

bangladesh

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(From our own correspondent)

Against the official line that "the situation in Bangladesh has returned to normal" independent observers recently in Bangladesh exposed the appalling reality of continuing army terror against the civilian population. Reg Prentice MP and a member of the House of Commons' Delegation to Bangladesh, Murray Sayle, Sunday Times reporter, and Hendrich van der Heijen, World Bank official, reporting on their recent tours in the country have returned to debunk the pathetic propaganda of the Yahya regime.

In sum their reports confirm a) that the earlier descriptions of the extensive waste underestimated the grim realities of plunder and depopulation while b) the reign of loot and burn is continuing to propel the exodus of refugees into India; c) that the economic life of the country is in dismal shambles, promising extensive famine within the next few months and d) that the resistance of Bangladesh forces is growing both in organisation and effectiveness.

Reg Prentice describes the actuality of Yahya's 'liberal gesture' of allowing foreign observers 'unlimited access' in Bangladesh. Although assured by Yahya personally in Rawalpindi that "we could go anywhere we like", the substance of his assurances boiled down to "a conducted tour in the hands of the regime, meeting local 'peace committees', and listening to the official point of view." The stage managing for the government's village scenarios was directed by Punjabi rifles, such that "our attempts to ask simple questions were met by confusion and even panic."

Still it was not difficult for the observers to penetrate the official cosmetics of 'normalcy': government cosmetics could hardly cover the vast areas of waste covered by low altitude flights, while "significant numbers of confidential statements from a wide variety of people all add(ed) up to the same conclusion: not only had the Army committed widespread killing and violence in the March and

April period, but it still continued. Murder, torture, rape and burning of homes was still going on. It was a story that was powerfully reinforced by the accounts given by the refugees in India a few days later."

It was a story confirmed further by the World Bank confidential report of South Asia Director, P. Cargill. The report was originally delivered verbally to a confidential and informal meeting of the 11-nation AID Pakistan Consortium, and released to the press only after McNamara attempted its suppression for fear that the contents would seriously erode international confidence in the Pakistan government. The substance of Cargill's report stresses not only that the continued reign of terror has bludgeoned economic life to a numb standstill, but that Yahya remains so blissfully isolated and gratified by Tikka Khan's reports that he is totally oblivious to the realities and nausea of world opinion. Hendrich van der Heijen, a member of the World Bank mission, who toured the western part of Bangladesh, reported to the press the concrete situation he experienced there. In Jessore District, for example, army actions had laid waste the countryside with such proficiency as to succeed in depopulating the country by one half. Actions were continuing, in the week before he arrived when the army burned down village after village in reprisals against resistance operations. "Generally," he says, "the army terrorises the population, particularly aiming at Hindus and suspected members of the Awami League." The situation was worse elsewhere. "Mangla has been vastly obliterated by naval shelling, the population, therefore, is down from 22,000 to 1,000." Khulna city has similarly suffered from heavy bombing and, as a result, left "a male city where people do not venture out after dark." Economic life at Chalna Anchorage, central port of river transportation, is reduced to 10% of its normal capacity due to "extensive destruction and flight of workers." While in

Kushtia, after defeating heavy resistance to eventually occupy the city the army managed to level "90% of the houses, shops, banks, and other buildings (which) were totally destroyed." Referring to Kushtia as the Punjabis' 'My Lai', the World Bank official described "people...sitting around dazed. When we moved everyone fled. It was like the morning after a nuclear attack." Summarising the whole of his tour, Mr Heijden said: "The farmers are not coming to the cities, and nobody goes out. Thousands of farmers have fled. Everything is abnormal there, and it was a shattering experience."

Reg Prentice and Murray Sayle carry on the reports of similar widespread destruction and continuing army actions from the eastern and central districts which they visited separately. Flying in low altitude helicopters, Mr Prentice continually witnessed "small villages and small towns where houses had been destroyed," and in the area near Feni, equidistant between Chittagong and Comilla, "between 30 and 50 villages had been completely destroyed." Murray Sayle, after mentioning to the West Pakistani officers evidence of recent artillery shellings in villages and towns recounts their crude attempt to explain one such incident as "caused by an accidental fire ignited when a lamp overturned in the market place, or something like that."

Thus these most recent reports contribute further to the accumulative evidence from the British Press, World Bank and the British Parliamentary delegation which in sum contradicts utterly the shabby and often naive propaganda coming from Rawalpindi: in the words of the Times editorial, "From the beginning the Pakistan Army established its rule by the deliberate use of terror and this rule is maintained now, over three months later, by the same means. East Bengal is being held down by force and fear."

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WEST PAKISTAN SCENE

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

BHUTTO'S LAST DAYS

West Pakistan's politics is in sixes and sevens. It only reminds us of the pre-Iskander Mirza-Ayub days (1947-58) when politics was just confusion worse confounded.

Bhutto, who has so far acted as a demagogue politician, has now started showing his restless, power-hungry mind to the people. But he really does not have a clue as to who is his friend and who his foe. He does not know which way to turn. This month he has issued three statements, all contradictory. His first statement (on 17 July) said that he would either get power in his own hands by November or he would be in jail. He then met Yahya and was "dictated" a statement to hand-over to press boys that he "fully and unequivocally supported Yahya and whatever Yahya was doing." He followed it up with a trip to Afghanistan to meet Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, "the Frontier Gandhi" and his son, Khan Wali Khan, the undisputed leader of the North-West Frontier. He had with him a full cavalcade of 'Yes' men. He failed in his mission and was angrily criticized by Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, the Pathan-Kashmiri leader of a faction of the Muslim League Party, whom now Yahya actually favours as the next civilian puppet Prime Minister of West Pakistan. Bhutto continued his journey to Teheran and sought the Shah of Iran's favour and support and to get him to recommend him to the United States and to the trust of Yahya Khan. Bhutto's wife is Iranian and he is himself a Shia, therefore the Shah, who is a fanatic Shia, has always treated him as his blue-eyed boy. Bhutto and Yahya have not been getting on well since Bhutto started conspiring with the Army hawks and the Iranian, Chinese and American Ambassadors against Yahya. Bhutto admitted this to reporters at a press conference in Rawalpindi on 17 July after he had long talks with Yahya. "His Party and the military government failed to resolve their differences." As Yahya is determined to find an East Pakistani puppet in preference to Bhutto as the Prime Minister and himself as President and Commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Bhutto is going insane. It is not sure whether he will even get the Foreign Ministership. The East Bengali quisling Hamidul Huq Chaudhury is tipped for Foreign Ministership. Many West Pakistanis now believe, among them the 22 "Financial Barons", that if Sheikh Mujib is released and there is a swift return to popular governments in both regions, Pakistan could possibly be saved on the basis of the

