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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SIKH NATIONALISM

The problem under consideration in this paper is Sikh nationalism as it is expressed by agitation for political autonomy. By nationalism, I am referring generally to political activism in the name of a community whose boundaries are defined primarily ethnically and usually contain a geographical component as well. The community in whose interest the activism expressly takes place is said to comprise a "nation" and, therefore, is entitled to certain economic, political, cultural, and territorial rights.

In the case of Punjab, India, the political demands of Sikh nationalism have centered around the expressed need to safeguard the culture and life of Sikhism. Territorial demands have closely accompanied political activism and have ranged from realignment of state boundaries to more autonomy within the Indian federal system to the extreme of separate nationhood to be ruled by a Sikh theocracy. The desire for independent nationhood has been voiced most vociferously by Sikh fundamentalists only since 1980 – 81, though there were calls for a separate Sikh nation in the 1940's during the time of independence and partition.

While more state autonomy within the federal system is sought by many of India's states, and ethno-regionalist movements have not been confined to the Punjab, Sikh nationalism is unique in that it is centered around the safeguarding of a *religious* community as opposed to broader secular and regional interests. Furthermore, this community has been until only fairly recently a minority population in the region which it calls its own. As a result, Sikh nationalism has not only posed a problem for the federal government but has contributed to and fed communal (i.e., Hindu vs. Sikh) tensions and violence within Punjab's borders. Politics in the Punjabs has become highly communalized.

The Punjab conflict is very complex and involves many factors – politics, economics, religion, and language. Theoretical approaches to the problem can focus on any one of these aspects. The orientation of this paper is toward how the socio-economic structure of Punjab promotes politics along communal lines. It is hoped that my examination and analysis of Sikh nationalism will contribute in some way to understanding the phenomena of nationalism and ethnoregionalism in a general way.

Recognizing that ethnic groups are not ipsofacto homogeneous entities, we cannot accept at face value what Pravin Patel refers to as "ethno-psychic" explanations of the Punjab conflict, i.e., that Sikhs demand cultural and political autonomy because they possess a unique identity based on certain religious and cultural distinctions and feel that they do not have enough scope to protect and preserve their culture and religion. As Patel notes, speaking a common language or following a common religion does not necessarily mean that a capacity or desire to

act in unison exists (Patel 1987: 276). Furthermore, such a theory ignores the fact within an ethnic group there can be differentiations and conflicts. This is certainly true of Sikhs.

The question which arises, then, is how do individuals come to see themselves as members of a community and then act in a united fashion. The ideas of Benedict Anderson can be of help here. In his book "Imagined Communities", Anderson talks about "nations" as imagined political communities in the sense that people who may never know or see each other face to face consider or imagine themselves to be in communion with one another; to share an identity and spirit of camaraderie, regardless of any inequalities which may prevail between them (1983: 15 – 16). Because nations are imagined, they have to somehow be created. This can happen under a variety of circumstances but is usually the product of elites' efforts for any number of reasons under any number of circumstances.

For Sikhs, identity and consciousness as a distinct political community is a fairly recent development in their history and was created by a defeated ruling elite who faced the threat of political and social marginalization. A Sikh sub-national identity exists today because it continues to be nurtured by a class of individuals whose political and economic fortunes depend on it. What I want to suggest, then, is that Sikh nationalism can be understood as a mobilizing symbol by an elite group to generate popular support for its political, and economic, agenda. For we shall see that it is the interests of the Jat capitalist farmers that are addressed and pursued in the struggle for political autonomy.

Hans Morgenthau (1985) has observed that personal insecurity and social disintegration, real or perceived, finds an emotional outlet in national identification. Having created a sense of nationality, Sikh leaders are able to exploit this sentiment when the need arises. This is first of all because Sikhs experienced severe dislocation during Partition which really did leave many feeling that their interests as a community were insecure. Secondly, Punjab has undergone rapid economic growth and change as a result of the Green Revolution, and this has had a number of consequences for the Sikh community. Most importantly, though, is the fact that a conflict in Punjab's economy is structured in such a way that makes the communalization of state politics a relatively easy task.

