

Punjab

Chair: Mr. P. Chidambaram

Mr. Chairman: During this symposium, each one of you will set your own parameters and will identify aspects which you think as important. As we go along, we will structure the sessions in such a way that each one of you has a full and complete opportunity to state for the record what you knew, what you did, what you heard, what you learnt and how you, working with Rajiv Gandhi, shaped the events during 1984-89. We are really dealing with the period when Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister.

Between 1986 and 1989, I was also a minor player in Punjab. Therefore, I can understand the contradictory pulls and pressures that will be there when each one of the speakers speaks on Punjab. But I sincerely hope that we will bring on record as much of what happened in Punjab during the crucial years of Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership as is humanly possible. During that period, mistakes were committed. And I think it would be good if we recognise what those mistakes were. We must resist the temptation to put a gloss on history. We are trying to record history as it happened, and events as they unfolded, not with the benefit of hindsight but how each one felt, reacted, acted, and decided, and why he did what he did at that time even if today, five years later, one might wish to correct that record. It is best to state what happened, as it happened, without saying whether that was right or wrong.

The delegates, of course, will have priority. If they wish to interject or speak at any point of time, I would most sincerely request all others to yield the floor to them. But these interjections must be brief, to the point, and truthful to history, and truthful to the record so that what we have eventually at the end of this session is as accurate a record as possible of what happened in Punjab during the crucial years. Since I have to begin somewhere and since I find Mr. Arjun Singh's name at the top of the list, may I request him to present his views?

Mr. Arjun Singh: Rajiv Gandhi came to the helm of affairs at a very critical time in the history of our country. The problem of Punjab had assumed alarming overtones. Here was a society divided against itself, emanating deep distrust, on the one hand, and, to some extent, justified indignation,

on the other. Perhaps we can say that Indian politics had not seen a darker hour than that revealed at that period, more especially after the tragic assassination of the Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi. It is in such trying times that India under Rajiv Gandhi had to find a way out.

I went to Punjab as the Governor and assumed office on 14 March 1985, three days after he asked me to go there. After taking office, I came to Delhi and requested him that if I were to work in a vacuum there, perhaps what he wanted could not be achieved. Therefore, I said, 23 March happens to be the martyrdom anniversary of Sardar Bhagat Singhji, and it would be very appropriate if he came to Hussainiwala where the mortal remains of Bhagat Singh, Gurdev and Sukhdev lay. As a result of my suggestion, I had the whole establishment in Delhi against me. As I was told later, from the Home Minister downwards, the entire Cabinet and the security forces were opposed to my suggestion because Hussainiwala is only 2.5 kilometres from the Pakistan border. They all felt that it was absolutely dangerous and they would not advise it. I was also a little nonplussed because it was a very awesome responsibility to take. But he asked me, after he had received all this advice from everyone, whether I still insisted that he should go. I said I can't insist that the Prime Minister of India go to such a dangerous place, but I told him: "You are a little more than the Prime Minister and you want to give the people of Punjab a message that you care for them. And what you are trying to do, we will try to do it under all circumstances. Therefore, I think, you should go." And he went. And I can tell you that visit was actually the starting point for the entire exercise that was undertaken, which culminated in the signing of the Punjab Accord.

In India, which in many ways still follows many of the past mores and codes of conduct, personal audience with the person who is at the helm of affairs in the country has a much greater impact and gives a much stronger message than all that can be said and done either through the written word or the spoken word. His presence on the soil of Punjab, for the first time after Operation Bluestar, gave the people of Punjab some food for thought. This was the basis, as it turned out later, for me to make first formal or informal contact with the late Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal. After Rajivji came back from Hussainiwala, I stayed back in Amritsar. After a few days, Santji was to come there soon after his release. And totally against all the norms of protocol, for which I was even chided by some people, I sent Santji a personal letter which was delivered in the Golden Temple. Santji was taken aback as to how a Governor could write to him as he was still under a cloud on the part of the Government of India. And in that, I mentioned the visit of Rajivji to Hussainiwala. I didn't get any written reply. But the messenger who gave him that letter came back and told me that he had reason to rethink everything because Rajivji had visited Punjab. I would not have even mentioned this but for the fact that Surjeet Singh Barnalaji is also sitting here. As I told him just now, we have to sit in close proximity if

not think alike. When this question of dealing with the hurt feelings of the people of Punjab came up, it was a rather delicate thing.

The real problem was how to get across to the people of Punjab and, there again, it was Rajivji who came to the front. In a BBC interview, the viewpoint that Rajivji put across is worth mentioning:

Ever since Sikhism took root, it fought for India's integrity and unity. Sikhs have played a part in building India and they are playing a part even today in taking India ahead.

This statement gave me the password, as if it were, to put across to many friends as to where the real heart of the young Prime Minister lay. But the impression was strengthened that we were prepared to over-reach ourselves to get to an agreement which could break the impasse in Punjab and within the four corners of the Indian Constitution; we would go to any length to help start a new chapter.

Many lessons were learnt in Punjab. There were lessons for political parties in that they can ill-afford to be silent witnesses to the hijacking of political issues by terrorist and extremist elements. There were lessons from the way the people of Punjab stood up to the menace posed by forces that were bent on dismembering the nation and gave them a befitting reply. To assimilate these experiences, and to draw from them a credible and persuasive line of action on Punjab, was something which was the essence of Rajiv Gandhi's endeavour there. Sometimes we are tempted to take very short and impulsive short-cuts to agreements; but unless you are prepared to invest in faith and trust, such agreements ultimately come to nought. The fact is that even today, though the Punjab Accord has not been fully implemented and I, for one, would always regret it, while Punjab has gone through a lot, there is no other alternative plan of action. And everyone concedes that, perhaps, the Punjab Accord is still relevant and still could be the basis of some positive step that can be taken to finally end the chapter of distrust and terror in that State.

It is this investment of faith which ultimately convinced Sant Longowal. Whenever I had the occasion, I had quite a few meetings with him before he came to Delhi, also with Barnalaji and some other common friends — the late Sardar Balwant Singhji and another great friend and I would say an elder person who helped me, Dr. Attar Singhji, he has also, unfortunately, just expired a few days ago — Santji was convinced that there was something that could come out of this effort only because, as I said, of the investment in faith. And ultimately, when he agreed to come to Delhi, he said in Punjabi, I can't reproduce the exact words, but which meant *ki hum to bharosa kar ke chal rahen hai, aage Rajiv jane. Ye to bharose wali baat hai*, which is, as I said, investment in faith; that is the bedrock on which statesmen have always built nations, taken great decisions and that cannot be replaced by

anything else. No amount of language used in so many ways, or stratagems used to convince people, can help unless there is faith.

After the Accord was signed, the elections were one of the main objectives which had to be achieved. As you know, when people are out to disrupt all democratic traditions, when they are out to disrupt the polity which is based on a democratic system, they have to disturb elections, because if free and fair elections are held, then that perhaps puts paid to all their efforts. Therefore, the elections were one way to test whatever had been done. All kinds of statements were made, and all kinds of efforts were made to disrupt the elections. When nothing seemed to be succeeding, a final card was played by the terrorists, which was the dastardly assassination of Sant Longowal. It was a moment of great despair, I must admit, because the co-architect of the Accord was silenced. And, therefore, arose the question: who would stand up and ultimately convince the people of Punjab that there has to be a democratic endorsement of this Accord? We were in great doubt about it. Even here in Delhi, there was a point of view that the best thing would be to postpone the elections because there might be violence, and we did not know what that could result in. And I am saying this without any fear of contradiction because I have sitting by my side the person who assumed the mantle of Santji with great humility, Barnalaji. He was fully in favour of holding the elections. Here in Delhi, it was debated very intensely and there were strong views against holding the elections at all. But here again, the commitment and the vision of Rajivji about the democratic polity of this country were the decisive factors. And without going into too much detail, I will only quote his statement made in the Lok Sabha, on 23 August, after the assassination of Santji:

The fundamental issue now before all political parties committed to the democratic system is: Shall we allow the exercise of the free will of the people to be obstructed, frustrated and subverted by the forces of extremism and terrorism? On a correct response to this hinges the fate of the democratic system in India.

And with this statement, he announced that the elections shall be held.

The elections were not only entirely peaceful, but also there was not even a single act of violence resulting in any injury or death. The turnout was above 65 per cent in the entire State, a percentage which was perhaps never attained before in Punjab in any election. After the elections, a democratically elected Government assumed power, with hope and also with some fear.

I know the Accord could not succeed or could not be implemented fully because of two factors — the transfer of Chandigarh and the river waters dispute. It is also true that the absence of Sant Longowalji deprived us of a great moral force which Santji would have brought to bear on any problems that would have arisen. Many people have since asked me why the Accord

failed. I would not like to give a very facile answer to this question. But the fact remains that it could not be implemented fully and it would be unfair to pin the blame entirely on the leadership of the Akali Dal in Punjab. We are also to blame to some extent.

I am sure, in due course, history, with its cold objectivity, will unravel all the facts that ultimately led to the non-implementation of the Accord. But even in this gloomy atmosphere, the one issue that had become very contentious was the transfer of Fazilka and Abohar to Haryana and in that, as sometimes happens in history, the entire focus was brought to bear on one village, Kandukheda. The population of that village was so evenly divided that the ultimate result of the referendum that was held would mean the majority and minority issue being clinched. Naturally, the Government of Punjab, which was then headed by the Akali Dal, wanted that village because the population, they contended, was the majority and in their favour, and the other group contended that the majority was not in their favour. I am mentioning this not because of what happened ultimately; I am only highlighting this point to show how fair and just Rajivji wanted to be. There were reports from both sides that large-scale infiltration was being engineered to influence the decision. Some people were saying that the CRPF [Central Reserve Police Force] people were trying to help somebody, and somebody else was saying that the forces of Punjab were trying to help somebody. When this question was posed to Rajivji, he asked: "Now what can I do?" I said: "It is entirely up to you."

Overnight, the Assam Rifles were airlifted from Assam and were deployed in that area to remove from the minds of people that the forces could be in any way partisan in the effort to give people of that area a free choice of what they wanted. This is the length to which he went.

Now we are sitting here, almost nine years removed from that event and I can say that there is peace in Punjab today. We are all happy that things are going well and normalcy has been restored to a large extent and the democratic processes are now functioning, however imperfectly. But I believe and I will continue to believe that the initiative taken by Rajivji, the Accord that he signed with Sant Longowal and the vision and commitment that he brought to bear upon all issues will ultimately be the deciding factors for bringing complete peace and tranquillity to the Land of the Five Rivers.

