

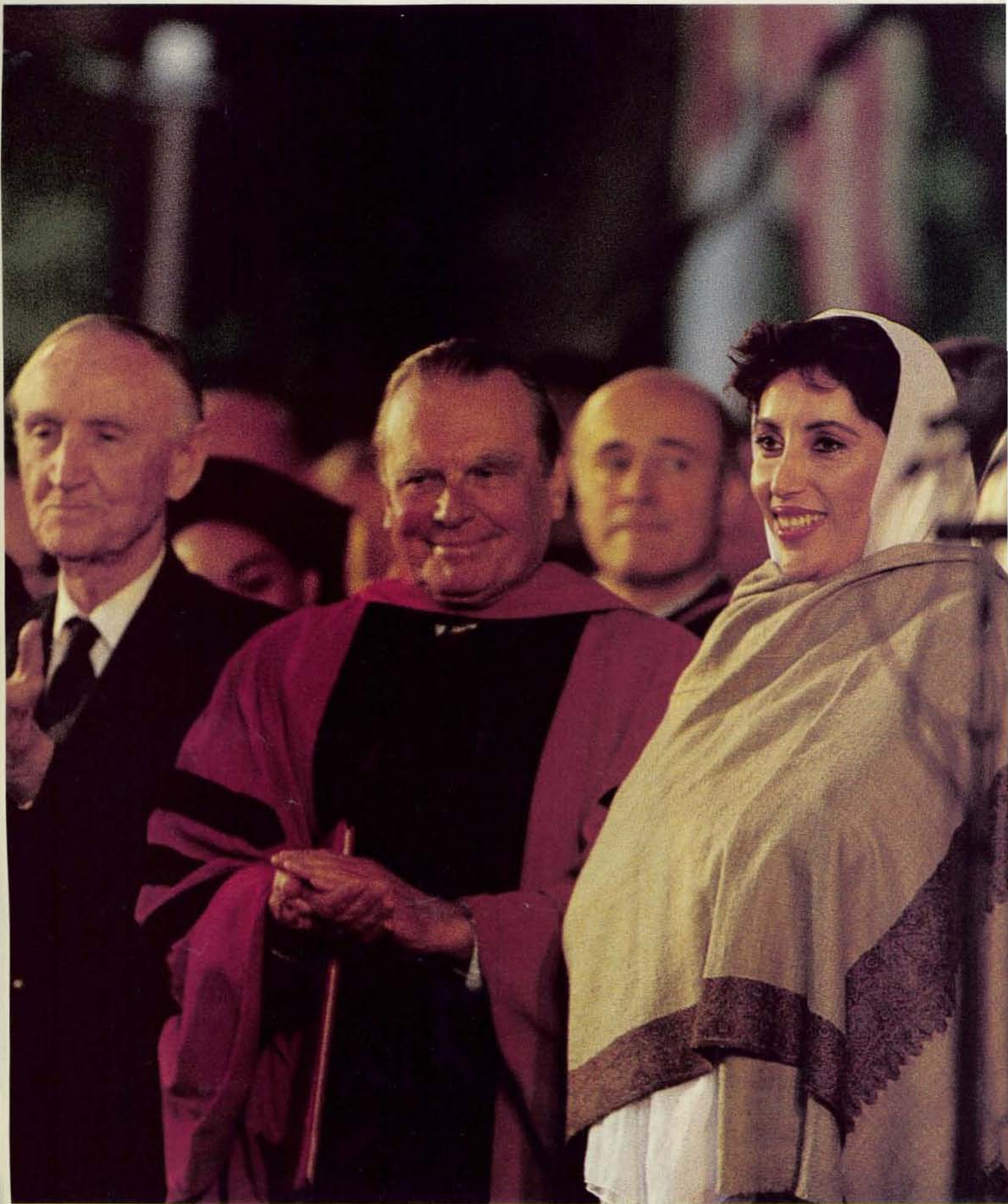
# HARVARD MAGAZINE

July-August 1989/\$3.50

## The Return of Benazir Bhutto











# THE RETURN OF BENAZIR BHUTTO

*To freshman classmates  
she was simply Pinkie from Pakistan.  
Now she is the first woman elected  
to lead a Muslim nation.*

by PETER W. GALBRAITH

In August of 1981 I was in Pakistan on behalf of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I had very much hoped to see my classmate and friend Benazir Bhutto. Unfortunately the martial law administration would not permit me to see her, so instead I sent her a long letter. A couple of months later an open envelope, without postmark, appeared in my Washington mailbox. It was from Benazir.

