

PAKISTAN'S DECILINE AND DEFEAT
SOME REFLECTIONS

THE VOICE OF ISLAM

Vol 7, No. 7

July-August 1972

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



PAKISTAN'S DECLINE AND DEFEAT: SOME REFLECTIONS¹

By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

We are meeting today in the face of a grim situation. Pakistan stands torn and humiliated. The nation is faced with a crisis that threatens its existence. The new ideological state that emerged on the map of the world on August 14th, 1947, has lost its grip on its very map, geographically as well as ideologically. Estrangement and alienation from within, and aggression and conquest from without have split the country asunder and left it bleeding. The threat continues unabated and undiminished. The catastrophe stricken people stand bewildered and aghast/unable to believe what has really befallen them, not knowing whether they are faced with just the end of the beginning, or the beginning of the end.

As a nation we must be prepared to face the truth. The greatness of a nation lies not merely in the triumphs but also in the way it faces a crisis. A crisis does not merely heap misfortunes, it also unfolds challenges and opportunities. And the graver the crisis, the greater is the challenge. Nations that are doomed to decay and destruction merely mourn and cry over reverses, and fall into the dustbin of history as dead leaves. Nations that possess the throb of life within them accept the challenge thrown by the crisis with faith and fortitude, and from the point of view of Islam will commence forthwith. The laws which are contrary to the absolute and basic injunctions of Islam will be picked out and in due course replaced by others more in conformity with the Shariah.

The Revolutionary Command Council, by a Decree issued on 24 March 1971, set up a Committee for preparing a comprehensive code with regard to Islamic Personal Law. This Committee is presently engaged on its work. Our next step will be to unify the judicial system and end the existing distinction between Shariah and Civil courts, so that both the Qadhis and civil judges will then decide matters in accordance with the law ordained by God. Insha-Allah.

The Libyan Revolution proclaims its firm determination and irrevocable decision to bring about the complete enforcement of Islamic law in the country, until at last God's Word and His injunctions are fully installed in their rightful place of honour, and that which is not God's word is relegated to the dust-bin where it really belongs. The Revolutionary Council does not care the least bit for the ridicule which the protagonists of Western law and their Orientalist fellow-travellers are heaping on the limits prescribed by Allah, and the doubts and suspicions which are being spread by a/group, which is ill-disposed towards Islam and the Muslims, about the penal laws of Islam and the other provisions of the Shariah, not refraining from resorting to lies and calumnies in the process. The Revolutionary Council will ignore, with the contempt which they deserve, all the inanities uttered by these people, and continue single mindedly with its task of establishing the validity of Truth and the hollowness of un-truth, bringing about the enforcement of Allah's injunctions.

For, it has been truly said:

Which then is best? — He that layeth his foundation on piety to God and His Good Pleasure? — or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand-cliff ready to crumble to pieces? And it doth

¹ This is the text of & talk given by Mr. Khurshid Ahmad at the conference of the Pakistan Solidarity Front, held in January 1972 at the Alexandra Hotel, London. Although much has happened since then, the basic realities, as pointed up by him, have not; nor, consequently, has the need for adopting the remedial course suggested by him — Ed.

crumble to pieces with him, into the fire of Hell, and God guideth not people that do wrong. (9:109).

"We must accept the fact of defeat although it was a portion of the armed forces and not the country, which surrendered to the enemy. We must not try to explain away the bitter realities that have produced this tragedy by simplified explanations, by searching for scapegoats, or by trying to change the focus of perception from the real issues towards pseudo-issues. Realism, consists in accepting a defeat as such and not either treating it as a slight set-back or claiming that it is a victory in disguise. Idealism consists in refusing to abjectly surrender the long-term perspective to defeat, in not reconciling oneself to it in thought and deed, and in regrouping one's energies to courageously and unhaltingly pursue the ideals which make life worth living and worth sacrifices for their achievement. Defeat is one thing; defeatism is another. Losing a battle is not tantamount to losing a war, but if defeat is accepted in the souls and the ideals and aspirations are abandoned, then the war is really lost, in fact even the right to a life with dignity and honour. Those who wish to live in honour must yet pursue the path of both realism and idealism. If we resolve to pursue this path we must, at this critical Juncture, pause to reflect upon the factors that have, within the short span of twenty-four at a half years? led to such a decline and defeat. An honest appraisal, however bitter it may be, must be the first step in a renewed march towards reassertion.

Is the fall of East Pakistan to Indian forces the end of the story, or is it merely a symptom and a symbol of the malaise that has overtaken our national life? Was it a solitary misfortune or was it the outcome of a long drawn-out process which has been eating at our vitals? Is the loss of the Eastern wing the end of the tale, or is it a catastrophe that has befallen the whole of Pakistan — its body and soul alike.

