

H K BURKI
**Tales of a
Sorry Dominion**
Pakistan 1947-2003

alhamra

Tales of a Sorry Dominion

Pakistan: 1947 - 2003

H.K. Burki

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Foreword

I can think of no greater honour than that I have been asked to contribute a foreword to the Maestro's collection of writings. Maestro because that was what I always called H.K. Burki. He was the sort of man, the kind of journalist one could look up to and then try to follow. I have seen no one who had his courage, his adherence to principles, his ability to match what he did with what he said and his deeply held belief in the sovereignty of the people as manifested through a popularly elected government.

It is rare for men who have once been in uniform to thumb their nose at rule by the armed forces. Burki had seen active service in the Royal Indian Navy during the Second World War and unlike the "swagger sticks" – a copyright Burki phrase - who have been strutting around the stage since 1958, he was battle hardened. And yet all his life he remained an a passionate believer in civilian rule and the democratic process. Many of his friends and admirers have expressed their unease with Burki's liking for Gen. Pervez Musharraf. Even I, who always showed him nothing but deference as becomes one junior in both years and the profession of journalism, expressed reservations about

the rather soft corner he had developed for the latest uniformed claimant to political power in Islamabad.

However, now that I think about it, Burki's soft corner for the General was not because he had become any less of a believer in democratic rule but because of his complete disillusionment with the two young civilian, popularly elected leaders of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, who had blown the great opportunity they had been given, not once but twice, of establishing a truly democratic order reflecting the wishes of the people and serving their interest. He called Nawaz and Benazir "the two fading stars of failed democracy" who, he wrote, "have been shoring up their flagging morale recently by promising themselves an uprising." He said their efforts were "redolent of Lahore coffee house guff in the early Fifties when armchair radicals waxed eloquent about the imminence of revolution." He went on to write, "Large elements of the elite, listless in the wilderness, are pining away for yet another chance to make a killing. Their ambitions thrive a cocoon of self-deception, and the world is passing them by. There are better ways of spending the time than wallowing in wishful thinking, An honest day's work, for instance."

All his life, Burki fought military rule and I for one am unwilling to believe that in the twilight of his life, he had modified in any way the principles he had always lived by. Burki's own rationale for supporting Gen. Musharraf was that to him this appeared to be the only thing to do under the circumstances in which the country and the nation found themselves placed. He remains the only Pakistani journalist of note who took on the country's unrepresentative rulers head on and was neither impressed by them, nor afraid of them. After the debacle of 197, which was entirely the army's making – Yahya Khan having had

no intention at any time of transferring power – it was Burki who in a string of searing articles in *The Pakistan Times* exposed the junta that had destroyed Jinnah’s Pakistan and even after half the country was gone, was unwilling to step down and hand over power. Had it not been for the revolt in the very heart of the Pakistan Army, the GHQ, Gen. Yahya would have stayed in place, Black Dog and Black Beauty becoming the order of the day. Burki’s memorable phrase about that cabal – “fat and flabby Generals” – has gone into the language.

Wrote Burki after the fall of Dhaka, “The mafia was really possessed of the demon of power and enamoured of the benefits and carnal liberties it safely and richly furnished ... Had this Rangeela Raj continued another year, there would have been no army left. Instead, we might have had plundering bands of bandits, commanded by warlords of principalities and city states. To observe our generals at politics has been the most frightening experience and a pathetic spectacle. They seem to have deluded themselves into believing that politics was just another war – a game for which one only required low cunning.”

Burki’s belief in what he called the sovereignty of the people never wavered. In a piece written in January 1972 when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been in office less than three weeks, he said, “The Herrenvolk – German for master race – overlooked one cardinal truth. The people of Pakistan are not pariahs who would accept their condition as a stroke of fate and an eternally settled fact. They are Muslims who have been reared on the teaching that all men are created equal. It is this basic concept that contains in it the unfailing seeds of rebellion and revolt. As Albert Camus, the universally celebrated Mediterranean son of France, has pointed out, wherever “theoretic equality conceals factual inequalities” the germs of revolution exist. What really

stoked this revolutionary fire was a constant drumming of the slogans and catchphrases that emphasised those very basic Islamic values the Herrenvolk were busy insulting and destroying. In this, one must be eternally grateful to the journalist prostitutes, the bureaucratic geniuses and the halva Maulvis for having done their job, even though unwittingly, so well. May their genius, their prostitution and their sources of halva flourish.”

Burki believed that there was no need and no rational ground for burdening Pakistan with “ideological baggage” after the Quaid-i-Azam had spelt out in clear and unambiguous words what the new state of Pakistan was going to be. Burki recalled his words, “You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the business of state.” Burki went on to write, “The state policy could not have been plainer than this. It had shut the door on theocracy and its retrograde, divisive burden. Within a few years of the country’s emergence, however, the clerics had instigated a campaign of falsification. Pakistan was created for the exclusive benefit of Muslims. Its system of government, therefore, must be Islamic.”

When Burki surveyed what had become of Pakistan instead, he wrote, his words dripped in sarcasm betraying deep sadness, “The holy warriors and the mullahs of Islamic ideology, between them, have bestowed upon an ungrateful nation several fabulous gifts. There are, for example, some two million converts to the wonder drug, heroin. Three million Afghan refugees are here to enrich the confederacy’s tapestry of crime. Several lashkars under the command of valorous clerics have turned all the cities and towns into spectacular killing fields. Each faction is determined to settle, according to its lights and with jihadi Kalashnikovs, all

the controversies of the past fourteen centuries. The plague is really raging now, threatening to devour the hakims and besieged patients alike. Welcome to the citadel of Islam.”

There are few of whom it can truthfully be said: we shall not see their like again. H.K. Burki was in that select and exalted company.

Washington
December 2003

Khalid Hasan

Beginnings of The Pakistan Times

Brig Desmond Young wrote a biography of Field Marshal Rommel, the legendary German commander. And *The Desert Fox* was a best seller. The Brigadier also set up *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore. The paper, too, had become within a couple of years the best-selling English language daily of the new country.

Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din had engaged Brig Young, wartime head of the British Indian Army's public relations outfit, because the radical nationalist had little choice. There was no Muslim journalist experienced enough to launch a full-scale English paper. In fact, there were not many Muslim journalists. Like so much else, the press was totally dominated by Hindus, the Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians.

Desmond Young found a home for the P.T. in the lap of Rudyard Kipling's *The Civil and Military Gazette* on The Mall, using its printing facilities and a small section of its premises. It was not a very satisfactory arrangement. Thus, when I started as a sub-editor in June, 1947, it was resuming publication after several days' hiatus due to a printing dispute.

The news editor Young had brought with him was already

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dead. Sibthorpe, a South African, could not bear Lahore's 114° temperature and died of heat stroke, Young's choice of editor was felicitous. He had known Faiz Ahmad Faiz as his army P.R. colleague in Delhi, and threw the poet in the deep end. Poor Faiz, a total novice, used to struggle with editorials, but within six months he had mastered the technique and earned his place amongst the "it is to be hoped" brigade.

The nucleus was small but solid. There was M.A. Shakoor heading the newsroom. Educated at Aligarh, Shakoor was a fiery Mopla from the West Coast and a committed socialist. He was brought from *The Statesmen*, Calcutta, one of India's leading British-owned papers. Jamil Ahmad "Mamooli" came from *The Pioneer*, Kamal Hyder from *The Star*, Calcutta, Mohammad Shafi, the chief reporter, had worked for *The C and MG* for several years.

There was Mazhar Ali Khan, a former student leader, a superb speaker, an Assistant Editor with a chip on his shoulder. And Pha Majid, a gentle bubble of a man who would reel off from memory his whole editorials.

Actually, this piece was to be written by Khawaja Mohammad Asaf. I had managed to persuade this ever diffident so-and-so to write it. Then he suddenly took off one morning last July and went to wherever noble souls are supposed to go. So this is a sort of double dirge for dear, departed friends, Khawaja Asaf, a gentleman journalist of a high order, and the P.T. to which we both gave, like so many others, the best years of our lives.

My lurch towards the P.T. was coincidental. Having left the Royal Indian Navy in September 1946 to attend to unfinished business of hockey, I shared a bungalow in Ichra with old college mates Ali Akhtar Mirza and Abdul Hakim, both API reporters. When they joined Brig Young's troops in January 1947, Shakoor, Jamil and Hyder also lodged with us. I already had one foot in

journalism, contributing illustrated articles to *The Sunday Statesmen*, and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. So, I too was sucked into Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din's *kabooterkhana* (dovecote). For as we used to say, instead of keeping a kennel for dogfights or fighting cocks or flying pigeons, as became a Punjabi feudal, the Mian had sought amusement in a newspaper. He turned out to be an exemplary, non-interfering newspaper owner.

Most of the new boys in the newsroom were there not because they needed jobs but they felt creating a good Pakistani newspaper offered exciting prospects. Mohammad Ajmal, the psychologist, worked for two years with us before he went to London for his doctorate. Similarly, Khawaja Asaf who joined later that winter could have had a job of his choice anywhere, for he was a gold medallist (M.A. English) from Government College, Lahore. A trim, dapper figure, he would arrive in the newsroom clutching in his left hand a tin of State Express and a matchbox, in the style and manner of Lahore's young dandies those days.

We got along well, kindred spirits perhaps, but also because we shared one passion, sports. Asaf was a budding opening batsman until he discovered to his horror he was too shortsighted to cope with the quickies. And he took pleasure in my being a hockey international. So when during the final trials for the 1950 team, The *C & MG* blatantly promoted a rival and I would not allow our own sports reporter to praise me, he promptly went out, reported the next game, giving credit he felt was my due.

The newsroom had no windows. It was more like a largish, airless dungeon that we entered through a small, narrow, tunnel-like passage, to roast there in Lahore's terrible summer and freeze in winter. But nobody minded. We were young and wonderfully serious about beating the hell out of *The C & M Gazette*.

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New people kept joining. Perhaps the most exciting arrival was that of Mahmud Hussain, a highly experienced, hard-boiled, no-nonsense journalist who took over as news editor.

In his fifties, Mahmud hit it off with Faiz straight away. They would troop off every evening to Lorang's a couple of hundred yards away and have a civilised drink or two. On their return, Mahmud would walk into the newsroom, offering to sub copy and narrating the most hilarious anecdotes about some of the top League and Congress leaders.

Mahmud Hussain came to us from Delhi after a Hindu mob had burnt down *Dawn*. When *Dawn's* main edition moved to Karachi he had been left behind as Resident Editor. A true professional, he was a complete journalist and could write on every topic under the sun, from sports to commerce to international affairs. He made me start writing "Spotlight on Sports", a weekly column, conjuring up a penname out of my initials: "Aichkaybe". When I drew heavy flak and wanted to cease writing, he insisted I continued. "Burki, it means you are doing well." Unfortunately, he did not stay long.

On my return from the London Olympics in October, 1948, Mahmud Hussain, I found, had left. Nawab Mamdot, the first chief minister and a decent dud, had been advised by his friends in *Nawa-i-Waqt* to impose prohibition and win popularity. So Mahmud Hussain had stormed out of a Lahore turned intolerant and gone to a more salubrious Dhaka.

When we shifted to the old *Tribune* building on Rattan Chand Road, other people joined up. Young Hasan Musanna, a shy, reserved fellow, calmly competent, but capable of gently sly barbs when provoked. Amjad Hussain, already an established reporter, moved over from *Imroze*. And Ghayurul Islam, another genuine socialist from Aligarh ever ready to man the barricades.

The emphasis on being a genuine socialist is to distinguish him from those fakes and opportunists like Zuhair Siddiqui.

Then Faiz and his friends outside the P.T. decided it was time for a revolution and they all landed in jail. Mazhar Ali Khan took over. Gone was the earlier abrasiveness, and he settled down quickly as the editor. Alys Faiz came in as well, as a full time "Apa Jan", making a pleasant dent in the male monopoly.

Over the years talented people kept on joining to preserve and strengthen the P.T's position as the country's outstanding English paper and, as Kingsley Martin of *The New Statesman* had told Faiz, the best written in the subcontinent. The excitement and thrill of making it the leading paper during the first half a dozen years was, however, something one can never forget.

Of that original lot working with Faiz, Mazhar Ali Khan and Khawaja Asaf became distinguished editors. Asaf served the longest, over a dozen years, and helped groom several new writers and any number of reporters. I owed my return to the P.T., after 10 years reporting in London, largely to Asaf who asked me to take over as United Nations Correspondent in January, 1964.

Then Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto entrusted to Asaf the National Press Trust. He managed it well and had drawn up ambitious plans for it. Gen Zia had other ideas.

Asaf refused the military dictator's request for launching a campaign in the NPT papers against the deposed premier. And he got the sack.

Then the Zia Junta and its super patriotic henchmen went to work, reducing the paper to a rotten gazette. Some, like the writer were thrown out summarily. Others left in despair. And there was such a rich stock of professionals that even today many of them are an asset to the English language press.

The largest number is to be found in *Dawn*. Ghayurul Islam.

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Tahir Mirza, Zim, Saleem Asmi, I.H. Rashid, Masudullah, Mohammad Yasin, Mohammad Ilyas. Ahmad Ali Khan, its editor, is half a P.T. man. *The Nation* has Hasan Musanna, Khalid Hasan and Ahmed Azeez Zia. Farooq Mazhar edits *The News*, Shamim Rizvi is helping *The Pakistan Economist*, and Arif Ali and Khawaja Maruf are working for the two leading Gulf newspapers. And *The Pakistan Times*? Well, it exists somewhere in a kind of limbo, awaiting final burial.

(The News 10-05-1997)

Swagger-sticks in Politics

It has been claimed repeatedly that Pakistan commanded the services of a professional army. A more objective appraisal would show that Pakistan had, in fact, inherited, and continued to maintain in great style, essentially a mercenary army, with all the trappings, traditions and motivations of such a force.

After all, what have those gay regimental centenaries and reunions been all about? They were celebrations of a mercenary past, and with the regimental battle-honours and trophies one could construct a fairly comprehensive history of a good part of the perfidious triumphs of Imperial Britain.

Half-hearted efforts have, of course, been made to give the armed services at least the veneer of a national force. And during the 1965 conflict and for a brief period afterwards, the people had genuinely tried to respect and take pride in their armed forces, and, in the process, assimilate them in the national fabric. However, President Ayub Khan's surrender at Tashkent, and he was a Field Marshal, put up the barriers once again.

In discussing the role of the armed forces, one has to exonerate the Air Force and, to some extent, the Navy. Both these

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arms are no more than 30 or so years old, and they have been too small and isolated to influence, in any crucial way, either the assumptions or the role of the armed forces as a whole. Because of its size and weight, the army has played the decisive part. After all, it was an army general who, assisted by his general staff, planned the coup and then removed President Iskandar Mirza to open the flood-gates to 13 years of military rule and much else besides.

Once Gen. Ayub had staged the coup - and he had carefully planned for a 20-year stint at President's House, he had to make sure that no one else would try to remove him. So he put a dud general in command of the army. Having established his hold on the power-structure and administration of the country, he gradually weeded out all likely troublemakers from the army. At the same time, he made certain that the retired brass were well off in civvy street, and fixed them up with lucrative jobs in business organisations or in the many autonomous bodies he created.

In order to keep the chaps in the army happy, President Ayub fattened their pay-packets. At the same time, the Martial Law apparatus had exposed the serving officers to all kinds of temptations. For despite all their swagger, the army officers are much like their brothers out of uniform. Only a lack of opportunity and strict application of Army Regulations had kept them out of mischief.

The net result of all this was that much of the officer class not only picked up all the venal habits of the civil servants but also their arrogance, their claims to encyclopedic expertise and, above all, infallibility. Thus, when an officer acquired a pair of crossed-swords, he was quite liable to believe that he knew all the answers and he knew how to put this bloody country right. Few other countries have suffered from such a surfeit of "saviours" as

Pakistan has for the past 13 years.

By the time Gen. Yahya Khan and his mafia broke into the palace, the jackboots of our "Prussians" were resounding in all the corridors of power. But the General found that the state coffers were almost empty, and the demands were many. So he tried to buy off the officer corps by doubling the number of generals, by giving them a fleet of new Mercedes, new messes and houses, lands and, through the Martial Law net, take any pickings they could on the side.

It began to look as though Gen. Yahya Khan was determined not only to make a hash of the country, but also to really destroy the army. There were rumblings and protests from within the army, and many senior officers, including the Acting Commander-in-Chief, are known to have given warnings of the dire consequences, but to no effect.

The mafia was really possessed by the demon of power and enamoured of the benefits and carnal liberties it safely and richly furnished. It is correspondent's considered view that had this "Rangeela Raj" continued for another year, there would have been no army left. Instead, we might have had plundering bands of bandits, commanded by warlords of principalities and city-states.

To observe our generals at politics has been the most frightening experience and a pathetic spectacle. They seem to have deluded themselves into believing that politics was just another war - a game for which one only required low cunning.

What the Junta never realised was that the political arena was not a drill square. That they ruled this country for 13 years was not because they were good, successful politicians, but simply because they commanded a mercenary army. With a combination of bull, bluster and political jargon, the Junta strutted about as

saviours and defenders of the faith. And our rotten "respectable society" provided plenty of harlots to crown the king, serve as his courtiers and hatchetmen, sing his praises and sermonise on his behalf.

An understanding of the genuine political process requires years and years of full-time field study and experience just as the commander of a division needs a long and careful grooming: If it were possible for a general to become a political leader overnight, then, logically, it should be equally possible even for Mr. Daultana to command the army.

Perhaps the most outstanding and vivid illustration of this truth is furnished by the flounderings of Air Marshal Asghar Khan. Here was a highly efficient former commander of the Air Force and he had the finest entrée into the political arena. Following close on the heels of an extremely popular Mr. Bhutto's disappearance into jail, he had really cashed in. Yet, despite this heady headstart, the Air Marshal has made, and continues to make to this day, every mistake in the book.

Abandoning Mr. Bhutto, the Air Marshal lined up with Sh. Mujib at Ayub's Round Table Conference. Then spurning Mr. Bhutto's offer of the chairmanship of the PPP, he formed his own party. Having failed to secure a leading position in the merged P.D.P. the Air Marshal retired from politics. Then he surfaced again with a new political party which he refused to describe as one, and put up candidates in the elections without the party label. Since then, he has been trying to entertain us with all kinds of political fantasies. All this should be an object lesson to budding politicians amongst the top brass.

Why has this otherwise decent retired Air Marshal made such a hash? Mainly for two reasons. Having commanded the Air Force, he wants to command the nation: he can't shed the serv-

ice habits that are now a second-nature to him. Secondly, he, too, believes that politics is just a bag of tricks, and he has only to produce a hare out of his hat and he would be made. He, too, is the product and a willing victim of the feudal-colonial juggernaut that has tried not just to accomplish a mass sacrificial slaughter of the bodies of men but also to devour their hearts and souls.

The herren-folk, however, overlooked one cardinal truth. The people of Pakistan are not pariahs who would accept their condition as a stroke of fate and an eternally settled fact. They are Muslims who have been reared on the teaching that all men are created equal.

It is this basic concept that contains in it the unfailing seeds of rebellion and revolt. As Albert Camus, the universally celebrated Mediterranean son of France has pointed out, wherever "theoretic equality conceals factual inequalities" the germs of revolution exist.

What really stoked this revolutionary fire was a constant drumming of the slogans and catch-phrases that emphasised those very basic Islamic values the herren-folk were busy insulting and destroying. In this, one must be eternally grateful to the journalist prostitutes, the bureaucratic geniuses and the halva maulvis for having done their job, even though unwittingly, so well. May their genius, their prostitution and their sources of halva flourish!

Having exposed the rotten flesh to the bone, all that remains to be done to complete a long overdue major surgical operation is to hack away at the tons of fat that have been allowed to grow and put the body and senses to sleep.

(The Pakistan Times 12-01-1972)

The Brickbats: A Reply

When the series 'A View from the Precipice' were being written, one was conscious that there would be brickbats, for human kind cannot bear much reality. Besides, having suffered falsehoods for 13 years, when the ruling elite and its henchmen were feasting on hurrahs, it is not easy to face the bitter truths. But one had not expected the level of criticism to be so abysmally low as it has turned out.

It is a well-known phenomenon in our country that when one has no rational argument to refute a point of view, we turn to the cheap trick of questioning the motives, the qualifications, even the honour and integrity of a person. And this is precisely what has happened. Still, one cannot run away from all this muck, and one has to meet the charges as decently and rationally as one can.

Mr. F. A. Khan (Jan. 18) asks: "where was Mr. Burki during the dark and dismal years.....?" Of course it would have helped the reader a little if Mr. Khan had at the same time stated what he himself had been doing in that period. But never mind. Any attentive reader of 'P.T.' would not have asked this silly question.

However the position was fully clarified in the 9th article of the series.

If there are any myopic readers still dissatisfied, then they should read this correspondent's series of four articles, "Pakistan at the cross-roads", published, by the present Editor, on Sept. 14, 15, 16, 17, 1969. These articles appeared at a time when Gen. Yahya Khan's Martial Law was inflicting on lawyers, workers and journalists the barbaric punishment of lashes.

Mr. Abdul Hamid Malik (Jan. 16) in an otherwise well-argued letter, ends up by virtually calling this correspondent a traitor. This merely confirms the point made in "Feudal-colonial juggernaut" that all those joining Government service acquire a monopoly on patriotism while the rest have to make do as "suspects". Mr. Malik's grief about the loss of his brother is the grief of all of us. If he had read the series with care, he would have realised that the intention was not to belittle "the Shaheeds" but to vindicate their honour.

In the third article, it was written: "Twice within six years, the flower of our youth has been cut down, and to no purpose". And this correspondent has fallen over backwards to pay tributes, well-deserved tributes, to those who did the actual fighting in three wars. But one cannot close one's eyes to the grave faults in the over-all set-up, for the future of all of us and our children is now at stake.

Mr. Rizvi (Jan. 22) says: "Mr. Burki seems to consider himself an expert on military affairs". A Soldier, Captured Territory (Jan. 27), gives the invitation to uniform and to trenches to find out "what war is". The reason for not flaunting one's competence to write on the subject is a very simple one: Our country has been swarming with self-proclaimed geniuses of all kinds, boasting about the Everests they have conquered. Now one has no option

left but to parade one's qualifications.

This correspondent, Mr. Soldier, Captured Territory, held an independent command of a combat unit during the Second World War. Passing out from the O.T.S., Mhow, in 1942, this correspondent volunteered for the newly created Combined Operations Wing of the Navy, and took part in every single operation of the Arakan campaign in the winter of 1944-45. All this involved close coordination and collaboration between all the three services. Leaving service in the autumn of 1946, because apart from spit and polish, there was no work, this correspondent has tried to keep up a lively professional interest in defence matters.

One presumes that the monopolists of military knowledge would have at least heard of a certain British Captain who fought in the First World War and then went on to develop two of the most outstanding concepts of modern warfare: blitzkrieg with armour and dive-bombers which the Germans used, and the concept of "indirect approach" in tank warfare which the Israelis employed with such telling effect in June, 1967. The correspondent is not making any ridiculous comparisons, because Basil Liddell Hart was a military genius, out of uniform. He is cited here merely to underline a well-established principle, hitherto ignored in Pakistan, that one does not have to stay in uniform all one's life to take an intelligent interest in defence matters.

So, please, Mr. Soldier, Captured Territory, oversimplifications, injured innocence and false pride are not the way to react, for there are thousands of people in Civvy Street who have been in trenches and do know "what war is". Let the forces speak, by all means, but, for God's sake, let the poor victims of 13 years of militarism also have a say at this late hour, and the hour is late indeed.

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The nation is not ungrateful to those who have kept the Indians out of our cities and this correspondent has written in anguish about those who were betrayed by the junta. But is it not significant that Mr. Soldier, Captured Territory, has not said a single word of gratitude to this poor and bloodied nation?

At first, a good part of our sovereignty was bartered away to get modern American weapons. Since 1965, more than half the national budget has been devoted to defence and at a time when about three-fourths of the population could not have two meals a day. The point that must be re-emphasised is that even if we mortgaged Pakistan to buy modern weapons, it would not help, unless and until our armed forces' assumptions about their role are straightened out.

A great deal of heat has been generated by the word "mercenary". There are all kinds of mercenaries and not all of them inhabit the dictionary. There is the one, like this correspondent as a very young man, who wants excitement and adventure. There are others who seek just a job, and those who join the army and want to become the President.

What we are really talking about here is the question of "loyalty". Are our armed forces loyal to a legal, representative government of a sovereign, independent state? Or are they available to their own head for conquering and enslaving their own people? It is in this correspondent's personal knowledge that a lot of officers, young officers and several Generals - highly intelligent and honourable men - were unhappy with the way the army was misused by adventurers for their own despicable ends, yet they were unable to do anything to stop the slide towards the precipice.

In the course of the series, it was clearly brought out with well considered arguments that Pakistan needs a strong army, complemented by a very large, well-trained militia. But this army

will now have to be the army of a free people, maintained on the clear understanding that the people of Pakistan are amongst the poorest in the world.

Mr. Gul Rez Khan (Jan. 25) unleashed a long diatribe in support of the NAP, only to confirm this correspondent's worst fears. His last sentence, and the subsequent public statements by responsible NAP leaders, leave no doubt that they are still not aware of the Indian threat. If they go ahead with their adventurous policies, then the bell will toll for all of us, including the Khans and their unashamedly racist activists.

There is just one other point which demands attention: a whispering campaign that this correspondent is pro-Bhutto. Even if this charge were true in its pejorative sense, this correspondent would be in excellent company - the majority of Pakistanis. The charge is an irrational consequence of the drubbing we have had from the ruling elite for 13 long years. It has left behind a lot of sick minds which tend to measure a man's integrity by only one criterion: is he sufficiently anti-government? Nothing else seems to matter.

This correspondent is not a new convert to the ideas of Mr. Bhutto. Ever since the President appeared at the Security Council in 1964, it has been this correspondent's considered view that Mr. Bhutto's concept of Pakistan, the place it ought to occupy in the world and the policies it should follow to get there - all these were rationally sound.

This, however, does not mean a blind commitment to an individual or a political organisation. There can be only one binding commitment and that is to a self-respecting, a progressive Muslim Pakistan, and an independent state managed by the representatives of a sovereign people.

The policies and actions of President Bhutto and his govern-

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ment will, therefore, be evaluated on merit alone and, of course, in the larger national interest. If there are any failures they will be errors of judgment and not because of any inherent bad intention.

(The Pakistan Times 05-02-1972)

The Little Caesars

The House in its wisdom has decided to entrust Mr. Shaukat Hayat's privilege motion to the relevant committee of the National Assembly. So the question whether or not the last "Looking glass" column had violated any privilege will not be discussed until the Committee has done its work. But there are several points arising out of the whole tamasha that need to be examined: Mr. Shaukat Hayat's outstanding contribution to parliamentary language, for one.

The member from Campbellpur had hurled at this writer the most vile abuse inside the House. The following day, within the precincts of the Assembly building, he repeated some of it at a Press conference. According to colleagues attending the conference, other great champions of democracy and monopolists of decency—Mr. Wali Khan, Mufti Mahmud, Maulvi Noorani and Prof. Ghafoor—all roared with delight. To give an effective answer to this kind of muck and behaviour, one would have to plunge to the level of a guttersnipe. So one dismisses all this with the contempt it so richly merits.

