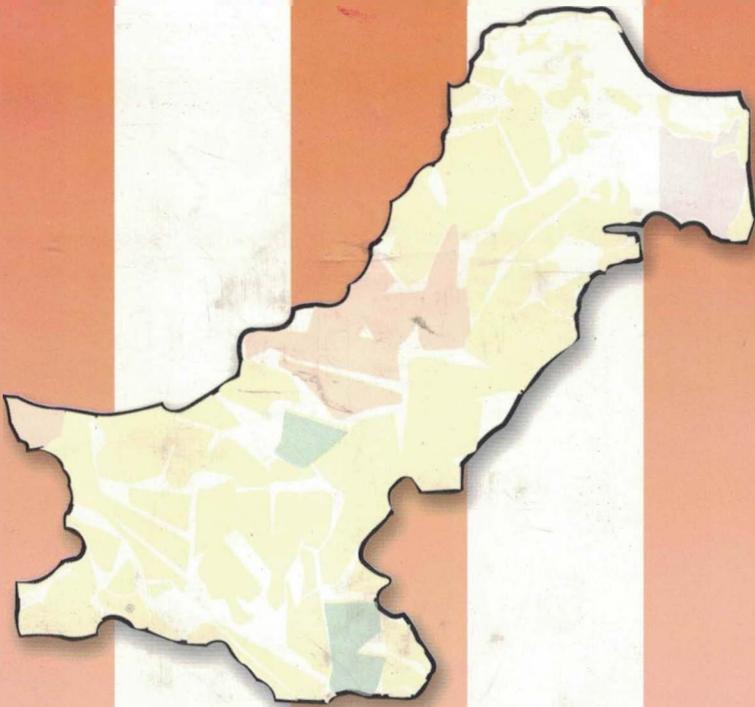


SHATTERED HOPE



Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto
and
Ameer Bukhsh Khan Bhutto

Introduction by Dr. Mubashir Hasan

SHATTERED HOPES

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

and

AMEER BUKHSH KHAN BHUTTO

Introduction by Dr. Mubashir Hasan



FEROZSONS (Pvt) LTD.

LAHORE - RAWALPINDI - KARACHI

ISBN 978 969 0 02171 7

First Published 2009 by
Ferozsons (Pvt) Ltd.,
60, Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Lahore, Pakistan
277, Peshawar Road, Rawalpindi
Mehran Heights, Main Clifton Road, Karachi

Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto and Ameer Bukhsh Khan Bhutto

SHATTERED HOPES

Copyright © Ferozsons (Pvt) Ltd., 2009

All Rights Reserved.
No part of this publication may be
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or
transmitted, in any form or by any means
(electronic or otherwise), without
the prior written permission
of the Publisher.

The views expressed by the authors do not
necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.

Printed in Pakistan at
Ferozsons (Pvt) Ltd., (Printing Div.) Lahore.
Published by
Zaheer Salam, Ferozsons (Pvt) Ltd.,
60, Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam,
Lahore-54000, Pakistan

email: support@ferozsons.com.pk
www.ferozsons.com.pk

CONTENTS

SECTION ONE SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

INTRODUCTION	5
1 WHERE IS THE ACTION?	13
2 SALVATION IN DEVOLUTION	16
3 PLAYING WITH FIRE	19
4 THE FAT IS IN THE FIRE	22
5 THE MYTH OF FEUDALISM	25
6 WHERE IS THE AGENDA?	29
7 DOES THE AGENDA EXIST?	33
8 SHATTERED HOPES	39
9 MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY	42
10 THE POLITICAL CIRCUS	45
11 9/11 AND THE AFTERMATH	48
12 DO WE WANT MORE DAMS AND CANALS OR PAKISTAN?	51
13 WHAT BECAME OF GOOD GOVERNANCE?	54
14 IS ANYONE SAFE?	61
15 DOES THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE MEAN BETTER GOVERNANCE?	64
16 DO THE PEOPLE MATTER?	67
17 ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ASKED BY DAILY DAWN	70
18 WHITHER SHAUKAT AZIZ?	74
19 FUTURE OF SINDH	77
20 THE POLITICAL SCENARIO IN SINDH	82
21 POLITICS OF OPPORTUNISM	84
22 THE GLOBETROTTING RULERS	87
23 MUSHARRAF'S MAGNUM OPUS	90
24 THE DEAL AGAINST THE NATION	93
25 WHY NOT A DEAL WITH THE MILITANTS?	96

SECTION TWO AMEER BUKHSH KHAN BHUTT O

26	UNCLE SAM'S REAL BEDFELLOW	101
27	US BESTRIDING THE NARROW WORLD LIKE A COLOSSUS	106
28	TOWARDS DYNAMIC CONSTITUTIONALISM	109
29	EXTRAORDINARY POLITICS	113
30	WHILE SINDH BURNS	117
31	CONFEDERAL SYSTEM THE ONLY WAY OUT	121
32	TURNING AWAY FROM FACTS	136
33	THE GENERAL ELECTION CARNIVAL	140
34	THE DOCTRINE OF 'REGIME CHANGE'	144
35	KALABAGH DAM AND FEUDALISM	148
36	A CRIME AGAINST NATIONS	151
37	SHIFTING SOCIAL PARADIGMS	155
38	THE 1940 RESOLUTION IS THE ANSWER	164
39	WHY IS PAKISTAN NOT SHINING?	166
40	WHAT DO THE NATIONALISTS WANT?	169
41	WHAT IS THE PRICE OF HONOUR?	172
42	POLITICAL FEUDALISM	175
43	A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO POLITICS	178
44	ROLE OF THE SILENT MAJORITY	183
45	WHAT WILL BECOME OF SINDH?	186
46	THE WATER ISSUE	189
47	WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?	192
48	IS PAKISTAN A FAILED STATE?	195
49	WHERE IS QUAID-E-AZAM'S PAKISTAN?	198
50	SADDAM'S EXECUTION: LESSONS FOR MUSLIM RULERS	201
51	A TALE OF TWO PUBLIC MEETINGS	204
52	BLOODSTAINED BLACK COATS	207
53	THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BEGINNING TO BLOW	210
54	THE SHADOW OF KALABAGH DAM	213
55	THE WILL TO BE FREE	217
56	THE MURDER OF DEMOCRACY	221
57	FUTURE BELONGS TO THE MASSES	225
58	BACK TO SQUARE ONE	228

INTRODUCTION

By DR MUBASHIR HASAN

Just as the people of Western Europe and North America have evolved the modern civilization following the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, similarly the people of the Indus had created a civilization of their own as the age of agriculture dawned on the planet earth ten thousand years ago. It was a Unique and distinctive civilization.

In the and areas of the world the Sindhis were matched only by the Egyptians along the Nile and by Sumerians on the Tigris.

The achievement of the Sindhis was most remarkable. Their lands were arid, not having the advantage that the rain fed lands of India, China and South Asia had. The people of the Indus invented irrigation without building barrages or violating the sanctity of the river. They developed new seeds for crops that would grow in the freshly laid soil of the Indus in its distinctive climate and created an entirely new way of life.

The great resource of Sindh was the river Indus. The mighty river which brought waters from the rains and glaciers of the Karakoram and Himalayas to the Arabian Sea became their lifeline, indeed the fountainhead of the civilization they created.

As technology progressed it became possible for a section of the community to produce food and fuel for everyone. Others became available to specialize as masons, carpenters, ironsmiths, potters, weavers etc. Still others devoted themselves to arts, music, literature and higher philosophical pursuits and scholarships, the foundations of a new civilisation.

Thousands of years ago, the Sindhi society became rich and prosperous. Its fame spread far and wide. As a society it evolved high moral standards. Its people learnt to live in peace and harmony with each other and their neighbours. It shunned violence and produced no Alexanders, Abduls or Mahmood Ghaznavis. Its heroes were Sufis and Saints. Islam came to Sindh in the 7th Century AD and in due course, Sindhi Islam became truly the Islam of peace and goodwill.

History is witness that rich societies are always a potential target for looters and plunderers from foreign lands. Big and small military chiefs and imperil minded generals have always cast coveted glances over the rich lands and peace loving non-violent peoples. Throughout history adventurers from Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Arabia

and India invaded and conquered Sindh or parts of it. But they dared not settle here. They could not master the technology of agriculture the Sindhis had mastered over centuries. How to produce gold from the kacha lands and how to use the water that spilled over the banks of the Indus during the rainy season, only the Sindhis knew how. They could not possibly like the climate so different from their native land. The mighty Indus inspired awe in them. Its extent was mind boggling for them.

Above all the people of Sindh loved their freedom. Being peace loving, the ferocity and ruthlessness of invaders was taboo for them, the Sindhis always settled for the payment of an annual tribute to the invader in return for total freedom for their decentralized polity. In a remarkably sustained way the Sindhis were able to preserve the civilization century after century. As soon as the suzerain power weakened in its native land the people of Sindh made a bid for complete independence. Thus there were periods in history when Sindh was completely independent as sovereign country.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Major General Napier of Queen Victoria's army annexed Sindh into the British Indian Empire breaking a solemn agreement with the Mirs for the autonomy of Sindh. The Sindhis resisted but lost.

In the early decades of the twentieth century as British power weakened especially after the World War I, the question of self determination was foremost in the minds of the Sindhi politicians. They strongly canvassed and the All India Muslim League Session held in Aligarh in Dec. 1925 demanded that Sindh be separated from Bombay and made a province in its own right.

David Page, in his book *Prelude to Partition, 1982*, (Oxford University Press) discussing the proceedings at this session, speaks of "the clash between provincial and all India interests, the Punjabis decided to cut themselves, adrift from their co-religionists elsewhere and stakeout a claim for themselves, less in relation to the subcontinent as a whole and more in relation, to the Muslim North West."

David Page further quotes Sir Malcolm Hailey, Member (Home) of the Executive Council of Governor General India, narrating this change of mood to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Permanent Secretary at the India Office, in a letter to say how far this separatist trend had progressed:

".... they seriously think of breaking away from the All India Muslim League and starting a Federation of their own. This will seek to embrace the Punjab, parts of the U.P., the North West Frontier, Baluchistan and Sindh; it is part of the programme to secure Sindh for Punjab and to give up Delhi ... they openly say that this in itself is only a preparation for a larger Federation which shall embrace Afghanistan and perhaps Persia.

"..... You will notice that the dream of the future to which I have alluded does not include Bengal. For the moment, the Northern India Moslem has given up his co-religionist in Bengal as hopeless and seems to expect no assistance from Bengal in the cause of Islam."

David Page describes Hailey's comments: "Twenty years before the creation of Pakistan and forty-five years before the creation of Bangladesh these were prophetic insights."

No wonder that the people of Sindh had never felt comfortable with the Punjabis who had come to settle down in Sindh off and on. They complained that settling farmers of Punjab in Sindh was not proper as they were culturally different from the local people.

They were suspicious politically as well, apprehended that the government at Lahore was established and run for years by British military. For a long time it had remained province of a Lieutenant Governor. They did not want official relations with such a province.

The struggle of the people of Sindh for self-determination has been determined and consistent. At the Round Table Conference held in London in 1930, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah again demanded the separation of Sindh from Bombay.

Finally Sindh was made a province under the Government of India Act 1935.

Elections were held in 1936. In 1946 G. M. Syed presented a petition in the Sindh Assembly in which it was demanded that Muslims as a separate nation are capable of forming government in places where they are in majority. If Indian Muslims were placed under a single govt it would surely lead to internal strife. It would have serious repercussions. All Muslim Members supported the petition. It was a call for autonomy bordering on independence.

The Muslims of Sindh overwhelmingly backed the League in its quest for Pakistan. In doing so they believed that at last the domination of their land by a power originating in far off places will end for ever. The federal administration of Pakistan will be able to guarantee their national security against foreign powers and they will be able to enjoy fullest freedom and autonomy as never before in history.

It, was not to be.

Pakistan came into being in August 1947. Type new government chose Karachi, a beautiful modern Sindhi city, to be the capital of Pakistan. For all practical purposes the government of Pakistan turned out to be nothing more than the imposition of the imperial system of governance devised by the British in the nineteenth century to enslave India through a combined power of the civil and military services. The governed had no say in it, whatsoever. In charge of the system were mostly senior officers who were Urdu or Punjabi speaking and very few were Sindhi speaking. However, Sindhi or non-Sindhi they were all authoritative, trained to rule through utilizing the powers of police, magistrates, lockups and intelligence services. Their actions showed that they cared a little about the democratic aspiration of the people. The people did not know what was good for them, only the officer corps knew, so they believed.

Suddenly Karachi became the focus of outsiders and govt officials. The new rulers of Pakistan did not like the capital of Pakistan to be a city in the jurisdiction of the government of Sindh. When Quaid-Azam tried to take the city under central jurisdiction, the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution against it. On, February 20, 1948 *Yaum-e-Karachi* was celebrated. Students of all parts of Sindh (except Karachi) decided to stay away from their schools. Processions were taken out all over the province. A big landlord and Chief Minister of Sindh, a person known to be a man of steel, Mohammad Ayub Khuhro opposed the move. This was the first brick of the Sindhi Mohajir confrontation.

The proposal to separate Karachi from Sindh was as senseless as separating that of Lahore from Punjab or Peshawar from NWFP would have been. This was a politically naive and dictatorial proposal. In response to Khuhro's opposition the Centre collected evidence against him, tried him and he was barred from office for 3 years. Political opposition was curbed by an authoritarian dictate.

Political unrest in Sindh had started soon after the establishment of Pakistan. The

Central government wanted the Government of Sindh to be completely under its control rendering the elected assembly of the province a tool in the hands of the centre. Ayub Khuhro was dismissed in 1948 and in the same year Pir Illahi Buksh became chief minister. In 1949 he was dismissed. Then Yousuf Haroon was appointed and dismissed in 1950. Then came Qazi Fazalullah who was dismissed in 1951.

The struggle for the supremacy over Sindh went on and on. The time came when that the elected bodies of Sindh and that of the NWFP could not be politically dominated by the Centre. The provinces of Sindh and the Frontier were abolished in 1954 and merged in a new province of West Pakistan with its capital at Lahore.

These administrative measures were political in nature. Political realities were not kept in view. No effort was made to think about alienation of the Sindhis that would be caused as a result. Issues were not presented to elected people. The elected leaders were helpless before officials.

Once again Sindh found itself occupied through the same old imperial governance.

But it was a different kind of occupation, quite unlike anything the people of Sindh had experienced in the past. Almost the entirety of the Muslim employees of the government of India migrated to Karachi. Along with the new government came waves after waves of immigrants from India looking for new pastures in a new nation. Under the patronage of the officers and Urdu speaking politicians the Mohajirs were settled according to a political plan in a manner that it should become their vote bank. They would then be able to enter the Assembly as the chosen ones by Mohajirs.

The new rulers were different from the conquerors of the past, who would come to Sindh to exact a tribute and leave Sindhis to their own means; these new ones had come to settle down in Sindh on a permanent basis. They wanted a share in the political and economic life. They also wanted property.

Because of the exodus of the Hindus from Sindh to India huge chunks of property was available in Sindh. The government decided to compensate those migrants from India who had left their property in India. The scheme for allotting the property evacuated by the Hindus required the evaluation of claims for the property left behind in India.

There was a lot of bungling and frauds in the business of settling down the refugees. An extraordinary number of exaggerated and false claims were filed, accepted on perfunctory evidence and the Hindu lands and real estate distributed indiscriminately. It caused a lot of resentment among the Sindhis. They felt that it was their wealth which was wantonly distributed. It was the wealth Sindhi labour and farmers had produced. It was best to leave it as common public property, they thought.

Rapidly, the port of Karachi became the hub of all imports and exports of Pakistan. The city flourished on a gigantic scale. Over the years large inflow of migrants from India and from other provinces of Pakistan, made Sindhis a minority. Karachi became the largest city of Urdu, Balochi and Pashto speaking people. Until 1971 there was a large population of Bengalis as well. The situation was not to the liking of the Sindhis whose city had been stolen by immigrants from far and wide.

Every people love and cherish their language. Without language a people is nothing. Sindhi was the official language of Sindh before partition. It had its literature and script. The revenue records and voters lists were maintained in Sindhi. It was incumbent on the migrants to Sindh to learn Sindhi. Instead the new government decreed that learning Sindhi would be optional in schools. Thundered Prime Minister Liaquat Ali

Khan, in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, that the country was made for the Muslims of India, the language, of Indian Muslims was Urdu. It was a preposterous claim. Except the Muslims of UP, Hyderabad state, parts of Bihar and Delhi, the Indian Muslims spoke and read the native language of the area they lived in.

The people of Sindh were greatly perturbed over the language issue. In 1972, when the Chief Minister of Sindh, Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto tried to meet the grievance of the Sindhis pertaining to language by passing the Language Bill in the Sindh Assembly, there was considerable rioting in Karachi.

Then there was the vital question of the waters of the Indus. In the beginning of the twentieth century, but for the diversion of water from two the canals, one from the Ravi and the other from the Sutlej in the nineteenth century, all the water of the five tributaries of this great river flowed down to the Arabian Sea. Even in the days of the lowest winter supplies, nearly 70,000 cubic feet per second flowed past Hyderabad as the century had dawned. The flows during the rest of the year amounted to a million cubic feet per second and much higher during the rainy season in the upper catchment areas.

From the oldest days the civilization of Sindh was beholden to the waters of river Indus. The focus of culture, politics and economic progress was the river Indus. With merciless building of scores and scores of canals from second to the sixth decade of the 20th century, alarm bells started ringing in Sindh. Punjab was blamed and in 1930 Indus Water Commission was established on the issue of water. The Commission had just prepared its recommendation when the country was partitioned. The canal construction continued.

In the sixties large supplies of the Indus river were gifted to India without consulting Sindh by signing the Indus Basin Waters Treaty. Sindh was once again robbed of its greatest resource. The injustice was followed by the building of dams and reservoirs in the Indus and Jehlum rivers. The winter supplies for Sindh were reduced further.

Today not a trickle of water flows past Hyderabad for nine months in a year. Never had the sanctity of a great river been so brutally and mercilessly violated in history.

Six decades have gone by since the establishment of Pakistan. The performance of the rulers has worsened by the year. Six presidents, twelve elected prime ministers have been dismissed in violation of the constitution. Eleven parliaments have been dissolved in a similar manner.

In the following pages, Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, a brave and conscientious son of Sindh, and his son Ameer Buksh Bhutto, narrate in articles and papers written by them, aspects of the story of misrule over Pakistan during the last eight years. Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto is unique among Sindhis in as much as that for his experience in the government and as a citizen with a sharp political intellect, he concluded long ago that the basic problem of Pakistan was profoundly rooted in the suppression of the rights of the nations. He has, stood for those rights with devotion and consistency.

Despite many setbacks and disappointments, the people of Sindh under the leadership of persons like Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, have remained devoted to the concept of Pakistan, in which every people in Pakistan enjoy maximum freedom, in a structure of governance in which the Centre enjoys powers and performs duties only to the extent bestowed by the provinces.

SECTION ONE

Articles

by

Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto

WHERE IS THE ACTION?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

November 10, 1999

The corrupt and incompetent democracies of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir had over the past eleven years, become totally intolerable. Not only had the country been bankrupted, but all the institutions had been destroyed. Worse still is the fact that corruption, lies, cheating, disloyalty, treachery and inefficiency etc. had become so deeply incorporated in our way of life, that serious moral degeneration had taken hold. In Pakistan, civil governments on the average have not lasted for more than fifteen months. And with change manifestly precipitated by Nawaz Sharif's own folly, the end for him had inevitably come.

The people accepted the change on 12th October with relief, and although mountains did not move, the agenda announced by the new incumbent, General Pervez Musharraf, was welcomed. The people saw in it solutions to the very many problems that have plagued Pakistan since the Zia days. Although unpreparedness on the part of the rulers did not signify a good start, the latter did seem fully aware of the maladies that grip the country. The people began to hope for better things to come.

As the months pass, however, the indecisiveness shown by the government in coming to grips with problems, is becoming increasingly clear. In his first broadcast, the Chief Executive declared that the armed forces were the only institution that had not been destroyed. Such being the case a vast administrative machine is at his disposal, supplemented by the civilian administration, such as it is, together with unshackled authority, to put things right. Thus quick and correct decisions with instant and firm implementation, which is the essence of good governance, is expected. The results on this count are already disappointing: The only people so far singled out for their misdeeds are the defaulters, and even these have been given a grace period of one month. Somehow the banks took this as a signal for an instant clamp down on the small defaulters. So much so, that the Chief Executive had to intervene to stop this. Then, the accounts of all politicians were ordered to be sealed regardless of the fact that in that number are included men of honour and integrity who have unblemished records of service for which they enjoy the respect of the people. This very first act of the new regime is reminiscent of the dragnet that was thrown during Operation Clean-Up (1992-93). True, some terrorists and bandits were eliminated in that operation,

but dozens of innocent citizens also died and hundreds suffered jail, torture and humiliation. The relief that came was in fact out-weighed by the harm caused.

It was announced that those politicians who were not defaulters could use their accounts, while others could also do so for basic and essential personal and household expenses for which no yardstick, procedure or rules were prescribed. In the end it did not matter because the banks have refused to differentiate and all and sundry are still barred from using their accounts, leading to much injustice and hardship. These measures are not only damaging for banking in the country, but have also led to a loss of confidence in the ability of the government to operate with the slickness that is essential.

The matter of the general sales tax and the increase in oil prices has raised its head again. This made headlines one day, followed by a threat of strike by the traders the next day. On the third day the Finance Minister denied the whole thing. Similarly the referendum: an announcement of it one day and a backing out the next day. Closing down PIA offices and then reopening them. This conveys an impression of indecisiveness on the part of the government, or at least mishandling of the situation. The choice of the Cabinet has also generated surprise. 'Is this the best choice out of a hundred and forty million people?' is the question on everyone's lips. Merit and excellence has certainly not been the criteria for this selection. Traditional supporters of military rule and constitutional subversion, outdated generals and bureaucrats together with unknowns and those who have been tested and have failed are a bunch that does not inspire much confidence. This cabinet in no way radiates energy, dynamism and effulgence which may generate hope and optimism.

Coming now to priorities listed by the government: defaulters are indeed culprits who should be dealt with, but are they the only wrong-doers? Many would agree that corruption is worse than default. In Benazir's time Pakistan was labelled the second most corrupt country in the world. By now it must be on the top of the list. A UN survey shows that a hundred billion rupees disappear every year in corruption, and the Chief Executive has admitted to the world that no institution in Pakistan is free from corruption. Then there is drug dealing, gun-running, smuggling, adulteration, tax evasion, murder, kidnapping, dacoities and robberies and much more. The hatchet should have by now fallen at least on the most notorious of these criminals who deserve no clemency. It is no exaggeration to say that the miseries of the people would be reduced by more than half if there was no police force in the country. It is a disgrace that these guardians of the person, property and honour of the people are the greatest violators of the same. They resort to loot, plunder and terrorism against the weak and vanquished, but display a remarkable skill in avoiding any encounter with criminals and outlaws. However, the police has the knack of becoming indispensable to the people in power by which means they always avoid accountability. Similarly, WAPDA is in serious contest with the police for the title of most corrupt and incompetent. The armed forces are already in control of WAPDA but although the consequences have been painful for the consumer, not a single WAPDA official has been touched even though the wrongs that the consumer has been made to suffer for, in physical and material terms, are the product of the corruption and connivance of WAPDA officials.

It is becoming increasingly visible that the new government is deeply prejudiced against politicians. It can hardly be blamed. During the past eleven years of the Nawaz/Benazir rule, politicians in power thoroughly disgraced themselves. They proved to be corrupt, incompetent, illiterate, insincere and generally useless people who have not

only made politics a disreputable profession but also caused serious harm to the country. Despite all that, there are a small minority of politicians who have not been involved in such shameful conduct and have been vocal critics of the same. They have maintained their integrity and unblemished record at a great deal of personal sacrifice while living in times when even decency has become a handicap. They have the ability and honesty to serve the people and do a better job of putting things right than clueless individuals who have no rapport with the masses and are unfamiliar with their grievances and aspirations.

It must be emphasised that the culminating point of the new regime's efforts must be the introduction of 'true democracy' which the Chief Executive has talked about. But what is 'true democracy'? We know now that it is not the centralised federalism which has been practiced for fifty-two years and has brought us to this disastrous situation. It has prevented stability and solidarity in Pakistan and broken the country in 1971. We also know that such federalism is not what the creators of Pakistan had in mind for this country. There are many utterances of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah in which he has referred to Canadian, Australian and Swiss types of systems as most suitable. This is because he knew that when Pakistan came into existence it would be a union of historically independent states which would group together to form a multinational country. The Quaid-e-Azam was familiar with the lessons of history, which taught him that centralised federalism cannot operate in multinational states. Therefore he was committed to a decentralised system which forms an integral part of the Pakistan Resolution (1940) which unequivocally lays down that the provinces must be 'autonomous and sovereign', borrowing the term from the Swiss constitution. This is true democracy for Pakistan and the Chief Executive has spelled it out by promising devolution right down to the grass roots level. It means the end of the dictatorship of Islamabad, political and economic freedom for the provinces and a government of the people in the strictest sense of the word.

The rulers must pull up their socks. They have a big agenda before them supplemented by very many promises of removing all evils. Governors and ministers must stop piling up promises and start showing results or a sense of *deja vu* will set in. The people must not be kept waiting for long. They are already asking 'where is the action?'

SALVATION IN DEVOLUTION

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

December 2, 1999

While the seven point agenda of the new government has been accepted by the people, the most important point remains the promise of devolution. This is also basic to the implementation of the other six points on the agenda. But the government seems so deeply entangled in its first step of dealing with defaulters, that it has not been able to focus on crime, corruption, maladministration, police terror, etc. all of which goes on as if Benazir/Nawaz are still in power. Such being the case, devolution appears to be a far off thing. In any case, the government seems to have moved in the opposite direction: instead of starting the process of decentralization it is strengthening the centre by setting up the National Security Council, National Reconstruction Bureau, the Federal Cabinet, Coordinating Body and Economic Advisory Council. This does not augur well for devolution and these bodies will no doubt trip up each other in the manner of too many cooks.

It would have been more appropriate, since Islamabad has to be cut down to size, to have a single body at the top and what could be more in keeping with devolution than to make the Council of Common Interest such a supreme body? It could be reconstituted with the chief executive as its head and three or four genuine and clean representatives of the people from each of the four provinces, as members.

The paramount need today is not only to have an unblemished set-up at the top, but also one linked with the people. A purely military bureaucratic government assisted by intellectuals and technicians can only go so far and not beyond. It becomes the prisoner of the intelligence agencies, which themselves are in need of cleansing, and estranged from the complaints and aspirations of the people. It acts on wrong impressions and commits blunders. Indeed, the politicians have acquired a bad name, particularly in the last decade, and they must be made accountable, but it would be unfair to assume that all of them have dirt on their hands. The Chief Executive himself admitted to the world that there is corruption in the armed forces, yet this does not mean that all generals are corrupt. Government is not about just pushing files, piling up promises and boasting to the press. The people have had enough of this. Government is about serving the people and removing their complaints with speed. But this government seems to be stuck. It has, out of its own published list of 50

defaulters, caught only 25 and reached a dead end. This is not surprising in the absence of men of the people in the team. Defaulters are easy to handle and should have been last on the priority list. The people are more affected by professional crime, bureaucratic corruption and police terror which is what the government should have dealt with immediately and controlled in the more than six weeks of unrestricted power it has enjoyed.

Reactivation of the Council of Common Interest, as suggested above, would have been an inspiring step in the right direction. The dye would have been cast for devolution and coming to grips with the biggest problem of the country, which is instability caused by lack of harmony amongst provinces.

Intermittent dictatorships in Islamabad over the last 52 years have dismembered the country and brought what remains to disastrous conditions. There is no justification or room in the concept of Pakistan for an all-powerful central government. Pakistan was conceived as a decentralised state with only subjects of defence, foreign affairs, currency, communication and customs with the centre while all other powers, including finance, were left to the provinces. This is clearly stated in the Pakistan Resolution (1940).

Devolution must follow this exact pattern, otherwise it will not work. Powers must be devolved all the way from Islamabad down to the union council level. This is what the Chief Executive has repeatedly said and this is what must happen without further delay.

An all powerful centre has failed to manifest even the basic requirements of good governance. Evils, such as lawlessness, corruption, maladministration, drug trafficking, adulteration, smuggling, underdevelopment, poverty, tax evasion, economic collapse, political chaos and lack of basic amenities for the people etc. have flourished, and the centre has failed to eliminate them in 52 years, simply because these maladies can only be cured if powers to deal with them exist at the lower levels. The fact that the central government is at the end of its wits in dealing with defaulting plutocrats supports this point of view. Leave alone ordinary problems, a Council of Common Interest would possess high credentials for also dealing with sensitive issues of fundamental importance which are contentious amongst the provinces, e.g. the Finance Commission and its awards. The council would do away with all this as in the process of devolution it would have to decide which powers should remain with the centre and which should move downwards. Using the commitment in the Pakistan Resolution as the barometer, financial powers would devolve to the different tiers of government that would come into being at the union, district, division and province levels. The centre would enjoy only those powers that the Council would confer on it, again relying on the Pakistan Resolution for guidance.

Financial exploitation is the main grievance of the provinces. Sindh contributes about 75% to the federal exchequer but remains poverty stricken and backward. Even Karachi, the most modern metropolis in the country, is short of water, electricity and every other basic amenity. The income from Sui gas alone would be abundant for Balochistan. But it is taken away by the centre while Balochistan struggles for survival in prehistoric conditions. Pukhtoonkhwa fares no better. Such is the plight of those who created Pakistan on the promise of "autonomy and sovereignty" contained in the Pakistan Resolution.

The economy will never improve unless such injustices are eliminated and the

provinces are allowed to have their own separate economies as in Australia and Canada. Pakistan has not descended from heaven. It is the sum total of the people, territories, wealth and power of the provinces. If the provinces are deprived, Pakistan will remain poor. In any case, the basic principle for repairing the economy is to spend less and earn more. Since there is no such prospect in sight, the other two alternatives are to have foreign loans written off and reduce defence expenditure. We have not had a leader with the stature and clout to get foreign loans written off, but that does not mean that Gen. Pervez Musharraf cannot rise to the occasion. If that is not on the cards than surely he can pin a long feather in his cap by diverting funds from defence into building roads schools, hospitals, water supply, drainage etc. which has not happened in the three smaller provinces for the last five years.

The Chief Executive is obviously very angry with the so called feudals and politicians. He holds them responsible for the destruction of democracy and economy and indulging in corruption. While he cannot be seriously contradicted on this count, is it not also true that generals assisted by bureaucrats have ruled the longest with martial law and unlimited powers, thanks to a compliant judiciary? Have they not violated every constitution of the country and not allowed democracy to take root? Have they not always taken the lion's share of the earnings of the people regardless of the fact that this leaves only crumbs for the man on the street? Are they not more answerable than all others for evils that have brought the country to this pass?

That notwithstanding, this is no time to start a class conflict or single anyone out. All those responsible for wrongs must answer while clean and honourable men must knuckle down to the task of pulling the country out of the quagmire it is sinking in. The agenda of the military rulers is good, but the implementation process leaves much to be desired. With the combined might of the military and civil administration, unrestricted by any law or court, the action taken so far is not only insipid, but also has a flavour of victimization. The evils continue and the culprits are at large. While a very small minority has been hit the hoards of crooks particularly in the police, WAPDA and bureaucracy collectively continue to make hay. The Government must beware that all the crimes, corruption, maladministration etc., which have gone on since it took over will be entered to its debit. It seems that Islamabad is sinking under the load of its obligations. People have begun to talk. Even the disgraced PPP and Muslim League have come out of their holes. Maulanas have become even more aggressive. Bombs and rockets are killing people and spreading panic. The Government should stop stumbling and waste no more time in getting down to its task of facing these issues and establishing its authority. It should set up the Council of Common Interest and start the process of devolution with haste so that the theatre of authority is widened and all problems are dealt with instantly. This is where the salvation for Pakistan lies.

PLAYING WITH FIRE

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

December 7, 1999

The matter of fragmentation of the provinces has raised its head again and that too at a time devolution is under consideration. This juxtaposition has led to scepticism and doubts about devolution. It is suspected of being an instrument of Islamabad for eliminating the provincial tier of authority and to establish a unitary system. Despite the fact that the Chief Executive has repeatedly stated that devolution will begin from Islamabad, it is nevertheless presumed by some that Islamabad will rule through district governments. This belief has been strengthened by the assertions of a federal minister, who appears to be a believer in destroying provincial identities, even though this violates the promise on which the provinces opted for Pakistan.

One must believe the Chief Executive when he talks about transferring powers from Islamabad downwards, which means more power at all levels from provincial governments right to union council level. The culprit in the plight of the country has been Islamabad, being the bastion of so much power that anyone who goes there, whether a general or a representative of people, becomes a king. The cool breezes and giddy heights of Margalla Hills with their marble palaces, fragrant rose gardens and wide green avenues, have created an Olympus from which rulers bestride the country like a mighty colossuses. This Olympus was created by a military dictator and it was in no way envisaged by the creators of Pakistan. It has to be destroyed if the country is to be saved and that is what devolution has to be all about.

As for creating more provinces, this is a very dangerous proposition on which an explosion may take place: Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon and Punjabi people have thousands of years of history and independence with their own territories and rulers. The British made them a part of India in the last century and reduced their status to provinces. If the partition meant independence then it must mean that these peoples acquired their pre British conquest status of independence so that their consent to join Pakistan became valid and effective. If this proposition is not accepted then it follows that these peoples were in no way competent to consent and their doing so becomes meaningless. Thus partition was the result of Lord Mountbatten drawing a line across the map of India, as some believe, thereby creating India and Pakistan.

We must stick to the belief that the Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon, Punjabi and Bengali

people became independent nations in August 1947 who exercised their will in opting for Pakistan. (The claim of the Pashtoon and Baloch people that they did not opt for Pakistan is a separate topic.) They thereby created Pakistan by contributing their peoples, lands and powers. It is quite obvious that in doing so they did not abandon or agree to abandon their thousands of years of history and identity and start afresh as Pakistanis. It is quite clear that they joined Pakistan on the assurance not only of autonomy, but also sovereignty in their territories. The promise of sovereignty to the provinces in the Pakistan resolution (1940) cannot be ignored or conveniently glossed over. The creators of Pakistan knew that these nations would certainly settle for no less in bringing Pakistan into existence. They would never have agreed to create Pakistan if in doing so they would inter alia have to submit to fragmentation of their lands. However the promise of "autonomy and sovereignty" was violated the day Pakistan came into being. The provinces became yoked to a highly centralized federal system in which majority of the Bengalis were denied and under the scheme of parity all were subjected to the hegemony of Punjab. This is a unique example of democracy based on minority rule or even party. The Bengalis could not take it and have gone. Others, whose "autonomy and sovereignty" has been repeatedly denied, would have followed had it not been for repeated use of armed force to maintain a forced unity in what remained of Pakistan.

The question of breaking up the provinces must be viewed in the above background. The Chief Executive talks about establishing stability by removing the grievances of provinces. This is a fine way to go about that. The very mention of creating more provinces projects a scenario of the centre strengthening its stranglehold on the country and attempting to erase the national identities of the Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon and Punjabi people. Even the proposal of a metropolitan police force in Karachi is viewed as a device to begin the process of splitting up Sindh. It is certainly true that giving a locally recruited police force to Karachi amounts to an invitation to terrorists and criminals to penetrate and dominate the force so that the already fragile edict of the government becomes even more ineffective. Similarly, the centre has no right to give work permits to aliens and illegal immigrants thereby creating an imbalance of population and increasing the miseries and shortages of the people of the capital of Sindh. In devolution, powers to deal with aliens in their territories must go to the provinces and the centre must lay off.

In any case, no purpose will be served in creating more provinces other than to increase administrative costs, corruption and maladministration. Sindh will remain Sindh and so will other provinces maintain their identities no matter how many administrative units they may be split into. We already have numerous separate administrative units and divisions, districts and tehsils but that does not alter the national identity of the territory. Even if the districts are designated provinces and D.Cs. governors, it will not prevent the territories from being what they are because we are not talking simply of land. We are talking about the peoples on them who are separate nations in their own right and with their own identities. Those simpletons who believe that all this can be changed with the stroke of a pen are hallucinating. They have forgotten that since the creation of Pakistan every effort has been made, even laws passed, to change Pakistan from a multinational country to a nation state, but to no avail. Even the Punjabi, who has benefited the most in Pakistan, is not willing to give up being a Punjabi. Pakistan is a multinational state created by its components who will not allow their lands and

identities to be taken away from them. It would perhaps be different if Pakistan was a nation state, but it is not and those who want to change this must be told that instead of wasting time and effort on changing the status quo they must cater to it so that Pakistan may stabilise and prosper. There is a big lesson to be learnt here by following the example of Switzerland.

There is absolutely no need to play with fire by recklessly raising issues that can destroy the country. The government has so much to do in the way of reform which could bring about laudable improvements:

For instance there is a desperate need to control crime, corruption, maladministration etc. The economy has to be set right by reducing expenses, producing more and resetting priorities. The development process and the provisions of basic amenities to people has to be restarted and so on. By taking up these urgent issues and sorting them out the government can perform a service which no government has done in the last 22 years. The people are getting restless. If their sentiments are trampled upon and tempers ignited, the rumblings on the horizon may erupt into thunder and lightning which may destroy us all. Let us not talk about breaking up the provinces when the urgent need is to cut Islamabad down to size.

THE FAT IS IN THE FIRE

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

December 27, 1999

The Chief Executive's 15th December broadcast sounded good. But then all such broadcasts, being based on the sweet calculations and verbal froth that speech writers conjure up, always sound good. The Chief Executive seemed to be voicing a dream or at least indulging in wishful thinking relating to the distant future. People heard him, but with much scepticism. They have heard it all before, ad nauseam from Zia, Benazir and Nawaz, and their promises of rivers of milk and honey always turned sour. The people no longer want to know what will be done. They want to know what has been done.

The Chief Executive has to be accepted as a man who means well. But when he has to himself admit to the press that he has done nothing for the people, in the last nine weeks, during which he has enjoyed absolute power, he cannot blame the people for their disbelief. In an earlier article I emphasised the fact that one cannot run a government without a finger on the pulse of the people. The priority given to economic matters, no matter how well deserved, has not impressed the people as they do not see anything happening around them. The poor are resigned to their poverty and there is no quick fix for relief. It is essential for a new government, which has done away with elected representatives, suspended the constitution, and incurred the displeasure of the international community, to solicit the confidence and trust of the people by showing that things are happening. Together with vital measures to revive the economy, it was imperative to take steps that show immediate results. This could have been in the field of lawlessness, corruption and mal-administration. Security of honour, life and property are the paramount requirements. All else comes after. It is quite obvious that the governments has been cornered into soft peddling with such advice as not to frighten the business community, bureaucracy, police, etc. But there appears to be no one to point out that in the process, the people are losing hope and the government developing an image of being unequal to the task. While there really is no danger of frightening anyone but the guilty by being effective, this would most certainly please the masses who have been repeatedly victimised, cheated and let down by those who are there only to serve them. Even the business community would take heart at the resolve and determination of the government. No one trusts a weakling, all rely on

the strong. The Chief Executive pointed out in his broadcast that good governance was one of his main objectives. This should have been his top objective. The mess the country is in is a legacy of bad governance. It is also not good governance to create so many advisory bodies at the already top heavy centre. This does not only negate the promise of reduction in expenditure but also creates doubts about devolution. The disappointing results of the last two months establish the fact that all these bodies amount to nothing. And now they are being set up at the district level also. This will be disastrous. A rat race will start for appointments which will push the vital issues out of focus. And in the end all that will have been done is to revive the khidmat committees which will further impede the already bogged down administrative process. The existing structure of administration is adequate and if anything, it needs trimming. The requirement is its proper and effective use. It has to be galvanised and put into forward gear. As suggested earlier, nothing could have been better than the revival and use of the Council of Common Interest which would have also fulfilled the government's apparent desire to remain close to the provisions of the constitution. Lawlessness is out of control, corruption has become a way of life, the bureaucracy is unbridled, indifferent and incompetent, police corruption, incompetence and terror has become unbearable. Sifarish and nepotism has become a curse, drug dealing and gun running are open business and municipal works have been abandoned so that cities and towns have become swamps of drainage overflow and garbage. Caught in the filth and squalor is the vanquished man in the street. All this results in very bad governance which is being entered to the debit of the military rulers.

How can economic or any other reform work in these circumstances? How can repairs take place if the tools do not work? The task of restoring law and order and sorting out the administrative set-up should have been tackled first of all. Surely with the might of both the military and civil armed forces behind the government it could have shown bright results. It should have had the jails full of the corrupt elements and even more important, their properties under confiscation. The police should have been brought to heel. A drive should have been launched to clean up the streets and repair the drains. Such initial action alone would have gone a long way in putting the machinery of government in forward gear and made it functional for reforms. But most important of all, the masses would have been convinced. A new hope would have dawned and such faith imposed in the government as to smother all criticism. This would also have impressed the international community.

Alas, the opportunities have been missed. The government has failed to convince the people of its ability to deliver the goods. It is no good telling them to wait and see. Rightly or wrongly, they must have instant results. These could have been given to them by improving the conditions of their daily existence in the above suggested manner. As it is, the government stands alone against an increasing hoard of opponents. The newspaper columns are full of attack. The indomitable and inimitable Ayaz Amir, being the first to express doubts, is now even more eloquent in his assault. The discredited and corrupt politicians of the PPP and PML who should be in jails, have re-emerged. Have they already smelt blood? A very serious threat looms from the traders and transporters, who have announced a programme of protests and demonstrations. In the past the governments have knuckled under. It remains to be seen whether the military rulers are made of sterner stuff and able to enforce their edict. Nawaz Sharif is making very damaging accusations while the hijacking case is

running into serious turbulence. Even more serious is the challenge to the legitimacy of the government made in the superior court which is ready for hearing. The government continues to woo the industrialist while targeting and alienating the agriculturalist. This amounts to looking a gift horse in the mouth and being indifferent to the fact that Pakistan is entirely dependent upon agriculture and not industry. It can survive if industries close but it cannot if food is not produced. Rockets and bombs are exploding and the culprits are at large. The mass murderer and psychopath of Lahore is still on the loose. Bandits have occupied vast areas of land and have territories named after them with total impunity. Murders, robberies and car thefts in Karachi are rampant.

These are some of the formidable problems to be faced by a government which seems already deeply entangled in a web of its own creation. Had it got its priorities right, carried genuine and clean men of the people with it and shown greater ability in dealing with the issues, its hands would now be free to face what comes. Such not being the case, the fat is clearly in the fire.

THE MYTH OF FEUDALISM

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

January 18, 2000

Feudalism seems to be under debate once again and I am constrained to write this article for two reasons: 1. Because of the indifference of the zamindars to all the abuse that is being hurled on them in the name of feudalism and 2. Because of the poison being spread by their critics whose ignorance about rural Pakistan is unlimited.

Let us differentiate, straight away, between feudalism and zamindari. Marquis de Sade was a feudal and books have been written about his atrocities. The word sadism has actually been coined for his outrageous practices. One reads about the feudals of France buying prison inmates, turning them loose and then setting the hounds after them which caught up and tore the victims into shreds. There were also said to be such practices as the feudal lord enjoying the right of the first night with a bride and generally much freedom of sex with the women of his subjects. In England even today, the tenants of the Duchy of Norfolk have to salute wherever they are and set sight on the Duke's palace located on a hill. Such occurrences brought about new property laws in England and the French revolution in France. Can those claiming that feudalism still exists in Pakistan honestly state that they have personal knowledge of any of the above sort of practices taking place here? If so, they must give names. In every country there is some rivalry between the urban and the rural population. But it is being carried to extremes here. Those city baboos who do not even have the foggiest idea of what transpires beyond the toll gates of the cites do not hesitate to style themselves as authorities on feudalism. It is quite obvious that their knowledge is based on watching sensationalised T.V dramas, reading outdated communist propaganda and such vulgar nonsense as "My Feudal Lord" and "Blasphemy" (A book about the authoress would be even worse reading). I was amazed that last summer while addressing a gathering of London based Pakistanis in London, who rarely visit Pakistan and have absolutely no access to or contact with the rural areas, I had to answer questions on feudalism in Pakistan, on which they held themselves out to be experts. Can anything be more ridiculous?

Aspects of feudalism existed in Pakistan at the time of its creation. At that time "Begaar" or free labour by the tenants, was in general practice.

Other than that it was a matter of individual trend as to how a land owner treated

his tenants. There are the good and the bad in every profession, and no doubt some land owners crossed the line. But are the industrialists all angels? Do they not treat their labour like slaves, set up fake unions and have workers beaten by hired goondas? What about doctors and lawyers? The way some of them treat their patients and clients is inhuman. They kill them with bad treatment and get them imprisoned or even hanged through indifference and incompetence. The mighty bureaucrat, who still acts like the gora sahib, and is always in power no matter who forms the government, is a curse on this country and the root of all evil. And let us not forget the very honourable judges: their gift to the nation of the "doctrine of necessity" alone is something for which they should be stoned. Not to speak of their corruption and political prejudice. And so it goes right down the line to the businessman, policeman, general etc. etc. But while all this is an unfortunate fact of life in our society, we cannot condemn a profession or class of people simply because there are rouses among them.

Feudalism and jagirdari was hit hard by Ayub Khan's land reforms. The Talpurs, the Chandios and the Magsis were jagirdars (those who paid no taxes). Out of the zamindars (those who paid taxes) the Bhuttos were hit the hardest. It was not a matter of just resuming lands but also practices such as begaar were barred. It is a different matter that because of some loops in the law and corruption and incompetence of the bureaucracy that these land reforms were not as effective as they should have been, but carried out under the first Martial Law and a military dictator who struck terror into the heart of the people, the practices of feudalism became a thing of the past.

The land reforms of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto reduced land holdings and curtailed the power of the land owner even further. But more than that it was his politics that brought the land owners to heel. He went directly to the masses, which no politician had done before, and made them conscious of their rights and powers. He preached socialism and egalitarianism and being foxy, the zamindars of Sindh saw their survival in conforming and joining the Pakistan People's Party. The very few like the Mahars and Wassans who did not, got wiped out in the elections. The Chaudhries and Maliks of the Punjab, however, did not read the signs, and together with the Hayats, Trwanas, Noons, Qizalbashes, Gurmanis etc. all got eliminated from the political scene. Undoubtedly the last nail in the coffin of feudalism was the deep involvement of the land owners in politics, particularly in the wake of the crusade launched by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Towards the middle of the 20th century when socialism was the most popular political theory, it was not possible for a land owning politician to use force to get votes which could only be done with a gentle approach and rendering services. Thus the conversion of feudalism into zamindari became complete.

The zamindar cannot own more than 125 acres per person of his family, in order to earn the maximum income out of which, he has to work very hard. His first and foremost task is to keep his hari content and happy otherwise nothing will grow. The zamindar's day begins with sorting out the problems of his hari. If he is a politician also, then the people from far and wide, depending on his image and clout, flock to him for redress of grievances. These range from murder, robbery, abduction of women, break down of marriage agreements, cattle thefts, crop thefts, etc., right down to the loss of a chicken. There is absolutely no exaggeration in this. The complainants come to the local zamindar/politician because the hari/villager has no

access to the local administration without paying a bribe. The police outpaces all other departments of government in this. They only talk money. This they take from both sides, and in the end the outcome depends on who pays the most. The one that loses out, even if he is a complainant, will be made to regret the day he was born. Thus the protection of the local zamindar/ politician is a vital part of life in the rural areas and will remain so until some act of God intervenes to put the administrative setup right.

Again on the cultivation side, the zamindar plays a vital role: true there are the irrigation, revenue, food and agriculture departments etc. but they also do not come into operation without bribes, and food production would go down by at least half if the role the zamindar plays was eliminated. We have had three land reforms in Pakistan, but none of them has fully worked because the corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy could not replace the zamindar. The consequence is that less than fifty percent of the entitled haris are in possession of the resumed lands. The rest are either abandoned or have passed into the hands of a new class of zamindars who have one way or the other dispossessed the originally entitled hari. Those who are clamouring for land reforms and a further reduction in the ceiling of holdings are totally ignorant of the realities on the ground. Were it not for the extensive mechanization of agriculture, the trend for which was set during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government, the land reforms would have proved seriously counter productive leading to acute food shortages.

The greatest injustice done to the zamindar by baboos is to accuse him of not paying taxes. Here again ignorance raises its head. The zamindar, apart from income tax and wealth tax, pays land revenue, water rate, ushr and other local charges. A detailed calculation has been made and it turns out that an acre of land growing rice and wheat as two seasonal crops a year, earns Rs. 9300, whereas taxes, fertilizers, pesticides & other expenses come to Rs. 6500/- This leaves Rs. 2800/- per acre per year for the hari and the zamindar to share on a fifty-fifty basis (Rs. 1400/- each). The average area of land cultivated by a single hari is 8 acres from which his annual income is Rs. 11,200/- while the zamindar earns Rs. 168,000/- per year from his 125 acres. The income from land has reached rock bottom owing to the high cost of inputs, ever increasing taxes and decreasing prices of agricultural products. The cotton and cane growers get higher prices than rice and wheat, but their costs are also higher. The sugar industry is in a total mess while prices of cotton are the lowest ever. Small land holders are abandoning their lands, finding daily labour and plying donkey carts more profitable. If the zamindar gives up growing, to cut his losses, the country would pack up.

It must be pointed out here that with mechanisation the involvement of the zamindar in cultivation has become much greater and that of the hari less. The days of the haris' sweat and blood are over. He only sows and cuts the crop and for two crops he works not more than 25 days in a year. The rest is done by machines for which the zamindar has to cough up or his land goes barren. Because of his occupation the zamindar is banished to the dark backwoods where he does not have the benefits of modernization enjoyed by the city slicker. The climate is cruel and so are the bandits and outlaws. The power supply is scarce and breakdowns frequent. On top of that corruption and incompetence of WAPDA officials make life unbearable. Drinking water is contaminated, education is a farce and medical facilities practically non-existent. The zamindar has to face all these hazards to grow food for the country where his name is mud.

The fault of the zamindar does not lie in his mistreatment of the hari. He would be mad to do so when his own bread and butter and his place in society and politics is dependent on the support of the haris. The picture of a zamindar with a thick moustache and a wart on his cheek wielding a whip with loud laughter, is only the stuff of ludicrous TV dramas for the ignorant. His fault lies in standing condemned by default. His indifference to abuse and the failure to state his case are manifestations of his lack of education and the desire to move with the rapidly changing pace of life. But the biggest failing of the zamindars is lack of unity in the ranks and disorganisation. They stand alone and expect to prosper by prostrating themselves before the government of the day and the corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy.

The lord has ordained that this be an agricultural country. More than 75% of the people are agriculturists. The industries are agriculture based and the main exports are agricultural products. But we tend to look the gift horse in the mouth. Rather than swim with the tide and promote agriculture, we tend to take it for granted and promote industry. This happened in Ayub Khan's time until the country reached near famine conditions. The gravity of the situation suddenly dawned and a U-turn was made by redefining priorities. During Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's time an all out effort was made in the agriculture sector with such rapid results that Pakistan became self sufficient even in wheat. The baboos do not realize that by promoting agriculture with genuine incentives and reliefs Pakistan can become a food exporting country second to none, thereby acquiring wealth and progress which industry can never generate. The zamindar must get organised. He must play a prominent role in making food production policies as he alone has the expertise. He must claim his true status in the country and follow the example of other agricultural countries where growers dictate the terms.

Agriculture being predominant in Pakistan, the zamindar is here to stay. It is only natural that he also dominates the scene. Those who treat this as an unnatural phenomenon are too dumb to recognise realities. It is the baboos, who climb to prominence that are the misfits, as they neither have roots nor contact with the masses. They fire their arrows from air-conditioned offices thereby making a mess of things. In the cities the zamindar who is still branded the worst kind of feudal gets the blame for all that has gone wrong in the country. True he has been in the corridors of power, but so have the industrialists, professionals and let us not forget the generals who have ruled the longest with no restraint on their powers. Be that as it may, it is the bureaucrat who has always been in power regardless of whether it is a representative or martial law government. He is the most permanent and powerful force in the country. It is up to him to make government policies succeed or fail. In fact, it is he who makes and breaks governments. So let us be fair. Although the zamindar must carry a lot of the blame for the fate of his country, it is the corrupt and incompetent bureaucrat and the general who remain the true culprits. Feudalism is only a myth.

WHERE IS THE AGENDA?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

November 13, 2000

The military takeover thirteen months ago was applauded for two reasons: 1) It promised to put an end to the agony of the previous ten years of corrupt democracy, practiced by Benazir and Nawaz Sharif and 2) General Pervez Musharraf announced an agenda which seemed to be the panacea for all evils that plagued Pakistan. On both these counts, the military rulers have failed.

While corruption and maladministration have broken all records, what baffles all is that even lawlessness remains uncontrolled. With the Army, Navy, Air Force, Rangers, Police, Levies, Scouts, Constabulary etc. etc., under the command of the government, a bunch of outlaws in the forests of Sindh cannot be dealt with! On the contrary they operate with such impunity as to have occupied government lands and become zamindars. They have installed tube wells, set up cattle farms, leased out government forests for wood-cutting and grant fishing contracts in the river. They summon people, hold jirgas and demand money through letters written on their printed letter pads. Not only is all this known to the law enforcement agencies, but it is no secret that senior police officers have made deals with such bandits and are generally at pains to appease them. Since no self-respecting government will swallow all this, it must be concluded that there is no government, at least in Sindh, where this situation has prevailed for many years. A variation on the same theme is that every officer in the administrative set up is a government unto himself. He can commit any act of corruption, victimisation, violation of the rules, acts and omission which harm the citizen with no one to check him. While the rulers in Islamabad make merry the country has slipped into anarchy.

And what of the accountability process? Was it meant only for the Sharif family? How come most of the big crooks roam free in and out of the country? Not only that but the new class of absconding politicians and bureaucrats have opened strong fronts against the rulers. They dominate the news media and are getting away with challenging the government on all issues. This is a very serious matter as it raises questions about the sovereignty of the government. If the government does not carry such weight with other governments as to be able to catch the crooks which have taken refuge in their countries, how can it hold up its head in the international community? We saw how Israel attacked Entebbe and recovered her hijacked citizens. We are all

too familiar with American commandos operating in other countries to arrest and take away wanted people. What do these countries have which Pakistan lacks? Something is definitely missing for even at home the manner in which the religious leaders parade with armies of gunmen and threaten in their speeches to take over the country, leaves the citizen asking, who is in charge?

Of course there are the self-styled wise men who advice caution to prevent panic. If panic is feared then there should have been no military takeover for

panic started on 12th October a year ago. If people see improvements around them they are bound to relax and feel secure. But a military government which cannot put things right and stands defeated by the elements against it, has caused serious panic. When the government promises good governance but corruption and maladministration become rampant, when law and order is promised, but the people live like rabbits among wolves and there is no security of life or property, when the government threatens to take away licensed weapons from respectable citizens but cannot disarm outlaws, when an end to smuggling, drug trafficking, gun running, black marketing, hoarding, adulteration etc. is promised but all these evils flourish, when the government pledges to clean up madrassas one day and has to take back its words the next day, when even such a basic function as collection of taxes cannot be performed smoothly, there has to be, and there is, big panic. The people neither have confidence in the government, nor hope in the future.

Apart from the absurdity of coming to a halt to avoid panic, there is the ridiculous proposition of the military government acting legally. After violating the constitution, sacking the elected legislatures and governments, and making the judiciary subservient to military rule, does legality matter? What is really required is effectiveness and achievement. The military rulers can only justify their illegal take over not by trying to act legally, but by producing good results. Apart from the fact that they have manifested an unbelievable lack of administrative ability and understanding of what is required, they have failed to appreciate the paramount need to win the confidence of the people. It seems that the people figure at the bottom of their list of priorities and they attach more importance to functions which are decorative rather than productive. Hobnobbing with world leaders, speeches in the UN, pursuit of IMF officials, sabre rattling with India and involvement in Kashmir and Afghanistan do not cut down crime, control corruption, increase efficiency, provide employment, bring down prices, repair the gutters, clean up the streets, improve power and water supply, provide better education and health facilities. The people do not see salvation in world touring by ministers with beggars' bowls. They see it in producing more and spending less. They know that after debt servicing, defence and establishment costs, only about 15% of the national wealth is left for their welfare.

Despite a long agenda, the government has been reduced to only two functions: 1) collection of GST, of which it has already made a complete mess, and 2) local bodies elections. No one accepts this move as devolution or part thereof. The Chief Executive himself in one of his speeches said that he was evolving power from the bottom upward. This may be described as evolution of power, if such an expression is tenable, but certainly not devolution which must start with Islamabad surrendering its powers to the provinces. There is nothing in the way of the government transferring local bodies, education, health, food and agriculture and even sales tax to the provinces straight away. As for the remaining powers, an acceptably representative commission

could be set up. As it is, the government's scheme of local bodies elections is doomed, for it is seen as a desire to bypass the provinces and reduce their entity through a direct link between the districts and the centre. This is a very dangerous move coming at a time when the goodwill between Punjab and the other three provinces is at its lowest ebb and demands for a new setup based on the Pakistan Resolution are being raised from many quarters. It is amazing how myopic the rulers in Islamabad can be: how can they forget the fact that what is being called provinces were, before the British conquest, independent nations with their own lands, peoples, powers and resources, which they have pooled to constitute Pakistan but not at the cost of their historic identities. This remains a fact even after the passage of fifty-three years. Those who do not accept this truth have not learnt a lesson from the breakaway of East Pakistan. In this day and age adventurism of the same nature will have explosive results. It was a blessing in disguise that a military ruler yielded to public pressure and broke up One Unit before it broke up West Pakistan. Breaking up the country into 105 districts controlled by the centre will not change the fact that Sindhis, Punjabis, Pashtoons and Balochis will still remain exactly that. Our governments have a tendency to brand nationalists traitors and seditionists. They turn their Nelson's eye to the fact that in an unfair setup, existing in violation of the promise on which Pakistan was made and based on hegemonistic exploitation. It is true patriots and sons of the soil who complain. Pakistan will not break if a decentralized and genuinely devolved system promised in the Pakistan Resolution is adopted. It will then be strong, held together by the will of the people and not by force which only destroys. Mujeeb-ur Rehman only wanted an arrangement based on his six points. The country was broken not by him, but by its so called guardians who answered with military action, and later proposed confederation with Bangladesh, when it was too late. The same scenario is again in the making right now in what remains of Pakistan.

We are told the new scheme of local bodies is the brainchild of the National Reconstruction Bureau. If so, the child is still born: the voters lists are all wrong, e.g. the age of this writer is entered as two hundred years which is just not true, or lists of villages in Sindh are full of names of people from other provinces or sons are listed older than their fathers, the demarcation of constituencies is absurd, the rules are yet not known and no one knows who can or cannot contest. There is in fact, total chaos and talk of postponement. In any case, this is a job for the local administration which has experience and can shuffle through the exercise smoothly. The NRB was expected to occupy itself with more lofty objectives. Its involvement in local bodies elections raises the question, how low can mighty Caesar sink? Could it not find anything better to do? How about devising a strategy to rescue the people from the pit of moral degeneration that they have sunk in? The ten years of democracy Benazir-Nawaz style has made corruption, deceit, treachery, lies betrayal etc. a way of life, in which people at all levels find nothing wrong. These evils have become a part of our culture and are deeply entrenched in the political field. Honesty and truthfulness have become a handicap. The National Reconstruction Bureau would have been better occupied devising ways and means for the moral uplift of the people and cleaning up the thinking process of our society. It has not done so, and nothing has changed. This will be most visible in the local bodies elections if and when they are held: the same crooks, who have made politics a dirty word, are the most active in the field. They are salivating at the mouth over the prospects of acquiring lucrative positions as Nazims.

In this scenario, apart from a return to the Benazir-Nawaz days, the agenda of the military rulers will be deeply and permanently buried.

In conclusion it must be stated that despite the dismal picture all is not yet lost. This government is our last hope - there is no better prospect visible on the horizon. We can't go back to the cursed days of Benazir-Nawaz. The government must wake up and put its act together. Even in military rule the people matter the most and their complaints and demands cannot be ignored. This government contends it has come to put things right and it must do so. It is losing out by default. The decks must be cleared and a new pattern of governance evolved. There must 'be a highly dynamic approach. Pumping military personnel into the civil services is not the answer. It is as bad as placing bureaucrats in military posts. Politicians with clean records and known for administrative ability and getting things done, must be sought out and inducted in government. They must not get office-bound or bogged down with files. They must go to the people and provide on the spot remedies. Nothing but the distribution of loafs and fish can now pull the fat out of the fire. If the evils that have made life impossible are eliminated, there will neither be panic nor questions about legality. This is the only way to implement the agenda.

