

The Contribution of Iskander Mirza

First President of Pakistan

Iskander Mirza holds the distinction of being Pakistan's first President and also its last Governor General. When the 1956 Constitution was introduced, the office of Governor General was abolished and replaced by the presidency. Mirza assumed this position and became a symbol of Pakistan's transition into a republic.

Role in the 1956 Constitution

One of Mirza's important contributions was overseeing the enforcement of Pakistan's first constitution in 1956. This constitution officially made Pakistan the "Islamic Republic of Pakistan" and provided for a parliamentary form of government. Although this was a landmark achievement, Mirza soon undermined its democratic spirit.

Dependence on Bureaucracy and Military

Instead of empowering elected politicians, Iskander Mirza placed more trust in bureaucrats and military officials. He believed that political leaders were inexperienced and could not provide stability. This approach increased the influence of non-political institutions and reduced the importance of parliament.

Frequent Dismissal of Prime Ministers

Mirza dismissed several prime ministers during his rule, including Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Suhrawardy, and Feroz Khan Noon. These constant changes created political instability and weakened public trust in democratic institutions. His interference in parliamentary affairs prevented the smooth working of democracy.

Imposition of Martial Law (1958)

Facing political unrest, Mirza declared Martial Law in 1958 and suspended the 1956 Constitution. He appointed General Ayub Khan as Chief Martial Law Administrator, hoping to control the situation through military strength. However, this move backfired, and within weeks Ayub Khan removed him from power and sent him into exile.

Legacy and Historical Evaluation

Iskander Mirza's legacy remains controversial. On one hand, he oversaw the creation of Pakistan's first constitution and became its first President. On the other hand, his actions weakened democratic institutions, promoted authoritarian rule, and opened the door for permanent military involvement in politics. Historians remember him as both a builder and a destroyer of Pakistan's early political system.