

Pakistan's elections under U.S. shadow

by Ramtanu Maitra

As Pakistan goes to the polls for the second time within two years, the fate of the recently deposed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who heads the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the country's largest political party, hangs in the balance. Whether the Oct. 24 elections will result in chaos or a new government will be determined largely by what happens in the coming days inside Pakistan, as well as by the policy Washington chooses to adopt for the immediate future of Pakistan.

Presently there is every indication that the promised election of a new parliament, and thereby a new government, will indeed occur. Not surprisingly, Bhutto's status, along with that of the PPP, has become the key issue. When President Ghulam Ishaq Khan peremptorily dismissed all four provincial governments and assemblies, the national government, and national assembly on Aug. 6 and charged the ruling PPP with gross incompetence and widespread corruption, it seemed that Bhutto, the first woman prime minister of an Islamic state, had reached the end of her rope. A massive investigation to establish financial wrongdoing by her 19-month-old government was launched by the President's handpicked "caretaker government." It was trumpeted that charges of misuse of power and funds—even treason—would be brought against Bhutto. At that point many political observers believed the PPP would be sidelined and the Combined Opposition would romp home in the coming general elections.

But things have not exactly worked out according to plan. Initial claims that Benazir Bhutto would be tried for treason came to nought when, after weeks of investigating, the caretaker Home Minister had to announce that there was no evidence to substantiate such charges. Almost a dozen investigations to nail the PPP for financial wrongdoing have also foundered.

Still, tribunals set up in Lahore and Karachi have succeeded in dragging Bhutto to court to defend herself and have put a damper on her election campaign. The Lahore tribunal has established what has been advertised as a *prima facie* case against Bhutto for using her authority as prime minister to sanction propane gas connections to members of her "coterie" and with allotting 287 acres of prime land in Islamabad to a company. The Karachi tribunal, which has already summoned Bhutto to appear, has accused her of making an unauthorized appointment of a consultant for the Karachi Electrical Undertaking. At the same time rumors are afloat that

the caretaker government is contemplating fresh charges of misuse of funds to bribe legislators and of tapping telephones of friends and foes alike.

If the charges pressed are laughable, the caretaker government seems determined to proceed with its "accountability drive" against the Bhutto government nonetheless. Indeed it has little choice. Failure to nail the PPP is tantamount to admitting that the presidential decree which brought the PPP government down was an act of bad faith pure and simple. Already Bhutto has scored a surprising victory in the form of a Peshawar High Court order restoring the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) assembly and government. Although the caretaker government has appealed to the Supreme Court, the PPP is continuing its legal-judicial offensive to reestablish all the provincial assemblies and the national assembly, and thereby prove Bhutto's claim that President Ishaq Khan's Aug. 6 action was based on "*mala fide* intentions."

Bhutto's opposition united in disarray

Meanwhile, the electoral battle against the PPP, which the opposition expected to win hands down following the President's denunciation of PPP rule, looks murkier than ever. Though the opposition vowed to combine against the PPP and deal it a death blow, it is still bickering over leadership and seat adjustments. The feud between Mohammad Khan Junejo and Mian Nawaz Sharif, two stalwarts of the Pakistan Muslim League, the key component of the opposition Islamic Jamahoori Ittehad (IJI) alliance, has gone from bad to worse.

Equally hollow so far has been the loud and solemn vow by Ghulam Mustafa Khar, a political renegade with reputed connection to the Army, who has changed party affiliations as often as he has changed wives, that he would "remove Benazir Bhutto from the political scene." Khar, a former PPP chief minister of Punjab, broke with Bhutto for the second time in July and jumped onto the caretakers' bandwagon. But the fact is that neither Junejo nor Sharif has an iota of trust in Khar, so his effectiveness against the PPP is likely to remain dubious.

The upshot of all this is that Bhutto's PPP may do well enough in the coming elections to emerge again as the single largest political grouping, and pose serious problems to both the President and Bhutto's sworn opponents.

How the U.S. views Bhutto

Behind this cameo scene the shadow of Uncle Sam looms large. Many political observers have no disagreement with Bhutto's conclusion that President Ishaq Khan dismissed the PPP government to facilitate the U.S. request for Pakistani troop deployment in Saudi Arabia to counter the mythical threat of an Iraqi invasion. There are reasons to believe that Bhutto might have balked on the issue. But this is not to say that Bhutto is considered an "enemy" by Washington, or that

Washington might be upset seeing her as prime minister again.

