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GAMMA

ASIA

PAKISTAN 29-33

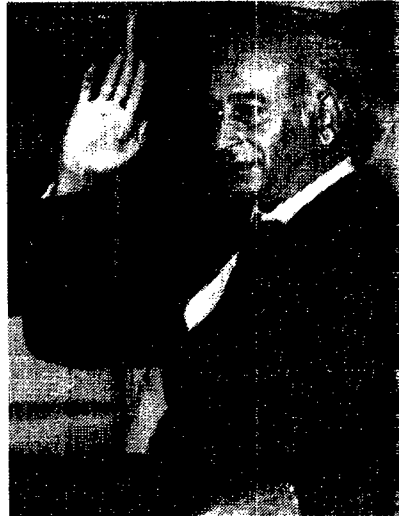
Prime Minister Bhutto and his political opponents have agreed to resume negotiations on June 3 in an effort to resolve Pakistan's political crisis. Neither side appears willing to make significant concessions.

The decision to hold new talks followed a week of consultations among opposition leaders in response to a Saudi Arabian initiative. Other Arabs, including members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, also have participated in the effort to resolve Bhutto's differences with his opponents. The opposition may have agreed to negotiate in the hope that pressure from the Arabs would make Bhutto more conciliatory, but it is doubtful that the Arabs will try to force the Prime Minister to make concessions.

Both sides apparently have agreed to a new National Assembly election, but major differences remain over timing and other specifics. The opposition wants an immediate election, while Bhutto wants as much time as possible to rebuild his political position. Last week, a member of his cabinet said no election could be held before March.

The opposition leaders have also demanded that Bhutto resign before an election; they argue that if Bhutto still controls the government, a new election would be as fraudulent as the one held in March. Bhutto, for his part, has no intention of stepping down. Some of the opposition leaders may be willing to modify their demands, but they are well aware that their colleagues would reject any proposal that leaves Bhutto in office. One opposition leader already has publicly denounced talks as a ruse to buy time for the Prime Minister.

The US embassy believes that, despite the present calm in Pakistan, Bhutto still faces a highly volatile and dangerous



Prime Minister Bhutto

security situation. Major cities are quiet only because of martial law, curfews, and an opposition decision to reduce demonstrations during negotiations. Outside the major cities, demonstrations continue and there have been a few serious outbreaks of violence, but press censorship has greatly limited news of the situation. [redacted]

BANGLADESH 41/42

The President of Bangladesh, General Ziaur Rahman, won an overwhelming vote of confidence this week in a referendum on his program and his continuation in office. Zia, as he is generally known, is popular with both the people and the armed forces and has won the support of some of the country's politicians—particularly those with strong Muslim leanings.

The turnout in the referendum was much larger than the 56 percent of the electorate that voted in Bangladesh's last national election four years ago. This will effectively prevent Zia's opponents from citing voter apathy to disparage the result of the vote.

Zia was installed as president last month, although he has been de facto

ruler since a military coup in November 1975. Under his leadership, Bangladesh has enjoyed greater political stability and economic security than at any other time since it gained independence from Pakistan in 1971. Many Bangladeshis believe the only alternative to Zia would be a return to the violence and corruption that prevailed under past civilian governments.

Zia's shrewd handling of incipient army mutinies and his crackdown on government corruption and inefficiency have added to his reputation as a relatively honest and dedicated leader. His trip to China last winter and an improvement in relations with India have also enhanced his prestige at home. Good rice harvests and plentiful foreign aid have further strengthened his support.

Bangladesh has a large Muslim majority; Zia's recent declaration of intent to amend the constitution to make Islam one of the fundamental principles of the state, while troubling to the Hindu and Christian minorities, brought public pledges of support from the Muslim political parties. He did not, however, have the support of the secular Awami League, the party that ruled Bangladesh in the four years following independence and that remains the largest. Zia may now begin building a political party of his own, or try to take over one of the existing parties, in preparation for the national election he promised for December 1978. Many supporters of the small Muslim parties and moderates in other parties might defect to a party led by Zia. [redacted]

Middle East

ISRAEL N.S.

The Likud party's prospects for putting together a broadly based government appear to have improved following a decision by the Democratic Movement for Change to resume negotiations on a coali-

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tion. The decision came after Likud leader Menachem Begin agreed to delay—but not cancel—the appointment of former defense minister Moshe Dayan as foreign minister.

Democratic Movement chief Yigael Yadin and other party officials fear that with the conservative Dayan as foreign minister, their party would be unable to exert a significant moderating influence on Likud's hard-line stance on Arab-Israeli issues. The Democratic Movement also had protested that Likud did not consult it on Dayan's appointment even though the two parties were discussing a coalition government. Without the Democratic Movement, Likud would have to form a narrow right-wing coalition in which small religious parties would wield disproportionate influence.

Although Begin still seems determined to bring Dayan into the cabinet, the Democratic Movement was apparently placated when Likud's executive committee passed a compromise resolution. The resolution requires Begin to submit all his cabinet nominations to the committee after he is formally designated sometime this month to form a government. In effect, the resolution temporarily freezes the Dayan appointment but



Moshe Dayan

UPI

preserves Begin's right to nominate whomever he pleases. Begin later reassured Yadin that all policies and appointments would be open for discussion among members of a prospective coalition.

Leaders of Likud's Liberal faction, who also protested that they were not consulted about Dayan's nomination, appear satisfied with the new arrangement, since all party factions are represented on the executive committee. This is only a face-saving device for the Liberals, however; Begin's Herut faction and other party groups that support the Dayan appointment have a majority on the committee.

Begin's health, meanwhile, remains a major question; he suffered a serious heart attack during the election campaign. He was released last weekend from an Israeli hospital, which he had entered because of fatigue a few days after his party won the May 17 election. The Herut faction's Ezer Weizman, who might well head Likud if Begin were incapacitated, reportedly holds even more hard-line views than Begin [redacted]

LEBANON

43-45

The Syrians have recently entertained a procession of Lebanese and Palestinian leaders in Damascus in an effort to promote an agreement on the so-called Cairo accords that lay down the ground rules for Palestinian activities in Lebanon. The negotiations are not going well.

The main obstacle is Lebanese President Sarkis' insistence that the Palestinian guerrillas give up most of their weapons and permit Lebanese authorities to provide security for the refugee camps. Sarkis believes that if the Palestinians are disarmed he will have grounds for demanding that Christian forces disarm. He hopes this will enhance his authority and lay the groundwork for future political negotiations between the Christian and Muslim communities.

Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat has resisted these pressures. He fears—with

PICTORIAL PARADE



President Sarkis

justification—that disarming the Palestinians would allow the Syrians to gain control of the movement and leave the guerrillas vulnerable to Christian retaliation.

The Syrians agree with Sarkis but are reluctant to use force, which would be strongly resisted by the Palestinians. The Syrians believe a show of force would also antagonize Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which are subsidizing Syrian operations in Lebanon but do not want Syria to gain complete control over the PLO. Serious fighting would also undermine Syrian efforts to project an image of Arab unity during negotiations with Israel.

In a move that appears to have been tacitly supported by Sarkis, and perhaps by the Syrians, Christian leaders denounced the Cairo accords last weekend as null and void. This may have been an effort to try to break the deadlock by forcing fence sitters—both Lebanese Muslims and the Saudis and Kuwaitis—to back a full and immediate implementation of the accords despite Arafat's objections. In all likelihood, Arafat will try to keep his supporters from yielding to such pressure and string out negotiations for as long as he can.

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