The Babbar Akalis considered the British Government a vicious institution which was founded on force and fraud. The Babbar had raised patriotism to the pitch of religion. The atrocities during the Gurdwara Reform movement had inflamed them and they openly worked for the destruction of the system which was responsible for their sad plight. The government in its anxiety to curb dissentient voices recruited spies and stooges. These people created panic and scare in the villages. The Babbar Akalis gave priority to their 'reform'. They despatched many a traitor and were quite a force to reckon with. Their activities were at their height in 1923 and so was also the repression by the government. The successive murders of jholi shuke in the districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, nearly, panicked the local officers.

The Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur, Mr. W.C. Jacob who was greatly perturbed at the murder of Subedar Genda Singh of Shurial recommended, to the Panjab Government, the adoption of stringent measures of the nature of martial law. On his suggestion, Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Asis was deputed to deal with the situation. At that time, the people were
too terrified to come forward and help the authorities to bring the offenders to book. As a result a conference, of the local officers, was convened at Lahore and it was decided to post additional police and military in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur Districts to patrol about the countryside and re-establish confidence in the minds of the people.¹

A wave of repression was unleashed which led to the persecution of the innocent Akalis. Their houses were searched and plundered. The honour of the women folk was violated and many Akalis were thrown into jails for no fault of theirs.²

The police raids on different villages were conducted on March 23, 1923, immediately after the duplication of an open Babbar letter to the Governor of the Panjab, Sir Edward Maclagan, on 22nd March, 1923. Mr. H. Mathews, S.P. Jullundur stated that they raided the houses of Buta Singh, Hukam Singh, Kartar Singh, Nirvair Singh, Sadha Singh and Milkha Singh of Pindori Nijjaran³ and obtained some useful information. At the time of search, the Lambardars and Chaukidars of Pindori Nijjaran, who were suspected to be the police informers, were so terror-stricken of the wrath of the Babbar Akalis that the police had to be

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¹. Paper Book Babbar Akali Conspiracy, p. 766.

². Tarlok Singh, Shiromani Khalsa Tawalkh, Amritsar, 1962, pp. 111-1

³. Pindori Nijjaran, a village at a distance of 20 miles from Jullundur towards the north-east, was a big centre of the Babbar activities. There were 13 Babbar Akalis of this village, out of whom two turned approvers in the Babbar Akali conspiracy case. The Babbar Akali Doaba leaflet was also duplicated here in the house of Kartar Singh. Bhai Buta Singh was a close companion of Jathedar Kishan Singh Garg. His memoirs, Babbar Akali Tehrik (MSS), throw limelight on many facts of the Babbar Saga which were little known so far.
sent to protect their lives under the orders of Khan Sahib.

Mir Fazal Imam, D.C.P. (C.I.D.) Panjab at Lahore. 4

The police also raided other hide-outs of the Babbar such as Kishan Pura, Jassoval, Bika, Pragpur, Rehsiwal, Rajowal, Kot Fatuh, and Daulatpur. These raids gave the police many vital and important clues.

5. Kishan Pura was an important centre of the Babbar activities. It was called 'big hospital' in the Babbar colloquy.
6. Jassoval remained an important centre of the Babbar activities for three consecutive years. The important workers of the Babbar Jatha from this village were S. Hardit Singh, Charan Singh see Fajir Singh, Teja Singh, Zaila Singh, Harbakhsh Singh, Har Singh, Gurbaksh Singh and Lab Singh. The crucial meetings of December 25 and 30-31, 1922 were held here in the Haveli of Hardit Singh and in the Kutiya of Charan Singh, respectively.
7. Bika. This village produced Atma Singh. He was a messenger of the Babbar Akali Jatha.
8. Pragpur. Pragpur was the main centre of the activities of S. Kishan Singh Gargaj. Sant Kartar Singh lived here, in a Kutiya. He gave help in the nascent stage of the movement but turned approver and thus proved a traitor to the Babbar cause in the end.
9. Rehsiwal. The village has significant place in the history of the Babbar Akalis because it was here that the talks of the merger of the Chakarvarti Jathas took place.
10. Rajowal. The Babbar Akali Doaba was duplicated here in the Kutiya of Sant Thakar Singh. The important decision of reforming the toadies on 24th March, 1922; formation of the Babbar Jatha in August 1922 and the decision of coming the responsibility of the Doaba murders was taken here on March 22, 1923 in an open letter to the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab.
11. Kot Fatuh: Here big conferences were held since the Mankana holocaust. The conferences were arranged in March 1921, December 1921 and February 1922. S. Lekha Singh, Hardit Singh, Waran Singh, Sunder Singh, Bhulla Singh and Amr Singh granthi of Kotbars Khan took active part in the Babbar activities. The Babbar Akali Doaba was also duplicated here.
12. Daulatpur. S. Karam Singh 'Editor' hailed from this village. He was killed at Babeli on September 1, 1923. A punitive police post was also set up here and a punitive post tax ofRs. 2,100/- was realised from the villagers, vide, The Fardesi Khalsa, May 19, 1923.
Khan Bahadur Abdul Asia took charge of the Babbar case on April 19, 1923 and on the basis of the March raids, the Babbar hide-outs were once again raided from April 20 to 22, 1923 in a surprise move. From Pindori Nijjaran, Kartar Singh Rukum Singh, Mukka Singh, Sadha Singh and Mirvair Singh were arrested on April 21, though records showed that these arrests were made on April 22, 1923. Others arrested during this operation were Hari Singh and Labh Singh of Jassowal, Bala Singh and Sadhu Singh of Pragpur, Ujjagar Singh of Bissrampur, Sunder Singh of Kot Fatahi, Gurbachan Singh of Sadhara, Sant Mit Singh of Kishampura and Nand Singh of Ghurial. According to the 'Akali-Te-Pardesi', 29 Akalis were arrested on April 24, 1923 on the suspicion of being involved in the Doaba murders.


Milkha Singh and Uttam Singh of Moramwali. 16

The Punjab Government was very sanguine in arresting the Babbar Akalis. Consequently, another proclamation was issued under the signatures of Mr. H.K. Kaul, Commissioner, Jullundur Division announcing that 6 squares of land would be given to the person/persons for helping the arrest of all those members of the Babbar Jatha alleged to be involved in the murders of Bishan Singh of Rani Thua, Bota Singh of Nangal Shamwan, Labh Singh Mistri of Garhsbankar, Basara Singh of Behalpur and Genda Singh pensioner of Ghurial. 17 After this proclamation, the police were able to arrest Waryam Singh of Kot Patuhi, Shiv Singh of Haripur and Amar Singh of Pindori Mijjran on April 27, Dalip Singh of Dhamian on April 28, Piara Singh of Dhamian on May 1, Sant Thakar Singh of Rajjowal and Banta Singh of Pragpur on May 5, 1923. Atma Singh of Bika, Thakar Singh and Harman Singh of Pindori Mijjran were arrested on May 6, while Prem Singh of Pragpur was arrested on May 12, 1923. Karam Singh of Manko was also nabbed on May 12, at Jullundur Railway Station on his way to Amritsar. His arrest was effected through the help of Jagat Singh of Manko who

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16. The Akali Te Pardegi, April 29, 1923. The paper included Gurbachan Singh Sadhara also among the arrested persons but Gurbachan Singh, Babbar Akali, op.cit., p.36, writes that he was arrested on 22nd April, 1923. Also see Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar, op.cit., p.201, Also vide Paper Book Babbar Akali conspiracy case, p.954.

who served as the informer. On 15th May, 1923 twenty one persons were arrested. They included Kartar Singh, Hasara Singh, Atma Singh and Bir Singh from Gondpur, Kartar Singh, Sohan Singh, Puran Singh, Harmam Singh and Inder Singh of Chahalpur, and Pritam Singh of Moila. Others arrested included Mehar Singh, Chint Singh, Mohan Singh and Bhaunda Singh of Moramwali, Dasaundha Singh of Banga, Lachhman Singh of Phakrudi, Jawala Singh of Malgarh, Aggar Singh of Tannauli, Ram Singh of Pindori Phagorian and Udham Singh of Kalabehr and Hasara Singh of Munder.18

On 16th May, about 113 persons were rounded up and put in prison. Many of them were let off as they were found innocent.19 The 16 persons arrested from Daulatpur included Phuman Singh, Waryam Singh, Banta Singh, Bela Singh, Farmuk Singh, Dalip Singh, Miranjan Singh and Wazir Singh. Ujjagar Singh, Hukam Singh, Hari Singh, Hasara Singh and Marina Singh of Hayatpur, Bishan Singh of Pindori Ladha Singh, Isher Singh, Karam Singh and Shama Singh of Behbalpur, Dalel Singh of Mannanhana, Arjan Singh of Naqadipur and Tej Singh of Paldi were also arrested.20

Jagjit Singh of Kuthar was arrested on May 27, 1923.21

Despite these arrests, the Babbars were still a terror for the toadies. It was admitted that a number of village officials and other loyalists were fear-stricken and expressed anxiety to resign their posts. Mr. C.A.H. Townsend, Commissioner, admitted Jullundur Division also and acknowledged the force of the Babbars in his evidence wherein he stated that "Many of the village officials spoke to me in a whisper and this too in my own house ... on account of this terrorism we could get hardly any evidence to show who was responsible for these outrages." 23 Keeping in view the gravity of the situation, the government sanctioned the use of troops. In the beginning of June 1923, two hundred cavalry and 250 infantry were placed at the disposal of the Commissioner, Jullundur Division. 24 The appointment of Khan Sahib Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Superintendent Police, C.I.D. proved as a break-through in solving the mystery of the murders and dacoities of the region. He was ably assisted by Diwan Khan Bahadur Abdul Hamid of Kapurthala. The officials were able to round up 71 Babbars on April 22, 1923, and apprehended other 21 members of the Jatha, after conducting raids on 39 villages. A number of punitive posts were also set up in

different villages such as Ghurai, Khuradpur and Kandhola. The whole amount imposed as Punitve Post Tax was recovered from Ghurai, whereas Rs. 1336 were recovered from Khuradpur and Kandhola each. The punitive posts were also set-up in Daulatpur, Aur, Mahal Gehla, Jhingar, and Bunga. The highest amount of the Punitve Post Tax imposed was Rs. 5650 on Bunga. Mahal Gehla came second with Rs. 4695, followed by Aur with Rs. 3700/- . The tax realised from Daulatpur and Jhingar was Rs. 2100/- and 1500/- respectively.28

The Punitve Post Tax of Rs. 8000/- was also realised from Tannauli, Dhakoval, Harkhval, Pindori Bibi and Mescanian on June 1, 1923. On June 2, 1923, the Punitve Police Posts were also set up in Kandhali, Bahli and Kalra as well.29 Lord Reading, Viceroy of India, in his report to the Secretary of State informed that 186 persons were arrested, 25 of whom were suspected of actual participation in murders; and against 30 others there was evidence of abetment and murder.30

The reaction of the press was somewhat mixed. Some of the newspapers owned by the Sikhs reached sharply. The Panjab Darpan criticised the Panjab Government for arresting hundreds of the Akalis on the pretext of the alleged help to

27. The Akali-To-Pardesi, May 21, 1923.
29. The Akali To Pardesi, May 28, 1921.
a group of 5 or 6 Babbars. The paper made special mention of 11 arrests made at Ghural as three out of eleven were those who suffered imprisonment in the Guru Ka Bach Morcha.  

