

SOWING THE WINDSPOST-ELECTION SCENEYahya Khan's Dilemma

The 1970 election results gave a stunning shock to Yahya Khan and his supporters, and placed them in a very difficult position. That such a crisis was bound to come sooner or later (unless West Pakistan completely changed her policy towards East Bengal) was obvious enough, yet Yahya remained oblivious to this truth.

Pakistan's political infrastructure was built upon three well-known assumptions: the supremacy of the permanent executive over representative institutions, the dominance of West Pakistan over East Bengal and the financial autonomy of the Pakistan Army. Due to these, the ruling elite of West Pakistan had come to enjoy such vast political powers that all representative institutions became defunct. It was natural for the ruling elite to feel worried over any proposal for reforms which could curtail its powers. However, such a system could not be tolerated by the Pakistani people for long, particularly in view of the growth of democratic institutions in South Asia. In addition, the conversion of East Bengal into a primitive colony naturally generated a demand for change in the system. Hence, the ruling elite in Pakistan had to face two inter-related movements for reforms. While the first demanded the introduction of representative institutions and political reforms, the second asked for autonomy in provinces, particularly in East Bengal. As both the movements grew simultaneously, they gave strength to each other. Yahya Khan could not cope with the developing crisis and so he resigned in 1969. His successor Yahya Khan, to check further deterioration of the situation, promised to introduce reforms and to transfer power to the representatives of the people. He also scrapped the one unit scheme to cool down the advocates of autonomy in Sind, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Though the policy of discrimination towards East Bengal continued, President Yahya Khan did try to placate the East Bengalees too, by promising to hold nation-wide elections and to accord Eastern Wing representation in the legislature proportionate to its population.

These concessions, it appears, had been announced with the expectation that no East Bengalee party would be able to get an absolute majority in the

National Assembly and, therefore, a coalition with certain West Pakistani forces would be inevitable. The military-bureaucratic complex actually hoped that neither of the political groups from East Bengal and West Pakistan would be able to gain majority to form a government individually and for the smooth working of a coalition govt. formed of two or more groups, they would heavily depend on it. Thus, the ruling elite could serve as the arbiter in the political system of Pakistan. If not the King, it would remain the King-maker.

Naturally, the election results came to President Yahya Khan as a thunder-clap. None had anticipated the Awami League's total and decisive victory. According to Yahya's calculations, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League could get at the most seventy seats, the three factions of the Muslim League could get sixty seats, while the remainder would be divided amongst other parties including Maulana Bhashani's National Awami Party and the Jamaat-i-Islami in East Pakistan(1). In West Pakistan, he had hoped that out of one hundred and forty-four seats, the Pakistan People's Party could win at the most thirty seats, the three factions of the Muslim League between sixty to ninety and the remainder divided amongst the National Awami Party (Wali group) and Jamaat-i-Islami(2). Thus, he did not visualise any one single party emerging with a majority either from West Pakistan or from East Pakistan. The free and fair election based on adult suffrage was probably the product of this thinking.

However, when the election results completely belied hopes of the President, he found himself on the horns of a dilemma. His promise to transfer the power to the elected representatives had generated tremendous hopes. Obviously, going back on his promise could lead to a fatal agitation, besides his losing face. The pressure from the people began to increase to bring the situation to its logical outcome. On the other hand, Yahya Khan knew that the ruling elite would not tolerate being deprived of power. It was also strongly opposed to the transfer of power to an East Pakistani party due to its inherent prejudices against the East Pakistani people. Hence, the military-bureaucratic complex began to put pressure on the President not to allow things to move in the direction they had started moving. It was, of course not easy to stop this process. The President and his advisers began to look for ways to come out of this predicament. The first alternative appeared to them to allow Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to form a constitution which could be rejected by the President, as envisaged in the Legal Framework Order. The second

Alternative was to play off Bhutto and Mujib against each other, and thus compel Mujib to water down his Six-Point programme and agree to a coalition of the Awami League and the Pakistan People's Party, with Yahya Khan as the President of Pakistan. And the third alternative was to bring about a deadlock and thus continue the rule of the military-bureaucratic complex.

As the first alternative could prove dangerous, the President and his advisers discarded it. Amongst the other alternatives, as the subsequent events show, they selected the second alternative, thinking that under the circumstances it would be easy to act upon. However, the third alternative was also kept in mind as a substitute for the second.

The delay of several weeks in contacting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Bhutto after the elections, seems to indicate that the President and his advisers took some time to arrive at this decision. Having arrived at that decision, President Yahya Khan began his manoeuvres. Keeping both the alternatives in mind, Yahya, as a first step, desired to bring pressure on Mujib to come to a compromise on the future constitution by using Bhutto. He could count on one of the two eventualities. If Mujib agreed to compromise, then a place for himself (Yahya) could be found and also assurance of sufficient funds for the army. And if Mujib did not, then the resultant deadlock could provide him opportunities to manoeuvre the situation in his favour. Later events showed how after Mujib's refusal to change his Six-Point Programme, a deadlock was manoeuvred, and then subsequently efforts were made to retain power by the ruling elite in collusion with Bhutto, even at the cost of thousands of lives in East Bengal.

Bhutto's Manoeuvres

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), known for his flamboyance, boundless ambition and political astuteness, found himself in a position, after the elections, from where he could bargain to share power with the Awami League. The emergence of the PPP as a strong West Pakistani party having absolute majority in two provinces - Punjab and Sind - with the right to speak for almost two-thirds of West Pakistan, was viewed by Bhutto as an opportunity to gain power at least in West Pakistan. Taking advantage of this peculiar situation arising out of the results of the election, Bhutto moved cautiously to achieve his objective. He could do that with the support of some members of the West Pakistani parties like Wali's NAP, Council M.L.,

P.D.P. and a few uncommitted members, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could run the central administration without any difficulty(3). Hence, Bhutto began to look for ways to bring a deadlock before the National Assembly could meet, with the view to increasing his bargaining power to demand a share in the administration. Fortunately for him, the ruling elite was one with him in opposing the transfer of power to Mujib. Hence, it was not surprising that soon Bhutto-Yahya coalition came into existence to oppose Mujib.

Reviewing the situation, Bhutto saw that while Mujib's party had gained majority in National Assembly, it had not even a single seat in West Pakistan. He immediately thought of using this fact to project the Awami League as the party of one wing only. Taking this plea, Bhutto on 21 December 1970 declared in Lahore that neither the constitution could be framed nor the government at the centre formed without the support of the PPP. He declared that authority at the centre would have to be shared between the AL and PPP to enable the two to execute the mandate given to them by the people(4). Further, he pressed that the problem of autonomy could not be determined on the basis of majority alone as in that case, the National Assembly would not be able to give a constitution acceptable to both the wings of the country. It is interesting to note that Bhutto talked of representation on the basis of two wings, but deliberately did not talk of representation on the basis of the five provinces of Pakistan. In the latter case, his party could represent only two provinces - Punjab and Sind out of total five(5). Justifying his claim for the representation of the Western Wing, he called Punjab and Sind as bastions of power(6). The position taken by him showed a strange inconsistency. While he was denying the right of duly elected majority party to represent the whole country on the ground that it represented only one province, he himself claimed this right for his party in the western wing when his party had majority in only two provinces out of four.

At the end of December 1970, Bhutto met Yahya. Though what was discussed between them is not known authoritatively, it can reasonably be assumed that Bhutto put forward his claims(7). When Yahya went to meet Mujib on 12 and 13 January 1971, Bhutto kept a watchful eye on the developments. Yahya's declaration of Mujib as the future prime-minister of Pakistan must have given Bhutto a jolt, little realising that it was probably intended to activate him further. When Yahya and his top aides were Bhutto's guests for a "Duck Shoot" at Larkana for several days immediately after it is most likely that both decided to force Mujib to

compromise on his Six-Points(8). Bhutto went to East Pakistan on 27 January 1971 and had several rounds of talks with Mujib on the constitutional issues. The discussions remained inconclusive, though both the sides had made their points clear. Knowing pretty well that there was hardly any scope for the AL to change its stand on the Six-Point programme, Bhutto pressed hard for it to bring about a deadlock. Soon after his return from East Pakistan, he declared that it was necessary to meet the leaders of all shades of opinion in West Pakistan, including those of the defeated parties, to have a consensus on constitution-making before convening the National Assembly. Obviously, he was seeking opportunities for conspiring against the Awami League.

In the meantime, the hijacking on 30 January 1971, of the Indian plane by two Kashmiris provided both Bhutto and Yahya with an opportunity to delay further the summoning of the Assembly. Bhutto, planning to take advantage of the anti-Indian feelings in West Pakistan, supported the cause of the hijackers. Yahya used it as a stratagem to send troops to East Pakistan, apparently for protection against any Indian attack but actually to use them against the supporters of the Awami League in case the need arose. Mujib, realising the fact that both Bhutto and Yahya were trying to exploit the situation to their advantage, condemned the incident and demanded inquiry into the matter(9). This further provided an opportunity to Bhutto to project Mujib as pro-Indian(10).

Yahya announced on the 13 February 1971, that the National Assembly would meet at Dhaka on 3 March 1971 for framing the constitution. Bhutto reacted by declaring on 15 February 1971, his decision to boycott the Assembly session. He demanded a promise of accommodation on the AL's Six-Point programme as a price for his participation. He again pointed out that as the people had voted for PPP in great majority in West Pakistan and for AL in East Pakistan, both the parties should share the power. In a dramatic manner, he likened the National Assembly to a slaughter house and said that his partymen would become double hostages if they went to East Pakistan(11).

Following Bhutto's threat to boycott the Assembly session, the efforts of General Umer to dissuade West Pakistani members from participation in the session hint at the deep conspiracy between the PPP and the ruling elite(12). On 28 February, Bhutto proposed two alternatives to resolve the political crisis - the postponement of the National Assembly session or removal of the 120-day time-limit for the

Assembly to frame a constitution. He also warned that if the Assembly session was held on 3 March as scheduled without the participation of the PPP, he would launch an agitation in the whole of West Pakistan from Khyber to Karachi. It was followed by Yahya's announcement of the postponement of the session.