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: Let me explain the problem as I understand it. The genesis of the Punjab problem has basically to be traced to the identity crisis of the Akalis. The urge for political supremacy in the State; the physical identity crisis of the large number of Sikhs becoming *Sahejdaris*; the fragmentation of the agricultural land resulting in the property crisis of the powerful Sikh farming class; the educated young men from the villages running to cities seeking cushy jobs and developing inertia to go back to the villages to work on land; and the assertion of the Hindu elements for their own identity in language have led to agitations by the Akalis from time to time, resulting, unfortunately, in the cleavage of Punjab and its society.

Despite carving out Punjab as a separate State, the Akalis who controlled the Gurdwaras and mixed religion with politics have been nurturing a grievance that they were still not the masters of the political situation. They realised that the Sikhs were divided and the Congress was still able to form the Government. Situations in 1971 and 1980 were a clear indication in that direction. It was such situations that impelled them to raise fundamentalist demands and go in for agitation, calling it *Dharamyudh*, in pursuit of political power.

After the 1971 elections and the rule of the Congress during the stewardship of Shri Giani Zail Singh, the Akali Dal came up in 1973 with the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. This resolution, endorsed by Sant Longowal, President of the SGPC [Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee], on 3 October 1982, stressed that the Shiromani Akali Dal was the supreme body of the Sikh Panth and was thus authorised to lead them. The principal aims of the resolution projected their religious, political, economic and cultural demands. There were quite a few meetings with Indiraji when she was the Prime Minister from 1980. The basic demands projected by the Akalis were: granting holy status to the city of Amritsar; installation of a transmitting station at the Golden Temple; Sikh passengers to be permitted to carry *kirpans* on domestic flights; the All-India Gurdwara Act to be framed; the reallocation of Ravi-Beas waters; transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab; autonomy of the State; and related issues.

When Rajivji arrived on the scene as Prime Minister, he intended to create confidence amongst the Sikhs in general and the Akalis in particular by seeking to resolve the problems at the highest level. He immediately appointed Shri Arjun Singh as the Governor of Punjab.

Immediately on assuming the stewardship, as a first step towards the resolution of the seemingly intractable problem of Punjab, Rajivji released the Akali leaders. In the wake of their release, these leaders at once adopted a rhetoric which was similar to that of extremists but, later, the SGPC President, Sant Longowal, a follower of the non-violent methods of Mahatma Gandhi, was persuaded to sit across the table and sort out the Punjab imbroglio. Shri Arjun Singh was instrumental in bringing the Akalis to the negotiating table and aided Rajivji throughout. This resulted in the signing of an Accord between Sant Longowal and Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 24 July 1985. The Accord included, *inter alia*, the transfer of the city of Chandigarh to Punjab in exchange for the transfer of the Hindi-speaking areas of the Union Territory of Chandigarh to Haryana and the appointment of a commission to determine the specific areas from Punjab to be transferred to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh on the principle of contiguity and linguistic affinity with the village as the unit. There were certain claims and counterclaims of boundaries for which a separate commission was envisaged. On the sharing of river waters, a cut-off date, i.e., 1 July 1985, was introduced and the States were assured that their usage of waters from the Ravi-Beas system was not to be less than a specified quantity. For the claims of Punjab

and Haryana regarding their shares of water in the Ravi-Beas system to be adjudicated, a tribunal presided over by a Supreme Court judge was envisaged. The construction of SYL (Satluj-Yamuna Link) canal was to continue and be completed by 15 August 1986.

The Accord was welcomed and Rajivji moved quickly to hold elections for the Punjab Legislative Assembly and for the Punjab seats lying vacant in the Lok Sabha.

Unfortunately, within a month, Sant Longowal was assassinated by Sikh extremists and the implementation of the Accord began to create problems. The political leadership in the State could not assert itself wholeheartedly for the implementation of the Accord and, equally, the response of the Haryana leadership was not enthusiastic. While matters relating to the implementation of the Accord moved at a slower pace, in February 1986, about half the Akali Dal members in the Legislative Assembly withdrew their support to the Government of Shri Surjeet Singh Barnala, a close ally of Sant Longowal. The Barnala Government was subsequently forced to rely on Congress support and, ultimately, in May 1987, President's rule was established. The resultant effect was that, after 1987, nothing could be done when there was no political leadership in the State to take the responsibility and from late 1985 to May 1987 and particularly after February 1986, when there was a split in the Akali Dal, the political leadership in the State could not assert itself to implement the terms of the Accord. The issues in the Accord were obviously complex which could not have been resolved in the manner to satisfy equally all the parties. This ultimately led to an impasse.

On the issue of river waters, the Eradi Commission was set up which was expected to decide the sharing of the waters within six months, i.e., by mid-1987. However, this commission could not fulfil its mandate within the specified period. The Punjab Government failed to complete the construction of the canal and later when the commission gave its report, Shri Barnala, as Chief Minister, rejected it on the ground that it violated the terms of reference set forth in the Punjab Accord and was injurious to the economy of Punjab.

In terms of the Accord, originally the Mathew Commission was appointed for the transfer of land from Punjab to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. This commission concluded that it could not identify suitable land in compliance with the requirements of the principles, i.e., the village being a unit, linguistic affinity and contiguity of territory are a must. Subsequently, two commissions, namely, the Justice Venkataramiah Commission and the Justice Desai Commission, were set up but their recommendations could also not reach fruition. The difficulty arose as the mutually acceptable exchange of territories between the States of Punjab and Haryana became an impossibility.

The demand for a separate personal law for the Sikhs could not materialise as clear proposals towards that end never came from the Akalis.

Mr. V.N. Narayanan: I have not been just a witness to developments in Punjab, but have also been an active participant in them, in the positive sense. At any rate, I had been the one person who had consistently and systematically maintained that Punjab was not a problem of separatism at all and so I said, "Don't run away from elections, don't run away from elections. Give the people a chance and they will show that they are solidly with the nation." That is why, I think, I want to correct Arjun Singhji now; 65 per cent was not the highest, there had been 72 per cent turnout earlier. Punjab is the one place where there had never been major violence during elections. The same arguments that were put forth in 1985 after the Rajiv-Longowal Accord were also put forth in 1989, saying that the gun ruled the elections. And I have the statistics to prove that the gun did not rule the 1989 elections either: 67 per cent of the votes polled in 1989 were against the Akali Dal (Mann) candidate. It was a freak that he had come to power at that time. So, I want to emphasise this fact that *Punjab was never, never a separatist problem*. In fact, this is the one thing which I told Rajiv Gandhi. My first meeting with him was slightly stormy as I was saying that the Central Government was responsible for much of the problem in Punjab. (I still believe that 80 per cent of the problem was created by the Centre.) But he immediately asked: "What is the solution?" He then said: "You tell me what is the problem." Then I told him what was not the problem in Punjab. I told him that it was not a Hindu-Sikh problem. This was in 1986. It was not a Centre versus Sikh problem; it was definitely not a Khalistan problem. And I would give him a number of instances to prove this. And when I did that, he asked: "What do you suggest?" I replied: "What is holding you back, there are people getting killed?" He then asked something which I thought was a point-scoring question. He said, "If you were the Prime Minister, what would you do?" I didn't realise that he was sincere in asking this question. At that time, I thought he was scoring a point. I said, if I were the Prime Minister and if I told him what I would do, would he implement my suggestions? I asked him this question and he smiled at me and said: "Nevertheless, tell me because you do not know the pressures that a Prime Minister has, so you tell me."

I told him that Chandigarh's transfer was not just a political issue, it was a commitment. I also said that I refused to accept that it should be given up at this stage when he had gone so far forward in the Rajiv-Longowal Accord to the transfer, that is, he had ensured that making the village as the unit and geographical contiguity as a term of reference, he had ensured there would be no transfer of Fazilka and Abohar. What would ultimately come would be a compensation of territory to Haryana. I posed the question: "Now that you have done it, why are you sliding back, why are you creating problems?" He clarified that he was not the one who was creating the problems. I think, Barnalaji is here, I was in touch with him all the time during this problem also. And Barnalaji came forward also. He said: "OK, I will give this much." He had identified some 25,000 acres in one place and

another 25,000 acres elsewhere, and so on. I said: "Don't reduce it to a real estate problem. It is not. Chandigarh is a commitment by, not just you, but by your mother as well. She introduced an aberration called Fazilka and Abohar and a corridor. But you removed it, you removed that aberration. Please do not go back on your word." The problem was that terrorism as a phenomenon had to be tackled by the nation. The terrorist as a person had to be tackled by the State.

I think it was during the Beant Singh regime (1992 onwards) that the State was left to handle the terrorists with help from the Centre. According to what the Rajiv-Longowal Accord prescribed, it was not enough to merely offer a few packages to the Sikhs, but the point had to be driven home that the rest of India loved them. Mr. Siddhartha Shankar Ray also concurred with my viewpoint and told me that he would try to make it a reality. At that time (1986) I did not quite believe Mr. Ray, but, later, I realised that this was exactly the solution that Rajiv Gandhi had in mind. And I salute him in retrospect. I am not saying this purely because I did not believe Rajiv Gandhi. I opposed him throughout his 1986-89 phase, because I believed that he did not have a complete grasp of Punjab. But later on, during 1991, in my interactions with him, I realised that he indeed had a comprehensive solution. That solution had been only half-achieved after Beant Singh's Government came to power in 1992. It was Mr. K.P.S. Gill who fulfilled the main promises made, namely, the State had dealt with the terrorists effectively. However, the Centre was sleeping over the terrorism problem. There is every chance that the Sikh, who is now patient and silent (not because he is satisfied, but he does not have a symbol or a rallying point) could once again resort to violence. There were good forces like Sant Longowal and sinister and pernicious forces like Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. If the latter symbol comes up, there is every prospect of the Punjab problem returning, especially as I feel that the police is the only terrorist in the State and this terrorism can bring back other terrorisms. So, I think that today the Rajiv-Longowal Accord assumes greater importance. And I am one with Arjun Singhji that this is the blueprint for tackling, on a permanent basis, the problem of terrorism in Punjab or militancy as the problem of Punjab.