Though the same paper in its editorial of May 18, expressed the view that none of the bodies like the SGPC, Sikh League and Chief Khalsa Diwan had any sympathy with the Babbars as they were opposed to their policy of violence, yet it resented indiscriminate arrests and expressed its fear that the statement of Amar Singh approver might lead to more detentions and arrests and admitted that the time was of grave peril for the Sikhs of the Doaba. It urged the SGPC to institute a sub-committee to investigate these arrests as well as the Doaba murders. The 'Gurdwara', in its issue of May 2, 1923, condemned the wholesale arrests. It took exception to the punitive and itinerant police stationed in the villages and observed that murderers must be a few in number but the government was bent upon harassing and bringing to knee the whole of the Doaba. The 'Khalsa' also stated that with the persecution of the innocent people, the public in general would get disgusted with the bureaucracy and refrain from rendering a helping hand to it. The 'Akali Te Pardesi' in its issue

32. The Punjabi Darpan, May 18, 1923.
34. Loc.cit.
of May 14, 1923, remarked: "Peaceful people are now between the devil and the deep sea. If they oppose the Babbar Akalis, their lives are in danger, but if they even talk with the latter, the bureaucracy comes down heavily upon them." 35

The powerful wave of rigour and repression was now passing over the Doaba to crush the Babbar Akalis and it had thrown in shade even the memory of the days of the martial law, thus observed Dr. Satya Pal in the 'Bande Matram' of May 24, 1923. 36 On the other hand, the 'Gulzar-i-Hindi' in its issue of 23th April, 1923 condemned the government for its complacency. It asserted that it was a wrong principle to be afraid of mischief-mongers and leave the loyalists to their own fate. Those who had fallen a victim to the violence of the Babbar Akalis in the Doaba were well disposed towards the government and the latter should have adopted precautionary measures of deterring nature to protect them. 37 The "Muslim Outlook" in its issue of 5th May called the Doaba murders, the work of a strong and determined secret organisation of criminals and concluded that the political motives were also connected with these violent perpetrations. 38 The local Government ironically regarded the movement as a conflict between criminal elements against

38. Loc.cit.
the forces of law and order.  

Though with the confessional statements of Assa Singh, Amar Singh, and Battan Singh, the police succeeded in making a dent in the Babbar citadel, yet it was not an easy task to demolish and root out the movement and haul up the leaders. The Babbar, once again, delivered a sensational shock to the Panjab Government, when on May 20, 1923, they swooped on Chaudhari Falla Ram and his brother Dittu of Kaulgarh. This double murder was committed on the night of May 20-21, by Karam Singh of Daulatpur, Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur, Santa Singh of Dhamian, Bishan Singh of Mangat, Uday Singh, Anup Singh, Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass, Babu Santa Singh and Dilip of Dhamian.

The 'Babbar Attack' was premeditated. A leaflet in "Gurmukhi" dated 17th May, 1923 was pasted inside Falla's Dalan (entrance hall). The poster contained the names of Karam Singh Jathedar, Bhai Dhanna Singh, Bhai Uday Singh, Babu Santa Singh, Bhai Anup Singh, Bhai Bishan Singh and Bhai Dalip Singh. This showed the reorganisation of the Jatha, with Babbar Karam Singh as president and Babu Santa Singh as its Secretary. They categorically emphasised that the mean tactics used by the bureaucracy/intimidating, arresting and

brow-beating their innocent helpers on charges of murder and arresting others for conspiracy had compelled the signatories to join the Jatha.\(^4\) The Babbars now were on war-path. As a result of it, certain traitors took refuge with their relatives and others hid themselves in the police stations, but some loyalists like Ralla and Dittu carried on their nefarious activities without heeding to the threats delivered by the Babbar Akalis. They had also caused the arrest of Dalip Singh and Curbachan Singh of Sadhara.\(^5\) Later on, they spied on Bawa Singh and Udham Singh of Kaulgarh. They did not desist even after Karan Singh of Daulatpur, who happened to be their relative, requested them to stop their activities.\(^6\)

These murders had created panic in the villages. Even Sheikh Abdul Asia, Superintendent of Police, on special duty, had to admit this. He wrote "Dittu and Ralla begged them to spare their lives offering them to pay later on any sum they further wanted; butcher culprits replied that they were jholichuks and would not be spared on any account. This was followed by several shots and the culprits decamped after killing both the brothers taking the eastern side, they had originally come from. The most surprising fact in the outrage is that while the culprits stayed for about 1½ hour in the

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\(^4\) Home-Political, Proceeding, File No.134/II/1923,p.7.
\(^5\) Curbachan Singh, Babbar Akali, op.cit., p.36.
\(^6\) Makhsupuri, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar, op.cit., p.168.
early part of the night when the whole village comprising of about 100 houses was awake, not a single man came to the rescue of the victims, the neighbours shutting themselves in the houses.\textsuperscript{45}

The perpetrators of the outrage were the same people who were responsible for several crimes. They had taken refuge in the Siwalik Hills. Kaulgarh, the scene of the outrage is only five miles on the side of the Siwalik Hills. They came in and went back from the village towards the same direction.\textsuperscript{46} Though the Babbar strength was depleted by numerous arrests, yet the Babbars who were still active showed their unflinching determination to deal with the spies and informers.

It was in Kaulgarh on 20th May, 1923 that Karam Singh asked the Babbars to give their names for the second time to take the responsibility of the murders, in case, Dhanna Singh, Uday Singh and he were either killed or arrested. Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa of Dhamian, Anup Singh of Manko and Bishan Singh of Man at offered themselves respectively but Banta Singh of Dhamian and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass declined. On 21st May, it was at Kaulgarh that the seven Babbars duplicated their Second Declaration and the same was published

\textsuperscript{45} Home-Political Proceedings, File No. 13/W/II/1923, p.7.

\textsuperscript{46} Home-Political Proceedings, File No. 13/W/II/1923, p.8.
in the Babbar Akali Doaba. In this declaration the contractors were also forbidden to bid for the contracts of opium and wine. 47

The Babbars also asked the people to use wood and fruit of the trees fearlessly that grew on the road leading from Ropar through Bala-chaur, Garhshankar, Mahalpur, Hoshiarpur and Tanda to Rargobindpur. As a result of this declaration, no contractor came forward to give bid for mango groves for the years 1922 and 1923. 48

The Babbars made their next move against Subedar Sunder Singh of Randhawa Nasandian in which they did not succeed. He opposed the Babbar Akali movement and had his and four others enrolled as special constables. A notice was put in the village threatening him with dire consequences. It was towards the end of May that Kartar Singh (younger) and Kartar Singh (elder) of Dowell, Baba Santa Singh, Banta Singh and Dalipa of Dhamian, Dhamma Singh of Kotli, Bawa Dass, Hasara Singh of Wunder and Anup Singh of Manko reached there. 49 But they had to abandon their project when they learnt that the Subedar was armed and was in a position to defend himself. 50

On the 6th June, 1923, Ata Mohammed Patwarl was murdered on the road leading to Nanda Chaur in Hoshiarpur District. 51

47. Makhsuspuri, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar, op.cit.p.205.
49. Ibid., p.164.
He was murdered by Banta Singh, Dalipa of Dhamian and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass.

This once again created panic in the area and the government made frantic efforts to curb the Babbar activities. The government report on the political situation in Panjab for the fortnight ending on 30th June, 1923 made its special mention. It admitted that "the arrival of the troops in the Doaba and the bi-weekly flights of aeroplanes scattering propaganda leaflets have had distinctly a reassuring effect on the loyal population. Offers of assistance are being received freely from private individuals and there is reason to hope that before long more of the outlaws would be captured." 52

The Babbar Jatha was also declared an unlawful association under Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 and Enrolment of Special Police Act, 1861.53 Besides this, the additional police also was sanctioned. In addition to this, various groups of 50 army men were deputed to keep an eye and wide vigil on the disturbed areas. Even Mr. C.A.H. Townsend, Commissioner, Jullundur Division, was advised to take strong force while on tour in Hoshiarpur District in July, 1923. 54 Special C.I.D. was deputed to assist the local police in their efforts to arrest the Babbars. A force of 50 regular

52. Home-Political, File No.13/II/1923, p.39.
53. Ibid., 5. Also, quoted in The Civil and Military Gazette, 9th August, 1923.
54. Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case, Judgement, p.129.
policemen was moved to Jullundur and the enrolment of special force of 150 including 50 mounted men was sanctioned. The police were assisted by a military force of 250 Indian Infantry and a squadron of the armoured cars. All these measures made it very difficult for the Babbars to operate in the area and they had now few offers of free food which they had been hitherto enjoying without asking. These measures compelled the Babbars to think of and to look for safe hide-outs. In the second week of June, 1923 Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa and Banta Singh of Dhamian, Anup Singh of Manko and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass decided to take refuge in the Malwa. Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa and Anup Singh left for the Malwa and reached Mindiaya and put up in the house of Bir Singh Akali. Sant Kartar Singh advised Anup Singh and Dalipa to spend some days in the Gurdwara of Thirrivala and then at Mastuana. He along with Santa Singh left for Malwala and stayed with Isher Singh. Sant Kartar Singh who turned traitor took away cartridges of Babu Santa Singh and was not even suspected. On the 20th June, 1923 on the basis of information, Mir Fasal Imam arrested Babu Santa Singh at Tape Railway Station from the 3rd class compartment of a train going to Bhatinda from Patiala.

