

International pressure forces Zia to release opposition leader Begum Bhutto

by Susan Brady

Nov. 11—Pakistani military authorities announced today that they would allow Mrs. Nusrat Bhutto to go abroad for advanced medical treatment. The decision was made after a government medical commission confirmed that Mrs. Bhutto had lung cancer.

The official spokesman for U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz has placed the Secretary and his department on record in effective collusion with Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq's ongoing effort to murder Mrs. Nusrat Bhutto by denying her request to travel to Europe for urgent medical care. In response to a question from *EIR* correspondent Stan Ezrol at the regular press briefing in Washington on Nov. 9, U.S. State Department spokesman John Hughes lied that Mrs. Bhutto was "no longer interested" in leaving Pakistan for treatment of suspected cancer.

This outright lie, stated for the record, poses the question: is the State Department engaged in a "preparatory coverup" for Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq's decision to murder Mrs. Bhutto, the leader of the banned Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the individual State Department officials acknowledge would win hands-down in a free election in Pakistan today?

Mrs. Bhutto is the widow of Pakistan's only elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whom Zia overthrew in a 1977 coup, imprisoned and had judicially murdered in 1979. Mrs. Bhutto, who took over leadership of the PPP, has been diagnosed by her doctors as suffering from advanced lung cancer requiring treatment abroad. Lung cancer is one of the fastest-acting cancers, particularly when not treated properly.

On Nov. 10, Mrs. Bhutto collapsed and was rushed to the intensive care unit of a hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. The medical reporter of the London *Times*, having looked over the medical records, said she needed to be immediately removed to the best possible facilities, which Pakistan does not have.

Nonetheless, Zia is trying to prevent Mrs. Bhutto from leaving the country, clearly hoping that cancer will do to Mrs. Bhutto what Zia needed a hangman to accomplish with her husband. Zia was asked by the press in Malaysia, where he is currently touring, if he would let Mrs. Bhutto seek medical care abroad. Zia told the press that his own appointed

health boards' tests had produced a negative result. In fact, the health board said nothing and simply ordered the tests to be repeated. "If they were positive," Zia told the press conference, "the woman could go and take a holiday."

The British-born U.S. State Department spokesman's feigned ignorance of the Bhutto case is hardly credible, since a widely publicized international campaign for Mrs. Bhutto's release has been gaining momentum daily. From London, to Europe and Ibero-America, as well as within the United States, pressure is building on both Gen. Zia and President Reagan, scheduled to host Zia's state visit in early December, through a series of press conferences, a letter and telegram campaign, and demonstrations.

The European-based Club of Life—with active branches in the United States, Asia, Africa, and Ibero-America—has joined the campaign. The Club of Life has initiated a five-continent letter-writing drive addressed to Gen. Zia, and announced a demonstration at the Pakistan Embassy in Bonn, West Germany for Nov. 12. In London the Pakistan People's Party will hold a demonstration at 10 Downing Street, where Margaret Thatcher is scheduled to be meeting with Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State Shultz's mentor.

On Nov. 1, in what some British press referred to as "an unusual departure from protocol," Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi interceded directly on behalf of Begum Bhutto with Martial Law Administrator Zia during the brief talks the two held during Zia's stopover in New Delhi en route to Southeast Asia. During the week a "Save Begum Bhutto Campaign" was launched at a press conference in London, where Conservative Member of Parliament Jonathan Aitken announced he would enter a motion in the House of Commons calling on the Pakistan government to allow Mrs. Bhutto to travel abroad for medical treatment. The London *Times* ran an editorial urging Zia to let her leave.

By contrast with the pretensions of the State Department, Gen. Zia is clearly under no illusions about Mrs. Bhutto's desire to leave the country to save her life. He has not only masterminded the months-long stalling on her request, including demands that a specially appointed medical board examine her case, but in recent days and weeks he has taken every possible opportunity to reiterate that he will not accede to demands to save her life. In Bangkok on Nov. 1, after his

flight from New Delhi, Zia told the press that he would not respond to Mrs. Gandhi's pleas to save Mrs. Bhutto's life unless his medical examiners tell him that she is suffering from terminal cancer.

Professions of concern

As Ezrol pointed out in his exchange with State Department spokesman Hughes, a month ago the State Department had told Ezrol in the same forum that they "would not be surprised" if Mrs. Bhutto were allowed out of the country very soon. When Ezrol reminded Hughes that a month had passed, and asked him what had happened, Hughes said: "No, nothing on that. But, ah, it seems to me I saw something recently, I'm not sure where, indicating that she is no longer interested in leaving."

