

## PREFACE

India won a glorious victory against Pakistan in the 1971 war. It was her first decisive victory in a major war in centuries. And it was won single-handedly, in the face of opposition and threats from a majority of the UN member-States, including a Super Power. Every Indian patriot felt proud of this glittering chapter in the nation's history.

2. I, therefore, readily agreed to prepare a history of this war when in 1983 I was recalled from retirement and offered the assignment. The Government provided to me the assistance of a team of specialist scholars and hand-picked Service officers. The draft history was completed before the target date in 1985. All the concerned Ministries, Intelligence Agencies and Services Headquarters have vetted the draft. However, they do not necessarily agree with all that is stated in the history, which should not be taken to reflect their views or to commit the Government in any way. I accept full responsibility for the facts stated and the opinions expressed.

3. As desired by Government, this history is as complete and as authentic as we could make it. It views the episode as a major national effort, and covers the problem of the East Bengal refugees, the administrative arrangements required, the internal political developments in India, and the diplomatic efforts abroad to resolve the crisis, apart from the operations of the three Services. The book has been compiled after studying the secondary or published sources, and some 5000 files of the Government, and after interviewing 66 of the important participants in the war. Twenty seven maps have been prepared for inclusion in this history to assist the reader - I wish we could prepare many more maps and sketches to illustrate even the minor operations described in the book. Foot-notes giving the references to original sources and particular files have been deleted under instructions of Government, but they are available in the 'master copy' kept in the History Division, Ministry of Defence.

4. Although this history is complete and authentic as per original records we could unearth from Prime Minister's Office, Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, and External Affairs etc, the draft has not been finally edited or polished. This effort appears useless and wasteful to me when the account is not to be published, and when the comments of a new set of

vectors would require to be amalgamated in the draft before it is published at some future date. For the present, the draft is released only for limited circulation for official use. I do not consider this account a proper history, but only a compilation of facts in narrative form. Its main value is as a record of facts researched from original records and from interviews with actual participants, while the records are still available and the participants are still alive.

5. Apart from the valuable assistance of the research team working with me, without whose dedicated and competent efforts the book could never have been completed in time, I acknowledge with gratitude the painstaking and wholehearted contribution of Dr. U.P. Thapliyal, the Director, and his colleagues in the History Division, Ministry of Defence, in bringing out this work. My sincere thanks are also due to the Secretarial staff and typists involved in the project, specially Shri Girdhari Lal and Shri D. Tamil Selvan, who worked tirelessly and for long hours to produce a fair copy of the draft. The work could never have been accomplished, of course, without the active support and personal interest of the Defence Ministers and Secretaries (especially Shri S.K. Bhatnagar and Shri N.N. Vohra), to whom I feel deeply indebted.

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*S.N. Prasad*  
4 June '92  
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