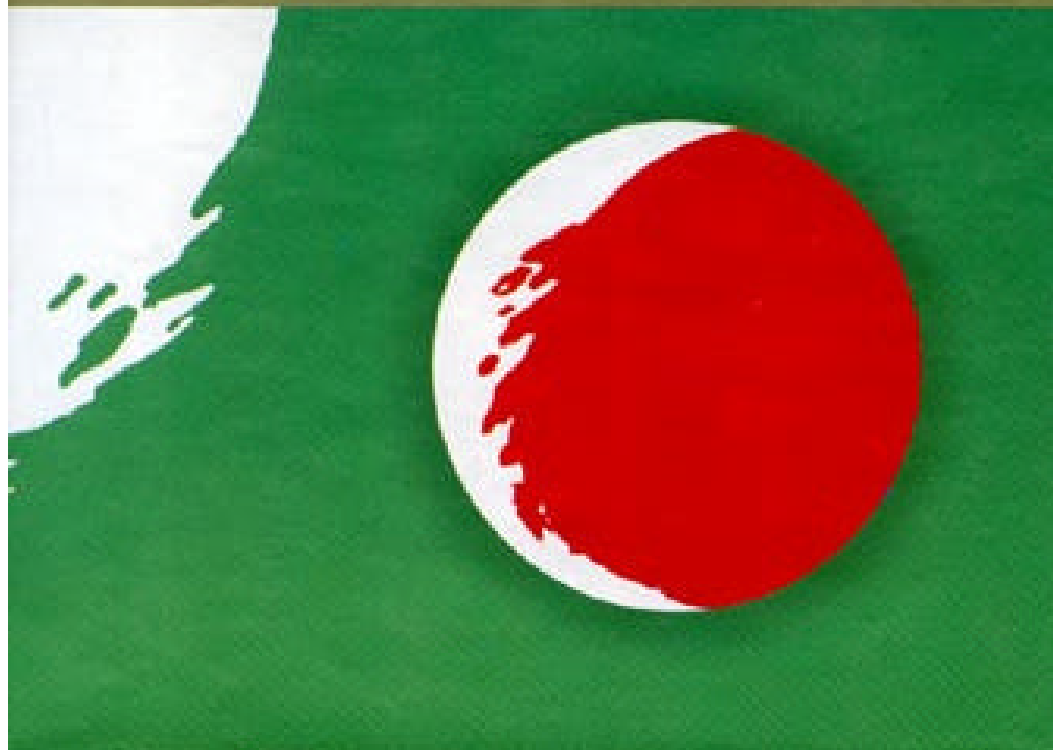


THE  
VANQUISHED  
GENERALS  
AND THE  
LIBERATION WAR  
OF BANGLADESH  
MUNTASSIR MAMOON



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Translated from Bengali  
by  
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**Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,**  
the name that inspired the nation to fight against the  
occupying Pakistani army in 1971.

**THE VANQUISHED GENERALS  
AND  
THE LIBERATION WAR  
OF BANGLADESH**

## Preface

I went to Pakistan for three weeks in early 1998. The trip was organised after much discussion with Mohiuddin Ahmed, of University Press Limited. There were three sides during our Liberation War-Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Books on Bangladesh and India have been published here, but there has been none on Pakistan. There is almost no information in our hands on what the policy makers of Pakistan thought in those days, or why at all they chose to go to war with a part of their country. Those who started the war have not spoken much about it during the last 30 years or so. But some of the Generals have written memoirs where our Liberation War has also been discussed.

We had to plan our Pakistan trip very carefully because we as a nation do have the tendency to be intolerant about many things and we take quick decisions without delving much into the matter. We also have this habit of politicising history. For all these reasons, we were afraid that our trip may cause widespread misunderstanding here. But at the end, we decided that it was necessary to go to Pakistan to collect information on the Liberation War. And Prof. Rehman Sobhan very generously came to our help.

But the question was, even if we did go to Pakistan, would the main players of those days let us interview them? They had not opened their mouth in the last three decades. Will they now talk to the two of us from Bangladesh? This delicate situation was resolved with help from Amina Sayeed, the Chief of the Oxford University Press in Pakistan. It took us almost a year to convince the interviewees to talk to us and to finalise all the preparations.

In the three weeks, we interviewed about 35 persons in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Rawalpindi. We let them talk freely and refrained from asking them questions unless it was required. All of them were very co-operative. I should mention that the interviews did at times turn out to be

mentally distressing experiences for us (specially while interviewing men like Niazi or Rao Farman Ali), but we suppressed our emotions for the sake of collection of historical data. It should also be mentioned that what they have said when we interviewed them express their own opinion only and not that of ours or the publisher. The reader is requested to keep that in mind while reading the articles.

The first three articles are based on the interviews we took and various articles published in Pakistan. Some repetitions may be there. Although the subject matter of the three articles are different, it was not possible to avoid repetitions in order to maintain the continuity of the narration and reasoning.

The fourth article is based on the memoirs and interviews of Pakistani Generals. Mohiuddin Ahmed and I took the interviews. The Generals defeated or involved in the Liberation War have been writing for the past few years. Their memoirs are being published. This has become a good post-retirement occupation for them.

These Generals are now in their 70s or early 80s. They are enjoying lavish facilities while spending their retired days. But an invisible force seems to be accusing them all the time. Their successors give them doubtful looks. No songs are being sung to glorify their feats. So they are being forced to write, specially on 1971 and its background.

I have meticulously read and evaluated the books by the Generals because we need to know how the Pakistani Generals have seen and judged our Liberation War. The Pakistani Generals have written their books mainly for the readers in Pakistan and the West. Till recently, a large part of the people of Pakistan did not know, or was not allowed to know, about the genocide in Bangladesh. Whatever they have been told has actually added to the confusion. These books may confuse not only the West Pakistani reader but also readers in other countries. Even Bangladeshi readers may get confused if they read these books without proper introduction. These books need to be judged properly so that they will not be able to distort history through the exaggerations, confusing information, and lies and half-truths.

After talking to people of different walks of life in Pakistan, I have come to believe that Pakistanis are carrying some preconceived notions about



Bangalis and the erstwhile East Pakistan. They admit that Bangalis are Muslims, but regard them as Muslims influenced by Hindus and therefore more inclined towards West Bengal. They have ignored the cultural bond between the two Bengals. They also see the Bangalis as overly politically conscious and anti-authority - attributes that do not match their upper class and feudal mentality.

The generals are no exceptions. They have written their books with these notions in their mind. It can be asked, why are they writing? I have already answered that. They are finding themselves held responsible for what happened in 1971. They are being blamed for the debacle. And of course there is the ignominy of defeat. Another objective of writing the books is to deny the allegations of their involvement in the genocide and crimes carried out in Bangladesh in 1971. The Generals have mainly put the blame for these on Yahya. But at the end they have all reached the same conclusion that the politicians were the culprits behind the debacle of 1971.

Victory in the Liberation War is one of the most glorious chapters in the life of the people of Bangladesh? For the last 25 years, even the Liberation War has been turned into a sensitive issue through government backing, politicisation of history, and intolerance. Today, after three decades, the time has come to look at the whole matter through impartial eyes. Why did we desire Bangladesh? Was it imposed on us? How did we want it? How was the victory snatched away from us? Have we managed to achieve what we wanted? Hints to the answers to many of these questions might be found in these four articles.

We believe that intolerance regarding history and imposition of censorship would complicate the matter. The time has arrived to collect all the relevant information from all sides of the Liberation War, examine that information carefully, and start writing the definitive history of the Liberation War.

While writing the book, I have received support from many, and specially from Mohiuddin Ahmed. Before being compiled in a single book, the articles were published in the dailies *Prothom Alo*, *Bhorer Kagoj* and *Banglabazar Patrika*. The photographs have been taken from the books mentioned. Farid Ahmed of Shomoi Publishers and Kazi Mukul of Dana Publishers have provided invaluable support during the publishing of the book. The book has been translated from Bangla by young translator Kushal Ibrahim and the translation has been edited by renowned journalist ABM Musa. I thank them all.

**Muntasir Mamoon**

Department of History

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January, 2000

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## **The Break-up in the Eyes of the Pakistanis**

There is no need to explain once again to Bangalis why Pakistan broke up. Those of us who grew up in the pre-independence era know the reasons only too well. May be the present generation needs to know some more.

But do the Pakistanis themselves know why they had lost a part of their country and who were responsible for that? No, they do not know it well. After having visited Pakistan recently, I have the impression that they do not have a clear idea about the whole affair. Mohiuddin Ahmed, the proprietor of University Press Limited, and I were in Pakistan for twenty days. We talked to the politicians, former military and civilian bureaucrats, professors, journalists and students. But I also have the impression that their preconceived notions about the reasons behind the creation of Bangladesh are changing gradually. This change is due to the increasing internal racial tensions in Pakistan. Besides, Bangalis and Pakistanis are having more dialogues than ever before. Improved technology is giving Pakistanis access to various information. A recent statement of Nawaz Sharif, who was the Prime Minister during our visit, had provoked discussion on the subject. When he said that Pakistanis should apologise to Bangalis it instigated a fair amount of controversy in the newspapers, which, in turn, contributed to spur the recent investigations into the causes for the break-up. Those we talked to discussed various issues and admitted, or were forced to admit, many facts that have hitherto been denied. According to Pakistanis, their country broke up because of -

1. The differences between the two regions
2. The attitude of the ruling circle
3. Some other immediate reasons

These causes, which are of course intertwined, are nothing new to us, but are fresh grounds to tread on for the Pakistanis. The state had managed to have such a degree of control over the psyche of the common people that they had never felt the necessity to think about it. That control is now being increasingly put under question, and the people are discovering with astonishment that the Bangalis or Sheikh Mujib were not after all responsible for the break up of their country- it was the Pakistanis themselves who had caused it. This is highly embarrassing for them. They are also developing a feeling of guilt for the events of 1971. May be this was why many Pakistanis openly discussed the matter with us and the newspapers are constantly focusing on this issue.

Did those who steered the Central Government of Pakistan prior to 1971 ever consider East Pakistan as a part of their country? No, they did not. If they did, may be the irreconcilable differences between the two regions could have been avoided and the attitude of the people would have been different. From the very beginning, the government propaganda machine and the newspapers had created an antagonistic attitude towards East Pakistan among the people in the West. The West Pakistani "Urdu Press" - delineated as rightist and pro-government by journalists - helped plant some preconceived notions about East Pakistan among the people in the West.

What were these preconceived notions? The notions went like this- the Bangalis of East Pakistan were influenced by Hindus and therefore were in effect Indians; so the Bangalis cannot be equal to them (West Pakistanis), and as they were not equal to them they did not deserve equitable behaviour from them.

Major General (Rtd.) Tozammel Hossain Malik was in East Pakistan in the 50's and the 60's. In his memoir he has written that any impartial observer would have noticed that the West Pakistanis, and specially the Army, saw the Bangalis as "niggers". He cites one incident where an Army officer delayed a train for forty minutes at the Kulaura Station because he was busy in a meeting and had to catch that train.

When I was conducting research on the bureaucracy of Bangladesh, a senior bureaucrat told me another story. Gurmani, the Governor of Punjab, once asked a senior Bangali bureaucrat, "From what social class do the politicians and bureaucrats running East Pakistan come from?"

"From the middle or lower middle class", replied the bureaucrat. Gurmani then said, "If we have to live with people of dust from East Pakistan, then it won't do".

Benazir Bhutto also told us during a conversation that Bangalis were in fact treated unfairly. At that time they used to live near the house of Khaja Shahabuddin, a Central Minister of Pakistan. The two families had a good relationship. Benazir said that they also used to say that they were not treated with respect.

Khalid Mahmud teaches International Relations at Karachi University. He was in Dhaka in 1963-64 because of his family business here. He also told us that the Bangalis were seen as an inferior race and were mistreated.

On March 17, 1998, the birthday of Sheikh Mujib was observed in the Bangladesh High Commission in Pakistan for the first time. Ahmed Hasan Dani, the famous historian, was speaking there. I have known him for fifteen years, and I have never seen him losing temper. That was the first time I saw him getting emotional. He was saying in a complaining tone, "The West Pakistanis had always misbehaved with the Bangalis. I am a witness to that. As I was in East Pakistan, they misbehaved with me too. No wonder the Bangalis wanted independence".

The general assumption was that the people in East Pakistan, because they were Bangalis, were pro-Hindu. Rao Farman Ali, the person responsible for the murder of the intellectuals in 1971, has written and said that the Hindus were influencing the East Pakistanis. Major General Umar, who was the Secretary of the Security Council of Pakistan in 1971, has expressed the same opinion. By pro-Hindu, they have actually meant pro-India. The Pakistani media have always identified India as their number one enemy. The logical reasoning was that Bangalis were influenced by Hindus and therefore they were pro-India and therefore they were less Pakistani and therefore they were enemies. This fallacious reasoning was so deeply rooted in the people's minds that even many open-minded persons have failed to see through the fallacy.

Here is an example of how 'in-built' the whole thing is. Mohiuddin and I went to Niazi's house to interview him. Niazi's two daughters were also there. At one point they asked us whether we were Muslims. Mohiuddin, a bit agitated, answered, "My name is Mohiuddin Ahmed". A bit later,

Niazi's younger daughter asked Mohiuddin, pointing at me, "Is he Hindu?"

"His name is Muntassir Uddin Khan Mamoon," he replied.

"Oh, he is a Pathan!"

"No", said Mohiuddin with a serious face. "He is a Mughul". The girls were a bit taken aback by this answer, as Mughuls are higher up in the social ladder than Pathans.

Indicating at the apathy of the West Pakistanis towards Bangalis, Brigadier Siddiqi has asked, "After the creation of Pakistan, why did Qaid-e-Azam [Jinnah] first go to Karachi instead of going to Dhaka? He should have gone to Dhaka, because 56% of the population of Pakistan were in the East".

Mohiuddin and I have asked many people in Pakistan - "Look, if the Bangalis were pro-Hindu and pro-India, then how do you explain this-Muslim League was founded in Dhaka; A. K. Fazlul Haque was the person who raised the Pakistan issue in Lahore, which later inspired the construction of Minar-E-Pakistan; Pakistan was created through the support of Bangalis. So how can the Bangalis be pro-Hindu/India"? Needless to say, no one could give any reply; they could only mumble. General Umar now says, as do many others, that Bangalis are very good Muslims ("Bahut Peyare, Saccha Musalman"). People like Rao Farman Ali and Niazi have also admitted that Bangalis are more devout Muslims than West Pakistanis.

With a straight face I said to Niazi and his daughters, "I've been feeling disgusted after coming to your country. You are so pro-Hindu and pro-Indian - disgusting!" Mohiuddin was having a hard time trying to stop himself from smiling. But Niazi and his daughters took the accusation very seriously and asked, "How?".

"Well", I said. "Wherever I go I hear Indian movie songs and see posters of Indian movie stars and videos of Indian movies".

"No no, that's different!" cried out the girls. But Niazi said with a serious face, "I do not listen to Pakistani or Hindi songs. I listen to only English songs".

On the other hand, Abdul Gafur, the Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami, said, "Sheikh Mujib was a Muslim, as were Bangalis. If they were not, then why would they want Pakistan? And Mujib was no agent of India".

It has been said and written now that 1971 did not come about in a day; it was the result of the accumulation of many reasons. M. H. Askari has said in a newspaper article that it was the culmination of a long process. Starting from 1947, the influential clique in Pakistan had implemented a policy that- instead of bringing the two regions closer in terms of economy, culture and politics - contributed to throwing them further apart. The ruling elite of each government continued this policy, an action "Not much different from the murder plot in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*". .I.A. Rehman, a journalist and the Secretary General of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said the same thing, "These differences were increasing day by day and the rulers were trying to conceal the differences under the cloak of religion".

Dr. Mubashir Hasan, a former federal minister and a close ally of Bhutto, said, "In short, it can be said that Pakistan had an 'internal colonial system'. We were running on the money generated by East Pakistan which was like our colony". Professor Khalid Mahmud said that Sheikh Mujib went to Islamabad once. While giving a speech there, he took a long breath and remarked, "I can smell jute!" What he meant was that the money for the construction of Islamabad was coming from jute exports. General Tozammel has written that the people in East Pakistan were poor, and no matter what kind of development activity that were taking place, money was being accumulated in the hands of a few. These few also included West Pakistanis who had business concerns here. It was like fooling themselves by saying that the Hindus were responsible for whatever that happened in East Pakistan.

M. A. Naqvi, a well-known journalist of Pakistan, sent an article to *The Dawn* protesting against the events in 1971. *The Dawn* never printed it. An enraged Naqvi then stopped writing for that paper. "In the 50s", He said, "A group of foreign economists carried out a survey in the two regions and concluded that the agriculture sector had more possibilities in West Pakistan. They recommended for more investment in agriculture in the West and in industry in the East. This policy was not adopted. Chowdhury Mohammad Ali told my friend Syed Naziullah, a journalist, 'Why set up industries in East Pakistan? We will eventually lose them'".

The persons we interviewed explained through examples the nature of the differences between the two regions. They were once posted in East

Pakistan, and they all claim now that they tried to alleviate those differences.

Let us take the issue of defence for instance. General Umar said he was posted in Dhaka Cantonment in the 60s. At that time there was no artillery force in East Pakistan. The Air Force had only six aircrafts and only one mortar battery. There was not even a tank regiment. It was propagated that the defence of East Pakistan lied in the West. This was a bogus theory. General Tozammel also said the same thing.

Altaf Gauhar said in his interview, "Bangalis were not against the West Pakistanis or West Pakistan. They were against, and quite rightfully so, some policies adopted by the central government. Ayub Khan failed to comprehend the merit of the demands of the Bangalis. I asked him why Bangalis were not being recruited in the Army. He answered that the British had taken this policy. So I said, 'then why did they take in the Gurkhas?' meaning that the Gurkhas were also short in size".

"Bangali officers were never given any significant posting. The appeals of the Bangalis were strongly presented in the Center by A. K. Khan, Hafizur Rahman and Justice Ibrahim. On the other hand, people like Monem Khan and Sabur Khan poured in Ayub Khan's ears the very things he loved to hear. In 1963, he dropped from the cabinet the three who had spoken for the East Pakistanis".

Altaf Gauhar also said that the Center had practically stripped the provinces of their authority over their economy, and East Pakistan was gradually being made more and more dependent on the Center. The revenue from jute was being handed over to the Center. Even Nurul Amin had to exclaim, "What are you doing? You are taking everything from us and making us dependent on you!" According to Gauhar, "Unfair distribution of national resources was at the root of this".

Qamrul Islam, an ICS Officer, was the Secretary and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of Pakistan. He said, "There were differences between the two regions. But I did not foresee the extreme reaction it would create. East Pakistan never got its share". Who implemented this policy? Air Vice Marshall Asghar Khan said, "The ruling circle desired power. We are controlled by the feudal class. They did not want the middle class to ascend to power".



According to M. A. Naqvi, abolition of Permanent Settlement in East Pakistan fell like a thunder on the West Pakistani leaders who thought everyone there were revolutionaries who had routed the landlords. The reason for this alarm was that the West Pakistani members of the Parliament were all landlords with unlimited power in their zamindaris. Their close allies were the military and civilian bureaucrats, many of whom were also from the feudal families. These three groups formed the ruling circle of West Pakistan, which was also the ruling circle of Pakistan itself.

Meraj Mohammad was an influential young leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in 1971. He said that the ruling elite and the Army was not prepared to accept secularism, anti-feudalism and division of power. When General Yahya said that Sheikh Mujib would be the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Bhutto retorted that it could not be. This meant that Mujib stood for the very elements that the ruling circle were afraid of. Brigadier A. R. Siddiqi admitted, "The Army favoured West Pakistan, and Bhutto was their spokesperson".

Faruq Ahmed Leghari, the former President of Pakistan, comes from a feudal family and was a CSP Officer. He had worked in Bangladesh as SDO and ADC. He said, "I was a junior officer then. But I did observe Punjabi and other West Pakistani senior bureaucrats looking down upon the Bangalis. They acted like they were doing the Bangalis a favour, and this was the main reason for the discontentment of the Bangalis. Rehman Sobhan and many others had the feeling that East Pakistan was being discriminated". Leghari thinks that all of the things that are said are not true, there are some exaggerations. Masud Mufti, a CSP Officer, was the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education in 1971 and had to remain in India as a prisoner of war. We were talking to him at the residence of Roedad Khan, a former Secretary and Minister. Now retired, Mufti has made quite a name for himself as a columnist and a writer. During our discussion he said, "The feudal axis of the Army wanted to maintain their authority at any cost, and they saw East Pakistan as a threat because the Bangalis were politically conscious and vocal".

"West Pakistanis have always been downtrodden and oppressed because of the feudal system. The Bangalis had judged the Army as objective

citizens. West Pakistanis had traditionally viewed the Army as a place to get a job".

Almost everyone we talked to have mentioned this fear or threat. Abdul Gafur of Jamaat said that the West Pakistanis thought that it would be difficult to control the East Pakistanis as they were pro-democracy.

General Umar said, "In 1971 a handful of men, and not common Muslims, dictated policies. Pakistan was created through a political process. The martial law in 1958 halted that process, which ultimately resulted in the break-up of the country. Besides, the people in East Pakistan were educated and politically conscious. They decided that that was no way to run the country. On the other hand, because of the feudal culture in West Pakistan, there was no such reaction there".

According to Asghar Khan, those who wielded power in West Pakistan were afraid that the feudal system would not exist if Awami League came to power. The solution was not to allow them to come to power. Ahmed Selim told me in Islamabad that after the election of 1970 a group of representatives of the West Pakistani feudal lords met Mujib to get his assurance that nothing would be done against them. But they never had that meeting with Mujib.

Bangalis were conscious, educated and democratic-minded. They did not care about the feudal lords. They had ousted Ayub Khan. They had carried out the Language Movement while Jinnah was alive. What would happen if they came to power! Professor Mahmud said, "It was like this: Bangladesh had been exploited for 17 years. But now if they come to power we (West Pakistanis) will be exploited. We will never be able to remove them from power. So stop them".

The ruling circle, of course, could not say this openly. So they concocted a new theory not known to us. It was the 'liability theory' and it propagated that East Pakistan was no asset to Pakistan, and Pakistan (that is, West Pakistan) would develop if East Pakistan was not tagged to it. East Pakistan was actually a liability to the West. Almost everyone chanted this theory which sprung up in the 60's.

Kamarul Islam said, "Ayub Khan, Amir of Kalabagh and M. M. Ahmed of the Planning Commission opined that we did not need East Pakistan anymore". M. M. Ahmed showed through calculations that Pakistan could run without its eastern wing. East Pakistan was in effect a liability,

and so there was no need to give any political concession to them. Abdul Gafur said almost the same thing. M. A. Naqvi clearly stated that in around 1965 the members of the Planning Commission and the bureaucrats said that East Pakistan was a liability - "We should ditch East Pakistan". The reason for this attitude was that the population in East Pakistan was large, while it did not have much resources. The people there were not subservient to the West Pakistanis, the latter could not stand the thought of being ruled by East Pakistanis.

In 1969, after the fall of Ayub Khan, this theory influenced the West Pakistani elite. The election results in 1970 stunned them, and created the background for 1971. This was in a way an immediate cause of the developments in 1971.

I.A. Rehman has also written about what he told us. In his opinion, after the election of 1970, the Bangalis suspected they were being deprived of their rightful position. The West Pakistanis, on the other hand, were made to believe that Bangalis neither understood nor wanted national unity. These days enough proof is there to assume that the West Pakistanis did not actually want East Pakistan to remain a part of their country anymore, and the war was only an excuse. May be they wanted to cover their real intentions by forcing the war on the East Pakistanis. In Rehman's words, "Sufficient evidence is now available to show that the event of 1971 were the consequence of the state's ruling coterie's decision to write off the eastern half of the country as war loss and thus betraying people of both the wings in different ways and in different measure".

Mufti Masud sent me an article a few months ago in which he said the same thing, citing various examples . Two such examples are: 1. Why was the Hamudur Rahman Commission Report never published? 2. Why were those responsible for this never punished? In his opinion, after East Pakistan was lost the excuse put up was that Pakistan had lost to a strong opponent. Tahera Mazhar Ali said that the civilian and military bureaucracy did not want to see Bangladesh as a part of Pakistan anymore. They saw the region as too troublesome. Their wish came true in 1971.

They did have an alternative. Many have hinted at it, but Rafi Raza was blunt about it. Rafi Raza was one of the closest allies of Bhutto. He said that everyone in PPP, and many others, thought that army action could

successfully crush the East Pakistanis. "Bangalis could be sorted out". And once crushed, they could be kept under control for years to come. Then who was actually responsible for the breaking up of Pakistan? Putting aside the detailed analysis and background, the question can have two answers. Those we talked to also gave either of these two answers. The answers are - 1. Both sides were responsible; 2. Yahya-Bhutto-Mujib or Bhutto-Yahya-Mujib combination was were responsible.

Those who blame both sides say that may be West Pakistan was more responsible, but East Pakistan also went a bit too far. But most are for the second explanation, keeping Bhutto and Yahya in the first two spots. Rafi Raza's hunch is that Bhutto and Yahya probably had a secret agreement of some kind. Abdul Gafur also pointed the finger at those three. Brigadier Siddiqi gave a different explanation by saying that Bangladesh did not want to break away. Meraj Mohammad put the blame on Bhutto, accusing him of breaking up Pakistan to safeguard the feudal system. The writ petition of Alamdar Raza also accused those three.

I asked a question to most of them. "Hasn't there been an election in Pakistan recently?"

"Yes"

"Hasn't Nawaz Sharif won?"

"Yes."

"Then why did Benazir Bhutto go to the Parliament? Did she demand that Nawaz Sharif would have to have discussions with her in a restaurant before she goes to the Parliament?"

"No, how could that be"!

"Very good", I said. "Was not there an election all over Pakistan in 1970?"

"Yes".

"Didn't Awami League win"?

"Yes"

"Then wasn't it normal that power would be handed over to them?"

"Yes. But Awami League demanded the Six Points which was tantamount to breaking up Pakistan."

"Ok", I said. "Wasn't the election carried out under martial law and LFO?"

"Yes"

"The rulers knew this, but they didn't bar Awami League from contesting the election".

There was no answer. There cannot be any answer to this. It is clear that they feel embarrassed to accept total responsibility, and hence these answers. Or may be the government propaganda in those days had got stuck too strongly deep inside their head.

And then there is India. India is the ultimate bogeyman to many people in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The main thesis here is that India had always wanted to tear apart Pakistan. Yahya and Bhutto gave them the opportunity. According to journalist Z. A. Suleri, India took full advantage of the situation rising from PPP's boycott of the National Assembly. PPP had wanted to get rid of Bangali majority and enjoy all the power by itself, and India had wanted to prepare for a big blow at Pakistan to tear off a large portion of it and thus crush the center-point of Muslim nationalism. What happened next was a great conspiracy. The person mainly responsible for the break-up of Pakistan, Suleri says, was entrusted with the responsibility of ruining what was left of it, and the most bizarre thing was that the whole nation seemed to forget the whole affair, as if they never had any relation whatsoever with East Pakistan.

Khalid Mahmud told the same thing in a roundabout way. He thinks that USA, Pakistan and India had an agreement that there would be a war in a limited scale and Bangladesh would break free. Many have pointed out that Pakistan delayed considerably before going to the UN, and they also delayed in submitting their proposal. They wanted to avoid surrendering to the Muktibahini.

But the statements and writings of many Pakistanis reveal something which nullifies the accusation against India. Many have asked us, "If there were no 1971, would Bangladesh remain with Pakistan?"

"No", we have answered.

They have accepted it, because they knew it was true. General Tozammel has said in his book that when he was in Dhaka in the 50's Sadri Ispahani told him that unless the Pakistani rulers changed their attitude Pakistan would not stay united. In his words, "I still remember he often used to say that unless there was a greater social contact and fair dealings between East and West Pakistan, their union would not survive for long. West

Pakistan should not treat East Pakistan as their colony. They must treat this part as homeland".

Professor Dani talked of the time he was living in Dhaka. The Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University asked him why he was leaving. Dani told him the situation in Dhaka was becoming unbearable - "I can clearly foresee Pakistan breaking up". Dr. Mubashir Hasan also said that the emergence of Bangladesh was inevitable.

All these mean that those in West Pakistan knew perfectly well that Bangladesh would emerge, and they would cause it. So their policy was to plunder the region as long as they could, and they implemented the policy perfectly from 1947 to 1971. And same Bangalis , like idiots, kept on believing in the Pakistani idealism, and some do so even today. But many Pakistanis have told me something that I want to reiterate for the 'Pakistanis' of Bangladesh - they said, "You did the right thing by becoming independent. It was a good thing that you did. Now march forward".

## **The Genocide in the Eyes of Pakistanis, and Other Issues**

What did happen in Bangladesh between March and December 1971? Those aged forty or above know very well, as did the whole world. The murderous activities carried out by the Pakistan Army and the heroics of the freedom fighters were discussed everywhere in the world, except in one place - Pakistan.

It sounds unbelievable, but if this is true then it is easy to guess their attitude towards Bangalis - which is that they could not care less about us. But let us not go to such extremes. The Pakistan Army had tried to keep under grips the erstwhile East Pakistan, and they did whatever was required for it. In their words, they needed the land and not the people. It is unimaginable that no one in Pakistan know this. I have discussed this with many of the policy makers of that time, and also with common people. There was no straight answer to it; the replies went like - 1. I knew what was going on, or, 2. I knew some of what was going on and not everything, or, 3. I knew nothing [actually he knew but refuses to admit that now].

Most of those I talked to during my recent visit to Pakistan, even 'responsible' persons, told me that the common men in Pakistan did not know what was happening in Bangladesh in 1971. What could be the reason for such ignorance? The answers are -

1. State propoganda and 2. Complete censorship.

The Urdu newspapers of Pakistan were always against the Bangalis and most of the times they attempted to present a negative picture of the Bangalis to the West Pakistanis. Bangalis and Sheikh Mujib were portrayed as a race and a leader who wanted to break up Pakistan and who were collaborating with India to achieve their goal. The very thought

of this was like blasphemy in Pakistan. So, the general opinion is that Yahya Khan did the right thing in 1971.

Actually, the people of Pakistan have grown up in a feudal society where they only obey and do not question about anything. They always accept at face value what the state propaganda machinery tells them. After March 25, 1971, the mass media completely blacked out the terrible incidents in East Pakistan. On December 16, they were out of their mind when they saw on TV General Niazi surrendering. The awfully revered Army were on their knees and surrendering to the Indians and Bangalis! This news and the image created such a reaction all over the country that it was never shown in Pakistan again.

One can question, did not the middle class in Pakistan have any radio in the days between March and December 1971? They had, but they were not interested in any other frequency except their own. We must also keep in mind that the West Pakistanis were never so worried about *Pakistan Qaom* as were the Bangalis. By Pakistan they understood only West Pakistan. They never had any second thought about it, and so they did not have any scruples while carrying out the genocide here in 1971. We, on the other hand, did have our misgivings, for which we had to suffer.

We were talking to Brigadier (Rtd.) A. R. Siddiqi, who was in 1971 the Director of Public Relations of the Pakistan Army, in Karachi. He was explaining that in 1971 the government was eager to give the impression that everything was normal in East Pakistan, and was driving its propaganda machine for that purpose. The rulers had no idea that the events of March 25 would generate such a strong and adverse reaction all over the world. The government was on one hand saying that everything was going on as usual and on the other hand disseminating reports of skirmishes with, and subsequent chastening of, "miscreants". No one cared about the contradictions among these messages. The average West Pakistani was convinced that the Army deserved praise for doing a great job in East Pakistan. In his recent book, Brigadier Siddiqi writes, "Most people in the West wing sang hosannas to him [the soldier] and wished him all the luck and success in his mission".

Siddiqi also says in his book that in 1971 the image of the Army got bifurcated - they were heroes in one part of Pakistan, and instruments of



oppression in the other. In his words, "Psychologically, the soldier acquired a kind of schizophrenia by fighting against the people he was supposed to stand by and defend. Professionally, he suffered from doubt about his own ability to fight a counter insurgency operation for which he had never been trained. In propaganda alone did he feel secure and vindicated".

Yahya himself initiated this line of propaganda. In his speeches he used to accuse the Bangalis who wanted freedom as *qafirs*, implying that the Pakistan Army was actually fighting against forces opposing Islam. The Army personnel were *mujahids*. Someone becomes a *mujahid* by fighting a *jihad*, or holy war. Was there any option but to exalt these *mujahids*?

What was the opinion of the more educated class, those who were involved with the government? Did they ever know of any genocide going on here in 1971? No----.Well yes, there was something happening, may be a few people died, they say, but the Biharis and Pakistanis were slaughtered mercilessly (This was given much importance in the government-published white papers).

The defence strategy adopted by those involved in formulating the policies that led to the events in Bangladesh was - the Biharis were being indiscriminately slaughtered in East Pakistan from March, making the Pakistani troops feel that they were living in enemy territory. This may have incited them to overdo on March 25. I have asked those who gave this explanation, "If the slaughtering of the Biharis was going on like that, then why wasn't it covered in the foreign press? There was no Bangladesh Government then". They could not give any answer, because there was no answer. But they continue to put up this story to cover up the issue of genocide.

Their lies and distortions of truth are being exposed in a different way. To defend their position, they are writing books and giving interviews, disclosing many facts. Here are some examples of that.

Suhail Lari and Yasmin Lari live in Karachi. Coming from the upper class and educated abroad, Lari is a researcher. They are now busy saving the heritage of Sindh through Heritage Foundation, an organisation in Karachi founded by them. Lari was saying, "Let me tell you what the attitude was like at that time. Dr. Mubashir Hasan was close to Bhutto

and also became a Federal Minister during Bhutto's regime. He was with Bhutto in Dhaka on March 25. We got to meet right after he had returned from there. 'What's going on there?', I asked him. 'A hundred thousand or so died in 1947 for Pakistan, may be the same number of people will die too this time, so what?' he scoffed".

We met Dr. Mubashir Hasan in Lahore. He said about those days, "I could feel that something was going to happen on March 25. At four in the morning I saw the Army on the streets from my room at Hotel Intercon. I went to Bhutto and asked him what was happening. He also observed the situation through the window. No one but Abdur Rahim of PPP wanted army action" [Rahim is now deceased]. He also said, "We did not know for a long time the injustice done towards East Pakistan. People like us knew nothing". Dr. Mubashir Hasan was the Finance Minister of Pakistan.

I asked Suhail, "What do the people here think about the events of 1971?"

"The general people did not know anything".

"Didn't they tune in to BBC or VOA?"

"Most probably they didn't care. They didn't even believe everything they heard there. They thought BBC was lying. The people had a totally closed mind."

"Didn't you know?"

"Yes, I could figure out a bit by listening to the radio". And then added uncomfortably, "But I didn't know anything in detail".

Educated persons tend to avoid this issue. When my next question was, "Why was there no protests?" they find it better to avoid the issue altogether. I also put the same question to Suhail, "Didn't anyone say anything?"

"No", he replied. "No one said anything. The only persons who said something in public were Air Vice Marshal Asghar Khan and Ahmed Raja Kasoori".

Abdul Gafur, the Vice President of Jamaat, said, "We have heard of what happened on March 25. India and the non-Muslims played a significant role in the whole affair. India was claiming that thousands of people were dying, which was not believable". His statement is ridden with inconsistencies. According to what he said, Mujib or Awami League

were no factors in the events of March 25 and India was in fact responsible for everything. Was Sheikh Mujib acting as the proxy of India? I asked him, "Then was Sheikh Mujib an agent of India?"

"No", he answered, thus contradicting the first part of his statement.

"Jamaat was involved in the murders of December 14", I said to him.

"If you say that Jamaat collaborated with the army then it is acceptable", he said. "But it is not believable that Jamaat actually murdered people".

Did Khalid Mahmud, Associate Professor of International Relations at Karachi University, know what happened on March 25, 1971?

"Yes I knew", he said candidly. "Half of the ownership of Meher Industries was ours. Our relatives who looked after the business in Dhaka escaped home. The factory was also damaged".

Talat Nazariat, the Chairman of the same department and who joined the department in 1971, said, "The newspapers did not give a full account of the events of 1971. We read that the Awami league leaders had been arrested. This enraged me. But we did not know of the bloodshed. Later we came to know bits and pieces through the radio".

Meraj Momammad Khan, a student leader in the 70's and later a PPP leader, said, "Bhutto returned on March 26. I was at the airport to receive him. Coming down from the plane, he said, 'Thank God, Pakistan is saved'. I said to myself, 'Allah miane Pakistanko mar dia' ('Allah has destroyed Pakistan'). I accompanied Butto to his residence at Clifton. Begum Bhutto was coming down from upstairs. Meeting me, she said, 'Pakistan will not be there anymore. How can Pakistan survive after this?'"

"The reaction was negative everywhere except in Punjab," went on Meraj. "J. Rahim, the party Secretary, drafted a paper criticising the activities of the Army in East Pakistan. The Central Committee was having a meeting at the house of Dr. Mubashir Hasan. Secretly I photocopied Rahim's paper and distributed it among the committee members. This greatly angered Bhutto". Mubashir had said that Rahim was the only person in the party who was for the Army. Probably right after this, his position in the party began to decline.

Now let us look at the reaction of some of the people who were directly involved with the events of March 25 and the days that followed. We

talked about this with General Umar, General Rao Farman Ali, General Niazi, Brigadier Siddiqi and Roedad Khan.

General Umar, who was the Secretary of the Security Council at that time, was in Dhaka on March 25. He visited Dhaka several times between March and December 1971. We were talking to him at his residence in Karachi. He welcomed us so warmly that it seemed that he has found his long-lost relatives. He said that before our arrival he was reading the Holy Quran and shedding tears. He acted like he had no idea how it all had happened.

"Do you know anything about March 25?", I asked.

"No", he replied in an innocent manner.

"Do you know anything of what happened after March 25?"

"No".

"You were the Secretary of the Security Council, and you want us to believe that you knew nothing?"

"I was a mere member secretary of the council. No meeting of the Council was ever held, and it didn't have any power".

