

BANGLA DESH AND THE CRISIS OF PAKISTAN

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THE cyclonic fury with which the Pakistan Army struck against the people of East Bengal,¹ exactly two years to the day on which the regime of President Ayub Khan had fallen and General Yahya Khan assumed power under Martial Law, marked a new stage in the deepening crisis of Pakistan. It is a crisis of national identity. It is also a crisis of the challenges which are being posed by the rising democratic forces in the country to the ruling bureaucratic-military oligarchy.

The one unambiguous fact in the situation is the relentless brutality of the Army in its attack on an entire people. Equally clear is the unqualified right of the people of East Bengal to struggle to liberate themselves from its yoke. But the underlying issues are complex. They concern, firstly, the consequences of widening regional economic disparities inherent in the unevenness of capitalist development, as well as, on the one hand, the questions of the social basis of unitarian concepts of nationhood and national ideologies, and, on the other hand, of the emergence of a sense of separate national identity amongst underprivileged regional groups. For a quarter of a century the people of East Bengal, who constituted 54 per cent of the population of Pakistan, have agitated for a rightful place for themselves in appointments to the state bureaucracy and the armed forces and for measures to rectify the economic backwardness of that exploited region by a re-allocation of economic resources and modification of economic policies. In the course of that struggle, they established their separate identity in their distinct culture and language and their sense of nationhood crystallized. Their confrontation with the Army in March 1971 was the climax of a long struggle.

The action of the Pakistan Army in East Bengal can have few parallels in history, because it was premised on the elimination of the entire Bengali intelligentsia, in a desperate bid to silence the voice of the Bengali people. When, in the dark hours of the night of 25th March, the army moved into bloody action, by all accounts it did so systematically, searching out marked houses of political cadres, intellectuals and members of the University community. They acted, evidently, on the hypothesis that the voice of Bengali nationalism was

no more than the rhetoric of a small band of intellectuals and politicians, whose elimination would, therefore, restore loyal obedience of the Bengali people to their own authority and remove all prospects of renewed challenge. Their action was calculated to break the spirit of those who survived and to silence a whole people.

The people resisted. But resistance to the Army's unanticipated action was localized, spontaneous and uncoordinated. It was courageous, because those who proudly proclaimed themselves as the 'liberation forces' had little to fight with except their own defiant spirit and the will to survive. In retrospect, it is only too plain that the East Bengali political leadership and, especially, the leaders of the Awami League who were the spokesmen of Bengali Nationalism, had neither planned nor anticipated and prepared themselves, for any kind of armed liberation struggle.

The style of politics of the Awami League leaders is reflected, for example, in the response of Sheikh **Mujib-ur-Rahman**, its undisputed leader, at the moment when the Army went into action. He had a timely warning of the army's impending attack. But having exhausted all possibilities of finding a basis for a negotiated settlement, he chose to remain at his residence and awaited arrest. This was a familiar style of politics of an earlier day, a style in which **Mujib** had been brought up. Successive generations of politicians had used the technique of political negotiations backed by threats and pressures, alternating with spells in British prisons. In this way they secured, step by step, concessions from the British which led inexorably towards the seats of Government, without their having to take the risk of mass action on a scale which could give rise to a revolutionary liberation movement. Negotiation was possible because the British could rely on that 'nationalist' leadership to maintain the social order in which their own essential interests were embedded and preserved in the neo-colonial situation which followed. They too feared the alternative to negotiations with the 'moderate leaders', which was the growth of revolutionary forces.

The situation in East Bengal was no **different**. There did exist some common ground and a basis for compromise between the 'Bengali nationalist' leadership of the Awami League, and the powerful vested interests of West Pakistan, neither of whom wished to unleash social forces in East Bengal which might threaten to overthrow the established social order. The Awami League leadership, who championed the demands for 'full regional autonomy' for East Bengal, as expressed in their 'Six Point Programme',² were constantly pushed from behind by forces which had helped them to an overwhelming electoral victory in December 1970, but which, nevertheless, threatened to push them aside if they faltered in pursuit of the East Bengali demands. We shall

examine the nature of these demands and the forces which pressed for them. But, it must be emphasized at the outset, these demands did not include any which might threaten the capitalist social order in East Bengal nor the interests of its landed gentry. Moreover, the leadership of the Awami League, unwilling to engage in an open struggle with the armed forces of West Pakistan were at pains to emphasize that their demand for regional autonomy did not in fact extend to total independence. However, it was abundantly clear to all the parties in the situation that, they could not renege on the Six Point Programme without losing control over the political forces which they were attempting to restrain. A basis for a negotiated settlement between the two sides existed not only because of their mutual concern to avoid precipitating a revolutionary struggle in East Bengal but also because East Bengal's 'regional autonomy' would in the circumstances have been acceptable to some of the vested interests in West Pakistan, as a necessary price for the preservation of their larger interests.

At the time when the Army struck in East Bengal, the Awami League leaders had been engaged for several weeks in negotiations with President Yahya Khan and his political and military advisers as well as with West Pakistan political leaders. The background to the negotiations was the constitutional crisis which followed the results of Pakistan's first National General Election, which was held under the auspices of the Army and Martial Law. The Awami League, committed to a programme of a maximum degree of regional autonomy, won no less than 167 out of the 169 East Bengali seats. On the other hand, the Pakistan People's Party, led by Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, who has great affinity with the hawks in the Army, won 81 out of 131 West Pakistani seats, in the National Assembly. Significantly, Bhutto's greatest triumph was in the powerful province of Punjab, which has always dominated politics and Government in Pakistan. Bhutto's party and the hawks in the Army were antipathetic towards demands for regional autonomy, and they stood for a strong centre. The respective positions of the two major parties were sharply opposed.

The Awami League had an absolute majority in the National Assembly. It could even count on the support of some West Pakistani politicians from the underprivileged Provinces; especially from the left wing National Awami Party. The Awami League demanded that the Assembly should set to work without delay. Bhutto, on the other hand, put himself forward as the principal spokesman of West Pakistan, by virtue of being the leader of the largest West Pakistan Party, and argued that the Constitution should be based on a prior agreement between his Party and the Awami League. He threatened boycott to the Assembly scheduled to meet on March 3, and mounted

a protest movement in West Pakistan. President Yahya Khan postponed the Assembly meeting. Sheikh Mujib responded by declaring a General Strike in East Bengal which was successful. There was shooting and many were killed. President Yahya flew to Dacca, the capital of East Bengal and a protracted series of negotiations began between him and Sheikh Mujib, after President Yahya Khan acceded to his demand that the Army be recalled to barracks. Bhutto and other West Pakistani leaders also came over later and negotiated with the Awami League leaders and with President Yahya Khan. On the eve of the military action on 25 March, optimistic statements had begun to issue from those who were engaged in the talks, and it was thought that a settlement was in sight. The army's action at that juncture was therefore sudden and unexpected.

The general strike called by the Awami League in East Bengal at the beginning of March was a total success and had continued whilst the negotiations were in progress. The civil administration and the police too identified fully with the Awami League, for by now the services in East Bengal were manned almost entirely by Bengalis. It became necessary for Sheikh Mujib to 'administer' the General Strike, to allow the necessary functioning of 'essential' activities. For this purpose he issued directives which were implemented by the Administration. The Awami League leaders found themselves, in effect, running the administration of East Bengal; they had achieved de *facto* state power. Sheikh Mujib was in command of the entire state apparatus in East Bengal with the exception of the army.

Sheikh Mujib's decision to continue the negotiations despite this new situation, unmistakably reveals his political style and intentions. The army was evidently unprepared to strike at that time because the bulk of its forces were based in West Pakistan. That was the moment when an independent state of 'Bangla Desh' could have been proclaimed if the Awami League leaders had so wished, without the human cost which was involved subsequently. But they did not seek a struggle for freedom and the perils of forces that would be generated by a popular struggle. They chose, instead, the path of negotiation and compromise. The army, on the other hand, began its own preparations. While negotiations were initiated, it gained time to obtain reinforcements and prepare for action. The signal that the Army had decided to embark on a repressive policy was given by the sudden removal on March 1 of Vice-Admiral Ahsan, the amiable and liberal minded Governor of East Pakistan, and his replacement by General Tikka Khan, a hawk amongst hawks. The Awami League leaders could not have missed the significance of that change, but they went on talking.