DOES THE AGENDA EXIST?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

August 11, 2001

The events of 12th October 1999 were welcomed for the reason that all had had enough of the corrupt and fake democracy of the previous ten years. We even found cause for optimism when the new military rulers announced their agenda promising economic progress, good governance and removal of interprovincial complaints. However, only within the short span of two months dark clouds gathered and I wrote an article in *Dawn* titled 'The Fat is in the Fire', warning that unless the military rulers knuckled down to the task of facing basic problems such as crime, corruption, maladministration, lack of basic amenities and collapse of municipal functions etc., these would grow and engulf the government. This has sadly come to pass: Things are out of control, the government is so trapped that even the President himself can do no better than offer apologies and excuses and try to explain that there is no quick fix, although two years of unfettered power is ample time for even a slow fix.

The question on the mind of all those who hoped for better days is why did this government get so bogged down right from the start? There are a number of reasons, most prominent of which are crisis of identity, wrong priorities and soldiers playing at politics.

1. Crisis of Identity

Military rule was established by banishing the constitution to abeyance, sacking the elected government and dissolving the parliament. The decks were cleared for action and what came to exist in reality was undeclared martial law. But what we see in operation is an odd mixture of laws and ordinances and deployment of soldiers in the civil administration with no noticeable result. The rulers are unable to decide whether they are a military or a civil government. In fact, they have ended up being neither, with the consequence that confusion and chaos has set in. The government backs out in the face of resistance and its writ remains unimplemented. The messy and amateurish manner in which policies such as general sales tax was imposed and the shaky approach in dealing with gun-running and possession of illegal arms is typical. The fire of sectarianism blazes and in dealing with this the government has been at its weakest, giving rise to a very dangerous situation. As far as accountability for corruption and

maladministration is concerned, a brake has been applied, except in the case of individual targets, through fear of upsetting the apple cart even though the apples are totally rotten. As for crime, all law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, stand defeated and the citizen has been abandoned to his fate.

The consequence of such inept handling is that the government is unable to cope. Apart from all else, all find it hard to believe that the Army, Navy, Air force, Rangers, Police, Levies, Scouts, Constabulary and what have you, all put together, cannot deal with bunches of thieves operating in Karachi, leave alone the rest of the country. If a citizen cannot find protection against criminals in military rule, he will only find it in heaven.

As if the above was not tragic enough, terrorism spread by the police in itself has driven the people to the point of revolt in Sindh. No lesser person than the President himself has publicly disclosed that criminals have been recruited in the police. It is no wonder that they are on the rampage. The police does not have the resolve or courage to face criminals, but is a scourge for the hapless, innocent citizen who has no protection at all. There is a total breakdown of discipline and motivation. The net result is that we have a police force which costs the people of Sindh more than fourteen billion rupees per year, but is unable to stop even car thefts in Karachi. All the government has been able to do in this regard is to shunt out Sindhi officers and replace them with those from the Punjab. It is salt in the wounds that Punjab has off-loaded the worst officers it could find, some of them even with criminal records or famous for their misconduct and corruption. These officers have played havoc in Sindh, and while crime continues unabated, the honour and dignity of the innocent citizen is at serious risk. Even the sanctity of his home and family has been violated. Women have been kidnapped and innocent people arrested and sent to far flung jails in remote districts on cooked-up charges to satisfy personal grudges. If anyone is interested in investigating this, proof is available. Complaints have already reached the governor and others concerned, but who cares? People are not even sure that there is a governor and government in Sindh because none is visible. The public cry therefore is "save us from the police - we will face the criminals who show greater humanity and compassion". This is a scenario hardly conducive to inter-provincial harmony and good governance, supposedly a vital part of the government's agenda.

All that has gone wrong is written on the horizon and there is no need to carry on a lament. The requirement to put things right is desperate before the point of no return is reached. The lesson of history is that the people can only be pushed so far and not beyond. When the pain becomes unbearable, they rise and no force on earth can stop them. The government is a military government and it must act as such. It is no formidable task to clean up the institutions and mobilise them in the service of the people. In capable hands and with correct and quick decisions followed by speedy implementation, the basic problems of the people can be solved in a short time. As for the police, you can't say there are criminals in it and then do nothing about it. That is not how governments are run, and immediate action is required. The government must strive for results rather than procedural niceties. Red tape and bureaucratic recalcitrance must not deter or hinder it in producing results. Such obstacles have to be smothered. Governments often have to take harsh, unpleasant and unpopular steps for the ultimate good and ours must not shrink away from this duty. It is the satisfaction of the people that is paramount. This is the basis of good governance and it is only on these grounds that military rule can find justification.

2. Wrong Priorities

While the people look upon the generals as redeemers, the generals turn to America and international financial institutions for salvation. The people expected immediate relief from insecurity and deprivation, but the generals manifestly rate this need at low priority. Trips to America and offices of international financial institutions have been to no avail. In satisfying our addiction for begging and borrowing the rulers run helter skelter but return with nothing. On the contrary, Pakistan today is an economical and political outcast yoked to the dictates of foreign institutions and agencies to the extent of compromising its sovereignty. So much could have been saved in the way of dignity and time if the rulers had dug in at home to improve the economy by cutting down expenses and producing more. Top priority should have been given to agriculture and keeping the prices down rather than increasing them under foreign dictates made to protect foreign loans. If as much hype, fanfare and anxiety was attached to providing security and basic amenities to the people, as was wasted on the futile Agra summit, this would have been a happier country. What do a vanquished people, living in subhuman conditions care about Kashmir or where it goes.

They want food and drink, security of life, honour and property and civilized conditions to live in before they look across the borders. Similarly, the water crisis of the last crop season in Sindh highlighted the government's callous and indifferent disposition towards the complaints of the people. When they saw their barren lands and drying crops they came out to protest. It was only natural for Punjab to be blamed since it has three dams, three link canals out of the Indus (with yet another in the making) and sixteen barrages upstream which it uses at will to divert water. If Punjab was blameless, this was the time for the government to go to the people and explain. An odd statement emanating from some air-conditioned government office was insulting. During the floods of 1973, which had worse consequences than the water shortage, the whole Sindh government, including the Chief Minister, was deployed in the heat and dust and did not return until the crisis was over. Not only were the masses satisfied, but even the opposition in the Sindh Assembly stood up and applauded. This is good governance.

3. Soldiers Playing at Politics

This is as bad as politicians playing at soldiers. A plan of armed action drawn up by Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan would be as disastrous as the devolution plan drawn up by a general. The agenda of the government held out a promise to clean up the country's institutions, including politics. But instead of doing so, the generals have jumped into the fray and muddied the water. The ISI has manifestly become the political wing of the government and even this would not be too bad had they not chosen the most ill-reputed turncoats, time servers, deserters, patharidars, illiterate and corrupt elements in the political field as their fellowtravellers. The rulers have sponsored those individuals which, in the process of cleansing, should have been totally eliminated from politics. This amounts to defeat and surrender by the military rulers which has given them a bad name and led to complete mistrust among the people.

The promise of devolution was a breath of fresh air to the deprived and down-trodden people of Sindh, Balochistan and the Frontier, but now it has become a nightmare no different from the corrupt basic democracy system of Ayub Khan. No one now doubts that the devolution plan is designed only to create a constituency for

the rulers, to eliminate the provinces and to impose one unit. The previous one unit scheme blew up and had to be withdrawn by a general. This scheme is also not only doomed to failure but a harbinger of no good for the following reasons:-

1. The provinces are not simply separate administrative units which may be fragmented at will, as in a nation state. They are in fact separate nations, in a multinational state, with long histories of independence. They have their own lands, cultures, languages, customs, economies and peoples who were conquered by the British and made a part of India. They pooled all this to make Pakistan on the promise of 'Autonomy and Sovereignty' contained in the Pakistan Resolution. Nothing short of this would have sufficed and Pakistan would not have come into existence otherwise. The fact that this promise has not been kept is the reason for the breakup of Pakistan and dissatisfaction and instability of what remains.

2. Devolution would be true if the centre maintained nominal powers as prescribed in the Pakistan Resolution, and transferred the rest to the provinces. The Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon and Punjabi people should have been left alone to devolve a setup of their own choice within their territories. This alone would have removed mistrust and firmly established interprovincial harmony.

3. No matter how many administrative units the Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon, Punjabi people and their lands are divided into, they will still retain their national identities. It may even happen that now the federal government, instead of dealing with three provinces clamouring for more powers and rights, will have to face 108 districts demanding the same.

4. Every rule and law that the government proclaimed for the conduct of local bodies elections has been flagrantly violated with complete impunity. Parties have fully and openly participated. Never before has rigging taken place so massively, defiantly and completely. The polling staff, including the judiciary have visibly been party to the rigging. The appellate tribunals do not function and the election commission has faded into oblivion. The recent declaration of the chief election commissioner that the party sponsored candidates will be disqualified, is a joke - they are all party sponsored. A system based on such fraud simply cannot work.

5. The elected nazims and councillors are not only party-nominated but also waderas, Pirs, Mirs, Sardar, Khans, Chaudhries etc. and their B & C teams which include absconders, people with criminal records and fake matriculates. In fact they are all those who have given politics a bad name. Votes have been bought and sold, oaths on the Quran have been commonly taken and broken. The old practice of paying, giving oath and making the voter disappear until polling day, has been in full swing. Camps have been opened where voters have been wined and dined and their outrageous demands met, i.e. use of coca cola instead of water in hookahs. Be this as it may one thing is abundantly clear: All those who have come into this local bodies system have done so with the sole object of making money and having a ball at public expense.

6. Government stalwarts are gloating over the fact that even those who have come on opposition party tickets are sitting on their doorsteps but can they really be sure of their support till the end? Or are these people there to stab it in the back at the first chance?

While at the time of the army takeover on 12th October 1999, PPP men, Muslim Leaguers and all other politicians with dirty hands either ran or could not find holes deep enough to hide them, they soon reared their heads when they saw the government

falter and stumble in its functions. They started issuing challenges and even organised demonstrations which the government did not know how to deal with. It only resorted to tired old methods which are used by governments on their way out. Instead of preventing protest or nipping it in the bud with skill and smoothness, the government acted like a bull in a china shop. This has further emboldened even the known chicken-hearted who have participated in the elections with full force and are planning to use the local bodies system to make the going rough for the government. They look upon the government as weak and washed up and the day not far off when Benazir or Nawaz Sharif will lead them to the corridors of power. Whether connected with devolution or a part thereof, the administrative reforms at the district level have again left the people in a state of disbelief! In place of one eighteen grade deputy commissioner who ran the whole district in a one window operation, now there are four or more grade twenty officers with a Nazim on their heads doing the same job. Where is the miserable creature from the backwaters, looking for a solution to his predicament, to go? He is shunted from office to office where the peons and clerks are waiting to strip him of his clothes. In a bankrupt country the need was to simplify and streamline the administrative set up for the benefit of all concerned. But the changes that have been made are not only going to increase expenses, corruption and maladministration, but also drive the citizen round the bend. There is going to be monumental chaos. And now we are holding our breaths for the much trumpeted police reforms. Lord have mercy!! It is baffling that all the Gods in Olympus in the Margalla Hills do not see that one cannot carve out a monument with blunt and corroded tools. What good are reforms when those operating the new system are the same old corrupt, incompetent and politically motivated bureaucrats who have caused the previous arrangements to collapse? Whether police reforms or any other, no benefit will be derived unless the services operating them are cleaned up and galvanized. What is the use of the new police system in the hands of old crooks? It will all result in more agony for the innocent citizen. The police must be made to confront criminals and not terrorise the people. Those who fail in this must be sacked and prosecuted. This is the only police reform required.

In conclusion, it must be stated that all is not yet lost. There are those who still expect the military rulers to revive their agenda and keep their promises. Return to the painful days of fake democracy operated by corrupt and incompetent politicians is a frightful prospect. Military rulers took over to do what politicians could not and that was to clean up the institutions and produce results. They cannot now use the restraint of rules and laws or an uncooperative judiciary as excuses. In affairs of state one either delivers or quits.

Whether military or civilian rule, the people are supreme and without their consent no government can function. They cannot be ignored or taken for granted. The people are trapped in the network of crime, corruption, filth and squalor, shortages of medical and educational facilities, unemployment and increasing cost of living and lack of all other amenities. The government must occupy itself with these vital issues which are far more urgent and important than Kashmir, Afghanistan etc. How can one operate abroad when the home is in flames.

The military rulers must leave politics to the politicians, albeit a new lot. Those that have been in the field since Zia days have not only disgraced themselves and politics but caused the country serious harm. It is time for new faces: young, educated, clean,

honest men of honour and character. If the government intended to produce such politicians through its local bodies system, the scheme has failed because it lacked sincerity. The same old sinners are back and want their pound of flesh. Majors, colonels, brigadiers and even generals cannot fathom the scope of politics. They have no rapport with the masses and are unfamiliar with the vicissitudes of public thought. They are hopelessly dependent on the bureaucracy which plays tricks on them. The government must gather around it a new breed of politicians. They must go out to the people and not get trapped in bureaucratic webs. They must familiarise themselves with the aspirations and apprehensions of the people and not just depend on tinted and tainted agency reports. The interprovincial imbalance must be removed. Nations are never big or small, they are all equal. It is not a matter of population, but status. This is the norm in the international community. Each must have the full benefit of its own resources which must not be taken away and spent elsewhere. Each must be 'Autonomous and Sovereign' as promised in the Pakistan Resolution. Only in this way can the Pakistan promised by its creators come into existence. Only in this way can it progress, prosper and stabilize. Only in this way can a new Pakistan come into being.

SHATTERED HOPES

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

November 8, 2001

Omar Asghar Khan, Minister for Local Governments' statement on the next phase of his devolution plan, appearing in *Dawn* on 5-11-2001 under the heading 'Downsizing in Federal Ministries, Divisions' has provoked this article.

Downsizing and making personnel redundant is surely not devolution? Genuine devolution is the urgent need of the country and the ideal form of this would be that promised in the Pakistan Resolution. But since upto now no ruler has had the sincerity to concede that, and all have wallowed in the luxury of totally centralized power, devolution should at least begin by transferring those subjects entirely to the provinces which are in effect already with them, i.e. Local Governments, Education, Health, Food and Agriculture, Interior etc. Bypassing the provinces and forming district governments with a new setup worked out by the centre has only led to the severe criticism that the rejected one unit has been reimposed.

The highly centralised federal system has been practised in the country for fifty four years and has proved seriously harmful. It can never work in a multinational state like Pakistan. We are not dealing here with just separate administrative units, but with different peoples who have their own lands, cultures, languages and historical back grounds, all of which they guard with their lives. Stubborn refusal to accept this truth has not only led to the breakup of Pakistan, but also the current bankruptcy, administrative collapse, interprovincial conflicts and total chaos. The country does not have the strength left to bear this state of affairs much longer. It is therefore imperative that a genuine devolution, if not based entirely on the provisions of the Pakistan Resolution, then to start with, at least closely related to those, must be carried out forthwith. In fact, this is how the devolution process should have begun and the matter of district governments, being a provincial subject, should have been left to the provinces.

I also take this opportunity to comment on the new district government system which has failed miserably and placed the local population in a whirl. First of all the election: the voters lists were in a mess and many constituencies were demarcated in an unfeasible manner. The candidates in the elections were nominees of not only political parties, which openly participated in this non-party election, but also of the Pirs, Mirs,

Waderas, Khans, Sardars, Chaudhries, Maliks and the new affluent classes which have emerged out of smuggling, gun running, drug dealing, corruption and so on. If the intention was to keep out the usual lot, success has been only to the extent that their B & C teams have emerged, which not only take directions from them but are totally unfit to carry out the responsibilities that have been placed on them. On the day of the polls I said in a press statement that the newly elected lot would not even be able to clean out the drains in their areas. This has turned out to be true and taking Larkana as an example, it will be seen that the city and all the towns of the district are drowned in dirty water and groaning under the burden of stinking rubbish dumps. Councillors and Nazims are only involved in disputes with each other and bureaucrats. Whatever funds they can lay their hands on are spent on office furniture, cars and tea parties. These new representatives of the people do not even have the awareness or obligation to express views on the burning issues of the country i.e. the Afghan war, financial victimisation of Sindh, cutting of the waters of the Indus for Sindh and total failure of the Sindh government in all fields, including the matter of providing security of life to the citizens. In fact, the only use Nazims and councillors have is to provide an applauding audience to the government, which may tell those who believe that it has the support of the elected representatives of the people. In other words, the district government system is a disaster and it will not be long before the old setup is restored.

Coming next to the new structure of the district governments, nobody understands what was in the minds of those who have worked it out. Instead of one DC., now there are twelve or more officers of the same rank doing the same job in the same area. Instead of one Commissioner covering three or four districts, now there is more than one officer of the same rank in each district. Surely the authors of this programme are aware that the cost of this has shot up by more than 100% with a corresponding increase in corruption and incompetence? And how is the added expense to be met when there is no money for the salaries of even sanitary staff? As far as the exercise of authority is concerned no officer knows what he is supposed to do and the people are knocking from door to door with their applications without finding any solution to the simplest problems. The government explains that being a new system, some teething troubles will be experienced, but when it is taken into account that it has laboured for two years in framing this setup, in which foreign expertise is also involved, no more time can be asked for or given by the people who have reached the conclusion that the prevalent chaos is a permanent state of affairs.

It must also be pointed out here that massive rigging took place in the polls in Sindh. Polling staff including returning officers, presiding officers and army personnel were either party to this or remained silent spectators. Since all complaints have been ignored, the impression has developed that rigging was government-sponsored. Further proof of rigging is provided by the fact that the very few petitions that have been decided by the tribunals have gone in favour of the petitioners. However, thousands of such petitions still remain undisposed and the petitioners are faced with the extreme hardship of having to travel to tribunals which have been located in different districts, to return only with new dates.

Generally speaking, things are desperately bad all around and it is imperative for the military government, which has come to put things right, to take firm and rapid steps in that direction. It is on such a promise that some applauded the take-over of 12th October '99. At least it was felt that the agony of the country, whose fate was being

shuttled between the People's Party and the Muslim League, was over. Added to this, the very positive agenda announced by General Pervez Musharraf generated the hope of better days ahead. But alas, this is not to be. All the evils that have plagued Pakistan particularly since the Zia days, have reached their peak. The agenda has been forgotten and the PPP, Muslim League, in particular the MQM, against which there have been two military operations & which has been labelled a terrorist organisation by the generals, resurrected. Even the convicted felons belonging to these parties have been turned loose and placed in high governmental positions giving strength to the propaganda that deals have been made to release more convicts and facilitate the arrival of those absconding in return for a scheme of power sharing in future. The government makes policies and announces reforms which are either unimplementable or it cannot implement. The urgent need is to deal with corruption and incompetence, which have become a part of our culture, otherwise no policies or reforms can bear fruit. But by using accountability laws as the erstwhile Defence of Pakistan Rules, to punish those who step out of line, mistrust has been created. The National Reconstruction Bureau should have accepted the challenge of devising ways and means to inculcate the minds of the people with thoughts of patriotism, honesty, collective thinking and acting on principles rather than just hunting for a buck. Instead, it has wasted two years on formulating a district government system which cannot work. In any case this is a task which should have been left to the lower tiers of the administration, while NRB occupied itself with loftier objectives. As things are, with the culprit politicians being rehabilitated for the promised elections, corrupt and incompetent officers firmly in the saddle and all the evils of pre military takeover, including economic collapse, totally out of control, (the involvement in the Afghan war and its consequences is a separate subject), the people have the right to know why the take-over on 12th October 99 took place at all?

MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

September 9, 2002

The current electoral process is shrouded in a dense fog of uncertainties and apprehensions and what we are witnessing today would be a comedy of errors if it was not tragic for the country. I wrote an article published in 'Dawn' on 29-12-99 titled 'The Fat is in the Fire,' in which I warned the military government that evils were already beginning to emerge again and if not nipped in the bud would become uncontrollable. This has come to pass with a vengeance in all aspects of life, including politics. Let us look backwards a bit.

Zia tried to use Islam as his manifesto for staying in power but this did not work. He then resorted to wholesale corruption. He did not even spare the very honourable courts of law in his resolve to corrupt every institution of the country, so that all were vulnerable and none strong enough to challenge him. In this he gave special attention to corrupting politics. For instance, parliamentarians received huge amounts of public funds, ostensibly for development projects in their constituencies, which being without proper accounting, were actually bribes in exchange for support. Thus the concept of politicking for profit and buying/selling loyalties took root, which was further strengthened during the so called peoples governments of Benazir and Nawaz Sharif. It became much easier for governments to buy loyalties at public expense rather than impress with achievements.

Corruption, which for long existed mainly in the bureaucracy, is now universal and most visible in the political field. Since there was no need to show qualification and ability, incompetence has also become endemic and the combination of corruption and incompetence has given a stench to politics which has reached the sky.

In this scenario came General Musharraf with his seven point agenda for correcting all wrongs and putting things right. This was a breath of fresh air for the vanquished masses of the country. Things were so bad that the machinery of government stood defeated. In such circumstances even the slightest effort to cope would have appeared like a big step and certainly yielded results. But alas the dark night of woes was not over. The military government, the advent of which struck terror into the hearts of the culprits who could not find holes deep enough to hide in, began to show a singular lack of capacity to prove equal to the task. It seemed that it had bitten off more than

it could chew and was stumbling and blundering along without any direction. Today the government has no control, and chaos has grown into anarchy.

It is not only the magnitude of the existing evils that have overwhelmed the government, but its own unpragmatic approach has also got its legs entangled: it has made policies which it cannot implement and retreats in the face of resistance. It has introduced reforms which do not work, partly because they are hallucinatory with no concept of what is actually required and partly because the machinery of implementation is recalcitrant, corrupt and incompetent. Even if the reform is good it cannot work if not implemented properly. Thus the first and foremost task of the government should have been to clean up the administration for which it has had more than enough time. It was sad to hear General Musharraf say in his last press conference that it will take a long time to improve the law and order situation. This coming from a military ruler, who has enjoyed three years of unfettered power, is indeed most depressing. The reason for lawlessness is simply the corruption, incompetence and even criminal conduct of the police. Why complicate the issue by seeking other causes or getting trapped in far fetched theories and philosophies? If the process of cleaning up the police had begun three years ago today it would be a force no criminal could dare confront. It is as simple as that. But instead of doing this the government has introduced highly complicated and uncalled for reforms which are not working and in fact, have increased corruption and incompetence in the police. Similarly, the new local government system is still not understood even by those who are practicing it. The need here was to simplify proceeding and streamline the system so that redress and solutions were easily available. But in fact the opposite has been done. The net result is more misery and hardship for the people and again increased corruption and incompetence.

The government has blundered even more seriously in the political field. Instead of systematically penetrating the masses and cleansing their mind of the past practices, removing their difficulties and winning their confidence, seeking out the white sheep from among the black and bringing forth a new spotless, dedicated and motivated class of politicians, it started off by labelling all politicians crooks and hunting them down. But even this it could not do a thorough job of, as most of the big crooks either slipped out of its fingers or made deals with it, making a mockery of its accountability process. In this state of affairs, the government suddenly woke up to the fact that it is politics that makes the world go round and General Musharraf leapt into the arena with the announcement of a referendum. This and its results were a disaster to beat all disasters. Going to the people with which he has no rapport and who were trapped in a net of mounting hardships, which the Government had done nothing to lessen, it was obvious that they would manifest a sullen disposition which gave the PPP and PML-N a second wind. The PPP has stepped up its tremendous international propaganda campaign which has bamboozled the government and put it on the defensive. Finding itself drowning in the political sea the government has scrambled only to find leftovers. What has been labelled the King's Party is only a conglomeration of losers and rejects who line up for any government that is in power and abandon it when the going gets rough. This is exactly the lot that should have been removed from the field in the process of cleaning up politics.

While the requirement of degrees etc. has prevented some old sinners from contesting, it is still a sorry lot that is going to the polls. On all sides there are the

notorious individuals who are licking their lips for another piece of the cake. There are no manifestos or commitments to the people. There is no belief in any principal or programme. Even allegiances to parties are fake and expediency the order of the day. Overnight foes are becoming friends and friends becoming foes. Who could foresee that Nawaz Sharif and Benazir would become political allies and exchange niceties? Manipulation, trickery, deceit and lies are all being used to get votes. Rigging and violation of the rules has already begun. The government is the same helpless spectator that it was when all rules and norms were violated in the local bodies polls. In Larkana, a returning officer who received a nomination form four days earlier, has only one day before scrutiny demanded certification of a foreign university degree by the University Grants Commission in Islamabad. Similarly S.E. Wapda, Sukkur, has refused to give an N.O.C to a candidate who has paid the amount of the electricity bills in court where these bills are challenged as being bogus. Again in Kashmir it is reported that a candidate, who has very high aspirations, had his forged degree certificate accepted by the returning officer even though such a certificate has been rejected in another case and in his previous election nomination forms he had declared himself to be only intermediate pass.

In Garhi Yasin the returning officer has demanded the production of a party ticket from one candidate and not any other, although this is not required to be shown till 13th September. Rigging is not necessarily an activity open only to the government. All, particularly the PPP, are past masters at it. Whenever there are elections there is rigging, however the consequences vary according to the degree. More rigging brings greater protest. If the government rigs, the explosion may be even greater than 1977 and if others do so we shall have bogus assemblies. It is clear that the latter is the direction we are headed in and the end result will be assemblies with no calibre overwhelmed by members who are not fit to be there or have not been properly elected. These will have only one object, and that is to make maximum personal gains while the going is good. They will make deals and ~ blackmail the government and there will be such a mess that the whole setup will become unworkable. We saw this happen in the Zia days, when even the assembly, consisting only of the King's Party, was scrapped and there was a return to square one. Those, however, were different days. This time round the failure of the setup will have far more damaging consequences and one can only say, may the lord have mercy.

THE POLITICAL CIRCUS

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

October 25, 2002

After surviving the shock of the results of the polls and accepting the unrestrained irregularities and illegalities committed during voting, as expected in view of the experience of the district government polls, one cannot help but be amused at the antics of our politicians in the struggle for power. The pictures in the papers of tired players who are past their sell by date, embracing, bowing and scraping to each other while in their hearts they carry millions of mischiefs, is hilarious. But the rest is the politics of the day. For example Makhdoom Amin Fahim calling on Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, when each side has publicly accused the other of having a hand in the murders of Chaudhry Zahoor Illahi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the fathers of Chaudhry Shujaat and Benazir respectively. A delegation of PPP meeting MQM leaders at nine zero with fake smiles even though each holds the other responsible for mass murder. The on again and off again romance between PPP and PML(N), with the background of the arrests of Abba Jee and A to Z, not to speak of their serious charges of corruption against each other. While being thus occupied, the PPP also reaches out to the King's Party, although it passionately covets the throne and appears not to accept the king's edict. Benazir dropping all pretences, finally speaks from the heart by reportedly declaring that she is ready to join anyone who releases her husband, withdraws the cases and allows her to return. In the same groove Makhdoom Amin Fahim discloses that the PPP must come to power to reward its workers who have been out in the cold too long and that the PPP philosophy is to accept anything that comes its way in the quest for power. This is the politics of the day in the raw, and in the merry go round all friendships and animosities have been abandoned which leaves the hapless Nawabzada Nasrullah not only high and dry but in search of anyone who is willing to follow in opposition to whoever forms the government. All this is what we have seen so far, but there are no limits to what may come. What, however, is very clear is that none of those in the political field are guided by any principles, programmes or commitments and are totally devoid of ideals and vision. The lust for power and wealth is the only motivating factor. Which indicates the sort of assemblies and governments we shall have if at all they are formed. However the material to elect a prime minister from is not of the highest quality and the names in circulation do not surprise but greatly

alarm. We are not talking here about the Chief Ministership of a province which is often placed in the hands of the biggest cretin available, but we are looking for a head of the government of Pakistan who has to succeed where even the great Zulfikar Ali Bhutto failed, and the conditions internally and externally are much worse now. We have before us some examples of unfit appointees to this post who could only show off their suits or could not even sit in a chair with dignity. One has heard such tales, particularly of their conduct abroad, from the bureaucrats who worked with them, that one breaks out into a sweat of embarrassment. Pakistan still claims to be a sovereign state. Let us not make ourselves a laughing stock in the world by electing some one as prime minister who in no way fits the job and comes only in implementation of a deal.

The scenario that we are faced with today is the consequence of the government's pathetic amateurishness and lack of control which has led to massive rigging by all who got the chance and since there was no one to enforce the rules it has been a free for all. Even before the polls, highly disreputable people openly boasted of not only being elected, but also reaching higher pastures under the sponsorship of the government. This made the whole election process suspect ab initio. In this deplorable setting we have, for the first time, assemblies dominated by religious parties or with their strong presence in them. Who is going to cope with this and how? Even if it is conceded that the religious leaders who have never had it so good, will not risk an upset and be ready to moderate their outlook, they may bend but will not break and face the wrath of their electorate which is situated mainly in the areas bordering Afghanistan and have been greatly affected by the tragedy. They have come on a strong anti-American mandate by projecting not only the atrocities committed in Afghanistan and the condemnable designs against Iraq, but also by singling out America as an enemy of the Muslim world. How is a military ruler who has no rapport with his countrymen and is wholly dependent on American support going to face such a situation?

The political game being played is not only a comedy of errors, but also a clear warning of the dangers ahead. The vote in favour of the types that have been elected amounts to a licence for loot and betrayal. While some are gearing up for another bite at the cherry, others are drooling for their first bite. Thus we are back to square one which raises the question: what was the need for a military take-over on 12th October '99?

If anything has been achieved in the last three years it is the magnification of all prevailing evils. The military rulers never succeeded in fathoming what needed to be done and then doing it. Authority slipped out of their hands like water out of a fist and their attempts at reforms are a cruel joke. They proved as inept at running the government as a politician would be at ordering troops on the front. This is the main reason for the reappearance of the dead parties that are again in the forefront.

The generals thought they could rule for ever without stooping to politics. They panicked when they found they could not and belatedly crashed into the field like a bull in a china shop. All the demons have been revived and turned loose. Instead of cleaning up politics it has been made dirtier and more disreputable. The situation is dangerous in the extreme for the country. The so called representatives of the people who have come on rigged polls and without any mandate other than to have a ball. They do not have the calibre or the acumen to reach honourable compromises for the good of the country. Will we ever see an honest and capable individual in the field?

There is no indication that a government, in any shape, is likely to emerge soon. If and when it comes into existence, it certainly will not last very long. On the other hand, there are religious leaders with a mandate that runs contrary to the usual trend of affairs in the country. Caught in the middle are the military rulers who never expected all this and bargained for something else. There is thus a clash of very strong currents which will lead to a huge explosion. This may have one of the three following consequences:

1. A new and brutal military takeover and long-lasting martial law.
2. Much bloodshed and breakup of the country.
3. If we are lucky and good sense prevails, a confederal setup designed by a commission of the genuine representatives of the Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon, Punjabi and Seraiki peoples, which releases the country from the stranglehold of the centre and lets blood flow in the veins of the provinces as intended by the architects of Pakistan who promised a confederacy.

9/11 AND THE AFTERMATH

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

September 9, 2003

The tragedy of 9/11 would have been unpardonable and lamented for long had not George W. Bush, President of USA, with his conduct and utterances, given rise to worldwide complaints of foul against the Americans. By causing rivers of innocent blood to flow in Afghanistan and Iraq, entirely without cause or justification, he has seriously mitigated the disaster of 9/11. He told the world that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the attack, who could run but not hide, although even after the passage of two years, Osama is not running but is definitely hiding. However, in retaliation for the claimed three thousand deaths on 9/11, the unsuspecting and innocent people of Afghanistan have been made targets of merciless bombardment, against which they are known to have no defence whatsoever. While we are repeatedly reminded of the three thousand casualties, there is no mention of the number that have been slaughtered in Afghanistan. The country has been reduced to rubble and it is safe to estimate that many hundreds of thousands have perished and their homeland colonized.

Similarly, Bush regurgitated fire against President Saddam Hussain declaring that he and his weapons of mass destruction were dangerous for the world and must be eliminated. And who was to save the world? None other than George W. Bush himself! But again he has failed:

Saddam is alive and there is no discovery of the weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, like Afghanistan, Iraq has been decimated with uncountable dead and the land colonized.

While Bush has had to swallow his words about killing Osama, he bulldozes on in violation of international law, UN decisions and opposition of the citizens of the world expressed in no uncertain terms by mass protests in what he calls a war against terrorism. What is terrorism and who is a terrorist is a matter in which Bush has usurped the sole authority to be the complainant, judge and executioner, and is not hampered by any such mundane requirements as presence of proof. Nor does he comprehend that when a mighty force uses its push button technological power to launch wars against small, poor and defenceless states and demolishes them with bombs and rockets rained from the skies, with soldiers only coming to mop up, the hapless targets have no choice but to devise ways and means to survive to fight another day. Thus guerrilla warfare, or what

those who provoke it call terrorism, becomes the only answer.

Freedom fighters, all over the world, have inherited this method of combat from the American Red Indians and such great warriors as Jeronimo, Chiefs Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Cochise and others who fought to the end against the colonization of their land by the Americans. Of course in Bush's reckoning these were terrorists and by the same token all those who fight for their homeland, freedom and justice are terrorists unless they act under American patronage. Then even brutal military dictators, of the calibre of Zia ul Haq became acceptable. Even Saddam was an angel as long as he fought against Iran on the American side. Such volte face by American governments has earlier been witnessed in Nicaragua and other South American countries, but even more glaringly in the case of the Taliban, who were nurtured, trained and armed by the Americans then massacred after they had served their purpose.

Of course the current practice of so called terrorism is the consequence of settling Jews of the world on the land of the Palestinians by the Americans, British and French after the Second World War. While the Palestinians were made homeless and denied justice and fairplay, the Israelis were not only financed and armed but also protected by the blazing guns of the west. The Palestinians were thus forced to hit out as and when and where they could, with their activities extending to suicide bombing by brave men and women who gave up their lives for their cause. This has now become the modus operandi in conflicts against superior forces. George Bush continues to harangue the American people about his great conquest of Afghanistan and Iraq, conveniently concealing the fact that, war on both fronts rages on at the cost of over six billion dollars a month to the American people and his declarations of victory are hollow. The aggressors/occupiers are now the targets and the situation on the ground is a testimonial to the fact that Osama, Saddam and the Taliban have indeed lived to fight another day. These are not just fanatical groups striking out in frustration, but it seems that they are trained and equipped armies which have been saved from futile confrontation against bombs, rockets and tanks and are now fighting back on their own terms at venues of their choice with crippling effect. The hawks in the American government are rattled to their roots and while Bush continues to rave and rant on, obviously in an attempt to conceal the fruits of his folly, the effort is on to drag other countries, of the world into the cesspool of Afghanistan and Iraq. With what face the American government is appealing to the world for help, when not long ago it spurned the protest of the people of the globe against war, only George W. Bush can explain. Even more brazen is the resort to the UN for cover when the memory is yet fresh as to how the American government rejected its entity as a peace-keeping authority and reduced it to being another League of Nations. Why anyone should now come forth to rescue Bush from stewing in his own juice is a question which has no answer. The situation in Afghanistan and Iraq has become a no-win situation for Bush, who is obviously unaware of the lessons of history that Afghanistan is the graveyard of would be conquerors, that its people are unyielding fighters who, helped by the terrain, have shattered the dreams of many adventurers, lately the Russians. As for Iraq, Saddam has not been playing marbles while the Americans were trumpeting tunes of war. He was, we now see, preparing to fight a war of his own choice. On both fronts the Americans are trapped very badly and surely the echoes of their hasty retreat from Somalia and the defeat in Vietnam are resounding in their ears. It was best that when the people of the world said no to his mad adventure, that Bush took the opportunity

to get out gracefully. But power drunk, bloated by wrong assumptions and bad intelligence he has landed himself in a big mess. While Blair of Britain, Bush's wagging tail, has already met his Waterloo and it is only his thick skin which keeps him going, Bush is also visibly destined to no better fate. The lesson learnt is simply this: that even the mightiest power on earth cannot label other leaders as murderers and despots, and then go into their countries to murder indiscriminately and occupy. That under the guise of bringing freedom and justice it can only bring the peace, freedom and justice of the graveyard. Here mention must be made of the American pressure on North Korea and Iran on the matter of the bomb. How and why, other than on the concept of might is right, Bush has assumed the authority to tell the world who can do or not do what, is incomprehensible. But the truth is that America has the largest arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and what is more it is the only power on earth that has ever used them. Thus Bush is hardly in a position to pontificate.

The people of the world are angry at the Americans using brute force against states that barely exist. Such adventure reeks of larger ambitions which cannot be achieved in this day and age. The times of the mighty conquerors and empires are over. The carnage at a prison near Mazar-e-Sharif together with the inhumanity against prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, who have not yet been found guilty of any crime, and the slaughter of the two sons of Saddam by a huge contingent of American soldiers are constant reminders of a savagery by the Americans which even surpasses that of the much condemned Nazi camps. The fallout of all this is having detrimental consequences not only on America, but also the world. The arena of terrorism has widened. No one is safe anywhere. The injustice against Iraq and Afghanistan has created sympathy for them which seems to be taking the shape of assistance. Volunteers, including suicide bombers, are pouring in to take on the Americans. The very people that Bush claims to have liberated are on the warpath against him. Both the occupied countries are in a state of total anarchy which the harassed Americans cannot control. World economies have been damaged and the mighty dollar is at its lowest ebb even against the rupee. But the worst result of all is that there is panic in America. While the morale is high in the bombed-out countries, the American does not feel safe in his home, which he is too scared to leave. His days as the affluent tourist of the world are over. Osama, Saddam and Omar have become heroes and their feats of taking on the American might from some cave in the deserts or the mountains, while there is a dragnet out for them, are considered formidable, while George Bush is being laughed at. At the beginning of his wars against two Muslim countries he said this was not a crusade. Now he is calling the conflict a war against Christians. This is a very desperate and dangerous thing to do. After the collapse of Communism the American government seems to have targeted the Muslim world for destruction. Not in the least because Islam is rapidly taking hold in America, and that too amongst the African Americans. Supporting the Jews against the Palestinians bombing and blockading Libya, bombing Sudan, hostility against Iran etc. are all manifestations of extreme prejudice against Muslims. Bush must see that his plans are becoming counter-productive for him. The state of disunity among the Muslim nations is disappearing under American pressure and religious extremism is finding a good argument in support. The call for jihad against the infidel and laying down of life for one's faith have become attractive slogans for the youth and if the over one billion Muslims of the world unite and go on the march, the blame for the consequences will have to be faced entirely by George W. Bush.

DO WE WANT MORE DAMS AND CANALS OR PAKISTAN?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

September 29, 2003

On 14th September 2003, a well attended seminar was held at Peshawar on the current crisis relating to the construction of the Greater Thal Canal and the Kalabagh Dam. The speakers, who were well known leaders of the three smaller provinces, were unanimous on the point that one province, even though with an overall majority population, has no right to impose its edict on the other three provinces. The underlying rationale in support of this proposition is that the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon people, have their own historic identities stretching back for many millenniums, their own lands, economies, cultures, traditions, languages and all else that is required to make them separate nations. This they were until the British conquest merged them into the mosaic of nations that became British India. They opted for Pakistan on the promise of 'autonomy and sovereignty' contained in the Pakistan Resolution. Thus whereas they have surrendered a part of their 'autonomy and sovereignty' to the central entity for the formation of a muslim state, they have not conferred upon Punjab the right to rule over then and impose its will on them. If this is not the case, then the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon people did not gain independence in 1947, but merely changed masters, which is absurd.

Ofcourse the above premise did not take hold after the emergence of Pakistan because its author, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was a sick man who died within eleven months and after him began the rat race for power which continues to this day. The foremost task of constitution-making could not be performed and governments fell like dry leaves in autumn. In the end it took nine years imposition of parity between East and West Pakistan to produce a result of sorts in 1956. In the process, all norms of true democracy, justice and fair play were abandoned and the fundamental concept of 'autonomy and sovereignty' of the provinces, being the promise on which Pakistan is based, got deeply buried. Corruption, treachery, betrayal and lies now constitute the backbone of our political system and it is when life has become impossible that we have woken up to the reality.

The hegemony of Punjab, backed by the military-bureaucratic axis, has cost the

country so dearly as to change its geography. It is on this very issue that the larger part of Pakistan broke away to become Bangladesh, while the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon people remain under the constant threat of military action. Even democracy based on majority rule works only in a nation-state as the ruler and the ruled are all the same and there is no cause for complaint on that count. But in a multinational state like Pakistan, it cannot and has not worked. This is the lesson of history of which we are reminded by the breakup of not only Pakistan, but also the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Ethiopia, and we are witness to continued bloodshed in India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Sudan etc. The anomaly does not end just there: while the Bengalis were with us, their majority was strongly resisted and denied by the Punjab. The very first constitution (1956) recognised only parity between the Bengalis and all other nations of Pakistan, which was the absurdity that ultimately led to the breakup of the country.

The forced construction of the Thal Canal and Kalabagh Dam, backed by threats of crushing and chopping off the heads of those who oppose these, has turned out to be the last straw. It is not only water – the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon people are also in revolt against the loot of their other resources and incomes only to feed Punjab and Islamabad, while the three smaller provinces remain starved and thirsty ghettos. The three have given their verdict against not only the Thal Canal and Kalabagh Dam, but also against Punjabi dominance and exploitation, and are out in the streets for its enforcement. So what is Islamabad going to do? Send in troops and carry out a full scale massacre as was done by Zia in Sindh in 1983? Not really. This government is an anachronism which cannot find a solid foothold. It has been unable to enforce its laws and policies in any sphere of life: it cannot control crime and has backed down on its declared intent of ending smuggling, gun running, drug trafficking etc. It has even done a U-turn on its much trumpeted accountability by bringing into the assemblies and government notoriously corrupt and dishonest people who were the targets of its own ehtesab. The manner in which it has conducted local elections, the referendum and general elections is a disgrace. Its police reforms and the new district government system, which is the brainchild of foreign consultants, who know nothing about our rural life, and a general who was never deemed fit for a command post in the army, have failed and are a punishment for the people. Thus even if madness prevails and force is resorted to, which section of the population does the government feel will stand by it in an adventure against the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon peoples? Certainly not the turncoats, and self-servers that fill its lobbies, as true to their calling, they will go in search of who is coming next. If this is not bad enough, then let us not forget the situation on the borders: troops are already deployed on the Afghan front, the Indian border remains volatile and the situation in Kashmir is far from comforting for our American sponsors, they only use military governments in Pakistan, but never come to their aid even in times of war. Besides, the Americans have already bitten off more than they can chew in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact they are choking on it and want Pakistan to help. Hence President Musharraf's second trip to the USA in quick succession to the picnic at Camp David. No Sir, the only course open to General Musharraf is to yield in his confrontation against the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon people. He must show wisdom and foresight in this and suppress those who are egging him on over the precipice for their own selfish ends.

The Kalabagh Dam and Greater Thal Canal must be abandoned. There will be no

complaint from the people of Punjab who will not want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. The Seraiki people have already disowned these projects and declared that the Greater Thal Canal is not for their benefit but for a well-known privileged class of super beings. Together with this there could be a full scale reassessment of the powers that the centre has usurped and what remains for the provinces. The powers taken away from the provinces and conferred on district governments have caused such chaos as to make good governance impossible. Pakistan lies in the provinces where the people are, not in the marble palaces of Islamabad where only the bureaucracy and the generals sit. Thus the bulk of power should vest in the provinces. There has to be an honest and genuine devolution beginning from Islamabad via the provinces to the union councils. Let the provinces make policies suited to their own circumstances even though they may be different from each other. This is the case in the most powerful and prosperous states of the world such as America, Canada and Australia. In any case, Islamabad has failed to run the country and has indeed made a total mess of it. It should only be the seat of the Council of Common Interest and deal with matters prescribed for it in the Pakistan Resolution which relate to the solidarity and security of Pakistan.

Pakistan needs a new constitution based on an outlook which takes into account the sentiments and aspirations of those prophets who created the country and provided the basis of a system for it. The Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtoon Front was set up in 1985 to propagate this truth but perhaps we had not suffered enough at that stage to care. Now, per force, things are moving in that same direction and all must give their blessings to the trend if Pakistan is to be saved. Those who believe that the country will break unless a powerful stranglehold is maintained on the provinces are in fact advocating what Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan practiced. It only expedited the breakup of Pakistan. This also raises the important question that if a country can be held together only by force, is it worth holding it together at all and how long can it be held in this manner when even the mighty empires of Chingiz, Halaku, Taimur, Napoleon, the British, Hitler and others have crumbled? Let the provinces breathe, do not bully and badger them. Let them exist as equals and let them be masters of their own destinies. This is the urgently needed cementing factor in Pakistan.

WHAT BECAME OF GOOD GOVERNANCE?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

November 14, 2003

On 12/9/99 the elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, using his constitutional authority, removed the Chief of Army Staff from his post. In a coup from the air, the Chief of Army Staff, using his muscle, did not only sack him instead, but also threw him in jail. It took only twenty soldiers, who climbed into the Prime Minister's House, to achieve this feat, proving that while the edifice of democracy is in fact easily destroyed, the route to military rule is roses strewn in this country. Thus on 12/9 came into being the General Musharraf brand of yet another military dictatorship albeit this time on the promise of a plausible seven point agenda. At the time this was something like a breath of fresh air after the stiflingly corrupt and rigged democracy of the previous eleven years. But alas this could not last and the fresh air turned out to be just a whiff.

The main factor of Musharraf's seven point agenda was the promise of 'good governance'. Economic progress, inter provincial harmony, clean politics, accountability and implementation of all the other commitments in the agenda were entirely dependent on this. But it is sad that the military rulers have in fact inflicted such shockingly bad governance on the country as never witnessed before. Let us look at the effect of this on the three pillars of the state namely, the executive, legislature and the judiciary.

The Executive

Cracks appeared in the armour of the military rulers at an early stage and their capacity to govern and control stands seriously challenged today. The political parties, that had ruled for the previous eleven years and could not find holes deep enough to hide in, at the advent of military rule, have now re-emerged with a vengeance. They take full advantage of their past links with the bureaucracy, the election commission and the judiciary and use their ill-begotten wealth to kick up such a storm of propaganda, trumpeting the bright prospects of their return to power, that the military rulers are rattled. Having failed in the long period of four years of unbridled rule to show any concern for the people and unable to give them even security of life, they are isolated and in panic. They have no rapport with the people and do not enjoy their

trust and support. Thus on the one hand they have been compelled to open dialogues with these political parties, and on the other have fallen back on the support of the notorious turncoats, corrupt politicians and traditional followers of anyone in power, whom they had promised in their agenda to eliminate.

Soldiers who are trained to destroy cannot, generally speaking, be expected to build and improve. There are, of course, exceptions, but not in this country. Indeed some progress was made in General Ayub Khan's time but then the government was run by a team of top notch civilians. Anyhow, Musharraf this time round military rulers have proved to be singularly inept at being policy-makers and administrators.

The most distinguishing feature of this military rule is that, to them the civilians are not only fools, but also matter the least. They just have to be ruled and it is the officers of the army who know all and can do all. Thus the country has been put under the charge of a hierarchy starting with the majors at the district level, colonels at the divisional levels, brigadiers at the provincial level while generals rule at the top and dictate policies. There are also the huge number of army officers, retired and otherwise, who have been planted in the services up to saturation point. This is the setting for the inevitable disastrous consequences that all are faced with today. No doubt army officers are trained and disciplined individuals who are also very decent and courteous, but launching them into a field which is alien to them has been harmful in the extreme. No less harmful than it would be if politicians are sent to conduct operations on the front. They have been misled and manipulated not only by the wily bureaucracy, but also the foxy waderas, Chaudhries, Sardars and Khans who practice the dubious art of flattery and sycophancy to perfection.

The much trumpeted economic progress, manifested mainly by increased foreign exchange reserves, is not the consequence of any new economic policy, but of the coincidence of 9/11, which has reversed the flight of capital and the State Bank's purchase of dollars in the market. There are other improvements in the economy, but only on paper. There is still no relief to the harassed man in the street who is, more than ever before, trapped in the expanding web of poverty, unemployment, rocketing prices of essential commodities, lack of security, corruption and generally such hardships as to be driven to suicide. Similarly, our foreign policy is only based on appeasing George Bush who has been an unmitigated disaster for his own people, the majority of whom hate him. By following him in his war against so-called terrorism, which is a poorly disguised crusade against Islam, we have blundered into conflict with very powerful revolutionary forces and those brave and admirable souls who are fighting for their cause even to the extent of suicidal attacks. Not only that, but we have been drawn into an internecine war with our own people in Waziristan. We are left with no friends in the world community and are stuck in a groove with no new initiatives in our fifty-six year most debilitating confrontation with India. The basic problem here is that we refuse to face the reality that India is a far bigger power with an equally bigger standing in the world community. Our insistence on parity with India is acceptable to no one. The hectic foreign trips of the President and in his wake the hapless, Prime Minister, produce nothing. More would be achieved if tours were conducted within the country, not to impose rejected schemes on the people, but to remove their grievances. The great Mahatir Mohammad, who neither crawled nor begged all over the world, but settled down to building his country, has taken it to such giddy heights of progress that he stands like a mighty colossus whose dignified withdrawal from

the scene is mourned by the world. A government which does not carry the confidence and support of its own people goes abroad with no credentials and cuts no ice.

While one hears complaints about bad governance in other provinces there is total administrative collapse in Sindh which has given rise to a state of anarchy. It is just a free for all in which, as in the wild west, the fastest gun prevails. The writ of the government is not worth the paper it is written on. Lawlessness and corruption are rampant and have drowned out the machinery for their control. The people no longer look to the government, which has ignored them and includes the most disreputable politicians, for redress. Instead they find their own solutions. This leads to indiscriminate fights and killings which are a common occurrence and which the government can do nothing to stop. There are even many no go areas for the government and when authority thus crumbles even the small fry become brave: for the second year running the twenty-seven sugar mill owners in Sindh have blatantly defied the government and refused to implement its orders on the price of sugarcane and back payments to cultivators. There is nothing the government seems capable of doing to enforce its orders.

All the instruments of administrative machinery have become blunt and corroded. The police is almost entirely corrupt and useless. They refuse to accept complaints at police stations or if they have to, they just refuse to act. It has become common and accepted practice for police officers to bargain with criminals to keep them out of their jurisdictions and in cases of kidnappings it is considered a big achievement to secure the release of the kidnapee, usually on payment of ransom. The question of confronting or arresting the criminals does not arise. The law-enforcement agencies stand defeated by criminals and are only good for guarding government functionaries and terrorising the citizens. The remainder of the civil service having become used to being led by corrupt, incompetent, illiterate and calibreless ministers, has become totally corrupt, indolent and recalcitrant so that projects are either fraudulently implemented, or not at all, leading to lapse of funds. Professionalism and discipline has disappeared and standards have hit rock bottom, so much so that even a report or a summary cannot be drafted and put up properly. It is also a fact that, in Sindh at least, the PPP carries more clout in the bureaucracy than the rulers because of its links and the bluff that it is coming back to power. In the tainted politics of today which is without any principles, scruples or ideology, the bureaucracy enjoys greater importance as the people only flock to those who have a say in the administration.

Special mention must be made here of the ushr and zakat set up: the performance of this alone is enough to make a self-respecting government hang its head in shame. In this department appointments from top to bottom are made by way of reward, or as a licence to loot and plunder. The funds meant for the blind, disabled and destitute are swallowed up at all levels by the office holders. These funds are even used to bribe polling staff, buy votes in elections and to cover expenses of candidates. Appointments in this department are so much in demand that people fight over them.

The executive functions of the government are further frustrated by the blackmail of the self-interested ministers, members of assemblies, nazims and councillors which the military rulers have selected as their fellow travellers. These characters have carved out territories for themselves where they have been given officers of their choice. They use these to suppress their opponent and to aggrandise themselves without regard for the law of the land or rules of decency. Thus criminals are being harboured

and gambling dens, drug dens, trade of illegal arms, misappropriation of government funds and other malpractices are flourishing with total impunity.

In the field of administrative reform the government has introduced only two innovations in the whole period of four years and both have become a pain. These are the district government system and the police reforms. Never before has the citizen been subjected to such torture as he has to endure under the new district government setup. Instead of meeting the urgent need to simplify the government system at the lower level, it has been made so complicated and confusing that even those propagating and operating it do not comprehend it. This, together with the massive corruption and misuse of public funds by the bureaucracy, nazims and councillors that the system allows has created such misery for the man in the street that he invokes the curse of God on all those responsible.

The fact that the district government system has been imposed in bad faith is evident not only in that it is the brainchild of a general who throughout his service was never deemed fit for command and who hired the services of foreign consultants with their head office in India, but also that the system is based on the so called devolution plan of the military rulers that gives no indication of being honest. Genuine devolution must begin with the transfer of powers from Islamabad, which is nothing more than a usurper in the concept of Pakistan. It enjoys powers which should rightly vest in the provinces and instead of devolving these to them it has transferred what little remained with the provinces to district governments. With no clear lines defining authority between the districts and provinces on various subjects, this is not a very clever attempt at eliminating the provinces and further strengthening the centre. This unbecoming design has ricocheted on the military rulers who are now unable to cope with the conflict and chaos they have generated. It is also highly embarrassing for them that the commanders in charge of cantonments have rejected this system as unsuitable for application in their areas.

Similarly, the police reforms have made the police a B team of the army, free from provincial government control, and multiplied the woes of the people. Here again simplification and streamlining was the urgent requirement, but instead a mess has been created: there are now two separate branches of the police dealing with the same single matter at the police stations. This means double corruption, double incompetence, double victimization of the citizen, double burden on the exchequer and indeed double crime.

These two shots in the dark (district governments/devolution and police reforms) have backfired seriously. The rulers must now show their due concern by admitting the fact and rolling back the moves. To be stubborn on this is to cause more harm to the masses and increase their hostility.

The Legislature

The parliament today is a complete embarrassment to the country. It could not be less when it owes its very existence to unprecedented and massive rigging. The electoral process has never been perfect in this country and the contestants have progressively done their best to cut corners at every stage, starting from the compilation of the electoral rolls right up to the counting and recounting of the votes. The political parties have acquired an expertise in cheating which they practice to the hilt. But the last time round it was the military rulers that outdid them all. As a consequence it would be safe

to assume that half the membership of assemblies, right from union councils to the senate, consist of individuals who neither have the calibre nor the right to be there at all.

Thus the bogus democracy that the country is saddled with today started with the elections to union, tehsil and district councils in which every rule/law was violated and all malpractices resorted to. The most defiant illegality was the open participation of political parties in these declaredly partyless polls, by issuing tickets, canvassing, office holders supervising polling stations and later on announcing victories of their candidates. The army and all other concerned officers did not only remain silent spectators to such offences, but also allowed the kidnapping of voters, purchase of votes, stuffing of ballot boxes and manipulation of counts etc. They also openly practiced favouritism and sponsorship, the election commission and the judiciary being the biggest culprits in this crime against true democracy. Thus the pattern was laid for the defiantly rigged presidential referendum, so much so that later the President himself had to concede the fact and publicly apologise for it, although he nevertheless sticks to the results. Similarly, in the general elections no one lost the chance to rig and violate all norms of fair play and decency.

The National Assembly and the Senate alone cost the people more than 750 million rupees a year. The Provincial Assemblies cost more. But what good are they? Except for the budget which has to be pushed through, not a single law has been passed. Nor do the assemblies serve the purpose of providing a facade of democracy. While the opposition never misses the chance to expose the government for its failure, the government side has also proved to be quite useless, even in defending itself in or outside the house. President Musharraf continues to call the shots and military rule is undisguised, justifying itself purely on the verdict of the compliant judges of the Supreme Court who have taken on oath of loyalty to the military regime. Even the government's pleas to the Commonwealth and European Union for restoration and acceptance are rejected on the grounds that there is no democracy in Pakistan. How can it be otherwise when the situation is such that the President cannot enter the assembly to discharge his constitutional obligation of addressing the joint session?

The sabre-rattling that has gone on for one year between the government and opposition has now left both sides exhausted. While the government holds on, the opposition also does not want to upset the apple cart, simply because neither side is confident about their political status and popularity. They certainly do not want to go to the people again to test it as they know that the voters are disgusted. Thus the desk-thumping and slogan-raising in the assemblies have become a bore and the threats of launching movements quite hollow. There is every indication that both sides have settled down to preserving the status quo, particularly when the MNAs have received a 100% rise in salaries and allowances.

Judiciary

A glance at the fifty-six year history of Pakistan must lead to the conclusion that this country was made only for dictatorial rule. The original Muslim League being a party of the elite, conceived and modelled Pakistan on viceregal traditions. Even the founder of the Nation, who promised 'autonomy and sovereignty' to the provinces, (Pakistan Resolution) chose to become the Governor General rather than Prime Minister, as Jawaharlal Nehru did. Thus from the country's inception there were attempts at

suppressing the multinational reality of Pakistan and saddling it with an unworkable highly centralized federalism, which is in effect unitarism and breeds only dictators whether generals, bureaucrats or politicians. This has broken up the country, not allowed democracy to take root, public institutions to operate or any progress to be made. The shame of all this mess rests mainly on the shoulders of the so called honourable judges. By inventing the cursed 'doctrine of state necessity' and thereby rolling out the red carpet for almost perpetual martial law and military rule, they have condemned this country to a state of subjugation from which it can neither retreat nor advance. This in itself is treason which must invoke article six of the constitution, but who is to do it? All other failures of the judiciary pale before this, but are nevertheless an agony for the people.

The courts, including the election commission, are manned, at all levels, by political appointees' who are loyal to their benefactors when their interests do not directly conflict with those of the government of the day. They submit to the rulers and reap rewards of extension in tenure, exemption from accountability and various monetary benefits. Upholding of the law and the dictates of justice are the farthest from their minds and in many instances they do not even know what these are! There are living examples of octroi clerks being appointed to the highest courts and there are many judges who cannot read or understand the law without the aid of their stenographers, who even write judgements for them. Graft in the judiciary has become as common a practice as at a police station, and on due consideration a murderer can go free while an innocent person may hang. Such examples are on record, and in the knowledge of the superiors. It is known in the legal profession that judges tell litigants in open court not to pay advocates, but instead come to them directly. Judges of the Supreme Court are known to use their offices to cause transfers and postings not only in the judiciary, but also in civil services and then use their influence on such officials for benefits. It is therefore no wonder that most judges are more than ready to take oaths of allegiance to martial law and subordinate themselves even to lower echelons of the army. It is said that in General Zia's days brigadiers went to the judges' chambers in the higher courts and issued orders on what would be the verdict in which case. Living in such a state of disgrace, it seems all the more laudable that an honest judge in far away Fiji has ruled that the military takeover in that country was illegal and in violation of the constitution. There is hope after all, but not for the unfortunate people of this country. How can life go on in a country where there is no one to uphold the law and dispense justice and where everything is up for sale?

CONCLUSION

All the above is a synopsis of the state of anarchy which actually exists in the country, but the rulers seem unconcerned. Of course, if there was civilian rule, the generals would have marched in long ago, but what happens now when there is already military rule? We have seen that this can stretch to eleven years and then too it only ends when some disaster takes place. So do we pray for disaster or salvation? And what sort of salvation is it going to be if we have to go back to either Benazir or Nawaz Sharif rule, when they have already been rejected twice, to the relief of the people. Thus, until a better choice appears, we must settle for an ad hoc arrangement: a Council of Common Interests consisting of, inter alia, two senior politicians, with an unimpeachable record, from each province must be set up. The Council must run the

country for one year with the realisation that there are a hundred and forty million people who do not only matter the most but are the masters. They have to be served and this must start with removing corruption and incompetence in the entire machinery of the state as otherwise all reforms will be defeated. This is a hard but not impossible task. Once the council establishes its credentials as a tough, clean and competent body, by hitting out uncompromisingly at crooks, hypocrites, opportunists and self-servers who dominate our society, things will start falling in line rapidly. The three pillars of the state must be reconstructed on strong foundations. A genuinely independent Election Commission, consisting of men of honour and integrity, must be created. Fresh, clean and transparent elections, based on accurate electoral rolls and justly demarcated constituencies, must be held. The rules must be enforced drastically and on the spot with no long drawn out and useless election petitions. The council must ensure that the days of dictators are over by a genuine devolution of powers from the centre through the provinces right down to the union councils. The country must not be run from Islamabad downwards, but from union councils upwards. Article six of the constitution must be applied mercilessly through a judiciary worthy of the name. Recognizing the multinational character of the country and catering to it, the existing federal/unitary system of governance must be banished forever. Thus the grievances of the three small provinces will be removed, true democracy take hold and Pakistan emerge as a solid and stable state at last on the path towards progress and development. This together with a realistic foreign policy, based strongly on friendship with neighbours, will provide Pakistan a place in the firmament.

