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|  | GENERAL ZIA’S MARTIAL LAW  BY SHAHMEER KHAN  25156  Being educated on the topic, my view was always going to differ from that of someone that's lived the experience. The topic in hand being general Zia Ul Haq's martial law which played a significant role in the History of Pakistan. Zia known for his strictness with regards to promoting Islam was inevitably judged for his notions and actions. This side of the spectrum was heavily weighted with the underprivileged.  My father being brought up in a relatively lower-class home had a bad experience as expected. Being 10 years old at the time he'd spent his whole life in Karachi and never to this day had he expected what was to come. Though most of the memories were fairly negative the one thing he vividly recalls is how every student got promoted to the next class the year the martial law was announced, something every child would dream of. Being a student the major changes he felt were in the school life. In fact, he received the news of the martial law from the school itself, however not being as educated on world politics at that age he just assumed that a martial law was something that was common in most countries. Another major change was that the school uniform changed from the formal wear to shalwar kameez. These "uniforms" had a color that was at that time named camel color, a dirty shade of yellow. Islam became quite influential as prayer breaks were made mandatory and became a part of the day to day for school life. School debates were sidelined for Naat-khuani and other Quran recitation events and programs. He even credited the rise of Islamiat and Pak-studies in the curriculum for schools and universities to Zia's tenure. One of the few things that lasted from that era. Another thing that was introduced at the time were NCC courses, these were short month-long army training programs which awarded you with an additional 20 marks upon completion. Through Zia thought of it as a way to get students excited about joining the army, a majority of these students just saw it as an easy way out for an extra few marks, my father however refused to take part in this as he felt it to be immoral and unfair. Education was all that a kid's life revolved around at that time and being a struggling student, my father had to rely on tuitions. These became a struggle later on as upon the boycott to Zia many areas saw riots and protests occur and were therefore put under curfew. Unfortunately, my father’s tuition academy was located in one of these areas and he broke curfew a few times to get to it. His luck didn’t fare too well in the long run as he did get caught eventually by the guards and was forced to do the rooster punishment, a punishment known for its humiliation.  Moving from school life to his everyday life his father's income already struggled to keep the household satisfied. The situation snowballed into chaos when the martial law struck as electricity was frequently disconnected and the family had to sleep on the roof every other day. His parents in general weren't as keen on politics as they knew the consequences of having an opinion at the time. They were however taken aback by the way the economy dropped during Zia's time. The Kalashnikov culture was something that took the streets over as well as heroine as my father talked about how these gangs sprung up from different areas and overcame the police at times due to how common ammunition was at the time and drug use and marketing wasn't something out of the norm. Something that Zia supporters brag about is how everyone had a phone, a massive exaggeration is what my father called it as he claimed that having a phone at that time gave you the upper class status. He talked about how someone having a landline in the house was the biggest deal ever and people from around the town would gather around to watch the telephone line be installed as getting your hands on one was not that easy. He talked about how his family got a landline installed through his uncle who was a senator at the time and he was given the phone quota which was the permission to install ten phones.  The general public's view was always something that confused my father as in private they'd talk against Zia but the image they portrayed was always pro army. A major reason for this was how the media was controlled by the army and he'd hear constant news of the public praising the army which he never actually saw in person. Having a differentiating opinion was a problem as journalists and others that spoke against the government were often beaten severely. My father also mentioned a karz-e-hasna , this was a law passed by the government that stated that you could give the government money if you wanted to , this was solely to fake an image of the government being so caring an lenient on the people and was simply a "publicity stunt" according to him. As time went on the martial law according to him eased up but was still in full motion. Another questionable action was the ban on restaurants to operate in Ramadan before Iftari, something that's still widely followed to this day. He mentioned how his non-muslim friends would often be forced to stay hungry when they worked day jobs as everything food related was closed. Moving onto the later years of Zia's time my father mentioned an incident that occurred in 1986 where he was passing through Waziristan and witnessed wounded soldiers, makeshift hospitals and a depot distributing ammunition, this was at the peak of the Afghan war. Upon general Zia's death the general public was surprisingly hurt as to losing their leader like this as depression took over the nation. It was only after a fair bit of education that my father realized that Zia's actions never warranted sympathy.  On the contrary my father's first cousin went through something completely different. Being a female, she was always going to have a much different outlook of this situation than my father. She was brought up in a much better environment that was strong financially and very well educated as well. Being 9 years old at the time her memories of the events are fairly vague and not that ordered. The first thing she commented on was how women that weren’t in a niqab would be judged for roaming outside as ever since the Islamization policy the religious preachers had quite the dominance on society. This strictness didn’t just end at their common life as she mentioned the way every tv presenter had to wear hijab at all times. At an age so young, tv was all she remembered as she also mentioned how religious channels were numerous and most times of the day there would be channels teaching the public subjects called Ilm-e-baligha which were topics for adults that would be broadcasted on the tv or at times basic urdu-teaching as well . She also mentioned how the news would be translated for everyone based on their geographical location so for Kpk the news channel would be in Pashto and for Punjab it would be in Punjabi etc. and at that time she'd receive news in Hindko, as it was spoken in majority in Islamabad where she resided. Her grandmother had ties with the army and she once told her this story of how when she was a nurse in her youth there was a law which prohibited marriage for any females in the medical industry. Marriage would inevitably mean quitting your career which ended up in several hidden affairs between soldiers, military chiefs, brigadiers etc and nurses in military hospitals. This was a law that Zia abolished which was something he was applauded for by the women the of the nation. Her father also worked in the army at a fairly prestigious rank which meant she lived quite the wealthy life in contrast to my father. Being from the military he and his family were in full support of Zia. It proved how your financial status really determined your opinion of him at the time. Despite this stark difference in status, like my father, her father also had to wear shalwar kameez instead of a proper uniform for the time he served in the military under Zia. This eventually became a habit as even after Zia's demise he'd still wear the same clothes designated to him until he retired. A practice followed by many Zia supporters in the army.  