

# Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy - A Biography

Begum Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah



Reproduced by  
Sani H. Panhwar

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## Acknowledgements

I began writing this book soon after Shaheed Bhai died. A number of reasons, *i.e.* illness, difficulty in getting material, inability to reach places where such material was available, delayed its completion.

The chief reason that delayed getting the book ready for publication was finding a secretary.

My writing is illegible, in fact absolutely unreadable, so giving it out for typing was out of the question. I live far from the centre of town and no typist was prepared to come that distance for such remuneration as I could give. I even tried to get someone from the staffs of the UK and US Embassies, but without success.

Then, by chance, I discovered Sharif Sahib. I cannot thank him for the devotion and diligence with which he typed the manuscript of my book. I dictate very fast and my English is quite different from the bureaucratic English typists are used to. This most often meant spelling out whole sentences but he never showed any impatience. I cannot express enough gratitude to him for all the work he put in except to say that but for him the manuscript would not have become printable.

My thanks are due to Professor Sharif-ul-Mujahid and Mr. M. H. Askari who kindly took the trouble of reading the typescript. It had taken a long time to write and I felt I had gone stale and the subject was no longer topical but they encouraged me to go ahead and finish the book.

117 Clifton, Karachi.

Begum Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah

## Foreword

It is somewhat presumptuous to attempt a foreword to a book on Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy written by one who was not only his close relative, but one who participated in many of the events—the freedom movement, the partition and its aftermath—which make up the history of the South Asian subcontinent. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was one of the makers of that history.

Today when the feeling is widely shared that the world in general, and the Third World in particular, suffers from lack of leadership, there is inevitably a nostalgic looking back to the past when towering personalities could inspire entire nations and could galvanize inert masses into forces which changed the course of history. Such leadership could inspire ordinary men and women to dedicate themselves to great causes by presenting before them a vision of a future which they could build through their common striving and shared sacrifices. To win the hearts and minds of people required of such leaders not only intellect but character. Political integrity—to live up to one's precepts and pledges—steadfastness in adversity and courage were some of the essential ingredients, which evoked a level of confidence, where a leader and those whom he led could together create history. Anyone who knew Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, or who would write history, would objectively write history, would testify that he possessed those guidelines in abundant measure.

The gift of advocacy, which had led a courtroom adversary to say that when Suhrawardy addressed arguments it seemed as if everything in the room, even inanimate objects like chairs and tables were arguing against you, had enabled him to be powerfully persuasive from the public platform—and had made him and the popular forces he led invincible in free and fair elections (the 1946-7 all-Bengal elections and the 1954 East Bengal elections). It was partly in recognition of such invincibility that the anti-people forces which opposed him—the military-bureaucratic elite—imposed Martial Law in 1958 to preempt the general elections schedule for early 1959.

Most great leaders are respected, some even revered. It is only a few who are loved. Suhrawardy was one of those few who had gained a place in the hearts of the people. In part this was because of his extraordinary powers to communicate with them. The most complex issues were put across in a manner which would be understood by the simplest of listeners. Humor, while reflecting his warm and affectionate nature, was an effective aid, which enabled him to communicate with multitudes assembled in a massive public meeting as if he were engaged in a fireside chat with friends or family. It was also a weapon with which he could disarm opponents, all the more so if they were pompous.

A debt of gratitude is owed to the author for her labor of love in presenting a volume on Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy full of information and illuminating insights. It should inspire a definitive multi-volume biography, which alone can do justice to the subject—a great people's leader, and one of the greatest sons of Bengal, and of our subcontinent.

London,  
28 September 1986

Kamal Hossain

## Introduction

On 5 December 1963, in Beirut, died Shaheed Suhrawardy, and so from Pakistan's political stage passed away its most colorful and controversial figure.

Shaheed died in exile, alone in a hotel room but his death plunged a nation into mourning and he was given a king's funeral. Thus his death, as his life, was full of contradiction. He was my much loved cousin, and had been a hero to me since childhood. For many years now I had wanted to write about him. 'Tell me, Shaheed Bhai', I would ask again and again. 'Tell me what did you do at...' 'Why did you do such and such...', I would ask with greater and greater urgency as I felt the sands of time running out.

'Yes, I will, I will, he would say and pat my cheeks affectionately. But the time did not come and now my questions will never be answered and the gaps in my knowledge will never be filled.

But I still want to write about him and his work—of the stupendous feat of uniting the educationally, economically and politically backward Muslims of Bengal under the Muslim League in opposition to the educationally much more advanced, economically much more prosperous, and politically much more mature Hindus; of his forming the first and only Muslim League Ministry in pre-partition India; of his retaining his party's majority despite internal and external pressures by exercising an iron discipline and so leading it to victory and Pakistan.

I want to tell about his brilliance as a lawyer which made each case he fought a *cause célèbre*, and his own magnificent defence against EBDO charges into a landmark in the legal history of Pakistan.

His intellectual caliber was of the highest. His capacity for work, as well as for play, prodigious. No man, certainly not in the subcontinent, has been so loved by the millions and so bitterly hated by his enemies. None surely, was so kind and generous to those who knew him, and none so feared by those who did not. But most of all I want to write about him because in his personality is the key to all that happened in the first seventeen years of Pakistan. The events that culminated in the collapse of democracy and the establishment of military rule in 1958 had their beginnings in the ruling clique's maneuverings to keep Shaheed out of power. For the first undemocratic step, the first unconstitutional act that was taken was taken in opposition to him and this effort to deprive him of the fruits of his victory was made possible because, on the eve of the birth of Pakistan, Shaheed, the Muslim League leader second only to Jinnah, went out and joined hands with Gandhi to save the lives of the Muslims of Calcutta. It was his finest hour. But it gave his enemies the tool to destroy him.



What I will be writing will be a personal and a subjective account. There will be many gaps in it as I have no access to papers and documents at the moment. But I was an eyewitness to most of the events, and I want to write about them while my impression of them and the impact they made on me are still fresh.

I write with the hope that my work will stimulate the interest of those better qualified than me to undertake a more extensive and documented account of the life and work of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. If I succeed in this, my effort will have been well rewarded.

Begum Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah

**PART I**

**THE EARLY YEARS**

## The Family Background

When Shaheed Bhai returned from England in 1918, debonair, with a B.C.L from Oxford, a brilliant career was prophesied for him. Nor did the years that followed belie the promise of early youth. But instead of the secure and certain success of the Bar he chose to tread the hazardous path of politics. It led him to the pinnacle of fame, but it also made him the target of some of the most bitter attacks. He dominated the politics of the subcontinent for forty years, its most controversial and colorful figure.

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was born into a distinguished family on 8 September 1892 in Midnapur, now in West Bengal, India. He was the younger son of Justice Sir Zahid Suhrawardy and Khujesta Akhtar Banu Suhrawardia Begum. His parents were first cousins and, therefore, he was a Suhrawardy from both sides of the family.

Shaheed Bhai's father was the embodiment of all that is best in our culture – a person of great scholarship and distinction. He was extremely modest and gentle also. Nobody ever heard him raise his voice yet no one ever dared ignore his wishes. He did not need to assert his authority for it rested in the deep and willing respect of those on whom it was exercised. His death in 1949 was described by leading papers of India and Pakistan as, 'The passing of the last great gentleman of Bengal'. (*Dawn*, February 1949). His mother, Khujesta Akhtar Banu Suhrawardia Begum, was one of those very few women (I do not think there were more than two or three at that time) who had achieved a high standard of scholarship, not only in Urdu and Persian but in English as well. She was a pioneer among women, an educationalist, author of several books, but singularly free from any feeling of self-importance which achievements so rare would have justified. On the contrary, she was an extremely modest person. The stories of her kindness and gentleness are a legend in our family and her memory is a hallowed one.

His elder brother Hasan Shahid, Suhrawardy, too, was a man of rare quality and distinction. A great linguist, and art critic whose evaluation was considered the last word in artistic judgment, and a minor poet of great sensitivity, he was known and highly respected in the artistic and literary circles of Europe and India. Aversion to publicity and an almost pathological understatement of his own achievements prevented his work from being generally known, but when he died in March 1965, one was surprised to find how highly he was regarded by the people who mattered.

Shaheed's three uncles, his mother's brothers, Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy and the Honorable Mr. Mahmud Suhrawardy, each achieved fame in their own spheres.

The chronicle of Sir Abdullah's life remains to be written. The Muslims of Bengal owe him a debt as great as to Shaheed, in fact greater, for it was he who laid the foundations on which Shaheed was to build.

Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, my father, was a brilliant surgeon who gave up a lucrative medical career to join politics. His moderation of view and balanced judgment brought an element of stability to the violent politics of that time. His solid contributions in the field of education and health were invaluable.

Hon'able Mr. Mahmud Suhrawardy was a member of the Council of State for many years, and devoted his time and energies to the problems of his own district where he was known and respected even more than his more brilliant brothers and nephews.

This is a record of two generations only, but the Suhrawardy family has been known and respected for their piety and learning for generations. They claimed descent from Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardy, the famous Sufi savant of the thirteenth century. The Suhrawardys were one of the several Sufi orders of that time but they had two distinguishing qualities, one that they had more scholars than saints in their ranks, and the other that they seemed always to be at loggerheads with authority, and both these characteristics have been handed down to their descendants in full measure.

Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardy, having incurred the displeasure of the ruling Caliph of the time, could not get anyone to work on the completion of a mosque he was building. He therefore carried the required material for building himself. When taunted for doing the manual work of a water carrier, he replied by quoting one of the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings: *Al-Fakharul-Faqri* (which means 'Poverty is my Pride'), and this has been the family motto ever since.

A collateral of his who lived about the same time in the city of Halab fell afoul of the *ulemas* there. He was a young man, and a friend of the king's son. The king, therefore, wanted to spare him, if he possibly could, from punishment for heterodoxy. He told him that it would not be necessary to recant if he could but just keep quiet, and not go out of his way to expound his views. But he did not listen, and so met his death.

'Remember what happened to one of your ancestors, that is what happens to people who won't keep quiet', my husband often laughingly said to me when my too vigorously expressed political opinions caused consternation in the establishment.

A descendant of Shahbuddin Suhrawardy came to India and chose Multan, now in West Punjab in Pakistan, as the venue for his missionary activities. For this reason he came to be known as Bahauddin Multani. The order flourished. Sultan Allauddin Khilji of Delhi invited one of the *pirs* of the Suhrawardy order to his capital in Delhi, hoping, thereby, to reduce the importance of the head of the Nizamia order which held sway

there. His scheme did not, however, succeed. The heads of the two orders met very cordially and the Sultan found that he now had two rather than one powerful opponent to contend with.

The anecdote about this incident is interesting. The king had taken great pains to be the first to greet the visiting saint and had gone to the city gates to meet him. Later, at a session to which all the dignitaries of the court and scholars of the realm were invited (including Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, the head of Nizamia order) he asked the visitor: 'Who do you consider the best amongst the persons you have met here?'

'The person who met me first.' Suhrawardy replied. The Sultan preened himself for he had met the *pir* at the city gate, but he was wrong – Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia had gone out of the city precincts and had welcomed his opposite number even before the king.

I have not been able to find a complete and coherent record of the events of this period. They have not been available to me, and in any case being in Arabic and Persian I would not be able to benefit from them if I could trace them. But anecdotes about our reverend ancestors abound in the family circle and some of the younger generation are apt to comment on it rather frivolously. For instance, there was the story about an ancestor who came from Delhi and married a poor girl from a village in Bengal. Seeing her humble village fare he was so incensed that he divorced her, taking care however to settle some property on her for her still unborn child.

'What an irate old gentleman,' we used to say when this story was related to us. 'Not a very saintly attitude,' we used to add. Then there was the ancestor who spent his time in prayer and meditation on the top of a mountain, the traditional place for such exercises, till at the age of sixty or thereabouts and then said he was commanded to abandon the life of a recluse, to marry and produce descendants for amongst them there would be a great saint, 'Jolly good excuse for getting married at that age, 'we would say, 'and anyway where is the saint? The nearest we've got to a saint is Shaheed Bhai and he is not all that saintly.'

This was Shah Aminuddin Suhrawardy, son of Shah Rukunuddin Suhrawardy, my great grandfather and also Shaheed Bhai's. Evidently our irreverent attitude towards his matrimonial venture was not shared by his followers for in Hoogly where he is buried his tomb is regarded as a shrine to which to this day devotees come to pray and make votive offerings. These generally take the form of little horses in silver and there is a story in connection with these also.

The first ancestor when he had come to Bengal had been told by the local ruler that he could have as much land as his horse could encompass in one day. He was evidently a good rider for he had been able to cover land which made a sizeable village. It was called *Ghora Mara* which in the local dialect meant 'Horse's Track'. It was the village

from which our grandmother came. Shah Aminuddin Suhrawardy was the last of the Suhrawardys who claimed to be a *pir*. None of his three sons followed him in what until now had been the family's traditional way of life. The two older sons both took law as their career and attained the position of Sub-judges (*Saada Alias*) the highest rank in the judiciary available to Indians under the British at that time.

The third son Ubaidullah al Obaidi chose education for his profession and was the Principal of Hoogly and then of Dhaka Madrassa, the first grammar school type of schools established under the British. He was a man of great learning and was therefore referred to not only as *Maulana*, but as *Behrul Uloom*, which means 'The Sea of Learning'. Besides being a scholar in Arabic and Persian he knew Sanskrit and several other Indian languages, and what was extremely rare at that time, had acquired a high proficiency in English, and in the rudiments of Latin and Greek as well. He was my paternal grandfather and Shahid and Shaheed's maternal grandfather. From him and their other forebears they had inherited their high quality of intellect. To Shahid he also bequeathed his gift for languages. But it was from his paternal grandfather, Mohammad Ali, that Shaheed Bhai inherited his zest for living, his liveliness and his weakness for pretty faces.

The stories about Mohammed Ali's escapades abound amongst the family reminiscences. He had by fortunate chance or by deliberate intention married an heiress who was generous enough to put her entire fortune at his disposal to be used to provide him with amusement. Women of my country at that time were extremely self-sacrificing. The goal of their existence was to seek to please their husbands, and they tried to live up to this ideal, but we girls of the younger generation imbued with ideas of the West thought that Hasina Begum, Shaheed's grandmother carried it too far.

Amongst the stories that are related about her, one is of the time when the wayward eye of her husband fell on one of her servant girls. Hasina Begum, seeing this, had the girl bathed and dressed in bridal clothes and presented to her husband in marriage the next day. 'Really this is absolutely the limit,' my cousin and I said when this was related to us in expectation that our reaction would be one of admiration for Hasina Begum. 'I don't understand you girls. You have such queer modern ideas,' the aunt who was relating it replied.

The life of Shaheed's other grandfather, the one we had in common, was by contrast of irreproachable virtue. He had been married three times but only after the demise of the previous one. 'Not all that abstemious,' we would say. 'Oh! But they died,' was the aunt's rejoinder.

My grandmother, and Shaheed's, was my grandfather's third wife, and it was her children who attained fame and distinction, and I cannot help feeling that the qualities that they inherited from her contributed in equal measure towards their success. From

the first wife, my grandfather had one daughter who died in childhood. From the second, two sons. The eldest showed much promise of intellectual achievement but was stricken while still a student by mental illness and lived out his whole life under its shadowy twilight, a sad and lost figure. The second son seemed to have inherited the love of riotous living of his uncle rather than the scholarly tendencies of his father. He died young, leaving no issue and his wife devoted the remaining long years of her life to serving her husband's family. She was always available in times of crisis, always ready to fill in the role of a nurse. The capacity of self-sacrifice of our women of that generation never ceases to surprise me.

Shaheed's grandmother had eight children, four boys and four girls. The youngest girl was born posthumously and died when six years old. The eldest, Shaheed's mother, was eleven years old when her father died. At a time when the knowledge of the Koran and a minimum of proficiency in Urdu was considered more than sufficient for a girl, Shaheed's grandfather had decided to educate my aunt. He had taught her himself and so at the age of eleven she had already completed the standard classic course in Persian, and knew the rudiments of Arabic, and was learning English with her brothers. She continued to do so, and learned not only to read and write but to speak English fluently with, I believe, an excellent accent. Her achievements have already been briefly referred to. It was in the education of her four boys that my grandmother showed a strength of character and a determination to face and overcome difficulties which cannot help but elicit admiration. Especially when one remembers that she was only twenty-eight years old when widowed. Shaheed's grandfather was the Principal of the Dhaka Madrassa when he died, and is buried there. His grave is regarded as a sort of literary shrine.

My grandmother came back to Midnapur after her husband's death. Her two brothers refused to do so. 'I did not want my sons to grow up beholden to anyone,' she used to explain later on. My grandfather had left two houses, one large house and a very small one which really could be considered a guest house. She decided to sell the larger house and move into the smaller one with her children. All the money that she possessed was from the sale of the house and one box of jewellery. Years later when I was born she gave my mother a pair of tiny gold armlets for me. 'This is all I have left of my jewellery,' she said to my mother apologetically. 'The rest went in the education of your husband and his brothers.' She decided to send her sons back to Dhaka for their education. 'But why?' questioned relatives and neighbors at this further proof of her strong-mindedness. 'Are not the schools in Midnapur good enough?' But my grandmother had learnt the importance of education from my grandfather, and was determined to give her sons the best that was available at that time. So to Dhaka they went—a long and hazardous journey in those days, and also expensive for her.

Her sons amply rewarded her efforts for their school record was brilliant, and soon they won scholarships and relieved her of much of the burden of the cost of their education. The eldest of her sons, Mamun passed his MA with a double first, also coming first in

the entire university. A brilliant career was in front of him, but cruel fate extinguished his promising life at the early age of twenty-two. His death nearly broke my grandmother's courage. But this was fate's last and crudest blow, after which, fortune smiled on her. Each of her remaining sons attained fame and distinction, and what is more, gave her a filial reverence and devotion which I have not seen matched yet.

Abdullah, her second son, followed an academic career that was as brilliant as that of his elder brother. He too secured an MA double, first in English and then in Arabic. Topping the list of successful candidates of the year he secured a Government scholarship and went to England. There he studied for the Bar and did many other things besides. At the age of nineteen he had already compiled a book, *The Sayings of Mohammed* which got him a letter of appreciation from Leo Tolstoy. He led the prayers for the first time on Eid day at Hyde Park Corner in London and despite his youth became such an active and well known person working for the Pan-Islamic Movement that he won international fame. On his way home from England he stopped at Turkey and Iran. The Sultan of Turkey, Sultan Abdul Hamid, decorated him with the *Tamgha-e-Majidi*. It was one of the highest awards of the Usmanias and given as far as I know to only one other Indian Muslim, Maulana Shibli. Similarly, the Shah of Iran gave him the title of *Iftikhar-ul-Millat*. Thus honored he returned home to start his career at the Bar, where he soon attained spectacular successes, but he left it a few years later and devoted his time to politics, and to the task of building a nation.

The third son Hassan, was my father. 'I was not at all studious and in fact rather mischievous and got into a lot of hot water,' my father laughingly reminisced. That might have been so, but I have a feeling that he was my grandmother's favorite, which would not be surprising for he was the most lovable of her sons. He decided to study medicine and was soon regarded as one of the most brilliant medical students of the Calcutta Medical College. It is said his tutor, Colonel Bird, was so proud of his young student that he often stopped half-way in an operation and let him finish it. My father was supposed to have something known as 'the surgeon's hand,' a particular mobility which makes for successful operation. He also had a remarkable capacity for diagnosis. Colonel Bird's confidence in him could also be judged by the fact that he recommended my father to be chosen as the personal physician to the Amir of Afghanistan when he visited India in 1908, when my father had just finished his medical training.

My youngest uncle Mahmud's academic record was inconspicuous only in comparison with the brilliance of that of his brothers. He passed his BA and joined the Provincial Service, which he also left for politics.

The second of the two remaining daughters married a young man of very good family and considerable property, but he turned out to be an utter wastrel and soon the property was gone and she had to suffer much else besides. Her misfortunes seem to have cut her off from the other members of the family, for she seldom left her husband's



village. I saw her two or three times at the most in my entire life, a quiet and sad figure, but she also must have had a hidden spark of the Suhrawardys somewhere, for when one of her sons asked her to put in a claim for her brother's property she replied, 'It is no joy to me that I have survived my brothers. If you want to stoop to such things, and try to claim their property do it yourself but I will have no part in it.'

My youngest aunt was a darling. We, that is to say, Shaheed Bhai, Shahid Bhai and myself, adored her. The sweetest and the gentlest of persons she showed her love and devotion for us in a hundred small ways. Her only daughter, Farzana, was very close to me despite a fairly big age difference, and it was we four cousins who joined together in making irreverent remarks when family history was related to us. We made these remarks as an unconscious protest against the feeling of noblesse oblige which was at times a heavy burden to us.

I have written in great detail about Shaheed's family background. The reason is that it played a very important part in the molding of his character and his values. All of us of that generation, despite our efforts to belittle it, felt the weight and the obligation of the family tradition which shaped our characters and fashioned our destinies, and because of it others seemed to regard us as a people apart and accepted much from us because we were Suhrawardys.

There cannot be more than a few families in the whole subcontinent who enjoyed this particular position amongst the people. It was not due to wealth because we were not wealthy, as wealth is reckoned. It was an innate reverence for piety and learning which our people have, and which gave an aura of sanctity even to our political activities. We did not consciously exploit it, but there is no doubt that we benefited from it. 'That so and so dared to oppose you people, you the descendants of pirs and walls,' would often hear our political supporters say.

'Oh, but our activities are not a bit in keeping with what pirs and walls would have wanted,' we would remonstrate.

'That does not matter,' they would say 'you still belong to the family!' I remember often as a girl going into a room full of women with my mother, and all heads being turned to look at us and I would hear them whisper, 'It is so and so's daughter?'

This mystique served me well on one occasion when my car broke down on Jinnah Avenue, Dhaka, a few years ago. As I was trying to hail a rickshaw, I heard a voice call out of the blue. 'Please, please, wait. I am just coming down and will take you in my car,' and a young man came down whom I had never seen before. It turned out he was one of Shaheed's lieutenants, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the future President of Bangladesh.

My children in their turn have tried to rebel against the family tradition and debunk it as we did in our time. When I have exhorted Salma to be mindful of how she behaved in Dhaka, for as we say in Urdu, 'Every stick and stone there knows us,' she laughed and said, 'I'll tell them to keep quiet', but later she admitted to me that she too found it to be true, and though it cramped her style she could not escape its thrall.

'I have tried to test you out,' she once remarked, 'by mentioning your family name and seeing if it evoked a reaction. It always does,' she said, rather surprised. So far, it still does.

Salma again admits that as she treads her way through the corridors of the University of Dhaka, a tiny unassuming girl, she hears people nudge each other and say, 'She is Shaheed Sahib's niece.'

## The Glory that was Shaheed

I remember an Eid day in 1925, Shaheed Bhai had come to call on us dressed in *khaddar*, 'For goodness sake, Shaheed, , my mother said, 'couldn't you find something better to wear than *khaddar* on Eid.' My mother still regarded him as a boy and so thought it fit to chide him on what she thought incorrect behavior. He laughed and began explaining why one should wear *khaddar*. I listened, fascinated; I remember bits of it still. His manner was light-hearted but his arguments carried conviction. I loved Shaheed Bhai's visits. They were always such fun though he teased me mercilessly. The moment I heard his deep baritone voice humming a tune as he came upstairs I rushed to meet him. My mother also left whatsoever household task she was engaged in and greeted him joyfully. Though often it would happen that he would not wait in the drawing room even for a few minutes before she could make her appearance, but would go into the pantry or kitchen and begin chatting to her there, sampling the *halva* or *savian* or whatever dish she may have been preparing, for as he generally visited us on a feast day there was always something special being cooked.

'Uhhh,' he would say licking his fingers.

'Really Shaheed,' my mother would laugh, 'you'll never grow up.' My mother had a great affection for him for at the time of her marriage she was not very much older than her nephews-in-law, and she had found them to be great fun. She recounted anecdotes of those days so vividly that I felt that I myself knew them.

They had left for Oxford soon afterwards. Shahid Bhai was miserable at leaving home. 'A premonition of what was in store for him,' my mother always said. Shaheed Bhai retained an attitude of nonchalance right till the end. The only sign of emotion he showed was to hold his cat close to him and say, 'Pussy, I'm going to England!' The word and the gesture so typical was poignant, especially in Urdu. The sixteen year old boy was feeling the wrench of leaving home and going beyond the seas, then still a rare enough event to retain the feeling of danger and adventure, but he was not going to show his feelings. His return seven years later was a red-letter day for the family for his sojourn abroad had included four years of war, and during these years all traces had been lost of his elder brother, Shahid, who had gone to Russia on a scholarship and had liked and been liked so much by the Russians, that he had stayed on as a Professor of English at the Moscow University. Since the Russian Revolution nothing had been heard of him—he was believed to be dead, for he numbered many Russian aristocrats among his closest friends. News from him came much later. My mother could not be present at the family gathering when Shaheed Bhai returned, for I had a sort of crisis soon after my father left the house. My mother used to recount dramatically, that the moment Shaheed came home, and before he had raised his head after paying respects to

my aunt, she had taken his hand in hers and come over to see me, such were the close ties between the brother and sister.

I have vague remembrances of him at that time—a slim boyish figure, always laughing, always teasing. A few years later he was just the same. His great delight was to pull my thick plait, he would make a grab at it if I was off guard for a moment, and would hold it lightly curled round his wrist. I would try to pull it away, he would pretend to let it go and then pull it back at the last moment. 'Let it go, stop,' I would say crossly. 'You must not speak to your elder brother like that,' my mother would say. 'But he does not behave like an elder brother,' I would reply.

He did not, and he never did behave as he ought to have on any occasion or at any place. He hummed tunes in the Government House, and whistled in the sacred precincts of its corridors. At one time he carried about a decrepit looking Panda in his pocket, and took it out and squeaked it to relieve the ennui of cabinet meetings, so Khwaja Nazimuddin told me, looking as if even its remembrance would give him a stroke. Khawaja Nazimuddin was Chief Minister of the Bengal Cabinet when Shaheed Bhai was the Finance Minister. He went everywhere, met everyone and accepted anyone's invitation if he thought it would be amusing.

He could not bear pomposity or pretension nor stand on false dignity, but despite all the *bonhomie* of his behavior nobody dared take advantage of him. He never bothered to argue or refute a point but his, 'Do you really think so?' or 'I see,' or 'Is that so?' said with a cold precision, somehow carried such icy scorn, that the unfortunate person to whom it was addressed literally squirmed. I had seen it happen and have had to look away, to save the person humiliation. It made me understand why Shaheed Bhai despite his charm and loveable character made such implacable enemies as well. They were in the ranks of the pretentious and the upstarts. His equals however bitterly they opposed him never hated him, and the ordinary people loved him, but he did not suffer fools gladly, nor had he any patience with people who bored him no matter how important they might be and he let them see it. They naturally resented it though his high intellectual caliber and prodigious capacity for work was accepted even by his bitterest enemies.

His grasp of a subject was so quick that he gave the impression of seeming rudeness when people were talking to him by appearing not to pay attention. Sir Edward Snelson, the Law Secretary to the Government of Pakistan, once said to me that he was explaining some obtuse legal point to Shaheed Bhai at the time he was Law Minister. Shaheed listened with eyes half-closed and seemed almost asleep. 'I'll carry on with it later, sir, when you can pay more attention,' Sir Edward said. 'But I'm paying attention,' Shaheed Bhai replied, and sat up, and repeated word for word every point that Sir Edward had made. Sir Edward was most impressed at this feat of memory, but the fact

was that he was not paying full attention, only a fraction of his mind was given to it—with the rest he was thinking of something else, but the fraction was enough.

The speed with which he got through his work was phenomenal. I was travelling down with him in his saloon after the fateful meeting of 9 June 1946, at the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. After we had breakfast, two huge trunks full of files were brought to him. 'Sorry, darling,! have to go through it You amuse yourself,' he said apologetically to me. I replied that it was all right, I would like to watch him work. He went through the files with the ease of a knife going through butter, and in each of them he made some note or comment. By lunch time it was all finished and he was as fresh and cheerful as if he had done nothing more than scan through newspapers during the morning. This was his routine work. I have seen him in moments of crises, as during the Bengal Famine and the Calcutta Riots. He had a tense closed look during these times as he worked day and night round the clock for days and weeks, and he not only worked, he suffered. He never held forth like some politicians on what his country and people meant to him, but I remember during his last illness sitting in his room in Jinnah Hospital when the words, 'But my people are dying on their feet', came to my ears and I turned round to listen. He was speaking to the Spanish Ambassador who had come back from a tour of East Pakistan and was discussing the conditions there. It was not said for effect for it was not of any particular consequence whether the Spanish Ambassador should be impressed or not, it was a *cri de coeur* and it was wrung out of him, as he lay helpless in the hospital for he now could no longer fight the injustices and right the wrongs of a downtrodden people.

'Why on earth did you ever join the Muslim League?' I asked Shaheed, 'You don't seem to me to be a particularly Muslim League type of person,' I said in that bantering tone which we always used for each other, it was a cloak which covered our real feeling. 'Why did I?' he said. A veil of thoughtfulness spread over his face as he looked at the road ahead of him. We were driving to Oxford to see about Rashid's admission and I had stipulated that no journalist, or anyone else was to tag along, and so we were alone. 'Yes, why did you? I really want to know.' He changed the gears deliberately and slowed the car down and still looking ahead into space and forming his words very slowly as if he were thinking, he replied. 'I joined the Muslim League so that the Muslims of India should not be reduced to becoming the drawers of water, and hewers of wood. I wanted them to get a fair chance.' These were his exact words as far as I can remember them, and then he went on to explain the point further but I cannot remember the words, the gist however is quite clear. He said that the Muslims were weak, and he hated the exploitation of the weak and always sided with the underdog, so he had joined the Muslim League, and had fought for the Muslims to have a state of their own where their rights and interests should be protected against majority domination and exploitation.

'Then you must believe in an Islamic state,' I said, 'I don't understand this sophistry about a Muslim state and not an Islamic state. What is the difference?'

He was still speaking very deliberately formulating his words, and thinking at the same time. 'The difference is,' he said, 'in a Muslim state the Muslims being in a majority are in a position to safeguard their interest and plan and achieve economic prosperity.'

'But even in a Muslim state as you describe it there should be formal observance of certain religious practices,' I said. 'Yes, there should, I'm not against it', he replied, and from there we went on with the argument we had been having before I had posed the question to him.

He felt a genuine concern and burning indignation on behalf of the under-privileged, the downtrodden and the unjustly treated, and this explained his change from championing the Muslims in India to championing the Hindus in Pakistan. And because people knew that he felt for them, they loved him and followed him. He was truly a peoples' man. He did not try to get their support by false pretences, nor claim virtues he did not possess or pretend to conform to an orthodox pattern of behavior. He led his extravagant and flamboyant life before the eyes of the people. He did not seek to deceive them. I used to tease him about this and said those who wished to join his ranks had their faith severely tested. The moment they entered the gate the dogs would fall on them and before the servants could respond to their frightened cries and rescue them from the wretched animals their clothes would have become *na-pak* (unclean). Dusting themselves, they would proceed to the hall where the most compelling object was a bronze figure of a dancing Shiva, a beautiful piece of art but hardly the most appropriate thing to be seen on entering the house of a man who claimed to be the leader of 90 million Muslims. They crossed the hall into the drawing room where right opposite on the wall, was a life-size painting of a woman, her nude back was the first thing that met the eye on entering the room, and if they still had not turned and fled they found themselves in the room of the leader at last.

Shaheed Bhai would be sitting on his bed using the next one as a bedside table. Both the beds would be covered with papers, files, newspapers and letters, opened and unopened. Papers would be strewn all over, spilling over the chairs on to the floor. There would be no place to sit, one just pushed the papers aside or sat on top of them. The phone would be ringing, he would be holding the receiver in his left hand and he would continue dictating the letter to one secretary, sign the one already done by another, speaking into the mouthpiece at intervals in between. In this manner and in this style he saw whoever came to see him. Politicians and journalists, newspapermen, representatives of his country, and other countries of the world discussed with him political and economic questions, he gave statements on the linguistic problems of Pakistan, foreign policy, the pacts versus neutrality issue, the international situation, the cold war, and all the topical and burning problems of the day. And such was the

brilliance of his exposition, the manner of his delivery that they listened spellbound forgetting the squalor of the surroundings.

I was often present and saw it happen. The first reaction was shock and surprise and even distaste and then the transformation, pencils furiously making notes, faces alight with interest and then they left. Bowing out, thanking profusely, 'Thank you, very much sir.' I saw it happen to others and it happened to me all the time. I am a compulsively tidy person and my immediate reaction each time on entering Shaheed Bhai's room would be to try and bring some order out of the chaos, and I would begin by picking up letters and arranging papers, accompanying my actions by remarks such as, 'Honestly, Shaheed Bhai you might get your hordes of servants to at least dust the room, you might have the breakfast tray taken out and, goodness me, there is another one under the bed!'

Not in the least perturbed Shaheed Bhai would say, 'Sit down, darling, no, no, leave that,' taking away the paper I was about to throw into the overflowing wastepaper basket.

'But where can I sit?' I would say as I'd give a stack of files a push and make a little room, and sit down. 'Oh, yes, Shaheed Bhai, I wanted to ask you about,' I'd begin. He would answer, and start talking about the topics of the moment and the magic of his exposition would make the surroundings of no importance.

He had a warm and tender affection for me and looked at my small achievements with an amused surprise. To him I was still the little girl whose plaits he had pulled. He still treated me in the same way and yet was so proud of me. There was something warm and touching in his pride. He would put his arms around me when introducing me to somebody whether privately or in a roomful of people and he would say, 'This is my little cousin. Think me clever? She is much cleverer.'

'Well from your Shaheed Bhai that is the highest praise isn't it?' my husband and children would tease me in their turn. It was indeed so, for he had a very good opinion of himself and yet his pride in me was genuine and sincere. My achievements such as they were, were due mostly to family advantages – advantages to which he himself had contributed greatly.

Shaheed Bhai worked at this tempo and this pace most ordinary days. When there was a crisis, and these happened with frequent regularity, the speed was doubled or quadrupled. The phone rang incessantly and the streams of visitors became unending as he worked late into the night. Otherwise he would break off at about 9.00 or so and almost invariably go to a party, his own or other people's, and dance until the early hours of the morning. From about 7.30 onwards, guests would begin arriving. Ladies would put their heads around the door and say, 'Hi, Shaheed', and he would call back,

'Won't be a minute', and go on finishing whatever he was doing. Then there would be a furious last minute rush.

He would be out of his bed standing in the middle of the room giving a last minute look at a brief, signing a last letter, giving instructions with such rapidity that it paralyzed his unfortunate secretaries, so that Menzies got entangled in the telephone wires and Azami spilled an armful of briefs on the floor. From the next room came a chorus of, 'Hi, Shaheed, we shall be late, we are famished, hurry up.' 'One moment, just coming,' he would call out and push aside the papers now scooped up by Azami and dart into his bathroom. A quick shower, a quick change and he would come out fresh and prepared to have an evening of fun. Entering his drawing room he would warmly greet his guests, brushing aside protests that it was late with, 'Oh, we have plenty of time,' and somehow time did seem to stretch when one was with him and late though it had seemed, one did manage to catch the picture or the show. And then there was dinner at the *Metropole* or the *Gourmet*, and then dancing till the middle of the night, or even until the early hours of the morning. He loved dancing and I believe could dance very well, and unless urgent work prevented him from doing so there was hardly an evening which he did not spend in this manner.

Even when on state visits after a day's hard work he would nearly always go to a nightclub. I believe he is the only visitor to the States who tired out the State Department rather than the State Department programme tiring him out. He would turn round at 12.00 or 12.30 after a grueling day of appointments, lunches and dinners and say, 'Now what else?' and when told that there was nothing else, he would decide to go on to a restaurant or nightclub. 'Are you going with your Prime Minister?' someone asked Syed Ahmed the Press Attaché in Washington. 'No, I am not as young as my Prime Minister,' he replied smiling. He was less than half Shaheed Bhai's age and was considered very energetic in his own right, but even he could not keep pace with Shaheed's tireless energy. Shaheed Bhai had a delightful sense of humor and his *bons mots* used to be quoted and are remembered still. When he went to the UK as Pakistan's Prime Minister, he was asked by the Press, 'And what do you think about Pakistan's leaving the Commonwealth?' 'Oh no! We are not thinking of leaving the Commonwealth when such a young and beautiful Queen is at the Head of it,' said he with a twinkle in his eye and won the heart of the Press.

During the same trip he went to the States, and went to see Julie Andrews in *My Fair Lady*. 'Where did you learn to speak such good English, Mr. Suhrawardy?' asked Julie Andrews. 'Oh, out there from your Professor Higgins!', was the pat reply.

'I felt such a fool,' says Julie Andrews in her Year Book, 'when I learnt that he was an Oxford man.'



And of course there is his famous saying. 'The English language, the PIA and I are the only links between East and West Pakistan.'

Alas, it proved to be tragically true!

His performance in the Law Courts was equally brilliant. The cases he dealt with became *cause célèbre*, and people used to flock to the court to listen to him. This was especially so when he was defending himself against the charges under EBDO. The prosecution Consul, Chowdhury Nazir Ahmed was unnecessarily offensive in his cross-examination. For most parts Shaheed Suhrawardy ignored his deliberate rudeness. Once however, he made a very apt reply by quoting a line of Ghalib:

ہر ایک بات پر کہتے ہو تم کہ تو کیسا ہے ؟  
تم ہی کہو کہ یہ انداز گفتگو کیسا ہے ؟

Only those who know the Urdu language can appreciate the nuance and the aptness of it. It is a line from Ghalib, protesting against the irony of fate that subjected a genius like him to being humiliated by idiots.

Shaheed Bhai was lighthearted in court, as in the legislature. His witticisms were quoted and enjoyed by the members of the legal profession. Mr. Bevan Patman of Surridge and Beechno, told me that Shaheed Bhai was appearing in a case where the lawyer for the prosecution was unnecessarily long-winded. Being bored Shaheed Bhai kept interrupting him. The lawyer asked for the judge's intervention. The judge duly reprimanded Shaheed Bhai and asked him not to interrupt. Shaheed Bhai accepted the reprimand with mock humility, put his head down on the desk and kept quiet for a little while. The lawyer of the opposite side went on and on. After a while Shaheed Bhai lifted his head, looked at the judge piteously and said, 'My Lord, may I have the permission to groan?'

Another incident has been related to me by someone who was in the gallery while Shaheed Bhai was arguing in a case. Shaheed Bhai was appearing on behalf of the Editor of a paper which had been suspended. In his examination of the I. G., he made mincemeat of him. To any question Shaheed Bhai put to him he replied, 'I don't remember. I can't remember.' Shaheed Bhai said with a perfectly straight face, 'My Lord! Please may I request that it be put on record that a man with such a weak memory holds the important position of the I. G. Police.'

A memorable reply of Shaheed Bhai's which is not humorous but extremely significant was the one he gave when asked, why he was defending Abdul Qayyum Khan, because if Shaheed Bhai could be said to have disliked anyone, it was Abdul Qayyum Khan and his politics. 'But why on earth are you defending him?' he was asked. 'I am not defending Qayyum,' he said, 'I am defending Democracy,' meaning that according to

democratic principles everyone no matter what his opinion may be, has a right to legal defence. Shaheed Bhai was perhaps subconsciously thinking of the American lawyer who dealing with the famous case of the Origin of Man had said, 'I entirely disagree with his point of view but I shall defend his right to hold it to the last,'—a concept which is now a forgotten one.

But Shaheed Bhai's life was essentially a sad and lonely one. All great people are lonely but Shaheed Bhai was more so. He had no home life as such. He was married soon after his return from England to the elder daughter of Sir Abdur Rahim. I remember Shaheed Bhai's wife, a petite and elegant person. They had a boy and a girl, but she died three years after their marriage. Shaheed Bhai's mother being already dead the children were taken by their maternal grandmother to be brought up by her. An old aunt had come over to look after the house and take care of Shaheed Bhai and his father, so that there had been no companionship, no youth, no love and laughter in his home for years, and he who loved children had been denied the joy of seeing his own growing up.

His son, Shahab died at the age of twenty in his second year at Christ Church College, Oxford. I saw Shaheed Bhai soon after Shahab's death. He looked grey, haggard and wan; he seemed to have aged twenty years. We did not say much, and after a while he went back to a roomful of waiting people. This was February 1940. He had already taken on the herculean task of reorganizing the Muslim League. There was no time to grieve, but the blow was a shattering one for as my uncle, his father, wrote to my father, referring to Shahab's death, 'So ends his short life and our high hopes', for Shahab was a brilliant boy. His erudition even at such a young age evoked surprise and admiration from friends.

Had he lived, no doubt, he would have added further luster to our name. At the time of his death he was the last of his line. Shaheed Bhai's daughter Farukh Akhtar Banu (Begum Akhtar Suleman) married Shah Ahmed Suleman, the eldest son of Justice Sir Shah Mohammad Suleman. Ahmed was a jewel of a person, and was like a son to Shaheed Bhai and his daughter loved him with a deep affection and after the death of his father he stayed with them but it was still not the same as the understanding and companionship of a wife, or the joy of having a home of one's own.

He did not remarry for years, for marriage was still arranged in those days and there was no one to arrange it for him. His mother was dead and he had no other relative to undertake persuading him. Had he wanted to remarry any of the aunts would have been glad to have arranged it for him. They tentatively suggested it but he laughed it off. He had already realized that he could not give the time to making a success of marriage. Then after eighteen years of being a widower he married an attractive white Russian refugee. Always susceptible to beauty in distress, Vera Tischenko's helplessness appealed to him. The marriage broke up within a short time. They were so hopelessly incompatible. The breakup was the cause of much headache to Shaheed Bhai, but it

brought him, and all of us, a great compensation – his second son Rashid. He is the only male member of a family which has served the cause of the Muslims, and has contributed to the making of Pakistan.

God grant that Rashid may carry on the tradition, he has the intellectual caliber to do so. Shaheed Bhai's daughter Begum Akhter Suleman did her best to keep the flag flying and her daughter Mrs. Shahida Jamil is carrying on the tradition.

## Entry into Politics

Shaheed's return from England coincided with a time of great political ferment in India. Events that were to lead to far-reaching changes were happening at that time. World War I was just over and India, like so many other countries in the world was suffering from the malaise of its aftermath, and was facing many other problems besides. Even if Shaheed's background and training had not been what it was, his entry into politics was almost inevitable.