IS ANYONE SAFE?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

December 29, 2003

While the Governor of Sindh is reported to have claimed that crime is down by 35%, it is also reported, at the same time that the notorious bandit and killer Mubeen Narejo has broken through an encirclement by thousands of policemen, near Madeji, district Shikarpur, issuing threats and uttering abuse while on his way to a safe haven from where he will no doubt strike again. Earlier on this month, he was reported to be in the kacha area within the jurisdiction of Larkana and Khairpur police where, despite pleas by locals, the police just refused to act, with the consequence that the criminal, as an act of defiance and bravado, gunned down an innocent bypasser and left, leaving behind a clear trail for anyone who dared to follow. Ofcourse no one did. Similarly, Shah Belo on the outskirts of Sukkur city is now a haven for the most notorious gangs of criminals. The police dare not enter this jagir of the outlaws who reportedly commit crimes and retreat there for total safety. But why mention such incidents? When the President of Pakistan, the most guarded man after George Bush has, with sheer luck, escaped two attempts on his life within a period of two weeks, this is hardly the time to claim improvement in law and order.

There are two reasons for such contradictions between the views of the rulers and the reality on the ground. Firstly, it is not only the Islamabadis but the Karachiites also who often manifest the view that the boundaries of Sindh do not stretch beyond the toll plazas of Karachi or at least what happens beyond these does not matter. If law and order has actually improved in Karachi, it is certainly not due to the effectiveness of the law enforcement agencies. The political and administrative setup is such that a lull has become necessary for the government. The potential for crime in Karachi still remains and will again explode when the government changes, as the enforcers of the law still remain the same ineffective force. Secondly, the Inspector General Police Sindh, is reported recently to have said that the law and order in Sindh was good except for two districts. Even if the government, in particular the police, did not owe a duty of care to these two unfortunate districts, the IGP's statement is simply incorrect. He has obviously relied on the quaint charts of crime figures that are drawn up by subordinates and placed before him and the Governor. But an administrator, with his ear to the ground and familiar with the tricks of the trade, directs these bogus charts

straight to the wastepaper basket. It is only necessary to see the Sindhi newspapers, which report from the rural areas, to appreciate that crime is out of control and the police on the run. Crime figures compiled into charts are inaccurate as complaints are not registered at police stations which are now being run as 'patharis'. The police either does not act, or acts informally which leaves it free to bargain and make money rather than enforce the law. It is unbelievable that even senior police officers themselves, or through their subordinates, maintain contacts with outlaws and boast of success when a crime is solved by bargaining with them. Application of the law and arrest of the criminal is a forgotten practice. This applies to serious crimes such as murder, kidnapping, highway robbery etc. Lesser crimes have become licensed as far as the police is concerned, because they can't be bothered to take notice.

In the winter of 1972-73 Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto undertook a district-wise tour of Sindh. He met a cross section of the people in what were fairly close to being genuine open kutcheris. Only in Sukkur one person complained of bad law and order, and even though it was explained on the spot by the participants that the complaint originated out of a tribal conflict resulting in one death, the then C.M. (yours truly) handed in his resignation at the conclusion of the PM's tour. Today the hue and cry of the people and Sindhi newspapers against outrageous crime is being answered with claims of improvements. The consequence is dangerous: having lost all confidence in the corrupt and incompetent police and judiciary, the people have been driven to buying arms for not only protection, but also solution of such problems as would normally be taken to the police station and the courts. This leads to more crime, conflict and bloodshed. Thus the situation in Sindh is rapidly turning into that existing in the tribal areas which no one has ever been able to control.

This cannot be ignored any longer and firm action is urgently required. Some heads have to roll and they have to be those of senior police officers who have become confined to wood panelled and marble floored cool offices. What is a police officer doing just pushing files? His place is out there in the field, leading his men against criminals to eliminate them, their hideouts and those who protect them. It is absurd that the senior officers only issue orders down the line one to the other and the burden ultimately falls on the poorly paid constable who does not even have proper ammunition and transport. No one blames him for just uttering long abuses against his superior officers. All officers within whose jurisdiction a crime goes undetected and unpunished must be put on the mat and face maximum penalties if found at fault. Such being the instant requirement, the police force needs general overhauling, starting with very strict recruiting on merit. It must be followed by absolutely first-rate training, by foreign experts if necessary. Very great emphasis must be placed on motivation, commitment to duty and absolute honesty. The crime of sifarish must be eliminated forever by being treated as a disqualification leading to instant dismissal. The new recruits must systematically replace the old useless lot so that soon we have a police force to be proud of. This must not be used for political purposes and kept out of the control and influence of politicians who themselves have earned much disrepute. Similar steps are required to clean up the judiciary and free it from disgrace.

This is all easier said than done, for who is going to bell the cat? The government has done a total *V-turn* on all the good it promised and has sunk to depths unprecedented. It has had to swallow its words frequently and has become notorious for backing out in the face of resistance. The latest examples are the refusal of flour

mills to sell flour at government prices while sugar mill owners continue to defy it for the second year. The writ of the government is not worth the paper it is written on and even government servants ignore orders from above. Leave alone reform and progress, absolutely nothing is happening and the administrative machinery is jammed. In this painful scenario it seems we are doomed to endure the hell that has become our fate.

DOES THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE MEAN BETTER GOVERNANCE?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

January 13, 2004

As predicted, General Pervez Musharraf has won his vote of confidence from the assemblies. It is however hoped that he does not have to apologise for this deed as he had to for his referendum. Since much effort went into filling the assemblies with the most notorious turncoats and persons devoid of any ideology or principals, intent only on being on the side of the government of the day, the calibre and validity of this vote is in fact no different from that claimed to have been cast in the heavily rigged referendum. However, despite the apology, General Musharraf stuck to the Presidentship then as he will now after the vote of confidence. It must however be asked: "Was this exercise necessary"? General Musharraf declared himself President on 12/9 in violation of the constitution and the very honourable judges of the Supreme Court, as usual, said welcome, instead of invoking Article 6 of the Constitution. As a matter of fact, the people of Pakistan also sighed with relief at the end of the corrupt and chaotic era of Benazir and Nawaz rule, whose democracy was nothing short of a disgrace. It was further heartening when the General came forth with a seven point agenda which promised to clean up the existing mess and chalk out a respectable course. But suddenly and only heaven knows why, the lights went out and the new regime found itself groping in the dark. Instead of getting down to the singular task of providing good governance and taking the much needed steps to bring relief to the people, the government became shaky, uncertain and more concerned with securing itself then implementing its agenda. Anyhow, with the armed forces his constituency and initial acceptance by the people, surely no further assurance from the assemblies was required. But someone, perhaps the same genius who suggested the referendum, felt it was. All that is now spilt milk although the predominant truth remains that he is still a military ruler backed by the armed forces. Should this matter? Is it not the reality of the politico/governmental set up in Pakistan? This country is the turf of military rulers who come when they like and are removed only by the occurrence of some disaster. The next one who follows rules from behind the curtain through pliable civilians until such time as the latter become unbearable. They are then either hanged or

banished to purgatory and a new general comes forth. Since this routine cannot be interrupted it may as well be put to good use. The MMA has wasted a lot of time in putting up what has really been token resistance, while the PPP, having lost out to MMA in the race for romance with the rulers, is now disgruntledly, using the ARD to vent the venom of a rejected suitor.

History is witness to the fact that even military rulers have been good for their countries. Attaturk alleviated Turkey from being the "sick man of Europe" into a solid modern state. Nasser is the saviour of Egypt. Gaddafi gave a progressive outlook to Libya, Ahmad Sukarno liberated his country from foreign rule. Why can't General Musharraf be expected to salvage Pakistan? If only he would pick up the reigns and cut out a course through the obstacles to a date with destiny. It is no good making a hollow claim of having fulfilled the agenda he set for himself, when the people are living in a state of such utter despair as to be driven to suicide, when the law and order situation is so desperately bad that it has overwhelmed the law enforcement agencies. Need more be said when President Musharraf himself, the second most guarded man on earth after Bush, has twice escaped with his life through sheer luck. Similarly, our foreign policy is a dismal failure. Becoming party to the American war against the Muslim world has led us into a dangerous cul-de-sac where we are left holding on to straws such as the customary palliatives of SAARC participants and the Indian facade of comforting utterances. The reality, however, emerges in such remarks by Prime Minister Vajpayee as, "Kashmir is a part of India," but we may talk. The much trumped improvement in the economy is based only on the increase in foreign exchange reserves to eleven billion. Of course, that this is due not to any magic policy of the government but the course of world events is simply ignored. No investment has come forth, unemployment and poverty have increased, and that the lot of the man in the street has never been this bad, are all dust which is conveniently shoved under the carpet. Politics has become a dirty word with the stench of treachery, corruption and dishonesty. Assemblies, at all levels, are largely the product of rigging and manned in high proportion by usurpers rather than true representatives. The European observers who came during the general elections left in disgust, while the Commonwealth refuses to accept the results as democratic. But the greatest condemnation of the setup comes from its own working, which is shameful. The relations between the provinces have not been so strained and bitter since the breakup of 1971. The Finance Commission can find no acceptable formula for division of income, while the distribution of water has become an explosive issue posing a serious danger to the country. The Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon peoples are no longer ready to accept the hegemony of the Punjab which is visibly being enforced at gunpoint. Corruption, graft and incompetence have brought the functions of government to a halt and the administration to unprecedented disrepute. The new district government system and the police reforms have increased the agony of the common man and the monitoring agencies, such as the Anti-corruption Establishment and National Accountability Bureau have become a cruel joke. While selected defaulters of banks are prosecuted, sugar mill owners, who are defaulters of the cultivators, enjoy full patronage of the government, including police protection against protesters. But perhaps the unkindest cut of all is the corruption, political motivation and incompetence of the judiciary. Never before has the citizen felt so betrayed and unprotected against injustice and violation of all rights. By inventing the cursed doctrine of state necessity which amounts to an invitation to military rule, our

judges have not only disgraced themselves in the annals of legal history, but also violated Article 6 of the Constitution. The bad faith underlying the devolution plan now stands thoroughly exposed as a ploy to weaken the provinces and strengthen the centre. The corrupt practices that Zia resorted to tainted the outlook of our society and only self-interest and profit became the objectives in life. This concept took deeper roots in the next ten years of so-called democracy. Thus when the new military rule came, it found such a mindset an insurmountable challenge and knuckled under. This opened up the flood gates which drowned out the agenda of General Musharraf.

Such being the case, for President Musharraf to announce that he has implemented his agenda, is no less than salt in the wounds of the people. But the story cannot end there. Even in extremely difficult conditions countries do not evaporate or turn into smoke. Life must go on and it is up to the rulers to make it worth living. Four years have been wasted in sliding backwards, but that does not mean that there is no forward gear. A new beginning has to be made by taking a firm stand on principles and what is right. A government is not worth the name when it has no control. The foremost need is to set the thought process of the people on the right track. This should very strictly be the task of the National Reconstruction Bureau which has wasted its time in getting involved in less important matters. Similarly, the National Accountability Bureau should become a scourge for the corrupt. A start must be made by cleaning up the government and the assemblies before going down the ladder. Surely it was not a part of the agenda to make corrupt and disreputable people members of assemblies and ministers? The basic realities must be recognized and catered to: Pakistan is not, was not meant to be and cannot be a nation-state. It is no use pretending it is. On the contrary Pakistan can be solid and prosperous as a multi-national state and must be treated as such by cutting down the disproportionate powers of the centre. Islamabad had no place in the concept of Pakistan. It is only a city of ministers and bureaucrats. The people are concentrated in the provinces and that is where the powers to provide them a better life must lay. The writ of the government must be supreme and unchallengeable and unless it is strictly enforced, the government cannot function. But most important of all the 140 million people must not be ignored. Their will must prevail and they must matter the most. They are the masters and must be recognized as such. Their daily demands, complaints, protests and demonstrations must be noted and given due weight.

All the above and more should have been achieved in the four years that have been squandered away. As it is, President Musharraf is handicapped by what he insists is democracy. What he really has is the always available Muslim League on one shoulder and now the MMA, with a one-off chance for a bite at the cherry, on the other. They may make progress slow, but not by much. President Musharraf still remains a military ruler with the armed forces his true constituents. If this is to be good for the country, then no more time should be wasted in providing good governance.

DO THE PEOPLE MATTER ?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

January 31, 2004

The answer to this question is no, not as far as the present rulers are concerned. Right from the moment Adam took a bite from that apple and created turmoil in the kingdom of heaven, people have mattered the most. From then on history is replete with manifestations of the power and importance of the masses exemplified by Moses leading the people through the Sea of Gallilee in revolt against Ramses the Pharaoh; The Greek democracies and the Roman republics, right up to the middle ages, in the initiation of the social contract and the French Revolution, and in the last century which witnessed an explosion of uprisings in the form of the Russian, Chinese and other revolutions on the same pattern, the breakup of the Spanish, French, Dutch and British Empires and in more recent times the Egyptian, Libyan and Iranian uprisings followed by revolts in the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, the last and latest of which occurred only last year in Georgia, are all clear manifestations of the power of the people. In the subcontinent, the independence and partition of India, resulting in the creation of Pakistan, is testimony to the fact that people matter. But why go so far back in history to seek proof? At home the ouster of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, the breakup of Pakistan and the rise and fall of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the man who raised the slogan 'All power to the people', is a clear answer in the affirmative to the question "Do the people matter?" Therefore, it is all the more baffling that the present rulers are lost in a myopia which only allows them to view the whole country as a cantonment in which all they have to do is to wallow in the cool breezes, marble palaces and bullet proof limousines, of that man-made Olympus called Islamabad. The cries of the tortured masses do not reach there and all is well as long as the bombs don't go off.

But all is not well and an explosion bigger than that wrought by bombs may be in the making. The frustration and anger of the people at being taken for granted and ignored is reaching boiling point. This writer has in previous articles made repeated references to the collapse of the governmental setup, leading to a plethora of agonising problems for the people. It is not necessary to go through the dismal scenario again when no doubt every reader himself is a victim of the existing state of affairs. But what needs to be looked at here is the reckless provocation that is being slapped on

the faces of the people by the maestros of Islamabad. In an earlier article, the general deplorable state of the three pillars of the democratic state, namely the executive, legislature and the judiciary and how the people have been bypassed and barred from a say or link with these, has been exposed. Reference must be made here to those aspects of this setup which irritate the most.

First comes the police: these guardians of the honour, life and property of the citizen, have acquitted themselves in such a manner that it would be fair to declare that the people would be better off if there were no police. As if it was not enough that the police in effect enjoys total immunity from accountability of any sort for their extreme corruption and incompetence, under the Police Ordinance 2002, it is being formally taken out of the field of public scrutiny and control by being directly linked with Islamabad. In other words, the police now joins the super strata of the armed forces and the judiciary who exist in the firmament, far out of reach of the common man. This inter alia makes mincemeat of the commitment by the rulers to devolve powers, which brings us to the next insult to the people in the shape of district governments. These have failed resoundingly. The inevitable corruption, incompetence compounded by fights between councillors, Nazims, MPAs, MNAs, Senators, Ministers and bureaucrats have all resulted in abject misery and pain for the people. The district government system was a nonstarter ab initio and should never have been implemented. It was quite apparent that the real intent was not to devolve powers, but to weaken the provincial governments and add to the powers of Islamabad. While the need now is to cut losses, by undoing this wrong, Islamabad insists on its continuation.

The government can only be of use to the people if it makes good policies and implements them instantly. In this the government has failed miserably: its declaration of eliminating crime, corruption, smuggling, gun-running, drug-trafficking, recovery of illegal weapons all remain unfulfilled. In fact, it has retreated on these fronts so that the evils have multiplied many fold. Lately the government has been unable to enforce its orders on the prices of flour, sugar cane and bus fares and has backed out in the face of defiance by the mill and transport owners who are committing all sorts of malpractices much to the annoyance of the people.

Similarly, the government policy of putting all its eggs in the American basket, is an anti-people move. Since the Americans have always sponsored military dictatorship in Pakistan and threatened popular governments with making horrible examples of them, the people do not endorse such a foreign policy. We see today that due to such a disposition the government has placed the security of the country in jeopardy by turning Pakistan into a part of the battlefield on which the Americans are fighting their war against Islam. As for Kashmir, we must not let the people down, but is the present stance by the government helping anyone? President Musharraf was right in suggesting that our position has become outdated and we must move on, but then he quickly backed down in the face of criticism. The question here is, do the people of Pakistan endorse the Kashmir policy, or is it only the vested interests who want to maintain the back-breaking quantum of the defence budget that wish to keep alive the hostilities with India? It makes far more sense to support the demand of the Kashmiris for independence, as on this issue India may be caught on the wrong foot and world opinion more easily mobilized for a solution.

In the same manner, the economic policies are also out of tune with reality. Controls and heavy taxes have made investment unattractive while insecurity and lack of basic

amenities are notable discouraging factors.

However, the greatest incongruity between what the people want and what suits the government is visible in the concept of the democratic setup. Right since the advent of Zia ul Haq the people have been left out of the democratic dispensation. His referendum was boycotted by the people and the Majlis-e-Shoora was a selected body. In the last ten years of civilian rule the people felt disappointed and let down. But the present rulers have surpassed all that with massive rigging at all levels and sponsorship of disreputable and unqualified individuals, whose only dubious asset is their easy pliability. They are not representatives of the people and have given the government, assemblies and indeed the science of politics a very low calibre and a very bad name. Thus the people are disgusted and have kept away from the polls in steadily decreasing numbers. The exaggerated figures given by the government place participation of voters in the last elections at about 35%, but barren polling stations and public opinion place this at about 20%. Such a percentage of the electorate places participation of the population at about 10% which makes it safe to state that the people have no faith in the process, assemblies or government which exist without their consent. But who cares? The government goes on as long as the boat is not rocked. No notice is taken of the daily hunger strikes, protest marches, demonstrations, strikes, that the people have to resort to against denial of security of life, corruption, incompetence and scarcity of basic amenities such as water, power, schools, hospitals, roads etc. As if all this were not bad enough increasing poverty, low availability of jobs, daily rising costs of essential commodities all of which are met with indifference by the rulers, drives home the stark reality that the people do not matter. This is a very dangerous situation.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ASKED BY 'DAILY DAWN'

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

May 16, 2004

1. Q In your view, will the present phase in Pakistan's politics lead us towards a participatory system of Government?

A We are moving in reverse gear and have reverted to the darkest days of Ayub and Zia rule. No one, internally or externally, accepts the present set-up as truly democratic. The elections, right from the union council level, have been comprehensively rigged and the assemblies, or at least sixty percent of the same, are devoid of genuine representatives of the people. Since the military takeover in October 1999, politics has been in the hands of army personnel who, apart from being ignorant of its rudimentary principles lack even an accurate and realistic grasp of the political realities of our country. For the first three years of the present setup, the country was run on a totally non-political basis and the politicians were indiscriminately targeted. But after the Supreme Court decision and, no doubt, with dictates from our only benefactors in the world, the military government realised the necessity to cover itself with a veneer of democracy. Partly through lack of political acumen and partly due to limited choice, the rulers fell back on sponsoring the most disreputable and even criminal elements in the political field to produce a political scenario over which they had complete control. This has, however, not worked and the rulers find themselves sinking in a quagmire of their own making. They are reduced to making humiliating confessions of rigging and the presence of corrupt people in the assemblies and government. This makes the existing state of anarchy even more pronounced, as exemplified by the rigging and bloodshed in the recent by-elections.

2. Q How do you perceive the military's role in politics to be today?

A Military rule in Pakistan has been predominant since the arrival of Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan on the political scene. In fifty-seven years of independence, this country has had twenty-nine years of military rule and in the remaining twenty-eight years there have been more than twenty civilian governments which have also been entirely dominated by the generals and have been unable to take

any major decisions without their consent. The role of the military in politics today is what it has been in the past and will be in the future, one of total dominance. The constitution of the National Security Council only serves to permanently legitimise this role, which in the past received ad hoc shelter under the guise of 'the doctrine of necessity'.

3. Q Are you satisfied with the state of federalism in Pakistan today?

A There has never been any federalism in Pakistan. Under that cover we have had nothing but a unitary system controlled by the centre. It does not matter whether the ruler is a general or a civilian. Whoever it is, becomes a god sitting at the Olympus in the Margalla Hills. This, however, is totally alien to and in contradiction of the concept of Pakistan. The Muslim League, since its inception in 1906, canvassed for a system in India under which no single state or nationality could dominate any other and the minority was protected. This struggle was most forcefully formulised in the 1940 resolution (Pakistan Resolution) which demands that the units (provinces) must be 'autonomous and sovereign' and the centre should have only very limited powers to deal with foreign affairs, defence currency, etc. Accordingly, the Muslim League accepted the Cabinet Mission's proposal in 1946 for a confederal India. It was only when the Congress rejected this proposal that the Muslim League demanded a separate and independent Pakistan in the resolution passed by its parliamentarians at Delhi in 1946. However, this did not in any way negate or alter the Muslim League's deep commitment to a decentralised system since it was deemed to be most suitable for a multinational state like Pakistan. Its far-sighted vision stands vindicated as our fifty-seven year history has illustrated that, leave alone unitarism, even true federalism such as defined in the 1973 Constitution, cannot work and has provided no protection against dictatorial rule.

4. Q Has the restructuring of the local government really brought about a devolution of power to the grassroots?

A Devolution means transfer of power from Islamabad, through the provinces, to the union councils. The current local government system has taken away powers from the provinces and vested them in Islamabad, with the effect of further strengthening the centre, which now directly controls the district governments. Whatever else this may be, it certainly is not devolution. It is, in fact, another step towards fortifying the unitary system and reducing the authority of the provinces. But there is a fundamental misconception in this design as the provinces are actually far more than mere administrative units. They are the lands of the Sindhi, Baloch, Pushtoon and Punjabi peoples which have, before the British conquest, enjoyed the status of independent and sovereign states. They have maintained their identity despite all measures aimed at submerging them into a single nation-state by destroying their distinct national entities. All such attempts have not only failed, but led to instability in Pakistan which has progressively escalated. The only solution is to accept the dictates of history, recognise the multinational character of Pakistan, as was done by its creators, and cater to it. In this way a stable and strong Pakistan, based on the consent and will of its components, will come into being.

5. Q Are you happy with the state of political parties in Pakistan?

A Political parties in Pakistan have been manipulated and used by successive

dictators. As a consequence, politics based upon principles, programmes and manifestos, last seen with the emergence of the Pakistan People's Party under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, has completely disappeared. Zia-ul-Haq wanted to rule forever. He tried to use accountability and Islam as his manifesto, but finally had to fall back on purchasing the loyalties of unscrupulous politicians whom he appointed to his Majlis-e-Shoora. After him, the civilian leaders, each of whom had two chances in the seat of power, found it convenient to secure themselves by continuing the practice of bribes and manipulation rather than winning public support through an impressive demonstration of calibre and capability. Today politics is entirely devoid of even the basic principles of loyalty and honesty. It has overtaken the traditionally manoeuvrability corrupt institution of bureaucracy and thrives on the dubious attributes of manoeuvrability and expediency. It is, indeed, such a state of affairs that is being sponsored and even encouraged today, so that those who should have been eliminated from the political field are in fact having a ball in the wake of their military benefactors. Even the political parties that remain outside this circus are either in a compromise or desperately looking for one with the rulers so that they may also have a piece of the pie. Tragically, the biggest loser in this bare-faced push for self-enrichment and lust for power is the common man who can find no saviour and has been abandoned to a dismal fate.

6. Q Do you think the country is on the road to economic progress?

A. Indeed there has been some economic progress. At least the slide to doom has been partly checked. But we are in no way out of the doldrums. Poverty, unemployment and a high cost of living are on the increase. Basic amenities such as water, power, roads, telecommunications, schools, hospitals, etc., are so lacking that people are driven to protests and demonstrations. The government's failure to control crime acts as a deterrent against conditions conducive to trade and economic activity. Foreign investments are not forthcoming and the industrial complex is in a state of ruin. Agriculture, which is the backbone of the country, is in a state of disarray due to corruption, incompetence and lack of effective reform and constructive policies of the government, so much so that this country which had become self-sufficient in wheat production in 1975 is now facing a wheat famine. The provinces and centre are deadlocked over the distribution of the wealth of the country and water resources. The only positive factor in the economic field is that due to the worldwide insecurity, brought on by American designs for world domination, the flight of capital has been reversed and the earnings of Pakistanis abroad are coming back in greater quantities. Can this alone sustain a country like Pakistan? And even in this, despite the boastful claims by the government, the common man has yet to feel any real change for the better. His life still remains a struggle for survival under primitive conditions in the absence of the most basic amenities. What good are the much trumpeted twelve billion dollars of reserves when the difficulties and complications faced by the common man continue to multiply every day?

7. Q How do you rate our foreign policy?

A. Do we have a foreign policy? In the world community we are bound to the American apron strings and have no independent entity worth mentioning. We

even go to the extent of pitting our army against our own citizens to appease our American overlords. Our relations with India are dominated by those vested interests that benefit from conflict with her, even though the people of Pakistan yearn for a cessation of hostilities. This has been clearly demonstrated by the cordial reception given to all Indians during the recent cricket matches. Our brotherly relations with China are cooler now than ever before and are a far cry from what they were in the 1970's.

No progress has been made to improve relations with Russia, a start of which was made in the early 1970's. Our relations with Arab states are of a subservient nature and we cannot even prevent the petty Sheikhs from trampling our land as hunters. They have carved out personal fiefdoms on our soil and have corrupted the local population with their wealth. But the saddest of all is that a Muslim country of the dimensions and strength of Pakistan remains a silent spectator to, if not a participant in, the brutal, unjustified and illegal massacre of our Muslim brethren in Afghanistan and Iraq. Other countries more closely associated with America than Pakistan, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt, have taken a stand of sorts but we cannot even do that. I rate our foreign policy as disgraceful.

WHITHER SHAUKAT AZIZ?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

September 1, 2004

The late Prime Minister, Mohammad Khan Junejo, while on tour in the Philippines, declared that democracy in Pakistan had taken deep roots under General Zia and the constitution could no longer be violated. When he arrived back home the next day, he found his luggage at the railway station. Zafarullah Jamali also made similar sounds and tried to please his boss, only to receive marching orders within a year and a half. Enter Shaukat Aziz with a trumpeted landslide election victory from two wide apart constituencies, in one of which they tried to blow him up and in the other where no one has seen his face. Not only this but the handling of these elections was so lacking in expertise and finesse that he will carry the stigma of rigger wherever he goes. How long is he going to last is not difficult to surmise particularly when we are told that frequent sackings of Prime Ministers is good democratic dispensation. But the most significant factor of the change is that Shaukat Aziz is the third Prime Minister to surface in less than two years while Chaudhry Shujaat is the first Prime Minister to complete his term even though a comically short one of twenty days. Apart from the fact that these matters may enter the Guinness Book of Records, no greater importance can be given to the reshuffle.

Although the usual platitudes and promises have already been made, hackneyed utterances by the new Prime Minister do not impress the people who have heard them all ad nauseam. There is also the awareness that Shaukat Aziz has already held the most important portfolio - that of Finance Minister - for five years, which was sufficient time to have made rivers of milk and honey flow, instead of promising them for the future. Nevertheless, he seems to be a competent man who they say is also a good person, which there is no cause to doubt. But on the achievement side there is very little to boast about and many feel that even that has been the consequence of 9/11, coming at a very heavy cost to the security and stability of the country.

The setup being the same as before, the change of Prime Minister has to be a change of face only. He has no space to manoeuvre in and show his skills. It is no use analysing the scenario in which the last straw is the total lack of security of life even for the highest functionaries while the people are the hapless victims of the painful status quo. The question is can Shaukat Aziz steer the sinking ship of slate through the turbulent

seas and bring it safely to shore? He could if he had a rapport with the people and enjoyed their confidence and support, but unfortunately such is not the case. The rulers have completely ignored the 140 million people of Pakistan in the fanciful belief that since all is well in Islamabad there is no cause for concern, even though the people are out in the streets today as never before. One only has to see the pictures in the local newspapers to witness that there is a virtual state of revolt in Sindh, Frontier & Balochistan against a multitude of problems and bad governance.

Shaukat Aziz is faced with the task of propping up a state, the supporting pillars of which have collapsed. The judiciary dispenses nothing but woe to the litigants through unqualified judges who have developed a bad reputation and been appointed by way of reward for political services. The legislature is nothing short of an embarrassment to the country. Majors, colonels and brigadiers who became the political masterminds for the new regime and chalked out colourful strategies on paper, fell easy prey to the practiced turncoats, hypocrites and self-seekers who are all devoid of any political belief or ideology and have no time for honouring pledges. They used the army officers to get into the assemblies where they are now only a nuisance even for the government. This, however, is the only material available to the new Prime Minister for his cabinet. He has to appease the Pakistan Muslim League, the Functional Muslim League, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and the new Pakistan People's Party, which are all demanding their pound of flesh in exchange for support. Such an entanglement makes the executive weak unfocused and self-contradictory, the consequences of which are visible, for instance in the desperate state of affairs in Karachi: once the most beautiful and peaceful city in Asia, it has now become the hunting ground for murderers, kidnappers, dacoits, robbers and car and mobile phone thieves, not to mention the filth, squalour, water and electricity shortage, drug dens, gambling dens and gun running which is thriving clearly with the blessings of those who are charged with the responsibility to eradicate these evils. In fact, the situation is such that like 1992 & 1995 another military operation is required, only this time the culprits have enjoyed full opportunity to be better prepared to face it.

When the Executive is in a state of chaos, a high level of corruption and incompetence in the public institutions is inevitable. In fact this has become a part of our culture and makes good governance and reform impossible and all attempts at such are doomed. It is very sad that the rulers from whom much good was expected have rather amateurishly manoeuvred themselves into a dark corner of intrigue and blackmail from their fellow travellers. They are encircled by people who are notorious for their misdeeds and now have the government by the throat. Each has carved out his own jagir where every malpractice is allowed and the situation in the districts is the same as in Karachi.

From this reality flow all the evils that have not only made good governance impossible but also made life painful for the man in the street. The administrative machinery has been rendered useless. The politics of mere survival and personal gain, in vogue today, have made the bureaucrat an essential instrument and accomplice for control by the MNA & MPA over his constituency. Since the vast majority of voters keep away from the polls in disgust, the elected representative resorts to a variety of under-handed methods to secure his hold. For this purpose he needs hand picked bureaucrats to facilitate the task. The result is that the local administration keeps only one man happy while ignoring or even victimizing all others. Be that as it may, one

thing is certain: Shaukat Aziz cannot keep up the pretence of well being any longer and if the status quo continues the whole setup is going to explode.

This, however, does not mean that there is no hope of redemption. Of course there is. But it means going back to the drawing board and chalking out new parameters. The three pillars of the state must be reconstructed with new and clean material. There must be strict separation of powers between the judiciary, legislature and executive. There must be a very ruthless and speedy process of accountability. The government must first sort out the bad eggs in its own basket. Urgent and effective measures must be adopted to destroy and bury the corruption culture, while nepotism and sifarish has to be banished. But most important of all the people must be recognised as the masters and source of all power. No one should be allowed to go to them without a political ideology and a written manifesto of commitments. All forms of manipulation and trickery for getting votes should be made punishable on the spot. The curse of rigging must be effectively eliminated and measures should be adopted to attract voters back to the polling stations. In this respect it seems that the light has dawned. President Musharraf's tour of Thatta and liaison with the people is commendable. If this had started five years ago the government today would not be at the mercy of blackmailers and criminals. Moreover, the President has also said that the new cabinet will consist of capable and worthy people. Where he is going to find them is a puzzle but at least the need has been recognised. In its initial stages the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a government of the people and while such it successfully crushed all revolts from the establishment such as police strikes in Punjab and Sindh. It controlled the onslaught by Communists in the form of protests by labour and industrial unrest in Karachi. It solved long-standing national issues such as the language issue which, even the military dictators dared not face, and enforced labour, health, education and land reforms. Two attempts at takeovers by the generals were also smothered and thirty-five of them retired. A hundred thousand prisoners of war were rescued from India and the occupied territories recovered. The writ of the government was supreme. All the elected representatives were bound by the ideology and manifesto approved by the people and dared not even think of blackmail. There were thus no disputes or demands for personal gain and the calibre of parliament and government was the highest ever. But sadly, a suicidal change, engineered by the bureaucracy and military axis, led to a disastrous and inexplicable U-turn by the great Quaid-e-Awam halfway down the road. He turned away from the masses and fell into the trap that the axis set for him. Thus devoid of genuine power he became dependent on those who finally deposed and hanged him. This is a great tragedy but it will be an even greater one if nothing has been learnt from it. Shaukat Aziz has this lesson before him: is he going to take the route to greatness or just fade into oblivion? The answer is not far off.

FUTURE OF SINDH

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

Paper for a Seminar organised by Sindh National Council
December 11, 2004

INTRODUCTION

Sindh is bleeding today. The wounds run deep and could conceivably prove to be fatal. This land of the immortal sufi saints and poets, this land of peace, the cradle of civilisation and the gateway of Islam in the subcontinent has never before seen such painful days in its very long and colourful history. The threat she faces today is no less dire than any of the invasions she has had to endure over the last several millennia. The Sindhu river, or the Indus as it is now known, has always been the lifeline of this valley around which civilisation has evolved and flourished. But now an effort is afoot to deprive Sindhis of not only this vital nexus with its historic roots but the very source that sustains life in this land. Sindh is being systematically robbed of its natural resources and assets, as a consequence of which Sindhis are compelled to live in hardship and misery while the fruits of their soil make deserts bloom elsewhere. Unbridled exploitation, maladministration, corruption, nepotism, political victimisation, opportunism, lawlessness, denial of political and economic rights, lack of opportunity and development, poverty and an overall administrative neglect and atrophy have combined to bring this rich, beautiful and once proud land to her knees. In the past Sindh has somehow repeatedly survived all calamities and adversities thrown at her by history and destiny. The response of the Sindhi people today and in the immediate future to the dangers and threats facing their motherland will determine whether Sindh shall survive into the new millennium or whether we are witnessing her last agonized breaths.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sindh derives her name from the word 'Sindhu', which means water, in reference to the great river which flows through her fertile lands. The ancient Aryan rulers regarded the whole of Pakistan, Kashmir and Eastern Afghanistan as 'Sapta Sindhu', or the land of seven rivers. It has been claimed that the Sindhu civilisation can be traced as far back as 6000 BC, but one can state with some degree of certainty that the Amri civilisation dates back to 3000 BC while the Moenjodaro civilisation can be traced back to beyond 2300 BC. Sindh was first mentioned in the Mahabharata as the domain

of Aryan kings and it was lauded in the Upanishads as a land famous for producing the finest horses in the region. The Huns ruled Sindh in the sixth century BC. Emperor Darius of Persia conquered Sindh in the fifth century BC on his way back from Punjab and it became the jewel in his Empire. Alexander the Great annexed Sindh to his vast Empire in the second century BC. Even at that time, the city of Patala was a thriving commercial metropolis in Sindh, on the banks of the Sindhu river, where a massive ship yard formed the nucleus of a highly prosperous economy. After Alexander, Sindh oscillated between Persian and Hindu control until 711 AD when the seventeen-year-old Mohammad bin Qasim invaded Sindh and established Arab rule for the next three hundred years, which included the rule of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates between 715 - 805 AD. During the reign of the Arabs, Sindh was elevated to a high plateau of achievement in various literary fields, producing scholars in mathematics, medicine, literature, poetry, economics, philosophy and Islam.

From the eleventh to the nineteenth century, Sindh was ruled by the Soomras, Sammas, Arghuns, Turkhans, Kalhoras, Talpurs and Moghul Emperors. During this period Sindh was also ravaged by the brutal invasions of Mehmood Ghaznavi, Allaudin Khilji and the Portuguese colonialists, who perceived Sindh to be a valuable prize. The British defeated the Talpur rulers of Sindh in 1843 at Miani, making Sindh part of the British Empire, and in 1847 they made Sindh a part of the Bombay Presidency. In 1936 Sindh regained her independence from the Bombay Presidency under the 1935 Government of India Act and in 1947 she opted to become part of an independent Pakistan.

BROKEN PROMISES

Sindh, like East Bengal, Balochistan, NWFP and Punjab, opted to be part of Pakistan on the promise contained in the Pakistan Resolution passed by the General Council of the Pakistan Muslim League in Lahore on 23rd March 1940, that all component nations in the newly created Muslim state would be 'autonomous and sovereign'. It was further pledged that only the portfolios of defence, currency, foreign affairs, customs and those aspects of communications relating to defence would rest with the centre while all other portfolios would be vested in the provinces and the chief executive of each province would be referred to as the Premier. This promise was never honoured, as a result of which Balochistan rebelled within days of the creation of Pakistan and the army had to be sent in to quell the uprising, while insurgencies surfaced in Bengal and NWFP and nationalist sentiment took root in Sindh. Those opposed to greater autonomy for the nations comprising Pakistan often claim that the commitment of 'autonomy and sovereignty' made in the Pakistan Resolution was later repealed by the Delhi Resolution of 1946. This is but a desperate exegesis on their part to deny the undeniable truth. The fact is that while the Pakistan Resolution was passed by the General Council of the Muslim League, the Delhi Resolution was passed only by the Parliamentary Committee. It is a universally acknowledged principle of democracy that the larger the body, the greater powers it has. Just as a cabinet can not override, amend or repeal an Act of Parliament, a party's parliamentary committee too lacks the authority to repeal a resolution passed by the General Council of the party. Not only this, but there is absolutely nothing contained in the Delhi Resolution that can be conceived to repeal the promise of 'autonomy and sovereignty' made in the Pakistan Resolution. To the contrary, the Delhi Resolution contains the following paragraph:

Whereas soon after the introduction by the British of the policy of setting up political institutions in India on the lines of western democracies based on majority rule, which meant that the majority of one nation or society could impose its will on another nation or society in spite of their opposition, was amply demonstrated during the two and a half year regime of Congress governments in Hindu majority provinces under the Government of India Act 1935, when the Muslims were subjected to untold harassment and oppression, as a result of which they were convinced of the futility and ineffectiveness of the so-called safeguards provided in the constitution and instrument of instructions to the governors and were driven to the irresistible conclusion that in a United Indian Federation, if established, even majority provinces would meet with no better fate and their interests could never be adequately protected against the perpetually Hindu majority at the centre.”

This paragraph emphasises four main points: Firstly, that no nation, even if it is in a majority, has the right to impose its will upon another nation. Secondly, that a federal system gives no protection to the provinces from the centre despite the safeguards built into the constitution. Thirdly, that a strong centre is oppressive to the minority areas. And fourthly, that the hegemony of any one nation is intolerable. So, far from setting aside or repealing the promise in the Pakistan Resolution of ‘autonomy and sovereignty’ for the nations comprising Pakistan, the Delhi Resolution further strengthens the case for decentralisation of power.

But despite all prior promises, a highly centralised system of government was imposed in Pakistan which amounted to a hegemonistic control of the largest and most powerful nation over the smaller nations. As a consequence, the whole system became tilted in favour of Punjab, with the rights and interests of the smaller provinces assuming no more than secondary importance. The distribution of national wealth, development, irrigation and virtually every other aspect and instrument of statecraft are designed and operated primarily to serve the interests of Punjab. From this there has sprung intense bitterness and passionate distrust between the nations making up Pakistan, leading to the cessation of Bengal in 1971 to form an independent Bangladesh. In what remains of Pakistan also nationalist sentiments continue to simmer and ferment, made all the worse by constant mishandling.

DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH & RESOURCES

The formula for the distribution of national wealth adopted by the National Finance Commission, set up in 1974, is the most unjust and inequitable in the whole world. Other systems around the world always take into account not only the need for funds on the basis of prevailing economic conditions and level of development, but also reward rather than penalize higher tax collection and revenue generation. But in Pakistan, whereas revenue for the divisible pool is collected from the provinces on the basis of income generation, it is allocated to the provinces on the basis of population alone. Sindh, which accounts for 24% of Pakistan’s population, contributes 65% revenue to the divisible pool, including 65% income tax receipts, 65% sales tax receipts and 85% custom duty. But for every rupee that Sindh contributes to the divisible pool, she receives less than sixteen paise from it. Punjab, with 55% of Pakistan’s population, contributes only 26% revenue to the divisible pool but takes more than 65%. According to a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank, Sindh is the poorest of all the provinces with 91 % of

its population subsisting below the poverty line. Therefore, while Sindh is, in effect, subsidizing Pakistan, Sindhis live prehistoric lives, deprived of even the most basic necessities such as security of life and property, clean water, medicines, education roads and electricity etc. There can be no greater injustice than this.

The injustice does not stop there. Sindh is rich in minerals like coal, gypsum, marble, granite, natural gas, to mention just a few. Perhaps our greatest natural resource is a thriving warm water port which, as mentioned above, has been the backbone of Sindh's economy since even before Alexander conquered Sindh, upon which the entire national economy even now depends. History is replete with instances where nations have gone to war to acquire access to a warm water ports, the significance of which has not diminished with the advent of aircraft, since much larger volumes of goods can be transported by ship than even the largest cargo aircraft.

While the whole country benefits from these resources, the Sindh Government cannot even pay its employees their monthly wages on time. Recently, the publicity hungry Sindh government jumped the gun by announcing that more than forty-two thousand jobs will be given in the public sector but the very next day had to go with begging bowl in hand to the Prime Minister to ask for three billion rupees, without which not a single job can be given. If Sindh was truly 'autonomous and sovereign' and had control over her own resources, the Sindh government would not have to depend on the mercy of the federal government to give jobs to the jobless or bring about development, nor would 91 % of Sindhis have to subsist below the poverty line. Sindh is surplus in all its requirements including food. On its own, it could be a paradise on earth. That the Sindhis should live a life of misery and pain is not decreed by divine authority. It is the unavoidable consequence of an inappropriate system of governance in Pakistan that propagates the hegemony of one dominant race over others.

THE WATER ISSUE

Alexander the Great, on his way back from Punjab, sailed down the Sutlej river in order to reach the sea to dispatch most of his army by sea to Babylon. When his armada entered the Indus river, the Indus was in such a violent state of high flood that the Greek generals began to celebrate, mistakenly thinking that they had reached the sea. It was only when the locals informed them that this was not the sea but another larger river that they realised that they still had a long way to go before reaching the sea. The same mighty Indus has now been reduced to such a state that in winter in many places in Sindh people can easily walk across it. The Indus, which once irrigated the whole of Sindh every year, can no longer irrigate even the kacha area located within the protective dams. In many places people have cultivated lands by tube wells in the actual river bed, which would have been inconceivable not so long ago. Since time immemorial, the Indus has flown all the way to the Arabian Sea, making the deserts of Sindh so fertile and rich that it remained a land coveted by conquerors throughout history. Now, for, the first time ever, the Indus dries up at Kotri and the river bed downstream of Kotri has become a collection of sand dunes that stand silent witnesses to this tragic catastrophe. Like the hopes and aspirations of the Sindhi people, this lifeline of Sindh is drying up right before our eyes.

This is not happening due to some calamitous act of nature, but is the direct consequence of the construction of Mangla, Tarbela and other smaller dams, Chashma,

Taunsa, Dera Ghazi Khan and Muzaffargarh Link Canals alongwith sixteen barrages upstream in Punjab. In order to make deserts bloom over there, three and a half million acres of fertile and productive land in Sindh have been made barren. The discontinuation of water discharge downstream of Kotri, which according to the 1991 Water Accord was to be no less than 10 MAF annually, has resulted in the encroachment of brackish sea water inland, making millions of acres of productive land in Thatta and Badin districts unsuitable for cultivation. Furthermore, it has destroyed the ecosystem in the delta region which thousands of fishermen and their families relied upon for their livelihood.

As if this is not enough, we shall now have to contend with the Greater Thal Canal, which is nearing completion, and the prospect of Kalabagh Dam, where a reservoir of 6.1 MAF will be created. The Chashma Right Bank Canal scheme, which had been shelved in the mid-1970's, has also been revived. There has not been a major flood since 1991 and there has been a chronic water shortage since the last ten years. It is inconceivable, as claimed, for the water requirements of Greater Thal Canal and Kalabagh Dam to be met out of rains or floods alone. There is no doubt that further diversion of water upstream will drastically deplete the water supply to Sindh. The excess water for these projects is simply not available in the river system and is bound to come out of Sindh's share. If this happens, the Indus River that today stops at Kotri will then dry up at Guddu, turning Sindh into another famine struck Somalia.

There seems to be a systematic design to exploit and harm Sindh. How else can one explain that while, on the one hand, Kalabagh Dam is being rushed through, even though it will cost well over ten billion dollars, which the government does not have, will take more than fifteen years to complete and has been declared infeasible by foreign consultants, when on the other hand nothing is being done to stop the wastage of 55 MAF of water in the existing canal system which can be done in no time and at a fraction of the cost.

Water sustains life and without water there can be no life. Not only do the livelihoods of the hari and zamindar depend on an abundance of water to grow crops, but clean drinking water is a necessity for everyone. It is, therefore, pointless and futile to suggest that this is merely a technical issue which should not be politicised and that it should be left to paid bureaucrats to decide the fate of those affected. Every issue that touches the people at such a fundamental level is, by definition, a political issue and must be dealt with politically to the satisfaction of the people. Furthermore, the water issue has come to symbolise the material and political deprivation of the Sindhi people. The Sindh Assembly has twice passed resolutions against the construction of Kalabagh Dam, which the agents of Punjab and Islamabad have summarily dismissed as having no legal or constitutional authority. Whatever the legal position of resolutions passed in a provincial assembly may be, the political significance of these cannot and must not be ignored. Sindh stands united against Kalabagh Dam and the voice of the Sindh Assembly on this issue is not an isolated cry in the dark, but the voice of the Sindhi people. On one hand we wish to maintain a facade of democracy in Pakistan to appease international opinion, but on the other hand the voice of the masses is disregarded with contemptuous disdain. Let there be no mistake, if Kalabagh Dam is shoved down Sindh's throat, the federation will be placed under grave threat and the responsibility of the consequences shall lie on those who fly in the face of the will of the masses.

THE POLITICAL SCENARIO IN SINDH

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

March, 2005

In recent times, Sindh has been used and abused to obtain narrow selfish political and personal benefits, even by the so-called Sindhi political leaders who have stood on the shoulders of the oppressed and downtrodden masses, to indulge in a gluttonous feast of self-gratification, while exhibit complete and callous disregard for their interests or condition. Successive 'elected' as well as unelected governments have misguided the people of Sindh and have introduced the common man to the opium of corruption. This addiction has sunk in so deep in the Sindhi psyche that purging it from the mind of the people has now become by far the greatest challenge before any government of the future that may be genuinely interested in setting things right. Sindhis were used by their own leaders as machine gun fodder during Zia's martial law junta in the form of the MRD movement in 1983, in which five thousand lost their lives and many more were imprisoned, flogged and tortured. When civilian rule was restored in 1988, the Prime Minister's first act was to give medals of democracy to the same elements responsible for the torment of Sindhis and hanging of a Sindhi Prime Minister, during the dark days of martial law. Whereas it is the duty and responsibility of a leader to command his followers from the front, those who claim to have the Sindh card in their pocket have run away to save their own skins and protect their stolen fortunes leaving the people of Sindh to face hard times on their own.

Successive Sindh governments have failed to bring about development and progress or in any way alleviate the burdens and hardships of the Sindhi people. Each Sindh government in recent times has been characterised by internal wrangling, blackmail by its own allies, lack of direction and purpose, ineffectiveness, inability to cope with an obstructive bureaucracy and a comprehensive helplessness in the face of a mountain of issues that confront them. They have been so busy trying to keep their coalition intact that the basics of good governance have continuously eluded them. Whereas the governments of other provinces have had some degree of success in improving conditions in their areas, the Sindh governments seem to have been in a constant state of drift and self preservation.

IS THERE A FUTURE FOR SINDH?

There comes a time in a nation's history when the people become the masters of their own destiny. That time has now come for Sindh and her future lies in the hands of Sindhis. But, arguably, Sindh's greatest tragedy is that even in these perilous times characterised by all kinds of threats, dangers and a plethora of chronic as well as acute problems, this soil can count on very few loyal and sincere sons to raise a voice for it. Everyone, from the common hari and labourer to the political leaders and rulers, has his personal and political interests closer to heart than the national interests of his motherland and its future.

The people are the fountain of all power. Any state and its vast mosaic of institutions are only a reflection of the nature of the people. If something is wrong in the body politic, if the leaders are stepping out of line, if the system is being perverted, then the people have to set it right either through the ballot box or by revolution. If conditions half as perilous as those that prevail here were to arise in any civilised society, the people would rise in a hurricane of discontent, governments would topple and heads would roll. This happened in Georgia recently where the people came out into the streets and forcibly changed their government. But the Sindhi people seem to have a very high threshold of pain tolerance. They complain about all the evils under the sun but never do anything about it. In an effort to shrug all responsibility from their shoulders, the people often claim that only when the Sindhi leaders unite on a single platform can anything be achieved. But history does not support this assertion. To the contrary, history shows that it is only when the people and not just the leaders, unite on a single platform that meaningful change occurs. The unification of leaders or parties has never achieved any significant or durable results. Revolutions in France, Russia, China and America took place when the masses united. In Pakistan also, the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was able to topple not one but two successive military dictators because he had the strength of the masses with him. He did not call for alliances between leaders, but instead took on the might of the armed forces alone with the people behind him.

The people of Sindh will have to unite in a struggle to defend the rights and vital interests of Sindh. Time is running out. The motherland is calling out to her sons. Will anyone answer her call? The future of Sindh depends upon the response to this question.

POLITICS OF OPPORTUNISM

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

May 6, 2005

Adversity brings out the real character, calibre and moral fibre of a person. Under pressure a person reveals a whole new kaleidoscope of otherwise concealed colors. There are essentially two ways to handle adversity; you either stand tall in the face of the winds that blow and hold on to your principles come what may, or you capitulate and surrender out of fear or expediency, opting for the path of least resistance. In the recent past at least, very few of our politicians have opted for the first option, being daunted and intimidated by the sacrifice and suffering it requires, and have mostly chosen the second option which comes with the allure of short-term gain, albeit at the expense of principles and reputation. But principles and reputation are currencies that went out of circulation long ago in Pakistan. Opportunism and expediency symbolize the new creed that prevails. To apply a veneer of respectability over this ugliness, we are now being told by self-appointed messiahs that in politics nothing is final and everything is open to a deal. This is, no doubt, a prelude to more political acrobatics that we are likely to be treated to in the near future.

There is a world of difference between flexibility and capitulation. Though flexibility is acceptable in politics, capitulation is a moral death to a man of principles. What we see happening in Pakistan cannot be called flexibility. One day a man is decried as an arch criminal and the next day he suddenly becomes the paragon of virtue and the symbol of all that is good. A man denounced as a despot and usurper one day, becomes mysteriously acceptable the next day, regardless of his choice of attire, when he dangles the carrot of power-sharing before his opponents. A pose of confrontation is adopted against the government for the sake of public consumption, but secretly a dialogue is initiated to facilitate entry into the corridors of power through the back door. Yesterday's enemies become today's allies and then, just as easily, become tomorrow's enemies again. This is not flexibility. This is unprincipled opportunism in its ugliest form.

The reason why the entire political scene in Pakistan is in a perpetual state of flux and instability is because principles, honesty and a commitment to ideas and the people have been made redundant by opportunism and expediency. Though this course has been profitable for some individuals, it has proven to be disastrous for the country.

- History has shown that only men of ideas and conviction who have a vision for the future can lead nations to prosperity, progress and stability. It is only when leaders look to the next generation, rather than the next election, that nations can expect to progress and develop. The politics of opportunism has driven us to ruin and despair.

Conviction is the conscience of the mind. Unfortunately the leaders we have today lack the conviction or the backbone to stand up for their beliefs and principles, even if they had any. They are desperate to get into power by any means possible and are willing to compromise anything along the way. It is usually easy to be brave from a distance, but even those who are at a distance find it inexplicably hard to be brave these days and seem to be the most eager to compromise. They have abandoned the honest brand of politics of the people and have prostrated themselves before the power brokers. They have forgotten the basic political reality that the people are the source of all political power and to harness this power you need only to address yourself to the issues that matter to them and take a firm stand on their behalf. If you can do this you need not sell your soul to the devil. The salvation of the nation lies in the leaders taking a firm stand based on principles and ideas and a deep commitment to the people.

Those who worship at the alter of expediency and opportunism would do well to learn a lesson from the shaheeds of Karbala, who chose to fight for the truth despite formidable odds and made the greatest sacrifice to be found in history. Who can deny that the ultimate victory belonged to the shaheeds rather than Yazid? The great success Islam enjoyed in the centuries that followed owed its origins to the blood of these martyrs. Had the grandsons of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) chosen the course of expediency and compromise, the long-term damage to the relatively young religion of Islam would have been devastating. Similarly, Joan of Arc's execution played a pivotal role in Christianity. In 399 BC the Sophists of Athens conspired to eliminate Socrates on false charges. Socrates remained defiant and true to his principles throughout his trial and willingly drank the hemlock rather than compromise his ideas. He is remembered today as the father of philosophy and a symbol of struggle against tyranny and oppression. Would he be revered in the same spirit had he elected to surrender his beliefs to save his life?

The late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto continues to dominate the political scene in Pakistan even twenty-six years after he was hanged and many scavengers have made a career and a living feeding off his legacy. He never succumbed to the temptation to strike a deal with the rulers of the day, who offered him safe passage out of the country. He went to the gallows, his head held high with honour and dignity. That is why he still occupies such a special place in the hearts of people across the nation. If he had chosen to compromise to save his life, his legacy would have amounted to no more than the legacy of those who now sit in exile in royal palaces as a consequence of deals.

Sacrificing one's life is the ultimate sacrifice one can make. It is pointless talking about sacrificing lives in the context of contemporary political leaders in Pakistan when they are not even prepared to give up ministerships, even when they stand disgraced. We have a federal minister who not only has cases proceeding against him in NAB courts, but also has outstanding warrants for his arrest. We have a former provincial minister who was accused by the Chief Minister, who appointed him, of gross misconduct, corruption and even murder and had to be dismissed. We have a

politician who has recently stumbled on to the political scene and, though he stands implicated in a plethora of cases from corruption and money laundering to murder, he claims to be the saviour we all have been waiting for. By contrast, British Home Minister, David Blunkett, resigned last year when accused of merely expediting the granting of a visa to a woman. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori resigned in April 2001, after just one year in power, when his government came under attack for incompetence and corruption, none of which involved the Prime Minister himself. President Charles de Gaulle of France resigned when the people of France rejected his policy on Morocco in a referendum. Leaving a ministership or the leadership of a party is too much to expect from our politicians, but when was the last time anyone in Pakistan resigned from even the nazimship of a union council without being forced to do so?

History remembers only those who take a stand on principles. Apart from all romantic notions, it is only when you take a stand that you can make any tangible difference in people's lives and blaze a trail to progress. It is a sad truth that the world belongs to mediocrities who cling on to the status quo and vociferously resist all forces of positive change. Great leaders and statesmen are a rare commodity, like the occasional shooting star across the heavens. But it is only with the advent of these shooting stars that mankind progresses with leaps and bounds as their force of conviction breaks through all resistance to lead mankind to a brighter future. This is not an easy task. It requires an iron resolve and the will to sacrifice, suffer and fight for what is right and just, regardless of the consequences. This kind of struggle and honesty of conscience is quite beyond the ambit of our contemporary leaders who would perhaps find it difficult to stand up straight if their shirts were not heavily starched.

There is an undeniable beauty and elegance about principles that generates a desire for the preservation of self-respect and dignity in those who possess them. Those who lack principles wallow in a petty life of humiliation and will, unfortunately, never understand things like why the shaheeds of Karbala went to their certain death. It is well said that little people do not wear well under the extremes of fortune. Politics is an honourable profession that has, in recent times, been dragged through the mud by those who do not understand what principles are. The urgent need of the hour is to jettison opportunism and expediency from the body politic and infuse a healthy dose of honour and principles. Andrew Jackson once said that "One man with courage makes a majority." Will anyone of our leaders who claim to have the people's card in their pocket step forward and show such courage?

The bond between a leader and a follower should be based on the solid foundation of an ideological contract and should be too sacred to barter away for personal gain and lust for power. The acquisition and exercise of power on the grounds of ideology, honour and principles produces a unique euphoria and intoxication that is unparalleled by anything expediency or capitulation can produce. Those who worship at the altar of opportunism might take heed from these words of Shakespeare:

"Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

THE GLOBETROTTING RULERS

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

March 17, 2006

China, if not already there, is well on its way to becoming a superpower. It attracts the highest foreign investment in the world and its growth rate is double its own projections. All seems to be well. Nevertheless, when a Chinese government functionary was asked why they did not make more foreign visits and play a prominent role in the community of nations, the reply was that there yet remained some domestic matters to be attended to. As opposed to this, the conditions in Pakistan are desperately bad; the classic maladies of lawlessness, corruption, maladministration, increasing poverty, unemployment and rising prices seem incurable. The administrative machinery has collapsed and even a pretence at effective governance cannot be sustained. The people, finding conditions unbearable, are out in the streets venting their anger at a failed and increasingly unpopular government which has never had any link with them. In fact they are being shot at and killed in Waziristan and Balochistan. Even the smugness of the rulers, based on American patronage and collaboration of the bureaucracy, together with disreputable politicians, is only a veneer.

The rulers' established practice of ignoring this scenario and globetrotting to an extent never before witnessed in this country, has become purely expensive holiday-making. Decked out in shiny suits, accompanied by a planeload of hangers-on, they venture forth all the way to Australia at one end and Argentina at the other, stopping off at places like Norway in the middle, for what purpose one is compelled to ask? A joint security pact with Australia! This must be the biggest laugh since the last Bushism. And not even that much came out of the Argentinean Odyssey, which at best resulted in the issue of those hackneyed cliché ridden statements that amount to exactly nothing. The Norwegian visit too, although more recent, is already forgotten. The only tangible outcome of such joyrides is the fat bill that is slapped down upon the exchequer. It is no wonder that the expenses of the Presidency and the Prime Minister's House are double the budgeted amount which, no doubt, is made up by diverting funds from allocation for development, as is usual in such cases.

Our peripatetic Prime Minister went off to the UK, having just returned from his seriously degrading pilgrimage to Washington. Our rulers did not have the gall to protest over American rocket attacks on Bajaur, which left eighteen innocent citizens

dead, leave alone ask for an apology and compensation. But on top of that, for our Prime Minister to go to Washington with a grin on his face and shake the bloody hand of George W. Bush, whom the people of the world have labelled the biggest terrorist and war criminal in history, is nothing short of a disgrace. There is, of course, much poetic justice in the fact that the Prime Minister's team of freeloaders was insultingly frisked at Washington airport. Some dignity may have been salvaged had all of them turned around on the spot and returned home. But alas, such is only the way of men like Dr. Jawaid Iqbal, who are made of sterner stuff. The humiliation did not end there: The Washington Post was vicious in its onslaught on the hapless Prime Minister, questioning his credentials as an elected leader and finding him undeserving of VIP status.

Trips to the United States of America by our rulers are the most frequent and the net result may be gauged from President Bush's recent surreptitious visit to Islamabad. He clearly refused to uphold the balance and equal treatment with India that the Pakistan government has always insisted upon, did not even mention Kashmir, said Musharraf must lay the foundations of democracy, implying that no such thing exists at present, and that the elections must be honest, thereby acknowledging the massive rigging of the past. Can there be a more resounding slap in the face?

The Prime Minister went to London to break bread with a man who is wanted by the local police for multiple murders and has been absconding for more than twelve years. This was followed by a meeting with Prince Charles, which does not even serve as a coverup. This comes not only in the wake of the President's phone call to London to congratulate the same absconder on winning a government-facilitated and hugely rigged local bodies election, but also in continuation of the visit of the Principal Secretary of the National Security Council to the same altar. The latter is reported to have returned with a long charter of complaints and demands requiring, inter alia, better behaviour from the Prime Minister (hence his dash to London) and the replacement of the Chief Minister of Sindh. What the fate of the Chief Minister could have been was fleetingly indicated by the Mahar group's supportive outburst on Kalabagh Dam, which they could not sustain for more than one day due to the hostile reaction of even their minions. But the more serious outcome of the Prime Minister's yatra is the resulting perception that if the Prime Minister and President hobnob with notorious criminals, who have previously been libelled terrorists by the military authorities, and make them partners in government at all levels, how can the country be prevented from degenerating into a crime pit?

