

## **A HISTORICAL STUDY OF ROLE OF THE LEFT IN THE MOVEMENT FOR RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was launched against the then military dictatorship in Pakistan in the 1980s. This paper is an attempt to present a historical sketch of the movement and also to discuss the role of the Left in that movement. The study considers those political parties as 'Left' which were following Socialist/Communist ideology, based in Sindh, province of Pakistan, specifically Awami Tehrik, a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party, and the Communist Party of Pakistan. This research is based on relevant literature, especially jail diaries and conducting interviews with victims of Communist Case registered by then military regime against communist leaders. The research addresses the events and mass movements launched by the Left in order to strengthen the movement for the restoration of democracy. Moreover, this paper shows how the Left converted a movement for the restoration of democracy into a great mass movement against the then military dictatorship.*

**Key Words:** Communist case, democracy, left, military dictatorship, movement for restoration of democracy, Pakistan, Sindh.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was one of the very famous movements against the military dictatorship led by the political leadership of Sindh province of Pakistan. Although almost all leading political parties of Pakistan were part of this movement, the base of the movement was Sindh, because of the Pakistan People's Party and *Sindhi Awami Tehrik* (Sindhi People's Movement) were at the forefront, which both parties were led by Sindhi politicians. Another reason behind starting of this movement from Sindh was the brutal military oppression that was also going on in Sindh.

This study mainly focuses on the role of the political Left, specifically those political parties whose party manifestoes were based on Communist/Socialist lines, like Awami Tehrik, a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Party, and the Communist Party of Pakistan, in launching and organizing the movement, because although rightwing and ethno-nationalist parties played a role, it was Left of Sindh that by mobilizing masses of the province against ruthless military dictatorship, converted a bourgeois-democratic movement into a mass movement.

In Pakistan, the military interference in the political and democratic process came into practice openly during General Ayub Khan's regime, who ruled the country as a dictator from 1958 to 1969. Ayub Khan was the first military general who overthrown the then existing government led by the first president of Pakistan, namely Iskander Mirza, in 1958. During Ayub Khan Period, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and the small provinces of West Pakistan were under the suppression of military dictatorship. Later on, under the Zia regime, the military shifted its attention to Sindh, because by that time Sindh was more politically aware than before, and also some separatist groups were functioning which provided an excuse to the military for launching military oppression in Sindh.

Zia-ul-Haq, after dismissing Bhutto government, announced that he would hold elections within 90 days, but later on, he had been denying his promise of holding elections until his death in an air crash in 1988. One major reason behind not holding elections was that he knew that due to hanging

Bhutto, sympathies of the people of the country were with Bhutto's PPP, so he was afraid that the PPP might succeed in the election and later it could take action against him. He did not only suppress political activities but also expelled all employees who were recruited during the Bhutto government. Besides this situation, Sindh was the most affected province which already had been marginalized, but an extensive number of Sindhis, who succeeded to get jobs during the Bhutto regime, had also been expelled. Khan analyzed that how Sindhis were marginalized during the early 1980s. He wrote:

"For most Sindhis, Zia's military rule was perceived as that of an occupying army, primarily because Sindhis were underrepresented in the military...Despite reforms in the quota system, Sindhi representation in the civil services has also been marginal. According to the 1981 census, Sindhis composed 11.7% of Pakistan's population, but only after extensive efforts did the share of Sindhis in senior administrative posts rise from 3.6% in 1974 to 6.8% in 1983" (Khan, 2002, p. 224).

Pakistani historian Tariq Ali described the condition of Sindh under the Zia regime as follows: "There are villages where an army officer slaps a Sindhi in the face if he doesn't salaam him. There were instances of Sindhi women students in rural colleges being raped" (Ali, 1984, p. 60). Likewise, the people of Sindh felt completely deprived after the execution of Bhutto in 1979 which is considered as a 'judicial murder', because Bhutto was a Sindhi Prime Minister. Therefore, this situation created hatred against Zia-ul-Haq and the military dictatorship in the minds of people. In this regard, Tariq Ali believes that MRD was not behind arousing a mutiny among Sindhi people, but Sindhi people started a movement against the Zia regime long before MRD was launched.

