

'Zia Is A Terrorist'

—Murtaza Bhutto

FOLLOWING is the full text of LINK's interview with late Pak President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's elder son MURTAZA BHUTTO, who leads the well-knit organisation Al Zulfikar which had claimed the masterminding of the famous hijacking of Pak domestic airliner early March this year forcing authorities to release a number of political prisoners languishing in the country's jails. We are not mentioning the time and place of the interview for the reason that Murtaza and his organisation operate from underground bases inside Pakistan, and also outside the country. Taking its advantage, as his views have been distorted beyond proportion by the Western and Pakistani conformist press, and his activities dubbed 'terrorist' by many more, in this exclusive talk Murtaza takes the opportunity to put in order all his positions — the thinking, the main direction of his activities etc.—while answering back the charges levelled against him by Pak General Zia-ul-Haq and all his friends.

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LINK: Why did you decide to form a separate organisation, Al Zulfikar? Would you like to elaborate the reasons?

MURTAZA BHUTTO: The biggest reason is that the struggle against Zia-ul-Haq's regime has no precedent in the history of our country. It has no precedent because the form of brutalisation, repression and cruelty against the people of Pakistan has no example. There has never been so much terror. And it is not restricted only to imprisonment. Zia has institutionalised terror. He has legalised kidnappings. The political parties in Pakistan are not familiar to this form of oppression. They do not know how to react to it. They are still in a shock. They have still to absorb the shock, formulate plans, reorganise themselves to face this new, unfamiliar challenge. The present ruling elite in Pakistan is not murdering one man, it is murdering a cause, an ideal; it is murdering the dignity of whole a nation. So it will take time.

Some say nothing is happening, everything is calm. But this calm in Pakistan is false, it is illusionary. When the storm starts, nothing in the world will stop us. But I feel that

there is no political party organised or capable at this stage to conduct the form of struggle that is necessary to remove Zia's regime. The People's Party is a massive party and it will win any election hands down. But it will fail to organise underground struggles. I know it from my own experience. Its people are known, its offices are known, its leadership is present in Pakistan and exposed. So they cannot at this conduct the form of struggle which we feel would be necessary to remove Zia. They can help, of course. They can create favourable conditions and help once mass uprising starts. Under such a situation, I am sure, they will lead the movement. But we have to start the process now only.

Besides the People's Party, I do not think there is any other party worth the name. Of course, there are some good parties which support the cause of the people, but they are also not in a position to conduct armed struggle.

There are the Baluch groups, the Communist Party and the National Awami Party which can conduct armed struggle. But that depends on their policy. We do not know what is their programme. However you will see, as time passes, and more terror unleashed by Zia on the people, new forces will rise to face the challenge.

LINK: What are the circumstances which led you to shift your headquarters from London. Did you have any perturbing experiences with your associates there?

M.B.: It is not because of any individual person that I left London. The work I have to do could not be done from England, or from any European country. Geographically London is very far away from Pakistan. It is not possible to conduct armed struggle and guerilla operation against the vicious Pak dictatorship from some 8000 miles away. Our fight is not against British bourgeois democracy, it is against Pak dictatorship. Britain will not support our struggle. It is necessary to establish ourselves inside Pakistan. But we have our supporters in England.

LINK: Zia's regime has been constantly trying to project Al Zulfikar as terrorist, particularly with reference to the hijacking of the plane on



2nd March this year. What has been the impact of such propaganda on the mass support to your organisation?

M.B.: First of all, we are freedom fighters. We are not terrorists. We want the liberation of our country, we want to choose our own destiny, our own government and we want the people to choose their own laws. This is not terrorism. It is a freedom movement. We want absolute sovereignty of the people; people must decide their own fate freely. But let me make it clear that Zia is a terrorist. Zia has unleashed terrorism in our country.

