

INDIA CAUGHT IN THE TURMOIL

REACTION IN INDIA

Popular Support

The prospect of the establishment of a democratically elected, representative government in Pakistan after December 1970 elections was a welcome development from the point of view of India. It was thought that with a popular government installed in Islamabad, the chances of good neighbourly relations would brighten. The land-slide victory of the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the election was even more heartening to the people of India. The Sheikh and his Party "stood for the values which we ourselves cherish, the values of democracy, the values of secularism and the values of socialism"(1).

Naturally, Indians were shocked when Gen Yahya Khan scuttled the democratic process to deprive the Awami League of its rightful claim to form the Government and resorted to a brutal suppression of the people. Bound as they were by geographical, historical, cultural and linguistic ties with the East Bengalees, Indians of almost all shades of opinion reacted instantly and spontaneously.

In Delhi on 27 March, demonstrations were organised by several political parties, e.g., Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee, Forward Block, and others. Demonstrating before the Pak High Commission, the protesters demanded immediate withdrawal of Pakistani forces from "Bangladesh". The demonstrating students in Calcutta went in a procession to the office of the Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan and burnt an effigy of Gen Yahya Khan. Public meetings were held at Sapru House, Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and other places. Students, academics and other intellectuals condemned the atrocities committed by Gen Yahya Khan's government. The students met the Prime Minister and demanded categorical Indian support to the people of East Bengal(2).

The Working Committee of the Congress(R) passed a resolution expressing its "deep anguish at the brutal suppression of unarmed, defenceless people of East Bengal", and solemnly pledged itself "to do whatever lies within its power to mitigate their sufferings"(3).

In Delhi, on 10 April, an all-party preparatory

committee was formed to mobilise political, military, and economic support for Bangladesh(4).

The Members of Parliament set aside all political differences and with one voice expressed their solidarity with the people of East Bengal. Sardar Swaran Singh, Minister of External Affairs, making a statement in Rajya Sabha as well as Lok Sabha on 27 March, on development in East Bengal, remarked that the Government of India could not but be "gravely concerned" at the events and said: "Our hearts go out in sympathy to the people who are undergoing great suffering"(5).

In the Rajya Sabha, during the short discussion that followed the above statement, CPI leader Bhupesh Gupta, said: "Our sympathies and our hearts go out to the people of East Pakistan because they are fighting for democracy, fighting for their right of shaping of destiny in their own way." Other Members, too, spoke in the same vein. In Lok Sabha, participating in the discussions that followed, the CPI(M) leader, A.K. Gopalan, condemned "the brutal onslaught and military massacre" and wholeheartedly supported "the struggle of the people of Bangladesh." Prof H.N. Mukerjee (CPI), described the movement in East Bengal as "a kind of revolution almost without precedent in history." Extending support to the struggling people of East Bengal, V.K. Krishna Menon (Ind.), too, termed the "spontaneous movement" of the Bangladeshes as "a revolution which has been sanctified by the vote of the people." The Socialist leader, Samar Guha, urged the Indian Prime Minister to "act as a courageous daughter of Mother India" and "raise the banner of defending revolution in Bangladesh." The cries of woe from Bangladesh, according to A.K. Sen, (Congress-R), represented "the voice of Asia, the voice of the colonial world which is speaking out to the whole humanity for succour and help in their hour of distress and in their hour of enslavement"(6).

The Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, shared the feelings and sentiments of the Members. Intervening in the discussion in the Lok Sabha, she described the situation in East Bengal as "not merely the suppression of a movement, but it is meeting an unarmed people with tanks" and stated that "We do fully share the agony, the emotions of the House and their deep concern over these developments because we have always believed that freedom is indivisible. We have always raised our voice for those who have suffered". In a similar intervention in Rajya Sabha the same day, Indira Gandhi assured the Members that "we are no less full of sorrow and grave concern and even agony at what is heppening there"(7).

The expression of sympathy and support for suffering people of East Bengal reached its high water mark in the 31 March Resolution unanimously passed by the Parliament. The Resolution, moved by Indira Gandhi in both the Houses of Parliament, expressed "deep anguish and grave concern" at "a massive attack" unleashed by armed forces of West Pakistan against "the entire people of East Bengal with a view to suppressing their urges and aspirations".

"Situated as India is and bound as the people of the sub-continent are by centuries old ties of history, culture and tradition", the Resolution continued, "this House cannot remain, indifferent to the macabre tragedy being enacted so close to our border". The Resolution called upon "all peoples and Governments of the world to take urgent and constructive steps to prevail upon the Government of Pakistan to put an end immediately to the systematic decimation of people which amounts to genocide". In conclusion, the Resolution recorded "profound conviction that the historic upsurge of the 75 million people of East Bengal will triumph" and assured them that "their struggle and sacrifices will receive the whole hearted sympathy and support of the people of India"(8).

Popular opinion, especially in West Bengal, regarded the Indian Government's response as inadequate. Junganter (a Bengali daily from Calcutta) voiced these sentiments in editorials on 28 March (Naya Dilli Toiree Thakun - New Delhi be ready) and 11 April (Dillir Dvidha Keno - why does Delhi hesitate?). Press statement of noted West Bengal writers and intellectuals, urged greater Indian assistance to East Bengalees. The Economist (London) on 24 April quoted Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal, B.S. Nahar, as saying, "We in West Bengal recognise the Bangladesh, although the Central Government has not done so yet"(9).

A large number of political parties passed resolutions urging the Government of India to immediately accord recognition to Bangladesh. They included Samyukta Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Bhartiya Jana Sangh, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Congress (O), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam(10). The Muslim League in Kerala, Bangla Congress in West Bengal, Azad Pakhtoon Jirga-e-Hind, and all-India Samajwadi Yuvak Sabha were also among those calling upon the Government to recognise Bangladesh(11). Even in All-India Congress (R) Committee meeting on 4 April during a discussion on the resolution extending sympathy and support to the people of East Bengal,

there was a strong demand made for immediate recognition of the "Provisional" Government of Bangladesh. The demand was, however, rejected by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who spoke after the resolution was adopted(12). Swatantra Party was the only party that opposed the demand for recognition.

On 7 May, leaders of 14 opposition parties except the Swatantra, had a 3-hour meeting with the Prime Minister, wherein an overwhelming majority of them demanded immediate recognition of Bangladesh and arms aid to freedom fighters. Only the Muslim League President, Mohammed Ismail, and an independent Member of the Lok Sabha, Dr. Karni Singh, were opposed to recognition(13).

Intellectuals in the Capital, too, were in the forefront to demand an active policy from the Government with respect to the happenings in East Bengal. Within six days of the revolt there, the Indian Council of World Affairs organised a symposium in which K.Subrahmanyam, Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, stated: "What India must realise is the fact that the breakup of Pakistan is in our interest, an opportunity the like of which will never come again. ...The so-called international forum has not deterred any major power from taking action to protect its interest.... A bold initiative on our part to help the struggle in Bangladesh to end quickly and victoriously is therefore called for". The consensus at the seminar viewed the situation as "an opportunity of the century" and favoured direct intervention by India(14).

A group of 300 intellectuals, teachers, writers, journalists, dramatists, and painters, went in a procession from Sapru House, New Delhi, on 5 April, met Indira Gandhi and demanded recognition of Bangladesh. At a two-day Bihar State Conference on Bangladesh on 6 July, the widely respected Jay Prakash Narayan declared that "the country, the Government and the people are unworthy if these are not prepared for a war", implying that India should be prepared to fight Pakistan to solve the Bangladesh problem. He stressed that the "defeat of Bangladesh will be defeat of India"(15). Even Acharya Vinoba Bhave, from his secluded Paunar Ashram, gave an advice that there should be no more delay in India recognising the Bangladesh Government as that step alone could help in solving the problem of the refugees and lead to many other countries recognising Bangladesh(16).

The Delhi Metropolitan Council, in a meeting on

30 March, adopted a resolution which besides recognition, urged the Government to take the issue to the United Nations and to give all possible assistance, including arms, to the freedom fighters(17). The same day Legislative Assemblies in Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Bihar adopted similar resolutions unanimously(18). A resolution passed by the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha urged the government to recognise the "Provisional" Government and render it all possible assistance(19). The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly expressed concern "over the massacre of lakhs of people of East Pakistan" and wished them success in their struggle for freedom(20).

The demand for the recognition of Bangladesh and extending full moral, political and material help, including military assistance, to the freedom fighters was repeatedly and forcefully raised in both the Houses of the Parliament on every conceivable occasion. Some members even pleaded for military intervention to stem the flood of onrushing refugees, create conditions in Bangladesh for the return of the refugees already taking shelter in India and to stop genocide in East Pakistan. Such demands were made from all sections of the house with hardly any distinction between the members of the opposition and the treasury benches.

On 27 March itself when the External Affairs Minister made a statement on the developments in East Pakistan, V.K. Krishna Menon (Ind.) former Defence Minister, advised that the Government "should not tinker about it and take the risk of recognising that government "if" an application of request is made by the new government of East Bengal"(21). On 1 April, Sunder Singh Bhandari (J.S.) and Raj Narain (SSP) made a fervent plea not only for the recognition of the Bangladesh government but also for extending moral, material and military help to the freedom fighters. Recognition would also "bury the two-nation theory". Bhupesh Gupta, the CPI leader, supporting the demand for recognition, said that "the question of recognition of Bangladesh is the crucial question. It is the test of our life, the test of principles that we have upheld in the world. It is the test of our friendship towards the people of East Pakistan"(22). Niren Ghosh (CPI(M)) called non-recognition of Bangladesh by the Government of India an act of "treachery"(23).

M.S. Gurupadswamy (Cong '0'), leader of the opposition, argued that if the Government had responded with early recognition, it would have really helped the freedom fighters and preempted the refugee influx. Charging government "with inaction"and

"chronic complacency", he said that "it is their hesitation, their procrastination, their vacillation, looking outside always, not looking to themselves, which has caused a great damage to the freedom fighters"(24). He cautioned the government "let Tibet be not repeated in Bangladesh"(25). Atal Behari Vajpayee (JS), also favoured the recognition of an independent Bangladesh and active help to the freedom fighters(26). Shibban Lal Saksena (Ind.) advised the government to send forces to East Pakistan on what he called "a mission of mercy" in order to ensure security of the returning refugees, to end continuing genocide and to put Bangladesh government in full power. Prophetically, he said that the Government of India should not be afraid of sending the army, because "you will have to send them ultimately(27). S.G. Sardesai (CPI) was of the view that by recognising Bangladesh, the Government of India would strengthen its stand that a political solution of the problem could be reached only by an agreement with the Awami League leaders. It would also facilitate extension of military help to the freedom fighters(28).

