STRUGGLE FOR REFORM IN SIKH SHRINES

by

RUCHI RAM SAHNI

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THE AKALI MOVEMENT.

Introduction.

The name I have chosen for the present volume may not be considered quite appropriate by the tco critical a reader. As every student of Sikh history knows, the Akalis did not form a separate sect. Anyone who heard thè cali to protect and safeguard the Granth and the Gurdwara (the two greatest objects of veneration by the entire community), and was prepared to risk his life in preventing the sacrelege at the hands of the Muslim fanatics, became an *Akali* (immortal) for the time being, but as soon as immediate task was finished, the Akali would revert to his or her hum-drum life as a house-holder. It is a singnificant fact that in adopting the role of an Akali, no sex distinction is observed.

With the advent of the British Government in the Panjab a new source of danger arose to Sikhism. Many of the priests did not strictly observe the tenets of the faith and not a few of them led an unclean life. Unfortunately, the new laws made them the virtual proprietors of the Gurdwaras with all their large offerings and the landed endownments attached to them. The law courts did not provide sufficient protection to the Sangats (congregations) who had previously exercised effectivè control over the administration of their places of worship. Early in the present century a wave of purifanic agitation swept over the length and breadth of the province which naturaly brought the whole Sikh community into clash with the powerful British officialdom. It is this movement which I have attempted to describe in these pages, the earlier chapters merely forming the necessary background to my story.

There was another attraction also for me to write this book. In my view, the Akali movement provides the best and the most inspiring instance of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of non-volience in thought, word and deed, the Mulshi-Peta struggle in Maharashtra talking the second place. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Sikhs and the Marhattas are among the most martial races in India. It is given to men of courage and strength to conserve their energies and not to make an exhibition of

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them, as weak and cowardly men often do.

Looking back upon what I have myself seen of the Akali movement, particularly during the past quarter of a century, I feel that the account of it as presented in these pages does but scant justice to the epic drama that I myself witnessed, mostly at close quarters, being enacted from day to day and month to month. While I have tried to be perfectly faithful in telling my story, so far as the facts in my possession permitted me to do, I sincerely wish the task had been entrusted to a really gifted writer who could interpret the strange happenings with the insight and imagination of a poet and who could invest his characters each with his or her own individuality and personality and thus make them live and act before us as they did on so many occasions in their own life. Lacking the power of visualising the strange happenings of the early twenties of the present century, I am afraid the picture of the events I have here presented may fail to make the proper appeal to my readers. Most of my notes upon which this book has been based were taken down soon after an event happend and oftener than not I have simply pieced these notes together so as to from a connected narrative. This circumstance would also account for a certain amount of repetition that may be found here and there in this book. Perhaps by re-writing the whole story of the rise of the Akali movement in the light of the general awakening of this time in India, one could have somewhat improved the picture, but for such a task I had no time. I had, therefore, to content myself with an inadequate presentation of the stirring scenes that I was privileged to see.

In addition to my own notes I have made free use of such contemporary literature as was available to me, not excluding the newspaper reports. in the case of the tragic happenings at Guru ka Bagh, Jaito and elsewhere, for instance, I am greatly indebted for filling in the details to certain pamphlets issued at the time by leaders of the Sikh community as well as to the valuable set of S.G.P.C. Press communiques which form a unique Source Book of the Akali agitation of this time knowing the value as historical records of

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these communiques, I took particular care to collect them and preserve them as they were issued from day to day. In the prepration of this book, therefore, I was greatly helped by these communiques a complete set of which was in my own Possession. I may mention that even the S.G.P.C. office did not have such a complete set as the one in my possession. This was partly due to the fact that the communiques were sometimes the subject of serious difference of opinion between the Akalis and the Government, and great efforts were made to seize as many copies of the communiques as the official agents could. A private individual was thus better placed for making his own complete collection of the communiques than even those who were responsible for issuing them. I made two complete sets of the original communiques bound copies of which I have placed in the Teja Singh Samundri Library of the the S.G.P.C. Typed and certified copies of the communiques have at the same time been presented to some other libraries. In certain cases I have avoided entering into details about an important incident chiefly because I did not like to take it upon myself to vouch for the correctness of particulars given in the communiques. Of the books, tracts and scattered bits of information, which I have consulted in the prepration of this volume I need not say more than that I have spared no pains in collecting all trust worthy material within my reach.

The following is the list of the more important books, tracts and other publications which have been used in the completion of the present volume.

(1) Bound volume of Proceedings of the Crimical case *crown versus S.B. Mehtab Singh and others*-2 Vols 2064 pages.

(2) Court proceedings of Nankana Sahib case against Mahant Narian Das and others.

(3) The Gurdwara Reform Movement by prof. Teja Singh, M.A.

(4) Press communiques issued by the S.G.P.C.

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(5) The Truth about Nabha-pamphlet Published by S.G.P.C. 1924.

(6) A history of the Sikhs by J.D. Cunningham.

(7) Essays in Sikhism by Prof. Teja Singh M.A.

(8) Bhiyanak Saka (Gurmukhi) Nankana Sahib Massacre.

(9) Firing into the Sisganj Gurdwara (Report by Enquiry Committee).

(10) The Phulwari, Tarn Taran Number.

(11) Guru ka Bagh hospital reports.

(12) Reports about Guru ka Bagh issued by Mr. C.F. Andrews.

(13) The Medical reports of the Akali happenings published in the Tribune (Lahore) from time to time.

(14) The Guru ka Bagh Inquiry Committee Report.

It is not Claimed that the literature upon which this narrative is mainly based is free from a certain amount of Bias which is unavoidable in such cases, especially at a time of great religious excitement, but even so it cannot be denied that in substance this literature—the communiques in particular—forms a valuable mine of information on the incidents to which they relate. Another important source of information which I have laid under frequent contribution is the record of the court proceedings of various cases in which Akalis were involved. To this class belong the lengthy proceedings of the case–*Crown versus S.B.Mehtab Singh and others*–in two bulky volumes aggregating 2264 large closely printed pages.

It should be added that the state of things arising out of the frequent conflicts at this time between the authorities and the Akalis was not only almost incredible but often also dangerously complicated. In describing these incidents I have, therefore, thought it necessary to document my account by frequent references to the communiques of the S. G. P. C.

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supplemented by the official documents published in the press. My only excuse for undertaking to write a history of the recent Akali movement of my own time is that some of the happenings, as I saw them with my own eyes, were almost unique in the history of the world, excepting, of course, the sikh history itself. I saw on these occasions the commonest men drawn directly from the lowest ranks of the community rising to great heights of idealism and acting the part of heroes. In saying this I am not conscious of being guilty of exaggration. Rustics coming straight from the fields in response to an inner call and inspired with the fervour of religious enthusiasm, played a part in a non-violent struggle of which anyone might well be proud. In a very real sense they were making history. I confess, till I saw some of the things with my own eyes, I did not believe all the recorded stories of the sikh martyrs and their Gurus having gone through extraordinarily severe ordeals not only unflinchingly but with beaming faces and gladness in their hearts, because they were convinced that the Akalpurkh (The Timeless One) expected such services of them. I wish to record my personal testimony of such sufferings borne with the inspiring words *Wahi Guru, Wahi Guruji,* on their lips by hundreds of men, day after day; at Guru-ka-Bagh, suffering ordeals which I have not heard of being borne by the members of any other community at least within our own times. I say this with all sincerity and with absolute truth. Mahatama Gandhi himself could not have expected more faithful followers to carry out his non-violent non-co-operative struggle in the face of the gravest provocation.

Considering the limited numerical strength of the sikh community, I am not a little surprised that, under the stress of the times, and the new forces that arose so many heroes, big and small, should have been thrown up, nobody can say how and from where. Almost everybody who was sworn before the Akal Takht for the service of the Guru under the direction of his Jathedar, became a hero. He behaved in a manner in which he himself could not have expected to behave before he had heard the call and

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obeyed it. He went through sufferings and made sacrifices that could only have been demanded of seasoned soldiers. In their case it was not a blind obedience like that of the Balaclava horsemen. Not desperate submission to an order because it must be obeyed, but the indomitable, unconquerable faith that they were doing the right thing in the service of their God and the community. The stories of the Crusaders pale into insignificant before the Guru-ka-Bagh or Jaito episodes, for instance, because, if for no other reason, the Akalis practised non-violence such as Christ himself preached in the Sermon of the mount.

To put it briefly, to be an Akali was, in the words of Shelley,

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy power which seams omnipotent ;
To love and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
Neither to change, nor faulter, nor repent.

R.R. Sahni.

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CHAPTER
Part-II

The Place of Gurdwaras in Sikh History.

The Punjab, and especially the Central Districts of it, are sacred ground for the small Sikh community. Every inch of this land is associated with one important incident or another in the lives of the Gurus or some great martyr of the community. Indeed the history of the Gurdwaras will form the best record of the birth and growth of Sikhism. Despite the various phases through which Sikhism passed during the last four centuries, it exhibits, even to a casual observer, a remarkable unity of plan ; it is like an organic growth rather than a piling up of geological strata one above the other. The whole movement turns round what may be called the *Gurdwara-cum-Sacred Book* axle. To the good Sikh the Gurdwara is more than a mere place of worship and the Granth Sahib more than a book of spiritual guidance. Both are associated more intimately than we can imagine with the social, political and spiritual life and growth of the whole movement from start to finish. To the Sikhs the Granth Sahib represents the body and soul of the lives and teachings of the Gurus; while the Gurdwaras are not only the living embodiment of the struggles, spiritual and political, of the Panth but they also Stand for the social and religious day-to-day life of the whole community. These are, rather, poor words to convey a clear idea of the intimate manner in which

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the whole long history of the bitter struggles and the joyous victories of the Sikhs against both outside and inside forces are associated as well as the daily life which a Sikh leads and the inspiration for his day-to-day tasks which he draws from them.

Such being the case, the Gurdwaras and the Granth Sahib occupy a special place in the estimation of the Sikhs and, as the living history of the long and ever lengthening line of their martyrs shows, no cost-not excluding tortures, bodily mutilations, burning alive-is considered too great to avert or avenge sacrilege, to them. It has always been a matter of honour and duty alike to the Sikhs, high and low, to protect and sefeguard the Gurdwaras and the Book. During the critical period in Sikh history when the small community was bitterly persecuted and hunted down ruthlessly like wild animals, when a small price was put upon the head of every Sikh and unmentionable orgies of debauchery were going on in some of the most sacred Sikh shrines, the men who came out to protect the Gurdwaras or avenge the acts of sacrilege going on there were known as the Akalis or the "Immortals". In the cheerful performance of the sacred duty, death had lost all its terrors for them. But as soon as the duty had been done, they reverted to their usual daily avocations as ordinary householders. The Akalis, therefore, did not form a class, for less a sect. Any one who heard the call went forth to do his duty by the Gurdwaras and the Granth round which the whole religious, social and political history of the community is centred and on the maintenance of which as pure and undefiled fonts of inspiration, courage and strength, all their hopes as a community are based. These men called themselves and were called by others as Akalis. They are the salt of the Panth (community) and the Panth honours them for it.

> Says Cunningham, "These were the "Akalis", the immortals or rather the soldiers of God, who, with their blue dress and bracelets of steel, claimed for themselves a direct institution by Gobind Singh. The Guru had called upon men to sacrifice everything for their faith, to leave their homes

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and to follow the profession of arms; but he and all his predecessors had likewise denounced the inert asceticism of the Hindu sects, and thus the fanatical feeling of the Sikh took a destructive turn. The Akali formed themselves in their struggle to reconcile warlike activity with the relinquishment of the world. The meek and humble were satisfied with the assiduous performance of menial offices in temples, but the fierce enthusiasm of others prompted them to act from time to time as the armed guardians of Amritsar, or suddenly to go where blind impulse might lead them, and to win their daily bread, even single handed, at the point of the sword.* Again; they also took upon themselves something of the authority of censors, and, although no leader appears to have fallen by their hands for defection to the

*Garret edition, page 110. Malcolm (Sketch, page 116) Confirm the same view. "He repeats, and apparently acquiesces in, the opinion, that the Akalis were instituted as an order by Guru Gobind. There is not, however, any writing of Gobind's on record, which shows that he wished the Sikh faith to be represented by mere zealots, and it seems clear that the class of men arose as stated in the text.

So strong is the feeling that a Sikh should work, or have an occupation, that one who abandons the world, and is not of a warlike turn, will still employ himself in some way for the benefit of the community. Thus the author once found as the Akali repairing, or rather making, a road, among precipitous ravines, from the plain of the Sutlej to the petty town of Kiratpur. He avoided intercourse with the world generally. He was highly esteemed by the people, who left food and clothing at particular places for him, and his earnest preserving character had made an evident impression on a Hindu shepherd boy who had adopted part of the Akali dress, and spoke with awe of the devotee."

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Khalsa, they inspired awe as well as respect, and would some times plunder those who had offended them or had injured the commonwealth. The passions of the Akalis had full play until Ranjit Singh became supreme, and it cost that able and resolute chief much time and trouble, at once to suppress them and to preserve his own reputation with the people".

The Akalis were and are, we repeat, not a sect or even a well marked section of the Sikhs. The Akalis claim their origin from Guru Gobind Singh himself, while by some writers Banda Bahadur is regarded as the founder of the Akalis. It is well known that Guru Govind Singh denounced materialism and called upon his followers to be ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of their faith and their Panth (or community). Whenever the faith or the Panth was in special need of protection, a number of men always came forward for this service. When men were called Akalis and were regarded, as indeed they richly deserved to be regarded, by the Panth as a whole with respect and veneration. While they were engaged in this service of the Panth at the peril of their lives, they wore a blue dress which inspired awe in the hearts of those who saw them. All good Sikhs but specially the Akalis had peculiar attachment to the steel which was always to be found on their person in one form or another.

The Sikh history shows many instances in which a small band of Akalis under a desperate leader have done heroic deeds in avenging the desecration of the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar and other sacred places of the Sikhs. The Akalis were in fact the voluntary "armed guardians of Amritsar" whenever the Sikhs were persecuted and oppressed.

As told above the sanctity of Gurdwaras and the origin and growth of the Akalis is very intimately connected with each other ; therefore, it will not be out of place to give here a synopsis of the desecrations of the Gurdwaras and the vendettas undertaken by the Sikhs and Akalis. In Sambat 1795–96 B. K.

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(Year 1738 A.D.), the Sikhs were taking refuge in Jungles and the deserts of Bikaner, having been pursued to these places by Zakaria Khan, the Governor. The Suba of Jullundar Kutab Din invaded Kartarpur (the temple of Guru Nanak) and after a short affray captured the city as well as the Gurdwaras. He burnt Gurdwara Thum Sahib and killed cows in the precincts of the Gurdwara* The Sikhs were highly incensed at this. Few days later the people learnt that Kutab Din the governor of Jullundar had been burnt to death by the Sikhs in Jungles.

In these very days Massa Ranghar, who was a Lambardar in a village called Jandiala–about fourteen miles from Amritsar offended the Sikhs by occupying its Golden temple. He committed excesses, debauchries and orgies. The Sikhs in Bikaner heard of it and Mehtab Singh of Mirankotie and Bhai Sukha Singh came to Amritsar. Disguised, they fearlessly pierced through the armed guards and killed the offender–Massa Ranghar.

In the year 1757 A.D. (1814 B.K.) Taimur, the son of Abadali, after having defeated the Sikhs demolished the sacred buildings and the "sacred reservoir was filled with the ruins". The Sikhs gathered under the leadership of Baba Dip Singh a spiritual devotee and saintly person and expelled the Durranis from Amritsar; so much so that the Sikhs occupied even Lahore.

But Ahmad Shah again invaded India in 1762 and went pursuing the Sikhs as far as Sirhand. On his return he gratified his own resentment, and indulged the savage bigotry of his followers, by destroying the renewed temples of Amritsar, by polluting the pool with slaughtered cows, by encasing numerous pyramids with the heads of decapitated Sikhs, and by cleaning the walls of desecrated mosques with the blood of his infidel enemies.*

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* Cf. Forster, Travels, i. 320; and Murray, Ranjit Singh, page 25.

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The Sikhs, therefore, took the earliest opportunity in avenging themselves upon offenders. We need not go into details about the early history of the Sikh Gurdwaras **

By the death time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh the Pujaris of the Gurdwaras had become negligent in their duties to a certain extent, due to the indifference of the Dogra ministers; and certain undue changes crept into the previous system of Gurmat.

After the annexation of the Punjab the defeated Khalsa lost its vigilence for their sacred Gurdwaras. The Mahants and the Sadhus incharge of the various Gurdwaras gave up all fear of the Sikh Sangat and became inheritary masters of the sacred shrines. Gradually they gave up (most of them) all symptoms (inward and outwardly) of Sikhism excepting the beard and the turban. They adopted all sorts of corruptions and vices that are liable to come in with unearned wealth. Idols were placed in the various Gurdwaras and their worship was becoming common contrary to the principles advocated by the Sikh Gospel.

This corrupted condition of the Gurdwaras of the Sikhs who had an unparalleled history of worship and sacrifice for the Truth, could not last long. By 1880 there had appeared a number of Sikh gentlemen who clamoured for the reform of the Gurdwaras and the removal of illiteracy among the Sikhs. This movement came to be known as the "Singh Sabha Lehr". This movement was responsible for bringing religious awakening and the propagation of education among the Sikhs.

The reformed Sikh public did not meet their religious requirements in their sacred Gurdwaras, the Mahants in charge of which had by this time begun to consider themselves as their hereditary

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** The sons of the 10th Guru had been burried alive. The Sikhs when they had conquered that tract, made it a religious duty to carry along a brick to their own places and with all the due reverence.

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proprietors. Several approaches were made to law to bring about the necessary reforms in the Sacred Gurdwaras. But the law was too defficient to prove effective in this respect, or it was easily rendered harmless to themselves by the Mahants' unearned wealth. In no case the Mahants lost against the Sikh public.

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The Singh Sabha Movement.

In the early days when the Gurus lived and moved about among the people, Sikhism was a living and growing religion. There was a little of doctrinal rigidity, but of simplicity, sincerity and a trength of faith there was no lack. The whole community was throbbing with life, not merely those who professed themselves as Sikhs but also large masses of Hindus and Muslims who had heard the message and were moved to shape their own course of life more or less by a higher and purer code of conduct. From Nanak to Gobind Singh, it was felt that the body of the teacher changed, but the soul remained the same. It was the soul of Nanak, so it was believed, that passed right through the long line of the Gurus and was then supposed to have become embodied and enshrined in the Granth Sahib. From that moment all homage was reserved for the Sacred Book. It is a remarkable fact peculiar Sikhism alone, We repeat, that throughout the unbroken line of ten Gurus covering a period of nearly 240 years great revolutionary principles were introduced from time to time, but from first to the last the personality of Nanak persists and influences the lives and teachings of one and all of them. Every thing is said and done in Nanak's name and all the Gurus are the bone of his bone and the flesh of his flesh. Even Govind Singh who, verily, worked a miracle in creating a new militant theocratic community out of a mass of simple, God-fearing peasant, petty shopkeepers and humble labourers professed to speak in the name of Guru Nanak. After the tenth Guru, the Granth Sahib and the Gurdwaras, most of them associated with some incident in the life of the Gurus or Sikh martyrs, became the centres where the congregations met. In their turn the Gurdwaras served a most useful purpose in propagating ard popularising the social and spiritual message of the Gurus.

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As congregations grew in social influence and political power, more importance began to be attached to the forms, rituals and the external signs and symbols of pomp and show of the creed than to the essentials of the faith. In Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time Sikhism became the State religion. Large estates were attached to the more important Gurdwaras, though some Jagirs had also been granted by the more liberal among the Mughal Emperors. To Ranjit Singh alone, however, belongs the credit of beautifying the Gurdwaras by means of marble floors and golden cupolas and steeples.

Throughout the pre-British times the Sangats (congregations) were supposed to be in charge of the Gurdwaras. They exercised the right to punish any one who happened to transgress the social and religious injunctions of the faith. It is well known that on a certain occasion Akali Phoola Singh, as the Jathedar of the Akal Takht, did not spare the Maharaja himself, but inflicted a degrading punishment to which the ruler cheerfully submitted with the double purpose, it is belived, of increasing the prestige of Sikhism and avoiding coming into conflict with the community.

After the death of Ranjit Singh, however, the whole administration was thrown into confusion. In these circumstances the Pujaris in charge of the Gurdwaras gradaully became independent of the contral by the Sangat and the old system of conducting the affairs of the holy places by Gurmatas adopted by the Sangats fell into disuse. With the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 things became worse. Places of worship came to be neglected and everything drifted into a state of chaos. The Mahants and the Sadhus in charge of the various Gurdwaras assumed an arrogant attitude towards the new disorganised and powerless Sangats and began to look upon the shrines as their own property. Before long vices inseparable from the possession of large unearned incomes crept into the administration of the Gurdwaras. Idol worship was not only tolerated, but encouraged

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in not a few shrines as an additional source of income from the orthodox Hindus, while corruption and debauchery were at times practised even in some of the most important Gurdwaras.

The Golden temple under British control, it is necessary to mention here that taking advantage of the prevailing confusion, the British Government had taken over the control of the Sikh Holy of Holies in the Punjab, the Golden Temple with the nearby Akal Takhat as well as some of the other important Gurdwaras. The events of this time are so important for our narrative that we consider it necessary to refer to them in some detail.

Eversince its foundation right up to the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh *Sangat* (congregation), as we know, was supposed to be in charge of the Golden Temple, as also of other Sikh Gurdwaras. With the appointment of Sir Henery Lawrance as British Agent to the Governor General in the Punjab, after the first Anglo-Sikh War, the affairs of the Golden Temple began to be managed and controlled, even in the minutest details, by his authority Sir Henry Lawrance selected Sardar Lehna Singh,* "as the manager of the Golden Temple which had been so far under the Control of Panth through local Sangat". The manager had, however, no powers. He had to take his orders about everything from the Agent.†

The Darbar Sahib, as the Golden Temple is called by the Sikhs, and its precincts were all holy places. By order of the Agent a brass tablet with instructions engraved in three languages was put up directing all visitors to take off their shoes before entering the "holy place." In this connection the following extract from Sir Henry Lawrance's political diary will not be without interest :

---

* Father of S. Dyal Singh Majithia.

† November 20, 1847 " I sign an order for a daily allowance of rupees 3/12/–to be expended on the religious offerings of the Umritsar temple." Lahore political Diaries, 1847–48, Vol. III, 355.

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"The Umritsur Akhbar stated that Major Mainwaring, who was residing in the Rambag, went to visit the temple of Hurimundir. On being requested to take off his shoes before entering into the holy place, he refused to do so, and, accompanied by two chuprassees with their shoes on also, went forward. Jahmul Singh, Thanadar of Umritsar, together with the Kotwal, approached him and said that there was an order from the Governor-General and the Resident that no one should enter the holy place without taking off his shoes. Major Mainwaring however got angry and refused to obey the order. The Sirdars, on hearing the Akhbar, expressed great surprise at the Governor-General's injunctions being disregarded, and directed that the Akhbar should be sent to the Resident for orders." I have had a great deal of trouble in investigating this affair. Major Mainwaring and Captain Knyvett think themselves as much aggrieved as the priests of the temple; and the whole thing turns on the construction to be put on the orders which, engraved on a brass tablet 3 in three languages, were given by me to the priests for their protection. The tablet certainly only says that persons are not to enter the Durbar Saheb with their shoes on, and a lawyer might possibly rule it that this meant only the temple itself and not its precincts; but the tablet further directs that the priests are not to be molested: and therefore I should have thought it might have been clear to any sensible person that the spirit of the orders was to exclude all strangers from the holy ground (wherever the priests considered it to begin), unless they chose to comply with those forms and ceremonies which the priests prescribed to save the object of their veneration form disrespect. (Political Diaries 1847-48, Vol. III, 233).

The Exact words of the order engraved on the brass tablet* are:

"The priests of Amritsar having complained of annoyance,

*The brass tablet is still preserved in the Tosha Khana of the Colden Temple along with other valuable articles.

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this is to make known to all concerned, that by order of the Governor General, British subjects are forbidden to enter the Temple (called the Darbar) or its precincts at Amritsar, or indeed any Temple with shoes on. Kine are not to be killed at Amritsar, nor are Sikhs to be molested or, in any way to be interfered with. Shoes are to be taken off at the Bhaunga at the corner of the Tank and no person is to walk round the Tank with his shoes on."

Lahore — H.M. Lawrance

March 24th, 1847. — Resident.

In 1859 when the Amritsar district was placed under a Civil Officer, a Committee of Sikh Sardars and Raises was appointed to manage the affairs of the Temple and specially to settle certain old disputes of the Pujaris regarding their shares. With the consent of the Deputy Commissioner, the Committee appointed a Manager to look after the affairs of the Temple. The Committee itself was supposed to have died a natural death though it was never formally dissolved. The Manager was now to be held responsible for everything he did to the local Deputy Commissioner from whom he took his orders direct and to whom he rendered his accounts.

The first forty years of the direct British rule in India formed a period of intense religious and social ferment in the whole country. Brave, emotional and deeply religious as they are, the Sikhs in the Punjab had been stirred perhaps more than any other community, not excluding even the Wahabi section of the Muslims.

Upto the early eighties and even for many years later, the Sikhs regarded themselves and were regarded by every body else as an integral part of the Hindus. For this there were good historical reasons. Not only were all the Gurus, the martyrs

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and the rank and file of the Sikh community flesh of the flesh of the great mass of the Hindus, but one and all of them had been mainly fed and nursed on the ancient Aryan culture and traditions that had been the common heritage of All Hindus. The first four Gurus had tried assiduously to reconcile the Muslims in every possible way. The Muslim saint Mian Mir of Lahore had been invited to lay the foundation of what has now become the greatest and the most sacred temple of the Sikhs, while the fifth Guru-admitted the theistic sayings of several Muslim saints in the Sikh scripture, the Granth Sahib, itself. But, as every student of Indian history must know, the last six gurus were an object of persecution at the hands of Muslim fanatics while three of them, along with a long line of faithful Sikhs including four sons of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur, had to pay the penalty for their intense devotion to their faith and their wonderful steadfastness with their lives.

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The Chief Khalsa Dewan

Searching of hearts. The closing decade of the last century was a period of serious searching of the hearts in all communities in the Punjab. The Sikhs were the last to awaken to a self-consciousness of their glorious heritage. It was a silent process. Slowly and almost imperceptibly they felt the new impulse creeping through the younger members of the community. There was a strange stirring of their bones, a tingling sensation in their fibres which they could hardly explain themselves. A great Sikh leader tells me that in the midnineties while sitting in a junior school class, he was suddenly assailed by the idea that he would like to become a Sikh. He was born and brought up a Hindu. That moment was a turning point in his life. In due course of time he passed his Matriculation Examination and graduated four years later. As a teacher in a Khalsa School at Lyallpur he resolved to become a missionary for the faith. He is now one of the foremost leaders of his community. Again, about the time the small Rawalpindi school boy was making a brave resolve about his future life, one day I discovered one or two Sikh students in my class at the Government College wearing an iron bracelet (kara) on their wrists. It attracted some attention from their class fellows. The symbol was so uncommon in those days except in the case of the much decaded Namdharis, popularly known as Kukas, that it exited no small curiosity among the Hindus and Muslim students of the class. I believe one of the two students who appeared in the class room with kara on their wrists was S. Sunder Singh Majithia. A few years later, a Hindu student of my class came up to me and asked me to change his name as his father had made him a Sikh. The Census of 1901 showed a rapid increase in the number of Sikhs. These men had probably hitherto passed for Hindus. These were small straws on the stream of time. The foundation of the Khalsa College at Amritsar followed by a few schools elsewhere awakened new hopes in the

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community. The Small band of young enthusiasts whom I have already named,* had been preaching the name of God. A member of the Indian Civil Service, Mr. M. A. Maycauliffe, had given up his appointment and with the assistance of some learned Sikhs, Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha being the most prominent figure among them, was devoting all his time to the English translation of the Granth Sahib. He was also bringing out the "Lives" of the Sikh Gurus. Nor should we omit to mention the work of Sir Baba Khem Singh Bedi of Rawalpindi, a direct descendant of Guru Nanak, who exercised a great influence among the Sikhs in the whole area of Dhani Pothowar which has always been a stronghold of Sikhism. He claimed to have thousands of followers and maintained a number of girls schools in that tract. He was a great patron of the Punjabi language and is known to have done an immence service to his community in popularising Sikhism in north western Punjab. The cumulative effect of all these forces could not but make itself felt over a wide area.

The foundation of the Chief Khalsa Dewan. At this stage it is necessary to refer to two important facts which began to force themselves upon the attention of the community. As the number of Singh Sabhas increased, some rivalry began to make its appearance between the Amritsar party and the Lahore party. As a rule the former was composed of moderates while the latter were whole-hoggers. The Lahore group had the advantage of a weekly Gurmukhi paper, the *Khalsa Akhbar*, edited by Giani Dit Singh, though wealth, rank and wordly influence were to be found on the side of the Amritsar party. Most important of all, the Lahore party was composed of a number of young men with a strong sprinkling of good Punjabi writers

*Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh, Giani Dit Singh, Bhai Maya Singh, Bhai Basant Singh (of the Agra Bank) and others.

Giani Dit Singh and Bhai Maya Singh were good speakers and writers, while Bhai Basant Singh was a ready and charming speaker in the Punjabi language.

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and speakers. Thus, as we have already mentioned, Giani Dit Singh was a fluent speaker and an equally good writer, while Gurmukh Singh, Maya Singh and Basant Singh were ready and charming speakers who could hold a large crowd bound for an hour or more, in particular the last named.

The opening of the Khalsa College gave a tremendous impetus to the revival of a puritanic movement in Sikhism. Thanks to the small but enthusiastic band of workers, a fairly large number of Sikh schools came into existence. More important still, there was a general re-awakening in the community which was now expresssing itself in various ways all tending to rouse the mass mind to a feeling of pride in their past history. For the first time public lectures in the Punjabi language began to be tolerated. In this direction Bhai Dit Singh's Punjabi paper, the *Khalsa Akhbar*, had already done a great deal of spade work to prepare the people that their own mother tongue was at least as suitable to serve as a literary language as any other vernacular then in common use in the country. For the English educated Punjabi, Mr. M. Macauliffe was doing a yeoman's service by translating the Sikh scriptures into the English language.* No less valuable were the "Lives" of the Sikh Gurus and Sikh martyrs which for the first time opened the eyes of thousands of the more sophisticated Indians to the grand heritage that had descended to the Sikh community and of which they had hitherto remained almost entirely ignorant. Excited by the frequent and unseemingly attacks of the Arya Samajists ** on the character of

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*He worked on this *magnum opus* for no less than sixteen years, 1893–1909.

** It would be difficult to convey to the reader even a faint idea of the feelings of bitterness and hatred that were being engendered at this time by the Arya Samajists in General and certain paid Sikh preachers of the Samaj in particular by their attacks on the personality of Guru Nanak and other Gurus. Referring

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of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh faith in general, violence also broke out now and again while foul abuse was a common feature of the discourses given by the preachers. In roder to meet these attacks, a more than ordinarily passionate Sikh young man, Bhagat Lakshman Singh of Rawalpindi, started an English paper at Lahore under the name of the *Khalsa* which lasted for about two years, 1899–1901.***

(*Continued from last page*)

to this subject, Prof. Teja Singh mentions the names of Chhajju Singh and Arjun Singh as being the chief men employed on this business, but there were a host of other men who often created serious trouble between the Hindus and Sikhs. Very frequently the critics took their shelter under the well known observations of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in the Sattyarth Parkash which the Aryas have come to regard as their sacred scripture. The book has been translated into English and several vernacular of India. In this book Swamiji refers to the opening text of Guru Nanak's Japji where he uses the Punjabi from "bhow" for the pure Sanscrit word Bhai (fear) and says that Guru Nanak was an unlettered man and, therefore, preached among the vulgar people, but the introduced sanscrit words in the course of his preaching so that he might be taken as a Pandit (learned man). He was, says Swamiji, thus "cheating" or "deceiving (dambh) the people. The Swamiji evidently did not know that in passing into another language, words often change their form, and spelling and sound. Bhow is a common Punjabi word meaning "fear".

***Bhagat Lakshman Singh was one of the most earnest workers in the cause of Sikhism. I knew him since his boyhood. When I was a student at the Government College in 1882, my friend was living in the same hostel with me. He was then studying in some school at Lahore, but was living in the College hostel as a ward of kesho Das Sapra of Jhang, who afterwards became a judicial officer. I became intimate with Lskshman Singh

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Meanwhile the Khalsa College at Amritsar was rapidly growing and progressing. But the officials were far from happy over it. The dominant feeling in their minds was one of disappointment that despite all they had done and were doing for the Sikhs, the growing youth of the community were not expected to be as amenable to their influence and control as they could wish. Knowing what they owed to the valuable help they had received at a critical moment in their recent history from the Sikh soldiery, they were more than ever determined to persist in their efforts to maintain their hold over the Khalsa College which they rightly believed to be the training ground for the future leaders of the community.

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under somewhat strange circumstances. One summer morning when I got up from my bed and was moving about in the compound, I found the boy Lakshman Singh throwing up his arms violently in the air. On going near his bed, I noticed a small bottle of strychnia lying on a small wooden stool. I afterwards discovered that he had taken the poison through some mistake. With the help of some fellow students, we carried the charpai to the hospital after securely tying Lakshman to it. At the hospital another difficulty arose. The House Physician in-charge at the time was still at his house (on the premises of the hospital) but as it was an early hour, no servant would go to him. I myself undertook to do this by shouting out to him at his door. He came out but began to abuse me. I begged him to have mercy on the poor boy who was dying. He came with me and applied the stomach pump and also gave some medicine. So far as I know Lakshman Singh never passed any examinations, but he acquired a very good command over the English language. He was fond of journalism. In the later eighties, I think he was appointed to edit an English paper, the Punjab Times, of One Mr. Thapar, at Rawalpindi Cantonment. Bhagat Lakshman Singh died at a good old age in 1945.

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There was a small Sikh party in the College Committee led by Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia that did not quite see eye to eye with the high officials who were interesting themselves in the affairs of the College. On their own part Sardar Sunder Singh and his co-workers believed that they had already conceded a great deal to the high officials to whom they were sincerely grateful but they felt that there was a limit beyond which they could not go. They were already being accused of weakness and servility by the more forward elements of the community. Indeed both sides were now extremely embrassed, the officials, because their isfluence over the brave community was, as they believed, waning, the young Sikh aristocrats, because their own positicn had been reduced to that of yeomen to the official hieracy in the province.

A new organization with a constructive programme and progressive outlook formed. It speaks a great deal for the spirit of healthy enthusiasm and constructive work of the Amritsar party that just at this time they brought into existence a new organisation that put heart into the whole community and provided ample apportunities for a large number of workers to engage themselves in useful activities for the good of the Panth and the country at large. It soon became famous under the name of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, as distinguished from the Khalsa Dewan of the time. Its moving spirits were S. Sunder Singh Majithia, S. Harbans Singh of Attari, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, S. Tarlochan Singh, S. Shiv Deva Singh, etc.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan had several departments of which the Khalsa Tract Society, the department for the encouragement of the Punjabee as the national language of the province, and the Educational Conference achieved a wonderful measure of success during the comparatively short period of about fifteen years when the organization remained in the full swing of its vigorous life and work. It will be worth while to say a few words here about each of these lines of work.

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1. *The Khalsa Tract Society*. The Tract Society was originally founded by Bhai Vir Singh as early as 1894, but it was only after 1902 when it became merged in the Chief Khalsa Diwan that it began to function as a well organized association with a definite programme laid down for it. So far as we can find out now the Society was able to publish a number of books and tracts in the Punjabee language. They were all written in simple and elegant language, most of them by Bhai Vir Singh himself who has done an invaluable service in enriching the Punjabee language.

2. *Efforts for Punjabee language*. The Chief Khalsa Diwan carried on a persistant correspondence with the Postal authorities and the Railway Board pressing them to provide proper and adequate facilities for the Punjabee knowing Section of the population. This was an uphill task, but success came to the Diwan at last. The Railway authorities agreed to print the names of Railway Stations in the Punjabee language on their sign boards while the Post offices appointed Punjabee knowing clerks on their staff, who could read the name and address on envelops written in the Punjabi language. This was a great help to the Punjabee knowing public of the province and the improvement was greatly appreciated.

3. *The Educational movement*. In 1908 when the Khalsa College at last came into the complete and undisputed possesion of the Government, the Chief Khalsa Diwan started what they called the Educational movement. Following the example set some years earlier by the Aligarh School of Muslim reformers, the Chief Khalsa Diwan began to hold an Educational Conference which met annually at one of the bigger twons for the disscussion of educational topics with special reference to the needs and requirements of their own community. A small admission fee was charged, but so great was the enthusiasm which these gathering excited that every year the organizers of the Conference were able to collect sufficient funds for starting a new High School after paying

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the expenses of the year's conference.

In this manner every year the Chief Khalsa Diwan was also able to add one High School to those they were already managing. Prof. Teja Singh estimates that collections made in connection with 30 annual Conferences enabled the community to pay Rs. 4, 95, 548 towards the upkeep of different schools, besides Rs. 69, 300 paid to needy students in the forms of stipends. The net work of schools thus spread over the province did immense service to the Sikh community in various directions, besides increasing the prestige of the Chief Khalsa Diwan.

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The Khalsa College, Amritsar.

As we have seen, the promotion of education among the Sikhs was one of the chief objects of the Singh Sabhas that were now spining up in the central districts of the province. Bhai Gurmukh Singh was the moving spirit of the new activities designed for the moral and spiritual uplift of the Sikh community. In these days the Oriental College where Bhai Gurmukh Singh was a Professor was located in the northern wing of the Government College building.* Associated with Bhai Gurmukh Singh were a number of other young men all of whom were as enthusiastic as he himself was. It was probably in 1887 that the idea of establishing a College for the Sikh community first presented itself to Gurmukh Singh and his co-workers. The Public mind in the whole province at this time was very much agitated over an important recommendation of the Education Commission of 1882 presided over by Sir William Hunter, a distinguished member of the Viceroy's Council. The Commission

*It may interest my readers to know that for the first two or three years, the Training College classes were also held in certain groundfloor rooms of the block of the Government College building that accomodated the Oriental College. Besides, the Law School of the Punjab University (now known as the University Law College), held its classes in some of the rooms of the same building. These classes met in the evenings. Neither the university nor the Law School had a separate Library while the Head Clerk of the Government College also acted as clerk for the Law School. He was also a (duly qualified) lecturer of the Law School, along with Lala Lal Chand (afterwards an officiating judge of the Lahore Chief Court), Mr. E. W. Parker, District Judge, Lahore and Lala Sangam Lal, Pleader (some time Trustee of the Tribune), etc., from time to time some of the members of the Lahore Bar were also appointed to lecturer on specified subjects.

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had been appointed by Lord Ripon's Government with the specific object of inquiring into and reporting upon the progress of school education in general all over India and of elementary education in particular in terms of the famous wood's Despatch of 1854. Among other things the commission pointed out that sufficient attention had not been paid to the diffusion of mass education and that the bulk of the funds alloted by the Government to popular instruction were being absorbed by collegiate education. Reviewing the Report, Lord Ripon's Government, passed a comprehensive resolution directing that, in future, adequate provision for elementary mass education shall be "the primary concern" of the Government and shall make the first claim upon the revenues of the State. At the same time, it was laid down that the Government should gradually withdraw its support from the higher education of the people and should confine itself to the maintenance of only one institution of the kind in each province so as to serve as a model for the people themselves to follow.

As was to be expected, Lord Ripon's resolution created something like a stir in the educated circles of the Province and soon we find the various communities vying with each other to start their own schools and colleges. In this work the Sikhs found a most influential helper in an unexpected quarter. Lord Dufferin had at this time successfully won over (Sir) Syed Ahmed to withhold his support for the new political movement.*

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*The Indian National Congress had come into existence in December 1885. Sir Syed Ahmed had been in the forefront of the national movement, but under the inspiration of Lord Dufferin and some of the high officials of his Government he was led to adopt the creed of a rank Communalist and to keep himself aloof from the Congress movement. As an influental leader of his community, he succeeded in weening the Musalmans of nothern India from advanced politics. Sir Syed now became the head and font of the

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As a martial community, it was natural for Lord Roberts, then Commander-in-Chief of the Indian forces, to make a similar attempt with the Sikhs. I do not know how it started, but when the work was fairly well in weigh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh used to tell me a good deal about it. As he was working in the same building as myself, we used to meet each other frequently. Professor Gurmukh Singh was himself in the thick of this business and used to see Lord Roberts in connection with it whenever he happened to come to the province. He would also take some of the Vakils of the different Punjab States "to pay their respects" to Lord Roberts. It is well known that it was mainly through the efforts of the Commander-in-Chief that the Phulkian States of the province became interested in the Sikh Educational Movement and were eventually induced to offer handsome contributions towards the foundation and maintenance of the Khalsa College at Amritsar. Indeed, the whole Sikh community began to be looked upon with special favour in official quarters and on various occasions even Governors and Viceroys would make very complimentary remarks about the community which went a long way in bringing the Sikh leaders closer to the officials. It is a remarkable fact that in many ways, the Muhammadans and the Sikhs now became the special favourites of the British officials in India, while the Hindus alone were left to shoulder the onerous responsiblity of the political interests of the country.

In the Panjab, a Journal of the name of *The Panjab Patriot* was started by an Anglo-Indian syndicate, though every attempt was made to keep this fact a sealed secret and the paper was supposed to be a purely Indian concern. After some years, the

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new Muslim separatist movement. In this work he was mainly helped by Mr. Beck, Principal of the Aligarh College who drafted all the memoranda and representations to Government in the interest of his community and acted as a sort of Secretary to him.

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business was sold to a young Sikh Sardar (afterwards well known as Sir Sunder Singh Majithia). So long as it lasted, the paper was bitterly opposed to the Congress movement for which purpose it was, in fact, originally started.*

It is noteworthy that with a view to keep the young bloods of the Khalsa College in hand, the Native States did not always pay down their promised contributions in cash. A small portion was handed over to the college authorities, but the bulk of the money was withheld by the States and kept in their own treasuries, only the interest being remitted to the College month by month to meet the routine charges of the institution. I believe the arrangement still continues in the case of several States. Probably this plan was also dictated, at least in some cases, by considerations of convenience of the States who did not always command sufficient ready cash to pay to the College.

It will be of interest to know that the original idea was to start the Khalsa College at Lahore, which is admittedly the intellectual centre of the province. The European officials who were among the sincere friends and advisers of the Sikhs at this time also strongly favoured this view. It was believed that they would thus be better able to watch and guide the affairs of the College.

There was also a small party that advocated the claims of

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*For full details about the Panjab Patriot, see the author's History of the Press in India. Among the high officials to whom the Khalsa College movement is specially indebted in various ways are Col. W.R.M. Horlroyd, the director of Public Instruction, Mr. J. Sime, Principal and subsequently Director of Public Instructions, Mr. W. Bell, who also acted as Secretary of the College Council for same years, Sir. William Rattigan, for many years vice-Chancellor of the Panjab University, Sir Charles Rivaz, Lt. Governor of the Panjab, besides several other high European officers at Lahore and Amritsar.

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Amritsar as the religious centre of the community. Eventually, however, the choice fell upon Amritsar. This decision has, an interesting history behind it. One should have been most reluctant to put much faith in this story had it not been for the fact that I heard it myself from the lips of two gentlemen whom I have reason to regard as thoroughly reliable, the more so as both of them professed to have taken an active part in the various stages of bringing about the change from Lahore to Amritsar. One of these two gentlemen, Bhagat Lakshman Singh, was long a well known figure in Sikh circles and passed away in the summer of 1944. He served for several years in the Inspection line of the Punjab Education Department. He had a facile pen and was editor of the *Panjab Times* of Rawalpindi in the later eighties or early nineties of the last century and, again, of the well known weekly paper, the *Khalsa* of Lahore. Now Bhagat Lakshman Singh became a strong protagonist of Amritsar party. In fact it was his advocacy that led to the formation of a small party in favour of Guru Ki Nagri as the site of the chief educational institution of the Khalsa Lakshman Singh used to write to the Tribune and other papers under the *nom de plume* of "A degenerate Sinkh". But the letters were really written by one of his near relations who was a leader of the Arya Samaj. Lakshman Singh little realized at the time what he was doing and was sorry for it aftewards. He said he was carried away by his youthful enthusiasm for his faith. He must be in his teens at the time. The second gentleman who appeared on the scene a little later was no other than a cousin of my own, Rai Bahadur Lala Lubdha Ram. He had been, he told me, In the thick of the plot himself. In 1893, my cousin and myself were occupying the same house at Lahore, where he had been lately posted as an Executive Engineer in the Railway Department. He told me that some year earlier, half a dozen Arya Samajists formed a scheme to get up a petition signed by thousands of "Sikhs" begging the Governor of the Province who was actively helping the Sikhs that the College should be located at Amritsar and not at Lahore.

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Thousands of foolscap signed sheets were circulated through an army of paidmen all over north-Western Panjab, each sheet bearing same words to the effect: "I request that the Khalsa college be established at Guru ki Nagri (Amritsar) and not at Lahore." The rest of the page was divided in two ruled columns, one for the names of the petitioners and the other for their address. In this manner several lakhs of signatures were said to have been obtained. These sheets were pasted together and then folded up in to an impressive Roll. Men who go so far and put themselves to so much trouble and expense in getting up a Memorial are not expected to leave things half done. The Roll was wrapped up in an expensive piece of Silk and then carried in a palanquin to the Government House on the shoulders of four stalwart Sikhs.

The plan produced the desired effect especially as it came on the top of a well organised agitation through the press and platform. The Government offered the spacious and valuable Ram Bagh grounds outside the city, but an agitation was raised again that the temptaticns of a bigtown should be avoided. Eventually a large plot of land was acquired at a distance of more than three miles, from the city* and in the course of time a handsome building was erected on the spot for teaching purposes with additional buildings for the residence of the staff and students of the College, and other auxilliary structures. A Gurdwara was, of course, attached to the College for the use of the scholars and their teachers.

When every thing was settled, the teaching work began with the Middle School classes in 1893 followed by the Matriculation Department, three years later. In due course of time, the successful students from the Khalsa Collegiate School were drifted into the

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* For this purpose the site of two villages was purchased for Rs. 10,000/- which was considered to be a large sum of money at the time. The dispossessed villagers were promised that their descendants would be admitted to the new institution free of charge.

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first Intermediate class and the Khalsa College may be said to have started on its career. The Degree Classes in Arts subjects were opened in 1899 and in Science subjects six years later. It was not till 1916 that the college was affiliated to the Uuniversity of the Panjab for the M.A. degree.

In the earlier years the college was faced with various difficulties, especially due to some friction with the officials over the control of the institution. They were all overcome by the patience and enthusiasm of the youthful band of workers like Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Sardar Harbans Singh of Attari and others. Like the Muslim College at Aligarh, a European was selected as the principal of the college.* This arrangement was made so as to keep control over the important institution which the government had not only brought into existence but for which they were doing everything to maintain in an efficient condition. Things went on smoothly for some years but serious trouble arose when early in the present century a particularly able sikh young man became available, and the Council was spiit into two parties, all the European members along with a few Sikhs being strongly in favour of Mr. Cole, European incumbent of the post, while another section consisting of the more influential Sikh members supported the claim of a member of their own community to be placed at the head of the institution. They pleaded that their nominee combined in his person high intellectual abilities with a deeply religious nature which they valued at least as much as literary qualifications in their teaching staff. For months a violent agitation

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*In the Aligarh College Mr. Theodore Beck was appointed the Principal of the College and Secretary of the Committee of management. There were also two other European Professors on the staff of the College whose salaries, as also of the Principal, were paid by Government. Mr. Beck managed the whole show. (For full details the reader is referred to the authors book and *a Century of Cultural Ferment*).

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was kept up not only among those directly connected with the College but in the whole Khalsa community. Unfortunately, some of the States withheld payment of their contributions to the College under inspiration, it was said, from official quarters, and it was felt that in the seriously disturbed conditions into which the affairs of the college were fast drifting, the institution might suddenly collapse. At one stage things had reached such a pass that Sir Macworth Young, then Lt. Governor of the Province, seriously put forward a porposal that the College classes should be abolished altogether.

