

On Liberation Struggle of Bangladesh

A massive uprising of people in East Pakistan, former eastern segment of Pakistan, saw in its wake the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 as a national sovereign state. This liberation struggle raised a number of questions among people at large, fancy in a section, cloud of confusion especially among the self-styled Marxists and the ultra-lefts. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh analyses here the root-cause of this uprising, its nature, the question of leadership of the liberation struggle, the prudence of the role of the then socialist China, the motive of India Government in their response. Most importantly, he shows how the people of India should view this issue and what should they do.

The struggle for liberation going on in Bangladesh at present is very important, particularly for India, because our country, India, surrounds that landmass within which this freedom movement is going on. So, even if other countries of the world may consider questions like the past and future of that country, the consequence of the present political movement there, and what would be the character and form of the government there to be an exclusive affair of that country, the understanding of the Indian people should not be like this. Our relationship with the people of Bangladesh is a historical one. We have naturally a very close relationship with them, an organic link so to say, and we share a cultural linkage between us. In fact, once we all were people of the same country, although now we are divided not only into two states but also into two nations, into two countries.

On this, I feel strongly that an important point should be made clear to those people in our country who are dreaming of an immediate unification of East Bengal and West Bengal through this freedom movement in Bangladesh and are giving such a call. That is, although we were once people of the same country, but that feeling of one nationhood does not exist in reality today in either of the two countries. Evidently, centring round the two countries two kinds of national pride and nationhood have developed independently of each other. It is true that there is

alikehood in the sense of Bengali entity between us, the people of West Bengal, a constituent state of India and the people of Bangladesh. But other than cultural and linguistic similarity between the two, the national feelings or nationalism of theirs is now completely different and separate from ours. We cannot afford to forget this any way. Whatever the importance of their independence movement to us, we should bear in mind while extending support to this freedom movement that Bangladesh aspires to exist separately along with its own sovereignty and freedom. So, we have to extend support to their freedom movement with the attitude of helping in the development of their sovereignty and national life.

If our help and support to them be motivated by such an attitude which shows we are displaying sorts of undesirable superintendence over them or that we are one and the same as they are and that we shall now reunite to be one again, then our help will convey a different message to them. Such an attitude of ours will not go down well with the very mentality that has prompted the national uprising in Bangladesh. Our party considers that if this type of attitude is expressed now it will create harmful repercussions instead of helping the freedom movement of Bangladesh. By this, it is the forces opposing the freedom movement there that will be strengthened. As a result, the very purpose of our extending sympathy and support towards the freedom movement will be adversely affected and the freedom movement will, in reality, be weakened in a way.

In order to correctly grasp the nature of the new, independent national awakening that we are now witnessing in Bangladesh, it is necessary to discuss briefly the history of its development. After two states were created by artificially dividing India, the Indian nation, by force and Pakistan was constituted as a separate state, in the course of time there was an attempt to develop a Pakistani nationalism, and it was developing too. But due to a number of reasons a common Pakistani national feeling and a common mental make-up comprising West and East Pakistan could not develop. The first reason being the great distance that separates West Pakistan from East Pakistan (East Bengal), and so geographically they are completely separated from each other. Secondly, it turned out to be a difficult task to build up a unity in the cultural sense, too, between these two ends of Pakistan, because from the point of view of language and culture, too, one has no similarity with the other. Besides, for advancement, industrialization and economic development of West Pakistan, the ruling elite of Pakistan had virtually reduced East Bengal into

a colony. Despite the population of East Pakistan being more than half of the population of Pakistan, one fourth of the total revenue generated from East Bengal used to be spent for East Bengal. And the rest was used to be utilized to increase the wealth of West Pakistan. So, just as the imperialists try to develop and advance their own countries by making use of their colonies as the sources of raw materials and keep them subjugated, so also even after the formation of Pakistan as one country and one state the ruling elite of West Pakistan turned East Bengal into such a colony.

But the realization of this colonial exploitation and resentment against it did not grow among the people of East Bengal at the initial stage and the sense of Pakistani identity did not disappear from the minds of the people of East Bengal just in a day. The people of East Bengal used to consider themselves to be Pakistani for a long period. But the public opinion in East Bengal was developing gradually against the ruling elite of West Pakistan centring round language, culture and on question of economic development, and various demands began to surface. But the ruling elite of West Pakistan could make out neither the latent meaning nor the historical direction of these movements. On the one hand, they sought to suppress these movements with brutal state power and, on the other, by fomenting religious fanaticism they tried to artificially create and sustain the concept of one single, undivided Pakistani nationalism among the common people. But they had forgotten that a nation does not develop only on the basis of religion.

Nation is a product of history. In the course of history, from the strong urge of development of capitalism an economic centralization and an awareness of one centralized identity develops within a given geographical boundary, and on its basis, keeping language, culture and all-round economic development in the forefront, a nation is born as a product of a historical process. This is the history of formation of all modern nations. Viewed from this angle, if Pakistan had not been carved out from India by forcible imposition of an unjust will, the present two countries – Pakistan and India – would now have existed together historically as a single nation. But India, which developed as a nation in the course of history, encountered vivisection because of political bungling of the ruling class, giving birth to two nations, two countries, two patriotic sentiments. But even after Pakistan was constituted as a separate state, East and West Pakistan could not give birth to a single patriotic feeling. Though the ruling class of Pakistan tried utmost to build up one national mental make-up in the geographically separated two parts of Pakistan basing upon

religion in the name of Islamic state completely negating language and culture, it is however a fact that Pakistani nationalism arose in the form of two divided streams of nationalism. The national mental make-up in West Pakistan developed in one way, and the national mental make-up of East Pakistan, which is now being called Bangladesh, began to develop in a separate way. This Bangladeshi mental make-up which developed separately within the geographical environment of East Bengal is a new nationalist feeling or nationalism. But along with this, it must never be forgotten that this nationalism of Bangladesh is an offshoot of the Pakistani nationalism itself.