Let us define terrorism. What is terrorism? Every time western press writes about it without defining it. Terrorism is the use of terror by a minority to influence the decision by the majority. If you want to influence the political will of another person you frighten him, you terrorise him. Thus in Pakistan you have an army of half-a million soldiers led by a few thousand officers who have whipped the nation into obedience, and with guns in their hands have torn the constitution and ruled by force. Zia's legitimacy today is based only on brute force. Therefore, Zia's legitimacy is based only on terror. The sanction to rule is because he can terrorise the people. If you ask anybody how Zia's regime is lasting so long, they will say he is terrorising the nation, he is a terrorist, a super-terrorist.

You mentioned hijacking. First of all, if our political prisoners are tor-

tured and arrested, and threatened with hanging arbitrarily at summary military courts, where we go to redress our grievances? Where should we go to get justice? Should we go to the majors, uneducated majors who have not completed their high schools, for we know they will whip us? We have nobody to go for justice. So we have to create conditions to create our own justice.

Why this hijacking took place? We planned that if our people are threatened with massacre, then we will launch our operations. One of them may be hijacking to secure release of some political prisoners. But what does Zia do? Many of our families were kidnapped literally kidnapped; they took their mothers sisters kids, kidnapped them all. Took them in jail. Okay, Alamgir or Siraj or Khalid have done some shooting against lunatic fanatics. If they have done some armed operations, Zia has institutionalised kidnapping.

This is not a government in Pakistan. This is mafia. Like mafia the regime in Pakistan has openly institutionalised, legalised kidnapping. If you cannot catch the person you want to catch, kidnap his family. But Zia kidnapped the whole nation: coup d'etat against a democratically elected government makes the hostage of 70 million people. Thousands of our party workers who cannot be arrested, their families are in jail. Thousands were kidnapped. So what if Alamgir and his friend took 100 hostages and demanded the release? After all if you are going to indulge in violence, the reaction will be violent. There could never have been the need for holding 100 people as hostages for 70 million people. No need to take up a plane if thousands of others were not kidnapped in Pakistan. So we are not terrorist.

You have asked about its impact. Believe me, honestly, it has had no negative impact. I have support. In fact, today people come and go from our different camps in our rural areas to the cities. Thousands of people want to join them. We cannot accommodate them. We do not have the financial means to take them in the organisation to transport them to our different training camps. Much more than we can accommodate, people want to join. So this is the impact. And finally, it is not for you or me and for the western press of American imperialism or Zia to decide who is terrorist. Let history decide this question.

LINK: So far the main achieve-

ments of your organisation have been hijacking of the plane, destroying of three-seater planes and hangers, blasts in various cities and such other acts. Why has your organisation not been able to strike at military personnel or at the murderers of Shaheed Bhutto. Does it mean that Al Zulfikar is still not strong enough to carry out such operations?

M.B: Our operations are not limited to hijacking and few blasts. Hijacking was the biggest achievement. We humiliated Zia and broke the myth of his invulnerability. But besides this we have also attacked military targets. We have ambushed the military personnel conducting operations against our people. Moreover, our objective is not to hurl a few bombs here and a few bombs there. We do conduct operations. We had conducted them where our people were tortured. If Zia goes ahead, if

on hijacking is ready. The report is complete. Many of our people are in jail, including my sister, who has nothing whatsoever to do with Al Zulfikar or the hijacking. My mother was released from jail only because she started vomiting blood. The military authorities were frightened that she would die in jail. Many innocent people are in jail. Many freedom fighters are in jail. We are waiting to see what Zia can do. Let him take his step and if this step is a wrong step like his. From July 5, 1977, his steps are all against the people of Pakistan. Let him dare take the next step against the people and you will see what we do. We will unleash a storm which the whole military will not be able to control. So we are preparing for this form of action.

LINK: Pakistan's military regime has announced various prizes on you and your associates. Has it borne



The domestic airliner which Al Zulfikar had hijacked: A hijacker peeping out at Damascus airport

the military uses torture and terror against them, we will react.