It will be difficult for the reader to realize the uproar throghout the Province that the proposal created. No section of the community was prepared to see all their hopes of having a first class College of their own so soon dashed to ground. And yet they did not know how to get over the serious difficulties that had presented themselves. They began to realize, as they had never done before, how strong a position the European members of the College Council occupied in the then existing circumstances of the institution. The bulk of the funds upon which the life of the College depended were held by the States and there was no expectation of getting even the monthly quotas from the States without the full support of the European members of the Council. Their complete helplessness became evident especially when, in 1902, the European members opposed the selection of Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia as Secretary to the College Council and insisted upon Mr. Cole holding the office of Secretary of the Council in addition to his own duties as Principal of the College. To add to their embarassments, by this time Lord Curzon had appeared on the scene and was unfolding little by little the reactionary educational scheme that he had brought in his pocket, it was said, along with certain other plans of political and industrial character.*

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* Lord Curzon called an Educational Conference at Simla in September 1902 which held secret meetings and consisted of the

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All these difficulties however, vanished when the powerful Sikh group headed by Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia gave up their agitation over the appointment of a Sikh Principal of the College. In 1902 all objections to his own appointment as Secretary of the College Committee were withdrawn, and once again the whole college machinery began to run smoothly. In place of the old unwieldy College Council on which all the Phulkian States were represented, a small workable, businesslike Committee of 13 members was selected. A most influential Sikh conference under the presidency of Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha was held in the newly completed Rivaz Hall of the College when not only all the promises of help by the Sikh States were renewed but fresh offers were also made, and the public confidence in the stability of the College was fully restored. Sir Charles Rivaz, the new Lt. Governor, went a step further by passing a law through his Council by which an additional half an anna in the rupee was

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heads of all the provincial departments of Education. Over this conference the Viceroy himself presided. The object of the Conference was to survey the entire system of school education in India. For the higher education, he appointed a Universities Education Commission (1904) under the chairmanship of a member of his own Executive Committee. The recommendation of the Raleigh Commission were of a most drastic character. Both the school and University education were officialized. For the industrial education, Lord Curzon appointed an Industrial Committee under the presidency of Col. Chibbern, Principal of the Engineering College at Roorkee. The Committee made a tour of the province, recorded evidence, but for some unknown reasons the Report of the Committee never saw the light of the day. It was said the Revd. Mr. Wescott, a member of the committee, who afterwards rose to be the Metropoletan of India, made certain proposals and wrote some notes which Lord Curzon strongly disapproved. The whole report was, therefore, suppressed.

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charged from all the Sikh landlords of the Province for the maintenance of the Khalsa College. This measure at once brought a huge sum for the maintenance of the College over and above what the States were contributing.

But inspite of all that the Government was doing for the Khalsa College in one way or another, the official mind did not seem to be quite at ease that the future leaders of the small but important martial community in the province would fulfil all their hopes. The fact is that the prevailing conditions and circumstances were unpropitious and they were some what disappointed to find that the College did not produce the type of men quite after their heart. Thanks to the extraordinary times through which they were passing, the students of the Khalsa College were carried off their feet as much as those of any other similar institution in the Panjab or anywhere else in India. First in order of time came the Boer War. The wonderful stand made by the small peasant community of South Africa against all the resources of a great Empire was an eye opener to the people at large as to the British soldiers and statesmen themselves. After this came the more impressive Russo-Japanese War. It will be impossible to convey to the reader a clear idea of the shock of pleasant surprise with which the whole Asiatic world followed from day to day the thrilling march of events as the little Japs succeeded in inflicting one severe defeat after another upon the Colossus of the North. The story of the Dwarf killing the Giant was being repeated before our own eyes. In India itself, Lord Curzon thoughtlessly created no end of trouble for himself by adopting a policy of distrust and repression. His ill considered speech at the Convocation of the Calcutta University, the unwanted Universities Act of 1904 and, a year later, the adoption of a measure like the Partition of Bengal and a number of ill advised changes set the whole of India ablaze and, for the first time in the country, gave rise to the appearance of an anarchical movement in which youngmen were specially involved. A foreign Government that lives largely upon its prestige

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knows no better weapons for putting down popular unrest than coercion and repression. The history of the first twenty years of the present century is a record of which the Government had little reason to be proud. As it was, the harsh press legislation and police rule quite estranged the people from the Government and, had not the world war broken out, it is difficult to say what would have happened.

We have said that at this time the students of the Khalsa College were as much affected as those of any other similar institution in the Province. The officials were at their wits' ends as to how to meet the situation. Small things here and there in the management of the College clearly showed that suspicion was rapidly growing between the Indian and European members of the College Committee. One such incident that created a great deal of fuss all over the province may be mentioned as illustrating the state of public feeling at this time. A very able and experienced Sikh Engineer, Sardar Dharam Singh, had on retirement from a high office offered his honorary services to the Committee for supervising the College building which was then under construction. The Committee thankfully accepted the offer, but a European gentleman, one Mr. Hill, criticised the "Labour of love" so bitterly that for months the whole province was agitated over the matter making the relations between the Europeans and Indians extremely strained and unpleasant. In 1907, the Europeans made a great discovery, as they thought, little thinking that perhaps they were making too much of a fact that was known, or at least ought to have been known, to every body.* In 1907 when these feelings were running very high

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*Not to go farther back, it was well known that in the Conference of 1904 held in the Rivaz Hall under the presidency of the Maharaja of Nabha, the nature of the Endowment Funds of the Khalsa College was clearly explained. Within a year, however, the Sikh leaders

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"It was discovered by the Government and the Panjab University that the Committee had been illegally constituted in 1902 and that its funds were bogus. The threat of disaffiliation was held out unless the fundamental rules of the society were changed, which meant that the society should consent to the introduction of Government control."*

As was to be expected, a bitter agitation was set up on both sides and the trouble only subsided when the independent Khalsa party headed by Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia submitted to the will of the powerful officials who were bent upon keeping control of the College in their own hands. Eventually—

> "A sub-committee appointed by the Punjab Government and consisting of the Commissioner of Lahore (Chairman), the Director of Public Instructions, a Sikh Sardar who was a 'Safe' man, and Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, who protested all along, proposed revision of the constitution of the college. The draft rules, approved by the Government and passed by the Executive Committee suggested by the Government, were placed before the old Council on the 10th June but without the requisite number of votes forthcoming the rules were declared passed and the remaining votes were secured later on by July 3rd." **

Professor Teja Singh from whom I have quoted the above passage goes on to explain that on the 10th of June 1907 when the meeting was held the "requisite number of votes" in support of the motion were not forthcoming "but the remaining votes

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raised voice in one form or another that the Funds should be deposited in a Bank in the name of the College and should not remain with the donor States.

*Professor Teja Singh of the Khalsa College, Amritsar :
Essays in Sikhism. p. 152.
**Ibid page 152.

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were secured later on by July 3rd."* "By the new arrangement", we are again quoting the same authority :

> "The Commissioner became President and the Deputy Commissioner, the Director of Public Instructions, the Political Agent, Phulkian States, and the Principal were appointed ex-officio by the Government to the College Council. With the Commissioner as Chairman, the Deputy Commissioner as Vice Chairmam, of the managing Commistee, and the Secretary nominated and removed by Government the effective control of the College may be said to have passed into the hands of Government."

No wonder the Principal, Mr. Cole, declared "complacently" that "the reconstruction of the College Managing Committee on the lines indicated by the Government and the University has served to place matters on a more definite basis". The whole Sikh community, however, was deeply resentful. The more independent members of the Committee like S. Harbans Singh of Attari resigned while his life-long friend and co-worker, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, felt himself as fish out of water. He was not happy to remain on the Committee but he was not sure if the tendring of resignation was the least course for him to adopt in the interest of the college. Retirement from it in a huff, he thought, might do more harm than good to the College. Even the officials began to feel that

> "the great influence he commanded in the management was

*There was nothing wrong about the Endowment Fund being held in the hands of the Ruling Princes, and I believe that no court would have taken serious exception to it. The princes had been paying the interest as it became due regularly and were thus acting as safe enough depositories for the funds of the College. But I am sure no court would hold that the "draft constitution" had been "passed" in a regular manner so as to be enforced upon a legitimately constituted body like a College Committee.

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too much for the Principal. Indeed, the official members and the Government expressed a desire that the constitution should be changed as it did not work well."*

The officials attached more importance to the control of the Khalsa College than that of the Government College. In no circumstances were they prepared to run the risk of letting the young bloods of the martial community to be brought up in an atmosphere of growing mistrust and suspicion. In 1912 things came to a head when it was proposed to reduce the number of representatives from the British districts on the Committee as they were less amenable to official guidance and direction than those from the States. At the same time, it was suggested that the office of Secretary should be held by a paid incumbent who could be appointed and removed by the Government. As a servant he was not to have a seat on the Committee while his powers were also greatly curtailed. In fact, for every thing he was to take his orders from the Principal of the College. A hard contest between the powers-that he and the popular elements in the Committee with Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia at its head ensued. With great difficulty, the Secretary himself came out unscathed from the trial of strength but the number of Committee members frcm the British districts was reduced. Worse still, the Lt. Governor of the Panjab was empowered "to suspend the rules and to direct

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* I have been quoting extensively from a Sikh Gentleman who saw every thing himself from the inside, for two reasons. In the first place in a delicate matter of this kind, it is best to rely upon the written word of an eye witness. In the second place, I am anxicus to show, as this narrative clearly indicates, that my friend, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, was always ready to serve the College faithfully and honestly to the best of his ability without the least desireof self-aggrandisement. Indeed, I have no tknown two gentlemen who have done more for the good of the College acccrding to their own lights than Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia and Sardar Harbans Singh of Attari.

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the Committee to take such action as the special circumstances may appear to demand and it shall thereupon be binding upon the Committee to take such action". Reduced, to all intents and purposes, to a position of utter helplessness, in the service and managment of the institution to which he had dedicated all his time and energies, S. Sunder Singh at last decided to resign from the Committee. Some of the best Professors on the staff of the College, like Prof. Jodh Singh and Prof. Narain Singh, also submitted the resignations. This latter step was a Godsend to the Government who at once filled up the vacant places by two more European Professors. Including the Principal, the College now possessed three European Professors at its head. The Government agreed to pay the salaries of these three men. What mattered it if the College became very unpopular. With the outbreak of the Great War (August 4, 1914) special efforts were made by the European staff of the College, but more particularly by the new principal (Mr. G. A. Wathen, late of the Government College) not only to do every thing he could to help his students in the way of getting jobs but also to win over the sympathy and goodwill of the whole Khalsa community. He told them he had a scheme for raising the College to the status of a University "in his pocket" and convinced them that it would not be long before they would be able to occupy the foremost place in the social and intellectual life of the province.

The Great War and, specially, the rapid rise of Mahatma Gandhi's non-co-operation movement soon after the hostilities had ceased, changed every thing. The Government tried their best to prevent the Sikhs from joining the new political movement but without much success. One of their greatest leaders, Sardar Kharak Singh of Sialkot, who was for sometime the President of the S. G. P. C., inaugurated the Sikh Central League at Lahore in October 1921 which was the means of soon spreading the creed of the Mahatma throughout the community. Even more important

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was the fact that through some misunderstandings with the Government, the brave community was brought into serious conflict with the officials. The short-sighted policy of some of the men at the helm of affairs created great bitterness in the whole Sikh community and the wonderfully well organized non-violent struggle that they staged, proved to be a very successful demonstration on an extensive scale of the meaning, scope and the actual working of Gandhiji's novel movement that extorted no small admiration from the greatest leaders of the Congress, many of whom spent days and months in watching the struggle and lending as such moral support to the Akalis as they could.

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THE SIKHS AND POLITICS

The Luckhnow Pact 1916-Sikhs no party to it.

Up to the beginning of the First Great War, like the Mohammadans the Sikhs had also kept themselves aloof from the Congress movement, though not for the same reasons. Owing largely, as we believe, to the disturbed conditions in the Balkans and generally in the Islamic countries of the Near East in the early years of the present century, certain sections of the Muslims in India had come round to accept the Congress views and, after some three or four years negotiations, an agreement, known as the Muslim League-Congress compact* had been adopted at a joint session of the Congress and the League held at Lucknow in December, 1916. The compact was sanction spoken of as the Congress-League Re-union.

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* The Lucknow Pact authoritatively committed the Indian National Congress not only to the acceptance of the principle of communal representation on Legislative councils and Municiple bodies, but also to the grant of weightage in Muslim representation. Many Congressmen were bitterly opposed to the Pact as incompatible with the "national" character of the Congress, besides being undemocratic in principal. Lok. Tilak was, however, bent upon bringing about the compromise between the two communities at all costs hoping for some future time when they also would see the wisdom of reverting to the system of joint electorates. The Hindu Sabha and some leading Congressmen like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Diwan Bahadur V. P. Madhave Rao and others pressed for a joint meeting with the Hindu Sabha before the Congress finally committed itself, but the negotiations had gone too far for them to retreat. The Hindu Sabha had thus to content itself with sending to the Congress a note of strong dissent

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The Sikhs did not join these deliberations and, indeed, they were not by this time generally recognised to be a seprate body from the Hindus, although they had been proclaiming their individuality as a separate religious community for some years past and had even obtained legal sanction for their own marriage laws. So far as we know, their political consciousness was first awakened by the separate franchise granted to them under the Montfor dreforms, combined with the general stir all over the country created by the Rowlatt Act and the tragic happenings at Amritsar that followed that unhappy piece of legislation. As the chief sufferers in the Jallain-wala massacre, it was natural for them to be drawn in large numbers to their rights and opportunities. They had done a lot of good to their community chiefly in expanding the education facilities for their people and looking after the religious needs of the community varied by their occasional requests to the authorities for a larger proportion of posts in the higher services of the province and the adoption of the Punjabee language as a medium of instruction. If their outlook upon questions of higher politics was somewhat limited that was the fault of their upbringing and the environment in the midst of which their lot was cast.

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accompanied by a warning that political franchise should not be "regulated by racial or religious considerations and that by consulting only the Muslim League representatives in your deliberations on the above question, you will not be doing justice to the great Hindu community." The President of the Hindu Sabha even administered a mild rebuke to the Hindu members of the Congress by sending a personal note in which he said, "We do feel that our views and sentiments are not and cannot be represented by those Hindus alone who happen to be there as members of the All India Congress Committee". Although the idea of forming an All-India Organization was, already being discussed, the Congress-League rapprochment, gave a strong impetus to the Hindu Mahasabha movement.

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The Sikhs and the political franchise. As already mentioned, the Sikhs were as conspicuous by their absence at the Lucknow Congress as they had been at previous sessions of the National organisation. But though ignored by the Congress as a minority community they claimed the same excessive representation as had been allowed to the Muslims in the Lucknow Pact*. The Congress leaders now found themselves in a rather difficult position, for, besides the Sikhs, there were other communal minorities also that were expected to demand a similar concession. Where were they to stop ?

The claim of the Sikhs to weightage was, of course, limited to their representation in the Punjab Legislative Council and the Municipal bodies within the province. It must be admitted that within the territorial limits of the province, they made out a very good case for themselves. They were the most compact and united body in the province, being chiefly concentrated in a few central districts where most of their sacred places of worship were also situated. Although one of the smallest communities in India, they contributed no less than 40 percent of combatants to the Indian **army and supplied not less than one-third of the total number of men recruited from the Panjab. They were the ruling race not

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*When S. Sunder Singh Majithia expressed his disappointment at the result of the Diwan's humble representations, Mr. Hallifax (who represented Panjab Government) said to the Sardar tauntingly, "Will you now go to join the Congress Party ?"

Again in the autumn Session of the Panjab Council in 1918, while refusing to accept the amendment of S. Gajjan Singh to his resolution recommending the congress division of the seats between Hindus & Muslims in the Panjab, Mian Fazl-i-Hussain told the Sardar that as his community had kept aloof from the congress it had no ground to complain afterwards to amend its decisions.

**These figures refer to the conditions obtaining in 1920 when the Sikh case was first put forward.

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long ago, the Punjab being the last province in India proper to come under the British domination. They contributed 40 per cent to the provincial revenues and owed———% of the agricultural lands. The Muslim votes in the province numbered 137, 984, while the number of Sikh votes was no less than 93, 725, the Hindus and others coming last with 92, 450. They formed about 10 % of population and on the basis of the concessions made to the Muslims, they claimed at least 30 % of the representation in the Province. The political-minded Sikhs blamed the leaders of the Chief Khalsa Diwan for having slept while the rights of the community were being ignored. The Chief Khalsa Diwan was a conservative body of the Sikhs composed chiefly of big landlords, title-holders and other aristocrats in the community.

*Drawn into whirlpool of Mahatama Gandhi's non-co-operation movement.** As we know, the movement arose out of the Amritsar troubles though the formal decisions were taken at the special Congress Session held at Calcutta under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai (September 1920). Within a few days of the adoption of the non-co-operation resolution by the Calcutta Congress, the more advanced section of the Sikhs under the leadership of Sardar Kharak Singh decided to organise themselves as a political body and towards the close of October, 1921 a most enthusiastic and largely attended Sikh Conference was held at the Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore, where it was decided to form a Central Sikh League and a number of important resolutions were adopted.

The Sikhs and the Montford reforms. The Government of India Act, 1919, declared the progressive development of responsible Government as the political goal of this country. But "the work of framing rules, whereby not only the questions relating

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*The fifth Guru may well be called the originator of the passive resistance movement in India.

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to franchise, electorates, election, rules of business, and a hundred other cognate matters" were to be settled was left to be carried out by the local authorities. The Montford Report out lined certain general principles but the working out of the details were left in the hands of Franchise and Subjects Committees with Lord Southborough as Chairman. The Sikh community bitterly complained that in the course of the inquiries and investigations relating to these matters, the "So called Lucknow Compact had proved a veritable stumbling block" so far as their interests were concerned. In a well-reasoned memorandum submitted to the Secretary of State the Sikh Deputation, appointed to represent the case of the community before the authorities in England pointed out that even the joint Report had referred to the serious harm that the Pact had done to the interests of the Sikhs and other minorities. Thus para 163 of the joint Report says :

> "We are not aware on what basis, other than that of negotiation, the figures were arrived at. Separate electorates are proposed in all provinces, even where Mohammadans are in a majority...While, therefore, for reasons that we explain subsequently, we assent to the maintenance of separate representation for Muhammadans, *we are bound to reserve our approval of the particular proposals set before us until we have ascertained what the effect upon other interests will be and have made fair provision for them.*

Proceeding further, the report said :

> "We have elsewhere touched upon the difficulty of denying to other communities, as the Sikhs in the Punjab, *a concession which is granted to Muhammadans.*"

The authors of the joint Report even refused to regard the Hindu-Muslim mandate as conclusive. They said :

> "The Compact by which the Muslims were to get a certain proportion of seats in the Councils, in some cases in excess of those to which their numbers entitled them, and by

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which also the discussion of measures affecting either community *could only proceed by leave of its representatives in coucil,** whose under what pressure agreement was reached." (Italics mine)

It is strange that the Franchise Committee did not pay any heed to the important words we have italised in the above paragraphs. They made no provision for a concession in the case of the Sikhs like that granted to the Muhammadans. "The Committee felt themselves justified in accepting the Compact as a guide in allocating the proportion of Mohammadan representation in the Councils."** The Franchise Committee thus shirked the problem with the result that the share of the Sikh representation in the Punjab Legislative Council was whittled down, i. e., first out of 54 seats the Sikhs were given 8. Afterwards the Sikhs were given two more (i. e., 10) but the total number of seats were also increased to 58.

Extremely unfavourable position of Sikhs

In view of the importance of the subject we consider it necessary to go back a little and give a brief history of the case for Sikh representation as put forward by the leaders of the community from time to time. Inviting the opinions of the District authorities on the proposed scheme of reforms which subsequently fructified into the Minto-Morley Reforms, the Punjab Government was pleased to remark that "In the Punjab the Sikh Community is of the greatest

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* Para 154 of the Montford Report.

** In the preparation of this chapter I have freely drawn upon the representations submitted to the authorities in support of their case, particularly the Annexure A to the Memorandum. Now and again, various other authentic documents have also been brought under contribution in the preparation of this part of the chapter, so as to present a fair and full summary of the claims of the community as the material at my disposal allowed me to do.

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importance and it should be considered if any and what measures are necessary *to ensure its adequate representation.*" (orignal italics) Nothing, however, came out of these platitudinous observations. In spite of the efforts of the President of the Chief Khalsa Diwan and "the acceptance by the then Government of India of the principle of separate and adequate, not proportional, representation of important minorities with special reference to the Mohammadans, no provision was made for the Sikhs in final regulations."

The Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab in his speech in the autumn session of the Imperial Legislative Council in 1917 observed that whereas all the Provinces had their Hindu-Mohammadan problems, we in the Punjab had "the very important Sikh interests to consider as well", and he stated the results of experience under Morley-Minto Reforms as follows :—

> "In 1900 all three seats then open to election were carried by Mohammadans. In 1912 out of 6 seats, 4 were won by Hindus, 1 by a Sikh and 1 by a Mohammadan. Last year (1916), of 11 elected seats 5 fell to Hindus, 5 to Mohammadans, 1 to a European, and none to a Sikh."

Again, in 1916 when the question of political and legislative reforms came up for consideration, the Hon'ble S.B. Sunder Singh Majithia, as Secretary of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, claimed a defferential treatement for his community and said that no scheme of reforms would be acceptable to the Sikhs "which did not guarantee to them a share in the Provincial and Imperial Councils as well as in the civil administration of the country, proportionate to the importance, position and services of the community, with due regard to their status before the annexation of the Punjab, their present stake in the country and their past and present services to the Empire."

In order to be "adequate and effective and consistent with their position and importance", he demanded a one-third share in

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their representation on the Punjab Council which he regarded as the "absolute minimum". Similarly, he added that their share "in the Viceroy's and the Secretary of State's Councils should be adequate and fixed on principles of the like nature."

Once again, on the 22nd of November, 1917, a strong Sikh deputation waited upon the Secretary of State (the Hon'ble Mr. Montague) and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, at Delhi in connection with the investigation of the claims of the various communities in the new scheme of reforms that was then under consideration. The deputation put forward their case in some detail in the following words :

> "According to the Census figures of 1911, the Sikhs numerically form very nearly 12 per cent of the population of the Punjab, the actual figures being 28, 83, 729 out of 2, 41, 87, 750. With regard to the status and importance in the country and the service and sacrifices in the cause of the Empire, however, we occupy a unique position, unapproached and unapproachable by any other community in India. Our strength in the entire Indian army is 20 per cent, while among the units recruited from the Punjab, which supplies no less than 60 per cent, of the Indian combatants in His Majesty's Army, we supply no less than one-third of their entire man-power. Our achievements on all the battlefields of the Empire from the time of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 right up to the present day form some of the most brilliant chapters of the history of the British Empire, and we are proud to be able to say that in all the spheres of action in the present gigantic War, no community in India has proportionately been able to put forth so much man-power or so much sacrifice as our community has done. Nearly one-third of the awards made to the entire Indian Army for deeds of valour performed and daring sacrifices made on the fields of battle during the present war, have been won by members of our community. Proportionately, the largest number of recruits,

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to keep up the fighting of the Indian Army, have been supplied by us. Our community as a whole, from our premier ruling prince, His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur, G.C.I.E., of Patiala, who, in the blessed words of the Sat Guru : "Thine house is mine", is the acknowledged learder of the community, downwards to the peasant, has spared neither men nor money in this gigantic War and our all is at the disposal of our gracious King–Emperor in this world War and we are determined to fight this War of aggression to a victorious issue."

Recognising the Sikh claim the joint authors of the Montford Report also declared :

"The Sikhs in the Punjab are a distinct and important people ; they supply a gallant and valuable element to the Indian army : but they are everywhere in a minority, and experience has shown that they go virtually unrepresented. *To the Sikhs, therefore, and to them alone, we propose to extend the system already adopted in the case of Muhammadans.*" (Italics mine)

This was not all. In September 1918, the Chief Khalsa Diwan convened a general representative assembly of the whole community, which after reviewing the entire position submitted to the Government a Memorandum in the course of which they said :

"The Sikhs are a living and young community and they understand the principles of democracy and the art of administration. They also understand their duties and responsiblities, and have made and are ready to make sacrifices in discharging them. They are a race of men possessing strong poten lities which mark them out as distinct from their countrymen of other religious persuasions. The present war and their services to the Empire and their achievements in it have brought to them a consciousness, which will not be satisfied till the pledge given to them by the two responsible

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ministers of the Crown in a very solemn and formal document, such as the Report under discussion, is carried out ard fulfilled in the fullest measure and in all its consequences. The Sikhs who are an effective factor in the defence of their country and the Empire and have always been so ever since their connection with the British, claim and, it is humbly submitted, are entitled to, an equally effective voice in the administration of the country."

The Punjab Government was doubtless throughout sympathetic to the claims of the Sikh community. On November 23, 1918, they pleaded with the Franchise Committee for a liberal treatment of the Sikhs in the following words :

> "But their (Sikh's) influential position in the Province, which is based partly on historical and political factors, partly on their military prestige, and partly on their comparatively high educational level and economic importance in the Council and Colony Districts, entitles them to a considerably greater degree of representation than is indicated numbers alone. The number of Sikhs in the Army is now believed to exceed 80, 000—a proportion for higher than in the case of any other community—and the amount which they pay to the State in the form of land revenue and canal charges is out of all proportion to their numerical strength".

But all that the Franchise Committee could say in support of the Sikh claim was a brief admission that, following the recommendations of the Joint Report (para 232), they had proposed for them "a separate electoral roll and separate constituencies." The Committee did not take the trouble to suggest the exact proportion of seats to which the community was in their opinion entitled. On the basis of the weightage allowed to the Muhammadans, they claimed that a share of 30 per cent of seats would be their due.

In support of this demand it was explained that, in Behar and Orissa with a population of only 10 per cent, the Muslims had been

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granted a representation of no less than 27 per cent, and their was no reason why the Sikhs should not enjoy a representation of at least 30 per cent in their own province where they had a population of 12 per cent.

As it was, however, finaly the Punjab Government recommended the Sikhs for only 19 per cent of the non-special seats, and, as if this was not enough, the community was shocked to find that even this proportion was still further reduced by the Franchise Committee. There was nothing left for the community, therefore, but to make one more attempt at demanding what they considered to be their just rights by knocking at the door of the authorities in England who were their final court of appeal. They lost no time in conveying to the Secretary of State for India their feelings of extreme disappointment at the treatment the community had received and informing him that it was intended to send a small deputation of leading members of the community to wait upon him and submit a representation of their case directly to him.

Accordingly, early in August 1917, S. Sunder Singh Majithia submitted a memorial to the Secretary of State through the Government of India. A gist of the memorial was cabled to England and a copy of it left by mail for him on the 9th of the month. In this document they briefly but strongly put forward their whole case and gave expression to the "feelings of grave and serious apprehension" which their recent treatment had caused to the whole Sikh community. The last stroke had, in particular, greatly shocked them, namely that "the Punjab Government had recommended 19 per cent seats to be reserved for the Sikhs, but the Franchise Committee, instead of increasing this percentage, as they should have done, reduced it to 8 seats out of 54 or approximately 15 per cent." Later on the Sikhs were given two more seats but the total number of the non-special elected seats was also increased, so that the Sikhs had now 10 out of 58 seats.

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The memorandum submitted by the depuation outlined the following facts upon which the Sikhs based their special claims :

(a) Our strength in the Indian Army is 20 per cent of the whole ;

(b) Our proportion in the Indian Army raised in the Punjab has been maintained at about one-third ;

(c) The awards made for distinguished and gallant services on the field of battle during the recent war have been won by the Sikhs to the extent of one-third of the total won by the entire Indian Army and one-half of those won by the Punjabees ;

(d) Nearly one-half of the aristocracy in the Punjab belongs to the Sikh community, and nearly two-thirds of the hereditary titular chiefs in the British Punjab are Sikhs ;

(e) The Sikhs pay the largest amount of land Revenue and Canal charges in the Province ;

(f) The number of land-owners paying Rs. 25 per cent, as land revenue, which is the chief qualification proposed for rural franchise in the Province, is as follows :

Mohammadans	123,926
Hindus	68,899
Sikhs	73,191

The claimed :

(a) A clearly defined share of appointments to the Viceroy's Executive Council should be reserved for the Sikhs, and as hitherto no Sikh has been appointed as an executive member, one of the first three Executive Councillors should be a Sikh ;

(b) A Sikh should also be given a place in the first Executive Council of the Governor of the Punjab and out of three portfolios to be held by Indians in the Executive

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Government of the Panjab one should be held by a Sikh ;

(c) In the matter of share in the Legislative Council in the Panjab, the Sikhs should be treated on the same principles as have been applied to the Mohammadans in Provinces where they form a minority. In doing so the pledge of the authors of the Joint Report should be carried out in all its bearings, and the historic, military, political and economic importance of the community should be fully recognised ;

(d) The Sikhs should be given such an adequate share in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State as may be commensurate with their historic and political importance and their services to the State so that their voice in those bodies may not be a negligible quantity.

On the question of the Sikh representation in the Council the whole community in the Punjab was extremely bitter at the time the deputation to the Secretary of State was preparing to start. In the briefest words their position was that "even if the historical, political and economic importance of the Sikhs were considered as equal and not higher to those of the Mohammadans in Behar and Orissa". On a mere population basis their representation "should have been fixed at 29.7 per cent of elected seats." For no reason whatever a smaller proportion of representation could be allotted to them. The Sikhs were no party to the Lucknow Pact, "the compact has also not been accepted by the illustrious authors of the Joint Report."

Only four members* of the deputation could proceed to England. After it was decided to send a Sikh deputation to England

*The Sikh deputation originaly consisted of seven members, namely : 1. Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia ; 2. S. Joginder Singh ; 3. S. Sewa Ram Singh ; 4. S. Sohan Singh ; 5. S. Ujjal Singh, M.A.,

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they did their best to reach there as early as possible, but unfortunately owing to certain unavoidable circumstances, the deputation could not reach England before the 11 July 1920, when they learnt to their great regret and disappointment that "the Joint Committee had already six days before our arrival passed the rules and made their Report to Parliament." On the 25th July, the deputation met Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu, member of the Council of the Secretary of State and of the India Office Advisory Committee on Reforms, and he frankly told them that "the poirt of view we (the deputationists) were able to place before him *was not present to their minds when the members of the said Committee Considered the Draft Rules.*" (Italics mine). The deputation also met Lord Sinha, the Under Secretary of State for India. He expressed great sympathy with the Sikh claims. He also told them that the Committee had come to know of their having sailed for England and that "the fact was taken into consideration and had influenced the Committee to increase our representation in the Punjab by two seats, but he could give us no further hopes in view of the danger of long delay being caused by introducing the Reforms Scheme if further amendments were undertaken." However, the Sikh Deputation tried to do all they could to press their point of view upon everybody who mattered for their purpose. On the 20th July, they appeared by appointment before the India Office Advisory Committee on Reforms. Lord Meston presided and of the other members the following were present: Lord Sinha, Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu, Sir Sankran Nair, Sir William Duke (the permanent Under Secretary), Mr. H.E.A. Cotton and some others." While all were

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Continued from last page.

*6. S. Shivdev Singh and 7. S. Teja Singh.

No 2 and 7 could not for personal reasons accompany the deputation to England while it was decided that S. Sunder Singh should remain in India, to watch developments here and be in touch with the deputation in England. As the events showed this was a wise decision to make.

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more or less sympathetic to their claims, Mr. Basu was particularly frank in telling his colleagues that the point of view of the Sikh deputation had not been taken into consideration before. The Committee

> "practically agreed that the Congress League compact could not affect the Sikh representation and would not be affected if independent provision outside its terms be made for the Sikhs *on the analogy of the provisions for European and Anglo-Indian communities who were similarly no parties to it and had provision made for them outside the proportions* fixed in the compact". (Italics mine).

In the course of the discussion it became perfectly clear that the whole Committee was "in full sympathy with our claims and tried 'to approach the question in a friendly spirit." The only difficulty was that any amendment they might purpose at that stage would mean delay in the introduction of the Reform Scheme. Sir William Duke was particularly anxious to know if even with their small representation, the Sikhs could or could not hold the balance of Power in the Punjab Council, "position which the Government desire to allow to us." Sir William "surmised that with proper organization of strength we could". Another point that came out in the course of the discussion was that the Punjab Government had suggested the Sikh constitutencies to be divided into rural and urban. It was known that in certain statements submitted to the Franchise Committee, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of the Panjab, had stressed that point of view.

The deputation was also able to interview Mr. Montague, the Secretary of State, on the 22nd July. He told them that "all the members of the Joint and Advisory Committees were in full sympathy with the claims of the Sikh community and recognised that the Sikhs had deserved and earned a most favourable treatement at the hands of the British Government. When the draft Rules, as proposed by the Government of India, reached the India Office, he said, they were accompanied with all the representations,

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(Memoranda and statement) which the Sikhs had submitted on the subject. On studying the case, Mr. Montague told us, he and his colleagues felt that some better provision for the Sikhs was needed. Thereupon the Government of India were communicated with, who consulted the Punjab Government. "The latter, Mr. Montague told us, insisted that the Sikhs were not entitled to any more seats but eventually agreed that in order to relieve our disappointment one more seat may be allowed to us. By this time Mr. Montague learnt that the Sikh Deputation had sailed and was on its way to England. He again cabled to the Government of India, he said, urging for a better treatment of the community which had done so much for the Government, and thus in view of the fact that we were already on our way to England and could not be expected to arrive in time before the Joint Committee made their report, and in view further of the fact that the Joint Cammittee had decided not to hear any oral evidence, he and his colleagues were able to make the Government of India agree to an addition of two seats to the Sikh representation in the Punjab."

While thanking Mr. Montague and his colleagues for what they had done for the Sikh community, the deputation "urged that the Sikhs were not fighting for a seat or two, but for a principle and a proper recognition of their status. Were the Sikhs to be acknowledged or not as an important minority entitled to an equal, if not better, treatment with Muhammadans? All the various elements, which gave special importance to the Muhammadans in India, applied with greater intensity to the Sikhs, and were examined one by one. A comparison of figures was made and we urged that in the Punjab Council the Sikhs were entitled to not less than 30 per cent of all territorial seats while in the Assembly of India they should have at least 5 and in the Council of State. The Sikhs, we urged, felt that they were being placed in a position of subordination and dependency, which they cannot accept with complacency. We also protested against the division, created among the Sikhs, of urban and rural constituencies *against the*

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wishes of the community, and without consulting them, by the Joint Committee, at the instance, as we were told, of the punjab Government." (Italics mine).

Mr. Montague had cabled to the Government of India pressing the justice of the Sikh case as he had promised to them. He could not unfortunately meet the deputation again, but the Lord Sinha was pleased to receive them on behalf of his Chief. He informed the deputation, that Mr. Montague had done his very best to get them a better treatment in the matter of the reforms, but "the Government of India were opposed to any further extension of our representation." All whom they had interviewed since their arrival in England "appeared convinced that the point of view of the Government of India was not correct." Even Lord Sinha was "pleased to concede that the pledge made to us in the Joint Report was quite reasonably capable of the interpretation put upon it by us but insisted that the Government of India could not agree to increase our representation *without offending other communities.*" (Italics mine).

The fact is, as became clear on more than one occasion, that "one link of the chain of constitution could not be modified without upsetting the whole fabric." The upshot of the whole matter was that the deputation was officially informed that "the matters under discussion could not be reopened." The authoritative document upon which we have so freely drawn in the latter part of the chapter concludes with a short Paragraph, showing that while the Sikh deputation was in England, General Dyer had published a letter in the press to the effect that "he was honoured by the Sikh community making him a Sikh." "This statement", we further told, "was much used as an argument in support of his action at Amritsar." The deputation, however, lost no time in challenging and contradicting a statement that had so scandalised the Sikh community.

A few words must also be said now in reference to another occasion when the Sikhs were called upon to put forward their

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case before the Royal Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission. The Memorandum submitted by the Sikh deputation* to the Commission on May 27, 1928, covered very much the same ground as the Sikh representation to the Secretary of State eight years earlier. Claming themselves to be "of the most democratic frame", and "the most literate" of the "three main communities inhabiting the Punjab", they declared that they had no wish "to make any proposals in a spirit of narrow-mindedness." Conscious of "the essentials of a healthy national growth", they were "always ready to co-operate with their sister communities for the development of a united nation", and "they would therefore, be the first to welcome a declaration that no consideration of caste or religion shall affect the matter of organization of a national Government in the counrty." They emphasised that

> "they are prepared to stand on merit alone provided they, in common with others, are permitted to grow, unhampered by any impediments in the way of reservations for any other community. Some other communities, however, still seem to persist, in one form or another, for the recognition of religious factions in the constitution of the country, and *if their claims are recognized and creed forms an intergral part of the basis of representation in the administration of the country, the Sikhs apprehend danger to their very existence, unless adequate safeguards are provided for them. The tyranny of majority is an expression not wholly unknown in the political history of the world, and when such majority is based on religion,*

*The deputation consisted of the following five members 1. S. Shivdev Singh Oberoi (President, Chief Khalsa Diwan), 2. S. Raghbir Singh Sandhanwalia, Lt., O.B.E., of Raja Sansi, 3. Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, K.C.I.E., 4. S.B. Mohan Singh and 5. S. Harbans Singh of Attari, Honorary Secrertary, Chief Khalsa Diwan.

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the extent to which such tyranny might go is unlimited." (Italics mine).

The Memorandum illustrates the Sikh point of view with reference to the excessive share allowed in the existing consititution on the basis of communal representation. It was, in effect, their old complaint about the Lucknow Pact over again. They were particularly bitter that although the Muhammadans were the majority community and, as such, did not need

> "any safeguards for their protection, yet they succeeded by clever manoeuvring and in the absence of Sikhs to secure for themselves separate electorates in the Punjab with half the elected seats, among the Indian population, to be reserved for them, in the Lucknow Compact which surprised even the authors of the Montford Report." (page 105).

The Sikhs considered the existing contitutional position most disastrous to their political interests. *Secure against any defeat, by the other communities or even against their combined strength, the Mohammadan minister, backed by his co-religionists in the Council and often by Government, which had to depend upon this Mohammadan majority for its own maintenance, trampled the cherished rights of the other communities under his feet. Even Government was defied at times by this majority, and was insolently told that its very existence could be made impossible by the Mohammadans, upon whose vote it had to rely so much for its continuance.*

In support of their case, they referred to the autocratic manner in which a Gurdwara Act had been passed by the Muslim Minister "backed by Mohammandan majority and his official block", in the teeth of the joint opposition of the Hindu and Sikh members of the Council. The Act remained a dead letter for three years when it was replaced by another Act. The deputation also referred to some other instances "*to prove the mischief of following standing religious majority to trample upon the feelings and interests of the two minority communities.*" The deputation emphasised more than once that "*the Sikhs inspite of being the smallest of the*

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three communities in the Panjab were prepared to forego all communal representation if this can be knocked out of the constitution of the country." (Italics mine)

Summing up their demands the deputation asked for the following reforms :—

(a) Removing Communal representation altogether,
(b) Defining the Governor as a purely constitutional head without any direct hand in the administration, excepting the power of veto ;
(c) Allowing the legislature full control over the finances ;
(d) Subordinating the Executive and bureaucracy to the will of the legislature.

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The Rikab Ganj Affairs

The Gurdwara known as Rikabganj marks the spot where Guru Teg Bahadur's headless body was cremated in the 1675. The story of the persecution and martyrdom of the Guru under the orders of Aurangzeb is well known and need not be repeated here. The Gurdwara is situated in the New Delhi (at a distance of about three miles from the Chandani Chauk) near the village of the name of Rikabganj.*

On January 14, 1914, the British Indian Government razed a wall of this Gurdwara to the ground on the pretence of making the the road run straight.**

The Singh Sabha movement was then in full swing and this incident gave it a hotspur. There was a great agitation against this high-handedness of the Government.

But within a few months of this happening the British Government had to enter the European War. As the Sikhs formed a considerable proportion of the British Indian Army, the Government could not afford to disregard the Sikh sentiments at that time. The wall of Garden was restored but the Gurdwara wall remained in the same condition. The Singh Sabha leaders, however, gave up the agitatation as they wanted the Sikhs to offer whole-hearted co-operation to the Government during the war.

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*This village was founded by a Stable officer of Emperor Shah Jahan. He was called Ham-Rikab of the Emperor, and so the village founded by him came to be called by the name it bore. ** This wall was 400 ft. long, 2 ft. thick and 11 ft. high. The bricks of this wall were hammered into pieces that were used for the construction of the road. Fifty bighas of land belonging to the Gurdwara was also taken for the purpose of constructing a road and a sum of Rs. 8000/- was deposited to take possession of the garden within the wall. This wall too was razed to the ground.

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(The agitation was taken up again after the war by Sardar Harchand Singh and Master Sunder Singh of Lyallpur and Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar of Lahore. As the Government refused to respect the sentiments of the Sikhs in respect of the Gurdwara, it was decided to send a Shahidi Jatha (a band of Martyrs) to rebuild the demolished wall and face the consequences of official wrath. The Government then realized the seriousness of the situation. Before the jatha arrived at Delhi, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha arranged for the reconstruction of the wall on behalf of the Government.)

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Non-Co-operation and the Akali Movement. 1919-1922.

With rapid spread of Mahatma Gandhi's National Movement, the Sikhs were as much effected as the other communities, though their activities found their main outlet in religious rather than political awakening. At this time, the chief shrines of the Sikhs, such as the Golden temple, the Akal Takht, Tarn Taran Sahib, Baba Atal were entirely in the hands of the Government. The remaining sacred places of pilgrimage and Gurdwaras with an income of lacs of rupees were in the possession of Mahants, who by the operation of section 92 C. P. C. had become indifferent to public opinion and entirely dependent upon the wishes of the Government. Some Mahants had become Honorary Magistrates, *Kuri Nashins*, *Darbaris*, title-holders, nominated members of Municipalities and notified areas. Most of them being unmarried and having large revenue at their disposal, without any responsibilities to the public or the slightest check or supervision on their movements and activities, squandered their huge resources in unworthy objects and not a few of them lost their characters. It is true that these vices are common to places of worship of all denominations. But as the Gurdwaras in the Punjab are visited as the places of pilgrimage by large numbers of Sikhs, and specially as many of them are intimately associated with the life work of the Gurus and other heros and martyrs, the Sikhs feel the humiliation more keenly than the other communities do. They find it very difficult to put up with the solution of their shrines taking place every day under their very eyes.

During the Martial Law *regime*, after the Jallianwala massacre, the Darbar Sahib being under the control of the Government, General Dyer was given presents of Sikh baptismal symbols from the Akal Takhat authorities. As most of the victims of Jallianwala Bagh happened.

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to be Sikhs, this white-washing of General Dyer by the Golden Temple Management was felt as a great insult offered to the whole Sikh community. During the debates in Parliament, General Dyer posed himself as a most successful Martial law administrator and he declared with undisguised pride that the Sikh community had accorded him the honour of marking him a Sikh by presenting these symbols to him. It will be remembered that some thirteen years back an agitation was set on foot against S. Arur Singh, Manager of the Golden Temple, for having given some valuable present to certain British officers out of the Tosha Khana of the Darbar Sahib. Now presents to General Dyer recalled and revived the agitation against the Manager and a strong protest was made for the removal of S. Arur Singh and the restoration of the management of the Golden Temple to the Sikh community. The Government, however, turned a deaf ear to all this agitation, and it went on gaining volume and strength. Soon the excitement became so great that Sardar Bahadur Arur Singh thought it prudent to voluntarily relinquish the duties of manager of the Golden Temple. The movement which had meanwhile come into prominence for the reform of the Gurdwaras began to be called the Akali movement. The Akalis are the baptised Sikhs who have at critical times in the history of the community come forward, even at the risk of their lives, to protect the Gurdwaras, the freedom of worship and the community. The word 'Akali' means immortal.

In July 1920, the Government appointed S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia as Manager of the Golden Temple. For a long time it had been the custom for the Pujarie (Priests) of the Golden Temple to refuse even the baptised Sikhs of the so-called untouchable castes to enter the Temple freely and worship there without let or hinderance. A special time had been fixed when they could go and make their offerings. But even at such times, the *Karah Parshad* presented to the Guru Granth Sahib was not accepted if it had been touched by them, They had, therefore, to engage the services of a man of a higher caste to carry it into to the Temple. The Akalis

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declared their determination to see that the untouchables, after their baptism, as Sikhs were treated equally with the other Sikhs and were given full liberty of worship and offerings in the Temple. One day, some time (in August 1920) a good many Akalis with a large number of duly baptised Sikhs from amongst the untouchables With *Karah Parshad* offerings went into the Temple, and as the Pujaries refused to offer prayers for them, the Akalis offered the prayers instead and, taking the *Karah Parshad*, they duly presented it before the Granth Sahib. It was distributed to those present there and they cheerfully partook of it. At this, some *Pujaries* of the Golden Temple left the place, and informed the Pujaries of the adjoining Akal Takht of what had happened inside the Harmandir Sahib. Thereupon, all the Pujaries of the Akal Takht also vacated it and went away to their homes, When the Akalis came out of the Golden Temple, they found the Akal Takht deserted. They declared that the Pujaries had committed a sacrilege by deserting the Akal Takht and leaving the Granth Sahib unattended. They then made their own arrangements for the management of these two shrines. With the transfer of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht to the Sikh Community, the attached Gurdwaras of Tarn Taran and Baba Atal also automatically fell into their hands. The acatual possession of the Tarn Taran Sahib, however, remained in the hands of the priests, and it was not till January, 1921, that the Akalis succeeded in obtaining control of this Gurdwara at the sacrifice of two precious lives. This was the first instance of absolute non-violence on the part of the Akalis even when they were being done to death. Naturally, it created a great sensation. It must, however, be mentioned that although two Akalis were murdered and several injured at Tarn Taran, there was no loss of life or injury to person or property on the other side. As already remarked, this incident too gave rise to an itense excitement among the Sikhs and it was thought advisable to organise on a thoroughly representative basis a responsible Committee to manage the Gurdwaras. On coming to know of this, the Government at once constituted, through the Maharaja Patiala a committee of 36

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gentlemen to devise plans for the better management of the Gurdwaras. The Sikh community interpreted this as undue interference with their wishes and intentions. They at once summoned a big gathering of men of all shades of opinion at Amritsar to consider the situation. By a method of rough selection, a committee of representative of all schools of thought and opinion was formed under the name of a Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

Sunder Singh Majithia became the first President of the new Committee, S. Harbans Singh vice President, and S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, Secretary. This was in October 1920. S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia seems to have written to Mr. Craik, then Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, about his duel capacity, that is, as manager appointed by the Government and as Secretary of Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee appointed by the Panth, and asked him what he was expected to do if the keys of the treasury were demanded of him by the new committee and if his duties as a manager clashed with his duties as Secretary appointed by the community. Mr. Craik's reply to him was that he should carry out the instructions of the Committee as secretary. At this time the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee decided to take the necessary steps with a view to improving and reforming the management of Nankana Sahib. They issued a notice convening a *Diwan* to be held at Nankana Sahib on the 4th and 5th March 1921. Before the Diwan could be held, the Mahant, probably apprehending some intereference with his management, began to fortify the Janam asthan Gurdwaras.

With this object in view, he erected forty new rooms. The Gurdwara was thus surrounded by the back walls of these rooms. At the same time, he took care to keep loopholes in them to fire through them, if need be. He also put up a strong iron-sheathed gate provided with loopholes which were covered up with movable shutters. The rumour also said that he was collecting arms and

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ammunitions. Some of these facts were brought to the notice of Mr. Curree, Deputy Commisioner, by a deputation which included Dr. Mahan Singh of Gujranwala and S. Uttam Singh of Nankana Sahib, besides other gentlemen. This was on the occasion of Guru Nanak's birthday at Nankana Sahib in November 1920. At the same time, the Deputy Commissioner and other Government officials had come to know from several independent sources that the Mahant had collected a large number of men to attack the Sikhs, if and when they entered the Gurdwara. The Sikhs used to come as usual, to the Gurdwara, paid their homage, and after Shabad Kirtan departed peacefully.

When the Mahant came to know that a big Diwan had been convened by the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee for the forth and 5th March at Nankana Sahib, he began to take measures of a very serious nature. Long before this, reports of his preparations and collecting arms had been reaching the authorities. Mr. C.M. King, Commissioner Lahore Division, received a deputation of the Mahant, headed by Baba Kartar Singh Bedi of Rawalpindi, and gave the Mahant certain legal advice which was published and distributed broadcast by Baba Kartar Singh Bedi. This created a very bad effect in the country, and it was considered that this advice might lead to bloodshed. A Sikh Association at Sargodha adopted a resolution published in 'the Sikh' Lahore, and other papers condemning Mr. King's action and said that it was likely to lead to bloodshed. As a meeting of the reformed Punjab Legislative Council was comming off on the 22nd February 1921, the Sikh members notified their intension of interpellating the Government on the important issues arising out of Mr. King's advice, and the serious results to which it might lead. They wanted to condemn the officiousness of Mr. King, and specially his ill-timed advice which was allowed to be published and distributed broadcast.

