

2. INDIA, PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

The conflict between the armed forces of India and Pakistan has been accompanied by a chorus of deprecatory, shocked, disapproving noises, as of an innocent bystander at a street brawl, on the part of the imperialist powers. The United States, the principal financier and armourer of the butcher regime in West Pakistan, whose armed assault against the democratic verdict of the people began the conflict, has accused India of 'aggression'. But in fact the real responsibility for the conflict rests with imperialism from the beginning.

Who Partitioned India?

A quarter of a century ago the united uprising of the entire Indian people in 1946, with the revolt of the Royal Indian Navy, accompanying actions in other military centres, mass strikes, and the unbroken

resistance of the people in face of wholesale shooting and killing from British guns, compelled the British rulers to decide that the time had come when they would have to withdraw. On March 18, 1946, the Royal Indian Navy revolted. On March 19 Premier Attlee got up in the British House of Commons to announce the new angle of vision to concede independence and despatch the Cripps Mission to negotiate the terms. The non-communal unity of the Indian peoples' revolt thus compelled Britain to concede independence. This non-communal unity of this mass revolt which won independence was demonstrated by the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy, who tore down the Union Jack and ran up on the battleships *jointly* the flags of the Congress, the Moslem League and the Red Flag. The slogans of the mass demonstrations were: 'Hindus and Moslems Unite!' 'Down with British Imperialism!' The eye-witness account of a British officer in Bombay reported: 'The sight that gave the brass-hats the jitters was the Congress Tricolour, the Moslem League Crescent and the Red Flag carried side by side in processions.' In face of this non-communal unity of the Indian masses in revolt it was British imperialism which, in the process of negotiation with the upper class leadership (who had opposed and condemned the mass revolt and co-operated with the British Commander-in-Chief) imposed partition by the Mountbatten Settlement as part of the price of independence.

How Imperialism Prepared Partition

Today the attempt is made to conceal the responsibility for the partition of India, into the separate states of India and Pakistan, through the Mountbatten Settlement, by laying the blame on the demand of Jinnah and the Moslem League as compelling the reluctant acquiescence of Mountbatten and British officialism. But it should be remembered that the foundation of the Moslem League in 1906 was originally inspired, as abundant subsequent available testimony has witnessed, by British high official quarters around the Viceroy at the time, Lord Minto (see, for example, Lady Minto's memoirs, *India, Minto and Morley*, published in 1934, recalling the official jubilation on the foundation of the Moslem League as representing 'the pulling back of 62 millions of Indians, Moslems, from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition, Congress'). The Moslem deputation to the Viceroy in 1906, for the establishment of separate communal electorates, was, according to the subsequent revelations of the Moslem leader Mohammed Ali, in 1923, 'a command performance', arranged by the Government. The Moslem

League President, M. A. Jinnah, at the time of the Congress-League's Lucknow Pact in 1916, proclaimed the aim of 'the birth of a united India'. Congress-League co-operation after the first world war brought the highest level of the national struggle. The proposal for the formation of a separate state of 'Pakistan' was rejected by the Moslem League in 1933 (in the evidence submitted by its representatives to the Joint Committee on Constitutional Reform) as 'chimerical and unacceptable'. If Congress-League co-operation in the cause of a united national struggle became disrupted during the 1930s onwards, this was the consequence of faults on the part of the leadership on both sides; and if the Moslem League by 1940 adopted the aim of Pakistan and was able to organise a measure of mass support for this demand, this reflected in part a confused expression of the growth of multi-national consciousness within India, distorted into sectarian channels by the failure of a united national leadership of the mass movement. The decisive responsibility of British imperialist policy for the growth of Hindu-Moslem antagonism was recognised by the evidence of the Simon Commission Report in 1930, which recorded: (1) that Hindu-Moslem antagonism occurred mainly in the directly ruled British territories, not in the adjoining Indian states, although there was a similar inter-mingling of religions in both; (2) that in 'British India a generation ago . . . communal tension as a threat to civil peace was at a minimum.'

