

UNTITLED:
Memoirs of a Life in the Pakistani Labour Movement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AEU	Airways Employees Union
APSO	All-Pakistan Students Organization
ARD	Alliance for the Restoration for Democracy
AL	Awami League
ANP	Awami National Party
APP	Azad Pakistan Party
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agent
CIA	Central Investigation Agency (US)
CID	Criminal Investigation Department (Pakistan)
CMLA	Chief Marshal Law Administrator
DSF	Democratic Students Federation
DSP	Deputy Superintendent of Police
FENA	Flight Engineers National Association
IB	Intelligence Bureau
IJI	Islami Jamhoori Ittehad
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
KPT	Karachi Port Trust
MRD	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy
MQM	Muhajir Qaumi Movement
ML	Muslim League

MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
NAP	National Awami Party
NLRB	National Labour Relations Board
NSF	National Student Federation
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
PIA	Pakistan International Airlines
PIAC	Pakistan International Airlines Corporation
PIACE	Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Employees Union
PMM	Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz
PALPA	Pakistan Airline Pilots Association
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League—Nawaz Group
PML-Q	Pakistan Muslim League—Quaid Group
QMM	Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz
SSA	Senior Staff Association
SAEP	Society of Aircraft Engineers of Pakistan
SP	Superintendent of Police
TI	Tehreek-e-Istiqlal
UPIAE	Union of PIA Employees
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter 1

Early Years in Undivided India

I believe that we are truly alive as long as we struggle, and remembrances of this struggle are the fruit of one's life. My earliest memories seem steeped in the terrifying shadows of orphanhood. My father, Akhtar Hussain, a young man in his thirties, died during my middle school exams. I must have been about ten then, the eldest of four children, with two sisters Zia Akhtar and Nargis, and a brother Zaki who was barely a year old. Part recollection, part imagination, I try to piece together what my mother, widowed at such a young age with four little children must have suffered, bereft of protection and position, and with little preparation and few resources with which to confront the new reality.

My paternal grandmother—*dadi*—and my mother—whom we called *apa*—wished for me to get educated and make a name for myself and the family, so that I could take on the responsibilities as quickly as possible. But circumstances were not to allow for anything but the most barebones education. Making my way through secondary school, I passed the high school matriculation examination at 14 or 15 years of age, too early to get a real job. So that I could continue studying, my *dadi* sold a piece of her ancestral land, which was the sole source of our livelihood after my father's passing. In 1946, I completed my Bachelor of Arts from Aligarh Muslim University. Had the war still been going on, I would most probably have enlisted in the Army.

The poverty and deprivation of those early years of my life were also accompanied with an energetic righteous urge to fight that sense of inferiority. An early infusion in the Shiite faith had made the battle between Hussainiyat and Yazidiyat a critical part of my genealogy, where

we were on the side of Hussain against anything that symbolized injustice, oppression, greed, and brute power. This persistent image of the aggressor and the unjust fed a fire of rebellion very early on.

The year was 1940, and I was in grade VIII at the Muslim High School in Bulandsheer, United Provinces. There was much in the air regarding the Khaksar movement, a social movement spurred by the effects of the Great Depression that targeting the British empire and wanted the formation of a Hindu-Muslim government. Then the news reached the school compound that there was a Khaksars demonstration in town. I made my way to the rally with some other kids, only to find that the police had surrounded the activists and were shoving them towards the jail. When the activists resisted, the police opened fire. Within moments, many activists lay dead. We kids scuffled our way towards the jail and saw blood everywhere. This was my first experience of the battle between the colonizer and the colonized; it impacted me profoundly and shook my entire being.

I recall another powerful experience, from the days of the Quit India movement. By then, I was in college, a student of Intermediate. I went to a rally organized by the Congress Party. The rally was well attended, mostly by college students like me. The whole country was in resistance against the British, and this was one small part of it. But there was no holding back on the arrests, perhaps testifying to the power of the resistance itself. Seeing this further strengthened my anti-British sentiment.

A few years on, in 1945, I was studying at Aligarh University during the heyday of the Muslim League. With no certainty about wanting to leave India, I was at least convinced that Pakistan was necessary. It was a matter of principle, I then thought, that Muslims should have a country of their own—perhaps this would also force the British to leave. I did whatever I could

do in pursuit of this end. My political activities landed a sentence of “Send Down,” meaning that I was expelled from university for life and would never be able to be back in it again. This was the end to many a dream.

How did all this come about? Over time, I got heavily involved in the movement for the creation of Pakistan. In those days a Collector by the name of Peter Dixon was in-charge of Aligarh, who was kept abreast of all political activities. One night I was with some friends at the railway station when the Chief Proctor of Aligarh University, Professor Omar Farooq, came by. When he saw us, he asked each of our names. Hearing my name, he took me to his nearby office and informed me of the twenty-two complaints against me. He told me that if I was honest about them, I would be forgiven, or else my fate would be in the hands of the Collector. I honestly admitted to all the complaints except for one, which was patently false: I never snatched a necklace from a prostitute in a railcar. He believed me, as he should have, and eliminated that accusation from the list.

Muharram holidays intervened and I went home to Dibai. When I returned to the University after the break, the library personnel were preparing a notice. Meanwhile, Ijlal Hussain, a third-year student who was also a distant relative of mine (and went on to take an important position in the Bhutto government in the 70s), came up to me and said that I had been “sent down.” I felt the earth disappear under my feet; all I could think of was my mother’s face, my frail grandmother, my sisters, and my brother—what would happen now? This would be so disheartening and disgraceful for my family who had been counting on me for so much.

I rushed to Professor Omar Farooq and reminded him that he had promised that I would be forgiven if I were to honestly accept the charges—instead I had been kicked out of the University. Obviously he was aware of all the developments and added that Dixon was bent on

arresting me, and it was due to Professor Ziauddin intervening on my behalf that the punishment was scaled down—and that instead of being put behind bars, I was asked to find my way out of the University.

Thus began the tireless wanderings of my mother and grandmother, with me in tow in search of any open door. After much strife and with many tapped connections (notable among which was Fasahat Hussain), I was allowed back in the University. I took my exams and passed. I soon learnt that, in my absence, many complaints and allegations had been filed against me back in my hometown. Once back home, I was summoned to the police station many times—fortunately, a kind and fair police officer intervened and helped clear up my record.

In Dibai, the atmosphere around the commemoration of the events of Karbala was intensely devotional and fervent, making it almost a truism that youths like us would be drawn to the lessons of Hussain against everything that Yazid symbolized. Our home was one of the central places where people gathered, with relatives and acquaintances coming from afar. One of these people was a gentleman by the name of Sibtain—lovingly called “munnay”—who had a shoemaking business in Bombay. Whenever I met him in *Majalis* and *Juloos*, he told me many stories of Bombay workers, their unions, and the red flag. There was also mention of a workers’ party. It was he who told me about the Navy strike of 1946, how the workers were able to shut down all of Bombay in protest against the British. And also that in those demonstrations, about five hundred workers had lost their lives. Years later, the same gentleman met me in Karachi, and became my conduit to many labour activists.

Chapter 2

In Pakistan: The Many Faces of a Voyage of Hope and Discovery

The celebration of Pakistan's independence was scheduled for 14 August 1947. When one of my relatives got transferred for a job from Delhi to Karachi, I decided to accompany him, just to check out the preparations in the lead-up to that date. I stayed in a one-room quarter in Jacob Lines. My mother and one sister were still in Delhi, while my brother was with my other sister in Aligarh. Hindu-Muslim riots had begun. Despite all the horrifying news and realities crossed borders, there was still a thrill that Pakistan had come into being.

On 14 August, there was a big crowd on Elphinstone Street (Elfy). The whole city was lit up. I was wandering the streets, absorbing what it meant that Muslims now had their own home, grateful for this to God in the way I knew to be. Suddenly, there was a big uproar on one side of the street. When I went closer, I found some men were misbehaving with the girls present, as if they were to be the objects of celebration for them. An elderly gentleman was with the women, and the police were close by, but no one did anything. With some friends, I took care of those men and made the girls leave.

Over in India, riots had taken an intensely ugly turn, and here, these guardians of freedom just terrified me. My mind was in knots, the sacredness of the moment trampled over. If this is what freedom meant to these people, then God save us! Relative to things that went wrong in those days, this was not the most significant or upsetting incident, but it nevertheless symbolized a lot to me. A whole web of connections between events and attitudes certainly assured me that freedom meant something completely different than what I was witnessing.

I had always known that even if Pakistan were to be formed we would stay back in India. In the elections of 1946, Irtaza Hasan, an old friend of my father was running as a Congress

candidate, and it was expected that I should work for him in the campaign. However, I assured him that while on principle I had to work for Muslim League (who had fielded Kunwar Ambar), I was going to stay with him and help him out in his political work in India.

After partition, the situation became so ugly that returning to India from Pakistan seemed out of question and very risky. My family accompanied a friend on a ship to Karachi. The next step was procuring employment, but not much was possible without extensive connections and references. This was especially dismaying, knowing how many people had left everything they had in order to come to Pakistan, not knowing how little awaited them by way of means, resources, and security. If this was merely the beginning, what were we to expect for the future? Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had said that Pakistan was to be home to a hundred million Muslims. Some home this was where every single educated young man was turned away from every opportunity! In short, there was no end to difficulties, but our affection for this new country was endless all the same. I chose not to file our claim to our ancestral piece of land, thinking that this would be costly to the new country. People insisted, but I did not relent. Maybe that was impractical and irrational, but certainly not without heart or passion! After a great deal of effort, I finally landed a job at 86 rupees per month at the office of the Accountant General Pakistan Revenues (AGPR), taking home 96 rupees with my BA allowance. A little while later, I got a better-paying job at Karachi Port Trust (KPT), with a salary of 135 rupees.

In March 1948, a friend found me a job at Orient Airways and it paid 175 rupees. This company had just moved its offices from Calcutta to Karachi. While I was hired for the technical office, I was deputed at the airport hangar from 7 am to 3 pm, which brought me into constant contact with those who worked on the airplanes. I had hoped that this exposure would teach me some worthy technical skill, maybe help me become an engineer one day, but fate had something

else in store for me. This job turned out to be a crucial turning point in my life, changing its entire course for good. September of the same year, Jinnah died, leaving the mind and heart confused about the future of the country. It seemed as if everything was over, and that the make-believe guardians of the country would not be able to do anything.

There was a labour union at Orient Airways, and all employees were members of this union. Without any awareness or consciousness of the notion of class beyond the most superficial understanding of economic inequality, I too became a member. In March 1949, the Union gave notice for a strike in order to get worker demands accepted. The strike would have been entirely in line with the labor laws of that time: the administration had refused to negotiate leaving the Union with no option but to strike. In response to this notice, management in turn put the workers on notice, threatening to fire them if they did not come back to work. The strike dissipated and those workers who did not return to work were indeed let go. Even I received a discharge letter. For me, this boiled down to a clear question of right and wrong; it was in the name of justice that we had participated in the strike, and it was unjust that we had been let go for doing so.

My employment was the only source of income for my entire family. But such setbacks were not new to them. After a period of negotiation between the management and the union, all workers came back to work barring some union leaders, a few of whom were arrested while others left the scene. Gradually, even they returned to work, on the condition that this formal and legally registered union would be disbanded. They also had to agree to never start a union again in that organization.

Many questions arose. Wasn't this was a country for Muslims, with Muslim owners and Muslim workers, and with laws made by a Muslim government? If so, then when the Labor

Department had deemed this strike legit, why was it that workers were fired only to be taken back if they signed off their legal and accepted rights? How could merely the threat of unemployment outweigh the resolve to strike that had been sworn upon the Quran? Was the fear and vulnerability of the worker a worse sign than the arrogance of the institution? I had no answers to these questions.

Chapter 3

First Formal Lessons in Class Struggle

The Orient Airways strike had failed, or perhaps had been made to fail. After the failure of this strike, there was palpable disappointment and disillusionment everywhere. At the same time, it was clear that many workers were asking important questions, and many, like me, were tormented by them. Such were my first lessons in class struggle.

The workers of the company started over, and serving at the pleasure of the corporate lords became the only route to making life better. To defeat a strike is a rule in the capitalist handbook. In order to maintain itself, capitalism invents meritocracy and performance-based progress, so that the worker is not too disillusioned and can still come back to work the next day. No surprise that my boss gave me a promotion too.

The years of 1949 and 1950 were confusing and provocative at the same time. My mother's health was failing, not helped by the unstable circumstances. With a limited income, a good doctor and adequate treatment was a distant hope. The general ward of Jinnah Hospital was her last stop, a final plea of ours to a system that failed, and failed us badly. My mind shrieked as I could do nothing to protect my family; why couldn't a desperate citizen even get to save a life in this new "homeland"?

In the midst of all this distracting and disheartening reality, I once again ran into Sibtain (who had, back in India, exposed me to snippets of labour struggles in Bombay). He was still engaged with many of the same issues, and introduced me to some labour activists. I began being drawn to progressive literature, and around about this time, I got my hands on Julius Fucek's *Behind the Gallows*, some words from which are still inscribed on my brain. A Czech hero, Fucek was Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. When the German army took

over in the WWII, many resisters were killed. Those who remained alive, including Fucek, were put in jail until further decisions. This fighter was tortured so severely that his fingers bled. He wrote this book in prison with those injured/bleeding fingers. He reports that a German guard once asked him if he was aware that all his companions had either been killed or had deserted him. Fucek replied that he did. The guard then said, “Do you know you will be killed tomorrow as well?” “Yes,” replied Fucek, “And I’m happy that I will have a part in the tomorrow that is yet to come, and that the future will belong to the workers and the peasants.” The words of this hero still resonate with me and have guided me in times of difficulty, crisis, and impossibility—even in matters of life and death—and have lit up many an unceasing darkness. They have taught me how to live.

I read voraciously any chance I got—at work or at home, (and luckily I was even transferred to the airline library for a while, as a way to keep me “out” of reach of union activities). Simultaneously, I started meeting regularly with many workers working in small shoemaking workshops. Through them, I met up with workers in the tobacco sector. I still remember the words of an elderly shoemaker, who said with much longing: “Comrade, when workers and peasants start ruling, please do me a favour: in the winter, make these capitalists lie down in open fields, and when they start making an O or a U with their bodies, tell them to be straight like an I.” Who knows where that image came from, and what part his own reality had in it, but it suggested that all the suffering of the poor workers and peasants will be redeemed whether or not we are alive, and they will decorate their tomorrows and vindicate their deprivations with prosperity.

It was 16 October 1951 and with some like-minded friends I was sitting at a Malabari café across from Empress Market. We were talking about the country’s political conditions. In

those days the Prime Minister was Liaquat Ali Khan, and he was on a tour of Punjab. When he was there last, many people had protested against the shortage of grain, and the situation had gotten ugly. The crisis was ironic given that Punjab was and is the core agricultural producer in the country. Needless to say, the situation was unbelievable and quite tense. As the Prime Minister was now back in Punjab, we were worried that something bad might happen this time. After this exchange with friends, I walked over to a restaurant on Elphinstone Street. I had just barely sat down when the finance manager of Orient Airways came over all disheveled and asked me if I knew that Liaquat Ali Khan had been shot. I froze.

Chapter 4

Initiations into the Labour Movement

The year of Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination, a renowned comrade by the name of Hassan Nasir who had been in custody for his political activities had been released from jail, with Fakhruddin G. Ibrahim representing him and winning his case. One evening there was an event at Park Hotel where I met many people including Nasir for the first time, many of whom became fellow travelers in years to come.

I gave the situation and these meetings a lot of thought and started organizing the workers at Orient Airways. I went door-to-door to have employees sign up for membership. When the administration got hint of this activity, I was called in. I was clear that this work would continue, with no adverse effect whatsoever on institutional responsibilities and productivity. Even if I had to work overtime in order to accomplish this, I would not bill the corporation for it.

The workers in Orient Airways had no transport facility. In the initial stages of organizing, we were able to at least get a truck with a few seats but the rest of it was open in the back. Winter, summer, or the monsoon, this became the sole mode of transport. Let alone its viability and durability, this facility could not even accommodate everyone who needed it. The employees got together and requested the management to do something about it. A better arrangement was made with a transport company, and the residual transport allowance was pooled by the workers to lay the foundation of a cooperative society. In order to boost worker and my own confidence and encourage others to step up, I stood in the election of the new society even though there was no chance of winning against an engineer with much better experience and reach. Winning or losing were besides the point; the main intent was to lift the

spirit of other workers lower down the line. I lost the election, but there was quite an surge of activity among the workers.

Unlike nowadays when we have abbreviated working days during the month of Ramadan, back in the early 1950s there was no such special status of work during the holy month. A few of us discussed this one morning, and it was decided that some of the older workers would go stand at the gate. When the managers came, they were unhappy at first but then inquired about the purpose lest this might be a delicate situation. We were invited into the office—when all of us tried to file in, not all of us could fit and we were asked to send in a few. It took some courage but we said that since we have no representative—hence no one to talk for us—what choice did we have but for all to be present. Some of us made it in to speak with the administrators and negotiated a reduction in working hours for the month of Ramadan. This was our first collective victory, and gave us much encouragement and confidence. This was also the moment, one might say in hindsight, when the Orient Airways Employees Union was formed.

This time round, we did not include officers or engineers in the bargaining unit because in the first strike they were the ones to desert the union. To be honest, they were not quite eager either, afraid as they were of losing their jobs. At this starting moment, the union had some 150 members.

With 45 of these members in attendance, the first union meeting was held at Theosophical Hall. With no other volunteers, I became the Secretary-General. I did not know how to speak in public, and I had never done it before. When I took the podium, my legs were shaking. But, there was no turning back. The workers convinced the General Secretary of Awami League, Mr. Mahmood-ul-Haq Usmani, to become President of the union. Our application to get the union registered was rejected because, in the aftermath of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy, there

was widespread suspicion of progressive elements. Certainly, our clear adoption of a programme based on a leftist perspective of class struggle did not help our case.

Prior to partition, the employees of many different airlines and companies working at the Karachi airport were part of one union, led by Comrade Sobhogyan Chandani. Later, that union passed into the hands of a government functionary Mr. Shirazi. Predominantly white-collar workers fell within the scope of the union, barely including folks like us in the Engineering department. We repeatedly proposed and discussed options for uniting with them on the conditions that the bargaining units and funds would be separate, and that all office-bearers would be Orient Airways employees. While they were not initially in favour of this option, its wisdom sank in over time, and soon the two unions merged to form the Airways Employees Union (AEU). Even though the Labor Department did not register our union, we continued to negotiate with the management on all issues on behalf of the employees and were able to gain some small victories. The ice was breaking.

Working in the the Airways Union (AEU) was my foray into active participation in the labor movement within the city of Karachi. I was there to support all workers, wherever they were struggling. During a strike, many of us would spend all day and night with the workers. Be it the Tramway strike, the Glaxo Union strike, or the Dawood Mills strike, there was no place where we did not take our own union flag to stand in solidarity with fellow workers. These connections, also linked us to efforts in remote settlements and colonies, organizing neighborhood committees and connecting workers to each other and to those in other locales. Soon, we were able to create a network in the areas of Landhi, Manghopir, Golf Ground, etc.

In those days, a new colony by the name of Drigh Colony was being settled. We decided to start social work in this new area. I moved there with my brother and sisters to live in a one-

room quarter. There, I met up with with Azhar Abbas, Mohammad Shafiq, and other activists. First, we set up an organizing committee for social work within the neighborhood. One of the first things we did was to set up a small school for children by enclosing a small plot of land with jute curtains. The foundations for a women's self-help organization by the name of Anjuman Mufad-e-Niswan were also laid. With its very humble beginnings in a small thatched and energized by the fervour of activists and minimal donations of a few annas each, the organization is still thriving today.

Right about then the younger of my two sisters got married and it was a joyous occasion after a long time. Some of the political discussions from that day are still lodged in my memory. One of the guests at the wedding was Nawab Yameen Khan, a member of the working committee of Muslim League (ML). When I asked him about the partition of India and the terror that accompanied it, he replied that after the decision of the Radcliffe Award (the board that set the boundaries for the new countries), Jinnah had sent him along with others to Punjab and Bengal. There, this team met inhabitants who amply foresaw and feared the bloodshed. Feeling that this was reason enough to not accept the partition, the team had communicated this to Jinnah whose response was that he wanted Pakistan in any condition. I was shocked to hear this, but this brutal fact did its part in clarifying many things for me politically.

In January 1953, students in Karachi started a movement by the name of Democratic Students Federation (DSF) in which I participated actively. Through daily strikes, the movement gained momentum enough to bring the city to a halt. For many days in a row, my brother Zaki and I did not go home. Our family checked out various hospitals and morgues. Days later, one of our friends was out looking for us in a car and found us walking towards PNT Colony. They were worried for us since many people had lost their lives during the strikes and in the violence

that followed. Years after this, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) told me that had he known I would go on to create so much trouble, he would surely have targeted me in those days.

Following these events, the All-Pakistan Students Organization (APSO) was formed, and its first council session was scheduled to be held at Katrak Hall. This convention was attended by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and other noted political leaders—a crucial instance of increased cooperation between workers and students.

Chapter 5

Setting Political Course Amidst a Rough Beginning to Pakistani Democracy

On the larger stage of Pakistani politics, my foremost commitment has remained to working-class politics, and these years were quickly consolidating that role. At crucial moments, this has required a united front with bourgeois liberal parties, but often that has resulted in the siphoning off of the best of a developed cadre of activists and the loss of time for the class struggle. This is a lesson learnt over many decades of work.

An early instance of this kind of collaboration was when many friends and companions began working in Azad Pakistan Party (APP). Sometime in early 1954, a big rally of the APP was to be held at Aram Bagh in Karachi, and Mian Ifikharuddin was scheduled to address it. Many elements, including the Muslim League (ML) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), were trying their best to keep this rally from happening. Moreover, the government also wanted the rally to fail. We tried to talk sense to the ML and Jamaat-e-Islami activists asking them to avoid being disruptive, but their fears were coming from the change of tides in East Pakistan, where a left-wing Jugto front had defeated Muslim League, which was quite a blow to the ideological ascendancy of the party that had “formed” Pakistan. When they refused to listen to us, we had to confront them physically, many of us sustaining injuries. In connection with this, I was arrested in May 1954.

A detour into the developing condition in East Pakistan is needful here, in order to provide context for the anxieties of the reactionary parties. Following the death of Jinnah in 1948, Khawaja Nazimuddin had become Governor-General. Later on, Ghulam Muhammad, who was in Liaquat Ali Khan’s cabinet, became Governor General with Nazimuddin as Prime

Minister. In March 1954, elections were held in East Pakistan. Jugto Front won the election and established government. Ghulam Muhammad was not happy about this.

Another issue was the growing animosity towards Ahmedis who, following independence, as early as 1948, had become the target of a brutal movement to declare them non-Muslim. Things got so out of hand that martial law was enforced in all of Punjab in 1953. Ayub Khan was then a general in the Pakistan Army. This was the high that the Army experienced, giving it confidence that it could suppress its own people by fire. With Ghulam Muhammad as Governor-General, Iskander Mirza as Secretary of Defence, and Ayub Khan as General, it was clear that this group had no commitment to democracy nor any concern for the sentiments of the people of Pakistan. In a whirl of this heady arrogance, the impasse was resolved fairly violently. In May 1954, the Governor-General dismissed Fazlul Haq from his Prime Ministership of East Bengal, and dissolved the East Bengal Assembly. When the Governor of East Bengal, Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman protested this, he was also let go of his position. (All this led up to, in October 1958, to the Bengali president of Pakistan Iskander Mirza levying Martial Law and establishing Governor Rule: all political parties were banned, and the constitution suspended.)

A sea change in Pakistani politics came about when, during Dwight D. Eisenhower's term as President of the United States, Pakistan was entrapped in a web of military agreements either with promise of military aid or something else. When Prime Minister Nazimuddin showed disapproval at this, he was swiftly removed from his position, replaced by the then Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, Mohammed Ali Bogra. Ayub Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the army must certainly have been in on all of these changes, as he later became the Minister of Defence in this government. Those who resisted this dirty game, such as Khaliq-uz-Zaman and

Khawaja Abdur Rab Nishtar, separated themselves from government. The Communist Party, already in a tenuous situation since the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, was banned in May 1954—to the further pleasure of the United States. A mini Martial Law was declared on 18 May 1954, starting a spate of arrests all over the country. In October 1954, the constitution was suspended and the Constitutional assembly dissolved.

On 24 October 1954, Bogra formed his cabinet that was to write and enforce the One-Unit law (that would establish all the provinces on the West as one West Pakistan to counter the numerical and political power of East Pakistan) a year from then. General Ayub Khan and Suhrawardy were both part of this cabinet, the former with the defence portfolio, the latter with the law and justice portfolio. In August 1955, Chaudhry Mohammed Ali became Prime Minister, in anticipation of the September 1955 approval of “one-unit” that went into action on 14 October 1955 with Iskander Mirza as the interim Governor-General. In March 1956, the office of the Governor-General was replaced by the office of President, so Mirza was now the President of Pakistan. Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, despite being advised against it, accepted the invitation to become Prime Minister in September 1956. I feared that Mirza would give him a very hard time due to his role in the politics of East Pakistan, but he was not willing to wait much longer due to his health.

During Suhrawardy’s tenure as Prime Minister, a meeting of states part of the Baghdad Pact was held in Tehran as a follow-up to the Suez crisis, at which he represented Pakistan. I was afraid that the United States would put pressure on Pakistan by way of the Shah of Iran. When the Prime Minister left for Tehran, he was moved by the slogans of the people at the airport. I had warned him that Mirza had an agenda in taking him to the Shah—and that any show of weakness or vulnerability on Suhrawardy’s part would cost him his job. However, I insisted, that

if he remained firm on his principles, Mirza might be too afraid of public disapproval to separate Suhrawardy from power. Even if the worst happened, at least Suhrawardy would retain some respect and honour in the eyes of the masses.

Suhrawardy returned from Tehran a completely changed man. Addressing the people at the rally in Aram Bagh, he really had nothing left to say. The people, as desperate as they may be, are not always fooled by word-games and falsehoods. On this very basis, I ended my connection with Suhrawardy, because he had gone against what we had discussed and had severed his link to the people. After all what I had feared happened. By October 1957, Mirza had deposed Suhrawardy, imprisoned him in a severely sick condition, and installed I.I. Chundrigar as the new Prime Minister. Within two more months, Chundrigar was replaced by Malik Feroz Khan Noon.

Chapter 6

The Long 1950s

Throughout the early 1950s, a large number of progressives in East and West Pakistan were working with Awami League (AL) because of its anti-feudal programme. Circumstances necessitated that, in order to unite West and East Pakistan, a party be formed that would be able to challenge the Muslim League government. The liberal-progressive alliance of Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani in order to create the Jugto Front had ensured that the AL would become a powerful force. The success of the Jugto Front in the 1954 general elections in East Pakistan had substantially transformed the political landscape, and this allowed Suhrawardy to emerge as a symbol of democracy. After the abolition of feudalism in East Pakistan by the AL government, a middle-class leadership exemplified by Shaikh Mujeeb-ur-Rehman was forming. For a moment, this allowed us to deem it conceivable, against all odds, that feudalism and the feudals in West Pakistan could yet be given a real jolt.

First Time in Prison

The night in 1954 when the mini Martial Law was enforced, I, too, was arrested from my home in Drigh Colony. Workers at Dawood Mills in Karachi were on strike, and I reached home around midnight. At 3 am, the police surrounded the house (which comprised of one room with an adjoining verandah enclosed by jute curtains). My brother Zaki was asleep in the verandah. Mistaking him for me, the police arrested him first but then let him go when they got a hold of me. Thus, my first arrest happened under the auspices of the Security of Pakistan Act (1952). Over the course of the months of May and June, more workers activists and leaders were put in prison all over the country. About 70 activists were arrested from Karachi. Since the labor

movement was much stronger and better established in East Pakistan, about 900 arrests were made there. Many people went underground in order to keep the movement intact.

When I was first taken away by the police, I had no idea what prison would be like. Instead of wearing a comfortable *kurta pajama*, I dressed in a western shirt and trousers. On the way, the police collected some of my companions from Dalmia Cement Factory, and by dawn we were all securely behind bars, albeit separated from each other and from those who came in after us. The first-time offenders were taken to a jail within the jail—called *chakkar*—where C-class and seasoned criminals are kept. Those people who had previously been arrested were kept in barracks. The prison officials had a very severe attitude towards all those arrested; the Superintendent of Karachi Jail, Mustafa, was no one if not the Pharaoh of his domain. We had to appear in a line-up once in a week, to be inspected by him. He proudly claimed that in Hyderabad, he had burnt communists alive. If any prisoner dared to complain about the conditions, he would scold and remind us in more ways than one that we were in jail. The raids against any and all kinds of progressive elements continued with great fervour, and the prisons were filled.

In the heat of May, being locked up alone inside the *chakkar* after 6 pm, spending the night on the bare floor with a blanket and mosquitoes, is by no means forgettable. There was no electricity in prison either; we were given lanterns for light, which certainly burnt for a little bit at night but soon coughed themselves to a silent darkness since the kerosene was diluted with water. To whom could I complain? My western clothing did not help in that heat, a lesson that was to stay with me for all future arrests. Initially, we weren't even given any newspapers, but that did change. After many days, when visitors were allowed, necessary supplies also came with them from home: soap, toothpaste, clothes, etc.

The prison administration was so tough that we never even found out who was in the cell, let alone barrack, next to us. Somewhere in those days, the festival of Eid sneaked in. I began to hope that this would allow a chance to meet other prisoners and companions for the Eid prayer, but the administration decided that there would be no collective prayer and that everyone would have to stay in their cells. What a circus this was that political prisoners could not even meet each other on the day of Eid! Faced with this sanction, some prisoners got really angry and simultaneously began kicking the doors of the barrack—eventually breaking it. Not only did this create a ruckus in the prison, it was a big crime as well. We were taken to the prison administration and in protest we did not eat all day and all night.

It is a convention that on the day of Eid, many wealthy citizens send food to prisoners to gain Allah's favour. Usually, political prisoners would be given food like anyone else: in the morning a cup of tea with roti, in the afternoon a very watery lentil or root vegetable, at night somewhat the same. Once a week there would be a meat curry which was mostly water, with a lost piece of meat here and there, mostly to look at and throw away. In my view, life inside prison very aptly resembles the life of the destitute workers and peasants of the country.

About a month later, I was moved out of the *chakkar* to an external barrack, numbered 21. In this barrack were present Comrades Sobo and Hassan Nasir. In a nearby cell was G.M. Syed, to whom the first two introduced me, but whose feudal style was quite off-putting to me. For as long as I was there, I never saw him again nor spoke with him on any issue. Earlier, when I was in the *chakkar*, a Hindu trade union leader by the name of Narayan Das, whom I had met at the Tramway strike, had also been brought in and locked up there. He was very strong and composed for how elderly he was—however, the prison still made him sad and depressed. And he was right to be that way, because he had no relation to the drama of corrupt national politics,

and was sick of how the government's soldiers were busy taking control, infiltrating and disabling unions wherever they could. He was released soon.

These events were contemporaneous with big changes in the USSR: Josef Stalin had died and the ruling bloc had turned reformist and revisionist. Meanwhile, my brother sent me a newsletter by the name of *Lasting Peace for People's Democracy*, from which I learnt that the era of de-Stalinization had begun, symbolized by Stalin's sarcophagus being removed from Lenin's tomb, and from a place of perceived honour. I predicted that if things had gotten this far, it wouldn't be long before Lenin would be exhumed and discredited as well.

When all the prisoners received their charge sheet, I received mine as well. I decided that because I was connected directly to the labor movement, the right response to the charge sheet would be to deny all allegations and demand an opportunity to prove them wrong. Comrade Hassan Nasir was of the opinion that in order to salvage whatever of the movement was left outside of the prison, it was imperative to exit here as soon as possible.

There were many efforts to get me out. My union pressured the airline management to do something about my release, and some connections with the police were also mobilized. For instance, Superintendent of Police (SP) Sardar Khan was a relative of one of our key union workers Mohammed Alam. In addition, a senior officer at Orient Airways, Chaudhry Fazal Ahmed also went to talk to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on my behalf. He wanted to visit me in prison but was not permitted. Spurred by all these interventions and my response to the charge sheet, CID officials decided to shift me from the prison to the New Town police station to actually interrogate me. This was my first departure from the jail.

The interrogation lasted about fifteen days. During the interrogation, many allegations came forth, ranging from neighborhood political work to instigating strikes; it seemed as if all

disruptions and disturbances in Karachi were caused by me. It is true that I was present at the moment of various strikes and was engaged in social work in various neighborhoods, including running a school in Drigh Colony (as I have mentioned before, as a family we had moved to the new colony in order to do that kind of work). In response to all these allegations, my position was that none of this constituted any illegal activity or harm to the country; throughout this process, my attitude was constructive and positive. One of the allegations was that once during the rains, I had halted a train near Drigh Colony. There was no truth in this, because in fact the people of the area had themselves stopped the train, overcome by emotion when the rain was basically clubbing their homes away. Night and day, dealing with shoulder-high water, we had rescued people from homes in Drigh Colony's fifth sector. Another allegation was that I had relations with foreign embassies, that I was a communist, and that I was on the payroll of these embassies. I rejected these accusations even more strongly, because I had never met anyone one from any embassy. What was most violent about this allegation was that it was trying to cast an unpatriotic and treasonous shadow on the work I had been doing, which I would not stand for. At least one thing was clarified for both parties as this interrogation ended; no future interrogation ever insinuated or alleged anti-state activity. After this I was sent back to prison where I gave a full update to all companions. Everyone affirmed what had happened and hoped for my release, which happened finally in August 1954.

Back at Work

Two challenges awaited me as soon as I was out. The first was returning to work after being imprisoned, and the second was getting in touch with the remaining companions. As for the first, luckily, the Orient Airways management had not fired me in my absence and the union members were very happy to have me back. Along with other union office-bearers, I met with M.M. Saleem, who was the General Manager of Orient Airways, and negotiated that my absence be absorbed into an annual leave, with the remaining days counted as leave without pay.

A crisis was emerging within the airline. A new company by the name of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) had been formed, and the plan was to subsume Orient Airways within it in order to form Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC). In the new setup, the head of the section to which I had been assigned refused to give me any work. Fazal Ahmed, in charge of the Engine Overhaul section, requested the head of the Engineering Department, Enver Jamaal, to which all these sections belong, that I be placed under his supervision. Jamaal was perplexed but Fazal said that he could handle things better because it would take sincerity and warmth to make me work.

The General Manager of the new corporation was an Englishman by the name of K. G. Bhore. His plan was to disregard the previous years of service in Orient Airways and arbitrarily appoint people on a new salary scale. Everything was in place for his plan to go into effect, but it invited an understandably adverse reaction. There was a huge uproar among the employees and I had no other option but to take charge of the situation and play a role in resolving it. This was November 1955. I called a protest meeting, fully aware of the risk of apprehension and arrest were I to speak out in public. Regardless, we proceeded with the protest and compelled Mr.

Bhore to come listen to what we had to say. He did not know any Urdu, so my friend Adeeb Ahmed Khan translated as I gave the speech.

Not only did Bhore listen, he also gave a reply to the speech. Seeing the spirit and energy of the people in the crowd, he laid out for us the story of Pakistan being a poor country, and PIAC being in financial crisis. We had also done our homework, with much information on how American advisers and British general managers were corrupting and hollowing out the country's airline. All top positions were populated by foreigners, to the extent that even the crew was not Pakistani. They were taking with both hands what they could. After this, we declared only a token half-hour protest, the result of which was not a surprise to me; the bell rang and on the evening of 16 November 1955, Adeeb Ahmed Khan and I were arrested.

In Custody Again

When we got to the police headquarters, I asked the officials to tell me for what had I been arrested. It is important to mention here that we had been reaching out to the local government and administration regarding the situation that was emerging within the airline and the ways in which workers' rights were being trampled upon. We had even prepared a report for the parliament, with facts and figures, to show how the management of PIAC was basically transferring our capital abroad. Our own people were unemployed whereas foreigners were being inducted by contracting out staffing and the aircrew to the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC). The general manager of PIAC was certainly part of this conspiracy. Given the fragility of the situation, we had also striven to strengthen our own ranks by forming a unified Airways Employees Union (Airways or AEU). The CID was well aware of this entire situation.

Back at the police headquarters, we were told that this was not an arrest, that we had been called in to give a statement, and that we should state this whole narrative in writing. Both my friend and I put on paper our accounts of all those events and situations, using the statistics and numbers that we knew. Then, the CID asked us to create a joint report. We did that as well.