Tariq states, "Actually, this Sindhi national upsurge erupted of its own accord. It was not a plan decided upon by the movement for the restoration of democracy. They of course backed it—and that gave them the biggest strength they have had in that country since the movement was launched" (Ali, 1984, p. 60). It became possible only because of the Pakistan People's Party's efforts to convince the leading political parties of Pakistan, especially those parties which were part of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA)\*, to become a part of MRD. But, according to Tariq, the masses of Sindh were not mobilized by PPP but it was a socialist party i.e. *Sindhi Awami Tehrik* behind it which worked amongst masses of Sindh. He explains it in these words, "The cadres who were strong in building the movement were people who had been trained and developed by the Sindhi Awami Tehrik, a group of socialists aware of the national question, in the interior of Sind. If you want a sociological characterization of the movement, it was essentially a very unique alliance between poor peasants and students in the interior of Sind. This then grew and developed and embraced some of the smaller towns and then spread to some of the bigger towns" (Ali, 1984, p. 60).

*Awami Tehrik* (People's Movement) founded by a leftist, Rasool Bux Palijo, along with some other Sindhi politicians, like Fazil Rahu. Palijo previously associated with G. M. Syed's Bazm-i-Sufia-i-Sindh movement in order to spread the message of Sindhi nationalism throughout Sindh, but later on, he disagreed with G.M. Syed on certain points, and he formed his own party, *Sindhi Awami Tehrik* (the Movement of the Sindhi people), in 1970, which later was renamed with only *Awami Tehrik*. According to Tahir Amin:

"The Sind Awami Tahreek led by Rasool Bux Paleejo, a splinter faction of G. M. Syed's movement, broke away from the movement due to differences in strategy from the Jeeya Sind Mahaz. It is a successor party to the Hari Party (Peasant Party) led by Haider Bux Jatoti during the Ayub era. It preached both Sindhi nationalism and socialism of the Maoist variety. Its programme included the eviction of all non-Sindhi landlords who had obtained lands in Sind through auction and other malpractices and strive for the distribution of lands to the landless peasants. It also worked for the rights of Sindhis in governmental services, autonomous and local bodies and other semi government offices. It had three separate wings working among farmers, students, and labourers" (Amin, 1988, pp. 144-145).

Being a Leftist Party, *Awami Tehrik* followed a radical line as compared to other political forces of Sindh. As Ansari observes, "However, Syed's organizations were not the sole spokespeople for Sindhi interests and rights. Alongside the Jiye Sindh Mahaz were organizations such as Paleejo's 'Sindh Awami Tehrik' but, unlike Syed who was prepared to postpone socio-economic reconstruction

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\* Pakistan National Alliance, consisted of nine rightwing political parties, was formed to oppose Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's socialist program. The PNA demanded for imposition of '*Nizam-i-Mustaffa*', Islamic Rule according to the teachings of Quran, in the country.

until political change had taken place, Paleejo combined arguing for greater Sindhi autonomy with land reform, and therefore proposed a more radical interpretation of the nationalist message” (Ansari, 2016, p. 113).

The regime of General Zia-ul-Haq was not alone in oppressing the people of Pakistan, especially of Sindh, under martial law, but also he was supporting the United States against Russian troops in Afghanistan; therefore, in retaliation US was fully supporting Zia’s Martial law in Pakistan. Likewise, the British Foreign Office was also supporting Zia-ul-Haq in this regard. Tariq Ali quotes the British Foreign Office briefing to the journalists, “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 backing this regime” (Ali, 1984, p. 61).

All the political parties, except two religious parties namely the Muslim League of Pir Pagara and *Jamaat-i-Islami*, were banned. Even the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), which was created in order to counter the Bhutto government, fully supported Zia-ul-Haq during his military coup; they also came against the Zia regime later on. The Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) accepted ministries in the Zia regime before Bhutto was executed, but once Bhutto was hanged, Zia did not need PNA anymore. So, eventually, he banned all political parties including those that were part of PNA (Khosro, 2013, p. 25).