"So unsettling," she wrote, "to hear from Harvard, a voice from the past, harkening back to an age of innocence. Did they teach us life could be full of such terrible dangers and tragedies? Were they words we read or did not read—meanings I, at least, can now say I failed to grasp. Freedom and liberty, the essays we wrote on them, papers for our tutors, for *grades*, but did we know the value of those words which we bandied about, of how precious they are, as precious as the air we breathe, the water we drink? But then harsh realities seem so remote in the snows of Vermont and the yards of Harvard (although we did get excited about Watergate, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Anne would get so upset in the discussion about the loss of human life). . . ."

When I visited Pakistan, Benazir was in solitary confinement in a class C cell (the category for common criminals) in the provincial Sindh city of Sukkur. Each day she received a bucket of water, which she

Benazir Bhutto '73, prime minister of Pakistan, receiving a doctorate at Commencement. Honorands Mike Mansfield and Czesław Miłosz are at left; at right is professor emeritus John Kenneth Galbraith.



poured on herself as a brief respite from temperatures that reached 120 degrees. And although foreign pressure helped lead to an upgrading of her conditions of confinement, it was another two and a half years before she was freed. At the time Benazir wrote me she was 28.

**T**his spring Benazir Bhutto '73 returned to Harvard to deliver the principal Commencement address and to receive an honorary degree. Of all our classmates she has probably had the most unusual career: president of the Oxford Union, political prisoner, exile, opposition leader, prime minister. In the space of twelve months, beginning in December 1987, she got married, designed and built a house, wrote and published a book, conducted a national election campaign, gave birth to a son, and took her first salaried job as leader of a strategically important country of one hundred million.

Since the remarkable events that swept her into office on December 2, 1988, I have often been asked whether I was surprised at my friend's success. I was not. At Harvard I knew her as a person of intelligence, assertive and articulate in her opinions, with a rare combination of charm and superb political instinct. As the daughter of Pakistan's most charismatic politician, Benazir benefited from a political legacy comparable to that of the Kennedys. (Coincidentally, the eldest of the new Kennedy generation, Kathleen, was a classmate of Benazir's and an Eliot Hall dormmate at Radcliffe.) But unlike the Kennedys, the Bhuttos operated in a political environment with no real national rivals.

So I always knew Benazir would do well. And I thought her eventual leadership of Pakistan—assuming she was permitted to live—became inevitable on April 4, 1979, when under the military dictatorship of General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, her father was hanged.

To me the amazing aspect of Benazir's triumph is not that it occurred but that she endured so much to make it happen.

---

**The amazing aspect of her triumph is not that it occurred but that she endured so much to make it happen.**

---

Her personal and political survival is testimony to her determination, patience, and above all, courage.

Benazir came to Harvard from the most protected of backgrounds. The Bhutto family was from a long line of landowners in rural Sindh, Pakistan's second province, where the culture remains to this day quintessentially feudal. In many Sindh landowning families women are still confined to women's quarters, venturing out rarely and then only under a head-to-foot veil known as the *burqa*.

The Bhuttos were not, of course, typical Sindh landowners. Benazir's grandfather, Sir Shah Nawaz Khan Bhutto, served in the administration of British India and was knighted for his services. Benazir's father was the child prodigy of Paki-

stani politics; western-educated at Berkeley and Oxford, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was cabinet minister at 30, foreign minister at 35, and president at 43. He was something of an enigma, with a kind of mass appeal many outsiders found hard to comprehend. But he was clearly a bold and fearless man: he sent his convent-school-educated sixteen-year-old daughter to Radcliffe in the fall of 1969.