Mr. J.F. Ribeiro: I went to Punjab with the express objective of making the police fight the demoralisation that had set in. I was then asked to fight terrorism also, a phenomenon that I had never encountered earlier and of which I was totally ignorant. We learnt, on the job, through experience. Some of the experiences, Mr. Barnala, who was my Chief Minister, would be able to corroborate. He once told me that there were certain people in Gurdaspur district who were creating terror and said that if these people were taken in, then that area would, perhaps, be quiet. My perception was also the same at that time. And I think both of us changed our minds later because after they were brought in, problems continued because new people took their place. This was one of the characteristics of terrorism which is

affected by emotion. There are other types of terrorism also which are affected by ideology. This was not the type that we encountered in Punjab. The one we encountered here was like what the British are facing in Northern Ireland from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or the Spanish from the Basque separatists. So we found that new recruits were always forthcoming. We made our lists. We identified the names, but that did not help. I remember another observation that Mr. Barnala made to the effect that the police has become afraid again and policemen do not go out at night. So, I brought them all together and asked: "What is it that the Chief Minister has noticed and I am ashamed that I have not? Why are all of you not going out at night?" They said they were in uniform and they were being shot down like rabbits because the opposite side was not in uniform and the policemen had no means of identifying them, whereas they were under certain obligations to challenge the opposite side. We gave the policemen civilian clothes and sent them out. But then it became more of a terrorist-versus-terrorist type of situation which was also not advisable and we had to stop that also. So, these are the experiences that we had gained in Punjab.

Whenever we came to Delhi to meet Rajiv Gandhi, which we religiously did every month, perhaps, more often, Mr. Siddhartha Shankar Ray was the main spokesman of the Punjab administration, basically after Governor's rule. I used to accompany Mr. Ray. After our discussions on the ground about what the police were doing and what they were required to do, Mr. Ray would continue alone with Rajiv Gandhi talking about the political part of it, in which I did not participate. My discussions were confined to the fight against terrorism. I agree that this was the perception. To fight terrorism you need to have the people on your side, and with particular reference to Punjab, it was the Sikh peasantry that had to come on the side of the Government in order to win this war against terrorism. It is all right chasing and nabbing or killing a few terrorists, but these terrorists were always replaced. And unless terrorism was tackled, it was not really possible to do away with terrorists. I again agree with Mr. Narayanan that now the situation has changed: it is a matter of balance of injustice to the people, and the press tolerated the police methods because they felt the terrorists were more unjust than the police. But now when the scales have been turned, I think it would be very wise to rein in the police and make them accountable to the law.

I must also mention the two-pronged approach that we adopted when fighting this menace. One was: no quarter to be given to the terrorists. The second was: at the same time, winning over the community. To this end, the Governor and I, or sometimes on my own, or sometimes with the political leadership, we went to the various villages. I must have visited at least 200 villages in the three-and-a-half years that I was there and people from the surrounding villages also would be asked to participate in these meetings. We made an attempt to explain what we were doing and also to find out whether there were any injustices being meted out to the people, especially

to the innocent persons, by the police. There were some objections raised by my officers, particularly the junior level officers. They felt that this would show the police in a weaker role than in what they should be seen because in Punjab the culture was different from that of my part of the country. Police strength is something that they always try to project and, for my part, I thought that in a fight against terrorism we have to be very careful not to alienate the people by our actions. We made lists of corrupt police officers, for instance, those who were using or misusing the situation on the ground to line their pockets. Many officers felt that we should not bother about these matters when we were fighting the bigger problem of terrorism, as a result of which people were losing their lives. I did not agree with this view. This was the reason why a dispute or a difference of opinion arose between police leaders. Perhaps not being from that part of the country, not knowing the culture and attitudes of the people, it was better that I got out at the time that I did because, later, as we see now, my perceptions may have been wrong. Peace has descended on Punjab; there is no doubt about that and I wish that the people continue to enjoy the fruits of this peace because they are very enterprising people. My colleagues were basically people who liked to fight and who had honour and I had no problems at all because before I went, I was told that they were not persons who would be very keen on fighting the terrorists because they belonged to their own people. But that was not so. They were people who were honest to their job. The only problem that arose, in fact, was that many of them lost their lives. Besides, vendetta is a part of the Punjabi culture; they take revenge on such occasions. But there was also the feeling among the police leadership that they should not only be compensated by the State but also, in anticipation of others losing their lives, no action should be taken against them if they indulge in certain corrupt practices. There was also the fact that more segments of society, not only the politicians but also the police, bureaucracy and judiciary, were all put under great fear. I do not know really what happened to the terrorists who were taken out of the Golden Temple after the second Black Thunder Operation. I do not know whether they were convicted. If they have not been, I would not be surprised because no judge was willing to try these cases. The whole world knew that they had been caught red-handed. My problem was that people were afraid of losing their lives, not only their own lives but also those of their family members. Terrorists had put that much fear into them.

There was no jail administration. Terrorists ran the jails. And the only other people who could put up a fight was the police because they were also armed, they also had guns. It is fortunate, and I repeat it, that this situation does not obtain today and we should ensure that it remains so.

Another interesting aspect of life in Punjab was that despite large-scale killings by terrorists, life went on normally, especially in the villages, where the farmers continued working in the fields. I had noticed policemen travelling on motorcycles, painted in yellow, being shot down by sniper fire.

Within half an hour, two other policemen had mounted the same motorcycle and had gone about their work. In my part of the country, this may not have happened. Here, people who had suffered traumatically were not afraid to go back to their normal work. Life never stopped.

I can only say from my own interaction with the people in the villages that, perhaps much more than the residents of Chandigarh, what they were bothered about was the sharing of the river water because they were told that they would be at a disadvantage. Secondly, there was the emotional problem relating to the prosecution of the people involved in the 1984 Delhi riots. That topic used to come up again and again in their talks with me. Why were the guilty not prosecuted? Just as today in Bombay, where I am staying, Muslims keep asking me: "Why are the people who killed us, looted us, burned our property not being prosecuted?" This is a problem that has to be looked into because it may be that persons have not been identified or there is no proper evidence. Whatever be the reason, all efforts have to be made to ensure that the law is upheld.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ribeiro, perhaps you could tell us something about your interaction with Rajivji? What did he have to say? Did you talk to him about river waters? Did you talk to him about the Delhi riots? Did you talk to him about the transfer of Chandigarh? What did he have to say? Secondly, you were a major actor in Operation Black Thunder II. In this context, what did he have to say to you?

Mr. J.F. Ribeiro: I was the Advisor during Operation Black Thunder II. I know each and everything about it. I was not the DGP; so, I didn't want to act as the DGP. The DGP has to act as the DGP. I don't want to impose myself on somebody else or on his job.

Mr. Chairman: We would like to know only about your interaction with Rajiv Gandhi.

Mr. J.F. Ribeiro: We met Rajiv Gandhi every day during Operation Black Thunder II. Mr. Chidambaram is here and I would be failing in my duty if I do not tell the truth that he was mainly responsible for the success of this operation because his perception that the Sikhs would not come over, based on the inputs of the Intelligence Bureau, was the correct one. If we had been left to ourselves on the field, probably it would have been a different action. But Mr. Chidambaram was present every day along with Mr. M.K. Narayanan and they kept on consistently saying that they would not interfere even though the *maryada* (honour or respect) had been disrupted. And that stand was very very correct. Regarding our meeting Rajiv Gandhi during the days of Operation Black Thunder II, it has been recorded in Mark Tully's book that he was absolutely and totally involved in this operation, in the very details of the operation and gave whatever help he could. He also gave the final instructions. But before that, I did not meet Rajivji alone, except once. I think Mr. Chidambaram knows it because he was waiting outside. It was soon after the attack on Rajivji on 2 October 1986. There was an attack on me the very next day, and he asked me to come specially and discussed

with me as to what happened and sought my opinion on how the security should be organised. This was a question which I thought I was not really competent to answer because I had never really bothered about security in all my service. Then Mr. Chidambaram and Mr. B.G. Deshmukh came in and probably decided what was to be done. Rajiv Gandhi was very keen and very eager that the Sikhs who had been alienated should be brought back into the mainstream. He did everything in his power to do that.

Mr. Surjeet Singh Barnala: An impression is sometimes created that the Akalis are to be blamed for terrorism in Punjab. On the contrary, I submit that, in fact, it was the creation of some Congressmen who wanted to bring about a situation in Punjab so that the Akalis could not come to power. After the formation of Punjab (as it exists today) in 1966, the first State Government, headed by Sardar Gurnam Singh (an Akali leader) came to power in 1967. This Government was dismissed after one and a half years. In fact, all the four Akali Governments formed after 1966 have been dismissed. None of them lasted for even two years. That was unfortunate.

The Akali Dal was formed in 1920, and is one of the oldest parties, second only to the Congress. The Akalis had launched several agitations against British rule. Even after Independence, the Akali Dal had to go in for agitations. But such agitations were always peaceful.

The Akalis launched an impressive movement against the Emergency (1975-77). The leaders decided to start a movement for the restoration of civil liberties and democracy in the country. Many volunteers began to court arrest. Also, the senior leaders were in jail for 18 months. I was the General Secretary at that time. The role of the Akali Dal was appreciated by the leaders of the Janata Party (which came to power after the 1977 general elections). Shri Jayaprakash Narayan wrote a letter to Sant H.S. Longowal (who was then organising the movement) appreciating the sacrifices made by the Akalis. So, this had been the trend of our party: to fight democratically, whenever necessary in the interests of the country, in the interests of the State and in the interests of the Sikhs.

For the first time an organisation called Dal Khalsa was constituted in Punjab. And the organiser was a Congress member of the Rajya Sabha. Then came the elections to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). At that stage, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was heading a purely religious institution known as Taksal Bhindranwala. For the first time, the members of this institution decided to contest the elections to the SGPC. Their candidates were supported by the Congress. This matter had come up in Parliament, where some Congressmen admitted that they were supporting Bhindranwale. That was how Bhindranwale was given power and he became a leader.

Operation Bluestar was, I think, a great mistake. Perhaps the object was to flush out some terrorists from the temple complex. That could have been done by other means also. Just now, we were mentioning Operation Black Thunder. And Mr. Ribeiro just mentioned that Mr. Chidambaram,

the Chairman, was playing an important role at that time. That was a clean operation. I made a press statement, though I was in jail, appreciating the manner in which it was organised because the police did not enter the Golden Temple complex. They were sitting on the periphery. They had sharpshooters with them. They would identify the persons who were to be brought out. And the others were forced to remain in the complex itself, in the sanctorum. So they committed all types of blunders there and defiled the place, and the public came to know about it and turned against them. They could not gather any support from outside. That is how Operation Black Thunder was a success and that way Operation Bluestar could have been avoided and people could have been flushed out.

