

Scenario 6

Who Supported Gen Zia (1977-88):

When the then retiring Army Chief Gen Tikka Khan refused PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to avail an extension of one year in March 1976, he had sent up a list of eight Lt Generals then serving in Pakistan Army with his recommendations. Gen Tikka Khan, in an interview published in **daily 'Jang' of 28th March 1999**, told that:

'We had never recommended Gen Ziaul Haq's name as army chief nor were we expecting his selection. He used to wear loose dress and was known as 'peon' of the Armoured Corps instead of being called a General. He had one negative report being captain which was later cleared by one Col Babar, the uncle of Gen Nasirullah Babar, but even then Mr Bhutto selected him.'

When Gen Ziaul Haq was selected as Army Chief, the then government Secretary Ghulam Ishaq Khan (later the President of Pakistan), by chance told Maj Gen Sawar Khan that he was going to make a media announcement of seven retiring Generals as per PM's desire. Maj Gen Sawar Khan asked him to hold on, talked to PM Bhutto who was at D I Khan that day and managed to tone down the news. Three of them, Generals Akbar, Aftab & Majeed Ch were nominated as Pakistan's ambassadors in some countries whereas Gen Jilani was sent as Secretary Defence in Pakistan Secretariat Rawalpindi.

Lt Gen Faiz Ali Chishti had been the main and known supporter of Gen Ziaul Haq during starting years.

Lt Gen Faiz Ali Chishti, a charismatic character behind the army coup of July 1977, has always been measured as top die-heart companion of Gen Ziaul Haq in the history of Pakistan. He was considered a key to success for the military rule in 1970s; known for coining strategic policies for the martial law government and their implementation & control without compromises. He remained with Gen Ziaul Haq till his retirement in 1980, kept silent till 1982 under the rules in vogue [In Pakistan no officer can jump in politics until two years after his retirement] and then released some stunning facts about the perceptions then prevailing amongst the people.

Referring to an interview Lt Gen Faiz Ali Chishti conducted by **Sohail Warroich**, published in **daily 'Jang' of 20th June 1999** and later included in his book titled as 'Jarnailon Ki Syasat in Urdu (2005)' some glimpses would be enough to reflect the then prevailing politics in power corridors of the military regime.

It was generally known that Lt Gen Chishti was the real strength behind Gen Ziaul Haq while the later used to say '*Murshid*' (spiritual leader) for him. The fact was that '*Murshid*' was a word Gen Ziaul Haq used to say for every colleague in an informal way and not specifically for Gen Chishti. Very few people know that previously they were simply known to each other as routine acquaintance being in army. Both the Generals were not even at good terms between March 1976 and July 1977 due to a little event in background:

'In GHQ Lt Gen Chishti was posted as Military Secretary (MS) and was once asked by then Lt Gen Ziaul Haq for transfer of an officer which he had refused. When in the March 1976, Gen Ziaul Haq became the Army Chief; Lt Gen Chishti at the first available chance explained that why 'that peculiar transfer was not done'. Gen Ziaul Haq had agreed with the reason apparently smilingly.

Being MS on duty Lt Gen Chishti used to brief Gen Ziaul Haq that he should not shake hand with others using both hands; he should wear a proper General's cap

with uniform; he should not give money to saints & clergymen and he should not bow down his body when meeting others. It was his duty to convey the Army Chief that the officers and men of his force did not like such humble and docile gestures in their army chief or commander.'

Interestingly, it was generally known that whole of the army was with Gen Ziaul Haq for taking Mr Bhutto to the gallows. It was not the fact. Even Gen Ziaul Haq's most trusted companion Lt Gen Faiz Ali Chishti was not standing by him for that heinous act. It was purposefully made public that Lt Gen Chishti was the person to take that decision of hanging Mr Bhutto; he (Lt Gen Chishti) had gone to Rawalpindi Jail to see the 'death cells' for some reasons etc. Lt Gen Faiz Ali Chishti had denied the charges altogether by saying that:

