

The Assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan

Syed Muhammad Zulqarnain Zaidi

The fateful journey

Before embarking on his fateful journey on the morning of 16 October 1951, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan said to his wife that he was going to make the greatest speech of his life. 'What it would be about'? Begum Liaquat Ali asked him. 'It would be a policy making speech', replied the premier.¹ He was certainly going to give a surprise to the nation.

Liaquat Ali Khan arrived at Rawalpindi Chaklala air base in Governor General's aircraft 'Viking' at 11:30 a.m. He was going to address a public meeting organized by Pakistan Muslim League, Rawalpindi. The Prime Minister arrived at around 4:00 p.m. in the Company Bagh. 'A huge crowd of about 1,00,000 persons had assembled to welcome and listen to the Premier'.²

The dais from where he was to address the nation was constructed according to his personal instructions. He had expressly desired that he alone was to occupy the chair on the dais and that no body else should have any seat with him. He had further insisted that there was not to be any *shamiana* (covering) over it. This desire of the premier was in response to the many letters which he had received from his admirers and fans who wanted to have his full view. So, a microphone and one chair along with a table had been placed on the dais which was about four and half feet high.

The proceedings of the meeting started with the recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by the welcome address of Masud Sadiq, the President of the Municipal Committee, Rawalpindi. After the welcome address the President of the City Muslim League, Sheikh Mohammad Omar, spoke a few words in honour of the Prime Minister and invited him to address the audience.

¹ *Civil Military Gazette*, Lahore, 17 October 1951.

² Enquiry Commission Report, *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, 17 August 1951.

The Prime Minister straight away walked to the microphone and had hardly said, 'Baradran-e-Millat' when the sound of two shots rent the air. The people saw the Prime Minister staggering and falling on his back. There was a lull of few seconds that was broken by the sound of third shot. The Prime Minister had been shot. The people were stunned in the deep silence that prevailed. Then as the people realized what had happened, they started crying and weeping, saying, 'Quaid-e-Millat mara gaya' (The leader has been killed).

Immediately after the killing shots were heard, the police standing near by fired in the air and the vast crowd, unable to comprehend the situation became excited. There was an uproar and tumult; people began to run for their lives. According to the APP Rawalpindi correspondent who was an eye witness to the tragedy, 'the assailant had hardly fired on the Prime Minister when he was at once swooped on and torn to pieces by the furious crowd.'³

The Prime Minister was unconscious when he was rushed to the Combined Military Hospital, 'in the car of Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani'⁴ who had reached the site after 'the premier had been shot and the indiscriminate firing of the Reserve Guard had stopped'.⁵ In the hospital the premier was attended to by Dr. Col. Mian and Dr. Col. Sarwar who vainly attempted to remove the bullets as the Prime Minister had already succumbed to his injuries.⁶

A crowd of tearful people, lamenting and praying aloud stood outside the hospital anxiously waiting the news about the Prime Minister. A little later Mr. Gurmani came out of the operation theatre waving his hands to the crowd in a consoling gesture. He refused to say any thing as also the operating surgeon Dr. Col. Mian who, on coming out, told the crowd, 'my lips are sealed'.⁷ Liaquat Ali Khan expired at 4:50 p.m. Shortly after, the Prime Minister's assassination, the APP came out with the news that the assassin was believed to be a Khaksar. Later the story was withdrawn. After two hours of the incidence the government announced that the assailant was an Afghan national of Khost. He was a detenu under the Bengal Regulation Act 1818. 'He was never on the C.I.D list of suspects'.⁸ Said Akbar was son of Babrak, a leader of

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan, 'Bay Tegh Sipoy' (Karachi: Allies Book Corporation, 1971), p.481.

⁵ Interview of the author with Ghulam Mustafa Shah Gylani, M.L.A.

⁶ *The Daily Civil & Military Gazette*, 17 October 1951.

⁷ *The Pakistan Times*, 17 October 1951.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 December 1951.

Zadran Tribe of Khost, Afghanistan. His father was killed in an encounter while fighting for King Amanullah. Being from pro-Amanullah faction, the family had become *persona-non-grata*. Said Akbar was a Brigadier in the Afghan Army. He was an admirer of Iqbal and Maulana Roomi. Said Akbar sought refuge in India in January 1947. The Government of India agreed to grant him and members of his family political-asylum along with residence and monthly allowances. He was then residing in Abbottabad.

Appointment of inquiry commission

On 1 November 1951 the Government of Pakistan appointed a Commission presided over by Justice Mohammad Muneer to look into the matter of Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination.⁹

The Commission held thirty eight sittings of which twenty three were held at Lahore and fifteen at Rawalpindi. The Commission examined eighty nine witnesses on behalf of the government and public. The Commission after going through the investigation and after recording the evidences and accounts of the eye-witnesses who were on the scene or knew about the incident directly or indirectly, concluded that there were indications of three conspiracies. Two of the conspiracies could not be revealed because the Commission believed that their disclosure was not in the national interest and because Said Akbar was not connected with them. The third conspiracy was related to Said Akbar who was the alleged assassin of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan.

The Commission examined three possible motives which might have prompted Said Akbar to commit murder of the Prime Minister but it failed to ascertain with complete certainty as to which of the motives was at the back of his mind. The suggested motives were:

1. That Said Akbar assassinated the premier in a fit of insanity.
2. That Said Akbar was resentful over the Prime Minister's Kashmir policy i.e., for not waging *jihād* against India.
3. That the murder was actuated by his extreme religious fanaticism.

After thoroughly examining the whole plethora of eye-witnesses' accounts, evidences and documents produced before it, the Commission was quite convinced that the assassination of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was neither an act of insanity nor of fanaticism. 'The assassination was not the individual act of Said Akbar and must have been the result of a conspiracy involving a change of government.'¹⁰

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 November 1951.

¹⁰ Liaquat Assassination Enquiry Report, *ibid.*, 18 August 1952.

If we accept the view point of the Commission that ‘the assassination was not the individual act of Said Akbar and it must have been the result of a conspiracy involving a change of government’ then a very relevant and pertinent question arises as to who were going to be the beneficiaries of this change of the government? In any case the beneficiary could not have been Said Akbar, the alleged assassin, who was not a citizen of Pakistan but a foreigner and a fugitive. He neither had any political roots nor did he have any links with any faction or political party. Instead of being a beneficiary he lost his life and happened to be a doomed man. Then, was he trapped into a net of conspiracy? If he was, we need to find out the truth.

