

FILE No. DUR-2/SVS/1991	CLASSIFICATION SECRET / NOFORN	DISPOSITION EYES ONLY
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[THE MIDDLE DOSSIER, CHRONOLOGICALLY]
[ATTRIBUTION: PROVISIONAL / AUTHENTICITY: PROBABLE]

DHURANDHAR 2

THE ROMANIAN

What the Joint Director of the Intelligence Bureau actually did during seventy-three hours in March 1991 to bring a Romanian diplomat home alive. Twelve theories. Four hostage-takers. One Mossad observer. And one Khalistani commander who survived the operation, vanished, and reappeared, eight years later, under a different name in a different country.

■ **CREED'S NOTE.** Following the publication of Dhurandhar 3 on April 27, 2026, the source who originally provided that file made contact a second time. Two further dossiers have arrived. The first concerns an operation in Punjab in March 1991. The second concerns a posting in Sikkim in 1973–1975. Both are reproduced here in the format in which they were received, with the same caveats as the previous installment: the protagonist is fictional, the events are real, the file is plausible, and approximately three of the twelve theories Sanyal offers are probably correct. The reader is invited, as before, to choose which three.

By **JASPER CREED** | Defence & Strategic Affairs Correspondent | (and a Source Who Wishes to Remain Beyond Reach)

Edition Forty-Six ♦ May 5, 2026 ♦ DHURANDHAR 2 ♦ The Romanian

■ COVER NOTE ■

On the morning of Tuesday, March 19, 1991, a black Ambassador car pulled out of the Romanian Embassy compound on Africa Avenue in New Delhi, drove fifty-eight kilometres in the direction of Chandigarh, and was never seen again with the diplomat it had been carrying.

The diplomat's name was Liviu Radu. He was forty-two years old. He held the rank of Counsellor at the Romanian Embassy. His official portfolio was commercial: textile machinery, agricultural equipment, the unglamorous middle of bilateral trade. His unofficial portfolio, which Bucharest does not concede to this day, was the discreet liaison work that the post-Ceausescu regime in Romania had been quietly conducting with several friendly intelligence services in the region as it tried to rebuild its external relationships from scratch.

The car was found seventy-one hours later, abandoned in a field outside Hoshiarpur. Liviu Radu was not in it. What followed was, in operational terms, the most complicated hostage rescue the Indian state had executed up to that point in its history. It was complicated because there were not one but four hostage-taking groups, each holding a different fragment of leverage. It was complicated because the Soviet Union was, at that exact moment, in the final ten months of its existence, and Bucharest had nobody left in the world who could exert pressure on its behalf. It was complicated because the Punjab Police and the Intelligence Bureau had spent the preceding eighteen months disagreeing, in writing, about who was operationally in charge of the state. And it was complicated because Liviu Radu, by the time we located him on the third day, was being held by the people we had been hoping he was not being held by.

What follows is the working file on what was done, by whom, and why. This file should not exist. Sanyal has, against all his own training, kept it for thirty-five years.

**"This file should not exist.
Sanyal has, against all his own training, kept it for
thirty-five years."**



■ ANNEX A — THE TAKE

The kidnapping itself was textbook. Three vehicles, six men, automatic weapons drawn at a roadblock dressed up as a state-police checkpoint between Sirhind and Khanna. Driver shot through the shoulder — he survived, and was the source of the first description. Radu lifted into the

second vehicle and driven north.

The first ransom call came forty-six minutes later to the Romanian Embassy in Delhi, in clear English, demanding the immediate release of seventeen named militants from Indian custody, ten million dollars in gold transferred through Karachi, and a public statement by Bucharest acknowledging 'the legitimate aspirations of the Khalistani people.' The call was traced to a public booth in Ludhiana within ninety seconds. The booth was empty by the time we got there. It always is.

THE GEOMETRY OF THE TAKE — WHAT WE KNEW BY HOUR 12

■ **Group One.** Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFFK). Demanded seventeen militants released, ten million dollars in gold, public statement by Bucharest. Lead voice on first call. Most visible, least operationally credible.