Much has been written in the West about the introduction of the non-violent, non-cooperation movement, and there is no doubt that rightly used, with iron discipline, it is a most potent weapon against violence. Peace-loving people all over the world have seen in it an answer to combat violence without further bloodshed. It was certainly the method most calculated to be effective against the might of the British Raj for the British have an innate distaste for using violence against unarmed people. I have often wondered whether Gandhi's methods would have been successful against an adversary like Hitler's Nazi Germany, but there is no doubt that it proved to be a most effective and potent weapon against the domination of the British, fashioned as it was to meet the psychological weaknesses in their make-up. It was also in tune with the psychology of the Indian masses, and by its promulgation Gandhi made politics comprehensible to the ordinary man. The magnitude of this phenomenon is known and understood by the West, at least by those who are interested in how India won her freedom. But what most of these people do not know, is the upsurge of emotional fervor aroused in the Muslims of India by the Khilafat Movement. The resentment that they felt against the British Raj for the part played by it in the eventual downfall of Turkey, got merged with their grievances nearer home. The two became one in their minds, and Gandhi with the wisdom and foresight of a really great statesman took advantage of this by making common cause with the Mussalmans in their feeling of hurt. It made the Muslims on their part give their full and unreserved support to his struggle to overthrow the British Raj. The doctrine of non-cooperation, a doctrine ordinarily speaking incomprehensible to the Mussalman was accepted by them in its entirety, and practiced with even greater fervor than the Hindus. Thousands of students left their colleges and universities. Even today one can find old men, their eyes dulled with disillusionment, eking out their existence as ill-paid clerks, because some time in the years 1919-22 fired by the call to free their country they had listened to their leaders and had turned their backs on higher education, thinking freedom to be just around the corner, where higher education plus many more things would be given to them again. Freedom had come, but too late for them. Others who had sacrificed much less were to be the heirs to its bounty.

The boycott of British goods, particularly of textiles was the second great weapon in the armory of the Congress. The spinning and the wearing of *khaddar*, the rough cotton cloth became synonymous with the fight for freedom. This doctrine was also accepted and practiced by the Mussalmans of India at that time. It may seem incredible but such is the power of suggestion that the wearing of the *khaddar* got tied up in the minds of the Muslims of India as a means of helping Turkey fight against the British. There were many poems, and many articles saying this, and this doctrine was preached from every street corner.

I still remember the electric atmosphere of that time, an atmosphere charged with emotion. It was the only time in their struggle for freedom that Hindus and Muslims joined hands together, the only time when their voices were raised in unison, the only time when they felt and thought as a nation, but alas, this feeling of euphoria was not to last very long. This period of high hope and noble endeavor was to give way to a period of abject dejection and disillusion—but this was yet to come.

The already overcharged atmosphere of the time was further sparked off by the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh. The British, generally wise in these matters committed, in this case, their biggest political blunder. Jallianwalla Bagh became, and remained, throughout the political struggle a trigger word. The death knell of the British empire was sounded the day General Dyer ordered the firing on 4,000 unarmed people in the walled garden of Amritsar. After that it was only a question of time as to when and how the British Empire in India was to be liquidated. It had provided the Indians with just the weapon they needed to whip up hatred, and it gave British the overwhelming feeling of guilt which had to be redeemed by giving India self-government. The first installment in this process was the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. It did not concede much. One realizes this particularly now, comparing it with the rapidity with which power has been ceded to other British dependencies, but it was a step towards representative government. The Council was enlarged from one of thirty-nine to that of sixty-one, and it was to be elected by direct, though limited, franchise in each province of India. The elected legislature was to choose its Ministers who would hold portfolios of what was described as transferred subjects, that is, Education, Health and Land. The key subjects such as Defence, Finance and Home Affairs still remained with the Governor and were allocated to the members of the Governor's Council who were chosen by him personally. This system was known as 'Diarchy' and introduced a novel system of dual control. In any emergency the Governor was empowered to take over full control. The emergency power of the Governor remained until the very eve of the British withdrawal from India. Shaheed Bhai had entered politics, advised and influenced by his uncle Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy who was, as I have written, a great Pan-Islamist. Shaheed therefore joined the Khilafat Movement, and became the Secretary of the Khilafat Committee and remained so for many years. The Khilafat Movement was still a living and vital force and therefore it was natural that Shaheed Bhai's sympathies should be with its leaders. Most prominent leaders of the Khilafat

Movement, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had been incarcerated, and this was a subject of bitter attacks in the Press. These men, all of whom were men of great standing amongst the Muslims, had not only been put in the ordinary category of prisoners, but had even been subjected to the indignity of having to wear prison clothes, which consisted of sleeveless shirts and shorts, a form of dress in which one could not perform prayers as this necessitates a certain formality in dress. This indignity had inflamed public opinion to a pitch of rebellion. I remember a photograph of Maulana Mohammad Ali in the newspapers, and my mother, the most unpolitical-minded of persons, looking at it with tears in her eyes and saying, 'What degradation such revered people have been subjected to, they cannot even say their prayers.' This connection of religion and politics always brought matters to a dangerous point throughout British India, at least where Muslims were concerned.

My uncle, Abdullah Suhrawardy, my father, and Shaheed all made powerful speeches attacking the treatment of the prisoners. The target of attack was, as it happened, the Home Minister, Sir Abdur Rahim, Shaheed's father-in-law. The attacks were so vehement, that after having made them, Shaheed thought it tactful not to visit his father-in-law's house, and so for the next few years, he was not even able to see his children (after his wife's death, his children were being brought up by his in-laws).

The term of the first elected Legislature came to an end in 1923 and I clearly remember the general excitement and election fever during the period of the second elections. I remember posters all over the place, stacks of voting cards, and booklets of what would now be called election manifestos. I remember the exhilaration of it all. I loved talking to people. Even in the first election of 1920 of which I have only a very hazy recollection I remember feeling the same. When Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India the English papers wrote that as a child she used to get up on a chair and try and give speeches as if this was something extraordinary. I am sure many people, who were children at that time, have similar memories. I can see the back verandah of my house and myself standing on a bench holding forth and the amused faces of the servants who seemed quite interested.

Politics entered a new phase in the second term of the elected Legislature. The All-India Congress under Gandhi's direction had refused to cooperate with the new set-up, but Motilal Nehru in North India and C. R. Das in Bengal having broken with the Congress had formed the Swaraj Party of their own. Shaheed Bhai joined it soon after joining the Council. He, together with other Muslim leaders of Bengal, entered into a pact with C R Das in 1923 in what came to be known as the Bengal Pact. According to the terms of the Pact the Muslims of Bengal would get separate representation through separate electorate in the Provincial Council on the basis of the population. They would get 55 per cent of government appointments till such time that the disparity between them and the Hindus disappeared. In the Calcutta Corporation which was the monopoly of

the Hindus, seats were reserved for the Muslims. The post of Mayor of Calcutta would alternate between a Hindu and a Mussalman every three years. Under this arrangement Shaheed Bhai became the Deputy Mayor in 1924. He also became the Deputy Leader of the Swaraj Party in the Council.

C. R. Das was a great statesman. He was the only Hindu in the forefront of politics who appreciated that without Hindu-Muslim understanding there could not be any solution to the many problems that faced the country. His generous gesture to the Muslims of Bengal won him their loyalty and admiration. It was the only time that an agreement had been worked out which was acceptable to the representatives of both the communities. But unfortunately C. R. Das died in 1925 and his work, which had hardly begun, was, without his dynamic leadership destroyed.

Shaheed Bhai became an ardent supporter and lieutenant of C. R. Das. It was very rarely indeed that I heard Shaheed speak of any political leader with greater admiration. He used to say that he was one of the greatest political leader that India had ever produced, that his death was the greatest blow to Hindu-Muslim unity and that had he lived the course of politics, at least in Bengal, would have taken a very different turn. In one of the last conversations I had with Shaheed Bhai, just before his death, he again categorically asserted this. Too late Shaheed had begun writing his memoirs, it was still in the form of disjointed notes but even in these he had praised C. R. Das enthusiastically.

'You really think him very great?' I said,

'Yes, I do. The greatest,' he replied.

'And non-communal,' I asked.

'Yes.'

'What a pity he died when he did,' said I.

'Yes' he agreed.

There is no doubt that C. R. Das had made a tremendous impression on Shaheed Bhai's youthful mind and imagination and there is no doubt that had C R Das lived the road Shaheed Bhai would have followed would have been different. Or, perhaps not. Who knows? How can one say how C. R. Das himself would have reacted to the events that followed? What would his reaction have been to the terrible Calcutta riots of 1926? C. R. Das' death in June 1925, followed by this communal frenzy in Calcutta, during which the Hindu leaders had blatantly shown their communal attitude, was the turning point of Shaheed Bhai's career.

The Calcutta riots of 1926 were as terrible and as far-reaching in their consequences as the riots twenty years later in 1946. In fact, their effect can be said to have been even more disastrous than those of 1946, for they gave the death blow to the dream of Hindu-Muslim unity, from which it never recovered, and therefore determined the course that Muslims were to follow from then on. By 1946 the Muslims had already chosen the path, and decided on their objective—the riots only made it inevitable. And yet the 1926 riots and their aftermath are not generally known. Even those closely interested in the subcontinent's struggle for Independence often confuse these riots with the much publicized Calcutta riots of 1946.

The reasons are obvious. At the time of the 1946 riots, India was on the eve of Independence and therefore whatever happened in India was of interest to the outside world. A greater awareness and a greater concern for the problems of erstwhile dependencies had followed the last great war. The fact that a Muslim League Ministry was in office when the riots took place was used by the extremely well-organized Hindu propaganda machine to their advantage. They tried to make out, and they succeeded in their effort, to make the riots appear a diabolically planned affair of the Muslim League Government, rather than the natural result of the pent-up tension and hatred.

On the other hand, at the time of the 1926 riots, India was still a British dependency and therefore what happened there was considered an internal affair and of no great interest to the outside world. At this time theoretically both Hindus and Muslims were in the same position, since the government machinery was still largely British controlled. So there was no comparison between the Muslims and the Hindus. In reality, however, things were different. The Mussalmans were at this stage completely disorganized. The fall of the Khilafat had left them without an objective and without any definite political goal, while the Hindus had greater economic strength and prosperity and national awareness. So it was that the horrors of the 1926 riots remained unnoticed by the world as its victims were mostly Muslims. I cannot provide any first hand details of the riots for I do not have, in this case, even childhood reactions and recollections to rely on for in 1926 we were not in Calcutta.

All I remember is my mother getting letters and turning pale as she read them. I also caught bits of conversation between her and my father and then, on our return later that year, I remember overhearing tales of horror and suffering, of localities completely gutted, of killings on the streets in broad daylight, of the whole economic life of the city coming to a standstill and martial law being clamped for weeks. The riots had taken place in June, we had returned about September or October. But the city had not yet got back to normal, one talked of nothing else but the horror of those terrible days. Shaheed was Deputy Mayor of Calcutta, almost the only Muslim in any sort of political or civic position and, therefore, it was his duty to do what he could to save the Muslims of



Calcutta. He strained every nerve to do so, he personally visited every troubled spot and on this occasion, as later, was engaged in hand-to-hand fights to try to save lives. The lives he saved numbered hundreds if not thousands, as he already could by sheer force of personality control mobs. He approached the provincial authorities responsible for law and order and insisted that the Commissioner of Police provide the Muslims in particularly dangerous areas adequate protection. He continued to save Muslim lives after the riots. Hundreds of people had been arrested on very flimsy evidence and many were condemned to death. For the next few years Shaheed fought legal battles on their behalf. He managed to get most of them reprieved. Dramatic stories were related years after the riots of how Shaheed had managed to save persons practically from off the gallows. 'The sentence had been passed, it was all over, even the grave was being dug, then Shaheed Sahib got the man off.' There was some grain of truth in those dramatic and exaggerated accounts. It was his championing of the Muslims of Calcutta during the riots of 1926 which made him their hero, and he remained their hero for the next twenty years. He captured their hearts and imagination by his forcefulness, and his wholehearted devotion to their cause. It was also the time from which he earned the enmity of the Hindus.

For Shaheed himself it was a turning point in his career. Not only did the violence sicken him, he was also deeply shocked that his Hindu colleagues in the Congress should have shown such naked partisanship and should have been so indifferent to the sufferings of the Muslims. Their communalism made Shaheed Bhai communal, he would henceforth champion only the cause of his community since the ideal of nationalism which he had tried to follow had proved to be a mirage.

The nebulous structure of Hindu-Muslim unity fell completely apart. The abolition of the Khilafat by the Turks had already taken away the *raison d'être* for political agitation from the Muslims, while the Montague-Chelmsford reforms although it did not satisfy them, had at least blunted the edge of the Congress' hostility.

To ascertain how this effort at representative government had worked and to assess the political temperature of the country, the British Government sent a commission called the Simon Commission after its leader Sir John Simon. Because no Indian had been included in it, it was boycotted by the Congress, and by prominent leaders of Mussalman opinion. Nevertheless, it toured the country and compiled a report, but to sound Indian feelings, the British Government then appointed an Indian Statutory Commission which consisted of leaders of Indian political opinion. It performed a similar task and presented a similar report of its own findings. My uncle Abdullah Suhrawardy was a member of this Commission. He disagreed with the findings of his colleagues and his minute of dissent published together with the report is one of the most significant documents connected with the Muslim struggle for Independence and is regarded as the basis of Jinnah's Fourteen Points, which in turn was the basis of the demands of the reorganized Muslim League.

This twilight period of Indian politics was a period of trial and experiment for Shaheed Bhai. Rejoined no political party, he was doing what he thought was necessary on his own. He formed a party called the Independent Muslim Party. Its aims and objects were related to the economic and social betterment of the Muslims of Bengal and their initiation into politics. It served a useful purpose, and laid the foundation on which he later built as a Muslim League leader. But even more important than this, was his organization of the Trade Unions and the Bengal Chamber of Labor.

Calcutta was one of the two largest industrial cities of India. It was also a great port and therefore had a large number of factory workers, laborers and dockers. Their living conditions and terms of employment left much to be desired. So far no one had bothered about them. They came from villages to seek employment and were ruthlessly exploited by their employers who gave them a pittance in wages and provided them with no amenities. Any sort of social benefit, of course, was an unheard of thing. Shaheed made these hopeless people his concern. He introduced them to the idea of forming unions, and directed them to choose leaders from amongst themselves for this purpose, and within a very short time there were well-organized trade unions of seamen, dock workers and factory workers who now could negotiate and obtain some amelioration of their miseries. No political leader of any standing had the backing and the following of this class. For the next two decades Shaheed's strength and power rested on this group and made him an invincible opponent. Franchise, though was still limited and these people did not have the vote, therefore Shaheed's concern with them was not for electoral purposes. He of course could not have been unaware that in due course they would have the vote, but it was not with that object that he identified himself with their cause—it was because their plight outraged his sense of justice. He championed them, as throughout his career he was to champion the downtrodden and the under-privileged.

His association with such lowly people was frowned upon by other politicians. His opponents derided it and called him the leader of the Calcutta *goondas*, that is to say, the riffraff. But his hold on them was absolute. Leadership, as I have said earlier, was still regarded as the prerogative of the upper classes, but if one of them championed the cause of the lowly he became their hero. Jawaharlal Nehru and Shaheed Bhai both won wide admiration because both coming from the privileged classes championed the under-privileged.

In 1933 Shaheed Bhai went as a delegate to the Round Table Conference but the Conference had lost its momentum because in five years it had not yet succeeded in drawing up proposals that were acceptable to all the parties concerned. After the Conference had finished, Shaheed joined his brother Shahid for a brief holiday in Europe, his first since his return home fifteen years ago. Shahid was returning after a twenty-three year stay in Europe. An intellectual, and a recluse by nature, he abhorred

the publicity and the attendant vulgarity of political life. He looked forward to making a home with Shaheed, who readily agreed. It would be pleasant to have a background where things of the spirit and the mind could flourish, for there were many facets of his character and there was in him also a genuine liking for all things of the spirit. Throughout his political life the yearning for it remained, for he had after all, been brought up in a home, and by parents whose values were essentially spiritual. He could, therefore, even though he hardly had time to open a book in years, remember and recite poems by Jalaludin Rumi, Urfi and Rushdi and passages from Shakespeare, Milton and Marlowe with equal ease. It took people by surprise, as did so many other things which he did. He, therefore, readily agreed to Shahid Bhai's suggestion that he should give up politics and confine himself to his legal career and so have more time and leisure.

In 1933 one still came back from Europe by boat. Shaheed Bhai's resolve remained intact throughout the voyage, and even till after reaching Bombay. The train steamed into the Howarah Station and as Shaheed got up to put his jacket on, Shahid reminded him of his promise, 'Now don't get carried away,' he said. 'No, I won't,' promised Shaheed. The train came to a halt, the platform was full of Shaheed's followers. Cries of *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Shaheed Suhrawardy zindabad* filled the air. The door of the compartment was pushed open and hordes of people stormed in and whisked Shaheed Bhai off. They carried him away with renewed cries of *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Shaheed Suhrawardy zindabad*. Shahid Bhai afterwards told me ruefully that he was left in the empty compartment with his baggage and Shaheed's, for as always he never had time to attend to such mundane things. Shahid Bhai found a porter, and came home alone. Much later in the evening Shaheed returned.

He was never to give up politics, he was forever to remain a captive to its magic. A few years later, he was to be carried away on the rising tide of the resurgent Muslim League movement, to become one of its foremost leaders, and to take part in the challenging and exciting task of creating the largest Muslim state in the world and of building a nation.

**PART II**  
**THE TRAVAILS OF**  
**A PEOPLE**

## Background of the Muslim Struggle

To understand the spectacular resurgence of the Muslims and the psychology that resulted in the demand for the establishment of Pakistan, it is necessary to know something of the position and the plight of the Muslims at the advent of the British rule.

A brief paragraph from Hunter's *Mussalmans of Bengal* gives a poignant picture of this:

The power had virtually passed into British hands after the Battle of Plessey in 1757, but the shadowy figure of the Muslim Emperor continued to remain in the Red Fort of Delhi, and the fiction of his rule was maintained by the meticulous observance of protocol. The Mutiny of 1857, put an end to this game of make-believe, it dealt a shattering blow to the Muslims of India, their pride was humbled, their prestige as a ruling class laid in dust. For the Hindus it merely meant a change of masters, for the Muslims it meant becoming the ruled instead of the rulers.

This profound psychological difference that the advent of the British rule meant for the Muslims *vis-à-vis* the Hindus has been understood by very few of those who had to deal with the destinies of the people of this subcontinent. Thus, when the time came for handing over power in 1947 it was not even remembered that the position of the Muslims had at one time been somewhat different to that of the Hindus. The results which had flowed from that difference had been far-reaching.

There was not only the psychological difference between the Muslims and Hindus in their reaction to the advent of the British, but the British attitude itself was totally different towards the two communities. They distrusted the Mussalmans from whom they had wrested power, and encouraged the Hindus as a countermeasure against them. The Hindus themselves free of resentment, took full advantage of the opportunities offered by the British in the educational, social and political fields. The Mussalmans on the other hand remained sullenly aloof until Sir Syed Ahmed Khan awoke them from their stupor. This initial advantage that the Hindus gained over the Muslims was to be the determining factor in the future. The Hindus had acquired the benefits of modern education and had set about reforming many of the social problems that beset their society under the leadership of men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. They began their apprenticeship in the political field with the formation of the Indian National Congress under the guidance of the British in 1885. By the time the Muslims got over their comatose attitude, the Hindus were well entrenched and well ahead of them.

The Muslims would have been still more backward had it not been for the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who with a band of writers, thinkers and speakers tried their best and succeeded in arousing the Muslims out of their suicidal attitude of apathy and indifference. The Aligarh Movement, as this movement came to be known, was essentially a social and an educational one. Sir Syed had a fanatical devotion to education. He believed with his heart and soul that it was the panacea for all the ills from which the Muslims in India were suffering and that once they had education all else would follow. It was an altitude of, 'Seek ye the Kingdom of Heaven and all other things will be added unto you.' From the time he was a young man, holding a small government post, his efforts were directed towards this end. He opened schools wherever he was posted. He organized the Scientific Society for Translation. He wrote monographs, and finally he started a journal *Tahzeeb-ul-Akhlaq* to promote consciousness among the Muslims of the need for education. His efforts finally culminated in the opening of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh on 8 January 1877. This was indeed a landmark in the history of the Muslims of India, for this college which eventually was to become the Muslim University of Aligarh, became the centre of the renaissance of Muslim thought in India. It was the men connected with this University who led the Muslim thinking of that generation, and for generations to come. Sir Syed had that quality, rare even among great men, of attracting other great men to his cause, and the Aligarh Movement truly had a galaxy of great names. Altaf Hussain Hali, Shibli Nomani, Mohsinul Mulk, Mohammad Hussein Azad, Nazir Ahmed were all connected with it.

The Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was followed by the establishing of the Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1886. The Conference was held once a year in different parts of India, to carry the message of the Aligarh movement, and to draw patrons and students to the college, but it became much more. It became, to quote S. M. Ikram, 'A powerful instrument of intellectual awakening and spread of knowledge among Mussalmans'.

Sir Syed wanted to keep the Muslims away from politics at this stage. He felt that they were not yet ready for taking part in political agitation. What they needed was education and social reform which would ensure their taking their rightful place in the professions and in the economic life of the country. The Muslims had suffered heavily after the first War of Independence more commonly known as the Great Mutiny, and were looked upon with suspicion and distrust by the British. Sir Syed's efforts were directed at removing the suspicion and distrust, and rehabilitating the Muslims in the good grace of the British. Latter day politicians have criticized him for it, even his contemporaries accused him of following a pro-British policy, but in doing so they did a grave injustice to a great man.

Sir Syed was merely seeking to redress the balance in favor of the Muslims. The Hindus had already gained a good twenty-five years over the Muslims and so were ripe for

political agitation. They were educationally advanced, economically prosperous and well represented in all the ranks of the professions. Now they were ready for the next stage. The Muslims, however, were still faced with the struggle for survival, and so it was that Sir Syed did not encourage them to rush into headlong collision with the British. None was more aware than Sir Syed that the Muslims had justifiable grievances. In fact one of the earliest monographs that he wrote was on this subject, drawing the attention of the British to the injustices suffered by the Muslims under them, but as he saw it, the way to redemption lay not in non-cooperation but in cooperation, at least then. This meant equipping oneself with education, trying to rehabilitate oneself economically and securing one's rightful place in the social and economic life of the country. Political agitation Sir Syed felt would have been suicidal for the Muslims at that stage. 'When a patient is too ill strong medicines are not given.' That was the condition of the Muslims immediately after the 1857 uprising.

But even Sir Syed, reluctant as he was to get involved in political controversies, could not help but take notice of the cleavage that was growing between the Hindus and Muslims—a cleavage that was based on a clash of interests. One finds the first note of alarm in a letter written in 1870 to Mohsinul Mulk, in connection with the Hindu demand that works of the Scientific Society be translated into Hindi. Innocuous enough though it seemed, Sir Syed's penetrating mind sensed the dangerous precedence inherent in it, and he says, 'This is a proposal which will make Hindu-Muslim unity impossible. Muslims will never agree to Hindi, and if Hindus following the new trend insist on Hindi, they will not agree to Urdu. The result is that Hindus and Muslims will be completely separated? Even more categorical is his statement regarding the Congress demand for an elected Viceroy's Council. In this connection he points out, 'It is certain that the Hindu members will have four times as many votes for their population as they are four times as many. It is like a game of dice in which one has four points and another only one.' Again in January 1883, speaking on the Local Self Government Bill, he expressed similar fears.

One is amazed at the clear-headedness and perspicacity of this great leader, who so early in the day saw the dangers of a British type of democracy introduced in India without any built-in safeguards for the Muslims. His attitude was considered reactionary and pro-British by the Hindus but it was not so. No more than Jinnah's was decades later. Both wanted freedom for India, freedom from British rule, but freedom to be equally shared by the Hindus and the Muslims. Neither of them were prepared to exchange servitude to the British for servitude to the Hindus, and if need be, both were prepared to delay the day of freedom so that freedom when it came, could be inherited by both. Call it communal, if you will, but the interest of 100,000,000 Muslims can hardly be called communal in a narrow sense, and their representatives were not prepared to sacrifice their interest, even to the larger interest of Indian independence. Sir Syed died in 1898, and it was left to his able successor Mohsinul Mulk to consolidate and carry on his work. It was Mohsinul Mulk who drafted the Simla Resolution, that

clearly and categorically stated the Muslim demands, and asked for separate electorates for the first time. The memorial was presented to the Viceroy in Simla on 1 October 1906 by a delegation of eminent Muslims. It was on the basis of this Resolution that separate electorates were granted to the Muslims in the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1906.

Mohsinul Mulk did not live to see the fruits of his efforts. He died soon after presenting the memorial. But it was his work that laid the foundation of the All India Muslim League, for the resolution for its establishment was passed in the All India Educational Conference session held in Dhaka in December 1906. It was presided over by Altaf Hussain Hali, and rich tributes were paid to Mohsinul Mulk.



## Reorganizing the Muslims of Bengal, 1937-46

Muslims all over India were backward as compared to the Hindus. But in Bengal they had reached an abysmal depth of backwardness. The malaise was of long-standing and deeply rooted in historic and economic factors stretching back to the decline of the power of the Moguls in Bengal.

Sir John Hunter in his *Mussulmans of Bengal* gives a graphic picture of their decline, and I cannot do better than quote from it.

At Murshidabad a Muhammadan Court still plays its farce of a mimic state, and in every District the descendant of some line of princes sullenly and proudly cats his heart out among roofless palaces and weed-choked tanks. Of such families I have personally known several. Their ruined mansions swarm with grown-up sons and daughters, with grandchildren and nephews and nieces, and not one of the hungry crowd has a chance of doing anything for himself in life. They drag on a listless existence in patched-up verandahs or leaky outhouses, sinking deeper and deeper into a hopeless abyss of debt, till the neighboring Hindu money-lender fixes a quarrel on them, and then in a moment a host of mortgages foreclose, and the ancient Mussalman family is suddenly swallowed up and disappears forever.

The Muslim ruling classes of Bengal did not have their roots in the soil. They were descendants of the nobles of the Mogul court, and the commanders of the Mogul army, who on their part were mostly of Arab and Persian descent, therefore, once the source of their power weakened their disintegration was inevitable.

The general mass of the Muslims of Bengal were converts from Hinduism. They belonged to the impoverished peasantry and had sought refuge from the domination of the Hindu caste system by embracing Islam. The decline of the Muslim power and the establishment of the East India Company impoverished both the strata of Muslim society in Bengal. The members of the East India Company were mostly merchant adventurers whose rapacity more than once brought on the censure of the British Parliament, and formed the subject of Burke's eloquent speeches.

But the Company continued to follow a policy of ruthless extraction and exploitation which impoverished the people. Even the Regulating Act of 1773 did not do much to prevent this state of affairs, and indiscriminate land resumption served to turn thousands into landless laborers. The Permanent Settlement elevated the Hindu collector at the expense of the Muslim landlord and peasant. The combined result of it all was the picture given by Hunter.

When the Aligarh Movement started a renaissance of the Muslims of Northern India, its echoes reached Bengal as well, and Nawab Abdul Latif carried out a similar programme of education and reform in Bengal as Sir Syed and his followers were doing in Northern India. The greatest benefactor of the Muslims of Bengal, however, is a man whose name is little known – Syed Mohsin Ali. He gave his entire property in trust for the Muslims and it was by utilizing income from this trust that Nawab Abdul Latif was able to form the Calcutta Madrassa and give scholarships to needy Muslim students. Even with all these efforts, the Muslims of Bengal lagged far behind.

On the eve of the reorganization of the Muslim League in Bengal, the position of the Muslims was that 95 or perhaps 98 percent of the cultivators were Muslims, on the other hand 99 percent money-lenders and 90 percent landowners and big *zemindars* were Hindus (statistics from A Social and Economic History of Bengal by Qamaruddin). The Muslim peasants lived in poverty and misery, and were often indebted to the money-lenders (*bania* or *mahajan*). Their conditions were such that they did not have a hope of ever paying back the loan, and therefore ended up as landless laborers. Moreover, the peasants being illiterate could not read the documents, therefore the unscrupulous landlord could enter whatever sum he wanted. Often the peasant had to repay three to four times more than he owed. In the end the *zemindar* or the money-lender foreclosed his mortgage and the peasant-owner became the landless laborer. Medical or educational facilities were non-existent, and the people too bowed down by the constant struggle for existence to demand anything at all.

To add fuel to the fire, the Hindu Members of the Council passed the Tenancy Act in 1938, giving still further power to the landlords. As a reaction to it and in a desperate effort to somehow help the Muslim peasants the Muslim leaders formed the *Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti* in 1929, with Maulana Mohammed Akram Khan as its Secretary. This was the nucleus of the *Krishak Proja Party*, and *Krishak Sramik Party*, of the later years.

At this juncture the first half of the recommendations of the Round Table Conference was given effect to by an Act of Parliament which came to be known as the Government of India Act 1935. By its provisions a substantial measure of self-government was transferred to Indian hands and the provinces became virtually self-governing. Provincial Legislatures would be elected by adult suffrage and would in turn elect Ministers directly responsible to it. Diarchy ended, and except for a minimum of reserve power in the hands of the Governor, power passed into Indian hands in every other respect. By still retaining separate electorate for the Muslims the Act roused a storm of opposition in the Congress and caused the provisions to be dubbed as *The Communal Award* and as such it was referred to throughout the years and remained a subject of bitter controversy.

The Congress had at first wanted to boycott the elections which were to be held as a first step to self-government in protest against the retaining of separate electorates for the Muslims, but realizing that a substantial measure of self-government would come into their hands by its acceptance, they decided to accept it, and contested the forthcoming elections under its provisions. It resulted in their gaining a majority in seven out of the eleven provinces of India, and so in forming Congress Ministries in them.

The Muslims, almost on the eve of elections, suddenly shook off the apathy and indifference which had characterized their attitude after the debacle of the Khilafat Movement and under the dynamic leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah reorganized the Muslim League. Quaid-i-Azam had come back from England in 1934 and was busy touring India for reorganizing the Muslim League. Shaheed Bhai had by this time acquired a reputation, and stature as a Muslim leader. He was the General Secretary of the Khilafat Committee and had organized the Bengal Muslim Conference and the All United Bengal Muslim Party. He was the Secretary of one, and President of the other on the eve of the election. Quaid-i-Azam was informed that without Shaheed Suhrawardy's cooperation, the League had no future in Bengal. Jinnah fully realized the importance of Bengal, the overwhelmingly Muslim majority province. He sent a delegation consisting of Khawaja Nazimuddin, Khawaja Khairuddin, Hassan Ispahani and Abdur Rahman Siddiqui, to persuade Shaheed Bhai to join the Muslim League. Shaheed Bhai gives his reason for agreeing to do so as follows:

Some friends of Jinnah saw me and requested me on his behalf to amalgamate my organization with the Bengal Branch of Muslim League. I hesitated to do so for various reasons, but subsequently agreed in view of the fact that the Muslim League was an all India organization. I affiliated my organization to the All India Muslim League of which Mr. Jinnah was the President and thus became the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League in 1936.

The Muslim League Parliamentary Board for Bengal was formed with Shaheed Bhai as its Secretary. Shaheed Bhai was an efficient organizer and worked very hard. He was the only Bengal Muslim leader who had contact with the masses. The others were more or less armchair politicians. It was at this stage that Shaheed Bhai taught himself to speak Bengali so that he could reach the people, and it was due to his untiring efforts that the Muslim League won 38 seats in the elections. *The Krishak Proja Party*, despite Fazlul Haq's dynamic leadership won only one seat more, that is 39 seats. Khawaja Nazimuddin, one of the leaders of the Muslim League party, was defeated by Fazlul Haq in Patuakhali.

Shaheed Bhai had himself been elected in two constituencies of Calcutta. He gave one of these, the twenty-four *Parganas* one, to Khawaja Nazimuddin, who was thus able to enter the Council. Out of the 38 Independent members 21 joined the Muslim League.

This made the Muslim League the second largest party in the Council, the first being the Congress with 60 seats. The Governor called the Congress Secretary, Sarat Bose, to form the Government but they were unable to agree on the terms of the coalition with the *Krishak Proja Party*. The Muslim League seeing the danger offered the Prime Ministership to Fazlul Haq thus enabling a coalition Government to be formed with the Muslim League.

Fazlul Haq had an impressive record of service to the cause of Muslims of Bengal but he was an emotional man and was largely swayed by his advisors, and either could not, or did not, see their selfish motives. He had refused to join the Muslim League because of differences over the appointment of the members of the Parliamentary Board. He maintained that the members chosen did not have direct contact with the Bengal Muslim masses. However, responding to the generous gesture of the Muslim League Party in offering him the Prime Ministership, he joined the Muslim League officially at the Lucknow Session in October 1937. He was immediately elected President of the Bengal Muslim League, Shaheed Bhai remaining its Secretary.

## The Coalition Ministry and After

The Coalition Ministry which was now virtually the Muslim League Ministry entered a period of spectacular work of social welfare. More than half a dozen Parliamentary Acts were passed each of which, more than the other, cut the chains that bound the Muslim peasants of Bengal.

The first of these measures was the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment, 1938, introduced in September 1937. This went a long way towards curtailing the powers and the prerogatives of the *zemindars*. It did away with many of the privileges of the landlords and prevented them from exhorting money from the tenants on flimsy pretences. It gave the tenants control over their property and prevented arbitrary enhancing of rents, ejection, etc. by the *zemindars*. The next two vital measures introduced by the Ministry were, the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act and the Bengal Money Lenders Act. These Acts virtually released the Bengal peasants from serfdom, for it freed them from the crippling weight of debt to the landlords and money-lenders. As the peasants were illiterate and could not read the documents, unscrupulous landlords would enter any sum they wanted. Since interest charges were sometimes as high as 100 percent the loans could never be paid back. The peasant was thus forced to sell his lands and join the increasing number of landless laborers. The *mahajans* grabbed the lands of all these indebted peasants either at a nominal price, or at times simply against the debt. These ill-practices were put to a stop by the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act, and the Bengal Money Lenders Act. Conciliation Boards were set up in 3,000 villages. These Boards settled claims by scaling down the exorbitant claims to a reasonable amount. The Agricultural Debts (Second Amendment) of 1940 which covered all types of lands was extensively enforced. Even more beneficial was the Bengal Money Lenders Act, 1940, which made it obligatory for all person in the money lending business, *i.e.* *mahajans*, to obtain Trade Licenses and register themselves with the Government. It also fixed the minimum rate of interest at six per cent for secured and eight per cent for unsecured loans. The above Acts which benefited the peasants made the Ministry extremely popular among the masses and for them the League became synonymous with reforms. Besides these sweeping Acts redeeming the lot of the peasants the Ministry passed several other equally important Bills, such as the Labor Welfare Act, the Maternity Benefit Act, etc.

The Muslims had lagged far behind in education as has been mentioned earlier. Lacking education they did not qualify for most of the Government services. Thus their condition grew from bad to worse. The Ministry tried to remedy these conditions through the Bengal Secondary Education Bill, 1940. It sought to remove Secondary Education from the control of the Calcutta University which was completely Hindu-dominated to a Secondary Education Board in which it was hoped that Muslim interests

would be taken care of. The Ministry made lavish grants to Madrassas and other Muslim institutions. It established a Degree College for girls in Calcutta in a predominantly Muslim area.

It sought to remove the disparity in service between Hindus and Muslims by fixing a 50 per cent quota for Muslims and stopping the recruitment of Hindus till this quota was filled. Though these measures were undertaken to rectify justifiable grievances and neglect there was a great hue and cry and the Ministry was charged with communalism. The Ministry also did commendable work in rural reconstruction—clearance of *khals*, re-excavation of rivers, improvement in communications by land and water, establishment of a Union Board, dispensaries, were some of the tasks it undertook. These activities had the side benefit of providing a large number of poor villagers gainful employment.

Shaheed Bhai had been associated with the labor from the earliest stages of his career. Now he tried to bring the unions within the orbit of the Government, and promote industrial peace. The number of Muslim labor unions rose rapidly during this period and this was a proof of the success of Shaheed Bhai's method. The unions contributed to the consolidation of Shaheed Bhai's position in the Muslim League, and the consolidation of the League's position within the cabinet. Government supported unions that were willing to cooperate were known as White Unions. Shaheed Bhai was the undisputed leader of the urban Muslims who were mostly up-country people with whom he had been associated since his Khilafat Committee days. The fact that he was Urdu speaking himself gave them a feeling of affinity towards him.

The Muslim League Coalition Ministry was acquitting itself very creditably, and there was no reason why it should not have continued to do so for some time but for the impact of the Second World War.

War was declared on 3 September 1939, The immediate reaction in India was the resignation of all the Congress Ministries in protest against the declaration of war without consultation with them. As seven out of eleven ministries were Congress, representative government virtually disappeared. Muslims had suffered a great deal under the Congress, therefore Jinnah ordered a Day of Deliverance to be observed by the Muslims throughout the length and breadth of India. This was done in December 1939.

The Viceroy appointed a National Defence Council and requested the Chief Ministers and other prominent political leaders to join it. Mr. A. K. Fazlul Haq, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Sir Saadullah all joined the Council without consulting the Muslim League. Jinnah called upon the Muslim Leaguers, who had become members of the Defence Council to resign. All obeyed except Fazlul Haq. After six months of acrimonious correspondence Fazlul Haq too, resigned from the Council but at the same time he also

resigned from the League, whereupon the Quaid-i-Azam expelled him notwithstanding his political stature and his importance to the Muslim League. A wave of shocked surprise went throughout the length and breadth of India. The Quaid's move was considered extremely rash, and it was predicted that the expulsion would lead to the disintegration of the League in Bengal. In fact, quite the contrary happened. The Muslim middle classes and the Muslim masses were by now solidly behind the League and it was Fazlul Haq who found himself isolated.

The Muslim League members of the Fazlul Haq Cabinet resigned in 1941 and Fazlul Haq formed a new coalition Ministry with the Hindu *Mahasabha* leaders Shyama Parshad Mukerji and Santosh Kumar Bose, leaders of the Forward Block of the Congress formed by Subhash Chander Bose. Amongst the Muslims, the Nawab of Dhaka alone joined him. The Congress did not accept a Ministry in this Cabinet but promised their support. This resulted in fewer communal riots which was a help, but this was more than offset by the opposition of the Muslim masses. Wherever Fazlul Haq went his meetings were broken up. Rotten eggs and tomatoes were thrown, and Fazlul Haq, the darling of the Muslim masses, for the first time in his life was faced with the implacable hostility of the people.

It was now that Shaheed Bhai came to his own, for it was due to his personality and organizing ability that the Muslim League owed not only its survival but its triumphs in Bengal, for Fazlul Haq was no mean opponent. He had already achieved a stature in the politics of Bengal which was unmatched by any other politician. He continued by sheer force of his personality to have a tremendous following amongst the rural population of Bengal. His party, with its full-fledged radical programme of economic reconstruction, appealed to them, and his superbly imaginative gesture of annulling the arrears of land revenue during the Coalition Ministry secured him a place forever in the heart of the Bengal peasantry.

Shaheed Bhai's task certainly was not an easy one. He had to fight not only the organized Hindu opposition but that of the most popular veteran Muslim leader as well. Only his own superhuman ability for hard work, and a personality which in its own way was as magnetic to the multitude as Fazlul Haq's was, could have accomplished the task.

To Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, no doubt, we owe the establishment of Pakistan but without Shaheed Suhrawardy there could not have been an East Pakistan. Subsequent political developments have been such that analysts have tried to underestimate his contribution, but as time passes, and the clouds of controversy regarding the establishment of Pakistan recede, this will be seen in its true perspective.

The masses had benefited by the Welfare Acts passed by the Muslim League Ministry between 1937 and 1941. The middle classes, businessmen and bureaucrats all felt that

the future lay with the Muslim League. Student demonstrations in favor of the League became common occurrences. The Muslim members supporting Fazlul Haq began to feel the social pressure, and began to cross the floor and join the Muslim League Parliamentary party. Fazlul Haq's candidates lost in by-elections in Natore and Balurghat ignominiously. By the beginning of 1943 the Muslim League Party began to gather strength both inside and outside the House. Fazlul Haq resigned as a result of sharp differences of opinion between him and the Governor, Sir John Anderson, and a Muslim League Ministry was formed under Khawaja Nazimuddin. Shaheed Bhai was appointed Minister of Civil Supplies.

Ominous clouds were gathering on the horizon. The Bengal famine which was to take such a heavy toll of human lives and cause so much suffering had already started, and news of death due to starvation began coming in as hungry and emaciated people began trekking their way from the villages into towns, especially to Calcutta.



## Bengal Famine

The Bengal famine was the most terrible and the most disastrous famine in more than a hundred years. The shortage began in the villages and the poor and the hungry in their thousands trudged to the cities, mainly to Calcutta, hoping for a handful of grain. Several factors contributed towards the famine most of them connected with the war.

Large quantities of rice imported from Burma and other Far Eastern countries was stopped, because these countries were now under enemy occupation. In view of the situation the British Government decided on a 'denial' policy. I quote from a letter by Military authorities to the Chief Secretary of Bengal, showing this:

It has been decided with the approval of HE the Governor General Executive Council that a complete 'scorched earth' policy for the whole of India is neither practicable nor desirable. A 'denial' policy has however, been formulated and this will be put into effect in certain emergencies. Briefly the policy consists of denial to the enemy of certain stocks and services by destruction or removal of essentials within the defined limits of threatened areas to be carried out in the event of invasion. Bengal is included in this area. The responsibility for initialing, coordinating and approving plans and bases, and for plans to be put into execution lies with the local military authority, but the closest cooperation of the civil authorities will be required when the time comes to translate the plan into action. I do not propose to go into details at the present juncture or to say more but the military is already making preparations to carry out the scheme should occasion arise.

(Sheila Sen: *Muslim Politics in Bengal*)

But most of all, it was the black marketers and hoarders whose criminal action was responsible for the tragedy. They knowingly and deliberately withheld stocks of rice and later sold it at exorbitant prices. Calcutta itself was in the grip of famine, at least as far as prices were concerned. All kinds of luxury food, sweets, cakes and fruits were displayed in shops and restaurants while people, men, women and children, died of hunger in the streets and on the pavements. It was most shocking, the most awful and the most terrible spectacle.

Though the seeds of this great disaster were laid by the previous government, which because of incompetence and lack of foresight, had not taken the necessary steps to avoid this, the blame for it was put on the Muslim League Government in whose tenure of office the results began to show. Then, and afterwards, the Hindu dominated Press of India, and the Western Press have blamed the Muslim League Ministry for the tragedy which was not of its making. It was merely reaping the whirlwind the previous

government had sown, but to this day, whoever writes about this disaster always blames the Muslim League Ministry. It surprises me because some of these writers are men of international repute and yet are content to repeat a canard without taking the trouble to sift the facts for themselves.

