

REHMAN SOBHAN

CP 2379

**FROM
TWO ECONOMIES
TO TWO NATIONS**

**MY JOURNEY TO
BANGLADESH**

This collection of essays records the long intellectual journey by one of the most distinguished of the Bangladeshis from the early years of Ayub Khan's military rule, through the struggle for East Pakistan's autonomy during the 1960s and the War of Independence in 1971, to what at the birth of Bangladesh looked like the dawn of a new world. I have vivid recollection of the dreary decade under Ayub Khan when we sought hope in the articles reprinted in Part I which were among the rare voices of dissent in those days of pervasive fear and repression. For us the weekly editorials in the Forum, reprinted here in part III, were like dispatches from the front in the battle for emancipation which quickly metamorphosed into full-scale war of independence. To the generations of Bangladeshis who came too late to experience that history first hand, this volume should tell what it was all like and all about.

Azizur Rahman Khan

Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of California Riverside

Stored safely away in a cupboard in my home in London, I treasure some of the issues of *Forum* from forty-five years ago. As a young economist working in undivided Pakistan, I had read them avidly in the months leading up to March 1971. They were to me the most intellectually and politically convincing introduction to the crisis to which I was to be one witness, and to the birth of Bangladesh which would bring me back to Dhaka when Rehman Sobhan and his colleagues struggled to put into practice the ideals expressed in these pages. Not only all Bangladeshis, but any serious foreign resident or student of Bangladesh today will find an essential understanding of its emergence as a nation in these pages.

Ian Martin

Former Secretary General of Amnesty International

Former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General

Professor Rehman Sobhan's contribution to the formulation of the theory of two economies in Pakistan and his subsequent active participation both with the pen and in person in the struggle, first, for autonomy and, then, for independence of Bangladesh are an indispensable part of our national history. This book brings together the

papers he wrote between 1961 and 1971 that inspired or angered the readers depending on which side of the divide they were sitting at the time. Re-reading these brings back old memories while reading those for the first time helps one alk through the vistas of bygone days.

Anisuzzaman

Professor Emeritus
University of Dhaka

The writings compiled in this book are a rare collection on the emergence of Bangladesh following the growth of economic disparity between the two parts of former Pakistan, deprivation of the Bangalis, and the political struggle this provoked. The volume will serve as an invaluable source of knowledge for the new generation of Bangladesh from an extraordinary person of an extraordinary generation. Starting as a 25 year old teacher of Economics Rehman Sobhan has been a participant and witness to events to which very few have been exposed. He was an active contributor to the ideas leading to the formulation of the 6 Points Programme of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, seeking self-rule for the Bangalis and subsequently as a participant in the liberation struggle for Bangladesh.

M. Syeduzzaman

Former Secretary, Ministries of Planning and of Finance and Former Finance Minister

From Two Economies to Two Nations: My Journey to Bangladesh

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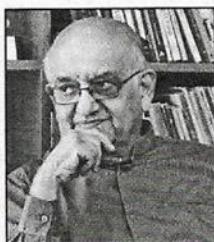
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To Hameeda Hossian and Kamal Hossain,

who shared my journey all the way



Professor Rehman Sobhan has served as a Professor of Economics, Dhaka University, Member of Bangladesh Planning Comission, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Visiting Fellow, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, Member of the Advisory Council of the President of Bangladesh, Founder and Executive Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Executive Director, South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), Visiting Scholar, Initiative for Policy Dialogue, Columbia University, Senior Research Fellow, Ash Institute of Democratic Governance, Harvard University and is currently Chairman, CPD. In 1991 he served as a member of the first caretaker government headed by President Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Professor Sobhan has held a number of important professional positions which include President, Bangladesh Economic Association, Member, U.N. Committee for Development Planning; Member, Governing Council of the U.N. University, Tokyo, Member of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, Member of the Executive Committee of the International Economic Association, Member of the Group of Eminent Persons appointed by the SAARC heads of State to review the future of SAARC and Chairman of the Board of Grameen Bank. He is currently a member of the Board of SACEPS, and Chairman of the Pratichi Trust (Bangladesh) set up by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen.

He was actively associated with the Bengali nationalist movement in the 1960s and the Bangladesh liberation struggle in 1971 where he was designated as Envoy Extraordinary in charge of economic affairs by the

first Bangladesh government. He has been awarded the Shadhinata Purushker and was the first recipient of Bangladesh Bank Purushkar for services to economics as well as the first Lifetime Achievement award presented by the Bangladesh Development Initiative, USA.

He has published a large number of books, research monographs and articles published in professional journals, relating to the political economy of development, public enterprise and privatization, foreign aid, geopolitics, agrarian reform, regional cooperation in South Asia, democracy and governance. His latest work, *Challenging the Injustice of Poverty: Agendas for Inclusive Development in South Asia*, was published by Sage. His memoir, 'Untranquil Recollections: The Years of Fulfillment', is under publication by Sage.

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Preface

From Two Economies to Two Nations: My journey to Bangladesh

Introduction

I had for many years aspired to undertake a more definitive work on the emergence of Bangladesh which could weave the economic background and political struggle into a single narrative. Sadly, I lacked the time and discipline to undertake such a major work. All I could do was to assemble my earlier writings during and on that turbulent period and organize these into a coherent narrative on the emergence of Bangladesh. The resultant volume must serve as a poor apology for what I had hoped would be the defining work of my professional life.

A living perspective is usually provided by those who were actually exposed to or participated in particular historical events. I was privileged to come of age during the turbulent years of the 1960s when Bangladesh was incubating in the womb of the Pakistan state. I witnessed the growth of this life form and was one of many who participated in its eventful birth through the blood and fire of a liberation war.

Much of my contribution to this living history of the birth of Bangladesh originates in my writings on those times where I participated as an academic, journalist and eventually a representative of the first

Bangladesh government. Most of these writings were penned in the heat of the struggle, with the objective of using knowledge and analysis as political resources which would be serviceable to activists on the front lines of the struggle. Even my academic works sought to provide ballast against the more scholarly challenges to the arguments for Bangali national self-assertion.

This volume is presented as a companion publication to my forthcoming memoir, *Untroubled Recollections: The Years of Fulfillment*, which is due to be published by Sage Publications in the Autumn of 2015. My memoir narrates the improbable story of my graduation from a child of privilege into an active participant in the political struggles which culminated in the emergence of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. Since my memoir mostly covers the events of my life it did not provide much opportunity to project my intellectual contribution to this historical process which, in fact, provided the principal currency through which I engaged myself in this struggle.

The coverage of the volume

The contributions to this volume date back to 1961, when I was a 26 year old teacher of economics at Dhaka University. They include academic papers, articles for newspapers and other written inputs which were designed to both inform and influence public opinion in support of self-rule for Bangladesh, which was then known as East Pakistan. These writings extend up to December 1971 and include articles written for newspapers and journals in 1971 when I was campaigning for Bangladesh during the liberation war. The presentation provides a sequential narrative which blends economic analysis with journalistic reportage of important historical events. The volume can, thus, be read both as a history of events as well as of ideas, which culminated in the emergence of an independent Bangladesh.

The volume is structured in five parts. The first part provides an intellectual history of my participation in the debates on what we then defined as the two economies which were lodged within the body politic of the then Pakistan state and the economic deprivation of the Bangalis, which originated in this peculiar national construct. These writings of mine on the economy, along with those of other Bangali economists,

were influential in shaping the political debates of the time which culminated in the presentation of the 6 Point agenda by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which became the *Magna Carta* for the struggle for self-rule for Bangladesh.

The second part of this volume provides reportage on the historic struggles which were provoked by the denial of democratic rights and the consequential inequitable opportunities made available to the Bangalis who constituted the demographic majority within Pakistan. This narrative, which includes a paper for an academic journal, drawing on my first published book, were mostly written as newspapers articles. They focus on the evolution of the political struggle of the Bangalis against the denial of their democratic rights under the regime of Field Marshall Ayub Khan and the culmination of this struggle in the war of national liberation where I was directly associated throughout 1971.

Part 3, *Two Nations*, covers my reporting and observations on the historic events of March 1971 during which the independent nation state of Bangladesh was born. This part includes my account of the final fateful negotiations between Bangabandhu and Yahya Khan which culminated in Bangladesh's war of liberation and writings during the 9 months of war. I conclude this part with a memorandum I prepared in July 1971 for presentation to the Cabinet of the first Bangladesh Government, reporting on the outcome of my mission in the United States and Western Europe during the months of April-June to propagate the cause of Bangladesh.

The Fourth Part, drawn exclusively from editorial written by me between 1969-71 for *Forum*, an English language weekly founded by me in 1969 in association with Kamal Hossain, Hameeda Hossain, Zeaul Huq and Salma Sobhan, attempts to articulate a vision for a prospective democratic Bangladesh. While the writings were mine its intellectual content reflected the collective consciousness of my co-partners in the *Forum* enterprise. Our ideas were reinforced through contributions to *Forum* by various fellow-travelling colleagues with a progressive vision for the future.

The fifth and final part on the *Idea of Bangladesh* is made up of two papers, prepared in the 1990's, far removed from the heat of battle and may thus be regarded as exclusively academic works. This part enables me

to not only draw upon my earlier writings which are published in the first two sections of this volume but also on the writings of my colleagues who were also writing about those events at that time. Such recollections, invoked with more detachment, drawing on the benefit of hindsight, provided me with the opportunity to reflect on the people, ideas and events which created a nation state. The first paper of this concluding part reviews the economic basis of Bangaldeshi nationalism and serves as a summation of all my pre-liberation writings on the subject. The second paper meditates on the shaping of a national identity for Bangladesh and the catalytic entrepreneurial role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who came to apotheosize the struggle for national assertion and take it to its culmination in the birth of an independent Bangladesh.

Acknowledgements

Many of these writings were originally published in volume 2 of my collected works, Milestones to Bangladesh, published by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) who invested much time and effort in compiling and publishing three volumes of my collected papers in 2007. In preparing the present volume for publication the services of Abdul Quddus, Senior Administrative Associate, CPD are gratefully acknowledged.

It is specially important for me to recognize the support of those closest to me, during the critical years of my journey to Bangladesh when the papers in this volume were originally written at all hours of the day and night – my late wife Salma and my sons, Taimur, Babar and Zafar. After all much of the time invested in both accessing the information and writing these papers was at the expense of the time I could have spent with my family. The hardships and dangers to which they were exposed as a consequence of some of my writings were also borne by them. Special mention must also be made of my association with Kamal Hossain and Hameeda Hossain who travelled with me on my journey and were founders and co-editors of Forum, where many of the contributions to this volume, were first published. Finally, I would like to recognize the encouragement I have received from Rounaq Jahan in compiling this volume. Her scholarly and prescient work, *Pakistan, Failure of National Integration*, published by Columbia University Press in 1972, summed up and improved upon much of the writings which have been included in this volume.

Part I

Two Economies

Introduction

The idea of two economies located within the nation state of Pakistan, was conceptualized through the writings of several Bangali economists. The premise of the concept originated in the argument that the physical separation of the two wings of Pakistan demanded distinctive treatment for the regions, to be overseen by a fully autonomous political entity involving complete devolution of power over resource management, policy making and implementation. My opening paper (chapter 1.1) on the *Indivisibility of the national economy of Pakistan* presented in Lahore in October 1961, to a conference convened by the Bureau of National Reconstruction, spells out the concept of two economies and its policy implications.

Since the paper was presented during a period when Pakistan was under Martial Law and was then reproduced in full in the columns of Dhaka's principal English daily, the *Pakistan Observer* in their issue of 23-25 October 1961, I attained considerable notoriety at the time even though I was only 26 years old. As a result, ever since, my name has come to be widely associated with the idea of two economies though I was only one among several of my colleagues, who articulated this idea. My subsequent paper on the *Problem of regional imbalance* (1.2) was prepared exclusively for publication in an international journal and spells out the nature of economic disparity within Pakistan which had inspired the search for devolutionary solutions.

The subsequent chapters (1.3 to 1.6) were all prepared as newspaper articles which were designed to perform both an educational role and serve as polemical contributions to the political struggle for self-rule.

The paper, *Disparity: a dead horse or a live problem?* (1.3) was written for the *Dhaka Times* in 1963 as a direct response to a radio broadcast by the Deputy Chairman of the Pakistan Planning Commission, Syed Hasan, who had directly attacked the Bangali economists, terming us as 'mediocre, minions of a foreign power' for persistently pointing to the economic deprivation of East Pakistan. The remaining three chapters were written for the weekly, *Forum*, in the 1969-71 period and were prepared in order to contradict arguments propagated by the principal policy makers of Pakistan to explain away East Pakistan's economic backwardness (ch. 1.4) and to expose the exploitative nature of its relationship with West Pakistan (ch. 1.5-1.6). During that turbulent period when the democratic campaign to realize the 6 point demand made by Bangabandhu was at high tide writings by me and other economists provided a serviceable resource for the Bangali leaders in their political debates with their counterpart from West Pakistan.

1.1 The Indivisibility of the National Economy of Pakistan¹

The indivisibility of the national economy as a postulate may imply one of two things. First, that the economy is indivisible in an organic sense. The term indivisibility however has certain forbidding connotations which provide ample meat for a philosophical feast. However, we will not be drawn into such theological disputations and will simply assume that we mean that there is one economy in Pakistan and not two or more as some people are said to have asserted. We can then examine the question of whether in fact there are one or two economies in Pakistan. Secondly, having disposed of the factual aspect of the question, we can then indicate our aspirations or value judgments. Should there or should there not be one economy in the country?

Now before we can get down to discuss the question of the existence or otherwise of two economies, it is advisable to really see what is meant by the term. The concept of two economies has been one of the more misused and maligned slogans of our time, a rare tribute where the misuse of terms has been historically endemic. When the term two economies has been used it has been used to imply that East Pakistan should be regarded as a separate producing and consuming unit for planning and development purposes due to the special nature of its economy and economic problems. This is how East Pakistani economists have used the word in the past and it is well to be clear about this before proceeding. It is thus advisable to examine the basis for this assertion and to examine the history behind the idea and some of its implications for the future.

Note:

1. Presented at a seminar on National Integration organised by the Bureau of National Reconstruction, Lahore (1961); published in the *Pakistan Observer*, 23-25 October, 1961.

The Obvious Fact

The first and most obvious fact which questions the oneness of our economy is economic differences arising from completely contrary natural conditions. The most obvious manifestation of this is the big difference in the land/labour ratio. Whereas West Pakistan has a population density of 140 per square mile, East Pakistan has a figure of 930 per square mile. This calls for considerable variations in the techniques of production in both agricultural and industry between the two wings and planning has to take these very strategic factors into consideration. For example, *prima facie* evidence indicates a case for accelerated industrialisation in East Pakistan as an antidote to the excessive pressure of population on the land.

Secondly and perhaps more important is the issue arising from disparity of living standard of the people in the two wings. Current figures on per capita income in Pakistan place the per capita income of East Pakistan at Rs.213 and of West Pakistan at Rs. 305, a substantial difference by any standards. This disparity obviously indicates that the benefits of our development programmes have not been distributed equally between the two wings. This observation raises certain fundamental questions about the oneness of our economy which can be revealed if we examine the basis for this unequal distribution.

Both economic theory and economic history tell us that in a homogeneous economy the impact of investment in one region will make itself felt over the rest of the economy in due course. Thus, a concentration of investment in Lancashire means that labour will be attracted there from other parts of England whilst the incomes generated from the investment will be spent for goods from other regions, thereby stimulating investment. From this the theory has followed that an economy always tends to equilibrium and if regional inequalities occur self-correcting forces in the form of movements of labour and capital will soon correct this.

Theory of Equilibrium

This theory of equilibrium has however been seriously discredited under the attack of economists like Professor G. Myrdal, H. W. Singer, R. Prebisich and A. Hirschman who have tried to spotlight the gap between current reality and past theory. Myrdal, the leading protagonist of this

group, asserts that there are automatic forces in the economy in an under-developed country which tend to accentuate inequalities. He calls this the law of cumulative causation where, given inequalities between the two regions of a country, the natural forces of the market make capital and skills flow in the direction of the more developed regions due to the relative attractiveness of the investment prospects or rewards, thus accentuating the inequalities in the country. Unless this fact is recognised by manufacturers, *Pan* and bananas will increase in demand in West Pakistan but hardly by enough to lead to an outflow of income from West to East Pakistan which can generate forces in the direction of greater equality.

Special Problems

We have thus far seen that the East Pakistan economy is faced with certain special problems. It is, however, appropriate to examine how the disparity between the two wings has been accentuated over the last 13 years and the current implications of this.

At the time of partition both East and West Pakistan inherited backward economies since they were, in their respective regions, regarded as the raw material producing hinterlands to the more industrialised regions of undivided India. In terms of industry, there was very little to choose between East and West Pakistan. However, West Pakistan had a well developed irrigation system and a bigger network of roads and railways which it inherited as a by-product of Imperial Britain's economic and strategic needs.

In the immediate aftermath of partition, refugee capital moved into trading activities in West Pakistan due to the total business vacuum existing there and the greater social and cultural ties with the region. The fact that the Capital city was in Karachi was in itself an attraction.

Real Expansion

However, the real expansion of the country started later by about 1950-51. By then, due to the policies of license allocations, credit facilities and the existence of a sellers market, fortunes in trade had been built up. The policy of giving import licenses in both West and East Pakistan to certain West Pakistani businessmen created artificial monopolies and enabled them to accumulate fortunes in a very short period. These fortunes were

subsequently invested mainly in the textile industry in West Pakistan.

The Second Five-Year Plan has, as a postscript, acknowledged the existence of a regional problem. However, its investment targets allocate Rs.950 crore to East Pakistan and Rs. 1350 crore to West Pakistan (including Karachi) according to the revised figures for the Second Plan. In addition to the Plan allocation, a further amount of Rs. 500 crore is to be spent in West Pakistan in the Industrial Canal Replacement Works and Rs. 517 crore in the anti-waterlogging and salinity campaign.

These latter two schemes may be outside the Plan but they not only represent a diversion of common resources but also have certain spread effects which will be mainly beneficial to the West Pakistan economy. Thus, as we move into the Second Plan, in spite of our acknowledgement of the need for regional balance, the disparity between the two wings will be seriously accentuated.

Furthermore, the allocation of foreign aid has also been instrumental in widening this gap since the bulk of the aid allocations have been in West Pakistan. This tendency is likely to continue due to the need to keep ongoing projects afloat and the more efficient lobbying of West Pakistan WAPDA and other administrative departments.

Special Problems

Given the paramount importance of the issue, what solutions present themselves? Even working on the hypothesis of a unified economic policy, we cannot ignore the special problems of East Pakistan. Assuming that regional disparity is a major problem, only a policy of massive investment, backed up by a crash administrative and technical programme to implement it, could effectively tackle it. Similarly, the bulk of foreign aid would also have to be invested here. However, this would imply that the current patterns of investment must reverse themselves and for the next 10-15 years upto two-thirds of total investment must take place in East Pakistan. Only then can we hope to bring living standards in the two wings into closer approximation to each other. Whereas such an investment policy could well change the face of East Pakistan within a decade, the national implications of such a step are almost too enormous to contemplate.

For one thing, it would mean that West Pakistan would have to reconcile itself to a period of standing still or at most creeping growth,

for the next 10 years. For a region, which has enjoyed the plums of progress for the last 13 years, to take this lying down is to impose on human nature itself.

Indeed, conflicts are inevitable wherever the distribution of resources is involved. The conflict may arise between labour and capital or the agricultural and industrial sector or between regions, as in our case. For it to be otherwise would be to go against all the experience of history and economics and to ignore some of the major political lessons of our time.

Given this premise, one is ultimately thrown back on the only alternative solution. Instead of having two regions perpetually quarreling over the share of resources, let the economy be split up not just for analysis, but functionally, into two economies. Given this alternative, we can thence proceed to spell out some of the implications of two economies for Pakistan.

To begin with, such a policy would have to be implemented in a framework of regional economic autonomy. Each wing would have full control over all its resources, domestic and foreign. This would mean that all incomes from revenue and all foreign exchange would be under the control of the regional administration.

From their resources, contributions would be made to the centre for the maintenance of foreign affairs, general administration and defence. Contributions would bear some approximation to benefits received and capacity to pay. Whereas the former criterion is not only more difficult to measure but also loaded with ethical conundrums, it is advisable to concentrate on the latter. Here we only have to invoke all conventional theories and practices of fiscal policy the world over to see that contributions to Central revenues are always made on the basis of capacity to pay. Given the economic backwardness of East Pakistan, it would follow that for some years to come it would give a much smaller contribution than the West. However, as investments multiply and growth increases the East wing will eventually be paying a full 50 per cent of the budget.

How to Tackle Problems

Now given this rough framework for a dual economy, we can tackle some of the specific problems which East Pakistan may face due to such a policy.

To begin with, it will be said that East Pakistan may have the foreign exchange but it lacks the domestic savings to utilise this. To which, it may be cited that East Pakistani's foreign export surplus has been compensated by the inflow of goods from West Pakistan. Furthermore, had West Pakistan not utilised this East Pakistan would have accumulated idle balances. In point of fact what East Pakistan has been doing for the last 13 years is to surrender potential capital, since for all practical purposes foreign exchange can be equated with capital goods which have come from industries set up in the West from East Pakistan's foreign surplus. Given its own resources, it could not only have consumed better and cheaper goods from all over the world but could have built up an industrial base commensurate with that in the West. The question of domestic finance could thus tackle itself in one of several ways:

- I. East Pakistan could simply invite West Pakistan capital to come and invest here. Given the shortage of foreign exchange in their own wing, this could easily be a paramount consideration for investment location.
- I. If capital is not directly forthcoming, foreign exchange could be sold to West Pakistan at the equilibrium or market value of the Pakistan rupee. These rupee resources could be diverted to internal financing.
- iii. Much easier than the above two would be a policy of credit creation to offset the absence of West Pakistani capital. This would not be as dangerous as assumed for the following reasons:
 - a. A good deal of West Pakistani expansion work took place as a result of credit creation. Deficit finance to the tune of Rs. 316 crore took place in Pakistan. Since most of the industries and development took place in West Pakistan, it is not unreasonable to believe that it was the major beneficiary of deficit finance and East Pakistan the victim, through higher prices. Even in the Second Plan about Rs. 100 crore is planned. This could now quite easily be located at the East. In fact, according to a study, done in the Institute of Development Economics on the safe limits of deficit finance, we can afford to create credit to the tune of Rs. 104 crore without risking inflation. All that we should now do is to concentrate this deficit spending in the East as the earlier deficit expenditures were concentrated in the West.

- b. The transfer of West Pakistani savings was in itself potentially inflationary insofar as it comes from the savings of the higher income groups there. Savings by big businessmen resulted in money and not real savings in the sense that it did not release real resources for use by wage-earners in industry. Thus, inflow of rupee capital into East Pakistan may have paid the wages of labour in the mills but it did not increase the surplus of rice or kerosene oil, mustard oil or coarse cloth and simply served to raise their prices. The rise in the price indices is closely co-related to the industrialisation of East Pakistan.
- c. West Pakistan would in any case have to exchange some of its raw cotton and oil seeds to meet its own needs of jute manufactures, tea, paper, etc.
- d. Any inflationary pressure generated by deficit finance could be mopped up by a heavy inflow of aid under the US PL 480 aid programme, which is likely to make basic wage goods available in large quantities over a long period.
- e. In the absence of individual initiative, a substantially expanded public sector would have to emerge, thus retaining a larger volume of resources directly in government hands. This would enable a faster and more equitable pattern of development within the province and would reduce the possibility of resources being either siphoned out of the region or into conspicuous consumption.
- f. The shortage of technical and administrative skills could be tackled by hiring them either from West Pakistan or from abroad, since skills like any commodity are always for sale.

Foreign Aid

Foreign aid could be singled out for special treatment. Here all foreign aid could either be divided on the basis of population or at least on a 50:50 basis. Even on such an assumption it would give East Pakistan something like Rs. 822 crore for development just in the course of the Second Plan, if we add the benefit of its foreign exchange surplus to its share of aid. This figure is almost as large as the total aid required by both East and West Pakistan for the whole Second Plan and would enable East Pakistan to double its investment programme.

Alternatively, each wing could get foreign governments to setup

separate aid missions and would do its own lobbying for aid. Given a tightening up in the quality of its planning personnel, East Pakistan could attract a good deal of aid in its own right not only because its projects would no longer have to be examined in relation to those in the West, but its needs would be evaluated according to their own merits. Given the greater poverty and concomitant danger of social unrest, one feels East Pakistan would be fertile ground for foreign aid.

However, this is mentioned only as an extreme alternative. In fact, even in an autonomous set up, a case could exist for a super-planning body which could work out a joint front for aid and also government development programmes to make sure that duplicate investment, which would lead to under utilised capacity in either wing, may be avoided. The ultimate economic relationship would be the one based on a common (but regulated) currency, which maintained the basic trade relationships between the two wings. Interwing trade deficit could either be balanced by credit or ultimate settlement in foreign currency in an accounting as opposed to real sense. This latter step would have its own corrective mechanism to ensure equal balance of trade since neither wing would find it worthwhile to pay foreign exchange for Pakistani goods. The overall pattern would not be significantly different from that which is prevailing today insofar as a common market and currency would continue. The main change would be that inter wing trade deficits may have to be settled in foreign exchange and that restrictions would have to be imposed on the inter wing movement of imported goods due to the dual import policy of the two wings. This incidentally would be only a continuation of the current policy regulating inter wing movements of imported goods.

The above exercise indicates some of the salient features inherent in the creation of two autonomous economic units. It should, however, not be mistaken for a blue print for action since many additions and commissions may be required depending on the politics of the situation. Ultimately, of course, any such scheme would require a body of experts who could work out the details of such a plan and clearly spell out all its implications, economic, social and constitutional.

1.2 The Problem of Regional Imbalance in the Economic Development of Pakistan*

Detailed articles on the economic development of a particular country tend to have little interest except for the regional specialist. In this brief essay, therefore, I wish to discuss economic development in Pakistan by isolating certain special features of the process which may be of general interest. I hope to raise issues applicable to other countries faced with broadly similar problems and issues having certain interesting theoretical implications.

The factor which distinguishes Pakistan from other similarly placed under-developed economies is the fact that its two major component regions, East and West Pakistan, are separated by 1,000 miles of foreign territory. About 55 per cent of the nation's population is located in the East and 45 per cent in the West. Hence, the facts of geography are at the center of Pakistan's problems. Furthermore, given the uncertain political relations with the intervening country, India, the principal means of communication is by sea, which is a distance of several thousand miles. Of course, there is a well developed air network, but this is only for passenger services and a small volume of air cargo, which in value constitutes about 1 per cent of total inter-area trade. Overland rail traffic exists, but is virtually negligible at present.

Apart from the problems caused by separation is the fact that natural conditions in the two parts of the country are also quite disparate. East Pakistan is essentially a monsoon region with an abundance of water. However, the land-labor ratio is very low, with a population density of

*Published in *Asian Survey*, University of California Press, July 1962.

about 930 per square mile. West Pakistan is largely arid with scant rainfall, heavily dependent on an irrigation economy. It has a much bigger land area, which gives it a population density of 140 per square mile. However, some of the land is desert or otherwise uncultivable. Furthermore, the West is faced with an acute problem of water-logging and salinity which is threatening to contract further its productive area. A heavy investment programme to counteract this is already being drawn up.

These elementary facts of geography are, of course, known to most informed people, and one simply reiterates them as a background to the subsequent discussion of some of the economic implications of this separation. The most important feature of the Pakistani economy is the low mobility between the two regions. This is a direct result of the problem of distance. Over the last 14 years, very few people have moved from one region to another as settlers. A small number of East Pakistani farmers were settled in Sindh under the Thal Development Authority, a big land reclamation scheme, but this has not been repeated on any significant scale. There is a certain amount of movement by government servants and business executives from East Pakistan to the national capital, first in Karachi and now in Rawalpindi. Businessmen were mostly located in Karachi. However, these together constitute a negligible number. The reverse flow is not much greater. West Pakistani businessmen and technicians have moved across, albeit temporarily, to fill the gap in technical and commercial expertise in the East Pakistani economy, but in aggregate, labour mobility is very restricted and shows no likelihood of increasing.

Apart from the problem of distance, which makes mobility an expensive and difficult proposition, cultural differences must also be considered. Differences in language, diet, and general customs make social integration difficult though perhaps not impossible. Religion is of course a unifying factor and may in some cases exercise a substantial influence on behalf of integration, but it is not certain how far this can counteract economic differences and cultural diversity in other respects.

These factors in themselves may not have special significance. Cultural homogeneity is not always present in a modern political society. However, these problems have really provided the leaven for the central issue, the economic disparity between the Eastern and Western sectors

of the nation. In this context the term disparity is used to mean differences in levels of development and the manifestation of this in differences in the average standard of living between the two regions. The indices of this disparity are provided by regional per capita income figures. In 1960, the East Pakistani per capita income was estimated at Rs. 213 while the figure in West Pakistan was approximately Rs. 305, a difference of nearly one-third¹. It should be mentioned that national income accounting in Pakistan is still in its infancy; hence, regional income estimates are little more than imaginative guesses. However, these figures, inaccurate though they may be, give a modest indication of the problem. An index of available commodities provides another useful indicator of disparity. The following tables, which are somewhat more reliable than the per capital income in figures, give evidence of the existence of disparity and show how this has been gradually widening (Table 1). Table 2 shows absolute figures for the availability of commodities on a per capita basis.

Thus far, we have merely marshalled some data to indicate the fact of imbalanced growth in the Pakistani economy. Now, let us examine some of the factors lying behind this imbalance and the implications of imbalance for planning and development in Pakistan.

At the time of independence in 1947, both East and West Pakistan inherited relatively backward sections of the Indian subcontinent. Both sections had represented raw material-producing hinterlands to the more industrialised parts of India. In terms of industrial development, there was very little difference between the two regions although in such products as textiles and tea East Pakistan was ahead while West Pakistan had an advantage in sugar and metals. In terms of roads, railways and irrigation, however, West Pakistan had definite advantages. In the aggregate, there was very little difference in the level of development in each sector. It is since independence that disparity has appeared and widened until it has come to constitute the serious problem of today.

The most obvious explanation for the increase in disparity is found in the higher aggregate investment in West Pakistan relative to East Pakistan. This was, in part, the result of the Government's own investment decisions and the resultant impact on the private sector of the economy. Another important factor was the preponderance of

revenue expenditures in West Pakistan due to the location of the major part of the Federal Government and Armed Forces in this region. A double-edged incentive was thus provided to the businessman. The investment reinforced the infrastructure, which is always an important attraction for businessmen, while the incomes generated from these expenditures provided the purchasing power for their products.

As a result, the refugee traders from India predominantly tended to concentrate their activities in West Pakistan and tended to use cash balances which they brought with them as an instrument for making claims on foreign exchange for import purposes. This, along with liberal credit facilities granted to these traders, enabled huge profits to accumulate in a short time through import trading and cotton export monopolies. By the beginning of the 1950s, these fortunes, supported by additional liberal quantities of credit, began to find their way into industry, with textiles providing the lead. The Government took an essentially laissez-faire approach to the problem which in itself tended to operate in favour of West Pakistan. There was no attempt to exercise the considerable powers the Government possessed through various Acts, or to achieve greater balance through investment policy or the location of industrial activity. From 1952 to 1954, in the wake of the Korean War boom, an Open General License policy was followed by the Government which tended to operate in favour of the advanced sector where incomes had already been built up.

In 1955, the First Five Year Plan was inaugurated, making it clear that the Government, as well as private entrepreneurship, would play a significant role in economic development. However, this First Plan actually aggravated the imbalance. This followed from the initial decision to invest much larger sums in the West than in the East, and in fact, due to poor implementation of the Plan, an even smaller amount than scheduled was invested in East Pakistan. There are some indications that per capita income in East Pakistan actually declined during the Plan period, thus reflecting the inability of the growth rate to keep up with the rate of population increase.

The Second Five Year Plan, which began in 1960, acknowledged the problem of regional disparity as a postscript, but did not make any definite commitment to remove it. Simple recognition was not enough,

especially since the investment patterns were designed to increase the disparity. The Plan aims at spending Rs. 13,500 million in West Pakistan and Rs. 9,500 million in East Pakistan. Unless investment is considerably more productive in the East, the disparity will widen still further by 1965.

In addition to the expenditures scheduled under the new Plan, a further investment of Rs. 3,300 million will be undertaken in West Pakistan as part of the Indus Canal Replacements.² The capital-output ratio of this investment is very high, but it has definite productive effects for the future and will leave a considerable reservoir of skills and capital when it is eventually completed. The total investment envisaged is about Rs. 6,060 million over 10 years. The United States and the World Bank have committed about \$1 billion in foreign exchange to cover the programme. Further large investments of about Rs. 5,000 million are envisaged in the elimination of water-logging and salinity in West Pakistan.

Thus, disparities have been increasing and are likely to continue to increase over time between the two regions. Very recently a Finance Commission was appointed by the government. Part of their terms of reference was to examine criterion for resource allocation between the two provinces. For the first time, the elimination of disparity both between regions and within regions was accepted as an objective of national policy. However, no specific formula or criterion was enunciated whereby this objective could be achieved, and the matter still presumably remains in the hands of the planners and the National Economic Council, the supreme national body on economic matters.

What has been the logic behind government decisions on investment? Critics have alleged that in fact there has been no logic and that either accident or some factor such as politics has constituted the main motivation. It is difficult to evaluate such criticisms, but it would not be inaccurate to say that economics has played a relatively insignificant role in location policy.

Many industries and investment projects were located in West Pakistan for no economic reason. The subsequent implications of this initial decision, however, are very important from an economic standpoint. Here Myrdal's laws of cumulative causation are very helpful.³ The location of investment in West Pakistan has attracted further investment for reasons previously mentioned. Thus, there has been a built-in tendency for

investments to flow in the direction of the faster growing region. Surprisingly enough, this logic was even accepted by some planners who argued that investments in West Pakistan had a higher productivity due to the superior infrastructure and existing investment base and that a policy of maximising growth would imply the location of investments in the more productive region, namely West Pakistan.

Cumulative causation tended to work in yet another way to the detriment of East Pakistan. Low investment in infrastructure made her implementation performance comparatively poorer. At the same time, the shortage of technicians and administrators, which may be traced back to the low investment in education, tended to aggravate the problem still further. The peculiar result of these conditions was that poor implementation began to be used as an argument against higher investments in East Pakistan rather than as a case for higher investments in that area.

At present, more systematic studies of the problem indicate that there is no real evidence to indicate that one sector is more productive than the other. Considerable research is still required to give planners a clear indication of the magnitudes involved. Superficial studies indicate that East Pakistan may well have a lower capital-output ratio given the greater productivity of her soil. This, however, remains to be demonstrated. It also remains to be seen whether the logic of higher productivity will be used as a case for relocating investments in favour of East Pakistan.

In the final analysis, the problem of increasing or eliminating disparity is essentially a political question. It is also essentially a question of degree—when and by how much should disparity be reduced or eliminated. What is important, however, is to discern the facts and draw attention to the peculiarities inherent in the Pakistani economy. Due to the immobility of Pakistani labour, it is not possible for a worker of the backward region to take advantage of the greater opportunities in the faster growing region. The case of Italy, where migration has played a strategic part in meeting the problems inherent in the backwardness of South Italy, is thus not applicable at present. Nor is the migration from South to North in the United States a feasible model. It is investment that must be brought to the backward region if the problem is to be solved. Nor can one wait for the market mechanism to reorient the investment process as happened in the United States. The fact that a majority of the population lives in the

backward region gives the problem of regional imbalance a special urgency in Pakistan.

In conclusion the following points emerge. Pakistan is a geographical peculiarity with its two regions separated by 1,000 miles. There is relatively little labour mobility between the regions. East Pakistan has lagged behind in the race for economic development and today has a lower aggregate and per capita income than West Pakistan, even though it has 55 per cent of the total population. This disparity has been perpetuated by both the First Five Year Plan (1955-60) and the Second Five Year Plan (1960-65). There are certain built-in forces in the economy emanating from the laws of cumulative causation which are further aggravating the imbalance. It is now fully realised that this imbalance has serious economic, social and political consequences. The Government of Pakistan has placed on record its desire to remove disparity. This can be done by accelerating the rate of investment in East Pakistan. At the same time, technical and foreign aid and foreign exchange will have to be made available in East Pakistan to ensure implementation of the proposed plans. This will have to be markedly different from past policies where about 80 per cent of all aid and loans went to West Pakistan as did the major part of foreign exchange from national exports. This was true in spite of the fact that East Pakistan earned 60-70 per cent of Pakistan's foreign exchange, mainly from her exports of raw and manufactured jute.

There is no reason why these objectives should not be attained providing there is full recognition of the nature of the problem and a continuous commitment to its removal. In many respects, the problem of Pakistan's economic development is truly unique. In addition to the conventional problems of under-development, it has special ones derived from its particular geographic and cultural divisions.

From an academic standpoint, the Pakistan economy presents an interesting case study of the problems inherent in an economic union between two regions experiencing different rates of development. One must emphasize the fact that the free play of market forces tends to accentuate these inequalities and that government action is necessary to induce any degree of equality in regional incomes. This, of course, makes the problem as much a political as an economic one and raises complex problems which deserve separate study.

Table 1 : Regional Income Estimates

Year	Quantity Indices		Per Capita Indices	
	West Pakistan	East Pakistan	West Pakistan	East Pakistan
1951-52	100	100	100	100
1952-53	103	105	101	103
1953-54	112	120	107	115
1954-55	123	111	115	105
1955-56	126	98	114	91
1956-57	133	127	118	116
1957-58	143	122	124	109
1958-59	147	110	125	96

Source : S. U. Khan, "A Measure of Economic Growth in East and West Pakistan," *Pakistan Development Review*, Autumn 1961.

Table 2 : Per Capita Availability of Specified Commodities

Commodity	Unit	1951-52		1959-60	
		West	East	West	East
Wheat	Oz. per day	9.9	0.1	10.0	0.4
Rice	Oz. per day	1.4	14.7	1.7	16.0
Other cereals	Oz. per day	4.4	0.1	3.5	0.1
Pulses	Oz. per day	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.3
Raw sugar	Lbs. per annum	32.7	15.7	50.3	13.3
Refined sugar	Lbs. per annum	8.0	2.7	6.5	2.6
Tea	Lbs. per annum	0.5	0.1	1.0	0.1
Salt	Lbs. per annum	17.0	11.6	10.0	11.3
Cigarettes	Nos. per annum	76.0	5.0	183.0	33.0
Tobacco	Lbs. per annum	1.8	2.5	1.7	1.8
Fish	Lbs. per annum	2.4	3.9	3.5	9.3
Rape seeds	Lbs. per annum	7.8	7.6	8.2	7.1
Cloth	Yards per annum	1.4	1.7	9.0	3.0
Paper	Lbs. per annum	0.5	0.2	1.4	0.3
Matches	Nos. per annum	10.0	7.0	16.0	13.0
Coal	Lbs. per annum	87.0	46.0	66.0	28.0
Kerosene	Gallons per annum	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.6
Petroleum	Gallons per annum	1.0	0.1	1.3	0.1
Electricity	Kwh. per annum	8.6	0.5	28.8	1.6

Source: S. U. Khan, "A Measure of Economic Growth in East and West Pakistan," *Pakistan Development Review*, Autumn 1961.

End notes:

1. Report of Panel of Economists on the Second Five Year Plan.
2. The Indus Canal Replacements followed from the settlement of the long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan over the diversion of the water from Indus tributaries. After prolonged negotiations under the auspices of the World Bank, agreement was reached in 1960 whereby Pakistan was assigned water from three rivers. To implement this, link canals have to be constructed to compensate for the loss of water from other sources.
3. These are described in his books, An International Economy: Problems and Prospects, and Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions.

1.3 Disparity: A Dead Horse or a Live Problem?*

The recent radio talk of the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission reveals one of the most extraordinary statements on the disparity question that has been made in the history of these discussions. Apart from the inadequacies of its economics, which this study is intended to lay bare, it represents a gross violation of the rules of public conduct that a paid government servant should indulge in such blatant political polemics. In fact, not even politicians have gone so far as to call critics of disparity "mediocre minions of a foreign power". This sort of vicious mudslinging is in the poorest taste.

However, let us carefully examine his talk in order to lay bare the fallacies on which it is based. There is much high sounding rhetoric about his role as an ageing iconoclast replete with literary cliches borrowed from sources as diverse as Shakespeare and Adlai Stevenson. The assumed mantle of a detached statesman and a Dutch uncle however confuse the basic issues at stake. It is, therefore, necessary to peel away the verbiage and get to the core of his arguments.

The first point he makes is that economic disparity between East and West Pakistan is no longer an issue. He expresses surprise that after all these years East Pakistanis continue to beat the dead horse of disparity and that "after many decades ... the people of East Pakistan should desire nothing more than economic parity with West Pakistan." In support of this he points out that the rate of growth in East Pakistan for development expenditure and per capita income has increased at a faster rate than West Pakistan.

* Published in the *Dhaka Times*, 1963.

Now it is an old debating trick to avoid facing a point by pretending that it does not exist. Debaters ranging from college students to members of Parliament have used it as one of the more durable tricks of the trade. However, this is no college debate and so it is worth looking at the facts. To quote rates of growth is, of course, another old trick used by all sorts of people. However, he uses his figures without any indication of their sources or reliability. To talk of development would need to lay bare the exact figures for development expenditure in East and West Pakistan over the last 15 years of its history.

Along with this would go a statement of the assumptions underlying the expenditure figures. On this basis the public could see and compute change in the rate of investment. As it stands, this statement takes the problem out of context and makes it look quite different from what it is.

This problem of course would not arise if the data on disparity were not shrouded under a veil of secrecy which normally surrounds it. Thus far, all that is available to test the figures on investment are the outlays during the course of the five year plans, which are supposed to embody all development expenditure during the years from 1955 to 1965. The figures for the second Plan stipulate that Rs. 1,350 crore will be spent in West Pakistan and Rs. 950 crore in East Pakistan. To this must be added the figure of Rs. 330 crore on the Indus Replacement Works, which are located in West Pakistan. This makes the figure for West Pakistan Rs. 1,680 crore. Now unless the Deputy Chairman assumes that the output-capital ratio (productivity of investment) is twice as high in East Pakistan it is difficult to see how this will do anything but increase disparity in per capita incomes between the two wings. To introduce the red herring of rates of growth is completely irrelevant to the disparity question. It is palpably obvious that a poorer region of the country, at a lower level of development, will have a higher growth rate. Thus, to take an example: if A increases expenditure from 100 to 150 it has a growth rate of only 50 per cent. But if B increases expenditure from 25 to 50, it has a growth rate of 100 per cent. Thus, we see that disparity between A and B has in fact widened since the difference was formally (100-25) 75 but has now increased to (150-50) 100. In spite of the fact that the rate of growth in B was faster than in A, this exercise, in what has come to be known as "growthmanship", is an old gimmick which should not deceive even the

layman.

In the same way the per capita income figures are equally misleading. In the first place regional income statistics are not publicly available. What figures do exist obscure the fact that rice and wheat are treated equally in accounting. In terms of dietary intake, a maund of rice equals a maund of wheat. However, wheat sells in West Pakistan at Rs. 16 per maund, whilst rice sells at Rs. 40 per maund in East Pakistan. Thus, to compute income from rice and wheat on the basis of these prices grossly inflates the income from rice and gives the impression that output in East Pakistan has increased by much more than it has. This is further emphasised by the fact that rice constitutes the bulk of the consumption for about 90 per cent of the people of East Pakistan. The corrected figure would tend to raise the disparity in per capita income between East and West Pakistan from 30 per cent to 60 percent.

However, even allowing for the overstatement of East Pakistan's regional income the Deputy Chairman's figures again only show rates of increase rather than whether disparity has narrowed. Given the higher volume of development expenditure in West Pakistan during the Second plan, it again follows that disparity in per capita incomes must have widened.

A further index of widening disparity may be derived from import figures. This provides a useful indication of the location of both development expenditure and foreign aid since all our development has an import component. These figures also provide a useful guide to current and past investment, which needs imports of raw materials, etc. to maintain operation.

**Annual Imports of East and West Pakistan
(in crores of rupees)**

	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62
West Pakistan	180.57	217.32	223.64
East Pakistan	65.53	101.44	87.28
Surplus of West Pakistan's imports over East Pakistan's	115.04	115.88	136.36

With such figures before us it is difficult to understand how a person in his position can say that "the age of increasing disparity is behind us, we are moving towards closing the gap".

To go on from here and express surprise "that the people of East Pakistan should desire nothing more than economic parity with West Pakistan ... is a pitiable goal ..." is of course to distort the basic position of East Pakistan completely. It is an insult both to the intelligence and aspirations of people here to think that this is the sole objective of the people. As far as aspirations are concerned, the sky is the limit, so the Deputy Chairman's vision of a new world is hardly unique. However, the elimination of disparity constitutes a vital landmark in pursuit of a better life. At the same time, it is designed to end a flagrant injustice which continues to thrive in our body politic. That one wing should have been allowed to lag behind in development in a country where all planning and development are the result of Government policy is intolerable in a democratic society.

This brings us to the Deputy Chairman's rather untenable analogies with the USA and Italy. The point which he attempts to convey is that disparities existed in these countries and that after so many years they still exist, therefore East Pakistan should not really worry. The point made here is misleading. It obscures the fact that in Italy and the USA disparities came into existence under free economy conditions where investment decisions were essentially in the hands of private individuals. In Pakistan, from the beginning, development expenditure has been made through government decisions and since 1955 has been directly planned by a Central Planning agency. Even in the field of industries, which are popularly believed to be exclusively in the private domain, a tight rein is kept by the government on industrial policy, through the control over foreign exchange allocations and through the Controller of Capital Issues and the Central Permission's Committee. Thus, permission to establish industries and their location are very much in the hands of the Government. To equate disparities in a planned and unplanned economy is therefore quite misleading. Furthermore Italy, for one, has recognised the existence of disparity as a central problem in its economy and most of the actual planned economic activity in Italy is specifically designed to eliminate disparity and is spelt out as a concrete objective of national economic policy.

The Deputy Chairman, as an aside, mentions the immobility of labour and capital. He could, however, have emphasised the uniqueness of our geographical situation which would be enough to reject any comparisons with the homogeneous economies of Italy and USA. However, even more important is the fact that the Southern USA and South Italy, which constitute the underdeveloped regions, are in fact a minority in population terms. What makes the predicament of Pakistan without parallel is that the region containing the majority of the population (54 per cent) is the backward region. We should therefore continue to learn lessons from the experience of similarly situated countries, but we should not delude ourselves into drawing any false comparisons.

The Deputy Chairman goes on to talk about the Perspective Plan and the Third Plan. Mercifully, 25 years from now he will not be in office for anyone to question him on whether disparity has been removed. However, the Third Plan is round the corner where there will be ample demonstration of the veracity of his sentiments. It should be categorically stated here that unless East Pakistan is allowed more than 54 per cent of total development expenditure both within and without the plan, there will be no possibility of any reduction in disparity. Since the Indus works require another Rs. 600-700 crore and the Anti-Water Logging and Salinity Programme in West Pakistan envisages the expenditure of another Rs. 1,000 crore, it is difficult to envisage East Pakistan getting anything near 50 percent of the aggregate expenditure. It is, however, hoped that the targets of the Third Plan will be a matter of public discussion and that the public will not be presented with a *fait accompli* devised in the inner chambers of the Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry.

Before going on to the question of separation, he expresses the pious hope that we think about the future form of our society. It is news indeed that our future form is in fact open to public debate. The categorical declaration of our latest, but not new Finance Minister that we are committed to the goal of free enterprise would indicate that even in Olympus there are differences. Perhaps a public debate, as to whether there is anything to debate, would be a valuable preliminary to any ideological soul searching on our part.

This brings us to the Deputy Chairman's observation on the question of disintegration which in a surge of rhetoric he goes on to call the

"madness of separation." His fear is that our industrialisation is following parallel lines in both wings which will lead to uneconomic industries which are unable to compete in world markets. Let us put his problem in its proper perspective. In his first place it appears that his apprehensions do not extend beyond the field of large-scale industries. As it stands, industries constitute 16 per cent of expenditure on the Second Plan and 8 per cent of GNP in Pakistan. This should automatically serve to reduce the orbit of his apprehensions. Now within the field of industry, it is agreed that the maximum advantages should be derived from the economies of scale. However, to do this requires that some definitive information exist on what is the most economic size for a particular industrial unit. Along with this unit go the important component of transport costs. Comparison should therefore not be between cost of production in East and West Pakistan but cost of production in East Pakistan with landed cost of similar West Pakistan goods in East Pakistan. Thus, the economics of West Pakistani cement manufacture may be obscured by the high transport cost which make it more economic to manufacture cement locally. Similarly, in textiles if the size of a viable unit is put at 12,500 spindles and 500 looms, there may be obvious scope for 50 textile mills in relationship to our demand for textiles. Therefore, in terms of economics it becomes irrelevant where we locate the mills. Given the other overriding objectives of promoting industrialisation and employment in East Pakistan, as well as a large demand for textiles here, it in fact becomes imperative to locate the bulk of these mills in East Pakistan.

Now as it stands, even the Deputy Chairman acknowledges the constitutional commitment to end disparity as early as possible. From his point of view, the only limitation is one of finding the right projects to contain this investment. Given this objective, surely logic would demand that industry be one field where a large dose of investment flow into East Pakistan. Particularly in medium and heavy industry, which is to be based on imported raw materials, the centre should obviously be in East Pakistan, which can not only meet its own needs but become a source of supply for the whole of Pakistan. From this point of view there should have been only one steel mill and that should have been located in Chittagong, since both units are to be based on imported pig iron and scrap. In fact, the only factor which might operate for economic

separatism is the refusal of the planners to recognise the need to locate the bulk of investment in East Pakistan and to go for a policy of duplicating investment in the West which is contrary to the enunciated objectives of national policy.

With a policy of locating industries here an automatic basis for further investments in social overhead capital would be provided. To sustain these industries would require investments in power, communications, housing, education and other sectors, which would all, in aggregate, make possible the removal of disparity in the shortest period of time. By the time this was done, East Pakistan's base in industries as well as social overheads would be on par with West Pakistan. This would enable future investment policies to pursue the objective of maximising output without undue consideration for achieving regional balance.

Given the logic of this argument the Deputy Chairman's polemics take on a rather odd character. He goes on to say that "unfortunately the affairs are in the hands of amateurs - small men who basically lack security because of ill adjustment in the new conditions of this country" and further "the most dangerous trend in our economic life is of separatism. It will destroy our economy, its proponents are mediocre minions of certain foreign powers and they consider this a short-cut to fame and importance." Now this extravagant flight of fancy leaves a lot of questions unanswered. In the first place who are the "amateurs", "small men", "mediocre minions of a foreign power"? Are they the people in whose hands these affairs rest? The implications of this would be quite shattering. Obviously, such affairs are not in the hands of politicians, who both in the Assembly and on the ground are far removed from policymaking. It could not be the university professors who in their academic ivory towers are nowhere near the centres of decision. It could not be businessmen who are themselves attendant on the will of policy. By a process of elimination it would appear to be the senior civil servants and cabinet ministers and the PIDC directors who make industrial policy. In particular, one wonders whether this is an attack on the cabinet, civil servants and EPIDC of East Pakistan. A clarification would be most welcome both as to their specific origins and whether they are small men, etc.

And what of the mediocre minions of a foreign power? This raises the question of whether people are actually taking money to pursue a policy

of separation and if so, how much. And who are these "certain foreign powers" behind these dark designs? The people of Pakistan would welcome further revelations to these pertinent questions raised by the Deputy Chairman. After all, unsubstantiated assertions are no substitute for hard facts and rigorous thought on what is, in spite of all that the Deputy Chairman might say, a very live problem today. It is evident that such statements seriously undermine the confidence of the people and are in themselves likely to frustrate attempts to convince them of the objectives of eliminating disparity.

1.4 Sense and Non-sense about Disparity: The Balance Sheet of Disparity*

A great deal of nonsense is currently being talked about East Pakistan's low revenue earning capacity as compared to West Pakistan. From this premise two totally untenable conclusion are being derived. First, that higher development expenditure in the West wing is financed by its own revenue resources and owes nothing to East Pakistan. Secondly, that higher revenue collections are the main reason for higher development expenditure in the West wing. Both fallacies need to be laid to rest if any coherent dialogue is to emerge.

Financing Development

In Table 1 we present a breakdown of total revenue collections in the two provinces and relate them to revenue and development expenditures in the regions. Revenue collections are collected separately by the Central and Provincial governments. From the table we see that during the Third plan period from, 1965/66 to 1968/69, the latest period for which figures are available, the Centre collected, through its main revenue heads of Customs Duty, Excise Tax, Sales Tax and Taxes on income, Rs. 470.5 crore from East Pakistan. Against this, Rs. 1,304.4 crore was collected from West Pakistan, which is 73.5 per cent of total collections.

Provincial revenues have a much smaller yield since the main elastic sources of revenue are with the Centre. As a result, Provincial revenues, which include both tax and non-tax revenue, yielded Rs. 258 crore in East Pakistan and Rs. 477 crore in West Pakistan. Together provincial and central revenues yielded Rs 728.5 crore from East Pakistan and Rs.

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1,781.7 crore from West Pakistan. Against this, revenue expenditures in East Pakistan amounted to Rs. 484.9 crore compared to Rs. 1,659.5 crore in West Pakistan. Revenue expenditure relates to all expenditures of the Central and Provincial governments located within the region. Expenditures of this nature generate income and direct and indirect employment in the region as a tangible benefit to its inhabitants.

In contrast, development expenditure was apportioned as Rs. 851.3 crore to East Pakistan and Rs. 1,107.6 crore to West Pakistan. The aggregate of revenue and development expenditure yields Rs. 1,336 crore in East Pakistan and Rs. 2,767 crore in West Pakistan.

This implies that both regions spend more than they earn. West Pakistan's deficit is however larger and adds up to Rs. 985.4 crore compared to Rs. 607.7 crore for East Pakistan.

This deficit is financed largely by foreign aid and inflationary finance. It is reckoned that during the period Pakistan received net foreign assistance valued at Rs. 1,295 crore, so that the balance was presumably financed by money creation.

If we assume that East Pakistan received 30 per cent of aid and loans then its share comes to Rs. 388.5 crore. This means that Rs. 218.2 crore or 36 per cent of its deficit was financed by inflation and Rs. 388.5 crore or 64 per cent by aid. In contrast, West Pakistan financed Rs. 906.5 crore or 92 per cent of its deficit from aid and only Rs. 78.9 crore or 8 per cent from inflation. This means that East Pakistan paid the price for higher expenditure in West Pakistan in two ways. It surrendered its due share of aid which should normally have been 55 per cent or Rs. 712.3 crore. In addition to this it is subjected to greater inflationary pressure. This is confirmed by the trend in prices. Between 1964/65 and 1968/69, the price index in East Pakistan rose 30 points compared to a 20 per cent rise of points in West Pakistan.

It is therefore evident that West Pakistan's faster development was only partly paid for by its own resources. Its sizeable deficit of Rs 985.4 crore was financed, *inter alia*, by appropriating East Pakistan's share of aid and passing the main burden of inflationary financing on to East Pakistan.

The Logic of Revenue Disparity

This leads to the second fallacy that West Pakistan's higher levels of

development are due to their higher revenues. In fact, it is the reverse. It is the higher development there and the policy bias in its favour which makes it possible to generate such high revenues. Correspondingly, East Pakistan's low revenue yields are a glaring indictment of governmental neglect rather than a demonstration of its poor tax performance. This point can be clarified by examining the main revenue heads collected by the centre for which figures have been presented in Table 1.

Customs revenue

We note that 35.3 per cent of all Customs revenues were realised from East Pakistan in this period from 1965/66 to 1968/69. But this is hardly surprising if we observe that only 32 per cent of Pakistan's imports during this period came into East Pakistan. Whilst the structure of imports and duties also contributes to the difference in customs yields, the volume of imports coming into a region remains a fair guide for how much will be collected there in duty. East Pakistan has always claimed that it was denied its due share of its own export earnings plus 55 per cent of foreign aid and loans. If this pattern had prevailed East Pakistan's Customs yield would be over 50 per cent.

Central Excise Tax

These are essentially taxes on production of manufactures. Only 26.8 per cent was collected from East Pakistan. This figure is however misleading. Excise is collected at the factory or point of distribution. Its cost is passed on to the consumer in higher prices. To the extent that West Pakistan produced goods are sold in East Pakistan, East Pakistan consumers pay the excise duty even though collections are recorded in the West wing. For example, in 1968/69 one-fifth of excise duty collected in West Pakistan came from cotton fabrics and yarn. This is also West Pakistan's biggest export to the East wing. It follows that a part of this collection should be accredited to the East wing. The same applies to collections for other products sold in the East wing.

However, even allowing for this, at least two-thirds of revenues are collected in the West wing. But this merely proves that West Pakistan has been privileged to have a higher level and faster rate of industrialisation. Nearly all excise collections are realised from the large scale

manufacturing sector. In 1968/69, 74 per cent of value added by this sector accrued in the West wing. It is, therefore, hardly surprising if 73.2 per cent of excise collections come from there. If the share of industry, East Pakistan has always demanded, was located here, its collections would have been correspondingly higher.

Direct Taxes

These refer to taxes on income and wealth of corporations and individuals. Here East Pakistan's contribution of 15.7 per cent is the lowest of all tax heads. And who should be surprised. Collections here reflect the geographical concentrations of companies and wealthy people. Less than 1 per cent of the population pay income tax. A large proportion of them are concentrated in the West wing. Most companies are located there and even those who do most of their business in East Pakistan have their head offices in the West wing and pay their taxes there. In 1968/69, out of Rs. 23.2 crore of corporation tax paid only by companies, only Rs. 2.98 crore or 12.8 per cent was realised in East Pakistan.

Again, this concentration of the wealthy in West Pakistan is a symptom of the faster development of the region and hardly a cause. Public policies have manufactured our affluent classes in the West and it is this very policy with its class and regional bias which is under attack.

Sales Tax

Here 27.2 per cent of collections are in the East wing. Of this about 54 per cent (1968/69 figures) are realised from imports, so that their regional distribution is determined, as in the case of Customs duties, by the distribution of imports between the two regions.

The balance of 46 per cent is realised from items of domestic manufacture and consumption. As with excise, concentration of manufactures in the West yields more sales tax. Similarly, concentration of income in the West produces higher sales and hence more Sales tax. Here again, some of the taxes collected in the West are paid by East wing consumers.

It is therefore apparent to the most modest intelligence that the two regions revenue collections bear a close relation to their development.

Disparity in development produces disparity in tax yield and is a commentary on past injustice rather than the cause to perpetrate new ones. Faster development in the East wing plus a higher share of imports and manufactures would have a salutary impact on its revenues and solvency.

It is therefore hoped that men of goodwill in the West will not be misled by the inaccurate and tendentious comments of their so-called spokesmen. A clear understanding of the degree and nature of past injustices to East Pakistan will create an atmosphere where mutual accommodation can serve to resolve outstanding problems. An attempt to mislead people by distorting evidence will merely lead to a false sense of righteousness and pander to those very interests in the West wing which have perpetrated these injustices on the nation and are even today attempting to perpetuate them.

Table 1: The Balance Sheet of Development (1965/66 to 1968/69
 [All figs. in Rs. Crore]

		East Pakistan	West Pakistan	Per cent share
A. Revenue	1. Central Collection			
	i. Customs Duties	187.8	344.5	35.3
	ii. Central Excise	141.4	481.1	26.8
	iii. Direct Taxes	58.9	252.5	15.7
	iv. Sales Tax	82.4	219.3	27.2
	v. Total	470.5	1304.4	26.5
	2. Provincial Collections	258.0	477.3	
	3. Total Revenue Yield	728.5	1781.7	29.0
B. Expenditure	1. Revenue Expenditure	484.9	1659.5	
	2. Development Expenditure	851.3	1107.6	
	3. Total Expenditure	1336.2	2767.1	32.6
C. Net Deficit (B3-A3)		607.7	985.4	
D. Financing the deficit	1. Aids and Loans	388.5	906.5	
	2. Inflationary Financing	218.2	78.9	

1.5 Who Pays for Development?*

Who has paid the bill for development in the two regions of Pakistan? The Fourth Plan debate has focused attention on the subject by raising the question of resource transfer from West to East Pakistan as the price of a larger plan for East Pakistan. The Panel of Economists reviewing the Second Plan also suggested the need for such a transfer. Such assumptions have stemmed from the notion that West Pakistan as the richer province is in a position to support East Pakistan's development. Higher revenue earnings in West Pakistan and higher business savings are alleged to constitute a measure of the available surplus which could be put at the disposal of East Pakistan.