Soon it was 3 am, and we asked them to let us go home. We were told to spend the night there and leave in the morning. It had begun to reek of excuses and forced delays, but my friend Adeeb was finding it hard to believe that we had been arrested for real. The next morning went by as well, with no word. Another 24 hours passed, and then I said to the officers that they should either free us or take us to prison. If there were more winter nights to be spent in confinement, they'd probably be better spent inside a prison with blankets rather than in this transient and uncomfortable police station.

Looking out from a small lockup window on the top floor of the police headquarters, I saw Inspector Munawwar leave for somewhere in his red car. He returned within the hour, this time with warrants for our arrests. On the way to the jail, the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Ghulam Rasool said that they had been ordered to arrest me. He promised that the report we had submitted would spur a complete inquiry.

Confinement truly has its own singular and strange logics. When I was back behind the bars again, those officials with whom I had become acquainted on my previous visit said, "So, you're back again!" I replied, "Not of my own accord." Those comrades that had been arrested in 1954 were now being let go one by one, with a few exceptions. I requested that I be placed with my earlier mates but the jail officials dismissed it.

Once inside the jail, I saw Hassan Nasir who asked if I had come by to see him. I said not really, that I had been arrested again. I learned from him that his mother had arrived from

Hyderabad Deccan to have him released, and that he was being allowed to go back to India on a two-year parole. That sounded strange, but I remained silent. When Nasir left, I was locked up in the outside barrack with Nazish Amrohvi, Ghayur and Aziz Ahmed Khan. My case was being heard while I was in prison. My lawyer was Fakhruddin G. Ibrahim, but we did not prevail. Meanwhile the union secretary Adeeb who had been arrested with me was released. I stayed there until 23 March 1956.

A National Airline Gets Going

What DSP Rasool had promised did indeed happen: there were changes inside PIA, the British General Manager was removed and replaced by a Pakistani Civil Service Officer Zafar-ul-Ahsan Lari. Many of our demands had been accepted. All the staff from Orient Airways who had initially been denied permanent positions in PIA, were now restored to their older grade and credited for previous years of service. Right from the beginning it was our principled stance that if PIA was to inherit all the assets of Orient Airways, then it must welcome its liabilities and obligations as well. The acceptance of these demands was a big victory for the workers and a vindication of our principles. With time, all foreign staff were let go, and PIA became a truly national airline. These changes were good omens. Our victory in this fight further affirmed our faith in a method of politics based on a thorough materialist class analysis.

The PIA management hosted a farewell party for the outgoing General Manager Bhore. That did not appeal to me, as I saw no need to thank and celebrate an administration that had dealt with our people so badly. But I relented and went. During the reception, Mrs. Bhore who was sitting next to me asked, “Mr. Abbas, are you Punjabi?” I replied, “No, I am Muhajir”

(immigrant from India). Incidentally, no more than one or two people in the union working committee were Punjabi. Upon hearing my answer, she said, “Then how come you were on the side of a Punjabi General Manager M.M. Saleem?” Such a question made so many divisive and incorrect assumptions, and was so telling of the framework within which these outsiders “understood” our politics and struggles. The best antidote to this conversation was officially welcoming Zafar-ul-Ahsan Lari and decorating him with garlands, congratulating him on being the first Pakistani General Manager.

At the party, I also met Ghulam Usman, the new Personnel Director. Soon, it became clear that he had been brought into PIA to dampen our influence. For this purpose, he recruited some new people and transferred me from the Engineering department into the Personnel department, so he could keep a close eye on me and so that my interaction with the frontline workers would be minimized. He also defensively tried to create ill-will within the union but when I explained the entire situation to him, he seemed to get the picture. With time, our relationship improved and carved out a constructive and positive path. While he was away in London, we heard the news of his sudden death. This was a historical moment in the history of PIA because the presence of thousands of employees at his funeral testified to his status as a friend of the worker. Even the president of Pakistan Iskander Mirza was present at the funeral, and seeing the large number of workers, showed his shock and surprise at how popular the deceased was among workers. Once Usman had even said to his Personnel Manager Mohammed Ahmed that he should never get me arrested, because I was a useful person. But how could he have known how many times I would be removed from PIA and how many times taken to jail! Ahmad Salman replaced Ghulam Usman as Personnel Director; he was at core also a good man and we developed good relations that continue to this day through a few generations.

Independence Day Confrontations

On independence day, 14 August, 1956, an Awami League (AL) rally was organized at Aram Bagh. The rally was to then become a procession and make its way to the mausoleum of Jinnah. When the procession left Aram Bagh, I along with the AEU joint secretary Saifullah Khan stopped to talk to a few people, but soon it started to feel that I was *being* held back. Some people walked us out of the park, back into the streets with many halwa shops. There, people started to chant slogans of “Long Live Muslim League” and attacked me. I could recognize some Jamaat-e-Islami activists as well—I suspect that these were the same people who had two years ago tried to create trouble at the APP rally with Mian Iftikharuddin and were now avenging the riot that had then ensued. They beat me up, snatched my watch, pen, and wallet. My companion, Saifullah Khan, never intervened or offered any resistance. I recall seeing many familiar faces of other workers and activists, but none of them said or did anything. I finally broke loose and got on a moving tram. They followed me into the tram, but I was somehow saved.

I was in a bad shape, courtesy all those who could have done something to help but didn't. In that fight, I realized that whenever I raised my hand, they would hold back, and when I tried to run, they would come at me ever strongly. I also learnt that it was not sufficient to be physically strong, and one had to be ideologically resilient as well. After this episode, I couldn't get out of bed for days. Due to internal wounds, a number of small surgeries also happened. Suhrawardy sent over Usmani, the Secretary-General of Awami League, to inquire after me. My friend Saifullah Khan was deeply troubled by this episode. He came over to my home and said, “These people are after your life, and they will kill you—why don't you move to England?” He had arranged for his own ticket and found his way there. Saved then somehow, I still had some lifelines left, for the challenges to come.

Preparing for Elections, In Vain

The year was 1957. The country was preparing for the general elections, and political activity was at a peak. All political parties were putting together their strategies and tactics. Progressive groups and labor organizations decided to constitute a larger movement, and to bring existing parties from East and West Pakistan to give shape to a new political alliance or party. In West Pakistan, I was given the task of persuading Mian Iftikharuddin; in the East, Maulana Bhashani was ready. Iftikharuddin wanted to hold on to his existing Azad Pakistan Party (APP), and was opposed to Bhashani as the President of a multi-class party. More conversations were needed, and we arranged a meeting with all allies present. Iftikharuddin was unwilling to listen to anyone, let alone merge his party into a new one. Finally, when I spoke and tried to explain, he asked others present about who I was and then asked whether I was underground. At the end of this, he was convinced of the merit of the alliance and on the way out said, “Write my name somewhere in a corner.”

Thus was formed the National Awami Party (NAP). East and West Pakistan, and all the provinces were represented in it. By now, Comrade Hassan Nasir had also returned after two years in India and was made office secretary for the party. Comrade Sobo Gyanchandani and other progressives also joined the party. The connections to the friends in East Pakistan were very robust. All the work was done with mutual input and consensus, and the preparations for the elections were swiftly moving along.

It was decided that I would contest the election for a national assembly seat in an independent capacity as a representative of workers from the area of Landhi. The NAP promised full support. Due to my work with labour, I have never been a member of a multi-class or bourgeois party, and have always believed that no bourgeois party should dominate among

workers. The politics of labour is independent and revolutionary, and if workers come under the influence of a bourgeois party, then not only their solidarity but also their revolutionary character is affected adversely, effectively diluted. All of us worked night and day for the elections. Our class rivals were concerned with this ascent of democracy in which they sensed their own demise. Soon, their fears got the better of them—they flipped the board altogether and declared martial law.

Merely twenty days after declaring martial law in the country, on 27 October 1958, Iskander Mirza was himself deposed by the General in his cabinet, Ayub Khan, and a new martial law was levied. The Martial Law Administration did not carry out as many arrests as were expected. Due to physical and psychological exhaustion, I had been taken quite ill in those days, and my health saw the worse before getting better. Meanwhile all political activities in the country had been suspended and banned by official decree. Our union office was sealed but then reopened. We had to make things work somehow or the other. In PIA, the labour movement was relatively strong and the situation quite stable. The employees and union members were developing a political consciousness, which was seeping into the larger public sphere. By means of the union platform and our regular newsletter, our analyses of the situation in Pakistan and abroad were making their way to readers. The union platform also served as the basis for unveiling U.S. imperialism and exposing its intentions any chance we got.

Chapter 7

Martial Law Comes to the Airline and the Union Gears Up

During martial law, a committee was formed for a thorough review of the affairs of PIAC under the leadership of the Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator Air Vice Marshal Asghar Khan. Union leaders were called in to give their testimony to the committee. Our meeting was lengthy and detailed. He asked me, “How come you’ve been arrested so many times and are still the President of the union?” I said, “Sir, yes I am the President of the union. As for the other issues, it is better that you talk to the management and the government about them.” The climate of the meeting was open and permissive. Besides PIA, we spoke more generally about the national situation. The Air Marshal’s attitude was very positive and he came through on many of the suggestions we had offered.

During this conversation, a gentleman who was sitting next to the Air Marshal said, “Do you mean that you should be able to communicate directly with the head of the corporation?” I said, “Yes, it is so, because we no of know other way that the management can get a genuine sense of what is happening on the ground.” This gentleman was Air Commodore Nur Khan, and he was the new Managing Director of PIA. As soon as he took his position, he called a press conference, single-handedly increased the working hours of the employees, and announced that “deadwood” employees—those who did not have work assignments—would be fired. After the press conference, the new Managing Director called me in and asked if I had seen his press conference. I said I had. He asked what I thought about the decision on working hours and deadwood. I replied that the union is supposed to work to decrease working hours, not to increase them. He said, “You people don’t work.” On this issue, and for improving the

productivity of the corporation, I offered my full cooperation if given a chance. He fell silent. The working hours were eventually not increased.

The remaining issue was of deadwood employees. Nur Khan wanted that those people who do not work should be expelled from their jobs. I asked how this would be determined; the martial law certainly allowed him to do whatever he wanted, but if he wanted our cooperation, he would have to consult with us on every issue. What I meant by this was that in the circumstances we were ready to do anything to save as many employees as we could. From among 6000 employees, the PIA management had drawn up a list of 500 people to be investigated and let go. We started investigating each case and certainly that was taking a while. When the directors complained about this to the Managing Director, the latter asked me if I was delaying on purpose. I said that we were obligated to discuss every case responsibly. As a result of this investigation, only 22 workers on the list were fired across East and West Pakistan—because these workers had a terrible record and had deserved to be charge-sheeted with more adverse effects on their future prospects and no severance benefits from the corporation. This way, they were let off easy.

The relations between the union and the management were very constructive, leading to many improvements in the work-life of employees. Many elements within or without the government were quite disturbed by this positive relationship. Meanwhile Nur Khan invited President Ayub for a tour of PIA, and I was to meet him at the engineering hangar. Nur Khan had said that no matter that we were leftists or communists, we were patriots and hence deserved a hearing with the President. We met the president and he said, “Brother, how are you?” I said, “Sir, we are fine, and you have sent us a good man. Please send people like Nur Khan to other organizations.” He said, “The good are very few.” I said, “Actually, Sir, there are many patriots.”

On behalf of the union, I informed him of our perspective of the troubles facing Pakistan's people and the country in a more geopolitical sense. He still wanted to talk some more, but a CID official grabbed me from the back and, pulling me away, said, "We have had our eyes on you; one bad move, and we would have killed you." I replied and said that I couldn't possibly have met the President without the approval of the military administrator of PIA. When I reported this to Nur Khan, he said, "Idiots, all of them." It is possible that he followed up with them later.

A similar, later, instance of Nur Khan's principled stance came when, on the occasion of the US presidential visit to Pakistan in 1959, many people were arrested including myself. When Nur Khan learnt of this, he asked the CID people how they had dared to arrest me without his permission. He then spoke to the Minister of Interior, and I was released.

The first formal forum between union representatives and Nur Khan featured a detailed discussion of the problems of the employees. He listened attentively and with compassion. At that time, there were only two hours set aside at a dispensary in the city centre for any medical checkups that the employees needed. There they were given basic medication, a mixture and some pills. There were no conveyance facilities, and the salaries were small. There was no canteen or cafeteria either. During the meeting with the Managing Director, we raised the issue of comparing our benefits with those given by the national airline of India.

Nur Khan made an executive decision on the spot to send me and the Personnel Manager Mohammed Ahmad to India to probe this comparison further, and to tour the offices in Bombay, Delhi, and Calcutta to get a good sense of their procedures and benefits. We went to these places and surveyed the conditions as well as the relations between the union and the management. On the basis of our report on returning from India, Nur Khan accepted our suggestions and approved

the provision of a canteen, transport, and medical support, along with increasing the salaries. In order to further improve the performance of the company, we insisted that the relation between union and management were of crucial importance, and there were good models to learn from and implement. One that came to mind was the German shop steward system. Nur Khan approved of that as well, and so the shop steward system was introduced in PIA for the first time in 1960.

At a union meeting at which Nur Khan had been invited to speak to the workers, we raised the issue of our demands also presented our perspective on the economy and foreign policy. Via the union newsletter, we sent our voice all over Pakistan. It was our priority that even during martial law we should not deter from presenting a materialist class analysis of the situation, and that the representatives of the government (however they might have been placed in that position) should be presented with the problems of the country.

The workers of PIA and various other organizations were all pleased with this activity, but our class enemies were clearly troubled. A reactionary and conservative government could not possibly tolerate the healthy and symbiotic relations between the management and the union, the ruler and the ruled, and was perturbed. The CID and other factions conspired to have one of the employees, Sadiq, arrested and interrogated, in order to gather material on me and thus justify getting their hands on me. In this conspiracy, I learnt later, many of the other deserters of this union were also involved. One day in the summer of 1960, some men from CID came to the airport and talked to me at the Airport Hotel. Then they asked me to accompany them to the CID office. When I was leaving with them, I ran into Nur Khan who was going home at the end of the day. Since it was the evening, he asked me how come I was still at the airport. I said “Yes, but now these officers are taking me with them to their office.” He took aside the CID Inspector

Sharif-ul-Hasan, and then said to me, “Be straightforward. They cannot arrest you unless they have proof against you.”

Despite All Assurances

I was taken to the CID office. On the way, they stopped by the police station and picked up Sadiq. Seeing his face, I figured out that the CID folks had probably made him say whatever they wanted him to. In the CID office, Sadiq spoke against me, but neither he nor the CID had any proof against me. I denied any any allegations that they brought against me, and was let go. The Superintendent of Police (SP) Akram Shaikh and Deputy Superintendent Vakil Khan were both very angry with their staff regarding the fact that Nur Khan had found out about me being taken to the CID office. The officers told them that it was purely an accident.

After a few days, the SP came with his staff to Nur Khan’s office and I was called in along with some other officers of the union. They insisted on the fact that we had met with anti-state elements and that I was in touch with Comrade Hassan Nasir who was then in hiding. I denied both these claims. They said that they were waiting for the day when they would arrest Nasir and put us face to face with each other.

Soon after this incident, on 6 August 1960, Nasir was arrested. While he was interrogated and tortured, a dozen or so other progressive activists were also arrested. During the investigation, the CID insisted most only on the fact that I should also be kept in custody. During those days Nur Khan was abroad and there was no way to reach him.

As I had feared, I was arrested as well, on 16 September 1960. So began a really brutal cycle of interrogation and torture. I was shown statements by various arrested activists which all basically read that I was responsible for the entire progressive movement. That was not true.

Many people were even brought in front of me and made to give statements. Before my arrest, Nasir had been sent to the Lahore Fort, so our paths never crossed nor were to ever cross again. The CID was suspicious that some secret document was being prepared, and that there was a coup plot in the making. I was absolutely clear in denying that any such situation existed, but they refused to believe me.

During one of those days of the interrogation, one morning after drinking tea, I immediately felt sick and had a breakdown: I fell flat on the bench and basically lost complete control, and as much as I wanted to, I could not stop my screaming. It seemed like I had been poisoned or something had been put into the tea to cause this reaction. I felt as if I was dying. This worried the CID officers; first, they tried to ease me by rubbing my hands and feet but when it was hard to get things under control I was sent to Jinnah Hospital. I was given some medicine and injections and brought back to the police station.

In the meantime, Nur Khan returned to Pakistan. He had found out about me and sent the Chief Medical Officer of PIA, Wing Commander Malik, to see me in jail. Dr. Malik was not at all satisfied with my condition and he thought it necessary to take me for treatment to the hospital. The CID office wanted him to put his suggestion in writing, which he did, and ordered that I should be kept under CID surveillance at the hospital. Until late that night I kept waiting to be taken to the hospital, only to find out that when this request was taken for the Superintendent's approval, he refused to accept it saying that there was no question of sending me to the hospital when they were trying to end the story altogether.

After two or three days, suddenly the state of my room changed. There was a desk and a chair, and I was given a bed. It was apparent that someone was coming to visit. Indeed, it was

Nur Khan who was coming to see me. Seeing my condition, he was very worried. He did say that the issue of taking me to the hospital had been raised multiple times but CID wasn't ready for it.

During our conversation, Nur Khan asked me whether I had been meeting Nasir. I asked what was so dangerous about that, when he is also a patriotic companion—plus, it was clear that he had been sent to the Lahore Fort even before my arrest. Nur Khan's attitude during the conversation was extremely positive, and he said to the DSP present there that I was a very useful person. He asked me to tell him what he could do for me. I said, "Sir, please do something to have me sent to the real jail."

Another DSP, Vilayat Khan, walked in once Nur Khan had left and said that they had arrested some PIA air hostesses who had information about my connections abroad. I said, "Sir, I myself know of no connection, why don't you ask them for details?" Then he started inquiring about my connections in East Pakistan. I said that since I was the union president and there were many progressives and workers over there, I certainly did have connections. As a matter of fact, he wanted me to confess that I was connected to East Pakistan via Mahmud-ul-Haq Usmani (a lawyer, who had been the General Secretary of Awami League [AL], and now was the General Secretary of National Awami Party [NAP]). But I said that I didn't need him to be connected to East Pakistan. In the days to come, I was sent to jail, and kept in confinement for six months. There, I ran into other companions who seemed quite ashamed of their acts of "confession," but I chose not to mention anything or to demand any explanation.

Comrade Hassan Nasir was in Lahore Fort, and I was very worried because of him. One night I dreamt that he had been killed. The next day my brother and other family members came to meet me, and I asked them if they knew anything about him. They gave me the newspaper that carried the news of his death. Reading it I was in a terrible state and my tears wouldn't stop.

Returning to the barrack, when I broke the news to other inmates, they were all in shock and despair.

In jail, I received a letter from PIA management that I had, without an inquiry, been dismissed from service for being a communist. Later on, I found out that the management had one-sidedly altered the service code and included this condition that management could fire anyone without an inquiry if there was a suspicion or allegation of being a communist. I am calling this one-sided because there was an agreement between the union and the management that no change to the service code would be made without consulting with the union.

After Nasir's death, his mother came from India and filed a case in court. Her lawyers were Mahmud Ali Kasuri and Major Ishaq, and it was their argument that Nasir had been tortured and killed in custody. For this case, the Lahore High Court solicited affidavits. Conferring with other companions in jail, we decided to submit affidavits. Incidentally, lawyer Raza Kazim, who had been arrested because of his friendship with Nasir but soon released, drafted the affidavits from a legal perspective, and I along with six other friends signed off on them. Then, when I learnt from the newspaper that these affidavits never made it to the court, we went on hunger strike. This led to the jail administration being answerable for what they had done, or so we wishfully thought. The story was that one of the lawyers, Kasuri, had decided to leave the country as the case was still in progress, and the other lawyer withdrew. On my end, my own sentence that was initially six months was extended by another six months while fellow inmates were gradually released. It is pertinent to mention here that among all those people, the only person who stayed true to the movement then and did so throughout his life was my friend Azhar Abbas.

After about eleven months in jail, I was released in August 1961. I made my way to PIA only to find out that I had been dismissed and was denied admission to the premises. However, I was still the union president, which is why Nur Khan was compelled to talk to me. In front of the various directors and union members in PIA, he repeated all those allegations that CID had levied on me and for which they had found no evidence. All I said in reply was that if the accusations were so certain and true, then how come I was released without even being taken to court? He had no answer, and was determined not to take me back to work. Things had changed.

Nur Khan went to East Pakistan and got into a scuffle with other union leaders on my issue, repeating that I was arrested because I was a communist and dismissed for the same reason. In response to him everyone said, “We are with him, so why don’t you kick us out as well?” In anger, he said to everyone that he would have me arrested again.

Now let’s turn to what was happening in Karachi. Since I was banned from the airport premises, the union members decided to move the union office away from the airport to the city. The government thought that their treatment during my arrest would scare me and it would deter me from coming to the union office or the airport. But love knows no fear! My friends and companions in PIA and other labour organizations decided to celebrate my release at the YMCA hall. It was a lovely event and to hold it during the peak of martial law was tantamount to declaring to “all the lighthouses on the shore that we were still anchored in the middle of storms.”

So, first, CID resorted to scare tactics, threatening arrests if people went to the reception. When these tactics didn’t work, just before the start of the reception, inspector Sherbaz took me aside and warned me that if I decided to make a speech at the reception, they had an arrest warrant in my name. I said, “How can I not speak when all the arrangements are in place?”

After speaking with him, for a moment I did think to myself and wondered whether I was falling victim to a kind of unexamined missionary zeal. Having just returned from jail, and with the progressive movement in a crisis, whom would my arrest help? My conscience responded that there was no option: it is action that resolves many a confusion in the ideal realm. Thus knowingly, prepared to be arrested, I took the opportunity in my speech to offer a forceful challenge to the government and celebrate the struggle of the working class. That night, 22 days after my release, I was arrested at the airport and sent to jail for another whole year.

After three months in prison, I was again taken to the CID office for interrogation. It is worth mentioning here that at that time my younger sister was shuttling between life and death, undergoing major surgery in the hospital; I requested release on parole and had hoped that it would be approved. Meanwhile, I was called in by the prison officer and asked to bring all my baggage. I kept thinking that I was going to be released on parole. Before going there, a worker who had been arrested with me had been called by CID and pressurised, and he had gotten off by saying that I was responsible for the movement. On the way to the prison office I ran into him and mentioned to him that perhaps I was being released on parole. He told me everything and surmised that I was actually probably being taken for interrogation. This mentally prepared me for what lay ahead. The CID probably thought that they would catch me off-guard given that my mind was already pretty troubled given what my sister was going through, and that they would be able to convince me of whatever they wanted. But my staunch commitment to the working class and my scientific approach saved me from any distraction. Moreover, I knew well that this current arrest and imprisonment, and the forthcoming interrogation, were all consequences of the affidavits that my friends and I had submitted on the event of the death of Hassan Nasir. The CID used to wonder whether I knew absolutely nothing or was insanely resilient—they were not

able to find out anything, their worries justified in their own right, in light of the kind of news and “confessions” that were supplied to them by the traitors to the progressive cause.

As this interrogation was underway, my family members were unaware of my whereabouts, since I was not there when they came to meet me at the normal visiting time in jail. I had been taken to the CID office without anyone’s knowledge. Back at the CID office that evening, I was taken to DSP Vakil Khan, whose face lit upon seeing me. He gestured to his drawer and said that Nasir had told them everything about me before dying—and that while earlier I had gotten off without revealing anything, that wasn’t going to happen again. Then he addressed the inspectors Sherbaz and Sharif who had brought me there, telling them to take me away and do whatever they needed to do to get all the information.

They took me to a separate room. Inspector Sharif charged at me with a baton and swore at me. I reacted angrily and said, “You can beat me as much as you want, but there will be no abuses. When you are tired of hitting me, I will hit you back.” The other inspector stepped in to defuse the situation a bit. At night they took me from the CID office to the police station at Civil Lines and started to torture me. I felt terrible and sick. One time, when Inspector Sherbaz took me out for a walk, I told him that if you think I’m not cooperating with you, please send me to the Lahore Fort (where Nasir had been taken). He responded that they could do the same stuff happens here.

During this round of investigation, I lay down awake but with closed eyes. Inspector Sharif asked me get up as the DSP the deputy was coming. I wasn’t able to get up. I said that I was awake, but was not going to get up. I was told that my sister’s surgery had happened. I asked if they knew anything about how she was; the inspector responded that I would be allowed to leave right away if I cooperated with them. There had been harsh words exchanged earlier with

the same inspector; this time, I told him that I wondered if he had ever had a chance to meet the kind of people who kiss a noose before putting it around their own necks.

Officers took shifts surveilling me and keeping me awake. Whenever a superior came and looked at my condition, he would make sure that I was not being allowed to sleep. One day, the policemen were beating up a worker who was locked up in the station. I asked them not to do so, and they did let him go. After being released he came to me in my lock up and asked, “Are you Tufail Abbas?” He had seen me speaking at the Dawood Mills strike in Landhi. He asked me for my home address so he could inform my family of my wellbeing. He indeed did find them, at 4 am that morning. Had that worker had not taken the risk, who knew where things would have gone, and whether I would have survived or not without anyone knowing of and intervening in the situation. I never met that worker again and neither could I find out his name or contact information. Without doubt, he made good on our fraternity as fellow workers.

Earlier, my family members had tried to inquire about where I was, but were given nothing. My fellow inmates had been specifically forbidden by the CID to say that I had been taken away for interrogation. When this worker informed them, my sister went and told DSP Vakil Khan, “We will not let my brother become a second Hassan Nasir. You have to allow us to meet him.” Then my family approached a lawyer. After a month in the lockup at Clifton, CID sent me back to jail, and after another 11 months I was released.

The threat that Nur Khan had publicly voiced in front of the union members in East Pakistan—that he would have me arrested again—came to haunt him, because now it became difficult for him to convince anyone that he had no hand in this recent second arrest. Representing the union colleagues in East Pakistan, Aftab Ahmed Khan who was a member of

Parliament, wanted to raise the issue of my arrest on the parliamentary floor. Nur Khan knew that I had been released sooner because of this.

I had lost my PIA job during the first arrest, and consequently did not have a job when I got out of prison this time around. When I visited the airport, the workers welcomed me with much love and respect. Nur Khan had deputed an officer to report on people's reactions and impressions upon my return. When he learnt about the respect, compassion, and devotion they showered on me, his attitude softened a bit.

I met with Nur Khan to ask to be taken back to work, now that the government's unjustified ill-treatment of me was evident as was its failure in proving anything against me despite all the torture and detention. He offered me a job at the Hotel Intercontinental, which I refused saying that I would work only in PIA, absent I would make a living with a typewriter outside the court. Nur Khan sent my case to the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Awan, the then IB chief, wrote in his report that there was no evidence of any involvement in treasonous or anti-state activity. When this file reached President Ayub, he said, clearing my case, "My CID people want to kill him, and my IB says that he is not an anti-state element." I was welcomed back in PIA, on the condition that I would not participate in the union elections. I agreed to this.

The union elections took place, and new office bearers for the union were nominated and elected. The first meeting of the newly elected leadership took place. Since I was not a union office-bearer at this time, I did not participate in the meeting but Nur Khan called me to it. When I got permission to speak, I said, "Sir, the union is the same, the management is the same, but without the permission and agreement of the union new administrative orders have been issued that have wreaked havoc on the service code, in violation of the agreement that the administration would not effect any change in working conditions without union consultation

and approval. This is why, before we can talk about other things, all those administrative orders that have hurt the workers and that were implemented one-sidedly should be retracted.” I was raising a matter of principle, and he agreed to it.

It was clear from this that unless the working class does not itself stand guard for its ideology and its interests, the management’s actions can actually hurt the workers, however well-meaning these actions may be. In the days to come, the PIA management resolved many union issues with my advice despite me not having any official position in the union. Members of the management who had their own preconceived notions about me and had opposed my re-entry into PIA, for instance the Director of Administration, Brigadier “Husky” Beg, changed their minds once they that saw my effective presence among workers was actually helpful to PIA on the whole and made management’s tasks easier as well.

Many of the benefits extended to PIA workers earlier had been withdrawn. It was decided that a general body meeting be called to address this. It was also necessary to let management know that the workers were perturbed since labour issues were not being resolved, and their situation had actually worsened,. This meeting happened on July 1962. I was meeting many of these people after a long time, and laid out the whole picture for them, clearly apprising the management of the seriousness of the situation. Despite the fact that I had not adopted a defiant tone or called for any sort of direct or immediate action, Nur Khan did not particularly like what I did. When I met him at a gathering of the PIA Officers Welfare Society, he said, “What have you started again?” I explained to him that this was necessary because the workers were disheartened and disappointed. Eventually, the management did speak to us on many of these issues; not only were all the benefits restored but many issues were also addressed in a new and better agreement.

Chapter 8

Piecing Together a Struggling Movement

When I got in touch with other progressive friends after my release in May 1962, I found out that there were many conflicts and divisions among the workers. Most thought well of me and were happy at my release, even penning eulogies and giving me a lot of love and respect. There was a lot of intensity and confusion in the labor movement in general. Workers in Manghopir were agitated and restless. We were working on the ground there by establishing an office for the labour movement's communications and outreach committee. We reached out to workers and tried to explain to them that any extreme action would only hurt them and adversely affect the headway we were making in working neighborhoods and factories in areas including their own. We would cite the example of the strike in 1958 in Landhi where, after a 54-day strike, workers chose the route of illegal protest and violated section 144 (that forbade gatherings of 5 or more people). Then, by way of Usman, Seth Dawood had sought me out for help on the matter. I spoke with him and compelled him to fulfill workers' demands, and then went to the workers and persuaded them to come back to work. All this happened just because of the fact that I had spoken to the management with the permission and on behalf of the workers.

A popular view on the left was that since the workers were on strike, they should be allowed to take whatever steps they want since that would only further their class and their awareness of their class struggle. I saw things a bit differently, and thought that this would amount only to a kind of left adventurism and end up hurting the workers, since no one but the worker suffered most in such actions, losing his life and property. This period of the early 1960s afforded a different situation, and the country faced a different set of objective conditions. I was afraid that if the labour movement chose to disregard them, it would surely succumb to

extremism—and were that to happen, workers losing their lives and livelihoods would erode the ranks of the movement pushing it back many years. The years of 1962 and 1963 saw an increase in the consciousness and maturity among the workers. Disregarding my advice, my companions who thought that they were championing the cause of the workers, encouraged them to go through with their version of extreme tactics. As a result, scores of workers were left unemployed and many died, and the movement suffered a huge setback. Subsequently, the labour offices in Manghopir and Landhi were also shut down.

In 1962 many Muslims had been killed in an unleashing of communal violence in Jabalpur, India, the first major wave after partition. In order to protest this, the National Student Federation (NSF) initiated a movement. During this time, NSF leaders, Mairaj Mohammed Khan among others, had been banished from the city of Karachi. This was a really complicated situation, which is why upon returning from jail I tried to convey to the Ayub regime via Nur Khan that this disproportionate reaction that exiled student leaders from the city did not speak well for the government. At that time, the Nawab of Kalabagh was Governor of Punjab and a relative of Nur Khan. The CID had communicated to him that the students were anti-government and unpatriotic, not meriting any hearing. The CID was loath to resolve this issue. I beseeched Nur Khan to arrange for the student leaders to meet the Governor of Punjab. He obliged, and this really did help. The student leaders returned to Karachi. The role of the CID in creating obstacles to communication between the student activists and the governor is a perfect example of what the bureaucracy does by way of deferring and even preventing resolutions of many problems.

A Pakistani army offensive was underway in Baluchistan against separatists who were asking for a Greater Baluchistan. I had a chance of meeting Nizamani from Baluchistan who was a progressive activist and I also got connected with Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo and Mir Gul Khan

Naseer. I had really fruitful conversations with them about the situation of West Pakistan and the problems in Baluchistan, and I learnt that there was a way to get things under control there. I was of the view that armed struggle never works unless the whole country is ready for it. By readiness, I meant at least a general political awareness all over the country of the stakes in the region where there is an armed struggle. In a country where class struggle had not yet been fully articulated, armed struggle in Baluchistan certainly seemed premature. Additionally, this requires a national class-based party to coordinate the struggle, a party led by a revolutionary working-class that has itself emerged from class struggle. Absent this, armed struggle is mere extremism. Many conversations and negotiations on the shape of things to come happened at different levels. Things cooled down a bit on the government front. On our end, it was finally decided that all progressive members should be pulled together and constituted into an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal front. But no decision regarding the specifics of this goal was reached.

The workers in Karachi were increasingly restless. The CID had its eyes on us. One day Nur Khan called me into his office and told me that the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent of Police both wanted to see me. The Chief Security Officer of PIA, Major Naseem accompanied me. Upon reaching the CID office, I was taken aside and the DSP spoke with me separately. His tone was aggressive, alleging that I had organized a secret meeting in Jut Lines to organize a strike in Karachi. I asked that if he knew so well then what did he imagine my interests to be in doing so? I said, “I have just been released; do you find no one besides me?” Then, I was taken to the SP, with Major Naseem present. He had the same tone and said, “If you don’t confess, we will lock you up for another year.” I said, “How come you never notice those capitalists and labor leaders who suck the blood of workers and lie in drunken stupor? I’m working to improve the organization, which has taken me back to work following government

clearance, and it is a corporation the likes of which cannot be found anywhere in Southeast Asia.” I also told him that I had assisted Nur Khan in order to ease the tensions and riots between workers and capitalists in Karachi. As to the threat of arresting me for a year, I said that if he thought that conditions would get better this way, then he should go ahead and try it one more time. Listening to these things, the SP was irate and said that we will get to Nur Khan’s case later and get him transferred as well. Then he added, “You have been taken back into PIA so that the red star can stay within sight.” Upon returning to the airport, I reported everything to Nur Khan. He replied that this is why he had sent the Major with me, and it was really a pity that government officers were so off-base. Then he called the SP and registered his protest at this treatment.

Even though Pakistan was in place now, the bureaucracy continued to behave as if the British were still around. The changing conditions went uncomprehended by voters, the bureaucracy, and the so-called revolutionaries alike. They didn’t seem to understand that in this era after colonization, new oppositions and contradictions were emerging. The area now called Pakistan had barely a working class. Even the capitalists had never given thought to how to treat workers. The bureaucracy had bought out many labour leaders which kept the movement from charting its own course. One ruler after another came to power bearing a feudal mindset, considering the workers and peasants to be their bonded labor and serfs, controlling and defacing the labor movement through its lackeys with great success. This has been the tragedy of our country right from the beginning.

Over these years, the entire country had been almost re-introduced to me. My perspective, based on class struggle, had emerged, clarified, and been exposed to others. This made me more friends but also many enemies, actually necessitating more distinctions between

friend and enemy. At the same time, in relation to the state, my practice and character through this period had debunked any questions regarding my patriotism. This probably led to the government contacting me directly. Nur Khan me called over to his place once and told me that the President wanted to meet me. Nur Khan was one of the president's loyalists and always found him to be correct, believing firmly that the President's proposals of basic democracy would lead to economic prosperity, comfort, and solution to people's problems. (It might be worth mentioning that he badly wanted to be the chief of Pakistan Air Force.) The system of basic democracy was Ayub's only political lifeline. And such a system needed people to sing praises of the president, of which I could not be one on principle. I did not concur with the policies that he had adopted, or the political system that he wanted in the country. The hardships of martial law were also impressing themselves fully on the political scene in an interesting, often paradoxical and ultimately untrustworthy way: in 1962, the political liberties were restored; Ayub held elections under the rubric of basic democracy and wanted to don a civil garb, which he ultimately did. And this wasn't the only time Pakistan would see this plot played out. All in all, I felt that meeting the president was futile in those conditions and rejected the overture.

After restoring political liberties in 1962, President Ayub held elections under the rubric of basic democracy. It was necessary to explain and expose the class positions both of the combined opposition and the President. This is why our labour movement fielded candidates on many seats against these "representatives" of the people, and even prevailed in some places. This gave us some much-needed room to manifest our independent political character, and to voice the thought and existence of the working class. In 1964, when Fatima Jinnah ran against Ayub Khan, we supported her against him, which certainly weakened the latter. By way of solid strategy and tactic, despite all the pressure on us, our work was moving ahead.

Forces that had tried to beat us down time and again, now found their way to our home, and set it on fire. Fortunately, some PIA staff who lived in Natha Khan Goth were on their way home from work and saw this happen, and their timely help brought the situation under control. After this, my family decided to leave the home in Drigh Colony, and my sister helped us move to a home in Pakistan Employees Cooperative Housing Society (PECHS).

Declaring Our Manifesto, Wielding Our *Manshoor*

During my imprisonment, I had mulled over the possibility of publishing a monthly journal under the auspices of Airways Employees Union. In order to do this, we needed the permission of the Director of Public Relations, Omar Kureishi, and we got it right away. This was 1964, and our monthly magazine *Manshoor* began publication. The entire responsibility of this was given to my brother Zaki Abbas who was also a PIA employee. We had hoped that the magazine would reach out not only to people affiliated with PIA but also more widely across and beyond the country, presenting a constructive working-class politics and playing an important role in promoting it.