The only possible justification for globetrotting which our rulers may offer is that they are canvassing for foreign investment. But this would be rather lame to say the least. The Chinese, the Indians or the rulers of Dubai, to name only three, do not go about scrounging all over the world and it is now known to all 'that the only way to attract investment from abroad is to produce a climate and infrastructure conducive for the same at home. No one will bring capital to a country where the government is at war with its own people, where bombs are exploding and rockets and bullets flying, where the President and Prime Minister live at a high risk, where the American President can visit only behind an iron curtain of unprecedented security, where the constitution is not worth the paper it is written on and the judiciary sponsors its violations, even though that amounts to treason, and where the bureaucracy has a separate price tag and practice of its own. To attract foreign investment it is imperative

that the rulers stay at home and put things right. It is also necessary to work out an effective foreign policy based on pragmatism and stark realities. There is nothing more important than having the best of relations with neighbours first and then with those across the oceans. But this government has gone in the opposite direction, losing whatever goodwill that existed on the borders. After trumpeting improving relations with India for the last two years, the President has stated that the Indians are sponsoring insurgency in Balochistan, while Indians have accused Pakistan of causing explosions in their temples. While the Indians continue to ignore Pakistan's objections on Baglihar Dam, they have, in turn, raised objections to the Bhasha Dam. Similarly, relations with Afghanistan have become strained with the two respective presidents engaged in accusations and counter accusations. The Chinese, who have been our close friends, are not happy with the total Americanization of the Pakistan government which is unable to even protect the Chinese engineers working on various projects here. There is also the matter of the Chinese base at Gwadar, which neither the Americans nor the Indians are pleased about, not to speak of the apprehensions of the Gulf states. Then there is the matter of the estrangement with Iran in which also our government's bonding with America is an irritant. In short, our foreign policy is a confused and complicated mess which makes any investment in Pakistan an unattractive proposition.

The government is sinking in a bog of problems and is taking the country with it. The rulers have not only wasted six, and-a-half years but have established practices in governance and politics that are dangerous for Pakistan. In the blind lust to remain in power by any means, the standard and calibre of what is proper and correct has been reduced to rock bottom. Thus when our rulers go abroad they go with no merit and fail to impress anyone. All this raises the urgent need for basic steps to save the ship of state from sinking, which cannot be done by globe-trotting.

MUSHARRAF'S MAGNUM OPUS

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

November 14, 2006

President Musharraf's Magnum Opus "In the Line Of Fire" is essentially an exercise in megalomania: he projects himself as the greatest soldier, politician, administrator and, in fact the best thing that has ever happened to Pakistan. This may be justified' on the grounds that everyone is free to hold any opinion and on the desperate need for him to impress the Americans with his ability and indispensability. But his countrymen and those who know better will find the book full of unsustainable claims and assertions.

For instance :-

Page 60: "Bhutto ventured into his first election.....The ballot was grossly rigged."

Only 15 to 20 cases of rigging took place in the whole country in 1977, where some rigging takes place in every election. Anyhow, Bhutto conceded the demand for fresh elections, but he was nevertheless ousted from power and hanged. In contrast, four elections have been held by President Musharraf, all of which have been so heavily and defiantly rigged that even President George Bush, during his very surreptitious visit to Pakistan, had to caution that the next election must be free and fair. Not only that but President Musharraf has publicly admitted and now recorded in his book (page 168) that his referendum was rigged. He, however, did not have a fresh referendum and remains in power. No one has been hanged.

Page 65: "First, whenever the army gets involved with martial law it gets distracted from its vital military duties..... Second, when we super-impose martial law and place the military over the civilian government the latter ceases functioning. When martial law is later lifted the civilian functionaries remain ineffective."

If so, why then is Musharraf, with his takeover and seven year rule in uniform, distracting the military and destroying the machinery and structure of the state? It is no good saying there is no martial law because when a general violates the constitution by imposing himself as head of the state and when military officers predominate not only in the civil service, but also in the government, the law of the land becomes martial law.

Page 136: "Pakistan was built as a refuge and a homeland for Muslims of India."

This is not correct. There is no provision for refugees in the concept of Pakistan. In fact there is the Liaquat-Nehru Pact of 1950, which specifically bans immigration

from both sides. It cannot be denied that Pakistan was created for and by the Sindhis, Baloch, Pashtoons, Punjabis and Bengalis who contributed their wealth, rights and powers, people, and above all, their lands, without which the country could not come into existence.

Page 149: "I set myself a seven point agenda....."

1. Rebuild national confidence and morale.
2. Strengthen the federation, remove inter-provincial disharmony.
3. Revive the economy and restore investors confidence.
4. Ensure law and order and dispense speedy justice.
5. Depoliticise state institutions.
6. Devolve power to the grass roots.
7. Ensure swift accountability across the board."

This agenda was clearly abandoned soon after its announcement and replaced by a scheme just to stay on in power as long as possible by any means. Never before has the national confidence and morale sunk so low and the people felt so abandoned and victimized. The federation is at its weakest and provincial disharmony at its strongest, as now admitted by the president in his TV interview on 22nd Oct. 06. So much so that the government is compelled to accept the demand for conceding more power to the provinces. Such a bill moved by the PPP in the National Assembly is being fully sponsored by the government which cannot treat this demand as treason and sedition any more. The revival of the economy remains an empty boast with poverty, unemployment, and prices at their highest, \$ 12 billion trade deficit, an even larger current account imbalance and the foreign debt, at \$ 37 billion, is at its peak. There is no foreign investment except through purchase of nationalized industries. Lawlessness is totally out of control and no one is safe, not even the President, Prime Minister or the Corp Commanders. The law enforcement apparatus has become useless and only a means of torture for the helpless citizens. This is not surprising as notorious criminals occupy high governmental posts. The promise of speedy justice has gone into reverse gear and the complainant regrets the day he went to court, while the defendant ignores the proceeding. There is no justice and cases go on forever. State institutions have been destroyed through extreme politicisation in order to appease government supporters. In Sindh, districts have been converted into constituencies for MQM and PML (Q) candidates regardless of their geographical and administrative unsuitability. Devolution is a total fraud in which powers of the provincial government have been taken away and given to district governments. These are now directly linked to the centre thereby increasing its grip. It is not devolution unless it starts from Islamabad. Accountability is the cruelest joke of all. Corruption is now a part of our culture. How could it be less when those serving prison sentences for corruption, or under trial or absconding from such cases, have been made ministers? In the TV interview cited above the President has shockingly declared that anti corruption measures harmed the economy and therefore had to be curbed. In such reckoning you cannot have a strong economy without massive corruption! This is an insult to countries like Switzerland and Sweden which have booming economies and no corruption. The Steel Mill and oil price scandals, directly implicating the Prime Minister, are an international disgrace and no help to the economy.

Page 151: "I needed an organization-a think tank- to research and recommend reforms.....I felt that Lt.Gen.Tanvir Naqvi (retired) filled the bill eminently. He

wrote the Local Govt. Ordinance.....It is to Gen. Naqvi's credit that he produced a new Police Ordinance 2002."

These two reforms are the only concrete and tangible steps taken by this government in seven years and both are an absolute disaster. As a result not only are corruption and incompetence more rampant, but the infrastructure of development, repair and maintenance has collapsed. Cities, towns and villages have become dirty water pools, and garbage dumps, where municipal services are practically non-existent. This is so despite the fact that the district administration has been expanded at double the cost. There is also much bickering and conflict between bureaucrats and nazims who are not only after money but unfit for the job, being the product of completely rigged elections. The only thing that has been gained is paid support for the government at the district level. Parallel police branches to deal with the same offence, set up under the new ordinance have, apart from doubling corruption, incompetence and costs, reduced crime detection to almost zero. These two reforms instead of meeting the urgent need to streamline and simplify procedures, have complicated them to such an extent that no solutions are forthcoming for the already harassed citizens.

Page 333-4: "If you want democracy then you must also be responsible enough to vote for the right people. If you don't, then don't bellyache about the poor quality of parliamentarians and ministers." The bellyache is in fact about the peoples vote not being decisive. It is superseded by the cheating that goes on in preparation for and during the polls. Apart from the confession of rigging by the President, there is the Prime Minister's election from the darkest Thar desert and remote Attock, where no one knew of his existence, and even tried to blow him up. Nevertheless, he polled far more votes than the sons of the soil who vacated their seats for him. This is a testimony to massive rigging which cannot be concealed. It is not the people who elect but the SHO's, polling officers, presiding officers and returning officers, who select government supporters.

Shortage of space prevents a more detailed analysis of the 174 pages that are taken up in the book by the claim that the terrorist presence and activities in Pakistan have been severely curtailed and that Al Qaeda and Taliban have been crushed. No one accepts this while our immediate neighbours India and Afghanistan - and even the Americans, continue to accuse us of harbouring terrorist. On 21st Oct, 2006 explosions in Peshawar killed seven and injured 41 people while, despite the truce in Waziristan a military outpost has been attacked and two soldiers lost their lives. As if all this were not enough, a madrassah in Bajaur has been targeted by bombs killing 80 students. The government boasts of performing this misdeed, although it is generally believed to have been done by the Americans. It is also reported that the Taliban have now set up their own government in Waziristan, while killing and sabotage is a daily occurrence in Balochistan. The truth is that by launching a crusade against Muslims George Bush has not only placed his own country in jeopardy, but destroyed the peace and tranquillity of the world. The Pakistan government by joining this conflict has turned its own country into a battlefield.

Similarly, President Musharraf has been at pains, throughout his book, to tell the world how he has made rivers of milk and honey flow on this land. But on the very last page he gives a long list of all the major problems that still remain to be solved despite his seven year rule. Thus almost every claim made in the preceding 334 pages stands trashed by his own testimony.

THE DEAL AGAINST THE NATION

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

August 6, 2007

It is no surprise that in the current whirlwind of imminent political realignment the usual adventurers have started salivating at the prospect of yet another bite at the cherry, while those who have had an absolute ball at public expense, for the last eight years, see an escape from accountability at the polls through an immoral and shady deal. But it is really depressing that our society as a whole is caught up in the slipstream of the fraud that is being perpetrated against the nation. The Musharraf and Benazir linkup, must raise many serious questions, based on the record of their past practices and it is up to the sane elements, particularly the media, to honestly analyze what all this means for Pakistan.

Ofcourse, both sides to the deal are at pains to hoodwink the people once again by professing to join hands for the restoration of democracy and the good of the country. No one is fooled as the record of the two, on both counts is dismal. Suffice it to point out here that the General came into power by violating the constitution and destroying the democratic setup while the so-called Daughter of the East does not tolerate democracy even in her own party and ruled the country for five years through henchmen and stooges. It requires no sharpness of perception to comprehend that the deal makers are motivated only by the desire to stay on in power even by swallowing what they have spit out, on the one hand and to save billions of ill-begotten wealth and sneak into power by the back door, on the other.

Now that Musharraf is sinking and he is no doubt ready to grasp at any straw, although previously he had no time for Benazir who spared no effort to move in since the day he took over. He often publicly ruled out the possibility of any links with her, spending millions to make her accountable for corruption. But Benazir is a deal maker by nature: during Zia days she made a deal to be shifted from Sukkur Jail to Karachi Jail and then to her residence. From there she made a fresh deal with Zia, through the good offices of the late Habibullah Piracha and an American named Peter Galbraith, who was imported from the U.S. for this purpose, to leave the country and remain silent. On these conditions she was allowed to go and returned only when Zia was no more. Then again even though she won the 1988 election, she came into power through a deal brokered by the Americans, with the then Chief of Army Staff, General Aslam

Baig, in which she agreed to continue Zia's policies and induct his ministers and followers into her government and party. All this was done even though she publicly held the Americans and the armed forces (whom she later awarded Tamga-e-Jamooriat) responsible for toppling her father and murdering him. In between there is the deal with MQM to share power in 1988 during which Sindhis were massacred to eliminate them from Karachi. Lately there is her deal with Nawaz Sharif, who is the last of the Zia men and who filed all the corruption case against her in which she is absconding. Of course she has already broken this deal and the Charter of Democracy and ARD have gone down the drain. It is inevitable here that her conduct must be contrasted with that of her father, in whose name she survives, who rejected all deals and took on and defeated two most powerful military dictators and refused to make a deal with the third, despite the latter's overtures, even though it cost him his life.

As for deal making for the good of the country, the eight years of Musharraf rule have turned Pakistan into a deprived and vanquished battlefield in which no one, least of all he himself, is safe, while the five years of Benazir government are remembered only by the dozens of corruption and murder cases against the Zardari couple and their closest confidants, some of which, such as those pertaining to the Surrey Palace and money laundering in Switzerland, stand proved.

Thus let us take stock of what the nation gets if these two lend each other a shoulder and once again impose themselves on the people: Musharraf continues to fight George Bush's war against Islam and place the country in increasing jeopardy culminating in rivers of blood. Lawlessness, corruption, unemployment, rising prices, and poverty continue to escalate while municipal functions and vital facilities of education and medical treatment are practically nonexistent. Criminals with mass murder cases against them and notoriously corrupt individuals with convictions and ongoing cases fill government offices. They put on designer suits and tour the world at public expense with absolutely no benefit to the nation. They publish bogus figures of progress and achievement which are contradicted by the manifest misery of the people. All elections held during the last eight years have been recklessly rigged, bringing to the Assemblies the usual turncoats and time servers who are nothing but a disgrace and are now looking for new moorings. All public institutions are drowned in incompetence and corruption, leading to uselessness and collapse. Those absconding from the country to escape accountability for corruption and charges of multiple murder, will return as conquering heroes to recommence their nefarious activities from the point where they were compelled to stop and run. Each party to the deal is insufferable separately, together they will be a prescription for bloody revolt by the agonized masses. Moreover, when the chips are down and the time comes for the leaders to make a stand, this lot will instead make hasty exits on their well-trodden paths to hide in safe havens abroad, which they have built for such eventualities. From there they will watch and wait like hungry vultures.

The redeeming hope in this scenario is that the deal will not materialize. Even though Benazir is ready to become Shaukat Aziz, the armed forces, which still remain the paramount political force in the country and will continue to play a leading role in any dispensation, will not be happy. Even though he is sponsoring the formation of a secular front against the MMA, George Bush's only interest in Pakistan is to have a setup which effectively implements his edict and it does not matter that this means wholesale massacre of innocent citizen in the country. This is a requirement which no

civil leader, no matter how willing, can meet. While Benazir, in the end, will be more than willing to support a politically dead general in return for escape from the corruption and murder cases against her and her spouse, the deal really does not give an indication of jelling. Hence, whether they know it or not, the ball rests in the court of the people. Chief Justice Ifikhar Muhammad Chaudhry made a heroic stand which was bravely supported by the legal profession. But it was the overall backing of the people that brought victory. The people are masters of their own fate and there is no political force greater than them. They must not allow shady deals between untrustworthy individuals to take the country over the precipice. They must stand up and exercise their right to elect new capable and clean representatives who may go forth and salvage the sinking ship of the state. In this the role of the media is of fundamental importance and it must play it to the hilt or share responsibility for the sad fate of the nation.

WHY NOT A DEAL WITH THE MILITANTS?

SARDAR MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, November 5, 2007

If at the end of six years of open war against so called militants and loss of thousands of lives of citizens and soldiers, General Musharraf can make no better showing than yet another bomb blast close to his residence on 30th Oct, 07 and one in Sargodha the next day, the time has come for him to admit defeat. It is now abundantly clear that getting citizens and soldiers killed achieves nothing but wanton death and destruction, which necessitates an immediate change of direction. Even the United States of America and the United Kingdom, for whose satisfaction General Musharraf has plunged the country into a bloody civil war, are visibly dissatisfied with the results and are now experimenting with an alternative by incorporating the PPP into the ruling partnership of the Muslim League(Q), MQM and the generals, an arrangement which already shows signs of going sour.

It is a matter of record that immediately after 9/11 when the American ultimatum that “you are with us or against us” came, this writer was among those invited to the President’s House, Islamabad, for consultation and the only one to advise caution with no greater involvement in the American course of action than that of other Muslim countries in the region. It was not very difficult, even at that stage, to see that President George Bush and his henchmen were heading for serious trouble and just as in Korea and Vietnam, attitudes would harden and resistance grow, plunging the world into a state of insecurity and fear, the worst hit being the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This has now come to pass. Muslim reaction to the American onslaught is no longer a local issue visible only in some Muslim countries. It has become a matter of honour, for one fifth of the population of the world, to take a stand, in one way or another, against the persecuting forces. The youth is attracted by the challenge and glamour of confronting the infidel. Many young men see themselves as Salauddin Ayubi and find glorification and martyrdom in sacrificing their lives. The commitment is so deep that the pain fades into insignificance.

This is a no win situation that General Musharraf is caught in and the disastrous outcome is breaking the back of the country not only in terms of loss of life but also

economically. As a payment for our joining the war against Muslims, our loans have been rolled over thereby making us debt ridden forever. We have been promised seven hundred million dollar over a period of five years which is a cruel joke and 'peanuts' as General Zia would say. There is of course the clandestine payment of one billion dollars a month but this is purely for military purposes and of no use to the vanquished people of Pakistan who are sinking in the evils of lawlessness, corruption, rising prices, unemployment, poverty and scarcity of all basic needs such as clean drinking water, electric power, medical treatment, education and hygienic conditions. Trapped in such deprivation they are being smugly told by the rulers how good the economy is and there is prosperity all around, conveniently trying to conceal that it is the bankers, industrialists, traders, smugglers, hoarders, black-marketers, ministers, parliamentarians, nazims, and bureaucrats who are racking in the loot.

The rulers have to admit that they have no defences against the militants and cannot protect the citizen anywhere in the country. It is only the President, Prime Minister and now Begum Benazir Zardari who enjoy the security of bullet proof vehicles and hundreds of guards, but even then the General and his PM are lucky to escape attempts on their lives while Begum Zardari just happened to descend into her bullet and bomb proof saloon on wheels when the explosion occurred killing a hundred and forty people and injuring five hundred and fifty. Thus the ordinary people are at risk at all times with no protection. Such is the degree of governments failure that it is not just the militants but also the ordinary criminal against which it is helpless. The law enforcement agencies stand totally licked even on this count. They are reduced to the humiliation of appeasing criminals, performing services for and making deals with them.

So where does the salvation for the people lie? Deals not only with criminals but also political opponents have suddenly become the order of the day. The deal to facilitate General Musharraf's election as President in return for withdrawal of cases of multiple murder and loot of public funds to the tune of many billions of dollars cannot be justified in law or morality. The funds are not his to barter away and the murdered, including Mir Murtaza Bhutto, are not his kith and kin for him to forgive. The matter is in the Supreme Court and it will be astounding if it decides to the contrary. Such being the case what would be wrong if a deal with the militants is brokered when it brings the desperately needed security of life and property, which the rulers cannot provide and the citizens are clamoring for?

Of course deals of sorts are being made in the tribal areas which appear not to be working, seemingly because of the rulers overall commitment to the unholy war and the outside pressure which keeps them fighting. It cannot however be forgotten that after all it was the Americans and the generals who brought the militants into existence by recruiting, training, arming, financing, motivating and launching them against the foreign occupation of Afghanistan. This is what they are tuned into and this is exactly what they are doing. Furthermore it was during the Prime Ministership of Begum Zardari that Interior Minister General (Retd) Nasirullah Babar went to Afghanistan and established direct government to government links with the Taliban. Not only that but in the current political dispensation the self-styled pundits, as a manifestation of their dubious wisdom, loftily declare that there is nothing final in politics (Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau must be retching in their graves). In other words there are no ideologies, principals, manifestoes, commitments and loyalties in politics and it is all a

mad rush for personal aggrandizement. Thus there being no restraints even on crooked deals, an honest one to bring safety and security to the man in the street, is the very least the ruler must do to compensate the people for the woe and bloodshed that they have inflicted on them. This need has become all the more urgent since the Americans in their usual blundering manner, have inducted Begum Zardari into the ruling team, who can do nothing more than carry on a loud and highly provocative tirade against the militants. This will no doubt please her sponsors but only aggravate the situation on the ground, the requirement being to soothe tempers and work out a solution which brings peace and harmony to the country.

SECTION TWO

Articles

by

Ameer Bukhsh Khan Bhutto

UNCLE SAM'S REAL BEDFELLOW

AMEER BHUTTO

'Newslines', July, 1994

In the run-up to the Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's recent visit to the United States, a high ranking member of the Indian government expressed grave concern over what he perceived to be the recent 'tilt' in American policy in South Asia towards Pakistan. What provoked this perception was Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's offer to deliver 38 F-16 aircrafts to Pakistan - which Pakistan has already paid for - if and only if Pakistan concedes to a verifiable cap on its nuclear program. This impetuous assessment is understandable given India's alarmist interpretation of any display of cordiality towards Pakistan on the part of the U.S. However, while it is understandable, it is neither justifiable nor truly representative of the situation on the ground. In fact, if all the allegations of U.S. tilts towards Pakistan through Pakistan's relatively short history were rooted in fact rather than fantasy, the United States should have, long ago, fallen over on its side from tilting too much.

The fact is that today we are talking not just about Pakistan's legitimate and overdue acquisition of F-16's and the sovereignty of its nuclear program. We are talking about the very survival of Pakistan. For the U.S. to insist upon the unilateral capping of Pakistan's nuclear program at a time when India, having acquired nuclear capability some time ago, is not only on the verge of producing a hydrogen bomb but is also testing missile delivery systems that would serve as vessels for her nuclear arsenal, is tantamount to drawing up a blueprint for the obliteration of Pakistan. As such, Mr. Talbott's recent visit to the subcontinent bore more resemblance to a modern version of gunboat diplomacy than shuttle diplomacy. It is not entirely clear how this can be perceived to be an American tilt towards Pakistan. When President Bill Clinton reports to Congress that Kashmir is not a pivotal issue vis-a-vis peace in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, that Pakistan was threatening India with war, even nuclear war, over Kashmir and that India's security considerations cannot be overlooked, only a highly biased member of the Indian government could possibly construe this as an American tilt towards Pakistan.

Moreover, a new and particularly ominous phrase, 'quiet diplomacy', has been introduced into the nomenclature of US - Pakistan relations by Talbott during his recent visit. At the conclusion of his visit, he declared unequivocally that he had, in

principle, reached an agreement with the Government of Pakistan over the nuclear capping issue and what was needed now was a phase of 'quiet diplomacy'. History proves that it is in the very nature of relations between weaker states and superpowers that the interests of the superpowers dominate all aspects of the relationship. It is very seldom, if at all, that the interests of the weaker states prevail over those of the superpowers. So if an agreement has been reached between the US Deputy Secretary of State and the Government of Pakistan, then it is most unlikely that the Government of Pakistan has prevailed upon the United States spokesman to abandon his country's stand and impressed upon him the wisdom of the Pakistan point of view. Indeed, it is far more likely - despite the daily protestations of our leaders to the contrary - that Talbott has succeeded in showing our leaders the benefits of coming around to the American point of view. Seen in this light, the unavoidable conclusion is that 'quiet diplomacy' is a thinly veiled threat to Pakistan to grin and bear it in silence. I am reminded of some lines from Ayub Khan's book *Friends not Masters*: "It was clear to me ... that the United States was out to appease India and to get her into its orbit of influence by all possible means. If Pakistan did not feel happy about it, it was just too bad and there was nothing that the United States could do ... The United States' attitude was that India should have all the sympathy and support and Pakistan would be well advised not to raise any difficulties." These words apply just as much today as they did in the 1960's.

The undeniable fact is that the United States has never tilted towards Pakistan, not now and not at any point in history. But whereas in the past the United States found it prudent to offer some token support to Pakistan, if only to counter-balance blatant Soviet backing for India, the United States no longer feels compelled to do so, particularly since India has thrown open her doors and is keen on finding a way to climb into bed with Uncle Sam without losing too much face. This is a consummation that the United States has devoutly wished for since 1947, but it was elbowed out by Soviet regional interests and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's inclination to give preference to the neighbouring superpower to the north rather than an unreliable and remote United States halfway across the globe. Which left America grudgingly encumbered - strictly out of necessity - with Pakistan. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States is now acting from the position of strength which comes from monopoly and her priorities and preferences, clouded in the past by the imperatives of bipolar superpower politics, have become crystal clear.

The first so-called American 'tilt' towards Pakistan came in July 1960 during Ayub Khan's visit to Washington. Though President Kennedy was vague and ambiguous on most issues, including military aid to Pakistan, he assured Ayub Khan that the United States would not supply arms to India unless there was a perceivable threat to the security of the subcontinent, in which case arms would be supplied to India only after prior consultations with the Government of Pakistan. Like Liaquat Ali Khan in 1950, the perennially pro-western Ayub Khan returned to Pakistan with nothing tangible to show for his efforts, but satisfied nevertheless with American assurances. The euphoria, however, was short-lived. In the wake of the October 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, Washington entered into various bilateral and multilateral agreements with New Delhi in 1963, including an agreement which would send 100 million dollars in arms to India. This was done, ostensibly, as a deterrent against further Communist excursions into the subcontinent, but without any consultations with the Ayub government

whatsoever. President Kennedy justified his actions by claiming that China was a threat not only to India but Pakistan as well. But how President Kennedy could have imagined a threat to Pakistan from China, when China and Pakistan had signed in March 1963 a treaty under which China agreed to vacate 1,350 square miles of territory in the Kashmir-Sinkiang region as a sign of good faith, is hard to fathom. In any case, the US completely reneged on the categorical assurances given to President Ayub Khan by President Kennedy.

In due course, Pakistan came to be known as America's 'most allied ally', but the 1965 war over Kashmir exposed the inefficacy of this alliance. When war broke out in September 1965, the Pakistani ambassador to Washington approached the US for help - which should have been forthcoming not by virtue of just CENTO and SEATO, but also a number of other complimentary agreements as well. The Pakistani ambassador was cold-shouldered by the then Secretary of State Dean Rusk and treated to a patronizing lecture on international morality. In the blink of an eye, alliances and commitments were forgotten and it was made abundantly clear that it was Pakistan who had started the war without any prior consultation with the United States and so the question of honouring commitments did not even arise. Not only did the United States deny military aid to Pakistan but, to further compound Pakistan's difficulties, it suspended all aid to both India and Pakistan. Given the imbalance of military power already existing in the subcontinent due to the strong Soviet support for India, and also in no small part due to the flow of US military aid to India since 1963, and given the fact that, unlike the Indian army, the Pakistan army was almost entirely equipped by the United States, the suspension of aid hit Pakistan harder than it did India. In effect, this was America's goodwill gesture towards India. It betrayed a desire on the part of the US to see the status quo prevail in the subcontinent so that anti-China India would continue to dominate pro-China Pakistan. Just as the Indian leaders had, despite very close ties with the Soviet Union, allowed the US to step in and revitalise India's slipping prestige and faltering economy after the 1962 war with China, the United States was now testing the waters to see how far it could go in the subcontinent without provoking Soviet suspicions.

Richard Nixon's arrival in the White House and Pakistan's role in arranging the Washington-Beijing link brought about another supposed 'tilt' in American foreign policy towards Pakistan. In October 1970, the arms embargo was lifted and during Yahya Khan's visit to Washington the same year, President Nixon declared "No one has occupied the White House who is friendlier to Pakistan than me." But despite President Nixon's best intentions, Pakistan could not benefit from his friendship during the 1971 war with India. As civil war began in East Pakistan on March 25, 1971, the United States once again halted all aid to Pakistan. India, on the other hand, signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union on August 9, 1971, just 23 days after Henry Kissinger's visit to Beijing. The military nature of this treaty was obvious and, indeed, the Soviet Union's supply of arms to India increased significantly in its wake. In November 1971, an American intelligence agency reported that India had received massive quantities of weapons from the Soviet Union, including 12 squadrons of MIG-21 fighters and SU-7 bombers.

Throughout the conflict, President Nixon's efforts to support Pakistan were hampered by Congress, the State Department (though Secretary of State Henry Kissinger supported Nixon's views), the bureaucracy and the press, which concentrated

exclusively on the atrocities of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan and overlooked completely India's invasion and occupation of an independent and sovereign neighbouring state. The State Department in particular found it unnecessary to sacrifice better relations with India just to please Pakistan. Thus, while aid to Pakistan was suspended in March 1971, it continued to flow to India until India's formal recognition of Bangladesh on December 6, 1971, despite repeated claims by Pakistani authorities that this aid was being used to finance guerilla operations in East Pakistan.

On December 2, 1971, the Pakistani ambassador to Washington formally requested American help, invoking Article I of the 1959 United States-Pakistan Bilateral Agreement on Cooperation, which guaranteed US support to Pakistan in the event of a threat to its security, even to the extent of "the use of armed forces." But the State Department denied any obligation to come to Pakistan's aid, claiming that the 1959 agreement had to be viewed in the context of the 1958 'Eisenhower Doctrine' resolution which was meant to exclude an Indo-Pakistan war. Henry Kissinger did not approve this U.S. posture vis-a-vis Pakistan because he feared that if Pakistan was defeated, the 'China initiative' would suffer a setback. In his book, *The White House Years*, Kissinger writes "The fact was that over the decades of our friendship with Pakistan, there had grown a complex body of communications by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, going beyond the 1959 pact ... whose plain import was that the United States would come to Pakistan's assistance if she was attacked by India." As early as July 1960, The Soviet ambassador to Pakistan had said to the Pakistani Foreign Minister that while the Soviet Union supported India against Pakistan even when India was in the wrong, only because they were friends, Pakistan's friends "do not support you even when they know that you are in the right." These prophetic words, spoken 11 years earlier, hit the nail right on the head in December 1971.

Among the measures that the Pakistani government requested the United States to take in order to stem Indo-Soviet ambitions in the subcontinent was the movement of the US Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal, but the United States remained reluctant. When the Seventh Fleet did eventually move into the Bay of Bengal on December 15, 1971, just one day before the fall of Dhaka, it was far too late to save East Pakistan. The timing was very significant. It was unspoken American policy that it was impossible, indeed undesirable, to change the course of events unfolding in East Pakistan because the conflict was generally regarded as a struggle for national freedom. The Seventh Fleet was, therefore, sent in as a precaution against further adventurism on the part of the Indo-Soviet axis in the subcontinent, specially regarding West Pakistan. India, however, had no plans to attack West Pakistan. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had thoroughly tested the waters before taking the plunge in East Pakistan and fully understood just how far she could go without alienating the international community. But to make sure, the Soviet deputy Foreign Minister, Vasily Kuznesov, made an unscheduled visit to New Delhi on December 11, 1971. Just as the Treaty of Peace and Friendship had facilitated Indian aggression in East Pakistan with Soviet support, it also gave the Soviet Union the reins to hold India back from going too far. The movement of the Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal was also meant to counter-balance the considerable Soviet naval firepower present in the Indian Ocean, which had increased systematically since the crisis began in March 1971.

This then, very briefly, is the history of US 'tilts' towards Pakistan over the years. While there has never been a dearth of lofty American rhetoric in support of Pakistan,

the United States has, invariably, identified its own interests with those of India's. The fact that India has continuously succeeded in projecting this hollow rhetoric as a manifestation of an American tilt towards Pakistan is nothing short of a diplomatic and propaganda coup for India. The inability of our leaders to understand American interests and intentions has been shocking and has damaged the long term security interests of Pakistan. It seems, however, that our leaders will now be spared the effort of having to read between the lines, since America, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, finds itself in a position of being able to pursue its global interests unfettered by the necessity of having to weigh and balance its initiatives against those of a competing superpower. We shall now, for the first time in recent history, behold the real face of a superpower.

US BESTRIDING THE NARROW WORLD LIKE A COLOSSUS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', September 24, 1994

The United States of America has finally, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, acquired the much coveted status of a 'Superpower' in the real sense. The stampede of galloping events on the international plane in the recent past has transformed the world from a bipolar community of states into one in which a single hegemonic state wields unparalleled economic and military muscle and is unbridled in its pursuit of its national interests. Consequently, the whole fabric of international relations has been forced through a process of dramatic transformation. Perhaps the most unfortunate, albeit entirely predictable, aspect of this transformation is the metamorphosis to which the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, has been subjected. Once, at least ostensibly, an idealistic beacon of peace, brotherhood, friendship and stability for the community of civilized states, the United Nations has, due to the imperatives of change and the consequences arising from shifting realities, become little more than an appendage of the American state.

In a unipolar world dominated by the United States of America, the Security Council has become America's third legislative chamber, 'a War Committee', not only to callously sanction every aggressive aspect of American foreign policy with reckless abandon, but also concurrently making it incumbent upon other sovereign member states to endorse and support American initiatives taken under the umbrella of the United Nations. It is hardly any wonder that the United States has now at last condescended to cough up the payment of well over half a billion dollars which it owed to the United Nations that had been accumulating for over a decade.

The banner of democracy, human rights and justice has been so used and abused that all value has been strained right out of it. It is under this faded banner that the United States of America has developed the Security Council into an instrument of naked aggression. First in Iraq and then, most recently, in Haiti, the use of force and the threat of the use of force have been employed to achieve American perceptions of justice and propriety with the full sanction of the United Nations. Whether or not the situation in Iraq and Haiti warranted international intervention, the fact remains

that the U.N. sponsored intervention goes against the grain of the charter of this august body and is contrary to the principles on which it was founded in San Francisco in 1945. First the League of Nations and then the United Nations were formed to provide a peaceful alternative to war, not to sanction war. The fact that the United States has succeeded in moulding the very *raison d'etre* of this body to suit her own foreign policy objectives bears sufficient testimony to the control which the United States exercises over the United Nations.

It is a fundamental principle of international law that whereas the basic concept of human rights for the individual is recognized in international law, neither an individual nor even the population of a state as a whole can be regarded as an 'international person' and, therefore, cannot be subjects of international law. International law is concerned with regulating relations between states and some international organizations. The United Nations cannot, therefore, regulate relations between states and their citizens. To do so would be a blatant infringement upon state sovereignty. As such, any sanction obtained from the Security Council to facilitate U.S. intervention in Haiti, even on the grounds of allowing democracy to flourish in Haiti, must be highly questionable in terms of its validity in international law. Just as U.N. resolutions are not intrinsically binding on member states unless they are incorporated into domestic law, the edicts of the Security Council authorizing the U.S. to wage war too are meaningless and devoid of legal force, meant only to placate world opinion.

Moreover, under the provisions of its charter, the United Nations can offer formal recognition to *de facto* governments only, since they, rightly or wrongly, represent the state which is the subject of international law. It cannot take cognizance of any other claimants to authority, because to do so would amount to a matter of subjective policy rather than legal obligation. In this light, it is hard to see how the United Nations can sanction aggressive action against a sovereign member state on behalf of an individual who lays a moral claim to be the rightful President. Even in the event of a liberation movement, which is certainly not the case in Haiti at present, international law frowns upon the provision of aid to the insurgents by a foreign power. But the monopoly of superpower might in American hands facilitates the bulldozing of all laws and conventions that are not in line with its national interests.

If humanitarian concern and the preservation of democracy were the sole criteria for international intervention today, then the United Nations and the United States should have been engaged militarily against dictators in Africa, South America and Asia during the past several decades. Instead, the United States supported the military juntas of three dictators in Pakistan, from Ayub Khan to Zia-ul-Haq. If the United States was sincere about preserving democracy and safeguarding human rights, then it should have taken decisive action to restore the representative government of the late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, just as they have struck decisively to bring Aristide to power. But Mr. Bhutto's stand against Western hegemonic tendencies precluded him from such favours. Why must General Cedras go to make room for and elected leader when General Zia-ul-Haq, who deposed and executed an elected leader, was propped up by the United States throughout the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan? Is democracy in Haiti more important than democracy in Pakistan?

Why should the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait draw such a swift and fierce response from America in 1991, while twenty years earlier there was only ominous silence in the West when India invaded East Pakistan in 1971? Is Kuwaiti independence

and sovereignty more important than that of Pakistan? In 1971, as the United States was striving to achieve better relations with India, the dismemberment of Pakistan at the hands of India seemed to American policy makers a small price to pay. But in 1991, it was a matter of preserving American interests by teaching the anti-American Saddam a lesson and keeping the valuable oil wells of Kuwait free from his clutches. If ever there was a need for international intervention, it was in Rwanda some weeks ago and in Bosnia since the last few years. But while the French made a brief token appearance in Rwanda, America's heartfelt impulses for the preservation of human rights and dignity failed to move them into action.

The United States is bestriding the narrow world like a colossus, driven not by any lofty ideological dogmas, like human rights or democracy, but rather in pursuit of narrow national interests, disguised by the morally appealing garb of joint multilateral initiative, justified by the sanction of a rubber stamp Security Council. George Orwell was so right to surmise that in a community of equals, some are more equal than others.

TOWARDS DYNAMIC CONSTITUTIONALISM

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, September 4, 1996

No society is static. Changes develop over the years in practically every sphere, brought about by irresistible evolution in environmental, economic, social, political and moral ideas and conditions on the national as well as global plane. Practices, customs and mores evolve and influence the way in which societies operate. In this essential and unavoidable process of evolution, if a law does not evolve along with society, it becomes archaic and meaningless and either becomes a dead letter or is overthrown by means of a revolution. Thus social evolution must give direction to the development of laws and socio-political systems. It is only the narrow-minded and those lacking vision and foresight who believe that society is enslaved by its own laws. In truth, laws only reflect the prevailing mores of a society and evolve along with society.

But one does not see this happening in Pakistan. We are helplessly manacled to the 1973 Constitution and our lawmakers, with their blinkered perceptions and tragically limited depth and vision, are incapable of looking beyond it. Despite all that has come to pass since 1973, they still faithfully recite the same old political mantra with fanatical religious fervour that was being chanted back then. They never think a new thought or entertain a new concept. They are intellectually lazy, intellectually bankrupt or intellectually dishonest. Let us leave the verdict on this count to history. Suffice it to say here that despite its unforgivable shortcomings and faults and the damage it has sustained in the Zia era, by blindly clinging on to the 1973 Constitution, the lawmakers are doing serious harm to the unity and integrity of Pakistan.

Without going into fine details, it is necessary to point out some of the perceived shortcomings in the Constitution. The system envisaged in the 1973 Constitution is a federal system which is totally unsuitable for a multinational state like Pakistan, particularly since there is a lack of consensus on many vital issues between the provinces. These provinces, which have distinct ethnic identities, cultures, customs, traditions, languages and histories, voluntarily surrendered part of their freedom and sovereignty to form Pakistan in 1947 based on assurances given in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution that the

provinces would enjoy the status of 'states' and would be 'sovereign and autonomous' within the larger framework of Pakistan. Not only have these assurances never been fulfilled, but under the present system inter-provincial antagonism and distrust has taken root and grown. The electoral system provided in the 1973 Constitution shifts the balance of power in favour of Punjab on the strength of its population. Punjab, therefore, dominates the decision making process, from the Kalabagh Dam issue and the distribution of the river waters to the National Finance Commission Award. The three smaller provinces feel neglected in the running of state affairs. National wealth is distributed through a totally unjust formula whereby revenue and taxes are collected from the provinces on the basis of production but are distributed on the basis of population. Consequently, Sindh, which generates up to seventy-five percent of national income, receives only a pittance in return through a federal grant while Punjab claims a lion's share. Punjab also has a stranglehold on the bureaucracy, the armed forces, the business and professional sectors. Business and job opportunities, development, social schemes, etc., are all heavily tilted in Punjab's favour, leaving the rest of the country in limbo. This gulf between the component nations of Pakistan is widening at an alarming rate and if the provinces are not given greater autonomy in their affairs, in accordance with the 1940 Pakistan Resolution, the fragile threads binding this country together are liable to come under a greater strain than they can be expected to bear.

Furthermore, the 1973 Constitution was abrogated by Zia in 1977. The maker of this constitution, late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, himself expressed the view that with the abrogation of the constitution, there was no longer any Social Contract binding the provinces together under the flag of Pakistan. This dead constitution can not be revived again as if nothing has happened between 1977 and 1988. Nor can one ignore the fact that Zia's Eighth Amendment has altered and perverted the essence and spirit of the 1973 Constitution. As it now stands, it is neither a presidential nor a parliamentary constitution. The blurring and overlapping of the powers of the President and Prime Minister has precluded any possibility of stability under this system. In 1987, 1990 and again in 1993, democratically elected governments have been sent home by the President under the scepter of the Eighth Amendment. If an element of stability is to be re-introduced into the political system, we will have to reconsider our blind commitment to the present system.

A new Social Contract is the undeniable need of the hour. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto contested the 1993 elections on the platform of a new Social Contract, but has forgotten all about it since coming into power. No member of the ruling party is sufficiently concerned about the future of the country to think in this direction, but when Mr. Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, an opposition MPA in the Sindh Assembly, makes a demand for a new Social Contract, the Sindh PPP President, Syed Oaim Ali Shah, questions Mr. Bhutto's right to make such a demand because Mr. Bhutto has taken oath under this constitution on various occasions, most recently as member of the present Sindh Assembly. I do not know which is more frightening: That despite the failures of the 1973 Constitution the lawmakers continue to cling on to this depleted and outdated document, or that a person such as Syed Oaim Ali Shah, who has held the post of Chief Minister Sindh and cabinet member, who is a lawyer and the provincial head of the ruling party, is ignorant of the basic principles of constitutional law that no constitution is ever carved in stone. If taking oath under a particular constitution precluded its replacement, then Britain would still be stuck with the Magna

Carta, which was drafted in 1215 by King John as a charter of the rights of the nobility. But even the Magna Carta contained within it the provisions for change and it was amended in 1216 and again in 1217. In 1225 King Henry II, King John's son and successor, so heavily amended the Magna Carta that he, in effect, wrote a new constitution. How unfortunate that the importance of the concept of change, which was even understood by the kings of England as far back as the thirteenth century, eludes the grasp of our lawmakers today.

In more recent times, General Charles de Gaulle, in the aftermath of the allied liberation of France, assumed responsibilities as President of France and convened a constituent assembly to draft the new constitution of the Fourth Republic. He could have merely revived the Third Republic, just as we have dug up the 1973 Constitution buried by Zia. Instead, in recognition of changed circumstances, de Gaulle chose to move forward rather than seek solace in the past. Again in 1958, upon the collapse of the Fourth Republic, General de Gaulle stepped forward to save France from chaos. He ushered in the Fifth Republic, which is in operation even today. If oaths bound one to a particular constitution and excluded any possibility of change, France would have drowned in the turmoil of the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle's timely intervention and eradication of the Fourth Republic to save France from catastrophe was appreciated by the enlightened and knowledgeable people of France to the extent that he was elected the first President of France under the Fifth Republic. It is only in Pakistan that lawmakers cling on to outdated concepts behind a farcical veil of misplaced party loyalty to conceal a complete lack of fresh ideas on their part. If France today is among the most advanced and developed countries of the world, it is due in no small measure to the bold decisions taken by General de Gaulle in 1944 and 1958. But if France had been blessed with lawmakers like Syed Qaim Ali Shah, then I have no doubt in my mind that it too would be a backward mess like Pakistan and Paris, far from being the sparkling jewel it is today, would be a battlefield for terrorists and looters like Karachi.

In Britain, elected members of parliament swear allegiance to the Crown, yet some of them openly advocate the abolition of the monarchy. Recently, an MP belonging to the Labour Party introduced a bill in the House of Commons demanding that upon the culmination of the reign of the present monarch, a referendum be held to determine whether the British people wish to allow the monarchy to continue. Though the bill was soundly defeated, the MP's right to introduce such a bill, despite his oath of allegiance to the Crown, was never questioned.

Before the promulgation of the 1956 Constitution, all of Pakistan's leaders, from the Quaid-e-Azam to Iskandar Mirza, took oath of office under the 1935 Government of India Act. Does this mean that Pakistan continued to be a British colony or domain till 1956. Despite the lack of a constitution, Pakistan was a sovereign and independent state from 1947 - 1956. The fact is that an oath amounts to a mere de facto recognition of the system prevailing in the country at the time. It in no way implies de jure acquiescence in it. Dicey, a leading authority on constitutional law, in his book 'Law of the Constitution' raises the question whether a constitution can be regarded as law. He quotes Tocquville as having declared that "... the English Constitution has no real existence." Tocquville is referring not to the unwritten nature of the English Constitution but to its elusive legal character. Dicey favours the view that a constitution mostly embodies a set of historical customs and conventions which are political rather than

legal in nature. He explains that constitutions have a political as well as legal aspect. The political aspect of a constitution needs to be flexible and lend itself to change in order not to become outdated. A significant change in the political aspect of the constitution will, as a matter of course, effect a change in the legal aspect as well. The question of being gagged and bound by a constitution just because one has taken an oath under it does not even arise. An oath can not alter the dynamic nature of the constitution itself.

Discussing constitutions in his book 'Cabinet Government', Sir Ivor Jennings points out that " ... growth of custom and convention is bound to modify it, apart from any positive measures taken to amend it." He goes on to say that "a constitution necessarily rests on acquiescence ... If an organized public opinion regards it as noxious, it will be overthrown." Mohtar ma Benazir Bhutto contested and won the 1993 general elections on the platform of a new Social Contract. Mr. Mumtaz Ali Bhutto also won his Sindh Assembly seat on the platform of a meaningful constitutional change. This implies a comprehensive rejection of the 1973 Constitution by the voters and a definite mandate for change.

The 1973 Constitution is not a divine law that it should be above reproach. But if we elevate it to such exalted heights, then once again, as in the past, it is bound to become the instrument of our undoing. The purpose of a constitution is to guarantee individual liberty, define the limits of governmental powers and enable the smooth operation of society. If a constitution were deemed to be unchangeable and irreplaceable just because an oath has been taken under it, then instead of providing individual liberty and facilitating the smooth operation of society, it will confine individuals and bind society in the chains of its provisions forever, with no hope of relief. This is not how you lay the foundations of a modern liberal democratic society, but it is the perfect blueprint for totalitarianism and tyranny. History illustrates that only those societies which are open-minded and far-sighted enough to move forward prosper and flourish. It is a swim or sink proposition. If you go forward you swim. If you go backward you sink. Being chained to the status quo is also equivalent to going backward. If our lawmakers can not understand and appreciate this, and instead of leading us forward to a brighter and more progressive future, insist on sinking us into the quicksand of the status quo, then this wretched country and its Godforsaken millions are doomed.

EXTRAORDINARY POLITICS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', September 5, 1997

The nightmare on Constitution Avenue seems to be subsiding with the resignation of President Farooq Ahmed Leghari. But no one expects the scars from this rumble to heal overnight. The most unfortunate casualty of the latest crisis in Islamabad was the constitution, which was kicked around like a football with such impunity as to boggle the mind. All the ugliness that transpired in Islamabad recently was, no doubt, the consequence of a power struggle, but it was also symptomatic of the collapse of the writ of the constitution. It is increasingly apparent that we are entering a particularly delicate phase in our history as we shift from one grundnorm to another. In science, when a new paradigm is in the process of replacing an old disproven one, such a phase is called a period of 'extraordinary science'. It is, therefore, quite appropriate to call a similar transition in politics a period of 'extraordinary politics'. This process takes time to complete since consensus is not easily achieved, nor does the old paradigm go out without a struggle.

The 1973 constitution has been ravaged by a military dictator, mutilated by amendments, overtaken by events and abused by those who should be guarding it with their lives and who stand to lose the most from its demise. As such, it is now only a hollow shell of its original form. We cannot turn a blind eye to all that has transpired since 1973. Successive political crises have adequately exposed the weaknesses and infirmities of this constitution and its demise has become a 'when' rather than an 'if' proposition. But this must not raise alarm in any quarter since this is part of the natural process of political evolution. Constitutional change is unavoidable and it comes as times change, whether we want it or not. At best, we can channel change in a desired direction. The recent political and legal crisis in Islamabad is the inevitable consequence of offering resistance to the irresistible forces of change. Even Edgar Allen Poe could not have penned a more macabre script than that which is unfolding before our eyes these days. With every sunrise the nation was subjected to new and unspeakable horrors that made reading a newspaper a painful experience for anyone who cares about the future of our homeland. Every day the citizens of Pakistan were furnished with novel reasons to hang their heads in shame at the unbecoming conduct of the guardians of their leading institutions.

Constitutional change must be the sole logical outcome of the latest crisis which engulfed and submerged three out of the four primary institutions of power and authority. Even the Prime Minister was forced to admit at least this much during his much awaited speech on television that since the institutions were not being allowed to function and play their constitutional roles, it was impossible for the present system to operate smoothly. Despite fresh political, constitutional and legal upheavals, if we still choose to remain aloof and allergic to the idea of change, we do so at our own peril. We need not fear constitutional change. From time to time laws need to be updated and realigned with changing realities. This is the norm all over the world. France had to go through four ineffective constitutions before arriving at the present Fifth Republic. Rigid constitutions often prove to be the undoing of states. Even the Roman Empire crumbled because its rigid system could not accommodate the new emerging impulses for liberty and freedom in the territories.

The most serious flaw in the 1973 constitution is that it espouses a highly centralised system. By concentrating far too much power in Islamabad, this system completely overlooks the fact that Pakistan is comprised of four nationalities, i.e. Sindhis, Punjabis, Baloch and Pathans, each of whom has a strong distinct ethnic identity and history. Each of them voluntarily surrendered their national sovereignty to form Pakistan in 1947. They were not conquered or forcibly annexed. In the 1940 Pakistan Resolution it was promised that these nations would enjoy the status of 'states' in Pakistan and would be 'autonomous and sovereign'. But the reality that has been imposed upon these nations since the creation of Pakistan has been very different. They have been made totally dependent upon and subservient to the whims of Islamabad, with not even an iota of the promised autonomy or sovereignty in sight. Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP have increasingly been pushed into the background as Punjab, by virtue of its larger population and greater representation in the army and bureaucracy, has elbowed its way onto center stage. Consequently, a strong sense of deprivation has germinated in the three smaller provinces. From the inequitable formula used to devise the NFC Award and the unjust distribution of the waters of the River Indus to the uneven electoral system and a diminishing voice in national affairs, all combine to foster the feeling in the three smaller provinces that they have merely substituted white masters for brown ones.

This disparity between Punjab and the three smaller provinces has given birth to strong nationalist emotions. The provinces are divided along ethnic lines to the extent even political parties that promote federalism are forced to adopt nationalist postures on vital provincial issues in order to survive in the political arena. The nationalist parties of NWFP and Balochistan have won elections and formed provincial governments. Sindhi nationalism is stronger than ever before in the wake of the let-down by federalist parties specially the PPP, and nationalism is growing even in Punjab, particularly in the southern belt. So there is clearly a need to bring the constitution in line with this significant tilt towards nationalism. Decentralisation of power from Islamabad to the provinces has become an inescapable necessity. Attempts to confine nationalist tendencies in a straight-jacket of centralised federalism are bound to put the unity of the country in serious jeopardy.

People are entirely fed up with uncertainty and instability, which has become an integral part of life in Pakistan and cast a menacing shadow over every aspect of life in every corner of the country. Every time the political deities clash on mount Olympus,

the lives of the poor denizens down below come to a grinding halt as trade, industry, commerce, investment, etc., are profoundly affected causing serious damage to the macro as well as micro economy. This too was admitted by the Prime Minister in his recent televised address. All business of day-to-day governance comes to a halt as everyone rushes to Islamabad to salvage power. Development work, policy making, law and order and administrative affairs all suffer in the process. A greater measure of decentralisation would invariably ensure that any crisis born in Islamabad would have only minimal repercussions in the rest of the country and it would be tackled at the source. Power struggles taking place in the Margalla Hills would not disrupt life all over the country as they do now. Moreover, the economic aspect of decentralisation would bring far greater prosperity to the nation as the provinces would generally become masters of their own resources, with a mutually agreed formula for funding the federal establishment whose powers and functions would be limited. There can be no cause for complaint arising from an unfair distribution of national wealth if the provinces are given control of their own economies.

Repeatedly dismissing elected Assemblies and holding elections under the same constitutional setup has not worked in the past and resorting to midterm polls will not work in the future because this electoral system favours the populous Punjab and does nothing to give an equal share of power to the other provinces. Population based electoral systems may be suitable for countries like the United States where there is only one nation. But in a multinational state like Pakistan, which is composed of four distinct nations, such a formula is unworkable. Even though the United States is a one-nation state, its constitution provides equal representation to all of its states, regardless of size or population, in the Senate. Time and again we elect a new government in the vain hope of seeing a better tomorrow for ourselves and our children, but time and again our elected leaders only lead us deeper into the darkest abyss of chaos and turmoil. Despite going through the grind of four general elections in the last nine years, no positive results have been obtained. Who can say that the vast amount of money spent on the last four general elections was money well spent when all we have to show for it is one crisis after another? How long can this be allowed to continue? How long will it take before repeated failures and past experiences teach us the lesson that there must be something wrong with the system?

The 1973 Constitution has proved inadequate in the face of repeated tests. There is an urgent need to design a better constitutional vessel, more in line with new realities, to carry us into the twenty-first century. Even if the 1973 Constitution is not entirely replaced, it is still imperative to at least closely examine it under a microscope in the light of all the water that has passed under the bridge since its enactment. It is important to understand why it has failed to save the country from crisis and how it has leant itself to easy manipulation. Until and unless we focus on installing a more suitable constitutional framework, all other efforts will be in vain.

Good laws alone, however, do not inspire morality in men. If that were the case there would be no crime in the world. Truth is that moral men make good laws. Good laws, however, do not make men moral. All laws actually are quite useless because moral men have no need for laws. They would lead the same lives even if there were no laws. Immoral men, however, are made no better by laws. In a moral vacuum, moral laws are rendered totally useless. Morality cannot be legislated or imposed by law, as this government tried to control floor crossing by passing the Fourteenth

Amendment. The impetus for goodness, honesty, sincerity and morality must come from within rather than from legal compulsion. Laws only restrict individual liberties and freedoms. They do not create or foster morality. No iron-clad law can bind a corrupt soul or an immoral spirit. Gladstone once said that "The disease of an evil conscience is beyond the practice of all the physicians of all the countries in the world." This critical absence of political morality is perhaps the most serious problem afflicting Pakistan

Democracy is a very fragile system that lends itself to abuse far too easily. Jean Francois-Revel, in his book *How Democracies Perish*, writes that democracies tend to perish by excess of its basic principle of individual liberty and freedom. It is, therefore, imperative that the foundations of democracy be laid in firm soil. The moral wastelands and ethical quicksand of Pakistan are anathema for such a delicate system. Our experiences of the recent past amply illustrate this point. Under the present system, democracy has become a meaningless toy for self-seeking politicians, a convenient tool for painting elaborate canvasses of utopia to mislead and use the poor and illiterate people for their own interests. They have lost sight of the fact that democracy is a means to improve the lot of the common man, to bring a measure of happiness and prosperity into his hard life and to alleviate some of the burdens of his life that have bent his back. Instead, the end result of our brand of democracy has been that politicians have acquired bloated Swiss bank accounts while the poor electors have grown more miserable and wretched and their lives have been more complicated by unprecedented instability and uncertainty. As a result, this abused form of 'jamhooriat' has lost its lustre and allure for the common man who has understood that it has nothing tangible to offer him.

Under such prevailing conditions of ethical bankruptcy and abuse of democracy, it becomes even more critical that we install a sound and suitable constitutional setup. It has become all the more essential to make our democracy truly democratic. A decentralised form of democracy is, by far, the most democratic form of democracy. Moreover, in our environment, it is the most workable form of democracy. Italian politics is riddled with scandal, sleaze and all shades of political immorality, but owing to its sound system, Italy is counted among the more advanced and prosperous countries in the world. Nothing can work if the foundations of the system are not sound. So, in order to bring our system in line with the original aspirations of our founding fathers, as expressed in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution, to preserve national unity and promote stability, economic progress and democracy, it is necessary to take powers away from the centre and vest them in the provinces. Therein alone lies our salvation as a state.

The poor people desperately crave real relief from the back breaking problems they are forced to face. Their plight has reached such a pitiful stage that they no longer know which quarter this relief might come from. Ideological and philosophical posturing is a luxury they can no longer afford to indulge in. Politicians, particularly those who have been elected into government in the past nine years, have let them down badly. This tragic let down has shaken the roots of democracy. Let us hope that things have not gone beyond the point of no return, because amidst all the commotion in Islamabad, the distant but distinct sound of marching long boots is not so hard to decipher.

WHILE SINDH BURNS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', April 15, 1998

Many years ago I saw the film 'Prisoner of Zenda' starring the suave and dashing Stewart Granger and ever since then, Fritz von Tollenheim's last words to Rudolph Rassendyll in the film have rung in my ears. In saying farewell to Rassendyll, von Tollenheim says "Fate doesn't always make the right men kings." It was not, however, until I was elected to the Provincial Assembly of Sindh in the February 1997 elections and saw the working of the kings from up close that the full meaning of these words became apparent to me with nauseating clarity and bitter poignancy, opening my eyes to some unholy home truths.

Prior to being elected, I had been naive enough to harbour certain illusions about parliamentary life. I had imagined that my experience in the Sindh Assembly would be a most fulfilling and rewarding experience as I shall be serving the people of Sindh in the capacity of their elected representative. I had expected to put my Cambridge education to productive use by indulging in fruitful and constructive debates on issues of vital importance to this neglected and backward province. I had allowed myself to dream of contributing to the formation of policy and passing meaningful legislation to bring Sindh out of the dark ages and on to the brink of the new millennium. It does not suffice to merely shift the blame for present problems. Every generation defines its own unique sound in each epoch. If the legacy of past administrations to the nation had been chaos, then I wanted our legacy to be one of order. I was well aware that the maladies affecting Sindh could not be remedied within the lifetime of a single Assembly, particularly given the short lifespan of Assemblies nowadays. Nevertheless, I was optimistic that, given a measure of goodwill, a healthy dose of honesty and sincerity and a serious effort, we could at least make a new beginning and blaze a new trail for others to follow. I was confident that with a dedication to the cause and single-mindedness of purpose, we could put a stop to the rot that has set in and is eating up Sindh from within like a cancer. This is the reality I had dared to envisage for the present Sindh Assembly.

But since being sworn in as member of the Sindh Assembly on 20 February, 1997, I have, sadly, seen an entirely different reality that has completely obliterated my noblest dreams and expectations associated with this House. It became painfully obvious to

me at a very early stage in the House that no one was serious about confronting head-on the major problems facing Sindh and finding viable solutions through debate and the evolution of a consensus, as is the norm in a parliamentary democracy.

The Treasury, instead of throwing issues open to debate in this forum of the people's elected representatives, goes out of its way to avoid debate, hiding behind the most lame and pedantic excuses. The Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, which are meant to encourage and facilitate orderly debate, are instead used by the Treasury to inhibit and strangle debate and gag the members. They allow discussion only on obscure matters of little or no interest while conveniently sweeping all urgent business under the rug to avoid having to answer embarrassing questions. Their failure to maintain order in the House results in a wild free-for-all reminiscent of bar brawls in old western movies.

The opposition, for its part, seems to have made up its mind not to allow the House to function smoothly and are doing everything they can to disrupt the proceedings. In a parliamentary system, an opposition fulfills a vital role. It keeps a check upon the powers of the Treasury so that it does not exceed the limits of democratic rule and it tempers the proceedings of the House with the view of the minority so that any forthcoming legislation is not too one-sided. The opposition in the Sindh Assembly is doing neither. They are satisfied to serve narrow, selfish party interests by making political capital out of vital matters such as the Kalabagh Dam project, NFC Award, law and order situation, etc. They have executed a complete about face on all issues of vital interest for Sindh since being constrained to sit on the opposition benches after their humiliating rejection at the February 1997 polls and have now become the champions of causes which are either of their own making or which they further complicated during their days in power.

Apart from this, they make it a point to waste the precious time of the House on the most meaningless and trivial matters, due to which often even the adjournment motions and resolutions submitted by themselves remain undisposed at the end of the day. Their demeanor and disposition is an ungainly blot upon the sanctity and honour of the House. The low calibre of their remarks and downright offensive behaviour has degraded the status of the House down to that of a 'kutchery' of illiterate waderas. These are the people in whose hands lies the destiny of Sindh and Sindhis. These are the people that fate, not to mention the people of Sindh, have chosen to lead Sindh into the new millennium.

The natural, unavoidable consequence of this misplaced trust is that since the Assembly came into existence fourteen months ago, not a single piece of serious, meaningful legislation that may bear a significant influence upon the lives of the poor people of Sindh has been passed. In fourteen months only two serious debates have been held in the House, one on the NFC Award and the other on the law and order situation, and even then no vote was taken at the end of each debate and no tangible result has been derived from these debates thus far. For fourteen idle months the Sindh Assembly has fiddled while Sindh has burned.

Having effectively lost its role as the forum of the people's elected representatives where issues are debated and legislation passed, the Sindh Assembly has lost its *raison d'être* under the present conditions and has become a totally unnecessary burden upon the public exchequer. We have let down the people who vested so much faith and trust in us and we have failed to provide answers to the mountain of questions

that Sindh is faced with.

So much valuable time is being wasted in the House. To begin with, no session ever commences before 11:30 am whereas it is supposed to commence at 9:30 am. Then when proceedings do finally get underway, every rule of procedure and every parliamentary norm of conduct is wrecked with impunity by the honourable members and their dilatory tactics, disruptive behaviour and unbecoming conduct usually ensures that things rarely proceed beyond the daily question and answer hour before it is time to adjourn the House for the day. The short time that the House remains in session is invariably spent indulging in idle humour, accusations and counter-accusations, obscene innuendo, abuse, filth and obscure, irrelevant arguments. Then, at the end of the day, when the House adjourns, the honourable members go home, have heavy lunches, then retire for the afternoon.