Shaheed Bhai was appointed Minister for Civil Supplies; he was also holding the portfolio for Finance. He worked day and night organizing food distribution centers, and gruel kitchens all over the city. He mobilized the students for doing this work. By threatening dire punishment, he did get the rice hoarders and black marketers (mostly Hindus) to disgorge their ill-gotten stocks, and rice did appear in the shops of Calcutta sooner than it would have otherwise. Rice could not be imported from the surrounding countries because they were under enemy occupation. Wheat from north India was of no use because the Bengalis were not used to eating bread, though as a result of the Bengal famine a drastic change did come about in their eating habits and I understand they do eat bread now.

Shaheed Bhai came to New Delhi many times and spent hours with officials in charge of food supplies, arranging to send as much rice as possible to famine-stricken Bengal because the agents handling rice import were Ispahani and Company. The Hindu Provinces did not want to send rice. Shaheed Bhai tried to persuade the Ministry to appoint one or two Hindu agents for which he earned the enmity of the Ispahanis. The Hindu writers still blame communal consideration in the handling of rice as one of the causes of famine.

It was mainly due to Shaheed Bhai's indefatigable energy that the Bengal famine came to an end when it did, but he has received scant thanks for it.

## Elections 1945-46

At last the famine began to disappear, rice was back at the food stalls. The dead and dying were seen less and less on the streets.

But there was no respite for Shaheed Bhai for the elections were looming ahead and it was vitally necessary to be successful in them. Shaheed had been organizing his party to this end and had been going out to the people in the villages, touring the remotest areas and addressing hundreds of meetings mostly of young workers. His attitude of bonhomie had completely won the allegiance of the students. Middle class Muslims had become aware of their political rights during the years of the Muslim League Government and were determined not to allow the Hindus to capture power again. Shaheed Bhai was ably assisted by Abul Hashim who had become the General Secretary of the Muslim League after Shaheed Bhai's resignation in 1935. Shaheed Bhai had resigned because Quaid-i-Azam had decided that those holding government positions should not be office-bearers of the Party also. Abul Hashim's views were radical and very much to the left. He promised to free the people from the shackles of reactionary forces and vested interest and as the majority of Bengal Muslims consisted of have-nots, his appeal got a ready response.

The Muslim League was now clearly divided into left and right. Shaheed Bhai stood in the middle.

Sheila Sen says in her book:

To Suhrawardy who was the uncrowned king of the poorer sections of Muslims of Calcutta and the suburbs, it did not matter much as it did not affect his position in any way. Rather he extended his willing support to Abul Hashim. Since Hashim himself was interested in protecting his leadership inside the party only, Suhrawardy stood a better chance of leading the Parliamentary wing. Instead of opposing Abul Hashim, therefore, Suhrawardy allowed his name to be associated with his new moves. This gave him, on the one hand, a wonderful band of young community workers and, on the other, helped him to dislodge Nazimuddin from leadership which was not otherwise possible as the latter had the blessings of Jinnah through Ispahani.

Party workers were recruited from every district of Bengal and a branch of the Provincial Muslim League was set up in Dhaka to organize Eastern Bengal. For the first time the Muslim League began to be organized. Every district had a Parliamentary board besides the Central Parliamentary Board which was to hear appeals. Shaheed

Bhai and Abul Hashim's Party won every district and union election and when the time for the provincial elections came, they won the majority of seats.

Elections were fought with great intensity in every town, district and village of the Province. How well organized and disciplined the Muslims had become in the bare space of seven years is seen in the result. The Muslim League won an overwhelming majority in every Muslim constituency. Every attempt to divide and deflect the votes failed. Cajoling, bribery, intimidation, were all tried, but the Muslims were united so well that they withstood it all. Realizing that on the result of this election depended their future, they went all out to make it a success.

Jinnah declared that the general elections to the Central and Provincial Assemblies would be 'a plebiscite' of the Muslims of India for Pakistan, as he wanted the Muslims of India to prove to the world that the Muslim League represented the Muslim nation in this country.

I happened to be in Calcutta when the movement for the election was launched in Bengal on 27 December 1945. A vast multitude had gathered in the *Maidan*. Shaheed Bhai spoke from the top of the Ochterlony Monument. There was a tremendous feeling in the crowd. Cries of *Allah-o-Akbar* rent the sky.

I witnessed even greater enthusiasm when I accompanied Shaheed Bhai and my father in their first election tour. We went to Khargpur. At each station we were greeted by large crowds shouting slogans and wanting to see their leaders. Shaheed Bhai would say a few words to them, and we would proceed to another station. In this way we gradually arrived in Khargpur, a large town in this area, and near Midnapur, which was our home town. That night a huge crowd gathered to hear Shaheed Bhai. People had come from far and wide, for in this part of the world there was a great deal of loyalty for our family amongst the voters.

It was at Khargpur that I made my first speech at a gathering of men though I spoke from behind the *pardah*, that is to say from behind a *chik* (this is a curtain of fine bamboo slats and it is so woven that one can see without being seen). My speech went down very well. The enthusiasm for the national cause had swept away traditional prejudices.

Once the election campaign was launched excitement spread throughout the country. Certain constituencies were of particular importance, for instance Liaquat Ali Khan's constituency. The Hindus had put all their might into trying to defeat Liaquat Ali Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim League. His defeat would have been most demoralizing, therefore the Muslim League put all its efforts into fighting it. It was to the strenuous efforts of the students of the Muslim University of Aligarh that the credit for Liaquat Ali Khan's success goes.

I remember the tense excitement with which we awaited the results, phoning Mr. Shamsul Hasan, Office Secretary of the Muslim League Office every half an hour or so. The results came trickling in—'He was winning, he was not winning,'—and finally at last about 12.00 or perhaps later at night the final results came in—he had won, and we breathed a sigh of relief.

Whilst Liaquat Ali Khan's victory was the single most important victory in the north, the win in Bengal was the single most important victory of a province. Bengal was the largest Muslim majority area and at the same time, it was backward, poverty-stricken and disorganized. Just before the election, floor-crossing of the Muslims had become a scandal. This was to be no more. Shaheed Bhai, ably helped by Mr. Abul Hashim, had organized the Muslims of Bengal in such a manner that they voted almost to a man for the Muslim League. Shaheed Bhai toured every district, town and village of the province, speaking to the people in simple words, explaining the objectives of the Muslim League and the reasons why they should vote for it.

'Who will you vote for?' was the question, and even the smallest child replied, 'For the Muslim League.' 'Why will you vote for the Muslim League?' 'Because they will give me a school to go to.' In this manner the message of the Muslim League was carried to every corner of Bengal. The General Elections were held in November 1945 and all the Muslim League nominees won.

There were 200 Muslim seats in the Bengal Legislature. Except for the six won by Fazlul Haq's *Krishak Proja Party*, all the seats were won by the Muslim League. It was a tremendous victory.

Things were moving very quickly and the British Government could not but realize that India had to be given Independence and some kind of understanding must be evolved with the Muslim League. After the British elections the British Government sent the Cabinet Mission to negotiate with the Indian political leaders. It consisted of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and AV Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty. They arrived in India on 23 March 1946. Soon after this, and before the negotiations began in earnest, Quaid-i-Azam decided to call a convention of the Muslim League Legislatures in Delhi. More than five hundred members of the Legislature gathered in Delhi to discuss the terms for the achievement of Pakistan. They came from every province of India. The largest and the most important contingent was, of course, from Bengal, which came in a special train. On each compartment of the train, and even on the nose of the engine, was chalked *Muslim League Zindabad*. They arrived jubilant and triumphant, and were received by the members of the other provinces on the station with thundering cries of *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Muslim League Zindabad*.

A wave of hope passed through every one, the achievement of the hearts' desire seemed very near. The members were taken out in a procession from the station straight to the first session of the Convention which was being held in the quadrangle of the Anglo-Arabic College. There was a huge *shamiana* and *pandal*, and near it was a ladies' enclosure from where one could see everything clearly. Sayings of the Quaid, and slogans of the Muslim League were written on large white letters on green bands. Surrounding the *pandal* was the Quaid's definitions of what made us, the Muslims, a nation.

The writing said:

We are a nation of a hundred million, and what is more we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendars, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions—in short we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international laws we are a nation.

The next morning was most important, for at 11.00 that morning Shaheed Bhai was to present the resolution for Pakistan. The previous Resolution of 23 March 1940 had been presented by Fazlul Haq and it was the right and privilege of Bengal, the largest Muslim majority province to do so again. This time it was presented by Shaheed Bhai.

The resolution presented by Shaheed categorically and emphatically stated the demand for Pakistan. It said:

Whereas the Muslims are convinced that with a view to saving Muslim India from the domination of the Hindus and in order to afford them full scope to develop themselves according to their genius, it is necessary to constitute a sovereign independent state comprising Bengal and Assam in the North East Zone, and the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sindh and Balochistan in the North West Zone.

The passing of this resolution by the newly elected Muslim members of the Legislature of India gave weight to the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and gave substance to Quaid-i-Azam's claim that there were not two but three parties to the settlement of the Indian question—the British, the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League. The Quaid could now argue from a position of strength. Pakistan was no longer a dream of a few ideologues or students, it was the considered demand of the majority of the Muslim politicians of the majority and the minority provinces of India. The Muslim League had reached the point of no return.

## CABINET MISSION

The formation of the Cabinet Mission was announced in the British Parliament in February 1946 and the members of the Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 23 March 1946. With the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, himself present, it was possible for the Cabinet Mission to settle questions on the spot. The fact that Lord Pethick-Lawrence at the age of eighty had come to India and the Labor Government's past record, all seemed proof of British bona fides.

The Cabinet Mission struggled to reach a compromise. It had long talks with the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, with Gandhi and Nehru and Jinnah and Suhrawardy, and with others.

But despite its efforts, it could not get the leaders to agree, and so they themselves put forward a plan, in which they tried to meet the Congress and, the Muslim League points of view as far as possible.

According to the Cabinet Mission Plan there was to be a union of India embracing both British India and the States which would deal with the subjects of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications and have the power to raise the necessary finances. Major communal issues would be decided by a majority of representatives of each of the two major communities as well as by a majority of all members present and voting.

Second, there should be three groups of provinces, Section A, comprising the six Hindu majority provinces, Section B, the province of the Punjab, North West Frontier, Sindh and Balochistan and Section C, the provinces of Bengal and Assam.

Third, the provinces and the states should be the basic units. All subjects other than the union subjects and all residuary powers, should vest in the provinces, the states would retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the union.

The plan also proposed that in the Constituent Assembly each province should have seats in proportion to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million. The representatives allotted to each of the three communities—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—were to be elected by members of the community in the Provincial Legislative Assembly.

Each of the three sections would settle the Constitutions for the provinces included in each section and also decide whether any group Constitution should be set up for those provinces. However, the new legislature of any province should be free after the first General Election under the Constitution to opt out of the group.

This went a long way to meeting the demand for Pakistan, without actually dividing the country and it will remain a matter of great regret to all moderate-thinking people that this plan did not succeed, but the Congress and Congress leaders alone are responsible for its failure. This is a fact which is not generally realized particularly by the West, for it is presumed that because the Muslim League demanded Pakistan, it was the Muslim League that rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan, but this is not so.

On 6 June 1946 at the Muslim League Council meeting held at Hotel Imperial, New Delhi, Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, after having consulted the Muslim League Council, and the Working Committee categorically accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan. I was present on the historic occasion and have a very clear recollection of it. I remember what Quaid-i-Azam said: 'They say sense has dawned on me, well that is a very good thing. I hope that sense will dawn on them.' Everyone laughed.

A wave of relief swept over everybody. We had come near the brink and had been saved from going over the precipice.

Shaheed left for Calcutta the next day. I travelled down with him, he was in a happy and elated mood at this turn of events. But the Congress had not accepted the Plan, they did not categorically reject it either but took up a most ambiguous attitude. They proceeded to treat the plan in two pans—the short term and the long term. The short term recommendation regarding the Viceroy's interim Cabinet they rejected completely. The long term plan they accepted but with reservations which caused misgivings among the Muslim leaders, but the bombshell that destroyed the Cabinet Mission Plan was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's statement given in Bombay on 10 July 1946 saying that Congress was committed to nothing except to going to the Constituent Assembly. Once there, they would be free to change any of the provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan as they would be in the majority. In other words, the agreement regarding provincial autonomy and the grouping of the provinces was not really binding. It was this statement which led Mr. Jinnah to withdraw the Muslim League acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and so change the course of history. As Maulana Azad says in his book *India Wins Freedom*:

Now happened one of those unfortunate events which change the course of history. On 10 July, Jawaharlal held a Press Conference in Bombay in which he made a statement which in normal circumstances might have passed almost unnoticed, but in the existing atmosphere of suspicion and hatred, set in train a most unfortunate series of consequences. Some Press representatives asked him whether with the passing of the Resolution by AICC, the Congress had accepted the Plan in toto including the composition of the interim Government.

Jawaharlal stated in reply that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly 'completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they



arise'. Press representatives further asked if this meant that the Cabinet Mission Plan could be modified.

Jawaharlal replied emphatically that the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought best.

Pandit Nehru's statement that as Hindus would be in the majority in the Constituent Assembly and could so reverse any provision made by the British and change any decision jointly agreed upon before their withdrawal, cut the ground from under the feet of the Mussalmans and left them with no alternative but to seek complete independence with all its attendant heartaches and suffering.

That this statement of Nehru's was responsible for the Muslim League's withdrawing of its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan is further proved by Field Marshal Wavell's note to Sir Olaf Caroe:

It is very unfortunate that the Muslim League has felt compelled to pass the resolutions which it has, and I think Nehru's intemperate speeches have done almost more than anything to drive them to this position. It is more than one can hope for that the Congress should approach the Muslims and offer them satisfactory assurances, that the lack of generosity among the Congress leaders makes one very doubtful about the future of a country which is guided by leaders of such mentality.

To reconsider their stand the Muslim League held a session in Bombay on 27 July 1946. It was a momentous session, and for the first time since the Khilafat movement was charged with anti-British feeling. At this session important Muslim leaders renounced honors and titles given by the British and prominent Muslims from all over India followed suit. It included men like Nawab Chattari and my father, men who were known for the moderation of their views, but even they felt that the Muslims who had not hampered the British war effort and had refrained from harassing them in any way, had been betrayed.

The demand for Pakistan was reiterated at this session, and a rider was added that now the time had come to achieve this through direct action. Much has been made of this word *Direct Action* and the Calcutta riots are supposed to have been the expression of it, but the direct action had not been defined. It had been left to the individual provinces and leaders to think out the form that this was to take.

At the Governor's Conference Lord Wavell says referring to Shaheed Bhai, 'the Chief Minister had no idea what direct action was likely to mean and had asked for a public holiday on 16 August, to avoid trouble on that day.' (*Transfer of Power Papers*). It was

Nehru's statement that had sparked the fire that caused not only the Calcutta riots but destroyed the hope of a united India.

### CHIEF MINISTER

With the overwhelming majority of the Muslim League in the Legislature it was a foregone conclusion that the Governor would invite Shaheed Bhai to form a Ministry in Bengal, which he did on 3 April. Shaheed Bhai said he would be unable to nominate his Ministers till his return from Delhi after attending the Convocation. While he was there, he saw Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, and started corresponding with Kiran Sanker Roy, the leader of the Congress Party in the Legislature with a view to forming a coalition ministry. The Congress wanted an equal number of seats, with the Muslim League having the Chief Ministership. There were also differences of opinion regarding the division of portfolios with the Congress wanting the Home Ministry which was traditionally held by the Chief Minister. There was also the question regarding the release of detainees and political prisoners. Shaheed Bhai was agreeable to this but he stipulated that the release of prisoners should not include criminally convicted persons.

There was the usual difference of opinion between the Congress and League regarding Congress' right to appoint a non-Muslim League Muslim. Shaheed Bhai, at the outset, in talks with Abul Kalam Azad had said that he could not accept this, and Maulana Azad had replied that he saw Shaheed's inability to do so, as he knew the Quaid would not agree to it. Maulana Azad also raised the question of Fazlul Haq being elected as Speaker. Shaheed Bhai had pointed out that it would not be acceptable to the Muslim League members of the Legislature. But he went out off his way repeatedly and with great patience asking Mr. Kiran Sanker Roy to cooperate, so that the Hindus and Muslims should work together in Bengal, and set an example for the rest of India.

The correspondence went on from 11 April till the final breakdown on 23 April when both Shaheed Bhai and Kiran Sanker Roy issued statements explaining their point of views and releasing their correspondence. Each side blamed the High Command of the other for the breakdown, but it was Congress' intransigence that was responsible for the break, the Muslim League was very keen to form a coalition ministry to show that it could work with the Hindus, and that, unlike the provinces where there was a Congress majority, it was prepared to give a fair share to the opposition. Bengal was the only Muslim majority province where this could be done. The only other Muslim majority province with a Muslim League majority, Sindh, was too small and too unstable to count. But the Muslim League according to the Congress was a non-party. It persisted in regarding it as an aberration which would disappear if no notice was taken of it, and therefore it was an unwarranted presumption on its part to think that it could talk on equal terms with the Congress. It was the Congress High Command that was responsible for the break of the coalition talks. It is indeed a pity that this happened, for

if there had been a coalition ministry, the horror of the Calcutta riots and its aftermath would most likely not have happened, and even if it had, the blame would not have been put on the Muslims and the Muslim League Ministry.

In a house of 246 which included 24 Europeans Shaheed Bhai had the support of 127 of whom 115 were Muslim Leaguers, so he could have formed the Ministry without the support of the Congress but he had very much wanted their cooperation to enable him to work for ameliorating the condition of Bengal and setting an example. He expressed this in his letters more than once.

When the talks broke down Shaheed Bhai went ahead and formed the Ministry with seven Muslims and one from the scheduled caste. The objectives of the Ministry were announced as: abolition of the *zemindari* system, improvement of the agricultural and irrigation systems, reform of primary and secondary education, better medical relief, encouragement of industries and gradual nationalization of public utility concerns.

But Shaheed Bhai was not to get much time to get any of these objectives realized. For the terrible Calcutta riots broke out just three months after he had been in office.

## Calcutta Riots August 1946

Throughout his political career Shaheed Bhai had been blamed for many things. His personality was of the type that aroused great admiration or intense antagonism, but he suffered the most bitter attacks in connection with the Calcutta riots and was the target of calumny and lies. He was accused of planning and organizing the riots with the view of forcing the British to yield to the Muslim League demands, he was accused of neglect in putting down the disturbances once they had started, and he was accused of not providing adequate and sufficient protection for the Hindu areas.

The Calcutta riots of August 1946 were not caused by Shaheed. No one person or organization can be held responsible for them, it was the result of the mounting tension of years. The atmosphere by August 1946 was so charged with hatred that it was inevitable that it would explode into violence. What added to the tension was that the Viceroy who had not gone ahead with the formation of an interim government when the Muslim League had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, now did so; and to add insult to injury it included Muslims whom the League did not accept as its representatives. All this added fuel to an already smoldering fire and a flare-up was inevitable.

I had been in Calcutta since 9 June as my father was seriously ill. It was 11 or 12 August, I had gone up to Delhi for a few days to see to some urgent matters in connection with my household, and I was returning in the early hours of 16 August by plane. It was at the New Delhi Airport that I first heard of the Calcutta riots. An English couple whom we knew came up to us saying that they had heard on the radio that there had been some rioting in Calcutta. My heart stood still for I feared that Ikram might not let me return to Calcutta, and come what may I had to go back for my father was ill and was alone in the house.

Fortunately, Ikram did not stop me, he had either not heard the news or did not realize how serious the rioting was. I don't quite remember the details of that early morning but I have a clear recollection of the fear that I might not be able to get back to Calcutta. However, I did go back, the plane arrived I think at about 1.00 at the Dum Dum Airport and as soon as we had disembarked we were told we could not go into town as there was serious rioting in the city and the roads were dangerous. Airline buses had been cancelled, and no private cars were allowed to come through. I felt desperate, as my father was alone and the fact that he would worry about me might well prove fatal for him. I begged the airport officials to somehow get me through.

They were sympathetic, but regretted they could do nothing. There were other passengers who also wanted to get to town and they kept asking the airport officials to

arrange transport. Finally, after what seemed ages, and after several other planeloads of people had arrived at the airport, we were all put into two or three buses and with some sort of improvised military protection – again I cannot remember the exact details – we were sent off to town. But I do remember very clearly the details of that journey. Its horror will remain etched in my memory forever, for it was my first acquaintance with violence at close quarters. From Dum Dum to the city of Calcutta we passed through suburbs most of which consisted of clusters of mud huts with straw roofs. These were all ablaze. I remember our bus passing between what seemed a wall of tall leaping flames on both sides. On the road lay charred remains of cars and rickshaws, and abandoned bicycles littered the road. As we entered the town further ghastly sights of violence met our eyes, dead bodies lay strewn everywhere. I clearly saw the body of a person lying on the marble steps of the porch of a house, his white drill suit splattered with blood, his head was neatly severed from his body and lying a few feet away. I saw a Sikh clad only in shirt and shorts, without his turban, being chased by a man with an unsheathed sword, panting after him like an animal after its quarry.

My house was in Park Circus, so I had to go to the other side of Calcutta and by the time the bus reached my house I was almost the only person remaining in it. As I had feared, anxiety had made my father's condition much worse. He was however greatly relieved to see me back. I was with him and as long as I was there it did not much matter what else happened. The riot in all its frenzy lasted three days, though its aftermath continued for weeks, in fact life and property ceased to be safe in Calcutta from then onwards.

The Hindus had an initial advantage of several hours for the Muslim men were away from their homes and so the slaughter of the women and children took place without any let or hindrance. That the Muslims retaliated in kind I do not deny, for I do not belong to that school of thought which thinks that its own community or its own nation is incapable of cruelty and brutality. Unfortunately, history has too many proofs to the contrary. Once animal passions of hatred and cruelty are aroused there is nothing to choose between nations and peoples. All I want to say is that the riot as such was not diabolically planned by Shaheed Bhai.

It was three or four days after my arrival that Shaheed came one night to our house at about 1.00. He had come because he knew my father was very ill, but he was too tired even to ask how he was. I answered his unspoken question and then walked down the length of the long verandah with him, our arms around each other in silent sympathy for our separate ordeals. His face was grey and haggard and his eyes were bloodshot from lack of sleep for he had spent day and night round the clock doing whatever was humanly possible to stop the carnage. He had moved to the Lal Bazar Police Headquarters to be able to get information and direct operations better. He had a map of Calcutta, spread before him on which he followed the course of the riots in the ill-fated city. As the phone calls came through, aid was rushed to wherever it was needed,

Shaheed went to the worst affected areas himself, and tried to get the crowd under control by sheer force of personality. I believe he engaged in hand-to-hand fights more than once, pulling bloodstained swords from the hands of hate-crazed individuals. Even his worst enemies have given him credit for complete fearlessness. This quality somehow had a salutary effect in calming a violent crowd. He was endangering his life all the time. One does not do so if one has planned the bloody orgy oneself. That Shaheed worked like a tiger to quell the riots is well known. There are enough people still alive, both Hindus and Muslims, who can bear testimony to it, but for me the greatest proof was the look on his face during those days. It was a look of anguish and suffering. No man who looked as stricken as Shaheed did, could have deliberately planned the riots. No one who knew Shaheed could believe it, for he was a most compassionate man and violence was abhorrent to him. Each time the turning point in his career came after violence. In 1926 he left the Congress after the first Calcutta riots, and twenty years afterwards, in 1946, the carnage of the second Calcutta riots led him to seek Gandhi's help in preventing a repetition of it and thus eventually cost him his future in the state which he had helped create.

As soon as the Bengal Legislative Council was in session, an adjournment motion to discuss the failure of law and order was moved and a few days later a no-confidence motion against the Chief Minister personally and the Ministry in general was moved. The adjournment motion was on 17 September, it was the day when my father's condition took a turn for the worse, in fact he was dying. Shaheed Bhai came in the morning before the session was to start, and stood at the foot of the bed. I was reading the Koran and the doctors were making last minute efforts. We were a small but very close family. It was a wrench for Shaheed Bhai to tear himself away and go face his ordeal, but he had to go. The adjournment motion was defeated. Shaheed Bhai came back straight to the hospital. My father's condition had improved somewhat, so after a while Shaheed Bhai left.

My father died late that night, and for the next two or three days Shaheed Bhai had to execute all the rites and ceremonies connected with my father's death. The leaders of the Opposition were baying like hounds at his heels but despite it, he attended to everything with respect and devotion. Busy as he was he always found time for important family matters, and attended to them willingly and with grace.

The no-confidence motion was tabled on 21 September. The adjournment motion had been tabled in a hurry, but the no-confidence motion was a studied affair with all the guns aimed at Shaheed Bhai and the Muslim League. The Congress and the *Mahasabha* leaders literally tore Shaheed Bhai to pieces. He was accused of willful murder, arson and loot. Member after member got up and excelled each other in vilification. This orgy of hatred lasted for two days at the end of which Shaheed Bhai made a civilized, moderate and humane speech. He explained what he had tried to do to stem the tide of

violence. He began by saying, 'Before I say anything I want to express my heartfelt sorrow, sympathy and regret for the victims of this holocaust and their relations.'

The tone of his speech was in marked contrast to the tirade from his opponents. The Governor, Sir Fredrick Burrows, in his letter to the Viceroy makes a special mention of its moderation.

The motion against the Ministry was defeated by 131 votes to 87 and the motion against the Chief Minister by 130 to 85. The Opposition, though defeated, did not desist in its efforts. So persistent were they and so completely in control of the media, that these charges reverberated through the length and breadth of India. Though there had been riots before the Calcutta riots and there were riots later, which were as terrible as that of Gurmukteshwar and as devastating as the Bihar riots which were virtually genocide, they are not even remembered. But the Calcutta riots are stamped in the minds of the people as the Great Calcutta Killing. Such is the power of propaganda.

## The Eve of Pakistan

The Calcutta riots were followed by the still more terrible Bihar riots, which enveloped a whole province in flames. The systematic killing of Muslims there sent a wave of horror through the length and breadth of India. Gandhi, Nehru and all the prominent League leaders of the time went to Bihar to try and quench the flames of hatred that were devouring the people, but to no avail. It was followed by a carnage of unprecedented frenzy, in Gurmukteshwar, some 100 miles outside Delhi on the occasion of an annual Hindu fair. As in Bihar the victims were solely Muslims. It was reported that the River Jumna on the banks of which the fair was being held turned red with the blood of the slaughtered victims. In East Bengal, in the town of Noakhali, the Muslims retaliated and took vengeance on the hapless Hindus. In East Punjab violence was rife and sporadic riots were the order of the day.

Fear and apprehension gripped the hearts of all thinking people, British, Hindus and Muslims. The British, on whom rested the responsibility for maintaining law and order found that the machinery was breaking down, and decided to transfer power before a complete breakdown, hoping, perhaps by this method, to restore sanity and stem the tide of violence.

In February 1947 Attlee announced in the British Parliament, 'that India would become independent by June 1948, and that power would be transferred to any successor state or states,' thereby acknowledging the claim for Pakistan.

From then on events moved very swiftly. Lord Wavell was succeeded by Lord Louis Mountbatten, who arrived in New Delhi in March 1947. I remember going to see his arrival (a thing I had never done before), but this was a historic occasion, the arrival of the last Viceroy of the British Raj. As the procession, the open carriage with six horses and the colorful guards, wended its way through the spacious streets of New Delhi, I thought the last chapter of an era was coming to a close.

Lord Mountbatten, to quote Churchill, 'set about liquidating the Empire with the enthusiasm worthy of building it up.' The date for Independence had been fixed for June 1948 and though this was soon enough, Lord Mountbatten decided to accelerate the process further. He took a trip to England immediately after taking office and got the British Cabinet to agree to his proposal of fixing an earlier date. On 3 June 1947, it was announced that the transfer of power would take place on 14 and 15 August. The broad lines of division were also indicated in this broadcast. That is to say that in two and a half months time the assets of an empire would be divided and a country consisting of over 400 million people with their diverse claims and problems would become two independent states.



Lord Mountbatten no doubt possessed a very high caliber of efficiency but the task he undertook was beyond even his ability. The country was divided arbitrarily, hurriedly, without due consideration, and the Muslims were the main sufferers.

The claim for Pakistan had been met but in a mutilated and truncated form. Bengal and Punjab though they had an overall majority were to be partitioned and only the parts of these two provinces where the Muslim majority exceeded 85 percent were to become parts of Pakistan. This meant West Punjab and East Bengal only. East Punjab and West Bengal were to be incorporated in the Indian Union.

Muslims were shocked and disturbed at this turn of events. The borders of Pakistan had never been clearly defined. Many in the rank and file of the Muslim League had continued to hope that some last minute agreement would ensure for them a position in an independent India without partition, and if partition came it should certainly mean the whole of Bengal and Punjab, and that in the Punjab, the line would be drawn just below Delhi where there was a 52 percent overall majority of Muslims. For millions of persons like myself to whom Delhi was synonymous with Muslim culture, a Pakistan without Delhi was a body without a heart, and yet this is what was going to happen. In Bengal, Calcutta, the main port, and the lifeline for East Pakistan, was also to be lost, and there was no time to do anything about it. Events had got out of control and there was a Kafka-like atmosphere about the whole thing.

Why the Quaid accepted what he himself had earlier rejected as a moth-eaten and truncated Pakistan, is the subject for a book in itself. Here it suffices to say that he did accept it. Minorities in India seem to have been left to their fate—no provision or agreement had been reached as to what would become of them. It was the Muslim minority in India who had led the movement for Pakistan, but when Pakistan came into being they were left behind.

I asked Shaheed Bhai once why he had not given any thought to the fate of more than 35 million Muslims who were going to be left in the Indian union. His reply was, 'I was not an all-India leader, I was the leader of the Muslims of Bengal only, and in the Pakistan I had envisaged, Bengal would have remained an entity and the Muslims would have been in a majority there. They alone were my concern.'

He made one desperate effort to save the Muslims of Bengal by suggesting an independent United Bengal. The idea was not impractical because the Bengalis, more than the people of any other province, have a very strong provincial loyalty. They are Bengalis over and above everything else. It's just possible that he might have succeeded, though the chances of Congress accepting this proposal were very remote indeed, but the British might have been persuaded to use their influence. The Quaid gave his tacit

permission to sound the Congress hierarchy about it. Needless to say, the proposal was rejected.

On the eve of partition Shaheed was faced with a three-fold task. He alone of the Muslim League leaders till the last moment leading to Independence remained responsible for the maintenance of law and order in his province, it was his first and foremost task. In no other province which became part of Pakistan was there a Muslim League Ministry, and therefore the leaders of those provinces were free to give their mind to the task of determining the future of Pakistan and their place in it.

Shaheed's second task was that as the Chief Minister of united Bengal he had to supervise the partition of the province. To this task also he gave the full benefit of his administrative and organizing ability. The machinery of Government that was set up for East Pakistan owes its very detail to Shaheed Bhai. Mountbatten says:

Suhrawardy came to see me again after the announcement. For a Muslim leader living in West Bengal he showed surprising courage and determination to build a worthwhile Eastern Pakistan. He was already full of plans, the principle one being to acquire the necessary machinery, power plants, etc. to put Eastern Pakistan on its feet.

He said he had already had a number of interesting offers from American businessmen, but he had been disappointed that no British interests had come forward. I arranged with Mieville to be put in touch with Shone since I pointed out that I was not here to look after British interests myself.

*(Transfer of Power - Mountbatten's Report)*

Then there was the third task, that of safeguarding his own position in the Party and securing a position in the state of Pakistan. To this he could not give his full measure of attention, not only because he was already overburdened with the job of maintaining law and order, and the responsibility of creating the machinery of government for East Pakistan, but also because he was overconfident and did not think that it was necessary for him to do anything to ensure his position; he felt it was already assured, that his victory was certain. This attitude, that is, overconfidence was a mistake he was to repeat more than once. The result was that after the division of the Bengal Legislative Assembly into the East and West Bengal Legislatures Shaheed Bhai lost the Party leadership to Khawaja Nazimuddin.

As the Muslim League Parliamentary Party was also divided, it was necessary to have an election for the leader of the Parliamentary Party again. Most of Shaheed Bhai's following came from West Bengal. In the divided Muslim League Parliamentary Party of 119, 40 members were those who owed allegiance to Khawaja Nazimuddin. Khawaja Nazimuddin after his defeat in April 1946 had asked Shaheed Bhai not to victimize his

followers and Shaheed Bhai had accepted these people without reservation, giving Ministerships to several of them, Mohammad Ali Bogra and Fazlur Rehman being the two most prominent amongst them. Besides these 40, there were 17 members from Sylhet who also voted against Shaheed Bhai because they failed to receive from him the promise of two Ministerships and three Parliamentary Secretaryships that they were demanding. So when the time for voting came this group of 57 voted in a block against Shaheed Bhai, besides which it is said that another half a dozen or so who were wavering in their loyalty for monetary consideration, also voted against him. The organizing ability of Abul Hashim had been a considerable factor in the success in the 1945 election, but Abul Hashim had not been able to gain much influence on the distribution of tickets and so had become disenchanted and did not exert himself this time.

## United Bengal

When Shaheed Bhai fell from grace two charges were leveled against him, the first that of joining hands with Gandhi, though it was to save the Muslims of Calcutta, and the second of suggesting and supporting the proposal of United Bengal. The first is so palpably absurd and I have dealt with it elsewhere so I will not go over it again here.

The second was his effort to have his proposal of a United Bengal accepted. This was not a conspiracy but was carried out openly with Quaid-i-Azam's knowledge and tacit support. In fact Shaheed Bhai had thought of it quite early in the stage that Hindu intransigence might insist on the partition of Bengal and the British may support the demand, in which case an effort should be made to secure a United Bengal where the Muslims being in a majority and now conscious of their position, would be able to lead a prosperous and successful life. He was criticized for it even at that early stage.

On 8 May 1947, Shaheed Bhai in a letter to Liaquat Ali Khan complains of the want of comprehension of his plan. He says:

If Bengal is divided, both sections will be weak and negligible. More so, our section which, although it has got a large enough population, is so deficit in food-grains that no amount of intensive cultivation will be able to produce a sufficiency. I am also just unable to realize how a weak Eastern Bengal can be of any assistance to the Muslim cause or be of any strength to the Muslim or help the Muslims in the minority areas.

(From: *Shamsul Hasan's Papers*)

When on 3 June 1947 the partition and division of the Punjab and Bengal was announced, Shaheed Bhai together with Abul Hashim and other prominent Muslims of East Bengal, went to Quaid-i-Azam who was at Masoorie then, discussed the question and got his permission to contact the Congress regarding it. He approached Sarat Bose and Kiran Sanker Roy who were favorably inclined, but they met with vociferous opposition from the Hindu *Mahasabah* as voiced by Shyama Parshad Mukerji. Other members of the Congress who were approached, were not keen either, but they left it to the provincial leaders. The proposal had a chance of success because Bengalis have a very strong loyalty to their ethnic group. They are Bengalis above all and this attitude could have prevailed and they might have opted for a United Bengal, but the Central Congress led by Nehru and Patel categorically and emphatically vetoed the suggestion. Shaheed Bhai put the case for United Bengal in very moving words. He said:

It will be a great country indeed, the richest and the most prosperous in India, capable of giving its people a high standard of living, where a great people will

be able to rise to the fullest height of their stature, a land that will truly be plentiful. It will be rich in agriculture, rich in industry and commerce and in course of time, it will be one of the most powerful and progressive States of the World. If Bengal remains united, this will be no dream, no fantasy.

Governor Burrows agreed with the necessity of a United Bengal. He painted a pathetic picture of the future of Eastern Bengal, or Eastern Pakistan, after partition. He said:

It would stagnate to such an extent and become so poor that it would end up as a rural slum. Economically it could not survive as all the coal mines, the minerals and the factories are in Western Bengal, so are the jute processing mills, with two exceptions. Eastern Bengal would be deficient in food to the extent of 225,000 tons ... if Eastern Bengal was to be properly fed it would be necessary to import 800,000 tons at least. The only main crop in East Pakistan was jute. They might turn over from jute to food, although that would kill the Calcutta Jute Industry.

Mountbatten was in favor of United Bengal in the beginning and remained hopeful of its success. He wrote to Burrows that he hoped:

that Suhrawardy will redouble his efforts to procure and secure the cooperation of the Hindus in order to achieve his object of an independent United Bengal.

But he was prevailed upon by the Congress, particularly Nehru, who said that he would never accept an Independent Bengal and would not allow his followers to accept any such proposal. According to them, Bengal had no future except in Hindustan and yet till the eve of his departure for London Mountbatten, according to Burrows, said that he did not wish Suhrawardy to abandon his efforts for unity. Burrows says:

The Viceroy returned with the final plan on 31 May. All his early hopes about an Independent Bengal was finally dashed by the last minute Congress opposition. Therefore in face of Congress non-acceptance of the plan as a whole, Mountbatten like Suhrawardy, gave up the cause as lost.

Having failed to secure a United Bengal Shaheed Bhai made an all out effort to at least secure Calcutta jointly, for it was the lifeline for both parts of Bengal. Here also he had strong support of the Governor. Burrows says to the Viceroy in his letter:

Thereafter ... put forth his suggestion regarding Calcutta. Calcutta he said was a special case and deserved special consideration. It had developed chiefly because of European trading interests and its status was dependent on both East and West Bengal. Hindus, no doubt, formed a majority, being approximately 78 percent of the total population. However he pleaded for the future prosperity of Calcutta, if it is not to perish, the city should if possible be given the chance if the

province was partitioned. It would be unfair he continued if all revenues went to one half of the province as the other half too had contributed to the prosperity of the city. He drew attention to the fact that nearly all jute was grown in Eastern Bengal.

But this proposal also met with failure in the face of the Congress and *Mahasabha's* vehement opposition. Desperate for a compromise Shaheed Bhai suggested that, at least for six months Calcutta be jointly administered so that the period of crisis could be tided over. 'Not for six days,' snarled Patel. (*Partition and Independence of India*, Manmath Nath Dass)

The fact that the proposal for United Bengal met with such virulent opposition from the Congress and *Mahasabha* and from Mr. Nehru, Patel and Shyama Parshad Mukerji is proof, if further proofs were needed that it was a proposal that was beneficial to the Muslims. It is indeed ironic that Shaheed Bhai's advocacy of it should be considered a mark of perfidy by his opponents who were Muslims, simply because of their opposition to him.

## Joining Hands with Gandhi

The Muslims of Calcutta were mesmerized as if they were in a dream. They had through the years and on other occasions fought and when attacked had attacked back. But after the 3 June announcement, the heart had gone out of them. Muslims of the minority provinces had always known that they would not be part of Pakistan, but the Calcutta Muslims had not envisaged exactly what their position would be. They were in a daze. For not only would the Muslim League Government end, but the British Government would also cease to have power and they would be at the mercy of the Hindus.

It was to safeguard against this that they had wanted Pakistan and Pakistan was going to come into being, but they would not be there. *Pakistan zindabad, Quaid-i-Azam zindabad, lekai rahain ge Pakistan, bat kai rahae ga Hindustan*, these heady slogans that had impelled them to victory, were no longer theirs to say any more. Calcutta was their home and had been so for generations – they always were distinctly different from their neighbors. It had always been so, and it had occasionally led to communal riots but the rest of the time they had lived amicably enough. But now a deadly hate seemed to divide them. It was confusing and they waited as animals for the slaughter. This was the mood till the date of Gandhi's going to Noakhali in Eastern Bengal to be with the Hindus there. It was then that Shaheed Bhai made the most courageous gesture of his life. Gandhi was going to Noakhali to be with the Hindus, for there had been riots there during the Muslim League Government, and he felt that the Hindus of Noakhali needed succor and support. Gandhi stopped over in Calcutta for two days to apprise himself of conditions in that city. He arrived in Calcutta on 10 August, Shaheed Bhai was in Delhi discussing the final details of the partition of Bengal with the Muslim League Working Committee and Quaid-i-Azam. On his return to Calcutta on 12 August he went over to see Gandhi at Sodepur to ask him to give up his visit to Noakhali and stay in Calcutta, for as Shaheed Bhai said to him, 'You are needed here.' A conversation, something along these lines, took place between Gandhi and Shaheed Bhai. 'Why are you going to Noakhali? Your place is here.'

'I'm going to Noakhali to be with the Hindus, there has been a riot there a little while ago, and they are afraid that now, when there will be a full-fledged League Government, they may suffer.' Gandhi replied.

'They will not suffer, I give you my word, but you must stay here.'

'If I stay here you will have to stay with me, and live as I live.. said Gandhi.

'I will do that,' replied Shaheed Bhai.

And after some more conversation along these lines, Gandhi agreed not to go to Noakhali but to stay in Calcutta and try and help bring back peace and goodwill between the two communities. Shaheed Bhai agreed to stay with him, in a dilapidated house in Beliaghata, one of the poorest slums of Calcutta. The evening they reached this place, there was a menacing crowd around the house, and as Shaheed Bhai got down from his car following Gandhi there were hisses and derisive calls of hate, 'Kill him, attack him', they shouted as they lunged forward.

'You are responsible for the killings.' the mob shouted.

'We are all responsible,' replied Shaheed Bhai, in a level tone, as he stood and faced them. There is something very powerful in the courage of one man against heavy odds. The ugly crowd receded muttering and growling.

Shaheed Bhai stayed in Beliaghata, as long as Gandhi stayed there. I think it was for about two and a half months. During this period there were several attempts on his life, hand-grenades were thrown at his car, tyres were punctured, windshields shattered but he met every danger and irritation with seeming indifference although he suffered deeply because violence was alien to his nature, and shedding of blood repellent. He had left the Congress *Swaraj* Party, after the first Calcutta riots in 1926, because he was sickened by the miseries of the Muslims, and revolted by the cruelty of the Hindus. Now again a similar change was taking place in him. Shaheed Bhai spent all his energy and risked his life to bring peace to the riot-torn city of Calcutta, and harmony between its Hindu and Muslim residents. He toured the streets and by-lanes of Calcutta with Gandhi. Shaheed Bhai had been doing this by himself since the riots broke out in the city, but now he went with Gandhi. Wherever they went, they talked to the people both Hindus and Muslims, listened to their grievances and begged them to give up the idea of revenge, so that the dawn of liberty and independence in both the domains should not be marred by violence and bloodshed.

