

Benazir Bhutto Obituary

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) – Benazir Bhutto, one of Pakistan's most famous and enduring politicians and the first woman to lead a Muslim nation in modern times, was assassinated Thursday, Dec. 27, 2007 by an unknown suicide attacker at a campaign rally. She was 54.

Bhutto was many things - zealous guardian of her dead father's legacy, aristocratic populist, accused rogue, even one of People magazine's 50 most beautiful people. And in the end, she was a victim of roiling passions in the nation she sought to lead for a third time.

To the West, she was the appealing and glamorous face of Pakistan - a trailblazing feminist, the first woman to lead a Muslim nation in modern times - though her aura was dimmed by accusations of corruption.

But to many Pakistanis, she was a leader who spoke for them, their needs and their hopes.

Even her worst critics would say that "she was a masterful politician," said Zaffar Abbas, an editor for the respected Dawn newspaper. She knew "what the people of this country wanted.

"If you asked an ordinary person what they achieved when Benazir Bhutto was in power, they would say at least she gave us a voice and she talked about us and our problems. That was her real achievement.

" Her life was a sprawling epic. Her father, Pakistan's president and then prime minister, was hanged; one brother died mysteriously, the other in a shootout. She spent five years imprisoned by her father's tormentors, mostly in solitary confinement, before rising twice to the office of prime minister.

She fled before her conviction on corruption charges, living abroad for eight years. She could have lived there comfortably, far from the cauldron of Pakistani politics, but chose not to do so. And when she returned in October to marshal opposition to President Pervez Musharraf, a suicide attacker targeted her homecoming parade in Karachi. More than 140 people died.

The 54-year-old Bhutto escaped injury. "We will not be deterred," she said then. And on the hustings, she celebrated her survival.

"Bhutto is alive! Bhutto is alive! Bhutto is alive!" she shouted at a rally in December. Like the Nehru-Gandhi family that has long been a force in the politics of neighboring India, the Bhuttos have held a central role in Pakistan for nearly a half century.

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