If the different provinces of West Pakistan are taken separately, then it will indeed be seen that Pakistani nationalism does not exist there, too, in one integrated form, because powerful resentment of the people against oppressive rule of the autocratic ruling clique, strong resentment among the other nationalities against the Punjabi Muslim nationality's attempt of domination are very much extant. Even so, because of the geographical contiguity between the provinces of West Pakistan, the resentment among the different nationalities there could not take on such a widespread and intense form so as to give rise to an independent national feeling as in Bangladesh. But because of lack of this geographical contiguity between the two parts of Pakistan, thereby giving birth to two different geographical environments within the same state of Pakistan, and because of the presence of burning resentment against colonial exploitation, slavery and political subjugation of the oppressed people of East Bengal coupled with their wounded feeling, new nationalist feelings and a new mental make-up started to develop there gradually. As a result though the ruling clique of Pakistan could maintain unity to a certain extent among the different nationalities of West Pakistan, but another current of the same Pakistani nationalism has found separate expression in the form of the nationalism of East Bengal, i.e. East Pakistan.

This national awakening of Bangladesh by freeing itself from the religious superstition of Pakistani nationalism has given birth to a completely new nationalism, and through a truly national awakening and upsurge of patriotic awakening and in the form of patriotic upsurge, Bangladesh has appeared in the pages of history as a new nation. It can no longer be called a part of Pakistan. To the people of Bangladesh the rulers of West Pakistan have assumed the character of imperialist rulers, and for Pakistan East Bengal has become a separate nation. This sense of

separate national identity, patriotism of East Bengal is completely different. If the Pakistani ruling clique tries to suppress it by force or are even successful to suppress this national uprising by any means – even then, it should be borne in mind that a new national consciousness has awakened in East Bengal. Bangladesh will rise up again and again demanding a separate state and would ultimately succeed in establishing an independent state. The freedom movement of no country can be ultimately kept suppressed in the old way. But at the same time it has to be borne in mind that because the national uprising that has occurred in East Bengal has been born as an offshoot of Pakistani nationalism, so within the present national uprising a compassionate and affectionate feeling is still at work as regards Pakistan in the thinking of the people of East Bengal even today. So, those who are giving a call for unification of two Bengals, making freedom movement in Bangladesh a basis of their argument or dream about uniting the two Bengals, considering it from the point of view of India's special interest, should remember that the state of mind of the common people of Bangladesh is not like that and they too are not viewing such an eventuality in this way. It is true that we were once united and that we shall again be united in future. But not in this way. If unification is attempted this way right now, the very cause of freedom movement of Bangladesh will suffer most. Those who are dreaming of uniting two Bengals here and now should always remember that even if a socialist state structure comes into existence in both these countries – India and Bangladesh – under the leadership of the working class in future, even then unification of the two countries cannot be accomplished immediately by abolishing the common boundary of the two countries. The national boundary of two neighbouring countries cannot be abolished immediately after the establishment of socialism. The right to do away with the national sovereignty and national frontiers does not come about with the establishment of the working class state. It has to be kept in mind that even after the socialist revolution is victorious, because the form of the socialist revolution from country to country is still national, although the content of those revolutions are socialist and international, it is not possible for any socialist country to do away with the national boundaries, unless and until this national form of socialist revolution is historically exhausted. If socialist countries try to achieve unification by forcibly doing away with the national boundaries, mutual bickering will develop among the socialist countries themselves. Because, the problems of dominating over and imposing one's view on the other will appear, and what is more, the sense of national pride, which is mixed as an alloy in socialist revolution, being hurt

because of the attempt of such forcible union will give birth to the mentality of going out of socialism itself. As a result it is the socialist revolution that will suffer setback.

United we shall all be in the distant future, when the entire human society, all the countries will merge into one human society. Revolution will be victorious throughout the world, one human civilization will arise combining all the countries on the globe. Prior to that, our duty is to selflessly extend help for the advancement and development of a nation, once it emerges through a struggle. The very attitude of getting united here and now has no need at all. To the people of both the countries such an attitude at this juncture is harmful indeed. So my request to those who are helping the freedom struggle of Bangladesh is that they should do so in the spirit of a volunteer.

However, this does not mean that no interest of ours is at all involved in this freedom struggle of Bangladesh. Our only interest is, if a revolutionary government is established in Bangladesh through the freedom struggle then that will constitute an effective conducive force, no doubt, helping the revolutionary movement of India. At least we should hope that such an independent sovereign state will be established in Bangladesh as would not act as a puppet state of imperialism, a state which would defend the very spirit of independence and extend support to the greater cause of anti-imperialist freedom movements all over the world, which would extend support and backing to the democratic movements in the country and help the country to advance gradually on the path of progress and socialism. So we want this. If a government like that of Tunku Abdur Rahman¹ is established in Bangladesh after having achieved independence then we shall surely be unhappy. At the same time it is very important to bear in mind that there is no question of withdrawing our wholehearted support to the cause of independence of Bangladesh, fearing that a government similar to that one led by Tunku Abdur Rahman is going to be installed there. Because, under what type of leadership a government will be formed there is a problem that concerns the freedom-fighting people of that country. If the people of Bangladesh install a moderate leadership in power through the present freedom movement then any attempt by us or any external forces to unsettle that would jeopardize the entire independence itself. Regarding the character of the leadership, there can be discussion and exchange of opinion. But whatever may be its character, if there is no disagreement on the

question that the present movement in Bangladesh is a freedom movement, then all honest, democratic-minded patriotic people should extend support to this freedom movement.