Meanwhile, progressives in India were finding it hard to believe that we were publishing this magazine from Pakistan, in the times of martial law! Famous Indian poet and journalist Ali Sardar Jaffrey inquired to this effect from some of our acquaintances in Bombay, and lauded it as a courageous move. Likewise, in England, a circle by the name of Bazm-e-Manshoor was set up first in London, which spread to various other cities in England; people still remember that and recognize us from that context and from the role this magazine played in the Ayub regime. The magazine was vital through Yahya Khan's rule, ironically closed down by a friend Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who, prior to coming to power, used to call the magazine *his Manshoor* (the word

Manshoor means both prism and manifesto in Urdu, so the irony is even greater here). This was a naked example of class politics. When democracy was restored to Pakistan in 1989 after the Martial Law of Zia-ul-Haq, we received permission to restart the magazine. From June 1989 to date, this magazine has been published continuously.

Our social and political work was gathering momentum. We established offices in Manghopir, Landhi, Drigh Colony, and PECHS, and put together a political platform that was named Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz (QMM; National Workers Front). Later on, the name was changed to Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz (PMM); during my arrest in the Bhutto Era, CID officers tried to link the word Qaumi (national) to separatist nationalism and demanded clarification, thus we thought that a name change was better. We handed over the responsibility of Karachi to Azhar Abbas; meanwhile, Shafiq took on the task of organizing in other provinces.

Chapter 9

The 1965 War and After

The 1965 war between Pakistan and India weakened the foundations of Ayub's dictatorship, and the declaration at Tashkent confirmed this. Apart from being a USSR-brokered peace agreement between India and Pakistan in 1966, it is still not known what exactly that declaration contained; what we do know is that Bhutto had made this the basis of a big uproar against Ayub. Many in the country thought that because Bhutto himself had a role in this diplomatic agreement, then perhaps he would reveal the secret. But he never did, and we never did find out in what exact way had Ayub betrayed the country at Taskhent. It is rumored that in his last days Ayub used to say that God would settle the accounts with Bhutto on the day of judgment.

The mystery remains as to how Bhutto, who used to respect Ayub like a father, came to be such a crusader against him. In earlier days, Bhutto titled him Salahuddin Ayubi; what had caused this tension? He also called Ayub Pakistan's Lenin, and had gone begging for votes on his behalf against Fatima Jinnah. And wasn't it the same same Ayub who had, after removing Iskander Mirza from power, retained only Bhutto (then a minister in Mirza's cabinet) for his own cabinet and introduced him into the world as his Foreign Minister. How come this relation turned so sour, and the battle for power ended only with Ayub's complete eradication? Official sources and other people said that at one point Ayub wanted to remove Bhutto from his government, and Bhutto was to settle for nothing less than Ayub vacating his seat for him. The sequence of events suggest to me that the 1965 war was part of Bhutto's strategy. He used his office to map out a strategy on Kashmir, to bring it to the attention of various people in power, and perhaps even to ensure that for optimal effect, some meddling in the territory would not devolve into a full-scale war with India. However, that was not to be the case.

In fact, in October 1964, after its second defeat at the hands of China, the Indian army was shaken up. The Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, had challenged Pakistan to a war at any moment. At the intervention of the British government, the exchange of fire in Rann of Kutch did stop, but the Indian army still went ahead to cancel the leave of all its soldiers and was on alert. Pakistan retaliated, and this brought both armies to the precipice of conflict. It felt like they could be war at any moment. Pakistan moved its front from Sind and Punjab to Kashmir. Naming it “Operation Gibraltar,” Pakistan sent its commandos into Kashmir and other areas of the state. Taking advantage of the shelling in the border areas of Gujrat, it then embarked on “Operation Grand Slam,” capturing Chhimm and Jodian. In this way, the operations in Kashmir transformed into a full-scale war.

The then East Pakistan had been saved by China’s threat to India, and thus the focus of this war remained the Western front. Had China not preempted that by threatening India, and had India attacked Pakistan on that front, the results of 1971 would have already been obtained in 1965.

The War and the Airline

Prior to the 1965 war between Pakistan and India, Nur Khan returned to the Air Force as its head, as he had hoped. After his departure, the former head of the Pakistan Air Force, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, came to PIA as its Chairman. Energised by this change, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) began to strengthen its ranks within the organization and its activists in PIA repeatedly disrupted our union meetings. In earlier times, when we had just formed the Orient Airways Employees Union, they had shown the same aggressive behaviour. I have no qualm in characterizing their attitude as thoroughly and consistently one of enmity towards labour; JI has

been the biggest class rival to the working-class. Opposing progressive labour politics has afforded that party the sole *raison d'être* and any legitimacy it has had on the national level in the over-wrought reactionary scenario of Pakistani politics, and continues to play that dirty role to this day. In PIA, they had one and only one purpose: to throw the workers' movement off-track and distract it from its class character and commitments, by the use of gangster-like destructive tactics.

In one such provoked confrontation, some of the workers of Jamaat-e-Islami sustained some injuries, and they approached the new leader of PIA. Asghar Khan called me in and, in a departure from his usual amiable tone asked what all this was. I replied that those folks had tried to disrupt union elections. He suggested that in that case perhaps the management should organize the elections. I said that while on principle this would be wrong, we would agree to the management supervising and executing the elections in the remaining shops if that put him at ease. I also added said that if, in the remaining shops, the JI procured a majority and emerged victorious, the rest of us would resign. He agreed. By then, only a few shops had voted, and about 150 representatives were yet to be elected. Jamaat-e-Islami fielded its representatives and candidates against each of ours for every single seat of the shop and working committee. Only one JI sympathizer won.

In discussing employee demands with Asghar Khan, things did not always go smoothly. I impressed on him that no amount of positive attitude toward us overwrote the real imperative to solve workers' problems—and that the seemingly supportive stance was not actually translating into real cooperation, which was making our constituency uneasy. He understood the fragility of the situation and he did try his best to improve the conditions.

On the basis of the role of PIA in the 1965 war (it being under the watch of the ministry of defence, and the only mode of connection between East and West Pakistan during troubles with India), and our performance, the mutual warmth and respect between Asghar Khan and myself increased. Once in casual conversation, the topic of travelling abroad came up. He said immediately, “Where would you want to go?” I replied, “China.” A few days later, he called me into his office and suggested that I could go to China in October for the celebration of the Cultural Revolution. This visit would be an official one, since we had PIA staff posted in China. I started preparing. The air links between China and Pakistan had been established under Nur Khan, and he, too, had wanted to send me over there on the inaugural flight as union president. But the CID did not allow. Perhaps the CID was not aware of this in advance of this trip, or they would have done their best to stop me again. The director of the Intelligence Bureau, Awan, was close to Asghar Khan, and perhaps it was because the Air Marshal acted independently and firmly that this trip became a reality.

Only in China

I flew from Karachi for China on 26 September 1966. I was told that the PIA District Manager in Shanghai, Qamruzzaman, would take care of the arrangements for my stay. It is worth mentioning here that Qamruzzaman was ideologically completely opposite to us, from back when we were students. He had been brought into PIA on the special request of President Ayub. It was hard for me to fathom what he would have in store for me in China.

The flight that I boarded was going to Shanghai because there was neither a direct flight to Peking nor did PIA have an office there. The flight captain was Salehji; we spoke a bit on the

way and he was the first person in whom I sensed an opposition to China. Then he said that Qamruzzaman worked for CIA. I kept quiet. This was indeed a rumour I had heard before, but it was truly odd to hear this from Salehji, since there was such a tidbit in circulation about him as well! When we got off at Shanghai Airport, Qamruzzaman was indeed there and I was relieved to see him—until I found out that he was leaving on the flight back home of the very plane on which I had arrived. I asked him what would become of me, to which he replied that I could always attend the celebration in Shanghai if I wasn't able to go to Peking. I was livid at this contrived nonchalance, but remained silent. When he heard that the captain was Salehji, he immediately said that he was a CIA guy. What a circus: one US secret service agent flagging the other!

Luckily, it so happened that a guy from the accounts department, my friend Dayyan Khan was posted in Shanghai and the flight operations were run by Usman Khan. This was a bit comforting after having recently met two other-exposing CIA guys. I stayed in Shanghai with my friend Dayyan. He contacted the Chinese officials who were connected with PIA, and introduced me to them by making reference of the union. They said that going from Shanghai to Peking was impossible at this time, because that has to be arranged for much in advance. Before my departure, I had put in a request of the Chinese consulate so that the officials in China would know and there would be no confusion. Initially the officials in Shanghai did not pay much attention and their attitude was cold, to say the least. But it changed suddenly and markedly, once they got the assurance from Peking. All the arrangements to go to Peking were made swiftly, and I proceeded to a celebration of the Cultural Revolution as an official invitee of the government of China.

I reached Peking on September 28, and was received by some officials. One gentleman from the Chinese Civil Aviation accompanied me. I stayed at a hotel where I had various meetings with Party officials especially in tune with international labour movement affairs. On Thursday, September 29, 66 guests were invited to a reception at the Great Hall of the Peoples. This was a historic and memorable occasion. Here, representatives of the ruling party welcomed foreign delegations. There was an official Pakistani government delegation led by the Governor of East Pakistan, Munam Khan. I was not attached to them and had met some members of that delegation at another event. I was seated at a table with the Albanian Minister of Transport. Not much was said beyond pleasantries. They were toasts to Pak-China friendship and to global peace. Since I didn't drink alcohol, too much of other fluids to keep up with the rest left me sick. The government of China, however, took very good care of me, and three different people were appointed as my guides and navigators.

I was in China for 17 days. During this time, the relevant officials and I had really fruitful discussions on various topics of mutual interest. My knowledge increased manifold. This was the era of the Cultural Revolution. President Liu Shaoqi was the target of an oppositional movement, to the extent that even books written by him were banned. I had many questions to ask and clarifications to seek. I brought those to my Chinese interlocutors, and exchanged thoughts on them, even when it was necessary to write in order to communicate. For instance, I was curious to know why all governments in Pakistan were deemed good by the Chinese, no matter what their politics or ideology? While it was fine to have friendly relations, why did China have to go all the way to recognize and support governments that stood for the exploiting classes? In my view, it was crucial to acknowledge and analyse the character of such governments across the globe and maybe this would help the people in China themselves learn something about what *not*

to do. For instance, *Peking Review*, a weekly magazine, which was seen as a mirror of internationalist thought, often published opinions on Indian and Pakistani governments that were quite asymmetric, even though the origins, affiliations, and sympathies, of the two governments were not quite that different. The publication never reported on anything bad in Pakistan, and went out of its way to affirm whichever government was in power—to the extent of praising Ayub’s Basic Democracy notion. I noted that when the Indo-China friendship was in its heyday, there was no analysis of any of the reactionary governments of India either. But, as soon as there was a border conflict between the two countries, it was as if *Peking Review* suddenly woke up to the reactionary, feudalistic, and capitalistic nature of the Indian Government. No such “opportune” critique of the Pakistani government was ever forthcoming, though, even in times of martial law or military dictatorship or when other reactionary forces took power. To this, the Chinese officials responded and said that China’s friendships are guided by five-year principles. That was quite an admission! But, however, I was assured, that regardless of its relation with the governments, China’s “real” sympathies lay with the progressive forces within those countries.

I suggested that a good model for the *Peking Review* was the Hungarian paper published from Bucharest, *For Lasting Peace, For People’s Democracy*. I hadn’t heard of this paper until 1954, when it reported to the world all the arrests of Pakistani progressives. I told the Chinese of how my comrades and I had been targeted and persecuted by almost every successive government, and how our friend Hassan Nasir met his end, and asked why none of this ever appeared in the *Peking Review*?

I was also curious about the relations between Indonesia and China, specifically between President Sukarno and the Chinese government, with the Indonesian revolutionary party characterizing Sukarno as the son of Indonesia. I asked how come he had earned their support,

when he was no communist. While I found the Indonesians clearly perpetrating a kind of revisionism, I was surprised that *Peking Review* characterized Sukarno and the party as revolutionary and lauded the relations between China and the Indonesian President. I did not agree with this analysis, because when Indonesia came under military dictatorship, and countless were killed, then the *Review* had published a scathing review of the mistakes of the Revolutionary Party of Indonesia. I had learnt a lot from that review and used it pedagogically with fellow workers, also reprinting it in *Manshoor*. Similarly, on the issue of the Cultural Revolution I found it worth asking how come that the writings of Liu Shaoqi which were considered very accurate and useful in understanding foreign relations and international affairs, were damned as revisionist overnight. When I raised these issues, my interlocutors didn't say much. Some kind of loss in translation this was!

The concept of the “third world” that emerged in global discourse courtesy of China had been stuck in my throat for quite a while. Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia had earlier come up with the notion of the “nonaligned world,” and had received flak from *Peking Review* (and I was in agreement with their assessment of Tito in these articles). But, at the same time I didn't see much of a difference between the non-aligned world and the third world, except that the former was created by Tito and the latter by Chairman Mao. In my view, the leaders and the ruling classes of the “third world” were still under the influence of the superpowers in one way or the other and didn't merit being considered independent political actors within self-contained national entities. On this issue as well, I failed to get a satisfying response from my Chinese friends.

Now than I was witnessing the Cultural Revolution with my own eyes, my mind got a bit tangled up about many things. While I raised many issues mentioned above, with a mix of

responses to them, there were many impressions that I did not share with my hosts. One jarring image was the kind of personality worship of Chairman Mao which left me very confused. I had a great deal of affection for Mao and his ideas had affected me immensely at that moment, as he emerged as the harbinger of international revolution. However, the people's treatment of him in China recalled for me recitations and hymns at religious ceremonies in Pakistan and India, and left me a bit uncomfortable. On 1 October 1966, I witnessed and participated in a rally of 2.5 million people on the streets. I was tired of standing since 10 am and I had a paper with me with Mao's picture on it. I decided to put it on the ground and sit on it, but because it had the photo of Mao on it, I feared that my move might be construed as blasphemous. My guide understood my hesitation and made the first move, putting the paper down on which I then sat.

Then there was the Red Guard, about a million members just from Peking city (there were many more from other parts of the country who had come for the celebration). This was mightily impressive. The platform on which Chairman Mao stood was just a few steps above where I was, and many leaders of the Chinese Communist Party were also standing next to him. I had a good view. An ocean of youth were in formation right in front of me, paying honors to Chairman Mao, eulogizing him, and chanting slogans. The thunder of the claps resounded, and Mao responded to the cheers by waving the red book. Next to him, Lin Biao and Zhou En Lai were also waving the red book—and they had been standing next to Mao unmoved since 10 in the morning. At about 2 pm, some of these people left the scene for a break. The moment Mao left walked off the stage, the Red Guard stopped doing what they were doing. Despite being asked to continue their guard of honor and their parade, no one was ready to move even an inch. The authorities made some announcement, and the crowd was still. The moment Mao returned to the platform, the guard stirred, started to cheer, and moved to join the rest of their companions.

This scene and the discipline of such a big crowd was really something to witness. In this rally of some millions of young men and women, there was no pushing, shoving, or wanting to leave the other behind.

This scene left a deep impression on my heart and mind. While this popular support for the leader was heartwarming, it raised questions as to the nature of this devotion, and the level of agreement and passion across the party high command. As far as the slogans and cheers were concerned, most of them were about Mao's personality, but how great could a personality be who was comfortable with all this? All of this seemed really fetishistic and unscientific to me. Everyone wielding the red book in this manner afforded it a magical and redemptive power, and while none of the rallying youth were wanting to leave each other behind, it was clear that all the officials standing on the platform with Mao were competing with each other on how vigorously they could wave the red book. I didn't leave with a favorable view of the inner workings of the party; instead, it bespoke some actual problems within its function, or else why this turn to this unscientific fetishistic attitude and this personality cult?!

When I returned from China and related these things to my comrades in the movement, some of them certainly didn't take well to it, because they weren't willing to accept anything that would question Chairman Mao. I tried to explain to him that it wasn't about opposing or supporting Mao, but a kind of impartial analysis of the scene and the political culture. Whether ironic or tragic, these instincts and fears that I had slowly come true and were borne out by history: such as Lin Biao's attempt to escape in a plane that was thwarted by a missile that killed him, and then the conflicts between Mao and Zhou En Lai. After Mao's death, the situation that obtained was even more painful because his successor Hua Kuo-Feng soon found himself in the court of the Shah of Iran and accepted Tito as his teacher, in exactly the same way as

Khrushchev had done. In my opinion, the story met its end therewith—this wasn't any more about ideological argument or degrees of materialist analysis. Later events proved that the Communist Party of China also fell victim to revisionism. Whatever is happening in China today proves that even further.

It is important to mention here that during the days of our alliance with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (more to come on that in detail), and when the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had not yet come to power, I did have some political disagreements with him which would feature him saying something like, "How strange are you, this isn't what Mao or Zhou En Lai say!" I would respond that while I did follow them, I also fortunately had my own independent analysis and was free to disagree with them or anyone else. And this was from the period of 1968-1972 when I was actually very devoted to Mao.

All said and done, this journey was a really crucial turning point for my life, and things changed drastically after that. As a result of my talks, China was informed of the progressive movement's circumstances in Pakistan. Years later, they would cite this as a reason for placing the photo of this ordinary worker in the Great Hall of the Peoples. The story goes as follows: My friend Khaqan Abbasi who was earlier the Deputy Managing Director of PIA and then a minister in Zia-ul-Haq's Cabinet, was traveling with Zia in China and touring the Peoples' Hall. Coming across my photo, Zia asked, "Who is this Pakistani?" Abbasi said, "This is my friend Tufail Abbas." When Abbasi told me this, I replied to him how come his government remains friends with China and turns away from those Pakistanis who might be friends with them! He laughed and said, "Because the Pope is more important than Rome."

I was grateful to Asghar Khan for enabling this crucial life-changing visit to China. When I thanked him upon return, he asked if there was somewhere else I wanted to go. He had the

Soviet Union in mind. I said, “Sir, why would I want to go there, it is fast moving towards oblivion.” He agreed with me. I asked him how come he went to China and didn’t see the pictures of the Revolution there. He said that he had gone only for a few days and didn’t get a chance. “Perhaps if there’s another occasion, I will make sure to see them.” It is a fact that the Chinese government had done a really excellent job of putting together a pictorial history of the Communist Party and the Revolution, which is still inscribed on my mind.

Soon after this trip, in May 1967, the Arab-Israeli war began. In this war, the roles of the US and USSR were on full display. On this occasion, under the leadership of workers, we held a demonstration in favor of the Palestinian struggle, in which Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz (QMM) and National Students Federation (NSF) participated wholeheartedly. Some Palestinian students led the procession. Suddenly, the police charged at us with batons. I tried to explain to the DSP Ahmed Sadiq and the Deputy Commissioner of Karachi that all the demonstrators were peaceful. But from all sides I was caught in the baton charge as well. I got a good beating, and was taken to a police car parked near Ampji’s. When some workers and students found out, they charged toward the vehicle and freed me from the clutches of the police. That night at about three o’clock, the police accost me at my home, arrested me, and locked me up at the Clifton police station. The next day, lawyers were unable to get me released on bail. The police eventually brought about 15 counts against me.

The very moment things that had gotten out of control at the march, National Awami Party’s acting secretary-general Major Ishaq Ahmed, our collaborator for the event, was also present. When he saw me being beaten up, he quietly left the scene, even though he was a lawyer and could have approached the policemen in that capacity. I was really disappointed at this, but it helped me put together a clearer analytical picture. I was badly hurt, and the police had to take

me to the hospital for treatment, where I stayed for a month. Initially, I was placed in the General Ward and then moved to a room where I remained in shackles. When I was released from the hospital, all allegations were withdrawn and I was free again.

Last Days of Asghar Khan in PIA

During the period that Air Marshal Asghar Khan was leading PIA, Mahmud Haroon was the Minister of Labour, and the Nawab of Kalabagh Malik Amir Mohammed Khan was Governor of West Pakistan. Nur Khan had close relations with the brothers Yusuf and Mahmud Haroon. During Nur Khan's time in PIA, Yusuf Haroon also been made a Director, but he left when Air Marshal Asghar Khan replaced Nur Khan. When Nur Khan became the head of the Air Force and travelled to Karachi, he would always stay at their home. That is where I would go to meet him as well, and it would give me a chance to talk to Mahmud Haroon and discuss labour issues (I would speak not only on behalf of Airways Employees Union but also as president of Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz, a federation of various labour and progressive groups). Haroon was always willing to talk in detail about workers problems, we saw eye to eye on most things, and on one occasion he even agreed that our suggestions and measures deserved to be implemented because it was *also* in the interest of the government to do so. When Haroon apprised the Governor of his conversation with me, the latter also concurred that solving the problem of the workers was beneficial to the government as well. I didn't see him again for a long period, and then I learnt that he had been forbidden from conferring with me on various issues because the Governor believed that I was a dangerous communist. CID always wanted to ensure that I never got to meet a government official, for it would blow the cover on their propaganda about me being an enemy of the State.

One day in 1967, I got a phone call from Mahmud Haroon. He asked if I wanted to go to England as an independent representative at a workers' conference taking place under the auspices of CENTO (Central Eastern Treaty Organization). I agreed to go and he asked me to contact Asghar Khan for permission. When I brought this up with him, he was encouraging and supportive, even hopeful that this visit might help ease up the government's paranoia of me and they would actually give me an ear as they should. I apprised Haroon of the situation, but in the time the CID took to give me clearance, Haroon was removed from his position, and the Nawab of Kalabagh left Ayub's government due to conflicts. One of my acquaintances who was a superintendent of police tells that when the issue of my permission to go to England came up, he told them that England is no comparison to China in terms of "sensitivity" or "risk," and if I had already been to China then a clearance for England should be simpler.

In 1967, after three years of serving PIA, Air Marshal Asghar Khan left for the world of politics. We organized a big farewell party for him. At a meeting in Rawalpindi for planning this send-off, Omar Kureishi, who was Director of Public Relations and also a close friend, conveyed Air Marshal's preference that I should not give a speech on this occasion. When I asked the Air Marshal if that was indeed what he wanted, he smiled and said, "It's fine if you don't agree." Kureishi also told me that Asghar Khan had put three things in front of Ayub Khan as conditions for his departure: that J. A. Rahim's pension should be paid (he was a civil servant who left to form the Pakistan People's Party and subsequently became its General Secretary), that the President should meet Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and that since the people of the union are extremely patriotic, that arresting them over and over again is wrong and should be stopped.

At the farewell party in Karachi, Air Marshal told me that the government was very afraid of me, and suspected that I had put together a union guard on the pattern of the Red Guard

in China. The truth was that in order to break the unity within the union, a faction of Jamaat-e-Islami had already been mobilized as militant with the guidance of those in power. In response to those actions, we had formed a union guard comprising of active workers who were more politically minded, which had made the government afraid.

Asghar Khan entered the stage of Pakistani politics, left it, came back, and continues to be a key player in it. Initially, I was in touch with him over many years, but we haven't spoken in a long time. It is characteristic of the ruling classes that they are not compelled by collective thought (except their own class ideology which they do not at all see as ideological or class-based), and instead judge things on a personalized and individualistic basis. They want that others should see things the way they see them, think as they think. Thus they do not understand the class perspective of anyone but themselves. And then when these people enter politics after spending decades in other institutions, they want that those people who have approached politics as an almost existential commitment and sacrificed their lives in the quest of a better world and in adherence to a scientific, materialist, political method, should abandon their entire worldview for the pleasure of the ruling class. How is it possible that everyone should come to think of and understand like them? Thus unfolds tragedy of Pakistan: a tribal and feudal mindset in the garb of militarized modernity and clientelism, and unbridled feudal capitalism, with all the weight of these postcolonial historical oxymoronic realities.

Many right-wing reactionary parties, especially Jamaat-e-Islami, some opportunistic left-wing forces, and the rulers of Pakistan shared the same goal: that the power of the progressive labour movement must somehow be eradicated, and that the arena (of PIA as an exemplary microcosm of larger political, economic, and social currents and challenges) where we were enacting our class responsibilities wholeheartedly, should be taken away from us as a way of

breaking and erasing the labour movement. The government was against us from the beginning, and did not limited itself to political tactics, trying its best to keep us from engaging in politics on the national level.

In pursuance of this, the government was supporting any group opposed to us, and was ready to take any such step that would lessen our impact on the labor movement and national politics. Notable in these measures was the JI playing the role of the government's intelligence agency. JI had resources of its own, supported also by the United States and Saudi Arabia. JI played a really crucial role by creating a fanatic sentiment on the basis of religion, and exploiting it in order to turn people against us. Other religious circles, regardless of sect or denomination were also aiding the JI in this, but because our foundations in class analysis were so strong, these forces could not deter us. My China trip, then the visit of a Chinese workers' delegation to Pakistan, and our role in further improving friendly relations between Pakistan and China, seemingly not only concerned the enemies but also frazzled them, probably compelling actions that they wouldn't otherwise have taken.

New Bosses, Old Politics

Air Vice Marshal Akhtar, a close associate of Asghar Khan, replaced him as leader of PIA. Akhtar had his very unique way of working: he wanted to run the airline on its own without including the union, and at the same time wanted to get close to workers. Perhaps this was a government trick, a way to break a principled alliance between the administration and the union. While it didn't feel like it in those days, after all these years it certainly looks like a conspiracy. Akhtar lasted only a few months in PIA, however.

After removing AVM Akhtar, the Ayub regime launched a new web of conspiracies in PIA, and sent Shakirullah Durrani as Managing Director. Nur Khan personally delivered Durrani to PIA. He fully took advantage of his relations with me, called me in and introduced me to him—as he shielded and abetted both the government and Durrani’s audacity. Had Nur Khan not personally fostered Durrani for the rest of us to suffer from, the circumstances might have turned out differently and we might have been more on guard against Durrani’s actions. His arrival in PIA commenced a conspiratorial era in the organization unlike any before, laying the ground for others to come; much was done to break the solidarity and strength of the workers. Ayub and Nur Khan’s shared enmity for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a key determinant of these organized spiteful actions.

Durrani came to PIA just as Bhutto was emerging on the Pakistani political scene. At that time, our union had created a united front with the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in PIA. After taking his post, Durrani called me in his office once, and declared that he was going to be the one to run PIA. I understood what he meant. I said, “Sir, you are the Managing Director, you should run it.” He said that the times of Nur Khan and Asghar Khan were in the past now, and he himself would run the corporation without the interference of any union. I tried to reason with him but his tone was very aggressive. Perhaps he wanted to provoke me so that the actual conflict would solidify right away, for his benefit. One can assess the intensity of this exchange by the fact that while speaking with him, I had to drink water three times in order to keep myself in control. However, it was clear what the future was going to hold for us. Had I locked horns with him then, the situation would have deteriorated (more) rapidly, and he would have gotten what he wanted even sooner and with more ease than he did!

When this aggressive blow went unmet, Durrani extended a hand of friendship. He often spoke to me about the ways and tricks of the CIA, and would tell stories about himself regarding how the CIA wanted to buy him out, and how he was greeted and welcomed when he went to the US. He really was trying hard to get me on his track (and off mine). Once he asked me whether I thought that Bhutto was going to bring about socialism. To this I said that I didn't think so, that I believed he was going to go after me if and when he came to power—and that our alliance with PPP was necessitated by the objective conditions the country was in and was for the good of the country. On hearing this, he offered to have me meet President Ayub. All of these things were intended to stop our support for Bhutto which had created considerable discomfort for Ayub already.

Alongside the union of PIA workers, by now we had established a labour movement all over the country. Our journal *Manshoor* was avidly playing its role. The trip to China had really shaped the present moment, and the slogan of Pak-China friendship had landed us the unequivocal role of a friend of China. *Peking Review* regularly featured our statements and articles. The National Student Federation (NSF) was conveying our political viewpoints to students. The political climate was conducive and full of possibility. And in this situation, Durrani wanted us to break from Bhutto to seek Ayub's blessings! Nur Khan had also broached this possibility earlier on; even then it felt futile, now it was even more so.

Often I would tell Durrani that he should cooperate with us in PIA in order to play a clear, positive, and constructive role in the country's politics. But it was apparent that he was on some mission and wanted to complete it in his own style. Listening to him, it sometimes felt that he did not hold Nur Khan in high regard. Later situations proved that. Durrani continued to behave in consonance with his reactionary style and the policy of the government; he had no

interest in the betterment of the organization nor was concerned with how his actions would impact affairs in the future. At one point, it seemed as if everyone was involved in a conspiracy, the results of which would land the country in a terrible place in the future. And so it happened, when in a few years the country broke into two.

The Pilots' Strike and a Chance at Labour Solidarity

I had at least a solid analytic grasp of these situations, and did not want to succumb to any trick designed to bring us in a confrontation with the government which would lead them to throw me out of PIA. I had to contemplate every step carefully. Meanwhile, the pilots' association PALPA (Pakistan Airline Pilots' Association) went on strike. This was December 1968. The issue was that Durrani resorted to the same aggressive and arrogant tone in speaking to the pilots and engineers with which he had approached me upon his arrival. Confronted with his style, I had controlled myself and left his office. However, the President of PALPA, K. R. Khan got in a tangle with Durrani, with the ensuing incidents leading to the strike. This situation came to my notice when the strike had been declared. The cause of the strike was Captain Salehji, about whom (as I said earlier) it was rumored that he was a CIA agent.

When I reached home at night, I learnt that Durrani had called me and had asked me to call back immediately. I called him, and M. Ahmed, the Director of Administration MA took the phone and told me that the pilots were on strike, and that I should get to Durrani's house right away. Then, Durrani himself took the phone, "General, where are you? Come right away!" What a shift in circumstance this was: this was the same person who had vowed to me that he will be running PIA alone.

A strange atmosphere awaited me at Durrani's residence: the directors and heads of all departments were there. Durrani took me aside and said, "General, the pilots have struck, please help me." He added, "Look, Tufail, I am a Pathan from Charsadda. If you help me, I will remain in your debt all my life, and you can test me anytime." After listening to whatever he had to say, I said, "Durrani Sahib, I know that you are a Pathan from Charsadda, but on this issue it is not you but PIA that I will help. You might remember that in our first meeting you said that you wanted to run it by yourself. I was very patient listening to those words and took in everything you said, because I am a political person and understand the situation. You spoke in the same way to the Captain, he is also a Pathan, and PALPA has nothing to do with politics, since it is a national professional organization. The same encounter that I averted between you and me ended up happening between you and him. However, seeing the conditions PIA is in as well as the situation of the country, there is no room for a strike at this point. But, you must accept your mistake, and I will talk to PALPA." Durrani did not agree to this, saying that he would only talk once they ended the strike. I told him that as the Managing Director, the situation was his to resolve—and as far as I was concerned, I would do my best for PIA and the country.

Durrani and other directors, including Omar Kureishi (Public Relations), wanted me to issue a statement criticizing the striking pilots. There was no reason for that, plus it would only make things worse. I insisted that talking to the representatives was the only way to work things out. I told Omar later that a statement against another workers' organization was out of the question. More needful was that Durrani understand the fragility of the situation and agree to approach the pilots' representatives.

Omar, whom I always respected, always, also seemed very disturbed and desperate. When I had entered practical politics, Omar was the editor of the evening newspaper *Star*, and

had been arrested due to the paper's policy. Later on, he came to work in PIA. He was a friend of Bhutto's and spoke well of him, for which he repeatedly came under fire in PIA. With regards to the strike, I tried to console him that because the strike is costing the institution, I would do my best to end it soon. What had led to the strike was merely a clash of personalities, not a principled issue.

After discussions, Durrani also saw that various people present at his home were beginning to understand what I was saying. I took his permission and went to the PALPA office, met with Captain A.R. Khan, and tried to lay out the whole situation to him. He was defiant and clearly still offended by Durrani. "What does Durrani think of himself? Would he be able to run PIA?" The captain proposed that our union join them in the strike. I explained to him that this would not benefit anyone. Soon, Salehji, the ostensible cause of the row, asserted that if our union was to join them, then Durrani would doubtless be out of PIA in no time. This was entirely possible, because the pilots had taken the matter to higher-ups as well—but still not certain or the best way out. I did my utmost to explain the situation to them, but because it was Durrani's bad attitude that had led to this, correcting the situation demanded that he accept his fault.

The next day was Friday. Since I had been awake all night, I needed some sleep. In the evening Mahmud Haroon called, and said, "Your friend has called from London and he is asking you to help Durrani." What friend from London, I wondered. It was Nur Khan. On the phone, I told Haroon that it was Nur Khan who was responsible for foisting Durrani on us, and in turn for Durrani's bad attitude bringing us to this point.

Haroon was in complete agreement with me and said that a meeting was necessary. When we met in my home, I gave him a full rundown of the situation, including Durrani's notorious

attitude. We then discussed ways of resolving it. While there was no doubt that the fault was Durrani's, others had certainly also played their part and exploited it. It was, however, necessary that the strike must end at any cost, because it was costing the organisation millions everyday. I assured him that the union would not join this strike, but neither would it be forced to follow the institutional line and blame PALPA for the strike. We would also publish our own analysis of the situation in the union newsletter and try to bring the climate back to normalcy. At the same time, it was necessary that Durrani also agree improve his attitude significantly, and that he would have to speak with the pilots before they ended the strike. Haroon and I concurred on all of these things, and it was decided that the next day he would speak to Durrani.

Next day, I reached Durrani's office, I met Haroon and Tariq, whom the government had sent to analyse the situation. Both gentlemen independently concurred with my opinion. The union followed up with an edition of the newsletter in which we requested the pilots to end their strike since it was putting the organization at great deficit. We also called on the management to take responsibility for the situation and rise to the occasion by addressing the complaints of the pilots and negotiating with them. Subsequently, Durrani did speak to PALPA representatives, and the strike came to an end.

This was a big crisis for the airline, luckily averted before it got too bad. Tariq said to Durrani, "Tufail has helped you a lot, rely on him and work with him." Durrani agreed to this on the spot, but detracted in his later actions. He really hurt the labour movement and PIA, ultimately harming the country in the years to come. I would even say that the foundation of the breakup of Pakistan was laid by the manner in which Durrani dealt with the issues of PIA. No matter where the planning came from—the government or the CID—the future would never forgive him for his role. Durrani learnt nothing from this episode, and the task he had been

assigned was still to be completed, which involved creating and abetting a front that would betray the workers' cause.

I kept communicating with Durrani, at the same time as he was in constant touch with JI. PIA management was fully supporting and advancing JI. Because there was one union, Durrani and his administration were not able to do very much. They were trying their best to provoke us so that the government would be justified in coming at us full force and blocking us as reprimand for our alliance with PPP and opposition to Ayub. Various government agencies were also bent upon this.

In those days, the head of Karachi police was Jaseem, a close friend of Durrani and someone to whom I had been introduced during the PALPA strike. Durrani had also appointed his younger brother Major Naseem as the Chief Security Officer of PIA. The relations between the Director Administration M. Ahmed and Major Naseem were increasingly good; Naseem took full advantage of these, spoiling Ahmed's position at the same time. Facilitated by Ahmed, Naseem had also gotten through to many union members. One day, I went to Ahmed's office and the Major was sitting with him. Upon Durrani's instructions, Major did this shadowing quite often because many union folks would stop by that office for different official purposes. I was talking with Ahmed, when Naseem just interrupted for no reason and said, "You seem to think a lot of yourself," expressing the desire to beat me enough to skin me alive and set me straight. This really provoked me to make the first move to beat him up—not that he was a very strong man himself—but fearing worse consequences, I thought it best to stay quiet. I went and spoke to Durrani about this. Although this was all happening with his blessings, even he felt that this had gone a bit too far. Durrani understood the fragility of the situation and called in the Major and made him apologize to me. While that instance was settled, things were changing fast and it was

clear that somewhere along the way worse and more entanglements were bound to happen. I was keeping an eye on the situation and trying to grasp every move of the enemy. There was a big battle waging outside of the organization, and the Ayub regime was breathing its last.

Chapter 10

PIA as Arena for Dangerous National Politics

The situation inside PIA was worsening every day and with the support of the government and the management, the activists of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) were openly becoming more goon-like and thuggish. Efforts to build another union in PIA under the wing of JI were apace. The legal situation was such that that the labour departments for West and East Pakistan were separate and no single union could be registered to represent all of Pakistan. AEU had been representing PIA employees in both parts of Pakistan, and were winning significant gains by negotiating with the administration on their behalf, all without being officially registered yet. Taking advantage of this loophole, a new union by the name of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Employees' Union (PIACE) was registered. JI could have easily done this earlier as well but thanks to the few sensible decisions of the management at different times, they were not given a chance: the issue of another union had come up in the tenure of Asghar Khan, but he had refused, in the interest of the workers and the organization, and for the sake of a relatively healthy working relation between the two.