The thrust of my inquiry shall be directed toward understanding the dynamics and structural supports of Sikh nationalism. With this in mind, I shall focus my examination on the agrarian economy which is closely to Sikh nationalism for the following reasons:

1. Agriculture is the basis of Punjab's economy, comprising with livestock 58.12% of the state's income in 1980 – 81, and employing 59.1% of the total working force in 1981 (Gill 1983: 42).
2. Sikhs are the predominant cultivators in the state and the bulk of the land-owning population. In fact, farming as an occupation has always been closely related to Sikh identity.
3. The political base of the Akali Dal, the political party whose primary platform is the advancement of Sikh interests, is among the "Jats" – the farming caste of Sikhism. "The control of Jat landlords ... over the Akali Dal and the SGPC

(Shiromani Gurdawara Prabandhak Committee) is almost total. ... (Most leaders come from) the Malwa region (and) have gained the most out of the Green Revolution. ... The richest landlord lobby from the richest region controls the Akali Dal and the SGPC" (Gopal Singh 1985: 79).

An analysis of the current condition of Punjab's agricultural economy, follows brief descriptions of the history of Sikh identity formation and politicization and the impact of Partition which gave the Akali Dal an agenda for political autonomy early on in independent India's history.

### Evolution of Sikh Identity and Political Consciousness

While the growth and expression of Sikh fundamentalism and separatism in the last decade is not without deep historical roots, consciousness as a separate and distinct political community is a relatively recent development in the history of Sikhism. The region of Sikhism came into existence about five hundred years ago. Present-day Sikh communal consciousness and politicization, however, is the product of a social and religious revival movement among Sikhs in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century. It was the events of this period that reformulated Sikh identity and set norms for orthodoxy which had hitherto been unclear and fluid and overlapped with Hindu Identity.

The defining and strengthening of the Sikh community took place during a time of social and religious reform movements in India as a whole (Kapur 1986: xiii) and began as a response to the changes wrought by British administration and to the growing influence of Christian missionary proselytization. Sikh revivalism eventually became a reaction and response to Hindu fundamentalist movements as well when militant Hindus included Sikhism among their targets of attack.

The Singh Sabha Movement, initiated in 1873, was most important in promoting among Sikhs a modern sense of self-consciousness and identity (Narang 1983: 43). The Singh Sabhas were associations whose members were concerned with the education and upliftment of Sikhs and promotion of religious reform. It was the Singh Sabhaites, through their central coordinating organization, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, who established the criteria for Sikh identity and drew the communal lines between Sikhism and Hinduism. They determined that a true Sikh was one who observed the five symbols of the Khalsa (a Sikh brotherhood founded by Guru Gobind Singh) – "kesh" (unshorn hair), "kara" (bangle), "kangha" (comb), "kirpan" (sword), "kachha" (short trousers) – and subscribed to certain other behavioral proscriptions inaugurated by the gurus.

This definition was not arrived at without considerable public debate, however. In fact, the entire question of a separate identity for Sikhs generated considerable controversy within the larger Hindu-Sikh community. Sikhs at that time could be differentiated as either Keshdhari or Sahajdhari. The former were those who observed the Khalsa symbols and specifically followed Guru Gobind Singh. Sahajdhari Sikhs were those who followed one of the other nine gurus and worshiped at Sikh shrines but did not follow Khalsa dress norms or other tenets. Association of

Sikh identity with the Khalsa could effectively exclude Sahajdhari Sikhs from the emerging political community.

The identity question was also controversial because many Sahajdharis and Hindus, especially, considered Sikhism to be a sect of Hinduism, not a separate religion. The significance of this point becomes clear when one considers the political implications it held for the two communities. The Sikh landed aristocracy who ruled Punjab just prior to its annexation by the British in 1849 found their position altered and weakened under the new administrative rule (Kapur 1986: 12). The conversion of prominent Sikh families to Christianity further threatened to erode this class's influence and prestige within the region and among their coreligionists. Religious reform and revival, therefore, came to be seen by these individuals as a necessary step to counteract a trend toward social and political marginalization.

When devolution of power to Indians and communal electorates were introduced by the British in the early twentieth century a race for political patronage and office began. As part of the larger Hindu community, Sikhs and their leaders were of little political consequence. As a distinct minority group, however, they had a platform from which to fight. Thus, separatism from Hindus became an issue of practical necessity for Sikh politicians (Kapur 1986: xiii, 14). Hindus, for their part, resisted separation because government recognition of Sikhs as an independent political entity would erode their relative power vis-a-vis Muslims (Narang 1983: 38). Muslims constituted a major community in Punjab rivaling Hindus, and prior to independence the primary communal tension in Punjab was between Muslims and non-Muslims. The militancy with which some Hindu groups engaged in the Hindu-Muslim conflict and attacked the Sikh identity question served to intensify inter-communal hostility and competition in Punjab. Sikh activists became that much more determined to carve out a distinct space for themselves.