The military defeat, nay, the military surrender, is not just an isolated event. Some might regard as the blunder of one man or of a few in military or civilian dress but the real story is different. The entire episode might be traced to a conspiracy, national and even international, through which a clique of power-hungry men have continuously gambled with the fate of the army and the nation, solely to perpetuate their own hold or the hegemony of men of their own liking as apparently happened in March 1969. The tragedy may also be traced to the failure of or, rather, betrayal by, the friends who did not come to our help at the moment of crisis while the allies of our enemy rendered it all-out political, material and military support. The catastrophe can also be explained in terms of the policy or, rather, more precisely 'non-policy', of the regime which held power, characterised as it was by confusion and ambivalence. It was directed towards deceiving political groups and factions, and at the same time exploiting the patriotic feelings of the people for its own ends.

All these explanations have some elements of truth, but none of them taken singly or even all of them taken together tell the whole of the truth. What has happened is the result of a series of blunders by a number of people who have been strutting about as leaders, imposed or elected. It does not seem mysterious any more that this was a conspiracy at the top-most level. For an army that had won laurels in the past and which has been one of the finest fighting forces in the world, to have lost more than half of the country not by fighting a war but through not fighting it. It has been not so much a military defeat, as a martial suicide and surrender. Even the unused arms, heavy and light alike, were not destroyed before the surrender but were, so to say, presented to the enemy on a silver plate. The failure of the allies was also a factor, particularly in a situation where the enemy was acting with the fullest support of its friends, for the world powers who have

been wanting to settle the scores of the crusades have not yet given up their efforts. The shameful policy of the Yahya regime contributed not a little to the events which culminated in the final debacle. It took over with pious promises of restoration of democracy but steadfastly refused to restore the 1956 Constitution which would have taken back the country from where it had gone off the rails in 1958. Instead,, it announced elections for a new Constituent Assembly. After removing the ban on political activity it allowed political parties to work in a fashion which could only spell doom for the country, for the way event were allowed to develop led only to the coming to the fore of parties committed not to treating Pakistan as one entity but rather as a conglomeration of two or even more entities with conflicting rather than common interests. The drama it staged of first summoning the Assembly and then of abruptly putting it off, the resultant eruption of secessionist revolt, the masterly inactivity in the face of the revolt, for three full weeks, and than striking back in a manner hardly likely to result in a favourable political or military solution — all this typifies the callousness with which the regime looked upon its duty toward the country. Nothing effective was done to counter the psychological and political war being waged all over the world by the enemies and, when it came time for the army to enter the fight, nothing was done to take the fighting into the enemy's country and no attack was delivered on him on the Western front for three weeks during which it was able to concentrate on the Eastern front with all the forces it needed for a military victory. And, when defeat seemed to be imminent, but it was yet possible to retrieve the situation at least partly by accepting a compromise formula at the United Nations, the opportunity was just thrown away. This is how the regime, with its advisers (both open and hidden), and associates, acquitted itself. But, is this too the whole truth? Was it just the failure of the regime, or of the entire system — its ideology of power-hunger, its Establishment and leadership, and its policy and strategy?

Pakistan has not been a mere geographic expression. The parts which combined to form Pakistan on August 14th, 1947, had been there in geography and history for thousands of years On the day Pakistan was established they tore themselves away from the geography of the land and its earlier course of history, and resolved to make a new history in the light of the ideals of the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent — according to the faith, values and principles given by Allah and His Prophet to which 100 million Muslims of undivided India were committed. Pakistan came into being as the promised land of Islamic revival and not merely as the land of the Punjabis, Bengalis, Pathans, Sindhis and Baluchis. Pakistan derived its identity from this Islamic ideology, which constituted its *raison d'etre*. The tragedy of Pakistan lies in the fact it was never made into a laboratory for Islam. Nothing more than half-hearted lip-service was paid to the ideology. The doors of the state were thrown wide open for all alien ideologies and orders. The educational system remained steeped in the traditions of secularism and utilitarianism. Economics of capitalism and exploitation were given a free hand to wreak havoc. Cultural aping of the West began in full swing at all levels. Regionalism raised its head and was fed from every source and in every area. Those who tried to remind the authorities of the original ideals of the movement were sought to be silenced in different ways, and imprisoned and even the sentence of death was hung over some. No effort was made for the ideological integration of the country and the Islamic orientation of the new generation. "Standard of living," and some mysterious economic development became the gods for the new society that was being brought into existence. Every one plunged into a mad race for quick riches. To justify this, a philosophy of 'planned imbalances' was forged and, as such, exploitation, individual, regional and sectoral, were writ into the economic policy. This created a devastating situation — and gave rise to a plethora of grievances which was tactfully exploited by the regionalists and the political demagogues. It is this blatant ideological failure which lies at the root of the crisis of Pakistan and which has unfortunately

culminated in the present disaster. When a people betray a pledge they have entered into with Allah they have to garner the bitter fruits of this betrayal.