Pakistan Resolution of 1940, which had granted sovereign status to all regional units with a weak federal centre: exactly what Mujib had demanded.

Colin Smith of the Observer was here recently and predicted after meeting "Army hawks" in Rawalpindi that "Bhutto will end up in jail with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

A PUNJABI CONSTITUTION

The cat is out of the bag. The Pakistan Times, the Government-controlled newspaper which speaks for Yahya has revealed in advance the proposed constitution of Pakistan. The Pakistan Times says: "Pakistan is to get a constitution of the Punjabis, by the Punjabis and for the Punjabis." So poet Iqbal's idea of "West Pakistan" as a Muslim State, excluding the Muslim majority province of Bengal, to give Punjab the imperial heritage of the British Empire, is coming true. Now the brave Pathans and the depressed Baluchis, the industrious Sindhis and the unfortunate and betrayed refugees from India, must be prepared either to rebel now or accept Punjabi neo-colonialism. It is certainly on the cards. The Punjab Army junta is in fact seriously thinking of making Punjabi the national language or Pakistan as the Muslim Empire Army had made Urdu (meaning Army) the lingua franca of India. Urdu is not really the language of West Pakistan.

While Yahya is inviting the Hindu refugees back to East Bengal from India by assurances through Pakistani "Prince" Sadaruddin Agha Khan, the U.N. Refugee Commissioner, his spokesman, Z.A. Suleri, says categorically in the Pakistan Times: "The constitution should deprive the Hindu minority of the vote, foist Arabic script on to the Bengalis, divide Bengal into two or four provinces, negate the Bengalis' overriding representation in the Assembly and leave the Punjab as the dominant province in the country."

Suleri also makes it clear that the constitution will be written around the Punjab's concept of nationhood and many of the East Bengal demands for autonomy will be ignored. Suleri goes on to advocate the division of East Bengal into three or more provinces, leaving the Punjab as the dominant unit in the proposed federation.

BLUFF AND BLACKMAIL

Pakistan, knowing the conservative attachment to the old Empire and now Commonwealth, is threatening to quit the Commonwealth on 14 August. One Moulana Nuruzzaman,

President of the Islamic Republic Party in West Pakistan, declares "Let Pakistan snap the thin tie Commonwealth membership right now. Do these fools understand any politics? The Commonwealth is not Britain's monopoly alone. It is free brotherhood of nations. One however, wonders how long the Commonwealth could tolerate West Pakistan's inhuman government?"

WAITING FOR GODOT

It is like sending coal to New Castle. So we here will recommend your readers to read the article under the above heading by a West Pakistani in the New Statesman of 2 July. Here is a significant quotation: "Power in Pakistan rests firmly in the hands of a group of six generals, totally committed to the military control of the East and ill-fitted to comprehend its economic or political implications. Yahya's precedence among them is in name only. Since February, he has been outnumbered by the hawkish majority who saw strong action as necessary to bring the East back into line, and increasingly regretted the reasons of President's elections, which had led to a situation they could not control. Open rejection of Yahya's weak persistence in seeking negotiated solutions was unnecessary as long as he consented to the preparations required for sterner action. Since March the story has been the same. Yahya has been prepared to concede most of the autonomy he demanded by the East and to contemplate the removal of Tikka Khan from the Governorship of East Pakistan. But the other generals have stood firm in opposing slackening of military control. As long as Yahya retains General Hamid Khan, his replacement as President is unlikely. But he has never shown the strength necessary to impose his own view on the junta."

The article reports of discontent against the Punjabi domination by the minority regions, Baluchistan, Sind and North-West Frontier province. There are also reports of Baluchistan troops to have refused to take part in some of the killings... Already arrests of regionalist politicians have been made and local councils are dissolved.

The article also reports that "Bhutto is totally impotent (politically of course) now."

WALI KHAN REFUSED VISA

Wali Khan, the elected leader from the North-West Frontier province, has been refused visa to go to Afghanistan. It is understood here that Wali Khan's Party, the National Awami Party (pro-Moscow) will soon be banned.

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AND CHINA-AMERICA detente

The recent announcement of Kissinger's visit to Peking sweeps away the mists of evasion and duplicity which until now have obscured American policy vis-a-vis Bangladesh. A clear line now emerges running straight to Peking through Rawalpindi -- a line which may solidify into a Sino-American axis with its fulcrum neatly in Yahya's palm. These developments begin already to radically alter the balance of forces in the sub-continent. And while Yahya reaps kudos from the international community it is clear that "Bangladesh" has been subordinated in more global strategies. What are the lessons and possible consequences for the struggle in East Bengal?