Rafi Raza, once a PPP activist and a close ally of Bhutto, was with Bhutto in Dhaka on March 25. The topic came up during our discussions at his Karachi home. He said, "How could Umar not know? We were setting off from Dhaka. Umar boarded the plane in such a consequential manner. He acted like he didn't know either Bhutto or me. It was as if he didn't see anyone. And he didn't know what happened in Dhaka?"

While sipping tea in his home in Islamabad, Altaf Gauhar revealed, "Listen, Roedad and Umar frequently went to Dhaka. After returning, they used to come over to my place in the evening. They described to me what was happening in Dhaka. Ask Roedad whether it is true with confirms my reference".

Brigadier Siddiqi has also said the same. He had to keep in touch with General Umar before and after March 25. He has said, and also has written, that Umar was the principal political advisor of Yahya. Right before March 25, venting his anger at the journalists of Dhaka, he told Siddiqi, "What kind of a Public Relations Director are you that you can't even control these bastards?"

General Farman has written his memoirs defending himself. While interviewing him, I asked him about the genocide. "Genocide? No, there was no genocide," He said.

"Well, were people killed between March and December?"

"Yes"

"How many died in your estimation? Thirty thousand? Forty? Fifty?"

"Yes, may be", he said, and, immediately realising his mistake, switched to another topic.

"General", I said, "isn't the killing of fifty thousand people genocide?"

He remained silent.

"Aren't you responsible for what happened on December 14?"

"I've explained this in my book", he said.

"I've seen that book", I said. "You've said in the book that you knew nothing. But after the fall of Dhaka a list of intellectuals was found in your office in the Governor House".

"Many people used to come to me and say this person or that person had done such and such. I used to jot down the names. That was a list of such names".

Altaf Gauhar cited an incident when we were discussing this with him. A friend had informed him that a list had been prepared to kill the Bangalis, and the name of one of his friends was also in the list. Was it possible for Altaf to do anything about it? He requested an acquaintance, who was also an acquaintance of Farman, to meet Farman and arrange for the removal of that name from the list. "Farman took out a list from the drawer and cut off the name. The name was of Sanaul Haque".

We were talking to Air Marshal Asghar Khan in Islamabad. We both began to laugh when I told him about Farman's claim that he knew nothing of what was happening in Dhaka in 1971. Then he said softly, "That ill-famed man. Now he is talking of philosophy and high ideals".

Niazi acted like he could not even comprehend the issue of genocide and said he knew nothing of the killings. Most probably this was just a show-off, because in his memoirs he has compared the military action in Dhaka on March 25 with the campaign of Halaku Khan. On April 15, 1971, Niazi sent a secret memorandum to the divisional commanders. The theme of the memo was - the troops have created chaos and they were busy raping, looting and killing. If this continues, their own [that is,

Pakistani] women would also be attacked. In his words, "It is not uncommon in history that a battle has been lost because troops were indulged in loot and rape". Here I am quoting the first part of the memo - "Since my arrival, I have heard numerous reports of troops indulging in loot and arson, killing people at random and without reasons in areas cleared of the anti state elements; of late there have been reports of rape and even the West Pakistanis are not being spared; on 12 April two West Pakistani women were raped, and an attempt was made on two others". Niazi had probably forgotten about this memo.

In 1971, Roedad Khan, a very influential man, was the Information Secretary. He later became a Minister. It was his responsibility to tell the outside world what was going on in Bangladesh. He was in Dhaka on March 25.

We met him in Islamabad. He said he was totally in the dark about what was happening in Dhaka. "No, I do not know anything of what happened. I did not hear a gunfire at least from twelve midnight in the morning".

"Right opposite the Hotel Intercon, where you were staying, the office of *The People* was in flames."

He had no answer to it, he just sat there with a silent gaze. "General" I added, "That you were the first person to give the declaration on the radio".

"General Umar is not right".

Brigadier Siddiqi has written that during that time the foreign correspondents were asked to leave the country and the damaged image of Pakistan is attributed to the vengeful actions of these correspondents. But in a way it was a good thing that they were forced out, because "Dacca, on March 26 and for several days to come, was virtually a media men's paradise. It was the picture of death and desolation Bodies by the roadside, every bombed buildings, barricade, tank, truck and jeep, these were stories for the avaricious TV man and news photographer: and they missed nearly all that".

Among all these, said Siddiqi, Roedad Khan and his men got busy painting the image of Pakistan. Roedad even produced a documentary named "The Great Betrayal", which cost almost a million taka of that time. The film was processed in Brussels and dubbed in four languages- Arabic, French, Urdu and English.

The film mainly described the persecution of the non-Bangalis by Awami League. A grand ceremony was arranged to show it to Yahya, but Yahya refused to approve its release. Roedad tried to convince Yahya that the motive of the film "Was to create guilt complex' in the mind of the Bengalis. It was time they were faced with the grim evidence of their crimes".

Alamdar Raza, the last Pakistani Commissioner of Dhaka, has filed a writ petition against the Pakistan Government to publish the Hamudur Rahman Commission Report and to punish those who were responsible for stalling its publication in the first place. In the article 52 of the petition he has said that Pakistan has become the laughing stock of the world for failure to punish those who were involved with grievous crimes. As a result, "The internal effect of this has been such that the extra judicial and custodial killing have become a part of a national tradition". The last comment is worth noting.

Alamdar Raza was explaining how the authority was delaying the acceptance of his writ petition. Then he finally got the chance to submit his petition at the court, and at one point he gave an example of the barbarity of the Pakistani troops. A group of soldiers attacked a house and killed a number of people. They kept the young girl of the family alive to rape her. The girl pleaded that she was also a Pakistani, and she was also a Muslim as were the soldiers. How could a Muslim rape another Muslim woman? At last she placed the Holy Quran on the bed and said if anyone wanted to rape her he would have to first remove the Quran from the bed. The soldiers did that. Alamdar described that the judge could not but shed tears after hearing this.

We did not get any reasonable answer from Benazir Bhutto to our questions, and it is understandable that even if she did know what was going on it would be impossible for her to say so.

So the fact is, the policy makers, and also those involved with the events of 1971 in other capacities, knew fairly well about the real situation in East Pakistan. But if they ever admit it, then they would have to stand for trial - in the court of humanity if not in any official one. Of course, they do not want it. The middle class, who were educated, also knew some of it, but they had no idea of its extent or the terrifying reality. Rafi Raza's comment in this regard seemed quite reasonable to me. "We didn't know

or we didn't want to know, whatever manner you take it". M. A. Naqvi said, "Tikka Khan said that only three thousand women had been raped. And now everyone is blaming everyone".

He said something else which had never crossed our mind- " It is claimed that West Pakistanis did not know of the situation in East Pakistan. This is a false government propaganda. Weren't there any transistors in those days? Punjabi soldiers used to send back home two to three hundred taka from their workplace. But in 1971, they started sending even five to six hundred taka. Where did they get this extra money"?

In April Niazi mentioned in a secret memo that booty of the war were being shipped to West Pakistan by the returning families. Not only that- "I gather that even officers have been suspected for indulging in shameful activity and what is worse, that in spite of repeated instructions, comdos. have so far failed to curb this alarming state of indiscipline. I suspect that cos and osc units/sub-units are protecting and shielding such criminals".

The bottomline is, no one in Pakistan, not even any liberal, wants to utter the word genocide. They do not want to admit it in any way because the issues like responsibility, crime and punishment may crop up immediately following such an admittance.

But what was the nature of the war in 1971, and how was it perceived?

I talked to some students of the International Relations Department of Karachi University. They were born after 1971. Naturally they do not know many things, but they do have the urge to know. They said they were starting to question what is written in the text books, and they were getting the feeling that what the books say is not entirely correct. The text books say that the factors responsible for breaking up Pakistan were Sheikh Mujib, the Six Points and the Bangalis. Of course, the students do not know that much about the genocide.

Raja Kazim is an affluent and successful lawyer in Karachi. Once involved with the Communist Party, he still frequently mingles with politicians. He said, "I believed that Sheikh Mujib and the *Muktibahini* were on the wrong path. It was a petty bourgeois uprising and not a revolution of the masses".

"I am not stating this after hearing the brief of Pakistan", he stressed.

"They have sent me to jail four times. What I'm saying is my own opinion. And then when I heard the stories of the killings, plundering and



raping, I felt disturbed. I certainly did not support the army but I remained in the darkness. I got to know the facts in more details after the prisoners of war and others had returned. But at that time, there was no room for contrary opinion".

Abdul Gafur of Jamaat also declared that "It was not an uprising of the common people".

Most people see the Six Points as the manifesto for the break-up of Pakistan. They also say how Bhutto once said that out of the Six Points, five and a half were acceptable. But no one talks of the remaining unacceptable half a point.

But, due to the recent situation in Pakistan, the notion about the Six Points is changing, with the degree of change varying in different regions. The Muhajirs, who have till recently kept on shouting in favour of Pakistan are now asking, what kind of a Pakistan is this? This Pakistan does not trust them. It never did. A Pakistani consultant of World Bank - a scholarly woman - expressed her anger in a party, "They say they knew nothing about 1971. They do not even believe that the soldiers have committed murders in Karachi."

The context of her comment was very interesting. In that same party, I was talking with a calm-looking researcher. She is not a Muhajir, and the two women were friends. The non-Muhajir woman was saying, "In 1971, the bodies of the soldiers were brought back home, and that was when we guessed that something must be wrong in East Pakistan. But we could not comprehend the magnitude of it".

During a chat, a young civil service recruit told me, "There was a question in the civil service exam - 'Discuss the Six Points'. I knew what the Six Points were, but I didn't answer that question, because if my answer paper had ended up in the hands of a Punjabi examiner then he might not have liked what I'd written". Time and place are not changing the significance of the Six Points. But Benazir Bhutto explained the standard text on the Six Points usually put forward by the politicians. She said, "Acceptance of the Six Points would have heralded the disintegration of Pakistan. It would have been tantamount to granting independence not only to Bangladesh but also to the other provinces of Pakistan. That was why we resisted the Six Points. I feel that if the Six

Points had been into place, Pakistan would not have existed as a state today".

Pakistanis usually avoid the words 'Liberation War', and also the word *Muktibahini*, because they still see the Liberation war of Bangladesh as an India-Pakistan war. This is only natural for the Pakistanis. It is extremely difficult and distressing for them to admit that they had been defeated by the Bangalis. They probably prefer to think of it as yet another India-Pakistan war. After all, there have been several armed conflicts between the two countries, someone has to win and someone has to lose in these conflicts, and Pakistan lost the war in 1971; that's all.

But they did know that the policies of the military junta would ultimately cause rebellion and war would break out. They were mentally prepared for it. If not, then why did General Yakub chalk out Operation Blitz in November 1970? And why would it be turned into Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971? They abandoned all hopes of keeping East Pakistan right after March - at least that is how the Head Quarters felt. The idea was to solve all the problems by crushing the Bangalis once and for all through the Operation Searchlight. And if the Bangalis could not be crushed, then that province could not be kept under control anyway, so it is better to save Pakistan. Brigadier Siddiqi asked a quite reasonable question - If it was required to protect East Pakistan from Indian aggression, then why were not there enough precautions taken beforehand? General Niazi also raised the same point.

In this context, a memo by the then Chief of General Staff Lt. General Gul Hasan is worth mentioning- "The main battle would be fought in the west (the Punjab). It was envisaged that the fate of East Pakistan would hinge upon whatever operation was undertaken in the west".

Gul Hasan says in his memoir that there was no hope for keeping East Pakistan and there was no point in wasting time by appeasing the Bangalis there. The time was up. So it was better to give attention to West Pakistan. Alamdar Raza also talked about this as an India-Pakistan war, but in his writ petition he has mentioned the real cause behind the defeat of Pakistan - "The fact of the matter is that Pakistan army lost in a people's war. No army in the world has ever won fighting against the people".

"Our greatest tragedy was that we didn't take any lesson from even a disaster as big as this", said Alamdar Raza. "We have directed all our resources in saving the persons responsible for the debacle. Yahya Khan was given a full military burial. The Hamudur Rahman Khan Commission report was never published. The 195, against whom there are adequate proof of their crimes, were never punished".

Only a handful of men publicly protested against the army action in Bangladesh in 1971. I have already mentioned some of them. Ahmed Selim wrote a poem speaking against the activities of the army.

Ahmed Selim and some of his companions were arrested. Selim told us that a big collection can be published by accumulating all the poems and songs against the genocide written in Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan. No one knows this. Habib Jalebi, the famous poet, was thrown to jail for speaking against the genocide.

In Lahore, Tahera Mazhar organised a rally to voice their disapproval of the army action. There were some protests at the individual level, about which we do not know much. For instance, Dr. Tariq Rahman, an army cadet in 1971, resigned right after he received commission. He would have faced a court martial, but was saved because his father was a Brigadier. Now he teaches at the Quaed-e-Azam University in Islamabad. We also talked to him in Islamabad. He was saying in a calm voice, "There was nothing courageous about it. I could not defy humanity". In the concluding lines of the Introduction of a book by Ahmed Selim, Tariq has written in a more eloquent form what he told me in Islamabad. He has called on everyone to remember the grim reality of 1971 and to ask for forgiveness to the dead. He has called for compromise and forgiveness. This, he says, will not alter the past but may change the course of the future. He hopes that this would help create a strong bond with Bangladesh, which is important for avoiding the creation of another Bangladesh. He says this in the backdrop of the violence and separatist attitude that have recently erupted in Pakistan.

I have already mentioned to I. A. Rahman, the journalist. He speaks his opinion just as strongly as he did in those days. He told me that we Muslims have killed more Muslims than did Hindus and the British. What he said is true. But how many have the courage to pronounce the truth like this?

I. A. Rehman said, "Many say that the people here did not know what was happening in 1971. These are lame excuses. They more or less knew it, because they supported the massacre of their compatriots in the eastern wing. With a very few honourable exceptions, the West Pakistani population, led by politicians, academics, bureaucrats, and opinion makers, chose to back the senseless carnage, and there were many who fought over the spoils".

He also said that it is impossible to put up any logical justification for the war of 1971. A clique in Islamabad declared the war fully knowing that they would lose it. Actually, their very objective was to lose the war. "It was a betrayal of the officers and men of the Pakistan army in that they were deceived into giving their lives for an issue, whose adverse outcome had already been determined by their supreme commander. And no justification could be placed before the people. The rules of combat do not apply in this case".

Following this line of thought, some have said that the conflict was not required at all. It would have been easier to say, "Look, we can't seem to get along. Why don't we just separate?" Today, after all that had happened, this is the thinking now; but this thought never occurred to anyone 28 years ago.

Finally, there is Sheikh Mujib, the hero of the Liberation War. How is he perceived in Pakistan? In 1971, they branded him as a traitor. Let me give an example. These days Roedad Khan says with an innocent look that he does not know anything and he respects Sheikh Mujib. But what did he say in 1971? Brigadier Siddiqi described the incident to me; he has also included it in his book. Yahya asked in a meeting with his advisors whether Mujib should be hanged after or without a trial. Roedad was in favour of hanging without any trial. Prior to that, when Mujib was brought to Pakistan as a prisoner, Roedad strongly opined that the captive Mujib should be photographed and the picture should be circulated in the newspapers. In Roedad's words, "Let the world know that the bastard is in our hands".

The last 28 years have changed some of these notions. No one calls him a traitor now, but he is one of the three men widely held responsible for the break-up of Pakistan. He is usually allocated the third place, the first two places being reserved for Yahya and Bhutto. Even Benazir Bhutto said

that Mujib was very affectionate towards her. Without any trace of doubt in her voice, she said, "Mujib was even prepared to die for his principles. And that is why his death shook us so much".

Lastly, let us look into a comment of I. A. Rehman. In the backdrop of the hostile relationship among the three nations of the sub-continent, his comment carries much significance. But I personally think that most people will still be unable to realise it. He said, "We are sons of the Himalayas. But the Himalayas will not remain forever, and neither shall we. We should act keeping this in our mind".

### **To Apologise or Not to**

In 1998, Nawaz Sharif made a statement in Dhaka that created quite a stir in both Pakistan and Bangladesh. While he was in Dhaka, he said that if the election results of 1970 were accepted and power was duly handed over to Awami League, then the history of Pakistan would have taken a different course. So, the results should have been accepted. He went a step further when he said in Karachi that those who did wrong would have to be punished. The ruling clique of that time chose the road to war to avoid being governed by East Pakistan.

There is a strong opinion in Bangladesh that this statement is not enough and there has to be an official apology. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also expressed its reaction. But we are not considering the fact that Nawaz Sharif was actually the first Pakistani ruler in the last 28 years to comment on 1971 and admit the mistakes of his countrymen. Making this statement he initiated a public opinion on this issue in Pakistan.

I have noticed its effect during my recent visit to Pakistan. After a long time, the events of 1970-71 are being discussed in the elite society of Pakistan. Newspaper articles are being written on this issue, and the readers are expressing their opinion through letters. The public opinion, however, is divided.

Many people smelled political motives in Nawaz Sharif's statement. Pricking too much on these matters would implicate, like many others, Bhutto himself. This would immensely embarrass Benazir, and put PPP in a precarious position. I asked Benazir about this issue, but she avoided the question. Hamudur Rahman Commission was also discussed. Many

hold the opinion that the publication of the Commission report would have revealed many facts. But the report has never been published and many Pakistanis assume that its copies have been destroyed.

"My father had a copy", said Benazir. "The report acquitted him unequivocally of all responsibilities. When the military arrested him, they also took with them that copy". She also said that the report should be published now, as it is generating much interest.

"Why didn't you do it when you were in power?", I asked.

"There were obstacles".

Benazir did not say that Nawaz Sharif may have the same obstacles in the Army. And there are the feudal lords and the bureaucrats. So it can be said without any doubt that in the context of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif actually displayed much courage by expressing his opinion on this issue. Nawaz brought two points to focus. He questioned the role of the ruling clique who were involved with 1971 and whose followers are still active. They want to erase this chapter from the history of Pakistan. Secondly, the general people are gradually realising that something did happen in 1971. The fact is, after talking to quite a number of people in Pakistan, I got the impression that no one except only a few had any idea of what was going on in Bangladesh in 1971. Unbelievable may be, but true. When you go to Pakistan and talk to the people, you get to see how the state machinery can turn the people into slaves. They accept (at least at that moment) without any question whatever the state says. In 1971, they were told that what was going on was the result of an Indian- that is, a Hindu- conspiracy against which the Muslims of Pakistan were fighting. They accepted it at face value and never pondered over it.

One group is saying, as I have mentioned before, that Sharif had political motives behind his statement. Hussein Haqqani wrote in *The Nation* that he [Sharif] was using separate incidents to judge history, and was talking like this to safeguard his own position which was being challenged. Yes, East Pakistan was oppressed, but the whole of the political leadership, including the Muslim League, was responsible for that (Sharif is a Muslim League leader). Haqqani however admitted that public opinion in West Pakistan at that time was largely in favour of military action. In his words, "It can be argued that the application of force in Bengal was merely an extension of the dominant political way of

thinking in West Pakistan. True, excess in the use of military action are, of course the responsibility of military leaders".

Thus he has shielded Bhutto and put the blame on the military circle. In his writing, Haqqani has also asked why was Nawaz Sharif forgetting the role of India, who was actually responsible for the whole affair. So, these things would have to be taken into consideration before apologising. There are many who admit that there was oppression and there were excesses by the Army, but it was India, they say, that was ultimately responsible for everything.

Those involved with the Army in those days are now naturally busy defending themselves, and so they are also joining the debate. Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Abdul Majid Malik, the Minister for Kashmir Affairs of the Government of Pakistan, expressed his dissatisfaction at the idea of apology, saying it was out of question. However, he made this statement as a civilian and not as a Minister.

He also mentions the Indian aggression. He said it was tantamount to insulting the patriotism of those who fought the *jihad* against India by indicting them for genocide. "I would request Dhaka not to touch this issue because it would not do any good to the relation between the two countries", he said.

This point-of-view has a corollary to it, which is also reflected in the public opinion. During the publication ceremony of "*Bangladesh: Mera Desh*" (Bangladesh: My Country) by Dr. M. A. Sufi, the Governor of Sindh Moinuddin Haidar said it was essential to learn the truth. Bangladesh "was a sovereign Muslim state" which did not become a colony of India, and this proves the validity of the 'dual nation theory'. He still believes that the people of Bangladesh consider the Muslim Pakistanis closer to them than the Hindu Indians [To prove it, he cited the excitement over some Pakistani cricketers in Bangladesh]. So, in his words, "If we (Pakistan) set our house in order, learn a lesson from the past mistakes, keep the present right and make positive headway in the future the possibility of Islamabad and Dhaka getting closer to each other cannot be ruled out".

This theory has been popular in some quarters, because it subtly admits the mistakes of Pakistan and says that as Bangladesh is a Muslim country, Bangladesh and Pakistan can unite against the Hindu India.

Z. A. Suleri, a journalist well-known for his allegiance to the government, wrote that Nawaz Sharif's acknowledgement of the tragedy of 1971 was the first of its kind by any government, and its significance cannot be exaggerated. Benazir Bhutto told us almost the same thing. Suleri has also said that in the face of Indian threats it would not be too much for them to apologise to Bangladesh for the greater interest of their country.

If the letters from readers are any indication of public opinion, then I must say that all the letters I have seen in the Pakistani newspapers express one view- that it is unthinkable to apologise. One reason could be ignorance about 1971. Those who knew, or who are getting to know now, are admitting to themselves their responsibility for the events and may also have a sense of guilt. But they are silent on the issue of apology. There are stories describing how many Pakistani soldiers were afflicted by psychiatric disorders or mental depression. The leftists always talk about the whole thing, but when it comes to apology they very conveniently keep their mouth shut. May be a greater commotion on the issue in the country will force them to speak out. Those against any apology, and those who sympathise with us, have added another point - West Pakistan might be responsible for 1971, but East Pakistan was also responsible to some extent. They never analyse how or why, but point the finger at India.

The fact is, it is extremely difficult for the Pakistani elite to accept the fact that 93,000 Pakistani soldiers actually surrendered. Khaled Ahmed, a left-inclined journalist of *Friday News* of Lahore, thinks that Bangladesh and Pakistan will not be able to have a good relationship because Pakistan has not still managed to reconcile with that defeat.

Brigadier A. R. Siddiqi, the Public Relations Officer of the Pakistan Army in 1971, has written that Pakistanis should probe into the matter passionately. "Are we pleading guilty to something simply by refusing to face it? If Bangladesh demands an apology from us, we might as well turn around and suggest a corporate basis on the consideration of such a demand". The truth, according to them, is that both sides were to blame for the break-up and may be West Pakistan bears a slightly larger burden of the blame.



Hasan Zahir, a former Cabinet Secretary, worked as a Secretary in Dhaka in 1971. He told me in an interview, "We did not act appropriately. There were excesses. In that context, it is alright to consider apology. But it is too early to start this controversy".

Following this line of thought, some people are for forming a 'Truth Commission' like that in South Africa instead of offering an apology. This was put forward by Altaf Gauhar, a former bureaucrat who was very close to Ayub Khan. He wrote an article on this in *The Nation*, and stressed on this while conversing with us. While conversing with us M. Zafar, a renowned lawyer in Pakistan, supported the idea. In his opinion, doing this would enable us to unravel the real background of 1971. Altaf Gauhar said that unless this was done it would not be possible to understand the present and mould the future of the nation. "Truth never hurts, it enables the nation by identifying those who acted against the people. The humiliating ceremony of surrender of the Pakistan Army in Dhaka shattered our national interests.....", he wrote in *The Nation*.

The former Chief Justice of Pakistan Dr. Nasim Hasan Shah and the Governor of Sindh have also spoken for the Truth Commission. Many others have acknowledged its rationale while talking to us.

Only a handful have actually spoken out publicly in favour of an apology. This again has two sides - some are demanding punishment of the men who were responsible, and others are for an outright apology. But the two topics are different. Air Marshal Asghar Khan, Tahera Mazhar Ali, I. A. Rahman and Ahmed Selim are in this small group. They voiced their protest even in 1971. Everyone we talked to said that Asghar Khan was the only person to condemn the actions of the Army in a public meeting. Stones were thrown at him because of this, and his meeting was forced to stop. He was branded as a traitor. But he refused to move from his standpoint. His reaction to Nawaz Sharif's statement and General Niazi's book was, "It is apparent that even after 27 years it will be a national mistake to gloss over the events of 1971 tragedy as has been done by General 'Tiger' Niazi...." He reiterated it when we interviewed him, and demanded the punishment of the people responsible for 1971.

Alamdard Raza, who practises law now, is a man driven by emotion. In 1971 he was the Commissioner of Dhaka. He was enraged to learn that we had interviewed General Farman Ali. In 1997 he submitted a writ

petition at the Lahore High Court. The petition demanded the disclosure of the War Commission or the Hamudur Rahman Commission Report. Government documents are sent to the archives after 25 years. But documents on this issue, claims Raza, were never sent, and those responsible for this were never apprehended. Here are some clauses from his petition that clearly admit genocide and rape. One can find few instances like this in Pakistan.

- "g. The large scale extra judicial and custodial killings, looting and raping was not stopped and the culprits were not punished.
- j. That the persons guilty of major crimes of vivisection of the country, surrender of the Eastern command, killing, raping and looting were protected and no actions were taken against them.
- n. That there has been no accountability of those who have indulged in heinous crimes in 1971 and even the latest Ehtesab ordinance does not apply to these people although their crimes are much greater in magnitude than the people whose Ehtesab is being done since 1985 under the Ehtesab ordinance.
- o. That on an average about half a million people have lost their lives and Pakistan basic concept has been eroded. The wave of crimes let loose in East Pakistan still continues in Pakistan".

Alamdard Raza was describing how the judge listening to his narration of the events of 1971 kept asking him, "Is this true?" Then when he started narrating how a young woman was raped by Pakistan soldiers, the judge could not hold back the tears. He accepted the writ petition. After that, said Raza, a year had passed by, but there had been no more hearings. It is very clear why there had not been any.

Dr. Mubashir Hasan, one time Federal Minister and a close ally of Bhutto, told us that Pakistan should apologise. Social worker Tahera Mazhar Ali has always been vocal about this. Even in those days of March 1971 she organised a rally along with several other women. She explained to us that those women were not from the so-called upper or middle classes - they were from the lower class. Mohiuddin Ahmed of University Press Limited was saying that he was attending a literary convention in Pakistan two years ago. Dr. Sultana Zaman, Kabir Chowdhury and AZM Enayetullah Khan were also attending from Bangladesh. They submitted to the Chairman a memorandum that had a

proposal calling for an apology from Pakistan to Bangladesh. The Chairman refused to accept the proposal. Tahera Mazhar forced her way on the podium and apologised on behalf of Pakistan. "I was called a traitor by many people in 1971 because I had protested against what was going on", said Tahera.

I. A. Rehman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, has also spoken for the apology. Protesting against the events of 1971, he resigned from his job and started publishing his own newspaper from Lahore. He wrote a long article in *Newsline* on this issue. While we were discussing all these in his office in Lahore, a woman named Bakhtiari entered the room. She lived in Karachi, and she said she had come to thank Rehman for his article. "In 1971, I was a housewife happily spending my days", she told us. "But when I came to know of these it turned around my life. I started working among the lower class people, and enrolled in the university". After getting her degree she became a full-time social worker. She has also been to Dhaka.

"Pakistan should apologise", I. A. Rehman told us unequivocally. "There was no point in attacking the life and property of the Bangalis. It does not fall under the codes of warfare. Pakistan should apologise even if only a few men had died for good cause. Even if one woman had been raped, and even if some children had been killed (for which there were no good reason whatsoever)". He expressed his feelings on this issue very articulately - "If we sincerely believe that in 1971 a great tragedy befell us, then a catharsis of the same order is necessary for the restoration of the mental health and our perception of justice and equity. So long as we believe, and continue to teach our children, that we were not responsible for killing our own innocent people in Bengal, we will never be able to understand what happened".

The name of Ahmed Selim was known to us. We met him in Islamabad. He went to prison when, as a NAP activist, he protested against 1971 tragedy. He has also been demanding that Pakistan should apologise. This time he seemed a bit infuriated, because his several visits to Bangladesh have seemingly aroused the suspicion of some Bangalis. He said, "Many people in Bangladesh have demanded an apology from Pakistan and punishment of those responsible for the tragedy. It is a

perfectly logical demand. But I can also ask, what has Bangladesh done with the collaborators or the war criminals?"

Others had also asked me this question. Needless to say, I had no answer.

## **The Vanquished Generals and the Liberation War of Bangladesh**

In the last decade or so, a number of memoirs by retired Pakistani Generals have been published, covering in varying degrees the events of 1970-71. Possible reasons for the Generals' inclination towards writing these books are, (1). The once revered Pakistani armed forces are no longer regarded as the great saviour of the nation; rather they are being accused of causing the dismemberment of the country; 2. The armed forces are increasingly being held responsible for the break-up of Pakistan. The latter allegation is specially damaging for them. The genocide of 1971 is being discussed in Pakistan nowadays, and the army officers of that period are accused, directly and indirectly, of committing those atrocities. Under these unfavourable circumstances, those who wielded power during that period are now trying to defend themselves in different ways, including by writing these books.

While going through these memoirs, I have found a common framework of historical concept - or historiography - which has been generally followed while writing them (of course there can be exceptions). One or two books may not make it clear to the reader, but the framework starts to emerge if these books are read together.

This historiography is based on what the Pakistani middle class understands of democracy, society and state. Recently I had the opportunity to travel to Pakistan, where, after talking to people from different strata of society, I found that their thoughts were more or less similar to those of the Generals, which proved that this concept was not the creation of the Generals alone but the mentality of the Pakistani middle class had also contributed to the process. The leftists, however, have a somewhat different view.

One thing is clear from the discussions and attitude of the Generals - that their of Pakistan was only West Pakistan. To them East Pakistan was an annex to the western part. The line they follow while discussing East Pakistan is - "Yes, injustice was done to East Pakistan, but not so much as it is said". (It sounds like a feeble attempt on their part to present themselves as "impartial"). In the memoirs, we would find out that if the author was posted in East Pakistan, he claims to have worked for the good of the province while he was there. But the Generals have openly written about the injustice because it is so widely discussed these days that there is no use trying to feign about it? Rather, any attempts to cloak it may create doubts about the validity of the memoirs.

West Pakistanis believe that it was the East Pakistanis who started the trouble there. Some have put forward the analysis that the problems have their roots in the refusal of the more independent-minded middle class of East Pakistan to accept the feudal authority of West Pakistan. The urge for democracy was not as strong among the West Pakistanis as it was among their countrymen in the east. The elite rulers of the West were allergic to the idea of democracy.

There were some preconceived ideas about the faith East Pakistanis had in Islam. Not only the Generals, but very few people in Pakistan are still free from this presumption. Those I talked to said there was no doubt in their minds about the influence of Islam among Bangalis; they even commented that Bangalis are more Islamised than Pakistanis. But in their writings, the old prejudice had the precedence. This same prejudice worked in the minds of the Pakistani soldiers during the genocide in 1971.

The deep dislike of the West Pakistanis for India and Hinduism contributed to reinforcing this prejudice. They have observed resemblance in culture and social activities among the Bangalis in West and East Bengal. The Hindu population was also greater in East Pakistan than in the west. Besides, the hatred for India and Hinduism was not that strong among Bangalis. For these reasons, one thing the Generals emphasised in their memoirs was the assumption that Hindus had greatly influenced the mode of thought of the Bangalis. To them Hindus, after all, were actually Indians, even if they lived in Pakistan. India had always been an enemy of Pakistan and had wanted its destruction. But the Hindu

teachers in East Pakistan misled the Bangali youth and diffused the Pakistani nationalism in them. That is why, the Generals say, the Bangalis were motivated towards separation.

The Agartala Conspiracy Trial, and in some cases the Six Points too, were seen as conspiracies influenced by India. However, nowadays the Baluch and Sindh peoples do not judge the Six Points from that point of view, the reason being that they are also now being oppressed by the Punjabis. But the Generals and the elite have always seen the Six Points as a reflection of separatist attitude.

The tone adopted by the generals while describing the events of 1971 is like this— the law and order situation in East Pakistan was deteriorating, Biharis and West Pakistanis were being attacked and killed; and the army had no option but to interfere and take matters in their hands to bring things under control. In these circumstances, one or two killings were inevitable, but something like a genocide never happened. India attacked Pakistan for its own interests.

None of the Generals have admitted that there was a joint command. They tried to avoid mentioning the freedom fighters. It seems that defeat in the hands of Indians is still acceptable, but it is unthinkable to admit that Bangalis could beat them in war.

Of course the Bangalis were mainly responsible for the break-up of Pakistan, the Generals say, but those in West Pakistan were also responsible and for it, the onus lie on Bhutto and Yahya. Yahya Khan is made the main scapegoat because he is dead he cannot refute the allegations. Moreover, he is not respected in his country, and he did not have any political base.

Then comes the issue of the army's involvement. The Generals, although all of them beneficiaries of military rule, admitted that it had not helped the people in any way. But why had there to be army rule come in the first place? The reason, they say, are the politicians. They have squarely put the blame on the politicians for martial law in Pakistan and the break-up of the country. The Army, they claimed, rather tried to do some good for the country.

Since the 1950's, the Army has created an exalted image of itself to help it seize and retain power. Brigadier Siddiqi has described some propaganda lines used to maintain this image:

1. The Army is the symbol of unity and sovereignty; implying that other institutions are not.
  2. The soldiers are honest and pious; implying that others are not.
  3. The soldiers are *mujahids*. They believe in protecting Islam. Paradise is guaranteed if someone becomes a martyr while fighting against *qafirs*. This implies that others do not want to protect Islam. Indians are *qafirs*, therefore the army always has to be in the mood for *jihad*. They carried on the genocide in Bangladesh under the pretext of getting rid of *qafirs*.
  4. The army is patriotic; implying that others are not so much, and the least patriotic are the politicians who have sworn allegiance to their parties.
  5. The army is efficient; implying that others are not.
- The bottomline was - the army had every right to run the country. And for this reason, even a special "Armed Forces Day" was observed in Pakistan.

It was because of this attitude that the word Pakistan has also become a form of expression; for example, to put someone in a negative light, we say, "He is a Pakistani". The very word expresses a certain kind of disposition. This mentality has played a pivotal role in shaping the attitude of the army personnel in Pakistan. The military rulers of Bangladesh also tried to implement this concept here. The result of this attitude is the attempt by the bureaucracy (and specially the military bureaucracy) to exert authority over the civil society and politicians, control the political process, and participate in the plundering of the nation. And that is why many of the Bangladeshi army officers (who started their career as members of the Pakistan Armed Forces) never managed to get out of this mould, even though they fought bravely in the Liberation War. They were trained by Pakistani instructors, and they spent the prime time of their youth in West Pakistan. They also seized power in Bangladesh, and tried to spread that same concept (or, in other words, the same *Kakul Culture*) of the Pakistan Army. What a tragedy for us!

Let me give some instances of how this Pakistani concept affected our rulers and politicians.

General Ziaur Rahman conducted a 'yes-no' poll after coming to power, as Ayub Khan did. General Zia dissolved all political parties, and then allowed them to operate with the provision of registration. He brought changes in the main characteristics of the Constitution. The countries that opposed our independence were given preference in our foreign policy. He used the media to enhance his image and the army's.

General Ershad went ahead more vigorously with this concept. He made Islam the state religion, and took steps to militarise the society.

During the periods of Zia and Ershad, some new propaganda lines were introduced, which the politicians keep uttering even today. For example:

1. The army is the symbol of discipline and sovereignty; implying that others are symbols of chaos and subservience.
2. The army is always mentioned as a "smartly dressed contingent"; implying that others are not smart. Probably nowhere else in the world, except in Pakistan, are words like these uttered.
3. Soldiers are simple and honest; implying that others are not. To reinforce this, the torn vest and broken suitcase of General Zia were cited as example. Ershad even rode a bicycle to office as a stunt.
4. Festive parades of the armed forces. Construction of an Armed Forces Museum (but not a museum in the memory of the Liberation War, although the Bangladesh army separate from the Pakistan origin was born through the Liberation War).
5. The politicians are blame for everything that goes wrong. They are painted as corrupt.

These propagandists and their followers never blame Pakistan for anything; rather they put the blame on India (that is, the Hindu India). They held Awami League responsible for everything bad in our country (including our independence, as Awami League led the Liberation War). They see Awami League as India's agent, and these agents and the Hindus, they say, are against religion and Islam. They conveniently cry out that Islam is endangered, as if they have the sole agency of protecting Islam. They even rehabilitated the collaborators. Under many pretexts, they plundered the country, and this money trickled down to the army officers through various ways. That is how they have always ensured the loyalty of the armed forces.



Justice Qayani used to say that Pakistani soldiers were heroes - they have conquered their own country. If he was alive, he might have said that Pakistan soldiers have also managed to break up their country. Our own military rulers are also heroes. They also conquered their country. But the civil society managed to oust them before they could destroy the country. However, that Pakistani concept is still there, and we are still fighting against it.

In this backdrop, I have reviewed the books by Fazal Mukim Khan, Amir Abdullah Niazi, Rao Farman Ali, Asghar Khan, Tozammel Hossain Malik and A. R. Siddiqi. Interviews of Niazi and Rao Farman Ali have also been included.

## 2

### **Mukim Khan's Crisis**

Major General Fazal Mukim Khan was the first to write a book giving importance to the events of 1971. His book *Pakistan's Crisis in Leadership* was published from Islamabad in 1973. Other writers on the Liberation War of Bangladesh and the role of the Pakistani Army specially foreign authors, have often quoted from this book. The book has been widely praised. But I could not find a single copy of the book in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. At last I borrowed a photocopy of the book from Matiur Rahman, the journalist, and read it with great interest. *Pakistan's Crisis*, in 27 chapters and about 300 pages, deals with the period between 1969 and 71, and so is of great significance to us.

Why did the General write the book in the first place? He says in the preface that he never actually intended to write it. He was warned not to write about the War of 1965, which means that his analysis of the war was not acceptable to the authority. After that, he concentrated more on social work. But, he says, he has written this book because after 1971, his friends asked him to write it. He makes an interesting remark at the beginning of the book - "Why Pakistan?". He does not exactly mention what that "debacle" of 1971 was, but we can rightly guess that it is the independence of Bangladesh that he is talking about. Some people put blame on international conspiracy for this debacle. Fazal Mukim is not so

convinced. He thinks that even if there was a conspiracy, Pakistan was responsible for it. A conspiracy can take place only when the leaders and the people create a field conducive to it. If India and Russia had conspired to tear Pakistan apart, then Pakistan definitely also helped them. "Our lack of political wisdom and vision of history and our own indifference to what might be our national interest brought the disintegration", he wrote.