But does this popular notion have any basis in reality? To answer this one must take a total view of resource flows between East and West Pakistan. Resources must be seen in real terms as physical commodities and not merely as money transfers which could reflect the artificial scarcity prices of commodities sold in the protected domestic market. Rather than look at the problem in terms of budget surpluses and deficits, it is more useful to see the actual flow of resources in the form of goods being imported and exported from each region. Similarly, development must be seen not as a mere collation of expenditure figures which always tend to be exaggerated but as embodied in real fixed investment in the form of machinery, equipment and building construction. Savings, again, must be seen in real terms as the difference between a region's fixed investment and the resources the region receives from outside its boundaries.

*Published in *Forum*, February 28, 1970.

The figures presented (Tables A and B) mark a crude attempt to estimate this flow of commodities in and out of the wings of Pakistan.

Within East and West Pakistan development is based on three sources.

(i) The region's own domestic resources; (ii) Resources flowing in from abroad; and (iii) Resources flowing in from the other region.

In Table A we provide a breakdown of the different sources from which fixed investment has been financed within East and West Pakistan. This table is based on actual estimates of resources flows, savings and investment (Table B). It becomes apparent that throughout this period West Pakistan's domestic resources covered only 15 per cent of its fixed investment. West Pakistan's capacity to finance its investment reached its nadir during the Second Five Year Plan when only 5.3 per cent of its total investment was based on domestic resources.

In contrast, East Pakistan financed its entire development upto 1960. During the Second Plan however an increased net inflow of resources from abroad enabled it to reduce its burden by financing 45 per cent of its development from outside.

According to the record, West Pakistan's development was largely dependent on its ability to get resources from outside. In the 1950s when the overall flow of foreign aid into Pakistan was appreciably lower, West Pakistan received resources from East Pakistan for its development. Table B shows that between 1950 and 1955, 22 per cent of West Pakistan's fixed investment was sustained by an outflow of resources from East Pakistan. Between 1955 and 1960, 37 per cent of all fixed investment was covered by East Pakistan's resources.

It was only in the 1960-65 period of the Second Plan that East Pakistan exhausted its ability to supply West Pakistan with resources. This was fortunately compensated by a massive inflow of external resources from abroad under grants and loans which accounted for 94.7 per cent of West Pakistan's fixed investment. On average, 3,803 million rupees per year came into West Pakistan every year from abroad which made it possible to dispense with East Pakistan's resources.

This claim on foreign resources was not without cost to East Pakistan. It meant that out of a total inflow of Rs. 4,422 million per year only 14 per cent or Rs. 619 million was diverted to East Pakistan. This meant that East Pakistan surrendered Rs. 1,592 million worth of its share of foreign

resources to West Pakistan, if one assumes that East Pakistan is entitled to, at least, 50 per cent of all foreign resources. If one divides external resources on population basis, this figure would rise by another Rs. 255 million to Rs. 1,847 million per year.

These figures have some important implications for understanding the past and interpreting the future. To begin with it means that between 1950 and 1960, East Pakistan, the poorer region of Pakistan, exported its resources to the tune of 2.3 per cent (1950-55) and 3.9 per cent (1955-60) of its regional product to West Pakistan. In return it got nothing so that the region for all practical purposes was an aid donor to West Pakistan rather than a recipient of external assistance.

When its capacity to export resources was exhausted by 1960, it was compelled to surrender its legitimate share of foreign aid. This had accelerated sharply in the 1960s so that it was no longer necessary to exploit East Pakistan's resources, only to keep it away from a major share of the external resource pool.

This drain of resources from East Pakistan in the 1950s had its inevitable consequence. Annual per capita income within East Pakistan declined from Rs. 286 in 1949/50 to Rs. 271 in 1959/60. West Pakistan's income increased from Rs. 351 to Rs. 374. Disparity widened from 22.7 per cent to 38 per cent.

The situation in the 1960s improved for East Pakistan due to foreign aid and per capita income rose to Rs. 302 in 1964/65. But since West Pakistan's per capita income had risen to Rs. 432, disparities even in the 1960s widened to a record 43 per cent in 1964/65. (this will be much higher if one calculates it according to Anisur Rahman's estimate of disparities). Here the unequal distribution of external assistance, which puts 86 per cent of such resources into West Pakistan, made possible a much higher level of investment and consequently a widening of disparities.

This unequal distribution of resources has led to a highly unequal burden on the two regional economies. West Pakistan, all along being sustained by resources from East Pakistan and abroad, has been able to impose a relatively low burden of savings on its inhabitants. Between 1950 and 1965, on average, West Pakistan saved only 2.1 per cent of its regional product. What is however surprising is that in the 1960s when its income was rising its savings fell to an all time low of 0.9 per cent of

regional product. In contrast, East Pakistan was forced to impose a high burden of savings on its population to extract the surplus required for West Pakistan in the 1950s. In the first half of the 1950s it had an annual average savings rate of 6 per cent of regional product. This rose to 7.6 per cent between 1955 and 1960. Only in the 1960s could it relax pressure and let savings fall to 4.3 per cent - again due to the cushion provided by external assistance.

This very satisfactory flow of external resources made it possible for West Pakistan to sustain an annual investment level of 14.1 per cent of its GDP compared to only 5.8 per cent for East Pakistan during the 1950-65 period. It is interesting to note that during this period, whilst West Pakistan contributed only 31.8 per cent of total domestic savings within Pakistan, it received 76.3 per cent of the fixed investment. In contrast, East Pakistan contributed 68.2 per cent of savings but received only 23.7 per cent of the fixed investment. The traditional relationship between sacrifice and development was brutally violated in the case of Pakistan, as was the belief that the richer country or region has a higher capacity to save. Within Pakistan the poorer region, East Pakistan, not only saved more relatively but absolutely, and bore the brunt of the domestic sacrifice. In return it received barely one quarter of the investment and witnessed a widening of disparities in favour of West Pakistan.

Table 1 : Origin of Resources for Regional Fixed Investment
 (All figures as a percentage of region's fixed investment)

	Pre. Plan Period		First Plan Period		Second Plan Period	
	E. Pak	W. Pak	E. Pak	W. Pak	E. Pak	W. Pak
1. Domestic Savings	100	14.4	100	39.0	55.2	5.3
2. Import/Export of Resources from Abroad	0	+ 63.5	0	+ 29.4	+ 44.8	+ 94.7
3. Import/Export of Resources from the other region	-	+ 22.1	-	+ 31.6	0	0

- denotes export of resources. + denotes import of resources.

Table 2 : Regional Savings and External Resources Flow Patterns
 (In Rs. Million) At 1959-60 Constant Prices

	Pre. plan period 1949/50- 54/55		First plan period 1955/56- 59/60		Second plan period 1960/61-64/65		(All periods		Key
	E. Pak	W. Pak	E. Pak	W. Pak	E. Pak	W. Pak	E. Pak	W. Pak	
Annual average 1. Domestic Saving	795.39	259.10	1007.89	680.04	762.82	214.67	864.60	403.91	Denotes resources inflow
Annual average 2. External Resources Flow	-399.0	+1546.1	-551.2	+ 1063.9	+ 619.3	+ 3802.9	- 50.4	+ 2286.4	Denote resources outflow
Annual average 3. Fixed Investment	496.42	1805.17	496.03	1743.94	1382.06	4037.61	836.91	2640.25	
Annual average 4. GrossRegional Product (GRP)	13205.0	15357.0	13282.0	17023.0	17645.0	23393.9	14942.0	19088.0	
5. Share of Savings in GRP (per cent)	6.0	1.7	7.6	4.0	4.3	0.9	5.8	2.1	
6. Share of external resources flows in GRP (per cent)	-2.3	+10.1	-3.9	+ 6.2	+ 3.5	+16.3	-0.3	+ 12.0	
7. Share of fixed investment in GRP (per cent)	3.7	11.8	3.7	10.2	7.8	17.2	5.4	14.1	

1. Fixed investment figures used here differ from fixed investment figures calculated by conventional methods because of revision of figures to make them correspond to savings and GRP figures. The difference is related to the re-valuation of the import component of fixed investment at domestic prices rather than C&F prices.
2. GRP figures have been similarly re-valued.

1.6 Resource Transfers: Third Plan Experience*

In *Forum* of 28 February, the facts of resource transfer from East to West Pakistan were discussed. It was seen that up to the Second Plan East Pakistan exported its own domestic resources regularly to the West. During the last years of the Second Plan the big inflow of aid into Pakistan made it possible for West Pakistan to dispense with East Pakistan's resources and depend solely on aid. Resource transfers however continued even in this period through East Pakistan surrendering its legitimate share (50 per cent of the net inflow) of foreign aid and loans to West Pakistan.

The earlier discussion stopped at 1964/65. What has happened since? In this and another article, by Forum Research Unit, we examine the extent of resource transfer in the four years from 1965/66 to 1968/69, bringing the picture up-to-date by separately examining the 7 months of the latest year 1969/70. The analysis in these articles is less refined and extensive than the earlier discussion because it does not attempt to revalue savings and investment or relate the resource transfer to the regional products. This exercise will be done when more data comes to hand.

The picture for the first four years of the Third Plan (1965/66 to 1968/69) shows that trends visible towards the end of the Second Plan continue. Both East and West Pakistan continue to be a net importers of resources thanks to the continuing bounty of foreign aid. However, in the 4 years under study, whilst East Pakistan imported a total of Rs. 194.2 crores (revalued), West Pakistan imported Rs. 1,152.2 crore (revalued) from abroad. It must, however, be noted that out of the total net inflow of resources into Pakistan from

*Published in *Forum*, March 14, 1970.

abroad the East Wing was an exporter of resources to the extent of Rs. 14 crore during the latest time period and received no direct foreign aid whatsoever. This marks a deterioration from the Second Plan period (1960-65) where 14 per cent of the net inflow of foreign resources went to East Pakistan. East Pakistan became a net importer of resources solely because of its Rs. 208 crore deficit on inter wing account.

As in the Second Plan, East Pakistan's real transfer of resources to West Pakistan came through the surrender of its legitimate share of foreign aid to West Pakistan. If we conservatively assume that East Pakistan is entitled to 50 per cent of the external resource inflows then throughout this period East Pakistan exported Rs. 478.50 crore worth of resources to West Pakistan which comes to Rs. 119.63 crore per year. It thus becomes apparent that the Third Plan changed nothing and the drain of resources from East to West Pakistan remains an ongoing phenomenon.

External Resource Flows in East and West Pakistan

	1965/66		1966/67		1967/68		1968/69		Total	
	E. Pak	W. Pak								
1. Foreign Trade Surplus/ Deficit	+36.20	-334.74	+1.62	-56.32	+31.34	-292.64	+56.17	-76.78	+14.02	-1360.48
2. Interwing Trade Surplus/ Deficit	-55.68	+55.68	-60.51	+60.51	-43.16	+43.16	-48.89	+48.89	-208.24	+208.24
3. External Resource Flow	-18.48	-279.06	-58.89	-395.81	-11.82	-249.48	-105.03	-227.89	-194.22	-1152.24
4. East Pakistani's Share of Foreign Aid (50 per cent of Total Inflow)	149.26		227.35		130.65		166.46		673.72	673.72
5. External Resource Flow adjusted assuming that 50 per cent of external resource flows accrue to East Pakistan	+129.78		+168.46		+118.83		+61.43		+478.50	

Note :

- All Figures in crores of rupees at current prices.
- + Denotes resource outflow from region.— Denotes resource inflow from region.
- Value of resource inflow from abroad has been recomputed assuming overvaluation of the Pak. Rupee by 100 per cent.

Part II

The Democratic Struggle For Self-rule

Introduction

The emphasis by the Bangali economists on the economic deprivation of East Pakistan originated in the usurpation of democracy by a West Wing based political elite through the instrument of military rule. The struggle of the Bangalis was, thus, focused on the restoration of democracy and its effective operationalisation through self-rule. The very first paper in Part-2, *Social Forces in the Basic Democracies* (ch. 2.1) was drawn from a major research work by me at Dhaka University which manifested itself in 1967 through my first published book, *Basic Democracies, Works Programme and Rural Development in East Pakistan*. The chapter explores the capture of the democratic process by the Ayub regime, through the instrumentality of a limited franchise extended to 80,000 *Basic Democrats* whose loyalty was captured through provision of massive political patronage channeled to them under the US aid financed, rural public works programme. My book was a well-researched academic work but its underlying political argument was helpful to the political opposition in East Pakistan in their democratic struggle against the Ayub regime.

My subsequent two chapters, *East Pakistan's Revolt against Ayub* (2.2) and *Pakistan's Political Crisis* (2.3) were both written for and published in international academic journals in 1969. They sought to explain the background of the political upsurge against the Ayub dictatorship and the political implications of his downfall.

All subsequent writings in Part 2, appeared during 1969-71 in the columns of *Forum*. These articles discussed the state of the political movement and principal parties in the period leading up to and after the

historic elections of December 1970 to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. *Red Dawn for the Red Caps* (2.4) provided an account by me, based on first hand discussions as well as attendance at public meetings, on the political capacities of the left in East Pakistan at that time. The three articles, *A Tale of Two Parties* (2.5), *The Mujib Phenomena* (2.6) and *Election Prospects* (2.7) discuss the ongoing election campaign in East Pakistan and the seismic impact of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's leadership on the unchallengeable political ascendency of the Awami League during the election campaign. The subsequent paper, *The Quiet revolution* (2.8), written just after the landslide victory of the Awami League in the election of December 1970, discussed the transformative implications of such an outcome for the future of the Pakistan state.

The last two articles were directly addressed to the leadership of Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). *Coming to Terms with Six Points* (2.9), written on 19 December, just after the elections, attempted to argue that a self-proclaimed, progressive party such as the PPP should be able to understand and accept a constitution based on 6 Points. This article was subsequently circulated by me to the principal lieutenants and advisors of Bhutto when I visited West Pakistan in January 1971 at the request of Bangabandhu and Tajuddin Ahmed to explore the position of the PPP towards 6 Points. *What Haunts Hamlet* (2.10) was written on 29 February 1971 to directly challenge the arguments propagated by Bhutto for boycotting the coming assembly session, scheduled for March 4th 1971, which had subsequently precipitated its postponement by Yahya Khan.

2.1 Social Forces in the Basic Democracies¹

The Electoral Base

The essential characteristic of the system of Basic Democracies is that the elected members of local councils (known as Basic Democrats or BDs) constitute the electoral college for the election of the President and the national and provincial legislatures. In this sense, the system differs from *panchayati raj* and other run-of-the-mill forms of local self-government. A discussion of Basic Democracies is a discussion in the field of national politics.

Enough has been written about the system for its main features to be well known. But previous studies have tended to view it purely as an exercise in grassroots development, and its wider implications have been obscured. My purpose in this article is to open up discussion of the relationship between national politics in East Pakistan and the social structure of the rural areas. The argument is based on a wider study of basic democracies and the works programme in East Pakistan's which was the result of two years of documentary research and field interviews.

Social Strata

For an understanding of the peculiar position of the Basic Democrats,

1. Published in *South Asian Review*, The Journal of the Royal Society for India, Pakistan & Ceylon, London (1968) pp. 166-176. This article was based on my book, "Basic Democracies, Works Programme and Rural Development in East Pakistan, published in 1967 by the Bureau of Economic Research, Dhaka University. The system of Basic Democracy as an institution for local government was introduced by the Martial Law regime of Field Marshal Ayub Khan, President to Pakistan. The new Constitution imposed by the Ayub Regime on Pakistan in 1962 ended the system of directly electing the national and provincial legislatures and vesting this electoral power in the 80,000 Basic Democrats elected to the Union Councils in East and West Pakistan.

it is best to start with an explanation of the social structure of East Pakistan's villages. They are usually stratified into three classes of inhabitants:

1. the "surplus farmer", defined as a farmer with land surplus to his subsistence needs and with "investible" funds-accounting for 5-10 per cent of village families;
2. small farmers, or subsistence farmers, whose holdings are barely adequate to provide a living-accounting for 60-65 per cent of village families;
3. landless or near-landless farmers, who do not own enough land to ensure subsistence, and who therefore have to rent land or hire themselves out as labour-accounting for 25-30 per cent of village families.

Under normal circumstances, the surplus farmer would have grown into a sort of *kulak*. He could have ploughed back his funds in investment in his land and in improved farming techniques. But what actually happened was that he tended to assume the role of landlord and moneylender. This tendency was the result of the social vacuum left by the decline and abolition of the zamindari system in East Bengal and by the decline and eventual disappearance of the Hindu moneylender brought about by the debt settlement boards of the 1930s and by partition.

Farmers as Moneylenders

The disappearance of the moneylender was particularly significant, for it left a demand for rural credit, still not adequately met by the Government, which made money lending highly profitable. The surplus farmer seized the opportunity, extracting an annual return of nearly 100 per cent on his investment, which was far more than he could expect to get from engaging in the hazards of farming with modern techniques.

Surplus farmers, who feel disinclined to farm their land, can lease it to the landless or near-landless. The 1961 agricultural census revealed that about 20 per cent of all land under cultivation is tilled by tenants. Rates are around Rs.500 per acre, payable in advance. This is comparable with the return from money-lending, and equally free from the risks of investment which would be vulnerable to the hazards of nature or of the market.

The surplus farmer can use his profits to buy up more land. There are

usually many sellers from the ranks of small farmers who have been driven to the wall. The surplus farmer thus becomes both the source and the beneficiary of the small farmer's bankruptcy.

Apart from such predatory investment, the surplus farmer tends to shift his funds into the urban areas. Lacking confidence in the future of the rural areas, he educates his sons and sends them to the towns for employment. So capital and skills are exported to the towns, thus confirming Myrdal's law that the rich areas get richer while the poor get poorer.

A Losing Battle

Meanwhile, the small farmer fights a perpetual and losing battle to keep himself out of the class of landless labourers. Without reserves, he is forced to sell during the harvest season, at depressed prices, to traders who are in many cases also surplus farmers. In the season of scarcity, the trader returns it to him in the form of a paddy loan, at scarcity prices. In the rural areas, the price of paddy may vary by 100 per cent within four months. For the small farmer, the only escape from the vicious circle of poverty and debt is into the ranks of the landless.

Alienation of the Landless

The class of landless or near-landless villagers is growing larger. They can hire land on *barga*, or they can hire themselves out as labour; but they usually face the annual prospect of six months of unemployment, when they are constantly in the shadow of starvation. They remain outside the orbit of all programmes of institutional reform and agricultural uplift. Even the new-style cooperatives, which hold out so much hope in Comilla, have nothing to offer these people. They are a potentially explosive class which could tear down any edifice of reform and progress.

The existing village leaders and institutions seem unable to cope with these forces. The traditional cooperative movement has been a failure. The cooperative credit societies were infiltrated by influential moneylenders, many of whom borrowed money at 9 percent from the cooperatives in order to re-lend it at 70 per cent to the small farmers. Such acts of social treason have filled the villagers with a suspicion of officialdom and all its efforts to improve their lot.

In spite of much publicised development programmes, agricultural

output tends to remain stagnant. In the face of rising population and growing inequality, this implies a decline in the real income of the poorer classes. The cycle of low productivity, low investment, growing poverty and debt is kept in motion until the farmer is forced into the ranks of the landless, accentuating the crisis in East Pakistan's villages.

Who are the Basic Democrats?

But the surplus farmers continue to prosper. They remain the main beneficiaries of the development programmes and they use their power to manipulate the programmes in their own interest. And the surplus farmers, by and large, are the Basic Democrats.

Only 10 per cent of East Pakistan's farmers own more than 7.5 acres, but 63.2 per cent of the Basic Democrats own as much or more land. Indeed, 42.8 per cent of them own more than 12.5 acres, while only 3 per cent of all farmers own as much as this. In terms of landownership, therefore, the Basic Democrats may be identified with the surplus farmers. This is confirmed by the figures for income distribution. Only 10 per cent of families in East Pakistan as a whole have been classified as having annual incomes above Rs. 3,000, but 66.4 per cent of the Basic Democrats elected in 1964-65 had incomes above this level. To the extent that Basic Democrats can be identified as surplus farmers, it would appear that this class has parleyed its economic domination in the villages into political control. This is of profound significance both in rural development and in determining the character of national politics in East Pakistan.

An Obstacle to Change

In the first place, it means that the system is in danger of becoming an obstacle to socioeconomic change in the villages, not an agent for it. To develop the villages means to make an impact on the small farmers and landless labourers who constitute the overwhelming majority of the village population. But any measure to make their land more productive will raise their output and their incomes. Such measures will, therefore, reduce their dependence on the surplus farmers, who for this reason will tend to oppose any significant attempt at institutional change. In the absence of such change, most measures for rural development percolate to only a small proportion of those most needing aid. The main

beneficiaries remain the surplus farmers, who can use their position in the union councils to manipulate the system to their own advantage, and whose hold over the small farmers is thus reinforced.

Key programmes such as the rural works programmes and even the pioneering attempts of the new rural cooperatives designed by Akhtar Hameed Khan in Comilla are in danger of being subverted by that very social condition which they aim to change. Within the prevailing social framework, the works programme is acceptable only so long as it reinforces the authority of the surplus farmers. The cooperatives, however, are more subversive to their power, because the central aim of the cooperatives is to liberate the small farmers from this authority. There is, therefore, a contradiction between these two programmes, one of which strengthens the surplus farmer while the other undermines him. There is a significant contrast between the willingness to allocate funds to the works programme and the very slow headway being made in extending the cooperative ideal.

Holding on to Power

The choice of the basic democrats as the electoral college landed the Government in the middle of the social conflict prevailing in the villages, rather than above it. This does not necessarily reflect a class bias in the regime, for it may equally reflect a lack of awareness of the social implications of these policies. This lack of awareness, however, is grounded in a certain awareness of where the regime's short-term interest lies. Given the key position of the Basic Democrats within the electoral system, political logic demands a set of policies which cement the Basic Democrats' relationship with the regime.

The shaping of the electorate was dictated by the regimes immediate political interests. These were:

1. the desire to prevent a return to the chaos associated with parliamentary government as practised in Pakistan;
2. the retention of power in the hands of the incumbent to carry through the aims and objectives which grew out of the 1958 "revolution".

The first objective was easily attained by so designing the constitution that virtually absolute power was concentrated in the hands of the

president. The second objective was less tractable. To resolve the problem, a vast and rather confused superstructure of political theory was built up about the political immaturity of the Pakistani masses.² It was felt that their illiteracy resulted in a lack of political sophistication which made them vulnerable to political demagogues who might persuade them to vote against their own best interests. From this it was deduced that their political horizon did not extend beyond their own immediate communities, which made them unfit to vote for a president or member of parliament, but quite capable of voting for their Basic Democrat whom they knew and understood. This line of theorising should normally have led to a franchise based on some sort of educational or property qualification, as was fashionable when imperial India began to take tentative steps towards self-government. Indeed, this was one of the conclusions implicit in the recommendations of the Constitution Commission set up by President Ayub to advise him on the new constitution.³

Millions Disfranchised

By an unexplained logical jump, however, the voting right was vested in the Basic Democrat. Whilst there is ample evidence to show that the Basic Democrats were above the average in education and wealth, this move still meant that 6,700,000 adults with some formal education remained disfranchised. Even taking the more stringent qualification of matriculates and above, there were 595,486 such who continued to be denied any say in the choice of their president or parliamentary representative. That the choice fell on the Basic Democrats must therefore be seen in terms of their contribution to the second of the regime's objectives-political survival. They were preferred to the educated or propertied classes to the extent that they were more reliable as a vehicle for re-election. The reasons why such confidence came to be placed in the Basic Democrats need to be explained.

Subordination to the Officials

Local self-government in Bengal dated back to 1871. The main innovation of the regime was to limit its representative character and integrate it more closely with the administrative machinery in the rural areas. This was done by reversing the measures introduced in 1956, under which the presidents and

vice-presidents of the Union Boards had been directly elected by adult franchise, and by abolishing the similar process of election for the District Boards which had been introduced in the same year. In place of these processes, the only direct elections under adult franchise permitted were in the elections to the Union Boards, re-named Union Councils. The chairmen of these councils were now indirectly elected by the members. In the higher tiers of local government, all representative character was eliminated. At these levels, half the members were officials, and the framework was so ordered that the institutions of self-government became integrated with and subordinate to the government machinery. Lacking elective support or expert knowledge, the representatives of the public tended to become rubber stamps for official decisions.

Although the Union Councils are more representative, they, too, are subject to the pressures of official supervision. Several studies have pointed to their growing subservience to the Government.⁴ This was largely to be expected in view of the chairmen's identification with the administration. Any doubts about it were soon dispelled by the introduction, in 1963, of the Rural Works Programme, which was a programme designed to use the rupee counterpart funds generated from the sale of American wheat, to promote employment in the slack winter season. The main focus of the programme was in East Pakistan.

The Ties of Vested Interest

The Works Programme proved the ideal vehicle for the reinforcement of government control over the Union Councils. The Government could legitimately claim that they were catering to a genuine economic need in the villages; but they were also binding the Basic Democrats(BD) to the regime with more than constitutionalties. By putting the execution of the programme in the hands of the BDs, and by giving them hard cash for direct disbursement, they gave them scope for power and wealth beyond their most extravagant expectations. The BDs were thus given a vested interest which proved deaf to all the exhortations to freedom and democracy from the combined opposition parties in the electoral campaign of 1964 for electing the President and legislatures under the 1962 Constitution. The timing of the programme, the particular choice of projects, the laxity in administration and the extravagant if

unfounded claims of its achievements all pointed to an implicit political motivation.

This piece of *realpolitik* did not stimulate in the villages the mass popularity of the regime which has been widely claimed for it; for the Works Programme merely served to perpetuate the existing power structure in the villages. This new source of power made the surplus farmer into more than a mere moneylender or petty landlord. He could now decide who would work and who would sit idle in the winter months. For the landless or near-landless villager this meant all the difference between eating and starvation. It was this class which was already most dependent on the surplus farmer, and whose bondage now became almost feudal.

At the same time, the Basic Democrat could now reward his political and personal friends by letting them dip their hands into the till. He could also enhance his own fortune, and the laxity of administration gave considerable scope for such acts of self-help.

Bitterness, Frustration and Distrust

Villagers who have been interviewed voice no objection to the programme itself, and are quite willing to recognise its potential. But this potential does nothing to banish their bitterness, frustration and distrust, for what they see is the growing power of the surplus farmer, who now parades himself as the dispenser of patronage. The Government is labouring under a very dangerous illusion if it feels that the Works Programme has either revolutionised the villages or made the villagers their lifelong supporters.

Such a situation is inherently explosive. So it is worth asking why the opposition parties were not able to canalise this discontent in the villages into a direct assault on the authority of the regime. It would not have been unduly difficult. There is no reverence, as there is in West Pakistan, for the surplus farmer; for there is no aura of feudal authority. The surplus farmer is merely someone who happens to be better off, and whom circumstance has put into a position of political as well as economic authority.

This resentment was in fact made manifest in the latest elections to the Union Councils at the end of 1964. Only 47.7 per cent of the sitting BDs were re-elected. Of these, only 44 per cent received more than 50 per cent

of the votes cast in the constituency. So only about 25 per cent of the BDs received an endorsement from their electorates.

No Real Release

But the vote of the people was essentially a negative one. There was no real attempt by the poor peasants to capture power for themselves. Only 10.2 percent of the elected members came from households with incomes below Rs.1,000 a year, a class which includes 41.3 per cent of all rural households. For all practical purposes, the elections were a palace revolution. Another lot of surplus farmers replaced those in power, by exploiting the resentment against the incumbents which was part of the general sense of frustration. For the mass of the villagers, electoral revolt provided a short-lived catharsis, which ultimately left them subject to the same social forces which had triggered their resentment.

The reason is to be found in the very nature of village politics. Within a constituency of 1,000 voters, the tendency of the richer farmer to gravitate to leadership is inevitable. The balance of economic power turns an election into a contest between rival surplus farmers competing for power and patronage. The small farmer's limited horizon and lack of self-confidence make it difficult for him to think in political terms or to exploit his numerical superiority; and this attitude is reinforced by an electoral system designed to insulate the small farmer from extraneous influences.

A Moment of Doubt

During the presidential elections of 1964, there were some doubts about the Basic Democrats' loyalty to the regime. At least half of them were uninitiated into the bounties of office. An old-style political campaign initiated by that rare phenomenon, a united opposition, generated some insecurity in their minds about the permanence of the system, and there was genuine apprehension at the spectacle of a politically stimulated population on the rampage. The fear that they would be victimised if the Opposition won the election, reinforced by the fear of mob violence if the Opposition lost, led about 46 per cent of the new Basic Democrats to vote for the Opposition. An additional, more positive factor was the Basic Democrats' realisation that even the opposition would not ultimately assault their formidable authority in the

villages, if only because the Opposition was largely ignorant of the dynamics of village society, and because such links as it had with the villages were links, equally, with these same surplus farmers.

The Opposition Disintegrates

Once the presidential elections were over and the permanence of the regime and its attendant institutions fixed in the minds of the Basic Democrats, their attitudes were much more clearly spelt out. The victory of the regime had been traumatic for the Opposition. They had failed to understand the nature of the system they opposed, and this failure had built up a sense of confidence which prejudiced any contingency planning for defeat. When defeat came, the dynamism which had characterised the Opposition during the elections evaporated, and the rampaging mobs were presented with a group of rather uncertain leaders who never knew quite what had hit them. Instead of taking another look at the system that had defeated them, they fell to bickering among themselves. By the time the parliamentary elections came round, the fragile edifice of unity so painfully constructed for the presidential elections was shattered. The result was a wholesale defeat of opposition candidates in both the provincial and the national parliaments. The Basic Democrats, no longer confronted with the threat of a united opposition stirring the masses to mob violence, voted either for the government candidate or for the highest bidder. The subsequent by-elections saw an unbroken record of support for all government candidates, for the Basic Democrats had been inducted into the rewards of the system, and had realised the death-wish implicit in their previous support for the Opposition.

The spectacle today is one which points to the regime's unchallenged political dominance in East Pakistan. But it is a spectacle which is largely conditioned by the peculiar nature of the franchise, and by the machinery constructed by the regime to ensure that the franchise secures its survival. The Opposition has no means of assault, for it is not geared to seize or maintain power at the grassroots. It lacks the social perspective which would take it into the villages to exploit the discontent which is prevalent there. It lacks the resources, the will, and hence the machinery to take it deeper than the sub-divisions, which constitute the limit of its organisational effort. Within the present system, it seems doomed to futile effort and eventual eclipse.

Economic Costs

For the politically neutral observer, who must take account of the present opposition's infirmity of character and purpose, this prospect may not itself be cause for serious concern. But there may be cause for such concern in the implications of the political status quo, as it affects the mass of villagers who are small farmers and landless labourers. The Government, faced with the risk of alienating the support of the Basic Democrats, will tend to play down the policies which promote the basic reforms that are necessary to liberate the energies of the small farmer.

This commitment to the surplus farmers will not be without its economic cost to the regime. The small farmers till nearly 80 percent of the cultivable land in East Pakistan. They are crucial to the overall performance of the agricultural sector. The failure to draw them into the mainstream of economic development is likely to frustrate the economic goals prescribed for agriculture, which in turn may vitally affect future development plans in the province. The failure to expand output for three successive crop years⁵ has already manifested itself in rising prices and imports. Development plans have already had to be re-phased.⁶ The portents are already there.

The regime is therefore faced with a fundamental contradiction between its political and its social objectives. Its commitment to the Basic Democrats is endangering not only its proclaimed objective of social change but also the whole edifice of planned development which has been built on the projected performance of the agricultural sector. So it has implications for the reduction of inter-provincial disparities which is one of the key political and economic commitments of the regime. What is at issue, therefore, is not only the regime's position in the villages, but ultimately its overall political position in East Pakistan.

The Villagers Wait

In the villages themselves, it is unlikely that the response of the small farmers will remain negative indefinitely. The considerable publicity given to the Works Programme may backfire, by accentuating the small farmers' frustration to a point at which it will become directed beyond the Basic Democrats and the surplus farmers.

It would be difficult to predict where this will lead, though there are

some lessons to be drawn from the contemporary experience of peasant societies in South-East Asia. What is apparent is that the villagers' traditional ignorance and inertia are no longer reliable barriers to social upheaval. The expectations of the small farmer have been aroused, and in this mood he awaits the ideas and organisation which can make him aware of his latent political power.

If this catalyst is ever injected into the rural areas, one can expect a social convulsion in the villages of East Pakistan which could engulf not only the surplus farmers but also the regime itself and the urban-based opposition parties. By choosing to anchor themselves to the existing social order in the villages, whether by design or merely from indifference, both the regime and the opposition parties may be paving the path to their own extinction.

Endnotes:

1. These observations on the structure of village society are largely based on the studies of Akhtar Hameed Khan, Director of the Academy for Rural Development in East Pakistan. See, in particular, US Aid Conference Report, pp. 4-16, published in June 1963.
2. For a discussion of the political ideas implicit in the 1962 Constitution, see *The Political System of Pakistan*, by Khalid B. Sayeed, Ch. 5 (Reviewed in this issue).
3. See The Report of the Constitution Commission, published by the Government of Pakistan, 1961.
4. See Ch. 3 of *An Analysis of the Workings of the Basic Democracies Institutions in East Pakistan*, published by the Bureau of National Reconstruction and the Pakistan Academy for Village Development.
5. See Monthly Statistical Bulletin, September, 1967, Tables 31 and 59.
6. See Ch. 12 of Pakistan Economic Survey, 1966-67, published by the Government of Pakistan.

2.2 Pakistan's Political Crisis*

The immediate background to the crisis in Pakistan may be traced to the political speaking-tour of Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto in the urban centres of West Pakistan during October of last year. At that stage President Ayub's position looked formidable enough. Local gatherings of the ruling Muslim League party had already begun to pass resolutions asking that he declare his candidacy for the Presidential election at the end of 1969, and as part of the build-up to the elections the Information Ministry had launched a country-wide publicity programme to celebrate the achievements of a "Decade of Development".

Within this perspective of unshakeable official self-confidence, Bhutto's tour promised little. His newly launched People's Party was organisationally weak and rested heavily on the leader's charisma. This had made some impact amongst the students of West Pakistan ever since his impassioned declarations as Foreign Minister during the war with India in 1965. His public statements and particularly his emotionally charged speeches before the Security Council identified him with a militant posture towards India and in favour of the liberation of Kashmir's Muslims from Indian hegemony. The move away from close dependence on the United States and towards cordial relations with China, the USSR, and the Third World was attributed to him. The Tashkent declaration, restoring the status quo ante in Kashmir, had been the occasion for widespread riots in the towns. This had been put down by a firm show of force for fear of its spreading to infect the armed forces who were thought to be restive over the cease fire agreement.

*Published in *World Today*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1969.

Bhutto was believed to have opposed the settlement and his departure from the Government shortly afterwards gave currency to this view, along with the idea that his departure was the price demanded by the U.S. for resumption of aid.¹ Notwithstanding this, his eventual entry into the ranks of opposition politics was met with considerable scepticism because of his association with the regime ever since its inception in 1958. He had, however, a ready constituency amongst students and his party's socialistic programme was designed to widen his base.

It was not surprising, therefore, that his articulate attacks on the regime should attract large audiences in the towns. What was surprising was the fact that the commonplace use of Section 144² by the local administration could not contain these demonstrations in his favour. A month of such meetings and demonstrations culminated on 8 November in the police firing on a particularly boisterous assembly of students in Rawalpindi who were to receive Bhutto in the course of his political tour. The firing triggered off student demonstrations of sympathy in all those areas previously visited by Bhutto and in other towns besides, until virtually every urban centre in West Pakistan was drawn in. The Government of West Pakistan reacted by arresting Bhutto and his party hierarchy on 13 November on the ground of fermenting the disturbances through his highly provocative utterances.

The fact that the leadership of the National Awami Party (NAP) in West Pakistan was also arrested made this particular justification less plausible. The NAP was an ostensibly left-wing party, but in West Pakistan its main base was in Sind, the North-West Frontier Province, and Baluchistan, where it had identified itself with the demand for a reassertion of the provincial personality of these regions. This had been in eclipse ever since West Pakistan's provinces had been integrated into a single unitary province in 1955 under what was believed to be Punjabi pressure to neutralise East Pakistan's dominance of the polity.³ Wali Khan, the leader of the NAP, and his party had been making some popular impact with their demand that the one unit of West Pakistan be broken up and autonomy established for all its component provinces.

The arrests were an integral part of Government policy in coping with political unrest and were normally thought to be adequate to contain such developments. On this occasion repression acted as a provocation and the agitation intensified to the point where no day passed without reports of

protest in one urban centre or another of West Pakistan being published in the press. What had been a student monopoly was now joined by other middle-class groups. Lawyers, journalists, teachers, and other groups began to march through the streets adding demands for better wages and service conditions to the universal demand for constitutional reform. It became apparent that resentment ran deep against the constricting influences of the system and the possibility that it could perpetuate itself. The fear and occasional practice of closure or prosecution of newspapers⁴ had led to a system of self-censorship where no criticism of the regime was allowed to surface. The wealth of hostility thus found no conventional outlet apart from direct agitation on the streets. Most middle-class citizens were reluctant to face the baton charges and arrests which attended such forms of expression. But when the students demonstrated a capacity to withstand these pressures this generated more confidence in other segments of the population, who were encouraged to articulate their diverse concerns for the first time in a decade.

Many of the demonstrations were led by the Jamaat-e-Islam who identified themselves in their attacks on Government family-planning clinics. They were highly disciplined and the best organised party in West Pakistan. At an early stage they began to come into militant confrontation with Bhutto's socialist-sounding student supporters, who were driven to identify Islam with socialism for fear of being outflanked by the Jamaat.

The arrest of Bhutto and the NAP leaders created something of a vacuum in the ranks of the opposition leadership. Leaders of the Council Muslim League, the Awami League,⁵ and the Nizam-e-Islam were part of the pre-Ayub order, men of some wealth who had no stomach for a repetition of their experience in jail. They were considerably behind the tempo of the ferment. They did not hesitate to take advantage of it in holding meetings and leading processions but were somewhat concerned at the touch of violence which had begun to manifest itself. Some of them had earlier joined with the Jamaat to form the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), which gave a joint platform to the associated parties in their opposition to the regime. They espoused various causes but were united in a demand for direct elections to Parliament. They reflected the general feeling that the system of indirect elections, where the franchise was vested in an electoral college of 80,000 Basic Democrats (BDs), was responsible for perpetuating the Ayub regime. It was believed that these

BDs had been given a vested interest in the system and would support the regime against all comers in order to protect the group privileges invested in them by the Ayub Constitution. The last Presidential election, when the opposition candidate, Miss Fatima Jinnah, had been defeated in spite of visible evidence of popular support, was evidence of the efficacy of the system. Reaffirmation of the bias of the BDs was provided by the overwhelming majorities they gave to the regime in the Central and provincial legislatures and in subsequent by-elections.

During November the more traditional figures were joined on the opposition platform by Air Marshal Asghar Khan, a former C.-in-C. (Commander-in-Chief) of the vaunted Air Force. He was reputed to be the architect of this prestigious service arm and was respected for his ability and personal integrity. His presence in the opposition gave currency to the belief that the ranks of the army and bureaucracy were themselves divided in their loyalties to the regime. The Air Marshall was joined by General Azam Khan and Justice Murshed, a recent Chief Justice of East Pakistan. Azam Khan had been one of Ayub's intimates at the time of his seizure of power and had first been a vigorous Minister in his Cabinet and then a popular Governor of East Pakistan. Justice Murshed had built up an image of judicial independence during his tenure of office. All three gave an image of novelty and respectability to the opposition ranks. Their public appearances aroused considerable enthusiasm and it was perhaps the recollection of this which eventually persuaded Asghar Khan to step directly into the political arena and to form his Justice Party in March this year.

Few observers thought that the agitation would fail to invite a firm response. President Ayub's broadcast on 1 December promising widespread concessions to the students therefore came as something of a surprise. For the first time the possibility of insecure loyalties within the Establishment and particularly in the army became apparent. One theory traced the President's response to his exhausting illness earlier in the year and suggested that he had never really recovered his erstwhile authority. His reaction was thought to be that of a sick man, and its ambiguity infected not only the agitation but also his own supporters who were gradually ceasing to make public appearances. Even though the ruling Muslim League claimed considerable numerical strength, its political resources were limited. Most of its members were more interested in

using the party as a vehicle for personal advancement, and in the face of popular agitation were singularly incapable of promoting the regime's image before the public.

It was following this manifestation of uncertainty that the President visited East Pakistan in mid-December. The agitation had as yet not spread to the East wing. Ever since the arrest of Mujibur Rahman and his lieutenants in the Awami League in mid-1966, political agitation against the regime had been at a low ebb. The aftermath of the war with India had produced a different response in the East wing from that in the West; the sense of military defencelessness had accentuated the feeling of neglect by the Central Government. Mujib had sought to capitalise on this mood by launching his six-point programme for complete provincial autonomy for East Pakistan. The Awami League had for long been identified with the move for provincial autonomy which was widely supported by the articulate middle classes of East Pakistan. The limited scope for economic advance and employment, added to the universal urge for self-rule, gave this demand considerable potency.

Under the Ayub regime, political power had become concentrated in the Centre where the upper ranks of the bureaucracy and army were monopolised by West Pakistanis. The primary political authority in the province was the Governor, who lacked elective support and was essentially a creature of the President, as in turn the Cabinet was the Governor's creation. A politically weak legislature gave little scope for East Pakistan's problems to be dependent on anything more than the goodwill of the Central Government. By concentrating revenue resources, foreign exchange, and external aid in the hands of the Central Government the latter acquired overwhelming power within the decision-making process. The regional representation in the Central bureaucracy within this system was thus a particularly sensitive point. The eclipse of the Awami League was compounded by ideological divisions within the left-wing National Awami Party so that political opposition to the Government in East Pakistan was dormant.

The student movement, which had traditionally been prominent in regional politics because of the well-organised and province-wide character of student organisations, was also divided. However, by the time the President visited the East wing, a united Student Action Committee had been formed, whose authority covered the entire student population of

East Pakistan. In the context of the organisationally weak and divided opposition leadership, this Committee assumed a disproportionate authority and significance within the agitation. In a short space of time, the eleven-point demand of the students⁶ was taken up in all the towns of East Pakistan, and for the first time in contemporary memory a nation-wide agitation against the regime was in motion. Any escalation in repression on the part of the regime was matched by militance in the streets. In the East wing, however, the agitation began at an early stage to draw in working-class elements who added their demands for better wages to the current demand for autonomy and electoral reform. A decline in wages had made these groups particularly inflammable.⁷ Curbs on the right to strike and weakness in the trade unions had contained this militancy but in an atmosphere of urban unrest this situation could not be maintained for long.

In response to an agitation which was now universal in the urban centres throughout the country, the opposition parties sought to derive political capital from a movement which had up till then been largely outside their control. Early in January all the opposition groups, apart from Bhutto's People's Party and the left wing of the NAP, joined to form the Democratic Action Committee (DAC). Their eight-point platform attempted to embrace the diverse concerns of the component parties, but focused mainly on a return to direct elections and the substitution of the parliamentary system for the presidential. They committed themselves to a boycott of the 1969 elections and promised nation-wide agitation for constitutional reform. The agitation attendant on the launching of this movement on 17 January precipitated more shootings and the death of a Dacca student. This roused the movement to a new pitch of violence, first in the East and then in sympathy in the West, and the military were called in to patrol the curfews which had to be imposed in a number of towns. The rising death toll, and the willingness of the public, particularly in the East wing, to defy these curfews, indicated that a completely new mood was pervading the country. By this time the ruling Muslim League had virtually ceased to function. In an extraordinary document⁸ the high command of the ruling party came out in unprecedented condemnation of the Government's policies but sought to make the bureaucracy the scapegoat for the ills of the system. Individual members or groups were either defecting or trying to identify themselves with the popular cause and against the Administration.

Faced with an agitation which was growing in dimensions and intensity and which was visibly backed by popular support, the President invited the DAC to participate in a political conclave to discuss constitutional reform. This move followed on the widespread expectation of martial law as the only expedient to save the regime. The choice of talks indicated that the armed forces were not willing to invest their power or prestige merely to sustain a manifestly discredited regime. The talks were delayed, however, because several key political figures were still in jail. Many of those arrested had already been released by due process when the West Pakistan High Court had shown its responsiveness to the changing situation by sustaining the numerous writs filed before it challenging the arrests. Bhutto's case was the climax and evoked a 20,000 word statement from him taking precedent from Castro's "history will absolve me" speech, in which he used all the rhetoric at his command to launch a massive indictment of the regimes.⁹ In fear of further judicial rebuff as much as in surrender to the prevailing climate of opinion, the regime released him on 14 February and he emerged to a hero's triumphal welcome.

The NAP leaders still in detention were also released, so that the chief stumbling-block remained Mujibur Rahman. His was a test case. Whilst under detention he had been implicated in the Agartala conspiracy, in which a number of junior service officers and three senior civil servants from East Pakistan were alleged to have been plotting with India to set up an independent East Pakistan. The trial itself had been going on for nearly a year with full publicity and the Government was being hard put to sustain its case, which was believed in East Pakistan to be a concoction designed to keep Mujib in jail and to intimidate the senior bureaucracy from East Pakistan. This prestigious group had reached the seniority where they were eligible for appointment as Secretaries to the Central Government. In the days of parliamentary eclipse, they had been articulate if unpublicised spokesmen for the concerns of East Pakistan, and it was felt that their accession to positions of power in the Central bureaucracy would breach the traditional monopoly of decision-making retained by the West-wing bureaucrats at the Centre. Whatever the truth of this hypothesis, it gave rise to a widespread belief in the fabricated character of the whole case.

Whilst the President's offer of talks was being examined by the opposition leaders, the situation in the streets was daily growing more

violent. The shooting of Sgt Zahirul Haq, one of Mujib's co-conspirators, for allegedly trying to escape escalated the movement to a stage where the houses of Cabinet Ministers and Government supporters were burnt by the crowds, and any supporter of the regime appeared in public at the risk of his life. It was believed that the President was at this stage again on the point of invoking martial law, but whether the public mood or the reluctance of the military to back him held his hand will have to await more inside information. Instead on 21 February he announced his historic decision not to contest the coming Presidential election. Within a day Mujib was released and the Agartala case withdrawn. Two days later the first session of the round-table conference opened at Rawalpindi with all parties associated in the DAC plus Asghar Khan and other independents in attendance.

The meeting quickly began to reveal the contradictions within the opposition. In his brief spell out of jail Mujib had sensed the climate in East Pakistan, and realised that there would be a short political future for any leader who demanded less than full autonomy for the province. This demand was compounded by a further claim for majority representation for East Pakistan in the Central Parliament, together with the option of transferring the capital to East Pakistan. This met with resistance from West Pakistani opposition leaders who wished to head off the demands by suggesting that the matter be deferred until such time as a new Parliament had been elected by direct franchise. The President utilised these divisions to cut short the conference and sent the leaders home with the promise of direct elections and a return to the parliamentary system. Such a solution cut at the roots of his own system but did nothing to resolve the most pressing issue in East Pakistan. Mujib's ostensibly uncompromised stand left him in a good position to carry on what he termed a peaceful agitation for autonomy.

During this period of parley the situation in the streets had acquired a momentum of its own. Bhutto had already boycotted the conclave along with Maulana Bhashani's NAP. Both put their faith in the streets. Their weak organisation, however, made them spokesmen rather than leaders of the popular mood. Their rhetoric may have lacked political substance but it certainly contributed to the mood of militancy. By now the working classes were out in full force and were giving expression to long suppressed wage claims outside every factory and establishment in the country. The use of

"gherao" and threats of violence precipitated an avalanche of concessions from employers, many of whom had accumulated big reserves from years of Government-sponsored industrialisation.

In East Pakistan, however, the movement was entering its most violent phase as signs of peasant involvement began to appear. The political system had insulated the peasant from urban pressures. Since none of the parties had any rural organisation they were in no position to exploit this rich mine of discontent. Within the last few years annual per capita farm income had reached its lowest point since independence - falling to Rs. 198, compared with Rs. 202 in the previous five years.¹⁰ During the same period the class of Basic Democrats drawn mainly from the richer farmers had prospered under Government patronage. Such a development had generated considerable bitterness in the villages, but there was no way for this to express itself under a system where the local councils were dominated by the rich farmers.¹¹ In an overcrowded region where 95 per cent of the population was rural, the agitation in the towns could not leave the villages untouched. Evidence is still unclear, but it appears that the rural poor began for the first time to express their long-suppressed resentments by attacks on the property and persons of Basic Democrats and other elements closely identified with the regime.

By this time the authority of the Government had for all practical purposes ceased to function in East Pakistan. The Governor was in self-imposed incarceration in Government House, and for a heady period a complete political vacuum existed in the province. Widespread and perhaps deliberately exaggerated rumours precipitated some panic amongst men of property, but had any political element stepped forward and given precise political direction to the movement the situation might have been contained. However, none of the parties possessed the necessary organisational resources. Indeed, the growing differences between Maulana Bhashani's NAP and the Awami League further reduced the prospect of any clear direction.

The eventual abdication of President Ayub on 25 March and his surrender of power to the army have to be fully evaluated when more evidence comes to hand. Ostensibly the army claims to be holding the ring for future elections, but its timing implies an attempt to fill the political vacuum in the East wing and to contain the radicalisation process in the West. The development there of the movement for regional autonomy had indicated that this was as much a problem in the West as in the East, and its

consequences no less important. In relation to the East wing, a situation in which the Central Government and its local agents had ceased to exercise authority meant that autonomy was already a reality. To the military this held out immediate fears for their budgetary appropriations as much as for what they believed to be the integrity of the country - a fear voiced by Ayub in his abdication speech. A situation where East Pakistan retains control of revenue resources and foreign exchange is hardly acceptable to the West Pakistani-based and dominated forces. Misgivings in the East wing over the entire nature of the defence effort, and the suggestion that the financing of the Centre and *inter alia* of the armed services would be a subject for negotiation once autonomy was realised, predicated a military response to restore the balance of power following the surrender of all Central authority in the province. But this action solves nothing. It is merely another stage in Pakistan's political crisis.

Endnotes:

- 1 See the inaugural issue of *Pakistan Left Review*, published by the Pakistan Society, University of London Union, for an interview with Mr Bhutto where he gave his own views on these reports.
- 2 An old-established law invoked for banning public gatherings.
- 3 See Khalid Bin Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, and London, Allen & Unwin, 1967), pp. 76-9, for a discussion and documentation of this hypothesis.
- 4 The *Pakistan Times*, the country's leading English daily, had been taken over by the Government early in 1959 and more recently, in 1966, the leading Bengali daily, the *Ittefaq*, was closed down.
- 5 One faction of the party of independence.
- 6 See *Pakistan Left Review*, Spring 1969, for the outline of these demands along with demands of other social and political groups.
- 7 See Dr A. R. Khan's 'What has been happening to Real Wages in Pakistan', *Pakistan Development Review*, Autumn 1967, for a detailed study of the subject.
- 8 See resolutions of the Muslim League council meeting in Dacca, Dawn (Karachi), 10 February 1969, and the report of the committee of West Pakistan Muslim League Assembly members, *ibid.*, 6 February 1969.
- 9 Published in full in Dawn, 26 February 1969.
- 10 See the present writer's 'What has happened to the Rural Poor', *Asian Review*, September 1968 and Dr S. R. Bose, 'Trend of Real Income of the Rural Poor in East Pakistan 1949-66', *Pakistan Development Review*, Winter 1968.
- 11 See the present writer's *Basic Democracies, Works Programme and Rural Development in East Pakistan*, DUBER/OUP, 1968.

2.3 East Pakistan's Revolt Against Ayub*

The revolt which brought about the downfall of Field Marshal Ayub Khan's ten-year Presidency of Pakistan had all the characteristics of a popular uprising. It involved a broad cross-section of society and spanned the two wings of Pakistan. The common denominator to the protest was a change in the repressive system and the end of indirect elections for the Presidency and legislatures by the 80,000 Basic Democrats.¹ In as much as President Ayub personalised the whole system, the protest came increasingly to be directed against him. The apparent reluctance of the armed forces to deploy their full power to save the regime made Ayub's promise of abdication inevitable since his own political party, a faction of the Muslim League, had failed to build up any popular support for the regime. The purpose of this article will be to trace the background to this development in the movement which arose out of the struggle for complete regional autonomy in East Pakistan. It will be argued that this particular development in the movement was founded in the political history of Pakistan and that the military coup of March 25, 1969, was an inevitable response to this particular deviation in the course of the movement.

The demand for self-rule within East Pakistan precedes the partition of India in 1947. The Pakistan movement within undivided Bengal captured the imagination of the new Muslim middle classes because it promised them political power which would neutralise the social domination of their Hindu counterparts. The frustration of the objectives of independence and the subsequent struggle of the Bengali

*Published in *Round Table*, The Commonwealth Quarterly, London, 1969.

middle classes to realise the self-government which they fought for and won prior to 1947 have constituted the hard core of Pakistan politics since 1947.

An initial majority for East Pakistan in the National Legislature was made ineffective by the encroachments of the executive into the decision-making process. Trained under the Viceregal system where civil servants were paramount, the better educated and more homogeneous officers were reluctant to surrender power to what they felt were less qualified politicians. Before Ayub's coup of 1958 a coterie of bureaucrats had twice succeeded in asserting themselves at the expense of the legislature.² Ayub's seizure of power was the culmination of this process. He was called in by the then President Iskander Mirza, an ex-civil servant, who feared for the tradition of executive domination at the impending General Elections. From 1958 onwards the bureaucrats completely dominated the decision-making process. When a legislature was permitted to reappear under the 1962 Constitution, its powers were so restricted as to make it little more than a debating society.

The ascendancy of the bureaucracy was synonymous with the ascendancy of West Pakistan. The central bureaucracy was dominated by officers from West Pakistan or Urdu-speaking refugees from India who made their home in the West wing. A recent breakdown of officers in the central government showed that 75 per cent were West Pakistanis. This concealed the even greater concentrations in the upper reaches of the services at the level of secretary and joint secretary. Since 1947, not more than half a dozen East Pakistanis have become central secretaries. More recently, as the post-1947 batch of officers began to attain secretary rank, they found themselves shunted into the more ineffective ministries. Key ministries such as Finance and Economic Affairs which handle aid negotiations have been a total West wing monopoly. It is significant that of the six Finance Ministers in the last 20 years five have been bureaucrats and all six West Pakistanis.

This domination of the bureaucracy was paralleled in the armed forces. Only one East Pakistani has attained the rank of General since 1947. Only one has risen above Captain's rank in the Navy and he was retired as a Commodore. In the Air Force, none have reached even this corresponding rank. Among officers as a whole, 1965 figures revealed that 5 per cent of all officers in the army were East Pakistani. Among air

force officers, 11 per cent of pilots, 27 per cent of navigators and 17 per cent of technical officers were East Pakistani.

The domination of the bureaucracy by one wing is owed to the legacy of imperial rule. But since 1947 very little has been done to make up for this inheritance; and disparities in recruitment were merely perpetuated. This in itself might have been more palatable had the end product been equally beneficial to the East wing. Yet over the years economic disparities have widened with per capita income differentials in favour of West Pakistan rising from 38.6 per cent to 43 per cent between the 1955-60 and 1966-7 period.

The Timing of the Ayub Coup

The East Pakistani political representatives in the legislatures were ineffective in containing this process. In the early years power as well as control over financial resources was ceded by the provinces to the centre in the interests of national unity. The politicians' own lack of understanding of the intricacies of economic development made what little protest there was less effective. By the early 1950s the sense of commitment to national solidarity had been dissipated over the question of regional representation and powers under the new Constitution which was then under debate. Bureaucratic intervention became more apparent from this stage. The Ayub coup coincided with a period when the regional issue was at its peak and was going to dominate the coming election. It was expected that political parties such as the Awami League and the National Awami party which had committed themselves to real power for the regions would dominate the legislatures. The Mirza-Ayub coup of 1958 must be seen as a pre-emptive measure to forestall this development.

The Ayub decade marked the apotheosis of West Pakistani domination. From 1958 to 1962 politics in Pakistan stood still. All decision making was vested in the central executive. East Pakistan's case was presented by a few East Wing bureaucrats who occasionally argued East Pakistan's case. But the fact that their promotion and prospects depended on the Central Government naturally put limits on their efforts. Agitation was left to the press and academic world and this, too, tended to be muted by fear of Martial Law. When Dacca students took to the streets early in 1962 in the first protests against Martial Law, the plight

of East Pakistan was central to their concerns.

The return to politics under the new Constitution of 1962 was no less frustrating for East Pakistan. The emasculated legislatures remained irrelevant to the decision-making process. The provincial Governor was appointed by the President and he in turn appointed his Cabinet, thereby making the provincial Government creatures of the President. The pocket franchise, sustained by lavish patronage to the Basic Democrats, made it difficult to use the elective process to express East Pakistan's sense of alienation. Though more resources compared to the past were allocated for East wing development expenditures, these lagged sufficiently behind those invested in the West to widen disparities in levels of living.

Paradoxically it was the 1965 war with India which heightened East Pakistan's awareness of its distance from political power and the full consequences of its neglect. An initial period of national solidarity during the war itself gave away to an awareness of East Pakistan's vulnerability to Indian attack. The declaration of Mr. Bhutto, then Foreign Minister, that Beijing had promised to defend East Pakistan did not inspire confidence in the benefits of a national defence effort. The complete cessation of all inter-wing traffic and foreign trade left the region dependent on its very modest internal development. Defence had claimed over 50 per cent of the revenue budget and valuable foreign exchange, the major part earned by East Pakistan's jute. The absence of any benefit to East Pakistan from these expenditures in the moment of need aroused serious misgivings over the rationale of the defence effort. With the bulk of the recruitment and also local purchases located in the West wing most of the direct and indirect non-military benefits of defence expenditure also accrued to the West.

Mujibur Rehman and his Awami League launched their Six Point programme for complete provincial autonomy early in 1966 to exploit the Zeitgeist. Its potential impact was serious enough to warrant the arrest of Mujib and virtually his entire party hierarchy. Between 1966 and the end of 1968 this measure appeared to have contained the agitation for regional autonomy but the problems which sustained dissent survived and resentment accumulated. When the movement against Ayub spread to East Pakistan there was an initial phase of interwing opposition solidarity against the common enemy. But it was only a

question of time before East Pakistan's more basic preoccupation with self-rule asserted itself and added a new dimension to the movement against the regime.

Total Disintegration in the East

Such a development had more far-reaching implications than were initially apparent. In the West the movement against Ayub did not in itself threaten the traditional ruling groups dominated by big landlords, army, bureaucracy and big business. It promised perhaps wider participation and a more liberalised polity; but there was no indication that a more fundamental transformation of the balance of power within the region was in the offing. In the East wing, however, power relations stood to be radically transformed. The collapse of the regime in the East wing was cumulative. But by the end of February 1969, under growing pressure from the uprising, it had virtually ceased to function. The government party, held together by patronage alone, had disintegrated completely as its members became virtual fugitives, in mortal danger from the public. The loyalty of the bureaucracy was itself suspect.³ The Governor, Monem Khan, was a self-incarcerated prisoner in Government House who had ceased to govern. In the days before March 25, the writ of the Government ceased to run and by implication West Pakistan's domination of the East wing was at an end. East Pakistan in real terms had already attained self-rule. When Mujib demanded complete autonomy for East Pakistan at the round table conference of leaders called by Ayub to resolve the political crisis, he was only articulating a reality. His unwillingness to compromise his demands was based on his awareness of the real power in the streets that lay behind the demand for autonomy and the need to preserve his political future in the province.

This confrontation with a total transformation of the balance of power was no more welcome to the West wing opposition leaders than it had been to Ayub, particularly those of them who had been actively associated with the bureaucrats in the pre-Ayub years in concentrating power in the hands of West Pakistan's power elite. In the conference they attempted to leave the autonomy issue to a newly elected Parliament. By then it was hoped the pressure on the street would have exhausted itself. Within the Parliament the basic problem of finding a majority to see

through such fundamental legislation would open the whole issue to compromise.

With fundamental issues still unresolved the movement continued to bring to the surface the grievances of a much wider segment of society than the middle class elements demanding parliamentary democracy and autonomy. With the administration virtually immobilised, workers began to take direct action to obtain from their employers a share of the high profits they had accumulated in the Ayub years. The fact that the bigger entrepreneurs in the East wing were West Pakistanis made it all the more difficult for them to resist by invoking protection from local political parties. Even more significant, the traditionally dormant village poor of East Pakistan had towards the end begun to be drawn into the movement. Their frustrations were the end product of two decades of declining real incomes at a time when the rich farmer and the Basic Democrat in particular had prospered. In the absence of a traditional feudal class which had kept the peasants of West Pakistan in subjugation, the BDs and other government beneficiaries were easy targets for the aroused villagers. East Pakistan's struggle had thus not only realised autonomy but with clear political direction may even have precipitated a social revolution. Direction from the left under Maulana Bhashani was haphazard largely because of organisational limitations. Differences between the Maulana's National Awami Party and Mujib's Awami League further limited the possibility of a political lead which took advantage of the realities of the moment by seizing power in the name of an autonomous East Pakistan.

No Taxes for the Army?

