

REVOLUTION
MILITARY PERSONNEL
AND
THE WAR OF LIBERATION IN BANGLADESH

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Dr. Col. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram (Retd.)

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written by: Dr. Col. Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram (Retd.) published
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Dedicated
To
The people of Bangladesh
Who fought and supported
The war of Liberation PREFACE

Focussing on the role and motivations of the Bengali military officers in the Pakistan Army during the initial but crucial phase of the Liberation War of 1971, this study has dwelt in details on the dynamic factors that led to the birth of a new state Bangladesh. The main motivating aspirations of

the military officers were nationalistic in essence. Unlike the military in many of the Third World countries, at that point of time, the Bengali military officers made a move neither for grabbing political power nor for replacing a corrupt or inept regime but for establishing an independent state of Bangladesh. The aims of the study have been to explain why the Bengali military officers became actors in the Liberation War, how they were motivated, when they took the crucial decision to revolt and declare independence of Bangladesh and how they proceeded till the formation of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile. I must say, Dr. Oli Ahmad has advanced cautiously and executed the research plan adroitly.

Being an activist himself from the very beginning he had to confront fumbling moments at times, but new methodology he adopted- the slippery process of auto ethnography has served him well to maintain objectivity on the one hand and to proceed courageously on the other. In final, he has come up with a study, which is not only original but also factual.

The findings of the study are indeed noteworthy. The Bengali political leaders prepared the people of East Pakistan for a revolutionary movement but at the crucial moment they faltered. As one of the dominant social forces in East Pakistan, the Bengali military officers watched from close quarters how ethnically, linguistically and culturally different East Pakistanis were subjected to the discriminatory policies of the ruling elite in Pakistan, which led to the wholesale alienation of the Bengalis. The 1970 general election, which was first of its kind in Pakistan, worked as a catalyst to sharpen the east-west confrontation still further. The post-election negotiation between the political leaders of

East and West Pakistan was used by the ruling elite of West Pakistan as a ploy to strengthen their military capability in East Pakistan, because they already decided to undertake a military solution to the political crisis, in fact for crushing the revolutionary movement by force. The Bengali military officers, who were deeply motivated by nationalistic aspirations, knew what was happening in the few cantonments in East Pakistan. That prompted them to take the critical decision of revolting from the Pakistan Army, declaring Independence of Bangladesh and starting the Liberation War from 25 March 1971 when the political leaders were in complete disarray. Not only did they start the war but also continued the Liberation

War on their own till 17 April 1971 when the Bangladesh Government-in-exile was formed to take it up. The military officers then accepted the command of the Bangladesh Government and ultimately came out victorious on 16 December 1971 through a grueling nine-month long war. This study, thus providing materials on the missing link between the people's movement in East Pakistan in March 1971 and the full-scale war of Independence under the leadership of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile on 17 April 1971, has helped to recreate the history of the Liberation War, which is the most brilliant chapter of our national history. The huge mass of data, collected both from the primary and secondary sources, have been marshaled by the author Dr. Ahmad to bring home to the readers what he intended. Though an active participant in the war, he has never lost sight of the objectivity of such a study and has remained absolutely neutral in his approach. I wish a wide readership of such a study, which is both interesting and instructive.

Prof. Emajuddin Ahamed, PhD

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

My Ph.D. thesis which was submitted in Oxford Brookes University in September 2003 is reproduced in this book. I intended to provide a fuller, deeper, and more thorough history of revolution of March 1971. I also attempted to elaborate, refine, reason and tried to explain under what circumstances, why we revolted and who gave the leadership. I tried to include and provide new topics not covered earlier on the revolution and especially the missing link of the history, i.e. period from 26 March to 17 April 1971 when there was no government and Bangladesh Army fought the war on their own during this period.

This book intends to present a framework for viewing correctly and analyzing the role of political leaders and military officers during the crucial period. My role in the revolution can only be clearly understood if one reads carefully the annual confidential report written by the then

Brigadier Ziaur Rahman, BU psc 1973 quoted below, which was corroborated by the then Chief of Army Brigadier K. M. Safiullah, BU psc. Most of the senior officers also wrote in my ACR that I was an asset to the army.

“An extremely loyal, brave and devoted officer who would take any amount of risk to complete a given task. He has a very quick uptake and can assess any difficult situation with ease and at times admirably well. He is highly reliable and is very considerate to his subordinates.

This officer played the main part which enabled 8th Battalion The East Bengal Regiment to revolt on the crucial night of 25/26 Mar 71 at Chittagong.

Throughout the war of independence 1971, this officer displayed cool courage in the face of heavy odds and enemy opposition. He has taken part in many actions admirably. As Brigade Major he performed excellently, most of the time also performing as DQMG.

His leadership qualities in the field during the war was a matter of inspiration for others including Indian Officers who were associated with ‘Z’ Force from time to time.”

The second annual confidential report was written by Brig. Mir Shawkat Ali, BU psc in 1974 and corroborated by the Deputy Chief of Army the then Maj. Gen. Ziaur Rahman, BU psc.

“This officer has an extraordinary ability to organize things. He is extremely hardworking and is capable of taking much greater responsibility than his rank demands. This officer if properly guided will be an asset to the army. His services during war was commendable – he in fact was the first officer who took risk and on his own initiatives informed Gen. Ziaur Rahman regarding declaration of Independence on night 25/26 Mar 71.” [For detail information see appendix 8]

I was fortunate to be able to participate and give leadership for the revolution. No doubt, I benefited and established my role in the revolution from the insights and interviews of the key participants of the liberation war.

The work which I have completed may be seminal in the sense that it might provoke many people in this society to re-examine those momentous events of 1971, and I believe that it may lead to a full scale investigation into the early stages of the Liberation War of 1971.

My deepest debt of gratitude goes to Professor Emajuddin Ahamed, my second supervisor, Vice Chancellor of University of Development Alternative, Dhaka and a former Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, for his consistent encouragement and support in writing the thesis. His generosity with his time and forbearance helped me to complete the thesis in time. He made immense contribution to improve the style and my presentation.

Here is my deepest gratitude to Prof. Barrie Axford for his supervision, making valuable comments on the substance, style and presentation. His guidance has been of great help to me in writing the thesis. I remember with gratitude his constant suggestions, tendered quite often, for improving the quality of this dissertation.

I am indebted to Principal Khurshid Alam who inspired me to do the research on revolution of 1971. I am also grateful to Prof. Niaz Ahmad Khan of Chittagong University for his helpful comments and informal discussion on methodology.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to my wife, Mumtaz Begum for her cooperation, patience and sacrifice without which the thesis might not have been complete.

The entire manuscript was typed several times by my eldest son Omar Faruq. He has also made corrections on spelling mistakes that made the book much better than it would have been otherwise. I take personal responsibility for any remaining deficiencies.

I must also thank all my family members, especially my son Omar Sharif, sons-in-law Mohammed Yousuf and Munshi Gulam Rabbi, my daughters Anwara Begum, Sonia Mumtaz and daughters-in-law Sabina Sharmin and Tamzida Parveen, who have encouraged and supported me during this trying time whole heartedly.

I gratefully acknowledge the support of Mr. Aziz-ur- Rahman, his family living at Oxford, Mr. Seraj Haque, Mr. Rashid, Mr. Aftab, and Dr. Nurun Nabi from East London. In addition I am thankful to Mr. Eltham Kabir for his cooperation, inspiration and support.

Dr. Col. Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram (Retd.)

PREFACE

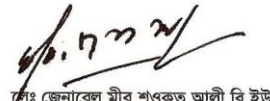
Dr. Oli Ahmad through this book has presented the nation a documentary record on the declaration of independence of Bangladesh, how the revolution took place, the role of Bengali military officers based on substantive truth and facts. I, myself, was an observer and participant in this revolution. I had the opportunity to observe very closely the role of Captain Oli Ahmad and the performance of 8 E Bengal Regiment in the uprising of 25th March, 1971. Dr. Oli, through his writing, has nicely and correctly recorded the role of Major Zia, himself and of all others.

Members of the Armed Forces on their own initiative fought against the Pakistan Army and administered the nation from 26th March to 17th April 1971. During this period politicians were busy in organizing themselves in various cities of Kolkata, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. At this critical juncture of the nation, the role of the Bengali Military officers is one of great pride and glory in the chapter of the war of independence. On 17th April 1971, the Government of Bangladesh was formed in exile.

In 1971, the politicians under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman prepared the nation for all out resistance against Pakistan. But after the nightfall of 25th March, the people were deprived of their leadership. At this crucial time and transitional phase of the nation, Captain Oli Ahmad organized the 8th Battalion the East Bengal Regiment and revolted against Pakistan Army. Major Zia announced the independence of Bangladesh from Kalur Ghat radio transmitting station

on 27th March. He was our leader and the first transient President of Bangladesh.

Dr. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram, through his research work, has narrated correctly the factual history behind the onset of the War of Liberation and also on the missing links of the history. Though Dr. Oli Ahmad gave leadership in the revolution, yet he maintained neutrality in presenting a factual document for posterity. As resource material with precise recording of history, the importance of this research work is invaluable. Undoubtedly this is a commendable initiative taken by him.



শেঃ জেনারেল মীর শওকত আলী বি ইউ
৭.৮.২০০৫

Lt. General. Mir Showkat Ali, B.U, Psc

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Oli Ahmad was born on 13 March 1939 in the famous 'Kutub' family of Chandanaish, Chittagong. His Father's name is Late Amanat Safa & Mother's name is Late Badrunnesa. He passed S.S.C. in 1957 from Gasbaria N G High School at Chandanaish. He obtained BA degree in the year 1964 from National College, Karachi. His unquenchable thirst for knowledge and self-improvement is a very rare and unique feature amongst our current political leaders. Even under the pressure of being a national leader, Oli Ahmad obtained PhD. degree from Oxford Brookes University, UK on 22 September 2003 for his thesis titled "Revolution, Military Personnel and the War of Liberation in Bangladesh".

While studying Law he joined Pakistan Military Academy and was commissioned in the year 1965. He was posted to 4 East Bengal Regiment in 1967 and thereafter to 8 East Bengal Regiment on 24 Sept. 1970.

During the turbulent period of early 1971 Capt. Oli Ahmad along with Lt. Col. M. R. Chowdhury and Maj. Ziaur Rahman planned their actions & took preparations in the event of Pakistan Military crackdown. On 25th March 1971, at mid night Capt. Oli Ahmad was the first officer to revolt against Pakistan occupational Army after hearing that, Pakistan Army started massacre at Dhaka. He immediately organised 8 E Bengal for fighting against them under the leadership of Major Ziaur Rahman,

Second-in-Command of the battalion. Capt. Oli Ahmad was the first Quarter Master of the Regiment located at Sholoshahar, Chittagong.

Capt. Oli established Combined Headquarters at Fultala of Boalkhali, Chittagong on 27th March 1971 for Army, BDR, Police, Ansars and Freedom Fighters. He was given the responsibility to organize and co-ordinate the battles at greater Chittagong area. He deployed troops at Sitakunda, Chittagong University area, Chittagong port area, Chittagong Court building area, Medical College area, Chokbazar, Cox's Bazar and Kalurghat Radio Station area under the leadership of various officers and on instructions from Major Zia. Infact they laid the foundation of the War of Liberation in Bangladesh and today's modern Arm Forces. He inspired Ziaur Rahman to declare Independence of Bangladesh from Kalurghat Radio Station on 27th March 1971.

Subsequently in the ensuing period, Capt. Oli was appointed Sub-Sector Commander of Chittagong area in the month of April 1971. He was given the responsibility to fight and defend the area from Feni River to Karerhat of Chittagong and was the first sub-sector commander of liberation forces. He fought gallantly in the famous battles of Kalurghat, Mirsarai, Mastannagar, Karerhat, Tolatali, Haku, Chikanchara under Chittagong District, Ramgar under Khagrachari District and Belunia under Noakhali District.

In recognition of his bravery, he was conferred with the gallantry award "Bir Bikram" in the month of September 1971. He was the first officer to be awarded "Bir Bikram" during the liberation war. In July 1971, he was appointed first Brigade Major of the famous 'Z-Force' and also the first and only Bangladeshi officer appointed as Brigade Major during the war.

He was promoted to the rank of Major in October 1972. He served as the Second-in-Command of 19 East Bengal, 9 East Bengal, 10 East Bengal and 6 East Bengal Regiments. For his out standing service record, late President Ziaur Rahman, BU, Psc and Lt. Gen. Mir Showkat Ali, BU, Psc graded Capt. Oli Ahmad on his Annual Confidential Report as an "out standing" officer several times and many a times in the following manner. "This officer will be an asset to Bangladesh Army".

He was promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel in September 1975. He commanded and raised 24 East Bengal Regiment at Saidpur. Thereafter he was posted to Army Head Quarters as a General Staff Officer-1 (Operation). His subsequent postings were to the Office of the Chief of Army Staff and DCMLA and later to the Office of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, CMLA and President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He was promoted to the rank of Colonel in January 1980. He played an important role for controlling nineteen coupde-tats, that took place during the period from 1975 to 1977 and made great contribution to restore peace and stability in the country. A long associate and as a trusted friend of President Ziaur Rahman, he organized political party by remaining behind the scene while serving at President's House. Later on the party was renamed as BNP on his advice.

Dr. Oli Ahmad resigned from service in January 1980 to start his political career. He worked hard to organise BNP through out the country and was one of the founder of the party. Although he joined Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in the month of February 1980. At the beginning of his political career, Dr. Oli Ahmad was appointed as State Minister in charge of Ministry of Youth Development in February 1982 where he continued till Martial Law was imposed by Lt. Gen. H. M. Ershad.

Most of the senior leaders joined military dictator Lt. Gen. H. M. Ershad in 1982 after Martial Law. But Dr. Oli Ahmad could not be purchased or coerced into submission. He was the most trusted friend of Begum Zia and Zia's family. He maintained his principle through out his political career and was imprisoned twice for political protest during the autocratic rule of Ershad.

Dr. Oli was elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time in March 1980, second time on 27 February 1991, third time on 15 February 1996, fourth time on 12 June 1996, fifth time on 01 October 2001 and sixth time on 29 December 2008.

Dr. Oli Ahmad consistently upholds his moral stance through out his political career. Never surrendering before any pressure or to any body's unfair demands. He helped Begum Khaleda Zia to gain control of BNP after the death of President Ziaur Rahman on 30th May 1981. In this period his hard work and sincerity helped him to establish himself as one of the leading political figures in BNP. Dr. Oli Ahmad was inducted into the Standing Committee in 1984, highest policy-making body of

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). He also played very important role to reorganise BNP and maintain unity among the rank and file (especially after the desertion of most of the senior leaders of the party) which paved the way for BNP to win Parliamentary Election in 1991.

Dr. Oli Ahmad was appointed as Cabinet Minister on 20 March 1991 and given the port folio of the Ministry of Communications and held the same port folio till March 1996. He brought new reforms in Bangladesh Railway, BRTC, BRTA and road construction. Some of the organisations were on the verge of financial bankruptcy (with tremendous pressure and objections from international donor agencies about the performance of Ministry of Communication). However, at the end of his tenure these organisations were not only made profitable and efficient but also their services expanded. As an administrator Dr. Oli Ahmad has always displayed visionary and pragmatic ideas. As the Minister for Communications he performed excellently. Infact he laid the foundation of modern road network and constructed many big bridges through out the country (construction work of Jamuna Multipurpose bridge was started and 60% work completed during his tenure).

He was sworn in and given the port folio of the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food and Ministry of Water Development Resources in the new cabinet formed in the last week of February 1996. But it was changed on the next day and was appointed as Minister for Energy, Gas and Mineral Resources where he continued till the resignation of BNP government on 30 March 1996. During this short period he improved the performance of Power Development Board and increased their production capacity by 130 MW.

He was In-Charge of Relief, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management for Chittagong and Chittagong hill-tracts immediately after the devastating cyclone and tidal waves of 29 April 1991. First ten days were the most crucial period for rehabilitation and bringing normalcy in the affected costal areas and Chittagong town. Despite the fact that all communication networks, public services and amenities were disrupted, with no food supply and drinking water readily available. Approximately One Hundred Twenty Five Thousand died and none was available to bury the dead bodies. He deployed Ansars and village defense party for the burial. On the night of 30th April he physically guarded Chittagong port & railway stores till the arrival of army and police contingent with his security guards. He worked day & night to restore normal life along with

all Govt. and semi-Govt. officials posted at Chittagong. He involved all M.P.'s, Chairman's, other elected representatives and eloquent people of the society for distribution of relief and rehabilitation of the affected people. He controlled the situation and brought almost normalcy within 7 days. Thereafter a few Minister's and officials were sent from Dhaka for helping in distribution of relief materials in different Upazilla's and Thana's. His works were greatly appreciated at home and abroad. Foreign help came only after restoring normalcy in the affected areas.

As Minister for Communication, Dr. Ahmad led the Bangladeshi delegation to attend The XIX World Congress held in Marrakesh, Morocco in September 1991. Bangladesh was one of the six countries to address the plenary session, where Dr. Oli Ahmad in his keynote speech highlighted the ambitious programme undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh for the construction of Roads & improvement in Road Transport Sector with particular emphasis on construction of highways and related infrastructure. Belgium, France and U.S.A. were among the other countries participated in the plenary session.

Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Turkey on an invitation from his Turkish counterpart during April- May 1992, where he intensively visited various important installations including those of railway and transportation sector. During the visit he also had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey.

As Communications Minister he participated in a conference held in Bangkok on 'Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific' during June 3 □ 5, 1992. Ministers from different Asian Countries responsible for transport and communications attended the conference. It was sponsored by ESCAP and Dr. Ahmad was elected as Chairman of Plenary Session.

Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Mexico from 21 Nov. □ 3 Dec. 1992. He was invited by the Mexican government to attend an international seminar on "25 years of Road Developments: Prospects and Problems", where he addressed the inaugural session as the Guest of Honour.

On an invitation from the Honorable Minister of Communication of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Saudi Arabia from

11 to 16 November 1993. During the visit he met the Chief of Saudi Fund for Development in Riyadh, the Minister of Finance and the President of Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah. He arranged 25 Million Saudi Rial as grant for the rehabilitation of Bangladesh Railways. He also visited the holy city of Mecca and Medina Sharif.

Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Myanmar in 1993 as special envoy of the Prime Minister. During the visit he held meetings with the President of Myanmar who is also the Chairman of State Law and Order Restoration Council. He also met the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Trade, Minister of Development of Border areas & National Races, Minister of National Planning and Economic Development and Minister of Home Affairs. This visit resolved the outstanding problems regarding return of Rohingya refugees and paved the way for better understanding between the two neighbours. This visit also ensured the stationing of UNHCR at Myanmar, which was not accepted by them earlier.

On an invitation from Chinese Railway Minister Dr. Oli Ahmad visited China from 28 October to 5th November 1993. During the visit he met the Vice Premier, Minister for Communications and Minister for Railways and resolved many outstanding issues with China.

Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Republic of Korea in April 1994 and gulfcountry Qatar in September 1994. On an invitation from the Iranian Minister for Roads and Transportation, he visited Iran from 7 to 13 June 1995. During the visit he met President of Iran and Speaker of the Iranian Parliament (Majlish). He visited various important installations including those of railway and transportation sector.

Dr. Oli Ahmad visited India from 2 to 9 May 1993 on an invitation from his Indian counterpart. During the visit he held meetings with the Prime Minister, Railway Minister, Foreign Minister, Home Minister, Commerce Minister and Water Resource Minister of India. He also visited different important installations of Indian Railway. He held separate meetings with the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Tripura and Governor of Rajas-than and Tripura. He was given the responsibility to resolve Chakma refugee and Armed Cadre “Shanti Bahini Problem”. He explained the position of Bangladesh government regarding Chakma rebels of Chittagong hill tracts and sought the cooperation of Indian Government for the repatriation of Chakma refugees staying at Tripura.

Dr. Oli Ahmad started visiting nook and corner of Chittagong Hill Tract along with other members of the committee, exchanged views with people of different strata of life, members of Shanti Bahini, convinced them to give up arms and lead a peaceful life. He visited Tripura (India) from 31st January to 2nd February 1995 in connection with repatriation of Chakma refugees and met the Governor of Tripura. He visited different refugee camps and convince them to return to their home land. He concluded a successful agreement with the Government of India and arranged the repatriation of Chakma refugees. After the successful agreement about 10 thousand Chakma refugees came back to Chittagong Hill Tract. He laid the foundation for repatriation and brought peace for the people of Hill Tract. The process was completed during the rule of Awami League through another agreement with Shanti Bahini leaders.

Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Malaysia from 2-4 May 1995 on an invitation from Chairman, Organizing Committee of the South-East Asian Conference on “Infrastructure for the 21st Century: New Perspective and Exiting Opportunities”. He presented a paper on “Opportunities for Investment in Infrastructure in Bangladesh”. It was highly appreciated by the audience. Dr. Oli Ahmad visited Canada from 2-9 September 1995 to attend ‘The 20th World Road Congress’ held in Montreal.

Dr. Oli Ahmad also visited Saudi Arabia on 11-14 September 1995 to attend 25th Founding Ceremony of the OIC held in Jeddah. He addressed the gathering on behalf of Asian countries.

Dr. Oli Ahmad attended a conference on “Global Terrorism and its Remedies” held in June 2006 at New York City of USA. The conference was jointly organized by Homeland Security of USA & Bangladeshi Nationals. Besides Dr. Oli Ahmad many Senators, Congressman & Chairman; Homeland Security participated in the conference.

He also led a delegation on 3rd Asian women Parliamentarians and Ministers Conference held at Sri Lanka on 2nd & 3rd August 2005 and was selected for chairing a session. He attended 55th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in Arusha, Tanzania from 1st October to 6th October 2009 as a representative of Bangladesh Parliament. He participated in a discussion held on “Climate Change” and made important contribution which was appreciated by all participants.

He served as President/Convenor and member of Twenty Nine Cabinet & Parliamentary Standing Committees (comprised of Ministers & MP's only).

He played an important role in bringing public awareness and accountability against corruption, extortion, use of illegal weapons and extremism of some of the Ministers, MP's and some political big wigs of his own party BNP and other political parties from 2001 to 2006. Subsequently he resigned from BNP in protest against corruption, extortion, armed hooliganism and extremism. Since 1991 he worked relentlessly for bringing reforms in the political system, accountability in the governing system and society. Throughout his career he retained an untarnished record of honesty and integrity. He formed a new political party on 26th October 2006 with an ambition and dream to establish corruption, extortion, armed hooliganism and extremism free Bangladesh. Where democracy will take root, people will get their due share and proper justice.

As a member of the Presidential entourage, Minister and MP Dr. Oli Ahmad visited numerous countries. These include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, City of Vatican, Cuba, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Netherlands, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Rumania, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, UK, USA, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Taiwan and Tanzania.

Dr. Oli Ahmad was bestowed with rare honour of being included in "Statesmen's WHO's WHO" in 1992 for his outstanding leadership quality, which is till date a unique feature for the politicians of the country. Dr. Ahmad's name also appears in Asia Pacific WHO'S WHO published in 2009-Vol. IX from New Delhi, India for his outstanding leadership quality.

Dr. Oli Ahmad was conferred with the following awards in recognition of his gallant services, social work and contribution in education sector: 1) Campaign Star, 2) War Medal (1965), 3) Tamga-e-Jang, 4) Liberation Star, 5) Victory Medal, 6) Constitution Medal, 7) Order of the National Flag 3rd Grade 1978, 8) Bir Bikram (1971). 9) "Zia Gold Medal 1992" – as Greatest Freedom Fighter by JASAS. 10) JASAS Independence Gold Medal 2003 (by JASAS). 11) "Moulana Mohammad

Moniruzzaman Islamabadi research Institute Gold Medal 2002” for social work and contribution in education sector, 12) “Chittagong Association Medal 2002” for outstanding contribution in the development of Chittagong Association, (13) ZISAS Independence Gold Medal 2005 for heroic contribution in the war of Independence.

