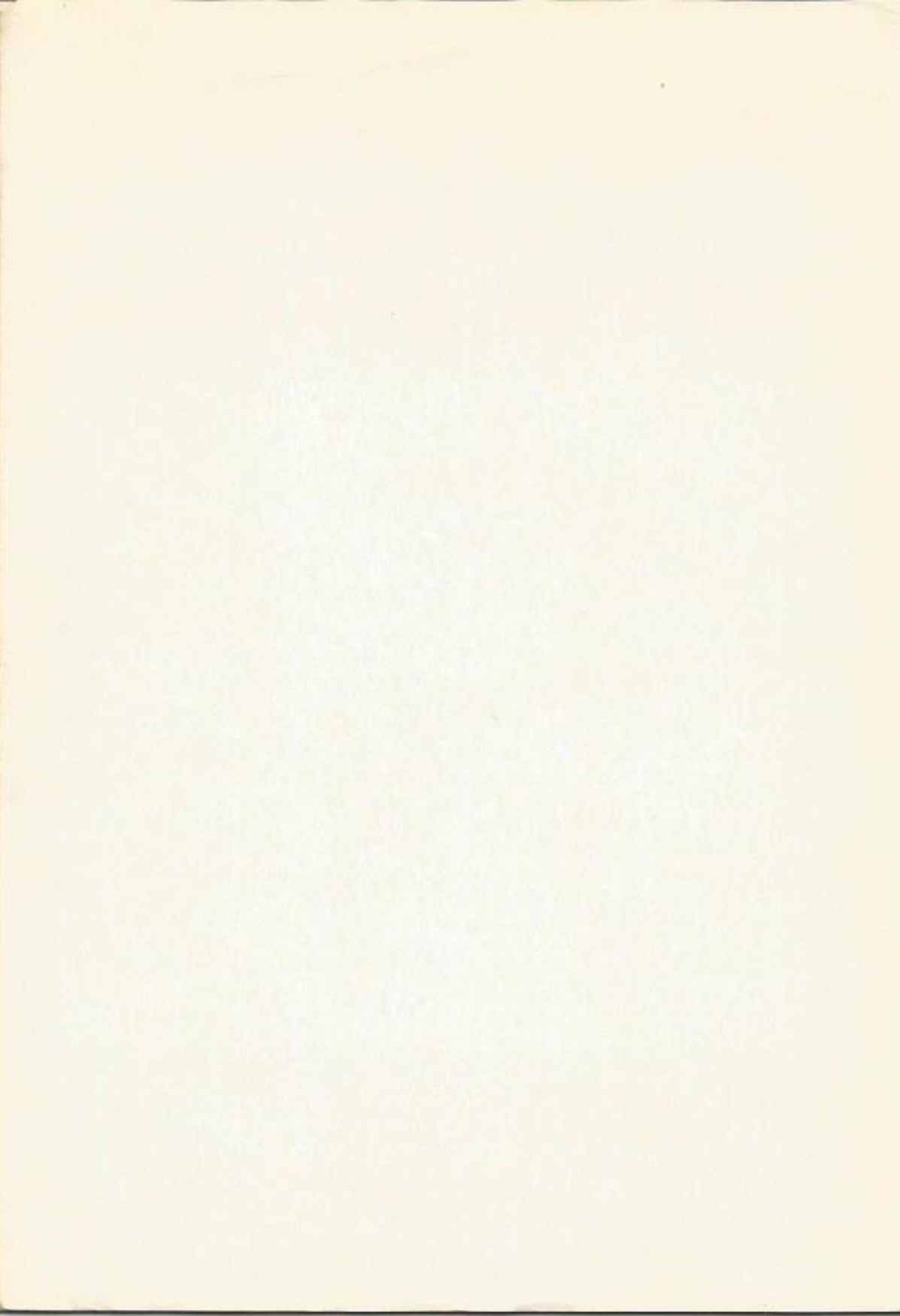


# The STRUGGLE in BENGAL and the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL



- INTERVIEW WITH WEST BENGALI TROTSKYIST
- THE IMPORTANCE OF BANGLA DESH: Tariq Ali
- DECLARATION BY THE UNITED SECRETARIAT  
OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL



# The Bengali Spark

## Will Set

### India Ablaze

*Tariq Ali*

The recent battles in Bangla Desh (eastern Bengal), which is still occupied by the troops of the Pa kistan Army, have demonstrated extremely vividly the revolutionary potential that exists in Bengal as a whole. They have shown us an image of the future—of a sub-continent which could be set ablaze by the red spark of Bengal and thus lead to the liberation of millions of oppressed workes, poor peasants and students from the yoke of capitalism and feudalism. The dangers inherent in the present situation in Bangla Desh, are visible not only to the Pakistani military dictator, Yahya Khan, but also to U.S. imperialism and its most favoured Asian leader, Mrs Indira Gandhi. While Yahya intervenes directly and attempts to terrorise the Bengali masses into submission, Mrs Ghandi manouvres desperately to prevent the development of a unified Bengali consciousness, which could lead very rapidly to an independent Red Bengal. It is vital that Bangla Desh revolutionaries the relevance of Mrs Gandhi's intervention against the revolutionary movement in Ceylon, which provides us with a clear indication of the real worries that afflict the Indian bourgeoisie.

The massive and spectacular explosion which has ripped Pakistan apart, was not totally unexpected. It was obvious that any elected representatives of East Bengal would attempt to modify the economic and political subjugation of their province by West Pakistani capital and its protectors. It was this precise oppression which gave the national question in Eastern Bengal a phenomenal importance, for Pakistan has been a state, but never a nation and the naive belief that the Muslim religion would be sufficient to transcend all other barriers lies buried in the mass graveyards in Dacca city. It was absurd to imagine that the political, geographical and cultural gap which separated the two parts of Pakistan could be bridged by religion.