Then he goes on to the main topic - the genocide. He says that the genocide, pillage, and rapes have been described in Indian and India-inspired reports. But no Pakistani wants to avoid discussing it either. The truth can be known when the prisoners of war return from India. [the book was written before the POWs had returned.] It's amazing to see his faith in his soldiers' honesty. How did he expect that those who committed the bloodshed and rapes would later actually admit it?

Fazal Mukim's suggestion was to ignore the propaganda of the Indians, who had spent 12 million pounds for propaganda purpose before the war broke out. They (Indians) were saying again and again that Islamabad was depriving Dhaka of economic and political rights. Fazal Mukim was amazed to see the international press believing this exaggeration! In his opinion, an "unjust impression" was formed among the international community about Pakistan. West Pakistan was being accused of carrying out a genocide in the East. In this way, "Objectivity, fairness and even reason went down before a thumping desire to punish and destroy Pakistan".

The problem with Fazal Mukim Khan and other army Generals was that their conception of the world was limited to Pakistan. If he didn't think the same way, then it has to be assumed that all the first-hand reports in the international press, radio and television had been a sham.

Then he has tried to put up figures to prove that the stories of genocide were not actually true. One thing that should be mentioned here is that most of the people we talked to in Pakistan said they knew little about the happenings. Even Generals Niazi and Rao Farman Ali said the same. But the real reason for their "ignorance" is clear to us. If it is admitted by Pakistanis that there was in fact a genocide, then the Generals and politicians involved in the crimes committed in 1971 would have to stand trial.

### 3

The next chapter of Fazal Mukim Khan's book is named *Between the Two Wars*. The time frame is 1965-1971. The author has seen both wars as Indian aggression against Pakistan, and the Liberation War was "Indian aggression in East Pakistan". What he tries to say in the chapter goes like this. From the very beginning India had wanted to tear apart Pakistan, and created the pressure on Pakistan to make that happen. There was the India-Pakistan War in 1965, but India "failed to achieve her aim, ended in a stalemate and brought no glory to the Indian Armed forces. Instead of gaining a stature, they suffered a further loss of face". If this is true, then why was Pakistan forced to sign the Tashkent Treaty? And why did Bhutto later use this treaty against Ayub Khan? There is no answer to that.

The author says that Pakistan did not take care of the political, military and economic problems that emerged after the War of 1965. Rather, the old system was allowed to remain.

The author does admit that the Bangalis were pioneers in the Pakistan movement. Muslim League, the party that led the movement, was formed in Dhaka. But those who were supposed to run the country with a pragmatic vision after the death of Jinnah and Liaqat Ali failed to do so. They were, he says, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Suhrawardy, Akram Khan and Tamizuddin Khan. Except Nishtar others were Bangalis, and they were not in power. So the country was not run by them. Those who did run the country - that is, the military and civil bureaucracy and their associates - are not mentioned, implying that they were not responsible in any way for the mismanagement of the state of affairs.

The author also says in this chapter that after 1947, a feudal class was created in West Pakistan, while the East had a "classless society". The intellectuals whom I talked to in Pakistan also agreed to this, but they did not use the word "classless society"; they said the rising middle class was the strongest force in East Bengal. In the pre-independence days the West Pakistanis were loyal to the British, so they were mostly benefitted. On the other hand the people of East Bengal, about whose allegiance the British were always suspicious, were deprived of government jobs. So, after 1947, the West Pakistanis emerged as the dominant force in the

government. East Bengal has always been like a "hinterland" - industrialisation never took off here. After 1947, the influential Hindu businessmen and craftsmen left for India, and the enterprises they left were bought by West Pakistani businessmen. Besides, the Bangalis, particularly the Muslim, "had always showed certain prejudices against foreign capital and capitalists," says the author. They saw everyone as outsiders, but many of them were also outsiders themselves. The implication here is that Bangalis actually did not like Muslims. Then whom did they prefer? Hindus, of course!

Fazal Mukim says, quite rightly by the way, that after 1965 East Pakistan woke up from its illusion about the West. He says that when Fatima Jinnah lost the President election to Ayub Khan, the Bangalis realised that in any democratic way they would not get any political power. The armed forces could have worked as a bridge between the two regions. But then it was realised that East Pakistan was unprotected, and "the feeling of uneasiness and loneliness produced by the war was taking root". The Central Government took no steps to pacify the growing dissatisfaction. In fact, in all the twenty-five years of united Pakistan no step was taken to really unify the two parts; rather, the government continued to adopt policies that only contributed to pushing the two regions apart. But Fazal Mukim has not blamed the Central Government for this. In his opinion, "the Government case, therefore, went by default, so did that of the western wing. No literature and no white papers were ever issued, and the Government's information media miserably failed. The great strides made in social and economic fields in East Pakistan remained unappreciated". And this led to propagation of Six Points.

Then Fazal Mukim Khan offers an interesting theory. He believes that India had a two-faced policy from the very beginning. Her doors were closed for West Pakistan, but open wide for the East. The Nehru-Liaquat Treaty of 1947, which allowed swapping of Hindu and Muslim population between the two countries, did not apply for East Pakistan. So, although 80% wealth of the West Pakistan came under the West Pakistani Muslims, the wealth in East Pakistan remained in the hands of the Hindus, and they gradually transferred that wealth to India. Every year, the Hindus smuggled or transferred in different ways 750 to 800 million Taka to India.

The same picture was in the education sector. In 1947, Hindus financed 1,210 high schools and 67 colleges in East Bengal. The Hindu teachers there, says Mukim Khan, used Indian books that were full of Indian propaganda. Because of this, no feelings for Pakistan were installed in the young generation, and as a result the "East Pakistani Muslims" were converted to Bangalis. I want to quote the author's actual comments here, because most Pakistanis believe in this theory and it will help the reader get a clearer idea about the Pakistani perception of the background of the liberation War - "The Pakistan cause came to be connected with West Pakistan only. Thus the internal disensions were being fostered to destroy Pakistan, and regional affinities were being encouraged and Pakistani patriotism downgraded. The seeds of the crisis between East and West Pakistan, sown by professors and teachers of the minority community, yielded a flourishing crop. In twenty-four years, the type of education imparted to them together with insistent Indian propaganda changed the East Pakistani Muslims to Bangalis. A considerable reaction of young East Pakistan was therefore to break away from Pakistan and its basis."

Hindus were absent from the political arena between 1965 to 1970. Wisely, they concentrated on the cultural front. Cultural organisations were formed throughout East Bengal, giving rise to anti-Pakistan activities. But why were the Hindu leaders absent in the first place? To answer this, Fazal Mukim would have been obliged to say that the Pakistan government saw them as "traitors", and drove them to exile or hiding. But he has not overlooked the contribution of the cultural activists in the democratic movement in Bangladesh. Even in our country, many people choose to avoid this issue.

Then came the Agartala Conspiracy Trial. Ayub Khan was forced to step down from power. We can get a clearer portrayal of Fazal Mukim's ideas from his concluding remarks. He says that the "misrule and misdeeds" of the political leaders in the first decade of independence paved the way for Ayub Khan's ascendance to power, but they were at the end able to destroy him. In the first decade, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali and Nazimuddin, among others, were prominent in politics. In other words, there was an attempt to establish a civil society, which did not ultimately materialise because of the bureaucracy; and Ayub Khan represented this

bureaucracy when he came to power. It was obvious that the Generals had little liking for the influence of the civil society, and this is not surprising. This is apparent in all the memoirs by Generals, where almost everyone has squarely put the blame on the politicians for the problems and break-up of Pakistan.

#### 4

What was the time between 1969 and 1971 like? According to Fazal Mukim, it was like a typical period under martial law. After Yahya ascended to power, the Principal Staff Officer of the CMLA said in a meeting that last time they were blamed for what the civilians did, but from then on they themselves would do everything, and take due credit for it. The work pattern of the new government decided its attitude - which translated into the system where military bureaucrats gave commands that everyone else were supposed to go by. But again, Fazal Mukim Khan says that it was not a military rule in sense, because its rules and regulations were not set by any military institution. It is obvious that he did not want to get into any controversy about the military's role, and wanted to keep the military above everything. And for that, he has blamed Yahya Khan and his close associates for the events of 1969-71, saying "it should not be mixed with the HQ CMLA."

Fazal Mukim had observed that since 1969, hatred against the West Pakistanis was growing in the East. The West Pakistanis and the army were weighed on the same scale, and so hatred was also growing against the army. He could not fathom out the reason for this hatred. Had not the army worked in the cyclone-affected areas in 1970? This hatred also surprised the army itself. According to the author, the Pakistan armed forces had never showed any allegiance to any particular political party or personality. They were under the legitimate (please note the word legitimate) central government. Fazal Mukim should have been asked, if the armed forces were so subservient to the government, then why did they oust the civil rule and, and how could Ayub or Yahya take over power? Is it legitimate to get rid of a civil government? Fazal Mukim could make those kinds of comments because he was one of the beneficiaries of military rule. So, although at first glance it seems that

these are all true statements that he actually believes in, the fact is that these are his attempts to delineate military rule as something legitimate.

Then there was the election of 1970. Sheikh Mujib's comprehensive victory put the government in Islamabad totally off-guard, forcing them to change all their earlier plans. But Awami League was prepared for everything. Here, he gives an information that has not been discussed in detail anywhere else. He writes that Colonel Osmani, the military advisor to Awami League, chalked out a detailed plan through discussions with Sheikh Mujib. The plan had three steps:

First step: Going to power through political dialogues, alleviating the disparity between the two regions, and declaring independence at an opportune moment.

Second step: If the first step fails, then getting power through force. To help this plan, Bangladesh was divided into six zones, and sector commanders were appointed for each zone. The commanders would work through the elected public representatives, who would have the responsibility of collecting arms.

Third step: If the first and second steps fail, then the common people and the voluntary forces would go to India. The idea would be to internationalise the Bangladesh issue, and then start guerrilla warfare.

Many others have hinted about plans like this. Some of our politicians and intellectuals are of the opinion that Awami League was not prepared for war - they had always wanted to be with Pakistan, and fought the war because they had no other option. But if we accept the General's version described above, then this theory of unpreparedness for war should be ruled out.

At that time, Lt. General Wasiuddin sent a message to Rawalpindi through officer courier:

1. India will prevent planes to go from one region of Pakistan to another.
2. India will enter Pakistan through the border in the west, so that Pakistan cannot deploy too many troops in the eastern border.

Three Bangali officers, Brigadier M. R. Majumdar, Lt. Colonel A. S. B. Yasin and Shamsul Hasan, had given Fazal Mukim all these information. Fazal Mukim says the conspiracy was widespread, and some civil and

police officers knew of it. Later, the East Pakistani officers of the army were impressed by the plan, and they were recruited in it.

Even in the early days of 1971 General Yahya was not able to figure out his course of action. He had pressures from different quarters. Besides, "various intelligence agencies had a personal stake in ensuring that Mujib did not come to power". Many were advising him to beat the Bangalis into senses. According to the author, the advice went like this - "The killing of a few thousand would not be high price for keeping the country together. Handing over power to Mujibur Rahman, a proved traitor, would be a blunder and history would never forgive Yahya Khan for this". While I was discussing with intellectuals and policy makers of West Pakistan, many of them corroborated this information.

Then Fazal Mukim goes on to describe the events leading to March 26. The narration is more or less as that in other books. But as his book was the first one to be published, we can say that the other books actually repeated what he had said. The gist of Fazal Mukim's account is - the law and order situation had broken down, Awami League was instigating the people, the Biharees were being slaughtered, and anti-army propaganda were being spread. But the good Pakistani Generals surely knew what had really happened, so the reader can easily discern the assumptions from the truth. But one thing can be mentioned here. In this prolonged narration, there is no mention of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, his actions, how he messed up the whole affair, and how the army collaborated with him.

Fazal Mukim was Bhutto's Military Secretary.

## 5

In Chapter V, Fazal Mukim describes in detail the events of March 25. Other Generals have also included descriptions of March 25, but their source was probably Fazal Mukim's book. And for those of us who were in Dhaka at that time, it is easy to figure out how authentic his version of the events is. Mukim says that during the night of March 25, the army wanted to bring back law and order in the city. They were ordered to shoot back if anyone shot at them, and break up any attempts of demonstration. They were told to break the opposition psychologically, and to shoot upwards to force the crowd back. Sheikh Mujib did not escape, he was arrested. Why didn't he escape? "To save Pakistan",



Sheikh Mujib answered to the Station Commander in Dhaka, says the General.

Let me mention an incident described by Mukim. He says that lots of Indians weapons, as well as some non-Bangali girls who were kept there as prostitutes, were found in the Iqbal Hall of Dhaka University. Four members of the army died in the operation, and 97 civilians were taken to the hospital. The official figure of dead persons is 150, the unofficial 500. After reading this account, it will seem that all the newspapers in the world had lied, and the only true version of the story is Mukim's. Actually this attitude of the Generals only helped to expedite the break-up of Pakistan.

## 6

The name of Chapter VI is, surprisingly, *Muktibahini* (Freedom Fighters). In the Pakistani propaganda during 1971 the freedom fighters were mentioned as miscreants. The Generals, while writing about 1971, have avoided using the word "freedom fighters". General Niazi, however, has mentioned the word, but no one else has used it on the head of a chapter. One of the reasons may be that General Khan was not involved in the war in 1971.

But Fazal Mukim has not forgotten to say in the very beginning of the chapter that it was India that actually formed this *Muktibahini*. The freedom fighters were frustrated several times because, according to Mukim, they and the Indian army were losing battles to the heroic Pakistani army. Many were deserting the force. But the Pakistani army failed to take advantage of the situation. These kinds of comments can be considered normal for him. But even then, he couldn't manage to conceal the role of the freedom fighters.

He says that since 1968-69, several such forces were formed in the border areas, like the pro-Russia volunteers, pro-China Freedom Committee, the Army for Liberation of East Bengal, and the National Freedom Alliance. We are also getting to know that such nucleuses were formed in the 60s. But certainly not in the way Mukim describes. He says that during the round table conference on March 11, 1969, Ayub Khan told Mujib that some men had entered into Pakistan from India, trying to destabilise the country and selling guns for as cheap a price as only 40

taka. Mukim implies that the Bangalis were actually prepared for this kind of armed resistance, so it was not difficult for them to form the *Muktibahini*. In Pakistan, he says, the role of the freedom fighters is usually undermined, and too much credit is given to the Indian army. India tried the same in the beginning, but then realised it was doing more harm than good. What he tries to say is that there is no way to play down the achievements of the freedom fighters. He even says, "Particularly the EPR had fought with skill, courage and fanaticism which should have surprised no one who knew these units".

## 7

The next chapters - *Defence Plans, Indian Preparations, State of the Army in November 1971*- are not relevant for us as they are more or less the same in all books by the Generals. The last chapter of the book, however, is more interesting.

The opinion about the Pakistan army in November is that they had low morale and barely any coordination, and they were suffering from a sense of uncertainty. In this context he provides an information which I have not seen in any other book - the casualty rate of the Pakistani soldiers. The casualty rate was under 15 a day in March and April, 3 a day in May and June, and steadily increasing to 100 a day by November.

For the army, this was extremely demoralising. They were stunned by the fact that they were dying not in face-to-face battles but in guerrilla attacks, and it was "adding to the strain on the proud army".

He analyses the reasons behind the Pakistani army's defeat, and discusses the effect of lack of coordination. Here, at one point, he makes an interesting comment, which may explain the real reason for the defeat. Because of increasing lack of security, the Pakistani army were being forced to stay back and defend only those places which were easily defensible, leaving all the other areas to be taken over. In Mukim's words, "They were getting fixed, with no manoeuvrability left to them. The feeling of being surrounded was creeping in as any laxity on their part was invariably punished by the Mukti Bahini".

Chapter XI is titled *India Attacks East Pakistan*; and then comes *The Fall of Dhaka*. These two chapters do not have much to attract the readers. The next three chapters are also irrelevant for us. The last chapter - *The*

*Reasons for Debacle* - is of more interest to us. The author was not comfortable in writing it, which is evident from the opening sentence - "Pakistan was not defeated, it was humiliated, which is still worse". He then goes on to discuss the reasons for the defeat, which were - the failure to write an executable constitution, the distance between the rulers and the ruled, uncertainties on national issues, and propaganda on behalf of some individuals or groups through the media. There were other reasons too, like keeping the issue of defence away from the eyes of the common people, and the people responsible for defence not being accountable to anyone. The army officers have mentioned these after retiring.

According to the author, another major reason for the debacle was the centralisation of all power in the hands of the CMLA. Pakistan faced yet another war in 1971 without any national objective. The war in East Pakistan, he thinks, was the result of the political mess-up created by means of the idiocy of Yahya's advisors. The reason for the surrender in Dhaka was the folly of the High Command and the commanders appointed by it. Then he discusses how the defence system of Pakistan can be restructured.

But how can these be achieved? His answer is, through "well defined and efficient political institutions for conducting the affairs of state". The politicians have the responsibility to form these institutions. Pakistan broke apart in 1971 because of events spanning over 25 years. Everyone was more or less responsible for it, but the blame is put mostly on the politicians. Now they have to forget the past and govern the country properly. "They must ponder earnestly over what great damage they have done to the country and get down to redeeming their past mistake "

Fazal Mukim Khan, like everyone else, concludes that it was the politicians who were mainly responsible for the break-up of Pakistan, and goes forward to give advice to the politicians. But the Generals could never understand that Pakistan broke apart because these political institutions were destroyed by force. Even if they do realise it, they want to keep it out of their agenda, and General Mukim's book is yet another example of that attitude.

## 8

### The Betrayal

Before talking about General Niazi's book *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, let us shed some light on General Niazi the person, because that will help us understand his views. Recently, when I was in Pakistan, I did not get to hear a single good thing about this man. At first I thought this was because he was a defeated General. Pakistanis have always imagined themselves to be the best of soldiers, and they got the beating of their life in Bangladesh. This is hard to swallow even for a liberal Pakistani. But the opinion about Niazi is: he was no heroic soldier, rather he was a lustful man expert in cracking obscene jokes. The Vice President of Jamaat even remarked, "Why did he have to return home alive?"

When I met Niazi, I got the same image. The man makes unnecessary jokes like a clown, has some deep-rooted prejudices, and he was actually exactly the kind of man - emotionless and thick - required to execute the blueprint intended for East Pakistan. And for that reason, the military junta sent him to Dhaka, promoting him superseding 12 others. Let me give an example of Niazi's common sense. He told us that if the High Command had not stopped him, he would have taken over Calcutta and Gujranwala and marched on to Kashmir. Please have a look at the map of India and see for yourself the locations of Dhaka, Calcutta, Gujranwala and Kashmir!

How has the Oxford University Press, the publisher of Niazi, seen him? For starters, they have refused to take any responsibility for his opinions in his book. They know very well how he is regarded in Pakistan. But they have agreed to publish the book for business interest, and it is selling well. The advantage derived by us in Bangladesh is that the book has become highly controversial, forcing even those who have remained quiet for the last 30 years to open their mouth and reveal many hitherto unknown facts.

Niazi has pointed out those responsible for 1971 in the preface of his book. He says he returned to Pakistan in 1974 after being a prisoner of war in India. The power was in the clutch of those people who were responsible for breaking the country with their aggressive attitude. He found what he was fearing for, says Niazi - he found that the garrison in

the East had been made the scapegoat to save Bhutto, the person actually responsible for the break-up of Pakistan.

He would have written all these at that time, but the condition was not conducive to him, not even during the regime of General Ziaul Haque. No one during the Bhutto and Zia regimes wanted the "truth" about 1971 to be revealed. Rather they were propagating their own views through the writings of the Generals. Niazi says that Fazal Mukim wrote *Crisis in Leadership* at the command of Bhutto and General Tikka Khan. May be it is true, because Fazal Mukim Khan was at that time awarded the post of Military Secretary. Niazi thinks that the book has distorted history. He has the same kind of opinion about Brigadier Siddiq Salik and his book *Witness to Surrender*. Niazi has been hurt that Salik has written against his commander (that is Niazi himself), although his commander saved him from being scalped by Bangalis. Salik and Niazi got promoted during the Zia regime despite being prisoners of war. Niazi says that the Head Quarter assigned Major General Shawkat Mirza to write on the war of 1971. Reza wrote the book *Pakistan Army 1956-71*. Niazi had removed him from a division in 1971 because of incompetence and cowardice. So how can Reza write the correct history of that time, Niazi asks. The Head Quarter also assigned Lt. Gen. Kamal Matin to write a book. Major Gen. Rao Farman Ali has written *How Pakistan Got Divided*. Niazi thinks Farman Ali's book is also full of lies. Farman, he says, managed to work under five governors through "intrigue and manipulation". This is not entirely without logic, because after returning to Pakistan in 1974, Farman did get a high post. What is interesting is that all retired Generals are now getting pensions, except only one - Niazi.

So Niazi had to resort to writing. He says that in 1970, Bhutto told M. M. Ahmed, Ayub's Economic Advisor, and Kamrul Islam, the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, to calculate whether Pakistan will survive without East Pakistan. Niazi implies here that 1971 was only an excuse - the ruling circle of Pakistan had decided to get rid of East Pakistan long before. Former high level bureaucrats also admitted this when I interviewed them. Kamarul Islam too did not deny it. Rather, he informed that this type of planning was going on since 1969. Niazi also says that Bhutto did not want to become the opposition leader. He wanted

power, and it was possible for him to have it if there was no East Pakistan. And that is why he said, "Idhar ham udhar tum" ("Me on this side, you on the other"). No one I talked to about it denied it.

When the war was at its fiercest, Yahya commented that he had nothing to do except pray for Pakistan; and the Eastern Garrison was told to surrender when it was prepared to fight to the last. Without this, West Pakistan would not have survived. There is a "but" here. Niazi did not actually have any option but to surrender. No one in Pakistan has denied what Niazi tries to impress. It seems that what Niazi says in the preface does have truth in it, because no contemporary of Niazi has denied it. But Niazi is the first person to put these facts in the open, and he deserves praise for that.

The first two chapters of Niazi's book narrate his childhood, his early life in the military, partition of India, his posting in East Pakistan and the India-Pakistan War in 1965. He starts the story of his childhood by saying that his name is Amir Abdullah Niazi but he is known as Tiger Niazi. He describes his lineage and his heroism in the book, and his heroic feats are told repeatedly. While we were talking, he told me, "Why should I be afraid of guerrillas? Haven't I fought against the Indonesian guerrillas? That's why the guerrillas in 1971 were not effective against me".

Niazi tells us he got the title "Tiger" from Brigadier Warren while fighting against the Japanese in Korea. Besides this "title", he is the proud possessor of a Military Cross, a Sitara-e-Khidmat, a Sitara-e-Pakistan, two Hilal-e-Zurats for valour, and 24 medals. He was in Dhaka in 1957, and for his organisational abilities and gallantry a road in the Dhaka Cantonment was named "Tiger Road". But Altaf Gauhar, an influential bureaucrat of the Ayub Khan days, told us ( and he has also written this in the newspapers) that the real reason for this title of "Tiger" lies elsewhere. An Indian General who received training with Niazi had said that Niazi used to call the orderlies "Shera" in the army mess to attract their attention, and that is how he got the title [Shera means tiger in the Punjabi language], and not because of any heroic action. Altaf Gauhar said that Niazi claimed he had been awarded the title of Tariq-Bin-Zaed in Pakistan, but he has never told any one who gave him this title and where. Gauhar also said that he had never heard of

Niazi during the War of 1965, and he had to analyse the war every hour at that time. May be Niazi performed his duties well and deserves the Hilal-e-Zurat, but his name was never mentioned in any of the briefings of Ayub Khan.

Niazi is probably the most decorated General in Pakistan. Niazi himself also boasts about it. May be he did fight well in the World War II and the War of 1965, otherwise there would not have been the series of medals. But one thing should be considered. Major General Tozammel Hossain Malik has commented in his memoirs that his own recommendations for decorations for the soldiers in his sector were ignored. An opportunist circle in the army preserved their interest in this way. Incidentally this also happened after our Liberation War. Most of the *Beer Uttams* and the *Beer Pratik* awards have been given to members of the Armed Forces, and not a single person outside the Armed Forces was found eligible for the *Beer Srestho* title. In this way, the ex-Pakistani army personnel in Bangladesh formed their own circle of interest.

In his book, Niazi gives detailed accounts of his gallantry in the War of 1965. He informs that General Abrar won the Battle of Sialkot, but General Tikka Khan got all the credit although he did nothing. In fact Tikka Khan gave wrong information about the war, and survived from punishment by a whisker. "At times history is unkind. It creates giants out of pygmies and titans are not given their due share", comments Niazi. It has to be kept in mind that Niazi and Tikka Khan were not in particularly good terms. No one in Pakistan except Niazi has ever claimed that Tikka Khan was a total failure as a commander.

Chapter III of Niazi's book is more relevant for us. Titled *Events Leading to Secession*, it reflects the usual picture given in Pakistan - what we can term as the 'standard text' -about the erstwhile East Pakistan. (But while in Pakistan, I had the feeling that the left wingers and the new generation are beginning to question this 'standard text'.) In this chapter, Niazi describes, just like the other Generals, his preconceived notions. General Umar and General Farman Ali have also spoken of these notions in their interviews. During the partition of 1947, informs Niazi, the rich and educated Hindus left West Pakistan. But those in East Pakistan stayed back. There the Muslims were greater in number, but the Hindus were in the positions of authority. Most of the teachers in the schools and

colleges were Hindus, and they pictured Pakistan as imperialists, autocrats and plunderers. They influenced the young minds, and sowed the seeds of dissent.

Because of this, the West Pakistanis wanted parity; otherwise the power would be in East Pakistan where they assumed that the Hindus, counted for 20% of the population in the East, actually controlled the Muslim majority. So in an indirect way, the Hindus would have ruled Pakistan. The parity system was introduced to restrain this Hindu influence. Let me give an example to show how deep-rooted this assumption was. When Mohiuddin Ahmed and I were talking to Niazi, his two daughters were there. At the very beginning, one of them inquired whether we were Muslims. After the interview, both of them requested us to forsake India and take some other country as friends. We asked - if we were so influenced by the Hindus, then why on earth did we initially propose for Pakistan, and why did we become a part of Pakistan? No one - Niazi, Umar or Farman - could answer understandably, and it was not possible for them to answer because this is not an issue at all. But it can be an important tool to explore and understand the Pakistani mind.

Niazi also says in his book that, although there were Muslim majorities in both parts of Pakistan, there were little in common among them - neither language, nor dress, nor even eating habits. Niazi in his interview commented that Bangali Muslims are better practising Muslims than West Pakistanis. Other Generals have also said this, thus revealing the contradictions in them.

Niazi further comments that West Pakistan was ruled by powerful and feudal *Zamindars*. The farmers were like their servants. In East Pakistan, on the other hand, the middle class was the powerful force. The intellectuals, teachers and lawyers could influence the common man. Those we talked to in Pakistan - even members of the feudal families - admitted the differences.

Niazi has not denied that dissatisfaction was growing in East Pakistan, but he has not analysed the causes of this dissatisfaction. Some of his comments indicate that he knew the reasons. For example, he writes that during the War of 1965 East Pakistan was unprotected, and this strengthened the dissatisfaction among the Bangalees. In his words, 'The



Bengalis were convinced more than ever before that they were being neglected. To a certain extent their anxieties were not unfounded".

In his opinion the Agartala Conspiracy Trial was not false and Hindus were in fact assisting the Indian intelligence since 1947. In 1969, Yahya Khan, then the Army Chief, inspired Sheikh Mujib to continue with his movement so that he (Yahya) could seize power. Undoubtedly this comment of Niazi is totally groundless.

After the cyclone of 1970, Admiral Ahsan, the Governor of East Pakistan, asked for help to Commander Shahebzada Yaqub of the Eastern Command, but did not get any. This further ignited the anti-Pakistan feeling in East Pakistan. Yaqub, on the other hand, drafted a security plan named "Blitz". Awami League swept the election that followed. Niazi told us that if the military government had not meddled, then the opposition would have won at least 50 to 60 seats (He came to know this from people like Fazlul Qader Chowdhury and Farid Ahmed!). Many West Pakistanis share this assumption. They still cannot figure out how a single party could win almost all the seats of the Assembly. Bhutto refused to accept the election results. In a meeting of Governors on February 22, 1971, Yaqub was informed that he should go ahead with Operation Blitz if Mujib did not withdraw his Six Points. Yaqub could have put down the revolt, because "All Yaqub faced was a rag-tag mob". Then Yaqub became the Governor, and resigned four days later. In the dark hours of Pakistan, he resigned, putting up conscience as the excuse and saying that he could not possibly shoot his Pakistani brothers. But if this excuse was valid, then he should have resigned long before. In other words, Niazi accuses Yaqub of being an opportunist who has secured benefits from all governments preceding Nawaz Sharif's.

Shahebzada Yaqub is one of those who were directly involved with the events leading to 1971 and maintained silence all these 28 years. After Niazi's book was published, he sent to Altaf Gauhar a letter and some documents defending himself. Gauhar published them in the form of an article. Mohiuddin and I met him in Islamabad. He talked about 1971 with us for a while, but demanded that everything be "off the record". When the topic of Operation Blitz was raised, he gave us the documents that he sent to Altaf Gauhar. "As you know, baseless and malicious charges are best treated with contempt", he had written to Gauhar.

He also gave us a copy of the letter that he gave to Lt. Gen. Pirzada, the PSO of the President, on February 23, 1971.

General Yaqub told us that he chalked out the Operation Blitz in November, 1970. According to him, the operation was planned ".....to meet the eventuality of an insurgency and the total collapse of law and order during the period of general elections in E. Pakistan in December 70. In this hypothetical situation, the mission was to restore order rapidly by the stringent enforcement of martial law, selective arrest of anti-Pakistan elements, vigorous implementation of order to secure key points of vital areas using minimum force. The object was to gain swift control to be able to meet external intervention".

He said Operation Blitz was not executed because he had resigned before it could be put into effect. He submitted his resignation letter on March 5. The letter said that the "Only solution to the present crisis is a purely political one. Only President can take this far reaching decision by reaching Dacca by March 6, which I have repeatedly recommended. Am convinced there is no military solution which can make sense in present situation. I am consequently unable to accept responsibility for complementing a mission, namely a military solution, which would mean civil war and large scale killing unarmed civilians and would achieve no sane aim. It would have disastrous consequences. I therefore confirm tendering my resignation".

General Yaqub clearly stated in the letter the possible consequence of a so-called military solution in East Pakistan. He asked, who would take the responsibility if Pakistan broke up. He wrote, "... West Pakistani leaders must make up their mind regarding "the price" they are prepared to pay in the political and economic spheres of integration.

It should be our endeavour to place the responsibility for their failure on their shoulders or at worst they - at least the W. Pak leaders - must be made to share with us the responsibility for the decisions which are bound to lead to the disintegration under the most unfavourable and bitter circumstances".

Altaf Gauhar said that another military officer was against executing Operation blitz - he was Group Captain Zafar Masud, who was generally called Mitti Masud. While Operation Blitz was discussed in a meeting between Yahya and other officers, Mitti Masud opposed it, and warned

of dire consequences if the plan was carried out. Not a single Air Force plane took part in Operation Blitz as long as Mitti Masud was in charge of the Air Force. General Yaqub told Altaf Gauhar that he has seldom come across a man as courageous and upright as Mitti Masud. Mitti Masud was court martialed for refusing to follow orders, and he now lives in Germany. So what Niazi says on these matters are not the truth, and are products of his assumptions. On the other hand, General Yaqub's letters show that the military campaign in East Pakistan and the genocide were pre-planned. They did not come about suddenly.

When the constitutional crisis intensified, Niazi writes, Bhutto demanded in West Pakistan to either arrest Sheikh Mujib or to accept an independent East Pakistan. In 1971, Yahya had a meeting with the Governors. General Yaqub was also there. In the meeting it was decided that military action would be taken if Mujib did not change his standpoint on the Six Points.

## 9

Then comes March, 1971. Here Niazi expresses some of his assumptions, mixes the truth with lies, and speaks some truth as a result of his animosity with Tikka Khan.

Niazi writes that after Mujib had called for the non-cooperation movement on March 7, Awami League committed some horrendous acts of cruelty. In Bogra, 15,000 non-Bangalis were murdered in cold blood. In Chittagong, thousands of people were killed and women raped. In Sirajganj, women and children were set on fire. Biharees and West Pakistanis were the object of these attacks. The atrocities did not stop here. The West Pakistani officers in the East Pakistan Rifles were murdered. Their wives were raped, and forced to get stark naked and serve food to Bangali officers. On the other hand, the stories of atrocities by Pakistani troops that were told later were fabricated to put the Pakistani army to shame.

However in no foreign press were there any stories of any such mass murders committed by Bangalis. "Then how did you come to know about these mass murders? What was your source?" we asked Niazi. He had probably guessed that we would ask this. He immediately handed us a photocopy of an article. The article, titled *The East Pakistan Tragedy*,

was by Rushbrook Williams. I did not turn its pages at that time, but later discovered that the source of information of the article were white papers published by the Pakistan Government. We can easily guess the rest. Some introduction to this Rushbrook Williams will also help. After Ayub Khan declared martial law, this man was appointed to write in his favour. He was always available for hire by the military government in Pakistan. He was once again used by the Pakistani junta after the crackdown of March 25.

Niazi says that Tikka Khan was not warmly welcomed as the Governor of East Pakistan. He wanted to meet Mujib but the request was turned down, because Mujib at that time regularly "wined and dined and played cards" with Yaqub. Not even a madman will believe that Mujib had these vices or had so much time to indulge in such activities in those turbulent days of March.

Tikka was taking all the preparations for the crackdown of March 25. At this point in his book, the truth, even though mingled with lies, blurts out as Niazi tries to criticise Tikka Khan. He has written, and has also has told us later, that Tikka was facing not an army but armed civilians [the word "armed" is a lie]. He required patience and prudence to face the situation. He says that Mujib gave Colonel Osmani the responsibility of analysing the whole affair, and the retired Major General Majid was entrusted with the job of organising the former soldiers. Arms were being smuggled from India, and the police and other East Pakistanis were being armed. The Indian Army was helping in this. By that time, thousands of Indian troops had infiltrated into East Pakistan in the guise of civilians. The latter comments are, of course, complete lies. If the Bangalis were in fact armed and there were thousands of Indian army in East Pakistan, then would it have been possible for the Pakistani troops to carry out the genocide? Niazi has failed to understand this simple reasoning.

Right after that, Niazi says that the Bangali soldiers had not revolted till then. Tikka Khan was told to disarm the Bangali soldiers and to arrest the political leaders. But "General Tikka let loose everything at his disposal as if raiding an enemy and not dealing with his own misguided and misled people. The military action was a display of stark cruelty, more merciless than the massacre at Bukhara and Baghdad by Changez Khan and Halaku Khan and at Jalianwala Bagh by British General Dyer". Niazi

cancels many of his lies by this single truth. This is the problem of uttering the truth. Niazi told me that Rao Farman Ali and Brigadier Jahanzeb Abrar carried out this command of Tikka perfectly. "Green land of East Pakistan will be painted red", wrote Farman Ali in his diary.

When asked about this, Farman Ali told me this was not true. Yes, he did write it in the diary, but the context was different. In those days, Kazi Zafar in one of his speeches had said that he would cover the green of East Pakistan with the red flag of socialism. Farman Ali had scribbled that in his diary. Is this in any way believable? I leave it for the reader to decide.

Tikka Khan, says Niazi, made another mistake by misbehaving with foreign correspondents after March 25. The correspondents, enraged at his behaviour, distorted the chronicle of the events, creating a negative image of Pakistan and its armed forces. After a few months, Pakistan Government invited its own contingent of correspondents to East Pakistan to prove that the situation there was normal. But no correspondent wrote in favour of Pakistan after they had gone back. Anthony Mascarenhas wrote his famous report *The Rape of Bangladesh*. So misbehaviour had nothing to do with it, the correspondents faithfully wrote what they saw.

In 1971, the East Pakistan administration was restructured. Tikka Khan was appointed as Governor and the CMLA - in other words the chief of civilian administration. He was to report to the President. Niazi became the Chief of the military administration and he was to report to General Abdul Hamid Khan. Although Tikka Khan has tried to establish that Niazi had worked under him, Niazi says in his book that it is not true.

## 10

Chapters IV to XIII deal with, among other things, Niazi's appointment as the Army Chief of the Eastern Region, deployment of Pakistani troops in the geographical context of Bangladesh, the freedom fighters, operation plan, chronicles of the war, and the defeat of Pakistan. Niazi has discussed at length his military plans. One of the reasons for doing this is to show that he is after all a military strategist, and his offensive and defensive plans were correct. He also claims that he would have succeeded if the Head Quarters had not stopped him from carrying out

his plans. The strategic plans are best left for the analysis by military experts. Let us talk about the points more relevant to us.

In the beginning of the Chapter IV, Niazi informs us that Tikka Khan took a hard line after he was removed from the command of the troops. It was highly ignominious for a General to be removed of his command in wartime. Tikka Khan had asked General Hamid to appoint Niazi under him, but he was refused. "Tikka you were given a chance and you have bungled it up, how can I violate the principle of not to reinforce a failure?", said Hamid.

At this point, Niazi again speaks the truth by saying that during those days the Pakistani armed forces and administration were completely estranged from the common people. The Bangalis were determined not to assist in any way the hated West Pakistanis. Niazi writes that they became persona non grata in their own country. With their sky-high confidence and energy, the freedom fighters had control over the whole of Bangladesh except Dhaka. Then Niazi lodges a strange complaint, which casts shadows of doubt over his mental condition. He writes that India had sent many dancers, pleasure girls and prostitutes to spy on the civil and military personnel of West Pakistan. They did not manage to "seduce" the West Pakistanis, but led many East Pakistanis to the wrong path. On March 25 and 26, a number of non-Bangali girls - prostitutes to be exact - were found in the university halls. Brigadier Shah Beg Singh, a commander of the Indian Army, reportedly had told Niazi of many Indian women working in East Pakistan. So Niazi firmly believes that the story of rape of Bangali women by Pakistani army, police and civilians is not true. His view is that there was no point in raping unwilling Bangali women when there were so many willing Indian women. Besides, in terrible times like those, no one acts like this; rather people become more religious. The soldiers were commanded to remain in their platoon or company. so it was not possible for them to do these any way. Anyone daring to venture out alone would have been killed.

