THE FUTURE OF TURKEY *

The question of the future of Turkey can not fail to possess an interest for every one who calls himself a Mussalman. This is at once natural and a fact. And so long as such sympathy and friendliness do not conflict with the commands of religion, such a sentiment is both a duty and a neccessity. So long as Turkey was at war with Great Britain, a considerable number of Indian Mussalmans was fighting against her, and it is likely that thousands of Turks have lost their lives at the hands of these Mussalmans. But such action on the part of the Mussalmans was no proof of the fact that they felt no sympathy for the Turks. It was merely an illustration of the law that a lower principle has always to be subordinated to a higher one. Loyalty to the British Government was to the Mussalmans a religious duty, since they had received many favours from the said Government. So long, therefore, as war prevailed between Turkey and the British Government, the Mussalmans, in obedience to the dictates of their religion, took sides with the Government and for the securing of peace faced and fought a nation who professed the same religion with them. But no sooner was the war ended and the relations between the two governments assumed a normal condition, than the natural sympathies of the Mussalmans sought a vent, since the dictates of religion or expediency no longer stood in the way of any such expression.

There is no doubt that the whole Islamic world has been looking upon the future of the Turks with doubt and misgivings and there is no doubt that the complete extinction of the empire or any curtailment of its independence will deeply wound the Moslem feeling.

* The condensed text of the first portion of a paper which Hazrat Mirza Asad-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, the present Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, wrote for the All-India Moslem Conference held at Lucknow on the 21st September, 1919, to consider the question of the future of Turkey.

But it is a mistake to say that this is due to the fact that the Sultan is looked upon as the Khalifa of the Mussalmans, because there are many who do not recognise his khalifate but still do feel very real sympathy for him.

Apart, however, from this, it appears to me to be politically a mistake as this important juncture, when the material power and honour of Islam are so seriously at stake to present the question before the public in a form which can be accepted only by a section of the community. A considerable section of the Mussalmans of India are of the Shiah persuasion and of them, save only a few extreme bigots, the largest majority of thinking and educated members are fully sympathetic towards Turkey, although they are in no sense prepared to accept the Sultan as the Khalifa of Islam. Similar is the case with the sect of *Ahl-i-Hadis*. A certain number of them may be willing to accept the Sultan as the Khalifa, but, consistently with their principles, the sect as a whole can not accept the Sultan as the Khalifa in the true sense of the word. My community, known as the Ahmadis, are also by no means prepared to accept such a claim, because according to us, agreeably to the prophecies of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him), the Almighty God has been pleased, in order to demonstrate the truth of the Holy Koran and for the regeneration of the Moslems, to raise in this age the Promised Messiah and Mahdi in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Thus, at present, the person rightly entitled to be Khalifa can not be any one else than one of his followers. The whole or almost the whole of the Ahmadiyya community has, by swearing the oath of allegiance to this humble writer, given practical demonstration of the fact that they are not prepared to accept the validity of the other Khalifate. Besides the three sections above mentioned, there are also others, who withal their claim to be Moslems, do not recognize the validity of the title of the house of Othman to the Khalifate. Even among the section known by the name *Ahl-us-Sunnat-Wal-Jumat*, there is

a party, which does not recognize the Othmania Khalifate, or else how could it be possible that while recognizing the Sultan to be rightful successor of the Holy Prophet (blessing of God be upon him) they should have taken up arms against him. Under the circumstances it was inadvisable to make the Khalifate of the Sultan the principal plank of a conference, in which it was expected that Mussalmans of all sections should co-operate and give expression to their opinion with regard to the future of the Turkish Empire, seeing that the question was one on which all the factions did not hold one unanimous view. Such a step could not but result in the discovery of their internal differences and weakness.