The massive election victory of the Awami League in the December 1970 General Election in which it won 98% of the total vote revealed the depth of feeling on the national question and revealed massive support for the Six-Point programme of the Awami League. The points which are, in fact, the charter of the Bengali upper petty bourgeois reflecting the latter's discontent with W. Pakistani economic domination, demanded:

- (1) A federal system of government, parliamentary in nature and based on adult franchise.
- (2) Federal government shall deal only with Defence and Foreign Affairs. All other subjects shall be dealt with by the federating state.
- (3) a. Two separate, but freely convertible currencies for the two parts of the country; or  
b. One currency for the whole country. In this case effective constitutional measures to be taken to prevent flight of capital from East to West Pakistan.
- (4) Power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the federating units and not at the centre.
- (5) Separate accounts for foreign exchange earnings of the two parts of the country under control of the respective govts.
- (6) The setting up of a militia or para-military force for East Pakistan.

As is obvious the Six-Points have nothing in common with socialism. What they are demanding is a share of the capitalist cake for the Bengali upper petty bourgeois. It is the right-wing character of the Awami League leadership which endears it so much to leader writers in **The Guardian**, **The Daily Telegraph** and **The Times**. However the vested interests in West Pakistan could not even allow the Awami League its limited demands and for two main reasons: first they conflicted directly with the interests of West Pakistani capital and secondly they established civilian control of the Army's annual budget and Bengali civilian control at that, which was repugnant to the racist Punjabi elite in Rawalpindi. Thus Yahya decided to crush the Bengali people by force and disenfranchise them by the use of bayonets, bullets and jet bombers. In this task he was admirably aided by the West Pakistani landlord-politician, Zulfigar Ali Bhutto, whose "socialism" enabled him to declare after the massacres had begun and claimed the lives of thousands of Bengalis that, "The Almighty be praised. Pakistan has been saved."

What is clear is that the Army general have outwitted the Awami League. The latter proved totally incapable of thinking beyond its self-prescribed constitutionalist framework. Thus while Yahya was gaining time to pour in more troops by negotiating with Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the Awami League was acquiescing in the negotiations instead of preparing the masses for a struggle against the military dictatorship. Instead of arming the masses it allowed them to be butchered on the streets of the cities; instead of preparing the countryside for a prolonged siege by the armed defenders of West Pakistani capital, it continued to concentrate in the cities until it was driven out by brute force. The Awami League leaders were politically and psychologically not prepared for any real struggle. They assumed that constitutional niceties would be sufficient and this assumption has cost the Bengali masses thousands of lives.



Of course the real tragedy lies in the total inability of the East Bengali Left to understand the importance of the national question until it was too late and the movement had been taken over in its entirety by the Awami League. The conditions which created an awareness of the national oppression, were, after all, not new. The economic exploitation of East Bengal began immediately after "independence" in 1947 and by 1956 economists had worked out that 300 million rupees were being extracted annually from the East by the West Pakistani investments. Both politically and economically, East Bengal was treated like a semi-colony. Its raw material (jute) which brought in badly-needed foreign exchange was used to develop Karachi and the Punjab in West Pakistan. Development plans were blatantly biased against the East. Thus the uneven economic development led to an uneven development of consciousness. The Bengali masses, who were historically much more advanced politically, continued to leap forward, and their discontent overflowed into the streets quite regularly. During the years of the Ayub dictatorship, this oppression became more acute and the Awami League started a limited agitation against the regime. The pro-Moscow left merely tail-ended the League; the pro-Peking left was paralysed by Peking's opportunist "friendship" with Ayub Khan and opted out of any oppositional activity. Some Maoists went so far as to declare that the Ayub regime was "objectively anti-imperialist". Thus the Left missed its greatest opportunity and the leadership of the struggle went to the petty-bourgeois Awami League. Today we see the tragic results of this as the Bengali masses find themselves ready to





fight, but are hampered by the bankruptcy of the Awami League leadership, which, having failed to lead and organise a national liberation struggle, appeals to the Indian bourgeoisie, the United Nations, and even the Tory government in Britain to help it against the Yahya dictatorship. What a sad spectacle. As if the Indian ruling class which oppresses the masses in West Bengal is interested in anything more than protecting its own class interests, as if the United Nations (an imperialist agency) ever really protected anyone, as if the Tory government was capable of defending the Bengali masses. To expect capitalist governments to arm the workers anywhere in the world is to live in a naive dream world and to abstract oneself from reality.

The temporary setbacks being suffered by the Bengali masses in Bangla Desh make the task of organising a revolutionary movement capable of leading a national liberation struggle all the more urgent. The treacherous role of the Chinese leadership in giving unqualified support to the butcher Yahya Khan is an open betrayal of the Bengali masses, which only helps the latter to continue the massacres of Bengalis (which includes many supporters of the Chinese revolution!) under the pretext of combatting "Indian interference". The Chinese bureaucrats have by their opportunist short-sightedness made the task of the revolutionary left in East Bengal much more difficult and has only tended to strengthen right-wing anti-communist propaganda. The Chinese have betrayed the class interests of the Bengali workers and poor peasants who have died in the struggle for national self-determination, who continue to struggle against the Pakistan Army (supplied with Chinese armour) today and who will tomorrow continue to struggle for a Socialist Bengal.

The only revolutionary international organisation which has fully supported the struggle of the Bengali masses has been the Fourth International and its sections. In West Bengal (as the next article shows) the comrades of the Fourth International are waging a struggle against the Indian ruling class. The time has come for a similar revolutionary organisation to take up the struggle in collaboration with all revolutionary tendencies in Bangla Desh. This requires not only a military strategy based on the experiences of a people's war, but a political understanding of the necessity to start organising a new social base in the Bangla Desh countryside. Only then will the struggle have a real meaning for the poor peasants and the rural proletarians.

The struggle in Bengal might have its ups and downs, but it will continue until a United Socialist Bengal has been achieved. A Red Bengal which will pave the way for the liberation of the entire sub-continent from the yoke of imperialism and capitalism. The heroic struggle of the Indo-Chinese revolutionaries shows us the way forward, and in learning from them we not only speed up the process of our own liberation, but also take some of the burden of fighting American imperialism off the shoulders of the Indo-Chinese comrades. Only then will we be able to make Asia the graveyard of U.S. imperialism and its satellites.