The ruling classes of Pakistan were aware of Sheikh Mujib's

dilemma. They also believed that the Awami League was the last bulwark in East Bengal of the social system in which their own interests were embedded. They realized that in conceding to the demand for regional autonomy, they must sacrifice some of their interests. But they saw no viable option to this, because they believed that if Mujib lost ground to the growing pressure from below, the situation might turn into a revolutionary one and then they would be left with nothing at all. I will discuss below the role and attitude of the different classes, in the present situation. But at the outset it is essential to grasp the fact that Sheikh Mujib's dilemma was also the dilemma of the West Pakistani ruling groups.

The dilemma of the Awami League arose because it faced the army on the one side and the growing popular forces on the other. The dilemma of the West Pakistani bourgeoisie arose because of an unpalatable choice between the inevitable encroachment on some of their privileges by the grant of regional autonomy and the alternative prospects of a revolutionary development in East Bengal if the aspirations of the people of Bengal were not satisfied in some measure. For the Americans, who have played a significant role in the situation, there were no dilemmas, beyond the niceties of protocol. They freely supported the Awami League, encouraged it and infiltrated it. In return, the Awami League was loyally and openly pro-American; even during times when anti-American sentiment ran high in Pakistan. It also refused to be drawn into anti-Indian chauvinism which was fostered and exploited by West Pakistani politicians. It appeared that with an Awami League Government in power in an independent East Bengal, that country would be drawn firmly into the orbit of American influence.

The manner of Indian intervention in the situation is significant. So far it has been limited mainly to propaganda and diplomatic activity in support of the Awami League leadership, some of whom have taken refuge in India and have proclaimed a provisional Government of Bangla Desh. The Indian press and radio responded to the Army's action in East Bengal by exaggerated and patently false statements, which did little to help the Bangla Desh cause because it made credible the Pakistan Army's propaganda in West Pakistan that the struggle in East Bengal was Indian engineered and that the Pakistan Army was engaged in fighting with 'Indian infiltrators'. But there is little evidence of a military intervention by India. There have been only border clashes between the Pakistan and the Indian armed forces, which could possibly escalate. But so far the Indians have shown sign of restraint in actual military action and in giving material support to Bangla Desh liberation forces who are engaged in an armed struggle which is, at the moment of writing, on a relatively small scale. The

Indian ruling classes could hardly relish the prospects of a revolutionary struggle developing next door to Indian West Bengal, which is itself in turmoil. Their strategy is directed towards the establishment of an Awami League government in Dacca, the capital of East Bengal, through international pressure aimed at securing a withdrawal of the Pakistan Army. If such a government is established, under the auspices of the Western Powers, India can look forward to close ties and co-operation with it.

The prospects of an independent government of Bangla Desh under an Awami League leadership closely allied to the U.S. and India was, evidently, looked upon with apprehension by the Chinese, for geopolitically, East Bengal is situated in a particularly sensitive location from their point of view. It is not only next door to turbulent West Bengal but also to Burma and close to the borders of China itself. In the context of their confrontation with the Western Powers, the Soviet Union and India, they also value their alliance with the ruling oligarchy in Pakistan. In a message to President Yahya Khan, Chou-en-Lai expressed support for the action of the Pakistan government and the army and commended them and "leaders of various quarters in Pakistan" for having "done a lot of useful work to uphold the unification of Pakistan and to prevent it from moving towards a split." The Chinese have issued dire warnings against "outside intervention in Pakistan's internal affairs" and have fulminated against Indian expansionism. Needless to say, such Chinese statements have been emblazoned on the front pages of Pakistan's controlled Press, and have helped to confuse public opinion and boosted the morale of those who have perpetrated one of the worst crimes in history against an entire people.

The Maoist Left in East Bengal is in the forefront of a united armed liberation struggle for Bangla Desh, in the company not only of all other sections of the Left but also that of militant cadres of the Awami League itself who have chosen the path of armed struggle rather than refuge in India. By focusing exclusively on Western intrigues and aims and speculating on the likely future orientation of an Awami League Government in Bangla Desh, the Chinese have overlooked the role of these freedom fighters and have thereby politically isolated them. In doing so, they have forsaken the obligations of proletarian internationalism. They have also demonstrated their extreme short-sightedness and failure to comprehend the development of social forces in Bangla Desh, and the true relationship of the Awami League leadership to the resurgent people of Bangla Desh. That leadership was swept forward to a great electoral victory by the rising tide of Bengali nationalism; it is only too conscious of the possibility that the tide may easily recede. Despite its limitations and its dependence on the Western

powers, that leadership will have no option but to respond to the popular forces, which are growing in strength by their direct struggle, and to respond to popular demands. The role of the liberation forces, and not only the orientation of the Awami League leadership, will decide the future directions of the Government of Bangla Desh. The Chinese stand could, however, sow confusion amongst the rank and file, and weaken revolutionary unity. Those who wish to weaken the forces of the people and to strengthen the right wing elements in the Awami League leadership are taking full advantage of the opportunity which has been provided for them by the Chinese stand. Fortunately, the Maoist leadership in East Bengal, as one can gather from reports which are available, has not allowed itself to be diverted from its tasks in the struggle that lies ahead. They fervently hope that the Chinese will recognize the mistake which they have made and make amends.

The strategy of the Western powers and the Indian ruling classes is directed towards a negotiated and orderly withdrawal of the Pakistan Army from East Bengal and the establishment of the Awami League leadership in government there. This will not be an easy task for them to achieve. But they are in a very strong position to exert pressures on the Government of Pakistan to that end. Despite Pakistan's much flaunted alliance with China, it is heavily dependent on Western aid. So far that alliance has not interfered seriously with the strategic aims of the Western Powers and it has been valued by Pakistan's ruling oligarchy in its confrontation with India. But the alliance is essentially fragile, despite a great (and increasing) amount of popular goodwill towards China, especially in West Pakistan. The alliance is fragile because of the heavy dependence of Pakistan on foreign aid, the bulk of which is provided by the U.S. and also the increasing ties of collaboration between the Pakistani (predominantly West Pakistani) bourgeoisie and foreign capital.

Pakistan has been in the throes of a prolonged and serious economic and financial crisis for some years and the situation has been getting progressively worse. But now the heavy cost of military operations in East Bengal and the dislocation of East Bengal's economy, have made the situation quite intolerable. Unable to meet her current financial obligations abroad, Pakistan has declared a six-month moratorium on the annual debt service payments due from her on account of foreign 'aid' received in the past. These currently amount to about £60 million p.a. or about 20 per cent of Pakistan's export earnings. Furthermore, Pakistan's economy is geared to a large quantum of imports and a variety of obligations to make payments abroad, which together are greatly in excess of her current export earnings. The deficit is met by further borrowing from abroad. Last year, the Paki-

stan Aid Consortium, made up of Western Powers under the leadership of the U.S.A., gave Pakistan 'standstill aid' amounting to \$380 million, which is equivalent to about 50 per cent of Pakistan's export earnings. This heavy dependence upon Western aid has made Pakistan's position highly vulnerable vis-a-vis the Western Powers. China cannot bail her out of her bankruptcy, although it has extended an interest free loan to Pakistan to the tune of £88 million. Therefore, the Pakistan President's emissaries are touring the capitals of the Western world, cap in hand. But press reports suggest that they have received a chilly response everywhere. The financial pressure on the Government of Pakistan has been turned fully on by the Western Powers. On the other hand, President Yahya Khan and the Pakistan authorities have begun making conciliatory noises. But they have gone too far to be able to restore the status quo *ante* and resume negotiations where they were broken off. The trauma of the blood-letting has transformed attitudes on both sides to implacable hostility.