But we are planning for an uprising. We want a massive uprising. We want the political and military departments of Al Zulfikar to be organised for uprising. We will create conditions for it. When we will make sure that time is ripe for the people to come out in the streets in a massive show of strength, we will go and launch the operations with all our combined strength. So they get encouraged to come out. We will protect the demonstrations. We will protect them against the military regime. So we are not going for small fire-crackers here and there. We are really and sincerely planning for an uprising. And therefore, in a sense your question is a little premature.

Let us see how Zia reacts. The file

M.B: No, none whatsoever till today. We are aware of the prizes on our head. We cannot be deterred by such action. If he thinks that by this he will force us give up our task, he is mistaken. We are prepared for any sacrifices. Persons from five or six groups who are paid by the Pakistani Government have been arrested by some of our friends. We ourselves have arrested, our organisation has intercepted and arrested, Zia's agents. The trial against them is continuing.

LINK: A propaganda campaign has been unleashed to create the impression that you are a Soviet agent. It has been alleged that the members of your organization are trained by Soviet experts. What is the correct picture?

MB: You have already seen part of the correct picture. We are not agents of anybody. We are totally independent. We will accept the influence of nobody except our own people. We are our own people's servants. For them we will work and for them we will die. You have mentioned the Soviet Union, others mention Afghanistan. Frankly, they have not helped us at all. Well, I can travel anywhere I want to, anywhere in the third world at least, I go to Arab countries. I have transited through India. In the same way I visited Afghanistan once or twice as a transit. But it does not mean that I have bases there. We have received no financial or military backing either from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan or the Soviet Union, and we do not desire any. We have our own sources of finance, military equipment and bases in Pakistan.

LINK: Daily 'Nawa-e-Waqt', Urdu, a well-known mouthpiece of Zia, carried an editorial some time ago advising his regime to protest with UAE and Libya for supporting your organisation. Would you like to comment?

M.B.: 'Nawa-e-Waqt' is a chain-dog of American imperialism. It is not independent. It is a puppet of Zia who is a puppet of the Americans. So we do not attach any importance to it or its stupid talk. They say many irresponsible and silly things. It shows how fearful they are of Al Zulfikar. We have friends all over the world. I have visited Palestinian refugee camps. In every house and in every shack, there is Bhutto's picture. Does 'Nawa-e-Waqt' of Zia have any relationship like that with any Palestinian in any refugee camp?

LINK: Some leaders of the movement for the restoration of democracy charge that their movement could not grow because the hijacking incident provided opportunity to Zia to crush the people's resistance. What do you say about it?

M.B.: I think this is a poor and shameful excuse by cowards who cannot confront the military regime. They find excuses when their efforts fail. Let us face it. First Zia cancelled the elections in October 1977. After that there have been five or six attempts of mass uprising against Zia. But every time the pattern has been the same: Small demonstrations have started and Zia has used brute force. He has terrorized the people into submission. What does he do?

He arrests all the leaders first and subjects them to varying degree of cruelty. For instance, my mother and sister were put in 'C' class jails. Air Marshal Asghar Khan, who was supposed to be Air Marshal, was put in home arrest. Workers and party comrades are also arrested on a massive scale, and then whipping starts.

The moment such movements collapse—six have collapsed in this manner—a new one starts and the last was a week before the hijacking. What happened? There were small demonstrations by students and lawyers spread fairly in large parts of the country. There was substantially a large one in Karachi, in Lahore, in Pindi and in Peshawar, and then on 2nd March the plane was hijacked. You see, the largest demonstration took place on 2nd or 3rd March. On 4th March, the lawyers for the first time came out after three or four months. And on this day, the leaders were arrested. I think it was on 4th or 5th March when the leaders and workers were arrested. And then the demonstration as usually collapsed.

