

The Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case: Myth or Reality – An Analysis

Muhammad Amir Hamza

Introduction

Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case was the first conspiracy in the armed forces of Pakistan to overthrow a civilian government. In March 1951, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, in a statement, revealed a conspiracy in the armed forces ‘to create revolutionary condition in the country by violent means and to subvert the loyalty of Pakistan’s defence forces’. The ring leaders of the conspiracy, who had already been arrested included two army officers – Major General Akbar Khan, Chief of General Staff (CGS) and Brigadier Muhammad Abdul Latif Khan, Commander 52 Brigade and Station Commander Quetta – and two civilians, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, editor, *Pakistan Times*, Lahore, and Mrs Nasim Akbar Khan. The two army officers were dismissed from service with immediate effect. The prime minister said that he could not disclose publicly the details of the plans of those who were implicated in the conspiracy for ‘reasons of national security’, but assured the nation that they would have stuck at the very foundations of our national existence and disrupted the stability of Pakistan. The government, however, expressed full confidence in the armed forces and the statement ended on a patriotic note congratulating them ‘on their deep and unquestioned affection for Pakistan and their resistance to all disruptive influence’.¹

Akbar Khan, was born in 1912 in a fairly affluent Pathan family. He received his education at Islamia College, Peshawar, and was chosen for King’s Commission in the army by the British. He received his military training at the famous military academy of Sandhurst and started his career in the Frontier Force Rifles – one of the distinguished regiments of the British Indian Army. During the Second World War he fought on the Burma front and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for conspicuous gallantry and leadership.

¹ *Dawn*, Karachi, 10 March 1951.

Major General Mohammed Akbar Khan, also known as Akbar Khan, fought as the Brigadier Incharge in Kashmir on the Pakistan side in Indo-Pak war of 1948. He also helped stop the first Baloch insurgency in 1948. Later he served as the Chief of National Security under Zulifkar Ali Bhutto and helped quell the Balochi insurgency again during the early 70's. But he is generally known in Pakistan as the main conspirator of the first but failed coup attempt of 1951 which came to be known as the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case.

At the time of independence, Akbar Khan was a member of the sub-committee involved in partitioning the armed forces between India and Pakistan. Almost immediately after independence fighting started in Kashmir. The Indian Army landed in Srinagar and confronted the Pathan tribesmen who were advancing towards the valley. Akbar Khan, who was then a Brigadier, assumed command of the regulars and irregulars fighting against the Indian forces and was given the code name of General Tariq. It was during this period that he first became dissatisfied with the moral and material support being given to the Pakistani fighters by Liaquat Ali Khan's government. He also had a grudge against General Douglas David Gracey, then C-in-C of the Pakistan Army, who had put a brake on the deeper involvement of the army on the Kashmir front. Akbar Khan was of the opinion – rightly or wrongly – that acceptance of ceasefire in Kashmir was a mistake and the armed struggle against the Indian Army should have continued. The constraints under which Akbar Khan had to conduct the battle in Kashmir made him a very frustrated and dissatisfied person. By nature he was extremely brave and, in fact, rather a rash person. He was also very ambitious. All these qualities and tendencies combined to propel him towards conjuring up a plan to remove the Liaquat government by means of a coup d'etat.

In sheer frustration, Akbar Khan started discourses with other army officers to form a group to stage a military coup. The government became suspicious of his moves. Akbar Khan's wife, Begum Nasim (daughter of the famous Muslim League woman politician Begum Shah Nawaz), was quite indiscreet in her conversation, criticizing the government and its policies before all and sundry, as did Akbar Khan himself to some extent. He thus was placed under constant watch by the intelligence agencies.

In December 1950, he was promoted as Major General on the basis of his seniority and posted as Chief of the General Staff in the GHQ. In his book *Friends not Masters* General Ayub Khan wrote that he (Ayub) decided to post Akbar in the GHQ so that firstly, Akbar should not have direct command over troops like a Div Commander and secondly, because he could be kept under close watch by General Ayub

Khan himself. Meanwhile, Akbar Khan continued his surreptitious meetings and discussions with various army officers and later with the civilians too.²

In those days the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) was under tremendous pressure from Liaquat Ali Khan's government. It was not being allowed to function openly as a political party. Arrest warrants were issued for all the top leaders of the party. All the members of the party's central committee went underground. Ordinary workers and even sympathizers were often arrested, beaten, sent to the fearful Lahore Fort for interrogation and threatened with dire consequences if they did not break all connections with the CPP. Akbar Khan's wife, Nasim had vast connections with political families and political personalities such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who was a committed sympathizer of the party. All these political connections brought together the Chief of General Staff and the CPP leadership.³ Apparently the general had promised the CPP leadership that if he came to power he would stop the continuous governmental assault on the leftists; the CPP would be allowed to function as a legitimate political party like any other party and to take part in the elections which General Akbar promised to hold a few months after consolidating his power. In return the CPP and its affiliated trade unions, *kissan* committees, students' fronts etc. would welcome the military government. *The Pakistan Times*, one of the leading newspapers of that period, would lend editorial support to General Akbar's (planned) dismissal of the Liaquat government and the formation of an interim government presumably under General Akbar Khan. General elections under army's supervision were also promised but no timeframe was given. The general also spoke about Kashmir, land reforms, eradication of corruption and nepotism and some such other topics. On 23 February 1951, a meeting was held at Major General Akbar Khan's house in which besides a number of military officers, three civilians were also present, namely Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sajjad Zaheer, (General Secretary of the CPP) and Muhammad Hussain Ata. In this meeting were also present Lt-Colonel Siddique Raja, MC, and Major Muhammad Yousuf Sethi, both of whom later obtained state pardon and became approvers in the case against the others. The Chief of General Staff presented his plan in this meeting. The plan was to arrest the Governor-General Khawaja Nazimuddin and the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, both of whom

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rawalpindi_Conspiracy_Case.

³ *Ibid.*

were expected to be in Rawalpindi after a week (Karachi being the capital at that time).⁴

Among General Akbar's confidants was one Askar Ali Shah, a police officer who was although not present at the meeting of 23 February 1951, had been informed beforehand by the general that he was going to convene such a meeting. This police officer had been a confidant of the general for over two years (or more) and had never leaked out any secret. But this time he got cold feet and blurted out to his IG Police, who in turn informed the Governor NWFP about the meeting. The governor wasted no time in contacting the prime minister.