The aftermath of the holocaust has left deep and bitter hostility in East Bengal towards the Army and the regime which is based on it. The regime has made efforts to re-establish a political base for itself in East Bengal. But even old collaborators appear to be deterred by the fear of the wrath of the people, if not by the fervour and the anger of Bengal patriotism, from collaborating with the military regime. On the other hand, the regime cannot continue indefinitely to maintain its presence on military might alone; particularly in the face of the regrouping of popular forces (after an initial battering at the hands of the army) and the growth of popular resistance. Nor can the Western Powers be too happy to allow the present situation to continue much longer. From their point of view, ideally, they would like to see a negotiated withdrawal of the army and the establishment of an independent Bangla Desh government under the Awami League. But that solution will not be easily achieved.

The most potent weapon in the hands of the Western Powers, which they are using to pressure the regime in Pakistan, is financial pressure under conditions of financial crisis which Pakistan is experiencing. But they are applying such pressures gradually and gently. They have too much at stake, especially in West Pakistan to precipitate its total and sudden financial collapse. That would disrupt the established social order and unleash forces in West Pakistan which they would fear. Their activities appear to be directed rather towards manipulation to bring about shifts in the ruling bureaucratic-military oligarchy and also in alignments of political parties and political leaders, by exerting pressure in a variety of ways. A few heads must, figuratively, roll before they can achieve success in their aims. But those who might collaborate with them also face difficulties. A forced withdrawal of

the Army from East Bengal, as a consequence of international financial pressure, and a declaration of independent Bangla Desh, will not fail to have traumatic effects not only on the hawks in the Army but also on its ranks and a large section of the population of West Pakistan, who have been brought up on chauvinistic propoganda and have been led to believe that the movement for the independence of East Bengal is no more than an Indian conspiracy to 'dismember' Pakistan. There is some indication, however, that the efforts of Western Powers are having some effect. The hawks in the Army have had the powerful support of Mr. Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan Peoples' Party, which won a majority of seats in the elections from West Pakistan. Splits and fractional quarrels have begun to appear in the PPP. On the other hand, Mr. Bhutto himself has made some statements recently which are rather significant. He had thanked God for the Army's actions in East Bengal. But now he has begun to express sympathy with the plight of the exploited East Bengalis and to minimize the significance of his own past attachment to the Chinese alliance as being not much more than a game of ping pong. He is evidently willing and, indeed, anxious, to allay the fears of the Western powers. If he does so successfully, he may yet prove himself to be valuable to them. There are too many uncertainties, for anyone to predict what will happen to him or his party and what roles different people will play in the drama that will be enacted. But the fact remains that political and power alignments in West Pakistan will have to be manipulated by the Western powers before they can expect to have their plans implemented.

There are many difficulties which the Western powers and their collaborators must surmount in East Bengal also, to achieve their objectives there. There is a peoples' liberation struggle being waged in East Bengal and new forces have emerged as a consequence. The Awami League is not a monolithic party with a tight organizational base. Rather its mode of operation has been to rely on a core leadership around whom people have rallied. The tide which took the Awami League leaders to their outstanding success in the general elections can recede and will do so if the leadership fails to live up to the aspirations of the people or if it aligns itself against those who have actually carried on the people's struggle in East Bengal. Even in the leadership of the Awami League there are those who lean in the direction of the people rather than towards making deals with the Western powers against the people. Moreover, an Awami League government in power cannot afford not to rely on the people, because the repressive apparatus of the state, on the strength of which it might have taken the opposite course, is non-existent in East Bengal. There is virtually no East Bengali army; (although, being surrounded by

Indian territory, with only a small strip contiguous with Burma, a reactionary Government of East Bengal could believe that its small Army could be used wholly to combat popular forces rather than be needed for external defence). Furthermore, the police force in East Bengal has received crushing blows from the West Pakistan Army and large numbers of experienced and trained policemen have been killed. This weakness in what remains of the repressive apparatus of the state in East Bengal and the growth of the popular forces, must present difficulties and dilemmas to different sections of the Awami League leadership as well as the Western powers. They have a choice to make; and the future of Bangla Desh will be determined by the choices which they make at this critical juncture and the relationship which they establish with the forces of popular resistance in the country.

Associated with the manifestation of the crisis in East Bengal, there is a deeper crisis which pervades the whole of Pakistan. The resolution of the present crisis cannot end with the proclamation of an independent Bangla Desh. The demand for regional autonomy echoes throughout West Pakistan also. This is because from its inception, Pakistan has been a nation in search of identity. It was fought for and established on the strength of the 'two nation' theory, which was propagated by the Muslim League in India, which argued that the Muslims of India were a distinct nation, separate from other Indians who were Hindus. Ironically, this theory was repudiated, on the very day when the new State of Pakistan came into being, by no other than its founding father, Quaide Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. In his opening address to the newly established Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, he declared that all citizens of Pakistan, without discrimination, constituted a single nation. It was a secular concept of nationhood which he propounded. Pakistan was not to be a theocratic state. He declared: "in course of time, Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense . . . but in the political sense, as citizens of the State."

After independence the slogan of 'Islamic unity' acquired a new significance in Pakistan society and politics. That slogan was taken up by right wing ideologues on the one hand and the dominant elements in the bureaucratic-military oligarchy on the other, to deny recognition to groups. The slogan of 'Islamic solidarity' was invoked by the ruling groups to deny the distinct identities of the people of the different regions of Pakistan and their legitimate demands and economic needs. The insistence on that ideology and the refusal of the ruling oligarchy to recognize the demands of the under-privileged groups has had the effect of undermining the unity of Pakistan and deepening the suspicions of the diverse regional groups who became

convinced that their rights and needs would never be acknowledged. The ideology of Islamic unity, as it was exploited by the ruling oligarchy, was tearing Pakistan apart.

Pakistan is not the first nation state to have cultural diversity amongst its peoples. Few nations have a total cultural homogeneity. The regional problem of Pakistan, which was the problem of its unity, did not arise from the mere fact of cultural diversity. The problem arose because of the refusal to recognise that diversity and, more significantly, the real material problems which underlay the idiom of cultural diversity in which regional political movements were expressed. The symbolic demands for the recognition of the separate cultural identities were expressive of material inequalities that were really at issue. Instead of facing up to these realities and legitimate issues, the ruling elite, professing patriotic unity, pursued policies which progressively intensified the inter-regional disparities. These disparities existed not only as between East and West Pakistan. They existed also as between different parts and regions of West Pakistan. The crisis of East Bengal is only one manifestation of a deeper crisis which ramifies throughout Pakistan.

By treating the interests of one 'region' as opposed to those of another, the debate on regional disparities has obscured the underlying forces which create them, namely those of the capitalist mode of production and the unevenness which is inherent in capitalist development. Such development polarizes incomes not only as between the social classes but also between regions, because of structural differences between them. This is the universal phenomenon of capitalist development and is by no means peculiar to Pakistan or to post-colonial societies. Without a change in the mode of production, regional autonomy offers no solution. An uncritical support for movements for regional autonomy, on the mistaken assumption that they represent a bourgeois-democratic stage which must precede a socialist revolution, obscures the structural origins of regional disparities and creates the illusion that the regional problem can (and should) be resolved before a socialist revolution; that it can be resolved without a socialist transformation of the mode of production. This diverts and divides the forces of socialist movements.