While Yahya's act attracted a sharp criticism from most of political leaders in both the wings, Bhutto welcomed it. Later, when Mujib put forward his 4-point demand, he diplomatically opposed it by saying that he had no objection to the demands pertaining to the holding of inquiry into the killing of civilians by the army in East Pakistan and the return of the army to the barracks, but the other two should be taken up in the National Assembly. On 14 March 1971, he demanded publicly that the power should be transferred to the majority parties in both the wings. Urged by Yahya, he participated in the discussions from 16 March to 24 March, ostensibly to formulate a constitution but actually to buy time for Yahya. The fact that on 24 March, Yahya and Bhutto held a meeting after which both left East Bengal, further strengthened the suspicion of a conspiracy hatched by them. Later on (after the crackdown took place) Bhutto exclaimed: "By the Grace of Almighty, Pakistan has at last been saved."

A study of Bhutto's actions shows that not only he went on changing his demands, he even proposed two prime ministers for the two wings. His sole aim, obviously, was to capture power by any means. For his personal interests, he was prepared to sacrifice the national unity and integrity of Pakistan.

Compulsions of Mujib's Overwhelming Victory

If the massive victory of the Awami League in the elections caught the military-bureaucratic regime by surprise and upset its post-electoral alignments, it placed the Awami League's leader in an incarcerated position that took away his freedom of manoeuvre. The people of East Pakistan had voted for the programme of the Awami League, which promised them freedom from exploitation. Quite naturally, the people now hoped that the future constitution of the country would be framed on the basis of the Six-Point and Eleven-Point programmes. Not only the thumping majority with which AL won was significant but also the fact that while it captured almost all the seats in East Pakistan, it did not have even a single seat in the Western Wing. This explains the hardening of the attitude of Mujib after the declaration of election results. Before the elections, Sheikh Mujib, it is reported, was agreeable

to modify his Six-Point programme and also to show Yahya Khan the draft constitution prepared by the Awami League(13). It is likely that he may have agreed to it as a part of his political strategy, and because he never expected to get an absolute majority in the elections. Whatever might have been the intention of Mujib at that time, after the declaration of the election results it was almost impossible to do anything against the wishes of East Bengalee people. On 3 January 1971, Sheikh Mujib declared that the future constitution of the country would be framed on the basis of programme given in the Awami League's election manifesto(14). Of course, he sought the cooperation of the people's representatives of West Pakistan in framing the constitution but without any compromise of fundamental policy matters(15). He repeatedly expressed that there was no scope of readjustment in his party's Six-Point programme because it was on the basis of this programme that the "referendum" was held in the country. And, therefore, the Six-Point and Eleven-Point programmes were no more his party's property(16), but these belonged to the people of East Bengal. On 4 January 1971, he warned if the Six-Point programme was opposed by any quarter in West Pakistan, the responsibility of any consequences would be theirs(17).

Consistent with his Six-Point Programme, Mujib advocated grant to all the provinces of sufficient autonomy that would solve the problems of West Pakistan as well as of East Pakistan. Such a course could allow him to form a government at the centre without compromising the basic principles on which the Awami League had contested the elections. Any compromise on the Six-Point and Eleven-Point programmes with his absolute majority would have shaken the confidence of the people in the leadership of the Awami League. Besides the above-mentioned compulsions, his firm conviction that his was the victory of certain principles, left little room for making any compromise.

Line-up Of Other Parties

While the elections of 1970 gave the AL absolute majority in the National Assembly, it had placed the PPP as the second largest party in Pakistan, though the latter had captured only about one-half of the seats won by the former. Other minor parties obviously could not bring a radical change in the deliberations in the National Assembly, yet their policies could either increase or decrease the bargaining position of the PPP.

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Before coming to the tie-up of the minor parties, it would be useful to have a look at their strengths in the National Assembly from the Table XIII given below:-

PAKISTAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

Name of Party	No. of Seats Contested	PROVINCE WISE RESULT					Tribal Area	Indirectly Elected Women's seats	Total
		East Pakistan	Punjab	Sind	NWFP	Baluchistan			
Awami League	162	160	--	--	--	--	7	167	
Pakistan People's Party	122	--	64	18	1	--	5	88	
All Pakistan Muslim League (Qaiyum)	132	--	1	1	7	--	--	9	
Muslim League (Council)	119	--	7	--	--	--	--	7	
Jamaat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam (Hazarvi Group)	93	--	--	--	6	1	--	7	
Markazi-Jamaat-ul-Ulema- i-Islam- (Thanvi Group)	Not known	--	4	3	--	--	--	7	
National Awami Party (Wali Khan)	61	--	--	--	3	3	1	7	
Jamaat-i-Islami Muslim League	200	--	1	2	1	--	--	4	
(Convention)	124	--	2	--	--	--	--	2	
Pakistan Democratic Party	108	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	
Independents	300	1	3	3	--	7	--	14	
		162	82	27	18	4	13	313	

Of course, the two important parties - the Awami League which stood for secularism, socialistic reforms, full autonomy for East Bengal and friendly relations with India, won 167 (including 7 indirectly elected women) out of 169 seats from East Bengal and the Pakistan's People's Party which stood for Islamic nationalism, socialistic reforms, strong centre and anti-Indianism, won 88 (including 5 indirectly elected women) seats in West Pakistan - had left only a few seats to be shared by these parties. All Pakistan Muslim League of Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan which was known for championing the cause of Islamic nationalism, a strong centre and for its anti-Indian stance, secured a total of 9 seats - 1 each in Punjab and Sind and 7 in NWFP. Pakistan Muslim League (Convention) with similar ideological background could get only 2 seats from Punjab. Another political party with similar ideological orientation Jamaat-i-Islami, secured 4 seats - 1 each in Punjab and NWFP and 2 in Sind. Pakistan Muslim League (Council) of Mian Mumtaz Daultana, which differed with the above mentioned-parties only in one respect as it also demanded the introduction of economic reforms, obtained 7 seats, all from Punjab. Pakistan Democratic Party, having an ideological orientation like that of Pakistan Muslim League (Council), won only 1 seat in East Pakistan. Jamaat-ul-Ulema-i-Islami (Hazarvi Group), a progressive politico-religious party, got 7 seats - 6 in NWFP and 1 in Baluchistan. Markazi-Jamaat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam (Thanvi Group), a rightist orthodox party, also got 7 seats - 4 in Punjab and 3 in Sind. The National Awami Party (Wali Group), a pro-Russian party which like the Awami League stood for secularism, socialism, full autonomy for East Bengal and friendly relations with India, won 7 seats - 3 in NWFP, 3 in Baluchistan and 1 indirectly elected women's seat(18). Besides, 14 seats were captured by independents including one from East Pakistan.

As the Awami League had secured absolute majority, it could form the government even without the support from other parties. However, it was obvious even in the beginning that some of the members of the West Pakistan parties either having similar ideological orientations like NAP (Wali group) or advocating economic reforms like the Muslim League (Council) and a few independents would support the AL led by Mujib. In addition, the lone independent member from East Pakistan could be expected to support Mujib. As such a situation was unpalatable for the PPP and the military-bureaucratic elite, they began to oppose the AL and its sympathisers. Attempts were made to assassinate the popular leaders. While Mujib

escaped an assassin's attempt on his life on the night of 8 January 1971, two newly elected MPs at Pabna and Chittagong were killed(19). These incidents, however, did not make any difference to the Awami League's position. Many leaders of West Pakistan pleaded with the ruling junta for a negotiated settlement with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Leaders like Air Marshal Nur Khan of the Council Muslim League, Wali Khan of the National Awami Party and Mufti Mahmud of the Jamait-ul-Ulema strongly denounced Bhutto for unjustifiably opposing the Awami League. Air Marshal Nur Khan, who stood for economic reforms, even went to the extent of saying that Mujibur Rahman's Six-Point programme of autonomy could be as beneficial for Punjab as for East Bengal(20). The fact that the Council Muslim League was known to be a rightist party, wedded to the ideals of unity and integrity of Pakistan and was the second largest political group in Punjab, lent special significance to such pronouncements(21).

The delay in summoning of the National Assembly session and the PPP's manoeuvres against the Awami League provided an opportunity to some of the East Pakistan political parties to take up those policies which could improve their image in the eyes of the people. Therefore, some leaders of different political parties, which had been considerably weakened due to the landslide victory of the Awami League in general elections, met at Santosh in Tangail - the seat of Bhashani - to formulate a strategy for making themselves popular. Aatur Rehman Khan with his truncated Pakistan National League, ASM Sulaiman of KSP, Pir Mohsenuddin (Dadu Miah) of East Pakistan Jamait-ul-Ulema-Islam and Lt Commander Muazzam Hussain, one of the accused of the Agartala Conspiracy Case, all joined the Santosh Parleys. Assuming that the demand for an independent East Bengal had built-in appeal amongst the masses of East Bengal, these leaders thought of giving to the people a clear-cut programme for separation of East Bengal from Pakistan. Obviously, the purpose was to outbid the Awami League and to revitalise themselves in politics by supporting extremist demands.

Another stage of lining up of the minor parties started when Bhutto decided not to attend the National Assembly session on 1 March 1971. Nurul Amin, President of Pakistan Democratic Party opposed this demand of Bhutto and requested all the members of the National Assembly to attend the session. Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maudodi considered Bhutto's demands as improper. Aatur Rehman Khan of Pakistan National League considered this move of Bhutto as an attempt to divide the country. Both the factions of the National

Awami Party also condemned the attitude of Bhutto. Still later when Bhutto opposed Mujib's Four-Point demands, he invited more criticism from various political parties. The General Secretary of PDP, Khwaja Mohd. Rafique condemned the fascist attitude of Bhutto which was responsible for creating an atmosphere of disunity. The General Secretary of Jaxait-ul-Ulema-i-Islam, Mufti Mehmud and the Baluchi leader, Nawab Bugti also deplored Bhutto's attitude for creating a deadlock. Begum Tahimina Masud of Bahawalpur United Party, a local party, cautioned Bhutto that history would not forgive him for his deeds and assured Sheikh Mujibur Rahman full support on behalf of thirty-two lakh people of Bahawalpur. The lone member of the PDP in National Assembly, Nurul Amin, termed Bhutto's demands as unreal and irrational. Maulana Hazarvi, General Secretary of Jamait-ul-Ulema-i-Islam (Hazarvi) which had 7 representatives in the National Assembly, while criticising Bhutto for his action, endorsed the decision of Sheikh Mujib not to attend the proposed conference of all parties in Dhaka on 10 March 1971. Bhutto, on the other hand, was supported only by Muslim League (Qaiyum Group) and Muslim League (Convention). Thus, Mujib not only had absolute majority in the National Assembly but also had the support of the majority of the representatives from three out of the total five provinces of Pakistan.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The story of National Assembly exposes the attempts of the military-bureaucratic group to thwart the democratic process in East Bengal. This group by its manoeuvres created circumstances in which it became possible, though unjustifiably, to postpone the National Assembly session. The first hint of Yahya Khan's plans is to be found in his two identical congratulatory messages sent to Mujib and Bhutto on the success of their parties in the National Assembly (22). Such an act was questionable as Mujib's party had secured a landslide victory and thereby he had become the democratically elected leader of Pakistan. Unwittingly Yahya Khan by doing so exposed his intention to play Bhutto against Mujibur Rahman and thereby retain power. As Yahya required some time to chalk out his strategy to deal with the unexpected situation, he did not meet Mujib immediately after the election. After about a fortnight of the declaration of the results, probably to know the mind of Bhutto, he first met the PPP leader on the 28 December 1970 (23). At the same time, probably to pacify Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, he declared that the National Assembly, when summoned, would first meet at Dhaka (24).

