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July 8, 1971

Dear Comrade Kolpe,

I am enclosing a Xerox copy of a letter dated July 5 sent to me by Comrade Tariq Ali, together with my reply. These are self-explanatory.

I should very much like to learn your opinion of the criticisms leveled by Comrade Tariq against the article "Bengali Liberation Army Fighting Partisan War," which was published in the July 5 Intercontinental Press.

Comradely yours,  
s/Joe

cc: Ernest  
Tariq

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The Red Mole, 182, Pentonville Road, London N.1

5 July 1971

Joseph Hansen  
Intercontinental Press  
New York

Dear Comrade Jo:

I am writing to discuss ICP's coverage of Bengal which relates very directly to our work with Bengali comrades both in England and in Bangla Desh. I realise that you have a right not to publish the article which I sent you and which was published in The Red Mole. I'm sure your reasons were good ones. But when you publish an unsigned article entitled; BENGALI LIBERATION ARMY FIGHTING PARTISAN WAR (ICP/5.7.71) then one is forced to register both an objection and a protest, particularly as one assumes that this represents the viewpoint of revolutionary Marxism (i.e. the FI). Apart from the fact that the article is totally descriptive and based on hearsay and gossip (some of which I supplied Kolpe, but told him that it was not confirmed when I was in India), what is really distressing is the derisory way in which it deals with the East Bengal Communist Party (Allaudin's group): "who seems to have some base among the peasantry....." This is a downright slander. The EBCP as we correctly described in The Red Mole is the largest of the groups, was engaged in preparations for the armed struggle months before even the elections took place, has at least 2000 armed guerrillas and is the strongest component of the newly-created NLF.

Articles such as this, based on inaccurate information really harm our work as they paint us out to be politically sloppy and inadequate. It would be good to discuss this whole question with you when you next visit Europe, because we are engaged in serious work with precisely the people who are dismissed in the article.....

Incidentally I hope that you will be able to find some space for my article (The Red Mole was sent to you especially and I sent the article separately as well). Even though you might not think it represents the viewpoint of rev. marxism I can assure you it is useful and necessary for our work.

Fraternally,  
s/Tariq

cc: Ernest Mandel

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July 8, 1971

Tariq Ali  
c/o The Red Mole  
London, England

Dear Comrade Tariq:

Thank you for your letter of July 5 which raises the question of how Intercontinental Press has handled the events in Bangla Desh.

I would make the following observations:

1. You do not complain about any lack of material on this subject in Intercontinental Press. The truth is, of course, that this would be difficult. Since last March when the upsurge and subsequent slaughter occurred, every single issue except one has carried at least one and more often two articles on the events there. A goodly proportion of them were written by our comrades in India, a fact of which I think the world Trotskyist movement should be especially appreciative.

2. You do not complain about the general line of these articles. From this I gather that you would agree that by and large they have expressed the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism, whether signed or not.

3. You voice only two complaints: (a) That Intercontinental Press did not carry out your request to reprint an article, "For a Red Bengal," signed by you which was published in the Red Mole. (b) That instead Interncontinental Press published an article datelined from Calcutta which you assume was written by Comrade Kolpe although he did not sign it. (We consider a datelined article to be the equivalent of a signed article --- what the British press features as "from our correspondent.") You condemn this article, saying that "Articles such as this, based on inaccurate information really harm our work as they paint us out to be politically sloppy and inadequate."

On the first point, you imply that I judged your article not to represent the viewpoint of revolutionary Marxism or not to be "useful and necessary" for your work. I do not know why you entertain such suspicions. In the April 26 issue of Intercontinental Press you will find an article, "The Spark That Could Set India Ablaze," signed by you that I would regard as expressing the same line as the article published in the Red Mole, "For a Red Bengal." You did not send us that article. It did not appear in the Red Mole. We found it in the Irish Times and reprinted it from there because we thought it was timely, informative, and in correspondence with the general position of our movement. This ought to show that no prejudgment exists here on articles bearing your signature.

We did not reprint your article "For a Red Bengal" for the simple reason that we received a series of articles from India on the developments in Bangla Desh, many of them written as eyewitness accounts or interviews on the scene. For once we were faced with an embarrassment of riches and we had to choose.

In such a situation I followed the old rule of revolutionary journalism -- if all other considerations are equal, give the preference to the story from the field.

Whatever practical requirements were involved in your work were taken care of, I assumed, by publication of your article in the Red Mole.