Mr. Ashwini Kumar: Barnalaji, circumstances during Operation Bluestar and circumstances during Operation Black Thunder were totally different.

Mr. Surjeet Singh Barnala: Yes, they were different. However, Operation Bluestar, I think, was not properly planned. It was a hasty decision and it was started on a very religious day, on the Gurburab, when there was a large congregation there.

Mr. Chairman: That is pre-Rajiv Gandhi; so that is a historical record.

Mr. Surjeet Singh Barnala: That is why I am skipping many details. It could have been done in many other ways. But the manner of execution created a sort of vacuum, a sort of situation in the country in which every Sikh, wherever he was, he was shocked and greatly grieved. And a lot of hatred was created by Operation Bluestar because taking over the sanctum sanctorum, the Akal Takht, and demolishing it and taking in tanks and artillery also gave entirely wrong signals to the entire Sikh community all over the world, and there was a reaction. That could have been avoided. After that an unfortunate incident had occurred in that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated. I think this incident was reprehensible because it was done by persons who were entrusted with her security and more so because they were Sikhs. A Sikh is, by religion, considered to be the saviour of people, not a killer, particularly when he has been entrusted with a job. The assassination created a situation in Delhi and in other parts of the nation which should have been avoided. Now there was resentment, of course. But there was much more resentment when Gandhiji was shot. Gandhiji was also a great leader. When he was shot, there were no such incidents. It was known who had done it, it was known that the person who had done it belonged to a particular party. Not a single man of that party was harmed, not a single Maharashtrian was harmed. But why were 4000 persons in Delhi killed mercilessly, inhumanly? And the killings went on for two, three days constantly. Not much effort was made to stop the carnage here. And, unfortunately, a very important aspect was that the killings were taking place in Congress-ruled States. In the other States, as far as I know, not a single person was killed, though there were cases of arson and some were injured. Now we are in the tenth year after those incidents. There is a

lot of protest inside and outside Parliament. Unfortunately at that time, even in Parliament, no condolence resolution was passed; not even one-minute silence was observed by the Members of Parliament. That also was harming the feelings of the community. So Sikhs generally feel that, perhaps, the laws are different for them. Why have the people responsible for these heinous crimes not been prosecuted?

Rajiv Gandhi had inherited many things, many wrong things. He had been made Prime Minister on that sad day when Indira Gandhi had been shot dead. He narrated all these problems. But he had a desire to solve the problems. And Sant Longowal was in Rajasthan in solitary confinement. He was released in early 1985. I was also released and some others were released too. We got together and started discussing the situation in Punjab. It was quite volatile at that time. People were not happy. Terrorism was growing. Santji felt that something should be done about it, otherwise things would go out of hand. He started going to those people who had been aggrieved by Operation Bluestar. There were hundreds of innocent people who had been caught in the cross-fire. He went to their homes. He toured Punjab extensively. He then came to Delhi, and I was with him. We went to those areas which had been affected adversely in the November 1984 killings. We were informed that nobody had come to them for providing any relief or say a word of sympathy. Santji went to those homes. They felt that somebody had come to hear their grievances, to share their grief, to be sympathetic. The Santji said: "We will do something, we will talk to the Government about your problems." And we did mention their problems to the Government at that time. Maybe some of them were later taken up.

At that time, things were very bad in all those areas which had been adversely affected. While travelling in Punjab, Santji was moving about in very adverse circumstances. Terrorism was growing and people did not like Santji and did not like me. The terrorists could have caused harm to any of us. We had to be very careful in those days. We were not having proper security at that time. Nevertheless, we started organising conferences and meetings and young boys who were against us tried to disrupt them.

After that, Santji started moving out of Punjab. He went to Rajasthan; he went to UP; and he came to Delhi also. Intellectuals of Delhi invited him for a discussion and a meeting was organised. There, only selected people came and aired their views. Then he was invited by the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Delhi University. Santji spoke in both the universities and his views were appreciated and acclaimed by the people. In fact, young boys were shouting: *Santji aap Jayaprakash Narayan ki tarah desh ke neta bano, aap Punjab ke neta nahi, aap desh ke neta bano*. This type of atmosphere was being created. That was a time when throughout the country there was an atmosphere that peace should come to Punjab somehow.

I think Arjun Singhji, being the Governor of Punjab, took advantage of the situation and started a dialogue with the other leaders. I came on the scene much later. He was already moving in certain circles. He had meetings

with Santji, he later told me. In these meetings, they had discussed certain things. Again, Sardar Balwant Singhji used to meet Arjun Singhji at the Raj Bhawan. And an agreeable situation on both sides was created and the Prime Minister invited Santji to come to Delhi. The Santji called a meeting in which it was decided that he should go to Delhi. And he accepted the invitation and fixed a meeting on 23 July. At the eleventh hour, Mr. P.S. Badal and Mr. G.S. Tobra decided to come with Santji. Balwant Singh and myself met the Santji. He was a religious type of person. He then sought the blessings of the Guru. Then he said: "We will go ahead." On 23 July he had the first meeting with the Prime Minister. It went on for half-an-hour in the Parliament House office of the Prime Minister. When he came out, I inquired: "How was the meeting?" He told me that the Prime Minister appears to be sincere and intends to be helpful in solving the Punjab problem. He further said, "To me it appeared that the Prime Minister was speaking from the heart — *wo dil se baat karte hai, aisa mujhe lagta hai, sincere hai aur kuch baat karna chahte hai.*" And on 24 July, the Rajiv-Longowal Accord was signed. This was a very historic moment, I think, and it was a crowning achievement of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. It was a ticklish problem and I think, I would give credit to Arjun Singhji and to the determination of Santji and Rajiv Gandhi.

Santji deliberately, perhaps, kept out some Sikh leaders from that meeting which led to the Accord. Otherwise, this Accord would not have been possible. Santji had taken a great risk, he knew it. While coming to Delhi we talked to him on the way. I said: "It is a great risk. These people with the guns, they will come after us." He said: "Well, somebody has to do it. I am not married. I am not worried even if I lose my life for the sake of the people, for the sake of Punjab. I don't mind it, somebody has to do it, somebody has to take a risk in life to do big things. We are trying to do a good thing, we are trying to bring peace to Punjab. For that, any risk can be taken."

And this Accord was received enthusiastically not only in Delhi but also all over the country. In Delhi, sweets were distributed in almost all the *mohallas* when it was declared that the Accord had been signed. The Accord was taken to Parliament and both the Houses ratified it. It was taken to the Punjab and Haryana Assemblies. Both passed it. In Punjab also there was a reception. When we reached Sangroor, which was Santji's district, people lined the roads all along with garlands. So that was the atmosphere created. But it was not liked by those who did not want peace in Punjab, and who wanted the disruption of the peace. And on 20 August 1985 Santji was killed in the Gurdwara itself when he was in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. By coincidence, 20 August is the birthday of Rajiv Gandhi but it is the death anniversary of Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal. We were there in Longowal. A very large number of people, perhaps more than a lakh, had gathered there.

When Santji was killed — he died in the evening — Arjun Singhji went to Sangroor. The next morning, I received a call from Rajiv Gandhi. I felt that he was shocked and very grieved from the voice that I heard. That was my feeling. He was virtually crying at that time. When he conveyed his feelings to me, he said: "Well, it has happened in this manner; we never thought that it will happen like this. It is very unfortunate." Though elections were announced, the date for polling was delayed for a week because of the cremation of Santji. And then elections took place. And as Arjun Singhji has mentioned, they were peaceful. We were, nevertheless, apprehensive. I was getting threats almost every day. Somebody would come to me in the morning: "Today don't go out, they will ambush you" and all that. Things started like that. Since I was made the President of the Akali Dal and I was in charge of the elections, I had to go out a bit. We were not provided security even at that time. So I had my sons with guns all the time, and with some supporters, we went out. Every day we were getting threats: "Well today has passed, tomorrow won't. You will be a dead man tomorrow night." The threats continued. And then on the last day of polling, I received a telephone call. The caller said: "You won't be able to go to Chandigarh and assume office as Chief Minister." I said: "I am not going to be the Chief Minister, somebody else will be the Chief Minister." [This was because, at that stage, it was uncertain as to who would be the Chief Minister.] But that type of atmosphere was still there. Such were the circumstances under which the Government was formed at that time. So, I assumed office at a very difficult time. There were many problems before me. Terrorism was there and the implementation of the Accord was also important; within the party also, some people wanted to be the Chief Minister. They could not succeed. They were also creating problems.

As the date of transfer of Chandigarh was coming near (the date had been fixed as 26 January), the Mathew Commission was appointed to identify certain areas and the Haryana officials had claimed that Abohar and Fazilka should be given to them. There was virtually a consensus in that area which was against the terms of the Accord. All the same, we told them that they could have it. And that is where the Assam Rifles came in. I was in Delhi. When I came to know that the CRPF was being rushed to Punjab to conduct the head count there, particularly in those disputed villages, I said this should not be done. We had complaints that the CRPF was not fair because its personnel were mostly recruited through Haryana in those places. We were apprehensive that they would not be fair and we would not get a free and fair response from that area. I complained to the Home Minister, to the Home Secretary and then to Mr. Ribeiro who was the Special Secretary at that time. He said: "They have been sent, Sir. They have gone there perhaps, near Sirsa." I said that I had ordered my police in Punjab not to allow the BSF [Border Security Force] or the CRPF to go to Punjab. So there would be a clash of interest, perhaps. I had asked the police in Punjab not to allow them to get down from the train in which they were travelling. So Mr. Ribeiro