Members belonging to various parties emphasised the point that the recognition of the Bangladesh government alone could enable the Indian government to render effective moral, material and even military help to the freedom fighters. V.K. Krishna Menon (Ind.) forcefully argued for recognition, debunking Pakistani claim for exclusive domestic jurisdiction over the developments in East Bengal. He observed, "whatever happens on our immediate border ceases to be an internal matter of another country." Recognition by India, he argued, would take away from "the sphere of illegality" any assistance we might give them(29)

Chitta Basu (FB) enumerating the advantages of recognition, said that it would "immediately boost the morale of the freedom fighters"(30). Indrajit Gupta (CPI) argued that "if we recognised the government of Bangladesh as sovereign having its own standing army, the Pakistanis could not have taken shelter behind the propaganda campaign that the freedom fighters were our guerillas whom we are training and sending in Bangladesh"(31).

Samar Guha (PSP) supporting the demand for recognition, argued that the Bangladesh possessed all the traits required for recognition(32). G. Vishwanathan (DMK), held the view that granting of recognition to any state was the discretion of the country doing so and international law could not stand in the way(33). According to Hiren Mukerjee (CPI), recognition was "the inevitable corollary and natural

complement of our resolution" to extend full support to the freedom struggle in Bangladesh(34). P.K. Singh Deo(Swa.), asserted that there was no hard and fast rule for recognition. The national interest of a country was the sole guide(35). Gurupadswamy (Cong'O'), S.M. Sangama (Cong) and N.G. Goray (PSP) advised the government not to hesitate in militarily engaging with Pakistan to achieve its objectives.

A.K. Sen (Cong) wanted India to take active steps, even blockade of ports and seizure of ships to stop all flow of lethal weapons to East Pakistan(36). When threats by Gen Yahya Khan to declare war on India and the reports of shelling by Pak troops on Assam and Tripura borders in July 1971, were discussed, some Members pointed out that if Bangladesh had been recognised, the Pakistan Army would not have dared to shell Indian territory(37).

Samar Guha (PSP) even made an emotional appeal asking the government to give immediate recognition to Bangladesh and render all help as there was a "national consensus" over the matter(38).

Pranab Mukerjee (BC) who had moved a resolution in the Rajya Sabha for immediate recognition and all out help to Bangladesh, stated that it should be done on humanitarian grounds and was justified even under international law(39).

Some Members of Parliament pointed out that if India recognised Bangladesh, other friendly countries would follow its example.

Besides recognition, armed assistance and even direct intervention in Bangladesh, other demands were also addressed to the government as a part of what was thought to be an effective policy with regard to the developments in East Bengal. Some Members of Parliament asked the government to raise the issue in the United Nations and its relevant agencies. A number of Members of Parliament belonging to various parties, and also Jay Prakash Narayan, supported the All India Students Federation and All India Youth Federation's appeal to the World Federation of Democratic Youth to mobilise volunteers and form an international brigade to render help to Bangladesh in the same way as was done by the international volunteers corps during the Spanish struggle against fascism(40). Bahrul Islam, M.P. (Cong), pleaded that if the return of the refugees was not possible or till it became possible, India should "carve out an area of two or three districts of East Bengal to accommodate these (i.e., refugees) under the supervision of a UN authority(41).

Some of the political parties even adopted agitational tactics to press their demand for recognition and increased support to Bangladesh. S.M. Banerjee, (CPI) on 12 April, made an appeal to all trade unions to raise their voice and demand for immediate recognition of Bangladesh(41). The Multi-Party National Coordination Committee for Bangladesh, on 28 April issued an appeal to the people to observe 5 May 1971, as "Bangladesh Recognition Day"(43). The Jan Sangh staged a demonstration in Delhi on 24 May to press for recognition of Bangladesh(44). During the course of Jan Sangh - launched "Recognise Bangladesh agitation" in Delhi, thousands of its volunteers courted arrest which included some MPs and MLAs(45).

As against the sympathy for the plight and support to the struggle of the people of East Bengal so overwhelmingly expressed by the people, press, public leaders and the Government of India, there were some sections who, for reasons of their own, viewed the developments in East Bengal differently. To some of them the likely independence of East Pakistan seemed disastrous from India's point of view, since they apprehended that it would give a fillip to secessionist tendencies in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kashmir and Punjab(46). Others were critical of the Government of India's expression of sympathy and support to the struggling people of East Bengal as, in their view, it amounted to interference in the internal affairs of another country. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Karunanidhi, was one of them. Shyam Lal Yadav, M.P. (Former Law Minister of UP and Vice-President of the Bhartiya Kranti Dal) found the Government's policy inconsistent with the policy pursued with respect to the insurgency in Ceylon. The well-known writer, Nirad C. Choudhari, in an article in the Hindustan Standard, described India's attitude towards East Bengal as "opportunistic and a petti-flogging exercise of chauvinism." Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah reportedly said in an interview that "India had been at the back of the events in East Pakistan to advance her own vested interests", and asked: "if West Bengal had come out with the demand for a separate state, would the Prime Minister award a prize for this act of treason?"(47).

Also some sections of the Muslim population in the country adopted an attitude inimical to the aspirations of East Bengalees, as in Cachar District in Assam(48), or did not fall in line with the national sentiments on this issue, e.g., in West Bengal. The Jamaat-i-Islami wanted the Muslims of India to maintain an attitude of stoid silence and its leaders were said to have expressed satisfaction when

Jay Prakash Narayan's mission to the Arab countries did not succeed(49). Even those Muslim parties who had taken a positively nationalist stand and were critical of Pakistan, endorsed the restraint exercised by the Government on the issue. However, in a statement made on 19 August, the General Secretary of the Indian Muslim League, Ebrahim Sulaimen Sait, M.P., said that the League and the eighty million Muslims in India would stand solidly behind the Indian government if it recognised Bangladesh(50).

Thus, the people in India by near unanimity expressed deep anguish at the gory happenings in East Bengal and extended sympathy and support for the democratic urges of its people. As a matter of fact, they felt not that the Government of India was doing too much, but that it was doing too little to help the cause of the people of East Bengal.

Government's Restraint

The Acting President of the provisional government of Bangladesh, Syed Nazrul Islam, had in a letter to the President of India dated 24 April 1971, requested immediate recognition(51). However, the Government of India, while giving all help to the Bangladesh government, including diplomatic support and even limited military support to the freedom fighters, followed a policy of caution and restraint as far as the question of its recognition or of direct intervention was concerned. As early as 27 March 1971 the Government of India had decided that, while the weight of public opinion in India and deep sympathies of government itself with the people of East Bengal were important, in taking public stance in the matter, constraints imposed by international law and by various problems had to be borne in mind(52). On 30 March 1971, the Ministry of External Affairs examined again the question of recognition as it felt that the idea of a unified Pakistan was dead after the military crack-down by the West Pakistan Army. India's main interest was to ensure that the new state of Bangladesh started its existence with the feeling of friendliness towards India, and secondly, that the regime which took over was not oriented towards China. It was realised that the recognition should not be delayed for long, for if the civil war continued for a long period, the leadership would pass to the extreme left. However, recognition should be given only when it was ensured that at least one or two more powers would also do so simultaneously(53).

Meanwhile, India's sympathy and support to the cause of Bangladesh took practical form in many ways. Millions of refugees from East Pakistan were given

shelter and succour in India in spite of the tremendous financial, social and security problems created by their presence and a severe set-back to her own developmental plans. The freedom fighters were extended not only moral, material and medical help but also provided with sanctuary and military assistance in training facilities and some arms and equipment. The government allowed the former Pakistani diplomats, who had declared their allegiance to Bangladesh, to open a diplomatic mission of Bangladesh in India and let them function as such without hindrance. Close contacts were maintained with the Provisional Government of Bangladesh and diplomatic and other support extended to it in international forums. The Prime Minister, the External Affairs Minister and other officials started using frequently the word "Bangladesh" instead of "East Pakistan" or even "East Bengal", which in fact meant de facto recognition.

However, the Government of India was firm that the question of recognition could not be decided on mere sentiments or emotions. It had to be based on hard facts and pragmatic considerations. Any pre-mature recognition would have given a set-back to its avowed objective of return of the refugees after a political settlement acceptable to the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh, as Pakistan would have then got a substantial basis for its accusation that the East Pakistan crisis had been created by Indian aggressive designs. Moreover, it would have proved harmful to the cause of Bangladesh itself, as other countries would have refrained from recognising it, regarding it as a puppet or satellite of the Indian Government. Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, said in Rajya Sabha on 27 March 1971 that the Government had "to act within certain international norms." Rejecting a strong demand by the All India Congress Committee for recognition of Bangladesh, she urged the members not to force the Government to take a step which would complicate matters or create more difficulties(54).

Indira Gandhi told opposition leaders also on 7 May 1971, that several friendly governments who were sounded on the recognition issue, did not favour any hasty action. Even Moscow shared this view, though it had accepted India's assessment of the East Bengal situation(55).

Further, recognition alone would have been of little consequence as far as the attainment of the objectives of the people of East Bengal were concerned unless it was followed by direct or indirect military intervention by India. In either case, Pakistan would have turned a confrontation between East Bengalees and

West Pakistan authorities into an Indo-Pakistan conflict, and an Indo-Pakistan war would have inevitably resulted. Even if India had refrained from intervention after recognising Bangladesh, the very fact of recognition would have given Pakistan a causus belli to declare war on India and seek assistance from the United Nations and the international community, besides putting pressure on the United States to fulfil its commitments under the agreement of 1959 to safeguard its independence and sovereignty. Any cease-fire imposed by UN before the liberation of Bangladesh, either by the Mukti Bahini or with Indian military help, would have only consolidated West Pakistani hold over it. Active US assistance or China's intervention would have created formidable problems for India.