The armed forces viewed this development with special concern. The sort of autonomy East Pakistanis had in mind threatened their military budget among other things. An Awami League document had already indicated that revenue raising would be transferred from the centre to the province. Payments for the upkeep of the truncated Central Administration and, more relevant, the armed forces would be decided by a finance commission on the basis of benefits received. With the experience of the 1965 war in mind, East Pakistan's contribution promised to be rather less than it had been in the past. With the foreign exchange also in provincial hands, the inflow of valuable hardware to

maintain a defence capability would be faced with similar hazards. West Pakistan on its own lacked both the domestic and foreign resources to sustain the military establishment located within its boundaries.

The fears of the armed forces were shared by the central bureaucracy which would be shorn of national power and compelled to confine its influence to West Pakistan. Big business feared for its commercial stake in the East which was now as much in danger from a militant working class as it was from the votaries of regional autonomy. The power vacuum created by the collapse of the government in East Pakistan provided a unique opportunity for the West wing ruling groups to reassert themselves. The armed forces were the only remaining power to do this. With their own interests at stake and with the implicit support of the bureaucracy, big business and a section of the West Pakistan politicians, they seized power from the paralysed hands of Ayub Khan.

Their effort can, however, be no more than an interim measure. The regional composition of the high command has put the Martial Law administration in the exposed position of not having a single East Pakistani in its higher echelons. General Yahya, the C-in-C President, has described his intervention as temporary to save the country from disintegration and to hold the ring until the politicians reach consensus. This consensus may not be so easily forthcoming. Consensus assumes a broadly homogeneous society whose contending political groups reflect similar social forces. The history of the last 20 years as much as the course of the recent movement has shown that there is not one but two polities contained within Pakistan. Each is the product of its own distinct social forces. This has made it exceedingly difficult for a national political party with a leader of national stature to emerge ever since the common goal of independence had been attained. Power at the centre before 1958 was exercised by fluctuating coalitions of regional parties whose interests, by definition, did not coincide. The instability of the pre-Ayub days was a direct result of trying to base a strong centre on basically unstable social foundations.

Ayub's conception of integration and stability was founded on complete West wing domination of Pakistan through the medium of the central bureaucracy. Recent developments have shown that this sort of integration was no more permanent than that of the pre-1958 period. Today Pakistan is still without national parties and national leaders and

the West Pakistani dominated armed forces have been forced to follow Ayub's conception of imposed integration. There is no reason to believe that if their rule is continued in the absence of a political consensus or diluted compromises extracted from the politicians, the end product will be any different. Any durable political solution must recognise the realities of the two polities and build a political structure which locates power where political parties today exercise influence, namely, in the regions. This may not be everyone's idea of an integrated Pakistan. But a stage has been reached in the political life of the country where anything less will merely perpetuate friction to the point where an integrated Pakistan will be rendered untenable.

Endnotes:

1. Local councillors who had under the 1962 Constitution been constituted as an electoral college to elect the President and legislatures. Their numbers had recently been increased from 80,000 to 120,000.
2. Early in 1953 the Governor-General, Ghulam Mohammed conspired with certain civil and army officers to dismiss the prime minister. This group again intervened in 1954, when the Governor-General's power was about to be curbed by parliament, to overthrow the legislature.
3. Three senior Bengali civil servants had been implicated in the alleged Agartala conspiracy to secede East Pakistan from the union. Most officers had strong sympathies with the cause for autonomy and hoped to be its immediate beneficiaries.

2.4 Red Dawn for the Red Caps?*

On Monday 19 January, Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhashani celebrated his second jamboree of red capped workers and peasants in the rustic surrounding of his home at Santosh. The event had received considerable advance publicity and invitations had been sent not only to all national political leaders but to local diplomats to witness this call to peasant militancy. Whilst most leaders and diplomats stayed home, from the morning local traffic police were seen directing a stream of cars packed with students, ladies and other city slickers who had headed for Santosh out of either curiosity or a sense of vicarious militancy.

The spectacle was not disappointing. A sea of red caps sat around an improvised dais, where, in the morning, Maulana Bhashani delivered himself of a marathon plea to redress the grievances of the peasants and workers. In the afternoon the crowd swelled with the addition of the delayed workers contingent from Tongi who had been held up for want of transport due to the impromptu hartal declared for that morning.

Shortly before their arrival the audience was diverted by a fearsome lathi display by two separate groups of lathials who it appears were imported from the Char areas of Barisal. They carried some wicked looking *dao's* which must have put urban spectators in a flutter. Anwar Zahid who had emerged as master of ceremonies was heard making plaintive pleas to them over the mike not to divert the attention of the participants from the speakers on the dais.

For all the spectacle attendant on the rally at Santosh its real significance lay in what it had to say about the political capacity of the

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peasant and the state of the party which sponsored the occasion. The Maulana echoed the sense of deprivation and growing frustration within the peasant in his own immutable way. Having lived his life amongst the peasants, he remains sensitive to their every heart beat. However, as a concerted attempt to give this growing militancy political direction, the rally betrayed the basic weaknesses and divisions within the parent political factions of the left, which have hitherto limited organised action in the countryside.

The first peasant rally at Paksey had been organised by the Matin-Alauddin or Naxalite faction of the NAP, so called because of their revolutionary posture and slogans. Being located around Alauddin's home area, this faction could deploy the full strength of its peasant base in that area. The function had been played down by the Abdul Haq-Toha faction and their token presence at the function had been greeted with hostile slogans from the Naxalites. At Santosh, however, both Toha and Abdul Haq, who is General Secretary of the Krishak Samity, which ostensibly had organised the function, were absent and the hard core of the peasant contingent was provided by Matin and Alauddin. They had marched about 8,000 volunteers from the river to Santosh a long march of 40 miles and quite a few marchers were to be seen resting their weary bones in improvised beds of straw in the anterooms behind the dais. The faction was mainly seated to the left of the dais and throughout the day, remained the most vociferous of the participants. They were ably supplemented by a Naxalite contingent of workers from Chittagong, one of whose leaders, Bashar, is now underground and the other, Deben Sikder, a legendary trade unionist, is now in Dhaka Jail. Led by a diminutive but vocal cheer leader from Postagola, they kept up a chant for their leaders and lead the clamour from the floor against any suggestion of NAP participation in the elections. At one stage even the Maulana had to scold them for sloganeering.

Whilst the Alauddin-Matin group provided the heart of the peasant participation, the Menon-Kazi Zafar group were equally central to the function. The Maulana has entrusted the organisation of the rally to Rashed Khan Menon, the ex-student leader, whose name is borne by one faction of EPSU. His ally, Kazi Zafar, another ex-EPSU hand, has considerable following amongst workers at Tongi and used this to put on an impressive demonstration of working class solidarity with the

peasants.

The third of the four NAP factions was also well represented and Anwar Zahid, one of their standard bearers, managed to hold to the centre of the stage and retain the function of announcer to himself. Since this faction is championing participation of NAP in the elections, whilst in theory the other two participants are against it, there was some element of sub-surface manoeuvring around the Maulana, with each faction hoping that he would speak in their favour during the rally. The Maulana however sensed that he was being made a political battle ground during the in-fighting in the morning session. In the afternoon session, which was billed as a public meeting with the Maulana's speech as the chief attraction, the veteran leader was fortuitously too ill to attend and remained incommunicado from all factions and enquiring newsmen, in his adjacent home.

Perhaps in consequence of this or for more basic reasons the working sessions of the Samity, where district delegates were to present their reports, could not be held. Even though a provincial committee to draft a constitution for the Samity was announced, the lack of any serious organisational discussion gave the rally the character of an extended public meeting.

There was a carry-over from the tensions of Monday into the public meeting called by the Sramik Federation, Krishak Samity and EPSU (Menon group) at Paltan Maidan on the next day to commemorate Shaheed Assaduzzaman. A successful hartal had been observed throughout most areas of East Pakistan but, significantly, mills kept working at Tongi where Kazi Zafar has his stronghold. There was some suggestion that the student wing of the Naxalites and the Menon Zafar group were less than enthusiastic about the occasion. Initially they were not present at the function but subsequently a procession led by EPSU student leaders Jamal Hyder (Zafar-Menon group) and Mahbubullah (Naxalite) materialised and demanded representation on the dais with the right to speak. The main organisers of the function, the Abdul Haq-Toha faction, appeared indignant at their sudden presence in the wake of their apparent non-cooperation for the day. After some argument they found their way to the stage but only Jamal Hyder was permitted to speak for a brief spell, the function being dominated by long speeches from Abdul Haq and Toha in his capacity as President of the Sramik Federation and

General Secretary of the Bhashani NAP.

Encapsuled in the sub-surface activity of these two days is the whole story of factionalism within the Maulana's party. A showdown is imminent over the question of participation in elections.

The Masihur Rahman - Anwar Zahid axis is for election. The Naxalites, Toha-Abdul Haq faction, and possibly the Menon- Zafar group, against. Since however those against election have their own differences which seem to the casual observer to be of a theoretical and personal nature rather than on substantive issues of policy or tactics, the voting line-up may not quite follow the predicated pattern. In the event of a decision for elections there is every chance of a formal split in the party.

These differences have hamstrung action and organisation within the party and less committed workers are becoming demoralised. It was felt that the original break in the NAP between Bhashani and the Requisitionists (known also as the Wali Khan NAP), led by Professor Muzzafar Ahmed would stabilise the factions. But the Bhashani wing has shown amoeba-like tendencies which may not even stop at the four factions currently visible to the public eye. So far the fall-out from factionalism has not fully disturbed the peasants; though events at Paksey and Santosh indicate that a split in their organisation, the Krishak Samity, may be imminent. So far the Samity has managed to keep all factions of the Bhashani NAP, along with the members of the Requisitionist NAP, on the organising committee. Currently 3 out of 11 members of the executive committee of the Samity are from the Requisitionists and two, Hatem Ali Khan and Jiten Ghosh, are Vice Presidents of the Samity. Cooperative effort by all factions within the Samity is limited and there has been no prospect of a province wide mobilisation of its 121,000 members behind a joint programme of action.

Different factions are dominant in different areas and can only mobilise their followers against some local grievance. The Requisitionists, for instance, are dominant within Dhaka district, though their real influence is localised at Raipura where, under the leadership of veteran peasant leaders like Jiten Ghosh and Nurur Rahman, they have reduced taxes and redressed local grievances.

In the same way in Jessore, Abdul Haq, backed by Muddassar Ali Munshi, another veteran leader and vice-president of the Samity, has

mobilised the 18,000 members of the Samity located in the thanas of Abhoynagar, Magura and Narail, to reduce the exorbitant rates of interest charged by the local mahajans to the peasants.

In Pabna, mainly around Paksey, Alauddin and Matin have their stronghold. They have a membership of about 10,000 scattered in about 300 villages. Their followers seem more militant and the redcapped, lathi-equiped volunteers originate largely from their area.

Other areas where the Samity is organised and active are in Badarganj, in Rangpur, Dumuria in Khulna, Gayerhat in Sylhet, Netrakona and Kishorganj in Mymensingh (strongholds of Moni Singh and Nagen Sarkar, historical figures of the old *Tebagha* movement) and pockets of Dinajpur, Barisal, Kushtia and Noakhali. Leadership is largely middle class though many have successfully de-classed themselves after years of work in the villages. But second rank leadership is still mainly drawn from the middle peasant and the landless or small peasant are still to be found mainly in the rank and file.

The span of the Krishak Samity is therefore limited both socially and geographically. Even in districts where the organisation exists, effective organisation is confined to a few base areas. Amongst the 121,000 membership, motivation and commitment is uneven and it will be some time before even these 121,000 members become fully politically oriented workers ready to spread the message to the 60 million peasants living in East Pakistan's 62,000 villages.

The Samity itself was only formed at Phulcharighat, Rangpur, by Maulana Bhashani on 1 December 1957. The 10-year interregnum created by Ayub Khan's rule seriously interrupted the organisational work of the Samity as most of the leaders spent the best part of the decade underground or in jail. For this reason peasant organisation is still relatively in its infancy and has a long way to go before it even approaches the success of the *Tebhaga* movement of the 1940s, which involved 6 million peasants in East Bengal. Today the Samity still concentrates on those areas where the Kishan Sabhas, which fired the *Tebhaga* movement, flourished. The leaders of today were in part educated by the old Kishan Sabha leaders. For instance, Matin and Alauddin were star pupils of Amulya Nath Lahiri who built the peasant movement in Pabna.

The relative novelty of the Samity plus the reluctance of the new generation of political leaders and workers to go in the countryside to

invest their lives in organising the peasant in the tradition of the old Kishan leaders explains the limited hold of peasant organisation. The imposition of political factionalism, which was largely absent in pre-independence days, has acted as another liability. All this makes the political prospect in the village highly uncertain. As the economic problems of the village multiply and social tensions accentuate, there is a grave danger that revolutionary conditions may develop without any revolutionary organisation to effectively direct their energies to a productive end. Unless this gap is filled by a massive and united organisational effort in the village, the future may promise black anarchy rather than a red dawn.

2.5 A Tale of Two Parties*

The Awami League

In the last fortnight Dacca has played host to the deliberations of two political parties. In the first week of June the Awami League council met to approve the new party manifesto and elect a new Central Committee. The council met in Hotel Eden and for the few days it was in session, green and white-capped volunteers were visible in the four corners of Ramna. Apparently 10,000 of them had come into town and posed formidable accommodation and logistical problems for the party which seemed to have coped quite manfully with the task. A big contingent of West Pakistanis came in. It was uncharitably suggested that they represented the sum total of the party there but they made up for their lack of numbers with considerable enthusiasm. The Sindhi members, who are also part of G.M. Syed's Sind United Front, are the only ones with serious electoral prospects but this will be numerically modest and based on a combination of Sindhi nationalism and Zamindar influence rather than as exponents of the Awami League programme.

The Awami League suffers from the problem of being a regional party though this also minimises the problem of preparing a programme. Its manifesto, whilst making the appropriate, progressive remarks about West Pakistan, was essentially designed for the East wing. This of course is no more than consistent with their 6-Point constitutional plan, where social and economic policy is to be made in the region. Logic would really demand two manifestos.

*Published under the *nom de plume*, Rashed Akhter, in *Forum*, June 20, 1970.

Notwithstanding its regional image, the Awami League has set a new standard in manifesto writing. The document is highly literate and involves more than average effort to be found in most party manifestos. It makes an attempt to break away from the image of being obsessed with 6-Points and tries to take up progressive positions on a whole range of social and political issues. On the subject of nationalisation, land reform, workers' rights, the content of social justice, its public position would place it at least as far left as the Bhashani NAP and somewhat to the left of the Wali Khan NAP and the People's Party. Its foreign policy posture is also at par with the left and its commitment to solidarity with anti-imperialist forces marks a more positive stand than the mere promise to withdraw from SEATO and CENTO.

As a document there will be little to fault the party. All comparisons are relative and the Awami League effort does not have to be compared with the highly scholarly manifestos of the British Labour Party or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or other such exercises. Compared to what other parties will do or have done, the document will be hard to beat in style, content and manhours of work invested.

The real problem for the party will be to translate the manifesto into operational programmes. It is only here that the world will be fully convinced that this or any party really means business. The commitment to nationalise banks is a statement of intention. So many parties have now made it that bankers have become quite *blasé* and feel that nothing much will happen. The Awami League promise inevitably arouses more nervousness since it is the province's leading party, has genuine mass support and in the not unlikely prospect of exercising power will be committed before its millions of supporters to honour its promises.

This it may have difficulty in doing, with the best of intentions, because of the lack of definite blue prints for action. Major policy measures like nationalisation, guaranteed consumption, development of infrastructure, will require an understanding of the workings of existing institutions, the social cost of maintaining the status quo, the costs of new policies, the personnel to execute them and the specific problems which would arise from such radical policy measures. It will not be enough to wave the manifesto at the CSP's and ask them to execute it. It will need constant supervision and direction from a committed and

informed party apparatus who are themselves very clear in their minds about what they want and how to get it.

This will call for a major effort in the next 6 months, behind the scenes, where blue-prints are drawn up, party officials and cadres educated on the provisions of the programme and the efforts publicised to the people as an indicator of the party's seriousness.

At a political level, again serious consideration must be given to the socio-political impact of the policies. Major institutional changes generate their own disturbances within the organisms of a society. If a party wants to abolish *bargadari*, it will step on the toes of landowners. If the Union committees of the party are dominated by rich farmers, such a programme will generate tensions within the party at the time of execution. The party will have to take a hard look at its structure and social composition and see that at all strategic spots workers committed to the programme are in a position to influence the local machinery and to propagate it amongst the people.

This is no time to highlight the various problems implicit in executing the manifesto, this will be done later, but it is important to draw attention to the seriousness of the problem. Whilst the Awami League may draw comfort from the fact that all other parties, including the left wing, are equally ignorant of the problems they wish to solve as well as the implications and mechanism for solving them, as the front running party it has a serious responsibility to equip itself to the tasks ahead. After 22 years of broken promises and disillusion, the people are in a mood for a reckoning. The Awami League has at the moment got mass support and in the Sheikh a genuinely charismatic leader. Those 3 lakh people who braved the monsoons at the Race Course to be mesmerised by his oratory gave ample evidence that he has something really big going for him. Today he occupies a position in relation to Bengali nationalism not dissimilar to Nasser and Arab Nationalism and to ignore him would be to overlook the importance of a major political phenomena.

It is therefore all the more important for him and his party to realise that these emotions cannot be trifled with and that millions of people are expecting these promises to be made good. Failure to do so will not only be dangerous for the party but will threaten the whole structure of democratic politics and in the absence of any serious political alternative pave the way for anarchy.

The National Awami Party (Requisitionists)

The NAP Central Working Committee meeting was in stark contrast to the Awami League. Whilst the Awami League manifesto only required the stamina to read its voluminous contents and was passed in 5 seconds flat without debate, the NAP spent several inconclusive days debating their manifesto. Such is the difference between a regional and a national party. Within their party structure the NAP embraces all the conflicts and contradictions bedevilling national politics. In this case the key questions which held up proceeding were the age-old East-West relations and the intra-regional problems of West Pakistan.

The local NAP here is committed to the 6 points + 5 more = 11 points. On this basis Prof. Muzzafar Ahmed has been crying himself hoarse for an electoral understanding with the Awami League. This strategy has not as yet got much lift from the League, though it is expected that no-contest arrangements may be possible in the near future as opposed to a full-fledged joint front. This slender hope may, however, be prejudiced by the conflicts within the National Executive over the election manifesto.

Mr. Mahmud Ali Qasuri has been leading his Punjab contingent against 6-Points and has the support of Mr. Mahmudul Huq Usmani. Mr. Qasuri has also been promoting sub-federation for West Pakistan which is anathema to Wali Khan and Bizenjo of Baluchistan. There must be some irritation at their stand since both Mr. Qasuri and Usmani are political light-weights in their province and have little prospect of producing many if any seats within their parish. The commitment to national politics gives them a weight disproportionate to their political muscle and this has deadlocked proceedings.

Debate over the two houses saw the smaller provinces of West Pakistan drawn up against East Pakistan. The suggestion of equal weight to the House of the People and the House of the Nationalities seems to have been borrowed from the Soviet Constitution without any reference to the circumstances prevailing there. In the Soviet Union all debates and decisions take place within the Communist Party which is a tightly knit, ideologically motivated and highly centralised body. The two elected houses merely rubber stamp the decisions of the CPSU and their political powers remain largely on paper. To borrow the names without understanding the reality inevitably led to the untenable suggestion that

the House of Nationalities and House of People have the same powers. This could put Baluchistan, which has a smaller population than Dacca district, on par with 70 million East Pakistanis for purposes of decision-making. It would be an invitation to deadlock given our heterogeneous polity and the wide numerical disparities between the component regions.

The question of a two-house parliament will rest on precisely what powers will be assigned to the Upper House. Within a strong centre, East Pakistan would obviously not accept anything which watered down its majority and produced parity by the back door. In a centre with the powers suggested by the 6/11 Points programme a two-tier house would be redundant. On questions of defence and foreign policy, divisions will cut across regions so that the need to protect the special interests of the smaller regions would not arise. The key issue of allocating economic resources between regions, which does cater to a regional interest, would no longer be a central subject so that a bi-cameral legislature would merely be a superfluous burden on an already abbreviated centre.

Apart from the question of representation, the commitment to 6 Points was skirted. The NAP has committed itself to a three-subject Centre: Defence, Foreign Affairs and Currency. Only "Currency" here, as in the manifestos of all other "National" parties, has been left deliberately vague and could embrace all solutions from 6-Points to the status quo. It is not certain whether the postponement of this debate to the assembly will help since it raises the spectacle of public differences within the party on the floor of the house.

More serious is the problem of distribution of powers within West Pakistan. With the rejection of sub-federation because of bitterness of the smaller provinces against Punjab, a policy vacuum exists. Whilst all are agreed that there must be some common subjects between the provinces of West Pakistan, there is no clear idea within this or any other party as to what these should be. Taxation, planning, allocation of foreign exchange, import and export policy, power, and communications are all key issues on which the parties in West Pakistan will have to decide where the decisions will be made. Equally important will be the question of the institutional arrangements to supervise common subjects. Whether there will be autonomous boards, joint parliamentary sittings, a two-tier centre, with West Pakistani members debating common

subjects, has widely different political and practical implications. A complete void in thinking on this subject within all parties may in the long run hinder a constitutional settlement even more than the East-West problem where at least blue-prints will be available for discussion. The National Awami Party, as a genuinely national party, has a responsibility to seriously apply itself to these problems before October and produce some working models for discussion. Postponement of the debate for reasons of political expediency will not merely transfer the arena of debate from the private to the public eye but constitute a grave disservice to the task of democratic constitution-making.

2.6 The Mujib Phenomenon*

Any real understanding of the current political scene in East Pakistan must come to terms with the Mujib phenomenon. For Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President of the Awami League, is transcending conventional political reckoning and threatening to become nothing less than a phenomenon.

Today wherever he travels people in thousands flock to his standards. In a river journey in Dacca district he addressed at least a dozen meetings within a 6-hour journey, where at least a lakh of people were exposed to his presence. In the dusty district town of Kaliganj, home of a formidable NAP candidate, a lakh of people were held captive by his speech.

Traveling in North-Bengal he addressed as many as 22 meetings a day to mammoth hysterical audiences who endangered life and limb to get a glimpse of the leader. In Armanitola maidan where a week ago Khawaja Khairuddin, his lone CML rival, attracted 5,000 people, a quarter of a million people braved the night air to hear the Sheikh. Not an inch of space remained within the maidan. The surrounding roads were blocked, people perched on trees, ledges and housetops to feast on the spectacle.

In the last 10 months since he has hit the campaign trail a crude calculation would indicate that an estimated 20 million East Pakistanis have been exposed to his presence, throughout the four corners of this province. Keeping up a back-breaking schedule, he has criss-crossed the province penetrating into remote villages from Patuakhali to the Sylhet haor areas.

Today he is the Awami League's chief political weapon. Whilst other

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leaders fight for their political lives, he is the only leader sufficiently sure of both his seats to spend most of time campaigning for other candidates. It is reckoned that a single visit of his is worth 50,000 votes to an Awami League candidate. In choosing 462 candidates not a few party candidates are short on box office appeal. They pin their hope on a visitation from the Sheikh. The party office is besieged by requests for putting a hard-pressed candidate on the Sheikh's tour itinerary. Much will depend on how many of the 162 national constituencies he can get to.

So far he has visited most areas. On the last leg of the campaign, he will focus on areas where his candidates are faced with a more formidable challenge.

He has managed to transform this campaign into a one horse race. Today the Awami League is the only political party in the field. In no constituency are they being opposed on party, political or ideological grounds. Where there is any serious challenge, as from Mohan Mian or Salam Khan in Faridpur, Sabur in Khulna, Nurul Amin in Mymensingh, Mahmud Ali in Sylhet, Mohiuddin in Barisal, Altaf in Kushtia, Fazlul Quader in Chittagong, it comes from the candidate's local influence. It is the candidate's history, record, ancestry, which provides the challenge and not his political platform. Much will depend on whether such candidates can survive a personal visitation from the Sheikh. From this, much will depend on the extent to which wider political issues impinge upon purely local factors so that people will vote for the ticket or Sheikh's man rather than a local leader.

It is not surprising that the Sheikh's campaign strategy seeks to project this election as a referendum on Six-Points, underwritten by his own charisma. When he makes his appeal in a constituency, he asks the audience to vote for him and then presents his candidate and tells them that the candidate is his proxy in that constituency. This raises occasional problems. The story goes that a candidate in Kushtia approached some rural constituents for their vote and was politely refused. When told that they would not vote for his opponent either, he wondered who then claimed their vote. The answer came that everyone here is going to vote for "Sheikh Mujeebuddin."

The story might be apocryphal but the fact remains that one man's charisma is now dominating this campaign. His audiences do not merely consist of college students or Bengali bourgeoisie out to make a fast

buck, but the poorest of the land. Factory workers, day labourers, rickshaw pullers and finally the ever present peasantry of Bengal come in thousands, shout his slogans, raise their hands to him in a pledge of support. Anyone who suffers from the illusion that his charisma is an urban phenomenon had best accompany him into the interior to realise that he is now a household word in every village of East Pakistan.

And why is this? As a person he has no exceptional qualities. Bhashani is as formidable a public speaker, Muzaffar has as long a record of suffering and imprisonment. Other leaders could match him quality for quality. The fact is that he has become a symbol in his own lifetime. He has come to personify Bengali nationalism, just as Nasser personified Arab nationalism, or the Quaid Muslim nationalism. After 23 years of oppression and neglect people in search of deliverance turn on one man and focus their accumulated hopes and fears on his person. Bengali nationalism is now the vehicle of a variety of hopes and ambitions. The landless hope they will get land, the land-poor that their debts and taxes will be lifted from their shoulder, the workers that their wages will rise, the workless that they will get work, civil servants hope for promotion, businessmen for more permits, students for more scholarships. All these aspirations are now focused on one man who is to lead 70 million people into the promised land.

The Awami League itself has become a microcosm of these pressures. Because its leader embodies an appeal which transcends class barriers, the party is far and away the biggest party in the country. It is now by far, the best organised. The organisation now extends down to Union level throughout East Pakistan. Whilst the Sheikh remains the main drawing card, those village audiences must be made aware of his presence and brought to the staging point. This can only be done by organisational effort. Those who think it is easy to get an audience should try their luck in any village or even Paltan Maidan.

Within its fold the Awami League embraces various views and diverse pressures for it has come to mean all things to all men. Whilst the bourgeois look for permits, its student wing and younger elements see it as the vanguard of emancipation - an engine of social revolution. *Matbars* join it to save their skins, peasants to destroy the hold of the *matbar* with the help of the students. Much of what will happen to Bangla Desh will depend on what happens within the Awami League, just as the

course of Indian politics has been mirrored in the history of the Congress Party.

Whether one supports the Sheikh or mistrusts him only a fool would underestimate him. Childish suggestions that he is a tool of India, that he is losing ground, that he might even lose to Amena Begum, are merely whistling in the dark. Any politician or public figure who makes his calculations on such fantasies is not only doing a disservice to his party but the nation. The only relevant question about the elections here is whether Mujib will win them or sweep them. If he presides over a landslide, he will come to the Constituent Assembly as the unchallenged spokesman of Bengal, whose voice will be heard beyond Islamabad and within the international community. He will have a constitution in his pocket and this will provide the basis of any dialogue.

If he is cut down to size in the polls because his appeal could not cross local barriers and Bengal speaks with many tongues he may have to bide his time for a second round in a different arena. For no constitution can last without his blessings, no government can survive in Bengal without his sanction. He today symbolises the tide of the moment. Like all symbols his appeal rests on his ability to articulate the basic emotions which put him on his pinnacle. This should temper any illusions he may have of his personal charisma. History has singled him out to lead Bengal's struggle to fulfillment. If he fails his trust history may simply pass him by.

2.7 Election Prospects: A Framework for Analysis*

In the absence of a Lou Harris or George Gallup, evaluating election prospects in East Pakistan can be a hazardous business. As a result, political forecasting becomes an exercise in wish fulfillment as pandits project their own preferences on the voters. For instance, estimates of Awami League prospects range from 90 per cent of the seats to less than one-third depending on whom you approach. The truth is that no one has surveyed the balance of forces in every constituency or evaluated the precise contribution and various forces at work, so that all exercises are little more than intelligent speculation.

In attempting an evaluation of the campaign, one can at best try to identify what one estimates to be the relevant factors likely to influence the voters and then to extend this general framework to the constituencies. The gaps in knowledge and resources are too great to qualify this exercise as a political forecast and it must essentially remain an heroic attempt at political analysis.

To begin with, some demographic truths must be recognised. The latest population projections show that 56 per cent of the people of voting age in East Pakistan are under the age of 40. This means that at partition they did not witness or become involved in the struggle for Pakistan. They have no experience of the social conditions which gave emotion to the demand for partition nor did they share in the sacrifices of that struggle. To them the origins of Pakistan are part of their history lesson and old enemies merely cardboard figures. To them the ancient nemesis of a Hindu-dominated India is an academic subject about which

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their elders happen to talk a lot. They know less about India than they do about the United States. Any suggestion of unification of Bengal or Indian domination of East Pakistan makes little sense to them. India's presence in East Pakistan is to them neither malign nor beneficial, it is today merely irrelevant.

This is the age group which is going to swing the election. A far larger proportion of them will get to the polling booths not just because they are physically more able to, but because they are better educated and more politically alive than the over 40's. Ayub Khan by killing politics for 12 years provided the death blow to the influence of the generation which had led and participated in the struggle for Pakistan.

Today there are parties and leaders still trying to invoke faded glories. They draw attention to their role in the Pakistan movement and attempt to revive ancient emotions around the slogans of yester-year. Some of this gets home to the over 40's though even to them the excitement of the struggles of the early 40's is a dim memory. But to 56 per cent of the electorate these slogans merely sound quaint. They wonder what these old men are talking about. Pakistan is 23 years old. It has waded through an ocean of troubles, it has lived through the chaos of democracy and the waste-land of dictatorship. People want answers to the problems of today rather than the clichés of yesterday.

Today in East Pakistan the reality of the moment is the urge for self-government. Bengal wants to rule itself. It wants its share in the control of the country. Arising from this is the hunger for a better life for its millions. The fact that this nation has been ruled from the West for 23 years is now inherent in the consciousness of every voting adult. The fact that this coincides with a visible decline in the conditions of life of a majority of the people equates, even in the simplest mind, the lack of power with the deterioration of life.

The rise of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the ascendancy of the Awami League owes itself to this basic reality. The Six-Point programme was launched after the Indo-Pakistan war. It was a time when East Pakistan's vulnerability had dramatically been driven home to the people. The Six-Points was inspired by this consciousness and chose to exploit its political potential. The fact that it was inadequately organised permitted the movement to be cut short, Mujib jailed and the party decimated. But Agartala merely re-focused attention to the Six-Points and the uprising

converted this consciousness into a relentless political weapon which destroyed the foundations of the Ayub Raj. Martial Law was seen as an interruption of this process. Mujib has recognised this truth and bases his election campaign on the Bengali's consciousness. He promises power to Bengali Muslims for the first time since the Battle of Plassey. His reference to Mir Jafar, the traitor of Plassey, is not without political significance. He promises that power will be the touchstone to confront the poverty and stagnation which has been Bengal's lot for two decades. To the extent that the people of Bengal entrust him with their struggle for power and accept his Awami League as the vehicle for this odyssey his party may sweep the polls.

It is this degree of acceptance which is the intangible in the election. Today only one leader, one party and one platform dominates the election. Mujib and his Six-Points is the only face and issue now known throughout East Pakistan. This has been the result of his phenomenal election campaign over the last 10 months. Today the statistics of disparity are quoted in villages throughout Bengal and one name goes with this consciousness - Sheikh Mujib. Let Bengal rule is the slogan. And Mujib is seen as the only credible leader to realise this goal.

In the constituencies Mujib's slogans have to contend with local forces. The politics of each area has an undercurrent of local influence and loyalties - families who have been prominent in the area for decades; wealthy men who have done public service; old leaders who have brought fame to an area by holding high office. The Awami League candidates have to contend against these factors with the charisma of the Sheikh and the power of their political programme. Where the party candidate is himself locally prominent, the seat becomes secure. Where the candidate is weak or unknown then the conflict between local and national politics makes the constituency open to speculation.

Today all parties have given up fighting the Awami League or its platform. The appeal is to local loyalties and memories. For all practical purposes, the Awami League is fighting independents who have discarded their party platform and fight on their local support.

How far will this go? Bengal has so far had only two elections under adult franchise in its history. In 1946, the overall political issue of Pakistan overrode local influences and the Muslim League made a clean sweep. In 1954 again, local influences were overthrown by the *Jukta Front*

as the people voted en masse against the Muslim League. The question is whether Bengal will do what it has never done in the past and in 1970 vote on local issues rather than the overriding political issue of the day.

The challenge to Bengali nationalism from the traditional or right wing forces - The Muslim League and Islam *pasands* - has been more feeble due to their inability to close ranks. A study of the 162 constituencies for the National Assembly shows that in 125 seats more than one rightist candidate will be in the field to divide the anti-Awami League vote. In 48 constituencies three or more candidates of the Muslim League, Jamaat, Nizam-e-Islam or Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP) will be fighting it out with a medley of independents against a single Awami League or pro-autonomy candidate. In 35 constituencies it will be a triangular fight between two rightist parties and the Awami League. Only in 24 out of 162 seats will the Awami League face a straight fight from a single rightist candidate.

In contrast, surprisingly greater harmony prevails on the left amongst pro-autonomy forces. This owes to the small number of seats put up by them. The NAP (Wali) has put up 36 candidates. The Bhashani NAP has put up 15 candidates. And if we include Ataur Rahman's Pakistan National League in the progressive camps then they have 14 candidates. Out of a total of 65 "Left" candidates in only 3 will there be any intra-Left contest.

It was feared, however, at the outset that failure to establish unity with the Awami League would lead to three-cornered fights where a divided autonomy vote would let in a rightist candidate. In fact, this possibility exists in only 12 constituencies where one or other of the NAP's and PNL competes with the Awami League against a single rightist. In some of these, as for example Dacca N.E.-108 where Tajuddin Ahmed, General Secretary of the Provincial Awami League, confronts Ahmedul Kabir of Wali NAP, the third candidate from Jamaat-e-Islam is so dwarfed by these titans as to make his presence irrelevant.

2.8 The Quiet Revolution*

The victory of the Awami League at the December 7 polls in East Pakistan must rank as one of the most decisive in the history of Parliamentary democracy. They have won 151 out of 153 contested seats. This may rise to 154 since Raja Tridib Roy, the Chakma chief, who defeated the AL candidate from the Chittagong Hill Tracts constituency, is likely to vote with the party. He was refused the party ticket in favour of Charu Bikash Chakma who represents the young and progressive element in the tribal region. With 9 seats in the disaster area now in the bag following their massive victory plus the 7 women's seats to be elected by the assembly, the Sheikh will come to the House with 168 out of 169 votes.

It was not merely that Awami League swept the board. In each Constituency their victory was decisive. In all but one constituency, Mr. Farid Ahmed's in Cox's Bazar, they polled more than 50 per cent of the votes cast so that there was no question of victory being contingent on a divided opposition vote. We note that in 8.5 per cent of the constituencies they polled more than 90 per cent of votes. In 52.2 per cent constituencies they polled over 75 per cent of the votes. In all, their share of the vote comes to 76 per cent (provisional count). By Bengal standards it was a high poll. A preliminary count indicates a poll of 57.5 per cent which was above the 1954 poll. Dacca district recorded the highest poll with 65.2 per cent.

There can be few illusions about the mind of the voters. They were voting for Bengali nationalism. The slogan of *Joy Bangla* and the symbol

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of the *Nauka* had become the focal point of public attention. In the polling booths people did not bother about the candidate but voted for the symbol of their emancipation. Quid-e-Azam had said at the time of the 1946 election that Muslims of India would vote for a lamp post as long as it carried the Muslim League label. This was the lamp post election all over again. Only this time it was Bengali nationalism which was recording its voice and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the leader who had been marked to carry the struggle to its conclusion.

Many defeated candidates still do not know what hit them. One such candidate had fought a long and costly campaign only to lose his deposit. During his campaign he had emerged as the most enlightened and attractive of the prospects and was drawing the largest crowds. Towards the end of the campaign even the fence-sitting BD's and *mathars* had begun to offer their support to him thinking that he was the man of the moment. In the last week his Awami League opponent had all but pulled out of the campaign and his cadres were deserting him. All this established the image of the candidate but was of no avail on polling day where people, presumably with regret in their hearts at letting down so estimable a representative, voted *Nauka*.

This illustration could be repeated many times over. Stories keep coming in of AL candidates who on their own merit had not a hope. One labour leader of Barisal hardly spent any time in his constituency because he could not afford to desert his labour front. He won by margin of 62,000 votes from a formidable and locally influential PDP candidate who, along with the two other candidates, forfeited his deposits. In another Barisal constituency, a highly qualified town planner, Salahuddin Ahmed, entering politics for the first time, with very little constituency contact, saw all his six opponents forfeit their deposit including ex-Conventionist Major Afsaruddin, now a man of considerable resources and backed by the highly influential Pir of Sarsina. In Kushtia, a young and dedicated barrister, bank-rolled by a Rs. 5,000 overdraft, polled 99,283 votes against an ex-Conventionist with a Rs. 10 lakh campaign fund who, along with all other candidates, forfeited his deposit. In Dinajpur, Bhashani NAP Vice President and peasant leader Haji Danesh, who was a legend in that area trailed an unknown Awami Leaguer by a margin of 40,000 votes. One could go on multiplying the examples of victory by the young, inexperienced, the unimpressive, who defeated

local giants, but it would merely be repeating the same story. This was the day of the *Nauka* and little else mattered in the minds of the voters.

Somewhere during the course of the campaign the voters were convinced by Mujib's universal cry that this was a referendum for the right of Bengal to rule themselves. The cyclone merely dramatised the argument and reaffirmed their conviction. Give Bengalis a chance was the watchword of the day. It was quite extraordinary to find villagers and rickshaw pullers telling you about disparity in transfer of resources in their own idiom. Mujib had got the message to the remotest village, whether through his own incredible barnstorm which must have crossed the path of at least 25-30 million voters or by word of mouth from those who had got the message. It is doubtful if there was a single voter on December 7 who did not know Mujib's name and did not have a broad notion of what the *Nauka* stood for.

As part of his charisma all campaign posters carried Mujib's picture on the top half and the candidate for the area in the lower half. People were voting for Mujib and his *Nauka* and gave only incidental interest to the AL name on the ticket. Where of course the AL candidate had done his homework and projected his own image, the victory became a massacre.

The margin of victory and the forces underlying it have tended to foreclose the options for all concerned in the discussions ahead. People have not voted for negotiations. They have voted for total autonomy. With a clear majority at his disposal in the National Assembly, Mujib need not settle for less.

The polls have clearly proved that in addition to two economies we now also have two polities in Pakistan. Not a single "national" party has survived the election nor has a national leader emerged. Mujib bestrides East Pakistan. Mr. Bhutto dominates Punjab and Sind with the Karachi *Mohajir* enclaves left to the Islam *Pasands*. Baluchistan is with the Baluchistan NAP. Frontier is sub fragmented with Wali dominant in the heartland of the Pashtoon area. Qayyum controls the Hindko area plus 3 out of 4 of the ex-principalities in Dir, Swat and Chitral. The Hazarvi Jamaat controls the Bannu, Kohat, D. I. Khan block plus a stake in non-Pakhtoon Hazara. In only isolated exceptions do any of these areas of influence overlap.

In West Pakistan however Mr. Bhutto has shown that a leader can transcend linguistic boundaries with an appeal to the common interest of

the dispossessed. With his home base secured in Sindh he is now the spokesman of Punjab where he controls 75 per cent of the seats. Even in the NWFP where he only won one seat his candidates have polled well in many constituencies. Only Baluchistan remains impervious to him where Baluchi nationalism under the Maris and Mangals has survived the elections as a significant force.

It is too early to say whether Mr. Bhutto can really impose a lasting supra-nationalism on West Pakistan. But he is the first politician to indicate that there are other ways of doing this than through the barrel of the gun. This is of profound significance to any future constitutional settlement.

For the moment Mr. Bhutto is without a stage where he can find expression for his political ambitions. In a Six Point-oriented Pakistan he may at most aspire to a limited orbit of power in the weakened centre. Thus, in order to push through his programme he will have to be either Chief Minister of Sind or Punjab. It is only within a more integrated West Pakistan, that he can project himself as a regional leader aiming to reform the whole area. He can in this situation never hope to be a national leader and in any coalition will always be the junior partner of Mujib as the Awami League will have twice his party's voting power in any show of strength.

In such a situation, he may be drawn towards the concept of a strong centre and find himself on the same side of the fence with Yahya in any confrontation with Mujib. He is today the spokesman of Punjab as much as the common man of West Pakistan. As a Sindhi he may be expected to be more than zealous in his efforts to preserve their interests. If their interests are identified with a strong centre, he may well find that he as much as Mujib is the captive of his own success. Of course, Punjab may have seen the light and the same new generation which voted out the old guard may be only too eager to relinquish their imperial burden and turn inwards to confront their own social contradictions.

In such a situation, Mr. Bhutto may himself opt for a separatist role for West Pakistan where he can project himself internationally as the spokesman of 55 million West Pakistanis - a sizeable enough figure to make the region into a leading Middle Eastern power. This could be realised within the confines of a loose federation as implied by the Six Points or he may even be tempted to go further if he wants his image to

transcend the national stage.

In working out his options he must assume that Six Points is now no longer negotiable. The nature of the vote rules this out. The only basis for dialogue is to work out the implications of Six Points and to identify problems which would need to be solved once Six Points are implemented. This is a task for the technicians, the political issue having been foreclosed.

Here it will not be possible to seek the shelter of the LFO because this has been rendered redundant. To suggest that if the Awami League does not accept the LFO, it will be treated as not having contested the election is obviously not viable any more. One cannot write-off the entire representation from East Pakistan. In practice, this need not arise because the LFO has always been a meaningless formula designed to give a window dressing to the reality of the Presidential veto. Six-Points is merely one version of integration and after the polls a more widely acknowledged one than any other conceivable solution put forward by any party or individual.

Taking the Six-Points as a constant in the dialogues ahead, it is for Mr. Bhutto and General Yahya to collectively or individually define their position towards it. Any one of them, if reconciled to the Six-Points, will be able to see it through. If Mr. Bhutto supports it, the constitutional draft will muster 256 votes in a house of 313 which is not just two-thirds but four-fifths of the vote and could not by any stretch of imagination invoke a Presidential veto. On the other hand, if the President has accepted the verdict of the polls in East Pakistan and waives his veto, then Six-Point is through with or without Mr. Bhutto, merely on the simple majority wielded by the Awami League.

If however both of them cannot digest the Six Points then they must prepare together in cold blood to hold down East Pakistan by a naked demonstration of force for there will not even be a dog to stand up for them in the East Wing.

There is no reason to believe that the new and forward looking generation of West Pakistan will permit such a perilous course to be followed which would earn them the infamy of the world any more than East Pakistan will take such a course lying down. It is hoped that they will prevail and come to terms with the people's verdict in East Pakistan.

2.9 Coming to Terms with Six Points*

Now that the total support of the people in East Pakistan behind the demand for autonomy has been made clear, it is time for West Pakistanis in particular to take a hard look at the Awami League's Six-Point Programme, which is the vehicle of this demand. Upto the elections any evaluation of this demand in the West was of academic interest since none of the political options before the voters (bar the Syed United Front in Sindh) offered Six-points. There was therefore no question for the people of West Pakistan to make up their minds about the Six-Point proposal.

All this had been dramatically transformed by the elections. Suddenly West Pakistan is confronted with the reality of Six-Points as the unanimous demand of East Pakistan. The very future of the country now rests on their willingness to come to terms with Six-Points. It is therefore essential that they know clearly what Six-Points is really about and why it is now the sole demand from East Pakistan. The new balance of political power thrown up by the elections now gives a definite political context within which to evaluate the demand so that we will not be dealing with hypothetical questions.

The Assumptions Underlying Six-Points

There is no need to labour the point that the demand for autonomy grew from two decades of injustice in resource allocation and the resultant growth in disparities. But if this were all, East Pakistan could seriously consider a strong centre dominated by it where it seeks full

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reparation for past exploitation.

Unfortunately, history has no record of reparations being paid by anyone except countries defeated in war, vide Germany and Japan. West Pakistan is not a nation nor has it been vanquished on the battlefield. The suggestion that they be made to unilaterally export resources to East Pakistan to compensate for the past use of East Pakistan's resources and forego their share of foreign aid is sheer fantasy. Resource allocation in favour of the West wing during the last two decades was without either economic or political sense. It could be explained by the fact that they had the physical force to keep a system of government in power which served the narrow interests of the West wing ruling elite and channelised resources away from the East. Nothing has happened so far to change this balance of force in East Pakistan's favour. East Pakistan's political awakening may now indicate that it is no longer open to the exploitation either of its resources or its share of external assistance. But this is a long way from being able to impose their will sufficiently on West Pakistan to start paying back the resources drained westwards during this decade. For a centre to guarantee this would require a balance of physical force between the regions which is far from likely in the near future.

There is no reason to believe that a return to democracy and shared power will solve this problem. For all the popular upsurge in West Pakistan, their ruling classes and the physical force sustaining them, are by no means vanquished. Whilst Mr. Bhutto may make some inroads into their power he cannot afford to cross those who wield the gun. As a Sindhi he will have to be particularly sensitive to the needs of Punjab and Karachi which will have to bear the burden if resources are to be exported eastwards. As a regional leader, confined in fact to the two richest regions in Pakistan and without any support in the East, he will have to protect their interests to secure his own base for re-election and the reforms he has in mind. He cannot expect to extract resources from the region both to improve the living condition of his own dispossessed and pay reparations to East Pakistan. In such a situation, the suggestion that East Pakistan rule the centre is no more than a pipe dream and the suggestion that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman can be beguiled by the fantasy of dominating the whole of Pakistan merely wishful thinking. In the present, politically polarised situation with the leading parties and leaders depending solely on their own regions for support, there will not even be the incentive to make concessions to the

other wing which comes from having candidates in the other region whose local constituents have to be placated.

These are the realities of the moment. Six-Points comes to terms, with them when it suggests complete bifurcation of the economies. This, in its essence, amounts to total decentralisation of economic decision-making to be based on the use of the region's own resources. The guts of the Six Points deals with this aspect of the problem and should be examined within this perspective. The fifth demand for a para-military force in the East wing is without prejudice to any region's interests and is even supported by Air Marshal Asghar Khan. The ability of the people to defend themselves merely supplements the efforts of the conventional defence forces.

Taxation

The suggestion that all tax powers vest with the province follows logically from the accepted suggestion that all economic decisions are made in the province. Taxation today is primarily an instrument of economic policy. It regulates the disposal of income, channels resources from one to another sector, regulates consumption and performs a host of vital official and economic services for the policymaker. The suggestion that such a power lies with the centre will thus not only be unsound but inequitable. For instance, if East Pakistan decides on a large expenditure programme for development, it would hardly be acceptable just to extract heavy taxes from the Centre which would be largely realised, say from Punjab. This would be resisted tooth and nail. Correspondingly the Centre cannot change tax rates which would distort priorities set by the planners in the East wing. It is only reasonable that whatever decisions a region makes should be based on the resources it can extract either from its people or from abroad.

The suggestion that tax powers in provincial hands would reduce the Centre to orphan status is, after 7 December, a purely theoretical issue. The Central Government is for the next 5 years going to be solely or predominantly under the control of the Awami League, which holds 55 per cent of the seats in the House. It is absurd to suggest that the Awami League provincial government is going to starve its own party in the centre. Such an argument may well be directed against Mr. Bhutto's governments in Sindh and Punjab. Will they pay their share for the upkeep of the Centre? The

chances are that they will since the bulk of the revenues paid to the centre, will be for the army which is predominantly drawn from and based in the Punjab. As long as the Awami League remains committed to a centre, which is responsible for Defence and Foreign Affairs, they will discharge their obligations to it both in the Centre and the Province.

In any case, tax powers for the Centre is itself a hollow power within a decentralised polity. If for some unanticipated reason a region withdraws support from the Centre all it needs do is to refuse to enforce tax collections. Even today taxes are collected by officers primarily recruited from within the region. If people fail to pay their taxes they are prosecuted by the provincial law enforcement authorities. A hostile provincial government will only have to refuse to prosecute tax evaders on the same lines that Jyoti Basu's government in West Bengal, through its control of the Home Ministry, refused to prosecute land grabbers, for the Centre to be helpless. Here the Centre will demand the right to dissolve the provincial government and impose Martial Law to collect taxes. And who is willing to give such arbitrary powers to the Centre today, particularly since it will always be dominated by East Pakistan?

In the final analysis then payment of revenues for the upkeep of the Centre depends not on the written clauses of the constitution but the political goodwill of the constituent members of the federation. The chances are that in the next five years this will be forthcoming for diverse reasons from both regions and the Centre is not likely to face a struggle for survival.

Foreign Aid Negotiations

To keep this in provincial hands follows from the decision to put both economic decision making and taxation in provincial hands. The need for foreign aid is a residual need derived from the gaps between our development goals and the resources domestically available to realise these goals. Once the planning goals and the tax policies to mobilise domestic resources are made, it is only logical to leave the responsibility for bridging the gap with the region concerned. A region which is lax in mobilising its own resources or sets its development goals too high must bear the responsibility of servicing its own debts. Any other arrangement merely penalises the austere and the hardworking at the expense of the extravagant and the lazy.

The suggestion that the province's pursuit of external aid may come

into conflict with the Centre's foreign policy is also merely academic. Both foreign policy and the search for aid, albeit by different arms of the state, will be made by the Awami League for the next five years so that no conflicts are envisaged as between East Pakistan and the Centre.

For West Pakistan today or in some hypothetical situation in the future, any conflict may simply be resolved by adhering to the rules of the game. In this world every underdeveloped country seeks aid from those with whom it has good relations. If we leave this issue to the Centre one does not see West Pakistan seeking aid from the nation's enemies. If at all this is a danger, any constitutional draft can cover this by embargoing aid or trade dealings with any country declared by the National Assembly to be an enemy of Pakistan. Precedents exist in the "trading with the enemy" embargoes used by the USA and other countries today to prohibit trade with China and Cuba or even South Africa and White Rhodesia.

Foreign Trade

Policy decisions affecting trade fall into two categories. One deals with control over foreign exchange, and the other deals with policy matters.

I. Foreign Exchange

It is a cardinal belief that all foreign exchange earned from a region should accrue to the region. This was not the case for East Pakistan upto 1962/63. Today however both regions have import surpluses, though West Pakistan's is much larger due to its greater consumption of foreign aid. For either region to control its own foreign exchange would be no loss to the other since both are, in theory, already fully utilising their own earnings.

The only problem will be to pay the foreign exchange needs of the Centre. This will need a small amount for our embassies but will mainly be required for import of military hardware. Here the constitution will have to devise an agreed formula whereby whatever foreign exchange budget is prepared by the Centre will have to be a first charge on the province's own exchange earnings to the extent of its predetermined liability. Here, for the same reasons that provinces will pay up their share of taxes, they will pay their share of foreign exchange.

II. Trade Policy

This deals with commercial policy with other countries. In practice,

much of this debate is academic. Nearly all our exports and a large part of our imports are in private hands. Trade here is done by individuals exporting where they have markets and importing either where they get the best price or more important for where their import license is assigned. Until foreign trade is nationalised, the question of whether trade is with the Centre or regions is a trifle academic.

The real problem arises when trade agreements have to be signed where a specific volume of goods have to be exchanged with a designated country. Here the danger is cited of a regional government making a trade agreement with a country which is hostile in the eyes of the Central Government. As with aid, for the next five years this problem is merely academic for East Pakistan because of the Awami League. As with aid, the constitution can bind itself with a self-enforcing embargo on "trading with enemies."

Today about the only country which Pakistan does not trade with is India and this is in fact only a legacy of the 1965 war. In the 18 years upto September 1965 we went on trading with India no matter how hostile our external relations. The question is therefore whether the status quo ante bellum may be restored in trade with India. Trade with India is of primary interest to East Pakistan. It can buy coal and possibly iron ore for its steel mill and even cement, in exchange for jute, at great mutual advantage. Once in the centre, the Awami League will have to decide whether the present level of confrontation with India continues or there must be enough relaxation to permit trade. Either way its own provincial government can do no more than comply. For West Pakistan, no corresponding dilemma presents itself. In the present or immediate future there is no national enemy visible with whom West Pakistan will feel inclined to trade.

Currency

This remains the most debated issue and suffers from the maximum of confusion. The heart of the problem really relates to the location of monetary policy decisions. Who will decide the volume of money in circulation in a region and the price at which it is made available to the regional economy? Today such decisions are made in a consortium by the Central Finance Ministry and State Bank. Under Six-Points this must be made in the province. To locate monetary policy decisions in the

province follows logically from the decisions to keep all other economic policy decisions in the province. Questions of monetary policy are subordinate to the region's development policy. As with fiscal weapons, monetary policy is a weapon to regulate demand, and the volume and nature of activity. To give such powers to the Centre whilst all others are in the province will generate confusion of the worst sort.

The question of whether such a policy is implemented through two currencies or separate reserve banks or one is not the real issue. These are essentially technical questions which have to be solved by technicians once the political question of the locus of monetary policy has been taken. Once the principle is accepted only technical difficulties relating to free movement of currencies, interregional trade and payments settlements, etc. will be dictated by administrative and technical convenience and need not degenerate into fixed political postures.

Package Deal

It is evident from the above discussions that Six Points is a package deal. Once the primary decision that all planning and development decisions will be taken in the province is accepted, practical necessity indicates that taxation, monetary, trade and foreign aid policy move to the province. If any one such contingent policy suddenly becomes identified as a threat to the ideology and/or integrity of Pakistan, then we will have to go all the way back to a Centre which controls key economic policy decisions since there is no viable half-way house.

Six-Points, looked at in the cold light of reality after 7 December, should not look too indigestible to anyone whose reason is not blinded by ignorance or prejudice. Mr. Bhutto's party does not consist of hysterical old men, illiterate in economics and totally lacking in political perspective. There is no reason why they should not be able to come to terms with Six-Points, which any economist of even moderate competence will inform them is of positive benefit to the richest regions of West Pakistan.

2.10 What Haunts Hamlet?*

The integrity of Pakistan seems to hang on the twin strands of foreign trade and aid under federal control. So appears the conclusion of the People's Party who have reaffirmed in their LFO that this is the basic precondition for their participation in the National Assembly.

Whose Tax Burden?

Their demand for revenue-raising powers to meet the needs of the centre need not detain us. In the Six Points scheme, the Centre has power to determine its own budget for defence and foreign affairs and to impose a levy on states to finance this budget. The debate is thus not over tax powers to the Centre but whether the Centre taxes the individual or the province. Considering Pakistan's poor record of tax collection, even within an all powerful Centre, it is surprising that people still believe that the power to tax individuals is the sole salvation of the centre.

As has been said before, the Centre will continue to be at the mercy of the provincial government even if it has full powers to levy taxes. The provincial law enforcement machinery will continue to exercise the sanctions which make the common man pay his taxes. With the balance of power now in the province, the average tax payer, who is reluctant to pay his taxes in the best of times, will be extremely tardy about discharging his obligations to the Central Government. The provincial administration will also be lackadaisical about enforcement since they have no immediate stake in realising central revenue from their citizens.

*Published in *Forum*, February 27, 1971.

Tax cases could thus drag on interminably and even when discharged their enforcement could be slack. All this time the Centre would be starved of vital revenue and could not even put its finger on the provincial government who will have discharged their obligation, only more slowly than demanded by the Centre.

In contrast, a tax on the province is a direct and immediately dischargeable obligation. In 1793 Lord Cornwallis had the right idea when he imposed his revenue settlement on Bengal. Instead of involving the British administration with lakhs of small cultivators, he farmed out revenue collections where individuals were given the right to tax the peasants in return for a fixed revenue obligation to the British. Taxing the province is many steps better. The Centre deals with a single tax payer who under the constitution, is forced to discharge its obligation to the Centre irrespective of the state of its economy or the efficiency of the provincial tax mechanism. Failure to pay their tax liability will be a violation of the constitution and for all practical purposes the end of the country, which is held together by agreements, enshrined in the constitution.

There is little doubt that in the next 5 years the Awami League at least will hardly default on its commitments since its own party will be in power at the Centre. The PPP, as self appointed spokesman for the armed forces, will also see that Sind and Punjab will deliver their share. Among these three provinces it should not be difficult to see that NWFP and Balochistan honour their commitments.

In this context, it is difficult to understand the agitation about tax powers. Indeed, on the basis of present collections, if tax powers were left with the Centre, about 75 per cent of collections would be from the West wing who should therefore hardly have much to be cheerful about in any dispensation which taxes individuals.

In contrast, taxes on the province would be based on a mutually agreed formula where the central budget liability would be paid by the provinces on a predetermined basis. For example, if one province's share is fixed at 30 per cent in the constitution, every budget year it will pay to the Centre 30 per cent of the central budget estimate. Negotiations will have to take place when the draft constitution is being discussed about the principles on which such a formula should be based and from this the exact share of liability for each province can be written into the constitution.

Why Trade and Aid?

It is obvious therefore that taxation powers need hardly be a cause for deadlock to anyone who has seriously examined the problem. But what of trade and aid?

At no stage did the PPP indicate that this was to them a life and death issue as distinct from other subjects. They argued rather feebly that trade and aid must be with the Centre as they were integral to foreign policy. But they never spelt out why, beyond reasons of convention, this should be so. In the USA the state governments float loans in the international money market. In Canada the provinces enter into their own trade agreements. Indeed, British Columbia in the Far West was the first to initiate trade with China which has long been a trading partner of the West coast province. So why should the PPP suddenly discover that here of all areas, Pakistan's integrity was jeopardised?

The notion of conflict with foreign policy is unreal. The Six Points concedes that trade and aid will be negotiated within the framework of foreign policy. Therefore, there can be no question of the province entering into a trade pact with a country where our foreign policy interests dictate an embargo. Today there are four such countries as India, Israel, South Africa and Rhodesia. If any region wishes to trade with any of these four countries, they should influence their parent party in the Centre to get the ban lifted.

If the embargo is lifted it will then be for the provincial governments to decide whether they will permit trade or not. Under a constitution where trade and aid are with the Centre, if the Awami League carries through a decision to lift the embargo on Indian trade then any individual exporter of Sindh or Punjab can resume exports of wheat, cotton or any other commodity to India and the PPP provincial government will be powerless to stop this. By a peculiar irony the PPP may thus end up trading with India where, under Six Points, they could have had the power, at least in their own domain, to prevent this.

Arising out of the notion that trade and foreign policy must be with the Centre is the notion that our embassies would become redundant under a Six points dispensation. This may or may not be so but no one would seriously suggest that it is part of a constitution to guarantee either jobs or full employment to the Foreign Service. In practice, however, PFS officers need not be haunted by the spectre of the dole. A nation of 120

million people will need to maintain its political links throughout the world and our embassies may continue to do this job. Provincial trade representatives can go about their business of promoting exports, soliciting aid or negotiating trade agreements in most parts of the world without in any way embarrassing the Pakistan Embassy. Perhaps they may even save house rent by sharing the same building. But there is no reason why one cannot bifurcate the functions and responsibility for external relations. Indeed, the present government is itself contemplating such a bifurcation through the establishment of a separate Ministry of Foreign Trade.

What Price Centralised Aid?

To leave trade and aid with the Centre, even within the PPP constitutional format, is likely to raise a host of practical problems which perhaps have not been contemplated by them so far. Their proposal leaves planning, development and economic policy-making with the province. This means that the province now draws up its own five year plan, based on its own estimate of resources. Now how can mobilisation of domestic rupee resources be divorced from external resources?

If East Pakistan designs its development plans so that a large part is financed by aid will the Centre then merely act as a post office to its aid requests? Or will all provinces have to sit down over every budget and fight over how the aid will be divided? Given past experience and the current importance of aid, the battles will be bloody since none of the contending parties would like to appear as selling out the interests of their electorate. This would arise whether there were socialists or feudalists in the saddle. A Rs. 10 crore loan from China would still have to be shared and Dacca's gain could only be Lahore's loss however idealistically one looks at the problem.

Alternatively one could of course write in aid allocations to the constitution

But how would aid shares be determined? East Pakistan would certainly claim that over the next 10 years the use of all its foreign exchange plus its legitimate share of aid be compensated through the aid mechanism. The definitive estimate of the Panel of Economists puts this compensation conservatively at Rs. 3112 crore. Would the PPP agree that

all future aid be allocated to East Pakistan until the compensation for past injustice is liquidated? Under any allocation formula East Pakistan could not ask for less. Would this liability be tolerable to the PPP electorate who would have to tighten their belt for a decade and develop without aid, whether from the Socialist or Western bloc?