- *'All lies. I've never visited the Rawalpindi Jail till today.*
- *Gen Ziaul Haq had never called anyone to share his plans about Zulfikar Ali Bhutto or his PPP including me. I was rather against Mr Bhutto's hanging and I used to differ with him openly in meetings. I had also argued that the mercy petition regarding Mr Bhutto's death penalty be left for the coming government.*
- *My contention remained that 'let us have elections and go'.*
- *In Mr Bhutto's death case, punishment was announced by the higher courts. No one could do anything. The real thing was the mercy petition of Mr Bhutto. An undue haste was done in processing it. When it was received by Governor Punjab Gen Sawar Khan, he sent it to Gen Ziaul Haq within 24 hours. The PM's position was of an international standing, much thinking should have been infused in that issue.*
- *This disinformation was purposefully sent to media that Mr Bhutto was subjected to torture by me. I was Corps Commander of 10 Corps Rawalpindi. I had no connection with martial law administration nor had I concern with jails. Mr Bhutto might have been beaten by Col Rafiuddin, then incharge jail from the Martial Law Admin, who was later awarded by sending to Myanmar as Pakistan's Commercial Attaché. He was under one Brig Rahat Latif who was later promoted to Maj General.*
- *The above disinformation was sent to media on Gen Ziaul Haq's specific instructions. I had known it the same day. I was upset on the day of Bhutto's hanging. I had met Gen Ziaul Haq that day and asked harshly that 'you are calling Islam here; then, as per Islamic injunctions, why Bhutto's dead body was not handed over to his wife and daughter. Shame on you, General, Shame on you.'*
- *Mr Bhutto was actually to be hanged a day earlier. Gen Ziaul Haq had already released that disinformation to media [that Bhutto had actually died of torture done by Gen Chishti in jail] but I was not in the town that day; witness the record of GHQ.*
- *Gen Ziaul Haq rang me, called me in town but as I had known about wrong media news, therefore, I avoided obeying his orders that day. Gen Ziaul Haq postponed the execution till next day.*
- *When I refused to go as Governor Punjab, why Gen Sawar Khan agreed immediately then because he could send Mr Bhutto's mercy appeal to Gen Zia within 24 hours, I was not of that type.*
- *Afterwards Benazir Bhutto came as prime minister twice; had there been any truth in stories wrongly attributed to me, she would have taken me through a hard mill during her government.*
- *Amongst the Corps Commander's meetings at GHQ Rawalpindi, Lt Gen Jehanzeb Arbab always stood by me in making demands of elections; he was the only officer to do so.*
- *I've never met Benazir Bhutto, then or after, till today.*

In army there are two kinds of people; firstly, the yes-Sir *Laftains* to obey which are also used to extend the chief's tenures and secondly, the 'good captains'; always needed to strike and fight. Pakistan's bad luck that we have seen more yes-Sir chiefs like Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Gul Hassan, Tikka Khan, Ziaul Haq, Mirza Aslam Beg, Abdul Waheed Kakar and Jehangir Karamat etc. Good captain was Gen Asif Nawaz so was sent very high very soon but by whome; remains a mystery.

The elections to be held in October 1977, as originally announced by Gen Ziaul Haq in his telecasts, were postponed on the instance of Gen Ziaul Haq who always quoted that the politicians were pressing him for announcing 'no elections'. *Jama'at e Islami* (JI) and the other politico-religious parties were in Gen Ziaul Haq's pockets under the false and politicized promises of Islamization of the country but with one exception of *Maulana* Shah Ahmed Noorani of *Jamiat Ulema e Pakistan* (JUP). Throughout that 11 year's military rule *Maulana* Noorani continuously hated the General, never met him except once. When Gen Ziaul Haq announced that there would be no elections till the Islamization process would get completed, the JUP was the only party which retaliated and went furious. He never attended any meeting of Gen Ziaul Haq.

Once *Maulana* Abdul Sattar Niazi and Gen (Rtd) K M Azhar, both of JUP, forced *Maulana* Noorani to see Gen Ziaul Haq because the General wanted to see him desperately; he agreed. However, during meeting *Maulana* Noorani got so enraged on Gen Ziaul Haq's betrayal with the nation on election issue (recalling that famous promise of 90 days) that he abused Gen Ziaul Haq while shouting at his face. In that meeting Shah Noorani was accompanied by *Maulana* Niazi and Shah Fareedul Haq whereas Ghulam Isahq Khan and Gen K M Arif were there to help Gen Ziaul Haq. The meeting could not be continued further; obviously.