In order to unearth the conspiracy we will have to explore and discover the hidden conspirators and their cohorts. In this wild chase of the culprits, a thorough scrutiny of the important eye-witnesses and circumstantial evidences surrounding the assassination of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and the killing of the alleged assassin is indispensable. Though the Commission had very exhaustively discussed, investigated and elaborated the motives of the alleged assassin yet it failed to unfold the rigmarole of the conspiracy under whose cover the culprits had got a safe heaven. In the pursuit of our mission, we will have to examine a few important eye-witnesses accounts and evidences concerning the events of 16 October 1951. This study may lead to some very concrete facts thereby opening a new horizon of concealed truths and hidden treacheries wrapped in the womb of the conspiracy. Now let us examine a few eye-witnesses of the tragedy as had been recorded in the report of the Commission.

Mr. Hardy: The first person to have rushed to the rescue of the fallen Prime Minister was Mr. Hardy, an Englishman, then serving as Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi. His testimony is briefly reproduced for deeper analysis of the situation. Mr. Hardy said: ‘The moment, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan said out the words, Baradran-e-Mellat; two pistol shots were fired in rapid succession and I saw the Premier falling on the dais. I at once rushed to him. Mr. Siddiq Ali Khan who was sitting at the back of the dais had also reached there and I saw the Premier reclining in the arms of Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan. The wounded Premier had Kalima on his lips. Meanwhile a third shot sounded and I ducked. I bent on the Premier and asked him whether he had been hit? He replied in English that he felt pain on the left side of his back. About twelve seconds later there was another volley of shots. During all this time I was bending on the Premier’s body and he was reciting Kalima. I undid the Achkan of

the Premier and I saw red patch of blood below his heart. It was probably at that stage that he become unconscious.’¹¹

Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan: The next witness was Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan who was the political secretary of the premier. He stated before the Commission: ‘The Prime Minister went to the microphone and had hardly uttered the words ‘Baradran -e- Millat’ when I heard the sound of two shots in quick succession. The Premier then staggered and fell on his back. I at once rushed to his aid. I took the premier’s head on my knees. After this there was indiscriminate firing. The Prime Minister was reciting Kalma. He then said to me in urdu: ‘Mujhay gooli Lag yai-Hay’, (I have been shot) May God save Pakistan!, soon afterwards he became unconscious’.¹²

Apart from the above statement some important things are written in his book. He writes that in order to provide comfort and ease to the premier he opened the buttons of his *sherwani* and folded up his silky shirt. He observed ‘two marks equivalent to the size of a gram; with in a diameter of two inches in a straight line on his left side in the middle of his ribs on the face of the marks some blood was visible. From the first wound there was no bleeding at all. Some blood did flow from the second one’. He also found a very small Quran with green silk covering in the left pocket of Liaquat Ali Khan.¹³

Lt. Col Chiragh Hassan: Lt. Col Chiragh Hassan said in his statement that following Mr. Hardy he too reached the dais and helped him in undoing some of the lower buttons of the premier’s *achkan*.¹⁴ Meanwhile he saw a scuffle going on where the alleged assassin had been overpowered by the crowd. ‘Some one stabbed him. His white trousers became red with blood’.¹⁵

The premier’s journey to hospital: The wounded premier was taken to the Combined Military Hospital in the car of Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani. Mr. Gurmani was sitting near his driver on the front seat. The premier was lying on the back seat. Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan had his head on his knees. Prof. Inayatullah, a local Muslim Leaguer was holding the feet of

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19 August 1952.

¹² Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan’s statement in *ibid.*.

¹³ Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.480-83.

¹⁴ Lt. Col. Chiragh Hassan was Administrative Commandant Rawalpindi see his statement in the newspaper, *The Pakistan Times*, 9 December 1951.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the premier in his hands. None of them said a single word about the bleeding of the premier.¹⁶

Dr. Col. Mian: In his evidence Dr. Col Mian explained before the Commission that there was possibility of the premier being saved if he had not been hit in his chest. There were three wounds on his body. Two wounds were caused by the entry of the bullets and the third one was caused by the exit of the bullet. He said that he tried his best to save his life and ‘vigorously massaged his heart but all in vain’.¹⁷

Foot Constable Lal Mohammad: Lal Mohammad was a Foot Constable and he was a resident of Mardan district. He was a Pathan and could understand Pushto. Lal Mohammad stated that he heard Khan Najaf Khan, who was Superintendent of Police saying in Pushto ‘da cha daza... ooka ula’ (who has fired? Shoot him!). He further stated that despite the orders of the S. P. to shoot the killer he fired into the air because he could not see the man who had fired the pistol.

Mohammad Akram, Assistant Sub-Inspector Police, later reported that his Reserve Guard had fired under the orders of the Superintendent of Police, Najaf Khan, in order to disperse the crowd.¹⁸

Superintendent of Police Najaf Khan: In his statement Khan Najaf Khan said that he was just behind the late Prime Minister at the back of the dais when he was fired at. It would be interesting to note the answer that he gave to a few questions asked by Inquiry Commission.

Question: After the Premier had been fired at, did you say to any one ‘da cha daza ooka ula’?

Ans: Might be that I had uttered these words.

Question: What do you mean?

Ans: Who has fired, shoot him or strike him. Khan Najaf Khan stated that Sub- Inspector Mohammad Shah shot down Said Akbar but he should not have done so.

Question: Did you take any action against Mohammad Shah?

Ans: No.

Question: Why did you not take action against him?

Ans: If the investigation had shown that he was at fault I would have taken action against him.

¹⁶ Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan, *op.cit.*, p.481.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *The Pakistan Times*, 2 December 1951.

Question: If your intention had been to shoot down the assassin, would you not have used your own revolver?

Ans: Yes! After the two shots, I rushed in the direction from which the sound of fires had come.

Sardar Amir Azam: Sardar Amir Azam stated: ‘there were a lot of Police Officers in uniform. Most of them were behind the dais. After the first two pistol shots were fired and the Premier was wounded, I saw Mr. Hardy went up to the stage and shout, ‘For heaven’s sake arrange for a car’.’

A few seconds after the first two shots had been fired I heard another solitary shot. This was followed by firing from behind and the front of the dais.¹⁹

Islam Din: Islam Din was retired Railway Jamadar, in his evidence he said that he was sitting close to Said Akbar. He was just behind him. Suddenly he heard two shots. He looked ahead of him and saw Said Akbar holding a pistol in his left hand. Islam Din claimed that he was the first person to catch hold of the assassin. He stated: ‘after the shots were fired the people started running and the man himself was about to go but I rushed at him. I bit him behind the neck in order to make him drop the pistol. He still held the pistol in his left hand. I was struggling to overpower him when he fired the third shot’. I saw Chaudhry Maula Dad sitting on a chair in confusion. He further stated that Ghulam Rasool was the man who had caught hold of the assassin by the arm.

