**Land mark event of November 1, 1988 (Part II)**

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She agreed with me that since GIK, General Aslam Beg seemed to have made up their mind to get rid of her she should talk to them to wrap up things and forget about making a speech on August 14. She agreed with me. Next day we left Karachi for Islamabad.

Later in the evening myself and some friends were sitting in Marriott Islamabad discussing aura of rumours that the government was being dismissed next day by GIK. Just then I saw ArifNizami, Editor Nation, whisk by the lift and before I could reach him he disappeared. On August 6 morning I was woken up by Bibi’s phone after she had read Daily Nation predicting Bibi’s removal by GIK that day. She asked me to confirm the news from Arif Nizami.

I managed to get hold of him who repeated his words that why would not I ask from GIK what he was upto. I conveyed his message to Bibi who later rushed her interlocutor Happy Minwallah to call on GIK who denied any move to dismiss her government. Later, we came to know through Minister of State Ahmed Saeed Awan that nothing of that sort was in offing. Indeed, Ahmed Saeed Awan was jovially at ease to tell us that GIK as a matter of fact, would in his radio broadcast, assure the government that it is not going anywhere.

Our IB chief Noor Leghari too was confident that nothing of that sort was happening. At around 4 pm I received a call from Shahjehan Kareem who was Press Secretary to the PM telling me that the Presidency has issued orders of my dismissal as Chairman of the National Press Trust (NPT). Shahjehan Karim told me that he too has been summoned by the Presidency and that he had decided to resign. He disclosed that it was all set to dismiss BIBI’s government by the President that evening..

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By 5 pm in the evening government of Benazir Bhutto was dismissed. Before that she had just asked me to leave Pakistan. Earlier to it, the vote of non-confidence against her initiated by CM Punjab Nawaz Sharif was all set. He had collected enough of MNAs in Changa Manga etc, MQM’s betrayal of PPP, Nawaz Sharif’s using of money with the backing of Aslam Beg did not help much. We were under extreme tension. Later one of her ADC’s conveyed a message to me from BIBI to leave Pakistan, either to go to London or Dubai. She warned me that I was not safe in Pakistan. Next day, by the evening we were allowed to call on her while Bibi was asked to pack up to make room for the Interim Prime Minister Malik Miraj Khalid.

While we were chatting with Bibi I made my observation known to her about President Farooq Leghari’s volte fact. I told her that he had ultimately acted at the instance of the Intelligence, following a conspiracy to get rid of Mir Murtaza Bhutto through his assassination. Talking to the media BIBI did not mince her words, she mentioned clearly about the conspiracy against her.

Later it was revealed, that the conspiracy was hatched by Farooq Leghari in collaboration with allegedly Nawaz Sharif, Syed Abida Hussain. They collaborated to get rid of Bibi and go after Zardari and me.

On November 4 I was to have dinner along with my wife Zarina at the Prime Minister House after Prime Minister has had a meeting with visitors from World Bank. By 10 pm we were finished and joined by Bibi. Our main concern was Begum Sahib’s rapidly deteriorating health condition. It was by then clear that she was suffering from Alzheimer’s.

We were worried about Begum Sahiba, wanted that she be either treated in London, Germany or USA. As a matter of fact, Zarina and myself had convinced Begum Sahiba to accompany us to London to start her medical treatment. Zarina was booked on PIA next morning.

Later in the night around 1 pm President Farooq Leghari had dismissed BiBi’s government, Asif Zardari was away to Lahore where he was ordered to be arrested on the orders of Farooq Leghari. BIBI was not informed how and where Asif Zardari was detained.

I got my intimation from Bibi herself. I was told by her to immediately proceed to London or Dubai as Sardar Farooq Leghari would not spare me and surely I would be next on list to be arrested.

Bibi advised me that she rightly fears that I would be arrested as Leghari believe that I was very close to Bibi and must be privy to all her secrets. Arrangements had been made clandestinely to make me leave Pakistan. I insisted with Bibi that I was clean and to run away like that would mean that I am not and that I am guilty. On the other hand, President Leghari knew that I was also privy to some of his cash dealings with a banker who had approached me in London. He wanted me to get him appointed as Head of a Pakistani Bank by Leghari in exchange of Leghari’s tape recording of the cash he allegedly received from the banker. It was a sound deal to clean chit the financial deal by Farooq Leghari in exchange of the banker being made head of a Pakistani Bank in London.

I consulted BIBI and told her of the brewing scandal. She advised me to meet Farooq Leghari to warn him of the threat. I remember meeting Leghari in the Presidential lawn to avoid our conversation from being taped. When I disclosed to Leghari that such and such banker had got his tape with Leghar’s conversation recording over the cash he had received in exchange to be absolved of his crime committed for Farooq Leghari and be given Number one position in any Nationalised banks in London.

When I showed FL his tape recordings, he heard it, went pale and just refused it to be genuine. He wanted me to hand over the tape to him. I told him it would be illogical since the original tape must be with the banker. Later in the evening I briefed Bibi of my meeting with Farooq Leghari. Her opinion was that he is being used by the intelligence and protected by them. Until then the relations between Bibi and Leghari had not gone bitter but rumours had started floating about them being at variance.

Earlier when I accompanied Farooq Leghari to Auckland to attend Submit of Commonwealth Heads of States, I smelled a rat. In Auckland one afternoon ADC came running to me, President wanted to see me immediately.

I rushed to his suite, he took me aside and revealed that Auckland police wanted to detain a Pakistani journalist (Late Salim Asmi) since he was found allegedly carrying a pistol. I was shocked to know about the suspect. He was a highly respected journalist. When the police said that they wanted to search his room, very reluctantly permission was given. President Leghari apprehended Asmi to be a diehard MQM supporter that he actually was not.

I defended Asmi and suspected that his Baluchi Shalwar, Long Qameez that he was wearing to have caused the whole security fiasco to bring in police to probe what appeared to be revolver in his bag. When police searched his bag, loo and behold, they found a beautiful plastic handle of a small umbrella- it looked like a small pistol. New Zealand Police regretted their blunder, apologised to the President and Asmi.

(Much more about the visit later).

*The writer is the former High Commissioner of Pakistan to UK and a veteran journalist*