Again, there were hard military considerations which militated against an early recognition involving the very serious risk of an Indo-Pak war. If recourse to war was inevitable to attain India's objectives, it must be a successful lightning strike lasting only a few days. India's hands in the eastern region were full with the West Bengal elections and the Naxalite underground insurgency. The required level of military superiority needed for a short successful war involved transportation of large numbers of men and enormous quantity of equipment and provisions from distant places to the eastern theatre. Only 250 wagons a day, could be ferried before the opening of the broadguage Farakka bridge on 11 November 1971. Thereafter, 700 wagons could be moved(56). The problem of logistics and the chances of Chinese intervention in support of Pakistan in a military conflict when the northern passes were still useable were reasons for the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen S.H.F.J. Manekshaw, to convey to the Prime Minister the reservations of the Army Headquarters about a military conflict before the onset of winter(57).

Thus, political and military considerations weighed heavily in India's decision to adopt a cautious policy with regard to the question of recognition of Bangladesh. Elucidating the official stand, the Foreign Minister assured Rajya Sabha on 19 July that "we are not opposed to the recognition of Bangladesh. We will take a decision at the appropriate and suitable time and we will not hesitate to recognise Bangladesh when we find that it is in our national interest and also in the interests of the freedom fighters"(58).

Thus, the Government thought it "politic to adopt a policy of watch and wait for some time until the situation in Bangladesh crystalizes further," and

in the meantime to "continue to exhibit its full-fledged support to the people of Bangladesh in their saddest hour and to render them moral, financial, medical and other facilities" and to keep "propaganda constantly focussed on the issue"(59).

In pursuance of this policy, the Government did not allow volunteers to go to East Bengal to help the freedom movement there so as not "to bring grist to the mill of Pakistan's malicious propaganda that India had prompted the freedom movement"(60). Again, India's military assistance to the freedom fighters had the limited objective of applying increasing pressure on the military regime to force it to come to a political settlement acceptable to the people of Bangladesh. When Donald Chesworth, a member of the War on the Want Organisation, approached the Ministry of External Affairs with the offer of financing the purchase of war material for Bangladesh, he was asked to discuss the matter with Bangladesh officials in London and elsewhere. The only assistance that the Government of India was willing to give was logistic support for transmitting the equipment after the purchase and other arrangements had been made(61).

The Provisional Government of Bangladesh, which was in early stages unhappy about its non-recognition by India, had by August, come to fully understand and respect the Indian position.

With the benefit of hind sight, few would deny that Indira Gandhi and her Cabinet colleagues showed great courage and statesmanship in resisting the strong popular demand for early recognition of Bangladesh, and for using the Indian armed forces to liberate that territory. Even at the risk of being called weak, she avoided the pit-falls into which she was being hustled; waited resolutely for the most favourable moment, and gave the fullest opportunity to the Government of Pakistan and to the international community to bring about a peaceful solution.

THE MOUNTING FLOOD OF REFUGEES

From the middle of April, the stream of refugees from East Bengal turned into an unending on-rushing torrent because of the cruelties perpetrated by the West Pakistani troops. The total number of refugees,(62) which stood at 1,19,566 on 17 April 1971,(63) had shot up to 43,79,000 by the end of May and by the end of July it had reached the staggering figure of 72,32,000(64). These figures show that during a short period of three and a half months there was a massive increase of over 71,00,000 refugees. The West Pakistani troops had been asked to crush the

engulfing, fiercely rising force of Bengalee nationalism. Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, pointed to the heart of the problem when she said in Parliament in November 1971: "The wrath of the West Pakistan army has been aroused because the people of Bangladesh have stood and struggled for values which the army is unable to comprehend, and which it has suppressed in every province in Pakistan"(65).

Causes of the Influx

The West Pakistani Army was getting increasingly infuriated at the success of the guerrilla operations by the Mukti Bahini and other liberation forces. By August 1971 the guerrillas had broken through the security net of Pakistani Army and brought the 'invisible war' to Dhaka itself. This had a demoralising effect on the Pakistani troops who had no previous experience of guerrilla warfare and retaliated by burning villages and indiscriminately killing civilians and looting their property.

The objective of the West Pakistani authorities in unleashing atrocities against the civilian population in East Bengal was to force as many Bengalees as possible to flee the country and to reduce the proportion of Bengalees by bringing in a large number of civilians from West Pakistan for permanent settlement by offering them inducements of loans and other facilities(66). In fact, it was reported that by April 1971, about 10,000 West Pakistani 'goondas' were brought to Rangpur and other sectors to harass and kill Hindus(67).

The operation depopulation executed by the Pakistani army had another objective viz., of weakening India, by forcing millions of refugees to flee, and hoping that India would absorb them as she had absorbed several millions who had fled East Pakistan since the partition in 1947. This would create formidable problems for India. Indira Gandhi on 26 May 1971, said that the influx of millions of refugees from East Bengal into India would lead to disastrous consequences. 'The cruel tragedy' in East Bengal was having a damaging effect on India economically, socially and emotionally and thus happenings there had now become "an Indian problem and also a world-wide problem"(68).

A number of distinguished foreign dignitaries and journalists who visited East Pakistan have given vivid accounts of the reign of terror perpetrated by the Pakistani army in East Bengal. Reginald Prentice, a member of the British Parliamentary delegation which visited Pakistan and India, said in an article in New

Statesman, London, dated 16 July 1971: "Everywhere we went we questioned refugees at random: everywhere we were told similar stories. The army had come to their village, or a nearby village. People were shot or mutilated, houses and farms burned, women were raped, the soldiers had looted, or encouraged the non-Bengalees to loot the Bengalees (and especially the Hindus). This was still happening. That was why they had left. They wanted to return, but only when it was safe, that is, when Mujib said it was safe, or when the army left"(69). Senator Proxmire, on 29 July 1971, in a statement to the US Senate gave a hair-raising account of army brutality. He said, "It seemed a routine enough request. Assembling the young men of the village of Halughat in East Pakistan, a Pakistani Army Major informed them that his wounded soldiers urgently needed blood. Would they be donors? The young men lay down on makeshift cots(sic), needless(sic) were inserted in their veins - and then slowly the blood was drained from their bodies until they died"(70).

A report by Anthony Mascarenhas, a Pakistani citizen and Assistant Editor of Morning News of Karachi, published in Sunday Times of London, 13 June 1971, vividly describes the inhuman cruelties perpetrated by the Pakistani army. "For Six-days as I travelled with the officers of the 9th Division Headquarters at Comilla, I witnessed at close quarters, the extent of the killings. I saw Hindus hunted from village to village and door to door, shot off-hand, after a cursory 'short arm inspection' showed they were uncircumcised. I have heard the screams of men bludgeoned to death in the compound of the Circuit House (Civil Administrative Headquarters) in Comilla. I have seen truck-loads of other human targets and those who had the humanity to try to help them, hauled off 'for disposal' under the cover of darkness and curfew. I have witnessed the brutality of 'kill and burn missions' of the army units... I have seen whole villages devastated by 'punitive action' and in the officers' mess at night, I have listened incredulously as otherwise brave and honourable men proudly chewed over the day's kill. "How many did you get?" The answers are seared in my memory"(71).

The Washington Daily News in an editorial on 15 June 1971, said that though the military regime of President Yahya Khan denied it was committing "selective genocide", there was mounting evidence that it was "cold-bloodedly murdering minority Hindus, Bengali separatists intellectuals, doctors, professors, students - in short those who could lead a self-governing East Pakistan"(72). The Washington

Post editorial on 30 July 1971, remarked, "In Pakistan the world is witnessing a holocaust unmatched since Hitler and 'witnessing' is the operative word"(73).

The refugees who swarmed into India after the crack-down on 25 March 1971 in East Bengal, were not refugees in the same sense as those who had come since the partition of India in 1947. Previously, the refugees were all Hindus who came to India to escape communal atrocities and suppression or to seek better economic prospects. They came in dribblets or in large numbers at the time of serious communal riots but never in such a massive flood as happened now. These new refugees belonged to every religious persuasion like Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians. They came from every social class and age group. Among them were intellectuals comprising professors, doctors, lawyers, students and others as well as poor illiterate people. They were 'victims of war' seeking refuge from "the military terror across the frontier", where the Pakistani army was engaged in both "political and communal persecution and genocide"(74). Another significant fact about these refugees was that in the early stages the ratio of Muslims to Hindus coming to India was 80 per cent to 20 per cent respectively. But since about the end of April the communal composition was reversed; nearly 80% of the people coming were Hindus and 15 to 20% only were Muslims. The reason for this change was that initially the Pakistani Army's killings were indiscriminate, but later the army got engaged in clearing a 10 to 30 mile belt all along the East Bengal-India border of the Hindu population(75). Besides this, the military authorities encouraged the 'Biharis', Razakars, Al Badars and Al Shams to kill and loot Hindus whose shops were allotted to pro-Pakistani Muslims. The authorities were instructed to convert to Islam the able-bodied Hindus who wished to stay in Pakistan and to drive away the old, infirm and non-working Hindus and to loot their property. At some places 60% of Hindus were converted into Islam and those who resisted conversion were eliminated(76).

The drive against the Hindus was meant to achieve some important political objectives. The Hindus fully supported the Awami League because of its secular, democratic and socialistic ideology. The Pakistani authorities were blaming India for the crisis in East Pakistan and, Hindus were considered Indian agents. By encouraging and helping the fundamentalist Muslims and Biharis to plunder Hindu property and to commit rape, arson and murder against them, the Pakistani authorities tried to create Hindu-Muslim clashes which they hoped would divert the people's attention from separatist demand. They hoped

that it would also help to promote the Islamic orthodoxy in East Bengal as well, where it had few followers. It would have been the final fulfilment of the two-nation theory on which Pakistan was founded. To counter the growing international censure against their repression in East Pakistan, they wanted to create an impression that the crisis in East Bengal was not because of confrontation between West Pakistani military rulers and East Bengali nationalist forces, but the usual trouble created by communal animosity.