■ **Group Two.** Khalistan Commando Force (KCF) splinter, operating out of the Hoshiarpur belt. Demanded a separate set of releases, no money, and the withdrawal of CRPF from three named tehsils. Lead voice on the second and third calls.

■ **Group Three.** Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), but a younger faction whose principal commander had broken with the senior leadership six months earlier. Demanded a single specific release: the commander's elder brother, held in Tihar. Lead voice on the fourth call.

■ **Group Four.** The fourth voice was the one that mattered. It made no public demands. It made no media calls. It made one private call, to a number that should not have been known, asking, in Punjabi, for Sanyal personally by his operational name. And it asked for something that was not on any of the other lists.

The first three groups were holding nothing. Sanyal understood this within four hours. Their demands were inconsistent with each other, their voice signatures did not match the original take operation, and the technical work on the first ransom tape revealed a callbox in Ludhiana, a callbox in Jalandhar, and a callbox in Patiala — three different callers reading from three different scripts, none of them present at the kidnapping. They were taking advantage of the news of a foreign diplomat's disappearance to register political demands they had been unable to register through their own actions. It is the kind of opportunism that emerges when an insurgency is in its declining phase, when the centre has begun to fray, and when peripheral commanders compete for relevance.

The fourth group was holding Liviu Radu. Sanyal knew this within twelve hours. He knew it because the fourth caller, on a private number, had asked for something so specific that only the people actually holding the diplomat would know to ask for it. The fourth group asked for a man named Resham Singh. Resham Singh was, at that moment, in Indian custody at a place that did not appear on any list. His existence was known to fewer than fifteen people in the Indian state, of whom Sanyal was one. And the people holding Liviu Radu knew Resham Singh's name.

"The fourth caller asked for Resham Singh by name. Sanyal knew, in that moment, that the fourth group

had a source inside us."



■ ANNEX B — THE PAKISTANI PROBLEM

Every Khalistani group operating in Punjab in 1991 ran, ultimately, on Pakistani logistics. Sanctuary in the canal districts of Pakistan-administered Punjab. Training camps at Dipalpur, at Kasur, at Mianwali. Weapons through the same channels that ran Afghan mujahideen materiel south. ISI handlers whose first names changed every six months and whose last names did not exist.

This mattered for the operational reason that any rescue conducted in Indian Punjab would, within forty-eight hours, prompt the principal hostage-takers, if they were professional, to move the diplomat across the border. Once Liviu Radu was in Pakistan-administered territory, the operation transformed from a hostage rescue into an exercise in inter-state diplomatic recovery, of the kind that takes years and produces, eventually, a body or a propaganda video.

Sanyal had a single relevant asset: a Pakistani contact, originally cultivated in Lahore between 1985 and 1987, who had since transitioned out of operational ISI work and into the family business in Faisalabad. The asset owed Sanyal a favour, the nature of which the file does not specify. Sanyal placed a call to a number in Karachi at 04:13 on the morning of March 21, asked for the asset's elder cousin, asked the cousin to convey a single sentence to the asset, and put the phone down. The sentence, in Punjabi, was: *I am calling in the favour. The diplomat must not cross.*

Twenty-two hours.

That is how long it took for the Pakistani asset to confirm, through three intermediaries, that the relevant ISI desk at Rawalpindi had been quietly informed that the diplomat's presence on Pakistani soil would be 'unwelcome at this time, in light of the present diplomatic pressures.' What those diplomatic pressures were, the file does not record. Pakistan was, in March 1991, in the final months of the Nawaz Sharif government's first term, and certain channels were operating that did not show up in newspapers.

The border was closed to Liviu Radu before the kidnappers could think of moving him across it. The fourth group had no escape route except to negotiate. This was the first decisive moment of the operation. It was achieved by a phone call to Karachi at four in the morning, and the cooperation of an ISI desk that had its own unspoken reasons for not wanting a Romanian diplomat's body to surface in Multan that month.

