

**SEVEN DAYS**

Photograph: David Rose



asking whoever's been dropping food in the lift to stop doing so. "I don't think that was us," jokes Bhutto.

A grey-suited minder lets us into the flat. In the living room, where a housekeeper serves mango lassis, there is a noticeable lack of photographs, books or personal items. Is there anything here that reminds Bhutto of home? "This rug is from Pakistan," she says, nudging it with her foot. There is one painting, by a Spanish artist, whose rolling hills remind her of her native country. Otherwise, it is a blankly impersonal space. "Yes, everything's so functional and work-like," she agrees: a result of moving around so much.

Does she feel at home in the UK? "I do consider London home," she says. "I studied here. My younger daughter, Aseefa, was born in a London hospital. I got engaged to my husband in London. I have many friends here."

**H**OW, then, did she feel about the recent terrorist attacks? "It's terrible. And it's tragic that militants take the name of Islam when they commit these horrific acts. Islam specifically prohibits the killing of innocent men, women and children. These people are fanatics, doing a great crime against all of humanity."

Why does she think these attacks are happening? "I asked this question recently at a talk and got different answers. Some said it was due to the Iraq war, others said, 'Well, no, the Twin Towers were attacked before the Iraq war.' Others said that there are groups who go around with pamphlets and try to tell people about what they think Islam is, their own marginalised interpretation, and try to radicalise them. But I think it's also important to deal with social issues that lead to disaffected youth. It's important to reach out to the young, the children of immigrants, who are born here, who may face an identity crisis about who they are."

"I don't think there's any war between the West and Muslims," she adds, "but I do think there are extremists and Muslims who are at war with both Muslims and the West. These fanatics also kill Muslims who adhere to a different interpretation of Islam. In a way, maybe we're going through what Europe went through, because Europe had its own religious wars when people started to challenge the church. Europe developed a kind of pluralism where people accepted differences. In our part of the world we need to cultivate tolerance."

Bhutto accuses Musharraf of failing to tackle head-on the problem of Pakistan's extremists (there have been reports that the US is starting to look upon her as a "viable alternative") and talks about the creeping "Talibanisation" of Pakistan. I remind her that, even though ideologically opposed, she initially provided military and financial support for the Taliban. "We made a mistake with the Taliban," she admits. "Several countries thought the Taliban were going to end the factional fighting in Afghanistan. But later, the Taliban changed colours. Before, they were just another nasty dictatorship – one of many around the world. But once they invited al-Qaeda in and permitted al-Qaeda to train and recruit Muslim youth from all over the world, and declared war on the West, then they became an exporter of hate and violence."

Given a third term, she would tackle the country's social and health problems, which extremists exploit, as well as striking hard against militants. "It needs sustained co-operation from several people, international community support, and reform of Pakistan's security apparatus and of our madrassas [religious schools]," she says. "The people who preach hate must not be allowed to do so. We have to assert the authority of the state. It's not going to be easy, but it has to be done."

*Daughter Of The East: An Autobiography by Benazir Bhutto is out now (Simon & Schuster, £12.99)*