It is true that we were repeated targets of arrest and persecution as a way to make us give up on the cause of working-class; in this situation, I had a foothold neither inside nor outside PIA, and the obstacles to spread scientific political analysis among the workers were at every turn. Despite all the fervour and paranoia on part of successive governments, various heads of institution and PIA administration had found my approach to be positive and beneficial to both country and corporation. This is the reason that back in 1960, when I had been removed from PIA due to imprisonment, I was restored because of my policy and the administration's sensible grasp of my politics and its realistic assessment of the overall good of the institution. After 22

months of being in jail, Nur Khan re-instated me, and went as far as the President of Pakistan to get approval for this. After him it was Air Marshal Asghar Khan who understood the positive impact of our work, and resisted the pressure of the government on our and PIA's behalf. With that history, it was clear that the only purpose of bringing Durrani to lead PIA was to compromise the workers' movement, and thwart our efforts—and it suited him extremely well.

During Durrani's tenure, the JI flexed its thuggery, to the extent that multiple times gangsters were hired to come to the Head Office and create disruptions. Once this went far enough: officers were beaten up and Bhutto's brother-in-law Mustafa was badly injured. The miscreants also tried to set fire to planes in the engineering hangars. Attacking people and harassing them was pretty normal, but this was the first time that things had been taken to such a level. Throughout all this, the PIA management, the city administration of Karachi, and the provincial government were silent spectators. Nur Khan was the governor of West Pakistan and the country was under martial law; it was clear that these incidents were no random accidents but the result of planning at higher levels. When I brought it up with Durrani, he did not take much notice. When I spoke with the Commissioner of Karachi, it seemed like he was not in a position to do anything. Until that point, I was a member of Nur Khan's advisory council, and brought it up with him. But it seemed like he was also helpless. Due to his persistent and shape-shifting opportunism, he was knowingly acquiescent.

All said and done, life-and-death games were being played, and it was apparent that all reactionary forces had, under the auspices of the JI and with the blessings of the government, taken it upon themselves to either conquer or demolish PIA as a bastion of the working class in the history of Pakistani politics. We tried our best to keep them from targeting the working defenders and protectors of this institution and from bringing them more harm. But the flames

were being fanned from various avenues. A spate of religious scholars and clerics, regardless of which sect they belong to, were helping the cause of PIACE union, even issuing fatwas of *Kufr* against me. When the reactionary elements tried to besiege us through noted religious figures, it seemed as if the battle between Islam and *Kufr* was being played out inside PIA. Another issue deployed in the attack was of my irrelevant origins—calling me Muhajir, sometimes calling me Shia—and when that didn't work, then I was called an atheist and communist. The only purpose behind this was to break the unity of the workers.

So much for the reactionary elements. On the other side, there were a whole host of merely titular progressives and left-wingers, who were after me because of my support of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, not yet the darling of the adventurous, nominal, Pakistani left. Behold the ebbs and flows of time, as soon as Bhutto came to power, these nominal progressives went over and endeared themselves to him in hordes while I was put in jail under various allegations for 13 months. My conflicts with the reactionary elements still had some basis, and their opposition was at least understandable; but it was hard to fathom what would estrange these progressives! Perhaps they noted that we were moving ahead and prodding along due to correct political judgment, and that they were dissolving for lack of it.

The reactionary parties and the government were bent on creating an environment in which our work should be nullified, if politically, then perhaps physically. Back in 1960-61, the CID had tried its hand at taking my life, but that was not to be. Now, these right-wing forces made their attempt and contracted professional criminals for that. I had some familiarity with such professional criminals largely because of the time I spent in jail, and in those places and times the proximity bred understanding and warmth towards the rejects and the deviants of an unjust society. Once I was going past Lalookhet; it must have been about midnight. A person

was trailing me and kept coming closer. When he got really close I turned around; his face was covered. When he looked at me up close he said, “Oh Tufail Sahib, you?” It turned out that in 1954 when I had been arrested, this kid was in the children’s ward in jail, and was now a grown-up man. He looked at me and said, “Thank god, nothing bad happened. Please take care of yourself.” He then took off. I also received a letter from someone who said that he had been called from Peshawar and shown my place of work and my route to and from there, as well as where I parked my car at PIA. But his conscience had kept him from attacking me.

In December 1969, under Durrani’s leadership, the referendum in PIA unfolded. What this unfolding also exposed were the roles and characters of the government, JI, various reactionary parties, nominal left-wing parties, and various other individuals faces and characters. At that time, the alliance between PPP and ourselves was an open challenge to these forces. I understood pretty well that PIA was under attack so that the connection to East Pakistan could be broken. We published the slogan and imperative of “one country, one airline, one union” in our journal and in our union newsletter—and made clear that attempted divisiveness between the workers of the institution would be equal to division of Pakistan itself, because PIA was the only material means by which the East and West were linked. We pled that affirming and enhancing the unity of the workers of this organization was crucial to sustaining this connection. In our work, then, it felt as if PIA was truly not only a microcosm or thumbnail for the country’s politics, but a component and index of it as well—and that in performing the task of uniting the workers here, we were protecting the longevity of the country itself. But it seemed like the rulers had decided that the country should break up. According to some analysts and commentators, during Ayub’s rule, it has been decided that the country should be split up, because the bad political and economic conditions of East Pakistan that was produced by this system was

impinging on West Pakistan's "chances" at vitality. This needs an entire discussion of the geopolitics and the post-partition role of neighbours to fully be analysed, which is beyond the scope of this recollection.

In order to see this conspiracy to completion, many CIA agents were being inducted in the airline. One such agent, Abbas Bavazir, was hired overnight. JI oversaw all of this, and almost all of the PIA management was involved. Those officers whose sympathies were with us, fell silent, because they were subjected to various investigations, inquiries, or relocations. For example, Omar Kureishi was transferred to London.

In order to expose the conspiracy behind the referendum, we filed a case in the courts, and the writ was accepted. No decision ever came of this; the referendum was held, rendering the writ pointless. We had the right to challenge the doctored lists that had been prepared for the referendum, but that was disallowed, and the date for the referendum. Our union decided to boycott the referendum. Our purpose was to expose the government's hand in this situation. On the day of the referendum, we were practically surrounded by the management and the army, who wanted to weaken and break the boycott. In this "managed" referendum, members of the administration themselves oversaw their employees casting their vote, Durrani himself notable among the poll supervisors.

The next morning, headlines of all the newspapers declared the victory of Islam over *Kufr*. And it seemed like this wasn't a union referendum, but a national one. The impression abounded that this was just a first act in the imminent destruction of socialism. On this victory in the referendum, even BBC and Voice of America announced that Pakistan was now purely in the hand of reactionary and conservative forces.

The referendum was held in East Pakistan as well. While in West Pakistan we had boycotted in order to expose the policy of the government, we had not done so in East Pakistan. As a result, AEU was victorious in East Pakistan, which testified to the failure of management and unmasked their joint conspiracy with the government. Their collusion had led to a victory for the PIACE union in West Pakistan, which led them to become over-confident in assuming that they had also “solved” the problem of East Pakistan. It is important to mention here that before the referendum Jamaat-e-Islami had created a big riot in PIA in East Pakistan and had forced the Director of Administration Ahmed to flee the airport. All of this was happening with the blessings of the management and government, all in order to established PIACE union as the only union among the workers. At the same time, they didn’t want to be *too* clear—mixed signals were part of the game, with occasional expressions of the government’s disapproval of the situation that had developed.

My analysis was that the enemy was seeking control over one of they key locations of the labour struggle—PIA—and wanted to break our morale and determination. The longer we could defer the final blow they fancied by taking incremental and deliberate steps in our struggle, the better. We also had to be prepared to accept the defeat handed to us, and then to regroup elsewhere and anew. Such courage under all circumstances is bound to frustrate and weaken the enemy—they can win in other ways, but never triumph *politically*. On the surface, this conspiracy was against us but in substance this conspiracy was against the country. The reactionary elements liked to think that they had won in the battlefield and saw this victory as foreshadowing the outcome of national elections. I had a different take on this, believing the political conditions to actually be to our advantage; so even if the current pressures were to keep

people away in PIA, the tide and influence in the rest of the country was in a different and better place, and rising steadily.

After the referendum, PIA seemed like a prison—I was also contained physically by being deputed to the officers' library. No worker could come and meet me there. CID was guarding the Head Office. Officers were scared of talking to me for the fear that their name would be noted. The circle around me tightened so much that once in the corridor of the Head Office, I accosted Durrani, and made clear that his purpose might be better served by just dismissing me or sending me to jail. He said, "Leader, how could I do that? You will become even more of a leader!" This conspiracy was not coming to an end. I discussed the situation with Bhutto and he seemed to get the picture.

Many perplexing things were happening. Once when I was going to get lunch, a worker from engineering saw me and greeted me. I responded. However, within seconds about 30 or more people came up and surrounded me. Then Hafiz Iqbal, the President of PIACE union interjected out of nowhere, "Why did you answer him?" I said I had done so in response to his greeting. People around him started to yell, "We won't let this happen, Hafiz Sahib! Give us a command!" I do not know what they were asking his orders for. As this was happening I was thinking that if these people attacked me then I would grab Iqbal's throat, and who cares if I survive the scuffle. This was an unreal situation. Soon, some of our union people also came to the scene, and the situation somehow got defused. In the evening, when I was about to leave, I found out that the same people were eager to finish things off by create a riot at the end of the day. Some of my friends were with me, one of whom assessed the fragility of the situation and brought his car very close to the gate, and I left swiftly. Once again, a terrible situation was closely averted.

The following day I didn't go to work. I met up with Bhutto and gave him the whole story. He dialled Durrani in PIA, but could not reach him. Who knows if he wasn't there, or if refused to talk. Then Bhutto got through to Shahjehan Karim who was a government officer on special duty (OSD) in PIA and told him about the incident, speaking firmly, "They didn't surround him, they surrounded me. This is the same man who will be my chief whip in the Parliament in the days to come. What do you plan to do about this?"

When I reached PIA the next morning, Karim called me in and asked where I was the day before, and why I hadn't applied for a day off. I said, "Sir, you know where I was. And, as far as a day off is concerned, have the rules changed for us? Does even a day's leave have to be applied for in advance?" He said, "Bhutto speaks highly of you. If you want, you can leave the country and get posted to any foreign station, in any grade and department you wish, for two years, and take anyone you want with you." I said, "Thank you very much, but I love my country. If I had to do this, I would have done it a long time ago. For one, I would not have been in PIA but in the government. Whatever situation is now developing in this institution, please do something about that." It seemed as if this gentleman, too, was working under some other plan.

When I met Bhutto again, I told him of my conversation with Karim, and he fell silent. Next day he called me and asked me to dine with him. When I got there, he said that Durrani was also invited. It seemed that the negotiations were happening somewhere higher up, and that Bhutto also wanted the problems of PIA to be solved in keeping with the wishes of the government. I told Bhutto that he will never come, because I knew very well what he thought of Bhutto. I would be very surprised if he were to have the gall to ever meet Bhutto in my presence, given the words he had spoken to me about him. And so it happened; Durrani never showed up. We went ahead and ate, but Bhutto was clearly not pleased.

The situation was worsening every day. I fully expected some really awful situation to be created in PIA that would seal the deal for the enemy.. The management was not letting me take any time off. I requested medical leave, so that my absence could remove a trigger for the management and government ire. Durrani called in a PIA doctor and ordered him to cancel my leave. The doctor protested that since the medical certificate had been given by Dr. Zaki Hasan, a senior and respected professor, cancelling the certificate would not only be inappropriate but tempt a lawsuit against PIA. Thus, I continued on medical leave.

In the first two years of its tenure, PIACE union dealt the workers a really rough hand and the institution became unpleasant for everyday employees. Their working conditions were worsening under its stewardship, many were being removed from their jobs without an inquiry and the retirement age had also been reduced. Our own sympathizers were facing increasingly risky situations: harassment had gone to such levels that Durrani himself felt compelled to save face by intervening against the perpetrators. After inquiries, two or three PIACE union members were fired, which brought on a union strike from PIACE union. Though the strike was intended to restore PIACE union to some credible position, it failed badly.

Once during those days, Feroz Puna, a PIACE union member attacked the Vice President of Poland within the boundaries of the Karachi airport; he ran him over with a catering van. Qamar Alam, then the Superintendent of Police, conducted an inquiry into the matter. He also called me in for a conversation at Hotel Sheraton. I expressed my opinion that without an actual plan or conspiracy, this incident would not have taken place. He understood that it indeed seemed surprising that such a mentally imbalanced person, who was not assigned to work at the airport, would gain entry and replace the on-duty driver of the van. I was also summoned to Lahore, to testify to the investigation committee under Justice Yaqub, where I said the same

thing. A representative of the Polish embassy was also present on the occasion. All said and done, the powers did not or perhaps could not afford to buy the conspiracy angle. After this case, Durrani was removed from PIA and made the governor of State Bank of Pakistan. Then, in the Bhutto administration, he was removed from that job and put in prison.

Durrani was succeeded by Zafar Chaudhry as Managing Director of PIA. Air Commodore Khaqan Abbasi accompanied Chaudhry, as his Deputy Managing Director. He was also a close colleague of Asghar Khan. As soon as he took office, he called me in and said, “CBA or no CBA, my doors are open for you.” Then, perhaps referring to the Air Marshal, he said that he had already been introduced to me by a person who thought very well of me.

I received transfer orders to Comilla in East Pakistan, but I wasn’t ready for this and the political situation there was fragile. Through Asghar Khan, I was able to approach the M.D., Chaudhry for a meeting. As I got there, Brigadier Hameed who had furnished my transfer orders was emerging from the managing director’s office. He didn’t think I was going to be able to see Chaudhry then, despite my insistence that I had an appointment with him. He turned out to be right about this, and I left. However, my transfer was cancelled.

Soon, in 1969, Yahya Khan who had become president after Ayub’s departure, announced the general election. Preparations began. The JI had, not only in PIA but also on an international level, started to propagate the notion that Pakistan would soon become the graveyard of socialism, and that the PPP, which was being associated with socialism, would be defeated badly. Under the name of “Shaukat-e-Islam” (meaning the Glory of Islam), they had started a propaganda movement to create an atmosphere of zealotry and an image for itself as the single political party proudly on the mission to quell every progressive element in Pakistan. The workers of the party would express this sentiment everywhere in their rallies and speeches. Lists

of progressive workers and activists were being drawn up, and their houses were being marked, just so that as soon as the party came to power, off with their heads! Despite its shameless and tasteless behaviour, the government was very supportive of JI.

Chapter 11

Another War and a New Political Stage

My politics has always borne the marks of its working-class background, which is why part of my task has been to expose oppressive classes. In our monthly journal *Manshoor*, and the fortnightly newsletter *Awami Mahaz*, we published an analysis of the true political and class character of various political parties. We brought to light Jamaat-e-Islami's and its leadership's thoughts against Pakistan and against Jinnah, and also exposed their blatantly sectarian divisiveness in post-independence Pakistani politics. We noted the Jamaat's friendliness towards the imperialist powers and its deep hatred for even the most remotely progressive politics. It is true that feudalist and capitalist parties are always friendly towards imperialist powers, but at times they can also come into conflict—especially when the imperialists use these parties and then discard them, feeding yet another cycle of a politics of resentment, no less conservative and reactionary.

The National Students Federation (NSF) contacted Bhutto and invited him to a rally. There he showed his emergent persona, something I had expected and feared all along. When there was criticism of Jamaat-e-Islami and Maulana Maudoodi at the rally, Bhutto got a bit flustered and a tad defensive, saying, “By the grace of God, I am Muslim.” He appeared on our platform out of his own need—at the same time he wanted to assure his own class companions that he did not concur with our class perspective. And, how could he anyway? We were against any political party that used the name of Islam to gain power and assist the ruling and oppressive classes. Jamaat-e-Islami, for one, did not have a claim to everything Islamic; worse still, it

supported all sorts of imperialist policies by giving them the stamp of Islamic approval. This is why they merited our staunchest opposition then, and do so today.

In these objective conditions, we had to decide how to use the emerging contradictions to the labour movement's benefit. Ayubocracy was in great disrepute with the people. Jamaat-e-Islami had, under the auspices of its international monsters, begun to use the name of Islam for the worst ends, and wanted to gain power in this way. We determined that the contradictions between Ayub and Bhutto must be pried open, and that in any kind of conflict between Bhutto and Jamaat-e-Islami, we should launch the strongest attack on Jamaat-e-Islami, as well as expose Bhutto's duplicitous character.

In East Pakistan, the conditions were completely different. The six points of Mujeeb-ur-Rehman were not only a nuisance for Ayub but were also considered a challenge to Pakistan sovereignty and unity. National Awami Party (NAP), which was a progressive party, had split up into two along the lines of the ideological divide between USSR and China. The pro-Soviet wing was led by Wali Khan, and the pro-China wing was represented by Maulana Bhashani. In East Pakistan, my comrades were working with Bhashani. Wali Khan's group was in favor of Mujeeb, both in East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

On an international level, the ideological differences between Soviet Union and China had become accentuated, and progressive circles were split in two. Pakistan felt these tremors as well. Pro-Soviet groups wanted to harm Pakistan, and they did succeed somewhat. Indira Gandhi made an agreement with the Soviet Union and supported Mujeeb, along with other groups that had Soviet blessings. East Pakistan became Bangladesh, and Mujeeb, an American agent, ingratiated the Soviet Union. How could US have accepted the fact of Soviet warships and ships docking at the harbors in Bangladesh? How long could it have tolerated the fact that

American pawns were being used by others? Thus, through its agents in the Army, the US basically destroyed Mujeeb and his entire family. Only his daughter Haseena Wajid escaped alive.

The collusion of pro-Soviet progressives, India, and Russia ended up turning East Pakistan into Bangladesh. Comparable strategies were deployed in the West as well, aiming at Sindhudesh, Greater Baluchistan, and Pakhtoonistan, but they didn't come to fruition. Whenever this drama rears its head, and it is ongoing today, any real success for it is close to impossible. On the one hand, we have the relative difference in the attitude of Russia, and on the other hand India has learned its lesson from making Bangladesh—that, after all is said and done, it has gotten nothing out of its ploys but a bad reputation and frustrated desires.

A New Turn With Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

I first met Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1968. Mairaj Mohammed Khan, who was the leader of our student front (NSF) conveyed Bhutto's message to me, and we convened at one of his friends' place. I asked Bhutto what he knew about me. He responded, "I have been in government, I know very well. After I became Foreign Minister, you haven't been arrested but once, and that was on the issue of Palestine. You were released when I told them that they should let my friend go." Later on, I realized that he was indeed accurate.

In our meeting, I laid out our stance clearly, and put forth my analysis of the country's situation. He expressed his agreement, and then wanted to talk about practical support. I assured him of our cooperation. It was decided that the student, worker, and peasant fronts on which I was working would not be duplicated by him (some of the fronts we had organized by then were Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz [labour], National Students Federation [student], Anjuman Mufad-e-

Niswan [women, social work], and Muhibban-e-Watan [political]). Bhutto agreed to this. He wanted to make a party, and had laid the foundation for Pakistan People's Party (PPP). I promised him our support, and I kept my word until the point when I felt that any further companionship would be sycophantic and opportunistic. The decision to support PPP came after a thorough analysis of the conditions, at the same time as I had no delusions about the class character of Bhutto himself. Were my positions not ideologically-informed or class-based, we might never have parted ways the way we did.

My entry, thus, in national practical politics was rooted in the working-class, my experience as a worker for 30 years, and my resultant political consciousness grounded in these. I had no legitimate claim to a role in concrete politics but as a member of the working-class within the confines of the objective conditions facing the country.

When Pakistan was formed, its working-class was a nominal presence. And today, after more than 60 years have passed, the working-class comprises about 3% of the entire population. By working-class I mean the industrial proletariat with a political role mediated by the presence or lack of trade union politics. From the earliest days of my activism, I had adopted the principle of doing everything possible to further the politics and interests of the working-class, and to take them to every platform possible. This is because the worker and his companion the peasant belong to the only two groups that carry the actual burden of the country's economy. These classes endlessly give to the country, and what do they get in return? Hunger. Disease. Poverty. It is my thinking that all available platforms for the furtherance of his politics should be utilized, as long as they don't amount to a surrender of the essential character of a working-class politics—which itself evolves over time.

First, in Awami League (AL), and then in Azad Pakistan Party (APP), I had become involved on the basis of class analysis. At that time, my sole purpose was that along with the interests of the worker, we should raise our voices for a wider critique of imperialism and feudalism. Any voicing of this resistance ultimately helps our cause. While in APP, I came to learn well of the class character of Mian Iftikharuddin and Sardar Shaukat Hayat. Speaking at an APP rally in Aram Bagh in 1953, Hayat made a case for the leadership emerging from the common people by saying something to this effect, “I have 22 suits to wear, when my son falls ill a hundred doctors come to see him, but the worker has neither any clothes to wear in the winter nor any medicine for his children. Thus, the real problems are the ones the working people face.” It was significant that these things were said by a member of the ruling and oppressing class. At the same time, I also understood that that the leadership of these bourgeois parties needed us and used us. We decorate their stages, work hard, and even spend the change in our pockets for them. What to do, then, when this is often necessary in order to have any chance at playing a role in the situations we confront. This was ongoing, and I feel that we have played our class role in bourgeois politics as sincerely as possible. Someone had once asked Lenin what the point of this method was? He said, that while it is true that this wastes time, and often our best members and workers get entrapped in this flow, there is no other option: we have to go through the struggle, and it is in this way that the movement moves forward. There are no shortcuts.

Climbing a mountain, one doesn't simply ascend—there are many ups and downs, many circlings back, and many wasted turns. The extremism on the left and the opportunistic rhetoric of “moderation” on the right both detract from the path. But it is important to take advantage of the bourgeois platform that appears under different names at different times.

So, when I met Bhutto, these accumulated lessons allowed me to associate with him on some conditions. I was willing to cooperate with any party or movement he starts up, even to unite on the strong positive points, with the caveat that conflict on the negatives was necessary and allowed. Following these rules of a united front, we would periodically assess whether and how this was actually benefiting working-class politics.

We had to be wary of the various temptations to abandon these principles of unity and struggle, and those there were many, ranging from expediency to opportunism to popularity to electoral power to dogmatism. To form a united front on other grounds was bound to land us in a bad place. We had to avoid the Scylla of becoming left extremists that would hurt the good the united front could bring, along with alienating us from the common people; and we had to avert the Charybdis of right-wing opportunism with assured deleterious effects on our own politics and the working class itself. With this in mind, we operated from the bourgeois party platform and aligned with other classes and their perspectives in accordance with the agreed-upon policy of the united front. It is important to check ourselves if we felt any urge to be lackeys or sycophants, and that would be a good point at which to separate from the united front. At that point, preserving political conscience and existence, and assuring the vitality of our politics for another day would far outweigh any immediate gain in mass exposure or support.

In 1968, the Pakistan People's Party was formed. As promised, we sent our best comrades to work in it, and made it our cause with integrity in all ways possible. Surrounded by various reactionary forces including the Jamaat-e-Islami, being an ally of PPP enabled us to voice those slogans that people were desperate to hear. In the palaces of the feudals, the barefoot children of peasants were raising slogans of "death to feudalism." The policy of Pak-China friendship was one of our central tenets. The same platform allowed us voice a critique of US

and Soviet imperialism. I fully utilised any opportunity that presented itself, deeming it imperative to play an effective role within given conditions.

Before coming to power, Bhutto kept his promise of not forming any parallel or comparable front. When no one was willing to believe that Bhutto could make it to the top, we supported him in every way possible, with heart, soul, labour, and resources. Everyone was just amazed. And when I would say that PPP would win many seats and can come into power, nobody was willing to believe me. Bhutto himself found it hard to believe that the populace could attain this consciousness so quickly, that he would win, and that he would win with such a majority. Even Omar Kureishi, a friend of Bhutto's from student years in London, told me that I was getting ahead of myself in my optimistic speculations. He suggested that I consider this more as a five-year plan. The only five-year plan I saw was this: Bhutto was going to come to power soon, and then he would be done with politically in five years. I had that assessment because I was already seeing signs that once the party came to power, his character would take a big hit and be exposed. I just did not predict the extent of that regress.

One day I was at 70 Clifton (the famed Bhutto residence in Karachi) along with some other friends of Bhutto, Safdar Mir and Yunus Said (who used to publish the English weekly magazine *Combat*). In his magazine, Said would amply praise the PPP, calling it a revolutionary party (a point on which he and I often argued). The country was buzzing with election fever and we were talking about seats, trying to assess which party would win how many.

The rallies of Shaukat-e-Islam had altered the political climate of the country, and the Jamaat-e-Islami seemed to hover over Pakistan politics. As I saw it, if the elections were held right away, then only an alliance with the PPP as a key player could deliver a defeat to the Jamaat-e-Islami. I told Mir and Said that having just gone around the country, I predicted that

Jamaat-e-Islami would win only 3 seats: one in Multan, one in Dir, one in Karachi. My analysis of the PPP wins a majority, and in Punjab takes about 50-60 seats. Bhutto could not believe a word I was saying, while Mir was agreeing with me.

The elections happened, and my predictions came true. PPP won the seats in the proportions I had expected, and in West Pakistan, emerged as a clear majority party. Jamaat-e-Islami won a total of 4 seats: the fourth because the vote got split between Maulana Okarvi and Kaniz Fatima allowing Maulana Azam Farooqi to win. In this way, Jamaat-e-Islami basically got devastated politically. Even Farooq Maududi used to admit that the senior Maulana Maududi succumbed to this political wound.

By this time, Asghar Khan had entered politics as well. On a tour through East Pakistan, he gave a press statement there about how democracy would be restored. One of our comrades in East Pakistan, Talha, responded to this statement in an English weekly paper *Holiday* (a response that we translated into Urdu and printed in *Manshoor*). The gist of his response was that democracy in Pakistan would be restored only when both the “puny socialism” of Bhutto and the 6 points of Mujeeb-ur-Rehman would be exposed to the people, and when the corpses of their politics would be thrown on a pyre. This article created a huge uproar. Unfortunately, this was to happen to each leader in his own way, and their stories are part of history now.

Bhutto was arrested. Left on his own, he was bound to just perish slowly. I contacted Air Marshal Asghar Khan, and asked him to enter the field and play a part. He was ready. Things moved forward, and the whole country was rising against Ayubocracy. It turned out that the ten-year celebration for Ayub was also his last. The affairs took a new turn, and Ayub felt compelled to release Bhutto. Mujeeb, who was under arrest for the Agartala Conspiracy case, was also released.

The preparations for a roundtable conference called by Ayub were underway. My position was that we should not attend this conference, boycott it, and press the President to announce general elections. This should apply to any allies as well, and they should not attend the conference were it to happen. I also advised Asghar Khan to not participate, and he agreed with me.

After his release, when I met Bhutto, we discussed party organization. When he asked me about my opinion on Ayub's roundtable conference I clearly told him what I felt. After taking my opinion, Bhutto asked me to come back the next day so that along with conversations about building the PPP, we would reach a decision about the roundtable conference. It seemed that, unlike me, most of his other companions were in favor of participating in the conference.

The next day I went over for the meeting. Hafeez Pirzada, J.A. Rahim, and one other gentleman whom Bhutto was referring to as "General" were also present. Later on, I found out that this was General Akbar who had staged the drama that led to the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case. In speaking with him, I was partly relieved thinking of what might have become of progressives and the progressive movement had this person succeeded in his conspiracy! We started discussing, and after speaking for a bit about party organization, we turned to the conference issue. Without giving his own opinion, Bhutto first asked the General what he thought. The General explained himself, saying that it was essential to go to the conference because if we didn't, then Asghar Khan would stage a civil coup, and leave us isolated. When he had laid out his view, then Bhutto turned to me and asked me for my opinion. Giving all the bases for my judgment, I tried to assure them that the only way to finish off Ayub was to make the conference a failure, so that he announces the election and exits the scene. The General insisted and repeated the risks of not going to the conference, namely, letting Asghar Khan

prevail. I disagreed with him and said that I had already spoken to Asghar Khan, and he would not attend the conference—and, even if he did, and went ahead with a civil coup, it was he who would be isolated, not Bhutto. At this point, Bhutto said that when he had met the Air Marshal in Multan jail, they had both decided to attend the conference.

The General and I kept iterating our opposing views. Bhutto turned to others present and asked for their opinion. Rahim and Peerzada both agreed with me. Bhutto finally came to agree with us on this issue and boycotted the conference. After this announcement, his character and politics really came in full view of the people. Meanwhile, Asghar Khan went back on his word to me, and made it to the roundtable conference. Later on when I met him and asked him why that happened, he said that when he had met Bhutto in Multan jail, they had both decided to go. When I laid out the whole story to him, he fell silent.

Elections were announced and Yusuf Haroon was appointed governor of West Pakistan. He called the meeting of labor representatives at the Commissioner House in Karachi,. The governor smiled and said, “You had me kicked out of PIA, now I’m Governor. Please cooperate with me and tell me what to do.” I said, “Sir, for now, please announce the reinstatement of the workers that have been laid off.” He conferred with Commissioner Masood Nabi for a moment and decided that this would happen. The meeting ended and after that, he took me to his home. There we discussed national politics for a bit, and agreeing with my analysis, he promised to hold elections. He was fully aware of my ties with Bhutto, but we never got to that topic.

The next day, per usual, I was supposed to meet Bhutto. I reached 70 Clifton. Donning a sharp suit, Bhutto was making his way out to the lawn. On my asking, he said that he was going to hold a press conference. He added that the conference was on the same issues that he had

asked me to discuss with Akbar Bugti and Ataulloh Mengal in Lahore, and thus I should sit next to him at the press conference.

It is timely now to talk about what he was referring to. Earlier that year, one day in Lahore, I was at a lunch meeting with Bhutto at the Hotel Intercontinental. Other noted members of the Party were also there (and it was there that he also met Asghar Khan). After lunch, when everyone started to leave, Bhutto asked me to stay back, and later, to join him in a meeting with Bugti and Mengal up in his room. The discussion began, and Mengal asked me, “Comrade, have you joined the People’s Party?” I said no, and that I was just supporting Bhutto. Then we started talking in detail about the political situation of the country. They were against One Unit, as was I. Bugti was of the opinion that if Punjab could rule for 20 years, then why couldn’t Bengal. I said that the issue was not Punjab versus Bengal, but that Pakistan belongs to its people, they should rule it, and this is the reason it was formed. Much more was said between us, Bhutto saying the least. When both those gentlemen left, Bhutto said to me, “This is why I asked you to stay with me because no one else can say these things to these people.”

Back to the press conference at 70 Clifton, I was trying hard to understand the sudden change in Bhutto. He wanted me to sit with him through the conference; I said that I would stand across from him. Very forcefully, he spoke out against One Unit, in accordance with our shared position on the issue. He warned that if the One Unit was not undone, he would start a movement. I was not quite grasping this drastic shift in rhetoric. The following morning the papers gave very flattering coverage of this press conference.

A New Martial Law

Within 24 hours of the press conference, at 5 pm the next day Ayub stepped down and transferred power to Yahya Khan. A second martial law was imposed on the country. Yahya Khan announced elections and abolished one unit. When I saw Bhutto soon after this, he was elated and said everything was going to be all right. I was listening to him speak and kept silent. Yahya Khan was a friend of his. In the days to come, on the issue of Yahya Khan, there was no dearth of disagreement between Bhutto and me.

Bhutto seemed rather pleased with Yahya Khan's martial law. One reason was that it got rid of Ayub, and the other reason was that Haroon was no longer governor. Somehow, there was a long history of conflict between Bhutto and the Haroon family. Yahya and Bhutto met often. If there was one person in Yahya's cabinet that Bhutto severely conflicted with, it was General Sher Ali. The goals of Yahya and his friends were considerably different: by exploiting the conflicts between Bhutto and Mujeeb, they wanted to confirm Yahya's presidency.

During Yahya's regime, some students belonging to the NSF—Naeem Qureshi, Hassam, and others—were arrested in Punjab. Besides heading the Air Force, Nur Khan was then also the Deputy Chief Marshal Law Administrator. I spoke to him about the students, and he promised that they would be released. Then in Yahya's government, Nur Khan became governor of Punjab, and those students were finally released.

Nur Khan becoming Governor was a welcome move. He invited me to the Governor House in Lahore. It was the evening, and when I reached that building constructed by the British, I was just astonished to see such a big palace for one person. Nur Khan was busy in another meeting, and I chose to wait in the lawn. After a little while, Nur Khan emerged from his meeting. We exchanged greetings. Then I asked him, "Sir, what did you do? How can you

work with Yahya Khan?” I felt that in these conditions, he was better off remaining in the Air Force. Listening to me, he said, “I’m not a bloody fool like Azam Khan.” I said, “Whatever the case, I don’t think you can work with him. Either you will be forced to give up your position, or he will remove you.” And this is what happened.

When Nur Khan separated from the Yahya government, he was staying at the Lahore Hotel Intercontinental. I flew there from Karachi to meet him. Begum Nur Khan was also present, and she was always very kind to me, also the chief patron of Anjuman Mufad-e-Niswan. When she started to say something, I said that her husband should have listened to me, since I knew this would happen.

As governor, Nur Khan had put together an advisory committee of workers and industrialists, and included me in it. Some of my friends thought that I shouldn’t be part of the committee. I was of the opinion that any opportunity available to the members of the labor movement to reach out to the Labour Department or the government in any way should be utilized, because it gave us a voice. In these meetings, the representatives of government, industrialists, and labour were all present and most issues were decided through consensus. I learnt of the conflicts and paradoxes within the government. I also gained experience that many of our everyday biases and affairs linger on even in such fora. Seeing this, one day I told Nur Khan that when he was in PIA, he would solve many of these problems himself; here, nothing seemed to move ahead.

Through this committee, I got to meet many businessmen, and also got to see many labor leaders up close, which only affirmed my belief that if the representatives of the workers sincerely follow a class analysis and a scientific perspective, then they can solve most of the problems of the country working with the nation’s capitalists in a relation of unity and struggle..

One of my most memorable meetings was with Rafiq Sehgal, who turned out to be a gem of a person, and a really sensible, humane, and secure man unafraid to do the good and right thing. Later he was also the Managing Director of PIA, where my relation with him became even deeper and lasted way beyond his tenure in PIA.

Bhutto and I met almost every day. One day he said to me that I should ask Nur Khan, who was then governor, to have dinner with us. Even I wanted that these big two should meet and develop relations. I conveyed the message to Nur Khan, and added my own vote of approval. As governor, Nur Khan didn't find it appropriate to single out the leader of the PPP to dine with. Ironically, after he was no longer governor, Nur Khan expressed his desire to meet Bhutto, who then declined.

The Elections of 1970 and their Aftermath

While PPP was gaining influence in the West, the Awami League was surging ahead in East Pakistan. Along with Jamaat-e-Islami, various reactionary parties were being left behind. In East and West Pakistan, we were performing a wholesome role in cornering revisionists and nominally or hypocritically progressive politicians. In East Pakistan, I found it hard to grasp the political moves of Maulana Bhashani and other fellow progressives; they seemed okay with moving toward a break-up of Pakistan. I had thought that perhaps other progressives would come forward, but seeing them boycotting the election and relinquishing the political field to Mujeeb was quite perplexing. Why did this happen? At that point I could only think that perhaps they decided in favor of Mujeeb. Perhaps they thought that when he would be unable to solve the problems, it would be easier to deal with him from the opposition. However, the effects weren't palatable and it all turned out badly. Had they continued on the path that they had been on,

perhaps the progressive parties in both parts of the country would have benefited from it. While our analysis was the same, the practice was different, and this eventually led to the division of the country.

In the 1970 elections, in West Pakistan the PPP emerged victorious in a big way. Jamaat-e-Islami lost badly. In West Pakistan, especially in Punjab and Sind, PPP had won in a big way. In other two provinces, the NAP and JUI were in majority. In East Pakistan, the Awami League emerged as a powerful party, and the Jamaat-e-Islami lost badly there as well. All over the country, the Jamaat-e-Islami survived but seemed badly disfigured. With JI's defeat at the national level, the union it sponsored in PIA also suffered.

The PPP victory had also left Wali Khan terrified. Admittedly, on a national level the situation was rather odd. The country was in two big pieces, with separate economies and separate politics hyphenated by a big landmass of India that was still unwilling to accept the existence of Pakistan. In East Pakistan, the Soviet influence had led a majority of the progressive forces to also withhold their acceptance of Pakistan. Even JI was against the making of Pakistan from the beginning, but then shamelessly acted as its trustee once it was there for the taking, with the support of America and Saudi Arabia. Various members of the left in West Pakistan were also unwilling to accept Pakistan. In December 1970, in these situations, the results of the elections changed the climate of the country once and for all.