*"The border was closed to him before the kidnappers thought to move him.
Faisalabad to Rawalpindi to a callbox in Hoshiarpur:
the operation was won in those twenty-two hours."*



■ ANNEX C — THE OBSERVER FROM TEL AVIV

On the evening of March 21, a forty-eight-year-old man with a Norwegian passport checked into the Oberoi Maidens Hotel in Old Delhi. His passport was authentic. The name on it was not. He had been despatched to India that afternoon at Sanyal's request, carried in writing through a back channel that the file describes only as 'the Friday channel.'

His real name does not need to appear here. He was a senior officer of the Mossad's Caesarea division, specialising in hostage-survival assessment. Sanyal had asked for him by name, citing a debt incurred in 1986. The Mossad had agreed within ninety minutes.

Why the request.

Sanyal's assessment, by hour eighteen of the operation, was that the fourth group was holding Liviu Radu in conditions that, if extended beyond seventy-two hours, would result in physical or psychological collapse. The Indian intelligence apparatus did not, in 1991, possess the specialist medical-psychological forensic capability to assess this remotely. The Mossad did. They had developed the capability in the long shadow of Munich 1972, and refined it through forty subsequent operations the world had not heard about. Sanyal needed to know, in real time, what kind of state the diplomat was in. He needed it not because he was sentimental about Liviu Radu, but because the operational decision — negotiate slowly, or move now — depended on it.

The Norwegian-passport man arrived at the operations centre Sanyal had set up in Chandigarh at 19:40 on the evening of March 21. He stayed for fifty-one hours. He was allowed to read the audio transcripts, listen to the original tapes, examine photographs of the scene, and consult two Indian forensic linguists. He produced, on a single page of handwritten notes that the file reproduces verbatim, an assessment of Liviu Radu's likely physical state, the probable composition of the room he was being held in, the number of guards, the time of last food, the diplomat's likely psychological state, and, in the final paragraph, a recommendation.

The recommendation.

Move within nineteen hours. Not because the diplomat was at imminent risk of execution — the kidnappers needed him alive. But because the diplomat, by the assessment of the Israeli officer, was approaching a psychological threshold beyond which his cooperation in any rescue could no longer be assumed. *If you take him after the threshold, the assessment*

read, *you may rescue a body. You will not rescue a man capable of returning to his family.* Sanyal kept the page. It is in the file.

*"Move within nineteen hours.
After that, you may rescue a body.
You will not rescue a man capable of returning to his family."*



■ ANNEX D — TWELVE THEORIES OF WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

What happened in the seventeen hours between the Israeli officer's recommendation and Liviu Radu's safe return to the Romanian Embassy at 14:32 on March 23, 1991, is the part of the operation that has never been written. Sanyal will not write it now. He offers, instead, twelve theories.

Theory One. A direct assault was conducted by an Indian Army Special Group element on a farmhouse in the Hoshiarpur belt, in coordination with the Punjab Police's special operations group, with the Mossad officer present in an advisory capacity.

Theory Two. The fourth group released Liviu Radu in exchange for the unannounced release of Resham Singh, who was driven across the border into Pakistan and never accounted for in any subsequent file.

Theory Three. The fourth group was, in fact, infiltrated. Resham Singh had been turned during his time in Indian custody, and was working back into the group as our man. What looked like an exchange was a controlled extraction.

Theory Four. A senior Khalistani commander who was holding Liviu Radu agreed to release him in exchange for a guarantee, conveyed through Sanyal personally, that his elder brother would receive medical treatment for an undisclosed condition. The commander accepted Sanyal's word.

Theory Five. The Soviet Union, ten months from collapse, had quietly conveyed through its embassy in Delhi that the matter of Liviu Radu was, despite the post-Ceausescu rupture, of personal interest to a senior figure in Moscow whose name does not appear in this file. A favour was called in. The favour was honoured.

Theory Six. Bucharest, having no leverage left in the world, had nonetheless retained one asset: a complete copy of the personal financial records of certain Pakistani military officers from the late 1980s, preserved on Romanian intelligence service archives that the post-Ceausescu regime had inherited. Pressure, when applied, was effective.