To my mind, the conference should take its stand upon the position, that the complete extinction or the curtailment of the sovereign powers of a Moslem State, the head of which is considered by a large section of the Moslems of the world to be their Khalifa, will be an act which can not but be disliked by all sections of Moslems, to whom even the contemplation of such an eventuality caused the deepest pain. In such a case the motion could be heartily and universally supported by all sections of Mussalmans in spite of the fact that many of them did not endorse the claim of the Othmania Khalifate and in spite of the fact that among themselves parties might believe each other to be heretics. For, though great are their differences, yet there is no gain-saying the fact, that in the eyes of the world all these sections form members of one body of Islam, and the material prosperity or adversity of Islam cannot but equally affect them all. To the Ahmadiyya community of India, their present temporal sovereign is His Majesty George V, King of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of India, and their Khalifa is the present rightful successor of the promised Messiah *viz.*, my humble self. But in spite of that fact, the community, now that there is nothing in such an attitude adverse to the interest or honour of Great Britain, do feel the most genuine sympathy for Turkey. This is because though

the Turks might differ from them in their beliefs, yet their prosperity was a source of honour to Islam, in which they both have a common interest.

The Turks have been defeated on the battle field and are now a conquered people. Their conquerors consider their territories a legitimate prize, and deem it quite conformable to justice to divide the same among themselves or to make such other changes in their government as they may think proper. They will therefore be hardly prepared to forego their rights at the request of any party or people. To persuade them to leave the former territories of Turkey wholly or nearly in *statu quo ante bellum* is a difficult task; more difficult than to snatch a prey from the jaws of a lion. They may see in this country people fighting one another for the sake of some insignificant rights who will never agree to forego the same. How then can we expect that in the matter of a State, and especially of a State whose existence is looked upon by them as a menace to their civilization, the nations assembled at the Peace Conference will be influenced by any decision of, or any speeches delivered at, our meetings and resign their hard-won prize? The object can be achieved only by persistent effort and industry, and that of a kind apt to turn young heads grey. Actions must be united, every step considered and deliberate and the means carefully selected. No sacrifice of time and money must be grudged.

The first thing which the Mussalmans should do when they actually launch upon this work is to realize fully that among the allied powers who are to decide the fate of Turkey, the only one which feels any sympathy for her and is willing to render any help to her is Great Britain. Her ministers have been most strenuously endeavouring to bring to the notice of the Peace Conference the sentiments which are agitating the minds of the Mussalmans on the subject. It is also the same power which is advocating the cause of the king of Hejaz in the said conference, as has been more than once admitted by "The Kibla," a semi-official organ of the

Hejaz Government. All these good services of the British Government should always be borne in mind by the Mussalmans whatever the course of action they might now choose to adopt, lest in their precipitancy they should lose the last friend they have, and be guilty of ingratitude. The Britishers are not Mussalmans by religion. Their sympathy for the Turks can not therefore be due to a community of faith. Nor politically can the overthrow of the Turks affect the interest of Great Britain. The experience of the last war has shown them how illusory are the dangers apprehended from Pan-Islamism. If Britain has therefore any sympathy for Turkey it is only due to a consideration for the feelings and sentiments of her Moslem subjects. The latter should therefore be grateful for whatever sympathy they might receive from that quarter, and regard her as a valued friend. They should also recognize the fact that while it is the duty of Britain to show a consideration for their sentiments, it is also equally her duty to be considerate of the sentiments of those nations who helped her in the War, whose soldiers fought side by side with the British force in numbers equal to, nay, rather more than, the Mussalmans. The monetary sacrifices made by those nations in order to bring the war to a victorious conclusion were also incomparably larger than those of the Mussalmans. If, therefore, Great Britain, while mindful of the Moslem sentiment, should at the same time show a due regard for the opinions of these nations, the Mussalmans should realize her peculiar position and not overlook the difficulties of her situation.