We are told that hijacking is responsible. There is no logic in this. If the people are coming out in the streets and suddenly you have a massive blow to the military regime in full view of the world (hijacking) and the demonstrators are told indirectly, go on demonstrating, we will release you too if you are arrested—so logically speaking, such a thing cannot spoil a mass movement. It can only encourage it can give only added impetus to it. It cannot destroy it.

To those who say that Zia got an excuse to arrest the workers, may I ask what excuse did he have before? What excuse did he have to arrest my father? Zia fabricated the reasons. What reasons did he have to martyr him? He fabricated it. What reasons did he have to arrest my mother five or six times, or Benazir (sister)? Or other sincere members of the People's Party or other parties of Pakistan? He has never needed and will never need excuses. Once he tore off the constitution of Pakistan into pieces he gave no excuse for that. Zia does not need excuses.

But we will not let him give excuses in future. True, at present we have withheld our operations. Well, we are giving Zia some time. We are giving him all the time he wants to make the correct decision now. It is a matter of tactic; if he makes a

wrong decision, I tell you, we will strike again. And I think one of the lessons of our past experience is that armed struggle is the only way to restore honour and freedom, at least for the time being. There will be a time when mass uprising will have to come. But to start with armed struggle is the only answer.

LINK: Does your organisation approve of a broad-based democratic united front of various parties against Zia's regime?

M.B.: In principle we have no objection to the idea of a broad-based democratic front. But there should be some guidelines, some conditions, because this is serious business. This is no bargaining in market place. The parties which we have to join must never support the military regime directly or indirectly. They must never have supported the assassination of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto indirectly or directly. They must have never opposed the poor people.

LINK: In view of the terror the military regime has unleashed against the people and the absence of militancy among the country folk, how do you visualise the possibility of creating a mass upsurge in the near future?

M.B.: I think there is militancy among certain sections. But I believe it has to be channelised and organised. We have to get them under one umbrella, we have to teach them, train them. The process is going on. It is gathering great momentum, especially after the hijacking. But the terror that Zia and his regime has inflicted on the people, in a sense, has shocked them into paralysis. Therefore, it is necessary to smash the illusion of military strength, of military invulnerability, that he is not all powerful, that the fight can be launched against him. We feel if suppression continues, there will be more militancy. We want to boost the morale of the people, showing that something is behind them. If you come out on the streets, somebody is there to protect you. And we are optimistic that there will be mass upsurge.

LINK: What is the attitude of feudal lords, businessmen and other ruling classes towards Al Zulfikar?

M.B.: Of course, they are very angry. To them it is like a nightmare. They become incomprehensible when they talk about it. They lose logic and rationale. This is natural. Because we are fighting for the people

we are fighting to fulfil the mission of their late President, which means that the fight goes against the interests of the feudal and bourgeois classes. There will be no place for them. Lands will be distributed to the poor people. Factories will be controlled by the workers. So they actively oppose.

LINK: Does it apply to such elements in the People's Party as well?

M.B.: Let us see. Of course. Anybody who has gone against the people of Pakistan and against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto will have to face it.

LINK: What type of revolution Al Zulfikar had been struggling for in the past? Would you like to express the fundamental objectives of the organisation?

M.B.: Fundamentally speaking, it is against all enemies of the people, inside and outside the People's Party. It is against all feudal lords, we want a democratic country, a socialist country in accordance with Bhuttoism. What is Bhuttoism? It recognises Islam and its importance in the country. It is not a dispute at all. It is a fact. The economy of the country should be based on socialism, and politics on democracy.

LINK: But how would you put it, would you call it secular democracy or...?

M.B.: Secular democracy.

LINK: You will recall that the Reagan Administration has decided to supply sophisticated arms like F-16 and F-15 fighters to Zia's regime and for this purpose granted an aid to the tune of three billion dollars. What will be its impact on the regime, the region and also on the anti-Zia movement in the country?

