

The Emergence of Pakistan and the Turkish Public Opinion in 1947

Ilber Ortayli

The year 1947 was a turning point in world history, when the old order began to collapse with the division of Europe into two ideological spheres. In August 1947 the Indian Subcontinent was also divided into two countries, whereby the Muslims of the Subcontinent came to possess a state of their own called Pakistan; a young state of an old people, the land of an ancient culture henceforth emblazoned the map of the world. The Muslims of the Subcontinent derived a great deal of encouragement in their freedom struggle from the Kemalists Turkey and Turks and the way they had successfully waged their war of resistance between the years 1919 to 1922. Likewise, the support the Indian Muslims extended to the Turks during their hour of trial also constitutes a remarkable aspect of Turkish history. On 10 November 1938, on the eve of the death of Atatürk – the darkest day for the Turks – Quaid-i-Azam M. A. Jinnah in the course of a speech, expressed his deepest mourning on the loss of that most brilliant General and Statesman of the East. He asked his audience that ‘with such a leader and admirable figure amid us should we still suffer this dark era?’ The audience replied in unison ‘no more’.¹

In 1947, Turkey was enjoying the second year of multiparty system. The economic difficulties coupled with the memories of war years and martial law of one-party system provoked a large wave of oppositional criticism. Internal politics turned day by day into a warmer conflict. In a few months several parties, from radical left to right wing had been established. One of the most interesting developments in this

regard was the compromising attitude of the government with the oppositional forces, in matters of radical secularism. But in spite of this, the country turned into a stage of polemics between the liberal opposition and the Republican Party. If on the one hand internal political situation created an anxious atmosphere, on the other, the internal ideological conflict and political crisis, also had its impact on Turkey. The cold war between East and West, too, focussed on this country for a while, because of the demands of the Soviet Union on the Turkish Straits. The general conditions of the Balkans and Soviet demands forced Turkey to arrange an alliance in order to resist the threats of the Eastern bloc. In those days, even the Greek politicians like Chaldaris, gave interviews about a confederation system between Greece and Turkey.² Besides these problems, which troubled the bureaucracy and public circles in Turkey, we cannot put aside the unfavourable conditions of an underdeveloped communication and information network which existed between Turkey and the Indian Subcontinent, before the Independence. Turkey has today permanent correspondents in neighbouring countries and enjoys excellent press contacts with Pakistan. The political life in Pakistan is followed better, and political events are reflected sooner. It is nothing short of a revolution, that a Turkish TV man today can conduct interviews with ordinary people on the streets of Pakistani towns. But in those days, the Turkish newspapers, had no correspondents at all in India. The news on India had to be picked up either from West European mass media, or rarely from some eyewitness reporters who passed through Turkey.

Notwithstanding all these problems, it was an amazing fact, that the Turkish newspapers in those days provided interesting information and made encouraging commentaries on the Muslim freedom struggle in the Indian Subcontinent. This deep interest and support had its roots in the common historical background of the two peoples.

After the Second World War there was an obvious revival in the Islamic world. On 12 April 1947, Sheikh Senusi expressed his wish for a union with Turkey; obviously he wanted to restore the old union which had been ruined after the Italian annexation of Tripolis (Trabulusgharb) in 1912.³ Later, he asked for experts and even for administrators from Turkey. The sympathy of Turkish public opinion with the Muslims of India was not entirely based on the commonality of faith – Islam; even the secular elements in public life, literature and politics also supported them. Almost every day between July-December 1947, news arriving from Muslim provinces of India, such as trains carrying Muslim refugees

under miserable conditions, or the attacks of Hindus and Sikhs upon Muslim migrant groups, could be read in newspapers. For example, on 27 August 1947, in the station of Tokhora the Sikhs attacked a Muslim train and massacred hundreds of Muslim migrants. The same day a message of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was published in Turkish newspapers, wherein he had expressed the gratitude of Pakistan to the Turkish leaders, for their support of the Turkish Government and people to the cause of Indian Muslims.⁴ In those days Turkish newspapers and leading writers took active part in the controversy surrounding the Hindu-Muslim relations and the Muslim demand for Pakistan. Reacting to the propaganda of Indian leaders, that Pakistan could only be created artificially and would have no future, a leading scholar Omer Riza Dogrul wrote: 'Many Indians cannot bear and stand to hear the concept of Pakistan and claim, that putting Muslim parts of India under this name is an insult. But the reality is on the contrary, as the Muslim leader Jinnah mentions, Pakistan is a combination of Punjab, Kashmir, Sind and Balochistan. Pakistan is stressed for a while in Turkey as a country of 'Pak people – clean and pure....' Arguing against the Indian thesis, he further added:

The Islamic background of Pakistan is closely connected to the history of Turks. Islam found its stronghold there as early as in the first century of Hijra and Turkish conquerers and commanders entered and settled there. They established there – like Babur, the grandson of Tamurlane, an empire and later Akbar Shah, who expanded its boundaries and covered almost all India. The fall of this empire happened only 90 years ago, not even a century. It is a happy event, that Muslims in India now proclaimed, under their able leaders, an independent state. We are glad, that India also took its independence. We wish that they live in peaceful coexistence and build their future together in a brotherly fashion and work for the welfare of each other.⁵

A radical secularist leader and leading writer of Turkish press, Necmettin Sadak also clearly expressed his opinion about the formation of the Muslim State of Pakistan, in September 4, 1947, issue of *Aksam*, and using rather the calm style of a sociologist wrote: 'There is not a unified and single India. For India we better use the French term in plural form 'les Indes'. India still suffers from many ethnic problems, whereas Muslim Pakistan – unlike India – owes its existence to a religious and cultural unity. Unlike India, Pakistan will not suffer from certain problems of strange caste system. Islam in these regions had solved, in the course of history the institution and problems of caste system. So the Muslim society of Pakistan has more chances than India to realize the modernization and unification of the country and its

people.... Because of that structure, the emergence of Muslim Pakistan would help the existence of peace in Indian Subcontinent...."⁶

Certainly the most erudite writer of the time, especially on this subject, was the brilliant novelist and politician, Mrs. Halide Edib Adivar, in those days Professor of English Literature at the University of Istanbul. In one of her articles she justified the necessary and undeniable formation of the state of Pakistan as follows: 'Formerly I had my doubts about the formation of Pakistan. But later I wrote a book on this question – *Inside India*. Pakistan has another cultural and historical background, and they had to be liberated from Hindu dominance in industry and commerce. Besides, the social structure of this country is based on the principles of Islam, that means social equality, which is far away from caste system'.⁷ In 1947 she tried to enlighten the Turkish public in this matter, as she did ten years ago with her erudite style and arguments in England. There she published a book entitled *Inside India*, in 1937, which still maintains its value as a first-hand source of information on this subject. She explained the role of Islam in the formation of Muslim India as follows: 'With regard to the clash between the Hindu and Muslim systems, the principal difference between them was that while Islamic system gave latitude for social evolution, Hinduism gave latitude to the mind only and insisted on a fixed social pattern'.⁸ She evaluated the social patterns of Pakistan positively for the purpose of modernization.

On 12 December 1947, Malik Firoze Khan Noon, a special envoy of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan, came to Turkey and in the course of a press conference reciprocated the Turkish sentiments of friendship towards Pakistan in the following words: 'Pakistan admires the glorious past of Turkey, and its administrative achievements and organizational abilities in the past and present times. Pakistan is now two months old; in the near future the two brotherly countries are going to establish close cultural, commercial and political relations.... A new happy era will emerge for these two countries....'⁹

REFERENCES

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