Prior to the election, Bhutto had offered us 22 seats for the provincial and national assemblies, and we had politely refused the offer. My position was that we should cooperate with Bhutto wholeheartedly but not have anyone among us contest elections via his platform. I suspected that once Bhutto came to power, he would not be able to carry out any action on the program on which he ran with our support. He just wanted to come into power, after which our

conflict with him was inevitable, but that would help the movement articulate itself even better. My comrade Shafiq Sahib was in the meeting with me. My refusal wasn't met happily by many of our partners including Javed Hakim Qureshi and Ashfaq Ahmed, and they broke from us. They went ahead and contested the election on PPP tickets and won. Mairaj Mohammed Khan was in the Rawalpindi jail, where he was sent the election papers, but he refused to file them. When he was released, he mentioned to comrades that if the PPP were to lose the election, then the government was going to deal very harshly with Tufail. I was taking my chances. Mairaj was of the opinion that I should go underground, but I thought that was the wrong thing to do. Bhutto himself was donning the cloak of progressivism, and this was the basis on which I had agreed to work with him in order to promote progressive views in Pakistan and to protect and defend the progressive movement against Jamaat-e-Islami and various other revisionists and reactionaries. However, soon enough, Bhutto joined forces with our biggest enemy, Jamaat-e-Islami, and launched a big attack on us. Plus, due to the opportunism and betrayal of some of our comrades, we could not take full advantage of the situation in order to create a viable movement with the leadership of the workers.

In these circumstances, this region was also a battleground for both major imperial powers: the US and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union could not stand Pakistan due to its friendship with China, and the pro-India policy of the Soviet Union was coming in the way of the Pak-China friendship. America wanted Pakistan to remain under its influence and was doing everything possible. While it was buttressing the Awami League in East Pakistan, it wasn't just in order to altruistically stabilize the region. As is the case today, the US also wanted to keep India happy and wanted to reassure it that despite India's connections with the enemy USSR, the US still regarded it as a big power and wanted to support its predominance in the region. The US

had a consciously anti-China policy, which was rewarding for India. Such was the face of geopolitics. The pressing question was how we should deal with the political situation that had emerged after the election, in the face of these national and international currents.

To Their Sheer Surprise...

Yahya Khan and his cabinet did not estimate such election outcomes. They were counting on different parties emerging as influential in different provinces, so that Yahya would win credibility props for being a fair and evenhanded ruler, in a position to play all the forces of against each other and preserve his own power. But the situation turned out to be quite different from what he expected.

While Ayub had given into popular pressure, he had not transferred power to the people but entrusted it to a fellow soldier—a tragedy that has been repeated many times in Pakistan. He had made one last effort to have Yahya hold elections as the governor, but it was already too late. Yahya had connections with Bhutto, and they were both using each other for their own ends. It was very easy for Yahya to include Bhutto in his government; instead, he took in his arch-rival Sher Ali, a general who furthered Jamaat-e-Islami's interests. Up till now, JI was after Bhutto's life, calling a person like Yahya "Mard-e-Momin." Bhutto wanted elections, and also wanted to keep Yahya in tow, in case there were elections in the country and the government rigged them heavily, in which case he could form a government with Yahya. Bhutto thought of the Army as a necessary force, and after the elections he had said clearly that there are three forces in the country: AL, PPP, and the Army. These power games continued as everyone tried to use each other. The complex situation that had taken shape in the country after the election kept getting more complex.

When we initially joined forces with Bhutto, I had assessed that PPP would emerge as a big force in the country and leftist forces will get to play an important role in East Pakistan. This is why I tried my best read to get an alliance going between Bhutto and Maulana Bhashani. It didn't even appear remotely possible then that all of East Pakistan would swing completely into their hands of Mujeeb, with the progressive forces washing their hands of the situation so completely. I had thought that these progressive forces will ride this wave and a collective movement could emerge from it, with AL and PPP in power. I also expected that eventually, this would combust due to their own internal contradictions and a new situation would emerge that would be more conducive to our movement.

While AL was a majority in the East, in the West it didn't win a single seat. Due to Mujeeb's pro-India stance, he and Wali Khan were friends. Then, there was Yahya with his friends, who belonged to the US lobby, supported Mujeeb and wanted to isolate Bhutto. They wanted Mujeeb and Yahya to reach an agreement. On this issue, ML and JI were with them. All these people were together, in India's back pocket, and severely opposed to China.

My view was that in the aftermath of the elections, there were two options: either Bhutto and Mujeeb should share power, or they should make a very strong united opposition. My first preference was that Bhutto should play his role as an effective and strong leader of the opposition, as this would further a class-based consciousness and political struggle for many fruits beyond immediate gain in power for one segment of the bourgeoisie. Sometimes even Bhutto confessed to this, but this was quite contrary to his essence and temperament. Then again, the door to a power-sharing alliance with Mujeeb was still open to him. Even this would have led to some sort of collective political consciousness where their own ideological content would

truly be tested and exposed, ultimately paving the way for true democracy and socialism for the country. None of this happened.

I adhere to the principle that objective conditions are not within anyone's control, and they provide the frame for the actions we take. The best I can expect to do in this world is play my class role fully. Mujeeb and Bhutto both finally got their own little countries to rule, and both enacted their class character in their way of ruling the countries. It obviously didn't work out very well for either of them or for their countries, their fates too similar to many other leaders in such situations.

I had first postulated a strategy assuming a united Pakistan, but in the context of the express tendencies of these distinct political entities, I had then turned to our comrades in East Pakistan to update it. I could not have guessed the extents that USSR and India would go to in order to break up Pakistan and fulfill their longstanding desire. I also did not think that Mujeeb, whom the US had fed and fostered, and whose Six-Point Plan was drawn up at the behest of the US, would then ally with USSR and India to deliver them Bangladesh, only to be removed from the scene altogether by the US. It was further impossible to imagine that China that had back in 1965 used its tactics to keep India from war on the eastern front, would just sit back as a silent spectator to the war and the subsequent break-up of Pakistan. This was especially shocking given what I had gathered in my talks with government officials in China in 1965 regarding its stance on Kashmir. They had said that they considered the Kashmir issue to be similar to the Vietnam problem only in a different location. But in 1971, when Pakistan was in the throes of an international conspiracy, China stood in silence with its hands behind its back.

Right from the start, Yahya wanted to be President come what may, and had expected to work out a deal with Mujeeb as Prime Minister and Bhutto in the opposition. Or, perhaps he had

fantasized coming to power in Punjab and Sind. Bhutto sought power too, and was not ready for this compromise that would involve handing over Pakistan to Mujeeb and sitting on the opposition benches. On this issue, Bhutto was by no means alone, since he had the support and agreement of the various oppressive classes and big international powers.

It was our utmost wish that the country be saved from this tragic break-up. Once, Mujeeb had noted to Bhutto that on the issue of nationalities, there was more resonance between my ideas and his (Mujeeb's), even though I was supporting Bhutto. When Bhutto had repeated this to me, I explained to him that this wasn't a support for Mujeeb the person or politician but a scientific stance that I had taken on the issue. I also told him that my meeting with Mujeeb had happened during the days of Suhrawardy, when he was a minister. As we were speaking about these things, Bhutto suggested that it probably made sense that he and I should go together to East Pakistan to meet Mujeeb and resolve the situation in a mutually beneficial way. I was ready to go, the tickets booked—but Bhutto first suspended the plans, then his mind about taking me along, and went to East Pakistan by himself.

Soon thereafter, Mujeeb was arrested, and military action ensued in East Pakistan. When Bhutto returned from East Pakistan, he said, "Pakistan is safe now." After Mujeeb's arrest, I suggested to Bhutto that he must press Yahya to make some decision soon, lest the US finds an in and makes a harmful move. Bhutto dismissively said that I was always after America! I insisted that delaying a decision was only going to worsen the conditions. Bhutto let this slide as well.

Yahya and Bhutto were in constant touch. One day Bhutto asked me what I thought of his idea of taking Mairaj along for his next meeting with Yahya. I didn't have much of an opinion. Then he asked me to meet him at the PPP office next day at 3 pm. I didn't frequent the

PPP office that much, and tried to keep my distance, but on his request I made my way there. Many people had gathered, and Bhutto gave a strong speech. He was leaving the office to go straight to the airport. He asked me to come along. I didn't see the point of that since he was on his way to Rawalpindi. Mairaj with him, they reached Rawalpindi, and just before meeting Yahya, Bhutto designated Mairaj his successor. Mairaj later told me that Bhutto had taken him along to Yahya's office but not to the meeting itself. This meant that Bhutto had playacted in order to give Yahya the impression that all progressive forces were with him.

Soon again, Bhutto called me and asked me to meet him in the PPP office. I got there to find him in an excellent mood. People filed in all day, and Bhutto was giving out little chits of paper in order to grant various people their wishes, joking and goofing around in and out of that. On his way out in the evening, he said that we should definitely meet in the morning. The same thing happened the following few days, and some more days to come: me going there, sitting around as he did his things, and then asked to come back again for an important meeting. Given my situation at work, and the unpleasant relation with Durrani, I was wary of how my constant absence from PIA was going to go down with the management—not that Bhutto was unaware of that already, but I tried telling him explicitly, to which he responded, “Don't worry. Durrani wouldn't dare.” I asked him what he really wanted to talk to me about. He smiled and deferred for another day.

I reached the PPP office at 9 am. Mairaj was sitting inside the office where Bhutto and I were supposed to meet. We exchanged greetings and small talk but nothing of consequence. In a little while, Bhutto came along and took me with him into the big hall, closing the door to talk in private since the office was bustling that day. He then came out with it: he had been offered the posts of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and wanted my opinion. I asked, “Who

will be President?” He said, “Yahya Khan.” “And the Prime Minister?” The answer was Nur-ul-Amin from East Pakistan. I said that if there was to be a Prime Minister from East Pakistan, then why Nur-ul-Amin and not Mujeeb? I just couldn’t see the wisdom in the sketch he was drawing for me. I said he should do whatever he thought best, but he insisted on getting my opinion. I told him that I honestly felt that if he accepted what seemed to be an elaborate trick to me, he should also brace for his political end. As we spoke, Rahim entered the room, and Bhutto posed the same question to him, adding that I was not in favour of joining the government. Rahim said, “He is right, he is right.” This conversation ended here, and I left. In the days to come, Bhutto went to the United Nations in Geneva, and everyone knows how that became the prologue to the breaking up of the country.

Whenever imperialists might well wish, they can crack a big continent first to make Pakistan and India, and then their next whim can get them Bangladesh as well. Sometimes, this division is on the basis of religion, sometime on the basis of nationality and ethnicity. The real goal of the imperialist is to prevent the development of class-consciousness in the people at all cost, and he repeatedly derails their process by constructing and/or deploying distractions of nation, religion, language, and ethnicity. These distractions also interrupt any recognition and accountability of the real enemies of the people. In this way, imperialists allow the already oppressive powers to continue to do what they are best at, rewarding their guardians who are the feudal lords and the capitalists. Mujeeb’s six points were certainly the product of a certain situation, but being stubbornly stuck to them was clearly to the benefit of the imperialist powers, even when they turned out to be quite harmful to the seeming protagonist, Mujeeb himself. Bhutto wanted Mujeeb to agree to a division of power between East and West Pakistan. That was the call of the day, and it unfortunately manifested itself in a real division at that time.

Looking closely, there are many resemblances between the partition of 1947 and the 1971 situation and: the contentious issue had morphed from religion to race and nation. Two parts of one country, separated by thousands of miles, punctuated by a powerful country that had not accepted the existence of Pakistan and was willing to further the goals of imperialist powers along with its own—the recipe was written. The conspiracy of USSR and India came to fruition. Pakistan was in two pieces, having fallen victim to its feudals, imperialists, bureaucrats, and the military, who had collectively turned away from serving the people and delivering them their rights and rightful share. In the words of Bhutto, a new Pakistan came into being, of which he was now President and, very ironically, the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA). This happened on 20 December 1971. East Pakistan was now Bangladesh, and Mujeeb its President.

Mujeeb got hold of Bangladesh in order to enact his 6 points, and Bhutto got his new Pakistan in which to enact his puny socialist promises. Great! But, what happened? Neither of them did anything. They got power through an American and Soviet conspiracy, and then betrayed the masses. In the months and years to come, the same forces not only led them down the path of deprivation from power, but also the loss of their lives. They had broken Pakistan and bled thousands of innocent people for their own ends. This is how history bears its witness and pays back in kind. Often.

In my view, neither was PPP able to bring about a revolution that many people were talking about, nor was the irrelevant opposition of PPP rule by leftists in the name of their own more-progressive-than-thou ideals ultimately constructive or productive. This was also harming a labour and class-based movement that was trying to chart its course within this storm. The situation demanded a patient analysis focused on the future prospects of a class struggle rather than only on its current tendentious and symptomatic expressions. Alas, many unthoughtful

opportunists failed to take the signals from the situation to play a worthwhile role, instead taking their revenges and rewards only to leave the workers' and people's movement in a lurch.

PIA and the Break-up of Pakistan

The Managing Director Air Marshal Zafar Chaudhry was in a great deal of tumult over the separation. He put together an economic committee, comprising of members of PIACE union and other workers' associations, including office-bearers of the Flight Engineers National Association (FENA), the Pakistan Airline Pilots Association (PALPA), Senior Staff Association (SSA), and Society for Aircraft Engineers of Pakistan (SAEP). This committee was to analyze the budgets and finances of airline in this new situation, and give recommendations. This committee drew up a list of 7000 workers and officers, and at least 3000 daily-wage workers, who would be rendered redundant and removed from service. It was accepted by the committee right away. And to think that PIACE union was the CBA, speaking on behalf of the workers!

I was called to one of the meetings of this committee. The organization was preparing for its referendum, and any union could win, which is why the Deputy Managing Director Khaqan Abbasi invited me to join the meeting. I got there and the discussion began. The Managing Director laid out the entire story of the forming of the economic committee, its suggestions, the decisions, the breakup of the country and its impact on PIA, the reduction in revenues, the increase in expenses, and so on. I said, "Sir, as far as the conditions of the country are concerned, we are fully aware of them, but I'm still not in favor of removing thousands of employees from service. While I accept that the country has broken up as a result of various conspiracies, even now our country is bigger than England, Japan, France, or Germany. If we plan well, we can bring the airline back on the road to progress without removing employees from their jobs."

Chaudhry was not willing to hear anything in this regard. Even I was not willing to be part of such a meeting where the decision to lay-off workers was being tossed around so lightly. Everything stalled. I said to the Air Marshal that while I appreciated him inviting me, I could not agree to what was being suggested in any situation. He allowed me to leave. It seems, though, that my going there and saying something did have some impact, namely that the immediate dismissal of the employees was put on hold. The referendum was close, and some of this could be taken up after that.

On 20 February 1971, the referendum was held and we won. Air Marshal Chaudhry went back to the Air Force, and Khaqan Abbasi was promoted to interim Managing Director. He and I consistently related well. I assured him that everything would get better without needing to remove anyone. I just asked of him that on his next travel with Prime Minister Bhutto (since airline heads often travel with the government heads), he must tell the P.M. that Tufail was saying that not a single person should be kicked out of PIA, and that we will be able to fix it all. Abbasi related this to the P.M., and after this conversation was even more cooperative with us. Abbasi addressed a range of issues: the extreme measures and hardships that employees had experienced under the previous union, and especially those people who had been removed without cause (especially by the arbitrary lowering of the retirement age). Not only were the lists for new dismissals out of the picture now, these other people removed arbitrarily were taken back as well. We really wished that Abbasi would become the permanent M.D. I did mention this to Bhutto, but I was sure that he wouldn't listen because he was aware and perhaps wary of my increasing closeness with Abbasi. Later on when Abbasi became a minister in the government of Zia, he used to tell his people that I had asked Bhutto to make him the Managing Director of PIA—that the latter did not follow through was a separate issue.

Chapter 12

Bhutto's Days of Wine and Roses

Word on the street was that after coming into power, Bhutto wanted Mairaj Mohammad Khan to be part of the government. It is important to mention here that some of my companions that had been sent to work in the PPP, had started to regroup and work against the movement itself. I remember the day that I had gone to meet someone at Shezan restaurant, and saw Tariq Aziz and Mairaj Mohammed Khan sitting there. I went up to them. I complained to Mairaj for not having met in a while, and offered my unsolicited opinion that he shouldn't join the government, for it would totally reduce to naught all that he had done for the movement. Even apart from the movement's interest, it would be politically self-destructive for him. The person and the movement are too inextricable: while his will, efforts, and personality were certainly his own, I also expressed to him that the movement and its policy had contributed to it. Upon my saying this, Mairaj started to talk about unrelated things, spurred on by his companion who was of the opinion that Mairaj should join the government. Mairaj promised to come by my house at 6 am the following day. But, the next time I saw him was exactly after six and a half years, in Karachi jail. There I told him that being in jail was inevitable for both of us, but had he made it there due to a unified and thought-out policy, and together with us, the situation would be very different.

When Bhutto came to Karachi after becoming President, we made plans to welcome him at the airport right across from our union office, which we had decorated festively. As his motorcade passed from there, I reached out my hand to shake his; first, he didn't understand, but then he saw me, smiled, and said that we would meet soon. I affirmed and said it was really important that we do so.

The next day when I got home I found out that there was a phone call from the Governor House asking me to meet with Bhutto that night. It was winter, and I hadn't shaved for about two days. Hurriedly, I made my way there after having dinner. The guards there said that they weren't aware of any meeting. Before turning back from there, I said to the policeman that it would be better if he checked in with Bhutto's ADC. When the SP on-duty called in, he was told to send me in immediately, as the President was waiting.

When I reached the upper floor of the governor house, Quadratullah Shahab was already there before me waiting to meet the President. When I greeted him he said that we had probably met before. I couldn't remember, but he kept insisting. I said, "Sir I've heard your name a lot, perhaps you have heard mine." After a few moments, he suddenly remembered that he had seen me in the magazine *Zindagi*. He had seen an essay with my picture in it (an essay that was part of JI's notorious propaganda against me.

When Shahab went in to meet the president, an Air Force Officer came by with a tie in a platter, and told me to wear it. I said, "Janab, I don't wear a tie." He said that this was a protocol for meeting the President. Then I assured him there was no need for a protocol between Bhutto Sahib and myself, and if that weren't so, I would have worn some old suit and tie from home and even shaved. He persisted for while, so did I, and then he left. Shortly after that, another officer came in and picked up where the first one had left off, also adding in a story of someone, an acquaintance of Bhutto from Larkana, whom the President had refused to meet because he did not follow the dress protocol. I said, "The President has asked to meet me, and if does not want to meet me for not wearing the tie, then I would leave. You are insisting that I should take this tie, I also know how to tie it, but let me assure you that I might do that now but as soon as I go in and see him, I would remove it and tell him that this was forced on me." He said no more. Soon,

I was asked in and Mumtaz Bhutto, the Governor, came out to get me. When the door opened, Bhutto got up and embraced me. There, Hafiz Peerzada and J Rahim were also present. Bhutto asked me, “What will you drink?” I said, “You know well” (hinting at the fact that he knew well that I didn’t “drink”). Then he said, “Mairaj is creating trouble. Should I lock him up?”

I said, “Sir, when you took our guy without consulting with me, why ask me before locking him up? Locking him up is not the solution to any problem, and we can deal with all the situations methodically, on the condition that you and I remain in touch.” He said that I should keep meeting Mumtaz Bhutto. This meeting went on for a while, and we exchanged thoughts on many political issues. This was a pleasant and positive meeting, and I gathered that Bhutto and his government were not handling the situation in a way that truly regarded the people’s conditions and wishes. Rather, they wanted to solve problems in a merely bureaucratic sense. Obviously, this difference in our priorities and approaches was to develop into a clash at a later point, and there was no avoiding that.

In Karachi, I kept in good contact with the Sind Governor, Mumtaz Bhutto. On many occasions this was very beneficial for us, such as in creating an employees’ union at the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC) in which he was very helpful since no administrator at that institution was willing to allow a union at any cost. Mumtaz Bhutto had a really positive attitude towards us, even though it is hard to generalize that compliment to every other person in the party, many of who were unhelpful and even saboteurs.

I was travelling from Multan to Karachi once, and with me was the acting MD of PIA Khaqan Abbasi. When we got on the plane at Sukkur airport, it was a pleasant surprise to see the first lady being welcomed, on her way to Karachi as well. I greeted her, addressing her as *Bhabi* (brother’s wife), and introduced Khaqan Abbasi to her. Then she asked me to sit next to her,

which I did, and the flight was spent discussing various national political situations. I told her that the conditions weren't irreparably bad: the president just needed to alter his attitude a bit, and return to his older self. She agreed with most of what I was saying and asked why I wasn't part of the government, where I would be able to assist and advise Bhutto better from proximity.

PIA and the Wider Labour Landscape

Back at the PIA front, we were trying to handle the aftershocks of the wider national political situation. Khaqan Abbasi was the acting Managing Director, and I supported him. Despite my utmost wish and effort, Bhutto did not confirm him as MD, instead sending Rafiq Sehgal to take the position.

As I mentioned earlier, I had had the pleasure of meeting Sehgal and benefiting from his good sense in the period of Mahmood Haroon's governorship of Sind, when he and I were both members of the Advisory Council. I was involved in uniting workers of the entire country under the flag of Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz (QMM). And we were gaining some ground in that respect. Friends felt that if we were able to make some headway in one of the industrial heartlands of the Punjab, Faisalabad, by winning the CBAship at Kohinoor Mills, it would be a crucial win for our cause. We registered our union there, and applied to be part of the referendum. Prior to this, nobody had registered a union in Kohinoor Mills. The administration had advised Sehgal to stop the referendum at all costs, but he had defied them and allowed the referendum to happen, open to cooperating with whoever emerged with a mandate. We won that referendum and after the success, the positive effects were felt not only in Faisalabad but also in all of Punjab.

Now when Sehgal made his way into PIA, he said at a meeting, "Brother Tufail, what should we do?" I said, "Sir, first of all we have to rectify all of the extreme measures that

Durrani carried out and also redress the situation created by the firing of 7000 employees on the bases of the division of the country and the independence of East Pakistan.” It is true that after Sehgal’s arrival in DIA, not only was no worker removed, but he also made 3000 daily wagemakers permanent. Besides this, he restored to duty all of those employees who had come to the West from East Pakistan. During his era, new planes were inducted into the airline fleet, notably the DC-10 wide-body aircraft, and this helped the organization a lot. The same year, due to the performance of the workers, PIA also garnered a bumper profit, resulting not only in an increase in salaries but also an exemplary bonus for the workers. This was the result of Sehgal’s administration, the positive and constructive policies of the union, and the relations between us that ensued on this basis.

On 5 July 1973, in the SITE area of Manghopir, the workers demonstrated in order to press their legitimate demands and the payment of salaries. That march was fired at, which made things worse. Had the Administration of Karachi, and the Ministers in Sind especially the Minister of Labour, shown some intelligence and actually approached the workers, no such big problem would have arisen. Instead, they thoroughly complicated the situation with aggression and violence.

At that point, my relations with the President were supposedly fine, at least in my view. In that procession, some labor leaders raised slogans against us, accusing QMM of working for the government. In order to address this situation, I sent a telegram to the Sind Governor and published a copy of it on the cover of our magazine. I also met him in person and apprised him of the whole situation. When the President himself came to Karachi after this incident, he invited all the labour leaders, and I laid out the entire situation in front of him pointing out that it had been willfully created and the troublemakers should be identified and discouraged. This was

true, notable among these suspects were those who were playing dirty and sponsoring certain internal groupings and divisions within the PPP itself. I asserted that it wasn't too late, and even now, the right tactic could salvage the situation. I was trying in all sincerity and honesty to improve the situation; after all, my role and conduct in PIA was in everyone's view, given how our policies had repeatedly saved the workers and improved the success of the company. Even at Kohinoor Mills, our principled policy was at work, and the capitalist class of the country was willing to speak to us rather than shirk us at all costs. This was evident even in the impossible situation at KESC where our policies had materialized beneficially. Alongside these things, it was better for everyone that such a government stay in power and actually succeed in doing good things for which we had struggled so hard. On the set of principles, this cooperation with the government was practical and realistic, but at this point it was the government who turned away from understanding our correct policy advice, starting to balk at us. I tried my best to get a hold of Bhutto by himself, so that I could explain the whole situation to him and restore his ease, but he gave me no such opportunity. He had truly let go of his really sensible and dialogic manner that was a hallmark of our relation prior to his coming into power.

The Manghopir situation had not quite settled when a few months on in October, due to nonpayment of salaries, the workers in the Landhi industrial area went on strike. The situation was getting serious. Faced with this, it was decided that as a show of resistance, two members of the Workers' Federation would offer their arrests. Two workers from QMM also got arrested. A meeting of labour representatives concluded that we should speak to the government and try our best to return the situation to normalcy.

In this matter, I went to meet the labour minister Rana Haneef at Qasr-e-Naz. There, the then security chief of PIA Malik Habibullah was also present. Perhaps he had been invited

because of me. I presented the situation to the Minister, and told him that if they made the gesture of ordering the payment the salaries for a few days of the strike for the workers of Landhi, which was a really small thing, then it might open up a channel of negotiation, and then we can enter the situation and try to resolve it. I requested the Labour Minister to convey this message to Bhutto or find us a way to meet him. He said that he had already spoken to the President, and that he was unwilling to accept this demand.

Frustrated, I returned. What I had feared, happened. The workers were fired at, many died, and the negative sentiment towards the President increased. After this incident, the President came to Karachi and as per usual he invited the labour leaders. We had one conversation, where I tried to impress upon him a good way to deal with the worsening situation, the same thing, and related my reaction to the meeting with the Labour mMinister. The promised meeting as a follow-up to this never did happen.

The *hari* in Sind was demanding his land. This was a legitimate demand, but complicated and worsened by being tied into the issue of Sindhi language nationalism. While in a free nation all groups of people have the right to promote their language and culture, and while it is the responsibility of the government to facilitate this, the manner in which this issue was raised in Pakistan foreshadowed a pretty regrettable and resentful unfolding. A good way to deal with this would have been to get to a table and converse, but it is lamentable that in order to “solve” this new “problem” the same offensive, negative, and aggressive tactics were deployed as were at work with the workers in Manghopir and Landhi. As had been done to the workers, this time the *muhajirs* (literally immigrants from India but in this tussle interpellated as the speakers and vanguards of Urdu,) were targeted with fire (in a complicated response to Sindhi nationalistic demands). Their graves are still to be found in the mosque at Lalookhet. After this incident,

many University students, majority of whom were Jamaat-e-Islami youth, came to me and said that this aggressive trend from the government was a huge injustice. They proposed joining forces with them in PIA, and joining a big strike in Karachi which would surely teach the government a lesson. While I agreed with the gravity of the injustice, their proposed tactic was off the table for me; it would benefit no one and only worsen the conditions.

By now, I could see how the articulation of these issues was taking on a certain tenor and political actors were falling into a groove that was soon going to not lead anywhere close to a mutual understanding. It was both impossible and now also insufficient to have our voices reach the Bhutto government for they had refused to come to the table in any meaningful way, and some confrontation was necessary to communicate our full position. I did not foresee the government to wash its hands of its own credibility so soon, bringing us to face our irresolvable oppositions earlier than I had expected. All along, I hoped that working with care and deliberation would avert or at least defer this fate, but the undesirable impasse impressed itself with great urgency. I found no way out except bringing the complete analysis to the people, and to let them be the judge. In this situation, we decided upon a two-hour token strike, so that apart from PIA workers, other institutions, workers, people, and the government also were apprised of the demands. The PIA administration called me in to talk about this. I assured them that this was a token strike, just a symbolic gathering of workers, and would not affect any flights. The strike certainly created ripples. The governor of Sind was very angry and treated the strike as a stab in the back, promising revenge. In its own way, the Bhutto regime certainly did avenge itself, but eventually had to pay for it too: they lost power, and their lives.

After the firing on muhajirs in Lalookhet, when the President came to Karachi, he invited labour leaders as usual. Almost all the leaders were awaiting this invitation. The Labour Minister

Rana Hanif was in attendance as well. Some of the leaders sarcastically said to me that I had landed safely, only because of my relations with Bhutto. Everyone started laughing at this, including the Labour Minister. I responded that while that may be so for now, they must remember that when it comes to targeting someone, Bhutto was bound to come after us, and all of the rest of them would escape unscathed.

Then the President arrived and met everyone. In this conversation with the President, various responsible officers of the police, administration, and the Governor of Sind were present as well. I accused the Karachi administration for worsening the situation in the city and said that it was one thing for the government to not give the hari his land, but why did they have to be even more sinister and give them a language to fight on. The President clearly didn't like that I said this. I mentioned the firing in Karachi and said that it was as if people were being hunted. The situation was in tangles. Every labor leader spoke about it. Bhutto clearly understood some of this, because the government itself had created these conditions. After this meeting, he decided to convene a Labour Conference in Islamabad. I said to him in front of everyone else that the situation was pretty bad, and the time not right for a labour conference.

But held it was. Despite disagreements, I went to the conference. The conference lasted for four days instead of three; I remained outside of the conference hall, because people were in pretty heated exchange with the president. During the speeches, the slogans of “the people's siren” and “the people's bullet” were being raised from all sides. During one of the breaks, the labour minister came out and saw me sitting and asked why I wasn't coming inside. I said, “Sir the situation inside is clear to you. People are saying all sorts of things about the President, and I'm not comfortable with that.” He laughed it off.

After the conference, we arranged a QMM rally at Liaqat Bagh in Rawalpindi. The rally was wonderful and many fiery speeches were given. The government felt targeted by the rally and this increased its displeasure with us. This was the start of a really difficult time, with an uptick in government disapproval. The President expressed his annoyance in a different way to Sehgal, who must be given credit for handling things really well and sensibly, by keeping his focus and preventing the situation in PIA from worsening. During his tenure, many incidents happened that no other person would have been able to handle as intelligently and gracefully as he did. It is my deepest faith that Sehgal never took a step against us on the advice of the President, no matter how much the latter tried. Assessing the situation, when I would tell Sehgal that the President was not going to let him last in PIA, he would smile in his unique style and say, “You’re probably right.”

Once, Sehgal received a phone call from the president at half past midnight. In those days, there were heavy rains in Karachi, causing many flight delays. The President started to speak about the delayed flights, but then change the topic and asking him how I was doing. Sehgal said, “Sir, he cooperates with me fully.” At first, there was no response. Then he went on, “How come, then, that he is creating all this disruption at the port and in Landhi.” When Sehgal responded with an offer to talk with me, the President told him not to do so, lest I feel too important or pampered.

When Sehgal went over to meet Bhutto for Eid in Larkana, my name came up again. Rahim and Peerzada were present there as well. When Sehgal again raised the possibility of speaking with me in order to get a true picture and remove any misunderstandings, the President said, “No, not you. Rahim will speak to Tufail.” But Rahim never spoke to me on this issue. Had

Bhutto reverted to his old attitude even at this stage, assuredly the situation would have been checked and approved.

An incident from 1978 comes to mind, when I had decided to leave PIA, and had gone on leave to England just prior to that. I was at the PIA office in London one day, visiting one of our old reliable union workers Ali Asghar who had been promoted and deputed there. Sehgal, who by then had left PIA, walked in as well, with him was brother Shafiq Sehgal. Very warmly, he introduced me to his brother. In conversation, he brought up an incident when about midnight one night, the President had called him and advised him to discontinue the supply orders to Anjuman Mufad-e-Niswan, “Because Tufail gets funding from there.” As I’ve mentioned before, the Anjuman was a self-help organization in a remote area of Drigh Colony, established for the support and aid of poor women and children. This institution had received support and patronage from the general manager of PIA Zafrul Hasan Lari and his wife, and after that from Nur Khan and his wife, and then Asghar Khan and his wife—almost all PIA heads except for S.U. Durrani, and their wives. Even Bhutto, after coming into power, had asked his wife and the Education Minister Hafiz Peerzada to tour the institution and the school in Drigh Colony sector 5. Now that he was thinking this way was truly saddening to me, and it further reflected his changed attitude and priorities. Sehgal told me as he narrated this that he remained silent on this request, but did not cancel any orders. It is true that under his leadership, PIA was healthy and thriving, and due to the core symbiotic relation between the management and the union, the airline succeeded immensely.

There are many other examples of Bhutto’s transformation. As I mentioned before, our ties with Air Marshal Asghar Khan were long-standing due to his role in PIA, and these were sustained in years to follow. When he then entered politics, I was with Bhutto, but continued to

meet the Air Marshal regularly. Bhutto was quite spiteful towards him, but despite that I had been able to convince him to accept the Bhutto government. Bhutto knew about my relations with Asghar Khan from the beginning. He repeatedly told me that I should not give any really useful person over to the Air Marshal. I assured Bhutto repeatedly that this was no matter since while I had cordial personal relations with the Air Marshal, my political support was fully for him and the PPP. Once I had gone to meet Asghar Khan while he was visiting Karachi after his party office in Lalookhet had been targeted in a riot, ostensibly caused by the government. When Governor Mumtaz Bhutto found out that I had met the Air Marshal, he had the DSP of the area suspended because he had not informed him of our meeting.

By the same token, the government had planned some arrests in preparation of an Islamic conference in Lahore. Despite being pro-China, my name was put into the pro-Soviet list and the Karachi administration was instructed to arrest me. The DSP who had been assigned this job mentioned this to one of my union comrades who conveyed this to me. This friend had now been promoted to officer (and thus no longer a union member) and he came up to me and asked, “Tufail, have you now gone pro-Soviet?” He related to me that the DSP wanted to confirm if that was indeed the case, and wanted me to be honest. The DSP concluded that it was unfounded, reported to Islamabad that my name on the list was misplaced, and that arresting me would be wrong. I responded that the DSP had indeed thought and written accurately; and as far as the arrest is concerned, that can proceed as the government desires but not because I am I pro-Soviet, and my magazine is a living testimony to that position. The real matter was not USSR on China, but Bangladesh: whereas we opposed the acceptance of Bangladesh, Bhutto wanted to get Bangladesh accepted by means of this conference, which is why his government had stooped to such petty tactics. Bhutto’s opportunistic turn to Islam was also reflected in the discourse around

the 1973 constitution. When it was drafted, there was much talk of its Islamic and democratic qualities. I could find neither anything Islamic nor democratic in this constitution. Nowadays there is once again much talk of the constitution and all political parties are demanding its restoration. The fact of the matter is that in such a constitution is inherently the lifeline of oppressive classes and parties, and they rely on such validations of their power in order to repeatedly keep proving their ownership of, claims on, and stakes in, the power and wealth of the country.

When Sehgal was in PIA, and visiting Rawalpindi once, I convened a general body meeting of the union. Nazar Husain Kiyani, who was the president of the Rawalpindi Airways Employees' Union, and was very close to the PPP, wanted to also invite Hafiz Peerzada and the Defence Secretary Ghiasuddin. I had a feeling that Kiyani wanted to use the platform of the AEU as a way of introducing and selling the constitution to this constituency. Thus, in the beginning of the meeting, I introduced Sehgal, directed the conversation toward the issue of the Islamic constitution, and presented a critique of it. Making a reference to Kausar Niazi, I asked, what was Islamic about this constitution? Feudalism, capitalism, pro-imperialism, and injustice for workers and peasants? The meeting's atmosphere changed after my speech. When Peerzada got up to speak, he was red in his face. Ghiasuddin also seemed nonplussed and out of place. Nevertheless, Sehgal seemed satisfied, because our approach was sincere, correct, and honestly critical.

Alongside my work in PIA, I was also the secretary general of the union at the Karachi Port. There, our union was in competition with another union, led by Khan Badeen. In the days leading up to the referendum, the members of the other union attacked our members, in which we lost many of our members and many were seriously injured. It was hellish. The large ward of

Civil Hospital was filled with the injured. Khan Badeen himself could not have dared to do this, and I am sure that he did all this at the behest of the government (he had relations with Peerzada; and even though both Peerzada and Sattar Gabol were supporting us in PIA, they were against us at the Port.) After this attack, Khan Badeen went in hiding, and evaded arrest (or perhaps the arrest evaded him!). After this incident, Peerzada came to the Port and I went over to meet him so that I could apprise him of the situation in detail. The Commissioner of Karachi, Kunwar Idrees was also with him. I said to Peerzada why was it that Idrees couldn't arrest Khan Badeen. He had no answer.