Looking After the Refugees

The task of meeting the challenge posed by the unending influx of refugees was a very difficult one. It required the mobilisation of all material, financial and manpower resources on a war footing. The Government of India on 27 March 1971, took the decision that the refugees from East Bengal should be provided relief, viz., shelter, food and medical aid, etc. on humanitarian grounds and the cost of such relief would be met by the Central Government. The State Governments were accordingly requested to undertake the requisite relief programme on behalf of the Central Government(77). A branch secretariat of the Department of Rehabilitation was set up at Calcutta to be an executive outpost with the necessary financial powers and authority to undertake relief measures(78). The local administrations asked the officers managing the camps to draw any amount of money from the treasury which they required for food, shelter, etc., for the refugees. No formalities like previous sanction, etc., were to be required(79).

By 3 June, 509 refugee camps had to be erected along 2,800 km (approximately) border from Meghalaya down to Bongaon in West Bengal(80). Every available building, including schools and training institutions, were requisitioned to give shelter to the refugees. The refugee influx over-flowed to the already congested city of Calcutta where the Salt Lake area near the Dum Dum Airport was literally invaded. The Government converted the eastern part of the Salt Lake area into a refugee township where nearly 3,00,000 refugees took shelter. Even then, hundreds of thousands of new arrivals could find shelter only under the trees(81).

Many refugees needed urgent medical attention. Equipment for 1,000 new hospital beds was made available in Tripura and West Bengal. Special teams of surgeons, physicians and nurses and public health experts were deputed to the major camps. Special water-supply schemes were executed on the highest

priority and preventive health measures taken on a large scale(82).

The Chief Ministers of the border States apprehended shortage of essential commodities, serious problems of law and order, communal tension, etc., if immediate steps were not taken to disperse the refugees to other States. As the Indian Government's firm policy was that all the refugees must go back as soon as conditions in East Bengal were favourable, their dispersal to other States far away from the border was not favoured. However, after the Prime Minister's visit to Calcutta on 5 June 1971, it was decided to ease the pressures on West Bengal and Tripura by shifting some of the refugees to the other States, e.g., Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The refugees to be shifted were to be concentrated in large central camps with a capacity of 40,000 to 50,000 persons. Large-sized camps were also set up in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura, which were run centrally by ex-army personnel. These camps were kept segregated and the refugees were not allowed to get mixed up with the local population(83).

As early as 24 May 1971, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had in a statement in the Lok Sabha clearly enunciated Government of India's policy that the refugees had been given shelter purely on humanitarian grounds, and relief could not be perpetual. She declared that "condition must be created to stop any further influx of refugees and to ensure their early return under credible guarantees for their future safety and well being"(84). Again on 15 June she reiterated that India had given shelter on humanitarian grounds to these people fleeing from atrocities committed by the Pakistani army but had "no intention" of allowing them to settle.

India also made it clear that it was extending help and providing succour to people running away from violent political vendetta of a brutal regime, but it could not and should not be the responsibility of a single country merely because it happened to be the next door neighbour. The magnitude of the problem created by the refugee influx was such that "the cost of these (relief) operations finally will obviously be beyond the capacity of India to bear single-handed"(85). The refugees were the responsibility of the international community and India was looking after them on their behalf. The Indian Government requested the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for emergency assistance(86). Various international aid agencies, including World Food Programme, the Congress of Churches and the United Nations International

Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) contributed to meet the urgent needs of the refugees. The UN Secretary General, U. Thant appealed on behalf of the UN Organisation on 19 May 1971, to member governments and private bodies and other sources for extending assistance (87). International relief supplies were received, but the brunt of the burden had to be borne by India. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated in Rajya Sabha on 15 June 1971 that "so far this help has been pitiable in proportion to what is needed. It is about one-tenth of what is actually needed so far as we have been able to assess" (88).

In making arrangements for providing relief to the refugees, the policy adopted was that there should be only minimum assistance to them so that the local population did not get annoyed or estranged to see the refugees enjoying better food, clothing, etc., than they themselves. The policy was to supply a refugee's minimum wants only. But they should suffer some hardships as compared to their life in East Bengal, so that they went willingly back when the time was suitable for their return (89).

The Government of India's position was that the refugee influx was caused by the reign of terror let loose by the Pakistani authorities in East Bengal and they were responsible to stop the influx and to create conditions for the return of refugees already in India. A note handed over to the Pakistan High Commissioner by the External Affairs Ministry on 14 May 1971 stated that "The Government of India, therefore, holds the Government of Pakistan fully responsible for creating such conditions forthwith as would facilitate the return of these refugees to their homes". The Government of India also told Pakistan that it reserved the right to claim from Pakistan appropriate compensation for affording relief to millions of refugees who were victims of a deliberate campaign of terror launched by the armed forces of Pakistan. Unlike in the past, India would not suffer the burden of such a large number of people expelled deliberately by Pakistan (90).

Dangers and Problems

The heavy influx of refugees created many serious problems for India. The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi stated on 18 May 1971, that "Lakhs of refugees pouring into the border States had created a major problem for the country. This would severely affect the country's economic, social and political life" (91). Again on 26 May 1971, she described the situation as "very critical" which could "lead to disastrous consequences". The refugee problem, she

said, was threatening the peace and security of India. Subsequently, on 15 June 1971 she declared in Rajya Sabha that the problems created for India by the upsurge across the border would "hurt us in many ways"(93).

Swaran Singh, Minister of External Affairs, in his address to the National Press Club, Washington on 17 June 1971, emphasised that the "point has now been reached where the actions of Pakistan's military government threaten to disrupt the economic, social and political fabric of our society and our state. These actions threaten to engulf our region in a conflict the end of which it is not easy to predict"(94).

The foreign press, too, assessed the situation in the same way. David Loshak, reporting in Daily Telegraph on 27 April 1971, noted that with "refugees streaming across the border, it is India which is most affected by the dismemberment of Pakistan. Her resources are already strained, her north-eastern(sic) territories already simmering in latent revolt, and the chaos in West Bengal already burgeoning from the tensions of a huge refugee population. India cannot afford to become embroiled"(95). The Ottawa Citizen(10 May 1971) in an editorial remarked: "Beyond the problem of providing them food, shelter, clothing and medicine now is the bigger one of their future. Given India's over population, especially in West Bengal, the prolonged stay of these refugees in India is bound to create resentment, perhaps even violence, against them"(96). The Sunday Australian(6 June 1971) editorially remarked that "to the prospect of social disintegration and pandemic cholera in West Bengal has been added a new threat to peace throughout the Indian sub-continent"(97). According to the Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 8 June 1971, the East Pakistani crisis has created for India "an almost intolerable problem, even threatening peace in the sub-continent"(98). An editorial in The Guyana Evening Post (17 June 1971) noted that the "impact of such a sudden influx of six million people was bound(sic) to cause severe disturbance to the social and economic life of the people of India...."(99).

Faced by such adverse international reaction, President Yahya Khan, blandly claimed that conditions in East Bengal had returned to normal and the refugees were coming back in large numbers. In a broadcast on 21 May 1971, he welcomed the bonafide Pakistani citizens to return home, as law and order had been restored and life was fast returning to normal. According to him, India had been circulating highly

exaggerated and distorted accounts of events and the number of refugees had been inflated by India adding to them "the unemployed and homeless people of West Bengal." The issue was being used by India "to justify its continuing interference in Pakistan's internal affairs"(100). On 18 June 1971, he issued a statement in Rawalpindi repeating his earlier call for the return of refugees with a special appeal to the minorities. He said, "my appeal was addressed to all Pakistani nationals irrespective of the caste, creed or religion; members of minority community should have no hesitation in returning to their homes in East Pakistan. They will be given full protection and every facility. They are equal citizens of Pakistan and there is no question of any discriminatory treatment. I urge them not to be misled by mischievous propoganda being conducted outside Pakistan"(101).

However, the refugees were not convinced. They were willing to return only if their safety and well-being could be secured through a political settlement with their undisputed leader, Sheikh Mujib. On 25 June 1971, the Associated Press correspondent found that only 785 refugees had gone back to the camp in Jhikargarcha in East Bengal(102). Reginald Prentice, a member of the British Parliamentary delegation, found the reception centres designed for returning refugees planned to receive 500 persons a day had a record showing that only 226 returned in 10 days since they were opened(103). The most effective rebuttal of the Pakistani claim was the fact that on 19 June 1971, the number of refugees in India was 59,26,000 and their average daily influx in May 1971 was 1,02,000 and in June 68,000 persons(104).

To solve the refugee problem, India's efforts were directed towards putting pressure on the Yahya regime to reach a political settlement in East Bengal which would be acceptable to its people. The creation of a favourable international public opinion and persuading various governments to make the military regime in Pakistan see reason were the means India adopted in her search for a solution to the aggravating refugee problem.

In the Ministry of External Affairs at New Delhi there was a current of thinking that the independence of East Bengal was inevitable. But this was an alternative scenario and not an essential or the only step which the Government of India envisaged for the return of the refugees. In a letter from the Ministry of External Affairs to all Heads of Missions, it was clearly stated: "It is obvious that the refugees will not return in any significant numbers till they are

confident of being able to do so in safety and this confidence they will have only when a political settlement has been reached which has the support of the people of East Bengal"(105). At one time it was even thought that "if they (the Pakistanis) are not prepared to restore the conditions under which these refugees could return to East Bengal, then the least they should do is to set apart a portion of their territory on which the refugees could be rehabilitated"(106). But the idea was not pursued, probably because it was impracticable. Moreover, any such action by India, to secure a part of East Bengal for the settlement of refugees would have been seen as aggression against Pakistan. It would have enabled Pakistan to invoke the sympathy and the support of the international community. India was keen to explore all possibilities to avoid a war with Pakistan as long as there was hope of political solution of the East Bengal problem either through internal diplomacy or by the pressure created by the force of Bengali nationalism and the Mukti Bahini.

INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

The brutal suppression of the democratic urges of the people of East Bengal at the hands of ruthless military rulers of West Pakistan did cause the neighbouring India concern and anxiety though indirectly. But when the hapless and helpless people began to flee to save their lives and took asylum in their millions on the Indian soil, India began to be directly affected by the developments in East Bengal. With the torrent of evacuees appearing unending, their burden was becoming increasingly unbearable to the host. Moreover, it was seriously threatening the peace in the sub-continent. The refugee problem had to be solved and solved expeditiously.