His Excellency, the Governor, with all the members, of his Government and Ministers, visited the scene of the tragedy on the

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afternoon of the 22nd February and assured the Sikh community that the evil deeds of the Mahant and his companions would be dealt with by the Government with a strong hand, and that strict justice would be done in the case. It was given out that S. Shivdev Singh ubberoi, Honorary Magistrate of Sialkot, would be appointed as Superintendent of Police to co-operate with the ordinary Police, and Sardar Bahadar Mehtab Singh would be put on special duty to make the preliminary investigations into the case. These open declarations, combined with the fact that the control of the Janam-asthan Gurdwara was made over to the Sikhs went to a large extent towards disarming public criticism of what had been done or left undone by high Government officials. The Sikhs were afraid that, as they had not taken any steps against the Pujaries of Tarn Taran, who had murdered two of their men and injured several others, the cold-blooded massacre at Nankana Sahib which was without a parallel in the history of the world, might also be passed over by Government without due notice being taken of the devilries that had been committed. It is not improbable that the incident at Tarn Taran had emboldened the Mahant, and to a certain extent at least, it might have been responsible for the massacre at Nankana Sahib. Under these circumstances, the Sikhs gave up non-co-operation and began to co-operate with the Police in their investigation. Before this, the Government had suspected the Akali movement to be a political movement in active co-operation with the Congress. That this was the general view, is shown by the C.I.D. report produced in thr Nankana Sahib trial. As soon as the new of the tragedy became known, the Government took steps to prevent excitement from spreading. The issue of tickets to Nankana Sahib Railway Station was stopped and everything was done to isolate Nankana Sahib for a time, but the Akalis hurried thither from all parts of the country, and, travelling on foot for hundreds of miles, gathered together at Nankana Sahib in their thousands. Their attitude towards Mr. King in the presence of the Governor was very offensive. They openly accused him of

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having accepted a large bribe from the Mahant, thus allowing the massacre to take place. The attitude and the organisation of the Akalis, who ultimately forced the Government to hand over the Shrine to them, seems to have given food for serious thought to the authorities.

The proposal to make S. Shiv Dev Singh Superintendent of Police was dropped and there was an apparent change in attitude of the Government and the Police towards the Sikhs. Mr. Bowring, a C.I.D. official, who has always been supposed to be hostile to the aspirations of the Sikh community, was put in charge of the investigation. This was not all. While the Police investigation against the murderers was being carried on in a leisurely and haphazard manner, a vigorous enquiry was being carried on against the Akalis. On the 5th March 1921, S. S. Mehtab Singh, finding the police bent upon mis-managing the case, resigned the post of Additional Government Advocate attached to the Nankana Sahib Enquiry. The resignation was accepted. On the 5th March, the Ministers and members of the Executive Council held a conference with public bodies and certain points about the situation at Nankana Sahib were settled and when this was publised in the Government Communique, the.....

Against the charge, S. Jodh Singh protested and wrote a letter to Sir John Maynard which was afterwards published in the 'Tribune' Lahore. One week's time was agreed upon for dispersing the Akali Jathas from Nankana Sa ib, but within a week (i. e. on the 11th March 1921), wholesale arrests of Akalis at Nankana Sahib began to take place. Even before the Public investigation in the Mahant's case was completed, about 150 Akalis were arrested and most of them were convicted on various more or less serious charges. They were convicted of dacoities, robberies, thefts and other criminal offences. One Sikh leader S. Kartar Singh Jhabbar, was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment, S. Teja Singh Bhuchar, an other Akali leader, to 7 years' imprisonment. It should be

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mentioned here that the whole Sikh Community felt scandalised at these arrests and convictions. They contended that the charges of theft, robberies, desecration of tombs, etc., which had been brought against their leaders were false and that the real object of the Government in markirg wholesale arrests was to put down the Akali movement which was expected to gain immensely in strength after the Nankana Sahib tragedy and the marvellous forbearance that the Akalis had shown. An unofficial Committee of Hindus and Mussalman political leaders made an enquiry into the more serious charges, specially those relating to the outrages against Muslim tombs and Hindu shrines, and found them to be without any foundation.

During the pendency of these cases against the Akalis., the Government introduced its first Gurdwara Bill and tried to rush it through the Council, but the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee refused to accept any bill so long as their leaders and other Akalis, who had been unjustly arrested, were not set free. The Government refused to recognise the representatative character of the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The Committce, for various other reasons, finding its position somewhat weak, framed a contitution on a strictly elective basis, dissolved itself and made arrangements for its re-election. The election was thrown open to all Sikhs from Karachi to Kashmere and from Peshawar to Delhi by free voting. By July 1921, a new Committee had been elected. With its representative character its influence and prestige also increased. It had a membership of 180, viz., 140 elected members and 40 members who were selected by the elected members themselves. On the 26th July, a deputation of about 20 gentlemen, including the members of the Council, waited on his Excellency the Governor and asked for the release of the Akali prisoners. This reguest was refused. Towards the end of August, the first meeting of the new S. G. P. C. was held at Akal Takht to elect the office bearers. S. Kharak Singh was elected President and S. B. Mehtab Singh, Secretary. The Non-Co-operation

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resolution of the old Committee was reiterated and the Sikh members of the Legislative Council were urged to resign. S. Bahadur Mehtab Singh, who had already resigned his post as Public Prosecutor of the High Court, now also relinquished his office as Deputy President and member of the Punjab Council. Within two weeks, the Akali prisoners were released.

After this, Mr. Dunnet, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, began to visit the office of the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to carry on negotiations with a view to bringing about a rapproachment between the Government and Sikh community. The Government agreed to give up all its connections with the Golden Temple and the connected shrines, and the S. G. P. C., while refusing to go to court, agreed to note on Mr. Dunnet's application to Court that the S. G. P. C. being already in possession of the Shrines shall continue to manage it. He sent up his proposal to the Government at Simla, but the Government refused to acknowledge the S. G. P. C. as the sole representative of the Sikhs until a mixed Conference of Sikhs of all shades of opinion, called by the Government, settled the matter. Mr. Dunnet again visited the office of Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (October 1921), and tried to induce the Committee to agree to accept possession of the Golden Temple and the connected shrines from the hands of the Government. The Committee on the other hand claimed that they had been in possession for the past 1½ years, and that by taking formal possession now, their administration during the previous 18 months might be considered illegal.

At this time, S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia was the President of the local Gurdwaras at Amritsar, and, as such, was in possession of the keys. During the absence of the Managing Committee of the S. G. P. C. at Hothian in Gurdaspur District, L. Amar Nath, a Ist Class Magistrate, a Court Inspector and other police officers and men in uniform paid a visit to the house of S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia and took away from him the keys of the Golden Temple

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treasury, which contains all the jewels and other valuables of the Temple and other connected shrines. This incident gave rise to the agitation over what is popularly known as 'the Keys affairs.' It resulted in the arrest and conviction of about 198 Sikhs, including 3 successive Presidents, four successive secretaries, and practically the whole of the Working Committee of the S.G.P. Committee. As there was no hope of the agitation subsiding and there seemed to be no end to the number of Akalis who were rushing in to suffer for the freedom of their Gurdwaras, an unconditional release was offered to the Sikh prisoners if they would receive the keys through the Court. This they refused. They asked that the keys be delivered at the Akal Takht. No terms of compromise were settled when it was suddenly announced in the Punjab Council (11th Janurary, 1922), that the Government had decided to release the Sikh prisoners.

In the first batch of Sikh prisoners, a non-Sikh gentleman, Pandit Dina Nath, had also been arrested on the 26th November 1921, though he made no speech at all. When the order for the release of the prisoners reached Dehra Gazi Khan jail, the Sikh prisoners refused to leave the jail till Pandit Dina Nath was also released along with them. They were, however, turned out after being permitted to send a letter of protest to His Excellency the Governor. They came out on the 17th Janurary at midnight. On their reaching Amritsar, the 'keys' were brought to them at Akal Takht, but they refused to accept them till the Government agreed to release Pandit Dina Nath also. As understanding was given through Prof. Jodh Singh that Pandit Sahib would also be set free, the keys were taken. This was on the 20th January 1922. Two days later, Mr. Dunnet informed the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee that he had made his recommendations for the release of Pandit Dina Nath. After several reminders had been sent, Mr. Dunnet was informed that the Government would release Pandit Dina Nath if he submitted an application for release. On the

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8th February 1922, the Committee decided to break the Seditious Meetings Act again and go to jail as a protest against Pandit Dina Nath's detention. That very evening the law was broken by all the members of the Executive Committee, numbering 35, beginning with the Secretary and ending with the President. This was at *Guru Ka Bagh*. On the 11th February 1922, Pandit Dina Nath was released.

Negotiation between the Government and the Shromoni Committee about the settlement of their outstanding difference were reopened. Conferences took place for about a month. In the middle of February 1922, the Government recognized that the *Kirpan* and the *Talwar* (Sword) were one and the samething and that the Sikhs possessing Kirpans would not be prosecuted. The Committee agreed to the Government's proposal that the Kirpan should not be carried on the shoulder in Military formation, or unsheathed, except for the performance of religious ceremonies and as a guard of honour to the Guru Granth Sahib by Panj *Piaras*. The Gurdwara Bill was generally discussed. The Committee had decided to do its utmost to accommodate the Government, as it was felt that the complication of Gurdwara affairs was standing in way of many workers from undertaking Congress work, which would be a blot upon the Sikh community when the history of India came to be written. After practically every thing had been settled, came the decision of the Nankana Sahib tragedy case by the High Court.

Soon after Government communiques against the Akalis began to come out and the S. G. P. C. felt that their inability in coming to an agreement with the Government had been interpreted as a sign of weakness by the Government. During the conversation with Government officers, it was given out, indirectly, that the Congress and the Khilafat movements had been paralysed, at any rate, for a time.

After the communiques by the Government and the S.G.P.C. in which it was announced that the Kirpan question was settled,

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and the Committee was recognized by the Government as representative of the Sikh community, the Government induced the Shromoni Committee to issue communiques asking the Akalis not to do anything which should disturb the calm atmosphere in the province in order to make the passage of the Gurdwara Bill easy. All the meetings and Diwans were, in consequence, stopped. But, strange to say, at this very time, the communiques by the Government against the Akalis began to appear in rapid succession. Information was also received by the Shromoni Committee that the Government was contemplating the renewal of their activities against the Akalis in the impression that the Congress and Khilafat could give them no support at that time. A notice was, accordingly, issued by the office of the Shromoni Committee informing the Akali Jathedars that, basing their decision on the supposed weakness of the Congress and Khilafat movements, the Government was preparing to lay their hands on the Akalis. The absolute necessity of non-violence was strongly impressed upon them and they were warned not to furnish any excuse to the Government to justify the declaration made by Sir John Maynard in Council early in March that a rebellion was about to break out in the Punjab. A Secret Government circular was issued about the same time to Deputy Commissioners of 14 districts to take conserted action along with the States of Patiala and Kapurthala against the Akalis so that the Akalis of one place might not be able to go to the assistance of Akalis of another place. It was also noted in the circular that the whole affair should be settled before the Government moves to the hills for the summer months. As the arrests of Akalis actually began to be made, the S. G. P. Committee had no course left open to it except standing by side of the Akalis against a determined campaign of wholesale and indiscriminate arrests and other forms of intensive repression.

On the third April, the Government again invited the S. G. P. C. to take part in the drafting of the Gurdwara Bill. On the 5th April 1922, an extraordinary meeting of the General

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Committee of the S. G. P. Committee met at Akal Takht to consider the general situation. The reports of maltreatment and torture of Akalis from the different parts of the Punjab and the States of Patiala and Kapurthala were presented before it. By a unanimous resolution the S. G. P. C. refused to co-operate with the Government or to discuss with them the proposed Gurdwara Bill under the circumstances deliberately created by the Government. It was estimated that between 2000 and 2500 Akalis had been arrested up to the 1st week of April in the Punjab and the two States. A reply to the Government condemning its Police and making it responsible for the breaking of negotiations between it and the Sikh community, together with a copy of resolutions, was despatched. Several messengers were despatched by high Government officers and letters were also sent by the Home Secretary to arrange for another conference with a view to discussing the situation that had arisen. The Secretary of the Shromoni Committee informed the Government that the conferences were useless and that in the present attitude of the Government, it was sheer waste of time to hold them. As a result of this correspondence, however, a conference did, after all, take place at the house of S. B. Mehtab Singh on the 1st May 1922. The Government was represented by Mr. H.P. Tollinton, Commissioner of Lahore Division, and Mr. Wilson Jhonston, Home Secretary while the Shromoni Committee was represented by Bhagat Jaswant Singh, S. Tara Singh, B. A. and S. Amar Singh of Vasu. The Government laid the blame on the subordinate magistrates and the police, and agreed to appoint a judge of the Punjab High Court to revise the cases. The Committee insisted upon the appointment of a Committee of Enquiry consisting of officials and non-officials in equal numbers, before it could reconsider its resolution of Non-co-operation with the Government. As no agreement was arrived at in the matter of the Gurdwara Bill, the Conference ended in a fisco. Before taking his departure, however, Mr. Wilson Jhonston used a threat that the Gurdwara Bill would be carried through the Council with the help of the Sikh members

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and the outside public and that the Shromoni Committee would be ignored. The representatives of the Shromoni Committee retorted that if the Government did anything of the kind, the Gurdwara Bill would prove to be another Rowlett Bill. The Government with its Executive members, Ministers and Sikh Members have drafted the Bill and sent it on for the sanction of the Government of India. The Shromoni Committee have sent out four deputations to travel throughout the province from end to end to create public opinion against the high-handed action of the Government. The deputations have been received with the greatest enthusiasm at Sargodha, Jhelum, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Haripur Hazara, Abbottabad, Ludhiana, Ambala, Jullundur, Amritsar, Ferozepore and Lahore. They are about to visit the remaining districts. It is rumoured that the Government of India have given its consent to the Bill which, though not made public, has been seen and discussed by the Shromoni Committee. It is regarded by the Sikhs an incomplete and unbusinesslike measure. Both sides seem to be preparing for a struggle and, if the recent indications in the Civil and Military Gazette may be taken as a guide, the Government might take action against the Shromoni Committee for what it calls its "revolutionery and anarchical" propaganda which is likely to disturb the peace and order of the country.

(N. B.) (This note has been compiled from information suppplied by S.B. Mehtab Singh in June 1922. It has been shown to him in its completed form.)

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The Nankana Sahib Massacre

Even before the tragedy at Tarn Taran, The S. G. P. C. were contemplating to bring the Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib under their own control. This historical shrine was then in the possession and under the management of Mahant Narain Das who had made himself particularly notorious for corruption and vice.

As early as the 23rd of January, 1921, and again on the 6th February, meetings of the S. G. P. C. were held at which resolutions were passed announcing a big Diwan to be held at Nankana Sahib on the 4th, 5th and 6th March, 1921. Copies of these resolutions were sent to the Punjab Government and the rulers of Sikh States as well as to the press. In this open letter, a clear mention was made of the corruptions and vices carried on by the Mahant of Nankana Sahib in the sacred Gurdwara ; the Sikhs were asked to foregather at the shrine on the appointed days in order to devise ways and means to put an end to the corruption in the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara. The Sikhs were also directed to observe complete non-violence on the occasion in spite of provocations. It is believed the S. G. P. C. had come to know that the Mahant had provided himself with weapons to be used in case the necessity arose.

On its own part, the Shromani Committee had, as already mentioned, cautioned the government, the states and the public at large so that, if possible a settlement might be arrived at between the Mahant and the S. G. P. C. It was understood that in case no such peaceful settlement was brought about by the beginning of March, the Panth would meet on the 4th, 5th, 6th of March, 1921, to chalk out a plan for carrying out the necessary reforms in the management of the Nankana Sahib Gurdwaras.

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The S. G. P. C. had arranged to hold a Diwan at a place a few miles from Nankana Sahib, on the 20th of February, 1921. Bhai Lachhman Singh, of Dharowali Chak No. 33, the Jathedar of this Diwan, started from Chuharkana with his Jatha early in the morning of 20th February, 1921, to make the necessary arrangements for the big Diwan that was to be held on the 4th, 5th and 6th of March.

Coming to know of this, Mahant Narain Das suspected to that Bhai Lachhman Singh was coming to Nankana Sahib with a large body of Sikhs to take possession of the Janamsthan Gurdwara. He therefore hastened his preparations so as to be ready to meet the "aggressors" on the 20th February. Now as Nankana Sahib lay on the way of Bhai Lachhman Singh and his party, Bhai Lachhman Singh, at the time of starting from Chuharkana, suggested to his companions that they should pay homage to the holy Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib that day. He was informed by other Sikhs that the Mahant had collected a large number of *gundas* and *badmashes* in the Gurdwara and it would be better to pay their homage to the sacred shrine from a distance.

But Bhai Lachhman Singh declared that he had determined to visit the Gurdwara, whatever calamity might befall him, and that it depended upon the sweet will of his companions whether they would accompany him or not. Upon this the whole party consented to visit the Gurdwara (see the court proceedings in the criminal case against Mahant Narain Das).

Reaching Nankana Sahib the Jatha had a bath in the sacred Tank of Gurdwara Bal Lila and paid their homage to this Gurdwara. The Mahant of the Bal Lila Gurdwara asked the Jatha if they had come to take charge of the Gurdwara. The Mahant willingly offered to give up the Gurdwara to the Akalis if they so desired. But he was told that they had no intention of taking possession of the Gurdwara, and that they had come only to pay their homage at the sacred place.

Leaving the Bal Lila Gurdwara, Lachhman Singh's Jatha went

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to the Janamsthan Gurdwara (the main Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib). Like other oridinary pilgrims, they sat down inside the Gurdwara after paying their homage to the Guru Granth Sahib. The *karinda* of the Mahant spoke to them in a very polite manner.

Up to this time the Jatha did not suspect any mischief on the part of the Mahant or any of his men. As usual on such occasions, the singing of *Asa di var* had began when all of a sudden they heard the sound of the main gate of the Gurdwara being closed. It may be mentioned here that this door had been provided to the gate only a few days back. The door way was covered with thick tin-plates and, at the same time, a number of openings had been provided to serve as loopholes. Hearing this sound, the Akalis also noticed that the door of the other gate was also shut. To their surprise a large number of men, who had been sitting on the roof out of the view of the Akalis, started firing at them. The Akalis ran in small groups into the small rooms attached to the Gurdwara and bolted the doors from inside.

But the cruel marksmen came down with their guns and *Chhavis*. They bolted the rooms, in which the Sikhs had taken shelter, from outside, and began to fire at the Sikhs through the holes in the doors. These holes were one of the marked objects for the crowds of visitors to seen after the foul deed had been perpetrated. A large number of the Sikhs received wounds while others were actually murdered. In the room in which Bhai Lachhman Singh was acting as Granthi, as many as 150 marks of bullets were observed by the Government officers while 44 marks were counted by them on other walls.

So far about the happenings within the four walls of the Gurdwara. A word must now be said as to what was going on outside. One Sardar Dalip Singh of Sargodha was believed to have some relatives at Nankana Sahib. He was a man of some social position, being a *Rais* and Secretary of the Sargodha Khalsa School. He was also known to Mahant Narain Das and was supposed to have some influence with him. As he happened to be at Chuharkana

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at this time, Jathedar Kartar Singh and some other leading persons of the place asked him to pursuade Bhai Lachhman Singh not to visit Nankana Sahib Gurdwara as Mahant Narain Das was reported to be bent upon mischief. Further, he was told that in the event of Bhai Lachhman Singh not listening to his entreaties, he (Dalip Singh) should try to convince the Mahant that Lachhman Singh had come to the Gurdwara only for darshan and should not be molested.

On reaching Janamsthan Dalip Singh saw the Mahant occupied with his murderous tasks. He shouted to him to desist but received a gun shot on the forehead and fell dead.

The Sikhs who had come with S. Dalip Singh had stayed behind in a Sarae. The Pathan murderers hired by the Mahant rushed to the place and did short work with them. Thus ended the gruesome drama with Mahant Narain Das as its chief actor.

Bhai Lachhman Singh's hands were cut little by little and then he was brought before the Mahant who took great delight in seeing his head being severed before him. The Sikhs within the Gurdwara who could not be killed with the bullets were murdered with axes. Some of them were even burnt alive. It was reported that the hired *goondas* murdered some Sikhs after searching them outside the Gurdwara.

S. Karam Singh, Station-Master heard the sound of the bullets and started for the Gurdwara. In the way he was informed by a Nihang Singh of what had taken place. In the meanwhile another Sikh, Bhai Labh Singh by name, met the Station Master and asked him to inform the higher authorities by wire about what had happened. Accordingly telegrams were sent to the Governor of the Province, to the Deputy Commissioner as well as to a number of other high officials* and the S. G. P. C., informing them

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*The telegrams were sent to the following :-

The Governor of the Punjab, D. C. Sheikhupura, D. C. Gujranwala,

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of what had happened at Nankana Sahib. Mahatma Gandhi at this time was at Rawalpindi and he also got a telegram to the same effect.

The Deputy Commissioner of Gujranwala reached Nankana Sahib at 12.30 p.m. and saw the bodies of the Sikhs burning with his own eyes.

In the evening the Commissioner of the Division with a military force consisting of 100 Europeans and 100 Indian soldiers, and D. G. Police and several Sikh Sardars reached Nankana Sahib by a special Train. The Military was posted all round the Gurdwara.

The Mahant had locked up the gates from within and when he was asked to open them, he is said to have replied that the Sikhs had murdered his Sadhus and he was burning their dead bodies so that the Sikhs may not take them away.

The authorities now set to work to assert the Mahant and his gang of Pathans who were suspected to have been concerned with the foul deed. The Mahant Narain Das who had locked himself in a small room came out of it after hesitating for a few minutes. He had a gun in his hand which was taken from him by the District Magistrate, Mr. Curie. After his arrest, two disciples (*Chelas*) of the Mahant and 26 Pathans were arrested. The Gurdwara was put under the protection of the Government.

Several Sikh leaders and Sikh Sardars from Amritsar and other places reached Nankana Sahib by motor cars. A large number of Sikhs tried to reach Nankana Sahib by train but they were refused tickets for Nankana Sahib and were informed that the trains did not stop at the Nankana Sahib Railway Station. However, a large number of the Sikhs reached the Janamsthan some by getting down at the

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and Superintendent Police Sheikhupura ;

S. Sunder Singh Majithia, S. Harbans Singh who were at the Khalsa College, Amritsar.

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nearest Railway Station and other by walking the whole distance from Lahore, Amritsar and other places.

The 29 persons arrested at Nankana Sahib were at once sent to Lahore by a special train and there confined in the Central Jail. The Government at once started investigation in which the District Megistarte, Mr. Curie, the D. I. G. Police, the Superintendent of Police and some officers of the C. I. D. of the Punjab took part.

After sometime the military and the Police were withdrawn from the Gurdwara, its management being handed over to the Khalsa Panth. Sardar Harbans Singh of Atari was appointed the President and Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia the Vice-President of the first Parbandhak Committee of the Gurdwara.

The Governcr of the Punjab, Sir Edward Maclagan, reached Nankana Sahib by a special train on the 22nd of February, 1921, on receiving a telegram from S. Harbans Singh. A large number of officials and men of influence accompanied His Excellency to the sacred Gurdwara. His Excellency saw the place of massacre very carefully and sympathetically.

Here we may also mention a touching incident that took place at the time of the visit of Sir Edward Maclagan. A very old woman came before His Excellency and said, "My child, my four sons and a grandson have been massacred. I request you for justice". Uttering these words the old lady fell down senseless.

The Sikhs had by this time assembled in thousands. They suspected some intrigue behind the holocaust of the innocent and non-violent Sikhs, and some of them openly expressed this view to the Governor. But His Excellency kept calm and collected showing every sympathy with the Sikhs. He assured the Sikhs assembled there that the Government would leave no stone unturned in chastising the murderers and giving full relief to the Sikh community. After this Sir Edward Maclagan returned to Lahore.

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Two days after the blood curdling event, the *sangat* was permitted to visit the spot when tens of thousands of men and women, Sikhs and others, poured into Nankana Sahib. The martyred Sikhs were cremated all together by the half burnt bodies being thrown into huge iron *angitha*.

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Mahatma Gandhi at Nankana Sahib.

On 3rd March, 1921 Mahatma Gandhi and some other leaders, viz., Maulana Shaukat Ali, L. Duni Chand, Dr. Kichlew, Malik Lal Khan, S. Harchand Singh, S. Prem Singh Sodbans, etc., went to Nankana Sahib. A Diwan was held there. Bhai Kartar Singh Jhabbar, Jathedar, related the incident of Nankana Sahib. He said :– "Just as the rising sun awakens the people from sleep, in a like manner preparations for Swaraj have raised the Sikhs from their slumber. That is why they have demanded religious freedom as the first step towards the attainment of their objective. That is how Gurdwara Reform Movement took its birth. The Mahants have been doing untold corruptions in the past," and he made mention of these corruptions especially in Nankana Sahib. He also mentioned the misdeeds of Mahant Deva Dass, who had been arrested and handed over to the Police. After this, S. Amar Singh of Vasu delivered his address. He said that the Sikhs were always considered as fiery–tempered but that they have now given proofs of their sedateness. After this Mahatama Gandhi stood up and gave the following lecture : "It was in Rawalpindi when I heard of this incident. My heart got frightened. I thought. I thought, are there persons in India who are so callous and hard–hearted as to kill and butcher their own brethern. L. Lajpat Rai told me that perhaps this news may be baseless and that we should go to Lahore to see whether it was correct. I have come here to tell you that your suffering is my suffering. I would have gladly laid down my life instead of letting these Sikhs being killed. My own *Dharma, Sanatan Dharma,* forbids me from committing suicide and becoming one with them. This is really a thing of wonder that the Sikhs have remained non–violent throughout. This has added another feather to the glory and dignity of India." Addressing all,

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the Mahatma continued : "This work is not solely of the Sikhs. Everybody should share it. The British rule is based on devilish tricks. They divide and rule. One part of the Sikhs favours the Government's policy. This is not wanted. Give a united front. Follow the path of non-violence. Do not co-operate with the Government. The Mahant Narain Dass and his followers with all their elaborate preparations cannot do so much mischief. I strongly believe that in this matter this Imperialist Government also had a hand".

After the Mahatma Maulana Shaukat Ali arose. He said, "There is no difference between an O'Dwyer and a Maclagan. All Englishmen are the chips of the same block. Do not hope for any help from them. The Government is mainly responsible for the mischief. Why did the Deputy Commissioner remain outside the Gurdwara ? And how did the Mahant make any preparation unless backed by the Government ? Do not expect any help from them." He rebuked those Muslims and the Pathans who had helped the Mahant in this matter.

5th April, 1921, was fixed as the Nankana Sahib Martyrs' Day.

Mahatma Gandhi gave the following message to the Sikhs after his visit to Nankana Sahib :–

"I paid a visit to Nankana Sahib yesterday (3rd March, 1921). I want to say a word to my Sikh brethern to that effect. That sight of what I saw of those who were killed and the sad tale that they told affected me a great deal. There is no doubt that on Sunday 20th February, 1921, the men of the Akali Jatha numbering 150 were mercilessly butchered. It is also told that one of the Akalis was bound with a tree and burnt alive. The Kerosene oil was poured over the dead bodies and set to fire. All those who entered the Gurdwara were killed and no one of them survived to relate the whole thing. The holes for fire-shots were made in the walls. In Nankana Sahib where even the poisonous snake had shadowed the Guru Nanak, the people have become demon-like and inhuman.

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I think that the Jatha went inside for homage. They had got weapon with them. But as they had pledged not to raise any weapon, they had not done so. All of them were shot down. The task of the Akalis is to do reform work. That is why their sacrifice is very great. The murderers are our own people and therefore we should pardon them."

An Inquiry Committee for investigating the incident of Gurdwara Nankana Sahib was apppointed on.....

Disbelief in the Inquiry Committee : Copy of the resolution passed on 4, 5, 6 March 1921 of Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee on the matter :-

(a) Passed that the Sikhs had already doubts that the Government would not do justice in the matter, but on the assurance of the Governor of the Punjab that the Government would do full justice and that it would fully investigate into the matter, the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee stopped doing anything further in the matter itself and helped the police in investigation. But on February 27, 1921 reading in the Government communique that : Legal procedure would be taken against persons who would raise any voice against the investigating officials, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Government is not prepared to bring to light the real nature of slaughter and that was the reason why no witness was taken. The conduct of the investigators shows that they are not doing their work properly and that they have threatened many Sikhs who can throw light on the subject, as for example, S. Uttam Singh member Gurdwara Committee Nankana Sahib. The Committee, in the light of above circumstances, is forced to decide that the Government Inquiry Committee should not be trusted and that the Committee appointed by the Sikh League should be helped in its investigation work. The other resolutions were :-

(1) In future when the Ardasa should be done, the names of the Akalis martyred and other Sikhs be mentioned.

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(2) An arrangement should be made for the maintenance of the families of the martyrs.

(3) A notice should be given to the Gurdwaras that up to April 3, 1921 all the Gurdwaras should hand over their management to the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, otherwise it would be taken over forcibly.

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THE AKALI MOVEMENT

The Organization and Administration of the S. G. P. C.

Having watched the whole movement at close quarters and enjoying, as I did, the intimate confidences of the leaders for a considerable time, I must say a few words here about the organization and day to day administrations of the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S. G. P. C.) which was the recognized machinery for guiding and controlling the activities of the whole Akali movement with its remifications all over the province. I wish it to be understood that throughout this book, and more particularly in writing about the working of the S.G.P.C., I have taken scrupulous care not to say one word which I did not consider myself to be justified to utter. Some of the statements that I will be forced to make will, I am afraid, look like gross exaggerations and I have, therefore, thought it necessary to say at the very outset that I can vouch my personal word for everything which will be found recorded in these pages*.

The offices of the S. G. P. C. were in those early days located in a small humble two-storeyed building at one corner of Guru ka Bazar, close to the Golden Temple. The seven or eight men who were chiefly concerned with the conduct of the day to day and hour

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* I have also further fortified myself by showing the manuscript of this chapter as also some other chapters to two or three Sikh friends who were themselves intimately associated with the Akali movement at the most critical period of its history. These gentlemen are : S. Teja Singh Principal, Khalsa College, Bombay, Sardar Niranjan Singh, Principal of the Sikh National College, Lahore, and Bawa Harkishan Singh, Principal Guru Nanak College, Gujranwala.

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to hour business of the organization and who held in their hands the reins of the whole movement lived on the spot. As a matter of fact, they lived nowhere in particular. They were to be found wherever their immediate duties carried them, within the town itself or out of it. As a rule during the day and the greater part of the night they were on their legs returning now and again to the "office" to give instructions to the men who were to be sent out on various errands, sometimes, to distant parts of the province. The "office" was the one place where they were sure to be found if they were in town. No body knew and no body could ask one of them what he was about at a particular moment. They formed a compact, well-organized "War Council" and, in fact, that was exactly the word that was frequently used about them.

At night they slept together in one fair-sized room about fourteen feet by fourteen feet. They all lay stretched pell-mell on the floor, covered with a thin durree with a ceiling fan overhead.* The "War Council" went on practically for the greater part of the night. The general meeting of the "Council" was held about 11 or 12 p.m. No particular hour was fixed, but as soon as all or most of the principal men were present, they would squat together in one part of the room to exchange notes and discuss the business of the day or, may be, some important change in the programme for the future.

I should mention here that, in those days, S. Teja Singh Samundri was the President of the organization. I have not had occasion to watch the working of the Akali machine at such close

*This description holds good chiefly about the time when the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha was in progress. For more than a month I also slept in the same room and when an occasion arose–but this was very seldom— I would be awakened for consultation on a point under discussion. This was the case, of course, only when they thought that my opinion or advice might be of use to them, or when they were in need of some information which they thought I could supply better than any one else present there.

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quarters when S. B. Mehtab Singh, S. Kharak Singh or one of the other leaders was in power. But what I saw of it during the month or more of the Guru ka-Bagh struggle, when I was privileged to be practically one of them, was enough to give me more than a peep into the smooth and orderly running of the whole minute to minute administration which filled me with no small admiration for those at the helm of affairs. In particular I can honestly say that I find it difficult to convey to the reader anything like an adequate idea of the wonderful personality of the President, his calm and unruffled temper in the midst of a tumultuous sea of troubles, of insistent demands from various quarters and not infrequently uncomfortable information about what the high-placed and all-powerful authorities at Amritsar and Simla had done or were contemplating to carry out, his remarkable resourcefulness and the light hearted manner in which he would habitually speak of things that would have frightened many other leaders almost to despair ; these and other things that one noticed from hour to hour filled every body with infinite confidence in the man under whose command they were working. Tall, wiry, with no pomp or show, or hurry about him, one could easily mistake him for a man of no particular importance. And yet when the occasion required, even in the midst of a vast crowd he would pull himself up erect and asserting his presence there he would give the word of command in the full assurance that it would be implicitly obeyed. On such occasions and even when he was approached by small groups of men with complaints and questions, he would generally address them familiarly as *chhors* (boys). I never heard him speak in any language but the simplest colloquial Punjabi as one hears in the countryside in the province. I do not think he could make a ten minute speech in urdu and certainly not at all in English with which he had only a nodding acquaintance. I do not think he could clearly follow a speech in the English language. All his own correspondence was carried on in Gurmukhi. I believe he had some system of obtaining correct and prompt information from

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official sources. On a few occasions within my knowledge this information proved to be of very great use to the Committee. I have also reason to believe that the Committee had a secret code of their own. This code was in my possession for a time, but I never attempted to look at it.

One interesting incident illustrating the importance of the secret information department of the Akalis may here be mentioned. On or about————report came to the S. G. P. C. that the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar had received information from his own sources that the Akalis who had always been present in large numbers—sometimes as many as two to three thousands being available—to be sent to Guru-ka-Bagh in batches of 100 a day had, for one reason or another, become dissatisfied with the movement and were therefore dispersing to their homes. Tired of the never-ending struggle with the obstinate Akalis, the Government was at this time thinking of approaching the S. G. P. C. for a settlement and were for this purpose prepared to go a long way towards meeting the demands of the leaders. On receipt of this information, however, the authorities, at Simla, which meant practically Sir John Maynard, sent immediate instructions that no approach should be made to the Akalis since dissensions had broken out amongst them and the movement was fizzling out. Such at least was the report that was received at the office of the S. G. P. C. The President got confirmatory information to the same effect. As I have already explained the S. G. P. C. had system of espionage of their own and they believed that they were in possession of all the important information that was reaching the Government and upon which the Government was basing its own decisions.

Anyway, on receipt of this information, the President himself got up in an excited manner, (a rather unusual thing with him), and told his principal co-workers that he would be absent from the station for two or three days at least. To my knowledge he did not explain at the moment why he was leaving Amritsar so abruptly and on what mission. It is possible that he may have mentioned it

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to one or two members of the Council of Action. But certainly most of them did not know or did not like to tell me why Teja Singh Samundri had left Amritsar at a time when his presence was most needed. Of course, we all came to know of the whole truth of the matter after his return.

The fact was that on account of the near approach of the Guru-purb (Guru Nanak's birthday festival) at Nankana Sahib, a couple of thousand of Akalis who were then present at Amritsar begged the S. G. P. C. to allow them to go home and take their families to Nankana Sahib to join the festival there. They promised to return as soon as the function was over. The S. G. P. C. kept about five hundred men at Amritsar and allowed the rest of them to absent themselves for a few days. Teja Singh Samundri wanted to show to the authorities that far from having lost their control over the rank and file of the Akalis, their hold on their allegiance was unbounded. From Amritsar, therefore, Teja Singh went straight to Nankana Sahib and as soon as the festival was over returned with some ten thousand Akalis bubbling with enthusiasm to take part in a great demonstration at Amritsar and thus show to the authorities that the S. G. P. C. was still the master of the situation and commanded an unlimited supply of men and even women to take part in the jathas for the Guru ka bagh morcha. The demonstration had its effect upon the Government, and it was from this moment that the situation began to improve, the Government being once for all convinced that the hold of the S. G. P. C. continued unabated and that they could command, if need be, many thousands of men to come forward for service in connection with the morcha. The credit for this sudden turn of events was given by everybody to that remarkable man, S. Teja Singh Samundri, who had with the ungrudging help and support of many other equally determined leaders organized the whole of the Guru-ka-bagh struggle. I have not words enough to describe my admiration for the calm, cool, but determined manner in which he conducted the

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complicated organization of the S. G. P. C. in its various branches to a successful issue. In spite of his literary deficiencies, Teja Singh was a remarkable man, one among tens of thousands of men, who was born as an organizer and leader of men and movements. More than this I consider it quite unnecessary to say.*

Religious propaganda and recruitment of Akali Jathas.

The most essential part of the activities to which the S. G. P. C. devoted their special attention was the holding of religious Diwans in all parts of the province. Small tracts consisting mostly of selection from the Sikh scriptures were printed and sold by tens of thousands for private daily recitations. Care was taken that these tracts (gutkas) be offered to the public at an exceedingly low price so that they may be available within the means of the poorest members of the community. It need not be pointed out here that the standard of literacy is much higher among the Sikhs than either Hindus or Mohammedans, the proportion of literates among women being particularly high. The professional singers were specially in evidence at religious Diwans and very frequently the Diwans were held because some famous group of professional singers had offered their services to the Akali organiser. It must be added, however, that the itinerant singing parties had now become more active because they discovered that they met with greater appreciation for their performances. The local S. G. P. C. leaders were generally present at the Diwans but on special occasions some of the topmost leaders were also invited.**

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*For an account of the grand demonstration staged at Amritsar after the Nankana Sahib festival see page.....

**It must not be supposed that the movement about holding the Diwans was initiated by the S. G. P. C. Their cnly credit lies in greatly extending the sphere of such activities and thus creating a

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Incidently, these Diwans became important centres for the recruitment of men for the Akali struggle for the control of the Gurdwara and, generally, for the revival of the Sikh faith on puritanic lines. It was in the spirit of the causaders that the men enlisted themselves. When the time came, an army of volunteers arose, nobody knew from where, to carry on the work of enlistment. The volunteers went about the country and held Diwans in the remotest parts of the province. In spite of my inquiries I was not able to discover if any of the volunteers were in the regular pay of the S. G. P. C. On coming to know from the lips of the leaders that jathas were being formed for service in connection with a particular duty, those that were moved by the appeals would offer themselves there and then but, move frequently, the work of recruitment was left to the volunteers.

Information and Publicity Bureau OF THE S. G. P. C.

Certainly, the most remarkable department of the publicity bureau was the small office directly attached to the Council of Action from which the S. G. P. C. communiques were issued. As a rule, at least one communique was issued every morning. sometimes even two or more. So long as he was free, S. Bhag Singh, B. A., LL. B.,

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Coninued from last page.

*a most remarkable religious reawakening in the community. The Chief Khalsa Diwan was primarily responsible for starting the tractarian movement—the chief object being the popularisation of the Punjabi language. A considerable progress was made in this direction, chiefly through the efforts of Bhai Vir Singh assisted by several other enthusiasts. So far as the purely religious side of these activities is concerned, the credit must go mainly to S. Harbans Singh of Attari seconded by his life-long friend, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia. They were responsible for creating the new horizons, which they themselves were not destined to enter.

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was incharge of this important and delicate business. During the Guru ka Bagh morcha he would regularly appear in the Council of Action room at about midnight and show his draft to the particular leaders to whose special charge the various items belonged. It is worth mentioning here that Prof. Teja Singh and next to him Bawa Harkishan Singh of the Khalsa College at Amritsar had a considerable hand in the preparation of the drafts of the communiques. For some time Prof. Teja Singh was solely in charge of the publicity department of the S. G. P. C.

Occasionally, when a particularly difficult or dangerous point was to be dealt with, Samundri could also be shaken out of his deep slumber on the hard floor. It may be that now and again the draft had to be submitted to the whole Council before it was considered to be ready for publication. A confidential staff was present in an adjoining room to prepare the required number of cyclostyled copies of the communiques, and as soon as they were ready, they were sent out to their destination. The list of addresses consisted of all the important nationalist papers in India, certain Sikh and other gentlemen sympathetic to the Gurdwara Reform movement and certain prominent bodies in the country. It must be pointed cut here that on certain occasions when it was feared that the copies of a particular communiques may be seized by the authorities and forfeited, a certain number of copies meant for particular individuals were posted from some outside station. Reliable *sewadars* were always ready to be sent out at a moment's notice with copies of communiques which they were instructed to post from distant places. They were, of course, directed to be on the look-out for police detectives who might be shadowing them.

Besides the important items of news about the movement itself, the communiques often referred to official orders or other information which they considered it necessary to challange. The communiques contained the Committee's own version of the facts and opinions as set out in the official announcements. No other political organization, so far as I know – not even the Indian

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National Congress was ever so prompt and efficient in carrying out this part of their propaganda as the Akali Bureau. The reason for it was obvious. The Akalis were openly engaged in a real war, and every member of the organization was deeply conscious of being *on active service day and night and lived* and worked on the danger line. I have not known any other political body so dircetly and fearlessly challenging and counteracting official statements, orders and directions as some of the S. G. P. C. communiques did. On the other side, the official administrative machine was also never so alert, active and thorcugh in dealing with any community as with the "dangerous Akali eruption". Above everything else, they knew that if the menace to their prestige was not suppressed in time, the stability of their whole administration might be undermined. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, and following him other high officials, often declared that with the Sikhs there was very little interval between thought and action. Besides they could not understand why the Akalis had been led so suddenly and completely to change their places—from faithful and devoted friends they had become sworn enemies—and they were determined either to suppress them altogether or, if possible, to win them back to their old allegiance and friendship Officials would sometime remind their Sikh friends of the danger the community ran of being reduced to the condition of landless and homeless labourers as the Poorbias after the Great Mutiny. The very comparison showed what a serious view the authorities took of the Akali defection.

Newspaper propaganda of the Akali Movement.

Conscious of the importance of journalistic propaganda, the S. G. P. C. took great pains in organizing this department of their Publicity Bureau through their own daily Journals in the English, Urdu and Panjabi languages. As they had no English daily newspaper under their own control, on the 27th August 1923, they acquired

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an interest in the *Nation**, then published at Lahore. The *Nation* had started some years earlier and had by this time a circulation of about five thousand copies a day. After some of the leading members of the S. G. P. C. had joined the Company that owned *the Nation,* S. B. Mehtab Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh, S. Mangal Singh, S. Teja Singh Samundri, Giani Sher Singh, S. Bhag Singh, all prominent members of the S. G. P. C. became Directors or Managers of the paper. The *Nation* now also began to have a Dummy Editor after the fashion of some of the Russian revolutionary journals. A youngman of the name of S. Gurdit Singh became the first "Dummy" Editor. These dummy editors were popularly known as "jail editors."

The S. G. P. C. owned and controlled three vernacular *Dailies.* The *Akali-te-Pardesi* (daily Gurmukhi paper) was published at Lahore. It was the chief paper of the S. G. P. C. with a circulation of about seven thousand copies. The well known Akali leader S. Hari Singh of Jullundur, was the printer, editor and publisher, while Master Tara Singh was the joint editor. As an organ of the S.G.P.C., it vigorously supported the cause of that body and, as such, was constantly appealing to its Sikh readers to help the Jaito Morcha which was then agitating the whole community in every possible way even to the extent of joining the struggle. On the Nabha Day (9th September 1923), this paper came out as a single leaf issue with the streamer "*Jaito Morcha : Sikhs reach the Morcha*", running accross the whole of the front page.

The urdu daily paper was known as the *Akali.* It was under the same management and control as the Gurmukhi paper. It had a circulation of about five thousand copies and was published

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*I donot know if with their wonderful sources of information the Akali leaders had got an inkling of the official plans to start criminal proceedings against the movement, but in any case it was fortunate for them that they had by this time a well established English paper also under their control.

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at Amritsar. Several Sikh leaders were directly connected with the paper as contributors, managers, etc. As has already been remarked, the S. G. P. C. attached great importance to the propagada side of its activities and therefore they took care that the organs of the Society should be under the control and guidance of some of the top leaders so as to get most out of these important instruments of the public opinion.

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Hindu Muslim Riots at Amritsar

Now reffer to an unfortunate incident that occured at Amritsar shortly before the Baisakhi day of 1923. No one could say how the trouble arose. The popular story that was current at the time was that a common street fight between two boys or youngmen, a Hindu and a Mohammadan, on the 11th April 1923, gave rise to mellee and in the strained relations that prevailed at the time between the two communities all over the province, it soon developed into a serious communal riot, the after effects of which lasted for several days. In big cities like Amritsar there is always present a considerable section of hooligans who are on the look out for mischief. The presence at this particular time of thousands of stalwart villagers who had come to the town to pay their homage at the Darbar Sahib further added to the confusion.

The S. G. P. C. showed great courage and resourcefulness and at once organised Akali Jathas to patrol the streets with a view to maintain peace and order. Throughout the night of the 11th April, 1923, bands of Akalis patrolled the streets while at places which were likely to become centres of trouble and disorder strong pickets were posted. It is necessary to mention that as soon as the Akalis heard of the trouble in the city they organized and sent out Jathas to patrol the city, but as a precaution least their action might be misunderstood by the authorities, the S. G. P. C. also sent an intimation about it to the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the action of the Akalis and both he and the Superintendent of Police welcomed the Committee's action in posting pickets for the maintenance of peace and order. The Deputy Commissioner further asked the President to meet him "with a view to discuss arrangements with you in order to take the best advantage of your aid." On the following day also the Deputy Commissioner

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sent a note that he "would be glad to have your help at Namak Mandi and Katra Karam Singh."

Again, in their communique dated April 27, 1923, the Government publicity acknowledged the services of the Akalis "during the recent trouble at Amritsar."

The following day witnessed more or less serious outbreaks in various parts of the city. Solitary Hindus and Muslims going about their business were roughly handled, some of them being even seriously injured. Several of these men were brought to the Golden Temple Akali Hospital and admitted as indoor patients. By this time British military and machineguns had also been requisitioned for patrol duty in the city. The Deputy Commissioner issued a proclamation by beat of drum that in case the rioting in the city did not cease he would be compelled to resort to arrests. At the same time, some Akali Sardars on horse-back rode through parts of the city imploring with folded hands the Hindus and Muslims not to destroy thoughtlessly and in a frenzy of excited passion the work of years and injure the cause of peace and amity. At the request of the S. G. P. C. about two hundred students of the Khalsa College with their teachers volunteered their services for patrolling in the city. So well was this work done that by evening order had been restored. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. (afterwards Sir) J. M. Dunnet promptly expressed his greatfulness to the S. G. P. C. "for the timely assistance which they had given the authorities in an anxious and difficult situation.*

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*The following letter, which the President of the S. G. P. C. received from the Deputy Commissioner will speak for itself :

Dear Sardar Bahadur,

You were good enough this morning to place two hundred Akalis who have been employed in patrolling definite portions of each of the four divisions of the city. I have now received a strong reinforcement of cavalry, enabling me to relieve your men of their

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At night the order was maintained by military patrols moving up and down the throughfares. But as the S. G. P. C. was overwhelmed with requests from bankers, merchants, magistrates, Civil judges, lawyers and other well-to-do citizens to help them in protecting their houses and properties, they sent out Akali volunteers for night duty, many of them under the supervision of Congress and Khilafat leaders. It is said that no less than five hundred Akalis were on duty that night along with a large number of Congress volunteers.

The 13th April was of course a critical day, but except for a few isolated cases of beating and stone-throwing everything passed off quietly. Throughout these troublesome days the atmosphere was electric and so great was the panic that even on the Baisakhi day most of the shops remained closed, and the whole town wore the appearance of a city of the dead.

As soon as things had settled down, the S. G. P. C. took the initiative by approaching prominent Hindus and Muhammadan citizens to discuss with them means and ways of restoring the old friendly relations between the communities. A conference of about 60 leading Hindu and Muslim gentlemen was held on the 14th April in the Town Hall. S. Teja Singh Samundri was elected Chairman. After a good deal of friendly discussion the following resolutions were unanimously adopted :—

Continued from last page.

fatiguing and anxious duties. I, therefore, write to ask you to be good enough to withdraw your patrols. I am very grateful to you for the timely assistance which you gave me in an anxious and difficult situation.

Yours sincerely,
J. R. Dunnett.

Communique No. 482.
Press Communique No. 483.

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1. "Resolved that a committee of the following three gentlemen be appointed to inquire into cases of alleged negligence on the part of any division-member and to take necessary steps :

Rai Bahadur Gopaldass Bhandari, President, Municipal Committee, Khwaja Ghulam Sadiq, Vice President Municipal Committee and Sardar Tara Singh. The last named gentleman was to act as Secretary of the Committee,

2. Resolved that the Shromoni Committee be requested to undertake the work of combating false, mischievous and exciting rumours, and of publishing the above proceedings*."

Before dispersing those present expressed their appreciation of the service which the Akalis had rendered in maintaining order ritical time.

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THE AKALI MOVEMENT

KARSEWA

Encouraged with the unique uprush of popular enthusiasm that had now overtaken the whole Sikh Panth, its supporters and admirers, the S. G. P. C. decided to undertake the tremendous task of cleaning the big beautiful tank in the middle of which stands the Golden Temple, the Holiest of Holies of "the brave little community, of black-turbaned long-haired, braceletted warriors" whom Guru Govind Singh had created on the Hindu-Sikh New Year Day in 1699. The last time the tank was cleaned under the direction of Maharaja Sher Singh. The work had long been waiting and the new gaurdians and custodians of the Gurdwaras all over the Punjab and beyond, naturally felt that the S. G. P. C. should lose no more time in removing the mud and silt that had accumulated to the depth of several feet at the bottom of the tank. Accordingly, under the impluse of a sacred urge, in the summer of 1922, the S. G. P. C. set up a special *Karsarovar* (service of the Tank) Committee with Bhagat Jaswant Singh as its Secretary. The enthusiasm that the Karsewa called forth battles description. Not only the Sikhs of all classes, ranks and strata of Society, but also tens of thousands of pious Hindus were stirred to their depths to take part in the sacred work. The ruling chiefs were represented by the Maharaja of Patiala, Maharaja Bhupendra Singh, who was seen going down the steps, filling up a basket with mud and carrying it on his head to the pavement in the midst of tens of thousands of others engaged on the same work. It is a pity that while the biggest feudatory chief in the province, the head of the Phulkian States, was seen carring a basket of mud on his head from the bottom of the tank to the marble pavement for about an hour, no other representative of the princely order even put in his appearance during the 22 days when the work of clearing lasted. A remarkable feature of the

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peaceful activities of the Karsewa, no less than the organization of the struggle of a different kind in connection with the non-violent morchas at Guru-ka-Bagh and Jaito, was that the whole plan of work was mapped out with the minutest details and completed with clock-work regularity and thoroughness. It is worth noticing that along with Hindus and Sikhs, a few hundred Mohammedans also joined in the actual work of cleaning the tank. The sight of the thousands of men and women of all ranks of society engaged in this sacred work day after day was as inspiring as it was an actual demonstration of the deep religious faith of the whole community.