The period from 1900 to 1925 witnessed the politicization of the emerging Sikh community. The framework for this process was an agitation for the reform of Sikh shrines (gurdwaras) which had come under the management of corrupt, decadent, and unorthodox individuals (mahants). The Gurdwara Reform Movement, launched in 1920, was a grass-roots campaign to take control of the gurdwaras from the mahants. Khalsa reformers recruited and trained local corps of volunteers (Akali Jathas) to occupy the shrines in their region and eject the mahants, by force if necessary. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) was formed shortly after the first gurdwaras were seized to oversee the management of shrines. The SGPC soon set up the Shiromani Akali Dal, a centralized body, to coordinate the activities of the local Akali Jathas (Kapur 1986: 100).

After five years of agitation, the movement ended with the passage of the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925. This Act served to legitimize Khalsa Sikh claims to a separate identity and marked the final stage of institutionalizing Sikh communal consciousness and political activism. Having won statutory sanction to manage the gurdwaras in the 1925 Act, the SGPC became the institutional framework for Sikh politics (Kapur 1986: 190). The Akali Dal emerged as a formal political

party. Since 1925 it has seen itself as the sole representative and voice of the Sikh community, and its persistent concern has been the maintenance of Sikh communal distinctiveness.

From its origins, then, the Akali Dal has based its existence on the existence of a separate Sikh community. Its political fortunes derive from this existence. Thus, it is in the Akali Dal's interest politically to maintain a Sikh subnational identity. A note of further interest is that 60 % of the Akali jatha recruits during the Gurdwara Reform Movement came from among the ranks of Jat Sikhs — the farming and primary landowning caste of Sikhs. The bulk of the Akali Dal's cadre till today has come from this caste with its particular agricultural economic interests. We can begin to see what direction the politics dictated by such a profile would tend to take. We turn now to the events of partition.

### The Impact of Partition

With the partition of India and Pakistan at the time of independence in 1947, the Punjab was divided as well, the larger western portion having been allocated to Pakistan. In geographical terms Indian Punjab was reduced to a little more than one-third of its original size but retained between forty-four and forty-seven percent of the total original population. In three month's time roughly four million Hindus and Sikhs in the West traded places with an equivalent number of Muslims in the East (Kirpal Singh 1972: 114). Approximately forty percent of the united Punjab's Sikh population became refugees. Hindus and Sikhs gave up 6.7 million acres of land in the West for 4.7 million acres of Muslim-owned land in the East. Over eighty percent of the irrigated land, including all of the Canal Colonies, went to Pakistan (Kirpal Singh 1972: 151). Disparities in the number of homes and shops forfeited by non-Muslim relative to what they gained existed as well, 154,000 Sikh and Hindu houses and 51,000 shops went to Muslims who left behind only 112,000 houses and 17,000 shops.

"The Partition of Punjab proved a great leveller, especially in the East Punjab. Millionaires were sometimes rendered paupers. The landed aristocracy and upper middle classes received a rude shock and most of them were condemned to destitution." (Kirpal Singh 1972: 152)

"As a community the Sikhs were the worst losers in the partition. The Hindus, largely urban, were able to retain some of their properties and cash. The Sikhs lost not only their homes but also their land and cattle which were their only means of livelihood. They had been the richest landowners in undivided Punjab (13% of the population paying over 40% of land revenue and water rates). They had to change places with the landless Muslim peasantry of East Punjab." (Nayar and Singh 1984: 20)

The disastrous losses suffered by Sikhs at this time popularized the expression, "While the Hindus got Hindustan and the Muslim got Pakistan, all we got was poverty". Becoming aware of the community's size relative to Hindus in all of India (Sikhs comprise 2 % of the total population), "a minority complex began to

build up. And with it a sense of grievance that they had been hoodwinked and wronged by the Hindu leaders of the Congress Party" (Nayar and Singh 1984: 20). This feeling was exacerbated by the loss of other privileges enjoyed under British rule. Specifically, the political situation in newly independent India differed significantly from that prior to 1947. Previously Sikhs had enjoyed a special status under the system of separate communal electorates. Now, however, the Akali Dal faced the situation of near monopoly rule by a single party committed to the ideal of secularism. Furthermore, the chaos of partition had scattered its constituents and left the Sikh religious community in disarray (Schermerhorn 1978: 142-3).