The influx of refugees was clearly the fall-out of the main political problem inside East Bengal, viz., violent suppression of the democratic rights of the people by the military regime. Government of India felt that steps to mitigate the effect of the fall-out, by economic aid etc., could not produce an effective solution to the problem. Once the basic political issue was resolved, the refugee problem would be solved automatically.

Emanating from the above assessment of the situation official Indian pronouncements clearly differentiated the new arrivals from the old East Bengal refugees. For instance the Prime Minister stated that the East Bengalees who sought shelter now in India were "not refugees as we have understood this word since partition. They are victims of war who

have sought refuge from the military terror across the frontier"(107). For that reason Indira Gandhi preferred to describe them as "evacuees and not refugees"(108). From the beginning of April, as the refugees crossed the border, (unlike in the past), they were now registered as foreigners. Those who failed to register failed to receive a ration card.

The East Bengalee refugees or, more appropriately, evacuees, could not be allowed to settle in India permanently. They were to "go back to their own home and hearth"(109) as soon as the conditions there became suitable. India was "determined" and "clear" that "they have to go back"(110).

India had given temporary shelter to millions of East Bengalees on humanitarian grounds. They were "on trust with us, primarily on behalf of Bangladesh and secondarily on behalf of entire international community"(111). The international community could not, therefore, avoid its responsibility towards those people.

The problem in East Bengal was intially an internal question, but after the cruel and inhuman atrocities on a massive scale perpetrated by the Pakistani military rulers on the people there and the flight or 'pushing out' of many millions into India, the issue certainly crossed the limits of domestic jurisdiction.

As early as 24 May 1971, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in a statement in Lok Sabha, declared "Relief cannot be perpetual, or permanent, and we do not wish it to be so. Conditions must be created to stop any further influx of refugees and to ensure their early return under credible guarantees for their future safety and well-being"(112). Thus suitable conditions had to be created in East Bengal to stop further influx and to motivate the refugees to willingly and voluntarily go back.

In the well-considered view of the Government of India, only a "peaceful political settlement"(113) of the basic problem could help in creating such conditions. Obviously, the required political settlement was one "which has the support of the people of East Bengal"(114). Such a settlement was possible "only if the affairs of Bangladesh are in the hands of elected representatives. It is none else except Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" whose Party "got such an overwhelming majority - 167 out of 169 seats"(115). "Unless he and his party are in charge of the affairs of Bangladesh", Swaran Singh stated categorically,

"there will never be the atmosphere for these refugees to go back"(116). In the same statement the Foreign Minister further cautioned "in unmistakable terms that any regime which consists of breakaway elements from the Awami League of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, or which consists of persons who might have been won over, cajoled or coerced and thus become willing tools in the hands of the military regime, who were given the facade of the Awami League but who were really puppets or quislings of the military regime, will never be acceptable to the people of Bangladesh"(117). In short, to be acceptable to the people of East Bengal, it should be "a Government which represents the people, which consists of members already elected by the people of Bangladesh"(118).

A UNICEF representative, and a member of the 3-men UNCHR team, reported after visiting many refugee camps in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, that all groups "were united in their determination to return to East Pakistan once it were a free state in which their safety would be ensured"(119). But the Government of India, in pressing for a political settlement, did not stipulate that independence of East Bengal could be the only political settlement. Independence of Bangladesh might have been thought of, in the official circles, as an alternative scenario or may be even the ultimate solution(120), but the Government did not insist on it as a precondition for solution of the problems in East Bengal.

However, the Acting President of the provisional government of Bangladesh, Syed Nazrul Islam, in a broadcast on 6 June 1971, had put forward very clearly four conditions for a political settlement, one of which was the "recognition of the Sovereign Republic of Bangla Desh"(121).

The basic problems of East Bengal were issues between the people of East Bengal and the military rulers of Pakistan. It was for them to reach a settlement. It was not an Indo-Pak affair. India, therefore, rejected outright the so called offers of mediation between India and Pakistan from leaders of other countries(122). Any attempt to make the East Bengal problem an Indo-Pakistan issue was unacceptable to India.

The suggestion of the posting of UN Observers on both sides of the India-East Bengal border "to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees back to East Bengal" contained in the Secretary General U.Thant's Aide Memoire of 2 August 1971, was "unacceptable" to the Government of India chiefly because it would have created "a misunderstanding in

the international community that the situation in East Bengal is an Indo-Pakistan dispute" and would "equate India and Pakistan" and thereby "divert attention from the root cause of the problem which is the political and military oppression of the people of East Bengal and a denial of their fundamental, human and political rights"(123).

India also rejected,(124) on 18 August, Pakistan's proposal for the establishment of a "Good Offices Committee" of Security Council members for what it called "defusing the tense situation" along the Indo-Pakistan border. The Pak proposal met this fate precisely because its acceptance would have made the situation in East Bengal an Indo-Pakistan issue.

Indira Gandhi, in her statement in the Rajya Sabha on 24 May, had cautioned: "If the world does not take heed, we shall be constrained to take all measures as may be necessary to ensure our own security and the preservation and development of our social and economic life"(125). Explaining the import of the Prime Minister's above statement the Minister of External Affairs said that if the International Community did not succeed in hammering out a satisfactory solution, "then we reserve the right to take whatever action we might consider appropriate"(126). In answering a question put to him after his address to the National Press Club, Washington, Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh had warned, on 17 June 1971 that "if this thing continues, we will not be able to watch helplessly this addition to our troubles and this increasing threat to our security and stability of not only our territory, but of the entire region"(127).

A number of steps were taken to counter Pakistani propaganda and to present before the world the true and objective picture of the happenings in East Bengal. Parliamentarians, diplomatic representatives and other important persons from all countries of the world were invited to visit the Bangladesh refugee camps. Parliamentarians from the USA, UK, Canada, West Germany, Ireland and Australia, besides Ambassadors and other officials of diplomatic missions located in New Delhi, visited the refugee camps. Representatives of the UN agencies concerned with relief measures, and of a number of foreign humanitarian organisations, also visited the camps(128).

Indian diplomatic missions and publicity media were utilized to inform the public and governments of foreign countries about the true facts of the situation in East Bengal. Copies of Parliament's

Resolution of 31 March 1971 were given to the foreign diplomats stationed at New Delhi. Heads of Indian Missions abroad also handed over copies of the Resolution to the governments of the countries to which they were accredited, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations(129). Besides publishing Bangla Desh Documents (in two volumes), the Government of India brought out and distributed the following publications(130):-

- (1) The Issue - Rule by Ballot : The Answer - Reign of Terror (brought out by the office of the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations).
- (2) Genocide in East Bengal (brought out by the above office).
- (3) Prime Minister's speech in the Rajya Sabha on 15 June 1971.
- (4) Foreign Minister's speech at the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 1971.
- (5) Foreign Minister's speech at the National Press Club, Washington on 17 June 1971.
- (6) Statement by India's Permanent Representative to the UN on 5 October 1971.

India also pressed foreign governments, particularly 'the great powers', and international organizations like the UN, to use their influence over Pakistan to end the genocide and the suppression of human rights of the people of East Bengal.

As early as 29 March, India formally approached the UN Secretary General U.Thant, and requested him "to take initiative and advise or suggest restraint" to the Pakistan Government "and if at all possible, try to prevent this mass slaughter" in East Pakistan(131).

The Government of India remained in constant touch with the Secretary General and made the following concrete proposals(132):

- (i) The Pakistan Government should be asked to restore the fundamental political and human rights to the people of East Bengal according to the norms set out in the UN Charter and various declarations and covenants on human rights to which the Government of Pakistan was committed.
- (ii) The international community should come to

the assistance of the refugees from East Bengal through national and international relief organisations.

(iii) The Government of Pakistan should be held responsible for the refugees who had come to India and for their repatriation back to East Bengal in safety.

(iv) The Secretary General of the United Nations should keep the problem of East Bengal constantly under review and render all necessary advice and assistance to resolve the problem.

The issue was also raised by India at the meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) early in May 1971.

The Ministry of External Affairs also kept in touch with member countries of the UN through diplomatic channels and explained India's concern at the deteriorating situation in East Bengal and the need to exert all possible influence on Pakistan authorities to have a peaceful political settlement with the elected representatives of East Bengal, namely the Awami League headed by its President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman(133).

Sheikh Mujib was the key figure in any settlement of the East Bengal problem and when the news came of his likely execution while in custody in West Pakistan, Indira Gandhi herself sent a message to Heads of Government on 10 August 1971 appealing to them to "exersise(sic) your influence with President Yahya Khan to take a realistic view in the larger interest of the peace and stability of this region"(134) and desist from any such action. In a similar message sent by the Foreign Minister to UN Secretary General it was pointed out that "if the Government of Pakistan do something precipitate and extreme in the context of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's life and welfare" it would have "grave and perilous consequences"(135).

The above efforts were supplemented by personal diplomacy. Several Ministerial and other high level official missions were sent to almost all the important countries of the world "to project the basic issues involved in the situation"(136) and to impress upon the official and non-official leaders, journalists and other makers of public opinion in those countries "the gravity of the situation created by the brutalities of the Pakistani Army, massive influx of refugees from Bangladesh and the urgent need for a political solution with the elected

representatives of people to enable refugees to return to their homeland in safety and with honour"(137).

Heading the list of such special emissaries, Sardar Swaran Singh, Minister of External Affairs, visited USSR, West Germany, France, Canada, USA and UK from 6 to 22 June 1971. From mid-May to July the following (138) were sent abroad:-

S.S. Ray (Minister of Education and Social Welfare); Professor Nurul Hassan, MP; Professor Rasheeduddin Khan, MP; Moinul Haque Choudhary (Minister of Industrial Development); Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed (Minister for Agriculture); Barakatullah (Minister for Law & Power, Rajasthan Govt.); Dr. Karan Singh (Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation); S. Mohan Kumarmangalam (Minister for Steel & Mines); V.C. Shukla (Minister of State, Defence Production); Shah Nawaz Khan (Minister of State in Ministry of Steel & Mines); Erasmo D'Sequiera, MP; Ghanshyam Oza (Minister of State in Ministry of Industrial Development); Raj Bahadur (Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Shipping and Transport); H.R. Gokhle (Minister of Law & Justice); K.C. Pant (Minister of State in Ministry of Home Affairs).