Ghulam Rasool: In his evidence Ghulam Rasool stated that after the shots were fired he saw Islam Din scuffling with Said Akbar. He also saw some children sitting in front of Said Akbar, who had a black turban on his head.²⁰

Prosecutions witnesses:

So far we have narrated the accounts of the statements of a few important eye-witnesses of the assassination of the Prime Minister. Now we present a brief summary of the prosecution’s witnesses and evidences which formed the basis of the verdict of the Commission, declaring Said Akbar, the assailant of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan.

The prosecution had produced seven eye-witnesses, out of which only two witnesses claimed to have seen with their own eyes Said Akbar

¹⁹ Statement of Amir Azam Khan, 10 December 1951.

²⁰ Enquiry Report. *The Pakistan Times*, 19 August 1952.

firing at premier with his pistol which he was holding in his right hand. Five prosecution witnesses claimed to have just heard the sound of the first two shots which, as concluded afterwards, proved fatal and resulted in the murder of the premier. It is important to note that three out of seven witnesses belonged to the Police Department.

Lal Din: The first prosecution witness was Lal Din, a butcher by profession. According to his statement he was the first person to have jumped up on the assassin, Said Akbar. He stated: ‘The moment the Premier uttered the words ‘Baradran-e-Millat’ I heard two successive sounds of explosions, Turning to my right, I saw a pathan standing on his knees and with his right hand attempting to get up. Immediately I grappled with him and held fast by clasping him around. The man fired the pistol for the third time, but the bullet went astray in the struggle.’²¹

Chaudhry Maula Dad: The second prosecution witness was Chaudhry Maula Dad. He stated that he was sitting on one of the chairs in the front row to the left of the dais. In front of him, among the first two or three intervening rows of the audience was sitting a man whom the witness noticed behaving some what suspiciously.

The premier had hardly uttered the words ‘Baradran-e-Millat’ when the witness saw the suspicious looking man taking out and levelling a pistol at the premier. The man fired twice and the witness saw the premier fall down. The witness rushed towards the man but by the time he reached him, he had already been caught by Lal Din. He further described that after some struggle he succeeded in disarming the culprit in a couple of minutes and took the pistol in his own possession.²²

Bahadur Khan: Bahadur Khan was a Head Constable of the District Security Staff. He was on duty in plain clothes and was sitting about two yards behind Said Akbar. The witness was looking at the premier, when he heard the shots. He saw the man who had fired and attempted to catch him. ‘He had grappled with Said Akbar immediately after the first two shots had been fired. The third shot fired by Said Akbar hit the constable in his hand’.²³

Mohammad Shah: Mohammad Shah who was a Sub-Inspector stated that he was controlling some children near the dais who were obstructing the

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Statement of Bahadur Khan before the Commission.

view of the premier. When he heard two shots fired by a man at a distance of 13 yards from him. The man was still on his knees and had the pistol in his hand. The Sub-Inspector brought out his revolver and ran towards him. He was still at a distance of three or four yards from him when he fired the third shot. By the time the witness reached the man he had been caught by some one but was struggling to release himself. The witness then fired five shots at him to make certain that he was dead. Mohammad Shah stated that he had fired at him straight without there being anything to obstruct the bullets'.²⁴

Dilawar Khan: Dilawar Khan was eleven years old boy. He was the son of Said Akbar, the alleged assassin. He occupied a position in front of his father. They sat on the ground in front of the dais of the premier. Dilawar Khan stated that when the premier rose to speak, the witness saw his father bring out a pistol and fired. At first the witness thought that his father had fired as men in Abbotabad used to fire guns in honour of some distinguished visitors. But when he looked toward the dais he did not find the premier on the stage. Then some men in green uniforms caught his father and pierced him with spears.²⁵

Abrar Ahmad: Abrar Ahmad was C.I.D Inspector. He stated that on hearing the two successive shots and seeing the people surrounding the assassin, I saw that he had already been caught by two or three men. Maula-Dad and Nikki had caught hold of the right hand of the man in which he was holding a pistol.²⁶

Findings of the Commission

‘This body of evidence leaves no doubt in our minds’, says the Commission Report, ‘that Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated by Said Akbar. Immediately after the incident Said Akbar was found in possession of a pistol which has been freshly fired. The number of this pistol was 8261 and a pistol bearing this number is mentioned in the license which had been issued to Said Akbar by Deputy Commissioner Hazara in August 1947.’²⁷

Besides having valuable accounts, statements of eye-witnesses, evidences and testimonies along with documents, the Commission had

²⁴ Statement of Mohammad Shah before the Commission on 2 December 1951.

²⁵ *The Pakistan Times*, 19 August 1952.

²⁶ Statement before the Commission on 1 December 1951.

²⁷ *The Pakistan Times*, 19 August 1952.

also succeeded in preserving the record of explosions, their timings and the types of the weapons used at that very occasion when the cold blooded murder of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and the killing of the alleged assassin took place on 16 October 1951 at the public meeting of Company Bagh. The indiscriminate firing on the order of Khan Najaf Khan had created panic, confusion and disorder in the huge gathering. The above mentioned accounts and the chart of the timing of firing provide definite clues to the conspiracy of the murder of the premier.

The Radio Pakistan staff had installed an apparatus to take a record of the proceedings of the public meeting. The microphone itself had fallen but the apparatus continued to function and faithfully recorded the sounds that were heard right from the moment of the first two explosions to the last explosion which had occurred at the 48th second. This record was played to the Commission at the Rawalpindi Radio Station and the timing of the explosions was recorded in their presence by Mr. Hardy with the assistance of a stop watch. Subsequently the Commission requested Brigadier Mr. Dixon, Chief Inspector of Armaments and Major J.W. Moore, Proof and Experimental Officer, Staff of the Chief Inspectors Armaments, G.H.Q, Rawalpindi, who were experts in distinguishing sounds caused by explosions from different classes of weapons, to make their analysis.

According to the chart prepared by the Commission with their assistance, the first two explosions were caused with in less than a second by a 9 MM high velocity pistol. The third explosion that had occurred between the 8th and 9th second was also caused by the same weapon. But the fourth explosion that had occurred at the 16th second was caused by a revolver of a large calibre.

The fifth explosion was heard at the 19th second, the sixth at the 20th second and both were caused by the same revolver as had caused the fourth explosion. Then there was a double shot at the 21st second. One caused by a revolver and the other by a rifle. The double shot was followed by three shots fired between the 22nd and 23rd seconds and a single shot at the 24th second, all being the result of rifle fires.