Slowly, very slowly the atmosphere changed. Shaheed Bhai slept on a mat on the floor as Gandhi did, he ate the same food as Gandhi – and everyone knows what Gandhi ate. He was a regular faddist in the matter of food, and poor Shaheed Bhai, who was something of a gourmet, had to put up with it. I think this was the hardest part for Shaheed Bhai, much more than the danger. Whenever he made a fleeting visit to me during this period, I asked, 'How is it going?'

'It's going fine but the food is awful!' he would say, and make a wry face.

But it was worth facing the dangers, worth putting up with the inconveniences, for slowly, very slowly, the atmosphere changed and the miracle took place. The Hindus and Muslims of Calcutta came together, even though only for a short period, so that the



dawn of freedom came in an atmosphere of peace. From early morning of 15 August trucks and lorries went round the city of Calcutta with young Hindus and Muslims shouting slogans of peace and goodwill, such as *Hindustan zindabad, Pakistan zindabad, turn ko Azadi Mubarak ho, Hindu Muslim bhai-bhai*. In the city of Calcutta where blood had flowed just a year ago, there was rejoicing unmarred by communal tension. It seemed incredible and miraculous, but a miracle had taken place. 'A two-man boundary force had succeeded in keeping peace in Bengal.'

## Speech that Cost a Career

On 6 March 1948 Shaheed Bhai made his first speech in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. In this speech he pleaded for justice and fair play for the minorities in Pakistan. He said that he did not think there was any anomaly in his still being a citizen of India and speaking in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

His speech was motivated by his consideration for fundamental human values which transcended parochial considerations. He charged the Government of Pakistan with showing communal tendencies and said that if the Hindus were leaving Pakistan because they did not feel safe there, the same applied to the Indian Union. Alarm and friction prevailed in both the countries. He said: 'Open your mind and heart and take within your fold the non-Muslim minority.' (Text of speech in *Appendix* ).

It was an eloquent speech and I remember parts of it clearly which are not found recorded in the *Hansard*. He had said, 'If you do not treat your minorities well, the Muslims of India will suffer, and they will come by land and by sea and it will destroy Pakistan.'

His speech was motivated by his concern for the Muslims of India as much as by general humane consideration.

This speech gave his opponents the handle they wanted to work against him. It was merely an excuse for he had already been stabbed in the back when Fazlur Rehman's name had been sent for the Central Cabinet instead of his. With the establishment of Pakistan his usefulness was over. He had organized and led the largest Muslim majority province to vote for the Muslim League and the creation of Pakistan. He was now dispensable. He was useful in turbulent Bengal, but he was too independent and too truculent a person to work with at close quarters. So at the very first stage a blow had been dealt. Now it only remained to finish the work, and how very fortunate, that he himself had provided the means for his elimination, first, by joining hands with Gandhi—it was no use pointing out that this was done to save the Muslims of Calcutta—and now by his vociferous support for the Hindus of Pakistan.

Within days of the speech the matter of his membership to the Constituent Assembly was taken up in the Party meeting. It was suggested that he be debarred from attending the Constituent Assembly and his seat be declared vacant. Some people objected to it, saying that as no condition was made regarding the membership of the Constituent Assembly, this would not only be wrong but illegal also. I supported this point of view and pointed out that there were cases of people of Indian nationality holding responsible posts in the Pakistan Government. The case of Mr. Ismail, the High

Commissioner for Pakistan in India was one such case. After much discussion it was decided to pass a resolution stating that no one who had not taken up residence in Pakistan within six months of the passing of this resolution could continue to be a member of the Constituent Assembly.

Following this resolution Shaheed Bhai sought to take up residence in Pakistan. With this intention he went to Dhaka in June 1948, but within twenty-four hours of his arrival he had a notice of extradition served on him as he was boarding a boat in Raniganj for Tangayal, (the notice was served on him by the I. G. Mr. Zakir Hussain by the order of the city Magistrate, Mr. Rehmat Ullah who had been asked to do so by the Chief Secretary, Mr. Aziz Ahmed, at the behest of the Central Government). The order not only extradited him but prevented his re-entry for six months.

Shaheed Bhai had intended buying a small house in East Pakistan which would have given him the necessary residential qualification. He could not do this in West Pakistan, for he did not have the funds or friends who could help him in this. It was also not possible for him to come over at this stage for my uncle, his father, Sir Zahid Suhrawardy, who was over eighty, was ailing and alone so Shaheed Bhai could not leave him. He was, as I have said before, despite his extreme preoccupation with politics, very devoted to his elders.

The Government of India had also served a crippling Income Tax notice on him at this stage. So the six months expired and in the next session of the Assembly, *i.e.* on 2 March 1949 his seat was officially declared vacant. A Press communiqué issued from the Constituent Assembly Office, said:

Mr. HS Suhrawardy's seat in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was officially declared vacant yesterday.

The communiqué further says,

In exercise of the Powers conferred upon him by clause (c) of sub-rule (5) of rule 6 of the Constituent Assembly, Honorable President of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan has been pleased to order that Mr. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy ceases to be a Member of the Constituent Assembly and to declare his seat in the said Assembly vacant.

Shaheed Bhai made a memorable speech on that occasion. He began by saying, 'It is not given to everyone in this life to be present at their own funeral oration, but I have that unique privilege.'

There was a division and everybody trooped out to vote, I can still see in my mind's eye, Shaheed Bhai sitting in his seat looking very alone but with the characteristic half

smile on his face. I went and stood before him not knowing what to do. 'Go along child', he said, 'go and vote.' I recited the following verse:

لاؤ تو قتل نامہ میرا میں بھی دیکھ لوں  
کس کس کی ہر ہے سر مخفر مگی ہوئی

'That is good, you must copy it out for me,' he said, as he always did when he heard a good line of Urdu poetry. The voters trooped back and took their seats looking rather shamefaced, for there was hardly anyone amongst them who did not owe some debt of gratitude to Shaheed Bhai. The Speaker read out the vote. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, the man who for twenty seven years held his seat in the Bengal Legislative Council, who for several elections had won two seats uncontested, he who used to give his second seat to party members who had failed to win one themselves, (he had given his seat to Khawaja Nazimuddin when Khawaja Sahib had been defeated in Patuakhali by Fazlul Haq in 1937) that person, with his unique record of Parliamentary achievements, had been, with due solemnity, unseated from the Pakistan Constituent Assembly.

There is a record of the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of March 1949. But there is no record of the division of the voting and I have not been able to find out why this has been deleted. The persons I could have asked, the Secretary, Mr. M. B. Ahmed, the two Deputy Secretaries, Mr. Hasnain and Mr. Ali Afzal, are all dead, and those I have asked do not know the answer. I wondered if a sense of shame prevented the inclusion of the division, but there is one other instance, namely my own. In October 1954 when I resigned the debate pertaining to it is recorded but the division and the recording of voting is missing. On inquiring I was told that there is a rule under which the divisions are not recorded in the *Hansard*, but are recorded elsewhere. I have, however, not been able to trace these anywhere.

So ended the first chapter of Shaheed Bhai's entry into Pakistan. He will now go into the wilderness for a while, then muster his forces, form an opposition, fight an election, win and become the Prime Minister before the story ends.

**PART III**

**BEGINNING AGAIN**

## Forming the Opposition

Now Shaheed Bhai began to rehabilitate himself. He had arrived in Pakistan literally in the clothes he stood in. All his belongings, his priceless carpets, his valuable collection of records, his house with all its contents had been left behind. But Shaheed Bhai was a man of unusual temperament. He loved the good things of life, good food, good clothes, expensive cars, but he was singularly unattached to his worldly possessions. He never mentioned what he had left behind in India. This attitude of his was in contrast to the attitude of most of the refugees whose assets in India became bigger and bigger as time went by, so that one was reminded about the story of the Dachshund in Paris who when asked what he was in Russia, replied, 'There I was an Alsatian.'

After being unseated from the Assembly Shaheed Bhai stayed with his elder brother, Shahid. Shahid Bhai was a scholar and an art critic of real distinction and international fame. Temperamentally they were completely different but there was a great love and affection between them though not apparent to the casual observer for it was masked by a seeming irritation and snubbing on Shahid Bhai's part. Shahid Bhai was only two years older than Shaheed Bhai but Shaheed Bhai regarded him with great respect and regard, bordering on awe. This was because of his scholarship and his moral caliber. Shahid Bhai loved quiet and solitude. Shaheed Bhai loved to live amongst people, he was perfectly at home in crowds. Shaheed Bhai loved music, both classical and jazz. Shahid Bhai loathed jazz.

'Shaheed Mian stop that infernal din,' there would be a sudden roar from Shahid Bhai's room when Shaheed Bhai was playing some loud music in the adjoining room. Shaheed Bhai would turn off the radio or gramophone or whatever was on, and look at his friends rather sheepishly and move away on tiptoe to some other part of the house. Shahid Bhai made sarcastic replies to queries by Shaheed Bhai's acquaintances as to his whereabouts. To the question, 'Where is your brother and what he is doing these days?' He would reply, 'He is flitting like a fat turtle dove of peace between India and Pakistan.'

Our family's attitude towards each other is a misleading one. We are not given to overt admiration, in fact, we debunk and belittle each other, but let an outsider attack us and we rally to each other's support with a fierce loyalty that takes the stranger aback.

For the first few months, perhaps about a year, Shaheed Bhai stayed with Shahid Bhai. He had no car of his own, no personal servant, and not much money. But not for a moment did his courage fail or his cheerfulness dim. He was neither bitter nor vindictive. I never heard him remark that the fruits of his labor were being enjoyed by others.

He began to take up his legal practice again. Here also the Government stooped to incredible meanness. Courts of Karachi and Lahore were directed not to register him as a lawyer. It was the court of the small town of Montgomery, now known as Sahiwal, that enrolled Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy as a lawyer. It is a happy coincidence that the husband of his only grandchild comes from there and Jamil and his wife Shahida are holding the flag high of their grandfather's tradition. Shaheed Bhai moved to Lahore and took up residence in the house of Nawab Iftikhar Hussain of Mamdot. Nawab Mamdot and his late father Sir Shahnawaz Mamdot had been strong supporters of the Quaid-i-Azam and the Muslim League. In fact, the Mamdots were the only family of large landowners from the Punjab who had supported Quaid-i-Azam from the start. All others belonged to the Unionist Party.

Nawab Mamdot was the President of the Muslim League, Punjab. When Pakistan was established Mamdot was appointed as the Chief Minister of Punjab. After a brief period, however, he was removed from office. Accused of misuse of power he was being tried under the Ordinance known as PARODA. Shaheed Bhai chose to defend him. His defence was reputed to be both legally and oratorically brilliant.

He did not succeed in getting Mamdot exonerated completely. The Government had made up its mind not to allow that, but he succeeded in removing the stigma that Mamdot had taken unwarranted compensation. It was the first step in Shaheed Bhai's struggle to make his name and fame in the country he had helped create.

The most spectacular trial that Shaheed Bhai was engaged in at this time was the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case. As the trial was in camera, perhaps spectacular is a wrong word to use, but though in camera it was the most sensational and talked about case. This was because the people involved in it were the top generals of Pakistan who had shown gallantry in the battles of the last great war and were recipients of high military honors. The wife of Major General Akbar Khan, Nasim Jehan Begum was the daughter of Begum Shah Nawaz, and the granddaughter of Sir Mohammad Shah. The very names gave importance to the case.

What gave an added dimension, and an ideological content to the case was that Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the editor of the *Pakistan Times* and one of the most famous Urdu poet of leftist views was amongst the accused. Sajjad Zaheer the well known writer and active communist was also arraigned. Faiz no doubt had communist sympathies but he was not an active member of the Party. His sympathies were intellectual and verbal. That Shaheed Suhrawardy undertook the defence of the case gave it a further political overtone.

The prisoners were first kept in conditions of great hardship, but after a short period were moved to Hyderabad Jail where, to quote Sibte Hasan, who has written much

about this period, a spirit of picnic prevailed amongst the accused for they were all together and had easy access to each others, quarters. There were almost weekly *Mushairas* and some of the best poems of Faiz, which were later printed in *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* and *Zindan Nama*, were written and recited during this period.

'Did Shaheed Sahib ever play the tape of my *ghazals* that he had recorded in the jail to you,' Faiz once asked me.

'No,' I replied, 'but how did he get them sung in jail?'

'Oh, there was a warder who had a very good voice and Shaheed Sahib used to make him sing the *ghazals* that he liked and tape them.'

'Just like Shaheed Bhai,' I said laughing.

This illustrates an aspect of Shaheed Bhai's character which is known to a very small circle of people. That is, his love of poetry, music and painting. It will not be remiss here to mention his friendship with Sadequain. He had discovered Sadequain when he was an unknown artist and had done a lot to get him publicity. This fact is little known, but when Sadequain died in March 1987, this was mentioned in many of the articles written about him.

The Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case lasted two years, and the sentences that were given were very heavy. The happy comradeship that had existed in the Hyderabad Jail was broken up as the prisoners were sent to different jails for the duration. There they remained for three and a half years till they were released when all the laws were declared invalid because of a lacuna in the law discovered in 1956, when Mr. Ghulam Mohammad dissolved the Constituent Assembly.

Years later when Faiz returned from Beirut in 1984, I went to see him and asked him to give me some of his impressions about Shaheed Bhai. He asked me to return the next day, which I did. He sat me down in the sitting room of Begum Majid Malik, and went into his room and came out holding a slim volume of poems between his finger and thumb. He flicked open a page and pointed to a poem entitled *Madeh* and said, 'Have you not seen this poem?'

'No,' I replied, 'I have not' Faiz smiled his slow enigmatic smile and said:

بس ایک ہی تو تعمیر کھا ہے

(It is the only panegyric I have ever written and in it I have said all I felt about him.)



Those who know Urdu and understand what panegyric (*qasida*) means, will know how averse Faiz's genius was to the writing of a *qasida* and would appreciate the affection and regard Faiz felt for Shaheed Bhai to have broken his tradition.

From the time he was fighting Mamdot's case Shaheed Bhai also began laying the foundation of his party, the Pakistan Awami League. I have a quote from *A Social and Economic History of Bengal* by Qamaruddin Ahmed.

Suhrawardy, a life-long liberal democrat, decided to fight the menace of fascism constitutionally by organizing political opposition. He believed that free will and not force was the true basis of government. In order that free will and not force should prevail he insisted that freedom of expression be guaranteed so that the people might criticize the existing government and propose alternatives. There should be, he believed, the right to form association so that people could organize parties to advocate alternative forms of government; free and timely general elections should be held so that the people could choose their own government. He was against all kinds of regimentation. To him fascists and communists were only two sides of the same coin.

At that time it was not realized that opposition to the government was not opposition to the state, and the loyalty of the members of the opposition should never be questioned. In England whose pattern of democracy we have adopted the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are equally respected and referred to as His or Her Majesty's Loyal Government, and His or Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and this is the practice in all democratic countries.

By forming the first opposition party in Pakistan, Shaheed Bhai did the greatest service to the cause of democracy because without an opposition no democratic system can work. The first meeting of the Awami League was held in Lahore on 19 and 20 March 1950 at Mochi Gate. Thirty-six resolutions were passed which can be considered the manifesto of the Awami League. These were most impressive, and included demands for fresh elections on an adult franchise basis, the expediting of the Constitution-making process, repeal of the Safety Act, settlement of disputes with India, the following of an independent foreign policy, more support for Muslim countries, the rehabilitation of refugees, the placing of a ceiling on land holdings and other socio-economic reforms. Maulana Abdus Sattar Niazi was appointed the General Secretary.

The party gained strength with the approach of the forthcoming provincial elections in West Pakistan. Apart from Punjab, the National Awami League was strongest in the Frontier where the President was Pir Manki Sharif, who opposed Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan's arbitrary policy. To present a joint front the Awami League merged with the Jinnah Muslim League, organized by the Nawab of Mamdot. The new party was called the All Pakistan Jinnah Awami Muslim League. The immediate concern was to prepare

for the Punjab election which was two months away. This was not long enough to organize an effective opposition, and the government's interference resulted in the Party's capturing only 32 seats and even this number dwindled away as members drifted over to the Muslim League. In the Frontier the elections were better organized, but the refusal of the Election Commissioner to safeguard the opposition's position resulted in a poor showing.

The Party in East Pakistan was much stronger because the situation was more explosive. Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhashani, who had come over from Assam, became the President; Mr. Attaur Rehman, Vice President; Shamsul Haq and Mujibur Rehman, Secretary and Joint Secretary, respectively. The party's objectives included some of the most sensitive issues of immediate provincial concern, *i.e.* the food situation, nationalization of the jute trade, release of political prisoners, including student leaders, recognition of Bengali as one of the State languages and general elections on the basis of adult franchise. A public meeting marked by inflammatory speeches, was held in Dhaka during the serious economic crisis following the Government's decision of September 1949 not to devalue its currency. The procession associated with the meeting was *lathi*-charged and teargassed and nineteen of the party's prominent leaders including Maulana Bhashani were arrested. With the exception of the NWFP, the Awami League had been unable to maintain an effective base in the rest of the provinces of West Pakistan. But in East Pakistan it emerged as a strong and organized party, and with the coming elections it began to consider the possibility of coalescing with other parties. There were no less than half a dozen in the field. The *Krishak Sramik* Party of Fazlul Haq was the strongest. Then there was the *Ganatantri Dal*, and the *Nizam-e-Islam* Party. As much as all these parties wanted autonomy for East Pakistan, Bengali as the national language and objected to the Mutual Defence Pact with the United States there was a wide range of differences in their perceptions. This was apparent before and during the elections, but despite this they succeeded beyond expectation. The United Front swept the polls and defeated the Muslim League candidates in every constituency. In a house of 309 it secured 223 seats. The Muslim League got only nine. There had been seething discontent in East Pakistan, both in political and economic matters. The feeling of being neglected and exploited for the benefit of West Pakistan was growing, the election results were an expression of this feeling. Fazlul Haq became the Chief Minister with a four-member Cabinet to begin with. This caused great resentment in other parties, and there were charges and countercharges.

Fazlul Haq then proceeded to Karachi to negotiate the relationship between the Centre and the provinces. While in Karachi he gave an interview to a Karachi correspondent of the *New York Times* in which he stated that he was in favor of absolute autonomy for East Pakistan. Terrible riots broke out at the same time in the Adamjee Jute Mills in East Pakistan, causing the death of more than 400 persons. This was the second serious outbreak of rioting since the coming into office of the new Government, the first being

in Chandragona. These factors combined to bring about the fall of the Fazlul Haq Ministry and the promulgation of 92A in East Pakistan. Thus the effort of East Pakistan to create a constitutional democratic government ended in a debacle.

Around this time Shaheed Bhai fell ill. The doctors took a very serious view of his condition. He was thoroughly exhausted—he had toured all over East Pakistan non-stop for six months, visiting every village and hamlet, living on black tea and handfuls of *channas* (roasted gram). True, he had done this many times before, including during the last general elections in 1946 but now not only was he ten years older but the emotional stresses that he had undergone during this period had added twenty years to his age. His condition was therefore precarious and he had to be flown to Zurich for treatment. When rest and routine treatment showed no improvement, doctors got still more concerned. They felt there was some serious focus of infection which they could not locate and suggested an exploratory operation. The doctors explained to us, his relatives, the seriousness of the operation in the exhausted condition Shaheed Bhai was in. They said that it was a risk and held out very little hope of success. Yet the operation had to be done because without it there was no hope at all. The operation took four hours and we, that is, Shahid Bhai and myself, sat in fear and anxiety till at last the doctors came out and said that the operation had been a success. They had located a gangrenous abscess behind the colon which was not visible in the x-rays. Draining the abscess had taken four hours since it was a very tricky business, and only time would show what the result would be.

Shaheed Bhai was very weak after the operation. His usual cheerfulness and bounce had completely left him. He would lie with his eyes closed seemingly oblivious to his surroundings. This condition lasted for some weeks after the operation and the doctors began to worry again.

The focus of infection removed, he should have improved, but Shaheed Bhai was so utterly and completely exhausted it took more than a month before improvement began to appear and he began talking and reading and asking for books. I readily supplied him with some amusing ones such as Don Comilio and Nancy Mitford. When I came in one morning and found him chuckling over them I realized that he was on the way to recovery. Poor Shaheed Bhai, he loved the good things of life, good books, good talk, laughter, but life had given him so little time for these.

## Law Minister

There was great resentment in East Pakistan for the people felt that all their efforts for establishing a democratic government had failed. Therefore, when the news of Shaheed Bhai's recovery began to trickle through, the government started to make overtures to him with a view of getting his cooperation to calm East Pakistan. Letters, telephones and emissaries began to come to Zurich to persuade him to consider joining the Central government. Politicians travelling through Europe came to Zurich, ostensibly to make kind inquiries about Shaheed Bhai's health, but in reality to sound out his reactions. Shaheed Bhai was still not fully recovered and the hospital did not approve of late night sessions discussing politics, but it had never been possible to restrain Shaheed Bhai. To be free of medical control he decided to come over to Paris and stay with us. My husband had been appointed Ambassador there a few months earlier.

Streams of emissaries continued, friends and foes alike came. Talking about foes, I remember my conversation with Shaheed Bhai when he was going out to meet a journalist who had been his most bitter critic and had attacked him mercilessly. My husband was a man of very strong principles, he did not want any political parleys to be carried on in his house, which also happened to be the Embassy, so Shaheed Bhai was going out to meet this person in a hotel. As he went down the broad Embassy stairs I walked down on the other side with him. 'Really Shaheed Bhai,' I said 'You are the limit. Just imagine, going over to see this fellow, who has been such an enemy of yours.'

Shaheed Bhai was coming down the stairs, slowly passing his hand over the banister. He paused as he always did when replying seriously to a question, then he looked into my eyes and said, 'But who has not been my enemy?'

I did not know what to answer. I muttered something about, 'But there is a limit,' for I really could not find an answer to the question of who had not been his enemy, and was it not the greatest of virtues to forgive one's enemy, though in politics, this is considered suicidal.

The government pressure became intense and finally Shaheed Bhai left for Pakistan. He was not wholly recovered and we were very apprehensive that he should be going back into the fray so soon. But there was no holding him back for the bait that had been held out to him was that as Law Minister he would be given the task of drawing up the constitution of Pakistan. The fact that nearly eight years had passed, and no constitution had been drawn up, accounted for most of the ills of Pakistan. The task was indeed worthy of Shaheed Bhai's intellect.

He arrived on 13 December 1954 in Karachi. Over 2,000 people besides members of the Awami League were at the airport to greet him. They had come from all over the country. Shaheed Bhai declared that the strength and stability of Pakistan was his first objective. He made a plea for placing the relationship between the two wings of the country on a strong and firm basis. On 15 December 1954, sixty-two top leaders of the Awami League unanimously passed a vote of confidence in Shaheed Bhai's leadership, and gave him plenary powers to deal with the situation and the restoration of democracy.

On 21 December 1954 Shaheed Bhai joined the Central Cabinet and took over the portfolio of the Ministry of Law. Dawn in an editorial welcomed his inclusion in the Cabinet and said:

Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy's entry into the present Cabinet was not unexpected but the occurrence of the event is nevertheless a landmark in the country's current political history. It considerably enhances the regime's human talents and makes its basis broader .... Mr. Suhrawardy has facilitated the task of constitutional and administrative reconstruction that is in progress. In making it a success Mr. Suhrawardy's contribution should be great. In some ways—notably in the context of return to democracy—it would be decisive.

From him, therefore, cooperation in ringing out the old order and ringing in a new one should be a welcome opportunity and a pleasant responsibility. Mr. Suhrawardy has shown wisdom in not letting the indefinite continuation of Governor's rule in East Pakistan prove an obstacle in the way of his cooperation in helping to hammer out a larger pattern for the whole of Pakistan. One may have reservations about some of the methods that are being employed, but one cannot withhold admiration for the rapidly unfolding design which is bold in conception, daring in execution, swift (though sometimes ruthless) in implementation, and obviously sincere in intention. One hopes that in rearing the grand new mansion Mr. Suhrawardy, as one of the chief architects will try to specialize in providing it with an effective system of ventilation so that the air of freedom may be the easier in its flow....

Shaheed Bhai set himself to the task in all sincerity, and with his usual energy and single-mindedness. His task was by no means the simple one of drawing up a constitution. All laws passed during the last seven years by the previous Constituent Assembly had been invalidated, the result was that the country was more or less without any legal basis. The very first task, thus, confronting Shaheed Bhai was to get a Constituent Assembly reelected which would revalidate the laws.

The Federal Court of Pakistan had declared that the best way to elect the Constituent Assembly would be through voting by the Provincial legislatures. This would make the

Assembly more representative than the previous one because the Provincial legislatures had been elected since, but it would, by no means, be as representative as one elected through general elections. It was Shaheed Bhai's thankless task to sell this idea to the people. He admitted that he himself had been for general elections, but as a lawyer he saw that the prospects facing Pakistan were appalling and even if it was decided to have a general election, there had to be a legislature to order it. Shaheed Bhai pleaded for the case of the election of the Constituent Assembly through the existing Legislatures at length, with all the legal sophistry at his command, and the Constituent Assembly was duly elected.

Now there was the second hurdle, the one that had stopped the drawing up of the constitution all these years—the division of seats between the East and West wings of Pakistan. East Pakistan with the majority population was entitled to a greater number of seats. Though it was their democratic right. West Pakistan was not prepared to accept it. This was the question that had bedeviled constitution-making. Shaheed Bhai took a really courageous step. He decided to accept the proposal of One Unit and its natural corollary, an equal number of seats between the two Units. Only someone of Shaheed Bhai's stature and following in East Pakistan could have done this. He was criticized vehemently for it, add to this day is blamed by his detractors, but in doing so he showed himself a statesman and not a mere politician.

One Unit as envisaged by Shaheed Bhai and a few honest persons, and worked as it was meant to work, would have been a solution for all the regional and provincial problems. As I write this the atmosphere has been so vitiated by bitter ethnic hatred and regional discord that it seems an absurdity to even say this, but I still do believe that had One Unit been allowed to work as it was meant to and had Pakistanis been allowed to think as Pakistanis, none of the ills from which the country is suffering today would have come about. But this is a digression.

The One Unit Bill was fought tooth and nail in the Legislatures of the provinces by the advocates of provincialism and regional separatism. But Bengal having accepted the principle of parity the chief hurdle was removed and in due course the Bill was passed.

The chief obstacle over, the Government had no further use for Shaheed Suhrawardy. He had been promised the Prime Ministership when Mohammed Ali Bogra left and even as late as August 1958 newspapers were talking about his becoming the Prime Minister. But it did not happen. Chaudhry Mohammad Ali was appointed Prime Minister. He was a very able civil servant and had held the key post of Cabinet Secretary for the first four and a half years of Pakistan, but he was no leader of men and had no political following or background whatsoever. His appointment took everyone by surprise. Once again Shaheed Bhai had been bypassed. He was understandably disappointed. On the occasion *Dawn* had reported:

All indications last night pointed to a Muslim League-Awami League coalition Government at the Centre, headed by Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy. The new cabinet was assured of the backing of 37 Muslim League and 13 Awami League members in the Constituent Assembly. [That] The Muslim League being the larger party was likely to have a majority in the new cabinet was not altogether ruled out.

The leader of the Awami League Mr. Suhrawardy replying to a question of the possibility of a tripartite coalition said: 'that no possibility was excluded'. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury, a United Front leader, however, ruled this out categorically.

And it was the last minute coalition of the United Front that resulted in the passing over of Shaheed Bhai and the formation of a new government under the Prime Ministership of Chaudhry Mohammad Ali. Some half-hearted efforts were made to include the Awami League in the Government, but these did not succeed.

Shaheed Bhai issued the following statement:

The principles which I advocated, the principle for which I staked my popularity and influence in East Pakistan and which my party had accepted and which today East Pakistan accepts as a whole, the principles which found favor in West Pakistan and which alone could have cemented and strengthened the relationship between East Pakistan and West Pakistan have alas! been betrayed. The main principles which have been betrayed are the principles of parity and equality at this juncture.

You may recall that although East Pakistan has a larger population I accepted the principle of parity between East Pakistan and West Pakistan in the hope and belief that such parity will forever get rid of the distrust and suspicion which existed in West Pakistan—that East Pakistan desired to dominate by virtue of its numbers—and this would thus lead to cooperation, good feelings, mutual trust and friendliness, and identity of interest and outlook. I thus hoped that centrifugal tendencies and loose talk by certain irresponsible lops politicians that East Pakistan wanted to secede from Pakistan would cease once for all. The principle of parity had for its immediate objective not only the securing of equal numbers of representatives from East Pakistan and West Pakistan in the *Constituent Assembly*, but in the larger context as well, it implied equality as far as possible in other Administrative fields as well as a division of powers. The basis really was no domination, no encroachment, on the rights of each other but just and fair dealings.

Chaudhry Mohammad Ali's Prime Ministership did not last very long. In a year's time he had resigned. The causes that led to his resignation were the same which would later lead to the complete breakdown of democracy and the promulgation of Martial Law.

Iskander Mirza, then President, belonged to the Indian Political Service and he had the arrogance and the temperament of the members of that service. His attitude towards politicians was that either you cajoled them, and bought them, or intimidated them and penalized them. His success in dealing with the Pathans in the NWFP had given him a taste for power and when he became President of Pakistan he was not content to remain a figurehead but wanted to take part in running the affairs of the country. To enable him to do this, he with the active support of Dr Khan Sahib, founded a political party called the Republican Party. Keith Cal lard says about this Party:

The Party was formed to give support to one man, Khan Sahib, and to keep out of office two other men, Daultana and Khuhro. This was a party that could not wait for popular support to return its members to the legislature. It had to be formed from among the existing MLAs. And its membership thus acquired provided little in the way of common outlook or policy.

Though the party was made up of former Muslim League members, Khan Sahib was appointed the Chief Minister for the united Province of West Pakistan. This incensed the remaining members of the Muslim League and their leader, Sardar Bahadur Khan, asked the Governor to appoint a member from the Muslim League as the Chief Minister. But Chaudhry Mohammad Ali who was the President of the Muslim League expressed his full confidence in Dr Khan Sahib. This created an uproar in the Muslim League Party which led to Chaudhry Mohammad Ali's resignation. Not being used to the stress and turmoil of political life, Chaudhry Mohammad Ali had a nervous breakdown and proceeded to England for treatment.



## The Prime Minister

After the debacle of Chaudhry Mohammad Ali's Ministry, the President was forced to accept Shaheed Bhai as the Prime Minister, though he had previously declared that he would do so only over his dead body, but circumstances forced him to change his stance. Shaheed Bhai formed a government with the support of thirteen members of the Awami League, his own Party, and twenty-nine members of the Republican Party. It was an uneasy alliance. Shaheed Bhai would have done better not to have accepted the cooperation of a Party whose principles were so diametrically opposite his own, but he had taken the risk and accepted the Prime Ministership, hoping perhaps to secure the support of members of the National Assembly belonging to other parties at a later stage. This had often happened.

At the time of his assuming office we were involved in the Suez crisis and it was inevitable that he should be drawn into its vortex. This was a pity because it took him away from paying attention to many important internal matters, especially the preparation for elections, and from stabilizing his position in the Government.

Pakistani sympathies were with Egypt, and this was made known to the British Government and whatever pressure could be put, was put by Pakistan towards withdrawing of the invading troops from the Suez and trying to negotiate a settlement. For this purpose, Shaheed Bhai travelled to the other Baghdad Pact countries, Iran and Turkey, met their leaders and tried to present a united demand which would have a greater force.

Eventually, American pressure compelled the British to stop the war, and they began to withdraw their troops.

The crisis therefore passed and it was possible for Shaheed Bhai to turn his attention to internal matters. He set up an Election Commission to formulate the rules and regulations under which elections should take place as soon as possible. This was very important, for though it had been nine years since Independence no elections had yet taken place. 1958 was declared as the year for elections, and work for its preparation began in real earnest.

Shaheed Bhai's tenure of office was not long enough for him to have made an impact on the conditions prevailing in Pakistan, but during his brief tenure he was able to take one or two decisions which were of lasting benefit. One of them was the establishment of friendly relations with China. This has been of inestimable value to Pakistan, though credit for it, as for so many other things, has not been given to him. He went to China immediately after assuming office in 1956. He was the first Prime Minister of Pakistan

to do so. He took a large delegation with him. His visit was a great success. Zhou En Lai paid a return visit in March 1957. He was greeted with great enthusiasm by the people of Pakistan and the foundation for a good relationship was ensured. Questions of border disputes were settled in an amicable manner and a source of future friction was removed. China has since been a great and good friend of Pakistan, massive aid has been received and trade pacts have benefited the economy of Pakistan. China's verbal if not material support has been a source of strength to Pakistan in its wars with India.

Shaheed Bhai's Prime Ministership was not a matter of plain sailing, not even in East Pakistan. Bhashani's ties with Shaheed Bhai came to an end, and he resigned in 1957. This weakened the Awami League as Bhashani had a substantial following in East Pakistan, but it relieved Shaheed Bhai of friction within the Party. There was sharp and vocal criticism of Shaheed Bhai's foreign policy in East Pakistan. He had while in opposition criticized the SEATO and Baghdad Pacts. On becoming the Prime Minister he supported them. His thinking before assuming office was supposed to be anti-American. Now he seemed their ally.

The volume of criticism grew till Shaheed Bhai decided to face his critics squarely and defend himself. There was a gathering at Kagmari, organized by his opponents with active help from leftist groups. He defended his policy on the grounds of necessity. The previous governments had not taken the opposition into confidence. Now in office he could see the necessity of these pacts. He did not intend to keep them forever but they were definitely necessary till such time as Pakistan made other friends, and he had taken the first step towards this by going to China. But till Pakistan made new friends it was at the mercy of any power that chose to attack it. Pacts gave a modicum of support and strength. He made a similar speech to the students at the Dhaka University and here again his completely frank and fearless attitude and straightforward approach got him, at least for some time, the support of the most vocal section of East Pakistan—the students.

The question of joint or separate electorates was one of the other issues that bedeviled Suhrawardy's tenure. This had been one of the main points of difference between the Muslim League and Congress in pre-partition India. Muslims had considered that with joint electorates their identity would be submerged and they would not be able to vote for the person of their choice. After Independence they felt that separate electorates would ensure the same safeguards for the minorities. But the minorities in Pakistan themselves did not want it. They felt that in joint electorates, they would be able to influence voting, and prevent the selection of rabidly communal persons. Shaheed Bhai supported this point of view. As he has written in his memoirs.

I had been an uncompromising protagonist of separate electorates when the Muslims were fighting for their rights in United India, for it was necessary that they should be represented by members of their own choice. But, after the

creation of Pakistan, there was no such need on the part of the vast majority of the Muslim population of Pakistan. If anyone had the right to ask for separate electorates or special representation it would be the Hindus. But they gave up this right and preferred the system of joint electorate, finding in it a better avenue of cooperation, finding in it a better method of securing the goodwill of the majority community and, through such cooperation and goodwill, safeguarding their interest and their safety.

I maintained that in order to create a sound Pakistani nation in which all elements of society could cooperate for a common national purpose, joint electorate was essential. The Muslim League, however, insisted on maintaining the system of separate electorates, asserting that it was an essential part of Islam. To the Muslim League the creation of Pakistani nationhood was of little consequence; they were more concerned with capturing the support of the Muslim masses by appealing to their fanatical sentiments and insisted on maintaining the system of separate electorates, asserting that it was an essential part of Islam. The *Jamaat-i-Islami* attempted to show that joint electorate would be against Muslim interests in Bengal. Its arguments and figures were proven to be fallacious and were contradicted by the results of joint electorate in the local bodies. Before finally framing the relevant clause in the constitution, Chaudhry Mohammad Ali, the Prime Minister, had sought the views of the two legislatures. The East Pakistan Legislature voted solidly, in favor of joint electorate; the West Pakistan Legislature voted overwhelmingly in favor of separate electorate. The constitution, as finally framed, left it to the provincial legislatures to settle the form of the electorates in their own region.

I was able to induce the central Parliament to alter that clause in the constitution and accept joint electorate for both wings. This avoided the determination of the number of several communal compartments and the number of representatives from each community, the preparation of separate electoral rolls, and the arrangement for separate election booths. Instead we had one electoral roll for each territorial constituency. This also settled a very controversial religious problem which had already cost several lives in West Pakistan, particularly in Lahore and Multan, whether the Ahmadis, also called Qadianis, were Muslims or not. A large section of the Muslims held that they were not and, hence, should not be allowed to be registered in the Muslim electoral rolls. It was maintained that they should be treated as non-Muslims. and if government desired to give special representation they could have their own electoral roll similar to other non-Muslim minorities under the separate electorate system. The Ahmadis, however, claimed that they were Muslims and should be treated as such and should be entered in the Muslim electoral roll. This controversy led to serious riots and loss of many lives, and Martial Law had to be imposed in Lahore. Joint electorate, which visualized a single rosier of Muslims and non-Muslims and in

which there was no reservation of seats for any community, obviously solved the political implications of this very dangerous religious controversy.

My views on joint electorate were supported strongly by President Iskander Mirza and I knew that the Commander-in-Chief Ayub Khan was also in favor. Electoral rolls were accordingly prepared. However, no sooner had Chundrigar assumed the office of Prime Minister on 18 October 1957 than he ordered the electoral rolls to be split, with all its complications, on the basis of separate electorate.

Shaheed Bhai was strongly opposed by the Muslim League members who took out processions, demonstrating against him. Some members of the minority community like Mr. Gibbon, President of the Anglo-Indian Community, also opposed him. The question was discussed at length on the eve of Shaheed Bhai's visit to Japan.

Charges and countercharges were being made, charges of disloyalty, of harming Pakistan were hurled by the members at each other and much heat was generated in the House. In the midst of all this turmoil Shaheed Bhai got up quite calmly to leave for Japan. I, as on many other occasions, drove with him to the airport.

'Is it not dangerous, your leaving the country when such a controversial point is on the anvil! They can easily bring down the Government,' I said.

'But, who would they find?' said Shaheed Bhai

'They kept you out all this time — didn't they?' was my reply. I mention this as an example of that overconfidence which was one of the factors of his downfall.

## Taking the Kashmir Question to the UN

The Kashmir question had been moribund for the last four and a half years. Shaheed Bhai decided to take it to the Security Council again and when the annual delegation to the UN went it was meant to prepare the ground for it. Sir Feroze Khan Noon as the Foreign Minister was the leader of the delegation. I had been appointed the deputy leader and was to take over as leader after the departure of the Foreign Minister. The first few weeks at the UN are given over to policy speeches by the delegates of the various countries with interventions on matters considered urgent or important. This was 1956 and Suez and Hungary were both constantly on the anvil which meant repeated interventions by the members of the Western and Eastern blocs.

I sat there by the side of the Foreign Minister listening to the routine speeches with increasing boredom till I could not contain myself any longer.

'May I intervene?' I asked the Foreign Minister, Sir Feroze Khan Noon. 'Yes, do so by all means,' he very generously said. It was this unusual generosity of his that gave me the chance that later blazoned my name in the papers for the next forty-eight hours and gave the question of Kashmir the much needed publicity.

A surprised murmur went through the audience as I came back to my seat, I sat there waiting for India to reply. I sat glued to my seat not daring even to go for a cup of coffee for fear that I would miss the reply. Days passed, a whole week passed. My Foreign Minister left and I was in charge, I sat in the front seat tense awaiting the attack, none came. No one, not one soul, from my Embassy told me, and they all knew, that India's Krishna Menon always made a valedictory speech that is, he spoke last so that no one could reply because by then everybody was so tired and bored by them. But I, a comparative newcomer to the UN—for I had been to it last in 1948—did not know this. So when Mr. Chhatari came to call me to go and see to something in the Legal Committee, I detached myself from the seat to which I seemed to have been glued and went. After dealing with whatever it was that needed my attention I went to the delegates lounge to dictate a note to one Mr. Niaz Ahmed, the typist I shared with Mr. Meer Khan the permanent representative to the UN. Niaz took out his writing pad and pencil in readiness to taking down whatever I had to say, just then he mentioned casually, 'Pity that you are not in the Assembly hall, Menon is speaking and he has just attacked Pakistan.'

'What!' I said, nearly spilling my coffee.

'Yes,' he replied, 'he is still speaking.'

I got up and dashed towards the Assembly door and when inside went as quickly as I could to the table at which sat the staff that dealt with the speakers' turn and other such matters.

'I believe Mr. Menon has attacked Pakistan and I want to exercise my right to reply,' I said.

'You can't,' said the girl, 'the President has declared a closure, for it is nearly lunch time.'

'Never mind,' I insisted, 'if you will not let me speak in the Assembly I'll make a speech in the delegates lounge,' I threatened.

'Oh, all right,' said the girl wearily, Portugal is also making a fuss so you might as well both speak.'

'Right,' said I, and went back to my seat seething with indignation. By that time many of the members of my delegation had come in and were sitting on the bench behind me. Mr. Chhatari who as my adviser was immediately behind came over to give me some facts and figures. I said in Urdu, 'Please Chhatari Sahib at this juncture I cannot take in any facts so you have to let me handle it as best as I can.'

Menon went on as was his wont for hours and hours. He was known as the prize bore of the UN. Mrs. Pandit between whom and Menon there was no love lost-used to say in her inimitable manner, 'I am sure Pakistan pays Menon, for each time he opens his mouth he loses a vote for India?' At last he finished. Then the Portuguese delegate went on, and though he was not very long it seemed to me as if the waiting would never finish. At last I was called and I was able to reply.

In June 1957 the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference took place in London. Shaheed Bhai made a very favorable impression at the Conference. His forceful presentation of Pakistan's point of view evoked admiration and support. His speech at the Pakistan Society which was a semi-official declaration of Government policy also evoked admiration. (See *Appendix*)

After the Conference Shaheed Bhai went to the United States to meet President Eisenhower and explain Pakistan's policy. He addressed some prestigious institutions and meetings. This necessitated a long absence from Pakistan with disastrous results. On his return he found the atmosphere much changed. In West Pakistan a party had been formed calling itself the National Awami Party. It drew its adherence mostly from the erstwhile Muslim members of the Indian National Congress in both East and West Pakistan—communists, fellow travelers and uncompromising anti-Americans. It found in the defection of Maulana Bhashani from the Awami League, a chance to offer him the Presidentship of their party which took on the shape of an all-Pakistan party. Some very

discreditable horse-trading went on first between the National Awami Party and the Muslim League and then with the Republican Party. The only point of agreement among these elements was the dissolution of the One Unit. In fact it was not an agreement, it was simply a pawn in the game of power politics, because these very same parties headed by Mian Mumtaz Khan Daultana and Dr. Khan Sahib had pushed the One Unit scheme through in the first place.

