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A. H. M. Fazlul Quader Chowdhury

Goods Hill,

Chittagong the 25. 12. 1968.

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My dear Nawabzada Saheb,

I was so sorry that we could not meet last time when you were in Dacca. I understand some of our friends did not like the idea that we should meet. In fact I was eager to meet you to exchange views about programme of action to unseat the present government. Unfortunately in our country to some of our friends vanity is greater than unity and jealousies are not forgotten even to meet common danger unitedly. You would appreciate that that sort of attitude weakens the strength behind even a noble cause when unity is a must.

I recall your friendly advise at my residence in 1966 that I should'nt join any party for the present. I remember all other kind sentiments expressed by you then, regarding how best I could be useful to the nation. As a friend and colleague I do not propose to embarass you in any way. I have very high regard for your patriotism and integrity. Encouraged by our past relationship I deem it my duty to consult you about my future course of action in the political scene of the country. Needless to mention that I would fight for the restoration of people's rights. Sometimes some of our friends ask me all sorts of questions regarding my association with Ayub regime. It is true I did criticise the leaders of the past regimes for omissions and commissions and their political behaviour, which made the ground fertile for the promulgation of Martial Law in the country. Maybe important public men did blunders with honest intentions. You know Martial Law was hailed in the country and even personalities like Late Khawja Najimuddin and Mohtarma Fatema Jinnah hailed promulgation of Martial Law. I might also have comitted blunders by trusting Ayub Khan about his political intentions. But I did all that in good faith with a fond hope that I would be able to convert Ayub Khan to democratic way of thinking and rights of the people would be restored by him. I was toying with that sort of idea but unfortunately I failed to win over Ayub Khan to the side of the people. I did not want a fight between the army and the people. I had thought by supporting Ayub Khan, I would inspire his confidence and the quietly win him over to people's cause. You would appreciate those were the days when political parties and people's political rights were suppressed. Need of the hour was to reconstruct political life. You know more than anybody else that I and Mohd Ali Bogra did not join Ayub Cabinet unconditionally. We made three conditions for joining Ayub's cabinet. Number one was that members should be allowed to retain their seats in the N.A.. Number two was restoration of fundamental rights.

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And number three was introduction of direct election on the basis of adult franchise. After a great deal of yea and nay Ayub Khan ordered amendment of the constitution allowing ministers to retain their seats in the legislature. Fundamental rights were also conceded later. Regarding adult franchise, he promised to abide by the recommendations of the franchise commission. President Ayub made public his promise in this regard in his address to the basic democrats in Quetta on 11th December, 1962. In fact Muslim League Convention also passed a resolution for introduction of adult franchise and direct elections at Clifton, Karachi. Opposition leaders like Sardar Bahadur Khan, Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, Begum Shah Nawaz and Mohd Hussain Chatha also attended the Convention. Ultimately Franchise Commission report came out on 23rd August, 1963 recommending adult franchise and direct elections. I recall that Mr. Sabur and I also told the press and the public that adult franchise would be introduced if the franchise commission recommended. Unfortunately President Ayub resiled from his earlier promise and Electoral College Bill was passed in 1964 envisaging indirect elections. You know by that time I was Speaker N.A. of Pakistan and I could not vote for or against the bill. My conduct as Speaker of the N.A. is known to you. It is redundant here to blow my own trumpet. Had Ayub Khan trusted me I would have continued to serve as the Speaker of the N.A. and I would not have been singled out to be thrown out of his party. You know more than anybody else, how many times I differed with his political thinking and his administrative measures.

Winston Churchill rightly said, that if you start a quarrel between the past and the present you would lose the future. I do not want to dilate on the past because then our united fight for people's cause would end in bickerings. Believe me I did not support Miss Jinnah because I had thought that Mohtarma would not be able to run the state and thrash out party bickerings. May be I was wrong. But that's what I thought. Past is past, let us face future unitedly. Blaming each other won't help. Mutual jealousies must be forgotten for the present. I am glad and I must congratulate your wisdom in inviting Bhutto's ^{party} in spite of the fact that Bhutto was a Martial Law Minister and President Ayub's closest associate when the present constitution was framed. You, of all our friends in the opposition have an open mind and I know you would very much like co-operation coming from any quarter. I know our other friends who are top leaders in the opposition today are also very sincere in their attitude for the restoration of people's rights.

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Let all of us combine and fight the battle of freedom on behalf of the people.

Unity could only be our chief weapon in that fight and you would appreciate that jealousies shall definitely mar the strength of the struggle against authoritarian government.

I am looking forward to meet you all. May I remind, my friend, it was Marshal Bernadette one of the Marshals of Napoleon, who ultimately engineered the downfall of Napoleon, when he behaved like a dictator and became guilty of broken pledges and nepotism.

More when we meet. With kindest regards.

Yours very sincerely,

(A. K. M. Fazlul Quader Chowdhury).

s.c/