

RASOOL BAKHSH PALEJO'S POLITICAL SERVICES DURING THE ZIA ADMINISTRATION FOR SINDH AWARENESS

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Abstract

For the survival of a nation, among other contrary nations, political awareness is an asset. For this torch-bearingness, nature creates and selects specific personalities. These personalities used to collide against grave challenges and stand against storms. In the history of Pakistan, several martial laws were imposed that tried to drag the country into the Stone Age, but some patriotic personalities rose to tackle this dictatorship. Among these personalities, Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, the founder of Awami Tehreek, was one. General Muhammad Zia ul Haq demolished the whole democratic value imposed by the martial law on July 5, 1977, which checked the state's progress wheel. So, in the 1980s, against this military dictatorship, the "Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was launched. This research paper is an attempt to sketch and discuss the role of political parties as 'Left' Socialist or Communist ideologies in Sindh province, "Awami Tehreek," a Marxist-Leninist Party of Pakistan.

Keywords: Communist ideology, democracy, leftist leadership, martial law, movement for restoration of democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Rasool Bakhsh Palejo (September 21st 1930- June 7th 2018) was a notable South Asian politician and social scientist whose work must be evaluated in light of

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the degree to which history confirms his forecasts. Rasool Bakhsh Palejo is the most brilliant and exceptional leader of 20th century of Sindh province (Pakistan), and some names stand out as the forerunners of uprisings, revolutions, changes and movements in every country. Like all great thinkers, scholars, and politicians, Palejo has occasionally been misunderstood, misread, and misrepresented by both his ardent supporters and his detractors. His ardent rivals as well as his admirers were mistaken in their assessments of him. One of Sindh's greatest original thinkers, Palejo is referred to as the Quaid-i-Inqelab (Leader of Revolution) for his revolutionary nationalistic endeavors against the monarchs of the time. Only a strongly unique awareness can free itself entirely from the oppression of acknowledged but previously outdated concepts of south Asian Political discourse as Palejo performed. Mr. Palejo demonstrated his great support for the rehabilitation the democracy and progressive efforts for underprivileged classes and nations throughout his life via his deft deeds and original ideas. He was an outstanding philosopher and a champion of the oppressed people in South Asia, including the Sindh province specially, and currently Pakistan generally.

According to Sheema Kermani Communist Palejo constantly spoke his mind, was courageous, fiercely anti-establishment, and wholly secular. He consistently stood up for the disadvantaged, the outcasts, and the underdogs. Finding someone of his caliber, with his level of knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, study of global revolutionary thinking, and knowledge of all global revolutionary forces was difficult. He was a cornerstone of Pakistan's leftist movement. Palejo sahib's magnificent integration of "Art" with his politics is, in my opinion, his most distinctive and significant contribution to the political development of the Leftist movement in Pakistan. His politics included transforming folklore, dance, music, and theatre into a phenomenon of society for the welfare as a whole development, and growth of the populace so that culture and cultural life plays a useful role in guiding us towards higher standards of human existence. For him, the political realm was more than just proclamations and brochures. For Palejo, equality, fairness, and the development of an improved environment for people were all motivated by love. He aspired to a just and lovely world that was devoid of injustice, oppression, and hatred. Only someone who believes in love desires to create beauty. He was a "nationalist" because he could see and feel the tyranny his people endured on a national level, and he was an internationalist because he realised that revolution could not be carried out in pieces. He was an emotionally and intellectually complex individual who tried to improve the standard of human existence and life by living life to the fullest. Rasool Bakhsh Palejo's influence and legacies will last forever (Kalavanti Raja, 2019).