### **The Movement Begins**

Almost all political parties, including those were in the PNA alliance, except *Jamaat-i-Islami* and the Muslim League of Pagara group started opposing the Zia regime. Now, it was a suitable time to be united against the Zia regime, because now the military regime was trying to suppress all political forces. Therefore, the dialogue in order to form an alliance against military dictatorship started in November - December 1980. *Jamaat-i-Islami* was the only party of Pakistan that propagated that it was Zia-ul-Haq who could lead them towards ‘*Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*’ in English; ‘Islamic system according to Quran’s teachings. So, JI supported Zia till the end (Abro, 2014, p 55).

During the initial stage of launching the MRD movement, the biggest problem for Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) was to sit together, because PPP leadership, especially Begum Nusrat Bhutto, widow of Z.A Bhutto, considered PNA not only sympathizers of Zia during Bhutto trial, but as well as supporters of Zia-ul-Haq against Bhutto in all illegal steps Zia had taken. Therefore, it was the most difficult time for PPP to decide whether to sit with PNA or not.

However, as MRD needed to be a very powerful alliance against the Zia regime, the PPP leadership decided to sit with the parties of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). Likewise, the Left of Pakistan, especially the Awami Tehrik, Communist Party of Pakistan, and Pakistan National Party, was working against the Zia Martial law, but because remaining out of Assemblies, the Left was not as powerful as the rightwing, like *Jamaat-i-Islami*, Muslim League of Pagara group and parties which were part of PNA, was, so definitely PPP could not rely fully on the Left. In this condition, it was time to make an alliance in which all parties, whether Leftwing or rightwing, were included. As the MRD alliance consisted of parties with different ideological orientations, they had set their common agenda of the alliance which was to oppose the Zia-Martial law and his unconstitutional and undemocratic steps and launching a movement for the restoration of democracy.

Badar Abro quotes Benazir Bhutto as explaining in her book ‘Daughter of the East’ that although; it was a politically good step to form MRD, but she found it difficult to make an alliance with opponents of her father. Likewise, the former opposition parties were also not feeling comfortable sitting together with PPP. In this disturbing situation, the PPP and the PNA leadership started their communication through their messengers, but not themselves directly (Abro, 2014, p. 31). In a meantime, a dialogue within PPP about whether to sit with PNA or not was also going on.

A secret meeting of banned political parties was held in Karachi. In this meeting, the leaders of PPP from Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) were also present. The huge majority of PPP leaders were not in favor of sitting with PNA. At the moment, an old socialist leader of PPP intervened and said that if when Japan attacked China, Mao Zedong had allied with Chiang Kai-shek then why PPP should not make an alliance with PNA for the sake of the collective interests of the people of Pakistan? (Abro, 2014, p. 32). After that meeting, PPP had decided to ally with all political forces which were against the military dictatorship and Martial law, because, it was the need

of the hour to unite against anti-democratic forces in order to restore the democratic process under the Constitution of 1973. Ultimately, the alliance i.e. 'Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD)' was founded on 6th February 1981 and thus the movement began.

Along with political parties which were part of MRD, students and lawyers were also the first active participants of the movement. Then the movement further expanded and people from different walks of life, especially teachers and doctors, also joined the movement (Abro, 2014, p. 36). MRD had announced to hold a countrywide MRD meeting on February 27 in Lahore. In order to disturb the meeting, General Zia-ul-Haq banned the movement of political leaders from one province to another. But despite a ban on the movement of political leaders from one province to another, PPP chairperson Begum Nusrat Bhutto succeeded in reaching Lahore. It is an interesting story of how despite severe surveillance by military authorities she reached Lahore.

This all happened in this way that, Nusrat and Benazir Bhutto both were under house arrest, but despite severe surveillance, she laid down in the dickey of a car from her house in Karachi to reach the railway station. After reaching there, she veiled her face and left for Lahore on a train with an eleven-year-old child (Khoso, 2013, pp. 31-32). In order to befool military authorities, the MRD leadership held the meeting a day before the due date when it was to be held because it was possible that many political leaders might get arrested on that day. If it happened then definitely meeting might be disturbed, therefore, they held a meeting one day before so that military authorities could not reach the meeting venue. However, MRD leadership was successful in doing that. It was shocking news for the government that the MRD meeting was successfully held, so in retaliation, when the government came to know about the MRD meeting, many arrests took place. Begum Nusrat Bhutto was also sent back to Sindh after that meeting.