Babu Santa Singh had assumed the leadership of the Jatha and was apparently the brain of the movement. He was hauled up and arrested and from his possession were recovered one revolver, eleven copies of the Babbar Akali leaflet of 21st May, 1923 and some papers including a letter addressed to Jawala Singh and Bhagwan Singh of Fatehpur Kothi. It also led to the recovery of the 'Elam' duplicator, on which the leaflets were printed, from the house of Parshottam Singh of Fatehpur Kothi. Bhagwan Singh and Parshottam Singh were also arrested. Santa Singh's detailed confessional statement also led to the arrest of 9 others including Kartar Singh, Bela Singh, Maluk Singh and Baisht Singh, who turned approvers. Kartar Singh furnished certain information which led to the arrest of Dalel Singh Mannanhana and Ram Singh and the disclosure made by the latter led to the arrest of ten other persons including Ram Singh S/O Gurmukh Singh of Hayatpur. This was another serious setback and it further thinned the depleted Babbar ranks.

The Babbars carried on their activities of reforming jholichak despite this serious setback that they had suffered. It was on the night of 15th July, 1923 that Bishan Singh of Sandhara was attacked by Banta Singh and Dalipa of Dhamian, Waryam Singh of Dugga and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass. He was...

enrolled as a special police constable in June, 1923 and had
since been assisting the police in hunting down the remaining
absconders of the Babbar Akali Jatha. On the night of 15th
July, while Bishan Singh was sleeping in front of his house,
he was awakened by severe blow on the chest. He ran for his
life, but was chased and seriously wounded. Later on
he recovered in the hospital, despite serious wounds. The
Babbar terror was evident here as well. The villagers
were aroused but none pursued the Babbars, due to fear.

The Babbar Problem and the British Parliament:

The Panjab Government was severely grilled in the
press and the Parliament for its failure to apprehend the
Babbars. The Babbars' exploits were echoed even in the British
Parliament. The numerous murders of the toadies and incessant
attacks of the Babbars gave many anxious moments to the ruling
party in London. The deteriorating law and order situation was
its special topic of discussion. The move of the Governor of
the Panjab to disband 606 constables out of 20,000 strong force
was hotly discussed in the Parliament. Sir Charles Yates sought
its clarification and Earl Winterton replied that Lord Peel
had already enquired of the Government of India with regard to
the reduction of 3 lakhs in the Panjab Police Budget. Taking
into consideration the financial conditions of the province
the Governor was justified in taking the decision, but it was
a risky decision in view of the prevailing political and

59. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
administrative situation in Panjab. The Panjab Government also came under fire for attaching too little importance to the movement. On 4th June, 1923, Sir Charles Yates expressed indignation "over the programme of murdering all officers and killing every foreigner. He also sought information regarding the revolutionary movement in the Panjab by certain Babbar Akali Sikhs. On 25th June, 1923 Lt. Colonel Howard Bury sought information from the Under-Secretary about the number of political murders committed by the Akalis since January 1, 1923 and enquired whether the increase in murders was due to the hasty reduction in the number of police force. The under-Secretary informed the House of Commons in response to Lt. Colonel Bury's question that ten murders had been committed and added that special police had been enlisted and the military forces were co-operating in the pursuit of the gangs. About 186 persons had been arrested.

In reply to another question by Mr. Hope Simpson, Earl Winterton expressed satisfaction at the steps that were being taken to deal with the situation.

One thing is clear that the Babbar activities had shaken the British administration in the Punjab, and grave doubts were being expressed in London at the ability of the Panjab Government to cope effectively with the alarming situation. Colonel Yates had suggested that the Doaba be

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60. The Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, March 22, 1923 (Microfilm-NML).
62. Loc.cit.
64. Loc.cit.
merged with some native state.

The 'Akali-Ts-Pardesi' of the 5th July, 1923 remarked that the observation of Colonel Yates was significant and showed that Indian Princes could rule better than the British rulers. It reminded the British that not only the Doaba but the whole of the Panjab of which the Britain took forcible possession belonged to Maharaja Dalip Singh. If it wished to do this only after events like those of the Doaba occurred (every where), may God fulfil its wishes.  

Rattan Singh 'Asad' observed that a small action of the Babbar Akalis had shaken London and Colonel Yates was thinking of moving a resolution to handover this area to a native state'. He observed that the real peace could not be established either by repression or by handing out the Doaba to the native princes, who were more despotic than the British rulers. He suggested the creation of a small state to be administered by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee for the restoration of peace.

The British Treasury Benches grew deeply nervous. In letter No.2443 of 30th August, 1923, India office admitted that at the time of Sir Charles Yates question there was considerable public anxiety in this country about the

situation in the Panjab, and the under-Secretary of State had some apprehension that an attempt might be made to move an adjournment of the House in order to call attention to the situation in the Panjab and the failure of the authorities to deal with it.  

The situation was peculiar in 1923. The Sikhs generally sympathised with the Babbars and the few who did not, were too afraid to help the government officials. The Babbars were a terror for the loyalists. The members of the Panjab Legislative Council like Mian Muhammad Shah Nivas exhorted the Government to deal with the Babbars firmly and persecute them forthwith. Bhai Jodh Singh also categorically made it clear that the Sikh members had not got any sympathy for those who committed crimes. Only Sardar Tara Singh, M.L.C. criticised the way in which the police administration was being carried on in the Panjab. He said, "The police surround a village, arrest men and release them. For the sake of a few persons, whole villages are besieged at night." Under these circumstances, the government could not be complacent anymore. It took strident action against the Babbars. The
weakling among the Babbaras and traitors were promised lucrative rewards. The moderate was cajoled to bargain and dissociate themselves from the Babbaras and finally deployment of police and army was also made on war-footing. The Babbaras were hunted like a game.

The Babbar Akalis and the Akali Leadership:

The Akali leadership showed willingness to toe the government line. Even in March, 1923, the Tribune published the speech of Chief Secretary, Panjab, Mr. C. D. Craik in which he appreciated the Akali leaders for their non-violent adherence, which they had instilled in their followers by their example, propaganda and actions. On April 34, 1923, the S.O.P.C. in one of its communique completely and emphatically dissociated itself from the Babbaras, though in the same breath it declared that its heart went out in love and pity to these misguided Sikhs. The editor of the Civil and Military Gazette detected signs of 'Covert sympathy of Akalis' in this communique for the Babbaras. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in its Gurmata No. 7 made it clear that it considered the policy of murders extremely dangerous for the Panth. Its reply published in the Tribune as a rejoinder to the Civil and Military Gazette pointed

72. The Tribune, September 27, 1923.
73. The Proceedings of S.O.P.C. General Committee (1922-39), Register No. 3, Gurmata No. 7, p. 53.
to the timely stand to which it was veering round. It clarified that the epithet 'Akali' adopted by the Babbars was likely to create a wrong impression among the people hailing from the distant provinces that the Babbars were perhaps a section of the Akalis who had got out of control of the S.G.P.C. and had taken to violent methods, but they were all the same within the Akali organization. It also hoped that every member of the S.G.P.C. would always welcome the opportunity to clear the complete dissociation of his dearly cherished open and non-violent movement from any secret and violent movement. Though the Akalis did not hold forth the Babbars as fine heroes, yet they showed love and pity for the misguided Sikhs because they thought that the Babbars had been driven to a campaign of mad and successful violence by the repressive policy of the Panjab Government.

The Government was trying to widen the cleavage between the Akalis and the Babbar Akalis gradually. It categorically declared on April 23, 1923 that the Babbar Jatha was responsible for the murderous attacks on the Loyalists. Then S.G.P.C. too, declared that it had no link with the Babbars in its declaration of April 24, 1923. The Panjab Government released the 'Guru Ka Bagh morcha' prisoners on April 25, on the one hand and on the other hand it resorted to repression on the Babbar Akalis.

74. *The Tribune, Lahore, September 27, 1923.*
Also vide the Declaration No. 54 of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, dated April 24, 1923.
The Government was anxious to dissociate the Akalis from the Babbar Akalis. The moderate leadership passed another resolution on May 29-30, 1923 and advised Gurdwara Committees and Akali Jathas to dissociate and keep away the Sikhs from those who had taken to violence and forbade to help them. In this resolution the S.G.P.C. pleaded the release of religious prisoners and not those of the political prisoners.

The S.G.P.C. had issued this statement, repudiating the doctrine of violence, on a hint from the government. The government had assured them in the bargain that the Akali prisoners would be released and their other demands would also be accepted.

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee passed a resolution in a general meeting on 29th September 1923 at Akal Takhat and once again reiterated its adherence "to the settled policy of non-violence" and asked the Akalis "to keep up the struggle for God and Guru with vigour and determination by all peaceful and legitimate means till complete religious liberty is attained."

Even Fazal-Imam, Deputy Superintendent of Police, C.I.D., in charge of the trial of the Babbar Akalis, on behalf of...

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75. Master Tara Singh, Meri Yed, Amritsar, 1945, p.64.
77. Home-Political, File No.124/II/1923, p.81.
78. Home-Political, File No.110/1930.
79. The Tribune, Lahore, October 3, 1923.
of the police, in the court of Mr. L.A. Bull, Special Magistrate, Lahore, conceded that the S.G.P.C. had neither instigated the Babbar Akali crimes nor had it conspired with the Babbar Akalis. Though the British Government in India, in its anxiety to crush the Akali movement, tried to dub the Akalis responsible for the actions of the Babbar Akalis, yet it did not succeed. The moderates like E.B. Mehtab Singh categorically declared that there was absolutely no connection between the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the Babbars.