I met Benazir, or Pinkie as she was then known, on the first day of our freshman year. (She had alternate explanations for her nickname: it was either because she had been a pink baby or because of her family's socialist politics.) She and her mother came to my parents' house on Francis Avenue for tea. I remember a quiet, neatly dressed, exceptionally polite young woman. In her recently published autobiography, *Daughter of Destiny*, Benazir recalls being surprised by my long hair and old clothes and shocked that I smoked in front of my parents. But the fall of 1969 offered greater shocks still. The University was being buffeted by continuing protests over the Vietnam War and by dramatic changes in cultural and social life.

Benazir quickly overcame any culture shock she may have felt. In many ways she was like the other women in our class: bright, and determined to be a full participant, not an observer, in undergraduate life. She comped for the *Crimson*, gave tours for Crimson Key, spoke up in class, and more than held her own in dining-hall debates.

Benazir was also a good friend. She remembered birthdays, baked cakes, and organized social events. On at least one occasion she played the role of matchmaker, introducing me to another Eliot Hall resident, Anne O'Leary '73, who became my girlfriend and later my wife. (It was not an entirely successful venture; we subsequently divorced.)

Benazir's real passion was for politics. She shared many of our class's liberal views and even participated in antiwar demonstrations. Although her father was working to develop a close relationship with the Nixon Administration, Benazir's sympathies in the 1972 elections were with George McGovern. In a conversation with Chou En-lai, she predicted Senator McGovern's victory over Richard Nixon—an uncharacteristic lapse of political analysis.

Bangladesh provoked the most heated discussions. Throughout 1971 newspapers and television reported the brutal repression of the East Pakistan secessionist movement by the Pakistan military. While the rest of us supported the Bangladeshis, Benazir was the Pakistan patriot, alternately denouncing the secessionists and denying the atrocities. One such argument became so intense that Anne literally fled the room into the night. Yet years later, after her own experiences with martial law, Benazir wrote in her autobiography: "I was too young and naive at Harvard to understand that the Pakistan army was capable of committing the same atrocities as any army let loose in a civilian population." It is a statement that reflects not only her sympathy for the victims of injustice but also her capacity for retrospection and honesty.

Harvard holds, I think, a special place in Benazir's heart. When she arrived at college she was simply Pinkie from Pakistan. While her background may have been more exotic than that of the average freshman, she was still a typical undergraduate with typical tastes and concerns. Even after her father became president of Pakistan in the middle of her junior year (at the conclusion of the Bangladesh War), Benazir was able to lead a relatively normal student life. Pakistan still seemed very far away.





Above: New graduates and a proud parent at a garden party on the afternoon of Commencement, 1973. From left, Benazir Bhutto; her mother, Nusrat; Anne O'Leary; and Peter Galbraith. Inset: Prime Minister Bhutto and Galbraith in her office in Islamabad.

**B**enazir, Anne, and I all ended up at Oxford after Harvard. Benazir pursued a second bachelor's degree in politics and economics and indulged in debate as a member of the Oxford Union Debating Society. Her first speech was in support of the proposition that Richard Nixon be impeached, and she carried it off with great aplomb: "Americans began with a president who could not tell a lie and now have one who cannot tell the truth." Her rhetorical skill aside, the coterie of Nixon supporters in any university in the fall of 1973 was very small, and Benazir's proposition sailed to an easy triumph in the Union voting. She went on to become president of the Union in the

winter of 1977, a remarkable feat for a woman and a foreigner. Anne and I returned to Oxford (having left in 1975) and attended a debate. From the raised podium Benazir handled the proceedings with charm and wit, looking the part of someone confident of a promising future. She tentatively planned on a career in the Pakistan Foreign Ministry; even without her connections, she almost certainly would have become an ambassador, if not foreign secretary.

In June of 1977 Benazir returned to Pakistan after eight years of study abroad. I did not see her for another seven years, although I visited Pakistan on several occasions during that time. Two weeks after her June arrival General Mo-



ammed Zia ul-Haq overthrew her father's elected government. Zia promised elections within ninety days of his coup. Eleven years later the elections were held, following Zia's death in an airplane crash.