This was an achievement for MRD that now it started to move on, but the movement had also faced some ups and downs as suddenly a shocking incident had happened which proved a great setback for the movement.

### **The Plane Hijacking Case**

This case relates to the study that on the one hand, PPP was on the forefront in MRD, and on the other, when the incident of plane hijacking happened, the case of plane hijacking was registered against Al-Zulfiqar organization, which was being operated by Meer Murtaza Bhutto, brother of Benazir Bhutto.

On March 3, 1981, the BBC had broadcasted news that the PIA Boeing-720, which had taken off from Karachi airport, was hijacked towards Kabul, Afghanistan. According to the news reports, one hundred and forty-two passengers were on the plane (Abro, 2014, p. 87). The hijackers demanded from the Pakistani government to release selected political prisoners. The Government of Pakistan alleged that the Al-Zulfiqar organization was behind the plane hijacking and stated that the mentioned organization was operated by Meer Murtaza Bhutto, son of former Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto and elder brother of Benazir Bhutto. Both Mrs. Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto were leading the MRD movement against the Zia regime.

Initially, Meer Murtaza Bhutto refused to accept responsibility for the plane hijacking and said he only came to know about the incident after it happened (Khoso, 2013, p. 36). But, later on, in a radio interview, he confessed that the hijacking was done by Al-Zulfiqar and he was operating that organization (Khoso, 2013, p. 36). It was a golden opportunity for the Zia regime when Meer Murtaza Bhutto had accepted the responsibility of plane hijacking, which provided an excuse to the Zia dictatorship to suppress the political activities launched by MRD. Now the military government came into action in a more organized way. Under an excuse of plane hijacking case, more than six thousand political workers were arrested in the month of March only.

Hijackers demanded the release of some political prisoners who were arrested before the plane hijacking. They gave a list of political prisoners in which many prisoners of the Communist Case, which is mentioned in the paper later, specifically those who were affiliated with the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), were also included. However, the prisoners of Communist Case themselves refused to get released because those prisoners wanted to defend themselves against the blames to prove that they were not guilty. Besides that, hijackers also gave another list of fifty-five prisoners except those who were facing the Communist Case.

Because of the delay in releasing their selected political prisoners by the government, the hijackers killed a military officer, Major Tariq Rahim, in the plane. In this way, they got their fifty-five prisoners released from jail, and the government sent them to Karachi airport on the midnight of 12 and 13 March (Abro, 2014, p. 80). However, this was a loss to the MRD movement because, now not the only crackdown against political activists increased, but at the same time, many people of Pakistan were angry to hear that Meer Murtaza Bhutto was involved in such a terrorist activity of plane hijacking. Resultantly, it helped the military government in countering MRD. Because of the plane hijacking incident, the MRD movement could not remain active, but it was the Left of Pakistan, especially the Left of Sindh, which once again raised the enthusiasm of MRD among the masses.

### **Role of the Left**

Generally, the MRD was a countrywide alliance of most of the political parties of Pakistan, whether these were religious, Leftist, or nationalists, and every political element who kept anti-Zia and anti-Martial law sentiments became part of MRD. But, in Sindh, the political parties were divided on this issue. On the one hand, a famous nationalist and separatist leader of Sindh, G.M. Syed, did not support the movement. Syed clearly stated his point of view about MRD on 27 June 1983 that: “the MRD alliance was made for the restoration of democracy which was not beneficial for Sindhi people because democracy could convert Sindhi people into a minority as Punjabis were in numerically in the majority, so it means democracy was in favor of Punjabi majority” (Abro, 2014, pp. 323-324). Syed was also of the opinion that the purpose behind launching the MRD movement was to save Pakistan, so he would not join it at any cost because he already had launched the campaign of separatism of Sindh from Pakistan to create a separate state of Sindh, which he termed as *Sindh Desh*.

On the other hand, two Leftist parties, Awami Tehrik and the Communist Party of Pakistan, were active participants in the movement. Awami Tehrik played a role in mobilizing the people of Sindh, especially people of rural areas. Likewise, Communist Party also played a key role through Jam Saqi Case or Communist Case. Although AT and CPP had never participated in the parliamentary process, thus PPP was the only party that was enjoying the support of the people of Sindh in terms of votes, but as AT and CPP were ideologically and practically more sound than PPP, so they could mobilize people in a very organized way.