As to your differences with Comrade Kolpe, I had received no word on this from either you or from the United Secretariat. Your criticisms thus came as a considerable surprise to me.

You will appreciate that I want to learn Comrade Kolpe's views on this. I am therefore sending him a copy of your letter together with a copy of this reply.

Fraternally,  
s/Joe

cc: Kolpe  
Ernest

## Despite Lack of Weapons

# Bengali Liberation Army Fighting Partisan War

Calcutta

The partisans known as the Mukti Fouj in East Bengal are estimated at about 30,000 men at present. Of these at least 20,000 are former personnel of the East Pakistani Rifles (EPR), the Bengal Regiment (BR), and the auxiliary forces like the police, Ansars, and Mujjahids. About 10,000 newly trained guerrillas have joined the Fouj since April—mostly students and youth who crossed into India as refugees. Another 30,000 guerrillas are under training.

Four former majors of the EPR and BR are providing the general command for the Fouj: Majors Zia-ur-Rehman (Chittagong-Comilla region), Usman (Nadia-24 Paaragana region), Khaled Musharaf (Meghalaya-Assam region), and Shafi Ullah (North Bengal region). The entire border of Bangla Desh is divided into fifteen sectors for operational and recruitment purposes.

The Fouj is not in physical possession of any big area in East Bengal. It has withdrawn into the borders for tactical reasons. Its main strategy is of guerrilla action—hit and run. Since the Pakistani army, estimated at about 60,000 combat troops, is concentrated only in major cities, cantonments, and towns, the Fouj has easy access to vast rural areas. There are about 62,000 villages in Bangla Desh, of which about 30,000 have been fully or partially destroyed by the Pakistani army.

The Fouj commanders claim that with their present strength and equipment they can easily capture some districts like Sylhet, Comilla, Mymensingh, or Kushtia, but they cannot retain control of these areas against a concentrated attack by the Pakistani army without heavy mortars, artillery, and anti-aircraft guns to meet aerial bombings.

The Mukti Fouj has the support of more than 80 percent of the Bengali population despite the attempts by the army to strike terror among the people. This support is the main strength of the Fouj. The Pakistani army is surrounded by an entirely hostile population of Bengali-speaking people. Non-Bengalis who might help the army constitute less than 5 percent of

the population, but are concentrated in big urban centres.

The army is subjected to constant harassment by guerrillas. A number of soldiers are killed by partisans almost daily. Means of communication between different districts have been disrupted. Agricultural and industrial operations have almost come to a standstill. The army has failed to create even the semblance of a civil administration with the help of quislings.

Judging from a purely military point of view, the Fouj has enough strength and organisational sweep to win the liberation war, provided: (1) it is able to replenish its stock of arms and ammunition, and (2) India continues to provide shelter and food supplies to the guerrillas. The Fouj commanders, who owe allegiance to the Awami League politically, are afraid that the five million refugees who have crossed into India might create political problems for them with the Indian authorities.

The Fouj can establish a base in "liberated territory" inside East Bengal if it is supplied with an adequate number of fighter planes and anti-aircraft guns, which they do not possess at present. They have small weap-

ons, some supplied by India and the bulk captured from the Pakistani army. If the Bangla Desh government is recognised by India or any of the "major powers," the character of the freedom struggle will change rapidly. But the fighting forces do not feel demoralised because of the apathy shown by various governments in relation to their struggle.

The Awami League of Sheik Mujibur Rahman still commands the support of the majority of the people in Bangla Desh, although most of the leaders of the party elected to the National and Provincial Assemblies fled the country after the army operations began. Some of them, including Mujib, are in prison.

As a party committed to parliamentary methods, the Awami League was totally unprepared for the situation created by the brutal armed confrontation. It was not at all acquainted with the techniques of partisan warfare, unlike parties such as the Communist party of East Bengal [CPEB] (pro-Moscow), which has been banned since 1952; the leftist National Awami party (NAP) led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed; the National Awami party led by Maulana Bhashani; and the

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July 5, 1971

various Maoist groups (that have broken with Maulana Bhashani), which have worked underground for many years.

All these parties are actively participating in the resistance movement. Maulana Bhashani, once considered pro-Peking (though not a Marxist), is unconditionally supporting the leadership of Sheik Mujib. The CPEB, led by Moni Singh (recently liberated by Mukti Foj from Rajshahi jail), and the NAP of Professor Ahmed have been demanding the formation of a "National Liberation Front" of all the partisan forces. The proposal for a front is being resisted by the bourgeois leadership of the Awami League so far, on the ground that it is the only democratically elected leadership of the people that could constitute a government.