Zia arrested Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, filed a murder charge against him, and put him on trial for his life. According to observers from international human rights organizations, the trial was characterized by numerous violations of due process. The guilty verdict was upheld, 4-3, on a split Supreme Court decision (after considerable political pressure was exerted on the court). On April 4, 1979, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged.

Throughout the eighteen months of trial and appeals, Benazir and her mother were repeatedly detained. After her father's

---

### **After her father's execution, Benazir was denied permission to see his body or to bury him.**

---

execution, Benazir was denied permission to see his body or to bury him. She spent much of the following year in confinement in her family's ancestral home at Larkana. Then, on April 12, 1980, she and her mother were abruptly released from detention. Their freedom proved only a brief respite from martial law persecution.

On March 2, 1981, a Pakistan International Airlines plane on a domestic flight was hijacked and flown to Kabul. Benazir's brothers, Mir Murtaza '76 and Shah Nawaz, who were then living in Afghanistan, went to the Kabul airport and embraced the hijacker.

When I learned of the hijacking from a colleague on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I knew it meant trouble for Benazir; I did not know how much trouble until later. Benazir was taken to Karachi Central Jail and then to the solitary confinement cell at Sukkur. Throughout the spring and summer, the martial law regime tried to develop evidence linking her to the hijacking.

The Reagan Administration was seeking to develop a new strategic relationship with Pakistan and was desperately trying to persuade Zia to accept \$500 million a year in U.S. assistance. The new secretary of state, Alexander Haig, had declared that terrorism had replaced human rights as an administration priority. And the administration's choice for assistant secretary for human rights, Ernest Lefever, was on record as being against raising human rights issues where they might cause discomfort to anti-Communist authoritarian regimes.

The U.S. assistance package provided a lever to help Benazir. It was obvious that the Reagan Administration would do nothing on her behalf. (Indeed, when I arrived in Pakistan in August 1981, I was lectured by our embassy for my insistence on raising Benazir's imprisonment in my meetings with Pakistani officials and for my request to visit her in jail. At that time, and for several years to follow, the embassy had a policy of no contacts with the Bhutto family; by calling on Benazir's mother, Nusrat, who had just been released from jail, I further annoyed the embassy.)



PETER CHARLES WORTHUB PICTURES

Congress did have to act on the U.S. assistance package for Pakistan, a process that provided an opportunity to help Benazir—and, as it turned out, to win her freedom. In the summer and fall of 1981, I tried to interest as many members of Congress as possible in Benazir's case. I sent memos, featured her in my report, drafted questions about her confinement, and worked on legislation linking U.S. assistance for Pakistan to improvements in human rights. I also alerted as many friends in the press as I could.

I was fortunate to have the backing of my boss, Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island. Although he had not met Benazir, Senator Pell was appalled by what I told him of her





Campaigning before last fall's elections, candidate Bhutto returns rose petals to supporters in Lahore.

imprisonment. Throughout the hearings on assistance and arms sales to Pakistan, Pell hammered away at the conditions of Benazir's confinement. On the floor of the Senate he cited her mistreatment as one reason for opposing the Pakistan aid package. A handful of other senators—Cranston, Kennedy, Hatfield, and Glenn—joined the effort. The Pakistan government got the message: Benazir was transferred from prison to confinement in her family home in Larkana.

In 1982 General Zia made a state visit to Washington. It provided a splendid occasion to raise Benazir's continued imprisonment. At a coffee meeting with the Foreign Relations Committee, I watched Zia's face as Senator Pell asked him to

explain the rationale for Benazir's confinement. The previously self-effacing dictator exploded in anger: "Let me tell you, Senator, this young lady lives in a house better than any senator. Her relatives stay with her. Friends can visit her, she has use of the phone. She insists on breaking our laws and no country can tolerate this."

The "laws" Zia referred to were, of course, the martial law regulations prohibiting the exercise of basic freedoms. As to the circumstances of her confinement, everything Zia told the committee was a lie, as I soon found out.