"BUREAUCRATIC FOUL-UPS"

During the past months Washington's ambiguous position on the "Bangladesh" issue has been a confusion to many. State Department assurances banning arms to Pakistan are immediately followed by shiploads of just such arms. Similarly with economic assistance: official bans don't seem quite to plug those "pipelines", which continue feeding Yahya with aid. And while "bureaucratic foul-ups" remain the official excuse, there is room to question the meaning of such inefficiencies in the land that produced I.B.M. and General Motors. Fortunately, however, a State Department functionary has confided the "real politik" behind these apparent confusions: continued covert economic and military assistance will give the government "leverage in persuading President Yahya to negotiate a settlement in East Pakistan." "Leverage" indeed is Nixon's objective, but the settlement he hopes to negotiate is further east than Bangladesh.

In a report to Congress earlier this year Nixon clarified Pakistan's special role in realizing ambitions stretching far beyond a mere settlement in the sub-continent: "Pakistan has gradually moved from its position of close association with us to a complex triangular relationship, balancing its contacts with the three great powers (which have) interests in South Asia -- China, Soviet Union and ourselves." Nixon began exploiting these contacts as early as last September when he sent Yahya to Peking bearing a personal letter; and if the Urdu paper Mashriq is reliable Yahya accompanied Kissinger to China in order to personally introduce him to Chou En-lai. Thus all along Yahya has held a special function in giving birth to the campaign slogan "Nixon, the Man who Won China."

And as midwife fees Yahya has exacted the military and economic support necessary to help keep his regime afloat. Hence the International Herald Tribune reports those unfortunate "bureaucratic foul-ups" were the personal decision of Mr Nixon himself.

"I'LL DECLARE GENERAL WAR!"

Has this increased "leverage" succeeded in "persuading President Yahya to negotiate a settlement in East Pakistan?" Current policies indicate that Yahya somehow has missed the subtleties of American diplomacy. For "negotiate" Yahya has apparently understood "liquidate" -- hence Sheikh Mujib is to be court martialled, in camera -- with the liberty of one appeal, to Yahya himself. Similarly, "political settlement" has been translated into "political repression" leading to a proposed constitution based upon no votes for Hindus, Arabic script for Bengalis and a permanent electoral majority of Punjabis (see "West Pakistan Scene"). American "leverage" has encouraged similar finesse in Yahya's recent diplomacy: thus an intensified diplomatic war with Britain, threats to leave the Commonwealth and recognize North Ireland, not to mention the thunderous bellow, "I shall declare general war and let the world take note of it!" These last words echo down to us from the abyss of centuries -- centuries that have known other Khans, Ghengis and Khubla, as well as Attila the Hun. The only direction American "leverage" has moved Yahya is back, towards his appropriate place in history by their side.

ISOLATED AND IMPOTENT

However, the consequences Nixon's China strategy have far from exhausted themselves in merely giving us a bigger Yahya. For the potential Sino-American detente threatens a diplomatic revolution globally, and already the possibilities are beginning to influence the sensitive forces of sub-continental relations. The situation of the sub-continent is that of a "power vacuum" in the sense that it is not clearly demarcated by the major geopolitical contenders. The power balance has been maintained by the triangular diplomacies of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, who judiciously keep a foot in both South Asian camps. The gradual shift of America's ponderous weight in the Sino-Pak direction radically disturbs the old equation, and is of such moment it can only pull the Soviet Union behind. One can hardly expect the Soviet Union to

counter-balance America's moves with heavier commitments to Delhi. Great Power polarization in the sub-continent would bode isolation when Nixon is becoming cozy behind the Great Wall. And at a time when the Sadats and Numeiris are confounding Russian policy in the Middle East, she will no doubt attempt to stay prudently aloof from the vortex of Indo-Pak politics. Accordingly India's former Great Power patron is reportedly negotiating in Karachi how much to contribute in Pakistan's Fourth Five-Year Plan.

Thus the potential Sino-American detente threatens India with isolation and impotence. What then of all the bellicose gestures issuing from Delhi lately -- the alert of Kashmir divisions, mobilization along the Silguri gap, and the declamations that "India is prepared to act as she did in '65?" These rattling sabres are more akin to rattling teeth that real threats. With the diplomatic forces flowing towards Rawalpindi India is left alone with the overflow of Bangladesh. Thus her militancy is far more a symptom of fear and despair than, as in the case of Yahya, a sign of strength. For the moment is long since passed when India could intervene in Bangladesh with the world's approval. Where is Bangladesh left in all of this? As the first victim of trans-Pacific ping-pong there is not one power interested or capable of backing her independence. Yet when in recent history has there been a case in principle of clearer democratic right to self-determination than that of East Bengal, and yet despite her parliamentary majorities and victims in pathetic millions, Bengalis gain no real support in the international community while Yahya reaps the laurels of diplomatic prestige. It is vitally important for Bengalis that they understand this situation and absorb the appropriate lessons from it. For what could be a clearer demonstration of the fact that rights do not exist to the extent they reflect *principles* but only to the extent they reflect a *force* in the existing balance of power: and parliamentary majorities and appeals to international opinion do not represent such a force.

Thus as Nixon's move to Peking isolates further East Bengal, it offers the one positive benefit of sweeping with it all parliamentary delusions and feeble reliance on the international bourgeoisie. As the Bangladesh movement more clearly perceives that it has no real allies among the powers abroad this can only help it to realize the necessity of *self-reliance*.

In the course of her last three hundred years of history never before Bengal had to go through a socio-political upheaval as violent, forceful and dynamic as the NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE that is sweeping this unhappy land of a peace-loving, idealistic and habitually docile people. Two most fundamental problems of organising the victory are (a) correct identification of the enemy and the friends and (b) unity in thought and action of the fighting people. In the first of a series of three articles the author deals with the socio-political forces whose clashes sparked the upsurge.