Secondly, a change in the policy for military recruitment was enacted which was designed to more evenly reflect the relative balance of the country's ethnic groups. For Sikhs this meant a diminution in their numbers. This is important for this discussion since military service provided a source of outside income for Sikhs that contributed to the establishment of an ability to invest in agriculture. These grievances led many Sikhs to conclude that "the community's existence in independent India had to be safeguarded in every possible way. They might be a minority, but they were one determined that their interests should not be sold down the river by others with larger concerns" (Shackle 1984: 7).

The demographic shift produced by Partition resulted in a consolidation of the Sikh population in East Punjab. In undivided Punjab, Sikhs comprised thirteen percent of the population with no majority in any one area; after 1947 they numbered thirty percent with a clear majority in several areas (Nayar and Singh 1984: 21). The political possibilities of this newly-constituted concentration of numbers was not lost on Sikh politicians. Many believed that political autonomy was seen as the only guarantee for the maintenance of their community's security (Shackle 1984: 8). Manipulating the central government's policy of adjusting states' borders along linguistic lines, Sikhs were successful in pressing for a reorganization of the Punjab into a state in which Sikhs enjoyed a sixty percent majority. (During the Punjab Subha Movement, Punjabi came to be associated with Sikhism while Hindus claimed Hindi as their native language.) The Punjab of 1947 was divided further into the present-day states of Haryana and Punjab. While this satisfied immediate Sikh concerns, a number of issues remained unresolved that would be of import in the future. Some of these issues will become evident in the following discussion of the Green Revolution.

### The Green Revolution

The Green Revolution in agriculture has had a tremendous impact on the socio-economic fabric of Punjab society. The renewed demand for political autonomy we have been witnessing since 1980 is, in part, a response to developments as well as to the loss of ruling power of the Akali Dal. This second point is of consequence because, as several of my sources note, when the Akali Dal has been in power, it has not actively pressed Sikh demands (Hardgrave 1983; Gopal Singh 1985).

"When out of power, the Akali Dal has always launched struggles to keep its base intact and/or to expand it." (Gopal Singh 1985: 78) Secondly, while Sikhs (i.e., medium and large land-owning Jats) were reaping the benefits of the Green Revolution, demands for political autonomy were not advanced.

"As long as the Green Revolution which brought unprecedented prosperity to Sikh farmers continued, little was heard of Sikh grievances. When the revolution reached its plateau and peasants realized that the land could not give them much more, grievances began to build up." (Nayar and Singh 1984: 22)

Another factor contributing to Sikh grievances is that when the Congress Party regained control of the central government in 1980, it retreated markedly from the agricultural investment engaged in by the previous Janata Party administration (Gopal Singh 1985: 76). Of added note is the fact that between 1977 and 1980 agricultural production expanded, overcoming a period of stagnation following 1972 when crop yields had peaked. Monohar Gill attributes this advancement solely to government policy (1983: 830). Interestingly enough, this period of growth corresponds directly to the period when an Akali Dal-Janata Party coalition government ruled Punjab while Congress Party controlled Punjab during the period of stagnation when government policy failed.

The introduction of green revolution varieties of wheat and rice with the concomitant infrastructural supports such as low-interest credit, roads and the availability of fertilizers, tractors, and irrigation facilities instigated a rapid mechanization of agriculture and a tremendous growth in wheat and rice outputs — a three-fold and one-third increase respectively. This transformed the Punjab into India's most prosperous state by the early 1970's (Bryjak 1985: 19). An immediate and trenchant situation created by the rapid economic growth has to do with rural labor. According to M. J. Akbar, the new prosperity has paradoxically facilitated a migration of Sikhs to other parts of India and to other countries where lucrative jobs are available (1985: 170). Arthur Helweg, for example, estimated that Jat Sikhs comprised sixty percent of the Indian immigrant population in England in 1970 (cited by Wallace 1986: 365). Successful agriculture has helped fund this Sikh diaspora.

The outmigration of Sikhs in the 1970's created a shortage of rural labor that had to be alleviated by an influx of agricultural workers from the poorer parts of India. This "in turn (has) had inevitable consequences for the delicate linguistic and communal balance in the state" (Shackle 1984: 11). The relatively high wages for agricultural labor has attracted a heavy immigration of Hindus from neighboring states, many of whom have stayed on permanently, establishing themselves in communities and earning voting rights in the state. In addition to a potentially adverse effect on the employment opportunities for Punjab's own work force, the sixty percent Sikh majority has slipped to fifty-two percent (Gopal Singh 1985: 82).