The above missions covered all the important West European, Scandinavian, East European and South East Asian nations as well as Japan and major Muslim countries of West Asia and North Africa.

Non-official efforts in that direction included the peace mission undertaken by the revered Sarvodaya leader Jay Prakash Narayan. From 16 May to 27 June, Jay Prakash Narayan toured abroad on behalf of Sarva Seva Sangh and Gandhi Peace Foundation to draw attention of the world to the ghastly events in East Bengal and to arouse world conscience in favour of the struggling and suffering people of East Bengal. His mission took him to many countries which included UAR, Italy, Yugoslavia, USSR, Finland, Sweden, West Germany, France, UK, USA, Canada, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia(139). During his conversation in those countries, Jay Prakash Narayan, apart from dwelling upon the Pakistani atrocities and sufferings of the people of East Bengal and the resultant refugee influx into India, stressed the need for four steps: stoppage of all killings by military forces, return of the Pakistani Army to the barracks, release of all political prisoners and resumption of direct talks between President Yahya Khan and the Awami League leaders for a political solution. Till then, he said, all economic aid, including project aid, to Pakistan should be withheld(140). Stoppage of all kinds of aid to Pakistan was also urged by official emissaries as a

means to pressurize the Pak military rulers to come to terms with the people of East Bengal.

There was a general feeling in India that the Government was "investing disproportionate time and effort in the hope that international opinion would, by itself, bring independence to Bangladesh"(141). Most foreign governments expressed sympathy for the refugees and for India's predicament, but those who were in a position to apply pressure on Pakistan did nothing effective. Giving information about the results of the Government of India's approach to various countries, Surendra Pal Singh, Deputy Foreign Minister, informed Lok Sabha on 24 May that "most foreign governments including the Big Powers have assured us that they are using their influence with the Government of Pakistan to stop the use of force and seek a political solution. Many of them are, however, reluctant to state their position publicly on this issue(142). Answering a question on the performance of various special missions, he stated that now "the background to and facts concerning recent events in East Bengal, and India's reaction to them, are better understood and appreciated abroad. Also international responsibility towards the refugee problem has been stressed and mischievous anti-India propaganda by Pakistan has been countered"(143).

Speaking specifically about the response of Arab countries to India's efforts, Surendra Pal Singh told Rajya Sabha on 21 July that some of them "are now showing a greater understanding of the problem"(144). He also disclosed that "Arab countries have not come out openly in support of Bangladesh. They have not condemned Pakistan for this. There is a feeling amongst them that this is an Indo-Pakistan issue, but they are now beginning to understand it better"(145). Though not very clearly stated, yet, so far as Arab countries were concerned, they felt that it was an internal affair of Pakistan.

About the gains of his own visit to six major countries (viz., USSR, West Germany, France, Canada, USA and UK) in June, Swaran Singh had informed(146) the Lok Sabha on 25 June 1971, that as a result of his talks with the Governments of those countries the following areas of agreements had emerged:-

- (i) That there could be no military solution and all military action in East Bengal must stop immediately;
- (ii) That the flow of refugees into India from East Bengal must immediately stop;

- (iii) That conditions must be created enabling the refugees to return to their homes in peace and security, and that this could happen only if the refugees could be assured of a secure future in East Bengal;
- (iv) That a political solution acceptable to the people of East Bengal was the only way of ensuring a return of normalcy; and
- (v) That the present situation was grave, and fraught with serious dangers for the peace and security of the region.

On 2 August 1971, the Ministry of External Affairs restated that as a result of India's diplomatic efforts "many foreign governments have assured us that they are using their influence with the Government of Pakistan to stop the use of force and to seek a political solution"(147).

But his Deputy Minister had made almost the same statement in May. It was clear that no tangible progress was being made on the diplomatic front and India's strenuous efforts were bearing no fruit.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FROM ABROAD

Even though India's diplomatic and media efforts failed to move the foreign governments, they did move the man in the street in London, Tokyo, Chicago or Lima. The large-scale massacres perpetrated by the Pakistan armed forces against the civilian population of East Pakistan, and the brutal repression of their democratic aspirations aroused deep sympathy and concern in the international community. The world was shocked by the harrowing accounts of genocide. At the same time the international community expressed appreciation of the commendable work done by the government and people of India in giving shelter, food and medical aid to the hapless people who had been forced to leave their homes. India's plea that it was the duty of Pakistan government to stop the repression of the East Bengalis and create normal conditions, by arriving at a political settlement with the elected leaders of East Bengal, also received widespread support. Such support came from various international quarters which included government spokesmen, eminent public figures, unofficial organisations and the Press.

International Support (Official)

Though the governments of many countries

regarded the political crisis in East Bengal as an internal affair of Pakistan and took up the humanitarian aspect of the matter with the Government of Pakistan only through private diplomatic channels, some important government spokesmen of some of the leading countries publicly regarded the problem as of international concern, and expressed support for achieving a negotiated political settlement of the crisis with the elected representatives of East Bengal. The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, N.V. Podgorny, in a message to the President of Pakistan on 2 April 1971, expressed the conviction that resort to peaceful methods for achieving political settlement would correspond to the interests of the entire Pakistan people and the cause of preserving peace in the region(148). Rt. Hon J.R. Marshall, Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand issued a public statement on 14 April 1971 expressing his Government's concern and calling for an early end of the bloodshed and for the renewal of attempts by Pakistan's leaders to reach agreement by negotiation and compromise(149). William McMahon, Prime Minister of Australia, replying to a question in the Australian House of Representatives on 22 April 1971, regretted the loss of life and bloodshed, even more so after the elections at which Awami League had received strong approval from the people of East Pakistan(150). The President of the Philippines, Ferdinand E. Marcos on 15 June 1971, expressed deep concern for the plight of the people adversely affected by the conflict in East Pakistan and observed that with the influx of millions of refugees to India, it had become a humanitarian problem of international concern(151). In the Canadian House of Commons on 16 June 1971, the Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Canada, Mitchell Sharp, expressed the opinion that the only possible way of dealing with the situation was to come to a political settlement in Pakistan(152). Elaborating, he said, the preferred settlement, of course, would be one in which the elected representatives of the people should be given the responsibility of governing Pakistan, particularly East Pakistan. An official Yugoslav statement on 17 June 1971, expressed great concern over the hardship of millions of East Pakistan refugees in India and urged that measures should be taken to find a political solution to normalise the situation in East Pakistan(153). A statement issued after the meeting of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Sir Alec Douglas-Home with Swaran Singh on 21 June 1971, said that in their discussion the two leaders agreed that it was important that the flow of refugees into India from East Pakistan should cease and that conditions should be created for enabling them to return to their home(154). It was recognised

that this would only be possible if a political solution was found which was acceptable to the people of East Pakistan. At a Press Conference in Bonn on 23 July, 1971, West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, emphasised the same points(155).

Support From Eminent Public Figures

A large body of leading Parliamentarians, Senators and intellectuals of the world community also condemned the brutal armed suppression of democracy and sought to put pressure on Pakistan to arrive at a settlement with the elected representatives of the people in East Bengal. Lord Fenner Brockway, Member of the House of Lords and the guiding spirit behind the British movement for colonial freedom, on 4 April 1971, demanded an immediate ending of the repression, release of political prisoners, and the convening of National Assembly(156). Peter Shore, a former Minister in UK's Labour Government during a Commons debate on 5 April 1971, strongly repudiated the argument that the brutal armed suppression of democracy in East Bengal was an internal matter of Pakistan(157). He appealed to the British Government to bring pressure on President Yahya Khan to stop bloodshed in East Bengal and demanded that the future of East Bengal should be decided by the people themselves and not by the army of West Pakistan. In his testimony before the US Senate on 11 May 1971, Senator Edward M. Kennedy expressed his great concern over the continuing heavy influx of refugees into India(158). In the US Senate on 18 May 1971, Senator Frank Church rejected the Pakistan Government's contention that the slaughter of elected leaders and repression of the majority of its population was not a proper matter of concern for the international community(159). Reginald Prentice, a member of the British Parliamentary fact-finding mission to East Pakistan and India on 4 July 1971, called for international pressure on President Yahya Khan to bring about a political settlement.

In a report released in Ottawa on 19 July 1971, the members of a Canadian Parliamentary delegation also noted that only a political settlement between the Government of Pakistan and the elected representatives of East Pakistan could solve the crisis(160). In the US House of Representatives on 3 August 1971, Congressman Cornelius E. Gallagher supported a political settlement in East Pakistan and said that the issue should not be confused by diversionary move like the proposed posting of UN observers on the Indian side(161). Professor R. Sieber, leader of the three member delegation of the Volkshammer (Parliament) of the German Democratic

Republic, which visited India from 14 to 22 August 1971, observed at a Press Conference on 21 August that a permanent settlement of the basic political problem could "only be brought about in accordance with the Will of the people of East Bengal and in consultation with their elected representatives"(162). Professor John Kenneth Galbraith, former US Ambassador to India, told a Press Conference in New Delhi on 14 September 1971, that a political solution to the Bangladesh problem could be achieved and the refugees allowed to go back to their country in safety(163). He said, "there was great sympathy and support in the United States for the vast number of people who had been driven into India." He went on to say that there "was also great admiration for the courage, restraint and energy with which India was handling the problem."

Many observers not only refuted the Pakistani allegation that India was preventing the return of refugees to their country, but also highly appreciated India's continued willingness to accept refugees in such staggering numbers on compassionate and humanitarian grounds. The UNHCR refuted Pakistani allegation that India was obstructing the return of refugees. Prince Sadruddin, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said there was absolutely no evidence for the host government having obstructed the refugees if they wanted to go(164). Again, in Paris on 10 July 1971, the Prince in reply to a question said that it would not be logical to say that India was in any way holding back their return. On 19 July 1971, at Kathmandu, two volunteers of the British Organisation "War on Want" described as "rubbish" Pakistani allegation that India was holding refugees and preventing their return. At Calcutta on 22 July, Manfred Cross, an Australian M.P., expressed the same opinion. Again, on 3 August, Gallagher said in the US House of Representatives that the Government of India had refrained from recognising the Government of Bangladesh and had accepted and handled the burden of 7½ million refugees with remarkable fortitude and praiseworthy competence(165). At the National Press Club Washington on 26 August 1971, Senator Edward M. Kennedy stated: "The Government of India, as it first saw this tide of human misery begin to flow across its borders, could have cardoned off its land and refused entry. But, to its everlasting credit, India chose the way of compassion. The Indian Government has made Herculean efforts to assist and accommodate the refugees - efforts which history will record and remember"(166).