But the people of Sindh remain encumbered with the back-breaking burdens that we, as their elected representatives, had promised to alleviate. While we snore peacefully in our air-conditioned bedrooms after having wasted "another full day in the House, the miserable people of Sindh who elected us remain hungry, unemployed, riddled with poverty, crippled by high prices that are spiralling upwards out of control, suffering under primitive conditions, deprived of even the most basic amenities of life such as clean drinking water, medicines, clothing, shelter, electricity and education, living under a constant threat to life, property and dignity as the law and order situation continues to allude the grasp of the authorities, to the extent that even namazis are not safe inside mosques.

We habitually sing the praises of democracy but act like kings. Locking ourselves behind massive iron gates in marble palaces and air-conditioned halls and isolating ourselves from the desperately urgent needs of the people is not the way of democratic rule. That is the way of kings who have been blinded by power. Let us heed the warning that there is a certain unmistakable fatality about power that has stalked the faltering footsteps of kings throughout history. Who should know that better than us? Let us open our eyes and take note of the fact that while we, the honourable members of the Sindh Assembly, continue to enjoy our state subsidised ego trips and draw fat salaries from the public exchequer, the people of Sindh who elected us and put their trust in us continue to watch us and suffer in bitter silence.

Misinterpreting this ominous silence of the masses will prove to be a fatal mistake. This is not the silence of acquiescence. It cannot be. No self-respecting people can ever acquiesce in their own suffering and pain. Instead, this is the sort of silence that preceded the storming of the Bastille in Paris on 14 July, 1789. It is the sort of silence that is the dark portent of a gathering storm on the horizon. The only reason why we cannot see the dark clouds amassing in the distance is because we are isolated, cocooned in the luxury of marble palaces.

The people are disillusioned with both leading political parties as both have repeatedly let them down. They are dissatisfied with the present political system since it has, time and again, failed to deliver them from their misery to the promised land. They no longer see any obvious advantages in a system of parliamentary democracy when it only leads them to the same dark depths of despair and desolation as the military juntas of the past. As such, it has now begun to dawn upon the poor and the neglected that they stand to gain nothing from the status quo and that they are merely being used as cannon-fodder to preserve a system that caters only to the interests of the ruling clique.

This is a very dangerous situation. We are sitting on a keg of gunpowder. In any enlightened society the explosion would have come a long time ago under these conditions. But our poor people, either because of their trusting and naive nature or due to their blinkered perceptions born out of illiteracy, have developed an unfortunate reputation of being gluttons for punishment. They will complain bitterly, but refuse to take positive action to bring about change. Politicians understand this, so they continue to take full advantage of their narrow self-interests at the expense of the general good. But there comes a stage when the degree of pain is so high that it wears off the anaesthetic of complacency and inaction. That is what happened in Paris on 14 July, 1789. Sooner or later our people too will have to rise and overthrow this hollow, useless system and those who have perverted it. There is no other way. Until then, the people can have as much pain and suffering as they are willing to tolerate.

CONFEDERAL SYSTEM THE ONLY WAY OUT

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', October 9, 1998

The concept of decentralisation of power and authority in Pakistan is one that is rooted in the ideas of the founding fathers of this country and encoded in the founding documents as well. It is abundantly clear that they intended Pakistan to have a decentralised system of government similar to a confederation. The need for a separate homeland for Muslims in India arose due to the domination of the Hindu majority. It became necessary to carve out a separate state for the Muslims so that they can live as Muslims in peace. Though the struggle for Pakistan was along religious lines, in principle it was a struggle of a minority against a dominant and overbearing majority. Having fought for the rights of the minority, is it conceivable that our founding fathers would want to create a system in Pakistan which would mirror the faults that they fought against and in which a powerful clique would establish dominance over the smaller and weaker units? Furthermore, at the time of the creation of Pakistan, the great colonial empires of the world, particularly the British Empire, were crumbling. Freedom, liberty and decentralisation were the order of the day around the globe. New independent states were emerging, having shrugged off the yoke and shackles of colonial domination and subjugation. Is it likely that in such a global atmosphere, charged as it was with the currents of liberty, our founding fathers would endeavour to create a centralised state in which foreign colonialists would be replaced by similar indigenous elements?

The 1940 Pakistan Resolution, our most important founding document, gives weight and credence to the case for decentralisation. It specifically stipulates that the provinces comprising Pakistan shall be referred to as 'states' and these states shall be 'autonomous and sovereign'. It further provides that these states shall have their own flags and constitutions and their Chief Executive shall be called a 'Premier'. It goes on to state that only the portfolios of Defence, External Affairs, Communications and Customs shall be vested in the Central Government in the initial stages and eventually even some of these subjects would be transferred to the states. If this is not a blueprint for decentralisation and confederation then I have never seen one.

It was under these assurances of 'autonomy and sovereignty' that Sindh, Balochistan, Frontier, Punjab and Bengal agreed to enter into a union in 1947. But these promises were never kept. The military and civilian rulers who succeeded our founding fathers, being predominantly from Punjab, never allowed this blueprint to be implemented. The noble intentions of the founding fathers were perverted and distorted right from the start by those who had a vested interest in establishing and maintaining an imbalance in which Punjab would dominate the other provinces in the union. They set a new course of centralisation of power, as a consequence of which, right from the start problems and contentious issues began to surface between the provinces, weakening the bond of unity.

Pakistan is a multinational state. There are now four remaining nationalities comprising Pakistan, i.e. Sindhis, Balochis, Pathans and Punjabis. Each embraces a unique set of customs, traditions, language, history and ethnic background. Before the advent of the British Empire in India, these nations were independent and sovereign states. The British forcefully bound them together in the fetters of colonialism. Then in 1947 these nations were herded together under the banner of Islam to form one state. Religion alone cannot form the bond or fulfill the requirements of nationhood. There can be no doubts that as Muslims our life and our soul is devoted to Islam. But more than a common religion goes into the making of a nation. If a common religion were an adequate criterion, then all the Muslim countries of the Middle East would have no obstacles in forming one united state rather than being at each other's throats, like Iran and Iraq, or Iran and Afghanistan. If religion alone was enough to bond a people together then Pakistan would not have broken up in 1971. Ethnicity plays a vital role in the definition of a nation. Given Pakistan's multinational composition, and given the fact that one of the nations in Pakistan is predominantly stronger than all the rest, it is an inescapable conclusion that a federal system cannot work here. Only a decentralised confederal system such as the one envisaged in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution can work here.

The roots of all maladies eating away our society lie in this highly inappropriate federal system. So many conflicts and problems have sprung up due to the imbalance between the provinces in this system. For instance, there is the National Finance Commission Award issue. The Federal Government collects revenue from the provinces on the basis of revenue generation but distributes funds from the divisible pool among the provinces on the basis of population. Sindh is responsible for approximately seventy percent of the income generated in Pakistan, which the Federal Government takes away to Islamabad and in return gives Sindh approximately ten percent in the form of a Federal grant. As a result, though Sindh feeds and clothes the rest of the country from its earnings, Sindhis themselves live prehistoric lives, deprived of all progress, development, modernisation and opportunity. The meagre Federal grants, which the Federal Government does not even honour fully most of the time, are not even enough to meet essential requirements like the wages of government employees. The formula under which the NFC Award is assessed is grossly unfair. If funds are to be collected from the provinces on the basis of revenue generation, then funds from the divisible pool must be distributed among the provinces on the basis of revenue generation as well. But if funds from the divisible pool are to be distributed among the provinces on the basis of population, then funds must be collected from the provinces on the basis of population also. There is no denying that the income generated

by Punjab is not enough to meet its requirements and Punjab needs financial assistance from Sindh. But why should Punjab's interests be met at the expense of Sindh? Is it fair that Punjab should flourish and develop on the earnings of Sindh while Sindh remains an undeveloped backwater? This is an unpardonable injustice that Sindh has had to live with since the creation of Pakistan. If financial powers were decentralised and if the provinces had control over their economies and had powers of taxation, then such injustices would not be possible. A mutually agreed formula can be worked out to provide financial assistance to Punjab as well as the Federal institutions without sacrificing the interests of Sindh. The 'autonomy and sovereignty' promised in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution can never be realised until and unless the provinces are given full control of their economies, including powers of taxation.

Then there is the key issue of Kalabagh Dam. The Provincial Assemblies of Sindh, Balochistan and the Frontier have repeatedly passed Resolutions against the construction of Kalabagh Dam, but Punjab's obstinate support of this project is keeping it alive. This project serves the interests of Punjab since it will not only enhance electricity production but will also make more water available in Punjab for irrigation purposes. Since there is already a severe shortage of water in our rivers, the water to be stored at Kalabagh will, no doubt, come out of the already inadequate share of the three smaller provinces. This will mean famine and ruin for them as they depend heavily upon agricultural income. According to the age old principle of Riparian Rights, which are embedded in International Law, in all issues relating to the distribution of the waters of a river, the needs and requirements of the tailenders are to be given precedence over all other considerations. But this is not happening here and Punjab is flaunting its weight and might in the face of unequivocal opposition from the three smaller provinces. In a decentralised confederal system, the provinces would have full control over all their natural resources and rivers and all disputes would be settled in accordance with the principles of International Law and the doctrine of Riparian Rights, as is the case in Europe and even Africa.

These are just two of the numerous contentious issues arising between the provinces due to the ineffective and inappropriate federal system. It has given rise to a general feeling of deprivations and isolation in the three smaller provinces. A deeply felt perception prevails that the interests of Punjab supercede even the genuine and urgent interests of the three smaller provinces. In the United Kingdom, which until recently was operating under a unitary system of government with all power centralised in London, a substantial decentralisation of powers has taken place as Assemblies have been elected in Wales and Northern Ireland and a Parliament has been elected in Scotland. While the whole world continues to move towards decentralisation, we in Pakistan remain steadfast in our misplaced devotion to a harmful centralised system dominated by Punjab.

Against a backdrop of alienation and isolation among the provinces, my party, the Sindh National Front, stepped forward in 1984 and was the first party to demand decentralisation on power through the institution of a confederal system. We were at once labelled traitors and separatists. Treason and sedition cases were filed against our leaders and workers and they were arrested. But now the political climate has transformed to the extent that every major political party, including the PPP and PML, are talking about decentralisation. The army top brass, who used to hunt down our leaders and workers, recently invited the Chairman of our party, Mr. Mumtaz Ali

Bhutto, to address the National Defence College on this very issue. Even the COAS is talking about provincial autonomy. I find in this dramatic transformation an historic vindication of the courageous stand taken by my party even in the dark days of Zia's martial law junta.

But even today there are certain elements that have a vested interest in the preservation of the status quo who are opposing decentralisation. They argue that the problem lies not in the system but in the leaders who run the system. During our fifty years of independence we have had all kinds of governments and leaders. We have had elected politicians, appointed bureaucrats and military dictators of all hues and shades. None have been able to run this system satisfactorily. Even a political and intellectual giant like the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had to pay the ultimate price for failing to run this system. So the question arises that if in half a century's experimentation with this system no one has been able to make it work, then where are we going to find the demigod who will make it work?

They also say that confederation will lead to the eventual breakup of Pakistan. This is not so. Let us not forget that it was under a federal system that Pakistan broke up in 1971, not under a confederal system. Confederation could have saved Pakistan from dismemberment. It can act as a safety valve. The highly centralised Soviet Union had no such safety valve and look what happened there. Yugoslavia did not benefit from such a safety valve either and it suffered the same fate. On the other hand, look at Switzerland. The Swiss have had a confederal system for over eight hundred years. Switzerland has not broken up. To the contrary, it has developed into one of the most prosperous and stable countries in the world. In fact confederation in Switzerland has fostered such unification and closeness between the provinces, known as Cantons, that now there is serious talk of converting the Swiss Constitution into a Federal one. This is the effect that confederation can have. Far from tearing states apart, it strengthens the bond and unites people.

The opponents of decentralisation also argue that the 1940 Pakistan Resolution passed at Lahore was eventually amended and replaced by the 1946 Delhi Resolution, which discarded the 'autonomous and sovereign' clause. This is a deliberate attempt by them to fog the issue and cause misunderstanding and confusion. Firstly, while the 1940 Resolution was passed by the General Council of the Muslim League, the 1946 Resolution was passed only by the Parliamentary Party of the Muslim League. It is an undeniable and universally accepted principle that the General Council is the supreme, all-powerful body and its resolutions cannot be amended, altered, replaced or overturned by any other body, including the Parliamentary Party. Secondly, there is nothing in the 1946 Resolution which can conceivably be deemed to have amended or discarded the 'autonomous and sovereign' clause contained in the 1940 Resolution. Whereas the 1940 resolution stated that there would be two independent Muslim states, one in the east and one in the west, the 1946 Resolution simply stated that there would be one united Muslim State, comprised of the eastern and western wings. There was no direct or indirect reference to the 'autonomous and sovereign' clause nor was there any attempt to alter it in anyway.

These are just lame excuses brought on by the lust for the preservation of the status quo. It was this lust for the preservation of the status quo that led to the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. Once again conditions are being created in which it is becoming increasingly impossible for the people of the three smaller provinces to live in Pakistan

and at the same time preserve some sense of dignity and self-respect. It appears that we have not learnt any lessons from the past. If Pakistan does once again breakup, then the responsibility will lie upon the shoulders of the same forces who claim to be the guardians of the Federation who caused the separation of East Pakistan. Pakistan's salvation lies in confederation. There is no other way. Excessive centralisation and concentration of power in Islamabad has created a stifling atmosphere. Let us loosen this noose of centralisation and breather a little. The more we tighten this noose, the closer we bring our demise as a state.

Action without delay must be the order of the day. With every moment that passes under this ineffective and inappropriate centralised system we move closer to the edge of the precipice. This system is putting an enormous strain upon the fragile bonds that bind us together. If we blindly continue under this present system, no one will be able to prevent these fragile bonds from snapping.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR IN 'DAWN' IN RESPONSE TO MY ABOVE ARTICLE

DECENTRALISATION NOT CONFEDERATION 'DAWN', OCTOBER 12, 1998

In the article (Oct 9), Mr. Ameer Bhutto has confused the necessity of decentralisation and democracy with confederation. A few days back while speaking at a seminar of Imran Khan's PTI on decentralisation he expressed similar views and mentioned the example of Switzerland as a confederation.

To start with let us be clear about the facts. World history proves beyond any doubt that political systems have been evolving from confederation to federation. In Switzerland three regions, namely Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, entered in a Defensive League in 1291. In 1353 eight more members and in 1531 thirteen more members joined the League. But in 1848 a new constitution was passed. The 22 cantons set up a federal government (consisting of a Federal Parliament and a Federal Council) and a Federal Tribunal. The 1874 Constitution further strengthened the federation. In the United States there was initially a confederation of 13 states. But later on they transferred themselves into a federation. But in all the democratic countries, including the above two examples, there is genuine decentralisation in all the organs of the state, which is the basic requirement of democracy and freedom.

As against this our feudal politicians want to keep the poor citizens of their areas under perpetual subjugation. They want to keep on enjoying rural lifestyle on the expense of poor haris and labourers. They do not mind existence of private jails of waderas, and the large scale exploitation of the poor masses at the hands of colonial style bureaucracy acting as henchmen of the feudals. If there is decentralisation of administration on democratic lines then poor masses will find escape from the clutches of worse kind of feudalism especially in Sindh and the Seraiki areas of Punjab. It will be through the democratic decentralisation that the ghost schools and the bogus health centers will disappear and rule of law shall be established.

Mr. Ameer Bhutto in support of his argument cited the 1940 Lahore Resolution. But he conveniently ignored the 1946 resolution of the Council of the All India Muslim

League demanding one sovereign Pakistan. The Muslim leadership of Sindh at that time fully supported this resolution, ignoring the 1940 Resolution.

Mr. Bhutto's contention that Sindh is feeding and clothing the whole of Pakistan is not correct. He should have quoted the figures of agricultural and other taxes being paid by feudals and waderas. As regards other taxes the bulk of income tax and other indirect taxes are paid by multinationals and big Pakistani companies. Most of them maintain only accounting offices in Karachi while most of their production and sales are in the up country. Mr. Bhutto should have known that about 70% of the industry in Sindh is sick and is getting more sick by the day in view of the deteriorating law and order conditions prevailing in the province. Even otherwise in a federation relative prosperity of federating units cannot be a reason to break up the federation. In the United States the wealth of only four rich states is more than the wealth of all the other 46 states put together. But that federation is running satisfactorily only because there is democracy and rule of law in the country.

If Mr. Bhutto is interested in the well being and prosperity of the poor masses in his province he should also strive for the establishment of democracy and rule of law not only in Sindh but in the whole country.

FEROZ SHAH GILANI
Karachi



NEED FOR DECENTRALISATION
'DAWN', OCTOBER 14, 1998

I welcome Feroz Shah Gilani's comments on my article. I don't understand why Mr. Gilani found it necessary to write this letter if he agrees with my basic premise that decentralisation is necessary. Confederation, after all, is a method to achieve decentralisation. And what is this 'democratic decentralisation' the he refers to in his letter? How does it defer from confederation or other forms of decentralisation? If Mr. Gilani has taken the trouble to propose an alternative plan to mine then he should at least elucidate and elaborate upon it in detail instead of randomly throwing a new phrase into the pot.

By quoting the examples of Switzerland and the United States of America in detail, Mr. Gilani further fortifies my argument that confederation leads to the strengthening of bonds between nations that can evolve into a federal structure once trust is developed between them rather than leading to the dismemberment of states. Therefore it is essential to start with a confederal system and let it develop naturally towards a federation. But if you unite nations that were previously independent and sovereign under the confines of federalism to begin with, particularly in a situation where one of the nations is in a position to dominate the rest, then this is a recipe for disaster as the centrifugal forces of ethnicity will not allow mutual trust to develop under these conditions. This was precisely my point. In trying to prove me wrong Mr. Gilani has added strength to my argument.

Here I am talking about the autonomy and sovereignty of nations, of breaking the fetters of centralisation and giving real power to the people at the grassroots level and Mr. Gilani feels I am trying to subjugate the poor man in the village! If Mr. Gilani feels that decentralisation will end this exploitation of the masses, then why does he shy

away from confederation, which is the purest and most transparent form of decentralisation? Is it that he wishes to give the masses only the limited freedom that federalism can afford and no more than that? Why does he set limits upon the extent of freedom of the masses by confining the scope of decentralisation to federalism?

Mr. Gilani further states that the 1940 Pakistan Resolution was superceded by the 1946 resolution. This is a worn out, tired old argument. But if he takes the trouble to closely read the 1946 Resolution he will find that there is nothing in it to alter the 'autonomous and sovereign' status granted to the provinces in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution. The 1940 Resolution said that the northwest zone and the eastern zone of India in which there is a Muslim majority should become separate independent states. The 1946 Resolution amended that by providing that the northwest and eastern zones of India should become one united independent state. How does that alter the promise of autonomy and sovereignty made to the constituent units contained in the 1949 resolution? Instead of having an independent East Pakistan and an independent West Pakistan, the 1946 Resolution merely said that there should be one united state. This in no way affects the status of the provinces within that state. Besides, if the 1946 Resolution superceded the 1940 Resolution and if the Muslim League leadership 'ignored' the 1940 Resolution then why do we celebrate 23rd March, the day the 1940 Resolution was passed at Lahore, by observing a national holiday? Why don't we instead observe the day of the passage of the 1946 Resolution with such reverence?

I stand by my statement that Sindh clothes and feeds the country and if Mr. Gilani takes the trouble to check the figures he will see that Sindh contributes nearly 70% to the divisible pool. If tax collection and sick industries are a problem then these are problems that are not by any means exclusive to Sindh and Punjab suffers equally from these maladies. I agree that the relative wealth of some provinces should not form the basis for the breakup of the state. But if revenue generating provinces are deprived of the fruits of their labour then that injustice can lead to the breakup of states. The federation is running satisfactorily in the United States because the states have equal representation in the Senate, which is a far more powerful legislative body than our Senate, which will become even more useless after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Moreover, the United States is generally accepted universally as being one of the very few 'nation-states' in the world, as opposed to Pakistan which is a 'multi-national state'. Democracy is all well and good but even that can not work unless there is trust and understanding between the nations comprising a state. This trust and understanding can only be fostered through a decentralised system like confederation.

Mr. Gilani wants decentralisation but not confederation. If this word strikes such terror into the hearts and minds of people such as him then I shall refrain from using it. But the undeniable need of the hour is fundamental decentralisation, along the lines promised in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution. In particular, the provinces must be given control of their economies, without which all efforts to decentralise power will be an empty hoax. If you don't want to call this a confederation then don't. Call it a federation, call it a unitary system, call it a monarchy if you will. But without genuine decentralisation this country is headed for hard times.

AMEERBHUTTO
Karachi

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION
'DAWN', OCTOBER 19, 1998

Mr. Ameer Bhutto has asked me to elaborate on the concept of democratic decentralisation. There cannot be any democracy 'if there is no effective local government elected by the people of the area'. The duties and functions of local government cover police, magistracy, education, social welfare, health, housing, water supply, sewerage, local roads, drainage, weights and measurements, art galleries, museums, parks and playgrounds. In the words of Prof. Henry Maddock, "the world has realised that decision making at the central level can be useful only when peasants, labourers and women can be induced to implement them at the grassroots level. It is the local people alone who can take those positive steps leading to sustainable development and establishment of socio-economic well being of the area."

The PPP in its 1993 electoral manifesto had promised to establish the system of elected district governments. But it went back on its promises and we are still suffering under a colonial style system. Mr. Meraj Mohammad Khan has in a recent interview said that while he was Minister of State in the cabinet of Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, the later started ignoring party workers and relying more on the colonial style bureaucracy. On Mr. Khan's protest Mr. Bhutto retorted that he could not do away with the commissioners and deputy commissioners, displaying a typical autocratic mindset. When former Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh visited Karachi I pointedly asked him how much democracy they had in India? After a short pause, he candidly admitted that there was no democracy in India and the system there was also same as in Pakistan. He said this at a meeting of Rotarians in 1992. No wonder as per Zee TV and other foreign media reports the poor masses of India are suffering in the same way as the people in this country. But the Indians have made some progress by adopting decentralisation in the form of creating more states (provinces).

I agree with Mr. Ameer Bhutto that centralisation of power in the hands of the center is unjust. What he should demand is provincial autonomy not confederation. The center should be left with minimum powers and only deal with defence, foreign policy, finance, communications and currency. But the residual power should not be monopolised by the provinces either, thus denying the masses their 'peoples government', i.e. the local governments of their own choice. We cannot afford to invent the wheel afresh; there are ample examples of successful federations in the world like USA, Germany, Canada and Australia. We can benefit from their examples and adopt democratic decentralisation.

If Sindh is feeding and clothing the whole of Pakistan, then why so much wheat, milk, edible oil, pulses, etc., are imported every year and why so much cloth comes to Karachi from other provinces? It is up to Mr. Ameer Bhutto to provide relevant statistics.

FEROZ SHAH GILANI
Karachi



DECENTRALISATION AND CONFEDERATION
'DAWN', OCTOBER 24, 1998

I agree with almost everything Mr. Feroz Shah Gilani has said in his letter. Our points of view are very similar. This being the case, I don't understand why he insists on continuing his argument with me? His entire bone of contention seems to revolve around the word 'confederation'.

Everything he has said in defining what he calls 'democratic decentralisation', including the need for local government, is contained in the manifesto of our party, the Sindh National Front. He even says in his letter that the powers of the center should be limited to a few subjects. This is exactly what was promised in the 1940 Resolution which he claims was ignored and superceded by the 1946 Resolution. If Mr. Gilani is interested I can send him a copy of my party's manifesto in which he will find that we have made exactly the same demand, almost word for word. The only crucial difference is that we feel that the subject of finance should be vested in the provinces rather than in the center since the provinces cannot be truly 'autonomous and sovereign' as promised in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution unless they are in control of their economies. I am not asking anyone to reinvent the wheel; I only want to replace a broken wheel with one that is more suited for us. If federation is working in some other countries like the United States, then that is so because the United States is a nation-state while Pakistan is a multinational state. No one state in the United States dominates other states like Punjab dominates the smaller three provinces here. This domination has reached such proportions that even the former COAS, himself a Punjabi, was constrained to concede the need to alleviate the grievances of the three smaller provinces.

Once again I fail to understand what Mr. Gilani is arguing with me about when he agrees with the basic principle of decentralisation? The only difference between us is that he calls it democratic decentralisation while I and the rest of the world call it confederation. As I said in my previous letter, if the word 'confederation' strikes terror in the hearts of some people then I don't care what you may call this system. I am perfectly willing to adopt Mr. Gilani's new label for this system. After all what's in a name? Confederation by any other name would work just as well.

AMEER BHUTTO
Larkana



CONFEDERAL SYSTEM IS NOT THE SOLUTION
'DAWN', OCTOBER 22, 1998

In his article Mr. Ameer Bhutto says that 'Sindh is responsible for seventy percent of income generated in Pakistan.' He forgets that when Pakistan came into being, Karachi was made the federal capital. Industrialisation was possible in Karachi not due to Sindhis, but on account of foreign exchange earned by East Pakistan through export of jute, raw material for textile industry mainly from Punjab, labour from NWFP, Punjab and Balochistan and capital investment from Muslims from all over

the country, including those who migrated from India. There was hardly any industry in Karachi at the time of partition. The income generated from the airport, the seaport, customs duties etc. is not due to Sindhis alone but all Pakistanis contribute to it.

As regards the claim that there are several distinct nationalities in Pakistan, then why Indian with thirty provinces and seventy languages call themselves one nation? There are more than 20 distinct cultures in the USA. Similarly, three different languages are spoken in Switzerland. The UK consists of England, Wales and Scotland with different cultures and even different dialects. If we agree to Mr. Ameer Bhutto's argument about nationalities in Pakistan - Sindhis, Balochs, Pathans and Punjabis - then what is the position of more than six million Urdu speaking people of Karachi who have their language, habits, way of life and customs different from those of original Sindhis. Then in Punjab there are three distinct regions of southern, central and northern Punjab. Which nationality the people of Hazara division of the NWFP belong to? Half the population does not speak Pushto. In Balochistan the people of old Makran state live differently from other Balochs. They speak Makrani, which is broken Persian. The people of Lasbela district of Balochistan mostly speak Sindhi and are culturally more akin to the people of Sindh than Balochistan.

I disagree with Mr. Ameer Bhutto that 'Sindh feeds and clothes the whole country but Sindhis themselves live prehistoric lives, deprived of all progress, development, modernisation and opportunity.' More than eighty percent of wheat and cotton is produced in Punjab. Poverty exists all over Pakistan and is equally spread. I come from a village in Punjab which has no electricity, no telephone, no dispensary, no pucca road and no post office. Each family has a holding of a few acres and hardly make both ends meet.

As regards the 1971 debacle, it was not due to any special group but it was due to the lust of power by some individuals who saw that if Pakistan remained united they will never be able to rule the country. Pakistan has suffered because of some individuals who belonged to East Pakistan, Punjab, Sindh, NWFP or Balochistan. I have lived in all the provinces of original Pakistan and found that the common people never felt like Bengalis, Punjabis, Pathans, Balochs, Sindhis and Mohajirs. The political leaders created hatred. Mujibur Rehman was no friend of the Bengalis. When he became President, he amassed wealth and lived like a dictator. When Bhutto came to power he also lived like a king. What love did he have for the masses? Zia enforced martial law to prolong his rule.

Similarly, what good was done to the Pathans when Ayub Khan took over the country and destroyed democracy? After the death of Quaid-i-Azam and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan did not have any honest leader otherwise we would have been a great nation.

MUSHTAQ AHMED
Lahore Cantt



IN DEFENCE OF CONFEDERAL SYSTEM
'DAWN', OCTOBER 31, 1998

It is indeed most satisfying to see how much interest my article has generated. The latest response comes from Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed from Lahore Cantt. He has tried to make the point that industrialisation in Karachi became possible because of foreign capital and labour resources from all over the country. That may be so, but why was all the foreign investment and labour etc. channelled to Karachi? Why was Rawalpindi or Multan or Lahore Cantt not made the centers of industrialisation? The answer is simple; because Karachi was the most feasible and viable venue due to its proximity to the port. Geographical advantages are natural God given national assets. Access to warm waters is perhaps the greatest natural resource Sindh has been blessed with. In which civilised country of the world are regional natural resources monopolised by the center without allowing the region to reap any of the benefits? But just as Balochistan receives no adequate royalty for the natural gas produced there and even people living in the Sui area still burn wood to cook meals and heat their homes, we in Sindh also receive no benefits from the income generated at our port.

If all Pakistanis are contributing towards the generation of income at the airport and seaport at Karachi, then so what? After all the income that is being produced there is also taken away to Islamabad and used to build marble palaces there, to run the federation and to spend in other provinces, particularly in Punjab. It is not as if their sweat and toil at the seaport and airport is in aid of filling the coffers in Sindh. Sindh only receives a few pennies in its begging bowl from the center in the form of a pathetic federal grant and most of the time the federal government does not even fully honour that measly commitment, as a consequence of which often Sindh cannot even give salaries on time to public employees.

There are indeed many distinct nations in India. If Mr. Ahmed takes the trouble to study Indian politics he will find that separatist nationalist tendencies run strong in India in many areas. It is true that the USA is a melting pot of various backgrounds and they revel in and relish their identities, but all the cultures of the immigrants have fused together to the extent that a unique 'American' culture has crystallised which has become the sole recognition of the citizens of the USA. In Switzerland different nationalities have managed to live together and thrive because, as mentioned in my article, for nearly eight hundred years Switzerland had a confederal constitution. The United Kingdom was operating under a unitary system till recently. But in recognition of the nationalistic impulses of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish peoples, last year Parliament passed a bill to allow assemblies to be elected in Wales and Northern Ireland and a full-fledged Parliament in Scotland. In other words, even a unitary system like the UK is moving towards decentralisation while we have buried our heads in the sand like ostriches.

The definition of nationhood requires a number of criteria to be met. For instance a nation must have its own history, language, culture, territory, etc. A mere claim does not amount to qualification for nationhood. The Urdu speaking people living in Sindh do not qualify because they come from many different parts of India, have different languages and customs and have no territory of their own. By contrast the Seraiki people do qualify for nationhood under this criteria. Their demand for a separate province, at the very least, is justified and valid.

Why do all the opponents of confederation so conveniently overlook the 1940 Pakistan Resolution? I am asking for nothing more and nothing less than what is promised in this document. The provinces were promised 'autonomy and sovereignty'. These are very significant words that carry unmistakable, intrinsic connotations and implications. No system other than confederation can fulfill this promise of 'autonomy and sovereignty' to the provinces. To reject a confederal system amounts to the rejection of the 1940 Pakistan Resolution.

AMEER BHUTTO
Larkana



CONFEDERAL SYSTEM IS NOT THE ANSWER
'DAWN', NOVEMBER 4, 1998

The article is a good narrative but suffers from multiple fallacies, hasty generalisations and confusion of fact and opinion. As Samuel Butler said "God can not alter the past, but historians can." Indeed, anyone can interpret history as one wishes. It appears that the author has interpreted history to suit his own case. Well a little knowledge is dangerous indeed, especially in this internet era.

The author mentions the inability of religion to bind people together. He should look towards Europe. Today Europe is coming together as the "European Union" and indeed religion is a common factor. One of the factors responsible for the fall of the Soviet Union was a lack of religion. The 91-year-old great Russian scholar, Dmitry Likhachev who has seen it all - wars, revolutions, the Gulag and new freedom - makes the following observations about the importance of religion in the survival of a nation: "If our country is strong in military power, strong in technical achievement, its associated state does not give us any right to exist. I believe that culture is the most important thing and that culture must be spiritual, everything else depends on that." For 130 million Pakistanis religion is the binding force. It was this force that created Pakistan. Today due to economic problems one should not try to interpret history differently. Pakistan was not created for ethnic groups or for states to exist within states.

The author's claim that Sindh feeds the whole of Pakistan is totally wrong. This is the same kind of thinking that was propagated by the Indians in East Pakistan that the revenue from jute was feeding the entire Pakistan. The technological advance in polymer technology has made jute obsolete, and today Bangladesh is struggling to find a niche in the international market to earn foreign exchange.

Who is responsible for the present chaotic state of affairs in Pakistan? Well, until the 1960's Pakistan was a rising star among Asian economies. Then one 'intellectual giant' appeared on the national scene; he claimed to have a vision for the country. And what a vision he had; two wars, the 1971 debacle, destruction of the country's industrial and educational base and martial law. The truth of the matter is that this 'intellectual giant' never gave the federal system a chance to flourish because of his undemocratic outlook and wadera background. There are certain prerequisites for the success of democracy -education, equality in social structure, respect for the rule of law and honest leaders.

Without them democracy cannot flourish. It is the leaders who make or break a political system. Leaders are products of social structure. No political system will work in Pakistan until a balance is restored in social structures. At present for developing countries like Pakistan the form of democracy is a secondary issue. The primary issues are; how to liberate people from the economic bondage to waderas, zamindars, Chaudharies et al? How to educate the masses? How to develop wadera-free institutions? How to promote social justice? How to re-establish an industrial base?

In countries like the USA, Canada, Switzerland there are no waderas to exploit the masses. Nobody lives in economic bondage to a landlord. On an Election Day no one is driven like cattle to a polling station to validate the wishes of a wadera. In those countries the federal system has succeeded because the leaders and people uphold the rule of law. Pakistan's salvation does not lie in a confederal system. Its salvation lies in the abolition of wadera system. Decentralisation and confederation are nice buzzwords, but they won't solve the real issues in Pakistan. As long as less than 1000 waderas and other elites continue to keep 130 million people hostage no political system will work. How could decentralisation give more power to the people who have no control over their destinies? How could haris living in a wadera's jailor on a wadera's premises as slaves, benefit from decentralisation? In the present situation, decentralisation would only strengthen the wadera all over the country. Decentralisation in the federation will work only if the feudal states within the State are demolished.

All people from Karachi to Khyber deserve economic and social justice. Would the leader of the author's party voluntarily donate his lands to his haris and start a national movement for the abolition of the feudal system? Would he ask his fellow waderas to surrender any unlawful expansion of their land estates and set free the haris from economic slavery? And would he initiate a national movement for eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease?

The road to confederation leads to Moenjodaro and not to the knowledge based global economy of the 21st century. In today's world even when addressing a local or national problem one needs to have a vision and a global perspective. Please think on national and global levels and not at the local level. And since that's the only way out, words should be uttered with caution and insight. As Aeschylus said; "Words are the shadow of action."

S.B.SALAM
Chicago, USA



CONFEDERAL SYSTEM FOR DEMOCRACY
'DAWN', NOVEMBER 9, 1998

The most recent critique of my article comes in the shape of a letter from a Mr. S.B. Salam from Chicago. He has taken exception to my point that it takes more than just a common religion to bind people together. For some strange reason he points to the European Union to make his point. I can't believe it! Does Mr. Salam seriously believe that the impetus behind the European Union is religion? Perhaps he can enlighten us all on what canon of Christianity is the European Union based? Where is religion mentioned

in the Treaty of Rome or any of the subsequent agreements and documents that form the foundation of the European Union? What are the religious goals and objectives of the European Union? Perhaps they are going to launch the Christian crusades all over again? The driving force behind the European Union is economics; nothing more and nothing less. That much is taught to every child in school. A common religion is merely incidental to the European Union and plays no part in it whatsoever, just as religion was incidental to the freedom movement in India in the 1940's. The ideology of the struggle was rooted in the principle of equal rights for minorities. It was incidental that the lines were drawn along religious differences since the minority happened to be a religious minority.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was indeed a political and intellectual giant who is recognised as such by the world and is in need of no stamp of approval from Mr. Salam. He came closest to making this inappropriate federal system work and he received his rewards for his services to Pakistan through the executioner's noose in 1979. But why must we shift the focus of the debate from the viability of a system to an individual? He is gone now. What have his successors achieved? The motley bunch of leaders we have had since, or even before him, have only made things worse.

I agree with Mr. Salam that for a developing country like Pakistan democracy is a secondary issue. The more important issue is the constitutional framework under which society will operate. Decentralisation is a prerequisite for democracy in Pakistan. There can be no democracy in the true sense here under a highly centralised federal setup like the current one. In any case, who can deny that a decentralised democracy is the most democratic form of democracy? Instead of parroting the highly biased press and media, if Mr. Salam took the trouble to gain first hand knowledge by travelling through the interior regions of the country and studying voting patterns he would see and feel the changes that have taken place in the thinking of the villagers and haris. But if he feels that feudalism is such a serious problem, then I am amazed that he sees the solution in this highly centralised system such as the present one. This defies logic. I am proposing a decentralised system in which power would be devolved right down to the grassroots level. I want to give power to the haris and labourers in the villages and towns, but Mr. Salam feels this will help feudalism flourish. I don't understand how he arrives at this conclusion. How does giving power to the people help feudalism? And how can concentrating power in Islamabad help the cause of the poor villager, hari, labourer or even democracy generally for that matter?

Mr. Salam asks whether I would be willing to surrender my lands for the landless hari. He should know that my family has surrendered over fifty thousand acres of land in various land reforms since Ayub Khan's days. He asks whether I would launch a movement to eliminate the feudal system. He should know that my family has done more to free the poor haris and labourers from the clutches of sardars and waderas than anyone else by bringing a sense of political awakening to them. He asks if we will launch a national movement for the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease. Let him know that these reforms are at the heart of our party manifesto. What do we stand to gain from denying the people progress and development but their wrath? It is characteristic of armchair politicians to make the mistake of thinking that politicians wish to deny their people the benefits afforded by the 21st century, not understanding that if politicians plot against their people in this manner they cannot count on them for their continued support.

Mr. Salam sees it fit to question my sincerity and integrity. Our views may differ, but I don't doubt his good intentions. I expect the same courtesy from him. Despite all the faults in me or in my views, at least I chose to share the burdens and sorrows of my fellow countrymen by coming back to Pakistan and living here upon completing my education abroad instead of sitting in Chicago and pontificating on the virtues of federalism. Drawing room politicians and weekend pundits are a curse upon our country. They lecture us ad nauseum as if they know everything and everyone else is a fool, while playing no active role in the reformation of our society themselves.

Finally, Mr. Salam says that the road to confederation leads to Moenjodaro rather than to a knowledge-based global economy of the 21st century. This is not so. Confederation is a progressive solution to the complications posed by multi-national states such as Yugoslavia and Pakistan. It may have escaped Mr. Salam's notice that the age of centralised, powerful states is over. That is why the Soviet Union fell apart. There is now a global impetus towards regional autonomy, even in highly developed and democratic states like Canada, that only a confederal system is equipped to satisfy.

AMEER BHUTTO

Karachi



TURNING AWAY FROM FACTS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', September 13, 1999

Hope is a very tenuous thing. It is not a concrete and steel bridge between the present and a better future. It is, instead, an edifice assembled from wisps of gossamer and is far too fragile to bear the awful burden of a troubled mind and a tortured heart. In another sense, it is like a habit forming drug. Taken in reasonable measure, it can sustain you. But when, in despair, it is consumed in excessive doses, it produces hallucinations and counter-productive effects.

Increasingly vain efforts aimed at keeping their hopes and aspirations alive over the last half a century are now taking their toll on the people of Sindh. Since the creation of Pakistan, the people of Sindh have dared to dream of the autonomy and sovereignty promised to them in the Pakistan Resolution, passed by the general body of the Muslim League at Lahore on 23rd March, 1940. They have yearned for a modicum of authority over their local affairs. They wish to live as equal citizens of Pakistan and receive an equal share of national wealth and resources. But all this has been denied to them by the successors of the Quaid-e-Azam who have deliberately and belligerently flown in the face of the promise of 'autonomy and sovereignty' for the provinces contained in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution and have imposed highly centralised control of Islamabad. The resulting stifling and suffocation atmosphere has given rise to a number of contentious issues and problems that are rapidly becoming a serious threat to the unity and solidarity of Pakistan.

On September 1, I introduced a resolution on the floor of the Sindh Assembly demanding that there should be a redistribution of powers among the provinces and the centre along the lines set out in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution. This should have marked a new beginning for us. My intention was to throw the issue open to debate in this elected forum and to show how we have deviated from the path chosen for us by our founding fathers. Instead, by opposing my resolution, seeking the implementation of the promise contained in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution, the Peoples' Party and the Muslim League have opened a new and particularly dark chapter in the history of this House. The 1940 Pakistan Resolution was adopted and passed by this very Assembly in 1943 by means of a resolution moved by G.M. Syed. It is, therefore, the undeniable duty of this Assembly to safeguard and defend the principles enshrined in this resolution.

Unfortunately, the present members of the Sindh Assembly are oblivious to the fact that by opposing my resolution they are doing immeasurable damage to the history of this House. By opposing the principles laid out in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution they are disowning the struggle of Sindhis for Pakistan and are distancing themselves from the decisive and heroic role played by this House in that struggle.

The fact that the Peoples' Party is opposing the 1940 Resolution comes as no great surprise. They worship at the alter of power. Grabbing power at all costs is their creed, their sole purpose for existing. Their survival depends upon it. They can, therefore, never be genuine and sincere spokesmen for Sindh and have habitually sacrificed the interests of Sindh for the sake of obtaining power. Despite their dubious facade of Sindhi 'nationalism' and the crocodile tears they shed for Sindh when they are out of power, they have never really succeeded in convincing anyone of their pro-Sindhi credentials. The opposition of the Muslim League to the 1940 Pakistan Resolution, though just as predictable and expected, is far more difficult to justify. It is, after all, their own brainchild. It is their own creation. How tragic it is that they should be so willing and eager to sacrifice their historic commitments to serve narrow short term interests. If the principles contained in the 1940 Resolution have become unacceptable to the Muslim League, then they should be honest enough to categorically state that they disown the Quaid-e-Azam and recognise only Nawaz Sharif as their leader.

Why is everyone so afraid of the 1940 Pakistan Resolution? After all, it is the document upon which the creation of Pakistan was based. So how can anything contained therein be a threat to Pakistan? But the sad fact is that the Pakistan of today is not the Pakistan envisaged by our founding fathers. The successors of the Quaid-e-Azam have perverted and distorted the very essence of Pakistan. It is apparent from the 1940 Resolution that our founding fathers intended Pakistan to be a decentralised state. This resolution guarantees that the constituent units in Pakistan, i.e. the provinces, shall be 'autonomous and sovereign'. These are very meaningful, poignant words. If the provinces are to be genuinely autonomous and sovereign then there is no room whatsoever for a highly centralised system and, in particular, the provinces must have full control of their economies, including complete powers to levy and collect taxes. Autonomy and sovereignty cannot possibly lead us down the path we are travelling along at present. It can only show us the way to decentralisation and total provincial autonomy. This is the only logical conclusion that can be drawn from the 1940 Pakistan Resolution.

Whenever one talks of the 1940 Resolution, the opponents of provincial autonomy counter by arguing that the 1946 Delhi Resolution overrides the 1940 Pakistan resolution. This is a futile attempt to distort facts and dilute the case for decentralisation. The 1940 Resolution can be divided into two parts. The first stated that the north-western and eastern zones of India in which Muslims were in a majority were to become independent states. The 1946 Delhi Resolution sought to amend this to the extent that instead of having two separate independent states, one in the north-western zone and one in the eastern zone, there would be one united Pakistan comprised of the two zones. The 1946 Delhi Resolution does not in anyway alter, amend or cancel the pledge contained in the second part of the 1940 Resolution that the constituent units within the framework of Pakistan shall be 'autonomous and sovereign'. The 1946 Delhi Resolution contains absolutely no evidence to suggest that our founding fathers had abandoned the belief, expressed in the 1940 Resolution, that a decentralised system would be most suitable for Pakistan. On the

contrary, the 1946 Delhi Resolution contains the following paragraph:

“Whereas soon after the introduction by the British of the policy of setting up political institutions in India on the lines of western democracies based on majority rule, which meant that the majority of one nation or society could impose its will on another nation or society in spite of their opposition, was amply demonstrated during the two and a half year regime of Congress governments in Hindu majority provinces under the Government of India Act 1935, when the Muslims were subjected to untold harassment and oppression, as a result of which they were convinced of the futility and ineffectiveness of the so-called safeguards provided in the Constitution and Instrument of Instructions to the Governors and were driven to the irresistible conclusion that in a United Indian Federation, if established, even majority provinces would meet with no better fate and their interests could never be adequately protected against the perpetually Hindu majority at the centre.”

This paragraph of the 1946 Delhi Resolution emphasises four main points: Firstly, that no nation, even if it is in a majority, has the right to impose its will upon another nation. Secondly, that a federal system gives no protection to the provinces from the centre despite the safeguards built into the constitution. Thirdly, that a strong centre is oppressive to the minority areas. And fourthly, that the hegemony of any one nation is intolerable. So, far from setting aside or cancelling the promise of ‘autonomy and sovereignty’ for the provinces, it further strengthens the case for decentralisation.

Besides, while the 1940 Pakistan Resolution was passed by the general body of the Muslim League, the 1946 Delhi Resolution was passed only by the Muslim League’s Parliamentary Party. It cannot, therefore, be said to have any moral ascendancy over the 1940 Pakistan Resolution since the Parliamentary Party lacks the authority to override the decisions of the general body. Moreover, the 1946 Delhi Resolution was never adopted by any assembly the way the 1940 Resolution was adopted by the Sindh Assembly in 1943, giving it further legitimacy.

Nevertheless, my resolution demanding provincial autonomy in accordance with the 1940 Pakistan Resolution is facing formidable opposition in the Sindh Assembly from all quarters. The Peoples’ Party and Muslim League MPA’s are going out of their way to prevent me from completing my speech on this vital issue which I began on September 1. They indulge in filibuster, dilatory tactics, they deliberately stay away from the House so that the quorum requirements are not met and they generally disrupt the proceedings with their customary hooliganism so that I may be denied the opportunity to discuss this matter on the floor of the House. Why are they so afraid of debate? Is it not the democratic way to arrive at a consensus through debate and discussion? But their lust for power and narrow political interests demand that they ride rough-shod not just over the interests of Sindh but also every norm and custom of democracy and decent conduct. How tragic it is that the people of Sindh have placed their destiny in the hands of such self-serving psychopaths who lack any sense of duty and history. These self-styled leaders of Sindh have shamelessly betrayed Sindh. They have lost all moral authority to sit in the Sindh Assembly. It is only fitting now that the Sindh Assembly should be dissolved. These charlatans must be sent home so that the people of Sindh have a chance to elect new representatives who are honestly and sincerely identified with the cause of Sindh. It is time for the people of

Sindh to do some house cleaning.

A few days ago the people of East Timor voted for freedom in a referendum. The ecstasy of liberty was altogether too apparent on the faces of the youths as they celebrated in the streets in the wake of this referendum. Some of the republics of the former Soviet Union are struggling to survive, yet they bask in the glow of their hard earned independence. Sindh is not demanding independence from Pakistan. There is nothing contained in either my resolution presented in the Sindh Assembly on September 1 or in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution that can threaten the unity of Pakistan. But is it too much to ask that the social contract that united the nations comprising Pakistan be fully honoured? Must we stand by as idle spectators or fuel the fires that are rapidly destroying all the hopes that we carried with us when we entered this union in 1947? I feel it is not too late to salvage hope. It is not too late to make a fresh start. The resolution I have presented in the Sindh Assembly is a positive step in that direction. I leave it to each MPA's conscience and his sense of duty and history whether he wishes to support or oppose my resolution. But the people of Sindh must keep an eye on what is happening in the Sindh Assembly on this issue. Whether the Sindh Assembly passes or rejects my resolution, either way the repercussions will be significant and far-reaching. After all, no one has forgotten that the Bengalis fought for Bangladesh only after the Six Points demand was rejected.

THE GENERAL ELECTION CARNIVAL

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', 2002

A General Election has become a very sad event in the life of this country. An appeal on the part of the political elite to the electorate and the exercise of democratic responsibility by the electorate through direct adult franchise should, ideally, be an invigorating and revitalising process in which new leaders with new ideas, fresh vision and sound morals rise to the top while old, bad blood is let out. But a Pakistani General Election has become a very different kind of circus altogether, particularly since the Zia days. It brings out all that is infamous and notorious about politicians and lays bare their true colors and moral cankers and warts for all to see with tragic clarity. If only they devoted the same zeal and effort to serving the nation as they do to getting elected, we would all be so much better off.

As soon as President Perwaiz Musharraf outlined the schedule for a General Election to be held in October 2002 in his 14th August speech last year, a palpable current ran through the political atmosphere and an all too familiar stench permeated through the political landscape of Pakistan. The actors on the political stage, along with those who think they are actors on the political stage, are running helter skelter to jostle for pole position in the upcoming electoral race as if their lives depend upon it. For some, of course, their lives do depend upon winning an election, because for them there is no life outside the corridors of power. As the elections draw closer, their frenzy will be whipped up to something reminiscent of feeding time at the zoo. But in all this mindless commotion, truth, honesty, sincerity and the concept of service to the people are totally lost. Politicians have developed a remarkable ability to change colors more rapidly than a chameleon. To them political ethics, honesty and sincerity to the people and a cause are no more than a laughable, archaic and unnecessary anchorage which cannot be allowed to stand in the way of winning at the polls. The following two examples perfectly illustrate this point.

A former member of the dissolved Sindh Assembly seemingly experienced no moral conflict in recently issuing a press statement blatantly declaring that he would support either the Pakistan People's Party or the newly formed Sindh Democratic Alliance depending solely upon which of the two succeeds in winning the blessings of President Perwaiz Musharraf, implying that their respective political programs and the

stand taken by them on various important issues was of secondary or no interest to him compared to the political patronage of the government. We all know that sycophancy and pandering to the power elite has long ago been perfected into an art form in Pakistan, but normally at least some veil of honour is maintained as a face-saver. However, this no longer seems necessary given the urgency of a General Election looming over the horizon.

Another member of the dissolved Sindh Assembly has changed political affiliations thrice in the last three years and is all set to make another long jump soon. Ever since his entry into politics at a relatively young age, he was a member of our party, the Sindh National Front. But when his elder cousin, who was elected to the Sindh Assembly in 1997, passed away in 1999, this budding, aspiring chameleon saw the wisdom of ditching the SNF to join the ruling PML(N) to win the bye-election from the constituency which fell vacant due to his cousin's death. The fact that the manifestoes of the SNF and PML(N) could not possibly be more different from each other on many core issues was apparently no source of discomfort to him. Then when Nawaz Sharif fell upon hard times and was sent packing into a political wilderness, this gentleman felt no qualms in jumping ship again to climb aboard the PML (Humkhiyal) bandwagon in the vain expectation of the formation of a National Government. Having realised the emptiness of the promises of power made to the Humkhiyal lot by the military government, he is now anxiously exploring ways to climb into bed with the Peoples' Party.

It is not uncommon for politicians in developed countries to switch loyalties as well, but that usually happens due to differences over matters of principle or policies of public importance, not just to be on the winning or powerful side to acquire personal benefits, as is the case here. Such political mercenaries who lack any trace of moral values and principles, who have no backbone and who have turned politics a source of livelihood for themselves have not only brought politics into disrepute but have also caused serious harm to this country. These are the hollow men, the sort of people who have no ideology or vision and are sustained only by an insatiable lust for power and self-aggrandisement. Power, in itself, is not an evil thing. If it is put to good use it can be a creative and dynamic force. But what creativity or dynamism can one possibly expect from these mercenaries who lack any ideas and do not even adequately understand the issues at hand? What can be the nature of any government comprised of such individuals? These people deliberately distance themselves from ideas and ideology and never take a meaningful, firm stand on important issues out of fear that doing so might become a cumbersome handicap in their quest for power. Instead of being identified with any clear ideology or belief, they prefer to float in limbo and surreptitiously mould themselves to the requirements of the moment with the breathtaking skill of contortionists.

During the last caretaker period, from November 1996 till February 1997, when my father was the caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh, both he and I never ceased to be amazed how some people, who had opposed us tooth and nail right until November 1996, used to come and sit before us with perfectly straight faces and claim to have been our humble and obedient servants all along since the dawn of time. It was a pitiful spectacle, to say the very least. They had a two-fold objective in mind: firstly, to get into favour with the ruling party to acquire personal benefits and, secondly, to have the support of the Chief Minister in their electoral contests so that they could misuse

and manipulate the administration to win by any means. They were all very disappointed when they saw that we were not prepared to let mercenaries creep into our party.

In a correct and disciplined democratic practice, it is the responsibility of political parties to eradicate such antics by shady politicians by denying them accommodation. But our political parties are not so discerning. The parties and mercenaries have fully gauged each other's depths and since neither are encouraged by any ideology or sense of right and wrong, their marriages, just like their divorces, are made in opportunist heaven. This has already started happening, as the floating, unallied prospective candidates who form the inner core of the mercenary brigade have started making mad dashes to various political parties depending upon their assessment of who is likely to win the October elections. There is no discussion of the problems facing the people. There is no debate over policy or manifestoes. There is only a frantic stampede to get hitched up with the side most likely to win, which is likely to intensify in the days to come. The consequence of all this is that undesirable people of woefully low calibre and no preparation or sense of responsibility get elected, the unavoidable outcome of which is collective degeneration and ruin.

This military government took upon itself the task of purging politics and government from all evils and afflictions and initially made some encouraging sounds in this regard. But of late that objective seems to have fallen off the agenda somewhere along the road. Not only has the grip been loosened around those who have looted and plundered and led the country to ruin due to their incompetence, but instead they are now actively and rapidly being rehabilitated. These are the very type of individuals this government had vowed to target and eliminate from the political scene. But an eager willingness on their part to tow the government line has had a miraculous cleansing effect on them in which all their sins of the past have been rinsed and forgotten.

This has not only tarnished the image of the government and crippled its writ, but has cast a dark shadow of doubt over the purpose and meaning of the upcoming General Elections. The Government will have to ensure that the October General Election is not an exercise in futility, which it most certainly will be if the same old culprits find their way back into the Assemblies. The whole point of these elections, as indeed the primary justification for the 12th October 1999 military takeover, was to cleanup politics and government by eliminating the corrupt and perverting elements and to ensure, to whatever extent possible under the law, that clean, educated and honest people get elected. How can this be achieved now when, instead of sweeping undesirable elements out of politics, the government itself is harbouring a motley bunch of well known, proven turncoats and time-servers? Instead of burying the nuisance of political mercenaries, the government is breathing new life into them by backing and promoting them, thereby facilitating their re-entry into politics and power.

The electoral reforms announced by the government are a step in the right direction. However this government has a poor record with regard to following up its words with deeds. Despite being a military government, it appears to be inexplicably vulnerable to political pressure. In the face of pressure, they backed down on the General Sales tax issue and their drive to disarm the citizens and collect weapons from them hit the doldrums right at the start and never actually got off the ground in Balochistan or the Northern Tribal Areas in the face of strong opposition. Now that they are increasingly coming under fire for announcing that all candidates will be required to have a B.A. degree, the President has already gone on record as having said that this requirement

may be scraped. Despite all their moral and ethical shortcomings, one can only marvel at the strength of the political mercenaries. There must be some truth in the old saying that the world belongs to the mediocrities. This B.A. degree requirement is hardly a hundred percent, airtight way to filter out the bad seeds from the Assemblies. But at least it is a positive measure and will eliminate a great number of those who go to sleep in the Assemblies because they have no clue as to what is going on in the proceedings. One can only hope that the government will have the conviction of its views to implement these electoral reforms and will not once again back down under pressure.

If the past is an accurate guide, then it is fair to surmise that the newly elected Government/Assemblies will not last more than two years. And then what? We are rapidly running out of options. The best we can do at this stage is to ensure that the right type of people get elected in October, who are up to the task of understanding and solving problems, rather than being obsessed with feathering their own nests. However, even these electoral reforms may not be enough to achieve this. The cancer has spread so wide that we need to plunge the knife in deeper and cut with surgical precision and skill. Without such drastic action, we will go full circle and be back to where we are now, or even worse, before anyone can say 'doctrine of necessity'.

THE DOCTRINE OF 'REGIME CHANGE'

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', April 14, 2003

The doctrine of regime change is a new and novel advance made by the United States of America in the history of modern day international relations, aimed at openly advocating and forcibly bringing about a change in the government of sovereign and independent states through the medium of coercive external military intervention and Iraq has been made the first target of this dubious doctrine. Notwithstanding the heavy sanctions imposed upon Iraq by the United Nations in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War and the no-fly zones in its northern and southern regions, Iraq remains a sovereign and independent state and is recognised as such by the United Nations. Therefore, not even the Security Council has the authority under the UN Charter and International Law to interfere in Iraq's internal matters, such as the right of self-determination of the Iraqi people. When the United States intervened in Yugoslavia, American policy makers in Washington DC went to great lengths to emphasise that the intervention was aimed not at regime change but to bring certain war criminals to justice under International Law. That is why the United States strived for the establishment of war crime tribunals before going in to Yugoslavia. But in Iraq, all pretences have been shed. There has been no talk of war crimes or trials under International Law. Only the single-minded purpose of removing the Saddam regime from power underlies the whole operation against Iraq.

According to Prof. Robert Jarvis of the Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, the regime change doctrine is a natural extension of the US policy of the old days, when the US regularly targeted world leaders for assassination with the help of the CIA. In the 1970's the US renounced the assassination of world leaders as a valid, legitimate instrument of foreign policy. George W. Bush's decision to go after Osama bin Laden seemed to mark a renunciation of the prior US renunciation, though it can be argued that Osama bin Laden is not a head of state. But Saddam Hussain is, and targeting him and his administration for regime change amounts to gunboat diplomacy in its most blatant and repugnant form and using colorful phrases like 'targets of opportunity' instead of assassination can not provide cover or justification under International Law.

The American invasion of Iraq relies primarily upon two arguments for legitimacy:

the need to disarm Iraq and destroy its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction and the need to liberate the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussain. Based on the principles of International Law and the empirical evidence emerging from Iraq since the US invasion commenced on 19 March, there seems to be no valid justification for regime change in Iraq on either of these grounds. Thus far, all debate at the UN has focused on disarming Iraq and destroying weapons of mass destruction. The issue of regime change has neither been debated nor sanctioned by the Security Council. The obvious answer to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is not regime change but the destruction of these weapons under the authority of Security Council resolutions.

The Bush Administration claims that the legal effect of UN Security Council Resolutions 678, 687 and 1441, read together, is to authorize a pre-emptive military strike against Iraq. It is hard to imagine how resolutions aimed at collective action under the umbrella of the Security Council can authorise individual member states to initiate military action on their own. Resolution 678 authorised member states to “use all necessary means” to obtain the compliance of Iraq to UN weapons inspection requirements by 15 January, 1991. The failure of Iraq to comply within the set deadline resulted in joint military action against it. This resolution was time-specific and can not be dragged out every time someone wants to go to war with Iraq. Resolution 687 called for a ceasefire to the 1991 Gulf War and placed certain sanctions and obligations on Iraq. Instead of authorising another war on Iraq, this resolution guarantees the ‘inviolability of the above mentioned (Iraq-Kuwait) international boundary.’ Resolution 1441, while reaffirming the commitment of member states to the ‘sovereignty and territorial integrity’ of Iraq, threatens Iraq with ‘serious consequences’ if weapons inspection requirements are not fulfilled, without specifying what these serious consequences would be or setting any deadlines. It goes on to state that the Security Council decides to ‘remain seized of the matter’, meaning that any necessary decisions regarding further action against Iraq in the event of its continued non-compliance with weapons inspection requirements would be taken by the Security Council. Thus, far from authorising individual member states to bring about a regime change in Iraq, these resolutions do not even authorise them to disarm Iraq or to seek out and destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction without the cover of the Security Council.

The American argument for single-handedly disarming Iraq without the backing of the United Nations is flawed and riddled with complications. Firstly there is the issue of a comprehensive lack of concrete evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, even after months and years of intensive UN inspections. Secondly, an act of forcibly disarming a sovereign and independent state due to a perceived or potential security threat amounts to anticipatory self-defence or pre-emptive strike. International Law in general and the UN Charter specifically bar pre-emptive military strikes. In authorising a military action against Iraq in 1991 under Resolution 678, the Security Council did not resort to the anticipatory self-defence argument but instead urged member states to ensure Iraq’s compliance with the weapons inspection obligations placed upon it by the UN. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter permits use of force only in self-defense or as authorised by the UN under article 42. A member state, acting under Article 51 may use force if ‘an armed attack occurs’ against it. In other words, an armed attack must occur before the right of self-defence may be invoked. This clearly precludes any use of force in anticipatory self-

defence or pre-emptive strikes against potential security threats. It is also significant to note that collective defence organisations, such as NATO, which have sprung up under Article 51, also allow for defensive action against an actual armed attack only and bar the notion of pre-emptive strikes. That is why, during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the US did not invoke its right of anticipatory self-defence, fearing that the Soviet Union would retaliate with similar counter-action against US missile installations in Europe. Today, in the unipolar New World Order, the United States is no longer confronted with such awkward situations and can freely ride roughshod over laws and conventions in pursuit of its perceived national interests.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2132, passed in 1965, states that 'no state shall organise, assist, foment, finance, incite or tolerate subversive, terrorist or armed activities directed towards the violent overthrow of the regime of another state, or interfere in civil strife in another state.' This principle has been repeatedly confirmed in numerous subsequent UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and also by the International Court of Justice in *Nicaragua v USA*, 1986. The court rejected the US argument of collective defence and held that the US had violated International Law by aiding contra rebels in Nicaragua. Whereas providing aid to indigenous insurgencies and national liberation movements remains a gray area in International Law and a case can arguably be made for that, on moral and political if not strictly legal grounds, there has been no such popular uprising in Iraq against the Saddam regime, even after the US invasion of Iraq, that could possibly confuse the issue. A handful of excited people flocking around American aid vehicles carrying rations of food and water does not amount to a popular uprising.