Democracy was never allowed to flourish. It took nine years to frame the first. Constitution, which was torn to shreds within two years and a half of its enforcement. No sooner was the date-line set for the first general elections than the constitution was abrogated, and martial law imposed. Democracy does not consist in the holding of mere elections—the sham of elections is put up in almost every dictatorship. Even Hitler and Mussolini staged this drama. Democracy does not mean mobocracy either. Any demagogue can whip up mass fervour. The essence of democracy lies in enabling the people to participate in the running of their own affairs through systematic constitutional channels and by making the rulers accountable to the people. It is the peoples' participation, their unceasing vigil and evaluation, the leadership's accountability before them, and repeated periodic references to them for change of leadership that go to make up the substance of democracy. Military rule destroyed all chances of democracy, with the result that, on the one hand, the natural political evolution of the country was disrupted and feelings of frustration began to take root amongst people in different regions and, on the other, there took place the politicalization of the army which struck a deadly blow to the efficiency and integrity of the armed forces. A new ruling class emerged in the country consisting of military generals, civil service bureaucrats and their political hangers on—the new Establishment, which ruled and continues to rule the country through repression, through destruction of the freedom of the press and through political corruption and economic exploitation. The people's failure lies in tolerating this situation by becoming silent spectators. This is how the tragedy of Pakistan was written: Pakistan, which the Muslims in India had envisaged under the leadership of the Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani was strangulated and, to cap it all, torn apart.

We must not forget the dirty game played by the foreign powers and foreign inspired elements. Nor should we ignore the blunders, the criminal behaviour of our own leaders. Nor should we underestimate the enemy, his strength, his real designs and his strategy and tactics. But along with these we must also care to look at the affairs of our own house and reflect on the responsibility that we as a nation bear in allowing them to deteriorate all along. The passive majority must realise that it is the greatest sufferer, and why. What has happened ought to be more than sufficient to shake us out of our complacency, our hearts bleed in agony. The forces that have brought us this tragedy, that have deprived us of more than half of our homeland, have not ceased to act. A still greater danger looms large on the horizon and threatens whatever is left of our homeland. The nature of the threat remains unchanged. The danger can still be faced and repelled, but only if we are prepared to learn the lesson from our own bitter past and battered present. To me these lessons, primarily are three:—

Firstly, we must realise that our survival depends on our strict adherence to and honest practising of Islam. If mere chanting of a prescription cannot cure a disease, how can mere lip-service to Islam change the fate of our nation? We can regain our lost stature if we sincerely and scrupulously implement the Islamic way of life. If we are not prepared to learn this lesson even after the fall of Dacca, then let me remind you that Islam does not need us for her survival. Allama Iqbal very rightly said, "What I have learned from the history of Islam is that it is not the Muslims who have saved Islam but Islam which has saved the Muslims".

Secondly, we must establish real democracy in the country, and the people must make a resolve that they are not going to tolerate any dictator, whatever be the price. We have suffered, too

much from dictatorship to now afford its continuance. People must be vigilant. They must boldly take stock of their national affairs and try to correct them, undeterred by obstacles, undistracted by favours. May I remind you of an event from the life of the second Caliph? When a person harshly criticised him, some of the Companions tried to scold him. Umar said—"Let him have his say: If the people do not criticise us boldly there is no good in them, and if we are not prepared to bear criticism, then there is no good in us".

Thirdly, we must not underestimate our enemy. We must not blindly put our reliance upon help from others and should rather build our own strength, materially, militarily and morally. With faith in Allah, we should prepare ourselves for the struggle ahead.

In the end, I want to utter a note of warning. The world powers are trying to thrust upon us a second Tashkent — which would mean peace at the cost of the original idea of Pakistan, at the cost of abandonment of Kashmir and acceptance of Hindu leadership in the subcontinent. East Pakistan has been separated through the intervention of India.

We may not be able to win back the friendship of our East Pakistani brothers, but we must strive to get them freed, in the first instance, from the yoke of India. Then we must make a planned effort, untangled by any selfish worldly motives, to gradually win over Muslim Bengal, by sincerely making Islam a living reality in our socio-political life, so that it can act as a bridge between the two wings. It is only through gradual and long-sustained effort that we can remove the bitterness that now separates the two brotherly families. Even in a family, splits and separations do take place, but reunions occur too. Political realities are never eternal and unchanging. Ireland fought against Britain for decades and at last got separated in 1921. It refused even to join the British Commonwealth — but only this month it has entered the European Community with Britain, both signing the new Treaty of Brussels on the same sheet of paper and at the same hour of history. Egypt and Syria joined to form the U.A.R., and then separated with bitterness after four years. Both have now joined hands in a new federation. Political realities go on changing, but they will change according to our aspirations only if we are prepared to mould ourselves according to the ideals which can inspire those who believe in Allah and His Prophet and want to live in justice and peace. If we fail on this count, we cannot stop the political realities from changing against our wishes, as we could not in the case of East Pakistan. But if we can live according to our ideals, then the gravitational pull will, come into operation and things can change for the better. Are we prepared to fight the malaise at home and reconstruct Pakistan in the light of its original ideals? Only if we do would we be justified in repeating the Quaid's saying that Pakistan is not a mere geographical expression, it is the embodiment of an ideology. If we fail the ideology, geography will defeat us. If we honestly live up to the ideology, geography will submit to us. This is the lesson of the past; this is also the recipe for the future.