The decline in Sikh numbers relative to Hindus in Punjab as a result of migration compounds a political problem facing the Akali Dal; namely, that not all Sikhs support it. Scheduled Caste (Mazhabi) Sikhs, approximately twenty percent of the population, generally support either the Congress Party or the Communists

as the Akali Dal is dominated by Jats who are identified with the landed interests (Wallace 1986: 366). Other castes such as the Khattris, Aroras, and Suds do not automatically support the Akali Dal either as their economic interests and social orientations are more urban-based. These caste groups are more recent converts to Sikhism and have always maintained close social ties to their Hindu counterparts. Thus, the demographic changes further diminish the Akali Dal's already difficult chances of winning a majority in elections.

A second social consequence of the Green Revolution and the prosperity it has brought to Punjab is the change in life-style of prosperous Sikhs. Influences of modernization and economic growth that are visible in Punjab are increased "consumerism" and a deviation from established religious norms, particularly among youth (Patel 1987: 279; Wallace 1986: 377; Akbar 1985: 171). Young men have begun to cut their hair and to smoke and drink — all prohibited under Sikh law. The fundamentalist movement led by Sant Bhindranwale emerged in the late 1970's/early 1980's in part as a response to these changes. Other Akalis, as well, became alarmed since the survival of the Khalsa identity was the rationale for the party's existence (Akbar 1985: 171).

Sikh grievances derive from a number of sources. One of these is the nature of Centre-State relations as they relate to the agrarian structure. The high-yielding varieties of seeds in use in the Punjab require large inputs of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. This raises concern regarding the issue of prices paid for inputs versus prices earned for product. Farmers come into direct contact with the government in the market through which all inputs and outputs pass. The government sets minimum support prices for the main agricultural commodities on the recommendation of the Agricultural Price Commission (Gill and Singhal 1983: 43). In recent years inflation has caused the price of inputs to rise relative to product earnings. Since 1971 especially, the Akalis have made the fight for a reduction in the prices of farm inputs and an increase in farm output prices one of their major objectives (Gopal Singh 1985: 79). Punjabi farmers feel that their contribution to the economy has been poorly recognized by the government in terms of the prices they receive for their produce against those they pay for inputs (Shackle 1984: 11).

Secondly, irrigation requirements are also high as are electrical needs. Power plants are under the control of the central government. Shortages of electricity have an impact on the availability of water. Exploitation of Punjab's rivers for agricultural purposes and electrical energy are an urgent necessity. In 1976 the central government intervened in the dispute between Punjab and Haryana over water rights and liabilities, diverting a large portion of the available water from the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej Rivers to the non-riparian states of Rajasthan and Haryana and to the New Delhi drinking water supply (Gurdev Singh 1983: 21). Although this allotment was readjusted in 1981, a lot of water still leaves the state. Sikhs would like to have more control over their river water resources than they have presently.

A third complaint is the redistribution process of financial resources by the central government to states. The overall feeling of Sikhs is that Punjab contri-

butes much more to the nation than it receives back. Although I could not find exact figures for income remitted to the center to compare to that received in the redistribution process, a couple of facts make the reality of this perception questionable. The nature of the taxation and revenue system is such that there is a clear bifurcation of taxes to be levied by the Union and State governments with little scope for exploitation of the same tax base by the two levels. The jurisdiction of state governments includes land revenue, taxes on agricultural land and income and taxes on the transportation of goods. The per capita share of total transfers from the center to Punjab in 1980 — 81 is relatively high, ranking sixth out of sixteen states (Bhargava 1982: 7 — 8). Given the prevalence of agriculture in the state's economy, and the latter piece of information, one must at least wonder about the validity of this grievance.

One complaint about "Center neglect of Punjab", however, that is legitimate is the reluctance of the central government to invest in heavy industry. Of total central investment in all the states in nondepartmental undertakings as of March 1979, Punjab's share was only 2.2 % (Wallace 1986: 372). Industrially, Punjab is a backward state, ranking only tenth among Indian states for national income generated in the factory sector in 1977 — 78 (Johar et al. 1983: 155). Anand cites five reasons for the slow growth in industrial development: the agitational politics of Akalis; ministerial instability; Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971; lack of mineral resources; proximity of the Pakistani border (Anand 1976: 269). Even the industrial units located in Punjab have set up new units either in Haryana or in Uttar Pradesh, instead of expanding their existing units. While this may not technically amount to a migration of capital, for all practical purposes this amounts to a shifting of capital from the state (Anand 1976: 269).