As far as Mr. Shaukat Hayat's vendetta against this writer is

concerned, there is a reason for it. Last week, Mr. Shaukat Hayat dictated to a colleague a statement on telephone. This statement, in reply to one by Khan Ghulam Mohammad Lundkhor, Mr. Hayat wanted to be attributed to his brother, Izat Hayat Khan. It is the established practice all over the world that every statement has to be in writing and signed by the man who is issuing it, otherwise a newspaper could land itself in legal complications. One has to be doubly careful about a man who does not have the guts to issue a statement in his own name. So Mr. Shaukat Hayat's own masterpiece in the name of his brother was not published.

At the Press conference, Mr. Shaukat Hayat had also talked about some protection this writer enjoyed. This only betrays the mentality of a petty feudal who is always ready to sell himself and acquire someone's protection so as to secure his own interests. As far as this writer is concerned, he only seeks the protection of Allah, not just for himself but for the people of Pakistan, from all these political adventurers who are trying so hard to destroy what remains of Pakistan.

Mr. Wali Khan has now gone to the extent of describing this writer as "more than a spokesman of the Government". Like everything else the Utmanzai chieftain says, this does a grave injustice to the Government and is far too flattering to this writer. After all, the Government has enough ministers and official spokesmen fully capable of articulating its policies. If this were not so, Mr. Wali Khan would not have run away from the National Assembly.

Actually, it is Mr. Wali Khan who desperately requires the services of a spokesman, all the more so since Mr. Shaukat Hayat proved such a miserable failure. He needs a spokesman who would be intelligent enough to make some sense of the Khan's Gandhian double-talk. Then Mr. Wali Khan will not have to do

his own weekly commercial in "Shahbaz".

However, the real issues posed by the disgraceful happenings on Jan. 2, are two: the rights and privileges of the members, and the aims and objectives of these adventurers in disrupting the working of the Assembly. Let us first examine the privilege part of this whole foul business. In no democratic parliament in the world are members allowed the kind of privileges some of our MNAs have been trying to claim for themselves. One speaks here with a 10-year direct professional experience and knowledge of the working of the Mother Mr. Shaukat Hayat keeps mouthing about. He ought to turn to some old Lord Protector of the family for help in educating himself at Westminster. If no descendent of Nicholson or even some Jenkins is around, Mr. Shaukat Hayat could at least read the British newspapers to learn what is what.

In which free parliament of the world would a member stand up and claim that the Press has no right to evaluate and criticise his doings? The only thing that is sacrosanct is that there should be no misrepresentation and no misreporting of facts. These very adventurous elements in the Opposition and the gutter Press that supports their every conspiracy, have felt free to abuse even the Head of State in the foulest language, day in and day out. And they have the temerity to demand that even their dirty politics should not be evaluated and exposed.

If these political adventurers think they are the new sacred cows, they are living in a fool's paradise. The people have elected them as their representatives and not created little tin gods who can do what they like. They are accountable to the people for whatever they do both inside and outside the House.

It is the duty and function of correspondents and political commentators to inform their readers as to what these elected

representatives are doing. In saying all this, one is conscious that obscurantist rags like the "Nawa-i-Waqt" which are controlled by the enemies of the people, do everything to distort the facts to defame the progressive forces in this country. The recent editorial is a case in point. But one day, they shall have to account for their infamies and transgressions to the long-suffering people of Pakistan, and to those individuals they have maligned and abused with such abandon.

The real purpose of the simulated row in the Assembly, which had been forecast in this column, has been established by Maulana Hazarvi's disclosure. The political adventurers who had instigated violent conspiracies in the streets, now introduced these tactics to the Assembly. The privilege motion, as Maulana Hazarvi's disclosures clearly suggest, was just an excuse to disrupt the proceedings and stage a boycott. All this indicates that Mr. Shaukat Hayat was only a willing tool in the hands of the Jama'at and the NAP, the two elements who were cheering and egging him on. Mr. Wali Khan's violent intervention without any provocation only confirmed that he was coming to the aid of the puppet who had performed poorly.

Mr. Wali Khan who has been talking of guns and frequently abusing the Head of State in the most violent terms for the past one year, has now come out in his true colours in the Assembly itself. Acting the big bully, he not only threatened Law Minister Pirzada with strangulation, but on his way out, also to shoot him and his leader. If this last bit is not on tape it is because the NAP leader had hurled the threat after the House had been adjourned.

The real reason for the carefully calculated disruption is obvious: boycott the Assembly to force modifications in the Draft Constitution and, if possible, render its adoption impossible. Since all the Opposition parties have signed an accord on which

the Draft is based, they now want to tear up the document. There seem to be two reasons for this volte face. If a workable permanent constitution were adopted, then Maulvi Maudoodi's fascists would be permanently doomed in the democratic framework. Similarly, if a permanent constitution for a single federal State were passed into law, how would Mr. Wali Khan and the Frontier Gandhi be able to attain their own dreamland called "Pakhtunistan"?

The point that needs to be emphasised here is that even if Mr. Wali Khan with his couple of supporters, Mr. Shaukat Hayat's and the Halwa Maulvies equally impressive following all stay out, the people would expect the Assembly to frame a permanent constitution based on the all-party accord. This handful of members, seeking their own narrow ends, cannot be allowed to jeopardise the fate and the future of the entire nation.

As far as this writer is concerned, he will continue to discharge his duties with a clear conscience, paying due heed to the genuine rights and privileges of all politicians, but keeping above everything else the interests and well-being of the sovereign people of Pakistan. This duty shall be performed despite all the threats and slanders by pettifogging feudals and the upstart editor proprietors of the gutter Press.

(The Pakistan Times 07-01-1973)

Encounters with Gen. Ayub Khan

There were only a dozen or so Pakistanis at the Oval to cheer Hafeez Kardar's team on to victory against England in 1954. For until the late fifties, their total number had amounted to no more than a few thousand in the whole of Britain. The historic sports event was graced, however, by at least one distinguished spectator: Ayub Khan. The General was in London to attend a conference of the Commanders-in-Chief of the Commonwealth countries. And as I was reporting the Test win for *The Times of Karachi* (long defunct), I sought his comments.

"It's wonderful to see our chaps do so well," he responded in that clipped, Sandhurst accent of his. "We're coming up in sports, you know. The army has also produced good athletes, some top-class athletes."

A towering figure and devilishly handsome, the Commander-in-Chief proceeded to wax lyrical about the army's contribution in sports. His animated projection of the khakis rang a bell, forcing a recollection of our first meeting a couple of days earlier.

At a reception hosted by the Pakistan High Commissioner, the General had enquired about my presence in London. On

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being told that I was a journalist, a correspondent, he started asking all sorts of questions. Not about the country I was covering, but Pakistan. All kinds of questions, about politics, politicians, about national problems and how these were to be solved.

"It's a wonderful country, you know, and the politicians are making a mess," he interjected.

Obviously, he was already planning what he eventually unleashed. This odd exchange went on for a good ten minutes until an entertainer by the name of Niazi came to my rescue. The fellow produced a whole range of birdcalls and animal noises, concluding with a rather unpleasant braying of an ass that produced from Ayub the loudest guffaw. The British brass was not amused. And bearing in mind our cricketing hero's howls and bellows currently beguiling audiences all across the country, one cannot help wondering whether the Niazis have some special facility for ventriloquism.

When Ayub Khan reappeared in London six years later to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference, he had about him a certain swagger which power perhaps brings to all oligarchs and dictators. South Africa's readmission as a republic was the great issue that year, and it looked as if Pakistan was about to disgrace itself by supporting the application of the violently racist regime.

The three Pakistani correspondents - Nasim Ahmad (*Dawn*), Yahya Syed (*Morning News*), and self (*C&M Gazette*) were so upset that we protested to Foreign Minister Manzoor Qadir. Rattled, he led us straight to Ayub's suite at the Claridges. The General, trying hard to graduate as a politician, gave us a patient hearing and, realising that to support South Africa could damage the country's standing in the Third World, readjusted his position.

As we got up to go, I asked the President how he liked his

new job.

"Oh, I like it. I love it," he replied candidly, brimming with enthusiasm, and then topped it emphatically, "I never liked to be number two."

It was a very different Ayub Khan I covered in Washington in December 1965. His generals had claimed victory in the September War, but the Chief himself looked a worried man. By launching that adventure without American clearance he had infuriated Lyndon Johnson, that rogue of a President. Thus, his favourite columnist, Drew Pearson, greeted Ayub Khan on the day of his arrival with utmost contempt as "the bugler's son."

The General had come all the way to seek a reaffirmation of backing by his American allies. In the full dress meeting with Johnson he came up against a brick wall. As Iftikhar Ali, Minister in the Washington Embassy, confided, despite Ayub's repeated pleas for a declaration of support on Kashmir, the American President refused. Ayub left Washington looking crestfallen.

In the next encounter by the Black Sea two years later, the General, one found, had recovered some of his buoyancy. Casually dressed, he was relaxing in a small pavilion jutting out into the sea.

"Why do they call it Black Sea? It doesn't look black at all," Ayub Khan, remarked with a chuckle to the five Pakistani correspondents he had invited for a chat. He had a good reason to be chuffed.

In April 1967, President Johnson had finally terminated all military aid to Pakistan. Totally dependent on Washington for weapons, the armed forces were virtually crippled and were desperate for aircraft, ships, tanks, guns, everything. Russia had agreed to sell whatever weapons were needed and on soft terms. In return, the General had agreed to put an end to the American

base at Badaber.

At Ayub Khan's return banquet in the Kremlin, I had found out from Group Captain Zafar Chaudhry that he was staying back in Moscow to discuss the sale of Russian weapons. So, fishing for more details, I asked the General as to why the people were never taken into confidence about defense preparedness.

"It's better that way, *yara*. You don't want the *Lalas* (Indians) to know about our strength," he parried.

"Sir, I was not talking of the troop strength or the number of divisions you have, but about weapons. Every time you buy some the whole world comes to know but not our own people. They need to be reassured."

"You've a point," Ayub conceded, but refused to divulge anything about the weapons he was about to buy from the Soviet Union. But he was certainly exuding self-satisfaction.

At the end of their successful talks, Premier Kosygin had suggested that Ayub Khan took a rest from his heavy workload and invited him to a holiday in the Crimea. The hospitality in the party leaders' palatial holiday homes at Yalta was lavish: loads of Volga, caviare, smoked salmon, all manner of fruit, vodka. Ayub visited several places, including Volgograd with its enormous steel statue of Mother Russia atop a big mound, the mass burial-ground of the Second World War dead.

One of the more entertaining outings was a wine-tasting. Ayub and his small delegation sat around a rough-hewn long table in the middle of the room while the rest of us took our places on benches stacked against the walls. As the tasting of vintage Georgian wines proceeded Ayub's face became flushed. Suddenly he spied the journalists. He came over and sat down between Nasim Ahmed and myself.

I hope you fellows are not going to report this," he remarked

with a sheepish grin.

"No, Sir, how can we do that?" said Nasim and, in his typically impish manner, added: "After all, we too are a party to the party."

When it was suggested that he should ask some Parsee to produce wine in Pakistan, Ayub rolled the idea round his tongue and then spat it out.

"Do you fellows want me to get into trouble?" he said and laughed.

Some six months or so later there came about the most bizarre encounter at Chaklala Airport. When, the General arrived to receive Marshal Tito, he saw me walking side by side with Sharifuddin Pirzada. He guessed, and correctly, that his Foreign Minister was briefing me about his sack for having made certain bold statements on the Middle East. As soon as he had finished shaking hands with Gen. Yahya Khan, he turned towards the small roped-in pen for some half dozen reporters and beckoned me. I went over.

"How are you, Burki?" he asked in a honeyed tone. All the assembled ministers, bureaucrats and the local elite saw that the mighty President of Pakistan was not only talking to me exclusively, but also patting me on the back like an affectionate uncle. It caused something of a stir, and they all thought Ayub was about to give me some important post, the consequence of a mind-set all authoritarian regimes induce. Thus, when the function was over, one of the local elite, a smartly-dressed young man rushed over to me.

"Burki Sahib, how are you, Sir?" he said pumping my hand vigorously, a complete stranger and the epitome of servility. Colleagues told me he was a lawyer and a budding politician. His name was Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, the one who became Gen Zia's

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opening batsman and currently leads Nawaz League's pack in the Senate.

Ayub Khan had done, in fact no more than his own public relations with the usual pleasantries about my health and general welfare. The weightiest thing he had said was to enquire if I also wrote for foreign papers. Thanks to this ludicrous exercise, I basked in glory for one whole afternoon.

The last time our paths crossed, it was one of those odd coincidences, and one couldn't help feeling sorry for the fellow. On the way to Islamabad Club for a swim, I saw Ayub coming from Pindi, squeezed in the front seat of a smallish car, with Gohar at the wheel and the other two sons in the back seat. As I was to learn later, he had gone to make his peace with the man he had thrown out of his cabinet so unceremoniously and also incarcerated for some months. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was gracious and let bygones be bygones.

When the General died, President Bhutto was represented by one of his ministers at the funeral. And, contrary to Gohar Ayub's churlish remarks recently, the President and Begum Bhutto both called on Begum Ayub Khan to offer their condolences.

Ayub Khan was the virtual almighty for a full decade. He came to a sorry end and nobody remembers him now. There is a clear lesson there. Yet the busybodies - the Huqs, the Ishaqs, the Legharis of this rotting Republic have refused to learn.

(The News 22-12-1996)

Encounters with Yahya Khan

Islamabad: Yahya Khan had a reputation. And the General, to his credit, was no hypocrite. The very first time he appeared in my sights on the lawns of the Pakistan Military Academy mess, the General was running true to form. The Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army was snogging one of Salman Rushdie's aunts. In full view of a large crowd of guests invited to the passing-out parade.

The General's notorious weakness for hectoring and blatant intimidation came into play in the opening minute of our introductory encounter. The occasion itself could not have been friendlier: the People's Liberation Army Day. Ambassador Chang Tung, and a more polished and warmhearted Chinese diplomat I have yet to meet, held the reception at the old embassy. The very complex where the Federal Investigation Agency nowadays choreographs its arcane, macabre dances.

Admiral A R Khan, a former naval colleague of World War Two days, effected the introduction.

"Oh, so you're the diplomatic correspondent who writes all those tales", the General said and then followed the rapier thrust:

"Are they true or do you just make them up?"

Reporters who have earned an honest living in this great country, have had to face gibes far more insolent than this. But the gauntlet couldn't be ignored.

"All right, General," I took it up, "would you deny that during your recent visit to Moscow you negotiated the sale of weapons?"

The mighty warrior, a glass of Black Dog in hand, wilted just a shade, and the Admiral rushed to his rescue.

"Sir, don't answer that question," the Defence Minister intervened in panic.

The striking thing was not the advice which was sound enough. The Defence Minister siring the Army Chief was what set a bell ringing in my head. And the siring seemed even odder when one recalled that the two of them had been drinking companions for years. Did that reflect the true hierarchy of power?

The answer exploded into view within months of that episode. Exploiting the situation on the ground created by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's mass agitation and in close collaboration with Air Marshal Nur Khan, the PAF Chief, the General gently winkled out Ayub Khan ere the Field Marshal could launch out on his second decade of development. And thus begun the Raj of a very jolly Padishah.

Within a month of the advent of Yahya Khan's reign, the Prime Minister of a Super Power was knocking at his door. An astounding development by any standards. Alexei Kosygin had rushed to Islamabad not to lend legitimacy to the military government, though given the right circumstances he would have obliged certainly. The Soviet leader was anxious to find out first hand whether Yahya Khan would honour Moscow's understanding with Ayub Khan.

Some half a dozen senior accredited correspondents had gathered at Chaklala Airport to cover Premier Kosygin's arrival. (The marvellous swarm of "*lifafa* journalists" was not there then. It came out of Zia-ul-Haq's hatchery.) When the Chief Martial Law Administrator arrived and stood waiting quite close to the correspondents' corral, his glowing face was a sight to behold. The two hairy cheeks were the colour of a ripe tomato. The General was well on his way at 11 o' clock.

It was widely known that Yahya Khan was a lush. Now it emerged that he was actually an alcoholic. A few civilized drinks would have been no bad thing. It might have actually given his command a tone. But an alcoholic Commander-in-Chief of the Army? Worse still, the nation's destiny, resting in his grubby, whisky-sodden hands? The country started paying the price almost immediately with the visit of Alexei Kosygin.

Ayub Khan, totally denied arms by the United States, was in desperate need of weapons, and had turned to the Soviet Union. He paid a visit to Moscow in October 1967. The ground had been well prepared with Foreign Minister Arshad Hussain declaring on the floor of the National Assembly that Pakistan would not renew the lease of Barraber American Base and would let the agreement "wither on the vine".

The atmosphere in Moscow, I had observed, was extraordinarily warm. Ayub Khan struck a deal, based apparently on the assurance that Pakistan would follow a truly non-aligned policy. Within months deliveries began and on the very day the PPP supporters were infesting Rawalpindi, Soviet Defence Minister Grechko was watching in Nowshera the Pakistan Army crews maneuvering Russian tanks. The Soviet Premier had come to ensure that their investment was safe.

The General told Alexei Kosygin to get lost. More or less.

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That was Yahya Khan's assignment, given of course by Pakistan's dearest and closest allies.

The Ossa class missile boats Ayub Khan had bought for the Pakistan Navy thus ended up in India. And in 1971, when the jolly Padishah was getting a drubbing in East Pakistan, the Indian Navy slammed the very same missiles into the oil refinery at Karachi. Above all, the Soviet Union backed India to the hilt during that war.

So deeply annoyed were the Russian leaders by the severe rebuff dealt them by Yahya Khan that when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto went on a visit to Moscow to repair the damage in early 1972, Alexei Kosygin let him have it. In his formal banquet speech, the Soviet Prime Minister threatened that if the Pakistan Government committed barbarities against their people again Moscow would act the same way as it had in the case of East Pakistan. It took Mr Bhutto two years' hard work to normalise relations and then secure the Karachi Steel Mill.

The news of Alexi Kosygin's dramatic visit was broken two days before his arrival, as it happened, by me. It brought the first load of trouble, only because of busybodies, the bureaucrats, who take upon themselves the duties of guardians of the ruler's interests. Yahya Khan couldn't have cared a hoot.

Alarmed that the leak may be blamed on him, Tabarak Husain, a vulnerable Bengali Director General of the Socialist Bloc desk at the Foreign Office, put up a note to the effect: Burki has embarrassed and misrepresented the President. Simply by reporting that the Soviet Leader was coming for three days whereas he was visiting only for 36 hours.

The PIO rang to say the boss of the Inter Services Public Relations wants to know the source. (My source, no harm revealing it now, was actually Niaz Naik). Refusal led to veiled threats.

The General himself took up his own case at the Finance Minister's dinner after the budget.

"Burki, have you stopped misrepresenting me?"

The same old bluster and the bullying tone.

"How can I misrepresent you, General, when you don't tell us anything?"

He sailed on towards other guests. Then, from a far corner, the same question repeated.

"Burki, have you stopped misrepresenting me?"

General Pirzada, the Chief of Staff, winked.

"That let's you off the hook" Apparently, I had been rebuked.

As far as the press was concerned, the General vanished for the next several months. He was busy entertaining a covey of broads. Witness the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission Report. He surfaced in autumn to go on state visits. Egypt to condole Col Naser's death and then the golden shores of North America, which seem to draw Pakistani rulers like a giant magnet.

At the UN correspondents lunch, the General performed in the gruff mode, referring a correspondent's question to "my stooge" sitting beside him. It devastated Aga Shahi, whose standing as the Representative of the country was sadly tarnished. It was embarrassing for Pakistani correspondents as well. Particularly me, for I had reported the UN for three years as a correspondent of "The Pakistan Times". (Yes, there used to be a paper by that name. It was destroyed systematically by another General, "the Light of Truth", during his 11 years of Islamic revolution).

In Washington Yahya Khan seemed to thrive. When President Nixon invited the four Pakistani correspondents to the Oval Office, the General looked pleased as punch. He had every

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right to be, though none of us could even guess the reason at that stage.

After the American briefing we asked Sultan, the Foreign Secretary, why he wasn't present at the meeting. He said it was one to one. We told him Henry Kissinger was also there. Sultan blinked, silly in ignorance.

Within weeks, Yahya Khan arrived in Peking. Here he was doubly chuffed. When he arrived with Chairman Mao for the customary group photo, they were walking hand-in-hand, a demonstration of emotion, which to old China hands, appeared extraordinary. After the photo session the Chairman sought out and grabbed the General's hand once more and walked out with a jaunty step as if they were going out on a binge.

The high watermark, as far as the correspondents were concerned, came at the return banquet to Premier Chou at the Ambassador's residence. Yahya Khan in his welcome address, reminded the Premier that the people were waiting for him to visit Pakistan and he must come.

"Yes, I will come after the elections when the new government is in office with you as the President".

"Oh, I thought you were my friend", protested Yahya Khan, the words coming over the speaker loud and clear.

After the dinner, Information Secretary Syed Ahmed came to the correspondents to request that that part of Chou's speech should not be reported. When the correspondents refused to oblige they were asked to stay behind. Then followed a proper charade, the General sitting on his haunches on the floor of the drawing room and correspondents sitting around him.

The visit, he said, had been highly successful. China was giving a lot of military aid and the rest of the usual sell. Then came the punch line.

"Please, don't report that portion of the Chinese Premier's speech."

We knew that the Martial Law wallas in Pindi would prevent its publication anyhow, and let the matter rest there.

While we were still in Peking, we heard that East Pakistan had been devastated by a hurricane. Thus when we landed at Dhaka the next evening we were certain the General would tour the province and make a common cause with the sufferings of the people of East Pakistan. To our horror we found in the morning he had flown back to Karachi. He was anxious to report the success of his latest assignment to Richard Nixon, as we learnt months later. In the process, he lost East Pakistan. For Sheikh Mujib's Awami League took control of the relief operations and swept the elections.

After the swearing-in of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the General wished his successor good luck. According to an eyewitness, if looks could kill ZAB had done the job.

A few months later, when he had cleared up some of the mess, and the Pukhtunistanis, the retired air marshals, the Punjabi bureaucrats and the serving generals and the Mohajirs had all begun conspiring against him, Mr Bhutto confided, a shadow of horror clouding his face, another of Yahya Khan's great projects. The General wanted Sheikh Mujib hanged and he himself would sign the death warrant.

It doesn't require much insight to know the horrendous consequences that would have followed had the General been granted his wish. Already Pakistanis were being reviled the world over as "bloody butchers".

The Bhutto haters, and they reside mostly in the mighty Punjab, and in Lahore, and Karachi in particular, are loath to give him credit for anything. For them he was a Sindhi traitor, an '

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their mouthpieces have said so in print on more than one occasion. They lack the sagacity and the nous to appreciate that if Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had not taken over the wheel of a foundering ship of state it would have come apart there and then in 1971-72.

(The News 26-01-2001)

Yahya's Staff Solution Derailed Pakistan

(1)

Of all the general elections held so far, the first one in 1970 is rated as the fairest. Justly so. What is not generally known, however, is that its fairness had nothing to do with Gen. Yahya's impartiality, or generosity of spirit and noble intentions. It was an accident.

The junta did not feel the need for tampering with the poll, for the results forecast by their experts and outside advisers would have served their purpose perfectly. It never crossed their minds that the calculations and assumptions would go wrong. They thought they had had advice of the best political brains amongst the hacks and knowledgeable circles.

The year-long election campaign had opened with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's public meeting at Lahore's historic venue outside Mochi Gate.

"*Larro gay? Marro gay?*" Bhutto asked the crowd, screaming at the top of his squeaky voice, punching the crisp January air with his fist. "Will you fight? Will you die?" And over one hundred thousand people responded with a roar.

Standing on a high wooden platform, erected like a big-game

shikari's machan, the PPP Chairman had been speaking for almost an hour about national problems in a language which was simple, sharp. It was also very colourful, spiced with jokes and mimicking of errant national figures. He had the crowd eating out of his hand, establishing with the people, especially the working-class, a warm rapport he came to value greatly, nourished with loving care and never lost.

That evening the streets of Lahore were awash with a fully roused lower orders. The Shahinshah of Iran's presence in town for an RCD meeting had been swept aside into the background by this human tide released by the Chairman.

Next morning, in his favourite Faletti's Hotel suite at the corner of the north wing, an acolyte was busy pressing the Chairman's sore legs. Quite understandably, for he had made not just a speech, but given a full-bodied performance. He had skipped and pranced all the while, at times pouncing forward to drive the point home. He was pleased with his success, of course, narrating with some relish the impact his showing had had on the visiting Iranians and Pakistanis at a dance in the Intercon. And he had reproduced for the benefit of his victims present there the way he had mimicked them.

Kausar Niazi had been waiting in the ante-room all morning, desperate to get on the bandwagon at the earliest. Bhutto said he needed a maulvi who could counter the mullahs spewing fatwas against him, but was not sure at that stage who to pick. Was it to be maulvi Niazi or Pir Dewal Sharif?

Although Bhutto had demonstrated his popularity and mass support during his months of campaigning against the Ayub regime, drawing-room politicians and self-opinionated hacks were all contemptuously dismissive of his party's electoral chances. Some went to the extent of denying him even his own

election from Larkana.

They called him a *madari*, a juggler, a cheap showman. His meetings were a mere tamasha which only tongawallas, coolies and the like attended. That was all. And true to the national trait, they cast around for examples from the past to back their woolly certitude. The one trotted out most often was of Attaullah Shah Bukhari, a leader of Majlis-e-Ahrar.

In the forties, Bukhari was a great draw, pulling in vast numbers to his meetings which went on for hours, sometimes well beyond midnight. And Bhutto mockers would recall with glee that the Ahrar leader had never won any election, not even a municipal election. Why would people vote for the PPP jester? They would ask, laughing, slapping their thighs, and then gorge on chicken tikkas.

The parlour pundits were sadly out of touch. Attaullah Shah Bukhari, mocked affectionately as Bukharullah Shah Attai, was a charmer, a teller of stories. People flocked to his meetings to be entertained. Politics hardly mattered.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, too, was a charmer, a thespian, but he used these gifts only as a means to project his political message and his radical agenda. His audience was never a passive crowd, out for an afternoon's free entertainment, but alive and committed. Anyone with an open mind who had witnessed a sea of clenched fists raised in response to his call for action, should have got the message pretty well.

Roti, kapra, makan (bread, clothing, shelter) was not just a catchy slogan like so many others floated by all manner of politicians and parties. It was the quintessence of a well-prepared, solid socio-economic programme. And it took hold of popular imagination, because workers, peasants, and hard pressed middle orders believed Bhutto and the genuineness of his pledge.

Most political observers, traditional politicians and, above all, the governing elite were, however, unaware or unwilling to acknowledge that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had, in fact, unlocked the door to a mass, populist movement. A new era of politics had arrived.

In July, an exchange with Brig. Ali Ibrahim Akram, one of Yahya's principal staff officers, gave some idea of the junta's smugness. An old acquaintance from Second World War days, he asked about the election prospects.

"Sheikh Mujib will score a major victory in East Pakistan".
"And in the West?"

He was told that Bhutto would win about 80 seats.

Ibrahim smirked in his bristly moustache. "Oh, are you sure you are not inflating your friend's strength?"

No, he had been given an objective assessment of the situation on the ground. He did not believe it, skepticism writ plain in his amused eyes.

"Our information tells us a different story."

A general whose political sense would have been blunted considerably by years of regimentation could be forgiven his lack of insight. Surprisingly, the older traditional politicians were equally astray. Even some of the younger, more aware elements were found wanting, totally out of touch.