Dr. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram was associated with several Cabinets, parliamentary, and other Committees in different capacities, Such as:

- (1) Member, Public Accounts Committee 1980-1981
- (2) Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Youth Development 1991-96
- (3) Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Communications 1991-96
- (4) Convener, Cabinet Committee on Evaluation and Implementation of Cabinet Decisions 1991-96
- (5) Member, Cabinet Committee on Nationally Important and Emergent Matters 1991-96
- (6) Member Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase 1991-96
- (7) Member, Cabinet Committee on Rules of Business 1991-96
- (8) Member, Cabinet Committee on Senior Appointment and Promotions 1991-96
- (9) Member, Cabinet Committee on Economic and Financial Matters 1991-96
- (10) Member, National Implementation Committee on Administrative Re-organization 1991-96
- (11) Member, Cabinet Committee on Hill Tracts Affairs 1991-96
- (12) Member, National Committee on Irrigation and Flood control 1991-96
- (13) Member, Cabinet Sub-Committee on Pay and Allowances of the Armed Forces 1991-96
- (14) Member National Training Council 1991-96
- (15) Member, National Tourism Council 1991-96
- (16) Member, National Council on Energy and Mineral Resources 1991-96
- (17) Member, Sub-Committee for Implementation of the Decisions of the 7th SAARC Summit 1991-96
- (18) Convener, NICAR Sub-Committee on Thana and Union Delimitation 1991-96
- (19) Member, National Population Council 1991-96

- (20) Convener, Council Committee on Administrative Re-organization 1991-96
- (21) Convener, Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs 1991-96
- (22) Co-Chairman, National Committee on Gold Cup Football Tournament 1991-96
- (23) Alternative President of SAAF Games 1991-96
- (24) Vice-Chairman, Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust 1991-96 (25) Member, Parliamentary Business Advisory Committee- 2001.
- (26) President of Bangladesh Football Federation.
- (27) Member, National Standing Committee of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Highest policy making forum of the party)- 1984.
- (28) Member, Children's Rights InterGroup (Caucus) (organized by the Members of Parliament from all over the world)- 2000.
- (29) Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee, Ministry of Planning- February, 2009.

Dr. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram was associated with the following Organizations, Associations and Professional Societies in different capacity, Such as:

- (30) President of Liberal Democratic Party- 2007.
- (31) Chief Advisor, The Daily Janopad- 1994.
- (32) Chairman, Daily Eishan Publication Group (A Daily News Paper)- 1997.
- (33) Chief Patron of Quasem-Mahabub High School, Chandanaish Chittagong- 1991.
- (34) Honorary Patron, Institute of Applied Health Science (A Private Medical College), Chittagong- 1991.
- (35) Chief Patron, Bangladesh Anjumane- E- Ittehadul Muslemeen, Dhaka- 1992.
- (36) Life Member of Kidney Foundation, Chittagong- 1991.
- (37) Life-Member and Vice President of the Trustee of the Board of the Chittagong Samity- 1984.
- (38) Founder Member of the University of Science and Technology Chittagong (USTC)- 1991.
- (39) Life Member of Retired Armed-Forces Officers' Welfare Associations (RAOWA)
- (40) Life Member of MP Club
- (41) Honorary Member of the Dhaka Club Dhaka
- (42) Life member of Kurmitola Golf Club, Dhaka

- (43) Life member of Army Golf Club, Dhaka
- (44) Life Member of Cox's Bazaar Press Club
- (45) Chief Patron of Chandanaish Press Club
- (46) Life Member of Chittagong Press Club
- (47) Life Member of Chattagram Samity, UK.
- (48) Life Member of Chandanaish Samity, Dhaka.
- (49) Chairman, Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children(SAHIC)- 2006-2008.
- (50) Life Member, Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children(SAHIC)- 2006.
- (51) Chief Patron of Social Welfare Organisation Co-ordination for Chittagong District.
- (52) Life Member, Army Golf Club, Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka- July, 2009.

Dr. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram, is the Founder of following Educational and Welfare Institutions, such as:

- (53) Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram College Satbaria, Chandanaish, Chittagong
- (54) Colonel Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram Degree College, Bazalia, Satkania, Chittagong
- (55) Amanatsafa- Badrunnessa Girls' Degree College, Chandanaish
- (56) Oli Ahmad High School, Barkal, Chittagong
- (57) Mumtaz Begum Kindergarten School, Chandanaish.
- (58) Mumtaz Begum Girls High School, Chandanaish, Chittagong.
- (59) Dohazari-Jamijuri Girls High School, Chittagong.
- (60) Charamba Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram High School, Lohagara Upazilla.
- (61) Jonar Keochia Adarsha High School, Satkania.
- (62) Keochia High School, Satkania.
- (63) Jafrabad High School, Chandanaish.
- (64) Col. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram Stadium, Lohagara, Chittagong.
- (65) Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram Orphanage, Hashimpur, Chandanaish.
- (66) Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram Orphanage, Barkal, Chandanaish..
- (67) Oli Ahmad People's Welfare Trust, Chittagong.
- (68) Old People's Home & Orphanage, Chandanaish, Chittagong.

- (69) Dr. Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram High School, Muhori Para, Dharmapur, Satkania.
- (70) Dohazari-Jamijuri Technical College, Chandanaish, Chittagong.
- (71) Colonel Oli Ahmad Bir Bikram Technical College, Bazalia, Satkania, Chittagong
- (72) He took the initiative and convinced Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, BU, psc. to declare the following private Colleges into Government College in the year 1976 - 1980.
 - (i) Gasbaria Government College.
 - (ii) Cox's Bazar Government College.
 - (iii) Bandarban Government College.
 - (iv) Patiya Government College.
 - (v) Boalkhali Kanungopara Sir Ashutush Government College.
 - (vi) Chittagong Government Mohsin College.
 - (vii) Chittagong Government City College. (viii) Chittagong Government Women College.

Dr. Oli Ahmad resonates his political ideals, his future plan and dream for the country, the future of BNP leaders & BNP, present prevailing condition of the country & the true facts of the initial stages of the Revolution and the Liberation war in his following books –

- 1) “My Struggle, My Politics” on 1 September 2001;
- 2) “My Ideal”; (AMAR ADARSHA) on March 2004;
- 3) “Revolution, Military Personnel and the War of Liberation in Bangladesh”- 2003;
- 4) “My Politics” (AMAR RAJNITI)- 2007.
- 5) “Rastrabiplab, Shamarik Bahinir Shadashabrinda Abong Bangladesher Muktijodda”- on February 2008
- 6) “Ja Dekhechi Ja Bolechi Ja Hoyeche” on April 2008
- 7) Battles That I Fought and Interviews of Liberation War Heroes.
- 8) “Ashoni Sanket- Din Bodal Na Hatt Bodal” (Foreboding of a thunder-crash, - Change of Day or Change of Hand).

He performed the Holy Umrah more than Thirty times besides performing the Holy Hajj (3 Times).

He used to play Football, Volleyball, and Lawn Tennis in his days in the army. Over the past decade, he proved himself to be a prominent Amateur Golfer of Bangladesh with innumerable trophies to his credit.

Dr. Oli Ahmad and Begum Mumtaz are blessed with two sons and two daughters. She was elected as a Member of Parliament in 12 June 1996 & continued till June 2001.

Address at Dhaka:

Dr. Oli Ahmad, Bir Bikram 102.
Park Road.
New DOHS. Mohakhali.
Dhaka 1206. BANGLADESH.
Phone: 01199850177
E-mail: dr.oliahmad@gmail.com

TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

2 Lt.	Second Lieutenant
75 mm RR	75 millimeter Recoilless Rifle.
ACR	Annual Confidential Report
AL	Awami League
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BOP	Border Out-Post
BPC	Basic Principles Committee Report
Brig.	Brigadier
BSF	Border Security Force (India)
Capt.	Captain
CO	Commanding Officer
Col.	Colonel
Dr.	Doctor
EBR	East Bengal Regiment
EBRC	East Bengal Regimental Centre
EPR	East Pakistan Rifles
FF	Freedom Fighters
FUP	Forming Up Place
GBM	Ganges Brahmaputra & Meghna
Gen.	General
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GRP	Gross Regional Product
Hav.	Havilder
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IDBP	Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan.
JCO	Junior Commissioned Officer
LMG	Light Machine Gun
LNK	Lance Naik
Lt.	Lieutenant
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel

Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General
Maj.	Major
Maj. Gen.	Major General
MG	Machine Gun
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
NCO	Non- Commissioned Officer
NWO	New World Order
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
PICIC	Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation
PPP	People's Party of Pakistan
PRO	Public Relation Officer
PRODA	Public and Representative Officers' (Disqualification) Act
Retd.	Retired
SEP	Sepoy
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States

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INTRODUCTION

Amitai Etzioni has identified three integrative powers in the political system corresponding to three capacities - identitive, utilitarian and coercive. (i) Identitive power involving common values, symbols or identity of interests, is the primary force of integration. This power is enhanced and reinforced by (ii) the utilitarian power of the system, representing its economic and administrative capabilities. If any political system has been able to acquire adequate identitive and utilitarian power, its coercive power is likely to increase; but when identitive power becomes ineffective and utilitarian power weak, then the alienated group or unit may seek to secede or alter the structure of a union. The use of (iii) coercive power at that stage not only compounds the problem but also accelerates decay (Etzioni, 1965: 37- 40, 122- 124).

The Union of East and West Pakistan was entered into voluntarily in 1947. The factors working in favour of such a union were the predominantly Muslim majorities in both the regions and fear of domination by the Hindu majority in united India. These factors resulted in a Pakistan nationalism based on the ideal of Islamic unity. The ruling elites in Pakistan, however, from the very beginning followed certain policies, which alienated the Bengali elites. For example, the policy of cultural assimilation was born out of distrust of the Bengalis. The ruling elites in Pakistan believed that if Bengali language and literature in East Pakistan were allowed to maintain contacts with the Hindu-dominated West Bengal, this might adversely affect the ideological unity of Pakistan. Hence time and again efforts were made to Islamicize Bengali language and literature (Ahmed 1967: 57- 70; Ahmad, 1968: 150- 160).

The policy of centralized administration and the increasing monopolization of political power by the West Pakistanis, especially after 1958, had an alienating effect on the Bengalis. After the military coup of 1958, the civil-military, bureaucracy where East Pakistan had the least representation, came to the forefront as the ruling elite in Pakistan. Thus East Pakistanis lost their representation in the decision-making structure

and became disaffected. Without a sense of shared political community the Bengali elite were increasingly inclined to distance themselves from the highly centralized administration of Pakistan.¹ The strong economic growth that had emerged in Pakistan during the 1960s made Bengali elite conscious of their deprivation on the one hand and raised their expectations on the other. Thus in the 1960s, both the identitive and utilitarian power of the political system in Pakistan declined beyond measure, because the system denied adequate opportunities for effective participation to Bengali elite, and the segmented economic growth in Pakistan heightened their sense of deprivation. The Six-Point Programme of the Awami League, enunciated in 1966, was both a reaction to, and a challenge against, the policy measures of the central government (Rahman, 1966). This was in fact designed by the leading political party of East Pakistan, the Awami League, to bring about a fundamental change in the structure of power in the system, and it ultimately led to the disintegration of Pakistan (Ahamed 1989: 28-47).

The basic premise of the Awami League's Six-Point Programme was that the domination of vital areas of economic policy by the West Pakistani elite had resulted in the growing economic deprivation of East Pakistan and consequently the bitter relationship between the two regions. The Six-Point Programme was designed primarily to transfer power regarding currency, taxation, utilization of foreign exchange earnings and foreign trade to the regional governments from the centre. This programme, if implemented, might have reduced the areas of conflict, and enabled the two regions to develop a healthy working relationship.

In 1971, the situation dramatically altered in favour of the Bengalis, because in the first ever general elections in Pakistan in the later days of 1970 and the early days of 1971, the Awami League, representing Bengali

¹ Here stability of the political system in Pakistan has been viewed in the line of David Easton. See his *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley and Sons: 1965.

interests, won a landslide victory, and emerged as the majority party in Pakistan. Unfortunately, even after that, the Bengalis were deprived of the opportunities to take control of the central government. At the crucial stage of negotiations in 1971, the West Pakistani generals played a vital role. They were primarily concerned with the defense forces in Pakistan. They considered that the regional government's control of currency, foreign exchange earnings, foreign trade and taxation would mean an end to Pakistan, because that would mean East Pakistan's control over the resources of East Pakistan, and the East Pakistani elite might not be interested in the maintenance of a big military establishment manned mainly by the West Pakistanis. Ultimately that would result in a drastic weakening of the defense of Pakistan. To the Bengali leaders, however, the defense of Pakistan was nothing more than the defense of West Pakistan. The 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, during which East Pakistan was totally defenseless, left an indelible impression in the minds of the Bengali elite. The ruling elite of Pakistan, especially the generals, who were dominant at this stage, denounced the Six-Point Programme as secessionist and condemned the Awami League leaders as traitors.

The Bengali military officers, because of their nearness to the Pakistani military officers in the cantonments, were well placed to realize the gravity of the situation, and secretly planned to rise up in revolt at the most opportune moment, with a view to giving a focus to the revolutionary aspirations of the people in East Pakistan. Captain Oli Ahmad organized a revolt in Chittagong on the night of 25 March 1971, although Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the recognized leader of the Bengalis, surrendered to the Pakistani forces that night. Most of the political leaders went underground and Major Ziaur Rahman declared the Independence of Bangladesh with himself as the Provisional Head of the State on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (the civilian leader) on 27 March 1971. This small group of Bengali military officers also began to organize the War of Independence. This state of affairs continued till 17 April 1971 when the political leaders regrouped in India and set up the Bangladesh Government-in-exile at

Mujibnagar. Till then the Bengali military officers were in the forefront of the revolutionary activities. Major Ziaur Rahman and his troops kept the Chittagong and Noakhali areas under their control for a few days and went across the border for further preparations. Major Khaled Mosharraf and his followers took control of the Comilla and Sylhet areas. Major K. M. Safiullah and his troops, who were stationed at Joydevpur, a township near Dhaka, moved to Tangail and Mymensingh and took control over those areas. They subsequently moved to the Sylhet area. Major Osman Choudhury, after liquidating a group of Pakistani soldiers, took control of Chuadanga and parts of Kustia. Major Jalil and his followers kept a large part of Khulna and Barisal under their control. Captain Hafiz with First Bengal regiment took control of a part of Jessore area. Thus, the Bengali army officers, casting aside all their professional and service norms and breaking the canons of military discipline and chain of command, revolted against the Pakistan Army and started the War of Independence. This study will focus on the role and motivations of the Bengali military officers during the early and critical phase of the War of Independence.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The factors that were crucial in the disintegration of Pakistan, especially the political, economic and cultural conditions, have been well documented. The military dimension however still remains unexplored, although the role of Bengali military officers during that critical period, that is from 25 March to 17 April 1971, was crucial. The Independence of Bangladesh was declared by an army officer, Major Ziaur Rahman. The revolt itself was organized by another army officer, Capt. Oli Ahmad. They began the War of Independence at Chittagong and gradually other

Bengali officers also joined the war along with the forces under their command.

What led these military officers to come forward at this historic moment? What circumstances motivated them to deny their professional and service norms of obedience and loyalty? This study will explore the socio-political environment that precipitated revolt among the Bengali military officers, and reflect on the transformation of a professional cadre into a revolutionary elite. The study also examines why the Bengali military officers, though deeply imbued with nationalistic feelings, were not interested in seizing political power in East Pakistan and why they initiated the War of Liberation after 25 March 1971.

The study also provides material on the missing link between the people's movement in East Pakistan in March 1971 and the full-scale War of Independence under the leadership of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile formed on 17 April 1971.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF THE LIBERATION WAR

After postponement of the session of the National Assembly by President Yahya Khan on 1 March 1971, the political parties in East Pakistan felt threatened, because they saw in it an excuse by the West Pakistani ruling elite to deprive East Pakistani leaders of the benefit of electoral victory. The people of East Pakistan, who were mobilized during the election campaign of 1970, became greatly agitated. In Chapter Two, it has been noted that Bengali military officers, who were watching these events carefully, became more alert and wary.

The autonomy movement in East Pakistan which began quite early in the 1950s, was gradually intensified in the 1960s, especially after the promulgation of martial law in Pakistan by President Ayub Khan in 1958. Following the promulgation of martial law in Pakistan, the bureaucrats, both military and civil, became the chief policy makers. Unfortunately, East Pakistan's representation in bureaucracy, especially at the national level, was minimal; and it was here that the crucial decisions were made affecting both East and West Pakistan. In the 1950s, the Bengali leaders wanted opportunities for more participation in the political system. In the 1960s, they made those demands more vociferously and proposed certain structural changes in the political system so that their demands could be met through negotiations. They demanded that East Pakistan as the home of the majority of its population should have adequate representation at the policy-making level. The East Pakistani leaders were also opposed to the transfer of resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan in the name of rapid development of Pakistan. They also demanded that East Pakistan should be self-sufficient in defense.

The electoral victory in the 1970 general election made the East Pakistani political elite more confident of their success at the negotiation table. By the East Pakistani political elite we mean those who were elected in the general election of 1970. It may be mentioned that the elected Awami League leaders of East Pakistan constituted the majority in the National Assembly of Pakistan. They expected and quite naturally that they would at last take control of the central government and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Thus they remained prepared for negotiation with the West Pakistani political elite which consisted of the elected members from West Pakistan and the West Pakistani generals. As it has been already stated, the West Pakistani generals were threatened by the contents of the Six-Point Programme for two reasons. Firstly, the armed forces in Pakistan was mainly WestPakistan centred; the representation of East Pakistanis in the Pakistan armed forces was absolutely minimal. Secondly, the Six-Point Programme intended to put the resources of East Pakistan under the control of the Bengali elite through regional government's control over currency, foreign exchange earnings, foreign trade and taxation (points 3, 4, 5 of the Six-

Point Programme). The ruling elite in Pakistan were not at all interested in handing over power to the Bengali elite. Thus, while the negotiations were going on, more and more arms and ammunition from West Pakistan began to be transported through the Chittagong Port and more armed personnel from West Pakistan began to be air dropped. The process continued till 25 march 1971.

On 1 March 1971 President Yahya Khan announced his decision to postpone the National Assembly session, citing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's unwillingness to participate in the National Assembly. The postponement sparked off spontaneous demonstration in East Pakistan against the central government. Sheikh Mujib, the leader of the East Pakistanis, came under heavy pressure both from the radicals of his own party, the Awami League and other political parties of East Pakistan to declare independence of Bangladesh. Mujib however decided to launch a nonviolent non-cooperation movement instead of going in for declaration of independence. His intention was to build up tremendous popular pressure to force the central government to negotiate with him the terms of transferring power to the majority party.

Between March 1 and 7, President Yahya Khan came out with an offer to the East Pakistani leader Sheikh Mujib for a round-table conference of the leaders of two wings of Pakistan and recalling of the National Assembly session; but while he was offering negotiating terms, violent clashes between the army led by West Pakistani generals and people of East Pakistan continued to occur on the streets of Dhaka and several other cities. On 7 March Mujib laid down his four preconditions for joining the National Assembly session, the most important precondition being immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. Simultaneously, the Awami League leader Sheikh Mujib launched a non-cooperation movement which placed him in complete control of East Pakistan. The entire East Pakistan administration, even the Bengalis working in the central government agencies in East Pakistan and in the civilian branches of the armed forces, complied with Mujib's call for non-cooperation. Faced with Mujib's de facto assumption of power in East Pakistan, President Yahya Khan came to Dhaka on 15 March 1971 to work out a political settlement of the crisis. Thus the negotiation began.

Detailed information of the Mujib-Yahya talks in Dhaka has never been made available to the public but from published reports, it appears that Yahya agreed in principle to Mujib's four preconditions, much to the vociferous chagrin of Z A Bhutto, who was demanding more time. The Awami League had been continuing its non-cooperation movement for more than three weeks, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain it non-violent. Confrontations between the military and the people became more frequent. Enmity to the non-Bengalis living in East Pakistan rose high, and a large number of them migrated to West Pakistan. The plight of these migrants was also used as a counter pressure on the Yahya regime.

On 23 March the Awami League advisers presented a draft proclamation which granted East Pakistan autonomy on the basis of the Six Points (GOB, August 1971: 18- 27). The Awami League pressed for quick acceptance of the proposal. On 25 March, while the Awami League leaders were hoping to hear the declaration of acceptance of their demands, Yahya Khan, without formally breaking the negotiation, launched a brutal attack against the East Pakistanis. On that night the Pakistan Army attacked the Dhaka University Campus, the head quarters of the East Pakistan Rifles and Police and some offices of Awami League newspapers and killed a large number of unarmed civilians. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested. A reign of terror was initiated in East Pakistan.

The Political leaders of East Pakistan did not have enough information about the military build-up in different cantonments, because these were being done secretly in the cantonments. But the Bengali military officers, who were in the Chittagong Cantonment and other cantonments, had a clear picture of what was going on. The Chittagong Cantonment was crucial in the sense that heavy weapons and huge amounts of ammunition were coming from West Pakistan by sea to be released from Chittagong Port. This was one of the reasons why the crucial decision of the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh □ which was expected from the top-level political leaders □ in fact was made by a young military officer of the Chittagong Cantonment, and why the Bengali military officers revolted and undertook a holding operation from 26 March to 17 April 1971. After that the political leaders of East Pakistan regrouped and

formed the Bangladesh Government-in-exile at the border village of Baidyanathpur, re-christened Mujibnagar after the formation of the government. Different dimensions of the Liberation War have been analyzed in a number of studies (Safiullah 1989: 1- 12; Islam 1981: 7- 93; Garg 1984: 27- 62), but nowhere has the role of military personnel, especially in the period from 26 March to 17 April, been discussed. This study will throw light on this.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- i) An in-depth analysis of the politico-economic and cultural conditions existing in Pakistan, especially in the context of the Six-Point Programme, which wanted to re-structure the political and economic systems in Pakistan.
- ii) Examining the reasons why the West Pakistani generals felt so much threatened by the regional government's control over currency, foreign exchange earnings, foreign trade and taxation as envisaged in the Six-Point Programme.
- iii) Examining the role of the key actors in the War of Independence, especially the role of Major Ziaur Rahman, Captain Oli Ahmad and other senior Bengali military officers at various cantonments.
- iv) Analyzing the reasons why the Bengali military officers became actors in the War of Liberation to establish an independent Bangladesh.

In sum, this study wants to analyze why the Bengali military officers took a pioneering role in organizing the Liberation War with a view to

establishing an independent Bangladesh since 25 March 1971, although the military in many other countries were busy taking over political role by displacing the political leaders. The Bengali military officers not only revolted from the Pakistan Army on that day and one of them declared independence of Bangladesh, but also sustained the war till 17 April 1971 when the Government-in-exile was formed and took up the Liberation War. The Bengali military officers from that point of time began fighting under the command of the political leaders.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The study is organized in eight chapters. The Introduction has outlined the issue along with the importance and objectives of research, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter One describes the methodology adopted in this study, especially its autoethnographical dimensions, because the researcher was not only an observer but also an active participant in the Liberation War of 1971. Chapter Two brings out the political role of the military in comparative perspective. Chapter Three clarifies the conceptual framework by defining such concepts as revolt, revolution and liberation war. With reference to themes of the social and political change, it sets out the need for a focus on key actors in the Liberation War of 1971. Chapter Four provides the socioeconomic background of the issue. In Chapters Five and Six, the policies pursued by the ruling elite in Pakistan in administrative, cultural and economic areas are analyzed with an eye to their impacts on the Bengali military officers and soldiers (Privates). Chapter Seven specifically deals with the role of the military officers at that point of time. In Chapter Eight the relevant data obtained from primary sources are analyzed with a view to explore the motivations of the key players. The findings are summed up in the Conclusion.