The inauguration ceremony began with a religious Diwan held at Gurdwara Pipli Sahib (June 17, *1922*) not far from the Khalsa College. After the prayers were over, a grand procession started early in the morning. The procession was several miles long and it was estimated by a fairly correct counting by the present writer himself that not less than a lac and a half persons took part in it. As soon as the head of the procession reached the Golden Temple, prayer was offered for the successful performance of the sacred duty which the Sangat had undertaken. As is customary with the Sikhs on all religious occasions, after invoking the blessings of the Gurus and the Sikh martyrs and those who had served the Panth in one way or other, *karahparsad* was distributed. The actual Karsewa was inaugurated by five persons* (the Panj Piyaras) who were specially chosen for the occasion by the Panth at the Akal Takhat. The five chosen ones were provided with gold spades and silver baskets**, for digging up and carrying the sacred mud from the bottom of the tank to the pavement of the Prakrama. The procession moved slowly singing hymns in

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*. Sant Sham Singh, S. B. Mehtab Singh, President, S. G. P. C., Bhai Teja Singh, Jathedar Akal Takht, Bhai Pritam Singh of Anandpur and Bhai Gulab Singh of Gholia.

**. They are kept in the Toshakhana (treasury) of the Golden Temple above the Darshani gate or the main entrance.

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lines of five each. Numerous iron baskets were provided for men and women of every rank and position to take part in the *kar-sewa* work. Some even carried the earth in the excess of religious enthusiasm in their shawls or in their aprons. The biggest in the land joined with others in this work. From the second day different parts of the tank were assigned to parties from the different districts and the whole work went on in a regular and systematic manner, from early morning till sunset, many of them chanting *Wah-i-Guru, Wah-i-Guru Ji, Satnam, Satnam Ji* all the time. It was sight for the gods to see. On one day a party of a couple of hundred Muhammadans after saying their Namaz (Prayers) in the adjoining Guru-ka-bagh marched to the sacred tank and joined in *Kar-sewa*. All who joined in the sacred work took their food in the Guru-ka-langer close by. The *Kar-sewa* work continued for 22 days and terminated on the 8th July. On the 9th the tank was filled up with water again.

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The Black Turban

The black turban was an anethima to the British officials and in many places any Sikhs wearing black turban was harassed and persecuted in every possible way. No Lambardars or no clerks, not to speak of higher officials even in courts, could wear a black turban. Even in courts, both the parties in a case were afraid of displeasing the Magistrate by appearing before him in a black turban. In the army very strict instructions were issued against Sikhs wearing black turbans even when they were off duty. The following orders issued by a high military officer to regimental officers will be read with interest :–

> "I am directed to bring to your notice that a case recently occured in which a sepoy was punished by his commanding officer for appearing in a regimental Gurdwara wearing a black *pagri* in defiance of orders forbidding the same.
>
> (2) A regimental pattern of pagri to be worn in mufti should be laid down in Regimental orders for dress. If any time a sepoy appears in mufti wearing a pagri not of the regimental pattern he should then be punished for disobedience of Regimental orders."*

It is a significant fact that despite these orders a very large number of high military officers** came forward to take part in the Akali activities at Guru-ka-Bagh, jaito and elsewhere.

They sincerely believed that in helping the *Akali* movement, they were earning religious merit of a high order, as we shall see in

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*S. G. P. C. Press Communique No. 330.

**In this connection the names of the following officers may be specially mentioned. Subedar Amar Singh, Jathedar of the first Military Pensioners Jatha, Rasaldar Ranjodh Singh, Jathedar of the 2nd Military Pensioners Jatha.

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another place in this book, a large Jatha composed entirely of retired military officers took an active part in the non-violent struggles in which the cammunity was engaged during the early twenties of the present century for safeguarding the sanctity of their Gurdwaras.

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THE GURU KA BAGH MORCHA

The ceremony of administrating the vow of truth and non-violence :

It was an inspiring sight that one saw morning after morning in front of the Akal Takht before the daily jathas started for Guru-ka-Bagh. At sunrise the members of the Jatha assembled on the spot after a dip in the "tank of immortality."* All wore long shirts coming down to their knees, and every one without exception had a black turban on his head. Sometime the Jathedar also wore a piece of yellow cloth tied round his head immediately underneath the black turban. The whole dress was simple in the extreme and was made of Khaddar cloth. Assembled at the Akal Takht, the proceedings began with prayers in which the whole congregation, the members of the Jatha and a few hundered others who were present to witness the ceremony, took part. Then the men were administered the vow of truth and non-violence. Usually a short sermon followed, in which they were remaindd of their pledge and the traditions of the Panth not to turn their back till the destination was reached. A small garland of snow-white jasamine flowers was tied round the turban of every member of the Jatha as an emblem of purity and sincerity in the performance of the sacred mission on which they were now embarking. Before they left the Akal Takht and marched forth in procession along the marble pavement of the sacred tank, singing hymns from the Sikh scriptures, sometime very touching scenes were witnessed. In many cases, the wives, sisters, mothers and even aged grandmothers had travelled long distance to see the inspiring ceremoney and bless their dear ones who were now going on a sacred mission but whom, they sure, they would see at the end of the day brought back, more or less, seriously wounded and, may be, half unconscious. At the

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*"Amritsar" literally means the "tank of immortality".

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clock-tower overlooking the Tank they were photographed. The march through the town in lines of four each was most impressive and was witnessed by thousands of people crowding on both sides of the road. They walked slowly in step singing shabads (Wahi Guru, Wahi Guru, Wahi Guruji, Satnam, Satnam, Satnamji) all the while. Here and there the shop-keepers, men and women sitting in the balconies waiting for the Jatha to pass and the sight-seers in the streets had provided themselves with loose flowers which they showered upon the procession as it passed in front of them.

It is noteworthy that the land attached to the Gurdwara, with only some kikar trees growing on it (sometimes called garden the press reports) was duly entered in the official Revenue Records as belonging to the Gurdwara. This fact alone ought to have been enough to convince the authorities that the Akalis who were persisting in their efforts to cut fire-wood for *Guru-ka-Langer*, attached to every Sikh Shrine, had at least the legal right on their side, and that there was no justification for the violent action taken against the whole community because, in a fit of religious fervour, they followed the principle of non-co-operation which was in vogue at the time and which had been practised by some of their own Gurus and martyrs. Doubtless, they took the law into their own hands instead of seeking redress in a court of law, but in times of political or religious excitement it would have been a part of wisdom for the Government not to follow too strictly the injunctions of the law books.

It is worth noting that a large number of the men taking part in the daily jathas were military men who had joyfully served in the Indian army during the critical time of the Great War. The S. G. P. Committee claimed that they formed about 30% of the total number of those who had participated in the Jathas proceeding to Guru-ka-Bagh, but without admitting the absolute correctness of this estimate, it would be safe to say that a very large proportion of them consisted of retired military men many of whom had

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distinguished themselves by a long and meritorious service and some of them risen to the highest position in the army open to Indian soldiers.

On March 25, 1923, a resolution was adopted in the Punjab Legislative Council recommending the release of the Akali prisoners. The Government missed a great opportunity in not accepting the resolution and doing a graceful act in applying balm to the wounded feelings of the Akalis. At the end of April, however, when loud complaints were heard all over the province about severe ill-treatment of the Akalis and political prisoners in the Multan, Attock, Montgomery, Ambala and other jails almost all the Akali prisoners were set free in small batches of 100 to 200 men. Sardar Kharak Singh and S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar were among those whom it was not considered safe to set at liberty.

For several weeks great excitement prevailed in the bazars of the Punjab towns as the released prisoners marched in procession on their way to Amritsar where after a Darshan at the Golden Temple they dispersed to their homes. These processions, it may be noted, did not differ much from those proceeding to Guru-ka-Bagh. There was the same religious fervour in evidence. They marched in military formation and sang hymns as in the fateful days of August and September of the previous year. There was however one great difference noticeable. There were no white jasamine garlands round their turbans, but instead each man carried a bundle of clothes behind his back.

As the struggle proceeded, far from dying down the enthusiasm of the Akalis went on increasing. And after the 3rd or 4th September, there was a distinct rivalry in evidence among the Akalis that had come from the various places to be sent forward to serve the Panth, as they called it.*

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*Asked as to what had brought them there, *Panth Sewa* was the word that one often heard on the lips of the waiting Jathas of Akalis.

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The Morcha. My personal testimony. The Guru-ka- Bagh morcha, to call it by the name by which it was generally known at the time, was an event which would live not only in Sikh history, but also in the history of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent, non-co-operation movement. Having been in the thick of both the movements myself and having watched their progress from day to day from the inside, I can say in all sincerity that I do not know of another instance of a large community observing absolute non-violence, in word and deed, day after day in the face of the severest provocation, and suffering abuse, ill-treatment and tortures, not only without uttering a word of complaint, but literally with the words "Wahi Guru, Wahi Guru Ji" on the lips of one and all members of Akali Jathas. I wish to record here that having read some of the harrowing accounts of the tortures which the old Sikh martyrs are said to have suffered uncomplainingly and even cheer-fully, I was in my heart of hearts reluctant to believe that such things could have really happened, and that, probably, the historian of those days under the impulse of religious enthusiasm had been carried away to indulge in the language of exaggeration, but after I had myself accompanied from day to day Jathas of a hundred Akalis from their start at the Akal Takht to their place of destination till they were stopped, and having witnessed with my own eyes the inhuman beatings which they received at the hands of a batch of policemen, generally under the orders of a European officer, till they had either become unconscious or were at least unable to stand on their legs and every one of them had to be carried to a special hospital established at Amritsar, having seen all these things not for a day but for almost the whole period during which the Guru-ka-Bagh struggle lasted, I cannot but add my own personal testimony to the absolute truth of the harrowing incidents I have narrated in the following pages in this chapter. I consider it a privilege, though of a painful kind, to have lived through these tragic times and witnessed the strange things which not only the elect few but the masses of the Sikh community suffered and bore

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with a patience, courage and fortitude I frankly find myself unable to describe. I may mention here that towards the end of August 1922, I along with another member of the Committee was deputed by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee to proceed to Amritsar and make a report on what was happening there. The struggle was in its initial stages. But even so it had a considerable stir in the province, and as it was claimed that the movement was being conducted strictly in accordance with the novel principles of Gandhiji's political gospel in which we Congressmen all believed and which we had been practising as far as possible, it was considered desirable that the Provincial Committee should provide itself with first-hand information about it obtained after personal inquiries on the spot by some of its own members. Proceeding in a tonga from Amritsar to Guru-ka-Bagh where the beatings were then taking place, we were stopped half way near Raja Sansi by some Gurkha* policemen armed with lathis with one end shod with iron or brass bands. We were also abused and pushed back and threatened with violence in case we attempted to proceed further. We heard a good deal here about the ill-treatment of the Akalis in the surrounding villages.

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*It is worth mentioning that after some time the Gurkhas were replaced by Muslim policemen drawn chiefly from the Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Attock districts. The Gurkhas refused to take part in beating the unarmed Akalis. They said they had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Sikhs. They were brave men. As soldiers they (the Gurkhas) could not attack men even with lathis till their opponents were also provided with the same weapons. They considered it unsoldier-like to beat unarmed men pledged to non-violence. The Gurkhas were dismissed from service. I saw them myself narrating their story to S. Teja Singh Samundri. Some 26 or 27 men were dismissed. Samundri got them employed as Chowkidars by local Hindu Sahukars and factory owners. Towards the end of the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha some Gurkhas were employed again in be ating Akalis in batches of 5 each at Guru-ka-Bagh.

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I was so much impressed by what I saw and heard about the strange things that were reported to be taking place, that I made up my mind to accompany the Jatha day after day and report to the Press the daily happenings. To facilitate my work, I asked the Editor of the "Tribune" of which I was Trustee to designate me as "Our special Representative." In that capacity I walked with the Jatha from day to day right up to the time when a settlement was arrived at. My daily report duly appeared in the columns of the *Tribune*. I reprint two or three of my daily reports as an Appendices to this volume. I was informed by the Editor that very frequently my reports were reporduced in full by influential daily papers in the other provinces of India. It may be of interest to the reader to know how the whole business of organizing and managing the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha was being carried on. The S. G. P. Committee had organized a Council of Action. At the time I joined, Sardar Teja Singh Samundri, President of the S. G. P. Committee, was chairman of the Council of Action, with Sardar Bhag Singh, A Vakil at Gurdaspur, as its Secretary. As I have already explained elsewhere, all the seven or eight members of the Council slept in one moderate sized room in the upper story offices of the S. G. P. Committee. They all slept on the floor covered with a dari with a ceiling fan overhead. I enjoyed the privilege of sleeping in the same room with them. A still greater privilege was that I enjoyed the fullest confidence of the Council of Action and I knew most of the secret matters regarding the management of the Morcha with which they were concerned. The meals of the members of the Council of Action were brought from the Guru-ka-Langer situated nearby. Only two meals were served. I cannot speak of the dishes because there were no dishes. The meals were severely uniform and each meal consisted of nothing but Roti and mash seeds (unground) and yet so great was the enthusiasm, I may well call it the intoxication, of the moment that no one even thought of the monotonous character of the dietary. Speaking for myself I must say that I found it to be quite tasty and certainly nourishing. The

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only variation which I allowed myself to make in my own case was to steal away early in the morning to a neighbouring shop and help myself to a couple of cups of hot tea with a considerable quantity of boiling milk. As a rule, I did not take my morning meal from the *Langer* as I had to walk all the way with the jatha day after day. I carried with me a small attache-case packed with bananas; oranges and some sweetmeat to which I would help myself on the way whenever I felt hungry. Many a time when I was not far from the Jatha I took my meals with the Jatha itself. These meals were provided on the way by some of the neighbouring villages.

One other point about the meals served at the office of the Council of action I cannot help mentioning. It was a strictly observed rule that no one should leave any food behind in his thali, the man who left even a morsel of food behind was fined Rs. 1/4/- and, similarly, Sewadar himself was fined double the amount in case he offered more food than was demanded of him.

More imortant than the question of food was the fact that it was in this room that all the communiques which were issued day after day were framed before they were cyclostyled and sent out. At about midnight the member whose duty it was to frame the communiques appeared in the room, where all the members of the Council of Action were sleeping.* During the day he had been receiving reports. He would wake up the particular member who was specially concerned and if he felt uncertain as to whether a certain fact should or should not be mentioned in the communique or if he did not quite know how it should be phrased, he would

*As a rule this important duty was assigned to Prof. Teja Singh or Bawa Harkishan Singh. It is not for me to say how well it was performed. The collection of communiques kept in the Samundri Library at Amritsar will speak for itself. I am conscious that I am repeating these details, but considering their importance I must apologise for doing so.

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wake up Sardar Teja Singh Samundri, the Chairman, himself. Sometimes all the members were shaken out of their deep slumber and then a meeting of the full Council of Action would take place. The discussions were quite short or rather there were not many discussions, but merely expressions of opinions, breif, decisive, and to the point. It was a great education and a greater inspiration to see how decisions were taken even on difficult and troublesome controversial matters. Every one showed great deference to the opinion of the Chairman and as I have already had occasion to mention more than once, truely Sardar Teja Singh Samundri was a remarkable man. In ordinary language he would not pass for an educated man. Of course he was perfectly at home in the literature and history of Sikhism. He struck me very frequently as I listened to the discussions as possessing a critical knowledge of Sikh history and specially of the hard times in which the Khalsa had been hammered into beliefs and practices that had made the community what it is and it was Samundri's greatest ambition to live upto the highest ideals and traditions which had come down to them from those hard times. Samundri knew a little English. He could not speak the language, but with his strong commcn sense he could understand in a general way what was being said to him or within his hearing in that language. He also knew a little Urdu, but although deficient, as we judge such things, in learning and education, Samundri had a remarkably keen and sound judgement. He could grasp the essentials of a proposition immediately and examine them separately from the non-essentials which could be ignored. He was acccmmodating in the extreme so far as the non-essentials were concerned, but on points which he considered to be essential and fundamental he would stand firm like a rcck. A born leader, as he was, I have known him in those great days to sense a critical situation immediately and act promptly in a manner which astonished many of us. One or two such incidents I have ventured to narrate this bcok. Naturally, everybody looked to him for advice

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and guidance. I never saw him ruffled. Indeed, even in the midst of the greatest excitement he was the one man who remained calm and self-possessed. Tall and robust without being stout like a typical village jat, he did not give one the impression of being a man whose broad rustic shoulders carried such a wise head.

The severe persecutions and the necessity of defending themselves against fearful odds had early kneaded and moulded the small community into a well-organised and disciplined body, content with leading a simple life, habituated to suffer extreme privations and with the name of their Gurus on their lips to feel cheerful confident of coming out victorious through the severest ordeals. No other body of men and women that I know of in history has so lived up to the words of their teachers "*Tera Bhana Meetha Lage*" (Thy will is sweet to me). Even in peaceful times and in the ordinary routine of life they think and talk in terms of military significance. As everyone knows in the course of their struggles and privations they had devoloped a terminology of their own. If one had time enough one could easily fill an intersting volume with Sikh abhorisms and their peculiar phraziology embodying and illustrating very important facts and principles. In the course of Guru-ka-Bagh affair while their outlook was entirely one of religious faith, their behaviour and the words they used often suggested as if they were engaged in a military compaign. Even the commonest villager spoke of the Guru-ka-Bagh affairs as a Morcha or military front which it was the duty of the whole community to defend at all costs.

The Guru-ka-Bagh Gurdwaras: The Guru-ka-Bagh Gurdwaras are two historical shrines situated close to one another at a distance of about 12 miles from Amritsar, a little off the trunk road leading to Ajnala. The Twin Gurdwaras are sacred to the memory of the two martyr Gurus who set the example in their own person of passive resistance to evil by supreme acts of self-sacrifice.*

*This place should not be confounded with what was at the

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The Guru-ka-Bagh Morcha

How the trouble at Guru-ka-Bagh arose. During the time of the Sikh Gurus themselves, the Gurdwaras were either under their direct supervision and control or under their *masands* (missionary agents). After the tenth Guru, when the Panth (community) was recognised, as a matter of doctrine, as the corporate representative of the Guru on earth, the conduct of the Gurdwaras naturally passed into the hands of the Panth and was exercised through Granthis and other Sewadars (incumbents) who were under the direct Supervision of the local Sangats (congregations).''*

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time of the Akali struggle an open piece of ground, called Guru-ka-Bagh, lying close to the Golden Temple. The Akalis have since built their own office on the spot as well as a large Library known as the Guru Ram Das Library. The Guru-ka-Langer is also located here, as also a free dispensary. This last, it may be mentioned, is the site where a large camp hospital with several section was improvised during the time the Guru-ka-Bagh struggle lasted, when day after day large number of Akalis were accommodated and treated after they had received severe beating in defending the Morcha and been carried here in loories-some of them still unconscious, but all so severely hammered with Police *lathis* that they could not stand on their legs. The smaller Gurdwara is sacred to memory of Guru Arjan Dev, while the bigger one was built to commemorate the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs.

*This section is based mainly upon communique No. 214 issued by the S. G. P. C. towards the close of October 1922, when the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha was about to come to an end. The communique is headed "*What led upto the Guru-ka-Bagh Affair.*" In following this communique, I have taken care not to mention anything which I donot consider to be supported by or consistent with the known and authentic fact of Sikh history.

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During the reign of Emperor Farrukhsiyar when the small Sikh community was exposed to the severest persecution and when a price had been fixed upon the head of every long-haired man, the Sikhs fled away to the jungles, leaving the Gurdwaras in charge, or chiefly though not exclusively, of the Udasis (a monestic order of Sikhs). According to the communique to which I have referred above "the Udasis had originally been appointed in the time of the sixth Guru as preachers of Sikhism and the peculiar dress they wore had been bestowed upon them by Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of the Sixth Guru in the memory of the dress worn by the Great Guru Nanak during his Udasis or preaching tours". Subsequent to the formation of the misals (political confederacies), the Sikhs earnestly set about taking control of the Gurdwaras and removing such of the custodians as they considered to be unfit for their sacred charge. "The degenerate Udasis at the Golden Temple were replaced by regularly baptised Sikhs." The same plan was also adopted in the case of several other important Gurdwaras.

After the establishment of the British rule (1849), a radical change came about in the legal position of the Mahants in respect of the Gurdwaras. The new law in its practical working converted the Mahants, who were mere servants of the Panth, into virtual proprietors of the temples. Being no longer responsible to the community, the Mahants began to misappropriate the income of the Gurdwara to their private use and alienate or sell the trust property at will. Irresponsibility and wealth inevitably resulted in immorality and the places of worship became the haunts of evil men. "In these circumstances the first thought of the Sikhs was to recover control of their Gurdwaras through the law-courts, but it was not very long before they came to realize the difficulties of the new situation in which they found themselves. To the dilatory procedure of the courts and the heavy expenses involved in litigation was added, as they now realised, the unsympathetic attitude of the Government." The officials were reluctant, they came to believe, to see the Gurdwaras pass into the hands of the Panth because nothing was

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likely to consolidate them so much and make them into a compact and powerful body as the control and supervision of their holy places. Round the Holy Granth and the Gurdwaras revolved the social and religious life of the whole community.

I have thought it fit to give this brief summary from the S. G. P. C. Communique, because apart from the intrinsic importance of the facts embodied therein, it presents the native soil from which the poisonous three of most serious misunderstandings between the Government and the brave Khalsa Panth grew up and spread with alarming rapidity. According to the communique, in November 1921 the Government suddenly determined to take possession of the Golden Temple. The decision surprised the whole community, the more so because owing to the uneasiness created by the Jallianwala Bagh and the Martial Law happenings, the official control of the Golden Temple had been abandoned after a great deal of deliberation. What had happened to make the Government change that decision and upset the Khalsa after they had been in possession of their Holiest of Holies for more than a year* ?

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*The answer to this question would be found in the fact that the non-co-operation movement of Mahatma Gandhi had by this time thrown of the whole of India into indescribable commotion. It was part of the official policy to appease the Sikhs that the Golden Temple had been handed over to them.

In October 1921, however, the Sikhs had finally decided to throw in their lot with Mahatma Gandhi. In scenes of tumultuous enthusiasm a great political conference was held at the Bradlaught Hall, Lahore, under the presidency of an intrepid leader, Sardar Kharak Singh, and it was feared that the whole province might soon witness a repetition of similar demonstrations. At such a time of popular excitement and upheavel the possession of the Akal Takht from which Hukam Namas (Bulls) could be issued for the Sarbat Khalsa was regarded as a source of great danger. The

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To return to our story, on the 31st January 1921, the Mahant was approached by S. Dan Singh of Wachhao along with a number of other Sikhs who were able to persuade Sunder Das to agree to work under a Local Committee subordinate to the S. G. P. C. of Amritsar. We are told that the Mahant also signed an agreement that "he would take the Sikh baptism and marry one of his mistresses.....Gian Kaur."

Things went on smoothly for a short time, but soon after the tragedy of Nankana Sahib, when large numbers of Akalis began to be arrested all over the province, Sunder Das, like many other mahants, went back upon his plighted word, ignored the agreement and returned to his old ways of life. The Secretary of the Local Committee who had his office in one of the rcoms of the Langar attached to the Gurdwara was turned out bag and baggage by the Mahant who was then living in some other rooms in the same building. At the same time the office records were burnt.

Things could be left long in this indefinite condition. On the 23rd August, 1921, the Shromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee finally took the matter into its own hands.

The rest of story may be told in the words of a Press Communique issued by the Shiromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. According to this document :

> "The Mahant sought the help of the authorities and the Superintendent of Police hurried to the spot. But realizing the actual state of affairs he confirmed the possession of the Sikhs. 5 Akali representatives of the Shromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee were put in charge of the place and a sufficient force of police was left to protect them in the discharge of

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Government was doubtless taking great risks but after due delibration they apparently came to the conclusion that the risk was well worth taking.

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their duties. When the danger of attack from the Mahant's party decreased the Superintendent of Police wrote to the Shromoni Committee that the Police force would be removed unless the Gurdwara Committee desired otherwise and paid for its maintenance. The Gurdwara Committee consented to the withdrawal of the Police.*"

In view of the importance of the facts embodied in this extract it is desirable to reproduce here the following correspondence which passed between the Superintendent of Police and the S. G. P. Committee :

From

C. A. Macpherson Esq., I. P.,

Superintendent of Police, Amritsar.

To

The Secretary,

S. G. P. Committee, Amritsar.

No. 11633/4/4/21 Dated 5th September 1921.

Dear Sir,

I inform you that the present Police Guard at Guru-ka-Bagh will be withdrawn and request you will kindly intimate if you require any Police Guard, if so, the number required, in order to enable me to send you a bill for the cost of the same.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/- Macpherson
Superintendent of Police.

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*Shromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee Press Communique No. 48, page 39.

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From

The Secretary,
S. G. P. Committee, Amritsar.

No. 1840/167 Dated 9th September 1921.

Dear Sir,

In reply to yours of 5th September, 1921, I have no objection to your withdrawing the Police Guard from the Gurdwara Guru-ka-Bagh, at least for the present. When we require the Police protection I will ask for it in due course.

Thanking you for the kind intimation.

I remain,
Faithfully yours,
Sd/- Sahib Singh
Assistant Secretary.

From this time on, the Guru-ka-Bagh Gurdwaras remained under the sole management and control of the S. G. P. Committee without "any let or hindrance from any one". All of a sudden on the 10th of August, 1922, Mr. Beaty, Additional Superintendent of Police, accompanied by a number of men in uniform in motor lorries appeared at the Guru-ka-Bagh and arrested five Akali sewaks working there under the orders of the Shromoni Committee. The men were produced without delay before Mr. Jenkins, a First Class Magistrate at Amritsar, on a charge of theft of a small dry kikar tree which they had cut from the adjoining lands said to be the property of the Gurdwaras, for use in the Guru-ka-Langar attached to the shrines. The news descended as a thunderbolt in the peaceful atmosphere that had sometime since been established between the Sikhs and the authorities at Amritsar. Those more curious than the rest who searched for an explanation of the recrudescene of the trouble between the Government and the cummunity that had deserved well at their hands had no difficulty in finding it in the fact that the Akalis had been foremost in the ranks of the non-co-operation movement of the previous year, and the present

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trouble in their view was nothing more than a part of the plan and general policy of repression of those connected with Mahatma Gandhi's movement immediately after the Mahatma himself had been securely lodged behind the prison bars*. According to his instructions no demonstrations followed; the official circles were convinced that the whole movement had collapsed.

The Guru-ka-Bagh Morcha Begins The Sikhs were the last community to take things lying down. As their whole history testifies they have always opposed coercion and persecution. Passive resistance to evil is in their blood. The two Gurdwaras at Guru-ka-Bagh itself provided living examples of their own Gurus who allowed themselves to be tortured to death not only uncomplainingly but cheerfully and with the words of prayer and praise on their lips. The land from which the dry Kikar tree had been cut by duly appointed sewadars was attached to the shrines. It is said no one has contested the report, that it was usual for sewadars to cut fire-wood from the land and store it for use in Guru-ka-Langar, specially when the rainy season had come to an end. In any case the incident was too trivial a matter to be taken to a court of law and thus set ablaze the whole peaceful community which had come to the help of the Government in times of its dire need. As it was, the news of the Police interference with the work of the Guru-ka-Langar leading to the conviction of the *sewadars* spread like wild-fire through out the countryside. In the words of a press communique issued by S. G. P. Committee at this time, "Akali volunteers from the surrounding Ilaqa immediately reached the spot**", and began to help in cutting and storing wood for the Gurdwaras. Good sense seems to have prevailed and no further arrests were made for two

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*Mahatma Gandhi was sentenced to six years imprisonment on March 18, 1922, on three separate charges of sedition. For fuller details see present writer's History of the———in India, chapter, Famous Trials.

** S. G. P. C. Press Communique No. 4, dated 21. 8. 1922.

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or three days. Although batches of Akalis were sent out to cut wood from the lands, no one was molested by the Police. On the 23rd August, however, the Police awakened to a sense of their duty and making up for their remissness of the last few days arrested no less than 66 volunteers and took them away in motor lorries. As was to be expected, this acted as a signal for batch after batch of volunteers to rush to the spot each vying with the others to be the foremost in the "service of the Gurdwaras"*.

Nor were the local officials slow to reassert the authority of the law against the Akali volunteers at Guru-ka-Bagh and take such action against the offenders as was considered necessary or desirable. Mr. Jankins, the officiating Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by Mr. Macpherson, Superintendent of Police, soon reached Guru-ka-Bagh and arressted several sewadars who were busy storing wood for Guru-ka-Langar, weeding the adjoining garden or repairing roads, etc. Later on four more sewadars, who are said to have been in attendance on the Guru Granth Sahib at the time, were "called out and arrested under Section 107, Criminal Procedure Code."

On the following day even a larger number of arrests was made, bringing up the total, we are told, to as many as 187.

The plot thickens. Everywhere people, astonished and aghast at the news, asked each other "waht has happened" "what next"? Among the Sikhs themselves, strange as it might seem, the greatest enthusiasm prevailed and hurrying groups of volunteers poured in their hundreds and thousands into the city of Amritsar. We doubt if ever in its long history the "Pool of Immorality" had witnessed the like of what was now happening or was about to happen.

Mr. J. M. Dunnet, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, was at Simla when these startling events took place. He hurried back to his post and immediately paid a visit to Guru-ka-Bagh

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* These men were drawn from districts so far apart as Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Sialkot, Sheikhupura and Jullundur.

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accompanied by an other European officer said to be Mr. Beaty, the Additional Superintendent of Police. But there was no change for the better in the treatment of the Akalis. If the reports are to be believed, things even went from bad to worse and it was considered necessary to make arrangements for establishing a temporary hospital at the open piece of ground close to the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee officies for receiving indoor patients and providing for them such medical treatment and small comforts as might be possible.*

Meanwhile the arrests continued. Friday, the 25th of August, was the Amawas day when large crowds of sewadars are attracted to the Guru-ka-Bagh Gurdwara but so great was the congregation on the present occasion that it became necessary to hold the Diwan in the adjoining garden, instead of the Gurdwara compound. But hardly had the Granth Sahib been taken out in procession with befitting ceremony to the garden than Mr. Beaty, the Police Officer in charge, appeared at the head of a post of Police and protested

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*The determined action of the authorities to stage the daily beating of the Akalis proceeding in small batches to the kikar grove close to the Gurdwaras at Guru-ka-Bagh to assert their right to the waste land and cut fire wood for the free-kitchen attached to the Gurdwaras had no relation or but a remote relation to the legal quibbles about the so-called aggressive action of the Akalis. On a common sense view of the matter, the position of the Akalis in sending large daily jathas of 100 men after taking a vow of truth and non-violence at the Akal Takht is perfectly understandable even by those who may not be in sympathy with the Gandhian movement. In a religious movement an appeal to logic and reason will often be regarded as out of place. It is the ideal and the sentimental that moves and rouses a community more than an appeal to reason. In this connection I cannot do better than ask the reader to study the touching letters of the C. F. Andrews on the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha some of which I have reproduced as an appendix to the present volume.

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that he could not allow the Diwan being held there without the permission of the Deputy Commissioner. In view of the persistent attitude of Mr. Beaty it was eventually arranged to send a policeman with the Akali sewadars in Mr. Beaty's car to inquire from the Deputy Commissioner, on the one hand, and the S.G.P. Committee, on the other, as to what was to be done under the circumstances. The story of Guru-ka-Bagh reads like one of those unbelievable tales which one heard from grandmamas of fates playing strange pranks with the lives of men. Meanwhile the men there in Mr. Beaty's car were busy making inquiries about trifling details as to whether the religious Diwans could or could not be held in the gardens attached to the Gurdwaras at Guru-ka-Bagh. Further serious trouble arose between Mr. Beaty and the Akali sewadars present there. The sewadars considered it necessary to move the Granth Sahib a little further from the place where it had originally been accomodated, because they could not tolerate to let the sacred volume representing the body, of the Guru remain in the sun. The suggestion to move it a little further up into the shade had come from Sangat and was conveyed by means of a slip of paper written by Sardar Waryam Singh. S. Waryam Singh and S. Suchet Singh who had carried out the request were also subsequently arrested. "On this", we are quoting from the account of the incident given by the S. G. P. Committee, "Mr. Beaty got so wild that he ordered his men to attack the Akalis with lathis and not one Akali was allowed to remain in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib." We have purposely ommitted to reproduce here a detailed account of the merciless beating which the police are said to have administered to the Akalis on this occasion.*

A few minutes after the Police attack, S. Bhag Singh Vakil and the sewadars who had been sent under Mr. Beaty's order returned to Guru-ka-Bagh.

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*S. G. P. Committee Press Communique No. 15 dated 23. 8. 1922. The Akalis claimed to have taken some photographs of the actual beating administered.

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The tug of war between the Akalis as represented by the S.G.P. Committee and the authorities starts in right earnest.* The only explanation which the public were able to discover for the strange events that were happening from day to day at Guru-ka-Bagh and, specially, the fact that the arrests and severe beating of Gurdwara sewadars who were found cutting some old kikar wood for Guru-ka-Langar from the piece of land attached to the Gurdwara itself was that it was a part of a carefully considered campaign of repression which was started all over the Province at this time for crushing the Akali movement as also the general political movement associated with the name of the Congress. However, whatever the explanation of it might be, from this time the tussle between the Akalis, on the one hand, and the authorities, on the other, started in right earnest. On the 25th/August S. Kharak Singh, President of S. G. P. Committee,

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*The S. G. P. Committee communique as well as my own notes written at the time are silent as to what instructions, if any, the men brought from the Akali leaders. Mr. J. M. Dunnett did not send any instructions in writing. He did not see any objection to the holding of the Diwan in the garden. The S. G. P. C. claimed that they had been in undisputed possession of the garden for at least a year and that during the whole of this period they had been cutting fuel for use in Guru-ka-Langar and holding Diwans in the garden attached to the Gurdwaras. I have personally known Mr. Dunnett for several years. I had also occasion to see him at his house during the Guru-ka-Bagh affair and I have great pleaure in bearing testimony to my strong impression that I always found him a most reasonable and conciliatory official. I believe that if he had been left to himself and allowed to action his own independent judgement, the Guru-ka-Bagh trouble would never have occured. But the trouble is that in such matters, the conduct of affairs is not left to the man on the spot but that he must receive and follow instructions from above.

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the three Secretaries along with several other leading members were taken into custody. On their way to the jail they gave a parting message to their co-workers in the cause of the Gurdwara movement in the course of which they said :

> "We the undersigned; the humblest of Kalgidhar's humble sewaks, including the President and all the three Secretaries of the S.G.P.C., go to jail in the cause of our God and Satguru. We are full of joy and satisfaction that Akalpurkh, in the abundance of His mercy, has chosen such humble instruments as ourselves for the consummation of His divine purpose.
>
> So long as we were allowed we did our duty to the best of our humble lights. We firmly trust that those on whom has devolved the great and holy task of holding aloft the banner of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh will do nothing calculated to lower in the slightest the dignity of the great panth in the eyes of either friends or foes. Before finally taking leave of you we wish to make but one request and it is this.
>
> "Le every Sikh, man or woman, firmly stand and implicity carry out the directions of the Shromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the only living symbol of Sikh national honour."

According to the instructions of the S. G. P. Committee the Akalis continued to proceed from the Gurdwaras at Guru-ka-Bagh to cut wood for Guru-ka-Langer in the adjoining garden. On the way they were stopped by a group of Policemen who were waiting for them, belaboured with regulation lathis till they had either become unconscious or were otherwise unable to stand on their legs and proceed further towards the garden.*

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* The message (i. e. Press communique No. 18) bears the signatures of the following leaders.

1. Mehtab Singh, President, 2. Bhagat Jaswant Singh, General

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As soon as one batch of five Akalis was disposed of in the manner just described and removed by *sewadars* to an improvised hospital within the Gurdwara compound, another batch was soon seen proceeding for the purpose of cutting wood for Guru-ka-Langar with the result that like the first batch it was mercilessly beaten, till the men were unable to proceed further on their appointed mission. As a rule, five such batches were disposed of in the course of the day. By way of diversion sometimes the men after they had been soundly beaten were treated to a good ducking in an adjoining pond, and then left on the ground to be carried away on stretchers, or charpais by the *sewadars*. Some of these scenes were so heart-rending that very often the lookers on—there was always a crowd of people to witness the frightful sights–were so disgusted that some of them found it difficult to stay there. I may mention that in the month of September when the struggle was at its height I had frequent occasions of seeing these sights myself.

It must be added that, while day after day batches of Akalis were being beaten at Guru–ka–Bagh or large jathas were similarly treated on the road from Amritsar to the Gurdwaras, a regular campaign of repression against the Akalis was in progress all over the Province, but more specially in the villages round about Guru-ka-Bagh. In particular, the men with black turbans on were the betenoire of the Police and the authorities. There were complaints

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Continued from last page.

Secretary, 3. Narain Singh, Secretary, 4. Sahib Singh, Assistant Secretary, 5. Tara Singh, Editor of the *Akali te Pardesi*, 6. Sarmukh Singh Jhabbal, 7. Teja Singh (of Chuharkana) 8. Baba Kehar Singh of Patti, 9. Kewal Singh.

The word garden has been used in this book because it is so called in Sikh history and also in the S. G. P. C. press communique. It may have been originally a garden, but now it is nothing but an open spot of waste land with some kikar trees standing on it. It is situated quite close to the Gurdwaras.

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of cases where black-turbaned men were prevented frcm travelling by train or crossing a ferry. In some cases, those proceeding to Amritsar were even taken out of the trains unless they agreed to buy return tickets and "declare on oath" that they would have nothing to do with the activities of the Akalis. The country-side round about Guru-ka-Bagh was scoured by policemen, scmetimes on horse-back, and those wearing a black turban were said to have been mal-treated in various ways. Police pickets were posted on the important bridges leading to Guru-ka-Bagh and, in particular, no Akalis and even other men bound for Guru-ka-Bagh were allowed to proceed beyond Raja Sansi, half way between Amritsar and Guru-ka-Bagh. On one occasion at least (August 28, 1922) as a group of about 50 Akalis arrested in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh, were being taken to the District Court, they shouted out *Sat Sri Akal*, close to the jail gate. This infuriated the European officer in charge. He ordered them to stop that "nonsense". He further declared that if they repeated the shout they would be gagged. The head Granthi of the Golden Temple and S. Teja Singh Samundri afterwards President of the S.G.P.C. who were present on the spot protested against such interference with the exercise of religious liberty of the Akalis. As the Akalis went on producing the same shout at short intervals the officer became wild and ordered the Police to tie cloth pieces over their mouths.* It was in this gagged condition that the men were marched to the court muttering all the while their sacred hymns.

Failing in their attempts to cow down the Akalis at Guru-ka-Bagh and prevent them from proceeding with their resolve to continue the cutting of wood for the langer from the adjoining

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* See S. G. P. C. press Communique No. 22 dated 28. 8. 1922. The present writer witnessed this Jatha marching to the District Court at Amritsar with their mouths gagged in the manner described above, but he was not present earlier when the gagging actually took place.

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'garden', the Police tried to starve out the men by seizing all the rations that were meant for the Akalis at the Gurdwaras. The men bringing such supplies were sometimes beaten severely and the wheat, flour or other eatables seized by the Police. Even milk meant for the wounded Akalis was not allowed to pass the pickets. On the 28th August, the beating seems to have been ever of a more brutal character than on previous days. On this occasion no less than 50 men who were proceeding from the Gurdwara to cut fuel for the langer were assaulted with lathis and severely beaten till they became quite senseless. Even medical assistants who were run from Amritsar in motor cars to take care of them were not allowed to proceed, but were stopped at Raniwala Bridge at a distance of about four miles from Guru-ka-Bagh. Meanwhile the wounded men at Guru-ka-Bagh were left to fare themselves as best they could without the milk, medicines or doctors.

A notable milestone in the Guru - ka - Bagh struggle

The incident of the 28th August, 1922, made a deep impression upon the minds of the whole Sikh community. As was to be expected from a determined body like the Akalis, the S. G. P. C. initiated a new move which within a few days not only attracted the attention of Indians all over the country, but stirred them in a manner no one could have dream of before. The first act of the S. G. P. C. was to issue a touching appeal in the course of which they said :

> "At this hour of trial we expect of you nothing more than to come and watch the ideally non-violent, spiritual struggle that is going on at Guru-ka-Bagh to obviate the possibility of misrepresentation at the hands of the clever bureaucracy."*

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* S. G. P. C. communique No. 27, dated 28. 8. 1922. unlike other communiques which were issued under the signature of the Secretary, S. G. P. C., this one was signed and issued under the authority of the then President, S. Sunder Singh Risaldar, President of the S. G. P. C.

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The appeal had the desired effect. A number of Pressmen hurried to the scene of the Akali struggle to see things for themselves. At the sametime several medical men and boy-scouts and other volunteers offered their services to attend to the wounded men. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee deputed two of their members, Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni and Mian Fazal Din. Both proceeded to Amritsar to see things for themselves. They started for Guru-ka-Bagh accompanied by two members of the S. G. P. C. (S. Gurdyal Singh of Raja Sansi and S. Hari Singh of Jullundur) who were also proceeding to the same place to look after certain arrangements. The party was, however, not allowed to proceed beyond Raja Sansi, where a picket of policemen was posted. Even an appeal to Mr. Beaty whom they found at a distance of half a mile off the main road proved to be of no avail. A communique of the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee referring to this incident reports that sometime after we had left, S. Gurdyal Singh received a severe beating and was otherwise insulted for having dared to accompany us.

In addition to small jathas proceeding from the Gurdwaras at Guru-ka-Bagh to cut wood from the nearby 'garden' the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee now began to send large daily jathas from the Akal Takht to Guru-ka-Bagh. They were able to do this because of the crowds of men who had by this time begun to pour in from the countryside all anxious to seize the earliest opportunity to be sent forward for the Guru's service, as they called it. At first daily jathas of fifty Akalis were despatched from the Akal Takht, but within a few days, the number was increased to 100 men. In all cases the procedure observed was the same as the Jathas were not allowed to proceed to the Guru-ka-Bagh, but were stopped by a row of Policemen drawn up across the road at the Gumtala Bridge (not far from the District Courts) at Raja Sansi (six miles from Amritsar on the Amritsar-Ajnala Trunk Road), or near the Chhina bridge (about 8 miles from Amritsar) etc. the distance being increased at intervals of a few days.

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On these days when the jatha was stopped from proceeding forward at one place or another on the road, the treatment of the Akalis did not differ much from day to day. A line of policemen under a European officer would be drawn up across the road where it was intended to administer the beating to the men. Finding the road blocked to them, the Akalis would generally squat down on the bare ground with joined hands as if in prayer singing hymns all the while. They would be asked to disperse and go back to their homes and on their continuing to sit and sing as before, they would be dragged about and beaten brutally with lathis, often on their private parts, till they became senseless. They were then lifted up and thrown on one side of the road, where they were attended to by the scouts and medical men who were always present for rendering first-aid and then carrying the men in ambulance cars to one of the three hospitals improvised for the purpose at Amritsar near the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee offices. Fuller details of the beatings on certain days will be found on other pages.

On the evening of the 29th August, 1922, a jatha of 50 Akalis started from Akal Takht, but was stopped at Raniwala Bridge, where they found a strong police gaurd on duty. They were asked to disperse, but on their refusing to do so they were placed under a nominal arrest and kept there. Next day another Jatha also arrived there from Amritsar when both the Jathas were allowed together to cross the bridge "under a heavy shower of Lathis."*

As a result of the beating 30 men had to be left behind, "some of them in a very serious condition." The wounded men were a little later removed by lorries to Amritsar.

Meanwhile the usual beating of small batches of Akalis continued at Guru-ka-Bagh. Jathas of four or five men at a time attempting to go forward to cut wood from the nearby lands

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*See Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee communique No. 29, dated 30th August, 1922.

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for Guru-ka-Langer, were stopped and beaten with lathis to semi-unconsciousness. On the day of which I am speaking an old Akali is said to have implored Mr. Beaty that he might given a specially severe thrashing, because "that alone would purge his very sinful soul."

I know there are some sophisticated people who consider such things in the light of a joke. At one time I myself used to look upon such statements as exaggerations, but having seen such strange things to happen in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha, I have come to realize better that I did before the wonderful power of the spirit in life of a man of faith.

To turn to our story, the plot was now thickening, if it was not already gruesome enough. A regular hunt was started for the black-turban Akalis in the villages all round the Guru-ka-Bagh. Mr. Beaty himself on horse back and accompanied by one or two other Policemen was often seen moving from place to place and giving the black-turbaned men, wherever they were discovered, a taste of his cane. Guru-ka-Bagh itself became like a blockaded area. Closely surrounded by the Police, all provisions were prevented from reaching the Akalis there. Even the supplies of milk and medicines required for the Akalis who had only recently been beaten and had not yet been removed to the Amritsar hospital were stopped from reaching Guru-ka-Bagh. In some cases they were seized by the policemen for their own personal use. The offices of both the S. G. P. Committee and the Shromoni Akali Dal were raided by the Police. Both the places were locked up and sealed with a view to their being searched later on.

Nothing daunted the Akali Jathas continued to proceed day after day from the Akal Takht to Guru-ka-Bagh. Thus on the 31st August a jatha of about 60 Akalis started from Akal Takht at about 1 p.m. after taking the necessary pledge of non-violence. Overtaken by night between Raja Sansi and the Chhina bridge they decided to spend the night on the road, but even here they were attacked

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with lathis by Mr. Beaty's policemen so much so that more than half of them are said to have been rendered unconscious. Next day (September 1st) even a severer trial awaited the Gargaj Akali Jatha of about 120 men on its way to Guru-ka-Bagh. Near the Gumtala bridge, about a mile beyond the District Courts, the jatha was surrounded by the foot and mounted police. Mr. Dunnett, the Deputy Commissioner, and a military officer were also on the spot. Presently, they were charged by the mounted police who succeeded in breaking up the jatha into several small parties which were chased in different directions far into the fields on either side of the road. Prof. Jodh Singh of the local Khalsa College, who was then editing a moderate Sikh paper, *The Khalsa Advocate*, and who had accompanied the jatha as an interested sight-seer gave a graphic account of what he saw with his own eyes. According to Prof. Jodh Singh the Akalis are said to have been charged, beaten and some of them seriously wounded with lathis. As soon as the information about the incident reached the Akali office at Amritsar search parties were sent out with doctors and first aid relief and late at night only some of the men could be picked up and brought to the Akali hospitals at Amritsar.

The same story of beating was repeated, only with somewhat greater mercilessness, both at Guru-ka-Bagh and on the road leading to it. At Gur-ka-Bagh three jathas of five each went out one after the other. By this time the policemen had been specially drilled and trained* in administering the lathi blows on the chest and on the private parts as well as on the feet and legs. These methods were repeated for several days as they seemed to have appealed to the officers in-charge. Mr. Beaty, himself was seen on these occasions to be taking a prominent part in the beating. The Boy-scouts who were on duty as well as some of the medical men

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*A booklet was officially published laying down the regular procedure fo using the lathi.

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rendered every assistance. As the beating proceeded from day to day the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee took care to post photographers at places of vantage in order to be able to take snapshots of what was happening. The scenes were witnessed by large number of Akalis who were present as also by some other persons who had succeeded in obtaining a permit to visit Guru-ka-Bagh. It was by no means an easy matter to succeed in taking a good photograph from a safe distance, and in one case at least a camera was snatched away and returned in a damaged condition. The medical relief parties were also abused, assaulted and sometimes ordered to leave the place.

A word may also be said here about the sympathy and support which the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee received in their present severe ordeal at the hands of the citizens of Amritsar, who provided the Committee with clothes, charpais, milk, medicines and other requirements for the wounded men. By the end of August, three hospitals had been fitted up and equipped with an adequate staff of doctors, dressers, warders and all other servants. Here I must not omit to mention an interesting story which I heard very early from the lips of S. Teja Singh Samundri himself. As President of the Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Teja Singh was in main charge of the Guru-ka-Bagh opperations. One day he surprised me by telling me that he had won the morcha. "But Bhaiji," said to him, "the *morcha* has hardly begun. How can you say that you have won it." He then gave me the following story.

