

Ishaq Khan unravels Pakistan government

by Linda de Hoyos

Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan is now acting to pull the plug on the elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, as part of the potentate's ongoing campaign to clamp his total control over the troika of power in Pakistan: the Army, the presidency, and the prime ministership. At stake is whether Pakistan becomes an instrument of Anglo-American war designs for the region, or whether it is able to act on the basis of its own national interests.

The latter course is not the option of Ishaq Khan, who has functioned in Pakistan for the past 20 years as the *éminence grise*, delivering orders to the military and politicians on behalf of London or Washington and the International Monetary Fund.

As *EIR* reported in its previous issue, Ishaq Khan began unraveling the Nawaz Sharif government when Nawaz Sharif, in a loose alliance with his political arch-rival Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistani People's Party, began to campaign for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution. Instituted under the martial law regime of President Zia ul-Haq, the amendment gives full powers to the President, who is appointed by the Senate, to dissolve the National Assembly; to appoint and dismiss provincial governors; and to appoint the Army chief of staff. In short, the post of President functions as the governor general of a British colony; it is the repository of final, arbitrary power.

Pulling the strings

Now, although Ishaq Khan succeeded in winning enough support from the Pakistan Muslim League, the largest party of the ruling Ittehad Jamhoori Islami (Islamic Democratic Alliance), to assure himself a second term, he has decided to bring down the government, in a warning to any future prime minister that the President's power is inviolable.

The signal for the ousting of Nawaz Sharif came on April 6, when Minister of State for Economic Affairs Sardar Asaef Ahmed Ali resigned from the cabinet. At his press conference, Ahmed Ali attempted to pin the rap on Nawaz Sharif for the harboring of alleged terrorists in Pakistan—an operation connected to Afghanistan which is overseen by Ishaq Khan, not Nawaz Sharif.

Then, 20 political and other personalities, including the Ishaq Khan-appointed governor of Sindh province, Roedad Khan, visited the President with a charge sheet of 22 allegations against Nawaz Sharif.

A week later, Mir Hazar Khan Bijrani, minister of state for defense production and a native of Sindh province who is identified closely with Ishaq Khan, announced his resignation. This was followed by the resignation of Minister of Defense Production Jam Mashood Ali, who quit on April 13 and demanded the formation of a government of national unity to rule by consensus in the absence of the Nawaz Sharif government.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, whom Ishaq Khan has pulled out all stops to destroy in her power base of Sindh, has also been served warning. On March 23, a mysterious fire broke out in her home in Karachi following a series of explosions. The intense heat even melted the ceiling fans. A metal safe reported to have contained important documents was broken. Mrs. Bhutto was out of the country at the time, but another leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pervez Ali Shah, has called for an investigation.

Ishaq Khan will now also attempt to pin Nawaz Sharif with the mysterious death of the late Pakistan Army Chief Asif Nawaz Janjua, who died suddenly on Jan. 8 of a heart attack while jogging. On April 11, his widow alleged that her husband had been poisoned and did not die of a heart attack. Nuzhat Nawaz, speaking to reporters in Rawalpindi, stated that "expert medical opinion collected by the United States reinforces our suspicion that his death occurred on account of the administration of poison which shrinks and narrows the veins."

At the time the Army chief died, he had been openly seen at receptions with Benazir Bhutto and was engaged in a campaign against the secessionist MQM movement in Sindh province, which Ishaq Khan has deployed against Bhutto's PPP. If Janjua was murdered, the assassination could not have been carried out without the connivance of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Furthermore, Janjua was part of the campaign against the Eighth Amendment, a campaign also supported by the Jamati-i-Islami. When Janjua died, Ishaq Khan replaced him with someone who is relatively unknown who can be guaranteed to do the President's bidding. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has called for a judicial investigation into Janjua's death, but a case has also been registered against Nisar Ali, a special assistant to the prime minister, and Brigadier Imtiaz, director of the intelligence bureau—both known for close ties to Nawaz Sharif—for the alleged murder.

As Ghulam Ishaq Khan proceeds to turn the power troika into a personal dictatorship, the result can only be more crisis for Pakistan—as the ISI proceeds to play the Anglo-American game for war, drugs, and terrorism in the region. That is the scenario, unless Ghulam Ishaq Khan is called to account. Certainly, Washington is aware of his connections to the ISI and the drug trade. A CIA September 1992 study, leaked in *New York Newsday* newspaper, noted that Pakistan's leading drug baron, Malik Muhammad Ayub Khan Afridi, also known as Haji Ayub Zakakhel, has direct access to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.