

Book Review

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Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century: A Political History*, Oxford University Press, 1997, Price Rs. 1200.00, 647

Dr. Lawrence Ziring, a well-known American Professor of Political Science, is considered an authority on the political history of Pakistan. Generally speaking all of his books on Pakistan are a significant record of Pakistan's political history. But his present work under review is most important in the sense that in one single volume Ziring has not only covered fifty years of Pakistan's politics but also briefly surveyed the Pakistan movement under Quaid-i-Azam's dynamic leadership. The themes that he has selected for describing Pakistan's political history are interesting and show interpretative method of describing history. Different chapters of this book are entitled as: Before the Beginning, Formation of Pakistan, Agony of Partition, Pitfalls of Constitution-making, Failure of Conventional Politics, Coming of Martial Law, Ayub Khan Era, Dismemberment of Pakistan, Bhutto Legacy, Zia-ul-Haq Decade, Democracy Revisited, End and the Beginning and lastly the Scanning of History.

One may disagree with Prof. Ziring's interpretations but no one cannot deny the indepth study. The independence of his approach also presents a longer view of history, providing the reader with a lot of data in as short words as are appropriately possible. Some of his presentations and findings like his assessment of M.K. Gandhi and Quaid-i-Azam M.A. Jinnah are quite revealing. He writes: "whereas Gandhi had earlier caused Jinnah to retreat from the fray, the circumstances surrounding the war in the subcontinent had evened the

playing field between the Mahatma and the Quaid-i-Azam" (34). Giving new meaning to the Quaid's call for Direct Action in 1946, Ziring observes: "Jinnah was constrained to note that the call for Direct Action was not to be taken as a declaration of war, but an official League act of self-defence" (43).

While describing the pitfalls of constitution-making, Ziring rightly describes that though Pakistan was fitted into a design of parliamentary experience", yet "the people who suddenly found themselves parliamentarians had neither the training nor the requisite sense of social responsibility" (99). He highlighting Nazimuddin's policy of inaction in this regards. Analysing the commitment of the Quaid's colleagues to his politics the author maintains that the "nation's guardians paid homage to the memory of the Quaid-i-Azam, but they did not hesitate in deviating from his policies" (147). In order to assess the failure of conventional policies in 1950s Ziring goes deep into the social composition of Pakistani society and the capability of the Muslim League politicians to perform as rulers. For this the author has held both Ghulam Mohammad and Iskandar Mirza responsible. It was, he writes, these two to be blamed for "reducing the parliamentary institutions in a shambles" (209).

The imposition of Martial Law in 1958 and its prolongation has been described by Ziring as "the wholesale repudiation of the political process that pointed Pakistan in a different direction from that envisaged by Mohammad Ali Jinnah" (219). At the time, he recognises that "the martial Law authority forcefully collected huge sums of unpaid revenue. Hidden wealth was uncovered in a number of high-profile cases" (232). Thus, he praises a number of steps taken by Ayub Khan like the reform of family laws though it was opposed by the Ulama (242-243). Thus by adopting these and many other, reformative measures, Ziring observes, "the Ayub era marks the end of Pakistan's age of innocence" (254). About the Tashkent meeting of 1966 Ziring has pointed out that even when the Soviet had leaders bridged the gap between Ayub and Shastri, Ayub kept on insisting that Kashmir dispute should also be included in the Declaration. "At this point, Kosygin reminded Ayub that Bhutto had agreed in the preliminary November meeting in Moscow that his government would not insist on the inclusion of the Kashmir issue in the negotiations" (304) Towards the end of the Ayub era, Ziring maintains, "Bhutto plotted to strengthen

his position by leading the opposition against the man he had intimately served for almost eight years" (305-306).

While describing the story of the separation of East Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh, Ziring puts the blame not on any one single person but holds Bhutto mainly responsible, besides Mujibur Rehman, for ill-advising Yahya Khan. Yahya Khan, one of those considered responsible for this tragedy, the author suggests, was trapped into the advices of the military ruling junta duly manouvred by Bhutto's rhetoric (354). Through his negative policies, Ziring maintains, Bhutto destroyed Pakistani people as well as ideas, institutions and conventions (338).

Writing on Zia-ul-Haq's coup against Bhutto, Ziring writes: "It would ...[took]also take substantial pressure to convince General Zia to lead the coup. Zia was not the strategist in the overthrow of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, but he was made its instrument" (420). Thus the Army officers forced Zia to take over and impose Martial Law on 5 July 1977. This coup "was a white-glass affair" (423).

The revival of democracy in 1985 followed by the regimes of Benazir Bhutto and those of Mian Nawaz Sharif have also been thoroughly analyzed in this book. By casting his observations on the voters whose turnout was lessening by every elections if we take into account all the elections of 1985, 1988, 1990, 1993 he comes to the elections of 1997 in which about thirty percent people voted whose majority showed preference for Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (597).

What is more interesting in the book is its last chapter — The Meaning of History. Though the author rightly recognizes that "there can never be true history, that is, that no historian can ever reveal more than a glimpse into the past, explains why history is for ever being written and rewritten" (605), Pakistan's chequered history is marred by the Viceregal system in which head of the party or state does not want to share power with any of his colleagues and that is the reason that democracy has not flourished despite the fact that Pakistan is massed by politicians and that is the main reason why Pakistan has failed to emerge as 'nation-state'. Its Viceregal system has not allowed the democractic institutions to flourish despite the politicians' lofty declarations that they are the servants of the people and true democrats. For this the bureaucrats and feudal lords are also to be equally blamed. Nothing has therefore been done for the solution of people's social,

educational and health problems. That is why Ziring comes to the conclusion:

Educated Pakistanis must confront the realities of their world. The country is not a nation-state and it will be some decades yet before such a goal is brought within reach... Before Pakistan can achieve the role of a nation-state, it will have to construct a civil society... Viceregalism can preserve Pakistan but it will not sustain it. Government will remain intimidating, but it will also be a weak government, one that cannot address the fundamental needs of Pakistani society (614).

The comprehensive treatment of Pakistan's history in a single volume like this will be useful for the students and teachers of Pakistan's history. For this, a landmark in the historical literature on Pakistan, the author deserves appreciation.