Theory Seven. The Mossad officer was not, in fact, an observer. He was an operator. The recommendation he handed Sanyal included an offer of operational support that was accepted, and the rescue was conducted with a small element of Israeli capability whose presence in India in March 1991 has never been confirmed by either government.

Theory Eight. Liviu Radu was not actually rescued. He walked out of the holding location of his own accord on the evening of March 22, having persuaded his guards — in fluent Punjabi, which his official cover did not record him as speaking — that he was a more useful diplomatic asset alive than dead, and that his employers in Bucharest would be grateful in ways the kidnappers could not yet imagine. The kidnappers, eventually, agreed.

Theory Nine. The fourth group received its instructions from a handler who was not Khalistani at all, but a former Indian Army officer who had defected in 1986 and was operating, in March 1991, from a desk in a foreign capital we will not name here. The diplomat was released because the handler decided that holding him was no longer in his employer's interest.

Theory Ten. Sanyal himself entered the holding location on the night of March 22, alone, unarmed, in clothes that did not mark him as Indian state, and conducted a face-to-face negotiation that lasted four hours. He emerged at first light with Liviu Radu walking behind him. Of all the theories, this is the one Sanyal would most like the reader to believe. It is also, almost certainly, partially true.

Theory Eleven. The operation was a coordinated three-way: an Indian assault element, an Israeli technical capability, and an unacknowledged element of the Pakistani security apparatus providing real-time location intelligence in exchange for considerations to be settled later. Considerations have not been publicly settled to this day.

Theory Twelve. All eleven of the preceding theories are partially true. Each captures one fragment of what was a deliberately fragmented operation, designed in advance so that no single participant could later reconstruct the whole. Sanyal designed it that way for a reason. The reason is not in this file.

***"Twelve theories. Three are probably correct.
The reader is invited, as before, to choose which three.
Sanyal himself, when asked, would not say."***



■ ANNEX E — RESHAM SINGH, AND THE CODENAME THAT RETURNED

Resham Singh did not, in fact, exist by that name. Resham Singh was a codename, assigned to a young man from Tarn Taran district who had been recruited by the Intelligence Bureau in 1989, infiltrated into a Khalistani training camp in Pakistan-administered territory, and extracted in the autumn of 1990 carrying material that justified, on its own, a small chapter of post-Khalistan operational history that has not yet been written.

When the fourth group, on March 20, 1991, asked for 'Resham Singh' by name, they were not asking for a Khalistani militant. They were asking, by oblique reference, for our man back. Which meant the fourth group knew that our man was ours. Which meant, in turn, that the fourth group

had a source inside us with sufficient access to know the identity of an extracted asset whose existence was in a file with a circulation list of fifteen.

Sanyal closed that source down within four months of the Liviu Radu operation. The closing-down process is not in this dossier. It is in another file, in another drawer, and the drawer is locked.

A NOTE ON THE OPERATIONAL CODENAME.

Sanyal's extracted asset, Resham Singh, was retired from active service in late 1991 and given a new identity, a new posting, and a new codename. The codename he was given, drawn from the Intelligence Bureau's standing list of operational pseudonyms reserved for assets of high sensitivity, was HAMZA.

The reader of Dhurandhar 3 will recognise this name. It was the codename Sanyal used, in his April 26, 2026 dossier from Abu Dhabi, for the man sitting to his right at the Sanyal-MBZ meeting — the man described in that file as 'the successor.'

Whether the HAMZA of 1991 and the HAMZA of 2026 are the same man, or whether the codename was simply re-issued to a successor of equivalent sensitivity, is a question the file does not resolve. Sanyal's marginalia, on the relevant page, consists of a single handwritten word, in his customary Devanagari shorthand, transliterated here as *sochiye*.

Sochiye. Think.



■ ANNEX F — THE DIPLOMAT WHO LIVED

Liviu Radu was returned to the Romanian Embassy in Delhi at 14:32 on Saturday, March 23, 1991. He was thin. He had not slept properly for four nights. He had a small wound on his left forearm that was treated and did not become infected. He gave a brief statement to the Romanian Ambassador, wrote a four-paragraph cable to Bucharest in his own hand, and was on a flight out of Indira Gandhi International Airport thirty-six hours later.

