

GEN. MUHAMMAD ZIA-UL-HAQ

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**A PERSONAL EVALUATION**

Reference to be provided by Prof. Khurshid

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



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Prof. khurshid Ahmad

The telephone buzzed at a rather odd hour: 05.00 A.M. on 20th August 1978. I had just settled for a little nap after taking my Sahoor and was woken to this call from Rawalpindi:

"This is Maj. Kanwar, ADC to the CMLA. Gen. Zia wants to talk to you."

I waited for the line. Within half-a-minute the General was taking to me.

"Professor Sahib Assalam O Alaikum. Where are you? We are waiting for you here."

I was conscious of what was going on in Rawalpindi. After intense negotiations the PNA had decided to join the Cabinet on the condition that PNA would have a two-third majority in the Cabinet and that Gen. Zia would nominate for the remaining positions from amongst the experts and technocrats but no sitting general would be appointed to the Cabinet. It was also agreed that provincial governments would be formed within a month or two, that a fresh election schedule would be worked out without delay, that political parties would be allowed to work freely and that the process of Islamization would be initiated immediately. The new Cabinet was to be sworn in on 21<sup>st</sup> August. Gen. Zia wanted me to join the Cabinet and take over the portfolio of Planning and Development and also hold the position of the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. Zia, as chief executive, was the Chairman of the Planning Commission.

This was not the first time I was invited to join the Cabinet as an Adviser on a Minister to look after the economy. Two earlier offers were made in October 1977 and June 1978. My esteemed friend Brohi was pressing me hard to join the Cabinet. So were a number of other friends and elders, Ibrahim Bawany, Maulana Ansari, Justice (retired) Afzal Cheema, etc. But I had my reservations over and above my general aversion to military rule and my non-familiarity with the cankers of power and catacombs of bureaucracy. I belonged to the discipline of the Jamaat. It is an honour to serve the country in any capacity but the idea of joining the Federal Cabinet had never crossed my mind. I had been apologizing courteously, yet firmly. Now the insistence from the General had assumed a new dimension. The PNA had agreed to join the Cabinet and the Jamaat, as a part of the PNA, was also joining the Government. Jamaat had given three ministers as its nominees. I was not one of them, as was decided earlier in our mutual consultations. I was based in the U.K. since 1968 and was deeply involved with the work here and abroad. Early return to Pakistan was not on the agenda.

I once again tried to apologize to Gen. Zia invoking my heavy commitments in the U.K., personal, professional, as well as responsibilities in the Movement. He was adamant. I tried to throw the trump card.

"You know I am committed to the discipline of the Jamaat, which has already given its nominees."

The General laughed: "You don't have to worry about that. I have already had clearance from Mian Sahib (Amir, Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan) and from Maulana Mawdudi too! They are with me and have no objection. And I want to have you not on the quota of the PNA, but as an economist, from my quota. This time, I am not going to take no as your answer."

I, however, persuaded him to give me some time to think. He said: "No. You come immediately and then think it over here."

I reached Pakistan on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1978 and had long sessions with Gen. Zia on the 27<sup>th</sup> mid-day, on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> evenings. On 28<sup>th</sup> morning I spent, at Lahore in consultation with Mohtaram Mian Sahib and with Maulana Mawdudi. Both commended I should join the Cabinet. I gave my final acceptance to Gen. Zia on 29<sup>th</sup> August. He invited me to attend the Cabinet meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> August, even before taking oath of office. I took the oath on 31<sup>st</sup> August and was in the harness for some eight months. I resigned along with the PNA ministers on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1979, although I was not obliged to do so as a technocrat. My power base was the Jamaat and the PNA; how could I have continued once the PNA had left the Government? The eight months in Cabinet gave me my first brush with power and a rare opportunity to see Gen. Zia at close quarters. Despite being in the Cabinet our personal contact remained close, more so at his initiative. He used to call me for consultations off and on. He sent me for important national assignments. Alhamdulillah, our contact had no personal quid pro quo; it was for Pakistan and Islam.