Small-scale industry is expanding and doing very well. Yet, it is limited to only eight industries and is unable to absorb the growing number of landless peasants who, in addition, encounter competition for these jobs from the immigrants from eastern India (Shackle 1984: 11; Gopal Singh 1985: 77). Furthermore, industry is seen as the most likely sector to maintain the pace of economic development as agriculture is unlikely to continue to expand. "In order to sustain Punjab's rate of growth and its leading position among the Indian states in ... per capita domestic product, Punjab's economy will need a new orientation towards industrialisation." (K. S. Gill 1983: 6)

An unfortunate circumstance of the Green Revolution is the unequal distribution of its benefits.

"Regrettably, the Green Revolution, while helping to make India self-sufficient in food production, has had the unfortunate consequence of contributing to the pauperization of a significant number of people (Bryjak 1985: 37).

The number of landless peasants has doubled and that of marginal land-owners tripled in the past ten years. The ratio of landless workers in the total agricultural labor force rose from 17.3% in 1961 to 32.1% in 1971; in 1984 the figure rested around 40%. Twenty-four percent of small peasants and thirty-one percent of marginal peasants live below the poverty line (Gopal Singh 1985: 76). Yet, the peculiar communal dimension of Punjab politics prevents class conflicts from coming to the fore.

A crucial factor behind support for appeals to the Sikh nation and communal violence in the Punjab is the demographic polarization between Hindus and Sikhs.

"The spatial distribution of the Hindus and the Sikhs has important social and political implications. The Hindus are largely concentrated in the urban areas and thinly scattered in the rural areas; and those in the rural areas are largely scheduled caste Hindus. The Sikhs are clustered in the rural areas and form the main land-owning classes. Thus the differences of outlook and interests between the urban and rural population are sharpened by distrust generated by religious differences between them." (Anand 1976: 270)

There are three major class contradictions between Hindus and Sikhs that can inflame communal identification and confrontation. The first exists between urban Hindus and Sikhs ("Bhapa Sikhs"). Bhapas came from Pakistan and differ from Hindus very little in their social habits, lifestyles, and sub-caste divisions. In fact, there is much interaction and intermarriage between the two communities. Bhapa Sikhs, however, seldom marry Jat Sikhs (Gopal Singh 1985: 84). The potential conflict between Hindu and Sikh traders centers around their different scales of operation. Hindus dominate the urban commercial scene and operate on a much larger scale than Bhapa Sikhs who are merely junior partners. Bhapas are unable to compete with their Hindu counterparts. With regard to agricultural trade, Hindus surpass Sikh traders in the appropriation of money from Sikh agriculturalists (Gopal Singh 1985: 84). Thus, though Bhapa and Jat Sikh economic interests differ and may even oppose one another, communal identification can be fostered given the potential competition between urban Hindus and Sikhs.

The second contradiction is between Hindu agricultural laborers and Sikh cultivators of all levels. During busy seasons, almost all cultivators, even the very small landowners hire extra labor. Therefore, when agricultural laborers (mostly Hindus) organize for higher wages and so forth, their demands conflict with the interests of all cultivating Sikhs (Gopal Singh 1985: 84). Again, communal identification is inflamed.

The major contradiction, however, is that between urban Hindu traders and Jat Sikh cultivators due to the market character of the economy in which all inputs and outputs pass through the hands of traders. Sikh cultivators, frustrated by supply shortages, market conditions that cannot accommodate bumper crops, and high costs of production, focus their discontent on Hindus. Furthermore, educated younger Sikhs, no longer attracted to agriculture as an occupation, seek employment in cities which is controlled by Hindus and of which there is a shortage (Gill and Singhal 1983: 44). The disadvantage they feel in obtaining employment results in acute tension between the two religious communities and agitation by Sikhs for political autonomy.

The situation is one of competition between the haves belonging to two different religious groups in which the have-nots in each group are made the pawns. "Communal politics in the Punjab has blunted the edge of class struggle." (D'Souza 1985: 52) The leading sectors of the economy are occupied by the leaders of two different religions who are able to invoke religious solidarity in safeguarding their economic interests (D'Souza 1985: 52). Most of the demands of

the Akali Dal are for making commercial agriculture more profitable (Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973).

