BOOK REVIEWS

Mohammad Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan: FRIENDS NOT MASTERS, A POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Oxford University Press, Pakistan, 1967, pp. xi, 275.

Political autobiographies of eminent and significant statesmen are not very common; far more rare are autobiographies of functioning Heads of State, particularly about contemporary developments. The present work, therefore, constitutes a rare gift for historians—not merely to historians of Pakistan but to historians of Asia.

Yet the book is not a chronicle or a narrative of events, barring the first part which describes the author's young age and early career. Such significant events as have come in for notice and discussion, have a role in the development of the argument of the work. For, the work is primarily concerned with President Ayub's political philosophy and the way he has been implementing it. In sum, it is an outstanding exercise in what one might call the philosophy of Pakistan's existence, but implicitly also the philosophy of the "Third World", more particularly the Muslim world. Indeed, the Revolution which President Ayub brought in October, 1958, in Pakistan, was only technically a military one; it was actually a revolution of a fundamental type in the social, political and economic life-pattern of Pakistan based on an original appraisal of the actual demands of the Pakistani situation. Yet the changes introduced in different spheres of life, although far-reaching and pervasive, were characterized by sobriety and moderation and carefully avoided excesses and extremism. A born realist, President Ayub has a natural aversion for the drastic and the spectacular—a tempting but dangerous pitfall for many a latter-day revolutionary.

As a book, its most outstanding feature is that it constitutes an extraordinarily frank and forthright statement of the views of its author on all problems, internal as well as external. Whether it is the language question in Pakistan or Basic Democracies or whether it is the question of the reform of law or the issue of Islamic interpretation and ideology; or whether it is the question of the developing vis-à-vis the developed countries or the relations of Pakistan with any individual country or the question of Muslim unity, no issue has been left without a clear and unequivocal position having been taken with regard to it.

The reforms undertaken by the regime of President Ayub since 1958 have been many-sided and comprehensive but all inter-linked and geared to the creation of a viable and progressive socio-political-economic fabric. It is, therefore, difficult to assign priority to any particular reform. The effects of Land Reforms,—psychological, moral and, therefore, social—will be so far-reaching that at this moment they are difficult to assess even approximately. Similarly the programme for education, when its mass impact becomes tangible, will have incalculable results. But if one were faced with the question of singling out one of these reforms as the most important one, in the opinion of this reviewer, this is the system of Basic Democracies instituted by President Ayub. In countries where
the gap between the urban educated and sophisticated classes and the rural areas in the socio-economic field is not as yawning as in the developing countries, it is very difficult to appreciate the magnitude of the consequences of this measure. Pakistan is primarily an agricultural country, about 85 per cent of its population living in village. These villages are still leading a medieval mode of life in all respects: very little touched by education or sanitation, not to speak of any 'economic development'. The galloping gap between the newly created urban life and rural areas would be suicidal for Pakistan. Not only this; the tiny educated majority (since it is either urban or urban-oriented) had very little knowledge of, or interest in, the development of the rural areas. Politically speaking, this meant that this vocal tiny educated minority acted like an effective curtain upon the real voice of the country as a whole and its interests. It is in the light of these considerations that one begins to realize the immense potentialities which the Basic Democracies system has in itself. Of course, in the beginning, there will be problems until this system fully matures. There will be problems of the adjustment of the officers with the Basic Democrats, of the corruptibility of many Basic Democrats, since they wield such a great deal of administrative, judicial and political power, etc. But the point is that if Pakistan is to develop socio-economically and if a genuine leadership is to grow from the soil, then the grass-roots have to be nurtured.