Rather, there are clear indications that Washington may not tolerate further harassment of Bhutto. A recent letter to President Bush by Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs and a personal friend of Bhutto, drew the American President's attention to the reports of nuclear weapons development by Pakistan and urged him to cut off military and economic aid to Islamabad. The letter was clearly meant to exert pressure: The money at stake is \$500 million, not negligible in light of Pakistan's depleted foreign exchange reserves, now under even greater strain due to increasing oil prices and the return of Pakistani migrant workers from Iraq and Kuwait.

President Bush subsequently announced that he would withhold certification of Pakistan's "nuclear weapons-free" status, the precondition for new aid, until after the Oct. 24 elections. The Pakistani establishment, and the Army in particular, can ill afford strained relations with the U.S. at this point and is expected to make any deal necessary, which may well include reinstatement of Bhutto as prime minister if she wins the elections.

It has also been evident that Washington is not particularly enamored with the Pakistani opposition. U.S. Ambassador Robert B. Oakley provoked an uproar among the anti-Bhutto crowd in Pakistan with a remark at an Asia Society seminar in New York Sept. 11. Oakley, speaking personally, said that if Bhutto's government is held accountable by the caretaker regime, it would be proper to hold the Junejo government similarly accountable for its tenure from 1985-88—lest the proceedings "inevitably be seen as partisan and further divide the country."

At a press conference on Sept. 17, the caretaker Interior Minister Zahid Sarfraz angrily retorted: "Mr. Oakley's behavior is like a viceroy's and not an ambassador's. . . . Why should a U.S. team come to observe our conduct?" Within days, Ambassador Oakley interrupted his leave to return to Islamabad with a personal letter from President Bush to President Ishaq Khan in hand.

The letter has not been made public. But, while those upset with Oakley consoled themselves that Bush had apologized on his behalf, leaks in the Pakistani media assert the letter dealt with an increased Pakistani role in the U.S. Gulf deployment and with the handling of Benazir Bhutto. Whatever may be the actual content of the letter, it is well known that Bhutto does have friends in powerful positions in the United States who would be unlikely to stand by and allow the opposition to persecute her and throw the country into yet another turmoil.

Under the circumstances, President Ishaq Khan is under almost as much pressure as Bhutto herself. If Bhutto and the PPP do well in the coming elections, which is not an unlikely prospect as things now stand, President Ishaq Khan might decide to accept Bhutto's suggestion and resign before things get too embarrassing.

Collor imposes green agenda on Brazil

by Silvia Palacios

When Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello came to the United States in late September to open the United Nations General Assembly session, he spelled out his decision to switch Brazil's national priorities. Collor repeatedly made it clear that Brazil would abandon any attempt to gain technological autonomy; instead, it would tie its hands and surrender to ecologism and to the one-worldist agenda of the great powers, in the illusory hope that they would generously help Brazil become a developed nation.

At the opening ceremony in New York, President Collor announced that Brazil had finally accepted limiting its development of nuclear energy, even for peaceful purposes. He stated, "The moment has come to go further" than the 1967 Tlatelolco Treaty by which most countries in the Americas have renounced all nuclear weapons. "Today's Brazil discards the idea of any experiment which implies nuclear explosions, even though they be for peaceful ends; and it hopes that other countries consider taking the same path." This was from a country which once had the Third World's most ambitious peaceful nuclear development plans.

Collor went so far as to describe the upcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992 as "perhaps the most important international meeting of the century."

Dumping Friedrich List for John Lennon

To give a living example of the new character of the Brazilian government, President Collor de Mello had the gall to go jogging in New York's Central Park wearing a T-shirt blaring "GREEN, I want you alive." And, if that weren't enough, he gave a show of what he treasures as "modernity" by placing a flower on the plaque honoring the assassinated drug addict John Lennon of the Beatles.

The Brazilian government's new international postures naturally provoked unusual enthusiasm in the Anglo-American Establishment. President George Bush, when meeting with Collor Sept. 30, praised him for his firm decision against nuclear energy development. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency assistant director Gordon Bradley was quoted in the daily *O Globo* Sept. 28 declaring on the eve of Collor's U.S. visit, "We hope that, in the future, both Brazil and Argentina will permit the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect their nuclear installations."

The unusual support of 30 U.S. senators for virtually the