I left the Zia meeting and placed a call to Benazir's Karachi home. The police answered. I asked to speak to Benazir. No,



I was told, it is not permitted. But your president has just informed me that she can use the phone, I insisted. No, it is not allowed, came the reply—and with that the police superintendent cut the connection. From her cousin I learned that Benazir was allowed only infrequent visits from her sister.

Zia's claims (which were reported in writing by the Pakistan Embassy) provided a means to put the Pakistan government on the spot over the Bhutto case. Senators Pell and Percy wrote the Pakistan foreign minister that "Mr. Galbraith is a personal friend of Miss Bhutto's dating back to their days as classmates at Harvard"; citing the promise to allow visits from friends, they asked that I be permitted to see her. For the Pakistan authorities, there could be no good outcome: either I saw Benazir and included in my official report an account of her confinement, or they denied me permission to see her—in which case Zia's unkept promises could be used to embarrass him publicly.

On January 8, 1984, I arrived in Karachi after a week-long visit to other parts of Pakistan. The U.S. ambassador had presented General Zia with my request to see Benazir, but I had not received an answer. A few hours after my arrival, however, the martial law authorities went to Benazir's house and told her to pack. Just after midnight she was placed on a Swissair flight to Zurich. After nearly three years of detention, she was free.

A few days later I joined Benazir in London, where she was enjoying her new freedom. She was full of life. We talked about the politics of South Asia and gossiped about Harvard friends. For all that she had been through, Benazir showed surprisingly little bitterness.

I urged her to consider quitting politics, at least for a time, for I felt that after so many years of imprisonment, she deserved a more normal life. I was also concerned that any return to Pakistan would bring the risk of renewed imprisonment, possibly death. Benazir did not accept my advice, but she did decide to go to Washington to make her case to Congress and the administration.

Over the ensuing years I saw quite a bit of Benazir. She was a regular visitor to Washington, and she used my office as a base of operation for her calls on members of Congress, the press, and the State Department. In the beginning it was hard to persuade senators and congressmen to see her. But her commitment, clarity of thought, and charm eventually won her numerous friends on the Hill. By her last visit in April 1988, several senators were expressing annoyance that I had not arranged for her to see them.

In April 1986 Benazir returned to Pakistan from a two-year exile. The year before, Zia had held elections for a National Assembly but had prohibited political parties from participating. Benazir and her coalition partners in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy boycotted those elections. Now she was returning to demand that genuinely free midterm elections be held.

When her flight from Saudi Arabia touched down in Lahore, Benazir was greeted by a million people. She rode in from the airport on the back of an open truck that took more than ten hours to make the fifteen-minute trip into Lahore. Although comparable crowds greeted her at other stops throughout Pakistan, Benazir was determined to keep her movement peaceful and so was unable to force an election.

The regime used the occasion of Pakistan Independence Day, August 14, 1986, to launch one final crackdown on Benazir



"Cambridge and Harvard were my cradle of liberty, too," Bhutto told her Commencement audience. "I arrived from a country that, in my lifetime, had not known democracy or political freedom."

zir and her Pakistan People's Party. She was arrested after a wild chase through Karachi neighborhoods, during which her supporters were tear-gassed—a sequence of events chronicled by Anne Fadiman '74, a Harvard contemporary who was then a writer for *Life*. After sharp protests by the U.S. administration and her many friends on Capitol Hill, Benazir was released a month later. But her arrest did take the steam out of the movement, and Benazir herself settled into a much longer siege on the military regime. She also decided it was time for a personal life.

**T**he extended 1987 Senate session precluded me from attending Benazir's wedding to Asif Zardari, a businessman from another prominent Sindhi landowning family, on December 17. Although many of Benazir's Harvard friends expressed amazement at the willingness of one of our contemporaries to enter into an arranged marriage, I was not surprised. Benazir is an amalgam of East and West, and very much the product of a tradition in which such marriages are the norm. More practically, her prominence in a fundamentally conservative society made dating impossible; an arranged marriage provided the only feasible means of getting married at all.