POLITICS AND PROBLEMS OF L I B E

The eruption of a national liberation struggle in Bangladesh has put the socio-political forces of South Asia in a condition of flux and turmoil. Besides the military aggressors from West Pakistan nobody seems to be clear as to what this war in Bangladesh is all about. What we are all fighting for and whom we are fighting against. The confusion seems to be deepest among the left forces in Bangladesh and West Bengal. And it is so acute among certain political groups that in many instances differing tendencies and trends are taking up diametrically opposite positions. The main beneficiary of this confusion and conflict among the left is of course the West Pakistani army rule.

It is, therefore, extremely urgent that we must try to appreciate the background and significance of the events that have been sparked off by the armed liberation struggle for Bangladesh.

BACKGROUND

First, it is essential to realise what has been and is happening in East Bengal today. If there was any doubt in anybody's mind as to the nature of the economic and socio-political relationship between West Pakistan and East Bengal, the present aggression of the Pakistan armed forces has completely dispelled those doubts and revealed the stark reality of the situation for all to see. Because the relationship was that of colonial exploitation of the 75 million people of Bangladesh by the neo-colonialists from West Pakistan under the garb of the military dictatorship of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the situation demanded that the struggle for emancipation should take the path of a national liberation struggle. History demanded that advocates and upholders of people's emancipation should have initiated and organised an uncompromising anti-colonial national liberation struggle. But the political illusions and ideological confusion from which our democratic movement and the socialist forces suffered prevented the Bengali people from taking up such a struggle. *It was, paradoxically, left to the military dictatorship to impose an armed national liberation struggle on the unprepared and unarmed political movement and the masses of the people.* The aggression of the military dictatorship left no alternative to the people but to take to arms to defend their very elementary human rights. The people of Bangladesh as one united

nation have taken up their positions and during the last sixteen weeks have demonstrated their determination to defend their national independence struggle against brutal fascist aggression.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENT

At this stage it is important to recapitulate also the events that overtook us on the night of 25 March 1971. *Like the Jallianwala-bagh massacre of 1919, the Great Dacca Killing marks a turning point in the movement of emancipation of the Bangladesh people.* On that tragic night out of the torrents of blood spilled by the students and workers -- our glorious dead -- a new nation has taken its birth and every minute since then this new nation is being steeled in its newly acquired resolve and purpose. Further, the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have since that fateful night of 25 March 1971 been burying unceremoniously (under the corpses of hundreds and thousands of Bengali Muslims) the bogus premises of nationhood of the Indian Muslims on the basis of religious framework as opposed to the linguistic-cultural and socio-economic factors (a homeland for Muslim India was the banner under which the aspirations of the Bengali people were covered up). The Bengali Muslims are being asked and are paying heavily for giving birth to the Muslim League in Dacca in 1906, for being sponsor of the Pakistan resolution in Lahore in 1940, for volunteering to join Pakistan in one state in 1945 and finally for building up the armed forces and the industries of West Pakistan with their foreign exchange earnings. It is to be hoped that the Bengali Muslims have sacrificed enough blood, gone through the hell of suffering and distress to compensate for the mistakes their forefathers and their political leaders made. We hope the brutalities and barbarities of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have atlast been able to clear the political soil of the Bangladesh movement of the perennial parasite of Hindu-Muslim communalism -- the cancer of the socio-political life of the Indian subcontinent. A new, revolutionary, and correct philosophy of National Liberation Struggle has been mooted deeply and is slowly but surely replacing the mediaeval and reactionary philosophy of communal politics.

The events of 25 March -- giving rise to armed resistance of the

people against colonial domination of East Bengal -- also picks up a lost link in the chain of the liberation struggle in the Indian subcontinent and joins the uprising of East Bengal with the popular non-communal national liberation uprising of 1945-46 in the shape of the Naval Mutiny and release campaign of 'naval ratings and Rashid Ali and others of the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose. *The East Bengal uprising of 1971 has similarly made a major ideological breakthrough and has opened the dialogue of liberation and emancipation of people in non-communal militant terms.* Further, the military aggression is also likely to 'teach' the revolutionary intelligentsia of Bangladesh that their strength and security lies not in isolated existence in urban pockets but in their capacity for identification with the peasant masses. From the experience gained from the confrontation with the enemy and running encounters with the organised armed forces they will soon learn that the victory of the liberation struggle of the Bangladesh people can be assured and consolidated only through organising the militant and politically advanced stratas of the peasantry, the working population and the professional intelligentsia into a mass army of the people. But that is not enough. To succeed such a mass army must be supported and spearheaded by highly skilled, mobile, disciplined and dedicated guerrilla commandos. Only when such mobilisation has been achieved can we reasonably hope for a lasting victory of the national liberation struggle of the Bangladesh people.

LET US IDENTIFY THE REAL ENEMY

Against this background we must now try to identify the enemy which the Bangladesh national liberation struggle is confronted with and whom it is trying to dislodge. A cursory glance at the political history of Pakistan during the last two decades will reveal who the *real enemy of the people* is. This identification of the enemy is imperative if we are not to lose our perspective in the labyrinth of many other irrelevancies, both national and international.