That summer, it was suggested to two of the brightest, Malik Qasim and his friend Khizar Hayat, that their place was with the People's Party. They just laughed ridiculing the idea. As parliamentary secretaries in Ayub Khan's government, they had rubbed shoulders with Bhutto, but, quite obviously, failed to appreciate the dynamic political qualities in the man.

Many of the bright, educated political figures had, therefore, stayed away from Bhutto. He had managed to bring together an

impressive hardcore: Sheikh Rashid, J.A. Rahim, Hafeez Pirzada, Rafi Raza, Mubashir Hasan, Hayat Sherpao, Mustafa Khar, Fazal Elahi but they were not enough. He was forced thus to take on board some of the rotten feudals, a good deal of political riffraff, even a few scoundrels, simply to have candidates to cover all his constituencies, especially in the Punjab. Most of them were to prove a millstone around his neck, their ranks also throwing up the young Judas.

(The News 21-04-1997)

Yahya's Staff Solution Derailed Pakistan

(II)

In a way, those brilliant hacks and cocksure advisers who misled Yahya, had rendered, quite unwittingly, a service to the nation. For had the General tumbled to the truth, it would have been a different story.

The junta would have done their utmost to manipulate the poll to ensure the success of their own plans. So, Yahya's staff solution was drawn up on the clear understanding that there was going to be a badly split mandate.

In West Pakistan, the two Muslim Leagues led by Mumtaz Daultana and Qayyum Khan, the old, established leaders, were supposed to win between 15 to 20 seats each, and the rest would go to Wali Khan, Mufti Mahmud, Maudoodi, Noorani and Bhutto. In East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujib's Awami League was expected to win around 50 per cent, the other 50 per cent would be shared by the Muslim League, the Bhashani NAP and the Jamaat.

A hung National Assembly would meet the junta's requirements admirably. Various parties and factions would fight like cats and dogs, as in the past, and never be able to draw up an agreed constitution within the stipulated 90 days. Then Yahya

was to step in to impose his own, drawn up by Justice Cornelius.

Another projection linked up Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman as President Yahya Khan's prime minister. That these two had reached some such accommodation became apparent in June after Bhashani had called on the military dictator.

When Salamat Ali and myself met the NAP leader in Flashman's Hotel in Pindi, the fiery Maulana looked quite subdued. It was left to his deputy, Masih-ur-Rehman, an accomplished and highly regarded politician, to brief us.

They had asked Gen Yahya to release their workers, some 1,200 of them, detained by the Martial Law authorities. And they had promised to take care of Sheikh Mujib and his six separatist Points. This was no boast. The Maulana was a great campaigner and his NAP was a force to be reckoned with.

"The General said he would give us an answer within a week's time." Masih-ur-Rehman, popularly known as Jaddoo Mian, confided.

When the military dictator arrived at Dhaka Airport a week later, correspondents briefed by Bhashani asked him when he was going to release political prisoners.

"What political prisoners?" Yahya snapped at them. "There are no political prisoners."

The fate of a united Pakistan was sealed that day, and of much else besides. Yahya Khan and his cronies, concerned primarily with their own perpetuation, had cast their lot with Sheikh Mujib for which eventually some of the finest combat units of the Army had to pay a heavy price in 10 months of bloody conflict, and suffer, in the end, the terrible humiliation of total surrender.

The junta was not only scared of the populist Maulana but also apprehensive about the possibility of coalition between

Bhashani's NAP and Bhutto's PPP, making it a troublesome radical force.

Pakistanis, by and large, excel in wishful thinking, a tendency which scaled new heights in 1970-71. Having planned an outcome of their liking, the elite circles - generals, bureaucrats, big business, landowners - egged on by the obscurantist press, awaited the elections with confidence, certain till the last that everything was going to fall neatly in place. So overwhelming was the momentum their prognosis had generated that even the more rational, objective observers succumbed to its pressure.

Sometime in September, some six weeks before the poll, a group of fairly perceptive and hardened reporters came together at D.G., APP Safdar Qureshi's place in Pindi to greet his Dhaka Bureau Chief Babu Hashim. Yes, in those days only decent professionals used to run the national news agency. And the consensus that emerged was completely off the mark.

Both Chacha Mansuri (*Dawn*) and Safdar insisted that Bhutto could win no more than 8 to 10 seats. And, apart from the Islamabad Bureau of *The Pakistan Times*, others also leaned heavily towards that view. Finally, the Intelligence Bureau's number two spymaster intervened to restore some balance.

Saood was a thoroughly professional, highly knowledgeable and sophisticated intelligence man. Yes, they used to have his likes, too. He came out with an assessment which was not only candid but also established the extent of the establishment's self-delusion.

"Our officers in the field give most of the seats to old, established politicians and only a few to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto," Saood disclosed. "But all our lower level agents are certain the People's Party is going to sweep the election."

"Whose assessment is going up to the bosses?"

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"The one they want to hear," replied Saood, with just a hint of irony. "The officers' version."

The calculation that Sheikh Mujib would win about half the seats was realistic enough, but providence and Yahya Khan teamed up to cause a stunning upset.

First, the General refused to release the NAP workers, forcing Bhashani to boycott the elections. Then a cyclone devastated East Pakistan while Yahya was in Beijing on his historic mission for President Nixon. We, the correspondents, thought the General would stop in Dhaka and tour the stricken province. Instead, he went straight to Rawalpindi to report, as it turned out later, his success to the American President.

Sheikh Mujib exploited the situation to the full, taking over relief operations completely and presenting himself as the great saviour. Little wonder that the Awami League went on to win all the seats bar two, one going to the veteran Leaguer Nur-ul-Amin and the other to Raja Tridev Roy from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As Zulfikar Ali Bhutto triumphed in West Pakistan, winning 82 seats, Yahya junta's staff solution lay in ashes.

Brig Ibrahim Akram rang the day after the election to compliment on the accuracy of my assessment, confessing that they had relied on the wrong hacks. Yes, such common courtesies were still observed in those days.

So intense was the shock to the junta, however, that they were virtually paralysed for a few days. Not Gen Sher Ali, though. Yahya's Minister of Information was really incensed and he called for the annulment of the elections. The General, who was known to have cultivated physically a Napoleonic profile for years, believed only the Bonapartist generals had the right to shape the country's future. As he tried to actively lobby the Principal Staff Officers, Yahya had to sack him. But this corny

narcissist had already inflicted one lasting injury.

At his very first press conference as information minister in 1989, Sher Ali launched a phrase which continues to poison to this day the politics of the country. Suddenly, out of the blue, this fellow traveller of the Jamaat-i-Islami talked of "the ideology of Pakistan."

"General, what is this ideology?" I asked him. "Will you please define it?"

"Look at this man! He doesn't know the ideology of Pakistan even after 20 years."

Obviously, Sher Ali did not have a clue. It was just an empty slogan, a bludgeon wielded ever since by the Islamic right-wing. Gen Zia exploited it shamelessly, transforming the Army into defenders of the ideological frontiers, thus loading it with a highly destructive political burden.

(The News 22-04-1997)

Richard Nixon in China

As Mao Zedong and Yahya Khan came into the hall for the traditional group photo with the Pakistan delegation, the General's hairy face was aglow with drink which was quite normal. The alcoholic was soaked all hours of the day. It was the Chairman's countenance and demeanour which seemed totally out of character. He was really beaming and, holding Yahya's hand, walked with a jaunty step as though he was out on a pub-crawl with an old drinking companion.

This was not the man whose plumpish artist's hand I had shaken some two years earlier at his office, covering Foreign Minister Arshad Husain's tour at the height of the Cultural Revolution. True to his reputation, the Great Helmsman had received us then in a friendly, vaguely benign but detached manner, and bestowed on each of us an enigmatic Mona Lisa smile.

Only a clairvoyant could have divined the reason for the Chairman's uninhibited show of pleasure. Similarly, some weeks earlier; it would have never occurred to any of us correspondents accompanying Yahya Khan as to why Richard Nixon was being

extra kind, inviting us into the Oval Office for an exchange of pleasantries. The errand the American President entrusted to Yahya that day was so momentous that he was moved to cultivate even the three Pakistani pressmen. And Mao Zedong was so completely bowled over by Nixon's message, acknowledging at long last the existence and importance of his beloved People's Republic, that he showered on its bearer as unusually warm regard.

When Richard Nixon finally landed at Beijing Airport in February 1972, the Americans' especially the electronic media, were hoping he would be given one of those massive, tumultuous public receptions. The revolutionary Chinese leaders were, however, never guilty of hypocrisy. They would not suddenly shift gears and offer to their bitterest adversary for two decades the welcome they invariably accorded the leaders of friendly countries.

On that crisp, crystalline morning, Premier Zhou En-lai thus received the American President with a perfectly measured formal friendliness due to a head of state. The Guard of Honour, one could not help noticing, comprised specially selected six-footers, got up in smart, worsted khaki uniforms.

As usual, a plane-load of American reporters had preceded Nixon's arrival. Since the Chinese could not cope with many more foreign correspondents from the rest of the world, they had allowed only one from each continent.

The Americans were floundering. Used to being spoon-fed by the White House staff they were completely at sea, for the kind of briefings they were accustomed to was not the style in China. Besides, it was in the vital interest of Nixon that nothing should go wrong and the visit should be an unqualified success from start to finish. For once the Americans had to compete with

the rest of us on level playing ground, and they did not like it.

At the media centre, the likes of Barbara Walters, ABC's pretty anchorwoman, was wandering around helplessly. Since I had met her in the United Nations a few years before, I thought of helping her out with some tips about the way the Chinese conducted such visits, but by then she had become the highest-paid, prima donna of television newscasters. She looked right through me and swept past.

Those of us who had covered state visits to Beijing knew that the success of Nixon's trip was almost guaranteed. The Chinese would have already hammered out with Henry Kissinger the main points of a joint communiqué, otherwise the visit would not have taken place. And bearing in mind Mao's principled and consistent position, Nixon would have conceded already there was only one China.

In order to introduce the foreign press to some of its accomplishments and to project the country, the government had organised several programmes. A visit to a Chinese division attracted, not surprisingly, several Americans, including Walter Cronkite, the CBS anchorman. It emerged during the commander's briefing that the division had fought in Korea. The Americans seemed to realise that they had chosen perhaps not the right programme, a realisation a firepower display later reinforced.

With snow lying on the ground and a bitterly cold wind searing the face, the visitors were grateful for the heavily padded P.L.A. greatcoats. A squad in normal uniforms laid on a withering, highly accurate fire with their AK-47 assault rifles. As the display proceeded with guns and mortars, it was easy enough to judge from grim American faces that they were being made aware in a direct, vivid fashion of what the US troops had been up

against in Korea.

When Nixon raised his glass of motai in response to Zhou's toast at the end of his speech of welcome, he sent two messages to his countrymen watching live TV coverage of the glittering banquet in the Great Hall of the People. Firstly, that his diplomatic initiative was to be crowned with success. The second, though unintended, was a dramatic plug for that over-rated fire-water he imbibed, so much so that even today one hears, it is in short supply.

The joint communiqué was duly signed in Shanghai which opened the door to full-scale diplomatic relations and the severance of Washington's ties with Taiwan. Since the United States itself had given up its hostility towards the People's Republic, its allies rapidly followed suit. Thus, despite Nixon's efforts to block for one more year Beijing from the United Nations, China's supporters, mostly from the Third World, won the vote in the General Assembly, many of the African delegates celebrating their long-delayed vindication with a jig in the aisles.

The People's Republic thus shed its pariah status and emerged on the world stage as a legitimate major power with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The United States was, however, not alone in abandoning its two decades-old rigidity. Though the Americans were in no position to know it at the time, China itself was already in a state of flux.

Some three weeks before Richard Nixon's trip, one came across a laxity in behaviour and discipline, individual and collective, which was never encountered before. Covering Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's visit, it became apparent that the traffic, largely cyclists and pedestrians, was visibly reluctant obey the policeman and let the delegation's cars come out of the Beijing Hotel, some actually disobeying and crossing the passageway.

In the past, the Chinese conducting officers would never accept an invitation to share the fruit and sweets placed in the hotel, room as part of hospitality. The code of conduct was observed that strictly. Now, one of them, an old familiar face, made bold to actually ask for an apple.

In all the previous tours of duty, it had been observed that the men's attitude towards women, native and foreign, was always prudishly correct, there never was even a hint of sexual interest. The Pan Am plane bearing Nixon's media people had brought along some beautiful airhostesses, and in mini-skirts. At Shanghai Airport, for the first time young cadres were seen having a good, unabashed peep at their shapely legs.

Looking back one can see that Richard Nixon's appearance in and subsequent cultivation of the People's Republic had accelerated the loosening up of Chinese moral values and norms of conduct instilled and rigorously observed for over four decades of revolutionary struggle. It also marked the beginning of the end of Mao Zedong's China.

(The News 17-11-1996)

That Fateful Day at The UN

Early in the morning on that fateful day 30 years ago, press counsellor Mohammad Sarfraz rang to say India had attacked Lahore and claimed it had taken the city. Taken Lahore? On the very first day? What was the Pakistan Army doing?

It was expected, of course, that India, having got a drubbing at Chamb, would attack Pakistan to counter the danger to its forces locked up in Kashmir. But Pakistanis at the United Nations were totally unprepared for the devastating news about Lahore. Later in the day when the Indian-inspired news was finally quashed, there was tremendous relief.

Being the sole Pakistani correspondent at the UN, the writer was swamped by reporters wanting to be briefed about the background to the conflict. For the press corps was totally clueless. They had not bothered with the Kashmir dispute for years. Apart from the annual ritual of statements by the two antagonists in the General Assembly, the issue lay buried in the world organisation's archives. The war had suddenly revived it.

As the conflict proceeded, it became clear that the two Anglo-Saxon powers and the Russians were tilting heavily to

wards the Indians. They openly disapproved of Ayub Khan's attempt to free Kashmir and President Johnson cut off vital American military aid.

The other factor behind the tilt was the Chinese backing for Pakistan. Thus when Beijing gave a three-day ultimatum to India that it return the flock of sheep it had stolen or else, these powers were alarmed because it indicated that China might be getting ready to intervene. They need not have worried. Before the ultimatum had expired Ayub Khan told a Pindi press conference that since Washington was a friend of both Pakistan and India, it should use its good offices.

The writer had covered many Pakistani personalities - Ayub Khan, Suhrawardy, Bogra, to name a few - for 10 years in London. It was not until Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto showed up in New York to attend the Security Council that one felt really chuffed about a national leader.

Arthur Goldberg, the American representative who led the pro-Indian pack, was anxious for an immediate cease-fire so as to foreclose the possibility of Chinese intervention. He assured Bhutto that the Security Council was seized of the Kashmir problem and would take it up after the hostilities ended. He probably knew that the Foreign Minister's brief was to accept the cease-fire, but he wanted to make certain.

Once the cease-fire had been agreed, Goldberg, as expected, resiled from his assurance. Instead, under pressure from the Indians who were threatening a walk-out, he conspired with the Russians and the British to try and prevent Bhutto from even speaking on Kashmir. But the foreign minister would have none of this tosh. Not only did he speak about Kashmir but also drove the Indian foreign minister out of the Security Council.

Bhutto had taken two initiatives, one quite bold. When he

was checked by the President of the Council he instructed Syed Amjad Ali, the Permanent Representative, to tell Goldberg that if he was not allowed to speak on Kashmir he would withdraw Pakistan from the United Nations. It shook the Americans and brought them to their senses. Secondly, he had secured French backing.

So when Bhutto finally started speaking on Kashmir, Natwar Singh and S.K. Singh, the young Hindu hawks, literally hoisted a very reluctant Swaran Singh out of the chair and escorted him out of the chamber. It gave Bhutto the opening to declare that the Indians were afraid to face the truth and had run away.

With this resolute stand on the conduct of the war Bhutto had already established himself as a towering leader at home. Now, after his performance at the UN, he emerged as an international figure. When the dust had settled and the Kashmir issue was back in the UN archives, certain questions presented themselves, leading to considerable bitterness:

The generals blamed the Foreign Office for its assessment that if Pakistani forces entered Kashmir India would not attack across international borders; if they were so dumb themselves they did not have to go to the Foreign Office. They should have asked the nearest Subedar-Major, and he would have told them that if they went for India's jugular in Kashmir, Delhi would have to attack Lahore.

One fairly plausible explanation doing the rounds at the time was that a group of generals and hawkish bureaucrats had come to the conclusion that if Islamabad wanted to free the Kashmiris it would have to resort to military action in the disputed state. And they had to undertake it before India, rapidly expanding its armed might, became much too powerful. Aware of Ayub Khan's timidity, they felt the tin pot Field Marshal would not

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agree unless he was assured that this limited action would not lead to a general war. And so they procured from an obliging Foreign Office the necessary assurance.

Why had Ayub Khan risked the action when his armed forces were so dependent on American aid for ammunition and spares? After having taken the plunge, why did he cave in so soon, especially when Chinese support was forthcoming and a united people were wholly behind him?

There was a strong feeling that had the Field Marshal continued the war for some six months, Pakistan would have emerged at the end of it, badly battered perhaps, but a nation. For it is only shared sufferings that bind people together.

The Indians, with a superiority of three to one, had been beaten off on all fronts largely because young officers had personally led the troops into battle. At the end of Ayub Khan's bloody misadventure one felt terribly sorry for a large number of those majors and captains who had sacrificed themselves in vain.

Now looking back, one feels doubly saddened. Far from liberating Kashmir, the generals have gone on to use the army to conquer their own people twice, leading to disastrous consequences. The first time, with Gen. Yahya Khan wanting to continue his "Black Dog" binge forever, they lost half the country. The second time, Gen. Zia's 11 years of Islamic military dictatorship have brought the remaining half to the brink of self-destruction.

(The News 06-09-1995)

The Simla Pact Story

Dusk was falling. We sat around on the manicured lawn of Himachal Bhawan; Chacha Mansuri, Amjad Hussain, self, having a gup in Simla's liquid, luxurious air. It was the penultimate day of the conference, and we were whiling away time, as correspondents often do, waiting for the story to break. The Pakistani diplomats were not giving away much, suggesting only a vague hopefulness with a stiff upper lip. Dilip Mukherji of *The Times of India* had, however, told me in the afternoon the talks were not going well. And he should know, for he was a member of Indira Gandhi's Kitchen cabinet.

Suddenly, a thin, squeaky voice called out my name and as we looked up there was the tall, commanding figure standing on the balcony. It turned out that we were directly below President Bhutto's first-floor window and our chatter had wafted up to him.

In a corner of the drawing-room, Benazir was perched on what seemed like a divan. First, the President teased his daughter, with that typical smirk of his, about how she was giving interviews to Indian papers and taking the limelight away from him.

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Then he quietly revealed that there was a deadlock. The Indians were trying to link Kashmir with the question of PoWs and withdrawal of troops and seeking major concessions. Officials were having another round of talks at that very moment but nothing might come of it.

Despite Mukherji's warning, it came as a shock. Those of us who had been following developments closely believed that Indira Gandhi, too, needed the conference to succeed. When I pointed this out, the President cautioned with a finger across his lips and then pointing towards the ceiling light to indicate the place was bugged. A little drama, carefully sketched, followed in a fuller voice for the benefit of the bug.

"I'm so concerned, you know, about our prisoners of war and what they must be going through", the President said. Then he really piled on the agony: "I no longer sleep in my bed. I sleep on the floor to show solidarity with our soldiers."

Benazir, one could see from the frown, was astonished by the last bit of the charade.

Clearly, this was a deflection, a dodge. The President was establishing for Indira Gandhi the point that he was most vulnerable on the PoW issue and it was his biggest problem so that she would want to hold on to the PoWs as a major lever. And she might be ready to let go the territory captured by the Indian troops as part of a compromise deal. The reasoning was simple but solid.

India could not hold on to the PoWs for ever. Since the war was over, it would have to release them sooner or later. But if a withdrawal from occupied territory was not secured now, it would be very difficult to dislodge the Indians later on. Despite all the UN resolutions, the Arab lands seized by Tel Aviv in 1967 war were still under Israeli control five years hence.

The President had to resort to the little game, and rely heavily on his diplomatic skill, because as the leader of a defeated nation he had very little going for him. Of course, he had done whatever he could to prepare for this unequal encounter. He had undertaken two whirlwind tours of the Middle East and Africa to ask leaders of some 20 friendly states to mount political pressure on Delhi.

In the second of these trips, the President had visited 12 countries in 13 days. Thanks to two of the PIA's finest pilots, Abdullah Baig and Taimur Baig, the Boeing would land exactly on schedule. Bhutto's elegant figure would come bouncing down the gangway and he would go straight into talks with his hosts.

Exhausted by the punishing pace, Foreign Secretary Iftikhar Ali was heard complaining that he could not keep up with the President. "The man is some sort of a Jin, and never seems to tire."

In addition to this tremendous diplomatic drive, the President had tried to soften up the Indians by including in his delegation some of Delhi's known Pakistani friends and sympathisers. Arbab Sikander, the NAP leader and Governor of the Frontier was there and so was Mazhar Ali Khan. Besides, Mr. Bhutto had asked one of his minions to write a highly conciliatory piece which Khawaja Asaf, the Editor, had very reluctantly agreed to publish in *The Pakistan Times* just a few days before the conference.

In spite of all these preparations, however, Mr. Bhutto had landed at Chandigarh Airport in a very tense frame of mind. Sardar Swaran Singh, India's wily foreign minister, received his old adversary affably enough but one could see the tension in Mr. Bhutto's arched back.

On the drive up the hills, at every village people had lined up

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along the road; silent, sullen crowds, making one conscious it was enemy territory. Simla looked shabby, dilapidated, almost unrecognizable. Gone was the glamour of its pre-partition days when the elite of northern India would arrive to rub shoulders with the Sahibs and the Maharaja of Kapurthala would go past in his quaint buggy drawn by a Zebra. In a way, the seedy former summer capital of the British Raj was perhaps a salutary setting for this conference of the two successor states which had very rapidly made such a hash.

For four days, officials had been negotiating, exchanging drafts, haggling, and getting nowhere. Now they had reached an impasse. This would end only if the victor was made to see the advantages of an honourable disengagement.

The officials, Special Assistant Rafi Raza and Iftikhar Ali, came back. On the way out of the President's room I found out from Iftikhar that there was no change. That night a story went out to *The Pakistan Times* about the Indian demands on Kashmir. The key element in it, however, was that President Bhutto would never concede anything on Kashmir and would much rather go back without an agreement.

Next morning, when the copter brought from Lahore its daily supply of Pakistani papers and the correspondents read my report, they tackled Aziz Ahmad. The Secretary-General Foreign Affairs maintained, with a bureaucrat's habitual attempt at secrecy, that he was not aware of any deadlock. But the story had an impact on the Indians, for they knew, courtesy the bug, that I had been briefed by President Bhutto personally.

(The News 03-07-1996)

A Diplomatic Coup

The talks had attracted a whole swarm of Indian reporters as well as foreign correspondents based in Delhi. They had been waiting impatiently for five days to get at the President, especially the Indians for whom he was a magnet as well as a bete noire. Thus, when Mr. Bhutto finally came to address the press conference late in the afternoon he was confronted by a seething phalanx.

In his opening remarks the President said that he would have been making a very different kind of statement but for a certain development that had taken place during the course of his farewell call on the Prime Minister of India. "Now the officials are going to have another meeting."

It was plain that some sort of a break-through had occurred. The Indian correspondents, however, went ahead with their agenda, firing away, one after the other, hostile, even nasty questions. Mr. Bhutto had mastered over the years the art of dealing with some of the toughest press corps in the world: New York, Washington, London. He handled this Indian pack with ease and considerable patience. Then he proceeded to take the wind out of

their sails:

"Gentlemen, I know you don't like me. But let me tell you, you've got to like me, because I am the elected leader of the people of Pakistan." Pin-drop silence. And the assault fizzled out.

During the farewell call, as Mr. Bhutto told me later, he regretted the failure of talks, adding that Mrs. Gandhi would have to come to Pakistan for the next round. Then he gently slipped in the observation that actually the two sides did not seem to be that far apart and an agreement could have been worked out. There were just two or three phrases and some sub-clauses that needed adjustment, revision.

Indira Gandhi who, it was known, was under international pressure and wanted the conference to succeed, asked for details.

As the president narrated the story with obvious self-satisfaction, he had taken a copy of the final draft with him. He pointed out the places in the text, mainly dealing with Kashmir, which required adjustments and also roughly how it could be done. The Indian Premier at once agreed that the officials should meet and revise the draft accordingly.

This was diplomacy at its best. Mr. Bhutto had carefully planned and beautifully timed the initiative, making the formulation tempting enough for Mrs. Gandhi to fall for it. It had come as no surprise, for the President was a consummated negotiator. By then he had exchanges with all the leading players of the times: Charles de Gaulle, Kennedy, Nixon, Mao Ze-dong, Zhou En-lai, Nikita Khrushchev, Tito, Nasser, Nehru; and mastered the skills of diplomacy and the cut and thrust of negotiations.

The officials, meeting went for several hours, and then came the news that an agreement had been reached. Looking for someone to get the details I came across the billiard room, its door wide open, and there sitting cross-legged on the billiard table was

Jaggiwan Ram, with the text in his hands and surrounded by Swaran Singh and Chavan, Mrs. Gandhi's inner cabinet, scrutinising the agreement.

Apart from changing the "ceasefire line" into the "line of control", Pakistan's position on Kashmir was safe and secure with reference to the United Nations and the inclusion of a sub-clause preserving the respective positions of the two countries. And there was the plum the President had picked: the vacation of occupied territory within 30 days of the ratification of the pact by Parliaments of the two countries.

After the pact was signed in the Banquet Hall, I dived into the room of one of our ministers and phoned in the story. As I was about to go down the stairs, the President whose door was ajar, called me. Pilloo Mody, a leading Indian politician and his wife were there. Mr. Bhutto introduced me to this old Parsi buddy from Bombay and later the author of *Zulfi, My Friend*, with the remark that the Khakis did not like me because I had been critical of their role.

The President handed me a copy of the Accord to read and comment. A ticklish job, but I found it to be a good agreement. Pakistan had given away little, nothing of any substance or consequence. I said as much to the President. The opposition, I thought, might try to find fault with the formulation on Kashmir, the "line of control" phrase in particular.

As I stood up to leave, the President came forward beaming. I congratulated him and he shook hands warmly. Mr. Bhutto had every reason to be pleased with himself: he had brought off a diplomatic coup.

During the debate in the National Assembly, the two main pillars of the opposition - Abdul Wali Khan and Mufti Mahmud - did not oppose the Simla Accord, for they still retained a soft

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corner for India. In fact, Mufti, the JUI leader, relished the opportunity provided by the country's breakup to remind the House that his bearded lot had not been a party to Pakistan's "sinful" creation. However, this did not stop others inside the National Assembly and people like Asghar Khan outside it, to charge that there were damaging secret clauses to the pact, a most irresponsible concoction.

The Indians vacated 5,000 sq miles of Pakistan territory within the stipulated period. Eventually the 90,000 PoWs also came home, but not before Sheikh Mujibur Rehamn making a determined bid to pluck out certain officers for holding war-crimes trials. The President was aware of the atrocities committed in East Pakistan, but he would never allow the honour of the armed forces to be compromised.

Finally, the Bangladesh President asked, as Mr. Bhutto confided to me, that he should be allowed to retain just one officer for a war-crimes trial. And the man he asked for was Maj-Gen Rao Farman Ali. The President refused, of course.