As large numbers of wounded persons began to be brought into the hospital at Amritsar S. Teja Singh Samundri wanted a couple of hundred Darris immediately for the wounded patients. He went to a merchant who was known to keep a large stock of darris in hand for sale. The merchant soon came to know who the customer was and for what purpose the darris were really required. Addressing Samundri he said, "Sardar Sahib, you need not trouble about the price." The Sardar was sent away with the

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assurance that the whole lot of darris would soon follow him along with a Bill and that he would have no cause of complaint on account of his charges. The required number of darris arrived at the hospital together with a Bill fully paid up. What the shop-keeper had done was this. He looked up his own invoice for the darris. He paid for two or three darris himself as his personal contribution. He then went round to some of the other shop-keepers and got each of them to pay for one two or three darris each, till the whole amount was made up. No profit was charged. A list of the contributors accompanied the paid up Bill together with a proper receipt for the amount. The Sardar was very much struck with this mark of sympathy on the part of a shopkeeper whom he did not know. It is only necessary to add that the same experience was repeated time after time not only with further supplies of darris for the wounded persons, but also for many other things required for their use. It is only necessary to add that not less than two thousand men passed through the hospitals each of them spending several days while some had to remain there for practically the whole time the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha lasted and, in fact, for sometime after the trouble was over. Some of the Hindu merchants of Amritsar paid for an ambulance car or two and if I am not mistaken, at least one man lent the use of no less than half a dozen such ambulance cars for the occasion. The total expenses incurred in connection with the equipment and management of the hospitals and the relief parties ran to many thousand of rupees, practically the whole amount being made up by voluntary contributions by the people of Amritsar, the Hindus contributing a lion's share of it. While there is not much to choose between the hammering which the Akalis received on one day or another, the story of the 1st of September contains features which are not common to the scenes enacted on other days. On that day, a jatha of about 100 Akalis started from the Akal Takht after taking the necessary vow of non-violence and after being blessed from the Akal Takht for the success of the mission on which they were being sent and

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after they had been photographed, each member wearing wreath of jesamine flowers round his black turban as a symbol of purity and sincerity which they were expected to observe in the discharge of their sacred duties. They proceeded towards Guru-ka-Bagh followed by four well-equipped ambulance cars with the necessary contingent of doctors, dressers and other assistants. They had hardly reached the Gumtala Bridge early that afternoon when they were stopped by the Police and asked to disperse and on their refusing to do so they were set upon by a large number of policemen who administered them a severe hammering, with *lathis*. Learning from the experience of previous jathas they soon sat down on the ground so as to remain as close together as possible. The *lathis* continued to rain upon them. They were now charged by a body of cavalry under a European officer. What happened can well be imagined. Two of the men are said to have received greivous hurts while most of the others were more or less seriously wounded. Throughout the lathi beatings and the cavalry charges the Akalis continued chanting Wahi Guruji and bursting into Sat Sri Akal now and again. The shouts became fainter and fainter and them completely died down when all the men had been sufficiently disabled in one way or another even to utter a cry. It wes truly a heart-rending scene and but for one fact that it was witnessed by hundreds of respectable persons who had followed the jatha from the city, it could hardly have been believed that such things were possible at the present time of boasted modern civilisation. Prof. Jodh Singh who was present on this occasion wrote in his paper, *The Khalsa Advocate* as follows :

"It is a pity that in spite of the fact that a European officer was at the head of the men on horse-back who rode backwards and forwards through the squatting Akalis and was himself in fact leading the charge, the official version of the incident was grossly inaccurate and mis-leading. By September 2, the scene had shifted higher up the road to Raja Sansi, where the jatha reached at about 5 p.m. when they found their further progress barred by a line

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of policemen armed with regulation lathis standing across the road. An other novel feature which was now added to the proceedings of the day was the presence of a man with a long black shirt and a drum hanging from his neck. The usual lathi hammering on this day proceeded in tune with the beat of the drum. After the men had received the usual lathi blows and had fallen to the ground, they were lifted up one by one and thrown over a mass of kankars from a height of two or three feet into the low lying ground on the one side of the road. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya had come up to see the gruesome drama that was now being enacted at Amritsar. But as he reached the spot a little too late he was not able to see the actual beating. He however saw the men lying on the side of the road and in the ditches and was greatly moved at the sight. He characterised the scene as "shambles."* As a press representative and as one who had taken care to provide himself with a permit from the Deputy Commissioner, I was present on this as well as on most other days and saw the cruel happenings with my own eyes.** Most if not all the policemen were either Gurkhas or Muhammadans, a few were Pathans and others seemed to be muslims from Shahpur and Jhelum Districts.

By the beginning of September, the struggle was in full swing and the publicity department of the S.G.P.C. and the press representatives who had been reporting the tragic events in full from day to day had done their work. There was great excitement all over the country and because of the bitter comments that had been appearing in the press the Government felt called upon to justify themselves. In a communique issued on September 1***, the Government gave a

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*It may be noted here that by this time according to the S. G. P. C. Report, the number of wounded persons had reached the figure 340.

**On this day L. Duni Chand, Malik Lall Khan and Captain Gopal Singh, M. L. C. of Bhagowal were also present throughout.

***The S. G. P. C, communique No. 53 (pages 62 & 63)
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brief history as to how the trouble had arisen. The S. G. P. C. at once repudiated the official version and pointed out that by a signed and stamped agreement the Mahant at Guru-ka-Bagh had consented to hand over the Gurdwara to the S. G. P. Committee and that, as a part of this agreement he was working under a Committee of 11 Sikhs who had been in full control of the shrine on behalf of the S. G. P. Committee by whom they had been appointed. This was sometime before the Nankana Sahib tragedy. But when the whole province was violently agitated and convulsed over the massacre of a large number of Akalis at the very birth-place of Guru Nanak, and large number of Sikhs began to be arrested for one reason or another, the Guru-ka-Bagh Mahant, like many others, was emboldened to defy the Akalis and sent at naught the terms of the agreement. It was at this time that, according to the S. G. P. Committee, they decided to take the control of the Gurdwara into their own hands. The Mahant approached the authorities for help, but when "the Superintendent of Police" —— we are quoting the S. G. P. C. version,— "came to the spot with a force of Police and studied the actual situation with his own eyes, he confirmed the possession of the Sikhs and left a body of policemen to protect the Akalis.* After sometime when the Police Superintendent was convinced that the storm had blown over, he wrote to the Gurdwara Committee that he was going to remove the Police guard unless the Gurdwara Committee wanted the guard to be kept at their own cost. This version is supported by the correspondence which has been reproduced earlier in these pages.** About some of the other matters dealt with in the official

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*See S. G. P. Committee press communique No. 54. This communique gives the details of cases of persons robbed, assaulted and otherwise badly treated by the police near the Chhina bridge.

**The two letters, first No.11633/4/4/21 and 2nd No. 1840/167 dated the 9th September 1922, are quoted on page——of the present volume.

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communique and the Shromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee rejoinder thereto we are not much concerned ; the facts are outside our personal knowledge and we do not undertake to sit In judgement on the conflicting view of the parties. All we would like to say is that, so far as we know, in general the Government was ill-served by its informants. I can personally vouch for the fact that a great many people in the surrounding villages bitterly complained to me and to many other persons about the manner in which they had been insulted, robbed and disgraced. The provisions that the villagers wanted to carry to Guru–ka–Bagh from a religious motive were often seized by the Police. I myself saw more than enough to convince me of the high-handedness of the Pollcemen at the Chhina Bridge as well as elsewhere, towards people who were in sympathy with the Akalis and were anxious to help them with supplies or in any other way, the behaviour and treatment of the custodians of peace and order was disappointing in the extreme. Even men who had gone to see the tragic scenes from a motive of curiosity were not spared and some of them had distressing tales to tell of their treatment. Speaking for myself I wish to record that had I not witnessed the scenes it was my misfortune to witness in connection with the Guru–ka–Bagh atrocities, I would never have believed that such things were possible and had actually happened. In the present narrative I have deliberately tried to understate the facts rather than otherwise.

with the beginning (1922), the tragic events connected with the Guru-ka-Bagh *morcha* were following each other in quick succession. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya arrived on September 2, and after addressing a crowded meeting of the Sikhs at Amritsar proceeded to Guru-ka-Bagh. A large number of press reporters had also by this time appeared on the scene including Mr. Sundram, representative of *the Independent*, an enterprising English Daily of Allahabad which had lately been started by Pt. Moti Lal Nehru. The *Independent* was true to the name it bore and within a short time made a great reputation for itself as a fearless exponent of

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official wrongs which other papers had taken many years to build up. Besides Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya and a number of other highly respectable men were also generally present to witness the strange things that were daily occuring both at Guru-ka-Bagh and on the road between Raja Sansi and the Chhina bridge eight to nine miles from Amritsar.*

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*Among these persons I saw the Hon'ble S. Jogindra Singh, Member, Council of State, S. Bhakhtawar Singh, M. L. C., Prof. Jodh Singh of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, ex-Member Golden Temple, Fellow Punjab University and Honorary Magistrate of Amritsar, S. Sobha Singh Rais, S. Sujan Singh, B. A., LL. B., advocate and Mill-owner, Sargodha, S. Basakha Singh Contractor, S. Ujjal Singh, M. A., Sardar (now Sir) Sunder Singh Majithia, S. Tara Singh, B. A., LL. B., (afterwards prominent member of the Punjab Legislative Council and subsequently Judge of the Patiala High Court, S. Tara Singh, Headmaster, Khalsa High School Amritsar, S. Jaidev Singh, son of Rai Bahadur Boota Singh of Rawalpindi, S. Shiv Dev Singh Oberoi of Sialkot, a prominent member of the Chief Khalsa Diwan and, subsequently, member of the Secretary of State's Council, London, S. Takht Singh, Manager of the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala of Ferozepore, S. B. Capt. Sardar Gopal Singh of Bhagowal, M. L. C., Lala Duni Chand, Bar-at-Law, Lahore, President, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, Malik Lal Khan, Member of the Khilafat Committee and Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, L. Rup lal Puri, President of the Amritsar Congress Committee, S. Sunder Singh Chawla Rais and Landlord of Lahore, S. Gurbux Singh of Delhi, Syed Atta Ullah Shah, Congress and Khilafat Leader, Jullundur, Lala Devi Dayal and S. Ghulam Mohd Hafiz, Secretary and General Secretary respectively of the City Congress Committee, Sialkot, S. Amar Singh Vakil, President, Congress Committee, Jullundur, S. Thakar Singh, General Secretary City Congress Committee Gujranwala, Sheikh Abdul Rehman, Sh. Mohd Umar and Sh. Alla Ditta raises the Hide merchants, Amritsar, S. Abdul Rehman,

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As regards the tragic scenes witnessed during the first few days of the month I need not know more than to give the following extracts from some of the reports issued by the press correspondents.

Continued from last page.

Superintendent, Provincial Khilafat Committee's Office, Lahore and numerous other prominent men.

The press was fully represented. For about two months I accompanied the jatha from the Akal Takht, as a special representative of the *Tribune*, Lahore and witnessed the harrowing scenes with my own eyes. Day after day I contributed a long account of the beatings to the columns of the *Tribune*. The editor told me more than once that my reports were being reproduced in the leading daily papers in the other provinces. The following press correspondents were also present on the scene of daily beating in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh affair. Mr. Sundram of the *Independent*, Allahabad, Mr. G. C. Rampal, representing the *Bandematram*, Lahore, S. Amar Singh of the *Loyal Gazette*, Lahore, Mr. Charan Singh, editor of the *Jathedar*, Amritsar, Mr. Atiqi, Assistant editor, *Zemindar* of Lahore, Mr. Milkhi Ram, Correspondent of the *Swaraj*, Madras, besides a number of other correspondents who put in occasional appearances. Among the more prominent medical men who were attending to the wounded on the scene of beating or in the hospitals, the following may be specially mentioned :

Dr. Mirza Yaqub Beg, L. M. S. of Lahore, Dr. Ghulam Mohd, M. B. B. S., Dr. Ghulam Haider, M. B. B. S., Dr. Abdul Aziz, Dr. Noor Mohamed, L.M.S., all of whom had been sent on behalf of the Punjab Provincial Khilafat Committee. Besides these the Khilafat Committee also sent a European lady who rendered conspicuous services in attending to the wounded. In addition to these a large number of other medical men offered their services and were put

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Day after day we find a jatha of about a hundred men assembling at Akal Takht taking the vow of non-violence with the

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Continued from last page.

in charge of either motor ambulance work or looking after the wounded men in the three hospitals established at Akali Bagh near the Golden Temple.

The following is the complete list as given in the S. G. P. C. press communique No. 34 page 50–51 :

1. Lt. Col. Ghulab Singh, LRCP., & S., (Edin) Director of Medical Services, 2. Dr. Khan Chand Dev, M. D., Incharge Motor Ambulance, 3. Dr. Mani Ram, Attached to above, 4. Dr. Bhagwan Singh, S. A. S., Incharge Hospital No. 1, 5. Dr. Sant Das, MBBS., Incharge Hospital No. 2, ward No. 1., 6. Dr. Mohan Singh MBBS. Incharge Hospital No 2 ward 2, 7. Dr. Chuni Lal Bhatia, LRCP & S., Incharge Hospital No. 3, ward No. 1, 8. Dr. Partap Singh, MBBS., Incharge Hospital No. 3, ward 2, 9. Dr. Manohar Lal, MBBS., Incharge Hospital No. 3 Ward 3, 10. Dr. Mohan Singh, S. A. S., Registrar. 11. Dr. Ram Rakha Mal Senior S. A. S., attached to Hospital No. 3, Ward No. 1, 12. Dr. Ganga Ram, S. A. S., attached to Hospital No. 3, Ward 3, 13. Dr. Raju Singh, attached to Hospital No. 2, Ward No. 1, 14. Dr. Hari Ram Singh, attached to Hospital No. 3, Ward No. 3, 15. Dr. Wasakha Singh, attached to Hospital No. 2, Ward No. 1, 16. Dr. Gurdit Singh, S. A. S. Incharge Medical Stores and comforts, 17. & 18. S. Jaswant Singh & S. Aya Singh Compounders, attached to above, 19 to 24. Compounders.

In addition to the above, three lady doctors were helping in dressing the wounded. Among the medical men in charge of the Hospitals who had volunteered their services in this work of mercy were the following :

1. Dr. Anup Singh, L. R. C. P. & S. (Edin) with his two compounders, Bhais Sohan Singh and Salig Ram ; 2. Dr. Santram Arora,

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resolve not to turn their back till they had reached Guru-ka-Bagh and gone forward to cut fire wood from the adjoining land for Guru-ka-Langer. As we have already described the daily jathas continued to go forward on their mission, to be intercepted somewhere on the road to be beaten down to unconsciousness, to be carried back by the Boy-scouts and other volunteers under the direction of a number of medical men who had volunteered their services either on their own behalf or on behalf of some political or social service organization to one of the ambulance cars which were standing at a short distance, and be driven back to Amritsar and lodged in one of the hospitals established by the S. G. P. C. in the Akali Bagh close to the sacred tank. It should clearly be mentioned here that contrary to certain reports which are said to have sent to the press by the Associated Press Agency, the Government did not provide any medical assistance or first aid to the wounded men, nor did they make any arrangements for carrying them to the hospitals at Amritsar. We are told that all these arrangmenets were made by the S. G. P. Committee with the generous offers which they received from the public of the Province. By the 7th September the number of men in the Akali Bagh Hospitals had reached the figure of seven hundred men lying there more or less seriously disabled.

By the evening of the 8th the number of the wounded had swelled to 936. In addition to this number there were not less than two hundred men lying at Guru-ka-Bagh who were being treated there.

Continued from last page.

3. Dr. Mangal Singh, 4. Dr. Kirpa Ram, 5. Dr. Ganga Singh, Rawalpindi, 6. Dr. Ishar Singh, 7. Dr. Harnam Singh Gujranwala, 8. Dr. Gurbachan Singh, 9. Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh, 10. Lady Doctor Ram Piari, 11. Compounder Diwan Singh, 12. Compounder Basant Singh, 13. Compounder Hira Singh, 14. Compounder Gurbakhsh Singh and 15. Compounder Partap Singh.

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On certain days even when it was raining the daily jatha proceeded on its mission and was received with lathi blows* as usual.

On the 9th September, to the amazement of everybody present, there was a sudden change in the attitude of the Police. On reaching the Chhina Bridge the jatha found no policemen lining up on the road and barring their way to proceed. In the elation of the moment, they proceeded rapidly forward, crossed the bridge and moved on straight towards Ajnala instead of turning to the right along the canal. They had gone about a hundred yards beyond the turning point when they discovered their mistake. Risaldar Anoop Singh who was among the spectators and who knew the road very well came up to the Jathedar and pointed out the mistake to him, I shall never forget what followed. The Jathedar who was at the head of his men atonce stopped the Jatha and in a commanding voice, as if he was giving the word of command on the field of battle said in simple Punjabi ; "O Singhs, we have made a mistake and have left the road to Guru-ka-Bagh behind. We did not know exactly that we had to turn (to the right) after crossing the bridge

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*In view of certain communiques issued by the authorities denying the severe nature of the beating administered by the policemen it may be mentioned here that day to day beatings were witnessed by hundreds of very respectable independent, men of whom the following may specially be mentioned. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, S. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, Sodi Lal Singh, M. L. C., S. Sangat Singh, M.L.C., S. Dilbagh Singh, M.L.C., The last three issued a joint statement about what they had themselves witnessed on the 7th Sept. 1922. In the course which they said "In our estimate the beating was very severe, brutal and inhuman. And on enquiry it was confirmed by the doctors at the spot that injuries were more serious on this occasion. We saw that the Akalis were perfectly non-violent and were falling senseless under the blows of lathis and singing Sat Nam Sri Wah Guruji all the time." (See Appendix———)

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but since you have taken the vow before the Akal Takht that you will not turn your back, nor will, therefore, move forward and will now reach Guru-ka-Bagh by wending our way through the fields. Come." So saying the Jathedar moved forward followed by his men. A more than usually loud shcut of Sat Sri Akal went up revibrating to a considerable distance and the Akalis continued their march singing sacred hymns as before. I may mention that the path of the Jatha lay through fields and kacha roads which were covered with water. It is no exaggeration to say that at several places the men—the Akalis, the spectators and all—had to wade through literally knee deep of muddy water here and there. Their feet fell upon thorny bushes but so catching was the enthusiasm of the moment that no one, not even the spectators, thought of the inconvenience but moved forward till they reached Guru-ka-Bagh at about 4 P. M.

I may indulge in a little digression here. On a previous occasion while a jatha was squating on the ground with the Jathedar in front of them, a photographer tried to take a snapshot of the Jatha from the side of the road, because the police were barring the way of the Jatha and the Photographer could not find a suitable place in front of them for fear of his camera being snatched away from him as had happened on one or two other occasions. In the natural desire to face the camera, some of the men turned their heads backward, noticing this, the Jathedar at once shouted an order to his men to look straight forward reminding them at the same time of their vow taken at the Akal Takht that very morning not to turn back their faces till they had reached their destination. This reminder was enough for them.

As we have already explained, the three hospitals which the S. G. P. C. had equipped were managed by competent medical men all of whom had volunteered their services for the purpose. They were maintained at the daily cost of more than two thousand rupees. The whole amount being said a S. G. P. C. communique, "mainly borne by the kind citizens of Amritsar."

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It should be mentioned that the three hospitals consisted merely of a large number of tents or shamianas when it rained and the condition of some of the men required greater care charitably disposed Hindus came forward to place at the disposal of the S. G. P. C. spacious building belonging to them for the accomodation of the wounded. In the same way on one occasion the committee of Hindu gentlemen in charge of the old Mission High School placed the building at the disposal of the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Cases were not wanting where the citizens of Amritsar offered to accomodate the wounded in their own houses.*

At Guru-ka-Bagh itself the usual daily spectacle continued to be witnessed without a break. As already explained a small jatha of five Akalis at a time would proceed towards the garden, be stopped on the way by a posse of policemen armed with lathis, received a severe beating till they fell down in a state of semi-consciousness and were then removed. As a rule, four or five of such jathas received the daily doze of Police beating. Even when medicines and comforts like milk, sugar and fruit for the sick and wounded were sent to the Guru-ka-Bagh with the permission of the Deputy Commissioner, they were sometime seized by the Police on the way for their own use.

As at this time no letters and even newspapers were being received at the S. G. P. C. Office in the daily dak through the post office, the Secretary of the committee wrote to the Post Master as to why the office dak was not being delivered and whether "there were any orders for the suppression or opening of correspondence." Two days latter he received a bundle of letters with a note from the Deputy Superintendent of city police saying "herewith 48 letters and 18 newspapers addressed to S. G. P. Committee detained in the post office vide Section 95 the C. P. C." All the letters had been opened before they were delivered, and

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*S. G. P. Committee communique. No. 58.

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even the ordinary newspapers addressed to the Committee had been treated in the same way.*

As there was considerable rivalry among the Akalis for precedence in being sent to Guru-ka-Bagh, after sometime the daily jathas were arranged by districts and the turn of the various districts was fixed, sometimes jathas having such names as Shahidi Jatha, the military pensioner's Jatha, the Gargajj Akali Jatha, the Nirbhai (Fearless) Akali Jatha etc. were formed. The names were slected by the Jathedars themselves.

From the 9th September, the Guru-ka-Bagh had assumed the appearance of a regular military camp. From the early morning of the 10th September, a large number of military men under the direction of two experienced officers had been busy erecting entanglements of barbed-wire all round the place, leaving only one narrow outlet for the Akalis within the Gurdwara precincts to come out and for those outside, to go in. Many of us had seen such a sight for the first time. It was an elaborate arrangement with a base about ten feet in breadth. It tapered to a point which was considerably higher than the tallest man. It was impossible to get through it but some Akalis who had been through the army explained to us that for properly trained men it was not at all difficult to jump over an entanglement of that kind with the help of long enough poles. In special cases entanglements were errected which were more difficult to negotiate. For such obstinations powerful scissors were used to cut the barbed wire and then creep through the hole.

Over-looking the spot where the final stages of the Police beatings at Guru-ka-Bagh were witnessed, there were some ordinary

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*The order intercepting and withholding the entire dak of the S. G. P. C. was issued in the beginning of September, 1922 and continued to be in force till the close of the following December. The order applied to the telegrams also (See S. G. P. C. communiqe No. 368.)

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buildings attached to the Gurdwaras. The roofs of these houses provided a most convenient place for accomodating important persons to see the harrowing scenes. Among these persons, I saw on one day or another and sometime for several days in succession the following gentlemen : Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mr. C. F. Andrews, Swami Shardhanand, M. Kifayat-ullah (President of the Jamiat-ul-ulema), Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Dr. Ansari, Sir Jogindra Singh, Sirdar Harbans Singh of Attari, S. Jodh Singh and the Sikh members of Punjab Legislative Council, besides a very large number of other gentlemen. It is worth noting that Swami Shardhanand was arrested as he was getting into his car just outside the entanglement, at Guru-ka-Bagh after he had witnessed the beating on one of these days, because he had made a speech earlier at Amritsar in support of the Akalis.

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About interruption of Sir Ganga Ram in bringing about a settlement of the Guru-ka-Bagh matter and extricating the Government from the serious situation in which it had entangled itself. See S. G. P. C. communique No. 297 dated 18th November 1922, pages 243-46.

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About the middle of November, the Government began to see the wisdom of not taking serious notice of the offence much as it was of the Akalis at Guru-ka-Bagh, Jatha after jatha who had been arrested when produced before the court was released on the recommendation of the Public Prosecutor, because the offence was not such as to justify conviction (Communique No. 295, page 242-43).

About the middle of November the barbed wire entanglements were removed and the police withdrawn except from the building where the Guru-ka-Langar was situated and in another part of which the Mahant was living. The Amawas fair which fell soon after the withdrawal of the police combined with the removal of the barbed-wire entanglements attracted an exceptionally large number of pilgrims who came to pay their homage at the Gurdwara. (Press communique No. 295 page 292).

At least sometime before the 18th November, 1922, the matter of the lease of the land to Sir Ganga Ram by the Mahant had become public property as is mentioned in communique No. 293 p. 240.

The Mahant had no right to lease the land, but it was simply done to get the Government out of an awkward position. The lease was given for one year and Sir Ganga Ram allowed the Akalis to cut wood from the lands without any hinderance. This did not solve the general problem of the Gurdwara, nor it was brought

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nearer any solution. It was only a make belief affair but did not in any way tend to reconcile the Sikhs to the position in which they found themselves (Press communique No. 292, page 236-37).

Up to the middle of November 1922, i. e. the 12th of November 1922, the number of arrests in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh was given by the Akalis as 5422 (see S.G.P.C. Press communique No. 287, page 235).

The military jatha proceeded on November 12, 1922, subsequently there was a 2nd military jatha also, each consisting of a little over a hundred men some of them who had by sheer dint of merit risen to very high position as a Risaldar and a Subedar in the army.

On the 16th November, the total number of arrested Akalis in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh had reached 5533 (press communique No.————)

On the 15th November it became known that some Hindu gentlemen had already approached the Mahant or were going to approach ostensibly on behalf of the S. G. P. Committee to lease out the land to him and that he would allow the Akalis to cut wood from the Guru-ka-Bagh lands. This was taken to be a device to get the Government out of the scrape into which they had been involved with the minimum loss of prestige. We will soon hear more about it.

On the 13th an emergent meeting of the Pensionholder Sikh Soldiers' Association passed a resolution condemning the action of the Government in interfering with their religious privileges and assuring the S. G. P. Committee that the retired soldiers sympathised with them and supported their activities. (Communique No.,282 page 231)

Among others the beatings at Guru-ka-Bagh were witnessed on one or two days by Shri Swami Sankracharya of Sharda Peeth, a recognised leader of the orthobox class of Hindus who had come specially to witness the scenes engaged at Guru-ka-Bagh. It was on the 12th November, 1922.

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The first Gurdwara Bill

The official Gurdwara Bill was introduced by Sir Fazil-i-Hussain, in the Punjab Legislative Council on November 7, 1922, (Press Communique No. 274). At this time the talk was going on and was well known to the public, about Sir Ganga Ram leasing the land and thus getting the government out of the whole trouble. According to the Akalis the object of the trouble was to establish the principal that the lands of the Gurdwara are inseparable from the shrine and are the property of the Gurdwaras.

Early in the month of November, the Jathedar of the 2nd Military pensioners Jatha sent the following telegram to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief in India :

> "Continued Government persecution of Sikhs compels military pensioners' second Akali jatha, hundred strong, to proceed to Guru-ka-Bagh on 12th, leaving hundred more to follow for sharing jail tortures with brothers in holy cause. We are glad to suffer at the hands of those in whose service we grudged neither life nor limb and feel no longer surprised at most loyal services being rewarded with brutal repression and unjustifiable retardation of Gurdwara Reform." (Press communique No. 289 page 222.)

Sometime about the 10th of November, 1922, prisoners Relief Fund was started and subscriptions invited from the public for it to help the poor relatives and dependents of those Akalis who had gone to jail and specially those relatives whose cattle and other property were being attached to pay the fines imposed on the imprisoned Akalis. (Press communique No. 270, page 22).

A hundred Akalis began to be arrested at Guru-ka-Bagh itself, instead of on the road leading to Guru-ka-Bagh. These men were sent in small batches, generally in the afternoon. The beatings were witnessed by thousands of men till barbed wire entanglements were put round the whole place when they could be witnessed only from outside the entanglements but with the permission of the

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Deputy Commissioner, some men could go in and see the beatings at close quarters. Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, Swami Shankracharya of Sharda Peeth, Swami Shardhanand, Mufti Kifayat Ullah, President of the Jamaiat-u-Ulema-i-Hind, Delhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Prof. Ruchi Kam Sahni, Mr. Duni Chand, Bar-at Law, President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, etc. etc. were among those who witnessed the beatings of small jathas at a time at Guru-ka-Bagh, from the roof of a building just over-looking the place of beating. They could see the beatings in every detail and hear all the talks and the abuse that very often took place between the police officers and the Akalis.

Five Sikh M. L. Cs were appointed on the Gurdwara Reform Bill but four of them had refused to act. The fifth member, Bawa Hardit Singh Bedi attended meetings of the Select Committee for sometime but from the 5th November, 1922 he too refused to work on the Committee at the request of the other four Sikh members and others.

It is a noteworthy fact that the Gurdwara Bill introduced in the Legislative Council by Sir Fazil-i-Hussain was framed in defiance of the desires and opinion of even the moderate sections of the Sikhs who were then on the Legislative Council. They, therefore, refused to serve on the Select Committee, four of them who were actually named did not attend a single meeting and the fifth Bawa Hardit Singh Bedi etc.

The 2nd military pensioners' jatha started on the 12th November for Guru-ka-Bagh to cut wood. (See press communique No. 261.)

After only when the reports coming out of the Attock jail about the treatment of the prisoners there and the communiques of the S. G. P. Committee were taken to be

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correct, the state of the things would be discreditably bad. We will not try to characterise the treatment of the Akali prisoners in five or six jails in the Punjab where they were kept but more particularly in the Attock jail because in making such an attempt would be courting failure. (Press communique No. 256.)

By the 5th November at least it became known to a well-known Hindu gentleman of Lahore who was trying to arrange taking lease etc. of the Guru-ka-Bagh lands. (Press communique No. 250.)

Shri Swami Shankracharya

Shri Swami Shankracharya Ji of Sharda Peeth came to Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, today and paid a visit to the Shromoni Committee Office. He was deeply moved to hear the details of the Guru-ka-Bagh affairs and expressed great sympathy with the Sikhs in their present sufferings. It was through his persuation that a Bengali medical relief party, consisting of two eminent doctors and twenty-four senior medical students, was sent in September from Calcutta to Amritsar to serve in the Shromoni Committee's hospital. His interest and sympathy for the Gurdwara Reformers laid the Sikh community under the deep debt of obligation. Last year too, he took great pains to counter-act the mischievous attempts of interested parties to sow discard between Sikhs and Hindus. He personally visited many important places in the Punjab greatly tended to remove mis-understandings. His presence markedly contributed to the harmony and effection which characterise the relations between the two communities. His Holiness is proceeding to Guru-ka-Bagh tomorow.

Sd/-General Secretary
Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committe
Amritsar.

16th October 1922.

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What led us to the Guru-ka-Bagh affair, for details see ccmmunique No. 214, page 195).

Subedar Surain Singh holding a high rank in the military department, arrested in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh (Communique No. 213 dated 26. 10. 1922).

Havaldar Chatar Singh who had lost one leg in action in Waziristan was also arrested in the military jatha.

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Press communique No. 205.

Arrests of Military Pensioners.

A Jatha of 101 military pensioner Akalis, while vindicating their right to cut wood from land belonging to Guru-ka-Bagh for Guru-ka-Langar, under the jathedarship of Subedar Amar Singh, were arrested on the 25th October. The sight was very impressive indeed so many stalwarts offering themselves for arrest; humiliation, insult, and religious provocation for the sake of their religion at the hands of the agents of the self-same British Government for the extension of whose dominicn they had not grudged the best blood of their being Immediately after their arrest, for the formal personal search, they were one and all stripped so completely naked that nothing but Kachhairas were left on their persons. The cheerfulness with which they submitted themselves to this peculiar humiliation was simply praise-worthy.

General Secretary
Shromoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee,
Amritsar.

25th October, 1922.

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As after the middle of October, 1922, the courts would often turn out a few of the arrested persons because they were too old

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or too young or had some other serious bodily defect such as one leg or one arm. The next day the S. G. P. Committee sent 100 men plus as many as rejected on the previous day. (Communique 202- dated 24. 10. 1922.)

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The Inquiry Committee apointed by the All-India Congress Working Committee started its work on 2. 10. 1922. R. R. Sahni was Secretary and Mr. Srinivas Iyengar was the President. Mr. M. V. Abhyankar and others were its members.

Pt. Motilal Nehru, Mr. V. J. Patel, L. Jamnalal Bajaj, B. Rajendra Parsad, Mr. T. Parkasham, Mr. Stokes, Swami Vishwa Nand and other members of the Working Committee of the All India Congress Committee, visited Guru-ka-Bagh today the 18th September, 1922, and one batch of four Akalis was arrested in their presence. They were much impressed on seeing a strange spiritual light beaming from the faces of the Akalis who offered themselves for arrest.

(Communique No. 86 page 109– back side part II)

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An ambulance corps consisting of Dr. J. M. Das Gupta, M. B., Professor Bacteriology University of Calcutta and Dr. Kiram Chander M. B. with 24 6th year students of the Calcutta Medical College and Carmichael Medical College Calcutta arrived here this morning to render medical aid to the Akalis, who had been wounded by the police. As, however, the beating by the police has happily ceased they will return to Calcutta tomorrow, with the affectionate gratitude of the Akalis in particular and the Indian public of Amritsar in general (Communique No. 86 part iii page 109 back side).

Acts of robberies at Guru-ka-Bagh, Mr. Mercer making investigations (See communique No. 85 page 109).

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About the injuries which the Akalis received at Guru-ka-Bagh in connection with the struggle regarding Guru-ka-Bagh Gurdwara, see communique No. 84, page 108.

See Guru-ka-Bagh by C. F. Andrews (page 105–6, see Communique No. 82, page 14.

Statement of Bhai Amar Singh before Mr. C. F. Andrews see page 101.

1st December ordered to be observed as a prayer day for the Reform of All Gurdwaras. Japji to be recited five times. Akhand Path to be kept wherever possible.

(Communique No. 388)

Medical relief offered by Government. S. G. P. C. Committee reply to the above. (See press communique No. 75, page 99).

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From the 14th September, it seems the beating ceased but Akalis were going on to the Kikar grove for asserting their right to cut fire wood were arrested instead. (See press communique No. 75, page 99)

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Serious medical cases reported by Lieutenant Col. Gulab Singh, Dr. Yaqub Beg Mirza, L. M. S., and Dr. Khan Chand, M. D., State Surgeon and other competent and qualified doctors (See Communique No. 74, page 98 A).

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The Home Member made a statement about the Guru-ka-Bagh affairs on a date little prior to 13th September, 1922 (See his statement) a contradiction of certain facts in this statement is given in S. G. P. Committee (Communique No. 74, dated 13. 9. 22 page 96–98.)

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After giving the previous known history about the possession of the Gurdwara the communique says "that on August 23rd, 1922 the Shromoni Committee was obliged to take charge of the institution into their own hands." Read the portion of the communique following the above words. (page 96).

Communique 74 is a long but an important one. Read the whole of it.

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Read the statement of Sir William Vincent, Home Member Government of India in the Legislative Assembly of September 11, 1922. After the 11th the beating of Akalis is said to have ceased and the alternative method of arresting them was adopted but complaints came in even afterwards of severe beating on certain days. For instance in spite of this denial beatings went on the 13th as usual. In the presence of His Excellency the Governor and the Executive Council member. The Police rammed the feet of Akalis (Communique No. 73, dated 13th September, 1922.)

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Serious beating on the 12th September, 1922. Mr. Vincent's statement. (Communique No. 72, page 94).

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Barbed wire. Akalis starved, thus no provision were allowed to go in. (See communique No. 70, part II, page 93.)

———

Hakim Ajmal Khan was at Guru-ka-Bagh and witnessed the beatings for two days and left on the night of the 11th September, 1922.

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On the 10th Septemter the Sikhs were beaten "in a novel way." (See Press communique No. 68, page 89. This is an

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important communique read the whole of it. I saw these things myself.)

The Postal department and S.G.P. Committee.

Up to the 10th October the Dak was being sent through the Superintendent of Police but stopped afterwards. (Communique No. 116 page 134).

(Press Communique No. 90 dated 20. 9. 22)

The following correspondence has passed between the S. G. P. Committee and the Post Master, Amritsar.

From

The Secretary,
The Shromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee,
Amritsar.

To

The Postmaster
Amritsar.

No. 5788/6-A-2. Dated 20th Sept., 1922.

Sir,

For the last ten days we have not received a single letter, or a packet unregistered, registered or insured, either directly from you or through the police. May I know if you or the police has any right to withhold our dak altogether and to open our registered and insured letters and packages? I beg also to inform you that if anything be missing out of the registered or insured articles sent to us we will hold you responsible.

An early reply will oblige,

Yours faithfully
Sd/- Gurcharn Singh,
General Sectary.

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From

The Postmaster, Amritsar.

To

The General Secretary,
S. G. P. Committee, Amritsar.

No. C. I. 872 Dated 20. 9. 1922.

Sir,

In reply to your letter No. 5788/6-A-2, dated the 20th September 1922, I have the hour to inform you that under orders of the Local Government, the mail matters addressed to you are being dealt with under Section 26 of the P. C. Act.

I have etc.,
Sd/- T. Singh,
Postmaster, Amritsar.

Attock Jail

No footwear. Many have to fetch water from Indus, specially hard condition of jail life. Bare footers common. (Press communique No. 364).

S. Amar Singh son of S. S. Sardar Khazan Singh, given bar-fetters for one week for asking a warder not to use abusive language. Jailor Gokal Chand, his treament very harsh, became notorious. (Press communique No. 357 date 17. 12. 1922).

Considerable lung trouble. Sancty clothing, prisoners kept in shouldaris.

Bronnchial troubles, Several deaths in jail (Communique No. 314).

Subedar Amar Singh was Jathedar of first military pensioner's jatha.

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Early in December the Government was tired of maintaining such a large number of Akalis in the jail and began to release them on one pretext or another, so it was believed by the Akalis (Press communique No. 340).

Equally 1700 Akalis kept in shouldaris in Attock jail. Several cases of prisoners scumbling to death. (Communique No. 301.)

On 12th the exact number of Akalis in Attock jail cannot be easily ascertained, but the number of the prisoners must be very large indeed considering that on the 12th October, the prisoners sent to Attock jail numbered to as many as 700. (Press communique No. 193).

Sometimes 25 out of every hundred persons arrested, were released on one pretext or another. To make up the deficiency, therefore, the S. G. P. Committee will send 122 instead of 100 Akalis to cut wood in batches of four or five.

From the middle of October at least the court began to find all kinds of excuses for letting off as many as of the arrested persons as they possibly could, because the idea was to lesson the number of convictions as much as possible. (Press communique No. 173).

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APPENDIX

The medical men in charge of the three Hospitals at the Akali Bagh submitted the following statement to the S. G. P. C. which was published in their communique No. 63.

Brief statement of injuries received on the 6th.

1.	Injuries to the organs	32
2.	Contused wounds	12
3.	Brain injuries	15
4.	Injuries above the trunk	20
5.	On the front part of the body	15
6.	Tooth shaken	1
7.	Urine trouble	7
8.	Simple	55
9.	Badly hurt	25
10.	Very badly hurt	3
11.	Serious	18
		203

The Statement of injuries received on 7th :

1.	Injuries above trunk	12
2.	Contused wounds	11
3.	Punctured wound	1
4.	Front part of body	15
5.	Brain	11
6.	Organs	15
7.	Urine trouble	1
8.	Fracture of bone	3
9.	Simple	59
10.	Badly hurt	14
11.	Very badly hurt	3
12.	Serious	15
	Total.....	160

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APPENDIX

I came Amritsar on the 2nd September 1922, and went along with an ambulance corps as a medical man to help the wounded.

At about 5 p.m. the Jatha reached just close to the Ekka stand of Raja Sansi. I found that the Police was standing their and the Jatha was stopped. What actually passed between the Jathedar and the Police I cannot say, as I was a little bit behind the Jatha, but in a few minutes time I saw that the police began to beat the Akalis with long brass bound lathis without any discrimination and kick those who had fallen down. Mr. Beaty too was seen using his cane and kicks. After this the fallen Akalis were dragged either by their head-hair or otherwise and thrown on the side of the road in mud or water even. They were dragged over the kankars collected for the repairs of the road.

After some minutes Mr. Beaty asked Dr. Khan Chand, In charge Ambulance corps, to pick up the wounded etc., and we all commenced to see the Akalis and treat them accordingly. As I did not see all the patients quite closely I could not say where they all were hurt, but I certainly saw one of them bleeding from the head and dressed him, others seen by me were found with marks of lathis blows on arms, back, neck, side of chest and legs. Their Kurtas or other dresses were torn, heads naked. At the commencement of beating I found that one man with a black long kurta was beating a drum, as I had seen on the Frontier, which meant that it was to excite the police people for beating.

We had commenced to look after the wounded, when Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji came back from Guru-ka-Bagh side and saw the Akalis in this condition and did all that was possible for him for the afflicted. He was there till after 8 p.m. or so and left for Amritsar. When a very large number of the wounded had been safely removed to Amritsar, we left the place after 9 p.m. with last batch of

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wounded and the scouts. When the beating was going on and the Akalis were lying down on the ground, I saw one European gentleman with a hand camera who on enquiry was found to be a representative of the Associated Press and was seen to be deeply effected by the sufferings of the Akalis. He is the manager of local liquor distillery and was asked to take up this work.

Next day I again accompanied the Jatha as usual, which was stopped near Chhina Canal bridge and a very large number of spectators also accompanied them upto that place. As usual one official lately found to be a Naib Tehsildar talked to the Jathedar while the Jatha was sitting on the road. He was said to have told them to go back and disperse but the Jathedar took no notice of this order. After this the police began to beat the Akalis while sitting in the same way as yesterday and dragged them to the sides of the road. One or two were thrown in the water of a nalla running by and beaten there too. After a while the wounded were allowed to be attended by the Ambulance people, who examined them and treated accordingly and sent them on to Amritsar in lorries. Today, too, the Associated Press man was busy in taking photographs while the Akalis were being beaten. Today there was no drum beating. Other Press representatives also were present like yesterday. The marks of lathi beating were found on all parts of the body and kicks were also used especially on the Private parts. One of the sepoys while taking to me said that the Sikhs were their (Pathans) enemies and on my enquiry as to why it was so, he said that they (sikhs) had fought against their prophets. When I pointed out to the wrong idea entertained by him, he could not explain this position, which showed that he and his companions were being taught on those lines by some person. It was late in the night when the last batch of workers came to Amritsar, as the place was at a greater distance to reach and come back. Mr. Sundram of the *Independent* (Allahabad) was also amongst the Press Representatives as yesterday.

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On the 4th September 1922, again the Jatha was stopped the Police at Chhina bridge as yesterday, but today there was some change in the method of Mr. Beaty. Pardit Madan Mohan Malviyaji was also on the spot and the Jatha after being stopped by the police sat down on the road, and some sepoys stood in front, on sides and behind. This day the number of spectators was very large and it included men like Hon'ble S. Jogindra Singh of Simla, S. Khazan Singh, M.L.C., S. Sangat Singh, M.L.C., and many others whom I did not know. Some wated to go further to Guru-ka-Bagh but were stopped and not allowed to go.

After this Mr. Beaty ordered his horsemen as well as the sepoys to chase the public and to make them run for at least half a mile back to Raja Sansi etc. In doing so the police attacked all the people and handled them roughly including all the notable persons. Even press representatives were treated harshly and Swami Rama Nand of Simla was pushed back. I saw from distance that the same sepoy with long black kurta, who was beating drum on the 2nd instant at Raja Sansi place, was chasing the people in the fields and snatching articles from them with the help of the Swars. I could not say how much money or other articles were looted on that they, but the way in which all this was being done looked like absolute anarchy as if they were the absolute rulers of the place and that they would never be required to explain their conduct to any body. This beating and looting lasted for a pretty long time and when the sepoys came back I saw one of them wrapping a white sheet round his loin. The people were pursued more than once and Mr. Beaty was heard to order to see that no tam tam or conveyance was allowed to stay on the northern side of Raja Sansi, and all people were driven back.

Just when the public was being driven back by the sepoys, one gentleman was roughly treated by Mr. Beaty himself. He was asked to leave the place, upon which the gentleman in question pleaded that he was an M. L. C. but Mr. Beaty said that he did not

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care for it and told him to leave the place. Mr. Beaty was then shown a piece of paper then he was allowed to go near the Jatha where the Press Representatives were standing. S. Jogindra Singh drew the attention of Mr. Beaty to the fact that certain sepoys had robbed some members of the public and that their articles were still in their possession and he suggested that they might be searched atonce. Mr. Beaty, however, did not care to carry out the search at that time and when S. Jogindra Singh came back from Guru-ka-Bagh he was informed by Mr. Beaty that sepoys had been searched in the presence of the Naib Tehsildar and that nothing was found on their persons.

Mr. Beaty talked with Pandit Malaviyaji and promised to him that he did not intend to use any kind of force that day. He said he was sure he make the Akalis to return to Amritsar and assured Panditji in every way. Panditji made the Jatha to sit on one side of the road so that the public traffic might not be obstructed. The Jatha was thus sitting in the sun from midday to sunset and it was with difficulty that the Akalis were allowed to be given water for drinking by Mr. Beaty. In the evening about the sunset the Jatha performed the Rahras and ardas when Pandit M. M. Malaviyaji, Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni and others were present.

Mr. Beaty assured Pandit Malaviyaji that there would be no beating today and that he should go away. Panditji left the place but apprehending some danger stayed a little back on the road leaving Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni Incharge for the night, and he managed to look after the affairs and made preparations to rest. He had hardly lay down when Mr. Beaty came and asked if Malaviyaji had gone away, as an enquiry was made by the police officials. Soon after this an attack was made unexpectedly on the people there. Mr. Beaty asked the ambulance men and lorries also to be removed back to a place where they could not be seen by the Akalis, as Mr. Beaty was of the idea, as he expressed it, that these people had come here only because they were pressed and were afraid of

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public opinion and if there was no one to see them, they would quietly go back to their homes with a little persuation. Accordingly, the lorries were removed back to a distance behind a bridge and Prof. Ruchi Ram, Dr. Khan Chand, one or two press Representatives were left there at the instance of Mr. Beaty to see that no wrong was done to the Akalis and to bring them to lorries and put them in it. While bringing the Akalis in this way the sepoys gave them beating in such a way that no hurt may be produced and pushed some to this side or that. The Akalis would jump down from the lorry and would be thus hurt and try to go to the place of Jatha from the side of the road where they would be pursued by the police and handled very badly. Prof. Ruchi Ram saw the matter more fully as he was there, and he said that beating was also restored to, which was objected to by Professor Sahib, Govind Malaviya * had also joined. Mr. Beaty thus tried in forcibly putting some Akalis in lorries and made them to be taken away to Amritsar under the guard of his own police men. His use of lorries for this purpose was objected to by the doctor incharge and myself. This made him furious and he began to cruelly beat the Akalis after 10 p.m. and then they were removed to Amritsar by and by and it was very late when the workers had to go on foot for want of conveyance. The patients were brought on stretchers to long distance or they were chased when they were trying to join their companions. Some were taken out of the fields and the water where they had been thrown. The patients were searched with the light of lantern and picked up from various places.

Sd/- Parashu Ram Sharma
Secretary,
Panjab Provincial Congress Committee,
Lahore.

Amritsar,
29. 9. 1922.

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*Son of Pandit M. M. Malaviya.

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APPENDIX

Ferozepore City
8th Oct., 1922.

My dear Prof. Sahib,

Your letter as well as the telegram. Herewith per my man Sardha Ram I am sending my written statement as to what I saw on the 7th September 1922, at Chhina bridge. On that day we could not see any beating at Guru-ka-Bagh as it began to pour heavily. The beating I heard was done late in the evening. Besides what I saw with my own eyes on the 7th I saw on the 13th in the Bagh Akalian, lorries bringing the wounded from Guru-ka-Bagh who were all hurt on the face and some badly hurt on the eyes. I saw two of them who were hurt on the eyes being taken out of the lorry. I did not see the beating done in my presence on the 13th. I had gone to Amritsar to see the Governor and could not go to Guru-ka-Bagh. If there is anything you wish to ask me, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Sodhi Lal Singh, M.L.C.

Statement

I heard and read in papers about the unfortunate happenings at Guru-ka-Bagh Gurdwara near Amritsar and wanted to see it for myself but my ill health did not allow me to go earlier. On the 5th September, 1922, I received a telegram about the meeting of the Sikh Members of the Council at Lahore and consequently I reached there and attended the said meeting at Sardar Khazan Singh, Bar-at-Law's bungalow. On the morning of the 7th I started with some other Council members for Amritsar. We had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Mercer, Deputy Inspector General of Police, who also was

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going to Amritsar by the same train. On our enquiry about the brutal beating of the Police to those Akalis who were sitting or lying on the ground and dragging them by their (Keshas) he said that he did not issue any such order.

We reached the spot (Chhina bridge) with Mr. Mercer about 20 minutes before the Jatha arrived. We met Sher Singh Naib Tehsildar, and asked him if he took away the Medical comforts sent from Amritsar on the 6th for the wounded and the sick, and in answer he said that he did take them away and they were later on disposed of by Mr. Beaty's instructions but they did not reach the wounded.

When the Jatha came in sight at about 2.15 p.m. the policemen prepared themselves for the beating and Mr. Mercer looking at one extraordinarily thick lathi mounted with iron at one end about 9 feet in length and brass at the other end ordered the police man to change it for a smaller one to which he replied that it was supplied to him by Mr. Beaty and there was no other to use. Mr. Mercer than ordered him to use the thicker end of the lathi while beating. On the approach of the Jatha, it was (not) by the Policemen under Mr. Lobb and beating was begun. While beating was going on some of the policemen were striking the Akalis with the pointed end of the lathis, some on the private parts, and some of the ribs. When Mr. Mercer's attention was drawn that this was being done again inspite of his prohibitory orders a few minutes before. Upon this Mr. Mercer again shouted to the policemen to stop that sort of beating.