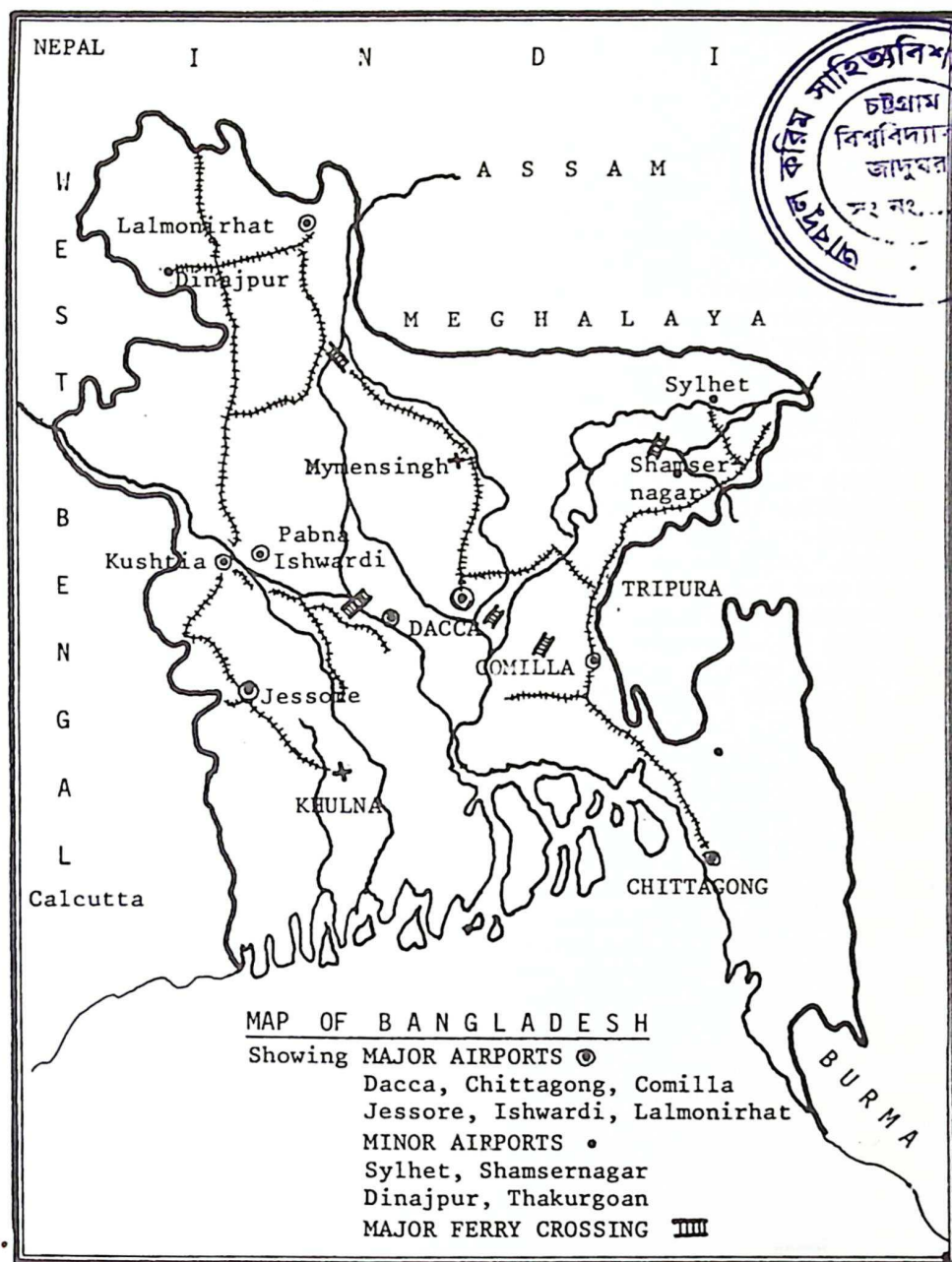
Pakistan was created by the Muslim League. The creation of this new state was supposed to bring permanent relief to the Muslim community of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent from socio-political and economic exploitation. The

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E A T I O N

leadership of Muslim India, a few consciously and the bulk unknowingly, over-played only the socio-political aspect of our deprivation overlooking the economic aspect of exploitation which provides the foundation of all other forms of exploitation and oppression. The communal ideology of life also prevented the Muslim masses to understand and appreciate the class nature of the communal conflict. The most fundamental truth of social life -- that the exploiters have no religion other than of living by sucking the blood of the exploited irrespective of colour, race and religion -- was carefully shelved. And the teaching of human history -- that the only way the exploited can get rid of the exploiters, whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian is by united and determined action by the exploited masses -- was forgotten. Creation of Pakistan, therefore, did not lead to the liberation of the Muslim masses of East Bengal and of West Pakistan, or of the 50 millions Muslims left behind in India. What it did was to replace the exploiting classes who predominantly used to be Hindus in the Muslim majority areas of India by a new class of Muslim exploiters. Pakistan provided a phenomenal opportunity for the growth of Muslim capitalists and exploiting classes. Further, in the case of East Bengal the exploiting classes did not come from the indigenous population but consisted of an imported community different in race, culture and language. The only common feature being that they both, exploiters and exploited, came from the same religious faith.

From the day of the birth of Pakistan the new state was grabbed by the class of feudal aristocracy and their henchmen. They were subsequently joined by the newly emerging bureaucracy. Under their combined strangulation even the elementary democratic rights were denied to the people and all efforts at constitution-making were frustrated. When this rule of bureaucracy and feudal aristocracy was seriously challenged by the rising democratic forces in 1957/58 and the bureaucracy started losing its grip over the situation it promptly invited the army to step in. Ayub's 'decade of development' was characterised by participation between the bureaucracy and army in the exploitation of the country's resources to give rise to the 22 families of industrial monopolists and a group of industrial kulaks (mainly retired army personnel and civil servants).



When Ayub's sham democracy called 'basic democracy' started to give way to popular pressure and his empire collapsed he invited his Commander-in-chief Yahya to take over. Full military dictatorship was established. To raise the international credibility of the regime when Yahya decided to give the country its first general election during its 23 years of history he was hoping for a fragmented political pattern to emerge giving the military manipulators suitable playground to stage the game of musical chairs with the political leaders. Such a situation would have provided adequate justification to do away with the popular political institutions as a whole and replace them with an Indonesia type of 'Islamic Dictatorship' with army keeping the pivotal role to itself. However, the people of East Bengal foiled this scheming by voting almost to a man for the six-point of Awami League. Yahya's manipulations having failed the military generals took the matters in their hands and organised the military response to the claim of right of self-determination of the East Bengali people and political democracy for Pakistan. A fascist dictatorship usurped the political power in Pakistan.