There is no point in even disputing what Niazi says. Even the Generals involved in 1971 have never tried to defend the rape of Bangali women in this way. On the other hand, some of them have described some of General Niazi's conducts related to women. Even General Farman has

told us about Niazi's exploits (off the record). I am refraining from narrating them.

Niazi tries to say again and again in these chapters that he had a little less than 50,000 troops, the geographical and political condition was against them, and they lacked modern weaponry. But even then, a political solution could have been reached when he managed to take control of the situation after driving off the rebels.

"How?", I asked in this context.

"Well", Niazi replied in a self-important manner. "The political leaders contacted me."

"Who were they?"

"Fazlul Qader Choudhury, Abdus Sabur Khan, Moulavi Farid Ahmed, Sirajul Haque, etc. They offered the government a chance to come to a solution by negotiating with them."

The Central Government had replied that there was no point in negotiating with these nonentities. They needed to negotiate with Awami League, but it was impossible for them to do so. Niazi, however, had failed to understand this simple thing.

Niazi claims that if there was a political solution at that time, he would have reached Calcutta through Asam because Pakistan had relations with Naga rebel leader Lal Denga, Fizo and Charu Mazumdar. General Hamid supported this plan of Niazi, but told him that he rather not think too much about the complex matters of politics.

So Niazi had to do everything by himself. He had no clear set of commands from the Centre. The Pakistani troops were not acclimatised to the Bangladesh weather. They lacked proper clothing. Razakars and Al-Badars were being "harassed". When the Chief of Staff of Niazi went to Lt. Gen. Wasiuddin to ask for arms, Wasiuddin refused to help him out. So, to make them hold him in high esteem, he had to resort to various devious means to prove that he had under him four fully armed divisions.

Answering to a question, Niazi told me that the Razakar Force was in fact his creation. As the number of troops was decreasing, he filled that vacuum with Razakars. The last comment is probably not true. It is impractical to contemplate professional soldiers fighting in the same rhythm with amateurs by their side. But here Niazi has indirectly

admitted that Pakistani soldiers were in fact failing to face the freedom fighters.

Meanwhile Brigadier Baqer returned from Islamabad and told Niazi that the Centre was losing all hopes of retaining East Pakistan, and the army in East Pakistan would be made the scapegoat. Niazi has sought help from Fazal Mukim Khan's book to explain how bad his position was, although he has dismissed Fazal Mukim Khan in the beginning of the book. Niazi had no naval or airborne forces under him. According to his statistics, prior to December 3, the day India officially went to war with Pakistan, about four thousand troops had died and two thousand injured. Even if we accept what Niazi says, something does not fit in, and that is the extraordinarily large number of prisoners of war. Such a large number of POWs was unprecedented since the World War II.

Niazi's last remark on the fall of Dhaka is worth noting. It shows he was not able to accept it as a defeat. He terms it as a political and diplomatic defeat while the Indians claim it to be a military victory. But he failed to accept, although he comprehended it, that it was in fact a comprehensive defeat for Pakistan. He writes - "To capture Dhaka the Indians would have had to fight hard and suffer losses to destroy my force but to their good luck when our President realised that the Indians were not capable of defeating us he for ulterior motives, insisted on our surrender. This was done because he and Bhutto could only get power through our defeat and Indian victory and not by our victory or a cease-fire. All I can say is that our political and diplomatic defeat was claimed by the Indians as a military victory which it was not".

While surrendering, Niazi refused to surrender to the Joint Command. "Take it or leave it", Major General Jacob of the Joint Command retorted. Niazi claims they were blackmailed. They were threatened that if they did not surrender, the gates of the Hotel Intercontinental would be opened to the *Muktibahini*.

Something must be explained here. Whomever we talked to in Pakistan told us that the war in 1971 was with the Indian army. They never mention the *Muktibahini* because it hurts their ego. They still cannot come to terms with the fact that the puny Bangalis could strike such a blow against proud Aryans like themselves. Niazi, however, talks about *Muktibahini* everywhere in his book, and directly or indirectly even



mentions their gallantry. No other General has done it in his book. But even then, Niazi could not bring himself to surrender to the Joint Command, which also consisted of the Indian and Bangladesh Armies. This was the greatest tragedy for him. But he avoids any sort of craftiness and expresses in his book how he really felt while surrendering. During that historic moment at Ramna on December 16, 1971, he was accompanied by Major General Farman Ali and Admiral Sharif. Niazi describes how he felt - "As I signed the document with trembling hands, sorrow rose from my heart to my eyes brimming with them with unshed tears of despair and frustration. "

The surrender ceremony was shown on Pakistan Television only once - on December 16, 1971. It gave rise to such an adverse reaction among the people that it was never shown again. Pakistan's dreams of supremacy were shattered with this surrender.

Niazi told me he had to surrender for the sake of Pakistan. "I swallowed my pride and made the supreme sacrifice of my reputation and honour and honour of my gallant troops in national interest", he writes.

Why did Pakistan lose the war? Niazi explains it in Chapter XI of his book. It is titled *Engineered Debacle* - implying that it was the result of a long-term conspiracy of the ruling circle of Pakistan. When I asked him why he had named his book *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, he replied that Pakistan betrayed its countrymen in the east. The ruling clique was going ahead with this plan all the time. The Pakistanis we talked to admitted this. Niazi also admits it, and through it dismisses the prejudiced comments in the beginning of the book. He had no options but this to defend himself. In his words - "However, it was a consistent policy of all rulers to deprive East Pakistan of their legitimate right of participation in governance and decision making process of the country. The result of the 1970 election could have kept Pakistan together if the democratic process of rule by majority party had been adhered to".

Muzaffar Ahmed, who was the Chief Secretary of East Pakistan and who later became a prisoner of war, angrily commented after the fall of Dhaka that the plan chalked out by M. M. Ahmed did after all get implemented. And Niazi also falls in that group, because he surrendered to uphold "national interest". The interest was of West Pakistan, not the Pakistan comprising of the East and the West. He accuses General Yahya, Air

Marshall Rahim, Lt. Gen. Gul Hasan, Tikka Khan and Rao Farman Ali for the defeat of Pakistan. He hints that Tikka Khan might have been responsible for the murder of R. P. Saha and his sons. He also accuses Bhutto who, according to him, was a master of intrigue. He forfeited the interest of the nation for his own personal interests.

But Niazi has reserved his fiercest wrath for Rao Farman Ali. The latter, he says, was not only an opportunist conspirator, but was also an embezzler of money. Farman asked him to send him back to Pakistan, because "Mukti Bahini would kill him for his alleged massacre of the Bangalis and intellectuals on the night of 15/16th December. It was a pathetic sight to see him pale and almost on the verge of break-down". But Niazi assured him that he would give his life to save Farman Ali from the clutches of the *Muktibahini*, and he kept his word.

The annexes, specially the third one, of Niazi's book carry much importance. On April 18, 1971, he issued a circular for the Pakistani army which dealt with discipline in the battlefield. He has clearly indicated in the letter that the Pakistan army was carrying out a genocide. But he has refused to admit this in his whole book.

No one in Pakistan has appreciated Niazi's book. Altaf Gauhar writes that the book is "...Not a confession but a long unending whimper from cover to cover". He thinks the book deserves to be in the dustbin, because Niazi is that fallen symbol of the shattered pride of Pakistan. After the surrender, Niazi was reduced from a "tiger" to a "cat". This is very difficult for a Pakistani to accept, however liberal he may be.

But the book is important to us for an entirely different reason. Besides all the lies and proud ramblings of Niazi, the book does reveal some facts that the Pakistani Generals had never admitted. Neither had Niazi ostensibly, but he has to admit those in his book to serve his own interests. Reversing Altaf Gauhar's words, we can say that the lies of Niazi are the whimper, and the facts he has been forced to admit are the "confession".

Lastly, all I can say is that after talking to Niazi and reading his book, I have had the impression that he symbolises the majority of the Pakistan Army. They are thick, almost robot-like. Their pride is enormous, and they see Pakistan as the world as a whole. The intelligent minority in the army have always used them. For instance, this intelligent minority had

realised beforehand that East Pakistan would at the end become independent. So most of them never came here, and those who did left early enough to save themselves from humiliation. They refused to take responsibilities for the defeat. Niazi, on the other hand, was more than eager to come and lead this force of murderers, marauders and rapists. He cannot even comprehend that he is actually a war criminal. He still dreams that the East and the West will one day reunite in a confederation because of the Muslim majority in both sides. But he also thinks that Bangalis carry a Hindu mentality. He still holds the Razakars dear to his heart. Not even his own troops, whose gallantry he praises again and again in his book, have been granted this privilege. If his troops had been so dear to him, then he would have dedicated the book to them, and not to the *Razakars*. To understand the mind of the Pakistani Generals, reading Niazi's book is a must.

## How Pakistan Got Divided

I have talked to various people in Pakistan who were involved in policy making, or were just closely involved, in the happenings in 1971; and among all of them the most intelligent and emotionless person was General Rao Farman Ali. He acted with a cool brain in those times - and carefully oversaw the interest of Pakistan. Lean and average-looking, Rao Farman Ali talks in a manner utterly devoid of any feeling. In 1971 he was in charge of the civilian administration of the then East Pakistan and so it is entirely unbelievable - although he does try to claim so - that he had no idea of what was going on in East Pakistan at that time. But this is what he has tried to convince us , and has argued in that line in his book.

Among the books on the Liberation War of Bangladesh written by Pakistani Generals, the one by Rao Farman Ali deserves special mention. His book, titled *How Pakistan Got Divided*, is well-written and designed. It is a testament to the fact that Farman Ali is a well-read, farsighted and very clever man. He has written this book because he was very close to Yahya and Tikka Khan, and he also helped Niazi during the war. As a result, the responsibility of the genocide - and specially of the murder of the intellectuals on December 14 - has been put on his shoulders. He has been forced to write this book to defend himself against these accusations.

Explaining what urged him to write the book, Farman Ali says that he saw more than what others did or wanted to see. During his first sojourns to East Pakistan as a Lt. Colonel during 1962 and 63, and later when he was holding important posts in the civilian administration, he was a witness to the beginning, development and culmination of the tragedy. Moreover, he claims he was like many others forced to get involved in the 1971 tragedy. He also writes how he is haunted by all the atrocities when he looks back to those days. But the book denies that the Pakistani Army were responsible for these atrocities.

Farman Ali says he wanted to juxtapose different courses of events and the emotionless insanities of the cunning leaders, and unearth the true picture of the promises and deceiving slogans that brought forth the

break-up of Pakistan. Here also he denies the responsibilities and involvement of the Pakistan Army.

He does, however, speak some truth in the preface. He criticises the Muslims for bragging and exaggerating about their achievements. The proof of this lies in the Generals' books. Farman says that if the appropriate and timely steps were taken then the events in Dhaka could have been prevented. He urges to take lessons from history. Otherwise, he says, they would be blamed for repeating the past mistakes. The words are of a perfect realist - something the politicians had been saying for a long time before 1971.

At the end of the preface, he makes some interesting comments about the present situation in Pakistan. He talks about the separatist movement in Sindh, saying it is like that in East Pakistan, although not that dangerous. He suggests political and socio-economic solution to the problem, and warns that use of force would backfire. He urges the need for a liberal and philosophical mentality, and steps to educate the people, for the moulding of the nation.

Farman Ali says that all classes of the Pakistani society contributed to the break-up of Pakistan somehow or other. He criticises the politicians, bureaucrats, foreign policy formulators, newspapers and the students of East Pakistan for failing to carry out their responsibilities in a constructive way. Rather, he says, they helped to worsen the situation. But the book does not reflect this thinking, except in the concluding two lines.

This is how Farman Ali narrates his tale. He had perfectly understood the reality, but he has avoided them skilfully. So ultimately the book becomes a mish-mash of exaggerations, half-truths and truths. But he has concocted the whole story so cleverly that it may seem believable to some readers. This is a good strategy for him, but disastrous for history or for the future. But even after all the scrutiny, there are some information in the book which are valuable for chronicling the history of 1971.

General Farman Ali's narrative style seems to suggest that he does not bear any ill-feeling towards the Bangalis and it was only a twist of fate that he got involved in the events of 1971. He does not fail to mention again and again that he was in excellent terms with Sheikh Mujib,

probably trying to imply that someone who had such good relations with Mujib could not be that bad a person.

Here I will try to present briefly the main theme of the book and Farman Ali's attitude.

## 12

Among the Pakistani generals, Rao Farman Ali was in Bangladesh for the longest period of time, at one stage from 1967 to 1971. After martial law had been declared, he oversaw the civilian administration on behalf of the armed forces. Naturally the other Generals thought him to be very influential and assumed that he was very close to Yahya. General Arif, a close aide of General Ziaul Haque, has also written in his memoir that Yahya always gave the views of Farman Ali much importance. His appointment is testament to the fact that he was influential, and his close relationship with Yahya is also evident in his memoir. But he says again and again that no one, including the President and Generals Hamid and Pirzada, heeded to his advice regarding East Pakistan.

This book by Farman Ali differs in many ways from the books by the other Pakistani Generals. The book indicates that its author was well-aware of what was going on in the civilian world, he used to read a lot, and used to think twice before taking a step forward. Like the other Generals he also had some preconceived notions about Bangalis which are exposed in the book, though presumably unintentionally. These preconceived notions can be of much importance, because they had a major effect on any decision. Farman Ali has consciously tried to strike a balance in his book. On one hand he has to keep in mind the viewpoint of West Pakistan, and on the other hand he has to show that he did have a lenient attitude towards East Pakistan. And that is why we see him attempting to include the viewpoint of East Pakistan in the book. There may be another reason for this. He had closely observed the events in East Pakistan and he also had contacts with the politicians. But something else can be mentioned here. He has been accused of the murder of the intellectuals on December 14, and may be that is why he has written in this way and has quoted many people, the authenticity of which is impossible to determine now. His version of the story goes like this - Pakistan was one country, and for some reason there was a war

between two sides, politicians are to be blamed for this, and both sides committed atrocities. He adopts this "we know that there were exaggerations" tone. He tries to portray himself as a friend of Mujib, thereby questioning the accusations of atrocities against him. In fact, the book is full of half-truths.

The preconceived notions about Bangalis among West Pakistanis are described in the very first line of the first chapter of his book. He says that from his childhood he had been fed the image of the *Bangali Babu*, *Bangali Jadoo*, and *Bhukha Bangali*. *Bangali Babu* means the educated clerical class, and more specifically the Hindu clerks who have always been accused of oppressing the Muslims during the British Raj. *Bangali Jadoo* (Bangali magic) indicates the belief that whenever someone from West Pakistan goes to the East, he stays back. These created a kind of fear and curiosity about the Bangalis. And Bangalis are always *Bhukha* (unfed). There is always a shortage of food in Bangla due to natural reasons, and he himself saw the extreme version of this during the famine of 1943.

In 1962 he came to East Bengal for the third time, and for the first time since the birth of Pakistan. He was surprised to see that the Bangalis had forgotten the communal violence of 1946 and were instead complaining about the West Pakistani oppression. This seems to suggest that the West Pakistanis had no idea that the Central Government was oppressing the Bangalis, and that there was a sharp turn in their attitude .

Farman Ali noticed this change again when he came to East Pakistan next time. He saw anti-Ayub slogans on the walls, and hatred against Monem Khan because he was a stooge of Ayub Khan. Yes, Pakistan was developing, the GNP of the country was also on the rise, but the minds of the people of the two sides were tuned differently.

In 1967 he was appointed in Dhaka. Before that he was appointed DDMO. Here he cites an incident which indicates the attitude of the Pakistan Army toward the Bangalis. Farman Ali, however, does not admit this.

The incident goes like this. Lt. Colonel Osmani was his senior officer and DDMO. When he went to Osmani to accept his charges, he noticed that no file found its way to Osmani's desk. Even the orderlies ignored him. His office looked dirty and run-down, despite the importance of the

Military Operations Department. Farman writes that Osmani was not considered for promotion in the Pakistan Army; may be he was not trusted because he was a Bangali. Here Farman Ali unwittingly utters a hard truth.

When he came here in 1967, he had the premonition that Pakistan might break up. An independent Bangladesh was being openly discussed. The Urdu language and those who spoke it were hated. The students, who had immense influence on the common people, were becoming angry and restless. Their influence had risen to such a level that during hartals if the students had said that birds would not fly, then the birds would listen to that. Farman Ali mentions a poster he saw. The poster showed a turbaned well-built man embracing a dhuti-clad smaller man, with a knife hidden in his hands. Please note the word "dhuti". Here he indicates that the Bangalis were actually followers of India and Hindus. Here again we see the influence of the deep-rooted prejudices. Is it not strange that after all those years Farman Ali failed to discern between *dhuti* and *lungi*?

Farman Ali writes that the basis of the formation of Pakistan - Islamic brotherhood - was not intact anymore. In his words: "It had electrified the entire man of Bhooka Bengali with rage against a distant cousin West Pakistan, for supposedly having snatched away everything from him. History was sought to be falsified and disowned, presumably in vain as has been testified by two decades that have passed since Pakistan's break-up". This part of his book does not match many earlier parts. He himself cites the incident of Osmani. Surely he did not make it up, or exaggerate it.

Then he mentions the disparity between East and West Pakistan. It is very natural that disparity will give birth to dissent, but he avoids stating this simple truth. He talks about the Agartala Conspiracy Trial, which, in his words, was genuine. He claims that he suggested to strike off the name of Mujib from the list of suspects, but Major General Akbar, the Head of intelligence, went on to include Mujib's name, saying this would incite the people to skin Mujib alive. But his words did not come true. History, on the other hand, says the opposite. To prove that the Agartala Conspiracy trial was genuine, Farman Ali quotes a letter from Moazzem Hossain's wife from the March 26, 1972 issue of the *Daily Purbodesh*. I have not seen the original letter, but Farman Ali's English translation



goes like this: "Dear Husband.....you are not with me today. I always remember your contribution to the independence of Bangladesh. I remember how you met the First Secretary of the India Embassy Mr. Ojha at the Agartala border along with Bangali and Indian officers after coming to Dhaka from Karachi under a false name. You talked to the Indian authority about arms and other forms of assistance.....". The author tries to show that India, in collaboration with some Bangalis, has always been conspiring against Pakistan. However, he could not manage to present any proof that Mujib was involved in the affair. He also says that during this time an alliance was formed between Bhutto and Yahya. This indicates that the backdrop for 1971 had started to be created at that time.

The second chapter of Farman Ali's book deals with the election of 1970. Here he says things worth remembering. In this chapter he gives us a lesson on how to combine the lies with the truth to create a distorted narrative. He says that during the 1970 election Awami League spent enormous amount of money, and that money came from India. But did it seem to be like that to those of us who were in Bangladesh in 1970? The motive behind these comments is to convince the reader that the whole 1971 episode was actually an Indian conspiracy. Again those prejudices come into play! He further states that during that time Yahya and Mujib were developing a close relationship, because Mujib had assured Yahya that he would make him (Yahya) the President.

While writing on this topic, Farman Ali gives some information that indicate how the Army was trying to influence politics and control it. During the election, the Army provided financial support to the right wing parties. When Mujib came to know of this and complained, Farman Ali told him that Mujib could get rid of the radicals if some right-wing candidates were elected to the Parliament. Farman Ali then proceeds to establish that the East Pakistanis were loyal to Pakistan to the last moment. It's their leaders who had betrayed them, and the West Pakistani leaders who had thrown them off their back. These are totally in contrast to his earlier remarks. But it is understandable why he makes these remarks, because from then on he keeps on blaming the politicians.

He says that the politicians always had a two-faced policy. To prove this, he describes a meeting between Maulana Bhashani and Yahya where he

was present. According to Farman, Bhashani, talking about his anti-government movement, told Yahya to stay in power while he (Bhashani) went on with his movement. About the students in East Pakistan, Farman Ali says that the West Pakistanis have absolutely no idea of their extent of influence in political movements. Then he does say something true: "The Army had been ruling over East Pakistan for a long time. All political leaders wanted to get rid of them, and probably rightly so. Army has no right to rule. They may come in to restore law and order but they should hand over power to the civilian authority as soon as possible".

### 13

The election was over. The "official stance" of Awami League was constitutional. Mujib was even prepared to give some concessions on the Six Points. But Bhutto refused to compromise. Rather he poisoned Yahya's mind against the Bangalis. On January 17, Yahya went to Larkana at Bhutto's invitation. Bhutto suggested that Yahya should test the intention of Mujib by canceling the session of the Assembly. If Mujib called for action against this cancellation order, then it would prove that he was not loyal to Pakistan. This comment gives us much insight into what kind of man Bhutto was.

On February 19, Farman met Yahya. "I am going to sort out that bastard", said Yahya. "Sir, he is no longer a bastard," said Farman. "He is an elected representative of the people and he represents whole of Pakistan. I recommend that you hand over power to Mujib. I assure that he will be the most unpopular man in East Pakistan within six months".

It is almost unbelievable that someone so critical of politicians could advocate for Mujib. There is, of course, no way of verifying the authenticity of this comment.

On the other hand, Farman writes, the Generals were pressurising Bhutto to stop Mujib from ascending to power. Bhutto had been a friend of these Generals for a long time. From these two consecutive comments Farman tries to imply that he was not bloodthirsty like the other Generals. He was different! He prepares the reader in this way to make his connection with the genocide credible. "That Punjabi Army circle put pressure on Bhutto to ensure that power does not go to Mujib is quite plausible and significant by itself. It does not have to be Farman Ali's defence".

On February 23, there was a meeting of MNAs in Islamabad. Admiral Ahsan, Lt. Gen. Yaqub and Gen. Farman agreed, and wrote to Yahya, that if the National Assembly was not allowed to convene then the military would get involved, which in turn would create a chaos that would give a pretext to the Indian Army to interfere. After returning to Dhaka, Ahsan informed the Awami League leaders that the National Assembly session scheduled for March 1 had been postponed.

Farman Ali mentions some comments of Tajuddin and Mujib. He actually disliked Tajuddin, but more examples of that later. The reason for this animosity is that Tajuddin led and won the Liberation War. On the other hand, he tries to portray Mujib as a liberal with a view to establish that if Mujib had been able to free himself of the radicals then the events of 1971 would have never happened. But he forgets that some happenings were inevitable. History does have this habit of taking its own course, ignoring the roles of individuals.

After knowing that the National Assembly session had been postponed, Ahsan, Yaqub and Farman contacted General Hamid in Islamabad and asked him to declare a new date. Siddique Saleq has written that Mujib had remained calm about all these and had said that he did not want to create a situation if he was given a new date. He said he would be able to take care of the events if the new date was fixed in the following month (March). Mujib could comprehend the reality. But there was no answer from Islamabad. Farman very rightly writes that Pakistan actually broke apart at the moment the National Assembly session was postponed.

Meanwhile Governor Ahsan was removed from his office dramatically. Ahsan, Yaqub and Farman were chatting that day. Pirzada called over the phone. Ahsan answered the call, but Pirzada wanted to talk to Yaqub, to whom Ahsan handed over the phone. After talking for a while, Yaqub put the phone down and said, "I am the Governor now". "Ok, I'll leave the Governor's Mansion", said Ahsan. Yaqub did not say anything. Farman did not like the whole thing, because Yaqub did not console Ahsan in any way. When Ahsan left on the 6th, his staff were in tears.

After this, Farman writes, plundering began in various places in Bangladesh. Like other Pakistanis, Farman also exaggerates on this point - "The act of kidnapping and raping of non-local young girls and

throwing children into burning house were never heard of in Pakistan since its inception. But this was what was actually happening".

Was there really any such incident? Or why does Farman exaggerate like this? Because in this way he sought to justify the atrocities of the Pakistani Army. He has tried to establish that these events led the Pakistani Government and Army to take action on March 25.

After Ahsan had left, Farman went to dinner with Yaqub at his house one night. General Khadim was also there. Pirzada called over the phone and informed that the President would not be able to come to Dhaka. Yaqub said that in that case he would resign. Farman and Khadim had also decided to resign.

General Khadim and Farman were supposed go to Pakistan after this. Farman decided to contact Mujib before he left to know the latest developments. He met Mujib and asked him whether it was at all possible to save Pakistan. "It is possible, if you listen to me", answered Mujib. "We are still ready to negotiate". Suddenly someone moved from behind the curtain. It was Tajuddin! Mujib called him, and Farman asked him the same question. Tajuddin said that Bhutto was responsible for the anarchy all over the country and it would not be possible to negotiate with him. It would be possible to save Pakistan if there were two National Assemblies. The two Assemblies would prepare separate constitutions for themselves, and then convene jointly to frame the consensus constitution of Pakistan. According to Farman, this would create a confederation. Then he comments about Tajuddin: "Tajuddin, the die-hard pro-India Awami Leaguer, came in and sat down. He hated West Pakistan and perhaps Pakistan itself. He was reputed to have been a Hindu up to the age of 8. I do not think this story was correct but it revealed his mental make-up". The reason for such a comment has been discussed earlier.

On the other hand, please note Farman's comments about Tikka Khan, the mass murderer: "He was a straightforward, honest and obedient soldier, a man with determination and a strong will".

An invisible government started to operate here from March 7. Yahya came to Dhaka on March 15. During their discussions, one of Yahya's comments startled Farman. Yahya said that as the Father of the Nation

(Jinnah) was not against two Pakistans, who was he [Yahya] to go against this?

Negotiations began in Dhaka on the March 21. Not once did Mujib talk directly with Bhutto. All negotiations were through Yahya.

## 14

Farman and General Khadim were not interested in Operation Searchlight on March 25. Other Generals besides Farman have also written this. Saliq has said that the HQ did not have confidence on these two. General Hamid separately talked with their respective wives. Later, both of them said that they would carry on the orders.

On the other hand, Hasan Zahir, a Pakistani civil servant at that time, writes about Operation Searchlight in his book *The Separation of East Pakistan* : "Major General Farman Ali was the executor of Dhaka part of 'Searchlight'. He succeeded in 'shock action' by concentrated and indiscriminate firing on the target areas".

But Farman, while describing the night of March 25, has cloaked the truth like the other Pakistani Generals. His version of the story may satisfy the conscience of Pakistanis, but not ours.

He writes that it was decided that only the leaders would be arrested and there would be no bloodshed. It was ordained that the operation would not start until Yahya had reached Karachi. This was done in the assumption that Indian fighter planes could intercept the President's plane. The President escaped, and the Generals thought that no one would know about this. But Farman says that Wing Commander Khandakar saw this from the airport, and immediately notified Mujib. Saliq narrated the same story. They are trying to say that this gave Awami League the message to get alert and prepare themselves for the rough times.

Farman says that when Dhaka University was attacked, the fiercest resistance came from Jagannath Hall, because Hindus lived there and they were anti-Pakistan. So the question arises, were the Muslim students on the Pakistani soldiers' side? Some say, writes Farman, that the soldiers killed the students. Then he asks, "When does a student cease to be a student? The answer that a student ceases to be a student when he carries arms should clear the Army of the charge of atrocities; all those who

were killed were carrying arms, had refused to stop firing and refused to surrender".

All Pakistani Generals have seen March 25 in this way. General Arif has not even mentioned March 25. He has written that on March 25-26, Awami League and its allies murdered the West Pakistanis who were at that time in the cantonments in East Pakistan. During March 25 to April 11, thousands of West Pakistanis and Biharis were slaughtered in Chittagong. As a result the Pakistani soldiers became too emotional and that is the reason why there were some reports of using "excessive force" against some of the anarchists. Farman Ali has also advocated for the genocide in this way, "When a civil war is raging, both sides are transformed into beasts. The words civil war have not been used by many of his fellow Generals. He also writes that the Pakistani Army failed to act like a national force. He gives an excuse for this failure: "Some of its members exceeded their authority and killed a number of civil and police officials without proper trial. The Army was not able to control Biharis in taking revenge when badly affected areas were liberated by Army".

## 15

Rao Farman Ali then devotes a whole chapter to the alleged plots by India. The Generals have all seemed to agree that India had been conspiring to break apart Pakistan since 1947, and even our Liberation War was also the result of Indian conspiracies. Pakistani Generals have never managed see past this illusion.

Farman Ali had the responsibility to oversee the civilian activities of East Pakistan. He claims he was always in favour of political solutions to all problems. He was the one who initiated the formation of Peace Committee and had talks with people like Golam Azam, Nurul Amin and Farid Ahmed. Farman certifies them as pure and loyal Pakistanis. He wanted to win over the Bangalis through them, as did many other army officers. They never realised that it was simply impossible. Farman writes that it would have been possible if Niazi had wanted it. But Niazi "wanted to change the racial character". Niazi and Farman could never get along. At that time, writes Farman, everyone - Bangalis, West Pakistanis, Biharis - were in distress. For instance, the wife of the Deputy

Commissioner of Comilla came to meet him. West Pakistanis (that is, the soldiers) had killed her husband. Her brother, who was accompanying her, had a Pakistani wife whose relatives had been killed by Bangalis in Chittagong.

The Deputy Commissioner of Tangail came to him "trembling, his hands clasped". He was behind the murder of a West Pakistani Assistant Commissioner. Farman sent him back to work, and received "full cooperation" from him. The Army arrested the Deputy Commissioners of Patuakhali and Faridpur. Farman told the Army to let them go, but he was not heeded. He even asked Governor Tikka Khan to intercept. Through all these, Farman tries to explain that he was not at all pleased with what was going on in East Pakistan. He claims to have done everything in his powers to make things better, because his "heart was bleeding". But he was not able to do anything because of Niazi. Such differences of opinion among Pakistani Generals eventually affected Pakistani politics. Farman and Tikka were awarded high posts during the Bhutto regime, and Niazi found himself in deep waters. This should be kept in mind when we read Farman's book.

Niazi, says Farman, had a very high opinion about himself. Niazi even declared Bangalis as enemies of the people. Tikka, on the other hand, was a good administrator but no politician. During this time, when General Hamid arrived in Dhaka Farman requested him to transfer him to West Pakistan. General Hamid not only refused to transfer Farman, but he also made him a Major General and gave him the responsibility of looking after the political affairs. Farman decided that this was in effect a punishment for him because he had not supported the plans of the Army in the beginning of March. Niazi, on the other hand, was acting like a hedonist. The rumour was that he preferred to be in the company of women. At that time Pakistan took the initiative to organise by-elections in the vacant seats of Awami League. Actually the Army carried on this election. They also took over the responsibility of deciding which party would get how many seats and where. Siddiq Saleq has also mentioned this. As the right-wing parties were allies of the Pakistani forces, "He wanted to reward them. There were many candidates, but the number of seats was small".

But the election failed to resolve any crisis, because according to Farman everything was going against them. On one occasion, he was discussing with Tikka Khan and the Communication Secretary how to transport food grains from Dhaka to Chittagong. They had decided to use the railway through Chandpur. Two days later, the railway tracks in Chandpur were blown off. It was the Communication Secretary who had passed on the information to the freedom fighters. On the other hand, the President and the Generals in West Pakistan could not care less about the events in East Pakistan. Farman writes, quite rightfully, that "The power to be of the future had already written off East Pakistan and were only planning for West Pakistan".

## 16

In the following chapters, Farman Ali describes the Liberation War and the fear and frustrations of Pakistanis. I will skip those details.

General Farman writes that he was against the surrender, and specially surrendering to the freedom fighters. He also told that to Niazi. But Niazi went to sign the document of surrender. Niazi, however, says the opposite.

Then Farman became a prisoner of war. After they had reached Calcutta, Admiral Sharif said to Niazi, "Didn't you always want to march to Calcutta? Well here you are in Calcutta". Niazi frequently boasted that he would march on to Calcutta with his troops.

I have mentioned before that General Farman's book is a blend of truths, half-truths and lies. His ultimate motive was to prove that he was in no way connected with the genocide carried out in East Pakistan. He claims that he was rather involved with civilian activities, and actually wanted to save the civilians. For example, he writes, he managed to save Moshir Rahman, Aaur Rahman and others. May be this was the reason behind their allegiance to the military rulers. Farman claims he ordered the search for Saidul Hasan's killers, and the Junta never liked this display of sympathy for Bangalis.

Farman has been accused of being involved with the murder of the intellectuals on December 14. When I asked him about this, he answered, "I've written in my book about this. Kazi Jafar at that time (right before 1971) had said in one of his speeches that the green of Bangladesh would



be turned red, meaning the influence of the red flag. I just jotted down that line of his speech. The meaning of that line has been distorted like this. Mujib was also told of this, and he didn't believe it".

"But after the fall of Dhaka you were found with a list of intellectuals", I persisted.

"Well, at that time many people used to come to me and complain against others. All I did was note down the names of the men with complaints against them".

The Hamudur Rahman Commission also investigated this allegation. But everyone has acquitted Farman, and that was just the natural thing to do because if Farman is proved responsible, then it means admitting that the atrocities actually happened. Rather, he writes that his directions were not replaced with new ones, and some people were arrested. He says he still does not know where those men were kept. His guess is they were kept locked under the supervision of the *Mujahids*. After the surrender, he says the Commanders of Dhaka Garrison had lost control over them and they had escaped to avoid the *Muktibahini* because the latter were indiscriminately killing the *Mujahids*. Farman also speculates that may be the Indian Army or *Muktibahini* killed the prisoners to give the Pakistan Army a bad name. The Indians, he says, had already taken control of Dhaka. "They could have been killed by anybody except the Pakistan Army as it had already surrendered on 16th December".

So he tries to say that neither he nor the Pakistan Army was responsible for the killing of the intellectuals; it was actually the freedom fighters or the Indian Army who did it! What a fabrication! Did he forget the fact that the process of erasing the intellectuals had started quite some time before December 14?

I also questioned Farman about the genocide. He had objections to the word "genocide", insisting that there was no genocide.

"Did people die?" I asked.

"Yes they did"

"How many? Twenty thousand? Thirty? Fifty?"

"May be fifty thousand", he said, and immediately realised his mistake.

"General, fifty thousand people died, and it's still not genocide to you?"

He remained silent.

Later I discussed this with Altaf Gauhar and Air Marshal Asghar Khan. Altaf Gauhar hinted at Farman Ali's involvement in the killing of the intellectuals. Alamdar Raza became very agitated, " After you have met Farman Ali, I should not be talking to you at all!" The Air Marshall smiled and said, "These people will say so many things now".

## 17

Then who is responsible for the whole thing? Farman points the finger at the politicians. We are not unacquainted with such remarks. For the last fifty years we have seen Generals blaming the politicians. If they don't do that, they cannot justify their own ascendance to power.

Farman accuses Mujib of carrying out a hate campaign against West Pakistan while leading the movement based on Six Points. He says Mujib incited the Bangalis against their brothers in the West, and ultimately took over all the operations of the government. This, in Farman's view, was an open rebellion, against which the Army had to act. Then came the interference from India, resulting in the break-up of his country.

At the end Farman falls back on that preconceived notion I have discussed earlier. He squarely puts the blame on India and the politicians in East Pakistan. But to bolster his viewpoint, he also puts some blame on Bhutto's shoulder. But not too much, because we must keep in mind that after going back to Pakistan he did manage a high post during Bhutto's regime.

And yes, Farman writes, some Generals like Niazi and Yahya were of course responsible. He does admit that Yahya's role cannot be ignored.

It becomes clear that Forman's very objective of writing this book is to support the actions and the standpoint of the Pakistani Army and its Generals. "The tendency to criticise and blame the army, as an institution, can only help the evil intentions of our enemy", he says.

## The Insecured East

I have found the name of General Ghulam Umar in the books I have mentioned. He was very close to Yahya in 1971 and was the Secretary of National Security Council. He has not written any memoir. While I was in Karachi to work on this book, I met him to talk about the events of 1971. What he said is nothing different from the historiography I have discussed earlier. He also has tried to exaggerate or hide the truth to cloak his activities during that time. This, I must admit, is quite natural for a Pakistani General active in those days. I had to then resort to talking to others to verify the truth. This attempt to double-check his version of the story revealed new facts, and I have used these additional information to evaluate his narrative of the events of 1971. After talking to General Umar, it has been reinforced in my mind that the defeated Pakistani Generals do have some preconceived notions about East Pakistan and Bangalis which will never change. And as I have mentioned before, these preconceived notions are the very base of all their writings.

General Ghulam Umar resides in Khayana Shehar in Karachi. His front door is guarded by two sentries. Over seventy years old, Umar has a surprisingly robust health and his only physical problem seems to be a slight limp while walking. His house is beautifully decorated, with the lawn full of flowers. Umar gave all credit for this to his daughter-in-law.

Born in Ambala, Umar got his Bachelor degree from Aligarh University. Inspired by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he joined the Army in 1940 and then migrated to Pakistan in 1947. He was also in East Pakistan for some time. He received higher degrees from London and Istanbul University while in the Army. He was the Director General of Military Operations of Pakistan Army. He also served as the Military Secretary of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. He was the Commander of a division in West Pakistan before being appointed the Secretary of the Security Council of Yahya in 1971.

General Umar was also posted in Bangladesh. According to him, he was posted in the erstwhile East Pakistan in 1958. Analysing the situation in East Pakistan, he had told his superior officers that Pakistan needed a military theory of its own which it could use for its own purposes.

Noticed by Ayub Khan probably because of his academic background, he was entrusted with the responsibility of formulating the military concept of Pakistan. He worked on this for four years, and was required to visit Bangladesh several times. In 1962, General Musa asked him if he was prepared to accept a posting in East Pakistan.

So he came to Dhaka as a Lt. Colonel. General Wasiuddin was then the GOC, and Umar was the GSO. "Please don't give me any responsibilities related to the martial law. I'll do my own work", said Umar to Wasiuddin.

About the arrangements for the security of East Pakistan at that time, Umar told us that there was only one mortar battery, two fighters planes, and no artillery forces. There was not even a tank regiment. "We always chanted that defense of East lies in the West. It was a bogus theory. The British started saying this, and then everyone followed", said Umar.