again went to the Home Ministry and I got a message from the Home Minister: "Well, now what can we do? They have already left. How can we manage things there without police help? The other party is complaining that Punjab Police should not be involved. You say CRPF should not be involved. Then what to do?" I said: "We have passed this type of order, we won't allow the CRPF." Then he asked the Prime Minister to talk to me. Then Rajiv Gandhi said: "What is going on?" I said: "Something wrong is going on. They have sent CRPF to Punjab and I have said that CRPF won't be allowed there." Then he asked: "What is the way out?" I said, "Assam Rifles." He said: "Assam Rifles, they are sitting in Assam." I said: "You have got such large planes, two, three will do. And they can be immediately sent to Bhatinda, which has an air strip, they can go there." He said: "Wait." After ten-fifteen minutes, I was told that Assam Rifles would move to that area and they would conduct this head count. I was satisfied. Amrinder Singhji had been deputed there to guard that area. I had received information from Haryana that about 3000-4000 men and women had been pushed into that area. There are two contentious villages, Kandukheda and another village. Bhajan Lalji [the CM of Haryana] was trying to push these persons there because they have relatives there and it would become very difficult to drive out these people from there. So Amrinder Singhji was deputed to guard that area. Not a person from Haryana was allowed to enter that area. Thus the head counts in those two contentious villages were done. I had instructed that a video film should be prepared so that nobody complains later. So video film people were there, and the Assam Rifles were there. And they were asking people what was the language the natives spoke? Almost everybody was saying, Punjabi. This has been recorded on video. Almost the entire population of that village, as was enumerated, was Punjabi speaking, 93 per cent. And Mathew had no other alternative but to give a report that it was not a contiguous area. This area (Abohar and Fazilka) could not be transferred. But this report came very late, that is, on 25 January at night time when we had made all arrangements for the transfer of Chandigarh. Everybody knew that Chandigarh was to be transferred. The Union Territory people had called their staff and paid their salary up to 25 January evening. That had been done. Myself and the Chief Minister of Haryana had been called by the Home Minister for a meeting. Bhajan Lal said: "*Bhai aa gaye hai batao kya karna hai?*" Mene kaha: "*Batao kya karna hai?*" "*Aisa kariye aap, hame panch saal vaha rahne ke liye de dejiye, Chandigarh mein.*" I said: "*Dekhiye, ve Home Minister sahib bethe huain hai vahan pe, aap bethe huain hai yaha pe, Chandigarh hame mil jaye to hum che saal denge, panch saal nahi che saal denge.*" He said, very good, very good. We had discussed every detail. This tubewell water goes to Haryana, so this tubewell also should go to Haryana. This is a watershed area of the lake; this should go to Punjab. This platform of the railway station should go to this side. Every detail had been discussed. In fact, we were issuing cards for the celebration of 26 January in Chandigarh by the Punjab

Government. That had to be stalled at the last moment. At about midnight I came to know that Chandigarh was not being transferred. Some other date was being fixed and another commission was being appointed. I was heartbroken. That day was just like a thunderbolt for me and I thought of resigning. I asked: "What is being done? I have been shabbily treated." Then there were some colleagues who informed me that another commission had been appointed, and that they had been able to successfully conduct this mission because they were in Government. Had they not been in Government, all this could not have been possible. That is why I decided not to resign at that time. Sometimes people in Punjab say that things would have been different if we had resigned on that day.

In that connection, we had an opportunity of meeting Rajiv Gandhi quite often on many issues. And it happened that in the joint session of both Houses of Parliament during his Address the President had to say something. Rajiv Gandhi personally asked me to be present in that session. I said that I had some other work. He, nevertheless, asked me to come because that was an important occasion. He did not tell me anything in advance. I, therefore, went to attend that session, not knowing that something was to be said about me. I came to know only when the President, Giani Zail Singh, started reading his address aloud, in which he praised me and my Government. This was the first time, perhaps, since Independence that an event like this had occurred. Only three-four days back Giani Zail Singh had given an interview to a Punjabi newspaper, *Ajit*, stating that he was not in favour of praising me and had conveyed his view to the PM. But Rajivji insisted that this mention should be included in the Address, and that is why it was. Then, in Parliament the PM himself praised my work twice. He also made some gestures of goodwill. These aspects endeared him to me. Sometimes, we met like friends. There was a free exchange of ideas. On such occasions, I felt that Santji was correct in stating that Rajivji speaks from the heart, and he was a person who wanted to do something about Punjab.

Later, when the Venkataramaiah Commission started functioning, we had official meetings. I didn't have a very good opinion about this commission. But I couldn't possibly tell him that perhaps he was not being guided properly by his advisors. But that feeling was there in me. And when we were discussing Chandigarh, we had agreed to a certain area. I had mentioned in the Punjab Assembly also that Chandigarh would be transferred in lieu of this 35,000 acres of land – about 31 villages occupied that land. But I do not know what happened overnight. Next morning we suddenly learnt that Venkataramaiah had mentioned 70,000 acres. Now there was no area beyond 35,000 acres which could be claimed to be Hindi-speaking. I affirmed that we were not going to part with any Punjabi-speaking area for the transfer of Chandigarh; thus we had to reject that decision of the Venkataramaiah Commission. That very night another commission was appointed, the Desai Commission, to go into the matter and identify within the next 24 hours the areas to be transferred. I rushed to the Prime Minister's house and asked:

"What have you done?" He said, that the day after tomorrow Chandigarh had to be transferred. There were two days left and some areas had still to be identified. I said: "Don't do it. Otherwise, the people will say, I have compromised; we have sold out; they will blame me. How can the areas be identified in 24 hours when for six months they have not been able to do so? How is another judge going to do it? Justice Desai has a reputation as a good judge. He will also be given a bad name." Rajivji called Buta Singh and then asked him to go with me to Justice Desai and say: "Well, don't do it, shortly we are passing some other orders." It was like that. That very night (after midnight) we went to Justice Desai's house and he had spread the relevant maps on the table and was studying them. He asked: "What am I to do? I don't know anything about it. It is certainly not a correct subject for me and to do something within this short time, wouldn't be possible." Then Buta Singh told him that we have come here only to tell you that you need not do it. Unfortunately, Chandigarh could not be transferred, even now it has not been transferred. As Mr. Narayanan said, it was a commitment, it was the spirit in which the Accord had been signed, and Chandigarh should have been transferred. Other areas could be identified later. Something could be done later but Chandigarh could have been transferred. That would have created a very good atmosphere in the State. There was a suspicion that the commissions were not going to do anything. I was also suspected, they were also suspected, and it went on like that.

We were organising in Punjab large meetings, all-party meetings in which even the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Congress, the BJP, the communist parties, left and right both, all participated. Around one lakh people in some cases used to collect and leaders used to address meetings. This was being done to isolate the terrorists. The last meeting was organised in Amritsar on 14 April 1987. Narasimha Raoji had attended that meeting. Earlier, Rajiv Gandhi had said that he would come. But then he sent Narasimha Raoji in his place. And I had discussed with him that 50 Jodhpur detainees should be released in the first place. I told him that there were people who were working for Sant Longowalji, who were employees of the SGPC and who were not at all connected with the terrorists. I gave him a list also. But at the last moment, I was told that they were not being released, for certain reasons. The Home Minister himself informed me that there had been some difficulty in releasing them. This was the first batch. Narasimha Raoji was here to say something to the effect that others were also likely to be released because that was quite a controversial matter at that time — the release of the Jodhpur detainees. But all that was not done. Narasimha Raoji said very loudly that Mr. Barnala had been doing very good work and they were solidly behind him. About less than a month later, our Government was dismissed. That was also a very sad chapter. I was worried about the way it was done. The Haryana State election was on. Some advisors told Mr. Rajiv Gandhi that he would get more votes if he were to dismiss the Punjab Government. That was perhaps the only reason. I told him that we could help him in 15

or 16 seats; we have some influence there, they are Sikh votes. You will be able to get those votes and things there are quite difficult. He asked me: "What is your opinion about Haryana?" I said: "I think, you can only get about 15 seats and not more." But then it was decided to dismiss my Government mainly on that score, as everybody knows and unfortunately, only five seats were won. In fact, every Punjabi in Haryana voted against the Congress at that time. The Government which was doing the good work, which was fighting terrorism there by different methods, had been dismissed unjustly. In fact, when we were tackling the terrorist movement, I found that the police were not working properly. They had lost their nerve. That was the time when I asked Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to get some good police officer from outside. I gave him four names from various States and I had read about Mr. Ribeiro. He had done very good work in Maharashtra. So I said, he is my first preference. Rajivji said: "No, no, he can't be spared, he is Special Secretary or something."

Four, five days later there was an incident in Ludhiana, some RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] people had been killed there. After this news came, I found Ribeiro entering my room. I was happy to see him. I was happy that he could come because he could reorganise the police force according to his own thinking. They were demoralised. I assigned one very senior police officer to go to Amritsar and give me a report in seven days about what we should do. He stated that it would not be possible for him to do so as his son was studying in Khalsa College there and he would be in danger if he went there. I said: "No no, you have to go." I was a little firm, and the next day, I came to know that he had suffered a heart attack. Unfortunately, the third day he died and I felt very sorry about it. But this was the state of affairs when I assumed office and I had to get help from outside.

As I said, the Chandigarh programme was a date-bound programme. I had been meeting Rajivji quite often in this context. And initially, when the Mathew Commission was working on it, he was very firm in his views. In the terms of reference, something not in conformity with the Accord had been added. I had objected to that. This was even before I had won the elections. I also objected to it after becoming the Chief Minister.

Rajivji replied that he would "try and do something about it". Two days later, he told me that it would not be possible to make the change I wanted and explained the difficulty in doing so. I insisted that the change be made. He then stated: "It is my responsibility. I will see that it [the commission's report] does not harm you." I, nevertheless, stressed that I could not agree with him because the matter was before the commission and, normally, heads of the executive do not talk to commissions, which was free to decide the matter in its own way. He then asked me not to worry about it. What he did was to hold a press conference within two days, in which he gave his views. I also had another apprehension in my mind regarding the ambiguity between Hindi-speaking and Punjabi-speaking villages. I felt the commission

may include the latter in the former category. Rajivji assured that the commission would not jump to any hasty conclusion. I clarified that we had identified 31 villages (Hindi-speaking) comprising 35,000 acres, which we were willing to transfer to Haryana. Rajivji said: "Well, sufficient, sufficient." He convinced me that this was going to be the decision. But, suddenly, the next morning I found 70,000 acres being mentioned! That created a suspicion in my mind that Rajiv Gandhi was, perhaps, being influenced.

There was a long-drawn-out dispute over the river waters. A River Water Tribunal had been appointed to settle this dispute. I mentioned to the PM that this was a very urgent problem for Punjab. I also pointed out that Punjab would not be able to give any water to any other State because the ground water table level was going down every day at a fast rate. (Punjab had, in fact, diverted large amounts of water earlier to Rajasthan through canals.) The situation was very difficult. I mentioned all these facts to Rajiv Gandhi. He stated that the matter was before the tribunal, which would have to decide. The tribunal's decision was not accepted by the Punjab Government at that time. Moreover, unfortunately, the Punjab Accord had also not been fully implemented. A very small clause here and there may have been worked upon. But for all intents and purposes, the Accord has not been implemented. Had it been, the situation in Punjab would have been totally different; terrorism would not have grown.

Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet: I will start by stating that there is a complacency in the minds of all that everything is all right in Punjab. They look on this problem from the angle, for the time being, that terrorism has been put to an end and normalcy has been restored. This is a fact. There is no doubt. For the present situation, only two factors count. One, the experience of the people of Punjab kept in check the hands of the terrorists. And second, the role of the administration. By combining them together, a situation was created in which normalcy has been restored and people who went away from Punjab have come back. And everybody who comes from outside — various correspondents from various countries have come — has reported that there is normal life. But it will be wrong to conclude that everything is perfectly all right, because I am going into the depth of the problem, only then can the truth be understood. I have read the statements by politicians, by administrators, and by police officers: they have stated: "We have set everything right. We have seen a separatist situation developing in Punjab, being controlled and redeveloping and again being controlled." I am a member of the Communist Party. I did not (and do not) see any difference among Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Hindus. Never. Once there was a national movement. But that spirit is not existing today.

I next come to another aspect which the ruling party has been missing. The main consideration of political parties today is to get votes. Such a stand might disrupt the country's unity but it is not their concern. They make appeals for votes on the basis of caste. I am not talking about the Congress alone. No Government tried to handle the situation politically;

only administrative measures were used. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was brought in to create an alternative leadership to the Akalis. That alternative leadership became a challenge later on. Regarding Operation Bluestar (June 1984) I want to ask: what was the intelligence doing? What was the Government doing for one and half years when weapons were being collected in the Akal Takht? What were the plans of the Government at that time? If you stated that you had no experience at all, that also did not go to the credit of the Government at all. That is why this feeling was further strengthened, until the last two days of the Army being sent there. At that time, the Prime Minister was saying that there was no question of entering the Golden Temple. Fifteen statements to this effect were made on the floor of the Parliament. An impression had been created that guns would not enter the temple complex. So, there are many questions which need to be looked into from various angles. The main one is: why did this type of politics become necessary? Now the situation has changed radically. Now nobody can think of military power entering the Golden Temple. Quite different aspirations are there today and they are growing. The principle should be that the unity of the country has to be maintained. From that point of view, it would be very difficult to tackle the present problems because everybody tries to utilise the problem to his or her own benefit instead of finding a solution to it. The unity and integrity of the country are very important in today's situation when the correlation of forces all over the world has changed. And India with tremendous resources at its disposal can play a big role.

And for this, I will give credit to Rajiv Gandhi. He was able to see at that moment that merely by using the repressive machinery of the police and administration, we could not bring peace to Punjab. Punjab is a border State. I know how in 1965, and in 1970-72, peasants took food from their homes and served the Army in the borders. They are the same Punjabis. So in this situation, he was able to see the truth and his initiative was very creditable.

Rajiv Gandhi was able to understand the problems and he came to the conclusion that without a political solution, a permanent solution was not possible. That was why this formula was founded. Longowal was a man who had credibility and nobody could compare with him in the Akali leadership. For example, before the Army entered the Golden Temple, Bhindranwale sent three armed persons to him. G.S. Tohra was also sitting in the room. They wanted that the formation of Khalistan be announced from Pakistan. Longowal declared himself against this intention, saying: "I will be the last person to do that." That is how he saved the situation from deteriorating at that time.

In Punjab, we have sacrificed almost 200 leaders in the battle against terrorism. The people of Punjab were (and are) never for separatism; they

were (and are) very healthy in their patriotism. However, the wounds inflicted by the terrorists are to be healed yet.

They don't want the revival of extremism. Also, what is required today from the people of Punjab is a national outlook, keeping in view the unity of the country. All the political forces must realise that they will not remain permanently in power. They must understand that we should now allow the prestige of the country to go down. This should be the main consideration, otherwise we are going to face fissiparous tendencies, as in former Yugoslavia. I am worried that the communal challenge is a tremendous challenge today. Also, caste challenges, linguistic challenges and territorial challenges have come up in a big way. The leadership should consider also economic, social and political problems faced by the country and not look merely to the administrative problems. Thank you.

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: I would like to highlight a few of the qualities of Shri Rajiv Gandhi which had a direct bearing over the manner in which he grappled with the Punjab situation. For that I have to go back to 1977 when I happened to be Mrs. Gandhi's lawyer. I found one thing between 1977 and 1979 while handling different cases of Mrs Gandhi: she never went into the nitty-gritty of the cases at any point of time except to the extent it was required to keep her in touch with what was happening. Beyond that she never showed any interest.

When the Punjab issue came to a boil, Rajiv Gandhi was the General Secretary of the Congress Party and also a Member of Parliament. He used to discuss with me, possibly with others also, the different nuances of the Punjab problem as the General Secretary of the party. I am also aware that he used to get briefed in detail by Amrinder Singh and his other friends. He used to hold discussions with the members of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, of which I was a member. He wanted to know the nature of the problem, the developments, the view of the people of Punjab and possibly — and this is my hunch — he was also trying to interact with Mrs. Gandhi.

In my view, his was an absolutely clean slate on which anyone could write what one liked and possibly this gave a large number of our friends the opportunity to exploit that gentleman. I use deliberately the word "exploit". I do not agree with all those who said he gave a long rope and did not take decisions. I cannot subscribe to this view because, basically, being a gentleman to the core he did not want to hurt anyone and the resultant effect was anyone could come and talk to him. He would listen. But that did not mean that he did not know how to take decisions.

Mrs. Gandhi was made of different stuff altogether. When somebody went to tell her something, she used to continue doing her own work, continue reading or writing or whatever it was she was doing. That made the visitor keep his suggestion short, to summarise himself or herself. She would not react. She would only say *achcha*, and sometimes nod her head and then go on reading or writing or whatever it was she was doing. So people did not

feel encouraged to go on at length. But Rajivji was made of different stuff. He would interact with you. And, in fact, many a time, I made a very earnest request to him in the Cabinet also that "You should not jump into the fray when somebody is saying something." But he would ask: "How do I understand the nuances of what the other man is saying unless I jump into the fray?" So he used to argue, and, in the process, I am sorry to say, often he revealed his mind which made many people sitting opposite take a clue and keep quiet.

The day that he took over as the Prime Minister, that was 31 October 1984, and when he came to know that a massacre was taking place in Delhi, at about 2.30 in the morning he decided that he would go and look for himself. Very few know that this issue was raised in the Cabinet consisting of four persons at that time, Mr. Buta Singh, Mr. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee and myself. He went to all the nooks and corners of Delhi, unmindful of the danger to himself, because the issue had been raised in the Cabinet and he thought it would be better if he made sure that some of us went.

Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar: Was this the night of the first or second?

Mr. Shiv Shankar: The second. Now the question as to who should go? Then he himself said he would go. He ventured everywhere. That shows courage in the man. He was prepared to take risks. When he took over as the Prime Minister after the elections, he never wanted to run away from politics. He wanted to solve problems. That sincerity in him made him immediately think of releasing the Akali leaders and requesting Arjun Singhji to take over the reins as Governor of Punjab.

After the preliminary work had been done by Arjun Singhji, Rajiv Gandhi discussed threadbare the entire issue and came to the conclusion that at the eleventh hour some problem was created with reference to the sharing of river waters. I was asked to dash to Jaipur by the morning flight and return by the same flight which left after about an hour. I had to rush and discuss the matter with the Chief Minister and his colleagues there and come back to the court, based on which a decision was to be taken that day itself. What I am trying to suggest is that he had a tremendous political will to take decisions at that stage. And he did take decisions. I know the Accord itself was to the disliking of some in the party. But, by and large, it received a tremendous approbation because the problem had to be resolved and no problem can be resolved, particularly in a plural society like ours, unless you have the political will and make efforts to create public opinion in favour of that decision.

He was determined right up to 25 January 1986 to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab. If you kindly look at the Accord, along with Chandigarh what had to be transferred were only those parts of the Union Territory which were Hindi-speaking, not Fazilka-Abohar. For that a commission was there at that time. Simultaneous transfer concepts had come in, no doubt about it. But then the point is that a straightforward mind could always be confused

by different people putting forth the problems in different manners. When everybody started saying, on 25 January 1986 night, that the situation was going to create problems, he could not after all have taken a decision alone. Then he said: "Okay, let us postpone it." And then as Mr. Barnala rightly said, Mathew's report also came in saying that the transfer was not possible on the basis of contiguity of territory, language or the village as a unit. Obviously, a decision had to be taken which had to tackle the situation.

Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar: May I ask you a question? Mr. Narayanan mentioned that the minute it was written in the Accord that the village would be taken as a unit and contiguity would be the factor, this was a muted code for saying that Fazilka-Abohar will not be transferred. Would you like to comment on that? What was the understanding on which those words were incorporated in the Accord?

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: The matter was not that simple. Rajiv Gandhi agreed to this formula because Santji was particular about it and let me tell you, his approach was very simple. In fact, he used to tell me also: "What difference does it make if a few areas go to that State or a few areas come to this State as long as those areas are part of our country?" He used to take this line. But the point was: there was a concept of simultaneous transfer in the Accord itself and that was stressed by a large number of people; i.e., how could you transfer Chandigarh without simultaneously transferring the other territories?

Mr. V.N. Narayanan: Mr. Chairman, may I intervene? I want to re-establish the fact that on 20 August 1985, a few journalists met Longowal in Chandigarh before he left for Ludhiana. He made it clear at this meeting that he had an understanding with Rajivji and it was quoted in many papers and it was not denied by any Congressman at that time. So it was accepted that Fazilka-Abohar would not be transferred. The other point is the understanding of Mathew's terms of reference, because I also discussed these terms with Rajivji. The terms of reference of the Mathew Commission said: Identification of villages, applying the conditions of linguistic affinity and geographical contiguity, with the village as the unit, to be transferred simultaneously along with Chandigarh's transfer. Chandigarh's transfer was Clause 7A. Clause 7B was the dream of Indira Gandhi that Haryana should be compensated. Clause 7C was for the judicial commission to identify the area. So, the moment Mathew could not identify, applying those principles, any village that could be transferred, simultaneity ended. There could be no transfer on that basis. So the way out for the Congress Party, and I told this to Rajivji, that clause 7B was the way out. You announce on 26 January the transfer of Chandigarh and announce according to the last boundary commission where the Hindi-speaking area in Punjab would be transferred to Haryana and the Punjabi-speaking area in Punjab would be transferred to Punjab by a larger judicial commission. This was what we thought. Simultaneously, the matter should have ended when the Mathew

Commission submitted its report expressing its inability to identify villages on the basis of the conditions prescribed by the Accord. In fact, I discussed this issue with him.

