

K A S H M I R - Talk with Sadiq.  
-----

On Saturday 22nd afternoon, I had an hour's off-the-record talk with Sadiq, President of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. Sadiq, I was surprised, talked freely and frankly, too freely and frankly.

A few days before the dismissal and arrest of Abdullah, Sadiq had openly criticised him for having postponed the elections of the National Conference Committee and the meeting of the Constituent Assembly.

I told Sadiq that as far back as 1948 and later in 1951 some of us in Bombay knew of Abdullah wanting to go over to Pakistan for a price and how was it that they in K Kashmir and in New Delhi did not know about it?

Sadiq replied that in 1947 Abdullah toyed with the idea of independence for Kashmir ("It is", Sadiq added, "neither wrong nor dishonest for a Kashmiri to hold such an idea of independence"). But he allowed himself to be persuaded to Kashmir acceding to India and he kept this attitude till 1952. Then there was some trouble and Abdullah once again began to think in terms of independence and privately started discussing about it. He was told by his friends in Kashmir ~~that~~ that he should discuss this idea of independence with Nehru and the Government of India because unless they agreed Abdullah would not be able to push forward his ideas. Instead of doing this Abdullah indulged in absing India and picked up quarrels with India, exploiting the Jan Sangh agitation.

But only in March 1953 suspicions of Sadiq and his friends in the National Conference and the Constituent Assembly were roused

that there was something fundamentally wrong with Abdullah and these doubts finally were confirmed in May and this change of heart against India, Sadiq attributes to "foreign influences" i.e. America.

"It was alright", Sadiq said, "for Stevenson while he visited Kashmir, to pay a call of courtesy on Prime Minister Abdullah but during the few days he was there, Stevenson saw Abdullah four times and the last meeting lasted seven hours."

"Stevenson drew a rosy picture of the great potential wealth of Kashmir; how he grieved over the poverty of Kashmiris and how this poverty could be liquidated by bringing about a vast change through gigantic ~~xxxx~~ schemes financed by U.S.A., but this financial help would come from U.S.A. to Kashmir only if Kashmir were independent, and he asked Abdullah to tell Nehru that it was thus in the interest of Kashmir to be independent, as India herself could not provide all the necessary finances and get Nehru to agree to this". "When Stevenson returned to New Delhi he spoke to several friends", Sadiq said, "and tried to sell the idea of independence for Kashmir".

"Also all through the years the U.N. observers were telling Abdullah that he should claim and work for Kashmir's independence".

"In July, Abdullah quarrelled with the Indian Press correspondents", Sadiq said, "and three or four days before his dismissal, many foreign correspondents came to Srinagar at the special invitation of Abdullah". I asked Sadiq what was the purpose in getting these foreign journalists there. Sadiq said that he did not know. When I pressed him with another question whether Abdullah wanted to announce openly on August 15 independence for Kashmir and dismiss and arrest his colleagues who did not agree with him, Sadiq said he could say

nothing definite about this

I asked Sadiq about the internal situation in Kashmir and about his repeating the charges about the American interference and turning Abdullah's head in regard to big financial aid from U.S.A. (In the interview which appeared in the morning papers that day and in his previous statements from Kashmir Sadiq had referred to the American interference in Kashmir affairs).

Sadiq said the internal situation was now well in hand. During the first three days after the dismissal and arrest of Abdullah there were sporadic demonstrations and they had to be brought under control by the militia. In India such demonstrators would have been successfully handled by the police, but as in Kashmir the police forces were not properly trained and were not efficient, the help of the militia had to be taken, and they gave an unnecessarily exaggerated picture of the seriousness of the pro-Abdullah Demonstrators.

Sadiq was touring in Kashmir during the first three days and in one place he arrived only 10 minutes after firing had taken place and three men were killed. The crowds were shouting pro-Abdullah slogans clamouring for the possession of the dead bodies and also demanding the release of two women taken in custody. Sadiq told them that the dead bodies would be handed over to the relatives for quiet burials and the women would be released if the ~~xxxxx~~ crowds would stop shouting and disperse and not join the funeral procession. The crowds agreed to keep quiet. When the relatives took over the dead bodies and orders were given to release the women, the same crowd started shouting pro-Bakshi slogans.

"The U.N. Representatives went about exciting the crowds to make pro-Abdullah agitations. They had no business to come up to

Srinagar, but when orders were issued that they should not use jeeps for this purpose they took to cycling and hiring taxies and wearing Kashmiri caps to hide their identities". When I asked Sadiq if Mirza Ismail had any hand in influencing Abdullah, Sadiq said that Mriza Ismail was a small-fry and did not count.

I asked Sadiq, "What about the future? How will Mohammad Ali-Nehru Agreement work out? When will plebiscite come off? What will be the result? Will it lead to partition?" Sadiq was brutally frank in his replies. He replied immediately: "The communique of the two Prime Ministers has settled nothing; it could settle nothing; it means nothing. There will be no plebiscite; there cannot be plebiscite. The April Day dead-line is just 'April-Fool' business. The conditions to be created by that time can never be created, and even if they were created, then it would take at least three years before the plebiscite could be arranged, and that means never. The Press is wrong in suggesting that there would be plebiscite in parts. Nothing like that had been suggested in the joint communique and we in Kashmir will never agree to partition. He who holds Kashmir holds the dagger at India; he who holds the Valley holds the dagger at the rest of Kashmir and the whole of India and, therefore, we who want to be with India can never permit to create circumstances which would, even as a remote possibility, lead to partition".