Some weeks after her marriage, I visited Benazir and her new husband in Karachi. Asif is a man with a fine sense of humor and quiet self-confidence, who was (and is) devoted to, and protective of, his wife. Benazir's women friends from Harvard, Anne Fadiman and Yolanda Kodrzycki Henderson '73,



who did attend the wedding, described him as "dashing." Most important, the marriage has added warmth and companionship to a life that has experienced so much loneliness. At the time of my January 1988 visit, Benazir seemed far from contesting for political power. I asked her if she intended to start a family, and she answered that if she were to become pregnant, Zia would surely then call elections. I remember pointing out that elections were not scheduled until March 1990, at which Benazir smiled.

Like so much else in her life, things did not work as Benazir planned. When Pakistan's political situation was turned on its head in the summer of 1988, she was pregnant. And as in other situations, she adapted.

On May 30, 1988, Zia summarily fired his hand-picked prime minister and dissolved the National Assembly. Benazir promptly declared her intention to contest the elections to the new assembly. Although the constitution required elections within ninety days of the dissolution, Zia set November 16 as election day—just before the due date wrongly calculated by the regime (Benazir's baby was actually expected in mid-October). By her pregnancy, Benazir seemed to have forced her goal of early elections.

Then, on August 17, the C-130 carrying Zia and many of his top generals crashed into the desert near the southern Punjab city of Bahawalpur. Also on board was the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Arnold Raphel, a personal friend whose skill was sorely missed in the extraordinarily difficult period that followed.

Benazir and Zia could not coexist in Pakistan politics. His death opened the door to the holding of genuinely free elections, with the prospect that if Benazir actually won, she would be able to take office.

In August and September, a very pregnant Benazir initiated the process of selecting candidates for the National and Provincial Assemblies. On September 21 she gave birth—by emergency cesarian—to a seven-pound boy. (Once again she had out-foxed the military authorities, who were anticipating a much later birth.) Within three days, she was working eighteen hours a day to finish slating candidates prior to the filing deadline. A month later she was spending twenty hours a day speaking to enormous crowds throughout Pakistan.

On November 16 Benazir's Pakistan People's Party won a plurality victory in the national elections, sweeping her home province of Sindh and edging out an alliance of pro-Zia politicians in the populous Punjab. The next day she met with the world press in the sitting room of the guest house of the Bhutto compound in Larkana. On the walls were pictures of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's triumphal moments—posing as the youngest minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet, shaking hands with Chou En-lai, speaking to the masses in his trademark Mao cap. Outside were the roses Benazir had tended for hours during the years of house detention. With Asif at her side, she told the world she had won the elections and expected to be sworn in as prime minister. Sixteen days later the regime succumbed to popular demand and world opinion. At 35, and just shy of her first wedding anniversary, Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as prime minister of a democratic Pakistan. In her first acts, Prime Minister Bhutto ordered the release of all political prisoners, commuted all death sentences, and restored full freedom of speech and the press.

On June 5 of this year, Benazir returned to the United States as the first official foreign visitor to the new Bush Ad-

ministration. She held lengthy meetings with President Bush, was feted at a White House dinner, and was accorded the rare honor of speaking to a joint session of Congress. To thunderous applause, she told a packed house that her government sought no retribution for the abuses of martial law, that "democracy is the greatest revenge."

On June 8 Benazir returned to Harvard in what she described as a sentimental journey. The U.S. Secret Service would not permit her to explore, so her view of Harvard Square was through the window of a motorcade that had been thoughtfully routed up John F. Kennedy Street, through the Square, and under the underpass north of the Yard. She was disappointed to learn that Brigham's had closed, but Senator Edward Kennedy did include peppermint-stick ice cream (her favorite) on the menu of a dinner at the Kennedy Library. And she did have a chance to visit Eliot House and to call on Master Alan Heimert, who had repeatedly invited Benazir to speak during the years of imprisonment (a reminder to those opening the mail that she had friends in America).