NOTES ON INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

Methodology of the Research

The study has applied mainly qualitative tools of data collection. It is primarily based upon examination of existing literature, official documents and notes in the archives of the University of Dhaka to construct the history of this crucial period. The biographical and autobiographical writings of the freedom fighters have also been valuable data. Primary data have been generated by using both structured and open-ended interviews with selected military officers, who took part in the War

of Independence. The study has also drawn upon unpublished diaries kept by key participants, as referred to in the bibliography, to provide unmediated narrative reconstructions of motivations and events.

For generating the primary data, several techniques have been adopted. Appropriate questionnaires were prepared for the selected respondents. These respondents were selected with care and caution given the sensitivity of the issue. The set of interview questions and list of interviewees are available in Appendix 9. The results of the field work are analyzed in Chapter Eight, although, some responses are noted in Chapter Seven. The notes and diaries of key military officers have also been used throughout the dissertation.

The researcher has had to confront the delicate issue of autoethnography (Adler & Adler, 1994; Denzin, 1989; Kreiger, 1991). He was not only an observer but also an active participant in the War of Liberation. Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that reveals multiple layers of consciousness.

Autoethnographers may have to look in two directions, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and environmental aspects of their personal experience. Then, they turn inward to examine a vulnerable self that is moved by social interaction but which refracts, and may even resist cultural influences (Deck, 1990; Neumann, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Autoethnography or radical empiricism, as Jackson (1989) calls it, has been a vital part of the study in the sense that the ethnographer's experiences and interactions with other participants form an important part of what is being studied (Ellis and Bochner, 1999: 733- 742).

The term autoethnography has been in use for quite some time. Emphasizing either on culture (ethos) or on self (auto), the researchers use their own experience in certain action to bend back on self and look more deeply at "self-other interactions" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 740). In personal narration, social scientists take on the dual identities of academic and personal selves to put up autobiographical stories about some aspect of their experience. In reflexive ethnography, the researcher's personal experience becomes important for its role to illuminate the culture under

study. Feminism has contributed greatly to legitimize the autographical voice associated with reflexive ethnography (Behar, 1996; Kreiger, 1991).

Distinguishing between ethnographic memoir and narrative ethnography, Tedlock (1991) has stated that while in a memoir ethnographer tells a personal tale of what went in the backstage of doing research, in narrative ethnography ethnographer's experiences are incorporated into the description and analysis of others. In the latter case, "ethnographic dialogue or encounter" between the narrator and members of the group under study is emphasized. According to Tedlock, the development of this kind of reflexive writing is related to a shift from an emphasis on a participant observation to "observation of participation" and an emphasis on the process of writing.

The process has at least two advantages. In the first place, the ethnographer knows quite well what he has in mind as the focus of the study. Secondly, the ethnographer finds it convenient to interact with his partners or colleagues because they also know the details of the incident or event. It has however one big disadvantage. The fact or series of fact which the ethnographer wants to bring out through arduous process may be clouded by his personal idiosyncrasies or heightened emotional touches. The objectivity of the study may therefore suffer. Having this in view, the researcher has decided to use third person singular in the narration so that his self (auto) may not surface and darken the objectivity.

Much like Ellis and Bochner, this researcher feels that "the act of telling a personal story is a way of giving voice to experiences that are shrouded in secrecy" (1992: 79). Yet he has to tell a very personal story which became "a social process for making lived experiences understandable and meaningful" (Ellis and Bochner, 1992: 79- 80). Caught up in the war, he was too engaged by what was happening to fully record his experiences at the time. Only later did he reconstruct the events that took place, including the emotional dimension of decisionmaking.

However, one advantage the researcher has had, a practice encouraged by his professional norms, was to write a diary even under difficult circumstances. Both the researcher and his colleagues in the war of liberation have become subjects in the inquiry that follows and his and

their experiences are the primary data in this study (Jackson, 1989: 4). Drawing on diaries and brief notes on the happenings on those days, recalling their experiences, and checking and re-checking through conversations, the researcher will lead his readers through a journey in which “they develop an ‘experiential sense’ of the events” (Krieger, 1984: 273; McCall, 1991)

The eight other actors, who were selected for an in-depth interview, were the war-heroes, some of whom were sector commanders in the Liberation War of 1971. The process of interview was both time consuming and painstaking in the sense that prior appointments had to be made with each one of them and that too at their convenient time. Since all of them are persons of some social standing, the logistics of the research had to be very carefully arranged and including such necessary implements as tape-recorders and low intensity microphone so that statements could be faithfully recorded.

Prior to appointments, each respondent was informed of the detailed purpose of the interview so that they could be prepared with short notes, if necessary. The researcher did not know for sure how long the interview of one respondent might take. That is why he undertook one as a test case and that took two hours and twenty minutes. Having that experience in store, he made appointments with the rest of the respondents in their residence at a time convenient to them, especially in the evening so that they could give more than two hours at a stretch.

The researcher himself being one of the active participants in the Liberation War did not know how the interview would go, because the respondents were required to respond to queries on issues of three decades ago. Moreover, he did not know how these respondents, most of whom have become activists of different political parties professing different action programmes, would interact with him. He was not sure whether the respondents would be relevant over some questions. He was also not sure whether he would be able to put the right questions. Having a lot of tensions, the researcher proceeded with care and caution. He felt confident because of the fact that there was a questionnaire already prepared for the purpose. The researcher feels happy that the scheduled interviews went on

well. Working together at a crucial point of time in history, fighting hand in hand, and sharing the same views, the researcher has felt that all of them went back thirty long years, thus effacing all the distance which he had in him as a role player and an observer.

In most cases, while giving their views they consulted their diaries, because of the need to recollect correctly what they thought and did some three decades ago. Most of them remembered the events quite vividly; each one of them took their roles in the war as the high point of their lives.

While conducting the interviews, the researcher, because he himself was one of the key figures in the war, was able to engage with respondents on an equal footing, a matter of some importance given their relative eminence. Indeed Chapter Seven of the thesis has been drawn mainly on his personal experiences. The respondents agreed readily and co-operated with the researcher eagerly; but were inclined to give details of every episode in lengthy speeches. Overcome by a kind of nostalgic recollection they made long statements of some intensity. The researcher had to painstakingly glean from these materials relevant to the question of induction, but without compromising the narratives too much. For the purpose of the study, the researcher wanted them to be frank and free and express their opinions. The respondents were reminded through a number of questions that they fought for establishing a nation state under the leadership of political leaders at a time when the military in most of the Third World countries were busy capturing political power by displacing the political leaders. The comparative perspective has been analyzed in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER TWO

Political Role of the Military in Comparative Perspective

Most of the post-colonial states emerged with constitutional structures inherited from the western democratic models of former colonial powers. Among other things, separation of the legislature, executive and judiciary, popularly elected legislatures, multiparty systems designed to provide a basis for a division between the government and opposition and subservience of the military to civil authorities, were prominent general features of such constitutions (May, Lawson and Selochan, 1998: 1). The role of the military was generally seen to lie in defending the country against external aggression, though, of course, “colonial rule left behind armed forces more often oriented towards maintaining internal order than to external defence, and therefore implicitly attuned to domestic politics” (May, Lawson and Selochan, 1998). This was evident in states where ethnic cleavages were obvious and where military personnel were recruited from ethnic groups most compliant to colonial policies in Pakistan, for example. Thus the shifts from parliamentary democracy to military rule or militarydominated regimes were not long in coming.

Military intervention in politics is not a recent phenomenon, however. In fact, independent political activities by the military have been widespread and of long-standing. There were 48 independent states in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century. Three more states emerged between 1900 and 1917. 32 of these states underwent some form of

military intervention in their politics. Of the 28 independent states that came into being during the period 1917- 1955, 13 of them underwent military rule (Finer 1975: 2). In June 1987 the United Nations Organizations (UNO) had 159 member states and 82 of them (50%) had been under military rule at one stage or the other (Finer 1975: 274).

Extent of Military Intervention □ Comparative Data

Military intervention in politics increased all over the Third World since the Second World War and continued upto the middle of 1980's, but it became endemic in four regions: Latin America, South and SouthEast Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. During that period 13 of the 20 Latin American states (62%), 21 of the 42 African states (50%) and 9 of the 22 South and South-East Asian states (41%) experienced military rule during the period 1958- 1973 (Finer 1975: 275). Even Europe was not free from it and 3 of the 18 states (11%) underwent this experience during that period. Taking a longer time frame Gavin Kennedy has shown that as many as 53 successful coup d'état took place in Latin America involving 16 of the 20 states (80%), and 22, 42 and 32 successful coup took place in South and South-East Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa respectively involving 9, 14 and 25 states during the period 1945- 1972 (Kennedy, 1974: 337- 344). According to his estimate, there were more

than 200 military coup d'état in those four regions since 1960. The number of coups since 1945 amounted to over 280: there were at least 42 coups in Asia, 86 in Latin America, 62 in the Middle East and 76 in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kennedy, 1974: 45).

table 2.1

If we look at the incidence of such coups year-wise, we find that 12% of all independent states in the world were under military rule in 1961. It rose to 19% in 1966, 27% in 1973 and 29% in 1975 (Margiotta 1976: 214). There was a slight decline of such incidence in the 1980s however, the percentage of states remained under military rule in 1980 being a little less than 24 and in 1984 being 23. The incidence of military coup has begun declining since the mid-1980's and came down to the lowest level in the 1990's (Liria 1993; Seitz 1991; Ashkenaz 1994). Having that in view, the number of successful and unsuccessful coups has been recorded in Table 2.1 and 2.2.

There were as many as 317 successful coups during 1945- 1985, and including the unsuccessful ones, the total number of coups and coup attempts were 616 during the period (Table 2.1 and 2.2). Of these, 203 took place in Africa, 208 in Latin America, 113 in Asia, 74 in the Middle East and the rest in Europe. The events of military coup was the highest in the 1950s and the 1960s. The trend is faithfully reflected in the incidence in Latin America where coups began to increase in frequency

from the second quarter of the 20th century. The amount of time that the presidency in 20 Latin American countries was occupied by the military rose markedly from 28.7% in the decade 1917- 1927 to 38.5% in 1927- 1937, 49% in 1937- 1947 and 45% in 1947- 1957% (Huntington, 1962: 33).

table 2.2

The degree of military intervention however varies from country to country and from region to region, and no generalization is possible about its impact on the society. There are states which were subjected to it time and again, and the whole fabric of society was permeated by the military ethos. Iraq, for instance, experienced 7 coups between 1936 and 1951 and 6 more in 1952, 1958, 1959, 1965, 1966 and 1968 (Finer, 1975). Syria experienced 4 coups between 1949 and 1952, and another two in 1961 and 1970, excluding another 6 abortive coups in 1962, 1963 and 1966. Sudan also experienced coups in 1958, 1959, 1969 and 1984, and two more abortive coups in 1971. In South-East Asia, Thailand is unique in that it underwent 8 coups between 1932 and 1971. In Latin America, however, its incidence was the highest. Kennedy has shown that 4 of the 20 Latin American countries i.e. Bolivia, Paraguay, Honduras and Ecuador, accounted for almost 50% of military interventions in the region during the period 1960- 1972 (Kennedy, 1974: 30). A study of Sub-Saharan Africa between 1960 and 1982 alone recorded 90 plots to overthrow governments, 60 attempted coups, and 50 successful coups (Orkand Corporation quoted in Seitz 1991: 65). Having all these in view Joseph Lapalombara commented in 1977: "Military coups are now so frequent and widespread that they must be considered as significant as elections" ("Foreword" in Nordlinger 1977: X). Janowitz's statement, some seven

years ago, almost in the same vein, speaks of the same thing. He wrote: “The intervention of the military in the domestic politics (of non-Western states) is the norm; persistent patterns of civil supremacy are the deviant cases that require special exploration” (Janowitz, 1971: 306).

Looking at the scale of interventions we can conclude that the military constitute an independent political force in the sense that they are a part of the power structure. That the military have intervened in the politics of many and widely diverse countries in the world, and that they have done it in the past and are doing so at present, is indicative of a political phenomenon which is “abiding, deep-seated and distinctive” (Ahamed, 1988: 5). That is precisely the reason why a growing literature has emerged on the military intervention in politics and its impact. The role of the Bengali military personnel in 1971, though expressly political in nature, is distinctive in that it was to create an independent Bangladesh out of East Pakistan and not to take over its administration by displacing civil authorities. In that role the Bengali military were motivated by the nationalistic aspirations of the people of East Pakistan and not by their corporate interests, although, as we will see in Chapter Eight, they were not totally oblivious of these interests in the new state. Of course most military interventions claim to be altruistic, expressing the needs and aspirations of ‘the people’.

Reasons for Military Intervention

Since military interventions are seen often as a denial of the incipient democratic values and institutions of new states, considerable scholarly attention was devoted to explaining why and how military coups occurred. Early scholarship explored the reasons for military intervention in the relative 'underdevelopment' of civil political institutions (May, Lawson and Selochan, 1998: 2) and the relative capability of the military, associated with the very organization of the armed forces. These organizational features provide them with discipline and cohesion, hierarchy and centralized command and unity both at the decisionmaking and executive levels. These enable the generals to take over political power promptly if they decide to act. Among a large number of studies which broadly pursued this line, major contributions include Shils (1962); Pye (1962, 1966); Finer (1962); Johnson (1962); Halpern (1963); Janowitz (1964); Von der Mehden (1964); Huntington (1968); Zolberg (1968); Daalder (1969); Dowse (1969); Lefever (1970); Bienen (1971, 1983); Lissak (1976); Perlmutter (1977, 1981); Stepan (1978, 1988); Crouch (1985) and Chazan et al. (1988).

An alternative line of reasoning is related to the corporate interests of the armed forces. Any threat to their corporate interest may impel them to move and capture political power. The corporate interests of the military may be threatened when the military is fiscally deprived, or its autonomy or professionalism threatened (See, for example, Janowitz 1964; First 1970; Bienen 1971; Hakes 1973; Thompson 1973; Nordlinger 1977; Horowitz 1980; Clapham and Philip 1985; Rouquie 1987).

In both these lines of reasoning the military is viewed essentially as a cohesive entity with a sense of collective unity. The third strand of thought,

in contrast, has portrayed the military “as simply an extension of the larger civil society, subject to the same class, regional and ethnic cleavages, prone to internal friction, and likely to side with particular political factions at particular times” (May, Lawson and Selochan, 1998: 3). That the military is at least potentially fragmented has had particular salience in those states in which the military had a specific ethnic bias, and where recruitment was made during the colonial period either from the so-called “martial races” or from ethnic minorities rather than dominant ethnic groups (Daalder 1969; Guyot 1974; Kabwegyere 1974; Mazrui 1976; Hansen 1977; Nordlinger 1977; Enloe 1980; Horowitz 1985 and Gow 1991). Added to this is the “intra-military elite factionalism”, due mostly to ethnic bias in its composition, and as the Orkand Corporation Study of 1990 has suggested, about a third of the plots, attempted coups and coups were instigated because of intramilitary elite factionalism (Seitz 1991: 70). In some studies various types of coup and coup attempts have been distinguished. Some coups sought to set up new regimes, but some were directed against regime change (Huntington 1968; Hoadley 1975; Chazan et. Al. 1988; Luckham 1991). These explanations are however not necessarily mutually exclusive. In most cases, “Personal, organizational and societal factors are intermingled” (Welch 1974: 135). There are however two types of civilian regimes which are more prone to military intervention: first, those regimes which consist mainly of traditional aristocratic elements, generally with hereditary kings, are more prone to military intervention; second, such regimes “whose primary support comes from the lower class, and those that might come to power with the support of politicized workers and peasants” (Nordlinger 1970: 77). Not surprisingly, therefore, a growing body of case studies, intended to provide support to all these hypotheses, emerged. All these suggest however that while there were some recurring characteristics of military intervention, the explanation of individual cases involved an understanding of their special historical and social circumstances. It has been found that in some countries the military, or factions within the military, serve as tangible means of taking over political power (May, Lawson and Selochan, 1998: 5); in some others the military intervened to replace an inefficient or corrupt civilian regime; while in still others the military went ahead to

forge a partnership deal with the civilian authorities for exercising political power. Having this in mind Bebler wrote in 1990: “Whether officially recognized or not, the military everywhere constitute an important part of the state apparatus and of the political system, and the soldiers, even when sound asleep in their barracks, participate in the political process and tacitly share political power with civilian rules” (Bebler 1990: 262- 263).

How do we characterize the role of the Bengali military officers in March 1971? No doubt their intervention was political, but they made a move neither for a blatant seizure of power for themselves nor for replacing an inept or a corrupt regime, neither did they intend to establish a system of joint participation in government. They revolted in effect against their parent body, the Pakistani military. One of their leaders, Major Zia, made a Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh and they took up on their shoulders the responsibility of fighting the War of Independence during that crucial period. While the Pakistani generals were fighting in 1971 for retaining control over East Pakistan by sheer force and governing it as a captive territory, through a joint partnership with the West Pakistani political leaders, the Bengali military officers fought the Liberation War under the leadership of Bengali political leaders to free East Pakistan and make it an independent Bangladesh.

So how can we conceptualize this war? The Government of Pakistan portrayed it as an “internal war” or a civil war (GOB 1981). Some Indian security experts termed it as “classical war” between two natural enemy states (Palit 1972; Pran Chopra 1972; Mohammad Ayub and K Subrahmanyam 1972). Some military officers in Bangladesh, who took part in the War of Liberation, called it a War of Independence against the Pakistani occupation forces (Bhuiyan 1972; Islam 1981; Safiullah 1989). The political leaders of Bangladesh took it as a Liberation War, while some of the academics, delineating its characteristics, termed it as “a revolution” (Jackson 1975; Loshak 1972; Talukder 1980; Ahamed 1988).

This war has been taken in this study as the Liberation War. Its beginning may be traced to the revolt of the Bengali military officers at the night of 25 March 1971 and subsequently to the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh by Major Zia on 27 March 1971. The series of events i.e. revolt

of the military officers, declaration of independence and beginning of the war, were however precipitated by the action of President Yahya Khan when he, without formally breaking the negotiation with the East Pakistani political leaders, left Dhaka in the evening of 25 March after deploying armed forces with a view to solving the East Pakistan crisis militarily. The Pakistan Army since then began to be treated as occupation army by the Bengalis, resisted by the Bengali armed forces and people of all sectors in the society in the revolutionary political situation of East Pakistan. The role of the Bengali military in the Liberation War and revolt are analyzed in Chapter Three.

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CHAPTER THREE

Role of the Bengali Military: The Liberation War in 1971

Types of War

Some wars may be messianic in the sense that these will bring about wholesale changes in the social orders in the conquered territories in terms of faith or privilege or power, and some others may be global involving major powers in the world and affecting different parts of the globe. Some wars may again be characterized as local or localized; others regional. There may also be internal or civil war (Margiotha 1983: 1040- 48). The Crusades of the past (1099- 1204), the ‘Master Race Theory’ in the recent past, and the very recent doctrine of war in the New World Order (NWO) signifying absolute supremacy of the U.S. in the global system are the expressions of the messianic philosophy. The First and the Second World War have represented the global variety.

The forms of war vary from time to time, place to place and situation to situation. There is however no universally accepted terminology for the various forms of war. There may be total war, involving the complete utilization of all resources available to a belligerent. The ‘totality’ involves the relevant nation’s economic, political and social resources completely

mobilized, and war ends only when their opponents are forced to surrender. The limited war takes place when the belligerent employs only limited military means. Conventional war is fought without the use of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, although availability of these weapons may have some influences on the courses and outcome of war. In contrast, the general war involves the total engagement of military might including these days' nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Low-intensity war covers military actions in the gray zones. It stands somewhere between peace and open warfare, and it includes military assistance to insurgents or to countries fighting insurgents, or reprisals by military means and often like "gun-boat type diplomacy." The forces and methods used are strictly limited (Margiotha, ed. 1920: 1048). According to motivations of those who wage it, war can be of several types: wars of conquest, preemption and of missionary zeal.

Mens' outlook and attitude toward war have changed many times throughout human history, and different studies have been made over time about the rules of war. (Brinton 1958; Walzer 1965; Pettee 1958; Johnson 1964; Sola Pool et al. 1963; Chamberlin 1952; Johnson 1962; Jouvenel 1962).

As organized collective violence or as an instrument of power or belief, war can be found in very diverse socio-political conditions, ranging from the ritualized vendettas of tribal society to the military regimes of the recent times. Mediaeval wars have very little in common with those of the industrialized world and this is not just a matter of technology. During the feudal era, war was an integral part of political life. Sometimes wars have been an expression of a chivalrous ethic. Warfare during the early modern period has been closely associated with military might. Finally the concept of a total war, endangering the very existence of nation states, has become a reality; yet war is still regarded as one of the ways of conflict resolution when all other diplomatic means fail.

During the mediaeval period religion dominated all aspects of social life, including the conduct of war. The concept of *bellum justum* i.e. the just war was a meaningful idea. But the stage for a fundamental change in men's outlook on war was set by Machiavelli (Machiavelli 1950: 183-

186). He was the first one to tear the fabric of morality from war as he did in his consideration of politics. He emphasized the “reason of state” in relation to war. In his own words: “when the very safety of a country depends upon the resolution to be taken, no considerations of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty nor glory or shame should be allowed to prevail” (Machiavelli, 41).

Writers like Clausewitz considered moderation in war and upheld the application of force only for the realization of a determined goal. When later writers justified war for reasons of state only, they did not exclude anything as the object of military action and included almost everything as object of attack. During the Age of Enlightenment, however the European states developed a theory which distinguished clearly between combatants and non-combatants. As an ideal, King Frederick of Prussia excluded the non-combatant civilians, villagers, hospitals, academic institutions, forests from the object of war. In war, the state itself has remained the main actor for a greater part of human history. When two Prussian provinces were occupied by French and Russian troops during the 18th century, the inhabitants initiated a resistance movement against the occupied forces. Then King Frederick himself dissuaded them from getting involved, as it was the responsibility of the state to regain their rights and uphold the sovereignty of the state. The attitude prevailing during the 18th century can be gauged from a quotation from Rousseau’s *Social Contract* (Rousseau, 1964: 357): “War is not a relation from man to man, but a relation from state to state. Therein the individuals are enemies by accident only, not as human beings, not as civilians, but as military men.”

Modern war, however, has undergone profound changes since then, and has turned to people from the state in the sense that it is the people who make a state. Modern writers have advocated pro-people war and sometimes the idea of a people’s war. In the acclaimed and influential work of Clausewitz, politics/ diplomacy is the central theme of war, and not people directly. He has emphasized that “war is nothing else than a continuation of political transactions” (Clausewitz 1992: 119). The political purpose of wars determines what methods the belligerents adopt to realize their goals. Sometimes the treaties that concluded a war did not become

the source of embitterment, but were acceptable to both sides and succeeded in installing a more peaceful order in the societies, thus touching the lives of common people.