"It is through the Akali Dal, and its economic and political program, that the demands of the rising class of capitalist farmers are sought to be realized. The demand for Sikh autonomy ... can also be seen meaningfully in the Punjab context only as a demand for growth of these economic interests under the aegis of their own political representatives." (Gopal Singh 1985: 80)

"When the Akalis agitate only for politico-economic demands, they have met with limited success. ... But after the Akalis added religious demands and shifted their headquarters to the Golden Temple, they have been able to attract a huge following for their meetings and demonstrations." (Gopal Singh 1985: 78)

It appears that in adding a religious component to their demands, the Akalis have been able to capitalize on the discontent of all Sikhs, channelling that discontent into their political agenda. The differential access to economic opportunities along communal lines has facilitated this process.

### The Recent Punjab Movement

Before concluding, a word needs to be said about the most recent eruption of Sikh nationalist fever which began in the early 1980's. That movement and the subsequent six years of violence and turmoil were catalyzed by certain events in 1980 and factional rivalry within the Akali Dal. In 1980 Congress Party resumed control over the central government and dismissed all state governments that were led by other parties. This included the Punjab government which, remember, had been ruled by an Akali Dal-Janata Party coalition. New state assembly elections were then held, and the Akali Dal suffered a humiliating loss to Congress Party.

Next, the Congress Party withdrew a river water distribution case filed in the Supreme Court by the previous Akali Dal government in order to settle the dispute in consultation with the other states concerned. This intervention of government in what the Akali Dal considered a judicial case provided an immediate provocation to begin agitation (see Kapur 1986). In April 1982, the Akali Dal launched a civil disobedience campaign to highlight the water dispute but apparently failed to attract sufficient attention of the masses on this particular issue. Thus, the campaign failed.

Now, in 1980 - 81, moderates, led by Prakash Singh and Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal, dominated the party. Their primary power base was in the very well-to-do Jat community. These individuals had been the greatest beneficiaries of the Green Revolution; had become interlinked with the rising all India middle class; and had minimum interest in disturbing the status quo (Malik 1986: 353). The second largest faction were the separatists, led by Gurbachan Singh Tohra. They are mostly small-scale farmers who, according to Malik, display a sense of insecurity caused by the ongoing process of modernization (1986: 354). This faction has been most insistent on maintaining a distinct Sikh identity but within the context

of belonging to the Indian federation of states. The extreme fundamentalists, led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, represented only a very small part of the Sikh community. It is even unclear whether or not they were actually regular Akali Dal members. This group had begun to promote secessionism and the establishment of a separate, sovereign Sikh theocratic state (Malik 1986: 354).

By the time of the failed civil disobedience campaign, Bhindranwale had begun to move into the limelight of Sikh society, having attracted considerable public attention and the following of disgruntled Sikh youth. Having failed to mobilize the Sikh masses behind the water dispute, moderate Akalis added a religious coloring to their movement. They eventually merged with the fundamentalists, with the intent of using them to pressure Mrs. Gandhi into conceding to their demands (Malik 1986: 354). The extremists, however, were trying to discredit the moderate Akalis in a power bid for the support of the Sikh masses. They were apparently aided in this move by Mrs. Gandhi herself who had little tolerance for opposition parties. Appeals to the Sikh "nation" flew from each corner in the ensuing battle for the right to represent Sikhs. Given the extremists' disposition toward violence, the situation soon exploded beyond control and culminated in the Indian military's storm of the Golden Temple complex in June 1984. Although Bhindranwale was killed in this operation, as were many of the extremists, and the Akali Dal finally won singlehandedly the state assembly elections in 1985, the situation remains volatile till today.

## Conclusion

Paul Brass has said that any movement from communal consciousness to political action requires two conditions: 1. perception of inequality in the distribution and competition for the allocation of scarce values and material rewards between different groups; and 2. a political organization to articulate group demands which can create a myth of its origin and destiny. Government policies may intensify or moderate group conflicts, but the kinds of political demands made are likely to depend more on calculations relating to the relative power of competing groups in a political system than the adequacy or inadequacy of government policies in satisfying group demands (cited by Narang 1983: 32).