But that was the position that confronted Shaheed Bhai on his return from the States. He was much disturbed and began an all-Pakistan campaign to re-win support for the One Unit. He began receiving a positive response. This brought him into headlong collision with Dr Khan Sahib and other stalwarts of the Republican Party. The Republican Party also passed a resolution against Nawab Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, Governor of West Pakistan, for allegedly conspiring with the Muslim League against the Republican Party Ministry. Shaheed Bhai, I do not think, believed this but he asked for Gurmani's resignation. He appointed a senior civil servant, Mr. Akhtar Hussain, with an excellent record of service and with an enviable reputation for integrity, as Governor.

The storm was, however, gathering. The President seemed to support Shaheed Bhai at first, but later he withdrew his support. This was a signal to the Republicans to withdraw theirs, whereupon the President asked Shaheed Bhai to resign. Shaheed Bhai wanted to seek a vote of confidence in the Assembly but this was refused and the President gave Shaheed Bhai the option to resign or be dismissed. Shaheed Bhai resigned.

Looking over newspaper reports of this period, of even government-oriented papers like Dawn, one cannot help but feel that Shaheed Bhai was made to resign to prevent the general elections being held on schedule in November 1958. For Shaheed Bhai was determined to hold the elections. As he said during his visit to the States and was reported in the *Pakistan Affairs* 24 July 1957 all arrangements for the election had been finalized.

He said:

I am determined to see that it (the election) is put through and I have made and laid down all the machinery necessary for the purpose so that even if I do not happen to be there at the time of the general elections as Prime Minister of Pakistan, whoever succeeds me will have it all laid out before him, and he will be a brave Prime Minister to put back the clock of time and stop the general elections from being held in March or April 1958.

This was said while addressing a luncheon meeting of the National Press Club, Washington, D.C. on 12 July 1957.

That delaying the elections was really the prime object of the advocates of the dissolution is apparent from the fact that ultimately One Unit was not undone till the eve of the General Election in 1970.

Had there been a general election in 1958 the people's representatives would have had the chance of running the One Unit scheme as it was meant to be run for the unity and stability of Pakistan in which the rights of every province would have been respected and there would have been no bitterness among the smaller provinces, and no breaking away of East Pakistan.

Reading the reports carefully, one cannot help but feel the irony of politics. Shaheed Bhai's Prime Ministership was brought down by Dr. Khan Sahib and his Republican Party and the NAP. Dr Khan Sahib before partition belonged to the Red Shirts, a branch of the Indian National Congress, whose leaders had vociferously opposed the creation of Pakistan and had not reconciled themselves to it, to the extent that they did not salute the flag of Pakistan the day it came into being. Shaheed Bhai had worked and suffered for the establishment of Pakistan. He had formed the first and only Muslim Ministry in pre-partition India, but such is the irony of fate that he was made to capitulate before Dr Khan Sahib. But was it an irony of fate? Or was some other machination at work? It is a question which historians may yet ponder over.



## Heading towards Dictatorship

After Shaheed Bhai's resignation, Iskander Mirza looked around for a tame Prime Minister. His choice fell on I. I. Chundrigar, an old Muslim Leaguer with an unspectacular record of service. His ministry lasted only six weeks, and he resigned on the issue of joint electorates.

The next incumbent was Malik Feroze Khan Noon, who belonged to a *zemindar* family of Punjab. Oxford-educated and a Barrister he had followed the traditional role of his class in Pakistan, of combining politics with loyalty to the British. He had become a Muslim Leaguer just before partition. A man of charm and generosity, Noon would not have been a bad choice if the times were not so critical. He was a friend of Shaheed Bhai, they had been in Oxford together, and he had been Foreign Minister in Shaheed Bhai's cabinet. They had come to a working understanding. Noon, more or less, followed the line of Shaheed Bhai's policy, *Noon reigns while Suhrawardy rules*, said the *Manchester Guardian*, when assessing the politics of Pakistan of that time. But conditions in the country were going from bad to worse. Incidents both in West and East Pakistan were causing anxiety and the behavior of some politicians was far below the decorum required. In East Pakistan, the crisis reached a regrettable pitch, there was rowdiness that would have been considered shameful in a bazaar. The Speaker in the Assembly was attacked and died the next day. In Punjab there had been similar incidents of unparliamentarily behavior.

There was tension everywhere, and one waited with bated breath for what would happen next. One did not have to wait very long. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Mohammad Ayub Khan had come down for a discussion with General Iskander Mirza. The two talked about the political conditions, and the mess the politicians had made of things. They decided to take action, and on 7 October 1958 General Iskander Mirza promulgated an Ordinance abolishing the National Assembly, the Constitution and the Cabinet, and assumed power as Martial Law Administrator. For three weeks, he and General Ayub Khan administered the country jointly, and then one day Iskander Mirza was sent to Quetta, and Ayub Khan become the Supreme Martial Law Administrator. Three days later Iskander Mirza and Begum Iskander Mirza came down from Quetta in time to be put on a plane to England. A wire was sent to the High Commissioner asking that a car should be sent to meet the ex-President and his wife. It was specifically stated that no special courtesy was to be shown to them.

The first Martial Law was, generally speaking, welcomed by many people, who felt that things had got to such a pass that something drastic had to be done. The Martial Law regime by tackling obvious shortcomings, such as food adulteration, street cleaning, etc.

won the approval of the common man. The curtailing of civil liberty was not even noticed for some time.

Shaheed Bhai seemed to accept Martial Law without protest. This worried me, and during one of my usual trips with him to the airport I tackled him about it.

'It is understandable,' I said, 'that the ordinary person should not protest against Martial Law, because the law and order situation had deteriorated to such an extent, there seemed to be chaos everywhere. But you stand for democracy and fundamental rights and civil liberties, so how can you so easily accept Marital Law?'

'Umph!' said Shaheed Bhai and looked thoughtful as he always did when I put a serious question to him. 'Why have I accepted Martial Law without protest?' he repeated my question. 'Because things were deteriorating very fast and I could not stop it. Maybe Ayub Khan can, I want to give him the chance to do so by not putting hurdles in his way.'

'I was not convinced by his explanation and said so, more to myself than to him, You will not escape their vengeance, you will be framed, you could have gone to jail as a hero, you will now go as a criminal.' I do not know whether Shaheed Bhai heard me or not.

I proved to be right, some six months after the Martial Law Ordinance was promulgated an Ordinance known as the Elected Bodies Disqualification Ordinance (EBDO) was brought in. Under its provision anyone who had held office could be charged for corruption, misuse of power, nepotism, etc. Former Ministers were charged one after another in quick succession, but with the solitary exception of Mr. Haleem, a Minister from East Pakistan, who was charged for the omission of a small unpaid telephone bill, no other Minister decided to fight the charges. They accepted the penalty which was not to stand for election or hold office in the Government for six years. Mrs. Asghari Rahim who had been engaged in some minor business transaction also decided to fight. But no one except these two, against whom the charges were so small as to be ridiculous, decided to fight.

The EBDO notice was served on Shaheed Bhai while he was in East Pakistan, the papers reported this but not his reaction. After a couple of days he came to Karachi, and came to see me and my husband, with his daughter and son-in-law. We sat and discussed the pros and cons of fighting the case. The general opinion was that there was no use doing so as all the guns were spiked against him and he did not have any chance of winning. After a desultory conversation that led nowhere, Shaheed Bhai got up. He was leaving for Lahore the next day. The day after that we saw the headlines in all the daily papers saying *Suhrawardy To Fight EBDO*. The papers were censored, but the feeling of excitement still came through. I was very pleased indeed, that he had decided to fight

the charges. I had not said so for I felt it was not my place to do so, for it was not I who would suffer. But now that he had decided on his own, I was very happy indeed.

He decided to fight all the seven charges and fight them himself. After all he was considered the best lawyer in Pakistan. Why should he not defend his own case? A special tribunal was formed. It consisted of A. R. Changaiz as the presiding member and Mirza Fazlur Rehman and Lt. General Akram as ordinary members. The prosecutor was Nazir Ahmed Chowdhury, an ex-Minister. He brought a great deal of unnecessary venom to bear on the case and was rebuked by the judges more than once.

The chamber used to be jam-packed. Amongst the people who came to hear the case the largest number was that of students, they cheered and applauded when Shaheed Bhai made a point, and because of this, had to be turned out of the court more than once.

**PART IV**

**THE LAST PHASE**

## EBDO

I have tried to get the full proceedings of the trial but have not succeeded in getting it. Inability to get it is one of the reasons for the delay in completing this book. I have tried to contact every source and have spoken to every person I could think of who could tell me from where and how I could get the reports, but with no success. It is after getting Justice Cornelius' letter that I decided to give up the quest and go ahead with the book, I herewith include his letter.

Lahore  
19 December 1985

Dear Begum Sahiba,

Many thanks for your letter of 23 November. I have taken time to reply, as I was enquiring about the record of the case you mentioned. It was apparently before a Military Court, and the record could have been kept secret. The case does not appear in any law or Court publication, so far as I have been able to ascertain.

Shaheed Suhrawardy was an ornament of the Pakistan Bar for some twenty-five years, the closing years of his life. As a sitting Judge for all the period, I could not get close to him, but I met him fairly frequently in a social way, and still carry a grateful memory of his very friendly well-rounded personality, to which high culture and intelligence, derived from Iranian ancestry and representing the high watermark of the attainments of Calcutta's intelligentsia in the last half-century of British rule in India, lent a rare patina. I was privileged to witness some of his outstanding performances as a lawyer, in a number of important Constitutional and other cases in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and the recollection of his smooth and comprehensive clarification of their complexities remains with me. His intense involvement with the intricacies of Pakistan politics of the time, at the highest level, gave him a realistic vision of the legal process involved in the constitutional controversies of the period and he could anticipate the results that were likely to follow the adoption of each course of action open to the authorities of the time. The value of his assistance to the Supreme Court of Pakistan in such cases cannot be overestimated.

I close with best wishes for the blessings of the season and for happiness and success to you and yours in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Cornelius

I had also been told by a senior and responsible officer of the Information Department that the reports were destroyed by the order of the government just before the 1970 elections. They were destroyed because they showed how farcical the trial was, and on what flimsy grounds Shaheed Bhai was charged and debarred from taking part in public life for six years.

In default of fuller records of the court procedure I have only the heavily censored newspaper reports to go upon. On examining the four charges on which Shaheed Bhai was found guilty namely: one, three, five and six it seems that the utmost he can be accused of was lack of judgment for not heeding the advice of the directors, Secretaries and Ministers concerned, and of overriding their decisions. At no instance can it be proved that he did so as a result of illegal gratification.

As far as the question of judgment goes, every person who holds an office of responsibility can be accused by his opponents and critics for taking a wrong decision. It has often happened that decisions taken by men in important offices have been wrong. Anthony Eden for the last thirty-four years has been accused of taking a wrong decision at the time of the Suez crisis, with disastrous results. During the last four years since the thirty-year ban was lifted, and official papers have become available to the public, a spate of books and articles have come out in Britain criticizing Anthony Eden in the strongest possible terms. But no one has accused him of receiving illegal gratification. That, and hurling the charge of treason is unfortunately the hallmark of our politics only.

Let us examine these charges in some detail. The first concerns one Mr. Noor Ali and is reported fully. It is covered in two and a half columns of the newspaper Dawn. Cutting out the legal verbiage, what it amounts to is this. Mr. Noor Ali had entered into a contract with the Government of Pakistan for the purchase of 10,000 tons of rice and had undertaken to provide foreign exchange in payment for it. He had also applied for permission to import certain items against the foreign exchange earned which was the accepted practice at the time. Mr. Noor Ali failed to provide the foreign exchange to the full extent required. The government thereby cancelled the contract. This happened before Shaheed Bhai became the Prime Minister.

What Shaheed Bhai did, was that in response to Mr. Noor Ali's appeal he renewed the contract, more or less, to the full extent, taking note, however, of some of the objections of the Commerce Department and amending the contract accordingly. The file concerning the case went backward and forward between the Finance Minister, the Director of Commerce and other officers of the Commerce Department and Shaheed Bhai and each time he gave detailed reasons for his decision.

In opening the case the prosecutor said,

That you, while Prime Minister of Pakistan, were guilty of corruption, favoritism and maladministration in the case of export of rice on barter basis by Messrs. Noor Ali and Company of Karachi. As a result of your frequent intervention and orders passed by you in this case from time to time in consideration of illegal gratification, M/s Noor Ali, and Company not only obtained extra Import License....

This indictment is totally without foundation. The charge of illegal gratification is without any proof whatsoever. Nowhere in the detailed and painstaking account of the transaction is there a trace of giving or receiving illegal gratification. It may conceivably be called a sort of favoritism as the applicant had been a client of Shaheed Bhai's and having dealt with his case previously he may have had some sympathy for him and being in a position to rectify, what he, Shaheed Bhai, considered an unfair decision, did so. This is typically 'in character'. Anyone who knew Shaheed Bhai would bear this out, but I quite realize that action being 'in-character' is not legal proof; there is, however, no legal proof to the contrary either. Whatever constitutional power the Prime Minister may or may not have in dealing with matters pertaining to portfolios other than his own, the general impression was that the Prime Minister could take action on any portfolio. Other Prime Ministers did not do so because they were hard put to dealing with matters in their own portfolios, let alone deal with matters in those of others. Shaheed Bhai did not suffer from this disability, Perhaps it was high-handed of him to do this, but that is about all he can be charged with.

The second charge, number three, concerns one Mr. Badi-us-Salam. It seems that he was given permission to import some machinery for the manufacture of glass. He was an established manufacturer and nothing irregular was proved in his obtaining the permit. The government prosecutor is magnanimous enough to say that:

Although the relationship of the respondent with the wife of Mr. Badi-us-Salam is not very close, and by itself does not establish that the respondent was interested in Mr. Salam yet the conduct of the respondent in respect of this firm throughout leaves no room for doubt that he was certainly interested in Mr. Badi-us-Salam.

This is really laughable. Mr. Salam's wife was hardly a relation at all. She was a distant cousin of Shaheed Bhai's wife. If Shaheed Bhai wanted to indulge in nepotism there were many nearer relations in East Pakistan, and in greater need of financial help, for nearly all of them had left properties behind in West Bengal. I have tried to understand what was so irregular in granting Mr. Salam a permit and all I can see is that Shaheed Bhai cut the red tape and got Mr. Badi-us-Salam the permit for which he had been waiting for a long time.

Cases numbers five and six concern one Colonel Wahiduddin. It seems that Colonel Wahiduddin had more than one firm under different names. It seems that this is often the case with business people, but because of my very limited understanding of business deals I do not understand whether this in itself means a shady transaction or not. Anyhow the Government asked for tenders. Colonel Wahiduddin submitted the tender under the name of one of his firms, Syed Brothers. The tender was the cheapest so he got the contract. Then the Food Supplies Department decided, to quote the prosecutor, 'Not to put all the eggs in one basket', but to give parts of the contract to some other firms also. Shaheed Bhai considering the appeal of Colonel Wahiduddin restored the full amount of order to him. This is considered a grave misconduct.

The second case, number six, was that, instead of having the quality of rice tested in Lahore it was tested in Karachi. Several years later it was discovered that the rice was of a poor quality. Much has been made of this incident. Again it takes two and a half columns of newspaper space. I have read and tried to understand the tirade. The crime it appears is that Shaheed Bhai overruled the Minister and the Director.

Till 1956, and many years after, the bureaucracy consisted of the old ICS and their newly elevated colleagues of the Audit and Accounts Department. They literally ran the government. They held the Ministers in utter contempt, and in most cases, justifiably so. In many cases the Ministers were uneducated, untrained, lacking in experience, and desirous of cheap popularity. The bureaucracy considered it its duty to keep them in order and did so. The Ministers submitted, willingly or grudgingly, but submit they did. Shaheed Bhai had been Minister of Civil Supplies and of Finance, and also the Chief Minister of Bengal, with senior English ICS officers working under him. He was neither educationally, nor intellectually, nor in experience inferior to them. So he did not feel overawed by the Secretary or the Director, and as for the Minister, even the prosecutor very kindly says he owed the job to Shaheed Bhai, and had not distinguished himself since. So Shaheed Bhai overruled them all. You may call it an act of high-handedness, but in the absence of any shred of evidence you cannot say it was a case of corruption.

In the case of the other three charges, number two, four and seven, he was exempted – they are in fact so flimsy that really someone in the legal Department should have advised the Government not to bring them. Charge number two is that of canvassing and collecting funds for the Awami League and not keeping any account of it. Everyone who knew Shaheed Bhai knows that the Awami League, and Shaheed Bhai himself, were more or less completely financially broke. As for keeping accounts, he never did. He kept account neither of his own personal expenses, nor of any public funds that he may have been in charge of. Very casual of him no doubt, but that is how it was and everyone knows it to this day. Money did not mean anything to Shaheed Bhai. After he had earned thousands in cases in Lahore and Dhaka he often had to borrow money for his fare back to Karachi, because he had given it all to someone with a hard luck story.



Perhaps a trumped-up story, but he did not have the patience to check it He was not the type to embezzle funds.

Charge number four is of getting Import Licenses for a small printing press, the proprietor of which happened to be an office bearer of the Awami League. The total asset of the business was Rs. 54,000 plus Rs. 6,000.

Charge number seven was one of favoring the Lebanese firm of Mr. Jabre Freres. The charge was without foundation and despite efforts could not be substantiated. Establishment of jute factories in friendly countries was one of the Government's well known policies, and factories had been established in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Lebanon, as Shaheed Bhai pointed out in his defence was by far the most prosperous of the Middle East countries and the establishment of a factory there would have ensured a good supply of jute to all the adjacent countries. Mr. Jabre's firm had been suggested to Shaheed Bhai by no less a person than the President of Lebanon whom Shaheed Bhai had met in connection with a Baghdad Pact meeting and having had his credentials checked, and finding them in good order, called for the execution of a contract between him and the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation. The effort made to make the giving of Mr. Jabre the contract a question of favoritism—or worse, for it is made out that it was not Jabre but his wife's friendship with Shaheed Bhai that was the reason for the transaction—is both false and unworthy of serious consideration. To substantiate the charge with the evidence of a disgruntled secretary is really shabby, and only goes to show the extent to which the authorities were prepared to go.

During the time the EBDO trial was on there was another humiliating incident. Mr. Bhutto, then the darling of the Government, made a statement that the EBDO under trials were using their opportunities to make political speeches and were taking advantage of the Government's leniency for they really deserved to be tried under criminal charges. Shaheed Bhai objected to this statement and brought a charge of contempt of Court. After several days' discussion it was decided not to take any action on it Ironically some ten years after, the roles were reversed and Mr. Bhutto himself was in a similar situation as Shaheed Bhai had been in, and making similar objections.

The trial finished on the 18 July 1960. It stated that the *Central Government has disqualified a former Minister, Mr. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy for being a member, or a candidate for membership of any elective body, until 31 December 1966.*

## In Jail – Illness - Exile

The EBDO trial was a fiasco. Instead of damaging Shaheed Bhai's reputation it actually enhanced it. The Government was chagrined and not knowing what to do at this stage, allowed him to go abroad conditional to his not taking part in any political activity. Shaheed Bhai kept to this condition meticulously.

We had returned to England again about this time, and so I saw this for myself. I was waiting in the sitting-room in his hotel in London when Shaheed Bhai arrived from the airport with a large number of his followers from London, Birmingham, Bradford, and other towns in England where Pakistanis had settled. They were insisting that he allow them to take out a procession in his support, and that he should address meetings in London and other towns. But Shaheed Bhai refused and remained adamant against doing anything that savored of opposition to the Government. 'I have been allowed by the government to come out for medical treatment, and I have given them my word of honor that I will confine myself to it, so I will not indulge in any political activity.' When the pressure became great he cut short his stay in London and left for the States. He kept to the same condition during his much longer stay in the States. This was around July-August 1962. He did not take part in any political activity. He completed his medical checkup, renewed acquaintances with friends, and returned to Pakistan in November without stopping in London.

My eldest daughter Salma had just got engaged to be married during this time. In his letter of congratulations Shaheed Bhai wrote, 'I have taken a lot of briefs to earn enough money to come for Salma's wedding.' The wedding was to be held in London, and we were all looking forward to his coming, for Shaheed Bhai, fond as he was of all my children, was particularly fond of Salma whom he called 'his junior', even before she had been called to the Bar. In fact, I used to tease Salma that she had become a barrister only so that she could become a junior to Shaheed Bhai. Preoccupied with the arrangements for the marriage I did not read the papers as carefully as I usually did and so sense the political situation. Thus it came as a bolt from the blue when BBC announced that Shaheed Bhai had been arrested! Further details were not available for some time and I was anxious because Shaheed Bhai's health had not been good for some time and jail could have an adverse effect on it. I got the news bit by bit from people who came from Pakistan and later I got the account from his daughter and granddaughter.

He had been arrested suddenly in the early hours of the morning, as is the wont of such things, on 31 January 1962 from Lakhm House, his daughter's residence in Karachi. The charge was, 'Taking part in activities prejudicial to the interest of Pakistan.' As the charge was not specified, there was great resentment in political circles at the high-

handed and unjustified action of the Government Newspapers were censored and political gatherings were forbidden, but the seething discontent could not be held back and before long all government restrictions were being defied, especially in East Pakistan.

Gatherings, large and small, openly condemned and criticized the Government. Papers defying censorship wrote against the high-handedness of the government. Most of all the students went completely berserk. It became impossible for the Vice Chancellor and the professors to keep them in control. Representatives from West Pakistan such as Mr. Manzoor Qadir, the ex-Foreign Minister and now the Advocate General, and Mr. Mohammad Ali Bogra, the then Foreign Minister and a former Prime Minister belonging to East Pakistan, found it impossible to address a gathering in East Pakistan. President Ayub was preparing for elections in the near future and it was necessary to get the support of East Pakistan.

It was at this stage that President Ayub Khan was known to have said, 'But Zakir Hussain told me that if I locked up Shaheed, everything would be all right.'

This remark needs a little explanation. Zakir Hussain belonged to the Bengal Police Service. When Shaheed Bhai became Chief Minister of Bengal, he had thought he could get to become I. G. Police. He had his wish conveyed to Shaheed Bhai but as Zakir Hussain had not reached the seniority necessary for an I. G., Shaheed Bhai did not think his being a Muslim sufficient justification for superseding the Hindu I. G. Zakir Hussain had set his heart on becoming an I. G. and approached people close to Shaheed Bhai to intercede for him. But Shaheed Bhai remained adamant, and so made an implacable enemy. When the government passed an order extraditing Shaheed Bhai, Zakir Hussain had great pleasure in executing it. During Khawaja Nazimuddin's term of office as Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zakir Hussain was appointed Chairman of the Public Services Commission—a strange appointment for a policeman! But Khawaja Sahib, God's good man though he was, could always be prevailed upon by any unscrupulous person and so Zakir Hussain got access to Ayub. To settle old scores and to gain the favor of Ayub he suggested that Shaheed Bhai be put behind bars. As Zakir Hussain came from East Pakistan, President Ayub rather naively thought his assessment of the situation would be the correct one, hence his bewilderment. Instead of all being Quiet on the Eastern Front, (with apologies to Henrick Marie)<sup>1</sup> there seemed to be the very devil to pay. Ministers were being stoned, Federal Ministers were having their shirts torn to shreds, there was virtual pandemonium in the University. In fact there was no other disturbance of such magnitude in East Pakistan, till the last great upheaval which preceded the secession of East Pakistan.

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<sup>1</sup> Henrick Marie, the author of the book about the Great War, called All Quiet On The Western Front.

Meanwhile, Shaheed Bhai was settling down to life in jail in his usual calm and philosophical manner. He wrote me amusing letters on jail life. I am sorry that in the succeeding disruption of my life after my husband's death they got lost. It is a pity, because Shaheed Bhai did not write many letters, but when he did they were amusing and entertaining, and threw light on a side of his character which was not known to many people. He wrote a letter to Salma on her engagement which is both amusing and wistful and I am including it in the *Appendix*. Salma's marriage drew near, but Shaheed Bhai was still in jail and I was sad that he would not be able to attend the wedding. I have very few relatives, and Shaheed Bhai was particularly close.

Meanwhile, tension in the country grew. Bogra told the President that it would not be possible for him to address meetings in East Pakistan unless Shaheed was released. Ayub, who was getting apprehensive himself, immediately agreed. Negotiations were started. Shaheed Bhai was offered release provided he did not enter into any political activities for six months. Shaheed Bhai categorically refused. The next offer reduced the period to three months, then six weeks. Shaheed remained unmoved. Finally the term was reduced to that of a fortnight. 'Oh alright!' said Shaheed Bhai, 'I'll go to the hospital. I need to have a checkup anyhow.' So he was driven from the jail to the hospital, where he stayed a fortnight. There was an endless string of visitors to see him, most of them politicians. What they talked about was anybody's guess, but he did not see the Press or give any statement.

The fortnight over, he returned to Lakham House and after parleys with representatives of other political parties, a statement was issued announcing the formation of the National Democratic Front (NDF). This was not a new political party but a union of the existing parties arrived at for the specific purpose of restoring democracy. This method was regarded with so much favor later on that an association was formed along these lines called the Pakistan National Alliance which succeeded in overthrowing the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Yet again another movement known as MRD (Movement for the Restoration of Democracy) was formed along the same lines with the aim of trying to remove the Government of General Ziaul Haq.

Shaheed Bhai began a whistle-stop tour of the country. Enthusiastic crowds greeted him everywhere. He pressed his advantage and asked the people to demand the restoration of democracy. There was so much enthusiasm, such a political awakening, that it appeared that the regime would be overthrown.

Alas! the fates were against him. It was 31 December 1962, and as was his wont on New Year's eve, he had given a party at Hotel *Metropole* during which he suffered a severe heart attack. He was rushed to the Jinnah Hospital. His condition was considered very grave and he was not declared out of danger for some time. I came over from the UK and was depressed to find him in such a serious condition but he was not downcast. He talked cheerfully with his visitors, holding forth on the NDF's objectives.

I realized how deeply he felt the plight of the country, and his inability to do anything about it, when I overheard him say to the Spanish Ambassador who had just returned from East Pakistan, 'My people are dying on their feet.' It was a *cri de coeur*, there was such pain in it, such a feeling of helplessness that standing at some distance from his bed I could still feel its vibrations.

I understand he wrote a letter to Manick Mian from Beirut, a few days before his death in which he said, 'if I cannot serve my people and do anything to ameliorate their sufferings what is the point of my living.' This letter was published in the *Ittifaq*. It is said that no one dies of a broken heart. But there is no doubt that Shaheed Bhai's heart was broken because he could not serve the people he loved.

Shaheed Bhai remained in hospital for some time before he was allowed to go home. He was much better but the doctors said it was absolutely essential for him to take a long rest and to completely avoid strain and excitement. It was palpably impossible to do this while staying in Karachi so Shaheed Bhai decided to go abroad.

After Shaheed Bhai's condition had improved, I went down to Dhaka to be with Salma who was expecting her first baby. I heard that Shaheed Bhai was due to leave for Europe, so I sent him a phonogram, wishing him Godspeed. As I began dictating the message, the operator interrupted asking excitedly, 'Where is he going? Where is he going?' I told him. Still anxious he asked, 'He will be coming back? Won't he?'

'Oh yes, he's coming back,' I reassured him, I didn't know then, that I was giving him false hope. He would be coming back, but only to rest amongst them forever.

This sort of thing had happened to me more than once even in West Pakistan. Once when I had been sending a phonogram, I said, 'Suhrawardy,' following it with the address. 'Mr. Suhrawardy,' said the operator, 'not just Suhrawardy.'

'No need to say "Mr.",' I replied, thinking of the extra cost.

'You can say just Suhrawardy but we cannot,' was the reply. What a pathetic little gesture of devotion and admiration it was.

Shaheed Bhai was the only person in politics besides Quaid-i-Azam who inspired such universal and wholehearted love and admiration for he had charisma—that most necessary but rare requirement of leadership. As I struggle to write his life story, it strikes me over and over again what a tragedy it was that petty jealousies, and intrigues kept him away from the helm of affairs.

Shaheed Bhai left Karachi for Beirut, from where he went to Europe. Traveling in easy stages he got to England. I can't remember his exact itinerary but I remember his writing, 'I shall be going to Greece and Yugoslavia, which I have not seen.' There were a few other countries mentioned which I cannot remember. I replied saying, 'Shaheed Bhai, just reading your itinerary makes me feel tired, for goodness sake, cut it down. You can do it on your way back to Karachi.' Of course, he took no notice of my admonition, for his entire life was an epitome of:

My candle burns at both ends. It will not last the night But ah! my foes, and oh!  
my friends. It gives a lovely light.

He arrived in London on 22 July, I remember it for it was my birthday and his coming made it perfect. We were then living in Hampstead Gardens suburbs. The late afternoon sun poured in through the windows of my small dining room making a golden glow as everyone gathered around the table wishing me a Happy Birthday. We were for that moment as happy as it is given to mortals to be.

'I didn't know that it was your birthday today,' Shaheed Bhai said, as he put a fine gold chain with a small Koran round my neck.

I had not been able to put Shaheed Bhai up in my house this time for it was very small, but I had managed to take a small house on the same road, almost opposite mine. Rashid had moved into it together with some of his friends with whom he had been sharing digs for some time. Shaheed Bhai settled in with these young boys quite happily. Chatting with them, discussing politics with them, playing bridge with them and ragging them about their girl friends. He used to intercept their telephone calls. Once, when Naz phoned Shaheed Bhai, he began teasing her thinking she was one of the other girls.

'Shaheed Mamoo it's me,' said Naz in a rather prim voice. 'Goodness me,' said Shaheed Bhai abashed, 'I'm sorry.'

The days passed quickly. Having both my invalids – my husband and Shaheed Bhai – at the same place lessened my anxiety somewhat, and I was hopeful that having passed their crises, both of them were now set on the path to recovery.

Both Shaheed and Ikram used to get heart attacks during the night. They occurred fairly often but they did not deter either of them from following their usual routine. A day after an attack Shaheed Bhai would take breakfast in bed, which he loved doing whenever he had the time, then he'd get up, bathe, dress, have lunch and go off to a matinee show. He'd see a play or a picture after which he'd spend the time with friends, and then see another play at night. Some days his schedule would not be so heavy but one play a day was a must. He tried to persuade my husband and me to join him, but I

generally did not, and my husband almost always refused with thanks, but he took the girls whenever they wanted to see anything he was seeing. One evening Shaheed Bhai came over to see me. I was in the house of a neighbor a little further down the road, so Shaheed Bhai came there, and we all chatted together for a while. After Shaheed Bhai had left my friend said, 'I cannot believe he is as ill as you say, he looks so well so cheerful.' 'But he is ill,' I insisted. Like Ikram, however, he refused to accept his illness and insisted on carrying on just as usual.

The days passed quickly and soon it was 8 September, Shaheed Bhai's birthday. We tried to celebrate it as well as we could. We had a sumptuous Pakistani lunch, and we all gave him little presents which pleased him very much. I gave him a birthday card which seemed very appropriate at the time. In terms of a car, it described the fitness of various human organs and ended with the comment, 'Many thousands of mileage yet!'

In the evening Shaheed Bhai showed us some of his movies. Among them was one he had made of my children over the years. During his stay in jail he had edited them by cutting and splicing them together, so there was one long film of the family alone. We enjoyed seeing this very much. My husband who also took home movies, asked if he could have this, he wanted to run it and see it for himself again.

'Of course you can, I made it for you people,' Shaheed Bhai replied. That day he took the film back, but before he left, he gave it to Naz, so we have this as a memento of the happy days that are no more.

We had a small luncheon party once again. Besides ourselves there was Mr. Dunnet, number two to my husband in the Commonwealth Economic Committee and my husband's personal secretary, Mrs. Dirver. We had an excellent lunch cooked by my youngest daughter who was just beginning to discover this talent of hers, after which we sat in our small garden which was looking its best just then. We had managed to plant a lovely herbaceous border which was a riot of color. There were also a few rose bushes, and we sat on the terrace and felt content looking at the flowers and the autumn sun pouring over the garden. Afterwards Mr. Dimnet wrote me a charming letter expressing his pleasure in meeting 'some of the builders of Pakistan.'

My husband had planned to take Bitlam for a holiday to Europe. The trip had actually meant to include Paris, Rome and Switzerland, and then only Paris, and now it was going to be Italy only. Ikram himself was not keen to go so far, but the plan for other places had not materialized. Also Begum Liaquat Ali Khan was asking him to visit her in Rome. So early one morning he left with our youngest child for Rome. The day after the next Shaheed Bhai phoned me as usual and asked me if I would like to see some Spanish dancing with him. I, as usual, said 'No, I don't feel like it.' 'Please come, I've already bought the tickets,' said Shaheed Bhai.

'Take Mrs. Dirver instead', I suggested, 'she does so much for you.'

'That's a good idea. But you come too.'

'No not really Shaheed Bhai,' I said, and he did not insist. Then he phoned again after some time and again asked me to join the party.

'One of the guests has dropped out. It's a pity to let the ticket go waste.'

I was at last prevailed upon to say yes—as I very often was—but I had a strange feeling of foreboding. It did not disappear even after seeing the dance, which was a very beautiful one. After the show, I wanted to come home, but Shaheed Bhai said, 'Oh! do have some tea,' I had barely finished when I got up and brushing aside rather brusquely Shaheed Bhai's suggestion for further entertainment, I asked Rashid to take me home. As I was standing on the curb waiting for the car I saw Shaheed Bhai cross over to the little paper shop opposite. I remember seeing his back in a smart grey suit and thought to myself, 'How thin he has become! But that is a good thing,' I reassured myself. That was on 12 September 1963. That is when I last saw Shaheed Bhai.



## Death in Beirut

Three months had passed since I had received the news of my husband's death. I had gone to Rome and then to Karachi and now, I was back again in London to wind up my affairs. It was one of the coldest winters that year and the radiators had gone out of order, so it was bitterly cold in the house. I got out of bed and pulled the curtains open. It was a dark and dismal morning, branches of leafless trees stood out starkly. I went back to bed shivering and tucked the eiderdown around me. It was still very early and nobody had got up yet, so I lay quietly thinking my sad thoughts. The door bell rang sharply. 'Who can it be?' I thought Then I heard the Bearer's cheerful voice saying 'Ah! Rashid Baba,' (Oh! It's Master Rashid) I felt a wave of pleasure, but immediately I remembered that Rashid never got up early, so what was he doing at this unearthly hour? Fear gripped my heart. I grabbed my dressing gown and rushed to the landing. Rashid was already almost there. He did not have to tell me why he had come. Silently I took him in my arms.

I cannot remember what we said nor the sequence of events. I remember Rashid, Naz and Bitlam sitting on my bed and talking about Rashid's going to Beirut. He made a few phone calls and managed to get a place in an airplane leaving within hours. His mother who had been in London was to leave that afternoon. 'I'll see to the arrangements,' I said to Rashid and he left after a while.

I went about in a daze and do not remember anything very clearly. Vera, Rashid's mother came sometime in the morning and we said goodbye to each other. I ordered some flowers to be put in her cabin. Raja Sahib of Mahmudabad came to see me after Vera had left, he was full of kindness and compassion. 'I wonder, how Rashid will be able to manage all the funeral rites,' I said.

'Don't worry Beirut is a Muslim country, and they will make all the arrangement without any trouble,' Raja Sahib reassured me. He wrote a verse of the Koran in the flyleaf of my Koran Sharif. After this he left.

I think it was about 12.00, I had been going about like an automaton without thinking, now suddenly what had happened hit me, and with it came an overwhelming desire to go to the funeral. 'I cannot bear not to be there to take leave of him,' I said to myself. It was almost 2.00 when I told Naz of my decision. She, bless her, made no objection, but set about doing the practical things that had to be done before I could leave. 'I'll phone to see if you can get a place on the plane,' she said.

'No, I shall phone Janjua,' I replied. Janjua was the PIA General Manager, in London. By a strange coincidence he was also one of the officers Shaheed Bhai had defended in the

Conspiracy Case I've written about. I told him, 'I want to go to Karachi to attend Shaheed Bhai's funeral but I don't have any pounds for the ticket, nor is there time to get the necessary permission to pay it in rupees, but if you can trust me and let me have the ticket, I promise you I will pay it back,' Janjua decided to trust me. 'I just have a ticket made out for you, please pick it up.'

'Since you are being so kind,' I said 'Would you do me a further favor. I do not have the time to pick it up from Regent Street, would you order it to be handed to me at the PIA counter at the airport.' Janjua was kind enough to do that also.

Naz offered to collect Bitlam from her school. We had thought it better she go to school and had therefore sent her in the morning. 'Wait a minute,' I said to Naz, 'I'll put a few clothes in my suitcase and I'll come with you and we'll take her from there and go straight on to the airport.' Naz phoned Bitlam's Head Mistress, Ms. Lloyd Thomas, who kindly agreed to give Bitlam leave. Channing, Bitlam's school, was fairly near and we got there soon. Bitlam was waiting in the hall and with her was the Head Mistress herself. I shall always remember her compassion and understanding at this time, and on several other occasions after Ikram's death.

Naz drove us to the airport. We were all silent or if we talked I don't remember what it was about. At the airport Naz took charge of all the formalities. The ticket was waiting at the counter and soon I said goodbye to the two girls and crossed the barrier into the waiting-room. There was a large plate glass through which I could see the girls downstairs. We gave each other *The sign of the hand*, which was one of our practices when travelling by air. There wasn't very long to wait and soon I found myself inside the plane, I didn't look around to see who else was there but walked over to my seat. Begum Asghar Khan was sitting one seat before mine, she was reading the day's newspaper, *The Passing of Suhrawardy*. I read the bold block letters automatically. 'So it has really happened,' I said to myself, so far it seemed to be something not quite real. The plane took off. The Captain, or whosoever reads the itinerary, read it, he did not mention Beirut. 'Oh Lord,' I thought, 'I've got onto the wrong plane. 'But there was nothing I could do. A feeling of utter helplessness came over me. A young man, a sort of distant relative, came over and spoke to me very kindly. I said to him, 'I was told this plane was going *via* Beirut but the announcer did not mention it, do you think you could please find out what happened.' Sarfaraz went and asked the Captain and came and told me, 'Yes it is going to Beirut. It was not originally going there but has been ordered to do so now.'

I thanked him and he said, '*Chachi*, can I make up a bed for you,' and proceeded to do so by removing the handles of the two seats. He got a blanket and pillow and said very gently, 'Please lie down. It is a long flight and you have to face so much tomorrow.' I shall always remember the kindness of this boy. I lay down for some time, I might even have slept, I don't know, my mind was full of so many memories of the lovely times

that we'd had together, Shahid Bhai, Shaheed Bhai and Ikram together made the woof and weave of my life, and now it was all over, for Shahid Bhai, I knew would not survive this blow for very long, and he did not.

The plane taxied to a stop, the passengers collected their hand-luggage and moved towards the door, I, too, with them. There had been no time to inform anyone so there was no one to meet me. I got down at Beirut airport. Things are rather confused after this. I suppose I was in the waiting room. I saw Hamid Nawaz, Pakistan's Ambassador to Lebanon, then Ahmed, Shaheed Bhai's son-in-law and Rashid. Rashid puts his arm around me and we are all stood near the tarmac. The carrier trundled along carrying Shaheed Bhai's coffin. 'It's rather small,' I thought to myself, as I stood waiting, and stared at it in an objective sort of way. These lines of Shakespeare came to my mind:

*Oh mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
shrunk to this little measure?*

## A Nation Mourns

We were in the plane for Karachi. The hours passed, I was conscious of the deep stillness punctuated with the whining of the airplane. Ahmed and Rashid sat behind me but we did not try to speak, each of us was deep in thought. The Captain's announcement that we are approaching Karachi, was followed by the collecting of luggage and tying of safety belts. The plane taxied to a standstill. From my seat on the port side of the plane I could see a dense crowd. We were led out. In the jostling of the crowd, I got separated from Ahmed and Rashid and was led by someone to the VIP room. I sat there lost and alone. Mitsi Minwallah, a friend of my daughter's came in and took my coat from me and said, 'Aunty please come this way.' I followed her to the jeep through a throng of people holding black banners with slogans on them. Baby and Munni were already sitting in it, I scrambled up besides them. Baby's eyes were red with weeping, Munni looked stricken, I felt numb with grief. None of us said much, at least I don't remember what we said. After some waiting the jeep began to move, when it came out of the airport, out on to the main road, I could see the truck with the coffin on it. It was already piled high with flowers. We were seated facing it and we followed it in this manner from the airport to Lakhm House. The crowd was so dense one could not see the road, there were cars, trucks and even rickshaws amidst it. Banners were carried by many groups of people belonging to one or other locality or organization. The slogans expressed their deep sense of loss. In this manner we wended our way through the streets of Karachi. At times someone would raise a *Nara-e-Takbeer*, which would be taken up by the entire crowd, and it seemed that the earth shook.

Lakhm House was packed with people. With great difficulty some of them were persuaded to come out so that the truck could go inside the gate. As the coffin was being taken down from the truck a couplet of Jauhar's came to my mind.

دورجیات ائے گی تاتل قضا کے بعد  
میری ابتدا ہوگی تیری انتہا کے بعد

Lakhm House is a biggish house but it was jam-packed. In every room, every corridor, every verandah there were people—people so tightly packed in, you could not move. Chapters of the Koran were distributed for reading and people tried to read them but they were too upset to do so. Others sat or stood and so time passed. Someone asked everybody to come down as the cortege was being taken to Patel Park. Baby, Munni and I got into a car, it moved at snail's pace towards Patel Park. From the car I suddenly saw my son walking along, sweat streaming from his face. I stopped the car and asked him to come in. At last we reached Patel Park. *The Namaz-e-Janaza* was offered.

I saw Aftab Ahmed Khan, he was Shaheed Bhai's private Secretary and very devoted to him, his face was full of emotion and he clenched and unclenched his fist, saying to himself, 'Why don't they shoot now. Let us have a trial of strength here and now', and words I could not clearly hear, I was near Aftab, I gently put my hand on his shoulders, he turned around and saw me, his eyes full of tears.

