

An address to the nation by Mr. Tajuddin Ahmad, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, broadcast on December 8, 1971.

My dear countrymen and comrades,

The Pakistani generals have plunged the sub-continent into a calamitous war. It was clear for months that they were seeking this evil consummation of their folly and crimes in Bangladesh.

The aggression against India has taken place in the background of Pakistan's humiliating reverses at the hands of the Mukti Bahini and India's warm-hearted support to the people of Bangladesh in their just struggle.

The peril from the common enemy has brought the people of Bangladesh and India closer than ever. Our forces are now fighting shoulder to shoulder with Indian forces, and their blood is mingling with ours on our soil. This seals the bond between two peoples who are destined for friendship.

The people of India had always recognised us in their hearts and now their Government has accorded formal recognition to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It is a tribute to the martyrs in the cause of our freedom and a triumph for all classes of people in Bangladesh, their elected representatives, and the Mukti Bahini whose efforts, sacrifices and impregnable unity have won them diplomatic recognition as an independent and sovereign nation. It is also a triumph for the people of India whose united wish was for Bangladesh to be recognised. This is indeed a fine hour for both Bangladesh and India.

This is but natural that India, the largest democracy in the world, should be the first to welcome us to the comity of independent nations. Her commitment to humanity and freedom, evident in her caring for ten million uprooted Bengalis and bearing the brunt of war to defend their democratic rights, must be regarded as a marvel of our time. We rejoice at India's bold decision, and thank Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Government of India, the members of the Indian Parliament, and the people of India for their historic contribution to the consolidation of our statehood. The Bengali nation owes an infinite debt of gratitude to Sreemati Gandhi's sagacity and statesmanship. Following India Bhutan has given us recognition, and we are also grateful to the King and people of that country.

India's recognition of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is a big event. As far as our relations with India are concerned, their foundation

will be friendship and mutual respect. The tie we have forged with the Indian people in adversity and war will endure in peace and will, I am confident, bring lasting benefits to our two nations.

The joy of the people of Bangladesh is, however, darkened by a cruel irony. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the Bengali nation, is in the prison of the enemy at this hour, when Bangladesh, his dream, has come true on the international plane. The Bangabandhu, whether away from his people or among them, is always in their hearts. He is the symbol of the consciousness that has changed the past for us and is part of the mythology that will sustain this nation in the future. And yet his absence from us now is painful.

The emergence of free Bangladesh should be welcome to all progressive nations. The new state represents peaceful co-existence, non-alignment in international politics and opposition to imperialism and colonialism in all forms and is committed to democracy and a secular and socialist way of life. I invite the nations to follow the example of India and Bhutan and accept the reality of seventy-five million people. The alternative to this is flying in the face of common sense.

The West Pakistan Government is being engulfed by the evil it has brought into existence. The attempts of her patrons in the UN Security Council to save her from Nemesis has so far been unsuccessful. The American resolution calling for a cease-fire in the subcontinent without attending to the root cause of the conflict in Bangladesh is, in fact, a monument to America's blindness and perversity. China is also guilty of the same failure of judgement. The people of Bangladesh are grateful for the Soviet veto.

We in Bangladesh must now complete the task assigned to us by history and drive the last nail into the coffin of a fascist state led by crazy militarists. The ring of death is fast closing round the enemy. He is in retreat everywhere and reeling under the blows of the Mukti Bahini and our ally. The hour has struck for the people of Bangladesh to rise against the invader to a man and give him the coup de grace he has earned. They must at the same time aid the liberator in every possible way, help maintain law and order, and co-operate with the administration of the Government of Bangladesh. Let it not be said of anyone in Bangladesh, whatever his station in life, that he failed when the call came.

I call upon all enemy troops and razzakars to lay down their arms and surrender. They can yet save themselves by heeding this call. I also call upon all citizen of Bangladesh to avoid the temptation to take the law into their own hands. We must remember that it is the prerogative of the

state to punish offenders according to the due process of law. If a single citizen of Bangladesh is harmed or hurt because of his language or race it will be a betrayal of the ideals of the founder of the nation and the flag of free Bangladesh.

Bangladesh will carry in her bosom the scars caused by the occupation army for a long time, but there is comfort and exultation in the thought that the end of the invader is come, that Bangladesh is going to be completely liberated, and that her homeless stricken children will soon return home from their sorrow and exile.

As we win the war, we must prepare to win the peace. The edifice of 'Golden Bengal' must be laid on the ruins left by a cruel war, and everyone of her sons and daughters must take part in the exhilarating and humbling task of reconstruction and development. The revolution begun by the Bangabandhu will end only when his ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism are fully realised.

JOI BANGLA