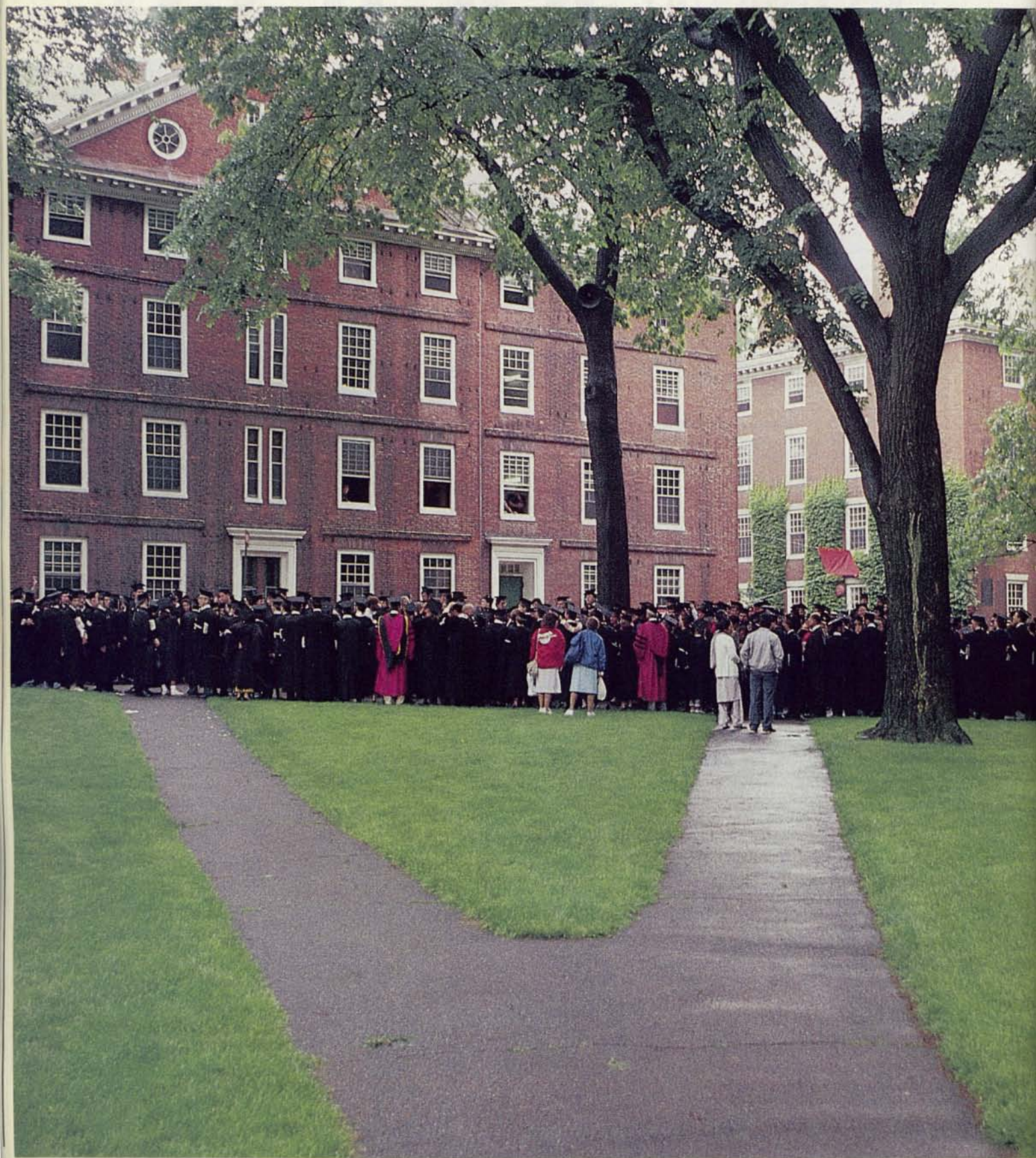
Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, dressed in his white and baby-blue doctoral gown, escorted the prime minister through the academic procession to her seat on the stage. There, in the rain, she received a Doctorate in Laws, surely one of the youngest politicians ever so honored. Following her afternoon speech, Benazir held a short press conference and returned to the Galbraith home for the now traditional post-Commencement party. My mother and father, who had felt the agony of her imprisonment and had helped draw attention to her plight, now shared the joy of her success. The honor of being hosts to a prime minister was accompanied by the pleasure of permitting a longtime friend to catch up with former professors and classmates.

