

Pakistan tensions are muted following the death of Zia

by Linda de Hoyos

The role of the Army in the present difficult situation is to help maintain law and order and to see that the promised Nov. 16 general elections become a reality, declared Pakistan's new Chief of Army Staff Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg on Aug. 19. Addressing the top echelons in the military in Rawalpindi for the first time, General Beg said it would be in the Armed Forces interests to strengthen the relationship between the federal and provincial governments and to create a conducive atmosphere to bring about a rapport between the masses and the political leaders.

Already new Pakistani acting President Ghulam Ishaq Khan has indicated that the government will accept to hold the Nov. 16 national elections on the basis of parties, and not simply individuals, as had been stipulated by former President Zia ul-Haq, who died in a suspicious airplane crash on Aug. 17.

The restraint on the part of the Army—even though rumors of an imminent military coup are rampant throughout the country—is being reciprocated by a calm within the general Pakistani population, despite its many religious, political, and ethnic fissures. Violence was expected, for example, on Aug. 23, when the nation's Shi'ite Muslim population parade through the streets in celebration of Muharram, the holiday of the lunar month. Last year, the Shi'ite celebrations had sparked riots in Karachi. This year, violence was all the more expected, given the murder in early August of Pakistan's primary Shi'ite leader Arif Hussain al-Hussaini. Violence has erupted only in the Northwest Frontier Province on Aug. 22, with Shi'ites reportedly celebrating the death of Zia and U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel.

The political opposition to Zia ul-Haq's military government, led by Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistani People's Party, has also been careful to use restraint in agitation against the military and for the elections. "The Army is seeking to extricate itself from politics," said Ms. Bhutto in an interview with the *Washington Post* Aug. 22. "Had they wanted to impose military rule, they could have done it when Zia died."

The condition of the Army's refraining from full martial law, however, is the maintenance of law and order. Since most political forces are united in their desires for elections, there will be a continued effort to ensure that tensions do not erupt into violence.

Pakistani neutralization

As of this moment, political observers believe that Bhutto and the Pakistani People's Party are slated to win the Nov. 16 elections. For one, the PPP is the only force with support across the country's four provinces. Former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was hanged in 1979 by Zia, had broad support, and that has been largely transferred to his daughter Benazir.

The PPP's fortunes will probably be bolstered by the bitter split in the Muslim League of former Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo. The League, according to press reports, split into two on Aug. 26, when a faction of Zia loyalists, including at least six current ministers, met to choose a new party president and secretary general. A meeting of the League in mid-August had ended in fist fights between the pro-Junejo and pro-Zia groupings. Junejo, whom Zia fired last May, declared the Aug. 26 meeting illegal. The breakaway faction includes the chief ministers of Pakistan's four provinces, who had been posted in their jobs shortly after Junejo's ouster.

There are numerous rivalries within the Pakistani military over position, power, and take in the illegal drugs-and-arms trade. On Aug. 22, Moscow's party daily *Pravda* noted that "the British with their imperial nostalgia . . . cannot fail to have known about the explosive political atmosphere now reigning in Pakistan. . . . To judge from reports, discontent persisted in Army circles, which did not want to continue sharing power with civilian circles. There was growing mistrust on the part of those political leaders and forces which had cooperated with the regime and had been deceived." *Pravda* specifically noted the *Financial Times'* explanation for Zia's assassination, stating, "The most likely explanation for the incident may be that discontented representatives of the country's Armed Forces placed a bomb on the aircraft."

However, aside from the internal problems, the key issue dividing Junejo and Pakistan was the implementation of the April 15 Geneva Accords. Zia had signed the accords under heavy pressure from the United States, centered on aid to Pakistan and the country's military program. Despite the signing, Zia had asserted his independence in aiding the Afghan Mujahideen to move in to fill the military vacuum left by the withdrawing Soviets. The removal of Zia at this

time is likely to result in a change in Pakistani policy toward Afghanistan and an effective neutralization of Pakistan.

Junejo was aligned with the State Department's line on Afghanistan, the delusion that the withdrawal of Soviet troops would bring peace to the region, despite the lack of any political settlement in Kabul. During his visit to Pakistan for Zia's funeral, Secretary of State George Shultz made a point of visiting Junejo.