Thinking that Mujib's position had become slightly weak by Bhutto's pronouncements, Yahya Khan went to Dhaka on 11 January 1971 to meet Mujib. During the next two days, he held discussions and secured the assurance from Mujibur Rahman for sufficient federal funds to meet military expenditure. As mentioned earlier while leaving Dhaka, Yahya Khan called Mujib the future Prime Minister of the country which must have alarmed Bhutto. Soon after this meeting, Yahya Khan went to meet Bhutto. It can be presumed that in this meeting Yahya Khan urged Bhutto to meet Mujib on 27 January, and held discussions with the Awami League leader on the Six-Point programme. These talks made it clear to Bhutto and Yahya that the Awami League was committed to the Six-Point and Eleven-Point programmes, and, therefore, some other strategy had to be evolved to deal with the situation.

As mentioned earlier, the hijacking of Indian plane on 30 January 1971, was used by Yahya Khan as an opportunity to create a war hysteria against India. Following this incident, Yahya Khan spoke of an emergency and his military advisers expressed grave anxiety about the 'brink of war' situation. But these attempts did not check the Awami League from demanding the summoning of the National Assembly at the earliest. When the pressure by the Awami League and the people increased, Yahya on 13 February 1971, announced that the National Assembly would meet in Dhaka on 3 March 1971. By this time, Yahya Khan knew pretty well that Bhutto would not agree to attend the session of the National Assembly, and this would provide more opportunity to the President to manage things in his favour.

As was expected, on the 15 February 1971, Bhutto came forward with the declaration of boycotting the National Assembly session, beginning on 3 March in Dhaka. The PPP leader threatened that his party members would resign from the National Assembly before it met. This was not permissible under the Legal Framework Order. So Yahya amended the relevant section of the Order through a Martial Law decree(25). Thereafter, probably to meet any eventuality of strong opposition from the people, Yahya dissolved his civilian cabinet and held a secret conference with all his Governors and Martial Law Administrators(26). The Governor at Dhaka, Vice-Admiral S.M. Ahsan and the Martial Law Administrator, Lt.Gen. S.M. Yakub, apprised Yahya Khan of the dangerous situation in East Bengal and advised immediate political action to end the crisis. Yahya Khan, however, did not pay any heed to it. Taking advantage of Bhutto's statement, that if the National Assembly session was held on 3 March 1971, as scheduled without PPP's participation, he

would launch a popular agitation from Khyber to Karachi, on 1 March 1971, Yahya Khan announced the postponement of National Assembly session for an indefinite period. Justifying his decision, Yahya Khan pointed out that the major party of West Pakistan, namely the Pakistan People's Party, as well as certain other political parties, had announced their intention of not attending the National Assembly session of 3 March 1971. In addition, the general situation of tension created by India further complicated the position, compelling him to take such a step. He, however, promised the people that as soon as the situation would improve, he would have no hesitation in summoning the session of National Assembly.

DE FACTO SELF-RULE IN EAST WING

The indefinite postponement of National Assembly, which was announced on 1 March 1971, produced a sharp reaction in East Bengal. Spontaneously, and even before a strategy could be chalked out by the Awami League, students and others had taken to the streets to demonstrate against this action of thwarting democratic processes. Processions were taken out, raising slogans against Yahya Khan's regime and demanding an independent East Bengal. This was the beginning of mass upsurge. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, deploring the postponement of National Assembly, formulated a plan of non-violent non-cooperation movement against the Central Government of Pakistan. He also called for a complete 'hartal' or strike in Dhaka on 2 March and throughout East Bengal on 3 March(27). While people were reacting angrily to the postponement of the National Assembly session another action of the military junta added fuel to the fire. The postponement of the National Assembly session was accompanied by the removal of Vice-Admiral S.M. Ahsan, a popular figure in East Bengal, as the Governor of East Pakistan. Obviously, he was removed because of his sympathetic attitude to the Bengalees' demands(28). In response to the call given by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, shops and business establishments in Dhaka remained closed and all vehicles went off the roads and train services were suspended on 2 March 1971. National flags were pulled down from the provincial Secretariat, High Court and other Government buildings. The mob even forced a contingent of East Pakistan Rifles to raise slogans of 'Swadhin Purba Bangla' (Independent East Bengal) in Dhaka University. A meeting of about thirty-five thousand people was held, where the speakers made a declaration of independent East Bengal. Following this, the Pakistan Government imposed curfew in Dhaka on 2 March. However, groups of people continued to defy the curfew orders. On 3

March, the Pakistan Government tried to frustrate meeting at Paltan Maidan, which Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was to address, but in vain. The Martial Law authorities resorted to firing at certain places, in which a number of persons were killed(29). Sheikh Mujibur Rahman urged the authorities to handover power to the elected representatives of the people(30). He also rejected the invitation of Yahya Khan to attend the proposed meeting of the leaders of all parliamentary groups on 10 March in Dhaka to solve the constitutional tangle. As mentioned earlier, at this stage, many political leaders condemned Yahya's actions and showed solidarity with Mujib.

On 3 March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced the details of the Non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement from 3 March to 6 March. He called for the observance of a province-wide hartal during this period in all spheres, including Government offices. All Bengalees serving in radio, television and pro-military junta newspapers were asked to refuse to cooperate with the military junta(31). From 4 March 1971, the Awami League police directives began to be issued from the 'Bangladesh Secretariat' at Mujib's house. These directives issued in the name of Bangladesh, helped to keep the Bangladesh economy moving and to maintain law and order(32). On 4 March, Mujib issued a directive to the Government and non-Government offices to function between 2.30 and 4.30 pm where salary had not been paid, for the purpose of disbursing salaries. Exemption was also granted from hartal to the essential services like hospitals, water, gas and electricity supply, telephones (local), fire services etc(33). The demonstrations against the postponement of the National Assembly session continued between 3 March and 6 March, and the army tried to crush them by force. Large numbers of persons were injured while many were killed.

In view of the fast deteriorating situation in East Bengal, Yahya Khan in his address to the Nation on the Pakistan radio on 6 March announced that the inaugural session of the National Assembly would be held on 25th March(34). He also said that while he was trying to initiate the process of transfer of power to the elected representatives, it was obstructed by the political leaders. He particularly blamed Mujibur Rahman for it(35). At the same time, Lt Gen Tikka Khan, well-known for his ruthless repression of dissent, was appointed Martial Law Administrator and Governor of East Pakistan(36). However, the Chief Justice of East Pakistan refused - on the plea of illness - to administer the oath of office to Tikka Khan, and he remained only the Martial Law

Administrator till a judge from West Pakistan was called in. The speech and this move of Yahya Khan confirmed the suspicion of the people of East Pakistan. On 6 March an incident of jail-breaking took place, reminding of the fall of Bastille during the French Revolution. Three hundred and forty-one prisoners escaped from the Dhaka Central Jail and later took out a procession(37). Similar incidents were also reported to have taken place at Narayanganj, Comilla and Barisal(38).

On 7 March 1971, Mujibur Rahman in a public meeting at Dhaka which was attended by over a million people, criticised Yahya Khan for blaming him and the Bengalees for the crisis. He also announced that he would attend the Assembly Session, fixed for 25 March, provided four conditions were satisfied(39). These were : withdrawal of the troops to barracks, the holding of a judicial enquiry into killings by the military, retraction of Martial Law, and immediate transfer of power to the people's representatives(40). Mujib further pointed out that there was still time for both the wings to remain united, if things were settled peacefully(41). Though Mujib did not declare outright independence, he did mention the terms 'freedom' and 'independence'. It appears that as a last attempt to maintain the integrity of Pakistan he had indicated his conditions to the military junta, hoping that Yahya Khan and his supporters might still change their minds and the crisis solved peacefully.

To put further pressure on the military junta, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on 7 March announced a week long programme of agitation starting from 8 March. He pointed out that this programme was in accordance with his programme of non-violent non-cooperation to attain the immediate termination of Martial Law and transfer of power to the elected representatives(42). He called for the continuation of the no-tax campaign, closure of all Government Offices, including High Courts, educational institutions and seaports. Exemption for railway was to continue, but the railway workers and the port-workers were asked not to cooperate with the West Pakistani authorities and to see that the railways and ports were not used for the mobilization of forces. Radio, television and the news-papers were asked to give complete versions of the Awami League statements. Banks were also asked not to effect remittances to the West Wing. This programme also included organisation of Sangram Parishads in each mohalla, thana, sub-division and district under the leadership of the local Awami League activists for implementation of the programme(43). All these directives received almost total obedience from the people throughout East Bengal(44).

The speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7 March 1971 marked a new stage in the development of the movement. He had taken over the virtual control of the administration of East Bengal. Many flags of independent Bangladesh were displayed at the venues of the meetings(45). Black flags were hoisted on many buildings in Dhaka city and other places in East Pakistan. Many political leaders both from East and West Pakistan issued statements supporting Mujib's four demands and urged Yahya Khan to accept them, so that a grave political crisis could be averted. Nurul Amin, President of the Pakistan Democratic Party, pointed out that the non-violent non-cooperation movement was spontaneous upsurge provoked by the several postponements of the National Assembly session. He urged Yahya Khan to devise effective means in consultation with Sheikh Mujib for the transfer of power to the elected representatives(46). K.A. Subur, General Secretary of all Pakistan Muslim League also requested the President to transfer power to the elected representatives through the adoption of Government of India Act, 1935 and the Indian Independence Act of 1947 with necessary amendments(47). Khwaja Khairuddin, President of East Pakistan Muslim League, expressed his full agreement with the demands of Sheikh Mujib. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, President of the pro-Chinese National Awami League, in a public meeting at Dhaka on 9 March expressed full support to Mujib's non-violent non-cooperation movement. Ataur Rehman Khan, President of the Pakistan National League, pointed out that the recent happenings clearly indicated that the people wanted nothing short of an independent Bangladesh. Professor Muzaffar Ahmed, President of East Pakistan NAP (Pro-Russian), said that Sheikh Mujib's conditions for participating in the National Assembly session were just and minimum.