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SINDH AWARENESS

His innermost being and political ambition were profoundly and permanently affected by The One Unit, treacherous and political demons in Pakistani history. He acknowledged Pakistan as his country of origin and as an established reality following the partition. However, in the regard of all rights of life he was an outspoken advocate of equal justice for all nations within Pakistan. He joined up the struggle of the anti-one-unit movement in Sindh against this backdrop. He was detained on multiple occasions for inciting' separatist' inclinations among both Haarees and Sindhi students. Additionally, he was accused of igniting a communist movement throughout rural Sindh. He continued on the road he decided on for himself as a political activist, writer, and philosopher despite his imprisonment. He became deeply committed to the leftist democratic movement in 1968, when he was 38 years old, and actively participated in the establishment and operation of the NAP, Bazm-e Sofia-e-Sindh, and Sindh Mutehda Mahaz. He then came to its conclusion that working with Z. A. Bhutto or G. M. Syed was next to unattainable at the time. He was obliged to create Awami Tahreek (Peoples Movement) as a result of his disagreements with Z. A. Bhutto over the Bengal and Balochistan issues as well as with G. M. Syed over his support of feudalism and the imposition of martial law.

The Awami Tahreek (Sindhi Peoples' Movement) was established in Hyderabad in 1968 but was announced on 3/3/70, as a platform for the battle against imperialist rule over our nation and for real democracy, the rescue of the exploited working masses, oppressed nations, and other causes. The Sindh province, to which my companions and I belonged, has some of the world's most mistreated peasants. We focused on organizing them and guiding them in their struggles against exploitation and oppression based on class and nationality. This infuriated the Sindhi landowners who had seized the greatest parcels of peasant land in Sindh, particularly the Islamabad bureaucracy, the immigrant manipulators, and the establishment. A real hornets' nest had been awakened by us. Genuine conflicts with such influential organisations as "Stop the Land Auction," "Print voter lists in Sindhi," etc. started instead of the customary token struggles that are portrayed in glowing terms by compliant journalists.

MOVEMENT FOR RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY (MRD)

One of the most well-known initiatives against the military rule was the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), which was spearheaded by the political class of Sindh (Pakistan). The Sindhi People's Movement and the Pakistan People's Party, both of which were led by lawmakers from Sindh, were in the forefront of the movement, even though nearly all of Pakistan's major political parties were participants. The severe military repression that was also occurring in Sindh was another factor in the movement's origin there. Because Sindhis were not sufficiently

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represented in the military, Zia's military authority was seen by the majority of Sindhis as an occupying force. Sindhi participation in the civil services has also been minimal, notwithstanding quota system improvements. Sindhis made up 11.7% of Pakistan's population in 1981, however it took significant work for their representation in key administrative positions to increase from 3.6% in 1974 to 6.8% in 1983 (Khan, 2002, p. 224).

According to Pakistani historian Tariq Ali, in some villages, an army officer would slap a Sindhi in the face if he doesn't salaam him when he enters the village. There have been incidents of Sindhi women college students being raped in remote colleges. In reality, the national uprising in Sindh started on its own. It was not a strategy chosen by the group working to bring democracy back. Of course, they supported it, giving them the most momentum they have had there since the movement began. It was only made feasible as a result of the Pakistan People's Party's efforts to persuade Pakistan's top political parties, particularly those who were a part of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), to join MRD. However, Tariq claims that it was a socialist party, Sindhi Awami Tehreek, which worked with the Sindhi people to mobilize them rather than the PPP. "The cadres who were strong in building the movement were people who had been trained and developed by the Sindhi Awami Tehreek, a group of socialists aware of the national question, in the interior of Sind," he says in elucidating the situation. If you want to describe the movement sociologically, it was primarily an unusual alliance between underprivileged farmers and students in the innermost parts of Sind. Then, as it continued to expand and grow, it spread to some of the larger towns after embracing some of the smaller ones (Ali, 1984, p. 60).

Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, a Marxist, created the Awami Tehreek (People's Movement), together with some other Sindhi politicians, like Fazil Rahu. In order to promote Sindhi nationalism throughout Sindh, Palejo previously collaborated with Ghulam Muhammad Syed's Bazm-i-Sufia-i-Sindh movement. However, after they diverged on some issues, Palejo established his own party, Sindhi Awami Tehreek (the Movement of the Sindhi people), which was later renamed with just Awami Tehreek. Tahir Amin states: "The Sind Awami Tahreek, a splinter faction of G. M. Syed's organization, broke away from the movement due to disagreements in strategy from the Jeeya Sind Mahaz. It is led by Rasool Bakhsh Palejo. It is the successor organization to the Hari Party (Peasant Party), which was active during the time of Haider Bux Jatoi. It advocated both Maoist socialism and Sindhi nationalism. Its programme called for the eviction of any non-Sindhi landowners who had acquired land in Sind by fraud or other unethical means, as well as a push for an equitable

distribution of land to the country's poor landless people. Additionally, it promoted Sindhis' rights in semi-government positions, autonomous and municipal organizations, and other governmental positions ((Amin, 1988, pp. 144-145).