In actual practice, of course other problems would also arise. Aid is not homogenous. It comes for specific projects, in commodities and as technical assistance. Only about 20 per cent comes as direct cash loans or grants which are easily divisible.

If PPP accepts that 80 per cent of all aid and loans go to East Pakistan for the next 10 years there is of course no problem and all categories of aid will be channelised eastward. But if every year a division takes place how do you do it? Who decides where an FAO expert will be assigned? If the US gives a 20 million dollar commodity loan to buy steel and soyabean oil how will this be divided? If one region does not want the available commodity then commodity loans will accrue to the other region. As for project aid, how will the central aid mission push its projects? Today Mr. M. M. Ahmed pushes West wing projects and puts East wing projects under the table during negotiations. Tomorrow should East Pakistan do the same with West wing projects by virtue of its control of the Centre? Or should there be an annual bloodletting every year before the Aid Consortium, to be resolved by Mr. Bhutto's Upper House(?) about which projects will be at the top of the shopping list?

There is no doubt that aid will pose a formidable allocative problem in the future. This may be prejudicial not just to political goodwill but even sensible economic planning. No plan could be drawn up without knowing how the annual battle for aid will resolve itself. As a result, long-term plans would be frustrated and each programme would wait on tenterhooks to see what the MNA's can grab for the province. Or would Mr. Bhutto leave allocations to the Awami League-dominated central cabinet who could then decide how much aid went where and determine all Consortium priorities?

The Six Points plan is the most generous offer the West wing could expect under any circumstances. A vindictive East Pakistan would have opted for centralised aid and trade solely to redress past injustices. Instead, they are abjuring past claims and defusing centralised decision-making so that in years to come West Pakistan does not become the

aggrieved partner. Cynics may doubt East Pakistan's motives but they are dictated by an awareness of reality and an overwhelming urge to once and for all end all this bickering over resources.

Apart from aid negotiation trade agreements pose a problem. But this is again only marginal. The volume of trade today transacted against agreements would not exceed 10 per cent. For East Pakistan to enter into a barter deal with Poland to exchange jute for coal would only touch a fraction of its trade and would not set the nation ablaze. State traded goods must be under the control of the province. The pattern of demand for imports is dictated by the planned production pattern. Here the province identifies its import needs and buys them abroad. To entrust purchase to a third party, presumably the Embassy, would always raise complaints that the East Pakistani ambassador has deliberately negotiated a "bad" coal deal for the PWR whilst he got the best terms for PER. These feuds are best resolved by letting the province define its own needs and to secure them at the best terms it can find abroad.

It really does become obvious that the traditional complaints about trade and aid add up to very little. One is constantly drawn back to the litany that foreign policy without aid and trade is meaningless and without precedent. This is hardly an argument and merely ignores the unique geographical characteristics of Pakistan which make it the only country in the world where a full-fledged balance of payments can be drawn up separately for its two regions, thereby identifying all external transaction for each region separately.

The standard concerns about provincialised trade and aid spring mostly from misunderstanding and with goodwill can be cleared up. It is therefore surprising that it should have been made into a life and death issue in the constitutional dialogue. Whilst the PPP is badly deficient in competent economic advice within the party, it is unlikely that they would have taken such a serious step without adequate briefing.

The Real Spectre

There is some indication that this briefing has at last been provided to Mr. Bhutto by the planning Czars who led Ayub to his doom and today continue to control policy. M. M. Ahmed, Economic Adviser to the President, is now spiritually committed to Mr. Bhutto, Qamrul Islam, Industries Secretary is an old friend and Aftab Kazi, Finance Secretary, a

fellow Sindhi, are all reportedly in close touch with the Chairman. Any one or all of them would have told Mr. Bhutto that the conventional arguments against provincialised trade and aid discussed above are hardly relevant. But trade and aid are vital to West Pakistan for another and as yet unpublished reason, which is sufficient for Mr. Bhutto to provoke a full-scale political crisis.

What the Czars must have passed on to Mr. Bhutto is that West Pakistan's captive market in East Pakistan is threatened. The unique feature of this market is that it enables West Pakistani industrialists to sell their overpriced products to East Pakistan for foreign exchange.

West Pakistan's traditional Balance of Payments surplus with East Pakistan has been financed by using East Pakistan's foreign exchange and East Pakistan's share of foreign aid. In the 20 years, between 1948/49 and 1968/69, it had a surplus of Rs. 675 cores of exports over its imports from East Pakistan which is the measure of the captive market enjoyed by its exporters in the East wing. This was paid for by taking East Pakistan's foreign exchange surplus plus its share of aid. This, according to the Panel of Economists, amounted to Rs. 3787 crore over these 20 years. Therefore, West Pakistan, in this time consumed, on balance, Rs. 3112 crore of East Pakistan's resources or Rs. 156 crore per year.

This was achieved through centralised control of trade and foreign aid. By controlling both export earnings and foreign aid in the Centre, East Pakistan's surplus export earnings plus its due share of foreign aid were syphoned off to finance the development of West Pakistan. It was hardly surprising that between 1950/51 and 1969/70 there was a disparity of Rs. 3202 crore in development expenditure in favour of West Pakistan. It was this high rate of development which generated faster growth of the West and a consequent widening of disparities in favour of West Pakistan from 21.9 per cent in 1949/50 to 61 per cent in 1969/70. (This is using the official estimates).

Messrs Ahmed and Islam, having, under Ayub, already seen the importance of trade and aid as an instrument of resource transfer, must have brought to Bhutto's notice the danger to the West wing economy in surrendering this vital instrument of exploitation. Here they must have brought to his notice the World Bank report on the Pakistan economy written under the influence of Mr. Cargill, an ex-ICS colleague of M. M. Ahmed, which has advocated that East Pakistan should continue as a

market for West Pakistan's industry, whilst aid continues to be channelled into West Pakistan to enable it to develop its economy to supply East Pakistan's needs. The classical colonial model is thus fully prepared but can only be used if the Centre keeps trade and aid.

What is surprising is that an ostensibly socialist party should fall for this con game on behalf of the West wing vested interests. Captive markets are for the benefit of West Pakistan's inefficient capitalists who cannot compete in the world market. For them a closed market in the East, which pays them in foreign exchange, is indispensable for survival. A socialist party does not have to buy this. Socialism provides the instruments both for absorbing output and mobilising exports. It may imply sacrifices for the West but the problem is hardly insoluble.

It is therefore absurd for the PPP to ignore the colonialism which survives within Pakistan by taking refuge behind the ridiculous argument that provincialised aid negotiation will keep us dependent on the Western powers. Twenty years of centralised aid negotiation have done this already. We should have learnt by now that continued dependency on foreign powers has little to do with the size of an economy. Self-reliance comes from the institutional changes which permit a development strategy which can change our economic structure. Which region or province will successfully do this will depend not on its wealth but its awareness of the problem and its capability to push through social revolution in the face of resistance from their vested interests.

Today's crisis is thus hardly new to those who have manipulated the destiny of this nation. Only the context is changed. But this time the old guard can only get away with this at an impossible cost. For they must know that even if trade and aid were left with the Centre there is sufficient awareness of their game to make it impossible for the old strategy to work any further. As a result, the crisis which has surfaced today would only be postponed to the time when East Pakistan used its power in the Centre to reverse the drainage of its resources and compensates itself to the tune of Rs. 3112 crore through the use of trade and foreign aid.

PART III

Two Nations

Introduction

The third section, *Two Nations*, takes up the narrative from the fateful decision of Yahya Khan on 1st March 1971 to postpone, *sine die*, the convening of the Assembly in Dhaka, scheduled for 4th March. These chapters trace the unfolding of the political crisis during March 1971, its immediate manifestation in the establishment and emergence of a *de facto* independent Bangladesh under the leadership of Bangabandhu, the duplicitous negotiations initiated by Yahya Khan for a political resolution to the crisis, which served as a prelude to the launch of genocide on the night of 25 March and its culmination in the liberation struggle for Bangladesh. The initial piece, *Too Little Too Late* (3.1) was written as the Forum editorial of 6 March. Its companion piece, *Over the Precipice* (3.2) appeared in the same issue as a lead article by me, reporting the immediate outcome of the postponement and the unfolding confrontation on the ground between the people of Bangladesh and the military regime. The subsequent pieces, *From Non-Cooperation to People's Raj* (3.3) and *Negotiating from Strength* (3.5) were written by me under the pseudonym of Rashed Akhter, *a nom de plume* frequently used by me in Forum when I did not want my name to reoccur more than once in a single issue. These two articles provide first hand observer/participant's accounts of the heady moments when Bangladesh established itself as an independent state under the leadership and administration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and on his last minute political negotiations with Yahya and Bhutto. The editorial by me, *Rebirth of a People* (3.4) written on 13 March discusses the implications of this assertion of independence by the Bangalis on the political future of

Pakistan. My final editorial, *Options for a Sane Man* (3.6) points to the imminent danger of a genocide and its certain dénouement in the emergence of an independent Bangladesh.

The last three articles in this section were all written in 1971 during the liberation war. The first of these, *Negotiating for Bangladesh*, an article prepared for the London quarterly, *South Asian Review*, provides an account, of the final negotiations between Bangabandhu and Yahya, its duplicitous nature and bloody outcome. This article was cited many years later in his memoir, *A Stranger In His Own Country*, by Major General Khadem Hussain Raja, GOC of the 14th Division of the Pakistan Army located in Dhaka, as an exposition of the Bangladesh perspective on the Mujib-Yahya negotiations. Little was known around the world of these last days of united Pakistan. On the occasion of our meeting in New Delhi in early April, 1971; Tajuddin Ahmed had, therefore, requested me to prepare a brief narrative of these events which was subsequently presented by him to the world on 17 April 1971, in his press statement as Prime Minister of the People Republic of Bangladesh. My article for *South Asia Review* was a more elaborate and analytical account of these negotiations as I witnessed it and on occasion participated in the process. Dr. Kamal Hossain, one of the principal negotiators, has provided the most definitive account of these negotiations. My own contribution, written in 1971, reflects the immediacy of my own perspective.

My *Report to the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* (3.8) was prepared in July 1971 when I returned to Calcutta after a three months campaign in London, the US, Canada, France and Italy, as the envoy of Tajuddin Ahmed, to propagate the cause of an independent Bangladesh and to argue before Pakistan's principal aid donors for a stoppage of aid until they ceased their genocide. My report was presented before the Bangladesh Cabinet in early August 1971. A copy of my draft report is on display at the National Liberation Museum. Following on my presentation I was formally appointed by the government as *Envoy Extraordinary in charge of Economic Affairs* and requested to return to Europe and the US to continue my campaign on behalf of Bangladesh.

While I was abroad in the UK and United States, at the first phase of my campaign, I wrote several newspaper articles to present the Bangladesh case and argue for an immediate suspension of aid to

Pakistan. The first of these, *Prelude to an order for genocide*, appeared in the Guardian, London on 5th June, provided a popular version of the paper later published by South Asia Review. The second, *The US and Bangladesh: Bailing out Pakistan*, appeared in the prestigious Washington DC based weekly, the *New Republic* on June 7, 1971. After the liberation of Bangladesh on 15 December 1971 and just before I returned home, I wrote a piece, *Bangladesh's Real Battle* (3.10), for the left wing journal, the *New Statesman* in London, which appeared on 24 December 1971, which discussed the challenges facing the newly independent Bangladesh. During 1971 I wrote further articles on the liberation struggle which appeared in the left oriented *Nation*, published from New York and another for the London Times which, as with my other writings of the time, were designed to educate the international public on the nature and implications of Bangladesh's liberation struggle. Copies of these two pieces could not be accessed for purposes of reproduction.

3.1 Too Little and Too Late*

The crisis long predicted in these columns and which we along with many others throughout the country had tried so hard to avoid is upon us. The future of this nation is at stake. If it survives this moment of peril it can never be the same again.

The people of Bangladesh have had to take to the streets to re-win the right to self government they had sought to establish three months ago at the polls. Then they did indeed speak their minds unequivocally. And today those same people are on the streets, armed with only primitive weapons but sustained by indomitable courage and faith in the justice of their cause.

The interests that have provoked this conflagration are the same as those which attempted to preserve the nation as a playground for their greed and ambition. It is however only fitting that the instrument for their design should be none other than Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Chairman of the People's Party, pledged to emancipate the people from these same vested interests.

Less than a month ago there was hope in the air. The polls had made it sufficiently clear that Bangla Desh was solidly committed to Six-Points. The victors in West Pakistan had no campaign commitments against Six-Points which could have inhibited a settlement with the Awami League and which could prevent them from honouring their economic commitments to their electorate. A constitution based on Six-Points, but taking care of the special problems of West Pakistan, could have been jointly framed without prejudice to the rights and interests of the

*Published as a *Forum* editorial, March 6, 1971.

common people of West Pakistan. A peaceful transition to a democratic order, which for the first time in two decades would have put inter-wing bickering at an end and left parties free to get on with the task of engineering social revolution, was distinctly possible.

All these hopes are ashes. Mr. Bhutto's refusal to attend the Assembly indicated that he has made common cause with the "hawks" in the power elite, and had the strength to force the postponement, *sine die*, of the Assembly. The long delay between election time and the summoning of the Assembly had already generated enough tension so that 3 March was not a day too soon. Anyone with the slightest notion of the mood in Bangladesh knew this would push the self-restraint of the people over the brink.

The reasons put forward by the great chairman for not attending the National Assembly were too puerile to be taken seriously. The notion that a National Assembly is merely a ratification chamber for clandestine agreements is part of the Byzantine politics which the Chairman learnt for 8 years at the feet of his spiritual father. If a parliament is not meant to discuss basic issues, to examine them closely in committee sessions, to seek settlement and to vote on them if positions are irreconcilable, why was so much blood shed in the cause of parliamentary democracy?

All this Mr. Bhutto knew and had made clear to him, not just on his visit to East Pakistan but by the powers-that-be, when he ignited the flames of crisis. It was therefore a coldblooded act which could have no other end than the death of peasants, workers and students in the streets of Bangla Desh.

He has worked hand and glove with the hawks who have now come up with their proposal of a National Assembly held under the shadow of the gun. A five hour session with the President before his provocative broadcast has proved this collusion without a shadow of doubt. His so called progressive supporters should take note of the role of their Chairman's collaboration with the forces of oppression. Dictatorship has been given a new lease of life and they would do well to realise that their own freedoms may be trampled in the dust along with the blood of workers and students in Bangla Desh.

Today the people of Bangladesh have been challenged. In the eyes of their rulers their struggle to realise their rights is merely the act of a handful of people out to instigate murder and loot. This crass reaction to the struggle and sacrifice of 70 million Bengalis would put even our ex-

imperial rulers to shame.

In this context even the calling of the National Assembly is being overtaken by events. Mr. Bhutto's acceptance, buttressed by reassurances of the LFO, is a mockery of the dead who gave their lives merely to make the Chairman change his mind. Now their memory demands much more than a mere debate for this has already been overshadowed by a dialogue of death in the streets. How far anything will come out of this session is uncertain, but the crisis will merely be postponed.

For the moment, the people of Bangla Desh have been reminded in no uncertain terms that power comes from the barrel of the gun. They have been reminded that sticks and rods are puny weapons when compared with the power of a mechanised force which sees itself as the sole guardian of the nation's future. They have been told that if their expectations extend beyond the National Assembly they will have to face the consequences. In throwing down this gauntlet the authors have banked on the fact that this was an essentially middle class dominated movement which in the moment of confrontation will act true to its salt and stand silent before the language of weapons.

But they are mistaken. This is a people's struggle. Today the emotions and interests of 70 million people are involved. Even the cautious civil servant has cast in his lot with the struggle. The extent of non-cooperation is almost unique. Today the loyalty of no one in Bangla Desh to the regime of the oppressor is certain. It matters not if the weak waiver because the workers, students and eventually the peasants are aware and ready to throw themselves into the final phase of the struggle.

Their lack of military preparedness may make this a long drawn out struggle where much blood will have to fertilise the soil of Bangla Desh. The struggle has merely confirmed what had been proved in 1969 that the people are no longer afraid of the gun. But this is only a first step. The outcome is however never in doubt, only the time and cost in blood. Leaders may come and go but the people will carry the banner of freedom forward. The National Assembly may therefore meet and go through the motions of debate. But it is now clear that unless this ratifies the elemental urge of the people of Bangla Desh for self-rule, it will merely be a staging post in the ongoing struggle of the people.

3.2 Over the Precipice*

Ever since Mr. Bhutto's decision to boycott the assembly, confrontation has been in the air. The movement of anti-aircraft guns into strategic positions outside the airport a week ago had already generated consternation amidst the public that something was afoot. There was a report that ex-Governor Ahsan cancelled his visit to Pindi at the last minute but this was put at rest when he left the next day to attend the Governor's conference in Pindi. As a backdrop to this, Mr. Bhutto and President Yahya had held emergency discussions in Pindi. To crown it all came the abrupt dismissal of the cabinet.

Following the meeting of Martial Law administrators and governors, Lt. Gen Yakub, Governor Ahsan and Lt. Gen. Peerzada flew to Karachi, first for talks with Mr. Bhutto and then onward, for talks with Sheikh Mujib. Whilst these three emissaries were in Karachi, news of Sheikh Mujib's press conference giving his reactions to Mr. Bhutto's political posture and underlining the dangerous implications of any further postponement of the National Assembly beyond 3 March came over the wires. The statement broke a long and deliberate policy of restraint by the Sheikh on Bhutto's histrionics and appears to have been inspired by concern that Bhutto's intransigence may well have pressured the President into postponement.

Following this statement, President Yahya's emissaries appeared to have detoured back to Pindi for more consultations with Yahya. Ahsan and Yakub then flew into Dacca. Peerzada was also expected and some newsmen even went to the airport to meet him but he did not come at all.

*Published in *Forum*, March 6, 1971.

In Dacca it appears that Governor Ahsan indicated to Mujib, in his last and fateful meeting the prospect of a possible postponement. Mujib warned him in no uncertain terms of the dangerous consequences of such a move. In the meantime, the Awami League MNA's were in closed door session since 27 February to discuss the party's constitutional draft. President Yahya had also flown to Karachi en route to Dacca. West wing MNA's from Baluchistan, NWFP, Punjab and even the tribal areas were all on their way to Dacca for the National Assembly session, which on all counts, was scheduled for 3 March. On 28 February the emergency electrical generator was moved into place next to the President's house indicating the imminent arrival of the President.

Incoming passengers from Karachi reported that President Yahya was booked to fly on the afternoon plane to Dacca. All security precautions had been made at Karachi Airport, passengers reported two hours in advance as customary when they have such august company. But the President did not catch his flight and the plane flew without him into the conflagration which was spreading like wildfire throughout Bangla Desh.

At 1:05 p.m. on 1 March a statement was issued in the name of President Yahya which, contrary to all precedent, was read by an announcer on Radio Pakistan. Half an hour after hearing of the postponement of the assembly *sine die*, crowds, aroused to spontaneous outrage, were converging from all parts of Dacca towards Hotel Purbani, where the AL MNA's were in session. Many had armed themselves with bamboos, iron rods and even hockey sticks. They were joined by the crowd at Dacca stadium who were watching the fag end of a boring cricket match. The moment the news came through, the play was suspended, shops were closed and people, depending on their class and disposition, had either fled homewards or had armed themselves and headed for the Purbani.

At 2:30 p.m. Mujib, flanked by his grim faced high command, held a hurried press conference in which he declared that the postponement would not go unchallenged. He called a two day hartal on the 2nd for Dacca, and on the 3rd for the whole of Bangla Desh.

From Purbani the crowd converged on Paltan where it was addressed by Tofail Ahmed and Mannan of Jatiyo Sramik League. The mood was militant and the crowd demanded action.

On 2 March they got it. The hartal was of course total. Not even a

bicycle could move in any corner of Dacca. On all the main roads barricades had been set up to obstruct movement of security forces. This provoked the first clash. At Tejgaon, at the entrance of the Second Capital, the most formidable barricades had been set up by Tuesday morning. These were guarded by a highly militant populace. The police from Tejgaon thana were asked to remove the barricades but after taking a look at the menacing crowd went back to the thana, from where they refused to budge in spite of the exhortations of their officers.

After a while a detail of security forces appeared from the airport side. When they attempted to remove the barricades the crowd shouted slogans at them and they took up action stations. At that stage another security force came up in a jeep from the Second Capital.

On being confronted by the crowd, the force suddenly opened fire. Estimates indicate two dead and five injured, but there is no way of confirming the accuracy of this figure.

Since then this has been a trouble spot and there was firing again that night when curfew had been imposed at 8 p.m.

In other areas of the city reports of clashes went on. In Jinnah Avenue *goonda* elements attempted to cash in on the situation and indulge in some free loot from putatively non-Bengali shops. The Awami League city chief rushed to the spot with volunteers and caught some looters with goods from Razzak, a local shirt shop. They were made to return the goods and soundly beaten. In Nawabpur similar cases of looting occurred by local *goondas* and there were some communal clashes which seem to have been confined again to the local *goondas*.

Tension and militancy mounted throughout the day. The barricades, slogans and sounds of gunfire gave the city the air of a battlefield. In other parts of East Pakistan cities and towns had spontaneously come to a standstill. A strike by PIA employees had effectively cut East Pakistan off from the rest of the world.

The curfew imposed from 8 p.m. therefore promised more clashes. By 9 p.m. there were reports of crowds in the streets in many areas of Dacca. The chatter of gunfire could be heard throughout the night in many areas of the city. Next day's toll indicated that in Medical College alone there were 35 dead and 113 injured, other casualties went to Mitford Hospital or were placed in Iqbal Hall at Dacca University.

On Wednesday 3 March, the atmosphere was electric. The crowds

were out, the barricades up in Dacca as the whole of East Pakistan came to a total standstill. In Dacca news had spread that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman would address the meeting called that afternoon at Paltan Maidan by the Students League. By 3 p.m. Paltan overflowed. Most were armed and ready at a call to march into hell. This was the union of the middle class students, the working class of the industrial areas and the *shorbohara* of the street and slums. The mood was revolution. Gone was the comfortable middle class ambience of such meetings. This was the people in the raw and demanding action.

The preliminary speeches by the Student League leaders and Mannan went all the way in their demands, making Six-Points into a positively reactionary slogan. Sheikh Mujib, faced with this armed and militant crowd, was faced with his own moment of truth.

In a unique display of crowd management, which put his charisma to the supreme test, he lowered the temperature of the crowd. He stopped short of the demands voiced earlier and asked instead for a peaceful transfer to the elected representatives of the people following the withdrawal of Martial Law. He guaranteed to enforce law and order if curfew was lifted. He warned looters and pledged his protection to the life, and property of all people. This was designed to put confidence into the panic stricken non-Bengali population who had felt that the movement had taken a communal turn.

The Sheikh gave the regime till 7 March to come to terms. Till then he called a continuous hartal and enjoined the people to go in for a peaceful non-cooperation movement including non-payment of taxes.

The crowd which left the meeting was subdued and this was reflected in the tempo the next day where the military was more contained and less shooting took place.

That was significant because that very morning A. Mannan, MNA, Tangail, Chief Whip of the ALPP and Publicity Secretary of the party, had been beaten by security forces and had his shoulder shattered. Ashrafuddin Chowdhury of the party, who was with him, was forced at gun point to clear a barricade at Outer Circular Road. More such confrontations were imminent but were obviously subdued after the meeting. This did not still prevent firing that night but on a reduced scale from the previous night.

President Yahya's announcement of an RTC to be convened on 10

March appeared in this atmosphere to be almost surrealistic. It completely ignored the climate of opinion in the province which was hardly propitious for detached conversation with tribal *maliks* and the sole representatives of such prehistoric entities like the Jammaat and even the Convention Muslim League, not to mention Mr. Bhutto himself.

Mujib's refusal to attend the RTC did not require much discussion. By this time the situation was becoming untenable for the regime as the authority of the administration ground to a halt and its influence extended only within the range of its guns. Not only had the hartals brought the province to a standstill, but the administration itself began to join the people in the non-cooperation movement. Civil servants, judges, and other government officials were willingly staying away from work and actively pledging their loyalty to the people's representatives. This reached its climax when not even a judge could be found to administer the oath to the new governor, Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, on his arrival. The extent of unity behind Shekib Mujib and the degree of non-cooperation with the rulers is without parallel in the history of the freedom movement in this subcontinent and must be a sobering thought to the rulers.

Sobriety however takes time to have its impact. Meanwhile, the killings went on. Firing on unarmed workers in Tongi, on demonstrators in Jessore, Khulna and other outlying areas continued to add to the pantheon of martyrs.

Whilst some looting and communal disturbance went on, the security forces rarely got to the scene on time and it was left to Awami League volunteers to apprehend and attempt to restore loot to the owners. By the third night their volunteers, at least in Dacca, had enforced a degree of law and order which had proved quite beyond the capability of the gun-toting military convoys who had formerly policed the city. The withdrawal of the security forces from the centre of the city to strategic redoubts around the airport and cantonment was thus as much a reflection of reality on the ground as it was tribute to the sense of discipline of the people.

The gradual collapse of authority, along with the unanimous and resolute response of the people in support of their leaders and against the oppressors, was expected to invoke a rational response from the

regime. Instead, in his broadcast of 6 March, which first surprised and then outraged the whole populace of Bangla Desh, Yahya attempted to blame the leaders of the people and attributed this uprising to the act of a handful of arsonists, vandals and murderers. The fact that the progenitor of the crisis, Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, got off scot free in this blanket indictment, indicated that his tactic of closing ranks with the ruling elite had paid off. Bangla Desh's demands were now confronted with the language of weapons as one of the reputedly most hawkish elements in the power elite was pulled in as governor to replace Admiral Ahsan who had refused to carry the responsibility for the consequences of the postponement any longer.

The military capability is being reinforced and an attempt may be made to enforce authority on the renegade administrators whose allegiance is now pledged to the people. Sheikh Mujib's response to Yahya's challenge in his rally on 7 March has set the stage for another showdown.

Despite considerable pressure from his rank and file, Mujib has however managed to keep the door open for an amicable solution to the crisis. The public mood wants much more than a mere dialogue which threatens to be frustrated by the LFO, reiterated once again as a challenge by President Yahya. Mujib has thus put his own leadership to the test in deferring the holocaust which must follow the inevitable confrontation with the reinforced hawks. In this he had to balance the urge for compromise by the middle class elements already feeling the pinch from the hartals and fearful of the chaos to come, against the student-proletarian base which now dominate the mood on the streets.

His speech was thus less than what the militants demanded from the dias but was no craven capitulation either. He succeeded in returning the challenge to President Yahya and placed the responsibility of genocide and national disintegration solely on those who wield power today.

His demand for an end to Martial Law, the withdrawal of troops and power to the people is no more than a request to come to terms with the de facto situation in Bangla Desh today. Killing, looting, and arson has stopped and the majority has shown itself fully capable of coping with the situation. What exists of the administration is already being run by the Awami League, all officials willingly take orders from them to see that the province does not degenerate into chaos. To attempt to reverse this

situation by attempts to recapture the administration under Martial Law can only bring the province to a state of total collapse. The capability of the regime therefore only extends to the point where they can shoot down unarmed civilians and impose a reign of terror. But they can never hope to get the economy and administration of this province functioning again without the people's consent. If they are therefore serious about their search for a viable solution to the nation's future, the least they must do is to accept Sheikh Mujib's terms. Whether this will be enough to convince the people that the nation can be held together will depend on whether the assembly will cede the minimum demands of the people or whether they are merely deferring a showdown.

As it stands, it is not certain if even Six Points is saleable any longer in Bangla Desh. Mr. Bhutto is reported to have said he saw no difference between Six-Points and disintegration. He is now being given a practical demonstration that an entire new world lies beyond Six Points and that the authors of Six Points were ironically perhaps the last true integrationists left in Pakistan. Today the nation can hang together only by the freely given consent of the people of Bangla Desh. The power of weapons is no more capable of ensuring the integrity of the country than it was in keeping India under the British or united. Sheikh Mujib has recognised this point and risked his entire political life in buying time for a final answer. In this simple act he has shown that if the nation does break it will lie on the heads of those who pull the trigger.

3.3 From Non-cooperation to People's Raj*

There are few precedents for what is going on in Bangladesh today. In a matter of one week a de facto transfer of power from the Islamabad government to the people's representatives has been effected. This has not been achieved by any spectacular victory on the battle front or by foreign intervention, or a formal surrender of power by the rulers, but largely by peaceful means. One says this inspite of the massive death toll in the last week because these deaths were at the cost of the people of Bangladesh and the forces of oppression.

The unique feature of this condition springs from the fact that peaceful non-cooperation has been taken a stage beyond to active cooperation with the people's representatives. In most freedom struggles non-cooperation was a vital element in the struggle. This was designed to paralyse the economy and administration and make life for the rulers untenable. Such a move could not be sustained indefinitely because the ruling power could always depend on a class of collaborators from the ranks of the administration, business and property owning classes. These elements have made it possible for even the French to enforce their writ in Indo-China at the height of the resistance and even the Germans and Japanese to keep the society functioning during the period of occupation in Europe and South East Asia. In the freedom struggle in India, the civil service, judges and other elements, were always available to keep the show on the road and the police force was there to enforce law and order at all times. Only very rarely were troops required and this too in support, rather than in substitution, of the local administration.

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What is therefore unprecedented for Bangladesh is the fact that non-cooperation with the rulers in Islamabad is total. For the last week, not a single element in the administration has been available to collaborate, from the Chief Justice of East Pakistan, to the Chief Secretary. This has never happened to my knowledge in any other country, in contemporary history.

In the extraordinary case of Radio Pakistan, when the military arbitrarily suspended the broadcast of Sheikh Mujib's speech on 7 March at the Race Course, after having given prior permission, the staff simply closed shop and went home. This created a major crisis in the districts where the abrupt cancellation of an announced broadcast threatened to create a law and order situation as people suspected that Mujib had been arrested. When this prospect was intimated to the military authorities, along with the fact that no news at all would henceforth be broadcast from any Radio Station in Bangladesh, they agreed to let the news be broadcast on the 8th morning. On such terms did the Radio network here resume operations and continue to operate their own news bulletin from *Dacca Betar Kendra*, leaving Radio Laos from Karachi to tell us all about news in Laos and the Middle East - anywhere but about Bangladesh.

Non-cooperation was however only a first step. Even more remarkable has been the evolution from non-cooperation with Islamabad to cooperation with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Whilst the Eden Building remains a mausoleum for lost hopes, administration has come to life on Road 32, Dhanmondi, the residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

From 4 March, policy statements designed to restore normalcy in the province began to emanate from Road 32. The first decrees permitted banks to re-open from 5 March, between the hours of 2.30 and 4.30, where they were permitted to encash cheques to a limit of Rs.1500/- . The next day this was elaborated to permit encashment of cheques for payment of wages and salaries, but these required authentication by the trade union leader of the establishment. These steps were dictated by the fact that the common man was beginning to feel the pinch. The breaking of the crisis coincided with pay day in many factories and establishments and workers were faced with starvation unless they had some cash in hand.

The revival of banking has not been without problems. To begin with, there was a run on the banks for fear that banks may close again, rather than any threat of their imminent bankruptcy. In outlying districts,

branches could not open because they had exhausted their cash reserves and could not replenish this from their head office in Dacca due to the breakdown of communications. This has been partially normalised with improvements in the communications network. It is expected that very soon people's preference for cash will decline and the run on the banks will be reversed. The operation of the banks for only 2 hours however restricted the activities of the banks and a further decree on 8 March enabled them to operate longer. The decree permitted banks to also make disbursements for raw materials for the operation of factories, since the factories had been permitted to operate from 5 March but were put into difficulties because of banking restrictions. All these measures were dictated by the need to revive the economy and mitigate any hardship for the workers. The main problem was however to restrict a run on the banks and a flight of capital from Bangladesh.

In the same way, the Decree of 9 March permitted a selective revival of governmental activities. Parts of the State Bank needed to serve the banks, were opened up. Farmers were feeling the pinch so that the Agricultural Development Corporation was opened to resume supply of fertiliser to farmers and operate power pumps to water the winter crop. Jute and rice seed distribution was permitted. Movement of foodgrains and operation of food godowns was also permitted as were operation of utilities and arterial transport. For the rest, the Eden Building, Courts and Kutcheries remained closed. Another and more elaborate decree of 12 March carried the principle of selective Non-cooperation a stage further.

This however did not mean that all civil servants were sitting idle. They were carrying the struggle from its phase of non-cooperation to active cooperation with the Awami League. Groups of officials accepted the task of identifying problems and presenting them to Sheik Mujib for decision. A sort of improvised secretariat was in operation where streams of businessmen and civil servants were visiting in search of solutions to problems, consultation and reassurance. The conditions of work were difficult, but decisions were being made and in many cases more rapidly than within the Eden Buildings. This left much to be desired in the organisational apparatus, conditions of work and modus operandi. The lack of experience of the decision makers itself is a constraint. But work went on.

Today, as a result, the writ of the people's representatives covers the four corners of Bangladesh. Secretaries, Deputy Commissioners, Circle

Officers, policemen, are all taking orders from them. Police operate in conjunction with the AL volunteers to enforce a degree of law and order which is unusual, considering the troubled times. Local authorities in the mofussil have begun to collaborate with the *Sangram Parishad* (Resistance Committees) and take directives from them. Today, in fact, effective power and decision making within the administration emanates from one source - the Awami League.

Whilst the collaboration of the administration provides a unique dimension to the present situation it is, in terms off effectiveness, far less significant than the response of the people. The sanctions on the senior administrators for instance are, in practice, being exercised by their own subordinates, the Class III and IV employees. Their overzealousness in safeguarding any attempt to sabotage party decisions has occasionally paralysed those areas where administration has revived and sent officials weeping to Dhanmondi for assistance in imposing their own authority. Effective power has now moved from the Secretary to his subordinate and, even when normal lines of authority are restored, the relationship between the boss and his subordinate can never be the same again.

In private banks and offices again, as in factories, it is the workers who are safeguarding the interests of Bangladesh from evasion and possible sabotage by the top executives. Whilst many of these have collaborated, either out of a genuine sense of commitment or simple fear of their subordinates, some have attempted to use the relaxations permitted by the decree to secrete money out of the system. That it is not much worse must owe to the patriotism and vigilance of their own employees.

The movement has in effect released untold resources from within the people. Today, in law, there is no government in Bangladesh nor the sanctions which go with it. The limited decisions and authority exercised by the Awami League are not enforceable in any court of law nor is there any effective machinery to put their decisions into effect. If they pass a decree prohibiting private banks from remitting money out of Bangladesh or withdrawals for unauthorised purposes there is none to enforce it for them.

This extraordinary set up is thus predicated on the unstinted loyalty and co-operation of the common man with the people's representatives. We have seen how in offices it is the clerks and lower division worker who act as custodians of the public interest. Outside, inspite of some initial anarchy

which found expression in loot and communal vandalism, normalcy has returned. Even the escaped convicts seem to be acting with patriotism and restraint. Police report an actual decline in the crime rate from normal times. Today they collaborate with the green capped Awami League volunteers to police the towns not just against a recrudence of violence but generally to ensure law and order. In Gulshan and Dhanmondi, where middle class nerves are particularly on edge, volunteers have been visiting houses and making their presence felt.

This is not to say that some peaceful nirvana has descended upon Bangla Desh either. It is reported that chemicals for explosives have been taken away from the Dacca University Laboratories and the PCSIR laboratories by armed bands. Sentries of VIP's have been overpowered and their weapons seized. The other face of the struggle is going on and one can be sure that in any future upsurge violence will not be one sided.

Militancy is reflected in the spontaneous acts of resistance against the security forces. Their own press note reported that supplies to their base areas in Sylhet and Jessore were interrupted. It took 18 hours for a supply convoy to get from Khulna to Jessore because of cuts in the road by peasants. In Chittagong, M. V. Swat carrying the first reinforcements from West Pakistan, had been partially unloaded into wagons. But workers, taking their own initiative, suspended unloading and removed the becalmed wagons. All this reflects the spontaneous response of workers, peasants and the common man to what they feel is a struggle for survival.

In this context, all attention is directed to Yahya who is expected any day. Lt. General Yakub left Dacca on 9th and was replaced by the governor designate Lt. General Tikka Khan. It is reported that Yakub had no stomach for killing people whose language he learnt and culture he admired, in support of a lost cause. The security forces were apparently staying within barracks avoiding confrontation. Indications are that they are marking time for Yahya's arrival.

And what does this promise? Yahya's strategy over the last week indicates the use of the carrot and the stick. Whilst the tone of his broadcast on the 6th was designed to give maximum offence to Bangla Desh, in substance, the declaration of a date for the assembly, without preconditions, was a climb down. But then his reference to the LFO and his despatch of a reputed hawk to replace Yakub indicated he brandished a big stick. But again Tikka Khan has shown relative restraint since his arrival.

Now we find the great Chairman Bhutto shedding a few crocodile tears for his dead victims and talking the language of conciliation in his cable to the Sheikh.

The wellsprings of bitterness and frustration generated by recent events invoke only suspicion within the people. Many see this as a gesture to buy time before the final showdown. This is envisaged as taking place when Yahya vetoes a Six-Points based constitution. By this time sufficient reinforcements will be at hand to cope with all eventualities.

But another school sees Yahya coming to terms with reality in Bangla Desh. For effective power is now irrevocably out of the hands of Islamabad and any attempt to re-establish it will require the reconquest of the whole province piece by piece. Nor can they expect people to merely play the role of live targets for the movement has advanced light years between 1 and 10 March. In this situation Yahya may well cede Mujib's demands *de facto*. He will let him continue to exercise power in Bangla Desh, he will keep his troops in the barracks, he will, in effect, end Martial Law by the simple expedient of not enforcing it. This will then be presented as an exercise in restraint and good faith which should be sufficient to let Mujib come to the National Assembly.

Mujib would then have to decide whether demand for *de jure* rather than *de facto* power was sufficient to precipitate confrontation or whether he should go ahead and join the constitutional debate whilst consolidating his hold on Bangla Desh. He must have realised by now that in any system controlled from Islamabad provincial power has limited attractions. He has no control of domestic revenues, foreign exchange or aid. He will also face the risk of veto once he passes his draft unless Yahya has realised that Six Points is the best of all evils he faces in his confrontation with Bangla Desh.

If Mujib can get Six Points carried he may possibly be able to contain his own hawks and keep the polity together. If however Yahya vetoes or Bhutto again sabotages the Assembly then Mujib will have no option but to seek a showdown on the streets. With his middle class base becoming progressively more irrelevant he is becoming more dependent on the people to sustain his present confrontation and to lead any future movement. Here he will have to decide between leading their struggle in a full fledged people's war or making himself redundant in their next and final upsurge.

3.4 Rebirth of a People*

For the first time since the Battle of Plassey Bengal is free. This is not freedom in the juridical sense. Nor does it ignore the guns which remain pointed at us. But today for the first time in two centuries decisions are being made by the people of Bangla Desh directing the course of their politics and economy without reference to the vested interests of alien ruling groups. The presence of these groups has in the course of 10 days which shook the nation, been restricted to fortified enclaves within Bangla Desh. Here they remain islands in a hostile sea with not a friendly face to turn to. To reimpose their will on Bangla Desh will for all practical purposes represent to the people, an act of aggression, analogous to the French and Dutch attempts to reoccupy Indo-China and Indonesia from "free" governments set up after the people's anti-Japanese war. No longer will this act of reconquest be seen as the act of a legitimate government enforcing its writ but will appear to the people as an act of usurpation against which resistance will become a sacred act.

To dream of any return to domination by the West ruling elite is absurd from the very outset. All that they can hope for is to continue their genocide until the bullets are exhausted. They can seek to cripple the economy through a scorched earth policy and thus bring death and chaos to this land. But they cannot rule us again no matter how much they reinforce their isolated enclaves.

Awareness of this reality can point to only one course for any civilised

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and rational human being. Yahya must come to terms with Sheikh Mujib by accepting his four points. The four points merely asks for legal recognition of a *de facto* situation and requires no concession on Yahya's part. Yahya must know that the trade and aid on which Mr. Bhutto thought to break Pakistan are lost forever since no exchange can accrue to them without exports moving out of Bangla Desh. Nor can resources be drained with a total boycott in operation against West wing goods and no taxes accruing to the centre.

This however presupposes rationality. If the bloodlust alone predominates they may yet seek revenge in death and destruction and leave us a wasteland before they pull out. Against the threat of economic war, the people must be vigilant and all factories and economic assets must be guarded by the workers and the people as the property of Bangla Desh.

We should here expect democrats, socialists and all people of humane impulse in West Pakistan to see that this holocaust does not take place. Our war was never with them and they must now, from a shared humanity and history, see that sanity prevails amongst their rulers. To socialists it may be said that a just society in West Pakistan can never be built from the blood and bones of the peasants, workers and students of Bangla Desh. We will rise from the ashes of destruction to rebuild a new order but for their connivance they will forever be held under the jack boot which tried to crush us. Balochis, Pathans, Sindhis and even the common man of Punjab will be bound to dictatorship with the progressive leader of today becoming the slave master of tomorrow.

To the world at large again Bangladesh makes its appeal. Chinese guns, American ammunition, British and Soviet equipment are being used in this act of genocide. Today the selfish interests of the great powers leave Bangla Desh without sympathy. If these powers were to simply express their displeasure at the course of events and indicate that their own tools could not be used to commit genocide, this ramshackle machine of repression would grind to a standstill.

Till then we must stand alone and appeal over the heads of governments to the people and ask them to tell their governments that the status quo itself is ephemeral and that any future they seek in this region lies only with the people and not their oppressors.

Today only our will, courage, unity and capability to resist remain our

assets. Out of adversity have emerged new reserves of strength from the people. Today the middle class is camp follower rather than leader of the movement. They are uneasy at the consequences of confrontation. They will continue to breathe fire into their now tax free beer and take violent resolutions to fight to the last drop of someone else's blood but secretly they can safely abuse compromise whilst enjoying its fruits. Before setting out to a day of rhetorical aggression, they see that full use has been made of drawing rights from the banks. Vital supplies are hoarded for their emergencies and cars are full of petrol. Whilst troops are away they will march the streets but will make sure to be indoors during curfew whilst praising the courage of curfew breakers.

Luckily for Bangla Desh the movement is no longer led by these forces. Today the character of the resistance has changed. It is the students, workers, the lower middle class, the *bustee* dweller and rickshaw puller, even the escaped convict who dominate the mood. They are no longer afraid of death. The threat of genocide itself springs from this new courage. If people were cowards a spray of bullets would tranquillise any movement. But today millions are there to replace the thousand who are fallen, and this must haunt their leaders as much as their oppressors.

The character of the movement must therefore not only condition the response of the leadership but the social order. These men are not shedding their blood so that their bourgeois masters can safely emerge from their homes to dominate the economy and return to the good life. This must be one war where the warriors share the spoils. Seeing workers and clerks taking responsible decisions on how to run their enterprise, one sees that they must be made the owners of the wealth they produce. A socialist order must emerge out of this upheaval for then it will be the people who will fight to defend their gains. We must never again repeat the experience of 1947 when all the enthusiasm generated by the struggle was dissipated in building a society of privilege and greed. We have had the rare opportunity of a second birth. Let us build with and for the people.

3.5 Negotiating from Strength*

The movement for Bangla Desh is completing its third week. By now the transfer of power within Bangla Desh to the people's representatives is total. The Opposite side of the coin, non-cooperation with Islamabad, continues. No civilian official went to receive the President on his arrival. M. L. R. directives to civilian employees of the security forces to join work on 15 March were ignored in spite of the contingent hazard of 10 year's R. I. and workers donated a day's salary to the Awami League Relief Fund. Eleven Thousand civilian employees of the Ordnance Factory at Joydebpur joined them in a boycott of work.

The population continues its refusal to provision security forces and the Quarter Master General of the Army has had to personally fly into Dacca to examine the supply position and make alternative arrangements, which, it is reported, included the flying of tinned provisions from West Pakistan by giant C-130 transport planes.

On the other hand, the military build-up goes on. Additional troops have been flown in though it is not certain if the N. S. C. cargo of 7,500 auxiliaries have as yet disembarked at Chittagong. From Comilla the S. S. G. commando unit has reportedly been brought into Dacca and tanks designed for securing our borders have been brought down to Dacca from Rangpur.

It was in this atmosphere that Yahya flew into Dacca unannounced at 2.30 p.m. on 15 March. In fact, All India Radio announced the news of his departure for Dacca before Radio Pakistan. His arrival however was hardly secret since a massive contingent of police, EPR and army lined the airport to President's House and provided him with an escort of

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exceptional ferocity. It is not clear precisely what all this was about but Yahya's drive was greeted only with stony silence and the still black flags which bedecked his route.

There was much speculation about his entourage and some suggestion that the entire war cabinet including Generals Hamid and Gul Hassan had accompanied the President. It is confirmed that he was accompanied by Lieut. General Peerzada, principal staff officer to the President and Omar, security boss of the services, though ex-Law Minister Justice Cornelius flew in on 17th March in his new capacity as Legal Adviser to the President. In fact, the Chief of Inter Services Public Relations, Brig. Siddiqui, was at great pains to impress newsmen that there was no special complement of generals accompanying the President, though this did not put speculation at rest that Hamid and Gul Hassan were holed out in the cantonment keeping a watching brief on the talks.

Talks with Sheikh Mujib commenced next morning at President's House when Mujib, flanked by his bodyguards, but otherwise alone, drove into the lion's den. The first talks lasted two and a half hours. They met again the next morning for an hour. What has come out of the talks awaits revelation but some optimism derived from the fact that they went on for several days and that a legal expert rather than an artillery expert had been sent for. This did not however suppress much anxious speculation in the province which included the untrue rumour that Mujib had walked out of his first meeting in a great rage.

Indeed, the barometer in Dacca continued to fluctuate, with the nervous middle class moving to the villages in order to get out of the way of a possible shooting war and the militants keeping up the tempo with local drilling and other more meaningful preparations.

In this period the economy continued to remain precariously poised between standstill and revival. A consolidated decree of regulations issued by the Awami League on 15 March carried on the task of selective revival of the administration and full revival of the economy. The assertion of control over Bangladesh was carried a step further by extending the no-tax campaign into one of collecting taxes for the "Government of Bangladesh". All central provincial and local taxes were designated for payment into special accounts to be opened by the only two Banks with their headquarters in Bangladesh and the State Bank of Pakistan and Treasury remained immobilised. Pending export bills were

also designated to these two banks for negotiation.

The State Bank and all commercial banks continued to function at the direction of the Awami League. This did not prevent the run on banks from continuing but there were some signs of the situation improving as more relaxation on the controls over banks was permitted.

All this is not to suggest that this extraordinary metamorphosis of the movement from non-cooperation to people's Raj was not causing some problems. The banking system began to acquire a lopsided appearance as local banks gained deposits at the expense of non-local banks. Their principals, in turn, in Karachi, seemed to be reluctant to respond to their local office's calls for transfer of funds so that the local State Bank was forced into the role of lender of the last resort to non-local banks to enable them to meet the run on their deposits. The phenomenon was one of neurosis without any immediate foundation in fact and corrective measures were being supplied through call lending by the local banks to those who were facing a run. Thus, the possibly inspired fear that non-local banks would close their doors did not have any real basis at all. Once this awareness sinks in there is some prospect of a restoration of normalcy within the banking system notwithstanding motivated attempts to build up emotions in favour of local banks.

On the industrial front, however, uncertainties kept production low and lowered efficiency. This again reflected the contradictions between non-cooperation and people's raj. Party exhortations to now resume work with redoubled vigour for the cause of Bangla Desh had as yet not got through to the work floor. Apart from the absence of any operational machinery to translate party directives into specifics workers are sceptical about a system where the prosperity of Bangla Desh is co-terminus with the prosperity of their factory owner.

Whilst this unique situation continued to pose new problems everyday the one certainty remained the inescapable break down of Islamabad's authority over the affairs of Bangla Desh. With each day and directive, this authority has receded and today any attempt to restore it will appear to the people as being little different from a British effort to reoccupy the sub-continent. In this context, the sole power of the Islamabad regime appears to be its capacity to inflict death on the people and to attempt to precipitate economic chaos as is evident by the diversion of food ships from Chittagong to Karachi. The question may therefore well be asked as

to why they find themselves in this untenable position where their only option to coming to terms with Sheikh Mujib's demands is to unleash genocide.

The answer, as with most wars of aggression, appears to lie in miscalculation. Those who initiated confrontation by the postponement of the Assembly session believed that the public response would be small and localised and would succumb to a swift and effective application of force. Mr. Bhutto is reported to have told visitors that such a firm reaction to the agitation would soon bring the Awami League to their senses. No one dreamt that within 7 days not only would the people vigorously resist attempts at mass murder but would bring central authority to a complete standstill. Perhaps no one even within the Awami League could have believed that non-cooperation could be so total as to place them in command of Bangla Desh within a week of their call for action.

The second miscalculation came from the belief that Mujib would not gain sufficient command of the situation to bring the law and order situation under his control so quickly so that even the excuse of wanton loot and mayhem, which was serving as a fig leaf for operation genocide, was not available to them. Yahya's report of loot and murder as the justification for killings had by 6th March ceased to bear any relation to reality. The calm which prevails in Dacca since his arrival is evidence enough of Mujib's authority.

Within West Pakistan itself the front began to crumble, Chairman Bhutto had been assigned the role of rousing the masses against Bangla Desh. He went around circulating the totally tendentious canard that Six Points meant the perpetual domination of West Pakistan by Bengalis when in fact it meant a repudiation of this very principle. In this task it was expected that Mr. Bhutto would use his control over the masses to intimidate other parties in West Pakistan into boycotting the Assembly so that confrontation would be total.

Bhutto's task had temporary success but by the end of February the attempt was facing disaster and the only party which had joined the boycott was the Qayyum Muslim League. This party had all along been receiving support or patronage from a certain section of the administration who now pressured them into lining up with Bhutto. It is well known that Rizvi, Director of Central Intelligence, had openly persuaded prominent figures

to join the QML and that Major General Umer was also soliciting support for this party in the election along with Nawab Qizalbash. Rizvi and Umer along with Major General Akber, the Service Intelligence Chief, appear to have switched their support to Bhutto after the QML's debacle and there is evidence that Umer actually canvassed MNA's outside the PPP and QML against attending the Assembly.

When even three members of the QML booked their seats for Dacca and Bhutto faced the threat that more than half of his Sindhi MNA's and some from Punjab would also take the flight the Umer-Akber axis, buttressed by Bhutto's new adviser and intimate, M. M. Ahmed, had to intervene. They seem to have mounted sufficient pressure to bail Bhutto out by having the Assembly session postponed. It is not certain if the additional time was desired to firm up the crumbling West wing front behind Bhutto to ensure a total confrontation with Bangla Desh or whether they wanted to sabotage the entire attempt to restore democracy.

The totally unprecedented resistance to this move within Bangla Desh has led to the inevitable reaction within West Pakistan. Whilst many political figures in the West began by supporting the postponement, by the end of the second week of people's Raj in Bangla Desh all bar the PPP were demanding that Yahya concede Mujib's Four Points *in toto*. Bhutto, who remained apologetic and on the defensive ever since the 1st March, was thus compelled to further expose his ambition in Karachi on 14th March. Here he introduced West Pakistan for the first time to the concept of the two-nation theory and demanded that power be handed to the two majority parties of Pakistan, namely the Awami League in Bangla Desh and People's Party in West Pakistan.

Bhutto's drive towards becoming Shahinshah of West Pakistan had of course been exposed in the columns of Forum sometime ago, though none would have thought that he would be crass enough to proclaim his ambition at such a psychologically unfavourable moment. Needless to say the reaction in the two regions, NWFP and Baluchistan where his writ does not run, was the most unfavourable. To them this was a clear attempt to reimpose Punjabi domination on them through the agency of Mr. Bhutto.

Even within the PPP there were serious misgivings not only at Mr. Bhutto's present posture but his entire strategy. Whatever their misgivings about Six-Points, they must have awakened to the fact that the

price of resisting Six Points and also imposing their will on the Baloch and Pathan was a permanent partnership with the likes of General Umer. Far from PPP being the champion of democracy in West Pakistan they would merely degenerate into the civilian front of another junta.

Whilst the events of last month have exposed Mr. Bhutto for what he is and perhaps in the process inflicted serious damage to the progressive cause in West Pakistan, it is not certain whether the wings of the hawks have at all been clipped. Whilst no man of whatever persuasion in West Pakistan could now doubt the Himalayan blunder implicit in the act of postponement and fail to be aware of the near-fatal damage to the concept of national unity, it is yet to be seen whether the right lessons will be drawn from the experience. A sensible general as much as a sensible leader having miscalculated would attempt to recoup his losses by trying to come to terms with the people's representatives in Bangla Desh and handing over power to them in order to create an atmosphere where the future of the country can be examined soberly. On the other hand, both generals and leaders have also been known to compound their own blunders, thereby converting simple folly into unmitigated disaster.

3.6 Options for a Sane Man*

It must be embarrassing for a President of a country to require the equivalent of a brigade to ensure his safe transmittal from the Airport to President's House. Sitting behind barbed wires President's House, Dacca looks as if it is in Khe Sanh rather than the garden city. Yahya must feel like the commander of an occupation army-General Westmoreland visiting his battle-front. Can he in all sincerity claim in this milieu to speak for millions of Pakistanis. Or can he seriously claim that his security forces are in any sense holding the country together rather than holding down 55 per cent of the country by force.

Is force a basis for national integrity and can the armed forces ensure this? It was not the armed forces which created Pakistan. During the Pakistan Movement when thousands of Bengalis including Sheikh Mujib were facing jail and lathi charges, they were fighting for the British Empire in other ex-colonial territories. Whoever made sacrifices for the creation of Pakistan it was hardly the armed forces and no one in Bangla Desh needs any lectures from them on the concept of Pakistan.

By what right do they then lay claim to custodianship of the integrity of Pakistan? Certainly, no one has offered this responsibility to them. If anyone has a responsibility it is Sheikh Mujib who was given the charge by 75 million people of realising Six Points for Bangladesh. These 75 million people are not aware of investing any corresponding responsibility on the armed forces beyond the task of defending their borders. How then do they claim to act in their name?

The notion of preserving nationhood at gunpoint lies shattered.

*Published as a *Forum* editorial, March 20, 1971.

Whether people want Pakistan or not they certainly will not have it thrust on them at bayonet point. Pakistan was made by the mass movement of the people through a democratic struggle and it will stay or break solely on the freely given consent of these people. If the people of Bangla Desh, formerly known as East Pakistan, feel now that the price of one nation is too heavy to bear, they are sovereign to bid farewell to their brothers in the West just as they exercised their sovereign right to part from Mother India.

This knowledge must seriously limit Yahya's options. He now knows for certain that 75 million people have repudiated not only his regime but his right to defend the integrity of the nation. He therefore can only claim to speak for West Pakistan. But who in West Pakistan wants his regime as spokesman? Not the Baluch who have faced armed repression in Ayub's days. Not the Pathan, and Sindhi who are far more worried about Punjabi colonisation than national integrity and have little sympathy for a predominantly Punjabi army. Not even the mass of the Punjabis who are more interested in getting the feudal lords and capitalists off their back rather than suppressing a distant land, whose plunder is not even shared with them.

This reduces their constituency to a coterie of Zamindars, bureaucrats, and capitalists whose immediate interests are threatened by the return to civilian rule. It is their good fortune that in Mr. Bhutto they have found a willing cat's paw who is ready to barter his popular support in Sind and Punjab for a share of power with the ruling groups. Does Yahya really intend to unleash his army to protect the interests of this handful of buccaneers who have bled the nation for 23 years? And will he even secure their interests by carrying through his task?

Today west wing traders faced with the loss of their markets in Bangla Desh and the cessation of remittances are themselves cabling the President to accept Mujib's demands. Even exploitation presupposes some element of popular support in the exploited region where local comprador elements can act as conduits to the people. You cannot exploit the dead nor can you find a market on the battlefield.

Or will this protect the interest of the Armed Forces? Taxes to pay their salaries are no longer forthcoming. Foreign exchange to pay for their hardware has dried up. Nor will aid be forthcoming to a regime whose very legitimacy is in question by 55 per cent of its population. If they sought to secure their defence budget, this must be one of the historically

most inept ways of getting about the job. If they sought a second front against India, they must know that this has totally collapsed since the borders of Bangla Desh lie undefended as all guns are turned inward on the local people. In this time the army has transformed itself from the role of a national army defending the nation's borders to a mercenary army suppressing its own people.

So what interests then are left to be defended in Bangla Desh? Force as an instrument of policy is now meaningless since it cannot secure any of its objectives. Therefore, force in Bangla Desh can only become an end in itself. Modern weaponry gives any psychopathic General considerable capacity to visit death and destruction on unarmed people. But even this exercise has a finite capability. Indeed, it is not certain if even this army with its mixed ethnic composition in Bangla Desh can be carried along the road to mass murder of unarmed civilians.

The world hopes that we are dealing with sane men and we have no reason to think that Yahya and his junta are anything less than sane however misguided their past actions. In such a situation, a public renunciation of the use of force by Yahya to solve the nation's political problems, backed by a withdrawal to West Pakistan of units pumped in since 1st March and the return of the rest to barracks, would clear the air.

Once the principle of a political settlement is accepted, then there can be no option but to come to terms with the people's demands. It now has to be confirmed whether Bangla Desh will settle at least for Six Points as their minimum demand or they have been pushed by recent events to a point of no return. If the nation is to break, let it go peacefully and without bitterness to live as a friend and neighbour. If it is to stay together on the basis of Six Points, then one can get down to the specific task of making Six Points workable in West Pakistan. We know it works for Bangla Desh and the blueprints are ready. In an atmosphere of goodwill created by the transfer of power to the people and the acceptance of Six Points *in toto* for Bangla Desh within the context of a renunciation of force by the armed forces, there is no reason why the problem of West Pakistan should not be solved by the National Assembly within 120 days. But all these decisions must be taken within days. Time is running out and each day may produce the spark which could fire a general conflagration. There is no time for half measures by Yahya. He must act decisively and immediately or the people themselves will be forced to the fatal last step.

3.7 Negotiating for Bangladesh*

Conflicting Explanations

The course of events within Pakistan, and Bangla Desh in particular, is in great measure going to be determined by the intentions and decisions of those military leaders who rule Pakistan today. In assessing their possible course of action it is instructive to look back on the events within Pakistan which culminated in the occurrences of March 25 and their elemental aftermath.

It was widely believed outside Pakistan that the decision by President Yahya to crack down on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League party was due to a breakdown in their political negotiations in Dacca prior to March 25. This has been given some currency by President Yahya's broadcast of March 26¹. But a subsequent press release of the Government of Pakistan dated May 6² stated that the military action was designed as a pre-emptive strike against a secession move by Mujib planned for March 26 and aided by a mutiny of Bengali troops and by Indian support. This subsequent explanation was at no stage touched upon by the President in his March 26 broadcast, and seems to have been a belated afterthought; no disinterested observer has come forward to lend credibility to this story.

What really happened? It is easy to piece together facts based on personal knowledge, but motives are harder to interpret. The emphasis will therefore be on putting the record straight, though some element of speculation remains unavoidable.

* Published in *South Asian Review*, July 1971.

The First Round of Talks

The first round of talks on the constitution took place between President Yahya and Sheikh Mujib around the middle of January in Dacca. It was hoped that the President would at this stage spell out his own interpretation of the "unity and integrity of Pakistan", and would indicate what aspects of the Awami League Six Point programme, if any, aroused misgivings within the ruling group. It was hoped that the "military interest" would be declared and that the terms on which the President was willing to transfer power would be put forward clearly. The President's Legal Framework Order (LFO), which was cited in parliamentary debates in Britain³, was a remarkably unspecific document which could mean all things to all men. By suggesting that the President would not accept a constitution which prejudiced the unity and integrity of Pakistan it begged the whole issue of the election which was being fought, not on the existence of Pakistan, but on whose interpretation of the terms of nationhood had the widest acceptance. The LFO was relevant merely because it indicated that the President reserved the right to veto any constitution presented to him. Since his LFO was unspecific on what would invoke such a veto it was expected that he would spell out what seems to have been deliberately left unsaid in his LFO.

Contrary to all expectation, in these initial talks with Mujib, Yahya had no positive views to state. Along with his aide, Lieutenant-General Peerzada, he gave a careful hearing to the Awami League team on the implication of the Six Points. He seems to have been probing to see if the Awami League had done its homework, and found that the team was well briefed by its advisers on the legal and economic background. As he might have been aware, the Awami League advisers had in fact begun preparation a year before of a constitutional draft based on the Six Points and had worked out in detail the various negotiating options open to the party, and their implications.

At the end of this session the President appeared satisfied that the Six Points did not mean the disintegration of Pakistan, but suggested that agreement be reached with Mr. Bhutto so that an early transfer of power could take place. On his departure from Dacca, he referred to Mujib as the future prime minister of Pakistan.