Price of Partition

The partition imposed on India by Britain through the Mountbatten Settlement was proclaimed to be on the basis of treating religion as equivalent to nationality. The harmfulness of this false principle has been demonstrated throughout the modern historical record from the days of the religious wars to the modern role of such states based on religion as Israel and Northern Ireland, (one of the weaknesses of the Irish Republic also, hindering the aim of unity with the North, is Article 44 of the Constitution establishing the 'special position' of the Catholic Church). On the basis of this false principle it was declared necessary to divide India into two separate states to correspond to the existence of two major religions in India, with a separate state for the minority religion. But in real life religions were intermingled all over India. Hindus and Moslems had lived peaceably together for generations until the British rulers in the days of the decline of their rule sought to divide and disorganise the advancing popular national movement by promoting communal antagonism as an instrument of policy. The conspicuous example of

this deliberate policy was the establishment of communal electorates, the most potent instrument to poison political life with communal antagonism. When as their final act in the moment of ending their administration the British rulers carried forward this vicious system of communal division to the point of partitioning India into two separate states on the basis of religion, this partition was not only based on a false principle, but entailed the most disastrous consequences. In view of the actual intermingling of religions all over India the execution of this partition in the name of religion meant that the living body of India had to be carved up to create from above a geographically most artificial state composed of two entirely disparate sections with a thousand miles of Indian territory between. The immediate result was to let loose a holocaust of communal conflict and slaughter, with mass flights of refugees, on such a horrifying scale that Gandhi explicitly declared he could not recognise this independence or join in its celebration. But the long-term effects were even more disastrous.

Heritage of Conflict

In place of a progressive advancing united People's India the partition imposed by British imperialism produced a legacy of two separate sovereign states involved in chronically recurrent conflict. While the real fundamental problem was the desperate poverty of the masses of the people, the all too inadequate resources of the populations of both states, so urgently needed for development, were crippled by a fantastically disproportionate military expenditure generated by this conflict. This burden of military expenditure facilitated imperialist penetration. Three wars have already taken place between the two successor states established by British imperialist partition. The first war, over Kashmir, took place immediately after independence, and ended with a most unstable cease-fire line carving up the living body of the Kashmiri people, and thus reproducing the partition of India with the partition of Kashmir. It was a characteristic irony of this war that at that time the armies of both the warring states were still formally under British commanders-in-chief. The second war in 1965 was only settled, not by the role of Britain, though both were members of the British Commonwealth but by the mediation of the Soviet Union leading to the Joint Declaration at Tashkent in January 1966. The third war, on a scale far exceeding the previous two, has now developed. Thus, so far from imperialism being innocent, the present conflict is the bitter fruit of the inheritance of a long line of imperialist policy.

Long Search for a Political Solution

Once imperialism had imposed partition through the Mountbatten Settlement, the interests of the peoples in both the new states, irrespective of their opinion of the partition, were to seek to fulfil a peaceful development of popular progressive advance within the conditions of the new states in which they found themselves. It was recognised by all progressive circles on both sides that, once partition had been imposed, to challenge partition, however open to criticism its consequences, was not in the interests of peaceful development. The aim needed to be to concentrate on peaceful democratic development in both states, and for friendly peaceful relations between them. In India a very considerable democratic advance has been achieved during this quarter of a century. A secular democratic Republic was established, with universal suffrage, a functioning parliament, regular elections and a wide measure of freedom of expression, press, meeting and organisation, despite negative features of various special powers, intermittent police actions and the limitations of the inherited social structure as well as the economic strength of the monopolies and foreign capitalist interests. At the last election in March 1971, the gigantic Indian electorate of 272 millions inflicted a signal defeat on the representatives of reaction, equally the breakaway right-wing Congress Opposition and the right-wing parties based on the old displaced feudal elements and the new monopoly interests. In international affairs India has pursued a consistent general line of non-alignment, resisting all the attempts at involvement in the various imperialist military alliances, such as Cento or Seato, designed to involve the newly-independent states in a military imperialist network. India fulfilled a foremost positive role for peace in the world settlement of the Korean war and in public opposition to the Suez war of Anglo-French imperialism and Israel. Similarly in face of the prolonged strain of the military assault on the people of what was East Pakistan and the consequent flow of over 10 million refugees to India, the Indian Government resisted war clamour and sought to the last for a political solution, until the direct aggression of the military regime of General Yahya across the borders finally compelled war.