The entry of the Left, including Awami Tehrik, Communist Party of Pakistan, and Pakistan National Party, was not easy in the initial stage because of the presence of religious parties in the alliance. Because of state propaganda against Communism since the very early days of the country's independence, Communism was declared as an ideology of infidelity, and it was termed as anti-Islamic. Therefore, it was hard for the right-wing to sit with the leftists. But as religious parties had no such mass base as the Left parties had, therefore, Left's entry into MRD was very necessary. Benazir Bhutto had also realized this dilemma, yet she was unable to instill those Left elements which were following the Communist line in MRD without the consent of other allied parties. As a result, she had to coordinate with other parties in this regard.

The religious parties, which come in the domain of the rightwing, were opponents of Leftwing parties. They feared that the Left parties might hijack the movement. Since Left parties were more oriented to mobilize people, the religious forces felt frightened, and they were not in favor of the Left joining the movement. Sardar Abdul Qayum, the leader of *Jamoon Kashmir Muslim Congress*, completely opposed the entry of Leftist parties into the alliance. These Leftist parties were Pakistan National Party of Mir Gous Bakhsh Bezenjo in which Communist Party was merged at that time, Awami Tehrik led by Fazil Raho and Rasool Bux Palijo, Mazdoor Kissan Party led by Fatehyab Ali Khan, Qomi Mahaz Azadi led by Mairaj Muhammad Khan, National Democratic Party led by Sardar Sher Baaz Khan Mazari and the Awami National Party (ANP) (Abro, 2014, pp. 66-67). The right-wing concerns about leftist parties came to the surface when a meeting was held at Sardar Sher Baaz Khan Mazari's house, but on that day, none of the members of religious parties was present at the meeting. These members demanded to expel all small Leftist parties from an alliance (Abro, 2014, pp. 68-69), otherwise they were not ready to remain part of the alliance.

However, on 19 February 1981, the first press conference of MRD was called, in which, while answering the journalist's questions, Ghulam Mustaffa Jatoi, Abid Zuberi, and Moulana Muhammad Shah Amroti said, “Pakistan National Party (PNP) is not a part of MRD as yet, but the



doors are open for it” (Abro, 2014, p. 70). MRD leaders hoped that Mir Gous Bakhsh Bezenjo, leader of the Pakistan National Party (PNP), would join the alliance. Although Bezenjo wanted to join, but due to religious parties' opposition to the Left, Mir Gous Bakhsh avoided becoming part of the alliance.

The Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) was launched in February 1981, could not become popular among the masses until a Left party, Awami Tehrik, joined the alliance and mobilized the students and peasants of rural Sindh, as the opinion of Tariq Ali regarding this was quoted above.

After two and a half years, on 9 August 1983, Pakistan National Party and Awami Tehrik were invited to participate in a meeting as observers. It was announced in the meeting that Awami Tehrik would participate as a full member of MRD. The decision of making Awami Tehrik a full member of the MRD gave space to other parties, especially the Pakistan National Party (PNP), to become a member of the movement. In this way, the Communist Party also became part of MRD because it was a part of PNP at that time (Abro, 2014, p. 164). According to Badar Abro, former leader of Communist Party, the Leftists were aware that MRD of which religious parties were also a part, after succeeding in movement, they would not coordinate with the Left anymore, but, in spite of that Left desired to be a part of the alliance in order to get rid of Martial law (Abro, 2014, p. 169).

However, at last, Awami Tehrik became the main organ of MRD, and it decided to participate in the civil disobedience movement, which was going to start on August 14, 1983. No doubt, it was Awami Tehrik, who played an active role after PPP in MRD, and the jails throughout the country were full of political prisoners of the PPP and Awami Tehrik. According to a journalist of Sindh, namely Faiz Khoso, who interviewed Rasool Bux Palijo, the leader of Awami Tehrik, Mr. Palijo claimed that he was behind the formation of MRD. According to Palijo, he was the man who convinced Begum Nusrat Bhutto to make an alliance with political parties of PNA (Khoso, 2013, p. 58) because it was need of the hour.