There was interval of 16 seconds after this and between the 41st and 42nd second was heard the 12th explosion which again was caused by a revolver. The 13th shot that was fired at the 43rd second was again by a rifle. The last four explosions, the first occurring at the 44th second, the second at the 45th second, the third between the 46th and 47th seconds and the fourth at the 48th second, were heard in midst of great noise and

according to Brig. Dixon, might have been either revolver or rifle shots. None of the shots was fired from a sten gun.²⁸

Thus within 48 seconds the whole gory drama had come to an end. In less than first second the two successive shots of pistol had fatally wounded the Prime Minister and he succumbed to the injuries. Between the 16th and the 42 seconds, five bullets had been pumped into the body of Said Akbar by the Sub-Inspector Mohammad Shah, resulting in his instant death.

Analysis of the evidences

After carefully examining the accounts of evidences and eye-witnesses and testimonies along with the chart of explosions and their timings, as described above, concerning the murder of the premier and the killing of the alleged assassin Said Akbar, one get a crystal clear picture of the gory episode. Quite astonishingly the government version and the findings of the Commission about the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan turned out to be one and the same. In both cases the burden of the guilt of murdering the premier had been heaped upon Said Akbar who was a foreign national, a fugitive and asylum seeker and who had no one to defend him or to speak for him. The facts of the episode that emerged as a result of analysis of the evidences bring forth the following truths and hard realities which are irrefutable and absolutely unquestionable:

1. The first two shots fired in quick succession with in less than a second had wounded the Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, and he had fallen on his back on the dais.
2. Mr. Hardy, the Deputy Commissioner, was the first person to see him after his fall on the dais. Mr. Hardy did not see any drop of blood on the face of his *achkan*.
3. Mr. Hardy asked the premier whether he had been hit? The premier replied to him that he felt pain on his left side at his back.
4. Mr. Hardy undid his *achkan* and saw a red patch of blood below his heart.
5. Lt. Col. Chiragh Hassan helped Mr. Hardy in undoing some of the lower buttons of premier's *achkan*. He too did not see any drop of blood of Liaquat Ali Khan on the face of his *achkan*.
6. Lt. Col. Charagh Hassan stated that when he went towards the place where the assassin had been over powered. He saw the assassin was bleeding but alive. His white trousers became red with blood.²⁹

²⁸ Enquiry Report, *ibid*.

²⁹ Statement of Lt. Col Charag Hassan before the Commission, *The Pakistan Times*, 19 August 1952.

7. Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan was the next important person to see the Prime Minister who had fallen on his back. He too did not see any blood on the face of premier's *sherwani* nor on his silken shirt.
8. Neither MR. Hardy nor Lt. Col. Chiragh Hassan nor Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan described that the face of the *achkan* or *sherwani* of the premier was torn with any bullet or bullets.
9. The chest of the Prime Minister was not injured. It was completely intact without any piercing marks.
10. The Holy Quran in the premier's left pocket was intact and its green covering was not soaked with any blood.³⁰
11. When the premier was being carried to the hospital in the car of Mr. Gurmani none of the three persons said anything about the bleeding of the premier.
12. Dr. Col. Mian vigorously massaged the heart of the premier.³¹
13. If the chest of the premier had been injured then Dr. Col Mian could not have massaged his heart.
14. The medical examination had verified that the first bullet had viciously punctured his heart from inside.³²
15. Dr. Col. Mian had said to Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan that the body of the premier was brimmed with blood. The blood had to be extracted to save the body from being consumed.³³
16. No body had said that Liaquat Ali Khan was profusely bleeding.
17. There were lots of police officers in uniform. Most of them were behind the dais. It was stated by Sardar Amir Azam Khan before the Commission.
18. Khan Najaf Khan was standing just behind the Prime Minister at the back of dais.³⁴
19. Prime Minister had complained pain at the left side of his back.
20. So the Prime Minister was not fired at from the front side of the dais.
21. Said Akbar was sitting just in the front of the dais.
22. Thus Said Akbar could not have been the assassin because the back of the Prime Minister was injured, and Said Akbar was sitting in front of the premier amongst the audience.
23. Said Akbar was actually made a scapegoat. He was cold bloodily murdered. He was not the assassin of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan.

³⁰ Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan, *op.cit.*, p.483.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.481.

³² *Ibid.*, p.480.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.482.

³⁴ Statement of Khan Najaf Khan before the Commission.

Now let us further dig out the truth by reading the conflicts and contradictions in the statements of the prosecution witnesses, especially Chaudhry Maula Dad who was the only adult eye witness and Mohammad Shah Sub-Inspector of Police who confessed to have killed the assassin Said Akbar.

We will not discuss the evidence of Dilawar Khan, son of the Said Akbar, who was a boy of 11 years of age, because he was a prisoner of circumstances and a puppet in the hands of police. He was tutored and tailored to speak against his father by the prosecution which is height of barbarity, inhumanity and injustice.

The only eye-witness besides 11 years old son of the alleged assassin, Chaudhry Maula Dad, claimed to have seen the assailant levelling a pistol at the Prime Minister. He was such a daredevil that in an twinkling of an eye he succeeded in cutting his way to Said Akbar and snatched the pistol from the hands of a terrorist who was on a suicidal mission to assassinate the Prime Minister in a huge gathering of thousands of people. According to his statement he succeeded to disarm Said Akbar in about a couple of minutes and took the pistol into his possession.

There was a pandemonium when the premier had fallen on his back. People were madly running and rushing towards the dais to see the fallen Prime Minister. According to the evidence of Islam Din: 'Chaudhry Maula Dad was sitting on a chair in that confusion.' How could he have paved his way to reach Said Akbar who was more than at least 20 feet away from his place? Moreover, he had boasted to have snatched the pistol from the hands of Said Akbar in a couple of minutes where as the whole episode had finished with in 48 seconds according to the Radio Pakistan apparatus which had recorded the timings of the shootings.³⁵ Thus the statement of Maula Dad is a pack of lies and a heap of rubbish to misguide the people and suppress the truth.

The most important prosecution witness was Mohammad Shah, the Sub-Inspector of Police who confessed to have killed Said Akbar, the alleged assassin. Describing the circumstances he stated that he was at a distance of 13 yards from the assassin. He was still at a distance of three-four yards when Said Akbar fired the third shot. The witness brought out his revolver and fired five shots at him to make certain that he was dead. In his confessional statement he had conceded that there was a great confusion and the whole crowd had started to run.³⁶ How could

³⁵ Please see the chart of timings and shootings.

³⁶ *The Pakistan Times*, 19 August 1952.

Mohammad Shah have smoothed his way of 13 yards in less than 14 seconds to reach the alleged assassin?

