

## Governing Pakistan\*

Lieutenant General A M Vohra PVSM (Retd)\*\*

**M**ohammad Ayub Khan became the country's first Pakistani Commander-in-Chief in 1951 and subsequently served as the Defence Minister, as well, in the second cabinet of Mohammad Ali Bogra. Iskandar Mirza, the President of Pakistan, declared martial law on 7 October 1958 and appointed Ayub as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Three weeks later, Ayub deposed Mirza and took over as President on 27 October 1958. He maintained personal diaries covering a turbulent period in Pakistan's history from 2 September 1966 to 30 October 1972, which included his presidency until 24 March 1969 (when he yielded to Yahya Khan), period of Yahya's rule, as also the appointment of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as President and Martial Law Administrator on 20 December 1971.

The diaries were kept under wraps for more than 30 years. Indeed, in the author's note, the Field Marshal mentions that as the contents are sensitive material affecting personalities and events "having a bearing on or relationship with, or influence on, the affairs of Pakistan", these cannot be used for long time to come.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto features prominently. He left President Ayub Khan's cabinet in July 1966. "He went because during the last year or so, something perceptible went wrong with him.....He was working fast in the direction of becoming another Krishna Menon or Subandrio (Indonesian Foreign Minister 1960-66). Besides, he started drinking himself into a stupor and led a very loose life. It is a pity that a man of considerable talent went astray." On 18 Nov 1966, Ayub on a visit to UK, records that the British PM, Harold Wilson said, "I am glad you got rid of Bhutto. He was not trustworthy". On 23 May 1967, Ayub records that Said Hassan, one time Pakistan's representative at the UN, told him that when Bhutto came as the head of Pakistan's delegation to the General Assembly, he asked to see Christian Herter, the US Secretary of State. At this meeting, he volunteered to spy for the USA on all the delegations to the UN. When he met Lord Gore, the British representative, he extolled the role of the Commonwealth and said that Pakistan had no use for the Soviets or the USA.

---

\*"Diaries of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan 1966-1972". Edited and annotated by Craig Baxter, (Karachi : Kagzi Printers, Oxford University Press, 2007), 599p, Rs. 795.00, ISBN 978-0-19-547442-B.

\*\*Lieutenant General AM Vohra, PVSM (Retd) is a former Vice Chief of Army Staff. *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. CXXXVII, No. 568, April-June 2007.



Apart from such observations on Bhutto's factitious behaviour, the diary spells out his activity against Ayub and what was in Ayub's eyes, against the State. On 13 September 1968, Ayub records, "Bhutto, since leaving the Cabinet, has been indulging in every form of mischief and disruption directed at me, of course," but not sparing the vital interests of the country." Earlier on 6 February 1967, Ayub wrote, "Bhutto has had a long run in talking nonsense. Time has come when his pretensions should be exposed....." Another personality that claims Ayub's ire is Asghar Khan, former C-in-C of the Pakistan Air Force "who belonged to Bhutto's group for a long time.....has seen fit to make a vile attack on the government and its policies based on half truth and down right falsehoods. This neurotic and unreasoned person may surprise strangers but those who know him well, are well aware that it is nothing but fulminations of a shallow, frustrated and shut in introvert not above cunning and deceit", writes the Field Marshal on 17 November 1968.

Having assumed Presidency in October 1958, Ayub instituted Elective Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO) in August 1959. This disqualified a substantial number of politicians from the pre Ayub period from electoral activity. He introduced 'Basic Democracy'. The Diaries do not go into the details of this political experience but it obviously failed to satisfy the people and there was political unrest. The EBDO had to be ended in December 1966. The unrest grew, opposition parties met in Dacca in Jan 1969 and demanded full democracy through direct election based on adult franchise. On 21 February 1969, Ayub records, "law and order situation has deteriorated everywhere. In Dacca and surrounding areas there were sporadic cases of looting and burning of private property....."

"I have been going over the events of the last few weeks in my mind. The situation is that whilst the opposition has been whipping up lawlessness, our own party (Muslim League) is disintegrating." In these circumstances, he spells out the choices before him as under:

- (a) Stick out whatever the cost and fight but would that cool the situation?
- (b) Declare that he was not a candidate for the next presidential election, this, he felt may help cool the situation somewhat, enable the elections to be held and leave him some power to influence the election of a good man, if the presidential system was to stay.

On 23 February 1969, Ayub records, "held a cabinet meeting and explained reasons for my decision not to contest the next elections.....when the others had left, the C-in-C, Gen Yahya Khan was definite that the time had come for the imposition of a countrywide martial law to save the country."

On 24 March 1969, Ayub records, "today, I have written a letter to General Yahya explaining how the civilian machinery has ceased to be effective and why it is necessary for me to step aside and hand over to him so that normalcy and decency can be brought back." In this letter Ayub writes, "I am left with no option but to step aside and leave it to the Defence Forces of Pakistan, which today represent the only effective and legal instrument to take full control of the affairs of the country."

It is interesting to note that Ayub genuinely believed that Pakistan was not ready for a proper democratic dispensation. While on a visit to his daughter and son-in-law in Swat, he records on 13 April 1969, "General Yahya has stated that, at an appropriate time, elections will be held on the basis of direct adult franchise and chosen representatives of the people will be given the task of framing a constitution. This is the height of wishful thinking." Again on 28 August 1969, he records that Sabir, the Chief reporter of Pakistan Times, came to see him and spoke despairingly of the politicians. "He felt, we are just not capable of running any form of democracy. On 27 November 1969, Ayub records apprehensions about Yahya's constitutional plans: undoing of one unit; representation on the basis of population; elections commencing 5 October (1970); Assembly to frame the constitution within 120 days; political meetings allowed from 1 January 1970. He concludes, "I have been spared the agony of dismembering the country (from one unit to two: East & West).

The Field Marshal continued to observe political developments and pen his observations till 30 November 1972 when he stopped recording due to his ill health. He passed away on 20 April 1974.

The Diaries are absorbing for those interested in political developments on the sub-continent.