What type of government they can form right now and what character that independent state would assume ultimately will totally depend on the character of the leadership in their movement and on the level of political consciousness of the people in this mass movement, in this freedom movement. Besides, which of the different political forces who are unitedly fighting side by side in the present freedom struggle of Bangladesh, despite differences of opinion among themselves, has more influence over the people and a stronger organization among them, and particularly which of them would be able to provide leadership on the present armed struggle, would also largely determine the character of the future government there. Because, the freedom struggle of Bangladesh having passed through the different stages of democratic mass movements, such as peaceful movements, rallies and processions and strikes, has at present taken the form of an armed mass uprising against the armed brutal and barbarous Pakistani military administration, and the people there are engaged in life and death struggle for independence. So, among those who are together conducting the freedom struggle, it is the party which in course of providing consistent leadership will be able to really build up and organize armed struggle, grasping its intricacies, with the utmost dedication and ability that will ultimately come into the leadership of the freedom movement. Today whoever may be in the leadership there in the freedom movement, finally it is the party that is able to advance the armed struggle successfully that is bound to come into the leadership and into state power after independence.

Here I want to tell those who are engaged in the freedom struggle in Bangladesh a very important point. We are observing there a simmering discontent against the leadership of Mujibur Rahaman among a section of the participants in the present armed freedom struggle. In our country too we are observing that a section of those who claim to be revolutionaries are even saying such things that Mujibur Rahaman is an agent of foreign powers. Perhaps they are saying so by observing the connections Mujibur Rahaman has with the heads of different capitalist states and the friendly relationship of Yahya² with China or, perhaps they have doubt as to whether Mujibur Rahaman will fight with the ideal of socialism; so they are propagating these. But they are not considering at all if the present freedom movement being conducted under the leadership of Mujibur Rahaman is called a conspiracy of the imperialists because he has

connections with different capitalist-imperialist states, then this would be tantamount to opposing the very freedom movement itself. It is true, from whatever information we have received so far about Mujibur Rahaman, he appears to us also to be a moderate leader. But this notwithstanding, it has to be borne in mind that the people of entire Bangladesh have plunged into such a gigantic struggle for complete independence centring round the leadership of Mujibur Rahaman, and it is Mujibur Rahaman who stands at present as the focal point of national unity and solidarity among the common people of Bangladesh in the present national uprising there. Hence, whoever may try to discredit the leadership of Mujibur Rahaman at present by raising various questions would not only be isolated from the public mind but would even weaken the solidarity that is there in the freedom movement. And doing this will in reality be tantamount to ultimately strengthening the hands of the barbarous military clique of Pakistan. So, we strongly feel that whatever may be the internal contradiction or differences of opinion about the political character of the leadership, those points should never be brought to the forefront now and must not, on any account, relegate to the background the cardinal question of the unity of the people that has emerged in the freedom movement of Bangladesh.

We consider that one vital point needs to be raised now with emphasis by us and on behalf of the freedom fighters too. It is this: Bangladesh must have full independence. There can be no settlement by moving away even an inch from this. Because, we are observing that a conspiracy is on in this regard on the part of the US and other interested circles. They perceived that if attainment of independence of Bangladesh cannot be frustrated despite all their efforts, then it would have to be supported ultimately. But if Bangladesh can be tied up with Pakistan before that through a confederation by UNO mediation then that would be the best thing from their point of view of protecting their interest. Therefore, the US official lobby is at present very active in this regard. To hatch such a formula, many a seasoned head is kept busy in the capitals of the various capitalist countries. On all these there is need for remaining very much alert.

Hence, today it is necessary for the freedom fighters of Bangladesh to raise this slogan with the greatest emphasis that there must be no yielding even by an inch from full independence, that is, full sovereign national independence. If any leader, any section or any party participating in the freedom movement raises the question of discussing any terms short of full independence – then whoever they might be, or whatever might be the leadership, they would have to be

gradually isolated from the freedom movement. Whoever extend their help in the present struggle for achieving full independence would have to be treated as friends of the freedom movement whatever might be their political philosophy, concept or ideology. If it is felt that Mujibur Rahaman would frustrate the freedom itself if the freedom movement is conducted under his leadership, then he would have to be got committed to full independence. A national liberation front would have to be raised in Bangladesh at present along with whoever desire to fight on the demand of full freedom. And in this freedom struggle the unity of this national liberation front would have to be protected like the apple of the eye. It is true that at the initial stage Mujibur Rahaman sought merely the right of autonomy in Bangladesh and tried for that. But later on he himself demanded full independence of Bangladesh and sought to provide leadership to the freedom struggle. So, the greatest need now is to carry forward the freedom movement of Bangladesh through forming a national liberation front combining with him, although his is a moderate leadership. Our appeal to the freedom fighters of Bangladesh is that they should not accentuate the differences among themselves centring round the question of leadership at the present time. Because, by that they would for all practical purpose weaken the very freedom movement.

Then again, the revolutionary forces there should keep in mind one thing in this context. That is, if they desire to provide leadership to the freedom struggle simply by levelling criticism against Mujibur Rahaman they cannot do so. For, revolutionary leadership cannot be established through mutual bickering and recriminations. There is only one way to establish this leadership. If they can correctly conduct ideological struggle within the national liberation front that would be formed in the present liberation struggle while maintaining unity of the front and, if they have the ability to provide the best form of leadership in the political, organizational and military spheres in the armed struggle that would perhaps continue there for a long time, then the leadership of the national liberation front will surely ultimately pass on to their hands. No one can stall it. And if Mujibur Rahaman himself provides that leadership then no one has any reason to object to it. Everybody will have to obey that leadership. One cannot go against the freedom movement just because, say, a feudal lord is providing the leadership. Those who do so frustrate the main objective. Therefore, the freedom fighters of Bangladesh would have to remember that by raising slogans against Mujibur Rahaman while scrambling for leadership, it is the national uprising that has developed at present centring round Mujibur Rahaman against the

misrule and exploitation of Pakistan that would be weakened and divided, and the hands of the Pakistani military ruling clique would be strengthened thereby.