Difficult Path of the People of Pakistan

Far more difficult has been the path for the people of Pakistan in their striving for democratic development. Pakistan was established by its Constitution on a theocratic basis as an 'Islamic Republic'. While the most numerous proportion of its population was in the

Eastern region, and the main resources for revenue and foreign exchange came from there, power was concentrated in a narrow feudal-military clique and handful of wealthy families dominating West Pakistan, who treated East Pakistan as a colonial annexe to exploit. The chief economist of the Pakistan planning commission reported in 1968 that 22 wealthy families in Pakistan owned 66 per cent of its industrial assets, 79 per cent of insurance and 80 per cent of its banking assets. While the jute exports of East Pakistan, with its population of 75 millions, provided the main foreign exchange for Pakistan as a whole, it was West Pakistan, with a population of 58 millions, which received 70 per cent of the imports, 70 per cent of foreign aid, monopolised 85 per cent of the central bureaucracy and 90 per cent of the army. Four-fifths of the central government's development expenditure was concentrated on West Pakistan, with the development of industries in the West using raw materials from the East, and 20 times as much was spent on agricultural development in the West as in the East. In the face of these conditions the development of the democratic struggle of the peoples of Pakistan, including that of the nations held subject to the domination of the ruling clique in the Western region, the peoples of the North-West Frontier, Baluchistan and Sind, alongside the high record of working class struggle in the Punjab, has shown that the foremost role has been consistently fulfilled by the people of East Pakistan, the most heavily oppressed and exploited section, and the most politically advanced.

Battle of Military Dictatorship and Democracy

From the outset under the ruling governments which maintained their power against the people Pakistan has functioned as a willing satellite of imperialism, initially British, and subsequently American, and a brutal regime of anti-democratic suppression. Pakistan has enjoyed the unique distinction of being simultaneously a member of Cento and of Seato, the two imperialist military alliances directed against Asian liberation. Cento was originally the Baghdad Pact, because it was based on Iraq under the dictatorial regime of Nuri Said, and in this way disguised as a nominally Arab combination. Egypt's resistance to pressure to join the Baghdad Pact was the starting point of the conflict which culminated in the Suez war of British and French imperialism with the Israeli cat's-paw against Egypt. While India took a courageous public stand against the infamous Suez war, the Pakistan Government gave its public support, in defiance of the feelings of the people wholly sympathetic to the cause of Arab liberation. After the Iraq revolution of 1958 had

ended the rule of Nuri and brought the withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact, the name was changed to Cento, since the last figleaf of Arab participation had vanished, and it was laid bare as an open anti-Arab military alliance (Britain, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan) for imperialist domination of the Middle East. Similarly with Seato alongside Anzus for South-East Asia. All this selling of Pakistan to be an instrument of Western imperialism against Asian liberation was an outrage to the anti-imperialist feelings of the people of Pakistan. Hence the internal record has seen the ceaseless struggle between the democratic strivings of the people and the brutal suppression conducted by the anti-democratic ruling regime.