Gen Ziaul Haq once told Lt Gen Chishti that '*Lt Gen Rahimuddin is a paper tiger only; put him as IG Training in GHQ.*' In 1971 War, his Commander Iftikhar Janjua had recommended Court Martial for him (Gen Rahimuddin) because he had absconded from the War. He had never seen a travelling bullet throughout his army career; but later the same Rahimuddin was made a four star General brushing aside the rules & requirements, astonishing it was; because he was (or going to be) the father in law of Ijazul Haq, Gen Ziaul Haq's eldest son.

Lt Gen Faiz Ali Chishti used to speak bluntly and loudly in Commanders Meetings at GHQ. Gen Ziaul Haq did not like him by heart but continued to tolerate him till his last day in service. After 1982, he was the first General to raise voice against Gen Ziaul Haq who was still in power then. Gen Chishti was never arrested for speaking against Gen Ziaul Haq but all politicians and media-men, whoever came to see him, were invariably arrested and taken through the usual interrogation process by the ISI then under Gen Akhtar Abdul Rehman; just to create harassment nothing else.

[Gen Ziaul Haq once had to travel in a plane which was to be driven by Gen Chishti's son. Due to security reasons and untold risk, his son was removed from the flying list. Gen Chishti, when told about it, asked his son to resign immediately. Later he joined Emirates Airlines.]

Lt Gen Chishti once told that though he was critical but Gen Ziaul Haq used to tolerate him and love him because he never expected anything more than he deserved. No complaint of corruption whatsoever but there were some Generals like Gen Akhtar Abdul Rehman, Gen Sawar Khan, Gen KM Arif and Gen Iqbal who used to twist Gen Zia's ears against him.

President Daoud of Afghanistan once came on Pakistan's tour and, due to unknown reasons, suddenly agreed to accept ***Durand Line*** as an international border. Lt Gen Chishti suggested Gen Ziaul Haq to make an announcement immediately. Gen Ziaul Haq hesitated; saying that he would do it in Kabul when he would be there on tour. Later when he went on Afghan tour, Lt Gen Chishti was not asked to accompany him. He was the eye-witness to President Daoud's offer first to the Prime Minister Bhutto and then to Gen Ziaul Haq.

[The ***Durand Line*** refers to the porous international border between Pakistan & Afghanistan, which is poorly marked and approximately 2,640 kilometres (1,610 miles)]

*long. It was established after the 1893 **Durand Line Agreement** between a representative of Colonial British-Raj India and Afghan Amir Abdul Rehman for fixing the limit of their respective spheres of influence. The single-page agreement contains seven short articles and is still in vogue.]*

Lt Gen Chishti was made Chairman Election Cell and of Accountability Cell too. He remained associated with the negotiations, from March to June 1977, used to be held between the IJI leadership and the PM Bhutto. Gen Chishti had told Mr Bhutto many times openly to go for new elections as the situation was going out of control day by day. Martial Law of July 1977 was finally decided by Gen Ziaul Haq as Army Chief, previously to be imposed on 3rd July 1977, but then held amidst the news that compromise between IJI & PM Bhutto would be signed on 4th July. Gen Zia asked PM Bhutto about it who had replied that IJI people were not coming to terms; that moment the army coup was finally decided for the next day.

The immediate cause was that PM Bhutto had called army to control the law & order situation in Lahore. An army contingent, deployed in *Anarkali Bazaar* had to fire at the crowd but a controversy had broken out within army which was taken seriously. Army was ordered to fire; 30 bullets were fired; there were only three found dead; why not 30 deaths as army was not trained to fire in the air; it was contended. Three army Brigadiers had resigned. A Channel of Command was considered broken; of course, an alarming signal for army discipline.

It was a general perception that Gen Ziaul Haq was a weak General while using shoulders of hard nuts like Lt Gen Chishti. In July 1977 and after, the two names were synonymous for that military coup but ultimately Gen Ziaul Haq survived. Gen Chishti believed in army discipline till his last breath. He believed that Martial Law was 'correctly imposed' but was not being implemented or carried through correctly. He knew that Gen Ziaul Haq was pushing the country towards devastation and wreckage but he behaved like a disciplined subordinate officer and walked away from the playground on the eve of his retirement; however, leaving the people disappointed.