These observations are rather insightful and relevant to discussions of Sikh nationalism. Clearly this essay has demonstrated that Sikhs foster a number of grievances relating to the allocation of resources and rewards. Behind the complaints of Centre-State relations is the feeling that Punjab's Sikhs do not receive what they deserve. Moreover, the Akali Dal as a political organization satisfies the second requirement. The Singh Sabha Movement and the Gurdwara Reform Movement instilled a sense of pride among Sikhs, and the Akali Dal has used this pride in mobilizing support behind its political agenda.

Underlying the existence of Sikh nationalism, however, is the issue of relative power. The communal division and competition within the economy and the kinds of opportunities which are created by governmental policy make the power

of rule highly desirable. Given their economic interests, their lack of confidence in a Hindu-dominated party's ability or willingness to answer to their needs, and the fact that they are politicized, it is only logical that Jat Sikhs want to govern Punjab. It has been established that the Akali Dal refrained from agitating for political autonomy when it was in power and when its followers enjoyed the economic benefits of the Green Revolution. Since agriculture's plateau in the mid to late 1970's and the humiliating defeat the Akalis the 1980 elections, we have seen a revival of Sikh cries that the "nation" is in danger.

Thus, to the extent that changes in the agrarian structure affect the economic well-being of the relatively wealthy to their detriment, combined with a loss of their party's political power, the notion of the "Sikh nation in danger" is revived. Economic grievances are fused with cultural anxiety to produce what Hardgrave calls a potentially virulent form of politicization (Hardgrave 1983: 1171). One can conclude, however, that the renewed threat to the Sikh nation is really a threat to the lifestyle of the wealthy and to the viability of the Akali Dal. Sikh nationalism is the mobilization of a community behind the political and economic agenda of its elites.

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## **ÖSTERREICHS BEZIEHUNGEN ZU ZIMBABWE**

### **Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme**

Die verstärkte Beschäftigung der internationalen Gemeinschaft mit dem Krisenherd Südliches Afrika hat in den vergangenen Jahren nicht nur zur Verhängung selektiver Sanktionen gegen Südafrika, sondern auch zu einer Intensivierung der politischen und wirtschaftlichen Kooperation mit seinen Nachbarländern geführt. Angesichts der massiven militärischen und ökonomischen Destabilisierung der Region durch den Apartheid-Staat (1) steht dabei die Intention im Vordergrund, die wirtschaftliche Abhängigkeit der sogenannten Frontstaaten von Südafrika zu reduzieren und ihnen selbstbestimmte wirtschaftliche und soziale Entwicklung zu ermöglichen.

Auch Österreich hat sich mehrfach zu einer intensiven Unterstützung der Mitgliedsländer der Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), die alle Staaten der Region außer Südafrika umfaßt, bekannt (2). In der Tat haben sich die heimischen Beziehungen zur SADCC seit 1980, dem Unabhängigkeitsjahr Zimbabwes, verstärkt. Eine besondere Dynamik im gegenseitigen Verhältnis ist allerdings nicht erkennbar; trotz eines merklichen Bedeutungsschwundes ist Südafrika Österreichs dominierender regionaler Partner geblieben (3), und auch die Frage, ob Österreichs Beziehungen zu den Frontstaaten tatsächlich deren selbstbestimmte Entwicklung und Autonomie fördern, kann nicht von vornherein mit Ja beantwortet werden.

Eine Bestandsaufnahme von Umfang, Struktur und politischem Charakter der Beziehungen Österreichs zu den einzelnen Ländern des SADCC-Raums erscheint dem Autor somit als eine wichtige Voraussetzung für verstärkte Zusammenarbeit. Der vorliegende Aufsatz versucht eine solche Bestandsaufnahme am Beispiel von Zimbabwe, das nicht nur für die SADCC von zentraler Bedeutung ist, sondern auch den größten Handelspartner Österreichs in der Region (mit Ausnahme Südafrikas) darstellt (4). Weitere Studien vor allem über Angola und Mosambik – derzeit im Mittelpunkt der „European Campaign against South African Aggression on Mosambik and Angola (ECASAAMA)“ stehend – erscheinen jedoch ebenso wünschenswert.

### **1. Die Anfänge der Beziehungen zu Süd-Rhodesien**

Abgesehen von den Aktivitäten der katholischen Mission, deren Beginn bis in die zweite Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts und somit bis in die Phase der Erschließung des Landes durch den britischen Imperialismus zurückreicht, sind die österreichischen Beziehungen ins Gebiet des heutigen Zimbabwe relativ jungen Datums