Awami Tehreek, a Leftist Party, adopted an extreme stance in comparison to other political parties in Sindh. However, Syed's organizations were not the only ones who stood out for Sindhi rights and interests, as Ansari notes. Organizations like Paleejo's "Sindh Awami Tehreek," which combined arguing for greater Sindhi autonomy with land reform, were present alongside the Jiye Sindh Mahaz. However, in contrast to Syed, who was willing to delay socio-economic reconstruction until political change had occurred, Palejo proposed a more radical interpretation of the nationalist message ((Ansari, 2016, p. 113). According to Tariq Ali, In addition to imposing martial law on the people of Pakistan, particularly in Sindh, General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship supported the US against Russian soldiers in Afghanistan. As a result, the US completely backed Zia's martial law in Pakistan. Likewise, Zia-ul-Haq was receiving cooperation in this area from the British Foreign Office. "The situation in Sind is very serious, but we don't want this regime to fall because of the Russians in Afghanistan, and we are supporting this regime," the British Foreign Office presentation to the media ((Ali, 1984, p. 61).

Bhutto's assassination in 1979 was seen as a "judicial murder" because Bhutto was a Sindhi Prime Minister—left the people of Sindh feeling entirely deprived. As a result, people developed animosity towards Zia-ul-Haq and the military government as a result of this circumstance. In this context, Tariq Ali thinks that the Sindhi people began a campaign against the Zia dictatorship long before MRD was introduced, not because MRD was responsible for stirring up a mutiny among them. All political parties were outlawed, with the exception of the Muslim League of Pir Pagara and Jamaat-i-Islami, two religious organizations. Even the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), which was founded to oppose the Bhutto administration, backed Zia-ul-Haq wholeheartedly during his military takeover and thereafter opposed the Zia rule. Prior to Bhutto's execution, the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) accepted ministries in the Zia administration, but once Bhutto was hung, Zia no longer required PNA. He eventually decided to outlaw all political parties, including those affiliated with the PNA (Khosro, 2013, p. 25).

BEGINNING OF THE MOVEMENT

With the exception of Jamaat-i-Islami and the Muslim League of Pir Pagara group, almost all political groups, even those that were members of the PNA alliance, began to criticize the Zia administration. Given that the military dictatorship was currently attempting to repress all political forces, now was an ideal time to band together against the Zia regime. As a result, in November-December 1980, discussions to create an alliance against military government began. Only the Jamaat-

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i-Islami party in Pakistan claimed that Zia-ul-Haq could guide people to the "Islamic system according to the teachings of the Quran," or "Sirat-e-Mustaqeem" in English. Ji continued to back Zia in this way (Abro, 2014, p 55). The biggest challenge for the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) in the early stages of the MRD movement was to sit together because Begum Nusrat Bhutto, widow of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and other PPP leadership members viewed PNA as both supporters of Zia-ul-Haq against Bhutto in all of his illegal actions, as well as sympathizers with Zia ul Haq during the Bhutto trial. It was therefore the most challenging time for PPP to choose whether or not to sit with PNA.

The PPP leadership chose to sit with the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) parties, nonetheless, as MRD needed to be a very strong alliance against the Zia dictatorship. Similarly, Pakistan's Left, particularly the Awami Tehreek, Communist Party of Pakistan, and Pakistan National Party, worked to overthrow Zia's Martial Law, but because they were excluded from assemblies, they lacked the right wing's strength, which included the Jamaat-i-Islami, Muslim League of Pir Pagara group, and parties that were a part of the PNA. As a result, PPP could not entirely rely on the Left. It was time to form a united front in this situation that comprised both left- and right-leaning groups. The MRD coalition, which was made up of parties with various ideologies, agreed on a similar objective that included opposing Zia's decrees of martial law and his undemocratic actions as well as starting a campaign for the reestablishment of democracy.