*Victory to Bangla Desh!*

*For a Red Bangla Desh!*

*For a united socialist Bengal!*

*For a Red sub-continent, a Red Asia!*

17 April 1971



# Declaration of the Fourth International on the Struggle in Bengal

As the Pakistani armies continue their effort to crush the independence movement of the people of Eastern Bengal, it becomes clear that the Yahya military clique failed to secure the quick victory it sought. Despite the brutalities and the mass killings, it has been unable to terrorise the Bengali people into submission.

Incensed by the wholesale slaughter of unarmed people, the Bengali masses are certain to continue their resistance against the colonial regime ruling their country. But the whole question of revolutionary leadership and revolutionary strategy is posed with the utmost sharpness. The Bengali people are united as never in the past. However their current leadership is completely inadequate. Far from preparing the workers and peasants for the decisive prolonged struggle for independence, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman did all in his power to arrive at a compromise with Yahya Khan. The Awami League opposed independence and set its sights instead on autonomy. Mujibur engaged in discussions with Yahya Khan while the dictator placed his military forces in position. The Mujibur leadership now flounders and hopes for help from the United Nations and the international bourgeoisie, starting with the Indian capitalists. Its real line was clearly expressed in Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's declaration to the *Agence France Press*:

"Is the West Pakistan government not aware that I am the only one able to save East Pakistan from communism? If they take the decision to fight I shall be pushed out of power and the Naxalites will intervene in my name. If I make too many concessions, I shall lose my authority I am in a very difficult position." (*Le Monde*, March 31, 1971)

The Fourth International, while declaring its complete solidarity with the struggle of the Bengali masses against national oppression reaffirms its view that the development of a revolutionary leadership is essential to win the struggle. This victory will only be achieved by the Bengali workers, peasants and students organised and led by a revolutionary proletarian leadership. This party will have the task of continuing the revolutionary struggle by all means necessary and thus begin the task of

smashing the old structures of the Bengali countryside and cities and laying the basis to establish a workers and peasants government, which will start building a socialist society. This task can only be impeded by any intervention of the Indian bourgeoisie, which is interested only in preserving the status quo and preventing the struggle in Bangla Desh from overflowing into West Bengal. The Fourth International is opposed to intervention by the Indian bourgeoisie which would be designed to hinder the development of the Bengali struggle rather than to help it. Once more the counter-revolutionary nature of Indira Gandhi's policies and of the bourgeois state of India has been confirmed by her government's aid, side by side with the Yahya Khan clique, to the Ceylon Army's repression of the revolutionary forces in that country.

The Fourth International condemns the treachery of the Maoist government in publicly supporting the Yahya dictatorship and thus helping it to maintain its ruthless exploitation and oppression of the Bengali people. In the guise of combatting Indira Gandhi's "interference", the Mao regime stands today as a direct accomplice to the massacre. Chou en Lai's message to Yahya Khan on April 12th is a brazen attempt to cover up Peking's approval of the massacre of the Bengalis:

"We believe that through consultations and the efforts of Your Excellency and leaders of various quarters in Pakistan, Pakistan will certainly be restored to normal. In our opinion, unification of Pakistan and unity of the peoples of East and West Pakistan are basic guarantees for Pakistan to attain prosperity and strength."

Mao's subsequent personal message to Yahya Khan repeats the same idea in even stronger language. The "unity" of Pakistan is the "unity" of a monstrosity sponsored by British and world imperialism against the unity of the workers and peasants of the Indian sub-continent. It is a "unity" that strengthens the grip of a tiny group of semi-feudal landlords, comprador capitalists and Generals over millions of super-exploited and starving peasants, agricultural and industrial workers. It is a "unity" that showed callousness to the most elementary needs of the Bengali people by failing to take precautionary measures in advance of last year's tornado and by doing nothing for the victims afterwards. It is a



fundamental revision of the elementary principles of Marxism-Leninism to speak about the Pakistani "state" and the Pakistan Army without clearly specifying its class character: a state defending the interests of a coalition of semi-feudal landlords, rapacious compradors and monopoly capitalists (22 families of robber barons control two-thirds of the industrial assets of the country). The army is a reactionary bourgeois army formed and trained by imperialism and ready to join similar armies in Iran and Afghanistan in forming an anti-communist *cordon sanitaire* in Central Asia in the direct service of world imperialism. These are the forces approved by Mao to preserve "unity".

The support given to Yahya Khan by the Chinese bureaucracy represents an open betrayal of the class interests of the workers and poor peasants who have died in the struggle for national self-determination, who are struggling today against the Pakistan Army and who will tomorrow continue the struggle for a socialist Bengal. It is obvious that the Maoist leaders, far from learning the lessons of the Indonesian defeat or the lessons of their unprincipled support for Yahya's predecessor, Ayub Khan, continue on the same opportunist road. Their course weakens the socialist forces in Bangla Desh and strengthens right wing elements that utilise Peking's support of Yahya to discredit "communism". Mao's support to Yahya Khan weakens and harms the advance of the Chinese Revolution: the only substantial bulwark against the threat of imperialist aggression from the Indian peninsula against the People's Republic of China is a strong and powerful revolutionary mass movement moving towards the overthrow of the reactionary states of India and Pakistan, towards a victorious workers and peasants revolution in the whole sub-continent. If the mass uprising in East Bengal is smashed, this will strengthen reaction in the whole peninsula and the very same reactionary army that Mao and Chou flatter today, would be ready tomorrow to support aggression against the Chinese Revolution.

Those communists on a world scale who have chosen to support the Chinese leadership in the Sino-Soviet dispute on the grounds that it acts in a more revolutionary and militant way against imperialism must say today where they stand on this issue. Silence would amount to complicity.

The various Western imperialist powers have, while deploring the mass slaughter, supported in various ways the status quo. The United States in particular has manipulated the distribution of its

stocks of food to favour Yahya Khan, knowing full well that starvation is a key weapon in his armoury. Moreover most of the arms used by Yahya were supplied by the Pentagon and will be replaced from the same source as they are used up in putting down the population.