With the affairs of the state increasingly run by the representatives of people themselves following democratization, especially in Western Europe and North America, the objectives set forth by Clausewitz for waging war tended to become obsolete. Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States (1913- 21), for instance, was not satisfied with the limited political aim as prescribed by Clausewitz. He set a new goal and that was “to make the world safe for democracy.” The First World War was to be “a war to end wars.” The masses around the globe were happy with this ideological slant and democratic tone. Thus a new age of just wars began and good wars were fought by the righteous and peaceloving people against vested interests.

The growing influence of the common people began to be felt during and after the Second World War. Modern wars require the active participation of the entire nation as well as their readiness to bear the burden and sufferings of war. The involvement of the common people in the war has moreover resulted in a qualitative change both in its context and content. The civilian population is not included these days as in the 18th century or earlier. It had been a part of the ethics of soldiery not to use arms against the unarmed for centuries, but the entire civilian population of an enemy country has become the target of naval blockades, large scale aerial bombardments and so on during the twentieth century. Even after the end of hostilities, the civilians in many cases find their property expropriated, their ancestral homelands forcibly taken away and sometimes, they are driven away. Thus war has intruded into the civilian sphere on an unprecedented scale in modern times, and civilians also have become militarized.

Revolution and Liberation War

When the Second World War came to an end, the colonial powers were thoroughly exhausted and weakened both economically and politically. The retention of overseas possessions by continuous military dominance became problematic for several reasons. Nationalism in the guise of anti-colonialism spilled over into the colonies and its pace became more intense after the recognition of the right of selfdetermination in the Versailles Treaty of 1921. The local leaders in the colonies, most of whom had been educated in European schools and colleges, became vocal about this right of self-determination. Moreover, many inhabitants of the colonies had to take part in the wars of the colonial masters in Europe and elsewhere. The impact of all these factors was quite profound.

Throughout the twentieth century there were many liberation wars, directed against colonial masters in different forms. Ceylon, for example, got independence in 1948 and it was made possible by the activities of the armed guerilla groups, aided by armed police and political activists. The Indonesian fought against the Dutch military and gained independence in

1949. The Chinese Communist Party through fierce fight against the Chinese Nationalist Government established their rule in mainland China in 1949. The nature of liberation war underwent changes over time, but guerilla tactics had been the favourite *modus operandi* with the army fomenting national revolution. Political parties, pressure groups, professionals and semi-military organizations like the volunteer corps played a vital role in these wars. Such wars have always been nationalistic in character and were fought by self-styled liberation armies. Much importance was often attached to the use of MarxistLeninist dogma by the young students, workers, peasants and political activists. The struggle of the Vietnamese or the Algerians against the French colonial masters are typical in this respect (Geertz 1963). The instances of independence struggles in Guinea and Ghana may also be cited in this connection (Wallerstein 1961). In some cases, the charisma of the leaders of independence movement was used to mobilize people.

The military had also to respond to the call of the nation. Thus, it turned out to be great liberating promise in most of the colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. While the common denominator of these movements in the colonies had been anti-imperialism stance and a political rejection of capitalist form of economic reconstruction, the ideology guiding them has been a mixture of agrarian populism and radical nationalism.

These movements were generally led by political leaders, but where violent means were used against the colonial armed forces, the military also got involved. Young intellectuals and the rising professionals also played important roles, but students constituted the most important mass base of the liberation war. It must be remembered that the conditions vary from country to country, but primarily the students and military constitute the bulk of such armies.

Can the term 'liberation war' be defined? Liberation war, like war in general, is a complex concept. No simple or single theory is likely to account for it. Bowyer Bell has defined the liberation war as a military action. Thus, "if a small, renewable core of true believers can be organized, willing to sacrifice their lives for a cause professed by a reasonable portion of the population and possible of realization, then, in spite of the obstacles, real or imagined, an armed struggle can be launched" (Bell, 1976: 526).

The cause of the struggle need not necessarily be fully understood or completely accepted by those for whom they fight and it certainly need not have to have majority support.

The essence of a revolt is commitment to a cause beyond the capacity of the system to co-opt or absorb. The motives that inspire revolt and the take up of arms are generally couched in fear of losing some vital interests of a collectivity, for which they are prepared to lay down their lives. The major interest of the rebels is to cause as much disorder as possible, even using guerilla tactics where feasible. Liberation war is a sort of omnibus term and covers wars of independence, guerilla warfare, revolution, rebellion, revolt, insurrection, peasant revolt, uprising or mutiny. It is however undeniable that conceptual confusion still persists. The 1956 'Hungarian Revolution' as referred to by one analyst becomes for another 'The Hungarian Revolt', because in his definition 'revolution' succeeds while 'revolt' fails (Keskemeti, 1961: 2). Similarly, some writers have termed the War of American Independence an act of revolution, but others differ (Greene, 1974: 7). While such phenomena are sometimes described as 'new wars', Harry Eckstein has used the term 'internal war' (Eckstein, 1964), because such wars take place between two nations in one state and remain confined within one state. The concept of liberation war has been used in this study in the sense of an internal war. John Chalmers has also used the term in this sense. In his own words: "During that time the world also witnessed at least fifteen revolutions of diverse types. These include the 1971 revolution that created Bangladesh out of what had been East Pakistan" (Chalmers, 1982: IX). Some Bangladeshi scholars have also described the bloody confrontation between the Pakistani authorities (the internal colonialists) and the East Pakistanis during 1971 as Liberation War (Ahamed, 1988; Talukder, 1980), although the Pakistan authorities termed it as rebellion because the Bengali military officers revolted against "their lawful authorities".

The term 'revolution' has been derived from astronomy. It was initially used by philosophers to imply a cyclical process in human development and it entered into common political parlance only after the French Revolution of 1789 (Arendt, 1926: 35-36). The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences defines revolution thus: "Revolution in its common sense

is an attempt to make a radical change in the system of government. It often involves the infringement of prevailing constitutional arrangement through the use of force. Revolution may also mean any fundamentally new development in the economy, culture and social fabric, that is, in practically in any field of human endeavour” (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, 510). Crane Brinton, analyzing the anatomy of this limited political revolution in broader social and cultural context, has found out such abstract general social values as freedom, security, equality or justice as the causes of revolution since these are the ones that provide a basis for revolutionary sentiment (Brinton, 1958).

Though the concept of revolution since the time of Aristotle was originally related to the notion of a cyclical alteration in the forms of government, it implies a totally different thing today. It is “the idea of a new order” and this concept of revolution predominates since the American and French revolutions. The concept of revolution began to be used in this sense since the seventeenth century, as “a challenge to the established political order” and “eventual establishment of a new order, radically different from the preceding one” (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences: 510). Its recent use is indicative of “an attempt to make a radical change in the system of government”, and in fact a successful revolution is more than an attempt, in that it radically changes the system of government. It inaugurates new order both in the society and polity (Skocpol, 1975: 175-180; Skocpol, 1976: 57-60). To avoid them or to reduce its possibility, effective changes by means of gradual transformation are in order so that adaptation of the institutions or processes of political order to evolving values, interests and beliefs becomes easier.

In the pre- revolutionary situation, large groups of people remain alienated from the established political order. The existing laws and regulations thus lose their legitimacy to them and appear arbitrary, their enforcement unjustified. During the pre- revolutionary period though, efforts are often made to reform and re-establish the political and socio-economic order, but they fail and this failure enhances the sense of revolutionary potential. Looking at the Six- Point Programme of 1966, and its implications for Pakistan, one is forced to conclude that it was intended

to re-structure the political system in Pakistan so that in such areas as finance and currency, taxation and trade that the integrity of the Pakistani state was severely challenged and the Bengali elite would have had their control firmly established. The West Pakistani elite could not accommodate this situation mainly because they were not prepared to part with the resources over which they had continued to exercise absolute control since 1947. The military leaders of Pakistan, most of whom were from West Pakistan, became especially alarmed because at least 4 points of the Six- Point Programme (2, 3, 4 and 5) were against their corporate interests. From this perspective, the happenings of 1971 in East Pakistan can be understood as a revolution (Talukder, 1980). The Six-Point Programme and its implications for the Pakistani armed forces have been analyzed in depth in Chapter Six.

One must however proceed with caution in this slippery terrain. The changes that occurred in East Pakistan after the revolution were much more than the revolution from above as formulated by Ellen Kay Trimberger (1978). East Pakistan, unlike Turkey after the Ataturk regime, or Japan after Meiji restoration, or Egypt after Nasser's take over, became a totally new entity, an independent and sovereign state, and in this transformation, mass upheaval accompanied by a bloody war fought by the Bengali soldiers and Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters) became the crucial factor.

Revolution has a variety of connotations. If it results in change of the government only, it becomes labeled as political revolution; if it also changes the distribution of wealth and status symbols in the society, for example, by destroying the privileges of a nobility, it becomes known as social revolution (Skocpol, 1976). Attempts that are made against a government or a state, seeking to change the ruling elite or their policies, but not intending to fabricate wholesale changes in the institutional framework, are generally known as revolts (Johnson 1964: 50- 75; Tanter and Midlarsky 1967: 15- 35; Gurr with Ruttenberg 1967: 66- 77; Eckstein 1963: 115- 121; Wallerstein 1961: 159- 163; Pettee 1938: 85- 96). In revolts, the rebels abrogate previous authorities by recourse to armed forces in an attempt to seize power in the name of a new legitimacy upheld in the name of people.

Although the aims of a revolt may in large part be determined by the orchestration of the rebel's resources, no new vision or any intention of fashioning a new society are necessary. In short, a revolt is a means to a limited end or varying ends, a determined but coherent intervention with violence. It may be difficult for the rebels to create a recognizable, legitimate alternative to the challenged authority. In the words of J. Bowyer Bell: "A revolt is coherent, armed rising of sufficient proportion to challenge seriously the existing central authority, but without the capacity to create an alternative authority: a lethal dialogue between rebel aspirants to power and the forces of authority" (Bell, 1976: 5-6). The momentous events in East Pakistan on 25 March 1971 may be characterized as a revolt in the sense that the Bengali armed forces, very casually trampling on their allegiance to the parent body i.e. the armed forces of Pakistan, and joining hands with other paramilitary forces and the political elements in the society, began fighting against the Pakistani forces. The Bengali forces issued a historic Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh; they coordinated their activities both with the military and paramilitary forces stationed in different cantonments; they agreed to fight under the recognized political leadership which started functioning on 17 April, 1971; the political leaders promulgated a constitutional formula to shape the destiny of the land and its inhabitants.

It can similarly be said that those cataclysmic events of 1971 in East Pakistan were revolutionary in that those were designed to make radical changes in the existing politico-economic system in East Pakistan through use of force, and were strongly motivated by the earnest desires of the participants for such social values as freedom, democracy, equality and justice. Ultimately it was proved that those events were more than a revolution in the sense that the authors of the revolution although they proceeded with the goal of re-structuring the system and the mass upheaval finally hardened and became solidified with a national movement desirous of setting up a new nation state. It can not be termed a revolution from above because the Bengali military leaders, who took the first crucial jump in the revolution and revolted by throwing aside the professional discipline finally fought under the leadership of an organized government, the Bangladesh Government-in- Exile at Mujibnagar. For all these reasons, it

is more reasonable to term that revolution the Liberation War of 1971, and this is how it has been described in the study.

The Historical Context of the War of Liberation in Bangladesh

The Liberation War of 1971 in East Pakistan has a long history. Such historic events as the Language Movement of 1952, the general election of 1954, the Six- Point Movement of 1966, the popular uprising of 1969, the general election in Pakistan in 1970 are so many landmarks, and each one of these events and movements was characterized by unprecedented popular involvement. The penultimate stage was reached when on 25 March 1971 the Pakistan Government decided to crush the people's movement in East Pakistan by creating a reign of terror and unleashing genocide through its organized disciplined forces, the Pakistan Army (Ali, 1973: 40- 45; Bhutto 1971: 11- 21; Choudhury 1972: 50- 81).

The story however began with the Partition of India in 1947. Bangladesh, then a part of undivided Bengal became independent as the eastern wing of Pakistan on the basis of the two-nation theory (Ali 1967; Callard 1957; Morris-Jones 1958). This resulted in a new nationalism based on Islamic values in East Bengal. The assimilationist cultural policies of the Pakistan Government, based on a distrust of the Bengalis and aimed at evolving a unitary culture in a plural society, began to alienate them gradually from the political system. The emergence of military rule in Pakistan in 1958 had the effect of drastically cutting down representation from East Pakistan because it was basically an administration run by civil and military bureaucrats and East Pakistani representation was of an absolute minimum in those sectors. This has been discussed in details in Chapter Five. The Ayub Khan regime concentrated mainly on economic growth instead of strengthening Islamic values in the society, but the kind of economic growth that emerged in Pakistan during that period became segmented not only in class terms but also in regional terms, and the West Pakistan- centred crude economism resulted in an explosive politics in East Pakistan. The demand for regional autonomy thus gained momentum in the late 1960s and the Six- Point Programme was its direct offshoot. The Six-Point Programme emerged as a reaction against the policy measures of the ruling elite in Pakistan. It was designed,

in effect, to establish the authority of the Bengali elite over the resources of East Pakistan. The Six-Point Programme intended to deny the central government in Pakistan to utilize the East Pakistani resources in West Pakistan (Rahman 1966).

During those days, the number of Bengali soldiers and officers increased slightly in the Pakistan armed forces because of demands from East Pakistani leaders. As they grew in number, they also developed a sense of togetherness and affinity amongst them because of their distinct identity (Ziring 1971: 125- 140; Ahamed 1980: 60- 72). Bitter experiences of being discriminated against in terms of pay and perquisites also fostered a sense of common grievance. In the absence of adequate political representation of East Pakistan at the centre, the Bengali bureaucrats, both civil and military, had to work as pressure groups for the articulation of demands for East Pakistan. As the number of these bureaucrats increased slightly over time, they began to feel more and more confident of themselves as representatives of East Pakistan's interest. Some of them deliberately became linked with the Bengali political leaders. Many of them supplied secret information and other materials to the top leadership of Awami League, Sheikh Mujib. The Agartala Conspiracy Case, which was framed in 1968 against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with a view to defaming him for conspiring to bring about secession of East Pakistan from Pakistan with Indian help, involved a number of civil and military officers. It was no wonder, therefore, that the Bengali bureaucrats lent full support to Sheikh Mujib when he organized a civil disobedience and non cooperation movement in East Pakistan with a view to paralyzing civil administration from 1 March to 25 March 1971. This non- cooperation movement ultimately proved crucial, because it paved the way for launching a bigger struggle against the oppressive Pakistan Government. The Six- Point Programme became transformed into a one-point movement i.e. the movement for independence. In the face of such a dire situation, General Yahya Khan, the President of Pakistan, took steps to buy some time □ to enhance their military strength by bringing in more men and materials from West Pakistan □ in the guise of a dialogue between the Awami League and the West Pakistani leaders and generals. The Bengali military officers saw this as a delaying tactic by the Pakistani

generals and prepared themselves for the crucial moment. They exchanged views with some of their colleagues and kept themselves abreast of the situation. They were sure that the enhanced striking power of the Pakistan army through the addition of more men and materials brought forth from West Pakistan would be used against the people of East Pakistan. The Bengali military officers decided to strike back if and when the situation so demanded.

After the completion of thorough preparation militarily, the Pakistani generals showed their teeth in the form of the ‘Operation Searchlight’. It was designed to suppress the people’s uprising in East Pakistan through a reign of terror involving massacre and genocide in Dhaka in the night of 25 March 1971. The political leaders of East Pakistan were caught unaware. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been leading the people’s movement till then, surrendered to the Pakistani generals. The other leaders also escaped to a safe haven in India without giving any direction to the people. At this juncture, the military officers, though junior in rank, played a direct role. At this point of time, some of them did what the political leaders were supposed to do. They staged a revolt, pronounced the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh and continued to mobilize the war efforts till the political leaders could regroup and consolidate their efforts through the formation of government-in-exile on 17 April 1971 in the neighboring country India. This indicates that the Bengali armed forces were interested only in the independence of Bangladesh. Unlike the military in most of the Third World countries at that point of time, the Bengali military officers were not interested in political power. They fought the Liberation War under the leadership of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile, headed by the political leaders.

The period from 25 March 1971 to 17 April 1971 may better be termed a missing link in the political history of Bangladesh because there was no legal government, no direction from the political leadership and no efforts whatsoever for mobilizing resources for the Liberation War from any quarter save those historic attempts made by Eight Bengal Tigers led by Major Ziaur Rahman. This study is designed also to throw some light on this missing link.

When the people of different strata in the society, different professional groups and different social forces, who became involved directly in the non-co-operation movement, lost touch with the political leadership, they were motivated and mobilized by the call of the Bengali military leadership. The military leadership appealed to the nation to resist the aggressors i.e. the Pakistani forces, anywhere and everywhere by whatever means. They also appealed to the international community to recognize the newborn state of Bangladesh and to condemn the atrocities committed by the occupation army of Pakistan. The activities of the Bengali military were not confined to rebellion and the Declaration of Independence only, they began to engage in the face-to-face fighting on occasions and organized guerilla type activities also. All these decisions on the part of the Bengali military helped bring renewed confidence to their compatriots scattered over the different cantonments and more importantly among the people, who from then on began to be involved in the Liberation War as active combatants (Safiullah 1989: 18- 92; Islam 1981: 112- 170). It is noteworthy that when the Bangladesh Government-in-exile was formed at Mujibnagar on 17 April 1971 the Bengali military officers instantly gave up giving directions to the fighting forces and concentrated solely on fighting the occupation forces under political leadership with a view to liberating Bangladesh. The saga of the nine-month long Liberation War is thus one of the richest, the most glorious, the most gallant ones, and to the historians, this is the most glorious chapter in Bangladesh history. It has all the unique characteristics of a successful revolution, but to the people of Bangladesh it has always remained both as a revolution and a Liberation War. It liberated the people from the marauding occupation army of Pakistan; it brought into being an independent and sovereign Bangladesh.

During those critical days of March 1971 the successful role of the band of nationalist Bengali military officers stationed in Chittagong was as much crucial as the gross failures of the West Pakistan- based powerhungry generals, who were for all practical purposes the ruling elite in Pakistan. But for their impolitic and ill-conceived haughty moves, Pakistan probably could have lingered for few more years. (Etzioni, 1965: 37-40). This orientation of the Bengali military officers did not grow

overnight. No revolt comes up in a vacuum. Such an important decision as the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh by a Bengali military officer Major Zia has its root deeper in the structural conditions of Pakistan. This has its socio-economic background: it has been shaped by the administrative and cultural policies of the ruling elite of Pakistan. It has been brought to a focus by the economic policies pursued by them. Only in the context of these structural factors can the role of the Bengali military officers, at that point of time, be properly understood. In the next chapter the socio-economic background of the issue has been discussed.

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Chapter Four

Socio-Economic Background of the Issue

Introduction

The issue in question i.e. the cataclysmic upheaval in the form of a Liberation War in East Pakistan in 1971 led by the Bengali military officers, must be understood in relation to its socio-economic context. Though the union between East and West Pakistan was voluntarily entered into in 1947, most of the ingredients that generate in people a solid bond of unity as a nation were absent in Pakistan. The people of East and West Pakistan had neither any experience of living together for generations within a continuing political framework, nor had they been united under identical political institutions which might have fostered common political perceptions, neither did they belong to a distinct cultural area. The only common bond that existed between the peoples of the two wings was a set of Islamic values and some experiences of the political movement for a separate Muslim homeland in the Hindudominated India on the basis of the two-nation theory (Bolitho, 1954; Chowdhury, 1967). For all these, Pakistan has been known as a 'double country' since its inception (Marshall, 1959:5). This chapter delineates in detail the socio-economic background of the issue in terms of geographical features, their demographic characteristics, linguistic heterogeneity, cultural traits, history and economic status of the two wings of Pakistan.

Geography

Pakistan as a state emerging in 1947 comprised two separate areas of British India - the Muslim dominated northwest regions (Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province) and East Bengal, which were later named as West Pakistan and East Pakistan respectively. These two provinces of Pakistan together had a total area of 3,65,529 square miles (East Pakistan 55,126 sq. miles and West Pakistan 310,403 sq. miles) with more than 1000 miles of Indian territory lying between them (Jahan, 1994:11). This geographical distance also created differences in the configuration of the physical and climatic conditions of the two regions. East Pakistan being the lowest riparian of the GangesBrahmaputra and Meghna (GBM) river system was mostly filled with sediments deposited by the respective rivers and their tributaries. The only variation in the topography is observed along the eastern and southeastern margins, where there are small hills and mountains and in the northern part with marginally high land mass, some thirty feet above the sea level. Due to the dense river network and heavy monsoon rainfall (average 80 inches) almost 30%-40% of the land of East Pakistan experience river flood every year, which also feeds the summer crops, whereas winter or Rabi crops require irrigation to some extent. The agricultural pattern of the country is mostly dependent on the flooding regime. In contrast to East, West Pakistan has diverse topography ranging from highlands like the Himalayas, the Karakoram and the Hindukush on the west and plains like Indus flood plains and delta on the east. When East Pakistan enjoys cool dry winter and hot humid summer, West Pakistan is noted for hot summer and cold winter with semi-arid to arid conditions prevailing in most parts, and sub-humid conditions in a small area in the north. The overall arid nature of West Pakistan made the region extensively dependent on irrigation for agricultural production. The only unifying element in the climate of East and West Pakistan is the influence of monsoon wind in a particular time of the year.

The differences in climate and topography of the two regions not only generated differences in agricultural pattern but have also nurtured different food habit, dress, rituals, customs of the people, thus producing two distinct cultures. Taking into consideration the geographical boundaries of the two parts of Pakistan, East Pakistan has common frontiers with India from west, east and north. In the south east, East Pakistan has a common boundary with Burma and to the south-east lies the Bay of Bengal. West Pakistan is bounded by Iran and Afghanistan on the west. In the north-west, Wakhan, a narrow belt of Afghanistan, separates West Pakistan from the Central Asia. In the north, West Pakistan has a common frontier with China. To the east, it is surrounded by India. The Arabian Sea lies to the south of West Pakistan. This extensive geographical separation has also prohibited the communication and social interaction between these two different socio-cultural units in general in the same country.

Population

The demographic features of East and West Pakistan also displays great contrast (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Demographic Features of East and West Pakistan

	Population (in Millions)		Population Density (Persons/ Sq. Mile)		Urban Population (%)		*Dependency Ratio (Per 100 Adults)
	195 1	196 1	195 1	196 1	195 1	1961	1961
East Pakistan	41.9	50.8	701	922	4.3	5.2	105.33
West Pakistan	33.7	42.9	109	138	17.8	22.5	97.6

Source: Jahan, 1994, p.11, Khan, 1971, p.697; The data of 1971, reflecting comparative perspective of two wings are not available, because the population census was not held in 1971. It was held in 1974.

The population was not evenly distributed in the two wings of Pakistan. The area of East Pakistan, being six times smaller than West Pakistan, contained 54% of the total population. East Pakistan's population density was seven times greater than that of West Pakistan. The density of population in the rural areas of East Pakistan was 1,483 persons per square mile of cultivated land and this figure in West Pakistan was 658 persons (Khan, 1971). The physiography and soil primarily control the distribution of the rural population in both the wings. The lands along the major rivers of East Pakistan, the Padma, Meghna and Brahmaputra, which are annually flooded, contain the densest population rising to over 2000 persons per square mile. In the Western wing the highest density of rural population rises to 200-700 persons per square mile in the humid areas of Upper Indus Valley and the intermontane high plains (Khan, 1971). On the contrary West Pakistan has a higher density of urban population than East Pakistan.