By emphasizing the importance of a united struggle for socialism, which is a necessary condition for the resolution of the problem of regional disparities, I do not qualify my support for the struggle which is now going on for the liberation of Bangla Desh. The independence of East Bengal is now a historical necessity not because that by itself will resolve the problem of the regional disparity nor because it is unique in having a cultural identity different from other parts of Pakistan. It has become a historical necessity because the bloody action

of the Army has precipitated a totally new political situation. It has severed, irrevocably, the remaining political links between East Bengal and West Pakistan and has crystallized dramatically the sense of Bengali nationhood. It has also set in motion forces of national liberation which will not allow the struggle for socialism in Bangla Desh to be halted by the weak petty-bourgeois leadership of the right wing of the Awami League. But, on the other hand, the implications of this analysis for West Pakistan, also divided into rich and poor regions, each with a different cultural identity, are very different. The independence of East Bengal will bring more sharply into focus the inter-regional problem in West Pakistan and will give impetus to forces which threaten to tear it apart. But the problems of West Pakistan will not be solved by Balkanization; they call for a united movement for a Socialist West Pakistan.

I will quote some figures to illustrate the inter-regional disparities, which exist not only as between East and West Pakistan but also within West Pakistan itself. A statement recently issued by three Harvard Professors³ quotes relevant data from a recent official document, namely the "Reports of Advisory Panels for the Fourth Five Year Plan", issued by the Pakistan Planning Commission—a body which can hardly be accused of partiality towards East Bengal. The Professors point out that, for example, in the quinquennium 1956-60, (the First Five Year Plan period) the per capita income in West Pakistan was 32 per cent higher than that in East Bengal. A decade and two Five Year Development Plans later, in the quinquennium 1965-70, the disparity had widened and the per capita income in West Pakistan was 61 per cent higher. The professors point out also that East Bengal "with 60 per cent of the population of the country" (note: the ratio of East Pakistan's population, according to the 1961 Census, was 54 per cent.) received as little as 20 per cent of development expenditure in the quinquennium 1950-55 and that East Bengal's share attained a peak of no more than 36 per cent in the Third Five Year Plan period, namely 1965-70. They quote official data to show that whereas over the last two decades East Bengal's share of export earnings was of the order of 50 to 70 per cent of the Pakistan total, its share of imports has been of the order of only 25 per cent to 30 per cent.

Comparable data showing the difference between the different regions of West Pakistan itself are not available. But a few indices are indicative of the order of magnitude of the relative differences. For example, the principal food crop of West Pakistan is wheat, which accounts for about a third of the cropped area. Punjab produced no less than 78 per cent of the wheat output of West Pakistan in 1964 and its relative share has increased greatly since then. But it has only

59 per cent of the population of West Pakistan. Again, cotton is the principal cash crop of West Pakistan. Punjab produces 68 per cent of it. The third most important crop of West Pakistan is rice, although the rice acreage is about a quarter of that devoted to wheat. Punjab produces 50 per cent of the rice. It produced 68 per cent of the sugar-cane and 75 per cent of 'gram' which is an important item in Pakistani diet. Therefore, on the basis of the 1964 data alone, the agricultural wealth (per capita) of the Punjab was at least $2\frac{1}{2}$ times that of the poorer provinces. The gap is steadily widening. Since 1964, the year to which these figures relate, the so-called 'Green Revolution', based on the 'elite farmer strategy' of agricultural development, has brought about a far more rapid growth of the Punjab relatively to the other poorer provinces. For example, by 1968, 96 per cent of all the tubewells in West Pakistan were located in the Punjab. The significance of this concentration must be judged by the fact that it was the availability of additional irrigation water from tubewells which has been the primary factor which triggered off the 'Green Revolution' by making possible increased use of fertilizer and the planting of new varieties of seeds for which the use of adequate fertilizer and water are necessary. Again, by 1968, 13,500 of the total of West Pakistan's 16,500 tractors were in the hands of Punjabi kulaks. As regards the distribution of industrial wealth, regional data are not available. But the concentration of wealth in Pakistan is extreme and much of it is owned by Punjabis—the rest of the business community consists mainly of Gujerati speaking immigrants from the West coast of India, so that the indigenous population of other provinces have very little share of industrial investment. Moreover, apart from the port of Karachi, which has the biggest concentration of industry in the country, the major industrial centres in the country are all located in the Punjab. Small scale industrial development is also heavily concentrated in the Punjab, especially in the districts of Sialkot, Gujranwala, Gujerat and Lahore. It might be added, however, that even in the Punjab there are great regional disparities; for example between the impoverished Rawalpindi Division and the rich canal Colony Districts.

These disparities are the direct result of Pakistan's commitment to private enterprise. There is also polarization of incomes between the social classes. For example, the Gross Provincial Product from agriculture in West Pakistan has doubled within the last decade. But because the rate of development in the poorer provinces has been slower, agricultural incomes in the Punjab have more than doubled. This localized inflation of agricultural incomes is, furthermore, concentrated in the hands of a small group of the big farmers of the Punjab. According to the 1960 Census of Agriculture, 8 per cent of all farms in West Pakistan were 'large farms' and accounted for 42

per cent of the farm area. But even these figures are not a true index of the actual concentration of land ownership because they relate to farms as units of cultivation and not to ownership units. 50 per cent of the total farm area was tenant cultivated and therefore also owned by the bigger landowners. The concentration in *ownership* of land is therefore much greater than that shown by the Agricultural Census data.

The bulk of the increase in farm incomes in West Pakistan has gone into the hands of this small and powerful group of big farmers and landowners of the Punjab. The inflation in farm incomes has generated a price inflation, as a consequence of which other groups in the country are economically worse off than before. For them, development has, paradoxically, created more poverty. The poor provinces whose population has been badly hit are Baluchistan, the Northwest Frontier Province and Sind. In all of these provinces, there has been political agitation for equitable treatment and a fair share of development expenditure, and of canal waters (a major source of dispute) as well as for greater provincial autonomy. These movements too have emphasized cultural and linguistic identity of the people of the respective provinces, which takes the focus away from the underlying economic issues and obscures their causes. Moreover, this emphasis on language and culture has created a special complexity for the situation in Sind where most of the urban population are predominantly Urdu speaking refugees from India, whereas the peasantry in Sindhi. The language issue is divisive here and puts workers and peasants into opposite camps. Nevertheless, the regional and language movements focus on real material problems which must be resolved. They have generated centrifugal forces in West Pakistan. The crisis of East Bengal cannot but have a far reaching impact on this explosive situation in West Pakistan. But in West Pakistan the problem of the respective under-privileged provinces will not and cannot be resolved only by the grant of regional autonomy; but rather, it calls for a unified struggle for socialism in West Pakistan and an end to the social order which, by its very nature, generates inequalities not only between different classes of society but also between regions.

The narrowing of the political focus from a struggle for socialism to that for regional autonomy has its particular class basis. It is to be found in the special role of the educated middle class which has played an important part in the politics of post-colonial societies. The nature and role of this class is a question of great importance, therefore, for political movements in post-colonial societies. But it is a question to which little attention has been paid by Marxists. It is convenient to approach this problem in the present context by an identification of the ruling oligarchy in Pakistan and its class basis and

allegiances, I have argued elsewhere⁴ that a complex problem arises with regard to the class basis of the post-colonial state. In particular, I find that the Military and Bureaucracy in post-colonial societies cannot always be looked upon, in terms of the classical Marxist view, as necessarily the *instruments* of a single ruling class. Because of the specific nature of the historical experience of post-colonial societies, the relationship is more complex. In the historical development of Western societies, we see the creation of the state, by an indigenous bourgeoisie, in the wake of its ascendant power. Even in that context, however, such a simplified statement must be qualified, because the process is often more complex. But in post-colonial societies, the historical process is qualitatively different from that of European societies. This follows from the fact of their colonial experience, which determines their specificity and their unique characteristics.

