

## *Review Article*

*Betrays of Another Kind: Islam, Democracy and The Army In Pakistan*, by Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Faiz Ali Chishti, Rawalpindi: PCL Publishing House, 1990, 260 pp. Rs. 300.00 (h.b).

The author Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Faiz Ali Chishti was known as the 'iron man' of Zia-ul-Haq's regime in its first years and was the one who led the 'OPERATION FAIR PLAY' which toppled the constitutionally elected government of the PPP under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The book is undoubtedly a valuable document which throws light on an event of historic importance.

Firstly, the book provides an opportunity to the students of history to study the nature and dimension of the ruthless struggle for power which is going on amongst the different contending classes, groups and individuals who are determined to outmaneuver one another and grab power sometimes in the name of Islam and sometimes in the name of Democracy. Secondly, the book exposes many important personalities who played havoc with the destiny of the people and institutions of the country. Since the author himself was closely associated with the Martial Law regime in its early period and was one of the most important collaborators of Zia-ul-Haq, his information and knowledge about the ruling clique is valuable. His account of events and opinions about Zia-ul-Haq and his visible and invisible policies and activities deserve our attention and careful study. Though he had developed differences with Gen. Zia and this book reflects his personal animosity, grudges and griev-



are many truths, half-truths and many cover-ups. The inherent contradictions are quite transparent. In all the sixteen chapters of the book, Zia-ul-Haq has been the main target of Chishti's criticism and ridicule. But most astonishingly Zia has been defended by Chishti in the circumstances which led to the overthrow of Bhutto's government and establishment of the military rule under Zia. In the opinion of Chishti, Gen. Zia did not hatch any conspiracy against the PPP's government. The circumstances compelled Zia and the Army to step in. Chishti writes, "Zia did not come into power through a conspiracy".<sup>1</sup> 'OPERATION FAIR PLAY' was not planned overnight. It was one of the contingency plans.<sup>2</sup> Zia was genuinely for elections and so were we, the corps commanders. "Gen. Zia stepped forward as a champion of democracy. He had to choose between Mr. Bhutto and the integrity of Pakistan".

Chishti is quite convinced that there was no conspiracy to overthrow Bhutto and the charges levelled by Bhutto against PNA were baseless as he writes, "Many PPP supporters still uncritically believe that it was the USA which was behind the upsurge of protests against the PPP government in 1977. There was no such thing as "a secret hand" of the USA or CIA, nor was there substance in Mr. Bhutto's charge that USA had made him a target because of the so called 'Islamic Bomb'.<sup>3</sup> Chishti gives no weight to the statement of the PM Bhutto in which he had accused a foreign power to have hatched a conspiracy to overthrow him. This speech was delivered on the floor of the National Assembly and at that time all the foreign diplomats of different countries were present. But very interestingly in the fifteenth chapter of his book Chishti concedes that no change of government takes place without American blessings. He writes, "It is said that no party can come into power in Pakistan without American help. This is because Pakistan is in the lap of the USA'. It is said that Iskandar Mirza had ordered martial law with the USA clearance.<sup>4</sup> Prime Ministers Bogra, Ch. Mohammad Ali, Suhrawardy and Noon



erendum, instead fresh elections should be held. We were to wait for him in his office. A TV set was available in the COAS office and we listened to the PM's address. Mr. Bhutto said that he would go for the referendum. This was unexpected. So we asked the COAS what message he had conveyed. Gen. Zia told us that he had informed the PM that it was the unanimous decision of the generals in GHQ that there should be no referendum and that fresh elections should be held. At that stage we had no way of checking what Gen. Zia had really said. It came as a shock to us when in a subsequent Cabinet meeting, Mr. Bhutto addressed Gen. Zia and said, General you had told me that the Army wanted me to go for a referendum but today I find that was not the opinion of the Army". Gen. Zia was caught out of the whole audience. I was the only one who knew that Gen. Zia had told a deliberate lie".<sup>10</sup>

Was it Bhutto who let down Zia or was it Zia who let down Bhutto? Another interesting chapter of the book is the working of the Election Cell under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Faiz Ali Chishti. "The Election Cell was officially created two days later although it had been functioning since 5 July".<sup>11</sup> The main purpose of the Election Cell was to guarantee fair and free elections and for this purpose the Election Cell was to meet all party leaders and to convey their views to the CMLA. So the Election Cell held meetings with all prominent leaders who mostly belonged to the opposition or disgruntled elements of the PPP who had their personal grudges against its leadership. One factor was common amongst all these visitors to the Election Cell that they were almost unanimous in their opinion that the elections should be postponed.