The first four persons to be arrested were the Chief of General Staff, Major General Akbar Khan, the Brigade Commander of Quetta, Brigadier M. A. Latif Khan, Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Akbar's wife Nasim. Later some other people were also picked up. But one of the accused, Muhammad Hussain Ata, a member of central committee of the CPP belonging to NWFP went underground and eluded arrest for a long time. He was eventually arrested in East Pakistan about a month after the trial proceedings had commenced. Most of the accused were originally kept in various Lahore jails and later shifted to Hyderabad jail where a special compound had been renovated and turned into the court premises. A special tribunal was formed by the government for hearing the case.

The trial

The trial began on 15 June 1951. The tribunal consisted of Justice Sir Abdul Rahman of the Federal Court, Justice Muhammad Sharif of the Punjab High Court and Justice Amir-ud-din of the Dacca High Court. The prosecution was led by the formidable A. K. Brohi, this being one of his earlier cases. Later he was to achieve great fame and notoriety as a legal adviser of dictators and authoritarians. The incomparable Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy appeared on behalf of Brigadier Latif and Z. H. Lari on behalf of General Akbar. Other famous counsels who appeared for the defence were Abdul Rahim, Malik Faiz Mohammad Khawaja, Sahibzada Nawazish Ali and Qazi Aslam. As the case proceeded gradually and continued month after month, many of the counsels departed due to the inability of their clients to pay them. But credit goes to H. S. Suhrawardy who fought till the very end even when his client had stopped paying him anything more.

The basic charge against all the accused was one of conspiracy to wage war against the king (British empire). A careful scrutiny of the first charge shows that it relates to a conspiracy alleged by prosecution to

⁴ *Ibid.*

have come into being for overthrowing the government established by law in Pakistan by means of criminal force or show of criminal force. Other allegations, though punishable offences in themselves, were 'either the consequences of this conspiracy or merely means to achieve the object for which it was stated to have been entered into.' The judgement was, therefore, directed mainly to examine whether the evidence produced by the prosecution was sufficient to establish (i) the existence of conspiracy; and if that was established, (ii) who were the proved parties to it? The evidence led by the prosecution to prove its case was both documentary and oral. The latter was of 'persons, who, without being either parties or willing parties to it, either deposed to the existence of the conspiracy or stated facts which might lead a court to draw a conclusion in favour of its existence; and (of) persons who were either, on their own statements, or on account of admissions of facts made by them, or due to existence of other reasonable grounds, held to be willing parties to the conspiracy. 'The case as presented by the prosecution, relied basically on the evidence of the two approvers, and other witnesses who gave circumstantial evidence. It was not a false case at all. In general the bulk of the evidence was true. But there was a major falsehood which negated all the claims of the state of presenting a truthful case before the tribunal. The prosecution induced the approvers to state that at the end of the crucial meeting of 23 February 1951, the people present had agreed to overthrow the government. They had to tell this lie because otherwise the allegation of conspiracy would have fallen flat. According to the penal code a conspiracy is only established 'when two or more persons agree to commit an illegal act or a legal act by illegal means'. If there is no agreement there is no conspiracy under the law. The conspirators claimed that after eight long hours of discussion, of arguments and counter-arguments, of high tension and near nervous breakdown, the group of persons assembled in Akbar Khan's house that day had agreed not to take any steps in pursuance of the plan presented by the Chief of General Staff. There was no agreement, and therefore no conspiracy! General Akbar could have very well been punished under the Army Act for even presenting such a plan and for trying to subvert the loyalty of others.

In jail the military officers and the intellectual civilians managed to get along together reasonably well, in spite of wide differences in ideology and thinking between some individuals. Actually, General Akbar had somehow managed to gather quite a diverse bunch of

characters.⁵ There was General Nazir Ahmad, who was an Ahmedi. Air Commodore Mohammad Khan Janjua and Major Hasan Khan were Shias. Brigadier Latif believed in sufism and read a lot of religious books. Brigadier Sadiq, Lt-Col Ziauddin and Captain Khizar Hayat had faith in 'pirs' and 'murshids'. Lt-Col Niaz Mohammad Arbab was a good-natured person belonging to an affluent and influential Arbab family of Tekhal Bala, near Peshawar. He was totally uncommitted ideologically, so much so that much later he became a minister in General Zia's government. Syed Sajjad Zaheer, Mohammad Hussain Ata and Faiz Ahmad Faiz were, of course, communists of varying degree, so was Major Ishaq Mohammed, but at that time he was still a beginner. Later, of course, Major Ishaq became a symbol of militant left-wing politics in Pakistan. He was a fearless person and used to argue with vehemence even with the judges of the tribunal. For example during the trial after an exchange of hot words where Justice Sir Abdul Rahman thundered: 'I will set you right', to which Ishaq boldly replied: 'Go ahead, my Lord!' The justice could then only mutter, 'I pity you'. Ishaq and Ata were both hot-tempered and indulged in blistering polemics when discussing politics in jail. The two coolest customers in that circle were the senior members of the group, Syed Sajjad Zaheer and Faiz Ahmad Faiz.⁶

The aftermath

Of the fifteen, the only woman, Begum Nasim, was acquitted while Major General Nazir Ahmad was dismissed from service and sentenced till the rising of the court. All the others received prison sentences ranging from a minimum of four years (civilians and junior officers) to a maximum of 12 years (for Major General Akbar Khan). In the words of the principal accused, Akbar Khan, it was General Ayub Khan (then army chief), 'the choreographer' of this comic strip (conspiracy case) who apparently feared that Akbar Khan had about two divisions at his disposal to support him. His ordeal after his arrest is best described in his own words:

...In the early hours of the morning on March 9, 1951 I was arrested and carried away the whole of that day, a long distance from Pindi to jail. In the deserted suburbs of what looked like a

⁵ Major Ishaq Muhammad, *Rawalpindi Sazish Mohibwattan Fauji Afsran Kay Khelaf Sazish Theey, Nazrya Aor Amal (Urdu book)*, publication of Mazdoor Kisan Party, 1985, pp.25-6.