The Fourth International appeals to the international workers movement to render all possible assistance to the freedom fighters of Bangla Desh, to carry out solidarity actions with the Bengali masses and to demonstrate unconditional support of the Bengali struggle for national self-determination. The Fourth International calls upon all socialists to oppose any interference by capitalism and imperialist forces designed to maintain neo-colonialism's grip on the whole Indian sub-continent. In particular military aid and especially assistance to Yahya Khan's forces in transit must be opposed by all means necessary. Revolutionaries should put the maximum pressure on the Maoist leadership to end its shameful support to Yahya Khan's dictatorship. It is also a vital task to expose the Soviet military aid which helped build up the West Pakistan counter-revolutionary army. The left should be on its guard against the possibility of a massive intervention sponsored by U.S. imperialism to prevent any spread of the revolutionary struggle in Asia. The Fourth International calls upon the workers, peasants, students and revolutionary intellectuals in West Pakistan to break with all chauvinistic anti-Bengali sentiments, to understand that the murderous Generals now trying to smother the uprising of the Bengali people in a bloodbath are their old oppressors. The struggle against the colonial war unleashed by Yahya Khan in Eastern Bengal is not only their internationalist duty, but is also in their own class interests. To defeat the West Pakistan army in Bengal will speed the liberation of the West Pakistani masses from the yoke of their exploiters.

The Fourth International is confident that despite temporary setbacks, the Bengali masses will finally triumph over the armed might of West Pakistani capital and thus pave the way for a united socialist Bengal which in turn will give powerful impetus to the liberation of the entire sub-continent from the yoke of imperialism and landlordism.

Victory to Bangla Desh!  
For a Socialist Bangla Desh!  
For a United Socialist Bengal!



## Interview with West Bengali Trotskyist

*This interview with Cde Sudhir Bose, a leader of the Bengali branch of the Indian Socialist Workers Party (Indian section of the F.I.) was first published in The Red Mole.*

What is the political importance of West Bengal in relation to the rest of India?

The political importance of West Bengal is very great, but the only way you can appreciate this is if you understand the political and historical background and tradition of this province. For instance during the days of British imperialist rule over our country, it was in Bengal where the terrorist movement and the revolutionary movement was born. If a proper survey were conducted, I think you would find that one family in twelve would be able to boast a martyr who died for the cause of national liberation. They fought bravely against British imperialism and made Bengal the spearhead of the anti-imperialist struggle. That is why Bengal was the part of India which the imperialists disliked and feared the most and that is why they institutionalised a racist discrimination against the Bengalis. They could not trust us to serve in the British Army and in this of course they were right. If the Bengalis had been armed it is possible that a revolutionary leadership would have emerged to lead them.

Yesterday they fought against the British, today they lead the struggle against capitalism itself, that is against the Indian Congress and its allies. It was in West Bengal where the popular discontent and revolutionary fervour of the masses was channelled into popular frontism by the so-called left parties. Today a big mass movement is developing against the betrayals of these parties and, in my opinion, West Bengal will be the place from where the spark or rather the flame of socialist revolution will begin to set the whole of India ablaze, and thus bring about a change in the social structure of the country.

What is the present situation of West Bengal, in other words the state of the peasantry, working class movement, etc.?

There is a very serious crisis facing capitalism in West Bengal and there is a general feeling which has pervaded virtually every strata which shows us that the people are simply not prepared to be oppressed any longer. From a revolutionary point of view the situation couldn't be more opportune. The capitalists are aware of this and they have started shifting their industries from West Bengal to "safer" parts of India. This withdrawal of capital symbolises the pre-revolutionary situation which exists in Bengal today. The leading Indian industrialist, Birla, recently stated that he preferred Bombay to Calcutta because the latter was a "hell" as far as he was concerned. He is, of course, correct.

The level of political consciousness inside the working class is very high. They fight on the streets today on *all* issues and not only their economic demands. Last December the jute mill workers came out on strike and the employers locked them out. This resulted in solidarity actions by all other workers and poor peasants. A General Strike was proposed in order to defend the jute workers. The central government capitulated before the strike could take place. Of course the working class movement is faced with certain problems. The level of unemployment is constantly rising and at the moment the average rate of unemployment is 65% throughout the province in both the cities and the countryside. The second problem is the trade union bureaucrats who are by and large in the pay of the capitalists. These parasites have created in many areas an atmosphere of fear and they are constantly victimising socialist



and radical workers. They act openly as the Trojan horse of Indian capitalism. But despite the growing poverty and constant fear of unemployment, the workers refuse to be intimidated and are in the fighting line of the struggle.

As far as the peasantry is concerned, as you know throughout India 70% of the population is agricultural. In West Bengal the figure is slightly less. Between 60% and 62% of the population depends on agriculture. Because of the famine conditions in the countryside and the drought, even among the peasantry the largest grouping consists of what can only be described as a rural proletariat. This class owns nothing except the mud and straw huts and their eating utensils. These people are today prepared to fight and go the whole way to smash the existing structures and change the social relationships which exist in the countryside. Thus we see that the demand for seizing the land today becomes extremely popular. This demand in some places was so powerful that we have seen the Naxalite movement winning a great deal of support and forcing both the right-wing reformist Communist Parties to make a show to the people in their short-lived "land grabbing" exploits. But they failed miserably and no one was taken in, not even the right-wing press.

According to the law there are no landlords. But of course this is a complete farce because in India it is the unwritten laws which operate. On paper a landlord might only own 25 acres, which is the limit, but in practice he can own land under several fictitious names. But this type of landlord has more of an upper-class kulak mentality rather than that of an old feudal landlord (this is in Bengal, of course). So as far as the class structure of the Bengali countryside is concerned, you have the kulak-landlords on the top, and then you have the middle peasants, but they are also in a state of decay because of the poverty, unemployment and the famine. Virtually every alternate year brings us famine or drought. Even today we are living in famine conditions. From April to October the agricul-

tural labourers will therefore have almost nothing to eat. They will have only one meal in 24 hours and that meal would surprise even the most ardent revolutionary living in the developed capitalist countries. It consists of rice with salt and if they're lucky some cooked vegetables. The number of people who eat meat or fish is very limited. The agricultural labourers are on the lowest rung of the ladder. They comprise a large and growing majority and represent an extremely potent revolutionary force in the Bengali countryside. In any future struggle they will be a decisive component and that is why our comrades are working in the countryside and leading struggles.