WHO ARE FIGHTING THE ENEMY ?

Against this fascist dictatorship is poised today (1) the National Liberation Struggle in Bangladesh; (2) the protest movement in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (over 1,000 in prison); (3) growing disillusionment in West Pakistan with isolated protest action (repressive measures in full swing, several trade union leaders, journalists, student leaders, in preventive detention).

When the polarisation of forces is so clear and complete, to confuse the real nature of the enemy because of the petty-bourgeois nature of the leadership of the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle is to confuse the molehill for the mountain. It is not only silly, but such a confusion unless rectified in time, may prove to be suicidal to the development of democratic upsurge in the whole of South Asia. While not underestimating the dangers inherent in the petty-bourgeois leadership of the national liberation struggle it must be stated categorically that they are the leaders of the upsurge not by design but by default. They are the leaders because the radical and socialist forces never fully appreciated the national content of the democratic

movement in East Bengal and they tended to seek political orientation basing their understanding on unassimilated political experiences of other countries. It was therefore left to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to raise the slogan of 'JOI BANGLA' in a determined and positive way. His charisma aroused the Bengalis to a new height of courage and enthusiasm. By asking for the right of the Bengalis to live as 'free men' he was in fact striking at the very root of an exploitative society in which the landlord-cum-industrialist class of West Pakistan, supported by the army and bureaucracy, occupied the seat of power and privilege. Too much occupied with politics and too little concerned with the social implications of the forces he was calling to life, Sheikh Mujib unwittingly and in spite of himself became the originator of one of the greatest social upheavals of recent time. But since then the national liberation struggle has been joined and taken up by the radical and revolutionary intelligentsia of the middle classes and the fire of revolutionary zeal is percolating right down to the working masses of the factories and rural areas. *Given the right type of political orientations and correct leadership the national liberation struggle has the possibilities of developing into a national democratic revolution -- a national democratic revolution that might well be able to lay the foundation for a socialist transformation of the*

economic and socio-political framework of the free Bangladesh. This is not a fantasy. This is the objective reality of the situation.

However, the complexities of the situation are such -- both national and international -- that it is extremely difficult to indicate the course this liberation struggle may follow and what will be the possible outcome.

A NATION HAS TAKEN ITS BIRTH

But the fact remains unchallenged that a new nation has served notice of its birth to the international community and this new nation will have to be provided with a place on the map of the world. How quick the physical realisation of this aspiration of the Bengali people will take place depends primarily on how correct and effective the political leadership of this upsurge is going to be. However, possibilities of betrayal of the upsurge by a wavering and faltering leadership is inherent in the situation. Such a danger, however, can be contained through united and organised actions of the radical and progressive social forces of the Bangladesh movement. Towards the creation of such a unity in thought and action among all forces committed to national liberation struggle for Bangladesh let us, today, dedicate ourselves.

(to be continued)

STOP PRESS : *Yahya in a recent Financial Times interview has disclosed plans to court martial Sheikh Mujib on treason. Also Ataur Rahman Khan, former Chief Minister of Bengal, is in the hands of the regime, reportedly facing similar charges. Now is the time to mobilise world opinion against these, and future, "trials".*



POLITICAL SEMINAR ON BANGLADESH LIBERATION STRUGGLE

The Bangladesh Action Committee (Westminster-London) is understood to be organising a study course on some of the fundamental problems related to the liberation struggle of Bangladesh.

Three papers have been selected as basic study documents. They are: (a) Pakistan -- Class and Colony by Richard Nations; (b) The Struggle in Bangladesh by Tariq Ali; (c) Politics and Problems of Liberation by Muhiyul Mazumdar.

On the conclusion of the study course a seminar will be held to review the study material and draw general lessons for the activists of the Bangladesh movement in the UK.

MOVE TO RECONVENE THE COVENTRY CONFERENCE

It is understood that the conveners of the Coventry Conference of 136 delegates met recently in London to review the progress made since the setting up of the Steering Committee. It was unanimously agreed that time has now come when the activities of the local action committees should be brought under a central committee and to provide an organisational framework for the operation of the action committees a constitution should be framed. It has, therefore, been decided to reconvene a conference of all the regional committees within the next couple of weeks.

A deputation on behalf of the regional committees is expected to meet the Special Representative of the Bangladesh Provisional Government in UK, Justice A.S. Chaudhury.

UK BANGLADESH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND THE LIBERATION ARMY

According to a news-release of the Bangladesh Medical Association, London, two doctors visited Bangladesh recently to examine the situation on the spot. One member who returned after six weeks gave to his association a detailed report on the need and pressing requirement of the Liberation Army. He said that the morale of the Army was very high but they were undernourished and were short of medicine and adequate medical equipment. The delegate also reported his finding to the Bangladesh Envoy in UK, Justice A.S. Chaudhury.

It is understood that the Association has already sent some relief garments to the refugees and medicine to the Liberation Army.

Beatle's George Harrison and Ringo Star will launch the former's record "Bangladesh". Proceeds will go to help Bangladesh refugees.