In the post-colonial societies we find that the essential role of the bourgeois revolution, insofar as that consists in the establishment of a bourgeois state and the institutional and legal framework which are necessary for capitalist relations of productions to develop, is a revolutionary task that was already accomplished by the Metropolitan bourgeoisie in the course of the imposition of colonial rule. But the colonial state had to undergo a development which went beyond that required of the bourgeois state in the Metropolitan countries, because the colonial state had to establish a bureaucratic-military apparatus and mechanisms of Government by which it exercised dominion over the native social classes in the colony. The post-colonial state inherits the apparatus of state and its institutionalized practices which regulate and control the indigenous social classes. At the moment of independence weak indigenous bourgeoisies have found themselves enmeshed in bureaucratic controls by which those at the top of the hierarchy of the bureaucratic-military apparatus of state are able to control their activities and their prospects.

The classical Marxist theory conceives of the development of the super-structures of the state in keeping with the development of the infra-structure of the economic foundations of society, namely the capitalist relations of production and the ascendant bourgeoisie. But, in post-colonial societies we find the contrary, namely that the development of the super-structure of the state, has taken place in advance of the development of the indigenous infra-structure, or the economic foundations of society, and the rise of the indigenous bourgeoisie. The super-structure of the state, in the post-colonial state is, therefore, relatively *over-developed* i.e. in relation to the under-developed economic infra-structure and the domestic bourgeoisie. It was not over-developed in the *colonial* situation because it was based on the economic foundations of the colonial society and the Metro-

politan bourgeoisie. The phenomenon of over-development of the super-structure arose only as a consequence of the disjuncture of its relationship with the structure of the Metropolitan economy, at the moment of independence, when the structure of the ex-colonial society was cut adrift. It is at this point that a fresh equation has to be established between the highly developed super-structure, which is over-developed in relation to the indigenous under-developed economic structure of *the post-colonial society*. The conjuncture of over-developed super-structures and under-developed structure is therefore a phenomenon which is peculiar to the post-colonial society and it cannot arise in a pre-colonial or colonial society.

The weak and under-developed domestic social classes of the post-colonial society have the impossible task of subordinating, without a social revolution, the state apparatus which has institutionalized their own subordinate relationship in the past. But in the post-colonial situation the indigenous bourgeoisie and the over-developed state apparatus, namely the bureaucratic-military oligarchy, are not the only two elements between whom an equation of power is to be established. The erstwhile Metropolitan bourgeoisie does not relinquish its colonial interests; it re-enters the now open situation in the post-colonial society in company with other competing bourgeoisies of other developed capitalist countries; and it establishes neo-colonial relationships which, are, however, qualitatively different, especially in their political mode of operation from those of the colonial situation. Finally, there is also the indigenous landowning class in the post-colonial society which is politically powerful because their sons largely control high positions in the bureaucratic-military oligarchy and also because, given universal franchise and the semblance of a democratic political process, they occupy powerful positions in the political structure.

Pakistan's experience suggests that none of the three propertied classes in the post-colonial society to which we have referred, namely the indigenous bourgeoisie, the neo-colonialist bourgeoisie and the landowning classes, exclusively command the state apparatus because the influence and power of each is offset by those of the other two. They all make competing demands on the post-colonial state, namely the bureaucratic-military oligarchy, which is in command of it, and the latter mediate the competing demands of the three propertied classes. This enables the bureaucratic-military oligarchy to assume a relatively autonomous role, which serves, as well as mediates between, the interests of the three propertied classes but is not under the exclusive control of any of the three.

The role of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy is only *relatively* autonomous, because it is determined within the matrix of a class society and not outside it. The preservation of that social order unifies

all the three competing class forces who, together with the ruling bureaucratic-military oligarchy, is committed to defend it from movements which challenge its continued existence. But, nevertheless, the role of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy is relatively *autonomous* because, once the controlling hand of the Metropolitan bourgeoisie is lifted at the moment of independence, no single class has exclusive command over it. But their autonomy is predicated not only on this negative condition but also on the positive conditions which stem from the new economic role of the state in the process of 'planned' development. The state not only regulates economic activity but also disposes of a large proportion of the economic surplus generated in the post-colonial society which it 'mobilizes' for development.

The mediating role of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy between the competing demands of the three propertied classes is possible in the post-colonial situation, because their mutual interests and inter-relations are aligned in a qualitatively different way from that which is experienced in other historical circumstances on which some of the conclusions of classical Marxism on this subject are premised. In the post-colonial situation their mutual relations are no longer antagonistic and contradictory; rather, they are mutually competing and reconcilable. The classical theory envisages a coalition between the Metropolitan bourgeoisie and a native comprador class, comprised of merchants whose activities complement those of the Metropolitan bourgeoisie, and, thirdly, the 'feudal' landowners. It envisages also that the interests of a rising native bourgeoisie are fundamentally opposed to those of the former so that colonial liberation takes the form of a bourgeois democratic revolution, which is presumed to be a necessary historical stage, in which the established power of the former coalition is overthrown by the latter. That this does not always happen in the post-colonial situation was noted by Paul Baran, who wrote :

"Its capitalist, bourgeois component, confronted at an early stage with the spectre of social revolution, turns swiftly and resolutely against its fellow travellers of yesterday, its mortal enemy of tomorrow (i.e. the proletariat and the peasantry). *In fact it does not hesitate to make common cause with the feudal elements representing the main obstacle to its own development, with the imperialist rulers just dislodged by the national liberation, and with the comprador groups threatened by the political retreat of their foreign principals.*"⁵

It is true that the three propertied classes in the post-colonial situation are united in the defence of the established social order, in which their class interests are embedded, in the face of unprecedented challenges from revolutionary movements. But this is not the whole explanation. The suggestion that **the** rejection by the bourgeoisie of its historic

'anti-feudal' and 'anti-imperialist' roles is solely due to its fears of the revolutionary consequences, is based on notions which derive primarily from analysis of the colonial situation and not the post-colonial situation. In the latter situation an accommodation between the bourgeoisie and the 'feudal' classes is possible because the task of establishing the nation-state as well as national independence is accomplished and that of subordinating 'feudal' power to a bourgeois state is one which does not face the native bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the 'feudal' class has an important role to play in the 'democratic' running of the post-colonial state; its role in establishing links between the state and local-level power structures in the rural areas is of value in containing potentially revolutionary forces and maintaining the 'equilibrium' of the post-colonial system. But, as regards the economic aspects too of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the 'feudal' classes, the growth of capitalist farming, under the auspices of the 'feudal' landowners has, once again, made it unnecessary that the 'feudal' landowning class be eliminated for the purposes of capitalist development. Perfunctory efforts were made in some countries, soon after independence, to introduce land reforms. But, by and large, not only were these measures ineffective but also (what is significant in this context), that fact has not seriously impeded the interests or the conditions of development of the native bourgeoisie. In recent years, the so-called 'Green Revolution' based on an 'elite farmer' strategy, has further helped to resolve the problem of increasing the agricultural surplus needed to sustain industrialization and urbanization, as well as that of expanding the domestic market for manufactured goods. The negative aspects of the 'Green Revolution' which has profited landowners, bear almost wholly on the rural and the urban poor, rather than on the bourgeoisie. It is not possible in the context of this essay to elaborate further on this important question. But we may conclude that the conditions of mutual cooperation between the landowning classes and the bourgeoisie are rooted not only on the political conditions of the super-structure but also in the economic conditions of the structure.