We got back into our cars and again edged our way back to Lakham House. It was, if possible, even more full. One almost could not breathe. People came and went. Women embraced Baby and Munni, and those who recognized me embraced me too. So evening came and then night fell. We were due to fly to Dhaka in the early hours of the morning. When the crowd had thinned, I went into Shahid Bhai's room. I knew the bond of affection that was there between them, and what a cruel blow Shaheed Bhai's death must be to him. Shaheed was like a son to him even though not so much younger. I sat holding his hand. He was quite blind by now. We talked in a desultory fashion. When the house had settled down to sleep, I took Shahid Bhai to the large room where Shaheed Bhai's coffin was on a trestle-table. Shahid Bhai put his hand on it, said a silent prayer, then he said 'Farewell', then we came back to Shahid Bhai's room. After an interval he said 'Some of his glory brushed on to us.' That was so. He brought color and excitement and a sense of being part of the making of history of the nation into our lives. Now it was all over. For him a niche in history was assured, for us oblivion.

There was a glimmer of light, with it sounds of activities. After a little while some men came in and began lifting the coffin, as they lifted it they said a most moving prayer. The Arabic language being sonorous lends itself to prayer and at this moment it was particularly moving. A dozen hands stretched out to lift the coffin on to the truck and as many people as could possibly fit, got in. The truck moved out of the gate and turned towards the airport, our car following. The crowd was so dense, it seemed as if it stood still. We moved at a very slow pace. We reached the airport but my mind is totally blank as to what happened there. I seemed to register again when we reached Dhaka airport. Hooked out of the porthole. There was again a crowd, a vast, vast crowd. At that time, Dhaka airport did not have so many high buildings around it and one could see far ahead and as far as one could see there was a sea of humanity. Suddenly I see Salma, my eldest daughter forlorn figure, she is standing a little away from the steps, she is trying to come up, soon she is up, and throws herself in my arms, she was Shaheed Bhai's, 'little junior to be' She was the person he wrote those marvelous letters to.

I follow the now familiar routine of coming down the steps and getting into a car which literally inches along. Someone had instructed the driver to take us to the race course and presumably he was taking us there. It seemed to be ages, and we had not reached anywhere. 'I hope he knows where to go?' I say to Salma. 'I hope so, too,' says Salma. After hours the race course stadium begins to be visible. Someone materializes from somewhere and very politely tells us, 'Please come over here, you will be able to see

clearly from here.' We follow him. He seats us on chairs. Baby and Munni and some ladies who had accompanied us from Karachi are already there. The vast race course stretches out before us. 'I wish they had not chosen such a vast space for the *Namaz-e-Janaza*, it will never get full and give a wrong impression,' I think. I was wrong. It did get full, full to the capacity, and spilled over on to the road. People came in groups, large and small, and individually. They kept coming. It must have been about eight in the morning, when the trek began and by the time the cortege began to be visible it was late afternoon.

We waited and watched the crowd come in, improvised sirens announced the coming of the cortege. It could be seen at a far distance. Gradually it came nearer and nearer, and the voice announcing its arrival becoming stronger and clearer, it was saying, 'Your leader is coming for the last time now, maintain discipline, do not let any untoward incident mar the dignity of this occasion. Remember your leader is coming to you for the last time to take leave of you, do this with the dignity and solemnity which the occasion demands. Your leader is coming ...'

The words were repeated over and over again. The announcement was being made by four people on a truck preceding the one with the coffin, bugles were held to the mouth of the announcer which made the voice carry. Then came the truck carrying the coffin. Rashid, his son was standing on one side of it, very erect, very still, like a carved statue. Ahmed Suleman his son-in-law stood on the other side, Rahman Sobhan, Salma's husband was sitting in front. Thus the truck passed slowly amongst the crowd. We followed the cortege with our eyes as long as we could see it. It being flat ground with no buildings near, we could do so for a long distance. Then finally it passed beyond our horizon.

We sat for a long time not speaking to each other not even trying to look at each other for we knew if we did we would break down. At last the stillness was broken with a cry like a clap of thunder, the sound of thousands of voices in unison shouted *Shaheed Suhrawardy amar ho*, as they laid him to his eternal rest. 'Shaheed Suhrawardy live forever.'

The crowd was thinning and moving towards the High Court. He was buried in the grounds before it. Fazlul Haq the other great Bengali leader was already burned there and Khawaja Nazimuddin who also had done yeoman services to the cause of the Muslims of Bengal was to be burned there next year.

So there they lie, the three giants that Muslim Bengal had produced at the hour of its need. Had they been able to unite their efforts the fate of Bengal would have been different.

## Epilogue

Shaheed Suhrawardy died on 5 December 1963. East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan on 26 March 1971, just eight years after Shaheed Suhrawardy's death.

These eight years were years of seething discontent, there had been continuous eruptions of violence. President Mohammad Ayub Khan resigned in the beginning of 1969 and General Yahya Khan took over. Martial Law was declared once more. Almost simultaneously with the declaration of Martial Law, General Yahya Khan also declared that he would hold general elections. Feverish preparations for the elections began in both the wings of Pakistan.

The Martial Law Administration decided to undo the One Unit before the elections. This was done in great haste, as also was the drawing up of the election constituencies. While this work was in progress the most terrible cyclone hit East Pakistan in October, devastating huge areas particularly around Chittagong. Despite the large-scale destruction and misery, the elections took place, just the very badly affected areas were omitted.

By December 1970 the elections were completed and the results were out. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman of the Awami League Party won with an overwhelming majority in East Pakistan. In West Pakistan, Zulfikar Ail Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party got an absolute majority in the provinces of the Punjab and Sindh. The Frontier went to Wali Khan's NAP. and Balochistan was a coalition of Mufti Mahmood's *Jamiatul Ulema-e-Islam* with other minor parties.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had won his election on his six-points, which demanded maximum autonomy for East Pakistan. It was decided to hold the National Assembly session in March 1971 where it was expected that the controversial elements would be thrashed out and Pakistan would emerge as a united democratic country with an elected government under Sheikh Mujibur Rehman.

It is not the object of this book to discuss the sinister influences that led to the change of date for the National Assembly which inflamed the East Pakistanis who regarded this as a betrayal and after some effort at coming to an understanding declared independence on 26 March.

Bitter civil war started from that date. Since the Second World War there have been many cases of savage brutality, but even so the nine months of civil war in East Pakistan is considered unparalleled in its savagery. There was large-scale infiltration from India, and sabotage; large numbers of Hindus fled to West Bengal as refugees.

This gave India an excuse to invade Pakistan in December 1971. Its overwhelmingly superior forces with the support of the local population made the task of the Pakistani army holding it back impossible. The Pakistan army surrendered after seventeen days of bitter fighting. 90,000 of our soldiers were taken prisoner and East Bengal's Government which was in exile in Calcutta was installed in Dhaka, till Mujibur Rebman was released by Bhutto, who had by then taken over the reins of the Government in West Pakistan.

As I have said before, this book is not meant to deal with the causes that led to the debacle of East Pakistan.

No one can say with certainty what would have happened in the future if Shaheed Suhrawardy had lived and had been able to control the destiny of his people. But I feel and there are many people with whom I have spoken who share my feelings that had Shaheed Bhai been allowed to play the part that was his, after the creation of Pakistan the antagonism and bitterness would not have grown to the extent that led to the division of the country. It must be remembered it was in Bengal that the Muslim League had first established its government. We cannot prophesy for certain about the future. All that can be said is that Shaheed Suhrawardy was the one leader who straddled both East and West Pakistan and who had the prestige in West Pakistan to safeguard the rights of East Pakistanis, and who had the influence in East Pakistan to persuade the people there to accept what was best for both parts of the country.

But the chance was never given to Shaheed Suhrawardy and when the crisis came he was no more, so it will remain one of the Ifs of History.



# APPRECIATIONS

## Appreciation I

### Extract from *Red Carpet at the White House* by Wiley T. Buchanan<sup>2</sup>

... Peter Townsend happened to be in Colorado Springs because he was writing a series of articles about North America for some British periodical. He was travelling in an elaborately equipped Land Rover, with every conceivable attachment and gadget, and was on his way from Canada down to Mexico.

I suggested to Prime Minister Suhrawardy that we invite the Currys and Peter Townsend to our dinner, and with his permission they were included in our rather small group. The evening turned out to be a very pleasant one, and the Prime Minister seemed to enjoy himself enormously. He laughingly made the comment to me that he was particularly interested to meet Peter Townsend because during his own career he had a few collisions with the British Crown himself, and he knew how formidable such opposition could be.

The Prime Minister continued to drink only fruit juice, but not all of his Muslim followers were such abstainers. Now and then one would sidle up to me and say very quietly, 'Don't you think a little gin would help this orange juice?' And on some occasions the official cars in our cavalcade filled with these non-drinking Muslims had a very alcoholic aroma. This never bothered me; if our visitors wanted to drink, it was perfectly all right with me. After all, it was their religion, not mine.

None of them overdid it, and if an occasional drink made their trip more enjoyable I certainly had no objections.

The next day the Prime Minister was determined to drive to the top of Pikes Peak. We rented a couple of cars with drivers, and set off with the Prime Minister in very good spirits. With us was the Pakistani Ambassador, Mohammed Ali. I was a bit worried about the Ambassador because I knew he had a heart condition. Pikes Peak is over 14,000 feet high, the oxygen content of the air at the top of the mountain is quite low, and I felt sure that Mr. Ali's doctor would not want him to make the trip. I suggested that he stay behind, but the Prime Minister was one of those people who has so much health and vitality that he thinks everyone else must be the same. He kept teasing his ambassador about being a sissy, with the result that in the end Mohammed Ali came with us.

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<sup>2</sup> Buchanan was the Chief Protocol Officer at the White House during the Eisenhower Administration.

About halfway up the mountain I noticed that the Ambassador was getting very pale and was beginning to gasp for breath. There is a roadside filling station and soft drink place about halfway to the top of Pikes Peak. I suggested that we stop there and stretch our legs. While the Prime Minister was drinking Coca Cola with two of his Cabinet members, I quietly bundled Mohammed Ali into the second car that had been following us and sent him back to Colorado Springs. Suhrawardy thought that Mohammed Ali was still with us, but when we got to the top of the mountain and two of his Cabinet ministers passed out, he became very worried and started blaming himself for having persuaded his Ambassador to come. He was much relieved when I told him that Mohammed Ali was on his way back to the hotel where a doctor could take care of him. 'I see now,' he said, 'why they call you Wiley. You're a wily fellow, Wiley!'

At the top of the mountain the Prime Minister enjoyed the view and had a fine time snapping pictures. He even took photographs of what he called 'my fainted Cabinet.' He seemed totally unaffected by the altitude, but I felt a bit light-headed and noticed that even one of our indestructible American security men was looking rather pale and unhappy. We finally drove back down, and everyone revived. The doctor at the hotel however, ordered Mohammed Ali to bed and told me that he really might not have survived a trip to the top of the mountain. The Ambassador did, in fact, die of a heart attack a few months ago, which ended a useful and colorful career.

After showing the Prime Minister the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, we took off for our next stop which was to be the Grand Canyon. It is impossible to land a big airplane very near the canyon, so we landed at Winslow, Arizona, and made the rest of the trip by bus. At Winslow the Governor of Arizona was on hand to meet the Prime Minister with various dignitaries, including an Indian chief leading a delegation of Indians. Suhrawardy was constantly amazed at the warmth and friendliness of the American people. He could not understand why the citizens of a big, powerful country should be so attentive to the leader of a small, new one. When he thanked the Governor he said. 'I am ashamed to have all of this happen to me.' Everything about Arizona delighted him. He was particularly amused by the fact that in one small town the sheriff was a woman. He kept saying that he was going to import some women sheriffs to Pakistan, where they could certainly use some.

Our bus ride up to the Grand Canyon was a memorable one. The Prime Minister had the first seat just inside the door, I sat across the aisle, and the rest of the bus was filled with members of our party and some of the Arizonians who had met us at Winslow. The Prime Minister decided that the best way to pass the time would be for all of us to sing songs. He started leaching us songs he had sung when he was a student at Oxford, songs from Pakistan and India, and some of his favorite dance tunes. Those of us who had hoped to get a catnap during the ride were sadly mistaken. The Prime Minister would turn around and point a finger at someone and cry, 'You're not singing! I order you to sing. I have been made an honorary sheriff by the Governor of this state and

anyone who doesn't sing will have to go to jail.' In between songs he would become ecstatic about the scenery. He would nudge me and say, 'Oh, Wiley, look at that, isn't it magnificent! Are you sure it isn't painted? Could I really go out and touch it?'

The Grand Canyon made a profound impression on Suhrawardy, as it does on everyone. Accommodations there are rather limited. The furniture in my own room looked as if it were older than the Canyon itself. The room was very small, and I was brooding about my primitive quarters when there was a knock at the door. It was one of our security men who told me that, as a result of some mix-up, he and one of the military aides for the Prime Minister had no accommodation at all. As a result, two cots were brought into my room, which made it so crowded that we couldn't even close the door. But we were all so tired from our singing bus trip that we slept well anyway.

The next day we flew on to California, where the Prime Minister was to address the Los Angeles Council of World Affairs. The speech that he gave after dinner at the Ambassador Hotel was a real spellbinder. He gave a most lucid and illuminating account of the situation in Pakistan and India and somewhat to the dismay of the State Department, I suppose—spoke very forcibly about the importance of settling the Kashmir dispute.

On our second night in Los Angeles the Prime Minister was entertained by a group of motion picture producers, including Cecil B De Mille. Again the Prime Minister's talk was so effective that Mr. De Mille leaned over to me and whispered. 'This man ought to be in the movies!' De Mille also told me that he once had asked Suhrawardy whether or not he should make his famous motion picture *The Ten Commandments*, to which the Muslim Suhrawardy replied, 'There are two forces at work in the universe, one that builds up and one that tears down. Let nothing stop you from making such a picture. The world needs it?'

After dinner, a good friend of ours gave a private party for the Prime Minister. This was Cobina Wright, who, of course, is very much at home all over the world, and certainly knows everyone in Hollywood. Cobina's house is charming, with beautiful French furniture and one of the most spectacular views in California. The Prime Minister was fascinated by Cobina herself and the story of how, after the stock market crash, she had to earn money for her family and so had taken up writing as a career. Cobina told me how impressed she had been by our security men, some of whom she had met that night. I suggested that she mention them in one of her columns, which she did. I am sure that the superiors of Frank Madden, Joseph Rosetti, and Hibbard Lambkin were startled to read in Cobina Wright's column about their boys being out on the town with the Hollywood 'Jet Set.'

Another highlight of our stay in Los Angeles was a party given for the Prime Minister by Mary Pickford. Suhrawardy had looked forward with great anticipation to this

evening at 'Pickfair,' and so had I. I remembered riding around in Beverly Hills as a small boy and seeing 'Pickfair.' where Miss Pickford and her husband Douglas Fairbanks lived. For this occasion the gardens had been lighted and the house was a mass of flowers. Many members of the movie colony were there, and Suhrawardy distinguished himself on the dance floor. By 2:00 many of the guests had left, and our own cars were waiting at the front door, but now Mary Pickford led us downstairs into a small room with a long bar across one end and heavy oaken tables and chairs, rather like an English tavern. The walls were covered with pictures of scenes from motion pictures in which the mistress of 'Pickfair' had starred. Sitting on the bar was a young man with a guitar who turned out to be an accomplished folk singer. He played for us until about 3:30. By this time I was more than ready for bed, but when we got back to the Ambassador Hotel Suhrawardy insisted that I have sandwiches and orange juice with him in the VIP cottage. The man was incredible; he seemed able to function with no sleep at all.

I had a little fun with him the next morning, though. At about 10:15, I went to the VIP cottage and found Suhrawardy eating breakfast. He was dressed in white silk *pyjamas* and a silk robe and was joking with some members of his entourage about the party the night before. They were teasing him about his dancing and saying that it was just as well that the people back in Pakistan had not seen him cavorting with Hollywood starlets. 'Yes,' said Suhrawardy, munching his toast. 'I'm glad there were no photographers. Sometimes such pictures can be very misleading.'

I happened to have the morning paper under my arm. 'Oh,' I said, unfolding it, 'but there are pictures! There's a large photograph here of you dancing with one of those little blonde actresses. I'm sure it'll be picked up in Pakistan.' He turned as pale as his complexion would permit and snatched the paper. 'Where is it?' he cried, feverishly turning the pages. 'This is terrible, horrible, a disaster!'

I let him look for a few seconds before admitting that I was just teasing him. 'Oh,' he said, 'there goes that Wiley again. I swear you've got the right name!'

From California we went to Las Vegas, Nevada. The reason was not just to inspect the night life and gambling. The Prime Minister wanted to visit the Hoover Dam, and Las Vegas was the nearest place with adequate hotel accommodations. The dam was of great interest to Mr. Suhrawardy, because he felt that such hydroelectric plants were badly needed in his own country. At the dam itself, which is certainly one of the most impressive manmade objects in the world, engineers explained every phase of the operation to us.

After this briefing we went back to Las Vegas, where we were guests at Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn. Very much aware of the fact that official visitors live in a constant glare of publicity, I had arranged with Ambassador Mohammed Ali for each member of our

group – the Pakistani and American—to pay his own hotel bill. The Pakistanis were just as eager for this to be a matter of record as we were. The Prime Minister did not gamble himself, but he was astounded by the number of people at the gambling tables and the pleasure they seemed to derive from losing their money. He was also amazed when somebody told him that none of the doors had any locks on them – none being needed because the buildings remain open twenty-four hours a day.

We had a fine dinner at the Desert Inn, then went over to Stardust directly across the street, where again we were guests of the Clarks. When the time came for us to leave the next morning the Pakistanis were astonished to find that their only expense had been the cost of their rooms and their breakfast. Everything else had been taken care of by the generosity of the Clarks. 'Why do they do it?' one puzzled Pakistani said to me. 'Most of us will never come back here again, so they'll never get their money back through our gambling!' I tried to explain that Wilbur and Toni Clark were simply generous Americans who wanted to offer hospitality to the guests of their nation.

If I have emphasized the social aspect of this trip rather than formal functions and civic dinners, it is probably because Suhrawardy was a man of such refreshing vitality and enthusiasm that when I think of him it is more in terms of gaiety than duty. He certainly made a great many friends in the United States.

The Prime Minister left for home on 27 July.

## Appreciation II

### Extracts from *The Washington Post*, on Prime Minister Suhrawardy's visit to the US

#### (i) *Hosting Your Boss*

Between the weather and entertaining his visiting Prime Minister, Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Ali was wilted when he returned to his embassy from the farewell ceremonial late the other night. He took off his native Jinnah hat, made of non-cooling caracul, and fanned his round, cherubic face with it. Then he began reminiscing. As a preface, he reminded his listeners that he now occupies a position which is unconventional in diplomacy, to say the least.

Suhrawardy is political leader of the Awami League. Ali is a big figure in the rival Muslim League, and used to be its Prime Minister. It's as if President Eisenhower went to Karachi and found himself being entertained by a US Ambassador named Harry S Truman.

... The envoy declared that, at the risk of sounding sycophantic, he had found his political enemy to be one of the most highly principled men he had ever known.

'Two or three days before the creation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947,' he reminisced, 'the leaders of the Muslim League assembled in Karachi to discuss transfer of power. Mr. Suhrawardy was at that time Muslim League [Chief] Minister of undivided Bengal. He told us, however, that he was in a hurry to leave for Calcutta, the capital of Bengal, which on 14 August would fall to India's portion.

Those of us who wished Mr. Suhrawardy well, tried to dissuade him from leaving Karachi, the capital of Pakistan, arguing that it would jeopardize his position in the new set up. We even followed him to the airport, still entreating him.

'But he was determined to go. He told us: "I must get back. I am still the [Chief] Minister until 14 August, and, as such, I continue to be responsible for whatever happens. There are millions of Muslims in Hindu India who could be butchered. I would have it on my conscience all my life, even if one single Muslim was killed and I was not at my post I cannot allow considerations of my personal fortune to influence me at this moment."

Ambassador Ali said the dire prophecies came to pass. Opponents charged that Suhrawardy could not make up his mind between Pakistan and India.

'This,' added the envoy, 'sent him into the political wilderness for nine long years'

'What did he do during that time?' the Ambassador was asked.

'Well,' replied Ali, replacing his Jinnah hat and losing warmer and wearier than ever, 'he toured Bengal with Mahatma Gandhi, trying to put an end to the bloody post-partition riots between Hindus and Muslims. Then, in 1949, he finally moved to Pakistan. But Muslim League leaders strove to freeze him out of Pakistani politics.'

'I take it,' said a questioner, 'that he refused to freeze?'

The Muslim Leaguer grinned. 'He launched a party of his own, the Awami League, stumped the country in search of support. Politically, I regret to admit that he finally got it.'

Ali said it had been a wonderful experience, having his governmental boss ... here with him in Washington. I tried again to picture Truman knocking himself out entertaining Ike and speeding him on his way singing his praises.

I guess we're just not as advanced politically.

George Dixon

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## **(ii) Pakistan's Leader**

... Since last September Pakistan has found an additional kind of leadership in the skilled political performance of the Prime Minister, Huseyn S. Suhrawardy, who is an honored guest in Washington this week.

Mr. Suhrawardy is less a personal leader than an extremely accomplished politician. Schooled in what is now East Bengal, he brought to his national office the arts of persuasion and compromise. His Awami League Party holds only 11 of 80 seats in the National Assembly; yet he has consistently won support for his foreign and defense policies, and he has a sort of Rooseveltian flair for taking issues to the people. Mr. Suhrawardy has dedicated himself to the holding of general elections next March—Pakistan's first nation-wide balloting, as contrasted with state elections and the indirect selection of constituent assemblies ....



# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

### **Resolution moved by Shaheed Suhrawardy at the Convention of the Muslim League Legislatures in Delhi, April 1946**

Whereas in this vast subcontinent of India a hundred million Muslims are adherents of a Faith which regulates every department of their life—education, social, economic and political—whose code is not confined merely to spiritual doctrine and tenets or rituals and ceremonies, and which stands in sharp contrast to the exclusive nature of the Hindu Dharma and Philosophy which has fostered and maintained for thousands of years a rigid caste system resulting in the degradation of sixty million human beings to the position of untouchables, creation of unnatural barriers between man and man, super-imposition of social and economic inequalities on a large body of the people of the country, and which threatens to reduce Muslims, Christians and other minorities to the status of irredeemable helots, socially and economically.

Whereas the Hindu Caste System is a direct negation of nationalism, equality, democracy and all the noble ideals that Islam stands for.

Whereas different historical background, traditions, cultures, social and economic orders of the Hindus and the Muslims made impossible the evolution of a single Indian nation inspired by common aspirations and ideals and whereas after centuries they still remain two distinct major nations.

Whereas soon after the introduction by the British of the policy of setting up Political institutions in India on lines of Western Democracies based on majority rule which means that the majority of the nation or society in spite of their opposition as amply demonstrated during the two and half years' regime of Congress Governments in the Hindu majority Provinces, under the Government of India Act 1935, when the Muslims were subjected to untold harassments and oppressions as a result of which they were convinced of the futility and ineffectiveness of the so called safeguards provided in the Constitution and in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governors and were driven to the irresistible conclusion that in a United India Federation, if established, the Muslims, even in Muslim Majority Provinces, could meet with no better fate and their rights and interests could never be adequately protected against the perpetual Hindu majority at the centre.

Whereas the Muslims are convinced that with a view to saving Muslim India from the domination of the Hindus and in order to afford them full scope to develop themselves

according to their genius, it is necessary to constitute a sovereign independent state comprising Bengal and Assam in the North East Zone, and the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the North West Zone.

This Convention of The Muslim League Legislators of India. Central and Provincial, after careful consideration hereby declares that the Muslim Nation will never submit to any constitution for a United India and will never participate in any single constitution making machinery set up for the purpose, and any formula devised by the British Government for transferring power from the British to the peoples of India, which does not conform to the following just and equitable principles calculated to maintain internal peace and tranquility in the country.

I. That the Zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the North East and the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province, Sindh and Baluchistan in the North West of India, namely the Pakistan Zones, where the Muslims are a dominant majority, be constituted into one sovereign independent state and that an unequivocal undertaking be given to implement the establishment of Pakistan without delay.

II. That two separate Constitution making Bodies be set up by the peoples of Pakistan and Hindustan for the purpose of framing their respective constituencies.

III. That the minorities in Pakistan and Hindustan be provided with safeguards on the line of All-India Muslim League Resolution passed on the 23rd March 1940, at Lahore.

IV. That the acceptance of the Muslim League demand for Pakistan and its implementation without delay are the sine qua non for the Muslim League cooperation and participation in the formation of an interim Government at the Centre.

V. This Convention further emphatically declares that any attempt to impose a constitution on a United India basis or to force any interim arrangement at the Centre, contrary to the Muslim demand, will leave the Muslims no alternative but to resist such imposition by all possible means for their survival and national existence.

## Appendix II

### Correspondence on the League-Congress Coalition Talks

After the talks to setup a League-Congress Ministry in Bengal failed. Mr. Kiran Sanker Roy, leader of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party released to the Press the correspondence that had passed between him and Mr. Suhrawardy in Calcutta. The misunderstanding caused by this prompted Mr. Suhrawardy to release the rest of the correspondence that had been exchanged earlier between the two leaders while in Delhi.

Here the text of the correspondence along with the statements of the two leaders is given as it appeared in the *Statesman*.

*Statesman*, 22 April 1946

Mr. Kiran Sanker Roy, leader of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party in a statement, says:

I am releasing the correspondence that has passed between Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy and myself in Calcutta regarding the formation of a Coalition Ministry by the Congress and the Muslim League in Bengal. I should very briefly indicate the circumstances in which the talks began.

Before I reached Delhi on 10 April Mr. Suhrawardy saw Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the President of the Indian National Congress, in Delhi. After I reached there, he and I met and had a short discussion as to whether it was possible for the Congress to work with the Muslim League Party in the Bengal Legislature. As Mr. Suhrawardy was immediately leaving for Calcutta it was not possible for us to discuss the terms with him.

In setting the terms for compromise, we thought we should not raise the fundamental issue on which we differed because the Provincial Legislature was not the forum for discussing and settling such issues. On such issues we should agree to differ and we should be free to raise them at the proper place and at the proper time. For the time being, we should confine ourselves to such matters, an agreement on which is necessary for making joint work possible within the limited sphere of provincial activities.

These terms were also generally approved by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress.

On my arrival in Calcutta on 16 April I put these terms before Mr. Suhrawardy.

The discussions I had with him were cordial and I still have an impression that Mr. Suhrawardy was not unwilling to come to an understanding with the Congress. It is not possible for me to know what circumstances compelled him to change his altitude and reject all our terms eventually.

I am sorry we could not come to an underfunding and work together even to meet the immediate problems of Bengal.

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## **The Correspondence**

In his letter dated 19 April Mr. Roy referred, among other things to the number of Ministers and to the release of political prisoners.

With regard to the number of Ministers. Mr. Roy wrote to Mr. Suhrawardy:

You are insisting on seven from the Muslim League Party and five from the Congress Party. I have pressed for an equal number from the League and the Congress with the addition of the Chief Minister from the Muslim League Party. But you have stated that it is not possible for you to accept the number proposed by me. I am still of the opinion that my proposal is reasonable. Either we should have both the Home and Civil Supplies or you should have an equal number excluding the Chief Minister.

We had some discussion regarding the distribution of portfolios. As they were tentative I am not mentioning them excepting that you intend to keep the Home portfolio to yourself and are prepared to give the portfolio of Civil Supplies to Congress.

With regard to the release of political prisoners Mr. Roy wrote:

You agreed that those that are detained without trial should be released immediately, but, as far as I remember, you are unable to commit yourself with regard to the release of convicted prisoners.

This is also a vital matter and I expect you to clear it up.

Mr. Suhrawardy, replying the same day, said with regard to the point about the number of Ministers:

I regret I cannot resile from the position I have maintained. The Chief Minister should, in my opinion, keep the Home portfolio.

Regarding the release of political prisoners Mr. Suhrawardy wrote:

You will undoubtedly realize that the release of political prisoners is subject to the special responsibilities of the Governor. I shall take into consideration whatever policy has been followed in other provinces and see to what extent it is applicable to Bengal. I feel that detention without trial is not justified in the present political atmosphere and I agree that political prisoners detained without trial, particularly the 1942 prisoners, ought to be released. As regards convicted prisoners, their case will be subject to further revision and scrutiny.

On 20 April Mr. Roy wrote to Mr. Suhrawardy:

You have rejected the terms which we considered to be the minimum for making joint work possible. I placed the correspondence that passed between you and me before the meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party this afternoon and the party has resolved that your reply is unsatisfactory and our party is unable to form any coalition with your party.

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### ***Statesman 23 April 1946***

Mr. Suhrawardy releases the text of the Delhi letters

Releasing the correspondence which he had in Delhi with Mr. Kiran Sanker Roy. Leader of the Congress Assembly Party, on the possibility of a League-Congress Ministry in Bengal. Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, Leader of the Bengal Muslim League Legislature Party, says:

Mr. K S Roy has released the correspondence that passed between us in Calcutta. But this correspondence should really be read with the correspondence that passed between us at Delhi. I saw Maulana Abul Kai am Azad in Delhi on 10 April once and not thrice as had been reported in Delhi papers. Apart from other facts to which reference has been made by me in the correspondence that subsequently passed between me and Mr. Roy, Maulana Azad stated that the Congress must be given a free hand to nominate whomsoever they chose. When I told him I could not consent to the Congress nominating a non-League Muslim, he replied that he realized my difficulties and that Mr. Jinnah would never consent to such a course. He suggested that the Congress should nominate four only leaving one vacancy which will be filled later on in accordance with the

wishes of the Congress, and that I should agree to such a proposal. He said that he was making this offer of his own accord, although he had rejected such an offer when made to him by the Nawab of Mamdot in the Punjab. This, as everyone knows, has been strenuously denied by the Nawab of Mamdot.

Maulana Azad also raised the point about Mr. Fazlul Haq to which I have referred in the correspondence. I was to see him the next day.

I saw Mr. Roy on the morning of 11 April and told him that it was not possible to have a joint Ministry on the terms proposed by Maulana Azad, terms which had estranged the Congress and the Muslim League throughout India. Mr. Roy was a little bit surprised as he thought from his conversation with Maulana Azad that I was agreeable to the terms. I, therefore, thought it proper to get down my own proposals in writing. It will be seen that, from the very beginning, I have been offering five seats to the Congress in a Cabinet of twelve, a proposal to which Maulana Azad agreed.

Mr. Roy in his reply, however, pressed for an equal number of seats barring the Chief Minister. I replied to him that I could not go back on my previous offer. I requested him to agree and made it clear that, if he agrees, he was to wire me in Calcutta.

On the evening of 12 April, I received a wire in Calcutta from Mr. Roy asking me to wait and that he would like to have a further discussion with me in Calcutta. He proposed to fly to Calcutta with Maulana Azad and discuss matters with me on 15 April. I replied, informing him that I would await his arrival and requested both of them to see me in my house for final discussions.

I then received a wire to the effect that Maulana Azad could not come to Calcutta and that Mr. Roy himself would be arriving on 16 April.

I had a discussion with Mr. Roy on 16 April, which led me to believe that there was no cause for pessimism. I made it clear to him that I could not alter the number. We, however, discussed portfolios and I offered five major portfolios to the Congress, I made my position very clear to him and, as my letter would show, have gone as far as was reasonably possible to meet the points raised by the Congress. I think that it is I, and not Mr. Roy, who should be in a position to say that I did not know what circumstances compelled him to change his altitude and to consider my reply unsatisfactory. However, I do not think it is any use dragging this matter further. The chapter is closed and I hope it has left no sting behind. As I have said before, I shall continue to seek the cooperation of the Congress and their goodwill. I cannot hope that they will see eye to eye with us

on every point but, surely, there can always be room for adjustments if the goodwill is reciprocal.

### **Text of letters**

Letter from Mr. Suhrawardy to Mr. Roy dated 11 April

My dear Kiran,

With reference to the various conversations I have had with you regarding the formation of a Ministry in Bengal I think it will be useful if I were to get down on paper my proposals lest there be any misunderstanding in future. I have been asked by HE The Governor of Bengal to assist him in the formation of a Ministry. He has asked me to suggest names, including one or more members of the important minority communities. As the elections have proved that your group represents to a very large extent the most important minority *viz.* the Hindus, I think it proper that I should make an effort to form a joint Ministry with your group. I am, therefore, offering you five seats in a cabinet of twelve. As the elections have further shown that most of the Scheduled Caste members have been returned on the Congress ticket, I propose that the Scheduled Caste representatives in the Cabinet should be taken from the Congress group. As regards how many should be Caste Hindus and how many Scheduled Castes, this matter can be discussed among ourselves as well as their personnel.

I shall be in Delhi today from 6 p.m. onwards. I shall be obliged if a final decision can be reached today as I propose to leave for Calcutta early tomorrow morning by air. If you can agree to these proposals. we can then sit down in Calcutta to draft a joint programme.

### **Congress position**

Letter from Mr. Roy to Mr. Suhrawardy, dated 11 April.

My dear Shaheed,

I received your letter of the above date at about 6:30 p.m. It would have been better off we could have met and discussed the points raised by you. But since you have put the terms in writing. I would like to let you know my reactions to them. You seem to emphasize that our group, *i.e.*, the Congress Party, represents the Hindus alone. As you are aware, I have repeatedly told you that is a position we can never accept. The Congress is a political party with a political ideology. I am sorry that you have needlessly raised this issue.



I would like to make it clear that there is no ideological bar to the Congress Party cooperating with the League, provided the issue of Pakistan is kept out of provincial politics. We shall continue to agree to differ on that issue and will be free to express our views at the proper place and the proper time. That apart, we should work untidily on the basis of a common programme and equal distribution of portfolios.

If you accept the basis mentioned above, I shall, if you so desire, discuss details with you in Calcutta. Since you are leaving early tomorrow morning it seems that it will not be possible to have further discussions here: I shall be in Calcutta on 6 April.

Mr. Suhrawardy's reply

Letter from Mr. Suhrawardy to Mr. Roy, dated 11 April.

Mr. dear Kiran,

I am sorry that your letter is so disappointing, as I had hoped to inaugurate a Ministry, at least in one part of India, where the Muslim League and Congress could have cooperated with each other. I regret that I find myself unable to go back on the offer of five Ministers in a Cabinet of twelve. I had made this clear to Maulana Azad and he had stated that numbers were of little consequence and would not stand in the way. I hope, therefore, that you will agree to the numbers as proposed by me. If you do, you can come to me in Calcutta, before I begin talking to other parties.

As regards the question whether the Congress represents the Hindus alone or not and whether this is incompatible with the Congress being a political party with a political ideology, I am not concerned. I am only going by the results of the elections, which have shown, as stated in my first letter, that the Congress has the support to a very large extent of the Hindu minority and, as such, my effort is to get, in the first instance and if available, such representatives of the minority community or communities as command the support of the majority of the community to which they belong. I do hope, therefore, that you will be able to accept my offer and thus give an opportunity for the Muslims and Hindus of Bengal to work together for the good of the province as a whole.

There is one other matter to which I would like to refer lest this raise complications in future. The Congress President told me that he could not give up Mr. Fazlul Haq, and that he must be elected Speaker of the Assembly. Apart from other considerations the Muslim League Party cannot support a non-League Muslim for any office, and hence I find myself unable to agree to this.

I shall very much appreciate an early reply by wire, as I am anxious in the interests of the province to have a responsible Ministry in the province without unnecessary delay. If you agree to my proposals, I shall await your return to Calcutta.

## Appendix III

### Mr. Suhrawardy's Defence in the Bengal Legislative Assembly 20 September 1946

Let me, Sir, as I begin, pay on behalf of every single member in the House and of the House itself our humble tribute of penitence and regret to those innocents who lost their lives in the terrible carnage that beset Calcutta on 16 August and the subsequent days, and our sympathies and condolences to the members of the bereaved families, to the widows and the orphans, the fatherless and motherless sons and the sonless fathers and mothers, who live to mourn their loss.

Let this terrible thing which has happened be a lesson to those who may still think that we are playing with politics, with Ministries, with no-confidence motions, with the battledore and the shuttlecock of power under the shadow of British Raj. Today politics is much more earnest and real.

Today it is not merely the transference of power which is involved but the lives of the people. It is not merely a question of forensics and fulminations, of debating ability, of making a point here or there. It is not a matter of tactical victories, of gloating over advantages won by shabby tricksters. Today politics is real, vital and earnest.

#### *Factual Position*

I will hence not attempt to make points but to narrate before this House the factual position as I understand it. I am doing so in the hope that all of us will draw a lesson from what has gone before and so mend our hearts and our minds and our ways that there may be no repetition of those horrible days which will haunt us as a nightmare till the end of our lives. May it come to pass that those who have died have not died in vain, and on their graves let us build a memorial of abiding peace and cooperation and strive to work for the common welfare of the various peoples that inhabit this subcontinent.

#### *Commission of Enquiry*

A terrible catastrophe has occurred, the most terrible in the annals of India within recent times, and the blame must naturally fall on the Government of the day until it can prove that it did all in its power and within the limits of its resources. I feel that when passions still run high, when political affiliations govern votes, it is only an impartial tribunal that can ever arrive at the correct facts and give a proper appreciation of the incidents, and hence I lost no time in taking steps to set up a Commission of Enquiry of unimpeachable judgment and integrity. I, however, do not seek that refuge

in placing the facts before the House as I see them, for I owe an explanation to the House itself and the members of the public outside.

### ***Reply to Charges***

I have been charged by Muslims time and again for being partial to the Hindus. Read the various papers, you will see that everything which I am saying is true. For myself, I have attempted to hold the scales even and I have resisted all efforts which might even remotely be considered unfair or victimization. Amongst the Hindus I have very dear friends, friends regarding whom I may say that for their safety and their happiness even my life is forfeited. As for the Muslims they have done me the honor of electing me the Leader of their party. I love the Muslims of Calcutta who look upon me even as their father. I know them intimately and I have been brought up amongst them. Would I ever consciously bring about a clash between the two? It is not suggested that I desire that the Muslims should be decimated. It is intimated that I wanted to get the Hindus assaulted. If it had been so, would I have left the Muslims unprepared and unprotected, so that their houses may be looted and burnt to the ground? Would I have asked them to come to the *maidan* leaving their women and children behind? Would I have allowed their *bustees* to be burnt and their women and children murdered? Would I have declared a public holiday on 16 August which would mean that while I would draw the Muslims from their homes, I'd leave behind the Hindus in their homes to look after themselves and if they so wish, to attack the unprotected residences of the Muslims. Do the Hon'ble Members realize what would have happened to the Hindus had the offices remained open and had there been a major communal conflict as actually did take place, Hindus coming to work in their offices from their distant homes would have all been in peril. May I say one word, too, on behalf of the Muslims.

I am a Muslim and I know their mentality. I can definitely and categorically state that the Muslim was not prepared for a conflict. He had not the slightest indication that so much antagonism and so much hatred had been stored up against him. He did not realize, being largely illiterate and not reading the Hindu papers, that the Hindus were determined not only not to observe *hartals* but to resist and defy any attempts, indeed any requests to close their shops.

### ***Observance of Hartal***

Elated perhaps by the observance of the day, hopeful perhaps that the Hindus would observe the *hartal* along with him, as he had done along with them, he made preparations to have a grand holiday and to come to the *maidan* and congregate there with lakhs of his brethren. Little did he know what was in store for him. Little did he know that his processions will be stoned, that his shops will be burnt and looted, that he would be waylaid and mobbed and killed and stabbed, that he would be prevented from going to the *maidan*.

### *Who First Started the Affray*

It has been suggested by some Members that the Muslims started the affray. A very ingenious defence is put forward by Mr. Kundu to explain the undeniable fact that the first casualties that came to the hospitals were Muslims. Based on the apocryphal story of a Muslim rickshaw puller, he suggests that all these Muslim casualties were inflicted by other Muslims. Is it really seriously suggested that Muslims would have ever dared to attack shops of Hindus in Harrison Road, Clive Street, Bowbazar Street, College Street, Bhowanipore, Rash Behari Avenue or any of the great Hindu localities where Muslims were obstructed and killed on the very first day? Processions coming from Howrah were obstructed at the junctions of Harrison Road and Strand Road and as far away as Tollygunge a small procession of Muslims coming from Tollygunge under the protection of a Deputy Commissioner of Police at 3.00 on the afternoon of the 16th was obstructed by a huge crowd of Hindus on Russa Road near the Bridge and had to return.

### *Police Precautions*

I will not dilate on the matter further. It is with great reluctance that I have stated what I have. I wonder if there is any one present here who could have visualized what was in store. I wonder if the Hon'ble Members Opposite when they were playing with the fiery impetuosity and political idealism of their young men and were charging them to resist the *hartal* realized what a fearful amount of hatred they were conjuring against the Muslims and what a tremendous conflagration it would cause. Police precautions were taken. Instructions were given to the Civil Supplies Department to keep all their vehicles in their depots until such time as it might be known whether disturbances would take place or not. Similar advice was given to the Oil Companies in view of the high vulnerability of their oil tankers and our opinion was conveyed to the military that their vehicles should not run unless under escort.

### *'Emergency Action' Scheme*

On 15 August the Commissioner of Police informed all police officers that the Emergency Action scheme which had been prepared before this Ministry took office, would be brought into operation with effect from 8 a.m. on the 16th. It was decided that this time should not be made earlier as it was likely that all ranks would be on duty throughout the day and it was desired that they should be able to get their meals before coming on duty.

### *The Emergency Action scheme involved the following:-*

- i. The mobilization of all available men of the Armed Police and the sending of 200 Sepoys to Lalbazar with the remainder being held in their barracks ready to be sent out at a moment's notice.
- ii. The withdrawal from the streets of all Traffic Police with half being sent to Lalbazar immediately and the other half held in readiness in their

barracks. In connection with the Traffic Police it was decided that those traffic points which are manned on public holidays should continue to be manned on the 16th as it was considered that the complete withdrawal of these men from the streets might create nervousness and also that such withdrawal might be constructed into belief that the police were also observing *hartal*. The number of men involved was small and these were all in fact withdrawn from the streets for emergency duties at midday.

- iii. The setting up of the Control Room at Lalbazar with all telephones manned by officers previously selected.
- iv. The manning by intelligence officers of all police station and District Headquarters telephones.
- v. The attendance in the Control Room of Deputy Commissioners' Special Branch, Security Control (I), Security Control (II), Public Vehicles Department, Detective with certain Assistant Commissioners who could be spared from their duties.
- vi. The sending out from police stations Constables in plain clothes for the purpose of collecting intelligence.
- vii. The bringing into Headquarters of all Inspectors and Sergeants from Security Control and Public Vehicles Department.
- viii. The sending out of mobile patrols on routes where experience has shown trouble was likely for the purpose of reconnaissance.

There were at readiness at 8 a.m., either at Headquarters or standing by in barracks approximately 16 Inspectors, 114 Sergeants, 400 Armed Police and 150 Traffic Police.