The Simla Pact was signed just after midnight of July 2-3, 1972. Five years later, almost to the day, the colonels and generals whose honour Mr. Bhutto had safeguarded so resolutely, committed treason and ousted the elected Prime Minister. Then they organised his judicial murder with the connivance of Maulvi Mushtaq's Kangaroo court at Lahore and Anwar-ul-Haq, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and his three Punjabi colleagues, including that Tarzan of integrity, Nasim Hasan Shah.

(The News 04-07-1996)

The Lahore Islamic Summit

Lahore was all agog with excitement, colour, pomp and ceremony bustle, and history in the round. The Lahoris were in their true element, bloated with self-regard. The world had come to them. Or at least the Muslim world had, and it did wonders to their individual and collective egos. The Islamic Summit of 1974 was the country's first, and as it happens, the only major diplomatic exercise on the international stage, and it was all happening in their midst.

"Now nobody can touch Bhutto for another ten years." That was "Meem Sheen", Mohammad Shafi the columnist, in his typical high-strung declaratory style, reflecting public euphoria on the final day of the Summit.

Just three and a half years later, Lahore's coteries of lawyers, bureaucrats, traders, journalists, sham women activists, political adventurers had all joined forces to drag Zulfikar Ali Bhutto down and the city's Kangaroo court sent him to the gallows.

Shafi, a colleague from the early days of *The Pakistan Times*, had lived in Lahore for a quarter century by then. But he had obviously overlooked its leading circles' long tradition of

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treachery against the central authority and its diabolical propensity for mischief. Shafi's bold assertion was, however, neither unique nor overdrawn. The Summit was an outstanding, unqualified success. And there was the solid Islamic icing on the cake which should have satisfied the hunger for the leadership of the Muslim world.

It is worth recalling for the benefit of the younger generation that the premier had gone out of his way to restore the prestige and honour of the armed forces. Which had been reviled throughout the world for their bloody actions in East Pakistan. Thus when during his address he called them "the soldiers of Islam," King Faisal who had sat through the entire proceedings without showing any reaction, suddenly come to life and responded with vigorous clapping. It never occurred to Bhutto that the only victory they would ever win was to be against their own people and their elected leader.

All the leading figures of the Islamic world were there: Hafez-al-Asad, Boumediane, Gadaffi, Faisal, Anwar Sadaat, Yasser Arafat. The Shahinshah was the only one missing, because Bhutto had refused to postpone the Summit a second time. The Saudi-Iranian rivalry was already in place and the Shahinshah was miffed by King Faisal's financial and political sponsorship of the Summit, as well as the presence of the Libyan colonel.

There were certain semi-deranged ideologues who propagated the thought that the Summit's principal purpose was to bring about the recognition of Bangladesh. Of course, the fraternal forum had provided an excellent opportunity to soften up the ground for an honourable patch-up. With the help of Asad and Boumediane, a resolution of the issue was achieved, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was welcomed in Lahore and attended the Summit. Obviously, Bhutto had planned to use the Summit to

facilitate an honourable reconciliation between Pakistan and Bangladesh. But he was rarely, if ever, one dimensional, either in his personal life or his policies.

It was not generally known within the country that Yahya Khan's military operations had not only earned Pakistan the reputation of a barbaric state internationally, but also soiled its reputation in the Muslim countries as well. So by holding the Summit, Bhutto had sought to bring about Pakistan's rehabilitation as a civilised country.

The gathering of some of the leading lights of the third world demonstrated to the Indians that Pakistan was no longer isolated and friendless. And drawing Sheikh Mujib into the Islamic fold was a good way of loosening India's stranglehold on Dacca.

The presence of all the petro-dollar rich Gulf states and Libya provided Bhutto the opening for placing a large number of workers in well-paid jobs. Eventually over a million of them were earning good money and sending back some three billion dollars a year. The benefits of this Bhutto initiative were reaped by the Zia Junta and rapidly squandered.

A staunch supporter of the Palestine cause, Bhutto used the Summit to accord Yasser Arafat and his PLO a formal, international recognition.

The only discordant note was struck by the Afghan delegate, Abdur Rehman Pazhwak, who thought that Bangladesh's emergence offered a good opportunity to make a pitch for "Pashtunistan".

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto refused to fall into the trap and denied himself the right of reply in the larger interest, as he put it, of the Summit. Little did Pazhwak, a notorious, diehard champion of Abdul Wali Khan's "Pashtunistan" know that his was a virtual

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swan-song, and his own Afghanistan itself was only a few years away from self-destruction.

Apart from achieving a great measure of solidarity, the Lahore Declaration laid down a comprehensive programme of political and economic cooperation. One solid, practical achievement of the Summit was to establish finally Yasser Arafat and the PLO as the sole representatives of the Palestinians and their authoritative spokesman.

The Summit had gone through without a hitch, in spite of the meagre resources in terms of infrastructure and big conference experience. It was a great triumph for the Foreign Office. In those days it was staffed and run by professionals who were good enough to walk into the foreign service of any advanced state. The FO's intellectual preparatory input was thorough, comprehensive. It had to make the most of the Punjab Assembly's imposing facade but constricted auditorium. The FO had to find and upgrade 30 private houses for the kings, presidents and leaders of delegations. And the precision of the timing of arrivals and departures was ensured with the help of the Army. The gold-braided colonels, one could see, were full of themselves, prancing around as escorts to the potentates. It seemed, at times, that some of them would much rather be the principal actors themselves.

For the first time, the Pakistan Television really came into its own. Under Aslam Azhar's guidance, it provided excellent programmes, music, drama. And its live coverage of all major events, especially the Juma Congregation at the Badshahi Mosque, was brilliant. Some images, King Faisal's cut-out for example, are still fresh in one's mind today. And of course, its coverage had given the Indians in Amritsar a vivid picture and taste of the great gathering of the leaders of the Muslim world. As one discovered

some six months later in New Delhi, this had a sobering effect there, for after the Dhaka surrender, the Indians had become, and not without reason, a little too swollen-headed.

Naturally, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was delighted. When I complimented him on the success of the Summit with the remark that he had killed off several birds with one stone, his eyes lit up.

"The most important thing is that we must turn to West Asia. I have opened up the Gulf for our people, all classes of people and for our armed forces."

(The News 15-03-1997)

A Light Skirmish with Bhutto

¶¶The Prime Minister's daughter Benazir Bhutto has been elected treasurer of the Oxford Union." The Principal Information Officer was on the line late at night, and he conveyed the directive couched in the form of a request, that the story should be taken on the front page with a picture and the bio-data he had put out.

When I asked him where this request had come from he said, from high up.

"How high?"

"Very high," the PIO replied.

"Well then, you please tell that person that if he wants to have the pleasure of editing *The Pakistan Times* he should come and sit in the Editor's chair so that he also receives the kicks in the shin."

Next morning, lo and behold, all the papers that prided themselves as the free press published the story on their front pages, with a picture and the bio. *The Pakistan Times*, Rawalpindi, dubbed a government paper because it came under the National Press Trust, carried a single column on an inside page, without

the picture and without the bio.

Both Khawaja Mohammad Asif and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had insisted that I took over as Editor of *The Pakistan Times*, and for different reasons. Asif, who had moved up to become Chairman, NPT, thought I was the person qualified to succeed him. The Premier sought my promotion because he wanted to "do something" for me, a kind of reward for having stood by him for five years after he was sacked by Ayub Khan.

I was determined to stay on my two feet and work in the field, reporting events rather than turn into a virtual paraplegic in an office. Besides, I was smitten with the existentialist ethos that you are what you make of yourself by dint of actual performance and achievement; nothing more and nothing less.

Unfortunately, in this country a person's worth is usually measured by the chair he or she occupies. Leaving aside a small proportion, Pakistanis, by and large, have the mentality of an upstart, and they desperately seek a high-sounding designation to show how important they are.

Gen Zia had paid special attention to *The Pakistan Times*, and during his 11 years he appointed three favourites to the editor's post one after the other. Who remembers them now? Even more pertinent, where is *The Pakistan Times* they edited, the paper which until July 1977 was the leading English-language daily with the largest circulation? Destroyed like everything else the military dictator and his cronies and hatchetmen touched.

To get Asif and the Premier off my back, however, I had agreed to look after the Pindi edition on a purely informal basis, and continued to concentrate on my own work as Diplomatic correspondent and columnist. Thus, the call that night from the PIO, the first and only one.

A realisation dawned after a few days that I had over-reacted

to that official interference. Treasurer of the Oxford Union was small beer, no doubt. (She was elected President the following year.) Still Benazir was the Premier's daughter and a brief story should have been used on an outside page. She also happened to be Papa's favourite. So it must have hurt the Prime Minister a good deal, but he never complained. Instead, he tried to get even through the tactic of indirect assault.

A couple of months later, summons for a meeting came from the PM's office. It was an odd collection: Foreign Secretary Agha Shahi, Information Secretary Nasim Ahmed, Siraj-ul-Haq of *Hilal-i-Pakistan* and Jamil-ur-Rehman of *Musawaat*. We had hardly settled down in a semi-circle facing his table that the Premier made the first thrust.

"Agha Shahi, what are you doing in the Foreign Office? foreign policy is being run by *The Pakistan Times*."

The lunge was so unexpected and swift that I sat up with a start.

"No, no, you wait a minute," the Premier admonished me and then launched out, addressing Agha Shahi, of course.

There were two complaints about editorials. The Americans had protested about one on Vietnam. The Italians had complained about another which was sympathetic to the Italian communist party's election campaign under a charismatic new leader. Mr Bhutto was particularly annoyed about the piece on Italy, recalling how delighted the Italians were when Pakistan had sent aid after a dam had burst. And the editorial had undone the good work. When he had finished his barbs, he turned to me.

"Now, what have you to say?"

"Sir, I was not going to say anything," I replied and kept quiet.

"No, no, what have you to say?" he insisted.

"I never read the editorials," was the answer which vexed him. But as it happened I had seen these two, and forcefully

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rebutted the American complaint. Then Mr. Bhutto asked about the Italians.

"But the Italian press itself is writing such editorials," I protested.

When the Premier insisted that we should not say anything that might hurt the sitting government's feelings and so spoil the relations, I countered: "Sir, in that case we can't write about anything."

Then Mr. Bhutto seemed to realise that he might have overdone it. We had shared at the United Nations the anguish and bitterness aroused by Ayub Khan's handling of the 1965 war and the craven ceasefire. So we had had some sort of an equation for many years, and he knew from my remark and demeanour that he had offended me. There followed an immediate lollipop.

"Nasim, who is going to Tehran with me tomorrow?"

The Information Secretary mentioned the name of an APP staffer.

"No, no, you know Burki always goes with me," the Premier said and wound up the meeting. "See you on the plane tomorrow."

As a mark of protest, the weekly column, "The looking-glass" was stopped. It was resumed the following year in May, only when I realised that the PNA's agitation against Mr. Bhutto's government after the 1977 elections was part of a much larger conspiracy. As the very first piece, "The World Policeman Again," established with hard facts, it was a diabolic bid to destabilise Pakistan itself. Not that those columns made any difference.

(The News 17-08-1996)

The World Policeman Again

The United States Government had denied Premier Bhutto's charge of conspiracy against Pakistan. Quite naturally so. The spokesman of the Pakistani collaborators, and all the PNA factions may not have been really in the picture, has done the same. Equally natural. After all, they are not going to confess their guilt. Even our great "independent" newspapers have cast doubts about the charges of the Prime Minister of the country. But then, having assisted the conspiracy so vigorously in their columns by publishing every rumour, canard and incitement to violence regardless of consequences to the nation, their stand comes as no surprise.

The Prime Minister has presented a good deal of circumstantial evidence. One day, when it is appropriate, the Government will no doubt provide concrete details. Meanwhile, here is more circumstantial evidence and some hard facts.

More than two years ago when the trouble in Baluchistan and the Frontier Province was still quite hot, one came to know from an unimpeachable source that American money was being distributed in all the four Provinces. Just before Dr. Henry

Kissinger's arms-twisting mission to Pakistan last year, the American Consul-General at Peshawar was asked to leave because he had been unduly active amongst the secessionist elements.

Now some more recent telltale signs. The American Embassy in Islamabad and the consulates at Lahore and Karachi have been the principal rumour factories, in daily production, synchronised and computer programmed, throughout the election campaign and more particularly since the violent agitation. There have been grumblings by the minority of non-CIA decent diplomats who have felt the United States should not do this to an old ally like Pakistan. But the majority, including some of the senior-most Americans, have made no secret of what they were doing. With an arrogance that would shame the herrenvolk, they have been telling the rest of the diplomatic corps quite openly that they were going to have this troublesome man out.

To cap it all and to establish the CIA link with the Opposition, one must recall the statements of men like Mr. Asghar Khan during the election campaign. When they came to power, they had said, they would scrap the reprocessing plant, there would be no Third World Summit, and the Karakoram Highway would be closed. An where do defectors like Air Marshal Rahim and the counsellor from Paris go? Why Washington, of course. And Gul Hasan? First stop, BBC Headquarters in London.

Recalling what has been going on for the past two years, one can safely conclude that the Carter Administration had inherited the CIA operation, and made it its own. For Mr. Jimmy Carter who had declared in the course of his campaign that as a Christian it was his duty to help Israel, would not view with sympathy a Pakistan Government which backs the Arabs to the hilt.

Similarly, the Third World Summit proposal and the agreement on the reprocessing plant are also two nasty thorns. What better way of removing them than to replace this tough and adroit, independent-minded leader with one of their own creation who would do as he is told?

Let us be clear about one thing, however. It is a much larger conspiracy, designed to roll back the rising crescendo of demand for economic justice by the Third World. Pakistan is the first victim of this assault because Premier Bhutto has been the leading activist and besides, he insists on acquiring the latest technologies for the creation of a self-reliant base for Pakistan. The catchphrase given to this assault by the new world policeman is "human rights" of which both "Nawa-i-Waqt" and "Jang" have sung significantly enough, loud praises.

The point is that if the peanut evangelist were really serious about "human rights", then there exists in the United States itself a great deal of scope for this good work. How about giving some meaningful rights to the one million Red Indians who have somehow managed to survive the wholesale massacres of their forefathers by the European colonialists? How about finally liberating the descendants of the negro slaves who, with their sweat and blood, made a major contribution to the making of the United States? Why not make Puerto Ricans and the Spaniards of the Western coast and Texas, at long last, first-class American citizens?

The crowing insult offered by this fraud of "human rights" is the stridency of its morality. A country whose governments have dropped nuclear bombs on cities and have conducted with the most lethal weapons modern times' most barbaric and unjust war, is now lecturing the world on "human rights".

In order to grasp the real import of this "human rights"

tamasha one has to recall the Dullesian era of the Fifties. Then the catch-phrase was "free world" in whose defence the imperialist and neo-colonial power, led by the United States, had carried on a holy crusade. What was this "free world"? It included Salazar's most ruthless dictatorship in Portugal and its African colonies kept in bondage with NATO weapons, Franco's Spain, racist South Africa and other European colonies, and the worst type of military dictatorship in Latin America.

This was the "free world" which the United States and its allies were defending. Under a fine-sounding phrase, the imperialist powers were, in other words, taking care of their narrow and wholly immoral neocolonial interests. It was a policy which led the United States finally to the biggest disaster of its history in Vietnam, a disaster for which it is still paying.

One would have thought that the United States would have learnt its lesson in Vietnam. But not the Carter Administration; picking up the old thread it seems bent upon "reforming" the world to suit its own book, and launching foreign adventures. It is trying to do this even when the United States' political influence and economic power is nowhere near as great as it was in the early Sixties. It is over-reaching itself at a time when, as a consequence of the Vietnam disaster, the United States is being corroded from within. Despite all the rosy forecasts of the past two years, its economy shows no sign of real recovery and has, in fact, reached such a dead-end that without a radical restructuring it just cannot recoup, and may well collapse.

The central issue today is that the poor nations are becoming poorer while the demand for a better deal by the people of these countries is becoming more insistent. The people want bread and butter, shelter, and education for their children. The Carter Administration says: "No, you must make do with human rights".

And if you shout too much for bread, we would send unto you such a thunderbolt that you heathens would destroy your own hearths and homes, tear one another apart and lose even the few chappatis you manage to knock together now. The damage caused by the conspiracy to Pakistan's economy in the past six weeks, for example, is far higher than the total US loans advanced to it in the whole of the past decade.

The United States can subvert and undermine developing countries like Pakistan largely because much of their own ruling elites take, in the international context, the same kind of plundering approach that the neo-colonial powers have towards the poor states. The Carter Administration, trapped by its own moral certitude could in a frenzy even destroy the entire world with all that stockpile of nuclear missiles, and chemical and biological weapons. But it cannot act the God Almighty and rule the roost.

Quite apart from the fact that there are other equally mighty powers in the world, even miserable little entities like Pakistan are too numerous and unmanageable to be manipulated into a global pattern conceived by some nut in Washington. But there is mounting evidence that the Carter Administration, trapped by its own evangelical zeal, is not likely to help resolve the growing confrontation between the haves and have-nots. It is a more likely to precipitate a head-on clash.

It is of course up to the American people to put anyone they like in the White House and in Congress. Pakistan is too small a fry to talk of rigging or deliver any lectures. But since what happens in Washington is relevant to the rest of the world, one dares to voice one small squeak of regret.

In a very reflective and candid talk with James Reston some 18 months or so ago, Dr. Henry Kissinger, as a student of history, had acknowledged the rapid decline of the United States. He

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had expressed the confidence that if the American people were to apply their many gifts - imagination and creative powers - they could still arrest the decline. Judging by the way the United States Government is proceeding, it appears that the people of that great country do not command those gifts sufficiently to turn the tide and may, in fact, rapidly burn themselves out and much else besides.

(The Pakistan Times 01-05-1977)

Another Paper Tiger

After months of threatening noises, the military regime has finally published the White Paper on the March 1977 general Elections. The ostensible purpose of the document as it claims, is to provide a record of "the conduct" of those much-maligned elections. But after reading only a few pages of the White Paper its real aim and target become pretty self-evident: to defame the People's Party and its leaders, on the one hand, and to fight off the promised elections, on the other hand. As such, this exercise, costing a large sum of public money, is the latest in a long series of actions, beginning with the military take-over on July 5, 1977, undertaken for this specific purpose.

The March 1977 elections were fought by two parties: The PPP and the PNA. Yet you will find no mention of the PNA's doings in this 1,000 page document. Not a word is there about the bloody events of Karachi where polling stations were burnt, attacked by the PNA thugs, and PP workers, including women, were beaten up and their supporters terrorised. There is nothing about what happened in Hyderabad or Sukkur and several other places. Nor is there any mention of those PNA threats, particu-

larly of Mr. Asghar Khan, that they were going to surround the polling stations and take over the government even before the results were declared. Surely, among these hundreds of fanciful annexures, a dozen or so photostats of press clippings about the PNA would have provided at least a touch of verisimilitude to this compilation of half-truths, distortions and brazen lies.

Every one knows that at least three PPP ministers, acting on their own, had really rigged their elections, and they were mainly responsible for giving their party a bad name. But true to its style and purpose, the White Paper merely makes a passing reference to them. What is more, those very culprits have been masquerading as leaders of a so-called PPP group, created and encouraged by the Military regime, and received in audience, thereby showing approval of their rigging. In other words, those who collaborate with the regime and help further its own objective, their grave crimes are over-looked, and those who have stood by the people and their principles, their reputations have to be tarnished in every conceivable manner.

The White Paper tries to present a large mass of material as evidence, and a great deal of it is in the form of confessional statements by bureaucrats. The interesting thing is that several senior officials have given statements after months of detention and under duress. Mr. Junejo, the former Sind Home Secretary, for example, has been made to give three lengthy statements and as the White Paper innocently records, he is still under detention. There is a certain kind of Deputy Commissioner who would be only too ready to give statements against a former government, particularly when there is Martial Law in the land. So several have obliged. There is, however, no mention of Mr. Bhutto's firm instructions to the commissioners of the Punjab to ensure that there were no malpractices in the elections. But then this would

not have served the purpose.

All this kind of evidence, secured under extreme form of duress, is not going to cut much ice with anybody except the supporters of the regime. What is more, the evidence itself is often so contradictory as to make nonsense of the charges. A great deal has been made, to give just one example, of rigging by Mr. Yahya Bakhtiar. But the statements of more than one official bring out very revealing facts. On March 7, it was that the Pakhtunkhwah NAP had taken over several polling stations in Chaman and in Pishin districts, driven out the polling staff, unleashing such violence that one Deputy Commissioner had to run away. It was in the light of this massive rigging by the Pakhtunkhwah which officials could not stop, that Mr. Bakhtiar, according to the White Paper, reacted in self-defence the following day.

It has been claimed by the regime many times that the Prime Minister had destroyed or taken away official records. Now here is the White Paper stating that the record "is more or less complete". In fact, the compilers are so enamoured of this record and the so-called evidence that they have put in photostats of every kind of document. The purpose seems to be to overawe by sheer bulk, and this has produced ludicrous results.

For instance, there are dozens of pages about one case where someone had complained to the Prime Minister that National Motors were grabbing money on import of Toyota cars and keeping it abroad for PPP's election fund. Mr. Bhutto's remarks on this anonymous complaint were: "This is very serious. I want a thorough enquiry. The guilty will have to be fully punished". Then follows the record of inquiries. One fails to understand what the White Paper has sought to prove by all this rigmarole. Similarly, there are photostats of the People's Party Chairman's printed letter awarding bicycles to outstanding party workers for

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their "selfless and valuable service to the people" of their area. Is this a crime? Or is this simply offensive to the anti-people ruling elite?

An attempt has been made to show that the Prime Minister used official aircraft for election purposes. Mr. Bhutto was the Prime Minister, carrying out all his official duties and looking after the state, and where he went his essential staff went. If he were not to use copters and aircraft for himself and his staff, then either he would not have been able to campaign or he would not have carried out his state duties. And this use of official transport is not a unique affair. A sitting President of the United States fights his election using all the facilities and conveniences the White House provides. He uses the same even when he takes a trip to campaign for party candidates. This is normal practice for most democratic states.

While we are dealing with the alleged misuse of transport, it may be pointed out that when the People's Party wanted to organise a procession for their Chairman in Karachi, the PNA threatened the transporters that if they hired their trucks to the PPP they would be burnt. So it was then that Sind Home Secretary Junejo intervened and helped People's Party organisers find the trucks. As he says in his statement, the truckers were paid by the People's Party.

Another charge which television wallas took some pains to emphasise, is that Mr. Bhutto was making preparations for an election as early as April 1976. It just goes to show how mindless is the propaganda of a regime blinded by its own authoritarian nature. Under the Constitution, it is up to the Leader of the House to call an election any time earlier than the scheduled term. Calling a snap election is a long-established and legal part of parliamentary democracy just as not wanting to hold elections

at all is the curse of every dictatorial regime.

A whole chapter has been devoted to the delimitation of the constituencies and a pathetic attempt made to somehow show that the PPP Government had played unfair, because it had created new districts. What the document tries to hide is the fact that the Election Commission had done this work to the satisfaction of all the main parties. What is more, the PNA had never complained about the delimitation of constituencies.

The central point of the White Paper is the so-called Larkana Plan about whose existence the former Frontier Chief Secretary says he never heard. That the Pakistan People's Party and its Chairman had a plan for fighting the general elections is, of course, true. There were several committees for looking after various aspects of the election campaign, with one at the top including (not any officials, as the White Paper tries to mislead) Begum Bhutto, Mr. Rafi Raza and other Party leaders. Surely the PPP was not expected to fight an election without strategy, programme and organisation? Every modern political party worth the name had an election plan and an organisational structure for implementing it. If the People's Party has to be faulted at all it is not over the preparation of its election plan and for setting up various committees. Its fault lay rather in its failure to make adequate arrangements for dealing with the internationally-inspired and supported conspiracy against the state and its elected, constitutional government.

The White Paper says that no evidence has been furnished to support the PPP charge of foreign interference and foreign money supplied to the PNA. It has been conveniently forgotten that photostats of foreign cheques sent to the Jama'at Chief were published at the time in Pakistan newspapers. Besides, all the evidence is in the possession of the Government and to this the

People's Party has had no access for the past one year. But do not worry, this evidence will become available one day.

The real purpose of the White Paper, it should be clear by now, is not to establish the true facts about the March 1977 elections. After all, even the PNA's threatened White Paper, immediately following the election, fizzled out after one instalment dealing with only 16 constituencies. The malpractices in these constituencies could have been rectified by the Election Commission but the PNA had first demanded the resignation of the Election Commission and then so browbeaten was the Chief Election Commissioner that he ended up by going for the PPP candidates alone.

No, the only objective of the White Paper, as has been briefly stated earlier, is to discredit the People's Party and its leaders since they are the only political force with a national following and national outlook, wholly committed to the people and demanding the return of sovereignty to them. The document is equally an attempt to discredit democracy. Thus, we have the general, in charge of the Election Cell, questioning in London, in typical Ayub Khan fashion, the very basis of parliamentary democracy. We have had a so-called minister announcing local elections in December. And we have had the CMLA himself talking of a referendum to decide whether local bodies elections should or should not be held. All these utterances reveal one common motive to defeat the demand for national elections.

The White Paper is believed to have been put together by a couple of hacks notorious for their Bhutto-phobias. No wonder their hatred oozes out of their writings. Such bilge, however, is not going to deceive anybody, just as a year-long outpouring of poison in the media has not shaken one bit the faith of the overwhelming majority of people in the PPP. If anything, the support

for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his party has become stronger, wider and more deep-rooted. So you can manufacture all the white papers you like and we will try to enjoy these fairy tales. But those who are making such free use of official facilities and squandering large sum of public money on this tamasha, should bear in mind that one day they, too, may be called upon to render an account.

Footnote: The White Paper informs us that "propaganda and publicity always forms a vital part of the scheme of things in a non-democratic society". Unwittingly, the compilers have themselves provided an apt comment on their own handiwork.

(Daily Mussawat 06-08-1978)

Bhutto Eludes Stan Wolpert of US

FOR 11 long years the military junta and an army of its vociferous henchmen subjected Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to calumny and relentless vilification. He was a fascist dictator, traitor, habitual liar, cheat and to him were attributed all manner of foul deeds. The air was thick with constant salvos, fired not just by a captive official media. Much of the so-called free press was also an eager player in this orchestrated campaign. And since most of the more objective observers were suppressed, this false projection went largely unchallenged.

Even the western press was obliging. Apart from its own antipathy to Bhutto, it was appreciative of a military regime conducting the West's proxy war against the Russians in Afghanistan. In the process, some of the correspondents went so far as to almost justify a patently fascist dispensation by claiming it was not half as oppressive as Bhutto's five years of democracy. No wonder all the half-truths as well as outright fictions have found their way into western books as authentic stuff.

In the light of this overwhelming falsification, one had hoped that a historian of Wolpert's reputation would have a fresh

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look and come up with a more balanced account. But no. The very first sentence of his book puts a question mark against his judgement, if not his objectivity.

"No individual in the history of Pakistan achieved greater popular power or suffered so ignominious a death..." Ignominious? By what yardstick? The Bhutto-haters would of course say that he met "a dog's death." His supporters, on the other hand claim for him nothing less than martyrdom. But surely, a more detached person would be struck by the fact that the man had refused to submit to the clutch of treasonous generals and had died a brave, almost heroic death.

In his book, "The White House Years", Henry Kissinger observes that Bhutto "did not suffer fools gladly. Since he had many to contend with, this provided him with more than the ordinary share of enemies." Here, thanks to Wolpert, many of those "fools" have had their revenge. For going through the list of people interviewed by the author, one finds that three-fourths of them - politicians, former generals and bureaucrats, journalists - are easily identifiable as Bhutto haters. And that is not all.