Could you tell us something about these fake left parties which believe in electoral fronts. What concrete results have their capitulations had on the consciousness of the Bengali masses?

The "left" parties were undoubtedly very popular because of their propaganda and agitation which was undoubtedly quite effective. But 1967 marks the great divide because it was in this year that these parties completely exposed themselves. These same parties which had in the past fought for some of the demands of the people, when they came to power in 1967, their lust for power and their desire to hold office overshadowed everything else. They openly went over to collaboration with the capitalist class. In the years when they were in power they behaved like any bourgeois government. The people saw for themselves that nothing had changed. Corruption, high food prices, unemployment, disease all remained the same and in times like these even the most violent revolutionary rhetoric cannot mask the fact that the condition of the people remains unchanged. Despite all their big talk, they failed to arrest a single black-marketeer or property speculator. In 1969 when they came to power again there was yet another chance for them to mobilise the masses against the bourgeois state and expose the central state apparatus. Once again they failed miserably. They weren't even capable of implementing an existing law regarding the amount of land any one person was



entitled to own, though they know full well that many landlords are defying or disregarding this law, which after all was framed by a capitalist government. The least the United Front government could have done—after all it included two parties which call themselves communist—was to implement this law. The only actions the two CPs could carry out was restricted to a mock occupation of Indira Ghandi and Birla's gardens. It could be that some of the CP leaders knew the geography of these gardens well as they are entertained there on certain occasions. These attempts to bluff the people have failed.

I think that these parties have ceased to be left parties in any meaningful sense of the word. They are working hand-in-glove with the ruling Congress Party, with other parties like the Muslim League and in places even with semi-fascist parties like the Jan Sangh. These parties have become a part of the established order. Today in West Bengal there are only two exist-

ing revolutionary tendencies: the Maoists and the Trotskyists. These are the only currents who oppose both the capitalists and the sham opposition of the "left" parties. Of course the Maoists are much better known than us because of the great weight of the Chinese Revolution, but don't be too deceived by appearances because in some parts of Bengal we are much stronger. You can ask any member of the repressive state apparatus in the district of Bankura who are the Trotskyists of the Fourth International. He will tell you. He knows because he and his friends have been trying to defeat us and have failed. Our comrades continue to occupy the land.

What is the attitude of the Trotskyist movement in India towards the General Election?

You probably know that the Indian Constitution is the longest in the world. It has 395 Articles and innumerable clauses and appendices, etc., but this constitution or any other capitalist constitution is incapable of solving the problem which the country is now facing. The number of elections is increasing both on a provincial and the central level. Looking at it from a purely practical point of view, it would be impossible for revolutionaries to participate because in India to participate in an election costs a lot of money and we are poor and all our funds are anyway put to better use. To run one candidate alone would cost us a minimum of Rs. 20,000 (£1,000 approx. on the black market exchange rate). As you can see, no real revolutionary tendency would be able to spare that amount of money just for an election.

Of course, there is a more important and political side to the question. After all, a bourgeois election is a hoax, a farce, particularly as far as we are concerned. The toiling masses of West Bengal have seen through this farce. Large numbers of workers and poor peasants today have no illusions about the elections. They have seen many elections. They and others like them, particularly the youth, feel that there is only one way and that is the way of revolutionary struggle. This atmosphere has been enhanced by the two revolutionary movements who



An anti-cholera poster in West Bengal. The biggest disease, however, is the bourgeoisie.



operate there, namely the Maoists and the Trotskyists. And now our party, the Socialist Workers Party in Bengal, has decided from both a tactical and strategical point of view not to participate in the elections. This doesn't mean that we extend the slogan of boycott like the Naxalites have done to every sphere of life without any regard for the level of consciousness of the masses. We have also decided to use the election period to go to the masses and explain to them the meaning of the election and why we are not participating in it.

What has been the role of the Naxalites or rather the CP(M-L) and what do you think their evolution is likely to be? Have they a future?

The Naxalites or the Maoists could be in fact one of the biggest parties in India, but because of their adventurism and because of their indecision and because of the internecine battles which take place inside their leading bodies, they have not been able to build an all-India party. Already they have disintegrated into different factions and groups all claiming their right to the true heritage. There are about 30 small groups and 13 different newspapers in West Bengal alone. They're saying almost the same things. Same strategy, same Mao Tse Tung, same ideas. They are divided on the question of who is the real leadership. The main party of course is the CP (M-L). They had a strategy of going to the countryside to start an agrarian revolution and this they tried, but never on the basis of the class struggle in the particular locality or on the bases of the masses in that locality. They tried it on the basis of individual terror by killing individual landlords and individual *jotedars* in Bengal. They failed because they failed to understand the role the masses play in any meaningful struggle and this despite all their "serve the people" propaganda. Their emphasis on individual terror brought upon their heads the entire might of the state and they suffered serious casualties. Many brave and heroic militants were killed. The repression has had a demoralising effect on many of their cadres and has caused some disintegration. I don't think that their future in that sense is

very bright.

Only recently they have changed their strategy. They have left the rural sector, but alas, without a Red Army, and are now concentrating on the industrial sector. Here, too, they have a plan of individual terror which they proclaim quite openly. So far they have not been able to kill any big or leading industrialist. They have only executed some medium-size traders. They should know as well as anyone else that the laws of property mean that the dead man's bounty goes to his descendants and relatives or to the government. This property would never go to the people.

Another point on which we disagree with them is on their method of furthering the "cultural revolution" in India. They have started attacking colleges, schools and universities. They have ransacked and burnt many libraries containing extremely valuable books and manuscripts which would be of importance to any Marxist historian. They have even attempted to burn the entire library of Calcutta University where there are many books which are not available anywhere. The lunatic reasoning behind this is that Mao's writing is sufficient for everyone. You don't need to study anything else. This attitude has nothing in common with Marxism; it is in fact reminiscent of another ideology. They have also destroyed science laboratories in which useful apparatus has been destroyed and they also sometimes tend to kill teachers. Anyone who thinks I'm exaggerating should read the posters the Naxalites stick up all over the place in which they openly admit this. If anything I've underplayed some of their more "heroic" activities. In the name of the cultural revolution they have committed acts which would sadden the heart of any Marxist-Leninist who has read both Marx and Lenin. These acts serve no real purpose. They tend to lower the political prestige of the revolutionary movement as a whole. In a country with mass illiteracy you don't endear yourselves to the masses by burning books. This is why I tell you they are on a suicidal course which can lead only to total disintegration.