Gen. Zia had a way of maintaining personal relationships. He gave me respect, confidence and great personal regard. He consulted me on sensitive matters of national importance and shared with me his discussions and correspondence with other heads of state and governments. On major turn of events in the country he would call me for a chat. Whenever he had to make a major speech, particularly on matters relating to Islam, Muslim unity and world affairs he would ask me to share my thoughts with him and assist him with write-ups if possible. We used to have very frequent and very frank discussions on domestic as well as international issues. Not that he always or even mostly accepted the suggestions others gave to him, at least I was not such a person from the very outset we became conscious of our different perspectives. But he had a passion for listening. Mostly he acted as he wanted to act. Yet he listened with respect, and insisted on those encounters. I am sad during the last two years of his life, our differences widened more and more. Our last agreement on our reservations to the Geneva Accord which the Junejo Government signed in March 1988, after a month's forced delay due to our pressure; our last disagreement was on the question of the Economic Commission under Shariah Ordinance and on the administrative set-up at the International Institute of Islamic Economics which was founded by our mutual efforts but from whose chairmanship I retired in July 1987.

Gen. Zia was a very strong-willed person: He had his own way of making up his mind. Yet, he kept his contact with a large number of scholars and persons representing different walks of life and had a way of maintaining this relationship. I can say with all honesty that in my case the initiative almost always came from his side. Despite my reluctance on a number of occasions he left me with no option but to respond to his initiatives. He had what may be described as a kind of personal magnetism.

We differed and differed vehemently on a number of issues. I was opposed to military's involvement in politics. My approach to Islamization and his difference at almost all levels, concept, strategy, programme. Economic policies formulated at the initiative of Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, (for whom I had very great personal respect and who also gave me great personal regard and respect) and of Dr. Mahbubul Haq were diametrically opposed to the way I wanted to handle the economy. His approach to student politics and mine were almost antithetical. Yet, the credit goes to him that he patiently listened to me, insisted on close and perennial contacts and maintained this relationship with warmth and confidence. He was always ready to respect my independence. Lt. Gen. Razaqat, his last Chief of Staff, confirmed after the death of President Zia that even when our differences became too large (particularly on the question of introduction of the Shariah Ordinance, on Islamization of economy, on the way the situation in Sindh was handled and on the manner the affairs of the Islamic Unity in general and the Institute of Islamic Economics in particular were being handled) and when I, had started avoiding meeting him, he would speak highly of me and me "Professor Khurshid is my friend. He may be unhappy with me but I trust him as a servant of Islam."

When I was elected to the Senate (March 1985), President Zia complained why I did not take him into confidence in this matter. I told him my election to the Senate was not my choice. The Jamaat decided it and I was called to fill in the forms only at a few hours notice. The election was fought by the Jamaat. I had to do almost nothing. This was a blessing from Allah. The Jamaat had its own way of dealing with such matters. Even in politics it has a unique style of its own.

The relations between the Jamaat and Gen. Zia became strained with the passage of time and the prolongation of the Martial Law. The promises made before PNA joined the Cabinet were not fully kept. The PNA withdrew its ministers in the third week of April 1979, after the new election schedule was announced, which too was not kept up. He wanted the Jamaat to join the nominated "Shura" which was established in 1982. The Jamaat declined. Distance between the two increased. Again in 1985 Gen. Zia wanted the Jamaat to join hands with the Muslim League and be in the Government. The Jamaat decided otherwise. We all sat on the opposition. Yet our personal contact remained unbroken. It was mostly because of him that it continued. If we were out of touch for some time his telephone would invariably come. Usually he would call after mid-night. We continued to meet, although more and more sparingly. My last meeting with him was in July 1988, when I left with the family for U.K. I was very upset over some of the changes that were made in the University and very unhappy over the way President Zia acquired in respect of them. The last meeting was not the most pleasant one.

On 17th August, I had gone for my medical check-up with Dr. Rosewithall. Returning as I enticed the Foundation the Foundation I was given by Sadiq the shocking news of the Bahawalpur Crash and Gen. Zia's Shahadah. Inna Lillahe Wa inna ilaihi Rajioon. I took the first available flight to Rawalpindi to join the funeral prayer for the man who may have disappointed some of us but who have allowed hope to be extinguished, whose personal warmth can never be forgotten, and whose impact on Pakistan and Afghanistan would last for years to come.

His death marked the end of an era. He would be remembered as a noble person, a kind friend, a great patriot, a shrewd politician, as the man who stood for the unity of Islamic Ummah, and the person who braced all the pressures of super-powers yet continued to help and sustain Jihad in Afghanistan in the manner he wanted. The decade he ruled is marred by a number of blemishes and people like me have expressed their reservations about prolongation of martial law, resort to certain repressive measures, slow pace and piece-meal nature of Islamization, but these considerations must not be closed the positive contributions of the man who dominated the Pakistan scene for over a decade.