Another thing to be considered in this connection is that, in the early part of the war, before America had joined the war, certain agreements were entered into by the belligerent States, the fulfillment of which is now being pressed upon Britain by the powers concerned. This fact also has been preventing Britain from advocating the cause of the Mussalmans to the extent the latter would desire. Under such circumstances one important point that should be definitely settled at the

very commencement of the work, is that no such agitation should be started or allowed to be started in this connection as might create in the public the impression that Britain has not been dealing fairly with the Mussalmans or been negligent to safeguard their interests; for there is a great difference between wilful negligence and the force of necessity. The Mussalmans should do all they can to strengthen the hands of Great Britain and not to create internal difficulties in the country. It is all the more necessary to remember this, because there are many selfish people, who would like to take undue advantage of the present situation, and use threat where they should use prayer, and unfriendly pressure instead of friendly request. Since Britain has already been advocating the Moslem cause, the proper course for the latter should, in my opinion, be to express their gratitude for what she has already done in the past, and request her to make increased efforts in the same direction in the future. It is true some of the existing agreements are a standing obstacle to such action. But it should be made clear to every British statesman that agreements which violate the principles of equity do not deserve that name. Men do commit mistakes but it is not for them to persist in their mistakes. A person may promise another a certain gift; if, however, it subsequently transpires that the thing did not rightfully belong to him, the person can not be held bound to make good his promise. Nor would it be moral for him to try to fulfill the promise. It is true that Britain entered into agreements with several States with regard to portions of the Turkish dominions, to the effect that they would be placed under their control. But since it is found that the people who inhabit those areas dislike such a step, and since it has been already accepted as a principle that in determining the nature of a country's government, consideration should be paid to the people's wishes, where this can be done without injustice, there is no reason why those people should be made over to powers whose rule they not only dislike but from whom they entertain an ap-

prehension of religious persecution. Europe, it is true, has made great progress in education. But all the nations of Europe are not, like Englishmen, wedded to the principle of religious tolerance. Examples are not wanting of European nations having forcibly interfered in matters of religion, and of their attempting to change a people's faith. The stories of the Tripolitan and the Balkan war, as narrated even by English correspondents, are sufficient to prove to Great Britain that she should not consider all the nations of Europe to be as civilized as herself. In short, it should be the business of the Mussalmans to convince the British statesmen by facts and arguments that, in this matter, the opinion of the Mussalmans has its basis in truth, and at the same time to bring the real state of things to the notice of the British public. They may then rely upon the ancient British spirit of love of justice that Britain, as far as it is possible for her, will not fail to give due consideration to the sentiments of the Mussalmans. They should carefully avoid all such steps as are likely to create any misunderstanding among the masses or set up any undesirable excitement; because, in that case the attention of the authorities will be diverted to questions of internal administration and the blame for their failure to represent rightly the views of the Mussalmans before the Peace Conference will attach to the Mussalmans themselves.

The second point which must be attended to for the achievement of success is that the Mussalmans must leave alone the question of the kingdom of Hejaz. It is a matter of common knowledge how great are the losses suffered by the Arabs under a foreign yoke in their political status and their language. The facts are well known to those who know the history of the country. It is also no secret that the Arabs have made large sacrifices in order to regain their present independence. The national pride of the Arabs has been aroused, and the pulse of freedom is beating strong. Under no circumstances can they now be placed under the Turkish rule. After 1300 years, the Arabs have

once more become masters of their own house and have already justified their rule by justice and good government. Any new suggestion with regard to them has therefore little chance of success. No such suggestions can be entertained by any reasonable man and the Arabs themselves will be the last to accept them. The independence of the Hejaz is now advantageous to the interests of Islam, and is preferable to its being under the dominion of Turkey.

The third important point is that after necessary deliberation a standing committee should be appointed to give practical effect to our sympathy for Turkey. Conferences and lectures can avail but little. Collection of funds and the distribution of pamphlets and books will also be to little purpose. Neither will it be profitable to send money to the committee in England. What is wanted is organized activity directed to the end in view, in all the countries of the world. This is an age of reason. Men demand arguments in support of every proposition. What is therefore needed is that evidence should be collected to support our case, and the same should be produced before the statesmen who are to decide this question, so as to win their conviction. It took four years and a half for the sword to decide the last war. The sword is however a peremptory judge. Arguments take longer time to bring conviction. They, therefore, require more persistent effort. There is, however, one difference. The sword can reach only a limited number at a time. But arguments may reach thousands of hearts at once.

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