Wolpert is particularly appreciative of the material provided by Ardeshir Cowasjee. It is no secret that this gadfly, elevated here fondly to the status of "a gentleman scholar", loathes Bhutto with such passion that venom seems to ooze out of his very pores. Similarly, the author cites "The Outlook" whose editor sat in the lap of the military dictator all those years and helped write the junta's white papers against Bhutto. And there is no evidence that this wholly partisan bunch's views have been compensated in any way. In fact the author's own bias finds expression in subliminal poison-darts launched at crucial moments.

".....inherently incompatible within his many psyches, forever

unsure of which Bhutto he was. Hindu outcaste? Sufi saint? Or the Zulfikar - sword - of Islam?" page-20. .

"Precious little of what Zulfi Bhutto promised would ever be brought to fruition." p-172.

"Though his Washington appointments were cancelled, it never occurred to Bhutto to fly directly home to flooded Karachi or drenched Islamabad-Pindi. A two-week holiday in Europe proved, indeed, much more salubrious..." p-218.

"... Power plots and treachery were inherent in the very blood, the DNA, so to speak, of both men (Bhutto and Khar)" p-247.

The first half a dozen or so chapters are good, especially those covering the student days in California and at Oxford. His contemporaries, now holding responsible positions, have furnished a good bit of information and Bhutto comes through as a rounded personality, warts and all. Keen witnesses, particularly of his years in California, bring out not only a healthy young man's weakness for whoring and drink but also his passionate concern for the Third World and his fond hopes for Pakistan.

This addition to Bhutto's early background is noteworthy and welcome. Despite many factual errors and distortions, the portion dealing with the growth and rise of Bhutto as a major political figure is also not lacking in interest. The book fails, however, in its handling of the crucial period when Bhutto was suddenly assailed from all sides and violently ousted.

Who had brought about his downfall? The rag-tag opposition parties on their own were totally incapable of it. At the time of the post-1977 election agitation and subsequently there were serious charges, supported with hard evidence, that the US government was involved. In the bibliography, Wolpert mentions that in response to his letter under "freedom of information",

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the CIA had refused "to either confirm or deny" the existence of any information about Bhutto in their files. Well, naturally.

The author lists Howard Schaffer as one of the American personalities he had interviewed, but what the notorious Diplomat said we are not told. Wolpert fails to mention the fact that Schaffer who had cobbled together the Pakistan National Alliance and masterminded the violent agitation as the key American operator, was expelled from Pakistan. Similarly, there is no mention of the evidence minister of state Aziz Ahmed had presented to the National Assembly in May, 1977 and which has not been refuted by Washington to this day.

Actually, like a good American, Wolpert has not let down his side in any way. And he seems so anxious to circumvent the vital issue that his style undergoes a radical change and, as if to flee the scene of crime, the narrative fairly gallops to a close.

The use of "Zulfi" in the title and its frequent appearance in the text is a little off-putting to those who knew Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. It is a specious attempt at familiarity that is in sharp conflict with the temper of a man who was a stickler for form. It required a genuinely open mind and objective approach for the author to get under the skin of a highly complex personality. Thus, the real Bhutto has eluded Wolpert and what emerges is a caricature, a many-head monster.

A good hatchet job.

(The Muslim 09-02-1994)

The Rise of Chairman Bhutto

(I)

The sun rises in the West! That headline in a Dhaka newspaper in December 1968 summed up succinctly Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's memorable achievement. Until then almost all political unrest, agitations, movements had originated in and were confined largely to East Pakistan, the work exclusively of Bengali politicians. Here was a West Pakistani leader who had really taken on the government, a powerful, autocratic, strongly entrenched administration of Gen Ayub.

The Bengalis, led by the Awami League, came out in Dhaka only when they were convinced the People's Party's demonstrations were no passing show. It had sustained the agitation for some three months. And, despite arrests and police excesses, Mr. Bhutto had transformed the struggle into a massive populist movement. It had not been easy.

The first meeting with the sacked Foreign Minister at Chaklala Airport, was a shocking experience. Two years before, during those critical days of the September war, he was a star attraction at the UN Security Council, a world figure. Here, waiting at the wicket-gate to the tarmac to greet him were just two or

three young students. None else, and not a single pressman.

As Mr. Bhutto came closer and saw the writer, he literally ran some ten yards or so to give an exuberant bear-hug. Obviously, after his fall from Gen Ayub's grace, he had been reduced to being a nobody, virtually a non-person. So, to be welcomed by a friendly Diplomatic Correspondent of the leading newspaper, *The Pakistan Times*, delighted him. How isolated he had become was made even more apparent that very evening.

There he was sitting in the gloom of dusk at a table on the lawns of the Pindi Club, all alone. He must have known any number of those imbibing at the bar inside, but they avoided him as though he were a pariah. Mr. Bhutto addressed the Pindi Bar Association, but it went mostly unreported, simply because Gen Ayub would not have approved. At a reception in a house in Peshawar Road, only two correspondents showed up, Safdar Qureshi and myself.

All the leading correspondents in Pindi-Islamabad had known the brilliant Foreign Minister very well and covered his every move. Now they had either written him off or avoided him to stay out of trouble.

On his next visit to Pindi in June 1968, Mr. Bhutto arrived as the Chairman of his own political party, the PPP. And the old impish sense of fun was back.

"When I write my biography I'm going to narrate how I spent two whole days in a remote Punjabi village, listening to flea-infested peasants describing how they bed their women." For "bed" he had used, of course, the proper four-letter word.

While agreeing that people in the cities were thoroughly fed up with the Ayub regime, I had suggested that the countryside probably was fast asleep. Mr Bhutto disagreed, revealing that he had toured all over the countryside in the Punjab, Sindh and parts

of the Frontier and the peasants and workers and small farmers were all equally unhappy.

The Chairman had gone around West Pakistan, organising the Pakistan People's Party right down to the grassroots level. Leaders of all the other older organisations were sitting in their homes and *hujras*. After the failure of their combined effort to exploit Miss Fatima Jinnah in the 1964 presidential election, they had decided that nothing could be done to oust Ayub Khan.

"The people may be ready, Sir", I said, "but who's going to provide the spark?"

"The spark shall also come," he responded with a conspiratorial grin.

Five months later, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto himself lit the fuse, of all the places, in Dera Ismail Khan. Defying the ban on meetings, he personally led a procession through the bazaars. His local partymen, headed by Haq Nawaz Gandapur, that man of courage who was assassinated a year later, fought off the police and made the demonstration a success.

From there the PP Chairman went on to hold public meetings in other towns of the Frontier. The Commissioner tried to block his *jalsa* in Peshawar.

"I warned the fellow that if he did not allow my meeting I would wait and stage it the same day Ayub Khan was due to address his" Mr. Bhutto narrated two days later in Pindi. "The Commissioner had to give in."

The Chairman was having a session with some of his stalwarts in his room at the Pindi Intercon.

"Ayub can arrest us whenever he likes. Now we are ready for it, because we have started something he cannot stop," Mustafa Khar asserted, bubbling with confidence.

Mr. Bhutto's right-hand man, he was referring to their suc-

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cessful tour of the Frontier and, more particularly, to the bloody fracas of that afternoon when a young Assistant Superintendent killed a Polytechnic student.

In Lahore, standing on the balcony of the PP Office, the Chairman rolled up his sleeves. He had taken the field in his battle against the dictator, he declared to his supporters, and invited them to join. Thus, the struggle was formally launched in the Punjab as well. Ayub Khan panicked and arrested Mr. Bhutto.

Then, as pre-arranged and agreed between the two of them, Asghar Khan stepped into the breach and started addressing public meetings all over the place. Pretty large meetings. The retired Air Marshal somehow reached the conclusion that the people were coming out for him and he, in fact, was the great leader. He decided on a solo flight and took off on his own. It led to a blighted political career and a futile quest for power for nearly two decades. It was also responsible for the Air Marshal's ill-considered collusion with Gen Zia in 1977, resulting in disastrous consequences for the country.

Ayub Khan had jailed Mr Bhutto because he and his foolish advisors had calculated the pleasure-prone PP leader would not be able to withstand for long the rigours of solitary confinement and the denial of scotch. They had misread the man. Not only did he negotiate his incarceration, he graduated into the ranks of distinguished South Asian politicians.

When the Lahore High Court freed him after a couple of months, the Chairman's resolve was markedly stronger and the challenge bolder. His popularity soared and the people shed their fear of the police. Almost constantly on the move, he held big public meetings in all the major cities, mimicking and ridiculing not just Ayub Khan, but also the Chaudhris and double-barreled Khans, "*agay bhi Khan pechay be Khan*" (Khan in front, Khan

behind), hiding in their drawing-rooms. Then East Pakistan followed suit and erupted.

The President resorted to a familiar tactic to defuse the situation. He called a round table conference of all political leaders. And to counter the importance of a rampant Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his party, released Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman, thereby winding up the Agartala Conspiracy case. It was the beginning of the fall of Ayub Khan and the end of his much-trumpeted "Decade of Development".

(The News 18-01-1997)

The Rise of Chairman Bhutto

(II)

“This is my Round Table Conference!” declared the PP Chairman, sweeping his arm across at the crowd of some 20,000 packing Liaquat Bagh. In spite of the drizzle, he had drawn that large crowd on a cold winter afternoon. And he went on to inform and educate that semi-literate and illiterate mass of people about national affairs, especially politics, the way Pandit Nehru used to teach the Indians. Only Mr Bhutto who was something of a thespian and had developed a dramatic style of delivery, was never boring and, unlike the Indian leader, held the audience spell-bound with interjection of earthy humour.

The Chairman had seen through Ayub Khan's snare and stayed away from the RTC. He had no intention of becoming a party to any deal which would enable the President to remain in power. Thus, while all the other politicians - great and small, genuine and fake - were gathered around Ayub Khan's table, Mr Bhutto had arrived in Pindi to hold a show of his own.

In the absence of the PP leader whose three-month long massive agitation had forced President Ayub to call the meeting, the RTC had turned into a virtual non-event. But not before a lit-

tle drama which exposed its farcical nature.

Suddenly, Asghar Khan whom Mr Bhutto had described as "the potato in the RTC goulash," shot out of the conference room and arrived in the porch, visibly upset and angry. He refused to answer our questions. Then *gora* foreign correspondents approached him and the Air Marshal obliged readily enough.

Adm A.R.Khan, Ayub's Defence Minister, had accused the Air Marshal of being in the pay of the Americans. Hot words were exchanged and Asghar Khan staged a walk-out. Not for long Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman came out soon after.

"You're with us Air Marshal Sahib," he cajoled and shepherded Ashgar Khan back. Sheikh Mujib, it became apparent later, was calling the shots. As Mr Bhutto told his supporters, there was a *gajar halva* (carrot sweet) party at the Presidency for the Awami League leader. Ayub Khan had won over the Sheikh.

The next elections were to be held on one man one vote basis and not through the basic democracies. But first the President was to fix the rabble-rouser Mr Bhutto, and crush his riff-raff. Easier said than done, as Ayub Khan was to discover. For his flank and rear were also no longer secure.

Air Marshal Nur Khan held an air display at PAF's main base at Sargodha. It was a big do and all the leading lights of the national press were there. And who was the chief guest? Gen Yahya Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, not the almighty Field Marshal. His exclusion was unprecedented.

Some four years earlier, as chief of PIA, Nur Khan briefing me in New York about the success of the airline, had specially asked that I mention in my story "the able leadership" of Ayub Khan, so that the President might not get "the wrong idea". Here, the two chiefs had boldly shut him out from the great *tamasha* of national military might.

There were good grounds to speculate that "the friends and masters" had given them the nod. For it was known that Washington did not like Ayub Khan's acquisition of weapons from the Soviet Union and the decision to end the lease of the American base at Badaber. And the two chiefs were not known for their fondness for the Russians. Another indication came through an American academic, an area specialist who had links with the Agency.

After his small dinner party for the visiting academic was over, the American Counsellor asked me to stay behind. When the other two guests, Chief of the General Staff Gen Sahibzada Yaqub Khan and a notorious hack, had left, first the Counsellor, puffed me up a bit as "the James Reston of Pakistan." Then the academic asked me about the political turmoil and how it was going to end.

I suggested, that, according to the Constitution, Ayub Khan would have to hand over to the Speaker who would then hold elections within three months.

"No," he countered confidently, "Gen Yahya Khan is going to-take over".

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who understood Ayub Khan very well, knew that the President was in a state of funk and on the run. As he had put it to a highly appreciative crowd of Pathans in the Frontier, all the politicians, the khans, the chaudhris, the nawabzadas and the mauvis were afraid of Ayub Khan, and "Ayub Khan is afraid of me."

After Sheikh Mujib's understanding with Ayub Khan, East Pakistan returned to normal. But Mr Bhutto continued a relentless pressure, his large following coming out in the streets every day all over West Pakistan.

In Pindi the pressure was particularly intense, precisely because it seemed to hold the key to Ayub's citadel. School boys and workers would attack the police with stones, vanish into the

narrow side streets only to appear at another point. Ayub Khan was forced to call upon the army for help.

Exploiting the intimidating presence of soldiers, the police became bolder, and tried to terrorise the agitators into submission. It fired at random at people on Murree Road and killed an innocent clerk going to work. That very day the GHQ withdrew the troops. The message was clear. The Army was not ready to serve as Ayub Khan's gendarme.

"This is not what was agreed upon," remarked S.M. Zafar bitterly.

Sitting out in the March sun on his lawn, we - the Law Minister, Salamat Ali and self - were listening to Ayub's announcement on the radio national hook-up. The President had imposed martial law and handed over power to Yahya Khan asking his countrymen to support the general.

Apparently, Ayub Khan was to clamp martial law to suppress the PP's movement and then conduct elections on direct adult franchise basis. The generals told him to go, because he had become too unpopular for the Army to risk a confrontation with the people on his behalf, and a confrontation in its own heartland. Thus, the country was landed with another military dictator who was destined to destroy and lose half the country.

There was some momentary relief at Ayub Khan's ouster but no celebration. Mr Bhutto was not happy with the way things had turned out. He had made one stunning gain, however. Although his political opponents were too dim and the ruling circles too self-absorbed to realise it at the time, the Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party had emerged as the most popular and potent leader of West Pakistan.

(The News 19-01-1997)

Bhutto: Martyr or Traitor?

The generals whose lust for power led to national humiliation in December 1971 were quick to transfer their guilt to a scapegoat. They blamed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for the debacle, as if he and not Gen. Yahya Khan was the almighty Chief Martial Law Administrator.

The smear, its absurdity notwithstanding, has gained considerable currency over the years, especially during Gen Zia's regime when independent opinion was completely suppressed. And for a whole decade it was open season for Bhutto-haters, including some prominent journalist prostitutes, to defame a man at whose judicial murder they had connived.

The verdict against the PPP founder has been supported by two charges. Firstly, that in order to prevent Sheikh Mujibur Rehman becoming Prime Minister he had boycotted the National Assembly session in Dacca. And he had, thus, opened the door to Awami League's bloody campaign for Bangladesh. Secondly, he wanted the two wings to separate, because he had said: "Udher tum, idher hum" (you there, we here).

To take the second charge first, Bhutto never uttered these

words. It was purely a sensational headline of an Urdu newspaper. Independent observers have exposed this canard in recent years, but frequent repetition for over a decade seems to have given it some importance.

It is, however, the first charge which has lent some weight to the denunciation of Bhutto as a traitor. Why didn't he go to Dacca to attend the National Assembly? Not because he wanted to split the country in two as his opponents contend on partisan and purely subjective grounds. Actually, if he had gone, Pakistan might have broken up into five states. Bangladesh, Pakhtunistan, Sindhu Desh, Greater Baluchistan and Punjab. For a constitution based on Mujib's infamous "Six Points" would have meant just that.

It was to somehow block this drift towards disintegration that Bhutto secured from Gen Yahya a delay in holding the Assembly session. As a leader with a commanding majority of seats from West Pakistan, he wanted to consult others of consequence and evolve a consensus on the provisions of the new constitution. Otherwise Sheikh Mujib, with his absolute majority in the house and massive Dacca street-power would have dictated to the Assembly his own six-point constitution.

Since potential secessionists here were also licking their chops in anticipation, Bhutto had taken on a very difficult task. It was made impossible when Yahya pulled the rug from under his feet. The PPP leader was in Peshawar to negotiate with the last three leaders - Abdul Wali Khan, Qayyum Khan and Mufti Mehmud - when the CMLA went back on his promise and suddenly announced the date of the Assembly session.

That evening in Peshawar, as one recalls Qayyum Khan's words to the writer and fellow journalist, Safdar Qureshi, next morning, Bhutto was so furious he rang up Gen. Pirzada and subjected him to the most violent abuse. The PP leader's decision

to boycott the session had followed inevitably.

It is not generally known that Yahya's inner circle had prepared one of those infernal staff solutions which have played such havoc with the destiny of this country. Its pivotal point was the crassest form of wishful thinking: no party would win a leading position in the elections (1970) in West Pakistan, and parties led by Daultana, Qayyum, Wali Khan, Moudoodi and Mufti would all have eight to ten seats each. Sheikh Mujib would pick up, at the most, a simple majority of East Pakistan's share. Then they would all fight like cats and dogs amongst themselves and fail to produce an agreed constitution within the stipulated three months. The way would be clear for Yahya to impose his own. The staff solution was completely fouled up by Sheikh Mujib's triumph in the east and Bhutto's sweeping victory here. And so began all manner of dirty tricks by the junta to regain the initiative. It had managed even to entice some half a dozen PPP members who were to attend the Assembly despite the boycott. And it was to counter this threat that Bhutto declared at a Lahore public meeting that if any of his partymen went to Dacca he would break his legs.

Gen Yahya, as a matter of fact, had no intention of handing over power to anyone. It is no subjective speculation. There is concrete first-hand evidence to substantiate this cardinal fact.

At the return dinner to Chou En-lai towards the end of his visit to Peking In October 1970 Yahya Khan, really chuffed by his role as bearer of Nixon's historic secret message, insisted in his speech that the Premier paid a visit to Pakistan. Chou En-lai's reply was loud and clear. Yes, he said, he would come to Pakistan after the elections, when the new government was in place with him, Yahya Khan, as the president.

A howl of protest from Yahya, came over the loudspeaker, "Oh I thought you were a friend!" At the end of the dinner, the

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General personally requested the Pakistani correspondents, including the writer, not to report this revealing part of the speech.

The second piece of hard evidence was furnished on the very day Gen. Niazi was surrendering to the Indians in Decca. Correspondents were summoned to the Press Information Department in Pindi and handed a bulky press release about the salient features of the new constitution being promulgated. It laid down a presidential form of government. And who was to be the President? The Constitution named Yahya Khan for the first five-year term.

The much-maligned PP founder will be hailed by his party-men on his death anniversary on April 4 as "Shaheed Bhutto". Was he a martyr? The matter is complicated somewhat by the use of word "Shaheed". Unlike martyr, Shaheed applies generally in a religious context. Of course, his more ardent supporters would insist that Bhutto merits it in that sense too. There is further complication that Gen Zia, who in a more stable, civilized state would have been hanged for treason, died in an air crash, is also called a "Shaheed" by his followers.

A more objective view would show that there is a strong case for supporting the claim that Bhutto was a martyr to a cause. He certainly stood up to a ruthless military dictator and laid down his life in defence of the democratic principle.

In view of the bitter polarization which has turned into an endemic disease, the controversy can go on till the end of time. One thing, however, is clear to the writer who monitored from 1961 onwards Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's performance from a point as close as a journalist could get. This blundering nation may not have a leader of his calibre and vision for another hundred years.

(The News 01-04-1995)

Press Freedom, Zia Style

Within days of the *coup d'etat*, Zia-ul-Haq held a press conference in what was then GHQ Hall. It was a farce, but in its way quite revealing. For there Gen. "Light of Truth" launched almost all the lies that were to mark the 11 years of his very special version of an Islamic dispensation.

"I know you may not trust a general's word in this matter but I assure you election will be held within 90 days." He repeated this over and over again during that press conference. The more he insisted the more one was convinced that he had no intention of holding those elections. He was actually trying to hoodwink Mr. Bhutto's supporters into believing that they need not launch a movement against his takeover. And the deception worked.

When it became known after Ayub Khan's coup in 1958 that the *Readers Digest* was his favourite reading material, there was dismay at the General's intellectual level. Here at this press conference it emerged that Zia swore by the *Urdu Digest*.

Instead of answering questions on contentious issues, he would refer the questioner to the *Digest* and other obscurantist rags, for he said he himself sought guidance there. It became

apparent as to what we were up against. A smooth religious hypocrite who was in cahoots with authoritative ignorants of the extreme right. Still, as he claimed to be holding free and fair elections, I asked him why the radio, TV and the print media were all blacking out Mr. Bhutto and his party.

"Mr Burki you'll be given the chance to express your views." This was one of those promises which became the *dbobi* mark of his regime and which he had no intention of honouring.

One petty columnist of one of the General's preferred publications jumped to his rescue, and tried to bully me into silence.

"General Sahib, I don't say that Mr. Burki had criticised the army, but..."

"No, no, go ahead and say it", I shouted to shut him up and loud enough for the General to hear it as well.

The fellow was referring, of course, to "Swagger-sticks in Politics", a critical evaluation of the army, the first-ever of its kind. It had formed part of the series "A View from the Precipice" which appeared in The Pakistan Times in January 1972, after the Dacca surrender. And instead of paying heed to the implicit warnings about their shortcomings, the pongos had responded with vile abuse and later, during their raj, intense harassment and persecution.

In about a month, Zia had taken full charge of the country and intimidated into secret collaboration most of Mr. Bhutto's leading colleagues with one outstanding exception of Sheikh Rashid. Clever Mustafa Khar had managed to slip away to London. Then the General set about destroying in that initial stage the PP leader's image and standing. He summoned Khawaja Asaf, the NPT Chairman.

Asaf wanted to resign the day Martial Law was imposed. His friends told him not to offer his head on a platter. Now it seemed

it was about to be chopped off. So I decided to print that night a piece I had prepared about the administration's total tilt towards the Pakistan National Alliance and the media's clear bias against the People's Party.

Next day, Zia first complained to Asaf that my article had embarrassed him. Then he asked him to launch in the NPT papers a campaign against Mr. Bhutto which Asaf refused, for as a professional journalist he wanted to remain even-handed. The same evening his head rolled, and Jamil-uz-Zaman, a guttersnipe from Jullundar and the Information Ministry, took over. I was the next to go. No charge was leveled; just an order abolishing the posts of diplomatic correspondent and bureau chief.

None of that so-called free press uttered a word of protest of these summary sackings. They were all for the General. Nor was there any reaction from the journalists' unions. Sadly, many leaders of the PFUJ, specially the Urdu-speaking lot, had developed a strong hatred for Mr. Bhutto, some of them actively assisting the PNA agitation. And anyone who did not support the General's ouster of the elected PP government, was anathema to them. It took a good six months of Zia's bloody repression for those PFUJ leaders to come to their senses and recover their balance. By then, it was too late.

Mahmud Shaam's *Meyar*, an Urdu weekly, was about the only independent journal that dared to be critical of the military regime and its excesses. Thus when he invited me to contribute, I jumped at it. Although I had not written a word of Urdu since college days, I picked up quite soon *Meyar's* mocking tone of voice and enjoyed this novel experience. But it was too good to last.

Aware that *Mayar* may be banned at any time, Mahmud Shaam had picked declarations of half a dozen other titles. Thus

when *Meyar* was suppressed, he came up with *Kehkashan*, and so on, till he ran out of declarations.

By then Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been brought to Pindi jail for the appeal in the Supreme Court. He told Benazir who visited her father for an hour every day, to ask me to write for *Musawaat*, the PP Urdu daily and write in English. After reading the very first column, "The looking-glass", Mr. Bhutto told Benazir that I would be arrested, a prospect I was prepared for.

In Pakistan there is a disgraceful tradition that once the military ousted a national leader you give the fellow a wide berth and let him fend for himself. This applied not only to politicians and bureaucrats but also to many journalists and the judges. Only when the military dictator lost power did the Supreme Court swing into action and declare him a usurper, and the hacks also got busy. I had taken a conscious decision to challenge the Zia martial law even if it meant going to jail.

Not an easy decision to make when one had three young children and a wife almost totally dependent on one for a living. As a citizen of a free country, however, that was the least one could do to oppose a tyrannical, usurper regime.

According to the grapevine, Zia wanted to arrest me. Fortunately, by that time the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists had conducted a determined movement against the suppression of press freedom. More than a hundred pressmen had gone to jail and Zia's barbaric regime had flogged three journalists. It had led to severe criticism in the foreign press. The General was thus advised that since I was known abroad my arrest would earn him more bad press.

Musawaat and its editor Badr-ud-Din were under tremendous pressure all the time and for a period subjected to suspension of publication and censorship. "The looking-glass" continued to

appear till the paper was finally shut down in October 1979, the very last column suggesting that if the army's job was only to conquer its own people and rule them, it did not need 16 divisions. A couple would be enough.

As in every other field, the Zia Junta has to its credit several brilliant achievements in the press also. Other military dictators had tried to split and weaken the unions, and failed. It succeeded in creating a parallel PFUJ. Others had tried to shackle The Pakistan Times, but in vain. Zia and his henchmen either sacked leading members of the staff or forced most of the competent professionals to leave in sheer disgust, and thus virtually killed a paper founded by the Quaid-i-Azam.

Zia had encouraged the press to pillory ZAB which went on for 11 years, one old hack developing a sort of nervous tick so that even today every time Bhutto's name comes up, he hisses: "traitor!" The PP leaders were maligned mercilessly and with impunity. Now that kind of smear journalism has become almost the norm, and a part of the military dictator's rich enduring legacy.

(The News 21-09-1996)



UN General Assembly 1965: with Foreign Minister Bhutto



Yalta, USSR, 1967: fourth from left, with President Ayub Khan, in Press briefing



Beijing, 1970: back row, second left, with President Yahya Khan, Premier Zhou En-Lai, Vice President Dong Biwu



Larkana, 1972: Chinese Ambassador Chang Tung (back to camera), Burki, Chinese interpreter, President Bhutto, Sidney Sobers, US Charge d'Affaires.
First public contact between US and Chinese officials prior to Nixon's Chinese visit.



London, 1948: back row, centre, with the Pakistan Olympic Hockey Team



Barcelona, 1950: receiving the World Cup



Simla Summit, 1972: with Khalid Hasan, Press Secretary to President Bhutto



UN General Assembly, 1997: first left, with Kuldip Nayar, well-known Indian journalist, and Farooq Mazhar, Editor "The News"

Restating the Obvious

A whole generation has grown up knowing nothing but the wonders of martial law and the blessings of authoritarian regimes. Its dominant experience has been of all-powerful generals and collaborative politicians who were concerned, first and foremost, with self-perpetuation, plunder and pelf. Normal laws and established rules and regulations were violated so brazenly that over the years their own lawless methods and immoral public conduct became virtually the norm.

How widely this virus had struck became apparent during the People's Party's 20-month interlude when it was allowed to come in from the cold in 1998. Its youngish, mostly novice ministers, following their predecessors' style, were not averse to helping themselves to some of the moolah in the till. One bright boy had held a press conference to assert his right to a bank loan for setting up a mill. Apparently, he had never heard of "conflict of interest" which debarred him from exploiting his official position for personal benefit.