Meanwhile as directed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the movement was conducted in a disciplined manner and, therefore, some semblance of order was maintained. The Awami League organised peace patrols which checked the rioting. The non-violent non-cooperation movement continued successfully in accordance with the programme laid down. Mujib, in addition to the four conditions laid down by his party, demanded three more things: the cessation of military build-up in East Pakistan, stoppage of victimization of Government officers and employees and entrusting the maintenance of law and order only to the police and the East Pakistan Rifles(48). However, Yahya Khan, instead of coming to Dhaka on 10 March, postponed his visit till 15 March. Reacting against this, Mujib on 11 March said that the use of force could silence the voice of the people only

temporarily. He also criticised the Martial Law order imposing upon civil employees of Defence Establishments to resume their duties by 15 March. He pointed out that such order could only serve as a provocation to the people. The civil employees of the Pakistan Defence Establishments took out a procession against the order in Dhaka on 14th March. Later they marched to Mujib's residence and expressed their support to his movement. Mujib, seeing no favourable response from Yahya Khan and the continuation of the policy of repression by the West Pakistani military junta, was forced to assume full responsibility of civil administration in Bangladesh(49). He declared that the Awami League was the majority party according to people's verdict and, therefore, would not allow the repression to continue by the West Pakistani rulers. On the same day, the Government machinery started functioning again with the promulgation of thirty-five elaborate directives(50). Tax collection had to recommence, but all receipts were to remain under the control of the provincial Government. The district administration was asked to keep close liaison with the local Awami League authorities(51). Thus, in an unprecedented, bloodless and open coup, the de facto administration of the province came into the hands of the Awami League. When Yahya Khan came to meet Mujibur Rahman and held discussions with him between 16 March and 24 March, Mujib was effectively in control of East Bengal.

PHONEY NEGOTIATIONS AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS

There is no doubt that Z.A. Bhutto and President Yahya Khan collaborated with each other to deny Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League the political right to frame a constitution for the country and form a government at the Centre(52). But, as already noticed, their respective objectives were incompatible. While Bhutto sought to share power at the Centre and a complete sway over West Pakistan, Yahya's game was to block Mujib with Bhutto and then to crush the East Pakistan's demands by military action. So, in the last week of February, Yahya Khan suddenly dissolved his civilian cabinet and held a secret conference with all his Governors and Martial Law Administrators. On or around 22 February 1971, a high level conference was held at the Army Headquarters in Rawalpindi, which was attended only by President Yahya Khan and the senior-most Army Generals(53). In this conference it was decided that political power should not be handed over to Mujibur Rahman and his party(54). The Generals thought that the autonomy movement of East Pakistan had been created by the politicians, and a few thousand dead could be sufficient to crush it. In March, Bhutto

reportedly revealed similar thinking to some foreign journalists : "The autonomy issue has been created by a few intellectuals. A few thousand dead in Dhaka in East Pakistan will be quiet soon"(55). Similarly General Tikka Khan reportedly told President Yahya Khan : "Give me one week's time, I will bring back normalcy in East Pakistan"(56).

When Yahya arrived in Dhaka on 15 March, for further dialogue with Mujibur Rahman, a number of Generals also arrived in Dhaka to give final touches to the Army's action plan. Next day, Free Bangladesh Students' Central Action Committee issued a press statement condemning the Pakistan Army's repression against the people of East Pakistan. Many many people had been killed and even women folk were tortured brutally. They asked Yahya Khan to "take these soldiers back"(57).

Now there was tremendous pressure on Mujib from the militants within and outside his party not to negotiate with Yahya, as they thought that the latter was not likely to come to terms with the Awami League. However, it appears, Mujib still hoped that Yahya might, due to the pressure of events, agree to the terms of the Awami League. On the other hand, Yahya, came to Dhaka under the growing political pressure from the West Pakistani leaders and to buy time for his military preparations. They held several rounds of talks during 16-23 March. In addition, senior leaders of the Awami League and the top advisers of Yahya met separately.

By then it became clear that the East Pakistan Rifles and the police force would not be a party to any military action against the people of East Pakistan. A few incidents confirmed this. In one instance, a Bengalee EPR Naib Subedar, Ahsanullah, refused to open fire on the Bengalee demonstrators. In another instance, Naib Subedar Salek Uddin, also did the same and both of them were arrested. On 19 March, in a military action against civilians at Joydebpur, 40 km away from Dhaka, about 150 people were reportedly killed(58). The following day, the Chief of Staff of Pakistan Army, General Hamid, was seen in Dhaka, from where he started visiting various cantonments of East Pakistan. Bhutto arrived in Dhaka on 21 March and, within two hours of his arrival, joined Yahya in a secret meeting lasting for two hours.

On 23 March, it was reported that an interim agreement had been reached between Yahya and Mujib on immediate withdrawal of Martial Law by a Presidential Proclamation and immediate restoration of power to the

representative parties. The same day, in a meeting between the President's aid and the AL team, a draft constitution was submitted by Dr. Kamal Hussain. It outlined interim administrative arrangements and a procedure for the framing of two constitutions for the two wings of Pakistan by two "constitutional conventions" for the 'Confederation of Pakistan' (59).

While these tortuous negotiations were going on, the events in East Bengal were putting pressure on Mujib to declare complete independence. On 23 March, on the occasion of the Republic Day of Pakistan, the Central Students' Action Committee hoisted the Bangladesh flag in place of the Pakistan flag all over Dhaka. This was a reaction against the Pak army's firings at different places in the province starting from 19 March in Joydebpur. The Central Students' Action Committee also observed 23 March as 'Resistance Day' and marched in a procession to Mujib's house and forced him to hoist the Bangladesh flag at his residence (60). Meanwhile, Radio Pakistan Dhaka, was renamed as "Dhaka Betar Kendra", and it began to issue news bulletins, about revolutionary happenings in East Bengal. During the period of negotiations, the hold of Mujib on East Bengal's administration further increased. Every day, innumerable processions of various bodies, including that of government employees, chanting slogans like 'Jai Bangla' or 'Swadhin Bangladesh Zindabad', paraded the streets of Dhaka. These usually ended at Mujib's house. Moreover, the directives of Mujib were faithfully implemented by the vast majority of the people in East Bengal. Hence, by 24 March 1971, Mujib had virtually established a parallel government which became one of the important dimensions of the Bangladesh Independence movement.

At this time, President Yahya Khan began to put such objections to the draft constitution, submitted by the Awami League that it became clear he was going back on his earlier assurances. The negotiations had virtually come to an end on 23 March. Although, A.K. Brohi - a constitutional expert and member of Yahya's team - opined on 24 March that the Indian Independence Act provided a precedent for the transfer of power by presidential proclamation, the President had other plans to implement (61). While Tajuddin Ahmed, as the spokesman of the AL, was meeting the President's aides to know the decision of Yahya Khan on 24 March, the latter was secretly ordering the Pakistan Army to go ahead with the crackdown. On 25th morning, Bhutto met Yahya and Lt Gen Peerzada to discuss the latest developments. The President left Dhaka secretly for Karachi at 7 p.m the same day, without informing even Bhutto (62).

In retrospect, the discussions that took place in the third week of March 1971, were bound to fail. While for Mujib, the talks were the last attempt to come to a peaceful settlement of the crisis, for Yahya these were merely an eyewash to hoodwink the East Bengal leaders and the world at large, till the time military preparations were over. As soon as these were completed, all pretensions of finding a political solution were thrown to the winds, and the military crackdown started.

The first batch of Pakistani troops had arrived in Dhaka from West Pakistan by a Boeing aircraft of the Pakistan International Airlines on the night of February 28, under strict security cover. Tanks were brought to Dhaka from other cantonments. Immediately on arrival, these were put on soft tracks for use on the city roads. Troop movement by air from the Western Wing to East Pakistan became a regular nocturnal affair(63). Troop movements over such a long distance (three thousand two hundred kilometres) by air, especially after the ban on overflights by India, following the blowing up of the hijacked Indian aircraft, entailed lengthy administrative and logistic preparations at the despatching as well as the receiving ends. A backward calculation of time would show that the troops which moved from Kharian and Quetta cantonments must have received orders to move at least two weeks earlier. Accordingly, the army units must have received their movement orders even before 13 February, when Yahya Khan announced the date of the National Assembly session in Dhaka.

The military build-up was continued furiously. Even as Yahya Khan was sending out the invitations on March 3 for the meeting on March 10, a battalion of the Baluch Regiment (22 Baluch) was airlifted to East Pakistan. This unit was kept at the EPR HQ at peelkhana in Dhaka, and it started reconnaissance in EPR uniform from the following day(64).

When people started talking about the military build-up, Yahya gave the excuse that such a build-up was necessitated by troop concentration by India along the borders. According to one U.S. newspaper report, two Pakistani C-130 aircraft with undisclosed cargo arrived at Dhaka on 16 March 1971, and according to the "Patriot" report datelined 16 March, two ships had brought troops to Chittagong, and those were being landed secretly(65). However, dock workers were refusing to unload the cargo from these ships. The "Patriot" also confirmed the airlift of troops from West Pakistan to Dhaka airport, via Ceylon and Sheikh Mujib got the information that 14,000 Pak troops had been sent to East Pakistan before the arrival of

reinforcements which might have raised the strength to 10,000 troops(66). Sheikh Mujib felt that Yahya's postponement of the National Assembly meeting was aimed at gaining time to rush additional troops to Bangladesh(67).

The ship, MV Swat, arrived at Chittagong port from West Pakistan, loaded with arms and ammunition. The dock labourers of Chittagong port refused to allow the unloading of military stores from the ship because they feared that these were likely to be used against them.

Although it was announced on 24 March that the talks between Yahya Khan and the political leaders of both the Wings of Pakistan were still continuing, the West Pakistani politicians started flying back to Karachi like birds returning to their nests before the coming storm. The same day, General Khadim Hussain Raja alongwith Brigadier Ansari, a West Pakistani Officer, flew to Chittagong in a helicopter, with a view to removing Brig Mozumdar, a Bengalee officer, from his command at Chittagong. He convinced Brig Mozumdar that 2 East Bengal, stationed at Joydebpur, north of Dhaka, who had shown some signs of restiveness, needed a pep talk from 'Papa Tiger'(68). In the evening, he returned to Dhaka with Brigadier Mozumdar, leaving behind Brigadier Ansari to control the situation in Chittagong. This was the end of Mozumdar's command in the Pak Army. Under personal supervision of the new Brigadier, the army started unloading arms and ammunition from the MV Swat. Chittagong seemed to burst in anger and people set up barricades on the road connecting the port with the cantonment. This led to firing on the crowds, and nobody knew how many were killed or injured.