At that time President Ayub came to Dhaka. Umar asked the GOC to call a meeting with the President where he would present the overall situation in East Pakistan. And he did so. He asked what would happen to East Pakistan in case of a war with India. The officials said that India had no such intentions. Nevertheless, the West Pakistani officials were requested to deploy in West Pakistan a tank regiment and an artillery regiment.

Six months later Umar was sent to do a course abroad. Wasiuddin was also transferred. Aga Mohammad Yahya Khan became the new GOC. He told Umar not to go abroad and to stay on and help him. Did the close association between the two men start there? "During the War of 1965, I had the notion that India would not attack Pakistan", said Umar. But what made him think like this? "My ancestors were saintly figures", said Umar, implying that he had attained this insight because of this saintly genealogy.

"Then what?" I asked

"But if India had in fact attacked East Pakistan, the East Pakistan could not have resisted even for six hours. And the Bangalis realised that no one would come to save them".

Then Umar went on to deliver a kind of an academic lecture. I did not interfere, giving him the opportunity to do some introspection. The summary of what Umar said goes like this - Pakistan was established through a democratic process. That process was halted in 1958 through martial law. It can be said that the unity of Pakistan was doomed from

that day. The effect of martial law was different in the two parts of the country. The educated and politically conscious people of East Pakistan decided that things could not go on like this. West Pakistan had a feudal culture, and the people there were less conscious about politics. So they did not react that strongly. On the other hand the people of East Pakistan could not take part in formulating any policy. 1971 was not created in a single day.

"India", said Umar, "from the very beginning adopted the policy of breaking up Pakistan, and accordingly started working in East Pakistan". I could not help laughing. "What was the Pakistani agenda against this Indian agenda?" I wanted to know.

"We did not grow as an integrated state", explained Umar. "Either we never understood its true meaning or we just cared for our own interests. Our interests meant the interests of the feudal lords. For instance, there was not supposed to be any discrimination between the two regions, just as there was not supposed to be regiments in the Army named Bengal or Baluch. We used to look down upon the Bangalis. We imagined ourselves as a martial race, but there is nothing in the world called a martial race. We did not even comprehend the true definition of security. Can guns ensure security? Are we being able to ensure our security with all the money we are spending for defence?"

There was no point in trying to respond to his monologue. Rather, I asked him about the Agartala Trial. "I was then the DG of Military Operations", he said. "Everyone here believed in the validity of the Agartala Trial and wanted a public trial. If Mujib was innocent, then he would be proven innocent, if he was guilty, he would be proven guilty.....".

The General also said that the trial was not run in the right way. Then came the election of 1970. Rao Farman Ali's book says that at that time the Military Intelligence distributed money among the right-wing parties to help them win the election. Umar also said that different political parties were in fact contacted before the election. They were placing different kinds of demands. Nurul Amin, for example, wanted 30 million taka. "I met Sheikh Mujib after the election", said Umar. "I told him that as he was going to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan, why didn't he go and pay a visit to West Pakistan. He almost agreed. Khandakar Moshtaq told me that Mujib was afraid to go to Pakistan, because he believed he

could be assassinated there. Hearing this, I told Mujib that one of my sons, who was a Lieutenant, would accompany him. I gave him this guarantee. Then I met Bhutto and told him that Mujib wanted the session in Dhaka. Bhutto agreed".

We know that afterwards Bhutto met Yahya in Larkana, and the situation changed. Umar also admitted that before going to Dhaka Yahya did want to see Mujib as Prime Minister; but then things turned around rapidly. Umar was not present at that meeting. Everyone except he was invited. He later came to know that Yahya had told Bhutto to force him to retire. Umar seemed to be carrying a grudge against Bhutto. He said that at that time Generals Gul Hasan and Pirzada were at the height of their power. They wanted Bhutto in power, so that they could be all-in-all in the country.

"People's Party wasn't interested in East Pakistan", said Umar emphatically. "Bhutto not only wanted to break apart Pakistan, he also wanted to destroy the Army". Was there any candidate of Bhutto in East Pakistan? No. But Mujib had candidates in West Pakistan. In fact, Bhutto never wanted to go into any kind of understanding. "Let me tell you a story", then Umar paused for some time. "There were some disturbances in Dhaka in January 1971. I was in Karachi when I came to know of this from General Yaqub. President Yahya, who was also in Karachi, called me. Bhutto was also in the meeting. Yahya told me to send this message to Yaqub - 'Be firm but just'. Bhutto intercepted and said that we should take sterner actions. I asked the President whether he had given any authority to Bhutto to give me orders. The President did not say anything".

"Do you know what happened in Dhaka on March 25?"

"Yes, I was in Dhaka on March 25", said Umar. "Although General Yaqub formulated Operation Blitz, he was in favour of a political solution. I know what happened on March 25. In the morning, when no one could be found to give a statement on the radio, Roedad Khan gave it. It seemed normal at that moment, but then I realised that it was not in fact normal".

"Then who was really responsible for the events in East Pakistan"?

"Everyone was responsible! While Bhutto was in power, I was either in prison or under house-arrest. General Zia went to join him numerous times. But I never did".

Then he suddenly went back to the topic of India. India had always wanted to break apart Pakistan. Despite the mass migration in 1947, the Hindu teachers and intellectuals had remained in East Pakistan. They inspired anti-Pakistan fervour among the East Pakistani children. I recalled hearing or reading this somewhere else. Then I remembered, Rao Farman Ali had written the same thing in his book - implying that the Bangalis' desire to break away from Pakistan was the result of the influence of the Hindus. They took advantage of Pakistan's weakness in 1971. Then Umar said, quite irrelevantly, "You just cannot compare Rabindranath Tagore with Iqbal."

General Umar in his interview clearly said that he did not know what was happening in East Pakistan after March 1971. He was totally in the dark about this. I was extremely surprised, "You were so close to Yahya, and were the Secretary of the Security Council, and still you didn't know anything?"

"No, I didn't know anything" repeated Umar. "Although the Security Council was formed, no meeting was ever called. Look, the East Pakistanis are good people, they are good Muslims. In 1971 a handful of men dictated the policies, not general Muslims".

Citing Niazi's book, I asked him, "Niazi has written that you abandoned him in Dhaka".

"It's not correct!" he sounded excited. "Niazi was a plunderer and a gold smuggler. His personal character is also despicable. He wants to justify himself. He wasn't a balanced person. At that time no senior General wanted to go to East Pakistan, and that was why Niazi was sent to Dhaka".

## 19

So this is what General Umar had to say about the erstwhile East Pakistan and our Liberation War. He probably would have said the same thing, may be in a bit more detail, if he had written a book. I will discuss the validity of General Umar's story on the basis of other information and

interviews. Every story of the Pakistani Generals needs to be analysed in this way.

First let us see whether Umar did have any involvement (which he had denied) in formulating the political policies of Yahya. General Fazal Mukim was the first person to shed light on this. He wrote in 1972 that Umar was included in the very close circle of Yahya, becoming the Chief of National Security. "He was an opinionated man and took pride in his supposedly superior knowledge of Pakistani affairs, and how they should be handled". Fazal Mukim Khan mentions that among the members of this circle Umar became the 'trouble shooter' of the President. Umar was well educated and a very good speaker, and these were the probable reasons behind his influence over the President.

General Niazi has written in his memoir that General Umar was involved in policy making and other functions from the very beginning. Even in February 1971 he was not only warning the politicians not to go to Dhaka, but he was also advising those in East Pakistan to leave. He was in effect telling everyone to abandon the place altogether. According to Niazi, "The reason he gave was that East Pakistan had become a hub of international intrigue. Therefore, it should be discarded". Niazi further states that the government was then confined to the President House. Generals Yahya, Hamid, Pirzada, Umar and Mitha were running the country from there.

Now let us discuss the days right before March 25. Brigadier A. R. Siddiqi was the Chief Public Relations Officer of Pakistan Army. He has written that Yahya was enraged by the anti-Pakistan comments and photos in the newspapers in Dhaka. So a very enraged General Umar, who was the chief political advisor of Yahya, complained to him, "What sort of DPR are you, if you can't even control these [Bangali] bastards". Later Yahya formed the Security Council with Umar in it. Sher Ali was the Information Minister. Umar was working for Sher Ali at the same time. Siddiqi writes: "It was a sort of cross between intelligence and PR. Yahya desired the two generals to control the strong drift towards political extremism".

Did General Umar know of the genocide, or was he totally unaware of what was going on in Dhaka from March to December? Umar insists that



he did not know anything. How could the Secretary of the Security Council not know anything? "No," Umar says, "I was only a member."

Now let us see what Rafi Raza has to say. Rafi Raza was a leader of the PPP. He came to Dhaka with Bhutto before March 25, and left the next day. In an interview he told me - "I met General Umar in Dhaka. He was also there on March 25. While we were waiting inside our aeroplane, Umar entered last with a heavy air. He tried to give the impression that he had done something big. He did not talk with anyone. Even he did not show any sign of knowing Bhutto. Umar was definitely involved with the events of 1971".

Did Umar really know nothing about the genocide? I talked about this with Altaf Gauhar, one of the most well-known former bureaucrats of Pakistan. He burst out laughing when I raised this subject. Umar and Roedad Khan (the erstwhile Information Secretary) used to go to Dhaka frequently at that time, he said. They used to meet him at his house after they returned from Dhaka, and gave him the latest updates on Dhaka. So they perfectly knew what was going on.

Facing incessant questions from me on the genocide, Umar had said, "I knew of everything later. Do you know that I was reading the Quran for you, and crying and praying for you remembering those days".

Altaf Gauhar said about this, "Nowadays everyone is talking like this. They are acting like philosophers. All of them secured very good jobs after 1971. Umar was the Chief of an institution. Now he is acting like a saint".

So that was the nature of the Pakistani Generals. They ran Pakistan in this way for 25 years. They had to face the heat for the first time after being humiliated in the hands of the Bangalis.

## The Politician General

I will discuss a bit different kind of a book now. Its author is also an exception from the usual crowd, so it is no surprise that this book appears different from the others. The book is named *Generals in Politics, Pakistan 1958-1972*. The author is Mohammad Asghar Khan, the former Air Marshal. His attitude towards politics is enough to indicate the tone of the book. Asghar Khan joined politics after retiring from service. But in the last three decades he has failed to exert enough influence in the political scenario of Pakistan and his position has remained marginal. The reason is, he does not know when to retreat in politics or when to break promises. But there is another side to the story. In my recent visit to Pakistan, I detected immense respect for this man among his political allies and rivals alike, the reason being that in his long life he has never done anything that could go against him.

Asghar Khan's book was published in 1983. We in Bangladesh were also under military rule at the time, and because of this his attitude towards the Army amazed me as he was also one of the Pakistani Generals who have benefited in one way or other. I read the book again while working on this book, and got the impression that if one book can claim any difference from all the ones I have gone through, then this is the one. But I will keep our discussion to the first 51 pages of the book, as the remainder is not relevant to the events we are dealing with.

At the beginning of the preface, he says something notable. He says that Pakistan was created through a democratic and constitutional movement. It had nothing to do with any military victory or campaign. Its architects were millions of homeless people rather than any General, and they never imagined that the Pakistan of the future would be ruled by a small coterie of Generals. This comment exposes his intentions - this book is against the Generals and military rule.

Asghar Khan writes that discrimination could be observed in many parts of Pakistan since its inception. The majority of the people lived in East Pakistan, but they were the minority in everything starting from the Army. 85% of the members of the Army were from West Pakistan, and even in that percentage the majority were from Punjab. He draws

attention to another special point. When the Army first seized power, there was strong reaction in East Pakistan, but little in Punjab. East Pakistan was raging as the junta was taking all those undemocratic decisions sitting in Karachi and Islamabad. The reason was that West Pakistan was tied in the clutches of feudalism, while East Pakistan was free from that and had a more democratic attitude. In his words, "The people of the eastern wing were sensitive and politically more conscious than those living in West Pakistan who were suffering from the age old domination of feudal lords and serfdom of tribal sardars".

In this context I want to mention another observation of his, which I have not seen in any other book, not even in any book by any Bangali researcher. He writes that the dissatisfaction in East Pakistan acted as a brake against dictatorship and made the people move towards democracy. And this prompted the ruling circle to decide that "they would be better off without the eastern half of the country".

His brief account of how East Pakistan was being deprived is followed by a description, which cannot be found in any other book, of how Ayub Khan seized power. Here I want to cite an incident that clearly shows that all West Pakistanis - from judges to soldiers - were united as far as their interests were concerned.

In an important meeting Ayub Khan asked Justice Munir what could be the process of adopting a new constitution through public support. Justice Munir answered that it would be very easy. In ancient Greece constitutions were ratified through 'public acclaims'. Following this example, the draft of the new constitution of Pakistan would be published in newspapers, and then Ayub Khan would speak in public meetings in Dhaka, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. He would ask the public if they wanted to accept the new constitution, and the answer would be "Yes". This is the Chief Justice who later proclaimed martial law to be legal.

It may be mentioned that Justices of our country also said in a verdict in 1978 that martial law would get precedence over the constitution. Thankfully they did not say they should also get the title of Major General or Lieutenant General.

To grab power, Ayub Khan used a taped conversation between Iskandar Mirza and the father of his (Mirza's) future son-in-law. He received support from General Yahya Khan. Ayub Khan even asked Asghar Khan

to bring Mirza's resignation. Asghar was then the Chief of Air Force. He refused to go to Mirza, but he did go to the airport the next day to bid farewell to Mirza and his wife. There he saw a Captain sitting beside the Mirzas with his legs raised on the table. He angrily told him to leave the room, but it struck him that this would be the situation if the Army began to meddle in politics. They would become arrogant as they were not answerable to the public. Considering the importance of this matter, let me quote Asghar Khan's views: "The conduct of this officer typifies the dangers inherent in the involvement of the armed forces in politics. When power is wielded by the Defence services, it is untimely exercised by the people who both by experience and temperament, are the least suited for this role. Since they are not responsible to the people, their arrogance finds expression in ways that are more harmful than the one typified by the ill manners of a young officer at Mauripur airfield on that October morning". Surely the reader can remember the arrogance of those who usurped power in Bangladesh in the Pakistani style.

Asghar Khan indicates that Yahya Khan planned to seize power. He was taking advantage of his position as the Chief of Military Intelligence to feed wrong information to Ayub or to tell Ayub whatever he wanted to hear. This is a new information for us. Then Yahya clinched power.

Asghar Khan claims that he was the only one in West Pakistan to protest against this. Bhutto, on the other hand, welcomed the military rule. The differences of their personal traits become clear from this. He then describes the situation of Pakistan prior to 1970, which we all know more or less.

## 21

While Mohiuddin Ahmed and I were travelling in Pakistan to work on this book, we met Asghar Khan. He warmly welcomed us and answered our queries. But he also said that all his answers could be found in his book. Here I want to present excerpts of our interview. We first wanted to know about the events following 1970 or the immediate background of the Liberation War of 1971.

"I had talks with Yahya prior to the election of 1970. He was saying that Bhutto had told him to skip the election. Yahya the soldier and Bhutto the politician would make a good team and they could rule the country

together. Yahya didn't find the suggestion too bad, but what would happen to East Pakistan? Bhutto told him that East Pakistan would not be any problem. Everything could be solved by eliminating twenty thousand or so people. I asked him his reaction to this. Yahya said, 'What can one say to such a suggestion?'

Yahya came to Dhaka after the election, and also had talks with Mujib in an affable atmosphere. After returning to the West, he declared that Mujib would be the next Prime Minister."

"What happened next?"

"Then Bhutto entered the scene. Yahya went to Larkana. The decision was taken there to apply force if Mujib refused to move from his standpoint. The decision was made in mid February in a meeting of the military junta."

Asgar Khan's words seemed quite logical to me. As a result of this decision troops were sent to Dhaka and Bhutto started giving fiery speeches in Pakistan. "Did you go to Dhaka during that time?" I asked.

"I went to Dhaka in the first week of March. I informed Bhutto before starting for Dhaka. He told me to go via Karachi. I did go to Karachi but he didn't meet me. I had three meetings with Mujib in Dhaka. He told me he was sure that Yahya Khan wouldn't hand over power and would apply force in East Pakistan. Where were Bhutto and Yahya when they were struggling for Pakistan, he asked".

"They never treated the Bangalis as human beings", his voice was almost choking with emotion. "Mujib was invited to West Pakistan but he didn't go. He said he was too busy to go. But my guess is, he and his close allies thought that he would be killed if he went there. Then what would happen in the future? He said that Yahya Khan would come to Dhaka first, followed by M. M. Ahmed and Bhutto. Yahya Khan would unleash the Army, and he (Mujib) would be arrested, and if he was not arrested, then the Pakistan troops or his own men would kill him. Isn't it astonishing that what he predicted actually happened!" Saying this, Asgar Khan was silent for a while.

"Do you believe that something could have been done on the basis of the negotiations going on in march?" asked Mohiuddin.

"May be Yahya Khan could have done something", said Asgar Khan.

"But Yahya Khan was in effect the chief of the Punjabi Army. He was

being pressurised by Bhutto, who was the elected leader of Punjab. Yahya could not take the Punjabi line of thought lightly even though he himself didn't have any ambitions. I asked Mujib to visit Punjab. I also told him that he had been given the right to become the Prime Minister. Not only that, Pakistan would have to be saved and the East Pakistan's rights would have to be established. He said it was too late. Now it seems he was right".

"What's your opinion about the Six Points?" I asked.

"Many in West Pakistan thought that Six Points meant the end of a unified Pakistan. Actually it was not so, and if Mujib could go to power he would have modified the Six Points because he would then have to think in the context of the whole Pakistan".

"What do you know about March 25?" I asked.

"The whole thing was stupid. It was madness in military terms".

"Did you go to Dhaka after March 25?" asked Mohiuddin

"Yes, twice", said Asgar Khan. "And I was even more depressed by what I saw. The Jamaat leaders in Dhaka were trying to forward the ridiculous argument that they were the second most important party after Awami League, and therefore power should be handed to them. The politicians who even a month ago were demanding that power be handed over to Mujib were now supporting Yahya to harass Awami League".

"I got to talk to Governor Malik. He was making up fantastic stories, about which I have told in my book. Anyway, I did speak out against such actions. I have been criticised for that, and I was called an agent of East Pakistan. The attitude of West Pakistan was - "How could Sheikh rule Pakistan?". There was a preconceived notion among the public about East Pakistan and related matters, and Bhutto played a key role in creating this notion".

After March 25, Asghar Khan next came to Dhaka in July and then in October. On July 18, after returning from Dhaka, he gave the President a letter where he said that Pakistan could not be saved unless alternative actions were taken - ".....You are no doubt aware that ever since March, I have differed with your Government about the best method of tackling this problem. I am, however, anxious, as many of our country-men are that a policy should be adopted which is both practical as well as enduring, a policy that has a reasonable chance of success".

When Yahya Khan went to Abotabad, Asghar Khan met him and advised him to hand over power according to the outcome of the 1970 election. Yahya refused to heed him. Rather, he said that he would appoint Abdul Malek, who was then the Ambassador to Phillipines, as the Governor of East Pakistan. Asghar Khan replied that the Bangalis would see him as Yahya's stooge. Yahya argued that Malek used to speak for East Pakistan when he was in the Cabinet. Asghar argued back that speaking while in Cabinet and becoming the Governor were not the same thing. It would only exacerbate the situation instead of improving it.

Asghar Khan has written that in his second trip to Dhaka he not only got to hear unbelievable stories from Malek, but his statements were also censored. Asghar wrote Malek a long letter on November 3, where he said, ".....I have maintained that the will of the people must be allowed free expression, that the people could keep the country together, that the political problems should be solved politically and not by force, that the democratically elected representatives of the people have the right to administer the country, and that any approach alien to these principles will create further complications from which we may not be able to extricate ourselves".

Asghar mentioned another important point in the letter, and it was a comment appropriate for any government in a developing country. He said, "It is a familiar phenomenon that governments start believing that their interests are synonymous with the interests of the country and treat all criticism and dissent as anti-state".

"Then who was responsible or 1971?" I asked.

"Bhutto and Yahya".

"But many of those we have talked to in Pakistan have said that Hindus were in fact responsible".

"These things were said and are still being said to justify those actions", said Asghar Khan.

"A controversy is raging in Pakistan now concerning the issue of apologising to Bangladesh. What's your opinion about it?"

"Both sides are going a bit too far", said Asghar Khan. "We should apologise for not handing over power to Mujib. We were more responsible for this because we were the ones in power and we started the whole thing".

The words 'both sides' did not escape my ears. Everyone goes to the defensive whenever the issue of genocide is raised. They have to say that the other side have also committed murders. All these made me think that whatever amount of sympathy or compassion we may show for each other, at the end of the day a Pakistan General remains a Pakistani and a Bangali remains a Bangali.

## 22

### **Army against Politicians**

General Gul Hasan was the last Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army and one of the policy makers of 1971. It is widely believed that he was a close ally of Bhutto and one of the key figures responsible behind the break-up of Pakistan. Appointing him as the Commander-in-Chief was one of Bhutto's first acts after assumption of power. Sometime afterwards he was made Ambassador to Austria and Greece. Later, following some disagreements with Bhutto, he submitted a very strongly worded resignation letter. May be all these have inspired him to write his memoir. He finished his book - *Memoirs* - in 1991, but refrained from publishing it because Benazir had just been elected to power then. He did not want his book to be used by Benazir's political rivals, as he had no intention of carrying on with the daughter his disagreements with the father. So it was in 1993 that *Memoirs* finally saw daylight.

The book gives a chronicle of his life, but I will discuss only those chapters that deal with the topic of Bangalis or Bangladesh.

Born in a middle class family in Quetta, Gul was sent to the Army after reaching the right age. He was fortunate to be posted first as the ADC of General Nicholson and then of General Slim. As Slim's ADC he travelled in the South-East Asian Theatre during World War II. After the partition of India in 1947, he was appointed the ADC of Mohammad Ali Jinnah; but he had no intention of working as an ADC anymore.

In his opinion, although Jinnah desired that Pakistan should be a state tolerant of all religions, thrifty and disciplined, he disappointed the mullahs who dreamed of pulling the strings in the newly founded country. This made them call Pakistan *Napakistan* (Not pure) and Jinnah the King of *Qafirs*.



After working as Jinnah's ADC for a while, Gul was given a field posting. In 1961, he got his first major posting in the form of Director of Military Operations. Then he became the Commander of the Armoured Division in Multan. In 1968 he became the CGS. He describes that period vividly, providing an analysis of the structure of the Army, India-Pakistan War, etc. But we need not delve into those. But one of his comments is worth mentioning. Gul writes that when he became the DMO, there were some adverse reaction among the senior officers. Some of them were saying that Musa, the Army Chief, had appointed a Baluch because he himself was a Baluch. In Gul's words, "parochialism, sectarianism and sycophancy can devastate any country or institutions including a well-disciplined army".

So, to ensure their existence, politicians, bureaucrats and army officers will have to free themselves from all these. If this is his honest opinion, then why did he fail to protest when the West Pakistani Generals were taking special actions against Bangali politicians? There is not a single line in his book where he expresses any sympathy for Bangalis or for politicians. Then he goes on to make many other comments that are completely opposite to the ideas floated earlier. I will give a few such instances.

Gul Hasan writes that the Army could have avoided so many upheavals if there were an established political base in Pakistan. A political government would have prevented the manipulation by the Army. A strong political base would have ensured a first class army in Pakistan. He exemplifies his statement by saying that Nehru removed Krishna Menon and the generals after the India-China War. Here Gul admits that the "first class" nature of the Army does not remain so if they start meddling in national politics. But Gul never asks himself how it transpired that it was Ayub Khan and the Generals who on their own initiative seized power, and did their best to destroy the civilian rule. The 50-year long history of Pakistan is actually the history of the struggle to establish civilian rule.

In the concluding pages of his book, Gul seems to reverse his views and says that it is the politicians who usually create the environment conducive for martial law. He opines that this should not be done, and the Army should not also declare martial law at their whim. Actually he

could not decide which side to choose even in 1993, because all throughout his life he and his friends and colleagues have been beneficiaries of military rule.

He further says that Ayub Khan, after snatching power, made a mistake by not putting the politicians on trial. He describes them as ignorant, unprincipled and without common sense; and says that they should go through an exam before being allowed to stand for election. If the election results are not clear, then there should be another election. If no one manages to form the government even after that election, then martial law will be imposed for four to five years. The politicians will prove their worth in these interim years. But how will the base for civilian rule be formed if this experiment goes on and on? Gul Hasan has no answer to that. And how are the politicians supposed to prove their competence under martial law? Will this test of competence be graded by the military rulers? He does not provide any answer to this too. He just shoots off his comments, just as a General shouts out his orders.

On the Agartala Conspiracy, he comments that Sheikh Mujib was "hobnobbing" with India. India was supplying him with a large amount of money and arms. The agreement was that Mujib would seize control of a part of East Pakistan and declare independence, and India would readily recognise the new state of Bangladesh.

His evaluation of Sheikh Mujib is that Mujib used to receive a stipend from USA and huge funds from the wealthy Hindus of East Pakistan. Mujib was the symbol of everything that stood against Pakistan, and therefore he was the "most amenable leader" of East Pakistan. Then the Indians inspired him to become a separatist. With this end in mind, Mujib, his allies and the Indians created the Six Points. When the Central Government refused to accept the Six Points, they became impatient and went for the Agartala Conspiracy.

The Agartala Conspiracy Trial was followed by the Round-table Meeting. Politicians were responsible for the "tragic" incidents afterwards, writes Gul Hasan. Mujib got support for his Six Points from East Pakistanis and the Hindus (as if they were not East Pakistanis!), who in turn got support from India.

The General says that the East Pakistanis had frequent complaints against their fellow citizens in the West. It was said that most development

projects were implemented in West Pakistan. West Pakistanis dominated all the high posts. Revenue from jute was swelling the West Pakistani treasury. Gul Hasan admits some truth in the accusations, but says that West Pakistan never experienced the kind of development it was accused of having. India and the local Hindus conducted a successful brainwash of the East Pakistanis. In fact, the situation on East Pakistan was never very good, and after 1947, jute was being smuggled to India from there. So West Pakistan was not responsible in any way for any matter.

He praises Ayub Khan as a national leader. In his opinion, political leaders cannot be national leaders. Ayub Khan "thought in terms of Pakistan as an entity, unlike our politicians whose vision never extended beyond provincial boundaries".

He makes many more comments like this about politicians. He says about Bhutto and Mujib that they were always prepared to lie to achieve their goal. They were in fact creative liars. Gul Hasan clearly tries to prove in his book that the only symbol of truth in Pakistan were the Generals.

The third and fourth chapters of Gul Hasan's book, named *The End of an Era* and *The Inevitable*, describe the events of 1969 and 1971. His account of 1970 to March 1971 - mostly borrowed from Fazal Mukim Khan - resembles that of any other General's. He stresses in his account that the situation was deteriorating because of the incessant propaganda of Sheikh Mujib. As small skirmishes with the Army were continuing, the Army was becoming more and more impatient, and as a result of all these, there was no alternative to the military action of March 25.

Gul Hasan adds only one new information in this whole narration. He says that it was Bhutto who proposed the military action of March 25. Hoping to find a way to resolve the crisis, Yahya called Bhutto before March 25. Bhutto did suggest a solution - a short-lived but powerful military operation that would bring down Mujib and his allies. Gul Hasan further states that Bhutto admitted this in an interview with Golam Azam in the September 25 issue of *Islami Zumhuria*.

Only one sentence in the whole book refers to the Army's atrocities. He insists that the Bangalis rebelled, and the Army officers killed their colleagues. "Later, atrocities were committed by the Army on the Bangalis".

Gul provides a vivid description of the goings-on in the Army Headquarters in Islamabad till December 16. He travelled to Dhaka on several occasions during this period. He had the premonition, he writes, that things would not go well. As the CGS, he had tried to explain this to General Hamid, the Army Chief, and to Yahya, but no one listened to him. Here he tries to say that Yahya and Hamid were responsible for the surrender in Dhaka. Then he talks about Bhutto's ascendance to power in Pakistan, his appointment as the Army Chief, his disagreements with Bhutto and so on. These are not relevant to our analysis. He does give one information repeatedly - he says Bhutto told him that Sheikh Mujib had prepared a list of 90 war criminals to put them on trial, and Gul Hasan's name was in that list. Later Gul Hasan wrote about this to Osmani, who assured him that it was not true.

In conclusion, the General does admit something. After the defeat of Pakistan, while General Hamid was giving a speech in front of junior officers, writes Gul Hasan, "I was still pondering over our indifference with the people of the former Eastern wing". There is no other comment like this in all the 424 pages of his book. The other Generals, however, have admitted the inequity between the two regions in their books.

Gul Hasan admits the responsibility of the Army for Pakistan's defeat in the wars of 1965 and 1971, the military rule, and the debacle the country found itself in. He blames the high ranking officers for this. But the rest of the officers and soldiers, he says, made the ultimate sacrifice in every case. Like all other Generals, he states that there would have been no martial law if the politicians had done their job properly. Ultimately the politicians were the root of all problems. So, "As far as I can see, the spectre of Martial Law will be ever-present in Pakistan, unless she produces political leaders who can look beyond the provincial horizons, be above-board, possess honesty of purpose, command the solid rapport of the masses, and be genuinely concerned with their welfare, and, last but by no means least, be patriots".

But he does harbour doubts about whether it will ever be possible.

## Malik's Foresight

Major General Tozammel Hossain Malik joined the Indian Army in 1946. He could never imagine that the Indian Muslims would end up living in a separate country of their own. When Pakistan was created, he made the natural choice of opting for Pakistan. In the last week of December 1947, he set for Dhaka with nine other officers. One of them was Major S. G. M. M. Pirzada, who later became a Lt. General and a trusted advisor of Yahya in 1971.

First they reached Chittagong, where they were welcomed by the Army Commander of the region Brigadier Ayub Khan. The people of Chittagong also warmly received them. After arriving in Dhaka, they found themselves getting a "grand reception" from the people of Dhaka too. Malik was the junior-most among the ten officers.

The Cantonment, which was at Tejgaon at that time, had only some abandoned cottages from the World War II days. A very small contingent of soldiers were there to defend the security of East Pakistan.

Malik briefly describes the situation in East Pakistan of that time. But these few words manage to portray a good enough picture of the region. Most of the civilian officers and businessmen were non-Bengalis. "They maintained their social contact in their own circles and treated the locals as niggers, same as the Britishers used to call them". According to him, the Bangalis only experienced a change of masters - the British were replaced by West Pakistanis, who were in some cases even worse than their predecessors.

Malik describes the Bangalis as "affectionate and unsophisticated people" who knew much more about Islam than did the West Pakistanis because of the extensive network of madrasahs in all parts of the region. They reacted very strongly if and when ignored. But they could be very dependable and helpful if given the right kind of respect and authority. Unfortunately the West Pakistanis misread the modesty of the Bangalis. To them the Bangalis were a cowardly lot, and they thought that the best way to extract work from the Bangalis was to mistreat them. This kind of portrayal of Bangalis cannot not be found in another book by any General.

Ayub Khan had two infantry battalions under his command. He was frequently invited to cabinet meetings; his opinion on political matters was also sought. This was a manifestation of good intentions by the civilian Government. Writes Malik - "They did so out of sincerity and not because General Ayub was intellectually a more superior person and they needed his advice to run the government". Ayub lived a spartan life, but he was greedy for power.

What Malik does not mention but can be said safely is that his ambitions probably climbed too high because of the excessive importance he received from politicians and government officials in East Pakistan. He was aware of the weaknesses of the politicians and bureaucrats, and thought that he could control them through duplicity.

Jinnah came to Dhaka in 1948. Malik's account of Jinnah's now-famous speech on state language does not match any of the usual versions of the story. The usual version is that in a speech at the Ramna Racecourse Jinnah declared that Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan, and he immediately faced protests. But Malik says that there were no protests of Jinnah's decision there - "When he declared that the state language shall be Urdu, there was not even a murmur from any quarter. They had come there not to question their decision but only to have a glimpse of their beloved leader".

On the other hand, Professor P. C. Chakrabarty, the provost of a hall of Dhaka University at that time, provides another information in his recollections of that time. The convocation was taking place in Curzon Hall. While giving his speech, Jinnah declared that there would be one language for communication among the different provinces of the country - and that language would be Urdu and not any other language. Three slogans were shouted at the same time, which "reiterated their faith in the unity of Pakistan, the leadership of Jinnah, and their determination to have Bengali as a state language". Jinnah made his Racecourse speech on March 21, and the Convocation speech on March 24. If he had faced so much protest at the Racecourse, would he have made the same comment in Dhaka University? And it is more plausible that the protest took place at a small corner by a small section rather than in a public meeting. May be researchers on our Language Movement can shed some light on this.

Malik also describes his life in the Army. The salary of a Second Lieutenant was 400 Taka, and this was quite sufficient for him. The cottages they lived in were clean and comfortable. The Army had not tasted power till that time. They were happy to carry on their only responsibility of protecting the border. After spending some time in Sylhet, Malik went back to West Pakistan in 1950.

His portrayal of East Pakistan clearly shows that rifts were beginning to surface in the East-West relationship. He makes no secret of it. He was staying at the residence of Sadri Ispahani, the businessman, before going back to Karachi. Ispahani always insisted that there should be more "social contact and fair dealing" in the relationship between East and West Pakistan, otherwise the relationship would deteriorate. West Pakistan should see East Pakistan as their "homeland" rather than their colony. At that time East Pakistan was totally unprotected. Despite the fact that East Pakistan earned the bulk of foreign currency for the new country, there were no Air Force or Navy here. It was frequently said that if the Indian Army attacked Dhaka then the Pakistan Army would take control of Delhi, and this would prevent any Indian invasion of East Pakistan. In his words, "The defence of East Pakistan lies in West Pakistan, the usual lofty talk and a bogus theory which miserably failed in 1971". India did reach Dhaka, but Pakistan could not manage to cross even the Wagah border, writes Malik. Rather, Pakistan lost a large part of its land area. Malik was surprised that the Bangalis did not complain against all the discrimination before 1950. In a way, "they showed more sense of patriotism than could be expected from any regional unit of a federal state".

In the fourth chapter of his book Malik gives some information about Bangali Army personnel and the training procedure of Pakistani soldiers. He tries to explain the breaking up of Pakistan through these facts. No other General has talked on this in such an emotionless manner.

Ayub Khan became the Army Chief in 1951. There were nine other officers ahead of him in the seniority list. But, according to Malik, it was Ayub who got the post because of the support of the East Pakistani members of the Central Cabinet. No one has given this information before. It seems that Ayub Khan's 'Dhaka Connection' did the trick. Of course, the Bangalis never realised what hazard was waiting for them !

Ayub Khan continued his ascent to power. He seized power in 1958, while the country was preparing for the general election. In Malik's opinion, Ayub did immense harm to the country by impeding the growth of the democratic institutions. The Generals had no idea that through their actions they were sowing the seeds of the break-up of Pakistan, because "the lust for power is often so tempting for such small minds that for their personal ambitions and greed they are always prepared to sacrifice the national interest as long as their own purpose is served".

After the martial law, the real allegiance of the Army was to the Army Chief, although on paper it was still to the country. Malik thinks that this was the root of all problems. He cites an incident, where the wife of an Attaché of the British Air Force asked her husband in a party, "Darling, can't there be martial law in our country?" "Well there can be", smiled her husband. "But the man who declares it will be seen as a madman by the people". Malik says that this was not included in the training procedure of Pakistan Army. It was "deliberately ignored and the central governments gave no protection to those who showed reluctance to obey the illegal orders of their superiors".

The interesting thing is that the leaders of all the coups in Bangladesh since 1975 were trained in Pakistan. Some of them did fight in the Liberation War, but they never managed to unlearn the basic Pakistani training.

In 1954 Malik became a trainer in the Military Academy in Kakul. Four of his students - Mannan Siddiqi, Mohabbat Jan, Wajiullah and Nuruddin - went on to become Major Generals in Bangladesh Army. Malik admits that Bangali cadets were ignored. "Their number had reduced due to shunting out as duds", he says. Their rise later in the Bangladesh Army, Malik says, is testament to the fact that they were not inferior to others in any way.

But this is also fact that this could happen only because an independent Bangladesh was created.



After a 15-year gap, Malik returned to East Pakistan in 1967 and was posted at Comilla. Malik writes that he failed to notice any significant development of the region even after 15 years. The only improvement he saw was of the cantonment at Kurmitola, and even that was done probably because of the West Pakistani troops. The East Bengal Regiment, till that time, had only one or two battalions. Any neutral observer would have noticed the "nigger" status of the East Pakistanis in the eyes of their countrymen from the West. The common people here were very poor, and the few rich men comprised of a good number of West Pakistanis among them.

Here Malik mentions that long-held prejudice regarding the Bangalis. "To say that whatever happened in East Pakistan was because of Hindu propaganda amounts to deceiving oneself", he declares.

Even those with laymen's knowledge of politics could feel the growing rift, says Malik. The West Pakistani administrators simply hated the Bangalis. Despite being the majority in the country, the Bangalis were treated in the way African Americans were treated in the United States. "This position of second class citizenship, they were not prepared to accept for long".

Here Malik uses an allegory. Fed up with the oppression of Ibrahim Lodi, his uncle Daulat Khan struck an alliance with Babar. Independence for Bangalis resulted in only a change in masters. Of course, they never wanted anything like that. They wanted to get rid of foreign rule, and may be the Agartala Conspiracy was a step towards that, because its objective was to establish an independent Bangladesh by ousting the West Pakistani rulers. That was why "Mujib in fact was not a traitor. He was a great patriot of his own people".

Malik opines that Fatima Jinnah would have won the election in 1965 if it had been a truly general election. Ayub did win, but Fatima Jinnah claimed 40% of the votes of the Basic Democrats. It was this result that spurred the movement that eventually brought in Ayub's downfall. At this point of time Malik became a Colonel. But he found an unhealthy competition of sycophancy in the Army. It was very difficult to rise

through the ranks without pleasing the superior. "Ever since our higher military leadership got involved in politics, their priorities changed".

