

Loss of Faith



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出版者:

出版时间:2006-8

装帧:

isbn:9780771011313

Riveting and shocking, Loss of Faith is essential reading for all Canadians.

On June 23, 1985, Canada found itself on the international terrorism map when two bombs built in B.C. detonated within an hour of each other on opposite sides of the world, killing 329 men, women, and children.

Canadian Sikh separatists, upset at the Indian government for attacking their religion's holiest shrine, the Golden Temple, were immediately suspected by the RCMP of perpetrating the worst act of aviation terrorism before Sept. 11, 2001. But while police agencies scrambled to infiltrate a close-knit immigrant community and collect evidence against the suspects, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service was destroying taped telephone calls between the same people the RCMP was investigating.

For years those at the centre of the terrorist plot tried to protect their dark secret. Two Sikh newspaper publishers who overheard an alleged confession by one of the bombers were assassinated. Other potential witnesses were threatened and intimidated. Journalists who wrote about the suspects were targeted by death threats

and harassment. The suspects founded charities and participated in political parties, attending fundraising dinners for premiers and prime ministers. And the families of the victims fought to be recognized for their unimaginable loss as the result of an act of terrorism plotted in Canada. When charges were finally laid against three Sikh separatists, the families believed justice was almost theirs. But their faith was shaken when one suspect pleaded guilty to manslaughter and got a five-year sentence for more than three hundred deaths.

The Air-India trial judge spoke in his ruling of the “the senseless horror” of the bombings. He called the plot “a diabolical act of terrorism” with “roots in fanaticism at its basest and most inhumane level.” He then acquitted Sikh leaders Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri on all charges, leaving the victims’ families reeling and the biggest case in Canadian history officially unsolved.

Kim Bolan is an award-winning investigative reporter who has covered the Air-India bombing case since the day Flight 182 went down off the coast of Ireland. Her work on the Air-India story has taken her to Punjab five times over the last twenty years where she met with militant Sikh separatist leaders and victims of the violence. She also followed Air-India mastermind Talwinder Singh Parmar to Pakistan before his 1992 slaying and chased down other suspects in England and across Canada. But she faced the most danger at home in Vancouver where the stories she uncovered about the Air-India case led to a series of death threats against her.

From the Hardcover edition.

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