

# SWARAJYA

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## THE CALL OF HUMANITY

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It is now four weeks since the civil war in East Bengal started. As all foreign correspondents were expelled soon after the hostilities began and the press there has been wholly suppressed, it is not easy to have a clear picture of the course of the civil war and the resulting position at present. But sufficient reliable information has been available to arrive at some tentative conclusions.

The Pakistan army in East Bengal appears to have achieved an all-time record in indiscriminate violence and mass shooting of men, women and children. It is difficult to imagine how the military officers and their men could have so completely forgotten that they were in a country which they claimed to be part of Pakistan and were dealing with people who were co-citizens and mostly co-religionists. It is even more inconceivable that they could imagine that such terrorism will be easily forgotten and that a military victory would enable the rulers of Pakistan to re-establish their authority. The moral and emotional gulf between West Pakistan and East Bengal seems to have been deliberately made unbridgeable by the barbarism of the West Pakistan army.

It is, I am afraid, equally evident, that it is not in the power of the followers of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman to defeat the Pakistan

army and establish their independent government. Much has been made of the difficulties of food supplies, communications and logistics but there is no room for thinking that an army will starve so long as there is any food which can be seized by force. So long as West Pakistan is able to maintain the supply of arms and equipment to its fighting forces in East Bengal, the Pakistan Air Force and the Navy can be expected to keep the supply lines operating. With the Chinese help and the probable assistance of other countries some of which are Muslim, the Pakistan army may be expected to maintain its hold on many towns and airfields and the Chittagong port.

Therefore, the immediate prospect seems to be a prolonged civil war which will completely ruin the economy of East Bengal where the people have perhaps the lowest standard of life in the world.

While lakhs of people may have lost their lives in the civil war, with the onset of the monsoon, two far worse enemies, namely, famine and disease, will enter the field. As a special correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, it was my painful lot to be an eye-witness to the terrible Bengal famine of 1943. About fifteen lakhs of people died then not because food was not available in the country but because it could not be taken

to the starving people. During the monsoons, the rivers Meghna and Padma and their innumerable branches and tributaries make inter-communication between villages and towns and often even between parts of the same village impossible except by boats. People in one village may starve while food is available in a neighbouring village a few miles away. There should be no surprise if, unless some effective arrangements could be made to provide relief to the people of East Bengal, millions die.

While the whole civilized world will have to take responsibility for such a disaster, a special responsibility rests on four countries, namely, the US, the USSR, the UK and India. All the four have expressed their sincere sympathies to the people of East Pakistan. The time has come when some concrete action has to be taken. It is today in the power of the US, the USSR and the UK to bring sufficient political and economic pressure on Pakistan to halt the military operations at least temporarily and allow recognized aid organizations to provide food, clothing and medical relief to the people of East Bengal. It may be recalled that they were able to call a halt to the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965.

If these three Powers act together, they may be able to arrive

at some compromise solution by which a minimum federation or a confederation can be arranged. Though the followers of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman have proclaimed an independent Bangla Desh, set up a provisional government and are busy seeking international recognition and assistance, it is more than likely that they will accept some reasonable arrangement which will ensure them effective autonomy in East Bengal.

The position of India is undoubtedly extremely difficult and delicate. Many responsible persons like Mr Chagla, Dr Deshmukh and Mr Jaya Prakash Narayan have advocated immediate recognition of the new Bangla Desh Government. If India were not such an immediate neighbour to both West Pakistan and East Bengal, such action would be legitimate but in the present circumstances, recognition of Bangla Desh is bound to be followed by a breakdown of diplomatic relations and possibly outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan. China may welcome such a development. It will also be morally impossible to recognize the Bangla Desh Government and refuse to supply arms, ammunition and other requirements. Therefore, the only thing that India can do is to keep herself ready to provide massive relief to East

Pakistan and support all measures that may be taken by the three Great Powers who alone can deal with the matter with any degree of success.

There will be universal regret that the United Nations and its Secretary-General, U Thant, should have taken refuge under the technical plea that the affair of East Bengal is a domestic problem of Pakistan. Neither South Africa, nor Rhodesia, nor even Portugal has been guilty of such cruelty and terrorism as the West Pakistan Army in East Bengal. If the UN can shut its eyes to the fates of millions whose only crime was that they exercised their franchise freely for their own autonomy, there should be no wonder if the United Nations ceased to have any kind of moral authority.

Today, it is not the political fortunes of Pakistan or East Bengal that is the main issue. It is whether the call of humanity and the need to save millions of unfortunate men, women and children of East Bengal from famine, disease and death should be heard or ignored. It is to be hoped that the people and the Governments of the US, the USSR and the UK will rise to the occasion and try to avert the great disaster that threatens East Bengal in the coming months.

## THE SWATANTRA PARTY

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

THE PAKISTAN civil war which continues in all its severity is the gravest issue before Asia and before India in particular. The internal affairs of the Swatantra Party are of trifling importance in the face of the perils before India as a result of the Pakistan conflict around her. Sri Santhanam in his front-page article, dealing with all the issues in that direction justly and comprehensively and there is nothing that can be usefully added by me to what he has said. I may not therefore be found guilty of want of a sense of proportion if I deal in this issue with the Swatantra Party, its mission, its policies and its proclaimed views on administrative matters.

I am not happy that Mr Masani could not be induced to withdraw his letter of resignation. But I am glad Mr Dandekar has undertaken to take his place until a new President is elected in the course of a few months when all vacancies in the organization will have been filled up. The public should not imagine that Mr Masani's resignation is due to a breakdown of the Swatantra Party and its significance. On the contrary, the resolution of the General Council on the party's programme properly studied together with the fundamental principles announced at the time the party was founded ten years ago, should convince the public that the policies and programmes

advocated by the Swatantra Party are the only policies and programmes that will suit and benefit the vast mass of the people of India whoever may be the authority in charge of affairs and whatever be the name or the names of the party or parties commanding confidence in Parliament. Employment on the widest scale is what the nation requires. The production of big cars or small cars will not serve this purpose. Open air employment if I may give this brief name to what has been set out in the resolution of the Swatantra Party is the only course that will drive poverty and hunger and disease out of the country. Socialism based on the corrupt permit-licence-raj is bunkum and fraud. The essence of what the Swatantra Party has always stood for and what has been substantially re-affirmed in the recent General Council meeting is maximum freedom for the people, and competition in productive industries and minimum power for those enjoying official authority, the expenditure of public funds in providing open air employment for the large mass of the people, leaving factory employment to private enterprise and the reduction of government-managed factory enterprises to the barest minimum including reform in the management of those concerns already annexed to government management and which have to continue in such management.

The so-called programmes announced by parties sitting in Opposition carry no meaning unless indeed the parties either singly or in coalition are in a position to oust the ruling group. Otherwise, these Opposition party programmes including that of the Swatantra Party's are mere instruments of education, whether of the government in power or of the people in order to make the parliamentary system a reality instead of being a mockery of it as it is today.

The policies and the programmes advocated by the Swatantra Party must govern India if she is not to succumb to the machinations of the communists or become a helpless victim of anarchy.