Faiz Khoso also interviewed President of Qomi Awami Tehrik, a faction of AT, Ayaz Latif Palijo, who stated that, when the alliance of MRD was going to be formed, the delegation of Awami Tehrik, which comprised of Syed Alam Shah, Gul Hassan Kerano, Lakha Dino Behrani, and Hakeem Halepoto, met Begum Nusrat Bhutto. Abdul Qayum, leader of Jamoon and Kashmir Muslim Conference, had an objection to Awami Tehrik's entry as a full member of the alliance. So, AT was first accepted in the alliance as a commentator and observer. But, when the plane hijacking incident took place, Jamoon and Kashmir Muslim Conference left the alliance and then no one objected to AT's entry, and ultimately it was accepted as a full member of MRD” (Khoso, 2013, pp. 58-59).

The movement could not remain more active like it was before because of the plane hijacking incident that happened in 1981, however, now it was again getting momentum after the civil disobedience movement against the military government launched on August 14, 1983. In retaliation, the crackdown against political parties was at its peak, and approximately within a month, more than ten to twelve thousand people were arrested (Abro, 2014, p. 226). However, it was because of the Left's entry, the movement got much support among the masses. The people of Sindh were already ready for resistance because the military operation was going on in Sindh after the overthrow of Bhutto's government and his execution. The MRD leadership, especially PPP and religious parties, who were against the Left's entry into MRD, now realized the importance of the Left. Before launching the civil disobedience movement, planned on 14 August 1983, a pamphlet was published presenting thirty-one demands of the alliance.

It was great recognition of the Left in MRD that many out of these thirty-one points of the alliance were clearly stated the demands of Left parties. These Left oriented points were:

- The restoration of Trade Unions for the rights of laborers and strike guaranty for these trade unions.
- Equal social and economic rights for women.
- End of injustice to factory laborers, peasants, and political activists and equal rights to all citizens through introducing reforms.
- Agricultural reforms and the distribution of state-owned land among landless peasants.
- The squatter settlements should be regularized, and all facilities are provided to people living in these squatter settlements.

- Making Pakistan's economy independent and save the country from the loot and plunder of multinational companies.
- Withdrawal of all military pacts, and parting ways with great powers and also assurance of neutral position of Pakistan in these matters (Khosro, 2013, pp. 68-71).

The role of the Left in the Movement for Restoration of Democracy cannot be ignored. Because mainly these were Awami Tehrik and the Communist Party of Pakistan that both parties greatly contributed to reviving the movement after the plane hijacking incident had happened. The contribution of Awami Tehrik cadres was to mobilize people of Sindh, especially people of rural areas, like peasants, students, and women, against the Martial law of Zia-ul-Haq. At the same time, the role played by Communist Case popularly known as Jam Saqi Case, in reviving the movement was also remarkable.

### **Contribution of Jam Saqi/Communist Case in MRD**

The Communist case was registered by the then military government against some communist leaders of the Communist Party of Pakistan under charges of working against the 'Ideology of Pakistan.' Although, the title of Jam Saqi Case, named after the name of CPP leader Comrade Jam Saqi, was registered before the formation of the MRD alliance, which initially was separate, later on, it linked with MRD. This was a Communist Case in which some members of the Communist Party of Pakistan were charged with Anti-Pakistan conspiracy. In an interview for the paper with Sohail Sangi, who was arrested with Jam Saqi, and he was one of the captivities under this case, he stated about Jam Saqi Case in these words: "In Pakistan, two major cases are highlighted with regards to Communists. These cases were registered with the accusation that Communists were trying to overthrow the existing government and wanted to replace it with a Communist government. These two cases were Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case and the other one was Jam Saqi Case. It is an interesting point that both the cases were registered in a period when Pakistan was signing pacts with America" (Sangi, Sohail, personal communication, January 31, 2016).