The Babbar Akalis and the Sikh League:

The Panjab Government seems to have influenced the Central Sikh League as well. Master Sunder Singh Lyallpuri who was president-elect of the Special Session of the Sikh league held on 24th June, 1923 expressed the view that the Babbar Akali Jatha of the Doaba, which was taking recourse to violent methods, was greatly mistaken in following the path of violence.

Though this Special Session of the Sikh league condemned the repressive methods resorted to by the bureaucracy under the cover of the Babbar Akalis in the Doaba, yet it also deprecated the violent activities of the Babbar Akalis. The congress leaders too, under the leadership of Gandhiji could not eschew revolutionary methods. The secret murders committed

80. Vide, Akali Leaders conspiracy case from 8 November, 1923 to June 18, 1926, p. 246 (published) and pp. 111-114 of manuscript.
82. The Khalsa Advocate, June 29, 1923.
by the revolutionaries were dubbed as crimes and were not considered acts of heroism. 83

Fresh Move of the Government to Curb the Babbar Akalis:

Thus the Panjab Government was in a position to isolate the Babbar Akalis and it gave a free hand to it to renew a reign of terror to liquidate the Babbar Akalis. There was some basis, therefore, when Master Mota Singh and the Naujavan Bharat Sabha charged Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee with giving a green signal to the Panjab Government for the execution of the Babbar Akalis. 84 The next step for the Panjab Government was to apprehend the absconding Babbars. On August 8, 1923, it came out with the third proclamation and announced the following rewards for the arrest of the Babbars:

- Karam Singh of Daulatpur - Rs. 3000/-
- Uday Singh and Dhanna Singh - Rs. 2000/- each
- Banta Singh, Dalip Singh, Waryam Singh of Dugga - Rs. 1000/- each
- Dhamma Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass and Anup Singh of Manko - Rs. 500/- each
- Bishan Singh of Mangat - Rs. 400/-
- Buta Singh of Pindori Nijjaran - Rs. 200/- 85

The Government adopted repressive measures to extort information about the Babbars and check new recruitment to the Babbar Jatha. According to one estimate 29 punitive police posts

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84. *Home-Political*, *File No. 179/1929*.
were set up by August 29, 1923 and 26 out of these were in the Doaba alone. These were set up in Daulatpur, Pindori Nijjaran, Haripur, Pindori Ganga Singh, Ghurial, Kandhola, Bulhowal, Moranwali, Dhamian Kalan, Jassowal, Behbelpur, Chahalpur, Sirhala, Moila, Manannhana, Burki Khas, Patara, Khuradpur, Tannauli, Dhakowal, Harkhowal, Pander Bibi, Massanian, Kandhali, Bahli, Kalra, Banga, Jhingar, Aur, Mahal Gehla, Manko, Kot Fatuhi and Chandsu. The number of arrests went on mounting. Till August 10, 1923, about 400 Akalis were arrested on the suspicion of being Babbar Akalis. The Panjab Darpan had earlier protested against the arrest of the innocent Akalis and besieging of the villages. The 'Babbar Sher' in its issue of June 28 also wrote that people were not engaged in riotous actions or seditious propaganda and there was no necessity for sending the police and military in large numbers.

The police adopted ruthless measures to cull out information. It also offered handsome rewards to weaken the movement. Buta Singh was arrested on 14th August, 1923 from Dichkot Manko.

86. Gurbachan Singh, Babbar Akali, op.cit., p.40. But the number of the punitive posts exceeds the figure given by him. Also vide Makhsupuri, S.S. Babbar Akali Lobar, op.cit. p.298. Also see, Akali Te Pardesi, May 21, June 1 & 2, 1923, Pardesi Khalsa, May 19, 1923.

87. The Panjab Darpan, Amritsar, August 10, 1923.

88. Ibid., June 15, 1923.

89. The Babbar Sher, Amritsar, June 28, 1923.

After Santa Singh’s confessional statement, were arrested Banta Singh of Behbalpur on August 28, 1923, Milkhia Singh of Moranwali, Basant Singh of Randhawa Massanana, Chhaja Singh of Massanian, Bawa Singh and Udham Singh of Pindori Nijjaran on September 1, 1923, Javand Singh was arrested on 3rd September, 1923. Munsha Singh of Johal on 4th September, Amar Singh of Rajowal on 6th September, Partap Singh of Sialkot District on September 7, Watan Singh of Ganeshpur and Thakar Singh of Bharta on September 9, 1923. Kirpal Singh of Malakwal was arrested on 18th September, Narein Singh of Chattiwind on 19th October and Man Singh of Gujjaranwala District on October 26, 1923.

But the biggest blow was administered to the Babbar Akali movement when Anup Singh an important member of the Babbar Jatha proved traitor. Anup Singh had been seduced and played traitor as Kabul Singh and Sant Kartar Singh had done earlier. There is but a small step from sublime to the ridiculous. The Babbars faced their hour of adversity with heroic courage and blazed a new trail.

**Heroic Encounters!** The first in the series was the Babeli carnage. On August 31, 1923 E. Karam Singh, Editor, Udmy Singh, Bishan Singh of Mangat, Mohinder Singh of Pindori Ganga Singh alongwith Anup Singh were going from Domeli to stay at the latter place till the afternoon of September 1, 1923. It is significant that Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur and Dalipa of Dhamian too were with them at Domeli, but Dhanna Singh, sensing
some danger from Anup Singh, declined to go to Babeli. He also warned S. Karam Singh to beware of him. When Karam Singh paid no heed, Dhamna Singh and Dalipa left for Narur and the others left for Babeli. On the way Anup Singh managed to get Karam Singh’s permission to see his sick maternal aunt. This was only a pretext. Actually he used this time to send his cousin Nirajan Singh to Manko to his uncle Bogh Singh to execute the plan as already decided. He, himself, went straight to Mehar Singh’s house at Babeli but the Babbar had still not reached there. He sent Mehar Singh to enquire about them towards Domeli. Mehar Singh was relieved to see that the four Babbar were coming when he told about Anup Singh. Karam Singh told Mehar Singh to send Anup Singh to Shiv Singh’s house but Anup Singh did not go there on the lame excuse of stomach-ache.

Anup Singh had been seduced by his uncle Bogh Singh through his wife and in-laws. He joined the Babbar Jatha in March, 1923 and took part in the murders of Genda Singh of Ghurial on 17th April, 1923 and that of Falla and Dittu of Kaulgarh on May 20, 1923. The twin weapons of repression and rewards had weakened the spirit of many a Babbar and Anup Singh was no exception.

Anup Singh’s message reached Bogh Singh at Manko, who immediately contacted Mr. Smith at 4 a.m. after covering a

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71. Vide Interview with Inder Singh Kirti of Thandian who told the writer on the authority of Shiv Singh of Babeli.
distance of 18 miles. Mr. Smith woke up Mr. Jacob, Deputy Commissioner of Jullundur early in the small hours of 1st September, 1923 and told him about the information received about the whereabouts of some of the principal leaders of the Babbar Akali Jatha. Immediately arrangements were made in consultation with Colonel Commanding with a force of cavalry to go round and surround the village of Babeli where the Babbar were lurking. Mr. Smith with captain Macleary and Mr. Unitts, A.S.P., left in the morning with the cavalry and police force. On the other hand, Anup Singh, lay in the house of Mehar Singh and avoided conjunction with the Babbars who had stayed in the house of Shiv Singh. He had managed to damage the ammunition of the party except a gun which Karam Singh carried with him. The police reached the village at 8 a.m. It was Paul Kaur w/o Mehar Singh who shouted that the police had surrounded the village. On hearing this Anup Singh slipped out of the house in a jiffy. When Karam Singh and others came to know of it on reaching Mehar Singh's house, everything became clear to them. They had become victim of Anup Singh's treachery.

Anup Singh, the traitor, had acted as guide to the cavalry. He informed Mr. Smith, Superintendent of Police, C.I.D., Punjab that the rest of the Jatha was still in the village and

92. Makhsuspuri, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar, op. cit., p. 177.
93. Paper Book Babbar Akali Conspiracy case, pl. 1766.
and requested Smith to put him in a place of safety. Immediately Mr. Smith asked Captain Macleary to open fire. Karam Singh of Daulatpur, too, said his final prayer and tried to find his way to the eastern side of the village. He fired a shot to escape but the military had surrounded the Babbars. Weaponless, they could not perform miracles. Mr. Smith tried to persuade them to surrender but the Babbar heroes knew not how to surrender. They unsheathed their swords and compelled Mr. Smith to retreat for safety. For 1½ hour the grim drama went on. Finally, the Babbars rushed to the Gurdwara Chaunta Sahib, across a small stream. The police, anxious to capture them alive, hotly chased them. When Mr. Smith found that the group was trying to swim across a strip of water which was too deep to be fordable and were making bid to hide in a clump of reeds on the bank of the stream, the firing was, again, started. Captain Macleary went back to the village while Smith's Sowars ascertained whether the Akalis were dead or still alive. When the detachment started examining the bodies one man suddenly rose to his feet and brandished his kirpan. He attacked a constable and cutting his breeches ran to the eastern side of the peninsula in which the Gurdwara was situated. Then again shooting ensued and all the Babbars died in the shooting. They were indentified as Karam Singh,

95. Ibid., p.60.
96. Loc.cit.
97 Makhauspuri, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar, op.cit.p.182.
Uday Singh, Mohinder Singh of Pindori Ganga Singh and Bishan Singh of Mangat. True to their word, the Babbar leaders fought to the last, but did not surrender. Theirs was the first struggle of its kind in contemporary annals and was reminiscent of the traditional Sikh spirit. Truly, the brave man falls, he cannot yield. This encounter occurred on September 1, 1923.

Home Department in its letter No.2308 of September 3, jubilantly informed the Government of India reproducing the telegram of D.C. Jullundur which carried the message as under:

"Mounted police supported by a squadron of cavalry rounded up main Babbar gang at Babuli village in Phagwara. The gang put up fight and troops compelled to fire with result four killed including Karan Singh...Smith showed great courage and all deserve highest commendation."