I think it necessary to have some discussion on the role of China on the Bangladesh issue. Because, thanks to the bourgeois newspapers of our country confusions of various types have appeared not only among a section of the people but even in the parties who call themselves Marxist-Leninists. In our country while, on the one hand, the circles known to be anti-China reactionary forces are conducting various kinds of misleading propaganda about the role of the Chinese government on the Bangladesh issue centring round the friendly relation between China and Pakistan, and, on the other hand, some Naxalites in our country who swear by revolution, on seeing the friendly relation between China and Pakistan and the silence that China has maintained so far on the Bangladesh issue, are opposing the freedom movement of Bangladesh and are branding this whole movement as a conspiracy of imperialism and the Indian government.

I think that such approach by China is being taken mainly with the objective of making use of the internal contradictions of the world imperialist-capitalist camp in the interest of revolution as a tactical means for weakening the imperialist camp ultimately. Many perhaps think that this policy of China is being pursued by its narrow nationalist interest. Be that as it may, I do not intend to enter into the controversy as regards different perceptions and interpretations regarding this policy of China. I want to say only this much that it is because of the sustained endeavour and successful diplomatic efforts of the Chinese government for a long period that the USA has not been able to get Pakistan committed in its favour on Vietnam despite Pakistan being a member of SEATO and its being almost totally dependent on the USA economically and militarily. It is the successful diplomatic efforts of China that pulled Pakistan to the opposite direction. However much reactionary the present military ruling clique of Pakistan may be, China does not want to mar in any way its friendly relations with Pakistan for the present in order to correctly handle the contradictions in the imperialist camp and to manoeuvre Pakistan to keep it as far as practicable out of American influence. Again it can in no way be concluded from this that just because it has to maintain this relationship, China does not support the national liberation struggle of Bangladesh or it will not support it in future if the necessity arises.

I am placing before you briefly how I have understood the question of China's not openly supporting the freedom movement of Bangladesh. China is observing that because the leadership of this movement has been in the hands of moderates like Awami League, Mujibur Rahaman from the very beginning, no preparation for building up armed struggle by organizing the masses or armed resistance on a broad scale could develop there from the outset. So, the entire freedom movement under the leadership of Mujibur Rahaman is still mainly in an agitational form. The possibility of developing effectively and widely armed struggle or armed resistance or a national liberation army from within is remote in the near future. But the geographical and logistic advantages are not such that China can effectively extend any sort of help in developing armed struggle or building up national liberation army within Bangladesh by providing direct aid. So, China perceives that to extend open support to the freedom movement at this hour of the movement will in reality be reduced to a verbal support only, which will effectively mean nothing at all so far as the freedom of Bangladesh is concerned except extending just a moral support. On the contrary, there is the possibility of some adverse reactions following from it. One: if China openly supports the freedom movement at the present moment, then the support of the official and unofficial circles of different capitalist countries, including the USA and Britain for the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mujibur Rahaman and Awami League that is there, the support of the Soviet Union to it that is there now behind it, and the zeal and initiative with which the Government of India is now supporting the freedom struggle of Bangladesh — there is every possibility of all these to be disrupted. Two: moreover, on the pretext of the involvement of China in the affairs of Bangladesh the USA could directly intervene in Bangladesh by taking the side of Pakistan, as it did in Vietnam. Three: China knows it very well that if they openly support the freedom struggle, Pakistan would not accept it. Moreover, as a result of such an action on the part of China, the pressure that is being exerted in this matter by some capitalist countries upon Pakistan today, this would be to a certain extent hindered, and what is more, the possibility of achieving freedom by Bangladesh, even under a moderate leadership like that of Mujibur through the mediation of countries like the USA, UK and USSR would also encounter diplomatic hurdles. So China is perhaps thinking that so long as the concrete condition is not created from within for conducting a protracted armed struggle inside Bangladesh itself, any open utterance in support of the freedom struggle of Bangladesh would do more harm than good at the present hour. Four: on the other hand, Pakistan, which China has

been able to isolate at least to a certain extent from the imperialist camp through prolonged successful diplomatic effort, would again be pushed completely into the arms of imperialism.

Perhaps by considering these aspects, China is of the opinion that it is not proper to say anything openly in support of the freedom struggle of Bangladesh at the present moment. So, it would not be proper to conclude just now from China's saying nothing openly in support of the freedom struggle of Bangladesh that China does not support this freedom struggle or that it is opposing it. Sometimes back China sent a note to the Indian government protesting about the malicious campaign against China that the anti-Chinese reactionary forces of our country with the patronage of the Government of India had been conducting by using as an opportunity the well considered silence of China on the freedom struggle of Bangladesh, on the one hand, and China's friendly relation with Pakistan, on the other. If the language of this protest note is carefully studied that will provide an inkling of the Chinese attitude on the freedom struggle of Bangladesh despite its present silence. At one place of this protest note China has said, "India is slandering against us that we are supporting the Pakistan regime against the freedom fighters of East Pakistan." The use of the word "freedom fighters" in this note is significant. If it is read carefully this should not escape anybody's attention.