Sohail Sangi further said: "During Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, Pakistan signed Anti-Communism SEATO and SENTO pacts with America. And during Jam Saqi Case, Pakistan was aligned with the USA against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Therefore, in both cases, America was backing the Pakistani government to suppress Communists in Pakistan" (Sangi, Sohail, personal communication, January 31, 2016). The US and the government of Pakistan were aware that the Left of Pakistan could resist the policies adopted by the capitalist block. Therefore, it was necessary to suppress the Left political forces so that they could not raise their voice against the pacts being signed between Pakistan and United States at that time. In the initial days of Pakistan, the Pakistani government was more inclined towards a capitalist block than a socialist block. It was a major reason that despite being invited by Soviet, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan instead of visiting Soviet, he visited the US. The Left of Pakistan was a major hindrance in the Prime Minister's way of signing the defense pacts with the US because the Communist Party of Pakistan was getting popularity all over Pakistan, especially in Punjab, which was not acceptable to the military establishment of Pakistan at any cost, therefore, Pakistani establishment had to suppress the Left. Finally, in 1954, the CPP was banned under the charge of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case.

Likewise, in 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, that was a positive sign for the Left of Pakistan as well, because Afghanistan was a neighboring country of Pakistan, so there was a possibility that the Left of Pakistan might support the Communist government in Afghanistan. Even it was quite possible at that time that the Left of Pakistan could come ahead, and, with the help of the Soviets, it could also establish a Left government in Pakistan. Therefore, again it was necessary to suppress the Left and the military dictatorship did it by arresting the leaders of CPP, who later were charged under Jam Saqi Case.

According to a newspaper report of 3rd September 1980, which are quoted by Badar Abro, one of the victims of Jam Saqi Case, that few members of the Communist Party were arrested under the allegation of producing communist literature that was found from their houses. According to the military government, the literature was against the 'Ideology of Pakistan' (Abro, 2014, p. 21). Government authorities claimed that Communists were supported by some external forces to destabilize the country. According to a newspaper report, Sindh police found Cyclostyle machines,

typewriter, secrete newspapers, and papers of Left organs like *Surukh Parcham*, red flag, and *Halchal*, struggle, from houses of those alleged Communists (Abro, 2014, p. 21). The following people were charged under the allegation that they were involved in a conspiracy against the ideology of Pakistan; Jam Saqi, Badar Abro, Amar Lal, Ghulam Shabir Shar, Ahmed Kamal Warsi, Professor Jamal Naqvi, Nazir Abbasi and Sohail Sangi.

Amongst the victims of the Case, Nazir Abbasi was brutally tortured and killed in jail on 9 August 1980. The remaining party members were charged with Communist Case, which was initiated on 15 December 1981 in a military court.

During the initial days, this case was called ‘Communist Case’, and then it was renamed with ‘Nazir Abbasi and Jam Saqi Case’. But, in international media, it was famous with the name of ‘Seven Communist Trial’. Faiz Khoso, while quoting Badar Abro, writes, “The actual purpose of Zia-ul-Haq regime was to present this case as a ‘Communist Threat’ so that Zia could get benefits from the United States concerning oppression in Afghanistan which was going on; and in this regard, he succeeded (Khoso, 2013, pp. 39-40).

On the other hand, the military court was trying to avoid using words like ‘Communism’, ‘Communist’ and ‘Communist Party’; the international media named it as ‘Seven Communist Case’. Therefore, later on, this case was called ‘Jam Saqi Case’ (Abro, 2014, p. 109). The objections against captivities of Jam Saqi Case, raised by government witnesses, were not strong.

Jam Saqi writes in the preface of Badar Abro’s jail diary that “all government witnesses, lawyer and military court failed to tell the actual definition of ‘Ideology of Pakistan’. Despite that, they kept us in jail under charges that we were working against the Ideology of Pakistan” (Abro, 2014, p. 19).

The court asked captives of the Jam Saqi case to give names of their defense witnesses. Jam Saqi and his companions submitted a list of one hundred and twenty witnesses in the court. The court ordered to call only fifteen out of one hundred and twenty (Khoso, 2013, pp. 43-44). From those fifteen names, Benazir Bhutto’s name was missing. So, the captivities of this case protested and demanded to add Benazir Bhutto’s name to the list and invite her in court as their defense witness. Finally, the court accepted the name of Benazir Bhutto as a witness (Khoso, 2013, p. 44).