⁶ Interview with Ch. Abdul Latif (2005), senior vice chairman, Communist Mazdoor Kisan Party Pakistan.

dead town, distant and asleep, that cold night, at 11 p. m. the massive doors of the jail groaned creaked and opened slowly to swallow a motor convoy that was bringing me in. Seventeen hours had been taken by that convoy speeding across territory that I had not been permitted to see, so that neither the route nor the destination should be known to me or anyone else interested in following us. That morning while I had been sleeping peacefully, a hundred men had surrounded my house and successfully overpowered my one unarmed watchman. Then Major-General Hayauddin knocked at my bedroom window and said that he had to see me about something most urgent. I had gone at once, without even putting on shoes, through the study door to meet him. But as I emerged, men with bayonets and sten guns had rushed at me from three sides – the front and both flanks. I had been rushed at before, during the war, by the Japanese in fighting – but never by 20 to one and not when I was unarmed. I had only a split second to think and I had let them come on. I think it had been the complete failure of this melodrama to impress me at all that had stopped the men mid-stride. No bayonet or sten gun had reached my body – and the few hands that had been laid at me had been quickly withdrawn. A mere telephone call would have sufficed to tell me that I was under arrest. But instead all troops had been alerted and these men had apparently expected to be gunned down by some sort of desperado. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan himself made the announcement from Lahore about the conspiracy which was generally regarded as treason and the conspiracy came to be known as ‘The Rawalpindi Conspiracy’.

UK High Commissioner in his 3rd report to his government on the Rawalpindi Conspiracy, sending 17 March 1951 on the question of evidence against the conspirators, stated that ‘General Akbar Khan was a dangerous man under the influence of an ambitious wife, and that he had been regarded as very anti-Commonwealth before he went to the United Kingdom last year to attend the Joint Services Staff College. According to Gracey (the first army chief of Pakistan) the Defence Secretary Iskander Mirza wished Akbar to go on to the Imperial Defence College to ‘complete his education’. The impression was that on his return, he would be less anti-British, and it was felt that he might be sobered up by being given a responsible job under the eye of the Commander-in-Chief at the GHQ. General Gracey also told Colonel Franklin that he had informed the Chief of the Imperial Staff of Akbar’s tendencies before he had left for the course. It was reported that the police have been

investigating the activities of Akbar and his wife for the last two years. General Gracey also maintained that these two, and certain of his friends, had been known as the 'Young Turk Party'.

Communist Party of Pakistan and Rawalpindi Conspiracy

Our main interest in the Pindi conspiracy is to see the character, nature and reasons of CPP's participation. Its decision to participate in a military coup not only proved disastrous for the party but was also a curious distortion of the concept of Marxist revolution.

In fact, Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case was a conspiracy against patriotic army officers because in the 1950s USA wanted to draw Pakistan into the defence pacts to contain the Soviet Union. The Pakistani government and the US realized that the patriotic army officers would strongly oppose this. Besides the ceasefire of 1 January 1949 in Kashmir was seen as a conspiracy of the British and the Liaquat government. In the army's rank and file, the government was already under fire due to this Kashmir situation. It was, therefore, necessary to get rid of these officers from the army to save American interests in this institution permanently.⁷

The 'Rawalpindi Conspiracy' was thus a direct result of frustration caused in the army ranks who wanted to remove incompetent and 'weak-kneed' political leadership of the country. The other view is that General Akbar Khan used this frustration in the army to attempt a coup d'état for personal power. According to this school of thought, General Akbar was a very ambitious general and used to study the *Rape of the Masses*, which described the Nazi tactics to achieve power.

As far as CPP is concerned there were already differences in the leadership of the party on the undemocratic attitude of Sajjad Zaheer. The party developed rifts from the very beginning. Eric Cyprian and Mirza Ibrahim distrusted Sajjad Zaheer. On his return from the Calcutta Congress, talking about the party line, Cyprian suggested that it should consolidate and go slow. But Sajjad Zaheer favoured a more aggressive course of action. In this he was supported by Muhammad Hussain Atta, who was still more radical, enjoyed the confidence of the secretary general, and was a member of the regional central committee. Soon after Sajjad Zaheer settled down in Lahore, Cyprian wrote to him about the militancy of Ata who, he said, 'has become a problem and his visits of W. Punjab have increased our difficulties... he is working up an agitation against what he considers the wrong policies and decisions of the Punjab party, the NWR (North Western Railway) union etc.' Ata

⁷ See Major Ishaq. *op.cit.*, pp.25-6.

advocated a mass struggle for which Cyprian thought the party was not yet ready; he further advocated that strike should be called, even if it lacked complete mass support. Ata, on the other hand, had written to Sajjad Zaheer, in early 1948, about his differences with Cyprian and Ibrahim on the conflict between Tito and Comintern and the printing of the party's name on *Naya Zamana*.

During its formative period, three personalities provided the ideological content to the conspiracy. They were Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Latif Afghani, and Nasim Akbar Khan. Akbar Khan had known Faiz for a number of years, he was frequently a house guest. During the tribal invasion of Kashmir and later, Faiz was chief editor of Progressive Papers Limited, which included *The Pakistan Times* and other newspapers and Akbar took him to the front lines on various occasions and kept him as a guest in his camp. Faiz was deeply impressed by the soldierly qualities of Akbar Khan who must have been influenced in return by the intellectual horizons of Faiz. Their relationship was quite intimate and continued after Akbar Khan's transfer from Kashmir. Visitors to Akbar Khan's house often found Faiz staying there. Faiz Ahmad Faiz was not a regular Communist Party member but an activist in front organisations, and was on friendly terms with Sajjad Zaheer and other senior leaders. It is certain that during this period it was Faiz who, in turn, must have briefed the Communist Party leadership.⁸

Latif Afghani appeared off and on out of the shadows in the story of the early Kashmir campaign. His background and political cover gave an idea of the communist techniques to penetrate rival organisations to achieve long-term objectives. Latif Afghani's father, Sardar Abdur Hakim, was the trade agent of the government of Afghanistan at Peshawar during King Amanullah's reign. He did not accept the Bachha Saqa government after the overthrow of Amanullah and entered into an agreement with General Nadir Khan to drive out Bachha Saqa and restored Amanullah. But Nadir Khan occupied the throne himself, and accused Sardar Hakim Khan of conspiring with his (Nadir Khan's) brother, Prince Amin Jan, to overthrow his government. The British government supported Nadir Khan and arrested Sardar Hakim Khan and his family as well as Amin Jan and detained them in Rangoon in 1934. In 1935, after the separation of Burma from India, the family was shifted to Madras. Latif Afghani was educated in Madras and Bangalore, and he took active part in student politics and agitations against the government. He was imprisoned for five months and later put under house arrest. He

⁸ Hasan Zaheer, *The Times and Trail of The Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, 1951* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.213.