The chart of explosions and their timings as recorded by the Radio Pakistan apparatus testified that Mohammad Shah had opened the first fire from his revolver at the 16th second and the fifth fire was shot at 42 second. Thus within 26 seconds he had killed the assassin.³⁷ But the question is how he could have traveled a distance of 13 yards in 14 seconds when thousands of people were heading towards the dais. We must not forget that he was standing near the dais. This is impossible. The chart of shootings and timings can not betray our common sense. How in such a mad crowd of thousands of people Mohamad Shah paved his way to Said Akbar within 14 seconds. It seems probable that the conspirators had planted their own men around Said Akbar and Muhammad Shah was one of them.

The history of prosecution witnesses in Pakistan, with few exceptions, is tarnished with treacherous lies and shameful concoctions without any remorse and pinch of the conscience. The state witnesses speak blatant lies to misguide judiciary. All prosecution witnesses in the case of Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination were thoroughly tutored and designed to hoodwink the people and cover up the conspiracy. Dr. Naeem Qureshi writes that in case of Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination state witnesses had been tutored thoroughly by the prosecuting officials.³⁸

The mystery of the third shot: According to the chart of explosions and their timings the third shot was fired between the 8th and 9th seconds. It was shot of pistol which was similar to the first two shots that had floored the premier. There is unanimity of evidences that Said Akbar had fired it. Definitely it was fired by Said Akbar.

The third shot fired by Said Akbar hit the Head Constable Bahadur Khan of C.I.D staff who had grappled with him immediately after the first two shot had been fired.³⁹

The cat is out of the bag. Bahadur Khan was conspirator's planted man. Bahadur Khan was the first person to assault Said Akbar who had instinctively pulled out his pistol when he heard the first two shots and saw the Prime Minister falling on his back. Being a warrior and an Ex-army Brigadier in Afghanistan he had perceived lurking dangers when the premier had been fired at. Said Akbar had opened his

³⁷ See the report of the Commission.

³⁸ *Pakistan Perspectives*, Vol. 11, June 2006, p.137.

³⁹ *The Dawn*, 21 October 1951.

eyes in an environment of vendetta and revenge. He could sense imminent dangers. So to meet any eventuality he pulled his pistol out in self-defense. Taking advantage of mob psychology in such situations the planted agents assaulted Said Akbar and the ordinary people also joined them and collectively pounced upon him. But it was not the public that had initiated his killing. Said Akbar was finished within 26 seconds by the shooting of Mohammad Shah.

It was the similarity of the sound of pistol that made Said Akbar a suspect and a culprit. In fact he had fired at the Head Constable Bahadur Khan in his self defense. This was his first and the last shot as immediately after that he was overpowered and killed. The conspirators had succeeded in distracting attention of the public from the centre of conspiracy and every body began cursing Said Akbar who had died. Dead people don't speak. Thus the conspirator succeeded in befooling the public and Said Akbar became the assassin of the premier. The real culprit who had fired the first two shots which resulted in the murder of the Prime Minister is still unidentified. The real culprit and the real assassin had the same type of weapon which had the same sound. The pistol which was recovered from Said Akbar was a 'Mauser pistol', the same type of the pistol was used by the genuine assassin of Liaquat Ali Khan from the back of the dais where Khan Najaf Khan was standing. In an interview Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi had informed the author that once Mr. A.K.Brohi told him that Liaquat Ali Khan was fired at from his back side.⁴⁰

Said Akbar's visit to Rawalpindi: The nucleus of the conspiracy was the cold blooded murder of Said Akbar who was lured and entrapped to come to Rawalpindi and meet the Prime Minister in order to get enhanced his allowances which he was drawing from the public treasury under the government rules.

'Earlier, a year before, he had submitted an application to this effect to the governor of NWFP but with no avail'.⁴¹ At that time the competent authority to enhance allowances was the Prime Minister only. That is why he had come with his son and with high hopes of getting redressed his financial constraints and distresses. Being a son of a tribal chief and an Ex-Brigadier in the Afghan army he was well dressed like a tribal chief having a black turban on his head, quite conspicuous in the crowd. He had come to see the Prime Minister. He had not come to kill

⁴⁰ The recorded interviews in the custody of the National Archives, Islamabad. The researchers can use it to verify this fact.

⁴¹ Enquiry Report, *The Pakistan Times*, 19 August 1952.

him. If it was his mission to kill the Prime Minister why did he bring his young son in such a suicidal mission? This is unnatural and absolutely against human nature. He was entrapped and killed. The killing was so provocative that the Commission had to observe, 'how the firing of as many as five shots was justified when the assassin himself did not fire a single shot after he had been over powered, and they feel that there was a conspiracy behind this outrage and, by the senseless act of Sub-Inspector Mohammad Shah and the failure of the police to rise to the occasion, the evidence of the conspiracy as well as the motive has disappeared'.⁴²

The conspiracy begins to unfold

Immediately after the assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, the shadow of the conspiracy began growing dark. The first peep into the conspiracy was facilitated by the malicious role of the national press and media which unleashed a campaign of disinformation to camouflage the real facts of the events of 16 October 1951. The national press excessively focused on the alleged assassin Said Akbar, who was only a scapegoat as has been argued in the preceding pages. The credibility of the regime was dented due to the contradictory statements about the events of 16 October 1951 in the public eyes.⁴³

The role of the national press in suppressing the truths of the events became much more questionable and shadowy when the two leading Urdu news-papers of the day i.e. daily *Imroze*, Karachi, and daily *Zamidar*, Lahore, absolutely blacked out the news of the assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in its issues of 17 October 1952.⁴⁴ Moreover no picture of any event of 16 October 1951 was published either in the daily *Pakistan Times* or in the daily *Civil and Military Gazette* on 17 October 1951. *The Pakistan Times* had thirty one pictures of Liaquat Ali Khan but none of the pictures was related to any event of 16 October 1951. After all what the Ministry of Information was trying to conceal, and why the photographic evidences concerning the events of 16 October 1951 were being kept secret from the people? One wonders if the Ministry of Information had some tacit understanding and collaboration with the conspirators or there existed any unholy alliance between the conspirators and the Ministry of Information!

Another question that still remains unanswered is related to the unexplained absence of Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani and Ghulam Muhammad on the day of assassination of the Prime Minister. Their

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *The Pakistan Times*, 23 October 1951.