Maulana Ghulam Ullah met the Election Cell on August 9, 1979 and raised the following points. The political situation had deteriorated and the PPP was likely to emerge successful in the General Election. He expressed his unequivocal opinion that under those circumstances, no elections should be held.<sup>12</sup>



meeting. We kept on meeting till the meeting was over. Then after a day came the final signal from Zia who ordered me to execute "Operation Fair-play" 'I recollected his last sentence to me after giving order "Murshid do not get me killed."<sup>16</sup>

After the coup Chishti was responsible for the protection and security of Zia because in his opinion at that time Zia was necessary for Pakistan's survival. Chishti writes "My job was simply to ensure that nobody removed Zia and put the existence of the whole country in jeopardy. Nobody dared a coup against Zia while I was present in Rawalpindi".<sup>17</sup> Really politics is a strange game. Friends of today may become enemies of tomorrow. Now the man who executed the coup d'etat of 5 July 1977, writes that, 'I was never a member of Zia's inner circle. There was no close personal relationship between us'<sup>18</sup> 'We were poles apart and remained strangers till we parted officially on March 30, 1980'.<sup>19</sup> If they were strangers then how did Chishti come to know that Zia was a 'colourless personality', 'deliberate liar', 'a treacherous fellow who broke all records by making every second decision a dishonest decision'. What was the source of his knowledge that, "In 1971 Zia was busy protecting the rulers and learning the fine arts of sycophancy and hypocrisy".<sup>20</sup>

But despite these obvious contradictions the book reveals many important facts such as the contents of the Hamood-ur-Rahman Commission's Report, Zia's plane being stopped in Paris for carrying narcotics/heroin, dubious 'Canadian connection of Zia', the hanging of Bhutto, appointment of a general who had 'run away from the battlefield in East Pakistan, as 'Secretary General Defence'<sup>21</sup> Kausar Niazi, G. Mustafa Jatoi, Yousaf Khattak, Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan, Nasrullah Khan, Haneef Ramay, Mufti Mahmood, Gen. K.M. Arif, Gen. Fazal-e-Haq are presented as disreputable characters. Chishti would have us believe that it was only his stand on elections which led to the rift with Zia which ultimately resulted in his retire-



10. *Ibid.*, p.54.
11. *Ibid.*, p.134.
12. *Ibid.*, p.166.
13. *Ibid.*, p.38.
14. *Ibid.*, p.68.
15. *Ibid.*, p.169.
16. *Ibid.*, p.63.
17. *Ibid.*, p.87.
18. *Ibid.*, p.113.
19. *Ibid.*, p.28.
20. *Ibid.*, p.121.
21. *Ibid.*, p.123.
22. *Ibid.*, p.113.
23. Mushahid Hussain, *Pakistan Politics; the Zia year*, 1990, pp.127-28.



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ment. Chishti writes, "Zia had consistently ignored my advice and failed to carry out the pledges on elections".<sup>22</sup> He wrote to Zia, "to maintain the state of moral and proverbial discipline of the armed forces, it goes without saying that elections must be held at the earliest".

Mushahid Hussain gives a more plausible reason for the exit of Chishti from the club, namely a struggle for the number two slot between Chishti and K.M. Arif. Also because Chishti appeared to be the king maker rather than a subordinate<sup>23</sup> (*Pakistan Politics; the Zia years* by Mushahid Hussain, 1990. p.127-128).

With all his distortions of facts and all his attempts to exonerate himself, Chishti's book gives valuable insight into the reality behind the facade of piety and love of Islam maintained by Zia with much care.

**Zulqarnain Zaidi**

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Chishti, Faiz Ali, *Betrayals of Another Kind: Islam, Democracy and the Army in Pakistan*, Rawalpindi, 1990, p.66.
2. *Ibid.*, p.65.
3. *Ibid.*, p.40.
4. *Ibid.*, p.209.
5. *Ibid.*, p.209.
6. *Ibid.*, p.209.
7. *Ibid.*, p.28.
8. *Ibid.*, p.28.
9. *Ibid.*, p.68.



The Election Cell gave great weight to the opinions of all those persons who were against holding the elections, because in any re-election the PPP was sure to win. Chishti writes, "We, in the Armed Forces, had always believed that the PPP was the biggest and most powerful party in the country which enjoyed the peoples' trust and love".<sup>13</sup> Under such circumstances holding of the Election meant the victory of the PPP which would have certainly gone against General Zia. Thus realizing the gravity of the danger the election Cell changed its priority. Chishti writes, "When accountability before election became Zia's slogan, a National Government, became an absolute necessity; Internationally it would have been better than a military government".<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the Election Cell started negotiating with Opposition political leaders and parties. Chishti reveals "I requested politicians to co-operate fully for the good of the nation"<sup>15</sup> Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Chishti had temporarily forgotten the mission which was assigned to him. The Cell which was created to hold free and fair election was now striving for the formation of a national government by completely eliminating the biggest national party of the country.

