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The possible presence of the former President of India, Giani Zail Singh, brought dozens of shouting Sikh demonstrators to the August 8th opening session of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's 5th European Hindu Conference in Frankfurt, Germany. They had little impact inside the conference's tight security cordon where 1,200 delegates and observers from 29 countries gathered to discuss 16 subjects such as "Science and Spirituality," "Karma and Reincarnation," "Role of Hindu women" and "Ayurveda."

The Ayodhya crisis in India over the birthplace of Lord Rama (now occupied by a mosque) was discussed frequently during many sessions, though it was not one of the 16 conference topics. Swami Chinmayananda (of the Chinmaya Mission) repeatedly demanded that the 14 clearly identifiable Hindu temple pillars reused in the present mosque be turned over to the Hindus.

A strident militancy was heard from many speakers and delegates. One interrupted a HINDUISM TODAY interview with a religious leader to state that Hindus had to take a militant stand now because "the nation (India and the family was going down the drain." The religious leader replied that Hinduism had already survived 1,200 years of foreign domination without being destroyed, and could equally survive the present conflict without resort to violence. Another delegate complained that because of the conference's many militant talks, "the children will become really aggressive. There should have been more spiritual programs." Nepalese delegates felt there was too much emphasis on India alone.

Conference resolutions demanded the restoration of Rama's birthplace to Hindu hands. They also lamented the expulsion of Hindus from Kashmir in face of Muslim insurgency, and the oppression of Hindus in Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Likewise condemned was caste discrimination in India. Delegates blamed India's

secular educational system for failing to impart ethical and moral values to the youth and for keeping Indians ignorant of the country's spiritual wealth and cultural heritage. The result, they stated, is that "The wellsprings of Indian thought and national ethos and identity are drying up. The result is a society being swept of its moorings, a decline in moral standards, headlong pursuit of materialism and cheap exploitation of religion and caste to serve narrow political interests." Delegates optimistically stated. "Hinduism is destined to play a special role in shaping the world of tomorrow - a world safer and saner, free from irrational prejudice and brute force and richer in mind and spirit, combining the dazzling achievements of modern science with the spiritual insights of the ancient savants." All praised the organizers - under the leadership of Ashok Chauhan and Ramesh Jain - for a very well-run conference, excellent meals and high-quality cultural events.

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