The older generation, whose obligation it was to safeguard values, mostly compromised its own integrity. Having some expe-

rience of the cost involved, one is not unaware of a devilish ethical conundrum. Under occupation of thoroughly malevolent forces, how much resistance, sacrifice and suffering should one expect of individuals, especially when it is almost a no-win situation? However, most of the older lot stands condemned because of their actual co-operation with the military regime, blossoming gradually into collaboration, in order to share the loot and coercive power for self-aggrandisement.

One is not referring to crooked politicians, rotten judges and bureaucrats, or to prostitutes in journalism. These were always around in small numbers to do the dirty work. Here one is talking of a majority of the decent people in all these and other categories.

The enormity of the decline becomes clear when one recalls the state of the nation before the generals had conquered it in 1977. Despite all the ups and downs, Pakistan as a developing country had fared reasonably well. Yes, there had been a decline in public morals, but it was slow, gradual and restrained. Yes, there was corruption, but its scale was pretty limited and it was never brazen. The system was holding and values, if not always honoured, were at least well understood as the given.

Even during the Ayub regime, the damage done was mostly to the political process. By and large, public affairs were conducted with restraint and established rules of administration upheld. There was a good deal of economic development. One can fault his methodology and question his goals, but Ayub Khan and his colleagues genuinely worked to build Pakistan. He had a vision.

It is true that there was a sharp decline after the ignominy of the military defeat and loss of East Pakistan in 1971. But Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had picked up the pieces and restored national dignity. His bitter opponents would never have the generosity to give

him credit, but this is what Henry Kissinger has to say about him in "The White House Years".

"... in the days of his country's tragedy he held the remnants of his nation together and restored its self-confidence in its hour of greatest need, he saved his country from complete destruction..." And Kissinger was no friend of Bhutto's.

Whatever his enemies might say, Bhutto had not only restored the nation's self-confidence but also a civil society governed by a unanimously agreed Constitution. Certainly, there were no armed daylight robberies in major cities, or the snatching of cars at gunpoint in crowded streets. There were no heroin addicts whatsoever or mighty drug barons or Kalashnikov criminal culture.

When the generals struck, major projects in key areas were well underway: cement and fertilizer factories, steel mill and nuclear plants. In a sense Bhutto lost out because he was determined to make Pakistan a strong, modern and genuinely independent state. For he fell to a massive conspiracy master-minded by foreign antagonists who would never countenance the emergence of such an entity.

During its long innings, the military junta undermined all national institutions, including the army. It gravely devalued respect for and observance of all laws through its own lawlessness. Among its many contributions three stand out: strident religious hypocrisy, insatiable greed, and complete elimination of conscience and sense of shame. Thus the general's principal descendant has the temerity to stand up in the National Assembly and take pride in having launched the yellow taxi scheme, even after it has been exposed as one of the biggest swindles, robbing the exchequer and banks of billions of rupees. Such utter shamelessness is common and a glaring fact of public

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life, thanks to the self-appointed saviours.

"We may have sunk to a level where a restatement of the obvious becomes the duty of intelligent men." This observation of George Orwell was about England of course, but it applies to us with even greater force. For we have sunk really to the bottom.

For about three decades one wrote about national affairs with at least a subconscious feeling that one was making a contribution, however modest, to nation-building. This sense of commitment became particularly strong during years of foreign assignment. For one saw how well-off people in those advanced countries were. Their governments did not have to go begging for assistance. There was a quiet enthusiasm, occasional periods of excitement when things seemed to be moving ahead.

There was hope. Little did one suspect that one day a gang of charlatans in Khaki would come along and reduce the country to rubbish, a paradise for robbers, teetering on the threshold of a medieval theocracy.

Now, after the locust swarm has ravaged the land for a dozen years, any kind of optimism would seem the height of wishful thinking. For the plague has so blighted civil society that even the basic sense of purpose has been falsified.

In a situation of such dire straits, anyone wanting this benighted nation to be put back on the rails has to reassert what should be otherwise only too obvious. One has to restate, in other words, the very first principles, the Ten Commandments of Moses, so to speak. There is, one must confess, little joy in this. It is a duty.

(The News 05-02-1994)

All the General's Collaborators

The mullahs are up in arms. Or at least certain categories of them are. At several places all over the country, religious fanatics of one kind or the other have been on the rampage, frequently unleashing acts of blood-curdling violence against fellow Muslims, even bombing mosques. Some of the fiery maulanas have blown out of proportion sectarian differences, thereby preparing the ground for this gory drama. In Malakand, they have been trying to impose with guns their own version of Shariah. Minorities have been targeted in a most unjust, high-handed manner. And no less disturbing is the fact that until the other day this drift towards barbarism had gone completely unchallenged by leaders of public opinion.

Now it begins to look as if Benazir Bhutto is the only person amongst the ranks of politicians. For while all macho males of the species have watched in silence the excesses of the clerics, she finally took the bearded bull by the horns at a lawyers meeting in Lahore. Recalling the clearly-stated aims of the founding fathers, she reminded her otherwise politically aware audience that the Quaid wanted the country to be a modern, forward-looking, plu-

realistic democracy. And in Islam there was no room for priesthood.

The Prime Minister also solicited the intelligentsia's participation in a jihad against the forces of sectarianism and obscurantism. Will the lawyers and the rest of the intelligentsia line up behind her? Seems unlikely. A week has gone by since her call and there has been no response from any quarter. The silence seems to have resettled. And the reasons for the evasion are not hard to fathom.

After 11 years of Gen Zia's self-serving, blanket patronage, the mullahs have become so entrenched as a factor in politics that as guardians of the faith, they can get away with murder, literally. The various sects command the services of armed cadres who unleash terror as and when they like. Thus everybody seems to be intimidated by this terrifying bludgeon the mullahs have come to wield in the name of Islam.

More specifically, there are the politicians who have advanced their own aims by exploiting the religious organisations. Led by Nawaz Sharif, they have been trying as hard as they could for the past eight months to topple by every available means the People's Party government. Naturally, these so-called Muslim Leaguers would welcome the maulanas' armed forays which arouse blind religious frenzy. But what happened to all those self-proclaimed secularists of the Awami National Party?

Judging by pronouncements of the ANP's distinguished Rehbar, it seems that understanding with their life-long foes, the Muslim Leaguers, is now complete. They have found one overriding factor in common: hatred of the People's party. The ANP did not quite join the Nawaz Leaguers' celebration of July 5, the day 1977 Martial Law was imposed, as a day of deliverance. But in the general outpouring of venom against the People's party

and its founder they have not lagged behind.

Abdul Wali Khan, the great secularist democrat, has kept mum about the bloody obscurantist challenge of the mullahs and assault of their Kalashnikov-toting followers. Instead, at a recent public meeting he was ranting and raving about Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Why were they calling him martyr when he was sentenced to death by the courts? he demanded.

The Rehbar cannot be unaware of the widely-known opinion of leading international jurists that it was not a fair trial and Bhutto's hanging was a judicial murder. If that was not enough for him and others of his ilk, there is the recent confessional statement of one of the four Supreme Court judges who had upheld Lahore High Court's judgement. Nasim Hasan Shah has revealed that he knew that if the appeal was accepted Gen Zia would remove the Supreme Court and try Bhutto for treason in a military court. So, he implied, that in order to save the Supreme Court they allowed an innocent elected Prime Minister to be sent to the gallows.

He may be forgiven, for the fault lay with those who made him a judge. Besides, he seems to be going round the bend. For this irrepressible man now wants to save the judiciary in order to save the country. When, pray, has any court or judge done anything to save Pakistan?

Actually, once the military dictator had "become dear to Allah" and democracy had returned, two independent commissions of enquiry should have been appointed to establish:

- A. who had cooperated with Gen. Zia in the imposition of martial law;
- B. how was Bhutto's death sentence manipulated in the courts.

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Unfortunately, the People's Party government in 1988 was never fully empowered and it dared not take such initiatives. It may be too late now, but if enough judges of acknowledged integrity can be found, an effort ought to be made to resolve these matters. For some of the principal actors whose own role in the upheavals of 1977 was far from honourable are still busy falsifying the facts.

In their speeches and writings in the press, several leading conspirators of 1977 never miss an opportunity to vilify an elected Prime Minister they had helped deliver to the military dictator's noose. The themselves always emerge as pure, angelic beings. And this despite the damning exposure of their dirty record by Prof. Ghafoor Ahmed and Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan.

Instead of continuing their calumnies at public meetings and in print, they should render an account of their collaboration with the military junta which led to a decade of darkness and has brought the country to the verge of collapse. Perhaps before they pass on they ought to make a public apology for their horrendous transgressions so that their souls may rest in peace.

(The News 23-07-1994)

Tales of a Sorry Dominion

(I)

It was 20th Century's unique creation. A country plucked virtually out of thin air and set down upon foundations awash with the blood of half a million innocent souls. And even after the passage of 54 years, it wobbles and lives a troubled, precarious existence. A singularity in perfect consort with its inheritance of some three millennia. And what a heritage.

Nearly all the great scourges known to history have ravaged the plains that are now the sum-total of Pakistan. And savaged the people over and over again. Only the Vikings and the Spanish Conquistadors had spared these parts.

It is not easy to pick the pre-eminent horde. Savagery on that scale is mind-boggling, immeasurable. The Aryans, however, come pretty close to earning the laurel wreath. Not simply because theirs were the earliest forays: circa 1,500 B.C. More telling, they were the Hitlers of their day, imposing a racist hierarchy of caste. It shackled the indigenous population to the ball and chain of a pariah. A branding so deep and searing it has endured to this day. A thousand years of Islam's liberating, leveling message and curative power has failed to eradicate altogether

er the insidious prevalence of the evil.

Till today, the socio-economic fabric admits only the chaudhris, khans, waderas, and sirdars to its top, dominant rung. The rest remain the lower orders, a mere coat of paint above the untouchables. One ever-visible and larger than life Nawabzada had faulted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto only on one count. The populist had given the peasantry and the rest of the scum ideas and made them insolent, insufferable.

"They no longer pay you the respect that is your due," he would rant, pulling at his gilded hookah.

The Aryans, the Nawabzada's progenitors, were the pioneers in decimation. All their putative cousins, too, came thundering down the Khyber and other passes, the most illustrious amongst the early predators being Alexander. Mercifully, he had already quenched his thirst for vengeance by reducing Persepolis, the Persian jewel, to cinders. His inroads were thus largely gladiatorial tournaments. The one major wound he did inflict was to break, with the help of native collaborators, Porus, the only leader the Punjabi loudmouths ever produced.

Then it was the Huns turn to pillage. And the Mongols who so loathed the bricks and mortar of cities, their monumental buildings and libraries, that they sacked and devastated every metropolis they came across. The Turkomans and the Moguls were next, with a penchant for raising pyramids of human heads. The Afghans, too, were here to visit upon these benighted lands satanic carnage and plunder.

Each host first destroyed everything of value and intrinsic worth, and then laid out their own constructs for their successors' sword and fire engines. No foundation thus remained in place long enough to allow the erection of not just other superstructures, but more crucially, durable institutions for running the

business of state and rules and traditions for the conduct of civil society. Is it any wonder that the oldest edifice of any consequence still in one piece is no older than 335 years? That, too, courtesy a major restoration begun by Sikander Hyat Khan.

The Badshahi Masjid, the writer remembers with a shudder, was a completely shattered shell in 1940, the year Mohammad Ali Jinnah demanded Pakistan under its very shadow. That was the handiwork, if you please, of the Sikhs, Pakistan's newfound friends acquired by none other than that eminent Muslim statesman, Gen Zia-ul-Haq.

Genetic engineering of such magnitude by the invader's sword and decree, spread over some three millennia, burnt holes into the very psyche of the victims. And massive incursions of new barbarians at regular intervals could only intensify the affliction. There emerged finally, during modern times, a species horrendously flawed, violent, vulgar. It rose in sheer lawlessness, totally unrelieved by civic virtue and enamoured not a little of thuggery.

Then the British arrived to take their turn. By then, fortunately, the Anglo-Saxon tribe, and what a bloodthirsty lot that was, had largely sated its lust elsewhere, particularly in North America. And to grant them their due, the Victorian Brits did try to tame and civilize the marauders and actually attempted the creation of a civil society, observing at least a modicum of legal norms. At the end of their 99-year lease, however, they sullied their honour in no uncertain manner. The Albion gave the fledgling state a parting kick of such perfidy that it has still not quite found its feet.

Lord Mountbatten coerced Radcliffe to falsify the Boundary Commission's award, at the last minute, to provide Jawahar Lal Nehru, the atavistic Kashmiri Pundit, direct physical access to

Kashmir. Thus, Pakistan was shorn of a vital limb and the Viceregal chicanery injected a poison into the Sub-Continent's bloodstream.

The British tailored their scuttle in a fashion, made familiar by their present-day cousins across the Atlantic, which would ensure they did not have to ferry back any body bags. It was a callous dereliction of responsibility that inflicted on Pakistan a terrible burden of displaced population and a trauma from which it has still to recover fully. In a two-way traffic, some 12 million terrified people fled across new Punjabi borders in a matter of three months. A million paid with their lives. One can never banish from memory that nightmare of endless caravans of a bloodied mass of humanity.

Pakistan has lived under the menacing shadow of a hegemon, ever apprehensive of the barely concealed revanchist urge to undo it. The vengefulness surfaced dramatically a day or two before Gen Tiger Niazi, that mighty warrior, was to surrender in Dhaka, when the writer heard, timbers shivering, on BBC radio Indira Gandhi crowing at a public meeting in Delhi. We have taken revenge for the thousand years of Muslim occupation of Bharat, she had thundered, as became Indira, an incarnation of the Aryans' god of war.

There is a chapter of pre-history that deserves to be summoned to relieve at least partially, this bleak and bloody chronicle and place it in perspective. The Indus Valley civilization was nearly as rich and advanced as that of the coterminous Sumer and of Egypt. Since no evidence of great palaces has been revealed, it was almost egalitarian, with a well-organised civil structure and community services.

Suddenly, around 1,500 B.C. its cities vanished without a trace. But for the British archaeologists one might not have

known of their existence. Did the Aryan invaders destroy them? Was it the Indus changing its course? Or did they implode? We may never know, though clear traces of fire at some of the sites would suggest internal strife, a speculation quite in harmony with the current internecine disarray of their progeny and, therefore, plausible. For the descendants of the builders of Harappa and Mohenjdarro, subsumed now in the larger farrago of savage invaders, seem to be teetering on the brink of yet another calamity.

Some four years ago, foreign think-tanks which often serve as a venomous extension of intelligence agencies, started calling Pakistan names: a failed state, a terrorist nation, a lair of Islamic fundamentalists. In recent times, a new breed of freewheeling commentators, in occupation of Pakistan media, have entered the field. They diagnose, week after week, ills crippling the country and prescribe ways to their instantaneous cure. The airy-fairy simplifications, the stuff of much intellectual natter in sanitized drawing-rooms, are little help in coming to grips with the crux of the crisis or even to locate the crux. They reflect in a way the abject bankruptcy of the ruling circles. An elite, mostly semi-literate and incorrigibly utopian, who are now knocking at the gates of dystopia. A stunning performance. Perhaps it is time for a battered old warhorse who observed, often from close quarters, the whole creaky turn of the wheel, to take the field once more. And essay, with some trepidation, a narrative of botched opportunities, egregious follies and the inherent limitations of character that have driven the dominion to a sorry pass.

(The News 26-06-2001)

A Confederacy of Criminal Tribes

(II)

When the first batch of students and their uncouth retinues arrived at the Chiefs College, Lahore, the Principal was shocked out of his wits. Am I to make gentlemen out of these marauders? he protested. Marauders, cattle-thieves, thugs; the British had inherited from the Sikhs congeries of very unruly subjects. In the south, they had on their hands an equally recalcitrant mob, led by rogue waderas and wily sardars.

Bringing into play their considerable empire-building expertise, the Brits set about enforcing a modicum of order. The pen and the sword were both brought to bear upon the parlous state of affairs.

The pen predominated in areas relatively easier to subdue and tame: central and eastern Punjab, the so-called settled districts of the Frontier and Baluchistan and most of Sind. The sword subdued the wilder parts and draconian Frontier Crimes Regulations were enforced with an iron hand.

Within a decade of the take-over, the East India Company's real estate was nationalised into Queen Victoria's Indian Empire. The British bureaucracy, by then comprising mostly enlightened

fellows, introduced a proper administrative structure, made laws and established courts. It introduced a scantling of good governance. The populace, especially in the Punjab, heaved a sigh of relief. They had suffered greatly at the hands of local Sardars and their gangs of plunderers. The rampage had earned the Sikh Raj the sobriquet of "Sikha Shahi".

The British crafted a system of education designed primarily, though not exclusively, to securing the collaboration of pliant chiefs and loyal services of native officials. Apart from the Chiefs College, several government colleges were established, the most prestigious and influential being the one at Lahore.

The spoilt brats of the chiefs were taught the manners, the language and the sports of Sahib Bahadurs. Fashioning them into gentlemen was a tall order. The grooming was only skin-deep at best which enabled them to handle knife and fork at the Sahib's table. The colleges, to which entry was restricted to the gentry's progeny by the expenses and a discrete screening, were a kind of Crown nurseries producing a regular crop of well-mannered, obedient Brown Sahibs. Thus by the turn of the 19th Century, these parts were ruled by a competent colonial administration, even-handed and generally fair in the application of laws, dispensation of justice, and maintaining public order.

The upheavals of partition shook the very foundations of the civic edifice the British had constructed, brick by brick, for almost a century. And refugees were not the only ones to claim lands and urban properties abandoned by Sikhs and Hindus. The local feudals, in cahoots with bureaucrats, helped themselves to whatever they could lay their hands on.

The marauders had not changed their spots. Free now from the constraints of an Imperial regimen, the feudals, many with seats in the assemblies, asserted themselves as never before,

wheeling dealing, conspiring, manipulating the levers of power at the highest rung and imposing their wills and whims at the parish pump level. Past masters at intrigue and canny manoeuvres, they flourished equally under military dictators and political regimes. They have evolved into a loose trade union.

In the five decades of independence, only once was their stranglehold broken, and most emphatically in the heartlands of Punjab. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had gone directly to the people with a socio-economic programme, which transcended clan lines and tribal loyalties, raising it to the level of a cohesive national agenda. By ceaseless campaigning he had made its appeal truly overwhelming, roused the unwashed from their slumber and given them heart to stand up to the bullies. And in the 1970 elections the PPP's founder gave the landowners and business tycoons a drubbing so thorough that they thirsted for his blood.

Even after the Prime Minister they had elected was assassinated by the military junta, the people stood their ground. Thus, in a bid to destroy the PPP's hold over the masses, Gen Zia masterminded the 1984 local bodies elections on non-party basis. The usurper's subterfuge inflamed communal hatreds, eroding a fragile national fabric. The wounds of the bloody furcation of 1971 were still to heal. The military dictator plunged a poisoned dagger of his own into the polity. And Pakistan reverted back into its old fractious tribal mould.

The turmoil in Afghanistan was a godsend. It opened up a much broader field for loot. Criminality coursing through the bloodstream of the tribes blossomed forth and came into full play all across the country. Klashnikov law and heroin trade marched hand in hand, providing the muscle and pelf they could have never imagined in their wildest dreams. Lawlessness became the norm throughout the land.

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Neither the passage of time nor the winds of change blazing across the world have weakened the criminal nexus. In fact, it has become in many ways, much stronger and greatly enriched by diversity. There is the free masonry of robber barons. They have been fleecing their customers and cheating with a brazenness worthy of dacoits.

Similarly, under the caring husbandry of the dear departed Caliph, several new tribes had mushroomed all over the place. Islamic fundamentalists of many persuasions, with gargantuan appetites and multifarious agendas, have developed into a force second only to the guardians of the country's ideological marches. They have at their disposal a quiver-full of fatwas to terrorise with impunity individuals and institutions, including their mighty godfathers. And finally, not to be overlooked, is the bloodthirsty tribe of eternal refugees, hiding behind flimsy fig leaves their disruptive ethnic enterprise.

This then is the rough picture of the land of the pure that, according to popular self-delusion, Allah had allotted like one of those proverbial corner plots in Islamabad, to his chosen people. Obviously, one would have to stretch a mile the definition of a nation to claim that Pakistan is one or is even in the process of jelling into one. It has regressed violently in the past 25 years. Today, it presents the shocking spectacle of a rotten confederacy of criminal tribes held together by a soiled khaki thread.

(The News 27-06-2001)

Who Created Pakistan?

(III)

The generals are castigating politicians nowadays for making an unholy mess. The politicians return the compliment in equal measure. Before one attempts an exposure of the real wreckers of Pakistan, it would be salutary to establish the identity of its begetters.

At first glance, a probe of this nature may appear superfluous. A question settled and sealed, it would seem. On the touchstone of objective history, however, it shows up as a matter much confused by deceit and falsehoods. Veracity, after all, has never been a darling of the Sub-Continent, particularly when it comes to the narration of a millennium of bitter civilizational tug of war between Hindus and Muslims.

More than one version of truth has been in contention since the day a brutally truncated Pakistan emerged from the debris of the Raj. Mohammad Ali Jinnah is credited with the creation of the land of the pure. That is the established orthodoxy. It is also a widely held popular belief. The original Muslim Leaguers and all their illegitimate runts have taken pains to keep the construct in good repair. The symbiotic link with the venerated leader has

served them admirably in the pursuit of sordid political ends.

Across the border, the Congress Party in particular and Hindu politicians in general, have never let slip an opportunity to excoriate Jinnah for breaking up Bharat. The Indian rope trick helps deflect attention from all the sins they themselves had committed against Mother India.

The politically literate Lalajis, and there surely is no dearth of those, cannot be oblivious of the facts. Especially, the crucial sequence of events that had propelled the advent of Pakistan. It is all there in "India Wins Freedom", Abdul Kalam Azad's revelatory tome. "Mr Jinnah raised the flag of partition, but now the real flag-bearer was Patel," he records. And the Maulana was no Muslim Leaguer, but an ardent Congress leader of long standing and a former president.

Jinnah most certainly demanded Pakistan at the League's Lahore session in 1940. And he campaigned for it relentlessly, firing off meticulously drafted policy statements and galvanizing his supporters. When it came to the crunch, however, he accepted, the statesman that he was, the Cabinet Mission Plan in good faith.

The Plan did not concede Pakistan, but it had offered the next best thing. The provision of two autonomous Muslim majority zones in the east and the west, and the Federal Government retaining only three portfolios: defence, foreign affairs, currency. A pragmatic, civilized solution to a complex, devilishly contentious issue. It safeguarded the Muslim minority's basic interests and it preserved the unity of India.

Jinnah was never the one to lay the actual groundwork for sundering India apart. The honour belongs to Nehru, the Congress Party's flamboyant President. Within days of the Plan's acceptance, the Kashmiri Brahmin in a secularist's natty clothing,

repudiated its main plank. Questioned at a press conference in Bombay on July 10, 1946, he "replied emphatically", to quote Azad's actual words, "that the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change and modify the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought best."

The Congress President was no novice. He knew exactly what he was doing and the consequences of the somersault he had effected so swiftly. As Nehru's aims unfolded in company with Patel's during the following eight months, that press statement was transformed into the core agenda of the Congress, completely controlled by then by its Hindu leadership.

At the frenetic urgings of Azad, the Congress Working Committee did try to soft-pedal by reaffirming its acceptance of the Plan. But Jinnah knew Nehru, Patel and Gandhi inside out. "If Congress could change so many times while the British were still in the country and power had not come to its hand, what assurance could the minorities have that once the British left, Congress would not again change and go back to the position taken up in Jawaharlal's statement." His charge was irrefutable.

Actually, the Congress changed once more while the British were still in the saddle. The all-powerful troika - Nehru, Patel and Gandhi - agreed amongst themselves to kick the troublesome Muslims out. What proved to be the last straw was Liaquat Ali Khan's budget for 1947. It brought out in the open communal bigotry lurking in the dark recesses of their hearts.

Liaquat had done no more than take a leaf out of the Congress Party's election manifesto. He imposed taxes on businessmen and industrialists, and proposed a commission to inquire into the allegations regarding unpaid taxes. "Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachari in particular", Azad records, "were violently opposed to the budget," accusing Liaquat of "harassing industrial-

ists and businessmen". Since industry and commerce were their exclusive preserves almost, it meant the Hindus, poor chaps, would have to pay taxes on large wartime incomes that had gone underground.

A point was reached, according to Azad, where Patel "openly said that he was prepared to have a part of India if only he could get rid of the Muslim League." The Maulana concludes with the withering observation: "It would not perhaps be unfair to say that Vallabhbhai Patel was the founder of Indian partition."

Even a virtually apolitical naval officer, as the writer then was in Bombay, understood at once the ramifications of Nehru's statement to the press. What one could not foresee at all was the eventual game plan.

The main thrust unfolded when the Congress hoodwinked Master Tara Singh, the hardliner Sikh, into collaboration. With the backing of his Akali Dal members, the Congress forced through the Punjab Assembly the partition of the key province, chopping off a vital hunk from Jinnah's dominion. The Nehru Government then withheld Pakistan's share of the assets. A total denial of its formally allocated military stores followed. It was a calculated bid to really cripple the new state at its birth.

Penniless, Pakistan had to beg the Nizam of Hyderabad for help. Nehru released the assets only after Gandhi, in a belated spurt of remorse, undertook a fast unto death. The Mahatama was made to pay for his temerity with his life by a Hindu fundamentalist of the RSS, Premier Vajpaye's seminal fascist stable.

The Congress top brass had obviously gambled upon Pakistan collapsing in total chaos and absolute penury. Jinnah and Muslim Leaguers would then have to come crawling back into Bharat's embrace. The fledglings managed to survive.

Nehru and Patel and their successors have expended vast

resources and much energy for half a century to subdue the breakaway state into submission. They have had one major satisfaction: the vivisection, to borrow Gandhi's favourite word, of Pakistan and the launching of a pliable Bangladesh. A sobering reminder for the ruling circles, so prone to playing snakes and ladders as they are.

(The News 28-06-2001)



The Merchants of Ideology

(IV)

People are not required, in normal circumstances, to justify the rationale of their state's existence. Nor do they quarrel interminably over its origins and the purpose for which it was brought into being. In Pakistan's case, however, conditions have been anything but normal over long periods of time. And adventurers and busybodies of every tint have had all the space for stirring up controversy.

One charming rogue of the press, to cite a specific instance, consumed hectares of newsprint and swallowed up several newspapers delineating the genesis of Pakistan. For half a century, he badgered his readers with a constant recycling of his marvel of genetic engineering, in the fond hope that one fine morning his fatwas would become the sacred text.

Even a remotely dispassionate appraisal would suggest that there was neither any pressing need nor rational grounds for burdening Pakistan with ideological baggage. Not after Jinnah had spelt it out in clear, unambiguous terms at the very outset. And he was the virtual midwife and had presided at the creation, and acknowledged almost universally as the papa of the nation.

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Jinnah, unlike the maulanas sermonizing within narrow runnels of their dogmas, knew the basic requirements for the governance of a pluralistic, modern-day nation state. He was also familiar with the world in which Pakistan had to find a niche. Since his historic, germinal address to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947 has been suppressed assiduously by all military dictators, political fortune hunters and obscurantist Urdu press, its defining portion deserves to be recorded here in bold letters.

"YOU ARE FREE, FREE TO GO TO YOUR TEMPLES, YOU ARE FREE TO GO TO YOUR MOSQUES OR TO ANY OTHER PLACES OF WORSHIP. YOU MAY BELONG TO ANY RELIGION OR CASTE OR CREED, THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE BUSINESS OF STATE."

The state policy could not have been plainer than this. It had shut the door on theocracy and its retrograde, divisive burden.

