

Illustration by John Deering

Musharraf denies charges raised in book about Pearl

BY DENNIS JOHNSON
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Writer Dennis Johnson is publisher of Melville House Books in New Jersey, which reprinted *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?*, by Bernard-Henri Levy. The book, translated by James X. Mitchell, was originally published in France. Johnson's column on books and authors formerly appeared in the *Democrat-Gazette*.

In response to a surprise question during an appearance before the Canadian Parliament on Sept. 26, the president of Pakistan has responded to revelations in the book *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?* that the killer of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter was a member of the Pakistani secret service, the ISI, and that the Pakistani government may be sheltering more who were involved.

In response to a query from MP Irwin Cotler, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said the author of *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?*, Bernard-Henri Levy, lacks evidence and that Pearl put himself at risk by his involvement with "a group that had contacts with all kinds of people and then he kept moving down into this world of extremism himself." Musharraf added, "And then what ever happened, happened."

Ruth and Judea Pearl, Daniel Pearl's parents, immediately denounced the comments. Speaking to



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Musharraf sits on a reviewing stand watching a parade in 1999.

a reporter from Toronto's *Globe & Mail* newspaper on Sept. 27, Ruth Pearl said Musharraf was "blaming the victim," while Judea Pearl said the Pakistani president was "trying to exonerate himself and the people he works with, the ISI."

The Levy book "raises major questions that the [Musharraf] gov-

ernment has never responded to," Ruth Pearl said.

Levy, meanwhile, called Musharraf's comments "outrageous," and "a slander on the memory of Daniel Pearl." In New York City on Sept. 27 to talk about his charges on the PBS news program "Now With Bill Moyers," Levy said, "Daniel Pearl was a

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journalist doing his job, and doing it fearlessly. He was not an extremist.

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to get away with these comments as a way of avoiding discussion on Pakistan's responsibility in this tragedy."

Musharraf has previously refused to answer questions about the book. During a state visit to France in July, Musharraf refused to answer reporters asking him about the book, saying Levy was subject to "vested interests, but refusing to elaborate."

The book, originally released in France, was released in the United States this month by the small independent publisher, Melville House in Hoboken, N.J. The book quickly became a bestseller in France.

Wall Street Journal Editorial Features Editor Tunku Varadarajan, in a review, said, "I commend this book," and praised Levy for his "painstaking research" and his "noble sense of outrage."

"He's one of the few to ask hard questions about Pearl's death, harder than the questions the Pakistani investigators appear to have asked of the suspects—harder, even, than the questions the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad was willing to ask of the investigators," wrote Varadarajan.

In a separate statement, *Wall Street Journal* Managing Editor Paul Steiger said the newspaper had no evidence to confirm one of Levy's hypotheses, that Pearl may have been investigating the exchange of nuclear technology between Pakistan, North Korea and al-Qaida.

"However," Steiger said, "we urge all the authorities involved in the investigation to review the book."