The mutual relationships between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the Metropolitan bourgeoisies, is qualitatively different from that which is premised in the classical theory. The classical theory argues that there is a fundamental contradiction between the two and, therefore, that the bourgeois democratic revolution in colonial societies, (even where it is led by its nascent bourgeoisie instead of the working class) has necessarily an anti-imperialistic character. It is true that the bourgeoisie plays a role in the national movement up to the point of independence. But in the post-colonial situation we find a totally different orientation of both the indigenous bourgeoisie and the **erst-**

while 'comprador class' consisting of merchants and building contractors. The latter, unable to compete on equal terms with giant overseas concerns, demand restriction on the activities of foreign businesses, particularly in the fields in which they can aspire to operate. They acquire a new 'anti-imperialist' posture. On the other hand, as the domestic bourgeoisie grows in size and moves from industries which involve relatively unsophisticated technologies, such as textiles, to those which involve the use of highly sophisticated technologies, such as fertilizers or petro-chemicals etc., they find that they do not have access to the requisite sophisticated industrial technologies and their scale of operation and resources are too small to make it possible for them to develop the requisite technology. For this purpose they turn increasingly to the highly developed Metropolitan bourgeoisies for collaboration. This they do despite the fact that the terms on which the collaboration is offered are such that it hamstring their future independent development. The native bourgeoisie cannot provide the basis for an *independent* development of the post-colonial societies. They necessarily opt for collaboration. The mutual relationship of the native bourgeoisie and the Metropolitan bourgeoisies is no longer antagonistic; it is collaborative. But it is, nevertheless, hierarchical, because the native bourgeoisie occupies a subordinate status in that relationship. Its character changes in the post-colonial situation from anti-imperialist to collaborationist. The Metropolitan bourgeoisie too values the collaboration with the indigenous bourgeoisie because this provides not only an insurance against political risks involved in direct foreign investments but also because that collaboration subserves their economic interests by establishing a captive market for their technology and their domestic products associated with the transmission of the technology.⁶ The conditions which underlie the collaboration are embedded in the structure as well as in the super-structure of the post-colonial society.

In this necessary, but necessarily brief, theoretical digression, we cannot embark upon an adequate examination of the complexities and contradictions which underlie the actual political processes through which the demands of the various classes are mediated by the dominant bureaucratic-military oligarchy. This is because, in the first place, the bureaucratic-military oligarchy is by no means monolithic. Rather, typically, it is riven into factions. Struggle for power between factions in the oligarchy encourages intrigue as well as attempts to consolidate their respective positions by alliances with political parties. The factions themselves, however, are not ideological groups which espouse the interests of one class or another, even though their political counterparts may invoke an ideological idiom. Their links with parties, where they exist at all, are tenuous. Moreover, the bureaucratic

military oligarchy as a whole as well as the factions within it, deal directly with specific demands which emanate from society. The various social classes do not press their demands on them through political parties, but directly by making **representations** and by establishing links with the appropriate factions in the oligarchy.

Insofar as the respective propertied classes establish direct **links** with groups within the ruling oligarchy, they have little use for political parties. The role of political parties is therefore greatly attenuated. With the exception of parties of the Left, they exist only because institutions of parliamentary government exist. Their value for the ruling oligarchy lies in the fact that they provide a facade of democracy and confer the mantle of political legitimacy on the regime. They also satisfy, although only formally and by creating an **illusion**, the desire for democracy and popular participation in Government.

'Ruling political parties' are not necessarily the pliant instruments of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy. Nor is that oligarchy an instrument of the former. A tension, as well as mutual accommodation, exists between the two. This tension and ambivalence in their mutual relationship is best seen in the way in which their relationships exist and develop before and after independence. Before independence, the bureaucratic-military apparatus, which is at that time the instrument of the Metropolitan bourgeoisie, is employed on the task of repression of the nationalist movement. But it is the leaders of that movement who subsequently inherit the apparatus of state power as the legitimate party in power. It might be thought that their previous relationship would have alienated the two completely from each other. But this is not so. Again a number of possibilities exist which reflect the peculiar historical experience of particular countries. In South Asia, there was a continuity in the structure of the bureaucratic-military apparatus and an equation of mutual accommodation was established between them and the nationalist leadership. But the balance of the equation was different, for example, between that which was established in Pakistan and that which was established in India.

There are certain general conditions which influence the way in which the equation between bureaucratic-military oligarchies and political parties is established and evolves in the post-colonial state. Firstly, a political party which has led the struggle for independence, is invested with legitimacy as the rightful successor to the colonial regime and as the party which (in the circumstances) commands a majority in the parliament or Constituent Assembly. This political structure is of value to the bureaucratic-military oligarchies. The politicians are incorporated in a structure in which the **bureaucratic-military** oligarchy has a **firm** grip on the levers of power. But the nexus between power and public responsibility and accountability is broken

and the burden of the latter is shifted on to the shoulders of the politicians. The political leadership shields the oligarchy. Secondly, their mutual relationship helps to establish political links between the regime and local-level power structures which operate at the grass roots level in society (such as the landed gentry), instead of alienating the latter and leaving them open to mobilization by a political opposition for an attack on the regime. The political leadership is therefore of value to the oligarchy. But this dependence on the political leadership imposes certain limitations as well as demands on the bureaucratic-military oligarchy. They may grow sufficiently powerful to threaten their interests. When that happens, a political crisis is precipitated and the oligarchy 'seizes' power, and attempts to rule in its own name; usually that of the army as the 'custodian' of national integrity and national interests.

Because of the powerful role of the bureaucratic-military oligarchy in post-colonial societies, places in the oligarchy are of strategic importance, especially for aspiring educated middle class groups, and political demands are focused on shares in the oligarchy. Where the oligarchy is recruited from a narrow social or regional base, as in the case of Pakistan, the unprivileged educated middle class groups, who are denied access to places in the ruling oligarchy, organize political opposition. 'Moral' principles and ideologies are invoked both by the ruling oligarchy as well as by the opposition to justify their respective interests and to rally public support in their own behalf. Difference of caste, ethnic origin, religion or language dominate the politics of post-colonial societies, particularly for this reason. Opposition groups raise slogans of cultural or linguistic identity. On the other hand, the ruling oligarchy, in defence of its own privileged position, denounces the opposition ideology as narrow minded particularism and divisive. It conceals its own particularistic privileged identity behind an ideology of 'national solidarity'.

In Pakistan the ruling (predominantly Punjabi) oligarchy has taken over and put to its own use slogans of Muslim nationalism, that is the slogans of the movement on the strength of which Pakistan was brought into being. It extols the virtues of 'Islamic solidarity' and denounces opposition movements as divisive 'provincialism'. In this way, after the creation of Pakistan, the nature of Muslim 'nationalism' and the significance of its slogans have altered significantly for they are put at the service of the ruling oligarchy. Muslim Nationalism in India propagated the cause of the under-privileged Muslim educated middle classes of India, who were numerically small and educationally less advanced than the Hindus. The creation of Pakistan was the fulfilment of that role, so that after the State of Pakistan came into being, the *raison d'être* of that movement ceased to exist. At that

point the Muslim League, the principal organ of the movement, was fragmented. The surviving faction which inherited the mantle of the Muslim League has propagated its ideology on behalf of the privileged groups in Pakistan, especially of the Punjabi oligarchy. The idea of Islamic unity, as an ideology, has been used for example to deny the less privileged groups of Bengalis, Sindhis, Pathans and Baluchis the recognition of their separate identity and their claims for recognition as under-privileged entities whose claims for equal treatment were justified and had to be listened to. The demands of the latter, on the other hand, were ideologically in the secular cultural idiom of the respective Language movements.

The Bengali Language Movement was born in 1947 when Pakistan itself came into being. It had its first martyrs in 1952, after a general strike which had brought the entire province of East Bengal to a standstill and paralysed the entire administration for several days. Its impact was felt later in the East Pakistan provincial election of 1954 when the opposition United Front had a landslide victory yielding no more than 10 seats to the ruling Muslim League Party out of a total of 309. It was on this wave of Bengali nationalism that the Awami League emerged as a leading political party. The main characteristic of the Bengali Language movement at this early stage was its apparent spontaneity because its grass roots cadres belonged to the Left who, under conditions of repression, remained anonymous. It was not then espoused by the ruling political elite of East Bengal who enjoyed office under the patronage of the dominant Punjabi bureaucrats, who wielded effective political power in the whole country. The Bengali Language Movement was a protest movement which was of a very great significance in creating radical political consciousness amongst all strata of the Bengali people. It gave them a sense of solidarity as a people and identity as an unprivileged people. Its main thrust came from the educated lower middle classes of Bengal, amongst whom the Awami League has its political roots. But the movement echoed with the ideology of social justice so that its cadres at the grass roots level were aroused to a consciousness of the demands of peasants and workers as well as their own.