became joint secretary of the All-India Students Federation. At some point during this period, he became a member of the Communist Party. In 1943 Latif Afghani went to Srinagar and met Mian Iftikharuddin and other Muslim Leaguers, along with other communists, Danyal Lathfi, Abdullah Malik, and Ataullah Jahanian. The adoption of the Muslim League cover by the party activists was in line with the party strategy of infiltrating mainstream politics.⁹ Latif Afghani was highly successful in the mission; he worked as office secretary of the Punjab Muslim League and also joined the Muslim League National Guard with Major Khurshid Anwar. He participated in the Muslim League movement against the Khizer Hayat ministry in 1947 and consequently suffered imprisonment. In October 1947, 'Mian Iftikharuddin asked him to join the fighting in Kashmir'. Latif Afghani's sister, Miss Mehr Khan, was also close to Akbar Khan's family. She had been educated in Turkey on a scholarship given by King Amanullah and, after independence, worked in the Women's National Guard.¹⁰

It is not known how and when Akbar Khan met Latif Afghani, but we find him at 101 Brigade headquarters at Chinari in Uri sector early in the Kashmir campaign. Eusoph Sethi testified before the tribunal that Latif Afghani was made a local colonel by Akbar Khan and was given the task of raising the Home Guards, which remained independent of Tariq headquarters. According to Serf, Latif Afghani was able to recruit and train 1000 men for reinforcement of the Azad battalions in the area and also quickly organised volunteer groups into porter companies and small groups of local Home Guards to guard the approaches, bridges and supply points. He also organized an intelligence organisation.¹¹ Sadiq Khan says, 'Latif Afghani was posted as an assistant to me. I first saw him in Hijira (Kashmir) where he was posted by GOC7 Division General Loftus Tottenham with a letter from a British officer of that division. Latif's sister, Miss Mehr Khan, used to be a steno in British Intelligence. He organised labour force to build roads and bridges to support the Kashmir campaign. In April 1949, the Communist Party sponsored the Democratic Students Federation to create a communist front in the students community. Latif Afghani offered to organize it and was made its president. In March 1950, on the occasion of the visit of Shah Iran to Lahore, the federation decided to greet the monarch with handbills criticizing his rule. The party workers were required to

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, (Interview with Afghani's wife), p. 214.

¹¹ Muhammad Yousaf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, Vol. 2. (Lahore: Feroze Sons, Ltd, 1977), p.1021.

distribute these quickly on the path from where the Shah was scheduled to pass, and then try to disappear. Latif Afghani was arrested with subversive material and sentenced to three years imprisonment. He thus goes out of the history of the conspiracy, but was mentor of Akbar Khan in communist ideology and also perhaps a contact with leadership of the Communist Party.¹²

The most potent and decisive influence on Akbar Khan was that of his wife, who was both ambitious and ideologically motivated. She collected subscriptions for the Communist Party and herself contributed Rs.50 per month and, on one occasion, also donated jewellery. Her communist activities were brought to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief also. She was close to Latif Afghani and on friendly terms with Shaukat Ali, the Secretary of Punjab Communist Party. Eric Cyprian said that her sister, Mumtaz Jamal, was a member of the Communist Party. She had pressurized Akbar Khan to convert his accomplices to practising communists. From time to time, Akbar Khan asked Sadique Raja, Sadiq Khan, and others to donate funds and supply party literature to them. In social gatherings, Nasim Akbar Khan invariably turned the conversation to iniquities of the Anglo-American bloc and the virtues of Soviet Russia. Akbar Khan's approach to the Communist Party was more practical than doctrinaire. He wanted political support for his coup plans and he obtained it from the communists with whom he had contacts through his wife and Latif Afghani. Akbar Khan had been telling his accomplices, without specifying that he had obtained the political support of powerful people. There is no evidence that he approached any other political party or leader.

Eric Cyprian recalled that some time in 1950 after he was released from jail, he attended a meeting of the regional committee at Multan along with Mirza Ibrahim, C. R. Aslam, Attaullah Jhanian, Sardar Shaukat Ali, and Sajjad Zaheer. It was put to the meeting that some army officers had approached the leadership asking whether the party would support a coup d'état by them and, if so, what kind of help it would extend. Cyprian said that he opposed any association with this adventure.¹³ C. R. Aslam said that General Nazir Ahmad met Sibte Hassan sometime in 1950 and asked for the support of the Communist Party in conquering Kashmir. The matter was discussed in the central committee and it was decided to send Faiz Ahmad Faiz to General Akbar Khan to find out the details of his plan. The CPP was not in favour of any army adventure in Kashmir. Akbar Khan told Faiz that he wanted to

¹² Hasan Zaheer, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

¹³ *Ibid.*

change Liaquat Ali Khan government and did not mention Kashmir. Faiz reported these negotiations and there was a long discussion in the central committee. Given the party line of armed struggle laid down in the second congress, it was decided to send Sajjad Zaheer and Faiz Ahmad Faiz to the meeting of 23 February. The party also gave two documents relating to the coup.¹⁴

Another version, and perhaps more likely of the involvement of the Communist Party in the conspiracy is that in January 1951, Abdullah Malik, a member of the Lahore district committee, informed Sibte Hassan that Faiz urgently wanted to meet Sajjad Zaheer, who was not in Lahore at that time. The following day Sibte Hassan met Faiz, who told him that some army officers were planning to overthrow the government and wanted Faiz to find out from the leadership whether the Communist Party would join them in the venture. Sibte Hassan briefed Sajjad Zaheer when he returned to Lahore in February. Apparently, Sajjad Zaheer knew of the developments in Rawalpindi and had in fact discussed the matter with Ashfaq Baig before he went to Karachi in January. He now discussed the army proposal with Sibte Hassan, C. R. Aslam, and Muhammad Afzal, who expressed doubts about the prospects of success of the coup attempt and advised against any involvement of the party in it. But at Sajjad Zaheer's suggestion that he should go to Rawalpindi to study the situation on the spot, they agreed to his visit on the condition that he would report back to the central secretariat before making any commitment on behalf of the party. Sajjad Zaheer, without informing the members who had authorised only the secretary general, took Faiz Ahmad Faiz to Rawalpindi and met Akbar Khan. On his return, Sajjad Zaheer called a meeting of central secretariat (Sibte Hassan, C. R. Aslam, and Muhammad Afzal) and Shaukat Ali, who was secretary of the Punjab committee. The meeting was held at 41 Lawrance Road, the house of Nawabzada Imtiaz Ali Khan, a cousin of Liaquat Ali Khan, where Sibte Hassan was staying. Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Afzal were opposed to any deal with the army officers regarding the conspiracy. They felt that it would not succeed and would do more harm than good. But Sajjad Zaheer and the other two members were in favour of supporting the coup plans. They considered it a short route to capture power. The split in the higher counsels of the party was reported by Sajjad Zaheer in a letter dated 14 February to Ishfaq Baig, delivered personally by Faiz, who left Lahore for Karachi on 13 February. Referring to his Rawalpindi visit about 'that particular matter', which he seemed to have briefly communicated to Ishfaq earlier, Sajjad Zaheer