In chapters IX to XIV, Malik chronicles his postings in different places in Pakistan and his involvement in the War of 1965. Those are not relevant to our discussion. What is relevant is his evaluation of the Army and martial law. Malik comments that martial law is not as strong and stable as it looks from the outside. In fact, this type of government is in effect very weak. It just rolls on as long as it can, but the slightest sign of any problem shakes it to the core. He makes this comment in the light of the general opinion in Pakistan, and he blames Ayub Khan for the Tashkent debacle.

Malik worked in the Pakistan Embassy in Ankara after the War of 1965. He returned to Karachi in 1969 while the martial law was being imposed. In the airport he was very cordially guided to the VIP lounge. Malik says that he was not even a Brigadier at that time. "Such are the privileges of martial law which knowingly or unknowingly army officers keep availing and when they get used to it, most of them become corrupt".

In 1971 he was transferred to the Head Quarters. He told Chief of Staff General Hamid that he thought a war was looming, and he would prefer to be in the battlefield rather than in the HQ. There was no post in West Pakistan for Malik, who had become a Brigadier by that time. Hamid asked him if it was alright for him to go to East Pakistan. Why not, replied Malik. After all, East Pakistan was also a part of Pakistan. Hamid was very pleased at this, because at that time no one wanted to go to East Pakistan, and people even feigned to be sick to avoid any posting there. The Military Secretary even had to issue an order that a posting was not cancellable and it had to be adhered to.

Malik's account reveals that the Army officers were more or less aware of the social situation in East Pakistan. The policy makers and army personnel of the erstwhile government had told me in interviews that they had no idea of what was going on in East Pakistan. It was, of course, a lie, and Malik's book proves it. Malik also writes that his mother began to cry when he went to bid her goodbye. Malik found it very natural because "Everybody knew the risks involved in going to East Pakistan in those days".

Malik arrived in Dhaka on November 16, 1971. On November 17 he went to Bogra to take command of the 205th Brigade. The next day he was ordered to go to Lalmonirhat as Niazi would also be going there. Malik writes that Niazi would appear to be an "unsophisticated soldier" at first glance. Malik did not like many of his obscene jokes. But he observed that Niazi did have the capability to inspire his troops and control everything around him.

Conflict began in the Hilly border before December 3, the day the war with India began officially. He listened to Yahya's call for *jihad* on the radio. There was probably some reference to Somnath Temple and Sultan Mahmud in the speech, because Malik comments that Yahya did not know that the person who charged Somnath Temple was a true Muslim and not a drunkard or lecherous man like Yahya.

The war began in full swing on December 7. Accompanied by his G.O.C., Malik set out for Bogra, but ran into the Indian tank force near Pirganj. Malik was extremely surprised, because it was very difficult to cross the Korotowa river and reach there. The two of them and their guide jumped out of their vehicle and escaped. Their driver was captured. The Indians began searching for them after hearing about them from the driver. Malik and his G.O.C. were split by then. Later the G.O.C. told him that an old man had given him refuge in his cottage. When the "Muktis" came to look for him, the man told them that there was no one at home. Malik could not decide whether he should head for Bogra, which was 40 miles from where he was, or for Rangpur, which was 24 miles away. He sought help from a local Bangali, who informed that there were some Pakistani troops in Pirganj. Malik asked him to act as his guide. Reaching Pirganj in the evening, they found the place deserted and came back to that man's house. A while later he again started off, accompanied by the same man, to search for Pakistani troops. They encountered a group of Bangalis on the way. His guide had a chat with them, and came to know that they had seen some Pakistani soldiers at Darga, which was 20 miles from there. Malik and his guide did find the soldiers after walking to Darga. They went to Rangpur from there on a jeep and met the G.O.C.

Marshalling some troops, they again marched towards Pirganj to stop the Indian advancement. They managed to stall the Indian troops for 18

hours before retreating. Malik wanted to go back to his Headquarters in Bogra. On the 9th, he set off for Bogra with a convoy of three jeeps. He describes in his book different confrontations with the enemy between the 9th and the 12th. May be they can be of use to a military expert. On the 12th, after crossing the Korotowa near Mahasthan, he noticed a group of soldiers coming back. Malik was enraged at their retreat. He immediately sacked their commanding officer and delivered a fiery speech saying that those who believed in *La Ilaha Illallah* should be ashamed of escaping from the attack of a group of *qafirs*. He threatened that anyone seen coming back from Bogra would be shot. Malik says that the Commander of the Eastern Command had declared that a defensive position could not be abandoned unless the casualty reached 75%. But no one paid any attention to that order. After Malik had returned to Bogra from inspecting some nearby positions, an officer told him during the briefing that in the meantime some officers had been awarded the Hilal-E-Jurat. The officers were Lieutenant General Niazi, Major General Rahim, Major General Ansari, Rear Admiral Sharif and Major General Jamshed. Malik complains that while many other officers were dying in the battlefield, the seniors were getting all the medals. Not only that, there have been times when the Pakistani soldiers were retreating like a flock of sheep, and these senior officers were squabbling over medals. "What justification was there", he says, "to give Hilal-e-Jurats to officers for killing their own countrymen whereas in actual war against the Indians they made no significant contribution and at the end, most of the so-called heroes preferred to surrender to save their own lives".

This line carries much importance. He actually admits that the Army of his country was killing his own countrymen. I.A. Rahman, the journalist, told me that if the Army had killed even a single civilian, let alone carrying out a genocide, then it was murder and a crime. General Shahebzada Yaqub also said that people see the Army as their last resort. What can be said about the Army that compel people to run away from them?

Bombing on Bogra Cantonment began in the afternoon of December 14. Malik himself also noticed that his subordinates were losing morale. He heard that many were thinking of surrendering. For him, surrender was out of question. He decided to go on a "frontline" inspection with several

officers. Reaching the 8th Baluch Regiment at six in the evening. he asked them how, as Muslims, they could consider surrendering to the *qafirs*? He decided to spend the night with them.

There was a fierce confrontation on December 15. On the 16th, an officer told him that it had been broadcast on BBC that General Niazi had surrendered. The Allied Forces had also stopped firing and had begun to spread the news through loudspeakers. Malik was not able to contact the HQ because his signalling system had collapsed as a result of the bombing on the 14th. He decided that it would not be possible for him to go back to Bogra.

He pondered on the possibility of getting out of that place through some other road. He set off with 60/70 soldiers, and very shortly ran into the Indian Army. Still he refused to surrender. But one of his Majors raised the white handkerchief, indicating the intention to surrender. Some other soldiers did the same. Accompanied by a Lance Naik, he took refuge in a cottage some 200/300 yards away. It was ten o'clock then. They remained in the cottage till six in the evening.

After the night had set in, Malik and Lance Naik Ashraf got rid of their caps and badges, covered themselves with chadors and told an old man of the house to lead the way. Malik was not afraid because he knew he had done nothing wrong.

He says in his book that right after taking his command in Bogra he had ordered that no Bangali could be punished without a prior investigation. Some days later 7/8 Bangalis were brought to him. An officer said that they were "Muktis", and they deserved punishment. Malik asked for proof of their involvement with the freedom fighters. He was told that when a group of soldiers were moving, they were shot at. After searching the village, they found these men. Malik asked what were they doing when they were arrested, and got the reply that they were going on with their regular activities. "What is usually done in this situation?" he asked. "They should be shot", was the answer. Malik set them free instead, because he believed in the dictum of Islam that he who does not show mercy to others does not get mercy himself.

One point is worth noting here. The officer had informed Malik that someone arrested was eventually shot. If this was done in every army camp, what could be the possible number of people shot throughout the

war? I am saying this because nowadays some people are trying to say that the number of people who died in the Liberation War is not as high as it is usually said.

Shantahar was 40 miles away, and Malik had no map or compass with him. He set for Shantahar at about eight at night. On the way, he fired at an Indian patrol that had challenged him. Meanwhile he found that his Bangali guide had run away. He was under the impression that Shantahar was at the west of Bogra. He began to look for the railway tracks, and stumbled on a cottage. The farmer who lived in the cottage, "a good Muslim" in Malik's words, gave him water. Malik had not eaten anything all day, but the farmer could not give him any food as he did not have any in his cottage. Malik resumed walking, and decided to take some rest in an abandoned cottage at about four in the morning. He met some local Bangalis when he was saying his morning prayers. One of them gave him a mattress so that he could say his prayers. "That again shows that despite what we had done to them, the fraternal feelings of Islam were still there" - Malik comments.

The other Generals, while writing or talking about the Liberation War, have either avoided the topic of any killings, plundering or raping, or have pretended that they did not have any knowledge of these. Considering the time when Tozammel Hossain Malik reached Bogra, it is natural that he might have been ignorant of many things. But it is clear that whatever he had managed to know had horrified him, otherwise he would not have said "what we had done to them".

After finishing his prayers, he asked the local men if he could find anyone of Jamat-e-Islam nearby. One of them suggested going to the local madrasah. The teacher of the madrasah could not provide him a guide, but he did give him some *muri* (rice puff). But he could not advance very far, as he found himself surrounded by *Muktibahini*. Ashraf and he started firing. Ashraf went down, and immediately a group of 7/8 "Muktis" and a group of local people with sticks in their hand had surrounded him. They began hitting him with the sticks. "I am the Brigade Commander. You will get a reward if you can catch me alive", he managed to cry out. Learning that he was a commander, the freedom fighters told the local people to leave. They took him to Kahlu with due

respect. The next day, the freedom fighter who had captured him asked if he was a Baluch.

"Yes", replied Malik.

"Then you have nothing to worry about. My son was also captured, but the Baluchis saved him. You won't be harmed". Malik assumed that this man could be the father of someone from the group of men he had set free a few days before.

Malik was handed over to the Indian Army as a prisoner of war. He was glad that he did not have to surrender. After serving his time in India as prisoner of war, he went back to Pakistan, became a Major General, and retired after a while. He was a supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami although he never joined them. During the Ziaul Haque regime he was arrested for conspiring to oust the military ruler. Chapters 24 to 40 chronicle these events, but we will not deal with them as they are not pertinent to our discussion.

Malik writes that the defensive plans of Pakistan was alright, but they were never put into action. He does not blame Niazi for the defeat of Pakistan. Niazi was not brave, he says, but he was "not a coward" either. Niazi alone did not take the decision to surrender, rather it was the "syndicate solution" of all the Generals. They were thinking of sending General Rahim as their spokesperson to General Yahya. General Rahim was known to be close to Yahya. In Malik's opinion, if this had materialised, then the Hamdud Rahman Commission would have never been formed.

Malik only talks about the Army in his book, avoiding any discussion on politics. But he repeatedly makes the military rule responsible for everything. Yahya was also to blame. In October, 1971 Yahya's son had a grand wedding ceremony, which prompted many to remember that old story of Nero playing the flute while Rome was burning. Malik has blamed the Generals for the break-up of Pakistan and has even mentioned the genocide carried out by them. His own words on this are very significant:

"I must say most of our senior officers had very slavish mentality. They knew the things were going wrong and often kept cribbing about it - yet they took no steps to dislodge Yahya Khan who in any case was an usurper and had no legal right to be where he was. Their attitude was that

of a mercenary soldier. They were only concerned with their own bread and butter. It never pricked their conscience that hundreds of their own countrymen were being massacred by these butchers only because they wanted to stay in power at all costs. In fact most of the senior generals were as much to be blamed for the break-up of Pakistan as Yahya himself....."

Considering the framework of discussion of this book, it must be said that Tozammel Hossain Malik's *The Story of My Struggle* is the only exception. He shows the courage of criticising his own profession. He also manages to portray a true picture of the erstwhile East Pakistan. Of all the Generals who have written their memoirs, only Malik had actually fought the Indian Army face-to-face. But he has not uttered a single word against the *Muktibahini* in his book. But again, at the end the Liberation War of Bangladesh becomes an India-Pakistan war rather than our fight for independence. May be it is impossible for any Pakistani mind, even Malik`s, to accept the whole truth.

## 26

### Siddiqi's Reality

He was not a General, but a Brigadier. A. R. Siddiqi would have probably become a General, if not for the debacle for Pakistan in 1971. He was not a policy-maker at that time but he was also not far away from the process, and he did have ties with influential policy-makers. In 1971 he was the Chief Public Relations Officer of the Pakistan Army. His recent book - *The Military in Pakistan: Image and Reality* - goes a long way to explain the mind of the Generals and their books (specially those concerning the events of 1969-71). He has analysed the Army from a completely different viewpoint. This is the first time that such a book by someone from the Pakistan Army has been published. Our Liberation War is also discussed in the book, making it important for us too. The book also helps explain the historiography created by the Generals that we have already discussed.

There is an anonymous quote at the very beginning of the book: "Countries which worship armies tend to use armies". This, in fact, is the theme of his book. But may be it would have been more appropriate if he had seen this in a bit different way - Pakistanis have worshipped the



Army, and the Army have used the state to fulfil their personal ambitions and in the process have destroyed the state. Throughout the book, Siddiqi tries to stress on one point- that a certain image of the Pakistan Army was created since the 50's, but this image was far from the reality. This relentless quest to amplify their image made them think that they could do no mistake. The Generals always believed that they could sort out the mess left behind by the politicians. The objective of the book is to show the dangerous effects of the deification of the Army.

The first chapter is titled *The Birth of an Image (1947-52)*. The image of the Pakistan Army was in an embryonic stage in the first five years of the country. The Army had a British Chief in the days right after independence. It was the appointment of Ayub Khan as the Army Chief that fully *Pakistanised* the Army. The other British officers also left, and the Sandhurst-trained Punjabi officers attained control. Ayub very consciously planned to create an image of the Army - an image that developed differently in the two regions of the country.

There was a tradition of warfare in West Pakistan and most of the troops were from that part of the country. So it was easy to create an image of the Army as far as West Pakistan was concerned. But in East Pakistan, says Siddiqi, there was no tradition of warfare. Ayub Khan was the first G.O.C. of East Pakistan. To familiarize the Bangalis with the Army, he used to organise flag marches in villages. Bangalis were impressed by these tall, well-built soldiers from the West, and a certain admiration grew for them among the people here.

Between 1947 and 1952, the only top ranking officer in the Army who was not from the West was Major General Majid, a Bangali in the Asam Cadre. During the Rawalpindi Conspiracy General Majid was shown to be involved and was removed from duty, although there was actually no proof of his involvement. This greatly enraged the then Lt. Colonel Osmani.

What Brigadier Siddiqi does not mention is that way back in 1950 the West Pakistanis exposed their attitude towards the East by removing Major General Majid. Ayub Khan had a heated argument with Osmani about this. Ayub never forgave Osmani, resulting in Osmani's never getting promoted any more in the Pakistan Army. Probably realising this, Osmani concentrated on building up the East Bengal Regiment during the

rest of his days in the Pakistan Army. In this backdrop of events, Brigadier Siddiqi, a Captain at that time, joined the Public Relation Department of the Army. This was a time when the Army was seriously planning on building up its image.

The second chapter of Siddiqi's book, named *The Growth of the Image*, shows how the image took its form between 1950 and 1956. Jamaat instigated a riot in Lahore in 1953 by attacking the Qadianis. Martial law was declared in Lahore, with General Azam Khan as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Azam Khan, an ambitious man adept in public relation exercises, made full use of his powers. He showed that only the Army could handle a riot like this so quickly. Moududi was sentenced to death for inducing the riot (the sentence was not carried out). The fact that the Army had the courage to sentence to death a religious leader went a long way to bolster their image as a fearless group determined to keep the peace. In Siddiqi's words, "Officers were treated and projected as popular heroes and leaders". 'Azam Cloth Market' was set up in Lahore in the name of the General.

During this period some Bangali officers began to be commissioned in the Army. But, as Tozammel Hossain Malik has said, the Bangali cadets were discriminated in the Military Academy in Kakul. That did not however manage to prevent Abdul Qayum, the younger brother of Professor Kabir Chowdhury, from getting the 'Sword of Honour' as the best Cadet of his batch. He stayed on in Pakistan after marrying a Pakistani woman, but he was never promoted above the rank of Colonel. The only exception was General Wasiuddin. But we must keep in mind that he was related to the Nawab family of Dhaka who were in one way or other connected to the power circle till 1956 (and even afterwards) and whose mother tongue was not Bangla.

Siddiqi uses Ayub Khan to exemplify the Generals' attitude towards the Bangalis - "Even as the local Major General in East Pakistan back in 1948, Ayub had conceived a profound contempt or commiseration for the Bengalis, from the Chief Minister (Khawaja Nazim-ud-Din) down to the common man in the street". During the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Trial, the army officers were ravaged by the cross examination of Suhrawardy. Ayub never forgot it. In 1948, when demonstrations were going on in front of the East Pakistan Assembly, Ayub very rudely told Muhammad

Ali of Bogra to go back home - "I tapped Muhammad Ali on the shoulder and said, 'Are you looking for a bullet?' ", says Siddiqi.

Ayub's own autobiography is testament to the hatred he felt for the Bangalis. "It would be no exaggeration," he writes, "to say that up to the creation of Pakistan, they (the Bengalis) had not known any real freedom. They have been in turn ruled either by the caste Hindus, Moghuls, Pathans or the British. In addition, they have been and still are under considerable Hindu cultural and linguistic influence, as such they have all the inhibitions of down-trodden races....." This clearly exposes the Generals' attitude towards Bangalis, and helps us understand how this attitude influenced their policy-making.

Ayub Khan's words show what can happen if one doesn't know his history well. He had very conveniently forgotten to say that the West Pakistanis were also under the caste Hindus, Moghuls and the British. In fact, the Punjabis were specially ridiculed as henchmen of the British. They were the first in the sub-continent to be subjugated by the invading army of Alexander the great.

At this time, says Siddiqi, the Pakistan Army caught the attention of the United States. But he fails to say that the Pakistan Army actually fell into the clutches of the USA who began to use Pakistan and its Army for its own purposes. Let us look more closely at this.

When Ayub Khan declared martial law in 1958, he announced that he wanted to create a system where the people would have an honest, democratic and efficient government. The *New York Times* commented that there was no room to doubt Ayub Khan's intentions. Tariq Ali has written in his book that CIA assisted Ayub in the military coup. Even Ayub's brother has admitted this. Tariq Ali has cited an incident - told to him by a former minister - in his book. In the first cabinet meeting following the declaration of the martial law, the new President, while explaining his foreign policy, had said that he was only interested in one embassy - the American one. Kalim Siddiqi has also written about the close relationship between Ayub Khan and the Americans. He said that the Americans were so happy to see Ayub as President that the amount of US aid to Pakistan increased by three times in a year. In 1958, it was US\$ 60.1 million. In 1959 it became US\$ 180.4 million. It may be mentioned that Ayub represented Pakistan in the first talks between Pakistan and the

US regarding military aid to Pakistan. Before that there were almost no bilateral discussions between these two countries.

A large amount of US aid was pouring in for the military sector, but the percentage of GNP devoted to military spending was increasing instead of the opposite happening. The following table testifies to that.

**Financial Year Revenue Spending Military Spending**  
**(million Taka) (in million taka)**

1947-48	198.9	15.38
1948-49	66.76	46.15
1949-50	88.54	62.54
1950-51	127.32	64.99
1951-52	144.84	77.91
1952-53	133.43	78.34
1953-54	111.05	65.32
1954-55	117.27	63.51
1955-56	143.58	91.47
1956-57	134.14	90.09
1957-58	152.50	85.42
1958-59	195.87	99.66
1959-60	197.751	04.35
1960-61	212.251	11.24
1961-62	231.691	10.66
1962-63	244.60	95.43
1963-64	282.961	15.65
1964-65	330.101	26.23
1965-66	379.792	85.50
1966-67	447.522	29.35
1967-68	470.422	18.65
1968-69	577.412	42.68
1969-70	440.262	74.92
1970-71	646.133	20.00
1971-72	589.864	26.00

Owen A. Wilcox has said in an article that Pakistan had to spend little in the military sector because of its relation with the United States. But the table says the opposite. However, Wilcox has admitted in the same article that foreign [that is, American] interference did not succeed in quelling the regional conflicts in Asia, rather it only managed to exacerbate them. According to the *New York Times*, during the period of 1954-1965 Pakistan had received military assistance worth US\$ 1.5 billion from the United States. But the papers on military assistance to Pakistan revealed by the United States in 1972 show that the actual amount was half of that quoted in the *New York Times*. The disparity of the two figures indicates that the clandestine arms deals have not been mentioned in the government documents. The figures provided by Amos Jordan has reinforced this suspicion. Amos had access to the government papers when he was in the Draper Committee. He says that Pakistan received military assistance worth US\$ 390-440 million till 1960. The picture becomes clearer if we look at some statistics related to the Pakistan Air Force.

In 1962 the Pakistan Air Force had a squadron of seven B-57 planes, twelve F-104 Star Fighters and four squadrons of airplanes. Within a year the number of airplanes had increased to 250, including two squadrons of B-57B Light Bombers, a squadron of F-104 Star Fighters and four squadrons of F-86 F Sabres.

Assistant Secretary of Defense of the US Government Col. Wolf P. Gross testified before a Congressional Sub-committee that between 1954-65 the United States gave Pakistan 690.3 million US dollar's worth of weaponry and further 700 million US dollar's worth of other equipment. The total amounts to about US\$ 1.4 billion, which is near to the amount quoted by the *New York Times*.

In 1953, the Pakistan Economic Appraisal Committee suggested in its publication that instead of channeling 54-86% of the revenue to military spending, a balance should be struck between the development and military sectors. But no one heeded it. As military assistance from the US increased, the additional military spending was used to ensure the extravagant lifestyle of military officers and their families.

The American policy makers knew very well that their assistance was in effect creating a prodigal military elite in Pakistan whose standard of life

was much higher than that of the common people. This was reason enough to give rise to unrest among the people. But the bureaucrats very cleverly inflated the fear of Indian aggression to such a level that the common people were terrorized by the thought. The state-controlled mass media were instrumental in deep-rooting this terror. The events following 1971 also created a situation conducive to mass uprising. But the same bureaucrats managed to use this terror to create confusion and save their skin.

There has never been any research on the relationship between American and Pakistani bureaucrats. But there is little doubt that they were in close contact. The events of 1971 are proof enough of that. During that time arms were supplied to Pakistan from USA despite the US Government's sanctions against it. This was possible only because of the close relationship between the bureaucrats of the two countries.

This relationship began to blossom after the US-Pakistan treaty for military cooperation in 1954. Fazal Mukim Khan describes that Pakistani officers began to put much importance on US opinion in every sphere. After such an understanding was reached, it did not take them much time to strike a close relationship. American Officers provided support to their Pakistani counterparts in carrying out the difficult job of gathering necessary weaponry. Study tours were organized to develop a "healthy and friendly relationship". "Orientation training" were also provided. According to Harold A. Hove, all these were meant to show the bureaucrats the US military bases and to socialize them with the American officers in these bases. The theme of these training programs was to acquaint the rising leaders of Pakistan with the military organizations and people of the United States. It was hoped that they would thus become supporters of US policies. Tariq Ali has dismissed these study tours as bribes, and has said that the United States used these tours to exert its influence over the Pakistan Army. It was noticed that the military bureaucrats had become so powerful that they frequently ignored their civilian counterparts while having discussions with the Pentagon. This was possibly why Pakistan was so confident that the United States would come to its aid in 1971. This hope of theirs was not fulfilled. But the United States did, at the last moment, send the Enterprise, an aircraft carrier, towards the Bay of Bengal. This again proves the closeness of the

bureaucrats of the two countries. [The accounts of the relationship between American and Pakistani armed forces have been taken from *Inside the Bureaucracy: Bangladesh* by Muntasir Mamoon and Jayantakumar Ray)

Siddiqi says that this alliance with the United States brought the 'centre of gravity' to West Pakistan, making the East feel dejected. In this period the number of Bangalis in the Armed Forces - specially in the Navy and the Air Force - did increase, but it was still only a fraction of the total military establishment. Almost the whole of the American aid ended up in the West and added to the treasury of the military. So what benefit did the Bangalis get from this? Nothing at all. "The Bengalis played the piper, while the West Pakistanis called the tune. The inflow of the American aid and all the propaganda in respect of its obtained by the West Palistanis benefit touched the Bangalis where it hurt them most that is, inadequate representation in the armed forces as the largest repository of power and authority".

Besides, till 1958, the Army organised various lavish programmes. The image of the Army continued to inflate. On the other hand, the politicians failed to come to agreements on different national issues. This created a state of chaos, providing the Army an excuse to seize power.

## 27

Brigadier Siddiqi singles out the period between 1958 to 1964 as the time when the Army's image reached its apex. The third chapter of his book - *The Rise of the Image* - chronicles this.

The Army, led by Ayub, seized power in 1958 and reaped the fruits of the image created of them during 1948-58. Most of the people welcomed the military rule. What Siddiqi does not say is that western, and specially American academicians introduced a new theory at that time. They tried to say that military rule was in fact essential for the development progress of third world countries like Pakistan. This theory internationally encouraged and legitimised military rule.

After ascending to power, Ayub reorganised his public relations machinery. He had the sense to realise that only force was not enough to have control on everything and to consolidate his power. A change in

social attitude was required, and that was possible "only through persuasion and education". "With his deeply ingrained soldiers' contempt for the 'bloody civilian', the scruffy intellectual and wretched penpusher, Ayub instantly realised and accepted their nuisance value", writes Siddiqi.

In this backdrop of affairs, the Writers' Guild was formed. Writers of both the regions flocked to the Guild with the hope of being benefited in some way or other. For the first time a forum was formed that included writers from both regions. The Generals were put in high positions. Yahya Khan was entrusted with the responsibility of constructing the new capital. This gave him the first opportunity to come under the limelight. Government propaganda turned Ayub into a national hero. The newspapers and the government-controlled media took part in this hero-worshipping.

To bring about "Intellectual Regimentation" Ayub Khan established the "Bureau of National Research and Reconstruction (BNR)". Siddiqi provides a very important information on this - "The Bureau was a most skilfully designed instrument of brain washing through a combination of PR and intelligence. Police and security agencies were integrated into the Bureau to serve as a watchdog on the country's intelligentsia".

Siddiqi cites an example of how the Army, only through propaganda, developed an image of itself as the defender of Pakistan. General Azam Khan was appointed Governor of East Pakistan. When he was removed the "Bangalis wept and cried and staged rallies against the centre's decision. The military had virtually become an object of worship in East Pakistan".

This image inspired the Bangali young men to join the Army. The United States carried on its assistance in maintaining this image. The first Armed Forces Day was observed in 1960. The objective was to display the might of the Army in front of the people. The other lavish programmes were carried on as usual.

## 28

In 1965 the image was put to trial, as Siddiqi describes in his next chapter - *The Test of the Image*. It was the year of the India-Pakistan War. Pakistan was in an advantageous position in some prior border



skirmishes, allowing the public relations activities to reach the apex. The newspapers began publishing stories on the gallantry of the Army. A song became extremely popular in the West at that time - *Mera mahi chail chabe li/ kanail ni jarnail ni* (My lover is either a Colonel or a General) or *Mera chan mahi kaptan* (My lover, his face is like the moon, he is a captain). We were schoolboys then, and we still remember the excitement of those days. From September 23, 1965 to March 23, 1966, this image reigned over everything else (*The Triumph of the Image*).

The East Bengal Regiment was fighting in the Kasoor Sector, which was south of Lahore. Gul Hasan was the Director of Military Operations while Osmani was the Deputy Director. But Osmani was not given any responsibility.

Osmani did not give up. He engaged himself in spreading the word about the valour of the East Bengal Regiment. He used to complain at that time that the Punjabi press was intentionally refusing to print reports on the heroism of Bangali soldiers. Osmani asked the Nishan-e-Haider for someone, but the battalion Commander ignored it. The regiment was, however, awarded two Sitara-e-Jurats and six Tamgha-e-Jurats. No other battalion was awarded so many medals. Osmani was the lone voice in spreading the stories of heroism of the Bangali soldiers. Siddiqi has pointed at this as a dividing factor between the East and the West, because everything in the army was West Pakistan's alone and "they hated sharing it with the Bengalis".

Colonel Z. A. Suleri added a new dimension to the propaganda - he used religion. Why was the Pakistani soldier fighting with such gallantry? Because he was a Muslim. He was fighting for Islam. He described the Army as "the ultimate sanction behind the creation of Pakistan". The newspapers in West Pakistan began to propagate this doctrine with much enthusiasm. We have seen the manifestation of such propaganda. Whenever there had been an uprising against the ruling circle or the military, it had been said that the dissidents were against Islam and they were being supported by the Hindus (meaning India). Islam was endangered! So everyone must come forward to fight them to save it!

The sixth chapter of Siddiqis' book, titled *The Manipulation of the Image*, describes the period between September 1966 to March 25, 1969. In the

author's words, "The 1965 war had exalted the military image to mythical heights".

Then why did the image stumble afterwards? The tide began to turn after the Tashkent Treaty. Siddiqi does not shed much light on this. It becomes very clear that the public relation campaign was merely an eyewash in some cases. If Pakistan had really won the war, then why would it be forced to sign the Tashkent Treaty? There is another side to the story. While the Army was trying to consolidate its authority, the politicians were being unified against the Army. East Pakistan had never accepted military rule. Tashkent Treaty provided a great opportunity to the politicians. Ayub took elaborate steps to celebrate "The Decade" - further dividing the East and the West because "The overplay in the Decades publicity of the prosperity theme created, in general an agonising awareness of the gap between appearance and reality". Bangalis observed with anguish that West Pakistan alone was reaping the benefits of development, leaving East Pakistan far behind.

Osmani, on the other hand, was ever-busy trying to augment the honour of the East Bengal Regiment. He organised a reunion of the regiment and also invited Siddiqi as the Public Relations Officer. The regiment had a distinct name and symbols with distinct characteristics. Although it was a part of the Pakistan Army "it prided itself in being the only post-independence army regiment which did not carry a foreign flag. Practically monolithic in class composition (unlike the mixed Pakistani regiments) it developed a sense of apartness from the rest of the army". Siddiqi thinks that this attention to distinctness created a subtle rift in the army. The regimental center of this regiment was called Tiger Center, the road approaching the center was called Tiger Road, the Center Commandant was called Papa Tiger and the recruits Tiger Cabs. General Niazi has claimed in his memoirs that Tiger Road was named after him (He used to be called Tiger Niazi). Siddiqi's information proves that Niazi was not exactly speaking the truth.

Political chaos born out of the Decade Celebration of Ayub instigated an uprising. Yahya started developing his own image very patiently. The Public Relations Department managed to manipulate the image amongst all these; and this is why, when Yahya declared martial law to suppress political unrest, the people temporarily accepted it.

Siddiqi comments that Ayub's decade started with martial law, and it also ended with martial law. During this period the public relations machinery has been used "as the main prop and instrument of governance". The ruling circle actually believed in this image, and this created a sense of complacency among them. The sycophancy-ridden public relation activities organised by Altaf Gauhar helped the Army "to build its action oriented image in a political vacuum".

## 29

Siddiqi describes the events between March 25, 1969 to March 25, 1971 in the seventh chapter, titled *The Twilight of the Image*.

The image Yahya intended to project of himself was that of a not-so-extreme Military Chief who was close to the common people and who was also a civilian at heart. To prove this, he frequently used to joke with journalists and answer their various questions. In a press conference in Dhaka, Abedur Rahman, the Editor of *The People* even called him "Uncle Yahya" without any negative reaction from the "uncle". His desire to be a civilian created problems in the public relations activities. In Siddiqi's words, it "messed up the popular image of the armed forces". The cyclone of 1970 proved disastrous for the Army as well as for its propaganda machine. Yahya Khan's too short a visit to East Pakistan enraged the Bangalis.

On November 21, the Chief of General Staff Gul Hasan called up the Director of Public Relations Brigadier Siddiqi and told him that the situation was worsening; the newspapers in Dhaka were openly criticising the Army and they were refusing to print the press releases of the Public Relations Department. Siddiqi would have to go Dhaka.

Siddiqi came to Dhaka and saw for himself that what he had heard was in fact true. The foreign correspondents were making things even more complicated. What Siddiqi says on this is not acceptable, because we were in Dhaka at that time. He writes that many Bangalis were working for the foreign correspondents, and the foreigners believed the exaggerations of the Bangalis. "The foreign press teams spent most of their time in their Dacca hotels, visiting the affected areas only rarely". As far as Siddiqi's version goes, the foreign press did not notice any role of the Pakistan Army in alleviating the sufferings of the people. The

journalists were not for military rule, and they never made any secret about it.

Siddiqi presents an academic analysis of the armed forces in his preceding six chapters, and two or three of them do reveal his hidden prejudices, proving once again that however much a Pakistani General may try to portray himself as 'impartial', he fails every time. They can never shake off their preconceived notions about Bangalis, the only difference can be in the degree to which the notion is rooted in their mind.

Yahya organised a press conference in Dhaka where the pro-Awami League journalists tried, but failed, to put him in an uncomfortable position. According to Siddiqi, Yahya managed to plough back, to some extent, the image of the Army; and he gave the announcement of a general election. The election was held, and, in Siddiqi's words, they proved that through the "brute force" of majority they would always be in power in Pakistan.

The ruling circle and specially the Army of Pakistan was terrified by the election results. The election results were a great threat to the Army. Siddiqi writes that although the Army carried on the election impartially, their wisdom is questionable - "How come that none amongst the generals could foresee the inevitable outcome of the election clearly enough to forestall it in good time? The military image in West Pakistan thus received a temporary set-back".

It seemed as if the Army had lost all its power after the election. What would happen to the Army if the Bangalis came to power? This was the question in the minds of every General. Although Yahya kept insisting that he wanted to return to the barracks, he did not actually have any such intentions.

Siddiqi's accounts give us hints about the following events. The Army was not interested in handing over power. They used Bhutto to come out with an excuse and created a situation on March 25 out of desperation. Actually the Army was preparing itself for retaliation right after the results of the elections had been declared.

In the conclusion of the chapter, Siddiqi says about the image of the army that it [the Army] "found itself in the twilight region of political power after the elections. In the gathering dusk the military image looked like

the Sphinx - half beast and half woman, a freak on the emerging national scene".

### 30

1971 was the time of the *Sunset of the Image*. The importance of this chapter lies in the fact that Brigadier Siddiqi was the Chief of the Public Relations Department during that period. His brief was to convince the people of the country that everything was normal.

After the election, Siddiqi writes, the Army had a growing feeling that they were becoming persona-non-grata in their own country. They were fearful of being left behind in all national activities. Thirteen years of military rule had made them addicted to almost unlimited power. The election pointed the finger at the place where the Army was supposed to remain. There was something else to be fearful about. If Bangalis came to power then more Bangalis would join the Army and there might be peace with India, resulting in "the consequent diminution of the West Pakistan military power and of its image".

This statement gives a clear enough view of the attitude of the Generals. In fact, they were never prepared to hand over power. They had assumed - and their assumption was supported by intelligence reports - that no one would get majority in the election, and the Army would still be running the country. The election results turned all the calculations upside down. Siddiqi says that something happened in East Pakistan at that time. The Army and the West Pakistan were all alike to the Bangalis - they were all oppressors. In these circumstances, on March 9, the Army forced the Provincial Government to publish a gazette which stated that till then 172 people had been killed, and the Army was responsible for only 23 of them. The Army tried to imply that not only the Army but the Police was also firing on the Bangalis, and the Bangalis in the Police were actually responsible for most of the deaths. Till that moment the Bangali police were heeding the commands of the West Pakistani superiors. But this time they got really scared, and angry too. The Bangali-Non-Bangali rift was developing everywhere - starting from the Army to the Police. Ten days later, in Jaydevpur, the Bangali troops refused to obey the command of Brigadier Jahanjeb Abrar.

Here is an example of the kind of xenophobia the generals were suffering from. Siddiqi says that everyday *The People* used to carry articles against military rule. There was a specially critical article published, titled *Who's Who in the Aviary*. The writer's name was Shawkat Osman. Siddiqi thinks it was actually written by Colonel Osmani. This was what the pattern of thinking of the PR Department of the Army was like.

The newspapers, and specially *The People*, were regularly writing against the Army. (*The People* is being mentioned frequently because they could not read the Bangla newspapers). According to Siddiqi, the Army was getting more and more impatient and "the mere word Bangali stank in their nostrils". They saw Bangalis as foreigners, and Bangalis saw the West Pakistanis in the same light. The growing agitation towards the Bangalis resulted in *The People* office being burned down on March 25.

On March 20, Yahya could not see a single Pakistani flag in Dhaka. Extremely enraged, he immediately gave the command to make preparations for the crackdown. On March 26 the foreign correspondents were sent back home. Siddiqi's explanation is that that was the reason why they became so anti-Pakistan. But right after that he says that it was a good thing that they were sent back, because they would have been witness to a horrible sight - "a picture of death and desolation" - if they were allowed to walk around in the streets of Dhaka in the morning of March 26.

At this point Roedad Khan entered the PR scenario. A very powerful man, he saw - according to Siddiqi - "every problem as a PR problem". He wanted to instil the fear of Allah among the people. If necessary, he was prepared to cleanse the Bangalis. When Sheikh Mujib was arrested and taken to Pakistan, Roedad commented, "Let the world know that the bastard is in our hands". Siddiqi protested against it.

Journalists were shipped from West Pakistan to the East. Their dispatches sang the heroism of the Pakistan troops. But the problem was - as Siddiqi observed - if everything was normal, then why were the Pakistanis fighting a war at all? West Pakistanis were never worried about this contradiction. They were just happy to see their soldiers doing well in East Pakistan. By then the image nurtured and nourished for so long began to crumble. "It was foreign in the East and 'national' in the West, a devoted and self-sacrificing fighting force for one wing and engine of

oppression for the other." The professional soldiers were questioning the ability of themselves to fight counter-insurgency, because they had no training for this. The only consolation they could find was in the propaganda.

Yahya Khan had ordered an all-out propaganda campaign in favour of Pakistan. The Documentary 'The Great Betrayal' was produced, with all kinds of assistance from Prof. G. W. Chowdhury, a Bangali. After Yahya saw the film along with his Generals, he asked, "I hope all the devastation shown in the film is not result of army action'. The documentary was never released.