Later on, we reached Guru-ka-Bagh where the rain began to pour heavily and we were unable to see much there. We saw more than one hundred Akalis there who were calm and contented reciting Shabads. We met a doctor there who told us that he had returned just then from the Police camp after dressing a police man who got injuries on account of fight which they had amongst themselves on account of the division of the loot committed from the neighbouring

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villages by some of them. On our return we saw on the way to Chhina bridge about a dozen Akalis lying senseless on the road-side who were being removed by motor lorries, others having been removed before.

In our estimate the beating was very severe, brutal and inhuman and on inquiry it was confirmed by the Doctors at the spot that the injuries were more serious on this occasion. We saw the Akalis were perfectly non-violent and falling senseless under the blows of the lathis uttering Satnam Sri Wahiguru all the time.

Sd/- Sodhi Lal Singh, M.L.C.

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APPENDIX

To
The Secretary of the
S. G. P. Committee, Amritsar.

Dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter No. 7017/6A–2. The accounts of what took place on the 4th September, 1922 on the Ajnala Road have already been published in all the papers. I don't think I can add anything. However in obedience to your wishes I write the account briefly, keeping in view the points on which you require information specially.

S. Joginder Singh had a permit for his party and the Chief Khalsa Diwan secured one for the members of its Executive Committee. Between Raja Sansi and the Canal bridge, all conveyances were stopped. The jatha was stopped on the road and they were sitting in the middle of the road reciting "Sat Nam Sri Wahiguruji ....." The number of spectators, I think, was about two thousand. As. Mr. Beaty was not there we could not show him our passes, so we got down and joined the spectators. Policemen wanted the spectators to get back, which order they immediately obeyed. They got back to the place which was pointed out by a mounted policemen which might be about 200 yards from the place where the jatha was sitting. Only press reporters were permitted to stay at a few yards distance from the Jatha. Then came Mr. Beaty with his officers, he gave some orders to his men. I only heard the words (make them get back). On this policemen ordered the spectators to get back which they atonce obeyed and began to move backward, but in spite of this police constables rushed upon the crowd and pushed some of them with lathis from behind. Spectators had no other alternative but to run as quickely as they could. At a short distance I saw a tonga, I got into it and

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asked the driver to drive rapidly. At the same time I saw Headmaster Tara Singh of the Khalsa College (member of the Evecutive Committee of the Chief Khalsa Diwan) fallen on the ground on side of the road in a bad plight and one or two policemen searching his pockets. I saw some other persons also who were made to fall by poilcemen and whose pockets were also searched by them. The chase continued for about a mile, the farther they went the bolder they became in looting. When the crowd reached near Raja Sansi the policemen went back. Many men complained of being robbed. I saw there a poor man weeping for the loss of his purse which he said contained a large sum. A man had the lower parts of his ears bleeding where from he said his gold ear rings were snatched away mercilessly. Many names of such persons were noted by some press reporters or others. Sardar Tara Singh (not the Akali leader) Headmaster, of the Khalsa Collegiate School, Amritsar, by this time joined us; he was robbed of his spectacles and the money he had in his pocket. Many others also received lathi strokes. Then we all who had passes went to Mr. Beaty, passes were shown to him and he replied that we could proceed. He was told about the doings of policemen and was requested to search their persons in order to find the stolen property, but he said the party should proceed to its destination and he would make the search himself afterwards and promised not to disperse the jatha till the return of the party. I attend to your other special points.

1. I did not see any Sikh being dragged by his keshas, but saw many men without turbans with their loose hair spread over their shoulders. I saw one Sikhs's turban was snatched away (from his head) by a policeman.

2. Yes, it is great insult to Sikh religion and is highly provocative if a Sikh is dragged by his keshas or his beard is pulled or his turban is pulled off.

3. I received no personal injury. I and S. Mohan Singh, Vaid of Tarn Taran were together at the time, by chance the constable

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who ran after us had only a thin twig in his hand, he satisfied his mind by touching every ones back or coat with it.

10. 10. 1922.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-Sunder Singh Ramgarhia.

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APPENDIX

(The Official case)

Extracts concerning Guru-ka-Bagh affairs from the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India during the year 1922-23. pages 281-83.

GURU-KA-BAGH (PUNJAB SITUATION)

"Although the situation in the Panjab had been relieved by measures taken for the restoration of order, causes for anxiety still persisted through the summer of 1922. The reform party abandoned their tactics of mass pressure and did their best to come to terms with idividual Mahants of Sikh shrines in order to secure control over these irstitutions. Most of these Mahants were not without a strong local following, and although many of them were by no means estimable persons, they were not regarded with abhorrence by those who lived in immediate contact with them. None-the-less, so strong was the hold which the reformers had now acquired over the Sikh community as a whole, that many Mahants were more or less forcibly persuaded to transfer their shrine to the administration of the S. G. P. Committee. Among these shrines was that of Guru-ka-Bagh situated about twelve miles from Amritsar city. The Akalis had for some time been in possession of the shrine proper, while the Mahant continued to remain in possession of the residential quarter, the garden and the land; for the agricultural portions of which he continued to pay land revenue. Early in August, some Akalis serving at the shrine cut down a tree on the land. The Mahant complained to the Police*

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*The S. G. P. Committee sincerely believed that the Mahant had been put up by the authorities to prefer this complaint. There

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and the Akalis were arrested and put on their trial. This led to more trees being cut down ; fresh complaints were made to the district authorities and a detachment of police was sent to protect the Mahant. The S. G. P. Committee now took up the challenge ; and Akalis began to concentrate on Guru-ka-Bagh. The continued influx of these bands was said to have become a source of embarrassment alike to the public and the district authorities.* The officials met the threat by placing police pickets along the roads leading to Guru-ka-Bagh with instructions that parties of Akalis as they arrived should be turned back. The bands were treated as unlawful assemblies, because their obvious objective was to take forcible possession of private property. They were stopped at different points and directed to disperse. They refused to obey the order, and when they tried to advance towards the police pickets, they were dispersed by force. *As each member of a Jatha before setting out upon this enterprise, had taken an oath of non-violence, no resistance was offered to the use of lathis against them. The spectacle of the forcible dispersal of band after band of people, who made no effort whatsoever to defend themselves from the lathis of the constables soon aroused considerable excitement in the neighbourhood. The Akalis displayed remarkable self-control, and in all sections of the Indian press, scarcely a word of commendation was given to the remarkable good temper and excellent discipline shown by the police in the discharge of their peculiarly unpleasant duty.*

(Coutinued from last page)

was no garden. The tree in question was a dry kikar tree fit only to be used as fire wood. The fuel was meant for the langar (free kitchen) attached to the shrine. Considering everything, the matter was not worth bothering about.

**There is not a single recorded case of embarrassment on the part of the public. On the contrary, the public representing all communities were anxious to help and did actually render every kind of assistance. (R. R. S)

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Throughout the Sikh community, as can readily be understood, these incidents excited much feeling; and those who had received injuries at the hands of the police became popular heroes and martyrs for the faith. But among the other communities in the Punjab the Guru-ka-Bagh affair did not arouse very much interest; and there were no symptoms of popular disturbance. To this the fact that certain sections of the Sikhs had lately behaved in a high-handed manner, and had made themselves obnoxious both to Hindus and to Mohammedans prior to the summer of 1922, was probably a contributory cause. For while sympathy was freely expressed no section of opinion showed any disposition to range itself actively besides the Akalis in their struggle with the forces of law. Before long the local Government found it desirable to abandon the forcible dispersion of Akali Jathas, and instead to arrest individual members. The excitement thereupon gradually died down, and in November 1922, a public-spirited individual obtained from the Mahant a lease of the land which had given rise to the dispute and himself made no objection to the Akalis cutting wood thereon. While the forcible dispersals were being continued, a fresh attempt was made to rally popular enthusiasm to the side of non-co-operation. This however produced comparatively little effect; first because vigorous steps were taken to make the real facts of the matter known to the general public; and, secondly, because the Sikh community, with its militant traditions and martial outlook, is often suspected by members of less masterful creeds of an ambition to dominate and to over-bear. Further, a good monsoon, and excellent autumn crops produced a further fall in prices, and with the continual reduction of economic pressure popular interest in political matters showed no signs of reawakening.*

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* This is a good instance of a bad case made worse by specious pleading. Tens of thonsands of people of all ranks & classes saw what was happening from day to day. Speaking for myself I can honestly say that if I had not witnessed the brutal & heartless

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"Perhaps the most thankless and unpleasant task was that of opposing and dispersing the bands of Akalis who, chanting religious songs and vowed to raise no finger of violence advanced unflinchingly against the cordons which barred the road to Guru-ka-Bagh. The Indian press resounded with praise of the Akalis for their marvellous exhibition of self restraint, but few indeed were the writers who did justice to the police for their behaviour in circumstances which tried to the utermost their loyalty, their discipline, and their good temper. Before long as fortune willed, those who had been loudest in their condemnation of the force for the "beatings of Guru-ka-Bagh" were driven to acknowledge that even a policeman might have his uses." (page 79)

"Among the most common content of questions during the period under review may be mentioned communal representation in the services, political trials, the alleged illtreatment in jails of political prisoners, the Guru-ka-Bagh affair, the Akali activities, and the imposition of punitive police, and it is not without significance that topics ordinarily so popular as education appeared to have receded somewhat into the background during 1922." (page 92)

"Among the current events which excited the interest of the Assembly, may be noticed the affair of Guru-ka-Bagh, concerning which an account is given in an other chapter. As a result of a motion for adjournment, the Home Member presented to the House a statement of the facts of the case." (page 97)

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(Continued from last page)

beatings, not only under the orders of European officers but also, now & again, by high Police officers themselves, I would never have believed that such things were possible. I am shocked to find the official reports so palpably coloured and falsified as was certainly the case in the official statements which I have reproduced above.

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Guru ka Bagh
An eye-witness account
By C. F. Andrews

I

In this communication to the Press, I shall confine myself to what I have seen with my own eyes since my arrival at Amritsar on the morning of September 12 (1922).

At 1 p.m. on that day I started for Guru-ka-Bagh and after leaving the main road proceeded along the back of a canal. There were three tongas in all. When we had gone some distance along the bank of the canal, we saw two Sikhs in black turbans on the opposite bank waving their hands to us and pointing to the sky, where a great bird was circling in its flight towards Amritsar. Immediately all those who were in the tongas got down and eagerly pointed out the bird to me and told me that every day, as soon as the beating at Guru-ka-Bagh began, the golden hawk rose from the Guru's garden and took its flight to Amritsar to tell those who were serving at the golden temple what was taking place. They asked me if I had seen the bird, and I answered that I had seen in the distance the great bird which they had pointed cut but I could not say whether it was a golden hawk or not. They said to me. "That was the bird. It was the golden hawk. It has gone to tell at the Darbar Sahib about the sufferings of the people." There was a light in their faces as they spoke to me with be tokened joy. I was especially struck by the look of devotion in the face of a Sikh lady of middle age who accompanied us. I can only describe it by saying that she looked, in her quiet devotion, like a picture of the "Madonna." The whole scene, the intense faith of my companions, the look of reverence in their faces, the solemn awe mingled with joy, moved me very deeply. It was the first event which really gave me the religious atmosphere of all that I was afterwards to

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experience in the later scenes. It put me in touch with the Aka reform movement in its spiritual aspects as perhaps nothing else could have done.

After leaving the bank of the canal we had to pass across open ground for a long distance which was covered with water in certain places. Our progress was naturally slow in the tongas. We met on the route a band of hundred Akalis in black turbans, who had marched that morning from Amritsar after having taken the vow at the Golden Temple that they would not commit one single act of violence, either by word or deed. I was to see, later on, how faithfully they kept that vow. On subsequent days I had opportunities of witnessing the scene at the Golden Temple itself as they came out with religious joy written on their faces and a tiny wreath of white flower placed on their black turbans which dedicated them to the sacrifice. I was able to see also, in the city, the crowds of spectators, Hindus, Musalmans, and those of every religion, welcoming and encouraging them, as they marched solemnly and joyfully forward calling upon the name of God as their protector and saviour. There, in the city, they were at the very beginning of their pilgrimage. Mile after mile of muds-tained, water–logged road lay before them. When I saw them, on this first day of my visit, as they drew near to the end of their march, they were bespattered with mud and dirt and perspiration was streaming from them, but their garlands of white flowers were stiff encircling their black turbans, they were still uttering with triumphant voices their prayer to God for protection, and the light of religion was still bright upon their faces. There were some who were young lads among them, and a very few old men with grey beards who had insisted on being taken and would not be denied, but the great majority were of military age and it was easy to guess that out of these stalwart bearded men there had been many who had served in the army. I had an opportunity later of getting accurate statistics and it would appear that at least one in three of the Sikhs in these Akali Jathas (as they are called) had been a soldier

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and had served during the Great War.

We got down from the tongas and went along with them for some distance. I was dressed in my English dress, with a sun helmet on my head, but even before they knew my name they returned my greeting without the slightest trace of bitterness in their faces. There was a halt to drink water and they got to know who I was and came forward. Then one who was serving water with a brass vessel came to me and offered the water to me also to drink. I put my hand forward to receive it, but he said to me, "Please take the vessel itself" and I took it in my hands and drank from it. The act had a strongly religious aspect to me. It was as if I was sharing in a sacrament of consecration before the suffering was to begin.

At any place where water could be received along the road there were villagers, both men and women, who waited eagerly each day to fulfil this small act of service by giving water to the Akali Jathas. Again, I noticed the extraordinary devotion of the women. Their faces were full of motherly tenderness towards those who were going forward, in the name of their religion, to receive suffering without retaliation.

After very great difficulty and many halts at impassable places we reached Guru-ka-Bagh at last. The first sight that met our gaze was that of eight motor lorries, such as usually carry passengers for hire which were now being used as a substitute for ambulance vagons. When I looked at them, I could picture vividly the acute suffering to those who would be carried in them, for more than fourteen miles to the base hospital in the city. Here and there the motors would almost certainly get struck in the deep mud. The jolting in other places would be difficult to bear even for a man who was quite well. What must it have been to men who were suffering from many confusions and wounds ?

There was one act of humanity which might atonce have been thought of on the part of the officials, but no one among them seemed to have noticed it or suggested it. The public road along

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the canal was almost worse, from the point of view of jolting, than the open track beyond. But on the other side of the canal was a private road, kept for officials, along which the motor lorries with the wounded persons might have passed smoothly and quickly. It would have been an inexpressible relief to them on that terrible journey back from Guru-ka-Bagh, if the lorries had been allowed to use it. But the subordinate Government officials who were approached time after time by the doctors and attendants refused altogether to allow them. I am quite certain that if the higher officials had been approached they would not have refused. But one of the greatest hardships in India at the present time is the tension which exists on both sides, the open gulf which grows day by day wider and wider, the almost complete distrust with which Indians have learnt, by bitter experience, to regard the official world.

II

When I reached the Gurdwara itself, I was struck at once by the absence of excitement such as I had expected to find among so great a crowd of people. Close to the entrance there was a reader of the Scriptures, who was holding a very large congregation of worshippers silent as they were seated on the ground before him. In another quarter there were attendants who were preparing the simple evening meal for the Gurdwara guests by grinding the flour between two large stones. There was no sign that the actual beating had just begun and that the sufferers had already endured the shower of blows. But when I asked one of the passers-by, he told me that the beating was now taking place. On hearing this news I at once went forward. There were some hundreds present seated on an open piece of ground watching what was going on in front, their faces strained with agony. I watched their faces first of all, before

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I turned the corner of a building and reached a spot where I could see the beating itself. There was not a cry raised from the spectators but the lips of very many of them were moving in prayer. It was clear that they had been taught to repeat the name of God and to call on God for deliverance. I can only describe the silence and the worship and the pain upon the faces of these people, who were seated in prayer, as reminding me of the shadow of the Gross. What was happening to them was truly, in some dim way, a crucifixion. The Akalis were undergoing their baptism of fire, and they cried to God for help out of the depth of their agony of spirit.

Up till now I had not seen the suffering itself except as it was reflected in the faces of the spectators. But when I passed beyond a projecting wall and stood face to face with the ultimate moral contest I could understand the strained looks and the lips that silently prayed. It was a sight which I never wish to see again, a sight incredible to an Englishman. There were four Akali Sikhs with black turbans facing a band of about a dozen policemen, including two English officers. They had walked slowly upto the line of the police just before I had arrived and they were standing silently in front of them at about a yard's distance. They were perfectly still and did not move further forward. Their hands were placed together in prayer and it was clear that they were praying. Then, without the slightest provocation on their part, an Englishman lunged forward the head of his lathi which was bound with brass. He lunged it forward in such a way that his fist which held the staff struck the Akali Sikh, who was praying, just at the collar bone with great force. It looked the most cowardly blow as I saw it struck and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping myself under control. But beforehand I had determined that I must, on no account, interfere by word or deed, but simply watch ; for the vow, which had been taken by the sufferers, must be sacred to me also. Therefore passive silence on my part was imperative, but it is difficult to describe to those who have not seen the sight with

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their own eyes how difficult such a passive attitude was.

The blow which I saw was sufficient to fell the Akali Sikh and send him to the ground. He rolled over, and slowly got up once more, and faced the same punishment over again. Time after time one of the four who had gone forward was laid prostrate by repeated blows, now from the English officer and now from the Police who were under his control. The others were knocked out more quickly. On this and on subsequent occasions the police committed certain acts which were brutal in the extreme. I saw with my own eyes one of these police kick in the stomach a Sikh who stood helplessly before him. It was a blow so foul that I could hardly restrain myself from crying out loud and rushing forward. But later on I was to see another act which was, if anything, even fouler still. For when one of the Akali Sikhs had been hurled to the ground and was lying prostrate, a police sepoy stamped with his foot upon him, using his full weight; the foot struck the prostrate man between the neck and the shoulder. A third blow, almost equally foul, was struck at an Akali when he was standing at the side of his fallen campanion. This blow hurled him across the body of the fallen man who was unconscious at the very time when he was being taken up by two ambulance workers. The intention of such a blow was so brutally insolent, that I watched for the Englishman in command, in this case as also in other cases, to rebuke the police sepoy who did the deed, but as for as I could see he did nothing to check or to rebuke his men. I told all these things that I had seen to the Governor and every officer whom I met the next day.

The brutality and inhumanity of the whole scene was indescribably increased by the fact that the men who were hit were praying to God and had already taken a vow that they would remain silent and peaceful in word and deed. The Akali Sikhs who had taken this vow, both at the Golden Temple before starting and also at the shrine of Guru-ka-bagh, were, as I have already stated,

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largely from the army. They had served in many campaigns in Flanders, in France, in Mesopotamia and in East Africa. Some of them at the risk of their own safety may have saved the lives of Englishmen who had been wounded. Now they were felled to the ground at the hands of English officials serving in the same Government which they themselves had served. They were obliged to bear the burnt of blows, each one of which was an insult and humiliation, but each blow was turned into a triumph by the spirit with which it was endured.

It was a strangely new experience to these men, to receive blows dealt against them with such force as to fell them to the ground, and yet never to utter a word or strike a blow in return. The vow they had made to God was kept to the letter. I saw no act, no look, of defiance. It was a true martyrdom for them as they went forward, a true act of faith, a true deed of devotion to God. They remembered their Gurus how they had suffered, and they rejoiced to add their own sufferings to the treasury of their wonderful faith. The on lookers too, who were Sikhs, were praying with them and praying for them, and the inspiration of their noble religion, with its joy in suffering innocently borne, could alone keep them from rushing forward to retaliate for the wrong which they felt was being done.

There has been something for greater in this event than a mere dispute about land and property. It has gone for beyond the technical questions of legal possession or distraint. A new heroism, learnt through suffering, has arisen in the land. A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world. This fact, in the ultimate issue, is independent of the mere legal question of trespass decided for or against the Akali Sikhs. They believe intensely that their right to cut wood in the garden of the Guru was in immemorial religious right, and this faith of theirs is surely to be counted for righteousness, whatever a defective and absolete law may determine or fail to determine concerning legality.

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One thing I have not mentioned which was significant of all that I have written concerning the spirit of the suffering endured. It was very rarely that I witnessed any Akali Sikh, who went forward to suffer, flinch from a blow when it was struck. Apart from the instinctive and involuntary reaction of the muscles that has the appearance of a slight shrinking back, there was nothing, so far as I can remember, that could be called a deliberate avoidance of the blows struck. The blows were received one by one without resistance and without a sign of fear.

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PERSECUTION OF SIKHS IN JAILS

In view of the serious conditions prevailing among the Akali prisoners in the Multan Jail, the S. G. P. C. decided to organise a big Diwan to be held at Multan on the 15th April, 1923. Communique No. 474, in which the "atrocities of the Multan Jail" had been detailed, was dispatched "by telegram" to a large number of papers as usual, as well as to the Viceroy, the Punjab Governor, the Commander-in-Chief, the Inspector General of Prisons and some prominent members of the Punjab Council. The telegram, however, was withheld by the Telegraph Office and the S. G. P. C. was informed saying :—

> "Your press telegram has been held by Government on account of its being objectionable." (See press Communique No : 480, Dated 11th April, 1923.)

The S. G. P. C. issued communique after communique complaining of "most inhuman and cowardly tortures of the Sikhs behind the jail bars and giving some details of the religious insults heaped upon the Sikh prisoners in the Attock Jail and of the "unspeakable Multan Jail happenings." The Committee believed that in inflicting these severe punishments one object which the authorities had in view was to extort appologies from the prisoners and thus find a pretext for releasing them without loss of prestige. It is not stated whether this method succeeded to any large extent. So far as one can see from the published documents of the time, the Akalis stood firm and refused to barter what they considered as the honour of the community for their personal liberty. The S. G. P. C. went on complaining that they were prevented from giving due publicity to these cases of severe and unnecessary hardships through the public press, because, by this time, the Press had become terrified and for fear of prosecution and forfeiture of security shrank from publishing "facts for which the

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S. G. P. C. was prepared to take full responsibility and to substantiate them in court."

Those convicted in connection with the Guru-Ka-Bagh affair were generally sentenced to a term of imprisonment along with fines. As non-cooperators, the Akalis refused to pay the fines. But the fines were realised by attaching their property, often the greater part of their already scanty property consisting of cattle and other agricultural belongings. Unfortunately, in some cases, over-zealous officials attached the property of wrong persons with the result that great bitterness was caused thereby in the rural areas.

Even greater bitterness was caused by the arrest and imprisonment of several old men who had long been leading a saintly life and were held in the highest esteem as the religious leaders of their community far and near. In some cases, these holymen under the religious impluse, which had seized practically the whole community at this time, also came forward to join the movement of suffering in the cause of the Gurus, as they believed it to be. The history of the Sikhs is eloquent with cases of even far severer persecutions suffered by saintly Sikhs, but such persecutions were, as a rule inflicted in the mistaken belief that the persecutor was serving the cause of truth and religion. In the present cases, however, this was not so. It was claimed that the men were being tried under the law and suffered in the cause of justice. It has often been remarked that the British administration in India is a machine, and a machine has no heart and the more efficient it is the more heartlessly it works, Even when the Guru-Ka-Bagh prisoners were ordered to be released, the process of release was carried out in a half-hearted and niggardly fashion, lacking imagination, and always afraid of its own unsympathetic acts, the bureaucracy in the enjoyment of unlimited power, decided to let out the prisoners in driblets, thus robbing the generous impluse of both merit and grace. Worse still, while the old Akali prisoners were being set free more were being arrested, for no other apparent fault, so the

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S. G. P. C. claimed, than that they or their near relatives had taken active part in the Gurdwara movement. The explanation given is that the Government feared that the release of so many prisoners all at once might so elate the Sikhs that they might get out of hand. Sometimes, these arrests were made for trivial offences.

A great many of the Guru-Ka-Bagh prisoners were kept in the Attock fort where the winter is particularly severe but no special provision seems to have been made for protection against it. The number of blankets, for instance, provided to a prisoner was the same as at Multan, a very much warmer place. No wonder that, during the cold weather, there were always a great many cases of pneumonia and other lung troubles among the jail population. To add to their discomfort the Akalis were not allowed to nurse one another. The food was miserably bad. The Akali prisoners were kept in tents instead of in barracks and as if all this was not enough, they had to sleep on the ground, there being no charpais.

The Akali prisoners of the Guru-Ka-Bagh affair were mostly kept in the Multan, Cambellpur, and Attock jails.

We refrain to enter into the particulars of the treatment accorded to the Akali prisoners in jails but one cannot help mentioning that, not in a few cases, the news of sufferings of the men that trickled out now and again were enough to create a wide spread feeling of pain and resentment in the general public in the whole province. Standing hand-cuffs and bar-fetters were neither quite exceptional nor rare.

S. Kharak Singh, S. Jaswant Singh Jabhal along with some other Sikhs had been, as a special concession, allowed to wear their own clothes in the Dehra Ghazi Khan Jail.* Subsequently, however, after the visit of the Inspector General of Prisons, on the 17th January, 1923, the Akalis were ordered not to use black turbans. Similarly,

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*A similar concession had also been shown to some respectable Hindu and Mohammadan prisoners sentenced to imprisonment in connection with the non-co-operation movement.

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the Congress prisoners, who had so far been permitted to keep their Khaddar caps, were ordered to replace them by ordinary caps. The order gave rise to great resentment throughout the province and beyond. It was considered as an insulting order. The prisoners resented being forcibly deprived of their turbans and caps and, as all their protests proved of no avail, many of them had not only given up the use of their bedding but also put off their clothes almost completely, stoutly refusing at the same time Jail clothing and blankets. The feeling of indignation among the prisoners themselves no less than in the province may well be imagined. The S. G. P. C. rightly criticised the removal of the black turban of the "Sikhs as a great religious insult." There was a truly touching scene when the turban of the venerable Sikh leader and president of the S. G. P. C., S. Kharak Singh, was removed by the Jail officials. Referring to this incident in a special press communique under the striking heading– "Things that sink", the S. G. P. C. wrote :– "This insult will sink into Sikh hearts and burn an impression which cannot be easily effaced."* It is no wonder that some of the prisoners were even reported to be abstaining from food.

Conditions were only slightly better in other Jails. The Akalis are an exceedingly sensitive and emotional people and certainly no insult is considered greater and more galling to them than that of interfering with their religious rights and privileges. In the Ambala Jail, the Akali prisoners were deprived of the Granth Sahib which had been previously allowed to them for recitation. They went on hunger strike and after some days, no less than 70 of them were found to be lying in a state of unconsciousness.

In some cases, the food served to the prisoners was so bad that they declared it to be uneatable and refused to take it. In the Attock Jail, the prisoners had to tell a harrowing tale of their sufferings to the Inquiry Committee set up by a resolution of the Punjab Legislative Council. The S. G. P. C. fixed the 1st of February, 1923 to be observed as a 'Day of Prayer'. They said :–

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*Press Communique No– 319, page 91.

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"Fasting is not a popular or religious practice among the Sikhs, but, in the present unprecedented situation and in order to be for a while in tune with our suffering Hindu brethren behind the bars, the S. G. P. C. desires that all Sikh, male and female, above the age of 14, should abstain from all food and drink till sunset on that day, the first of February. In the evening Diwans should be held in every town and village and prayers should be offered to God that he may in His mercy grant strength to our suffering brethren in jail and bless the sacred cause of Gurdwara Reform.*"

It is a pity that although the authorities were said to have allowed two seers of milk per head for the ailing Sikh prisoners, complaints were received that not more than half a seer actually "reaches the hands of an unfortunate patient." In many cases, the prisoners had to remain without any footwear. The S. G. P. C. sent some shoes but these were not allowed to be worn. If the communiques of the S. G. P. C. are to be believed, one main reason of the severe hardships to which the prisoners were subjected was that the authorities were under the impression that they would thus be able to extract appologies from the Akalis so as to get rid of such a large number of prisoners without loss of prestige. Sardar Kharak Singh, President S. G. P. C., and Sardar Jaswant Singh Jhabal are still living with no clothes on but their Kachhehras (The date of this is 17 days after they had been deprived of their black turbans). A solitary cell was a common punishment for Akali prisoners. Hard labour of grinding corn was exacted from many. Some of the punishments given to the Akalis for very ordinary offences or no offences are so strange that a chronicler has serious difficulty in accepting them as true. The only authority upon which he has to rely is that of the Communiques of the S. G. P. C. and the occasional notices in the public press and such accounts as were

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*Press Communique of the S. G. P. C. No: 392, dated 26th January, 1923, pages 92–93.

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passed from month to month by released prisoners from these Jails. A more authentic source of information on the condition of the Akali prisoners was the report of the Inquiry Committee set up by Punjab legislative Council, but for reasons of its own the Government decided to pigeon-hole the Report. The public was not to be put off in this way. The responsible members of the Committee Raja Narendra Nath and Rai Bahadur Sewak Ram were approached and the few particulars which were un-officially extracted from them were enough to set the public feeling ablaze from end to end of the province and, to a lesser extent, in other parts of the country.

Much of the trouble arises, perhaps, from the fact that some of the European Superintendents of Jail and the I. M. S. Officers, do not know in what holy horror the Sikhs hold smoking. The European official, of course, would go on smoking while he is on his round and even when he is surrounded by Sikh prisoners. Besides, the Jail discipline does not allow shouting of religious slogans like *Sat Sri Akal* and Akalis took pleasure in uttering this shout almost on every occasion, even when a sentence was announced in a Court of law which they thought was particularly heard for the offence they had committed.

Refering to the frequent attachments for realisation of fines, it may also be mentioned that very frequently the property attached was 15 or 20 times the amount of the fine. But a more frequent complaint was that the property of a wrong person was attached. Some very comic tragedies were brought to light in the communiques issued by the S. G. P. C. Other grievances were not wanting. In many villages, where the population consisted largely of Akalis, punitive police was established and the expenses were charged to the Akalis. Again, in several cases, the police with fixed bayonets marched through villages and the people were expected to salute the police inspector and those who failed to do so were given a 'corrective.' On such occasions the forcible acquisition of vegetables and fuel from the fields, provisions from the shops and milk from the goat-herds were reported to be daily occurences. In several places,

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the villagers were ordered not to stir out of the village after 8 p.m.

The Akali case *Crown Versus S. B. Mehtab Singh and others* went on continuously in the court of Nawab Aslam Hyat Khan, Magistrate First Class, for six months. (See Communique No. 44, pp. 99–100, for details of punishment).

In the regiments, there were cases of men who were discharged from service in the army "for the crime of wearing black turbans" in their barracks, and otherwise showing sympathy with the Akali movement.

I find it difficult to describe how ruffled were the feelings of the Akalis as a body when they heard of the treatment of their fellow believers who were now serving terms of imprisonment in the various jails of the Punjab for their unflinching courage and faith in defending what they considered to be their religious right and with a view to safeguarding the sanctity of their Gurdwaras. In the Jail at Mulan, for instance, several Akalis were reported to be severely beaten by the jail authorities for shouting Sat Sri Akal after their evening prayers. This was an almost daily occurrence. Such a well-known leader as Giani Hira Singh Dard had experienced the insult of the Guru Granth Sahib being forcibly snatched from his hand and thrown on the ground in the presence of many of his fellow prisoners. Nor were these cases solitary or isolated. On the 5th April, 1922, as the S. G. P. C.* tells us, five Sikh soldiers were court-martialled and convicted to various terms of imprisonment for the crime of wearing black turbans when off duty These men were first sent out of their country to suffer the imprisonment in Basra Jail. After about four months they were brought back to India and were kept in Thana Jail. Here they were deprived of their *Kachhehras*. On asking for this "essential religious piece of garment", they were transferred to Visapur Jail on the 21st August. For reasons which it is hardly necessary to give here, this Jail has earned the nickname of "Visapur hell." Here the Sikh prisons were

*Press Communique No. 446.

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given caps to wear instead of turbans. On refusing to wear caps on religious grounds and prefering to remain bare-headed, after three days each of them was given a piece of cloth three feet by nine inches. There were other case, where for refusing to wear a cap, prisoners were deprived of *lambardari* (a minor office in Jails) and even punished with hard labour consisting of grinding twenty seers of corn daily. Some of the Sikh soldiers who wanted to serve the Panth requested the Military authorities to strike off their names from the regimental rolls.* For this piece of audacity they were sentenced to four years imprisonment each. Again, in the Multan Jail, some sixty prisoners were punished, on February 16, 1923, with cross-bar-fetters, standing hand-cuffs and solitary grinding cells for fifteen days. When they tried to rest themselves for a while, "they were mercilessly belaboured by fiendish *lumbardars* specially imposed for the purpose by the newly arrived Jailor and superintendent already notorious for persecuting Akalis in the Attock Jail, where from they had been transferred to this place."**

Such huge numbers of men in connection with the Guru-Ka-Bagh affair were arrested and tried that many of them never returned to their homes. Sometimes even insult was added to injury when the official bailifs appeared at the houses of the dead people to realise the fines imposed upon them.*** In a particular case reffered to in the press communique we have quoted, the officials deputed to realise the fines, came once, twice and for the third time when, on the 16th March 1922-23 they could realise only Rs. 2/- from the members of the family on the threat of the attachment of the whole property. No satisfied with this, they came again for the fourth time and, we are quoting from the same communique, "at once attached two bullocks worth about Rs. 200/- and one buffalow worth about Rs. 150/- of his brother who had no

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*Press Communique No. 446.

**S. G. P. C. Communique No. 448, p. 108.

***Communique No. 410, p. 110.

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property in common with the dead man." The amount of fine was Rs. 200/-. It is reported that the attached articles were afterwards released. Other cases of a similar nature are also reported in the same communique. The number of the Akalis who died in jail was fairly large, specially in the Campbellpore, Attock and Ambala jails. The historian of the future will find great difficulty in believing that in the 20th century things which are reported in some of the Akali communiques issued at this time were possible. We have purposely refrained from dweling at length on the facts disclosed in this and other communiques. We are inclined to believe and we hope that we are right in so believing that these communiques are exaggerations of the truth. But even after putting a heavy discount on the facts revealed in these documents and knowing in a general way as to what was happening we are constrained to say that a state of things did exist at this time in some of the Punjab jails which we cannot call creditable to a great civilized government. The Government no doubt published refutations of some of these communiques but when challenged by the S. G. P. C. to hold an independent and open public inquiry, there was no response from the Government. The refutations were doubtless based almost entirely, as the S. G. P. C. suggested, "upon the mendacious reports of the Jail Officials* concerned." In view of the serious nature of the reports coming from the Jails, the S. G. P. C. summoned a big meeting of the Sikhs at Multan on the 15th April to consider the situation.

It may be noted here that, in general, the S. G. P. C. maintained friendly relations both with the Hindus and Muslims, specially with those sections of the community that were nationalist in their beliefs and attitude. Thus, on the night of the 30th April, when the Akalis were assaulted and wounded by the railway police outside Rawalpindi railway station they received considerable help from Muhammadans. Volunteers of the local Khilafat Committee and Nimaz Committee promptly reached the spot to afford relief to

*Communique No. 474.

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the wounded.* Mr. Anwarul Haq, Secretary of the Khilfat Committee, at the request of the S. G. P. C., supplied them with a list of 30 persons who had been wounded along with a statement of their injuries. "It was a touching sight", says an S. G. P. C. Communique, to see the unconscious wounded Akalis being carried on stretchers in the middle of the night by the Mohammadan youths and to be looked after subsequently in a private Hindu hospital. It is inexplicable that after the release of about two thousand Guru-ka-Bagh prisoners from the various jails, should have come the "terrible outrage of Rawalpindi". This was not all. The Rawalpindi outrage was followed by reports from the D. G. Khan jail which in the words of a Communique of the S. G. P. C. have "sent a thrill of horror through every Sikh mind. According to the comm-unique, which we have so frequently quoted, while relapsing fever was raging in the jail and all other prisoners had been taken away from the hospital compound for purposes of sagregation, "the venerable Sardar Kharak Singh and Sardar Jaswant Singh Jhabal", the two Sikh leaders, had been left behind within that compound whare they had to depend upon the drinking water from the pump situated within the infected area.

*Comm. No. 512 of may 6, 1923, wherein the S. G. P. C. has acknowledged that "in this noble work a large number of them (Muslim volunteers) received blows and injuries.

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The Attock Jail Inquiry Committee.

In view of the harrowing accounts of the happenings in certain jails, where Akali and political prisoners were lodged, the demand for an open and public inquiry became irresistable. The matter was taken up by the punjab Government and a Committee of Inquiry consisting of D. B. Raja Narendra Nath and R. B. Sewak Ram, members of the Punjab Legislative Council, were appointed to visit the Attock Jail and take down statements and submit their report to the Government. The two gentlemen paid a visit to the Attock Jail and after taking down certain statements submitted their report but the report never saw the light of the day. What became of it, nobody knows. It is presumed that it was so bad from the point of view of the Government so damaging and so discreditable to the administration that it was considered safe to pigeon-hole it. Both the members were however interviewed by press reporters and the summary of their report was published in the press. (See the proceedings of the Legislative Council and the press reports published in the local press. The report was published some time in April or May, 1923.) In their communique No. 485, page 123,* the S. G. P. C. started that the Finance members Sir John Majnard had "promised" the representatives of the S. G. P. C. that he would publish the report as soon as it was received, but so far as we know it never came out of its hiding place.

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*S. G. P. C. Communique No. 485 wrote as follows about The Attock Jail report: "Where is the report of Raja Narendra Nath and R. B. Sewak Ram about the Attock Jail which the Finance members in so many words had promised to publish ? If the Government has got my regard for public opinion or any faith left in its own interest let it submit to a public now official enquiry".

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Attock Jail.

No foot wear. Many have to fetch water from Indus, specially hard condition of jail life. Bare-fetters common. (Press Communique-364)

* * *

S. Amar Singh son of S. S. Sardar Khazan Singh, given bare-fetters for one week for asking a warder not to use abusive language. Jailor Gokal Chand – his treatment very harsh, notorious. (Press Communique, 357, dated 17th December, 1922.)

* * *

Considerable lung trouble. Scanty clothing, prisoners kept in chhouldaries.

* * *

Bronchial troubles. Several deaths in jail. (Communique-314.)

* * *

Subedar Amar Singh was Jathedar of first military pensioners Jatha.

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Early in December the Government was tired of maintaining such a large number of Akalis in the Jail and began to release them on one pretext or another. (Communique No. 349)

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Some 1700 Akalis kept in chhouldaries in Attock Jail. Several cases of prisoners scummbing to death. (Communique No. 309.)

* * *

Standing hand-cuffs given to a dozen Akalis (Communique No. 301.)

The exact number of Akalis in Attock Jail cannot be easily ascertained but the number of the prisoners must be very large indeed considering that on the 12th October the prisoners sent to Attock Jail numbered as many as 700. (Communique-193.)

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Sometimes 25 out of every hundred persons arrested were released on one pretext or another. To make up the deficiency, therefore, the S. G. P. C. will send 122 instead of 100 Akalis to cut wood in batches of four or five.

From the middle of October, the courts began to find all kinds of excuses for letting off as many of the arrested persons as they possibly could, the idea being to lesson the number of convictions as many as possible (Communique No. 175).

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THE AKALI MOVEMENT 1923-24

THE NABHA AFFAIR

Abdication of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh : By this time the S. G. P. C. had become a powerful body, ready to fight the battles of the community wherever they thought that an injustice was being done to them. In particular, the prestige of the Committee had risen considerably in the public estimation after the heroic struggle at Guru-ka-Bagh, through which they had recently come out with flying colours. The hardships which such large numbers of ordinary members of the community had gone through stoically and uncomplainingly day after day and month after month, on that historic occasion, baffles all description.

When in the summer of 1923 the young Maharaja of Nabha, Ripudaman Singh, was made to abdicate* his Gaddi, the S. G. P. C.

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*According to the account given by the S. G. P. C. the Maharaja was neither deposed nor did he abdicate. Various contradictory stories were published at the time, but in a delicate matter of this kind it is difficult to give currency to one story in preference to another. The broad fact would seem to be that owing to certain personal disputes between the two young princes of the important neighbouring Sikh States of Patiala and Nabha, the latter prince who had in various ways incurred the serious displeasure of the authorities was induced to leave his State. How much or how little force was used to bring this about we will not undertake to say. The fact of the Maharaja having given serious offence to the authorities by certain indiscretions at the time he took over charge of the State at the death of his father, Maharaja Hira Singh, are well known and cannot be denied. His sympathies with the Akali movement are also well known. These facts must have made him even more unpopular with the authorities who cannot brook the slightest exhibition of a spirit of independence in a feudalory prince.

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considered it a challenge to the community, which they were not loth to take up. According to a statement issued by the S. G. P. C. on the 9th of July, the Maharaja, "the hereditary ruler of Nabha, was unjustly and forcibly detached from the administration of his State by the Government of India." The Committee further alleged that His Highness was "forced to leave his State under humiliating circumstances with an unnecessary and insolent show of military force." This was not all. In the same communique, the Committee also made some other serious allegations of arbitrary conduct and high handedness against the Political Agent.

The S. G. P. C. was so much upset at these happenings that they desired to mark their resentment by calling upon the whole Sikh community to demonstrate their wounded feelings against this affair by arranging on the 9th September next a barefooted Nagar Kirtan procession to pass "through the principle streets of all important towns to some Central Gurdwara in the town, where prayers should be offered for the speedy restoration of His Highness to his rightful powers." The Sangat on such occasions were also urged to pass resolutions condemning the action of Government and the Political Agent and sending messages of sympathy telegraphically to whatever place His Highness the Maharaja Sahib might have been removed.*

On the 2nd of August, the S. G. P. C. telegraphed to His Excellency the Viceroy informing him that the Government officials had practically forced the Maharaja of Nabha by threats and intimidation to sever his connection with the administration of his State and praying for the appointment of a Comission of Inquiry to find out the truth. No reply was, however, received to this representaticn or even to a subsequent reminder. The only information that was vouchsafed to the public was an *Associated Press* announcement that His Excellency the Viceroy was considering

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*Press communiques Nos. 5, 7, and 12 dated 9th, 17th and 22nd August 1923, issued by the S. G. P. C., Amritsar.

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the appointment and personnel of a Council of Regency for the Nabha State. The S. G. P. C. protested against the adoption of such a measure. It was pointed out that according to the Treaty, no occasion had arisen for the appointment of a Council of Regency. The Committee further asked the leading Sikhs and others as well as the relatives of the Maharaja not to accept a post on the Council of Regency,* should one be offered to them.

Situation further complicated. Conflict between the S. G. P. C. and the Nabha authorities. The S. G. P. C. communique, dated 28. 8. 1923, speaks of certain ordinances having been issued by the Maharaja of Nabha and the Administrator, but we have not been able to find out what they were about. The only reference we have come across is to be found in the record of Proceedings in the case *Crown versus S. B. Mehtab Singh and others*, where we read "these ordinances prohibited political meetings in Nabha State." The state issued orders prohibting all political meetings in the State to discuss the question of the Maharaja's abdication. The S. G. P. C. protested against these ordinances. Diwans were held at several places at which members of the S. G. P. C. were arrested and prosecuted. Some were even convicted. A three days Diwan at Jaito was called. At these meetings, it is said, speeches of political character were delivered. The meetings continued even after the 27th August, 1923. The S. G. P. C. openly challenged these orders. Among other things they made themselves responsible for organizing and sending for a considerable time jatha after jatha to Jaito in defiance of the repeated orders of the Administrator. Again, it was under the auspicies of the S. G. P. C. and in obedience to their directions that the bare-footed processions on the 9th September 1909 were organized at

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*For fuller details of the reasons why the Government was supposed to be not competent to appoint a Council of Regency, See the S. G. P. C. press communique No. 9 dated 17th August 1923; also the "Truth about Nabha" issued by the S. G. P. C.

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a good many places in the Punjab. Communique No. 40, dated 9. 9. 1923, contains reports of the bare-footed processions, that had taken place. Public meetings were held at numerous places, including Amritsar, at which the Akalis were urged to join the Morcha at Jaito. The Jathedar of Akal Takht issued a *Hukumnama* announcing the ex-communication of Sardar Gurdyal Singh. A poster published at this time spoke of the issue of the order from the "Court of the Sri Akal Takht." On the 4th and 5th August, 1923, at a general meeting of the S.G P.C. the Nabha affair came up for discussion. The S. G. P. C. first adopted a general resolution that it was competent to take up the Nabha question. Afterwards, by another resolution it was resolved that the General Committee authorised the Executive Committee "to take all the necessary steps by legitimate and peaceful means to solve the Nabha question."

The Congress and the Jaito Morcha: At the special Congress Session at Delhi, (1923), the Civil Disobedience Committee was formed. The Congress Session evinced great interest in the exciting drama that was being enacted not very far from where they were meeting. After listening to stirring accounts for some Sikh visitors as well as from Diwan Chaman Lal, the Congress leaders evinced their deep sympathy with the Akalis. At the same time, Principal Gidwani, Mr. K. Santanam and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru started for Jaito to see for themselves what was happening there. On the 15th September, the S. G. P. C. brought out a special Jaito Number of their daily paper, the *Nation*. On reaching Jaito, Mr. Gidwani, Pt. J. L. Nehru and Mr. K. Santanam were all arrested. As might have been expected, the arrests of these three Congress leaders was taken as a challenge to the whole country. A Nabha bulletin was issued by the Congress Civil Disobedience Committee. All these things combined to focuss public attention upon the Jaito affairs and for a time the whole country was talking about nothing else.*

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*The S. G. P. C. passed a special resolution thanking the leaders

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The Akalis who came for the Nabha Jatha had to sign a prescribed form pledging themselves to absolute non-violence. Sometimes a jatha was named after the village which had supplied all the members of the Jatha. So great was the enthusiasm that shoals of people would come and offer their services to join the Jathas and take the consequences. It will be remembered that the same was the case at the time of Guru-ka-Bagh, while I was staying at the office of the S. G. P. C. and going from day to day with the Jathas starting for Guru-ka-Bagh from the Akal Takht, I heard the story of one man who came and offered his services at the offices and wanted to join one of the Jathas for Guru-ka-Bagh "for the service of the Guru." According to the account which he gave on that occasion, he belonged to Hoshiarpur. He said his sister was standing on the road-side in their village when some Sikhs passed by singing *Shabads* with great gusto. She asked them where they were going and they said they were going to Amritsar to offer their services for Guru-ka-Bagh morcha. She thereupon ran to her house and said to him (her brother) why did he not also go to do Guru's service and join one of the Jathas. He said he had this, that and the other business to attend to. She replied that she herself would see to these things and that he should not be anxious about them in the least. It was under those circumstances and after getting an assurance from his sister that all would be well about his own work, that he started for Amritsar and there he was to offer his services to join one of the Jathas proceeding to Guru-ka-Bagh. This was by no means a solitary case. They were drawn from all parts of the province, but more specially they came from the Central Punjab. Seldom did they come alone. They came in groups of four, five or more at a time. There were always several hundred men ready to be sent in batches of a hundred a day. They took their food of course at Guru-ka-Langar.

Why Jaito was selected as the venue of the Diwan in

Continued from last page)

on their arrests. (India was now passing through strange time when going to jail was a mark of courage, patriotism and sacrifice.)

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sympathy with the removal of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh? The Maharaja of Nabha was deposed sometime in 1923 before the election of the S. G. P. C. took place. This gave rise to great commotion in the rank and file of the Sikh community as their sympathy was all with the Maharaja. Numerous Diwans were held all over the Punjab. Some were organised by the S. G. P. C. but so great was the excitement that it did not become necessary for the S. G. P. C. to organize demonstrations in sympathy with the Maharaja of Nabha. Jaito was selected as the venue of the sympathetic Diwan because the Brars belonging to the same tribe as the Maharaja himself lived in this tract in large numbers. Even a more important reason was that the famous Gurdwara of Gangsar was situated there. The Diwan lasted for three days. The Akalis were the chief organisers of these Diwans. The Akali Jathedar of the Nabha State and the Secretary of the Jatha were the principal persons. But it should be stated that large number of Akalis from outside the State also joined the Diwan. Of course the neighbouring Faridkot State supplied a respectable quota. The Diwan opened on the 9th Bhadon (25th August 1923 A. D.). A great procession was taken out on the first day. Strong speeches condemning the removal of the Maharaja from the Gaddi were made on the occasion. Comparisons were made with what was done when Maharaja Dalip Singh was removed. Some of the members of the S. G. P. C. were also present at the Diwan. On the 3rd day, namely, the 11th Bhadon 27th August 1923 A. D. some of the speakers were sent for by the Superintendent of Police and other officials and reprimanded for delivering political lectures, but they said they were not giving political lectures; they were only expressing their sympathy with the Maharaja. One or two of the men were arrested at the Diwan and taken away. They wanted to see the warrants but none were shown to them. Originally they had announced the Diwan to be held for three days but on account of the arrests they decided to continue the Diwan for an indefinite period. The Diwan was held in an open space outside the Gurdwara at Jaito under a pipal tree.