¹⁴ Interview with C.R. Aslam, Lahore, January 2005.

wrote: 'After this we have been continuously cogitating over it. One proposition was that all members should be called and consulted. Later, as time was short and the majority [three vs two] had approved the proposition [to join the conspiracy], we took it upon ourselves to take the responsibility for the final decision.' The letter then gave the break-up of voting by fake names of the members who supported or opposed the proposal. 'You will be apprised of details', the letter concluded, 'by our friend who has been assisting me in this particular matter for some months. It was necessary to associate him for the purpose. On Faiz's return from Karachi, he and Sajjad Zaheer went to Rawalpindi'. On 20 February, Faiz picked up Sajjad Zaheer and Sibte Hassan in his car, and together they went to Khadija's residence on College Road and left for Rawalpindi in her car at 3 p.m.¹⁵ They reached Rawalpindi at about 7.30 p. m. and went to the house of Riaz Ahmad, conservator of forests, and the stepson of Begum Shahnawaz. They had dinner at Riaz's house and later Nasim Akbar Khan took them to Eusoph Sethi's house. Faiz and Sajjad Zaheer remained in the house until 23 February, but Sibte Hassan, who had his own plan to visit Wah, left the house to meet a worker and then left for Lahore on 21 February by train. The same day, Muhammad Hussain Atta, who had apparently been asked by Sajjad Zaheer to report to Rawalpindi, arrived, and stayed in the same room with the other two. This is the mystery of fourth man referred to by Eusoph Sethi in his evidence.¹⁶

A balanced view perhaps, appears in Z.A. Poshni's article, 'My Version of Pindi Conspiracy'. Poshni holds the view that there was no such thing as the fact that the Pakistani army was cheated out of a victory in Kashmir in the 1948 war. It was only a myth and as a matter of fact the cease-fire was the only solution to the stalemate that had been reached in the Kashmir fight. It is a fact however that there was a lot of frustration generated by Akbar Khan and other army officers who had fought valiantly in Kashmir without adequate support from the civilian government. They definitely felt that they had been let down and this resentment was reinforced by General Akbar and the other conspiracy-involved Pakistani officers' belief that the Pakistani government of the day was corrupt, nepotism-ridden, and totally subservient to British imperialist domination. Poshni argues that Akbar was patriotic officer even though he was ambitious. For Poshni, personal ambitious and patriotism go hand-in-hand and he argues that most officers had a mix of each to a more or less degree. Regarding the second important question,

¹⁵ Hasan Zaheer, *op.cit.*, pp.217-18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

as to whether there was a conspiracy, Poshni argued that there was a 'conspiracy' of sorts. The prime mover and main figure in the whole drama was of course General Akbar, who mostly with various officers discussed the failure of the civilian government and its complete subservience to British imperialism and suggested that the way out was to remove this government from power and to substitute it with a patriotic, independent and progressive government under his leadership. A conspirators meeting had taken place as early as 5 December 1949 at Attock Rest House under General Akbar Khan. The next and final meeting was however held in Akbar Khan's house on 23 February 1951, at which besides a number of army officers, two members of the central committee of CPP, Mr. Sajjad Zaheer and Muhammad Hussain Atta and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Pakistan's eminent poet and editor of *The Pakistan Times*, and a close associate of the CPP were also present. Mr. Poshni who was present describes that fateful meeting thus:

Akbar Khan presented a critique of the existence politico-economic set-up in the country and followed it by unfolding a plan of how to overthrow the existing government. The Governor-General and the Prime Minister who were coming to Rawalpindi shortly after-wards were to be detained and a proclamation was to be issued in the name of the Governor – General dissolving the existing government and substituting it with a new government under General Akbar Khan. There was to be no bloodshed. there was no link-up or contact with any foreign power, whatsoever. General Akbar proposed that after assuming power he would withdraw the warrants of arrest against all CPP members (most of the leaders of the CPP had gone underground in those days) and allow them to organize trade unions and Kisan organizations freely. In return, the CPP would publically applaud the coup and support the new military government. The meeting at Akbar Khan's house lasted the whole day. Most of those present had grave mental reservations about the plan. Objections and answers went on hour after hour...the discussion seemed almost interminable. I remember that the tension was so great that I had smoked away a full tin of fifty cigarettes by the time the meeting ended. And then came the final punch. When the meeting ended it had been decided that there were too many unanswered questions to problems presented by the participants, and that, therefore, the plan should be abandoned.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Outlook*, Karachi, 3 February 1973, pp.8-10.

According to the law as spelled out in the Pakistan Penal Code it is only when two or more persons agree to commit an unlawful act by unlawful means that conspiracy is said to have taken place. In the meeting at Rawalpindi on 23 February 1951, there was no agreement to commit an unlawful act and the plan was in fact completely abandoned. However, the approvers, Lt. Col. Sadiq Raja and Major Yousuf Sethi, who gave evidence in the case were told by the police to state wrongly that an agreement had in fact been reached. This was a false statement which the approvers made before the special tribunal so that the conspirators could be convicted.¹⁸

Sardar Shaukat Ali described Sajjad Zaheer's attitude in favour of the conspiracy. He said that Sajjad Zaheer's arguments for joining the military coup were:

1. He thought that it would be a progressive coup and the politics of the CPP would be strengthened through army's support.
2. Sajjad Zaheer used to say that (by hook or crook) all means could be used to achieve socialism.
3. He also thought that the army coup would save Pakistan falling into clutches of the U.S. Imperialism. After a tense and open debate a vote was taken and majority (2 vs 3) voted with Sajjad Zaheer (all were Urdu speaking) to join the military coup.¹⁹

Iqbal Leghari has discussed Major Ishaq's point of view. Though, the major was not involved directly in the conspiracy, but he was entangled in the conspiracy due to his communist, patriotic, and anti-American thoughts:

Ishaq Muhammad (ex-Major) who lead the Mazdoor Kisan Party, and who was implicated in the 'Pindi Conspiracy' said that he was aware that a military coup was a foot, and surprised to find that the CPP was also getting itself involved in it. Ishaq stated that he strongly opposed the likelihood of the coup and warned the communists about it. He even put his point of view in black and white. In his letter to Sajjad Zaheer, Ishaq argued that Akbar Khan had the key to the whole thing and that the CPP should not get dragged into it. Akbar was not a socialist but personally a very ambitious man. Why should he be trusted? He also warned the CPP that the plot was no secret and the intelligence was aware of it. He argued that an easy victory of the left would not be accepted.... Thus British and American