Referring to an interview published in **daily 'Jang' of 4th October 1998**, Gen F S Lodhi had once commented that: '*Gen Ziaul Haq was a nationalist person and it was his ultimate wish to impose Martial Law [that he did in July 1977]*'. Gen Ziaul Haq's option to fight the Afghan War was correct because the Russians were knocking at our door. Pakistan had not fought a proxy war because America joined us later.

It was rightly contended that instead of blaming Americans we should blame ourselves. In August 1988, Pakistan had debts of \$7 billions; in 1998 it was \$42 billion. In ten years what our politicians had done with Pakistan. One third of foreign loans went in the pockets of rulers (as per World Bank Report then published) so our politicians had eaten up \$12 billions personally. Some of our key figures still take their 'pocket money' from India & America.

However, there were no two opinions that Gen Ziaul Haq had used the Islamization to extend his political rule and not for Islam. When he was made the Army Chief in March 1976, liquor was banned in army messes and the restriction was laid down by Gen Tikka Khan in Mr Bhutto's regime. The same Mr Bhutto when first time visited the army mess in Gen Ziaul Haq's period, the later had waived that constraint just to please Mr Bhutto; where was his Islam then.

Invariably in all GHQ meetings, the officers used to hold discussions over possibility of elections. Lt Gen Chishti always openly asked for elections whereas Gen Fazal e Haq (later Governor of NWFP and was shot dead in open) always opposed him saying: '*Don't follow him Sir. He wants to swing over gallows and wants us to accompany him too*'. Every officer believed that if elections were held, the PPP would definitely sweep; Gen Ziaul Haq and religious parties did not want so; the military rule continued amidst discussions.

Gen Ziaul Haq always heard the arguments about elections in detail but never commented. From inside he was sizzling. Once at last, during a meeting where all Generals were sitting, he smashed the agenda file on the floor and shouted at Lt Gen Chishti in rage: '*Ok! Come and hold the Chief's chair, you always keep on giving dictations to me*'. Chishti's contention

was that the army had been hero in 1965 like wars but due to Martial Law of 1977, it was earning bad name due to Gen Ziaul Haq's false statements regarding elections and false promises of Islamization.

[Gen K M Arif, in his interview published in daily 'Jang' of 30th May 1999 had, however, said that he could not recall any such event as Lt Gen Chishti had claimed.]

Soon after Gen Ziaul Haq called a meeting (cum dinner) of politicians in which all Generals and the then Chief Justice Anwarul Haq were also present. The CJP Anwarul Haq had given six month's time to Gen Ziaul Haq to hold elections in Nusrat Bhutto case. Those six months were over. Lt Gen Chishti loudly said to the CJ:

'Sir, six months period is over. Gen Ziaul Haq is guilty of contempt of court. Call him in the apex court tomorrow, send him to jail and we Generals would announce for the general elections and place the results before your honour.'

There were murmuring and sarcastic smiles on many faces; Gen Ziaul Haq was one of them.

At the time when Gen Ziaul Haq had planned a self extension in his tenure as the Army Chief, Lt Gen Chishti had suggested to him that he should not do so. He should make any of the 40 Generals his Army Chief and go for Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee instead. Gen Ziaul Haq had flatly refused because he did not want to be a CMLA on the mercy of another COAS.

When news about differences between Gen Ziaul Haq and Lt Gen Chishti started catching leading spaces in media, the later went to see his Army Chief in his office with a written and signed resignation and placed it before him. Gen Chishti told his Chief that:

'To remove you from the scene and from the government is two minute's job for me (because he was the real strength; Corps Commander of the Rawalpindi Corps 10 which performs all coup operations in Pakistan) but I'll not do it because it would harm Pakistan. I've also got a list of senior army officers and politicians with me who had been advising me since months that I should send you away, but I'll not do it because it would harm Pakistan. Enough is enough General! Let me go home.'

Gen Ziaul Haq stood up from the chair; worriedly & smilingly; torn out the resignation in pieces; embraced Lt Gen Chishti saying: **'Murshad! Nothing doing like that, cool down'**.