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The Langar was located inside the Gurdwara. The land on which Diwan was held was attached to the Gurdwara. Their object in continuing the Diwan was that if forcible arrests were to be made they would continue the holding of the Diwan till the Akalis present were arrested. As some of those present were the members of the S. G. P. C. they had no doubt in their mind that they would get the sympathy and support of their own body. The Diwan continued to be held for several days. On the 5th day, 13th Bhadon ; 29th August, 1923 A. D. the Secretary, S. Jiwan Singh, was arrested. The next day two other leaders were taken by the Police to some Nabha officials ; one of them was arrested but the other man was set at liberty. On the 15th and 16th Bhadon, Risaldar Ranjodh Singh, President of the Shromoni Akali Dal, and some other leaders arrived at the Jaito Railway Station with a view to proceeding to the Diwan but they were prevented by the police from doing so. They were told that if they wanted to go to the Gurdwara for worship, they could do so, but they should undertake not to stay there and not to go to the Diwan This is exactly what other Akalis were also told. The police were placed on all sides. Some time Akalis came singly but oftener in groups of two, three or more persons. On the 17th, 18th or 19th Bhadon 2nd, 3rd and 4th September, 1923 A.D. about 25 Akalis were arrested while attending the Diwan. On the 9th September 1923, a bare foot-procession was form. This was done in obedience to the instructions of the S.G.P.C. who had issued a communique to the effect that the processions of barefooted Akalis should be held on that day. (9th September, 1923) in connection with the "abdication" of the Maharaja of Nabha. As we have seen, such processions were taken out not only at Jaito, but at many places in the Punjab also. At Jaito the procession started from the Gurdwara of Gangsar Sahib. At the time the procession began only about eighty to hundred persons were present inside the Gurdwara, as well as in the Diwan which was being held outside. It was decided to form a procession of 25 men only, so that they may not all be arrested at once. As soon as the procession approached the Diwan

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they were arrested by the police who were waiting for them along with some State officials. The men were told that the procession was being taken out against the orders of the State authorities and therefore they were arrested. The orders that had been issued were to the effect that no Diwan should be held and no political Lectures be given. The arrested persons said that they were not giving any political lectures. As the procession was carrying the Granth Sahib, five sepoys put off their shoes and took charge of the Granth Sahib from the processionists. After that all the 25 men were arrested. The Granth Sahib was carried back to the Gurdwara with *Shabads*. Some time later some sikh policemen are said to have gone to the Gurdwara and "gently shifting the reciter with his hand took up the recitation in his place."

The Preliminary vows before the Akal Takht at Amritsar : As in the case of the Akali Jathas proceeding day after day to the Guru-ka-Bagh Morcha, so also for the Jathas which were organised for proceedings to the Nabha morcha, the Jatha would first come to Sri Akal Takht. A Diwan was held at which a few hundred Akalis and others were present. Here they were instructed by the Jathedar of the Akal Takht to remain strictly non-violent in word, deed and thought, and to obey their leader, the Jathedar. Small wreaths of snow white jasamine flowers were put round the black turbans of the men. Very touching scenes were sometimes witnessed here when "mothers, wives or sisters came forward to bless their dear ones who were going, they were reminded, on the sacred service of the Guru under instructions from the Akal Takht and must not turn their back whatever happened to them."* After prayers the Jatha would leave the Akal Takht in solemn, orderly procession and while singing Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru, Wahe Guruji, Satnam, Satnam, Satnamji, they would walk to the Darbar Sahib (the Golden Temple) opposite to the Akal Takht. Here they would pay their

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*I have myself been present on many of these occasions and have witnessed these scenes with my own eyes. R. R. S.

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homage and then, accompanied by a band, they would proceed to their destination. On coming out of the precincts of the Gurdwara they would be photographed under the clock Tower. This done they would march in fours with the bands playing at the head of the procession. The Jathas were often organised by districts. This was done to create a spirit of emulation among the men. Generally three to five hundred men were present at the Akal Takht when prayers were offered and instructions were given by one of the Akali leaders to the Jatha to remain non-violent. As a rule, it was the Jathedar of the Akal Takht, S. Teja Singh, who gave these instructions. Along with other instructions, the men were told that for the sake of the honour of the Panth they should be prepared for all privations and sacrifices.

A Bhojhangi Dal (Young Akalis Company) was also formed at Amritsar at this time. Some of the Akalis took a considerable interest in the affairs of the Dal and attended their meetings and sometimes they were also asked to address the Dal. The Bhojhangi Dal did a great deal of work by way of propaganda. Since the inauguration of the Congress movement in 1885, Young Men's volunteer corps were formed in connection with the conferences of various kinds held from time to time in the country. They were deputed to maintain order at the meetings, to attend to the personal wants, needs and comforts of the assembled guests and, indeed, to do everything that they were ordered to do by the "captain" of the Volunteers. The Bhojhangi Dal of the Akalis was, however, a permanent and well organized body of youngmen who were called for a course of training like the Boyscout Movement or the Sewa Samities of later days. The Bhojhangi Dal supplied in later years a large number of the recruits of the Akali Dal which was, as we have explained before, the "army" of the S. G. P. C. upon whom devolved most of the active duties in connection with the Gurdwara movement. Men for specially risky and hazardous duties were sometimes selected from the Bhojhangi Dal and not a few of the future leaders of the Akali movement also came from the same body

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Military Pensioner's Jatha :

Since the inauguration of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh himself on the Baisakhi day of 1699 at Anandpur Sahib, the Sikhs have learnt to cultivate the martial instinct. It would have been strange if the retired military officers and men had not formed their own jathas. It was characteristic of the Akali movement that the leaders were not merely office holders, but that in dangerous situations they were expected to place themselves in the forefront of their men. Thus the 2nd Military Pensioners Jatha was placed under the leadership of S. Ranjodh Singh (Risaldar), President of the Shromoni Akali Dal, who had fought in the great war in France. It is said to have consisted of 164 Akalis.

The Nabha day : The Nabha day processions on the 9th September, 1923 were a typical demonstration of the Sikh sentiment against Government's action in "forcing" as it was generally taken to be, the abdication of the Maharaja of Nabha. These demonstrations were held with great enthusiasm and exhibition of feeling at a great many places. The procession at Amritsar was perhaps the most impressive of all, It started from the office of the Akali-te-Pardesi early in the morning. The Sikh band was at the head of the procession, which was followed by 5 Akalis carrying big banners. Behind these were Panj Piyaras with drawn swords. Then came the members of the S. G. P. C. They were followed by the Akali Jatha of the Amritsar Tehsil, the Ramgarhia Jatha, the Bhojhangi Jatha the Amritsar Town Jatha, the Jatha of a hundred Akali ladies, the Nadharak (undaunted) Akali Jathas and the Ajit Akali Jatha (the unconquerable Akali Jatha). The whole procession marched bearfooted, in military formation, four in a line. Entering through the Hall Gate and marching slowly through the city, they reached the Akal Takht in about 2½ hours. Here a big Diwan had now swelled to about four thousand men and women A resolution to the following effect was moved and adopted.

"This big Diwan of Amritsar District Akalis held before Sri

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Akal Takht Sahib, regretted the action of the Government in deposing the Maharaja of Nabha. They sympathised with the Maharaja, his family and his subjects and pledged before Sri Akal Takht that the Akalis under orders of the S. G. P. C. would make every sacrifice while remaining non-violent for the removal of this injustice by the Government."*

The mover of the resolution emphasised that they were taking a pledge before the Akal Takht itself that the Nabha Morcha would be a greater ordeal for them than any of the Morchas in which they had taken part before. But they realised their strength. S. Santa Singh, Jathedar of Sultanwind, moved the resolution while S. Sohan Singh seconded it. Some other members of the S. G. P. C. supported the resolution one and all appealing to the Akalis to uphold the honour of the Panth by helping the S. G. P. C. in doing its duty. The S. G. P. C. had after a full and careful consideration taken the Nabha question into its own hands. At the close of the Diwan, Giani Sher Singh, the blind orator recited a prayer with emotion for the restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha to his Gaddi. He also prayed to the Wahi Guru to assist the S. G. P. C. in the great task they had taken in hand.

The first Akali Jatha formed in connection with the Nabha Morcha started on the 11th September, 1923, and a Jatha of 110 Akalis presented themselves before the Akal Takht at about 10 A. M. for proceeding to Nabha. There were from two hundred to three hundred Akalis present besides the members of the Jatha, and about three hundred others. Jathedar of the Akal Takht asked them to follow strictly the discipline and the rules of non-violence as was the case with the daily Jathas proceeding at the time of Guru-ka-Bagh Morcha. They should strictly obey the orders of their Jathedar, wherever he asked them to go. After prayers, the Jatha left the AkalTakht. They first walked straight to the Darbar Sahib

*Record of proceedings, Crown versus S. B. Mehtab Singh *and others*, page 72.

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for homage after which they started towards the Railway Station, a band playing at the head of them. In the same way other Akali Jathas started from the Akal Takht on other days with short interruption.

Repression of Akalis in neighbouring Sikh States for holding religious Diwans in spmpathy with the Maharaja of Nabha: It is to be greatly regretted that while what we have comprehensively called the Nabha affair was in progress, reports of interference on the part of other Sikh and Hindu States with the Akhand Path and religious Diwans of Akalis were frequently heard specially when the speakers happend to make a sympathetic reference to the Jaito incident.*

This was particularly the case in the city of Patiala where special precaution were taken against Akalis conducting Nagar Kirtan processions. It was also noticed that very strict watch was being kept upon the movements of the Akalis all the comings in and goings out being carefully reported to the authorities. It would seem that there was a regular outburst of repressive activities against the Akalis in Nabha, as well as in the Akali circles in other Sikh States. The appearance of Akalis attracted the sympathy and support of a very large section of the mass of people in these States and wherever a jatha marching in procession came in sight, numbers of people follwed it. The ferment which was caused by the Akhand Path accompanied by the Diwans held at Gangsar Gurdwara was thus not cofined to that place only, nor to the Nabha State itself, but its revibrations were felt all over the Sikh States and even beyond.

Occasional clashes between the State authorities and the Akalis also took place in parts of the Nabha city. On the morning of the 9th September 1923, for instance, when the Akhand Path at the

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*Several instances of this kind are stated in S. G. P. C. Press communique No. 40 dated 9th September, 1923. The Communique gives specific references to arrests made at Sirhind, Barnala and other places.

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new Gurdwara at Akalgarh at Nabha (still under construction) was in progress, some friction arose between the Akalis and the authorities, so much so that the procession was surrounded by the police under the orders of the administrator. Mr. William Johnston, and the procession did not dispurse till the Akalis had received instructions to do so from the Head office of the S. G. P. C.*

In the same way; the ferment extended to the neighbouring States of Jhind, specially to Sangrur, the capital of the State.**

At Baramula (Kashmir) also there was a clash between the State authorities and the Akali procession.†

In several Sikh States the authorities had issued proclamations prohibiting their subjects to participate in the Nabha agitation in any way and as the sympathies of the people were with the S.G.P.C. in what they regarded as a strictly religious matter, there was more or less serious conflicts between the Akalis and the State authorities in several places.‡

It should be clearly noted here that these clashes and conflicts, proclamations and demonstrations were all in connection with the observance of the Nabha Day on the 9th September 1923. Some State subject who had participated in these processions were subsequently expelled from the State or had to suffer other penalties. Many had to suffer very severe hardships of one kind or another, which it will by unnecessary to detail here.

In addition to the instances which we have specifically reffered to above, there were numerous cases also in which the Akalis or their sympathisers were subjected to various hardships or disabilities. It should not be supposed for one moment that the instances of cases which have been given above would any way exhaust the list. . If the communiques of the S. G. P. C. are to be believed, some of

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*See communique No. 41 (no date is given)

**Idid No. 43.

†Idid No. 44.

‡Idid No. 45 (Refers to Faridkot State)

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the Akalis received a treatment which for its severity even decency will not allow us to describe.

Even in the districts of the Punjab, Akalis were harshly treated and in some cases they were arrested for wearing long Kirpans and refusing to promise that they would not go to Jaito. Their uniform reply was that if the S. G. P. C. required it they would go but not otherwise.*

In this connection a further reference may also be made here to the happenings at the Gurdwara of Akalgarh at Nabha. When a good many Akalis were taking part in the demonstration of the Nabha day on the 9th of September, they were arrested in a body and sentenced under section 18 to three years imprisonment. They were besides banished from the State and their properties were confiscated. It is worth recording that after the incident of 9th September at the Akalgarh Gurdwara at Nabha, the Gurdwara was placed under military guard. The Gurdwara was in charge of a solitary Granthi and no pilgrim was allowed to visit it.**

The series of communiques issued by the S. G. P. C. touching the happenings at the Gangsar Gurdwara on the treatment of the Akalis in the State of Patiala arising out of the Nabha Day demonstrations or other incidents of this time make very painful reading and we have no wish to comment upon them at length. An incident at Gangsar Gurdwara on the 14th september

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*Communique No. 49 dated 13. 9. 1923 issued by the S. G. P. C.

**On the S. G. P. C. communique No. 54 dated the 11th September 1923.

The Govt. on this occasion tried, more than on any other occasion, to suppress the truth by leaving all references to this affair.

Mr. S. Zimand of the *New York Time*, and other eye witnesses said that the Akalis were non-violent, but the Govt. announced that 'a crowd of 6000 opened fire on the police'. Only an independent enquiry could have brought out the real facts but that was not allowed. (T. S.)

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1923 excited particularly bitter feelings and the S. G. P. C. sent more than one telegram to his Excellency Lord reading in which they even accused the local authorities of acts which were, they said...to the Darbar Sahib and an...to the Panth. At one stage the situation became so grave that the Akalis had to send a second telegram to the Viceroy but the only response they received was the publication of what appeared to be an inspiration of news in the *Pioneer* of Allahabad to the effect that the Akalis had taken forcible possession of the Gangsar Gurdwara at Jaito. It is so difficult to write on the basis of one sided communique issued by the S. G. P. C., but many of them are so detailed and specific that it is not possible to dismiss them altogether, the more so as I have myself seen enough of similar happenings at Guru-ka-Bagh and elsewhere. The personal privations and hardships entailed upon large numbers of the Sikh population of the Phulkian States had best be left undescribed because without hearing the other side it is not easy to judge between the parties.*

The happenings of the 14th of September at Gurdwara Gangsar (Jaito) deserve special mention. For on that day, the Sikhs within the Gurdwara were going to start the Akhand Path while the ordinary reading of the Granth Sahib continued outside the Gurdwara. The officials were, however, determined to prevent

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As one instance, we may reffer to communique No. 60 (without date) pointing out that certain Lambardars were forced to resign their office because they would not consent to depose falsely, as they believed, against some Akalis, but their harassment continued. To save themselves from such annoyance many people had to leave their houses and homes and settle down outside the State. Again in the Patiala State a large number of persons were said to have been arrested in connection with the Nabha Day Procession of 9th September 1923. All but three men were soon released. These three men were challaned, but the case was kept pending from day to day for a very long time, because they would not give an undertaking not to take part in future in "unlawful activities."

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every expression of sympathy with the Maharaja who, they declared, had abdicated voluntarily. They would not allow even the reading of the scripture and the offer of prayers in connection with the whole congregation assembled around the Granth Sahib outside the Gurdwara.

"Then the armed soldiers in uniform were taken into the Gurdwara itself, where the Sikhs sat listening to the Akhand Path. The whole congregation including the reciters and the attendants were arrested and, what was an unprecedented sacrilege, the Granthi actually reciting at the moment was caught hold of by his arms and dragged away and arrested. According to Sikh religion this was a grave desecration. This interruption was admitted even by the *Associated Press* telegram published in the *Tribune* of September 19, 1923. The news of this desecration spread like a wild fire and a number of Sikhs from the neighbourhood came to the Gurdwara to re-start the Akhand path."

The prohibtion against freely visiting the Gurdwara had been enforced, according to official admission, from 31st August, 1923, but from the 14th September,"the day of the desecration, it was made absolutely rigid." But the Sikh pilgrims from all quarters began to visit the Gurdwara to "perform Akhand Path and other acts of worship."

Mean while the deposed Maharaja of Nabha who was then residing at Dehra Dun was being threatened by the authorities as being responsible for the Sikh agitation although the Maharaja had already publically dissociated himself from what was said or done by the Akalis. It is said that D. N. Narsinghrao, the Maharaja's previous Diwan, who was supposed to be mainly responsible for all the troubles that had fallen him, was once again proceeding from Indore to Simla to see the Viceroy. It was generally believed that this visit was in connection with the recent developments at Nabha.

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At first the jathas arriving at Jaito were treated with comparative leniency. Thus the 1st and the 2nd Jathas which arrived at Jaito about the middle of September were arrested and taken away to a place a mile or two outside the State territory and then set at liberty. Many of the released men made an attempt to re-enter the Nabha State, but they were arrested again and some of them were harshly treated.

In addition to the first two returned Jathas the 3rd Akali Jatha was also proceeding to Jaito on the 17th when it was stopped near the village of Chhina ; they were arrested the same afternoon and taken to Jaito. Every now and again inspired messages were published accusing the Akalis of converting the Diwan at the Gurdwara of Gangsar into a political gathering for the restoration of His Highness the Maharaja to his Gaddi. The Akalis, on the other hand, not only stoutly denied such a charge but also reiterated their own version of the affair. They regarded it as a reiigious duty to write a wrong done to their community. They did not therefore consider it a political Diwan and nothing had been done, they declared, to give a political colour to it.

The S. G. P. C. affirmed repeatedly in several communiques that neither before nor after the date of the Gangsar incident had the Akalis "resorted to any active resistance.*

So great is the devotion of the Sikhs to their Gurdwaras, specially those whice are in any way associated with the life work of any of the Gurus or the martyrs that some of the most respectable members of the community, including men who had seen a

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*According to the semi-official version as published in the Pioneer of 17th September 1923, however, it was said, the Akalis had fallen upon the Police and military cordon round the Diwan that was still going on. The contention of the S. G. P. C. on the other hand was that the Diwan had been forcibly dispersed a couple of days earlier and that in order to conceal this fact the story of the Jatha falling upon the military had been invented.

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life time of military service and had loaded themselves with distinctions and decorations and risen to the highest posts open to Indian Military men, were ready, and in fact glad, to offer themselves for the severest ordeals in the service of the Panth.

More drastic measures adopted. After a few days getting tired of having to deal with the Jathas day after day, the authorities of the state adopted a more drastic method of dealing with them. They were kept hungry and set free without food or money at a small place near Rewari, some 200 miles from Nabha. According to the S. G. P. C. communique No. 94 at least three such jathas had been dealt with in this manner by the time when the communique was issued.*As we shall see, Jathas continued to proceed to Jaito for a considerable time. Three such jathas after release reached Delhi.† Two more batches of 95 and 47 Akalis were sent to Bawal early in the last week of September. The S. G. P. C. communique No. 95 and one or two other communiques issued by the same body also speak of the arrested jathas being kept hungry and thirsty in the hope that thereby the Akalis would frightened frcm joining the jathas. This of course proved to be a vain hope.‡

Some of the men arrested in connection with the Nabha incident were given exemplary punishment such as imprisonment for six years for making speeches.§ It was said to be a common thing for a man to have been sentenced to one year's imprisonment besides confiscation of his property and expulsion from the State for making a speech at an Akali Diwan.‖

Pandit Moti Lal Nehru on the 24th September 1923, himself went to Nabha but as soon as he got down from the train, he was met by one Nahtu Ram, Chief Police Officer, who informed him

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*The communique does not bear any date.

†No date is mentioned in the communique.

‡For these and other incidents of the same kind, see S. G. P. C. communiques No. 95 and 99.

§S. G. P. C. communique No. 103.

‖Ibid No 107 dated 26th Sept., 1923.

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that he was not permitted to proceed to the city. Pandit ji explained that he wanted to see his son Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru. Mr. William Johnston, the Administrator, and Mr. Ogilivie, Assistant Administrator, visited Pandit Motilal Nehru and had a long talk with him. During the few hours that Pandit Motilal was in the waiting room of the Nabha Railway Station, shoals of people from Nabha arrived to have his *darshan* with the result that again and again he had to come out of his room to be greeted by the people who had come to see him. Panditji questioned them earnestly "if they believed that the hard things said against the Maharaja by his detractors were true." They replied that "the campaign of villification was the work only of a few traitors and self-seekers." On Panditji's asking "if they wanted the Maharaja back, they cried out with one voice they were longing for his return with there heart and soul." Panditji left Nabha the same evening without seeing his son.*

On the 29th September, i. e., a fortnight after the incident, the S. G. P. C. passed the following comprehensive resolution in five parts condemning the action of the Nabha authorities in interrupting the Akhand Path and otherwise molesting and ill-treating the Akalis.

I

"The S. G. P. C. strongly condemns the sacrilegious action of the officers of the British Administration of Nabha on 14th September 1923, in showing greatest disrespect to Sri Guru Granth Sahib by dragging away the Granthi and stopping the Akhand Path (continuous recital of Sikh scriptures) in the sacred Gurdwara, Gangsar, of Sri Guru Gobind Singhji at Jaito, Nabha State, and in breaking up the Diwan (Sikh congregation) assembled there.

"The S.G.P.C. holds the Government of India responsible for the unbearable insult to Sikh scriptures and the action of challenging the religious liberty of Sikhs to assemble in

*S. G. P. C. Press communique No. 107, dated 27th Sept., 1923.

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congregrations and to go on pilgrimage to their Gurdwara to carry on Akhand Path or other mode of worship.

"Therefore the S.G.P.C. declared that the Sikh religious rights challenged by the Government of India are rights that can never be surrendered, and the duty of maintaining the dignity of the Sikh scriptures, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is a duty that can never be shirked by the Sikhs.

II

"Further, therefore, the S.G.P.C. solemnly delcares Its determination to fulfil the sacred duty of adopting all peaceful and legitimate means to maintain the dignity of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and to enjoy the unfettered exercise of the religious rights that have been challenged.

"The S.G.P.C. records its considered judgement that the action of the Nabha official, Gurdial Singh, in carrying out the dispersal of Sikh congregation and the stoppage of Akhand Path at Gurdwara Gangsar in Jaito on 14th September 1923, and thence forward the prevention of the entering and the assembling of Sikh pilgrims in the sacred Gurdwara amounts to virtual denial of his religion. Therefore the S.G.P.C. advises and authorises the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib to declare, in exercise of the religious authority of the Panth that the said Gurdial Singh, had thus forfeited the sacred privilege of belonging to the Sikh religion, and is not a Sikh and shall not enjoy the rights and privilege of a Sikh.

"Further, the S.G.P.C. feels it its duty to warn all Sikhs that any Sikh, prince or peasant, soldier or civilian, high or low, who becomes an agent for invading the Sikh religious liberty of assembling in congregations, and worshipping in the Gurdwaras will be acting as the enemy of the Panth.

III

"Whereas constant reports are ripe to the effect that the Government is contemplating to carry out wholesale and simultaneous arrests of all Sikh public workers in the

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S.G.P.C. and the Shiromani Akali Dal, and to stop the Gurdwara movement and upset the Panthic management of Gurdwaras by declaring these bodies as illegal associations, and gagging Sikh national press, therefore the S.G.P.C, wants to reassure the Panth that by the grace of the Guru it is prepared to receive the blow and contemplates the threatened attack with equananimity.

"Further the S.G.P.C. feels confident that with the mercy of God, the Panth, in that eventuality, will strictly adhere to the settled policy of non-violence, will keep united and faithfully follow the lines chalked out by the committee and keep up the struggle for God and Guru with vigour and determination by all peaceful and legitimate means, till complete religious liberty is established.

IV

"The S.G.P.C. reiterates the oft-declared fact that the Kirpan or sword is a religious symbol of the Sikhs which is and ought to be free from all restrictions whatsoever, regarding manufacture, sale, possession, wearing or carrying etc. The S.G.P.C. condemns the action of the Government in playing fast and loose with the religious principles of the Sikhs by persecuting Sikhs on various pretexts, in spite of having more than once declared its recognition of these rights of the Sikhs.

"The S.G.P.C. therefore declares that the Sikh rights with regard to the Kirpan can in no way be surrendered.

V

"Whereas the authorities of Hoshiarpur district have arrested the members of the Doaba Inquiry Committee of the S.G.P.C. indirect contravention of the undertaking given by the Commissioner, Jullundur Division, to the representatives of the S.G.P.C. in June last and in circumstances when there was absolutely no justification for arresting them, the S.G.P.C. condemns the action of the Hoshiarpur authorities

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as a breach of faith and absolute disregard of the most ordinary honesty and fair-play.

"Keeping in view the severe repression in the Doaba and the high-handedness of the officials in preventing any inquiry into the true facts of the situation, the S.G.P.G. declares that it cannot forego its elementary and natural rights to find out the truth about the sufferings of the thousands of peaceful and non-violent Sikhs residing in the Doaba."

Sd/- Teja Singh
General Secretary,
S.G.P.C.

Amritsar,
30th September, 1923.

It may also be mentioned here that after sometime the jathas were in train for Bawal, news of Particularly regrettable instances of official, or rather of the State's overzeal in persecuting the Akalis was received from the Faridkot State where the Granthi of a village Gurdwara was ordered by the State authorities not to let Akalis partake of food in Guru-ka-Langar attached to the Gurdwara. As this was directly against the clear instructions of the Gurus. the Granthi decided not to take food himself so long as the order remained in force.

The arrest of Akalis, specially those who were in charge of Gurdwaras themselves, In one part or another of the Punjab or in an Indian State, continued unabated. After a mock trial the arrested persons were sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Early in October 1923, the Akalis all over the province and the States were very much perturbed and alarmed to see an editorial note in the C. & M.G. (October 2,1923. in which the editor referred to the "most belatantly political movement" of the Akalis and made the significant obfervation that "this long continued campaign of mendacity and incitement is obviously having the most serious effect on the whole Sikh community, and things have gone so far that there is small hope of averting the gravest consequences unless the organizers of the agitation are brought to book for their mischief making."

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The Akalis feared that Probably that stage was being set for the reported "coming drama for the suppression of the S.G.P.C. as an unlawful association."* The Journal further said that for years the sacred and historical Gurdwara at Gangsar "had ceased to attract pilgrims from outside and the wonder was expressed why people should have chosen of this particular time to go on pilgrimage to the Gurdwara." This statement of the C. & M. G. was strongly condemned by the S.G.P.C. who said that ever since its foundation large congregation of Sikhs assembled at the Gurdwara every month on the full moon night when a reading of Guru Granth Sahib was concluded. The Akalis, therefore contradicted the statement that the obstinacy of the Akalis alone was responsible for arranging these so-called pilgrimages to an unfrequented Gurdwara in order to exploit the temple for what the C. & M.G. calls "a political and provocative action." They very much regretted that in preventing the entry of the Sikhs the British administration of Nabha had "challenged the Sikh religious liberty of assembling and worshipping in their Gurdwaras, and has offered an unbearable insult to their religious feelings by stopping Akhand Path in the Gurdwara at Jaito.†

Tension between Patiala and Nabha States. It would throw a flood of light upon what the Akalis regard as the real cause of the deposition of His Highness the Maharaja of Nabha, if we pause here for a moment and refer to the stranned relations between the two young neighbouring Sikh rulers, that is, the Maharajas of Nabha and Patiala. We can only place together a few outstanding facts bearing on the extremely unpleasant state of things existing between the two rulers. In the press Communique No. 212 dated 25th October, 1923, the S. G. P. C. record "a phenomenal campaign of dirty

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*The S.G.P.C. was declared unlawful assembly and all its executive members were arrested. The Committee was re-formed, and then the 2nd executive was arrested, and so on. The leaders were tried for waging war against the King.

†S.G.P.C. Press Communique No. 120.

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pamphleteering between certain supporters of the Patiala and Nabha States going on." The Communique speaks of the language in which both sides have been indulging in the pamphlets as "most indecent." The Maharajas themselves are not spared. In the view of the S. G. P. C. a most painful scandal was being perpetrated. The S. G. P. C. emphatically condemned this "disgraceful campaign and expected all Sikhs to stamp out this evil by strongly repudiating it." The Akalis were advised not to read this dirty literature and not to take part in this campaign of villification by reading or circulating "any pamphlets of this scandalous character." Both the Maharajas were also appealed to use their influence to make this public nuisance impossible.

JAITO (NABHA)

Extention of Nabha Morcha to neighbouring States entails great strain upon the resources of the S.G.P.C. both in men and money : Dissipation of energy. Fight against several States at the same time as well as against the British Government in the Punjab. Leaders arresled and tried for more than three years. Some including the President died in the Jail during the course of his trial. The Akali ferment was nòt confined to Jaito itself, nor even to the Nabha State, but like a wild-fire it soon enveloped the neighbouring Sikh States of Patiala, Jind and Faridkot as well. The reverations of the agitation were felt in every Sikh State and even beyond. At Patiala special precautions were taken to prevent any Sikh Diwans to be held or Nagar-Kirtan processions to be taken through the streets. On the Nabha day, pickets were placed on all gates. The local Akalis were made to sign an undertaking that they would not participate in the organisation of any meeting or procession. The whole State was in a ferment and crowds of Akalis marched from the surrounding villages to the neighbouring towns. At the capital of the State, stringent precautions were taken and no Jathas from the villages were allowed to enter the town. As soon as a Jatha appeared outside the city it was forcibly

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dispersed. At the Patiala railway station there was always an extraordinary show of police force. Every now and again large bodies of Police also marched through the city in order to overawe the people. One Jatha of about 100 villagers was placed under arrest because they would not disperse and return home. Press representatives were not allowed to enter the city and those who were already there were closely shadowed by the State C.I.D. At Sirhind (Patiala State) about 200 Akalis were arrested in an attempt to take part in the Nabha day demonstration. At another place in the State, namely, Bhawanigarh, the Police came into conflict with the Akalis. Some 60 Akalis were arrested on the 9th September and many others who were flocking from the surrounding villages refused to return home but insisted upon being arrested. The local authorities were in a fix and it is reported that a special messenger was dispatched to Amritsar to request the committee to ask these men to go back to their villages. The excitement at Barnala was even greater than elsewhere in the State. A large Diwan was held in the Gurdwara at Thikriwala about four miles from Barnala from where they marched out in a procession. The Jathedar and five other Akalis were arrested by the Police. The rest of the assembly refused to be separated from the Jathedar, with the result that about 250 more men were taken into custody and then marched to Barnala. The Sikh ladies of the place now joined in the agitation. They formed a procession of their own and marched through the streets of Barnala singing hymns shamed by the sight of women passing in procession through the streets, hundreds of Sikhs who had not so far participated in the demonstrations came out and joined in the Nabha Day celebrations. Similarly, a Jatha from Rajpura, which was on its way to Patiala, was intercepted in the way and arrested.

At Sunam (Patiala State) the local Gurdwara, where the Akalis had intended to celebrate the Nabha Day, was locked up probably under official orders. The Pujari-in-charge, however, forced open the door and allowed the Sikhs to assemble in a Diwan. A procession was afterwards formed but it was stopped at the gate of the town

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by armed police and forcibly dispersed.

The Trouble extends to other States : In the Faridkot State the President of the Court of Administration had issued a proclaimation on the previous day prohibiting the State subjects from participating in the Diwan at Jaito or in any way joining in a demonstration of sympathy with Maharaja Ripuduman Singh. A leading local Akali, a member of the S.G.P.C., S. Gurbax Singh, was sent for by the Superintendent of Police and ordered to prevent any procession being taken through the streets of the city, but in view of the clear instructions of the S.G.P.C. which, he said, the people were determined to follow, he expressed his inability to help the authorities in the matter. At this Gurbax Singh was taken into custody as also S. Nand Singh, Jathedar of Faridkot Akali Jatha. At the same time, orders were issued posting pickets at all the roads leading into the city. In spite of these precautions, however, several hundreds of Sikhs assembled at the Faridkot railway station carrying Guru Granth Sahib. The police and some State officials were soon on the spot. They took away the Granth Sahib in a motor car and placed the whole Jatha under arrest. In the evening they were ordered to disperse but they insisted upon marching in a procession so long as the 9th of September had not come to an end. They were, therefore, detained upto the midnight and then released with the threat of forfeiture of property and imposition of punitive police. Similarly, a Jatha of Sikhs coming from the villages of Sikhanwala, Sidri, and Chaihi, were arrested while proceeding to Faridkot. A religious teacher, Bhai Amar Singh of Kot Kapura, was also expelled from the State during the period of his school vacation, as he was helping in religious Diwans in the State.

The S.G.P.C. takes up the question. Jathas of twenty-five start for Jaito : From the 15th September, 1923, Akali Jathas of 25 persons each daily started on foot for Jaito after taking the usual pledge of non-violence in thought and deed before the Akal Takht. The avowed object of these Jathas was (a) to resume the interrupted

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Akhand Path at the Gangsar Temple, (b) to suffer in a meek and humble spirit all hardships and tortures inflicted upon them by the officials for the sake of establishing the Sikh birth-right of free congregation and free worship in all Sikh Temples.

But the Nabha authorities did not allow them to proceed to the Gurdwara. They arrested them, kept them in custody for a few days, it is said, in very insanitary surroundings; some times severely beating them and afterwards removed them to a place about 300 miles away where they were left in a peniless condition, to shift for themselves as best they could. Within a period of seven months this happened with no less than 5,000 Akali pilgrims."

The First Shahidi Jatha. The Jatha starts with a proclaimed object: As week followed week in the year 1924 with no tangible results visible, there was a good deal of the searching of hearts in Akali circles. Brave and accustomed to a life of extreme hardships, as they were, the dominant feeling among them was that all the sacrifices the community had made were insufficient and that greater sacrifices would be required before the authorities could be moved. "In order to impress the Government and the public about the depth and sincerity of Sike religicus feeling by the intensity and vastness of Sikh suffering, it was decided that a Jatha of 500 Sikhs remaining perfectly non-violent should walk to Jaito to visit Gangsar and resume Akhand Path. On the 9th February, 1924, the day of Basant Anniversary, a solemn pledge for restarting the "interrupted" Akand Path at Gangsar was taken before Akal Takht.* The members of the jatha were exhorted by the Jathedar of Akal Takht to remain perfectly non-violent in thought, word and deed. It may be mentioned that the members of the Shahidi Jatha were drawn from all professions and classes and from various parts of the Panjab.

The Jatha on its way: The Shahidi Jatha started for Jaito on foot. They evoked tremendous enthusiasm whereever they

*It was timed to reach its destination on February 21, the day of Nankana Martyrs.

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appeared. At all halting places morning and evening Diwans were arranged. People from surrounding villages foregathered in large numbers on these occasions and,as the reports showed,the attendance was often as large as twenty to twenty-five thousand villagers.

Entering the Faridkot State the Jatha halted at Bargari, on the 20th February. They were now only five or six miles from their destination. Next day they left for Jaito at 12 noon. It is important to mention that during the last stage, Dr. Kitchlew, Principal Gidwani and Mr. Zimand (representative of the "New York Times") also accompanied the Jatha. Before the Jatha reached the boundary line of the Nabha State, the State officials stopped the motor car in whlch these three gentlemen were seated and showed them the order restricting admission in to the Gurdwara to bands of fifty or more. On remonstrance from the occupants of the car, the officials sent a messenger to the Administrator for further orders. But no repiy came from that quarter. As a matter of fact, the Jathas of even 25 each were not permitted to enter the Gangsar Gurdwara before or after the passing of the order restricting the the number to fifty. Not only this, the feeling of the Sikhs were said to be awfully hurt to know that the Administrator of Nabha had been made "a sort of religious Dictator".

Preparations by Authorities: The passage leading to the Gangsar Gurdwara and the Fort of Jaito had been narrowed by the State authorities by a barbed wire barrier on one side and a long row of about 200 chained bollockcarts filled with thorny bushes and masses of barbed wire, on the other. A special barbed wire enclosure had been erected to serve as a trap for the Shahdi Jatha near the end of this passage and in the immediate vicinity of the Gangsar Gurdwara. On the top of the bullock carts and behind them were men from villages armed with heavey sticks stationed in a triple row. "Amongst them were a number of policemen from Jhelum and Attock districts, who had to their credit a brilliant record of similar services in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh affair". Near the Sacred eminence of *Tibbi Sahib* a platoon of Nabha infantry

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had dug their trenches. Beyond Tibbi Sahib there was the camp of the Faridkot Sappers and Miners with the camp of Col. Minchin in the middle and with two detachment of cavalry in front of this camp.

The Jatha approaches its destination. Everything was now ready for the actual struggle. The Jatha reached the place where the narrowed passage began and where the cfficails and the military had taken their position. The Jatha was in rows of four each, the Granth Sahib being carried in the middle of it. "The Sikh Sangat walked on both flanks in a calm and devotional mood keeping well behind the planquin of Guru Granth Sahib out of reverence. There were many ladies among the Sangat; they were distributing food and drink to the Sangat."

Order for Firing: At this stage the Administrator ordered the Jatha to stop, declaring that he would order firing in case they did not comply. The Jatha continued to move but took a turn to the right in the direction of Tibbi Sahib. At this the Administrator gave his signal to open fire by waving a small flag without the slightest provocation or cause of alarm from the Sikhs.

The Fate of the jatha: "Then followed a scene unique in the history of the world for the calm restraint, the cool courage, and a remarkable capacity for suffering in a righteous cause, displayed by Sikh victims of official fury". The big procession of the Sikh devotees, that included even women and oldmen, marched on with their uplifted hands towards their temple under a shower of bullets. Many of them fell dead or wounded; but lifting them up, they went straight to Tibbi Sahib. From all sides bullets poured upon them. A Lewis gun was also fired. A bullet struck a child who was in the arms of its mother. The mother placed the dead child aside and calmly moved on with the Sangat. Another Sikh had his bowels thrown out by a bullet but before expiring he thanked God that he had accepted his impure body for the service of His Faith.

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(1) Allowing for all partisan exaggeration, the account is gruesome enough to rouse the whole Sikh community.

(2) It needs scarcely be said, that special care was taken to keep the palanquin carrying the Holy Book in the middle of the crowd as much as possible of the reach of the stray bullets. Two vollies were fired with a short interval. The vollies, excluding the interval, covered five minutes. The Sangat after the firing entered the enclosure of Tibbi Sahib Gurdwara. Some of them went to the field, to bring in the wounded and the dead and the women began to nurse there wounded brethren. The Sikhs were cheked by the military from removing the dead and the wounded, and thus many of the wounded died for lack of attendance and water. The Sikhs placed their dead and the wounded in the Tibbi Sahib and then marched in the direction of Gangsar but a detachment of cavalry blocked their way. The Sangat was attacked and scattered by a squadron of cavalry. "This relentless hunt of old men, children and women resulted in heavy casualities and many were trampled under the hoofs of the horses." Now the cavalry and the policemen began to beat the Shahidi Jatha. "Every member of the Jatha was surrounded by a group of five or six desperadoes, who encouraged by the State officials plied their sticks freely beating the heroes of the Shahidi Jatha to senselessness and tying to tight bundles, with strong ropes, huddled them into bullock carts to be transported to the barbed wire enclosures." From the enclosure they were subsequently removed into the fort.

The few Sikhs that were lingering near the Tibbi Sahib and the women who were attending to the injured, were outrageously beaten and arrested. One lady was even abused by the soldiers and asked to leave the place, and on her refusal was rudely pushed down the Tibba mound. For 24 hours after the shooting neither the Sikhs were allowed to attend to the wounded nor the athorities themselves rendered any assistance, with the result that many died for lack of timely assistance.

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Attempts made to keep the whole affair in the Dark. The authorities took special care to prevent the transmission of reliable reports to the press. Principal Gidwani, Dr. Kitchlew and Mr. Zimand, correspondent to the *New York Times*, were stopped at the boundary, but they entered when they heard bullets being fiired. Dr. Kitchlew and Principal Gidwani entered the State territory and were arrested. Respectable gentlemen were detained at the railway station under ciose custody. Among them were members of the Legislative Assembly (Raizada Hans Raj and Mr. Shanmukan Chetty), members of the Legislative Council (Sardar Tara Singh, Vakil of Moga, and Sadar Partap Singh) the gentlemen detained at the station were packed off from Jaito by the first available train, regardless of their destination. Jamadar Partap Singh heard reports of firing. In his opinion two vollies were fired, which continued for five minutes. The Jamadar said after the firing, a squadron of cavalry was seen galloping and a little later charging of the people in the distance. A photographer who was taking some photographs was severely lashed by a European officer who ordered some soldier to turn him out of the State territory. The photographer reported that the same cfficer mercilessly whipped a Sikh lady who did not get up from behind a bush under his orders.

Casualties: The exact number of casualties could not be ascertained as the scene of tragedy was made practically inaccessible. According the S. G. P. C. reports there were 300 casualties including about 100 deaths. But the Government reported the low figures of 21 dead and 33 wounded. The S. G. P. C. claimed to possess proofs to show the falsity of the official estimates. "Twenty two dead bodies were cremated near the fort with ten tins of kerosene oil. Again, according to the testimony of respectable eye-witnesses, a large number of dead bodies were packed in boxes and removed by train to some unknown destination. The cavalry men snatched away the dead bodies form those who were taking them to villages. The three doctors from Amritsar reported that they saw 45 wounded at Jaito, 22 of whom were sent to

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Ferozepore in their presence. This they saw in one of the camps only. The number of wounded sent to Ferozepore rose to 38. From the bodies of 13 Sikhs 16 bullets were extracted, out of which five were Lewis gun bullets. The number of people that were arrested at Jaito cn this occasion was more than 700. *

How the First Shahidi Jatha fared after the Occurance of February 21, 1924. The seven hundred (constituting the Shahidi Jatha of the Sangat) were arrested and imrisoned in an enclosure hardly sufficient to accomodate even one-third the number. Food and clothing was awfully deficient. Some were severely beaten and intimidated to sign statements in accordance with the version of the authorities. "After about a month the prisoners were removed to the Fort at Bawal by a train which ran through most of the stations over a line of 300 miles. There they were kept in very insanitary conditions, the site allotted to them had been used as stable. One of the tottering roofs fell down, but no casuality occured as none was there at the time. They got food only once a day, and even this was nearly half-cooked with the result that forty of the prisoners fell ill. They were detained for about two months without any case being started or any charge having been proved against them. Then some of them were let off, a few at a time. They again sought to reach Gangsar. On April 17, 60 of such prisoners reached Jaito and were "beaten so severely that three of them died and more than a dozen received serious injuries".

The treatment meted out to Dr. Kitchlew was most humiliating. He was hand-cuffed and had to walk up to the Railway Station while being removed to Nabha. He was given very dirty food and it was offered to him in the most objectionable

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* I repeat what I have said before that the above narrative is based mainly on Akali sources of information which are likely to err on the side of partiality but the picture that emerges even after reasonable allowances are made is dismal and distressing in the extreme.

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manner. He refused it and preferred to do without it for a whole day when he was permitted to have his own food. He was locked in a solitary cell and even his wife could only see him after a good deal of unnecessary trouble and delay. He remained under detention for about a month.

A similar treatment was meted out to Principal Gidwani who remained in the Nabha lock-up for a longer time.

The Second Shahidi Jatha. The Second Shahidi Jatha started on the 28th February, 1924. It was estimated that about forty thousand people had assembled to bid farewell to the Jatha. The Sikh religious sentiment was at its highest pitch at the time and "the Sikhs of all classes, ranks and professions displayed an eager rivalry for enlistment in this Jatha. A Sikh from a neighbouring village sent his wife and children to his father-in-law, it was reported, and setting fire to his house started for Jaito with a light heart. Another Sikh who was not given a chance to join the second Jatha complained that even the Sikhs had begun to show partiality as they were enlisting their own relations but would not give him an opportunity to render service to the Guru. Several cases of this kind were recorded. It was said that some Sikhs before leaving for Jaito wrote out their wills bequeathing all their property to the S. G. P. C. when the wife of another Sikh reminded her husband at his departure for Jaito that his two sons were seriously ill, he said, "there is enough of fuel in store to burn them". "Many Sikh mothers, wives, and sisters garlanded their sons, husbands and brothers and gave them a loving send-off to Jaito." A mother whose eldest son had fallen in the first Shahidi Jatha, garlanded her second son for the Second Shahidi Jatha and said to him, "Dear son, fight the battle of your Panth and bless your mother with the heroic sacrifices". The Jathedar of Akal Takht advised the Jatha "to remain perfectly non-violent and to face bullets and all sorts of severities." There were about a dozen Nirmala Sadhus accompanying the Jatha with a batch prepared for medical assistance. Large crowds flocked throughout the route to offer greetings and sweets to the

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Jatha, but the S. G. P. C. had asked the Sangat not to accompany the Jatha to Jaito. The following statement was issued :

> "The Secord Shahidi Jatha which will leave Akal Takht tomorrow, the 28th February, to resume Akhand Path at Jaito is deeply pained at the loss of life and the injuries sustained by the Sangat (congregation) which accompanied the first Shahidi Jatha on the 21st February out of love and reverence. As the basic idea of these Shahidi Jathas is to confine all sufferings only to themselves, therefore they earnestly wish that the Sangat should not suffer on their account. On the request of this jatha the Jathedar of Akal Takht decided to enjoin on all Sikhs the duty of refraining from accompanying the Jatha on its march. All people of villages by which the jatha passes should content themselves, so ran the directions, by bidding farewell to the Jatha just outside their villages and should not march on with the Jatha so that it might reach its destination attended by no body except doctors, press reporters and such other few indispensable helpers. The cause is so sacred that the Sikhs should learn to control even the legitimate apprehensions of their heart that the Nabha authorities may not invent any story about their going with the Jatha," According to the correspondent of the *Civil and Military Gazette* "the Jatha was successful in persuading many followers from following it across the Nabha border."

Attempt at Reconcilliation, "On March 14, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sardars Gulab Singh, Kartar Singh, Mr. D. P. Sinha, M. L.As and Messers Rangaswami Iyenger, Vedmurti and M. S. Bhatt, members of the Council of State, arrived from Delhi at 7. 30 a. m. Three Punjab Councillors nominated by the Punjab Government had reached on the previous day." The Punjab M. L. Cs were Messrs. Jawahar Singh, Maqbul Mahmud and Duli

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Chand. All of them had a long conversation with the Administration lasting till about 11 O'clock. During this time Pandit Malaviya and party visited the Gurdwara-Gangsar also and saw how many people could be accomodated in the Gurdwara. The 2nd Shahidi Jatha had vowed to complete 101 Akhand Paths in the Gangsar Gurdwara. Malaviyaji suggested to the Administrater that it would take ten months to complete the 101 Paths and only 3–1/3 months if the Akhand Paths were started three at a time. But the Administrator refused to allow ten months or, even three months for an "attack", as he called it, on the State territory by the the outsiders. He could give them only one week to finish the 101 Paths that may be started all at once or 50 at a time, and that the settlement could be reached and the Jatha admitted into the Gurdwara, if the Malaviyaji could give the administrator such an assurance on behalf of the S. G. P. C. This, of course, Panditji was not in a position to do. Panditji emphasised that the jatha should be allowed to enter the Gurdwara unconditionally as it had been pledged to start the Akhand Path, and negotiations should be carried on with the S. G. P. C. Panditji hoped that the S. G. P. C. could be persuaded to finish the 101 Akhand Paths within a short time, if the Jatha were given religious liberty to start the Akhand Paths unconditionally. But Mr, Johnston could not be so persuaded. The only difference of opinion between the parties related to the question of time during which the readings were to be completed.

Panditji and party left the Administrator and went to Bargan to meet the Jatha and ascertain their view-point.

On both sides of the road by which the Jatha was expected to come to Gangsar, armed soldiers were posted as if they were going to meet the attack of a powerful enemy.

Panditji and the party meet the Jatha. Panditji and party met the jatha on the way to Gangsar. The Jatha was preceded by large numbers of State cavalry and infantry. Panditji was told that the Jatha intended to start the Akhand Path on that

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very day. They had no intention to hold simultaneous Akhand Paths, but they were always prepared to obey the orders of the Akal Takht.

Panditji and party came back to Mr. Johnston and tried to persuade him to extend the time limit. He said that he himself could not act independently, but he again demanded from Panditji the guarantee of time, without consulting the S. G. P. C.

Thereupon the gentlemen who had come from Delhi wrote to the Administrator expressing their own views on the question at issue. S. Jawahar Singh and Ch. Duli Chand were also requested to sign this letter; but they refused to do so. The letter was sent to Mr, Johnston, but he refused to receive it at that time.

Jatha reaches Jaito. The Jatha reached Jaito at 3. 30 p. m. the Administrator told the men that he would let them enter the Gurdwara provided they were prepared to leave the Gurdwara after the first Akhand Path was over, and await the result of the negotiations with the Akal Takht (The Administrator had been told by the Jatha that Akal Takht and not the S. G. P. C. was the proper authority to enter into negotiations for a settlement).

The Akalis of the Jatha rejected this proposed solution, as they had pledged to finish 101 Akhand Paths, but they were prepared to obey any further order from the Akal Takht.

After the Jatha had refused to agree to any compromise that was not strictly conformable to their pledge, they were placed under arrest. They were then led into a pen inside the fort taking the Granth Sahib also with them.