Within a few years of the country's emergence, however, clerics had instigated a campaign of falsification. Pakistan was created for the exclusive benefit of Muslims. Its system of government, therefore, must be Islamic.

The Jamaat-I-Islami was in the forefront. Its brazen attempt to rewrite history was the first concrete indication of a grave flaw in national character. A weakness for bending truth to serve sordid aims and a congenital religious hypocrisy.

No matter what the aims and objectives, the Jamaat was hardly the one to pontificate on the matter, much less to issue Papal bulls. Its sole contribution to Muslim struggle had been to

oppose the demand for Pakistan with a venom that would have done Hindu Mahasabha zealots proud. Maulana Moudoodi went to the extent of calling Jinnah "Kafir-I-Azam", the great infidel, and Pakistan a monster.

As the Jamaat spread its tentacles, especially into the Army, and relished delusions of power, it rolled out a bundle of lies to service its programme for Islamic renaissance. First, its propagandists claimed a role in securing a homeland for Muslims. Then it sent its nifty record to the cleaners. Moudoodi's books, cleansed of all evidence of Maulana's venomous opposition to Pakistan, were reprinted. Safdar Mir, that scholar mujahid, had to expose the fraud, quoting chapter and verse, in a series of articles in "The Pakistan Times" in the mid-Sixties.

The Jamaat was in good company. All the other religious parties were hand in glove with the Indian National Congress and had denounced Jinnah's campaign. Mufti Mahmood, father of the current JUI chief, had the audacity to actually boast about it on the floor of the National Assembly in 1972. During the debate on Simla Pact, he declared that his organisation, Jamiat-ul-ulema-i-Hind, was not a party to the sin of Pakistan's creation.[Iss ghunah mein ham shamil nahin thay].

The campaign of falsification received a boost from a wholly unexpected quarter. Gen Sher Ali, Yayha Khan's information minister, floated at a press conference in Pindi in 1969, a catchy term: the ideology of Pakistan. When the writer pressed for a definition, the general modelled a mock Napoleon profile and was clueless. Little did the fellow know that he had opened a can of worms.

The maulanas who thrive on slogans and hot air, were delighted. The real beneficiary, however, turned out to be Gen Zia. By the time he had sneaked to the throne, obscurantists had

plugged the term so hard that it had turned into a fearful catchphrase. A true, faithful progeny of a mauvi, the military dictator exploited it up to the hilt.

Suddenly one heard the cry of ideology rending the skies. Lo and behold, the common-or-garden rank and file of the Army were transfigured overnight into holy warriors. They were assigned the sacred task of safeguarding the ideological frontiers. The khakis loved it. After all, it was a lot more fun whipping the believers gone astray than defending the physical frontiers against those bloody idol-worshippers. And then there was the bonus, too. A plot in the defence housing society in paradise.

As the keeper of the nation's ideological conscience, Zia flourished as few caliphs had. He couldn't care too hoots that salinity was seeping into the roots and drying up the wellsprings. Besides, he had a mighty Afghan jihad on his hands. It was one of a kind, sanctified by the keepers of the Holy Places and bankrolled by the high priests of the temple of Mammon. He was determined to extend his caliphate to Kabul and Kandahar and also reclaim Emperor Babur's Samarkand and Bokhara.

Trunk-loads of dollars poured in. Everyone was happy, the Caliph General, his commanders, colonels and captains, cronies, and the jihadi lashkar. The maulanas received the consideration they thought was their due in the Caliphate. Every few months, battalions of clerics would arrive in Islamabad in their personal Toyotas and Hondas, to further the cause and feast at the Caliph's extended table. Meanwhile the citizenry got the jackboot and a heavy dose of ideology in the shape of barbaric, medieval punishments.

Jinnah who? That beardless lawyer in a Savill Row suit who could not get even the priorities right? The purveyors of surface purity, assisted by psycho warriors, decreed that the Founder's

trptych must be repainted and "faith" given the pride of place.

The holy warriors and the mullahs of Islamic ideology, between them, have bestowed upon an ungrateful nation several fabulous gifts. There are, for example, some two million converts to the wonder drug, heroin. Three million Afghan guests are here to enrich the confederacy's tapestry of crime. Several lashkars under the command of valorous clerics have turned all the cities and towns into spectacular killing fields. Each faction is determined to settle, according to its lights and with jihadi klashnikovs, all the controversies of the past 14 centuries.

The plague is really raging now, threatening to devour the hakims and their besieged patients alike. Welcome to the citadel of Islam!

(The News 29-06-2001)

That Other Pakistan

(V)

An entire generation has grown up in the loving embrace of generals in a country in perpetual crisis of one sort or the other. The younger people may have heard stories about the past, but they would not know that it was another country. A vastly different Pakistan, in fact.

The older generations have only hazy notions of it. Mostly, they are far too busy milking this one to have the time or the desire to recall the other. Yet, before examining the wreckers' handiwork of the past 25 years, that country needs to be summoned. It is the only means of bringing into focus the enormity of the demolition.

A clutch of generals had drawn the dividing line on July 5, 1977. The writer has straddled the divide as a professional observer, and spared thus far the national blight of amnesia, can bear witness to the record of both.

Let it be said straight out that a citizen of pre-1977 vintage visiting it would have difficulty recognizing the place. Innocent of the new law and order, he may end up being kidnapped for ransom as his compatriots returning from petro-pastures of the

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Gulf are at Islamabad airport.

A good way to begin reconstruction of the earlier version is to sketch in what it did not have. It was, for instance, totally unaware of heroin and drug addicts; the migrant hippies apart. Klashnikov, the designer automatic, was not known to many. When a quarrel erupted in a locality it was settled with an exchange of blows, not with automatic weapons and rocket launchers.

Armed dacoits did not make a habit of shooting their way into houses in the cities and mohallas in broad daylight and then vanish without a trace. Cars were not snatched at gunpoint at traffic lights at rush hours, or at any other time.

There was petty larceny aplenty and corruption in the districts and provincial towns. Hardly ever at the top or amongst the higher echelons of bureaucracy. Load-shedding was not common. Public schools were not run by indifferent teachers or no teachers at all. University degrees were not sold in open market like chicken tikkas. Hospitals were not staffed and managed only by grasping, heartless doctors. There were problems of course. Political, economic, but they were by no means unmanageable.

That Pakistan was never reviled in the world as the land of cheats or a basket case. The government did not have to beg from foreign banks hundreds of millions of dollars at 14 percent interest every few months to service earlier loans.

The maulanas made a nuisance of themselves at times. They did not command armed lashkars. The Sunnis and Shias had brief periods of tension during Muharram, but they did not kill one another or gun down congregations at prayer.

The Pakistan of pre-1977 was no land of milk and honey, of course. It had stumbled badly when another general, trying to perpetuate himself by hook or by crook, had lost its eastern wing.

That cataclysmic blow had come close to destroying it altogether. But once Yahya Khan's tottering military regime toppled over and was succeeded by a democratic government, it had made a remarkable comeback.

Fortunately, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the elected President and then Premier, had eight years of actual experience as a minister of Ayub Khan. Leading a team of smart cookies, he had salvaged the ship of state within a matter of months and put it back on an even keel.

The ruling circles do not like to be reminded of Bhutto's contribution. They had given a verdict - Sindhi traitor, dictator, murderer etc. - and dispatched him. There is no escaping it, however; specially now that the havoc of the past two and a half decades has accumulated into one huge tinderbox and is on a short fuse. The whole picture needs to be put into perspective for the benefit of a multitude of lesser, much tormented beings.

No matter how hard his enemies try to rubbish the record, some hard facts sparkle through the garbage. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto presented the nation its first fully democratic constitution, adopted unanimously by duly elected representatives of all the four provinces.

Driven by a deep nationalist urge for moulding the multi-ethnic people into a cohesive whole, Bhutto ventured into areas, which no head of government had ever thought fit for a visit. Risking assassin's bullet, he went to the wildest parts of the Tribal Areas more than once. He flew into every nook and corner of the Northern Areas to bring succour and hope to people languishing in their mountain fastness.

In Baluchistan, that totally neglected province, the Prime Minister loosened the stranglehold of Sardars. He set in place full-fledged district administrations, opening for the tribesmen,

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virtual serfs, a means of escape from the tyranny of tribal chiefs. Bhutto thus tried to pull the variegated threads together to weave a national arras.

A balanced and very ambitious national economic development plan was launched to make the country self-reliant in key areas. Defence production received a priority it had never had before. Kamra aircraft complex, heavy mechanical plant, tank rebuild facility and half a dozen ordnance factories were constructed.

A comprehensive nuclear programme of vital strategic importance was set in motion. It gave the generals the bomb to play with and most probably cost Premier Bhutto his life.

In a chance encounter in the lobby of the National Assembly six weeks before the coup, the Premier revealed to the writer that he had fallen foul of the Carter Administration not just because of the nuclear programme. The steel mill, eight fertilizer and eight cement factories were also a factor. The projects would free the country of reliance on U.S. loans for buying these essential commodities and thereby loosening Washington's hold.

The rupee was devalued in January, 1972, soon after Bhutto's takeover, and the rate was 10 rupees to a dollar. Five and half years later, at the time of his ouster, it was still the same in open market. The foreign debt in 1977, stood at about nine billion dollars only and in soft loans.

The Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, Libya were opened up by Bhutto's well-directed diplomacy for workers, technicians, the armed forces. About a million of them sent two to three billion dollars remittances per annum, a fabulous windfall for the Zia Junta, their cronies and a swelling army of swindlers.

The Simla Pact, the vacation of Pakistani territory under Indian occupation, and the honourable release of 90,000 POWs

were Bhutto's achievements. A tremendously successful Lahore Islamic Summit was another. The list is long.

Travelling abroad during the pre-Zia period, one felt proud to be a Pakistani. The green passport was respected everywhere and some half a dozen west European countries had abolished visa requirements.

Erasing the stigma of the army's barbarities in East Pakistan in 1971, Bhutto had put Pakistan back on the map of the world. It was a country on the road to becoming a progressive, developed state.

If this excursion ruffles the feathers of old Bhutto haters, all one can do is to promise them a promenade in Gen Zia's Garden of Eden.

(The News 30-06-2001)

All the Sacred Cows

(VI)

Midnight was approaching. Some half a dozen of us had been kicking our heels for several hours, as reporters sometimes have to, in the Prime Minister's office complex in Pindi. Then Prof Ghafoor and Kauser Niazi emerged and announced that an agreement had been reached.

"Are you sure an agreement has been reached on all points?" Mansuri, the distinguished Dawn correspondent, asked pointedly.

"Yes, we have settled all the 32 points," Ghafoor, the spokesman for the Pakistan National Alliance negotiating team, confirmed. "All that remains now is the actual signing of the agreement."

Next morning - July 4, 1977- the PNA leaders met to give approval. After the session, instead of Ghafoor, the regular spokesman, Asghar Khan appeared. The Air Marshal made the devastating announcement that the agreement negotiated by their team - Mufti Mahmud, Nawabzada Nasrullah and Prof Ghafoor - was not acceptable. That one pronouncement set Pakistan on the road to disaster, a road on which it has been skid-

ding ever since and is strewn with much wreckage.

Asghar Khan, a decent chap gone astray, was in touch with the generals. He had to block the agreement to provide a justification for Zia's coup the following day. The Tehrik leader, however, was not alone. Sherbaz Mazari and Begum Wali Khan had also contributed their share.

Mufti Mahmud, the JUI chief, told Afzal Khan, a senior reporter in his confidence, at the time that Mazari arrived at his residence in Islamabad one evening. Saying that the house was bugged, he took the Maulana out to his car. There, in Begum Wali's presence, Mazari pleaded that they should let the Army conduct the re-election, because Bhutto could not be trusted.

The Maulana then turned to the Begum and, bypassing Mazari, asked her in Pushto if she had cleared the position with her husband. The answer was yes. Mufti, according to the reporter who is alive and well, was shocked by their support for the Army's intervention.

Independent observers have been aware of these unsavoury facts. And both Prof and Nasrullah Khan have repeatedly asserted that the PNA had reached an agreement with the Bhutto government for holding elections on October 15, 1977.

Actually, all sorts of vested interests and disgruntled elements had coalesced in support of the plan to oust Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The very coming together of a thoroughly disparate lot into an alliance was a political marvel of the first water. And its creator was none other than Howard Schaffer, the American counsellor, who was expelled belatedly for his dirty work.

A good deal more was involved in the military coup than meets the eye. Everyone is familiar with the record of the sacred cow. Several minor ones also need to be exposed and branded with a red-hot iron of truth.

The bureaucracy, mostly Punjabi chauvinists, accustomed to playing a major role in the corridors of power, felt sidelined. They resented a premier who himself conducted affairs, according to his lights, to promote the larger national interests. The domineering Urdu-speaking elite loathed him because he had passed on to the Sindhis, for the first time, a slice of the Karachi cake and other long-denied benefits in their own province.

The PNA's agitation received assistance from the oddest quarters. Emancipated young women with political savvy took out processions on the Lahore Mall in support of the Maulanas campaigning for an Islamic system. It had only one explanation: a vendetta against Bhutto due to all manner of political and personal grudges. In one case it was said to be the denial of extension to their papa's lease on government land.

Zia met a group of leading journalists in Karachi, all highly touted as champions of press freedom. They advised the General to impose Martial Law and remove Bhutto. Two of them - Zuhair Siddiqui and I. H. Burney - later came out in the open to promote the Military dictator's cause.

The two top leaders of the Federal Union of Journalists made a serious bid to force the trade union to join the PNA agitation. One of them got so deeply involved that his pictures appeared in the press with Nasrullah Khan leading protest demos.

First these gentlewomen and gentlemen actively helped destroy the elected Prime Minister and his democratic government. Then they set up shop to promote human rights and press freedom. Their heroic deeds have been celebrated both in the land of the pure and in the land of the free. Awards have been bestowed on some or press freedom awards have been named after others. Perfect examples of that hole in the heart of nation-

al character: political adventurism, self-aggrandisement, lust for power and pelf, hypocrisy and total disregard of civic duty.

One of the minor characters in the drama of the Hyderabad conspiracy case revealed that the day Jimmy Carter won the Presidential election the leaders were jubilant. They distributed sweets in the Jail.

When Abdul Wali Khan made his peace with the Military Junta and came out of jail, he voiced only one demand. Accountability first, elections later. The socialist democrat sang praises of the Army and the secularist swore by Islam like a true mullah. The NAP chieftain really believed his turn was about to come.

All the newspapers, reputed to be the free press, lent whole-hearted support to the military dictator. The Trust papers, supposedly the occupied press, were brought to heel by a summary sacking of those, including the writer, who dared to take a stand in their writings against the imposition of Martial Law. And the PFUJ leaders watched the fun in amused silence.

One common thread linked all these players. Their patron saint whom the Iranians have assigned a more colourful cognomen, had decided "to make a horrible example" of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Two months into the election campaign, the Junta discovered the truth. Despite Bhutto's incarceration, the People's Party would sweep the polls once again. The elections were called off. Instead, some PNA leaders, including two from the loyal Jamaat-I-Islami, were inducted into the cabinet. The pledge to hold elections within 90 days was abandoned. The physical elimination of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the top priority.

Henry Kissinger in his book, "The White House Years", says that Bhutto did not tolerate fools and he had too many around

him. The Premier might have survived the fools but he stood no chance against a pack of knaves.

Vice Chairman Sheikh Rashid, Attorney General Yayha Bakhtiar, Foreign Minister Aziz Ahmed, Defence Minister Tika Khan and Governor Naseerullah Babar, held their ground. All the rest jumped the sinking ship. Some, with an eye on the Party-leadership, actually wished him dead. There could not have been a more disgraceful betrayal. It showed a total lack of sense of loyalty to a cause, to principles and, for that matter, national interests; traits that govern the role of the ruling elite.

(The News 01-07-2001)

A Walk in Zia's Garden

(VII)

Constantly egged on by the Corps Commanders of Pindi and Lahore, Gen Zia finally struck on July 5, 1977. And a very nervous Chief of Staff had to make desperate efforts in the critical early weeks to justify the treason. He uttered frequent public assurances that he was there only to conduct free and fair elections within three months. He stayed put for 11 long years.

Many rulers have come and gone, leaving little trace behind. Even Ayub Khan, the great Field Marshal who was in power for a whole decade, has suffered the same fate. Not Zia. Thirteen years after his fiery departure, his legacy flourishes and pockets of his adherents are alive and active, especially in the higher rungs of the Army.

Who wrecked Pakistan? If that honour were to be bestowed upon just one individual, Zia would walk away with it. Others, Yahya Khan in particular, had also inflicted grievous wounds upon the republic. Zia's contribution was comprehensive, profound, lethal.

The military dictator was the most powerful ruler the country has known. And his gifts were stunning: an unmatched peas-

ant cunning, heaps of false humility, ruthlessness of a high order and, above all, a towering religious hypocrisy. He was a rare evil whose time had come.

Once he had accomplished the judicial murder of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the General emerged in his full Mephistophelean glory. He ditched the PNA fellows and dumped the Air Marshal whose disruptive services were no longer required. Crushing with savage ferocity the People's Party's supporters, he set out to create a civilian constituency of his own.

The Maulanas were the obvious choice. Always on the lookout for a patron who would serve a serial supply of halva, they rallied to the military dictator in droves. So began the exploitation of religion for political purposes, and on a grand scale, generously rewarded as the Maulanas were by their Amir-ul-Momineen.

The military regime would have collapsed for want of foreign aid. Zia had all the luck, and was bailed out by the timely arrival of Soviet troops in Kabul. The American-sponsored and financed Islamic jihad was unleashed in Afghanistan.

Nearly all the major problems threatening Pakistan today have their roots in those swashbuckling years of Afghan jihad. The heroin, the Klashnikovs, the Afghan refugees, the sectarian lashkars, the all-consuming corruption, nation-wide outbreaks of violent crime; they were bequeathed by the Zia regime.

When the Movement for Restoration of Democracy's agitation started gaining momentum in Sindh, the Military Dictator sent in helicopter gun-ships to assault villages. Then he sponsored and organised Altaf Husain's Mohajar Qaumi Movement to counter the Sindhis, injecting into the province an ethnic cancer which is raging there out of control.

Within about three to four years, the Junta had fractured the whole national fabric. Every institution without exception was

thoroughly undermined: bureaucracy, higher judiciary, the press, education, civil administration and the Army itself.

Ayub Khan had sent the troops back into barracks within a few months of the 1958 military coup. Officers exposed to conduct of civilian affairs were becoming contaminated and indulging in corrupt practices. The General, a decent bloke, was genuinely keen on good governance.

Zia would entertain no moral constraints. The general would have nothing less than absolute power. He retained Martial Law for eight and a half years. Thousands of army officers, taking turns on martial law duties, outperformed civil bureaucracy in malpractices, high-handedness, terror, and especially in every kind of corruption. The Dictator knew all about it. He wanted to keep the officer corps happy and loyal. Besides, he, too, had his hands in the till.

Those were heady years. Billions of dollars cascaded in for the Afghan Jihad. Some three billion dollars a year came as remittances from workers. Then there was the smuggling of heroin, a real windfall. According to one intelligent estimate, the Zia regime, served by a financial wizard called Ghulam Ishaque, gobbled up or squandered about fifty billion dollars in a decade. Not a single economic project of any consequence was undertaken during those halcyon years. In the tradition of degenerate Muslims of the sub-continent, the ruling elite had one tremendous party.

The spin-doctor general in the Information Ministry would taunt sceptical journalists to go across to India and see how poor the Lalas were. Pakistanis, he would brag, were having a marvellous time. What the blockhead did not know, or perhaps want to know, was that the nation was living well beyond its means.

Ayub Khan was said to have chalked out a 20-year programme. Zia, it soon became obvious, wanted to remain the cock

of the walk till the end of time. And two of the main planks he employed to stay in power now pose dire threats to the very integrity of the country.

The Afghan adventure brought billions of dollars, yes, but it also spawned horrendous and seemingly intractable problems. The two million refugees are not going anywhere. They have ruined the country's economic structure, gravely damaged its stability and given wide currency to a multitude of crimes. Then there are the Taliban, the darlings of the generals, who have become an awesome burden and a sad political liability of the first order.

The all-out patronage of religious elements at the mass level served Zia's purposes to his great satisfaction. But what he has left behind are well-armed lashkars of great size contending with arms for supremacy of their respective creeds. From Sunni versus Shia street battles, the area of conflict has widened; Sunnis are also killing Sunnis.

These harvests of hate are the direct consequence of Zia's religiosity. The multi-dimensional sectarian warfare has made life well nigh impossible for the citizenry. More alarming still is the government's apparent helplessness.

Zia sent his mercenary legions to Afghanistan to fight Washington's proxy war against the Russians. A lucrative adventure, but totally against the national interest. Pakistan had no business to get embroiled in a clash of the Super Powers. And this is no hindsight.

In an article written in January, 1980 for "The Muslim" under the pseudonym of "Cassandra", the writer had warned against pushing the Terraki regime into the lap of the Russians. No matter what the colour of their politics, the Afghans, it was pointed out, were very proud of being Afghans. The new regime should

be cultivated, therefore, and helped to stand on its own feet.

The usurper, strapped for cash, was interested in one thing only: American aid. Nothing else mattered. He welcomed Afghan refugees with open arms. The mercenary Dictator accepted with alacrity the American assignment. The fat was in the fire.

Pakistan's military intervention helped destroy Afghanistan. Now the chicks are coming home to roost. There is the incessant pressure of tens of thousands of more refugees. Then the nexus between the Taliban and powerful Jihadi lashkars, already rampant here, is beginning to threaten the country's integrity. Would it become another Afghanistan? Heil Zia!

(The News 02-07-2001)

Democrats and Dictators

(VIII)

On Benazir Bhutto's return from exile in 1986, the writer suggested to her that she should sit out the impending national election. Zia, it was pointed out, had made a complete mess of everything, all the institutions were in disarray and the country was in utter shambles. Whosoever got elected would have his pants taken down within the year.

Instead, she should give the Wali Khans, the Marshals and the maulanans the opportunity to serve the nation. And all the many rotten opportunists surrounding her would depart.

With the help of genuine leadership, she could re-organise the party, mobilize her supporters into a solid, committed force and fight the next election. Only then she might have at least the capacity to do some good.

In an hour-long, one-to-one meeting, the first and last, she gave a patient hearing, said nothing. After the stupendous public reception at Lahore, Benazir was obviously looking forward to being the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan. She made it at the earliest, of course, and has been paying the price ever since.

The PPP leader took over in 1988 with only a semblance of

power. Vulpine manoeuvres of President Ishaque Khan, inspired and backed by the generals, reduced her to a virtual cipher for the 20 months they had allotted her. And out she went.

Benazir's second coming in 1993, was a new ball game. Inspired no doubt by Asif Zardari, she acquired the services of old Zia hands who had managed the dictator's affairs and knew all the tricks of profitable governance. It made one Bhutto sympathiser remark bitterly that had Tara Massih, the hangman, been alive he, too, would have been appointed an adviser.

Soon Premier Benazir's name was mud. Asif Zardari earned the sobriquet of Mr Ten Per Cent. Stories of corruption were in circulation, based in most part on substantial evidence. It was a horrifying waste of opportunity, talents, and a colossal let-down. All because of her husband's manipulation of power for personal gain and a seemingly insatiable appetite.

Coming from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's daughter the transgressions were doubly shocking. And recalling her years of struggle against the military dictator and her sufferings during long solitary confinements in inhuman conditions in Zia's jails, her downfall was a source of deep, widespread anguish.

Nawaz Sharif's two turns were all of a piece and entirely in character. Groomed by the military and promoted by the generals in a milieu reeking with large-scale bribery and corruption, he did exactly what was expected of him.

Both the military and civil bureaucracies wanted a continuation of the jolly picnic to which they had become accustomed during Zia's Afghan jihad. And Nawaz, their wunderkind, was the fellow best qualified to lay out a lavish spread.

There is a great deal of cacophony nowadays about the failure of democracy, plangent across the length and breadth of the country. Sneers about fake democracy, too, are the ton. Both complaints are valid and undeniable facts of life. What remains

unsaid are the reasons that brought about the debacle.

Pakistan has never been blessed with too much democracy. The fault was partly of politicians, but mostly of the godfathers, some civil like Ghulam Mohammad and Iskandar Mirza, others military, Ayub, Yahya and, above all, Zia. The only time the country had an administration approaching close to democracy was the five and a half years of the PPP's elected government. And that was snuffed out by a coterie of hungry generals.

For 11 years the Zia Junta had a free run. The generals governed with total disregard of laws of the land and norms of decency, taking civil society and its administration as far away as they could from the norms and habits of a democratic polity.

A parody was reintroduced with song and dance in 1988. Four elections have been held and not one was fair and free. Each outcome was predetermined by the generals in command and the Inter Services Intelligence. Alliances were rigged, crores distributed amongst chosen candidates, ballot boxes stuffed with sheaves of votes. And hey presto, a new rabbit was in power. Democracy? Strictly for the birds.

Only a fool will deny that both Nawaz and Benazir and their governments were anything but democratic. Benazir had excellent credentials. Her liberal impulse and probity were subverted by Asif Zardari and the diseased political environment in which she had to function.

Nawaz had no problem. He took to it with great gusto, for he was a progeny of the generals and had surfaced from the cesspool of a dictator. In his mercurial rise to power, he and his family bought with hard cash and gifts of jewellery many friends and henchmen: generals, pressmen, maulanas, up and coming adventurers and old political swindlers.

With the dexterity of magicians, the Sharifs created the most powerful mafia ever assembled: Chaudhris, Wattoos, Khosas,

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Makhdooms, Saifullahs, Wali Khan clan, Zia's kin, Punjabi and Pathan civil and military bureaucracies. And plunder on a massive scale began. Nawaz launched billion dollar projects, the Motorway and the Taxi scheme, to name two, so as to rake in hundreds of millions of dollars like a Las Vegas croupier.

The Kashmiri leader's complete sway over Pakistan, cynics noted, had fulfilled a well-known prophecy. A wag had predicted the Kashmir issue would be resolved: India would take Kashmir and to Pakistan's share would come all the Kashmiris. Nawaz planted trusted Kashmiris in many key positions, and suddenly the dear fellows were all over the place.

Power is a heady wine. Not everyone can hold it well. It went to Nawaz's head. Sycophants inflamed his megalomania further.

First, he had the constitution amended to clip the President's wings. Then he rushed through the National Assembly the Shariat Bill to prepare the way for his caliphate. A gang of his goons, including an intellectual goonda or two, stormed and subdued the Supreme Court. Only the army remained out of his grasp. For this *coup de grace* he picked a fellow Kashmiri: Gen Ziauddin Butt, the ISI chief.

Independent insight into the events of October 1999 has suggested that Nawaz had come very close to achieving complete supremacy. Had his coup against the Chief of Staff come off, he would have togged himself up in the robes of a potentate.

The new dispensation has been in place for some twenty months. Burdened with a breakdown that is very nearly total, Pervez Musharraf and his team have had their work cut out. What the final outcome of their endeavours is going to be remains an open question. Wide open.

(The News 03-07-2001)

The Crusader Knights

The crusades have ended now. That is how Gen Allenby had celebrated his entry into Jerusalem in December, 1917. In other words, he had finally avenged after seven centuries the crusaders' defeat at the hands of Sultan Salahadin. The Ottomans, the last refuge of Islamic civilization, lay prostrate. The era of Western domination and humiliation of the Arabs in particular and the Muslims in general had begun with a vengeance.