Benazir's Commencement address, delivered to a sea of umbrellas, was a bold call for new measures to enhance democracy and respect for human rights. The Pakistan prime minister proposed the creation of a new international organization, an association of democratic nations, to protect and promote "the most powerful political idea in the world today: the right of people to live under a government of their own choosing." The new association would monitor elections, assist in the development of judicial institutions, mobilize world opinion against coup makers, and help funnel assistance from wealthy democracies to those emerging from the shadow of dictatorship. In its emphasis on democracy and human rights, the speech embodied the essence of Benazir Bhutto's long political struggle.

Much has been made of the symbolism of Benazir's election, of the significance of a young woman leading an Islamic nation. Reflecting back on my friend in prison and in exile a few short years ago, I marvel at how quickly and completely it all changed. And I see her victory as a personal achievement, a triumph of determination and belief over extraordinary adversity. □

*Peter W. Galbraith is a senior adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, with a special responsibility for South and Southwest Asia. Pakistan's new democratic government recently awarded him the Sitara-i-Quaid-i-Azam (the Star of Pakistan) for his work in securing the 1984 release of Benazir Bhutto from confinement and for his support of democracy and human rights in Pakistan.*







## Sodden Splendor

"There are three truths that will see you through life," the Reverend Mr. Peter Gomes told seniors assembled in Memorial Church on the morning of Commencement Day, Thursday, June 8. "The first is, the check is in the mail. The second is, I'll call you tomorrow. The third is, it never rains on a Harvard Commencement."

On Sunday, June 4, when members of the Class of 1964 began to arrive in town for their 25th reunion, the sun was shining. Clouds arrived on Monday. Rain fell lightly on the Phi Beta Kappa and Baccalaureate processions Tuesday, heavily on Class Day exercises Wednesday, naughtily on Harvard's 338th Commencement exercises themselves, and mercilessly on reunioners the day after. It failed to dampen spirits. The skies had cleared by the night of Saturday, June 10, when the 15th and 20th reunion classes were dining and dancing on cruise boats in Boston harbor.

Sheltered under their umbrellas, like happy campers in the rain, the Harvard family heard an address by Benazir Bhutto '73, prime minister of Pakistan. Learned that the alumni had elected insurgent candidate Archbishop Desmond Tutu to a seat on the Board of Overseers. Welcomed a distinguished group of honorary-degree recipients, including, besides Bhutto, former ambassador Mike Mansfield and novelist Toni Morrison. Received news that they had given this year a record sum to the University—\$168 million. Laughed when President Derek Bok told about his dreams. And marveled at Pachelbel's Canon rendered by two members of the Band in a sousaphone duet delivered impromptu in an odd moment for the fun of it, as many of the best parts of Commencement always are.

Benazir Bhutto called for the creation of an association of democratic nations. She attacked "the argument that a Muslim country as such cannot have or work

democracy. . . . I stand before you," she said, "a Muslim woman, the elected prime minister of one hundred million Muslims, a living refutation of such arguments. This has happened because the people of Pakistan have demonstrated, time and again, that their faith in their inherent right to fundamental freedoms is irrepressible. . . . Islam, in fact, has a strong democratic ethos. With its emphasis on justice, on equality, on the



Members of the 50th reunion class make ready for the alumni parade on Commencement afternoon. The crafty one with the sign is Harry Freeman Rice '39, LL.B. '42, of Boston.

brotherhood of men and women, on government by consultation, its essence is democratic."

Bhutto quoted the poet-philosopher Iqbal: "'Life is reduced to a rivulet under dictatorship. But in freedom it becomes a boundless ocean.' This is true in Pakistan, and on every continent on earth. Let all of us who believe in freedom join together for the preservation of liberty. My message is, democratic nations unite." (For a profile of Bhutto, see page 19.)

Bhutto looked down from the lectern onto thousands of umbrellas. Those un-

Left: In the damp austerity of Harvard Yard, seniors prepare to be admitted to the fellowship of educated men and women. Photograph by Christopher S. Johnson.