Reluctantly, but inevitably, the dominant Punjabi bureaucratic elite had to yield ground to Bengali demands for a fair share of jobs and promotion. As a consequence by the late sixties the provincial administration was almost wholly staffed by Bengali civil servants. Bengali progress was less remarkable with regard to appointments in the Central Government. It was not until 1969 that a few Bengali officers were, for the first time, installed as Secretaries to the Central Government, at the head of Ministries. Even that belated concession was hailed as an extraordinary event and merited public acclaim and

newspaper editorials. But nevertheless the Bengalis complained with some justice that this gesture was not enough. This was not only because the proportionate Bengali share in the senior appointments was still much below that which would be justified by the population ratio, but also because only minor Ministries were relinquished to Bengali hands. The bastions of power, namely, the Ministries of Finance and Defence, the Planning Commission and the Establishment Division, were still retained securely in trusted West Pakistani hands. These Bengali officers were removed from their posts after the army's action in East Bengal. In the military establishment, on the other hand, far fewer concessions were made to Bengali demands, on the plea that 'suitable officer material' was not available from there in sufficient number for recruitment. In the long confrontation with India, the bulk of the army, moreover, is stationed in West Pakistan. In the 1965 war with India, East Pakistan was left virtually defenceless. This led to strong demands from East Bengal for an adequate share in the defence forces. Bengali recruitment was slightly accelerated. But Bengali units in the army were few, small, ill-equipped and ill-trained.

The Bengali movement for equitable treatment, reached a new level when, in the late fifties, demands began to be made for an adequate share of economic resources for development to be allocated to East Bengal. East Bengali economists have prepared excellent detailed studies which demonstrate the steady exploitation of East Bengal by West Pakistan. Their studies have shown that there has been a net annual drain of resources from East Bengal to West Pakistan. Their argument that there should be a radical re-allocation of development resources and a re-alignment of economic policies, became a major issue in the Bengali movement. In recent years it was the issue of economic disparity between East Bengal and West Pakistan which has been at the centre of Bengali demands. Their demands are justified, and are now universally recognized. Even Mr. Bhutto, acknowledged the fact that "The Eastern Wing (i.e. Bangla Desh) has been treated as a colony in the past." I have quoted earlier data provided by the Pakistan Planning Commission, which indicates the large extent of the economic disparity; and the Pakistan Planning Commission can certainly not be accused of partiality in favour of East Bengal.

The economic disparity and the fact that East Bengal's economic development has been retarded derives principally from the inherent dynamics of capitalist development and the ideological commitment of Pakistan's ruling oligarchy to private enterprise. East Bengal's share of private investment has been of the order of only 25 per cent of the total. Moreover, the bulk of it was in the hands of 'West Pakistani'

businessmen. The Pakistani bourgeoisie is made up mainly of two linguistic groups. Many of them are Gujrati speaking Muslims who, originally from Gujerat in India, migrated to Pakistan; principally to West Pakistan. The other group of Pakistani capitalists is Punjabi. Their activities were mainly concentrated in West Pakistan, which therefore benefited greatly from the cumulative impetus to economic activity which this generated. West Pakistan, having a more prosperous agrarian economy, also provided the richer market. A few businessmen had gone directly to East Bengal from India. But, because they were identified there as 'West Pakistanis', and became the targets of agitation in the Bengali Language Movement of the fifties, they were demoralized and shifted their interest increasingly to West Pakistan. This did not deter some of the biggest of them from continuing to invest in and exploit East Bengal. But the main thrust of private investment was confined to West Pakistan and 'private capital formation' in East Bengal became a major problem. The only viable path for the economic development of East Pakistan was a socialist one, and a socialist ideology found a receptive audience in East Bengal.

In the sixties, President Ayub decided to foster in East Bengal a Bengali bourgeoisie, who he thought would also provide him with a political base in that province and counter the influence of socialist ideas. This endeavour was blessed and backed by the West Pakistani bourgeoisie. But to create a bourgeoisie the regime had to put money into the hands of men who had too little of it. Two categories of people were drawn into the process of 'capital formation' which was devised by the Ayub Regime, whom we can refer to respectively as the 'contacters' and the 'contractors'. The 'contacters' were educated Bengalis with influential contacts (especially those who were relatives of bureaucrats or politicians) who were granted all kinds of permits and licences which had a ready cash value because they could be sold to West Pakistani businessmen who needed them to be able to engage in profitable transactions. This process transferred money into the pockets of a parasitic class of people, at the expense of the ordinary consumer who ultimately bore the burden of inflated prices. The 'contacters' lived expensively, and few of them built up any industries. The 'contractors' were different. They were small businessmen who were awarded construction contracts etc., by the Government at deliberately inflated rates. The profits made by them were ploughed back into their businesses. They were later encouraged to become industrialists, by generous loans and official support. For example, for some industrial projects, the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan, which was set up for the purpose, would advance about two thirds of the investment funds required and the East Pakistan

Industrial Development Corporation would provide half of the remaining third of the total amount. The remaining sixth of the amount had to be raised by the prospective industrialist from his own pocket or the stock exchange. In fact a substantial part of this equity was also subscribed by the state sponsored National Investment Trust and the Investment Corporation of Pakistan. To set up an industry, therefore, the budding Bengali industrialists needed barely 10 per cent (or less) of the capital needed. But profits were so high that it did not take long before they became sole owners of their industries and began to multiply their new-found fortunes.

The attitude of the newly created nucleus of the Bengali bourgeoisie towards the politics of Bengali nationalism was one of qualified support. They profited greatly from the pressures created by such politics. But, at the same time, they were a little apprehensive because of its leftward gravitation. Moreover, their extraordinary privileges had been brought into existence because there was a Central Government which could be pressured and the continuance of their privileges in an independent East Bengal was a little problematic. Not all of them supported the movement wholeheartedly; they provided support for right wing movements in East Bengal also, and collaborated with the ruling oligarchy. They were particularly demoralized after the winter of 1968-9, when nationwide protest against the Ayub Regime, which brought about its downfall, threatened to develop into a revolutionary movement, especially in East Bengal. Many of them transferred substantial amounts to politically more 'stable' West Pakistan or, illegally, abroad, for safer investment. While they supported a movement for regional autonomy and diversion of a larger share of economic resources to East Bengal, they also looked upon the bureaucratic-military oligarchy, which is based on West Pakistan, as a bulwark for the defence and protection of their own class interests. The movement for independence for East Bengal cannot, therefore, be explained by reference to the aspirations of the Bengali bourgeoisie. Moreover, in assessing the class basis of that movement, one must take into consideration the fact that the movement existed and flourished before the Bengali bourgeoisie was brought into being. The class base of that movement is, essentially, petty bourgeois. But the armed liberation struggle has transformed it into a people's struggle.

The response to East Bengali demands from the various West Pakistani classes, neo-colonial interests and the bureaucratic-military oligarchy, was by no means unanimous. First of all, the West Pakistani landowners had little to gain from the retention of East Bengal within the fold of Pakistan; and they had much to lose from it. The threat from East Bengal to their vested interests came not only in the form of a generalized threat consequent to the infusion of radical politics.

There was also a specific threat in the form of proposals emanating from East Bengal which affected them; principally the proposal to apply income tax to agricultural incomes which have so far been exempt. Such a tax was essential if sufficient resources were to be mobilized to allow targets for the Fourth Five Year Plan to be kept at a level which would ensure the minimum level of development effort acceptable to underdeveloped East Bengal. Moreover, because of the small size of landholdings in East Bengal, such a tax would have affected only West Pakistani landowners. It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that the question was debated sufficiently widely to make all West Pakistani landowners aware of the issue and therefore to have allowed their self-interest to transcend their 'patriotic sentiments'. The latter factor did play a part. But there were powerful members of that class who favoured regional autonomy (which the Bengalis demanded) to insulate their own privileges.