Mr. Smith was all praise for Captain Macleary who surrounded

99. Labh Singh Jassoval, Santhep Inawairkon Babbar Akali, op.cit., p.93; Sadhu Singh Patara, Master Hota Singh ji. Jivani, op.cit., p.50; Dr. Mohinder Singh, The Akali Movement, op.cit., Satya M. Rai, Panjabi Heroic Tradition, op.cit., p.82, seen to be confused about the date. They mention the date of the encounter as August 31, 1923. Actually, the Babbar had started for Babuli from Domeli on this date. Report of Mr. Smith, vide Home Political File mo.134/II/23 p.53 and letter No.2108 dated 3.9.1923 of H.D. Craik, Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab to Mr. Crear, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, vide Home Political File No.134/II/23 p.52, sets at rest all confusion about the date of the encounter.

100. Home Political, File 134/II/1923, p.53.
the village to make the operation a success. He stated that "his squadron consisted of 67 rank and file. The Police sowars numbered 81, one of the cavalry chargers received three shots in the neck causing flesh wounds. There was no other casualties on our side". 101

The Doaba atrocities culminating in the Babeli encounter left no one untouched. The 'Akali Te Pardesi' in its issue of September 6, 1923 called Babeli encounter a fake one and wrote that no one should be killed on suspicion. It pointed out that the police should have arrested the offenders and had them punished by a regular court of law. 102 The 'Punjab Darpan' expressed pity and sympathy at the death of the Babars. It wrote that though the Babars had followed a wrong path yet theirs was a selfless sacrifice. It urged the government to think cool-headedly what led the Babars to follow this path. 103 The blood too boiled in the veins of the American Sikhs and they collected Rs. 37,000/- for the relief of the families of the Doaba Akalis who had made unique sacrifices. 104

Even the S.G.P.C. was roused from slumber. It sent two enquiry committees. The first Enquiry Committee comprised

101. Ibid., p.63.
103. The Panjab Darpan, September 7, 1923.
104. The Akali Te Pardesi, September 18, 1923.
The Second Enquiry Committee consisting of Surmukh Singh Jhabal, President S.A.D., Gurcharan Singh, Secretary, S.G.P.C., and Gopal Singh of the Akali Te-Paydesi reached Ghurrial on September 7, 1923, but the committee was not allowed to inquire and was subsequently arrested. 106 The fact had been conceded by Mr. C.A.H. Townsend, Chief Secretary, Panjab, in a letter to the Secretary Government of India. It was admitted that the S.G.P.C. sent an enquiry committee to Jullundur on 7th July comprising Bhai Khazan Singh, Sangat Singh and S.Gurcharan Singh. It spent a few hours at Jullundur, visited Pindori Nijjaran and recorded some evidence in camera. Another committee was appointed in the beginning of September 1923 consisting of Gopal Singh Quami, Surmukh Singh of Jhabal and S.Gurcharan Singh Vakil. This committee left Amritsar on September 6, 1923 and reached Ghurrial on 7th September. Action was taken against these members u/s 107 C.P.C., but then they crossed into Moshiarpur. It held enquiries on 10th and 11th September in Kot Pafuhi, Moramvuli and Behbalpur. The Deputy Commissioner of Moshiarpur ordered them to stop the enquiry. On their refusal to stop the enquiry they were arrested on 13th September, 1923. 108

107. The Panjab Darpan, Amritsar, September 14, 1923.
According to the statement of S. Bhag Singh Canadian, the enquiry committee consisted of S. Sarmukha Singh Jhabal, S. Gopal Singh Singh Qaumi, S. Bhag Singh himself, S. Ram Singh Judge and S. Gureharaan Singh Vakil. It went to Khuradpur, Nanak, Ghurial, Adampur, Pindori Nijjaran, Rajowal, Pindori Mahatman and Shamehaurasi. The people of Shamehaurasi were so terror-stricken that they did not extend any cooperation and the members of the enquiry committee had to sleep in an animal yard on cane-trash. Next day, they reached Dhamian, Bulhowal, Moranwali and Jassowal. It was here that the members of the enquiry committee were arrested. 109 Gopal Singh 'Qaumi', a member of the Doaba enquiry committee, stated:

"When we were going from Moranwali to Jassowal in the Hoshiarpur District, where we were arrested, the police constables were going in front of us and coming in our rear, with guns in their hands. We were shocked to hear the tales of the Doaba people . . . . either God or the Doaba people know how much they suffered at the hands of the police." 110 The sting of the government was very severe. It put every conceivable hurdle to stop the different bodies to institute and send enquiry committees so that ruthless and oppressive policy and the excesses of the police might not be exposed.

110. Akali Leader's Conspiracy, case p.1000, (printed) and p.4000 of the manuscript (Statement of Gopal Singh Qaumi).
The Provincial Congress Committee had sent Maulvi Lal Hussain to ascertain the facts about the Doaba affairs on the spot and his findings shocked and stunned the Congress leaders. The S.G.P.C. also suspected that the Government of the Panjab wanted to crush the Akali movement under the pretext of the Doaba murders.

The high-handedness of the government compelled the S.G.P.C. to adopt a policy which was tantamount to virtual surrender. The Babbar Akalis rightly complained that the S.G.P.C. - the representative body of the Sikhs - was opposed to their activities and was actually obstructing their work by withdrawing sevaks for otherwise they would have been counted as an association.

**Mannanbana Episode**

The next blow to the Babbers came in the death of their valiant leader, Dhanna Singh. If Anup Singh's desertion at Babeli gave a staggering blow to the movement, the perfidy of Jawala Singh Zian further shattered the Babbar strength. He was brother of Bola Singh of Zian a police agent and a spy of international notoriety, who had killed Bhai Bhag Singh and

and Wattan Singh in Vancouver Gurdwara on September 5, 1914, in Canada. Jawala Singh had won the confidence of Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur and posed himself to be inimical to Bala Singh and often helped the Babbars. After Babali encounter, he advised Dhanna Singh and Dalipa of Dhamian to seek refuge in the Bar area, away from Doaba. Dalipa went with him and was got arrested on October 12, 1923 at Mian Channu railway station. On his return, he was not even suspected by Dhanna Singh. Instead, he too acted as Jawala Singh bade him to do. Jawala Singh told Dhanna Singh not to stay at his house at Zian as police kept surveillance over him and instead he was told to take shelter in his sugarcane fields. Jawala Singh, in the meantime, hatched a plot. Alongwith sub-inspector Gulzara Singh of Mahelpur police Station, he met Superintendont police Hoshiarpur, Mr.A.F. Horton and the plot to arrest Dhanna Singh was finalised there and then. He was to be arrested on 25th October, 1923. Finalising the details, Jawala Singh reached Zian on 24th October, took Dhanna Singh on 25th morning and set out for Mannanhana. During the first half of night he was kept busy in gossip and was not allowed to have a wink of sleep. Then he was asked to go to sleep. Jawala Singh and his relative Karam Singh took upon themselves the duty of keeping vigil when Dhanna Singh went to bed. His weapons were removed and they anxiously awaited

134. Milkha Singh, Babbar Akali Sangsarh (MSS), Ch.44, Karam Singh was brother-in-law of Kartar Singh Burro Barrian, a member of the Babbar Jatha. He was cousin of Jawala Singh. Thus Dhanna Singh was caught in their net without suspecting that his comrades and their relatives were acting in a treacherous manner.
the arrival of the police. The police party consisting of 40 policemen under A.F. Horton, S.P., and Mr. W.H.P. Jenkins, A.S.P., Hoshiarpur surrounded Karam Singh’s haveli and about half a dozen policemen pounced upon Dhanna Singh. He was handcuffed immediately. Mr. Horton was jubilant at this prise catch and chided Dhanna Singh for having arrested him alive. Dhanna Singh’s fiery look frightened Horton, who ordered Dhanna Singh to be blindfolded. At this Dhanna Singh taunted him to be too timid to do the same himself to a menaced person. When Horton came nearer, he exploded a hand grenade which he had hidden under his armpit. The blast killed Dhanna Singh, nine policemen, and a buffalo.

It may be added that out of these nine policemen, three police constables, one head constable and a Dafedar were killed on the spot while 4 were seriously wounded. These four included A.F. Horton S.P., W.H.P. Jenkins, A.S.P., Gulsara Singh Sub-Inspector and one constable. The last two died after their arrival at Mahalpur while Mr. Horton died of internal haemorrhage in the hospital at Hoshiarpur on November 3, 1923 and Mr. Jenkins on his way to U.K. at Calcutta. The event is matchless and one may search

115. Home-Political File No. 245/1926, p.112.
117. Loc.cit.
118. Makhsuspuri, Sunder Singh, Babbar Akali Lehar, op.cit., p.192.
history of this region in vain to find a parallel to it.

**The Activities of the Babbaras involved in the Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case, Supplementary II**

The active members of the organisation, still at large, were Banta Singh of Dhamian, Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass and Waryam Singh of Dhugga. With the assistance of new recruits to the movement they committed dacoities at Bassi Johal, Waddala Pukhta and at Dhogri Railway station. They were also responsible for a dacoity with murder at Kotli Bawa Dass in Mohriarpur as well as a dacoity at Sangaranwali and a robbery in Sikandarpur in Jullundur District between the middle of October and the first week of December, 1923.

The dacoity and murder at Kotli Bawa Dass needs special mention. It took place on November 13, 1923. Banta Singh of Dhamian, Waryam Singh of Dhugga and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass, Nikka Singh, Teja Singh and Urian Singh of Alowal and Bachint Singh of Dumuda assembled at the well of Niranjan Singh. From the well they proceeded to the village and attacked Jawala Singh and Narain Singh, notorious money-lenders of Kotli Bawa Dass. Narain Singh was robbed of ornaments and

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120. *Home-Political, Department*, *File No. 200/1926*, p.17. The account is based on the 95 page 'Brief History of the Babbar Akali Movement' prepared by Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Aziz.
cash and his account books were also burnt but his life was spared, while his brother Jawala Singh was murdered for his anti-Babbar activities.\textsuperscript{122} They escaped police witch hunt by using Montgomery and Lyallpur districts as places of refuge where they also endeavoured to form branches of their movement.\textsuperscript{123} The police conducted enquiries in the Montgomery District where it was found that Jawala Singh and others had also committed a murder for robbery and the nucleus of another Babbar organisation had been formed.\textsuperscript{124} This was the only group of active Babbars which the police failed to trap. Once again, the treachery of a so-called sympathiser proved tragic.

