

Weekly Notes

Principles, Parties and Persons

THERE is not much cause for surprise in the decision of Mr. Ghulam Mohammed, Governor-General of Pakistan, to relinquish his office a Utile more than a month after his going on leave. The nature and course of his illness made it almost certain that he would have to quit power sooner or later. What is surprising, however, is the manner in which a section of the public and the press seemed to hustle the ailing Governor-General out of office. There appeared to be little grace in the controversy that had been worked up over his illness, his leave and the treatment that was being given to him at State expense. It is true that Mr. Ghulam Mohammed was not given to much ceremony in disposing of political opponents or those who did not meet with his approval. Whether there should have been any return of compliment, now that he is unable to hit back, is a question that is bound to assail those who still set store by certain decencies of public life.

Democracy may be no respecter of persons; but there has been evident in Pakistan a trend which would make of public men no more than handy instruments to be used for a particular purpose and then thrown on the scrap-heap. Were there well-organised, well-disciplined parties in Pakistan, this would not have mattered much to the progress of the country. But with a few able individuals bulking larger than parties there, one feels that there might well be a little more care in expending leadership material. Political stability can come only when there is faith in basic principles, parties or a few dependable individuals; but when there is abiding faith in none, the outlook cannot be very encouraging.

The argument that the lack of too much faith in leaders is a healthy antidote against dictatorship carries little conviction in the case of Pakistan at least; for while Jinnah or Liaquat All Khan were alive and in power or Ghulam Mohammed was in good health and in a position to assert himself, their rule had all the elements of a personal dictatorship. The political forces in Pakistan may have no respect for fundamental human values

which are of an enduring type; but they certainly appear to have a healthy regard for bravado and obvious strength, which are apt to pass away and which provide no lasting foundation for political evolution or national growth.

Mr. Ghulam Mohammed came to power at a time when, with the passing of Jinnah and Liaquat All Khan, there seemed to be none in view to take control of the troubled affairs of Pakistan and when power-seeking politicians were at one another's throat and political groups were disintegrating as fast as they had sprung to life. Within a short time of his coming to power, he showed that he was not going to be a mere figure-head; and in three years, through bold decisions and drastic actions, he came to be the only man that mattered in the whole of Pakistan. Politicians were reduced to playthings, the legislature was reduced to a convenience, and triumphing over them all was the executive personality of the Governor-General operating through a puppet-show of Ministers.

A Man of Crisis

IT was the triumph of what may be called the one-track 'service' or bureaucratic mind over the squabbles, hesitancies and bargainings of politics; and though in the process, democratic processes were set at naught, the country was saved again and again from serious trouble, albeit temporarily. For that, credit is certainly due to Ghulam Mohammed, and also perhaps a certain measure of gratitude from his people; but thoughtful people, seeing the host of problems that he has left unsolved behind him, may well ask whether in purchasing stability at such great cost to democracy, Pakistan acted wisely at all. It may be that if Ghulam Mohammed could guide the destinies of his country for a few years more, he would have tidied up things in his masterly way; but as things are, this must remain a piece of idle speculation. And Ghulam Mohammed is less likely to be known to history as an outstanding administrator, a far-seeing statesman or a leader who put Pakistan on her feet than as a plucky ruler or rather as a man of crisis.

Succeeding him is Major-General

Iskander Mirza who also answers to the strong man type, though perhaps without the vast administrative experience, the power of handling men and mental agility which distinguished the retiring Governor-General. In a sense, Mirza faces a situation in Pakistan not far better than what his predecessor had to face, though one may not go so far as to describe it as definitely worse, what with the damage that has been done to democratic growth in the preceding years. Anyway, the posture of affairs would seem to be not unfavourable to the conversion of the one-man rule of the previous regime with the trappings of democracy into a full-fledged dictatorship without the trappings—frank and unabashed. And Major-General Mirza Is an Army man. Whether the power that has passed out of politicians' hands into those of servicemen will see yet another transfer is a question that cannot but agitate those in Pakistan who are still trying to keep their faith in democracy alive, however disillusioning the experience of the past might have been.

It is a question that is bound to cause concern to democratic-minded people outside Pakistan too. And the first few actions of the new regime, particularly the arrest of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, have not been such as to obviate this concern. One may not deny that Pakistan has been facing an extraordinary situation for some time now; but in resorting to extraordinary measures to deal with an extraordinary situation, irreparable harm may be done to ordinary values—the values that constitute the very springs of human rectitude and righteousness. The immediate past has been too redolent of this to escape notice.

Cambodia

OF the three States in Indo-China, in Cambodia alone have general elections yet been held under the Geneva Agreement. Laos will hold the elections later this year. In Viet Nam, the situation has been complicated by the refusal of South Viet Nam to discuss arrangements with North Viet Nam to hold the elections. M. Diem, South Viet Nam's Premier, has let it be known that