Even if, for the sake of argument, we concede that the United States has the authority to disarm Iraq, although there seems to be not a shred of evidence of nuclear or biological weapons in sight, under which canon of law can the United States claim any legal, moral, constitutional or political right to effect a regime change in Iraq and impose a puppet administration upon the Iraqi people, that would be committed to towing the American line rather than attending to Iraqi national interests? Disarmament does not have to mean regime change. These two things are not in any way inter-dependent upon one another.

The right of self-determination is enshrined as a basic principle of International Law. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the primary criteria for determining the legitimacy of any government is the 'will of the people.' The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been ratified by the United States, recognises self-determination as a human right and declares that under this basic right people may 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.' In 1974, in defining aggression, the UN General Assembly determined that it is 'the duty of states not to use armed force to deprive peoples of their right to self-determination,' specifying that a violation of this provision may be deemed to be an international crime. Speaking at a symposium organised by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in October 2002, Prof. Gerrard Bradley of the Notre Dame University School of Law commented that 'an attack on Iraq to avenge past injustices perpetrated by Saddam and his regime, to punish Iraq for its alleged complicity in the 9/11 attacks upon New York and Washington, or to subjugate the Iraqi nation, or just for the sake of regime change, would, in my judgment, be wrong.'

All considerations and concerns regarding the observation of international norms, rules and customs is based upon the presumption of a willing acquiescence on the part of states to be a part of, and uphold, the international system established in the post World War II period. The United States, however, has adopted the course of unilateral action in deliberate violation of International Law. The requirements and obligations of International Law hold no meaning whatsoever in such a Hobbesian environment and only narrow self-interests rule supreme. The United States is hell bent upon removing the Saddam regime from power. There are rumors of a disagreement between US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair over the constitution of a post Saddam setup in Iraq and the role of the UN in it. There is some talk of installing US retired Lt. General Jay Garner as an interim head of government in Baghdad. There is also talk of importing a disreputable Iraqi Karzai-like figurehead. But in all this commotion, nothing more than formal lip service is being paid to the Iraqi peoples' right of self-determination, which is likely to be the greatest casualty of a forced regime change in Iraq in the long run.

KALABAGH DAM AND FEUDALISM

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, December 20, 2003

S.M. Zakerya Kazmi (Kalabagh Dam Can Hardly Be Wished Away) and Rauf Nizamani (Sindh’s Politics Of Water) have blamed everything from feudalism to the rural caste system and tribalism in Sindh for creating obstructions against the implementation of the Kalabagh Dam project (Encounters, Dawn, 13.12.03). They have, however, deliberately closed their eyes to the genuine apprehensions of Sindhis regarding this project. I have heard feudalism being held responsible for everything from solar storms to disease and pestilence, but this one took even me by surprise.

Has it escaped the notice of these two gentlemen that virtually all political parties in Sindh, big or small, despite severe political differences, have united in opposition against Kalabagh Dam? Only some leaders of the ruling Muslim League have been talking in favour of the dam, but even they are too embarrassed to do so in public. Whereas some of the parties opposing the dam may be headed by what they call ‘feudal lords’, a majority of the nationalist, left wing and religious parties as well as other non-political social organisations, like ADN, are headed by non-feudals who belong mostly to the middle class and are themselves in no way dependant upon agriculture. They would never serve the interests of waderas since their dislike of waderas is no less venomous than that of the authors of the above mentioned articles. But these men realise that an overwhelming majority of the poor haris of Sindh depend on agriculture for their survival and thus they raise their voice against Kalabagh Dam because this dam would break the back of the poor hari who earns his daily bread from the soil whereas the larger zamindars may be able to diversify and absorb losses to a much greater extent.

With what authority does Mr. Kazmi speak of the kacha area of Sindh? I am sure he has never set foot on kacha land. How can he possibly know of the plight of the people of the kacha? His ignorance on this subject is unmasked by his own comments; he claims that kacha land is government property but happens to be under the control of waderas. It amazes me that he is oblivious to the fact that vast tracts of privately owned land exist in the kacha that have been under legal private ownership since centuries. In addition to this, virtually every government has been granting land to landless haris in the kacha area. Consequently, millions of acres of land in the kacha is

now privately owned. Similarly, he claims that the feudals profit from the floods while the poor haris get no benefits from it. If he knew anything at all about zamindari, he would know that if the large landowner profits, so does the hari, and vice versa, since the whole system is based on a crop sharing formula. I can state from personal experience that some of our own haris in the kacha area have done so well for themselves that they have gone and purchased their own land and businesses in the pukka area. Incredibly, Mr. Kazmi even goes on to blame flooding for the scourge of dacoits in Sindh, instead of blaming the failure of the law enforcement agencies to cope with them.

He goes on to state that dams are necessary to store water for periods of drought. He says that if Kalabagh Dam had been constructed before the last monsoons, we could have averted any danger of drought for the next three years. Did he not learn in High School that water evaporates? Does he seriously believe that water from the last monsoons could have been stored in an open lake for three years? Annually, out of the 105 MAF available for irrigation purposes, over 25 MAF are lost due to evaporation and seepage. That is almost one-fourth. If we apply the same rate of wastage, the Kalabagh Dam reservoir would be losing almost one-fourth of its total storage capacity each year due to evaporation and seepage.

Kalabagh Dam, far from alleviating hardship in Sindh in instances of drought, would assume particularly menacing dimensions under drought conditions. If there is a shortage of water, then where would the water for storage come from? As things stand, there is not enough water to fill the reservoir at Kalabagh Dam, giving rise to apprehensions that the reservoir could only be filled by reducing the allocation of water to Sindh and Balochistan. Mr. Kazmi lets the cat out of the bag in his article by stating that the Indus has become a controlled waterway by virtue of the construction of barrages. In the event of a drought, Punjab takes its required amount of water from these barrages at the expense of the needs of Sindh, creating severe hardship in Sindh. And what about the downflow from Kotri Barrage which is essential to hold back the brackish sea water and prevent it from ruining the coastal agricultural lands of Badin and Thatta districts, not to mention the mangrove forests in the delta? Mr. Kazmi callously states that this downflow amount is fixed by IRSA. What he neglects to mention is that the amount of water to be released downstream of Kotri Barrage, agreed upon in the 1991 water accord, has never been honoured in the past and the construction of Kalabagh Dam would make it impossible to honour in the future.

Numerous barrages and canals have been built on the Indus, mainly for the benefit of Punjab and, like the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal, are being operated in blatant violation of agreed principles. Before that, even in years of comparatively less rainfall, Sindh hardly ever experienced a drought of the nature that has become a routine occurrence in the last few years. Mr. Kazmi wonders why Punjab would want to turn Sindh into a barren desert. Based upon past experiences there exists a vast chasm of trust between Punjab and the three smaller provinces and nothing has been done to bridge this chasm while a concerted effort has been launched to shove Kalabagh Dam down our throats.

If browbeating and hollow propaganda is the order of the day, then Mr. Kazmi's and Mr. Nizamani's articles might suffice. But if we are serious about finding a solution to avert disaster in the future without compromising the interests of any area of the country and at the same time foster and encourage harmony and trust among the

provinces, then its high time the likes of Mr. Kazmi and Mr. Nizamani made a sincere effort to find real causes and real solutions instead of hiding behind smokescreens and blaming feudalism for everything under the sun. Mr. Nizamani admits in his article that even the urban middle class have now resorted to settling their social, political and literary issues in feudal style jirgas. Are the feudals of rural Sindh to blame for that? Will he not open his eyes and see that this is symptomatic of the total collapse of the state machinery which has left behind a vacuum? The 'archaic social structures' that he holds responsible for everything that is evil are in fact fulfilling a valuable function in binding society together and solving problems. With the writ of state no where to be seen, if these archaic social structures were not there, society would degenerate into a state of complete and utter chaos. The way to deal with the problem is not to weaken these ancient social structures, leaving no safety net for society, but to strengthen and revitalise state authority and make it efficient and competent. Once that happens, all other 'archaic' systems will automatically vanish.

A CRIME AGAINST NATIONS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', January 25, 2004

There is a stigma attached to nationalism which 'nationalists' around the world have not been able to shake off. This stigma exists due to a deliberate confusion created by the anti-nationalist forces and vested interests who seek to discredit genuine nationalists. To clarify the position, it is necessary to draw a distinction between two types of nationalism. One type may be described as an aggressive nationalism while the other type may be referred to as a protective nationalism. The impetus for action and the nature of change brought about by these diametrically opposed ideologies is very different. Whereas aggressive nationalism is an ideology that readily lends itself to imperialist and fascist tendencies that seek to oppress and stifle, protective nationalism acts as a barrier against oppression and can be a fertile breeding ground for positive change leading to freedom and liberty.

The brilliant Oxford Don and philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin, wrote "The sense of belonging to a nation seems to me to be quite natural and not in itself to be condemned, or even criticized. But in its inflamed condition - my nation is better than yours, I know how the world should be shaped and you must yield because you do not, because you are inferior to me, because my nation is top and yours is far, far below mine and must offer itself as material to mine, which is the only nation entitled to create the best possible world - it is a form of pathological extremism which can lead, and has led, to unimaginable horrors." This bellicose and belligerent form of nationalism is aggressive nationalism and has thrown up the Hitlers, the Mussolinis and the colonial empires that history is riddled with. It is an extreme form of nation-worship that leads to suffering and subjugation and must be abhorred by any liberal who values the freedom of man.

What defines and indeed distinguishes protective nationalism from aggressive nationalism is the basic principle that whereas aggressive nationalism is a matter of ideology promoted by a militarily and materially advanced nation to hegemonise a less advanced and less powerful nation, protective nationalism is an attempt on the part of the less advanced nation to survive in the face of hegemonistic designs of the aggressor who seeks to obliterate its national identity. Protective nationalism is thrust upon nations by history and circumstances. It is the agonised throes of a nation as it

struggles to resist the current in an effort to stay afloat. These natural instincts for self-preservation are erroneously referred to as nationalism whereas it is, in fact, no more than a desperate struggle for the political, economic, social, cultural and territorial survival of a nation under siege. If the struggle is successful, the nationalists are hailed as revolutionaries and liberators. Statues and monuments are erected in their honour and boulevards are named after them. If the struggle fails, they are imprisoned and executed as traitors and terrorists. The process of recording history is highly subjective. The victor has his say while the voice of the vanquished is silenced.

Pakistan too has experienced protective nationalism in its relatively short history. The cessation of East Pakistan and the consequent birth of Bangladesh was a direct consequence of Bengali protective nationalism. They were pushed into a corner and forced to fight for their national and cultural survival, which in their view was impossible within the framework of Pakistan. Sindhi, Baloch and Pushtoon nationalism too has, at one point or another, been viewed as a threat to the state and treason cases have been filed against a number of nationalist political leaders. More recently, their brand of nationalism has been held responsible for impeding development with reference to Kalabagh Dam. The sad and frustrating part of all this is that no attempt whatsoever is made to understand the protective nationalism that is fermenting in Sindh, Balochistan and Frontier and the causes and circumstances that gave birth to it and the fears that sustain it continue to elude the grasp of those who seek to crush it. Preconceived, prefabricated and highly inappropriate solutions are applied that further aggravate the situation rather than repair the harm already done. Understanding requires more than a mere superficial knowledge of how things are. It implies an appreciation of why things are the way they are. Rather than understanding and addressing the motives, fears, hopes, ambitions and historical factors that generate ripples of nationalism, we prefer to gag all dissent and plaster over such ungainly, embarrassing and hard to deal with realities in order to give the appearance of a veneer of calm, no matter how unacceptable and distasteful it might be.

A good example of this is the way in which the Federal Government is insistently pushing ahead with the Kalabagh Dam project in the face of strong opposition in Sindh, Balochistan and Frontier, even though the provincial legislatures of these three provinces have passed resolutions against this project. Instead of trying to understand the apprehensions and causes of the objections to the dam and allaying these fears in a spirit of accommodation and trust, the Government seems to have adopted a highly provocative three-pronged strategy. Firstly, an all out attempt is being made to discredit the opponents of the dam by labelling them as feudal vested interests. Secondly, the political parties and representatives of the people have been distanced and isolated and the task of resolving the conflict and forging a consensus has been placed upon the shoulders of the civil service and technocrats, who have no nexus with the public and are thus incapable of swaying public opinion. The only way to resolve this deadlock is through political dialogue between political leaders from all four provinces, including nationalists, aided by technical experts and perhaps with the assistance of independent foreign experts to provide an impartial view. The President is right in believing that this issue has to be resolved soon but civil servants can not resolve this issue and if any agreement reached by them is imposed upon the nation, there could be serious trouble. Thirdly, the President has taken it upon himself to promote Kalabagh Dam at every forum instead of remaining impartial. This has only served to elevate the debate to a

higher level and further antagonise the opponents of the dam. Sensitive national issues require finesse and a deft touch. They can not be bulldozed or be stamped out under a heavy boot.

It has been my experience that those in power simply do not understand the problems of the three smaller provinces and continue to live in denial of their genuine and urgent needs. Their ignorance on matters of vital interest to the people of the three smaller provinces is astounding. During a recent visit to Lahore, a classmate of mine from Aitchison College whom I had not seen in over twenty-five years, and who now happens to be a power to be reckoned with in Punjabi politics, invited me for dinner with his family and some other mutual friends. The conversation inevitably steered itself to politics and I was telling him about the mess in Sindh compared to which Punjab seemed like an island of tranquility, development and stability. After listening to me patiently, my friend's wife finally spoke. "The solution seems quite obvious to me," she said. "A Punjabi man should be appointed Chief Minister of Sindh so that he can set things right for you." For a moment I was not sure I had heard her properly or whether she was serious or merely jesting. She was not jesting. This was not a careless remark from some insignificant, illiterate person. It came from an educated, responsible and knowledgeable member of a highly respected and powerful family. There followed a brief awkward silence. To break the tension, her husband joked "Why don't we get someone from Singapore?" I went a step further. "Why don't we hand the whole country back to the British?" I asked. "They seemed to have done such a marvellous job here in the past!" To be fair, I also had a rather pleasant meeting with an advisor to the Punjab Chief Minister who surprised me with his balanced approach and an understanding of the issues at hand. We need more people like him who realise that nationalists are not out to dismember the country but are merely protecting the vital interests of their regions. Alas, men of that ilk are few and far apart up north.

Pakistan is not a nation but a multi-national state, comprised of four nations that have been independent and sovereign in the past. Each nation possesses, in the words of Johann Gottfried Herder, a distinct 'center of gravity'. Multiple values and interests of each component nation, which are an essential, indeed objective, part of their identity, flowing inexorably from their past experiences, often produce a diversity of opinion and sometimes conflict. This cultural and national diversity, whether it be political, social or economic in nature, need not be perceived to be a threat to Pakistan. It can become our strength if we let it evolve and flourish. Variety and a difference of opinion unleash a dynamic process of creativity and progress, but the inescapable prerequisite for that is an atmosphere of mutual trust that can only be born of mutual respect. Protective nationalism surfaces in response to a threat. Eliminate the threat and nationalism loses its *raison d'etre*.

In Pakistan we have evolved a deep distrust of national diversity and cultures and we view competing interests as a threat to state interests. The nations comprising Pakistan have enough in common to coexist and cooperate to their mutual benefit with a healthy display of tolerance and accommodation, but problems arise when an attempt is made at an unnecessary artificial unification of cultural and national identities and interests to the extent of forging one all-encompassing identity at the expense of its component parts. This can not be done and can lead to serious trauma, as it already has in our history. Modern times demand a tolerant, pluralist approach. Smothering

the identity and vital interests of a nation to needlessly produce an absurd and meaningless monism of national culture is characteristic of imperialist impulses and is a crime against nations.

SHIFTING SOCIAL PARADIGMS

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, February 9, 2004

Our society is in the midst of a paradigmatic shift. The imperatives of ‘progress’ have brought with them western influences and values that often conflict with our traditional practices and principles. We find ourselves in a position where we are neither willing to fully embrace nor fully reject modern western values. Similarly, we can not bring ourselves to wholly give in to our traditional conservative customs and beliefs nor do we wish to shake lose from them. Our westernized values do not allow us to condone the confinement of women by *chadar and char-deevari* nor do our traditional values allow us to establish a permissive, western society. Consequently, we currently inhabit a social wilderness in the vast grey area somewhere between the two extremes. The fact that a large segment of our society in the rural areas is lagging far behind the urban centers in terms of development and enlightenment serves only to exacerbate the tension and conflict between these two sets of values giving rise to heated debate on issues like *karo-kari*, honour killings, etc.

I had the opportunity to attend a seminar on honour killings in Karachi recently. It was exactly as I had expected: Everyone came with preconceived notions and views based upon the distorted, thoroughly biased reports of the press and media. Without any real first hand knowledge of the issue, some of the participants proposed that the *jirga* system should be abolished while others felt that new laws against honour killings need to be enacted. As I listened to one absurd suggestion after another, I could not help but wonder how many of these people had actually set foot past the toll gates on the National Highway into interior Sindh, let alone have an in-depth knowledge of the subject on which they wished to present themselves as self-styled experts. Obviously, there can be no difference of opinion with these drawing room philosophers as far as the sanctity of human life and the discontinuation of archaic and medieval customs is concerned. But the question ‘What needs to be done?’ produces a dichotomy of views. We are talking about something as sensitive as social and cultural reform. We can not callously machete our way through historical, traditional values with reckless abandon.

Morality, social beliefs and cultural values can not be legislated or imposed by law. The history of legal systems around the world and the writings of eminent jurists

illustrate that at any given stage in the evolution of society laws reflect the values that are held supreme in that society. It is social values that dictate laws. Laws crystallise and emerge out of cultural norms and customs. But laws can not dictate social change. Whenever a law comes into conflict with or contradicts a widely observed social custom, it is invariably that conflicting law which becomes a casualty and is discarded by either lack of observance or, in extreme cases, is overthrown by means of revolution. This is what most people fail to understand and feel that every issue can be resolved by passing new laws. In 1976, the National Assembly passed a bill by which the sardari system was abolished. But it could not be implemented because it came far before its time and conflicted with prevailing cultural norms. The fact is that we do not need any new laws. Murder is already a crime in Pakistan. It is absurd to clamor for a law specifically banning the killing of women. In that vein, we would need to pass specific and separate laws prohibiting the killing of doctors, industrialists, lawyers, businessmen and every profession and segment of society. This would make a mockery of our legal system. The laws that exist on the books are quite adequate. We just need to implement them.

Modernisation and the evolution of a social conscience and morals is a natural process that all advanced western societies had to go through as well. There was a time in the United States of America when innocent men and women were accused of practicing witchcraft and were either drowned or burned at the stake in the now infamous Salem Witch Trials, which often had the sanction of state authority. Our authorities may turn a blind eye to instances of *karo-kari* and honour killings but at least they do not officially sanction them. But, like the United States of America, we too have to pass through this stage of social evolution. It is unavoidable. Perhaps the transformation of our society will not take as long as it did in the West since the path has already been blazed before us, but there are no shortcuts and we can only expect to expedite the process so much without distorting the natural forces of social change. Change will come but impetuous rashness can be counter-productive and can produce a whole new set of problems.

It is customary to hold the sardars, so called 'feudals' and the jirga system responsible for everything, from bird flu to sunspots. The sole sources of information for most urbanites are the press and media, who present sardars and jirgas in a completely convoluted and highly prejudiced image. For instance, an impression has been created that jirgas and sardars encourage honour killings. Nothing could be further from actual fact. When a *karo-kari* matter is brought to the attention of a sardar, there can be no question of anyone killing anyone after that point. Any sardar worth half his salt would ensure the security and safety of the accused at a neutral location before proceeding with a jirga in which, if the charges are sufficiently corroborated with evidence, monetary fines are imposed and the girl in question is handed back to her parents who are made to take a vow to protect her from all harm. Killings sometimes take place when a *karo-kari* matter is not brought to the sardar's attention and even then the sardar plays a pivotal role in the resolution of the matter. It is absurd to suggest that sardars themselves promote and encourage honour killings. Such sardars would not only lose face among their peers but also lose respect among their followers.

Of course there are always rotten apples in every barrel. There may be some sardars who pronounce distasteful rulings in jirgas, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Are there no hopeless quacks in the medical profession who cause the

death of far more patients than any jirga ever could? Are there no shyster lawyers in the legal profession? Are there no unscrupulous industrialists who exploit child labour? Have we already forgotten the judgment of the Anti-Terrorist Court in Lahore a few years ago which ruled that a man who had been found guilty of abducting young boys and brutally murdering them and then dissolving their bodies in a large vat of acid should suffer the same fate as his victims? Did we allow that one ruling to cast a shadow over the whole legal system, resulting in calls for the abolition of the judiciary? If these instances can be generally regarded as exceptions to the rule then why must all attention be focused on the narrow negative aspect of jirgas while the good they do is conveniently and summarily overlooked?

The fact of the matter is that the whole civic, administrative, judicial and law enforcement system in Pakistan has collapsed and there exists a vacuum of authority. People are left at the mercy of civil servants, police and judiciary that are either incompetent, uninterested or corrupt to the core and are incapable and unwilling to solve their problems. The people have no choice but to turn to the sardars, who provide instant relief. A few years ago, a serious feud between the Kalhora and Nareja tribes on the border of Khairpur and Larkana districts had made the area a no-go area for law enforcement agencies and had resulted in the loss of thirty-seven lives. The authorities were totally helpless to do anything about it and finally the SP Khairpur approached my father, Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, to resolve the conflict in a jirga. The jirga took place and the conflict which the authorities could not resolve in three or four years was resolved in three or four hours and peace restored in the area.

Whereas serious conflicts arising from matters relating to property, business dealings, blood feuds etc. are neglected by the authorities and drag on in courts for years, they are resolved within a matter of a few hours in jirgas to the satisfaction of the concerned parties. Why is this aspect neglected? If jirgas are banned, then what will become of the people who will once again be tossed at the mercy of a system that is not working? If disputes and feuds are not resolved quickly and effectively, that will only result in an increased number of killings and more law and order problems as people will be forced to take the law into their own hands. At the conclusion of the above mentioned seminar, a resolution was tabled against honour killings. Though I certainly abhor the taking of human life for any reason, I could not support this resolution because it went on to demand the abolition of the jirga system. The jirga system goes against all that my western education has taught me. But on some occasions a serious case surfaces which needs to be resolved quickly as lives are at stake. In such instances it becomes very difficult to turn people away. The only way to get rid of the jirga system is to revamp and revitalise the administrative, judicial and law enforcement system. Once that happens then jirgas and sardars will automatically become obsolete and redundant. But it can not be legislated out of existence as long as it is the sole safety net for the hapless and desperate common man.

It is the misfortune of the representatives of the traditional way of life, whether they be sardars, waderas or the so-called 'feudals', that they are fragmented and disunited and have failed thus far to collect on a common forum to face the ridiculous, indeed slanderous, allegations that are levelled against them and to promote their own values and customs. They are being attacked mercilessly from all directions, yet they have failed to put up a defence due to their unfortunate disunity. If this state of affairs does not change this disunity and fragmentation will be their undoing. This is no skin

off my nose since I hold no brief for either side. I have only said what needed to be said.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (May 27, 2004)

I wrote an article in this newspaper titled 'Shifting Social Paradigms' (Dawn, 9th February, 2004) in which I tried to emphasise the point that social change can not be legislated by law but can only be brought about by a process of social evolution and progress, which takes time. I tried to point out that laws reflect the values, customs and beliefs held supreme in society and that laws can not impose a certain morality upon society. Any attempt to do so is likely to exacerbate the situation and produce a whole new set of problems.

Not long ago, an honourable court ruled that the divorce decree issued by Balakh Sher Mahar to Shaista Almani was invalid since it had been procured under duress by tribal chiefs. Therefore, the court nullified the divorce decree and restored the marriage of Balakh Sher Mahar and Shaista Almani. This not only went against tribal and social customs but also against religious practice. Few, if any, paused to consider the ripple effect of this verdict. For many this was the end of the fairytale, the couple presumably destined to live happily ever after. But for those familiar with the tribal psyche, this merely marked the opening of Pandora's box.

On 21st May, 2004, virtually all Sindhi newspapers carried banner headlines reporting commencement of lethal hostilities between the Mahar and Almani tribes. On just the first day of this tribal feud, five innocent men have lost their lives, seven women were abducted, many people were injured, villages were set on fire and homes destroyed, large bands of heavily armed men roamed the highways and stopped and searched vehicles at will to seek out men of the opposing tribe and there were reports of many abductions. More trouble is on the way as heavily armed Mahars and Almanis from all over Sindh are collecting in Ghotki. The government has been forced to call in the Rangers and police from adjoining districts and set up hundreds of pickets all over the district. Life for the ordinary citizen of the area has become a living nightmare. This is just the beginning.

This is what happens when a misguided, foolish attempt is made to wipe out centuries old customs and conventions to appease the westernised sensibilities and perceptions of the Clifton Cavalry, who have become self appointed saviours of women all over Pakistan. Compared to the coverage reserved for the trials and tribulations of the star-crossed lovers and the frenzy of the press and media to claim credit for bringing the case to public attention, the press and media, apart from the Sindhi press, have paid only routine attention to the ongoing bloodshed in Ghotki. This is not surprising since the press and media generally pander to the urban elite who are not interested in such minor incidents as murder and abduction in remote rural Sindh as long as women have the right to marry according to their own choice regardless of the consequences.

There is undeniably a need to bring ancient tribal customs and beliefs in line with

progressive and modern perceptions of morality and justice, but this is not the way to do it. The process of evolving a modern, progressive morality can be somewhat expedited by greater emphasis on education and enlightenment but if it is rushed too much then the events unfolding in Ghotki today will become an everyday occurrence.

Another honourable court recently saw it fit to ban the settlement of disputes in tribal jirgas. Time will, no doubt, prove that this verdict too will open up a new can of worms. In the past not a single tribal dispute of this nature or severity has ever been settled in court. Having clipped the wings of tribal chiefs, it will be interesting to see whether the legal and administrative machinery can cope with the crisis brewing in Ghotki and whether a durable peace can be restored without resort to the ancient tribal ways. I, for one, have my doubts. But for the sake of all involved and the people of Ghotki in general, I hope sanity prevails.

AMEER BHUTTO
Larkana



LETTER
(May 29, 2004)

This refers to the article 'Shifting Social Paradigms' (February 9) and the letter 'Cost of Disregarding Social Customs' (May 27) by Ameer Bukhsh Bhutto.

Mr. Bhutto emphasizes that "laws crystallise and emerge out of cultural norms and customs" and that "laws cannot dictate social change". The problem at hand is that there is no one society in Pakistan or for that matter in Sindh. Not only is there a stark contrast between urban and rural Sindh, but even in the urban areas there is a great difference between what is considered acceptable from locality to locality. One would not expect what is normal in Karachi's Orangi to hold in Defence. The problem is that our laws have emerged from cultural norms and customs of some of the people, but unfortunately not all of them.

Tribal customs were never practiced by those living in urban British India or in Mughal India for that matter. For most urban Pakistanis, a jirga, a sardar, tribal loyalty, etc., are antiquated notions: something found in history books rather than modern society. The same held true of their grandparents. So what does the government do when the rural society's norms appear to be centuries behind its urban contemporary? Should the writ of urban law 'callously machete its way through historical, traditional values with reckless abandon' or should it leave the rural areas to catch up in its own time? It appears to me that some customs have been unaffected through 1,200 years of Islamic influence. Should we wait some more? Should we codify a dual system, allowing tribal customs to prevail in matters concerning tribal people? In that case what happens if an individual belonging to a tribe decides to appeal to a court instead? Hand him or her back to the tribe? What happens if an urban citizen happens to raise the ire of someone from a tribe? Do I have to submit myself before an authority I do not recognise?

Mr. Bhutto is sympathetic to the so-called 'feudals', who are being constantly attacked

in the press. So, why is it that the much maligned sardars, most of whom are western educated, have been unable to wield their considerable influence and convince their tribesmen to accept that times have changed and to abandon the jirga system? Why not abandon the old system if the new one is better? The tribes in Arabia could abandon not only their old ways, values and customs but their religions and their gods. Is it too much to ask for people who live in a country to follow its laws whether they like them or not?

Mr. Bhutto is right when he says that murder has always been a crime in Pakistan and that we do not need to pass special laws for the protection of women. He is also right when he says that “the only way to get rid of the jirga system is to revamp and revitalise the administrative, judicial and law-enforcement system”. However, since most of the sardars sit in our provincial and national legislatures, it seems peculiar to me that this state of affairs still continues. How can they sit on two bodies that are antithetical in nature? How can they promote administrative, judicial and law-enforcement system and still maintain the tribal system?

Mr. Bhutto writes of the Mahar and Almani tribesmen collecting in Ghotki. Why haven't the leaders of these tribes told their people to lay down their arms and submit themselves to the law of the land? Why is it that if the law authorities were to try to arrest the leaders involved in the fighting, they would fail? Why have the sardars been unable to prove 'drawing-room philosophers' like me wrong by implementing imaginative solutions to these problems rather than carrying on with centuries old customs?

Mr. Bhutto is right when he suggests that education is the way to progress. Unfortunately, that isn't going to happen soon either. How many lives will be lost until this social evolution takes place and tribal customs catch up with those of their urban contemporaries?

Mueed Peerbhoy
Kingston, Ontario,
Canada



LETTER
(May 30, 2004)

This concerns the letter of Mr. Ameer Buksh Bhutto “Cost of Disregarding Social Customs” (May 27). Many of his arguments are well taken and one can understand his stance concerning laws and regulations of the country, which curb tribal authority and go against socially entrained customs. This too especially since a large portion of our society till today remains affiliated with one social group or another and likely holds his viewpoint.

However, one cannot help but oppose some of his contentions. He belittles the importance of law and the constitution by saying that “social change cannot be legislated by law” and “laws cannot impose a certain morality on society”. These are not the sole purposes of law in the first place. The law is there to ensure a viable society. In our case our founding fathers had envisioned a society based on equality, freedom and

justice for all and our constitution in its spirit respects these principles. Tribal rules and regulations on the other hand are customs handed down the generations which in the days gone by were enacted to preserve the tribe alone. By virtue of this fact alone they are obsolete and the sooner they are done away with the better.

The situations which arise when a judgment is passed by a court of the land against the will of the tribe, such as the reported incidents in Ghotki, are more the doing of tribal leaders who cannot see their power over the people wane. Their sense of entitlement would vanish if their subjects were to demand their constitutional right of equality with them and thus they continue to nurture the tribal structure. This keeps them in power. Rather than urging the rest of the country to give up the rule of law, one should convince the rulers and leaders of tribes to break from tradition and stop using their 'subjects' to kill, abduct and wage war on their behalf.

Education and enlightenment are necessary. But it is also vital that equality and justice be provided to each citizen via a standard law throughout the country. Any system of jirgas that sanctify rape to preserve the 'honour' of a tribe is faulty and any tribal council which sanctifies 'honour killings' is wrong. This must cease immediately without waiting for social change to come from within which may take decades (if at all).

Mubashar Khan
Indianapolis, IN,
USA



LETTER
(May 30, 2004)

I am writing these lines in response to Ameer Buksh Bhutto's letter of May 27. Mr. Bhutto must know that racial segregation in schools all over America was eliminated by a court order. Change from enlightenment and education does happen but the cost may be many lives. It is naive to wait for such a change. The Indian tradition of sati was also eliminated by the passage of a law. People changed their attitudes later.

Raza Haque
Jackson, Michigan,
USA



LETTER
(June 3, 2004)

I am writing in response to Mr. Mueed Peerbhoy's letter (Dawn, 29.5.2004).

I never suggested in my article or in my letter to the editor that the writ of law should leave the rural areas to catch up in their own time. To the contrary I emphasised

that education and enlightenment were needed to transform the tribal psyche. That is the effective and durable long term solution rather than seeking to alter people's behaviour at gunpoint. Laws can be implemented much more effectively when people understand and accept them. You cannot coerce someone into accepting a law. As I said in my article, that will only give rise to a fresh set of problems. Does Mr. Peerbhoy feel that the writ of law can be effective only if it flows from the barrel of a gun rather than through education and enlightenment?

People get impatient when they see the world galloping ahead while a majority of our society remains embroiled in issues like blood feuds and honour killings. But what have we done to bring development and progress to the rural areas that we can now allow ourselves the luxury of impatience? In Sindh we currently spend thirteen billion rupees annually on the police alone, while we spend only three billion rupees on education. This being the case, it should come as no surprise to anyone that we lag far behind our perception of where we should be.

Mr. Peerbhoy questions the dual participation of sardars and feudals in the political system as well as the tribal setup, which he feels are antithetical to each other. Tribal system exists by default to fill a vacuum. If it did not exist there would be chaos and anarchy as state institutions are not up to the task of effectively fulfilling their responsibilities. Once the organs of state are revitalised and begin functioning as they should then resort to ancient ways and institutions will automatically become redundant. Mr. Peerbhoy asks why the sardars do not use their influence to convince tribesmen to accept change? He also wants to know why the tribal chiefs in Ghotki do not intervene to restore peace? You can not have it both ways; on the one hand you want the writ of law to prevail exclusively and at all cost, but on the other hand you want tribal chiefs to come to your rescue every time a situation comes up which the state can not get a grip on.

If Mr. Peerbhoy were in Ghotki instead of Ontario, Canada, he would know that the tribal chiefs in Ghotki are playing an instrumental role in restoring peace to the area and in settling the dispute, while all state agencies stand on the sidelines without a clue. He would also know that many of the educated and enlightened tribal chiefs have instituted fundamental changes with regard to how disputes are settled in their tribes. They have banned the use of women as currency to be paid in disputes as fines. The killing of men and women in karo-kari cases, as redemption of honour, is a practice that has been discontinued in most tribes since a long time. Virtually all karo-kari related killings that still occur do so only when the matter is not brought to the attention of the tribal chief. Forced marriages and forced divorces, in most tribes, are things of the past. But one does not hear about these positive changes since the press and media prefer to concentrate on isolated incidents that provide fodder for the Clifton Cavalry.

Educated tribal chiefs are indeed playing their role in bringing about a real change and the change is palpable. But I cannot, in all fairness, expect Mr. Peerbhoy to know any of this while sitting in Ontario when even most of the Clifton Cavalry, sitting on our own shores, know nothing about the tribal system or how it is changing and evolving. I wonder how many of them have actually seen a tribal chief settle an important tribal matter? How many of those who are calling for the banning of jirgas have actually attended a jirga and seen what happens in it? It's like calling for the abrogation of the constitution without having a clue about what is in it. In any case, for all those opposed to jirgas, I would advise them to ask President Musharraf to

settle the Wana issue without the aid of a tribal jirga. Let's see what happens then.

AMEER BHUTTO

Larkana



LETTER

(June 5, 2004)

I am pleased to see that my article and letter have sparked off a lively debate on the issue of social customs and the law. The latest critiques of my views come in the form of letters from Mr. Mubashar Khan from Indianapolis and Mr. Raza Haque from Jackson, Michigan, (Dawn 30-5-04).

I am not belittling the importance of laws. I just feel that laws alone cannot deliver the desired outcome. Education and enlightenment are necessary to fine tune the social psyche to compliment these laws. In fact I feel that Mr. Mubashar Khan is belittling the importance of social and tribal customs. As a student of jurisprudence and history of legal systems I learnt that a system of positive law is born from these norms and customs. Once a system of positive law emerges, it evolves and develops at a far more rapid rate than social customs and indeed overtakes them. But this stage of overtaking is a very delicate one and a great deal of tact and finesse must be used rather than imposing modern legal systems at gunpoint. That, simply, is my contention. That laws must go hand in hand with enlightenment to encourage an acceptance of laws. In Pakistan we are going through this delicate phase now. The system of positive, or modern, laws must not be allowed to bulldoze ancient social norms. It must win precedence over old beliefs by being accepted by resort to common sense and reason.

It is a fallacy to think that passing new laws is the solution to everything. Laws already exist against murder, theft, rape, kidnapping, etc. Have these crimes vanished from society just because there are laws against them? Two things are imperative for the success of any legal system; firstly, the acceptance of laws by society and, secondly, an environment conducive to the success of these laws. In Pakistan we have made no visible effort in either direction.

Believing that tribal leaders wish to preserve the status quo to maintain their own position of power or that they encourage rape and murder in jirgas to preserve tribal honour are things I would expect only from those who have absolutely no knowledge of the tribal way of life, customs and beliefs. This is the kind of tripe the highly biased media and press feed the urbanites, who swallow it whole without questioning its absurdity. I can only reiterate that if anyone is so concerned about all this then they should make an effort to gain proper first hand knowledge of what they are talking about rather than passing verdicts based on ridiculous and malicious propaganda.

AMEER BHUTTO

Larkana



THE 1940 RESOLUTION IS THE ANSWER

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', March/April, 2004

This is in response to M. Abul Fazl's article 'Why the Feudals Seek Biafrization' (Encounters, 20-3-2004). The Pakistan Resolution passed by the General Council of the Muslim League at Lahore in 1940, promising 'autonomy and sovereignty' to the component units of Pakistan, is the answer to everything stated in this article. We either embrace the Pakistan Resolution or we reject it. If we embrace it we must embrace it in its entirety. We cannot selectively accept only the portion that suits us while summarily rejecting those portions which some of us find awkward or which jeopardise the hegemonic grip of a single nation on the other smaller nations in Pakistan. That would be hypocritical. The nationalists are demanding nothing more and nothing less than what is contained in the Pakistan Resolution framed by our founding fathers. It was on the basis of this covenant that they entered this union and they want it to be honoured. Why is that so difficult for people to understand?

If demanding decentralisation of power to the provincial level makes one guilty of 'feudal' impulses then our founding fathers must have been the biggest feudals of all because they are the ones who presented the formula for decentralisation of power in the Pakistan Resolution. In this resolution, they not only envisaged a system in which the component units would be 'autonomous and sovereign', but specifically stipulated that apart from the portfolios of Defence, Communications, Customs, Foreign Policy and Currency all other portfolios would rest with the provinces and, in time, even some of these portfolios would be transferred to the provinces. What is this if not a blueprint for a highly decentralised system?

Mr. Fazl condemns nationalist's demands for decentralisation and greater provincial autonomy as a feudal ploy but he nevertheless blames the provincial legislatures for not playing a more active role in bringing about egalitarian reform. The fact is that the provincial legislatures do not have the authority to do so. All legislative power rests with the parliament in Islamabad. Does Mr. Fazl not see the irony that only by acceding to nationalist demands for provincial autonomy would the provincial legislatures get the necessary authority to bring about meaningful reform? Mr. Fazl feels that feudals

want decentralisation of power so that they may easily control the centers of power to continue their subjugation of the hapless hari. Thus far we have only had highly centralised government in Pakistan. Would he care to tell us how that has helped the lot of the hari, or anyone else for that matter?

It never ceases to amaze me how people fancy themselves as experts on issues like the relationship between the 'feudal' and his hari just because they have read a couple of text books and attended a seminar or two on the subject. This is a very complex and deep relationship based on mutual trust and benefit that anyone with a city-slicker mindset cannot even begin to comprehend. And what about the relationship between the capitalist and the labourer? Let Mr. Fazl come to Larkana and I will introduce him to the workers at Naodero Sugar Mills who would tell him horror stories that would make all exaggerated half truths and lies about the excesses of the 'feudals' pale into insignificance.

Mr. Fazl finds it in good taste to mock the liberation movement of the Igbo people of Biafra, just because it failed. His thinking seems to be that of preserving the status quo, no matter how abhorrent it might be. Does he not see that it was a similar desire for freedom and liberty that led to the creation of Pakistan? Had that struggle failed also, there would, no doubt, be someone like Mr. Abul Fazl to gloat over the misery of the Indian Muslims. Why did Mr. Fazl find it necessary to bring up the question of the right to secede in his article? The nationalists in the three smaller provinces of Pakistan are not demanding the right of secession. They are merely asking for a fair deal. Is that so unreasonable? A deliberate attempt is being made to discredit those who speak up to defend the rights of the three smaller provinces by labelling them as secessionists or, worse yet, 'feudals', since that is the worse imaginable slur in the nomenclature of the self-styled urbanite saviours. This is being done on purpose to confuse and smudge the issue and shift the focus of the debate from the injustices being perpetrated upon the three smaller provinces and their genuine grievances to the perceived interests of a small group. The idea is to smear them with half-baked, convoluted allegations and discredit them and therefore their ideas. That is why the issue of secession is being raised unnecessarily to create an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility. This is no way to resolve national conflicts. This will only add fuel to fire. Why can't issues like Kalabagh Dam, NFC Award and the demand for decentralisation of power be discussed on merit instead of making petty and unbecoming personal attacks?

WHY IS PAKISTAN NOT SHINING?

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', June 1, 2004

'India Shining' was Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's re-election slogan. But an overwhelming majority of the neglected poor in India, who neither saw nor felt any shine, took an historic decision to improve their lot in defiance of all expectations and conventional wisdom and showed their Prime Minister and his government the door. This verdict of the Indian electorate must serve as a watershed for the godforsaken and suffering millions all over the world and must awaken the realisation in all rulers that being in the good books of the White House and the World Bank alone does not in anyway assure their political survival when the teeming masses are suffering under inhuman, pre-historic conditions, deprived of even the most essential and basic amenities. The same sort of decision is desperately needed from the Pakistani electorate, who have been force fed a steady diet of state propaganda since the military takeover in October 1999 about the ever expanding reserves, now supposedly amounting to over thirteen billion dollars, even though no tangible, visible benefit is forthcoming for them.

What are the insurmountable impediments preventing the Pakistani voters from seizing the opportunity offered to them every two or three years to transform their destiny? Political pundits, as usual, blame feudal lords, political big shots and religious leaders for steering and stifling the aspirations of the people, thereby denying them any chance of bringing about meaningful change. However, a close look at election results from the last five general elections will reveal that political big shots, feudal lords and religious leaders have themselves regularly lost elections even in their home constituencies at one time or another. Pir Pagara, the archetypal personification of the feudal/religious leader, lost twice from his home seat in Khairpur, which would have been unimaginable in days of old. Apart from him, the late Nawab Sultan Ahmed Chandio of Larkana, who was the son of the biggest jagirdar of Sindh, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, Begum Naseem Wali, Asfandyar Wali, Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, the relatives of Ghulam Mustafa Khar (who could not contest himself in 2002 due to the education requirement), Syed Fakhar Imam, Moulana Fazalur Rehman, Nawabzada Nasrullah, Air Martial (Retd.) Asghar Khan, Illahi Buksh Soomro, Moulana Shah Ahmed Noorani and Qazi Akhtar (while he was the incumbent caretaker

Chief Minister of Sindh), to mention but a few, have all lost their own home seats in general elections between 1988 and 2002. And let us not forget the 1970 general elections in which most of the political as well as feudal and religious big shots, particularly in Punjab, lost out to the socialist promise of 'roti, kapra aur makan' given by the Peoples Party. Does this reek of dominance or control by the political, feudal and religious elite?

The leadership that materialises through the ballot box can only be a reflection of the electorate itself. A Russian writer once wrote that the people get the kind of leaders they deserve. The voters can not escape responsibility for the shortcomings of the leaders they elect, particularly when there is no retribution forthcoming at subsequent polls. Admittedly, the politicians are corrupt and have badly let the people down and betrayed them. Then why do the people keep on repeatedly electing the same turncoats and opportunists? Not because anyone is forcing them to do so. The above examples amply illustrate that the people are capable of rejecting the political, religious and feudal giants when they want to. But they do not seem to be able to make correct choices based on merit and principles on a consistent basis. This is so because the voters bear an insatiable expectation of gratification through patronage, which has become a habit forming aphrodisiac for them. In most civilised democracies people vote on issues and manifestoes and lend their support to the party or leader who, in their view, will be good for the country. At the very least they refrain from once again supporting those who have blatantly abused their trust. But here politics based on principles, issues and truth has since long ago become a casualty to opportunism and expediency and personal needs take precedence over national interests, honesty and decency.

A democratic system is like a highly tuned, sophisticated machine with multiple parts, each with a specific important function and responsibility, working in unison. Supreme among these is the accountability of corrupt, incompetent and insincere leaders and political parties at the polls by the electorate to keep them on the straight and narrow, as witnessed in the Indian elections a few days ago. Without this, the system can not operate. The Pakistani electorate seems to have voluntarily and altogether too readily surrendered this constitutional right and responsibility at the altar of opportunism and expediency. The voters are supposed to jettison bad blood from the body politic through a judicious application of their vote. But in the 2002 polls, the voters in fact injected more bad blood into the veins of this already emaciated leviathan by electing the most disreputable and undesirable elements and giving them free reign as long as they share the spoils of power with them. One is forced to conclude from this that honest, sincere and competent leaders are not wanted by Pakistani voters. Lack of accountability by the electorate necessitates military takeovers and special accountability courts which are, at worst, anathema to the spirit of genuine democracy or can, at best, be regarded as ad hoc measures rather than durable long term solutions.

Rigging has become part and parcel of our 'democracy'. The phenomenon has permeated across the board at every level, so much so that it has become impossible to hold an election for even the lowest office in the land without some form of rigging taking place. We in Pakistan excel at this dubious art and continuously come up with new and novel innovations to pervert the results of the polls to suit our own purposes. But if the people are politically active and aware then no amount of rigging can alter or pervert their verdict. If accountability through the ballot box fails then the

offenders must be dealt with by other means. In 1977 a few sporadic instances of rigging sparked the PNA movement and led to the eventual downfall of the Peoples Party government. But since then the people seem to have lost all perception of their own power and have tamely accepted the bogus results of subsequent elections in a silence that betokens complacency and lack of interest, regardless of how distorted and mangled by rigging those results might be.

Election results in Pakistan are further marred by voter apathy. Turnout figures have been steadily plummeting over the last five general elections in Pakistan. Official figures claim a turnout of almost forty percent in the 2002 election but the real figure is, in fact, closer to twenty-five, compared to a turnout figure of nearly fifty-five percent in the recent Indian elections. It is felt that the general public stays away from polling stations out of disgust and disappointment at the letdowns and betrayals they have repeatedly suffered. But they must realise that they alone have the power to right the wrongs. Walking away in disgust and surrendering this power will not cure the ailment. Positive action is needed on their part. That is what happened in India. The poor and the deprived felt betrayed by the Vajpayee government. But their response was to vote him out of office, not to sit at home and lament their misfortunes. Voter apathy and inaction can only lead to a bigger mess. When a man falls ill he seeks medical treatment rather than sitting quietly at home. Only when the disease has reached such an advanced stage that nothing further can be done to treat the patient may a state of hopeless surrender to the inevitable set in. We have not reached that stage yet. Much can be salvaged, provided the electorate shake of their stupor of apathy and take the future into their own hands. They must play their part rather than surrender the game by default. The apathetic have no right to complain of whatever misfortune that might befall them as a consequence of their inaction. How much further are we destined to fall and how much more hardship and humiliation are we to suffer before we open our eyes and realise that the future depends on us and we need not be bound by the tethers that tie us to the past?

In order to establish a stable, progressive democracy in Pakistan and ensure a better future for coming generations the people will have to step forward and produce new honest, capable and sincere leaders. The incumbent old guard politicians, already decaying under the burden of their glaring faults, can not stand in the face of the winds of change once they begin to blow. Change is a dynamic force. It has a life of its own and throws up its own leaders once the wheels go into motion. A significant infusion of clean, fresh blood is urgently needed here. Waiting for our present elected leaders to save us from ruin is an exercise in futility, which we must realise before it is too late.

WHAT DO THE NATIONALISTS WANT?

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, August 28, 2004

The issues which the nationalists of the three smaller provinces seek to highlight and resolve, and for which they are labelled disruptive, retrogressive and even seditious, originate from the historic betrayal of the social contract embodied in the Pakistan Resolution. Taking into account the multinational nature of Pakistan, the founding fathers realised that a centralised system of government would not be suitable. They envisaged a decentralised system of government in which the federating nations would have maximum control over their indigenous affairs and their interests would be protected. They laid down guarantees in the Pakistan Resolution that each nation in Pakistan would be ‘autonomous and sovereign’, that they would be referred to as states rather than provinces, they would be headed by a Premier and would have control over all portfolios, with the exception of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Currency, Customs and those aspects of Communications that pertain to Defence, which would rest with the centre. It was on the basis of these assurances that Sindh, Balochistan, Frontier, Punjab and Bengal acquiesced to be part of Pakistan.

Having been lured into this covenant by the allure of autonomy and sovereignty, they were presented with a very different reality after the creation of Pakistan. The social contract was not honoured for even one day as our rulers either found one super clever exegesis after another to bypass the social contract or simply silenced all conscientious objections of the federating nations with guns. There seems to prevail a continuous and comprehensive disregard for the wishes and interests of the three smaller nations in what remains of Pakistan. The voices raised in Sindh, Balochistan and the Frontier seem to fade long before they reach Islamabad, while the interests of Punjab take precedence. Any truly political and genuinely representative government with vision would realise the pitfalls of pursuing such a course. But successive governments have closed their eyes to stark political realities and operate in a vacuum of a socio-political conscience. Even prime ministers elected from the smaller provinces, apart from serving their own personal interests, eagerly compromise the interests of the soil which produced and sustains them to appease Punjab and its power brokers, and become agents of the establishment. They deliberately distance and isolate themselves from the heartbeat of the nation to better serve the narrow interests of a

specific clique.

Instead of listening to the complaints of the nationalists and trying to redress them, an effort is made to discredit them and their ideas. Nationalists are blamed for adopting a retrogressive approach and impeding progress. How does one define progress? Is it progress to allow the interests of one's nation to be stamped to serve the interests of another? Is it progress to allow Islamabad to loot the God given natural resources of a nation without any benefits accruing to that nation? What benefits does Balochistan derive from the natural gas produced at Sui? People still burn wood in Balochistan to prepare their meals and are living prehistoric lives in the hills. Women have to walk all day in the blistering heat to fill their clay pots with water from distant springs and stagnant, infested ponds for their families. What benefits does Sindh derive from the port at Karachi? Warm water ports are a valuable natural national resource that nations have gone to war over in the past. Yet all revenue generated at the port is taken away by Islamabad. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the Balochis are apprehensive about Gwadar? What benefits do the Pashtoons derive from the power generation projects operating in the Frontier? The figures regarding the number of electricity consumers in the Frontier as compared with the rest of the country are alarming. Pashtoons live in darkness while their natural resources are being exploited to provide electricity for the rest of the country. Islamabad wishes to identify progress and development with the silent submission of all nations in Pakistan to its edicts, no matter how unjust they may be. This can never happen. The Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtoon peoples are the proud descendants of ancient civilisations and their heritage is rich with honour. They came into Pakistan in 1947 with the hope of living in peace and liberty as equals. They did not shake off the British imperialist yoke only to be adorned by another one in its place.

The water issue has become a serious obstacle in the restoration of confidence between the provinces and it perfectly symbolises the imbalance created by the present centralised federal system that serves the interests of only one nation. There was a time, back in the 1980's and early 1990's, when the federal government would go out of its way in an effort to convince the opponents of Kalabagh Dam that this project was intended mainly for the purpose of producing electricity. Having failed to dupe the opponents of the project, the authorities were ultimately forced to concede that the main objective of Kalabagh Dam was to create a reservoir of water for irrigation and now hardly anyone even mentions the electricity production aspect of the dam. The same sort of deception was used to construct the Chashma - Jehlum Link Canal. Assurances were given that it would be operated only in instances of high flood to drain out excess water. But it is now being operated all year long for irrigation purposes. This tangled web of deceit cannot work because you cannot fool the people all the time.

The Greater Thal Canal Project, which is already more than half completed, and the prospect of Kalabagh Dam that looms over our heads has given rise to serious concerns about where the extra water will come from to operate the Thal Canal and fill the 6.1 MAF reservoir at Kalabagh Dam when there has been a consistent acute shortage of water over the last decade and a half. It is feared that the share of water of the three smaller provinces will be further reduced in order to meet this requirement, thereby further exacerbating the water shortage crisis and will bring us to the brink of famine and ruin. Due to the water shortage over the last several years, the water table

has already dropped drastically in Sindh. Where water was once available at eighty feet underground, one now has to drill over a hundred and fifty feet, and in some places over two hundred feet, to find water. If the water shortage becomes worse, not only will the shortage of water for irrigation become more severe but there will be a serious and widespread scarcity of drinking water as well, as is already the case in some parts of Sindh and Balochistan. Unless sanity prevails, this delicate issue can pose a serious problem for the federation.

If there is such an urgent need to build reservoirs of water to satisfy the ever increasing demand of an ever increasing population, then why must all focus be placed upon controversial projects that divide us without looking at possible alternatives? Why has the government wasted so much time trying to shove Kalabagh Dam down our throats instead of conducting a serious feasibility study of building a large dam at Skardu? The reservoir at Kalabagh Dam will hold a little over 6 MAF of water. The reservoir at Bhasha Dam will hold a little over 7.5 MAF of water. But 40 MAF of water is being entirely wasted at Skardu. Then why the stubborn insistence upon Kalabagh Dam even in the face of vociferous opposition? Is it because a dam at Skardu or another location might not be as beneficial to Punjab as Kalabagh Dam would be?

Our fifty-seven year experiment with federation has not been a very happy one. It has clearly failed. Meaningful and radical change is long overdue. Nationalists do not want to breakup Pakistan. They want the social contract in the Pakistan Resolution, which is regarded as the founding document of Pakistan, to be fully implemented in letter and spirit. They desire a real decentralisation of power from the centre to the provinces according to the formula contained in the Pakistan Resolution, not a mere cosmetic 'devolution' which succeeds only in making the districts and local governments directly dependant upon Islamabad, bypassing the provinces and thereby creating something akin to a one-unit state. If the demand for decentralisation is a ploy on the part of the feudals to harness power, as the anti-nationalist forces claim, then history bears witness that the present form of highly centralised federalism has proven to be the teething ring of military and civilian dictators of all hues and shades over the last fifty-seven years who have all but destroyed us. All the damage to the socio-economic and political fabric that Pakistan has sustained thus far has come under this highly centralised federal system. What do we stand to lose by trying a different approach?

The evolution of political systems is one of the prerequisites of progress. This is precisely what the nationalists want. The present system binds us to the vestiges of a failed past. But the vested interests of a certain powerful clique demand that no meaningful changes be made. Yet they accuse the nationalists of impeding progress. Nationalists are merely trying to salvage something out of a bad situation by proposing options and alternatives. Nations that are afraid of change and mindlessly cling on to the remains of a painful and ruinous past are doomed. Only nations that are progressive in their outlook and are unafraid to discard the shackles of a miserable past and look to a new dawn are destined to, and worthy of, a bright future.

WHAT IS THE PRICE OF HONOUR?

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', April 30, 2005

31st March 2005 marked the chehlum of the Shaheed Imams and was, as such, a holy and solemn day of prayer and contemplation for us all. But three young men belonging to the Syed family of Ratodero city (Larkana District) chose to mark this holy day by luring an innocent, clueless fourteen year old girl, Shabana Mirani, who had come to the Syed's Imambargah to participate in religious rituals, to an empty house where they gang raped her and beat her mercilessly. I felt duty bound to go and sympathise with the parents of the victim and assured them of my full support in ensuring that the culprits would be apprehended and made to answer under the law. The victim's parents repeatedly emphasized that they only want justice under the law.

It became apparent to me from the beginning that the police was reluctant to take action against the culprits. The culprits happen to be nephews of a retired Supreme Court judge who, before being appointed judge by Benazir when she was Prime Minister, was elected MPA twice on a PPP ticket in 1988 and 1990 from Ratodero. Almost a week went by and not only had the culprits not been arrested, but the police had yet to present Shabana before a judge to record her statement, knowing that once she implicates the Syed boys in this crime in her statement, the case would have to be challaned under the Hudood Ordinance and then there would be no way for the boys to escape the maximum penalty prescribed by law. A strange situation arose whereby the victim was being held prisoner while the culprits roamed free. The culprits finally surrendered to the police voluntarily almost a week later once intermediaries had made arrangements for the settlement of the issue in a jirga.

Since the culprits belonged to the PPP, the whole PPP machinery immediately went into frantic motion to somehow save them from their much deserved punishment. Instead of letting the law take its course, they brought Shabana Mirani's parents under enormous pressure to agree to settle this matter in a jirga. A number of PPP MNAs and MPAs did their best to influence and intimidate Shabana's poor parents in order to save the criminals by steering the matter towards a jirga rather than letting the law take its course. The PPP women MNAs and MPAs make it a point to create a big drama in the assemblies about women's rights but when faced with an ungainly practical reality such as this, they expose their true colours by stifling the voices of victimized

women to save the culprits out of political expediency. The culprits also enlisted the help of a Sindhi nationalist leader from Ratodero, whom they sent to plead with me to stop pushing the authorities to punish the criminals under the law. What amazed me is that while these intermediaries came to me to plead for leniency for the disgraced Syed boys, not a soul came to plead the case of the poor fourteen year old girl.

Since neither my father nor I would have anything to do with a disgraceful jirga in this matter, the intermediaries, with full backing of the Syed family and the PPP, organized a town meeting under the guise of a local social welfare organization in Ratodero. The meeting was headed by the same nationalist leader who had come to plead with me on the culprits' behalf and many town elders of Ratodero participated in it. This town meeting took the form of a jirga as they arrived at the decision that the Syeds should pay six lac rupees to Shabana Mirani's parents as a fine for their crime, in return for which the complainant would forsake all recourse to any legal remedy and would withdraw the case. The representative of our party was the sole voice of dissent, placing on record his opposition not only to the verdict but the jirga as well.

I feel ashamed to be part of a community whose elders see it fit to pronounce such a dishonourable verdict. There is neither honour nor valour in protecting rapists and child molesters. The elders who pronounced this verdict are as guilty as the perpetrators of the crime for letting the criminals off the hook. What is six lacs? What is six million? Is there a price for rape or child molestation? Everyone has children in their homes. Would these so-called wise men who sat in this jirga care to tell us what price they would put on the innocence of their own children? Or is it only poor and harassed victims like Shabana Mirani who have a price? This incident should be an eye opener for us as a nation. Have we sunk to such depths of moral depravity that we are willing and eager to auction off the innocence and honour of a poor child for a fist full of rupees and gag her with threats merely to save the skins of rapists and child molesters? What has happened to our sense of right and wrong? What has happened to our sense of honour and dignity?

Not so long ago a similar incident in Sui set the whole of Balochistan ablaze and resulted in bloodshed in Dera Bugti. Eventually the federal government was compelled to enter into a dialogue with Nawab Akbar Bugti. Though the Sui rape case remains unresolved, I salute the Balochs for taking an honourable and principled stand on the issue. I am not preaching similar bloodshed in Sindh, but when one finds oneself amongst people who value political expediency and financial gain more than the pitiful plight of a fourteen year old victim of a gang rape, then the stench of opportunism, greed and a criminal disregard for the wellbeing of the less privileged and less fortunate must sicken any reasonable person to the very core of his being.

I have, in the past, written and spoken out in favour of jirgas in some instances when lives are at stake and violence threatens to erupt if serious disputes are not resolved effectively with haste to the satisfaction of both parties. But jirgas make sense only when both parties are willing to have their dispute thus settled. You can not drag a party into a jirga against their will by coercing and intimidating them. There can be no case for a jirga or town meeting in the Shabana Mirani rape case. The law must be allowed to take its course.

We, the people of Sindh, are the scions of an ancient civilisation that is enriched with a refined and sophisticated culture and heritage. Our history spans back over more than five millennia to the pre-Moenjodaro days. When people in Europe were

living in caves and wearing crude animal skins, Moenjodaro boasted intricate public drainage systems, paved streets, sophisticated architecture and an advanced economy based upon agriculture and trade. But that was five thousand years ago. Five thousand years is a long time. It takes no more than five heartbeats for a man to fall from grace. The tragic Shabana Mirani rape case is symptomatic of our fall as a nation. Lord knows how many more Shabana Miranis languish in the remote, far flung corners of our land who have been coerced and gagged into a painful silence.