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: The point is that on the basis of the commission's terms, you are right that it was not possible for Mathew to come to any conclusion. But then there were a large number of people who said, relying on the Accord itself, that unless some areas are transferred along with Chandigarh the problem will be more knotty because already, so far as Haryana was concerned, some of the leaders of that State were threatening an agitation. It was a complex issue. There were two commissions in sight. One commission was to identify areas in lieu of Chandigarh apart from the Hindi-speaking areas of the Union Territory. And there was another commission which was envisaged for boundaries. What I am trying to say is that there were complications all over and that it was thought fit that we would postpone the decision a little so that we can find some acceptable solution. I may tell you that Rajivji believed to a great extent in the consensus concept. He was simultaneously trying to discuss it with the Haryana leaders as also the Rajasthan leaders to see that they come round to his view. And in fact, I only heard at that time, I was not a party, but Mr. Arjun Singh had to spend sleepless nights in order to discuss with all the three parties, especially with the Akali Dal leaders, particularly the Sant. Unless the background was prepared, it was not possible to complete the Accord. But what I am saying is, on his part, he left no stone unturned. But the problems started growing. This created a situation where certain difficulties cropped up. If you recall, in February 1986, there was a split in the Akali Dal. This split weakened Barnalaji. And in the middle of 1987, as he put it rightly, his Government was simply not there. I am not going into details. I may tell you, if he were to survive, he could have survived with Congress support. A large number of his own ministers were not prepared to vote for him.

Mr. Chairman: We were in 1987 when the agreement was not implemented. Why was it not implemented?

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: Suppose it had been implemented, the foregoing situation would not have arisen. I would again like to stress that terrorism has nothing to do with the problems that confront Punjab. It is true that terrorists have taken advantage of the situation. But once they took advantage of the situation, it is not as though they were fighting for the water or the territory or anything of that type. Today, if peace reigns in Punjab, it is because of the efforts that were made between 1985 and 1989. The manner in which the terrorism was tackled then has now started bearing fruit. It is a different situation now that peace prevails; you can't rest on your oars.

Mr. Chairman: Shiv Shankarji, I just want to make a statement. I got an impression that somehow Rajivji was convinced by his advisors that Chandigarh could not be transferred unless there was a simultaneous transfer of some territory to Haryana. I know it was offered. This is where

I thought Shiv Shankarji should now concentrate. How did 35,000 acres become 70,000 acres? And how did the Mathew Commission's fairly clear conclusion get completely distorted by the Venkataramaiah Commission's verdict? I think there are two others who have something to say on it.

Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet: I think it is stated in the Mathew Commission's report itself. The commission said we agreed to it. But Haryana did not agree to what the commission was for. That is why, I now ask, how indeed did 35,000 acres become 70,000 acres?

Mr. Chairman: I tried to convince Rajivji that Chandigarh should be transferred. And I can now tell you: it was on the day after Operation Black Thunder. I went to him and said: "This is the time for you to seize the opportunity, transfer Chandigarh." I think, if he had done it, it would have had an electrifying effect on Punjab. That was the crucial time when the sentiment against terrorism was the highest. The sentiment in favour of the country was also the highest. But somehow he had been convinced that unless something was given to Haryana, there was no way politically or legally or even administratively to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab. This is my impression.

Dr. Manmohan Singh: I think there is another point. I am not saying I subscribe to it. One view was that the Central Government had no intention of doing anything and that the Akali leadership was too simple minded to see that.

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: I would like to deal with two aspects to the extent that I am aware of. The award rendered by Justice Mathew has been highlighted by Barnalaji. But he also observed that since, on these principles, it was not possible to transfer any territory to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh, therefore, you might think of some territory to be transferred to Haryana in lieu thereof. He read the whole Accord and he found that something has to be transferred to Haryana. He made a general remark. It is on that basis that the Venkataramaiah Commission was appointed.

Mr. Surjeet Singh Barnala: I am intervening for a moment. The Mathew Commission had said in the report that Haryana has claimed only Abohar and Fazilka and no other territory. And Abohar and Fazilka cannot be transferred because of the constraint that they are not contiguous territories. So if any other territory had to be located, it could be located by another commission. That is what he had mentioned. He said, according to the terms of reference, this could not be done.

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: That is precisely what I said. I did not mention by name Abohar and Fazilka. I said, keeping in view the principles on which the reference was made, it was not possible to transfer any territory. Therefore, he said, you look for some other territory to be transferred to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. Of course, he also suggested a new commission. There is no doubt about it.

Mr. Surjeet Singh Barnala: My point was that the commission was appointed, namely, the Mathew Commission. Haryana was asked to claim

any other territory. They claimed only Abohar and Fazilka and no other territory. On that a decision was made. So that should be treated as final. That is my contention that that should have been treated as final. Haryana's claim was rejected and hence the transfer of Chandigarh was simple.

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: That is your view. But what I am trying to bring to the notice of our friends here is the fact as to what Mathew had decided and further developments based on that decision. Based on that decision, the Justice Venkataramaiah Commission was set up. Now it was before Justice Venkataramaiah, that you came forth with 31 villages with 35,000 or 36,000 acres of land. But he came forth with the idea that that would not be sufficient; I think you remember it. That is what you said in the subsequent meeting. He asked you: "Why don't you increase the area?"

Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet: I think you have read the report. It is clearly stated in that report that since Haryana did not agree, give more area. How do you tackle this?

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: Actually, what I said was that there was also a personal discussion with Mr. Barnala because, as far as I recollect, Barnalaji said at a later stage that he asked for some more territory. But anyway he came forth ultimately with the figure of 70,000 acres of land to be transferred to Haryana in lieu of transfer of Chandigarh. That also did not take place. There were difficulties. Punjab asked: "From where do we get 70,000 acres?" The matter was referred to another commission, the Justice Desai Commission. Now what happened thereafter, I am not very much aware of because, to my knowledge, that commission did not give the award within the requisite time. What happened later on, I am not very sure.

Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet: Will you throw light on who advised that a new commission would give the award within a few hours? You said, it was clearly stated the same night — the 25th night — that by the morning, the award would be given. Which commission could do it?

Mr. P. Shiv Shankar: What had happened was both the parties, that is leaders from Haryana and Punjab, were asked whether they could meet because the deadline was 26 January. That deadline was there. Therefore, they were asked whether they would sort out the matter so that the judge could give the decision by the morning itself. And then Justice Desai was specially requested whether, by discussions between the parties, he would be able to come to the conclusion to carve out certain territories. He said that if the parties came and sat before him, he was prepared to give his report. It is in this manner that the whole thing was transferred to him and the term was that he should give the award by the morning, within 24 hours. Now the other aspect which Mr. Manmohan Singh has raised, often, it so happens that by virtue of propagation of a certain view, it undoubtedly gains ascendancy in the minds of the people. It is possible that some elements must have been canvassing after the Accord that the Central Government was not sincere in going ahead with the Accord because I am aware that some of the friends met me the very next day after the Accord was signed

(I was not a Minister at that time) but some of the friends did meet me and said that this was the talk that was going on, i.e., what Mr. Manmohan Singh has said. I said that that was rubbish because if the Accord was not to be implemented or the Accord was not to be signed, why should it be entered into at all? And Rajivji himself was keen to implement all the provisions of the Accord. It is a different matter that it was not possible for him to implement them *in toto*. As I was saying that because of (a) the split in the Akali Dal and (b) because large numbers of his own friends trying to take a different stand, the approach of leaders in Haryana was inflexible. All these things contributed to the delay. And finally when Presidential rule came in May 1987, then, of course, it was very difficult to go ahead because then there was no popular government with which the matter could be sorted out. On both the sides, there were certain lapses. Both sides have to be blamed. But the impasse has got to be ended and I still feel that the Punjab Accord could be the basis for solving the problems.

Mr. Amrinder Singh: Mr. Chairman, after 1984, my interaction with Rajiv Gandhi was limited. But the genesis of the problem and its culmination in the Accord, that process started much earlier. I would like to give a little background to that, from the time Rajiv came to the political arena and how things went up to 1984 till I was there. After Sanjay Gandhi passed away (in June 1980) he came into the picture and that coincided with the talks that were conducted with the Akalis through Sardar Swaran Singh and Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeetji, which did not reach any sort of conclusion. And, in fact, there was some misunderstanding and the entire talking came to a standstill. At that stage, I was brought into the picture by Mrs. Gandhi. And from that period of the mid-eighties, when Rajiv also fought elections shortly afterwards and before that he had started getting himself involved, we started working together on this. In fact, as Shiv Shankarji would bear me out, there was a three-tier sort of functioning that was going on in the Cabinet. There was a Cabinet Subcommittee set up for this purpose. There was a Committee of Secretaries with the Principal Secretary and the Home Secretary as members. And then there was an inner group which used to function with Rajiv, myself and one Akali colleague, Ravinder Singh. And we used to meet very often to resolve this problem and discuss the issues which came up because it coincided with the time when a charter of demands came from the Akali Dal. I think, 40 demands came at that stage to the Government. There were a lot of issues which really weren't that relevant. And that is how it all started, and we used to interact virtually on a day-to-day basis other than when I was sent out to talk to either Sant Bhindranwale or Sant Longowal. So the process of interaction went on and we narrowed those demands to three: religious issues; political issues; and economic issues. Under these heads came the Gurdwara Act (part religious, part political), the water-sharing issue (with Rajasthan), industry, and making Chandigarh the capital of Punjab, which was the principal demand of the Akalis at that stage. So, we negotiated with the Akalis and the others

involved and the year 1982 was a critical year for us. I think it was on 18 November 1982 that we had reached a solution which eventually took form many years later in the form of an Accord. It was virtually the same solution. In fact, that was quite a critical day and we had a meeting in the house of Dr. Alexander and Mr. Shiv Shankar was there from the Cabinet Subcommittee side, I was there, Akalis were there led by Mr. Parkash Singh Badal and everything was sorted out. In fact, a decision was taken and from his house we called Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal and told him about these developments. He was very pleased about the whole thing. Rajiv, who had been working behind the scenes, was himself very pleased though he was not present in this meeting. It was the Cabinet Subcommittee and the Akali Committee and a few others who were there to assist. And it was decided that the Cabinet would reconvene later about 7.30 p.m. We called Sant Longowal to inform him that we were coming. Sardar Surjeet Singh Barnala was in Chandigarh. We gave him a clue and he came to the airport. We were supposed to pick him up on the way. Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra was in his village. So from Patiala we sent somebody to pick him up and bring him to the airport also. And we were all very pleased. In fact, when that meeting was going on, Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet also came in and was very appreciative of all the events that had taken place. We waited till 10 p.m. when I got a message from the Prime Minister's house that the meeting was going to be called off that night. We didn't realise what had happened.