He went on to explain: "But it was necessary for Mohammad Ali and Nehru that they should come to an agreement as they did in New Delhi. See what would have happened to all of us (Pakistan, India and Kashmir) if there had been no agreement. Mohammad Ali, whose position

5

in Pakistan is very weak and shaky, would have had to go immediately, and his place would have ~~once again~~ <sup>been taken by a reactionary and Pakistan</sup> ~~and his place would have once again~~ appealed to the Security Council, and the Security Council would have been only too willing to oblige and would have sent Mr. Graham to Kashmir for further investigations and Mr. Graham would have taken three to four months to report and once again uncertainty and consequent insecurity would have prevailed in Kashmir and we in Kashmir could have done nothing to improve the internal situation through consolidating our position and through constructive economic reforms. The tension between India and Pakistan would have continued to increase".

"And through this agreement", Sadiq gloated, "we have got rid of the threat of Admiral Nimitz. Whatever happens, Nimitz can never come to Kashmir now. So we have gained all along the line. India has conceded nothing more than she is committed to all these years, namely, plebiscite under certain conditions".

"And so now", Sadiq further clarified his ideas, "we shall go on with the work of the Constituent Assembly, for this Agreement cannot stop us from doing so - we have acceded to India only over Foreign Policy, Defence and Communications and for the rest we can do what we like. We have a big and difficult task in front of us. Our greatest need is a strong, efficient and honest administration and we must immediately start setting our house in order. There is great poverty and distress in Kashmir and the people would suffer from terrible frustration and despair if they lose confidence in our bona fides and our strength to put things right. Things went on haphazard in Abdullah's time, nothing much was done and still people did not rebel or protest because Abdullah was 'demi-god' to them and he got away with

anything (here Sadiq unwittingly acknowledged Abdullah's hold over the people). But we cannot do it. We must move fast to lessen the burdens of the people and bring happiness and prosperity; otherwise, the new Government is doomed".

I once again brought up the question of internal peace. Sadiq said: "It would be alright; if anything drastic was to happen it would have happened in the first three days and we were able to control the situation. We were afraid something might happen on Id. But Id has passed away quietly and, therefore, there would not be any more trouble from pro-Abdullah quarters".

I said, "One report from Delhi suggested that Nehru was pessimistic about Kashmir's future." Sadiq said, "On the contrary I found Nehru very cheerful and hopeful about the future. I met him in New Delhi only two days back (Thursday the 20th), the last day that Mohammad Ali was in New Delhi, and Nehru was in excellent spirits".

I said, "Abdullah's treachery must have been a great shock to Nehru, as Nehru had trusted him so implicitly". Sadiq said, "It was not a shock to Nehru alone; it was a great shock to all of us, his old friends and colleagues for so many years".

All throughout this talk there were in the room Dr. Nishat, Trade Agent, Jammu and Kashmir Government, and a representative of a travel agency. Dr. Nishat reminded me that when Abdullah and I had a long talk some years back in the Taj Mahal Hotel, Nishat was with Abdullah then.

Time was speeding and other visitors started coming, but I had still two questions to ask: "If as you say, Kashmir is so necessary to India, why did Mountbatten go to Kashmir in September 1947 and advise

the Maharaja to accede either to India or Pakistan, adding that he had Nehru's and Patel's permission and authority to tell the Maharaja that they would not mind the Maharaja acceding to Pakistan? How do you explain this?" Sadiq replied: "It is true Mountbatten said this to the Maharaja, but that was in 1947. Don't forget times were different then. China was not Communist then".

The only time Sadiq felt uncomfortable was when I fired my last question: "Abdullah's letters were intercepted these letters and under whose orders and if these letters showed Abdullah's inclination towards Pakistan, why was not action taken earlier?"

Sadiq took time to reply, looking rather confused. Then he got out of it by saying Abdullah's letters were not intercepted.

I thanked Sadiq and took leave. This was the first time I met him and he could have known nothing about me except what Dr. Baliga, who had kindly arranged this meeting, would have told him. My immediate reactions to what Sadiq told me is that Nehru would repudiate most of Sadiq's opinions in regard to the agreement between Mohammad Ali and Nehru. I can never believe that Nehru was talking to Mohammad Ali with any mental reservations. Nehru was frank and forthright and my own personal opinion of Nehru is that he will exert his utmost to see that the agreement is carried out both in letter and in spirit. Imagine the consequences of Pakistan realising after three or six months that nothing was being done to give effect to the agreement. The resultant reaction would be much worse and the results would be far too terrible to conceive. Also I am not so sure, and I am going to check this up, if Sadiq was giving expression to his real views. This note should, therefore, be read with great caution and some other evidence must be forthcoming

before it could be accepted as representing Kashmir Government's views. There is no doubt about Sadiq's anti-American feelings and I challenged Sadiq to publish any documentary evidence which he said the Kashmir Government had in regard to the American intrigues.

Bombay  
28-8-1953.