Inside Bangla Desh, however, all-party resistance committees, known as "Sangharsh Samities," have been formed at different levels. Initially only the supporters of the Awami League were allowed to join the Mukti Foj, but now all those who want to join are encouraged.

The Indian government preferred to deal only with the Awami League, for obvious political reasons. New Delhi's policy has been that of "containing" the Bangla Desh revolution within the framework of bourgeois property relations.

There are three known "pro-Chinese" groups in East Bengal. Until recently, all of them were working inside the NAP led by Maulana Bhashani. In fact, Mohamed Toaha, leader of the Maoist group known as the Communist party of East Pakistan (Marxist-Leninist) [CPEP(ML)], the counterpart of the Communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist), was the general secretary of Bhashani's NAP. His group broke with the parent organisation when Bhashani decided to put up some candidates to contest the 1970 general elections. Toaha favoured boycotting the elections.

The Toaha group appears to be taking a "neutralist" stand in the present war. It has not openly supported the Yahya regime, as the Chinese government has done. The group characterises Sheik Mujib as an American agent and a bourgeois leader, and has accused him of sabotaging the class struggle by raising the secessionist demand for an independent Bangla Desh. The Toaha group is said to be active in Sylhet and My-

mensingh districts in the north, where Bhashani is also powerful.

There are two other pro-Chinese groups, both calling themselves Communist party of East Bengal—one led by Matin Allauddin, a 42-year-old peasant leader who seems to have some base among the peasantry and industrial workers in the Pabna area. The other group is led by Kazi Jafer and Rashid Khan Menon, and has some influence among workers, but more among students in Dacca and Chittagong districts.

The Jafer-Menon group controls the Chhatra (Student Union) of East Pakistan, as opposed to a rival Student Union led by Mrs. Motia Choudhary (belonging to the CPEB). The largest student organisation, the Chhatra League, is led by the Awami League. Both of these one-time Maoist groups are now extremely critical of the Chinese leadership and are supporting the liberation war. Political differences dividing these groups are not clearly known as yet.

As an old colleague of Suhrawardy and Fazlul Haque, Bhashani commands great popularity among the peasantry. But he has no organisation of his own, apart from those built by the Maoists who were with him. The general secretary of his NAP, Mashi-ur-Rehman, for example, is considered to be an opportunist not trusted by his own followers. Bhashani's friendly relations with the Chinese were largely influenced by the Maoist groups who were working with him during a period when the Chinese were openly fraternising with Islamabad—especially under Ayub Khan. After the 1968-69 popular upsurge, when Yahya stepped in to replace Ayub, this relationship changed.

By the eve of the 1970 election, Bhashani broke with his Maoist supporters and called for an "independent Bangla Desh" when Sheik Mujib and his Awami League were not prepared to go beyond the demand for autonomy.

After the army launched its offensive on March 25, Bhashani publicly criticised the Chinese support to Yahya Khan. He wrote a personal letter to Mao Tsetung, demanding that the Chinese support the liberation war of Bangla Desh. Some of Bhashani's supporters believe that China has not specifically condemned the liberation movement and that the Chinese leadership might even now change their

stand if a new leadership emerges in Bangla Desh.

The leaders of the Communist party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] in West Bengal have established contacts with Bhashani and are supposed to be assisting his supporters. The Maulana is understood to have assured the Indian authorities that he would not seek any relations with left parties in India. He is now staying somewhere near Calcutta along the Bangla Desh border.

As a regional bourgeois party opposed to communism and communists, the Awami League enjoyed good relations with U. S. imperialism, which has big stakes in East Bengal. American capital investments in the region are estimated at 30,000,000,000 rupees [7.5 rupees equal US\$1].

It has even been reported that Mujib was in constant contact with the American consulate in Dacca during his negotiations with Yahya in January and March. The U. S. officials are said to have a tape recording of the Yahya-Mujib talks. The Americans supposedly gave Mujib every assurance that they would stand by him in the event the negotiations broke down.

When the talks collapsed March 25 and the masses chose independence for Bangla Desh, the U. S. government evidently changed its policy. Washington was not prepared to antagonise Islamabad at that juncture without knowing the future relationship of forces. This has caused a great deal of bitterness among Mujib's supporters, who think that American advice restrained him from countering Yahya's manoeuvres.