**Munder Tragedy** On December 12, 1923, Waryam Singh Dhugga, Banta Singh Dhamian and Jawala Singh Fatehpur Kethi were staying in the house of Jagat Singh of Munder. He informed the officer Incharge of Adampur police station, through Udham Singh, a police constable posted at Shar Chaurasi, about the presence of the Babbars in his house. The police officer of Adampur police station further conveyed information to Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Aziz at Jullundur. The latter met Mr. W.C. Jacob, Deputy Commissioner, Jullundur at about 11.30 a.m. The Deputy Commissioner, W.C. Jacob and the Superintendent of Police Mr. Fitzgerald then set out to work.


\textsuperscript{123} Home-Political Department, File No.2CC/1926,p;17.

\textsuperscript{124} Loc.cit.
They, along with Khan Bahadur Abdul Azis, made arrangements for a force of cavalry and directed it to meet them at Adampur. They also arranged for a force of police to come out in lorries, while they went on to Adampur to wait for them. The cavalry went cross-country to Munder. The Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police as well as Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Azis waited for the police to arrive for a considerable time. Finally, they decided to go to Munder with the police force at their disposal and reached there at about 4.30 p.m. Mr. W.C. Jacob took position on the southern side of the village, while Mr. Fitzgerald was on the northern side. Suddenly, firing ensued and several shots passed over them. The cavalry was still at a distance of some 2 miles.

The Babbar's took shelter in the 'chabara' of a carpenter. The police got vacated the whole village. The Babbar's were aware of their impending fate, but they remained in high spirits. They resounded the sky with the shouts of 'Sat Sri Akal' and declared, in a loud voice, that they would not surrender.

The police party then trained a machine gun on the Chabara. Some rounds were fired. The Babbar Akalis, who possessed two guns and one revolver, also returned fire. From another machine gun, fire was also opened on the chabara but it was found impossible to make any impression owing to the strong position taken up by the Babbar's. These operations...

continued for sometime and it was finally decided to set fire to the chubara. The Babbar tried to escape but two of them were hit and killed. It was Waryam Singh of Dhugga who escaped after inflicting severe wounds on one of the police constables. He escaped to Daulatpur and took shelter with Surain Singh who got the services of a medical practitioner from Alowalpur for his treatment maintaining perfect secrecy.

Waryam Singh Dhugga was the last of the Babbar heroes who created scare in the bureaucratic echelon and created panic among the toadies. He made a bid to activate the Movement, once again, after his escape from Munder. He went to Lyallpur in Chak No. 5 and stayed with his maternal uncle Dalel Singh of Sirhala. After sometime he came back to the Doaba.

There was still some life in the remnant group as evidenced by the commission of a dacoity at Sherpur Pukhta in Hoshiarpur and another at Bal in Jullundur in the first week of February, 1924. The Babbar Jatha consisting of Waryam Singh of Dhugga, Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Das, Nikka Singh and Banta Singh of Alowal, Munsha Singh of Samranwan and Surain Singh of Kang Mai went to murder Amant Ram of Sherpur but the attempt was without any result as he was

126. Home Political, File No. 245/1926, p.117.
not in the village and even his house was found locked. 129

A clue to the offenders in these cases was, however, quickly obtained and various minor arrests were made. In March, Nam Singh was arrested in Amritsar District and a few days later, Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass was captured from Sab-hraon in Lahore District. 130

In April 1924, Waryam Singh escaped to Lyallpur and took refuge with Ralla Singh of Dishkot Manko whose sister was married to Waryam Singh’s cousin (son of Dalel Singh, maternal uncle of Waryam Singh). There he organised a group, consisting of Naurang Singh of Gurusar Satlani, Sunder Singh Lohke, Gujjar Singh of Dhapai, Mukand Singh Jasswal, Nikka Singh of Gill, Ralla Singh and Isher Singh of Dishkot Manko. They planned to ‘reform’ Mohan Singh, headman of Chak No.96 and consequently attacked and shot him dead. His son, a nephew and a farm hand were also shot dead.

Waryam Singh also fell victim to the machinations of his relatives, Dalel Singh and Ralla Singh. On May 21, 1924, Ralla Singh informed the Incharge of Thikriwala police station that Waryam Singh had taken shelter in the fields of Buta Singh of Chak Dhapai, station Saineeur (Lyallpur). He was

129. Milkha Singh, Babbar Akali Sangarsh (Mrs), p.47
surrounded by Sub-Inspector Gehna Singh, one head constable and ten constables. Maryam Singh showed marvellous
courage and was able to escape by breaking the police cordon
inspite of the fact that he was badly wounded. The police
superintendent suspended the police party due to the
cowardice shown in this action. Then 3 squares of land were
announced as reward for Waryam Singh's arrest. He took
refuge with his relatives who nursed him till his wounds
recovered. Waryam Singh failed to see through the game of
his relatives. They continued their nefarious game. They
informed Mr. Degale, Superintendent of Police on June 1, 1924
about the whereabouts of Waryam Singh. On 7th June, 1924,
Ralla Singh contacted, Sahib Ditta Mal, a Commission agent
of Jhang Bazar, Lyallpur to inform the police and told him
that Waryam Singh had taken refuge in Chak No. 54, in the
Dera of Mangal Singh. His weapons were also stolen. Degale
arrived with a strong police contingent on June 8, 1924
at Chak No. 54. Waryam Singh was, then, in the fields. Sensing
some danger he rushed to a hut where he had kept his gun.
With this single gun, he encountered the police party.
He fired shot after shot shutting himself inside the hut.
Finally he came out of the hut and fired two shots at Degale.

134. The Babbar Sher, June 14, 1924.
The latter had aimed 6 shots at Waryam Singh but all had missed. Suddenly, Waryam Singh jumped at Degale and grappled with him. Degale had emptied his revolver at him without any success. Waryam Singh drew his sword and wounded him on the right arm. Meanwhile, Sahib Ditta Mall came to Degale's rescue and managed to throw Waryam Singh on the ground. This struggle came to an end only when Police Inspector, Buta Ram reached the spot. He claimed to have fired four shots at Waryam Singh which left him dead. It was a befitting finale of the Babbar heroism in the Bar area.

With the death of Waryam Singh the only operation to be undertaken, had been "clearing up" and then there was II supplementary case with 38 additional accused ready for trial, bringing the total number of the accused against whom evidence had been collected of active participation in the conspiracy to 169 of whom 8 were still at large, they being, however, men of minor importance.

Of these accused no fewer than 54 were those who served in the army and 8 were returned emigrants. The enquiries had resulted in the working out of 32 cases committed

135. The Babbar Sher, Amritsar, June 14, 1924.
136. Loc. cit.
by the Babbars, besides 9 miscellaneous cases of murder. Action was taken u/s 107 of C.P.C. against more than 100 persons and 96 cases u/s 216 of I.P.C. were dealt with by a special magistrate. During this brief period, the Babbars were able to eliminate 147 toadies and traitors including policemen. The police was able to decimate the Movement by ambushing the Babbars at Babeli, Munder and Mannanhana. Many of them were arrested. Apart from stolen property in the shape of jewellery, the recoveries included 4 bombs, 6 shot-guns, 11 revolvers, 6 swords, 5 dhavals, 285 cartridges and one detonator. They were tried in various cases leading to the executions and long terms of rigorous imprisonment.

The Babbar Trials and Executions:

The Babbar conspiracy case was one of the most exciting cases in the recent history. The main Babbar conspiracy case against 94 including 17 approvers and 15 absconders was sent up for trial on August 15, 1923. The arrests upto the time totalled 226 of whom 104 were presented in the court u/s 107 of C.P.C. The case was deferred to August 17, 1923 due to the arrest of Buta Singh of Pindori Nijjaran on August 14, 1923.

139. Loc. cit.
140. Home-Political Proceedings, File No.245/1926, p.111.
141. Home-Political Proceedings, File No.200/1926, p.34.
142. Ibid., p.16.
143. Loc. cit.
The *abbars* were tried on charges of criminal conspiracy, importation and possession of arms, ammunition and stealing from military stores, going armed without a licence, murder, attempt to murder, grievous hurt, robbery with hurt and murder in dacoity. Five others i.e. Lakha Singh, Bawa Singh, Bhulla Singh Kot Patuhi, Jagat Singh Plahi and Gokal Singh Simbi were discharged by the magistrate. Out of the absconders, Karam Singh Daulatpuri, Uday Singh and Bishan Singh were killed at Babeli on September 1, 1923; Dhanna Singh met his heroic end at Mannankana on October 25, 1923; Javala Singh Fatehpur Kotbi and Banta Singh Dhamian were killed in an encounter at Munder on December 17, 1923, while Waryam Singh Dhugga was killed on June 8, 1924. Anup Singh Manko, Nasara Singh Munder and Dhanna Singh Kotli Bawa Dass turned approvers. Dalip Singh s/o Labh Singh was accused in the Supplementary Case I (Trial No.II), while Waris Singh Dharival was hanged in another case, while three were still at large. 