The seasoned diplomats of different capitalist countries and the bourgeois newspapers have correctly understood that this action of desisting right now from openly supporting the freedom struggle of Bangladesh and the efforts by them to maintain a friendly relation with Pakistan in various ways do in no way mean opposing the freedom movement. And as because they too have realized it they are showing over-enthusiasm over Bangladesh and are frantically trying to find out a kind of settlement on the Bangladesh issue as quickly as possible. Because they know if the freedom struggle runs along the path of a protracted armed battle, then in the near future there would be emergence of revolutionary leadership in the freedom movement by ousting the moderate leadership and it would ultimately come under the influence of China. And because they understand this, they are so concerned. Otherwise, that the imperialist-capitalist powers are opposing liberation struggle everywhere is known to all. But the different capitalist countries are supporting the freedom fighters of Bangladesh and trying their utmost to bring about a settlement of the issue. This can have only one object; it is this that centring round Bangladesh nationalism, once the movement to attain complete independence has begun it cannot be ultimately quelled at

the present times. From many a bitter experience, they have understood this. So long as the leadership of this movement remains in the hands of a moderate like Mujibur Rahaman and his Awami League, if the independence movement could be brought to an end within that time by hastening a political settlement through transfer of power, then even after achievement of independence would it be possible for the capitalist imperialist countries to maintain relation with it in their own interest, and maybe it would also be possible to keep Bangladesh loosely connected with Pakistan. So, clearly it is the apprehension that the entire freedom movement may ultimately come under the influence of China which is at work behind all these so-called pious attempts of theirs. It is this line of thinking that has been at work behind all the activities of the rulers of different capitalist countries and the propaganda publicity being given by the bourgeois press as is becoming evident from some facts, information and opinion being expressed by foreign papers and magazines, which I am going to refer to in the hope that you will certainly understand from it how they are viewing the role of China on this issue.

The Guardian which represents British imperialist interest has advised Pakistan like this: Even if it be possible for you to suppress this present uprising, still you must not forget that this movement will raise its head again and again, so it would be a prudent act to concede to the demand for freedom and confer independence now while there is still time. That means, they want to say, it is necessary to politically settle the issue with the elected representatives of the Awami League while there is still time, before the Chinese influence increases. The idea that they hold is more or less like this: Pakistan has foolishly created the present situation. Had they conceded to Mujibur's six point demand at the very outset there would have been no ground for the emergence of a situation as it is obtaining today. But when there has been an eruption, there is no escape from the situation. Now if Pakistan again behaves obdurately, then not only independence would have to be conceded, there will be no kind of relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Perhaps another Vietnam would be created and the whole of Bangladesh would come under the influence of China. So this cannot be in any way to the liking of any capitalist country, including the USA.

It is in their own self-interest that such bourgeois newspapers are trying to correctly grasp the role of China on this issue. Addressing Pakistan, *The Guardian*, a trusted representative of British imperialism, further told: You say that China is your friend, but if your generals are

surprised to find the freedom fighters fighting with Chinese automatic rifles tomorrow and start pondering how the freedom fighters have procured those Chinese automatic rifles despite China being a friend, then we can't help calling them 'idiot generals'.

A newspaper of Paris, too, has tried to impress upon Pakistan almost in the same vein: You think that as China is your friend so China will stand behind you against the freedom fighters of Bangladesh, evidently, you have not at all gauged the politics that China is pursuing. The same newspaper has remarked in a jocular vein in one place: China is assuring you about Bangladesh that 'Don't worry, we are behind you, if you are endangered by anybody we shall see to it. If you who belong to the Pakistani ruling circle place faith in such kind of assurances, then your condition too will be much like the proverbial patient'. The story which they have mentioned runs like this – when a patient suffering from heart trouble went to a doctor, the doctor was assuring him: "Don't worry, I shall cure your liver." This newspaper of Paris has tried to warn Pakistani ruling clique: the assurances given by China to you about Bangladesh are much like the assurance given by that doctor.

In *The Statesman*, too, a foreign correspondent has recently penned a feature titled, Chinese Riddle. There, too, he has tried to bring home the same point in a roundabout way. Although a bourgeois journalist he could by no means subscribe to the view that despite various Chinese assurances to Yahya, the present role of China on the question of Bangladesh is one of opposing the freedom struggle. Rather, he is of the opinion that if the freedom struggle there takes the form of a protracted armed struggle, then it is China that will help Bangladesh most. The gentleman has advised Pakistan to be on guard for that while there is still time.

Jayaprakash Narayan, the Sarvodaya leader, by apprehending that the Chinese hand is behind the freedom struggle of Bangladesh, has also tried to convince the state heads of different countries of the world that unless they are able to effect an immediate settlement of the Bangladesh issue by exerting pressure on Pakistan, there is every possibility of Bangladesh falling under the complete influence of China in the near future.

So, it is seen, that starting from the British, French and American newspapers and journals, even Soviet Union all are trying to impress upon Pakistan the same point. Everyone's apprehension is: there is every possibility that the whole freedom movement may ultimately

come under the influence of China. Notwithstanding all these developments what is very striking is that the so-called revolutionaries and Marxist-Leninists of our country are not in a position at all to realize this. On the other hand, the Indian government which is indulging in progressive verbiage these days and spreading verbal fireworks in support of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh – they too have either not been able to grasp this, or else, despite being fully aware of the Chinese attitude to the freedom struggle are conducting motivated propaganda against China to thwart the increasing Chinese influence on the movement.

In this context my appeal to the Government of India: if they are really desirous of providing effective and selfless support and help to the freedom fighters of Bangladesh then it is China even more than the Soviet Union that can be the only reliable force for India in this regard. Hence, rebuilding friendly relationship with China should be considered as a most urgent task for effectively supporting the freedom struggle of Bangladesh and for preserving the independence of Bangladesh even after attainment of freedom – leaving aside the question of India's own progress and development.

So frankly speaking, the type of propaganda against China going on in our country, that China is on the side of Pakistan against the freedom struggle – I find this difficult to believe.

