

# Spies, spies everywhere

**W**hat, spies in Canada? Many people were horrified by charges last week that Indian and Chinese agents were operating here. Why would anyone want to spy on goody two-shoes Canada? That's like peeking up Mary Poppins' skirt.

In a new book, *Soft Target*, the authors assert that India has sent numbers of agents to Canada. They also claim that Indian agents may have planted the bomb that destroyed an Air-India flight off the coast of Ireland in order to discredit Sikh separatists.

Are there, in fact, Indian agents operating in Canada? Most definitely yes. India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, has long watched and infiltrated Sikh groups in Canada.

Canadians who find this thought odious should try to understand the situation in India. A savage, murderous war of terrorism and counter-terrorism has raged in Punjab for more than a decade between Indian security forces and Sikh separatists. Thousands have died, the Sikh's holy of holies, the Golden Temple, has been stormed and desecrated — and the killing still goes on.

I was up in Punjab last year and saw first hand how the rich farming province is held in the grip of terror. Standing in the Golden Temple at Amritsar, I watched Indian army sharpshooters follow me with their scopes. A few feet away, people were being murdered by Sikh fanatics.

There is much right and wrong on both sides of this bloody struggle. India has abused and offended the proud Sikhs and used their angry reaction to rally anti-Sikh Hindu voters in north India. Radical Sikhs have pushed aside moderates and are killing anyone they don't like, Hindu and Sikh alike. Hardly a day passes in Punjab without bombings, stabbings and gunfire.

And, of course, no one in India can forget how prime minister Indira Gandhi was murdered by her own Sikh bodyguards.

Canada has long been a haven for Sikh political exiles, from moderates to extremists. Some of the

**ERIC MARGOLIS**



current violence in Punjab can be traced directly back to Canada. Money raised here by Sikhs goes to buy arms and munitions for separatists in Punjab. Small wonder, then, that the Indian RAW keeps its eyes on the Sikh exiles. Neither the RCMP nor CSIS has the manpower or language skills to maintain proper surveillance of Sikh groups.

It's awfully hard to tell which Sikhs are peaceful objectors to Indian policy and which are violating their right to be in Canada by actively participating in covert war against Indian rule.

I don't like the idea of RAW agents running around Canada. But when we bring in large numbers of Sikhs and other Indians, along with their feuds and ethnic battles, we must expect trouble and curious outside eyes. The claim by the authors of *Soft Target* that RAW agents put a bomb on the Air-India flight that blew up off Ireland sounds absurd. Why would India blow up one of its own aircraft? The Indians may sometimes do odd things, but they are not bomb-happy Lebanese or Syrians.

Still, I have followed the writing of one of the authors, Zuhair Kashmiri, and know him to be a highly reputable journalist. His dedication to writing the truth about the Mideast has, I suspect, hurt his career. Absurd, yes, but nations sometimes do crazy or stupid things.

Last year, for example, RAW tried to get the world to believe that Pakistan was arming Sikh separatists. In their best Peter Sellers style, RAW agents planted crates of arms and munitions in a warehouse, all neatly stenciled, "Made in Pakistan." Journalists were called in to see this example of Sikh and Pakistani wickedness. To the enormous chagrin of the red-faced Indian government, the arms inside the boxes were discovered to have been made in India. The whole embarrassing frame-up was revealed.

Clownish and inept, to be sure, but might other bumbling agents have decided to permanently discredit the Sikhs by bringing down an airliner? Might the bombs have been intended to be found before going off? We will probably never know the truth. Any more so than about the mysterious facts behind the infamous almost-bombing of an Israeli El Al airliner in London two years ago that may — or may not — have been a wickedly clever doublecross and frame-up of the Syrians by Israeli intelligence.

And, yes, there are lots of Chinese agents here. Lots of Cubans, too, plus Czechs, Soviets, Poles and the Yugoslav SDB that has threatened Croatian and Albanian Canadians. In fact, there are more spies in Canada than overworked RCMP/CSIS have agents to watch them.

Much of the media has been too busy bashing our security agencies to notice this.