According to a Pakistani officer, it was on 17 March that President Yahya Khan, after his talks with Mujib, reportedly told Gen Tikka Khan : "The bastard is not behaving. You get ready". Tikka Khan rang up the G.O.C. at 10 p.m.: "Khadim you can go ahead"(69). The detailed planning for the Pak military crack-down on Bangladesh then started. On 18 March (morning), Maj Gen Khadim Hussain Raja and Maj Gen Rao Farman Ali met in the G.O.C.'s office to draft the basic plan for "Operation Searchlight" in place of the earlier plan for "Operation Blitz" (to enforce Martial Law in its usual role). While Gen Farman Ali wrote down the first part of the new plan, using an ordinary school pencil, Gen Khadim wrote the second part dealing with the distribution of resources and the allocation of tanks to brigades and units. The plan was read out on 19 March to General Hamid and Lt Gen Tikka Khan who approved the main contents of the plan but struck out

the clause pertaining to the disarming of regular Bengalee troops (not EPR or Police)(70).

All preparations for the military crack-down were completed by 24 March. The final order indicating the time when the crack-down should start was conveyed over telephone at 11 a.m. on 25 March. Lt Gen Tikka Khan rang up Maj Gen Khadim Husain: "Khadim, it is tonight"(71). The date coincided with the second anniversary of Yahya Khan's assumption of power. General Khadim passed the order to his staff for implementation. The General Staff of HQ 14 Division rang up all the outstation garrisons to inform them of the H-Hour through a private code, so that all garrisons could act simultaneously.

THE CRACK-DOWN OF 25 MARCH 1971

Although the fateful hour was set for 260100, i.e., 1 a.m. of 26 March, the actual crack-down began a little earlier. According to the plan of the operation, code-named OPERATION SEARCHLIGHT(72), Maj Gen Farman Ali, with 57 Brigade under Brigadier Arbab, was responsible for operations in Dhaka and its suburbs, while Major General Khadim was to take care of the rest of the province. Lt Gen Tikka Khan and his staff were to monitor the progress of the operations from the Martial Law Headquarters in the Second Capital(73).

Before 11 p.m. on 25 March, Sirajul Alam Khan alongwith some other student leaders met Mujib at his residence and urged him to issue a declaration of independence and call upon the EBR, EPR, Police and Ansars to resist the Pak Army. Mujib agreed, and at about midnight tried to contact the Dhaka Radio Station, but could not do so as the Army had already seized it. He then managed to contact the Chittagong Radio Station through the EPR wireless to broadcast the declaration of Independence. Mujib also gave instructions to his colleagues to go underground, but he himself preferred to remain at home. He knew that he might be killed, but nevertheless, an independent Bangladesh would be built on his grave(74).

Meanwhile, starting from the cantonment at about 11.30 p.m., West Pakistani troops reached their target areas, such as the Dhaka University Campus, Dhanmandi area where Mujib was living, Nawabpur, and the old city, before midnight. In an act of treachery unparalleled in contemporary history, a programme of calculated genocide was unleashed on the peaceful and unsuspecting population of Dhaka by midnight of 25 March. No ultimatum was given to the Awami League by

...hya, not even a curfew order was issued when the machine guns, artillery, and cannon on the tanks launched a reign of terror, death and destruction. At the first shot was fired, the voice of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came faintly through over the radio which sounded like a pre-recorded message. It said, "This may be my last message. From today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh, wherever you are and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved"(75).

Heavy troop movements along the main city roads made the residents of Dhaka believe that some action was imminent. But later when the sounds of guns, tanks and rifle fire came from all sides, people were thrown into confusion, and an unknown fear gripped them all. By 12-30 that night the telephones were dead and the whole city was aflame. The 31 Field Regiment, tactically deployed in the Second Capital area for quite some time, had secretly prepared a target list, and by 1 a.m., on 26 March, the first artillery shells were landing on and around the main targets(76). The bursting of these shells shook the whole city. People took shelter under their bed and children started crying in fear while older people started praying and reciting from the holy Quran. One tank, one APC and a platoon of Special Service Group (Commandos) under Lt Gen Z.A. Khan, the C.O. and Maj Bilal, the Company Commander, raided Mujib's house in Dhanmandi. When they started firing at the house, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman shouted at them: "You can arrest me; but stop this firing"(77). Soon, Mujib offered himself for arrest. The raiding party rounded up everybody in the house and brought them to the Second Capital in army jeeps. The voice of Major Jaffar, Bde Major of 57 Bde, came on the army wireless: "Big bird in the cageothers not in their nests.....Over"(78). Mujib was lodged in the Adamjee School for the night. Next day, he was shifted to Flag Staff House, from where he was flown to Karachi three days later. When the Station Commander, Dhaka, asked Sheikh Mujibur Rahman why he stayed back and allowed other leaders to run away or go under round, he replied that he wanted to save Pakistan. During his confinement in the Cantonment, Mujib repeated this many times(79).

While Mujib was resting in the Adamjee School, the residents of Dhaka were passing through hell. According to a Pakistani army officer, who himself witnessed the harrowing genocide: "The prominent feature of this gory night was the flames shooting to

the sky. At times, mournful clouds of smoke accompanied the blaze but soon they were overwhelmed by the flaming fire trying to lick at the stars. The light of the moon and the glow of the stars paled before this man-made furnace. The tallest columns of smoke and fire emerged from the University campus although some other parts of the city, such as the premises of the daily, 'People', had no small share in these macabre fireworks"(80).

Iqbal Hall and Jagannath Hall in the University campus headed the list of targets of the planners of the army crack-down. The troops attacked the resident students and teachers indiscriminately after smashing the buildings with rocket launchers, mortars and recoilless rifles. Hundreds of these unfortunate students, teachers and their family members were queued up and then shot or bayoneted to death. They included Dr. G.C. Dev, Dr. M.A. Khair, Dr. Serajul Haque Khan, Dr. Shahadat Ali, Munier Chowdhury, Mufazzal Haider Chowdhury, Jyotirmoy Guha Thakurata and Anwar Pasha. "Besides, a sizeable number of reputed journalists, doctors and literary persons fell victims to their killing hands. History has hardly witnessed such a massacre of human beings"(81).

The U.S. Intelligence Agency, C.I.A., reportedly collaborated with the Pak military junta in trying to destroy the autonomy movement of East Pakistan by exterminating the Bengalee elite(82).

Other important targets such as the Bengalee officers and Jawans at Kurmitola cantonment, the Police HQ at Rajarbagh, the East Pakistan Rifles HQ at Peelkhana, and the Hindu areas in the old city such as Tanti Bazar, Tejgaon industrial area, ferry ghats, stations, road-side slums, Malibagh, Maghbazar, Bahubazar, Nayabazar, and Shakhari Bazar - wherever there was concentration of population - experienced inhuman massacres and hellish conflagrations. The police force at Rajarbagh and the EPR men at Peelkhana put some resistance, but the army soon overpowered them with the help of their sophisticated weapons including tanks. Incendiary tank shells and liquid fire from flame throwers made a big bonfire of the police barracks. Many were roasted alive with their families. The fighting continued for over six hours. The rootless pavement and slum dwellers were exterminated like vermins, because without their participation no political movement, demonstration or meeting could be organised. A Pakistani officer made a boasting remark to foreign journalists: "We can kill anyone for anything. We are answerable to none"(83). At 8.30 a.m., on 26 March, Bhutto, escorted by Pakistani soldiers, left Hotel Inter-Continental

Dhaka for Karachi remarking, "Thank God, Pakistan has been saved"(84).

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY RESTORED"

By the time the first Martial Law proclamations issued by Lt Gen Tikka Khan, were broadcast the next morning some 50,000 people, had been butchered most of them without offering any resistance. Dhaka had been turned into an inferno with fires raging in most corners of the city. Sleeping inhabitants who had been drawn out of their homes by the fires, started by the military, were machine-gunned as they ran to escape the flames(85).

The military operations in Dhaka continued without interruption. On 27th morning when the curfew was apparently lifted after 33 hours, almost the entire population of Dhaka started fleeing, and within the next 24 hours approximately 75 to 85 per cent of the population is said to have left the city. The West Pakistani rulers ordered Government employees to join their work, but few did. The massacre continued by way of indiscriminate mass killing, loot, arson and rape under a policy of annihilation. Within the next seven days, they burned down most of the populated areas in and around Dhaka.

Jinjirabazar, on the other side of the river Buriganga, was attacked in the dark night and the population of approximately 25,000 suffered terribly. By setting fire, the Pak troops devastated the entire area of approximately 10 to 15 sq. miles and killed approximately 10,000 to 12,000 people. Similar war of annihilation was let loose on Shantinagar Bazar, Rayerbazar, Bhadi, Shakhari Bazar, Tatibazar, Kaptan Bazar, Chakbazar, Narayanganj, Tongi and many other places. The total number of people killed in and around Dhaka city alone would be approximately 150,000. Officers and other ranks in East Bengal Regiments, who were within reach were disarmed and were subsequently killed along with their families. In Jessore and Comilla Cantonments almost all the Bengali Officers (about 30 each) were killed, including their families present at that time. Similar genocide took place in all the other Cantonments and military bases(86).

In every place where they found resistance, they strafed and bombed from the air by Sabre jets. Besides thousands of villages, the towns heavily mortared and bombed from the air were, Chittagong, Sylhet, Maulvibazar, Sunamganj, Habiganj, Narshingdi, Chandpur, Feni, Khulna, Bheramara, Kumarkhali, Alamdanga, Pabna, Shahjadpur, Rajshahi, Nawabganj,

Rangpur, Santahar, Parbatipur, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Bogra, Sherpur, Mymensingh, Tangail, Jamalpur and Joydebpur. Fifteen thousand out of 60 thousand villages were bombed or set on fire along with 20 out of 21 district headquarters. Non-Bengalee collaborators assisted West Pakistani soldiers in searching out prominent Hindus, Awami League leaders and workers and then killing them without discrimination(87). The West Pakistan troops often followed a set pattern in their genocide. Before they sent troops to a particular area, they bombed and strafed indiscriminately, leaving the people terror-stricken. And then the troops would arrive. They killed anybody they found, looted houses, banks, jewellery shops, raped women, stole foodgrains and cattle and finally set the villages on fire.

