



23 February 1984

De. Robin

Amritsar

You asked for a report on the visit by to India to advise the Indians on their intention to divest the Golden Temple of Sikh extremists. has reported as follows:

- a. The spent eight days with the Indians. He travelled and operated Our speedy response to the Indians' request for assistance was much appreciated by them and they put every facility at the disposal of their visitor. He made a ground reconnaissance of the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar on 10 February, flown there by special helicopter. It was clear to the officer that the Indians had not given much thought to how they should root out the extremists, beyond applying the 'sledgehammer to crack a nut' principle. With his own experience and study of this kind of problem, he was able to advise the Indians of a realistic and workable plan which Mrs Gandhi approved on her return from Moscow on 16 February.
- b. Sir R Wade-Gery, who was most impressed by the officer, made three points to him at the beginning of his visit:
 - (i) Our reaction to the Indian request can have done Anglo/Indian relations nothing but good;
 - (ii) it was therefore vital that there should be no leak about the visit. If there were, it would be extremely embarrassing for both sides, and, if the leak sprang from us, the Indians would never forgive us;
 - (iii) if and when the Indians put the plan into operation and if it went wrong, they should not be able to pin any blame on us.

/On this



On this last point, a difficult one, the draws attention to likely difficulties and various requirements that need to be fulfilled if the plan is to have a reasonable chance of success.

- c. In summary, believe that this was a very useful visit which passed off well and should have left the Indians well satisfied. It remains to be seen whether Mrs Gandhi has the political will to act. The officer had the impression from the Indians that she would proceed.

have seen the telegram from New Delhi reporting the shooting in the Gold Temple last weekend and the deployment of a 'commando squad'. The was not present at the time. do not consider that the shooting arose from an attempt by the Indian authorities to implement their plan, but believe that the arrival of the commandos, if confirmed, could presage an operation.

In view of the possible repercussions among the Sikh community here of any action by the Indian authorities against the extremists in the Temple, I shall be writing separately to the Private Secretary to the Home Secretary (as was agreed in the earlier correspondence).

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

John 24/4

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

F E R Butler Esq
 10 Downing Street