There are also indications that the United States would be prepared to accommodate to a Bhutto government. U.S. intelligence sources say that if Bhutto were to drop her demands for an election based on parties, and reach agreements with some section of the military, then she would receive the backing of the United States. However, Miss Bhutto, since her 1986 return to Pakistan from exile, has been a favorite of the State Department's Project Democracy and has been likened to Philippines President Corazon Aquino. However, despite her "people's power" reputation, Mrs. Aquino came to power on the back of a U.S.-backed military coup, and even Bhutto told the *New York Times* Aug. 24, "No one in Pakistan is naive enough to believe that an opposition party could come to power without the Army's tolerance."

Miss Bhutto stated Aug. 22 that she and her party are "committed to the implementation of the Afghan accords, as they are widely interpreted." PPP strategist Syed Tariq Sohail was further quoted by the *Wall Street Journal* Aug. 22 as saying that if the PPP comes to power in November, it will try to find factions within the Kabul government that could be persuaded to work in coalition with the Afghan Mujahideen. "That notion," the *Journal* points out, "isn't likely to sit well with the Mujahideen commanders, who want to overthrow the Kabul government."

Afghan refugees a pressing problem

For all Pakistanis, the most pressing issue is the return of the 3 million Afghan refugees who have come into the country over the last nine years. One of Bhutto's big rallying cries has been her demand that Zia get the refugees out of Pakistan by reaching a settlement with Kabul (i.e., Moscow). But it is to be wondered how refugees, whose homes, cattle, and livelihood have been devastated by the Soviet scorched-earth policy in Afghanistan, are to return to a country under a hostile government or under an accord which has no provision for their economic survival or the rebuilding of their country. The more likely prospect, is that the Mujahideen, whose major protector was Zia and who will become increasingly desperate in their perceived betrayal, will turn on Pakistan itself. The Afghan accords will have created a "new Palestinian" population of millions of displaced persons, a key asset in making a new Lebanon of Pakistan. This is the eventuality which General Zia was committed to avoiding, and which it is believed the Pakistani military without him, will have difficulty withstanding.

IRA sets off summer terror vs. Britain

by Mark Burdman

During the month of August, the Irish Republican Army has dramatically escalated its 1988 terrorist offensive. Since February-March of this year, 27 members of the British Army have been killed by the IRA. For the entirety of 1987, only three British soldiers were killed.

The IRA's "Hot August" began on the morning of Aug. 1, with the bombing of an army barracks in North London, close to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's home election district of Finchley. Between that date and Aug. 19, the IRA struck several times in Northern Ireland. It also hit a British Army barracks in Düsseldorf, West Germany on Aug. 5, and shot and killed a British soldier the following weekend in the port city of Ostend in Belgium.

The peak of terrorist activity came early in the morning of Aug. 20, when Provisional IRA men blew up a British Army bus carrying soldiers returning from leave as it traveled along the main Belfast-to-Omagh road in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. Within 72 hours, 8 soldiers had been pronounced dead, and more than 20 wounded. The bomb device, set off by remote control, was reportedly composed of 200 pounds of Semtex, a high-powered plastic explosive made in Czechoslovakia and supplied by Libya.

Over the Aug. 20-21 weekend, the British cabinet was called into emergency session by Prime Minister Thatcher, to discuss new strategies against the IRA. The sessions occurred against the backdrop of faltering morale and increasing frustration in the British security forces in Northern Ireland, including the regular Army, the Ulster Defense Regiment, and local police, because of the inefficacy of actions taken so far, even though the identity of key terrorist "operators" is well known.

Following these meetings, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Tom King visited soldiers who had been wounded in the Aug. 20 outrage, and told them, "Violence cannot win. If it does, it is the end of civilization. As a democracy, the United Kingdom is not prepared to concede to terrorism and will take whatever steps are necessary."

In the next days, however, the terror continued. On Aug. 22, a British Royal Navy recruiting officer was killed in Belfast, by an IRA booby-trap bomb in his car. On the night of Aug. 23, two officers in County Londonderry narrowly escaped being blown up when a bomb went off in their parked van. On the morning of Aug. 24, police sealed off a 400-