I think it necessary to discuss a little about the role of the Indian government on the question of the present freedom struggle in Bangladesh. For, whatever support we may have as the people of India for this freedom struggle of Bangladesh, how much help can we provide compared to their present need without any effective role of the Indian government? What we can do is, if the freedom fighters of Bangladesh so want and if the Government of India allows us to go, then we can send thousands of volunteers there. They can cross the border and can fight and can mobilize resources, collecting and handing over funds and medicines. In the liberation struggle along with the freedom fighters, they can lay down their lives. But the help that is most needed today by the freedom fighters of Bangladesh is the effective help for building up an invincible liberation army with innumerable armed detachments, equipped as guerilla fighters. The people of our country cannot effectively provide what is necessary for these. That can only be provided by the Indian state, the Indian government.

So, we as the people of India have to be vigilant so that in the matter of providing help and assistance to Bangladesh there is no perfunctory attitude of the government to provide some help anyhow. It can never be allowed. The type of help which the freedom fighters of Bangladesh need most will have to be provided if it is needed. Risk, to a certain extent, we must take. But I am not in favour of taking risk in a hot-headed manner. My personal opinion is that now we can take risk to a great extent. If we do not extend help along wrong lines, if we do not do that suffering from any misconception or with any ulterior motive, then to my mind in the present situation we can take a lot of risk. Apprehensions are being expressed from some quarters that in an eventuality China may join hands with Pakistan against us, but such talks are evidently inconsequential. That China is really against this movement and is on the side of Pakistan – I don't believe this at all. It is impossible for me to believe this. My thinking on this is not like that of the other parties. I have found by minutely observing that the language of China's utterances on this issue — though of a different type from our language — but I cannot say that China is speaking in a totally unfamiliar language. I have already made some discussion about this and highlighted certain pertinent facts and information.

If we want to make the Government of India extend exactly that kind of help which is necessary to effectively help the freedom fighters of Bangladesh then first of all the democratic movement of our country needs to be established on a firm basis centring round a definite ideology and principle. I firmly hold this to be the most urgent primary task in the matter of extending help to Bangladesh. If we can do this, then that would be a worthwhile job. The government would do its bit. Yes, we are seeing, to facilitate that no one seems to be lagging behind in running and rushing from here to there. But if our democratic movement is not on a correct footing, then our government may do many things in the name of extending help, which are not in conformity with the desire of the Indian people. Since our government is the embodiment of the interests of the monopolists, it is not the way we want to help the people of Bangladesh but instead, naturally, there is every possibility that the very expansionist desire of the monopoly class will manifest itself through its policies, and in extending help to the struggle of Bangladesh this expansionist motive is likely to work. So, the sole guarantee of getting the Government of India to extend the kind of selfless help to the cause of the people of Bangladesh in the way we want it, lies in raising the democratic movement to a higher conscious level. If the minimum standard of democratic movement is not adequately present in the country, then in the

name of supporting and helping the movement of Bangladesh the Government of India may naturally try to exercise its big power-like superintendence or try to spread its sphere of influence there to a certain extent in the interest of trade and commerce and may even try to install a puppet government in Bangladesh. In order to bring a restraining effect on such motives working behind the government help and if it is to be ensured that governmental help moves along the right direction, the unity of the left and the democratic forces has to be restored again within our country, consciousness has to be developed within the movement regarding these motives behind the government help and above all a minimum code of conduct and minimum ideological cohesion has to be developed within the democratic movement. Because although Indian capitalism is backward compared to that of the western capitalist countries, it has already been transformed into monopoly capitalism and has itself acquired imperialist character. This can be proved easily with the help of statistics. It may not have that wide dimension like the imperialist design of the western countries, but I do not accept that Indian monopoly capitalism does not have a limited expansionist desire, as just the opposite of this is being indicated by data, statistics and also theoretically.

So, I think when we are exerting pressure on the Government of India to the effect that something must be done immediately : “Do something and do it courageously! Extend help in as many ways as possible and as required !” – then, at the same time, the left and democratic forces of our country would have to be constantly vigilant as to whether the government is doing this in consonance with the aspirations of the people of our country. And the greatest guarantee for ensuring this, as I have already said, lies in unity, a minimum ideological standard in the democratic movement and a firm policy which are altogether lacking in our country today. So, it is seen that even in the matter of helping Bangladesh, the strengthening of our own democratic movement, conducting it along the right direction is of crucial importance.

But you see the Government of India has said many things expressing its sympathy towards the freedom struggle of Bangladesh. But under different pleas it has not yet accorded recognition to the independent government that the freedom fighters have formed in the meantime. The Government of India’s sole concern in according this recognition seems to be to see whether USA, UK, USSR or China do so or not. I like to ask: what prompts you, the Indian government, to hesitate so much? As far as other states are concerned, which way to see this freedom struggle

– that is their concern. It is a fact that India has certainly recognized this freedom struggle. Then why is it failing in according recognition to this independent government of Bangladesh? Giving recognition to this independent government of Bangladesh and extending every help in equipping its liberation army as an effective armed resistance force had been the bounden duty of the Indian state and government. Yet the Government of India is cleverly trying to avoid that responsibility. They are no doubt providing some money and medicines in various ways as help along with sweet words, but they seem to be afraid of openly according recognition to the independent government there and of providing arms on a large scale and if necessary military help. It seems from the attitude of the Government of India that it is perhaps thinking, if the freedom fighters are defeated and if the ruling military clique of Pakistan is able to suppress this freedom movement then its diplomatic relation with Pakistan will deteriorate. In that case the question that arises is: in extending all-out support to the independence struggle should the success-failure prospect be considered to be the determining factor by the Indian government? If that be the case then what is the necessity for them to mouth high sounding words in support of the freedom struggle? By this the Indian government is simply showing hypocrisy, resorting simply to trickery, trying simply to keep the freedom fighters under its fold. The intention is clear; if the freedom fighters are victorious then it would show off how much help India had provided to them. And if the freedom fighters are defeated, then the relation with the state of Pakistan would also remain intact; the diplomatic relation with it would not be snapped. That is the trickery. So our party considers that on the matter of extending effective help to the freedom struggle of Bangladesh no amount of appeal to the Indian government will yield any result. For that due pressure is to be exerted on the Government of India by organizing intense movement, and the people should therefore step forward in that direction.