Her father's job meant they'd often have postings here and there. One of such postings was at Rawalpindi where one day while she was at the hospital for an eye-problem she heard loud bombings. This was at the peak of the Afghan war. Due to the censorship for media and news they were unaware of the situation and were in the middle of it. Being a child, she was scared to death as she cried her eyes out. Her father rushed to her as he held her in his arms and ran out, being the only child at the time they were ever so careful with her. As they did run out she heard constant bombings all around her, these were due to the Ojhri camp incident which was situated somewhere between Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Her father evacuated the family as they rushed out of Rawalpindi. She also recalled going to Islamabad in their later years when they bought a house and there she claimed that the walls were in terrible condition with one of them still having remnants of an exploded missile. These missiles that even affected her direct family as her aunt was struck her in the leg by one of the many missile pieces and resulted in her impending death. Fast forwarding to Zia's death the family was distraught especially her father who idolized Zia, she herself was still young at the time and didn’t have much knowledge of who he was and what he did. Upon maturing her opinions changed as she was against Zia and everything he did but due to her family's loyalty to the army she never spoke out on her views, however since she was of the upper class she barely faced a fraction of what my father went through which shows how much your conditions swayed your views at the time.  The narrative then shifts to my grandfather who's worked his entire life in the military as a brigadier. At the time of the martial law he worked as a major in the army and had the power to arrest civilians and punish them with koray i.e lashes to the body. He was situated in Quetta at the time of the news and when it did arrive the other majors and officers had no option but to abide and support it whole heartedly. He also mentioned how the common soldiers just hoped it's for the best and for the betterment of Pakistan and preferred not to go against what happened as the image that this was given was that of treason. Lashing was something much feared by the general public as they claimed to have their manhood at risk because of it and this was thus made the punishment for anyone that spoke ill of the army or the government which now went hand in hand. When he got home is when the family got news of the recent events, my mother being a child at the time wasn’t that aware of what just occurred, my grandmother on the other hand was a heavy supporter of the army and she followed the soldier's footsteps in supporting whatever Zia did and what the army promoted.  Upon Zia's arrival, his main focus was to get the ulemas on his side as he knew religion dominated the nation, this was something that was very visible in the military as the imams were always given utmost respect by the soldiers and the majors and they had a lot of influence in the office my grandfather worked in.  The Islamization worked a treat as he claimed that after Zia's work, prayers became a much more common thing within the soldiers. The sudden support towards Islam was quite the goldmine for the ulemas as my grandfather claimed to have seen them move from small houses to massive ones and bodyguards and jeeps etc. Upon the war of 86 the situation for the ulemas got even better due to the sudden surplus of funds received from the west. It wasn’t just the ulemas though as the army benefited greatly from these funds and my grandfather claimed that the majority of the higher officers got pay raises and bonuses which just gained more support for Zia. The adverse effect to this was the growth of the Kalashnikov and heroine culture due to which the army faced stiff opposition from local gangs, a few of which my grandfather faced in his lifetime. The growth of this however saw the downfall of Pakistan in his eyes as he witnessed the genuinely good imams be sidelined by those hungry for money and power.  Things were smooth for the army and so my grandfather never really faced any difficulties. It was during Zia's tenure that he got promoted and had pay rises and so him and his family's life benefited greatly from the martial law. Despite this and spending his entire life in the army, he always saw through Zia's acts as he never agreed with the policies, the power given to ulemas and the destruction of the general public and economy. Upon general Zia's death in 1988, the army was shook. The news traveled fast and everyone else in their postings couldn't believe it. My grandfather himself thought it to be a mere rumor until it was actually confirmed. He recalled to many officers being distraught because of the news, something my father’s cousin confirmed through her parents. The atmosphere changed drastically as the news spread and it took time until everyone finally believed it. As the case itself raised eyebrows, who caused it was a common topic among officers as my grandfather mentioned the fact that everyone had their own theories. The case itself was taken to the higher ups and that was the last he saw of the evidence and discussion.  To sum it up, it was clear that Zia's rule broke the country into two halves, those against it and those for it. My father who was from a lower-class household faced the difficulties that his cousin avoided. Despite her being a female, her privilege is what differentiated her experience from that of the women in my father's family. My grandfather on the other hand who was expected to be biased to Zia due to his long span in the army was surprisingly against his acts and motives and to this day stands against what Zia did and what he promoted. He also spoke heavily against the rise of ulemas in power and how it inevitably led to the Lal masjid incidents in the future. The main difference what separated opinions was status and this is something common in the history of Pakistan to this day.   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  |