The President Consults Mr. Bhutto

The Awami League believed that the reference to Mr. Bhutto implied

that the President would elucidate his unarticulated views through Bhutto. From Dacca Yahya had gone to Bhutto's home in Larkana, where they had had long talks; Bhutto's impending visit to Dacca was seen as an occasion for serious discussion at which the real "West Pakistan interest" would be spelt out.

I had paid a visit to West Pakistan several weeks earlier to meet various PPP leaders who were involved in the task of drawing up the PPP version of the constitution. All were lawyers. Economists were conspicuously absent from the team. The talks were useful inasmuch as they presented a medley of PPP misgivings about the Six Points. But they confirmed that the PPP had done no homework on any alternative set of proposals, and that, in fact, different members of the team did not even have identical views on what aspect of the Six Points they objected to, and for what reasons. It was suggested that by the time the PPP team came to Dacca for talks, they would have an alternative draft which would form the basis of their own negotiating position.

Probing the Positions

Mr. Bhutto came to Dacca in the last week of January. He had direct sessions with Mujib, and then his "constitutional team" met their Awami League counterparts. As the talks proceeded, it became clear that the PPP had as yet not prepared their draft, and were merely probing the Six Points as Yahya had done before them. This made formal negotiation impossible, since negotiations imply alternative sets of positions and an attempt to bridge the gap between them.

The exploratory character of the talks and the need for a more substantive second round were blurred by Bhutto in his parting remarks to the press in Dacca on January 30. He said that there was no deadlock, and that "you cannot solve the problems of 23 years in three days". He added that he planned to hold consultations in West Pakistan, and then continue his search for consensus and resume his negotiations and dialogue with the Awami League, and that for this reason the National Assembly session should not be held before the end of February. It was not, he said, necessary to attend the Assembly with an agreement already reached on different issues, because negotiations could continue even when the house was in session.

Mr. Bhutto's Boycott

On January 31 at Dacca Airport he said that the talks had been useful, and he was not unhopeful of compromise. He reiterated that the dialogue between the leaders should continue during the Assembly session, and referred to the parliamentary committee system as an established practice. It is, I think, misleading to infer from these remarks, as does M. B. Naqvi⁴, that the fate of the talks was sealed in advance because of earlier acrimonious exchanges. The Awami League did not take Bhutto's public postures that seriously. When, therefore, on February 15, following a meeting with Yahya three days before, Bhutto announced his boycott of the Assembly, the move was seen by Awami League as bearing no relation to their earlier talks, but as part of a conspiracy with either Yahya or some of his generals to frustrate the democratic process.

The Attitude of the Generals

It was known that at least two generals, Major-General Umer, Chairman of the National Security Council, and Major-General Akbar, Chief of Inter-Services Intelligence, had serious misgivings about a return to democratic processes, particularly if Bengalis were to be in the ascendant. Whether Yahya or his aide Peerzada was merely the other side of a planned duet, or was put under pressure to line up with the "hawks", is still being debated. Umer and Akbar had played a conspicuously partisan role, along with Mr. Rizvi, Chief of Central Intelligence, and Nawab Qizalbash, a Punjabi minister in Yahya's cabinet, in support of Qayyum Khan's Muslim League. Once their objective of blocking both Mujib and Bhutto was foiled by the election results—which had been wrongly forecast by Akbar's services to the very end—they switched support to Bhutto as West Pakistan's rallying point against Mujib. Concrete evidence of their partisan role was provided by Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo, a member of the National Assembly from Baluchistan, Wali Khan, MNA from the North West Frontier Province and president of the National Awami Party, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, MNA from Punjab and president of council Muslim League, and Sardar Shaukat Hayat, MNA from Punjab and president of the Council of the Punjab Muslim League; they all reported visitations from Umer asking them to support Bhutto's boycott of the Assembly. One of them said that Umer claimed to be acting in the name of President Yahya who wanted a joint West Pakistani front against Mujib if in fact the boycott was to serve any purpose.

It is as yet unclear what objective was served by the boycott. Some suggest that the idea was to buy time to rally West Pakistani support behind Bhutto. In his round of talks with the Pathans Wali Khan claims to have told Bhutto that his party at least would back Mujib in the Assembly, and it is likely that a similar message was getting through to Bhutto from his other contacts with west wing leaders. A two-thirds majority for Mujib's constitutional draft was coming to seem more and more likely as anti-PPP parties bargained their support for a share in a coalition at the centre. The possibility of being excluded from central power threatened to split Bhutto's own party, where a group of opportunistic landlords from Sindh who had been taking a ride on his bandwagon said they would break ranks if power was denied them. When Bhutto referred to the Assembly as a "slaughterhouse" he may well have articulated the fear of the generals who saw that if Yahya should be confronted with a constitution commanding enough support in the West to give it a two-thirds majority, it would be difficult to use his veto under the LFO. For this reason time was needed to consolidate a joint front in the West behind Bhutto, who had now emerged as the spokesman of West Pakistani interests against Mujib.

But such a confrontation could only serve the purpose of frustrating the return to democracy, unless Mujib modified his Six Points. This was difficult, not only because Mujib had fought his entire campaign on this single issue, but also because neither Yahya nor Bhutto had as yet come up with a coherent and viable alternative. Had there been some intention to seek concessions from Mujib the discussions could have been used as a basis for serious bargaining with all cards on the table. Instead, Bhutto was encouraged to provoke a public crisis which no Bengali leader could conceivably countenance without seriously compromising his position in the east wing. This implies that the very idea of a return to democracy had become repugnant to the hawks, that on February 15 Bhutto was merely taking the first step on the path which ended in the holocaust of March 25, and that everything in between was an elaborate charade.

Sheikh Mujib's Responses

Yahya's decision on March 1 to save Bhutto's crumbling position in the West by postponing the Assembly session *sine die* brought to the surface the fear that had lain dormant in Bengal since the successful

completion of the elections that the generals never really intended to transfer power. To postpone the Assembly was to postpone the prospect of Bengal's assuming the share of power in the polity which they believed their 55 per cent share of population ought to give them. For people who felt that they had been denied their rightful role for 23 years through a series of plots and conspiracies hatched in the West, this was the last straw. The public upsurge of support for Mujib's call for non-cooperation had 23 years of accumulated emotion behind it, which explains its unprecedented dimensions. When the police and civil servants joined the judges in pledging support for Mujib a *de facto* transfer of power had taken place inside Bangla Desh, and it had happened within a week of Yahya's decision.

During the next three weeks Mujib's house became in effect the secretariat of Bangla Desh as Bengali secretaries, today still serving in Islamabad or Dacca, voluntarily offered their services to Mujib. Faced with such a vacuum, the Awami League was forced by events to move from non-cooperation to a selective exercise of administrative authority in order to prevent social anarchy and a breakdown of the economy.⁵ In this phase police officers subordinated themselves to Awami League volunteers. District commissioners cooperated with Awami League *Sangram Parishads* (resistance committees) to administer the province. Businessmen queued up to pledge their support to Mujib and seek solutions to their diverse problems. That this was not an urban phenomenon became plain when villagers cut the roads to the cantonment and besieged trucks attempting to ferry provisions to the Punjabi *jawans*. To any observer it was evident that short of a full-scale war of reconquest Yahya's writ could never run again within Bangla Desh. The widespread and indiscriminate killings by the army today reflect the experience of these 25 days, when it became evident that every Bengali was a potential enemy and that the loyalty of all traditional instruments of Islamabad's rule was suspect.

Pressures on the Awami League

The force of public reaction appears to have taken Mujib as much as Yahya by surprise. Mujib realised that a mere return to the pre-March 1 position asking for the Assembly to be convened would be out of touch with the current mood. His demand for an end to Martial Law and a

transfer of power to the people in the province merely gave expression to the reality on the ground. After two days of ineffective attempts to preserve Yahya's authority the army had been withdrawn to barracks by Lieutenant-General Yakub, the Corps Commander and supreme authority in the province since March 1. Admiral Ahsan, the former governor, had asked to be relieved following the rejection of his plea against postponement of the Assembly session.

Yakub, who was no dove himself, had some kind of historical perspective; a scholar among generals, he had in three months mastered enough Bengali to discuss the writings of Bankim Chandra in the language. He saw that repression would not work. His reports were unheeded and he was replaced by Lieutenant General Tikka Khan, whose reputation as a man of action dated from his command of the Sialkot front in the 1965 war and during the Rann of Kutch operations. A "ranker", he had also been involved in the pacification of a Baluch tribal uprising during Ayub's days, and his appointment was seen as evidence of the triumph of the hard line. Yakub is since reported to have resigned his commission in protest, and the army is faced with the embarrassment of deciding whether to court martial one of its most distinguished generals.

Yakub's replacement was backed up by a continuous inflow of reinforcements for the garrisons. Yahya in a speech on March 6 had given further provocation by blaming Mujib for the crisis and not even alluding to Bhutto. His offer to reconvene the Assembly on March 25 was seen as belated and inadequate and as having been put in a context in which it was rendered virtually irrelevant. For this reason it was believed by many that Mujib would use his public meeting of March 7 to proclaim independence, since Yahya had shown no willingness to come to terms with the consequences of his earlier decision. The army itself was put on full alert to go into action on March 7 in the event of such a declaration.

Mujib realised that any such proclamation would invoke massive carnage on Bengalis, and was reluctant to assume such a responsibility. His decision to persevere with non-cooperation while leaving the door open for a negotiated settlement within Pakistan was a compromise between the counter-pressure of the street and the army. There is no doubt that between March 1 and 7 he was under intense pressure to proclaim independence, and this became greater still after Yahya's

broadcast on March 6. But by the afternoon of March 7 he had successfully contained these pressures and committed his party to negotiations within the framework of Pakistan. Subsequent suggestions that he lost control to extremist elements in his party bear no relation to the facts, and overlook the point that the crucial issue had been resolved before March 7, after which Mujib's authority on all substantive issues was unchallenged within the party. When, for instance, student leaders decided unilaterally to impose a customs check on West Pakistanis leaving Dacca it took Mujib precisely four hours to get this withdrawn. It was largely the unchallenged nature of his authority which enabled him to use his volunteers to preserve law and order throughout the province during this period. Given the charged atmosphere, this was no mean achievement. It can be confirmed by a host of foreign journalists who had congregated in Dacca hoping to witness a major convulsion.

The President Comes to Negotiate

Denied the provocation of a UDI, or even the breakdown of law and order, Yahya seems to have opted for negotiations. He arrived in Dacca on March 15 with Generals Peerzada and Umer in his entourage. It has since been learnt that several other members of the junta had arrived less conspicuously and were staying out of sight in the cantonment.

Yahya began talks with Mujib within a day of his arrival. Mujib had tabled four demands, which were:

1. Withdrawal of Martial Law.
2. Transfer of power to the elected representatives.
3. Withdrawal of troops to the cantonment and cessation of reinforcements.
4. An inquiry into army firing on March 2 and 3.

Yahya conceded 4. The remaining three merely demanded judicial recognition of the de facto situation in Bangla Desh. The troops were in barracks, power was with the elected representatives, and Martial Law orders were not being enforced.

Yahya in fact conceded all demands in principle at an early stage. It was the knowledge of Yahya's concession which provoked Mr. Bhutto to demand a separate transfer of power in East and West Pakistan; and in so

doing he articulated the concept of two nations by denying Mujib the right to speak for Pakistan. As the dominant force in the West, he insisted on a paramount position in that region. This was strongly opposed by the Pathans and Baluchis, who argued that since West Pakistan had ceased to exist as one unit Bhutto could speak only for Punjab and Sindh.

Faced with these contrary demands, Mujib was confronted by the prospect of coalition at the centre. While a coalition was acceptable to him in principle he was not willing to concede parity where his party held 167 seats to the PPP's 87. Deadlock was avoided by consensus on the idea that power be transferred in the provinces to the majority party, with Yahya, in the interim phase, staying on in the centre. There was some suggestion that the parties nominate advisers to assist Yahya.

Legal Technicalities

On the question of lifting Martial Law, Justice Cornelius, who had been called in to advise on the legal aspects, first raised the suggestion that Martial Law must remain as the legal cover for the agreement or there would be a constitutional vacuum. This was seen by Mujib as mere legalism, and he pointed out to Cornelius that since Yahya and he had come to a prior political decision to withdraw Martial Law it was not for Cornelius to impose legal obstacles, but to provide the legal mechanism to give effect to the political decision. The escape clause was in fact provided by Mr. A. K. Brohi, Pakistan's leading lawyer, who had invited himself to Dacca and produced his own *ex gratia* solution to the problem after, presumably, discussing it with both parties. He suggested use of the precedent of the Indian Independence Act under which power was transferred by the Crown to the two sovereign states of India and Pakistan by an Act of Proclamation. This proclamation provided legal cover to all legislative acts until each state had framed its own constitution. Brohi argued that in the same way, Yahya could transfer power by proclamation and this would provide the cover till the Constituent Assembly had framed a constitution.

This point was accepted by Yahya and Cornelius, and it disappeared from the dialogues at an early stage. Since then it has emerged that Daultana, of the Muslim League, and Mahmud Ali Qasuri, of the People's Party, again raised the question of a legal vacuum and suggested that the Assembly would have to meet to give legal effect to the

proclamation and assume sovereignty from Martial Law. When Daultana posed this to Mujib it was dismissed first because the issue had already been resolved and secondly because any move to put the proclamation to the Assembly would merely prolong Martial Law. At a time when tension was mounting daily the time taken to assemble members and then debate the proclamation was seen as more than the nation could at that stage bear.

It is thus surprising that Yahya used the issue of the legal cover as the final evidence of the *mala fide* nature of Mujib's intentions, since his own team had already settled this matter and passed on to more substantive issues. The matter was obviously a mere piece of formalism, of relevance only to lawyers, and it was absurd to suggest that nations might break merely because of differences over a legal technicality.

Awami League Concessions

Mujib's terms applied only to the interim phase between the lifting of Martial Law and the passing of the new constitution by the Assembly. It was not certain how long this phase would last, but there was no question but that the long-term basis for nationhood must be decided by parliament, who would assume sovereignty through the instruments provided by the constitution. At that stage it was generally agreed by both parties that the Six Points would at least have to provide the basis for this document.

Yahya had argued that while the Six-Points had been worked out for defining Bengal's relation to the centre, its application to the West wing provinces would create more difficulties. This had always been conceded by the Awami League, whose Six Points were based on the existence, because of the peculiarities of the country's geography, of two economies within one polity. Yahya's demand for a separate deal for the West was readily conceded by Mujib, since he himself had no power base of his own to defend, having failed to win a single seat there.

Yahya suggested that West Pakistan might need more time to work out inter-provincial relations in the West in a post-One Unit region, since no work had been done on this by any of the parties there. He suggested separate sessions of the Assembly for either wing so that this task in the West could be done without any interference by the East wing. The whole proposal was designed to accommodate Bhutto, who was obsessed by the

fear that Mujib would enter into collusion with the smaller parties and regions to neutralise him. He wanted a free hand in the West, and Yahya secured this for him from Mujib. But in accepting the proposal Mujib alienated his potential support in the West, which had increased considerably following Bhutto's boycott decision, and as a result, when Yahya initiated his military operations, Mujib found himself friendless in the West. To suggest that the idea of two assemblies was basically Mujib's was to do violence to logic, since the Awami League not only had a clear majority of its own, but by then could command more than two-thirds of the votes in the house behind any position it chose to take.

From Politics to Economics

Once the format for the political and legal basis for the transfer of power had been determined, there remained the more substantive question of the distribution of powers between the province and the centre in the interim phase. It was agreed by both parties as a guiding principle that the basis should not deviate too much from the final version of the constitution which was expected to be based on the Six Points. Since economics was the key issue here, M. M. Ahmed, Chief Economic Adviser to the President, was brought in.

The Awami League team again argued that at least the *de facto* situation must be recognised. By then export earnings and revenue collections were being paid to a Bangla Desh account. M. M. Ahmed found no difficulty in conceding that these powers be formalised. He also conceded to the province the right to make its own trade policy and to have its own reserve bank to determine monetary policy for the region. As an amendment, delivered to the Awami League team at their last meeting on March 23, he proposed:

1. that since it would take time for the charters and the new reserve banks to emerge, the State Bank at Dacca assume this role for Bangla Desh; in case of conflict in regional monetary policies the State Bank of Pakistan would have powers to intervene;
2. that for financing the centre in revenue and foreign exchange existing arrangements continue;
3. that for foreign aid a joint delegation go to the consortium; it could by agreement be dominated by Bengalis and could be divided on a

prearranged formula; once aid had been pledged at the consortium the provinces could negotiate individual agreements on their own.

These represent the sense of his proposals. His amendments were worded loosely, and in discussing them the Awami League advisers tightened up the wording to lend them clarity; otherwise, his amendments were accepted. There was nothing to prevent the formulation of a joint draft of the proclamation for transferring power any time from March 25 onwards.

It is worth noting that in the interim phase all inter-provincial matters for the west wing were to rest with the centre, as had been provided for once the One Unit had been dissolved. This as well as other proposals were intended only for the interim phase. Once the West worked out their problems in separate sittings, the two houses would come together for a joint session to frame the constitution.

The Negotiations Halted

It is evident then that there was no breakdown in the negotiations, and in fact agreement on all substantive points had been reached. M. M. Ahmed claims that this was his view and that accordingly he left for Karachi on March 25. The Awami League now sees his departure as evidence that the army were at that point bent on action, since Ahmed was a key negotiator who should at least have stayed to see the response to his own proposals.

In fact, the sessions of March 23 were the last to be held, and all calls to Peerzada for the holding of the final session went unanswered. Yahya had still not put any firm proposal of his own on the table, or even stated what his final terms were for a settlement. As always the debate took place on the Awami League draft of the interim constitution, and they were as before left with their cards exposed while the world remained ignorant of the real intentions of the President and his junta.

Bhutto had arrived in Dacca with his own team, and was having separate sessions with the President's team. This was because the Awami League felt that any substantive settlement lay in Yahya's hands, and Bhutto's role, to judge by past experience, was derivative. Since the President had so ably carried Bhutto's brief no fear was felt that Bhutto would in fact oppose the settlement.

As it happened, while the two teams were in session in President's House, Dacca, Yahya himself was in the Dacca cantonment talking to his generals. During this time the army had escalated the situation in Chittagong by suddenly deciding to unload a munitions ship which had been immobilised for 17 days by the non-cooperation movement.

At 11 p.m. on March 25 troop movements into Dacca began. Yahya had flown off to Karachi a few hours earlier. Negotiations had been overtaken by war. Only this time they had not broken down. An agreed settlement, which even at that date might have kept Pakistan together, was available to the generals, and was ignored.

Endnotes

1. See *Dawn*, 27 March 1971.
2. See *Dawn*, 7 May 1971.
3. See speech by Sir Frederic Bennett, Hansard, 14 May 1971.
4. See Naqvi, M. B., "West Pakistan's Struggle for Power", *South Asian Review*, Volume IV, Number iii, April, 1971.
5. See *Forum*, March 13 and 20, 1971, for an account of this process.

3.8 Report to the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bangladesh by Rehman Sobhan, July 1971

Author's Introductory Note

The above Report was prepared by me at 8, Theatre Road, Calcutta, in July 1971, on the instructions of Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed and presented to the Council of ministers of the Bangladesh government. The Bangladesh government reviewed the report and invited me to discuss its findings with them, in the first week of August, 1971, along with another proposal I had submitted to them on the issue of setting up a Planning Cell to serve the Mujubnagar government. Subsequent to my presentation at the cabinet meeting I was formally designated as *Envoy Extraordinaire in charge of Economic Affairs*, to represent the People's Republic of Bangladesh and requested to return to Europe and USA to resume my campaign to stop aid to Pakistan and for recognition for Bangladesh. The report presented in this volume is compiled from a first draft of the report I had prepared in Calcutta which includes pen corrections of the typescript and hand written sections inserted in the report. The original document retained by me was presented to and is lodged with the *Muktijuddha Jadughar*, Dhaka.

When I had this document photocopied for inclusion in this volume it was found that pages 1-2 of the report had been mislaid. The report, thus, begins with a report of the visit of M.M. Ahmed, Chief Economic Advisor of Yahya Khan, President of Pakistan to Washington D.C. From my memory the opening two pages report on the origins of my mission to Western Europe and North America, at the instructions of Tajuddin Ahmed, during our meeting in Delhi in the first week of April, 1971. The mission was inspired by the news that M.M. Ahmed was being sent by Yahya Khan to visit Washington D.C in order to lobby with the Nixon

administration and the World Bank for stepping up aid flows to Pakistan which was facing an economic crisis at that time. Tajuddin commissioned me to initiate a campaign among Pakistan's prospective aid donors to immediately suspend all aid to Pakistan until they cease their genocide on Bangladesh.

My opening presentation reports on my initial efforts in London, to reach out to the British government, as well as members of parliament to persuade the UK to withhold aid from Pakistan. I also report on my encounters with the British media to educate them on the need to support our campaign and to recognize and project the reality of a sovereign Bangladesh.

The subsequent part of my presentation on the missing pages 1-2 of the report present an account of my activities on my arrival in Washington at the end of April 1971. This reports on:

1. My meetings with the Bangladeshis working in the Pakistan Embassy which included some of our most able talents such as Enayet Karim, SAMS Kibria and A.M.A. Muhith, Abu Rushd Matinuddin and Moazzem Ali, our current High Commissioner in India. My message to them from Tajuddin was to defect to the Bangladesh cause as early as possible.
2. I report on my first meetings with the World Bank, in the person of Peter Cargill, the Vice President, who chaired the Pakistan Consortium meetings. Cargill informed me of the decision of an earlier meeting of the Pakistan Aid Consortium in Paris in April where donors expressed their profound concern over the genocide in Bangladesh and their reluctance to make any further aid commitments until a Bank mission visits Pakistan and provides a first hand report of the situation in Bangladesh. This, more aid-decisive meeting of the Consortium, was scheduled for 21 June in Paris.
3. I report on my meeting with Robert D. MacNamara, President of the World Bank and the report prepared by me, in collaboration with A.M.A Muhith, explaining the situation in Bangladesh and demanding that the Bank take the lead in suspending aid to Pakistan. MacNamara gave me a patient hearing and proved both concerned and sympathetic to our cause.
4. I report on my frustrated efforts to meet members of the US administration from Dr. Henry Kissinger downwards, and their refusal

- to meet with any Bangladeshi except through lower tier officers.
5. I report on my initial contacts with the US Congress which included the most sympathetic members such as Senators, Church and Ted Kennedy. From their Congressional aides, Tom Dine (Church) and Gerry Tinker (Kennedy) we learnt of the M.M. Ahmed visit and its projected strategy in Washington. The subsequent part of my report (P.3) onwards is presented below:

The document which was reproduced below includes some edits for typos in the original document and insertions clarifying who I refer to in parts of the report. A further, fuller account of my North America and Europe Mission is presented in my forthcoming memoirs, *Untroubled Recollections: The Years of Fulfillment*, under global publication by Sage.

My Report to the Council of Ministers (beginning from p. 3) and then Hanna Chief of AID and Rogers, Secretary of State. Some days later Rogers advised him (Ahmed) to meet Senators and a reception on the Hill was arranged for Ahmed by Senator Symington, an old friend of Pakistan. This was, however, very poorly attended. A press conference by Ahmed only produced three reporters and a final press conference on the eve of his departure was cancelled.

Reports of his discussion indicated that they were inconclusive. Whilst friendship for Pakistan was confirmed, both US AID and the World Bank indicated the need for restoration of normalcy as a prelude to resumption of aid. The need for a political settlement was stressed. What this was to be was not made clear but it appears that Ahmed's own package did not carry conviction with the US administration.

Concern over potential famine was voiced, Ahmed's central position that the food situation was in hand was dismissed and in mid-journey his brief was changed to a demand for food aid and river craft. US AID was willing to discuss this but on the aid question no commitment was made and a decision was deferred till the Bank mission reported back from Pakistan. Ahmed finally went home empty handed and was reported to be both surprised and disappointed at his first failure in aid diplomacy.

Bank-IMF Mission to Pakistan

An agreement was reached with Ahmed for a Bank-IMF team to visit Pakistan, to assess how far normalcy in Bangladesh had been restored.

They were to report to the Pak Consortium in Paris on 21st June who would then decide about resumption of aid. It was, *inter alia*, designed to buy time for Consortium members to make up their minds and to see if Yahya could get the situation under control in Bangladesh.

IMF Position

The IMF had also declined the stand-by credit pending the Bank Mission report. They indicated that a standby credit would only be forthcoming if the Consortium gave a green signal on aid.

UN

At the conclusion of his trip Ahmed met U Thant to discuss food aid. Their position was that 2,50,000 tons of foodgrains was needed along with river craft for distribution. U.N. supervision was acceptable but actual distribution must be done through the Pak Army.

Bangladesh Lobby

As a counter to Ahmed's lobby a major offensive was launched with US public opinion and Congress. All newspapers read in Washington were approached (by me) and presented with the true facts as existed in Bangladesh. As a result, at the peak of Ahmed's visit all five papers (read in Washington DC) wrote editorials within a spell of 48 hours demanding a cut off of US Aid to Pakistan.

The television media was also utilised where friendly contacts managed to get me a number of interviews on various television news channels. Finally a press conference was held by me in the Washington Press Club at the conclusion of Ahmed's visit where about 30 journalists representing US and foreign papers and wire services attended.

At Congress lobbying was intensified. Senator Saxby, an important Republican, agreed to host a lunch for me to counter Senator Symington's reception for Ahmed. At the lunch, amongst others, Senator Fulbright and Senator Scott, Republican Senate Leader, were present and gave the Bangladesh case a patient hearing.

Congressmen Gallaghor of the House Foreign Relations Committee had also taken the unprecedented step of holding hearings on Bangladesh where Senator Kennedy was the first to give testimony. Whilst some Senators were particularly sympathetic to our cause it was

our strategy to avoid making Bangladesh a partisan issue and lobbying amongst Republicans was also kept up. A number of 'Conservatives' in Congress had begun to read testimony on Bangladesh into the Senate record on the basis of reports received by private US citizens who had recently come out of Bangladesh and had witnessed the massacres perpetrated by the Pak army. Whilst sympathy in Congress was mounting there was still some hesitation amongst all except a few Congressmen over taking a firm stand on a US aid cut-off. However, towards the end of my trip (end May) there was a growing awareness of the importance of US Aid in keeping the Yahya Government going and more Congressmen were willing to take a stand on this. This growing commitment has now come to a head in the Saxby-Church amendment which is being introduced as an amendment to the US Aid appropriations bill. This would cut off all US economic aid till relief to Bangladesh under international control was accepted by Yahya and a political settlement with the representatives of Bangladesh was worked out. It is reported that they have got the support of 42 out of 100 Senators already.

There is a suggestion that the recent discovery of continuing US arms shipments to Pakistan, inspite of an official denial of this following the Senate Foreign Relations Committee resolution, will sufficiently antagonise undecided Senators to secure a majority for the bill. But this is only a view and much more work will be needed if the bill is to secure the necessary majority to make it mandatory on the US administration.

Assessment

A summary of the US position would indicate that Yahya enjoys a certain sympathy with Nixon, amongst some people in the State Department and within the Pentagon. This owes partly to long standing links forged over the last 17 years between the West Pak army and administrators whilst no contact at all has been made with Bengalis.

They as a result see Bangladesh as an unknown quantity with a potential for social and economic chaos which would become an area of much instability. It was this fear which made them apathetic to Six Points. The US view always regarded the West Pakistan Army and administrators as a stabilizing force and would have liked them to retain an influence in Bangladesh within the framework of a strong centre. They, however, realised the need for more economic assistance to the East Wing and

their need for greater participation in the centre and to this end were willing to support a return to democracy.

It appears that Yahya's action was thus viewed with considerable misgivings in the US Administration. They may yet have gone along with this under pressure from US Ambassador, Farland and West Pak friends in the State Department and Pentagon, if Yahya's promise of re-establishing his authority within 72 hours was fulfilled. But the prolongation of the struggle into an open ended crisis has compelled them to reappraise the situation with a view to seeing what would restore stability in the region most quickly. To this end they are beginning to take Bangladesh more seriously but are still weighing options. There is some concern that an abrupt parting of the ways may create serious problem which they would like to avoid. There is also some fear of driving them closer to the Chinese.

It is this uncertainty which has made them possibly take up contradictory positions. On the one hand new aid commitments have been withheld. An \$80 million commodity loan which was previously pledged to Pakistan has not been negotiated. On the other hand some arms shipments are still going on though this could not be too much since the total US commitment for arms sales does not exceed \$10 m per year. If the US can be convinced that there is enough resistance within Bangladesh to ensure a state of continuing instability and that the cost of keeping Pakistan together will make the area into a world trouble spot they may have to make their position clearer. But for them the time is not yet ripe for this and they are continuing to keep their options open. For this reason, lobbying must be maintained not only to project the real situation in Bangladesh before them but to see that they stand by their decision on aid and not respond to reported requests from Farland that US, for political reasons, resume bilateral aid to Pakistan outside the Consortium.

Finally, it was repeated on all occasions that if Bangladesh seeks recognition they must demonstrate their military capability and ability to hold territory.

UK 1st – 20th June

The situation in UK on my return at the beginning of June had also changed somewhat. There had been a debate on Bangladesh in the Commons on 14th May. But since then the issue had begun to cool off.

There was some plan to revive Bangladesh prior to the Consortium meet on 21st June but this was effectively done by the growing world concern over refugees and cholera.

The growing sense of horror at the human problem of the refugees raised the danger that people would be distracted from the political issue which had given rise to this problem. To this end contact with the press was established (by me) and most papers were now inclined to take the position that UK should cut off economic aid until a political settlement was forthcoming. The most important breakthrough was however on the Opposition front bench. Here the Labour Party front bench was persuaded to take up the issue of an aid cut off. In an emergency debate on the Bangladesh question held on 16th June, Judith Hart, Labour front bench spokesman on overseas development, spoke out for a cut off on UK aid commitments to Pakistan, a position echoed by her party spokesmen in the debate.

Contacts had also been established (by me) with the Foreign Office. Here the question of an Aid cut off was discussed and the McNamara policy memorandum was presented. Indication were that UK were not making any commitments but would let their own Aid pipeline expend itself. Their position was confirmed by Sir Alec Douglas Hulme in the House debate.

The detailed revelation of Anthony Mascarenhas of the Pak Army's genocide plans and tactics, was a valuable contribution to the growing store of information on Bangladesh finding its way into the British Press. The latest development has been the motion tabled in the House demanding that the UK take the Bangladesh issue to the UN's notice under the genocide convention and begin considering the question of recognition. The motion has so far attracted 210 signatories which is one-third of the house membership.

Assessment

In the UK, the Foreign Office and Tory Party were basically sympathetic to Yahya because of old connections with West Wing ruling groups. But a combination of Labour Party pressure in the House plus a hostile public opinion and press has tempered their commitment. Their own political posture is undergoing reappraisal for the same reasons as the USA. But they are also worried about the threat to the future of West

Pakistan from any abrupt break up of the country. There is a growing recognition that Pakistan as they know it, is finished but they are still hesitant to act on that assumption and are keeping their options open.

Consortium

The Pakistan Consortium meeting in Paris on 21st June confirmed the decision to withhold any new aid commitments to Pakistan pending a political settlement. This decision was echoed in a House of Commons statement by Sir Alec on behalf of HMG. Prior to the sitting of the Consortium all members were presented (by me) with a memorandum on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh (Appendix B). the consortium decision became unacceptable following the verbal presentation of the report by the Bank-Fund team about their trip to Bangladesh. They gave a full account of the continuing tension and abnormality in Bangladesh and the impossibility of an economic revival to sustain a development effort. They were very skeptical from their discussion with Yahya and other West Wing officials if they were interested in making an acceptable political settlement and were left with no option but to suggest withholding of aid commitments until political conditions were more appropriate for development. The Consortium, therefore, dispersed without even fixing a date for a further meeting to reconcile the question. It is believed that the Consortium has now become an inactive body and further aid to Islamabad must come from bilateral negotiation between Islamabad and the donor country. This pressure may now develop in the next few months where specific countries may be approached on specifically political grounds, to bail out Pakistan.

United Nations

The UN had come into the picture following Ahmed's meeting with U. Thant in May. The question of UN supervised relief for famine and refugees has led to the dispatch of Prince Sadruddin and Ismat Kettani as U.Thant's representative to assess the situation on the spot. Some contact with the UN Secretariat at a high level had already been established during their visit to the US where the implications of putting food into the hands of the Pak army were discussed.

Now that the issue is coming alive, U. Thant has already asked the Director General of FAO to make a direct investigation of the question of food aid to

Bangladesh. Hence FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) are going to supply and administer the programme. For this reason I made a special trip to FAO in Rome where I met a high official in FAO likely to be involved with the relief question. The danger of putting such aid in Army hands and possible alternatives to such a policy were presented. Here again the response was sympathetic and a factual assessment of the problem is going to be presented by the FAO. But the final decision on the conditions under which Food Aid is made available lie with U.Thant.

Canada

Outside of the main approaches to USA, UK and international agencies a brief visit was made (by me) to Ottawa where our case was presented before a member of the Cabinet and to members of Parliament. A press conference was also held (by me). Response was sympathetic and Canada held firm at the Consortium against further Aid. Their recent stand over the question of military aid confirms their basic sympathy.

France

Their country is very important because they are the main source of arms to Pakistan. Currently Pakistan has to pay France \$15 million per month against past war debts and has been trying to get fresh arms to fuel the war in Bangladesh.

France has refused a Pak request for rescheduling the arms debt and is reportedly withholding further sales pending clearance of outstanding liabilities. Some contacts have been made (by me) amongst French intellectuals on the implication of France's role and the need to secure a cut off in arms sales, if France is persuaded to resume them.

Italy

Here contact was established (by me) with the Foreign policy committees within the Christian Democratic Party and Socialist Party, both members of the coalition Government and with the Communist Party the largest single party now in Italy. All were sympathetic and willing to raise the Bangladesh issue with their parties and also in Parliament. Here follow up is vital because the parties are basically sympathetic to the Bangladesh cause.

Conclusion

Where direct contacts have been established, people and even governments demonstrate profound concern over Bangladesh. Except for a few individuals, neither officials nor public have indicated approval of the military action. Many officials are even privately willing to concede that Bangladesh is inevitable. All governments are willing to express concern on the humanitarian level. But as yet they are reluctant to face the political implications which arise out of the human tragedy. To do this, in all countries approached, officials speak of the need for more evidence of Bangladesh's military capability. If the strength of our resistance can be more effectively demonstrated and the Mukti Fouj can hold territory then these governments say that they will be willing to consider the prospect of recognition.

Short of this, in the short run, the only other issue which is likely to produce any fundamental rethinking towards Bangladesh arises out of the Indian response to the refugee problem. This is now seen as a new dimension to the crisis which has the potential for internationalising the problem. There is no indication of their political reaction to this as yet. But there is some indication that these powers are today less inclined to treat this as merely a domestic problem of Pakistan and may be more responsive to suggestions for an international initiative.

Summary of situation

The Consortium decision to withhold aid has won Bangladesh a temporary victory. But all member countries are keeping their options open and can at any time revise their decision and resume aid on a bilateral basis.

For this reason the diplomatic initiative must be maintained in all donor countries on the lines taken prior to the Consortium meeting.

We must, however, recognise that many countries may reach a position of stalemate if aid is cut off but Pakistan still remains set on its policy of genocide and occupation. Yahya's recent speech would indicate that he is persisting with his policies. The Bangladesh Government must, therefore, work out the next stage of its diplomatic strategy.

The following lines of action may be considered:

1. Drawing attention to the genocide aspect with a view to raising the issue at the U.N. under the genocide convention. Here U.N. member

countries must be lobbied to raise the issue and relevant international laws and conventions must be examined. Some of the smaller European countries with less of a stake in the sub-continent may be approached on this.

2. Projection of the humanitarian issue of refugees and the impending famine within Bangladesh. Here we must emphasise that no aid must be put directly in military hands. Aid via Pakistan must be internationally administered and their field workers must be directly involved in the distribution. At the same time the world must agree to underwrite the maintenance of the refugees and also provide some surplus which can be sent across the border to the adjacent districts within Bangladesh.
3. A gradual build up for recognition must be made. Here we must project our image and situation abroad more prominently and highlight the fact that the liberation struggle is continuing and achieving success. We must emphasise that stability in the region can only return once political negotiations for withdrawal of troops is opened with elected leaders of Bangladesh. We must highlight dangers of international crisis arising out of the domestic crisis created in India because of the refugee problem.
4. We must emphasise that West Pakistan's own survival depends on an early withdrawal from Bangladesh and reconciliation to the reality that Pakistan must be confined to the West Wing. Unless they do this their social and regional contradictions will surface to the point where a major explosion becomes imminent in that region.
5. Finally we must emphasise that all Bengalis are now committed to Independence. Those who pay lip service to Pakistan do so only through the terror and coercion exercised by the army. To give this credibility we must ensure that no renegades emerge from within the Awami League to join the handful who have let themselves be used. To them and other potential quislings the cost of collaboration must be made clear. At the same time political activity in the villages and occupied towns must be stepped up to improve people's morale.

Policy decisions to give effect to above strategy

1. Permanent missions must be set up in strategic countries. The missions to be opened in order of priority are indicated below:

- i. Washington (For USA and UN)
 - ii. London (For UK and Ireland)
 - iii. Paris (For France, Spain, Portugal)
 - iv. Stockholm (For Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland)
 - v. Rome (For Italy, FAO, Yugoslavia, Greece)
 - vi. Bonn (For Germany, Austria, Switzerland)
 - vii. Brussels (For Benelux countries)
2. Simultaneously Missions may be opened in Moscow and selected Eastern European capitals. But for this, initiative may not be ours. They are however potentially the best source of material support and priority must be given to establishing close contact with them. Their respective Governments will have to be approached immediately by Bangladesh Government to see whether missions are acceptable and till then, whether they will receive delegations from us.
 3. For other countries mainly in Middle East, Africa, South East Asia and Far East, delegations should be sent out without delay, to project the Bangladesh cause. Here the Bangladesh cause goes unrepresented and Pak Govt. has a free hand.
 4. Careful watch should be kept for all international conferences where Bangladesh can be projected. Here again we should make sure we are properly represented.

Finance

For the above operations adequate foreign currency resources will be required. We may partially use funds collected from abroad from Bengalis for this purpose. But we should explore alternative sources of finance. For this we must seek to raise a foreign credit with sympathetic foreign governments and even private agencies. Representatives of Bangladesh Government should be commissioned to begin explorations abroad for such finances. To this end Bangladesh Government should open an overseas account operated under their direct authority and all funds collected overseas should be transferred to this account.

Publicity

A high-powered information centre should be opened in London. This should be the main mouthpiece for the cause and should feed all missions and countries.

They should bring out a weekly news bulletin and journal and should publish available material on Bangladesh as well as research work useful to the cause.

A translator service should be set up to make available all materials to non-English speaking countries.

They should liaise with news media overseas and keep them supplied with information about Bangladesh as well as encourage them to visit Bangladesh directly.

Seminars and conference should be promoted to publicise the cause. To do all this on the scale necessary all financial and materials resources from Bangladesh should be channeled here and all news and all communications from Bangladesh should be channeled to the centre. For this regular supply of news of all activities within the Government and on the front, plus all policy decisions must be communicated to the centre.

Other centres bringing out bulletins should be discouraged from doing so to avoid duplication of news and wastage of resources. This will also ensure coherence in the projection of our image abroad.

If a decision is taken, I may in consultation with Justice Chowdhury, draw up a detailed scheme on the lines suggested and Bangladesh Government may take a decision on this and make funds available from the fund collected in London.

Infrastructure

To sustain the diplomatic and publicity campaign the foreign and information ministries of Bangladesh must be expanded and streamlined. Clearly formulated policy direction on both fields must be regularly available, whilst the parent ministries must be organised to receive communications and act upon these without delay.

Planning Cell

For a coherent assessment of policy decisions to be taken in this area a special planning cell is needed which can identify policy options within the fuller perspective of the government's overall political and military strategy. To this end such a cell must be instantly set up and should work in close liaison with not only these two ministries but all other organs of Government.

3.9 The US and Bangladesh: Bailing Out Pakistan*

As Pakistan slides towards disintegration, the United States is being forced to do some fundamental re-thinking of a policy dating back to the days of Dulles diplomacy which inaugurated Pak-US relations through a Mutual Security Pact in 1954. Pakistan did well out of the relationship, receiving \$1.5 to \$2 billion in armaments and \$3 billion in economic aid up to 1969. It is less certain what the US got out of it, apart from a U-2 base in Peshawar, since Pakistan never made any bones about the fact that it needed American arms to face India.

The ostensible purpose of this investment, however, was to contain communism in Southeast Asia and the Middle East and Pakistan was happy to subscribe to this illusion by making anti-communist noises at international forums. While the US sold its aid package to Pakistan in Congress as part of its containment strategy, the pacts were sold in Pakistan as an expedient to get arms to defend the nation against Indian designs. No one on either side sought to question these contrary assumptions until Pakistan actually became embroiled in a shooting war with India in September 1965, when a large quantity of US gifted hardware was seen in action on the plains of the Punjab.

Washington's reaction to this failure of policy was to suspend all arms shipments to both sides but the denial was far more severely felt in Pakistan where the entire military machine had been geared to the United States. The move soured Pak-US relations which had already been strained by the US decision to send arms to India following the Sino-India border war in 1962. Pakistan's moves to strengthen its ties with

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China on the assumption that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" had knocked out another key assumption underlying US policy, and the Pak-Indian war merely wrote *finis* to that phase in the relationship.

As history has shown, US arms are far more likely to be used to suppress popular movements at home than to resist external aggression. The rise of the military, whose numbers and strength within Pakistan grew with every shipload of American weapons received, gave testimony to this truth. By October 1958 the armed forces under Ayub Khan felt strong enough to take over the country and frustrate the prospects of a genuine return to democracy imminent in the general elections set for early 1959.

While the Pak-Indian war in 1965 led to a suspension of arms shipments to Pakistan, the US continued pumping in economic aid. The emphasis on aggregate growth rates concealed the fact that during the Ayub decade inequalities increased sharply both between social classes and between East and West Pakistan. Disparities in per capita income in favour of West over East Pakistan increased from 32 per cent in 1959/60 to 61 per cent in 1969/70. This followed from the fact that less than one-third of the development, financed by aid, took place in the East though 55 per cent of the population lived there. \$2.6 billion worth of resources in the way of East Pakistan's foreign exchange plus its legitimate share of foreign aid, were transferred to West Pakistan between 1948/49 and 1968/69. Such policies were possible because power in Pakistan, whether indirect before 1958 or directly since, rested with the armed forces and bureaucracy which was overwhelmingly drawn from West Pakistan. To the extent that the US underwrote these military regimes, it perpetuated a set of power relationships which permitted the West wing based army-bureaucratic complex to dominate the more numerous East.

The war of liberation now raging in East Pakistan stems from an attempt by the Bengalis to break free of the hegemony of West Pakistan's ruling groups. They thought they could do it within the framework of Pakistan by seeking a loose federal relationship which put all decision-making and resources into the hands of the regions. But this was seen as a threat not only to the captive markets of West Pakistan's inefficient industrialists but as a threat to the westward flow of resources. And to the army it appeared as a menace to their privileged budget. East Pakistani revenues and foreign exchange were vital, particularly since arms had to be bought for cash from

the French and other suppliers after the suspension of large scale US arms shipments in 1965. The refusal of the army to come to terms with the peaceful attempt to restructure power relations within Pakistan has now compelled it to use force to suppress the Awami League which won 80 per cent of the votes and 98.5 per cent of the seats in the East wing on its autonomy platform. Since the entire eastern population of 75 million is united in its support for its elected representatives, the army has had to resort to genocide. Visiting foreign journalists estimate that this has led to over half a million Bengali dead within the first 6 weeks of fighting. It is hardly surprising that a political struggle by East Pakistan for autonomy within Pakistan has been transformed into a full scale war of independence for the creation of Bangla Desh.

The United States remains an uneasy but by no means unininvolved spectator. Its economic and aid strategy which favoured the West wing has now culminated in a drive for freedom by 55 per cent of the population and the arms Washington gave are being used by the West Pakistani army to crush this drive.

The US is further involved by the recent request from West Pakistan to rescue it from economic catastrophe. All export from East Pakistan being suspended, Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings are cut by 50 per cent and its reserves are expected to be down to zero in another two months. A business recession threatens West Pakistan due to the loss of captive markets and price inflation of up to 100 per cent is imminent because of the drop in production. This plus the loss of all revenues from the East promises that only half of the next Pakistan budget can be financed. A war now costing the impoverished economy \$2 million a day will have to be financed by creating paper.

In this predicament Pakistan has asked aid donors for up to \$1 billion to bail her out. She needs \$70 million in commodities aid from the US, plus \$100 million as ready cash. A further \$300-\$400 million will be required by the year's end just to stay afloat.

How Washington will respond to this request depends on how determined the Americans are to go on compounding their failures in Pakistan. Indications are that the US has bought time to make up its mind and is taking cover behind a World Bank-IMF mission being sent out early this month to look over the situation.

Meanwhile, Pakistan presses for a political solution to the war and

speaks of the need to get relief to Bengalis faced by famine. But both these issues are tied up with a willingness by Pakistan to come to terms with reality and to negotiate disengagement with the elected leaders of Bangla Desh.

Only an inclination to resume business with old friends could persuade the Americans to buy Pakistan's proposed solution of setting up a Quisling Administration in Bangla Desh, on the pretense of returning Pakistan to civilian rule. If the US chooses under these circumstances to resume aid and agrees to put relief into the hands of the Pak army, it will neither be tranquilising the crisis nor saving the Bengalis from famine. It will merely hand another weapon, relief to the Pakistan army and will foster the illusion that Washington can insulate West Pakistan from the costs of this war. By doing so, the Americans will ensure that the war goes on with a mounting expenditure of Bengali lives and resources and eventual disaster for West Pakistan as the price for its refusal to negotiate a political disengagement before it is too late. An open-ended crisis of this dimension transcends the frontiers of Bangla Desh and threatens not just sub-continental war but because of the interest of both China and the USSR in the area possibly another global confrontation. The United States today can buy disengagement cheaply by refusing to underwrite Pakistan's military adventure in Bangla Desh. Tomorrow it may find itself in yet another quagmire not of its own making.

3.10 Bangladesh's Real Battle*

The Caesarean birth of Bangladesh could well have been aborted on the delivery table under pressure of Big Four politics. Nixon's penchant for Yahya was always understandable in terms of the traditional US commitment to Pakistan's West wing based-ruling classes. But he has only succeeded in alienating both Indians and Bengalis, who will long remember the American President's malign role in their moment of crisis.

Bangladesh has however become a fact of life, even though it has emerged in the shadow of Big Power rivalries in the area. This should concern its leaders, who must now establish their authority in a nation born amidst destruction and death. They already control large tracts of Bangladesh, but the task is still heroic.

Immediate problems arise over the handling of the defeated Pakistan army, whose murder of the Dacca elite was only the last of a long catalogue of genocidal crimes. There is today no household in Bangladesh which has not experienced tragedy and death at first hand, and passions run high. For the 150,000 armed Bangladeshis this war was no cricket match where victor and vanquished can shake hands and send the losers home with piped music. To the people of Bangladesh every Pakistani soldier is a war criminal who has committed murder, rape and loot in direct violation of the Geneva Convention and should be treated no differently from the Nazis at Nuremberg. A potential confrontation with the Indian army on how the Pakistani soldiers are to be treated can perhaps be avoided if an across-the-board negotiation is rapidly initiated

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which takes in the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, other political prisoners in Pakistani hands and the half million Bengalis stranded in West Pakistan.

Such a dialogue could work out the future of linguistic minorities in Bangladesh, who must also feel apprehensive, considering the role played by some of them when the Pakistan army was rampaging through the country. In the absence of any such arrangement, the people appear to be diverting their hatred against collaborators. It is here that the release of Mujib could play a vital part in lowering the temperature for the final deal. Much depends on whether Yahya's heirs have come to terms with the reality of Bangladesh or still cling to their fantasies about a united Pakistan to the point where another million lives could be thrown in the balance.

In this event the world community may use the concern which was so abundantly, if irrelevantly, displayed at the UN in evolving a solution for safeguarding minorities on both sides and bringing Mujib home to his people. But one cannot wait for order to be restored before the new state of Bangladesh begins to cope with its 10 million displaced citizens. Contrary to journalistic myth, most of these-including the Hindus-will not only return but are beginning to do so with disconcerting speed.

Rehabilitation would have been less of a problem if they merely had to go back to abandoned homes. But many of their villages lie devastated by the Pakistan army; abandoned properties have been gobbled up by Yahya's collaborators; land titles have been destroyed. It is here that resettlement will have to recognise the dialectics of rural society and seek to rebuild a new social order along with the shattered homes of the refugees. Most collaborators tend to come from affluent classes in the villages. There is thus considerable opportunity for a restructuring of village society in favour of a more egalitarian land ownership built around co-operatives.

The communications and marketing infrastructure of the rural economy lie shattered. There is scope for immediately providing work and income for the refugees by involving them in a massive public works programme to rebuild the transportation network. But again massive use of labour will demand the creation of institutions which, however, must not become sources of enrichment for the ruling classes as they were under Ayub, if tensions in the village are to be contained.

The urban economy emerges less devastated than was feared had the Pakistani army decided to make a last-ditch stand. As it is, Chittagong port is devastated. The industrial complex in the port area, which includes Bangladesh's only refinery and steel plant, is repairable provided resources are available. Resources can be raised even if only part of the \$700 million tentatively pledged for refugee relief by donor countries can be forthcoming for reconstruction.

The more relevant problem is again institutional. The wholesale exodus of West Pakistanis will, as in post-independence Algeria, create a major entrepreneurial vacuum. The opportunity for a major expansion of state ownership into key sectors of the economy, such as foreign trade, banking and insurance, large industry, is obvious. Fledgling Bengali capitalists lack the resources to fill the gap without considerable state patronage. Their own collaborationist role during the occupation, where they continued to earn profits and foreign exchange for the Pakistanis whilst their own workers risked starvation by refusing to work, makes them improbable successors to the departing economic barons.

Leader writers have had a field day, emphasising the dark prospects for an independent Bangladesh. Implicit in these gloomy prognostications is the belief that West Pakistan was sustaining the Bangladesh economy. In fact, they drained \$2.6 billion out of the West wing in two decades, making Bangladesh the poorest aid donor in the world. Even in recent times 80 per cent of Bangladesh foreign exchange and 70 per cent of the aid inflow went to the West wing. Independence will rid Bangladesh of the liability of the West Pakistan economy as much as it will rid it of the retrograde influence of its generals, capitalists, landlords and bureaucrats. They may still leave it a wretched place, but at least it will be able to use all its own resources and, for the first time in its history, will make policy decisions based on the interests of Bangladesh rather than those of the colonial master in the West.

Whilst external resources may initially be needed in rehabilitating refugees and reconstructing the war-ravaged economy, the future of the economy will depend on the speed with which a social revolution can be pushed through that can not only generate the surpluses needed for development but can also involve 75 million people in building the economy rather than in eating up its substance. The objective conditions favour radical change today. It may also become a political necessity. The

young men who faced privation and death in the village to sustain the resistance are not likely to take kindly to a society which recreates the privileged order of the past.

The real challenge to the new leaders in Bangladesh will thus not come from any recognised party. The Right is finished irrevocably because of its collaborationist role during the occupation. The orthodox Left is yet too small and fragmented to mount a serious challenge on its own. In the immediate future the pressures for radicalisation will thus have to be given body by the young men within the ruling party and in the Mukti Bahini itself. The sense of commitment of these young men needs to be channelled into the task of social reconstruction. If their idealism is permitted to go sour, they have the capability of taking the new society apart. It is here that the return of Mujib may buy time by establishing his authority over these impatient young men in the task of rebuilding Bangladesh.

PART IV

A Vision for Bangladesh

Introduction

In part 4, I present our vision, expressed by me through the editorials of Forum in 1969-71, on how we envisaged the future of a Bangladesh under self-rule. Here we spelt out our vision for a just, corruption free, secular society, predicated on restoring power to the people, through constructing an egalitarian economic order. Many of these ideas had already been incorporated by Tajuddin Ahmed, Kamal Hossain and myself into the election manifesto of the Awami League, prepared prior to the elections of December 1970. Along with Kamal Hossain, Nurul Islam and Anisur Rahman, I had played an active role in drafting this remarkably progressive document.

4.1 The Corrupt Society*

The sour stench of corruption has hung heavily over our whole society. It is, therefore, not surprising that public opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of the drastic measures directed against corrupt public officials. This matter, however, involves two vital enquiries. The first should be aimed at determining the guilt or innocence of those charged with corruption. The other should seek to discover the causes underlying the gangrenous growth of corruption in our society.

As to the first, it is only necessary to urge that such an enquiry must be fair and impartial. The officer charged should be furnished with materials upon which the charges are based and be given an adequate opportunity to rebut the allegations made against him. A public enquiry, presided over by a Supreme Court judge, and the publication of incriminating evidence would serve a highly useful social purpose. For not only would this provide a safeguard against the infliction of undeserved punishment on innocent persons, but what is equally important, it would deprive those guilty of the pretext later to pose as martyrs who had been denied the opportunity to establish their professed innocence. Further, it would also expose the guilty to public contempt, which, so far as the social object of deterring corruption is concerned, would be a more telling punishment than removal from service, or even perhaps, the confiscation of property.

The second enquiry is of much greater consequence. For corrupt officials are after all only the products and not the causes of corruption in society. These causes are to be sought in the nature of the political and economic system prevailing in the country. While the seeds were sown

*Published in *Forum*, December 13, 1969.

earlier, it was the Ayub decade which provided hothouse conditions for the growth of corruption. A political dictatorship wedded to an economic system, the special feature of which was the vast prospects it offered to privileged individuals to acquire wealth merely by procuring certain bureaucratic decisions in their favour, made corruption utterly inevitable. The absence of free elections, a free press and a truly representative legislature left the chief executive and his functionaries free to abuse power without any checks or restraints. No combination of political and economic systems could provide more congenial condition for the growth of corruption. The political philosophy of Ayub Khan and the economic philosophy of the "Robber Barons" shared the same basic tenet, viz., "every man has his price." Political support was to be purchased, not earned. An American protagonist of Ayub's economic policies in his book, Pakistan's Development, expounds the theory of the "social utility of greed." Thus, since people were viewed as greedy and the Government controlled licenses, permits, sanctions, tenders and all other forms of patronage, which go with a system best described as "bureaucratic capitalism", the strategy for the perpetuation of the regime was based on forging an alliance between the lust for power and the greed for wealth.

In this system not only was honesty and integrity in public officials not rewarded, in many cases it was a positive handicap. An officer with a conscience lived under the constant risk of being transferred at twenty four hours' notice. The lack of scruples, more than any other quality, ensured advancement in all walks of life. A criminal conviction seemed to be one of the best qualifications for holding public office. This was the nightmarish world in which every value had been turned upon its head and honesty had been made to become the worst policy.

The architects of that preposterous system have yet to be called to account. Should they escape justice, this cannot but lead to the demoralising conclusion that corruption does after all pay if it is practiced at the level of the chief executive, ministers and parliamentary secretaries. Neither law nor justice can be a respecter of persons. If those persons, who had founded the system and set the pace for the corrupt practices which symbolised it, remain unpunished, the cancer of corruption will remain rooted in our body politic.

If corruption is to be exorcised from our society, as it must, then it will

not suffice to call to account only public servants or to reorganise the services. The progenitors of the corrupt political and economic system must also be brought to book, and society as a whole must be reorganised. Given the acute scarcity of resources and the pressing demands of the people for the basic necessities of life, "bureaucratic capitalism" must be rejected out of hand as an economic system which has no relevance to our problems. A real living democracy and a socialistic economic order, in which there will be a striving together to establish a just and egalitarian society, alone hold the promise of salvation for our society.

4.2 Power to the People*

The New Year promises to resurrect politics. Great expectations have been aroused by this promise. There is a perceptible flickering of hope among the forgotten millions of Pakistan, who have been driven to despair by their steadily worsening situation. If this hope is not to be belied, political parties and their leaders must prove equal to the tasks that confront them.

The politics of the fifties cannot meet the challenges of the seventies. The weakness of political organisations enabled anti-democratic forces in 1954 to dismiss a Government elected by an overwhelming popular majority. It was organisational weakness which enabled intrigues and conspiracies to thrive, and floor crossing to be practised with impunity. The deficiency of personnel and programmes in political parties meant that they could only attempt to keep their constituents happy by doling out modest doses of old-fashioned political patronage. On basic problems, the parties had little to offer but make-shift policies and ad hoc improvisations devised by the ubiquitous bureaucrats. It was a measure of the failure of the politics of the fifties that Ayub could wreak a successful coup, and rule the country for ten long years. Lessons must be learnt from this tragic history: for it has been rightly said that those who fail to learn lessons from their past mistakes are condemned to repeat them.

Today the basic problems loom much larger than they did in the fifties. The population alone will have almost doubled since 1950. The struggle for existence in the countryside has inevitably become more desperate. The injustices perpetrated by a development philosophy premised on the accentuation of inequalities has generated explosive tensions

*Published in *Forum*, December 27, 1969.

between classes and regions. Not only the expectations, but also the awareness, of the people have been greatly heightened by the experience of last year's great popular movement.

Political parties, therefore, cannot hope to satisfy the expectations of the people, nor can the quest for a real democracy begin, unless they fundamentally reorganise themselves and their approach to the basic problems. The only real source of strength for a popular party is the people: but the people cannot provide this strength unless they are organised. In a society, where almost 90 per cent of the people live in villages, a necessary prerequisite of a strong political organisation is the creation of vigorous and dedicated primary units at the village level. Party cadres must be developed which can provide effective leadership both in imparting political education and in mobilising the latent energies of the people behind bold and imaginative programmes of social reconstruction. In a country so richly abundant in population and so distressingly poor in resources, no programme of economic and social change can succeed unless it is based on such massive mobilisations of the people.

A political party can only begin to translate the dreams of the common man into reality by undertaking the task of comprehensive policy planning and the designing of a whole range of necessary programmes. Neither imported experts, nor inspired bureaucrats, can provide substitutes for a clear definition of goals and the formulation of radical policy measures designed to realise those goals.

The problems are too pressing and too urgent to be deferred till after the elections. The strengthening of party organisations, the training of party cadres and the formulation of basic programmes must move apace with electioneering, for elections are not a means to an end. That end is bringing power to the people, and what is more important, retaining that power and using it for the purpose of fulfilling their basic aspirations. Unless such strength can be mustered, the power, which rightfully belongs to the people, can be usurped either by frustrating the elections themselves or at any time thereafter. Without party cadres and programmes, power, even if secured, would be impotent to meet the basic problems of the people.

What is at stake in the next year, therefore, is not the winning or losing of an election, but the survival of the still lingering faith in parliamentary democracy as a means for fulfilling the aspirations of the people.

4.3 Towards Socialism*

For twenty-two years socialism has been used as a slogan, shouted from every political platform in Pakistan. It is now time to spell out what precisely socialism means for Pakistan in terms of ideas and policies. We refuse to be drawn into an irrelevant dialogue about whether socialism is an imported ism or alien to the ideology of Pakistan. This line of debate seems to have been deliberately made fashionable, so that people are forced to see the problem in terms of emotional slogans rather than specific problems, demanding rational solutions. In Forum we intend to spell out the theoretical and philosophical implications of socialism for Pakistan and more important to translate socialism into concrete policy programmes designed to resolve our diverse problems. When clear-cut ideas and policies are presented to the public we feel a meaningful debate can develop around the relevance or practicability of these policies. This is the only civilised way of conducting political debate. To confuse the issue by questioning the faith and loyalty of parties and spokesmen in presenting policies contrary to one's own is to elevate emotions over reason and to substitute the force of argument by the argument of force.

Our commitment to socialist policies is founded on the belief that they provide the only solution to reconciling the twin goals of rapid development and social justice within a democratic framework. Socialist ideas will provide neither if we cannot diagnose correctly the diverse maladies which afflict our society and pose socialist solutions which are directly related to national problems.

*Published in *Forum*, January 31, 1970.

The question of importing socialism from Russia or China or elsewhere is neither here nor there. Socialism is neither for export nor import. It merely provides a certain framework for looking at problems. This framework has been fashioned out of centuries of intellectual discourse and historical experience. But the theory thus evolved has to be applied with intelligence and discrimination to the unique circumstances of a particular country, for there are no ready made blueprints for socialism.

It is our tragedy that in twenty-two years socialists have not taken the trouble to try and translate their beliefs into clear-cut programmes. Demands for higher wages, remission of land revenue or reduction of rents are only designed to make the existing social order more tolerable for the oppressed. They say nothing about the new order based on social justice. Thus, whilst the struggle for a better life for the rural and urban poor must go on in every form, those who wish to change society have an obligation to present their vision for the future in concrete terms.