Next day, the Prime Minister was to go to Rajghat, Shantivan in the morning and after that the Cabinet would reconvene. But in the meantime what had transpired was somehow this issue leaked and the next day being the Prime Minister's birthday, the Chief Ministers of Rajasthan and Haryana, Shri Shiv Charan Mathur and Shri Bhajan Lal were here in town. And they were asked questions by the press as to what was going to be the outcome of that meeting in the night and he wanted his comments to be published also. How it leaked, I don't know. I hoped the Government had gone to find out what eventually happened. In fact, that very night, the Akalis were very agitated and Parkash Singh Badal said: "We knew that this is going to happen. This had to happen because this is the way we have always been treated and we knew that it is not going to get anywhere." Mr. Barnala kept sitting at the airport till I think past midnight. Mr. Tohra was also there. But what had transpired at that meeting when the Cabinet met was that both the Chief Ministers went to submit their resignations to the Prime Minister. And Mrs. Gandhi then said: "All right, let us further discuss this," and the next morning, when the Cabinet was reconvened, at 10 o'clock, by that time, the game had been lost because there was already too much agitation in the Akali mind. Within the Congress Party there was a strong feeling that this matter should not have reached the present conclusion and the Chief Minister himself felt so. So there was a move to remove him from the scene and bring somebody else because he could not control himself.

There was a feeling in some people's minds that a little bit of controlled problem started in Punjab and the Chief Minister felt that he may not be removed. At that stage, the tussle between him and Giani Zail Singh was going on, and I remember one incident quite clearly. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale had come to Delhi with a whole lot of people and telegrams going on, and I remember every day saying that Bhindranwale was coming from the Chief Minister every day saying that Bhindranwale was in Delhi, and he should be arrested. Then he would go back to Punjab and telegrams would start flowing to Punjab that now Bhindranwale was in Punjab, arrest him. This was going on all the time. This was just a game which was being played. And while this was going on, we were also trying to reach this Accord with the Akalis, and we had to defuse Sant Bhindranwale. I was in touch with him, and we got through to him. He was, till that stage, quite a simple man. Later on the pressure groups had mounted after the advent of the advocate of Khalistan. He was quite amenable. In fact, I arranged a meeting with him and Rajiv, which did not take place again because of the infighting between two groups within the Government in Punjab and the Home Minister. We had arranged to meet him at the Ludhiana airport. As an exchange, four or five of his men, who were in jail (including Baba Tara Singh and Amrik Singh) would be released, and Bhindranwale, in turn, would march to Nanded (just as Guru Gobind Singh had done) and also to Assam (just as Guru Nanak had done), so that things could normalise in Punjab.

The first evening, I can't remember the dates, we got airborne from here with Rajiv and myself to meet Bhindranwale who was waiting in Ludhiana. When we were half way across, we were ordered to return. The reason: Bhindranwale was supposed to have prepared an ambush. Also, with Sanjay gone, Mrs. Gandhi was taking no chances with the life of Rajiv Gandhi. The second time again, he called me and asked me to fix a meeting with Bhindranwale. I told him I would do so, only on the condition that he did not let us down. It took a lot of pacifying after we failed to keep the first appointment. So we went again and fixed a venue in Ludhiana. We hadn't even reached the airport at Safdarjang when we were recalled. This sort of thing was going on because Darbara Singh somehow kept getting wind of the meetings. I can recall instances in which, when I used to land up in Amritsar on behalf of the Prime Minister in an aircraft provided by the Cabinet Secretariat, we were parked way out so that we never came near the civil terminal in the Air Force area and somebody would come to collect us. This was an important issue. In fact, that particular night the Santji was waiting for us and we were received at the airport by the Deputy Commissioner and the SSP who were not even supposed to know we were there. How did all these leaks take place? Whether they took place through the Home Ministry, or Darbara Singh got the information through his own sources, we don't know. But it was apparent that nobody wanted this channel to go through. They wanted some sort of control over the process; they wanted destabilisation. These approaches to Bhindranwale thus fell flat.

Mr. Chairman: Did Rajiv meet Bhindranwale ever?

Mr. Amrinder Singh: No. Arjun Singhji said the Accord formed the basis on which we could proceed further. The reasons why the Accord failed have already been explained. But I would like to say that these very issues which caused the problems — right from the time when the Anandpur Sahib resolutions were drafted under the committee of which Sardar Surjeet Singhji was the Chairman in 1973 to the time when it was adopted in 1978 at the general house meeting became a part of the Akali demand and later on part of the Accord — are still relevant to Punjab.

There were other issues also, which caused resentment among the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular. For instance, the Satluj-Yamuna link canal; the people could not accept the fact that more water had to be given to other States. Also, the people wanted a separate capital for Punjab and did not want to give any territory in exchange. Then, there were problems arising due to Operation Bluestar and its aftermath. However, Operation Black Thunder was conducted in a civilised manner, which was welcomed by the public. Then, there were anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984 after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Moreover, terrorism had spread all over the State (and to other parts of the country as well). All these problems had to be solved before peace returned to Punjab.

Mr. R.D. Pradhan: Very few people would remember that on the night of 31 December 1984 Rajiv Gandhi delivered a speech on Doordarshan or AIR, a speech of hardly ten or fifteen lines. But there was one significant line to his own thinking and he had said: "Henceforth, each step we take must be in the correct direction." And when he addressed the nation on 5 January 1985, when he became the Prime Minister, he gave priority to Punjab and he also mentioned Assam. He set his own direction. I happened to be his first major appointee as the Union Home Secretary after he became Prime Minister and about four weeks after I took over in January, he called me and said: "Pradhanji, now it is the time to start on Punjab. Why don't you start by your visit to Chandigarh and border areas?" I visited Chandigarh. I spent two days there and one more day elsewhere. And I made whatever assessment I had to make. But after my return, this must be around 28 February 1985, I made only one recommendation. As the law and order situation was under control, one couldn't take a further step unless there was a political Governor. And it was time to have a political Governor in place of the incumbent at that time. I was surprised that within eight days, Mr. M.L. Fotedar rang me and said: "Mr. Pradhan, will you come immediately?" At that time, Rajivji used to sit in 1 Akbar Road. When I reached there, he said: "Mr. Home Secretary, I want you to meet the new Governor of Punjab." Arjun Singhji had come that morning to meet him in connection with the formation of his own Government because he had been sworn in as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. And if I recollect he had just come to discuss some issues with him. I must say I had never met Mr. Arjun Singh till then. I just said hello. This was the beginning. I am mentioning

this because very few would say that the choice of the Governor at that time was the most critical thing. And Rajivji's steps further led to the process which led to the Accord. And, of course, Arjun Singhji played a great role. I was told to leave Punjab and attend to Assam. But whatever had to be done in Punjab about law and order and which Arjun Singhji wanted to be done should be done.

Two small points. I do not want to correct anybody on anything which has been said. Much has been said about the Mathew Commission. My own perception is that Justice Mathew became a prisoner of history. That one sentence, which was apt about the intention of Mrs. Gandhi, became the focus of his whole attention, apart from the fact that Haryana claimed only Fazilka and Abohar.

Now, on the transfer of Chandigarh, as you know all preparations were completed. In fact, our legislation was ready and our Ordinance was ready. We had even requested the Assembly to be called. And on 25 January we came to a dead end. The report was presented to us at 2 o'clock in the Home Ministry and by 5 o'clock we were before the CCPA and we were stuck: what to do next? But I remember that night Rajivji asked Shiv Shankarji and me to meet Justice Mathew to find out whether Justice Mathew could himself take one more month or six weeks more, but find a solution, instead of transferring the problem. I think it was past midnight. We went to the judge's house. It was bitterly cold, the old man was sleeping. We met him in his own bedroom and we passed on the request. But he said: "No, enough is enough, I don't want anything to do with this. I have done what I can. You find another judge." Then, of course, the Venkataramaiah Commission was set up. Two points about that. First, Barnalaji himself made an offer of 15,000 acres of Punjabi-speaking villages to make a capital for Haryana.

Mr. Surjeet Singh Barnala: It was not a Punjabi-speaking area. Just around Chandigarh there is ...

Mr. R. D. Fradhan: Around. But there were also Punjabi-speaking villages in that area. There were not completely Hindi-speaking. You took a risk and offered to make it a capital and Justice Venkataramaiah pursued that. As Union Home Secretary, he asked me to appear before the commission and Rajivji was good enough to give me a mandate to go and say that if the capital of Haryana was to be constructed, whatever the cost which the judge thought fair, we were ready to bear that. And I have made that statement before the Venkataramaiah Commission. Unfortunately, that offer was rejected and we could not proceed further. One more point. I think one has to be fair to Rajivji on the Desai Commission about which much has been said. We were even ready for that at that time. But one must remember what the intentions were — 21 June 1986 was the date for transfer of Chandigarh. Talks were going on at different levels on what was to be done. And on 18 or 19 June, we found that Justice Venkataramaiah could not proceed further. He had done two things. He had identified 45,000 acres which could be transferred, and to the 70,000 acres, which was mentioned,

there was a logic. We came to the conclusion that 70,000 acres was one-fourth of the area of Fazilka and Abohar which Mrs. Gandhi had decided to transfer. And 70,000 was readily accepted by the Haryana Government immediately. So his hunch was right that 70,000 would perhaps stretch it right. Then the question was how to identify the remaining 25,000? Of the total, 45,000 he had identified. I must tell you that a lot of home work had been done both by the Venkataramaiah Commission and the Home Ministry to identify 25,000 acres. I cannot say more now. But you can rest assured that Rajivji did not take the decision merely as a whim, for which he was much ridiculed. In fact, people were surprised. But the intention was that even if we could make an effort around the negotiation table, if the two Chief Ministers could sit down with a judge, they could still identify certain areas which could be transferred and those 24 hours of commission were really a manifestation of his strong desire to find a solution under pressure of time. And on the basis of the home work which had already been done in great detail, by give and take, something could be quickly worked out. Therefore, I want to put the record right, if you will remember on the 19th night it was Arjun Singhji and Buta Singhji who visited you in Chandigarh. But it was the Punjab Government which, the next day, for their own reasons said that the report was not acceptable to them for it departed from the terms of reference enunciated in the Accord.

There are many points on which I would have liked to put the record sight. But that might be, perhaps, on some other occasion. Thank you very much.