Support by Unofficial Organisations

A large number of non-governmental organisations

passed resolutions and issued statements assailing Pakistan Government's action in East Bengal and calling for a political settlement of the crisis. The officers of the World Conference of Religion for Peace (WCRP), New York, meeting in New Delhi on 22-23 April 1971, condemned the infliction of suffering and death on masses of innocent human beings(167). They called upon the President of Pakistan and his government to stop violence and repression in East Pakistan. The Socialist International Council Conference in Helsinki on 27 May passed a resolution in which it expressed its profound concern about the tragic situation in Pakistan and called for immediate commencement of negotiations with the elected representatives of the people to achieve a political settlement of the problem(168). The Executive Committee of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs during its 26th session held in Geneva on 9-12 July 1971, expressed concern over the plight of the Pakistani people and urged its national constituents to influence their own governments to press the Government of Pakistan to negotiate a just political settlement with the leaders of East Pakistan(169). Twenty-two international non-governmental organisations on 20 July 1971, petitioned the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to take constructive action "concerning the reports of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedom occurring in East Pakistan"(170). An international conference held in Toronto from 19 to 21 August 1971, and attended by over 30 distinguished scholars, editors, Parliamentarians and former diplomats, called for an immediate end to all killings and stressed that a lasting political solution should be achieved to end the crisis(171). A resolution unanimously passed by the Latin American Parliament at Caracas, Venezuela, on 27 August called upon the Government of Pakistan to desist from committing further violation of human rights, stop military repression, and enter into immediate negotiations with the already elected representatives of the people(172). The 21st Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs held at Sinaia, Rumania, from 26 to 31 August 1971 appealed to the Government of Pakistan to promote speedily a peaceful political settlement and create conditions for the safe return of the refugees to their homes(173). In a statement issued in London on 11 September 1971 the Bureau of the Socialist International expressed its profound concern at the terrible human tragedy in East Pakistan, condemned the violation of human rights by the Pakistan military regime, and declared that there must be a political solution to this tragedy(174).

Support by International Media

The world press also condemned the brutal suppression of human rights and the imposition of reign of terror in East Bengal. It had done a commendable job in rousing public sympathy for the people of East Bengal by giving authentic eye-witness accounts of the gruesome and tragic events and by exposing the lies and half-truths dished out by the Pakistan officials. Sydney H. Schanberg, who was one of the 35 foreign newsmen expelled from East Pakistan, testified in his despatch in the New York Times of 28 March 1971, that the Pakistan Army used artillery and heavy machine guns against unarmed East Pakistan civilians(175). In its editorial on 29 March the Sydney Morning Herald held President Yahya responsible for the tragedy in East Pakistan and observed that a political miracle would be needed to put Pakistan together again(176). The Age, Canberra, in an editorial on 29 March 1971 warned that the nation could not be held together by the military repression of a hostile majority of people(177). On 31 March, the New York Times editorially condemned the brutality of Pakistani troops towards their "Moslem brothers" in East Pakistan and noted that acting "in the name of God and a united Pakistan," forces of the West Pakistan-dominated military government of President Yahya Khan had dishonoured both by their ruthless crackdown on the Bengalee majority(178). The editorial appealed to the world community to call on President Yahya Khan, "in the name of humanity and common sense, to stop the bloodshed and restore Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to his rightful role as elected leader of his people. Commenting editorially on the tragic developments in East Pakistan, The Times (London) on 3 April, concluded that the aim of the military regime was to wipe out the Awami League leadership(179). Anthony Mascarenhas, a Pakistani national and former Assistant Editor, Morning News, Karachi, in Sunday Times (London) on 13 June 1971, gave a gruesome account of the massacre in East Pakistan and was of the opinion that it was deliberately carried out by the West Pakistan army(180). He stated that 'pogrom's victims were not only the Hindus of East Bengal but also many thousands of Bengalee Muslims which included university and college students, teachers, journalists, Awami Leaguers and those who had been prominent in Sheikh Mujib's movement. Murray Sayle in the Sunday Times (London) on 11 July, doubted the claim of the Pakistan Government that life in East Pakistan was returning to normal and wrote : "On the refugee issue, it is clear that only a very brave or very foolish refugee would even try to return as things are, and that his welcome would be very doubtful if he did"(181).

With the migration of millions of refugees into India, the crisis in East Pakistan was no longer considered by the media solely an internal problem of Pakistan. They regarded the problem as of international concern. The New Herald, Kathmandu, in an editorial on 26 May 1971, argued that the massive influx of refugees from East Pakistan into India supported the view that whatever had happened was no longer an internal affair of Pakistan, as claimed by Islamabad Government and its allies(182). The Commoner of Kathmandu on 1 June editorially noted that India had been doing her best to help the refugees from East Pakistan. The paper rejected Pakistani contention that the refugees were encouraged by India to come in. It was incomprehensible why any country, including India, should willingly invite such burdens, the paper commented(183). The Straits Times, Malaysia, said in an editorial on 8 June that with four million refugees having crossed into India, the developments in East Pakistan were no longer solely an internal problem. Even Pakistan had given up the pretence of being able to come to grips with it without massive external assistance, the paper observed(184). Commenting editorially on 10 June, The Straits Echo, Malaysia, lamented the fact that the international community had "failed to take a moral stand on what clearly was a ruthless attempt to subdue a whole people." Referring to the clear evidence of the continuing flight of East Pakistanis into India, which it feared could well number ten million before long, the editorial said: "It is an international problem and the international community and the United Nations must accept the responsibility of rehabilitating the refugees in their own homeland. This means prevailing upon the Pakistan authorities to create conditions which would enable the refugees to return..."(185). The Christian Science Monitor in its editorial on 20 May stated that "Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is certainly right in saying that the nearly three million refugees from East Pakistan who have surged across India's borders since the March 25 Civil War are an international problem"(186). Under the caption "Help India solve Refugee Problem," Palaver of Accra in its editorial on 20 May appealed to all freedom-loving peoples of the world to support India in the gigantic task of caring for the refugees who had become a burden and liability on India(187).

It is amply proved, therefore, that official spokesmen, eminent public leaders and the press in most countries of the world clearly endorsed India's position on the East Bengal crisis. Only the powerful governments friendly to Pakistan failed to press Yahya Khan. And without effective pressure the East Bengal

crisis was bound to deteriorate.

THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY

The deepening crisis in East Pakistan was now seriously affecting India's security and economic wellbeing. Yahya Khan's almost weekly statements about a possible war with India with a view to turn the fast deteriorating internal Pakistan crisis into an Indo-Pak problem; unwillingness of the USA to discontinue arms supplies to Pakistan and China's open support to the military regime in Pakistan, were creating a dangerous situation. The Government of India took a momentous decision then to sign a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation with the USSR(188).

Yahya Khan's pronouncements from May to July showed hardening of attitude and not a movement towards accommodation. Rattled by the increasing tempo of the Mukti Bahini operations with Indian support, he told Neville Maxwell in an interview that if India seized any part of East Pakistan, he would declare war and Pakistan would not be alone.

Realising the gravity of the situation, the Government of India on 13 July decided that the steps required in case of an emergency should be carefully considered and put down in writing, so that action could be initiated quickly if it proved necessary(189). With war clouds hovering over the horizon, it was also logical step for India to give a formal and juridical basis to its existing close relations of friendship and cooperation with the USSR by signing a treaty which would act as a deterrent to any potential aggressor.

The fast changing international configuration of forces also impelled India and the USSR. Henry Kissinger's visit to China in July gave indications of a Sino-US detente with adverse effects on USSR's strategic posture and global policy. China already had close military and economic relations with Pakistan. The now emerging China-Pak-US axis naturally posed a great security threat to India because of its strained relations with both Pakistan and China(190). The changed US attitude towards a possible Sino-Indian conflict was a further cause for concern. Before going to China, Kissinger told the Indian Ambassador, L.K. Jha, that if China attacked India, US response would be as strong as in 1962. He also assured the Indian External Affairs Minister that in any conflict between India and China, USA will be on India's side. But on return from China, he told the Indian Ambassador that America would not intervene in any conflict between India and Pakistan even if

China intervened in support of Pakistan(191). This significant change in US attitude towards a possible Chinese intervention in an Indo-Pak conflict evidently took place because of Henry Kissinger's talks with Zhou Enlai in Beijing during his visit there. A Rumanian diplomat is reported to have told Hemen Ray, an Indian writer, that Zhou Enlai had informed Kissinger that in the event of an Indo-Pak War, Beijing would militarily intervene on behalf of Pakistan. "Zhou also demanded and received a verbal American promise that Washington would not support India in the event of a Chinese military intervention for the sake of developing a dialogue between the two countries"(192). Swaran Singh told Parliament on 20 July that "we cannot at present totally rule out" that any Sino-American detente would not be "at the expense of other countries, particularly in this region." Therefore, India had for sometime been "considering ways and means of preventing such a situation from arising, and meeting it if it should arise"(193).

The Indo-Soviet treaty was not a sudden development. The Soviet Union had wanted India to sign such a treaty and the two countries had it under consideration for about two years. It appeared that India did not want to take any hasty decision about it because of the probability of its being linked with the Soviet proposal of Asian Collective Security suspected to be directed against China. The Indo-Soviet cooperation in economy, industry, science and technology and also in the supply of military hardware by the Soviet Union, was running smoothly without requiring any formal treaty. But now the regional and international situation was gravely deteriorating, requiring a new look at the proposed treaty. Giving legal and juridical shape to India's friendship and cooperation with the USSR would show to the world that India was not alone. If Pakistan took the plunge, China would hesitate to intervene militarily on its side; and even the USA might exercise some restraint in its support to Pakistan. Internationally also, the developments were propitious. There was an air of detente between Western Europe and USSR, symbolised by the "Ostropolitik" of Chancellor Willy Brandt of the Federal Republic of Germany, which resulted in the Soviet-FRG Treaty on 12 August 1971. USA and USSR were regularly holding talks for the limitation of strategic nuclear weapons, which ended in the conclusion of the SALT I agreement in May 1972. In this fast changing international atmosphere for detente and cooperation, an Indo-Soviet treaty was not likely to be misunderstood as placing India in the Soviet camp.