⁴⁴ Please see the Urdu daily of 17 October 1951.

mysterious absence casts further shadows of doubts on the judgment of the Commission. All dignitaries and notable politicians were present to welcome and receive the Prime Minister. But, astonishingly, neither Ghulam Mohammad nor Gurmani had turned up at the air base or at the public meeting where the premier was shot dead. Being members of the cabinet it was incumbent on them to have attended both the functions. There was no news of their being ill. Then, why were they absent from the scene? Had they ceased to be ministers or had they been dismissed by the Prime Minister because they had lost his confidence? or had they been sacked? The clue to this fact is hidden in the writing of President Mohammad Ayub Khan in his popular book, *Friends not Masters*. He writes, 'I wondered at how callous and cold-blooded and selfish people could be. The termination of the Prime Minister's life had come as the beginning of a new career for them. It seemed that every one of them had got himself promoted in one way or other, I got the distinct impression that they were all feeling relieved. That the only person who might have kept them under control had disappeared from the scene'.⁴⁵ Ayub Khan had not mentioned the names of the persons who had 'a new career for them'. But in a subtle manner he had raised his finger towards the conspirators. Undoubtedly they were Ghulam Mohammad and Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani who had been earlier relieved of their portfolios by the deceased Prime Minister.

But two dismissed ministers could not have contrived a conspiracy of such a colossal magnitude in which not only the Prime Minister was killed but the whole political scenario of the entire region got changed. This was a deep rooted conspiracy in which not only recalcitrant ministers, civil and military bureaucrats and selfish politicians had ganged up against the Prime Minister but the conspiracy also had foreign tentacles.

Conspiracy of that nature could not be conceived without the deep knowledge of the dynamics of domestic and foreign politics of that period. The base of power of Liaquat Ali Khan, the Pakistan Muslim League, had no unity, no organization and no direction. The mutual discords and dissensions amongst its leaders had alienated them from the public support and sympathy. People like Chaudhry Khaliquzaman were undermining and challenging the authority of the premier. Ayub Khan had recorded a pen picture of the domestic mess that surrounded Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan at the time of his assassination. He writes, 'Not only was the Central Government at loggerheads with the provinces

⁴⁵ Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.41.

but a great deal of intrigue and dog fighting was going on within the Central Government itself. Karachi was the hot bed of intrigues. They were all busy destroying one another. The more powerful among the services had developed political ambitions of their own. Every body seemed to have a group of his own'.⁴⁶

The cabinet of Liaquat Ali Khan had very ambitious and strong headed and intriguing members who were more bureaucrats than ministers. There were people like Ghulam Mohammad, Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, Chaudhry Zafarallah Khan who all were British-trained bureaucrats. 'They did not regard Liaquat Ali Khan with the awe that Quaid-i-Azam commanded till the end'.⁴⁷ One of the most dangerous hidden enemies of the premier was Khawaja Shahabuddin. 'A group, reportedly headed by Minister of Interior Khawaja Shahabuddin and actively aided by the editor of the *Dawn*, Altaf Hussain, was seeking to discredit and perhaps ultimately unseat Liaquat Ali Khan'.⁴⁸ Ayub Khan and Iskandar Mirza had completely tightened their grip over the Army. By the time Liaquat Ali had been assassinated the civil bureaucracy had almost marginalized the politicians. 'The one man they were in awe of was the formidable Ghulam Mohammad, while the Prime Minister came to be viewed by them as progressively weakening and ineffectual figure'.⁴⁹

Ghulam Mohammad maintained close contact with the American Embassy in Karachi. The Embassy had kept the State Department informed of its appraisal that Ghulam Mohammad dreamed of becoming a future 'top banana' of Pakistan. The well-informed U.S. Military Attache, Nathaniel Haskot, had reported that Ghulam Mohammad was acquiring illusion of grandeur and visualized himself (as) Jinnah's successor. Haskot further stated that Ghulam Mohammad had gathered almost unlimited power in his hands.⁵⁰

Ghulam Mohammad had developed very intimate diplomatic ties with important and meaningful Americans. American Ambassador Mr. AVRA Warren maintained good rapport with Ghulam Mohammad. A relationship of mutual confidence and trust existed between them. Assistant Secretary of State, George C. McGhee, was a rising star in the diplomatic corps and belonged to Texas, had acquired a reputation of

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.19-39.

⁴⁷ M.S. Venkataramani, *The American Role in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd, 1984), p.57.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.142.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.57.

being a brilliant young man who carried the trust and confidence of the Secretary of State, was a friend of Ghulam Mohammad. McGhee had played a prominent role in shaping America's Pakistan policy of momentous consequences. 'Ghulam Mohammad's photograph was hanging in the drawing room of McGhee'.⁵¹ Interior Minister Khawaja Shahbuddin had informed the author in an interview that Ghulam Mohammad had developed contacts with America 'as much as he had required'⁵² to achieve his goal.

Deterioration of relations with the U.S.

Pakistan had cordial relations with the U.S. from the very first day of its independence. In May 1950 Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan visited United States on the invitation of President Truman. The visit further cemented the ties and brought the two countries closer. Being a newly born and poor country, Pakistan needed economic help and moral support to stand on its feet. At the global level it was the time when the Cold War had set in.

America desired that Pakistan should offer one or more divisions of troops for use in Korea and move with her to cooperate on Middle Eastern Defense to contain communist and Russian influence. Liaquat Ali Khan was willing to go with U.S.A but wanted complete and unqualified American support on Kashmir and Pakhtoonistan issues. 'Since no assurance to that effect was forth coming from the United States, Liaquat Ali Khan decided not to send troops to Korea'.⁵³

The State Department of the U.S.A worked out a policy statement on Pakistan which reiterated that it should be the U.S. policy to remain impartial in all Pakistan-India disputes. India was described as key stone of stability in South Asia and the importance of continued efforts to bring about a settlement of Indo-Pakistan disputes was stressed.⁵⁴

By June and July 1951 the relations between Pakistan and India had gravely deteriorated. Pandit Nehru was bent upon holding election in Indian held Kashmir. To pressurize Pakistan India brought its troops on Pakistan's border which provoked Liaquat Ali Khan who displayed 'a clenched fist' to India. Fear of war began to loom over the horizon. In due course Dr. Frank Graham, the U.N representative, visited the subcontinent.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.165.

⁵² S.M. Zulqurnain, *Quaid-e-Azam Kay Raufa Say Mullaqatain*, op.cit., p.130.

⁵³ M.S. Venkataramani, op.cit., p.437.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.156.

Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, in a meeting with him, said ‘your mission is the last. I have held my people in check for three years and can do so no longer if you are not successful’.⁵⁵ Liaquat Ali Khan was in an aggressive mood. He held discussion on the war issue with Mohammad Ayub Khan who was Commander-in-Chief and said to him, ‘I am tired of these alarms and excursions. Let us fight out’. Ayub Khan said, ‘We have only 13 tanks about forty to fifty hours engine life in them to face the Indian Army’.⁵⁶

Assistant Secretary of State McGhee feared that while India was unlikely to initiate war, there was ‘increasing danger that public opinion in Pakistan will force the Government to resort to war.’ It was a time when new challenges and threats to Anglo-American interests had appeared in Iran and Egypt. The situation was quite alarming. In this context the report prepared by National Intelligence Estimate stated that in case of war in the subcontinent a very horrible scenario would emerge. Besides, it would result in the economic disaster of India, posing danger of communist take over. The result would almost certainly be communist domination in the area and promotion of neutralism in Iran and the Arab Middle East. In the report it was also mentioned that there was a possibility that Indian communists with China’s help might even be able to take control of the government. If so, a defeated and dismembered neutral Pakistan, whose bases might not be available for U.S bombers would be of no use for U.S.A. On the other hand the victorious but weakened and torn India was more likely to be a ripe plum for the communists. So to avert this disaster it was necessary that Pakistan should not start any local action that could escalate into general war. The report stated that Liaquat Ali Khan had made extreme statements, an indicative of a dangerous mood of frustration. So anti-war people should be encouraged in this effort to move Pakistan away from the brink. To stop the outbreak of war, Secretary of State asked McGhee to explore all possibilities, perhaps a ‘shot-gun’ approach might be necessary, he added.⁵⁷ The Truman Administration appeared to have come to believe that Liaquat Ali Khan was not adequately responsive to urgently perceived security requirement of the United States. Had then Liaquat Ali Khan become some what a liability from the American point of view?⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.159.

⁵⁶ M. Ayub Khan, *op.cit.*, p.40.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.164-70.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.180.

On the night of 9 October 1951 Liaquat Ali Khan sent for the American Ambassador in Karachi and expressed his displeasure over the delay of Dr. Graham Report: 'we Pakistanis are convinced that where American interest is engaged, action follows shortly after', Liaquat Ali exclaimed. The Prime Minister said that he hoped the Security Council would be able to take up Graham's Report for debate not later than 15 October 1951.⁵⁹ This was the last and most serious discourse of Liaquat Ali Khan with the American Ambassador with dire consequences to follow not only for Liaquat Ali Khan but also for the whole nation. On 16 October 1951 Liaquat Ali Khan had disappeared from the political scene.

Foreign hegemony cannot visit any land without collaboration with the internal hegemony. 'The two hegemonies complement each other'.⁶⁰ The Interior Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani is reported to have said on the floor of the National Assembly that 'the assassination (of Prime Minister) might have been plotted on foreign soil'.⁶¹ The foreign hegemony could not have stalked the land without internal collaborators. That is why Ayub Khan had written, 'A civil servant who had become Finance Minister at the time of Independence elevated himself to the position of Governor General'.⁶²

Relations between Liaquat Ali and Ghulam Muhammad

It will be very appropriate and interesting to deliberate upon the nature of relationship and circumstances which led to conflict and clash between Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and Finance Minister Ghulam Mohammad. There were many contentious issues which strained their relations and sowed the seeds of disharmony and discord leading to acrimony and hostility, which in the end turned out into a battle of survival. Apart from clash of personalities, there was a clash of ideas and interests. Both the Prime Minister and Ghulam Mohammad were brought up in a diametrically opposite social and political environments. One was basically a politician, while the other was outrightly a bureaucrat with shining record of professional acumen, strictly honest and financially incorruptible but very ambitious.

In the beginning they were very friendly and close. But with the passage of time the clash of ideas and egos began to creep in and

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.169.

⁶⁰ Z.A. Bhutto, *If I am assassinated* (Lahore: Classic, 1994), p.119.

⁶¹ Zamir Niazi, *Press in Chains* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1986), p.62.

⁶² M. Ayub Khan, *op.cit.*, p.49.

poisoned their relations. The major issues on which differences cropped up were related to the framing of constitution and foreign policy.

The Objectives Resolution was the first major constitutional issue, which became a bone of contention between Liaquat Ali Khan and Ghulam Mohammad. It gave birth to discords and dissensions in the cabinet and the Muslim League. Ghulam Muhammad and his faction were deadly opposed to the Objectives Resolution. Ghulam Mohammad's point of view was that state should not be based upon religion. The Objectives Resolution was a retrogressive measure against democratic norms and values. It would promote orthodoxy and intolerance in the society and would encourage reactionary forces of clerics.

The religion should be a private affair of an individual, and state should have no role in it. 'Some people were so much scared by religious influences that they even expressed their deep apprehensions that it would ultimately lead Muslims to cut each other's throats in the name of Islam'.⁶³ But the showdown between these two factions was averted by Liaquat Ali Khan who promised that the Objectives Resolution would never be a part of Pakistan constitution. The Objectives Resolution would remain in the preamble of the constitution.⁶⁴

The other grave issue, which bogged their relations and poisoned the whole political environment related to foreign relations. In the beginning Liaquat Ali Khan had outrightly tilted towards America. It was Ghulam Muhammad who had sabotaged the Russian invitation extended to Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to visit Moscow. Ghulam Mohammad changed the entire dimension of Pakistans' foreign relations by 'extracting an invitation from US long before Liaquat Ali Khan traveled to Moscow on a state visit'.⁶⁵

That was a time when Ghulam Mohammad enjoyed trust and confidence of Liaquat Ali Khan, but the wilderness of politics has unique infidelity of its own which is unpredictable and very volatile. Friends of today may become enemies of tomorrow. And this is what happened in case of Liaquat Ali Khan and Ghulam Mohammad.

The relations between Prime Minister and Ghulam Mohammad took a sinister turn when the relations between India and Pakistan got strained and both countries reached to the brink of war. It was the time when Liaquat Ali Khan had become completely disappointed with America which had flatly refused to become a party to Pakistan in case

⁶³ S.M. Zulqurnain, *op.cit.*, pp.72-3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.104.

⁶⁵ Interview of the author with Syed Amjad Ali in 1994.

of war against India.⁶⁶ Therefore Liaquat Ali Khan decided to chart a new-course, which clearly indicated his positive turn towards Russia and formation of a Muslim bloc to assert his position and meet new challenges and threats.

In his last historic interview we find a clear picture of his ideas and new policy which he desired to pursue. This interview was recorded by an American journalist, Mr. Browne, a few weeks before his assassination. In this interview, Liaquat Ali Khan had very candidly opened his mind about Russia. Mr. Browne had asked the Prime Minister if he feared 'Russian aggression'. 'No,' was the reply. 'Pakistan is too small for Russia to bother about for the time being'. Mr. Browne asked if he had any particular message, he wished to give American people.