Our response to all injustices perpetrated against us by outsiders is lightening quick. We hold outsiders responsible for stealing our water, robbing us of our earned national income and depriving us of our rights as a nation. But we turn a blind eye to all injustices we perpetrate on each other. In our convoluted view, rape, murder, plunder, theft and everything the civilized world regards to be a punishable crime is no more than an unfortunate inconvenience that can be fixed by plastering over it with money. If money is the solution to all our problems, then instead of protesting against Punjab and demanding our rights from the center, why don't we ask for financial compensation? If honour can be sold then why not water? Take away our water but give us money. Take away our rights as a nation but slip a few rupees in our pockets and we will be happy. If money can restore honour then maybe it also has the magical qualities of quenching thirst and diluting the desire to live as equal citizens with some dignity.

If this is our creed then it is hardly surprising that we have been reduced to doormats whom no one takes seriously. We ourselves have initiated the process of our own moral and social collapse that is bound to lead to our doom and we have no right to blame anyone else for it. I can say it no better than Shakespeare: "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in the stars but in ourselves that we are underlings."

POLITICAL FEUDALISM

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', May 14, 2005

A few months ago the Baloch tribal sardars stood accused of acting like warlords and toying with the destinies of the poor and suppressed people by depriving them of development and opportunity. The traditional tribal system of Sindh, maliciously portrayed in the press and media by clichéd caricatures of waderas, has since long been under siege from the vested interests in the establishment who seek to discredit Sindh's stand against Kalabagh Dam, Thal Canal and an unfair distribution of national wealth under the present NFC Award, among other issues, by depicting the protagonists in a twisted image. Not only this, but Sindhi waderas have become easy targets on a plethora of issues for NGO's and organizations related to human rights, women's rights, social welfare, etc. But all the evils associated with so-called tribal feudalism, whether real or concocted, pale into insignificance before the looming sceptre of a new brand of state sponsored political feudalism that is being introduced in Sindh, which is likely to usher in a new era of pain and oppression for the suffering poor of this land.

Political mercenaries have made a living off sycophancy and pandering. Past governments, imposed upon us by the powers that be, through the facade of bogus rigged elections, have tried to sustain their fleeting hold on power with the backing of such bands of floating mercenaries who make it a point to be on the winning side, but inevitably demand their pound of flesh in return for their support. It is an ideal marriage for them and the government of the day, as both feed off each other while they can. In the process, however, these mercenaries acquire enormous personal and political benefits from the government, not least by way of getting officers of their choice appointed at important government posts at all levels through sifarish, who then cater to their every whim and need. Unable to draw strength from the masses, with whom they have no nexus, successive governments are constrained to submit to the blackmail of this unsavory and disreputable bunch in order to survive.

The present government has gone farther than any government in the past in its effort to appease these mercenaries. Not being satisfied with giving them the customary perks and paraphernalia now deemed to be their God given right by virtue of being 'in power', Sindh is now being carved up into private jagirs and fiefdoms for handpicked

waderas, pirs, mirs and sardars associated with the ruling party, not to mention dominating alliance partners from the urban areas, to facilitate their return to power in the upcoming local bodies elections as well as the 2007 general elections. Maps of entire districts, tehsils, union councils and even dehs are being redrawn on the sole criteria of personal and political interests of darbaris and sycophants who survive and operate purely at the mercy of the government of the day and can not win elections without underhanded, not to mention illegal, manipulation and full support of the administrative machinery.

Within the last few months, Larkana, Jacobabad and Dadu districts have been broken up into two districts each and Hyderabad district has been mutilated to create four ridiculously small districts. One of the districts carved out of Hyderabad, Matiari, is roughly based on just one tehsil and encompasses only nineteen union councils. Furthermore, the creation of Shahdadtown district out of Larkana was highly controversial from the first day of its inception. This new district was initially named Kambar district. Upon the insistence of a ruling party MPA from Shahdadtown, it was renamed Shahdadtown district. This led to violent demonstrations in Kambar in which four people lost their lives. The government then announced that the district would be known as 'Shahdadtown District at Kambar'. Similarly, Kashmore district, which was carved out of Jacobabad, is known as 'Kashmore District at Kandhkot'. Nothing can be more absurd than having district offices in one town while the district is named after another town. This ridiculous farce, apart from exposing the government's weakness and inability to impose its writ, has also shown that appeasing the ruling party MNAs and MPAs takes precedence over the interests of the people.

There are a number of mercenaries still manoeuvring behind the scenes in an all out effort to create more personal political jagirs for themselves. In the past, a few elite darbaris, who were privileged enough to be close to the real powers behind the scene, occasionally managed to have electoral constituencies of their own choice demarcated. But now no one even blinks when whole districts, encompassing several National and Provincial Assembly seats, are axed to bits purely on the basis of nepotism and political convenience. The ruling Muslim League (Q) is stronger in Punjab than in Sindh, yet one does not hear about private jagirs being carved out for Punjabi ministers, MNAs and MPAs. In Sindh the urge to prove oneself to be more loyal than the king himself, it appears, is felt with greater urgency.

Even the enemies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto will admit that he played a pivotal role in freeing the poor and suppressed masses from the stranglehold of waderas and sardars and made them appreciate the value and power of their vote when exercised by free will. The new current trend of making political jagirs in Sindh, however, is bound to set the clock back by at least four decades. The waderas and sardars never felt comfortable with the liberation of the masses from their grasp during Bhutto's time. They have now finally found a government myopic enough to herd the flock back into their stockades. Once the mercenaries have carved out political jagirs of their choice, administered by government officers of their choice, the consequences for the common man will be painful and disastrous. He can then bid farewell to any vestige of free will as he is bound to become totally dependent upon the master of the jagir and will have to tow his line.

For instance, an MPA from Shikarpur district is lobbying hard to have a bordering area of Larkana district included into his new proposed jagir. The area in question is

inhabited by people who have refused to come under the influence of this man and have established a trend of voting according to their conscience. He has also tried his best to pressure them into submitting to him for a jirga for a number of murders that took place a few months ago, but the people of the area refused to succumb to his pressure. Therefore, he now wants to teach them a lesson by having their area included in his political jagir and then unleashing his handpicked police officers on them to bring them in line. This is going to be the norm in every newly formed political jagir across Sindh. The people will be denied their right to exercise free will and will be thrown into the jaws of wolves. Instead of moving towards an era of enlightenment and progress by encouraging the exercise of free will, the government is stifling the political and social independence of the poor haris and labourers who already find the odds heavily stacked against them.

Given the low calibre of the mercenaries and the government's helpless dependence upon them, is it any wonder that Sindh is in such a mess? While Punjab succeeds in attracting heavy foreign investment in the form of a hundred million dollars per year aid package from the World Bank for providing free education to nine hundred thousand children, Sindh fails to emulate this achievement because the World Bank can find no one in Sindh capable of formulating and implementing a radical reform of the education department that the World Bank set as a pre-requisite for similar aid. While the project of canal lining, announced by the President, proceeds rapidly in all other provinces, no headway has been made in Sindh and the funds are about to lapse. Virtually all government departments in Sindh are in an advanced stage of atrophy and are, according to the Chief Minister himself, crippled by corruption and incompetence. This is hardly surprising. When the government, as a matter of policy, sponsors and promotes intellectually bankrupt and illiterate mercenaries, rather than persons of calibre and ability, there can be no other logical outcome. The unfortunate trend in Pakistani politics is for politicians to distance themselves from the masses and rely entirely upon mercenaries and the establishment. The hollowness of the facade of democracy was exposed when the Chief Minister Sindh boasted proudly, as reported in a Sindhi newspaper, that he was made Chief Minister by a general and a colonel.

It would better serve the interests of the nation as well as the government if the poor hari's and labourer's right to exercise free will is protected rather than sacrificed for narrow selfish interests, enabling truly representative and committed people to rise through the ballot box who are capable of steering us in the right direction. Allotting political jagirs to sycophants is hardly going to achieve this end. Those who wield real power would do well to note that it is not the imaginary warlords or feudals who stand as an impediment to tangible positive change, but their own minions in government who value the acquisition and wielding of power more than national and public interests.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO POLITICS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', July 9 & 16, 2005

The one thing the political philosophers and experts generally agree upon is that the ultimate aim of politics is to serve the citizens and promote the common interests of society. However, if you are aspiring to be a successful politician in this country, you must not believe any of this nonsense, otherwise you will unnecessarily create obstacles and problems for yourself and will hamstring your career before it even begins. What do philosophers and experts know about conditions in our society? Here we make our own rules and customs, even though they may be far from rooted in principles nor reflect any of the norms and values embraced by the rest of the civilized world. In such an environment, there is so much to confuse and distract a newcomer that he is likely to lose his way. I, therefore, deemed it necessary, as a service to our up and coming young leaders of the future, to guide them through the maze and facilitate their rise to the top without undue delay.

First of all, we have to see whether you have the requisite qualifications to be a politician. To determine this you must answer these questions: Do you love your country? Do you feel a bond with your fellow countrymen? Do you wish to promote the common good and national interests? Do you want to ensure a brighter and more progressive future for your nation? Do you have a vision for the future and a specific manifesto or ideology to alter the faltering destiny of your nation? Are you honest, sincere and committed to your cause and ideology? Have you received a higher education from one of the finer universities abroad? Do you have a deeply ingrained sense of honour and self-respect which you cannot compromise or sacrifice? If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions then you have absolutely no right whatsoever to even think about being in politics in this country. You either need to do a lot of serious and fundamental rethinking and readjusting, or else get all dreams of a political career out of your head and come up with some other way to make a living.

Having a genuine love for your country is a great handicap because that will compel you to act in a way that even your own supporters will not understand or condone. Besides, in this day and age, who will believe that you really love your country? Such things are not to be found in the language and nomenclature of our politics these days. The bond you might feel with your fellow countrymen is also an outdated, rusty old

sentiment. There are no such bonds in politics today. The leaders use the people to get into power and the people use the leaders to get legitimate and illegitimate perks and benefits from them once they are in power. That is the sum total of any bond that may exist in politics. If you pursue the common good or national interests, you will find yourself all alone. People are not interested in such things. They want personal individual benefits here and now. If you tell anyone that you want to bring about a brighter future for the nation, they will look at you as if you are an alien from outer space. Political objectives nowadays revolve around personal benefits for the leader and his followers. Having a firmly held vision and an ideology will weigh you down like an anchor and is a death knell for a political career these days. Not only will it prevent you from drifting with the ever-changing winds, as is the norm, but it will make the powers that be wary and suspicious of you and they will do everything they can to prevent you from succeeding in politics. It is easy to control a man but difficult to contain an idea once it takes root. Hence, the flexibility afforded by a comprehensive lack of ideology is preferred. If you are honest and sincere to your beliefs then you will be like a fish out of water. Politics in this country requires so many frequent somersaults and midair flips that coping with such an environment would be beyond the constraints of your ideological commitments. If you have received higher education at some fine university in Europe or America, then you have been made unfit for Pakistani politics because your head has been unnecessarily filled with useless ideas, principles and values which do not apply here. If you wanted to go into politics then getting a higher education was a waste of time and resources. Having little or no education does not seem to have handicapped other politicians' rise to power. If you have a deeply ingrained sense of honour and self-respect then you have no business being in Pakistani politics because in order to acquire power, you have to not only prostrate yourself before the real masters of power but keep your head bowed even after you get into power and take dictation. The fact is that the politics of the people was buried along with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Since then, the masses have forgotten how to flex their muscle and it is futile, at least for the foreseeable future, to hope that the people will rise and sweep you into power in a populist revolution. The unfortunate reality now is that the source of political power are not the people but a small pocket of powerful elements whose patronage is required to succeed in politics.

If, however, you answered 'no' to each of the above questions, then you are just the sort of invertebrate who can fit in perfectly in the existing conditions and the future for you is bright in politics. You can look forward to a long and successful career and should expect to rise to the top in a relatively short time.

Now the question arises how should you enter the political field? This is an important consideration and needs to be managed properly rather than be left to chance or a foolish emotional decision based on what is 'right'. Do not under any circumstances join any party at the beginning of your political career. There is nothing to be gained from restricting the playing field by establishing associations and connections right at the beginning. The disadvantage of this would be that not only will you become too closely identified with the interests of that party, but the shady past of the leaders of that party will also cast its shadow on you. Why should you bear the brunt for someone else's tainted past? It is preferable for you to carve out a shady past of your own that you can be proud of. Before you join a party, it is imperative that you establish your credentials as a bona fide Iota. If you feel the need for personal guidance and supervision

during your early days in politics, then it is acceptable to link up with some seasoned politician who has already established himself as a senior Iota, with fluid commitments and loyalties, until you learn to stand on your own two knees.

Association with political parties can not be avoided altogether. Sooner or later you will have to take the plunge and join one of the parties. You have to ensure that when you do so, you occupy an honourable place in the party and are close to the party leader. There are two ways to ensure this: one way is to have a lot of money and to use it lavishly but wisely in the party. Very few things buy respectability and status these days like money. With a sufficient amount of money, you can not only buy a place of respect and authority in your party but you can also buy your way into the corridors of power. The other way is to get close to the real masters of power. Toe their line obediently. Sing their praises. If you have fruit orchards, send them mangoes. If you have a hunting preserve on your lands, organize hunts for them. Organize lavish parties and receptions in their honour. Leave no stone unturned when it comes to sycophancy. Their patronage is priceless since no party leader will be able to turn you away if you are recommended to them by the real masters of power. With a combination of their support and your money, you cannot fail. After joining a party, do not lay down deep roots for yourself in that party because changing conditions will make it necessary for you to leave that party in a few years time. As such, it is also unwise to antagonize leaders of other parties or jeopardize your personal relationship with them by taking a firm stand on principles on any issue. After all, today's opponents are tomorrow's allies, and vice versa.

You have to be shrewd in your choice of parties. If the incumbent government happens to be a newly installed one, then it is likely that it will last at least another year or two, which should give you ample time to establish yourself and get at least some of the perks and benefits you came into politics for. So take the plunge and join the ruling party. But if it has been in power for two years or more, then it is likely that the current setup is on its way out since no government lasts more than two or three years. As such, it makes no sense to jump into a sinking ship. Browse for alternatives and see which way the winds are blowing. Seek guidance from your political benefactors. They will point you in the right direction.

If you play your cards right and use your connections and money well, you may never have to face the scourge of a general election. Getting your party to elect you to the Senate or making yourself so indispensable to the leader that he feels he must have you by his side all the time as an advisor can spare you the hassle and humiliation of actually having to present yourself before the common man to beg for his vote. You should only tolerate democracy as an unavoidable yoke. You must be a believer of the old adage that democracy is based on the irrational conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary men. You must be clear in your mind that you have a higher purpose in life and can not afford to be weighed down by the illiterate, unknowing rabble. The best way for you to achieve your ends is to acquire a position of power and responsibility that does not bring you into any sort of contact with the general electorate.

But avoiding a general election is not as easy as it sounds and more often than not you will have to face the electorate. In a way this is good, because nothing will test your skills as a politician like an election. This is a major step in your political career and it cannot be left to something as elusive and uncontrollable as the will of the people.

The people are very fickle minded and can too easily be manipulated to be relied upon to make the right decision. It is imperative that you get elected at all costs because failure to get elected will mean relegation to the sidelines, which is anathema to your political career. If you are elected, those seeking to patch together a majority in the assembly to form a government will come courting you and you will become their inescapable necessity, regardless of your calibre, stature or reputation. Therefore success at the polls has to be ensured. The only way to do this is to rig the polls. It would be a fatal mistake to wait till the day of the polls to rig. The process of rigging begins well before a general election is announced. Use your connections and sources in high places to have an electoral constituency of your own choice demarcated which would put you at an advantage and your rivals at a crippling disadvantage. This should not be so difficult these days when people associated with the ruling party manage to have entire districts and tehsils carved out to suit their interests. Once you have had the constituency of your choice demarcated, have thousands of bogus names entered in the electoral rolls and have corresponding bogus identity cards made to be used at various polling stations throughout your constituency by your handpicked, reliable supporters. Make sure that the location of polling stations is fixed at places easily accessible to your supporters and all the polling staff are appointed through your recommendations to ensure that they will create no problems in getting your bogus votes cast. Have some of the pages of the voter's lists, which bear the names of your opponent's supporters, removed from the electoral rolls to deny them the opportunity to vote. Buy out your opponent's supporters. Those who can not be bought out must be harassed and intimidated into staying away from the polling stations. On the morning of the polls, shift the location of those polling stations where your opponent's supporters are in a majority to remote and inaccessible venues without prior notice. Your opponent's polling agents must be bought out or intimidated into remaining silent to ensure their complicity in the rigging process. Leave no stone unturned to get elected. Your survival in the political field depends upon this moment.

Having been elected to the assembly, you have achieved a major milestone in your political career. But the membership of an assembly is not by any means your final destination. There was a time when being an MNA or MPA meant something. Nowadays even your local patwari commands more respect and attention than an assembly member. Your membership of the assembly is a mere stepping stone to higher places. You have to utilize your money and connections to make a bid for leadership. Having manipulated the political and electoral process, you have proven yourself worthy to be Prime Minister or Chief Minister, though you may not even know how to sign your name. Aim high and see how far you can get. If your bid for leadership fails, settle for nothing less than at least a ministership. It makes no difference if you get a lame portfolio like sports or youth affairs or even if you are made a minister without portfolio. You will still have full protocol and access to the ways and means to indulge in self-gratification as well as nepotism and political victimization of opponents. What more could you ask for?

Some say that the actual work begins after you are elevated to a position of responsibility and you have to prove your worth by producing tangible positive results. Do not listen to such trouble makers. They are merely suffering from a bad case of sour grapes, since you got into power and they did not. Once you have been made minister, your work is done. You have reached your destination. Now you can relax

and enjoy the life of power and privilege. This is your just reward for all the hard work and wheeling dealing you did to get to this position of authority. Do not waste time sitting in your office doing paper work or attending dull meetings. Let your department secretary deal with all the mundane routine work. Go out and attend lavish receptions in your honour. Make it a point to be seen in full protocol, flying the state flag on your car and being escorted by as many police mobiles as possible, with sirens blaring. Go on hunting trips and state sponsored foreign visits to exciting and exotic locations you never dreamt you could ever visit. Amass wealth beyond your legitimate means and make sure you allow your party workers and hangers on to also feed from the trough. Keep in mind that you have only a limited time in power so make hay while the sun shines. Make sure you prepare for future elections by squashing your opponents under your thumb or buying them out with extravagant favours. Think of the state as your personal jagir. Never worry about tomorrow. Turn your back on the people who elected you and renege on all promises made to them during the election campaign. Treat them like dirt. The poor in this country do not even have a right to live. Who are they to make demands from minister sahib? If anyone wants to know about your contribution to statecraft, inundate him with state subsidized generosity and largesse until he stops asking such irritating questions.

Alas, all good things must come to an end. Your state subsidized ego trip too will end in about two or three years time when the government will be dismissed and the assemblies will be dissolved. When this happens, it will likely be accompanied by a wave of so-called accountability in which members of the dismissed government will be arrested and cases will be filed against them. You should have established enough contacts while in power to enable you to escape on a night boat to Dubai from Keamari, where you can live in secure and luxurious exile on the proceeds of your ill-gotten wealth till the storm blows over. If for some reason you can not escape and are sent to prison, do not panic. You can easily get a doctor to certify that you are on the verge of death and must be shifted from prison to a VIP suite in a five star hospital. As far as the cases against you are concerned, that should be the least of your worries. These cases are prepared by those who happen to be even less competent than you and most of the time they get dismissed in court, despite pressure from the higher ups. With the passage of time, as the storm loses its edge, you can strike a deal with the new administration and return from exile or be freed from detention and even be rehabilitated and reinstated by your erstwhile prosecutors if you play your cards right. Then you can once again start the whole process from the beginning with a new party.

You are, by now, an experienced and seasoned Lota and ready to take on apprentices.

This, unfortunately, is the pitiful reality of Pakistani politics, which has led us to ruin. The self-consuming vicious cycle of lotaism is a curse upon this land and it has pushed the ordinary labourer and hari to the brink of decimation. The people themselves hold the power to wiping the slate clean of all undesirable elements and influences from politics. It is precisely such conditions which cause the people to rise and change the course of events. But the people of this country have lost all perception of the enormous power they wield and are unwilling to right the wrongs like the people of India and Iran recently did. As such, there appears to be no relief in sight from this painfully pathetic state of affairs. The existing conditions are very similar to the Ayub Khan days. But back then Zulfikar Ali Bhutto emerged to deliver a much needed, albeit temporary, respite. No such deliverer is visible on the horizon today.

ROLE OF THE SILENT MAJORITY

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, July 30, 2005

Politicians have let down the people of this country. They have lacked courage, ability and preparation to effectively serve the people and have only served insatiable personal appetites for self-gratification instead. As a consequence, while the leaders have done quite well for themselves, the future of the country has become bleaker and the poor and the deprived have slipped deeper into the quicksand of poverty, unemployment, high cost of living, lawlessness and depravation from even the most basic amenities which has made life torturous for them.

However, despite past failures and let downs by these leaders, there has been no significant change of faces at the top. The same failed old guard repeatedly get elected and somehow find their way back into power. Human nature is such that everyone tries to get away with whatever they can, unless someone tightens the reins. Political leaders feel they can get away with all kinds of malpractices and misconduct while doing nothing to improve the lot of the ordinary citizen because they never have to face any sort of political accountability at the polls. They are secure in the knowledge that the people will continue to vote for them in expectations of future favours and benefits, regardless of whether they fulfill their obligations or not. When the incompetence and corruption of such leaders becomes unbearable, military intervention and change of government become necessary. But this sort of change does absolutely nothing to resolve the back breaking problems facing the common man because this change is not brought about by the people and it is not aimed at alleviating their burdens.

Every society needs a mechanism to set right what is wrong and drain bad blood from the system. In Pakistan, it is the armed forces that perform this critical function, though it is not their job to do so. Despite an enormous civil service with huge salaries, perks and ridiculously inflated budgets, such is the pathetic state of our civilian institutions and administration that in every moment of need and crisis we are forced call in the army. Whether we need to build a road, secure the dams, hold trouble free elections, control the law and order problem or if relief work needs to be carried out in the event of a flood or other emergencies or calamities, we invariably turn to the army to save us. But when they step in to clear the mess in the political field, we cry foul. In an

enlightened society, the people must rise to check an ineffective or corrupt government, because the people are affected the most and they are the source of all political power and legitimacy in a democratic system. But that does not happen here. The people become silent spectators witnessing the systematic desecration of all laws and institutions upon which all hopes of progress and development rest. They complain incessantly about the state of affairs but take no action whatsoever to prevent the fabric of society being rent asunder by their own elected governments. The failure of political leaders certainly plays a role in facilitating the army's entrance in politics but, due to their inaction, the common citizens can not escape their share of the blame for necessitating the entry of generals in politics. If the people fulfilled their constitutional duty of holding politicians and parties accountable at the polls, the generals would find no legitimate grounds to intervene.

In the recent Indian general elections, the Indian voters' verdict against Atal Bihari Vajpayee was an historic example of political accountability at the polls. More recently the people of Iran removed a president who had lost touch with the pulse of the nation and chose a man who they felt gave better expression to their aspirations. The uprising of the people of Georgia against President Shevardnadze was a landmark example of the people taking their destiny in their own hands, as they stormed the presidential palace and physically removed Shevardnadze and installed a president of their own choice without any election.

What are the insurmountable impediments that prevent the people of Pakistan from seizing the opportunity offered to them every two or three years to transform their destiny? If they can not rise in revolution like the people of Georgia, then why can they not at least bring about a substantial change through the ballot box? Feudal lords, political big shots and religious leaders are routinely blamed for stifling the aspirations of the people, thereby denying them any chance of bringing about any real change. I have dealt with this question in a previous article in which I presented a long list of feudals as well as political and religious leaders, including Pir Pagara, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Moulana Fazalur Rehman, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, Nawabzada Nasrullah and many others, who have lost elections from their home constituencies, to illustrate that the people are fully capable of voting according to their own conscience when they want to and I shall not go into those details again. The question arises why do they not do so more often and on a larger scale?

To strengthen their grip on power and avoid accountability before the people, the politicians have corrupted the people by giving them illegal perks and benefits. The people are sated with petty piecemeal measures that are aimed at satisfying the individual rather than the common good of society and they habitually flock to the prospective election winner to get more benefits from him rather than support a candidate who they feel is good for the country. They may openly admit that such and such leader has sound ideas, but they hasten to add that it is futile to support him because he is unlikely to come to power in the near future. This way of thinking becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and, invariably, national interests become its victims. Advanced countries are advanced because the people vote on issues and manifestoes and lend their support to the party or leader who, in their view, will be good for the country. At the very least they refrain from once again supporting those who have blatantly abused their trust in the past. But here short term personal gratification takes precedence over long term national interests. One can only deduce from this that the people prefer corrupt and

incompetent leaders who feather their own nests and also throw some scraps their way. This being the case, which self-respecting, honest and capable politician would want to present himself in the political arena only to be humiliated by someone less worthy than himself, while getting no appreciation from the people whom he is striving to serve? If this trend continues, even the few honest and competent leaders left on the periphery of politics today will be compelled to leave the field and politics will then become the exclusive domain of incompetent lotas who can do no better than to lead the nation to comprehensive ruin.

A democratic system is like a highly tuned, sophisticated machine with multiple parts, each with a specific important function and responsibility, working in unison. Supreme among these is the accountability of corrupt, incompetent and insincere politicians and parties at the polls by the electorate. Democracy has failed in Pakistan because the electorate has wilfully surrendered this constitutional weapon of political accountability, which has given free rein to the leaders and left the people helpless before them. An overwhelming majority of the people of this country refrain from participating in the political process. According to official figures, about forty-five percent of the country's population are registered voters. Out of these, only about thirty percent cast their votes in an election. This means that only fifteen percent of the country's overall population participates in the electoral process. The remaining eighty-five percent stay away from polling stations out of disgust and disappointment at the let downs and betrayals they have repeatedly suffered. They have every right to be disgusted, but they must realise that surrendering their constitutional power and responsibility to right the wrongs by holding the leaders and parties accountable at the polls will not cure the problem. Playing the ostrich is not the answer.

All successful and durable revolutions in world history have been brought about by the people, not the leaders. It is futile to expect the leaders to set things right. How can they do so when they are the biggest beneficiaries of the squalid status quo? The people will have to rise and become masters of their own destiny. The future of this country depends upon the massive complacent silent majority who have withdrawn into a shell. We have not yet reached the point of no return and much can be salvaged, provided the silent majority awakens before the ship sinks. The complacent have no right to complain of whatever misfortune that might befall them as a consequence of their inaction.

WHAT WILL BECOME OF SINDH?

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', November 26, 2005

Civilizations that are destined to fall do not disappear from the face of the earth overnight but rather succumb to a creeping process of decay and degeneration that is often so slow as to be imperceptible while it is in progress. It is said that it took a thousand years for the Roman Empire to fall. But the signs heralding the demise of a civilization are unmistakable. There was a time when a handful of loyal and sincere sons of the soil would issue warnings that if Sindhis do not unite and face the storm looming over the horizon, Sindh will be destroyed. Such warnings are now redundant because the storm is already upon us and is systematically eroding Sindh's political and social foundations. The questions we must now ask are how will we face this storm and can we survive as a nation? As a sidebar, perhaps we might even steal a glance at our own faces in the mirror and ask ourselves whether we deserve to survive?

Apart from the general malaise and atrophy that grip the whole of Pakistan in the form of a lack of law and order, breakdown of the writ of government, collapse of all administrative institutions, corruption, poverty, unemployment, high cost of living, lack of opportunity, lack of development, etc., which have, arguably, hit Sindh harder than the other provinces, there are a number of Sindh specific issues that cast a gloom over the future of Sindh. These issues, such as the water issue, the financial issue in the form of the NFC Award, deprivation from benefits accruing from God given natural resources and geographical advantages, lack of equal opportunity in education and employment and now a direct attack upon the Sindhi language, are issues that are common public knowledge and require no further elucidation.

There are basically three categories of people in Sindh, from the political point of view. Firstly there are the enemies of Sindh who are the root cause of the crisis. Like nature, politics also abhors a vacuum and the vacuum of authority and legitimacy created by the catastrophic failure of the two other categories mentioned below has facilitated the rise of this element, which takes different forms and identities from time to time. Whoever these enemies may be, whether they be from within Sindh or outside, and whatever the specific issue may be, their objectives are the same; to promote the interests of their own narrow cliques at the expense of Sindh, which is becoming an increasingly easy target.

The second category comprises those who like to call themselves 'mainstream' or 'national' politicians of Sindh. They claim to have the Sindh card in their pocket and also lay claims to be the guardians of Sindh. On their shoulders lies the greatest responsibility of all to protect the interests of Sindh because, at one time or another, they have wielded the reigns of power and have been in a position to make a real difference. But far from protecting Sindh, they have compromised and fallen on their knees before the enemies of Sindh in return for personal benefits, perks and power. These leaders long ago abandoned the politics of the people and adopted the avaricious brand of politics characterized purely by expediency and self-interest. The consequence of this tragic surrender of principles and loyalty to the soil is that an overwhelming majority of politicians Sindh has at present are professional turncoats and self-seekers who have left Sindh at the mercy of its enemies in their quest for personal aggrandizement. Not only this, but they are treating Sindh like a sinking ship, which instead of being rescued, must be relieved of all its treasures before it sinks.

The third category is comprised of the so-called 'nationalists' of Sindh. Their failure represents perhaps the unkindest cut of all, since they were deemed to be the last line of defence for Sindh. Instead, such is the reputation most of them have carved out for themselves that the word 'nationalist' has become synonymous with hooliganism, pettiness or worse. Their activities are limited to making tall claims about the great feats of heroism and sacrifice they intend to accomplish at some indeterminate time in the future and chanting hollow meaningless slogans. When the necessity arises to unite for action at a time of national crisis, these politicians cannot put their trivial differences and self-interests aside in pursuit of a higher purpose nor even sit in the same room without getting entangled in bickering. All attempts at forging unity among them invariably fall prey to their petty wrangling and some even go so far as to wilfully sabotage such efforts to please their real masters.

Thus the 'mainstream' as well as 'nationalist' politicians of Sindh have either failed miserably or have consciously chosen to abandon Sindh in the pursuit of personal benefits. This being the case, who is left to care for and protect the interests of this land of the Sufi Saints? If the people of Sindh stand alone today, then they can not entirely escape responsibility for this state of affairs. They have repeatedly elected and supported these self-serving leaders who have ditched them in their hour of dire need. Repeated senseless infusions of obviously bad blood in the body politic was bound to take its toll. What will the people do about it now? Will they rise and sweep aside these treacherous leaders and throw up a new cadre of leadership that is sincere and honest? Will they rise in rebellion against the injustices being perpetrated against them and their land? There is no reasonable cause for optimism on these counts. Conditions in Sindh long ago passed the point of tolerance of any reasonably enlightened and motivated nation that has a love for the soil it feeds off. If the Sindhi masses were going to rise, they would have already done so. Instead, at a time when Sindh stands deprived of its proper share of water and its own earnings, when outsiders receive preferential treatment in the jobs market and have better access to education, medical facilities and development, when living conditions have become subhuman due to lawlessness, poverty and uncertainty and when now even the Sindhi language is under a concerted attack, the people of Sindh are content to leisurely sip tea at bus stop cafes and merely complain about the deteriorating conditions rather than take positive action. This is not how a nation under siege should act. Where is the sense of urgency and zeal

that causes millions of people to pour out into the streets around the world on much lesser issues than the ones we are faced with? Where is the fire and passion? It is nowhere to be seen. Civilizations prosper and rise to prominence either due to the preponderant influence of a superior ideology and values or due to significant natural factors such as geo-politics, natural wealth, etc. They invariably fall from prominence as soon as they compromise on the ideas and values that made them great or when their enemies gain the upper hand and deny them the advantages of the natural factors that sparked their rise to prominence and prosperity. Sindhis have never been a great conquering martial race but have flourished through the ages due to the richness of their soil and the significance of their geo-political reality. But now the warm water port at Keamari is bound to lose some of its significance once the new port at Gwadar is completed. We lost all control of our natural resources long ago. Sindh is under siege at present, but Sindhis of all hues and shades persist in emulating Emperor Nero who played the fiddle while Rome burned. The only logical conclusion that can be drawn from this painful scenario is that Sindh is in for very hard times in the not so distant future.

Not long ago I visited Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti at Dera Bugti to condole the death of his son. On the occasion he commented that Sindhis seem to have lost the will to survive and have surrendered Sindh to outsiders. Of course at the time I refused to concede the point and argued with him to the contrary. But, having seen the present state of affairs, if I ever meet him again I will tell him that he was right.

THE WATER ISSUE

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', February 9, 2006

The opponents of Kalabagh Dam have been accused of turning a 'technical' matter into an emotional political debate. They stand charged of whipping up paranoia, fostering secessionist tendencies and using the issue to achieve political objectives. It is even claimed that the opponents of the dam have put the federation at risk. Our rulers always find it convenient to label any opinion which clashes with their own designs as a threat to the state. Emerson pointed out that "Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels." The supporters of the dam wish to portray it as a benign non-issue, which it most certainly is not. When fertile fields become barren for want of water and people yearn for a drop of drinking water, which is what will inevitably happen in Sindh if dams are built upstream, how can this be called a 'technical' issue? This is like telling the passengers of a crashing airplane not to get emotional because the airplane is merely experiencing a 'technical' problem. The water issue has direct and far reaching repercussions on the life of every man, woman and child in Sindh.

The fact is that the bone of contention is not just Kalabagh Dam, but the very principle of damming the Indus River to create water reservoirs up north. By giving priority to Bhasha and Munda Dams, the President has not killed the snake but has, to borrow an expression from Shakespeare, only scotched it. The objection is threefold and applies to the creation of any reservoirs: firstly, there is not enough surplus water available on a regular annual basis to justify the creation of reservoirs. Secondly, it is feared that water will be siphoned off to Punjab for irrigation purposes by canals from these reservoirs, particularly from Kalabagh Dam, at the expense of the share of water of the smaller provinces. Thirdly, there is a yawning gap of trust, created by an obstinate and wilful breach of previous understandings and assurances.

The Technical Committee on Water Resources reached the conclusion that the availability of requisite surplus water essential to fill new reservoirs can not be counted upon every year. In other words, the 117 million acre feet water around which the 1991 accord was put together is not available every year since floods are a rare occurrence. Even the supporters of new dams agree that in recent years there has been, on average, a water shortage of up to forty percent due to which vast tracts of fertile land has been left uncultivated, not only in the 'pukka' area but even in the

'kacha' area located on the banks of the Indus. This being the case, it is hard to see how one can arrive at the conclusion that the solution lies in creating more reservoirs. Where will the surplus water come from to fill these reservoirs when there is already a shortage and our current requirements are not being met? This is like Marie Antoniette suggesting that peasants eat cake if they don't have bread.

One look at the official figures reveals that a dam at Skardu would go further than one at Kalabagh in achieving the objectives which the supporters of the dams are supposedly promoting. For instance, at Skardu a reservoir of 35 MAF can be created and 15,000 MW electricity can be produced. By contrast, at Kalabagh a reservoir of only 6.1 MAF will be created and only 3,600 MW electricity will be generated. But since, unlike Kalabagh, canals can not be dug at Skardu to supply water to Punjab, so far even a feasibility study has not been conducted for a dam at Skardu. When, under pressure from the smaller provinces, it was proposed by the government that the design of Kalabagh Dam be modified to eliminate the canals, Punjab refused to accept any such modifications, thereby undeniably revealing their true intentions. This is why the President refrained from scrapping Kalabagh Dam and instead tried to sugarcoat the bitter pill by giving priority to Bhasha and Munda Dams. But if all five dams are to be completed within ten years, then construction work on all five will have to proceed simultaneously. The question of prioritizing the dams is, in practice, purely academic.

Inter-provincial confidence is a currency that is in short supply and it will take positive action rather than useless assurances to remedy this situation. Assurances were given that the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal would only be operated in the event of floods. But now this canal is operated throughout the year. The President has offered to give constitutional guarantees that every province will receive its full assigned share of water. Need we remind him that Article VI of the Constitution stipulates the charge of high treason for anyone who abrogates or in any way subverts the constitution? How many times has this provision been implemented? Such hollow and cosmetic constitutional guarantees are not worth the paper they are written on.

If the government really is concerned about meeting the demand for water in the future rather than just appeasing a specific clique, would it not be wiser, in the face of vociferous public opposition to the dams, to carry out the de-silting and raising of Tarbela and Mangla Dams instead? This along with the lining of canals and watercourses and introduction of modern irrigation techniques would not only save more water than can be stored in the reservoirs, but it would incur a lesser financial burden on the state. Large dams come at too great a financial, social, environmental and political cost for them to be deemed as being feasible, a view shared by the World Commission on Dams in their report issued in 2000.

Unfortunately, the government has made it a habit of late to land on the wrong side of every important issue. The whole nation is in a state of furious uproar over the American bombing in Bajaur that caused the death of at least eighteen innocent citizens. But our rulers' innate propensity to capitulate before the Americans compelled our Prime Minister to be seen smiling and shaking hands with the American President just a few days after the bombing, despite having failed to extract even a token apology from him. There is widespread uproar against the operation in Balochistan, but the government persists in perpetuating this folly. The recently announced NFC Award has been rejected by the smaller provinces, but the government is adamant. The Sindhi,

Baloch, Pashtoon and Seraiki people oppose the construction of Kalabagh Dam, but we are told that we shall have not just one but five dams within the next ten years. We have learnt absolutely nothing from history. Our rulers feel that if they have the blessings of America and the World Bank, there is paradise on earth and they need not heed the call of a hundred and forty million Pakistanis who inhabit this land. Many a fallen dictator has made the same mistake in the past.

Having found no reputable popular politician in Sindh to support the building of dams, the government has now been constrained to rely upon a handful of ministers, nazims and assembly members of dubious repute to launch a movement in favour of the dams. This bunch comprises of well known turncoats and political mercenaries who thrive by making personal capital out of every situation at the expense of principles and the common good and habitually bow to the rising sun. How they intend to live on the soil they are brazenly betraying for personal gain and look fellow Sindhis in the eye with a shred of self-respect and dignity remains to be seen. But that a government which once boasted that it would wipe out all undesirable elements from politics and introduce 'real' democracy should be compelled to solicit the help of such an unsavory lot speaks volumes not only about how desperate it is to find some foothold in Sindh to promote its highly unpopular projects, but also about the extent to which it has deviated from its original seven point agenda.

The leviathan is often slow to stir. But, after enduring years of injustice and inequity, it has finally opened its eyes. The people of Sindh are united on the water issue like never before and they are on the move. Mammoth public rallies in Karachi on 22nd December 2005, in Hyderabad on 18th January 2006 and in Larkana on 28th January 2006 have clearly shown that the people of Sindh have come together to raise a voice in unison on the water issue because it is a matter of their survival. Any genuinely democratic government, or at least one sympathetic to the aspirations of the people, would see the pitfalls of flying in the face of public opinion. On the one hand we boast of having a 'real' democracy but on the other hand we turn a deaf ear to the cry of the masses on the instigation of a handful of technocrats and vested interests. In a democracy, all executive power is exercised in the name of the people, not in deliberate opposition to their wishes. The voice of the people will have to be heard and respected. Therein lies our salvation as a nation. Those who choose to ignore the voice of the masses do so at their own peril.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, March 18, 2006

President George W. Bush’s visit to Pakistan has made transparent the hollowness of the Bush – Musharraf relationship. Prior to this much anticipated visit it was widely believed that the Bush – Musharraf nexus was of benefit exclusively to President Musharraf and his administration rather than the country. But now it seems that this relationship has outlived even that paltry element of utility. Far from strengthening his much vaunted ally in Islamabad, President Bush, instead, humiliated him by putting him on the defensive by raising the issues of democracy and the uniform, leaving the general scrambling to justify his constitutional position. Apart from that, all Bush did in Islamabad was churn out the now transparently meaningless rhetoric and play cricket, both of which he did badly.

If there ever was any uncertainty about American objectives and priorities in South Asia, they should now be crystal clear. When American non-proliferation concerns, not to mention the issue of regional balance and stability in the sub-continent, can be put on ice to cement their ties with India, while denying the same exemption to Pakistan, there can be little room for doubt about the orientation and direction of American foreign policy in this region. That this fate has befallen us should come as no surprise to anyone. This is what happens when you give yourself too readily and too cheaply, as we have done since 1947, but more so than ever before in the aftermath of 9/11 and Secretary of State Colin Powell’s “yes or no” ultimatum. Not only this, but successive governments in Pakistan, particularly military governments, have made it a habit to hitch their stars so comprehensively with the good graces of their American benefactors that they entirely overlook the significance of public opinion at home. They feel that they can get by on the support of America, the IMF and the World Bank and that the teeming masses of Pakistan count for nothing. Consequently, when their fickle foreign masters pull the plug on them once they have outlived their usefulness, they fall with an almighty crash. Having isolated themselves from the public, indeed having alienated them to appease the *gora sahibs*, they can not count on public support to sustain them. The ensuing crash not only relegates such leaders to the trash bin of history but also causes a major setback to the development of the political process in the country, leaving no option but to begin again from scratch.

The chasm between the rulers and the ruled in most Muslim countries continues to widen on this count. Genuine democracy has never been allowed to take root in most Muslim states by opportunistic rulers working in collusion with foreign vested interests and influences. The United States sponsors unpopular governments that obediently tow its line rather than serve the people. This and American exploitation of the third world, along with the anti-Muslim American foreign policy tilt, has fostered strong anti-American sentiments among the Muslim masses around the world. So we have a situation in which whereas the rulers of Muslim states pride themselves on being no more than American satraps, the Muslim people of the world vehemently voice their opposition to America in almost daily and often violent demonstrations in which they burn American flags and effigies of American leaders. They feel frustrated that their governments do not reflect their passions, ideals and values and sell out too easily to western powers. It is from such frustration that the Osama bin Ladens and the Mullah Omars of this world are born.

The Musharraf administration too has hitched its star with the support of the Bush administration, not only in terms of foreign affairs, dominated by Bush's ill-conceived War on Terror, but even on the domestic front. The administration feels that under the sheltering aegis of the Washington, it can steam-roll over all dissent at home to push forth a highly unpopular agenda that no genuinely representative government would ever even consider promoting. The grand design set forth by this administration, including the so-called Water Vision 2016, the NFC Award and the military operations in Waziristan and Balochistan, not only lack the requisite popular support but are in fact the object of daily mass demonstrations throughout the country. President Musharraf brazenly announced on television that the people of Sindh are misguided and that he alone had the vision and knowledge to lead them to the promised land. This is not how a democracy functions. This is a blueprint for authoritarianism. Democracy is a government of the people, by the people, for the people. The people are masters of their own fate and do not need a nanny adorned in full military regalia to point out to them what is right or wrong.

But then, President Musharraf's desperate defence of his democratic credentials during President Bush's visit notwithstanding, we all know what kind of democracy we have in Pakistan. President Musharraf himself has stated on record that the incumbent Parliament is illiterate, incompetent and corrupt. Sindh has been handed over to the MQM, whose leaders were not long ago being decried as criminals by those who are now sponsoring them, while many of them still have serious criminal cases against them. Sindh has been carved up into private political *jagirs* for the *sarkari waderas* in the form of new constituencies and districts in which they have been given free reign to run riot on the shoulders of corrupt and incompetent officers appointed on their *sifarish*. There is no effective plan or mechanism in sight to get a grip on crime, corruption, maladministration, poverty and unemployment. This is how this administration defines democracy.

Furthermore, this government is hell bent upon fighting its own citizens to appease the foreign masters. The blood of innocent citizens is being shed by American bombs and our own forces in Waziristan in the name of America's War on Terror, though not a single 'terrorist' has as yet been apprehended or killed there. In Balochistan the government claims that out of seventy-three sardars, seventy support the government whereas only three sardars are making trouble because they do not want their people

to benefit from development and enlightenment. Even if we swallow the unlikely story of three people stopping the march of progress in Balochistan, would the government care to elaborate what measures it has taken to bring progress to the areas belonging to the seventy sardars it has in its pocket? Pathans have come close to becoming a majority of the population in Balochistan. There is no sardari system among Pathans. What development has come to Quetta and other areas dominated by Pathans in Balochistan? And under what principle of democracy, or indeed decency, did the government feel justified in bulldozing and reducing to a pile of rubble Nawab Akbar Bugti's *haveli* where his women and children live? Which law permits such a deplorable violation of the sanctity of *chadar* and *char deevari* in our society? And which law enabled the government to bring the Kalpar tribesmen, most of whom are notorious absconding criminals who are wanted in many serious cases, out of hiding and rehabilitate them in Sui and Dera Bugti only because they are enemies of Nawab Akbar Bugti? In the past many people have been made to feel the brunt of the law for being *patharidars*, or associating with and protecting criminals. Now who will file *patharidari* cases against the government for protecting, restoring and rehabilitating notorious bandits in Balochistan?

The question arises where do we go from here? How wise is it for the United States of America to put all its eggs in the basket of an unpopular and unrepresentative government? Would it not be far more desirable and effective in the long run to have a truly representative government in Pakistan and win its support for the American agenda on merit? If America feels that a representative government would not support its agenda on merit, then that speaks volumes about the merit of the American agenda. As far as our government is concerned, is it really worthwhile to aggravate and alienate the public at home or shed innocent Pakistani blood to appease unreliable partners abroad? Is it wise to push through unwise and unpopular schemes and projects that could irreparably damage the fragile socio-political bonds that bind us? The government may enjoy the support and confidence of America today. But when the winds start to change direction then the only thing that will matter is public support. The fact is that winds have already begun to blow in another direction. That was the most self-evident truth that emerged from the Bush visit to the subcontinent. So apparent was the shift of fortunes that even an underling like Afghan President Hamid Karzai, having smelt blood, openly attacked President Musharraf. The Shah of Iran was the primary ally of the United States at one time. But when they decided to dump him, not only was he forced to flee into exile to escape the wrath of his own people, but in his final days he could not even find a piece of earth to die in peace on.

IS PAKISTAN A FAILED STATE?

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, June 3, 2006

What is a failed state? The concept is relatively fluid, defying cast-iron definition. The choice of criteria associated with efficient statehood is often subjective. Quoting selective data and statistics, one can build a strong argument that even states like America, France, United Kingdom and Japan are failed states. However, Professor Noam Chomsky’s perception of a failed state serves as a reasonable frame of reference. He identifies a failed state as one that has a weak government with little or no control over its territory and which has lost its monopoly over the use of force. The writ and laws of such governments are habitually ignored on a massive scale and can not be imposed due to crippling corruption, high rate of crime, impenetrable bureaucracy, ineffective judiciary and repeated or continued military interference in politics. The consequence of all this is an implosion of all state institutions, rendering the state unable to perform even its most vital functions of providing security and development. Not only this, but it can no longer reproduce the requisite conditions for its own continued existence.

In the most recent assessment of the US magazine ‘Foreign Policy’, Pakistan occupies the ninth position in the list of failed states, having leapfrogged twenty-five places from the thirty-fourth slot on the previous list. A joint report issued by the US National Intelligence Council and the CIA, titled “Global Futures Assessment Report”, quoted by former Pakistan High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Mr. Wajid Shamsul Hasan in South Asia Tribune, lends credence to this assessment. The report states that “by year 2015 Pakistan would be a failed state, ripe with civil war, bloodshed, inter-provincial rivalries and a struggle for control of its nuclear weapons and complete Talibanisation. Pakistan will not recover easily from decades of political and economic mismanagement, divisive policies, lawlessness, corruption and ethnic friction.” Other reports emanating from the West question whether Pakistan can survive beyond the next ten years. Is the future really so bleak for Pakistan?

The edifice of state rests primarily on three pillars; Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. The Executive, or government, has lost credibility and public confidence. Since it is the product of an artificially engineered parliamentary majority and comprises of a patchwork coalition, its defining characteristics are a depressing intellectual staleness, lack of ideas, weakness, indecision, lack of direction and total administrative atrophy.

It is even vulnerable to bullying and blackmail by its coalition partners. The ongoing strife in Waziristan and Balochistan amply illustrate the loss of government control on vast chunks of territory as well as the loss of monopoly on use of force, which is further highlighted by political terrorism and crime. The general lawlessness, corruption and incompetence that prevail prove that the writ of government is non-existent and it is in no position to impose its will, since it has lost control of the administrative machinery. The bureaucracy has evolved a will and purpose of its own and often refuses to obey even ministers: who can blame them, when people who are not fit to be Union Council nazims are elevated to senior posts in government? Even the post of Prime Minister has been reduced to a joke, his role in government having been reduced to wearing flashy suits and making useless foreign trips. In a country crippled by severe economic constraints like Pakistan, having a cabinet of such unprecedented size, which has failed to produce positive results on any front, is nothing short of a crime. The government has miserably failed to provide the citizen with security of life, dignity and property, which is its most basic and essential responsibility. A majority of people live without the most basic amenities of life such as clean drinking water, medicines, electricity and education, while funds earmarked for such projects are embezzled. When the hardships of life and lack of facilities and opportunity forces our youth to commit suicide at a disturbing rate, when private militias and security firms become necessary since the plethora of law enforcement agencies can not be trusted and when people are forced to buy drinking water from the water mafia and install tubewells for irrigation purposes rather than rely on public arrangements for supplying water, then where does that leave the role of government in our lives? The disenchantment of the public with government is evident from ever decreasing turnout figures at the polls. People have justifiably come to believe that the government is neither capable nor interested in finding solutions to their problems.

The National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies are products of rigged elections in which candidates sponsored by the authorities, on the basis of blind allegiance to them rather than ability and calibre, are ensured success. Senate seats are brazenly sold to the highest bidders. As a consequence, the sort of people who manage to find their way into parliament only succeed in making a sad burlesque of the noble institution. Even President Musharraf was forced to concede that his 'graduate' parliament is full of incompetent and illiterate people. In recent years, not a single piece of legislation that can positively impact the life of the ordinary citizen has been forthcoming. Instead, only legislation intended to secure the tenure of incumbent administrations is rushed through, even in contravention of rules. Because of the obvious uselessness of the assemblies, the people have come to regard them as an insignificant sideshow rather than the responsible and representative institution they should be. One can only look at the parliament of Nepal in wonder and ask why our assemblies can not fulfill the same heroic role.

The failure of the Judiciary is, perhaps, the most damaging and painful, since an effective judiciary can set right many wrongs and act as the last line of defence for individual rights and freedom. But the Judiciary has failed to live up to its responsibilities and has turned its back on the ordinary citizen. Instead of acting as the guardians of the constitution, the courts have repeatedly provided legal and constitutional cover to bonapartist tendencies, thereby encouraging future usurpation of legitimate civilian rule, rendering the constitution no more than a tragic hoax. From the Moulvi Tamizudin

Case to the Dosso Case, Begum Nusrat Bhutto Case and the Zafar Ali Shah Case, one can chronicle a litany of sad let downs of historic proportions. The common citizen can have no hope of relief either, as cases have been known to linger on in court longer than the lifetime of the litigants. In a society where murder, kidnapping, loot, plunder, terrorism, theft, corruption and all sorts of excesses are rampant, the Justices are satisfied to take suo moto notice only on issues like kite flying on basant, smoking cigarettes in public places, wedding feasts and jirgas.

Under these conditions, the common man feels like hunted prey with no relief in sight. At least one third of the population of Pakistan subsists below the poverty line, earning no more than two dollars a day. Forty percent of our children are grossly undernourished. The literacy rate is less than forty percent. Only one percent of the people pay income tax. Over sixty percent of the budget is dedicated to military expenditure and repayment of debt. Another twenty percent is spent on government expenditure. Only the remaining twenty percent of the budget is set aside for development, most of which finds its way into the pockets of corrupt officials and politicians. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world, while its per capita income of \$2,388.00 ranks as the 135th in the world. The fortunes of the top one percent elite of society are flourishing, as witnessed by the huge influx of luxurious European vehicles and the construction of palatial homes, but the bottom half of the population is sinking deeper into the poverty pit. It is the best of times. It is the worst of times.

Does this make Pakistan a failed state? The answer depends on too many subjective assessments. However, no stroke of genius is required to see that things are bad and getting worse fast. But all is not lost. It is not too late to stop this slide. The need of the hour is deep, radical change. We need new blood, new ideas, a new direction, a new system and a new social contract. Change is a natural process and is inevitable. But such radical change is never easy. It requires courage and an iron will. The vested interests, indigenous and foreign, are bound to cling on to the status quo with all their might because it serves their narrow interests. Our present woes are the direct consequence of not letting go of the status quo to allow change to occur. As such, the most important question for us now as a nation is not whether Pakistan is a failed state or not, but whether the progressive forces of change can be made to prevail over the retrogressive forces of the status quo in the struggle for Pakistan's survival and what role each and every citizen of Pakistan will play in this decisive struggle?

WHERE IS QUAID-E-AZAM'S PAKISTAN?

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', January 6, 2007

The territorial integrity and unity of states, particularly multinational states like Pakistan that are vulnerable to ethnocentric forces, can not be guaranteed by bullets and bayonets. To the contrary, coercion unleashes centrifugal forces that erode the sensitive and fragile social, political and ethnic tethers that bind a multinational state. We need look no further than our own short, chequered past to appreciate the validity of this assertion. The glue that binds multinational states together and makes them stable and strong is a social contract between its component units based upon consensus and wilful acquiescence in expectation of liberty, equality, equity, peace and prosperity. Mutual respect, trust, and fairplay must intrinsically form the core of any such social contract. Given such an environment, the spirit of fraternity that consequently flows from it cements the bond between the component units, thereby strengthening the state.

Pakistan came into being on the basis of such a social contract between the Sindhi, Punjabi, Baloch, Pushtoon and Bengali nations on the basis of the Pakistan Resolution. But the consensus and acquiescence among these nations that gave birth to Pakistan is nowhere to be seen now. One could actually argue that this consensus was no more than a mirage even back in 1947, since Balochistan objected with the first post-partition sunrise and troops had to be sent in to silence all dissent by force. The armed forces, having built permanent fortifications and trenches in the mountains which they use from time to time to quell political unrest and 'anti-state' sentiments, have become a more or less permanent feature of the province. Instead of resolving contentious issues amicably to allow mutual trust among the nations of Pakistan to develop, an iron fist approach has been employed which has shattered all remaining semblance of unity and cohesion.

The tragedy lies in the fact that the deep fissures that have opened up are not products of any flaws in the social contract, but are an artificial phenomenon generated by a specific clique in an attempt to establish the domination of one larger nation over the other smaller ones in blatant violation of the original social contract. This has, predictably, sent the smaller nations into a centrifugal spin. The Pakistan Resolution guaranteed that the component nations of Pakistan would be 'sovereign and autonomous' in their own affairs. But the Sindhi, Baloch, Pushtoon and Bengali peoples

saw a different post-independence reality that was the antithesis of everything contained in the Pakistan Resolution. A new creed of opportunism, expediency and neo-imperialist hegemonic tendencies replaced the promise of the Pakistan Resolution. This wayward drift has systematically pushed the country to the edge of the precipice. It is now a crime to even talk about the Pakistan Resolution since it amounts to holding a mirror before Caliban in which he cannot avoid seeing his own ugliness.

In the aftermath of the brutal killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti and his tribesmen, a grand *jirga* of Baloch sardars was summoned by the Khan of Kalat in Quetta on 21 st September 2006. It was attended by eighty-five sardars and three hundred tribal elders, including those the government claims to have in its pocket. They declared that Balochistan was no longer a part of Pakistan since the rights of the Baloch people, ensured by a covenant signed by the Khan of Kalat, the British government and the government of Pakistan, had been violated and they announced their intent to move the International Court of Justice. A followup grand *jirga*, held on 2nd October 2006, reaffirmed the declaration of the first *jirga*. What clearer demonstration can there be of a breakdown of national consensus?

The killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti was a catalytic spark that ignited already simmering Baloch passions. I was in Quetta a few days after the tragic incident to condole with the late Nawab's sons. The provincial capital wore the look of a town under siege; all roads were cordoned off in the town centre by the police and the rangers, who were out in a massive display of strength on the one hand, while the people were out in the streets on the other, giving vent to their frustrated emotions. It brought back memories of the darkest, and final, days of the Ayub junta. In such a charged and volatile situation, any genuinely representative government, having already achieved their goal of eliminating a perceived obstacle in the person of the late Nawab, would see the need to diffuse the tension by trying to forge some sort of rapprochement with the alienated masses, if not their leaders, by extending an olive branch to them. But rapprochement and reconciliation are beyond the scope of the men in boots in Islamabad who only know how to use force, unless expediency or survival instincts dictate otherwise. Then it is acceptable to reconcile with anyone, including the menacing clerics in parliament, the Taliban elders in Waziristan or even those politicians they not long ago vilified as being corrupt and terrorists. But the common citizens are not afforded the same deferential treatment when they come out into the streets to demand their rights. For them are reserved threats of dire consequences and, most recently, a promise to 'rub their noses in the dirt.' This approach can only add fuel to fire and further aggravate an already alienated people.

The situation in Sindh is not very different. The government has not as yet resorted to the use of force here as it has in Balochistan and Frontier, but given the collision course set between the people and the government on core issues like Kalabagh Dam, leasing of islands to foreign companies, establishment of non-Sindh's and criminals as de facto masters of Sindh, NFC Award, etc., one wonders how far off the exercise of that option can be. The government has made it a point to adopt policies and projects that every man, woman and child in Sindh is protesting against on a daily basis. This approach by the government has miraculously achieved something that was hitherto deemed impossible: it has united Sindh. Not only have all big and small opposition parties come closer together to cooperate in defence of Sindh's interests, but even the ministers, advisors, MNAs, MPAs and Senators of the ruling party dare

not promote the government agenda in public.

Perhaps the reason why the government has not so far felt the need to open fire in Sindh is because they have found a large band of belly-crawling sycophants here who are willing and eager to tow the government line, if in exchange for their services the government will prop them up in power and allow them to loot and plunder public and private resources. Hence, in order to secure their position, not only have new districts and constituencies been demarcated in Sindh, but electoral rolls, which had been compiled anew and computerized only four years ago, have been redrafted to their tailor-made specifications. This unholy wedlock between the boots and the suits is a union made in hell because Sindh is having to pay a very heavy price for their honeymoon. The betrayal of her own sons has hit Sindh harder than bullets. The government has made up its mind to use these mercenaries, terrorists and criminals and totally bypass the people to push ahead with its unpopular agenda. No serious attempt has been made to enter into a dialogue with the genuine leaders of the people to resolve the impasse. The sole half-hearted attempt made by President Musharraf ended in embarrassment for him when, during his speech at Sukkur airport on 23rd December 2005, a man in the audience that had been carefully sifted for the occasion by the agencies, stood up and asked him not to mention Kalabagh Dam in front of them because the very mention of it made their blood boil. The International Republican Institute can embellish its survey all it wants but this is the reality of the popularity of the President and his agenda in Sindh.

The government's approach of defying public opinion can only lead to disaster. It will widen the gap between the rulers and the ruled, aggravate tensions and frustrations and damage the unity of Pakistan. The need of the hour is to mend bridges, produce an atmosphere of reconciliation and regenerate the consensus that led to the creation of this country. This can not be achieved by means of an iron fist approach. History illustrates that such an approach may stifle a few individuals but can not work against the masses. Far greater and supposedly even more invincible dictators like the Shah of Iran, Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines and Ayub Khan of Pakistan were swept away by the wrath of the people. In the face of a shockwave of public discontent, even their foreign overlords, with all their power and might, had to get out of the way.

SADDAM'S EXECUTION: LESSONS FOR MUSLIM RULERS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', January 20, 2007

Infinite American 'wisdom' has transformed a villainous despot into a hero. Certainly Saddam Hussain faced the ultimate test of courage and strength with supreme dignity and grace and he will be remembered for that, but his greatest contribution to history is the important lessons he leaves behind for Muslim rulers.

Firstly, Saddam's fall and execution emphatically emphasizes what we already know; that the Americans are unreliable, indeed dangerous allies. They have a habit of ultimately turning on their friends. Their friendship is based on a one way flow of interests as they use their allies to achieve their objectives. In the process, all transgressions of their allies are overlooked and condoned. But once the allies have outlived their utility, their transgressions suddenly become sins against humanity worthy of punishment, inviting the wrath of the 'righteous'. Such was the isolation of the Shah of Iran in exile that he could not find a piece of earth to die on in peace.

And now there is the Saddam example. Once their blue-eyed boy who could do no wrong, he ultimately found himself hanging at the end of a rope to the humiliating jeers of morbid onlookers. In the aftermath of the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran and capture of American hostages in November 1979, the United States was keen to isolate and punish Iran and Saddam Hussain was a willing instrument of American objectives. Therefore, America fully backed the Iraqi invasion of Iran in which chemical as well as biological weapons, including mustard gas, taban nerve agent, sarin and anthrax, were used, resulting in over a million casualties in Iran, not to mention damage to the tune of over \$350 billion. On 24th March 1984, the day the United Nations released a report confirming the use of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq on Iranian soil, Donald Rumsfeld met with Saddam Hussain in Baghdad to discuss the Aqaba pipeline project. The brutal massacre of Kurds and other political opponents in Iraq, which took place while Saddam was still operating under American tutelage, also did not matter to his American masters at the time. But when winds started to blow in a different direction and Saddam became too big for his boots, all these skeletons were dragged out of the closet by his erstwhile protectors as justification

for his elimination.