Because of his dislike for Bhutto and the PPP, Ghulam Muhammad Syed was further cut off from the MRD's popular currents and eventually found himself in odd partnerships with Zia and pro-establishment political groups. He and his political party were reduced to constituency level political actors as a result of their partnership with ideological opponents. Other nationalist groups also experienced same conundrum, which ended up being the biggest barrier to their political success.

Another well-known Sindhi nationalist was Ibrahim Joyo (born in 1915). He received his education at G. M. Syed's well-known school and afterwards at Sindh Madrassah. He was ignited by Syed's Sindhi nationalism. When he was in Bombay for his higher schooling, Marxist philosophy also had an impact on him. At Sindh Madrassah, he began his professional career as a teacher. Later, he enrolled in Sindh University in Hyderabad, where he rose to prominence as a key figure in Sindhi nationalism. Future generations of Sindhi nationalists were inspired by him. His notable pupils were Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, a renowned nationalist politician, and Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi, the head of the Hari Committee. In the late 1960s, Jam Saqi, a communist party activist, was the third outspoken leader of the Sindhi student

On March 5, 1970, in Hyderabad, major Sindhi Nationalist and Leftist leader Rasool Bakhsh Palejo founded Awami Tahreek. Leftist and Sindhi Nationalist writers, academics, and activists soon joined. When compared to the PPP's moderate land reform plan, the Awami Tahreek's hardline agenda of feudalism annihilation was adopted. On the subject of Sindh's independence, Palejo disagreed with Ghulam Muhammad Syed and favoured autonomy for provincial governments. According to a 2003 interview with Rasool Bakhsh Palejo that Farhan Siddiqi cited, "Our initial war is mainly against the feudal rulers of Sindh. Exactly why do I oppose Sindhu Desh? Because I worry that these powerful lords will murder us if Sindhu Desh is established. The fight against authoritarianism is our first front. Hyder Bakhsh Jatoi passed away in May 1970, and Awami Tahreek became an advocate for farmers' interests (Farhan Hanif Siddiqi, (2012).

In contrast to Ghulam Muhammad Syed, Palejo also enrolled in the PPP during the MRD. G. M. Syed's separation from the mass pro-democracy movement in Sindh and the support he received from military dictator Zia ul Haq to challenge Z. A. Bhutto further damaged the reputation of the founder of Sindhi nationalism. The MQM and G. M. Syed formed an anti-PPP alliance at Zia's encouragement. During the MRD agitation in Sindh, Palejo's Awami Tahreek made significant sacrifices and endured harsh military tactics. 13.45% of the activists who were arrested were its employees. However, upon the restoration of democracy, the PPP disassociated itself from all MRD parties, including the Awami Tahreek, due to political considerations in the 1988 elections. The party ran for office independently and even formed a political coalition, but it was unsuccessful in winning any elections (Tahir Amin, 1993).

The Sindhi National Alliance (SNA), which was established in May 1988 as a result of the collaboration of two prominent Sindhi nationalists, G. M. Syed and Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, issued an eight-point Charter of Alliance. They pledged to fight peacefully against "gangs of outsiders" in Sindh, against the establishment of army cantonments, against the imposition of Sindhi as the official language of the province, and against the detention of political prisoners. Before the election, Mohajir and Sindhi ethnic violence broke out in Hyderabad, which left many people dead. In September 1988, G. M. Syed proclaimed Sindhu Desh to be an independent nation, and Jiye Sindh workers set fire to the Pakistani flag at the airport in Sukkur. GM Syed was detained on these allegations. The party abstained from the elections in November 1988 (Ian Talbot, 2015).