The dependency ratio was also high in East Pakistan than that of West Pakistan. A major part of this ratio was occupied by the child (0-14 age group) dependency. Another distinct demographic feature of Pakistan was the refugee population particularly migrating to the region after the partition of 1947. West Pakistan with better economic status experienced more influx of refugees (7.2 million, 1951 census) than East Pakistan (0.7 million, 1951 census). According to 1951 census refugees constituted 39.9% of the total urban population of West Pakistan. By contrast the vacuum created in the east wing by the departure of the Hindu elite was not filled by the new immigrants (Jahan, 1994).

Language

The topographic and climatic diversity often determines the linguistic complexity in a region. East Pakistan, an area with uniform landscape, had

one dominant mother tongue that was Bengali. The colloquial practice of this language with some regional variations in terms of pronunciation and elocution displays strong resemblance all over East Pakistan, though some exception in the hilly regions are seen, where trans-boundary linguistic influence has modified the language to a greater extent. A totally different scenario existed in West Pakistan, where a very complex polyglot was practiced. As the topography of West Pakistan changed from mountains to plains so did the language. The following table illustrates the linguistic differences in the two provinces of Pakistan.

Table 4.2: Mother Tongue Commonly Spoken by Population of East and West Pakistan (%)

Language	East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
Bengali	98.16	98.42	0.02	0.11
Punjabi	0.02	0.02	67.08	66.39
Pushtu	-	0.01	8.01	8.47
Sindhi	0.01	0.01	12.85	12.59
Urdu	0.64	0.61	7.05	7.75
English	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.04
Baluchi	-	-	3.04	2.49

Source: Jahan, 1994, p.14; same as in Table 4.1.

Bengali remained almost an unfamiliar language for the West Pakistanis (except some bilingual elite), likewise the majority of East Pakistanis or the Bengalis could never adopt Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu which are the widely spoken languages of West Pakistan. The differences in the alphabets and script and the elocution imposed a barrier in the acceptance of the languages in both the wings. Despite such diversity, West Pakistani administrators tried to impose Urdu as a single state language rejecting

Bengali on the ground of secularist contributions by Hindu authors in the language. Though Bengali script is derived directly from Gupta Brahmi script, the historical development of the language dates back to Mughal era when Bengali literature was greatly influenced by Persian literature and Islamic thoughts via Sufi mysticism. However the attempt of developing Urdu as a national language was discarded in the face of strong resentment by the Bengali nationals. Both Bengali and Urdu were recognized as national languages in Pakistan under the 1956 Constitution. Ultimately this settlement failed to incorporate the two languages at national level and English remained the official language since it is understandable in both the wings. The cause for such failure as identified by Jahan (1994) has increased the trend not conducive to national integration mainly because of the small number of mobilized and differentiated groups in the country.

Religion, Culture and Society

When the British decided to give independence to the subcontinent, the Muslims were not sure of a fair deal from the caste-ridden Hindu majority. The Hindu-Muslim rivalry dates back to the eighth century AD, when the Muslims rulers first entered the subcontinent and reigned over 600 years till the British regime started. The Indian Muslims therefore demanded a separate Muslim state where they could preserve their own constitutional rights, culture, tradition and Islamic laws. Though the society in East and West Pakistan was based on Islamic principles, still

there remained some basic differences in terms of attitude towards the religion. In East Pakistan, Islam is more of a liberal type in the sense that more of its day-to-day ethos rather than its archetypal rites and practices appealed to the people. In West Pakistan, however, Islam is more conservative and orthodox. This is mainly because of the fact that Islamic Principles had been made popular in East Pakistan mainly by the Sufi saints, popular both to the Muslim and non-Muslims alike since the thirteenth century. Whereas in West Pakistan it has largely been associated with the works of the conquering rulers, and that too since the ninth century. This liberal nature of Islam in East Pakistan has quite often been misunderstood by West Pakistani leaders, some of whom termed Bengali Muslims as lesser Muslims in Pakistan.

The distribution of the religious groups in the two wings was also quite disproportionate (Table 4.3). A good proportion of Hindu population resided in East Pakistan, whereas in West Pakistan the Hindu population was very negligible. The cultural diffusion from the surrounding states also plays a vital role in moulding the lifestyle of a country. West Pakistan is bounded by two Muslim States, Iran on the west and Afghanistan on north east, thus the cultural interaction that occurred among these nations belonged to the same orthodoxy. The dominance of fundamentalist perceptions could possibly be the reason for minimum Hindu population in West Pakistan. East Pakistan, once being a part of Hindu-dominated Indian territory, has a very enriched cultural heritage influenced by Buddhism-Hinduism. This disparity between the culture and society of East and West Pakistan within the broader context of Islam has always been a barrier to a united Pakistani nationalism.

Table 4.3: Religious Groups in East and West Pakistan (% of total population)

Religion	East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
Muslim	76.8	80.4	97.1	97.2
Hindu	22.0	18.4	1.6	1.5
Christian	0.3	0.3	1.3	1.3

Other	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.5
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Source: Jahan, 1994, p.23; as in Table 4.1.

The society of West Pakistan has been more fragmented than that of East Pakistan. The economic status-segregation has been quite predominant in West Pakistan, but tribalism posed as a strong factor retarding cohesion in the regions of the former North-West Frontier and Baluchistan provinces. The stratification regarding the linguistic identities of the ethnic minorities like Pathans, Baluchis, Sindhis has also been acute in this region. The Feudal Landlord system has been more widespread in West Pakistan compared to East Pakistan. A caste-like system has been prevalent, particularly in Punjab and often endogamy was practiced and children followed the caste occupation (Jahan, 1994):

In terms of ethnicity East Pakistan was more homogenous. The majority of its population belonged to one ethnic group Bengali, though racially Bengalis are a mixed group, comprising the Caucasoid, ProtoAustraloid and Mongoloid. The existent tribal groups in the region form a very small proportion of the population (about 496,000) residing in the Chittagong Hill tracts, Sylhet, Comilla and Mymensingh and never posed any problem to the Bengali nationalism. The agrarian community dominated the social lifestyle of East Pakistan. According to 1961 Census of Pakistan 85 percent of the total population were engaged in agriculture; 4 percent in manufacturing and 9 percent in tertiary activities, while the figures in West Pakistan were 59, 14 and 25 percent respectively. This rural society was loosely structured with no permanent leaders or institutions. The local Samaj and the local leaders only appeared during any crisis of the society. This Samaj was mostly constituted of the rural elite who were particularly the affluent and religious leaders of the rural society. Urban life in East Pakistan was mainly centred in the few urban centres like Dacca, Chittagong, Narayanganj and Khulna. The urban culture in East Pakistan has always been the culture of the educated elite of the society. Social stratification based on economic status was prevalent both in rural and urban social system, which also overshadowed other caste-based social stratification. But prior to the partition a more rigid

socioeconomic segregation prevailed between the agrarian society and the landowners, more popularly known as the Zamidars. Most of these landlords were Hindus who after partition either fled the country or were thrown out of their land holdings by the East Bengal Estates Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 that abolished the feudal landlord system from the country. The perspectives of a Bengali farmer who voted for Pakistan was also to elect a legislature that would abolish the hold of the Hindu Zamidars and Mahajans over his daily life. This perspective was somewhat different from that of the tribal leaders or elite of Punjab, Baluchistan, the North West Frontier Province and Sindh, who sought regional power to retain the domination of their provincial power structures against encroachments by the Hindu dominated centre (Sobhan, 1993).

In the rural societies of both East and West Pakistan land ownership was the prime indicator of economic status. In both the provinces the majority of the lands were in the hands of a few (Table 4.4). The major difference in the land ownership was that the percentage of the landowners with smaller sized lands were higher in the Eastern province compared to the Western province, which was also indicative of high land fragmentation in East Pakistan. The small and fragmented lands are direct results of the population growing without the opening up of new employment opportunities (Khan, 1971: 792). No organized effort of consolidating holdings was made in East Pakistan, while in West Pakistan Consolidation of holdings Ordinance was promulgated in 1960.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Land Ownership by Size in East and West Pakistan (1960)

Size of Farms in Acre	East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	% of Owners	% of Total Farm Land	% of Owner s	% of Total Farm Land
Under 1.0	24	3	15	1
1 to 4.9	53.5	39	34	9
5 to 12.4	19	39	28	22

12.5 to 24.9	3	14	15	26
25 and Above	0.5	5	8	42
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Khan, 1971, p.792

History

The prehistory of East and West Pakistan is not very clear. But both East and West Pakistan have been a melting pot for different races and culture. The two provinces also have a common Islamic history belonging to the Muslim Period in the Subcontinent. This bond was emphasized by leaders of the Pakistan movement prior to the establishment of Pakistan. Following independence it was often used by Pakistani policy makers to cement relations between the two wings (Jahan, 1994). In fact the first territorial demand that was put forward for Pakistan, corresponded roughly to the area of West Pakistan. When Choudhury Rahmat Ali and his associates first coined the name “Pakistan”, they thought of P for Punjab, A for Afghanistan, K for Kashmir, S for Sindh and TAN for Baluchistan. There was no trace of East Bengal within this acronym. The Lahore Conference of Muslim League in 1940 called for “Independent States” in the Muslim dominated regions of northwest and east. This was interpreted by many prominent Bengali Muslim Leaguers as demand for two states.

The Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 conceived by the ruling British Government as the basis for Indian Independence devolved power on three sub-states - Hindu dominated Jukta Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Bombay and Madras; Muslim dominated Punjab, North-Western Frontier Province, Sindh and Baluchistan and Muslim dominated East Bengal and Assam. The Cabinet Mission Plan was rejected by the Congress Party. It was only when the Congress Party high command rejected the idea of a united and sovereign Bengal that the idea of the Muslim majority areas of Bengal and Assam joining a 'moth-eaten and truncated' Pakistan was accepted as the ultimate home of Muslim Bengali nationalism (Sobhan1993). In 8 November 1945, Jinnah, in an interview to the Associated Press of America, stated that Pakistan would be a United States and its provinces would enjoy autonomy (Khan, 1998). The attempt to modify the Lahore Resolution in favour of one state was opposed by some East Bengal Muslim Leaguers. It was in 1946 when the Lahore resolution was finally amended in support of one Muslim State in Muslim League Council Session held at Delhi.

Thus Bengali nationalism found its national identity defined by religion located in the territories of East Bengal and Sylhet, though nonMuslims constituted 22 percent of the total population of Eastern Bengal at the time of partition (Haxner, 1969). But after August 14, 1947 Bengali nationalism was more bounded by a territorial definition which not only contained the existing Hindus but also the Muslim population who migrated to East Pakistan from different parts of India and having different perspective on politics and economy. Among all these divergent groups the Bengali Muslims had high expectations from the newly emerged nation, since they were the most deprived Indian Muslims throughout history. The minority Urdu speaking Muslims of India had a good hold over the business, profession, lands and in some parts of India they also belonged to the higher class of the society. It was the Bengali Muslims who had been economically and politically exploited by the British rulers and the later by the Hindu Zamidars. The backwardness of Eastern Bengal could be very much attributed to such prolonged domination by the external forces. The struggle for Pakistan and the struggle for power within Pakistan which eventually focussed on the

struggle for self-rule from Pakistan thus constituted a continuum within the consciousness of Bengalis of Eastern Bengal and should not be seen as a discrete historical episodes (Sobhan, 1993).

Economic Status

The economy that the two wings of Pakistan inherited during the partition of India was quite frail. Among the two provinces, East Pakistan left most of the sources of its economic resources in West Bengal and brought in only the agrarian hinterland of Bengal and the tea growing estates of Sylhet and Assam, while West Pakistan inherited a better infrastructure of roads and railways, experienced entrepreneurs, armed forces personnel and a pool of professionals. Still, East Pakistan superceded the West Pakistan in terms of highly fertile agricultural land, higher carrying capacity of the land and a strong rural industrial base like handloom industry from where a good amount of cloth for the population of that region were supplied. There was not even much difference in the educational attainment of the two regions. In the first decade of Pakistani rule most of the policies developed by the centre was within the framework of centralization and expediency and economic policy was of no difference. While the Bengali economists blamed the economic policy of the central government to be accentuating the overall disparity between the Eastern and Western province of Pakistan, the economists of West Pakistan emphasized on the weak economy that East Bengal attained at the time of partition. The causes of disparity between East and West Pakistan is a matter of debate; the relevant document reveals that East Pakistan has always lagged behind in every sector of the economy compared to West Pakistan.

In sum, the structural differences that existed between East and West Pakistan at the time of birth of Pakistan in terms of physical features, demographic characteristics, linguistic heterogeneity, cultural pluralism,

economic status, and especially the expectations of people, provide the context of the upheaval of 1971 in East Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan expected that they would not only rid themselves of the exploitation they were used to in United India under the dispensation of Hindu Zamidars and Mahajans in Muslim Pakistan, but they would also have ample opportunities to fashion their lives in accordance with their cultural heritage, to have effective participation in the political systems and to have just and equitable share of the national pie as participant citizens.

For historical reasons the Muslims of Bengal and especially of East Bengal, which became East Pakistan in 1947, remained backward both economically and educationally. It is Bengal where the British established their domination first and to suit their imperial interests they completely transformed the existing socio-economic structure. In the process, the Muslims in general and Muslim aristocracy in particular were deprived of all kinds of privileges they were used to as the ruling community (Seal 1968: 30). In the eastern parts of Bengal, where the Muslims were the most numerous, this was particularly evident. They were conspicuously absent from schools and colleges. A new class of landlords was created by the British by the 1793 Company Act, who were mostly Hindus (Seal 1968: 32- 33). The Muslim culture also suffered under the dispensation of the Hindu landlords. That is one of the reasons why the Muslims in East Bengal opted for Pakistan. (Ahamed 1980: 63- 64)

The policy measures adopted by the ruling elite in Pakistan since the very beginning, which have been analyzed in Chapter Three and Four, ran however counter to their expectations. They had neither any freedom to pursue their own culture nor any effective participation in the polity, nor had they equitable share in the growing economy. Much of the dynamics of the Six-Point Programme, which intended to restructure the political system in Pakistan in the late 1960s for the benefit of the people in East Pakistan, can be understood in this context. If the Six-Point Programme were accepted by the ruling elite, Pakistan might have continued as a confederal or a consociational polity with maximum autonomy to the units. Chapter Four analyzes why the Programme was not accepted by them. After the general election of 1970, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,

the leader of East Pakistan- based Awami League, won the majority of seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan and yet denied the opportunity of forming a government at the centre as the leader of the majority party through conspiratorial manoeuvres, legitimacy of the central government was grievously eroded and so also the allegiance of the people of East Pakistan. At that stage, the Pakistani ruling elite were left with only coercive measures, the use of which resulted in the breakup of Pakistan and emergence of the independent Bangladesh. The people of East Pakistan, having not many chances to be integrated with Pakistan during the last 23 years and most of the time taking themselves merely as aliens in the polity because of the structural differences, thus became a dynamic force in the revolution which they termed as the Liberation War.

This socio-economic background, which was sharpened by the administrative and cultural policies of the ruling elite in Pakistan, discussed in the next chapter, alienated the people of East Pakistan from the central government in Pakistan.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Administrative and Cultural Policies of the Ruling Elite in Pakistan

Introduction

The structural differences that characterized the two wings of Pakistan at its birth, as we have noted in Chapter Two, were exacerbated more and more because of the pursuit of certain policies by the national elite from the very beginning. The administrative and political policies, which were highly centralized, resulted in what has been known as the "viceregal system" (Sayeed, 1968, chapter 10). The Government of India Act, 1935, under which Pakistan was administered until 1956, provided for a strong central government with the provinces totally dependent on it. The Constitution of 1956, which supplanted the 1935 Act, perpetuated the essentially strong position of the centre. The parliamentary system of government, which was adopted in Pakistan in 1947, guaranteed adequate provincial autonomy. The governor of East Pakistan was supposed to be a constitutional head, working on the advice of the Provincial cabinet. In practice, however, the Provincial governor remained the effective head of the Provincial government and as the centre's nominee. He was always eager to protect centre's interest in the provinces and worked as an

important instrument of centralization. The centre could direct the governor to use article 92A of the Government of India Act 1935 or article 193 of the Constitution of 1956 and take upon himself the entire responsibility of provincial administration and thus impose direct central rule on the provinces. Its most blatant use took place in East Pakistan in 1954 when the newly elected United Front Government was ousted from office on flimsy grounds, though the United Front Government represented more than 90 percent of the voters of East Pakistan during the 1954 election. The centre could also control individual provincial politicians through the Public and Representative Officers (Disqualification) Act (PRODA), and its use was extensive.

The Policies of Administrative and Political Centralization

The most effective instrument of centralization were such central services as the Civil Service of Pakistan, the Central Audit and Accounts Service, the Police Service of Pakistan and so on, which accounted for most of the key decision-making posts in both the centre and provinces. Ultimate control over, and co-ordination of, these functionaries lay with the centre even when they worked in the Provinces. It was more like preindependent India, where the central services constituted the single most important stable bond between the centre and the Provinces. The top echelons in the military hierarchy monopolized the formulation of defence policies and increasingly became directly involved in shaping economic

policies from 1958 when Martial Law was proclaimed in Pakistan. These military officers i.e. the top layers of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, wielded an influence far disproportionate to their numbers (Wilcox, 1965). The Bengali elite, especially the growing "vernacular elite" of East Pakistan (Jahan, 1972: 28- 30) was unhappy with the policies of political-administrative centralization, for they found that not only were they not participants in the strong centre which was developing, but they were not even masters of their own house. The demand for full provincial autonomy thus became the logical corollary, and it began to be raised from the early 1950s. As the process of centralization continued, the demand for autonomy began to be louder and it drew growing public support. It was the autonomy issue that swept the United Front to power in 1954 in East Pakistan. The dismissal of the United Front government and the continued imposition of Article 92A of the Government of India Act 1935, thus ignoring the popular will in East Bengal and instancing the ruling elite's intolerance of any political opposition, led to further intensification of the demand for autonomy.

Hamza Alavi and Angus Maddison expressed the view that the bureaucratic elite in Pakistan had been "in effective command of the state power" right from the beginning (Alavi, 1973: 152; Maddison, 1971: 136). They functioned with a "Parliamentary façade of politicians" in the 1950s. In 1958 they openly seized power which they exercised in practice. The dominant position of the bureaucrats in Pakistan was due partly to historical reasons and partly to social dynamics.

The bureaucracy was the chief instrument of control and domination in British India, and their control over the structures of government and their monopoly of decision-making was a prominent feature of colonial rule. If British control was to be maintained, they needed to hold all the key offices and supervise the subordinate ones. Since they were a very small group, ruling over a populous country, the small group of officials needed to retain ultimate control in their hands, so that the supremacy of their final authority could not be challenged. The elite bureaucracy i.e. the Indian Civil Service, was organized on these precepts. Its members were responsible for filling all executive as well as political and judicial posts

at the highest level. It was not only the executive branch of government, it also helped formulate and direct policy. These bureaucrats always held the key positions in the administrative hierarchy and exercised the widest possible discretionary power. In the act of governance they were neither responsible to those whom they ruled, nor were they responsive to their demands. The members of the Civil Service had always been the key links in the chain of governance because of their superior position and status and the whole system was orchestrated in such a fashion that it worked like a "machine", a classical bureaucracy (Houghton, 1913: 30). Seeing the coherent working of the system by the members of the Indian Civil Service, Lloyd George termed the service the "steel frame of the British empire" (Ahamed, 1980: 49- 50). The military officers in British India also played a dominant role in the governance of India. They strongly supported the "viceregal" system. They were used frequently to govern various frontier regions (Ahamed, 1980: 50).

As a post-colonial state Pakistan inherited this kind of "overdeveloped state apparatus and its institutionalized practices" (Alavi, 1973: 147), and the bureaucratic elite in Pakistan, which was the lineal descendant of "the colonial bureaucrats" inherited the "attitude" and "orientation" of their predecessors. The elitist character of the Indian Civil Service, which made it a tightly knit group of officers, recruited at a uniform age and exposed to a common training and education, became the ideal of the Civil Services of Pakistan. Similarly, the character of the Pakistan military was extraordinarily similar to that of the British Indian Army (Tinker, 1962: 156- 60). The tone of the military officers was laid down by the Sandhurst, Cranwell and Woolwich trained senior officers and they carefully preserved the values and traditions of the British Indian Army (Ahamed, 1980: 50).

The bureaucratic elite in Pakistan inherited the intellectual orientation of the Indian Civil Service. They also inherited the orientation of the British Indian Army and the apparatus of the colonial bureaucracy. Being recruited and trained in the same tradition and working within a similar institutional framework, they were able to retain their elitist nature, and became the most dominant social sector in Pakistan. The Muslim League,

which was largely responsible for mobilizing the people for establishing an independent Pakistan, disintegrated soon after Pakistan came into being and a number of rival factions emerged from it within a few years. The representative institutions such as the legislature and local government, which were set up belatedly and hesitantly during the closing part of the colonial regime did not strike deep roots. The political system which was established in Pakistan was more or less similar to that which functioned in colonial India - a highly centralized and unitary system managed by the bureaucrats.

Apart from this historical reason, social dynamics also contributed heavily to the strong position of the bureaucrats over the structures of government. Most of the bureaucratic elite - the top level civil servants and the military officers - who were responsible for the formulation of major public policies in Pakistan came from the north-western part of India (Braibanti, 1966: 360- 77), and in this part of the subcontinent the tradition of bureaucratic domination reached its highest watermark. This was due to two reasons. First, this part of India was what had been the non-regulation area (Sayeed, 1968: 103), and in the non-regulation area the rule of the bureaucrats was personal and paternal. They exercised power with minimum interference from the centre or provincial governments. Secondly, there were many big landlords in that area and politics was dominated by them. The struggle for power was decided most often by factional strife or intrigues rather than by public discussion or political bargaining. Such schemings or intrigues provided ample opportunities for the bureaucrats, and in effect, power tended to gravitate toward the bureaucratic elite.

In East Pakistan, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 took away much of the discretionary powers of the district officers since it was a regulation area (Sayeed, 1968: 103). East Pakistan, moreover, was not dominated by the landlords, because most of them were Hindus, and they migrated to India after partition. This condition explains why the bureaucrats in the region were less dominant. But in Pakistan, there were fewer bureaucrats from East Pakistan and practically none in the higher echelon (Choudhuri, 1963: 78). Consequently, power tended to gravitate towards the politicians

in East Pakistan. But since the politicians from East Pakistan championed the cause of provincial autonomy, decentralization of power and so on, they were looked upon with suspicion, and quite often sidetracked from the policy-making structure.

Imbalance in Bureaucracy in Regional Terms

There was an imbalance in the bureaucracy in respect of regional representation right from the time of partition. This imbalance was not only between East and West Pakistan but also between the various regions of West Pakistan. The elite cadre of civil servants from Sindh constituted a bare 5 percent of the total number, and that from the NorthWestern Frontier province and Baluchistan was merely 7 percent (Ahamed, 1980: 63). East Pakistan's representation in the civil services was the poorest. For historical reasons the Muslims in Bengal remained backward both economically and educationally. It was in Bengal that the British established their domination first and to suit their imperial interests they completely transformed the existing socio-economic structure. In the process Muslims in general and the Muslim aristocracy in particular were deprived of all kinds of privileges they were used to as the ruling community (Seal, 1968: 30). This economic backwardness inevitably led to educational backwardness. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did a small middle class began to emerge in Bengal. For all these reasons there were few civil servants from East Pakistan.