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Interview with Sardar Shaukat Ali, Lahore, September 2002.

opposition and manipulation of people by the reactionary classes would not allow the coup to succeed.²⁰

Ahmad Bashir a renowned intellectual of the left and a prominent figure in the world of journalism verified the above statement of Major Ishaq. He stated that Major Ishaq wrote a letter to Sajjad Zaheer and warned him that CPP should not participate in any conspiracy initiated by the army officers. This letter was brought from Sajjad Zaheer's house by the intelligence agencies when Sajjad was arrested with other participants of the conspiracy. Sajjad Zaheer did never reply to Major Ishaq's letter. The major came personally to see Sajjad Zaheer but he was not in Lahore in those days. At Zaheer's house, Major Ishaq met for the first time Sardar Shaukat Ali. He told the whole situation to Shaukat. This letter caused the arrest of Major Ishaq. He was arrested from Quetta where he was posted at that time.²¹

Chaudhary Abdul Latif, Vice Chairman of Communist Mazdoor Kisan Party (life-long companion of Major Ishaq) told that at the time of the conspiracy Major Ishaq was posted at Quetta. He was among those army officers who believed in communist ideas and had anti-America stance, and fought on the Kashmir front with General Akbar and others. He knew very well Akbar Khan so he did not participate with these army officers although he was aware of the whole planning. He did not take part because he had not believed in conspiracies. It is very interesting that Ghulam Ahmad Pervaiz (famous religious scholar) was his best friend. Ghulam Ahmad Pervaiz met him in Quetta during those days. They discussed this situation. But after some days the whole conversation about the conspiracy came under the knowledge of military intelligence and they started watching Major Ishaq.²² After this incident Major Ishaq never met Pervaiz again throughout his life. After the arrest of Major Ishaq, Government of Pakistan tried its best to make Major Ishaq an approver but it failed. Government sent a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) for this purpose (he was brother-in-law of Major Ishaq) but Major Ishaq refused to play in their hands.²³

At the disclosure of the 'Pindi Conspiracy', Liaquat Ali spoke out not only against the military officers and conspirators but also against the communists. He said: 'The conspirators seemed convinced that there was no possibility of achieving their objectives through popular support

²⁰ Iqbal Leghari, *Socialist Movement in Pakistan*, an un-published PhD thesis of Laval University, Canada, 1979, p.215.

²¹ Interview with Ahmad Bashir, Lahore, November 2003.

²² Interview with Ch, Latif, Faisalabad, winter 2005.

²³ Interview with Dr. Maqbool Akhtar, Faisalabad, winter 2005.

or by use of democratic or constitutional means. They planned, therefore, to regain strength with the support of communists and revolutionary elements making use of such members of the armed forces who could be persuaded for the cause...'.²⁴

The Qadianis and Pindi Conspiracy

There is an other interesting point of view about the conspiracy, which is as under:

On the midnight of 9 March 1951, Major General Akbar Khan, Chief of the General Staff, Pakistan Army, Brig. M. A. Latif and some civilians were arrested on the charge of hatching a conspiracy to create commotion in the country by violent means and to overthrow the then government of which the late Liaquat Ali Khan was Prime Minister. Major General Nazir Ahmad was a Qadiani, a close relative of Sir Zafarullah, he was at the Imperial Defense College in London on a training course from where he was brought back and was arrested. From a socialist's point of view, 'The Rawalpindi 'Conspiracy' was bungled from the very start. The mastermind was Maj. Gen Akbar Khan, Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army. Akbar had fought in the war to liberate Kashmir and felt that he had been betrayed by the political leadership. He was considered to be progressive, a pro-Nasserite army radical, and the officers who supported him were a mixed bag ranging from neo-Fascists to national chauvinists. The tiny Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) also got embroiled in this mess. Sajjad Zaheer stated that he had met Akbar at a cocktail party and the General broached the subject and 'requested help' to draft manifestoes and a possible plan of action. The CPP leadership accepted the offer and participated in various meetings with army officers. Eventually it was decided to shelve the plan for some time, but a conspirator, fearing that the truth might be revealed at a later stage, turned informer and the 'conspiracy' was unveiled. The army officers and Communist leaders were arrested.²⁵

The interpretation that since the Pakistan army was cheated out of victory by the cease-fire in Kashmir,²⁶ they made a plan to over-throw

²⁴ *Outlook*, 11 November 1972, p. 10.

²⁵ Tariq Ali, *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p.45.

²⁶ Hassan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan* (Karachi: Progressive Publishers, 1976), p.85.

the government is not generally accepted. Zafarullah Poshni and Air Commodore Janjua, who themselves were involved in the conspiracy case, called it a myth. The real motive, says Zafarullah Poshni, was to change the government which had 'corrupt, nepotism-ridden, inefficient and weak-kneed bunch of characters totally subservient to British imperialist domination'.²⁷ Brig. Sadeeq Khan, another accomplice in the Pindi Conspiracy Case, reveals that Sir Zafarullah gave a cease-fire signal in the Security Council precisely at the time (January, 1949) when India had got some strategic gain in Kashmir. We accepted the cease-fire without getting any political advantages out of our successes in the war. He states that Sikander Mirza opposed Liaquat. He wanted to see Ayub Khan in C-in-C uniform. They were good friends. Through Ayub Khan's military influence, he thought to attain power by removing his opponents from the way.²⁸ There is another plausible version of conspiracy, which proves it to be a British inspired one²⁹ rather than a pro-Soviet plot. Following points have been put forward in this report:

1. Qadianis, being the stooges of the British imperialism and their stakes in the affairs were not communists; they could not have been any thing but pro-British.
2. The Communist Party of British India, like other colonial British parties, had generally been an extension of British political indifference and not 'made in Moscow.' Moreover, the British intelligence had always had a certain presence within the party itself.³⁰
3. A Soviet connected plot would appear to be highly stupid at a time when Liaquat Ali was known to be trying to distance himself from

²⁷ *The Outlook*, Karachi, 3 February 1973. Also see Col (Retd) Hassan Khan's article on Pindi Conspiracy case in *Urdu Digest*, Lahore, October 1982.

²⁸ *Weekly Hurmat*, Rawalpindi 1-7 April 1984, Special Research Report on the Pindi Conspiracy Case. See also Maj. Gen. Akbar (Retd) Akbar Khan's interview in *Defense Journal*, June-July, 1985.