Victims of the flood in East Bengal.

Could you tell us something about the Trotskyist movement in Bengal? What work is it doing and what is the present situation in the areas which are under their control?

Trotskyists of the Fourth International only began functioning in West Bengal at the end of 1968 and the beginning of 1969. After studying the situation and analysing the balance of class forces we decided to concentrate all our modest forces in the rural areas. If we can organise properly in one area and bring it under our control, the spark from this area would act as an inspiration for the rest of the country and point the way forward. So in one district called Bankura and in its rural area which is not very easy to reach because of no proper communication system. There is only one bus route and even on that you have to walk three miles where there isn't a road. In such an area, the Trotskyists started a movement. First we carried out simple, agitational political propaganda and were pleasantly surprised by the

response we got. Then later we issued a call for a strike in that area. Everyone knows what a strike is in the cities. But a strike by agricultural workers in a country like India is virtually unheard of. The response of the rural poor to the strike was amazing and took us all by surprise. It was too big for the small Trotskyist force in Bankura. For ten whole days the labourers didn't go to work. Despite the suffering they still refused to go. Finally their main demand was accepted. In this way our first strike was a success. (cf. *The Red Mole*, Vol.1, no. 11—Ed.) Then we decided that simply to stop at wage demands was to pander to economism and this was the last thing that the poor peasants needed. So we decided to go further. The next step was to seize the land, and we proceeded to do so. The capitalists said this was illegal, etc, but in fact it wasn't because in some cases the land didn't belong to the landlord and *he* was occupying it illegally. We explained this and the agricultural labourers seized the



land as a class, as a mass aware of its rights and its place in history. We have occupied over 300 acres of land in three different localities, and the lands belong to either the government or to the landlords. While the seizures were taking place there was a clash between the landlords and the police on the one hand, and our comrades and their supporters on the other. But our numbers were so large that the rural authorities were frightened of a confrontation. The real crisis that we had to face was in November and December of last year. This is the harvesting period and the local authorities were scared. So the local police station was reinforced; it was given a special wireless set and many other subsidiaries. Then semi-military forces were also brought to this area so that our movement, a new type of movement as far as India was concerned, could be halted. What was this movement and what was it engaged in doing? The land that we have occupied and which is well over 350 acres was not given to individual peasants. A committee known as the "Collective Farming Committee" with an elected leadership of 21 people, all of whom are agricultural workers, runs the entire area. There is a chairman of this committee as well. This form of organisation is new to Bengal if not India. Most of the other groups and tendencies who seized the land gave it to their peasant supporters to cultivate. We Trotskyists refused to encourage, especially in a place like West Bengal, individual ownership. Land belongs to the collective and its committee organises collective cultivation, etc. While the amount of land we have seized and which is under our control is nothing compared to the vastness of the province, it represents a far bigger *potential*, and it is the new form of organisation and its example which frightens the ruling class.

We have had many clashes with the authorities and have not been intimidated, but of course our resources are limited compared to the force of the bourgeois state's apparatus. The police have attacked villages and beaten up women and children, tortured peasants, etc. They claimed that the Trotskyists had launched

an offensive against their special camp, but this was a blatant lie. From the beginning of November to December 24th 1970, there were eight clashes between the Trotskyists on one side and the police and rich peasants on the other. There were a few of our comrades wounded, many were arrested and 200 have had to go underground, and against our leading comrade Jagdish Jha the police have registered 50 different cases, all of a serious nature. The police have offered an unofficial reward for comrade Jha, dead or alive, of £50. This is a description of the reign of terror in the Bankura district of West Bengal. We have begun to start in some other districts also a similar movement and it will have its effect in the near future. Of course our aim is to generalise the struggle, but our resources are not great and the Fourth International does not have state power as yet. Despite this we think that comrades in Europe and North America could do considerably more to aid us.

What are the relations between the Trotskyists and the Naxalites?

We have one big agreement with them. Like us they are also opposing the capitalists and the whole role which the left parties so-called are playing in India. But there are some big differences also. For instance the Naxalites still believe in the bloc of four classes theoretically and they try and impose Mao's cult everywhere. They believe in individual terrorism and thus underrate the importance of the class struggle. We believe in increasing the struggle, in mass terrorism. But in the struggle when we see that the Naxalites are being oppressed by the police, we help them in every possible way. In that sense they are comrades engaged in a similar struggle. Most of the Naxalite workers are sincere and honest militants who are dying for their ideals.

What is the importance of the national question in West Bengal, particularly bearing in mind the fact that in East Bengal (Pakistan) it has acquired a phenomenal importance?