We too, as the people of India, have many things to do in the matter of helping the freedom struggle of Bangladesh right now. We should first of all speedily create an organized volunteer corps so that we can effectively help in this freedom struggle. Those who want to work as volunteers in the freedom struggle of Bangladesh should enroll their names en masse as volunteers. Our party has already appealed to the people to form a volunteer corps. If we can build up a powerful volunteer corps then we can effectively demand of the Government of India to transform that volunteer force, ready to participate in the freedom struggle, into an armed force and to make arrangements for sending them to Bangladesh. But if this volunteer corps is

not equipped, then as some unorganized people crowding there and making a fuss we shall only create hindrance to the freedom fighters but not render any effective help to them. So the building up of this volunteer corps and making it ready in every respect is a compulsory task for us. Besides, we need to send food, clothing and medicines to help them. But along with this we have to see that this help does not fall into the hands of bad elements. Because, various types of forces are at work there. It will have to be ensured that our help properly reaches the organizations of those who are the real freedom fighters and those organization and parties which are constituents of the freedom struggle. So we would like to request those non-government organizations who are collecting money and materials in aid of the freedom struggle of Bangladesh to send the aid preferably through a political party or through the government of our country in case they have no faith in political parties.

Lastly, I consider it necessary to examine to a certain extent the present situation of the democratic movement of our country in the context of the liberation struggle that is going on at present in Bangladesh. I think that the people participating in the democratic movement of our country and the political parties here have much to learn from this freedom struggle of Bangladesh. Because, whereas the people as well as different progressive democratic parties there are carrying on unitedly a life and death struggle against the military ruling clique, the mass movement of our country is today split because of internal squabbles. Deception has taken root within the democratic movement itself of our country. Confusion abounds in it at all levels. Moral standard, political principles, ideological standard within this democratic movement are collapsing. It is true that we conduct struggles here on various democratic demands, but we the participants forget that we have a duty and responsibility to the society too along with that struggle. The ethical standard that we reflect in all these democratic movements is that if any one is friendly to me or subscribes to my opinion, we applaud him like anything. But even if someone is a leader and fighter in the democratic movement we do not feel any qualms in abusing him in filthy language if we have even the slightest difference of opinion with him. The political principles and ethical standard within our democratic movement has come down to this level today.

In this context I wish to remind you again one thing. I discussed this point in my speeches in many a previous meeting. It is that there were many flaws and shortcomings in the freedom

movement that we conducted against British imperialism in this country. We are aware of that. During the freedom movement we failed to conduct ceaseless struggle against religious bigotry and blindness in order to develop democratic values and mindset within the society. A national feeling and patriotism free from blind religious superstitions did not guide the independence movement of our country. Rather things like religious revivalism, religious reformist outlook were mingled with the freedom movement of our country. As a result, we conducted the national freedom movement of our country on the basis of a religion-oriented nationalism. We could not hold aloft the flag of cultural and social revolution within the freedom movement. Yet even at that time we observed that before the freedom movement, because it was progressive for the country despite all its shortcomings, there was a clear-cut political ideology. A certain standard of morality and ethics guided the youth and the people participating in the mass movement then. The sons and daughters of the country fought against British rule but did not turn indisciplined. They sacrificed their lives in the face of bullets but did not indulge in misbehaving with anybody.

But today we see that the strength of the so-called communists, socialists, of those parties who claim to be big revolutionary parties has increased. Their influence over the youth and the people of the country has increased. They themselves claim this too. But we know that a revolutionary ideology by its very nature reflects higher ethical and cultural standard. So, if their ideology is really a revolutionary one, then the people who are awakened by its influence should have reflected a higher cultural and ethical standard through its magic touch. Then how to explain this degradation of cultural and ethical standard among them? Why this indiscipline and aimlessness among them? Why is such aimless reckless mentality engulfing the youth under their influence? It is true that they fight on democratic demands and raise slogans on democratic rights too, but do not feel any sense of duty and responsibility to the society. Why is such a mentality working at different levels of the democratic movements in our country? The more the strength of such so-called revolutionaries is increasing, the strength of their parties increasing, the more are indiscipline, misbehaviour, vainglory and arrogance among the youth increasing, and the ethical standard is sliding downward. Then does this not undoubtedly prove that their strength is increasing indeed, but that strength is an evil force, it does not signify increase of strength of a democratic force or real revolutionary force. Because, had there been an increase in strength of the revolutionary force then at least a new life throb, vitality should have been

generated among the people who are moving under their influence. They should have been vibrant with new principle, morality and ideology. They would have laid down their lives, but nobody could have said they were indisciplined and indulging in misbehaviour.

Till now the people who are now fighting for freedom in Bangladesh are not vocal about Marxism-Leninism, the noble revolutionary ideology. Again it may be that there are such talks within, but to us these are inaudible. Their present struggle is one for attaining national independence, which we had conducted from 1922 to 1947. There they are fighting against the enemy, making supreme sacrifices, embracing death. They themselves are dying and are killing the enemies too. But they are restrained, they are not oppressors. But in the democratic movement of our country in case of difference of opinion we abjure ethics and culture, we lack sobriety. When differences of opinion with others crop up we do not hesitate to insult people, harass people, thrash them — friend and foe alike – and behave in a most uncivilized manner.