Under the impact of these major changes in regional developments and international configuration of powers, India was receptive to the suggestion made by the Soviet Ambassador to India, N.M. Pegov to the Indian Foreign Secretary, T.N. Kaul, on 16 July 1971, that in view of Kissinger's visit to Beijing, it was urgently necessary to finalise the Indo-Soviet treaty(194). A thorough study was made to see whether the proposed treaty would in any way adversely affect India's long cherished objectives in foreign policy or would be harmful to its international relations in the global context. It was found that the proposed treaty would not conflict with the basic tenets of non-alignment but on the contrary further strengthen it. It would promote stability and security in the region. Western Europe, itself seeking detente with the USSR, logically could not oppose India and the USSR exercising a peaceful and stabilising influence in the area. The countries of Eastern Europe, barring Albania and Yugoslavia, would welcome it. Yugoslavia might not like it but was not likely to oppose it. The effect on the African countries was likely to be wholesome and since they were not directly involved, they were not likely to be opposed to it. The countries of the Caribbean, and Latin America, would perhaps remain neutral or some of them, like Chile, Cuba and Mexico, might even welcome it. Japan, in the new context of a possible Sino-US detente, might not look askance at the treaty. The countries of South and South East Asia would see in the treaty a factor for the stabilisation of peace and security in the region. The effect on the Arab countries should also be healthy, as some of them like the UAR, Iraq and Libya would have second thoughts about aligning themselves with Pakistan. The USA might not like India and USSR coming together. For counter influence, the Americans might further strengthen Pakistan, Iraq and Turkey in the region, which they were already doing any way. They would get reconciled when it was realised that the treaty was for peace, and security and stability of the region. The only countries that were certain to oppose the treaty were China, Pakistan and Albania. However, the treaty would have a deterrent effect on Pakistan and China. Even China might with the lapse of time, take India's offer of normalisation of relations more seriously, if for no other reason at least to wean India away from the USSR. In any case, the treaty would definitely promote India's security and territorial integrity by formally placing on her side a reliable and powerful friend like the Soviet Union. It also placed on a firm legal basis the very beneficial Indo-Soviet cooperation in economy, industry, science and technology and other fields(195).

The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was signed at New Delhi on 9 August by the Soviet Foreign Minister, A.A. Gromyko and the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Swaran Singh(196).

The treaty consisted of XII Articles. Articles I to III reaffirmed the policy of peaceful co-existence, friendship and cooperation between the two countries and continued efforts by them to strengthen peace and cooperation and for halting the arms race.

Article IV was of special significance, for while it expressed in general terms India's respect for the peace-loving policy of the Soviet Union, the latter explicitly and in unambiguous terms accepted that the Indian policy of non-alignment was an important factor in the maintenance of peace and international security.

Articles V, VI and VII dealt with bilateral relations, maintaining regular contacts with each other on major international problems affecting their interests and cooperation in science and technology and expansion of trade.

Articles VIII, IX and X dealt with the safeguarding of security of the High Contracting Parties. They bound them not to participate in any military activity directed against the other party and to prevent the use of the territory of any one of them for the commission of any act which might inflict military damage on the other. The essence of the military provisions was that if either of the two countries was faced with the threat of an attack, they would "immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such a threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of the two countries." The two countries also declared that they would not enter into any obligations which might be incompatible with the terms of the treaty.

Article XI of the treaty fixed its duration for 20 years and provided for its being automatically extended for each successive period of 5 years, unless either party gave 12 months notice for its termination. Article XII provides for the High Contracting Parties bilaterally settling any differences over the interpretation of the treaty.

Pakistan and some other anti-India elements in the Western countries alleged that the treaty adversely affected India's policy of non-alignment.

India's position was that non-alignment did not mean that she could not enter into agreements with friendly countries for establishing peace, particularly when there were threats from various quarters. In the 1950's, India had taken arms exclusively from the Western countries, and between 1962-1965 it had even accepted military assistance from the USA. Later, for many years she was buying military hardware mostly from the USSR. Such military arrangements could not affect her non-alignment policy. The Indo-Soviet Treaty, in fact categorically stated USSR's appreciation of India's policy of non-alignment and reaffirmed that this policy constituted an important factor in the maintenance of universal peace and international security. It was the first time that a great power like the USSR had in a formal document accepted non-alignment as a major factor for peace(197). This lent further credibility to the non-aligned policy of India.

If the Indo-Soviet treaty is compared with similar treaties entered by the Soviet Union with other countries, it would be evident that additional precautions were taken in it to prevent any military entanglement. The Soviet Union's treaty of friendship and cooperation and mutual assistance with Finland (1950), and the treaty of friendship and cooperation with the UAR (1971), had specific provisions for cooperation in the military sphere, but the treaty with India provided only for "mutual consultations." In fact, the Soviet Union had signed a protocol with Canada - a NATO power - which provided for similar consultations when a situation arose which was dangerous for the maintenance of peace or when peace was violated. Agreements entered into by some other non-aligned countries for their defence and security had clear military implications. Malaysia and Singapore were members of the Five Power Defence Arrangement with United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, which had specific military cooperation provisions. Yugoslavia had concluded in 1954 a 20-year Balkan Pact with Greece and Turkey - NATO countries - with specific military provisions. Yugoslavia was somewhat sceptical about the Indo-Soviet treaty in the beginning because of her own bitter experience of agreement with the USSR, but later recognised its validity and necessity(198). President Tito stated that it was a treaty of friendship and not for assistance in war, and that it had a moral and material rather than military significance(199).

As expected, China, reacted against the Treaty with bitter ire. Radio Beijing declared that the Soviet Union had signed a so-called Peace and

Friendship Treaty with India for throwing dust in the eyes of the world and in fact it was a military pact. But analysts concluded that the Chinese anger was directed more against the Soviet Union than against India, and, like the Soviet Union, it looked at the Treaty mainly in the context of the bitter Sino-Soviet dispute.

Both India and the USSR regarded the Indo-Soviet treaty as a major event in international relations having far reaching consequences, not only for their security and development of cooperation in various fields, but also for promoting regional and international peace. B.N. Ponomarev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet of Nationalities, at a joint sitting of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, on 11 August, said that the treaty "will exert positive influence in the interests of peace and security of the peoples, in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism"(200). Swaran Singh, while speaking at the All India Congress Committee Session at Simla on 8 October 1971 stated that the treaty was concluded at a time when the feelings in the country were fully receptive to a concrete step of this type, as it was often asked who were India's friends in moments of crisis. He summed up the importance of treaty: "the Treaty is sound in content, is practical, safeguards our independence and non-alignment, and at the same time it binds us to constructive course of mutual cooperation; safeguarding the sovereignty and independence of the contracting parties...without the automatic involvement of either of the two countries"(201).

Although these pronouncements, and the Treaty itself, emphasised international peace and cooperation, there is no doubt that Pakistan and her friends were profoundly worried at its possible military implications. The Treaty could even have secret military clauses. An early Pakistani attack, which was widely believed imminent then, was ruled out while the new situation was assessed and analysed. While strengthening India's position, the Treaty, therefore, definitely bought a few more months of peace in the sub-continent. These months could be used by the international community and the Mukti Bahini to put final pressure on the Pakistani rulers to achieve a political solution to the Bangladesh crisis, failing which another Indo-Pak War appeared inevitable.

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<u>Month</u>	<u>Total number of refugees by the end of the month</u>
April 1971	1,221,000
May 1971	4,379,000
June 1971	6,435,000
July 1971	7,232,000

(Statistical information relating to the influx of Refugees from East Bengal into India till 31 July 1971 - Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation, Department of Rehabilitation, Branch Secretariat, Calcutta-17, 3 December 1971, p.3).

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106. The Indian Foreign Secy., in his conversation with the Soviet Ambassador on 21 June, also hinted at the likelihood of India helping the refugees "to create a belt of land on Bangladesh territory to which they could go back". From Official Records.
An official note sent to Pakistan, as annotated by an official source for the Indian Press, also reportedly hinted at such a possibility. From Official Records.
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128. LSD(Fifth):VI;46, 26 July 1971.
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152. Ibid., p.503.
153. Ibid., pp.519-520.
154. Ibid., p.508.
155. Ibid., p.515.
156. BD I, p.522.
157. Ibid.
158. Ibid., p.536.
159. Ibid., pp.543-544.
160. Ibid., p.575.
161. Ibid., p.587.
162. BD II, pp.191-192.
163. Ibid., pp.198-199.
164. BD I, p.663.
165. Ibid., pp.583-584.
166. Ibid., pp.596-597.
167. BD I, p.532.
168. Ibid., p.605.
169. Ibid., pp.608-609.
170. Ibid., p.660.
171. BD II, pp.177-178.
172. Ibid., pp.179-180.
173. Ibid., p.180.
174. Ibid., p.181.
175. BD I, p.380.
176. Ibid., p.385.
177. Ibid., pp.386.
178. Ibid., p.388.
179. Ibid., pp.391-392.
180. Ibid., p.358.
181. Ibid., p.379.
182. Ibid., p.471.
183. Ibid., p.473.
184. Ibid., pp.474-475.
185. Ibid., p.475.
186. Ibid., p.497.
187. Ibid.
188. From Official Records.
189. From Official Records.
190. From Official Records.
191. From Official Records.
192. Ray, Hemen, p.278.
193. BD I, p.708.
194. From Official Records.
195. From Official Records.
196. For full text of the treaty see Appendix.
197. From Official Records.
198. From Official Records.
199. BD II, pp.168-169.
200. From Official Records.
201. BD II, pp.241-248.

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