Hospitals and medical centres were bombed; nurses and sisters driven away from their patients. Young Bengalees' blood would be drained out totally at hospital for transfusion into the veins of wounded Pakistani soldiers, and their dead bodies were thrown into rivers like Buri Ganga. Clergymen were persecuted and missionaries were made to broadcast at gun point at Rajshahi. A large number of Christians were also turned into refugees and there were instances of churches being shelled and damaged(88).

It is difficult to assess the exact damage and loss of life, but a conservative estimate would suggest the number of EBR/EPR and civilian casualties as one million. The Pak forces also suffered considerable casualties(89).

Similar mass killings were perpetrated by West Pakistani troops in Chittagong and other important towns of East Pakistan, where West Pakistani troops were garrisoned. On the night of March 25, the Pakistani troops in Chittagong destroyed the Recruitment Centre of the East Bengal Regiment, killing all the trainees there. Major Rafiq-ul-Islam who was then stationed in Chittagong as the Commander of a EPR Company, wanted to forestall the Pakistani crack-down by launching an armed attack against the West Pakistani forces in Chittagong on the night of March 24, but Lt Col M.R. Chowdhury and Major Zia-ur-Rehman, both Bengalee officers, persuaded him not to start any action, but to wait further(90).

However, when the news of the failure of the talks between President Yahya Khan and Mujibur Rahman reached Chittagong, coinciding with the sudden rupture of wireless communication between the EPR wireless unit in Chittagong and the EPR Control Station at

Peelkhana, Dhaka, in the evening of March 25, Major Rafiq-ul-Islam launched his planned attack against the West Pakistani troops in Chittagong. There were about 300 West Pakistani soldiers in the EPR HQ at Halishahar mostly senior JCOs and NCOs. All these Pakistani troops were cleverly disarmed and taken prisoners(91). Other West Pakistani EPR troops stationed in border posts around Chittagong were also neutralised by the Bengalee troops. But the West Pakistani troops took the initiative and got the upper hand in Chittagong Cantonment and at Sholashahar, though the total strength of Bengalee soldiers of the EBR was about 2000, as against hardly 400 West Pakistani troops (92). At about 11.30 p.m., on 25 March, men of 20 Baluch moved out of their barracks and suddenly attacked their Bengalee comrades in the EBR Centre. First, they captured the armoury and killed its guards. Then they went into a frenzy of killing, murdering more than 1,000 Bengalee soldiers, who had been sleeping. Thereafter, they moved to the latter's family quarters and indiscriminately killed anyone within the range of their weapons. Women and children were simply bayoneted to death. Those Bengalee soldiers, who could manage to escape this massacre, ran away in different directions. Some of them reached Rafiq-ul-Islam's Tactical HQ on the Railway Hill to narrate their harrowing tales, while others moved to 8 East Bengal Regiment stationed at Sholashahar where all soldiers and most of its officers were Bengalees. The escapees from the cantonment requested 8 East Bengal Regiment to come to the rescue of the Bengalee soldiers and their families in the cantonment area. But some officers of 8 East Bengal Regiment argued that there were only 300 soldiers with them with insufficient arms and ammunition, and hence, it would be suicidal to go to the rescue of the East Bengal Regimental Centre against the well-armed soldiers of 20 Baluch(93).

Major Rafiq-ul-Islam fortified his position on the Railway Hill by digging defensive trenches laying new telephone lines and placing defensive weapons such as 3" mortars in pre-selected locations on the Hill. Meanwhile, Major Zia-ur-Rehman and his men successfully arrested the non-Bengalee officers at Sholashahar and left for Patya on that same night. In the early hours of the morning of 26 March, West Pakistani troops moved out from the Naval base and attacked EPR defences at Halishahar, but this attack was beaten back with heavy casualties to the Pakistanis. At this time, a message was received by Major Rafiq-ul-Islam that a big West Pakistani convoy of about 100 vehicles had left Comilla and was moving toward Chittagong. Major Rafiq-ul-Islam moved a Company of EPR under a JCO to ambush this column. The

Pakistani convoy, consisting of 24 FF, detachment of field engineers, and a few 120 mm mortars, and commanded by Brigadier Iqbal Shafi, Commander of the 53 Bde at Comilla, was halted at the Shuvapur bridge, which had been extensively damaged by EPR men. As the repair of the bridge was taking time, the Bde Commander moved toward Chittagong with his infantry, leaving behind the mortars and engineering detachment. When at sun-set Brigadier Shafi and his column reached Kumira, 23 km short of Chittagong, the EPR troops ambushed them with murderous fire, killing about 70 West Pakistani soldiers, including the C.O. of 24 FF, Lt Col Shahpur Khan, injuring many others and destroying a large number of vehicles (94). Brigadier Shafi fled towards the hills for safety. Other survivors followed him in total panic, dropping their weapons and leaving their stores in the vehicles. Meanwhile, the rear half of the West Pakistani convoy, which was out of the EPR troops' firing range, took up positions and started firing back, resulting in a prolonged fight for over an hour, while the Pakistani mortar batteries crossed Shuvapur bridge and joined the rear elements of the Pakistani column. At this, the EPR troops withdrew to the next position about 5 km behind, after suffering casualties of 14 dead and 15 injured.

The lack of information about the Pakistani column created much apprehension in Dhaka. The G.O.C., Maj Gen Khadim Hussain Raja, flew in an army helicopter on 27th to locate the missing column. As his chopper tried to land in the 20 Baluch area, close to the Chittagong hills, it attracted small arms fire from the freedom fighters. Although hit, it managed to land safely. Lt Col Fatimi of 20 Baluch could not give any information about the missing column, but proudly reported his success in killing 50 and capturing 500 'rebels' in the East Bengal Centre. While the G.O.C. continued his search and flew along the Comilla road, his chopper again attracted small arms fire from Kumira area. One bullet grazed the tail of the helicopter, while another pierced through its belly, one inch away from the fuel tank. After that the General lost all interest in his search mission and made straight for Dhaka (95).

Although according to plan, EPR reinforcements from Cox's Bazar and Kaptai were to come to Chittagong to help Maj Rafiq-ul-Islam, they were stopped at Kalurghat bridge by Major Zia, and EPR troops from Ramgarh also failed to come owing to the heavy fighting at Kumira. Thus, Major Rafiq-ul-Islam's plan for attacking the naval base and the port area fizzled out (96). By 9 a.m., on 26 March, Pakistan

helicopters started hovering over the city of Chittagong and giant C-130 transport planes were bringing reinforcements from Dhaka. Now 20 Baluch, supported by tanks, moved out of the cantonment, while EPR troops, occupying vantage points all along Agrabad Road, kept the Pak forces at the Naval base bottled up.

Of the reinforcements, which were airlifted from Dhaka to Chittagong airport during 26-27 March, one column moved towards Agrabad Road, and another towards the EPR HQ at Halishahar. However Brigadier Shafi's troops were so scared after the Kumira ambush, that nothing could induce them to move forward. To boost up their morale, Major General Mittra Khan flew to Kumira by helicopter and told them: "Your officers, men and their families are being killed by the Bengalees, instigated by the Hindus. Unless you move to their rescue they all will be killed. Go and take revenge. Blood for blood. Save Islam and save Pakistan(97). This at last roused their spirit to desperation. Having failed to move along the main road, Brigadier Shafi sent a column through the hills to join 20 Baluch in the cantonment and another column along the sea-shore to outflank the EPR troops who had by then organised a hasty defence. In an ambush, the EPR men inflicted heavy casualties on this column moving along the coastline. Many of the survivors lost direction and landed up in villages where they were beaten to death by infuriated people. Brigadier Shafi had sent for a battery of mortars which joined him from Comilla on 27 March. After making a dawn attack on 28 March he cleared his way to Chittagong and finally reached the Haji Camp, on the edge of Chittagong city.

On the night of 26 March, naval guns opened up with heavy artillery fire, and Pak forces from the naval communication base attacked the Railway Hill. Two attacks came from the Tiger Pass Base also. But all these were repulsed. Similar attacks were made against Halishahar, but were repulsed after fierce fighting. To escape encirclement and attack by tanks, which were being brought from the cantonment, Major Rafiq and his men withdrew to Kotwali Police Station next morning after 8 hours of fighting.

The EPR troops near the cantonment, who were awaiting reinforcements promised by Maj Rafiq, did not get any, and hence fell back on the main defences at Halishahar. Similarly, the Bengalee police personnel at Dampara Police Lines, after putting up a brave resistance against the Pakistani troops and suffering heavy casualties, abandoned their post. Tired, ill-fed and ill-equipped EPR troops fought bravely in

the Circuit House area, Medical College, D.C. Hill, Court Building without reinforcements and with sleep for four nights. On March 30, the Pakistani troops attacked the EPR forces at Haliashahar infantry after a six hours artillery barrage in which the naval guns also took part. According to S. Saif the attacking troops, approximately in battle strength, had the support of a naval destroyer, gun boats, and a heavy mortar battery. When they failed to dislodge 'the rebels' they called for support. Two Pak aircraft came within half-an-hour and started engaging the EPR defences from 12.30 p.m. Non-availability of anti-aircraft weapons gave the attacking aircraft complete freedom and they strafed each and every trench, one by one. By evening, the Pak troops overran Haliashahar after an hour-long hand-to-hand battle. Brigadier Ansari was rewarded with the award of Hilal-i-Jurat, Pakistan's second highest gallantry award, and promoted to the rank of Major General for his gallantry in this action(98). He was also successful in unloading 90 tons of ammunition from the 'gheraoed' Pak ship(99). The Bengalee troops retreated to an alternate position on the Chittagong-Dhaka highway.

After the fall of Haliashahar, the Pakistani troops' full attention was turned towards the Court Hill, the last EPR strong-hold in the city of Chittagong. On 2 April, a full Pak battalion launched a well-coordinated dawn attack against this stronghold with the help of naval guns, artillery, tanks and mortars. The defenders repulsed several attacks one after another, till their ammunition was exhausted. At 2.30 p.m., the Court Hill fell and in the afternoon the Bangladesh Radio Station operating from Bahaddarhat on the outskirts of the city was silenced by Pak air action. Millions of patriots in Bangladesh, whose hearts were tuned to the broadcast of this radio station, felt that the pulse of the newly born nation had suddenly stopped beating. On April 3, a cyclonic storm lashed Chittagong, disrupting its electricity and water supplies. People were on the verge of starvation, and if any man stirred out of his house in search of food, he was shot by the Pak troops. When young children would go for milk or water the mothers would force them into silence, so that their cries would not be heard by the Pak soldiers engaged in mopping up operations. Pressing their children close to their bosoms, mothers shed silent tears. In Bangladesh, only blood and tears were flowing in plenty. "Operation Searchlight" in Chittagong was over, though the Pakistani mopping up operations continued up to 6 April(100).