The political leadership of Sindhi nationalism shied away from electoral politics in 1988. The majority of the leaders abstained from voting. Some of them

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entered politics through the channels of various political parties. In her native district, Hamida Khuro ran for office against the Bhuttos, longtime adversaries of her family. Begum Nusrat Bhutto received 83,449 votes against Hamida Begum's measly 4,524 votes from the Pakistan National Party (PNP), giving her a resounding victory. Another well-known person, Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, joined the Awami National Party. He also contested elections from NA-182 Thatta district with full public support but had to face electoral defeat (The Pakistan Election Compendium, Vol. II).

AWAMI TEHREEK'S ROLE AS A LEFTIST

The MRD movement had considerable participation from Awami Tehreek and the Communist Party of Pakistan. The Sindhi people, particularly those in rural areas, were mobilized in part by Awami Tehreek. The Communist Party also had a significant impact through the Jam Saqi Case or Communist Case. Although neither Awami Tehreek nor the Communist Party of Pakistan had ever taken part in parliamentary proceedings, PPP was the only party receiving votes from the people of Sindh. However, because Awami Tehreek and the Communist Party of Pakistan were more ideologically and practically sound than PPP, they were able to organize the public in a very organized manner. Due to the inclusion of religious groups in the alliance, the admittance of the Left, including Awami Tehreek, the Communist Party of Pakistan, and the Pakistan National Party, was difficult at first. Due to state propaganda against Communism that began as soon as the nation gained its independence, it was labeled as anti-Islamic and labeled an ideology of infidelity. As a result, it was challenging for the right to seat next to the lefties. But because religious groups lacked the Left parties' broad support, their inclusion into MRD was crucial.

Right-leaning religious parties opposed left-leaning political parties. They were concerned the Left parties may seize control of the movement. The religious forces were opposed to the Left joining the movement because they felt threatened by Left parties' increased emphasis on populist mobilization. Jamoon Kashmir Muslim Congress leader Sardar Abdul Qayum vehemently opposed the inclusion of Leftist parties in the alliance. The Awami National Party (ANP), the Mazdoor Kissan Party (Fatehyab Ali Khan), the Qomi Mahaz Azadi (Mairaj Muhammad Khan), the National Democratic Party (Sardar Sher Baaz Khan Mazari), and the Awami Tehreek (Fazil Raho and Rasool Bakhsh Palejo) were these Leftist parties (Abro, 2014, pp. 66-67). The right-wing was feeling fear about communist groups rising to the forefront when a session was organized at Sardar Sher Baaz Khan Mazari's house, however on that day, none of the members of religious parties was participating at the gathering. These members argued that if any tiny Leftist parties were not expelled from the coalition, they would not be willing to stay. (Abro, 2014, pp. 68-69).

The Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), which was established in February 1981, was unable to get widespread support until the Leftist Awami Tehreek joined the coalition and organized rural Sindh's undergraduates and farmers. After 2.5 years, Pakistan National Party and Awami Tehreek were asked to attend a conference as observers on August 9, 1983. The meeting saw the announcement that Awami Tehreek would take part as a full member of MRD. Making Awami Tehreek a full member of the MRD opened the door for other parties to join the movement, particularly the Pakistan National Party (PNP). As a result, the Communist Party, which at the time was a part of the PNP, also joined MRD (Abro, 2014, p. 164). The Leftists were conscious that the MRD, of which religious parties were also a part, would no longer coordinate with the Left after the movement succeeded, but they still wanted to be a part of the alliance in order to end martial law, stated Badar Abro, the previous leader of the Communist Party (Abro, 2014, p. 169).

Awami Tehreek eventually took over as the MRD's primary organ, and it made the decision to join the civil disobedience action when it began on August 14, 1983. Without a doubt, it was Awami Tehreek, which participated actively in MRD after the PPP and had a large population of political prisoners from both Awami Tehreek and the PPP. Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, the head of Awami Tehreek, allegedly claimed to be responsible for the creation of MRD. According to Palejo, he was the one who persuaded Begum Nusrat Bhutto to form an alliance with political parties of the PNA because it was necessary at the time, according to Sindhi journalist Faiz Khoso (Khoso, 2013, p. 58).