His advent to power and his demise both remain spectacular. The declaration of July 5, 1977 brought him into sudden lime-light; the announce ment of the crash C-130 on 17th August 1988 drew the curtain on this era. But his influence on developments in Pakistan and the Muslim may continue for years to come. History's verdict would come at the appropriate time. We who have lived through this era and also had some personal contact with him can only help posterity of sharing with it some of our reminiscenes and recollections.

Reflecting on a decade of my relationship with him what comes out most prominently are some of the traits of his character. He was and remained a simple man. His courtesy, even humility could not but impress everyone who met him. He was an extraordinarily social person. He would simultaneously keep personal contacts with hundreds of persons, and yet leave each one with the impression that he holds him in a special relationship. He dressed simply. Would greet you with a broad smile and a warm handshake even a cordial embrace. He would remember what you had discussed with him best and would take interest in most minute of your personal problems. He would see you off personally walking with you upto the car and would not return till you have moved out. He would shake hands with your driver, and would respond to anyone who tries to come close to him. Once after a function in Rawalpindi I was returning with him in his car. When we were about to leave a student asked for a lift. The ADC frowned at him. But President Zia smiled and asked the ADC to let the boy in. The ADC and the student uneasily sat at the seat beside the driver. The boy was overjoyed. He confessed his life's ambition has been fulfilled!

I used to visit him on every Eid, as is the tradition in Pakistan and the Muslim World. On one occasion (in 1984) when relations between him and the Jamaat were strained because of the Government's repressive policies towards the students in general and the Islamic Jamiat-e-Talaba in particular I did not have the heart to visit him on this Eid morning. The day just passed by. In the

night his telephone came. "I just wanted to extend aid-greetings to you" he said in his usual warm and pleasant manner. I responded, ye felt somewhat guilty. He would not let you pass unnoticed.

The same year I was unwell. Gen. Mehboob was treating me. He must have mentioned to the President about my illness. Presto; came his telephone. "What can I do for you? Would you like me to send Gen. Hasan to see you." I thanked him for his concern and reminded him that I am more worried about the students in prison than myself. He laughed in his usual manner. "Professor Sahib, leave that to me, you take care of yourself." It was difficult to beat him in matters of personal courtesy. When my elder brother died (Sept. 1985) he not only sent a telegram but personally came to our house to offer fateha, condolences. In 1979, when I was in the Cabinet he telephoned me at Riyadh to change my programme and go to London to attend to an important official business. My family was concerned on my long absence, and also because of the tense political situation in the country. He telephoned my wife twice just to find out the welfare of the family and told her: "Sister, I want to apologize to you because I am responsible for the absence of Professor Khurshid. But I am at your service and if you need anything please give me a ring." I know of no other head of the State who would be so concerned about persons who do not fall within his close circle of relatives, friends and confidants.

President Zia harnessed this personalized approach even in international relations. He developed very close personal relations with other heads of State and government and used this for building friendship for Pakistan. When floods devastated Bangladesh in 1985 he personally took a delegation of the members of the Parliament, visited the affected areas and distributed relief supplies amongst people. I was with the delegation and saw with my own eyes the impact this visit had on the Government and the people of Bangladesh. To the best of my knowledge it was for the first time after December 1971 that the head of state of Bangladesh said at a press conference that we share with Pakistan a common faith, common history, and common aspirations. Reference to history was significant.

Despite the anti-Pakistan attitude of Mrs. Indra Gandhi he was never short on courtesies towards her. He would send her best of the Mangoes as gift of the season and Mrs. Indra Gandhi could not but say: "Thank you for sending me Pakistani mangoes. They are especially welcome as our own season for mango is over." (Letter dated August 7, 1982). Former President Nixon bursts out in gratitude when he received gifts from President Zia. He writes:

"Our home was brightened over the holidays by your beautiful gifts."

His cricket diplomacy as against India's aggressive exercises known as Operation Bras stack has become a legend. But it is not known outside that it was backed by masterly defence planning which derived all the winds off Indian soils. Courtesy was not only his major character trait; it was also an effective arm of his diplomacy.

One of President Zia's daughters (Zain) is retarded. That made her most beloved to him. He took personal care of her and set an example as to how a father should shower his love and affection on the one who has lagged behind. This also increased his concern about the disabled and the retarded in general. He took personal interest in the establishment of institutions for the disabled. Perhaps no other head of the State in Pakistan has shown any real concern for those who lagged behind in this respect.

