

NOTE: Roger Silverman, a British Marxist, wrote an introduction to Farooq Tariq's new book. He received a comment from a comrade in Pakistan. Reproduced below is the exchange between the two.

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Hello Sir,

.... I have written to and have been replied by Mr. Farooq Tariq whom I regard as the best fighter in my country.

Sir I was reading his book on Musharref and read your article

.... I read that you wrote creation of Pakistan a mistake? The country was built on the two nation theory which stands true even till this day. Don't you see and observe what happens to Muslim if ANY party except for congress win the elections in India? How can you even think about calling creation of Pakistan a mistake didn't you witness the appalling attitude of the BJP when they were in power towards the Muslims? And with all due respect sir I completely understand why you are saying this but I will never EVER agree with your argument(s).

Secondly you say that Pakistan is ripe for revolution. My grandfather was a migrant from Delhi. He died in 1996 hoping someday the day will come when the issues of masses will be discussed in Pakistan. My friend's cousin stood in the 2003 elections as an Azad Umeedwar (independent candidate) his connections were with a DIG police (if I am not mistaken). The police inspector took four of his relatives including my friend in a police car to the balout station , went straight in took out a stamp and the 4 of them stamped and voted for their cousin who won a seat as an Azad Umeedwar . More than 80% of votes in Pakistan are pocket votes. The fools are asking the Oxford playboy and hoping that he will become a future leader of Pakistan. What revolution, sir, what revolution ? In Pakistan No Revolutions jut sheer optimism which can keep us socialists alive. Sir I am just very disenchanted today with the state of affairs in Pakistan and I see no ray of hope and read your article. I am emailing just my thought; I Will be honored to read your reply

Regards

X

Roger Silverman replies:

Dear X,

Thank you for your message and for your very interesting report on the situation in Pakistan. Thank you also for reading my article and showing the seriousness to write to me frankly about your concerns.

I do understand your misgivings about the position I have put forward regarding the creation of Pakistan. Of course communalism is rife in India, and Muslims face the most terrible persecution. But that is an outcome of the retreat of the working class, in India and internationally. In the period culminating in the mass explosion of 1946, the whole people of the entire subcontinent had mounted a united struggle against British imperialism for independence, through general strikes, mutinies and armed uprisings. The three defendants in the show trial enacted by the British against the INA, in solidarity with whom the independence struggle was aligned, were respectively a Hindu, a Muslim and a Sikh. The advocates of partition were all either conscious agents or passive dupes of the British imperialists, who, in yet another manifestation of the diabolical policy of "divide-and-rule", had cynically manipulated the grievances of the Muslim minority in a conspiracy to leave behind them a bloody trail of fratricidal mass murder.

Similarly, In the 1970s and early 1980s, there was a massive wave of worker militancy in India which brilliantly cut across communal bigotry. It was only after this had subsided, and especially after the defeat of the Mumbai textile workers in 1983, that Shiv Sena and the BJP rose to the ascendancy and naked communal politics took over.

You say India in 1947 was "two nations". And what is it today? Two nations or a hundred? Why two? The Sikhs were also victimized on a horrific scale in the mid-1980s. Do you also then support the goal of a Khalistan for the Sikhs? India is a cross patch work of countless conflicting communities, languages, castes, religions and nations. So why do you divide it into just two simple national camps? During my own travels in India, I personally witnessed the horrifying murderous outbreaks of "ethnic cleansing" perpetrated on Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 and on Muslims in Mumbai in 1993, as well as countless everyday cases of local caste and communal victimization (for instance, a wave of violent attacks on the Tamil-speaking minority in Bangalore).

And, once the "two nations" of India had separated and Pakistan had been established as the "single homeland" of the Muslims of the sub-continent, what happened next? Within 25 years this so-called "Pakistan" had broken in half; but not before a new genocidal massacre, of up to three million Bengalis. And now that Pakistan exists even in this truncated form, is it now "one nation"? Would the Sindhi people agree? And the Pathans? And the Baluchis? What about the recurring attacks on Christians? And the communal conflicts between Mohajirs and Sindhis? Is there one area of Pakistan today which enjoys communal harmony? And if not, are you in favor of still more secessions, until the sub-continent has exploded into a thousand bleeding fragments?

British imperialism always boasted of its benevolent role in civilizing and modernizing the countries which it plundered. In practice, its main historical contribution has been to wreak hatred and bloodshed everywhere by sharpening to perfection the strategy of "divide and rule", playing off sectional rivalries with deadly consequences in every case. Look around the world today and we see its real legacy: in the Middle East, in Ireland, in Sri Lanka, and most clearly of all in the Indian sub-continent.

I'm afraid the only answer to communalism, racism and bigotry of all kinds is workers' unity. All workers should respect the wishes of persecuted minorities and accept their right to determine their own status and future, but it is our duty as socialists to argue passionately and warn very seriously against false illusions in secessionism, which can only put back the workers' united struggle, maybe by decades.

.... To dabble with communalism is always fatal to the cause of the working class.

If I am putting my points emphatically, it is a sign of my respect for you in honestly and boldly stating your objections to my article. I welcome your criticisms, and look forward eagerly to your response.

With comradely greetings,

Roger Silverman