Pak-American relationship too is replete with repeated American let downs. In the Pak-Indian wars of 1965 and 1971, despite all the treaties, pacts, commitments and assurances that guaranteed American assistance to Pakistan in the event of Indian aggression, America was loath to act on time to pull the reins on India lest her developing relations with India be jeopardized. Even the highly pro-American Ayub Khan was forced to concede in his book 'Friends not Masters' that "The United States attitude, in fact, was that India should have all sympathy and support and that Pakistan would be well advised not to raise any difficulties." The Soviet Ambassador to Pakistan commented to the Pakistani Foreign Minister as early as July 1960 on the unreliability of American friendship, saying "We support India and Afghanistan against you because they are our friends, even when they are in the wrong. But your friends do not support you, even when they know that you are in the right." These words, spoken in 1960, have come to define Pak-American relations.

Secondly, the silence of the global Muslim community over Saddam Hussain's execution was deafening. The heads of most Muslim states either remained mute, or coated their protests with diplomatic camouflage, preferring to condemn not Saddam's execution, but the fact that it was carried out on Eid day. Most heaved a sigh of relief to be rid of him. He was neither a model neighbour nor an asset to the Muslim community of states/statesmen. Public reaction to his execution in Muslim countries outside Iraq was not so much pro-Saddam as it was anti-American. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon ignited fierce passions in Muslim countries and produced not just heartfelt sympathy and support for the enigmatic Hassan Nasrullah and Hezbollah, but emotional demonstrations and protests everywhere. In the aftermath of the historic triumph over Zionist forces, Hassan Nasrullah has become larger than life in the eyes of every Muslim man, woman and child, because he enjoys the love and support of his people and took on a greater military power in the name of truth, honour and justice. He proved that with popular support you can defeat superpowers. One can only wonder how events might have unfolded in Iraq had Saddam Hussain enjoyed widespread active support in the global Muslim community.

The absence of a nexus between Saddam Hussain and the people of Iraq produced the third lesson arising from Saddam's execution, i.e. a lack of public reaction to his execution in Iraq, apart from small pockets of disturbances in his hometown. Saddam was never a man of the people or a populist leader with great public support. He ruled by the Machiavellian principle of force and strength, inflicting terror upon the people, ruthlessly crushing all dissent and allowing no political freedom of expression and opposition. The power he derived flowed from the barrel of the gun rather than from the support of the people. He preferred to hitch his star with the good graces of his American overlords and subjugated his nation to unspeakable horrors like genocide and merciless suppression, resulting in a mind numbingly massive loss of life and unimaginable misery. He denied the people of Iraq the development and enlightenment that the country's oil wealth could easily afford. Thus, when the Americans pulled out the rug from under him, he had nowhere else to turn to and was left with no option but to stick it out with a hollow, short lived display of false bravado. When American tanks rolled into Baghdad, Iraqis celebrated the fall of the hated tyrant (even though worse lay ahead for them) and when the trap doors of the gallows swung open on Eid day, precious few shed a tear for him.

There is a lesson to be learnt from all this for the rulers of Muslim states around the world: grovelling and pandering to America is no panacea for political problems. Nothing matters more than honour, truth and the support of the masses in politics. Without the weight of truth, principles and popular support on your side, you ultimately die ignominiously on the gallows, taunted and insulted till your last living moment by the very people who would be fighting for your life had you not burnt your bridges with them. But with their support, you live forever. Men of honour and principles enter the political arena to serve their nations and in doing so carve out their place in history. But unfortunately, most rulers of Muslim states feel they cannot survive in power without prostrating themselves before America to earn its protection from their own people whom they alienate by such prostration. This has become their creed. On the other hand, we have the example of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, who won a massive electoral victory on an anti-American platform and has defied America on the strength of unwavering public support. His resolve to serve his own national interests rather than playing the American stooge has earned him not only unanimous respect and admiration of the common man in Iran and around the Muslim world, but has given him the strength that only honour and truth can produce. So much so that even the Americans are forced to swallow their pride and solicit his help and cooperation in restoring peace in the Middle East. This is a far cry from how the Americans treat their supposed ally in Pakistan. President Bush humiliated President Musharraf by refusing to sign a nuclear accord with Pakistan similar to the *one* he signed with India and further insulted him by talking of the need for 'fair elections' in Pakistan during his visit to Islamabad.

There is something undeniably noble about looking an adversary in the eye with honour and dignity that invariably gives pause to any Goliath and makes him blink. Doormats have only themselves to blame for any humiliating, painful fate that befalls them. Shakespeare said it so eloquently: "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in the stars but in ourselves that we are underlings." There is no substitute for the sovereign power of the people and their support. Therein lies honour and real power. The rest amounts to no more than wages of servitude.

A TALE OF TWO PUBLIC MEETINGS

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', March 10, 2007

A public meeting is democracy in action. It is the ideal vessel for the display of the direct bond between a leader and his supporters and a show of political muscle. Without such a bond and popular support, public meetings are meaningless. Of course, that does not stop military dictators from having mammoth public meetings. Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini addressed crowds that seemingly stretched beyond the horizon. Such public meetings are orchestrated to create a mirage of public support which military dictators do not enjoy.

Two large public meetings took place in Sindh on 28th February 2007. One was organized by the government near Larkana near the right bank of the Indus River, addressed by President General Pervaiz Musharraf. The other was organized by the Sindh National Front in Khairpur, almost directly across the river, addressed by Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto. The contrast between these two events vividly illustrates all that is wrong with politics in Pakistan today.

President Musharraf came to Larkana to lay the foundation stone of a new bridge across the river connecting Larkana to Khairpur. The authorities organized a public meeting for him at an abandoned airstrip near a small town called Hatti, a few kilometres south of Larkana. This derelict site was long ago reduced to wet, soggy soil and is surrounded by water logged fields. It needed a lot of work to make it fit for a public meeting. Thus preparations got under way several weeks in advance. Heavy machinery, in the form of bulldozers, dumpers, excavators and rollers, was brought in from all over Sindh and deployed under the supervision of senior officers. Over a hundred homes of local shepherds between Haider Birohi village and Memon village were razed to the ground and more than one hundred and fifty acres of standing wheat crop was leveled by bulldozers to make way for five helipads and a VIP car park. When the local PML(Q) party men came to know that the dispossessed shepherds and haris were going to demonstrate against the atrocity perpetrated against them, they rushed to them and promised them fair compensation, which, if precedent can be relied upon, they are highly unlikely to ever receive. Twenty-five thousand chairs adorned the public meeting venue, covered by an enormous marquee.

The security arrangements were befitting the second most guarded man in the

world (the first, of course, being George Bush). A strict cordon of seven kilometers radius was thrown around Hatti seventy-two hours ahead of the event by the armed forces, para-military units, rangers and police, with a heavy contingent of armed soldiers on high alert, along with thousands more in plain clothes, giving the area the appearance of occupied territory. Roads were blocked off and security personnel took up positions on the rooftops of government buildings and even private homes. Hundreds of security cameras were fixed at key positions. Sukkur and Moenjodaro airports were closed while the President was in Hatti and military airplanes and helicopters were seen patrolling the skies overhead. The public car park was located approximately three kilometers from the public meeting venue and the VIP car park was about one kilometer away. All, regardless of rank or office, were required to park their vehicles in the appropriate car park and walk to the venue.

All SHO's in northern Sindh were required to provide at least 50 buses each to bring people to the public meeting. They started confiscating buses four days ahead of the event, bringing the public transport system to a grinding halt. Public employees, particularly those belonging to the Health and Education departments from all districts in northern Sindh, were bound by their superiors to attend the public meeting. The Ministers, Advisors, MNAs, MPAs, Senators and other PML sycophants who wanted to pander to the President to prove their loyalty had brought thousands of buses and pickups from all over Sindh (though eye witnesses report that most of these vehicles were only 25-30% full), but none of these people were allowed anywhere near the public meeting. They were left to wander listlessly on the roads leading to Hatti while only public employees and VIPs were deemed safe enough to fill the twenty-five thousand seats. During the public meeting the crowd remained silent, uninterested and detached from the proceedings, which is a telltale sign of a rent-a-crowd. There was a distance of at least fifty yards between the stage and the first row of seats and security personnel ensured that no one approached the stage. All twenty-five thousand in attendance were required to stay in their seats several hours before the President arrived and after he left, without even drinking water.

All this hassle, not to mention a bill easily running into several tens of crores, for what? Just to lay the foundation stone of a bridge? That could have been done for a fraction of the *cost* and inconvenience to the people. The President announced a grant of ten crore rupees each for Larkana and Khairpur, which is unlikely to materialize for months, if at all. Even if it does somehow trickle down, it will fall into the hands of corrupt nazims and officers. So what did the common man get out of all this sound and fury? And who is going to be fooled by this farcical display of 'public support'? If the President really was so popular, it would not have been necessary to engineer the results of the referendum that launched his presidency (for which he felt compelled to apologize later) nor would it have been necessary to rig the general elections of 2002 or the local bodies polls to install his yes men in power. An orchestrated 'public' show can not alter reality. Instead of producing positive effects, the government show at Hatti left the public cursing the organizers for making life miserable for them.

The Sindh National Front public meeting at Khairpur was in sharp contrast to the government show in Hatti. Even though lack of transportation (all buses in northern Sindh having been highjacked to the government show at Hatti) meant that only the local people of Khairpur could participate, a Sindhi newspaper ("Sobh") wrote that it was the largest public meeting ever held in Khairpur. It was easily as big as the other

public meeting taking place at the same time across the river. Everyone sat comfortably on the grass in the park that was the venue and no elaborate security arrangements were required. A police officer informed the party office holders that he had received intelligence information about a possible suicide bomb attack on the party Chairman in Khairpur and that the police could not ensure his safety. That is a strange thing for a public '*mohafiz*' to say, especially in light of the unprecedented security arrangements made for the President across the river. Is one to surmise that all law enforcement agencies are there only to guard the VIPs while everyone else is left to his own devices? In any case, the public meeting proceeded without any unpleasant incident. Everyone had easy access to the venue. People could come right up to the stage and many even climbed up to shake hands with the Chairman and garland him. The entire public meeting was organized by the party office holders and workers at minimal cost and no inconvenience to the public. A massive crowd had crammed into the park and thousands more poured out into the streets outside, occupying all vantage points on fences, trees, boundary walls and rooftops. The enthusiasm and fervour of the crowd was mesmerizing as the whole neighbourhood rocked with their slogans and cheers. The connection between the party leaders who spoke and the crowd was palpable and heartfelt. This public meeting left the participants buoyant and in high spirits. Even several days after the event, people were still calling to congratulate party office holders and workers for a spectacular *jalsa*.

Unfortunately, the generations that have come in the post Zulfikar Ali Bhutto era have no clue as to what politics and government really is. All they have seen is the loot, plunder, incompetence, *lotaism* and capitulation of the pseudo politicians and military rulers who have plagued this country since 1977. They have never seen politics of the people in action. They have no idea how an administration should be run. The love affair between a popular political leader and the people is perhaps the most romantic of all love affairs. Alas this romance was buried with the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. What has taken its place in his wake is malodorous *lotaism* and sycophancy that was on unabashed display in Hatti near Larkana on 28th February 2007. How long can the people of this country tolerate this nauseating stench? History and destiny await the answer to this pivotal question.

BLOODSTAINED BLACK COATS

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, April 3, 2007

At a time when one feared that the value of truth and what is right may not have survived the crush of expediency, sycophancy and habitual sacrifice of all that is holy and worth cherishing for the attainment of narrow self-interests, the black coats have risen to defend the honour and sanctity of the institution they are associated with. The question now arises whether they can sustain their movement till they achieve their ends. This will be very difficult to do since their own livelihood is being affected. After all it is not the affluent, elite echelons of the black coat community that are bearing the brunt but those belonging to the middle and lower classes whose families break no bread if they do not earn on a daily basis. The government has also realized that the momentum of the lawyers’ protest needs to be broken. It is for this reason that future hearings of the reference against the ‘non-functional’ Chief Justice before the Supreme Judicial Council are likely to take place at longer intervals.

The issue is bigger than the fate of just one judge. It pertains to the independence and sanctity of the judiciary and is, as such, a political issue. In addition to this, democracy, the constitution, parliament, good governance and the will of the people have all been reduced to a sad burlesque. The need of the hour is for the big mainstream political parties who have gained the most, politically and materially, from the system that now lies in shards and splinters at their feet, to rise to the occasion in support of the black coats. They claim to have the peoples’ card in their pocket but have miserably failed to flex any muscle in recent years. Events have given them another opportunity to redeem themselves. But with the exception of MMA, which does not command large scale nationwide support, the leaders of the big parties fled the country several years ago to escape legal action on corruption and criminal charges. The people are not going to follow lightweight second tier politicians who carry no weight into the streets to face tear gas, *lathi* charge and imprisonment. The common man has lost all interest in politics. He may come out into the streets only on issues directly related to his person but not on some arcane points of principles which do nothing to fire his imagination anymore. Besides, this government gauged the depths of the so-called leaders and their parties some time ago and feels no threat from them. They know how to deal with them.

Action against the Chief Justice was precipitated by Naeem Bokhari's open letter, which was widely circulated on the internet. The reference too was based upon material contained in this letter. Apart from allegations regarding the Chief Justice's son, Mr. Bokhari's gripe against the Chief Justice is that he used excessive protocol, insisted upon a guard of honour in Peshawar, acquired a Mercedes, used government helicopters, airplanes and houses and refurbished his chambers at considerable cost. If the Chief Justice abused his office, then he should be held accountable. But so should those who acceded to his demands in providing such perks, including the appointing authority who gave his son a job. In any case, who doesn't avail of such perks and benefits when in public office to as great an extent as they can get away with, especially with regard to nepotism and protocol? The Prime Minister's motorcade on Shahrah-e-Faisal in Karachi on 21 st March, which I witnessed first hand, is a perfect example. Traffic was blocked at all intersections along the route and at least a two mile buffer was enforced ahead and behind the motorcade. Pedestrians were not allowed to stand on the sidewalks and were herded into the nearest shops and side streets (where have the days gone when people would throng their leaders and shower rose petals on them as they passed by? Where have those leaders gone?). The motorcade itself consisted of at least a hundred vehicles of all sorts, with sirens blaring. The intimidating scene was reminiscent of a full scale armed invasion, drawing much comment in newspapers the next day. Is all this in strict conformity to the rules? I have seen British Prime Minister Tony Blair's motorcade in London. It comprised of two police motorcycles driving ahead of the Prime Minister's car, which was followed by just two other vehicles carrying officials and security personnel. Even high ranking police officers get more protocol than that in Pakistan. As for the refurbishment of chambers, Benazir and Nawaz Sharif both refurbished the Prime Minister's House during their tenures. They also built a massive, vulgar new Prime Minister's Secretariat that is a monstrous eyesore. Does anyone know how much all that cost? Who in power doesn't use government helicopters, airplanes, vehicles and houses, even for private use? Recently, the Chief Minister Sindh sent an Indian lady on a tour of Sindh in a government helicopter. If all this, which has hitherto been condoned common practice, has suddenly become a crime, then why just target one culprit in an ocean of offenders?

Mr. Bokhari's other complaint against the Chief Justice is that he was harsh with police officers and often treated them to verbal threats and onslaughts. What was he supposed to do when the police overstepped their legal bounds or his orders were disobeyed? And since when did police officers become heroic standard bearers of all that is good and sacrosanct, deserving deferential treatment? They are an even greater nuisance for the poor common man than criminals. But the government understandably has a soft corner for the police because they do their dirty work, particularly victimizing political opponents. After I was elected MPA in 1997, the newly elected Chief Minister Sindh took me aside one day and complained that a judge of the Sindh High Court, who had been appointed during my father's caretaker period, was creating problems by being harsh with police officers. I tried to explain, in vain, that he was doing no more than applying the law and giving legal relief to people who had been victimized by the police. When his tenure as ad hoc judge expired, he was not confirmed and returned to private practice. Our rulers forge a greater affinity with state instruments of coercion that prop them up in power than the people whom they purport to represent who are victimized by the same.

Mr. Bokhari further alleges that the Chief Justice would announce one decision in court but would produce a different written order. He also accuses the Chief Justice of mistreating lawyers, displaying an arrogant attitude towards them, not allowing them to present their cases and leaving no room for advocacy. Even if all this is true, the Chief Justice is not the only one guilty of such conduct. The entire Judiciary is in an advanced state of decay. Discrepancies in the announced and written orders have become a common occurrence. The Judiciary causes bottlenecks instead of providing remedies. Cases linger on in courts for decades without resolution, leaving no other course of action for the parties but to take the law into their own hands, exacerbating the law and order situation. Litigation has become a punishment for the complainant who exhausts himself in the pursuit of justice, while the defendant remains untouched and ignores the proceedings. There is much evil under the sun, such as *sifarish*, favouritism, incompetence and worse that ails the entire judicial system that does not bear elaboration here on my part. But it is an open secret. The cure lies a in long overdue effective reform of the Judiciary rather than a selective witch hunt.

Interestingly, Mr. Bokhari writes "The Chief Justice would rise in the eyes of everybody if he walked from his residence to the court and hooters, police escorts, flags is just fluff not the substance of office." Well, the Chief Justice tried to walk to court from his residence on 13th March to attend the first hearing of the Supreme Judicial Council and the world watched in horror the treatment meted out to him. A fine live illustration of enlightened moderation worth saving on a tapestry.

The fate of the 'non-functional' Chief Justice and the outcome of the reference against him will go a long way in defining the future of the Judiciary in Pakistan. If equity and justice do not prevail, then the blood on the black coats may eventually dry up and be washed away, but it will leave behind a stigmatic, indicting stain that no amount of whitewash will be able to conceal.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BEGINNING TO BLOW

AMEER BHUTTO

'Dawn', May 19, 2007

May 12th 2007 was perhaps the darkest day in the history of Karachi. The city watched, in stunned disbelief, the unprecedented carnage unleashed in its streets, while a plethora of law enforcement agencies stood by as spectators, idly witnessing the bloodbath and often themselves running for cover. Bullets flew in the streets as all semblances of government and authority ceased to exist. It will take some time for the city to come to terms with the brutality. It may take even longer to get to the bottom of the tragedy. But for those with eyes to see and recognize the truth, the writing on the wall is clear enough. One only need ask oneself why only the Chief Justice's rally was disrupted while the MOM rally proceeded uneventfully.

A number of important questions arise from this tragedy: firstly, why did the government feel the need to prevent the Chief Justice from addressing the lawyers in Karachi? If he can hold a twenty-five hour rally from Islamabad to Lahore that culminated with a similar function in Lahore, what apocalypse would have descended, worse than the one that actually did, if he had been allowed to do the same in Karachi? The Chief Justice's Punjab rally was a mammoth event, beyond the expectations of the ruling clique, who were visibly shaken by it, to the extent that the very next day the Prime Minister was forced to concede that the imposition of emergency was a possibility. Nevertheless, the Punjab government had enough common sense to realize that to block a public tidal wave by use of force is asking for trouble. This is precisely how mass movements originate; when the authorities bull-headedly initiate confrontation with the people. President Musharraf himself admitted in his speech at the Islamabad public meeting that no one can stop the masses once they are on the move. He has also claimed recently that there is a conspiracy afoot to destabilize his government. He could have out-manoeuvred the *conspirators* by instructing the Sindh government to allow the Chief Justice to hold his rally. The President has no one to blame but himself for letting the *conspirators* to run amok.

If it is alright for the ruling party to mobilize state apparatus (some say state funds as well) to hold a public meeting in Islamabad, and if their ally, the MOM, is allowed

to hold a rally in Karachi on the same day, then why should the opposition parties be prevented from according a welcome to the Chief Justice? Either there is democracy in the country or there is not. If there is, then the freedom of expression and political activity must extend to everyone. Justice Ifukhar Chaudhary can not be held responsible for the carnage in Karachi. He was not the one spraying bullets into the crowds in the streets. He came to Karachi as the Chief Justice of Pakistan and a free citizen of a *democratic* state to exercise an inviolable right. The blame must rest those who needlessly stopped him from doing so. That is what led to bloodshed.

Secondly, in view of the events of May 12 in Karachi, one must ask whether there is such a thing as 'government' in Pakistan, or at least in Sindh. When the President or Prime Minister come to Karachi, the Sindh government and all the law enforcement agencies have no qualms about sealing off virtually half the city to provide security for them, despite the inconvenience caused to the residents. Why could they not make similar arrangements for the Chief Justice if they knew there would be trouble? Even if we give them the benefit of doubt and overlook the serious accusations being hurled at them in connection with the bloodshed in Karachi, the government cannot, at the very least, escape the charge of mind boggling incompetence and negligence. Among other things, they must explain why the massive law enforcement machinery played the ostrich while the massacre continued? Are we to assume that the sole task of the heavily funded law enforcement agencies now is to harass and victimize the political opponents of the ruling party, but at the first sign of trouble they have the mandate to run and leave the people to their own devices? How can the people feel secure ever again, knowing that Karachi has been surrendered to terrorists and they can not count on any form of state authority to protect them? What is the *raison d'être* of the state if it can not even protect the lives of its citizens? Heads should roll on this count. But we all know that such things do not happen in this country.

Apart from fulfilling his duties of cheerleading for the President (a painfully sad sight indeed!), it was ridiculous of the Prime Minister to stand before the rent-a-crowd in Islamabad and assert with a straight face that his government would not allow terrorists to hold sway in Karachi, while the same day Karachi's Shahrah-e-Faisal was adorned with dozens of dead bodies and the writ of state was nowhere in sight. The Prime Minister's farcical statements were improved upon by the President's, who claimed that the Islamabad rent-a-crowd proved that the nation was with him, as if the carnage in Karachi was just a figment of our imagination. This government has placed Pakistan on someone else's pyre by making us a party in America's War on Terror. But, at the same time, the terror at home rages on unabated.

In even a semi-enlightened country, such a massacre would lead to the instantaneous collapse of the government. If the government did not resign, the people would throw them out. President Nixon was forced to resign because he ordered the bugging of the Democratic Party headquarters. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori resigned on account of unsubstantiated allegations of corruption against not himself but his government. But this is Pakistan. Here the Supreme Court rules that the privatization of the steel mills reeks of corruption, but the government does not even blink an eye. Blood flows in Karachi but the rulers have the audacity to claim that the nation is with them. No one should hold their breath expecting the government to do the honourable thing and resign.

The third, and perhaps the most important, question is who will fill the leadership

vacuum that has left the people with no one to turn to? The people are unhappy with the status quo and have become restless. They yearn for meaningful change. The response the Chief Justice has received all across the nation is symptomatic of public discontent against the present setup. While the government boasts of the rivers of milk and honey they have caused to flow across the land, the common man wages a desperate daily struggle for survival against the odds and he is drowning fast. The situation is similar to the tail end of the Ayub Khan era. At that time, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto saw the telltale signs and took advantage of the seething discontent and unrest among the masses to launch a decisive movement. The present charged atmosphere is ripe for a similar political earthquake that could uproot many a seemingly stout oaks. If the people are pouring into the streets and facing bullets because of a suspended Chief Justice, who does not even directly touch the lives of common citizens the way a political leader might, then it is not so hard to imagine the response the appeal of a popular leader, who speaks the peoples' language and influences their lives, might receive. No one would dare stand in his way.

But there are no Zulfikar Ali Bhuttos in this country today. The age of heroes is long gone, at least in Pakistan. The leaders of the main opposition parties have ditched their supporters and fled the country to seek shelter in cooler climes rather than face cases ranging from corruption and money laundering to amassing ill-begotten wealth abroad. Some seem to have taken up more or less permanent residence abroad, while others have diverted their energies to securing a deal with the government that would absolve them of their past sins and allow them to keep the loot, in return for their support. Instead of resorting to the irresistible strength of the masses, which should be their creed and which even a military president is forced to acknowledge, they have chosen the path of deals and compromises. Not surprisingly, the interests and well being of the common man remain unfocused in all this and they have lost faith in such leaders. Hence, the public response to the plight of the Chief Justice is a vent for pent up frustrations. For these leaders to say that they will return if and when elections are held, or when their cases are withdrawn, amounts to rubbing salt in peoples' wounds. The message this sends to the people is that they will come back only when there is some prospect of their coming back to power. In the meantime, the people should stew in their own juices, alone.

These questions and many more need to be answered. Winds of change are beginning to blow. The people themselves, rather than self-serving, corrupt, outdated and failed politicians, must dictate the pace and direction of change.

THE SHADOW OF KALABAGH DAM

AMEER BHUTTO

The Government is adamant about shoving Kalabagh Dam down our throats despite the vociferous opposition to this project in Sindh, Balochistan and the Frontier. The provincial legislatures of these three provinces have repeatedly passed resolutions against this project but this has failed to make any impression on Islamabad or Punjab. The Federal Government's main contention rests on the premise of providing water for the expansion of the agriculture sector in the years to come by creating another water reservoir at Kalabagh to face the strain that a booming population growth is likely to place upon the existing system. Planning for the future is all well and good but problems arise when confronted with existing ground realities which must be tackled. Since Sindh would be the most affected province, Sindhis harbour a number of genuine reservations against Kalabagh Dam. President General Pervaiz Musharraf has become the most vocal advocate of the project and has been asking the people of Sindh to ignore those political leaders who oppose the dam. This ham-fisted approach, far from resolving the issue, has served only to elevate the debate to a higher level and further provoke the opponents of the dam.

The President may be right to some extent in claiming that the issue has been unnecessarily politicised. But that should in no way detract from the genuine objections that exist against Kalabagh Dam. The politicisation of this issue has become a serious impediment in drawing attention to the genuine concerns regarding this project. All opposition to Kalabagh Dam is summarily rejected as being politically motivated, which is a rather peculiar approach to adopt when your publicly declared objective is to build a consensus. So far, all efforts to build a consensus on the issue have revolved around experts and technocrats, including bureaucrats from WAPDA and the irrigation departments of the four provinces. A political and truly representative government, with its finger on the pulse of the nation, would have realised long ago that bureaucrats can neither resolve the controversy nor generate a consensus since they have no nexus with the public. Bypassing politicians and using the Civil Service is the hallmark of all military governments and this poorly veiled military junta too cannot help but resort to old natural instincts. The President must convince the political leaders of Sindh, Balochistan and the Frontier and win their support in order to arrive at a lasting consensus and no effort has been made in that direction.

There exists a glaring chasm of trust between Punjab and the smaller provinces which has widened with the experiences of the past and no progress will be possible towards evolving a consensus on the Kalabagh Dam issue unless this chasm is bridged. For instance, when the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal was constructed, Sindh was assured that it would be brought into operation only in the event of a high flood in the Indus to channel excess water from the Indus to the Jhelum River. Since its construction, it has not only been operated to supply water for irrigation purposes to the area but also supplies water to a nuclear plant located nearby. Furthermore, we were initially told that Kalabagh Dam was intended for the generation of hydro-electric power only. The proponents of the dam never used the irrigation aspect of the dam in their arguments until relatively recently. In the face of strong opposition, the proponents of Kalabagh Dam are now forced to confess that the dam is meant for irrigation purposes after all and the argument for the generation of hydro-electric power is no longer used. In fact it is now obvious that power generation was always of secondary importance compared to irrigation, just as the opponents of the dam had suspected all along.

Such blatant, bare faced attempts to *deceive*, which eventually invariably stand exposed, have done little to foster trust and confidence. Recently, at a lunch hosted in his honour by the Sindh Chief Minister at Ghotki on 14th December 2003, President Musharraf gave firm assurances that Sindh would get more than its rightful share of water and other resources. In the light of past experiences, the people of Sindh can be forgiven for being skeptical about all such assurances. The problem is that even if we take President Musharraf at his word, how can we be certain that we can continue to count upon the same measure of goodwill from his successors in view of past experiences? Verbal assurances are not enough.

The proponents of Kalabagh Dam argue that the reservoir at Kalabagh Dam would be used to store water for use in years of drought. One can only wish that solutions to complex problems were that simple. Firstly, the undeniable fact is that there is not enough water available to fill a new reservoir at Kalabagh Dam. In fact, in the wake of the 1992 floods, which were the last major floods we had in Pakistan, there has not even been enough water to fill the existing reservoirs at Tarbella and Mangla (2003 being the sole exception owing to heavy rainfall), due to which we have had to suffer through the rationing of water in most canals and watercourses in Sindh, resulting in significant losses to cultivators and reduced grain production figures. This being the case, where would the water come from to fill an additional reservoir at Kalabagh? No explanations are forthcoming to this vital question. Sindh and Balochistan are understandably apprehensive that this new reservoir can only be filled by a reduction in their allocated share of water. Secondly, water can not be stored in an open lake for extended periods of time because it evaporates and also seeps into the ground. Out of the 105 MAF water available annually for irrigation purposes, over 25 MAF is lost due to evaporation and seepage. A reservoir that loses almost a quarter of its stored water annually, coupled with an already prevailing shortage of water, hardly seems to be the solution to years of drought.

The greatest victims of Kalabagh Dam would, perhaps, be the people of Thatta and Badin Districts along the coastal belt of Sindh. In order for their fertile lands to remain fertile and productive, it is imperative that a certain amount of water be released into the sea through the Indus delta to hold back the brackish seawater that would

otherwise encroach inland and ruin these lands. In the 1991 Water Accord, it was agreed that no less than 10 MAF water would be released downstream from Kotri Barrage for this purpose. This discharge is also necessary to preserve the mangrove forests in the Indus delta which provide a livelihood to thousands of fishermen and their families. However, since 1991, the discharge of water downstream from Kotri Barrage has never come close to the agreed 10 MAF, the highest discharge in any one given year since then being no more than 8 MAF in 1992 and the average since 1991 being well below 5 MAF. This has resulted in serious damage to the once fertile lands in Thatta and Badin and the mangrove forests have suffered as well. If another reservoir is built at Kalabagh, the prevailing water shortage will be exacerbated resulting in a further decreased flow downstream from Kotri Barrage, leading to the devastation of the surviving fertile land along the coastal belt of Sindh and an unmitigated ecological disaster in the mangrove forests in the Indus delta region.

The kacha area of Sindh depends largely upon floods for cultivation and is critically affected by water shortages. Some of the larger landowners have installed tubewells and pumps to supply water to the fields but the cost of fuel is prohibitive and the nuisance of false and grossly excessive electricity bills is a deterring menace. Consequently, productivity as well as profit margins are greatly reduced. But the poor hari can not afford such extravagance and for him flood irrigation remains the only viable and feasible method of irrigation in the kacha area. The construction of numerous barrages and canals in Punjab has, however, made flooding a rare event in Sindh. Consequently, vast tracts of the kacha area have become barren and unproductive, causing the exodus of entire villages as people are forced to leave the kacha area to seek a living elsewhere. This is a blow not only to the fortunes of poor haris but to the national economy as well. Contrary to the myth perpetrated by the proponents of Kalabagh Dam, the scarcity of floods has hit the hari far harder than the large landowner who can diversify into commerce and industry to put bread on his table and need not depend solely upon agriculture. But what other appealing options are available to the poor hari? His destiny is inexorably tied to the land he lives off. He flourishes or famishes as does his land.

These problems are just the tip of the iceberg. They need to be dealt with transparently and comprehensively so as to leave no doubt in anyone's mind. Yes, the issue may have been unnecessarily politicised, but the answer lies not in sweeping the debate under the rug or isolating it to a handful of bureaucrats behind closed doors. Nor will anything be achieved by attacking the opponents of the dam by branding them as self-serving feudals who have only their own interests at heart. Apart from being nonsensical dribble, as argued above, this will only further aggravate an already touchy situation. The idea is not to confront and reduce but rather to soothe and facilitate cohesion.

If there can be frantic all party conferences in Islamabad when the Indian troops amass at the border, then why can there not be a similar conference over this vital issue? It is more likely to produce positive results than an excessive misplaced confidence on civil servants and technocrats. It would give the political leaders who are opposing the Kalabagh Dam project a chance to directly confront those who are supporting it and voice their concerns. It would also give the proponents of the project an opportunity to allay the apprehensions and objections of the opponents of the project. The President himself should preside over this conference and technical experts from both sides of

the debate should be included to provide expert opinion when needed. Foreign experts can also be invited to sit in and give their impartial and unbiased opinion over the issue to add a fresh perspective to the debate to help develop a consensus.

The point is that the controversy has, whether we like it or not, evolved a political dimension. We can not play the ostrich and pretend this dimension does not exist. Nor is there any reason to be afraid of the political aspect. It can be dealt with and must be dealt with. But nothing will be achieved by relying solely upon bureaucrats or trying to discredit the opponents of the dam. This will only deepen the mistrust that already exists and lead to further trouble. Sensitive national issues require finesse and a deft touch. They cannot be stamped out under a heavy boot like a cigarette butt. This is perhaps the biggest test of the political nimbleness of this thinly veiled military junta and how it handles this issue will cast an ominous shadow over the future of this nation.

THE WILL TO BE FREE

AMEER BHUTTO

English translation of article printed in Sindhi daily 'Khabroon', October 8, 2007

Conditions are as ripe as they have ever been for a popular uprising against the present dispensation and yet, inexplicably, despite seething public discontent, there are no visible signs of this happening. If the monks in Myanmar can evoke widespread response from the masses, why have the people of Pakistan failed to respond to the lawyers' movement?

Part of the answer lies in a suffocating leadership vacuum. The opposition can not even muster enough street power to welcome back their exiled leader and their alliance has been infiltrated by elements known to bear flimsily disguised sympathies with the Musharraf administration. Others have already bowed before the military President and have been his partners in government since the last eight years. And those who have been left out in the cold during this period are now scrambling to elbow their way back in to become the next Shaukat Aziz. Aung San Suu Kyi's principled stand against authoritarian rule in Myanmar has earned her incarceration for twelve of the last eighteen years. Nevertheless, she remains on home soil to act as a point of focus for pro-democracy forces. Pakistan's 'Suu Kyi' chose to strategically place herself oceans away from home to play a clever waiting game, giving the generals a free run for eight years. Now, at a time when the country is deluged by critical legal, constitutional, political, economic and security crises, Benazir's primary lament is the inordinate delay in the finalization of a power sharing deal with the President.

Well, the deal has been struck, but no principled politician could possibly find any cause for pride or gleeful celebrations on account of this deal. Had the People's Party brought President Musharraf down to his knees by means of a mass movement and forced him to accept their terms, then the People's Party would, no doubt, occupy the political and moral higher ground and the generals would get out of its way, as they got out of the way of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972. But by grovelling and begging for general amnesty and throwing a lifeline to a falling unpopular military ruler, thereby imposing him upon the nation for another five years, only for the sake of personal political gain, the People's Party has inflicted a mortal blow to any chances of the revival of genuine democracy. This was a golden opportunity for the People's Party to

achieve some real good for the people. But they did not ask for a more just and equitable NFC Award, or the cancellation of the Kalabagh Dam project or even greater provincial autonomy. These are issues from which the public could have benefited. Instead they only asked for general amnesty for the loot and plunder of public funds and a chance to get back into power so that they can loot and plunder some more. Benazir is returning not as a champion of the people or democracy, but as a champion of the corrupt and criminals whom she has saved from punishment by blackmailing the government into passing the Reconciliation Ordinance.

This general amnesty issued in the Reconciliation Ordinance will set a very dangerous and harmful precedent. It will institutionalize corruption. We might as well have a Ministry of Corruption from now on at the federal as well as provincial levels. It will establish the practice of looting the public exchequer with both hands while the opportunity exists and then striking a deal to have your sins forgiven in exchange for political support. In other words, it is bound to have the effect of legalizing corruption for all those political leaders who have members in the assemblies to bargain with higher authorities. The question arises why should there be any reconciliation with criminals and thieves? These are the sort of people who ought to be pushed out of politics to infuse new and clean blood. How can the future of the nation be trusted to criminals and thieves? This is like appointing wolves to guard the chicken coop. Under the new ordinance, all cases registered on political considerations will be withdrawn. Registering cases on political grounds is itself a crime. If the government is now admitting that they filed cases to harass political opponents, then they are confessing to their own guilt and should be held responsible under the law. Under this ordinance, not only will corrupt politicians escape any accountability under the law, but will also be free to pocket the looted funds and also escape arrest in heinous crimes such as murder, kidnapping, rape, etc. For President Musharraf to forgive such crimes against the nation just to secure his own re-election is the worse example of rigging in the history of Pakistan, or indeed in the history of elections worldwide. No one else has ever bought votes for a sum of two billion dollars, which is the amount that was reportedly looted from public funds during the last two People's Party governments. What kind of restoration of democracy is this?

We all know what services the People's Party can perform for the nation if restored to power. The record of their previous two governments is before us, in which the MQM was unleashed upon the people of Sindh resulting in a bloodbath, funds were allocated for the construction of Kalabagh Dam for the first time and *tamgha-e-jamhooriyat* were awarded to those Benazir held responsible for the execution of her father. This is the same Peoples' Party and the same Benazir Zardari whose government was twice dismissed on charges of corruption and incompetence. After the second dismissal by President Farooq Ahmed Leghari, when the People's Party challenged the dismissal in the Supreme Court, even the court ruled that there was some substance in the corruption and incompetence charges and rejected the petition.

Political parties no longer play the role of factories of ideology and principles in Pakistan. That is why they have failed to mobilize public opinion. The overriding impetus is to get into power by hook or crook. There are very few politicians who are genuinely committed to a party and its ideology or leadership. The political field is inhabited by drifters and the identifying characteristic of the times is drifting with the tide. Almost everyone in PML(Q) was once a part of PML(N) during the heyday of

the Sharif brothers. When they fell from grace, virtually their whole party rushed to pay obeisance to the new king; principles be damned! When Musharraf eventually falters, they will once again migrate en masse to greener pastures. This lack of commitment to principles has created a vulgar fluidity in which democracy cannot take root. Throw in an eagerness to capitulate before foreign powers and you have a situation that is anathema not only to democracy, but also national sovereignty.

The fact is that Pakistan has lost all remaining vestiges of sovereignty, which has been sacrificed to western powers by our politicians to obtain power or cling on to power, for which they are even prepared to hand over Abdul Qadeer Khan to the IAEA and are also willing to formally allow American troops to go after Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil. This is something that even our military President has managed to avoid thus far. But power hungry civilian politicians want to prove themselves more loyal than the king. It should be kept in mind that India elevated the father of her nuclear program to the post of President. We use the father of our nuclear program as a bargaining chip to achieve narrow political interests by gambling with national sovereignty. As a result of such capitulations, there is no such thing as 'politics' in Pakistan anymore. The will of the people and all issues related to national interests count for nothing and have been shunted to the sidelines. The White House is running the whole show. After much denial, not only have the Americans finally conceded that they sponsored the deal between President Musharraf and Benazir, but now U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has gone so far as to recommend that Benazir should be made part of the next setup. But if everything is to be settled beforehand in shady deals, worked out by our foreign masters between a military ruler and a failed and corrupt politician, then elections become a pointless facade, the voice of the people loses all importance and the 'democratic' process is reduced to a sad burlesque of all hopes.

For the United States of America, the stakes are considerably higher than the future of democracy in Pakistan or our petty internal squabbles. Pakistan has become a key pawn in America's War on Terror. Consequently, all meaningful decisions regarding our future are taken in Washington D.C. Our leaders have been reduced to mere managers and the masses to no more than cattle, to be herded at will. In the pursuit of American interests, one man rule has achieved such paramount importance in Pakistan above all other considerations that the rulers have received *carte blanche* from their foreign masters to deploy extreme measures such as mass arrests of *opposition* politicians and their supporters, *indiscriminate* police brutality, sealing off of entire cities, acting in defiant breach of the apex court rulings, the manipulation of the constitution and electoral rules, legalization of corruption and gross misconduct by former rulers and even the *imposition* of emergency or martial law as a last resort, if that is what it takes to sustain the status quo.

The people of Pakistan find the American agenda being pursued by our rulers repugnant and contradictory to their values, yet they remain unmoved and silent.

The fire and passion of a people fighting to regain control of their destiny is nowhere to be seen. The enemies of democracy and their accomplices are destroying the country, yet the masses remain silent, as if in a trance. Instead, we have lawyers and the press/media bearing the brunt of lathi charges and tear gas. Of course, lawyers and the press have a distinct role to play in the struggle for democracy, but their battlefields are different from those of the masses. However, due to the apathy of the

masses, they find themselves fighting battles that are not theirs' to fight. What does that tell us about ourselves as a nation? The silence of the masses has cost the country dearly for the last eight years. Their continued silence and inability to look past narrow immediate self-interests towards the greater long term common good will destroy Pakistan.

In the absence of the requisite democratic checks and balances, it is human nature for politicians to try to get away with whatever they can. The people of Pakistan have never held their leaders accountable for their repeated betrayals of trust and misconduct. Instead, some of them are now dancing in the streets in the run up to the expected return from self-imposed exile of an already failed politician. What are these celebrations for? Which Somnat Temple has been conquered? How can bypassing the people and striking a deal with a military ruler with the blessings of a foreign power to receive general amnesty corruption be considered a triumph for democracy? The murder of democracy does not warrant celebrations. These celebrations can only be explained in terms of anticipation of the perks of power, nepotism and self-aggrandizement. We have learnt nothing from the past.

No good can be expected from the present leadership since most of them stand to benefit from the status quo. But if this land is cursed with spineless and corrupt leaders who are not fit to spearhead the struggle for democracy, then does that mean that the people should accept the status quo as their ordained fate and continue to suffer in silence till the bitter end? The leaders have accepted servitude for the sake of power. But does this mean that the masses must also live life as the slaves of outsiders? If the future is to be salvaged, the people have no alternative but to seize the initiative themselves. They will have to realize, sooner rather than later, that by remaining silent they themselves stand to lose the most. History teaches us that it is the masses, not leaders, who bring about revolutions.

There is nothing more sad and painful than the demise of the will to be free. Once the will dies, hope dies with it and then humiliating servitude becomes the inescapable fate. No self-respecting nation can accept such a fate. We must decide now, once and for all, whether we want to be free or continue to live as slaves to the whims of indigenous and foreign masters.

THE MURDER OF DEMOCRACY

AMEER BHUTTO

English translation of article printed in Sindhi daily 'Khabroon',
September 18, 2007

What mutilations and indignities has democracy not been made to suffer in Pakistan? For more than half the period of our independence, it has had to face the martial law juntas of Iskander Mirza, Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zia-ul-Haq and a thinly veiled military rule of Pervaiz Musharraf, with the sanction of the judiciary. Successive constitutions have been abrogated, suspended and amended to pave the way for one man rule. Governments, both military and civilian, behave like monarchies and parliament and all other democratic institutions have been reduced to a sad joke. Rule of law is no more than an unfulfilled dream. Brute administrative muscle is reserved only to stifle cries for genuine democracy, while governments have been helpless before the rising tide of lawlessness, not to mention the commands of foreign masters. Democracy has died many deaths in Pakistan in the last sixty years. Yet, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, this is the model of 'democracy' our American overlords support around the world, and then they wonder why people in these countries bear such undisguised hatred for them!

The events that transpired at Islamabad airport on the morning of 10th September 2007, when the two time former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrived from London to end his seven year exile, must count as plunging a dagger into the corpse of democracy. The mass arrests of APDM leaders and supporters that commenced several days earlier and continued on 10th September, the five kilometre cordon around Islamabad airport to stop the public from reaching the airport, the deployment of thousands of police, rangers and other paramilitary troops, the lathi charge and use of tear gas and the deporting of Nawaz Sharif to Jeddah in blatant violation of the recent Supreme Court verdict betray a sense of panic on the part of the administration. Nawaz Sharif can claim a moral triumph because all these extraordinary steps belie an unwillingness on the part of the Musharraf administration to face him in the political arena. What are they afraid of? If he is a discredited, failed criminal who no longer has roots in the public, then why not let the people pass the final verdict on him? And if the Musharraf administration has made rivers of milk and honey flow across the land and enjoys the support of the masses, then why not face him on the strength of their

achievements?

It is especially unfortunate that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been dragged into this mess. It is not enough that our national sovereignty has already been mortgaged by our leaders to prolong their hold on power with American support, but now even Arab princes and sons of former Middle Eastern Prime Ministers are getting involved in our internal affairs. The government has continuously brandished the Saudi-Sharif pact in court and in the press. Would they now care to elaborate upon the details of the pact they themselves entered into with their Arab friends under which the Saudi intelligence chief and the former Lebanese Prime Minister's son were invited to hold a highly unusual press conference in Islamabad to plead with Nawaz Sharif not to return? Under which law has Nawaz Sharif now been handed over to them? How can the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia justify holding him against his wishes? This would be a throw back to medieval times when foreign princes were held hostage. The only honourable course of action open to Saudi Arabia now is to declare that Nawaz Sharif is free to go wherever he pleases. Otherwise, Saudi Arabia will be in violation of international law and individual freedom.

Choudhary Shujaat Hussain revealed in an interview on a TV channel that the King of Saudi Arabia had written a letter to President Musharraf requesting the return of Nawaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia. He said that this letter was submitted before the Supreme Court but the court refused to accept or acknowledge this letter. There can be no doubt that everyone in Pakistan bears the highest respect and regard for the Khadime-Harmain Sharifain, but the question is whether he has any legal authority to make such a request pertaining to one of our citizens? It is a good thing that the Supreme Court refused to acknowledge this letter. It is refreshing to know that there is at least someone in Pakistan to whom national sovereignty still means something. Others are so used to bowing before their foreign masters that they do not even blink an eye upon receiving such a letter. And what was the purpose of all this extraordinary, frantic diplomatic activity on the part of our Arab friends? Just to prop up an unpopular military ruler and give his chances of re-election a boost.

It is ridiculous to claim that Nawaz Sharif was given a choice of going to Jeddah or jail and he chose to go to Jeddah. Nawaz Sharif has denied that any such choice was given to him, but even if it was, how can it be justified under the law? If the law permits such a choice, then all under-trial and convicted prisoners in Pakistan should also be given the same choice. The law must apply equally to everyone.

The fact is that this latest deportation of Nawaz Sharif has been carried out in defiant violation of the Supreme Court verdict announced on 23rd August 2007. A seven member bench issued the following unanimous short order on a petition filed by the Sharif brothers: "It is declared that Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif under Article 15 of the Constitution have an inalienable right to enter and remain in the country, as citizens of Pakistan. Their return/entry into the country shall not be restrained, hampered or obstructed by the Federal or Provincial Government Agencies in any manner." It is clearly stated in this order that not only do the Sharif brothers have the right to enter Pakistan, but also to remain in the country. The deportation appears, therefore, to fall under the scope of contempt of court. Article 15 of the Constitution also clearly states that "Every citizen shall have the right to remain in, and subject to any reasonable restriction imposed by law in the public interest, enter and move freely throughout Pakistan and to reside and settle in any part

thereof.” Furthermore, the Supreme Court order implies that the agreement between the Sharif brothers and the Saudi government had no legal value. Nawaz Sharif is not wanted in Saudi Arabia on any criminal charges. Why should he be handed over to them? There is ugly expediency at work here, because it serves the interests of the Musharraf administration to get rid of him. From the copies of the agreement printed in the press, it was clear that it was not an agreement at all but a declaration by the Sharif brothers. An agreement is between two parties and bears the signatures of both parties. This is clearly not the case in this document since it only bears the signatures of the Sharif brothers. It, therefore, can not be called an agreement. The legal effect of a declaration by one party is very different from the binding nature of an agreement between two parties.

The government has displayed utter disdain for the Supreme Court order. But such things as the verdicts of courts matter only when society is governed by rule of law, supremacy of the constitution and a regard for justice and fairplay. How can there be any rule of law in a country where the constitution is routinely manipulated for the individual benefit of one man and the Chief Justice himself is manhandled in the streets and illegally detained? So blatant has the government’s defiance now become that one can only surmise that it has decided to take on the judiciary. Not on this, but the shocking events at the Sindh High Court premises in Karachi on 10 September, whereby the court building was virtually taken over by hooligans belonging to the MQM to intimidate the judges who were conducting enquiry proceedings into the 12th May massacre in Karachi, culminating in the assassination of a lawyer, forcing the judges to adjourn the proceedings, is another instance of the belligerent and hostile disposition of the ruling party and its allies towards the judiciary. All this points to a menacing storm brewing on the horizon that augurs a clash between the rule of law and the rule of the gun, which can only bode ill for the nation.

This is the mentality of a military junta in action, stepping out of its former civilian disguise which was flimsy and unbelievable in the first place. The Musharraf administration has demonstrated conclusively that in his brand of democracy, law flows from the barrel of a machine gun and rule of law means nothing. This is barefaced one man rule in which the needs of the one outweigh all legal considerations. But this is not likely to be the end of the story. By bundling Nawaz Sharif off to Jeddah, President Musharraf has opened up a new can of worms. Nawaz Sharif’s lawyers have already brought the issue of his deportation before the Supreme Court in the form of a contempt of court application and the legal community is once again up in arms in reaction to the murder of their colleague in Karachi. The eyes of the nation, regardless of their political hue and ilk, are focused squarely on the honourable judges of the Supreme Court. But the courts alone can not fight this battle. Will the people play their part? Time will tell.

The whole opposition stands united against Musharraf, with the exception of the Peoples’ Party, which is still pinning its hopes on a deal with him to sneak into power by the back door. Nawaz Sharif took on the Musharraf administration and he was refused entry into Pakistan and deported forthwith. By contrast, since the People’s Party has chosen to adopt a conciliatory, cooperative approach, the administration is burning midnight oil in an all out effort to reach a deal with its Chairperson to facilitate her return to Pakistan. It is not very often that right and wrong stand before us in such stark clarity.

I saw a documentary on National Geographics recently in which they showed a massive wild buffalo that was stuck in quicksand being eaten alive by a pack of hyenas. So exhausted was the poor animal from its frantic efforts to extricate itself from the mud that it had no energy left to fight off the predators and could only helplessly watch, groaning in agony, as the hungry pack fed on its flesh. That is what is happening to Pakistan now. People see the enemies of democracy and freedom destroying the nation, yet they remain silent, witnessing the carnage. They will have to realize, sooner rather than later, that by remaining silent, they are the biggest losers in the present scenario. We are not as yet so deeply stuck in the quagmire that we can do nothing about it. We can still fend off the enemies of democracy and salvage something for the future. But prompt action is required since time is not on our side.

FUTURE BELONGS TO THE MASSES

AMEER BHUTTO

‘Dawn’, September 6, 2007

It seems like Pakistan was born under the unluckiest of stars. India gained independence a day after Pakistan and is well on her way to becoming a regional superpower on the strength of a robust economy and stable democratic system. Malaysia became independent ten years after Pakistan but is generally considered to be one of the most developed, prosperous and advanced countries in Asia and on par with many European countries. Far from advancing and developing, Pakistan has regressed in real terms, especially in the last three decades. Our economy lies in tatters. If it were not for the foreign remittances and the aid we receive from our foreign masters in return for unquestioningly towing their line, regardless of the price we have to pay at home, the situation would be desperate. All our leaders, civilian, military or others, habitually regard themselves above the law and treat the constitution as if it is there to serve only their needs and abrogate, suspend, amend and generally run amok over it with reckless abandon. We hang our elected Prime Ministers while others are reduced to pleading for general amnesty for their misconduct.

Important institutions of state and society were never allowed to take root and mature in Pakistan. Whereas Jawaharlal Nehru became India’s first Prime Minister, Quaid-e-Azam chose to assume the post of Governor General of Pakistan. His early death prevented him from making the intended transition to democracy. In his wake came a series of short-lived civilian governments and the military juntas of Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan, who had little or no nexus with the masses. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the first charismatic and dynamic leader to succeed in firing peoples’ passions and captured their imagination. But after the first two years of an exemplary administration, which still stands as a lesson to all would be leaders, he succumbed to the trappings of power and steadily distanced himself from the people. He became surrounded by the likes of Masood Mehmood and Waqar Ahmed, who caused his downfall and led him to the gallows. After eleven dark years of General Zia-ul-Haq’s Martial Law, the nation dared to vest its hopes in Benazir Bhutto, expecting the young Harvard and Oxford educated daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to fight for the common man and set the derailed democratic process back on track. The euphoria was short-lived when, instead, all they got was unprecedented maladministration, corruption and misuse of

power for which both her governments had to be dismissed. Most recently, the nation felt there was some cause for optimism when General Pervaiz Musharraf took over in October 1999, since he seemed to make all the right noises and his seven point agenda seemed to contain the right formula to make amends for a ruinous past. But that too turned out to be a cruel mirage. Expediency became the identifying trademark of the Musharraf administration, as it became obvious quite early on that the President would dance with the devil if that would sustain and prolong his hold on power.

He collected around himself the most disreputable *lotas*, some of whom had been imprisoned under various corruption and criminal cases during the early days of his administration, while others absconded. But when the need arose, they were once again rehabilitated and restored to power and their cases swept under the rug.

In this melee of self-serving opportunism and lust for power, the plight of the masses has gone overlooked as they have been forced to endure one painful let down after another. The current frenzy on the part of some wily politicians to get a share of power by striking a dubious deal with a politically crippled President is perhaps the most shameful of all the let downs thus far. They insult our intelligence by claiming that they are pursuing the deal to restore democracy. Some one should remind them that democracy is not something that can be granted by a military ruler as a display of his largesse. It is something the people must seize for themselves. Why supposedly popular leaders of the people and self-proclaimed champions of democracy would prefer to indulge in a shady deal with a military ruler instead of relying on the strength of the people to achieve the professed objective of restoring democracy defies understanding. Perhaps they want to bypass any meaningful democratic accountability at the ballot box and present the masses with a *fait accompli*. What sort of democracy is this?

Overwhelming temptations to take short cuts to power notwithstanding, at some point in time it becomes necessary to take a stand on principles, if honesty and sincerity mean anything. But these bleeding heart democracy lovers seem to have arrived at the ill-conceived, convoluted conclusion that power acquired through the ballot box or by taking a stand on principles is shaky at best whereas power received with the blessings of a man in uniform is far more conveniently acquired and is comparatively stable. That is why everyone is so eager to become the next Shaukat Aziz. Now that the Musharraf-Benazir deal seems to have hit a pothole along the way, Moulana Fazal-ur-Rehman has reportedly jumped into the fray, having already played a pivotal role in giving President Musharraf a new lease on life with his support in passing the Seventeenth Amendment. As long as President Musharraf keeps dangling the deal like a carrot before the power hungry politicians, there will be no shortage of takers. In any case, does President Musharraf have the ethical and legal authority to forgive corruption and criminal conduct or grant any concessions in order to secure political support? Is this not blatant rigging?

For the first time in Pakistan's history, the judiciary is fearlessly upholding the rule of law and supremacy of the constitution. Arguably, it stands as the greatest obstacle before the designs and intentions of the Musharraf administration. It just goes to show how much an independent judiciary can influence the evolution of a progressive state while acting as guardian of democratic social and state institutions and individual freedoms. One can only wonder where this country would be today had the courts fulfilled this obligation in the same manner during the past sixty years. Could we have

been spared the agony, uncertainty and turmoil that has brought us to this state of ruin at the hands of tin pot dictators and corrupt, self-serving politicians who treat the state as their private *jagir*? We will never know. In any case, the matter of the re-election of the President with or, without uniform and a plethora of other issues have already been placed before the Supreme Court. The nation expects the honourable justices to do what the politicians have not the fortitude to do, i.e. infuse a modicum of honesty and principles into politics and uphold the constitution.

But there is just so much that the Supreme Court can reasonably be expected to do. The fate of the nation rests ultimately in the hands of the people. The time has come for the people to be the masters of their own fate. The problem, however, is that they seem to have forgotten just how powerful they really are. When the people unite, even superpowers and much dreaded armies get out of the way. Our leaders lack the backbone to take a stand on principles because that entails hardship, struggle and sacrifice and it would be foolish to expect any good from them. The future belongs to the masses and they must realize that they need not be bound by the vestiges of a failed past.

BACK TO SQUARE ONE

AMEER BHUTTO

By the end of 2007, the President and his allies, the PML(Q) had hit rock bottom. The president was on shaky ground and the PML(Q) couldn't find enough candidates to cover all constituencies, as even their ministers and advisors remained reluctant to apply for party tickets. Against this backdrop and seething public discontent, it was hoped that the elections would produce substantial change.

But nothing has changed. Though the PML(Q) was washed out at the polls, the president remains as powerful as before with unfailing American support and now enjoying the backing of an even larger and more popular political party than the PML(Q), the Peoples' Party. His governors still occupy three of the four Governor's Houses. His attorney General, despite his tainted past, still remains in office. The Peoples' Party has climbed into bed with the MQM, which stood badly shaken in the aftermath of the 12th May tragedy, and the PML(Q), despite being disgraced at the polls, is set to receive a share of power should the PPP-PML(N) alliance fall through. The net effect of this will be the resuscitation of the pre-election ruling alliance, with the addition of the Peoples' Party. So much for the voice of the electorate.

The Peoples' Party has emerged as the reincarnation of the defeated PML(Q). Because of the deal between the Peoples' Party and President Musharraf, it's interests have come to be identified with those of the President's. Public posturing notwithstanding, they are now squarely in Musharraf's camp. As a result of this deal, and in return for the withdrawal of cases and allowing looted billions to be swallowed, courtesy of the NRO, the Peoples' Party did not oppose the holding of presidential elections before the general elections. They refrained from voting against Musharraf in his bid for re-election, choosing to sit futilely on the fence. Their election campaign was a vitriolic assault on the PML(Q), but not a word was uttered against the President. In the post-election period too the Peoples' Party has in practice mirrored the position taken by President Musharraf on all major issues, most prominent of which is the issue of the restoration of the judges. In this issue, there is a confluence of interests between Musharraf and Zardari: Just as the restoration of the judges, particularly the Chief Justice, can open up a Pandora's Box for Musharraf, not least by calling into question the legality of his re-election, Zardari too stands to lose everything if the National Reconciliation Ordinance is challenged.

The Peoples' Party was never serious about the restoration of the judges and resorted to dilatory tactics. Drafting a parliamentary resolution is a very simple matter and does not require a committee of the finest legal minds in the land. The surest way to ensure that something does not get done is to form a committee. The resolution simply needed to state that the house is of the view that the proclamation of emergency by the Chief of Army Staff on 3rd November 2007 was illegal since the COAS lacks the constitutional authority to issue such a proclamation and the house recommends to the government that the PCO and the consequences arising there from may be declared null and void. But such a resolution would send home the new judges who took oath under the PCO, leaving the NRO and the presidential re-election vulnerable to challenge before the restored judges. Hence the Peoples' Party's insistence upon a constitutional package that would ensure the continuity of the new judges and clip the wings of the restored Chief Justice by shortening his tenure and depriving him of some of his powers, including the power to review all that transpired under the PCO. Such a reform, far from enabling the judiciary and making it independent, would cripple it forever.

Nawaz Sharif has taken a sound stand on this issue. Whether he possesses the intestinal fortitude to withstand the pressure he is bound to come under, not least from his own party members who will be loathe to leave the treasury benches and sit in opposition for who knows how long, remains to be seen. If the PPP-PML(N) alliance falls through, will the Peoples' Party do the honourable thing and return to the electorate for a fresh mandate? Or will they embrace the newly buffed and polished PML(Q), which Asif Zardari is on record as having labelled the '*qati*' league, unmistakably implicating it in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, to hold on to power? Time will tell. But all this while, as the power brokers wiggle and squirm to make deals and form alliances to preserve their hold on power, the hapless people await in vain the promised relief from high prices of essential life supporting commodities, lawlessness, power shortages, poverty, unemployment and every other misery that has pushed them to breaking point. Who can afford to think of them when the throne is on the line?

The Peoples' Party won the February elections on a ground swell of sympathy arising from the assassination of its leader. They clamoured for a United Nations inquiry into the assassination. Now, after nearly two months in power, all they have achieved is passing a resolution in the National Assembly, which itself took several weeks, recommending that the government move the United Nations for an inquiry. While the fate of the letter to the UN. for inquiry into the killing of the leader on whose name the PPP won this election remains uncertain, buried in a summary pending before the Law Department, no time was wasted in throwing behind bars a PML(Q) former provincial minister, Altaf Unar, and forcing another former minister, Sohrab Sarki, to go into hiding, because the two were implicated in manhandling Zardari's sister, Azhra Pechuho, at a polling station in Jamshoro during a provincial assembly bye-election in February 2007.

People have very short memories. More often than not, the stomach rather than the conscience dictates future course of action. The tragedy of 27th December 2007 has been eclipsed by euphoric celebrations and revelry in the corridors of power. The popular mandate to bring about meaningful change has been set aside and we see ghosts of a painful, ruinous past looming ominously over the horizon.