Siddiqi gives a detailed description of the propaganda carried out till December by the Pakistan Government and the Army. The worse the situation grew, the more it was being shouted that everything was normal. But the whole world knew that the situation was anything but normal. One thing is clear from this, all the Generals had a very good idea of what was actually going on in Bangladesh. But, as they had lost control on the events, their only source of comfort lied behind the propaganda. On December 13, when the Pakistani Army finally lost the war, that hyper-inflated image of the Army was shattered to pieces. Something else is worth mentioning here. I asked the main actors of the period - the people Siddiqi talks about in his book - whether they knew what was happening in Bangladesh in 1971. Did they know what was going on? All of them have answered in the negative. Even Roedad Khan also did the same.

## 31

Recently, Mohiuddin Ahmed and I met Brigadier Siddiqi. Here we are presenting some parts of the conversation.

We wanted to know something from him that he does not mention in his book. After the first fifteen minutes of pleasantries, Mohiuddin said, "Brigadier Siddiqi, we have come to know through discussions with many people here that the Pakistanis once saw East Pakistan as a liability"

"There is no doubt about that", said Siddiqi unequivocally, "This assumption was there from the very beginning. Let me give you an example. Pakistan became independent in 1947. Fifty-six percent people

of Pakistan lived in East Pakistan. Why did Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, go to Karachi from Delhi instead of going to Dhaka?"

We have never thought of it this way. Yes, it was something to ponder about. Jinnah finally came to Dhaka one year later, and immediately struck a blow at the cultural pride of Bangalis. "But in that case", I asked, "Do you believe that the Hindus influenced the Bangalis? Were they the ones who provoked the Bangalis to demand independence? Many people here believe this".

"Rubbish!" said Siddiqi. "I have also heard - and many have written too - that Hindu teachers had influenced the Bangali youth. These do not have any base. I don't think Bangladesh ever wanted separation in that way".

"Have you read the book by Siddiq Saleq?"

Siddiq Saleq's *Witness to Surrender* was the first book on our Liberation War to be written by a Pakistani. The Brigadier said he had read the book, but he did not seem to have a positive attitude towards Saleq. He said that Saleq had worked under him. Many of the information in the book were not in fact correct. Saleq wrote the book to please the General Head Quarters. He was duly rewarded for this through rapid promotions. He died in the same air accident that killed General Ziaul Haque. Many in Pakistan have expressed similar views about Siddiq Saleq's book.

"You were close to the policy makers, right?" I asked.

"Yes, I was involved with the GHQ. I was the Director of the Inter Service Relation. That means that I had to do all the media-related activities of the Army. That kept me in touch with the policy makers".

"Were you in Dhaka in March" asked Mohiuddin.

"Yes I was", said Siddiqi. "I went to Dhaka on March 16 and returned on April 1. I was in Dhaka on March 25".

"What happened on March 25?" I asked.

"On March 25 I saw *The People* office being burned down. From then on till April I was busy with public relations. Dead bodies were lying around on the streets on March 26. After the curfew was lifted, people began getting out of the city".

It was clear that he did not want to talk about it any further.

"General Umar and many others have said that they did not see anything unusual in March although they were in Dhaka at that time", I said.



"Is this believable?" said Siddiqi. "General Umar was part of it. He knew everything. After March 25, he told me, 'Why are you so grim? Cheer up". General Jacob also said, 'Umar was Yahya's brother'".

The Brigadier's secretary brought tea. We began discussing the Pakistan Army in general. While in service Siddiqi surely did not dare make the comments that he now made about the Army. His opinion is that the Army had always wanted to create a myth about itself centered on its gallantry. They always wanted to present themselves as the driving force in history. Of course, their attempt failed. As the Chief of Public Relations in 1971, he had to deal with the absurd plans of the Generals. He said that during that time they had lost all connections with the reality. There was also no hint of practicality in the Pakistani military strategy. His view was that an "affordable defense is a good defense". In this context Mohiuddin asked, "Such a big thing happened in 1971, and no one here got to know anything - how could this be possible?"

"Look, it happened like this", said Siddiqi. "Tikka Khan believed that because of the action on March 25, everything would cool down by April. Not only Tikka, but many politicians and Generals of Pakistan also thought this way. They failed to realise the extent of the people's anger, and this was their big mistake. On the other hand, there were no organised protests against military action here. If there were, then things could not have gone so far".

"Have you read General Niazi's book?" I asked. "What is your opinion on Niazi or his book?"

"I used to visit Dhaka often during those days. It was part of my job. I had to manage the foreign correspondents, explain to the world whatever the GHQ wanted to tell them, and so on. I used to meet Niazi then. The last time I met him was on October 1. Niazi was under the impression that everything was under his control, which was a laughable thing to do. India attacked on November 21-22. The situation reports we were getting were all laughable".

He paused for a moment. I noticed that like all others he saw the whole thing in the light of an India-Pakistan war. "On December 11", he started again, "General Gul Hasan called me up and said that East Pakistan was lost. I was stunned despite knowing that it was only a matter of time".

"How was Niazi as a military strategist?"

"Niazi was good as a Major, but as a General he was worthless", was his clear-cut response. "Look, I have read the books of both Niazi and Jacob. Both of them have written in the same way. According of them they did what they did completely by themselves, almost like Superman, and their superiors were nothing. Can a General talk like this?"

"I don't know if you have read Rao Farman Ali's book," I said. "After reading the book it would seem that he knew nothing, although he was there all the time during the genocide. What's your opinion about this?"

"He was the Major General in charge of the civilian administration in East Pakistan. It was not possible for him to not know of anything that was going on there. Forman is probably the man who knows about the murder of the intellectuals. I never trusted him. He always wore a ruthless mask".

"And Bhutto?"

"He wanted power and only power. He did not bother about anything else. He had the Army's support. The Army was in favor of West Pakistan and Bhutto was their spokesperson. He used to say fantastic tales - that he would fight with tanks and so on. He was a disaster par excellence"

Brigadier Siddiqi's book is more objective than the other General's. He has shown how the image of the Army was created based upon empty rhetoric that had no connection whatsoever with the reality, and how that propaganda created the rift between the two regions. As the Generals had no idea about the real situation, this image, which was built on a set of lies, was completely shattered in 1971. They wanted to use this image to seize power. Even today they are trying to recreate this image, but not succeeding. To compensate for the defeat in Bangladesh they got involved in Afghanistan, but they got a beating there too. That was why Nawaz Sharif could force an Army Chief to resign - an unprecedented event in the history of Pakistan. It can be said that the creation of Bangladesh actually encouraged Pakistan to opt for democracy.

Although he was objective, it is worth noting that the Liberation War of Bangladesh had ultimately remained as an India-Pakistan war in his mind. He never mentions in his book that the Bangalis fought for justice. Not only that, he comments in the Appendix 5 of his book that both

regions were responsible for the crisis of 1971. In his words, "While West Pakistan's share of the blame is admittedly much larger than that of East Pakistan, the latter cannot be altogether absolved. As for the Army, it was inexorably sucked into the political quagmire mainly the making of Mujib and Bhutto."

## 32

The description given so far has hopefully managed to present clearly the conceptual frame mentioned early in the book. Among the books by the Generals, only three can be identified as a bit different from the usual. It can be assumed from the beginning that Asghar Khan's book would have a different touch. He had been involved with politics for the last three decades, and everyone knows his opinions. During the Liberation War he publicly criticised the Army. But nevertheless he had found excesses in the actions of both Pakistan and Bangladesh, implying that no single party was responsible.

Brigadier Siddiqi's book also merits differences, but at the end he has also arrived at the same conclusion as Asghar Khan's and has put the blame on both Bhutto and Mujib.

The book by Tozammel Hossain Malik, however, is different in all respects.

Malik, a devout Muslim, always abides by the *Sharia*. But the surprising fact is that all through the book he has criticised the Armed Forces. He has tried to successfully (as successfully as possible for a soldier) explain why Pakistan broke up. His book is important also because he was the only General who had fought in the battlefield in 1971.

After taking him as a prisoner, the Muktibahini men did not kill him as he was Baluch.

During the Independence War the Bangalis had a softer attitude towards the Baluch as they were regarded to be comparatively more kind-hearted. The hatred was more specifically directed towards the Punjabis. The Baluch were seen to be as oppressed as the Bangalis. May be the Baluch also saw themselves in the same way. General Gul Hasan, who was also born in Quetta, had taken a completely different standpoint. On the other hand, General Musa's version of the events of 1971 comes close to Malik's. General Musa, also a Baluch, had not criticised the politicians

like the Punjabis had done. From this point of view, it can be said that General Gul Hasan was an exception among the Baluch. Despite being born in Baluchistan, his whole life had been spent in Punjab. So the real question is, does nationality, at the end of the day, influence every author? Does it even influence history?

I will end with two examples. General Musa became the Army Chief during the Ayub Khan period. He also acted as the GOC of East Pakistan. Yahya succeeded Musa as the Army Chief, but he was not recommended by his predecessor; he was the personal choice of Ayub. The interesting thing is that it was Yahya who toppled Ayub. On the other hand, Bhutto appointed General Zia as the Army Chief, and it was Zia who hanged him. Musa retired in 1966, and was not involved in the subsequent events.

He has opined in his memoir that Awami League should have been allowed to form the government. Besides, the government did not have any objection against the Six Points, and Awami League won the election based on that program. So they had every right to power. His view is that the ruling circle was not expecting such a result in the election. So, instead of doing what they should have done, "In their disturbed and confused state of mind, they resorted to political manipulations".

Musa has hinted at an important information. When Ayub picked Yahya, Musa told him that Yahya was close to Bhutto, and therefore he should not be made the Army Chief. Musa has also said in his book that Bhutto was very happy to know of Yahya's appointment as Army Chief. It can be inferred from this that the Bhutto-Yahya liaison went back a long way, and they jointly planned against Bangladesh in 1971.

General Musa has advised the Army to stay away from politics, as it is not its job and it is not also trained for politics. He has told everyone to take lessons from 1971 - "Neither God nor History forgives those who do not learn from past mistakes and repeat them".

On the other hand, let us consider General Arif. He was the Army Chief during the Ziaul Haque regime. While talking about 1971 and the military rule, he has followed the conventional path of blaming the politicians. He holds Mujib's treachery, Bhutto's ambitions and Indian conspiracy responsible for the break-up of Pakistan. Please note that the

words "treachery" and "ambition" are miles apart. In his words, "In the final analysis, Pakistan's internal mismanagement, the treachery of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the overambitiousness of Mr. Bhutto and the inept leadership of General Yahya Khan contributed to converting the East Pakistan into Bangladesh, no less than the covert and overt aggression committed by India".

### **Referances :**

1. Maj. Gen. Fazal Muqem Khan, *Pakistan's Crisis in Leadership*, Lahore, 1972.
2. Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, Karachi, 1999.
3. Maj. Gen. Rao Farman Ali Khan, *How Pakistan Got Divided*, Lahore, 1992.
4. Air Marshall MOhammad Asghar Khan, *Generals in Politics, Pakistan, 1958-1982*, Dhaka, 1983.
5. Lt. Gen. Gul Hassan Khan, *Memoirs of Lt. Gen. Gul Hassan Khan*, Karachi, 1993.
6. Maj. Gen. Tajammal Hussain Malik, *The Stroy of My Struggle*, Lahore, 1996.
7. Brig. A.R. Siddiqi, *The Military in Pakistan : mage and Reality*, Lahore, 1996.
8. General Mohammad Musa, *Jawan to General*, Karachi, 1984.
9. General K. M. Arif, *Working with Zia, Pakistan's Power Politics, 1977-1988*, Karachi, 1995.

## Appendix-1

### **Interview of Rao Farman Ali**

MAHIUDDIN AHMED : We would like to ask you, General Rao Farman Ali, how you initially got involved you in the operation in East Pakistan?

RAO FARMAN ALI : I was posted to East Pakistan in 1967 as Commander... 14th Battalion ... after the Martial Law was declared ... General Yahia took over. Just before that I had completed 2 years and I was sent back to West Pakistan, but as Martial Law had been declared I had some experience of the East Pakistan situation, they wanted me back and I was posted back within 10 days of stay in West Pakistan. When I reached there General Muzaffaruddin was the GOC, he was acting as Governor and I was posted there as Deputy Marshal Law Administrator for several years. It's a very difficult thing to explain to an outsider that within Martial Law there were branches which were practically operating independently and doing their own job under one man, the Martial Law Administrator.

Q. You were in charge of the civil affairs?

A. Civil affairs, right. Every file, which started... from secretariat, it came to the Governor's house. I was there, the file went through me to the Governor. Normally it was a complete file; there was nothing I could do. At times, I may have asked a few questions, as a normal officer of that level, to raise queries to the General who was acting as a Governor. His task was commanding... and therefore a lot of responsibilities depended on me.

Q. Was your job concerning national security, the security of the people?

A. No, I was not dealing with the national security in the sense of power game. I was dealing with national security in the sense that the nation [had to] stay together and it would be the nation's security. That means I looked after the political aspect of every action that was being taken in East Pakistan.... for example, in those days, the students had actually taken over politics before the Martial Law. During Field Marshal's days, as I explained, all political parties had been banned. They were not operating, so somebody had to take over as a natural consequence of the situation, and the students took over the political side. Now I had to deal with the students side.

Q. What was your agenda, basically, while dealing with the students?

A. The agenda was to win over as many people as possible in the student community and the labour community also. I spent a lot of time in putting the administration right. Why do people agitate? Because things are not going right from the administration's side and there is frustration and that frustration leads to agitation. Before Martial Law, those had to be put right and I met the people, I met students, I met labour leaders.

Q. Who do you think were responsible for those problems at that time?

A. Well, it is a very complicated problem. If you take labour, population is a problem; you could not give jobs [to] everybody. Unless... developing your country

economically, the labour will agitate. As far the students are concerned, as I said, they came into politics, and they virtually had the control over Dhaka University. They did whatever they wanted; I suppose you were also there. So a police was not allowed to go into hostels, not only hostel but also into the University.

Q. So, It was an important posting, I mean, it was because you were close to Yahya Khan?

A. No, actually ... he did not know much about me because I never drink I [have] never touched drink. No I was not in that group. Secondly I was too junior. My promotion took place very rapidly and I became a General before six other persons become Generals later on.

Q. So, you were basically in the Martial Law culture. I mean, if you are talking about democracy and rule of law, you are talking about the majority ruling, in that case the population which had the majority would find the highest number of seats, so...

A. Yes, this is what I have in the end come to know or at least realise that East Pakistanis were in majority.

I suppose when I was here, one did not even think of these things. But when I started dealing with the situation then my whole perception changed. Before that I was just an administrator— things come to you, you give a decision. But later as things went on as you saw what was happening. For example I delivered a speech when a branch of National Bank of Pakistan was being opened in Dhaka Cantonment and in that I thought that, East Pakistanis were being influenced by the "Hindus". I did not know that there was a Hindu leader sitting there.

Q. In your book, you also...

A. That, I did not even realise that there the society is quite mixed up.

Q. In your book you also mentioned that it is generally believed that Tajuddin Ahmed's... family was...

A. No, well, Tajuddin was anti-Pakistani. Mujib was not anti-Pakistani, Khandker Mustaque was not anti-Pakistani.

Q. You mean Tajuddin was pro-Bangladeshi or pro-Bangali?

A. No, there is a difference, you could be pro-Bengali, and everybody should have been pro-Bengali, all Bengali should be Pro-Bengali, the difference was that he wanted to break off Pakistan, the others did not want to break off Pakistan.

Q. Right, so...

A. So, my feelings against Tajuddin were stronger than [those against] the others, the others were on the right side.

Q. Then my question would be that were not the Bengalis who proposed, who formed Muslim league, were not the Bengalis who proposed the 1947...

A. Actually I wanted to start with that and in my book also I have said that 95% Muslims of East Pakistan voted for Pakistan. It was the East Pakistanis who created Pakistan. So the creation of Pakistan was not imposed by West Pakistan on East Pakistan, it was the interest of East Pakistan to preserve Pakistan.

Q. That's it

A. Is not it?

Q. Except when the...

A. Except when they thought that perhaps the West Pakistanis were not fair to them, that they were not giving [them] their rights. In that, I am with them that they were right in asking for their right, but in their effort to break off Pakistan, I think they were not right because Pakistan was a necessity felt throughout Pakistan movement by East Pakistanis more than by West Pakistanis. The Pakistanis who were living in West Pakistan did not create Pakistan.

Q. Do you think the feeling for Pakistan was being exploited over the just feeling of the Bengalis? Because the ruling elite which was... in the army, they became the contractors of Pakistan. They decided how to run Pakistan, so in that power structure there was no room for the Bengalis. So I mean, was it unjustified?

A. No, absolutely right, they were right. Even then I said that they had the right, if they are in majority they should be given the power, this was my stand and continue to be my stand.

May I explain that the difference between two is this, it was right for any people of any area ask for their own rights, but it was not right to break off what they had created themselves.

Q. True.

A. I can say that Pakistan was not broken by East Pakistanis, it was broken by West Pakistanis but the fact is it was broken by the mistakes which both sides made. East Pakistan made some mistakes, West Pakistanis made mistakes. The Central Government of Pakistan was responsible for doing things which were not right for the maintenance of Pakistan and for keeping Pakistan together. Now I hope the distinction which I have drawn is clear.

Q. What's your opinion about the Six Points?

A. Yes, [Mujib] said that he will modify the Six Points and he will [make it] flexible. These are not Quranic laws, the Six Points is not from heaven and also we knew that within the Awami League there were people who had differences on Six Points and on the perception of Six Points. If Mujib had [fewer] number of votes, he would have had [a] more reasonable chance of getting things done in the manner he wanted, having such a heavy mandate that only two votes were against him he became a prisoner in the hands of demanders [of the Six Point]. He had to then support the Six Points. It became a case of do or die, which should not have been when you are discussing politics. Now, at the same time I hope you will keep in mind what I said against Bhutto. My dealing with the situations would be sort of neutral. I tried to hold a meeting and say you get together. Who are they? They were also East Pakistanis; they were not from West Pakistan.

Q. You mean the rightists, Mr. Nurul Amin? Golam Azam?

A. They were all East Pakistanis. We would have found a solution. [If] Mujib did not have all the ... seats we would have been able to put pressure on him.

Q. So, now that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won, I mean the Awami League won the majority, don't you think it was the duty of the Government to hand over power to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman?



A. No doubt.

Q. Then what happened?

A. No, as far I was concerned, I will explain that I wanted him to be Prime Minister, and even after [the] war when Mujib was ... in the jail and somebody, some other person tried to become the Prime Minister, I told that to General Yahya.

I think immediately after the election, the situation should have developed by reconciliation of the different points. Instead of reconciliation confrontation took place. Now there was a tremendous amount of doubt in the minds of each other. Sheikh Mujib did not trust Bhutto, Bhutto did not trust Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Mujib, himself told me, I think I have written in my book that, that night when I went to see him, after Bhutto's rejection happened..., I asked him, what happened between [the] two of you?

Q. Were you aware of the so-called Larkana plan? When did you think this was developing?

A. I was not aware of it. General Umar told me [a] little bit about it, because in my book I have written only what I knew directly.

Q. Right, what did General Umar tell you later on?

A. He told me that after the President came back from Dhaka where he had declared that Mujib would be the next Prime Minister of Pakistan, they went to Larkana and in Larkana, Bhutto said that you had made Mujib the Prime Minister, he said I have not, people had made him the Prime Minister, and he said that after some little bit of talk he told him that Mujib's patriotism should be tested, the test should be postponement of the National Assembly session. If he reacts, he is not a patriot and if he accepts it then he is [a] patriot and in my book I think I have said that if the reverse side had been tested what would have happened, now these things I have said that time in meeting with the President and-

Q. What was his reaction?

A. See, when you are dealing with the....

Q. Intelligence?

A. Or politics, there are many pressures and the pressure of the Generals was so great on him that he literally told me, I [am] going [to] West Pakistan. But the main reason was Bhutto wanted to be the Prime Minister and here was only one country. They had to had to have two countries to have two Prime Ministers. He has suggested two Prime Ministerships to an American journalist and then he denied it.

Q. Who? Mr. Bhutto?

A. Mr. Bhutto. Then he denied it. This was quite early but this was his feeling. Now, as I was saying, instead of reconciliation, confrontation started. Mujib made a statement, Bhutto made another statement and this went on one after the other. Mujib had no compulsion, being very aggressive because he had the majority. A normal politician that would not have done but he [Bhutto] did. Any those old Muslim [League] leaders, could have accepted Mujib, things would have been finished. But he wanted to keep his own party alive. Without giving your own party something for the struggle, the party is likely to breakup if he is not aggressive. And in that

aggressiveness he went too far and when he made those statements that 'Hum Edher Tum Udher. "I will break up every body" all those things.

Q. So, the talks were desired to fail any way, is it how you interpret the situation?

A. As far as Yahya was concerned, he reached for the first talks on 16th March, I think, and we met and there were two persons I... and Air Force Officer Masud and... hero of 65 war and except the two of us nobody spoke in that meeting. General Shah Ali said something, he was being stopped. I said Sir, this is not right to follow a policy that would encourage East Pakistan to go away from us. You know, one does not use [such] words, say break up.

Q. You want to suggest superstitions?

A. And he said that the Father of the Nation was quite willing to accept Mr. Suhrawardi's suggestion. From that we were quite clear that he was going to accept a compromise, and he and Bhutto ... Mujib... I think [came] to some sort of solution. I rang up Mujib on the 19th in the evening and said "Bhai kuch hua?" You see, we were on friendly terms. He said, yes, I will be the Prime Minister, there will be few ministers from Punjab, five from East. I said I was quite happy. Next morning Mr. Bhutto was there and he broke up every thing.

Q. That was on the 20th of March?

A. Yes, he said that you cannot lift Martial Law because there will be no law to keep the Federation together. There was no constitution, Next November same year, just before Indian attack I saw Yahya in Lahore and the People's Party stated that he should hand over power under a Martial Law order to the Pakistan People's Party. I said, see how they have changed, could not this be done a year ago? Now in my opinion in East Pakistan I had conversations with many people. They thought they could live independently as Singapore. In East Pakistan also they had the American Ambassador in India. He had suggested that if East Pakistanis threw away West Pakistan this will be more economically viable. So people stopped thinking rationally, there was too much of emotion involved and I have also said in my book that there was a time when somebody said that we will not allow this bastard to rule over us. I said if they are bastards, we are bastards to them. There were some people in West Pakistan who thought of East Pakistan as a colony.

Q. Yes, it was a liability!

A. Why do we say we have lost East Pakistan? See that... East Pakistan has lost West Pakistan, actually they were [the] majority.

Q. General, we are going to ask you about the 25th of March, 24th, and 26th. Now, when was it planned to go for Operation Searchlight and why was it planned?

A. Actually, on the 19th. As I said, after the meeting ... I was satisfied, but on the 20th we started feeling in our offices that there were certain things going wrong, and 25th, I think it is Bangladesh day or what ever it was.

Q. 23rd-Pakistan Day, Republic Day.

A. On 23rd, Pakistan Day the I think, Mujib came with a flag, Bangladesh flag, to meet the President, and there was a parade in front of his house. There he took the salute, [it can be said] declaring Bangladesh. Now, even then, at least in our head

office we had not much information. At the President's house at their own negotiations, I think the President, Mr. Pirzada, Colonel Elias, Mr. Ahmad, Mr. Hamid, one or two others were keeping everything secret, so I and the GOC still stayed outside without a job at that time because we had come out of the Governor house... and General Khadem Hossain Raja was appointed as commander. We asked General Tikka to go and find out what was happening, because we were totally in the dark because something was not right. So, he went there and he came back and he said that there was something wrong, the negotiation was not going well so something should be done to re-establish the control of the Government. What had happened was that we had to go back. As soon as the date was changed, announcement was made, there was hesitation in Dhaka and there were killings, from what we heard of people in Nawabgang, Old Dhaka, and Army moved in, There was a big rally and in that it was announced by Mujib that Government will be run by the Awami League. Mr. Tajuddin became virtually the Prime minister, he issued direction to the bank, to everybody. The army was confined to the barracks, they could not go even out of the cantonments limits. There was nothing which we could buy from bazaar, no contractor would supply even the vegetables.

Q. Army was not flown from West Pakistan?

A. On the 26th.

Q. Before 26th, when the army was flown in, there were 90 lakh army-

A. No, that is a separate question. It gradually built up. 26th was the day when the first battalion arrived there, after the 25th-

Q. So, could you tell us elaborately the planning of "Operation Searchlight".

A. Now this had developed over a period of time as to what type of operation will be successful. Now, in Amritsar, for example, the Indian army attacked and they used tanks, mortars, whatever they could, except aircraft and they overcame the opposition. When an army was launched as an army, not as civil affairs, it succeeds or it tries to succeed. Over a period of time the curfews had lost their effectiveness. Martial Law had lost its effectiveness, and nobody obeyed the Martial Law. The Government was finished in East Pakistan....

We did not consider the emotional side which I think was wrong, we did not realise the troops, feeling. What ... was happening was that they were beaten up in many places, officers were insulted, they could not go out, and emotions were charged. Here we are, troops of a Government, and we cannot even get meat. Our plan was quite simple, that we will impose curfew and that we will go and arrest the leaders.

Q. But you said earlier that on the 19th Mr. Bhutto told you that things were settled.

A. No, Mr. Mujib, not Bhutto.

Q. Bhutto agreed to settle?

A. No, he had not agreed, Yahya Khan agreed, Bhutto had not agreed, Bhutto came and-

Q. On his suggestion?

A. Well, suppose so, because I met Bhutto when I came back to Pakistan. I had never met him before, when I was in East Pakistan he was too big to meet a Brigadier. So

what I was saying was that they were emotionally charged. On the second day the citizens of Dhaka, I would say, were better prepared. They were prepared for it from the 7th till the 25th. They had the police into them, they had all the Rajakars, and Mujahids, Ansar, everything. They were all under the command of the Government at that time. It was not a declared Government, but had the authority and it was just to go in and occupy the television, radio, the stations. The houses of leaders had been marked. Such a search plan had been shown to troops and they were to be arrested so that no commotion happened. However at about 10 O'clock Yahya left. So after sunset, it was still [a] little bit dark when he in his small car came to the airport and took off on the 25th. But you know, he did not know that Mr. Khandker, Air Vice Marshal, came later on. He was at the airport and informed Mujib. At that time, the Awami League was holding a meeting in Mujib's house and we thought we will go and arrest them, it will be easy and simple. When these talks were going on I gave a paper to Siddiq Salek, the PRO, who was going to President house. He was the Liaison Officer. In the paper I suggested that two prompt strategies be adopted, You have to have force, but you must have a political solution, attest to that and [the] political solution [that] I suggested [was] that as soon as we arrested these people, the President should go there and declare that the eight points of the Pakistan People's Party will be accepted instead of Six Points. You know, virtually they were the same, except that one was too aggressive, the other was too mild but achieving [the] same provisional autonomy for East Pakistan. So when the discussions were taking place in the Martial Law Head Quarter as to what to do with Mujib I suggested that he should not be killed because the SAG was going to raid the house. I said that he should be taken in custody and that [will] separate him from the extremist— not from the people, but those who wanted independence. This suggestion's first part that Mujib not be killed was accepted, but the second part that he should announce a political solution simultaneously was not accepted. I do not think the President gave any thought to it because he was flying to West Pakistan the same night. This was now personal and the GOC and I were isolated and harassed. We visited our wives. We also went to General Hamid and General Khadem's place. Well, they said that we were afraid of taking military action. Both of us were against military action, Khadem and I. So, they told our wives, we do not want to take military action and I said that Sir I am not worried about my life, I am worried about Pakistan because it would not stay after this. Somebody can ask why did you take part in this? Now as an army officer we cannot resign. Shahebjada Yakub resigned and he was declared "Yellow" and for a very long time he was in the clouds, even now there are people who think that he was a coward. Which he was not, he had his conviction. But what we considered was that I am giving an order to attack a position in actual war and I know that I will be killed. [Knowing] that troops will be killed, I ... still attack, because I have been ordered.

Q. There is a code in the army- you can defy if it is a mad order?

A. No, not in that sense.

Q. I mean, I have seen the war crime trials, they said you can choose not to execute a 'mad order'.

A. This came out of the war crimes, this is the opinion of the learned judges that one should... did any General of German army...

Q. Not the German army, such a plea was accepted by a tribunal.

A. May be, but it is not normal that the Generals would resign if they are told to do certain things. It is not done in the Pakistan army. In any case I was not the GOC.

Q. I think General Niazi has written that Tikka Khan ordered that the Pakistan army be more merciless than the massacre at Bukhara... by Chengis Khan and Halaku Khan and he said I want the land not the people and he said that General Rao Farman Ali matchlessly followed that order and in your diary you wrote that the green land of East Pakistan will be painted red.

A. There are two different things. General Niazi, I am sorry to say, is a liar. Let us discuss the green of East Pakistan be painted red first.

Q. I think, you have explained that in your book also.

A. You can ask Jafar, Kazi Jafar, whether he delivered a speech in Tongi or not. He delivered [the] speech meaning that we would convert [the] East Pakistan Islamic concept into Communism. General Yaqub rang me up and I wrote it down.

Q. What is your opinion about Niazi's book?

A. He has tried to defend his own position by accusing others, I would not like to say more than that. Because this is total lie. You know, he has not written the book. You ask him now to write one page then I will accept that he has written the book. The people are not together and they have written this book in whatever manner they wanted. General Tikka never said these things. I think that he is a very fine person. He is a poor chap, he has been blamed for the butchery of Baluchistan, butchery of East Pakistan. If you meet him you will see that he is a very fine person.

Q. You ask us to meet him?

A. He is not well, he is terribly sick, very old.

Q. What did Niazi say?

A. Well, Niazi said clearly that on the first day when he took over he had his chair turned round. He sat on that and he said what I am hearing about Russia, we are in enemy territory. In Burma we used to get rations from the land. We could get cattle instead, though they were limited. So he was one, who said [we were in] enemy territory. We never thought that was an enemy territory, this was Pakistan. He also said terrible things, that we should change the race. He was a clever person. He may show you the orders. Somebody wrote it for him and he signed it. But this execution was terrible.

Q. Can you elaborate on the formation of the civil armed forces saying that you formed the Razakars?

A. I think it had been formed by the Martial Law Head Quarter.

Q. Whose brainchild was the Force?

A. Must have been the Core Commandant's.

Q. Who was at that time?

A. Niazi.

Q. His book is also dedicated to them.

A. He created them and he used them, which I suppose anybody else also would have done.

Q. As far as danger was concerned it was a war situation. In the book he said that the leaders of Al-Badar and Al-Shams were brought back along with the prisoners of war (POW).

A. I do not know.

Q. You have no knowledge?

A. You see what happened was [that] there was a break in my authority. On the 13th I think, the Governor resigned. I was in the Governor House. The Indians attacked, and the Governor resigned, Malik. After that, I have no job. I am nobody.

Q. This is on the 13th (December 1971). So on 13th and 14th the intellectuals were...

A. Yes may be, intellectuals, there you are. They are all blaming me for being...

Q. Western media and the independent international media hold you responsible, why?

A. As a person I do not know why, because I was the only one...

Q. They have shown a lot of evidence. Nobody has refuted that so far.

A. I have not seen international media...

Q. Killing of intellectuals actually started in October, because in Dhaka near Notre Dame [College] a doctor was killed. I mean it started earlier and 14th December saw culmination of the killing. That's one thing. Second is you were in charge of civil administration. General Niazi was looking after the front.

A. No, he was Martial Law Administrator.

Q. You were in charge of civil administration and the political leaders say Golam Azam, Moulana Mannan, they had connections with you. They used to meet you, take advice, and may have executed those things. So it's logical that nothing could happen without your knowledge. Do you agree with it?

A. Why?

Q. Because you are the...

A. By nothing means killing?

Q. It includes everything in administration.

A. No, see what happened [was] that after the military action things changed. The Martial Law acted as last force. The Governor House did not have any stand of its own because Governor House only controlled the civil secretariat, all the police and all the Razakars. All the army, civil armed forces were under the Martial law Administrator. And the core commander not even under me.

Q. So General Niazi was responsible for that?

A. General Niazi was responsible for law and order.

Q. Legacy speaks that...

A. Absolutely. I tell you, on the 9th December, I was called by General Jansher who was in Pikhana, Civil Armed Forces, and EPR. He said that we have to go and see General Niazi. Generally I had never had a meeting with General Niazi. So I said all right we will go, situation is bad. I went to Pikhana. It was dark slightly. I saw certain vehicles standing there and I ask him why these vehicles are standing here?

He said we are going to see General Niazi for certain purpose and these cars are here for that purpose. On the way he told me that certain number of the people are to be arrested. So I said why? He said you ask Niazi. We went to his office and there Niazi said, what is your opinion? I said Sir, this is not the time to arrest anybody, and you have to account for whoever is with you.

Q. Which date was this?

A. This was the 9th of December, just before surrender. 9th or 10th. And they should not be arrested. The question does not arise. He said alright, they would not be arrested. I came back. And on the morning of 16th or 17th, I was called by the Indian General O.R Tagore and he said that these people were killed by your orders. I said how could I execute my orders! Whom did I give my orders? Can I go alone and kill those people? I had no troops.

Q. Who were these people?

A. All the intellectuals .....

Q. After the liberation, I mean, in Bangladesh, in the Governor House there were some written documents in which the names of intellectuals killed were written by you.

A. Not by me. There were lots of people who used to come and see me. And they would give me a list, I never .....

Q. For what reasons?

A. No these were anti-Pakistanis. Though I accepted those things I would take no action on those. And the same lists would be given to the Core Commanders. Some people used to attain here and there.

Q. You lost your war against the independent media.

A. Please tell me, is it possible for one individual on the night of 16th December ...

Q. No, no this was done on the night of 13th and 14th December.

A. No. I will tell you about which General Niazi has also said. I think he was the BBC Representative, may be. No, no, what happened was that on the 7th December BBC announced that General Niazi has run away and General Farman has taken over. But this was not possible because I was junior. I was rung up by Corps Headquarters saying that you go [ check ] on this fellow that he should not publish or get such stories published. So I rang him up. He had perhaps a recorder. And the people do not know that I am of the Army but two separate things I used to do. I had no regard as such for executing the orders of the Army. I was not under them. I only said in my effort to help you 'ke bhai, dekhiye army may take some severe action against you. So don't send such stories'. So that has been used against me by the international media. He has not only done this but he had also warned him. I was afraid now of what had happened. There was ex-Secretary in the government, with the Governor, Hussain. He came to me. What he said was that people were being arrested, can you save me? I said, who is arresting. He said that people were being arrested and I have no knowledge. See, the Army had its own jail. We in the Governor house had no knowledge that they had a jail. But it was for crimes which Army said are being

committed by them. Otherwise, as far as intellectuals are concerned how would I be there going round and meeting intellectuals.

Q. General Niazi claims also .... And you know that your book came before and General Niazi's book came afterwards. Now he squarely puts his blame on you. And you will have to write another book to ..... I mean, explain.

A. But I think that also, what happened was that while I was in India, the Indian Army was quite willing to try me through something against me. They had arrested 50 people, taken them from the EPR (East Pakistan Rifles). Among them was General, that is, Brigadier Bashir and gave them an offer that whoever gives evidence against General Farman would be sent first to their home in West Pakistan. And it is to their credit that one man came up and said, General Farman had not done anything wrong. Now I claim that I did nothing wrong. I did try to first preserve Pakistan without killing anybody. If some, even one man, can be claimed to have been killed by me, you can hang me. And I made this offer in Jabbalpore to the MIRCP: please take me to Dhaka and let me meet Mujib for 5 minutes and after that if he does not embrace me then you can do whatever you like.

Q. What is this MIRCP?

A. That was International Red Cross.

Q. I see.

A. In Jabbalpore, the Deputy DDMI - the Indian Army, Leslie, he came and interviewed [me]. He said, General Farman, you are accused of having killed two hundred people in the last.....

Q. You say so in details in your book about various interrogations. Niazi was also interrogated?

A. He is sitting there. Go and ask him : Did I oppose the arrest of those people or not? If I opposed the arrest would I be killing them? In any case, what did I have? Troops? I had no troops. There was police to be used.

Q. No. It is alleged to have been done by the Al-Badar and Al-Shams.

A. No. No. I had no control.

Q. You had no control over the Razakars?

A. It was done by the Martial Law Headquarters.

Q. The development was done by the Martial Law Headquarters?

A. The development, if at all, was by General Niazi. I had good relations with, I think, most of the Awami League people. But as they had gone to Calcutta, my time was mostly spent on keeping in touch with a large number of people who were still in East Pakistan and I think they were 42 or 43 people. And I was also trying to contact MNAs ....

Q. There was the new batch of MNA's because you held an election.

A. Well, that came very late. I think we can discuss it after it has been cleared. Yes, you can take my word.

Q. No. That's alright.

A. No. No. Because you see that there have been suggestions.



Q. But again I mean, during the 9 months did you know that Pakistan Army was killing many people, raping many women, killing children. It was happening with knowledge [of the] Pakistan Army. From March to December 16.

A. Yes. And I tried to take action. I told General Hamid, the Chief of Army Staff. I gave him names of individuals who have been killed by the Army after they were taken into custody. The names were I think, Saidur Rahman... [Saidul Hasan]

Q. I am not saying that the Army did not take into custody one or two people or killed one or two people. I mean the numbers were much higher... it was genocide.

A. This is wrong. I don't accept it was genocide. How do you define genocide in the military term? Genocide is when you start killing people without any reason.

Q. That means no fighting is happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

A. That is genocide.

Q. So ethnic cleansing is as bad as 'Nustle badla dena'.

A. Wuo to khair hoga. But I don't think he executed that. I don't know. But I think he did not. He was just using his tongue loosely. But I don't think there was whenever it was possible. Martial Law was the culmination of break down of the civil administration. And so Martial Law comes in. When Martial Law had failed that means us - myself and the Governor - we had failed. Then, the Army had taken over. And it was the Army rule which was in existence for 9 months in East Pakistan, not the Governor's rule.

Q. I mean you call it genocide what was happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina, then why should not your action in East Pakistan be termed as genocide.

A. No. I claim not. So many people were killed.

Q. Then all the international press was wrong?

A. The international press as only .....

Q. And only you and those who were in Dhaka.

A. No. No. Nei. Nei, that is not true. We, those who were in Dhaka, said it was not genocide. Genocide is done with an intention that you want to kill people. And as far as we are concerned, you see, we were separate from the Army.

