

our female hockey players wear baggy trousers instead of shorts, and stopped women playing some sports altogether.

Many of our madrasas or religious schools were opened at that time, and in all schools religious studies, what we call *deeniyat*, was replaced by *Islamiyat*, or Islamic studies, which children in Pakistan still have to do today. Our history textbooks were rewritten to describe Pakistan as a 'fortress of Islam', which made it seem as if we had existed far longer than since 1947, and denounced Hindus and Jews. Anyone reading them might think we won the three wars we have fought and lost against our great enemy India.

Everything changed when my father was ten. Just after Christmas 1979 the Russians invaded our neighbour Afghanistan. Millions of Afghans fled across the border and General Zia gave them refuge. Vast camps of white tents sprang up mostly around Peshawar, some of which are still there today. Our biggest intelligence service belongs to the military and is called the ISI. It started a massive programme to train Afghan refugees recruited from the camps as resistance fighters or mujahideen. Though Afghans are renowned fighters, Colonel Imam, the officer heading the programme, complained that trying to organise them was 'like weighing frogs'.

The Russian invasion transformed Zia from an international pariah to the great defender of freedom in the Cold War. The Americans became friends with us once again, as in those days Russia was their main enemy. Next door to us the Shah of Iran had been overthrown in a revolution a few months earlier so the CIA had lost their main base in the region. Pakistan took its place. Billions of dollars flowed into our exchequer from the United States and other Western countries, as well as weapons to help the ISI train the Afghans to fight the communist Red Army. General Zia was invited to meet President Ronald Reagan at the White House and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street. They lavished praise on him.

Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto had appointed Zia as his army chief because he thought he was not very intelligent and would not be a threat. He called him his 'monkey'. But Zia turned out to be a very wily man. He made Afghanistan a rallying point not only for the West, which wanted to stop the spread of communism from the Soviet Union, but also for Muslims from Sudan to Tajikistan, who saw it as a fellow Islamic country under attack from infidels. Money poured in from all over the Arab world, particularly Saudi Arabia, which matched whatever the US sent, and volunteer fighters too, including a Saudi millionaire called Osama bin Laden.

We Pashtuns are split between Pakistan and Afghanistan and don't really recognise the border that the British drew more than 100 years ago. So our blood boiled over the Soviet invasion for both religious and nationalist reasons. The clerics of the mosques would often talk about the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in their sermons, condemning the Russians as infidels and urging people to join the jihad, saying it was their duty as good Muslims. It was as if under Zia jihad had become the sixth pillar of our religion on top of the five we grow up to learn – the belief in one God, *namaz* or prayers five times a day, giving *zakat* or alms, *roza* – fasting from dawn till sunset during the month of Ramadan – and *haj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, which every able-bodied Muslim should do once in their lifetime. My father says that in our part of the world this idea of jihad was very much encouraged by the CIA. Children in the refugee camps were even given school textbooks produced by an American university which taught basic arithmetic through fighting. They had examples like, 'If out of 10 Russian infidels, 5 are killed by one Muslim, 5 would be left' or '15 bullets – 10 bullets = 5 bullets'.