'Yes,' the Prime Minister said, 'I am sure that United States wants peace. Pakistan is interested in bringing Muslim countries closer and nearer to each other in the interest of peace and we are determined to go ahead'.⁶⁷ This interview was broadcast from a New York radio station on 16 October 1951 just after Liaquat Ali Khan was shot dead. It was a message to all dissident leaders of Third World not to displease the big power and not to chart a new course against their interest and wishes.

In the realization of his new policy, Liaquat Ali Khan wanted to have new colleagues and new friends. Naturally all those persons who were strongly committed to American bloc became unacceptable and obnoxious. By August/September 1951, the relation between Prime Minister and Ghulam Mohammad were not only strained but had turned out to be quite inimical and hostile. The immediate reason for Liaquat Ali's annoyance and displeasure was Ghulam Mohammad's outburst against Government of Pakistan in Bombay.

Mr. M.B. Ahmad who was the First Secretary of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan said to the Prime Minister how 'it was possible that a member of cabinet should criticise his own Government in a foreign land? Action against him should be taken. He should resign. So, Liaquat Ali Khan told Ghulam Mohammad, 'Make yourself ready to go'. Besides Ghulam Mohammad, the Prime Minister had decided to sack the following persons: Gurmani, Khawaja Shahabuddin, Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan and Qurban Ali. Liaquat Ali Khan had disastrously blundered to have given them (Ghulam Mohammad and Gurmani) notices of 15 days. He was sending Khawaja Shahabuddin as an

⁶⁶ M.S. Venkataramani, *op.cit.*, p.86.

⁶⁷ *The Pakistan Times*, 20 October 1951.

Ambassador to Egypt. He was also very much annoyed with Qurban Ali Khan.⁶⁸

The accounts narrated by Mr. M.B. Ahmad are confirmed by many other important political figures who were contemporaries of Liaquat Ali Khan. Mr. Yousaf Khattak was one of them. He was Secretary General of Pakistan Muslim League. He was very close to Liaquat Ali Khan. Mr. Yousaf Khattak said in an interview with this author, 'I think it was a murder. People were going to be thrown out'. Wholesale changes in the cabinet had been perceived by Liaquat Ali Khan. Shahabuddin had been appointed Ambassador at Cairo. Qurban Ali Khan, I. G. Police, a very powerful man was retiring in the natural course of service, but no body wants to get retired in Pakistan. Gurmani was also one of the affectees. Sardar Bahadur was also on the hit list'.⁶⁹ So, all disgruntled and hostile politicians and civil bureaucrats ganged up and planned the murder of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan.

The birth of a new regime on the night of 16 October 1951 at Rawalpindi

Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani was not present at the public meeting. But quite surprisingly, he arrived in the Company Bagh after the Prime Minister had been shot and the indiscriminate firing had stopped. Immediately the Muslim Leaguers surrounded his car. Without saying anything else, he abruptly murmured: 'Has the mission been accomplished'. He did not get out of the car. Nor did he express any word of regret or sorrow. Ghulam Mustafa Shah Gylani, M.L.A, in an interview with this author said, 'We were at a loss to understand what he was murmuring about'. However, he told Gurmani, 'Liaquat Ali Khan has been shot and martyred'. After listening to this 'he moved away quietly without uttering a word'.⁷⁰ Gurmani remained in the hospital as long as Liaquat Ali Khan was not declared dead. From the hospital he rushed to his residence where Ghulam Mohammad was waiting.

Syed Amjad Ali, who had been Pakistan's Ambassador in Washington during 1953-55 had very friendly relations with both Ghulam Mohammad and Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani. Gurmani was his primary school classfellow and chum. Gurmani himself had narrated the

⁶⁸ Mr. M.B Ahmed's interview with the author. The recorded interview is in the custody of National Archives, Islamabad.

⁶⁹ Interview with the author in 1976. The interview is in the custody of National Archives.

⁷⁰ Interview with the author, the interview is in the custody of National Archives, Islamabad.

whole episode of the birth of a new regime to Syed Amjad Ali after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan. Governor General Khawaja Nazimuddin was at Nathiagali when the premier was killed. He arrived from Nathiagali soon after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan. Sardar Abdul Rab Nashtar flew from Lahore to Rawalpindi. Chaudhry Mohammad Ali also reached from Karachi by air. They all got together in the *kotha* (residence) of Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani which was a very huge building. Gurmani had already planned the course of actions in his mind. All these bigwigs were sitting in a big room. Gurmani requested Khawaja Sahib for privacy and escorted him to a nearby room.

He said to Khawaja Sahib: 'The country is passing through a grave political crisis because the Prime Minister has been assassinated. We must have a government immediately. You leave the office of Governor General and assume the prime ministership of the country. Since you are Governor General, holding the highest post, no body will raise any finger against you if you become Prime Minister. Thirdly you belong to the biggest province. The people over there will have no objection too'.

But Khawaja Sahib expressed his inability to carry the heavy burden of premiership. He refused three times to become the Prime Minister. Whereupon Gurmani pleaded to him whether he liked it or not in any case he will have to accept the responsibility. Hesitantly Khawaja Sahib lowered his head. Then Gurmani asked, 'When you have vacated the seat of Governor Generalship and you became the Prime Minister, somebody should be there to fill in your place'. 'Yes, of course,' replied Khawaja Sahib. 'Then I propose the name of Ghulam Muhammad'. Khawaja Sahib said, 'It is alright'.⁷¹

After concluding this discourse Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani and Khawaja Nazimuddin came out from the chamber and went into the room where the big guns were sitting. Gurmani announced the settlement and they all agreed to it, though it was a bizarre decision. Before Liaquat Ali Khan had been buried, a new regime had taken birth.⁷²

The assassination of the first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan has derailed the country from the path of democracy and irreparably damaged the foundations of fragile democratic structure of the state of Pakistan. The introduction of the cult of bullet undermined the sanctity

⁷¹ Interview of Syed Amjad Ali with the author in 1994 at Lahore.

⁷² The above mentioned account was narrated to the author in an interview in 1994 by Syed Amjad Ali who was Finance Minister in the cabinet of Feroz Khan and was very close to Ghulam Muahmmad and Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani.

of ballot and opened the political arena for the army to take over. The country was plunged into darkness and lost its destination in the wilderness of oligarchic misrule which plundered the people and made them more wretched and helpless. After a passage of two and half decades another Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto emerged to emancipate the poor and ignorant masses but he too was judicially murdered by the monster which was born on 16 October 1951, in the house of Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, on the night of Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination by a conspiracy. An attitude of complacency and indifference developed among the politicians, intellectuals, lawyers and historians over the national tragedy which was a crime bigger than the cold-blooded murder of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who was neither mourned nor forgotten.