He returned to Bucharest. He was promoted twice. He retired, eventually, with the rank of Director General in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He never, in any forum, public or private, discussed what had happened to him in the seventy-three hours between the roadblock outside Sirhind and his release at 14:32 on March 23. He died of natural causes in Brasov in 2017.

On the evening before he flew out, March 24, 1991, Liviu Radu requested, through the Romanian Embassy, to convey his personal thanks to a single Indian official whose name had not appeared in any communication. The Embassy, after some confusion, arranged for a meeting at a private address in Vasant Vihar that lasted approximately twenty minutes. The meeting is not in the file. What was said in it is not in the file. But Liviu Radu, for the rest of his career in Bucharest, kept on his desk a single small object that did not belong to him: a brass paperweight in the shape of a sleeping Garhwali tiger, given to him, without explanation, by a thin Indian man with steady eyes.

***"He kept the paperweight on his desk for twenty-six years.
When he died, his daughter found it in a drawer.
It is now in a private collection in Brasov.
Sanyal does not know this."***



■ CLOSING NOTE — SANYAL AND THE THIRD DRAWER

Sanyal kept the file. He should not have. Operational dossiers of this type are, by standing protocol, to be returned to the Multi Agency Centre vault within ninety days of operational closure, where they are catalogued, redacted, and entered into the long-term archive with an access list that, by year ten, is typically empty. Sanyal kept his copy.

He kept it in the third drawer of a filing cabinet in his personal office, the same drawer in which, thirty-five years later, he keeps two other things. The first is the working file on his posting in Sikkim from 1973 to 1975, released by the same source and published as Dhurandhar 1 in the previous edition. The second is a third file. It is unlabelled. It is locked separately within the drawer, in a smaller box that requires a different key. Sanyal's notes record, in the same handwriting as the marginalia in Annex E, the following observation about the third file.

The third drawer contains the file that is not yet operational. It is the file Sanyal will not show to anyone, including his successor, until the operation it describes has either been authorised or definitively cancelled. It is the file that, for thirty-one days now, since the morning of April 5, 2026, Sanyal has been quietly preparing.

Creed has read this paragraph twelve times. He notes, for the record, that Dhurandhar 3 was published on April 27 and presented, at that time, as Sanyal's swansong. Creed is no longer entirely certain that the third was the swansong. An epilogue to the trilogy, addressing what may now be in motion, follows shortly.

"The third drawer contains the file that is not yet operational.
For thirty-one days now, since the morning of April 5, 2026,
Sanyal has been quietly preparing it."

CONNECT WITH CREED

A PERSONAL INVITATION FROM THE CORRESPONDENT



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<p>1 ■ ■ ■</p> <p>PHONE CONVERSATIONS</p> <p><i>The highest form of human communication. Increasingly rare.</i></p>	<p>2 ■ ■ ■</p> <p>PHYSICALLY WRITTEN LETTERS</p> <p><i>The second-highest. Brief, considered, beautifully dated.</i></p>	<p>3 ■ ■ ■</p> <p>WRITTEN EMAIL</p> <p><i>The third-best. You are here. (That is fine.)</i></p>
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— JASPER CREED —

Defence & Strategic Affairs Correspondent ♦ Geopolitical Intelligence Review

Sources: Provided as a recovered dossier from a source within the Government of India who has, following the publication of Dhurandhar 3, released the second of three files in his possession. Background: The 1991 abduction of Romanian diplomat Liviu Radu in Punjab is a matter of public record (Indian and Romanian press archives, March 1991), as is the operational involvement of the Intelligence Bureau Joint Director (Wikipedia, accessed May 2026; Praveen Donthi, 'Undercover,' Caravan, September 2017). All names of intelligence personnel, all conversations, all marginalia, and all references to specific operational locations are fictional. The protagonist, Ajit Sanyal, is a fictional rendering. The events of March 19–23, 1991 are constructed from public reporting and the necessary creative liberties of a recovered-dossier format. The reader will, as always, choose which three of the twelve theories are correct.

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