Ayaz Latif Paliyo, president of Qomi Awami Tehrik, an Awami Tehreek faction, was also interviewed by Faiz Khoso. He claimed that when the MRD alliance was about to be formed, a delegation from Awami Tehreek, made up of Syed Alam Shah, Gul Hassan Kerano, Lakha Dino Behrani, and Hakeem Halepoto, met Nusrat Bhutto. The Jmoon and Kashmir Muslim Conference's head, Abdul Qayum, objected to the accession of Awami Tehreek as a full member of the coalition. In the coalition, AT was thus initially welcomed as an intellectual and spectator. However, the Jmoon and Kashmir Muslim Conference departed the coalition after the plane hijacking episode, and no one then opposed to Awami Tehreek's entrance, hence in the end it was recognised as an entire component of MRD (Khoso, 2013, pp. 58-59).

The aero plane hijacking episode that occurred in 1981 prevented the movement from continuing to be as active as it once was, but once the coalition of civil disobedience organizations opposing the government of the military was established on August 14, 1983, it began to gain momentum once more. Over ten to twelve thousand persons were detained within a month as a result of the political party crackdown, which was at its height (Abro, 2014, p. 226). Nevertheless, the campaign

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received a lot of support from the general public as a result of the Left's participation. Due to the military campaign that followed the toppling of Bhutto's regime and his assassination, the citizens of Sindh were prepared for resistance. The PPP and religious parties, who had opposed the Left's admission into MRD, as well as the MRD governance, have finally recognised the Left's significance. Before beginning the planned civil disobedience movement on August 14, 1983, a booklet outlining 31 requests for the alliance was produced.

The fact that several of these thirty-one principles of the coalition clearly outlined the requirements of Left parties was a great appreciation for the Left in MRD. These left-leaning points included:-

- Restoring trade unions that protect workers' rights and provide them with strike guarantees.*
- Women's equal access to social and economic rights.*
- Implementing changes to end unfairness towards manufacturing workers, peasants, and political activists and grant equal rights to all citizens.*
- Reforms to agriculture and the distribution of public lands to peasants without land.*
- Making Pakistan's economy independent and protecting the nation from the pillage and looting of foreign corporations.*
- Regularizing the squatter settlements and providing all facilities to individuals living in these squatter communities.*
- The withdrawal from all military agreements, the breaking off of ties with powerful nations, and the assurance of Pakistan's impartial stance in these disputes (Khosro, 2013, pp. 68-71).*

It is impossible to dismiss the Left's contribution to the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. The Communist Party of Pakistan and Awami Tehreek were primarily responsible for renewing the campaign following the plane hijacking episode, and both organisations made significant contributions. The Awami Tehreek cadres' contribution was to organise the people of Sindh, particularly those from rural areas, including as farmers, students, and women, against Zia-ul-Haq's martial regime.

CONCLUSION

It is abundantly evident from the entire discussion that the Left, specifically the Communist Party and Awami Tehreek, played a key role in making it feasible to mobilize large numbers of people from all walks of life to join the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. Only MRD made it feasible for military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq to hold elections in 1985 and allow civilian Muhammad Khan Junejo to

take office as Pakistan's prime minister. Martial law was not lifted despite the election of a civilian prime minister. However, a delayed democratic process did begin. On the one hand, the MRD movement aided the cause of democracy. Additionally, Left benefited, from its position are being more apparent at the same time. The Left found it impossible to operate publicly following the 1954 Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case's ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan, but it persisted in operating covertly. When political groups with various ideologies, such as the Pakistan People's Party and those affiliated with the Pakistan National Alliance, required the Left to organize and mobilize the populace, this was the case. In summary, the Left played a significant role in the MRD movement because it did not join the movement solely for the purpose of restoring Pakistan's Constitution; rather, it joined because it was only possible thanks to the organization of Pakistanis, particularly Sindhis, who were opposed to the military campaign that was taking place in Sindh at the time. The Left's strength was so demonstrated. However, the martial law finally came to an end when General Zia-ul-Haq perished on August 17, 1988, in a plane crash.



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