The West Pakistani bourgeoisie had most to gain from the retention of East Bengal in Pakistan. It provided for them a captive market for their overpriced manufactured goods and a useful source of foreign exchange earnings. But they were already reconciled to the idea of regional autonomy under the Awami League. Their interests were not seriously jeopardized by regional autonomy. As far as investment in East Bengal is concerned, they were not greatly interested, not only because of the 'political risks' which for them were greater in East Bengal but also because the great increase in agricultural incomes in West Pakistan had made it a much more profitable market which was much easier to exploit. Their interest in East Bengal was a sharply diminishing one. They were particularly concerned about the prospects of a revolutionary development in East Bengal, especially after the experience of the great upheaval of the winter of 1968-9. In view of this, they relied heavily on the Awami League as a conservative force, as indeed did the U.S. and other foreign powers. They had given very large financial support to the Awami League. They recognized the pressures to which the Awami League leadership had to respond and were prepared to make small sacrifices in order to contain the forces which were threatening from East Bengal. They favoured regional autonomy under Awami League sponsorship, under which most of their essential interests would be preserved. They would have favoured a deal with the Awami League rather than the action which was mounted by the army, and which has brought in its train incalculable risks and very large costs.

The neo-colonial powers, led by the U.S., had little interest in preventing regional autonomy for East Bengal. On the contrary, the Americans have been deeply involved with the East Bengali secessionist movement and have encouraged it, supported it and infiltrated it.

Under the Awami League, the government of Bangla Desh would be unlikely to embark upon any revolutionary measures and, committed as it was to its weak bourgeoisie and the philosophy of private enterprise, it would be heavily dependent upon the U.S.A. The U.S., amongst other Western powers, is now exerting diplomatic and financial pressures to extricate the West Pakistani army from East Bengal.

The main thrust behind the army's action against the people of East Bengal has come from the bureaucratic-military oligarchy itself. But here, again, the picture is a little complex because of changes in attitudes amongst bureaucrats as a result of recent developments. The Punjabi dominated bureaucratic oligarchy had steadily to yield ground to progressive Bengali demands. Punjabi officials were disaffected by the relatively rapid promotion of Bengalis (and others) to senior posts, which was done under the pressure from regional movements, in order to redress the balance of allocation of senior appointments as between various regional groups. By this the Punjabi bureaucratic elite felt cheated of its own 'seniority'. On the other hand, insofar as control over resources was concerned, regional autonomy threatened to undermine their control over a large share of it. Indications are that, while many members of the bureaucratic oligarchy might have favoured the army's action, not all of them did so and now, in retrospect, they are aware of the colossal financial problem which has been created as a result of that action (if not its terrible human cost) and they would therefore be amenable to the army's withdrawal from East Bengal.

It was the army itself which was most directly threatened by the East Bengali demand for regional autonomy, and the Awami League's Six Point plan which would have deprived the centre (responsible for 'defence') of financial resources except those which the Provinces chose to make over to the centre. Moreover, in addition to decentralization of financial control and economic policy-making, the Awami League was also committed to a very substantial reduction in military expenditure, in order to make more resources available for development. This was a direct threat to the vested interests of the army.

The direct threat to the army's interests was reinforced by the strong ideological orientations of the army officers to anti-Indian chauvinism combined with the belief that Bengali nationalism, was an Indian inspired, Indian financed and Indian engineered move to disrupt the unity of Pakistan. The *raison d'être* of the army, as they had been trained to think, was defence against India. Right wing ideologies had persistently fostered the idea that Bengali nationalism was no more than a manifestation of Indian subversion. Bengali nationalists for their part made little effort to propagate their ideas in

West Pakistan, with the exception of economic demands which were voiced in the English language press. One of the strongest manifestations of the Bengali movement was the emphasis on the Bengali language to the exclusion not only of West Pakistani languages but, to some extent also of English which is the language of inter-communication between the educated members of Pakistani society. The most important literature of the Bengali movement is still inaccessible to those who do not read Bengali. This failure of the Bengali nationalists to communicate with West Pakistanis isolated them and has helped their enemies in West Pakistan to foster hostility towards them. Such hostility is deeply ingrained in West Pakistan and is reflected in the ideology of the Pakistan Peoples Party and its leader Mr. Bhutto, who are close to the hawks in the army. The victory of the PPP in the elections of December 1970, in Punjab and Sind, greatly strengthened the hands of the hawks.

Two conclusions arise from our analysis. Firstly, it emphasizes the political role in post-colonial societies of the educated middle class, whose aspirations are directed primarily towards positions in the bureaucratic-military oligarchy which dominates such societies. The ideology of 'national' solidarity is put forward by privileged groups in that oligarchy in order to obscure their own privileged identity. On the other hand, under-privileged groups put forward their demands in the idiom of regional culture or linguistic or ethnic identity. These demands are reinforced by the phenomenon of economic disparities which are necessary concomitants of the unevenness of capitalist development. The focus on cultural and linguistic identity of the under-privileged regional groups obscures this fundamental cause of economic disparity. The frustrations and the energies of the under-privileged groups are therefore channelled into 'nationalist' movements instead of movements directed explicitly towards a socialist revolutionary change. But because the underlying structure of capitalist development continues even after concessions are made to regional demands, the problems of the regional groups are not solved simply by the achievement of regional autonomy. Their problems can be solved only by a social revolution, and an end to uneven capitalist development. Secondly, the specific conditions of East Bengal have given rise to a situation which can no longer be considered simply as a regional problem, on a par with the problems of the under-privileged regions of West Pakistan. For the latter, the perspective must be that of a united struggle for a socialist West Pakistan rather than a narrow struggle for regional autonomy within a capitalist West Pakistan. In the case of East Bengal, however, a distinct national identity has crystallized. That identity has been baptised in the blood that was shed by the military massacre and the subsequent armed struggle.

There can therefore no longer be any question of East Pakistan being 're-united' with West Pakistan; least of all under the **bureaucratic-military oligarchy** which now rules the country. It is difficult to visualize, at the moment of writing, when and how precisely the present crisis will be resolved by the emergence of a free **Bangla Desh**. But socialists everywhere will support the struggle of the people of **Bangla Desh**, and resist the intrigues of the western powers to thwart its liberation.

NOTES

1. East Bengal, officially designated East Pakistan, is referred to by Bengali nationalists by its Bengali name of Bangladesh, which is the name by which it has been proclaimed as an independent country.
2. The Awami League 'Six Point Programme' proposed (i) a Federal Parliamentary constitution with universal adult franchise, (ii) the Federal Government to be responsible only for Defence and Foreign Affairs and Currency, (iii) two separate currencies for East and West Pakistan, controlled by two separate Central Banks with control on capital movements between East and West Pakistan, (iv) power to levy taxes and to regulate fiscal policy to vest in the federating units, (v) separate accounting of foreign exchange and separate negotiation of foreign aid for federating units and (vi) the governments of the federating units to have the power to maintain para-military forces.
3. E. Mason, R. Dorfman, and S. Margolin, "*Conflict in East Pakistan—Background and Prospects*" (mimeographed) April 1971.
4. See: Hamza Alavi, "The Army and the Bureaucracy in Pakistan Politics" in "*Armée Et Nation Dans Les Trois Continents*" (Ed.) Anouar Abdel-malek (forthcoming).
5. Paul Baran "*The Political Economy of Growth*", New York, 1957, pp. 220-1.
6. This development was analysed in my article "Imperialism, Old and New" in Socialist Register 1964, (Les Temps Modernes No. 219-220, Août-Sept 1964), and valuable empirical material is provided by Michael Kidron, "*Foreign Investments in India*", London 1965. See also my review of Kidron's book in *New Left Review* 37, June 1966.