We believe that there are no simple solutions to our national problems. Parroting slogans about nationalisation provides no answer to these problems. Nationalisation of industry and commerce provides a means of breaking up concentrations of wealth and harnessing productive forces for the people. Social control of the commanding heights of the economy will make it possible to utilise productive forces more fully and rationally. But it is obvious that socialists cannot afford to resort to indiscriminate nationalisation where every privately owned enterprise from jute mills to a small machine shop in Nawabpur is taken over simultaneously. A nationalisation strategy, which spells out not just priorities but the rationale behind these choices, will be required if socialism is to be taken seriously.

Responsibility will not end here but will demand policies governing the management, structure and operation of such enterprises. Will they be run by State managers or workers or some combination of both? How much responsibility can be entrusted to workers? How much control should the state exercise over pricing, investment and income distribution policies of these enterprises? All these will require meaningful answers if socialisation is not to degenerate into a mere extension of the power of inefficient organisations like PIDC and WAPDA.

On the land even more serious thinking will be required about ownership patterns and tenure relations. How far can land be redistributed without

prejudicing productivity? What is to replace the prevailing land tenure system? If individual ownership of land is to give way to new organisational forms, how far will these be socially tolerable and what will be the precise organisational character of the new institutions.

Not only will these and other policies in education, foreign economic relations, development strategy and allied fields have to be worked out from a socialist perspective, but their social and political implications will have to be clearly spelt out. Institutional change generates certain social tensions. Some classes are antagonised, others enthused. These conflicts will have to be recognised and political solutions devised to contain them.

Furthermore, it must be recognised that the pace and direction of socialism will vary between the two regions. The possibilities of change and the degree of resistance will vary widely in keeping with differences in the social structure of the two regions. The political implications of social difference will have to be taken into account in designing appropriate political and constitutional arrangements for the country.

The issues spelt out above only indicate some of the diverse problems that socialists must answer if they are to be taken seriously as a credible alternative to the existing social order. The task is not only formidable but is perhaps 22 years late in its inception. Forum has initiated discussion with an article last week on "Socialism and Freedom." In this and further issues we aim to provide a platform for discussing what socialism means in terms of concrete policies and programmes in the context of Pakistan. We hope those who believe in the relevance of socialism will join this dialogue and contribute to the arduous task of laying the intellectual foundations and designing the programmes for a socialist Pakistan.

4.4 Land to the Tiller*

Toba Tek Singh may not herald a new order for rural West Pakistan but its significance cannot be ignored. It served notice on the ruling classes that the traditionally dormant peasant was at last becoming conscious of his predicament and was willing to contemplate collective political action to secure his dues from society.

The awakening promises to be a long and bitter struggle. The feudal interests in West Pakistan are securely entrenched in the countryside and dominate not only the economic life of the peasant but through them the social fabric of West Wing society. After 22 years the *zamindar* can still expect to dominate the representation from West Pakistan to the legislatures. Popular opinion must wait another round or more before it can expect the parliamentary system to remotely reflect their concerns. By virtue of this stranglehold on the political life of West Pakistan, the *zamindars* can effectively insulate themselves from public opinion and turn politics into a family affair. Power in the legislatures need bear no relation to the popular will but will reflect the sum of the deals and alliances which sustain the most unscrupulous and devious of the *zamindars*. Governments will be made and broken on the shifting sands of *zamindar* politics. Completely alienated from principle or any ideology beyond the preservation of their class interests, power remains the only rationale of their politics.

Zamindar politics was the bane of democracy before 1958 and will threaten its survival after October 5, 1970. The emancipation of the West Pakistani *kissan* is therefore not just a domestic social problem but should

*Published in *Forum*, March 28, 1970.

concern all Pakistanis who aspire to a genuinely democratic social order. The mechanism of West Wing politics hinges on the crucial relationship between the *zamindar* and the *kissan*. Unless this relationship is revolutionised, politics there will continue to follow the traditional pattern and thereby threaten the stability of the future order.

The crux of the relationship lies in tenure relations. Over 50 per cent of the land in West Pakistan continues to be tilled by tenant farmers. As long as they depend for their livelihood on the *zamindar*, they can be expected to do nothing to challenge the traditional assumptions of rural power. All democrats must therefore unite in their demand for land to the tiller. The person who cultivates the land must own it. Peasant ownership of land poses no problems to the peasant economy. All that will be effected is the *batai* system where the peasant surrenders half or more of his crop to the landlord for no other reason than that he owns it. This transfer of title rights to the cultivator should be without compensation at least to the bigger landowners. Most of these obtained titles to their land by virtue of being lackeys to the British and it is unthinkable that a peasant should be milked to compensate services rendered to a foreign ruler.

Once the peasant gets a stake in the land, he will be encouraged to invest his labour in its improvement. He can do this in the knowledge that half the rewards of his additional labour do not go to a parasitic landlord. This will add to the productive capacity of the land which is today stifled by the *zamindari* system. Apart from vesting ownership rights in tenant farmers, there is considerable scope for redistribution of land. All land over a socially permissible limit should be seized and distributed amongst farmers tilling less than 5 acres of land.

Naturally, one would expect that the state would intervene to promote cooperative efforts amongst small holders where tubewells, fertiliser, improved seeds, and credit should be easily made available. The existence of two agricultures in one community must end. The small farmers must also be made an integral part of the "green revolution." It is neither in the interests of a stable social order nor an expanding economy that all progress be concentrated in the lands of the big landlords and farmers whilst the *kissan* remains tied to age-old methods.

The economic emancipation of the *kissan*, which gives him land and breaks the nexus of dependency with the *Zaminder*, will revolutionise

West Wing politics. But one is not so naive as to think that this new dawn is round the corner. Political power today is in the hands of the feudal classes. They have made common cause with big business and many are now successful capitalists as much as businessmen and are now absentee landowners. The bureaucracy underwrites their power in exchange for land and social status. Even today it is not possible to tax the rising incomes of the big farmers because top bureaucrats are pledged to their prosperity.

If ever the politics of movement as opposed to parliamentary politics had relevance, it is today in West Pakistan where power and politics continue to be insulated from the people. We in East Pakistan should therefore join hands with the people of West Pakistan in demanding land to the tiller "as a prelude to" power to the people. Our own survival may well depend upon the outcome of the social revolution in rural West Pakistan.

4.5 Reason in Politics*

Underlying the current crisis which the country is experiencing is the sense of injustice which pervades our entire society. The basic urge which moves the people is for justice, between man and man, and between region and region. Having been denied justice over the years, the mood today is one of desperation, since mounting injustices have pushed people to a point where they feel their bare survival is at stake. This hunger cannot be assuaged with slogans or ideological outpouring. What is needed is a comprehensive programme for social change.

These programmes can only be implemented if they are adopted by political parties, manned by dedicated and trained cadres. Neither is possible without the rehabilitation of political processes or the reorganisation of political parties and their commitment to rational programmes.

In this context, one cannot but decry the attempts to exploit the religious susceptibilities of the people. By raising bogey of "Islam-in-danger", it is sought merely to cloud the basic issues with which society is confronted. When the crying need of the hour is for a rational debate on alternative sets of programmes, when all heads are required to be put together to restructure our society on the foundation of justice, the self-styled "Islam lovers" are bent upon rousing passions, dividing people, and creating an atmosphere more appropriate for a "holy inquisition" than the social revolution which our society needs.

Equally vicious are attempts to label political opponents as being "foreign inspired" or "Hindu dominated." These are nothing but desperate actions to

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avoid joining issue on matters of real substance. If a party puts forward a federal scheme, aimed at redressing injustice between region and region, which another finds unacceptable, the honest response would be to put forward alternative solutions. Instead, there is a volley of abuse directed at the proponents of the federal scheme, who are dubbed as "secessionists." Yet these holier-than-thou "integrationists" fail to put forward any concrete alternative, thus revealing that their interest is not really in protecting the integrity of the nation as it is protecting their own vested interests.

When programmes aimed at promoting social justice involving measures of nationalisation and land redistribution are put forward, these are depicted as representing "foreign-isms", not suited to "our national genius" or our "religious values." It is a sorry spectacle to find columns upon columns being written to argue that Quaid-e-Azam or Allama Iqbal, when they used the word "socialism" did not really mean "socialism" or that "socialism", is a foreign idea and therefore must be resisted. Those who oppose the structural and institutional changes, including nationalisation and land redistribution, aimed at promoting social justice must present their own positive proposals. Their palpable failure to do so shows that their resistance is not to "socialism" but to "social change", since it threatens their privileges.

The real polarisation today is between those who recognise that the constitutional, social, political and economic structure must be altered, in order to attain justice, and those who wish to preserve the present structure. The latter cannot afford to adopt a rational approach since by resort to reason they will be undone. They are, therefore, led by the compulsion of protecting their narrow interests, to rouse passions, to raise false bogeys, and to divert attention from the real issues. Among the former, however, reason alone can provide a guide towards an effective strategy for justice. There is, therefore, not only a basis but a need for these forces to reason together instead of working at cross-purposes.

It may be that such a dialogue may in some cases lead to an agreement to disagree, not as to the goals but as to methods and tactics. But a dialogue and an exploration of areas of possible cooperation and collaboration is vital in the confrontation between the forces of reason and the forces of reaction in our society if we are to avoid the tragic result of finding the forces of reason divided in the face of a united, reactionary force.

4.6 Meaning Business about Nationalisation*

Nationalisation is now a universal election slogan. Apart from Banking and Insurance, which every party is committed to nationalise, a whole range of additional sectors seem poised for the people's axe. But those who should be the most bothered by these fearsome threats to their investment have kept their cool. Some big houses are going ahead with big investment plans even in East Pakistan.

The cost of over-eloquence has been scepticism. Few people are willing to believe that the front running parties mean business. Businessmen in particular look as if they have heard this before. Whilst the businessmen's *sang froid* is welcome in as much as panic on their part may have dislocated the economy, the public need to mentally adjust itself to the prospect of fundamental changes in the economy. Only then they will be able to generate the necessary coherent measure needed to compel parties to make good on their election promises. Furthermore, it will make the dislocations inherent in such social transformations more acceptable. A public who knows what it wants as clearly as it knows what it is in for will have the necessary tolerance for change and will in fact give it their full support.

For this reason it is important for those who talk of nationalisation to demonstrate that they mean business. To do this they must spell out the details of their nationalisation programme. This must precisely state the following:

1. What nationalisation means :

State ownership and management of the whole enterprise; partial ownership by the State with i.e. joint management; workers'

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ownership and control; tripartite ownership and management between State, owners and workers.

2. *What specific sectors are to be nationalised:*

This must state clearly what is meant by blanket terms like "Heavy Industries." People as well as capitalists want to know whether this will include the Saigol Petrochemical complex outside Lahore or the Dawood-Hercules Fertiliser Plant or the BECO engineering works. An unambiguous definition of these catch-all phrases is needed so that the party knows its own areas of responsibility, the public knows what to expect and the owners can make arrangements to either fight, move out or cooperate with the regime.

3. *The reasons for choosing particular industries as priorities:*

Some statement showing an understanding of the workings and weaknesses of the industry as well as its importance to the public sector will be needed. This will demonstrate that industries are not picked out of a hat but that choice represents part of a coherent strategy of public ownership.

4. *How the industries will be managed efficiently:*

This must first spell out who runs the industry. Will it be run by civil servants, the ex-proprietors or managers, or the workers? Will they be managed autonomously and pursue conventional pricing and profit seeking criteria or will they be managed by some omnibus organisation like PIDC? If workers are to manage them, how will specific responsibilities be distributed to particular workers and will they be equipped to discharge them? If management cadres are to run them, political parties will need to have lists of names of civil servants and private sector professionals who are willing and able to serve in public enterprises. They will have to be told their financial prospects and the area of responsibility to be assigned to them.

5. *Compensation for affected industries:*

Here again people will want to know and a party needs to know whether compensation will be paid at all, and the principles and forms of compensation if it is to be paid.

Unless parties are clear on all or most of these issues, their promises will lack credibility. More serious, they may inherit power without the ghost of an idea as to what they must do to make good their promises. This will be a counsel for inaction within the party which will give time for pressures

within the public, administration, party and capitalist circles to lobby against direct action. If action does follow at the end of much wrangling it may be a precipitate act. This will give time and opportunity for capitalists to withdraw resources and sabotage the policy of the government.

Lack of preparation plus prospects of sabotage could lead to serious dislocation in the production and efficiency of the enterprise and generate public hostility arising from the resultant interruption, shortfalls or deterioration in supply of goods and services.

In the absence of any concrete discussion or plans for nationalisation Forum proposes in its future issues to spell out ideas about nationalisation strategy. Whether these have any relevance to the future will of course depend upon how the balance of power in society changes. Whilst this cannot be predicted we have a responsibility to see that a programme does not fail merely for lack of clear thinking on the subject.



4.7 Making Autonomy Work*

In the euphoria let loose by the nation's first general election we have tended to overlook the, perhaps far more relevant, provincial elections. This is of considerable significance for the pattern of government in the future.

In West Pakistan Mr. Bhutto seems to be labouring the role of the People's Party in the National Assembly. He seems to suffer from the illusion that power to stabilise prices, nationalise industries and reform land tenure will be determined by the national government. For this reason, the question of whether his party sits with the government or opposition is highly significant. But this surely assumes a pattern of government which is at complete variance with the 6-Point constitutional framework put forward by the majority party in the Assembly, the Awami League.

As the government in power in Sindh and Punjab, the People's Party will have every opportunity to put its social programme into effect within a constitution based on 6-Points. If the elected representatives of the four provinces of West Pakistan want to surrender powers to some mutually agreed inter-provincial authority, though this would militate against the sentiments of the people, then again the People's Party will influence any such body sufficiently to push through its programmes throughout West Pakistan. Either way, there is no constraint, bar their own inhibitions or the role of West Pakistan's extra parliamentary forces, to prevent the People's Party from revolutionising West Pakistan. Whether in fact they coalesce in the centre or sit in opposition is

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irrelevant to their plans for West Pakistan and will depend largely on the areas of shared agreement in constitution-making followed by their position on foreign policy. For this reason, the People's Party should look to its power base within West Pakistan to see how far they are willing or able to put through their programmes.

In the ultimate analysis it must be realised that for East Pakistan Six Points is now the moderate position in any negotiations. There are plenty of one-pointers, not just around Maulana Bhashani but within the young men of all parties. An old practitioner like the Maulana does not start talking of the Lahore Resolution without putting his ear to the ground. It took him a long time to get from Kagmari to Paltan and back to rediscover Bengali nationalism, but having realised his tactical error he is now anxious to be one step ahead of the Awami League and his strategy if not his capability must be taken as a relevant factor in future discussions.

With full autonomy for East Pakistan as the basic precondition for national government, the provincial assembly becomes the crucial arena for politics in the country. Here the Awami League may regret having sent their entire first team to the National Assembly. In the event of full autonomy, these people will be away from the scene of action. If the provincial administration is to reflect not just the burdens, which will be placed upon it but the balance of power within the ruling party, a large number of party front benchers would do well to resign and return to more important responsibilities in the province. Indeed, we would go so far as to suggest that the party leader himself would do well to set his eyes on the premier post within East Pakistan rather than the Centre. His presence at the Centre would pose a serious contradiction not just within his party but in the working of an autonomous constitution.

Within the province, the ruling party itself will find that it has a vital role to play. There is a built-in tendency in bourgeois democracies towards redundancy for members of the ruling party. As long as one is in opposition, there is plenty of work to do in opposing the regime on all fronts. Once in power, a very small segment of the party holding office or in parliament is gainfully employed, but the rest, faced with redundancy, tend to seek patronage for past services and in the process corrupt the body politic.

This must no longer be permitted. The party cadres must realise that

now that the ruling party holds office in the province virtually without opposition, they are the main sanction to see that the party adheres to its commitments to the people. They must not only function as a disciplined and informed pressure group but must be directly involved in the process of programme implementation. The cadres are the main bridges between the rulers and the ruled. They must carry the message of social revolution to the people. They must use their local leadership to persuade the people to accept change. At the same time, they must act as vigilantes for the people against a perversion of the programme by corrupt bureaucrats.

To fulfil this task the cadres must be intensively educated about the social commitment of the party. They must understand the basic premise on which the programmes rest and must be invested with some knowledge of their actual role in pushing through these programmes.

In the final analysis, any programme of social revolution rests on the quality of the cadres. If they are indisciplined, then the programme is corrupted and taken over by bureaucrats. In East Pakistan where one party government is now the immediate reality, aware and educated cadres acquire even greater relevance. Failure to give the cadres a positive role in the order ahead may not only jeopardise the programme but the unity of the party. In five years the people may seek retribution for such failures but this is no consolation for those millions who have waited so patiently for a new dawn.

4.8 Beyond Autonomy*

In the exhilaration of electoral victory we must never fail to remember that autonomy is only a means to an end. The end remains social revolution. All our struggle will be rendered meaningless if we see this historic victory as no more than a change in the balance of power between alien and indigenous exploiters. The people's struggle was primarily directed against exploitation. Today exploitation of the weak and oppressed is directed from West Pakistan which is the bastion of the ruling elite. Autonomy will break their hold on Bangla Desh. But this is no license for native hands to replace them on the people's lifeline. This was the experience after 1947. Then the oppressor was the Hindu capitalist and *zamindar* or the Brahmin *mahajon*. The Bengali Muslim peasant fought and voted for Pakistan in the hope that he would be liberated from their oppression. But all that he inherited was a new set of oppressors. Today the *Shorbabora* have again voted against their latest oppressor. But this is their last vote. There will be no next time. They are now ready to seize power and will physically destroy anyone who seeks to perpetuate oppression.

This truth needs reaffirmation times without number. Already we see that the same class of Bengali buck-seekers who used to line the corridors of Monem Khan's palace, desperately trying to clamber on to the Awami League gravy train. Suddenly full page ads of fealty to the leader are appearing in our newspapers from firms with weird names and obscure interests. As they fawned on Monem, so do they seek the patronage of the Sheikh. But they have no loyalty except to their bank

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balance. They have no leader except mammon. They are willing to suffer any rebuff or humiliation as long as their profits increase.

For them, Bangla nationalism is a license to usurp the pastures of the West wing bourgeoisie in Bangla Desh. Two hundred and fifty loom Jute Mill owners cast covetous eyes at Adamjeenagar. Small time contractors cast salacious eyes at the juicy contracts involved in the reconstruction of Sonar Bangla. Petty traders hope that the passport of the Bengali language will give them entry into a world of lucrative import licenses. In their hopes one sees the greed which earned the Muslim League the support of the Muslim bourgeois before 1947. For them, Pakistan meant the creation of the 22 families. Today the same motives and expectations fire the Bengali bourgeoisie who see nationalism as a license to exploit Bangla Desh for the next 23 years.

But thousands did not face the tyrant's bullets for this. People did not suffer jail, privation and oppression so that this same class which brought their first Toyotas under Monem Khan should now ride Mercedes. Twenty three years ago the people of Pakistan let themselves be hoodwinked into tolerating the growth of the 22 families under cover of ideology and integration. Today fortunately we have the experience of the past and a bill for our neglect to guide us.

Today all the objective conditions in Bangla Desh are poised for revolution. The conditions of life for the masses are more wretched than they were 20 years ago. We remain one of the poorest regions in the world. The economy is prostrate. Yet the expectation and political consciousness of the people is at its highest level.

Against this, the forces of counter-revolution are now at their lowest ebb. The realisation of full autonomy will at one stroke radically change the position of the West wing bourgeoisie who control our economy. Cut off from their main source of patronage and protection in Islamabad, they will survive only on sufferance. Many are already making desperate attempts to pull out.

The local bourgeoisie who survived as the running dogs of the West wing interests lack the competence to fill the vacuum. Twenty three years of deprivation have left them weak, insecure and without political muscle. Today they are incapable of lifting a little finger to resist even the most radical measures. Another decade of patronage and the jackals may yet become lions.

On the land, the Basic Democrats and *mathbars* stand discredited. In the movement and subsequently in the elections, this class was badly isolated. Attempts to exploit their local influence were frustrated by the growth of political consciousness in the villages. Those who survived the sweep did so only by clambering on to the bandwagon in a desperate bid to preserve their local hold. But they too are badly demoralised and will be in no mood to resist a province-wide attempt to restructure both social and economic power in the villages.

The bureaucracy were in any case merely messenger boys for their masters in Islamabad and lack either the experience or confidence to assume the mantle of the M. M. Ahmed's and Aziz Ahmed's. In any case those who had such aspirations are today discredited and anxiously fawn at the leader's ante-chamber to secure his goodwill.

Above all, 23 years of neglect have left us without a military caste. This has been an anti-democratic bastion throughout the Third World through their command of physical force. Bangla Desh is unique in that it begins with a clean slate. It can now learn from the experiences of the past as much as from other countries and avoid at all costs the creation of a Bengali military elite.

Today we have the unique opportunity of legislating revolutionary changes in the social order. The legislators have the power today to legislate night into day for there is no opposition in the land except their own inhibition. Sheikh Mujib today has the choice of becoming one of a long line of nationalist leaders thrown up by the Third World in the last two decades or a man of destiny who brought peaceful social revolution to Bangla Desh through the unique medium of the ballot box.

The constellation of forces which today exists in Bangla Desh makes our circumstances almost unique in the Third World. We have a highly conscious public, who have refused to be distracted by the irrelevant appeals of theocracy, cast and clan in casting a revolutionary vote for revolutionary change in the power balance not just within Pakistan but in Bangla Desh. Just as our leaders recognised the force of nationalism, which was the dominant reality in our politics for two decades and rode it to victory, so must they now come to terms with the hunger for social revolution within Bangla Desh if they are not to be consumed by the very forces which they lead today.

4.9 Different Roads to Socialism*

Until 7 December religion was meant to be the cement which held Pakistan together. With the political annihilation of those forces who campaigned on this assumption in both wings, the quest for identity continues. In this vaccum, it is being suggested that socialism be introduced as the binding force. Now that we have parties committed to a socialistic society dominant in both wings, we can afford to repudiate local nationalism and build an integrated Pakistan free from exploitation. As a corollary to this, it is suggested that East Pakistan abandons its commitment to complete autonomy and seeks to remove disparity through a socialist partnership ruling a strong centre.

The proposal is well meant. One need not seek any ulterior motive behind it in the way that one instinctively assumed that all talk of Pakistan's ideology was used as camouflage by the old exploiting classes. The question is therefore one of feasibility.

Autonomy for East Pakistan rests on two key assumptions. The first is the disparity in the social structure of the two regions. The second is in the inherent contradictions between its regions when they have to share a common pool of resources.

In spite of the fact that a progressive party has dominated the polls in the West, one can hardly expect it to put through its social legislation without difficulties. Land reform will pose one set of problems to the PPP's more middle-class oriented parliamentarians in the Punjab compared to its more feudal representatives in Sindh. A uniform land reform for both provinces would be difficult to push through within a parliamentary

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framework. Nor could one expect that reforms in NWFP and Balochistan would take place at all given the class character of their representatives. The radicalism of the programme will vary as is inevitable, given the disparate class forces not just in the region, but within the PPP itself.

If so many problems will arise merely to push through a programme in the West, what of East Pakistan? The problems of a subsistence cultivator and the dialectics of rural Bengal are radically different from a feudal society dominated by large holdings. The notion that a federation composed of five provinces, each with their unique social constraints, be permitted to legislate property relations in Bengal is not only inefficient but dangerous.

Similarly, in the urban sector the social and economic compulsions which will influence nationalisation strategy will vary greatly. In the West, the priority list will be different. So will the pressures. The political capacity in the West to sabotage a nationalisation programme is much greater than that available to the debt-ridden and socially insecure nouveau-bourgeoisie of Bengal. Within an integrated economy, Big Business could make life as difficult for progressives in the East as in the West, since they have had business connections in the East wing for a long time. Apart from the problem of social disparities, one cannot also rule out the survival of conflicts over resource allocation. The crisis in the past was to a considerable extent tied up with the question of sharing the development cake. With every plan and every budget, the traditional fight over whether East Pakistan should get 30 per cent or 50 per cent of resources would go on. There is no reason to think two socialist governments would be any the less committed to claim a larger share of the cake. Both would be interested in mobilising resources to meet the demands of their peoples - irrigation, education, low cost housing, hospitals. A hospital in East Pakistan would still be at the cost of a hospital in the West. One cannot bank too much on mutual socialist goodwill since the primary responsibility of a socialist party is always to its own people. Proletarian internationalism may be a good talking point but we live in a nationalist world. Any planner in East Europe could educate us on the myth of socialist solidarity when it comes up against the bedrock of national interest.

The logic of our position stems not from ideology but geography.

History and geography have combined to heighten the sense of national consciousness in all the component regions of Pakistan. To revert to appeals for socialist solidarity is, in our present context, almost as fanciful as the appeal of the *Islam Pasands* of old. Too much has happened for anyone to reverse the flow of history.

This is not to say that socialism is irrelevant to the current dialogue. With the chief protagonists committed to socialism, they can at least talk a common language based on science rather than metaphysics. This should make it possible for them to examine the constitutional problems in terms of class and material interests. The PPP in particular should see East Pakistan's autonomy demand in terms of the interests of their own masses. Are the workers and peasants of West Pakistan harmed by Six Points to the extent that the vested interests will be affected? If not, then why oppose this basic and universal demand? A genuine socialist party need not feel committed to the vested interests nor should they need the crutch of common aid, trade or taxation which was always the demand of their business elite.

Today therefore let us live with the reality of our experience. Whilst the socialist commitment may be shared, the roads diverge. Let each region take its own path. How fast and how successfully they approach their goal will vary according to the dialectic of their own societies. If one is more successful, this may inspire the other. When they eventually reach their ultimate goal, they may re-examine the assumptions of statehood. But that is a while off and it would be foolhardy for any party to make its plans on the basis of a hypothetical socialist future. The task of merely building socialism in one region is going to be hard.

PART V

xi

The Idea of Bangladesh

Introduction

The final section 5, on the *Idea of Bangladesh*, was written by me long after the liberation of Bangladesh. Most of the writings recorded in Parts 1-4, written by me in the heat of the moment, project the spirit of the times and were contextual to the ongoing political struggle for self-rule. These final papers, written three decades after Independence, were invested with the luxury of detachment from past struggles and gave me the opportunity to retrospectively reflect on the pre-history and outcome of those historic struggles. The first of these papers, the *Economic Basis of Bengali Nationalism* (5.1) was written as a contribution to Vol. 2 of the *History of Bangladesh* published by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh in 1992. This work presents my most complete discussion on the political economy underlying the struggle for self-rule for Bangladesh. It remains a poor substitute for the definitive work I once aspired to write on this subject but enabled me to both sum up my own less mature writings on this issue and draw upon the scholarship of other contributors to this subject such as Nurul Islam, Akhalqur Rahman, Rounaq Jahan, A.R. Khan, A.I. Aminul Islam and the historic report of the Bengali members of the Panel of Economists on Pakistan's Fourth Five Year Plan.

The concluding paper, *Bangabandhu and the Emergence of an Independent Bangladesh* (5.2), was prepared in 2000 as a public lecture before the *Institute of Bangabandhu and Liberation Studies*. This chapter did not emerge out of any sustained academic work but it did enable me to reflect on the definitive role of Bangabandhu in giving shape to the idea of Bangladesh and his capacity to translate this into a political reality.

This work not only enabled me to reflect on my active association with

Bangabandhu and participation in the political struggles for Bangladesh but to revisit this experience in the post-liberation context. During the period 1975-96, Bangladesh witnessed a 24 year long erasure of Bangabandhu from the pages of our history as part of an agenda to rewrite history. Any move to contextualise Bangabandhu's historic role has thus acquired a contemporary political relevance where objectivity becomes the first casualty. My paper may do little to transcend these pathologies which not only divide our present but also our memory of the past but it does attempt to provide a perspective on the role of the individual in history. My hope was to stimulate more scholarly work on Bangabandhu's catalytic role in the emergence of a nation state. This work is still awaited.

5.1 Economic Basis of Bengali Nationalism*

The Scope

This chapter focuses on the economic basis of Bengali nationalism as it developed during the 1947-71 period when the Bengalis of East Bengal were citizens of Pakistan. It must however be recognised that the development of Bengali national consciousness extends several centuries back. During this earlier phase the sense of economic deprivation of the people who inhabited the regions of Eastern Bengal and Assam which eventually came to constitute Bangladesh began to infect the consciousness of the Bengalis. This consciousness initially found expression in the struggle of the Bengali Muslims for Pakistan. It was the failure of Pakistan to remove the sense of relative deprivation of the people of East Bengal which fuelled the forces of Bengali nationalism that finally led to the emergence of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. Since various aspects of the economic basis of Bengali nationalism constitute the theme of this volume, this chapter will only cursorily touch on the pre-1947 developments.

It may be argued that a sense of relative economic deprivation lies at the root of the Bengali nationalist movement. The struggle for autonomy of Eastern Bengal was predicated on the belief that the relative deprivation of the region derived from the fact that the Bengalis were denied the political power to forge their own economic destiny. The Pakistan polity was built around the struggle of the Bengalis to share power within the Pakistan state and to exercise self-rule within the region

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of Eastern Bengal. The failure to build an integrated nation state during 1947-71 originated in the refusal of the dominant classes of West Pakistan to share power to cede self-rule to the Bengalis. This compulsion to retain power within West Pakistan in considerable measure derived from the control this power vested in the Pakistan state over the disposition of economic resources both domestic and externally derived. The Bengalis sense of deprivation was sustained by their rising awareness of these realities of political power in the Pakistan state and their sense of frustration at not being able to control the levers of power so as to correct this deprivation.

The chapter will be divided into six parts. The introductory part will look at some conceptual issues relative to deprivation and nationalism. The second part will look at the economic basis of Bengali participation in the Pakistan movement. Part three will look at the material dimensions of deprivation as it evolved over the 1947-71 period. Part four will look at the role of the Pakistan state and its policies in promoting this sense of deprivation amongst the Bengalis. Part five will look at the regional bias which influenced the formulation of economic policy in Pakistan and aggravated the sense of deprivation amongst the Bengalis. The sixth and concluding part will discuss the extent to which the failure of Pakistan to correct this sense of deprivation of the Bengalis precipitated the political struggle for independence.

1. Conceptual Issues

To talk of the economic basis of nationalism we must understand what we mean by nationalism. In this context we may think of nationalism as defining a sense of national identity for a particular community associated with a territorially bound place of residence. Such a community must see themselves as distinct from other communities in terms of defining the contours of well-being, community of action, cultural interaction and defence of territory. There are obviously many contradictions in such a definition insofar as the sense of community may not be congruent for all the areas identified above. A culturally homogeneous community may still have contradictions derived from ethnicity, tribe, religion and caste. There may be contradictions between regions within a territory which divide village from village, district from district or province from province.

The notion of deprivation derives from the capacity and capability of a national entity to command access to goods, services, productive assets, control over the means of production, policy making and allocative processes, compared to a community other than its own. Such a divide may be defined in a variety of ways, including by class. A national identity is thus one of many ways in which a community can define its deprivation vis-a-vis another community.

2. Economic Basis of Bengali Participation in the Pakistan Movement

Defining Bengali Nationalism

Since this chapter does not intend to contribute to the literature on the theory of nationalism we will merely aim to situate our conceptual problem within the context of the history of Bangladesh. If we look at the cultural correlates of Bengali nationalism we would need to incorporate within such a history the Bengali speaking peoples of Bangladesh and the states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura within the Indian Union. In practice, however the Bengali speaking Muslims of this region staked a claim to a separate national identity, which thereby brought them within the political framework of Muslim nationalism in pre-1947 India. However, a Bengali Muslim national identity had to have a territorial base if it was to achieve political recognition. This territorial base was originally seen to embrace all of Bengal and Assam where indeed Muslims were in a majority on the eve of the partition of India.¹ Such indeed was the assumption of the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 conceived by the British Government as the basis for Indian independence.² The Plan sought to devolve power on three sub-states of North Western, Central and North Eastern India, with minimal powers for defence, foreign affairs, national communication and some financial affairs vesting with the Centre.

When the Cabinet Mission Plan was rejected by the Congress and the agreement was reached on the partition of India on the basis of Muslim majority areas forming Pakistan, Muslim Bengali nationalism redefined its territorial limits to include all of Bengal and the Muslim majority area of Assam.³ In this territory Bengali Muslims would have been in a majority. It was only when the Congress Party high command rejected

the idea of a united and sovereign Bengal that the idea of the Muslim majority areas of Bengal and Assam joining a "moth eaten and truncated" Pakistan was accepted as the ultimate home of Bengali Muslim nationalism. Needless to remark that when Mr. Jinnah talked of a moth eaten and truncated Pakistan he did not think of what was West Pakistan which inherited the whole of Sind, Balochistan, North West Frontier Provinces and the best parts of the Punjab, including its capital in Lahore. He was thinking of Bengal which left behind it's capital, Calcutta, and its entire industrial base, one of the biggest in India, its principal port, one of the biggest in India and brought into Pakistan the backward agrarian hinterland of Bengal and the tea growing district of Sylhet in Assam. Thus, Bengali nationalism as it found expression in the Pakistan movement ultimately had to define its national identity in terms of the majority community, defined by religion, located in the territories of Eastern Bengal and Sylhet, as delimited under the Radcliffe Award. Such a territorially delimited definition of Bengali nationalism had to take cognizance of the large number of non-Muslims who constituted 22 per cent of the population of Eastern Bengal at the time of the partition of India and Bengal.⁴

Whatever may have been the origins of Bengali nationalism up to August 14, 1947, after this date Bengali nationalism came to be exclusively defined in terms of the territory which then constituted the province of East Bengal in Pakistan and now constitutes Bangladesh. This definition of nationalism now included non-Muslims but in most cases, by choice rather than definition, excluded the 1 per cent of the population who emmigrated to East Bengal from other parts of India. The smaller fraction of non-Bengali tribals living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Garo Hills of what is now Bangladesh constitute their own grey area in our definition of nationalism.

Economic Deprivation

This limited essay to define nationalism is of some relevance to our paper since it defines the contours of economic deprivation in the context of Bengal. Upto 1947 the people of East Bengal in general and the Bengali Muslims in particular felt deprived in relation to metropolitan Bengal and the majority community of Hindus. This deprivation derived from the fact that West Bengal was much more developed than Eastern

Bengal. However, within Eastern Bengal the Bengali Muslims felt that their economic life was largely controlled and dominated by communities other than their own. Land ownership was thought to be largely held by Hindu landlords with Muslims being in the position of tenant farmers or small holders. Financial intermediation, trade, commerce and rural industry were largely controlled by Bengali Hindus and in the upper reaches of commerce in some trades by Marwaris.

What passed for capitalist industry was either in the hands of the British, as in the case of the tea industry in Sylhet and the mechanised river transport which constituted the main arteries of communication in Eastern Bengal. What little of modern manufacturing industry there was in the way of some textile mills and one sugar mill were owned by Bengali Hindus, who also controlled much of the urban trade and commerce and dominated the bureaucracy, teaching and legal professions.

This social stratification of Eastern Bengal is presented more in the way of stylised facts to give substance to the notion of the Bengali Muslims seeing themselves as a deprived community. Other papers in this volume will be able to present more specific information on the social structure of pre-1947 Bengal and will indicate that by 1947 the emergence of some elements of a Muslim *jotedar* class with some capacity for financial intermediation was emerging as was the proportion of Bengali Muslims in government service advancing in numbers if not in rank.⁵

The Bengali Muslims sought to advance themselves within a polity where they were politically in command of the machinery of state. They expected to assume control over title to land, to use the machinery of state to advance themselves by and in education, in government service and the professions, to develop the infrastructure of Eastern Bengal and to promote the industrialisation of this region.

Given the fact that Bengali Muslim entrepreneurship was virtually non-existent, the state was expected to both mobilise resources and initiate the process of economic development and structural change. Given the importance vested in the machinery of state as the prime mover of economic development, Muslim nationalism put great emphasis on the control over the machinery of the state. Since the Muslims of India chose to define their national identity in terms of religion, they could only visualise a structure of national power which was dominated by the majority Hindu community. Since the Hindus

dominated commerce, industry and the professions, their control over state power was seen as a means of perpetuating communal hegemony of the majority over the minority community. Such a perspective paid little attention to class, ethnic or territorial disparities within India.

The Muslim majority communities of North Western India, where Muslims were politically dominant and economically far from being deprived, were put in the same boat with the Muslims in a minority in other parts of India or in a relatively deprived and backward state as in Bengal. In such a situation, the perspectives of a Bengali *proja* or tenant farmer, who voted for Pakistan so as to elect a legislature which would abolish the hold of Hindu *zamindars* and *mahajans* over his daily life, was somewhat different from that of the Noons and Tiwanas of Punjab, the tribal chiefs of NWFP and Balochistan and the *Waderas* or landed elite of Sindh who sought regional power to retain the domination of their provincial power structures against encroachments by a Hindu dominated centre.

To the extent that both the Muslim landlords of North Western India and the peasants of East Bengal sought a polity which gave them political power to direct economic development within the respective regions, the Pakistan movement provided a coalition of expediency to capture local if not national power. The struggle for independent national power for the Muslims of India derived from the failure of the Muslim majority provinces to ensure sufficient political autonomy to direct their own affairs. But for the Muslims of Bengal this power was also sought to correct the economic deprivation vis-a-vis the economically dominant Hindu community. The Lahore resolution which spoke of separate Muslim majority states was thus, whether by design or accident, the logical outcome of the concerns of the Muslims of these two regions of India.⁶

The state inherited by the Bengalis of Eastern Bengal on 14 August 1947 was thus shared with the Muslims of North Western India and refugees from the minority provinces of India, including some from West Bengal. These citizens, drawn from diverse regions and backgrounds, entered Pakistan with rather divergent and even contradictory perspectives on the political economy of the new state.

Of all the divergent social forces, which constituted Pakistan, the Bengalis had the most ambitious expectations. Even in the minority provinces of India, Muslims were well represented in commerce,

professions and in artisan skills in the South and West of India. In the northern regions of the Hindi speaking belt, Muslims were part of the dominant class of landowners and professionals whose mother tongue, Urdu, was indeed the shared language of the upper classes of this region. It was, thus, the Bengalis of Eastern Bengal, amongst all the communities, which inherited Pakistan, who had been exposed to external political and economic domination by Mughal rulers from northern India and their lieutenants, by the British and by Bengali Hindu Zamindars. The backwardness of Eastern Bengal was, thus, correlated with the alienation of the peoples of this region from political power and control over economic resources. The struggle for Pakistan and the struggle for power within Pakistan, which eventually focused on the struggle for self-rule from Pakistan, thus constituted a continuum within the consciousness of the Bengalis of Eastern Bengal and should not be seen as a set of discrete historical episodes.

3. Economic Deprivation of the Bengalis in Pakistan

Some Conceptual Issues

Economic deprivation may be seen in both absolute and relative terms. The deprivation of a person living in poverty is measured in terms of some absolute norms such as calorie intake or an insufficiency of entitlements to command a minimum bundle of goods and services. Deprivation may also be relative to the entitlements of another person, community or territory. To the extent that we are talking of deprivation as a basis for defining a national identity for the Bengalis, we will be looking at the concept in terms of communities and regions which inhabited a shared national space with the Bengalis.

For purposes of our analysis, we will measure deprivation in relation to command over goods and services as well as productive capacities. Such deprivations will be related to deprivation in relation to command over resources, both domestic and external, and eventually to command over the policy-making process.

The concept of relativity will be defined in this paper in relation to Bengalis and the rest of Pakistan. This will in large part be defined in terms of economic disparities between the region of West Pakistan and

East Bengal/East Pakistan now Bangladesh. It will however also look to the disposition of productive resources within Bangladesh between Bengalis and non-Bengalis. This is important since a significant element of the sense of relative deprivation historically experienced by Bengalis related to the command of "outsiders" over the levers of the local economy.

Separating the Regional Accounts

Within the construct of our definition of relative deprivation the peculiar geographical feature of physical separation between East and West Pakistan made the concept of separation much more measurable. It was possible to analyse the two regional economies as two distinct economies.⁷ For each region it was possible to estimate a gross domestic and gross national product, savings and investment, interregional movements of capital and labour, prepare a separate balance of trade and payments, discrete price indices, separate estimates of resource flows on budgetary and external accounts.

Problems only arose when estimates were being made over the costs and benefits of central government services. Whilst revenue collections on central government account could always be identified by the regional sources of collection, it was not unusual for taxes paid by business enterprises incorporated in West Pakistan to pay taxes out of their head office on incomes generated by their business operations in East Pakistan. For some of the business houses such as the Adamjees, Bawany, Amins and Dawoods, a sizeable part of their business revenues originated in the East wing.

On the expenditure account, it was easy enough to allocate central government expenditures which conferred specific goods and services on a region such as expenditure on telecommunications or railways. But central expenditures on the central administration, on the foreign services and defence, though largely physically located in terms of personnel, offices and employing a larger proportion of personnel of West Pakistan origin, were supposed to confer common services on both wings of Pakistan and were thus seen to be unallocable. This proposition was strongly contested by the Bengali economists who argued that since the benefits, both of defence and central administration, accrued largely to West Pakistan, such expenditures should be allocated on some *pro rata*

basis which weighted the greater benefits of such expenditures accruing to West Pakistan.

Since the services of the central government were also seen through their policy and allocative decisions as being relatively much more advantageous to the West as opposed to East wing of Pakistan, Bengalis remained quite disinclined to see such benefits as equitably shared. In constructing measures of such central government resource flows Bengali economists attributed such "unallocable" central expenditures on some rule of thumb formula based on the regional composition of employment and physical location of expenditures.⁸

The significant feature of all these claims and complaints was that the fact of physical separation made most such stocks and flows measurable on a regional basis. This lent a measure of quantitative precision to the notion of the relative deprivation of East Pakistan, which was not so readily identifiable for other countries coping with regional disparities. It was this capacity available to economists to not only measure regional disparities but to chart its course over time and interpret its dynamics, which invested such special significance on the economic basis of Bengali nationalism.

Estimating Economic Disparities

The most readily available measure of disparity related to measures of regional gross domestic product and per capita income. Any number of measures of regional per capita income and indices of regional disparity are at hand.⁹ Whilst most such estimates derive from data originating from the national income estimates of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) of Pakistan there are from year to year differences in the estimates from different sources. Without going into the respective merits of these statistical variations, we have decided to use the estimates of per capita disparities derived from the two separate reports of the East and West Pakistan economists for the Panel of Economists for the Fourth Five-Year Plan of Pakistan. We will, however, look at other data to provide a fuller account of the disparities in the regional economies.

The available evidence suggests that at the partition of India the two wings of Pakistan inherited economies with not significantly disparate levels of development.¹⁰ Both regions had a negligible industrial base.¹¹ West Pakistan however inherited a better developed infrastructure in the

way of roads, irrigation facilities and power.¹² Levels of gross regional product (GRP) were about the same.¹³ If we only look at domestic product, then in 1949-50 East Pakistan's GRP was marginally higher than West Pakistan's and remained so till 1953-54.¹⁴ However, if we attribute the unallocable components of GDP associated with central government expenditures then in 1949-50 the share of West Pakistan remains marginally higher than for East Pakistan due to the higher incidence of central government expenditures in the West wing. By 1959-60, West Pakistan's share of GDP had risen to 52.5 per cent compared to 50.5 per cent in 1949-50. This gap had further widened by 1969-70 when West Pakistan accounted for 57.4 per cent of Pakistan's GDP.¹⁵

Variations in Growth and Structural Change

These regional disparities show that West Pakistan's GRP had grown at a discernibly faster rate than that of East Pakistan as between 1949/50 and 1969/70.¹⁶ In the 1950s West Pakistan's growth rate averaged 2.7 per cent compared to 1.9 per cent for the East. In the 1960s this gap widened with growth rates for the West rising to 6.4 per cent compared to 4.3 per cent registered for East Pakistan.

The faster rate of growth registered by the West Pakistan economy was a measure of the higher rates of investment and the greater diversification of the economy compared to East Pakistan. Between 1951/52 and 1959/60, the share of industry to the regional income of West Pakistan rose from 8 per cent to 15 per cent, in contrast, to the share of industry in East Pakistan rising from 7 to 10 per cent.¹⁷ Within the industrial sector in this same period the share of large scale industry grew from 41 per cent to 72 per cent compared to a change from 15 per cent to 43 per cent registered in East Pakistan. Industrial investment was thus being registered in both wings of Pakistan. As between 1949/50 and 1957/58 industrial output in East Pakistan grew from Rs. 320 million to Rs. 630 million but in West Pakistan it grew from Rs. 871 million to Rs. 1,808 million.¹⁸ This indicates that whilst industrial growth was common to both wings, the gap between East and West Pakistan increased quite rapidly in the 1950s.

The faster growth and structural diversification of the West Pakistan economy compared to East Pakistan's during the 1950s created the preconditions for such disparities to be perpetuated in the 1960s. During

this period the share of industry to GDP increased to 16 per cent by 1969/70 compared to 8.9 per cent¹⁹ in East Pakistan. If we look at the export sector West Pakistan's exports accounted for 38.6 per cent of Pakistan's foreign exports during the first plan period of 1955-60,²⁰ during the 1960-65 period its share of exports rose to 40.5 per cent. During the Third Plan period (1965-70), the West wing's share of foreign exports had come to exceed that of the East wing, accounting for 50.2 per cent of total exports.

Not only was East Pakistan ceding ground to West Pakistan in exports, its export structure remained heavily dependent on jute throughout the Pakistan period. In 1956/57-1958/59 the share of jute and jute goods accounted for 76.1 per cent of East Pakistan's total exports, both international and interregional.²¹ By 1967/68-1969/70, East Pakistan had become only marginally less dependent on jute, its share in total regional exports accounting for 69.5 per cent. Indeed, in relation to exports outside Pakistan jute and jute goods accounted for 90.5 per cent of total exports in the earlier time period compared to 91.4 per cent in the more recent time period. What diversification was registered in the East wing's exports was directed to West Pakistan. In contrast, West Pakistan diversified itself away from a dependence on raw cotton, yarn and cotton piece goods.²²

Disparities in Levels of Living

The more rapid growth and diversification of the West Pakistan economy inevitably reflected itself in growing disparities in levels of living. Table 1 provides an aggregative measure of this disparity in terms of per capita income (PCI). The available evidence suggests that disparities in PCI grew in favour of West Pakistan, both absolutely and relatively, as between 1949/50 and 1969/70. The growth in disparities had nearly doubled rising from 32.5 per cent in 1959/60 to 61 per cent in 1969/70.

It has been suggested that even these high and rising disparity estimates remain understated. It was argued by various economists that estimates of regional per capita income do not take cognizance of the relatively lower purchasing power of the rupee in East as opposed to West Pakistan.²³ This disparity is particularly apparent in relation to the prices of the basic staple of rice consumed in East Pakistan compared

to wheat consumed in West Pakistan. The equivalent in caloric intake of rice in the East wing costs much more than in West Pakistan. This fact was captured by Mahbub ul Haq who recomputed regional per capita incomes correcting for the fact that a ton of rice in East Pakistan in 1959/60 cost Rs. 518 compared to Rs. 334 in West Pakistan, whilst wheat cost Rs. 517 per ton in the East wing compared to Rs. 267 per ton in the west wing.²⁴ Haq's recomputation of regional PCI came up with disparity ratio of 60 per cent in favour of West Pakistan for 1959/60 compared to 27 per cent using the conventional methods as estimated by Dr. Haq. If such an exercise were applied to 1969/70 when the price of rice was Rs. 42.37 per maund in East Pakistan compared to Rs. 22.0 per maund for wheat in West Pakistan, the estimate of disparity of 61 per cent would have been correspondingly higher.²⁵

Disparities in per capita income are matched by disparities in consumption of goods and services. In Table 2 we present trends in disparity of basic consumption items between 1951/52, 1959/60, 1963/64 and 1966/67. The available evidence shows that in terms of consumption of farm produce disparities were not significant for cereals though intake of sugar, both raw and refined, was much higher in West Pakistan with disparities growing over time.

The most severe disparities were registered in the consumption of manufactured goods. Such items as cloth, paper, cigarettes, matches and energy reflected a discernibly higher level of per capita consumption in West Pakistan. This reflected the higher rate of growth in per capita income in West Pakistan as well as the faster rate of industrialisation. This disparity grew over time. This is further confirmed if we look at trends in aggregate per capita consumption derived from CSO household income and expenditure surveys as reported in Table 2. We see that disparities in consumption increased between 1960 and 1966/67.

Disparity in access to goods was also matched by disparity in access to public services. Table 3 shows that in the area of health care, in construction of hospitals, maternity and child welfare centres, beds in hospitals and dispensaries, the numbers of doctors and nurses, disparities in favour of West Pakistan increased. If we allow for East Pakistan's higher population, then the availability of medical services to the people of the region was appreciably inferior to that on offer in the

West and little was done over the years to correct such disparities.

In the area of education the enrollment ratio had traditionally been higher for primary education in East as compared to West Pakistan. However, as Table 3 shows between 1947/48 and 1966 the ratio of West to East Pakistani students at all levels of education increased quite rapidly.

Road mileage, railway routes, motor vehicles and radios in use were in 1947-48 substantially higher in West as compared to East Pakistan. However, over the years these disparities widened. Road mileage increased tenfold in East Pakistan between 1947/48 and 1966/67 but there were still 20,000 miles more of roads in West Pakistan. As a result, there were over 200,000 more motor vehicles on the road in West compared to East Pakistan. This disparity does, of course, reflect the riverine nature of East Pakistan. But it is significant that compared to growth in road mileage and transport in the West no corresponding growth of riverine arteries was registered. The mileage of rivers which were permanently navigable rose from 2,668 in 1959/60 to 3,352 in 1969/70.²⁶

Bengalis came to believe that West Pakistanis ate better, were better clothed, had superior health care and education, lived in a more developed environment with superior transport, telecommunications and power services. This awareness reinforced their sense of relative deprivation. The available statistics thus merely confirmed what most Bengalis had come to believe, that the fruits of independence were consumed in greater abundance in West Pakistan.

4. Disparities and the Role of the State

Inheritance of the Regions

It was widely believed in East Pakistan that the growth in disparities between East and West Pakistan originated in the inequitable policies and allocative decisions of the central government. This view invests a degree of authority in the state which excludes the contribution of inherited economic structures, natural resources, entrepreneurial capacities and market forces. In the Pakistan context, the structural inheritance did not specially favour West Pakistan though it had a somewhat better infrastructure of roads, railways, irrigation and power. But East Pakistan had more abundant rainfall and more fertile land and had a well

developed system of waterways to move goods and people. There was no reason to believe that West Pakistan's agricultural potential was superior to that of East Pakistan though demographics were undoubtedly more favourable to the western region. However, the carrying capacity of the land in East Bengal was also higher. West Pakistan was as ill-endowed with industrial capacity as East Bengal who if anything had a much better developed rural industrial base where at least the handloom industry clothed a substantial part of the population of that region.

The educational resources of the East wing were not inferior to those on offer in the West wing and if anything levels of educational attainment were superior, though there was little to choose in the degree of backwardness in both regions.

West Pakistan was obviously better endowed in its inheritance of personnel in the armed forces, senior administrators, professionals and entrepreneurs. The Punjab and NWFP region were an important source of recruitment to the British Indian army. The armed forces inherited by Pakistan were thus largely drawn from West Pakistan where a number of cantonments and ordinance depots were also located. The imbalance in the administrative inheritance derived largely from the preference to settle in West Pakistan exercised by Muslim civil servants from the Muslim minority provinces of India who had opted to serve Pakistan. A similar choice appears to have been exercised by professionals, though here again the pool of professionals who were at hand and inclined to live in Pakistan was not large.

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Entrepreneurial Variable

The important variable in the inheritance in human resources was thus the pool of entrepreneurs. Muslim entrepreneurs were a marginal factor in the world of business in undivided India. It was their very marginalised status which encouraged Muslim business houses such as the Haroons in Karachi, the Adamjees and Ispahanis in Calcutta to support the Muslim League in their struggle for Pakistan. Sir Adamjee Hajee Dawood, Mirza Ahmed Ispahani and his younger brother Hasan Ispahani were respectively treasurers of the Bengal Muslim League.²⁷ These business figures came from communities such as the Memons, Ismailis and Bohras who originate from Western India whilst the Chiniotis came from Punjab. The Ispahanis, who were of Iranian descent, were mostly

engaged in trade and obtained some patronage from the Muslim League ministry in Bengal.²⁸ But they lived in the shadow of the more entrenched Hindu business community which was also dominated by urban ethnic groups such as the Marwaris, Gujratis and Parsis.

For the Muslim entrepreneurs, Pakistan was to be a land of opportunity where they could prosper without threat of Hindu competition. The mass exodus of Hindus and Sikhs as a result of bloody communal riots in West Pakistan created a major entrepreneurial vacuum in that region of Pakistan. Since trade and what little industry existed were largely controlled by Hindus and Sikhs, the aspirant migrant entrepreneurs from India hoped to fill this vacuum. It was thus not surprising that many of these families chose to migrate to West Pakistan, opting for Karachi which was proximate to their base in Western India and which had closer cultural affinity.

Though some communal riots did take place in East Bengal, the Bengali Hindus and Marwaris, who dominated the local economy, felt no strong compulsion to move out so that no corresponding vacuum emerged to encourage business emigres from India to settle in East Bengal. Some of the Calcutta based business families sought to establish a base in Dhaka, but the Ispahanis and the Amins, a Chinioti family with a base in the leather trade, were the only houses to make Dhaka their headquarters.

Role of Market Forces

The disproportionate authority invested in the state of Pakistan to promote development reflects again the limitation of market forces in initiating the development process. It has repeatedly been suggested that the size of the West Pakistan market compared to that of East Pakistan provided the dynamic for the growth of the region. But we have observed that if we compare the gross regional products in 1949/50, the GRP of East Pakistan (Rs. 12,374 million) was slightly higher than that of West Pakistan (Rs. 12,091 million).²⁹ It is the size of the GRP which initially sets the size of the market. However, if we add in the market implications of locating the central government in Karachi with its attendant expenditures on security and civil account as well as its employment creating potential, then West Pakistan generates a slightly larger market potential. However, East Pakistan remained the principal

source of export earnings, accounting for 51.5 per cent of all foreign exchange earned between 1948/49 and 1954/55.³⁰

In contrast, during the period of unregulated imports in the early years of Pakistan, West Pakistan absorbed 70 per cent of all imports. This suggests that West Pakistan commanded a larger import capacity.³¹ However, the structure of import demand is much more a function of income distribution than of aggregate demand. Thus, West Pakistan appears to have had a larger class of more affluent people with a higher import intensity of demand. Furthermore, purchases on government account for defence and building up the machinery of state, both in West Pakistan and the Centre located in Karachi, were import consuming tasks. To let the demand for imports thus be determined by the dispersal of power and income rather than the dictates of mass demand and development represented a political choice which permitted West Pakistan to dominate the consumption of foreign exchange whilst East Pakistan was the principal earner of such exchange.

It has been since argued that it was during this phase of import liberalisation that Pakistan's share of the Sterling balances accumulated during the Second World War, and its foreign exchange reserves were run down contributing to a period of severe stringency in foreign exchange and a resultant overvaluation of the Rupee.

The import trade in that period was monopolised by the class of emigre traders settled in West Pakistan who earned sizable profits from this trade. These profits, in turn, provided the seed capital for the industrialisation of West Pakistan in the 1950s. This process of industrialisation was stimulated by the protection offered by a regime of severe import restrictions and an overvalued exchange rate.³²

It is apparent that West Pakistan enjoyed certain inherited advantages in the way of a somewhat better physical infrastructure, location of the central government and headquarters of the armed forces and the fortuitous presence of a larger proportion of the emigre professionals and Muslim entrepreneurs who opted to settle in West Pakistan. The phase of import liberalisation in the 1949-52 period contributed to the accumulation of capital in the hands of the immigrant business community located in Karachi. Had Pakistan at that stage opted for a *laissez faire* economy when market forces and private entrepreneurship would have dictated the location of economic activity, West Pakistan may

have forged ahead of East Pakistan. The laws of cumulative causation would have accentuated these disparities.³³

But the reality of Pakistan's history suggests that from the onset of the period of foreign exchange stringency after the collapse of the Korean war boom, the state rather than the market emerged as a critical arbiter in the allocation of resources and in influencing the level of economic activity in the respective regions of Pakistan. In the absence of a domestic capital goods industry the access to foreign exchange became a critical variable in influencing the pace and direction of development. From 1952 to the division of Pakistan in 1971, the allocation of foreign exchange was directly within the province of public policy. Whether foreign exchange was dispensed by the centre or province, in what regions it was to be spent, what sectors would get priority and for most of the period even which individuals benefited from access to foreign exchange, was determined by state policy. This directly influenced the location and direction of industrialisation, levels of capacity utilisation, levels of current consumption derived from imports and scope for accumulation of capital. All these possibilities derived from the constant overvaluation of the rupee throughout Pakistan's history. This overvaluation not only penalised the agricultural sector of East Pakistan but put a premium on access to foreign exchange whether as an importer or an industrialist. Access to foreign exchange thus became a privilege and a discretionary resource within the patronage of the state.

Foreign Exchange Variable

Access to foreign exchange derived from Pakistan's export earnings was, over the years, increasingly supplemented by allocation of foreign aid. From 1948 to 1969, with the exception of 1950/51, the peak of the Korean war boom, Pakistan ran a permanent Balance of Payments deficit which was initially financed by running down of the accumulated Sterling balances and after 1953/54 by a progressively increasing inflow of official development assistance (ODA) which financed a rising proportion of Pakistan's imports and development programme. As between 1948/49 and 31 December 1969, Pakistan received grants and loans estimated at \$6 billion.³⁴ This accounted for 44 per cent of total imports coming into Pakistan since 1947/48.³⁵ This indicates that access to aid, which augmented the claims on foreign exchange, was also a

critical variable in influencing the pace and direction of regional development. Allocative decisions on aid between regions remained largely political decisions, since the uses for aid were numerous and well in excess of the volume of aid available.

State as a Variable

Whilst the foreign exchange resource gap remained of paramount importance in influencing the pattern of regional development, the capacity of the state both as consumer and investor in influencing the regional balance of development was also critical. Between 1950/51 and 1969/70, the Government of Pakistan disbursed Rs. 113 billion in the way of public expenditures on both revenue and development account. This invested the state with quite exceptional control over regulating effective demand in the national economy. Location of this expenditure had a significant impact on the regional market for goods and services. The development component of this expenditure, which amounted to Rs. 50 billion, influenced the development capabilities of the regional economies through its impact on the development of physical infrastructure, public sector industrial development and human resource development. The development of the private sector was itself not an independent variable but was directly influenced by public credits and subsidies and indirectly influenced by provision of public investment in infrastructure and skill development, through the market regime created by public expenditure and by the policy orientation of the government which influenced the incentive structure of private economic activity. We will briefly look at regional biases in each of the following areas of public intervention: public and private expenditure, distribution of foreign exchange, allocation of aid, financing of public expenditures and the direction of public policy.

Public Expenditures

In Table 4 we look at regional biases in public expenditure. This indicates that on revenue account East Pakistan in the 1950-70 period received only 23 per cent of all expenditure. This trend did not significantly change over the successive time periods indicated in the table. This pattern of regional expenditure is not altogether surprising given the physical location of the central government, first in Karachi

and then in Islamabad. The location of the headquarters of the three armed services in West Pakistan meant that the incidence of defence expenditures was largely located in West Pakistan. The composition of the armed services indicated that in 1963 only 7.4 per cent of the rankers in the army, 28 per cent in the airforce and 28.8 per cent in the navy were from East Pakistan.³⁶ The ratio for officers is even more adverse.³⁷ In the bureaucracy as late as 1966 only 30 per cent of Class I officers in the Central bureaucracy came from East Pakistan.³⁸ The ratio for the lower ranks was rather worse. Most of these personnel were physically located in Karachi.

Most of the expenditures of the central administration and defence personnel, the procurement of stores, civil construction of offices and residential accommodation and investment in support services such as power, telecommunications and roads were located in West Pakistan. Such central expenditures built up the cities of Karachi, Rawalpindi and an entirely new national capital in Islamabad. It provided direct and indirect employment mostly to West Pakistanis and stimulated private economic activities by generating a demand for goods and services in the West wing economy.

This heavy imbalance in revenue expenditures was seen by Bengalis as a critical determinant in perpetuating the imbalances between the wings. The demand for parity in the central services, the suggestions for transferring the headquarters of the navy to Chittagong and the location of components of the central administration and development institutions in the East wing derived from the search not just for power and for jobs and access to decision-making but to benefit from the contingent expenditure of the Central government. Bengalis were never impressed with the view that they were less qualified for service either in the administration or the armed services. The use of quotas at higher levels of recruitment into the class I services such as the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) never overcame the initial imbalance built up by virtue of the original location of the Central government in Karachi and the imbalance inherited from the Government of India at Partition.