On 1 April, Maj Rafiq-ul-Islam reached the Indian town of Sabroom in Tripura across the Feni River. From there he went to Agartala and met some senior Indian officials besides the Chief Minister of Tripura, Mr. Sachin Singh. After obtaining some small arms from the BSF authorities there, he returned to Chittagong to help his compatriots fighting at isolated places against the Pak troops.

Meanwhile, having gained the control of the Chittagong city, columns of Pak troops started fanning out towards Rangamati, Kaptai, Cox's Bazar, and Rangarh. Kalurghat bridge, which was defended by 1,000 Bengalee soldiers under Maj Zia-ur-Rehman, fell on 11 April. Karerhat, situated on the Dhaka-Chittagong high-way, and linked with Ramgarh and Subhapur bridge over the Feni river through a hilly road, fell to the Pak troops on 25 April. Two days later, the Pakistanis with a regular commando company along with two Mizo brigades of about 3000 fighters attacked the Bangladeshi forces in Mahalchari area. "Employing the Chinese tactics of sending human assaulting waves, the Pakistanis pushed the Mizos in the frontal assault. Attacks were launched one after another and they were all beaten back. The Mizos suffered heavily. But they could not even withdraw. The Pakistani commando company was sitting behind them, positioned in such a manner as to shoot down any Mizo trying to withdraw to safety"(101). Heavy fighting continued for the whole day before the outnumbered Bengalee forces withdrew to Ramgarh. The next battle took place at Hiakhu on 29 April, when a Pak Battalion was employed. On 2 May, the Pak troops launched the decisive thrust towards Ramgarh. Under the cover of heavy artillery shelling, they attacked the bunkers of the Bengalee forces with anti-tank weapons. While the Indian Army and BSF troops, sheltered in their trenches in Sabroom, watched this battle as spectators, the Bengalee forces withdrew under cover of darkness when they ran out of ammunitions. At night the Pakistanis set fire to many houses in Ramgarh. The entire market was in flames.

The next Pak target was the Shuvapur bridge on the Feni, a portion of which had already been demolished by the freedom fighters with the help of the BSF. For the defence of this bridge, strong bunkers were prepared by the civilian freedom fighters, about one hundred strong, who had received only a week's military training. The Pak artillery pounded these defences, and tanks started destroying the bunkers one by one. Even then, the Bengalee defenders foiled all enemy attempts to cross the river. Meanwhile, the town of Feni fell to the Pak

column advancing from Comilla, and by 11 May the Pak troops came close to the Shuvapur bridge. On 12 May, a Pak force of approximately two battalions, supported by artillery and tank fire, launched the final assault. After a day-long fight, including hand-to-hand combat, the Bengalees, most of whom were seriously injured, withdrew to the Indian territory. A large number of Pak soldiers were killed in this action(102).

After Shuvapur, the last territory under the control of freedom fighters was the bulge of Belonia, where some of the fiercest battles were fought. The western half of the bulge, divided by the Muhari river, was being defended by the troops of Major Khaled Musharraf. On 26 May, the freedom fighters blew up an important bridge at Chandgazi to strengthen the Belonia defences. On 6 June, the Pak troops attacked Chandgazi with 2 Coys. The defenders replied with mortar fire which killed and injured many Pakistanis. The latter then fled towards Chagalnala in panic, pursued by the freedom fighters. After this, it was all quiet in this area for almost 10 days. But the Pakistanis returned with reinforcements. Five Pak helicopters landed troops behind the Belonia defences, while two Pak infantry Battalions under artillery cover launched a fierce offensive. The attacks continued from 16 June to 19 June. Being out-numbered and surrounded on all sides, the freedom fighters had to retreat. For the time being, this was the end of Bangladeshi resistance against the Pak troops in this area(103).

Pak troops undertook similar operations in other parts of Bangladesh also. In the subdivisional town of Feni there was a platoon of West Pakistani troops, but a Bengali Officer, who had defected from the Pakistani Air Force based at Dhaka, organised resistance forces with local police, members of the University Officers Training Corps (UOTC), and a number of Ansars and Mujahids, and forced the West Pakistani platoon to surrender. In the Comilla cantonment there was a Brigade of Pak soldiers, including one Battalion of the EBR. The Brigade Commander and C.O. of the EBR Battalion were West Pakistanis. Major Musharraf, the Bengali Officer who had come on transfer to Comilla from the Dhaka cantonment, was cleverly sent away to Shamsher Nagar, a border town in Sylhet district with a Coy of EBR to guard against 'Indian intrusions'. Major Musharraf, after reaching Shamsher Nagar, found no trace of the alleged 'intrusion'. While in Comilla, the remaining Bengalee soldiers of EBR Battalion were killed on the night of 25 March, and the Bengalee D.C. as well as the Bengalee S.P. were executed after-wards. Getting

...scent of the Pakistani ruse, Major Musharraf dashed towards Brahmanbaria on 27 March, and alongwith Major Shafat Gamil attacked Pakistani troops and imprisoned them, thus "liberating" Brahmanbaria(104).

In the Sub-divisional town of Sunamganj in the district of Sylhet, freedom fighters killed most of the West Pakistani troops stationed there. However, in the district town of Sylhet itself, a batalion of West Pakistani troops established control over the town(105). In the district town of Mymensingh, West Pakistani troops attacked the Bengalee jawans of the EPR in their barracks when they were resting, killing most of them, while the rest managed to escape on 26 March(106). Bengalee troops from Joydebpur under the command of Major Mohd. Shafiullah arrived in Mymensiingh on 27 March after killing most of the Pakistani Officers and jawans at Joydebpur. Next day, they occupied Mymensingh town after killing the majority of the West Pakistani Officers and soldiers. Then Major Shafiullah divided his battalion into two columns, and sent one column towards Tangail and led the other column himself towards Dhaka. But under persuasion from Khaled Musharraf, through wireless, Major Shafiullah withdrew to Kishoreganj with his troops. From there he went to Brahmanbaria to consolidate the forces of resistance(107). In Tangail, the Bengalee Commander of a EPR Coy had killed the few Punjabi soldiers in the Coy before the column sent by Major Shafiullah reached there. While in Munshiganj Sub-division of the Dhaka district, there was a spontaneous revolt by the Awami League volunteers, in Narayanganj, there was hardly any resistance(108).

In Khulna, sporadic fighting took place between the Pak forces and the resistance groups, in which many freedom fighters were killed and the Khulna Sub-divisions remained firmly in the hands of the Pak army. In Bagerhat and Satkhira Sub-divisions, there were no Pak soldiers, and the local administration was taken over by the Awami League(109). In Jessore District, things were different. The Brigade of Pak troops stationed in the Jessore cantonment disarmed and killed most of the Bengalee soldiers on 26 March. However, there was a massive uprising in surrounding rural areas, in Narail and Magura Sub-divisions. Led by two Bengalee army officers, who were on annual leave, a force of about 2000 freedom fighters alongwith some EPR men moved towards Jessore. On the way they met a group of 200 West Pakistani troops and captured all of them. On 31 March, these freedom fighters along with approximately 300,000 civilians surrounded the Jessore cantonment(110). The West Pakistani troops fired heavy guns from the cantonment,

killing hundreds of civilians and most of the "Mukti Bahini" men (Freedom fighters). As a result, the 'rebels' retreated from there by the end of the first week of April 1971.

In the districts of Faridpur, Barisal and Patuakhali, where there were no Pakistani troops, the Awami League volunteers alongwith the local EPR men, the police and the Sangram Parishad tasted freedom for a while(111). In Kushtia Sub-division, there was a Coy of West Pakistani troops who took over the administration of Kushtia town on 27 March 1971. But the EPR men from the border posts, along with the police and Awami League volunteers, soon wiped out this coy and established civil administration with the help of the local Deputy Commissioner. Similarly, in Chaudanga Sub-division, the freedom fighters alongwith the EPR men killed the West Pakistani Sub-divisional Officer and established civil administration there. In Meherpur, there were no Pakistani troops, and the SDO himself led the resistance and maintained civil administration for about three weeks(112).

In Rajshahi, where there was a West Pakistani battalion, some prominent local leaders, including an Awami League member of the National Assembly, were killed by the Pakistanis in the first two days after the military crack-down. The Police and Awami League volunteers organised resistance, and a truce between them and the Pakistani Battalion was arranged by the Deputy Commissioner. However, the Pak troops treacherously launched an attack on the police barracks and killed most of the policemen. A group of EPR men then arrived in Rajshahi and alongwith Officers and trainees of the Police Academy of Sarda near Rajshahi, occupied Rajshahi town in the first week of April and kept it under their control till the 14th of that month. At Nator, the SDO himself led the revolt and organised resistance forces comprising the Police, Ansars and Awami League volunteers, and wiped out a Platoon of Pakistani troops. The town remained "liberated" upto the middle of April. In Naogaon Sub-division, the EPR revolted and killed the Pakistani SDO and took over the administration. Similarly, the administration of Nawabganj Sub-division was also taken over by the Awami League. In Pabna Sub-division, there was one Coy of Pakistani troops which was exterminated by the freedom fighters, organised by the Deputy Commissioner himself. In the Sirajganj Sub-division of Pabna district, there were no Pakistani troops. However, in the Bogra Sub-division there was platoon of West Pakistani soldiers who were wiped out by the 'rebels'. In Rangpur district, there was one brigade of Pakistani troops who killed most of the Bengalee Officers and

jawans of the 3rd EBR during March 25-26 and kept Rangpur town under effective control. Similarly, in Dinajpur Sub-division, where there was a Platoon of the Pakistani troops, and in Thakurgaon Sub-division, where there was no Pakistani detachment, the "Mukti Bahini" took over the control after eliminating the Pakistani elements. In Gaibanda and Nilphamari Sub-divisions the freedom fighters easily gained control(113).