Ezrol responded: "The latest information we have from her family is that she is very much interested in leaving. If someone else is putting out a different story, I would be interested to hear it." Hughes refused to answer and proceeded abruptly to the next question.

Someone must have later realized that Hughes's remark was too "imprudent," because the next day a written response to Ezrol's inquiry was posted at the State Department stating: "We have discussed this matter with the government of Pakistan and continue to take an interest in it. It would not serve our interests in the matter to reveal the details of our discussion."

Hughes's protests that Mrs. Bhutto does not want to leave Pakistan contrast sharply with the State Department's own professions of concern in recent months for the "human rights" record of the Zia dictatorship, a concern which many observers trace directly to the upcoming state visit of the Pakistani dictator to Washington Dec. 7. Many Congressmen and Senators opposed the provocative political and military alliance with Pakistan that the U.S. administration has given every indication it is intent upon maintaining at any cost.

State Department deskmen have been anxious in recent days to puff the agency's "intensified" campaign to encourage the Zia regime to "clean up its act"—which, besides an odious "human rights" record, includes the distinction of being the world's number-one supplier of heroin. U.S. Ambassador Speirs stated publicly in Islamabad that the issues of human rights, narcotics, and Pakistan's reported efforts to gain a nuclear-weapons capacity may point to a future conflict between the United States and Pakistan.

Another "horrible example"?

Mrs. Bhutto's simple and urgent request has put the State Department's public relations to the test.

Her late husband, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, presented a similar challenge to American diplomacy when, as Prime Minister of Pakistan, he insisted on the sovereign development of nuclear energy technology for Pakistan. For this kind of stubborn independence in defense of modern industrial and scientific development for nation-building, that could have

set the pace for the rest of the developing-sector nations, Z. A. Bhutto was delivered the threat from Henry Kissinger that "I will make a horrible example of you." One year later Bhutto, the democratically elected leader of Pakistan, was overthrown by Gen. Zia, and two years later Bhutto was murdered by Gen. Zia's judicial system.

Mrs. Bhutto is not alone in fearing that Zia, with possible State Department connivance, has the same fate in store for her. She has continued to speak out about her case, attempting to counter the Pakistani government propaganda which has recently turned toward attempting to imply that Mrs. Bhutto is the one holding up a decision.

Zia's stalling game

Mrs. Bhutto first requested permission to leave the country for medical treatment in August when her condition had worsened and her own doctors had advised her that they could not administer the necessary treatment. At the time, she stated publicly her willingness to answer any and all inquiries the government might have concerning her request. She also stated publicly that she had no intention of engaging in political activity while abroad.

For more than two months, she received no response at all. Then, in late October Zia declared that a specially appointed medical board would be established to rule on her case. Finally, on Oct. 31, Mrs. Bhutto was put through a series of strenuous tests following which she fainted and later reported a significant loss of blood. Nearly two weeks later the government still has not issued its report, and there is little reason to believe that when and if it does the report will be honest. According to one of Mrs. Bhutto's doctors who was allowed to attend the interview board meeting, chairman of the board Major-General Iqbal Chaudhuri made a vague and ambivalent statement about her disease.

Now Major-General Chaudhuri has ordered Mrs. Bhutto to undergo yet another round of taxing and potentially dangerous bronchoscopy and biopsy tests—this, when fresh clinical tests and x-rays are already before the board, and when the full reports of Mrs. Bhutto's doctors, who had administered these tests earlier, are also before the board.

Since August, when her doctors determined that she most likely was suffering from lung cancer and advised her to seek foreign treatment, further tests have clearly showed a mass in Mrs. Bhutto's left lung and she continues to cough up blood, according to Dr. Thelma Bates of St. Thomas's Hospital in London, who has reviewed Mrs. Bhutto's medical records and addressed the London press conference this past week. Mrs. Bhutto has undergone three courses of chemotherapy. "The more time that goes by the less chance there is of saving this patient," Dr. Bates told the press.

Mrs. Bhutto's doctors have strongly advised her against a new round of the bronchoscopy and biopsy tests. Not only is it likely to cause a flair-up of her disease, they warn, but if Mrs. Bhutto were to undergo general anesthesia at this point, they say, it might well result in cardiac arrest.