

Dictatorship A Full-time Job

Politics Non-Existent In Swat, Wali Reigns Supreme

By PETER DESBARATS
(Last of a Series)

We were pretty proud of the six-foot all-nylon made-in-Canada brand-new Canadian flag, Ed McNally and I. We had carried it from Montreal to Australia to Thailand to Pakistan. And now, at last, it was THE FIRST CANADIAN FLAG IN SWAT!!!

"What," asked the Chief Secretary, "is the Wali going to do with it?"

"Well . . .," I said.

"He could always . . . uh . . ." mumbled Ed.

But the Wali couldn't have been nicer, or more tactful, when we visited him in his palace the next morning. It was just what he had always wanted. He said:

"But I thought it was supposed to have three maple leaves. And what happened to the blue edges?"

We gave the Wali a brief summary of the flag debate.

"Ah, politics," said the Wali.

Politics-free Land

There are no politics in Swat, no parties, no politicians. There is only the Wali and what he says, goes.

Not so long ago, being the Wali of Swat was one of the world's most hazardous occupations. Half a million Yusufzai tribesmen, for whom a rifle is like a third arm, don't make the most placid of subjects. The Royal Bodyguard that sprang to attention when we approached the palace was a reminder of this. But today, the Wali's main concern is not quashing rival khans but building a modern state. It's a

full-time job, being a dictator in the twentieth century.

Every morning at eight o'clock, five days a week, the Wali of Swat, 56-year-old Major-General Miangu Jahan Zeb, H. Pk: H.Q.A., C.I.E., drives from his palace to his office across the main road, named after himself, of the capital city of Saidu Sharif. There are always 25 or 30 people waiting to see him, for the Wali is available to any Swatis with a grievance. All that is necessary is to purchase a half-cent application form from the government

and await an appointment.

Much of the routine administration is performed by various officials. — Secretaries, Musheers, Qazis, Hakims and Tehsildars. But any citizen can appeal directly to the Wali against taxes, administrative decisions and incompetence by civil servants.

One-man Court

The Wali also functions as a one-man Supreme Court. He hears all criminal cases personally and dispenses justice according to local codes, which vary from district to

district, and Islamic law. Every year he handles about 25 murder trials. As there are no lawyers in Swat, he listens to statements from each side and studies police reports and news from his own informants before handing down a decision. If a man is sentenced to death, the relatives of the deceased take him from the Wali's office to a quiet spot outside of town and shoot him. This happens about four times a year. Other offenders are sent to the state's only jail in Mingora, which houses about 260 people.

According to the Wali and his Chief Secretary, there is no crime problem in Swat apart from the occasional killing by hot-blooded tribesmen, minor theft and a small amount of opium addiction.

Prostitution?
"Nothing like that," exclaimed the Chief Secretary, "just a few bad girls."

Legal Wisdom Needed

Some of the cases which the Wali encounters would try the wisdom of Solomon. Several years ago, a Swatis who had lived in California for 25 years returned home to find that his wife, not surprisingly, had assumed that he was dead and had married another man. The man claimed his wife and the Wali, bound by Islamic law, was forced to pry her away from her second husband and hand her over to the first. Some time later, the Californian Swatis appeared again before the Wali, applying for a divorce. When this was granted — divorce in Swat involves no technicalities and no alimony — he married a young Swatis girl. Shortly after, he died. Shortly after that, the girl appeared before the Wali to ask him to find out whether she was eligible, as the wife of an American citizen, for social security payments from the United States.

No rest for the Wali.

He also is Commander-in-Chief of the 8,000-man Army of Swat and claims that he knows the name of every man above subaltern rank.

After a morning's work and lunch in the palace, the Wali drives through his state almost every afternoon inspecting new schools, bridges, roads and forts. Once a year,



Ed McNally's autographed sketch of the Wali of Swat.

for about a month, he travels beyond Swat and Pakistan to other countries in Europe and Asia. He visited North America in 1956, spending a day in Toronto, a day in Ottawa and a week in Montreal. He remembers that the St. Lawrence Seaway was under construction and that he received a warm if puzzled welcome when he visited the Indians living on the Caughnawaga reservation near Montreal.

Links With Pakistan

The Wali is also responsible for the Swatian equivalent of federal-provincial relations: contact with the national government of Pakistan headed by President Ayub Khan. This has proved to be a relatively easy matter since two of his sons, including the Heir-Appa-

rent, married the President's daughters.

The benevolent dictatorship of the Wali is modified slightly by the existence of an Advisory Council of 40 members, of which 30 are elected every three years. The Council meets two or three times a

year, when the Wali wants it to, and the President of the Council is the Wali. There is no opposition party. Debates of the council are not reported publicly for the simple reason that there is no newspaper in Swat and no radio station.

"With the advance of education, ideas are changing rapidly in Swat," said the Wali. "I suppose that one day we will have political freedom and all that."

He didn't seem to be particularly excited by the prospect.

By this time, the coffee cups had been removed from the rather Victorian drawing room of the palace and the Wali had stubbed out his last filter-tipped English cigaret. The interview was at an end.

"Thanks for the flag," said the Wali. "Have one of mine."

He handed Ed a green flag with a golden fort in the centre.

"I designed it myself," he said. "There was no debate."

New Technique Aids Heart Cases

CHICAGO —(UPI)—Science is putting the pressure on many of the diseases that plague mankind. Research in "hyperbarics" indicates that this new technique, involving administration of oxygen to the patient in a specially engineered high-pressure chamber, has helped during heart surgery and in treatment of a number of diseases.

Until recently the equipment was extremely expensive but, reports Chemetron Corp.'s NCG division, improved design and fabrication techniques have made it possible to reduce production costs, placing the equipment within economic reach of many more hospitals and medical research centres.



Husunzara, a servant girl in the Wali's palace.