I began to feel that the situation had deteriorated or at least become inscrutable to such an extent that there was no accounting of how some ministers who were apparently supporting AEU in PIA, were opposing the same people and policies at the Karachi Port. In this uncertain and tendentious scenario, there was no need to put the lives of workers on the line. I thus said to the Labor Minister Gabol that if they were so helpless and couldn't handle the situation or even clear their record in it, then I was loath to send workers to their death. After this, I resigned from the union at Karachi Port. It was evident in this entire situation that the government was bent on provoking me to do something impulsive out of anger, so it would give them an opportunity to arrest me.

Meanwhile, the government decided to host another, the second, labour conference and we were called to Islamabad. This time, unlike the last one, Bhutto was present at the conference. He was sitting among many people, and thinking that it might be deemed insolent and disagreeable if I didn't go over and greet him, I walked over to him. One of the leaders of PPP, Shaikh Rasheed, was sitting next to him. I said Salaam, perhaps he didn't hear it. I repeated, and this time he looked, got up, and shook my hand. At that time, Shaikh Rasheed didn't say

anything to me, even though we were well-acquainted with each other. In the same moment, many other people also came to greet Bhutto. After this brief greeting, I got out of the way and no further conversation happened. At lunch, Sehgal was also present. Bhutto came over to me and inquired about my wellbeing. I replied that I was fine. I then added that this was a poor substitute for a real conversation, and that I would like to know where things had gone wrong and attempt to amend ways if we knew which faults were ours. We kept conversing in this manner as he walked towards the car, and promised to meet soon. Later, he came to Karachi, and I learnt that while my name was on the list of people he wanted to meet, I was not contacted.

The Bhutto government was in increasing disrepair. Now, after having driven us out of the Port, the government was trying to ensure that we would give up PIA as well,. Due to the cordial relations between Sehgal and myself, I had the feeling that soon he would be removed from PIA. There were also conspirators from PPP bent on tearing our union apart from the inside. In those days, an air show was to happen in Paris, and Sehgal went to it. The DMD, Aijaz Ali, was functioning in his place. It was Sehgal's wish that I would be part of the delegation to the air show, en route to dealing with some worker issues in England. All the preparations had been made when Aijaz Ali got some instructions from the government and called me over to his place. He looked quite worried: he said that while all papers were in order for me to go, there was a chance that if I actually did leave, it would cost me the government's goodwill. I immediately said this was not a big issue at all, and that I wouldn't go. He breathed a sigh of relief.

When Sehgal returned from Paris, I complained to him that things seemed unfair when the representatives of the officers, the pilots, and the engineers, could go out of country to solve their constituents' problems, but I as the representative of the larger portion of the workforce

wasn't allowed to do so. Upon hearing this, he gave me permission to go to England. This was 1973, and it got me connected to many people in London. Due to my connection to the labour movement, I was introduced to many people in the progressive circles there who already knew of me a little—back in 1954, with respect to the situation in Pakistan, the news of my first arrest was published in the progressive paper, *For Lasting Peace, For People's Democracy*. Through these connections and meetings, I gathered that those circles had the false impression that an armed struggle was apace in Pakistan. I clarified that there was no such thing—that while there was tension in Baluchistan, the workers and peasants had nothing to do with it. These contacts proved to be very useful in the years to come.

One of the people I met in London was Air Commodore Janjua, who had been arrested in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. When Nur Khan had come into PIA as the head for the first time, he had employed Janjua in PIA and that is when I had met him for the first time in Karachi. Later he was transferred to London. He was a regular reader of our magazine *Manshoor*, and also contributed to it. He left PIA, but stayed back in London.

During Bhutto's time, all PIA staff was strictly instructed to not meet Janjua. I met Janjua at a hotel, owned then by an East Pakistani Mr. Ahmed, who used to work with Maulana Bhashani. Within a certain circle of leftists in London, this Hotel Ganges was very famous, and it was considered the hub of various politicians and activists from Pakistan, India, and elsewhere. It is said that Bhutto also used to go there, and met with Janjua regularly. While we were forbidden by PIA from meeting Janjua, I went ahead and met him and exchanged views on many a national and international political issue. He was pro-Soviet and I was in favour of China. He was rather impressed with Mujeeb; my analysis regarding Bhutto and Mujeeb was clearly at odds with his. In 1978, when I returned to London, I found out that he had gone to Pakistan but was returning

the next day. I was taken aback wondering why he didn't get in touch with me in Pakistan. This was the time of Zia's Martial Law. I met him at the hotel the next day, and found him to be rather cold. When I asked to meet again, he said that he was going to Birmingham and gave me the phone number for there. When I visited Birmingham, I called him, and asked to meet him, to which he said he was having other people over that evening. I suggested finding another time, and he said that we could figure it out later. I gathered that he was not keen on meeting, and then I never saw him again.

During my stay in London, I got a call from Ashraf Khan, the PIA Director Administration, who was then in Rome, and he asked me to return to Pakistan immediately. He sounded disturbed. I asked if everything was alright. He said that Bhutto was on his way to London, it was imperative that I was out of there before his his arrival. Why? What was the government afraid of? What danger did I represent? Nonetheless, I made my way back to Karachi the very next day. My flight took off from London just as Bhutto's was landing. When I got back to Karachi, I was welcomed very warmly, which gave a nice impression that there were no divisions within the union. The government was interested in creating misunderstandings and mistrust among workers. In the days to come, it went overboard trying to pulverize the unity, the institution, and the solidarity we had built.

Before long, the government relieved Sehgal of his post in PIA, because he wasn't willing to be a party to the government's increasingly childish and conspiratorial tactics. He had mentioned this to me many times earlier, and soon he was called over to Rawalpindi. The manner in which he mentioned that invitation compelled me to say that I foresaw that the time had come. That was indeed the case. When he left PIA, everything seemed to go haywire. Not only was he saddened, we were crestfallen as well. Overcome with emotion, I gave him a hug

and he had tears in his eyes. In the evening, I went to his place. I said that employees at every PIA station wanted to throw him a farewell party, but he refused such attention. He insisted that I stay for dinner, and we spoke until well after that. I learnt many new things. Sehgal said, “Brother Tufail, you are a patriot, which is why I have always been in agreement with your policy. I have cooperated with you, and I hope this will continue in the future as well.” The truth is that he was a thorough patriot himself. We saw eye to eye on the progress of PIA and the country. He always tried his best to ensure that no extreme measure or injustice should ensue from his administration upon the workers or their union. If he had lived longer, I have complete faith that a man like him would have had an even more positive and constructive role to play as a benefactor of a country and its people he so dearly, and justly, loved.

After Sehgal’s departure, Nur Khan came back to PIA with expanded powers as the chairman of the organization. The meaning of this appointment was that Bhutto wanted to flex his muscles in PIA and openly and amply play his game against us in this arena. He was well aware of my connection to Nur Khan. He also knew that Nur Khan and Sehgal had good relations. I had great respect for Nur Khan and had many expectations and hope from him with regards to Pakistan and its future. Bhutto knew very well that Nur Khan did not respect him in a genuine sense, and had remained an opponent. Both Bhutto and Nur Khan, as I have related before, often expressed their unfavourable opinions about each other to me. Against this backdrop, Nur Khan’s entering into PIA at this time seemed a bit strange, and I expressed that to him, inquiring whether he and Bhutto had worked out their problems. After giving him this position, Bhutto demanded a great deal of service from him, for which Nur Khan paid a heavy price both personally and politically,, because this hurt his credibility both within and outside PIA. Through this appointment, Bhutto also was able to spoil the relations between Nur Khan

and the Haroons, which had been pleasant for a long time. This only signalled that Bhutto was using one stone to kill many birds, not fearing that he might become his own target. From this point onward, Nur Khan immaculately played Bhutto's game against us.

Let's turn back a bit to recount a brief history of Nur Khan's relation to Bhutto. After his successful first tenure in PIA during which he had cooperated with the workers and enabled the success of the company, and on the basis of his positive role in the 1965 war, Yahya had appointed Nur Khan governor. As Governor, he brought together capitalists, workers, and the government in an Advisory Council that earned him much praise and respect within the working class. He had devised a good labor policy, and parted ways from Yahya on principle—for which he was appreciated all over Pakistan. Simultaneous to this, Bhutto was becoming popular for his challenge to Ayub and his formation of the People's Party. I had assessed that Nur Khan had desires of his own to enter politics, which is why I had advised him the first time he came to lead PIA, which was in 1957, that he should cooperate with Bhutto, but he was not prepared for that.

Once Nur Khan was in Karachi for Eid and I went over to greet him. This was the period of Bhutto's government. Sherbaz Mazari, a good friend of Nur Khan, was there too. Nur Khan introduced me to him, saying that I was a communist and a Bhutto supporter. Mazari said that he had probably met me somewhere, but could not recall. Nur Khan said that perhaps it was at his place. Mazari said, no. Later, he remembered that he was eating at a Chinese restaurant once with Asghar Khan, and met me then. He started inquiring how come I, a Muhajir, was friends with Nur Khan, Punjabi? To this weird question, I said that I had special respect for him. After this awkward small talk, I warmed up to him and apprised him of the entire situation and story about supporting Bhutto.

Nur Khan then left national politics, and came back to PIA late in the Bhutto era. It was around the time that our conflicts with PPP were beginning to emerge. When he disembarked from the plane at the airport, Mohammed Alam, the Senior Vice President of our union who had now become the leader of the PPP group in PIA, carried Nur Khan on his shoulders. While there was no doubt a plan under which he had come to PIA at Bhutto's pleasure, Nur Khan was at the same time not ready or willing to be bullied over PIA matters by Hafeez Peerzada's group, namely Mohammed Alam and Nazar Kiyani. It is probable that this was an elaborate set-up, that the Peerzada group sought to insult, and discredit Nur Khan in PIA on Bhutto's advice. Once, when I wasn't present at the airport, Alam delivered a speech against Nur Khan on the advice of Peerzada. Nur Khan was very angry over this, and wanted to dismiss Alam. Our union's General Secretary Altaf Hussain and I earnestly tried to calm him down and make him aware of our suspicions. While we averted a worse situation then, Nur Khan did avenge Alam later: after the end of the PPP government he caused him great pains and discomfort, before finally dismissing him.

When the Bhutto government was making AEU its platform and using Alam and Kiyani to create formidable opposition for Nur Khan whom Bhutto himself had appointed, Nur Khan should have assessed the situation and predicted to some extent what lay ahead. Not only in PIA, but in other institutions as well, Bhutto had tried his best to create rifts within our ranks. Those among our workers and members who had gone into the PPP, with the exception of Azhar Abbas and a few others, had all sold out. Our student organization, NSF, had fragmented into many wings. Reactionary forces were opposing us—and on at an international level, the same forces were also trying to get back at us for our earlier gains, resenting our ideological clarity and prevalence. Revisionist Marxist groups, the government itself, and different factions of the PPP

were bent on defeating us. Through Alam and Kiyani, they were ransacking the organization of our union. Kiyani, the AEU Rawalpindi President, and the central President of the union in the days to come, contested a national assembly election on a PPP ticket, won, and became the chief whip of the PPP in the parliament.

Agents of the government had infiltrated both the PIACE union and the AEU. Bhutto outdid Ayub and Yahya in the nature of, and the negativity and destructiveness of tactics employed to break up the solidarity and strength of PIA workers. I wistfully remember the time when Bhutto used to be proud of his support of Airways, and called *Manshoor* his own paper and his own manshoor (manifesto). Ayub and Yahya governments persecuted us for supporting him. But we stuck by him by choosing principles over immediate outcomes, upholding the word and policy to which we were committed.

Outside PIA, groupings and factions were emerging within our union in Kohinoor Mills as well. We were clearly in the government's crosshairs there as well. The government sent its own group to the union in KESC that had taken so much work to build. The government and the local administration colluded to disrupt a QMM rally at the KESC compound. First, they tried to stop it from happening, and then when we did get permission it was on the condition that no speech would be critical of the government. Failing to ensure that, then government agents within KESC, along with some goons and Jamaat-e-Islami activists disrupted the meeting by pelting stones at the participants. Many of our comrades visiting from Rawalpindi were badly injured and some arrested. To complain about this incident, some key members approached Khursheed Hasan Mir, a federal minister who was then in Karachi. Despite the fact that they knew him well, he refused to recognize them.

Sharpening Contradictions

In March 1974, a third referendum was announced in PIA. Just like the government had sent Shahjehan Kareem as Officer on Special Duty to PIA during Durrani's time, this time it deputed an official from the Intelligence Bureau, Javed Shah. The government was clearly up to something. Preparations were underway. In another repeat of the past, the PIA management, the city administration, and the PIACE union were getting outsiders to come into PIA and create disturbances. Even on the day of the referendum, many members of the Islami Jamiat Tuleba (the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami), were present within PIA premises. The PIA management turned a blind eye to this. The Commissioner of Karachi, Kunwar Idrees, was also present at the airport at that time. When I approached him regarding this, he behaved as if he didn't know me at all, even though we had met many times and I could say I knew him well. I just had not anticipated that, in Nur Khan's presence, the government would get away with so much, resort to such filthy tactics, and ultimately do whatever it could to ensure our defeat. They made a government functionary out of everyone who was in any position of power, whether consciously or unconsciously. When the results came out, our union had lost and PIACE was victorious. Who knew that the polling stations could be the centre of such great transformations! None of our activists and members were willing to accept these results.

After this "operation" was over, the government proceeded to another play. Alam and Kiyani came to me along with some other people, and said that if we have to truly compete with the PIACE union in PIA, for which we would need government support, then it was necessary that I should step down as president of Airways. I was beginning to fully understand the whole plan: the government wanted to remove me from my post in order to fill the ranks and the leadership with its own people. In light of this new situation, I called a meeting. Judging from

people's faces and expressions, assessing what the future might hold, and in order to avoid Airways to fall victim to factionalisation which would be much more harmful, I resigned from the presidency of the AEU. Trusting that one day we would regain this platform, I chose to protect the union from being broken into two pieces.

After this, Kiyani used the letterhead of the AEU in order to file an application for a ticket for the national assembly seat from the PPP—this is how he offered himself up for auction and made his way into the assembly. When this drama reached its finale, the government dealt a last blow and had me arrested on the night of 18 May 1974. I knew that this whole chain of events—the defeat of Airways and my removal from the union leadership—were all steps to this moment, because in my capacity as the president of the CBA union in PIA, the government would not have arrested me. This was accepted and acknowledged by Hafeez Peerzada once I had been released. He said it was necessary to have me defeated, so that the government could arrest me.

With Friends Such As These...

That night in May 1974 when I was arrested, the police surrounded me from all sides, and said that the DIG police Rizvi had sent for me. I understood where this was leading. At that time, the security in-charge in PIA was Khan Asghar Khan, who was on deputation from the police a second time and knew me well. I tried to reach him that night, and mapped out the whole situation for him. He remained silent, which showed me that he was helpless. Later on, he said that he left PIA soon after this turn of events.

After my arrest, the government was doing its utmost to humiliate and discredit me. They ordered an inquiry into Anjuman Mufad-e-Niswan by an officer of the DSP grade, because they

thought that I obtain funding from the AMN account. This inquiry went on for fifteen days, but nothing was found, obviously. After this period, the DSP apologized to my sister Zia Akhtar (Begum Baji as she is more fondly known) who ran the institution, and said that he had been forced to do this. The officer also told her that there were orders for an investigation against me in PIA. My sister told him that in PIA he would be even further disappointed and embarrassed.

I was brought to the police station and kept handcuffed. The inspectors said that they were helpless and had to follow orders to deal with me in this way. Then I was shuttled from one station to another, in order to frazzle me, and to confuse others regarding my whereabouts. Food was brought to the lockup; neither could my family send me food nor could they meet me. The Airport, then Malir, and then Saddar, stations were part of this tour. It seemed as if my captors were waiting for something. Many sizeable and ridiculous allegations of dishonesty and fraud were levied on me, and the officers at the station were wondering how they were going to have me confess to these. It seemed as if they were waiting for orders so they could just get to the physical violence. The policemen personally thought this would be wrong to do, since they knew me well. We had been here before!

Meanwhile, a bomb exploded at the Airport Hotel, and the policemen tried their best to pin it on me, because the person in charge of this hotel was the wife of a dear comrade of mine Azhar Abbas. They soon left that issue behind. After about 2 weeks of all this, the policemen informed me that I would be taken to court the next day, after which I would be sent to jail. I was taken to court, no friend or family member knowing where I was. On the way to the court, and at the court, I met some acquaintances, through whom I was able to send news to my family.

I was taken to jail that very evening. An old jailer, Mr. Alvi, sent me to the political ward. There I met a few friends. While all of them belonged to different parties, we all knew each

other. There, Lala Rind told me that Mairaj Mohammed Khan had also been in that ward, but had recently been moved to Hyderabad jail. Mairaj had been arrested after me, for leading a procession. In this conversation, Lala Rind told me that Mairaj was going around saying that he had joined the government following a party decision. I knew that the truth was completely contrary to this. I assured Lala Rind that when he met Mairaj next, it should become clear to him as to who had done what.

I spent two nights on the floor because I was a C-class prisoner. On day two, the Jail Superintendent Shafqat came for a survey, and got angry as he saw me—he was mad at the jailer for putting me in the political ward since I was “a big criminal.” Then I was moved to Barrack 21. Back in 1954, I had stayed in the same barrack, and now there were murderers and some serious criminals there. The walls of the ward had also been extended and raised so that no one could even *see* a way out. Back then, when the prisoners there had found out about me, they welcomed me with their covert tea-making and general hospitality. My attitude to fellow prisoners, right from my first experience in 1954, had been very warm and respectful, which is why normal prisoners were kept away from me. Whether inside or outside of the jail, my fellow inmates have always respected me.

In the evening, I was taken from this barrack to the *chakkar*—which is for habitual criminals, a jail within a jail. I had been here in 1954 as well. In order to bother and faze me even further, I was kept close to the insane. Sometimes during a shower, some insane prisoner or the other would steal my soap. The days went by like this. I was retained in the C-class, but in a few days, I was permitted to get food from home.

Then I was sent out to another barrack for criminals. I had no connection with any other political prisoners. After 2 months, I was promoted to B-class. After a while, under the Defence of Pakistan rules, I was sent to the political ward where I had first been placed.

During this time, the government had also arrested the Airways Employees' Union General Secretary Altaf Hussain and Treasurer Sibte Akhtar, but I did not get to meet them in jail. Both of them were being forced to aid the government in proving three charges of misappropriation of union funds against me. I had had no interaction with any of these comrades throughout the time of their arrest, investigation, and their four months in prison. The government was not going to find anything against me, because right from the start I had been absolutely careful and strict about the rules for managing union accounts. I never used my own signature to withdraw any funds from the bank; all cheques drawn on the union fund needed to be signed by the General Secretary and the Treasurer. Despite this, the CID folks combed through all the accounts, but could not find anything against me. Later on, I learnt that the two comrades had independently taken the position that it was impossible that they would *both* simultaneously extract money from the accounts to give to the union president to spend for illegitimate reasons.

Since this time I was arrested under criminal charges, some friends and comrades thought that perhaps I might be released on bail. But I knew from the very first day that I had been brought in on the orders of the President, and would never be released without his wish. This was soon proven to be the case. After my arrest, Nur Khan told my family members that I could perhaps be released if I was ready for a discussion and a press conference that could lead to cooperation with the government. I am sure he knew well that I would never agree to this. When my family members mentioned this on one of their visits, I refused.

When J.A. Rahim learnt of my arrest, he contacted the then Chief Minister of Sind, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, asking that I be released. The latter said that he is willing to let me go, but Rahim would have to handle whatever situation then emerged. Rahim went to Rawalpindi, and when he found out what the real story was, he relented.

Many lawyers came forth to take my cases up. In one case, I was granted bail, and just when that happened, another case was brought up and I was re-arrested. Initially, there was much passion on the part of my lawyers, and many people had photo-ops with me in handcuffs. But as soon as they found out that the issue was directly connected to Bhutto himself, they all slowly retreated. The politicians were also just amazed, wondering how this all had come to be: while my opponents were concocting one charge after another on the instructions of the government, some others were spreading the propaganda that my arrest was a drama and a premeditated plan, and that I had many conveniences and perks inside the jail. In the months of my imprisonment, Jamaat-e-Islami, revisionist leftists, and others who had betrayed me along the way, played key roles in this propaganda. The reality was that the government had really made life a living hell for me, and the attitude of the prison personnel was also particularly demeaning and provocative.

PIA workers stood by me through all this with much affection, enthusiasm, and hope. They would come to all the hearings in the court in big numbers and chanted slogans. But the airways “leaders,” Kiyani and Alam who belonged to the PPP, never showed up. On some dates, the government put up with the supporters, but then said that if this were to continue, I would be transferred to Sukkur jail. I thought better to stay put in Karachi due to proximity to all near and dear ones, and then requested that the union workers not come to court.

I had very cordial relations with Allama Naseer Ijtehadi who had also joined PPP. He also spoke to Jatoi and expressed his dismay at the condition in which I’d been kept in the jail.

Jatoi responded, “Allama Sahib, the man you are talking about is a communist and a *dahria*.”

Allama responded that while that was beyond the scope of his knowledge or determination, he felt strongly that Bhutto and his people should speak with me. Allama Sahib would himself call up my family regularly to inquire after me. And they would assure him that everything was fine and that he need not worry.

As I have mentioned before, I had initially thought that because my arrest had happened at Bhutto’s will, how difficult could it be for them to furnish all sort of evidence to get me sentenced. The only thing that could follow from that was that Bhutto would be the one to make a dramatic and magnanimous apology and release me—as a result of which my political position would be harmed just as they intended. Through some other sources, I learnt that the file with Bhutto’s orders for my arrest had a note from him, “Be sure before arresting him.” From this, it appeared that the government functionaries had assured Bhutto that they would be able to build a foolproof case against me. They were counting on the fact that there was no way that I had done all the work all these years—running the Union, organizing a political movement all over the country, working with students, establishing social work institutions, supporting many people’s party members political expenses—without some sort of illegitimate funds. They were certain that they would find something to pin on me.

My arrest had happened when Bhutto was completing a tour of China on his way to the Soviet Union. Ramzan Lasi, who was the union president at KESC—a union that we had helped create, which initially had been opposed by the PPP but then appropriated by it—was travelling with Bhutto. On his return from Russia, Lasi told me that Chinese officials were quite perplexed at my arrest and asked about my wellbeing. Radio China had also relayed news of my arrest. In the USSR, when people would ask about the progressive movement in Pakistan, Lasi would take

my name and say that there was only one truly progressive movement in Pakistan, which was opposed to them (the Soviet Union).

All said and done, Bhutto's government found nothing against me. Tired of granting bail and then re-arresting me on some new false charge, the government had tossed my case to a special tribunal so that there would be no bail possible. The government was trying its utmost to give me some kind of sentence, because that would increase its credibility with the masses who still accord the courts more respect than they do politicians. Even the special tribunal could not move ahead. When this happened, I went to the High Court, and submitted a writ. Meanwhile, the government filed another case against me, under the Defense of Pakistan rules, citing a speech I had delivered in Rawalpindi in 1973 against the so-called Islamic constitution in which I had said that the document had no protections for workers and peasants. I had said that if the land is indeed God's, then how come the Constitution was unable to give it to God's people who work it. The government had concocted this case, and the High Court accepted my writ for a hearing. Judge Nur-ul-Arifeen refused to preside over the case, saying that he had worked with me in the Peace Committee back in 1956-7. This case then went to Fakhruddin G. Ibrahim. And, since he had been the lawyer on behalf of Airways Union, even he declined to hear the case. This went on for about thirteen months.

Another labour conference was convened and Bhutto met with trade union leaders. Older leaders said to him that it was high time that I be released. One labour leader, from Jamaat-e-Islami, Akhtar-ul-Iman, opposed this, to which Bhutto responded, "Should I keep him in jail for life?" He assured the leaders that he would resolve the issue soon. When I got this news, I thought that a meeting with Bhutto was imminent.

When I went back to jail for the case brought under the Defence of Pakistan Rules, and was taken to the political ward, Mairaj who had been transferred earlier to Hyderabad Jail was now back. I have already discussed my conversation with Lala Rind in Mairaj's absence, and until now I hadn't seen Mairaj since the chance meeting at Shezan over six years ago. One day in jail we were all gathered: Mairaj, me, Hakeem Iqbal of Jamaat-e-Islami, Lala Rind, Nawaz Butt, Amanullah, Usman Baloch, and Iqbal Ahmed Khan of NAP. I saw it as an opportune moment to clarify a few things. I turned to Lala Rind and repeated what he had said to me: that Mairaj had joined the PPP government on our encouragement. Lala Rind agreed that this is exactly what had been said. When I asked Mairaj to clarify, instead of addressing it, he started talking about different things, such as what others had done, and that he had indeed gone with everyone's blessings. On this answer, I related my version of history from the beginning, including my advice to not join the government. What I said was based on actual facts and evidence, leaving Mairaj speechless.

In prison, my attitude towards Mairaj remained normal and he was also kind in return. One day in ordinary conversation, I asked him what he thought of what Rafat Baba had said about Mairaj creating a faction within the movement along with Zain-ul-Abedin, Shamim Zainuddin, Rasheed Hasan Khan and others. It was also rumored that this group had then disbanded over some differences around the same time as there was an attack at our Manghopir office. Mairaj accepted the truth of these and said that the conflict within the group had happened because Shamim Zainuddin was not given the PPP ticket for the provincial assembly folks they were angry with Mairaj for not trying hard enough despite the fact that he was in government.

Salahuddin and Hakeem Iqbal, both from Jamaat-e-Islami, were still surprised that Bhutto had arrested me. While I was in jail, Maulana Maududi returned from America, after

which all the Jamaat-e-Islami prisoners were released. What followed was a pact between Jamaat-e-Islami and PPP, and Bhutto visited PIA accompanied by Nur Khan. When Bhutto went to the engineering department, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Yahya welcomed him. Later on, Bhutto also sent a PIACE union delegation to China under the leadership of Hafiz Iqbal. How things had changed.

When Eid rolled in, I got permission to visit with some other people for a little while. This was the same day when workers had been fired at in Landhi. A collective decision was made to hold a meeting inside the jail in memory of the martyrs. Workers and other people from almost all political parties were present in prison. I was to preside over the meeting. All of the speakers at this gathering criticized the government and the PPP. I was the last one to speak. I provided a class analysis of that party, and discussed the current political situation. Despite such a diversity of background and opinion, the meeting proceeded and ended on an understanding and harmonious note.

In February 1975, Hayat Mohammed Khan Sherpao was assassinated. The NAP was banned, and many arrests were made. It was said that the assassination was the work of the NAP, because Sherpao was bothering many people within that party. Political differences aside, I had good relations with some of those people. There used to be some tension and harshness around the issue of China and Russia. In jail with me was Qazi Sahib from the party, who was a big devotee of Wali Khan and Ghaffar Khan. He would tell me that the Pathans didn't know how to do politics. It was his wish that I should meet Wali Khan after my release. I had no resistance to it, but found it hard to believe that it could happen. True enough. Once out of jail, let alone Wali Khan, I never even saw Qazi Sahib again.

Right around that time, I also received the news of the death of Raja Sahib Mahmoodabad. It was truly saddening. I had met the gentleman after partition, and he was always very loving and sincere. When I met him in England 1973, he wasn't well—the making of Pakistan perhaps didn't affect him well, and his health had gone downhill.

The Release

One day, when I returned to jail after a hearing in the court, I found all my belongings piled near the door. I couldn't understand what was happening. The officers smiled and said that they were taking me to Sukkur or Hyderabad. After two or three hours, I was taken to a separate room and told the same thing. While there, I realized that this ward had been built in the time of the British for the Ali brothers, and Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy had also been kept in the same ward. I had all the necessities available to me in this ward, the area around it was being cleaned, and I still had no clue what was afoot. The day ended, and at night I couldn't sleep very much. All kinds of thoughts were racing in my mind. But the changed climate of the prison was telling me that some big personality was coming. Many people checked in with me who didn't give a hoot anytime before. Another day passed and the evening came. The jail administrators came by and asked me to come outdoors with them. The Superintendent of Police's car came inside the jail compound and I was made to sit in it. We were followed by another police van. The SP turned on the radio so that I could listen to some music. His attitude had changed drastically. But it was still unclear where I was being taken. He then told me that we were going to the Home Secretary Junejo's office. When we reached there, the SP saluted and handed me over to Junejo, who met me very warmly and told me that the Chief Security Officer of Bhutto, Saeed Ahmed Khan, was going to come by to meet with me. After a while, he came in and started talking about random

things, from which it appeared that perhaps my meeting was going to be with Bhutto himself. He was saying that Hafeez Peerzada was responsible for creating all our misunderstandings. I said whatever the case, the truth is that Bhutto had a personal relation with me, and before having me arrested me, he could have at least called me in and told me what I had done. Khan said that I must meet him. I added that what had they expected to find when they had started all these inquiries? That I live in a rented house? Time had not only exposed Jamaat-e-Islami's false propaganda against me in their magazine *Zindagi*—but now even the government knew how many cars and homes I owned across the country, including the Abbas Villa in the Murree Hills. They had found only their own fictions.

In this conversation, we discussed my England trip, including my meetings there with Air Commodore Janjua. Khan even inquired about the car that took me from the airport to the hotel, which was driven by a local. I told him that the car belonged to one of my friends. The government had reports of every hour of my life, and was unhappy with my visit to England. Then I was told that I would meet Bhutto soon. I said that while that would happen when it happens, I needed my health to be cared for right now. He told Junejo to get me to the hospital right away. At midnight, all of my stuff and belongings were brought from the jail to the hospital. My family was informed—they were hoping that perhaps I would be released. Not yet, though. For, now I had a room to myself in Civil Hospital.

One day I was walking outside the hospital room, when a dear friend of mine Hasan came to see me from Lahore. He had been interrogated regarding me as well. The situation was that whenever I would go to Lahore for some union or QMM work, Hasan would take me around in his car (he drove a Cadillac) despite my resistance. He also would not let me stay in any other place or with any other friend in Lahore. When the CID had asked him about our relationship

and the car, he had told them, “While I am Punjabi and Tufail is Muhajir, by all measures he is my older brother. This house, this car, are all his because my relation with him is one of sincere friendship.” This is how desperate Bhutto’s bureaucracy got, unable to gather any incriminating material against me here or abroad. Maybe that is what forced him to finally change his paranoid attitude.

At the hospital, I was initially forbidden from seeing anyone. Slowly, those restrictions eased, but the police and CID were always around. Everyone expected a meeting with Bhutto. But a month passed with no word. Meanwhile, hearings at the High Court were proceeding.

One morning, the Jail Superintendent Shafqat came by and asked me to get ready. Then I sat with him in his car. For about two hours, our car was parked outside Hotel Metropole. We were waiting for Junejo, because he was to take me to see Bhutto. He finally came and asked me to sit in his car. He then turned to the Superintendent telling him his work was done—apparently, all the cases against me had been dropped and I was now free.

It was thus that a 13-month imprisonment was undone with one utterance. Praise be to the bureaucracy, and the rulers! When all was said and done, it took no courts, no hearings, no bail, no papers. I was, plainly, free. But now I was to be taken to the real court: that of the Caliph! Junejo started to prepare me, advising me to speak properly to the big guy. There were many things that my heart wanted to tell him.

The Chief Minister’s House was only about five minutes away from Hotel Metropole. We reached there to meet Bhutto, with the Chief Minister of Sind, G.M. Jatoi, also present. After exchange of greetings, Bhutto stuck his hand out and I said that it had been a long time since he had hugged me like a brother. We embraced and he said, “Whereas I wanted to be my chief adviser, it was you who made a front against me, you who fought with me,.” I said, “You know

very well that I did not create any fights with you, and the front that you are talking about is the same Qaumi Mazdoor Mahaz which was the platform for our support of you. And, I hear what you say about being a chief adviser, but your government levied baseless charges of dishonesty and cheating, made up cases, carried out inquiries to find nothing but the reality of my very modest living conditions!” I told him everything openly. I also referred to our agreement that workers would never be targeted. Had it been violated!! I reminded him that when workers were shot at in Manghopir, I had brought that grievance to him and Mumtaz Bhutto that same night. I reminded him that people used to call me his agent and chant slogans against me. Next, when he authorised police fire in Landhi, I had begged Rana Hanif, the Labour Minister, to talk to him, and he clearly had told me that Bhutto were not willing to listen to anything. I had brought that to his attention is well. Did he not remember? Oh, but wait, there was a third time as well, when the Muhajirs in Lalookhet were targeted. And my expression of dismay and concern at that even had only drawn his ire. Hadn’t I tried enough times before this moment to caution him, and to get him back to respecting our agreement? Time and again, I impressed upon him that our the basis of our political agreement was our united political front, and my support for him without subsuming my politics and organization into PPP. Now, I assured him how extreme tactics would only have hurt our cause more than they would hurt him, which is why we stayed away from those. I expressed my sadness at how he had dealt with me like an outsider, even an enemy, without listening to anything. After hearing me, Bhutto said to Jatoi, “Release him.” Then turned to me and said, “What next?” I said, “Only you can do something, and everything is still possible.” This meeting went on for an hour and a half. He seemed relatively relaxed, but the air still seemed murky to me. I left at least satisfied that I had spoken the truth to power. I informed the family, and collected my things from the hospital on my way home.

Returning Home

The next day, I went to PIA Head Office, and then held a meeting at AMN in Drigh Colony, to report back fully to all the comrades. A meeting at the airport was not possible because PIACE union was in power, and Nur Khan did not allow either. I didn't insist too much; for now, it was enough that I was now back with my fellow PIA workers wherever we were.

I soon came to glean a pattern: every time I returned after time away in jail, I came back to a great deal of organizational turmoil within the movement. The reason for this, I gather, is that with the blessings of the government, government functionaries conspired to target opportunistic and weak minds; and those who lacked resilience and maturity succumbed to it for the promise of personal gain. During the Bhutto regime, when I was released, the same thing happened. Many people had walked out on us out of fear, and many pretended to make up some kind of ideological conflict as a premise to separate. Many workers became supporters of PPP, and those comrades who had sympathies for NAP found their way way back to it. Many were confused as a result of my stance on the Third World and my critique of this notion. But those people who had left us on the bases of disparate styles of thought and other random reasons that had nothing to do with ideology, somehow banded together with each other upon leaving us, which is truly strange! However, in the months and years to come, as these people conspired to hurt the movement, it is no wonder that their own personal interests also pried them apart from each other. Nonetheless, in all this frenzy of doing everything to fulfil the government's desires to weaken our organizational core, they never thought twice about to whom had they signed their souls off.

Soon after my release, some people from CID came over to my home and said that the Home Secretary had invited me. There, I was conveyed a message from Islamabad: that I should

give a statement or hold a press conference that would clear up the situation that had arisen as a result of my arrest, with the ultimate goal of removing any ill-will towards Bhutto on this issue. In response, I said to Junejo that if this is what I had to do, then I would have traded my way out of jail before 13 months; a message not dissimilar to this one had been brought to me by Nur Khan just a few days after my arrest, and my answer had been the same then too. Junejo asked me to think about it some more. This angered me, and I said that there was nothing to think about. I left, understanding that we would meet again, and that he would speak to Islamabad some more.

After this I saw Junejo about twice or thrice, with the situation getting increasingly knotty. I used to think that if the government had to arrest me again, they wouldn't have let me go in the first place. Their real desire was to have me succumb to their pressure. I got sick of the situation and sent Bhutto a telegram asking him for a meeting, since his people were bothering me. Soon, Bhutto was in Karachi, and accidentally I ran into Saeed Ahmed Khan at the PIA head office when he was over to meet Nur Khan. I told him the whole situation and also about the telegram that I had sent Bhutto. I mentioned to him about my meetings with the Home Secretary; he pretended to not know anything about them. He said, "Don't worry about it, I will speak to Junejo." Soon after this, in talking with Nur Khan, I learnt that Bhutto had called him and me together for a meeting. In the evening, I reached Bhutto House to find Nur Khan already there. First, he went in to meet him. Then I was called in. Bhutto met with visible warmth and said, "See, you sent me a telegram and I called you right away. Tell me, what is it?" I rehashed everything for him. He listened silently, and said that all this could be dealt with easily. I had also taken with me seven or eight written pages detailing everything regarding the political

problems we had discussed in our meeting after my release. He kept those pages and said that we would meet again, and soon, to discuss all of those things.

That was never to happen. After this meeting, I was at least able to get CID folks and the Home Secretary off my back, not to mention that the attitude of the PPP people seemed different as well. Gabol was still Labour Minister, and when I met him he advised that I speak properly to the President. I said, “Has he called me again?” He then fell silent. But from his question, it became apparent that Bhutto had not mentioned my release or our meeting even to the Labour Minister. Similarly unaware of all this was the AEU President Kiyani who had reached Lahore from Karachi the same day as I was released. , When people had mentioned to him that I had been released, he had assumed that they were asking when that would happen. And here was PPP’s chief whip in the parliament, nowhere in the know! This is how Bhutto worked.