Is it any wonder then that President Bush's first response to the shattering experience of September 11 was the declaration of a crusade in the defence of the civilized world? His gut reaction was entirely in character. How dare these degenerate "Mohammadans" who had been put in their place by the arms of Christendom, challenge the might of his celestial empire?

Now one can understand why the opinion makers of the western world had so insisted upon calling Pakistan's nuke "the Islamic bomb". It had challenged, no matter in how small a way, their supremacy over the Muslim world. It threatened to dent their monopoly over the decisive, ultimate source of power.

Of course, once the initial shock was absorbed the spin-doc-

tors got busy and launched the cover-up. It's not a war against the Muslims. Islam is a religion of peace etcetera. They would not want to put at risk their exploitation of three-fourths of the world's oil wealth. After all, Arab terrorists could set fire to the oil wells.

The Muslims were not taken in by any of this tosh. Nor were they allowed much leeway for self-deception. The savage bombings of Afghanistan day after day, using everything short of nukes, repudiated in a starkly cruel manner those pious reassurances. Innocent civilians, including women and children, have perished by the thousand, a slaughter which the Bush-Blair duo have justified with the chanting of a threnody on the September 11 killings of 5,000 Americans. A clear case of revenge killings; an eye for an eye, damn it.

There is a constant barrage of assertions about the multi-religious and multi-racial complexion of the international coalition, as though the Muslim component had a choice. Even the Iranians are said to have delivered in a small way on the quiet so as to stay on the right side of a roused "Great Satan". All the dressing-up of the enterprise in secular raiment notwithstanding, it stands out as a shining crusade.

Tony Blair has been jetting across continents to rally the coalition partners. But when he summoned a conclave at 10 Downing Street no wog was invited. They were all crusader knights of Europe. Blair needs only Richard the Lionheart's suit of armour to step out of the closet.

Is it a mere coincidence that only the Muslim countries' citizens are now to go through draconian procedures to secure an American visa of any sort? Forget about the racial profiling of Muslim residents and their arbitrary incarcerations. How about the Archbishop of Canterbury's declaration of "a just war".

Expecting all good Christians to support it? "Daisy Cutters", carpet bombings and all.

Osama bin Laden may be the world's worst terrorist. He may be exploiting the Palestinian cause for selfish ends, as the Jewish lobby has been plugging resolutely in the western media it commands. But what about his actual charges? Are they false? Can they be refuted factually? The accused have taken good care to bury those under the constantly televised debris of the Twin Towers. Let's resurrect the hard core.

There's the charge of 80 years of humiliations, beginning with Allenby, and disgrace constantly heaped upon the Arabs and the Muslims. The insults and massacres of the Palestinians, relentless usurpation of their lands and their territories in violation of Security Council resolutions. The half a million children killed wantonly in Iraq and another half a million awaiting the same fate. How about the uninvited presence of American troops in the holy land of the Prophet?

Bin Laden's crime is that he has dared to cock a snook at the lords and masters of the universe. As it happens, it is also the source of his charisma. He has struck a chord that resonates in the very fibres of much-abused Arabs and Muslims everywhere.

Pervez Musharraf deserves credit for taking an enraged bull by the horns. In his speech to the UN Assembly, he dared to face down its self-righteous fury by reminding it to focus on the causes that had led to the tragic loss of innocent American lives. And he did well to dwell upon the horrifying phenomenon that in nearly all the major political disputes plaguing the world the Muslims were invariably at the receiving end. Dispensation of justice and fair play was the only path to the restoration of international order, harmony and peace.

The more enlightened and thoughtful American academics

and commentators have started asking the key question: Why does three-fourths of the world hate America so bitterly? The American people, shaken rudely out of their grossly self-indulgent mode of living, are also beginning to look for sane guidance and grope for answers to the bewildering crisis. Not the ruling elite, though. Witness the almost daily outbursts of arrogance. We shall fight the evil of terrorism everywhere as long as it takes. We shall prevail and ensure the security of the civilized world. And lest Pakistan forgets, they promise a second phase after the pulverization of Afghanistan.

Whose turn will it be next? The Jewish lobby's priority is Iraq, because it's the only Arab state Israel fears. Yemen? Somalia? Some pillars of the American establishment have taken the unprecedented recourse to scathing criticism of Saudi Arabia. The New Yorker has already revealed one C. I. A. plot for taking out Pakistan's nuclear arsenal with the collaboration of Israeli commandos. There is no limit to the sweep of the crusade which, Washington threatens us daily, will go on for years.

The American people, exposed for the first time to direct personal danger and fear, may have woken up to the need for change in their government's overbearing attitude and propensity for inflicting wrongs and violent interventions upon hapless states and their innocent citizens. Is this going to translate into corrective action? No, say American analysts known for their insights and integrity. The ruling elite, in cahoots with Corporate America and venture capital, is not about to change its imperial spots. Osama bin Laden had got it right when he reminded the American people of their culpability. The leaders who have been visiting upon innocent peoples of the third world all manner of horrendous punishments, were elected by them and had committed the crimes in their name.

In the cold war years, Washington operated as the world's gendarme. Unacceptable third world regimes were toppled. Bolshy leaders were just liquidated. Whole nations were bombed back into the Stone Age, their natural resources defoliated with chemical weapons. Simultaneously, Harry Truman's SOBs were patronized and promoted, particularly in Latin America. More recently, globalization, democracy, and human rights have been pressed into service to clobber the recalcitrant into submission. The hypocrisy is limitless, obscene.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the Big Chief in the Oval Office has been free of all constraints. He has been playing God. Until the morning of September 11, that is. Now he wants to reclaim his title to divinity. It is going to be no doddle. The suicide bombers have exposed the Achilles heel.

(The New 25-11-2001)

A Canter with the Emperor

Where shall one begin? With ebullient tales of President Musharraf's triumph in the imperial capital? Or the snarls of his crazed political opponents? A bystander's detached evaluation of the General's trot in the Emperor's durbar would rate it a success. But of what kind and complexion?

One measure of success was Pervez Musharraf's failure to secure a new deal on the supply of F 16 aircraft. President Bush's refusal was influenced primarily by the Indian factor that now looms large in American calculus. In the process, however, the gentleman has done Pakistan a favour. For quite apart from the ever-present danger of shifts in policy, there is no surety his administration will survive next year's election. A new emperor may well wipe the slate clean and choose a new bunch of cronies from other dominions.

It was not so long ago that some 650 million dollars paid for the last lot of F 16 were refunded and that, too, very reluctantly, as drums of soya bean oil. Prudence demands that the government looks for the aircraft elsewhere, France being the one obvious alternative.

Tales of a Sorry Dominion

The commitment of a 3 billion dollar package is an achievement. The five-year programme will provide the framework for longer-term friendly ties sought by General Musharraf. Satisfaction over the promised largesse and faith in its delivery need to be tempered with caution, however.

There is no guarantee that the \$600m yearly grant will be approved every time by Congress, a body prone to sudden lurches, especially when Indian and Israeli lobbies are hard at work. Or the administration itself will not shift its position because it does not like the way Islamabad runs its sewerage system. Ludicrous? But that is the established style when it comes to dumping unwanted client states.

Already a shower of poisoned darts have been launched at the President. In an editorial, "The Washington Post", a vanguard of Indian and Israeli lobbyists, smeared Musharraf's integrity and credentials. The General never honoured his commitments, it railed, and was harbouring Islamic terrorists and fundamentalist outfits. Then, one of its columnists, noted for his endearing salvos at Pakistan, censured Bush for wasting gold on the General and made a strong pitch for close collaboration with India.

Actually, the Indo-Israeli lobby need not have soiled its hands. Its job was being done pretty well by Pervez Musharraf's own countrymen. There was the leading democrat in lush self-exile firing on all cylinders on TV and newspapers, asking George Bush not to entertain the President. Then her minions petitioned the National Security Council. No, not Musharraf's, but the one in Washington.

The Maulanas of the MMA and other stalwarts of the adventurous opposition alliance went completely overboard. They disowned President Musharraf altogether, threatening they would

not honour any agreements reached by him. A unique example of supposedly responsible public figures denouncing their own head of state while on an official visit and conducting important business with a foreign power. And that was not the end of it. Since George Bush ignored the thunder of the empty vessels and rolled out the red carpet for the General, the Opposition leaders changed tack smartly. Clever Dicks that they are, they declared his visit a failure.

Not to be left behind, partisan columnists joined the fray and rubbished the General's outing with oodles of cynicism. Journeymen journalists have been earning their keep by spinning cock and bull stories of sell-outs.

A general in command will be the last person to compromise on nuclear weapons. He knows that without the deterrent a resurgent, bellicose India will over-run the country's defences. It is a national policy that Washington can neither fault nor over-rule. In fact, only the other day Assistant Secretary Rocca was telling Congress that the US acknowledged Pakistan, along with India, as a nuclear power.

There is not a shred of evidence so far that the President has yielded ground on Pakistan's assets or on other matters of vital national concern. One very serious challenge is, however, staring him in the face: the American demand for deployment of troops in Iraq.

Imperial powers in the past hired mercenaries from the colony for policing their possessions. Both the Indian and Pakistani armies, one may mention in passing, are direct descendants of the mercenaries who helped conquer the Ottoman province of Mesopotamia in the First World War. Now the American Emperor seeks to recruit states to do the job. Tread softly, General, and watch thy step. You are being lured into a

minefield.

The Indians have been wagging their behinds, to borrow Arundhati Roy's metaphor, ever since the Americans turned their guns on Afghanistan. They may well agree to lend a division, at up-market price, of course. And they can get away with it, for India fancies itself as a budding super power and is being courted by all and sundry. In any case, since the rise of Hindu fundamentalists, Delhi has virtually ditched its longstanding Arab allies and is cozying up to Israel.

For Pakistan the odds are deadly. The Afghans have started paying Islamabad back for its intervention by ransacking its embassy. Sending troops to Iraq in support of the beleaguered American forces will be the height of folly. Many more embassies may be assaulted in the Arab states and Pakistan will turn into a pariah in the Islamic world and beyond. And at home, the Maulanas and their teeming seminaries will irrupt, drawing nationwide public support they have not mustered thus far.

The facile proposition about ICC or Gulf Council umbrella is a nonstarter. It will be a very flimsy fig leaf. A contingent should be offered only if the United Nations is entrusted with the task of conducting a peacekeeping operation. Otherwise stay clear and let the Americans defend the new frontiers of their burgeoning empire.

The opposition has been counting upon Pervez Musharraf committing a major blunder. Nimble-footed, he has disappointed them for the past three years. It must be terribly frustrating. No wonder, the two fading stars of failed democracy have been shoring up their flagging morale recently by promising themselves an uprising. It is redolent of Lahore coffee house guff of the early Fifties when armchair radicals waxed eloquent about the imminence of a revolution.

Large elements of the elite, listless in the wilderness, are pining away for yet another chance to make a killing. Their ambitions thrive in a cocoon of self-deception, and the world is passing them by. There are better ways of spending the time than wallowing in wishful thinking. An honest day's work, for instance.

(The News 14-07-2003)

Pakistan at '48 London Olympics

When Pakistan defeated Holland by six goals to one it caused a minor sensation. For until then we were an unknown quantity, a dark horse. The Europeans were not sure how much of the Indian hockey talent had been sheared off by Pakistan. Now they knew. The Dutch were a strong, fancied side, and they had been crushed.

In the opening match of the preliminary round against Belgium, we had not done too well. On a slightly soggy ground Pakistan had a poor game, winning by two goals to one. The next two encounters, against Denmark and France, were a piece of cake. The last match of the pool against Holland was to be the real test.

The ground of the London Polytechnic, where I was to play club hockey for a decade in later years, was level, dry and fast. The ball ran well, allowing us to play freely our style of hockey. The forwards - Masud, Hamidi, Dara, Aziz, Rehmat - were thus on the offensive from the word go.

The Dutch did not know what had hit them and their defence fell apart. They were able later on to score just once in

reply to our six goals.

After this performance which took us to the semi-finals, the organisers of the Olympics started making enquiries about Pakistan's national anthem. At that stage, it had none. Nor, as it turned out, was one needed.

Actually, Pakistan hockey's first international outing had begun badly. The Olympic Association officials leading the contingent wanted to take over-all charge of the hockey team, because they knew it alone stood a chance of winning a medal. Bashir Ali Shaikh, the PHF Secretary and Manager, would have none of it. And there was rumpus, so much so that the hockey team was deprived of a call on the Quaid-i-Azam which was a pity, for the old man died while we were still on tour.

Another source of conflict was my criticism of the Olympic Association's choice of athletes. In a weekly column, "Spotlight on Sports" in The Pakistan Times, I had questioned the wisdom of taking two short-putters, among several other joy-riders, when neither of them was within hailing distance of the Olympic standard. Thus, when the team arrived in Karachi, there were threats that I would be banned as a professional.

Fortunately good sense prevailed and the team took off in a chartered BOAC flying boat from Korangi Creek early one morning. Just to recall what air travel was like then, the boat landed at Basra for lunch and on the Nile in the evening for an overnight stay in a Cairo house-boat.

Next morning flying over the Western Desert the low-flying plane ran into air pockets and everyone except myself, an ex-naval officer, was sick and lay flat on the floor.

We got down for lunch, cuts of cold meats and salads, at Augusta in Sicily and unable to land at Marseilles because of a storm, ended up on a lake in the south of France. The following

morning, the third day, the team was welcomed at Southampton by a group of engineering cadets of the Pakistan Air Force.

England we found was indeed a "green and pleasant" land. As the London train sped past a big cemetery, lush with flowers and trees, Khurram, the team jester, remarked that the British knew how to live and also how to die.

Initially we were lodged in a tarted-up army camp in Richmond Park, with wide open spaces for jogging and light training. The minimum fare on the tube was ha'penny, and soon we were exploring the great wen.

The Londoners, men and women, were dressed very shabbily, as if they had gone to some great "Landa Bazaar" and picked up second-hand clothes. Most things were rationed - two eggs, two pats of butter, a few ounces of sugar a week. But they had fought a World War for almost five years, and won it. With a bit of American and Russian assistance, of course, but they were made to pay a heavy price. Although the debris had been cleared, its scars were visible everywhere, especially around St. Paul's Cathedral and Fleet Street.

The weather had been uncertain, but the morning of the opening ceremony it was gloriously sunny. Aziz Malik, a police officer, had to tie everyone's turban. When the contingent, dressed in green blazers, white flannels and those light green turbans with 10-inch starched perky ends standing atop, appeared in the Wembley Stadium, there was a roar of approval.

An opening ceremony with 80,000 people cheering, waving flags, and the music; it is something which arouses an emotion so powerful that it can bring tears to the eyes of strongest of men. Little did we know that morning that Wembley Stadium was also going to bear witness to our tears of another kind.

On the day we were to play semi-finals against Britain every-

one got up early raring to go. But the enthusiasm was short lived, for it started raining, and raining cats and dogs. The deluge lasted for several hours. When we arrived at the Wembley Stadium in the afternoon, the field, a soccer pitch with grass, we saw was water-logged. We took it for granted that the game would be postponed, but no.

Both Pakistan and India asked for a postponement, and the organisers refused. The hockey tournament was almost entirely in the hands of the British and other Europeans. They knew they could not stop the two favourites from South Asia on a dry pitch. Thus we were forced to play.

India took on Holland first. As we saw the Indians floundering, our hearts sank. India was lucky to get through by one goal to nil. When we got on to the pitch it was like a quagmire. I could hit the ball quite hard, but it would go no farther than 50 feet. Although we tried desperately to play hockey, it was just not possible. It was more like polo, hit and run.

At half-time, Prof. G.D Sondhi, former Principal of Government College, Lahore, came down to give us encouragement. He had five old boys in the team - Dara, Niaz Khan, Khurram, Shahrukh and myself, and India had three more, but it did not help. We went down to Britain two-nil.

Two days later, on a dry Wembley pitch we failed to beat the Dutch. The demoralisation was total. And the next day, on the very ground we had beaten Holland six goals to one, we lost, in pouring rain. Thus Pakistan had to wait for another two years for its first international triumph.

There were two slips. Dara, well past his prime, should not have played. He was no longer the Dara of 1936 when he was specially flown to Berlin to strengthen the Indian team. Secondly, both Pakistan and India should have refused to play on that rain-

soaked pitch. But the managers were still in awe of the old Sahibs, and were gutless. And the myth of "sporting spirit," perpetrated largely by the Brits, was shattered. It is a noble concept, no doubt, but in actual practice it turned out to be sheer humbug.

(The News 21-07-1996)

Pakistan's First Sports Triumph

In the last 10 minutes of the final of the 1950 World Cup, the Dutch packed their defence to keep us out. However, I managed to draw out their left-half and gave a through pass to Mudi. The right-wing collected it near the goal-line and sent in a cracking cross. Latif Mir stopped it in front of an open goal and scooped. It went wide by a yard. The blunder rankles to this day.

That World Cup, the first of its kind and organised by Spain, was not the full-blooded affair it is today. India and Britain had stayed away. They calculated that in case they lost, their position in the draw for 1952 Helsinki Olympics would suffer. And Pakistan participated largely because it was anxious to establish itself internationally.

The ground at Terrasa, the Spanish hockey centre just outside Barcelona, had a fair bit of grass on it and was a little bumpy. The conditions were thus far from ideal. But it was a tremendous relief to learn that there would be no rain. Two years earlier, in the London Olympics we were destroyed because of the waterlogged Wembley Stadium ground.

Unlike cricket, the captain of a hockey team cannot do much.

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The game is too swift and lasts 70 minutes. Off the field on an International tour he is called upon to maintain discipline and good conduct. At Barcelona, members were told to be back at the hotel by 9 p.m. And there was to be no hanky-panky at least during the tournament. Not that the señoritas were waiting with open arms. In fact, the Spanish were only a shade less conservative than us in those days.

We sailed through the preliminary round, with only Spain offering some measure of resistance. And when we turned out for the final against Holland, the crowd, to our pleasant surprise, was with us. They loved our "magico" stick-work.

There were two Latifs in the side and they were poles apart. The short, wiry left-wing who had crossed over from India after the 1948 Olympics, was all speed and stick-work and bit of a show-off. He would pick up a pass and dodge his way to the goal-line and there lose it, which was not much help to the team. No less annoying was the fact that he played barefoot which caused us much embarrassment.

Latif Mir, the centre-forward, on the other hand had the build of a wrestler from Gujranwala, but he was very quick on his feet. Highly experienced, he proved to be quite a handful for the Dutch. He got us a goal quite early.

The Dutch equalised in the second half with the oddest of goals. The rule then did not allow the stick to rise above the shoulder. A pass from the right sailed over my head but the Dutch left-wing swung his stick above his head, smashed it tennis service fashion into the net. The umpire whistled a goal. It left us stunned, but there was little one could do about it.

We were attacking all the time, but we just could not find the goal. Aziz, the inside-left, was a little off colour that afternoon, Hamidi, the inside-right who developed into such a fine player in

later years, was trying to bore a hole through the goalie's pads. And when finally that opportunity to move ahead arrived, Latif Mir fluffed it.

Since the tournament could not be extended for another day, the cup was awarded to Pakistan on a better goal average. Luckily, the issue was put beyond any doubt at Amsterdam a week or so later.

Lal Shah, Pakistan's ambassador at The Hague who played for India at Berlin, was bedridden, recovering from a heart attack. Running into players from the 1936 Dutch team he had turned out for a game. He had not played for some years and thus suffered the attack. So when we went to see him he was not only feeling sorry for himself but also pleaded that we give him a present: a win against his hosts.

Unlike the Wembley pitch the Amsterdam Olympic Stadium ground did not have too much grass on it and despite the early morning drizzle it was not unduly slow or slippery. As the two countries had had such close and up and down encounters, some 30,000 Dutch spectators turned up which for a hockey match in Europe was quite a record.

The game began at a furious pace. Soon I noticed that the Dutch were marking Latif Mir very closely. After his showing at Terassa they considered him the danger man. So I asked Aziz Malik, the inside-left, to go through by himself. Having watched him slice through a defence in the 1946 Agha Khan Tournament at Bombay and only six months earlier against the Indians at Delhi, I was sure he would deliver. And he did.

Aziz picked up a ball near the centre-line and raced down the pitch, beat the right-full and scooped into the net. Five minutes later he tore through again, scooped. It hit the goalie's head and went out. Aziz made the third dash, scooped and it hit the far

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post and came out, Hamidi slow to pounce upon the rebound.

The Dutch repeated the Terassa story in the second half, but this time their right-wing scored a clean goal. So the same old ding-dong battle followed. Fortunately, when Latif Mir found the Dutch centre-half and left full-back level. He gave a through pass to Hamidi who made no mistake. Thus, we emerged clear victors by two goals to one, and on the Dutch home ground. And in front of their home crowd, though one must add that they were a fairly sporting lot.

This was Pakistan's very first international sports victory. It was made possible by good team-work, and untiring efforts of Bashir Ali Sheikh and Lala Ayub, the two managers. Aziz Malik was the star of that tour and Niaz Khan, the right back and Vice Captain, was not far behind. In all we played 13 matches, won 12 and drew one. And it was a privilege to captain such a good bunch of players.

(The News 19-10-1996)

Pakistan's First Sports Tie with India

Even though we had won the opening game by just one goal, Indian hockey officials realized Delhi was no match for our Punjab team. They sought reinforcements from elsewhere. Thus it was that Dhyān Chand, the legendary centre-forward, suddenly appeared on the scene. He led the Delhi squad in the fourth and final game of that first sports engagement between Pakistan and India in June 1950.

By then, Dhyān Chand was, of course, past his prime. The masterly stickwork, the wizardry was still there, but not the speed. And, appositely enough, we won that crucial match thanks largely to one of his chelas from pre-partition Ferozpur Cantt: Azam.

The Delhi team had been strengthened considerably and it was a hotly contested game throughout. In the closing stages, I was able to feed a through pass to Masud, our outstanding International rightwing. He tore down the sideline and then centred. Azam collected it on top of the circle.

Manna Singh, the juggler of Indian hockey, tried to block him. Azam's fierce shot flew straight into the net. So we won the four-match series two-one.

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For most of us, it was a pleasant resumption of a success story that had been interrupted by the Partition. For three Punjabi teams had swept everything before them in Bombay in March-April 1947.

First, my Brothers Club from Lahore had won the All India Invitation Tournament contested by eight top clubs from all over the sub-continent. Then our Punjab Team, led by Dara, triumphed in the Inter Provincial Championship. Finally, in April, the Spartans of Pindi, spearheaded by Aziz Malik, had secured the highly prestigious Aga Khan Cup.

As was to be expected, our presence in Delhi led to invitations from many other cities. Neither the Indian authorities nor the Pakistan government were prepared, however, to risk this wider exposure. We had played in the Indian capital under tight security, because the wounds of the Partition were far from healed.

Actually, it was a wonder that a Pakistani team had gone there just three years after the communal massacres in which an estimated one million Punjabis - Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus - were killed. The tour had come about because hockey officials on both sides were friends of long standing. They had persuaded their respective governments to establish sports links to promote goodwill between the peoples of the two countries. It was for that very reason that Pakistan had agreed to one additional match at Jullundar on the way back.

At a public reception in the Jullundar Town Hall, standing in the familiar verdure of the Company Bagh, one of the Hindu contemporaries from Basti Baba Khail, approached me.

"They (low-caste Hindus) are waiting to welcome you, Khan ji. Please, you must come."

I excused myself by pointing out that I was to give a radio

interview and then play in the afternoon. Frankly, I had no desire whatever to go back to a place, a home from which a cruel stroke of history had uprooted me so brutally.

It was bad enough travelling overnight from Delhi on the Frontier Mail, the sub-continent's famous train on which one had made innumerable explorations from Peshawar to Bombay in happier times. But to play against East Punjab on one of those mudbaked pitches of the Cantonment where I had cut my hockey teeth was heartbreaking.

Almost all the East Punjab players were either old club-mates or fellow Punjab players. The teams were well matched. They had five Indian Internationals, we six Pakistan players. The atmosphere was tense.

Unlike Delhi, the crowd here was highly charged and partisan. Many of the 5,000 or so spectators would have experienced the horror of escaping the carnage in West Punjab. Others would have participated in the slaughter of Muslims of Jullundar. So when , our centre-half, indulged in rough play I pulled him up. Similarly, when their left-wing hit straight at me he was rebuked by his skipper. For one minor incident amongst the players, we knew, would have resulted in a riot.

The police officers in the team, as Dharam Singh, their International left-back, confessed after the game, had seen to it that their umpires would not let us win. For Ashwani Kumar, their Police boss, had warned the players that if they lost they would get the sack. Thus, twice we scored and each time Dharam Singh pulled the ball back into play.

Fortunately, providence intervened. One of those huge black clouds of sand, a summer specialty of Jullundar, mounted the horizon and soon the storm was upon us, putting an end to the farcical match. Everyone's honour was preserved.

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Next morning we were intercepted at Amritsar by Sikh officials, insisting that we stopped there for lunch. But it turned out to be a grim and highly revealing engagement.

At a Golden Temple reception where no Hindu was present, Sikh leaders addressed us in the warmest of terms. One of them broke down and wept, bitterly lamenting Master Tara Singh's deal with the Congress which had resulted in bloody partition of the Punjab. Obviously, they were already feeling the oppressive weight of Hindu dominance.

For me personally the high point of the tour was to captain the Punjab team against Delhi skippered by Dhyan Chand, perhaps the greatest hockey player of all time. An unusually modest man, he gave all the praise to other forwards of his heyday like Jaffar Shah and Dara.

(The News 15-02-1997)

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Our children, Ibrahim, Shireen and Tariq, who take great pride in their father, have chosen the accompanying photographs.

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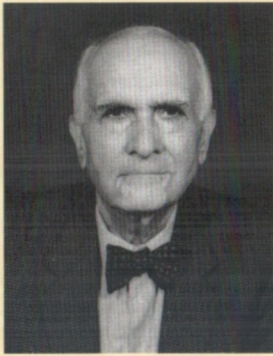
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‘However, now that I think about it, Burki’s soft corner for the General was not because he had become any less of a believer in democratic rule but because of his complete disillusionment with the two young civilian, popularly elected leaders of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, who had blown the great opportunity they had been given, not once but twice, of establishing a truly democratic order reflecting the wishes of the people and serving their interest. He called Nawaz and Benazir “the two fading stars of failed democracy” who, he wrote, “have been

shoring up their flagging morale recently by promising themselves an uprising.” He said their efforts were “redolent of Lahore coffee house guff in the early Fifties when armchair radicals waxed eloquent about the imminence of revolution.” He went on to write, “Large elements of the elite, listless in the wilderness, are pining away for yet another chance to make a killing. Their ambitions thrive a cocoon of self-deception, and the world is passing them by. There are better ways of spending the time than wallowing in wishful thinking, An honest day’s work, for instance.””

From the Foreword by Khalid Hasan

Hamidullah Khan Burki, born in Jullundar, India in 1920, was educated at Government College, Lahore. He was an officer in the Royal Indian Navy serving in Burma in World War II. He played in the 1948 Olympics as a member of the newly-established Pakistan Hockey team. In the 1950s and 60s, he was a pictorial photographer of international standing.

Burki took up journalism in 1947. He spent 15 years in London and New York as Foreign Correspondent for the *Civil and Military Gazette* and, later, for *The Pakistan Times*. He returned to Pakistan in 1967 where he was Diplomatic Correspondent and Islamabad Bureau Chief of *The Pakistan Times* until 1979. Since then he had devoted himself to writing fiction and, as a free-lance journalist, writing occasional newspaper articles, until his death in September 2003.

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