The Book is severe in its indictment of Zia-ul-Haq for his acts of omission and commission. The author has mentioned his association with Zia which is spread over a period of about fifteen years, which is more than sufficient a time to assess the character of man. Zia and Chishti were the sons of the same soil and birds of the same feather, they knew each other very well. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Faiz Ali Chishti was one of those four generals who had overthrown the PPP government. Chishti writes,

At about 9.30 in the evening on July 3 Maj. Gen. K.M. Arif took Maj. Gen. Riaz Khan and myself in his car to meet Gen. Zia in his residence. Gen. Zia knew that the PNA and Government meeting was in session at that time. We discussed the situation and Gen. Zia decided that he would give the final orders after seeing the outcome of the



wanted to stay on the right side of the USA and never did anything without clearance from the USA for fear of losing their posts. It was so bad in Noon's time that even top secret talks in the cabinet used to be conveyed to the USA, not by American Agencies but by some Pakistanis...' <sup>5</sup> with the fall of the Shah of Iran... Pakistan became a first line state for American policy makers. It wanted to replace Iran with Pakistan as its key regional ally, to secure oil routes. This time it was martial law again. It was Gen. Zia's government". <sup>6</sup>

The person who was the victim of this diabolical conspiracy publicly accused a foreign power. The secretary general of PNA, Mr. Rafique Bajwa, said in an interview that there was a hand of a foreign power who pumped money into the campaign of the PNA but still in the opinion of Lt. Gen. Chishti, Zia did not come to power through conspiracy. Keeping in view this observation of Chishti one is quite puzzled by his logic. At one place he writes "I believe that it is possible that CIA got hold of him (Gen. Zia) when he was under training in the USA. Maybe Zia's stay in Jordan took him closer to CIA..." <sup>7</sup> Again he questions, "Did Zia want to become COAS or was it a deep conspiracy by someone else who wanted to deal with the democratic elements in Pakistan through him". <sup>8</sup> After reading these lines one is quite surprised by Chishti who wants to exonerate Gen. Zia from the guilt of the conspiracy? Simply because Chishti himself was equally involved in the heinous crime or was he merely defending the 'Club' of which he and Zia were members.

Defending Zia, Chishti distorts the facts when he writes, "Gen. Zia had given his best to the Bhutto from March 7 to July 5. It was Mr. Bhutto who let down Gen. Zia..." <sup>9</sup> He contradicts himself when he writes,

Gen. Zia was to give our recommendations to the PM who was to address the National Assembly in the afternoon and announce his decision on the referendum, Gen. Zia told us that he should go to the PM to inform him about our recommendation that there should be no ref-



ances and colours his version of events and observations about the character of Zia, yet his remarks and assessment of Zia have its own weight and value which cannot be ignored. It may not be the 'whole truth' but even the partial truth is quite interesting and thought provoking.

Thirdly, in ordinary circumstances, information and knowledge about coups and conspiracies are very difficult to acquire. The people involved in conspiracies are most reluctant to talk about them truthfully. Usually they try to conceal and cover up all their activities. But in this case one of the collaborators after having fallen out with the leader of the coup d'etat of 5 July 1997, is bold enough to speak his mind to vindicate his own position. Since Chishti had developed deep differences with Zia on the issue of General Elections and transfer of power to civil administration, he resigned. Being a straightforward and honest man as he claims to be, we will have to give due weight to his explanations and opinions. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Faiz Ali Chishti is an honourable man and he had the courage of his convictions to speak bluntly after the death of Zia without caring for its consequences. As he wants to put the facts in their true perspective, we will have to accept his version of events on its face value unless and until he contradicts himself or is challenged by some other evidence.

Fourthly, many things might not have been known to ordinary citizens of Pakistan about their rulers but the writing of Lt. Gen. Chishti provides fascinating glimpses of the characters of those who masqueraded sanctimoniously as champions of Islam. He had painted a very serious and gave picture of financial irregularities, favouritism, abuse of power and misappropriation of public funds committed by Zia-ul-Haq and his colleagues and politicians of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA).

The book is certainly interesting as well as boring. It is interesting where Chishti is natural and uninhibited; it is very boring where he is dissimulating and tries to cover up. There