²⁹ Qadianis were very eager to take control of general headquarters of Pakistan Army in early 50s. Fazal Mahmud Khan Qadiani, deputy financial adviser, Central Ordnance Department Rawalpindi wrote a letter to Mirza Mahmud on 24 February 1949 and gave a few proposals for this plan. See, Mir Ghulam Nabi Nasik. *Mirzaeyat Kay Napak Iraday*, Rawalpindi, 1951.

³⁰ The Communist Party of India secretly collaborated with the British during the Second World War to sabotage national movements. Arun Shourie, a well known Indian writer has given many startling facts supported by documentation in the four issues of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 18 March-8 April 1984, on the *Imperialist-Communist collaboration during early 40s*.

both Britain and the US. He had told the British that Pakistan should not be taken for granted. He had declined all offers and pressures to enter the so-called Middle East Defense Organisation being then vigorously put forth by the US. On the other hand, the removal of Liaquat Ali had the effect of drawing in Pakistan closer and closer into a system of western alliances, from which it has neither benefited nor been able to detach itself effectively.³¹

Effects of Rawalpindi Conspiracy on the CPP

The effects of the Pindi Conspiracy on the CPP were very bad, long term and crucial. The CPP was the first strong opposition party of Pakistan. It was more organised, disciplined and militant than any of the political parties except Muslim League. The CPP had grass-roots level support among peasants, industrial workers, trade unions and students both in East and West Pakistan. CPP was the supporter of Pakistan movement and some important CPP leaders had joined the Muslim League during the movement. Therefore, due to this conspiracy case, the role of opposition as a true political force diminished to a great extent. Moreover, as the party was a great hope for the development of democracy, democratic values and culture came to an end because of this conspiracy.

Till 1958, civil bureaucracy was the real ruler of Pakistan with the alliance of feudal lords of the Muslim League. The civil bureaucracy and military establishment were not in favour of a democratic environment because it could produce more democratic political forces. And it was possible that a united front of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist and anti-fundamentalist might have emerged under the leadership of CPP. Therefore, it was the agenda of civil and military bureaucracy, feudal lords and U.S. imperialism to crush and remove the left forces from the political field. Pindi conspiracy helped in creating a favourable environment for these forces. Thereafter, a horrible propaganda was started against the communists which effected the credibility of the CPP in the masses. Government propaganda charged that the Communist Party, in collusion with the Soviet Union, attempted to undermine the existence of Pakistan by trying to establish an atheist state in Pakistan and that the CPP was a foreign agent working against the very basis of Pakistan. This government propaganda had great effect on the public. The outrageous public demanded that the plotters be hanged without trial. The ruling classes greatly capitalized on this and Liaquat Ali who had been referring to Islamic socialism previously started speaking

³¹ Weekly *Impact*, London, 8-21 October 1982.

against it. It was a great disaster for the CPP and the socialist movement in the country.³²

The whole leadership of the CPP, the central committee, party workers, trade union activists, students leaders and the sympathisers were arrested under the Security Act of Pakistan. Sajjad Zaheer was arrested following the arrest of his courier. After undergoing considerable torture at the hands of the police for a week, the courier finally led the police to the secret lodge of Sajjad Zaheer. About his arrest, Eric Cyprian observed that when the courier had failed to return for three days, Sajjad Zaheer should have changed his lodge, but like a lame duck he kept sitting as though waiting for the police to arrest him. Moreover, when the police came, they not only discovered 'Maulana' (Sajjad Zaheer) there, but also all the office and secret files of the party. According to Eric Cyprian, no revolutionary could have acted in a similar fashion.³³

The last meeting of the central committee (CC) of the CPP took place in May 1951 in Karachi, when Sajjad Zaheer, Feroze-ud-Din Mansoor and Sibte Hassan had already been arrested. Eric Cyprian, Shaukat Ali, Mohammad Hussain Atta, Hasan Nasir, Abdul Ghafar, attended the secret meeting. Eric Cyprian described that it took place in an atmosphere of terror. Some of the members were in a state of panic. As a result of this, they were of the view that they should publicly call for the dissolution of the CPP and put all the blame for their involvement in the 'Pindi Conspiracy' on Sajjad Zaheer, so that the rest of them could get off the hook! The rest, however, argued that at this point they could not disown themselves as communists by putting all the blame on Sajjad Zaheer. They decided that the party should remain underground and do its best to ride the storm. Some days later, however, most of the CC members participating in the Karachi meeting were also arrested. By now there was panic, fear, anger, and demoralization, it led to the disintegration of the party.³⁴

Eric Cyprian described that the party's underground apparatus was totally smashed in the wake of police oppression that followed. All significant communist leaders were captured. Police got hold of all communist documents, including records and bills, and one such bill showed the expenses of Ishfaq Baig's liquor bill running to Rs. 150 per month. Police obtained other scandalous information of the party leadership and this was spread amongst the rank and file of the party

³² Iqbal Leghari, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Hasan Zaheer, *op.cit.*, p.215.

which created demoralization among younger cadres. During this period of confusion, some old communists who had been purged earlier by the party, reappeared and exploited the state of affairs. In the absence of the CPP leadership which was arrested, they captured the CPP office. They showered severe criticism on the jailed CPP leadership, and even drew up a new party constitution, thus creating further confusion and demoralization in the lower ranks of the party.

The Self-Criticism Report(1952) does not go into the ‘Pindi Conspiracy’ but just mentions the effects of government repression against the party and large scale arrests of party’s friends and sympathizers. The workers’ unions broke up and their strength was greatly weakened in the unions. The peasant movement dispersed and the progressive forces in the country received a great setback. Many of the members of the party, because of the fear of police torture, and desire to save themselves, were guilty of exposing the secrets of the party or publishing their resignations in newspapers and were responsible for spreading fear amongst party workers and sympathizers. They propagated against the party, campaigned to break it, and created disruption and factions within it. The party structure was smashed and although pockets survived here and there, a new party centre could never emerge to put the bits and pieces together again. Due to heavy government repression, all mass fronts of the CPP were also smashed and communist influence in the trade unions, PWA. and students dwindled further.³⁵ Pakistan joined the American sponsored Baghdad Pact and SEATO in 1954. In the same year Pakistani government, in order to please its new friends, declared a ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan.³⁶

Ban on left politics in Pakistan

Despite all measures to suppress political opponents, the League’s government was no longer able to prevent the development of opposition sentiments and halt the development of the democratic forces in Pakistan. The ruling clique’s policy not only came under the vigorous criticism of the left forces, many of its aspects also caused dissatisfaction among conservative elements. The most consistent and principled opposition to the ruling group’s undemocratic course was put up by the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) which had its basis in the Indian Communist Party’s organisations operating in territories which formed

³⁵ Iqbal Leghari, *op.cit.*, p.70.