M.B.: First of all, we are not going to be intimidated by three billion or 30 billion dollars of arms. That is not the question, because if the massive equipment could not preserve the well-entrenched regime of the Shah of Iran, then certainly it cannot protect this regime. There is no question that the movement will be stopped or we will go back. It cannot have any impact on the anti-Zia movement. The first stage will be the guerilla stage, and the second a massive insurrection, uprising. We will not be intimidated. We are prepared for sacrifices and he cannot defeat us. And, let me tell you, we will not pay the debts. The people's government will not pay America for this equipment. This deal is not

done with the legitimate government of Pakistan or the legal representatives of the people of Pakistan. Give us 10 billion dollars more. We will not pay a single penny. For these arms we are not responsible. The people's government will not pay.

LINK: Looking at it from the viewpoint of the region, the geopolitical situation, will sophisticated rearming of Pakistan increase the tension?

M.B.: Of course it will increase tension. It will unleash an expensive and futile arms race which we cannot afford at a time when most of the people go hungry in the streets. They have no shirts to put on, no shoes, no money even for burial. So with this condition we can hardly afford arms race. Hence, Pakistan must be held responsible for starting arms race. America is responsible.

We want a strong people's army, a national army, not an imperialist army. The present army is an imperialist army, and being an imperialist and not national army it will follow the orders of outsiders, not its own national interests. Therefore, it will provoke tension with India, it will provoke tension with Iran, with Afghanistan, with all its neighbours. It pretends to be trying to fight the Soviet Union. Let us first provide food to our people. Let us provide them with freedom, honour, dignity. I think it is going to be a dangerous act.

Our army is too small to need three billion dollars of arms. They will not be able to absorb it. If you have 200 crew who can drive tanks, but you want to give them 2000 tanks, who is going to drive them? 200 tanks will be driven, 1500 tanks will be rotting. So India can be provoked to start an arms race. So Pakistan can boast on people it has 2000 tanks. If you have 50 or 200 qualified pilots, there is no logic to give 1000 aeroplanes. So it is too much. We cannot afford all this. We do not need such weapons. Instead of taking weapons, three billion dollars, let us build our roads, develop our country, have peaceful relations with our neighbours. This will be a more logical step.

Zia has provoked the Soviets into Afghanistan. For two years since the Afghan government took over after the April Revolution of 1978, Zia has given away massive equipment, weapons to destabilise that country. That country has certain obligations, certain pacts and agreements with the Soviet Union. We are a small coun-

LINK: As a result of the growing our neighbours.

LINK: As a result of the growing resentment against Zia do you see any possibility of underhand gimmick by US imperialism of change of face? What will be the mass reaction to it in the country?

M.B.: Americans would not like to change Zia because nobody can serve the American interests better. Nobody else cares what happens to the country, what happens to the people, what happens to the region. So they cannot find a more faithful copy anywhere else. But suppose he is changed, well, the people are conscious enough. They are aware, they have been given consciousness during the five years of the People's Party government, and they know the struggle has not finished. If it becomes necessary one day to remove Zia because he is mad, and he is getting madder, we will not sit down and reconcile ourselves to the new face. The change will have to be fundamental, of the system, of the overall policy.

LINK: What is the equation and understanding of Al Zulfikar with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Baluchistan and other militant forces?

M.B.: We have no formal association with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Baluchistan. We have informal contacts with all freedom groups, all freedom-loving people inside and outside Pakistan, but we have no pact, no common front, no united front. However, we are not opposed to a common front. It is necessary to have understanding on certain principles. Let us see if it becomes necessary.

LINK: Have any of those forces made their initiatives from their sides for such an understanding?

M.B.: Actually, it has been mutual. You cannot say that the other side consulted us. We have known these people, we will continue to know them whenever we talk about united front. My view has always been that united front must be meaningful. In other words, if Al Zulfikar is fully capable of carrying out responsibility of waging struggles against Zia, is independent, then it should enter into alliance with other organisations which are also independent. No organisation should be burdened on the other. So, we have put this forward, and we have mutually agreed, that we need more time to prepare and we will form a united front.