This was a great opportunity to launch the MRD movement through this case. Now, the leading political figures of Pakistan, who were also part of MRD, were invited to be present as defense witnesses of captivities of Jam Saqi Case. After the plane hijacking case, MRD could not remain as much active as it was before the hijacking incident. But now the leadership of MRD again got a chance to overcome and resist Martial law. The process of giving statements as defense witnesses in court started on 12 January 1983 and lasted till 29 March 1983 (Khoso, 2013, p. 47).

The government of Zia-ul-Haq was considering Jam Saqi a very dangerous man who could even harm the integrity of Pakistan. In response to government concerns about Jami Saqi, while giving his statement in court, Mir Gous Bakhsh Bezenjo, one of the witnesses of victims, said, “Jam Saqi is a patriotic person, and I have never seen him being involved in any anti-Pakistan activity” (Khoso, 2013, p. 48). Likewise, despite being a religious leader of a religious party, Moulana Muhammad Shah Amroti also appeared in a military court as a defense witness of communists. After hearing Moulana Muhammad Shah Amroti’s statement, the court and government officials were shocked when he said, “Socialism is not against Islam” (Khoso, 2013, p. 48). It was shocking in the sense that, because the high authorities of the Pakistani state had been trying hard to prove that socialism and communism were Anti-Islamic ideologies, therefore, such statement given by a leader of a religious party that socialism was not against Islam, was never in favor of the state authorities.

Since Benazir Bhutto was leading the largest party, her statements in favor of communist leaders really mattered. Benazir Bhutto also supported communists by saying, “It is the birthright of every individual to criticize and keeping opposite opinion is as old as human civilization. There is no place for Martial law in Islam. Freedom of opinion is supported in Islam, but despite that, Martial law compels to obey military commanders at any cost” (Khoso, 2013, p. 53).

Benazir Bhutto’s statement, given in court, got much attention in media, especially BBC gave much coverage to Bhutto’s statement, and also Jam Saqi Case got much public attention because of media coverage. Meanwhile, Benazir Bhutto’s statement was published and distributed among people. Both media coverage and distribution of published statements of Benazir Bhutto contributed a lot to give much strength to MRD again because now the Jam Saqi case was linked with the MRD



movement. Therefore, it was because of Jam Saqi Case that MRD came in a position to organize itself once again. So, MRD leadership decided to launch civil disobedience movement on August 14, 1983 (Khoso, 2013, p. 64). Now, the movement was launched in a much-organized manner, which compelled Zia-ul-Haq to make Muhammad Khan Junejo as a civilian Prime Minister of Pakistan, who was from Sindh. Zia-ul-Haq might have chosen a civilian Prime Minister from Sindh, the actual battleground during MRD to get a favorable response from the province to weaken the movement. However, allegations against captivities of Jam Saqi Case were not proved in military court and ultimately, they were released from jail on 27 July 1984 (Abro, 2014, p. 251).

## CONCLUSION

In this whole debate, it is very clear that it was Left in the shape of the Communist Party and Awami Tehrik, because of the role played by the Left, it became possible to attract masses and people of different walks of life to participate in the movement, the Movement for Restoration of Democracy. This became possible only because of MRD that military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq held elections in 1985, and he allowed a civilian, Muhammad Khan Junejo, to become Prime Minister of Pakistan. Although a civilian Prime Minister was elected, still Martial law was not lifted. But, at least a slow democratic process got started. The MRD movement, on the one hand, was a supporting cause of democracy. And, at the same time, it was also beneficial for Left that its role came on the surface. After the ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan under the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case in 1954, it was difficult for the Left to work openly, but it continued working underground. In this regard, when political parties with different ideological orientations, including the Pakistan People's Party and those, which were part of the Pakistan National Alliance, needed the Left to mobilize and organize people. In nutshell, the role of the Left in MRD was important in the sense, Left did not involve itself in the movement just for sake of restoration of the Constitution of Pakistan, but it became only possible that people of Pakistan, especially people of Sindh, who were organized against military operation was going on in Sindh at that time. In this way, the strength of the Left was proved. However, at last, the Martial law ended with the death of General Zia-ul-Haq who died in a plane crash on August 17, 1988.

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