Amar Singh s/o Natha Singh Mandhiani and Gurbachan Singh s/o Mali of Daulatpur and one more could never be arrested. Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass was arrested on March 27, 1924 about a week before the Main and Supplementary cases were committed to Sessions Judge, J.K.M.Tapp. Dhanna Singh became an approver in


the Supplementary Case II. Thus there were 62 Babbar who were challaned on August 17, 1923. The counsels of the Babbar were Lala Raghu Nath Sahai engaged by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Durga Dass, engaged by the District Congress Committee Boshlarpur to fight the Babbar cases.146 Investigation of the conspiracy was still on, while the main case was being inquired into by the magistrate with the result that on January 29, 1924 another Supplementary case involving 36 persons was brought before the same magistrate. The committing magistrate charged 55 accused in the main case and 36 in the supplementary case. Both the cases were committed to Sessions on April 4, 1924. The trial started on June 2, 1924, in the court of J.K.M. Tapp Esq., additional sessions judge, Punjab, at Lahore, with the aid of 4 selected assessors. The case was known as Trial No.II of 1924, King Emperor versus Kishan Singh and others.147 Lala Pindi Dass was Public Prosector. Out of 91 Babbars, nine did not engage any counsel. They totally boycotted the court proceedings calling it a mock trial. Lala Raghu Nath Sahai appeared on behalf of 76 Babbars while the government engaged Ram Lal, a non-entity to defend 6 Babbars who were not in a position to engage any counsel.148

The manner and the method of the trial was most unjust

and it was rightly condemned by the press. The Tribune, in its issue of 10th August, 1923, wrote: 'The trial of the Babbar Akalis within the closed doors of a central jail will lay the government open to further charge that the accused were not treated fairly.' It was also held outside the district and the division. It amounted to discourage the defense counsel to produce witnesses freely and cheaply. The exclusion of the press representatives and holding the trial in jail and that too in camera, was interpreted as a step to block fair trial. The 'Nation' in its issue of August 16, 1923, observed: 'It seems that the procedure in these cases is going to be peculiarly novel and unprecedented. The cases are not going to be tried under any particular emergency law, but will be conducted according to the ordinary criminal code. If that is the case, we fail to understand why the privileges under the law should not be fully extended to the accused. The justice must precede, may supersede, all considerations of political necessity, if any. In this case particularly, the need of justice is greater, when it is remembered that the procedure under which arrests were made and evidence was collected was anything but satisfactory.'

The 'Khalsa' of August 25, the 'Milap' and the 'Partap' of August 20, 1923 unanimously condemned the procedure of the

150. The Nation, Lahore, August 16, 1923.
trial. 'The Tribune' in its issue of August 18, 1923, commented: "Securing the conviction of the accused persons is not the only thing. The government must also see that the trial is properly and fairly conducted and the public is convinced of the guilt of the persons found guilty.\footnote{151} The pro-government 'Civil and Military Gazette' also criticised the official stand as it was likely to give ground to the enemies of the government to spread rumours which could be scotched by full publicity alone.

The criticism of the press failed to affect the course of the trial to any appreciable extent. The Judge allowed, despite crown counsel's objections, the admittance of the press, provided the gentlemen writing to representing newspapers satisfy the court of their bona fides.\footnote{152} They were also debarred from publishing reports without scrutiny by the court. The conduct of the National Press was not also worthy of its name. None took the trouble of sending reports highlighting the facts. The false statements of the witnesses obtained by the police under duress were gullibly accepted.\footnote{153} Jathedar Kishan Singh Gargaj in his 125 page statement, too, brought to light the attempts of the police to throw dust in the eyes of justice by hoodwinking the court and producing false witnesses.\footnote{154}

\footnote{151} The Tribune, Lahore, August 18, 1923.  
\footnote{152} Ibid., August 30, 1923.  
\footnote{153} Gurbachan Singh, Babbar Akali, op.cit., p.17.  
\footnote{154} Ibid., p.138.
He also castigated the S.G.P.C. for its indifference to the Babbar Akalis and its failure to enquire the truth. He maintained that it could have verified the facts from three of its members, namely, S. Dalip Singh Sadhara, B. Udham Singh Jandoo Singh and Subedar Amar Singh Dhallival, who were also arrested in this case. The indifference of the Akali Dal and the S.G.P.C. gave free hand to the Government. 155

Mr. J.K.M. Tapp, Additional Sessions Judge, Lahore, delivered his judgement on February 28, 1925, awarding death-sentence to 5, life-sentence to 11 and various terms of imprisonment to 39 others, while only 34 were acquitted. 156 Three of the accused, namely, Amar Singh and Sadha Singh of Pindori Nijjaran, and Waryam Singh of Kot Patuhi died during the trial.

The judgement was very harsh. The appeal was filled in the High Court. The judges of the High court who heard the appeal, were Mr. Broadway and Mr. Harrison. They delivered their judgement on January 19, 1926 157 awarding death-sentence to 6 and life-sentence to thirteen. About 29 were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment while 40 were acquitted. 158

155. Ibid., p.140.
157. The Sangat, Lahore, February 21, 1926.
158. Makhansuri, Sunder Singh Babbar Akali Lehar, op.cit., p.21. Also vide Home Political Prosecutions, file No.112-14/1926.
The petitions were filed for mercy to the Government of India on and before February 18, 1926. The Counsel of the Babbars based his case on the following grounds:

1. The movement which came into existence in 1922 has been totally exterminated by this time.
2. Eight of the accused were killed at Babeli, Mannanhana etc.
3. Twenty two tendered pardon and were made approvers.
4. Almost all the accused connected with the Babbar Akali Movement had made confessions to the police.159
5. Some 70 persons made confessions.

But the petitions for mercy were rejected as the Government of India considered the conspiracy as one of the most serious menace to the public safety and the Governor-General observed that a very strong case would be required for interference which certainly did not exist.160

On February 17, 1926, Lala Raghu Nath Sahai had received a telegram from the Government of India that execution of death sentence had been postponed and their petitions were under consideration and it was added that any petition in this regard be filed up to February 20, 1926.161 Despite this, 6 Babbars were sent to the gallows on February 27, 1926.162

160. Ibid., p.2.
161. The Akali-Te-Pardesi, Amritsar, February 26, 1926.
162. The Ganzat, March 7, 1926.
Six Babbars executed on February 27, 1926, were S. Kishan Singh Birring, Karam Singh Haripur, Babu Santa Singh of Chhoti Herion, Har Singh Churial, Dharam Singh Hayatpur and Dalip of Dhamian. At first, the jail authorities refused to hand over their dead bodies to their relatives, but the public pressure and fervent requests of Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh and Sardar Sardul Singh Caveshar led to the reversal of the official decision. The dead bodies were handed over to the claimants at about 2 a.m. on February 28, 1926 and those were consigned to the flames in the rear of Gurdwara Dera Sahib, on the banks of the Ravi.

The 'Akali-Te-Pardesi' and the Sangat gave a detailed and exhaustive report of the Babbar executions. S. Kishan Singh, Babu Santa Singh and Dalip Dhamian were hanged at 3 minutes past 8 a.m. on 27th February, 1926, while the second batch consisting of S. Har Singh, S. Karam Singh of Haripur and Dharam Singh of Hayatpur were hanged 7 minutes past 9 a.m., the same day. 164

The execution of the Babbar Akalis led to widespread resentment. The Babbars were glorified and were considered

163. The Sher-i-Panjab, Lahore, March 7, 1926.
164. The Sangat, Lahore, 7 March 1926.
martyrs for the national cause. All those parties, which failed the Babbar in the hour of their peril, invited seething public criticism. The Akali-Te-Pardesi' observed that on the day of Holi when mounds of red colour had been poured on the participants, the Babbar had also made the mother earth red with their blood. 165 S. Mangal Singh, editor of The Akali-Te-Pardesi' wrote: "What the Babbar did may be right or not, but one thing is certain that the common people consider their executions, an act of sacrifice for the country. They have been sent to the gallows because they wanted to liberate the country in their own particular way." 166 The 'Akali' considered 27th February, 1976, a bloody day and remarked that it would be remembered for ever in the annals of India because by the Babbar sacrifices, India had come nearer the goal of Independence. 167 According to the "Kirpan Bahadur", the government had further poured salt on the wounds of the Sikhs by executing the Babbar Akalis. 168 The "Babar Sher", in its issue of March 5, 1926, considered 27th February, as a doomsday for India. It observed that the S.G.P.C. and the Sikh League had committed a grave blunder in condemning the programme and policy of their brethren. Had the Akali Dal and the S.G.P.C. not showed indifference to the Babbar Akalis, these bodies would not have been declared unlawful by the Panjab Government.

165. The Akali Te Pardesi, Amritsar, 3 March, 1926.
166. Ibid., March 4, 1926.
168. The Kirpan Bahadur, Amritsar, March 4, 1926.
and the Sikh Panth would not have been caught in the bureaucratic snare.\textsuperscript{169}

The 'Qaumi Dard' of March 5, 1926 was very bold in its comment. It observed that neither death nor transportation for life would improve the situation. It concluded that the remedy lay in the setting up of a responsible government\textsuperscript{170}

Even 'Zamindar' considered the executions most unstatesmanlike.\textsuperscript{171} The Editorials of many a newspaper did not absolve the Sikh masses and the leadership of their guilt because their weak policy was responsible for the sad plight of the Babbars. The 'Hindustani', in its issue of the 7 March, 1926, squarely laid blame on the countrymen and wrote: "It is we who are responsible for the execution of the patriots".\textsuperscript{172} S. Karam Singh Jhingar, who was undergoing life-sentence in this case, wrote to the 'Desh-Sewak', Jullundur: 'The execution of the valiant Babbar Akalis is ascribable to the indifference of the selfish leaders of the community. If Master Mota Singh Akali, the pride of the community and Baba Kharak Singh, the uncrowned king of the Sikhs, had been out of jail, the tyrants would not have looked askance at these deceased patriots.'\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{169}. The Babbar Sher, Amritsar, March 5, 1926.
\textsuperscript{170}. The Qaumi Dard, Amritsar, 5th March, 1926.
\textsuperscript{171}. The Zamindar, Lahore, March 5, 1926.
\textsuperscript{172}. The Hindustani, Lahore, March 7, 1926.
\textsuperscript{173}. Vide the Desh Sewak, Jullundur, March 13, 1926.
The parting message of Jathedar Kishan Singh Gargaj was equally inspiring and left no doubt about the aims of the Babbar Movement. He said, "Convey my message to the nation that nothing will be obtained from the government by begging. Only sacrifices will avail." He bade Sat Sri Akal to the "Sarbat Khalsa." These executions failed to curb the Babbar spirit.

There was another case in the court against the Babbar Akalis, namely Babbar Akali conspiracy case Supplementary II, called crown v/s Nikka Singh and others. Its incharge was C.I.D., Inspector Lala Bota Ram.