Rising Level of Democratic Struggle in Pakistan

All the recent years in Pakistan have seen the increasing brutality of the military dictatorship and the rising level of popular struggle against it. The Constitution which had been promulgated after long preparation in 1956 was abrogated in 1958 to be replaced by the military dictatorship of General Ayub Khan, who became President, Commander-in-Chief, and Chief Martial Law Administrator. By 1969 the level of popular unrest and mass strikes compelled Ayub to resign, and he was succeeded by the military dictatorship of General Yahya Khan. Yahya continued the regime of martial law, but found himself compelled by the strength of popular discontent and struggle to make promises of constitutional advance in the direction of democracy, and for this purpose to concede the holding of a direct universal suffrage general election (though with the Communist Party still banned) for all Pakistan to elect a National Assembly which would draw up a Constitution. The result of this election, held in December 1970, staggered the military rulers. The Awami League, on a programme of progressive democratic reforms and self-governing autonomy for East Pakistan, won 167 of the 169 seats in East Pakistan, and thereby an absolute majority of the 313 seats for all Pakistan. In face of this overwhelming democratic verdict General Yahya postponed the meeting of the National Assembly till March 25, and used this interim period to make a show of negotiations with the leader of the Awami League, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, but actually to concentrate troops for the planned blow against the people. On the evening of March 25 the blow was struck. Shaikh Mujibur was arrested and deported to West Pakistan for a secret trial before a military tribunal; the Awami League was banned and all elected bodies dissolved; and an unprecedented military onslaught was let loose on the people of East Pakistan, with systematic

slaughter of popular leaders, and a reign of terror, repression and arson, leading to hundreds of thousands of dead and the flight of 10 million refugees to India. Never in history has there been so glaring an example of an immediate answer in blood to aim to reverse a democratic verdict. From this springs the whole present conflict.

Salute to Bangladesh

No democratic government in the world can claim more unassailable credentials by every measure of democratic electoral expression of the will of the people than the present Government of Bangladesh. In all the historic struggles against oppression and exploitation the people of East Bengal have fought with honour in the forefront since long before the foundation of Pakistan. When Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905 the mass movement of resistance against that partition reached such strength throughout Bengal that by 1911 at the Durbar the partition had to be cancelled as a concession to national feeling. In the face of the heaviest exploitation for the benefit of the ruling clique centred in West Pakistan, deprivation of resources and development, successive natural disasters and ceaseless political bans, they have throughout carried forward their consistent democratic political struggle. They showed their political maturity when in the moment of opportunity extorted by their struggle, the general election of December 1970, they united all the forces of the left, communist and non-communist, around the Awami League to ensure the staggering majority of 167 out of 169 seats. In the face of the unexampled murderous suppression by the overwhelmingly superior forces of armoured troops, tanks and bombers imported into East Pakistan, they carried forward the guerrilla struggle of the Mukti Bahini to such a stage of strength that the rule of the imposed governing regime could only be effective on the direct basis of the military posts held and not in the territory beyond. The West Pakistan Government, conscious of its failing hold in East Pakistan, and unable to provoke the Indian Government into war, finally conducted heavy long-range bombardment across the frontier into India, thereby compelling the Indian armed forces to cross the frontier to deal with the bombarding positions. Thereupon the West Pakistan Government seized the opportunity to open full-scale war against India, not only in the East, but also in the West, through the planned offensive in Kashmir, and thereby sought through this desperate strategy to cover up the bankruptcy of their military anti-democratic suppression in the Eastern region by

presenting it as a war between India and Pakistan, and on this basis hoping for the intervention of the imperialist powers. The war came, not through the will of the Mukti Bahini or of India, but through the military offensive of the West Pakistan Government to overturn a democratic verdict.

Towards the Future

Whatever the further outcome of this conflict or future possibilities, the sovereign independence of Bangladesh rests firmly on the support of the people. The path will be difficult; even after the cessation of the immediate conflict, and the full recognition of independence, the path of development in the devastated territory, with the return of the millions of refugees to their destroyed homes, will be enough to daunt the most courageous. But they have shown already their courage and tenacity in the face of the most cruel obstacles. Whatever the varying political range and trends in the popular movement, their aspirations find common expression in the aim of the development in the direction of socialism. They will choose their own path. But when the time comes that a People's Republic of Bangladesh on a socialist basis is finally established, such an addition of a socialist community of 75 millions will be a glorious new partner, the third in the numerical range, in the world community of socialist nations.

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