What is the basic cause for the difference between the movement in Bangladesh and the movements in our country — I feel that also needs to be considered. It should be remembered that the creed of nationalism which was avowed as noble ideal during the freedom movement in our country – that same creed of nationalism is at work in the present freedom struggle of Bangladesh. But after acquiring political independence and establishment of a bourgeois state in our country that creed of nationalism exercises no longer any efficacious role in our social life today. It can no more imbue the people of our country. But, what the big parties known as Marxist-Leninist are propagating in the name of ideology is not Marxism-Leninism, it is only slogan mongering. We know that the kernel, the essence of any ideal, any philosophy, any noble ideology is ingrained in its moral standard, in the cultural and ethical standard. Marxism is a noble revolutionary ideology. Consequently the essence, the kernel of this noblest revolutionary ideology too lies ingrained in its cultural and ethical standard. Hence, if the ethical standard of what the so-called big communist parties of our country tout as Marxist ideology has descended to a level that is lower than the standard of those who are fighting for freedom of Bangladesh, then the pertinent question is: where will the mass movement conducted by them lead our country to? When the leaders and cadres of big political parties seek to justify the correctness of their political line citing instances of their widening mass support, I would like to remind them one or two incidents of history. At times it may so happen that thousands of people rally under

the slogan of the pseudo-revolutionaries, even the reactionaries. The people get confused, the whole country is emotionally surcharged – such incidents occurred many times in history. Once a man like Hitler had got the people of entire Germany, from the working class to the intelligentsia, frenzied with the slogan of progress, the ‘dawn of a new era’. But this sea of humanity which once thronged behind Hitler – does it prove that Hitler rallied the masses behind the cause of Germany’s real development, advancement, socialism and progress? Or is it not the truth that Hitler confused the people of Germany with slogans of progress, even if temporarily? At that time keeping in mind the low standard of public consciousness Hitler very deceitfully raised some such slogans in Germany to which the entire people of Germany gravitated by thinking that to be the only course for advancement of Germany, for progress of the working class, having failed to understand the implications of the slogans. As a result, catastrophe befell the whole of Germany.

What was the condition of the communist party of Indonesia? Before the uprising of reactionary forces in a small country like Indonesia, almost the size of Bangladesh, the total number of members alone of the communist party there was three million. After inducting their own people to the armed forces, police and at different levels of government administration, the communist party there was thinking that they had almost completed the task of revolution. What did they actually do? They played with revolution. Those who want to accomplish revolution by aligning with the capitalist or imperialist state structure and by using its administrative machinery, what they do in the name of revolution is to expose the entire party to the exploiting state machinery. Such an inconceivable incident happened in Indonesia. So when the tide of reaction came, the military turned against them. Then the entire party got smashed up in the face of the onslaught of state power. Because, as a result of exposing the party to the state nothing of the party was hidden from the state machine. This was the major flaw, speaking in the technical sense, or in other words the manner in which they wanted to accomplish revolution — from that point of view the main failing.

Their second failing was that along with the increase in strength of the party, they did not gauge at what level lay the cultural and ethical standard of the people, how much was their sense of responsibility and duty to the society, and they did not make continuous efforts to uplift the same. In our country too when the workers of the so-called big revolutionary parties parade on

streets, shout slogans and make various gesticulations in a highly objectionable way and resort to obscene talks and use of abusive language in the event of some arguments or disagreements, it at once reveals the level of the ethical standard of this democratic force. If the ethical-cultural standard of people and the party workers remains at this level, then it should be remembered that those workers and masses who at one time install these so-called revolutionary parties in power by raising slogans in elections and at another time bring them down, they may any day, coming in contact with another political current, become a powerful weapon in the hands of reaction, as happened in Indonesia.

These so-called big revolutionary parties are not even for once thinking of taking lesson from history, how the hundreds of thousands of people who used to assemble at the call of the Indonesian communist party got lost at an extremely adverse situation faced by the party. They were the multitude of people who had stood behind the Indonesian communist party in meetings, rallies and processions carrying banners and raising slogans. But when the storm of reaction broke out, when the state power combining with the religious fanatics went out to annihilate the party, it was found that the larger section of the population of the whole country stood behind the state power against the three million communists. The communist party there never bothered to gauge the mindset, the direction of the thinking of that larger section of the population outside their three million members. Because, they became visibly smug with the strength of three millions. They never cared that however large their party membership might be, it was a minority compared to the vast masses of the whole country.

This is why all the great revolutionaries taught that a revolutionary party must always keep in view that compared to the greater mass of the people of the country those who actively participate in the struggle with the revolutionary party in a most effective manner during revolutionary movement, constitute a minority. While conducting the revolutionary movement no revolutionary party can afford to disregard the mental orientation and direction of thinking of this vast mass of the people. It is true that as because this greater mass of the people is not organized, it shrinks in fear in the face of rallies of hundreds of thousands, it cannot build up any effective resistance even if it wishes to. But it is also true that unless the mass movement is conducted in the correct fashion and if shortcomings and flaws persist within the democratic movement, then this mass of people develop resentment in them against it. If a party

is not able to gauge the mentality of the people in time and does not correct its policy, conduct and method of work accordingly, then unknown to it this resentment among the masses gradually goes on spreading out, and some day at an opportune hour the masses throw out that party in the face of a violent storm.

It is this danger that has appeared today in the mass movement of our country, too. So we need to view the freedom struggle of Bangladesh in a greater perspective. We have to take lessons from the freedom struggle of Bangladesh in order to free our minds, free ourselves from obliviousness of our great heritage, from self-conceit, and get rid of cultural degradation and for advancing the standard of the mass movement of our country. If we can do this, then that will help in a great way in properly conducting the democratic movement of our country in the coming days.

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certain points on the role of China
from another address at a gathering
organized by DYO on July 11, 1971.*

Notes

1. The then Prime Minister of Malaysia.
2. President, Pakistan.