The Vice President of Airways Union, Alam, who was also a PPP office-bearer, called a meeting at his home upon my return, where people asked about my arrest and release. In this meeting, Peerzada and Gabol both accepted in front of people that because the government had intended to arrest me, it had schemed to have 1800 fraudulent votes cast in order to defeat Airways. At the same meeting, an office-bearer of the Rawalpindi AEU Rafiq Qureshi also asked a question regarding the government’s suspicion and investigation of the Press Building as a union asset and trust, in response to which Peerzada was compelled to accept that he had inquired into everything while I was in prison, and all accounts were clean in every way. Even Pervez Lari, the managing director of the firm that had sold us the press had also been questioned by CID; everything had been found to be legit.

This was the period when the conflicts between us, the PPP, and Nur Khan came to the fore, and this could not have been possible without the will and unrelenting game-playing of Bhutto,

Kiyani, Alam, and Peerzada. The government wanted to keep AEU under its influence in order to keep putting pressure on Nur Khan. The two-year tenure of PIACE Union was about to end, and the preparations for the 1978 referendum in PIA had begun. At that time, Kiyani was the AEU President and Shahid Ali Khan its general secretary. I had not abandoned the union despite the explicit pro-PPP policy it had adopted with which I absolutely disagreed. How could I do that, since Airways was my identity, and I its symbol? I was trying my best to play a wholesome role in these circumstances.

Chapter 13

The End of an Era

Unions without Labour: Political Parties in PIA

In PIA, PPP was supporting the AEU, and at the same time another pro-government group was, under the leadership of the Governor of Punjab Ghulam Mustafa Khar and on the advice of the President, supporting the PIACE union. Still a third union, PIA Organisation, had been formed with the help of Qaim Ali Shah, also supported by the PPP. These dirty tactics by the government had worsened the situation, foreshadowing some kind of big disruption in PIA so that the referendum can be cancelled and unions abolished. In order to fund AEU's expenses for the referendum, Peerzada went to the extent of trying to sell the very press that he had investigated, only to find out that it had been purchased with the contributions of the union members. He went ahead and sold it.

Just to recap, the main players in PIA union politics at this time were as follows, each with government blessing: Hafiz Peerzada, Sattar Gabol, and Khursheed Hasan Mir were supporting AEU (Airways Employees Union); the PIACE Union was being supported by G.M. Khar, Khan Qayyum, and Kausar Niazi; the new, third, union PIAO had the support of G.M. Jatoi, Abdullah Shah, and Qaim Ali Shah. When I met Mir, he said that Bhutto had sent a message to Nur Khan instructing that he should support AEU, while Nur Khan had been instructed by Khar to support PIACE union. When this was brought to Bhutto's attention, he reportedly accused Khar of flouting his word. At the same time, Khar insisted that he was following Bhutto's orders. .

The battlefield was ready. Despite all these conspiracies, AEU was definitely in the lead. My analysis was after all that is the referendum, because while this was happening, the Chief

Minister of Sind left the country and even the acting Chief Minister Katpar left for Sukkur. The preparations for the referendum were apace, and according to labor laws, every union had been assigned one day to hold their meetings. The day for which the AEU rally was scheduled, I led the procession, and the other union leaders were in a jeep. Chanting slogans, people raised me on their shoulders. Seeing this, the government and the local administration got a little worried. The same day the Director Administration Nawaz Tiwana called me into his office in the presence of the security chief Javed Ahmed Shah and started congratulating me on our referendum victory. I said, “Sir, the referendum hasn’t happened yet, so how come we’ve won; in any case, I’m not even a union officer, then why are you congratulating me?” He said, “Just get ready to go to Pindi.” He meant that I should go see Bhutto. I said that this was impossible: I could not shove the workers under the banner of the government, because in my view, no political party should dominate over them. If I went to Pindi on this occasion, it would only allow people to say that the government had handed over the union to me, and I would lose my credibility with my people and become a lackey of the government’s without my intention or wish. Thus I refused the offer and left the office. Later on, I found out that Tiwana had probably done this on the advice of Nur Khan, which left me wondering why he would have not said it himself, which might have, given our history, enabled a middle path to be carved out.

Just as I had feared, there were riots prior to the referendum. The PIA administration had its role in it, but the local administration of the city was also involved. Some people were hurt in the firing, but nobody died. I wasn’t present on the occasion, but a case was filed against me as well (and was ongoing till 1988). After this incident, many arrests happened and Nur Khan forbade me from coming to PIA so that I would not be arrested within office premises.

This was a unified and organized conspiracy to completely decimate the labour movement within PIA. A few days after this incident, I met Nur Khan in the head office corridor. He seemed quite pleased with the changed situation, and assured me that everything would be fine. This sentence of his resonated with what Bhutto had said to me upon his return from East Pakistan, when he had triumphantly declared that Pakistan was safe! But, what happened then? Pakistan was divided! The same way, despite Nur Khan's words, nothing quite improved in PIA.

According to a very well-thought out plan, Bhutto's government went ahead and tried to modify the organizational structure of PIA. The first move was altering laws governing the membership and bargaining units of the union. Since the beginning, employees in Pay Group V had been part of the bargaining unit and could become members of the union. Around this time, the parliament passed legislation to elevate this pay group to the officers' grade, which removed all of the union members in Pay Group V from the union, affecting different unions disproportionately. (For instance, many of us had been in this highest staff pay-group for a long time, given our longstanding employment in PIA, whereas many of the new unions were relying on the newest political inductees who had been hired strategically). For 22 years, I was in Group V, and I had refused many promotions to higher pay groups in order to be able to continue working in the union,. This legislative change was a foolproof way for the government to forcibly remove me from the Union, something that this government shared with all governments and their intelligence bureaus to-date. How simple it turned out to be! Nur Khan was party to this as well. He confessed to me that if the staff in group V stayed in the union, then no other union would stand a chance to compete with AEU; besides me, AEU included many senior activists who had worked in PIA since its formation, while the other unions were very new, having just been formed a few years ago under the Yahya regime. This was the real "democratic" face of

this people's government, which aided by the character of the PIA administration, resulted in the forced removal of labor activists from the movement that they had formed with so many sacrifices, workers for whom it was the entire universe (and still is!). This decision affected me really deeply. When I brought this to the workers, for the first time I had tears in my eyes, I choked and could not speak. Despite this setback, the caravan took it upon itself to continue moving forward.

Both Bhutto and Nur Khan were quite adamant that they be remembered as friends of the worker. This is what began a new conversation, this time regarding the creation of a "pocket union" within PIA, soon after labour union activity was officially banned. Thus, the Union of PIA Employees (UPIAE) was registered. With the purpose of remaining involved in labor activism, I sent our workers into this Union. Many people from PIACE and PIAO also joined it. Akbar Naseeruddin, left PIACE to join UPIAE, and as a rising star in the eyes of the administration, was made the President of the new union. In deference to Nur Khan's wishes this unit was formed and kept doing some work; in my view, not only the organization but also its workers suffered greatly during this time.

After banning all unions, and before the creation of UPIAE, the PIA management and the government decided that all union office-bearers that were on the PIA staff should be removed from their jobs. Lists were prepared by the joint efforts of the PIA management and the CID working together. A government functionary and the security chief in PIA, Ahmed Javed Shah, played a crucial role in this, and he did his job so well that he was rewarded by being made the Director of Administration.

One group within PPP was of the opinion that there should be disproportionate removal of Jamaat-e-Islami members from PIA. The other group was after the AEU members. In those

days, often met with labour minister Gabol and Peerzada. One day, some friends and I were sitting at Peerzada's office along with Gabol, when we learnt that Nur Khan was about to arrive. I think that Peerzada had planned for this to happen, ensuring the crossing of paths, in order that I may find for myself out to what extent Nur Khan was complicit in the PIA situation, and also for Nur Khan to take away the impression that I still had ties with PPP. Peerzada and Gabol both went to meet Nur Khan in the drawing room. Nur Khan was accompanied by some other people from PIA administration, such as Tiwana and Ahmed Javed Shah. After a while, Peerzada returned with two lists in his hand, lists drawn up by Nur Khan. Peerzada, in a rare show of cordiality, handed over the two lists to me, which included the names of all the union members that were slated to be dismissed. My name was on that list as well. As for the officers, Peerzada said he had ensured that no officers would be on this list; he probably said that because ever since the elevation of Group V to officer (and hence non-union) grade, many of our sympathizers were now officers. But despite his claim, they showed up on this list fairly abundantly, so far as I could tell. Nur Khan had handpicked some of my friends and acquaintances to be included in this: among others, Iqbal Ahmed, Arif Ali Khan Abbasi, S.M. Nasr. I asked that their names be removed from the list. As far as union members were concerned, I said to Peerzada that I should be removed before anyone else in my union. Later on, Nur Khan, Jatoi, Peerzada, and Gabol consulted with Bhutto on these lists. When he saw my name on top of the list, he said, "Don't fire him," and left the rest to Nur Khan and Jatoi's discretion.

One day, as I was meeting with Gabol, Nur Khan called. At one point, Gabol looked toward me and signaled that Nur Khan was talking about me. In response to something said on the other end, Gabol said that the decision to not dismiss me was Bhutto's himself, and that Majeed Shaikh of PIACE Union was still on the list. It was Nur Khan's opinion that if I was not

going to be kicked out, then neither should Majeed Shaikh. All this ended with many people unemployed.

When it came to constituting the body of the new pocket union (UPIAE), Nur Khan tried to break off Saghir Ahmed from AEU, which Kiyani and Alam opposed since Saghir was a member of my group. In fact, under the leadership of Alam and Kiyani, PPP had made its own faction within PIA with the sole purpose of erasing any trace of the work I had done and removing my influence altogether. Not only this, but all the anti-labour forces in Pakistan were joining hands to destroy the labour movement in the country. Akbar Naseeruddin who was in PIACE union, surprisingly became President of UPIAE. Many other reactionary elements had been included in the UPIAE, and this was formally made a PPP union, regardless of all the disparate political origins of its key players. It seemed that the government was, in order to control us, willing to destroy the airline itself as collateral damage.

Labour without Unions

Before the formation of UPIAE, and during the ban on union activity in the organization, I advised Nur Khan that this was a great opportunity to take proactive steps to improve the workers' problems and bring some order to other affairs of the airline. He formed a team to prepare a report on organizational performance. The team was composed of representatives from our union and PIACE union, some administration officials, and the Personnel Manager. We started preparing the report. Right off the bat, the Director Administration was against the idea of any such report, and wanted to have nothing to do with any that was prepared. There were still other obstacles to the committee's work, and I went ahead and said that even if there was to be no collective report, I was going to do everything I could to compile separate ones where

possible. Perhaps Javed Shah feared that such a report would reveal the actual situation of the company, and his incompetence, especially insulting when an officer of his own department, the personnel manager, was involved in the preparation. With great difficulty, this report was prepared, and then the Ashura holidays intervened, delaying its final typing. Javed Shah was unwilling to give any extension on the presentation of the report. When I approached Nur Khan about this, he gave me some extra days. Finally a joint report was submitted, and a meeting was called to discuss it.

Chairman Nur Khan, Managing Director Enver Jamaal, Director Administration Javed Shah, and other members of the committee were present. In the report, we had criticized Nur Khan and at the same time assessed the work of the entire administration, placing most of the organizational burden and responsibility on the shoulders of the Director Administration. Javed Shah, as he feared and we expected, was very angry with this. Nur Khan, on the other hand, ignored that childish reaction, quite graciously taking in this report as an open criticism of him

Nur Khan concurred with the entire report, and said to me, “What should I do with you? Shall I make you Director Administration or the Managing Director?” I said, “Just let me sit in your office in the same pay group as I am, and dismiss me if I cannot fix PIA.” Nur Khan agreed to this. On his instruction, copies of this report were sent to the directors of the various departments and Enver Jamaal who was Managing Director was asked to coordinate all the affairs. Later on, I heard that on government order, any and all action on this report was blocked. The government pretty much said to Nur Khan that they had only just been successful in removing me from the union, and now Nur Khan wanted me to sit with him and run the organization! Javed Shah certainly had his role in conveying this to the government and affirming the obstructionist, nay destructive, attitude.

The Managing Director wanted me to come over and work with him in the office, but the Director Administration refused to give me permission for this. In a further resentful act, he transferred me to the Karachi Booking Office, and had me reporting to a former officer of my union, who had now been promoted to the post of District Manager. I was really angry with this transfer. I met Nur Khan at the airport and asked why I was being treated like this. He said that the transfer was done by the Director of Administration. I said, “Sir, but you are the chairman of PIA!” I also told him that I was not going to come back to work the next day and he should feel free to dismiss me. After this, Nur Khan sent Arif Ali Khan Abbasi to my home and tried to resolve the situation. Then he overwrote the transfer order, and placed me with Omar Kureishi.

Amid all this, the work of people’s various problems and advocating for their valid demands to the management continued apace. Shah was resentful that he had not quite been as able to dampen my influence as he would have liked to. Once he even suggested that he would keep me in his office so that we could work together, but then he changed his mind. At once answerable to the government and perturbed at his inability to find the right tactic, he made one more attempt, transferring me to the engineering department, so that I would be cut of from the head office, and perhaps be provoked to some kind of a clash with people from the PIACE union. When I reached the engineering department, I expressed my fears to the Director of Engineering Chaudhry Fazal Ahmed, upon hearing which he put me to work in his office. This frustrated yet another of Javed Shah’s plans.

Much dishonesty and fraudulence was underway in PIA, and no one was addressing it. When I spoke with Nur Khan about it, he demanded evidence. A staff member in the PIA Flight Catering department had filled out overtime for one day. But, when a copy of that request reached the accounts department for payment, it had magically transformed into a whole month

of overtime! I took this case, with evidence, as one example among many. Nur Khan deputed his Special Assistant Aslam Khan to look into this matter deeply. I asked over and over again about the follow up, but neither Nur Khan nor his special assistant had much to say on it, which made them look pathetic at best.

It was clear from this and other instances that the conditions in PIA were worsening. A comrade from Peshawar, Jaffery, came to Karachi, and had some jewelry stolen from his bag at the airport. Nobody seemed to care or respond. He even spoke with Nur Khan, but to no avail. I advised him to go back to Peshawar and to get his friend the Inspector General of Police there, to put pressure on the Inspector General of Police in Karachi to do something about this. He did exactly that and within a day, the President of the new UPIAE union, Akbar Naseeruddin, reached out to Jaffery with the lost jewelry in his hands. I impressed upon Nur Khan that at least we should find out how that came about, and what and how the union was implicated in this, but nobody paid any attention.

The Long Wait for National Elections

The national situation was no better. Bhutto announced elections for 7 March 1977. There was a lot of adverse reaction against Bhutto's policies all over the country. As the election announcement came, various political parties were able to put together a new electoral alliance by the name of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), to serve as a platform for political parties that were challenging him. Meanwhile, the attitude of the Bhutto government remained conflictual toward us. , Later on, when all tactics had failed, Bhutto sent an offer to me to run for election, via Kamal Azfar. He knew that I had brought Kamal Azfar into PPP.

Azfar invited me to his house for dinner, and when I got there, he wasn't there. I spoke to his wife as we waited for him. She was very warm, and spoke to me on various political issues until he arrived. She said that she knew I was the one who had brought Kamal into PPP Party, when I had very good relations with Bhutto. She wanted to know how those relations had gone so sour that I was sent to jail by Bhutto (only to be released at his pleasure). I said that as far as bringing Kamal Azfar into the party was concerned, that was a good thing since it had benefited all involved, politically and personally. As for my issues, my fight with Bhutto was not a personal one, but over principles. I tried to explain to her that my main conflict with Bhutto was over his claim to being a socialist, and nothing about him corroborated that. When her husband returned, Begum Azfar related this to him—he fell silent because he had just written a book on Bhutto asserting that he was a staunch socialist.

Azfar and I spoke about the upcoming elections. He suggested that, knowing that I would not run for election on the PPP, I should contest the election as an independent candidate, with full PPP support. I said that was not an option, least of all now when the situation is so different from the time back in 1970 when Bhutto had offered us 22 seats and I had refused despite the rationale of an existing political alliance. There was no way this would happen now, and things were out of our hands. I thanked him and we spoke about other things for a while before I left.

Trusted sources conveyed to me that the Defence Secretary had sent a letter to the PIA administration ordering that I should be sent abroad before the elections. In pursuance of this order, a post of Administration Manager was created in the PIA Dubai office and all Gulf stations were placed under its control. This was a very attractive offer objectively speaking, but it read exile to me; I was not ready to leave the country at any cost. However, PIA administration promoted me to the said position, and gave me a letter to show up for duty in Dubai. I protested

to Nur Khan and said I was not ready to go. He told me that if I didn't go, then Bhutto would surely arrest me again, because he was not going to let me be free to do as I will during the time of the elections.

I was not ready to be put in jail again. Since I would go only begrudgingly, I requested Nur Khan to not promote me, because if I were transferred with a promotion, my departure would be construed as consensual. I also asked him for a six-month leave prior to the transfer. He agreed to the first thing, retracting my promotion, allowing me to stay in Group V in which I had been working for 22 years. But he wasn't willing to sign off on my leave, suggesting that I should join duty in Dubai first and then go to leave from there. That seemed reasonable.

There was delay in my visa for Dubai and the transfer kept being deferred. Meanwhile, the national political situation was deteriorating very quickly. Despite being disgruntled and disillusioned with PPP, we had not thrown our support behind any other player in the field either, so we were quite neutral and nonpartisan. However, we did want the PPP leadership to understand that this was the result of its bad policies and attitude, and that it was time it learned from its mistakes.

Elections were held, the PPP won, a victory marred by allegations of election fraud. PNA refused to accept the results of the election, and started a movement in the country. Many arrests happened, and the whole country was up in arms against Bhutto. My analysis was that Bhutto would probably have won even in clean elections—but, since he required a two-thirds majority in the parliament in order to change the constitution and become the President, rigging the election was almost necessary. He did not want any other person to become the President of Pakistan, even if only ceremonially or nominally so. It was his wish to become the national

President and hold all constitutional authority in his hands, because this power complex was quite part of his temperament.

Working independently, we kept ourselves separate from the PNA movement, However, in order to promote the stance that the working class should have its own independent political character, we opposed the intervention and intrusion of PPP in PIA with or without its pocket union. Despite now being in Group V, I continued to work with the union workers. We organized a big demonstration of employees in PIA. The army intervened, but we were able to keep any unpleasant incident at bay. We amply expressed our opposition to the dictatorial designs and policies of Bhutto, and spread word of our analysis that Bhutto now found himself in this situation because he had allied with our enemies and Jamaat-e-Islami against us, feeding the monsters among them that were now banding together to destroy him. Our criticism of Bhutto was principled and in line with the best practices of democratic politics; no way was a military dictatorship in he country an option, let alone a preference, for us. It was clear that Jamaat-e-Islami had made a strategic pact with Bhutto in order to get Zia-ul-Haq to be Commander-in-Chief, the consequence of which would soon take shape ever brutally.

During these disturbances, things were changing very quickly everyday, and it was difficult not to dread the emergence of something monstrous, however changed or even new. One day, I ran into an important member of Jamaat-e-Islami and PIACE union, Mohammed Yusuf, who worked in the engineering department. Seeing me, he said that Jamaat-e-Islami would not let Bhutto go at any cost. I got a bit perturbed by this, and I related it to Nur Khan. I said I wanted to go to Islamabad in order to make Bhutto aware of this. Nur Khan did not opine on what I'd said and left it to me. Bhutto had earlier given me permission that if in case of anything really important or urgent, I should talk to his special assistant Afzal Saeed and meet

him. I did that, saying that it was essential that I meet Bhutto right away. Saeed asked me to get to Islamabad promptly.

I reached there and met Saeed. I explained what was bothering me about given what I had heard, and expressed my wish to see Bhutto. He heard me attentively. He must have conveyed it to Bhutto as well. However, I waited all day, and the meeting didn't happen. I checked in once or twice, but only silence. Then I had an idea that perhaps I should meet Hafiz Peerzada and apprise him of the situation, only to learn that he had gone to Nathiagali. I went there after him, met him, and gave him the whole update. I spoke to him about various things, and one of the issues we argued about was the issue of nationalizing tiny ginning factories as I saw no sense in that. Peerzada was adamant about his socialism. We then spoke about the character and role of the Army, and the goals and intentions of Jamaat-e-Islami. I even asked him about meeting Bhutto, but everything I had said amounted to nothing. I came back to Karachi. I had done my part.

The PNA riots and demonstrations were spreading in the country. Meanwhile, on 28 April 1977, Bhutto delivered a speech with a strong and critical message to the USA and its President Jimmy Carter. In Raja Bazaar in Pindi, he dramatically tore a letter to shreds, signifying a rejection of American designs on Pakistan,. Amid these conditions and events, he was digging himself ever deeper. The Constitution was amended in order to enable levying of a summary martial law, and through a really well-planned conspiracy and sadly his own actions leading to consequences that aided and abetted his enemies, Bhutto was fully surrounded on all sides. He himself was responsible for this.

On 5 July 1977, Zia declared martial law in the country, ironically, under the very law Bhutto had pushed through, and Bhutto and his associates were arrested. Jamaat-e-Islami was overjoyed. Along with Jamaat-e-Islami, many parties from the PNA entered the Zia government.

Zia promised to hold elections within 90 days, but he stayed in power for 11 years, removed only by an accident. Zia used Jamaat-e-Islami and many other political parties to his own full advantage.

In this time of incredulity, when Bhutto was arrested, many PPP followers surmised that this was all an elaborate political hoax: that Zia was one of Bhutto's men, and he has levied the martial law on Bhutto's instruction. Since it was true that Zia had used a tool that Bhutto had made possible with his constitutional amendment, these people were correct in thinking that perhaps this was happening at his behest, or at least with his agreement. After his arrest in July, Bhutto was held in the Murree Hills and people were allowed to meet him as well. Many big speeches would happen there, with cheers of "Prime Minister Bhutto." People were being assured, or at least the impression was being created, that the Army would hold elections in 90 days and restore PPP to power.

My take on this was different. I was seeing a besieged Bhutto, with very few chances of his escape. In removing him, Zia had followed Jamaat-e-Islami's wishes. Bhutto was released only after a few days of being arrested, and this was a really clever move on part of Zia. Bhutto should have seen this coming and found a way to pull out of this quicksand. But once he was released, he put all his emphasis on removing the martial law (which he had capitulated). He came to Karachi after a few days. Someone brought me a message from Bhutto saying that he wants to meet, asking whether I would like to meet at home or elsewhere. I said I would meet him at his residence, as always. I was also hopeful that we would talk about his no longer being PM, a new situation demanding fresh analysis and action. I feared that Bhutto was indeed stuck, and we have to together find a way out of this somehow or the other. In my meeting with him, I wanted to tell him to perhaps leave the country for a while before Zia restricts him, which was

entirely possible. While open aggression towards the Army was not wise at this point, he could easily count on popular pressure to bring him back to the country once things settled down a bit.

That meeting did not happen on that trip, since he left for Lahore to attend Tika Khan's rally. A big procession welcomed him, and people were sure this was the end of Zia. But, I had the feeling that this was another mistake of his, and the very same day, things took an about turn. It so happened that, in that procession, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani had gotten stuck and been subjected to mistreatment, following which Bhutto was taken in custody again. After he was taken away, only a few people were left at Tika Khan's rally.

I was sure that Zia was going to have his way this time, and there were few chances of Bhutto surviving this onslaught. Many PPP sympathizers used to say that many generals and judges were on Bhutto's side. But Zia had his own pawn on the bench: Justice Mushtaq. I happened to run into Khursheed Hasan Mir, and he asked me how come I thought that Bhutto would lose, with America supporting him. That bit was already suspect to me, but I said that while might be so, there was one grave open right then: either Bhutto takes it, or Zia. Dreadfully, the balance of power was tilting towards Zia.

I exchanged views on this situation with a PIA doctor Mujeebuddin, whose father Justice Waheeduddin was the head of the tribunal that was hearing Bhutto's case. Dr. Mujeeb took me to meet his father. The Justice said, "Mujeeb was telling me that you think that Bhutto will be sentenced to death. And, I am the head of the tribunal who knows that four out of seven justices are with me; I think he is not going to be sentenced, so what's the merit of your analysis?" I said, "Sir, suppose you are taken ill, and one of your judges is replaced; the balance will shift very quickly." He said, "How can this happen? I am healthy, and no judge can be transferred." The tragedy of the situation is that all the pieces got shuffled in the worst case scenario: either Justice

Waheed fell ill or was made to fall ill, and another judges was replaced. The new tribunal read a sentence to hang Bhutto.

Chapter 14

After the Tragedy

Under the leadership of Taj Mohammed Langah and Khursheed Hasan Mir, we tried to push forward a labour politics on the platform of a new party by the name of Awami Jamhoori Party (AJP). A new front, the Awami Jamhoori Ittehad (AJI) was also formed, but people's enormous egos came in the way of actual ground-level work. I also tried to bring PNP and AJP closer so that they could create one, bigger, party, but even there the personal wishes for leadership and power plagued the members. Not too long after that, even we broke off from AJP.

After martial law was levied in the country, the PIA situation also changed. As I have mentioned before, towards the end of the Bhutto era, unions had been banned and replaced by a PPP-pocket union, UPIAE. Now, since Jamaat-e-Islami was supporting Zia, and was part of the new government, its old union, PIACE was finally registered. The martial law government wanted to bring PIACE into the arena, and to hold a referendum in PIA that it would surely win.

I thought that if PIACE union was now registered, maybe so could we. This was initially impossible because there was apparently a prohibition on registering more than two unions within any organization. UPIAE also did not want us to be registered, but despite all their opposition, our union was registered again. We tried to ally with PPP in order to defeat JJ's PIACE union in the referendum. I was thinking that if the three were to compete with each other, then PIACE union would definitely win.

When UPIAE had been formed, a big chunk of the AEU membership had made its way to that new union, and then when the Pay Group V parliamentary decision dismembered the union body, the AEU membership had further dwindled. To talk about the alliance, we met the UPIAE leaders at my home. I proposed that if the president of the new union alliance was from

UPIAE, then the general secretary would be from AEU. Perhaps the UPIAE representatives were not able to persuade their central leadership about this, and this alliance never materialized. In this situation, there was no question or possibility of AEU winning the referendum, but it was important for the labor movement and for the political development of the working class that we stay in the picture and play our role in the field. The government and the PIA management both wanted the PIACE union to win. PPP was very confident about its own influence and chances. But, when the referendum happened, PIACE indeed did win the referendum. By taking part in the election, we were able to test our own strength, policy, membership, and ideas, and despite all the setbacks, the results showed that our political vision was still alive, and to some extent percolating, in PIA.

With Group V employees being no longer eligible to vote, I could not take part in union activities. Despite this, UPIAE, PIACE union, and the management folks were seen complaining about me to those Martial law officials who had come to supervise the referendum. One person on referendum duty had me called in repeatedly to reprimand and warn me about the complaints they were receiving about my participation in union activities. I told him, “Sir, I am in PIA, and Airways union is participating in the referendum. I have built Airways and been in it all my life. Even if I were to stay at home, they would still bring complaints to you that I am participating.” Despite my clarification, the Major didn’t seem satisfied. His tone was rather aggressive and he threatened to report me to the higher ups in the Martial Law Administration. This he did, and I was called to the Martial Law Office at the KMC sports complex in Karachi. I appeared there. With great force the Colonel told me that he was getting many complaints about me. I explained everything to him, which he probably understood as well. But, since he had called to give me a threat, he did that and said I should consider this a warning, which if I violated, would get me

locked up for at least a year. I said, “Governments in the past have locked me up, you are welcome to go ahead and do so too, if this would solve the problem. You can call someone at my home and ask them to come take the car, and you can then send me to jail.” While he didn’t send me to jail, he still in some way, managed to “house arrest” me within the confines of PIA.

It was the strength and endurance of our political philosophy that I wanted to re-assert by bringing AEU back into the playing field. Despite having and controlling everything, the weak rulers—from the government to the management to the municipal administration—were afraid of me even apart from the union, a union that wasn’t even the CBA. Despite this obvious imbalance, they were still perturbed by our political line.

My Last Days in PIA

I must mention here that in July 1977, when Bhutto had been arrested, I had asked Nur Khan to cancel my transfer to Dubai. I also told him that he should let me free and accept my resignation. I had already given a request for a six-month leave, and submitted my resignation along with that so that when the leave ends, I should be relieved of any responsibilities to PIA. Instead of six months, I was given approval for a three-month leave. About resignation, Nur Khan said that he would accept my resignation when he himself leaves PIA in October 1978. Ahmed Javed Shah was displeased at my application for leave and my resignation, because he had promised to the Defense Ministry that he would get me kicked out of Pakistan, and now this plan seemed ineffective.

Prior to my leave, Shah started to bother me. I complained about him to Nur Khan. Nur Khan understood what I was saying and said that I start my approved leave early. I told him that I was going on medical leave. He seemed satisfied. When Shah found out that I was going on

medical leave, he contacted Dr. Mujeebuddin who was the in-charge of the airport dispensary. When he refused to intervene and cancel my leave, Shah asked another doctor to do it, who refused as well. He tried to have my leave retracted, but failed, and I left for England.

Redirections

While I was in England during my leave in 1978, it was usual to get together with many of the old PIA acquaintances that would come through London. I also met with Nur Khan then, when he was faced with the decision of whom to appoint as the Director Administration (to replace Javed Shah who had, to say the least, played a suspicious role in the previous administration and then been transferred to London). Among Nur Khan's chosen people in PIA was Arif Ali Khan Abbasi, I had repeatedly expressed to Nur Khan that he was a good man deserving to be made the Director of Administration. When I met him in England, I reiterated, but for some reason he chose Qamruzzaman for the post. Perhaps this appointment was done to please, or under the influence of, PIACE.

A few days after this, I met with Enver Jamaal in London, and he expressed his disbelief at the appointment of Qamruzzaman as Director Administration. He also told me not to leave PIA. While my resignation had been approved when while I was away in England, some matters were as yet unresolved, and Jamaal asked me to see him when I returned to Pakistan.

During the same leave, I had planned to go from London to China, and all my papers and tickets were ready. As luck would have it, I got the chance to meet a progressive friend, Mrs. Rajna Ash with whom I saw eye to eye on many ideological matters. When I brought up my upcoming visit to China, she asked why I would do such a thing, since everything there had changed. While this was true, I still thought that maybe I should go to China and take a look for

myself. The same day, I found out that Asghar Khan was in China, and seeing that I changed my mind. Another round of making plans coincided with the news that the leader of the Chinese Communist Party Hua Ko-Feng had gone to meet the Shah of Iran, followed by a meeting with Marshal Tito, who was fundamentally a revisionist and my thoughts and philosophy sharply diverged from his on numerous international issues., I didn't need more seeing for myself than this, and the the issue of China was thus settled forever. There was no revolution in China to tempt me there anymore.

When I told Rajna of my decision not to go to China, she suggested introducing me to a political comrade for some further insight. The meeting was to be at her place. When I reached there, I met a gentleman. When we went into the dinner room, I saw a photo of hers with him. When I asked her, she said, "This is my husband Comrade Ash." When I marveled at the suspense she had built, she smiled and said, "What difference does it make?" I had a detailed exchange with Comrade William Ash. He told me that he agreed with me on many issues, and on those issues on which we weren't completely aligned, he directed me to someone in whom I might find some greater clarity and agreement. This was the Albanian leader of the Party of Labor and the President of Albania, Enver Hoxha. On my asking, Ash gave me some of the writings of Hoxha, after reading which I understood how right he was. From that point on, my orientation to the international labor movement was closely in line with Hoxha's and I deepened and clarified them further over the years. This meeting was a critical turning point in my political life.

I received my letter of retirement upon the completion of my leave, and I was retired in a higher Grade of VI instead of V. When I asked Nur Khan about this, he said that according to the new rules in PIA, if I refuse the promotion, I would be dismissed from the service rather than

honorably retired. Thus, in October 1978, 12 years in advance of my actual retirement date, I took my permanent leave from PIA, because after having been deprived of participation in the union and being kept from my political role and commitment and service to the workers of PIA—and through them, to the workers beyond PIA—there was no reason to stay in PIA anymore. Thus, 30 years of my life, and an extended struggle and association with the workers in PIA ended. But, the consciousness as a worker and a member of the working class that I had received by being a proud fellow worker of fellow workers in PIA, is part of my faith and life-purpose to this day.

PIA During the Zia Regime

After I left PIA, many folks from the PIACE union, especially Hafiz Iqbal, who was very close to Nur Khan, started to spread rumors about him that he had favored me and given me lots of perks. Painting my relations in a very negative color, they even extended the propaganda to Begum Nur Khan, namely that I had given her a gold necklace on behalf of the AEU as a gift. When such lies and dirt were being bandied about regarding him, Nur Khan realized how he had misjudged PIACE, and understood the error of his ways in following their advice when it came to appointing a new Director of Administration.

PIACE won the PIA referendum and continued with its old ways. The era was so fully Zia's that PIACE imbibed his philosophy and mannerism most thoroughly and shamelessly. After Nur Khan's departure, Enver Jamal was made chairman of PIA; unfortunately, consciously or not, he gave himself over to the union's tactics.

After returning from England, one day I went to the office of Enver Jamaal as we had planned, and asked him to arrange for my outstanding dues. Before meeting him, when I had

reached the head office, some members of the PIACE Union had started to chant slogans against Nur Khan and me. Then, while I was in Jamaal's office, the new Director Administration, Qamruzzaman appeared. He came and said that according to the security report, I had given a speech that Enver Jamaal and Qamruzzaman had gotten together to hurt Punjabis in PIA. On this falsehood and gross misrepresentation, I turned to Jamaal and said, "Sir, I will talk to you later." I left, very saddened by the situation.

Then Jamaal held back the arrears that were owed me by PIA. I apprised two sympathetic friends in PIA of the situation: Chaudhry Fazal Ahmed and Shroff, both directors and close to Jamaal. On their advice, I went to Jamaal's house and explained the entire situation to him. For about an hour and a half, he listened to me. Then suddenly he asked me if I was Punjabi. Ironically, this was the same thing that in 1956, Mrs. K.G. Bhore had asked me at the Hotel Metropole farewell reception, when we had had her husband removed from the institution to make way for more self-determination on part of Pakistanis in their own national airline.

I told Fazal and Shroff about this odd exchange. I felt that Jamaal was showing signs of mental exhaustion. Shroff surmised that this behaviour could perhaps be explained by Jamaal's closeness to General Zia, as they often even dined together. With Zia's blessings all further victories for PIACE were already in the bag. I also had heard that Zia had sent PIACE members to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in order to work on building an Islamic Labor Federation. I would do my best to not let that happen.

A new date was announced for the referendum. There were three unions in PIA: AEU, PIACE, and UPIAE. I was aware that there was no way that AEU could win the referendum, but it was important to defeat PIACE so as to create a hurdle for Zia and Jamaat-e-Islami. PPP wanted to work from the platform of AEU because during martial law, when nobody had dared,

only the representatives of AEU had had the courage to go to the grave of Bhutto, and the birthday of Mrs. Bhutto was also celebrated at the AEU platform. I offered the PPP folks our platform, on the condition that if, despite all their claims, they were unable to lead AEU to victory, our union would be returned to us.

For this referendum, the entire machinery of the local administration was mobilized into action on behalf of PIACE on the instructions of the government. I learnt this from various sources in the government, and had wanted to remain nonpartisan and neutral in this referendum. Confronted with this situation, at the last moment, we withdrew AEU from the running, allowing UPIAE to win and defeat the PIACE union in order not to repeat what had happened the last time. On this occasion, the leader of JI, Munawar Hasan and Salahuddin (the editor of the newspaper *Takbeer*) were all present at the airport, and even the thousands of people inducted into PIA on PIACE's behalf could not hand them this referendum.

We had planned very carefully for this result. Just before the referendum, the Officers' Association had also held its own election, the constituency of the organization including all of those members of Airways who were in Pay Group V and had been promoted and separated from the union body by government order. We had negotiated the inclusion of the Group V people as voting members of the Senior Staff Association (SSA) because they were no longer able to be part of the union bargaining unit. Many other former AEU members were now also officers. Thus with AEU supporters, we participated wholeheartedly in the officers and election. And our panel was victorious; Shahid Ali Khan, former General Secretary of AEU, was elected the General Secretary of the SSA. On the other hand, PIA management, PIACE, and UPIAE supporters had also fielded panels of their own candidates. While no longer in PIA, I played a key role in these elections. At Karachi and other stations, our candidates won with heavy

margins. In a way, this was a victory for the philosophy of AEU that had grown and risen through the ranks of the organization as a result of decades of hard work.