On 27th March, Dhanna Singh Kotli Bawa Dasa was arrested from Sabhraon Police Station Patti, District Lahore. He was interrogated by the C.I.D. and his confession led to many arrests. Ralla Singh's betrayal also led to the disclosure of the Babbar action at Chak No.96 where Waryam Singh Dhugga and his group shot 4 persons. The police arrested Nikka Singh Gill, Naurang Singh Gurusar Satlani, Mukund Singh Jassowal, Gujjar Singh Jhapa, Funder Singh Lohka and Isher Singh Dishkot Manke.

174. Vide the 
Sangat Lahore, March 7, 1926.

175. Bata Singh, Babbar Akali Tahrik (ms), p. 282, mentions the following arrests: Kashmira Singh Sabhraon, Gurdit Singh, Alipur Gudda; Pala Singh Jaur Singhvala; Nikka Singh, Teja Singh, Giani Singh, Divan Singh and Banta Singh Aloveal; Rattan Singh Vein Bhoelin; Dhanna Singh and Chhajja Singh, Kaira Majha; Man Singh, Surain Singh Kang Mai; Bhan Singh and Labh Singh Randhawa Massandan; Surra Bassian; Surain Singh Daulatpur; Udham Singh Suran-un-Nisai; Shiv Singh Kuthar; Kartar Singh Mozha; Bashint Singh and Lachman Singh Dumunda; Lal Singh Raipur Rasulpur; Munsha Sing Samranwan; Bhoia Singh Bhismai; Bhola Singh Dhami; Bhola Singh and Divan Singh Adhkar Katha; Kishan Singh Sandhara; Sadhu Singh and Gurds Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass.
The case was heard by the trying magistrate Lala Sant Ram. Except Bala Singh all the witnesses were of the main Babbar case. Dhanna Singh Khaira Majha died during the trial, while Rattan Singh, Diwan Singh Alhkare Kathe, Pala Singh, Lal Singh, Ghilam Rasul, Mand Singh, Maurang Singh, Banta Singh and Gurdas Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass were let off. 176

In March, 1925, Lala Sant Ram, committed the case to the sessions Judge. 177 Some of the Babbars like Hasara Singh of Munder and Harbakhash Singh of Jassoval were involved in the main Babbar case. Hasara Singh was an approver who turned hostile and Harbakhash Singh was an absconder. The Sessions Judge, Mr. E. S. Harris, held the trial in camera, at Lahore. All the accused denied the charge levelled against them. The Judge delivered his judgement on February 28, 1926 and awarded death sentence to 7; nineteen were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Only 2 were acquitted. 178

Then, an appeal was filed in the High Court. The Bench consisted of Justice Broadway and Justice Harrison. Out of 7 who were condemned to death in the lower court, decision was changed only in respect of Ishar Singh. Out of others Harbakhash Singh, Bhan Singh, Labh Singh and Sadhu Singh of Sandhara were acquitted.

176. Ibid., p.286.
The six Babbar, namely Nikka Singh of Alowal, Sunder Singh of Lohke 179, Banta Singh of Gurusar Satlani, Nikka Singh of Gill, Mukand Singh of Jassowal and Gujjar Singh of Dhapa 1 were sent to the gallows on February 27, 1927 and were cremated the same day in the cemetery of Shahamau's garden, at Lahore. 180

Nikka Singh Alowal was awarded death sentence on the charge of murdering Jawala Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass on November 13, 1923, while others were held guilty for the murders committed at Chak No. 96. 181


181. loc.cit.
The nature of this case has been much misunderstood. The court kept it separate from the Babbar case. Sunder Singh Makhuaspuri in his 'Babbar Akali Lehar', had toed the court. Shiv Singh of Haripur, Haridit Singh of Jassowal also harped on the same strain whereas Buta Singh, Milkha Singh and Surain Singh of Daulatpur emphatically called them Babbars. Khan Sahib Sheikh Abdul Asia also termed it as Babbar conspiracy case, Supplementary II. Though there were certain dacoits who were included in the case by the police to defame the Babbars, but that was always the plank of the police and it could not detract the value of their sacrifice. Rightly, Editor of the 'Akali-Te-Pardeeh Mangal Singh called it the Babbar Supplementary case, and observed that the judgement in the case was very harsh. Sardar Sardul Singh Caeveshar also called it the Supplementary Babbar Akali case.

The Babbar Saga did not come to an end with these executions. The Babbars inside the jail defied the rigours

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187. Vide his tape-recorded talk with the writer on September 8, 1983.
188. Vide his interview with the writer on 20, 11.82.
190. Vide his letter to the writer on September 26, 1983.
192. Vide the Akali To Fardesi, Lahore, March 4, 1926.
193. Vide the Sangat, Lahore, March 7, 1926.
of the jail with valiance, while outside, their exploits once again resounded the air for a long time.

The Babbaras in the Jails: They continued their struggle even inside the jails. For them, stones did not make a prison. They defied the unjust jail rules with the same courage as they had challenged the toadies. On April 26, 1925, the Babbaras resorted to hunger-strike. It continued for 14 months and was a sequel to the maladministration of Lahore jail. Hazara Singh of Munder, Bhola Singh of Dhamian, Kartar Singh of Domeli, Kartar Singh of Pindori Nijjaran, Chhaja Singh of Massanian, Amar Singh of Rajowal, Bachint Singh of Dumunda, Ram Singh of Musara Kalan, Thakar Singh of Bharta, Bhola Singh, and Partap Singh of Chhabilpur joined the hunger-strike. The strike was called off only at the intercession of S. Buta Singh, M.L.C., Panjab. He promised to take up the case for the reform of jails in the Council. Hazara Singh of Munder and Bhola Singh of Dhamian were challaned for this offense and were sentenced to one year's additional term and were transported to the Multan jail. They continued the hunger-strike, there, too. Again, they were shifted to Montgomery jail and their sentence was increased by one year, here as well.

In September, 1926 Bhai Karam Singh of Jhingar, Dalip

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194. Vide the Siyasat, Lahore, May 22, 1926.
195. Bachint Singh and Bhola Singh were accused of the Babbar conspiracy case Supplementary II, while others were of the main Babbar case.
196. The Babbar Sher, Amritsar, 31st July, 1926.
Singh of Manak, Hardit Singh of Jassoval and Kartar Singh of Gondpur, etc. went on hunger-strike again in Multan jail as a protest against the maladministration of the jail and ill-treatment of the prisoners. The Babbars who went on hunger-strike, were 12 in all. After 28 days of hunger strike, Hardit Singh of Jassoval and Dalip Singh of Manak were given the punishment of 30 canes each. Partap Singh, Bhola Singh of Adhkare Kathe (II Supplementary Case) and Sunder Singh were sent to Indomans-Nicobar islands as a measure of coercion.

The account of hunger-strikes is an ample proof of the Babbar dauntlessness. On November 16, 1926 the prominent Babbars like Karam Singh of Jhingar, Kartar Singh of Domeli, Shiv Singh of Haripur, Ujjagar Singh of Bisrampur, Dalip Singh of Manak, Hardit Singh of Jassoval, Man Singh of Gujarwanala, Kartar Singh of Gondpur, Banta Singh of Daulatpur, Surain Singh of Kangwai, Surais Singh of Daulatpur, Gian Singh of Alovat, Udhar Singh of Sura-Un-Nissa and Bhola Singh of Dhamian went on hunger strike. The Babbars were threatened with dire consequences and some of them were even deported to "Kaale-Paani" but nothing could deflect them. The strike was called off only on January 20, 1927 when some of their demands were met.

In 1929, S. Bhagat Singh went on hunger-strike to seek special class for the political prisoners in jails. S. Sunder Singh Makhauspur, Karam Singh of Jhingar, Kartar Singh of

Gondpur, Thakar Singh of Bharta and Bachint Singh of Dumunda also went on hunger-strike to support his cause. It continued for 3½ months. The Babbar got an addition of one year in their jail term and were transferred to Montgomery jail. 199

After sometime the Babbar were sent to Multan jail. Here again they had to go on hunger-strike as a protest against the harsh treatment meted out to Harnam Singh Chamak of Ahmedgarh daceity fame. The Babbar who went on hunger-strike included Bachint Singh of Dumunda, Bhola Singh of Kathe Adhkar, Piara Singh of Dhamian, Hardit Singh of Jassowal, Karam Singh of Jhingar and Thakar Singh of Bharta. This occurred in 1930. 200 The Superintendent of the Multan jail was incorrigible. The jail authorities found a way out only by transferring the Babbar to the Montgomery jail back.

In 1932, again confrontation took place with jail authorities and as a result of this S. Karam Singh of Jhingar and Kartar Singh of Gondpur were sent to Lahore jail, while Bachint Singh of Dumunda and Thakar Singh of Bharta were transferred to the Multan jail, leaving Sunder Singh, Makhsuspuri alone in the Montgomery jail till 1937. 201

In 1938, the Babbar went on hunger-strike again to affect their release as they had undergone complete term of

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201. Ibid., p.287,
imprisonment. Sunder Singh of Makhsuspuri, Bachint of Dumaunda and Udham Singh of Sura-un-Nissa continued their strike for 2 months. Karam Singh of Jhingar died on the day of release i.e. on April 8, 1938. S. Sunder Singh was the last to be released in December, 1938.

But no account of the Babbar struggle in jails will be complete without a reference to the indomitable spirit with which Sardar Hasara Singh of Mundar escaped by digging a 74 feet long tunnel in the Montgomery jail. His escape from the jail is nothing short of a thriller. How he was able to cut 36 strong iron bars which fettered his legs, staggers imagination! That he managed to perform this feat with the aid of cotton thread and that too within a span of four days, would always remain a mystery. He could be arrested only when he had covered a distance of 45 miles.

202. Ibid., p. 289.
203. Ibid., p. 290.
204. Gargaj, Arjan Singh, Mera Anna Aan, op.cit., p. 140. The account of the escape varies from writer to writer. Labh Singh, Sandeep Jawarek Babbar Akali, op.cit., p. 143 gives the length of the tunnel 77 feet whereas the Panjabi Tribune, May 25, 1963 on the basis of an interview with S. Hasara Singh gives the length of tunnel as 250 feet.