### ***No Shifting of Responsibility***

Many persons have criticized me for attempting to divest myself of responsibility for law and order in Calcutta, for making the Commissioner of Police the scapegoat, for being so ungallant as to shift the responsibility upon him. I want to state categorically that I have no such intention. The Commissioner of Police, to my knowledge, put the emergency scheme into operation early in the day, as I have told you, at 8.00. He utilized the forces at his disposal to the best of his ability. He accepted all the calls for assistance that were made to him at Lalbazar. He and his officers worked unceasingly; he himself remained on duty until the early hours of the 17th and he and his officers took it by turns to attend at Lalbazar throughout. But if he and his police force were overwhelmed, it is not, his fault, for as I have repeatedly stated the police force of Calcutta have not been engaged in sufficient numbers to take charge of a general

communal conflagration when fighting goes on in every street, lane, by-lane, when human beings commit acts of cruelty and bestiality without any precedent in the annals of Calcutta or of this subcontinent.

### *Control of Police Force*

It has been stated that generally speaking the police stood idle and allowed assaults and lootings to take place under their very eyes. It is stated that when the police were asked to intervene, they said they had no orders, or they had orders not to interfere. I have been solemnly asked by some people to ascertain from the Commissioner of Police if he gave such orders. I am amazed that such a request could have been made, that it could possibly have been conceived that such orders could have been issued by any reasonable human being, and I can categorically state that no such orders were issued. How. I ask you, can I, or the Commissioner of Police, be held responsible if in some place or places the police at hand does not intervene and does not perform its duty in preserving law and order. I think however that at this stage honorable members should know what the statutory position is regarding the direction and control of the police force in Calcutta. I refer the honorable members to Section 9 of the Police Act.

Placed below the opinion of the Advocate General himself so that there may be no doubt regarding interpretation.

Investing 'the direction and control of the Police force' in the Commissioner of Police the Legislature has used the word 'exclusive' to emphasize the position and to make it clear that the Police force is under the 'exclusive' direction and control of the Commissioner of Police.

In contrast to this exclusive power of direction and control, the power to frame orders and regulations given to the Commissioner is made subject to the control of the provincial Government.

The words 'subject to the control of the Provincial Government' cannot obviously qualify the 'exclusive direction and control' of the Police force given to the Commissioner.

It will thus be seen that so far as the direction and control of the police force is concerned in Calcutta the Commissioner of Police is vested with the statutory responsibility and what staled in another place that neither I nor any higher power can intervene is strictly correct Apart from that, administratively it would be wrong on the part of anyone to interfere with the dispositions without the consent. When this is so. I am asked, why did I go to the Control Room and what was I doing there? I am certain that such is the perversity of human nature, had I not been there, I would have been charged with dereliction of duty.

### ***Military Help***

As far as I remember regarding the Incidents of that crowded day I entered the Control Room at about 2 p.m., after having visited several localities and having ascertained for myself that the tension was rising and the conflagration was likely to be general. At that time the compound of Lalbazar was flooded with armed police and lorries. Some had gone out on urgent calls. I gave to the Commissioner of Police my appreciation that the military should be called out. At 2.45 p.m. a warning was communicated to the military authorities to be in readiness as their services might be required. At 4.30 p.m., a decision was taken and communicated to the military authorities requesting them to come to the aid of the civil power and for this purpose to concentrate a force at Sealdah in order to keep open certain important thoroughfares such as:

- a. Canning Street, Kolootolah Street, Mirzapore Street.
- b. Lower Chitpore Road from its junction with Kolootolah Street to its junction with Vivekananda Road from its junction with Upper Chilpore Road to its Junction with College Street.
- c. College Street from its junction with Kolootolah Street to its junction with Vivekananda Road.
- d. Harrison Road.
- e. Central Avenue from its junction with Vivekananda road to its junction with Kolootolah Street.

### ***Military Preparations***

At 11.00 it was decided that the military would patrol the area already designated and to which I have referred above. At about noon the next day the military made preparations to take over the area which was bordered north by Vivekananda Road, east by Lower Circular Road, south by Bowbazar Street and west by the river Hoogly. They chose to employ three battalions for this purpose and started combing that area. All along a Deputy Commissioner of Police was in liaison with them that is to say, from the 16th.

On the 17th during their operations they asked for the assistance of three Deputy Commissioners. 45 policemen of officer's rank and 210 armed police, which further depleted the resources of the Commissioner of Police. The operation opened at 8 p.m.

### ***Military Patrolling***

On the same day at about 4 p.m., arrangements were made for military patrolling during the evening in the Garden Reach, 24-Pargana area, from the Docks to the end of the Garden Reach Municipality and on that same day the military were also asked to



take over or to maintain order in the area from Surendranath Banerjee Road down to Free School Street, Wellesley Street, Park Street, Marquis Street, Elliot Road, Royd Street and then on to the Park Circus Area. On the 18th the military extended their operations further north of Vivekananda Road.

### *Peace Parleys*

On the 17th at about noon the leaders of the various parties including Mr. Sarat Bose and the Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition were good enough to meet me in my room in the Assembly. Although I had an unfortunate experience the previous evening regarding the behavior of a Hindu crowd I requested them earnestly to come out with me or without me address the people in the interest of peace so that the evil might cease before it spread further. They expressed their inability to do so. I want to make it clear to the House that I do not blame them. Perhaps the position was such that no amount of peace parleys on our part would have eased the situation. I only state facts. They asked that armed pickets should be placed throughout Calcutta. I conveyed the opinions so expressed to the Commissioner of Police who expressed and demonstrated his inability to comply with the request with the forces at his disposal. This is a matter of administration in which I felt I could not interfere.

The Commissioner of Police had his own method of dealing with the disturbances and he utilized what he had and I repeat that what he had was clearly not enough for the task that he had to cope with. He utilized what he had in a manner which he considered most suitable and most likely to yield results. The lack of personnel indeed was so great that he could hardly deal with the innumerable requests for armed escorts to rescue people from marooned areas.

### *'Statesman's Charge*

A paper which I think Hon'ble Members will recognize as the Statesman picked upon me as a Chief Culprit from the very beginning and held me responsible for the breakdown of law and order for clearly there was such a breakdown where so many people could have been massacred or butchered by their fellow countrymen. At first I thought that this charge was not really serious and that it had been leveled against me to avoid the obvious culprit namely the Cabinet Mission which had produced such a terrible tension between the Hindus and the Muslims and which had created a situation where the Hindus felt that any agitation by the Muslims was directed against their assumption of power in the Interim Government but when I found later on that in one or two of its articles or sub-articles it charged me with inactivity, I understood that this paper was deliberately out to malign me and to find every possible excuse for doing so. Whoever was the writer was obviously working in his sanctum sanctorum sheltered from the cataclysm which had overtaken Calcutta and drawing his own conclusions from these same fantasies which trouble the Hindu Press. He wished to know where I was. Probably he thought that I had disappeared from the scene. He wished to know where I was when he stated that His Excellency the Governor had already been twice

round some areas in the city and had already broadcast on two occasions and why I was not present at the routine Press Conferences which were being held to apprise the Press of passing events.

The *Statesman* is still on the war path. It will not be satisfied until it sees me out of office. Perhaps its hopes will be fulfilled but I shall never forget the attack on me which it initiated at a time when I was not in a position to meet it, an attack no less violent in its nature than the bludgeoning by fifty *goondas* on one defenseless head, or an assassin's knife in the back.

### ***'Direct Action'***

There is very little for me to add except to clear further points that have been made in the various speeches through sheer misconception. It has been stated that I cannot remain in office if I call upon the people to break the law. I agree with this proposition but the point which I would like to emphasize is that 16 August was not a day in which Direct Action was to be launched nor was it a day, indeed, in which the people were called upon to break the law. It was simply a day for demonstrations and for listening to the speeches justifying the policy of the Muslim League. Muslims were not ready for Direct Action and up till now they do not know what form the Direct Action will take. Reference has been made in this connection to the speeches of Maulana Akram Khan and Khawaja Nazimuddin. Those speeches I am sure had not the slightest effect on Muslims on this occasion for they were speeches delivered in support of a future Direct Action which has not yet been placed before the Muslims. Not one Muslim was laboring in the belief that on that day which the Quaid-i-Azam had called upon the Muslims to observe as a peaceful day that on that day any Direct Action was being contemplated.

### ***Parallel Government***

Reference has been made to a statement which I am alleged to have made in Delhi regarding Independence and running a parallel Government. Surely I have never conceived that I could declare independence while remaining a Chief Minister under the Act of 1935. I still maintain perhaps I may be permitted to do so—that Bengal one day shall be an independent sovereign state.

### ***Question of Coalition***

Many Hon'ble Members have offered me advice to form a coalition. They say that there never will be peace in this province unless a coalition is formed. The Hon'ble Members know my views regarding a coalition but I ask them how can there be a coalition in this province with the Congress when elsewhere there is no cooperation and coalition. Are there not riots going on in Bombay, in the United Provinces, and elsewhere? What attempts are being made by the Congress Ministries to take any Muslim Leaguers into their Ministry? Has not Sardar Vallabhai Patel spoken in no uncertain terms? That it is absurd to talk about a coalition between the Congress and the Muslim League, their

ideologies are too wide apart? I refer to this statement which came out in the paper here not so long ago as 3 August this year.

### *Congress and League*

Let us all wish ardently that the disputes between the Congress and the Muslim League may be settled at the centre in a real spirit of cooperation and friendliness motivated by the earnest desire to see that peace prevails in India. Let us stop talking about civil war as the only other alternative. You cannot have civil war in a country where either the Hindus or Muslims are so closely inter-mingled or one section is in a desperate minority and is perfectly defenseless. That will not be civil war. That will be insensate brutish butchery and we must avoid it if you do not want to make a political game of the lives of the people, if you do not think that Hindustan or Pakistan can be achieved by murdering your neighbor, if you are determined to see that whatever the ideologies local peace is maintained throughout and an earnest effort is made to preserve peace without having to call in the military.

Mr. Dharendra Nath Dutt's motion against the Council of Ministers was defeated by 131 to 87 votes and that of Mr. Bimal Comar Ghose against Mr. Suhrawardy by 130 to 85 votes. The announcement of results of voting was greeted by prolonged shouts of *League Ministry zindabad and Suhrawardy zindabad*.

## Appendix IV

### Sir Fredrick Burrows Letter to Lord Wavell on the No-Confidence Motion 21 September 1946

Calcutta  
21 September 1946 Dear

Lord Wavell,

I promised in my general letter No. FJB-11 dated 20 September 1946 to address you separately about the no-confidence motions in the Bengal Legislative Assembly against the Ministry and the Chief Minister, which were debated on September 19 and 20. The motion against the Ministry was defeated by 131 votes to 87, and the motion against the Chief Minister by 130 votes (the Chief Minister himself abstaining) to 85. I enclose a copy of the debate as reported in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which is considerably fuller than the version in the Statesman which you may have seen. I am sending a copy of this letter to the Secretary of State.

2. The party position just before the riots may be tabulated as follows: —

#### Ministerial Party

Muslim League (including Speaker)	.....	118
Independent Scheduled Castes	.....	5
European Group	.....	25
Anglo-Indian	.....	4
Total		152

#### Opposition

Congress	.....	87
Communists	.....	3
Nationalist Muslims	.....	4
Hindu Nationalists	.....	2
Indian Christians	.....	2
Total		98

I described to you in paragraph 2 of my general letter No. FJB-10 dated 5 September 1946 the effect of Fazlul Haq's 'somersault' which had the effect of transferring four votes from the Opposition to the Ministry. The allegiance of Anglo-Indians and some of the Independent Scheduled Castes was for a time in doubt. Strenuous efforts were also made by the Opposition to persuade the European Group to support the no-confidence motions—efforts which were seconded by a forcible and unequivocal leading article in the Statesman on the eve of the debate—but was never in serious doubt that they would not remain neutral.

3. The two-day debate was marked by a general feeling of restraint, and feelings rose only during the markedly provocative and communal speech of Dr Syamaprosad Mookejee. The speech of Kiran Sanker Roy, the leader of the Opposition reads well, but I am told that his delivery was very ineffective and he did not hold his audience. In what was, I am told—in spite of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika's* unfavorable comment—a very effective reply to the debate, the Chief Minister made a restrained and statesmanlike defence of the Government and I am much relieved that he did not throw the Police 'to the wolves.' I give below an analysis of the voting on the main motion (it is based on a newspaper report, as I have not yet seen the official division list, but I believe it to be accurate).

### Ministerial Party

Muslim League	.....	117
Nationalist Muslims (since joining the Muslim League)	.....	3
Indian Christian	.....	1
Independent Scheduled Castes	.....	3
Scheduled Castes (Congress)	.....	3
Anglo-Indians	.....	4
Total		131

### Opposition

Congress	.....	82
Hindu Nationalists	.....	2
Independent Scheduled Castes	.....	2
Indian Christian	.....	1
Total		87

### Neutral

European Group	.....	20
Communists	.....	3
Speaker	.....	1

Total 24

**Absent**

European Group	.....	5
Congress	.....	2
Nationalists Muslim	.....	1
Total		8
Ministerial Party	.....	131
Opposition	.....	87
Neutral	.....	24
Absent	.....	8
Total		250

It will be seen that both sides mustered practically all their strength. The two Congress absentees are both out of the Province at the moment There has never been a 'three-line whip' before in the present House, so the allegiance of some of the Independent Scheduled Castes has always been a matter of doubt. I am not surprised to find that two of them have sided with the Opposition. The Ministry has more than counter-balanced this loss by winning over three of the Scheduled Caste members elected on the Congress ticket

4. The effect of the voting is that, as long as the Ministry agrees to work the 1935 Act, they are practically unassailable. Now that the present Ministry has faced the House successfully. I am expecting my Chief Minister to strengthen his team as soon as the Legislature is prorogued.

**Appendix V**  
**Extract from India Wins Freedom<sup>3</sup>**  
**by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**

Now happened one of those unfortunate events which change the course of history. On 10 July, Jawaharlal held a Press Conference in Bombay in which he made a statement which in normal circumstances might have passed almost unnoticed, but in the existing atmosphere of suspicion and hatred, set in train a most unfortunate series of consequences. Some Press representatives asked him whether with the passing of the Resolution by AICC, the Congress had accepted the Plan in toto. including the composition of the interim Government

Jawaharlal stated in reply that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly 'completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise'.

Press representatives further asked if this meant that the Cabinet Mission Plan could be modified.

Jawaharlal replied emphatically that the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought best.

I must place on record to say that Congress was not free to modify the Plan as it pleased. We had in fact agreed that the Central Government would be federal. There would be the compulsory list of three Central subjects to remain in the provincial sphere. We had further agreed that there would be the three Sections, *viz.*, A, B and C in which the provinces would be grouped. These matters could not be changed unilaterally by Congress without the consent of other parties to the agreement

The Muslim League had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, as this represented the utmost limit to which the British Government would go. In his speech to the League Council, Mr. Jinnah had clearly stated that he recommended acceptance only because nothing better could be obtained.

Mr. Jinnah was thus not very happy about the outcome of the negotiations, but he had reconciled himself as there was no alternative. Jawaharlal's statement came to him as a bombshell. He immediately issued a statement that this declaration by the Congress President demanded a review of the whole situation. He accordingly asked Liaquat Ali Khan to call a meeting of the League Council and issued a statement that the Muslim

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<sup>3</sup> (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Lid., 1988)

League council had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan in Delhi as it was assured that the Congress had also accepted the scheme and that the Plan would be the basis of the future constitution of India. Now that the Congress President had declared that the Congress could change the scheme through its majority in the Constituent Assembly, this would mean that minorities were placed at the mercy of the majority. His view was that Jawaharlal's declaration meant that the Congress had rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan and as such the Viceroy should call upon the Muslim League, which had accepted the Plan, to form the Government.

The Muslim League Council met in Bombay on 27 July, In his opening speech Mr. Jinnah reiterated the demand for Pakistan as the only course left open to the Muslim League. After three day's discussion, the Council passed a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan. It also decided to resort to direct action for the achievement of Pakistan.

I was extremely perturbed by this new development I saw that the scheme for which I had worked so hard was being destroyed through our own action. I felt that a meeting of the Working Committee was necessary. This accordingly met on 8 August I pointed out that if we wanted to save the situation, we must make it clear that the view of the Congress was expressed by the resolution passed by the AICC and that no individual, not even the Congress President, could change it.

The Working Committee felt that it faced a dilemma. On the one side, the prestige of the Congress President was at stake, On the other, the settlement which we had so painfully achieved was in danger. To repudiate the President's statement would weaken the organization but to give up the Cabinet Mission Plan would ruin the country. Finally, we drafted a Resolution which made no reference to the Press Conference but reaffirmed the decision of the AICC.



## Appendix VI

### Mahatma Gandhi's letter to Shaheed Suhrawardy on the Bihar riots 27 October 1947

Heavens nor the  
letter of the former  
Hence you & I have  
to die in the attempt  
to make them live  
together as friends  
& brothers wherever  
they are.

Whatever others  
may say, you &  
I have to regard  
suchs and others  
as part of India.

decline it is their  
concern.

I cannot escape  
the conclusion  
that the mischief  
commenced with  
2. A. & still continues.

This I say more  
to make my meaning  
state correct to you  
than to correct  
you  
I have only one  
course - to do or die

same paper

This letter of Mahatma Gandhi is one of the series of letters he wrote to Shaheed Bhai after the Bihar riots, when Shaheed Bhai was the Minister of Civil Supplies in the Government of Bengal.

It was published in the 'Suhrawardy Number' of the magazine called Monitor after Shaheed Bhai's death. The editor of the magazine was the veteran and well-known journalist Mr. Aziz.

I had seen the letters as Shaheed Bhai was staying in my house in New Delhi after the riots in Bihar. I was asking him questions regarding the riots as he had just come from seeing the conditions there.

He handed me a stack of files. 'Read these,' he said. I began reading them and found a number of letters between Shaheed Bhai and Gandhi in them.

Shaheed Bhai's began by being formal and terse. His letters related the conditions of the Muslims, what they had suffered and were suffering. The letters were signed very formally: H S Suhrawardy in Shaheed Bhai's bold handwriting.

Gandhi's letters were conciliatory, reminiscing over the days when Shaheed Bhai was the Secretary of the Khilafat Committee. How he (Gandhi) still remembered seeing Shaheed Bhai sitting in a corner, spinning *Charkha*. It was signed 'Bapu'.

Shaheed Bhai continues in his terse, matter of fact, style for some time.

Finally there is a softening, there is no giving in regarding the Muslim demands. But the letters are now signed: Shaheed.

## Appendix VII

### Mr. Suhrawardy's first speech in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan 6 March 1948

Mr. Deputy President Sir, it is with great diffidence that I rise to speak in this august House on a subject which may be considered to be somewhat touchy for obvious reasons and which makes the position of the Cabinet somewhat vulnerable inasmuch as it is a Cabinet of a very new and young Dominion which had to struggle against difficult odds before it could find its feet. My position, here, Sir, is seemingly anomalous, but I think that there is really no real anomaly in a member, in a citizen of the Indian Dominion, being a Member of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and presuming to participate in this Debate. There is no legal or constitutional bar, but more than that, I think, that there is no moral bar to a person coming here and saying something which may be beneficial to the Dominion of Pakistan, and, perhaps, may help in serving the cause of the people in general.

Sir, a person has not only one loyalty, he has several loyalties to several causes which are not antagonistic to each other, and I feel, Sir, that the greatest loyalty which a person can possess, is a loyalty to humanity which transcends all parochial loyalties. It is, Sir, on behalf of and in pursuance of that loyalty that I am presuming to address you here today. I shall not endeavor to offer any advice or comment on how this State should be run. I shall not comment, Sir, on the proposals of how to make the State solvent or what should be done in order to promote commerce or to establish industries or how to settle the refugees and look after their welfare or how to promote education and make it cheap for the people or how to promote their health. These matters I should leave to those who are now in charge of the destinies of Pakistan, and I presume, who are now fully aware of their duties and responsibilities. My purpose, Sir, here today is to comment only on a fundamental aspect, *viz.*, the foundations of Pakistan itself. It has two branches, one is the goodwill of the people and of the citizens of Pakistan within the State and the other is the mutual relationship between the Dominion of Pakistan and the sister Dominion, *i.e.* the Indian Union.

As regards the first, Sir, I have not the least doubt that if this State is not founded on the cooperative goodwill of all the nationals, a time will come when this State will destroy itself. I am reminded of one of the statements made by Mahatma Gandhi that if the Indian Union eliminates Muslims from within its fold and forms a Hindu State, Hinduism will be destroyed in the Indian Union, and if Pakistan eliminates non-Muslims from within its fold and forms a Muslim State, Islam will be destroyed in Pakistan. We have to think it out very carefully. The Islam which will be in Pakistan

will not be true Islam which is founded on toleration, equality, brotherhood, and those sentiments to which you have given expression so frequently not only through the mouths of your Ministers, but through the far greater authority of the Governor-General. We have, therefore, Sir, to consider whether, apart from these high sounding sentiments of yours, you are doing anything for the purpose of capturing the confidence of the minorities within Pakistan; whether in spite of these high-sounding sentiments, you are not establishing in effect a communal State within Pakistan. I regret, Sir, to have to say that I feel that your tendency is rather in that direction. I feel, Sir, that you are not giving that assurance to minorities which is their due. I feel that you are not able to give them within your fold that assurance. Do not blame the authorities of the Indian Union that they sent their missionaries here amongst the masses and are asking them to leave your territories for nefarious purposes. Nobody wishes to leave his home. Whenever he comes into Pakistan, he should feel that he is safe and he should not look over his shoulder in order to see whether a blow is going to descend upon his head. He has not got to fear for his life or his existence. That, Sir, should be the position equally of the minorities within Pakistan. They should feel safe within Pakistan as a Muslim feels within its boundaries.

Sir, although this is not the proper forum. I would like – if my voice can reach anywhere else—to say that what I am saying for Pakistan applies equally to the Indian Dominion in its different forms. Sir, why are the Hindus running away from Sind where they were safe and sound, where they had established business on colossal scales and which they made their homes? They had adopted its language and its culture. I think, I am wrong in saying that they adopted its culture. It was their language and their culture, and what are you doing to keep them back? Will you be able to get them back by forming and strengthening the Muslim League within the State? When my Honorable and esteemed friend, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, was speaking yesterday, and said that he did not consider that there was any necessity for the Muslim League to continue within the State of Pakistan and the Honorable and esteemed Minister of the State of Pakistan on my left stated that the Muslim League was necessary for the maintenance of Pakistan and its continuance, *Isko qaim rakhnay kay liai*, were the words. This is an absolutely wrong, parochial and narrow attitude. The Pakistan State, if it is to be maintained, must be maintained by the goodwill of Pakistanis, of all people, Muslims or non-Muslims, whom you consider to be your nationals. It is not to be maintained merely on the goodwill of the Muslims or on their authority or on their strength. The Ministry here is believed to be a Muslim League Ministry. The Ministry here is supposed to follow the policy laid down by the Muslim League.

It was brought into existence in that manner. I shall refer to it later, if I do not forget it, as to how the Muslim League here has ignored the Muslim League while it claims to be behind it; how the Muslim League has flouted its resolutions, because if it had followed its resolutions, I think that the minorities in Pakistan would have had a fair treatment than they are having at the present moment. I shall refer to it if I do not forget it.

## *Interruption*

I do think, with great respect to the Prime Minister, that there has been a gross dereliction of duty upon his part in not carrying out the dictates of the Muslim League which he is supposed to represent in this House. With the Muslim League behind your Ministry is it fair that you should set up a political organization from which you will exclude the other nationals of Pakistan? If your Ministry is going to be a representative Ministry, if it is going to reflect the opinions of all parties and of all peoples then the organization behind it must be an organization which must be permitted to have all parties and all peoples. That is the reason why I maintain that there is not only no room for the Muslim League in Pakistan but that you should found a Pakistan Nationalist League which will open its doors to all the nationals of Pakistan. Then and then only will the minority communities over here feel that they have a voice in the administration, in the Ministry and in the politics of the Province through which they will be able to maintain their influence; otherwise you know what you are doing. You are establishing a Corporation; you are appealing to religious sentiments; you are raising the cry which was raised at the time—and I was a party to it and I think I was justified in those days because we did not have Pakistan and Indian Union but for which there is no justification at the present moment—that the rights of Muslims were in danger. Now, you are raising the cry of Pakistan being in danger for the purpose of getting the caucus going. Now you are raising the cry of Pakistan in danger for the purpose of arousing Muslim sentiment and binding them together in order to maintain you in power. This must go now. Be fair not merely to your own people whom you will destroy, but be fair to the minorities because I would like to tell you this that a State which would be founded upon caucuses and coteries, a State which will be founded on such sentiments, namely, that of Islam in danger or of Pakistan in danger, a State which will be got together by raising the bogey of attacks and which you will keep together by keeping up a constant friction between yourself and the sister Dominion, that State will be full of alarms and excursions. You think that you will get away with it. but in that State there will be no commerce, no business and no trade. There will be lawlessness and those lawless elements that may be turned today against non-Muslims will be turned later on, once those fratricidal tendencies have been aroused, against the Muslim gentry itself. I want you to be warned in time. I want you to open your mind, your heart and your bosom and lake within your fold the non-Muslim minority here that is seeking for expression. On my right I see a small minority within this House that is attempting to assert itself. It is assertive; I want it to be assertive I want it to be more assertive; I want it to be pugilistic so that it may rouse within its people whom they represent a certain sense of self-respect, a certain sense that they are not submerged by the vast Muslim majority. And with self-respect on one side and with desire for goodwill on the other it is not only possible, it is not only desirable, but there should be an endeavor in order to get all the peoples of Pakistan together; that all should work for the benefit, for the glory, for the maintenance and for the prosperity of Pakistan.

Sir, I have never from the minorities heard one word to say that they do not desire Pakistan to succeed or that they do not desire its glory and its prosperity. But what have you done in regard to it? You feel mistrust You say that the Pakistan National Guards are open to all communities but in essence this is not so. It may be so in theory only. In some places some may come and join these National Guards; but you must open it to them in such a manner that they may feel that it is their own organization which they can join with an open heart, where they will be able to get administrative posts and where they will be able to have responsibility which you have denied to them. What responsibility have you given to them over here within your own fold? Only Mr. Jogendra Nath Mandal is their representative who is in your Ministry. In Eastern Bengal where you have such a large number of Hindus, 130 lakhs, and where there is such a large proportion of the Scheduled Castes for whom you shed tears and for whom I shed tears before they parted, what have you done in order to look after their interests? You have established a Ministry; you have made fifteen Parliamentary Secretaries. You have included only one member of the Scheduled Castes in that whole lot in order to show that they are not an utterly forgotten race and in order that you may fulfill your pledges and implement the promises you made at the time when you shouted for Pakistan. I ask you to pause, to turn aside, to retrace your steps and take the minorities into your bosom. Sir, I plead that it is in the cause of humanity. It may be said that coming from the Indian Union and being a Muslim of the Indian Union, I am doing so in order that the Muslims of the Indian Union may get a fair deal from the Indian Union. Sir, I leave the treatment of the Muslims of the Indian Union out of consideration on the Floor of this House. What is happening to us there is no concern of yours for the simple reason that you have made it no concern of yours. I wish that it should have been a concern of yours. At the time when we divided, it was not said as I have heard it said by the Satraps of Pakistan that the Muslims of the Indian Union were warned that you will be in the hopeless minority, that you may be exterminated, that you may have to suffer all kinds of difficulties, that you may be enchained, enslaved and that the Muslims of the Indian Union then said that it did not matter if that was going to be their lot so long as a large number of their brethren living in the majority Provinces were able to have an administration of their own.

Sir, that is only one side of the story. The other side of the story was that you told the Muslims of the Indian Union at the same time that the division of India would solve the communal problem; that would be the greatest safeguard for the minorities within Pakistan and the greatest safeguard for the minorities within the Indian Union. You have forgotten that aspect of it ...

### *Interruption*

Your corners are closed to the Muslims of the Indian Union. You have said that they may not come here and perhaps, Sir, from the point of view of Pakistan that is the best

policy, because if the Muslims of the Indian Union have to leave those shores and are decimated on the way, say, out of three crores even one and a half crores find their way struggling into Pakistan, Pakistan will be overwhelmed. It is perhaps true that you have no other alternative but to say that I do not want you, Sir, to fight for me; I do not want you to look after me; I do not want you to stand up for my rights. The Muslims there hope that they will be able to do so and the true spirit of Islam in the Indian Union will, I think, shine forth, when they will stand up for their rights against overwhelming odds. I do not want you to compete, Sir, in frightfulness. I want you to compete in good deeds. I want you to start the good deeds from here. I want you to give a fair deal to the minorities here. Then the Indian Union, if it is not giving a fair deal to the minorities, will be forced into doing so. Leave, therefore, our fate to ourselves. It is not on our behalf— though I would like you to remember that they are your Muslim brethren living across your borders—it is not on their behalf that I speak for a fair deal for the minorities in Pakistan. It is for the sake of Pakistan itself and in the interest of humanity that I say so.

Sir, perhaps I may be permitted to offer some slight suggestions as to what, in my opinion, may keep the minorities within your Dominion and give them assurances of a fair deal. These suggestions, Sir, were made by me in various documents long ago. I had hoped that the Honorable the Prime Minister would be able to deal with them and would be able to frame, in consultation and in agreement with his opposite number in the Indian Union a Charter of Minority Rights. I am still hoping today because I know that the Honorable the Prime Minister cannot possibly be unsympathetic to the cause of the minorities either here or there. I am still hoping that the Honorable the Prime Minister will make every effort in that direction. The papers, Sir, are with him.

For you, Sir, I may state certain points that could very well be taken up. Sir, one of the greatest mistakes that was made—a mistake very early recognized by that talented politician, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan— one of the greatest mistakes made at the time of the division, was to send out the minorities from the services on to the other side and to denude the Muslim minorities in the Indian Union from the positions which they occupied in the services there. Sir, I would like you to make an effort to get them back. You may say that this may disrupt the position here but, no, Sir, if you say that it means that you do not trust the minorities, Sir, I say, 'Give them a place in the Administration'. In Eastern Bengal you have declared that you will give 30 percent of the places to them; that is, in the new recruitment. Most of them have left now. Get them back and recruit as many from the minorities as you possibly can until the proportion comes to anywhere near their population or even more. Make them realize that you are giving them responsibility—that is the most important pan of the problem—give them certain important posts like those of Deputy Commissioner, or Magistrate or Superintendent of Police. You should not be afraid of them. You are here in a vast majority. Your people are with you. You should arouse their sentiments and you will see that these people do desire to be loyal to Pakistan.

Form a Ministry here, or a Department, to look after the interests of the minorities. Let there be somebody, some authorized person, to whom the minorities may go with their little difficulties and the injustices under which they are laboring. The small pinpricks which are driving them out of Pakistan— ere may not be murders, there may not be slaughters—but there are small things which make their position difficult which make them feel that they are not wanted in these areas, which make them feel that the people are waiting for them to get out of their places. Put up a Ministry for them where they can go. Let there be a Muslim Minister; I do not want that the Minister should come from the minorities. My practical experience, Sir, is that the minorities cannot look after themselves. Very bravely, the Honorable the Leader of the Opposition stated, 'I do not want protection from anybody. We can stand on our own legs.' The word 'protection' was unsound. Nobody says that he wants to give you protection, but what you do really want is the friendship and goodwill of the majority community and more than that you want that the members of the majority community should fight for you. If you fight for yourself, if you fight for your rights you will be told that you are dividing the Muslims. If you fight for your rights you will be told that you are sabotaging Pakistan. If you fight for your rights your motives will be challenged as was the case when I gave an interview on the Bengali question. It is for the Muslims to get up and fight for the rights of the minorities. It is for the Muslims to get up and say that these are your rights and we shall see that justice is done to you. Therefore, Sir, I would suggest as one thing that a Ministry for the Rights of the Minorities should be formed.

Secondly, you should get more people into the services and into the Administration. You should, Sir, open your Ministerial posts and your posts of parliamentary secretaries to the minorities so that not only they but the people should feel that they are not subservient to the majority. What is the present position. Now the minorities in both the places feel that 'We are here merely at the mercy of the majority. If they want to keep us we are here; if they do not, we have to go. We have no voice in the administration. We have no voice whatsoever in framing the policy', and therefore the minorities are nothing else but in the position of serfs or slaves. If they are put in the position of Ministers, if they are given a certain amount of responsibility, they will feel. Sir, that they are the part and parcel of the administration and of the Dominion of Pakistan. Believe me, Sir, the minorities will be your greatest champions in the councils of the world. Do not think that the credit of Pakistan will go up merely because the Muslim majority here will say that we are getting a fair deal. It is when the minority will get up and say, 'we are getting a fair deal and that we are getting justice and toleration and equality of treatment from the majority in Pakistan'. When they will say that in the councils of the world then indeed. Sir, your stature will rise and you will be able to clarify your position. It is they who will be your great champions.

Therefore, Sir, I ask that you should give them not merely a fair treatment but a generous and more than generous treatment because I feel, Sir, that you have used the



word 'generous treatment' which has not yet even come to the category of fair treatment on their behalf. Now, Sir, I would like organizations to be sponsored by the Government—organizations of Muslims where you can take in some of the minority members. Sir, I shall, with great respect just take five minutes more because there is one aspect regarding the Dominions which I have to state.

Sir, if you behave fair, that is the greatest possible thing that can be stated in India. If you do that, Sir, you have won the cause for the minorities in both the Dominions.

I would like you to sponsor through your Magistrates, Superintendents of Police, officials, committees of Muslims open to minorities that will go round and will preach goodwill. They must do it, again I say, that the majority community must do it. It will not be for the minorities to fight for minority rights and struggle for it. I know, Sir, you have gone very far. I know, Sir, you have done a very great deal. Believe me. Sir, I am conscious of it because I have seen conditions in both the Dominions. I know that you tried to give security and satisfaction to minorities. Believe me. Sir, I am not attacking you, that you have not done your duty but do feel, Sir, that you can do much more than what you have already done.

Now, I come to the next point, namely, your relationship with the Indian Dominion. I assure you, Sir, it is causing everybody grave consternation to see that the Dominions are unable to agree with each other on economic policy. Sir, even if the two Dominions do not come to war, the economic war between them will impoverish both the Dominions. It is not going to lead to your prosperity. You will find all of a sudden that many goods will not come and business will suffer. You will find unemployment You will find poverty. You will find lawlessness.

Sir, when Pakistan and the Indian Dominions were founded, nobody thought that there would be war between the two or there would be economic war. It was thought that the two Dominions side by side will cooperate with each other for the welfare of both. That was the view. That was the hope. You may say that you have not been fairly treated; you may say that agreements have not been implemented. You may say that the division regarding military equipment has not been kept and the equipment has not been handed over to you. That the civil equipment, for example, post and telegraphs equipment, has not been handed over to you. You have not got a fair deal from them and consequently it has been very difficult for you to maintain good relationship with them. It is true but this is not the way to solve the problem. The way to solve the problem was to have Ministers of yours and call upon them to have Ministers of their own for the purpose of meeting regularly—not once a fortnight, not once in a month, not once in two months, not whenever you feel that things have gone so far that you have got to meet together for the purpose of solving the problems—but meet constantly in order that whenever the cloud is as small as a man's hand, it is at that time that the

cloud is dissipated and not allowed to grow into a storm. It is this, Sir, I think that is to be done.

You are, over here, imposing export duties. I do not wish to refer to any justification on your part for putting export duty on jute. It is a very knotty problem. Perhaps, Sir, that is my own view, that the Indian Union Government was wrong in stating that they will not divide the export duties until everything was solved as a whole. It could have taken up, as it has taken up other matters, piecemeal. But, Sir, shall we realize what it will mean not only to the jute position of East Bengal and to the future of jute and to the future of the agriculturist, and that it will lead to all kinds of opposition. It will lead to all kinds of counter-duties which will lead the two Dominions into an economic war.

I have very little to say. Sir, except one thing, that you send, as soon as possible, goodwill missions to the Indian Union so that they may go round and establish, with your goodwill and with the goodwill of the Pakistan Government better relationship between the peoples of the Indian Union and I hope. Sir, the Indian Union will reciprocate. We desire, Sir, more than anything else, as soon as possible, you meet together for the purpose of solving your economic problems. We were hoping, Sir, that there would be a customs union between the Indian Union and the Pakistan Union. And I think, Sir, whatever is done in this respect will be to the advantage and prosperity of both the Dominions. That is all I wish to say. Sir, I only wish to point out what exists in the minds of people. I do not think it exists in the minds of non-Muslims but it exists in the minds of Muslims as well. They apprehend, Sir, that this kind of estrangement between the two Dominions is not going to benefit either.

## Appendix VIII

### Mr. Suhrawardy's Speech in the Constituent Assembly after being unseated March 1949

*H. S. Suhrawardy:* Mr. Chairman, it is not, Sir, given to everyone in this life to be present at one's obsequies, or to participate in an oration at his own funeral. This is too good an opportunity for me to let pass without making a statement on the Floor of this House, which perhaps may be the last.

Sir, it has been said that these amendments to the rules—fairly intelligible to ordinary human beings but rendered unintelligible to the Pakistan Government and requiring further elucidation—that these amendments have been proposed for the purpose of eliminating such a humble person as myself from the Constituent Assembly. Sir, I refuse to give credence to such a statement. I cannot conceive, Sir, that a State that hopes to be the premier Islamic State of the world, in which there will be justice and toleration, will move its legislative machinery, its party machinery, its government its party discipline, for the purpose of eliminating a person, whose sole crime was to plead for the cause of the minorities on the Floor of this House, whose sole crime was to direct the attention of the Pakistan Government to its responsibilities towards its own minorities and the attention of the Indian Union Government to its responsibilities towards its minorities; whose further crime it was to plead for a better relationship between the two Dominions. I cannot conceive, Sir, that the Pakistan Government could act in this manner for the purpose of eliminating such a person.

*Chairman:* You are replying to something that has not been said here. Please reply to the points which have been raised.

*H. S. Suhrawardy:* It will not be said. Sir. The purpose of a notion is sometimes guessed at rather than uttered on the Floor of the House.

As I said. Sir, it is for the world to judge whether you are doing it or not and it is for the world to judge whether you have a mistaken sense of your own responsibilities towards the Pakistan peoples. You are attaching too much of importance to a person who may not happen to be a permanent President of Pakistan.

Now, Sir. I wish to deal with the subject-matter of the resolution as it stands quite apart from any personal factor. Sir, I will take first portion, *viz.*, eligibility of a person who may seek election to the Constituent Assembly. It is required that he must be a

permanent resident of Pakistan, that he has been or has become a permanent resident of Pakistan. Let me deal with this first before I come to the second qualification of allegiance. Sir, I would beg of the Ministry to consider that today matters are in such a state of flux – the rights of the peoples have not yet been so defined – that they might as well pause to think before raising such a disability for a person who may seek to become a Member of the Constituent Assembly. I shall explain this a little bit more, Sir. Today it is not known. Sir, who is going to be a permanent resident of this dominion or of the other. You have not as yet passed your law of nationality. It is not as yet known what disabilities there are regarding citizenship of one State and of another but more than that Sir, if we consider what is actually taking place, it is not known yet as to who are likely to become permanently the residents of Pakistan or of the Indian Dominion. There are many people here today who are your permanent residents but who perhaps may find it impossible to remain within your Dominion, and who may think of leaving it. God forbid that it should be so. There are many, Sir, outside in the Indian Union who today are not permanent residents of Pakistan and who may be compelled to consider Pakistan a refuge for themselves and become its permanent residents. There are many, Sir, who came here for the purpose of becoming permanent residents of Pakistan and who, because, they could not find adequate amenities, left Pakistan of their own free will. We are, therefore, Sir, still in a slate of flux and I think that it would be well if the Ministry were to pause and postpone this matter until matters have settled down and the rights of minorities in both the Dominions have been sufficiently clarified for them to be able to choose one State or the other. Sir, who are after all those who have become permanent residents of Pakistan and who have come from outside? Either they came here for loaves and fishes which Pakistan has provided them or for doing business, or commerce, or as refugees.

There are many, Sir, who may have to come over to this area and therefore to place a disability like this at this initial stage would be very unfair to them. I ask you to consider. Sir, have you or have you no responsibilities towards the Muslims of the Indian Union and have the Muslims of the Indian Union any rights as regards Pakistan. Is it necessary for them to become permanent residents of Pakistan before they can claim from Pakistan some recognition of their rights?

Sir, let me take your mind back to the time when Pakistan was founded. A homeland for the Muslims, it is true. But it was at that time stated that Pakistan would be the solution of the communal problem. It is on those who demanded Pakistan, it is on those who carved Pakistan out of India, on them is the responsibility, more than on anyone else to make all possible attempts to solve the communal problem within Pakistan and outside.

Sir, if you make this rule that it is only a permanent resident of Pakistan who can help you in the Constituent Assembly you are eliminating the Indian Muslims. Believe me, Sir, I want to tell you, that in the minds of those Indian Muslims, who have not come

here and do not fall under those categories that I have mentioned, there will be a serious misunderstanding in this respect if it would appear as if the Pakistan Government is eliminating them: it is ruling them out of consideration. There may be, Sir, Indian Muslims who think that they are serving the cause of humanity and by serving the cause of humanity they are serving the cause of Pakistan much better by staying there and yet who have the right to come here and help in molding the Constitution of Pakistan. There are many, Sir, who may feel that the best way of serving Pakistan is to direct the attention of the Pakistan Government to its treatment towards its minorities so that the minorities in the Indian Union—so that Muslim minorities there—may equally be kept safe. You can well realize Sir, that if the minorities in the Indian Union—Muslim minorities there do not find opportunities for adequate political expression within the Indian Union and they choose to trek to Pakistan, then, Sir, Pakistan will, in the wave of invasion, I am afraid, be washed into the sea. I think, Sir, that for the safety of Pakistan it is desirable that minorities should get both a fair deal here as a fair deal elsewhere. And, therefore, Sir, it is quite feasible that persons not remaining within Pakistan or not becoming permanent residents of Pakistan can serve Pakistan far better than by coming within its boundaries and thereby divesting themselves of their capacity to serve the cause of the minorities. Sir, I feel that until the Pakistan Government has fulfilled its obligations towards the Muslims of the Indian Union, it should not undertake such a resolution. I feel, Sir, that this Resolution breathes suspicion as regards the bonafides of those who are not permanent residents of Pakistan but who, perhaps, in their days did render service—sufficient service—in the creation of Pakistan.