President Zia's personal commitment to Islam was beyond any shadow of doubt. He was an observing Muslim, and was eager to promote Islamic values and norms. He publicly expressed his commitment and pride in Islam and declared that the moving spirit behind the establishment of Pakistan was La ilaha illallah. He also emphasized that its destiny lies in the realization of an Islamic Order. This had a great psychological impact upon the people, particularly so as during the first PPP Government (1972-1977) a secular approach to life was promoted at the state level and public observance of Islam was shied away. He declared that he wanted to introduce the Islamic Shariah, but could not make much headway in this respect. He did introduce certain hudood laws but their actual implementation could not take place. He promoted establishment of Salat and building of mosques at the airports and other public places. A nation-wide scheme for the collection and distribution of Zakat and Ushr was introduced. Some steps were taken towards the elimination of Riba. A number of Islamic Conferences were held to promote Islamic thought and consciousness. An International Islamic University was established to integrate religious and secular streams of education and to produce a cadre which could be instrumental in implementing the Shariah. A Federal Shariah Court was established to decide whether a law is repugnant to the Qur'an and Sunnah or not. The Islamic Ideology Council was made a more active institution. In the last days of his life he also introduced an implementation of Shariah Ordinance, which, however, lapsed due to the new Government's lack of interest in the subject.

President Zia emphasized that he wanted to pursue an evolutionary approach towards the establishment of the Islamic Order, yet he was condemned in the Western media as a fundamentalist. The Islamic forces in the country, on the other hand, were dissatisfied with the extremely slow and disjointed pace of Islamization, with a very piece-meal and selective approach, with over-emphasis on the symbolic and formal aspects and neglect of the fundamental attitudinal and structural changes as well as mobilization of a cadre of committed persons without which Islamization cannot be realized. An objective evaluation of the whole period reveals that initially Gen. Zia showed commitment towards a programme of total Islamization, a commitment which can be seen in his early statements, particularly the package announced on 10th February 1979, but gradually he veered away from a programme of total change to somewhat piece-meal change in which the symbolic and traditional elements occupied a central place and the vision of total transformation of the society and state shrank and was beclouded. International pressures, domestic constraints, resistance from vested interests in bureaucracy, both civil and military, and gradual ascendance of the traditional political forces and also religious led to the

stagnation and retardation of a process that began with at least some promise. There is a lesson in this for those who pursue the challenging task of Islamization.

President Zia always started his speech with Bismillah ar Rehman ar Rahim (In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Mercy-Giving) and with blessings on the Prophet of Islam. This has now become the order of the day. He regularly visited Haramain Sharifain in Ramadhan. He tried to avail the opportunity of presenting Islam at International platforms. In his address at the United Nations General Assembly in 1982 he prefaced his speech with recitation from the Holy Qur'an and devoted a part of the speech to the message of Islam and the advent of the 15th century of the Islamic era. In his speech at the NAM Summit at Havana he invited mankind to understand the revolution brought by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Even in response to the message of the Pope he did not hesitate to say that:

"Your Holiness! Exhortation is, indeed inspiring as it reaffirms our own faith in the abiding principles of Islam which underline the universal brotherhood of man."

**(Letter to His holiness Pope John Paul II, 29th Jan, 1983)**

President Zia would always be remembered for his affirmation of Islam with pride and confidence. He also promoted the national language, Urdu, and the national dress, Shalwar and Kamiz. He was the first head of state who welcomed foreign dignitaries in state banquets by addressing them in the national language. Under his influence people began to take pride in the national language and the national dress.

As a little digression it is worth surmising why Islamization did not make much headway, beyond the symbolic, despite all the calling during the Zia era? My personal analysis is that implementation of Islam in the context of the contemporary Islamic society calls for structural changes and this is possible only if a multi-dimensional effort is made to root out the alien concepts, values and institutions that presently govern the Muslim society. This also calls for a broad-based mass movement for change, movement that is capable of bringing up a new leadership in every walk of social life, intellectual, political, economic, educational, bureaucratic, military, cultural, literary and even religious. There is no denying the role of individuals, particularly of dynamic leadership, but it is futile to expect that such structural changes can be delivered by individuals from the top. The vested interest is firmly entrenched in every sphere of activity. One, who is bound to operate at the mercy of this system, cannot be the catalyst for destroying this system. Zia had his own constituency and he had to compromise to keep that constituency unless there is a popular movement and a contravening power to restrain the vested interests, waves of change cannot go far enough. Without revolutionary changes in education, without grooming into power not a few persons but a new cadre committed to Islam and competent to, implement it, the restructuring of the society may remain a distant-dream. It is only through pursuing a movement-oriented approach to religion that the challenge of Islamization can be met. The traditional approach to religion has the tendency to go for the symbols and compromise on substantive issues. It has the tendency to