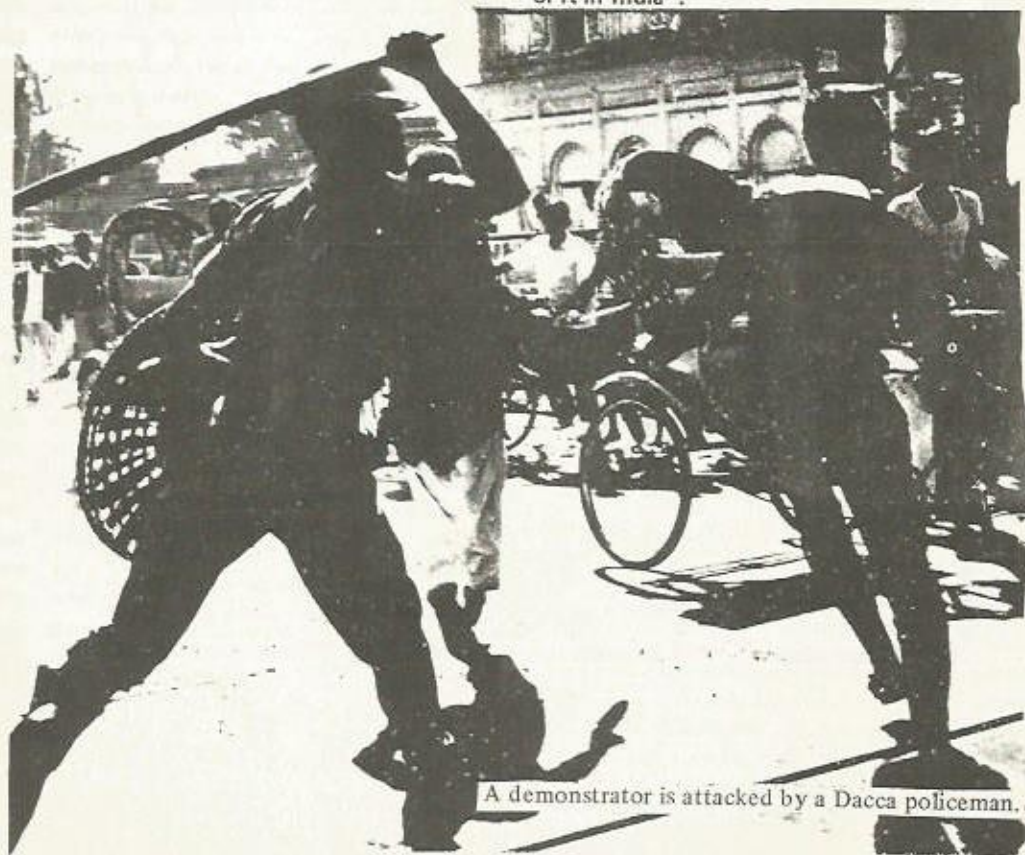
Yes, it is important . . . but we cannot simply restrict it to that as we don't want to replace one oppressor with another. We have no real differences with East Bengal. We speak the same language, share the same culture, etc. The differences that exist have been fostered artificially. On its own, Bengal is a sizeable country with a population of over a hundred million. Therefore the only slogan we can give is that of a Socialist Bengal and that is the way we hope to develop consciousness on the national question.

Knowing as we do and understanding the tremendous impact which the Chinese revolution has had in Asia and ourselves being outside the Maoist movement, do you think it will be possible in the near future to build a large section of the Fourth International in India?

**Surely and certainly. I do not doubt it. What we lack and what both the orthodox Maoists and the pro-Moscow Stalinists possess is the backing of state power. In a country which is backward and a majority of whose people are illiterate**

like India today, simple propaganda in pictorial form or in films etc. on a large scale undoubtedly has a big impact. We, alas, do not as yet have the resources to match these efforts on our own. Our newspapers, etc., are very modest affairs compared to those of the pro-Moscow and pro-Peking tendencies. Also the financial resources of these states enable them to maintain full-timers, get printing presses and the like.

However, we must not be pessimistic in the face of this. What is always decisive is politics, and even as Mao has said, politics must be in command. We agree. We say that the programme and the politics of the Indian Fourth Internationalists today are an extremely important weapon and we shall ensure that this weapon is used well. The existing political vacuum makes it all the more imperative for the Trotskyists to develop roots in the masses and thus lay the foundations of a revolutionary party. I think we are beginning to do this and therefore I can say with a certain amount of confidence that the Fourth International has a big future ahead of it in India .



A demonstrator is attacked by a Dacca policeman.



## INDIAN MARXISTS SUPPORT BENGALI STRUGGLE

*The following statement has been issued by the Secretariat of the Socialist Workers Party (Trotskyists), Indian section of the Fourth International, on the democratic revolution in Bangla Desh:*

The massive assertion by the East Bengali people of their determination to end exploitation by the West Pakistani military regime headed by Yahya Khan has claimed lives of lakhs of workers, peasants and students, highlighting once again the brutal subjugation and economic exploitation which has been the lot of the people of East Pakistan under the garb of an Islamic state ever since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. The large scale and indiscriminate massacres, reckless bombings of towns and villages to crush growing resistance of an entire nation fighting for national independence has no parallel in modern history. This has clearly demonstrated the total inability of the West Pakistani bourgeoisie to solve any of the basic problems of 75 million people of East Pakistan, representing a majority of the total population of that country.

Unfortunately the liberation forces led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman cannot as yet match their strength against the organised fire power of the Pakistan Army, equipped with the most sophisticated weapons. The criminal role of the Anglo-American bloc of imperialist powers which has extended all possible military and financial aid to the militarists of Islam must be condemned by all freedom-loving people. No less condemnable is the behaviour of the United Nations, the "thieves' kitchen" dominated by imperialists in the context of savage butchery perpetrated in Bangla Desh.

It is all the more deplorable that even the "socialist" countries like China and the USSR should have pursued an equivocal policy of directly or indirectly placating the Yahya Khan regime, having allowed the arms supplied to West Pakistan to be used against the national liberation movement in Bangla Desh. There are also reports that the Chinese ships have been used to ship arms to Chittagong ignoring popular

protests. We demand that the Governments of USSR and China immediately stop supply of arms and other aid to the West Pakistan regime and rush every possible help to the freedom fighters of East Bengal.

The treacherous role of the Government of Ceylon led by so-called left and "Marxist" parties like the SLFP, LSSP and CPC is providing transit and refuelling facilities to Pakistani planes transporting soldiers as well as arms and ammunition from the western wing of Pakistan to the eastern wing deserves universal condemnation. We demand that such facilities be stopped forthwith. We also deplore the ambivalent stand of sympathetic bystander taken by the Indira Gandhi Government in New Delhi in relation to the developments in Bangla Desh and demand that the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Bangla Desh be recognised forthwith.

It is obvious that Bangla Desh is in for a prolonged period of civil war in which the people can be victorious only if they prepare themselves for protracted guerrilla resistance. We are confident that the revolutionary leadership of workers and peasants in Bangla Desh will march forward to their goal of a socialist Bangla Desh, creating new conditions for a revolutionary overthrow of the present capitalist system. The step taken to arm the masses of people must be welcomed and this must be followed by steps to create new organs of struggle in the form of elected councils of workers and peasants to coordinate their resistance on a national scale.