Q. But what I am asking - did you know these things were happening in the then East Pakistan?

A. Not at that scale as you see. Because ....

Q. Forget about it.

A. This is my opinion....

Q. Is the international press which had reported these things?

A. Yes, international press was annoyed because Yahya threw them out which was wrong and the international press were then ...

Q. Actually they were not thrown out but they came back and they reported in details with photographs. With photographs and everything. I mean, you - you have the knowledge of hindsight. Even if, you know, one is prepared to accept your point of view that you were not in any way responsible for killing of even 1 percent and you said that very clearly, then somebody has, don't you see? I mean, is it not clear now?

A. The reason, no. One must ...accept this that under what circumstances whoever exceed the limit of the rules of the Army, he is responsible, but circumstances should also be seen.

Q. The reason, you see, if General Niazi was fighting a war and if it was really a war situation, I mean then one can understand that these things happen in war. But the point, I mean, you clearly said that. He said, he claimed to be in the enemy territory. Obviously, you know he was fighting a war. I mean, even if these were accepted, you see, the killings of such a large scale, I mean, I can't believe as an active General at that time you were not aware of ....

A. No. I don't accept the figure of 2 millions.

Q. No. No. We are not debating....

A. 40 to 50 thousands.

Q. Do you not consider the 40-50 thousand is also a large number?

A. No. This is....

Q. Army killed innocent people.

A. Yes. It was a very large number. It is a very large number. I agree it was a large number. At the same time see what happened between the 7th and the 25th March, what a large number of people who can be identified were killed. We had in East Pakistan Rifles NCO's who were of West Pakistani origin, they were all killed. The JCO's in the East Bengal Regiment were killed, troops were surrounded in Patna.... What is the .... Pabna, Pabna... they were all massacred.

Q. This one particular reference which General Niazi makes of 2000 officers were killed. I mean, what is your opinion on that?

A. Not army officers.

Q. Army officers and their families. But it was not reported in the press - Pakistani Press and in the international press?

A. 2000....

Q. Yes. Two or three thousands ...like these! Between the 7th and 25th March all the West Pakistani Army Officers were killed and their wives were killed and raped.

A. I tell you, I know the army officers who were killed. Two army officers were killed in Dhaka area— the Commandant of the Cadet College and the Central Commandant Janjua. He was killed and his wife was taken away. The one woman - one of the wives of the officers was pregnant and the child was taken out of her body. But these were certain things. In Bogra there was a small ammunition depot and there was a Major in charge who was killed and they played football with his head while his wife was made to stand up there.

Between the 7th and the 25th a large number of Biharis were killed. In Syedpur, I am talking about Keya naam hai— but a large number of Biharis were killed. 800 dead bodies were found. ....Woman and children were killed and their men were thrown in the river. But a West Pakistani and Assistant Commissioner, son-in-law of Intelligence Bureau Chief had been dragged in Tangail and two officers were killed in Jessore area.

Q. I mean, in a way it was revenge killing?

A. No. No. It was between 5th to 23rd when they had taken over. There was nothing before that.

Q. But why it was not reported in the Pakistan newspapers and in the East Pakistani newspapers because at that time we read newspapers avidly and newspapers from both West and East Pakistan.

A. But Mr Bhasani made a statement against the killing in Chittagong. Whether it was fact or not that all the railway officials in Chittagong were killed?

Q. After 25th March?

A. No. Before 25th March.

Q. No. I mean they were killed before that ..... Well, whatever had happened, do you have any remorse on the situation.

A. Yes, I had remorse then, I even have it here. One day I saw three people. The wife of the Deputy Commissioner, Comilla, a delegation from the Bihari women and a delegation from the West Pakistani officers and I was crying because East Pakistanis or West Pakistanis were the same.

Q. The entire period, I mean, in this period of your action, the action of the army ....

A. This was very tragic. It should not have happened.

Q. Do you feel any personal remorse?

A. In not doing what I could do.

Q. Only doing what you should not have done.

A. No. I am doing but whatever I did was to the best of my ability and conscience and I think that I have no remorse about that. But I have a feeling I could have resigned. I did resign. You can ask General Yaqub but he said that you then will be court martialled.

Q. You have any message for the people of Bangladesh?

A. Well they are, I ... you see, I am a Pakistani. If the creation of Pakistan was right, preservation of Pakistan was also right. If Pakistan had not come into being, Bangladesh would have never come into being.

Q. Niazi has written in his book that actually you are the man responsible for Niazi's down fall. I mean he did not want to surrender but you engineered everything.

A. With the .... Russians, that was not possible. This will be the first time in history, wherein I was a civilian who made a General surrender.

Q. Then why did you draft the surrender instrument?

A. I didn't.

Q. The message you sent to the United Nations.

A. Yes, this was drafted by Muzaffar Hussain, the Chief Secretary of East Pakistan at that time and the Governor ....

It was drafted by them. Muzaffar and I both went to General Niazi and we said that the Central Government had sent a message saying you can do what you like in East Pakistan. Before that General Niazi's 2 signals, has he quoted those signals which he sent to West Pakistan? He says, I can fight on.

Q. I think they are reported in General Gul Hassan's book.

A. He can say that I can fight for say 2 days or a couple of days more. Now if [it] was shown that you can only fight for couple of days more then why blame me? I was trying to ensure that there is no surrender, that a cease-fire takes place, a cease fire is much better. The Indians had cease fire in Kashmir, they are still there. We could have a cease fire....

Q. No. I mean attempts were made to have a cease fire when Mr. Bhutto went to the United Nations.

A. No. He did not. He also tore up [The chances]. Otherwise a ceasefire could have taken place-we could have sat together and got a decision to form a government by the elected representatives of East Pakistan in Dhaka. Now what is wrong with that ... why not have a Government by the representatives of East Pakistan. Now, in my opinion if we had a cease fire there would have been no surrender, there would have been no humiliation and what had happen and East Pakistan and West Pakistan could have sat together. And after that there could have been a solution. Now I don't know, this is my feeling as soon as the Indian Army entered Dhaka, entered East Pakistan, the mood of the people of East Pakistan changed, you may recollect ...[it] influenced you as well, that we are changing one Army ... we are changing Pakistan Army with Indian Army.

Q. No. No. Not at all because we were happy that they helped us to fight the Pakistani Army because they were doing such terrible things. We were at that time in Dhaka because you see worst things were happening. So we had a different feeling. You were in power. So you had a feeling different from us. I know that will be different. But the point is, you know, recently in the Pakistani newspapers the debate is going on. Somebody is writing that Pakistan Government should apologize for what they did in Bangladesh. What's your reaction please.

A. Well, I think, it should be ....

Q. Which one, may I ask a question?

A. Both sides made mistakes.

Q. So your inference is : Both sides made mistakes?

A. Both sides made mistakes. There were three phases of developments in East Pakistan. Phase- 1, West Pakistan was totally wrong in considering East Pakistan as a colony; not giving the power, not giving them share in powers; Phase-II when the agitation started, it started in a manner which was more aggressive than that it should have been and then the Pakistan Army made mistakes of launching the army to reestablish.....

Q. Who should start the process?

A. First of all we should decide on whether our perception of Muslims of Pakistan, that means, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India is the same as [it] used to be in the olden days.

Q. It can't be; I don't think it is possible. I mean, you can't have that perception now.

A. No. By that I mean do we all feel together, that though we made mistakes we are still under the same danger as it existed before Pakistan came into being, that if we have [a] feeling that we should be closer to each other. We can not be one: we cannot

be one state. In any case, my own opinion was that Mr. Suhrawardy may have been right. But Bangladesh could not have survived because it did not have the administrative structures and .... If you feel that the Hindus [have the] mentality of considering us Malichch (Mlechcha), the lowest cast, and would treat us in the same manner as they did in the past then a feeling could have been developed in East and West Pakistan that it is in our mutual interest to get together. It is very difficult, very difficult for one side, it is a question of political language which is to be used. But state apology, I think the West Pakistanis may not be able to give, may not be able to give it if it was a question of by saying so. I can say, I am sorry, please forgive me.\*

*\* Abridged and edited version of the Interview of Rao Farman Ali taken by Prof. Muntassir Mamoon and Mahiuddin Ahmed.*

## Appendix-2

### Interview of General AAK Niazi's

General Niazi : Would you please tell us about your general ideas about the events in the then East Pakistan?

Mahiuddin Ahmed : People were coming up and telling me wholeheartedly in interviews here in West Pakistan about truth that was never told. The reason was that when Tikka Khan took over, he warned foreign pressmen, reporters and cameramen and threw them out of East Pakistan with disgrace. The result was that they came against us and they started talking and publishing concocted stories. They were depending on people who were fleeing from East Pakistan and going there as refugees and they were being brainwashed by the Indians and whatever they were told by the Indians and the result was that the truth never came out. ...And then in West Pakistan, and as at that time there was martial law, the people were not interested and they did not try to find out what had actually happened. Bhutto and Yahya wanted to embolden themselves in East Pakistan and rule West Pakistan. Therefore, they were not publishing anything. The result was that people started believing those concocted stories published in the Western press because there was nothing from the home press.

Q. You say these, General, from the knowledge of the hindsight. Did you know at that time what they were thinking?

A. I did not know because I was busy there with my own tasks. But when I came back here I found that the people did not know about the truth and people used to ask me silly questions. The result is truth hidden under the debris of farce and falsehood. Somebody wrote but as you see, they were keen to know who broke Pakistan. It was Bhutto, it was Mujib. .... if you read the stories and everything the brute war was by the outsiders.

Q. Who were outsiders?

A. [They were] America, India, Afghanistan and Israel. Therefore, they did not fight [the election] in the other provinces. ....

Q. No. I think Awami League had also fought in West Pakistan. They had candidates in West Pakistan.

A. I don't know. But they did not want to, I think.

Q. But they had an all-Pakistan-based party.

A. They were people who were voters we seek. I made a party here after I came here.

Q. What was the name of your party?

A. It was Mujahid..... Fedayeen Party. The government did not approve it.

Q. Why? Why was it not approved?

A. Because it was my party. And Bhutto's government was against me!

There were so many promises to get me a ticket. They say that [there are] people who get a ticket to go wherever they want. So there were these things that were never removed. Then I wrote this book. And I was almost apprehensive that a lot of people

will start cases against me because I have exposed everything I found out. It took me 5 to 6 years [of] research to find out. In the book I have brought out everything you want. And if you had read it, [it will answer] any question. Government again went to the polls, [there were] people who liked Bhutto and who liked Mujib.....We surrendered and all those officers who were fighting with me they were my students.....They knew me and I knew them.....I did not like these atrocities. I will give to you [some examples] from the book of a British.....[that describes] atrocities committed by the East Pakistanis. I was here and you must have been there. When the cyclone came, it was a very serious thing. Real Admiral AKM Ahsan was the Governor. Shaebzada Yaqub Khan was the Martial Law Administrator and Commander of the troops. Ahsan first asked for helicopters and Yaqub.....did not give [them] though it was [his] moral duty.....The result was that he did not share their bad days and time. And then the other team came and that was a bad thing. That created some sorts of doubt in the minds of the people, that at a time of crisis these people did not help us. But people were one man. But he still was representing [a certain population].....So that went against West Pakistan. But in the Army at that time it was equal: 12 battalions from West Pakistan and 12 battalions from East Pakistan. And there were 13 Unit Officers. So in a greater sense, Army had discipline although [there were some disappointments in East Pakistan].

The election came. Yahya was Commander here. Whatever he was as Commander-in-Chief, he was a selfish and a greedy man. He removed Ayub by something, whatever it was, and he encouraged Mujib to carry out things so that martial law would not be declared if [nothing is done] against him. And they had the understanding that if Mujib [would] certify him he would remain. So that whatever you may call it, he broke parity and one unit .....By breaking parity we became 35%, East Pakistan became 35% and then again by one unit...

Q. I mean, votes were always allotted according to population.

A. No. But in parity it has to be made equal. 50 seats here and 50 seats there irrespective of proportionate population of the respective units..... but before that [there was a] reason [to fear] ..... a Hindu population that was educated in East Pakistan. If they make the Government the Hindu population would have [upper] hand there.

Q. What was the number of Hindus there?

A. It was at that time one crore. They were all educated. They were holding good posts. Most of them were professors and teachers. And the constitution to be adopted by them will have Hindu iron hand in it. And that was the idea given here.

Q. Where was this idea given? In West Pakistan?

A. Yes.

Q. But did you also have the idea yourself?

A. No. No. I was a soldier. I had nothing to do with it. At that time, our training was different. That [training taught us not to] bother about what happened. You are [to be] loyal to your institutions and constitution. We are loyal to institutions and the constitution. Whatever happens makes no difference.

Q. Which institution were you loyal to?

A. My unit, Army, the institutions and the constitution ..... under which I had taken oath that I will be faithful to the country ....

At that time, we had a low profile look at the civilians. And whoever came from outside, if he was a politician, I did not allow him to enter the cantonment. I never allowed anybody, even if they were my friends. I did not allow them to enter the cantonment if they had taken part in politics. So then the elections there were rigged.

Q. Which was 1970 elections?

A. Yes. Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, Monem Khan, Farid Ahmed and a couple of other people who were pro-Pakistani told me about this. ....that a man who is planning to do everything [had to be] stopped. Then if Martial Law Administration had stopped those people [from contesting in election] ..... we would win 50 to 60 seats in the election. And at that time, if we had 50 to 60 seats Mujibur Rahman would not have a thumping majority. And he would not have a high hand in the affairs. But then again blame came on the Martial Law. So elections in the West Pakistan were fair but not in East Pakistan. I feel, you remember, Fazlul Quader Chowdhury was an honourable man, Sabur Khan, Monem Khan, Moulavi Farid Ahmed of Teknaf - all the people were pro-Pakistani, and they used to come to me. And everybody use to come..... In Mymensingh, I went into the crowds and the people felt I am not doing any harm to them. But I used to go into the crowd and nothing happened. Mujib won the elections. Yahya [came] .....here. He kept saying: here is my future Prime Minister. But he told him: you are not my future President. Mujib said: I am a politician. So Yahya got a shock - that I had broken one unit for him, I broke parity for him, I did not bother what he is doing in the election. In the mean time Bhutto, who had some 82 seats, ....went to Mujib. He wanted a share in the Government. He said, meet Major No.2. Mujib said, No. 'You give me the foreign ministries'. 'No'. 'Give me the post of Speaker'. 'No'. Then he began overtures otherwise, and Yahya told him that this man has promised to make me the President. 'I will make you President. We have West Pakistan for us, and you will be the President, I will be the Prime Minister'. So Bhutto took him to Larkana for *shikar* (game party). And then they made a plan and that was 'Larkana Plan'. It was 'leave East Pakistan without a successor government'.

Q. Yes you have said in your book, you should have East Pakistan without a successor government. But how did you know about the Larkana Plan? I mean who informed you?

A. Yes. It was secret. But there was a chap - Deputy Super of Police (DSP) Quazi Azam and when security people knew this [they] sent Quazi Azam to Larkana. There he went out and met a man when they made this plan. They made the plan in a boat there. But there was somebody who was with them. I learned through him and Quazi Azam through him got the details. And when he derided Bhutto came to know of it. He wanted to suppress it thinking we would not know about that. That is how it came out otherwise it would have remained a secret. But someone was intelligent who reported and it was leaked to the papers.

Q. When did it come in the papers?



A. In those days and I think it was in February. Then they started working on that plan. The plan.....was to fight in the West Pakistan which means that in the East we would have few troops and the bulk of them would be in West Pakistan. And we [would] defeat the Indians here in West Pakistan and we will lose East Pakistan. So after the Larkana Plan they started working on it and forgot about the plan that the best luck is in the West. That plan could be implemented only with my defeat and not with my victory or any political settlement. In case of critical and political settlement politicians were to get the government. Yahya Khan could be taken to task and Bhutto will have no place because the majority of East Pakistan was there. So he whoever is left, he goes into the background. Thus the possibility of a political settlement was ruled out completely.

Q. So you were the Commander of the Eastern Command. You were aware that there was Larkana Plan.

A. No. I did not. I did come to know of these things only when I came back and was writing a book.

Q. How come that it came out in the papers here in those days and you were not aware of it?

A. Then Yahya died. Bhutto lost his power and a lot of people came [up with a] lot of things. So they started working on [their plan]. They could gain only if I was defeated. They thought guerilla warfare never failed. But I defeated the guerillas, however, in two months. I fought against the Indonesian guerillas, I fought against the Chinese guerillas in Malaya.

Q. You have mentioned that in your book..

A. Therefore, I had the power to catch a thief and set a thief in a new home. Within two months, I made a stand and it was considered a lightning campaign in the history of guerilla warfare.

Q. When did this guerilla warfare start?

A. The day I took over.

Q. Which was...?

A. 10th April of 1971. At that I was very happy. Before that they were mud-clad. But from that day they were declared a force, uniformed. Colonel Osmani was my friend and he became their chief. And now when Osmani was at GHQ (Pakistan Army headquarters), I was here. One of my titles is Tiger. So whenever he rang me up, he would say, Tiger, this is Tiger speaking.

Q. That you experience a piece of it also!

A. So I said, why you are senior to me, because he belonged to East Pakistan (East Bengal) Regiment and their sign was Tiger. So he became C-in-C. I was happy that I shall be fighting against armed people in uniform and not against some civilians.

Q. Besides Tiger, what other titles do you have?

A. Tareq bin Ziad, that was given me by a West Pakistani, and Meridonne.

I was in Rajput Regiment and you know they were Rajputs of Rajputana. They are brave people and one of their heroes is called Amar Singh Rathore. And my Mussalman colleagues used to call me Amar Bahadur.

Q. You have explained the operation plan, the battle lines etc. in your book. We will be sort of asking you some other questions like on 10th April, the idea of engaging Tikka Khan was to go for a lighting campaign on 25th March i.e. Operation Searchlight, to be followed up with mopping up operations and all that so that, you know, agitation were to be quelled and then they would go for a political settlement. This was the plan. But if you, according to you, had combed the rebels, the Mukti Bahini, within 2 months, then why didn't they go for a political settlement? Why did they opt for a military operation because it was very difficult to send you any assistance from West Pakistan over Sri Lanka?

A. I will tell you that. Yahya and Yaqub was there. Yaqub had a plan : Blitz.

Q. When was Operation Blitz planned?

A. It was in the early 70s.

Q. Early '70s? Before the election or after the elections?

A. No. No. Even before the election. In 1969 he made the plan.

Q. You mean to say this is the plan that designed .....

A. No. No. If there was trouble, whether election or no election, if there is any sort of trouble, he made the plan to quell the rising.

Q. No. I mean Yaqub has made some response in the papers in reference to your Operation Blitz, did you see that?

A. I saw it. That is another question. Field Marshal Rommel said, no plan survives context. If the commander joins the battle according to the plan then that is good enough. How he has to fight is tactical. So plans are just outlines. If there is a plan, whatever the plan, it will be use of force. Without use of force what you want you acquire little. Mujib and his associates started committing atrocities. And he did it and kept quiet. He could have nipped the things in the bud. He had the power that time. East Pakistani troops did not mutiny yet. They were with us. There were only mobs, crowds and not very organized.

Q. When do you think he should have gone into the operations?

A. After the election. When they were asking for the handing over of power in those days...

Q. Before, you mean, 25th March?

A. In March, he should have gone into action but he did not do it. He delayed and let the game away. Then Tikka Khan went there and the Bengalis were in civil riots. Before that Urdu-speaking people were being attacked. Yaqub could have stopped it.... According to intelligence, on the very same night of 24th or 25th March, Mujib was to declare independence and take action. So they took action a couple of hours before. They used power. But that action was harsh. Too harsh.

Q. 25th night action?

A. I have mentioned already.

Q. It was too harsh?

A. Too harsh.

Q. I also say too harsh.

A. It depended on the person who was doing it. [When] under fire and the people behaved very curiously.....The result was that he said I want land not the people.

Q. It was Tikka Khan?

A. Yes. He said, I want land and not the people.

So when Yahya saw it, he was horrified. So he decided to change him within 10 days. And to change a General in operation was a horrible thing. It was a death warrant. Then they worked over [it]. They asked some people .... and they said, forget the seniority and forget about rules, send a person who can do it. So I was selected although I was trailing far behind. There were 12 Generals senior to me. When I was sent 2 Generals senior to me had already failed there. I was selected. I went there and found out everything was in topsy turvy. Pakistan Army was fighting around the cantonments and cities they were holding. The rest of the province was under the control of the Mukti Bahini. Provincial government was not working. Boundaries had vanished and the Hindus were coming and going freely. When I took over, according to our sources, our troops elsewhere were surrounded. Their only communication was helicopters. Roads and river routes were cut between Dhaka and the rest of the country. So what happened was that there was a certain Field Marshal - I can't remember his name - as the people called him. Somebody told him about the situation our troops were facing. So he said, the situation is excellent and I will attack. I [told] him the same thing: you are surrounded, your communications are cut, you have no supplies, situation is excellent, I will attack. And I attacked. And this was certainly a surprise as they were not expecting it. They had expected and planned if a guerilla killed one Pakistani soldier a day they will be finished in two months. So they were not expecting I would dare an attack on them. When I jumped I told them: reach the borders ... fastest and must. This is my order. I repeat it. I went to the area commanders, nothing on wireless because I could not keep it secret, nothing on the telephones because the Bangalis were holding them. So I went there and [told] them [to] reach the border fastest and must. And they went straight up to the borders and wherever they went [they went] with everything and they started working. This was secret. And that plan that the Bengalis will be able to establish Bangladesh with guerillas they had. They had three lac men. But my total strength was 45 thousand men. Out of 45 thousand 34 thousand were regular and 11 thousand were Policemen and other ranks. So the record has it that in Vietnam the Americans used 7 lac of their own troops with 10 lac strong from the South Vietnamese Government Forces, that is, it was a total strength of 17 lac against guerillas. In Algeria, France used 10 lac troops. I had to face 4 lac guerillas with troop strength of 41 thousand and that was [a] slap on the Bangalis, Russians and Indians. Because Indians were telling and ..... Russians were telling then, 50 thousand Indian regulars were with guerillas. So that was the state when I took over. I had not the equipment required, ..... no radar, no night visibility apparatus ..... I asked C-in-C General Hamid: I am just on the border, allow me to enter India. But as they were expecting my defeat they got alarmed when they heard it. And before that, knowing that they may stop it.... that is why I did not tell them what I was doing. So they told me to freeze on the border,

'don't enter India'. Then after two days Hamid came. Again I said to him, ' If you allow me now, I am in their heart. They are on the run. We are cleansing them. Shooting and chasing after them. I will capture a vast chunk of Bengal on the side of Brahmaputra and Nagaland and all the things. If you give me one more permission, I will take Calcutta as well with my two divisions. I will destroy Indian Forces and take the whole area of Assam, Bengal and Bihar. India will be beaten, he said, all these are sound and I can help you. But Hamid came to see that we cannot succeed and to have a policy of open war with India. Indians have admitted in their books that had Yahya struck at that time he could have achieved very useful targets in both the wings of East and West. I would have broken into Kashmir..... and all the sites. But they did not allow me. And the Indians were not prepared at that time with all that arms build up. This was possible up to October. After October, they got concentrated and it was not possible on my side because I did not have everything complete. I .... was short of 18 heavy guns..... 74 medium range guns and about a hundred attack and anti-tank guns. I was short of it. ...with all the infantry.

Q. What was the situation with the Air Force?

A. Air Force had one aircraft. They had no fighting capability. Out of six combat aircraft all were gone. I had only infantry power.

Q. This I think was quite excellent. But what about the situation within Bangladesh. Were you able to bring your own men or were you using [a] lot of these people from the civil armed forces?

A. We used some with reasons.

Q. When did you decide to recruit these civil armed forces: Al-Badar, Al-Shams?

A. How essential it was has been a matter of conjecture. When my troops were.....

Q. When was this...?

A. This was I think... at the end of May. Then I started recruiting.

Q. And they were directly under your command?

A. Yes. Some people say, it was under Jamaat-Islami. But I would not entertain that. Al-Badar and Al-Shams took the name because, the German, the ruler of the Germans called Al-Badran ...

Q. In your book you said that you brought back the leaders who....

A. Some of them who were wanted by the people who were known leaders, they were known. They [would] be eliminated....

Q. Why?

A. Because they were famous people.

Q. Who were these people?

A. They were Bengalis.

Q. Do you have any...?

A. I didn't know because my staff knew them and supported [them].

Q. Because Jamaat-i-Islami supported in raising Razakars?

A. Even Bengalis were supporting me.

Q. Of course, the Jamaat-i-Islamis were Bengali people.

A. They were not Jamaat-i-Islami and I hate [politicians], I did not allow any body who belonged to parties to enter the cantonment. So how could I ask a political party to help in it.

Q. What was the role of Rao Farman Ali?

A. He was adviser to the Governor.

Q. So he had nothing to do with .....

A. He had nothing to do with the fighting and everything. He was only adviser. Army was between the Governor and me.

Q. You know the international press and the independent media, even they were reporting about the atrocities and other things. You see the Martial Law authority would become responsible and not the adviser. Would it be so?

A. Adviser ... when Malik became Governor, Yahya told me any order from Malik will be considered as order from me. So he issued orders.

Q. You said in your book?

A. That we had been given civil armed forces and he had Police and EPR ... under him. We were using them under pressure. But the men ...

Q. I mean, they were under your command.

A. But they were being paid .....

Q. I mean they were under your command, wherever needed you used...

A. But they were paid by the civilian ...

Q. But all these actions wanted by the Martial Law authority. They may have been indulging in activity ... actually what happened they used civilian ... they might have allowed Police to act, you see, to do something which the Government doesn't want to do.

A. No. when I took over, Tikka was the Chief Martial Law Administrator. It had nothing to do with the Martial Law. Martial Law was under Tikka Khan. Farman Ali was his adviser.

Q. No. He was the Chief Martial Law Administrator.

A. I began under Tikka Khan, the CMLA. I began in September but up to September whatever it was, it was Tikka Khan ...

Q. But you wrote in your book that Rao Farman Ali meticulously obeyed Tikka Khan's order and the massacre was done as you said in your book, yes, by Rao Farman Ali and he said that he does not know anything about it.

A. But he prepared the plan, when Tikka took over he had these advantages with him - he was Martial Law Administrator, he was Governor, he was Commander of the troops ... so on the night the orders were issued by him and Raja Khadem.

Q. So Tikka was the supreme commander. In Dhaka...

A. Not, this was.... He [Farman] said that the green fields of East Pakistan should be made red. He said, I think Kazi Zafar in one of his political speech in March said, whatever may be, it was written in diary : the green field of East Pakistan should get red. Whoever that was, the diary was shown to Bhutto and Mujib. They were given the diary with dates given.

Q. We are specifically asking about the killing of the intellectuals towards the end, you see, and he [Farman] denied.

A. Many intellectuals were known naturally to me but only men with weapons were my enemy .... intellectuals or no intellectuals it did not matter. But ..Altaf Gauhar has given or somebody told me that Farman has a list of intellectuals. I sent somebody who checked it and Farman deleted two names on his request. I did not know about it. But I knew it from Altaf Gauhar.

Q. So Farman was behind it?

A. It did happen I mean Altaf had noted something. I could have done anything I liked. Why I should have a list of thinkers....

Q. That is what I was saying. I mean, you had no knowledge of that because you were then...

A. And I am telling you I am so grateful to Bengalis, most of them ... they were not happy with this Indian interference. They were blaming it. You think, without the help of these people I withheld 5000 men ....I am not a Fereshta.

Q. May I ask you General Niazi what was your personal feeling. I mean, you were, you know, almost abandoned as you have now discovered, after you came back — Would you say what was your feeling because there were people who were Pakistanis. They were the founder of the Muslim League- they were the founder of the Pakistan Resolution.

A. I tell you one thing...

Q. You had any doubts in your minds that they were lesser Pakistanis?

A. I still believe that they were Mussalmans.

Q. So you discovered this?

A. I discovered that. I knew them before. In 1965 War they fought with me!

Q. But the brain-washing of the troops was that these are all Hindus ... you ...

A. No. No. ....I have to tell you a story. Once there was a young, bright upcountry Hindu boy. It so happened one day, my guard threatened him saying, why have you come? I shall kill you! The reason for this I don't know. The young man sought my protection and ...I told him, 'Why do you kill him?' I gave my Chinese rifle to him ... suppose I might be in his place, it is possible that you would kill me! You are killing him finding him alone. Then come on, so kill me, brat! And now be away from here and mind your own jobs. I told you ....no. no. I have told you Hamid told three friends —for a critical political settlement the Bengalis are ready. Because Fazlul Quader Chowdhury was coming to me and asking me, if you agree to contact those people. They will listen to us now. He said, ...[the] critical thing is too difficult for you.... because they did not want political settlement and because political settlement was against Bhutto, they did not want it. political settlement was possible up to November. It could happen. Political settlement was possible when Bhutto went to the United Nations...by handing over power to Mujib and then cutting relations/union with Bangladesh. There would have been no surrender, anything of the sort. But that was not going to happen. I was forced to surrender. I was not beaten. I could not be beaten. Have I had at all to make surrender I could have done so considering my

overall situation. They were biding their times over there and cutting their senior role in the cities. They lost over here. They lost one Pakistan, in West Pakistan, they surrendered. Malik wrote about him warning Yahya that if General Niazi did not surrender, he will lose West Pakistan. He was the Governor, he was Martial Law Chief, and he was everything. This is he who was saying. And the Army says the same thing. And [the] order from them said, I had to surrender.

Q. What I was asking, you said that people of East Pakistan were better Mussalmans. Then what did you mean by '*Betrayal of East Pakistan*'? What does this betrayal mean?

A. West Pakistan? No, not the people of East Pakistan. But those who were in power in West Pakistan, who were at the helm of affairs - Yahya and Bhutto - not the Pakistani people. They like [Bangladeshis] and still like them. It was those greedy people [who] wanted to rule them . I don't blame them.

Q. You wrote 3000 officers were killed and wives and daughter were raped. What is its source? Because if it had happened it would have been reported in the newspapers. We did not we have any sort of report. What is your source?

A. The sources were my colleague officers who fled and those women raped.

Q. How did you claim that figure?

A. Because we were there.

Q. If I say, it did not happen. What will you say?

A. It was a report.

Q. No. It was an assumption. Because even Farman Ali and other sources said, no this could not have happened.

A. Sources said that they did not return.

Q. But you said that the wives and daughters were raped and no such things happened. I mean, what I want to know, what is your source?

A. Source.

Q. No. No. I want to ...

A. Because those people, the concerned officers and the women raped, they told. It is given here .. It is pathetic.

Q. So this is from your book? It comes from your book!

A. It is not that I cannot make any mistake.

Q. Then you sometimes feel that there were certain mistakes committed.

A. Yes, I say, yes. You know every Hindu is a Shivaji. [They would] try to eliminate us . It is not also difficult for them to eliminate you. Due to them we all were isolated. We get together, we had been forced ....

Q. When did you first contact the Indians?

A. On the 14th...

Q. 14th December. Not before 14th December?

A. And that was through the Americans, ... when Aurora had warned, I had three or four divisions. And when they came they were Jacob and Colonel Khara. And Khara was Sikh from Risalpur— his ancestor became Mussalman during the reign of Mughal Emperors in India. So he came and met me and he said, how many troops

you have got? The signal was clear. I said, we [have] got 9 battalions. I said you are Sikh, you should be available as Sikh. I have 9 battalions with 10 thousand men. I can fight you one man, two man but not 10 thousand men. He told me, you are going to Fort William.

Q. When was this?

A. When he came. We surrendered and went to Calcutta on the 20th or something like 21st December.

Q. Were you interrogated as Prisoner of War?

A. No. General ...

Q. But Rao Farman Ali, in his book...

A. He might have [written]... not me...

Q. But you have no knowledge of it?

A. No, they got me and had given me to the officers of India. Then I went farther. When you are away from here one could have leaked you what I have not told here.

Q. Could you please tell us what was your feeling on 16th December 1971?

A. Oh! That was the day we were surrendering...

Q. It was surrendering, according to you, to the Hindus.

A. I..I was that day ... I was silent that day, helpless! See, the Army is practically like a horse. The same army under Yaqub had nothing to do, same Army under Tikka started killing people, the same Army afterwards, under me, fought after it was practically a fatigued horse. It behaved like the rider. If the rider is not a good rider, then it kicks. If the rider is good enough, it runs fast. Have you seen *shikari kuttas* (hunting dogs) to be let call *shikar*(game)? There is some sort of fun to open the door. Same is the case with the Army. Which way the *shikari* should lead he should know, he should know how and when he should release the bird from his closed fist, where he will lead [the] bulldog ....

Q. How many people were killed, you think, during this time, I mean, from April to December?

A. Our account is 30 thousand killed.

Q. What about the civilians?

A. It was 50 thousand on the night Tikka took action.

Q. And during the rest of the period?

A. Up to that time [there] were not much.

Q. I mean what could be your official record? ...were you not maintaining any record?

A. Yes it is mentioned. We collected it. We had to send situation report. And in it we had so many wounded, so many ...

Q. No, this is during the war. War was declared on the night of 3rd December.

A. 21st November. They attacked us. On that day we had 13 thousand [troops].

Q. But they had complete superiority. There was no question of frontal. Basically ...

A. Mukti Bahini's casualty is given here as 30 thousand.

Q. No. I am talking about the civilian population.

A. No. We have no account of that. I never fought civilians.



Q. Are you aware that the Razakars, Al-Badar, Al-Shams— they were involved in large-scale killing?

A. No. I had 38 thousand troops. They were getting killed. So I used them to make up [for the] the deficiency. I gave those Al-Badars, Al-Shams to the divisions. They were using them for their own thing. And that they broke and got away and did something, nobody could check that. But they were put under the religion and they were being used.... They were sent to field. So it will take time to confirm. And then they were given weapons.

Q. And do you have any remorse on the overall situation?

A. Somebody got inducted as proposed, and then someone also came...we could have broken India if we were allowed to go ahead. India would have forgotten ....

Q. What about the action taken in Bangladesh?

A. It was wrong. The action on 25th or 26th was wrong. But there was report that Mujib was to take action that night. We were to counter that.

Q. Do you believe Mujib was going to do that?

A. Yes, he was flying high about it. He was hard. And as I said, had Yaqub controlled them, nothing would have happened. If Yaqub had done it properly and as I said had Yaqub controlled [them] then nothing would have happened. If Yaqub had done it properly, Tikka would not have come, action would not have taken, I would not have gone there, everything would have been okay there. If Mujib was given the power [that was] taken away, then things would not have happened. It was not proper not to give him power when he won the election. He could have been given the power. It was Bhutto [who] opposed [it]. He said he should not be given the power that he deserved.

Q. You have dedicated your book to the Razakars, not to soldiers, why?

A. Ours had been the duty and we were being paid but they came voluntarily!\*

*\* Abridged and edited version of the interview of General Niazi taken by Prof. Muntassir Mamoon and Mahiuddin Ahmed.*

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The writer was working for the Ministry of Education in 1971. He was taken to India as a prisoner of war after December 16, 1971.

P-187

The writer is a columnist in Pakistan

P-192

The writer is a columnist in Pakistan

P-202

The resignation letter of Sahabzada Yaqub Khan

P-208

These letters regarding General Yaqub's resignation have never been published before. While discussing these issues, he gave them to me for any required use.

The Pakistan Army (1947-1971)

General Douglas Gracy, Army chief of Pakistan

General Sir Frank Messervy, Army chief of Pakistan

Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan

General Muhamad Musa Khan, Army chief of Pakistan

General Muhammad Yahya Khan

General Gul Hasan, C-in-C

Tikka Khan, Rao Farman Ali and their companions having dinner at the Banga Bhaban after taking control of Dhaka by starting a genocide on March 26. (Curtesy: Muktijuddo Ridoye Momo)

Two Pakistani soldiers guarding Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after Pakistani General arrested him on March 26, 1971.

General Tikka Khan

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

General Abdul Hamid Khan,  
Army Chief of Staff 1971

Lt. General S. G. M. Pirzada,  
Principal Staff Officer of the President of Pakistan, 1971.

Lt. General Niazi in 1971

Lt. General Niazi in 1998  
(Photo : Muntassir Mamoon)

Major General Khadim Hossain Reza,  
G.O. C. of East Pakistan, 1971

Major General Rao Farman Ali,  
Adviser to the governor of East Pakistan, 1971

Major General Rao Farman Ali, 1998  
(Photo : Muntassir Mamoon)

Lt. General Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, 1998  
(Photo : Muntassir Mamoon)

General (Rtd.) Musa, Air Marshal Asghar Khan and Noor Khan waiting at the Islamabad Airport to welcome the Shah of Iran, February, 1965

Major General (Rtd.) Tozammel Hossain Malik

Brigadier (Rtd.) A. R. Siddiqui (Left). 1971

A Family murdered by the Al Badar forces of Jmaat-E-Islami being taken to the graveyard on a cart, 1971

List of intellectual to be murdered : after liberation these pages from Rao Farman Ali's diary was found in Banga Bhaban. Farman Ali himself had written the list. The pages of the dates April 9-12, have the name of 10 persons, 13 of whom, including Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Professor Kabir Chowdhury and Professor Nilima Ibrahim, were saved because Bangladesh was liberated before their murders could be carried out.

The Pakistani forces surrendering at Suhrawardi Uddayan (Ramna Racecourse) in Dhaka on December 16, 1971.

General A. A. Niazi signing the document of surrender on December 16, 1971. Beside him is General Aurora, behind him are the Chief of Bangladesh Air Force A. K. Khandaker, sector commander Major Haider and other. Ramna Racecourse, December 16, 1971.

Appendix-3 Appendix-4 Appendix-5

Appendix-6 Appendix-7 Appendix-8

Appendix-9 Appendix-10 Appendix-11

The Vanquished General-1 The Vanquished General-2

The Vanquished General-3 The Vanquished General-4

The Vanquished General-5 The Vanquished General-6

The Vanquished General-7 The Vanquished General-8

The Vanquished General-9 The Vanquished General-10

The Vanquished General-11 The Vanquished General-12

The Vanquished General-13 The Vanquished General-14

The Vanquished General-15 The Vanquished General-16