³⁶ For full elaboration see YV Gankovsky’s *A History of Pakistan 1947-58* (Lahore: Peoples Publishing House, 1979), pp.224-40.

part of Pakistan. The policy documents of the Communist Party of Pakistan published in 1950-51, called on the people of Pakistan to fight for durable peace, independence from imperialist powers, withdrawal from the British Commonwealth, broader autonomy of the provinces, nationalization of the foreign companies, radical agrarian reforms, confiscation of the landed estates and its distribution among the peasants free of charge, lower rent etc. The CPP also demanded for the development of national industry, nationalization of its key branches and establishment of workers, etc.

The communists of Pakistan were able to operate legally for a few years only. In July 1954 the CPP was banned, and the ban was not lifted until August 1972. But even in the short period after its formation when the party was formally able to operate legally, the authorities kept it under constant police control and subjected it to all kinds of repressions. This, together with the introduction of reformism in the working-class movement, created enormous difficulties for the communists and restricted the party's influence among the proletarian strata, thereby preventing it from becoming a mass organisation of the working people.

Socialist Party of Pakistan was among the few parties which in the first year's of independence constituted the left opposition to the League. It was founded in 1948 and was led by Muhammad Yousaf. The Socialist Party had its roots among certain groups of the Muslim intelligentsia in West Pakistan. It published an Urdu weekly, *The Socialist*. Radical Muslim intellectuals, backed by Mubarak Saghir, who was secretary of the party, joined it, and it was under their influence that the constitution and rules of the party contained such progressive demands as the withdrawal of Pakistan from the British Commonwealth, nationalization of the basic means of production and the organisation of the working people along class principle. The Socialist Party proclaimed as its ultimate goal the initiation of socialist transformations by peaceful means.

There was serious opposition to the Muslim League government inside the League itself. The growing dissatisfaction of the ruling section caused them to break away from the Muslim League and to form democratic parties and organisations which opposed the right-wing leadership of the Muslim League. Within the Muslim League the struggle became more intense and certain discontented politicians, who left the League or were expelled, formed their own political parties.

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, a prominent leader of united Pakistan, was up to 1947 president of the Assam Muslim League. In 1949 with a group of followers he formed an opposition party, the

Awami Muslim League (the people's Muslim League). It comprised the radical petty bourgeoisie of Bengal which was dissatisfied with the conservative policy persuaded by the right-wing leadership of Muslim League. The Awami Muslim League demanded democratic reforms in the country; it was an important step towards the liberation of popular masses of East Pakistan from ideological and political influence of the Muslim League. The Awami Muslim League found supporters in West Pakistan as well.

Another opposition party came into being in 1950. On 17 January 1950, the Muslim League expelled two prominent leaders of the left wing, Mian Iftkharuddin and Shaukat Hayat, because they criticized the anti-democratic actions of the government, which restricted civil liberties, and spoke in the Constituent Assembly for the rights of the people in the states of West Pakistan. A few months later the two leaders were joined by Mahmud Ali Kasuri, Sheikh Rafiq and Khawaja Muhammad Afzal – three prominent officials of the Punjab Muslim League, who had left the League because they disagreed with the reactionary policies of the leadership. They founded the Azad Pakistan Party in Lahore. In its manifesto, adopted on 10 November 1950, the party put forward a far-reaching programme for the social, political and administrative reorganisation of the country. The Azad Pakistan Party demanded civil liberties for the people, the repeal of all anti-democratic laws, and the dissolution of the unrepresentative Constituent Assembly and the holding of general elections for a new assembly that was to prepare a democratic constitution. Another demand of the Azad Pakistan Party was the removal of all foreign officers and officials from the armed forces and state institutions. Following points were also included in the party's programme:

- a) Introduction of measures designed to improve the economic position of the refugees, peasants, working class, craftsmen and small traders.
- b) Elimination of all feudal relics, abolition of the jagirdari agrarian system and abrogation of the princely states.
- c) Withdrawal of Pakistan from the British Commonwealth and proclamation of a sovereign, independent republic pursuing an independent foreign policy of friendship with all countries.

The initial political forces described above were crushed by an iron hand of civil and military bureaucracy and the feudal oriented Muslim League. Because of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal nature of their programmes, the left wing opposition parties had working alliances and growing support from wide sections of the people. By increasing police repressions the Muslim League government tried to prevent the growth of the left wing forces. The offices of the parties and affiliated

organisations, such as the Progressive Writers Association and the Trade Union Federation, were raided. In reply to the repression the progressive forces, on 10 December 1950, formed the All Pakistan Union for the Civil Liberties.

This anti-democratic course and repression continued until the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case. The case was the final step in the anti-left campaign of the government. Under the influence of a pro-US foreign policy Pakistan became a party to the politics of the cold war. With the objective to contain the Soviet Union in the Arabian Sea and its penetration into the Muslim world, the government crushed all the left parties including the Communist Party of Pakistan because the left, radical and democratic forces were naturally allied with the Soviet Union. The left forces were considered as the main hurdle in the pro-US policies of the Muslim League government. Actually, Muslim League was not a democratic party, it had lost grip on the government institutions from the very beginning. The real power holder was the civil bureaucracy which formed an alliance with the military establishment and the feudal lords. In 1947 power was transferred to the civil bureaucracy under the act of 1935. According to this act the real ruling force was civil bureaucracy which was under the governor-general.

Another political and historical fact is that Pakistan came into being during a period marked by two events of historical importance. The first was the emergence of the first socialist state in the Soviet Union. The other event was the destruction of the colonial rule in the world after the two world wars. The analysis of the different political events of Pakistan shows that despite difficulties caused by the partition of 1947, means for overcoming grim heritage of the colonial past existed in the country. Pakistan was an independent state, the colonialists had lost their political power and the country had economic advantage in a number of important areas, such as the exclusive ownership of the mineral resources, irrigation system, means of communications, railways, and so on. Pakistan could have relied on the support of the USSR and the other socialist states in its fight for economic independence, but the rulers of Pakistan did not venture to choose this road due to their class interest with the new-colonialists. Pakistan's participation in the different defense pacts was another factor which affected the political scenario. These military alliances (which were actually against USSR) not only restricted and undermined the sovereignty of the state but also hampered its economic and social development. It strengthened the position of the reactionary elements in the country, crushed the progressive forces and placed heavy burden of steadily growing military expenditure on the weak economy of Pakistan.