At the time of partition there were only 2 Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers from East Pakistan, and up to 1950 only 17 new recruits entered

the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) out of a total of 175 such officers (Ahamed, 1980: 64). To remedy the situation and to increase representation of East Pakistan in the services, a quota system was introduced in 1950. But it did not produce the intended results and the regional imbalance between the two regions continued to grow.

Table 5.1: East-West representation in Civil Service of Pakistan, 1950-68

Over the years East Pakistan's representation increased considerably and in the period 1950- 1968, 42 percent of the new recruits were from East Pakistan, though overall representation remained less than 30 percents in the civil services. In the Foreign Service, Audit and Accounts Service and Taxation Service, East Pakistan's representation during the period was 37.5 percent, 25.5 percent and 38 percent respectively (Ahamed, 1980: 64).

Table 5.2: Secretaries in the Central Secretariat, 1956

	Number	East	West
Secretary	19	-	19
Joint Secretary	41	3	38
Deputy Secretary	133	10	123
Under Secretary	548	38	510
Total	741	51	690

Source: Ahamed, Emajuddin,. Op. Cit. Pp. 66

This representation was, however, in the lower echelons and in departments which did not influence the vital areas of policy. As late as 1956 there was no Secretary from East Pakistan, and there were only three Joint Secretaries, ten Deputy Secretaries and 38 Under Secretaries.

Table 5.3: East-West Representation in Class 1 Officers in Some Divisions, 1968- 1969

Division	196				196			
	East Pakistan		West Pakistan		East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Economic Affairs	16	36.0	28	64.0	20	44.0	29	59.0
Commerce	19	38.0	33	62.0	20	33.0	41	67.0
Finance	10	29.0	27	71.0	12	30.0	30	70.0
Agriculture	4	13.0	26	87.0	6	17.0	28	83.0
Industries	9	28.0	23	72.0	10	32.0	21	68.0
Cabinet Division	3	13.0	21	87.0	4	16.0	22	84.0
Establishment Division	12	32.0	25	68.0	11	30.0	25	70.0

Planning	21	30.0	51	70.0	28	29.0	67	71.0
Information & Broadcasting	5	25.0	15	75.0	6	26.0	17	74.0
Labour and Social Welfare	4	28.0	10	72.0	5	33.0	10	67.0
Defense	4	10.0	35	90.0	5	13.0	31	87.0

Source: Ahamed, Emajuddin, Op. Cit. Pp. 66- 67

In 1964 there were only two secretaries from East Pakistan and five joint secretaries. Even in 1968, there were only two secretaries from East Pakistan and eight joint secretaries. But the key posts like those of cabinet division, establishment division or economic affairs division, or secretaries of finance, industries, commerce, defense, home were never held by East Pakistani officers. Even among the class 1 officers, East Pakistan's representation was very low; in some divisions it varied from 10 percent to 13 percent.

Table 5.4: East Pakistan's Representation in the Armed Forces in 1964.

The Army	Percent
1. Officers	5.0
2. Junior Commissioned Ranks	7.4
3. Other Ranks	7.4
The Air Force	
1. Officers	16.0
2. Warrant Officers	17.0
3. Other Ranks	30.0
The Navy	

1. Officers	10.0
2. Branch Officers	5.0
3. Chief Petty Officers	10.4
4. Petty Officers	17.3
5. Leading Seamen and below	28.8

Source: Ahamed, Emajuddin, Op. Cit. Pp. 69

Like the civil servants, all the top ranking military officers were from West Pakistan. This was also due to historical reasons. The British deliberately excluded certain groups and races of the northern and eastern parts of India from the British Indian Army since the "Mutiny of 1857" (Ahamed, 1980: 67). Recruitment to the British Indian Army was largely confined to the north-western part of India from the so-called "Martial Races" (Cohen 32- 36). The Simon Commission pointed out that "those races which furnish the best sepoys are emphatically not those which exhibit the greatest accomplishment of mind in an examination", yet they provided the bulk of recruit to the Indian Army (The Indian Statutory Commission, 1930).

During the Second World War a considerable number of persons were recruited from the non-martial races. They fought so well in the war that the myth concerning the martial race theory was exploded, and after the war, they were well represented in the Indian Army. In Pakistan, however, the myth continued. The bulk of the armed forces had been drawn from West Pakistan, particularly from four districts of northern Punjab and two districts of the North Western Frontier Province. On the whole East Pakistan's representation did not exceed 10 to 11 percent in the officer ranks and other ranks (Table 5.4). Thus the bureaucratic elite in Pakistan was an exclusive group in regional terms.

The policies of administrative and political centralization, which had been pursued in Pakistan since the beginning, demonstrated in sharp relief the domination of West Pakistan over East Pakistan through the domineering roles of the West Pakistan- based bureaucratic elite. In the first decade following independence, Bengali participation in the national power elite was limited indeed, but the parity among the political elite had a sort of balancing effect. After the military take over in 1958 it was lost

totally, because the military rule was in effect a rule of the bureaucratic elite i.e. the top level civil servants and the military officers in partnership, where East Pakistan's representation was the lowest.

Table 5.5: Central political elite in Pakistan 1947- 1958

	East	West
Heads of State	2	2
Prime Ministers	3	4
Ministers including State and Deputy Ministers	27	27
Members of Constitutional and National Assembly	84	75

Source: Jahan, Rounaq; Pakistan: Failure in National Integration. Dhaka, University Press Ltd. 1973, pp. 25.

Of the bureaucratic elite, who were responsible for the formulation of development strategy and policy in Pakistan from 1958, only a few members were from East Pakistan. The two generals who were the Chief Martial Law Administrators and Presidents of Pakistan from 1958 to 1970 were West Pakistanis. Of the nine governors during the period, seven were top ranking bureaucrats, and six of them were from West Pakistan. Of the seventeen ministers, who were in charge of the Ministries of Finance, Industries, Food and Agriculture, Economic Affairs and Commerce, eleven were West Pakistani. Of them, ten were bureaucrats and eight were from West Pakistan. Of the forty one secretaries and joint secretaries who were in charge of the key divisions in the Central Secretariat from 1961 to 1969, there were only three secretaries and four joint secretaries from East Pakistan. More than 80 percent of those who held the posts of chairman or managing directors in the key corporations were West Pakistanis. In other words, the people of East Pakistan were greatly alienated because of the policies of administrative and political centralization.

The Policy of Cultural Assimilation

While the policies of administrative and political centralization first prompted the Bengalis to raise the issue of provincial autonomy, the cultural policy of assimilation provided a wider emotional appeal to the demand for autonomy and helped develop a linguistic nationalism among the different classes in Bangladesh. It was believed by the national elite that the two wings could be held together only if there were one language and one culture between them. This idea was projected boldly by the first Governor General of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his speech in Dhaka in 1948. He said:

Let me make it clear to you that the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one State Language no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function (Ahmad, 1960: 490).

While answering a question in regard to an amendment to the National Assembly rules, allowing Bengali to be used in the house along with Urdu and English, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan said in the same vein:

Pakistan is a Muslim state and it must have as its lingua franca the language of the Muslims. ... (The mover) should realize that Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in the subcontinent and the language of a hundred million Muslims is Urdu... It is necessary for a nation to have one language which can only be Urdu and no other language. (Constitutional Assembly Debates, 25 February 1948.)

This policy of linguistic and cultural assimilation in a heterogeneous society of Pakistan, having diverse ethnic and regional groups proved counterproductive. The people of East Pakistan opposed it tooth and nail as they took it as West Pakistan's clever ploy to keep them subjugated for ever not only politically and administratively, but also educationally and culturally. This is the reason why the first Basic Principles Committee Report (BPC), which came out in 1950, was rejected by all sections of people of East Pakistan as it recommended Urdu as the only state language in Pakistan. The move was opposed not only by the students, intelligentsia and different professional groups, but also by all the political parties of East Pakistan. Even the party in power of East Pakistan, the Muslim League, adopted a unanimous resolution urging recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages.

The central government however persisted in its effort until 1956 when the Constitution of 1956 recognized both Urdu and Bengali as state languages and that too after a lot of bickering among the leaders of the two wings of Pakistan. The centre's cultural policy thus drove a wedge between the two wings instead of uniting them. The language movement, which began surfacing quite early in East Pakistan, was crucial to the development of the vernacular elite (Jahan, 1973: 42- 43). It helped foster a kind of linguistic nationalism in East Pakistan and set the pattern for a 'student-literati-professional alliance' which was used adroitly in all subsequent movements. It provided the vernacular elite with a popular

issue under the banner of which all Bengalis could meet, and in fact that helped them bridge the elite-mass gap on this popular issue.

The language movement got off the ground quite early, in February 1948. The students and some teachers at Dhaka University, analyzing the various dimensions of this issue, made the people conscious of the importance of language and began demanding that Bengali, which was the language of about 54 percent of the people of Pakistan, should be accepted as one of the state languages. The students, who were the main spokesmen of the vernacular elite, were mobilized in this popular cause.

The movement reached a penultimate stage in 1952, especially on 21 February, when in a massive demonstration in deliberate violation of the government ban in Dhaka, a few students lost their lives because the police fired on them. The events of 21 February 1952 left a profound imprint on East Pakistan's political development. The language movement in fact created new myths, new symbols and new slogans which strengthened further the emerging vernacular elite. It gave them not only a common cause but also their first martyrs. A whole literary and cultural tradition grew out of the events of 21 February 1952. Every year the day began to be observed with solemnity as a memorial day and the martyrs were remembered with veneration. In 1999, 21 February was recognized by the 188-nation United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the Universal Mother Language Day.

In sum, the policies of administrative and political centralization and the assimilationist cultural policy, which were pursued in Pakistan by the ruling elite, not only alienated the people of East Pakistan from the overarching framework of Pakistan but also made them conscious of their separate identity as a people. The rule of the bureaucratic elite, which was mainly based on West Pakistan, always reminded them that they were not equal partners and participants in the affairs of the state. The language movement and the events of 21 February 1952, on the other hand, helped foster in them a sense of identity which they never experienced before. These, above everything else, generated in the minds of the vernacular elite in East Pakistan the kind of hope and aspirations, which began to be

expressed first of all in the form of provincial autonomy and finally in the Six-Point Programme formulated in 1966 by the Awami League.

The alienation of the people of East Pakistan, which was due mostly to the administrative and cultural policies of the ruling elite in Pakistan, deepened further by their economic policies pursued right from the early 1950's. This has been analyzed in the next chapter.

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Chapter Six

Economic Policies of the Ruling Elite in Pakistan

Introduction

While the administrative policy of centralization and the cultural policy of assimilation added an emotional appeal to the demand for autonomy and helped develop a linguistic nationalism among the various classes in East Pakistan, the economic policies, which directly affected the

emerging middle classes, led to the wholesale alienation of the Bengalis. They began to attack the economic policies for the perpetuation and widening of economic disparity between East and West Pakistan.

As we have discussed, the two regions of Pakistan were dissimilar in many respects, but they were similar in that both were industrially underdeveloped and had been the producers of agricultural raw materials. East Pakistan produced 85 percent of the world's best quality jute and West Pakistan produced a considerable amount of good quality cotton. At independence the industrial bases of the two regions were almost of the same size (Papanek, 1964: 48). In terms of industrial development, there was very little difference between the two, although in such products as textiles and tea, East Pakistan was ahead, while West Pakistan had an advantage in sugar and metals (Sobhan, 1962: 31- 37). In irrigation facilities, however West Pakistan had a greater advantage, though banking activities were slightly greater in East Pakistan (Ahamed, 1980: 118- 119). In the aggregate there was very little difference in the level of development. Per capita income was, of course, slightly higher in West Pakistan.

Economic Disparity Between the Two Wings

The small gap that existed between the two regions widened very rapidly over the years and in the 1960s it took on critical proportions. The Gross Regional Products (GRP) in East Pakistan grew from Rs. 12,360 million in 1949/50 to Rs. 14,945 million in 1959/60 and to Rs. 23,119 million in 1969/70. The average annual growth rate was 0.2 percent in the first decade and 5.4 percent in the second decade. Compared to this, the total GRP of West Pakistan was Rs. 12,106 million in 1949/50, Rs. 16,494 million in 1959/60 and Rs. 31,157 million in 1969/70 - the average annual growth rate in West Pakistan being 3.6 percent in the first decade and 7.2 percent in the second decade. (Table 6.1)

Table 6.1: GRP of East & West Pakistan at 1959/60 Constant Factor Cost (Rs. Million)

	1949/50	1959/60	1969/70
East Pakistan	12,360	14,945	23119
West Pakistan	12,106	16,494	31,157

Source: The Third Five Year Plan 1965-70, op cit., p. 11; Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, Reports of the Advisory Panels for the Fourth Five Year Plan 1970- 75 (Islamabad: July 1970) I, p. 134.

The rate of growth was reflected in per capita income in the two regions. The per capita income in West Pakistan increased from Rs. 338 in 1949/50 to Rs. 367 in 1959/60 and Rs. 533 in 1969/70; whereas in East

Pakistan per capita income declined from Rs. 287 in 1949/50 to Rs. 277 in 1959/60 and rose to Rs. 331 in 1969/70 (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Per Capita Income in East and West Pakistan, 1959/60 Prices (Rs.)

	1949/50	1959/60	1969/70
East Pakistan	287	277	331
West Pakistan	338	367	533

Source: Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, The Third Five Year Plan 1965- 70 (Karachi: 1965), p. 11; Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, Reports of the Advisory Panels for the Fourth Five Year Plan 1970- 75 (Islamabad, July: 1970) Vol. I, p. 134.

The rate of growth was the outcome of the inter-regional disparity in per capita output and the level of disparity went on increasing rapidly since independence. In 1949/50 the disparity was 19 percent but in 1959/60 it rose to 32 percent and in 1969/70 to 61 percent (Table 6.3), indicating a highly differential rate of development in the two regions.

Table 6.3: Rate of Interregional Per Capita Disparity in GRP at 1959/60 Prices

	Per capita gross regional product of East Pakistan	Per capita gross regional product of West Pakistan	East-West disparity ratio (per cent)
1949/50	Rs. 287	Rs. 345	1.19
1959/60	Rs. 269	Rs. 355	1.32
1969/70	Rs. 314	Rs. 504	1.61

Source: Reports of the Advisory Panels for the Fourth Five Year Plan 1970- 75 op. cit., pp. 22, 136.

The disparity was, however, an underestimate for two reasons. First, the estimate of output or value-added in some sectors was on the high side for East Pakistan and low side for West Pakistan (Ahamed, 1980:119). Secondly, these comparisons did not allow for inter-wing price differences for the same commodities and, in reality, the purchasing power of the rupee was lower in East Pakistan. The cost of living in East Pakistan was 5 percent to 7 percent higher on an average from 1959/60 to 1966/69.

These differential rates of growth of the two regions were primarily due to different rates of industrialization. In East Pakistan the industrial sector accounted for 9.4 percent of regional output in 1949/50 and it rose to about 20 percent in 1969/70, but in West Pakistan the industrial sector came to account for almost a third of the regional output in 1969/70, though in 1949/50 it represented only 14.7 percent (Griffin & Khan, 1972: 4). If the share of industrial employment in the total labour force is used as an index, the level of industrialization in East Pakistan was much lower and, in fact, it failed to industrialize in the period 1951- 61, because the percentage of the labour force employed in agriculture increased from 84.7 percent to 85.3 percent, while in West Pakistan it declined from 65.3 percent to 59.3 percent and it came down to 53.4 percent in 1966/67 (Griffin & Khan, 1972: 4). This, more than anything else, reflects the relative shift and direction of structural change in the economy.

The principal reason for the unequal rates of growth in the two regions was the incomparable shares of investment and the various policies the Government of Pakistan had been following since 1948. East Pakistan's share of investment varied from 21 percent to 26 percent in the 1950s and from 32 percent to 36 percent in the 1960s; but by far the largest share of both revenue expenditure and development outlay went to West Pakistan (Table 6.4)

Table 6.4:

East Pakistan's share out of the total investment of Rs. 1160 crores (11600 million) in the First Five Year Plan was 254 crores (2540 million) as against 898 crores (8980 million) in West Pakistan. In the Second Five Year Plan East Pakistan's share in plan allocation was 47 percent and 30 percent in the public and private sectors respectively. In actual implementation, the share of East Pakistan was 32 percent of the total public and private expenditure. During the Third Plan Period East Pakistan's share was 36 percent.

The disparity in development and revenue expenditure can be fully appreciated if they are considered on a per capita basis. In the pre-plan

period (1947- 1955) the per capita development and revenue expenditure on average were Rs. 22.08 and Rs. 37.75 respectively in East Pakistan as against Rs. 108.03 and Rs. 201.94 respectively in West Pakistan (Table 6.5)

Table 6.5:

Per Capita Revenue and Development Expenditure in East and West Pakistan 1950-70

A similar policy was followed in respect of the allocation of foreign aid and loans. During the period 1947/48 - 1959/60 East Pakistan received only Rs. 93.89 crores out of a total foreign development aid of Rs. 542.14 crores and Rs. 129 crores out of total US commodity aid of Rs. 409 crores. These represented only 17 percent and 30 percent respectively, and the rest were allocated to West Pakistan (Government of East Pakistan, Planning Department, Economic Disparity between East and West Pakistan, 1961: 21). The Government of Pakistan received Rs. 7,003 million as economic assistance both in grant and loans till December 1970 (Ahamed, 1980: 123) and East Pakistan's share in the net foreign resources was about 25 percent during the Second Plan Period and about 30 percent during the Third Plan Period.

Disparity in the allocation of resources, both domestic and foreign, in the two regions was the inevitable result of the development strategy. An

entrepreneurial approach based on a one-economy policy was the basic feature of the development strategy in Pakistan and the bureaucratic elite defended it on the grounds of efficiency and productivity. West Pakistan had a larger stock of social and economic overheads in the form of power, transportation and communication facilities and higher ratio of natural resources with a relatively lesser density of population. The West Pakistani railway system was more developed and less affected by the partition in 1947. The port of Karachi was more developed. Most of the refugee industrialists, moreover, settled in West Pakistan and thus there was a larger pool of private enterprise as well as greater managerial and technical ability in West Pakistan. In East Pakistan communication and transport facilities were poor. Chittagong Port was yet to be developed. There were fewer entrepreneurs. The adoption of the one-economy policy based on an entrepreneurial approach, however, accelerated the rate of economic disparity.

In 1947 the two regions were almost at the same level of industrial development. Following independence one factor was crucial in helping West Pakistan widen its initial gain. The capital city of Pakistan was located (and then expensively relocated) in West Pakistan. In view of the wide control the government exercised over the economic life of the country, particularly industrial enterprises, exchange control, import regulation, allocation of resources and so on (Rahman, 1968: 16) West Pakistan gained immensely. West Pakistan not only hosted the central government, but also held nearly 100 percent of its key positions.

The allocative bias in favour of West Pakistan, concentrating nearly 75 percent of the total expenditure in a region where only 46 percent of total population lived, generated not only income and employment, but also created a favourable condition for private investment. Apart from maintaining more than a quarter of a million armed forces personnel, largely recruited in the West and stationed there, running defense industries and maintaining an efficient communication system for defense and hosting almost 100 percent of the relatively wealthy diplomats and their families, West Pakistan was in more comfortable position and all these were helpful for building the market for industrial products in the West and in providing capital for private investment (Rahman, 1968: 16).

East Pakistan's low starting point, lack of private entrepreneurs in industry, low level of infrastructure demanded a sustained effort on the part of the government to create conditions for private investment; the policy measures of the bureaucratic elite were however different. They worked as sanctions against East Pakistan's industrialization.

The financial institutions in Pakistan followed a kind of discriminatory attitude to East Pakistan. The Industrial Development Bank (IDBP) distributed Rs. 2,044 million as loans for industrial development from 1961/62 to 1969/70, and East Pakistan received only Rs. 990.8 million. The Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation (PICIC) disbursed Rs. 2,521.93 million as loans to investors, but East Pakistan investors received only Rs. 821.28 (32.28%) only during 1957/58 to 1968/69. For all these private sector in East Pakistan could not be a thriving sector.

Apart from the disproportionate expenditure and differential growth of the private sectors in the two regions, disparity increased because of the government's agricultural policy, particularly in the first decade. The Government of Pakistan adopted a policy of industrialization through the private sector and to make industrialization a success, fiscal and monetary policies were geared to extract adequately the surplus from agriculture and then to re-channel it to industrial sector. It was estimated that over 15 percent of the value of gross agricultural output was extracted and re-directed to industry and manufacturing and its burden on the farmers was over 10 percent of their income. East Pakistan was severely affected by the policy, because East Pakistan accounted for a larger share of export than West Pakistan (Table 6.6) and a greater proportion of agricultural goods in total exports. The transfer of surplus from agriculture to industry was in effect a transfer of the agricultural surplus of East Pakistan to the industries of West Pakistan, because import licenses were distributed to West Pakistani manufacturers and traders against East Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings. The process continued throughout the 1950s. When, in the 1960s the government began to subsidize agriculture, most of the benefit went to the landlords and rich farmers, 90 percent of whom were from West Pakistan.

Furthermore, through a surplus in international trade and a deficit in inter-wing trade, a sizable amount of East Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings was diverted to the West wing. Exports from East Pakistan earned the bulk of Pakistan's foreign exchange. At the same time the major share of imports was destined for West Pakistan. In terms of regional commodity trade East Pakistan had a continued deficit in its current account which until 1957 was less than its surplus on its foreign trade account, thus indicating a net transfer of resources to West Pakistan (Stern, 1970: 14; Rahman, 1968: 11- 15). Added to this was East Pakistan's share in foreign aid which was mostly utilized in West Pakistan. Haq estimated that such transfer amounted to Rs. 210 million per year from 1950 to 1955 and perhaps Rs. 100 million a year from 1956 to 1960 (Haq, 1963: 100). The Advisory Panels of economists showed that the net transfer amounted to Rs. 31,120 million at the rate of Rs. 1,556 million a year (Reports of the Advisory Panels for the Fourth Year Plan 1970- 75, Vol. I, pp. 84-86). In other words, West Pakistan grew at the expense of East Pakistan.

This did not mean, however, that all classes of people in East Pakistan became impoverished; rather that the incomes of the upper classes in East Pakistan increased. The rate of their gains accelerated when the government decided to strengthen the commercial and industrial class in East Pakistan and increased public sector expenditure in the 1960s. This created an awareness among the Bengali elite and raised their expectations and they became more anxious for effective participation in the system. When they felt that the system created by the bureaucratic elite had denied them opportunities for participation, they became determined to bring about a structural change in the system. The Six-Point Programme, which was a reaction of, and a challenge to, the policy measures of the bureaucratic elite, can be properly understood only in this context.

The Impact of the Economic Policies: Growth of the Six-Point Programme

The Six-Point Programme was a significant political-economic document. Politically it sought to re-structure the system in a manner which would ensure effective participation of the Bengali elite in the polity; economically, it was designed to put East Pakistani resource management at the disposal of the Bengali elite. Militarily, it strove to make East Pakistan self-sufficient. The Bengali political leaders felt that the parliamentary system in a federal structure might increase their participation at the decision-making levels and the Six-Point Programme called for the establishment of a federal and parliamentary government in which the election to the federal legislature and legislatures of the federating units would be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise (Rahman, 1966).

While the political system did not provide room for the effective participation of the Bengali elite, Bengali economists and bureaucrats pointed out that economic development could be accelerated by altering the development strategy and policies. Bengali economists and bureaucrats showed that East Pakistan lagged because of the strategy and policies pursued by the ruling elite. They suggested that there should be

two economic strategies for the two regions. East and West Pakistan started from almost the same base, but after independence the rate of industrial growth in West Pakistan outpaced that in East Pakistan. The main reason was that the foreign exchange earned by the East Pakistani farmers was utilized for the industrialization of West Pakistan. They also showed that though East Pakistan's share in foreign exchange earnings was declining from 70 percent in the 1950s, yet it was more than West Pakistan's share in the 1960s. Even in 1966 it was 56 percent of the total foreign exchange earnings.