Attempts to increase recruitment of Bengalis into the armed services ran into questions over physique. But the post-independence growth of the armed forces in Bangladesh suggests that there was no shortage of Bengalis ready to seek recruitment and that regular access to adequate

and nutritious food and regular exercise can greatly improve the physique of any nationality. Had a conscious attempt been made by the Government of Pakistan (GOP) right from the outset to realise parity in employment in the civil and armed services, within perhaps a 10-year period, such a policy commitment would have been an entirely feasible target whose realisation would have commanded a disproportionate influence on the perceptions of the Bengalis as to the credibility of commitments by the Centre to reduce disparity.

Development Expenditures

The allocative biases of public development expenditure remained at the root of the political conflict between East and West Pakistan. From the beginning of Pakistan questions were being raised in the national legislature that East Pakistan was receiving less than their due share of public expenditures. In the pre-Plan 1950-55 period, East Pakistan received only Rs. 700 million of public development expenditure compared to Rs. 2,000 million for West Pakistan.³⁹ The rationale for such allocative biases was never made clear. Suggestions that there was no strategic vision underwriting public expenditures would no longer be able to justify the allocation of only 36 per cent of public development expenditures to East Pakistan during the First Five-Year Plan. In terms of realised expenditure, East Pakistan fared even worse realising only 30 per cent of public development expenditure in the first plan period.

A conference of Bengali economists meeting in Dhaka in 1956 criticised the First Plan for its neglect of East Pakistan and demanded not just a more equitable allocation of public resources but that East Pakistan be treated as a distinct producing and consuming unit.⁴⁰ This suggested a perspective that Pakistan be treated not as an integrated planning entity but as two economies for whom separate plans should be prepared.

The argument advanced by the Pakistani policymakers against allocations to East Pakistan was that the province had low absorptive capacity. This was supposed to explain the fact that the plan allocations made to the provincial government in East Pakistan went unrealised. The Bengali economists and administrators argued that absorptive capacity was a function of both commitment of funds and devolution of authority from the centre to the provincial government. The relatively weak infrastructure in East Pakistan in the way of roads, power,

telecommunications itself constrained absorption. Consumption of electricity per kwh per capita in 1951/52 was 8.6 in West Pakistan compared to 0.5 in East Pakistan.⁴¹ As a consequence of massive investments in the power sector in West Pakistan in the 1950s, by 1959/60 consumption had risen there to 28.8 kwh compared to a negligible improvement in per capita consumption in East Pakistan to 1.6 kwh in 1959/60. As between 1947/48 and 1957/58, road mileage in West Pakistan increased by 5,603 miles compared to an increase of 460 miles in East Pakistan.⁴²

Delay in utilisation of funds in East Pakistan owed to the cumbersome sanctioning procedures where major projects had to be cleared by four separate bodies: the Provincial Development Working Party, the Provincial Planning Authority, the Central Development Working Party and the executive committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). In such situations the celerity with which the centre approved schemes and then released funds influenced resource utilisation. However, even when resources were released bottlenecks in the access to foreign exchange; access to building inputs such as steel and cement, which were in short supply in the East, deficiencies in power supply, inadequate transport and communications could delay projects. Plan figures about allocations and rates of utilisation, which always showed more favourable estimates for West Pakistan, were thus quite misleading in that they confused the symptom with the malaise.

Debating the Disparity Issue

These issues of regional allocation and utilisation were discussed at some depth in the course of the formulation of the Second Five-Year Plan for Pakistan for 1960-65. In preparation for the discussions on the Second Plan, the East-Pakistan Planning Board invited Dr. Akhlaqur Rahman, who was then working at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics in Karachi, Dr. Mosharraf Hossain, who was Reader, Department of Economics, Rajshahi University and the present writer who was at the Department of Economics, Dhaka University to help them in formulating a position for East Pakistan in allocation of resources during the Second Plan. In the deliberations of the working group where the economists interacted with officials of the East Pakistan government, the importance of relating regional plan allocations to

population size, to correct the imbalances in public expenditures incurred through the 1950s, was emphasised. In these discussions, issues of improvement in implementation capacity in East Pakistan, through decentralisation of decision making, bifurcation of the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation and location of some central institutions in East Pakistan, were suggested.

The Pakistan Planning Commission was obviously not impressed by these arguments. Since this was a period of Martial Law there was no scope for such issues to be raised in the political arena so that what little debate went on emanated from the Bengali economists, expressing themselves in seminars and through the press.

When the Second Plan came out the allocations committed 41 per cent of Plan expenditures to East Pakistan.⁴³ This was an improvement on the First Five-Year Plan where realised investment in East Pakistan had been 20 per cent.⁴⁴ The Second Plan in fact did not take explicit cognizance of the fact that there was a problem of regional imbalance between East and West Pakistan. It emphasised the need for stepping up investment in East Pakistan but argued that historically economic growth has in no country taken place simultaneously and at the same rate in all regions.⁴⁵

It was thus not surprising that the regional issue was again at the centre of intensive debate amongst economists in Pakistan. The first critique of the Second Plan was made at an extended seminar on the Second Five-Year Plan organised in Rawalpindi in the summer of 1960 on the occasion of the publication of the Plan. Here Dr. Nurul Islam and the writer from Dhaka University along with Mr. M. Raschid, who was then Deputy Managing Director of the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan, and some Bengali civil servants joined issue on the regional question with the members of the Pakistan Planning Commission such as the Deputy Chairman, Mr. Said Hasan, Dr. M.L. Quoreshi, Chief Economist, Mr. Altab Ahmed Khan, Joint Chief Economist, Planning Commission and Dr. Mahbub ul Huq who was then Deputy Chief Economist and most of the senior civil servants of the Pakistan establishment concerned with policymaking.

The Panel of Economists on the Second Plan, where Dr. M. Huda and Dr. Mazharul Huq from Dhaka University participated, underplayed the regional issue and conceded that the dynamism of the West Pakistan economy warranted higher investment in that region. But they argued that

resources from the faster growing region and abroad should be transferred to East Pakistan to step up growth.⁴⁶ There was a suggestion that some productive investment in the West Wing should thereby be foregone for the sake of better regional balance in East Pakistan but the limits within which such a policy should work will have to be clearly laid down so that there is no serious reduction in the overall rate of the growth of the economy. This approach was predicated on the unverified and possibly fallacious assumption that capital productivity in West Pakistan was higher while marginal rates of savings in West Pakistan were higher than East Pakistan and higher than investment rates in the West. In fact, the rate of savings in East Pakistan in 1959/60 was 8 per cent compared to 5 per cent for West Pakistan, whilst gross investment rates were 7 per cent in East Pakistan and 13 per cent in West Pakistan.⁴⁷

To improve absorption of resources in the East Wing the Panel proposed that the centre should directly take over the responsibility for the formulation of development programmes in the East through deployment of technical and administrative personnel from the centre and from West Pakistan. The approach of the Second Plan document and indeed in the Panel was that Pakistan had a well-integrated economy where precipitate moves to correct regional imbalances could prejudice national growth. This concern was to run through the mind of the Central planners and the West Pakistani economists during the deliberations relating both to the Third and Fourth Five-Year Plans of Pakistan.

Needless to say *post facto* evidence indicated that West Pakistan did not enjoy any superiority in efficiency in investment nor did it have the higher savings to transfer resources to East Pakistan. Rather, with the inclusion of the Indus Replacement works and investments to reduce water logging and salinity as ex-Plan expenditures, a sleight of hand to ensure greater regional balance within the plan, expenditure and income disparities was perpetuated during the Second Plan.

Concept of Two Economies

The notion of an integrated national economy as a basis for planning and resource allocation received its intellectual burial after the publication of the Second Plan. By 1961, the debate was moving from the seminar rooms and chambers of the government to the streets and

the media. As the democratic mobilisation challenging Martial Law under the Ayub regime began to gather momentum, the issue of regional disparity and allocation of resources emerged as central to the concerns of the Bengalis. The Second Plan was seen as a Martial Law plan which rather than correct the deprivations suffered by East Pakistan in the previous decade sought to use public policy and resources to perpetuate the same injustices. The public reaction thus focused on a restoration of democracy, correction of regional imbalances in development and devolution of power to the provinces. Some Bengali economist thus found themselves as leading protagonists in what was building up as a movement for national assertion amongst the Bengalis. In the seminars which were widely cited in the media the conventional myths of integrated national development were challenged.⁴⁸

The growing militancy of the student's movement, primed by some of these same economists, gave a political potency to the issue of regional disparity, which might otherwise have remained entombed in academic disputations in seminar rooms. The President of Pakistan sought a meeting with the Bengali economists on his visit to Dhaka in October 1961. He was insulated in that meeting from the more vocal of the local economists and was offered a more sanitised exposure to the views of the profession by the more senior economists. In a public meeting the President for the first time took cognizance of the problem of regional imbalance by setting up a National Finance Commission to discuss and make recommendations on allocation of public resources with a view to correcting regional disparities.

Finance Commissions

The Finance Commission, which first met in Karachi in December 1961, was the first official body in Pakistan to discuss disparities in development.⁴⁹ The East Pakistani members of the commission included Mr. D. K. Power, the Additional Chief Secretary of East Pakistan, Mr. M. Raschid, Mr. Abul Khair, Finance Secretary, East Pakistan and Prof. Nurul Islam. The commission was assisted by the present writer who worked with Islam to draft what turned out to be a separate report for the commission. Three reports were presented, one each by the East wing and West wing members and one by the Chairman. The Report of the East wing members argued for a self adjusting formula for allocation of

central resources based on the population ratio weighted by the percentage of disparity in per capita income. Once disparities were corrected the population ratio formula would apply. The East wing members proposed that this formula be incorporated in the Constitution which was at that time being framed. The East wing Commissioners however put their faith in the central government to mobilise all fiscal resources which should be directly used to correct disparities. This challenged the demand by the West Pakistani Commission members for greater retention of fiscal revenues in the provinces on the basis of local collection of revenues. The East wing members argued that higher development in the West had also expanded its tax base. The East wing members further argued for greater relocation of non-development expenditure to East wing on account of its local impact on employment, income generation, market growth and urbanisation. The members saw absorptive capacity not as a constraint but as a function of development and sought to use foreign technical assistance to break bottlenecks in project development.

The debates in the Finance Commission at a time of mounting public concern on the regional question persuaded the Ayub regime to incorporate a commitment into the 1962 constitution to allocate public resources with the explicit objective of reducing regional per capita income disparities. This reflected a quite dramatic *volte face* on the part of the central government between the publication of the Second Plan in mid-1960 and the publication of the constitution in the first quarter of 1962. A second Finance Commission was appointed after the adoption of the constitution to review progress in reaching the constitutional goal of reducing disparity. The Commission remained constrained by lack of reliable benchmark data on disparities and was thus not in a position to gauge how far the Third Plan would succeed in reducing disparities.

Third Five-Year Plan

The framing of the Third Five Year Plan in 1965 came at a time when the public debate, reinforced by the constitutional commitment and the report of two Finance Commissions, had brought the issue of regional allocations to the centre of the debate around the Plan. The commitment during the Third Plan was thus designed to give 51 per cent of planned investment to East Pakistan. Fifty three per cent of public expenditure

was to be located in the East, whilst parity was to prevail for private investment. As with the Second Plan, however, Tk. 3,600 million of ex-Plan expenditures on the Indus replacement works was enough to tilt the allocative balance to West Pakistan. In practice, during the Third Plan 55 per cent of public investment was spent in West Pakistan, so that the commitment in the constitution to use the Plan to reduce disparities remained frustrated. Disparity within the plan period grew from 45.4 per cent in 1964/65 to 61.5 per cent in 1969/70.

The Panel of Economists on the Third Plan included Prof. Mosharraf Hossain and the present writer. The debate on regional disparities, the role of the public sector and land reforms became so intractable that the Chairman of the Panel, Dr. M. L. Quoreshi, the Chief Economist of the Planning Commission, brought the deliberations of the panel to an abrupt and untimely end after only two or three meetings. There was thus no report of the Panel of Economists on the Third Plan.

Political Reaction to Regional Disparity

By the mid-1960s no session of Parliament went by without disparity being at stage centre. The Bengali economists now joined by students and political leaders, following the withdrawal of Martial Law in 1962, had made disparity into the central political issue in East Pakistan. The historic Six-point Programme, presented on behalf of the Awami League by its President, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to the Round Table Conference (RTC) of opposition leaders in Lahore in the summer of 1966, drew heavily upon the issue of regional imbalance and the call for treating Pakistan as one polity but with two economies. Three of the Six-point dealt exclusively with the concerns of the economists dealing with devolution of monetary, and fiscal and foreign trade policy to the regions. No economist was, however, involved in drafting the Six point, though the writings of the Bengali economists obviously influenced the programme. Some economists indeed sat with the leaders of the nationalist movement and discussed issues relating to the economy.

The failure of the Third Plan to reduce regional disparities meant that the issue of regional imbalance became the fulcrum for the political mobilisation in East Pakistan. The focus of the mobilisation had shifted from correcting imbalances to realising self government. At the RTC, convened by President Ayub in Islamabad in early 1969 to defuse the

political crisis threatening his regime to discuss the process of political transition, Bangabandhu, who had just been released from jail, invited three distinguished Bengali economists Prof. Nurul Islam, Prof. Anisur Rahman and Prof. Wahidul Haque to assist him and Dr. Kamal Hossain in making his presentation to the RTC and to frame amendments to the 1962 Constitution to incorporate the Six-Point demand for autonomy.

The election campaign subsequent to the fall of the Ayub regime in March 1969 was fought in East Pakistan on the issue of Six-points. This meant that the issue of disparity was again at stage centre. The most effective election campaign poster, prepared by the Awami League, '*Purbo Bangla Sashan Keno*' took the statistics of relative economic deprivation, once articulated by academic economists, into every village of East Pakistan. The issue of economic disparity had thus finally become an integral part of the political consciousness of every household in East Pakistan which was now increasingly being thought of as Bangladesh.

Fourth Five-Year Plan

The drafting of the Fourth Five Year Plan was thus something of a sideshow to the election campaign being fought on the issue of Six-points. The draft Plan allocated Rs. 37,000 million or 49.3 per cent of total development expenditure to East Pakistan compared to Rs. 38,000 million to West Pakistan. However, given the changed spirit of the times the National Economic Council asked the Planning Commission to recast the plan so as to ensure substantial reduction in economic disparities between the various regions of the country. In the final version of the Plan East Pakistan was allocated Rs. 39.4 billion (Public Sector = Rs. 29.4 billion, Private Sector = Rs. 10 billion) compared to Rs. 35.6 billion for West Pakistan (Public Sector = Rs. 19.6 billion, Private Sector = Rs. 16 billion).⁵⁰ For the first time, East Pakistan was allocated a larger share of the Plan.

The panel of economists, set up to review the draft Fourth Plan, included the following Bengali economists on the Panel: Dr Mazharul Haq, Prof. Nurul Islam, Dr. Akhlaqur Rahman, Prof Anisur Rahman and the present writer. The Bengali members on the Panel refused to work under the chairmanship of Dr. Mahbub ul Huq, the then Chief Economist of the Planning Commission, on the ground that he was party to the legacy of allocative policies which had created regional

imbalances. For the first time in the history of the Panels, the Chief Economist of the Planning Commission was not in the chair and Dr. Mazharul Huq, who was then the President of the Pakistan Economic Association, was invited to chair the Panel. The Bengali economists at the outset of the Panel deliberations questioned the bona fides of what was seen as a transitional Martial Law administration in framing a Fourth Plan which should indeed be done by the government which was elected by the people at the conclusion of the forthcoming national election. However, they entered into the work of the panel in the expectation that they could make a major statement on the issue of regional imbalances and the measures needed to rapidly correct these imbalances.

It is a tribute to the legacy of divisiveness generated by the regional question that even in 1970, with Pakistan rapidly falling apart under the pressure of the regional question, the economists from West Pakistan on the panel could not join with their East wing colleagues in making a commitment to correct the history of imbalances. Both groups knew that the Fourth Plan was going to be consigned to the dust heap of history and that their work was an academic exercise with political overtones. But they both submitted separate reports.

The Bengali economists presented two alternative models. One, based on a smaller plan size of Rs. 75 billion, committed Rs. 40.5 billion (54 per cent) to East Pakistan and Rs. 34.5 billion (46 per cent) to West Pakistan. The second was based on a larger plan size of Rs. 80 billion, designed to protect West Pakistan's historical rate of growth, kept the earlier ratios intact and allocated Rs. 43.2 billion to East Pakistan and Rs. 36.8 billion to West Pakistan. Both allocations were related to the respective population ratios of the two wings.

The Report of the West wing members of the panel assigned Rs. 36.35 billion (48 per cent) to East Pakistan compared to Rs. 38 billion to West Pakistan. The phasing of their plan expenditure was, however, designed to build up to a 54 per cent share of the annual plan size for East Pakistan by the end of the Fourth Plan period (1970-75). Much high quality analysis of such arcane issues as regional capital output ratios, regional balance of payments accounts and interregional transfer of resources, captured the attention of the Panelists. Their disputations on such academic issues had a certain surreal quality to it in the context of the fast

changing political context around them.

As it transpired, the final version of the Fourth Plan recognised the academic but nonetheless political character of the Fourth Plan exercise and came up with a revised plan which comes close to the proposed regional allocations of the East wing panelists. The report of the Panel of Economists from both wings has since become a source material and basis of analysis of the regional question in Pakistan since it represents the most definitive available information on such issues as estimation of regional per capita income disparities, interwing transfer of resources and other macroeconomic parameters of regional development.

Balance Sheet of Planned Development in Pakistan

At the end of 20 years of state-directed economic development in Pakistan, economic disparities were seen to have nearly trebled from 21.9 per cent of per capita income in 1949/50 to 61.5 per cent in 1969/70. This remains a reflection on the role of the Pakistan state in the discharge of its allocative and policy making responsibilities. We have observed that only 30 per cent of all development expenditures over the 1959-70 period were located in East Pakistan. This disparity may have narrowed somewhat over successive plan periods but it meant that with 54 per cent of population located in East Pakistan absolute disparities in per capita investment widened over successive plan periods. Thus, disparity in per capita development expenditure increased from Rs. 86 in 1951-55 to Rs. 281 in 1965-70.⁵¹ This meant that the gap in investment resources per capita, which could enhance the productive capabilities of the respective inhabitants of each region, was widening over the years. Unless East Pakistan could consistently use its capital more efficiently than West Pakistan, under such a dispensation, the interregional per capita income disparities were bound to widen.

Available evidence on incremental capital-output ratios, which serve as an imperfect measure of capital productivity, indicates that at the margin capital in East Pakistan was more productive than West Pakistan. This indeed was the premise of the allocative share both in the Draft Fourth Plan and the Report of the West Pakistanis on the Panel of Economists. Both sought to reduce per capita income disparities during the Plan period, notwithstanding that fact that investments were marginally tilted in favour of West Pakistan. They assumed a lower ICOR

for East Pakistan in the Fourth Plan. This assumption was challenged by the East Pakistani panelists. If indeed ICOR in East Pakistan was lower in the Fourth Plan and may have been so in earlier plans then the logic of maximising growth would have suggested relatively higher allocations in East Pakistan in earlier plan periods. In the First and Second Plan the same argument of greater efficiency of investment was used to justify higher investment shares for West Pakistan. In practice, the evidence on ICOR itself is flimsy both as to its conceptual worth as a measure of capital productivity and the validity of the empirical evidence at hand for estimating ICORs in Pakistan. It would thus be safe to exclude the capital productivity argument as a variable in influencing resource allocation and simply look at available evidence on investment shares and per capita incomes where disparities between East and West Pakistan widened in both areas over the years.

Role of Private Sector in Accentuating Disparities⁵²

Looking at aggregate expenditures data, we observe the much stronger disparities in private sector development expenditures. The figure for public sector expenditures shows that in the 1950-70 period 40 per cent of expenditures were located in East Pakistan. This share increased with the passage of time from 26 per cent in 1950-55 to 48 per cent in the 1965-70 period. Public sector development expenditures directly reflect the allocative priorities of the state in that such expenditures were made directly by the state from public resources both domestically mobilised and mediated by the state from external sources.

It has been argued by West Pakistani policymakers and economists that the root of the disparity in per capita incomes lies in the dynamism of the private sector in West Pakistan. This is manifest in the fact that between 1950 and 1970, 77 per cent of development expenditure in the private sector was located in West Pakistan. Since the private sector accounted for 48 per cent of total development expenditure between 1950 and 1970 (51 per cent in West Pakistan and 32 per cent in East Pakistan), the main source of disparity in investment between East and West Pakistan originated in the private sector.

This argument was recognised by East Pakistani economists who, however, argued that precisely because the private sector was more dynamic in West Pakistan the state should play a more active role in East

Pakistan. It was argued since the time of the Second Plan that the Planning Commission deliberately set unrealistic investment goals for the private sector of East Pakistan in the Plan knowing full well that these would never be realised. This was borne out by the evidence that in successive plan periods East Pakistan's private sector fell short of its expenditure targets whilst in West Pakistan targets were realised or overfulfilled. This was designed to give at the outset of the Plan the spurious impression of narrowing regional disparities in overall development expenditure. The Bengali economists argued that higher shares of public expenditure in the East wing were needed to realise parity in overall development expenditures. The Bengali panelists for the Fourth Plan argued that 62 per cent of public expenditure thus be located in the East wing, compared to the 55 per cent recommended in the draft plan and 48 per cent actually realised in the Third Plan. The Bengalis suggested that the share of private investment in the total plan expenditures for East Pakistan be cut from 38.5 per cent recommended in the draft plan and 33 per cent realised in the Third Plan to 25 per cent in the Fourth Plan. It was argued by the Bengalis that this would provide a more institutionally realistic base for fulfilling plan expenditure targets.

The relative weakness of the private sector in East Pakistan, we have observed, was part of the varied inheritance of the two regions. The majority community in neither East nor West Pakistan inherited a business tradition. In Sindh the Hindus controlled all commerce. In Punjab the Sikhs and Hindus were dominant. The Punjabi Muslim Chiniotis associated with the leather trade preferred to operate outside Punjab. In Bengal, Bengali Muslims were conspicuously absent from trade and commerce at all levels. The emigre business communities from India thus became the critical variable in tilting the entrepreneurial balance in favour of West Pakistan. However, even this community did not come into Pakistan with bags of gold to be instantly invested in setting up industries in West Pakistan. They brought trading skills which yielded windfall profits through the import trade in the early foreign exchange surplus years of Pakistan. These surpluses provided the seed capital for industrialisation in the protective trade regime set up by the Pakistan state in the wake of the collapse of the Korean war boom. It is clear that in 1948/49 the industrial capacity in both regions was negligible and that textile manufactures in both East and West Pakistan were on par.

West Pakistan had a small capacity in the manufacture of cigarettes and cement whilst East Pakistan was a sizable tea producer. The number of workers employed in factory establishments in 1948 in West Pakistan was 117,355 compared to 55,074 in East Pakistan. By 1954, a sea change had taken place in West Pakistan where employment in West Pakistan had increased by nearly 88,000 compared to a negligible increase of 33,000 in East Pakistan. Large scale industrial output in West Pakistan more than doubled from Rs. 210 million in 1949/50 to Rs. 595 million. In contrast, production in East Pakistan rose from Rs. 38 million to Rs. 75 million.⁵³ Yarn output in West Pakistan rose from 18 million pound in 1948/49 to 252 million pound in 1954/55, whilst cloth output rose from 44 million yards to 389 million yards in the same period.⁵⁴ In contrast, in East Pakistan output of yarn and cloth increased only marginally. This sea change reflects the fact that between 1949/50 and 1954/55 private investment in industry and transport in East Pakistan was Rs. 710 million compared to Rs. 2,130 million invested in this same sector in West Pakistan.⁵⁵ Another measure of private sector growth may be traced from figures on approval of capital issues by region. As between 1948 and 1951, Rs. 100.6 million of capital issues were approved for East Pakistan compared to Rs. 421.6 million approved for West Pakistan;⁵⁶ of this Rs. 309.4 million (73 per cent) was approved for Karachi. The importance of trading capital accumulated in the hands of immigrant trading communities located in Karachi thus emerges as a critical variable in the early industrialisation of Pakistan.

The rather disarticulated machinery of state, operating under *laissez faire* principles in trade in the early years of Pakistan, may explain the regional bias in the process of primitive accumulation in Pakistan. The state had not as yet emerged as a significant source of financing for private sector accumulation. The only agency at hand in the early years of Pakistan was the Pakistan Industrial Finance Corporation (PIFCO) set up in June 1949 with a paid up capital of Rs. 20 million of which the government subscribed only 51 per cent.⁵⁷ Its lending operations were severely constrained by its lack of access to foreign exchange so that it only advanced rupee loans at an interest of 6 per cent. Between 1949 and 1960, PIFCO advanced loans estimated at Rs. 293 million. Of this 56 per cent went to the cotton textile and jute industries and the bulk to large entrepreneurs. Since in this early period all such industries in the private

sector were set up by West Pakistanis, it would be a fair presumption that few Bengalis benefitted from PIFCO though some of its loans supported investments in jute mills in East Pakistan set up by some non-Bengali families in collaboration with the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC).

In this initial period in the first decade of Pakistan it would be a fair presumption that private industrial investment was largely derived from reinvestment of trading and then manufacturing profits. Whilst upto 1952 such sources were derived from a free for all approach to accumulation, after 1952 trade based accumulation remained highly sensitive to access to import licenses. The regime of overvalued exchange rates, import restrictions and regulated entry into industry through control over industrial import licenses, meant that official allocative decisions became an important basis for making monopoly profits. The distribution of such import licences thus became a policy variable in the control of the government to determine who could set up what industry where. Between January 1951 and December 1955, it appears that the GOI allocated Rs. 1,104 million of commercial import licences of which 67 per cent went to importers in West Pakistan. These licenses realised sizable scarcity premiums and thus contributed to the resources at the disposal of the West Pakistani traders for investment in industry.

It has been argued that in this initial phase of industrialisation the GOP could have compelled private entrepreneurs, notwithstanding their origins or initial place of residence, or source of liquidity, to locate their investments in East Pakistan. Similarly, commercial import licences valid for imports into East Pakistan could have been given to traders, based in East Pakistan, valid for imports into East Pakistan. Special preference could have been given to Bengalis to provide for a source of capital accumulation. The idea that the location of investment and the capacity for accumulation was thus a market derived variable in perpetuating regional disparities was far from valid in the highly regulated and state interventionist economy of Pakistan in the 1950s.

With a view to stepping up the pace of industrialisation, particularly in the area of medium and large industries, the GOP set up the PIDC. This public institution was supposed to directly set up industries to be run as public enterprises or to be set up in collaboration with private entrepreneurs with a view to immediate or phased disinvestment of

public holdings. The PIDC pioneered the industrialisation of East Pakistan but it was also active in West Pakistan. Since its inception in 1952 and upto 30 June 1970,⁵⁸ PIDC set up 58 industrial projects in West Pakistan involving a total investment of Rs. 1,178 million, of which the private sector contributed 20.9 per cent. PIDC set up 74 manufacturing units in East Pakistan involving an investment of Rs. 1,864 million.⁵⁹ This indicates that 61 per cent of PIDC investment went to East Pakistan. It could be argued that an even larger share of such investment could have been located in the East wing to compensate for the preference of the private sector to invest in West Pakistan.

In the late 1950s the state committed itself to a more activist role in promoting private entrepreneurship. It set up the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation (PICIC) in 1957 and the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP) in 1961 which took over the assets and liabilities of PIFCO. The government also set up the Investment Corporation of Pakistan (ICP) in 1966 and the Equity Participation Fund in 1970. These respective agencies played an important role in promoting private industry in Pakistan.⁶⁰ However, as of 1957-60, of the total of Rs. 4,807 million sanctioned by these agencies, Rs. 1,925 million (40 per cent) went to projects in East Pakistan. Out of a further Rs. 1,727 million sanctioned by the Agricultural Development Banks and the House Building Finance Corporations (HBFC), Rs. 734 million (42.5 per cent) went to East Pakistan.⁶¹ The lending policies of the public development finance institutions (PDFI) in Pakistan indicate that notwithstanding their important role in promoting private entrepreneurship in East Pakistan, they could not correct the bias in private investment which had located itself in West Pakistan. Thus, as between 1950 and 1970, 77 per cent of private sector development expenditure was located in West Pakistan. If anything the PDFI actually promoted such disparities since public lending always served as a catalyst for private investment.

Domination of Non-Bengalis in the Private Sector of East Pakistan

What was less evident in the Pakistan period was that private investment in East Pakistan did not necessarily mean investment by Bengalis. The focus of public debate in Pakistan was to locate investment in the region of East Pakistan and to use the policies and resources of the

state to so direct private investment. In practice, however, the weak entrepreneurial capabilities of the Bengali Muslims meant that much of private investment and economic activity in East Pakistan came to be controlled by non-Bengalis. We have observed that non-Bengali Muslims had begun to emerge as entrepreneurs of substance in undivided Bengal under the patronage of the Muslim League administrations in Bengal. This class was quite influential in the high command of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League (BPML).

The presence of non-Bengalis in the economic life of East Bengal received a sizable boost when the PIDC, between 1952 and 1954, set up 12 jute mills in East Pakistan, with fixed assets estimated at Rs. 229 million, in collaboration with non-Bengali business houses.⁶² The EPIDC provided the foreign exchange for these ventures. Subsequently, in 1954 it disinvested the Karnaphuli Paper Mill to the House of Dawood at a cost of Rs. 68 million which was priced at well below the opportunity cost of the venture.⁶³ In the lending operations of the PICIC and IDBP in East Pakistan, non-Bengalis received one third of the loans.⁶⁴ Lending to Bengali entrepreneurs in the 1969-71 period was accelerated. Rs. 1,020.7 million, 46.2 per cent of all loans given out by IDBP and PICIC between 1957 and 1971, were concentrated in that period and directed exclusively to Bengali entrepreneurs as a response to the earlier criticisms of neglect by the PDFI of Bengal entrepreneurs.⁶⁵ If we exclude this period of 1969-71 and assume that all PDFI lending in East Pakistan to non-Bengali entrepreneurs took place in the 1957-69 period then, upto 1969, non-Bengalis received 62 per cent of the Rs. 1,187 million lent by the PFDIs.⁶⁶

Direct state sponsorship and the growing attractiveness of East Pakistan as a source of investment, as the infrastructure there developed and the regional market expanded, attracted non-Bengali entrepreneurs. On the eve of the emergence of Bangladesh, the non-Bengali entrepreneurs completely dominated the urban economy of East Pakistan.⁶⁷ In the industrial sector they controlled 47 per cent of industrial assets, compared to 34 per cent controlled by EPIDC and 23 per cent by Bengalis. However, in the private industrial sector non-Bengalis controlled 72 per cent of industrial assets. Non-Bengalis also controlled 28 tea gardens accounting for 19 per cent of tea output.

In the trading sector, 93 per cent of the large import category holders were non-Bengalis, of which 57 per cent were from the Memon

community.⁶⁸ Interwing trade was also completely dominated by non-Bengalis. Where import licences were given to Bengalis they were in many cases sold off to the better established non-Bengalis. Ninety five per cent of the registered Bengali importers had only very small licences.⁶⁹ The export trade was similarly monopolised by non-Bengalis. In the jute export trade non-Bengalis accounted for 25 per cent of exports compared to 33 per cent by Bengalis and the balance was controlled by foreign and public sector shippers. However, in export of tea, paper and paper products, matches and tanned products to West Pakistan non-Bengalis were dominant. They also controlled much of the wholesale trade and also a large part of the retail establishments in the metropolitan areas of East Pakistan.

In the area of banking, 70 per cent of deposits in East Pakistan were located in non-Bengali banks, and a large part of insurance underwriting was carried out by non-Bengali insurance firms.⁷⁰ In the inland water transport sector two of the three largest ship owners were non-Bengalis.

The disparity in the location of private sector activity in West Pakistan was thus compounded by the fact that non-Bengalis, with their base in West Pakistan, largely controlled the modern economic sector of East Pakistan. This factor, indeed, contributed to export of capital from the region where profits accumulated from business ventures in the East wing could be reinvested in the West. Thus, part of the growth impulses derived from acceleration of public investments in the East ended up by stimulating growth in the West wing through investments and trading opportunities for exports from West to East Pakistan. By 1971, East Pakistan provided a market for 15 per cent of the West wing output from their large-scale industrial sector.⁷¹

If the private sector was to be promoted in East Pakistan it meant that resources had to be directed into Bengali hands. But this ethnic basis for resources allocation within an integrated multinational polity was hardly possible for Pakistan. Though it has been a basis of policy in Malaysia for many years to promote the economic uplift of the Malays vis-a-vis the Chinese. Moreover, the limited number of Bengali entrepreneurs to take up public resources was also a problem. Resources in the way of import licences, permissions for setting up industry and PDFI credits, often ended up in the hands of non-Bengali businessmen. However, in the 1960s a conscious effort to channel PDFI resources to Bengali

businessmen was made and for the first time a Bengali was appointed the Managing Director of the IDBP. After the change of regime in 1969 in response to the upsurge of Bengali nationalism, the PDFIs stepped up their lending activities in East Pakistan and began targeting loans to Bengali applicants.

Development of Bengali Entrepreneurship

Given the weak entrepreneurial capabilities of Bengalis, the public sector led by the EPIDC had to play a more active role in promoting the industrialisation of East Pakistan. The public sector had to substitute private entrepreneurship and its expansion was used as a covert strategy by the East Pakistan bureaucracy to preempt further domination of the economy by non-Bengalis. In the late 1960s the EPIDC pioneered the induction of Bengalis into the jute industry. It invested Rs. 35.5 million in setting up 10 jute mills in collaboration with Bengali entrepreneurs.⁷² With further support from the PDFIs, these private owners had to contribute only 20 per cent of a total investment of the Rs. 174 million needed to set up these mills. EPIDC also disinvested, on favourable terms, a textile mill for Rs. 24.7 million and a sugar mill for Rs. 31.9 million, to Bengali entrepreneurs, who were, in turn, underwritten by the banks in the purchase of these mills.⁷³

The end result of these efforts at building up a Bengali entrepreneurial class meant that at liberation Bengalis accounted for 18 per cent of fixed assets in the modern industrial sector. However, five-sixths of this investment was located in the jute and textile sector plus one disinvested sugar mill so that most Bengali entrepreneurship was really located in small and a few medium-scale industries.

In the banking sector Bengalis had set up two banks, the Eastern Mercantile Bank and the Eastern Banking Corporation. In the insurance sector 12 companies were owned by Bengalis at liberation.⁷⁴ They commanded only a small share of assets and in 1969/70 accounted for only 10 per cent of life insurance underwriting. In trade their main headway had been in raw jute exports. Though most Bengali jute exporters were members of the Small Shippers Association, together they accounted for about a third of all jute shipments. A number of Bengalis, such as the house of Zahurul Islam, had begun to receive awards for big civil construction contracts. Some retired civil servants

were using their connections in the bureaucracy to lay claim to the lucrative indenting business which had, even for supplies to East Pakistan, been dominated by non-Bengalis.

Most of these gains in the development of a Bengali entrepreneurial class were a product of the 1960s and particularly the late 1960s where the mounting pressure of Bengali nationalism was yielding dividends to the Bengali middle class in the way of upward mobility in the bureaucracy and greater official patronage in the business sector. However, the emergent Bengali entrepreneurial class remained very much a junior partner to the non-Bengali entrepreneurs who continued to dominate the business life of East Pakistan on the eve of Bangladesh.

It is thus plausible that the entrepreneurial variable always worked in favour of West Pakistan. The head start they received in the early days of Pakistan, due to the accident of migrant settlements, was built upon and cumulatively sustained the growing gap between East and West Pakistan and the even wider gap between Bengali and non-Bengali entrepreneurs. However, the state remained the dominant influence in the direction of economic policy as we will see in the next section and could have both promoted private entrepreneurship and substituted public enterprise to compensate for the initial advantages enjoyed by West Pakistan.

That the state could play a decisive role in inducting feudal and professional classes into industry was evidenced by the rapid rise of business houses from the Punjab and the NWFP in the 1960s. The rise of Gandhara industries, owned by Gen. Habibullah Khan Khattak of NWFP and father-in-law of the son of President Ayub Khan, was one of the examples of what state sponsorship could do in building a person with no commercial background into one of the 43 top families of Pakistan. Today Lahore has become as dynamic a business centre in Pakistan as Karachi and a new generation of Punjabi entrepreneurs has prospered under state patronage.

The moral of the Pakistan story is that entrepreneurship is a development variable which inhibited the development of Bengalis in Bangladesh. But the state always had the power to circumvent this through promotional efforts and direct intervention. The sense of relative deprivation vis-à-vis the non-Bengali business sector thus remained acute in the minds of the Bengali middle classes who lived in their own land in the shadow of this alien presence whilst having no access to business

opportunities in West Pakistan. They resented having to go to Karachi and Islamabad to promote their business ventures and resented the patronage extended to non-Bengali businesses operating in this area by non-Bengali civil servants who in the early years ran the East Pakistan secretariat. When Bengalis came to positions of prominence in the East Pakistan Secretariat, they resented their lack of power and control over resources and responsibilities compared to Islamabad. It was only when Bengalis began to take over national institutions such as IDBP and to become Secretaries in the Centre that Bengali businessmen began to acquire confidence that the balance of opportunity was moving in their favour.

Thus, democratic power of Bengalis in the Centre, full regional autonomy and finally an independent Bangladesh represented for the nascent class of Bengali entrepreneurs the opportunity of escaping from the shadow of non-Bengali commercial dominance in the same way that Pakistan provided an escape to the Memons and Chiniotis from the dominance of the Marwari and Gujarati business house in undivided India.

5. Bias in Economic Policy Making

Competition over the allocation of resources remained at the centre of the East-West economic conflict. However, access to public resources and economic opportunities were conditioned by public policies which influenced both the location of economic activity and the sources of financing. We will look at four areas of public policy which reflected regional bias in economic policymaking and accentuated the sense of deprivation which fuelled Bengali nationalism. These areas cover issues of commercial policy, exchange rate policy, federal finance and external resource mobilisation.

Commercial Policy

The issue which burned most deeply into the consciousness of Bengalis was their deprivation from using the exchange earnings generated by exports out of East Pakistan. Someone whose name is lost in antiquity remarked on the eve of partition in 1947 that the future of Pakistan depends on the life of the Quaid-e-Azam and the price of raw jute. Both presumptions were somewhat exaggerated but merit repetition because of the significance attached to jute exports.

Whilst jute was Pakistan's principal export in 1947 its principal market

was in India, which accounted for 65 per cent of its market compared to 35 per cent which was exported to the rest of the world.⁷⁵ This situation reflected the industrial disparity between West Bengal where the jute mills of India were located, and East Bengal where the best jute was produced. Be that as it may even after 1947 the jute trade with India remained a lifeline for millions of agriculturists in East Bengal. Free trade with India after 1947 persisted largely to avoid disruption to the growers of jute and also of raw cotton in West Pakistan where upto 1946, 80-90 per cent of the crop was exported to India. After partition a conscious effort was made to diversify markets for raw jute and cotton. By 1948/49, exports to other countries accounted for 48 per cent of jute production but India still absorbed 48 per cent of the jute crop and 43 per cent of West Pakistan's cotton crop.

This lifeline for jute growers was threatened when trading relations with India were suspended as a consequence of Pakistan's refusal to join India in devaluing the rupee in 1949.⁷⁶ Whatever be the merits of this dispute the brunt of the burden was borne by the jute growers of East Bengal whose money incomes fell drastically due to the fall in both jute sales and price. The index of jute prices fell from 100 in April 1948 to March 1949 to 7 between April and September 1950.⁷⁷ A more serious decline was overcome by the fortuitous outbreak of the Korean War which stimulated the demand for all commodities including jute when price and earnings rose sharply. East Bengal's export earning doubled from Rs. 620 million in 1949/50 to Rs. 1,210 million in 1950/51.⁷⁸ This episode is cited here to indicate how commerce policy enacted in Karachi impacted on the life of growers in East Bengal.

Whilst the disruption in jute exports to India was compensated by the development of alternative markets and the growth of the jute industry in East Bengal, the resultant move by India to completely substitute the imports of jute from East Bengal had more lasting consequences. Production of jute in Eastern India expanded from 1.57 million bales in 1945/46 to 4.68 million bales in 1951/52 and 5.2 million bales in 1958/59.⁷⁹ Exports from East Bengal to India fell from 4 million bales in 1945/46 to 2.6 million bales in 1951/52 and to 0.2 million bales in 1958/59.

Exchange Rate Policy

The first exposure of Bengalis to the discriminatory character of

commercial policy was compounded by the longer term impact of import and exchange rate policy. With the collapse of the Korean boom in 1952, Pakistan moved into a regime of stringent import controls. This sustained an overvaluation of the rupee over the subsequent history of Pakistan upto 1971 which required administrative rationing of foreign exchange and a regime of high import tariffs. In the 1950s upto the devaluation of 1955, the rupee was overvalued by more than 100 per cent.⁸⁰ This overvaluation was somewhat moderated after 1958 but still remained between 74 and 100 per cent in the 1960s.

East Pakistan paid the price of this particular policy regime in two ways. This overvaluation of the rupee meant that jute growers were receiving a lower price for their exports whilst importers of Pakistan were receiving a subsidy. It has been estimated by a noted Bengali economist that in a single year, 1959/60, this overvaluation represented a concealed taxation of 6.4 per cent of a jute grower's income.⁸¹ Given the higher overvaluation of the rupee in earlier and later years, this taxation could have been as high as 10 per cent of the jute grower's income.

No corresponding benefit accrued to importers in East Pakistan since the second outcome of the restrictive import policies of the Pakistan state was its bias in allocation of foreign exchange to West Pakistani importers. Since 1952 very little of *laissez faire* prevailed in the import market of Pakistan. The overvalued exchange rate ensured an excess of demand over supply for foreign exchange which was managed by a system of administered import entitlements which rationed foreign exchange.⁸² The bias in this system of administered exchange allocation may be seen by the fact that 69 per cent of imports coming into Pakistan between 1947 and 1971 went to West Pakistan.⁸³

Part of this regional bias in imports derives from the dynamics of the market. A larger, more dynamic economy generates greater demand for imports of consumption, intermediate and capital goods. The resultant growth in the more favoured region further increased the appetite for imports. Thus, the faster growth and more rapid industrialisation of West as compared to East Pakistan obviously generated a larger market for imports. It is, however, argued that both wings lived with an unsatisfied demand for imports due to the overvaluation of the rupee. Thus, in a regime of import controls it remained within the discretion of the policymakers to more fully satisfy the demand for imports of one region

over another. Given the need to commit resources to accelerate the development of the lagging East wing, such a discriminatory import policy would have attracted resources to the region which would have served to promote greater regional balance in investment and narrowed disparities in output and incomes.

In fact, import rationing worked in a contrary direction. We have already observed how the allocation of cash import licences in the 1950s for commercial imports went largely to importers in West Pakistan. The mechanism of import rationing derived from the system of import entitlements which was based on an importer's historical imports in the early 1950s. Since this was the OGL period where imports largely went to West Pakistan, the original disparity in favour of West Pakistan became, under this system, self-perpetuating.⁸⁴ Import licences to set up industries in West Pakistan in the early 1950s then provided, in a later period, the basis for a larger share of import entitlements into West Pakistan for imports of industrial raw materials and spares. There was no way that East Pakistan could catch up to West Pakistan in the way of imports under this system unless a conscious policy decision was taken to give 90 per cent of commercial import licences to East Pakistan, to induct new import category holders from East Pakistan, preferably Bengalis and to only permit new industries to be set up in the East wing over a period of time. Such an interventionist arrangement was obviously politically unacceptable and would have also created severe market problems due to the increasing gap between the demand and supply of imports into West Pakistan.

The outcome of this distortion in exchange rate policy and the discriminatory allocation of import entitlements was further aggravated by the fact that within East Pakistan the principal beneficiaries of the import entitlements were non-Bengalis, both commercial importers and industrial importers. This commercial and exchange rate policy regime thus not only maldistributed resources between East and West Pakistan but between Bengali jute growers and non-Bengali industrialists and traders within East Pakistan.

Financing the Trade Deficit

The logic of the market place and the dynamics of cumulative causation may have been made marginally more tolerable if East Pakistan

had not been the principal source of foreign exchange earnings in Pakistan. Between 1947/48 and 1969/70, East Pakistan accounted for 55 per cent of Pakistan's export earnings of Rs. 46.7 billion.⁸⁵ In these 23 years only in six years did West Pakistan's export earnings exceed East Pakistan's; three of these years were in the period of 1948/49 to 1952/53 and three in the last three years of Pakistan from 1967/68 to 1969/70 when the many years of higher industrial investment in Pakistan paid off in a rising export volume and a more diversified export structure. Between 1947/48 and 1966/67, with the exception of 1963/64 and 1964/65, East Pakistan ran a constant surplus in its exports over its imports. Only in the last three years, 1967/68 to 1969/70, did East Pakistan, as a result of a rise in imports and a stagnation of its exports, run into deficit on its foreign trade account. In contrast, in the entire 23-year period, West Pakistan ran an external trade deficit in every year, except 1950/51. The trade surplus accumulated to East Pakistan came to Rs. 5.5 billion compared to a deficit accrued to West Pakistan of Rs. 23.2 billion.⁸⁶ It was this imbalance in the regional trading accounts which gave currency to the view that East Pakistan transferred resources, particularly in the 1950s, to finance West Pakistan's faster industrialisation, growth and diversification compared to East Pakistan.

The sense of deprivation in East Pakistan was not assuaged by the fact that West Pakistan ran a perennial surplus on interwing trade with East Pakistan. This imbalance grew in successive time periods and by 1969-70 amounted to a cumulative deficit of Rs. 7.5 billion for East Pakistan. West Pakistanis claimed that in fact East Pakistan's transfer of resources to West Pakistan on its external account was partially compensated by West Pakistan's interwing trade surplus. This view was repudiated by Bengali economists on account of the fact that the interwing and international trade surpluses were not comparable owing to the overvaluation of the Rupee. Furthermore, a Rupee surplus was not comparable to a foreign currency surplus since in the absence of a Pakistani capital goods industry, only foreign currency could be used to buy the capital goods needed to sustain development and structural change.

Disparities in Appropriation of Foreign Aid

The situation was somewhat complicated by the emergence of foreign aid as a major source of external finance. From the late 1950s Pakistan

became increasingly more dependent on foreign aid to sustain its development activity. Upto December 1970, Pakistan received loans and grants valued at \$7 billion.⁸⁷ Of this \$5.6 billion came as loans and \$1.4 billion as grants.⁸⁸ Of the loan funds \$2 billion went for project aid, \$0.9 billion for non-project aid and \$0.15 billion as US PL480 food and commodity loans.⁸⁹ Most of the grant funds were for food aid but also included some project and commodity aid. Table 5 gives us a breakdown of the distribution of aid and loans between East and West Pakistan. The available evidence indicates that out of \$7.6 billion of foreign economic assistance committed to Pakistan between 1947 and 1970, \$2.02 billion (2.6.4 per cent) went to East Pakistan. Of the funds committed between 1947 and 1970, some \$6.4 billion was utilised. Of this \$1.9 billion (30 per cent) was utilised in East Pakistan.

Foreign aid emerged as a crucial variable in underwriting the development of Pakistan. Rupees 91.94 billion of development expenditure was incurred in Pakistan between 1949 and 1970. Of this it is estimated that Rs. 61.58 billion or 67 per cent was made up of disbursed aid.⁹⁰ In the case of West Pakistan, aid contributed to 68 per cent of its total development expenditure of Rs. 62 billion and in East Pakistan aid accounted for 64.5 per cent of its Rs. 30 billion of development expenditure.

It is thus clear that disparities in development expenditure were highly sensitive to aid commitment and disbursement. We have observed that East Pakistan received 30 per cent of aid disbursements and also incurred 30 per cent of total development expenditure. Thus, disparities in commitment and disbursement of aid in favour of West Pakistan clearly impacted on disparities in levels of development in the two regions. It was thus hardly surprising that the disparities in access to aid fuelled the sense of economic deprivation felt by Bengalis and inspired discussion on East Pakistan's legitimate share of aid appropriated by West Pakistan.

Transfer of Resources from East to West Pakistan

The surrender of foreign exchange earnings and the surrender of East Pakistan's share of aid coalesced around the issue of transfer of resources. Bengalis in the 1950s believed that the external surplus was financing West Pakistan's deficit. This transfer was not compensated by the East wing's trade deficit with West Pakistan on interwing account.

However, if we add in the "due" share of East Pakistan of foreign aid surrendered to West Pakistan, then a more comprehensive measure of the transfer of resources from East to West Pakistan can come to hand.

Some of this debate tends to suffer from conceptual confusion and serious problems of estimation. This task was most definitively tackled by the Bengalis on the Panel of Economists for the Fourth Plan. They managed to bring the estimates for interwing and international trade flows on par by appreciating the rupee value of the international trade figures by the extent of the overvaluation of the Pakistan rupee for all years between 1949/50 and 1969/70. They then went on to compile balance of payments estimates for East and West Pakistan in order to take account of the flow of the invisible items in the flow of resources. This task had always inhibited economists from putting together a more definitive measure of resource transfers. The Bengali panelists, making some heroic assumption about attributing debit and credit for such items as transportation, insurance, investment income, government expenditure, remittances, etc., compiled a set of regional balances.

In Table 6 we present the regional balance of payments estimates prepared by the Panel of Economists. It is clear that the East wing ran a payments surplus upto 1960/61 which rose to Rs. 5.4 billion at scarcity prices. In contrast, West Pakistan ran a deficit of Rs. 21 billion. But in the 1960s both the regions were in deficit though the West's deficit was 13.7 times higher than for the East. The deficits for both the regions were covered by aid. West Pakistan thus received the larger share of aid. In the 1960s West Pakistan was appropriating East Pakistan's surplus on trade and payments plus it was appropriating all aid and paying for it in part through interwing exports. To the extent that the East was in surplus in the 1950s it was a net exporter of resources and received no aid. This situation changed in the 1960s with both the regions in deficit. Resource transfers from East to West thus took place through West Pakistan appropriating the "due" share of aid of the East wing. The "due" share was assumed by the Bengali panelist to be based on East Pakistan's weightage in the population of Pakistan. Transfer of resources on aid account from East Pakistan is thus derived from the difference in East Pakistan's "due" share of aid and its realised share.

In Table 7 we present an estimate of resource transfers from East to West Pakistan. The figures are derived from the estimates prepared by the

Bengali members of the Panel of Economists. The table shows that in the 1950s East Pakistan transferred Rs. 8.96 billion to West Pakistan both on account of its payments surplus and its surrendered share of due aid. However, in the 1960s it was in deficit on its payments account but surrendered Rs. 12.2 billion of its aid account so that the net transfer of Rs. 2.8 billion was well below the figure of the 1950s. In aggregate, over the 20 years, 1948/49 to 1968/69, East Pakistan transferred Rs. 11.8 billion of resources which underwrote the development of West Pakistan. This came to 19 per cent of West Pakistan's total development expenditure in the corresponding period. If this Rs. 11.8 billion was used for the development of East Pakistan, the region's development effort could have been augmented by 39 per cent.

It was thus a serious fallacy to presume that West Pakistan's faster rate of development derived from its capacity to mobilise a higher proportion of resources than East Pakistan. In fact, it was East Pakistan's savings and share of aid which enabled West Pakistan to develop beyond its own means. The rate of domestic savings in East Pakistan during 1955-60 was estimated at 7.69 compared to 4 per cent in West Pakistan. In 1960-65 East Pakistan's savings rate was 4.3 per cent compared to 0.9 per cent for West Pakistan.⁹¹

It was quite ironical that the relatively more backward but more populous region of Pakistan should have thus surrendered its resources and share of aid negotiated in the name of the whole country to promote the development of the more developed part of Pakistan. Equity and democracy would have suggested the reverse.

It was thus not surprising that the issue of transfer of resources became an issue of bitter controversy and more than anything else accentuated the sense of deprivation amongst the Bengalis.

Problems of Federal Finance

Whilst the flow of resources on trade and aid account remained a critical vehicle for perpetuating imbalances between East and West Pakistan, the system of federal finance provided a parallel vehicle. The federal budget collected revenues from both the regions based on fiscal levies and surpluses generated by public enterprises.

In turn, these revenues were spent in either region either by the central or the respective provincial governments. Estimation of revenue

collections normally presented no problem of estimation except for the fact that many companies with headquarters in West Pakistan but business operations in both the wings had their revenue assessments attributed to their head offices in West Pakistan. Furthermore, customs and excise duties on intermediate and finished goods, which were shipped from West to East Pakistan, were eventually paid for by East Pakistani consumers but collected from importers and manufacturers in West Pakistan. It was thus reckoned that the actual incidence of revenue collections from the East wing was about 10 per cent lower than was actually credited to the regional account.

Actual estimations of revenue collections between East and West Pakistan show a higher rate of collection in West Pakistan. One report for 1961 estimated that 22 per cent of revenue collections accrued in the East wing.⁹² A more updated estimate for the period from 1965/66 to 1967/68 showed that over three years collection of central revenues from East Pakistan ranged from 25.5 per cent to 29.8 per cent.⁹³ This is not surprising insofar as the collection of central revenues based on customs revenues and taxes on production, sales and income will reflect the regional disparities in the location of imports and economic development. Thus, West Pakistan's higher contribution to central revenues was merely another measure of disparity in development and not a rationale for higher development in that region.

State as the Source of Disparity

In fact, as on its external account, West Pakistan ran a sizeable deficit on its public expenditure account. This is captured by a review of the incidence of public revenue and expenditure reported in Table 4. This indicates that between 1949/50 and 1969/70 only 23 per cent of central government revenue expenditures accrued in the East wing. This implies that East Pakistan was, on balance, getting back slightly less than what it paid for on revenue account whilst West Pakistan got back slightly more. In practice, this surplus or deficit on revenue account did not mean much since a large part of development was in effect financed by foreign aid. However, as we observed earlier, a higher level of revenue expenditure in West Pakistan did have a positive developmental impact through its contribution to higher employment opportunities for West Pakistani residents and creation of effective demand to sustain economy activity.

6. Pathway to Independence

It has been argued in this paper that the Pakistan state served as the principal source for creating and perpetuating regional disparities. Its allocative strategies on account of public expenditures, both on revenue and development account and its aid allocations and disposition of domestic foreign exchange earnings, constantly demonstrated a bias towards West Pakistan. Its policy regime in relation to exchange rates and imports created an incentive structure for the private sector which favoured industry over agriculture, West Pakistan over East Pakistan and non-Bengalis over Bengalis. It is thus appropriate that we should conclude this paper by briefly reflecting on the composition, functioning and political economy of the Pakistani state.

Democracy and Disparity

Disparities between East and West Pakistan would have been more tolerable had the machinery of state been more representative in its composition. The Pakistan state throughout its existence denied Bengalis an effective role in the process of governance. Representative institutions remained compromised throughout the history of Pakistan. No direct elections to a national legislature in Pakistan were held from 1947 to 1970. Between 1947 and 1971, no transfer of power at the Centre took place through the ballot box. It would thus be correct to conclude that except for a couple of years after the emergence of Pakistan no central legislature commanded any sort of popular mandate.

This absence of representative institutions impacted most adversely on the Bengalis who constituted the demographic and voting majority in Pakistan. At no stage could their numbers be counted on in the control of the state. Between 1947 and 1958 Bengalis served as Prime Ministers for half the period. But two of these Prime Ministers were figureheads, and one held power as a minority coalition partner and was removed within two years of office without reference to the legislature. From 1958 to 1971 West Pakistan provided two soldier presidents who held unchallenged and unlimited power in the centre.

Given the weakness of representative institutions and the impotence of the national legislatures, power in the Pakistan state was effectively exercised by the central bureaucracy, by the armed forces and lately by the class of landlords and businessmen who benefited and grew in power

under the patronage of the Pakistan state. Federal power was concentrated in the central government who not only retained the principal sources of domestic revenue and controlled the disposition of aid and export earnings but also made all major policy decisions pertaining to the economy. The provincial governments were, thus, creatures of the centre.

The central government was completely dominated by the bureaucracy and the armed forces and these institutions, particularly in their upper strata, were dominated by West Pakistanis. Table 8 gives some measure of the composition of the levers of power in the Centre. However, even these figures understate the extent to which Bengalis were excluded from the upper echelons of power. In an essentially unrepresentative state, with power highly concentrated, the fact that first Ayub Khan and then Yahya Khan served as all powerful Presidents meant that Bengalis were totally excluded from the centre of power. In the history of Pakistan no Bengali became Finance Minister or controlled the portfolio which handled aid negotiations. Until 1971 when the Planning Commission was rendered sterile, no Bengali became Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. No Bengali became a Secretary in the central government in any of the key ministries. Only in 1969 did a Bengali become Commerce Secretary for the first time. No Bengali became Governor of the Central Bank till 1970. In key ministries such as Finance no Bengali even rose to the rank of Joint Secretary till 1969. The armed forces were more or less a West Pakistani affair.

It would thus be no exaggeration to argue that upto 1969 Bengalis were effectively excluded from the upper and even middle echelons of the central bureaucracy and hence from the centres of decision-making, particularly in regard to the making of economy policy.

Marginalisation of the Provincial Government

In the 1950s the first Muslim League government in East Bengal remained a spectator to the initial acts of commission and omission which set the stage for the build up of interregional disparities. The erosion of its representative status compromised their capacity to confront the centre. The brief episodes of United Front and Awami League rule in the 1954-58 period witnessed some efforts to claim resources from the centre and retain powers for the province. But provincial governments in the 1940s and 1950s were served in the senior

ranks of the provincial bureaucracy by non-Bengalis whose shared culture and service links with the central bureaucracy hardly made them supportive of their Bengali Ministers in confrontations with the centre. Attempts by the Awami League government to go outside the bureaucracy and set up a Planning Board served by senior Bengali economists could not break the stranglehold of the non-Bengali bureaucracy over the provincial administration or disturb the bureaucratic links with the centre. The Planning Board thus operated as little more than advocates for the cause of the Bengalis in various meetings with the Centre rather than as a new source of authority within the provincial administration.

The ascendancy of Bengalis to positions of Secretary in the provincial government around 1960 led to more conscious efforts to present the cause of East Pakistan in debates with the Centre on allocation of resources. But it must be remembered that after the imposition of Martial Law and the complete domination of national power by a West Pakistani chief executive, Bengali ministers both at the central and provincial level and provincial governors served at the will of the President. Since they lacked representative status or political support they were poor candidates for challenging the domination of the economy and polity by a West Pakistani elite.

Bengali bureaucrats thus had to operate in a context where Bengali ministers could not really protect them in any confrontation with the centre. The powerless and resourceless nature of the provincial administration in any case gave limited scope for such advocacy. The Bengali bureaucrats in the province and the centre were thus mostly serviceable as a source of clandestine intelligence and advice to Bengali nationalist politicians and economists advocating the cause of Bengali nationalism.

Marginalisation of Bengalis in the Business Sector

The Bengalis throughout the history of Pakistan felt and indeed were excluded from the main sources of state power, namely the executive Presidency, the bureaucracy and the army. The rise of the business elite as partners in the national power structure also provided no scope for Bengalis to assert their presence. Of the 43 families who dominated the Pakistani economy only one was a Bengali, A. K. Khan.⁹⁴ An earlier study,

circa 1959, had shown that Bengali Muslims accounted for only 2.5 per cent of all industrial assets in Pakistan.⁹⁵ At that stage Bengali Hindus who did business in East Pakistan owned 8.5 per cent of assets so that Bengali owned assets came to 11 per cent. But these assets held by Hindus were already being run down in the early 1960s and their interests were being taken over by non-Bengali Muslims. After the 1965 war between Pakistan and India all "Hindu" assets, including what was left of the 2.5 per cent of assets owned by Marwaris was sequestered under the Enemy Properties Ordinance of 1965 so that in effect Bengalis were left with less than 5 per cent ownership of industrial assets. Thus, the exclusion of Bengalis from all echelons of state power was total. An immasculated and unrepresentative state legislature, where Bengalis held 50 per cent of the seats but exercised ministerial power at the will of a West Pakistani president, remained outside the circle of power in Pakistan.

Struggle for Self Government for Bengalis

In such circumstances, the response of the Bengali people to the manifest deprivation which had come to characterise their economic life in the Pakistan state was to directly associate regional disparities with their exclusion from national power and the monopoly of power by a strong Centre. The struggle for restoration of representative institutions through a free direct election was part of the struggle by the Bengalis for a share of national power. But the frustration of the impending national election in 1959 by the imposition of Martial Law in 1958, the framing of a constitution in 1962 which vested absolute power in the Chief Executive and the Centre to the exclusion of the province, and the denial of direct franchise convinced the Bengalis that they could never aspire to a share of national power. The death of H. S. Suhrawardy, the leader of the Awami League, in 1963, removed the only figure in Bengali political life who had a national constituency and aspired to national power. His successors in the Awami League such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had reasons to believe that Bengalis would never command national power, and would never receive justice from the centre.