become a refuge for the religious longing, without translating that into a movement for social and structural change. This also calls for a much more participatory approach, a more effective mechanism for accountability, a more powerful system for guidance and planning and a far more powerful effort to awaken and deepen the moral commitment of the individual and inculcation of the spirit to sacrifice this worldly for the achievement of the formal usage for salvation in the Akhirah and mobilization of an ethos which can only be described by the Islamic strategy of jihad. Zia found this path too difficult for him to pursue. He contented with the symbolic which he could achieve without changing the V system and without destroying the vested interest. What he achieved should not be immunized; but the fact that a breakthrough towards real Islamization of the society and state could not be made has in it a message for all those who reflect on the future of the Ummah and the obstacles that hold real progress.

President Zia's training as a general lied at the root of his concern for the security of Pakistan. He believed that Pakistan is faced with threats from the North as well as the South. He was clear that security can be ensured only through military strength and comparative deterrence. In his concept of security armed forces occupied the position of the king-pin.

Despite lip-service to ideology and popular mobilization, they did not reign prominently in the security build-up he sought to pursue. He silently devoted resources of the nation to the training and re-organization of the armed forces. Despite his emotional attachment to the army he gave priority to the development of the air force and acquisition of F-16 as the main arm of the defence system. His iron-willed perusal of development of nuclear technology despite all the pressures from friends and foes is an index of his commitment to the security needs. He handled this issue with great tact yet with invincible courage. He was conscious of the weaknesses of the Pakistan Navy but lacked resources to redress that fully. Yet he tried to improve the capability of the navy. His stand on Afghanistan would go down as his greatest contribution to the future of Pakistan and of the Islamic Ummah in the region. He was amongst those few people who realized that condiment of Russian occupation of Afghanistan would represent inauguration of a new era of imperialism. He told me of his discussions with the Russian Ambassador in December 1979 and January 1980. He shared with me the threats he received from Russia and the disappointments he had to face at the hands of American diplomacy. Yet he stood like a hock on the Afghan issue. He mobilized the world opinion. He extended all support to the Mujahideen at that critical hour when even American help was reluctant. First two years of the resistance were purely indigenous. The drain on Pakistani resources was heavy. The pressures from India were mounting. The Indo-Soviet lobby within country was active. Indo-Zionist lobby in America was playing its own game. But Zia was firm and unflinching. I am not divulging a secret when I say that the perceptions of the Foreign Office and the President did not converge. Foreign Office was advising caution and compromise ever since Russians stepped into Afghanistan. Zia knew surrender to Russian manoeuvres would be disastrous for the region. Later events vindicated correctness of vision.

Zia was unhappy with the Geneva Accord as it was being formulated. Geneva negotiations began and continued for a reason far different from what got crystallized in the form of the Accord in 1987-88. Qualitative changes took place between 1985 and 1988 which unfortunately the negotiators at Geneva to respond to in time. The fatal mistake relates to the undeclared differentiation between the Russian occupation forces and a regime pick forced into power by the forces of occupation. The question of interim government was not handled properly at the right time. This became the trap. Even President Zia realized it too late. He was more concerned with the resistance movement and left the negotiations to the Foreign Office. He realized his mistake too late. The idea of convergence between the strategic interests of the Afghan resistance, of Pakistan and of the U.S. was so played up that it befogged the gruesome realities of divergent visions and deceptive commonalities. Zia become more and more conscious of these in the later stages of resistance. The game of the super-powers had its own ethos. Junejo Government could not cease enough courage and lacked strategic vision to face the challenge in the critical phase of 1987-88. Zia tried to influence the situation, yet the super-powers were able to strike a new deal. Zia tried to make the best of a worsening situation. He desperately tried in different directions, missing a number of targets, resorting to things that rebounded. His vision was correct. His tactics faltered. But the fact that he was prepared to challenge the world powers in his own way was too much to be digested. Life and death are in the hands of God; but there is little doubt that his presence became a throne in the flash for three major actors in the region, Russia, India and America. The new shape of things they wanted to see could materialize only through his elimination. The crash C-13'O of 17th August 1988 is not a riddle — it is the key to the change that was to be. Zia's domestic policies can be rebuked; but it was his Afghan policy that made him immortal. He joined the caravan of Shuhada who laid their live in the cause of Afghanistan.

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