Mujib's military experts had two plans. One was to arrest Yahya, Bhutto, and others and to hold them as hostages during negotiations for the withdrawal of the Pakistani army. The second was to capture the Chittagong region with all its military installations and supplies of arms and ammunition (including the ship M.V. Swat, which had anchored in Chittagong harbour) on March 23, when a Bengali officer, Brigadier Mazumdar, was in command of the military in the region. Both these plans were rejected by Mujib, supposedly on the advice of the Americans.

When one meets Awami League leaders today, they ask one question repeatedly: "What are the Americans doing?" There is a great deal of bitterness and disappointment among

them over the U. S. role.

They had been led to believe that the Soviet Union and China, as "communist countries," could not be trusted. Soviet President Podgorny's statement condemning the genocide has been well received by the Awami League leaders, but the leftist parties, including the CPEB, are disillusioned that the Soviet Union has not extended any material support in the form of

arms. Moscow's reluctance to recognise the Bangla Desh government is also criticised.

The situation along the border is very bad, with more than 5,000,000 refugees having crowded into camps in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura. Already there is a great deal of resentment in the border states against the refugees being settled in their midst. The resentment is partic-

ularly vocal in Meghalaya and Assam, where anti-Bengali sentiments are predominant. There are fears of communal and language riots breaking out in these states. This is one of the reasons that compelled the Indian government to shift the refugees to other states. The reactionary capitalist parties in India are trying to give a communal twist to the whole situation. □

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New York, N.Y.  
July 14, 1971

Dear Comrade Kolpe,

The comrades in Brussels forwarded a Xerox copy of an English translation of an editorial which they note as having "appeared in 'Larai,' the Bengali journal of the Socialist Workers' Party, Indian Section of the Fourth International." It is entitled "The Future of Bangla Desh and West Bengal."

I assume that you are already familiar with this item. If by chance you are not I can airmail you a copy.

There are three paragraphs in particular that I should like to call to your attention:

"The tasks which confront the revolutionary left forces in Bengal as a whole therefore come into sharp prominence:

"In Bangla Desh (Eastern Bengal) the most important task is laying the foundations for a protracted people's war against the West Pakistani Army. This can only be done by a process of intensive selection and the establishment of mobile guerrilla units consisting of trained fighters and political cadres. The most important job which confronts the latter is establishing a degree of confidence among the masses, who have become extremely disillusioned and very bitter as a result of the Awami League's inability to lead the struggle. This can be done by a process of selective sabotage and terrorism designed to bolster the morale of the workers and poor peasants. Thus the assassination of Gen. Tikka Khan and other military commanders carried out after intensive planning and preparation, could have an extremely positive effect on the masses. The liquidation of all Bengali politicians who collaborate with the military regime could be carried on simultaneously and Fazlul Quader Chowdbury (a former Cabinet Minister in Ayub's regime) and Ghulam Azam (a leader of the neo-fascist Jamat-i-Islami) are the two scoundrels whose death at the hands of the liberation forces would be welcomed by the Bangali masses as a whole.

"Of course we do not advocate individual terror in isolation. But no one can deny that it would take place with the backing of 75 million people whose rights have been brutally taken away from them, but even more importantly, we consider that it is essential if a start is to be made on constructing a revolutionary army based on the support of the masses. Individual terror in this case, far from isolating the vanguard from the masses, would draw the two closer. The base would thus be laid for a long-term struggle, the leadership of which would, from the very beginning, be in the hands of the revolutionary left, a crucial factor which would pave the way for a Socialist Bangla Desh as a new base against U.S. Imperialism in this region."

Does this represent the line of the Indian section? It appears to me to stand in polar opposition to the line laid down by the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers' Party of India, particularly in differentiating from positions held by the Naxalites and others under Maoist influence. It also appears to follow quite a different line from the one reflected in your articles on the developments in Bangla Desh.

It is quite clear that Yahya Khan's decision to employ genocide in a desperate gamble to maintain his grip on Bangla Desh will stir up mass resistance on a scale that will surely defeat the occupation force and eventually bring down the military dictatorship itself. That is one thing. For our small group to advocate (and try to practice?) assassination of designated figures is something else again.

I would greatly appreciate hearing from you about this -- the reasons for such proposals and especially whether they represent a change in the line of the Indian section.

Separately I am sending you by airmail materials that you would ordinarily receive after some delay. There are two items. One is International Information Bulletin No. 4, which is just off the press. The other is a copy of a letter from the Political Committee of the American SWP to the United Secretariat. These are self-explanatory. After studying them, any comments you might have to offer would be welcome.

With warmest regards,  
Joe