After winning the union referendum, the President of UPIAE and his companions were unwilling to grasp the situation, and were also not ready to cooperate with the officers' association. They were trying to be yes-men to the government and to the PIA management, chanting slogans of "Ziaul Haq, Mard-e-Haq" (man of truth and right). After winning the election, Akbar Naseeruddin spent about a month in Rawalpindi trying to find a way to meet the President, but he was busy licking his wounds because with the defeat of his union, the plans to create some kind of Islamic Labor Federation had also been dealt a severe blow. When Zia ignored Akbar, the latter resorted to strange tactics, even some extreme ones in order to keep feeling vital and important. After the defeat, even the PIA administration was unwilling to give him time of day. Frustrated with this, he resorted to violence as well, beating up some officers. The Chairman Enver Jamaal was helpless, and after the defeat in the referendum, Zia very disrespectfully sent him packing.

Jamaal was followed by Mufti Mohammed Saleem, who had been a General Manager in the early days of Orient Airways, and had also served in various capacities in PIA. Now he was brought in as Managing Director. After Jamaal's departure, the position of UPIAE further deteriorated. I continually tried my best to have UPIAE and the officers' association come together in an alliance. But UPIAE was not ready for this. I was sensing some danger. Meanwhile, Brigadier Shamim Yaseen Manto was brought in to PIA as the Director Administration. Then, the Martial Law Ordinance Number 51 was levied in the country. We called a meeting of all the workers' federations in Karachi and condemned this ordinance. In those days, I was working with Nabi Ahmed for United Workers' Federation. The AEU was also

a member of this federation, and I was trying to get UPIAE to join the alliance. I met with Nabi Ahmed and Akbar Naseeruddin for dinner at the former's home, where I suggested that the only way to face the dangers and threats of tomorrow is to join forces and gather all the workers, offer arrests, and protest the martial law regulation at the airport. He agreed in word, but did nothing in practice, citing religious obligations during Ramadan as the big excuse.

The consequence of this was that the government levied Martial Law regulations like Number 52, under which it was able to lay off thousands of workers, officers, pilots, and directors from PIA, affecting thousands of livelihoods and families. This was the first time in the country's history that any institution had enforced a martial law regulation in such a way, in order to remove "undesired elements" from their jobs. Later on, the International Labour Organization protested this act, but to no avail.

It is my understanding that all of this was possible only because labor leaders betrayed the workers' interests and were incapable and unwilling to change course while there was still time. This resulted in thousands of families being destroyed by what befell PIA employees on 15 August 1981. So, in this way PIA, where the entire labor movement in Pakistan had nurtured its class perspective and philosophy, was all but destroyed. We suffered most from this. Back in Bhutto's time, unions had already been abolished, their core constituency divided, and I was forced to leave the institution I had worked so hard to build. This time, the attack was on the entire labor movement, which really created a deep-seated fear in people unlike any seen before. This attack by the government hurt most of my well-wishers and family members, whether they were workers or officers or part of management.

The Martial Law Administration brought in Brigadier Manto into PIA as Director Administration for a special reason. But those employees of PIA who were members of PPP and

part of UPIAE, were not comprehending what the situation was asking for. They wanted to clash with the management, and repeatedly came into conflict with the Director Administration to the extent that union folk would call up the Managing Director M.M. Saleem and abuse him on the phone. Saleem had been appointed by Zia himself as the head of the organization because the two of them knew each other from long ago back when Zia was stationed in Oman, and Saleem was looking after the airline there.

As I have mentioned before, we played an effective role in the Officers' Association election. In the beginning, the office-bearers of the Association praised and welcomed but then things went wrong. Soon after the election, there was a big celebration at Hotel Midway, but when later there was a proper ceremony at Hotel Beach Luxury, I was not invited to it. The reason was that the Association representatives were butting heads with the management, whereas I was of the opinion that we should handle think sensibly and move forward with some compromises. A meeting of the Association then took place in Rawalpindi. Incidentally, I was in India that time. I found out from the office-bearers that they were inviting the Minister of Defence as special guest at the general body meeting. I suggested that perhaps they should instead invite the PIA Chairman General Rahim, because as I had found out, the defence minister had no power in this situation. The Association office-bearers Haseeb Ahsan and Shahid Ali Khan didn't raise this issue again nor did they invite me to the meeting. It seemed as if they were working on some special agenda even though I was the one who had requested Nur Khan (who was now heading PIA Investments) to persuade Haseeb to run for the Association president.

Many speeches critical of General Raheem were given at that meeting in Rawalpindi, after which the situation worsened further, basically inviting that the martial law or regulation 52—which until then had only been levied on the lower pay groups—entrap the officers as well.

In large numbers, different departments lost many great employees. Later on, we heard that General Raheem had said to one of his acquaintances who was a pilot, “The union that Bhutto dislodged was in the right and made of the right people.”

This came too late. The deeds were done, and the losses already ours to bear. The stupidity and opportunism of people had brought PIA to a dark place. I am positive that some logic and sense been at play in dealing with the situation at hand, perhaps so many people would not have lost their jobs, and perhaps even this martial law regulation would not have been enforced. M.M. Saleem became the head of the PIA Investments after leaving PIA, and I met him once in his office. Commenting on PIA he said, “Tufail, had you been the CBA and were the union in your hands, then PIA would never have been hit by the martial law regulation.”

Filling out the Barren Landscape

The political landscape of the country at large was adrift, and old players were finding new stomping grounds. It was being speculated that Zia wanted Asghar Khan to win elections and take power. This was why Asghar Khan had separated from the Pakistan National Alliance (the alliance of parties opposing Bhutto in the last elections). There was a popular impression that Asghar Khan was going to become the President of Pakistan. I happened to meet Air Commodore Khaqan Abbasi and he congratulated me saying that Asghar Khan was going to be President soon and that I would be in government as well. I assured him there was no chance of any of this.

When I saw Asghar Khan, I gathered that the government did really want to promote him. When the higher-ups from China came to Pakistan, Asghar Khan was front and centre, and later on he was sent to China as a representative of the Pakistani government. He even went to

the court of the Shah of Iran. Many photos of his were published there, but after that it seemed that the Shah of Iran, who was an American lackey in this region, didn't assess him to be worthy of a presidency and communicated accordingly with the powers that be.

I asked Asghar Khan whether he thought that Zia would hold elections. He said that that was sure to happen, because as a Muslim, he had sworn on the Quran. I said, "Sir, you know better—I am not a good Muslim, but I do think that Zia will not hold elections." When Asghar Khan himself came to grasp the situation that the elections were not to be, he told me that I was right. Frustrated and disappointed, he started to forcefully critique Zia.

Perhaps Asghar Khan was too sure that Zia would not have him arrested. I tried to caution him a couple of times: my view was that we should first organize our ranks, get the politicians together in a united front, and then move things on from there in a considered fashion. I persuaded him that he should attend the wedding of the nephew of Taj Mohammed Langah in Lahore, where he could meet various key political personalities. Langah also went to meet him and invited him. Perhaps the government got a whiff of this, because almost too soon after that, Asghar Khan was arrested in Peshawar prior to this trip. But he advised his wife and children to attend that wedding. This was the first time I met his son, Omar Asghar Khan.

Asghar Khan's extended house arrest caused his party, Tehreek-e-Istiqlal (TI), to be targeted and persecuted by the martial law regime. At that time, the PPP was moving forward with more extremist tactics, to which I always been principally opposed. In the Martial Law period, many of my comrades joined the Tehreek, in order to raise a voice against the government's injustices and repression, and to keep themselves politically viable and active. This was done after much thought, and determined on a party/movement level. In Punjab, Chaudhry Shaukat and Ahmed Naeem Qureshi were playing a key role in the Tehreek; in Karachi, Azhar

Abbas, Zaki Abbas, Shakira Zaki and other comrades were also involved in moving that party forward. Lakham House in Karachi, the residence of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, was quickly becoming the symbol of TI; his granddaughter Shahida Jamil and her husband Barrister Jamil were pulling their weight within the Tehreek. All the issues were moving along slowly, but in a considered, thoughtful, and correct manner.

I was in constant touch with Asghar Khan during his house arrest in Abbottabad. After the end of his house arrest, when Asghar Khan was set to come to Karachi, the government prohibited his entry into the city. We welcomed him wholeheartedly at Karachi airport, and with me was comrade Azhar Abbas, very active in TI and also the personnel manager at Hotel Midway House at Karachi airport. Without caring a bit about the repercussions, not only did he welcome the Air Marshal, he also took him to the Airport Hotel and put him up there.

Tehreek-e-Istiqlal was emerging as vibrant political at the national level. Even though I personally was not a member of the party, I regularly discussed and concurred with Asghar Khan on various issues of policy and political matters. He was in a great situation, considering the condition the whole country was in, and it was hard for me to figure out why the Air Marshal was not satisfied. I was cooperating with Shahida Jamil and Barrister Jamil, but many of the older office-bearers of Tehreek were not happy with my presence and the internal tensions were increasing. In order to keep these people happy, Asghar Khan often made various organizational changes, not quite thinking yet of what would happen if he and I were to clash on policy matters.

Things were moving along, but I found out that the Air Marshal was soon to make some big changes within the party. He wanted to bring in his son as the publicity secretary and Rahim-ul-Haq to replace Barrister Jamil. Apart from this, he wanted to make Ispahani the Karachi president of Tehreek-e-Istiqlal. I discussed some of this with him at the house of General

Habibullah, his daughter's father-in-law, and I expressed my disagreement with almost all of his proposed changes. After much argument, when we couldn't resolve the issue, he asked me how long I would be in Karachi. I said, "I'm here until you want me to be." He said that we should meet again within a month, and then we would resolve everything. None of us including Shahida Jamil and Barrister Jamil were happy with these changes. Even our comrades Azhar Abbas, Shaukat Chaudhry, and Naeem Qureshi were unwilling to keep working in TI were these changes to go through. Nonetheless, the Air Marshal did what he wanted to do without conferring with any of us. The meeting planned for a month later never happened. It was rumored that sherwanis were being fitted in preparation of his joining the government.

My differences with the Air Marshal were not limited to organizational decisions, but they were also emerging at the level of overall policy. For instance, Asghar Khan sent Dr. Kamal to India without even conferring with us. Then he himself went to America where he met Babrak Karmel. Again, there was no discussion on this. It seemed from a distance that the CIA and KGB were coming into alliance through him! Under all these political and organizational circumstances, it was hard for us to keep making a go of this relationship. And my comrades and I decided to separate from TI. I have not met Asghar Khan since that day, because I still feel bad that first, by indulging in right-wing opportunism and then in left-wing opportunism, he forfeited all opportunities to do anything worthwhile for the country.

Against All Odds, the Pursuit of Our Own Commitments

We carved out our politics separately. Working with the folks at Lakham House, primarily with Shahida Jamil, Barrister Jamil, and Dr. Kamal, we formed the Pakistan Fikri Mahaz, under the auspices of which we wrote and distributed about 25 pamphlets on different topics across the

country. It was also at Lakham House that we announced the creation of Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz (PMM). Dr. Kamal stuck it out with us for a long time, but then went his own way. At the Railway Stadium in Lahore, we organized a big meeting, and gathered all our members and activists from various parts of Pakistan. Bringing Shahida Jamil and Barrister Jamil along, we formalised the foundation of the Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz, which is a party of workers and peasants. It was decided that I would be the chairman of this party, whereas Shahida Jamil would be General Secretary. After a while, the Jamils left the party. Today, PMM is playing its political role from the ground up in all provinces of Pakistan, and is emerging as a vital, awake, and forceful political voice.

Chapter 15

The Eleven Year Rule and its Undoing

Zia and His Fabled End

General Zia's eleven years in government were a dictatorial regime however one saw it. Opposition to it was organized in the form of a Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), which eventually resulted in reestablishing the credibility and position for Pakistan People's Party down the road. The depressing and aggressive policies of martial law were destroying the status of the government continually. The masses were sick of Zia and his lies, and desperately wanted change, but no other alternative force was emerging to transform the situation, wrest away the reins, and afford the country stability.

MRD was most effective and consequential in the province of Sind. The masses were somehow not willing to take to the streets, and wanted change via the ballot. Political parties were suffering due to their weak organization and hypocrisy, ultimately unable to cajole, convince, or force Zia to hold elections as he had promised. Under the pressure from the United States, Zia finally held elections on a non-party basis, and without thinking, political parties decided to boycott the election. What a relief for him!

These non-party elections were held on 1 February 1985, after which Zia appointed himself as the seventh president of the country (prior to this he was the fourth Chief Marshal Law Administrator), and chose Mohammed Khan Junejo for his Prime Minister. In just three years, though, on 29 May 1988, conflicts between the President and the Prime Minister led Zia to dissolve the national assembly and depose the Prime Minister.

In light of contradictions emerging on the national and international level, especially in relation to the anticipated rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union, both

these superpowers were acting like partners in order to exploit the situation for their own designs. Zia's dictatorship was acceptable to neither player any more. In the case of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US had used Zia fully to thwart that offensive, but with the US and the USSR about to reach a resolution via negotiation, a pact that was to apply to Afghanistan, Zia was slowly becoming irrelevant. There, on the other hand, Zia was unwilling to give up his role as broker/contractor in the region, and in addition to his vision of a great mosque in Kabul, he also wanted to spread Islam to the Soviet Union. But, America was not willing to entertain his fantasies to this extent. Consequentially, on 17 August 1988, Zia and some of his friends lost their lives in an airplane crash. This accident was certainly planned, but to this day remains an "unsolved mystery."

The Daughter of the East Returns Us to Democracy

In keeping with the Constitution, the Senate chairman Ghulam Ishaq Khan succeeded Zia as the President of Pakistan. The daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto, who until then had held the US responsible for her father's death, and led from a distance with the slogan of "Whoever is a friend of America is a traitor to the country," morphed her policy overnight into something that was much more palatable to the US, forbidding those slogans, even punishing those who would raise a finger against the US.

In 1988, Benazir Bhutto went to America, to assure her strange bedfellows that US interests would be protected were she to return to Pakistan and gain power. After Zia's death, the political map of Pakistan remain fairly unchanged. Only the faces and some designations changed. The US supplanted Zia with Benazir, strutting her out into the political field, because

as compared to unabashed dictatorship and tyranny, titular democracy was better able to defraud the people, by doing so more subtly.

Elections were held, in which Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) emerged as the two main powers. There wasn't a remarkable difference between their economic and political programs, and they were both faint reflections of the oppressive system that had been in place. The elections were held in November, following which Benazir became the eleventh Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Ghulam Ishaq Khan continued as the President. Ishaq was a loyal member of the bureaucracy, having served as a secretary in Ayub's government, retaining that position first in the Yahya regime and then in Z.A. Bhutto's regime. He was then made a Minister by Zia. It is rumored that it was he who had informed Zia that Z.A. Bhutto was about to remove him from his position, leading up to the tragedy that unfolded back in the late 70s, and Zia had made him a minister as a reward. It is surprising that both PPP and IJI chose this man over Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan for President. Here, the question arose as to what this critical pawn of Zia was being rewarded for by being made and kept President.

In December 1988, PPP came into power for five years, and tried to put a pretty face on its friendship with America and its sustenance of feudalism. In Sind, PPP made a joint government with Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) whereas in the NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa province), the PPP, ANP (Wali Khan group) and some independents formed an alliance government. In Baluchistan, the assembly was soon dissolved, with new elections to follow. In Punjab, IJI led by Nawaz Sharif was in power. At the national level, while the PPP formed the government on its own, the situation was changing every day.

The PPP was politically rather weak, even if the power was in its hands. Resting on her friendship with America and its ongoing reliance on feudals, Benazir Bhutto wanted to rule alone

without making an alliance with anyone. Sensing this, we commented in the November 1989 issue of *Manshoor* (the publication of which was restored soon after the restoration of democracy, however nominal, in the country, also coinciding with the removal of ban on unions and the slow re-employment of people in PIA and other corporations who had been unjustly removed under MLR 51 and 52): “If indeed the government wants to complete its five-year term, and if People’s Party wants to be elected again, then it should establish a true, solid, and sincere base through practical connections with Pakistan’s workers, peasants, and the oppressed. Leaving behind its confusion and uncertain attitude, it should take the courage to emerge fully on the side of the people. Treachery, duplicity, and cowardice are the beginning of a prolonged defeat, and if PPP isn’t able to change its course, nothing can save the federal government from certain and total failure. Without doubt, this reality is unpleasant and harsh, but it *is* reality.”

We supported PPP during the elections, despite knowing that it would be very difficult for any PPP candidate to win in Karachi. We campaigned for Saghir Hussain Jafri as a candidate for the national assembly. He was contesting from the constituency of Karachi Airport, and on behalf of the AEU, we had published a pamphlet in support for him. On the other hand, the freshly minted Karachi-based party soon to become a bigger sensation, the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) was also looking for support, and it was clear that its candidate was going to win from that constituency, but we stuck to our established principled position.

In PIA, we once again raised the slogan of unity, and desired a return to worker solidarity like the one we had in the past under the auspices of AEU. Opportunism and hypocrisy had destroyed any labor unity and solidarity. PPP brought out its own union by the name of People’s Unity of PIA Employees, and then established the People’s Labor Bureau. UPIAE Union, that had been formed when all other unions had been banned, was now separated

into two factions. The PIACE union of Jamaat-e-Islami also split into two. Later on, each of these factions were registered as independent unions. We also got Airways Employees Union registered again. By this count, in the same PIA where once there used to be one unregistered union in all representing workers of both East and West Pakistan, there were now six registered unions and counting only in this new, smaller, Pakistan. Solidarity among workers was essential, and those thousands of people who had been deprived of their jobs under the Martial Law Regulation Number 52 had to be brought back!

Luckily, momentarily, we had the ears of the PPP government. When the intelligence folks called me, I put forth my position, and said that only through unity and solidarity among workers, can the airline be saved. I told them how the conspiratorial tactics of Zia's martial law had destroyed the political climate of Pakistan. I also told those gentlemen that I would like to present our proposal and perspective to Benazir Bhutto herself, but things never moved ahead.

However, a positive change happened in the PIA management, when Arif Abbasi was brought in as the managing director. During martial law, Abbasi had been relieved of his responsibilities in PIA. He agreed that it was necessary to take back the workers and other employees and to restore their trust. It had been 11 months since the PPP had come into power, and while the government had announced their re-employment, and the bureaucracy that comprised of the National Industrial Relations Commission (chaired by Afzal Sindhu) was in place to handle this, the PIA management had not made any move despite the mounting pressure. In one meeting, Sindhu told me that if things stayed this way, he would resign as chairman of NIRC. I asked him to be a little patient; with Arif Abbasi as the brand new Managing Director of PIA, there was much hope that things would begin to move and problems solved. I suggested that they both meet.

Once Abbasi and Sindhu finally met, the process of restoring the jobs to these people laid off under MLR 52 began in earnest. The air in PIA was fragrant with long-awaited freedom. I told Abbasi that he should first give workers some time to restore their trust and confidence before holding a union referendum. I again proposed a unity of all unions. The PPP union, People's Unity wanted the referendum to happen right away, whereas I was of the opinion that having a referendum too soon would create divisions among a workers' body that was still trying to heal and consolidate itself.

It was necessary first to restore that trust and confidence, and also to let the organization itself recover. Irresponsible and unthinking members of PPP were insisting on having the referendum soon, in order for the People's Unity to capitalize on the PPP sympathies, win, and get to the work of propagating the party itself (rather than the workers' agenda). Abbasi was agreeing with me, and for the first time in the labour history of Pakistan, he brought together six unions, and had them sign a historic agreement, accepting for the very first time that a worker's salary should at minimum be equal to the value of 10 g of gold.

Abbasi was becoming really popular in PIA on the basis of his policies, and this popularity was making Benazir Bhutto uncomfortable, an unnecessary and irrational tendency she probably shared with her father. Thus, after only six months, he was removed from his position. The AEU called a meeting at the airport, and I said in my speech, "Madame, your father made a mistake in the case of PIA and you have repeated it. Now, you must face your political end as well."

After Abbasi's departure from PIA, I once ran into Taj Haider, a cousin of mine and also a leader in the PPP. I said to him that the government should not have removed Arif Abbasi while the airline was still on the road to recovery. He responded that if they had not removed him

from the post, then AEU would have won in the coming referendum. I was still bewildered by the extent of PPP's repulsion by our political line! After Abbasi's departure, there was a referendum in PIA, and just as the government had wanted, People's Unity was victorious. At the same time, the differences between Benazir and Nawaz Sharif were becoming more acute. That drama took a quick turn when, on 6 August 1990, President Ishaq dissolved the national assembly and ended the PPP government.

Benazir was replaced by G.M. Jatoi as the caretaker Prime Minister of the country and fresh elections were held on 24 October 1990. The IJI prevailed in these elections, and Nawaz Sharif became the next Prime Minister, as Ishaq continued as the President.

In the November 1990 editorial of *Manshoor*, I had written, "The presidential decree of 6 August had only removed PPP from power, but the results of 24 October have completely decimated the party." Indeed, PPP had repeated Z.A. Bhutto's mistake. His daughter was deploying the damning tactic right from the beginning: destroy allies, push them away to your opponents. Father and daughter did much harm and suffered greatly in turn. In the same issue of the magazine, we commented, "Our analysis has always been on behalf of the larger constituencies of workers, peasants, and the common people. We still believe that unless and until the common person doesn't self-confidently wish to change his own fate, oppressive classes and their factions in power will keep coddling and deceiving them. They will keep playing the game in which the rich enjoy the shade with the masses running around in the scorching sun. In the name of an unending and unconditional love for the people, this analysis has stood the test of all tests of time and political situation, and our faith has remained undeterred in every crisis. Not once but a thousand times, the history of the country will bear witness to the fact that we were right then, and true now. "

Reading this editorial really upset one of our subscribers and he became so angered that he wrote to us, “It seems like you are connected to CIA and ISI, because whenever things are happening in the country, you present your analysis and report the event before the fact.” In his letter, he mentioned our analysis and experience of Ayub, Yahya, Bhutto, and Zia. Our honorable reader should have understood that our analyses were correct and prescient because they were always based on a scientific class and political analysis.

A Quasi-Capitalist Prime Minister

During Zia’s regime, Nawaz Sharif was Governor of Punjab, and under the government of General Jilani, he was the Minister of Finance. In the aftermath of the airplane accident and the elections that followed, he became the Chief Minister of Punjab.

PPP had not expected that it would lose so badly in Punjab where it had enjoyed a history of abiding influence. This was because Sharif very effectively stopped and blocked PPP’s efforts and groundwork in the province. Forming the alliance IJI, Ishaq, Jatoi, Jamaat-e-Islami, and other various powers banded together to ensure that Benazir should be kept from becoming the Prime Minister again. Meanwhile, Benazir was sure that she would prevail since the US was behind her. She would talk about friendship with India and the resolution of the Kashmir issue, in a manner similar to the US and Indian positions on it—seemingly sufficient reasons for her confidence about returning to power.

During the caretaker government, Ishaq contrived various kinds of pressure on the PPP. PPP ministers, especially Benazir’s own husband Asif Zardari, were targeted through various charges and court cases. Many people were arrested, including the husband.

When Sharif came to power, Jam Sadiq Ali was made Chief Minister of Sind as a reward for his effective bothering and badgering of the PPP. The alliance between MQM and PPP had already come apart during Benazir's time. Exploiting the situation, Jam joined forces with MQM to hurt the PPP. An alliance between IJI and MQM emerged, ironically at the same time as the conflicts between Jamaat-e-Islami and MQM were worsening. There was tension and chaos all over the country. In Karachi and Sind, the crime rate was at its peak. The fights between PPP, MQM, and Jamaat-e-Islami were intensifying. There was violence, abductions, lives lost. The routes from Karachi to interior Sind and Punjab became most dangerous and treacherous. Buses were looted and it wasn't safe to travel in trains. The dacoits ruled the day. Communities were divided and gated, and torture chambers discovered. This unrest and chaos was discouraging investment, especially foreign investment. In Afghanistan, after the end of hostilities with the Soviet Union, the various militant Islamic factions were at each other's throats, and this was also impacting Pakistan. In this situation, the Prime Minister was having difficulties ruling effectively. The conflicts within the country were multiplying and sharpening every day.

Against this background, we continued to articulate and promote our class perspective through our magazine. Alongside that, we were also reenergizing Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz (PMM) as a platform for Pakistani workers and peasants. Due to an increase in our political activities, many of those who had shared our understanding of the world but had become distant due to misunderstandings or simply lack of understanding, started getting in touch with us again. In Punjab, by way of the Railway Workers' Union, our ties to the railways, the historical cradle of labour activity in the region, were restored. We took the PMM to Rawalpindi, Lahore, Raiwind, Kot Radha Kishan, Kasur, Faisalabad, Multan, among other cities in Punjab. In Sind, old connections in Tando Mohammed Khan, Hyderabad, etc., were revitalized.

In April 1991, I met with Senator Naseeruddin Jomezai who was also a leader in the Pakistan Muslim League. He was the Baluchistan President of the IJI. I found him to have a positive attitude toward us and our policies. When I met him I said that as he was the President of IJI in Baluchistan, and Jamaat-e-Islami was part of it, it didn't seem possible for us to make an alliance with them. He responded that the Jamaat-e-Islami was indeed against him as well and there were new conflicts and differences within IJI on the whole. He said that even Nawaz Sharif was no longer willing to be bullied by Jamaat-e-Islami. Long-standing devotees of Jamaat-e-Islami, such as Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, among others, were also unhappy with Sharif. Jatoi was already put off, because he felt that he was deprived of his right when he didn't become Prime Minister. In this way, contradictions were emerging within the ruling and oppressive classes, and Sharif was indeed unable to handle this fight on his own. Jomezai concurred with our class perspective and had already been part of our *Manshoor* fora. He was of the opinion that we should meet the Prime Minister as a precursor to something more.

In the final days of April 1991, I got a phone call from Pakistan Television Karachi and they invited me to the station. I thought that perhaps their workers' union had invited me to some meeting. It turned out that this was a TV discussion programme for discussion on May Day, moderated by Agha Masood Husain. In this discussion, the capitalists were represented by Dadabhoi whereas I was being invited as a representative of labour. It was my position that the tribal and feudal system should end, in order to further industrialize the country and in adherence to the laws of the International Labour Organization, en route to nurturing the working-class as an ally of peasants in a true and broad-based democratic struggle. The contractual system and 12-hour workdays were a stain on Pakistan's name which could be washed off if there was a will to do so.

Next day was May Day, and I was to attend a big rally at the Railway Institute in Karachi, bringing together the Railway Workers' Union, the Airways Employees' Union, and Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz. (One such a gathering had already happened a while back under the auspices of *Manshoor*, in which Senator Jomezai was the guest of honor). In my speech, I reiterated our demand for the abolition of feudalism, and offered to form a united front with businessmen in order to accomplish that. Our stance has always been that the country should experience a free growth of capitalism so that the workers and peasants partake in it as distinct classes in a practical and political sense, a precondition for any real class struggle in the country. Only after that could the peasant and the worker conceivably get together to create a true people's democracy.

One link of this chain was our meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on 27 August 1991. In this meeting, I was accompanied by Mirza Ibrahim, Haji Saeed Arain, Shaukat Chaudhry, and Naseeruddin Jomezai. The exchange was open and honest. It is true that the feudals were inimical to even the class he was representing. We spoke openly about Jamaat-e-Islami, PPP, and MQM. The Prime Minister heard our observations and welcomed them. I impressed upon him the need to unite with workers and peasants in order to attack feudalism. I also asked him for a good leader in PIA, referring to Arif Abbasi. There was no government official at the meeting. As I left, he was in agreement about making a united front with PMM. He said clearly that 14 people from his ruling party, and 14 people from PMM should get together and form a committee in order to solve the country's problems. Jomezai, who was anxious about the meeting before it happened, was quite relaxed and gratified with its results. I had thought and hoped that the Prime Minister would follow through on these promises, but no advances were made.

On the national level, the apprehensions and fears that I had both gathered and expressed in the meeting with the Prime Minister came true to such an extent in the weeks and months to come that on 17 April 1993, he addressed the people and discussed his differences with the President. He was thinking that he would be able to dislodge the President, but on 18 April 1993, after meeting with Benazir, the President dissolved the national assembly and deposed Sharif, making Balkh Sher Mazari the caretaker Prime Minister.

Sharif protested his dismissal at the Supreme Court, and the Chief Justice Naseem Hasan Shah restored to him to his position. Later on, on 19 July 1993, the Army chief General Kakar went ahead and got rid of both the President and the Prime Minister in a coup. The Senate Chairman Waseem Sajjad became President as per the Constitution, and Uncle Sam sent over his representative Moin Qureshi to be made the caretaker Prime Minister.

The Revolving Doors, Guarded by the Pakistan Army

Elections were held in the country later that year, and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) split into two factions. The PML-Junego group supported Benazir, and she came into power for a second time. Farooq Leghari, then the General Secretary of PPP, became President. In Punjab, Manzur Wattoo of PML-Junejo became Chief Minister. In NWFP, ANP and PML-Nawaz joined to form the government, picking Sabir Shah as Chief Minister. Soon, PPP brought a vote of no confidence against him, and he was replaced by Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, effectively giving the PPP this provincial government as well. In Sind, PPP made the government with Abdullah Shah as Chief Minister, whereas MQM chose not to join the government. Murtaza Bhutto, the elder Bhutto son, returned to Pakistan, but under Benazir's government, he remained in the jail. Benazir removed her mother Begum Nusrat Bhutto from the chairpersonship of the PPP, and

became party chairperson herself. In Baluchistan, Akbar Bugti's party split into two, and Yusuf Magsi became Chief Minister. The national assembly speaker was Yusuf Raza Gilani, who was until recently the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

In 1994, there was quite an uproar about the Mehran Bank scandal. Both the government and opposition left no filthy tactic behind, trying their best to insult and disrepute each other. In this scandal of millions of rupees, both sides seem to be complicit. The former commander-in-chief Mirza Aslam Baig who was part of the PML-Junejo group, confessed to taking 140 million rupees, but he said that President Ishaq knew of this, and that this money was given to IJI for the election. Thus, in removing Benazir and bringing Sharif to power, both the President and the Army chief were complicit.

Benazir used to think that she had made the wisest and safest decision by making a member of her own party the President. Murtaza Bhutto was a member of the provincial assembly, but was killed in a police encounter. Benazir alleged that the President had a hand in her brother's murder. Leghari went ahead and colluded with the opposition, and once again the President dissolved the National Assembly, and removed PPP from the government. Malik Mairaj Khalid was appointed caretaker Prime Minister. Elections were held, and Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister again. Leghari resigned and Sharif made Rafiq Tarar the president.

Sharif also appointed Pervez Musharraf the commander-in-chief. When differences between him and the Army chief arose on the issue of Kargil, among others, Sharif decided that he should replace Musharraf. The differences worsened and intensified, and when the General was returning from a foreign tour, the Prime Minister forbade his from landing at Karachi. The General contacted his friends on the plane and his plane did land. A coup ensued, and on 12 October 1999 the General dissolved the government and became President himself.

This was the fourth time in the short history of Pakistan that an Army chief had done away with an elected government. And, sadly, every single time, somehow the people feel relieved and even welcome the military ruler, but not surprisingly, they end up only disillusioned and damaged. After the removal of Sharif, the BBC reported that every circle in Pakistan had welcomed this change. Western commentators noted, surprised, that there was no protest at the dismissal of Sharif at the hands of an Army chief. Perhaps Pakistani people think the nominally democratic regimes swindle them far more, and to boot, none of the problems are solved. While the West can be seemingly perturbed by this, the sad fact is that the majority of Pakistan has always breathed some sigh of relief at the removal of a nominal democratic tyrant of sorts.

When General Musharraf came into power he said that the Pakistan army would not stay in power for even a single day beyond what was the most necessary. He wanted to pave the way for true democracy to be nurtured in our country. Addressing the people, he announced that Pakistan was at a crossroads again: that it was in our hands to make it or break it. He promised a wholesome effort to build.

But, what happened? A military dictator was inducted into power in January 2004 by putting into effect an amendment to the Constitution using the ill-gotten power, finagling the approval of the parliament for another five years of unchallenged rule. This measure validated and legitimized everything that had happened in the past four years, all the unconstitutional steps, such as the military coup, suspicious referenda leading to a sustained presidency, the abuse of government resources to hand-pick a party to win the election, the indiscriminate use of legal and illegal means, the devastation of the legal machinery, and the forgiveness of criminal politicians en route to mutually beneficial partnerships.

When the general came into power, we wrote in *Manshoor*: “It is important to be careful and we hope that he will not adopt the path and method of the previous military dictators. Democracy is democracy; there are no multiple faces. Without abolishing feudalism, there can be no democracy, because you cannot put the cart before the horse. Will the General realize that he should create priorities and do first things first? If wishes were horses, we would ride and Pakistan would be a piece of heaven. Ghulam Mohammed, Iskander Mirza, Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Zia-ul-Haq, Benazir Bhutto, and Nawaz Sharif (both twice), have expressed many a noble sentiment and wish, but Pakistan has been continually hurtling towards and even courting disaster.”

Sharif was arrested but the Saudi government intervened so that Musharraf would let him leave the country in their protection and trust. After this, the Sharif family left and resided in Jeddah as a guest of the monarchy.

As has been mentioned before, various politicians welcomed the General as the saviour. Jamaat-e-Islami’s Qazi Hussain Ahmed said that the General had done what he had wanted to do himself. As time passed, following their own vested interests, various parties were bent on the restoration of a democracy only in name. First, an all parties’ conference was called under the leadership of Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, and then an Alliance for the Restoration for Democracy (ARD) was formed. In his own mind, the General probably thought that he was making his grip on power stronger and stronger, but the truth is that the economic situation of the country was leading the government of Pakistan into deeper and deeper waters with the World Bank and the IMF. After the events of September 11, 2001, the US appointed Pakistan as a frontline state, sounding a death knell for any residual sovereignty.

General Musharraf announced elections, and on 19 November 2002, PML-Quaid (PML-Q) group (yet another faction of the founding party of Pakistan) came into power, defeating Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA, an alliance of mostly reactionary Islamic parties in the aftermath of September 11) and the PPP in various places. The PML-Q was a collection of various factions of the Muslim League, and the moment Zafrullah Jamali became Prime Minister, these tensions started to tear the alliance asunder. This situation was difficult for the General to handle by himself, leading to the move to appoint a “non-political/nonpartisan” Prime minister should be appointed. On the recommendation of US, an economist from Citibank, and a stalwart of the private capitalist sector, Shaukat Aziz, was made Prime Minister.

Then came 2007. There was talk of elections and various oppressive classes, their parties and groups, tried to enter practical and ensure mental alliances with each other. Nominal parliamentary democracy, which has absolutely no roots in Pakistan, was the slogan of the day. To us it was clear that this was an old story being repeated, with the same ruling classes in a power battle with each other.

There have been numerous elections in the country and many of them have been certified as free, fair, and transparent by foreign representatives, but no fundamental conditions changed, only the faces did, even if sparingly. Millions of people continue to ruled by a few hundred who have remained the contractors, the brokers, and the owners of the country. Seeing this drama enacted over and over again, people lose faith in the electoral process, and stay away from voting, so fewer and fewer people decide who comes to power, if the elections are fair. Otherwise, a doctored statistic is all the victor needs. Whoever succeeds in an election tries to recover his expenses during his window of opportunity in power. Every dictator in our history has eventually hold elections, often even more than one, but to what ends? The fate of those who

held the elections and the fate of the country is in front of us. We have even suffered the break-up of the country, with no change in behavior. In our country, the funeral march has been played for democracy over and over again.

At every turn, I have presented my political analysis and observations, and the current situation of the country is completely due to internal elements where the feudal and tribal systems are still healthy and flourishing. 98% of the people of the country are fated to live under feudalism, and Pakistan is under ever more open dictates of a rejuvenated and unabashed US imperialism. Thus, a parliamentary democracy the slogan of which all the supposedly freedom-loving classes are parroting, would only ever be a sham. Parliamentary democracy is a product of a capitalist system, and as long as feudalism is thriving in our country, the capitalism system cannot be nurtured and neither can its accompanying parliamentary democracy prosper.

(Manuscript that I have ends here).

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Abbasi, Arif Ali Khan
Abbasi, Arif Ali Khan Abbasi
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Ahmed, Nabi
Ahmed, Qazi Hussain
Ahmedis
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Ali, Chaudhry Mohammed
Aligarh University
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Alliance for the Restoration for Democracy (ARD)
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Anjuman Mufad-e-Niswan
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Bogra, Mohammed Ali
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Chundrigar. I.I.
Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA)
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Communist Party of China
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