The validity of such a perception, which came to impact on the emerging leaders of the Bengali nationalist movement in the 1960s, remains outside the scope of this paper. It only takes such a perception as

given and can observe that after the failure of the opposition to unseat Ayub Khan in the 1964 Presidential election, fought, under a restricted franchise, the Awami League and most other parties invested their political resources in the struggle for regional autonomy.

The Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented a Six-Point autonomy programme to the world at a round table conference of the opposition leaders in Lahore in 1966 which was supposed to launch a national movement against the Ayub regime. The Six-Point declaration made to the people of Pakistan demonstrated that the Bengali leadership were more concerned with self-government for Bengalis from Pakistani rule rather than the capture of national power through the removal of Ayub. Mujib was far from convinced that the West Pakistani leaders of the Opposition would be anymore willing to share power than was Ayub or indeed they themselves were in their earlier days in central power.

The Six-Point programme was the lineal descendant to the struggle for self-rule registered by Bengali Muslims in their demand for separate sovereign states under the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and reiterated in the demand for an independent and sovereign Bengal in 1946-47 by H. S. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim.⁹⁶ Both moves assumed that Bengalis could never aspire to a share of central power so that the fulfilment of the democratic urge of the people of Bangladesh could only be realised through self-government.

The Six-Point programme had its origins in point 19 of the 21-point programme of the United Front contesting the 1954 elections. This stated that,

'In accordance with the historic Lahore Resolution, to secure full and complete autonomy and bring all subjects under the jurisdiction of East Pakistan leaving only defence, foreign affairs and currency under the jurisdiction of the Centre. Even in the matter of defence, arrangements shall be such as to have the headquarter of the army in West Pakistan and the head-quarters of the navy in East Pakistan and to establish ordnance factories in East Pakistan with a view to make East Pakistan self sufficient in the matter of defence and also to convert present Ansars into a full fledged militia.'

The failure in the subsequent 12 years to realise this demand for autonomy registered in 1954 and the denial of democracy to the entire people of Pakistan to frustrate this demand by the Bengalis for

autonomy meant that when this demand resurfaced in 1966 it did so in a much sharper and more decisive form.

Point 2 of the six-points leaves defence and foreign affairs with the Centre as in the 21-points but qualifies the retention of currency by the Centre with the proposition that:

'there shall be two separate currencies, mutually freely convertible for each region or in the alternative a single currency subject to the establishment of a federal reserve system in which there will be regional federal reserve banks which will devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to other.'

This demand obviously derived from the experience of the last decade with a centrally determined monetary policy. The Six-Point programme sought to regulate monetary policy regionally with a view to stimulating economic activity within the region. *Point 2* assumed that regional control over monetary policy would be able to regulate the transfer of capital out of Bangladesh from the surpluses accumulated by non-Bengali enterprises doing business in this region. This point was somewhat inconsistent with the acceptance of free convertibility and implied a measure of control over interregional capital movements. The idea of preventing the transfer of resources through monetary as opposed to commercial policy was somewhat misplaced since it assumed that the instrument of transfer was through monetary rather than trading channels.

Point 4 demands that fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the federating units. This went on to argue that such a constitutional provision would ensure that Federal Government revenue requirements are made consistent with the objective of ensuring control over the fiscal policy by the governments of the federating units. This measure sought to use fiscal policy as both a means of generating resources and as a policy instrument for promoting the development of Bangladesh. It sought to meet the financial demands for defence and foreign affairs through a system of fiscal levies, which would be automatically appropriable by the Federal government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the constitution.

It was *point 4* of the Six-Point which for some reason aroused the most concern and was said to be decisive in influencing the attitude of the Pakistan army to frustrate the framing of a constitution based on Six-

points. In actual practice, it was likely at the outset to pose more difficulties for an autonomous Bangladesh. By opting to fund its own development from domestic revenues, it would have committed itself to the 30 per cent or so of national revenues actually accruing within the region. Its low level of development and weak tax base would have meant that it would be quite sometime before Bangladesh could generate a sizable revenue surplus to underwrite its development effort. Even if the fiscal levy from the provinces for the Centre was made *pro rata* on the basis of size of regional GDP, West Pakistan would have generated all the revenues it needed to sustain its defence establishment. Paradoxically, a strong centre, retaining fiscal powers, could have reallocated central revenues to Bangladesh at the expense of the defence budget. Thus, the annual budget would have been a perpetual tug-of-war between the demands of the defence ministry, the competing claim for central grants by the provinces and the urge by the richer provinces such as Punjab and Sindh (Karachi) to retain a larger share of the revenues collected within the province, for domestic development. Given the disparities in levels of development and the compulsion to use the budget to transfer resources to Bangladesh, *point 4* of the Six-Point should have been seen as the best possible deal available for Punjab and Sindh and indeed for an army which would retain a constitutionally guaranteed share of revenues raised in each region.

As far as the development of Bangladesh was concerned, it was really *Point 5* which was the most far-reaching. It argued that:

'Constitutional provisions should be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units under the control of the respective governments of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirement of the federal government shall be met by the governments of the federating units on the basis of the ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the constitution.'

This part of *Point 5* was unexceptionable. It might have been revolutionary back in 1965 when Bangladesh's export earnings ran far ahead of West Pakistan. But by 1967/68, West Pakistan's earnings were slightly larger and this gap would have widened in their favour given the growth and diversification of their economy. Bangladesh's principal export of jute and jute goods, which accounted for nearly 90 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings, was a globally declining industry. Since

Bangladesh had in the last three years, 1967-68 to 1969-79, for the first time, registered a trade deficit on its external account, there was no scope for West Pakistan appropriating any of Bangladesh's surplus export earnings.

In these circumstances, the critical provision of *Point 5* related to aid and trade. The proposition most difficult to digest for the West Pakistan elite stated that:

'The regional governments shall have power under the constitution to negotiate foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the Federal Government.'

This proposition exposed the West Pakistani industrialists, who supplied, in 1969/70, 45 per cent of Bangladesh imports and whose exports to Bangladesh accounted for 48 per cent of their export market, to serious risk. Bangladesh's right to handle its foreign trade and use its own foreign exchange meant it could import from the most competitive sources. West Pakistanis particularly feared trade between Bangladesh and India would revive at their expense. However, it was a moot question if exposure to such external competition may not have made West Pakistani exporters more competitive. Indeed, East Pakistan's growing trade deficit and foreign exchange scarcity would have, with the aid of an exchange rate policy which corrected the overvaluation of the rupee, retained some demand for West Pakistani goods, such as raw cotton, oil seeds and rice, purchasable in domestically convertible rupees.

Thus, the crucial issue related to the right of Bangladesh to negotiate aid. The presumption was (a) that Bengali aid negotiators would succeed in bringing home a much larger slice of aid than they realised from central aid appropriations to Bangladesh, and (b) that retaining the right to utilise such negotiated aid would deny access to West Pakistan for Bangladesh's "due" share of aid.

As far as the Pakistanis were concerned aid was for them the bottom line of the autonomy issue. We have observed that it was in the 1960s through surrender of its due share of aid that Bangladesh was in effect transferring resources to West. The loss of East Pakistan's share of aid, unless compensated by the superior negotiating skills of West Pakistan's aid officials, would have involved a high opportunity cost for West Pakistan's development. This proposition was raised by the West

Pakistani economists on the Fourth Plan panel and by the World Bank in its country memorandum of 1969/70. They both argued that West Pakistan, for a few more years, needed to appropriate some share of Bangladesh's aid to finance its import of capital and intermediate goods. This rather colonial perspective on interwing economic relations as late as 1970 was symptomatic of the myopia which characterised East-West relations throughout their shared nationhood. The possibility that an autonomous Bangladesh would not surrender its share of aid and would buy from the most competitive sources generated the strongest objections to the Six-Point demand and could well have been, along with fears of the armed forces for their defence budget, the issues around which the Bengali's demand for autonomy became unacceptable to the Pakistani ruling elite.

From Autonomy to Liberation⁹⁷

The Bengali economists worked closely with the political leadership of the nationalist movement between 1969 and 1971 to make them understand the implications of the Six-Point programme and to ascertain the will of the leaders to stand by the demand. This interaction was important because it enabled the leaders to understand that Six-points was workable and that a constitution could be written based on this programme. For some unaccountable reason, no West Pakistani leader, neither Yahya Khan and his advisors nor Bhutto and his associates, showed any inclination to sit down to discuss in depth the Six-point and to articulate their specific objections. The Awami League meetings with Yahya and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in January 1971 were exchanges of generalities and rhetoric and not of substance. Neither the PPP nor Yahya's government produced any substantive critique in response to the Six-point.

The only time when substantive discussions took place on the Six-point was in the fateful days of March 1971 when Yahya Khan brought in M. M. Ahmed, with Justice Cornelius and Col. Hasan, the legal draftsmen of the government, to negotiate the issue of transfer of power with Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed and Kamal Hossain acting on behalf of the Awami League. The Awami League negotiating team were backed up by a team of Bengali economists who met with the Awami League negotiators to discuss all economic issues raised in the talks. In these talks

M. M. Ahmed, the once powerful Czar of the Pakistan economy, accepted the basic economic points of the Six-Point programme and worked out the practical details of making them viable. In fact, the two negotiating teams reached an agreement on 22 March 1971 about the constitutional mechanisms for a transfer of power to the elected representatives in Bangladesh.

However, by that time the Pakistan army had decided that the issue of Bengali nationalism would be settled by blood and fire and not by political negotiations. But by March 23 Bangabandhu had already established self-government within the territory of Bangladesh. During March 1971, for the first time in contemporary history, elected Bengali leaders were ruling Bangladesh. Their writ was accepted by all sections of the bureaucracy, machinery of law and order and the business community, though the non-Bengali business community were more reluctant in their allegiance.

By March 1, 1971, what generations of political struggle had failed to realise was achieved in two years of sustained political mobilisation in the course of the campaign for the national elections scheduled for the end of 1970. The election campaign became the forge in which the metal of Bengali nationalism was shaped. The period of self-rule in March 1971 was the anvil on which this steel of nationalism was hardened.

During the period from March 1969 to December 1971, the message of Bengali nationalism had been taken to every household in Bangladesh by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his political supporters and other smaller parties. At the centre of this message was the issue of economic deprivation. At the end of the message was the call for self-rule to empower Bengalis to solve their own problem. The assertion of self-rule in March 1971 thus came as the inevitable outcome of this intensive mobilisation. The elections provided the political mandate for self-rule and gave unchallengeable credentials to Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League to represent the aspirations of 75 million Bengalis for self-rule. When Mujib declared civil disobedience and assumed virtual control in March 1971 over Bangladesh he took to himself the full control over the direction of economic policy, and control of resources within the territory of Bangladesh. In the negotiations between the experts designated by President Yahya and the representative of the Awami League, M. M. Ahmad, the principal Pakistani negotiator on economic affairs appeared to concede to the new realities over the management of the Bangladesh

economy. He accepted the relevant amendments to the Pakistani constitution which would have given juridical recognition to the economic components of the Six-points.

Why could not the urge for self-rule by the Bengalis be accommodated by the Pakistan state? In the absence of more definitive research the answers must at best remain speculative and thus open to debate. The present writer has argued elsewhere at greater length⁹⁸ that the critical factor was the change in the character of the Bengali nationalist movement. Between 1969 and 1971 what had traditionally been a movement dominated by the concerns of the urban educated middle class was transformed into a gigantic mass upsurge. This tendency first manifested itself in the revolt against Ayub in the winter of 1968-69, when the urban working class joined the students in the streets and invested a new class-oriented militancy in the mobilisation against the Ayub raj. But it was the 1969-71 election campaign of Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League which took the demand for self-rule down to the villages and made every household in Bangladesh conscious of their sense of deprivation. This deprivation was linked up with the denial of self-rule so that the Bengali masses became the driving force behind Bengali nationalism and the final custodians of the Six-point demand. When they registered their categorical commitment to the nationalist cause through their overwhelming vote for the Awami League in the December 1970 elections to the national and provincial assembly elections they made it clear that the elected representatives were now bound by their mandate.

The oath taking ceremony for the elected representatives taken by Mujib, before half a million people in the Dhaka Suhrawardy Uddyan, was designed to publicly declare a commitment to the Six-Point mandate. It was these same masses in the towns and villages who provided the sanctions which sustained the period of self-rule in March 1971 and who challenged with their lives the acts of armed aggression by the Pakistan army in the period after March 25, 1971. It was these same masses who fought and died in the liberation war to liberate Bangladesh from alien occupation.

Had the masses not been drawn into the nationalist movement it is possible that the appetites of the Bengali middle classes could have been accommodated by the Pakistan state. During the 1960s, but much more so after March 1969, a heroic effort was made to step up allocation of public investments in East Pakistan, build up a Bengali bourgeoisie, channel

resources to the rural surplus farmers through the public works programme and to elevate Bengali civil servants to senior positions in the central government. This process may have stopped short of full partnership in the Pakistan state or ceding the autonomy demanded in the Six-Points but it had the potential for opening up new vistas of opportunity for the Bengali middle classes. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman recognised this possibility of compromising the struggle for self-rule by immobilising the middle class vanguard of the nationalist movement. His conscious decision to take the movement to the masses and make them the custodians of Bengali nationalism was designed to preempt the possibility of a betrayal of the movement by dividing its middle class leadership.

Once the Pakistan state was brought into confrontation with the new realities of Bengali nationalism where the leadership could not be bought off, they either had the option of accepting the reality of self-rule as they had done in their negotiations with the Awami League in March 1971, or they had to destroy the leadership of the nationalist movement. Their miscalculation appears to have been in their failure to realise the mass base of the movement and the heightened consciousness of the masses as a consequence of the mobilisation of 1969-71. Their decision to destroy the Bengali nationalist movement thus meant that they had to destroy the Pakistan state. The genocide inflicted by the Pakistani army on the people of Bangladesh was the final recognition of the Pakistan state of their failure to accommodate the demands of Bengali nationalism within the framework of one Pakistan.

Table 1: Disparities in Per Capita Income between East and West Pakistan

	Year	East Pakistan	West Pakistan	Disparity (2-1)	Disparity ratio $\frac{2-1}{2} \times 100$
1	1949/50	288	351	63	21.9
2	1954/55	294	365	71	24.1
3	1959/60	277	367	90	32.5
4	1964/65	303	440	137	45.2
5	1969/70	331	533	202	61.0

Source: Table 1-1 and 1-2, Report of the Panel of Economists on the Fourth Five-Year Plan of Pakistan (Report of West Pakistan Economists).

Table 2: Trends in Regional Disparity in Basic Consumption Items and Consumption Expenditure

	Commodity	Unit of Measurement per capita	1951-52		1959-60		1963-64	
			EP	WP	EP	WP	EP	WP
1	Cereals	Per oz. p.d	14.9	15.7	16.5	15.2	16.8	17.4
2	Sugar	Per oz. p.m.	24.5	43.5	21.2	75.7	10.2	38.4
3	Tea	Per oz. p.m.	0.13	0.6	0.13	1.3	0.16	1.12
4	Matches	No. p.y.	7.0	10.0	13.0	16.0		
5	Cigarettes	No. per p.a.	5.0	76.09	33.0	183.0		
6	Cloth	Yds p.a.	1.7	1.4	-	-		
7	Kerosene	Gallon p.a.	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.9		
8	Paper	Lbs. p.a.	0.2	0.5	0.3	1.4		
							1961	1963-64
9	Milk and Butter	Lbs p.m.			3.7	9.7	2.1	8.6
10	Mutton, beef & fish	Lbs. p.m.			3.1	0.7	0.4	1.7
				1960		1963-64		1966-67
11	Household in Rs. monthly consumption expenditure		121.9	143.8	123.2	170.2	151.5	211.4
12	Disparity per cent Index <u>WP x EP</u> WP		26.6		30.8		40.0	

Source: (1-7), S.U. Khan, 1961 for 1951/52 & 1959/60. All others: Pakistan Statistical Year Book, 1968.

Table 3: Regional Disparities in Social and Physical Infrastructure

	Item	Unit of Measurement per capita	1951-52		1959-60		1967-68	
			EP	WP	EP	WP	EP	WP
1	Electricity	Kwh. p.a.	0.5	8.6	1.6	28.8	(Total generating capacity on Dec. 1969)	
							378 MW	1559 MW
2	Route mileage of railways	Miles	1682	5316	1714	5327	1712	5334
3	Road mileage	Miles	405	17152	1040	19684	2588	22508
4	No. of motor vehicles		-	-	14410	109228	56285	259395
5	No. of radio licenses issued		8848	70513	37713	293607	358241	738215
6	Hospital beds		-	-	4973	22100	6984 (1966)	26200 (1966)
7	Doctors		-	-	5492	6132	88100 (1969)	131000 (1969)
8	Primary Schools		1947-48		1959-60		1959-60	1966-67
8	Primary Schools		29633	8413	26583	17901	28225	33271
9	Primary School Enrollment (in million)		2.02	0.54	3.18	1.55	4.31	2.74
10	Primary School Teachers		75624	17820	78462	44848	97256	75697
11	Secondary Schools		3481	2598	3053	3043	4390	4563
12	Secondary School Enrollment (in million)		0.526	0.508	0.530	0.912	1.057	1.529
13	No. of Secondary School Teachers		74362	18848	23571	31355	38283	56228
14	Enrollment in Universities		1620	654	3970	5084	9984	14425

Source: (1) Electricity, 1951-52 and 1959-60: S.U. Khan, 1967-8 Pakistan Economic Survey 1969-70 (6&7) Hospital Beds, Doctors, Jahan, Table 16; all others columns: Pakistan Statistical Year Book, 1968

Table 4: Regional expenditures in Pakistan, 1950-57 to 1960-70

	East Pakistan					West Pakistan				
	Revenue	Development			Total public (1+3)	Revenue	Development			Total public (6+8)
		Total	public	Private			Total	public	Private	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1950/51-1954/55	1710	1000	700	300	2410	7200	4000	2000	2000	9200
1955/56-1959/60	2540	2700	1970	730	4510	8980	7570	4640	2930	13620
1960/61-1964/65	4340	9700	6700	3000	11040	12840	23710	13010	10700	25850
1965/66-1969/70	6480	16560	11060	5500	17540	22230	35600	19600	16000	41830
Total	15070	29960	20430	9530	35500	51250	61980	30630	31630	81600
East Pakistan's share (%) of Total expenditure	23	30	40	23	33					

Source: Report of Panel of Economists on the Fourth Five Year Plan, Table 2 (pp.6).

Table 5: Regional Distribution of Aid Flows into Pakistan 1948/49 - 1968/69

		East Pakistan	West Pakistan	Total
A	Aid Disbursements converted to Rs. at \$ scarcity value (in Rs. billion)			
1	1948/49 - 1960/61	4.84	10.77	15.61
	per cent	31.0	69.0	100.0
2	1961/62 - 1968/69	14.49	31.48	45.97
	per cent	31.5	68.5	100.0
3	Total	19.33	42.25	61.58
	per cent	31.4	68.6	100.0
B	Aid Disbursements in \$ (in \$ million)	1941	4106	6439
	per cent	30.1	69.9	including 392 for the centre 100.0
C	Aid Commitments in \$ (in \$ million)			
1	1947 - 60	542	1516	2058
	per cent	26.3	73.7	100.0
2	1960 - 70	1482	4100	5582
	per cent	26.5	73.5	100.0
3	Total	2024	5616	7640
	per cent	26.4	73.6	100.0
D	Composition of Disbursed Aid in US \$ (in \$ million)			
1	Project Aid including technical assistance	825 (25.2)	2127	3271
2	(1) as % of (7)	42.3	51.8	50.8
3	Non-project and Commodity Aid	671 (34.8)	1248	1927
4	(3) as % of (7)	34.6	30.4	29.9
5	Food Aid	445 (35.9)	791	1241
6	(5) as % of (7)	22.9	19.3	19.3
7	Total	1941	4106	6439
8	per cent			100.0

Source: (A) Panel of Economists (EP), (B), (C) and (D), Muhith, 1978.

Table 6: Balance of Payments of East and West Pakistan (1948/49-1968/69)

(Rs. million)

		East	West
1948-49 to 1960-61	Nominal price	+ 592	- 8116
	Scarcity price	+ 5368	- 20989
1961-62 to 1968-69	Nominal price	- 6526	- 18180
	Scarcity price	- 9386	- 34075
Total		- 5934	- 26296
1948-49 to 1968-69	Nominal price		
	Scarcity price	- 4018	- 55064

Source: Report of the Panel of Economists on the Fourth Five Year Plan, Tables I-A, B, C, 76-78.

Table 7: Transfer of Resources from East to West Pakistan (1948/49 to 1968/69)

(in Rs. Million)

		1948/49- 1960/61	1961/62- 1968/69	1948/49-1968/69
1	Aid actually utilised in East Pakistan	4840	14490	19330
2	East Pakistan's due share of aid in proportion to population	8430	26710	35140
3	Transfer from East to West on Aid account (2-1)	+ 3590	+ 12220	+ 15810
4	East Pakistan's balance of payments	+ 5370	- 9390	- 4020
5	Transfer of resources from East to West (3+4)	+ 8960	+ 2830	+ 11790

Source: Report of the Panel of Economists on the Fourth Five Year Plan Table 1, 75

Table 8: Regional Origins of the Machinery of State in Pakistan (per cent of Bengalis)

1	Military Establishment (1963)	Army	Airforce	Navy
	a) Commissioned Officers	5	17	1
	b) Junior Commissioned Officers	7.4		
	c) Warrant Officers		13.2	
	d) Other ranks	7.4	28.0	
	e) Branch Officers			5
	f) Chief Petty Officers			10.4
	g) Petty Officers			17.3
	h) Leading seaman and below			28.8
2	Bureaucratic Establishments (1966)		East	West
	Class I Officers in Central secretariat		170	631
	Disparity (WP - EP x 100) EP			271
3	Entrepreneurs (1959) % of fixed asset ownership			11 (includes Bengali Muslims, Bengali Hindus)

Source: (1 & 2) Jahan, 1972 (3) Papanek, 1967

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5.2 Bangabandhu and the Emergence of an Independent Bangladesh*

Introduction

After 29 years of existence as an independent nation state there is a strong tendency to take our nationhood for granted. We Bangladeshis tend to believe that we are a nation like any other with a flag, a passport, a national anthem and a national airline. This comfortable belief in our shared inheritance of nationhood is, however, an injustice to our history. Bangladesh emerged under certain unique circumstances which are shared by few countries. These special circumstances have influenced our subsequent history and left its imprint on the society of Bangladesh which is even today influencing our national politics. This presentation today is designed to trace the immediate circumstances surrounding the emergence of Bangladesh and to explore the critical role played by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in this process. This focus on the role of Bangabandhu remains without prejudice to the important contribution of other leaders and activists as well as political parties in the long drawn out struggle for the emergence of Bangladesh. This story must, however, remain part of a larger work on the emergence of Bangladesh.

The present paper is structured in three parts. The first part addresses the evolution in the perceptions of national identity in India. The second part discusses the unique historical circumstances which served to transform Bangladesh's national identity within Pakistan. The concluding part addresses the circumstances of Bangladesh's emergence as a nation state and the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in this process.

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1. The Issue of National Identity

Most countries inherit their national identity from their history and geography. History forges the sense of community which persuades a group of people that they have an identity distinct from other people. Geography circumscribes the physical space where this community resides. The definition of space and identity tends to be overlapping and hence fluid. In the context of Bangladesh's history we were first Indians and then Pakistanis before we became Bangladeshis. Our Indian identity was, however, itself the by-product of external conquest where rulers from Northern India incorporated the peoples of Bengal into a succession of empires which culminated in the British Empire that ruled India for two centuries from 1757 to 1947.

The British bequeathed to its heirs the social, economic, physical and political infrastructure of an integrated Indian state. Within British India Bangalis, Punjabis, Mahrathis and myriad other nationalities submerged their national identities and identified themselves as Indians.

Religious identity and the emergence of Pakistan

At the time of their departure the British could not bequeath this sense of shared nationhood to its Indian subjects. The Muslims of India were persuaded by their leaders that they were a nation within India who needed autonomy to rule themselves. This emphasis on religion as the basis of national identity superceded more primordial identities associated with ethnicity, language and caste but did not extinguish such claims to national identity. The concept of religion as a basis of political identity provided the logic of the two-nation theory which defined the basis of a Muslim nation state within the body politic of India.

However, the proclamation of religion as a basis of national identity not only served to subordinate other claims to identity but did violence to the geographical parameters of nationality. India, as bequeathed to us by the British, was a patchwork of religious communities scattered across the territorial boundaries of India. Whilst some areas, such as North Western India, in the provinces which now constitute Pakistan, and Eastern Bengal, had distinct concentrations of populations practising the Islamic faith, in each of these areas there was a significant minority population practising other religions. Thus, in undivided Punjab, where Muslims constituted a majority of the population, around 40 per cent of

the population was made up of Sikhs and Hindus. Similarly, in united Bengal, a small Muslim majority coexisted with a sizeable Hindu minority. As and when India was partitioned on religious grounds, as demanded by the founder of Pakistan Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League, both Punjab and Bengal also had to be partitioned to accommodate the same logic of religion as the basis of nationality.

The passions let loose by the partition of Punjab unleashed a major explosion of what today is termed ethnic cleansing but in the Indian subcontinent was termed as communal violence where minorities on both sides of the divided Punjab border were comprehensively massacred. Those who survived were forced to abandon their homes as well as property and seek refugee across the border. As a result of this ethnic cleansing, which far exceeded in its dimensions what we have recently witnessed in Bosnia and Kosovo, West Pakistan, including West Punjab, Sindh and NWFP, were virtually depopulated of their numerically sizeable and economically influential Hindu and Sikh populations whilst East Punjab was "cleansed" of all its Muslims. Notwithstanding such instances of ethnic cleansing, the partition of India left a sizeable segment of Muslims behind in India who were simply not willing to sacrifice their hearth and homes for the privilege of becoming refugees in a nation state located in an alien landscape. For similar reasons, a sizeable segment of Hindus stayed behind in Bangladesh. The Hindus and Sikhs of West Pakistan were given no such choice.

The problem of confessional nationalism was and remains that it constantly comes into conflict with competing national identities based on ethnicity and language and also remains at war within the logic of geography. However, the practical problem attendant on a religion-based nationalism is that there is as yet no way that administrative authority can be vested on a religious denomination in order to enable them to rule themselves. Even Israel, the quintessential religion-based state, could not solve this problem and had to cleanse its territories of most of the indigenous Arab population who had lived in Israel and Palestine for two millennia. The problem originates in the fact that identity has to be located within a contiguous territorial unit which becomes the basis for delegating political authority. Thus, the Lahore Resolution of 1940 demanded self-rule for the two Muslim majority areas of North West

India and Eastern India. This, in effect, meant provincial autonomy of a substantial nature for the entire province of Punjab, NWFP, Sindh and Balochistan on the North West side and Bengal and Assam on the Eastern side. Thus, the Pakistan resolution did not, in constitutional terms, demand a Pakistan nation state but regional autonomy for two Muslim majority, geographically and administratively delineated, areas.

A demand for regional autonomy could not, however, have constitutionally accommodated the claims of a religious-based-nationalism, since Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs had lived side by side for generations in the geographical space of Eastern and North Western India. Thus, Mr. Jinnah, in effect, had to include both Sikhs and Hindus as prospective beneficiaries of his demand for regional autonomy for the two states covered by what came to be Pakistan. The emergence of Pakistan as a nation state was thus not the end product of a search for a religion-based nationalism but the outcome of a breakdown of negotiations over the degree of autonomy which would be vested with the federating units of an independent India.

The concept of a religious or ethnic nationalism divorced from its territorial base has few, if any, precedents. An attempt to proclaim a transcendental nationalism founded on religion but delimited by territory is bound to end in grief, blood and violence, since it leaves sizeable religious minorities behind in territories where the religious majority claims itself to be a nation. By definition those of another religion are relegated to the status of a perpetual minority where rights, property, economic opportunities and even lives remain hostage to the goodwill of the majority population. Those Arabs left behind in Israel remain there as a marginalised minority. Similar problems are likely to be faced by Serb Christians who have stayed behind in Bosnia or Kosovo. The contemporary logic of a state based on a religion denominated nationalism is, in its essence, a fundamentalist state. In this respect, the Taliban version of the state, which seeks to define the parameters of such a state on principals of Islam, remains the more logical interpretation of a state which defines its *raison d'etre* on its Muslim identity.

2. The Quest for National Identity in Bangladesh

Competing national identities in Bangladesh

Within the state of Pakistan, the people of Bangladesh found themselves in a peculiar dilemma. They had become part of Pakistan by proclaiming their Muslim identity, but at the time of the partition of India in 1947 close to 20 per cent of the population of Bangladesh were Hindus who expected to enjoy all the rights associated with a shared Pakistan nationality, available to the majority Muslim population. Thus, having acceded to a Pakistan state defined by its religious identity, the political coherence of the Bangladesh polity demanded that it recreate itself as a secular state where religious identity was no longer acceptable as the basis of national identity. This point was well recognised by Jinnah in his famous speech before Parliament proclaiming Pakistan's secular character and defining religion as a personal affair having nothing to do with the affairs of state.

However, the issue of the position of religious minorities in Pakistan applied largely to Bangladesh since West Pakistan had solved its own dilemma by "cleansing" itself of its own religious minorities. Once Pakistan came into existence, Bangladesh's religious identity could never again provide the basis of its nationalism. This was consistent with the logic of the Lahore Resolution which in effect sought regional autonomy for the North West and East of India and not religious autonomy for the Muslims of India. Thus, in post-1947 Bangladesh the national identity which came to the surface was defined by its territorial separation both from India and from West Pakistan. Since the fight for Pakistan was built around the demand for autonomy of the two Muslim majority states of North West and Eastern India, this demand for autonomy remained the central driving force of Bangladeshi politics throughout its incorporation in the Pakistan state.

However, within a united Pakistan, right from the first day of its new nationhood the Bangalis found that their commitment for regional self-rule, as demanded in the Lahore Resolution, had been usurped by the central government of Pakistan. Had this central government been a democratic government where the demographic majority of the Bangalis within the Pakistan state could be reflected in the shared exercise of political power at the Centre, the lack of the promised provincial

autonomy for Bangladesh may have proved more politically tolerable. However, the denial of autonomy for Bangladesh, in practice, meant the exercise of central power by a non-Bangali dominated ruling elite drawn from the feudal classes of West Pakistan, allied with a military and bureaucratic elite where Bangalis were virtually excluded. Thus, as far as the Bangalis were concerned, the constitutional contract for self-rule, which motivated their association with the Pakistan movement, was violated virtually from the first day of its shared nationhood with Pakistan.

This denial of shared power at the centre for the Bangalis as well as their demand for provincial autonomy was compounded by the assault on the cultural identity of the Bangalis associated with the proclamation by Pakistan's first Governor General, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, of Urdu as the single national language of Pakistan. Urdu was a language of certain provinces of India where it was spoken by both the Muslim and Brahmin elite. Urdu was, in fact, the mother tongue of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, derived from his birth in Allahabad, whilst Mohammed Ali Jinnah could barely speak Urdu and could neither read nor write the language. This quite fallacious association of Urdu with a Pakistani identity recreated a sense of Bangali identity for the inhabitants of Bangladesh which, they felt, had been subordinated to their Muslim identity.

From identity politics to self-rule in Bangladesh

Political domination and cultural subordination of the Bangalis was compounded by the denial of democratic access to the economic opportunities being created by the Pakistani state. In the 1950 and 1960s the state provided the dynamic of development in most recently independent countries, including Pakistan. A West Pakistani dominated central government used its monopoly of power to channel state resource and to manipulate economic policies with a view to accelerate the development of West Pakistan over Bangladesh. Thus, for example, national import policy was used to channel Bangladesh's export earnings from jute to finance the industrialisation of West Pakistan, with Bangladesh serving as a protected market for Pakistani manufacturing exports. Within Bangladesh itself the exercise of administrative powers was monopolised by non-Bangali bureaucrats and deployed to promote the growth of a non-Bangali business elite who came to dominate the

modern economic sector of Bangladesh.

This denial of political rights and economic opportunities to the Bangalis of Bangladesh provided the dynamic of the demand for democracy and self-rule for Bangladesh which constituted the central motivating force of Pakistan's politics for the 24 years of its existence as a unified state. To sustain this denial of democratic rights to the Bangalis demanded a projection of a Pakistani identity over a Bangali identity. It was argued that an economically and politically strong West Pakistan, ruled by an enlightened elite, should be tolerated by Bangalis in the name of Pakistani nationhood. To mask this usurpation of the spirit of the Lahore Resolution, the Pakistani ruling elite had to revive the notion of Pakistan's religious identity. It was argued by this elite, from the time of the 1952 Language Movement, that the assertion of a Bangali identity was unislamic as well as anti-Pakistan. The reality of Pakistan's politics was that its rulers have always been driven by secular appetites for power and wealth where religion has remained a convenient instrument to deny democracy to its people even after Bangladesh emerged as an independent state.

The political struggles of the 1960s in Bangladesh were thus driven by four key goals:

- i. The restoration of democracy whereby Bangalis could share power in the central government using their demographic majority through the franchise;
- ii. The realisation of self-rule through the acceptance of the principle of autonomy for Bangladesh;
- iii. The channelling of resources appropriated by the central government towards the development of Bangladesh;
- iv. The recognition of Bangla as an integral part of the culture of Bangladesh and as one of the two national languages of Pakistan.

These four political themes had a territorial base located in Bangladesh. Thus, the concept of democratic assertion coalesced with the notion of a separate identity for the Bangalis. The physical separation between two wings of Pakistan had inspired the idea that Pakistan was a state where two economies, even two societies, co-existed within one polity. However, as the political aspirations of the two regions of Pakistan began to diverge the notion of two polities also began to assert

itself in the consciousness of the Bangalis. Thus, a Bangali identity, associated with language and culture, within a state with differentiated economies, polities and societies and located in a country geographically separated by the landmass of India, established a unique sense of separateness amongst the Bangalis within Pakistan, which has few parallels in any other state encapsulating multiple national identities. Much of the political struggles of the people of Bangladesh, starting from the Language Movement of 1952 to the democratic movement of the 1960s, were driven by these four salient concerns of the Bangalis of Bangladesh.

3. Bangabandhu and the Emergence of Bangladesh

The emergence of a national identity for Bangladesh

However, this emerging sense of distinctiveness between the people of East and West Pakistan did not automatically evolve into a sense of national identity because the Bangalis of Pakistan still thought of themselves as Pakistanis. It needed a major political effort to weave together these various notions of separateness within the consciousness of the Bangalis into a sense of shared nationhood. Whilst a number of historic political figures, such as H. S. Suhrawardy, Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haq and Moulana Bhashani, played a vanguard role in the political struggles of the people of Bangladesh, the catalytic act of political entrepreneurship needed to forge a sense of nationhood for the Bangalis was provided by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. From the period in 1966 when Bangabandhu launched the Six Point Programme down to the defining two year period from March 1969 to March 1971, in the course of an election campaign of unique historical significance, Bangabandhu played a dominant a role in the struggle for self-rule for the Bangalis. In this task he was reinforced by the dedication of his senior colleagues as well as younger activists, in the Awami League as well as other secular political forces, not to mention individuals within and outside politics. But all these forces were brought and had to be kept together by Bangabandhu during the two year period of the political campaign, from 1969 to 1971, to ensure that any division amongst the Bangalis could not be used by the Pakistani elite to deflect the demand for

self-rule for Bangladesh.

In the remainder of my presentation I intend to discuss the successive phases of the struggle associated with the evolution of a struggle for self-rule into the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. However, it should be kept in mind that my earlier discussion has identified two preparatory phases associated with the forging of a national identity for Bangladesh. The first phase related to the political and legal separation of East Bengal from both India and West Bengal in August 1947 and the second related to the sense of separateness which came to divide East and West Pakistan between August 1947 and March 1969. These two phases are no less important to an understanding of the emergence of Bangladesh but are less emphasised in this presentation which focuses on the final phase of Bangladesh's move towards independence.

The six point programme for autonomy

Bangabandhu had already played a critical role in institutionalising the growing sense of separateness between East and West Pakistan by presenting his historic Six Point Programme before the people of Pakistan in the summer of 1966. The Six Point Programme provided the constitutional parameters for complete autonomy for the two provinces of Pakistan. The Six Points reflected, for the first time, a formal recognition, by a major Bangali political leader, that political co-existence between East and West Pakistan, even within a democratic central government, was not a feasible political option for the people of Bangladesh. Only through a devolution of political power, policymaking and administrative authority as well as command over economic resources could the two provinces of Pakistan hope to survive within a single nation state.

Interesting to note, the Six Point Programme had a historical precedent in the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 where a political mission sent by the Labour Party government, which had been elected to power in Great Britain in 1945, offered a constitutional formula for post-independence India to resolve the Congress-Muslim League conflict which had stalemated the negotiations for India's independence from British rule. The Cabinet Mission presented a constitutional formula before India's political leaders, based on a devolution of central power to three component regions of North West India, Central and Eastern

India. The Cabinet Mission plan was founded on a recognition of a separate political identity dividing the Muslim and Hindu communities in India and thus chose to devolve power to the regions where each of these communities was respectively in a majority. This formula was initially challenged by the Congress Party and eventually repudiated by the Muslim League. The political partition of India, leading to the emergence of Pakistan as a separate nation state, thus originated in a breakdown in the constitutional negotiations over the nature of the federal constitution in an independent India and not because the Muslims were determined to proclaim themselves as a separate nation state. Ironically, Pakistan again broke up and Bangladesh emerged as a nation state initially because of the reluctance of Pakistan's ruling elite to accept a new federal constitution for Pakistan based on the Six Point Programme.

The crucial issue in Pakistan appeared to be the reluctance of Pakistan's ruling elite to relinquish their power to rule Pakistan. Thus, at the time of the promulgation of the Six Points by Bangabandhu in mid 1966 it had been rejected not just by the autocratic regime of Field Marshall Ayub Khan but also by the political opposition of West Pakistan who were part of this ruling class. In the eyes of this elite the Six Points came to be exclusively associated with the demand for autonomy by and for the people of Bangladesh. Thus, the attempt to suppress the political mobilisation associated with the Six Point Programme was directed exclusively at the Bangalis. Bangabandhu, along with most of the Awami League high command, was arrested during June-July 1966 and kept in jail for over two years. It took a mass political uprising in both wings of Pakistan, culminating in the downfall of Ayub Khan, to obtain the release of Bangabandhu and his colleagues.

The eventual resignation of Ayub Khan in March 1969 arose out of the breakdown of his roundtable talks with the leaders of the opposition in East and West Pakistan. It was Bangabandhu's demand that the Six Point programme be incorporated into the Pakistan constitution which proved unacceptable to the West Pakistan opposition and forced Ayub to hand over power to General Yahya Khan. In turn, Yahya Khan had to seek a political accommodation with the opposition in both wings of Pakistan by promising national elections. Even though Pakistan was to be governed by Martial Law until the promulgation of the new constitution by the newly elected parliament, this arrangement was accepted by

Bangabandhu. He was confident he could win an overwhelming mandate from the people of Bangladesh to frame a constitution based on Six Points.

It was the election campaign of 1969-71 which came to play a critical role in forging a sense of national identity for the Bangalis out of the separateness which motivated the Six Points Programme. Bangabandhu calculated that nothing short of an overwhelming mandate from the people of Bangladesh would generate enough pressure on the Pakistani ruling elite to devolve power to Bangladesh under the Six Point Programme. It was believed that such an overwhelming electoral display of support would persuade the military junta of Pakistan that rejecting and suppressing the universal demand of the people would jeopardise the very foundations of the Pakistan state. This turned out to be a prophetic assumption on the part of Bangabandhu.

The role of the 1969-70 election campaign in forging a national identity for Bangladesh

To build an overwhelming mandate behind Six Points demanded total support from the people of Bangladesh manifested in the polling response of the voters. Historically, all attempts to resist external political domination by the Pakistani elite were frustrated by divisions amongst the political leaders of the Bangalis. Bangabandhu sought to go over the heads of his political rivals in Bangladesh to seek a comprehensive popular mandate for his Six Points. To build this popular unity it was necessary to forge a common identity for the Bangalis. The main message of Bangabandhu's political campaign after March 1969 was to persuade the Bangalis that not only were they separate in their social, political and economic life from Pakistan, but that Bangalis of Bangladesh were one people who should vote together to proclaim the right to live a separate life from West Pakistan.

To build this mass unity demanded a focus on identity politics and a capacity to project this identity into the consciousness of every villager in Bangladesh. It was not enough to build this shared identity within an urban, educated middle class who had hitherto been the principal reference point for political activity in Bangladesh. It was essential to persuade people across the nation that all Bangalis were being politically oppressed by a Pakistani ruling elite. The key message, encapsulated in a

political poster put up by the Awami League workers in every village in Bangladesh, *Purba Bangla Shashon Keno* (why is Eastern Bengal oppressed), itemised in simple language the statistics of disparity between East and West Pakistan. In delivering this simple message to the people of Bangladesh, the role of the Awami League as a party, should not be underemphasised since Bangabandhu's message to the voters did not land on their doorstep by osmosis but required large scale party organisation and dedicated work to carry the message of Bangali nationalism into the consciousness of every household of Bangladesh, rural and urban. The role of Tajuddin Ahmad, General Secretary of the Awami League and right hand of Bangabandhu, as well as of other key figures and dedicated workers in the party, should be recognised in this process.

Over this two year period Bangabandhu emerged as the unchallenged leader and the embodiment of the national will of the people of Bangladesh. In this period he graduated from being the leader of a political party into a national icon for the Bangalis of Bangladesh. Wherever he went the entire population of the area, men and women, old and young, assembled just to obtain a glimpse of this near mythic figure. Without his presence the Awami League would have still won the election but it was Bangabandhu who ensured the overwhelming support of the voters for the Awami League candidates because in his person, he transcended his party and came to represent the aspirations of all Bangalis. This emphasis on the role of Bangabandhu should again not detract from the growing receptiveness of the people to his message of self-assertion over a long period of time and the groundwork of other Bangali leaders and activists in building this popular consciousness.

The total support of the Bangalis of Bangladesh for Bangabandhu was manifested in the election of December 1970 where the Awami League not only won 167 out of 169 seats contested from Bangladesh but also 75 per cent of the vote. More to the point it won such large pluralities in virtually every constituency where it was successful. It is silly to argue, as some scholars have done, that the cyclone of November 1970 influenced the overwhelming victory of the Awami League in the election in December. The cyclone may have swung 3-4 per cent of voters to the Awami League. But the Awami League's majority of votes in all but one constituency far exceeded this margin. The impact of the

cyclone merely reinforced a political wave in favour of the Awami League which had already begun to sweep all before it well before the cyclone.

The elections of December 1970 and its implications

The political outcome of the December 1970 election had given the Awami League an absolute majority in the National Assembly of Pakistan as well as total control of the Provincial Assembly and had clearly demonstrated that the voters of Bangladesh had endorsed the Six Point programme of the Awami League. But above all the election had proclaimed to the world that the Bangalis had forged a collective national identity and that they had invested their collective authority behind Bangabandhu to realise self-rule for Bangladesh. Thus, what had originally been a political demand for constitutional autonomy had culminated in the emergence of a national identity for the people of Bangladesh.

The political logic of the vote in December 1970 by the people of Bangladesh was that they had empowered their representatives elected to the National Assembly of Pakistan to frame a constitution which recognised Pakistan's plural national identity and could thereby frame a constitution which devolved power to the regions where these nationalities were located. The geographical separateness of Bangladesh, however, demanded a degree of autonomy which was neither necessary nor desired by the other nationalities of Pakistan whose own sense of national identity was not insignificant but remained less sharply defined than that of the people of Bangladesh. Unlike Pakistan's original search for a national identity, based on religion, Bangladesh's national identity had an interior logic to it because of their territorial separateness from West Pakistan. This separateness had served to more sharply define the emergence of two economies, two polities and two societies within a unified Pakistan where the socio-political formations which came to rule Bangladesh remained quite distinct from those who retained power in West Pakistan.

These far-reaching implications which had arisen out of the election campaign and its outcome in December 1970 were not fully appreciated by the ruling elite of West Pakistan, including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Neither Bhutto nor Yahya had foreseen the decisive electoral victory of the Awami League, having been comprehensively misinformed by

Pakistan's intelligence agencies about the facts of political life in Bangladesh. Both, however, recognised the threat to the bastions of power which had dominated the Pakistan state since 1947, implicit in the overwhelming electoral victory of the Awami League in Bangladesh and the authority commanded by Bangabandhu over the people of Bangladesh. But both Yahya and Bhutto deluded themselves that the election results were an urban, middle class phenomenon, fuelled by Bangali emotionalism and influenced by the adverse reaction to the November 1970 cyclone.

Until both Bhutto and Yahya met Bangabandhu in Dhaka in January 1971 they believed that like previous Bangali leaders before him he could be persuaded to compromise his Six Point demand through inducements of power sharing at the centre. The West Pakistani leaders failed to recognise the seismic changes which had been registered in the self-awareness of the people of Bangladesh between March 1969 and March 1971. They did not realise that as a result of the elections in December 1970 the Six Points had become the minimalist demand for a constitutional solution to the unfolding political crisis in Pakistan. As a consequence of this new found sense of nationalism in Bangladesh voices were being raised after the elections, even within the Awami League, for full political independence.

Yahya's conspiracy with Bhutto, forged in their historic meeting in Larkana, in January 1971, after Yahya's visit to Dhaka and meeting with Bangabandhu, put in motion the forces which culminated in the emergence of Bangladesh as a nation state. Yahya's decision of 1 March 1971 to, *sine die*, postpone the inaugural National Assembly session scheduled to meet in Dhaka on 3 March 1971, was viewed by all Bangalis as a conspiracy to deny them their democratic mandate registered in the elections of December 1970.

From non-cooperation to self-rule: March 1971

Bangabandhu's response to the decision by Yahya to postpone the Assembly session was to call for a political mobilisation throughout Bangladesh through a programme of non-cooperation. The popular response in Bangladesh to his call registered a measure of support which remains without precedent in the history of democratic and liberation movements. The non-cooperation movement was spontaneously joined

not just by the people of Bangladesh but by the administrative and judicial machinery, the forces of law and order as well as the business community. The non-cooperation movement eventually graduated into a formal shift of allegiance of the machinery of civilian government in Bangladesh away from the central government of General Yahya Khan to the authority exercised by Bangabandhu over Bangladesh. Thus, the entire machinery of state located outside the military cantonments of Bangladesh, unanimously came forward to pledge their loyalty to the leadership of Bangabandhu.

By March 1971, Bangabandhu found himself the unchallenged ruler of Bangladesh with the entire machinery of administration in Bangladesh behind him. In no other independence movement has such a shift of loyalty emerged prior to the recognition of national independence. Bangladesh's, *de facto* independence, thus, emerged as part of a process, where, between March 1 and March 15, Bangladesh assumed all the correlates of an independent state. So total was the non-cooperation movement that the economy and infrastructure of Bangladesh came near to collapse with life threatening consequences for the people of this region. Thus, Bangabandhu had, of necessity, to escalate the movement from non-cooperation to self-rule in order to restore economic activity and maintain law and order.

A rudimentary policymaking apparatus had to be established by Bangabandhu to take decisions about the selective revival of the economy and establishment of administrative authority. A small cell was established where a number of Bangali professionals met every day with bankers and bureaucrats to discuss a variety of operational issues such as the steps needed to revive banking operations, revive exports, pay salaries of public employees, collect public revenues, resume public distribution of fertiliser as well as operate tubewells and to keep the transport within Bangladesh functional. Suggested administrative actions to be taken in the name of the Bangabandhu regime were communicated every day by Tajuddin Ahmad and Kamal Hossain to a team of Bangali bureaucrats who had been elected by their colleagues to liaise with the Awami League and act as conduits for transmitting the orders of Bangabandhu to the administration.

Many ad hoc problems of an administrative, political or commercial

nature that needed urgent resolution were directly presented to Bangabandhu at his private residence on Road 32 in Dhanmondi which, in effect, became the seat of authority in Bangaldesh during March 1971. Delegations of businessmen met with Bangabandhu and selected colleagues to seek emergency decisions about how they should run their business during this period. The machinery of law and order was restored as the police began to take orders from Bangabandhu and to work in cooperation with Awami League political workers to restore a sense of security to the people of Bangladesh. Whilst there were instances of persecuting non-Bangalis, the general law and order situation during March was remarkably stable and even non-Bangalis were extended protection.

The emergence of a sovereign Bangladesh

By the 15th of March, for all practical purposes, a functioning administration, operating under the direction of Bangabandhu and administered by key Awami League colleagues, had emerged as a *de facto* administration and political authority in Bangladesh. However, it is arguable that Bangabandhu's authority was not just *de facto* but could be termed legal since his leadership enjoyed electoral legitimacy, registered in the overwhelming vote of the population endorsing their political confidence in Bangabandhu. This exercise of political and administrative authority by Bangabandhu over the entire geographical area of Bangladesh was more than enough to meet the criteria for sovereign recognition by a foreign government.

This exercise of authority by Bangabandhu throughout Bangladesh was projected before the world through a large contingent of the international press who were present in Bangladesh to cover what appeared to be the emergence of a new state. Bangabandhu was, at the same time, communicating with government leaders, who were believed to exercise some leverage over the Pakistan government, to seek their assistance in persuading Yahya to accept the logic of the democratic process in Bangladesh. However, it was the world press which projected Bangabandhu's message to the ordinary people of these countries so that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, during March 1971, became one of the most globally visible personalities in the Third World.

When Yahya Khan arrived in Bangladesh in mid March to resume

political negotiations for a constitutional solution to the crisis he was, thus, no longer negotiating with a subject but with a political equal. Bangabandhu, at that point, was not only sovereign in Bangladesh but commanded more authority in his own territory than Yahya did in West Pakistan. If such negotiations between Bangabandhu and Yahya had been carried out on the basis of the political realities that prevailed on the ground in Bangladesh, a peaceful solution to the political crisis might have emerged. Such a solution may have ended in a loose confederal arrangement which may have eventually led to a peaceful parting of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

Yahya, goaded by Bhutto and some of the hawks in the Junta, still persisted with his delusion that a show of force would bring these middle-class Bengali leaders to their senses or that some of them would come forward over the dead bodies of their colleagues to seek a compromise with the military Junta. The Junta did not believe that the Bangalis had the political cohesion, courage, tradition or military capacity to sustain a war of national liberation. To the end they could not comprehend that a nation state had been forged within Bangladesh during March 1971 whose people would be willing to fight spontaneously to protect their sovereignty. At the back of their minds, both Yahya and Bhutto believed that if worse comes to worst, Pakistan would leave Bangladesh as scorched earth where the Bangalis would have to pay in fire and blood for their presumptions of sovereignty. Bhutto believed that Yahya could not survive the loss of Bangladesh and that he (Bhutto) would emerge as the new Shahinshah of what was left of Pakistan.

As it transpired, Yahya used the cover of political negotiations to move troops into Bangladesh to build up enough force to suppress the forces of Bangali nationalism. He projected such an act of force as a reassertion of the political authority of the central government of Pakistan over a province of Pakistan. But by the time Yahya gave his final orders to General Tikka Khan to launch his genocide on the Bangalis on the night of 25 March 1971, it was Pakistan which was the usurper of authority from the democratically established sovereign state of Bangladesh. Thus, the armed assault of the Pakistan armed forces on the Bangalis was seen as an act of military aggression by one sovereign state on another. This was how the Bangalis viewed the assault on their sovereignty and indeed how much of the world viewed the military aggression against Bangladesh.

During the month of March 1971 Bangladesh's sense of national consciousness evolved into an awareness of their sovereign status through the assertion by Bangabandhu of the right to self-rule. Thus, the concept of national consciousness, which was essentially an abstraction, consolidated itself through a political process which culminated in the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. For the first time, since the Battle of Plassey, Bangalis awoke to the fact that they were ruling themselves through their freely elected representatives.

Bangladesh's declaration of independence

By the 25th of March 1971 Bangladesh was already a sovereign state in the minds of its citizens. The proclamation of independence by Bangabandhu on 26 March, in response to the military assault on the Bangalis ordered by Yahya Khan, was a juridical act recognising a *de facto* and legitimate authority. The post-liberation debate over who declared independence of Bangladesh is thus a largely irrelevant debate. It is self-evident to anyone with commonsense that the operative issue is not who declared independence but when Bangladeshis asserted their own independence, which they did during the month of March 1971. In any case, a declaration of independence can only derive from a legitimate authority otherwise any citizen could proclaim any part of the globe independent. In the Bangladesh of 1971 it was unreal to imagine that an unknown army officer could proclaim independence for 75 million Bangladeshis without any authority to do so and could be expected to be taken seriously by anyone. Indeed, such anonymous declarations could only generate apprehension in the international arena that Bangladesh was degenerating into anarchy.

At that time the only person who was invested with the credibility to declare independence, in the legally acceptable sense of the term, was Bangabandhu because he enjoyed both electoral legitimacy and had a total political mandate from the people of Bangladesh to speak for them. This was recognised by the global community where Bangabandhu alone commanded the visibility derived from his unchallenged leadership of 75 million Bangalis to proclaim their sovereignty to the world. Any local declaration of independence could, thus, only be accepted as a surrogate act on behalf of Bangabandhu. It is only in the politically divided Bangladesh of today that such a surreal political debate over who

declared independence for Bangladesh could continue for so long to perpetuate the myth that a declaration of independence could originate from any person who had a mind to make such a proclamation.

Bangabandhu and the Legitimacy of the Liberation Struggle

The legitimacy derived from the unchallenged authority of Bangabandhu was crucial to the sustainability of the liberation war. At the time that independence was formally declared on 26 March 1971, Bangabandhu commanded what few, if any leaders of independence movements have commanded during their phase of struggle with an imperial authority, the freely given and overwhelming electoral mandate to speak for Bangladesh. Such a mandate was not available to Gandhi or Nehru, or Mao, or Ho Chi Minh, or Ben Bella, or Nkrumah, or Nyerere, or even to Mandela, all of whom obtained full electoral legitimacy only after independence. Bangabandhu had already exercised *de facto* authority, in the eyes of the world, over the territory of Bangladesh when he proclaimed Bangladesh's independence. It was this universally recognised authority which persuaded Bangali judges, bureaucrats and diplomats to extend their support to Bangabandhu and for Bangali members of the armed forces of Pakistan to break their oath of service and pledge their allegiance to the liberation of Bangladesh. It should be kept in mind that to the end, Vietnamese fought alongside the French to suppress their liberation movement, Algerians fought with the French to suppress the FLN, local troops, bureaucrats and police were used by the British to suppress various independence struggles throughout the age of Empire. It was only in Bangladesh that these servants of colonial rule repudiated the authority of the ruler and supported a "rebel" authority because they deemed its leader to have a legitimate authority to speak for all the people of Bangladesh.

When the people of Bangladesh took their message to the international community after March 1971, they had no difficulty in commanding support at the popular level even when the governments of the day remained lukewarm in their support to the sovereignty of Bangladesh. It was this popular groundswell of support in most countries of the world for the Bangladesh liberation struggle and against the genocide of the Pakistan army which compelled some national governments to demand restraint from the Pakistan government. Today

the genocide unleashed by Yahya and the Pakistan Army would have been condemned by many governments and there would have been a global outcry for the trial of Yahya and Tikka Khan as war criminals. In 1971 most governments, with rare exceptions, still believed that a state, however weak its popular legitimacy, could massacre its own citizens with impunity. Thus, in 1971 Bangladesh needed to invoke the support of the people of these countries who would in the normal course of their lives have never heard of Bangladesh. That ordinary people around the world took notice of the atrocities inflicted on the people of Bangladesh, owes in no small measure to global recognition given to Bangladesh during March 1971 and the visibility and stature of Bangabandhu as the leader of Bangladesh. Whatever may be said about the role of Bangabandhu and the Awami League after 1971, all Bangladeshis will have to come to terms with the fact that had Bangabandhu not united the people of Bangladesh by building up their national self-awareness, particularly prior to the liberation war and could draw upon their democratic mandate to speak for Bangladesh before the world, our liberation struggle could have turned out to be a much more protracted process.

Conclusion: The Unique Basis of Bangladesh's Nationhood

The emergence of Bangladesh must, thus, be recognised as an unique historical event where a nation emerged out of an intensive process of political mobilisation, which evolved through successive phases. The final phase of the emergence of Bangladesh was the most difficult because it required that a sense of national identity should be brought to maturity within a sovereign state. This demanded an extraordinary leader who could be accepted by all Bangalis as the symbol of their nationhood where they could not only be persuaded to proclaim their sovereignty but would also remain united and willing to defend it.

At the same time, our emergence as a sovereign state demanded the complete involvement of the people of Bangladesh. Thus, the consolidation of a sense of national sovereignty in the minds of the people of Bangladesh was not the skin deep process one associates with formal declarations of independence where ordinary people find one day that white-skinned rulers have been replaced by brown sahibs. In the case of Bangladesh, national sovereignty was inculcated into the consciousness of the masses through a deliberate political process. It was

the mass character of this consciousness building which provided the underlying strength to the nationalist movement and gave substance to the assertion of national sovereignty during March 1971 by Bangabandhu and the people of Bangladesh.

During March 1971 Bangladeshis at all levels participated in the mobilisation, repudiating the authority of Yahya Khan. In every village a sense of Bangladesh's sovereign status took root and people became psychologically prepared to defend their sovereignty. In many places villagers came forward to interdict communications with the cantonment which might be used by the Pakistani army to move troops and these common people participated in moves to deny supplies to the cantonments.

In those days of March 1971, citizens were acutely conscious of the threat of a military attack by the Pakistan army in the name of restoring their authority. Even within the cantonments, where preparation for an attack were visible to all Bangali members of the armed forces, their rank and file, along with their officers, had within their hearts and minds proclaimed their loyalty to a sovereign Bangladesh under the leadership of Bangabandhu. Some officers were already in touch with Bangabandhu and other Awami League leaders in the cantonments and were preparing themselves for an eventual crack down by the Pakistani army.

When the Pakistani army launched its aggression on the people of Bangaldesh on the night of March 25, 1971 the entire population spontaneously rose up to resist this, even without any coordinating military direction. Two years of political mobilisation by Bangabandhu had made them conscious of their identity. The events of March 1971 had made them a nation. The intense process of national consciousness building throughout March 1971, politically equipped a people with no tradition of armed struggle or even the use of arms, to take up arms and be prepared to shed their blood to defend their newly acquired sovereignty.

More than most nations states, Bangladesh had to go through a long process of preparation for their independence and to then fight to preserve it. Such a state owes a blood debt to the people who shed their blood for the liberation of Bangladesh and to the leader who played such a critical role in inculcating this sense of nationhood within the people of Bangladesh. The tragedy of post-liberation Bangladesh lies in the fact

that this symbol of our nationhood was not only assassinated but was marginalised from our historical consciousness for 21 years. This single act of terrorism did not just murder a leader and his family, it was an assault on the inspirational sources of our nationhood for which we have paid an incalculable price. It is not surprising that since 1975 we have witnessed the resurrection of those very forces which remained deeply inimical to the historical processes which shaped the emergence of Bangladesh.

A further departure from the spirit of the liberation struggle lies in our failure to honour the blood debt to the common people of Bangaldesh who paid the real price for our liberation. It was this ability of Bangabandhu to involve these people which gave the depth and strength to the liberation struggle and enabled them to withstand the genocide of the Pakistan army. This mass participation was the distinctive feature of the Bangladesh's liberation struggle and sets it apart from most such struggles. For this same reason it remained essential to build a society where the common people are given a sufficient material stake in the rewards of independence and a commensurate democratic stake in shaping a modern Bangladesh. Instead, we have built a more inegalitarian society than we inherited, where the fruits of independence have been appropriated by a narrow elite who have come to dominate the economic and political life of contemporary Bangladesh. For such acts of betrayal to the ethos of the liberation struggle, we remain condemned to an era of political divisiveness and social unrest which has compromised the sustainability of the democratic process in contemporary Bangladesh.

From Two Economies to Two Nations: My Journey to Bangladesh

The contributions to this volume by Rehman Sobhan date back to 1961 and extend up to December 1971 when he was campaigning for Bangladesh during the liberation war. They include academic papers, articles for newspapers and other written inputs which were designed to both inform and influence public opinion in support of self-rule for Bangladesh.

The writings provide a sequential narrative which blends economic analysis with journalistic reportage of important historical events and can be read both as a history of events as well as of ideas, which culminated in the emergence of an independent Bangladesh.

The first part of the volume provides an intellectual history of Sobhan's participation in the debates on what was then defined as the two economies dividing Pakistan and the consequential economic deprivation of the Bangalis. These writings of his were influential in shaping the political debates of the time which culminated in the presentation of the 6 Point agenda of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The second part of this volume provides reportage on the historic political struggles which were provoked by the denial of democratic rights to the Bangalis, and its culmination in the war of national liberation.

The concluding section on the *Idea of Bangladesh* retrospectively reviews the economic basis of Bangladeshi nationalism and the catalytic role of Bangabandhu in the birth of an independent Bangladesh.

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