Sir, I think, if I repeat it again, that a resolution like this will be sorely misunderstood by the Muslims of the Indian Union. Up till now, unfortunately, the Muslims of the Indian Union are still being held responsible for the acts of omission and commission of the Pakistan Government in respect of its own minorities. That should not be so, but until and as long as that continues and I maintain, Sir, that will continue until such time the two Governments meet together for the purpose of drafting the Charter of Minorities, until that time, Sir, I think it would be extremely unwise on the part of the Pakistan Government to eliminate the Muslims who may happen to live within the Indian Union, but who are best serving the cause of Pakistan and of the Indian Union by their being there.

Sir, I pass from this to the next point, namely, that a person must owe allegiance to Pakistan and to no other State. I sympathize greatly with the Pakistan Government, with its vision of enemies within and enemies without, with its vision that this State is riddled with fifth columnists, it has to be extremely careful and therefore, it can only have within its Constituent Assembly persons who owe allegiance to the State and that State alone and, after all, Sir, a Member of the Constituent Assembly is of very, very great importance. He is the person who has to mould the destinies of Pakistan. He is supposed to have an individual voice, although he may not stand on the Floor of the

House and criticize this Government or place before it any constructive remarks. He is far more important than a British Governor who may owe allegiance to Pakistan and, at the same time, owe allegiance to his own native land and to the Government beyond the seas. He is of far greater importance than your Commanders-in-Chief of land, air and sea who take the oath of allegiance to Pakistan, but who still owe allegiance to another State outside. I realize, Sir, the importance of the Honorable Members of the Constituent Assembly and how very, very important it is that they shall owe allegiance only to one State. On this point I have no issue with the mover. I only wish to point out, Sir, that times can change and do change. I am reminded, Sir, of two cases—one a little while ago when was it not my very dear friend, Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-Zaman, who took the oath of allegiance in the Indian Union and who today is the President of the Pakistan Muslim League, the body which stands behind the Government? Is there not a very recent case, perhaps I am mistaken, is not the Honorable gentleman by the name of Mr. Ishaque Sait, who took the oath of allegiance only the other day in the Indian Union Parliament, today the representative of the Pakistan Government as an Ambassador outside. It would be difficult to define if allegiance to one State debars him from owing allegiance to the Pakistan Government: and if the subsequent allegiance is conclusive or not.

Well, Sir, as I said, I join no issue on this point with the Honorable Ministers. If their conscience is satisfied, if they think that whereas in the case which I have pointed out, it is permissible for persons to have this divided allegiance—but a Member of the Constituent Assembly may not have it—they are at liberty to frame any rules they like on the matter, subject of course to the point which I have raised first and to which I shall advert—not, Sir, as a challenge to your ruling, which is final, but as an appeal to the Honorable Members of this House to consider that legal point and not to force them through the House.

Sir, I am frightened at the possibilities that have rendered possible an amendment of this kind when it is open by changing the rules of this House to eliminate Members of this House, to alter the constitution itself and Constituent Assembly by rules, and not wait for the Constitution Act to be passed. Sir, the rules may be passed here, but I would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that it would be most unwise to pass such as conflict with the law of the land. Sir, I am reminded of the case which I think the Honorable Mr. Prime Minister must be fully aware of The House of Commons was carried away by that same complex as has been exhibited by the Honorable Pirzada Abdus Sattar that the Constituent Assembly is such a Sovereign body that it can do anything that it likes. It cannot, Sir, It cannot go beyond the Law which binds it. The House of Commons by a resolution—a resolution duly and properly moved—owed Hansard to print its proceedings. Hansard duly printed the proceedings, which were affected by the law of libel. The person who was libeled sued Hansard in the King's Bench; the judges laid that the Houses of Parliament could not frame a resolution or a motion that conflicted with the law of the land and they accordingly awarded damages

to the person who had sued Hansard; thereafter the plaintiff tried to execute a decree; the House of Commons in its turn brought up the Sheriff for contempt. The King's Bench then laid it down that although the Houses of Parliament had no right to amend the law in the manner in which they had done, the King's Bench could not interfere in this particular matter of the arrest of the Sheriff, it was presuming to act as a matter of privilege. That was a sufficient hint to the House of Commons which thereupon proceeded in accordance with the [sic] to enact an Act which gave Hansard the permission to print the proceedings.

I would request the Honorable Ministers also to act in that manner. The matter has not gone before any King's Bench or any other bench, and I would ask them to consider this and take the lesson to heart, and ponder if they wish to proceed illegally. Let them proceed not by a change of resolution which offends against law, but by any enactment which is within their powers, which can alter the law.

Sir, I would, therefore, request them as an act of propriety to defer consideration, ponder over it, and if any constitutional points arise let them consult proper constitutional lawyers in England and thereafter act in accordance with law and constitutional propriety.

Now, Sir, the next point is the attempt on the part of this House to do away the rights of membership from those who have been duly and properly elected. I maintain that an attempt to do so will lay Pakistan open to suspicion regarding its bonafides. I can understand, Sir, regarding future eligibility, but to take away the rights from those who have been duly elected under the Act, to take away those rights by rules. I fear, Sir, would be a highly improper act. Although the Pakistan Government may succeed and will succeed on account of its party discipline, in passing this resolution, I maintain standing on the Floor of this House, that it will stand condemned before public opinion. Sir, something frightening is about to be created here, *viz.*, to make the President, the informer, the Prosecutor and the Judge. Never, Sir, in the whole course of the history of franchise has the President of an Assembly been charged with these powers to the exclusion of the law courts. Sir, I again do humbly entreat the Honorable Members of this House to pause and consider before they invest their President with such dictatorial powers, because there is no doubt that you are investing him with autocratic powers beyond the law, which I do not think it will be wise for this House to do. It will betray a tendency upon the part of the majority of the Members of the House which is to consider the Constitution of Pakistan, to establish a dictatorship beyond the law. Sir, I plead for law when I ask you to amend the resolution. Let not the President be invested with final powers to deprive a person of his rights of franchise. To preserve the coveted right of franchise, revolutions have occurred in England. Let not the President take away that coveted right from a single Member in this House, and place himself beyond the law, by a resolution passed in the Constituent Assembly.

## Appendix IX

### Prime Minister Suhrawardy's Speech to the Pakistan Society (England), June 1957

I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. President, and to the members of your Society for conferring upon me this honor and privilege of addressing you this evening and of meeting so many old friends and new friends, so many familiar faces and, I hope, so many faces with whom I shall get more familiar before I leave, but I must confess, Mr. President, that you have taken me unawares. I think that you and my Lord Home conspired that today I shall not be able to meet you on your own ground.

I thought of delivering a speech here on behalf of Pakistan and letting you know what we in Pakistan are doing. I was trying to collect my thoughts when I was told by you, Mr. President, and by my Lord Home that I was expected to be frivolous; that I was not to say anything which was important or serious. So all the thoughts which I was attempting to collect together just fled like leaves before the wind and now, my Lord, you come back on me with a speech which was full of pith and matter and which really was a challenge to me to meet, unaware as I am, I think, my Lord, you realize how unfair you have been to me and if I am unable to answer adequately it will be your fault and not mine.

You started by giving me undue praise, so much so—I do not know whether any of you noticed it, but—I really blushed and I nearly fell under the table! How could anyone hear all those praises about himself and not feel that he does not deserve them? It was kind of you to have reported me in such eulogistic terms, but later you began to speak of other qualities of mine and I trembled with fear lest you also speak truthfully of those other qualities which I would rather remain unknown. You only referred, fortunately, to my singing operations in the bath, and I am grateful to you, my Lord, for your reticence.

I am glad to know that the Pakistan Society is improving in strength and growing in membership and so many persons are taking an interest in it. It just shows that Pakistan, probably, itself is growing in strength and becoming interesting too. If you are interested in it, it must be becoming an interesting place. When you drank the toast, not to Pakistan but to the Guests, and coupled my name with it, I was not clear whether I should accept the position of a guest of the Pakistan Society or whether I should identify myself with the hosts.



I think that it is the duty of every Prime Minister, whether he is short-lived or long-lived as a Prime Minister—It really does not matter whether he is here today and gone tomorrow – so long as he is one I think he should identify himself sufficiently with the Pakistan Society not to be considered as a guest. I do not quite know whether I shall be admitted to the ranks of members of this august body, but if there is any way by which I can get into it without being blackballed, I would like to worm my way into the organization so that the next time I shall be in a position to rise and drink to the health of the guests.

I am delighted to find that persons have come here from all quarters and from all grades of society and of varied interests. I believe there are people sitting here who are interested still in Pakistan in the sense that they have interests there and there is a flow of finance between the two countries. I believe I find here many old civil servants, those who have given of their best in the service of that country, which is very grateful to them for having set it on the road of progress and development.

I find here Conservatives, I even find here to my right a Suffragette. I have been talking to her about it. I have been telling her that when this world crumbles and is destroyed owing to the growing power of the female community she will be held responsible for the destruction of the world. Possibly she does not know how she has set this world on the road to win.

My Lord, you are right when you say that the duties of a Prime Minister are very onerous. The responsibilities are great and indeed time and again one feels that one cannot possibly measure up to one's responsibilities; but one does his best. Frankly, I have not yet got used to being considered a Prime Minister. It always comes to me as a new shock whenever anyone says to me that I am a Prime Minister. I do not know what a Prime Minister should feel like, because I do not seem to have changed from what I was before this big and this high office was conferred upon me. There should have been some kind of change, but nothing seems to have come about and I am beginning to wonder if I shall ever get used to this office, but it is certain that the tasks that are there before us are so complex that one is appalled at the magnitude of the responsibilities placed on a few weak shoulders.

We are attempting to do our best by our country, but, as you know, my Lord, our resources are limited and we are deeply grateful to those countries within and without the Commonwealth who have come to our assistance and who are still helping us on the road to progress. I feel myself as a fundamental duty on the part of any country that may be assisted by other countries to acknowledge its indebtedness to other countries, and in that spirit I am thankful to those who have unstintedly supported us.

We have set ourselves on the road to democracy and it has been stated by those who have in a sympathetic spirit studied our constitution that possibly our constitution

today is the most democratic constitution of recent times. We are struggling to achieve democracy in its truest sense, the democracy, my Lord, which your country has taught us. It is something which I have stated from different and many platoons, that we are indebted to Great Britain for those lessons of democracy and democratic traditions and institutions of decencies in political life, of constitutionalism, of the rule of law and justice—these are matters which have helped to build up our country. This debt is so great that I feel that our country will not only not be able to repay it but our country should remember it for generations so that it may take a lesson from your country and from the struggles through which your country has passed so that now you are a shining example to the rest of the world of what democratic institutions can be.

You have paid a great tribute to the civil servants, those who give so much of their energies, their thoughts and their activities in the service of the country to which they are dedicated. Sir, we cannot sufficiently praise them for their spirit of service, but I would implore you, my Lord, on behalf of that much maligned element, the politicians, not to praise them too much—because they are merciless and, if they can ever get to a place from which they can wreak their vengeance upon us, they do so and do not lose the opportunity! So, while we acknowledge all that they have done for us, and are doing for us—indeed without them a country cannot possibly be run or be adequately governed—I would still like to keep them in their place.

I acknowledge that the food problem of my country is of the greatest importance and ever since I have had the privilege of contributing to the guidance of its destinies I have devoted my attention to that part of our problems. Pakistan has developed in many fields and, thank God, it is developing as the days pass. We have no fear regarding its future and its potentialities if we proceed in the right direction. I do maintain that one of our primary problems and the one which needs our urgent attention is the production of food so that our people may eat and be happy. If they can eat and be happy then the problems which are before us can be tackled with the greatest ease and we can find a solution to all of them with the cooperation of the people, for it is true that on unhappiness and the misery of the people that ideology which is termed Communism grows. I call it the ideology which is termed Communism because I feel that most of the persons or most of the countries that follow their path and most of the elements which consider that they are Communist do not know what Communism is. They really consider it fashionable to be considered Communist because Communism means subversion, destruction and chaotic revolution, a revolution that ultimately does not construct but destroys the very soul of man. It is for that reason that we are against that brand of Communism that kills the soul and we hope and earnestly trust for the sake of peace that Communism that prevails in those countries which profess it will change its character so that the dignity of man may be recognized, for, after all, it is the dignity of man which is the final worth for which all of us are working.

It is to uphold that dignity that governments are established not to suppress that dignity and not to enslave the human mind and the human heart and the human soul. It is for this reason, my Lord, that we believe in the free democracies of the world and I join with you most earnestly in the hope that my country as a member of the British Commonwealth will forever remain linked to your country and to countries of similar attitude towards life, towards the people, so that we may be able to cooperate with each other for all time to come in order to uphold the dignity of mankind and to work for liberty and freedom with its proper meaning.

I see no reason why we shall not be able to work together. There is probably one basis, however, which we must keep in mind. That is that cooperation between free peoples in the service of humanity is only possible if we believe in truth and in justice and in honesty and in charity and toleration. Those are the qualities that we must keep in front of us. If we sincerely dedicate ourselves to those qualities we shall find that the Commonwealth will grow from strength to strength and countries will rally round the Commonwealth because in it they will find peace, peace of mind, peace of soul and, possibly, the greatest instrument for the peace of the world. But let not our sense of justice be clouded by expediency and by diplomacy.

Those are hard words that I am saying because hitherto politics has meant that a certain innuendo has been underlying it from which it must be rescued. Diplomacy has a sinister significance from which it must be rescued. In order that the congeries of nations may be able to work harmoniously together, this and this only shall be our aim, namely to uphold truth and justice.

Before I sit down I only just wish to say one or two words regarding a very important aspect of our life to which you referred. I do not know what made you do it because you really were touching on a very serious matter and I had been told that it was my duty to be frivolous and in that spirit you will forget most of what I have told you this evening. You referred, my Lord, to the availability of water for Pakistan as an essential for its existence. This is the problem which is here before us, far greater today than any problem that we have to face. Is Pakistan going to get, and to continue to get, the water which is essential for its livelihood, which is essential for its existence, or will it be deprived of this primary commodity? These are the questions with which we are to be faced.

This is a problem of life and death for Pakistan. It is not a problem only of Pakistan and another country; there are similar problems all over the world when rivers flow through several countries, but it has become urgent for us, and it is a matter of life and death for my country. I hope that you and other nations of the world that not only wish well by Pakistan but wish well by humanity in general and desire to see the peace of the world is maintained, will see that justice is done to my country. We look to you, my Lord, to you and to your country to see that justice is done to us.

It is a very great responsibility that rests upon the great countries of the world. Please see to it that we are not strangled before we have been able to find our feet for, believe me, the situation is so tense that a desperate man may do anything if he finds that by mere acquiescence he is inviting extinction. You will forgive me if I have spoken somewhat crudely, but I have tried to clothe my words in the English language which was really created for the purpose of expressing one's thoughts in words which do not express the man on the surface.

It is an extraordinary thing, the English language. It means more than it says and often it says more than it means and you have got to find out exactly what a person is saying, what he is meaning in his own heart So my Lord, wishing you and the Commonwealth every success, hoping that for all time to come we shall cooperate with each other in the cause of peace and the welfare of humanity, and thanking our hosts for the very sumptuous dinner they have given us and for the opportunity they have given to each one of us to meet each other, I would request those who are the guests of the Society to rise and drink to the health of the hosts.

## Appendix X

### Mr. Suhrawardy's letter to President Ayub Khan, 1962

#### 'Pakistan is my life, my passion'

Mr. President,

I was arrested on 30 January 1962, and have since been detained under the Security of Pakistan Act 1962, in the Central Jail at Karachi. On 5 February 1962, I received the 'Reasons' for my detention. They are so vague and indefinite that it is impossible to make any representation regarding them other than a denial, and a reference to my past services as proof of their untruth. Nevertheless, though a representation is impossible, I feel that I am entitled to address you...

You will pardon me if I fail to understand how you, Mr. President, who has been known to me at close quarters, should have paid the slightest attention to the false statements, insinuations and allegations which must have been made to you, challenging my patriotism. I do not refer to the 'Reasons' of my detention, for these are so obviously and patently false that they could not have been the real reasons for the order of detention, and your mind must have been poisoned by other allegations. In your forthright statement to the Press the day after my arrest you gave reasons and made charges not one of which is to be found among the 'Reasons' of my detention. Hence, it is quite clear that I have been arrested for reasons other than those supplied to me.

I propose to show how these 'Reasons' are obviously insubstantial.

#### *Take the first 'Reason':*

Ever since the inception of Pakistan and particularly during the last three years, you have been associating with anti-Pakistan elements both within and outside the country. I do not know whether I have to answer for my actions before I became Law Minister and later Prime Minister, I have never heard from you one word challenging my patriotism when we were working together. If you only knew, you would have realized how by staying behind in India immediately after the Partition, I saved Bengal from the catastrophe which led to much bloodshed in the Punjab, with which you are very familiar. Indeed, if Bengal had also become an arena of such murders, no Muslim would have been allowed to live in India and a wholesale trek of Muslims to Pakistan might well have created an impossible situation for Pakistan. Now as regards 'within

the country'. Again I fail to understand what are the anti-Pakistan elements and who they are. It ought not to be difficult to specify them. Does this refer to Pakistanis? I have not had one word, let alone association with any anti-Pakistani element who is a Pakistani. Normally, we call communists and fellow-travelers (real and not faked) anti-Pakistani. During these three years I have not contacted or been in touch—let alone associated—with any such person. If foreigners are meant, is the list confined to diplomats or does it include non-diplomats? Again, it would not be difficult to specify them. I believe I do not know a single non-diplomat, who is anti-Pakistani, and who belongs to a country commonly considered anti-Pakistani. If diplomats are meant, I have not associated with any anti-Pakistan element I may have met those connected with countries normally considered anti-Pakistan on social occasions like many other Pakistanis; but this is no association such as is presumably insinuated in the first 'Reason', I claim that my patriotism is above suspicion and cannot be tarnished by any such contact. I have noted, with great pain, that you are alleged to have said in Dhaka (what is not to be found among the 'Reasons'): 'It was not beyond him (*i.e.* myself) to accept monetary assistance from those who are hostile to Pakistan.' Pardon me, Mr. President what possible justification have you for making such a serious charge; what kind of false and dirty reports must have been placed before you to induce you to make such a statement. This is one of the most damnable statements that can be made against anybody; and what chance has such a person of contradicting it, except by invoking your sense of justice and fairplay? I may be a poor man, Mr. President, and poor men are easily kicked about; but I have never stooped to such filthy activities. My only consolation is that such a statement will not be believed by any one in Pakistan or outside, except by those who wish to believe it. What you said to the Press clearly shows that my detention is based on raise 'Reasons.' Such a definite charge or reason, as you have made and which can be proved or disproved, does not form part of the 'Reasons' of detention which have been supplied to me.

I will have occasion to refer to other statements of yours later, if they have not been dealt with, when dealing with the 'Reasons'. Indeed, Mr. President, what you have stated in your interview as being the reasons for my detention, are quite outside the 'Reasons' for my detention supplied to me, as I have pointed out before.

***Second item:***

I have been misusing my personal influence and friendship in attempting to alienate the sympathies of some countries friendly to Pakistan.

I feel flattered that I am told that I have some personal influence. This, under the present regime, does not exist. 'Friendship': I wonder whom this refers to. Apparently this refers again to some unnamed diplomats and diplomats of countries friendly to Pakistan. In the first place, I have never had any illusions out of office; anyone can be a friend of any foreign diplomat or they can have feelings of friendship for anyone

outside office. They are more concerned to be on good terms with the Government in power, and are prone to misunderstand others out of office. Secondly, will one of them dare to say—unless he wishes to flatter you—at I have breathed, or thought or insinuated, one word or sentiment against Pakistan, or said anything which may alienate the sympathies of friendly countries from Pakistan. When I have had occasion to say anything about Pakistan to anybody—and such occasions have been rare indeed—I have impressed upon them the absolute desirability of helping Pakistan more and more so that it may be independent of outside help.

Let me tell you, Mr. President, what you do not know, that Pakistan is my life. I have, I believe, played a great part in bringing it into existence. Bengal was the only province—among the Muslim majority provinces—that gave a Muslim League Ministry to the Quaid-i-Azam—Bengal was the pawn in his hand due to which the Congress accepted the partition of India. And to make Bengal accept the Muslim League, and align itself in the struggle for Pakistan, I had to work night and day, at the cost of my own living, health and safety.

I was the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League and the entire work fell on my shoulders. I received some help from local leaders, within the ambit of their own local influence; even then I had to go to the remotest villages and speak to the Muslims; I had to travel long distances on country conveyance and on dusty roads, or on country boats; stay where I could find shelter, eat what I could get, arguing, inducing, begging for Pakistan. I have been stoned and nearly killed. I have braved the spears of the fanatical army of opponents, and all for Pakistan; when others sat back, reaped, and have since reaped, the fruit of my labors. And I succeeded in converting the country to the Muslim League ideology, and aligned it in favor of Pakistan. You would not know this, Mr. President, on this side of the subcontinent. All this meant constant endeavors for years—ten years of the best portion of a life spent in toil and heartbreak; and then came the victory of 1946. To charge me that I would say anything that may alienate the sympathies of the friendly countries is, pardon me, Mr. President, a damnable lie. I wish all those friendly countries would align themselves more openly with us, and come to our help whenever occasion required.

*Third item:*

I am alleged in the course of the last three years to have openly aligned myself with elements outside the country who are opposed to the various reforms carried out by the present regime.

This again is very vague. This charge smacks of the question—'when did you last beat your wife?' It takes for granted some alignment—and if not open, then secret, which I deny as vehemently as this alleged open alignment. And now what are those elements opposed to the various reforms. Again this is too vague for me to reply to.

This charge is frankly so meaningless that I am beginning to wonder if it does not refer to the Revolution itself—not to the reforms of the present regime; but to the present regime as a reform. This, of course, is not the charge; and I am sure you will allow that it is permissible to have different views regarding the Revolution. Some constitutionalists hold that there were sufficient powers in the Constitution of 1956, to have undertaken all that the Revolution has done without abrogating it.

My view has always been that whatever might or might not be the justification, once a Military Regime has been established, and the Military authorities have taken control, they must have a full run and must have the fullest opportunities to serve the country as best as they can, until in God's good time democracy is established in the country. It would be foolish to deny that the country as a whole would like to revert to democracy, and you yourself, Mr. President, realizing this have promised the country to lead them to it. I am not disposed to deny that I too wish it; and it is totally immaterial if I am associated with it or not. But my inclination towards democracy is a vastly different matter from openly or secretly aligning myself with elements etc. As a matter of fact I do not approve of many reforms which the present regime has carried out; and which it has been able to do by virtue of the plenary powers it possesses, reforms of such a nature that no democratic Government would have been able to pass them without much travail and struggle and much passage of time, unless it was accorded similar plenary powers.

*Fourth:*

I am charged with having insidiously set up cells in various cities of both East and West Pakistan where I am alleged to carry on propaganda against the achievements of the present regime. What phantasmagorical imagination has conceived this? In the first place brought up in the legal and constitutional tradition, and following particularly the constitutional tradition of the Quaid-i-Azam, I cannot do anything or have done anything underground or underhand.

I have neither the capacity nor the ability nor the machinery nor the knowledge or experience of how to set up cells. When you banned political parties, that was the end of my party and of all organizations. It is true that people cannot cease to be politically minded by merely banning of parties, and it can be taken for granted that as a rule people have some nostalgia for the parties to which they belonged. But as political parties go, your fiat was enough for me; and my party stood abolished and all the leaders ceased to exist as such. It is absolutely ridiculous that I should have set up cells in various cities, etc. In the course of my legal practice I have been only to Karachi (where I live permanently), Lahore, Dhaka and Chittagong. I have been invited by my friends and clients to visit them in their homes in various cities, where now free from politics, they wanted to entertain me, but I have refused to go. Not because I ever



conceived that if visited them I would be charged with 'setting up cells', such a fantastic idea and the thought that anyone in this world would be found to entertain it never entered my mind. I did not do so, as I had little time in the midst of my work and was not interested; and was not inclined to take the trouble and was purposely avoiding contacts as far as possible. Had I been interested in the aforesaid cells, those visits would have been useful if I only knew how to set up cells. I ask where have I setup cells?

*Fifth:*

There were two parts to this 'Reason':

*1st Part*

I am charged with having consistently (please note the word consistently) preached hatred and contempt against the regime to my followers and colleagues of the now banned Awami League. Please may I ask why should I do so? 'Hatred and contempt' are strong words; and strong words of Law, the Penal section has been quoted in the 'Reason' the whole context has to be taken into consideration with meticulous care, before there can be any such finding. Scraps of statements have been rejected as insufficient Can any evidence be offered of this? On the face of it, the charge is ridiculous. I do not deny that some friends and colleagues of mine, of the now banned Awami League have seen me; mostly in connection with cases against them. But why should I preach hatred and contempt to them? Where was the occasion and what the purpose?—Need I deny this fantastic charge? Have I become insane that I should indulge in such futility? Those who see me in Court do not think so.

*2nd Part:*

I have been holding out promises to interests affected by the Reforms. In God's name, where? What are these interests which have been affected by Reforms I want to undo? The only interest I can think of which the Reforms have affected are the landlords of West Pakistan. I wonder, Mr. President, if you are aware that 'land reforms' of a stricter nature, was in the forefront of the programme of the Awami League; and if you are aware of what I did for the tenants of Bengal, to ensure them their rights, and my constant struggle against the landlords. The charge is so general that I can only reply to what I consider it means. Can any of your agents, or those sitting in their offices let me know where and to which landlord I have ever promised etc. etc. and under what circumstances?

*Sixth:*

The charge is that even up to this date I have remained irreconcilable to the concept of Pakistan. Mr. President, you, who have worked with me particularly when I was 'Prime Minister' do you believe it? What I have done for the concept of Pakistan and what I have suffered, I alone know; and when little men make such a charge against me what can I say? I referred very briefly to what I did for Pakistan and its concept. I even might like to take you back to the speech I made at the last Muslim League Convention at Delhi, Pakistan is my very life, and to make this filthy charge against me speaks of some cesspools in your administrative machinery, which have not been brought to your notice.

*Seventh:*

Reads: 'By unjustified criticism of the Foreign Policy of this country in the formulation of which policy you (I) played a leading role, you are (I am) causing serious embarrassment to the present Government'. I am grateful for the authorities that they have been gracious enough to admit that I played a leading role in the formulation of the Foreign Policy of Pakistan.

Foreign Policy is for the Government of the day to formulate, to amend and to apply according to the circumstances.

And now, Mr. President, permit me, having dealt with the 'Reasons' to refer to your own statement which you made to the Press, which give reasons for my detention which are different from the charges and the reasons supplied to me. These reasons given by you must be the real reasons for my detention, for you have uttered them. Presumably, the reasons supplied to me have been manufactured in the Office....

In the first portion of your statement you stated that I aimed at the disruption of East Pakistan first and then the rest of the country. What does 'Disruption of East Pakistan, mean?' Was I trying to split it into groups? or in conjunction with your statesmen that it was not beyond me to accept monetary assistance from those who are hostile to Pakistan, and that there were people to act as my agents with the sole object of disrupting East Pakistan, it probably means that I was receiving money from India in order to join up East Pakistan with India. Say it, Mr. President, with your hand on your heart, and then may Allah be our Judge, in this world or the next. For if this is how you feel about it, it is not right that I should live. If you know anything of what took place in Bengal, you would know that I have no place in Hindu India, or Hindu Bengal, nothing would please them more than to see me dead, and a sacrifice to the dagger of a Godse. To even conceive the idea of joining Hindu Bengal or Hindu India, is not merely treason to Pakistan, but to the Muslims as a whole. It is nothing but tantamount to offer so

many victims for sacrifice. Do you think I cannot see it? I see much more clearly than many the rising tide of militant Hinduism in India which is placing the Muslims of India in grave danger of annihilation.

How can anyone who is a Muslim, who loves Muslims, whose greatest anxiety is the safety of the Muslims we have left behind in India, ever think of placing East Pakistan, with its innocent Muslim population, who have loaded me with trust, and I hope, love, in the thrall of Hindu India? Or do you mean secession? I never heard this until after I had resumed from my tour abroad, and then only from a statement of yours that there was some such idea somewhere. FOR ME, PAKISTAN IS ONE AND INDIVISIBLE. It is for this I have risked and grown old. Both must remain together. East Pakistan stands in the greatest danger of being overwhelmed and destroyed and annexed by police action if it secedes. This is my reaction to any suggestion of secession. Again I say we must stay together and our safety is in cooperation with West Pakistan.

In order that West Pakistan may not have any sense of grievance arising out of its minority representation, I induced East Pakistan to accept parity. Although this has been mooted in previous reports, nobody could induce East Pakistan to accept it and give up a political right cherished in all democratic countries, on which today the principle of self determination itself is based with all its angularities. I, however, thought that cooperation with West Pakistan was essential for the existence and progress of Pakistan, and that the principle of parity could get rid of the Provincial complex, and we would have common political parties in both wings instead of forming ourselves into Provincial groups. And I toured East Pakistan (I was Law Minister then) and spoke to the people at countless meetings and induced them to endorse the principle of parity. It was on this principle that the Constituent Assembly was elected for the first time in 1955 (when I was Law Minister).

I was called a traitor to East Pakistan, and I was told I was selling East Pakistan, but I held my ground and won for the sake of an integrated Pakistan. And do you think I could have been party to secession? Alas! Mr. President by keeping me under detention with such terrible charges against me, you have destroyed my utility. I did not and never wanted and do not want any office or representation. I could have helped, if ever the occasion arose and my words would have proved useful to point out how necessary it was that the two wings must remain together, and that we must get rid of Provincial feelings.

Mr. President, may I respectfully point out that what has so often been repeated by my calumniators, and by repetition seems to have acquired some force, need not have been uttered by you. Pakistan was created as the homeland for the Muslims of India, and it was with this faith that we fought. We in Bengal and particularly the Muslims of West Bengal, suffered grievous annihilation at the hands of Hindus, and we got Pakistan, Pakistan was our country; not an asylum for us. We had the right to come and we came.

Yes, we came to our country, a country we had helped in creating. When the Nationality Act was passed here and there was no question of remaining a Pakistani National with residence in India. I chose to come here, I would beg of you to recall that I was member of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan all the time until February 1949, there could be no question of any asylum for me in Pakistan, and it was only after I had declared that I was coming to settle in Pakistan and was moving definitely on the 5 March 1949 that it was left to Mr. Tamizuddin Khan to remove me from my membership at the instance of the Muslim League Ministry on the 26 February 1949, I think something which the Quaid-i-Azam would not do. So do you still think that I sought asylum?

Of course I am a refugee; so was the Quaid-i-Azam and so was Liaquat Ali Khan—so are millions of others, who have come to their home, guaranteed by the Quaid-i-Azam, Perhaps, Mr. President, you will forgive me if I were to submit that from your statement regarding myself it appears that the real reason for detaining me is an apprehension that my presence outside would interfere with the working of the Constitution about to be launched, otherwise reference to this has no meaning in the statement in which you gave reasons for my detention. You might at least have assured yourself regarding this before taking action against me. It is axiomatic that the Constitution that you are believed to be promulgating cannot be received enthusiastically by me, but surely this is not a sufficient ground for a detention. Probably 99 percent of the people of Pakistan would feel as I would do whatever may appear in print.

This is my opinion, it would be easier if the President could possibly promulgate the Constitution of 1956—which gives adequate powers to the President. I gave this as my reason and whenever a Constitution is on the anvil every one hopes and expects it will settle the problems of the country, and that if it does not do so it causes disappointment; but if the 1956 Constitution were promulgated nobody would object as it was the product of Parliament, the administration and constitution experts. Forgive me, if it appears that the apprehension that I might interfere with the elections to further my 'ambition that knows no bounds' (I am quoting from the communiqué) has been responsible for my detention. This statement, Mr. President, would be laughable if it were not fraught with such tragic consequences for myself. Do you think, Sir, that I served and struggled all those years for the Muslim League and nearly killed myself in the months preceding the elections of 1946, as a result of ambition?

Do you think, Sir, that it was the result of an 'ambition that knows no bounds' that I rejected one after another five efforts which the Quaid-i-Azam made to me, three of them of a Central Ministry, and one so tempting that even Liaquat Ali Khan said he would have accepted it if it had been made to him and instead of this I stayed behind in Calcutta in a dilapidated insanitary building in a riot-torn area, seething with Hindus who were killing Muslims at sight, and ran the gauntlet of a revolver, a bomb and murderous assaults by Hindus who made several attempts to murder me? Are you

aware. Sir, that it was Godse's own evidence at his trial that the RSS had marked out three persons for assassination, the first was Gandhi and the second myself, and do you think that I put myself into all this risk in pursuance of an ambition that knew no bounds?

And what was my ambition? Just to be left alone, to live a strictly social life, and to earn a living. When asked why I was not detained earlier for my allegedly nefarious activities allegedly spread over such a long period of years and why was I given the charge of the Constitution's promulgation, and the holding of elections—a conjunction of events which did not escape the gentlemen of the Press—you said, Mr. President, you were expecting me to 'Amend my ways.' Did you, Mr. President, or any one on your behalf ever advise me to mend my ways, or tell me that I should not do something or other of which you or any one in Government disapproved?

The charges leveled against me show only too clearly, Mr. President, what little information you have about me and the services I have rendered in the creation of Pakistan. It is impossible for those who have not struggled in this behalf to have any conception of the fire of the love of Pakistan which burns in us, and how anxious we are to see Pakistan fulfill itself as a great nation. I wonder, if you, Mr. President, can realize how humiliating it is to have to proclaim and justify my patriotism to those who are not aware of our past history.

I see no advantage in being released if you do not believe what I have said and you are against me, for then I shall always be in danger. Even a smile, a joke, a word, my presence at a party will be misunderstood, and if the aim is to find reasons, reasons will also be forthcoming.

H. S. SUHRAWARDY

## Appendix XI

### Mr. Suhrawardy's letters to Salma Sobhan

Camp, 'Hold Shahbagh'  
Dacca, 13 May, 1959

My dear Junior,

Never having given a certificate to anyone, I do not know in what terms the certificate should be couched and what should be the contents of the certificate which you want me to write for you. Could not you send me a draft? I will be delighted to have it typed out on my own paper and return it to you by express delivery. I am sorry that you did not come this time to hear the arguments. I leave out of consideration my own arguments, but the remarks and observations of the judges as well as the arguments from the other side would have taught you many things. However, your mother still thinks that you are a chicken who cannot be trusted beyond the stretch of the maternal wings. A barrister-at-law who is a chicken or a chicken which is a barrister-at-law is a phenomenon not unknown to the legal world.

Love to all. Date of return unknown. Hope all well. Love

Miss Salma Ikramullah,  
No. 1, Bath Island,  
Karachi.

Shaheed S.

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Camp, 'Hotel Shahbagh,  
Dacca, 18 May, 1959

My dear Junior,

I hope this is sufficient. Why spend 4 ½ annas in postage stamps when two annas will do?

With Love.

Miss Salma Ikramullah,  
Barrister-at-Law,  
1 Bath Island,  
Karachi.

Shaheed S

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13, Kutchery Road  
Karachi  
18.6.52

My dear Salma,

Thanks for your lovely letter. I do hope you are enjoying yourself hugely in Albania, Ontario. It must be a grand change from the deadly atmosphere of this place. Has your mother found any avenues for her superabundant energy, and any companions who can excel her in conversation. I suppose you are learning French. If you are not, you should. The case is dragging on its eternal length. I have started arguments – I have had a month of it already, and it appears there will be three months more to go. I am sure you would like to know what has happened to Bhai. His term expired on the 14th at 12.00 noon; and he left for UK on the *Buttory* at 2.00. He was obviously very sad and depressed having to leave everyone behind and serve out a new existence at this time of his life. But just before he left he has been given an assignment, *viz.*, he is the representative of Pakistan on a UN Commission that has been appointed to report on the administrative system of Turkey. There are five other countries represented. He would probably not have accepted this had the Columbia Universally offer been received earlier. Still, it is a good thing: the present assignment is of a three month duration, but may last longer. I think it is a good thing – this belated recognition of his transcendental abilities. Perhaps it may lead to something better. Who knows the conscience of Pakistan may wake up and he may get the Embassy in Turkey, which will suit him to a T. Yesterday we received your mother's telegram regarding the Columbia University. I have written to him at his Bank, *viz.*, Grindlays Ltd. 54, Parliament Street, London SW, where he can be contacted. I am sure he will be thrilled to receive the offer. I want him to receive it even though he may not be able to make it now. It may stand him in good stead later – so your mother should contact him there. I suppose you know we have removed to 13 Kutchery Road, I am here for a few days, and shall soon be going back to Hyderabad – to slavery – I doubt very much if I can get away from here – for want of funds and there is shortage of sterling and dollars. Give my love to all – your mother first, and then to all of you – your father, Naz, Billy and of course, yourself.

Heaps of Love.

Your Uncle and  
leader, and senior

Shaheed

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Central Jail  
According to the News papers  
today is 8 May 1962.

Hello my Junior-never-to-be

Congratulations to start with,

And now as an ancient relic I am expected to offer you some sterling advice—as you are about to be hitched or nitched. Having made a mess of my own life, and still in the further process of doing so, I am the most competent person to guide others, particularly in the province of Dont's. What do these persons know of the shape of things who have lived a sheltered life, embosomed in the service of a providing government—other than they know everything, they know and know what they will know. So I, am an outcast, I am certified.

Now let us start with a non-controversial premiso. You are preternaturally transcendently intelligent It just oozes from you and you can't conceal it. The above adverbs you have inherited from your mother, and the adjective from your parents. Now the young man is also intelligent, and sound, and well-versed in his subject. Let there be no conflict of intelligences. You may scintillate in your arguments, but he is sounder in his deductions. So learn how to give in and try to conceal the spark under a bushel.

Item number two—you will have to mix with other people, relatives, friends, wives of friends, take a place in society—such as will enhance the young man's prestige. But now—the other people. Normally they resent intelligence. They happen to be normal, and have an inferiority complex in the presence of better-equipped people and they resent it. You will not realize it. You will go in your own way—a little introverted—and they will call you arrogant, and proud, although you really are a very humble little creature, anxious to please, dreading to hurt people. Hence, what are we to do! We cannot make them more intelligent, we can't go on defending ourselves. I am afraid that it is a little cross we have to bear. Afraid of you, they suspect you before you open your lips. Now I cannot ask you to shut your mouth—it will be impolite to do so and equally impossible for you to comply—heredity stands in your way. But it is best to let the other chatter and their talks will be inane. The female, the modern one—thank Heavens, when I look at sundry females of our family I find that that they have a higher sense of dignity and social behavior and harbor no ill-will—thinks it clever to talk ill of other females—slyly, by innuendoes. Do not fall into the trap, never speak ill of anyone, however much that anyone may deserve being spoken ill of—this, of course, I have not understood, why does one deserve to be libeled. If X is bad, well it is none of your business. In fact, speak



well of everyone—or not at all. Best is, to treat them as elder sisters, and give them a sense of superiority, at least in the social aspects.

Next item. Set your own house in order, before you start the social rounds or embark on social service. Most important you may even learn how to cook. Strange as it may sound, it is a tradition of Midnapur and of your family, to cook well from the lowly *pietha* to the best *qorma*, *qofta*, *pulao*, *biryani* (*kutchi* and *pucci*), *seekh kabab* (I have never tasted anything equal to what my sainted mother used to cook), *shami kabab* (*pharaira*) *murgh-i-musallam*, *paraiha* (with several *parads*, and at the same time *khasta*, on top, and *narm* inside), *feerni* (sounds easy, but can be very tasty), *meetha tookra* (rich and poor), and I nearly forgot the exquisite (I am tasting it in imagination, and drooling, bull have forgotten the name, sign of sure senility—I wish people would realize I am senile and played out) something sweet and sour with curd and onions and you can have meat fish (very good) fowl (very, very good) even *shisah-rangea*; *nargisi kabab*, *ananas*, and *kabule pulao*: and *chutnis* of all kinds and *bhartas* (potatoes, *brinjals*, *sutki*, *chingri*, fish, etc. etc).

I know of a person who is doing so much social service that she is neglecting her home, allowing the expenses to outstrip a fairly comfortable income, and in her zeal, making enemies—her sole satisfaction being that she is really doing good work and will go to heaven—selling an example that others can't follow and hence they dislike her (inferiority complex. I hope disillusionment doesn't await her to break her spirit). Begum tomatoes make excellent *Chatnis*. In fact, I think you should not think of social service now—time is when you are a matron, and your sympathies need bestowal on a wider circle and here comes the crux (don't pronounce it as crooks) of life. I think firstly, it is absence of hate: and secondly, the positive feeling of love. I do not know why I have never been able to hate—I almost think it is a weakness. Or it is perhaps a streak in me of always trying to see the other man's point of view and find justification for him. I think I was born with it, and it has developed with legal training and a judicial sense. Even in my childhood days I always fought for anybody absent who was attacked. I find that there are a few, very few—I cannot think of but one or two who are just intrinsically spiteful and vindictive, but they can't help it, if God endowed them with a friends' nature. Others—and this is true of nearly all people—seek to justify their actions by arguments, or by principles, which, however warped they may be, satisfy their conscience. Hence, even when I was in power, and I have been so for years together, with power to do harm to my enemies, I have never victimized them. Indeed, my party men, who understand more the ruthlessness of politics, have always blamed me for what they call, my softness. Have I made friends by my leniency and consideration! I have yet to see. Unhappily it is those persons on whom you confer benefits who are apt to stab you in the back. Still, not to hate is morally satisfying, and then, to love. I think I do, and would like to love everyone. Only some won't have it. However, this is not the proper occasion to deal with a subject so abstrusely psychological—it may have something to do with senile decay. The reason why I have

digressed is, that I think that when one steps into society one is apt to like and dislike and it is more satisfying to like, and not to dislike. And as an outer sign—do not backbite, there is nothing which I dislike more, and never hit a person who is down. They must have your sympathy, whether they deserve it or not.

Now, I think, that is enough of sterling ad vice; I hope it is not dross. But it is quite heavy. It could be gold or lead. If lead, transmute it into gold. I hear you can now spout French. Let me see how far you have progressed when we meet. I took it up after my detention; I have cased off considerably: I find it easier to pass time being lazy than being industrious for nothing. I have started Monte Cristo in French—to discuss common experiences when I meet him in the next world.

I have received your mother's letter. She is always worrying and explaining that she has always replied to my letters etc, etc. Just ask her not to worry. I do receive her letters and they are as balm in Gilead or nectar to a thirsty soul—I would love to hear from her, if she will stop worrying about having written, or not having written etc....

Now Salma, behave yourself, be a good girl and accept my cordial felicitations.

Lots of love.

Shaheed Mama