LETTER FROM AMERICA

THE GUTTER MULLAH CROAKS

One Mullah, Farid Ahmed, a worse of the worst gutter politician, was recently sent to the Middle East as an Islamic spokesman for Yahya. Having failed there completely as he neither knows Arabic nor French, he returned to Karachi and told the press what can only be called an "Islamic lie" that Mr Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, Mr Rehman Sobhan, the former Economic Reader of the Dacca University, and the Communist Pakistani student leader Tariq Ali, who is resident in Britain, have reached Beirut on mission of the Indian Government. He went as far as to say that they tried to address a meeting at the American University of Beirut, which was refused; the Indian missions tried to arrange diplomatic receptions which were refused to be allowed by the Arab Governments. All expenses of this mission are being paid by the Indian mission and wherever they go the Indian officials go with them. This wretched Mullah, obviously a gutter politician, as well claims to be a Muslim divine and yet tells deliberate and concocted lies. Perhaps this is the state of Islam now in Pakistan. Prime Minister Tajuddin has not left Calcutta except his daily visits to liberated areas inside Bangladesh. Rehman Sobhan has been in Europe and Tariq Ali has not been to Beirut for over a year. The West Pakistan papers have also gone to the lowest possible yellow journalism to give the news such a prominence, to use adjectives of "self-styled" and a "coward runner" for the respected Prime Minister of Bangladesh. (The local Urdu weekly Mashriq of London has readily copied this news to boost its dwindling sales and has even cut out every reference to this gutter politician from the letter the editor of BANGLADESH wrote to him -editor.)

PAKISTAN PREPARES FOR WAR

It is commonly known, and is no more mere gossip, that Pakistan Army is mobilising to attack "the Indian-occupied Kashmir" any day to relieve the Indian pressure on East Bengal. Yahya's agents are also encouraging the Sikh leader of Amritsar and Kabul and Iran to start a movement for an independent "Sikhistan" which will receive full backing from West Pakistan. The Sikhs in return will be guaranteed full and free access to their Holy places in Lahore. It is also proposed to set up a "Sikh mission" in Lahore.

BANGLADESH POSTAGE STAMPS: In a ceremony in the House of Commons postage stamps issued by the Bangladesh Government were released. The stamps are in eight different designs.

ANNUAL CONVENTION OF BANGLADESH LEAGUE OF AMERICA

The annual convention of Bangladesh League of America Inc., organised by New York Chapter, was held in New York City on 26 June 1971. This was attended by over one hundred representatives from different Chapters all over the United States and Canada.

Apart from the New York group, Chapters of the Bangladesh League represented in the convention were Washington, D.C., Kentucky, Tennessee and N. Carolina.

Observers from the Bangladesh Defence League, Bangladesh Association of Delaware Valley and the Bangladesh Association of Ohio were also present. The day-long activities of the convention included reports from the Chapters and other Bangladesh organisations. Convention was concluded with the formation of a coordinating committee to coordinate the activities of different groups working for the liberation of Bangladesh and the election of the executive committee of the League.

WISCONSIN DEMONSTRATIONS

A coalition of Wisconsin peace groups called Wisconsin Alliance in association with the American Servicemen's Union (ASU) organised a demonstration on 3 July at the Pakistan Students' convention held at Madison. The Alliance and the ASU earlier in a press conference announced their plan to stage a demonstration at the airport when the Pakistan Ambassador arrived. But the demonstration could not take place as the Ambassador cancelled his scheduled appearance in the convention at the last moment. The Alliance and the ASU sponsored a Teach-in on Bangladesh where Bangladesh literature were distributed. Dr Iqbal Ahmed and Mr Muzammel Huq addressed the well-attended teach-in and answered questions on Bangladesh. A number of TV and Radio programmes on Bangladesh were organised by the sponsors on this occasion.

PROTESTS SET OVER ARMS TO PAKISTAN

A coalition of peace organisations announced plans for demonstrations in three cities to protest American arms shipments to Pakistan.

Sidney Lens, a coordinator for the Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice, told a press conference in Christ the King Church, 25 W. Jackson, that U.S. military aid is "propping up a vicious military dictatorship" in Pakistan.

Lens said the Peoples Coalition plans to demonstrate at federal buildings in New York, Washington and San Francisco.

David Burak, a spokesman for the Mayday Tribe, an organisation affiliated with the Coalition, said his group plans "disruptive demonstrations of a non-violent sort to halt the loading of armaments onto ships in New York." He would not specify what the actions would be.

BANGLADESH ASSOCIATION OF QUEBEC

Naiyyum Choudhury, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Association of Quebec, reports:

"Padma" carrying U.S. arms and ammunition arrived in Montreal port to load Canadian made Sabre Jet parts for Pakistan Air Force. The timely action of the Montreal Press resulted in putting an embargo on the Canadian arms shipments.

We are keeping a close watch on this North American-Pakistan conspiracy and trying to unveil it to the Canadian people by working with local press and sympathetic Canadians.

Demonstrations against the arrival of Padma were supported and joined by several labour groups including the Confederation of National Trade Unions.

BANGLADESH SUPPORT GROWS IN CONGRESS

Senator Saxbe of Ohio and Senator Church of Idaho have introduced an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, regarding Aid to Pakistan. It reads as follows:

All military and economic assistance, and all sales of military equipment and weapons, whether for cash, credit, or any other means, to Pakistan, authorized or appropriated pursuant to this or any other Act, and all licences for military sales, shall be immediately suspended and no commitments or expenditures, including the provision of debt relief shall be undertaken or made, until distribution of food and other relief measures, supervised by international agencies, takes place on a regular basis throughout East Pakistan and the majority of refugees in India are repatriated to East Pakistan; provided, however, that these provisions shall not prohibit expenditures of previously appropriated funds pursuant to binding written agreements between the Government of Pakistan and the Agency for International Development in force on or prior to 8 June, 1971.

A similar motion is before the House of Representatives introduced by Representative Gallagher.

Both motions have generated considerable support in Congress.

OMEGA TWO: Omega Two departed last week for India. Omega One expects to enter Bangladesh shortly.