Table 6.6: Export Earnings of East and West Pakistan (Million Rs.)

Year	East Pakistan	West Pakistan	East Pakistan's share in total earnings (%)
1960/61	1,259	540	70
1961/62	1,301	543	70
1962/63	1,249	998	55
1963/64	1,224	1,070	54
1964/65	1,268	1,140	53
1965/66	1,514	1,204	55
1966/67	1,660	1,325	56

Source: Emajuddin Ahamed, op. cit., page 128.

East Pakistan's industrial backwardness forced the Bengalis to buy goods and services from West Pakistan, and in order to do that, they had to surrender East Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings. Moreover, since West Pakistan's industries were operating behind the protective walls, Bengalis had to buy West Pakistani goods at higher prices. Thus, the development strategy the ruling elite had pursued, the Bengali economists and bureaucrats pointed out, was responsible for the regional disparity.

The ruling elite of Pakistan favoured West Pakistan by issuing more licenses and permits for the establishment of new industries there, making larger allocations and sanctioning more loans and grants both from its own resources as well from foreign aid. The quantum of foreign aid was moreover increasing. In 1952 Pakistan received a paltry amount of 8 million dollar as foreign aid, but in 1970 it rose to 7.03 billion dollar (Pakistan Economic Survey, 1970-71). Bengali economists and bureaucrats not only pointed out the reasons for regional disparity, but also suggested remedies "There must clearly be an accelerated growth in East Pakistan as compared with West; in other words, West Pakistan's economy, although it undoubtedly will still continue to grow, will grow at a slower pace than that of East Pakistan" (Report of the Five Members of the Finance Commission, 1963: 11- 12). The Advisory Panels of Economists also noted: "The administrative efforts for plan implementation was basically limited by the absence of East Pakistani at the top level executive positions both in central and provincial governments" (Report of the Five Members of the Fourth Five Year Plan, 1970-75: 27).

Table 6.7: Income per Worker Employed in Agriculture (Rs. in 1959/60 constant prices)

	1951/ 52	1955/ 56	1959/ 60	1961/ 62	1964/ 65	1966/ 67	1967/ 68
E. Pakistan	714	724	688	652	630	585	620
W. Pakistan	903	990	971	891	911	892	881

Source: As in Table 6.6.

The Six-Point Programme was thus a product of an air of optimism. It reflected a spirit of self-confidence. The Bengali elite felt that they could participate in the decision-making process only if the parliamentary system in a real federal structure were re-instituted, and that was the first point of the Programme. The second point of the programme demanded that the federal government deal with only two subjects- defence and

foreign affairs- and all other subjects "rest in the federating states" (Rahman, 1966). Point three suggested that there be either two separate but freely convertible currencies for the two wings or one currency for the whole country, provided that effective steps were built in the system to stop the flight of capital from East Pakistan to West Pakistan. An arrangement should be in place for a separate banking reserve and a separate fiscal and monetary policy for East Pakistan. The objectives were obvious; West Pakistan must not grow at the expense of East Pakistan and the Bengali elite should have the resources of East Pakistan at their disposal. The fourth point denied the central government the right of taxation which was to be vested in the hands of the federating units with the centre receiving a fixed share. In the fifth point of the Programme some specific arrangements were suggested in respect of foreign trade and foreign exchange earnings. There should be two separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of the two wings. The earnings of East Pakistan should be under the control of the East Pakistan Government. The foreign exchange requirements of the federal government would be met by the two wings either equally or in a ratio to be fixed. The indigenous products should be allowed to move free of duty between the two wings. The constitutional provisions should be made to empower the regional governments to establish trade and commercial relations with, set up trade missions in, and enter into agreement with, foreign countries. The sixth point demanded the establishment of a militia or a paramilitary force for East Pakistan.

In Pakistan, expenditure on armed forces had always been very high. In 1948/49, 71.5 percent of the budgeted expenditure was allocated to the armed forces. It came down considerably over the years, but still a staggering figure was apportioned to the defense services. In 1957/58 it was 56 percent of the budgeted amount and in 1968/69 it remained 43 percent (Ahamed, 1979: 44- 45). The defense services however were always an exclusive preserve of West Pakistan; East Pakistan had neither any control over it nor any stake in its continuance in that form. The 1965 Indo-Pakistan war made it absolutely clear to the Bengalis that Pakistan defense forces were entirely for West Pakistan. During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, East Pakistan remained entirely defenseless and the

Pakistani armed forces were deployed for the defense of West Pakistan. East Pakistan was safe only because India did not invade it. In this context Bengali elite's demand for having control over the composition of the Pakistan defense forces is quite understandable.

The Six-Point Programme, thus designed in 1966, differed radically from the autonomy demands of the 1950s in that it specially denied the central government the right of taxation, advocated that the regional governments have the right to establish separate trade and commercial relations with foreign countries and keep separate accounts of their foreign exchange earnings, and suggested that the units have their own military or paramilitary forces. For all practical purposes, a confederal rather than a federal form of government was built into the Six-Point programme; it was, in fact, a reaction against, and a challenge to, the policy measures of the ruling elite in Pakistan. These policies made the West Pakistani businessmen-industrialists fabulously rich. The landlords and rich 'Kulaks' became richer by their agricultural policies. The developmental activities, which were mostly concentrated in the urban areas, benefited the urban-centred professional of West Pakistan. The Bengali counter elite, which grew up in reaction to these policy measures as a counter-elite, was keen to have control of the resources of East Pakistan so that they might also repeat the process of economic growth in East Pakistan.

The Six-Point Programme was supported enthusiastically by different social groups in East Pakistan. It had a great appeal to the petty bourgeois and the rising businessmen and industrialists, because it meant the elimination of competition from the West Pakistani big business houses. It attracted the urban salaried employees in East Pakistan because in it they saw an opening to further prospects. Bengali bureaucrats supported it enthusiastically because they found in it the key to their independence from centre's fiscal and administrative control and their promotion to the decision-making structure. The army officers favoured the Programme because it meant an unlimited scope for their promotion and consolidation of their position in East Pakistan. Though not explicitly, yet by implication of responses of the respondents the researcher got this impression. These elite groups were the main constituencies of the Awami League, which

was in fact the most representative political party in East Pakistan. These elite groups, in essence, constituted the linchpin of the politically relevant strata of the society. The workers however lent their support to the programme not because it promised an opportunity for higher wages but because their lower wages, coupled with the fact that many of the industrial establishments in East Pakistan belonged to the West Pakistanis, led to an admixture of class, regional and ethnic conflicts. The rural farmers were looking for a change and the Six-Point Programme was the symbol of a big change to them (Ahamed, 1979: 45- 46).

The autonomy movement based on the Six-Point Programme gathered momentum and for about six months after its formulation the urban centres of East Pakistan were in the grip of "a popular revolt". It became highly radicalized and in the words of Herbert Feldman, "If an election had been held in July of that year, Mujibur Rahman's party, The Awami League, would have swept the province on the Six-Point issue" (Feldman, 1972: 18). The election ultimately took place in 1970 and the Awami League won a sweeping victory on the basis of Six-Point Programme by securing 160 of 162 allotted seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan in the 300-seat house.

This landslide victory of Awami League, which was the first ever victory of the Bengali elite since independence in 1947, brought them almost to the threshold of power in Pakistan, and not without reason they were determined to exercise this power within the framework of the Six-Point Programme. Much to the dismay of Bengali elite, however, conspiratorial moves were afoot mainly to deprive them of the opportunities to take control of the central government. In that conspiracy, the West Pakistani generals seemed to have a role and that became obvious at the final stage of negotiation in 1971. The Bengali political leaders, despite their victory in the general election of 1970, were deprived of the opportunity of forming the government at the centre. They took it as a conspiracy, pure and simple. Since the West Pakistani generals were primarily concerned with the defense and defense forces in Pakistan, they thought that the unit's power of taxation, control of currency, foreign exchange earnings, foreign trade would mean an end to Pakistan's defense

forces in that format. Thus threatened, they denounced the Six-Point Programme as secessionist, condemned the Awami League leaders as traitors and took a strong position against handing over power to the elected representatives of East Pakistan. The Bengali military officers, who had been living with them as junior partners in the various cantonments, came to know of their designs much earlier than even the political leaders, and began to think of countermeasures for thwarting them. Thus when on 25 March 1971 the negotiation failed as it was destined to fail, and when the Pakistani generals' move to overwhelm the Bengali political leaders through brute force began, the Bengali military officers felt impelled to revolt and dissociate themselves from the Pakistani military. The reign of terror, which was let loose since 25 March, motivated them to take immediate step.

As the researcher has noted, the process of alienation of the Bengalis from the Pakistani political system began since the beginning of early 1950's, and was exacerbated during the later years mainly because of the pursuance of certain policies. The Six-Point formula was the outcome of, and reaction to, these policy measures. Through use of this programme, the Bengalis wanted to make structural changes in the Pakistani polity so that they might achieve a measure of fairness. The election of 1970, the first ever general election held in Pakistan on the basis of universal adult franchise, worked as a veritable catalyst to sharpen the east-west confrontation. The Awami League, representing the emerging middle classes in East Pakistan, took the election as a referendum on the Six-Point formula. The election-results were better than they expected, winning an absolute majority in the National Assembly (167 out of 313 seats) and receiving all but two of the 162 seats from East Pakistan.

With an absolute majority in the National Assembly, the Awami League expected to come to power, and it was busy working out details of a draft constitution after the election. Mujib himself, as mentioned earlier, played up to his image as the leader of the majority party in Pakistan. He interpreted the election results a de facto transfer of power to the party, as is the practice in a parliamentary democracy. President Yahya Khan summoned the National Assembly in session to frame the constitution

which might facilitate the transfer of power. When everything was proceeding peacefully and looking normal, the sudden announcement of the postponement of the session of the National Assembly on 1 March 1971, citing Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's unwillingness to participate in the Assembly as the primary cause for the postponement, was critical. This announcement sparked spontaneous rebellious demonstrations in East Pakistan. To the politically conscious people in East Pakistan, especially to the students, workers, literati and professionals, the Six-Point formula unwittingly became transformed into a one-point formula i.e. the independence of East Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib came under tremendous pressure from the leaders of all political parties including his own to declare independence. On 7 March 1971 Sheikh Mujib addressed a mammoth public meeting of about one million people in Dhaka, spoke as a national leader, whipped up their expectations but did not declare the independence of Bangladesh. He said that "the struggle of this time is a struggle for liberation" and pleaded for the transfer of power to the elected representatives in the strongest possible terms. Simultaneously, the Awami League launched a non-cooperation movement, which put Sheikh Mujib in complete control of East Pakistan.

The whole of the East Pakistani administration, even the Bengalis serving in central government agencies and in the civil branches of armed forces, complied with Sheikh Mujib's call for non-cooperation. Faced with Mujib's de facto assumption of power, President Yahya Khan came to Dhaka on 15 March seemingly to work out a political settlement of the crisis. The minority leaders of West Pakistan also came to Dhaka along with Z A Bhutto, whose party (PPP) won majority of the seats of National Assembly in West Pakistan. The negotiations continued between the West Pakistani leaders and those of the Awami League for nine long days, but to no avail. On 23 March 1971 the Awami League leaders presented a draft proclamation, which in effect, was supposed to grant East Pakistan autonomy on the basis of the Six-Point Programme. On 25 March, while the Awami League leaders were still hoping to hear the proclamation from the President of Pakistan, President Yahya Khan, without formally breaking the talks, launched a policy of military solution to the crisis. Thus, after 25 March 1971, when both the identitive and utilitarian powers

of the political system in Pakistan were totally eroded, the use of coercive power at that stage by the ruling elite not only compounded the problem hundred fold but slowly and surely led to its decay. At that stage, the legitimacy of the system was lost to the people of East Pakistan and authority disintegrated.

The Bengali elite at that stage were no longer eager to save the unity of Pakistan if it were at their expense; the ruling elite in Pakistan were equally reluctant to save the union with the primacy of the Bengalis. The Bengali military officers took up, at that stage, a leading role in destroying the existing order and replacing it by another, an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. Chapter Five describes and draws a pen picture of what they did at this crucial stage of history of Bangladesh.

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Chapter Seven

The Role of the Military Officers in the War of Liberation

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher has attempted to provide an account of how the Bengali military officers and soldiers (privates) of Chittagong Cantonment in particular and those of other cantonments in the country got involved in the Liberation War. This chapter is based mainly on researcher's recollection of events and personal account of the critical period i.e. March 1971. This includes his own motivation to join the Liberation War. Using autoethnography as the method and using third person singular, Oli Ahmad has narrated what he felt, experienced and did during that period. Various methodological strategies have been applied in connection with autoethnographic projects, but in this study generally those followed by Ellis, Denzin, Tedlock, Reed-Danahay have been applied (Ellis 1991, Denzin 1989, Tedlock 1991 and Reed-Danahay 1997).

The Liberation War of 1971 was no accident. It was the culmination of a long process of movement beginning from the early 1950's and at the penultimate stage of a revolution- nationalistic revolution - that gripped the nation during March 1971. As a soldier and active participant in the war, researcher Oli Ahmad has presented an insider's account of the series of events that led to the Liberation War.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Bengalis had a disproportionately low representation in the armed forces of Pakistan confined largely to the lower echelons. The fact remains however that these officers, though junior in rank, played a historic role at the crucial moment and helped shape the destiny of the nation. One of them pronounced the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh. Many others were engaged in this historic Liberation War. All of them however made a common cause and collaborated to mobilize war efforts against the Pakistani forces till victory was achieved.

History is replete with instances of how the military work hand in hand with political forces for achieving victory in the wars for liberation. In most cases, the political leaders initiate the move and the trained military work under their guidance and supervision (Nee and Beck 1973: 3- 25; Karnow 1983: 5- 15). In the case of Bangladesh, the military personnel took up the initiative at the crucial moment and continued the holding war operation until 17 April 1971 when the Mujibnagar Government-in-exile was formed. The military remained the symbol of independence till then and they kept the flag of Bangladesh flying.

By focusing on the role of the Bengali military officers in general and those of Chittagong Cantonment in particular, this Chapter emphasizes how and why they revolted during that fateful night between 25 and 26 March 1971 and proceeded eventually to the crucial phase of the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh. Since the researcher himself was an actor in these events, his role along with that of others in the whole drama has been delineated in some details. The critical situation in which they had to decide upon the appropriate course of action as they did, involved not only their personal survival but also the survival of the Bengalis as a nation. Thus their motivation to get involved in the national war of liberation seems to be sublimated from a coarse instinct of personal safety to a noble cause of national emancipation. This is how they saw it, and the researcher being an insider perceived it that way. This chapter delineates the sequence of events that unfolded in quick succession; it also reflects the perceptions of the key players. What is also of importance is that this kind of academic work has not been performed earlier.

At that point of time there were about 50 well trained Bengali officers and approximately 5000 soldiers stationed in Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore, Saidpur and Dhaka Cantonments (see Appendix- 1) in addition to about 15 thousand members of the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), a paramilitary force trained for guarding the national frontiers. The Chittagong Cantonment had an added advantage in the sense that though quite far from Dhaka, it provided the Bengali military officers at the Chittagong Cantonment ample opportunities to watch closely how the Pakistani strategists were re-inforcing their grip over East Pakistan by bringing in

more and more arms and ammunition through the Chittagong Port. The Comilla Cantonment being closer to the Chittagong Cantonment, provided a convenient opportunity for easy communication between the military officers and the political leaders. The political leaders of Chittagong, many of whom were quite influential in the policy-making hierarchy of the Awami League, had been in touch with the Bengali military officers at Chittagong. Chittagong also had one radio station.

The researcher was commissioned on 29 October 1967 and posted to 4 East Bengal Regiment at Joydevpur, Dhaka. He was transferred to the Chittagong Cantonment in September 1970 and was appointed QuarterMaster in the newly raised 8th battalion of the East Bengal Regiment stationed in Sholosahar, Chittagong. The office of the Quarter-Master in the regiment was a crucial vantage point from which to view the events which ultimately led to that historic decision to wage the Liberation War in 1971.

Background of Revolutionary Decision of the Bengali Military Officers

For those who might question why the military officers and not the political leaders initiated the first salvo against the Pakistani authorities in East Pakistan, some reflection on the Pakistan military is in order.

Immediately after the emergence of Pakistan in 1947 its armed forces were preoccupied with their own organization. For a time they remained content with the policies of the ruling elite, since the armed forces were assured of their privileged status in respect of pay and other perquisites. Furthermore, having their roots firmly implanted in the landed aristocracy in West Pakistan, the military officers also felt a kind of class affinity with the civilian rulers (Ahamed, 1988, 40- 41). Pakistan's strong anti-Indian foreign policy, coupled with a "stand off" at the first Kashmir Conflict of 1948, resulted in a stalemate with India on the issues of canal water and evacuee property and contributed towards making the armed forces in Pakistan strongly anti-Indian in nature from the beginning. This ultimately drove Pakistan much closer to the US, which had for long been seeking a

reliable ally in South Asia within the framework of its global strategy of containing communism.

After the conclusion of the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement in 1954 with the US, the Pakistan armed forces acquired sophisticated weapons from the US. It enhanced not only its striking power but also its bargaining strength, and gradually it began to penetrate the civilian government of Pakistan. When in 1954 effective political power was assumed by the bureaucratic elite the generals found it quite propitious to enter the political arena openly. Symbolic of the significant changes that had taken place in Pakistan in 1954 were the dismissal of the national government by President Ghulam Mohammad, dissolution of the National Parliament and appointment of a member of the armed forces as a minister in the new government headed by Mohammad Ali. This new minister was General Ayub Khan who in league with the top-level military officers and civil servants, frustrated the development of a democratic system, and by staging a coup and then assuming dictatorial powers in 1958, established the supremacy of the military in Pakistan.

All the Bengali military officers, who played crucial roles in the Liberation War, were recruited during this period and were trained and socialized under the shadow of Ayub Khan's martial law. This had farreaching effects on the Bengali military officers in many ways. In the first place, they became conscious of a regional imbalance in the armed forces. Moreover, they began to realize that the small number of Bengali officers and soldiers, who were recruited into the Pakistan armed forces, were not accorded equal treatment. They also felt that a policy of discrimination was followed against Bengali officers in matters of privileges, promotion and other perquisites. The discriminatory policies made the Bengali officers not only resentful but also vociferous against the Pakistan's ruling elite (Ahamed, 1988: 35- 50).

In the 1960s, their complaints became louder and more structured when regional conflicts were "diverted from the usual political channels of expression and deflected into bureaucracy", and bureaucracy turned into "the arena for covert forms of political struggle," in the absence of a political elite after the imposition of Martial Law in Pakistan in 1958

(Ahamed, 1988: 41). The limitations put on the political process and the absence of a Bengali political elite meant that the Bengali bureaucrats, both civil and military, constituted the only substantial Bengali group taking part at the national decision-making level. In fact, at that time the Bengali bureaucrats, both civil and military, though not holding senior positions at the key ministries became by default the chief spokesmen for Bengali interests.

This role of the Bengali bureaucrats at that critical time politicized them still further. The Agartala Conspiracy Case of 1968, which charged 33 Bengali politicians, civil servants and military officers with conspiring to bring about East Pakistan's secession in collusion with India, indicates how the Bengali bureaucrats were implicated because they were calling attention to East Pakistani interests (Ziring, 1971; Ahamed, 1988: 42). The testimonies of these military officers also indicate how much politicized they were. These officers complained that in Pakistan they had been treated 'not as equals' but 'as inferior breeds'.

Many of the civil servants and military officers established linkages with the dominant East Pakistan political party, the Awami League, and remained on good terms with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Many of them supplied secret information to the Awami League leadership, which helped the Sheikh to sharpen his case for autonomy (Jahan, 1972: 198-202). Not surprisingly, therefore, the bureaucrats, both civil and military, lent full support to Sheikh Mujib's call for civil disobedience and the non-cooperation movement which paralyzed the entire administration in East Pakistan from 1 March to 25 March 1971. It is also of great significance that the Six-Point Programme (Appendix- 2), which had been the basis of the national movement in East Pakistan since 1966, turned out to be a One-Point demand i.e. the demand for the independence of East Pakistan, after the ill-considered and impolitic declaration by President Yahya Khan on 1 March 1971, which called for suspension of the session of National Assembly to be held on 3 March 1971. Only in this context, can the role of the Bengali military officers be properly appreciated, as well as that of the Chittagong Cantonment, where a few junior officers worked together.

Capt. Oli joined 8 East Bengal Regiment at Chittagong in September 1970. Within a few days, more Bengali and Punjabi Officers were posted to the new battalion. They included Lt. Col. A. R. Janjua as Commanding Officer, Major Kelvi, Captain Abbas, Captain Ahmed Ali, Captain Akhtar, Captain Majid, Lt. Humayun Khan, 2nd Lt. Azam. Captain Chowdhury Khalequzzaman (now retired Brig.), Captain Sadeque Hussain (now retired Brig.), Lt. Mahfuzur Rahman (later on Lt. Col.), Lt. Shamsheer Mobin (now in Foreign Service as Foreign Secretary), Major Mir Shawkat Ali (later on retired Lt. General and former Cabinet Minister under Begum Khaleda Zia's BNP Government) and Major Ziaur Rahman (later on Lt. General and President of Bangladesh). Lt. Col. Janjua originally belonged to the 4 East Bengal Regiment, wherein Lt. Col. M. R. Chowdhury was the Commanding Officer. Lt. Col. Chowdhury was also transferred to the Chittagong Cantonment as the Chief Instructor of the East Bengal Regimental Centre.

The researcher's association with Lt. Col. M. R. Chowdhury in Lahore was deep and far-reaching which made them even closer in Chittagong. The researcher used to visit Col. Chowdhury to discuss the political situation in the country and map out strategies of possible army involvement if necessary. The discussions were, needless to say, carried out secretly during the first and second week of February at Chittagong Cantonment and both officers were tense with anxiety lest they be disarmed and arrested. Lt. Col. Chowdhury's office was located inside the cantonment. The 20 Baluch Regiment, comprising some of the Punjabis, was also located next to his office. Pakistan Army intelligence became very alert at that time and was keenly observing the movements of the Bengali officers.

Working inside the Pakistan Army, the researcher was aware of the Pakistani officials' attitude of demeaning Bengalis as a nation who, according to the Pakistanis, were no good at fighting. The rank and file in the Army was also taught to believe this stereotype. Drawing on his experiences of dealing with the Pakistanis, the researcher felt that despite a clear victory for the Awami League in the parliamentary election, the central political leadership of Pakistan would never transfer power

democratically and peacefully. These events troubled him and the seeds of revolt were sown in his consciousness.

The researcher, as well as most of the Bengali military officers, felt that a critical situation lay ahead. Major General Ejaj Ahmed Choudhury, one of the interviewees for this study responded: “Pakistan Army started mobilizing their troops from early March. From their mobilization of troops I could understand that Pakistan Army was going to take actions to neutralize and suppress political crisis in the then East Pakistan.” Major General Mohammad Abdul Halim, another interviewee, said in that connection: “During the non-co-operation movement [of March] I was watching the situation and was mentally prepared for the war and kept my fingers crossed.” Major General Safiullah, another respondent had this to say: “Pakistan, which we knew comprising both East and West, I should say, did not exist in East Pakistan after 1 March 1971. When Awami League, having won absolute majority for forming government [at the centre] and when Sheikh Mujib was declared as the prospective Prime Minister of Pakistan, they [Pakistani ruling elite] were making issues not to give that authority to Bengali leadership. So in the guise of conflict with India they were pouring in troops and at one stage there was a dialogue between the central government and East Pakistani leaders. We as military personnel knew what they were trying to do.”