For the time being, as a result of popular revolt and armed resistance, the Pakistani forces withdrew to their cantonment areas in Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Sylhet, Jessore, Khulna and Rajshahi. However, reinforcements from West Pakistan, which had been pouring in from the last week of February, were further accelerated after March 25. For several days the stream of PIA commercial flights with Pak soldiers on board landed at Dhaka Airport via Colombo. Similarly, a convoy of ships carrying soldiers, arms and ammunition reached Chittagong port. Thus, Pakistani rulers managed to move two full army divisions to Bangladesh by the middle of April, 1971(114).

However, according to Maj Gen (Retd) F.M. Khan since 3 March 1971, (when the East Pakistani element in the Pakistan Air Force stationed in East Pakistan, had threatened a mutiny if Pak troops continued to move to Dhaka from West Pakistan by PIA Boeings) till 26 March, no Pak units moved from West Pakistan to East Pakistan, "but it does not mean that troops movement was altogether stopped. Leave parties continued moving, deficiencies in the existing units and formations were made up. These movements were carried out in civilian clothes as was the normal practice when flying via Sri Lanka"(115).

About 6 Coys of Pak troops were lifted by helicopters to Brahmanbaria area, and another battalion arrived there by river. These troops shelled the Mukti Bahini strongholds and the PAF also bombed them. Major Shafiullah, the Commander of the Mukti Bahini in this area, withdrew from Brahmanbaria and took up defensive positions in the northern borders of the Sylhet district. But the Pakistani forces pursued him and ultimately drove him and his men into India.

Vigorous action was taken against Sylhet also. A full brigade of Pak troops was air-lifted from Dhaka to Sylhet, and from there one column moved north to Zakiganj and another column southward to Maulvibazar. These columns drove away the freedom fighters from the towns. Fighting took place between the Pakistani

troops sent from Dhaka and the Mukti Bahini in Rajshahi, Bogra, Saidpur and Rangpur. Inevitably, the freedom fighters were defeated, suffering heavy casualties. Similarly, troops were air-lifted from Dhaka to Jessore from where columns were sent to Kushtia and Khulna. These columns inflicted heavy casualties on the "Mukti Bahini" and put down their resistance.

Thus, by the end of April 1971, the spontaneous and popular revolt in Bangladesh was crushed by the Pakistani rulers. By the end of May, only a part of Tetulia Thana of Dinajpur district, Patgram and Raumari Thanas of Rangpur district (on the eastern side of the river Jamuna), two small pockets in Sylhet district (one in Maulvibazar Sub-division and the other in Sylhet Sub-division), a total area of about 500 square miles, remained free from Pakistani control(116).

"Government's authority has been restored over the entire Province", declared the Army. But it was not the end of the bloody civil war - only the beginning.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Hardly a week before the National Assembly elections, Pakistani intelligence reports gave the following estimate of the seats likely to be won by the major political parties: Awami League-80, Qayyum Muslim League-70, Council Muslim League-40, NAP (Wali-Muzaffar)-35 and PPP-25. (Ayoob Mohammed and Subrahmanyam K., p.87).
2. Khan, Maj Gen Fazal Muqem, pp.40-41.
3. Muhith, A.M.A., p.183.
4. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., pp.152-153.
5. BD I, p.130.
6. Pakistan Observer, Dhaka, 25 Dec 1970.
7. From Official Records.
8. Rafiq, p.31.
9. The Pakistan Observer, Dhaka, 3 Feb 1971.
10. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.158.
11. The Dawn, Karachi, 16 February 1971.
12. Muhith, A.M.A., p.191.
13. Ali, K., p.115.
14. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.153.
15. BD I, p.138.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p.140.
18. From Official Records.
19. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.154.
20. Dewan Badrinath, Tremors in West Pakistan, in Chopra, P., (II) (ed.), p.146.
21. Ibid.
22. Ali K., p.108.
23. From Official Records.
24. From Official Records.
25. The Dawn, Karachi, 19 Feb 1971.
26. Ibid., 23 Feb 1971.
27. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.163.
28. Ibid., p.162.
29. From Official Records.
30. The Dawn, Karachi, 4 March 1971.
31. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.164
32. Maniruzzaman, T., p.79.
33. The Dawn, Karachi, 5 March 1971.
34. From Official Records.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., pp.166-167.
39. Ibid.
40. The Dawn, Karachi, 8 March 1971.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. From Official Records.
45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. The Pakistan Observer, Dhaka, 16 March 1971.
51. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.171
52. Maj Gen Farman Ali (Retd), who was posted in Dhaka during the Indo-Pak Conflict, 1971, said recently in Islamabad that besides the late Mr. Z.A. Bhutto and Gen Yahya Khan, some top Generals also had a hand in dismembering Pakistan, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had tried till the very end to keep Pakistan united - The Times of India, New Delhi, 16 April 1984.
53. The Dawn, Karachi, 23 Feb 1971.
54. Islam, R., p.34.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Rafiq-ul-Islam, pp.57-58.
58. Ibid., pp.61-62.
59. Ali, K., p.130.
60. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., pp.180-181.
61. Ibid.
62. Bhutto, Z.A. p.49.
63. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.35.
According to T. Maniruzzaman, the first battalion of reinforcements from West Pakistan arrived in Dhaka in the last week of February 1971, and by 1 March, the strength of the Pakistani Army in Bangladesh rose to 1½ Divisions, of which the share of the East Bengal Regiment consisting mainly of Bengalee Officers and soldiers was about 4½ battalions, a battalion each at Jessore, Joydebpur, Rangpur and Comilla, and half a battalion of EBR and about 1,000 EBR recruits under training in Chittagong. Thus, the total strength of EBR was about 4,000, while West Pakistani troops in Bangladesh were about 29,000. The total strength of the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), the vast majority of whom were Bengalees, was about 15,000, while the strength of the Bengalees, in the Police Force was about 40,000 (Maniruzzaman, T., pp.83-84)
64. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.39.
65. From Official Records.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Salik, p.69.
69. Ibid., p.62.
70. Ibid., p.63.
71. Ibid., p.71.
72. Ibid., pp.218-224. Full text of the Plan for operation is given in Appx.
73. A complex of modern red-brick buildings, constructed as the second Federal Capital of

Pakistan, on the South-Western fringe of Dhaka airport.

- 74. Bhuiyan, Md., A.W., p.185.
- 75. Salik, S., p.75.
- 76. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.89.
- 77. Dainik Bangla, 26 March 1972.
- 78. Salik, S., p.75.
- 79. Khan, Maj Gen (Retd) F.M., pp.72-73.
- 80. Salik, S., p.76.
- 81. Ali, K., p.142.

82. The CIA began its Allied Intelligence Operations in East Pakistan, with the beginning of the liberation movement. Initially, their Allied Intelligence Operations were merged generally with the counter-guerrilla operations of the West Pakistan Government. The Bengalee intellectuals were wiped out, on 25 March 1971, following a plan which had been drawn by the "Butcher" Jackson - the former U.S. AID official - in Dhaka. The list of victims was drawn up by an army intelligence officer, Colonel Taj and executed by Brigadier Bashir, Kader and Hijazi who were army interrogators. During the liberation struggle, CIA "pumped in men and money through various relief agencies...to divert the liberation movement from its goal of independence...to a compromise on a formula, short of independence". (The Statesman, 28 October 1971) and succeeded in creating a rift between the Military and the Political Wings of the Mukti Bahini. The political leaders were allured to strip Mukti Bahini's Brigadier Zia Khan (the commander of Rangpur), in the Mymensingh Sector, of his colours when he had already liberated over 500 square miles of East Pakistan's territory in his sector and was preparing to launch an offensive on Dhaka and Chittagong.

Then on the eve of the Pakistan's surrender, a list of three thousand intellectuals, including those fifty who hailed from the Dhaka University, had been prepared for their quick liquidation with the help of the Al Badar's student members who had been incited by the Jamait-e-Islami.

Garg, Captain S.K., p.169-170.

- 83. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.92.
- 84. Salik, S., p.77
- 85. From Official Records.
- 86. Ibid.
- 87. Maniruzzaman, T., p.83.
- 88. Ibid.
- 89. A confidential Note of the Provisional Govt. of Bangladesh claimed that Pakistan "lost atleast 10,000 soldiers including 150 officers," while

- due to their guerilla tactics their own losses were only one hundredth of that. This claim appears much exaggerated.
90. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.67.
 91. It appears likely that such captured enemies were soon killed by either side, though specific information in each case is not available.
 92. According to a Pakistani Army officer who personally witnessed the Bangladesh tragedy, the total number of Bengalee and West Pakistani troops in Chittagong, at that time, were 5000 and 600 respectively, (Salik.S., p.79).
 93. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.82.
 94. Ibid., p.96. However, according to S.Salik, the advance company suffered only eleven casualties, including the commanding officer, (Salik, S., p.80).
 95. Salik, S., p.80-81.
 96. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.97.
 97. Ibid., pp.99-100.
 98. Salik, S., p.83.
 99. Ibid., p.82.
 100. Ibid., p.83.
 101. Rafiq-ul-Islam, p.167.
 102. Ibid., p.175.
 103. Ibid., p.178.
 104. Maniruzzaman, T., p.88.
 105. Ibid., p.89.
 106. Ibid., p.90.
 107. Ibid.
 108. Ibid., p.91.
 109. Ibid., p.92.
 110. Ibid., pp.92-93.
 111. Ibid., p.91.
 112. Ibid., p.93.
 113. Ibid., pp.93-95.
 114. Ibid., p.96. According to S. Salik also, between 26 March and 6 April, Headquarters of 9 Div and 16 Div, five Bde Hqrs, one Commando and 12 Inf Bns arrived in Bangladesh from W. Pak. Three more Inf Bns and two mortar batteries arrived on 24 Apr and 2 May respectively. Similarly, between 10 Apr and 21 Apr, 2 Wings each of E. Pak. civil armed forces (EPCAF) and Rangers (WPR), besides sizeable number of Scouts from the North-West Frontier Province were air-lifted to take the duties of the E. Pak. Rifles and Police - (Salik, S., p.90).
 115. Khan, F.M., p.68.
 116. Maniruzzaman, T., p.98. According to S.Salik, the major towns were secured on the following dates:

Paksy(10	Apr)	Pabna(10
Apr),	Chandarghona(13	Apr),
Rajshahi(15	Apr),	Thakurgaon(15
Apr),	Brahmanbaria(17	Apr),
Darsana(19	Apr),	Hilli (21
Apr),	Satkhira(21	

Apr), Rangpur(26 Apr), Noakhali(26 Apr),
Santahar (27 Apr), Sirajganj(27 Apr), Maulvibazar
(28 Apr), Cox's Bazar(10 May) and Hatia (11
May). (Salik, S., p.90)

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