Indeed, a careful perusal of this book not only shows Ayub Khan to be a careful and cautious leader and administrator, whose keen desire it is to carry the country along with him, but one really senses a very deep and burning feeling for the common man. If it is the system of Basic Democracies, it is instituted in order that the common man may be able to administer his own affairs; if it is the question of law reforms or education reforms, the end in view is the weal of the common man—that justice be dispensed quickly and cheaply and that education should spread as widely and as quickly as possible (the type of education which would be beneficial for the people). Finally, if it is the Islamic issue, Islam should contribute positively to the good life of the people. If it is an impracticable and unworkable form of Islam, obviously it cannot be meant for man. It is with this background that President Ayub unfailingly criticizes the unenlightened conservatism of a large section of the 'ulamā' and makes a more particular target of his criticism the politically organized group of the Jamā'at-i-Islāmī and its leader. The reviewer tends to believe that however emotionally attached one may be to certain modes of Islamic thought and theory, the real touchstone on which the future of Islam on this earth must depend is whether it can show positive results in the practical field or not. Indeed, this is the first thing that is required of any ideology; only after this the question of how true it is or how truer it is than others can be decided. If Islam can help erase the moral degradation in which Muslim society has been sinking, not the least cause of which is its economic backwardness, it can create for itself a warrant on the world stage.

In the field of Foreign Policy, the realism of Ayub Khan's regime has already yielded positive results and Pakistan has occupied a respectable place in the brotherhood of nations. Realizing the dictates of Pakistan's geographic logic and vital economic needs, Pakistan has been able, under his leadership, to forge links of friendship with all States particularly with its neighbours, improving relations
with others like Afghanistan. But even Ayub Khan's realism and pragmatic wisdom have not been able to move India out of her romantic vagaries. Unless events take a very different turn in this subcontinent and India's bigotry and inferiority complex can give way to a sufficient measure of self-confidence, the future of this "torch-bearer of peace and humanitarianism" may cause untold misery and even bloodshed.

There is little doubt that President Ayub has been able to launch and steer successfully the ship of his people. If his task faces any dangers, apart from the obvious external Indian threat, it may come mainly from two internal sources. One is the fact that, despite a much higher level of economic prosperity in the country, there seems to be a good deal of frustration caused by the economic disequilibrium among different classes; this can be remedied only by quick and effective measures to liberalize the economic base so that a powerful economic middle class is created besides the industrial magnates. The second immediate question is to minimize corruption and malpractices among those official classes which directly come into contact with people's affairs and where corruption seems to be greatly rampant.

It should not go unremarked, at the end, that although this book deals with practical problems, it is far from being prosaic and is quite readable. Indeed, at points, it achieves the level of literary beauty—for example, when the author describes "the soft clouds nestling in the hills" outside his village (p. 4). Attention is particularly drawn to a powerful mixture of literary expression and the genuineness of feeling when the author describes, in his chapter on Foreign Policy, the callousness of the colonial powers with which they arbitrarily divided up Africa among themselves for gross exploitation.

FAZLUR RAHMAN

Qeyamuddin Ahmad: THE WAHABI MOVEMENT IN INDIA, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 6/1 A Bachharam Akrur Lane, Calcutta—12, 1966, pp. xxi. 391, 2 maps; Rs. 25.

Presenting his lectures on Modern Trends in Islam, which have already become a classic on the subject, Professor Gibb discussed some fruitful lines of investigation in the area of Islamic studies and remarked that among those lines the present religious attitudes and movements of Muslim peoples was 'the least-studied and most treacherous field of all.' How true is his observation can be judged from the fact that no comprehensive study has yet been made of the Wahhabi movement which was, in the words of Iqbal, 'the first throb of life in modern Islam', and which, as Professor Gibb has rightly said, 'inspired' the movements of Shari'at Allāh and Sayyid Āḥmad in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, of al-Santīṣī in the Maghrib, and of al-Mahdī in the Sudan, and whose influence 'contributed to the outbreak of militant movements even in such distant regions as Nigeria and Sumatra'. The publication of the first comprehensive book in English on the Wahhabi movement in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent is, therefore, most welcome.

Recently the Indo-Pakistani jihad movement has received considerable