Two press reporters accompanying the jatha. On its arrival they were put under arrest. One of them was a representative of the *Bande Matram.*

The official communique stated that Jatha had consented "to be arrested pending negotiations." But this was refuted by the special correspondent of the *Tribune.* The correspondent explained to Mr. Johnston that the official communique did not correctly state the facts. Mr. Johnston readily accepted version of the special correspondent.

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A few days after the arrest the Jatha was removed to a forest in the neighbourhood of Nabha and interned there in very insanitary and unhygienic conditions. An insult was offered to the Sikhs sentiment by placing the Granth Sahib in a brake van packed with miscellaneous parcels.

The Third Sahidi Jatha. The third Shahidi Jatha started from the Akal Takht on March 22 ; This Jatha too had taken the vow of re-starting the 'interrupted' Akhand Path as their declared object. Among those who were present at the time of the starting of the Jatha were Lala Lajpat Rai, Dr. Kitchelew, Mr. Phookhan of Assam, Dewan Daulat Rai, C.I.E., of Rawalpindi, Diwan Chaman Lal, M.L.A., Mr. Deep Narain Singh of Patna and Mr. K.M. Panikar. There was a huge crowd numbering many thousands assembled at the Durbar Sahib to give the Jatha a becoming send off .

The Jatha started in the midst of the usual enthusiasm and the religious songs and shouts common on such occasions at about mid-night. The Jathedar of Akal Takht read the Hukamnama to the Jatha to the effect that they were to resume the 'interrupted' Akhand Path at Gangsar and observe complete non-violence in thought, word and action.

The Jatheder of this Shahidi Jatha had been in Government Service. He came forward and was presented a sword of honour with loud cheers. "Then his second and third in command underwent the same ceremony."

Besides five hundred volunteers, a separate kitchen, a special ambulance crops under the charge of a qualified doctor, and provisions for the way accompanied the Jatha.

In the way the Jatha was received everywhere with great enthusiasm. Mr. Panikar, Secretary, Akali Sahaik Bureau, spent a day with the Jatha at Jagraon. He was much struck with the enthusiasm amongst the Sikh masses and the sympathy of the Hindu and Muhammadan public. Mr. Panikar bore testimony to the fact that the Akali movement was backed by the Sikh masses and that it was not a sectional movement. To quote his own words :

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"From whatever I saw about the Jatha and the procession, I was convinced that whatever Government might say the Sikh community in the rural parts is behind the Akali movement to a man. It is not a sectional movement, The respect that the S.G.P.C. commands from the villagers is unique.....Secondly, what struck me was the fact that Hindus and Mussalmans were very sympathetic towards the Jatha. It has been said by Government that the villagers on the way were being harrassed by the Sikhs for provisions and supplies. This is certainly not true.....voluntary offerings from Sikh gentry pour in wherever the Jatha halts... Hindus and Mussalmans have made substantial contributions....."

"The thing that was prominently noticeable about the crowd was the extraordinary high percentage of men in Khaddar clothes. The Akali movement has given a great impetus to Khaddar. Every man, woman and child who accepts the lead of the S.G.P.C. has discarded foreign cloth."

"The education value of the Jathas, both from the Sikh religious point of view and from the national point of view, is great. The present Jatha is traversing an area which is politically backward and the meaning of nonviolence it carried is reaching homes and hearths which have so far been uninfluenced by the current nationalism. The idea that communal feelings are being disturbed by the demonstrations which are disliked by the Hindus and Mussalmans has no foundation whatsoever. I found the Hindu population in the villages sympathetic towards the Jatha and anxious to serve in whatever way they can."

An account of the arrest of the third Shahidi Jatha on the 7th April, 1924, has been presented by Sardar Tara Singh and Mian Fazal Haq, M.L.Cs to the S.G.P.C. a summary of it is given below :

S. Tara Singh and Mian Fazal Haq arrived at Tibbi Sahib before the arrival of the Jatha and joined S. Kartar Singh, M.L.A. and L. Izat Rai of Faridkot State who were alread

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there. A large number of cavalry and infantry had taken their position when the Jatha approached near. The State authorities were standing ahead of the cavalry. They met the Jatha at 4.53 p.m. The Jatha looked cheerful and was busy in "Satnam, Satnam, Satnamji; Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguruji."

"Batches of Akalis were handcuffed with ropes and were removed by the Police to the Fort. All the Akalis excepting eight of them that were in charge of the Palanquin with Guru Granth Sahib in it were arrested by the evening. Then these eight sewadars were later replaced by State people and they were arrested."

A few days later the Akali prisoners of the third Shahidi Jatha also were removed to the Jungle in the vicinity of Nabha. There they were kept in very insanitary conditions and as a consequence of that two of them died. Some of the Akalis who tried to attend the cremation ceremony of these dead companions were severely belaboured, so much so, that some fractures were reported to have occurred.

The Fourth Shahidi Jatha. This jatha started from Anandpur Sahib on the morning of March 27, 1924. The ceremonies in connection with the departure of this Jatha were the same as in the previous cases. The Jatha was to reach Jaito on the 18th of April after traversing the whole Doaba on foot.

The police had tried to dissuade people from joining the reception of this Jatha, but it was all in vain. The Jatha reached Jaito on April 18th. It was handcuffed by ropes in groups of 6 and removed to Nabha by train.

The Fifth Shahidi Jatha. The Fifth Shahidi Jatha started from Lyallpur on the 12th April, 1924—Balsakhi Day. In spite of the difficulties put in the way by the Government the Jatha while on its way to Amritsar received the usual enthusiastic reception wherever they appeared. The Jatha was to reach Amritsar on the 26th April, was to proceed to Jaito on May 1st, reaching there on May 21st, 1924. It completed its journey without any incident and on

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arrival at its destination the men were treated exactly as the members of the previous Jathas were.

We feel that this rapid sketch of the Nabha happenings is far from adequate to give anything like a faithful picture of the Akali struggle there, but obviously it is impossible for us to provide a longer or fuller narration of the blood curdling conflicts that had continued for very nearly ten months between the Akalis and the authorities of the Nabha State.

The movement dragged on for some time more until it was brought to an end by a compromise arranged by some moderate Sikhs. It was clear that both the parties were tired of the long-drawn struggle, and wanted to come to some understanding, which could take the form of a Gurdwara Bill only. At last in 1925 the Gurdwara Act acceptable to Sikhs was passed and the Akali leaders who were being tried in the Lahore Fort for waging war against the King were released.

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BIRDWOOD NEGOTIATIONS

June, 1924.

For sometime past negotiations had been going on between the Government and some of the Sikh leaders about the settlement of the Akali problem. These parleys were being conducted through General Birdwood who is known for his popularity with the Sikh troops. The Government have now (June 1924) issued a communique announcing that the conversations have been abandoned as no agreement has been reached as regards the preliminaries. The Sikhs, on the other hand, accuse Government of breaking their faith with them and going back upon their plighted word. This is a serious charge. The Sikhs have also issued a statement in reply to the communique of the Government in which they review the whole situation, They state that on August 17, Sardars Jodh Singh and Narain Singh, both members of the Punjab Legislative Council, met General Sir William Birdwood and Mr. Craik, chief Secretary Punjab Government on the 17th April, 1924 at Government House. They also interviewed the leaders in the Lahore Fort and told them that the Government was seriously anxious to settle the Nabha, Jaito, Gurdwara Legislation and Kirpan questions. After some time, some hitch arose about the Nabha question which was then left open and the Government and the Sikh representatives proceeded to find a solution of the remaining questions. A document was actually drawn up by which the Government agreed to release the Akali prisoners including those under trial and those arrested inconnection with the Jaito affairs. The Sikh Councillors brought the draft agreement to the S.G.P.C. who made some ordinary changes in it.

The work before the Birdwood Committee. Politics is a game of chance and it is not necessarily the cleverest man who wins. But there are certain principles of the game which can not

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well be lost sight of. This is specially the case when the players are situated as in the game which is being played before us in this country ; a small very able and well-knit but a self-willed and *alien* bureaucracy on one side, and millions of men and women, weak and disorganised, but sensitive both to feelings of gratitude and resentment at an insult, and filled with the pride of their past, on the other. No insult is felt more keenly than that which is implied in the words "Oriental diplomacy" as used by European writers and statesmen. What are those principles which it is necessary for players in the political game to bear in mind ? One is the straight playing. It so happens that the real interest of both parties in the present case are identical. But the pity of it is that the parties donot think so. And an attempt is very often made to over-reach the other party. The other principle is that building up a dam is not necessarily the best method of stopping a flood. It may conceivably be the worst. And is any flood more dangerous and more irresistible in its onward march than the rapid moral awakening of a people smarting under a deep sense of its weakness and halplessness to set its own house in order ? If a father does not know from little acts of wilfulness and 'rebellion' on the part of his child, rapidly growing into the consciousness of manhood and self-raliance, that the time has come for him to withdraw his direct guidance and governing, and depend in future upon such indirect influence as he may be capable of exercising upon the life and well-being of his son—if a man has not learnt these elementary principles of parenthood, he may be sure there is no end of trouble in store for him.

This is rather a long pre-amble for what we want to say about the Birdwood Committee and the work immediately before it. But it is really not the Birdwood Committee, not even the settlement of the present dispute between the Government and the Akalis, which is the *root of the matter* and for which the whole of this long, painful game is being played. The thing really at issue is : does the Government realize that there has been a tremendous psychological change in the people—a mental

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and moral awakening which accompanies national adolescence and is the most pronounced as also the healthiest sign of it? The Akali awakening is only one particular aspect of the national *self-consciousness* and *self-assertion*, which Government often calls 'Sedition', 'Rebellion' and so forth. Whether people say so in so many words or not, they feel that because the Government is alien, foreign and selfish, their treatment towards them is stepmotherly and unsympathetic. They want domination, not co-operation. They aim at continued exploitation, and not co-partnership. That is the whole trouble.

As soon as those differences, which we often told are due merely to the highly sensitive and suspecious nature of us Indians, are removed the Akali trouble will disappear like mist before the rising sun. *And not till then*, whatever the settlement, the trouble will raise its head again in one form or another. For, by their temperament, their past traditions, history and training and the consciousness of the immense services which the Sikhs have rendered to Government, the Akalis-those that offer themselves for the protection of the Panth in times of distress and danger-have felt the stirrings of the new life more keenly than perhaps the other sections of the Indian people. All that they ask for is the right of free worship in their own temples managed by a duly elected representative body. The Muhammadans are not concerned with the matter at all. The differences with the Hindus are not vital and can be settled without difficulty. Why should the Government stand in their way? Have they not proved their earnestness and their sincerity by their unthinkable sfferings borne with a patience and even cheerfulness without a parallel in the world? And they are still suffering. Stories that are in circulation, but are not published, broadcast, show that some of the worst incidents of the Guru-ka Bagh affair are being repeated elsewhere. This may or may not be quite true. But they are videly credited to be true—thanks mainly to the absence of Press correspondents at Bhai

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Pheru and Jaito. The Government might think that the Secrecy which is being maintained now is helping them. Far from it, things are being said and believed which one would not dream of being true. But the Government alone is responsible for it. They denied the non-violent character of the Akalis at Guruka-Bagh to which tens of thousands of persons were eyewitnesses. On one pretext or another they refused discussion of the happenings in the Legislative Assembly as well as in the local Council. Scores of spectators were robbed in open day light by the police near Chhina bridge in the presence of a European officer. An Official enquiry was held, but the result was not made known. In both cases, the incidents were witnessed by some of the most respectable men among the Indians. The memory of these happenings can never be effaced. Only an open expression of regret can soothe the wounded feelings of the Sikhs in particular and the rest of India in general. The fault of the Akalis was at the very worst technical ; that of the Government moral. The remedy they applied was like building up a dam in front of an advancing flood. In all such matters kindness combined with timely concession go a much longer way than coercion. But this the alien bureaucracies can never understand. At Jaito, again many lives have been lost. There are two completely comflicting versions of the happenings there as regards *most vital issues*. The statement published by Mr. Zimand the American Journalist, who saw the Jatha and the crowd of spectators only half an hour or so before the firing began supports the popular version on all important points. Months have passed. The Legislative Assembly and the Punjab Council have both clamoured aloud for an open and an independent enquiry. It was refused on the plea that the incidents took place in a Native State. Whatever we may think of this plea, cannot the late Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Reading, find a way consistent with the "law" of the land to hold an enquiry which would satisfy Indian public opinion? Can England take just pride in such "laws"? Any law that goes against the eternal laws of

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humanity is not worth much. Supposing one of the many killed at Jaito was a white man—no matter an Englishman, or a German, or a Russian—what would have happened? Would not the whole 'civilized' world tremble till the truth of the matter was sifted out? It is questions like these which are being asked and answered not only by Akalis but by human beings all over the world. It is questions like these which the Birdwood Committee should be able to answer if it is to settle the Akali trouble once for all.

Indians have never been slow to acknowledge their indebtedness for what noble minded Englishmen have done or tried to do for their country. To mention only one instance, after the lapse of forty years and in spite of subsequent experiences of a quite different type of rulers, the name of Lord Ripon is never uttered but with the greatest respect and gratitude.

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September, 1924.

Nankana Sahib

A serious situation has been created by the order of Court appointing a Receiver for all the lands belonging to the Shrine. This means the beginning of a *Morcha*, at Nankana.

The Akalis are considering the new situation. As a preliminary step they have sent a small Jatha of 50 men to Nankana where it reaches on September, 1st, 1924. Big posters are being distributed by Akali Committee asking men, women and even children to be ready for all sacrifice. A five-anna fund has been started for meeting the larger expenses in this connection.

Morcha—Great enthusiasm in Sikh circles aiready prevails.

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Vol : V

October, 1924

The Akali Movement

Baba Kartar Singh Bedi's Penance

Baba Kartar Singh Bedi is a son of late Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi of Rawalpindi, a most influential religious leader of the Sikhs in northern India. Baba Kartar Singh is also a big landlord in the Montgomery district. He was one of the intimate associates of Mahant Narain Das of Nankana. It was he who called the famous Conference at Lahore at the Patiala House opposite Punjab Government House. This Conference was intended to offer effective resistance to the Gurdwara Reform Movement of the Sikhs. The conference was held on the 19th and 20th February, 1921, that is just a day before the Nankana massacre. The Akalis were sore against Baba Kartar Singh and he was contemptuously spoken of as Kartaru Bedin (the faithless Kartaru). His effigy was burnt in public. A *Hukamnama* (or a Bull) of *Akal Takht* declared him as *Tankhahia*, that is one who had committed an offence against the community. Such offences made a Sikh a sort of religious outcast in the community. No Gurdwara would accept offerings from him

For more than three years Bedi Kartar Singh did not mind the "*Bull*" of the Akal Takht. But on.....he wrote to the S.G.P.C. offering his submission. They said, that he should appear before the Akal Takht and surrender himself. This he did on May 23rd, 1924. He was asked to do two things by way of penance before the *Tankha* could be removed ; viz., 1. that he should clean the shoes of the *Sangat* at the Durbar Sahib, and 2. that he should undertake a pilgrimage on foot from Akal Takht (Amritsar) to Nankana Sahib, a distance of about sixty miles. The first sewa

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he did at once. Coming out of the Temple, he cleaned the shoes of the worshippers lying on the platform of the Clock Tower with his handkerchief. He did not merely brush them, but took up each pair one after another and cleaned it with great faith and love. This act of penance created a great impression at the time. It was witnessed by hundreds of men and women. But the second penance still remained. Further difficulties and trials presented themselves. Owing to his position and services to Government, he was Honorary Lieutenant in the British army ; he was also a Civil Judge and an Honorary Magistrate. The Government was far from pleased at the idea of the second item of the penance, the more so as the Akali organisations had been declared unlawful association. He was asked to resign his office in the army before he accepted to submit himself to the humiliation of offering penance. Similar pressure was put upon him to maintain the dignity of his honorary offices. But he struck to his resolve and relinquished all the honours and distinctions and faithfully went through the prescribed penance from beginning to the end.

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The Akali Movement

Akali Leaders Case

Crown versus S. B. Mehtab Singh and others. The very serious Nabha happenings had convinced the authorities that they would soon have to come to grips with the Akalis who were becoming a powerful and well-organized community, closely knit together by an intense religious sentiment that was being nourished and fostered by the present movement, particularly through the agency of hundreds of Gurdwaras spread like a net-work all over the Province. By the end of September 1923, the stage seems to have been set for taking a decisive step against the S. G. P. C., the source and fountain head of the quasi-military activities that had caused the Government so much trouble and anxiety since the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi with his non-co-operation movement in 1919. The association, as they thought, of these two powerful forces was ominous.

The time for effectively dealing with the Akalis was opportune. The Mahatma with tens of thousands of his admirers and co-workers had now been safely lodged behind prison bars, while after the Mooltan disturbances of the previous year both the Hindus and Muslims had not only been greatly weakened but were at the moment busy settling their accounts with each other.

An editorial note in the semi-official organ the *Civil and Military Gazette* of the 2nd October, 1923, left no doubt on the public mind that something very serious was brewing and that they might hear about it at a no distant date. After referring to "the blatantly political moves" of the Akalis, the Anglo-Indian Journal wrote:—

> "This long continued campaign of mendacity and incitement is obviously having the most serious effect on the whole Sikh community and things have gone so far

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> that there is small hope of averting the gravest consequences unless the organizers of the agitation are brought to book for their mischief-making."

Always on the look out for things to come, as a soldierly community engaged upon a serious business may be expected to be, the Akalis seem to have read the signs of the times more correctly than the public at large. Calling the observation of the Anglo-Indian journal as "significant," a communique issued by the S. G. P. C. asked: "Is it setting the stage for the coming drama of the suppression of the S. G. P. C. as an unlawful association?" These were prophetic words. Almost immediately after the communique was issued, a criminal case was started against a large number of Sikh leaders who had been taking part in the Guru-ka-Bagh affair and, generally, in the Sikh agitation which arose immediately after the non-co-operation movement was inaugurated in the Panjab. The Sikh leaders were accused of conspiracy, sedition and waging war against the King. All the members of the Executive Committee of the S. G. P. C. and Akali Dal along with office men (about 60 in number) were arrested at one sweep at dead of night on October 12. The complaint was filed against them in the case *Crown versus S. B. Mehtab Singh and others* under Section 120, 121 A and 124 A, I. P. C. also Section 17 (1) and 17 (22) of the Act 14 of 1908. The case was filed on the 15th October 1923 by Mr. V. W. Smith, O. B. E., Superintendent of Police on behalf of the Government. The plaint covers no less than 36 printed foolscap pages and sets out in great detail the activities of the Akalis during the previous three years. The accused numbered 58, but one or two further batches were added to them after a few days. The bist includes all the prominent members of the S. G. P. C. and the Akali Dal as also a few of the more prominent ministerial officials, especially those who were in charge of the confidential work of the S. G. P. C.*

*The plaint gives considerable details of the meetings

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The case lasted for about eighteen months and came to an end on the 13th March, 1925. Only some of the accused were represented in court by Counsel for them, but a large number refused to be so represented being non-co-operators. The principal counsel for the accused were Raizada Bhagat Ram, Lala Raghunath Sahahi and Sardar Sant Singh of Lyallpur. The complainant was Mr. V. W. Smith, O. B. E., Superintendent,

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(Continued from the last Page)

and other activities of the Akali movement. The following are the names of the Chief accused in the case : 1. S. B. Mehtab Singh. 2. S Teja Singh, 3. S. Bhag Singh (Vakil), 4. Prof. Bawa Harkishan Singh, 4. Giani Sher Singh, 6. Master Tara Singh, 7. Prof. Teja Singh, 8. S. Hari Singh of Jullundur, 9. Capt. Ram Singh, 10. Bhagat Jaswant Singh, 11. S. Gopal Singh Sagri, 12. Master Mehtab Singh, B. A., 13. Risaldar Sunder Singh, 14. S. Mangal Singh, ex-editor of *Akali*, 15. S. Teja Singh, of Ghavind, 16. S. Teja Singh of Chuharkana, 17. S. Dan Singh, 18. S. Bakshish Singh, 19. Sodhi Pritam Singh, 20. Prof. Narinjan Singh 21. S. Sewa Singh, 22. S. Mit Singh Canadian, 23. S. Nanak Singh, 24. Risaldar Ranjodh Singh, 25. S. Gopal Singh Qaumi, B. A., 26. S. Narain Singh, Barrister, 27. S. Gurdit Singh, 28. S. Amar Singh, 29. S. Harbans Singh, 30. S. Bal Singh, 31. S. Tripat Singh, 32. S. Surmukh Singh Jhabbal, 33. S. Piara Singh alias Karm Singh, 34. S. Sahib Singh, B. A., 35. S. Kishan Singh, 36. S. Teja Singh of Amritsar, 37. S. Kirpal Singh, 38. S. Gyan Singh, 39. S. Dalip Singh, 40. Bhai Kartar Singh, 41. S. Mangal Singh, 42. Bhai Prem Singh, 43. Bhai Lahora Singh, 44. Bhai Dharm Singh, 45. Bhai Gurbaksh Singh, 46. Bhai Man Singh, 47. Bhai Nand Singh, 48. Bhai Gurdit Singh, 49. Bhai Harnam Singh, 50. Bhai Man Singh typist, 51. S. Gurcharan Singh, 52. S. Gurbakhsh Singh, 53. S. Rai Singh Alias Daljit Singh, 54. S. Sohan Singh Josh, 55. S, Narinjan Singh, 56. S.Santa Singh, 57. S. Hari Singh, editor *Akali*, 58. S. Gurdit Singh editor, *Nation*.

Note : Reproduced from the S. G. P. C. communique No. 120.

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CID. The crown was represented by Mr. Pettman and R. B. Jawala Pershad (Public Prosecutor). The proceedings of the case were followed with great interest throughout the province, the accused being mostly leading members of the S. G. P. C. or committees of important Gurdwaras or office bearers of Shiromani Akali Dal or the Central Sikh League or other important Sikh organisations and institutions.

On the 18th October, 1923, that is only a fortnight after the ominous paragraph had appeared in the C. & M. Gazette, the S. G. P. C. was declared an unlawful body throughout the province. Two days later, the newspapers in the Punjab were warned not to give publicity to the communiques of the unlawful body. The Akali leaders began to be arrested. On their own part, the members of the unlawful body marched in procession rather ostentatiously through the thoroughfares of Lahore, Amritsar and other towns inviting the Government, and particularly the Governor who was then about to open the new Council, to arrest them. Of course the object of the Government in declaring the S. G. P. C. as an unlawful body and arresting all the prominent leaders was to paralyse the aggressive activities of the Akalis. In this object they failed completely. On the 19th November, 1923, or exactly one month after the declaration of the S.G.P.C. as an unlawful body, its place was taken by a new organization under the name of the Akali Sahaik Bureau with headquarters at Amritsar to carry on the Jaito campaign. This was not all. To the Jaito morcha was now added another at Bhai Pheru, where on the first day 32 Akalis were arrested, followed in subsequent days by daily jathas of 25 men. More important still, the Jaito struggle instead of fizzling out or even suddenly collapsing became very much more vigorous and dangerous than before. On the 9th February the first Shahidi Jatha of no less than 500 Akalis started from Amritsar to Nabha. Altogether ten shahidi jathas were despatched before a halt was called. On the 21st February 1924, the Jatha reached

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Jaito when it was fired upon by order of the Nabha Administrator resulting in the death of.....men. Far from deterring the Akalis or their leaders, a second Shahidi jatha left Amritsar for Jaito only a week after what is known as the Jaito massacre. The jatha reached Jaito on the 14th March 1924 and was peacefully arrested. Eight days later the third Shahidi Jatha was on its way from Amritsar to Jaito. The tenth Shahidi Jatha reached Jaito on the evening of the 18th August and was arrested without much trouble.

The case covered the whole ground from the time the Gurdwara reform movement began in the Punjab and particularly since the formation of the S.G.P.C. as the Central organized executive body of the community in whose name and, in fact, under whose direct control and guidance all the activities were carried on. The plaint is a most interesting document and contains information about the disturbed condition of the province which it would be difficult to find collected in a conveniently available form anywhere else. Sometimes even small boys formed themselves into bands for propaganda and other activities, it was alleged, under the direction of Akali leaders.

The judgement in the case was delivered by the trying Magistrate, Nawab Aslam Hayat Khan, on March 13, 1924. Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh, Baghat Jaswant Singh, S. Narain Singh, S. Rivel Singh and Baba Kehr Singh* were each sentenced to simple imprisonment for six month and 16 days, commencing from the date of their arrest and expiring at the rising of the ccurt. Bhai Sahib Singh was acquitted. A very large number of men were serving their terms of imprisonment with hard labour for one thing or another in connection with the movement. it is difficult to describe how deeply ruffled were the feelings of the Akalis as a body, wherever they happened to hear of the treatment of their fellow believers who were *now* serving terms of imprisonment in

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*Prof. Teja Singh was released before conviction on medical grounds.

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the various jails of the Panjab for their unflinching courage and faith. The conduct of the case itself entailed immense labour, although only a small number of the accused offered to defend themselves, the majority deciding to non-co-operate with the Government. The complaint was general that in a political case of this character, it was the part of wisdom for each accused to submit a statement in explanation or justification, if necessary or desirable, of his own share in the struggle, but otherwise not to take part in the defence of the case. Apart from other matters, there was the question of the enormous expense involved. Some idea of the expense incurred in the case may be formed from the fact that the Senior lawyer alone was charging the Akalis Rs. 330/- a day. There were besides at least two other lawyers throughout the pendency of the case. The senior lawyer on behalf of the Government was being paid Rs. 550/- a day besides a very senior Public Prosecutor and one or two assistants. The case lasted practically from day to day from October 1923 to March 1925. Of the accused several men suffered from severe illness of one kind or another during the period of incarceration while at least one man, the jewel of the whole body of the Akalis, who was in main charge of the very arduous Guru-Ka-Bagh movement, I mean, S. Teja Singh Samundri, passed away in jail. I was present throughout the struggle and was privileged to watch the whole movement at close quarters. As I have described on another page in this book I slept in the same room with the members of the Council of Action and was in fact trusted as one of the Committee. While every one did his best in faithfully and honestly discharging the duties with which they were severely or collectively entrusted, words fail me to describe adequately my admiration for the cool, calm, but determined manner in which Teja Singh Samundri conducted the vast and complicated organization of the S.G.P.C. in its various branches to a successful issue. Teja Singh Samundri, in ordinary language, was a man of very moderate education. But in spite of all his shortcomings, he was a remarkable man, one among tens of thousand of men, who was born as organizer and leader of men

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and movements.* People may wonder at the marvellous results achieved by the Akalis within a few short years, the highly successful manner in which they conducted the struggle against all the forces and resources of the Government, but the secret of it lies in the fact that in the midst of an army of competent and devoted leaders, great and small, a wonderful sense of order and discipline prevailed throughout the organization, so that the whole machinery worked smoothly, ceaselessly and without the least sign of friction in any part of it. Even the moderate elements in the community did not fail to show their sympathy with the movement.

The case dragged on, and several attempts at compromise were made through the Commander-in-Chief (Birdwood), but failed. The real solution was to give the Sikhs control over their Gurdwaras through a Bill, but as this meant giving the Sikhs a central body, which could be only the S.G.P.C., the Government was reluctant to come to terms. They tried to bolster up the Chief Khalsa Diwan or some other element, but no association of Sikhs could dare to put itself in opposition to the S.G.P.C. Ultimately the Government after trying many draft Bills brought forward a measure which provided a central body, called Board of Control, for the management and control of all the historical Gurdwaras. They took care to see that this Board should not have the whole power or all the funds in its hands, and its name also was not to be S.G.P.C. until the Board adopted it by a resolution. The Local Committees were given much power, so that the centre should be at the mercy of the outlying boards. But a later amendment (1945) made at Giani Kartar Singh's proposal, the power given originally to the local committees has been allowed to gather in the S.G.P.C. The leaders were then released.

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*The Hall of the S.G.P.C. is named after him "Teja Singh Samundri Hall."

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The Gurdwara Bill.

During the Congress non-co-operation movement, the popular excitement over the management, or rather mismanagement, of the Gurdwaras, chiefly those under the charge of Udasi Mahants, became so intense and wide spread with a view to meet the persistent demand of the Akalis for the reform of their sacred shrines, that the Government decided to introduce a Gurdwara Bill in the Punjab Legislative Council as early as possible. At this time, the serious happenings at Nankana Sahib had not only intensified the already simmering discontent among the Akalis, they had also created a very difficult situation for the Government all over the province. The authorities were genuinely apprehensive lest the impulsive Akalis should get out of hand. On the other hand, the whole Sikh community was loud in their complaints that the Mahants, pampered and corrupted by the huge offerings flowing ceaselessly into their coffers, looked only to the local officials for support instead of their sangat to whose spiritual ministration and social welfare it was their duty to attend and whom they were bound to consult in all matters concerning the use of the Gurdwara funds of which they were merely the custodians.

In the prevailing condition of uncertainty and general uneasiness, the newly formed society for the management of the Gurdwaras, which had by this time provided itself with a constitution and a somewhat pompous name, had now begun to take into its own possession and control such of the Gurdwaras as they could without much difficulty. In the circumstances of the time it is not surprising that while the Shromani Gurdwara prabandhak Committee (written briefly S. G. P. C.) or the more religious-minded or the more prudent Mahants realising that their personal interest or the interest of the shrines in their charge lay in their seeking the protection of the Committee that had been

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formed specially for the purpose of managing and maintaining the Gurdwaras on lines consistent with the teachings of the Gurus and the wishes of the community, had voluntarily placed the Gurdwaras under the control of S.G.P.C. Some other Mahants, on the other hand, believed that their own interests could be better served by continuing to manage the Gurdwaras on the lines on which they had hither to been doing, namely, with the support and guidance of the local officials. It is not improbable that in some cases, at least, some Akalis may have actually taken forcible possession of Gurdwaras. In the case of the Gurdwara of Hothian, a village in the Gurdaspur district, for instance, it is said, that the Mahant apprehending an attack on his shrine fled away from the Gurdwara when the Akalis came and took possession of it. The Mahant afterwards made an application * to the District Magistrate for the possession of the shrine. The District Magistrate passed orders attaching the shrine. The Akalis, however, completely ignored this order and took forcible possession of the shrine, claiming it to be in their possession. The case of Hothian is possibly not a solitary instance of forcible possession by the Akalis. In a few cases even private places of worship where people from the neighbourhood used to congregate to hear the Granth Sahib recited, were taken possession of by gangs of men without orders from the Headquarters. Some of these dlaces after proper inquiry were handed back to their rightful owners under the instructions of the S. G. P. C. A few of these places were not Gurdwaras at all, out simply Dharemshalas built by religious-minded Hindus who had faith in the teachings of the Gurus and where the Granth Sahib was read regularly for the spiritual benefit of all the men and women living in the neighbourhood.**

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*Under section 145 Cr. P. C.

** In a couple of cases of this kind, I was deputed by the S. G. P. C. to make enquiries and finally dispose of the complaints. My decision, in some cases, went against the Akalis and dharmsalas were restored to the complainants.

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In view of the increasing strength of the non-co-operation movement and partly, perhaps, also influenced by the excitement prevailing amongs: the Sikhs over the Gurdwaras question, the Punjab Government, in November 1921 without any cause, extended the Seditious Meetings Act to the districts of Lahore, Amritsar and Shekhupura. Under this Act no public meetings could be held without the special permission of the local magistrate. The Sikhs, however, paid no heed to the prohibition orders and continued to hold their Diwans, claiming that the provisions of the Act did not relate to religious meetings. As a matter of fact, the number of the Dewans greatly increased. Whatever the original intention of holding the Diwans might have been, it was often difficult to ensure the strictly religious character of these gatherings throughout. It must be acknowledged that here and there advantage was taken of the Diwans which were being held at this time all over the country including some remote villages, to severely criticise the Government's part in the management of the Gurdwaras and in particular about what is known as the "Keys' Affair." * The Sikhs naturally regarded these questions as purely religious, but as it often happens in intense times of popular excitement, some of the speakers were carried off their feet to import a political colour into their speeches. This was specially the case with men who were not much used to public speaking or those who have never felt the sense of responsibility in such matters. The Government, of course, became very nervous, specially because the criticism often related to the manner in which the important Sikh shrines including the Sikh Holy of Holies at Amritsar, had been managed under official direction during the previous Seventy years. Moreover, it was felt that the criticism of officials acts made in utter disregard of the Seditious Meetings Act would go a long way in undermining the official authority

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*The incident popularly known as the Keys, Affair was a most ill-advised action on the part of certain high Panjab officials and became the starting point of a long series of troubles.

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and prestige. Anyway, in their keen desire to avoid a conflict with the Sikh community, the Government instituted in a court of law "a friendly suit with the object of obtaining a judicial decision in the matter of the keys which was now chiefly exercising the mind of the whole Sikh community. As the S. G. P. C. came forward as a regularly constituted representative body of the Sikhs and claimed to be recognised as the legitimate custodian of the Gurdwaras belonging to the Panth, the Government was glad to hand over the keys of the Golden Temple to the President of the S. G. P. C *

In view of the serious happening's at Nankana Sahib, Guru Ka-Bagh and elsewhere, obviously something was desired to be done to settle the very serious disputes between the Mahants, on the one side, and the S.G.P.C. representing the whole community, on the other. It had become perfectly clear by this time that the Sikh community was united in their claim that the existing management of their sacred shrines was anything but satisfactory and that early action was called for to place the control of the Gurdwaras and their funds on a proper footing, consistently with the teachings of the Sikh faith.

Accordingly on the 7th of November, 1922, Sir Fazli-Hussein, as Minister for Education, introduced an official Gurdwara Bill in the Punjab Legislative Council. The Guru-ka-Bagh "Morcha," which had been the cause of so much misery and pain to the Sikh Community and of equal trouble and anxiety to the Government, was still in progress, but it was known that a public spirited gentleman was interesting himself in the matter and it was confidently believed that the trouble would soon be over.

Sir Fazli-Hussein's Gurdwara Bill was foredoomed to failure. Five moderate Sikh M. L. Cs were appointed on the Select Committee of the Bill. Four of them had refused to act while the fifth member, Bawa Hardit Singh Bedi, attended some

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* Court Proceedings in the case Crown-vs-S. B. Mehtab Singh and Others, pages 6–7.

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meetings of the committee but from the 5th November, at the request of four absenting Sikh members as well as some others, he too refused to work on the Select Committee. By this time it had become quite clear that even the moderate section of the Sikh members on the Legislative Council was against Sir Fazli-Hussein's measure, because they said that it had been framed in defiance of the desires and opinions of the whole community. More than a fortnight before the unwanted legislation was placed before the Punjab Council, the S. G. P. C. had recorded a strong protest against it. They declared that quite apart from the merits of the legislation itself, a worse time could not have been chosen for it. Most of the Akali leaders were in jail. Thousands of other men had also been pushed behind prison bars, simply because of their love of the Gurdwaras.

As such no legislation of this kind had the smallest chance of succeeding without previous consultation with and consent of the S. G. P. C. which was the most vitally concerned body in the matter. The S. G. P. C. appealed to the Sikh members of the council to oppose the proposed Bill if and when it was brought forward in the Council. They also appealed to the Hindu and Muslim Members in the Council not to be a party to the passing of a measure which was sure to be the cause of untold misery to the whole Sikh community. The first day of December (1922) was fixed to be observed as a Prayer Day for the reform and welfare of all Gurdwaras. Diwans were to be held on this day and Japji recited five times by every Sikh, man and woman. In addition to this, an *Akhand path* was to be kept wherever possible.

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The Second Gurdwara Bill

The severe conflict between the Akalis and the forces of Government at Guru-ka-Bagh, the great power of organisation and resourcefulness of which the Akali leaders had given ample evidence in this struggle and, above all immense hold they had now acquired on the masses of the community, could not have failed to convince the authorities of the futility of legislating for the Gurdwaras without the consent and willing support of the Akalis themselves. In spite of the fact, therefore, that a (Sir Fazli-Hussein's) Gurdwara Bill had already been passed, Sir John Meynard, then Finance Member and the most powerful man in the Legislative Council, did not take long to realise that the measure sponsored by Sir Fazli-Hussein was as good as dead. As soon as the Guru-ka-Bagh affair was settled, he bagan to throw out feelers to some of the leaders of the Sikh community about the terms of a new settlement of all the knotty questions arising out of the disputed possession of the Gurdwaras which had been the source of so much trouble both to the Government and the Sikh community. Indeed, even before the 1st Gurdwara Bill had become an Act, some informal discussions had already been going on between some members of the Government and the representatives of the S.G.P.C. There is evidence to show that Sir John Meynard had had some talks on the subject with two or three leading members of the Prabandhak Committee. For several months proceedings remained confidential. The S.G.P.C. were far from satisfied with the attitude of the Government and even went to the length of characterising the peace-offer of Sir John Meynard as no better than a 'farce'.

A further step in the same direction was registered when, on March 8,1923, speaking on Mr. (now Sir) Henry Craik's amendment to S. Randhir Singh's resolution, Sir John Meynard said that the "Government would be prepared to release all Guru-ka-Bagh prisoners if an agreement could be reached between the S.G.P.C.

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and the Hindus and the other parties concerned as to the common principles on which the proposed Gurdwara legislation was based." He regretted, however, that the Akalis had repudiated his proposal and had shown "complete unwillingness even to listen to the suggestion." But the Government was always prepared, he added, "to deal with even the most unreasonable people in a reasonable way." With this object in view he had repeated the offer a few days back but it was again refused.

The Akalis had their own story to tell. Their grievance was that the Government had passed its own Gurdwara Bill without due regard to the feelings of sentiments of the community for whose benefit it was intended and who were so vitally concerned with the reform and proper management of their sacred shrines. This was an insult offered to the whole Panth. It was only when the Government discovered that their unpopular legislation could not be thrust down the throats of a living and determined community, that a wish was expressed to bring about a settlement on the basis of a common consent and agreement. On their own part the S.G.P.C. had always been ready to accept the arbitration of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya regarding the framing of those provisions of a Gurdwara Bill "which concerned the question of the determination of the nature of a temple, i.e., how they should distinguish a Sikh Gurdwara from a Hindu Mandir or an Udasi Akhara. The S.G.P.C. had, however, never accepted the arbitration of the Pandit on all points. They had never agreed to giving to an individual the right of the Sikh Panth to decide its religious matters. Even a Sikh, however eminent he was, they declared, could not be given this right." The S. G. P. C. cannot agree to leaving to arbitration vital matters concerning religious principles and fundamental object of Gurdwara reform.*

The Committee further complained that it was the Government who had broken off the talks that had been taking place between the

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*S.G.P.C. Press Communique No. 444, page 102.

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parties. It was understood that Sir John Meynard, or someone else on behalf of the Government, would call a meeting soon after the return to Lahore of His Excellency the Governor, who was then on tour. No meeting was called with the result that the negotiations, such as they were, were supposed to have come to an end on December 6. Whatever the reasons for the cessation of the negotiations might be, the S.G.P.C. held that they were not responsible for it. Sir John Meynard had indeed put forward a modified suggestion and there the talks had ended. Sir John had repeatedly told the friends with whom he was carrying on the informal discussions that he was not speaking on behalf of the Government when the preliminary discussions at first began in November 1922. The talks of Sir John were nothing more than a feeler and therefore they did not proceed far enough to bring about a settlement between the parties.

It would be futile to consider why no agreement could be reached. In the Summer of 1923 the S.G P.C., finding that for one reason or another nothing had come out of the talks with Sir John Meynard and other members of the Government party, decided to run its own candidates in the forth coming general elections for the Punjab Legislative Council and thus to navigate their own Gurdwara Bill through their own representatives in the Council with the help and support of such other members as they might succeed in winning over to their side. Accordingly at their general meeting held on the 20th of September, 1923, the Committee adopted a formal resolution to run its own candidates for election both to the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Punjab Legislative Council. At the same time the Committee issued an appeal to all Sikh voters to give their fullest support to the nominees of the committee.

It may also be mentioned here that all the candidates nominated by the S.G.P.C. were required to sign the following declaration :—

I solemnly declare that :

"(a) I shall abide by the mandate of the S.G.P.C. with regard to all matters placed before the Legislative Assembly and

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the Punjab Legislative Council, concerning the welfare of the Panth or of the country, and if necessary I shall resign my seat.

(b) I shall not accept any post in or under the Government without the permission of the S.G.P.C. or try to derive any benefit from my position in the Indian Legislative Assembly or the Punjab Legislative Council for myself or my relatives.

(c) If, for any reason, at any time, I find myself unable to carry out the mandate of the S.G.P.C., I will resign my seat.

(d) I shall conform to the condition of being an orthodox Amritdhari and wear the Sikh symbol, (Kirpan), as required to be kept by the members of the S.G.P.C. under the Committee rule No. 7*

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*S.G.P.C. Communique No. 114, Resolution. II. Dated : 30.8 1923.

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The Akali Movement

Chapter :—Firing at Gurdwara Sisganj.

The firing at the Sisganj Gurdwara, Delhi, occured on the 6th of May, 1930. An independent inquiry Committee was appointed by a resolution of the S. G. P. C. at Amritsar, on may 9, 1930, "to inquire and report about the firing at Gurdwara Sisganj, Delhi, on 6th May, 1930, and other official excesses relating thereto." The Committee as originally constituted consisted of five members. *

The Chairman of the Inquiry Committee requested the Chief-Commissioner, Delhi, to depute some Government Officers to cross-examine the witnesses before the Committee and help the Committee in its work. The request was, however, refused obviously to show that the Government did not recognize the

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* Mr. K. L. Rallia Ram (Chairman), a public spirited man and an Educationist of standing; President of the Punjab Christian Conference; Vice President of All India Social Congress held at Lahore in 1930. (2) Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, M. A., Retired Professor of Chemistry, Government College, Lahore; Fellow Punjab University; Trustee and Honorary Secretary, D. S. College Trust; Chairman Reception Committee of the All-India Social Conference 1929 (Secretary to the Committee). (3) S. Gulab Singh, M. L. A., (Central) Member, All India Railway Finance Committee. (4) S. Buta Singh, B. A., LL. B., M. L. C., Ex-Deputy President Punjab Legislative Council. (5) Maulana Abdul Qadir Kasuri, President of the Punjab Provincial Congress. Maulana Abdul Qadir was arrested before the Inquiry Committee started its work. The S. G. P. C. then nominated Chaudhri Afzal Haq to take his place. But the intimation did not reach him in time and he too could not take part in the enquiries conducted at Delhi.

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S. G. P. C. Inquiry Committee. But the Committee was able to see the Chief Commissioner twice. It received some information from the Senicr Superirterdent Police and Mr. Isar, the City Magistrate.

The Committee conducted its enquiries for three days, on the 18th, 19th and 20th of May, 1930, the sittings being open to the public. The Committee at first visited the Gurdwara and saw the various marks of the bullets. A large number of bullets were also removed from within the folds of the cloth wrapped round the Nishan Sahib (the Guru ka banner). It recorded evidence of some 44 witnesses including the persons injured at the Gurdwara, as also other eye-witnesses, and responsible gentlemen from the city. The Committee visited the Hospital to record the evidence of the injured persons lying there.

The Committee submitted its report late in the month. The Report covers 70 pages in all, out of which 24 are devoted to the statement about the facts concerning the firing into the Gurdwara Sisganj, while the remaining 36 pages were devoted to the evidence of 44 witnesses who appeared before the Committee.

Before dealing with the actual firing at the Gurdwara Sisganj, Delhi, the Committee briefly referred to the general situation at the time all over the country and particularly in Delhi.

In the years 1930, the national movement for the "complete independence of India" was going on vigorously all over India. Mahatma (Gandhi) ji had been arrested for launching the Civil Disobedience campaign. In connection with Mahatmaji's imprisonment on the 5th of May, there was universal Hartal on the 6th of May, 1930. Delhi had of course, its full share in the Hartal; and the crowds of enthusiastic People paraded the streets uttering various slogans, as the procession. Some minor incidents occurred during that day which led to unexpected consequences.

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A certain European officer tried to take his car through the procession and in doing so some persons were injured. Another European passed that way and was roughly handled by the crowd. The Additional District Magistrate appeared on the scene and he too received rough treatment at the hands of the people. No one was seriously injured, but the Police resorted to lathi charges to disperse the crowd assembled before the Kotwali. Some of the people, for the sake of shelter, entered the Gurdwara Sisganj that stands quite contiguous to the Kotwali building.

At 3.30 p.m. the Manager of the Gurdwara informed the Deputy Superintendent of Police, the officer in charge of the Kotwali, that two stones had been thrown into the Gurdwara, one of which had hit the *Romals* (coverings) of the Holy Book. But the Deputy Superintendent made a countercharge that stones had been thrown at the Kotwali from the Gurdwara side.

At about 4 p.m. three lorries full of policemen reached the Kotwali in order to strengthen the Police force at the Place. Some people from the crowd threw brickbats on these policemen and, according to the official version, 15 to 20 policemen received injuries. The Police now made a very strenuous attack on the crowd and a large number of people entered the precincts of the Gurdwara to take shelter there.

According to the official version, brickbats were thrown at the Kotwali from the Gurdwara. The Committee, however, could not see its way to accept this view without a challenge.

The Inquiry Committee "did not notice a single leaf of flower or blade of grass to have been injured in the flower garden in front of the Kotwali where the policemen are said to have received tons of brickbats." This place is just before the two roofs from which the brickbats could have been thrown from the Gurdwara.

Firing

All of a sudden, without giving any warning, the Police

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started firing into the Gurdwara* as well as outside. The firing lasted, according to the city Magistrate's version, for 15 to 20 minutes. In the opinion of the Committee it was "indiscriminate, vindictive and excessive."

The firing was indiscriminate as marks of the bullets were seen at places where there were no people or from places no brickbats could be thrown. For example a bullet hit the portrait of Guru Gobind Singh that was on the first floor from which obviously no stones could be thrown. The firing was vindictive in the sense "that the police made no difference between the guilty and the innocent" and it was excessive because it continued for 20 minute.

After the firing had stopped the Police in a body entered the Gurdwara, with their shoes on, and walked through the various parts of the Sikh temple. The Sikh community took this act of the Police as an insult to the sacred place and the whole Sikh community. The publication of the Report created a sensation in the Sikh community and special precautions had to be taken to prevent any disturbance at the huge Jor Mela which was held soon after in connection with the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Deva. The mela is held at Lahore outside the Gurdwara sacred to the memory of the Guru close to the walls of the Lahore Fort.

The evidence placed before the Committee refers to some 3 hundred persons injured in the course of the Firing but it is obvious that only small fraction of these must have been wounded by the Firing inside the Gurdwara. Some of the witnesses and the mother of a boy gave to the Committee the pathetic story of her son who was shot within the Gurdwara and died subsequently in hospital. He was the only bread-winner of the Family.

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*As the name implies, the Gurdwara marks the spot where the Ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was assasinated under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. He was given the chcice between the acceptance of Emperor's faith or death. He accepted the latter. (For fuller information see the account of Gurdwara Rikab Ganj on page 58-59).

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The Akali Conference at Attari

On Saturday and Sunday, February 10, 11, 1940, the Akalis held a great All-India Akali Conference at Attari near Amritsar. The attendance is said to have approached seventy thousand persons, many leading Sikhs coming from long distances from all parts of India. The Akali Sena clad in Khaki uniform numbering, it is said, ten thousand volunteers staged an impressive parade. A dozen resolutions were passed. Sir Jogindra Singh, ex-Minister of Punjab, S. Sant Singh, M. L. A. and Sardar Pratap Singh M.L.A. and Sardar Boota Singh ex. M. L. C. of Sheikupura among other leaders spoke on these resolutions. The Conference supported the National demand for complete independence and the right of people to frame their own constitution. The conference said that they would wholeheartedly stand by the Congress in any active struggle for the attainment of independence. The suggestion was also put forward that the Congress should "set up a Standing Committee to look after the interests of the minorities and that this committee be associated with the Minorities Department of the Congress ; (b) that the nomination by the Congress of candidates from the minority communities to the various legislatures in the country may be made accordance with the wishes of the Congressmen belonging to the minority concerned and that the nominees must, in all cases, be *bona fide* members of that minority ; (c) that definite instructions be issued to various Congress organisations to nominate a due proportion of members of minority communities in local bodies for election ; and (d) that the minorities may be granted, by convention, an adequate representation in the Congress organisation and that a Sikh Congressman may always be taken on the working Committee of the Congress. "No community in India has in the past shown such a remarkable power of organisation and such wonderful spirit of sacrifice as the Akalis."

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The President, Jathedar Teja Singh Akarpuri, remarked that the strength of Sikhs in the Indian army was 40% in 1885. It came down to 20 per cent in 1914 and now it is 14 per cent. This is due to the policy of the Government, and not that the Sikhs for the army were not forthcoming. They were anxious to go to the army and to serve the country and also the community. The President Jathedar Teja Singh said that there could be no Swaraj without unity and no unity without Swaraj. It was a puzzle. He condemned the Pakistan mentality of the Muslim leaders which was dangerous and, when Swaraj was in sight, it was even mischievous. He said he was glad that Sharomani Akali Dal is organising an Akali Fauj not for establishing Sikh Raj (that idea was irreligious) but for service. The small Sikh community could exist only by serving others. He dwelt upon the political situation in India which was in melting pot and specially deplored the condition of the Sikhs.

Master Tara Singh hoisted the Akali Flag.

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