The stories of differences between the two Generals even continued after Lt Gen Chishti's retirement. Ch Zahoor Elahi, father of Ch Shuja'at Hussain, had been trying to bring the two Generals together. Ch Zahoor used to convince Lt Gen Chishti to tone down and to stand by Gen Ziaul Haq but the former did not agree declaring openly that Gen Ziaul Haq was a 'Munafiq' (a hypocrite) so they would not go along. Once Ch Zahoor made a quick halt at Lt Gen Chishti's residence while going home (then in the Westridge Rawalpindi) and told:

'I was with Gen Ziaul Haq just now and told him that he was not going straight. I've told him that if he would not come straight then something else would be done. Mr Chishti! You were right; always right; Gen Ziaul Haq is not a trust worthy person.'

Next day, Ch Zahoor Elahi was murdered; Gen Ziaul Haq had ordered for his elimination.

Ch Shuja'at Hussain and Ch Pervez Elahi knew this fact for long. Contrary to a general perception that Ch Zahoor Elahi was killed by Al-Zulfikar was wrong. Later the Chaudhrys and Gen Zia's eldest son Ijazul Haq remained together in so many cabinets as ministers but went compromised with that hard fact despite tall claims of being from 'Naf' tribe, a caste of warrior *jaats*.

Lt Gen Hamid Gul had been the main supporter of Gen Ziaul Haq during his ending years.

Referring to daily **'The Nation' of 15th December 2008**, the President of Pakistan Mr Zardari had once described former ISI Chief Lt Gen Hamid Gul as 'more of a political ideo-

logue of terror rather than a physical supporter' while giving interview to the **'Newsweek'** magazine in New York. He had further clarified that:

'Hamid Gul is an actor who is definitely not in our good books. Hamid Gul is somebody who was never appreciated by our government. He has not been accused in the Mumbai incident but he is more of a political ideologue of terror rather than a physical supporter. Pakistan's intelligence agencies are no longer backing outlawed groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba. The links between the ISI and the LeT were developed in the old days when dictators used to run the country.'

'The government led by his PPP had always maintained a certain position that the intelligence agencies (should) have nothing to do with politics. Since the PPP in government, we held a stated position that ISI has no political role anymore.'

Lt Gen Hamid Gul had called Gen Asif Janjua as his senior and friend but they were not at good relations with each other for at least two reasons. Firstly; Gen Asif Janjua once said in Punjabi language that *'now we should roll back our nuclear program, we'll see it later,'* to which Gen Hamid Gul had instantly refuted by saying that *'what the hell are you talking about.'* The tone might have pinched more than words.

Secondly; the two Generals were having different views on the status of Northern Areas of Pakistan. Gen Asif Nawaz wanted to motivate politicians to take some decision on the status of the Northern Areas whereas Lt Gen Hamid Gul held the opinion that *'any such decision may extend loss to our stand on Kashmir Cause.'*

Referring to the **'Daily Times' dated 1st February 2008**, Gen (Rtd) Faiz Ali Chishti, who was heading the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society, which issued a blunt open letter signed by about 100 senior officers in early 2008, calling on Gen Musharraf to quit, should have apologised himself first for being a willing and core partner in the military coup of Gen Ziaul Haq in July 1977. Gen Chishti once came on TV to explain why the army did not educate the nation. His answer was: *'if the roof is leaking why put good furniture in the room.'*

[Gen (Rtd) A Majid Malik [who was a major in 1956 when he drafted a resignation by which Gen Ayub Khan forced President Iskandar Mirza to resign] should apologise for siding with Gen Musharraf when he took over the government in October 1999 and split the PML betraying Nawaz Sharif. He should be followed by Gen (Rtd) Mirza Aslam Beg for his role in the famous Mehran Bank scandal and misuse of the ISI funds for electoral & political manipulation. Gen Beg should have apologised for bringing the Supreme Court in contempt when he admitted that he had influenced the chief justice. When confronted with challenging a general, the Supreme Court under Justice Zullah forgivably got cold feet and let Gen Beg walk away free.

The biggest crime to which many retired Generals like Lt Gen Hamid Gul must confess, and then apologize for, is the policy of seeking 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan because the end results of this policy are now threatening the existence of Pakistan's unity on many counts.']