It is the sacred duty of the working class and the exploited masses not only of India but also of West Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and other neighbouring countries to frustrate the treacherous policies of their respective governments and rally behind the people of Bangla Desh and render to them every possible assistance in their liberation war.

*April 4th, 1971*



# The Red Mole



Revolutionary internationalist Marxist fortnightly, edited by Tariq Ali.

News, discussion and analysis on all subjects of importance to the revolutionary left in Britain and internationally.

RED CIRCLES set up by Mole supporters all over the country provide a framework for action around issues of immediate importance. Look for the address of your nearest Red Circle in The Red Mole.

1/6 per copy. For a subscription to the Mole, fill in and send the form below.

Please send me THE RED MOLE for the next 6/12 months. I enclose cheque/P.O./cash for £1/£2.

Name .....

Address.....

THE RED MOLE, 182 Pentonville Road,  
London N.1. 01-837 6954, 01-278 2616.

Foreign subs: Asia/Africa/Australia/  
N & S America: £5 per year (airmail);  
£3 per year (ordinary). W. Europe:  
£3 per year.



*Background books to the events which are transforming the East*

---

**PAKISTAN—Military Rule or People's Power : by Tariq Ali**  
The background to the current struggle for power in Bangla Desh  
[£2.75]

**PERMANENT REVOLUTION : by Leon Trotsky**  
[£1.05]

**THE DEATH AGONY OF CAPITALISM : by Leon Trotsky**  
[20p]

**TO THE TOILERS OF THE EAST : by Leon Trotsky**  
[7½p]

**LETTER TO THE INDIAN WORKERS : by Leon Trotsky**  
[7½p]

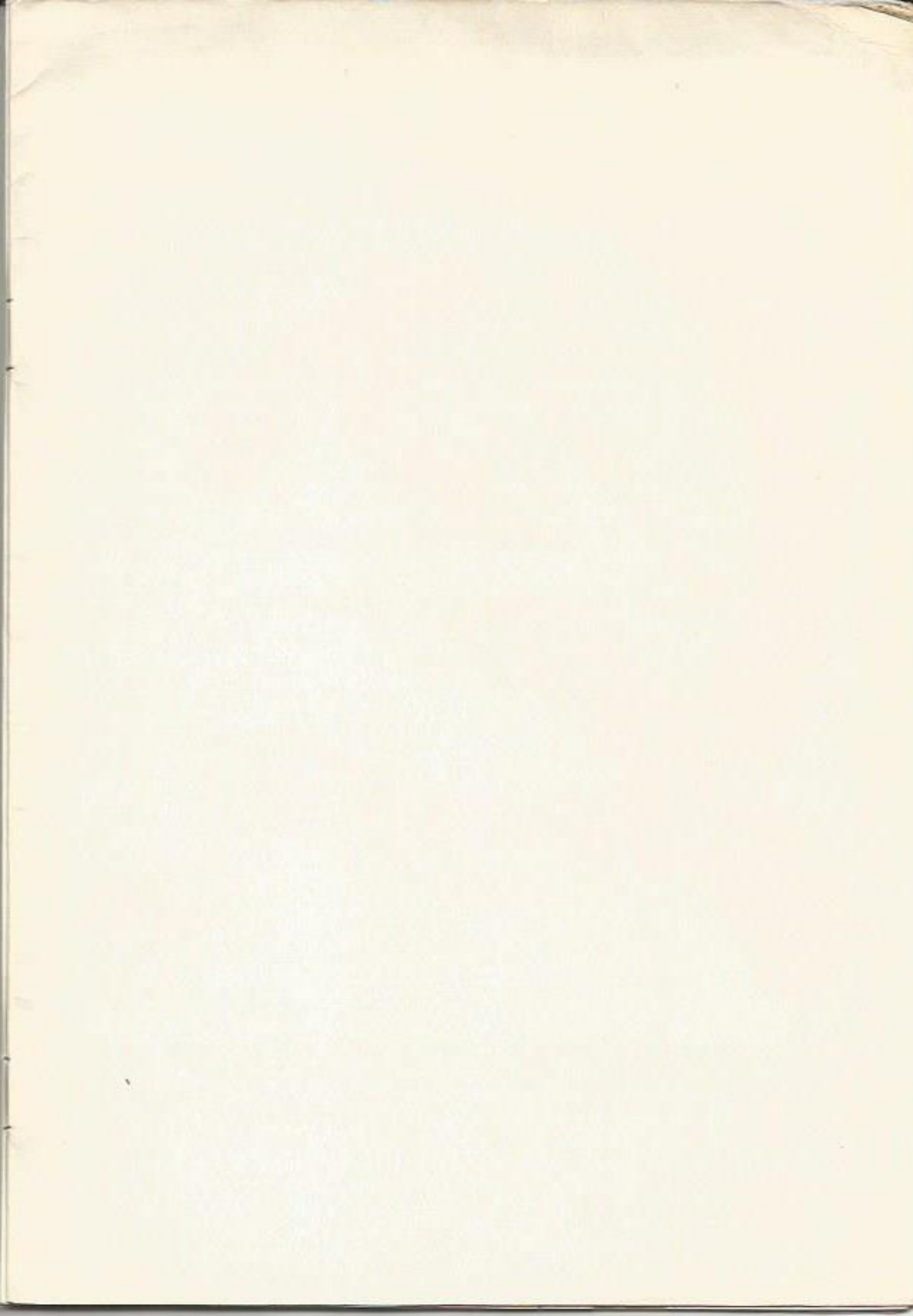
**PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND WORLD REVOLUTION : by**  
Ernest Mandel  
[10p]

**THE CATASTROPHE IN INDONESIA—Three articles on the fatal**  
consequences of Communist Party policy  
[20p]

---

*From RED BOOKS, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.*  
*Add 12½% for postage and packing.*









Printed by The Prinkipo Press Ltd (T.U.),  
182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.  
Tel: 01-837 9987