RAZAKAAR AND PEACE COMMITTEES

As time passes the crude logic of army occupation is working itself out along the too familiar lines of Vietnam: A parallel structure of administration and police -- 'Peace Committees' and 'Razakaars' respectively -- is being established to replace the local structure of authority in the village and town. The new order is founded on the spoils of the land and property of the Bengali refugees -- confiscated by the government 'in default' -- and recruited from non-Bengali supporters of the fascist Jamaat-i-Islam and Muslim League, plus the odd collection of professional goondas and local henchmen attracted by the Rs. 2 per diem salary offered for 'service' in the 'Razakaars'. In short, the local administration adds up, in the words of Murray Sayle, "to a regime of paid informers, bigots and thugs, answerable to no one and apparently above whatever law is left in East Bengal."

THE NFL AND BANGLA RESISTANCE

The bourgeois press has for the first time affirmed the encouraging progress of political developments reported earlier elsewhere. The Morning Star, Red Mole and People's War have all pointed to the political coordination of the revolutionary socialist parties in a National Liberation Front. Peter Hazelhurst in a dispatch to the Times identifies the same trend: "Left wing political forces from East Pakistan have formed their own united front," which he calls the Bangladesh National Liberation Struggle Co-ordination Committee. For the moment an overall picture of the exact composition and policy of this front vis-a-vis The Awami League and the Mukti Foj remains as unclear as its exact title. Nevertheless, the emergence of the NFL clearly indicates that the struggle has progressed to a higher level along the path of fully mobilising and coordinating the Bengali masses in the resistance effort by rooting the struggle in the ideology and organisation of mass politics.

On the military front the increased effectiveness of guerrilla activities indicates a broad inter-regional coordination of operations similar to developments on the political front.

Advancing on isolated raids, border operations have spread from Jaintapur (in the extreme North-East) to Benapole (in the extreme South-West), and a common pattern and timing of harassing transportation and army positions indicates a central coordination. The strategy appears one of keeping the army thinly stretched out along the border, thus allowing commando and guerrilla type operations to penetrate deeper into the provinces. This is exactly what has happened. Since early July guer-

rilla operations have continually sabotaged power and communication connections in Dacca, Chittagong and Comilla, as well as those of numerous market towns in the surrounding districts. For example commando-type units destroyed 15 bridges and power pylons in Comilla area leaving the town isolated and without power for over a week. Similarly, in Dacca, sabotage of sub-power stations and pylons was coordinated with terror bombings inside the city. Although power was quickly restored, it could not be maintained. Commando raids hit connections three times successively in the past month, while just last week gas supplies to Dacca were cut off by severing several key pipelines. These operations dramatically demonstrate not only the increasing sophistication, military intelligence and skill rapidly being acquired by the Bangladesh forces, but equally the clumsy inability of the army to protect its strongest positions deep in the interior of the country.

Elsewhere the same general strategy of isolating and immobilising the enemy through attacking communications was clearly evident. The main trunk communication to Dacca and Chittagong has been severed through an expert destruction of the two main bridges near Feni. While in Sylhet the attempt of British planters to carry on 'business as usual' in supplying the regime with a most valuable foreign exchange saver, tea, has been continually frustrated by commando actions blowing bridges, tearing up tracks, ambushing Pak convoys, etc., to such an extent that it is impossible to get the tea out of the area.

In other areas, the British press report Noakhali district and Madhupur Forest reserve in Mymensing entirely in the hands of the resistance -- apparently those of Md Toaha's and Abdul Huq's East Bengal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). While on the other side of the country in Jessore district, Peter Gill reports that Bangladesh forces have regained and occupied 150 square miles around Kashipur, a former East Pakistan Rifles border post. An abundant arms depot of Chinese automatic weapons and ammunition was captured. And apparently, the guerrillas feel themselves sufficiently secure to attempt a holding action against the future attacks of West Pakistan reinforcements. In other operations reports confirm that throughout the country Bangladesh forces have succeeded in executing 'Razakaars' and Peace Committee' collaborators; tors, diminishing appeal of the Rs. 2 per day salary; while the shreds of Landrover patrol, victims of commando mining operations, blunt the arrogance of Punjabi troops and severely restrict their movements. Commando-in-Chief of the Bangladesh forces, M.A. Osmani,

maintains that 20,000 Pakistani troops have been either killed or severely wounded: a figure which, the Times correspondent, judging from Colonel Osmani's extensive professional record as well as from his own calculations, considers probably an underestimation.

And while the operations in the past month demonstrate clearly the transition from disorganised and scattered defence actions to effective organisation and central coordination, the move to the next level of operations may occur sooner than anticipated. Peter Hazelhurst reports confidential information that 10,000 volunteers have recently been released into Mukti Foj operation camps, having just finished two months of basic training. Another 15,000 are reported to be preparing now for action some time in this month. In all, the Bangladesh forces may exceed 35,000 men at the end of August. Against the West Pakistan troop strength of between 70,000 and 80,000 in a type of military operations where conventional professional opinion requires a ratio of 10 regulars to one guerrilla in order to control an occupied country, it may be that the internal balance of physical strength is beginning to tip more in favour of Bangladesh. Though against such a happy prospect one should always bear in mind that somewhere in the wings waits the international gendarmerie. If it is not yet time to be over-optimistic, still the guerrilla forces are making life in Bangladesh sufficiently uncomfortable for the West Pakistan army that Tikka Khan has advised Yahya to postpone his scheduled visit to Dacca 'for reasons of security'.

COMMITTEE FOR JOINT ACTION AGAINST MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

A few political activists currently engaged in campaign activities for the liberation of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, democratic liberties of West Pakistan and for Bangladesh have decided to coordinate their efforts against the common enemy -- the fascist dictatorship of Yahya and the Generals. The founding meeting held on Monday 26 July 71 appointed a 10-member sponsoring committee with former Air-Commodore M.K. Janjua as Chairman.

The sponsoring committee in an appeal to all freedom fighters have invited to pull their resources to defeat the colonial and anti-people regime and create a condition so that people of the regions may live a life according to their choice.

The Committee will shortly issue its manifesto inviting others to join the Committee.

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