Being summoned, Capt. Oli met Lt. Col. Chowdhury in the first week of February 1971. He looked anxious and tense, especially over the uncertainty of the political dialogue, which was then in progress, between the Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and General Yahya Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and others. Col. Chowdhury and Capt. Oli were of the same mind. They believed that the West Pakistanis would never hand over power amicably. Then they moved on to the more significant issue: how would they react when and if their Bengali brethren sought assistance from them? They decided to extend their full support to uphold the cause of the Bengali nation even at the cost of their blood. They sat together and discussed the plans in detail. Both of them also decided in principle that they should do whatever was needed to be done under the political direction of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was then leading the

movement as the recognized leader of East Pakistan. Mujib had a mandate from the people and represented the absolute majority in Pakistan. It was their belief that Mujib knew his business well by virtue of his long association with such veteran politicians as Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haque and Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy.² Col. Chowdhury and Capt. Oli also decided that relevant information should secretly be collected about all the Bengali Officers stationed in different cantonments of East Pakistan (See Appendix- 1).

So they continued to meet regularly. They devised possible ways and means for procuring arms and ammunition, which were then at the disposal of the Punjabi officers. They remained sensitive to the contemporary political situation and the demands of the mass movement. They also collected information about the strength and specific location of Pakistani officers and soldiers serving in East Pakistan (See Appendix- 3. Salik, 1997: 231-234). Thus the seeds of rebellion were sown in the minds of those who mattered most at that point of time.

In this chapter, the researcher offers an insider's view of the Bangladesh Revolution. He argues that although Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his political colleagues prepared the nation for the struggle of self-rule and autonomy, he was subsequently not available to guide and lead the nation in the crucial time. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the undisputed leader of East Pakistan. His party, the Awami League, turned out to be the majority party not only in East Pakistan but also in Pakistan since it secured 167 seats in 313-seat Pakistan National Assembly in the 1970

² Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani was a veteran political leader of East Pakistan. He was the Founder- President of Bangladesh Awami League. He was mainly responsible for initiating the populist orientation to Bangladesh politics since the 1950s. A. K. Fazlul Haque was the Chief Minister of united Bengal in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He was the Chief Minister of East Pakistan in 1954. Then he became its governor, and finally he became the Interior Minister of Pakistan in the mid- 1950s. It was he who put forward the Lahore Resolution in the Muslim League Conventions in 1940. Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy was the Chief Minister of United Bengal in the mid- 1940s. He was the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1956. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman worked with these veteran political leaders as their young associate, and remained quite close with Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy.

general election. When President Yahya Khan postponed the session of the National Assembly on 1 March 1971, the people of East Pakistan began demonstrating in anger against the Pakistani ruling elite. The people of different sectors in East Pakistan i.e. the students, teachers, professionals, Bengali civil servants, leaders of different political parties in East Pakistan came out in the street decrying the decision of President Yahya Khan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman knew it. He also made it public that he would make a significant declaration in the meeting to be held on 7 March 1971 at Paltan Maidan. Everybody including the members of the armed forces expected that Sheikh Mujib would declare independence on that day. He, instead, called for a non-co-operation movement since 7 March. At that time there was only one infantry division in the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan (Khan, 1993: 41). The researcher feels that had the declaration come on 7 March, East Pakistanis would have been able to achieve independence with lesser bloodshed.

The Bengali military personnel, to a significant extent, filled in the vacuum created by the political leadership. The revolt by the Bengali officers in Chittagong, in fact, marked the beginning of the nation's organized resistance to the Pakistani occupation forces. The revolt was engineered by an active and enthusiastic section of the Bengali officers, who were able successfully to disseminate the spirit of revolution to the rank and file and, eventually, to the civilians. To sum up in more specific terms, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman prepared the nation for struggle, but he failed to provide the leadership in the face of the Pakistan Army's crackdown on the Bengali officers, soldiers and civilians. Capt. Oli prepared and coordinated the soldiers of the 8 East Bengal Regiment and played the main part in the revolt on the crucial night of 25/26 March 1971. Major Ziaur Rahman declared the Independence of Bangladesh.

The Gathering Storm

Immediately after the appointment of the researcher as the Quarter Master in the 8 East Bengal Regiment, Major Ziaur Rahman was posted there and was appointed second-in-command. Capt. Oli found in Major Zia a smart, well-versed in war-strategy and accomplished officer. He used to speak less, listen more and work swiftly. Major Zia had a very good command of English and Urdu languages. Their Offices were located in a cluster, adjacent to one another, separated only by a thin wall of about 5 inches. At that time Major Zia and Capt. Oli were not known to each other. As the Quarter Master Capt. Oli was in an advantageous position, which required all officers and staff to associate with him. Their food, rations, clothing and other amenities were at his disposal, which gave him an opportunity to interact frequently with them. The researcher's good relationship and association with the officers and soldiers caught the attention of the second-in-command Major Zia who started to take an interest in Capt. Oli and became closely associated with him, especially when it emerged that he also shared the same view of the situation.

During the month of February 1971, Major Zia called Capt. Oli to his office several times. He wanted to ascertain what was going on in the political arena. He made queries about the ideas, feelings and views of Bengali army personnel. Capt. Oli was still not quite comfortable enough to open up fully to him and followed a rather cautious approach. Moreover, the researcher's training in intelligence work during his service with the Pakistan Air Force made him even more cautious. Major Zia, however, talked things over with Oli without reservation. Although, Capt. Oli was

careful, he was quite aware of the rapidly changing political situation in the country and of the necessity to develop a dedicated group who would be ready for action.

Major Zia called the researcher, on an emergency basis, to his residence one evening in the third week of February 1971. On that day, without any hesitation, Capt. Oli was open with Major Zia and briefed him all about the Bengali officers and soldiers. Zia seemed to be determined to act directly to safeguard the interests of the Bengali nation and Oli assured him of his support. They discussed the problems and prospects of such direct action in detail. The only information, which the researcher did not disclose to Major Zia, was about the understanding between Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury and himself. He kept it a secret for the time being and wanted to observe and understand Zia further. He also felt the necessity to consult with the political leaders of the Awami League in Chittagong, in order to search for a coordinated strategy of action and to keep them abreast of the political situation.

Within a short while, Oli gained the complete confidence of Major Zia and they became very close. Major Zia and Capt. Oli had regular exchanges of thoughts and plans. The 20th Baluch Regiment was stationed in the Chittagong Cantonment. The Baluch regiment's overriding purpose at that time was to check and contain the Bengali nationalist movement. Captain Iqbal Hussain was the Quarter-Master of the Baluch Regiment. Capt. Iqbal and Capt. Oli shared the same type of duties and responsibilities, and thereby developed an intimacy. Besides they studied together at Pakistan Military Academy and were course mates. During the first week of March,

Iqbal disclosed to him that more and more Punjabi officers and soldiers were scheduled soon to enter East Pakistan with arms and ammunition.

Capt. Oli communicated the news separately to Lt. Col. Chowdhury and Major Zia immediately and they were in no doubt that the Pakistanis were planning an armed crack down on the Bengalis. The 8 East Bengal Regiment was originally scheduled to be stationed in the Kharian Cantonment of West Pakistan.

Since it was originally planned that the 8 East Bengal Regiment would be stationed at Kharian in West Pakistan, they were not provided with the arms and ammunition. There were 12 LMGs (Light Machine Guns) and 300 three-naught three rifles for training purposes only and the arms were not in good condition. Besides there were only 5 vehicles for the whole regiment.

By the first week of March 1971, Major Zia and Capt. Oli were having frequent discussions about future course of action. On the 2nd March 1971, some Punjabis of the 2nd Commando Battalion and the 20th Baluch Regiment killed some Bengalis in the non-Bengali Area of Pahartali, Chittagong. Both Zia and Oli were worried. Tension enveloped the whole cantonment and beyond. In the evening, on Oli's return from the Hill District of Banderban, Havildar Abdul Aziz entered Capt. Oli's room in the officers' mess. He closed the door, informed Oli about the killing of the Bengalis and waited for his orders. Capt. Oli told him to prepare for the fight and promised to keep him informed of the right moment for action. On the 1st and 2nd March 1971, Oli hurriedly recorded in his diary the following:

“Had a discussion with Major Ziaur Rahman about the future of the Bengalis and the present situation and the behaviour of the West Pakistani Officers (01.03.1971).”

“All West Pakistani Officers had a secret meeting at the Chittagong Cantonment Public School at 0030 hours. They decided to disarm all Bengali officers and troops when the time demanded. We somehow got this information and they were bringing more and more troops from Pakistan. Myself and Major Ziaur Rahman had a long discussion on the subject and decided to revolt if situation so demanded to liberate Bangladesh (02.03.1971).”

It became a major part of Capt. Oli's duty to communicate everything secretly to Lt. Col. Chowdhury, whose encouragement helped him to take this audacious decision. Oli coordinated their activities towards mobilizing support from other fellow Bengali officers. On 4 March 1971

Oli noted in his diary: "Major Ziaur Rahman asked me to inform Captain Khalequzzaman Chowdhury and Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury about the present situation of Bangladesh and find out their feelings about it. I found them in the same wave length. But I told them to keep their mouth shut for then and they would be informed of every thing they should know." On 5 March 1971 Capt. Oli met Lt. Col. Chowdhury to update the information on the situation. Meanwhile, Major Zia advised Oli to exchange views with the Bengali Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs), Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and soldiers of the Regiment. Capt. Oli gave the responsibility to his most trustworthy JCO, Naib Subedar Abdul Hamid (Later on Subedar Major). Hamid brought to his notice that all Bengali soldiers were disgusted with the way they were being treated by the Pakistanis and they would readily join the struggle for independence, if ordered by the researcher or called by Sheikh Mujib.

Lt. Col. Janjua, the Commanding Officer of 8 East Bengal Regiment, made it a regular habit to visit the Officers' Mess. Sometimes his visits were sudden and surprising. The Bengali officers were also conscious about Janjua who kept a sharp eye on them and used to engage apparently in idle gossip in the Mess. One day he opened his mind to Capt. Oli and said: "You have all turned into Hindus and we shall have to reconcile the truth to you." Oli knew well what the 'truth' might be.

The researcher started keeping a vigilant eye on the movements and activities of the Punjabi Officers. After the 2nd March 1971, Brigadier Majumder, Lt. Colonel Chowdhury and Captain Amin Ahmed Chowdhury (Now Major General) were deputed to Chittagong city. They stationed their troops at the Chittagong Circuit House and the Chittagong Stadium in order to control law and order. Captain Amin Ahmed Chowdhury could not tolerate the humiliation and torture of the local Bengalis by the Pakistani soldiers belonging to 20 Baluch regiment deployed in the city. He personally went to the Non- Bengali area to help the Bengalis. He instructed them to be prepared to face greater odds.

Meanwhile, Major Zia and Oli decided to brief Mustafizur Rahman Siddiqui, one of the senior most leaders of the Chittagong City Awami League, about the designs of the Pakistani forces. They subsequently made contact with many Awami League leaders and came to know that Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman would make a public speech in the Race Course field of Dhaka on 7 March 1971, wherein he would declare the future action plans. The speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, however, could not give the people any clear guideline about the future course of action. He might have had his compulsions, but he failed to convey any definite signal for revolt or rebellion. People expected that Mujib would declare some direct action for liberation of the country. Fakhruddin Ahmed has remarked in his book, *Critical Times*:

Yahya announced the postponement of the National Assembly meeting scheduled in early March 1971. Dhaka reacted sharply. Many foreign observers in Islamabad were eagerly waiting for the announcement of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7, 1971. They also predicted that Sheikh Mujib would declare independence on that day. I remember a BBC commentator hinting that possibility. If this was done without any ambiguity the cost of sufferings would have been less. One can now say with certainty that the Pakistan army was not yet ready to strike. They were simply bluffing. Reinforcements were still continuing. Furthermore, the declaration of independence on 7th March 1971 would have alerted the Bengali armed forces in the East to remain constantly vigilant. Thus the Pakistan army could hardly move out of the cantonment. Personnel of the East Pakistan Rifles and Police could have moved to safer areas instead of being slaughtered on the night of 25th and 26th of March 1971. (Ahmed, 1994: 57)

The Bengali troops became intolerant of vacillating role of political leadership and agitated, as they felt that the speech failed to voice their expectation. Farooq Aziz Khan is of the same opinion in his book, *Spring 1971*: “To many Bengalis it was a lost opportunity. If Mujib had declared independence on March 7, as a lot of people thought he would, the history of our independence movement would have taken a different hue. Yahya thus got more time to prepare his army and execute his plans drawn up while he was shooting ducks in Larkana along with his coconspirators as guests of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.” (Khan, 1993: 40)

In this connection, the statement of Colonel Shafaat Jamil, one of the interviewees in this study, is equally interesting. He said: “Before 7th

March the then East Pakistan had a very small army. It consisted of only one infantry division. We had five battalions of East Bengal Regiment and there were five battalions from West Pakistan. We were superior to them. Apart from that there were the East Pakistan Rifles and the Police which were overwhelmingly manned by East Pakistanis. Had the declaration come on 7 March, we would have been able to achieve our end with lesser bloodshed. Whereas from 7 March to 26 March they got 17 days' time on account of negotiations. During those 17 days they brought in 10-12 infantry battalions, thereby outnumbering the military might of the Bengalis to 3:1."

On 8 March at about 5.30 PM, Capt. Oli received a telephone call from Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury, while he was exploring with Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury the possible course of action. Lt. Col. Chowdhury wanted to give Oli some instructions and he wanted to do so via Lt. Shamsheer Mobin. Lt. Mobin and Lt. Col. Chowdhury talked in the Sylheti colloquial dialect so that no one could understand them. Mobin then translated for Oli "He has instructed you to report to him in the Western side room of the Chittagong Stadium and Captain Amin Ahmed Chowdhury will be waiting for you in the evening. You proceed immediately." Capt. Oli rang Lt. Col. Chowdhury again and asked permission to bring Major Zia along with him. Col. Chowdhury was taken by surprise for a moment, but agreed following Oli's explanation.

Accordingly, Major Zia and Oli reached the Western gate of the Stadium at 7 PM. Havildar Jan-e-Alam received them at the gate and escorted them to Captain Amin Ahmed's room. Havildar Alam appeared to be very jubilant to see them. Captain Amin, who was anxiously waiting, informed them that Lt. Col. Chowdhury had gone out to meet Brigadier Majumder in the Chittagong Circuit House. He wanted them to wait until he returned. In the meantime, Oli hurriedly went back to his battalion to ascertain the latest situation there, as Lt. Col. Janjua was suspicious of their movements. Moreover, their movement to the city was prohibited and it was not safe for them (Zia and Oli) to remain out together for a long time. Major Zia was sitting with Capt. Amin while Oli went back to the battalion. Oli, however, came back within thirty minutes and joined their discussion. About the meeting of 8 March 1971, his diary reads: "Had a

discussion at the Chittagong Stadium building with Lt. Colonel M.R. Chowdhury, Major Ziaur Rahman and Captain Amin Ahmed Chowdhury at 1930 hours regarding the situation prevailing in Bangladesh and the behaviour of West Pakistani Officers. This meeting was arranged by Lt. Colonel M. R. Chowdhury and Captain Amin Ahmed Chowdhury. We finally decided to revolt in case the President does not fulfill the demands of the Bengalis”.

In the meeting it was also decided to inform M. R. Siddiqui and Col. M.A.G Osmani. about their proposed revolt. Both of them were members of Parliament, representing the Awami League and were very close to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Thereafter, Lt. Col. Chowdhury, Major Zia and Capt. Oli started to meet on a regular basis and discussed about the day-to-day situation, future plans and programmes.

On the 11 March 1971 in the afternoon, three officers of the Baluch Regiment came to the 8 East Bengal Officers’ Mess. A few minutes later the Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Janjua joined them. Their demeanour was very suspicious and they seemed to be in a great hurry. Four of them left the Mess and started walking towards the residence of Major Zia and Lt. Mahfuz. The researcher immediately rushed to the roof of the mess to observe them. He could see the residence of Major Zia from there. He saw that they went near the residence of Major Zia, stopped for a few minutes and came back to the mess. Soon after they left the mess. The researcher got the impression that Lt. Col. Janjua took these officers to show them the location of Major Zia’s residence and feared that they had designs on Zia. Later on, Oli informed Major Zia of the incident and advised him to keep weapons handy. Thereafter, Zia used to keep weapons in his house. Zia and Oli received positive information that the West Pakistani officers were having secret meetings regularly and were intensifying their vigilance on the Bengali officers.

On 18 March 1971, Captain Khalequzzaman came to Capt. Oli’s room and asked to accompany him to the residence of Captain Rafiqul Islam (Retired as Major), then Adjutant of East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), Chittagong Sector, stationed at Haliashahar. Capt. Oli suggested that they should take Lt. Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury along with them.

Accordingly, Captain Khalequzzaman, Lt. Mobin and Capt. Oli arrived at the residence of Captain Rafiqul Islam at 7 PM sharp.

Anxiously walking the lawn, Captain Rafiqul Islam seemed quite restless. He informed his colleagues that some other gentlemen would also join them. Capt. Oli suggested that the meeting should be held in some place outside the city, which Captain Rafique readily endorsed. It was decided to hold the meeting at the residence of Shamsul Alam, the Chittagong University Librarian. Within a short time, Captain Haroon (retired as Major General) of East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), Dr. Jafar, an eye Specialist of Chittagong, and Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser MNA joined them. They proceeded towards the University.

The discussion was fairly extensive. At one point, Captain Rafique, Captain Khalequzzaman and Dr. Zafar raised the question as to what should be the action against the enemy in the event that the Pakistani Army attacked them. This led the group to discuss and assess their overall strength including the resources of the Bengal Regiment, EPR and the available arms and ammunition. Capt. Oli was not in favour of discussing the operational strategy too openly and suggested that Captain Rafique and he should meet later.

On 18 March 1971, Capt. Oli recorded in his dairy: "Had a discussion with Captain Rafique of EPR about the West Pakistani Officers' plan to disarm all Bengalis, and to kill them if they resisted. The discussion was held at the University Campus and attended by the following officers - Captain Chowdhury Khliquzzaman, Captain Haroon of 17 Wing EPR, Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury - Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser MNA and Dr. Zafar, an Eye Specialist."

Capt. Oli approached Major Zia with the request to go alone to have a word with Captain Rafique in the specified place. This time Capt. Oli did not accompany Zia, as it was unwise for him to leave the mess since the Quarter-Master was always wanted. Major Zia went to meet Captain Rafique as planned and briefed Oli about their discussion on his return. Capt. Oli advised Major Zia to arrange further meetings with Lt. Col. M.R Chowdhury and Captain Rafique to finalize their plans, programmes and

strategies. They also decided to inform Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, via M. R. Siddiqui, about the latest activities of the Pakistan Army in Chittagong.

On 20 March 1971, Lt. Col. M. R. Chowdhury, Major Zia and Captain Rafique met at the residence of Shafi Ahmed, the Member (Planning), of the Railway Board and outlined the following plan of action: Lt. Col. M. R. Chowdhury with EBRC troops would occupy the entire Chittagong Cantonment and, if required, attack the 20 Baluch Regiment quartered next to their location. Subedar Helal of EBRC would take the responsibility for working out the details of 'three inch mortar firing' positions on 20 Baluch Regiment and carry out the firing when ordered (this particular weapon could be fired from a distance without seeing the target and was a high trajectory weapon); Captain Rafique with the EPR troops under his command would occupy the Naval Base and the Chittagong Airport; the 8 East Bengal Regiment would remain on stand-by under the leadership of Major Zia for any emergency. It was also decided that M. R. Siddiqui of the Chittagong Awami League would be kept informed about this plan and the subsequent amendments on a regular basis. Capt. Oli briefed Captain Khalequzzaman and Lt. Shamsheer Mobin about these developments so that they could remain alert and mentally prepared to resist the Pakistan Army. Capt. Oli ordered his trusted Naib Subedar Quarter Master Abdul Hamid to mobilize their loyal troops against the Pakistani aggression.

On 21 March 1971, around 8 AM, all officers were ordered to remain present at the Battalion Headquarters in uniform. Gen. Abdul Hamid Khan, the Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army along with Maj. Gen. Khodadad Khan, Quarter Master General, and other top ranking officers would be visiting the battalion at 9 AM. They arrived at the Battalion Headquarters on time. Brig. M.R. Majumder, the Chittagong Area Commander, was also with them. All officers of the battalion were present except Major Zia. He was away at Chittagong City, shopping as it was a holiday.

General Hamid maintained a very low profile during the visit as if everything was normal. He did not mention anything about the prevailing situation. Capt. Oli was suspicious of the motives of his visit, believing that Gen. Hamid came to have a final review of the arrangements taken by

the Pakistani officers against the Bengalis. From Oli's past experience, he could not recall so many top-ranking officers visiting a battalion on a Sunday (a holiday) without there being any emergency. Gen. Hamid left for the Chittagong Cantonment at 11 AM. Major Zia returned to the Battalion Headquarters at 11.30 AM and Capt. Oli narrated everything to him including his suspicions about being attacked or disarmed by the Pakistan Army at any time. Major Zia decided to meet Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury and Captain Rafique to discuss the implication of the general's untimely visit. Brig. Majumder, in addition to holding the post of Chittagong Area Commander, was the Commandant of the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) at the Chittagong Cantonment and Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury was the chief instructor under him. They hailed from the same area and had been keeping close contact with each other since 8 March 1971. Brig. Majumder extended his full support and assurances that other Bengali officers would join. However, he pointed out that it would be better to keep him away from the direct leadership, since the Punjabis had him under surveillance. Both Zia and Oli asked him, through Col. Chowdhury, to contact Col. Mohammad Ataul Ghani Osmani who had joined the AL and was the senior most retired Bengali military officer working for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Osmani was informed of the plans and programme in detail and was given the responsibility of contacting and coordinating the 4 East Bengal Regiment at Comilla, the 1 East Bengal Regiment at Jessore, the 2 East Bengal Regiment at Joydevpur and the 3 East Bengal Regiment at Saidpur. Col. Osmani agreed to take this responsibility and act as the vital link between Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Bengal regiment. They had already developed contacts with local leaders of the Awami League in order to keep abreast of the political developments at Dhaka. East Pakistan was now under the de facto control of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from 2 March 1971, the government of Gen. Yahya Khan having lost effective control. Col. Osmani conveyed that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman intended to have several meetings with Gen. Yahya in Dhaka to work out the details of handing over power to him.

The Declaration of Independence

Since the beginning of March 1971, Captain Yakub, the Quarter Master of the 20th Baluch Regiment in the Chittagong Cantonment had been communicating with Capt. Oli by telephone about their activities and about the movement of the Pakistan Army from West Pakistan to East Pakistan. In addition, Oli had several casual meetings with Captain Yakub in his office in connection with the different requirements of his battalion. During the course of discussions, Capt. Yakub informed him that new battalions of FF, Baluch, Punjab and other troops were being brought from Pakistan. These troops, comprising the F.F., Baluch regiment and Punjab regiment were brought from Pakistan and deployed in East Pakistan with a view to suppressing the Awami League leaders and supporters and the Hindus who, the West Pakistani leaders and Generals thought, were trying to disintegrate Pakistan. As usual Oli informed Col. Chowdhury and Major Zia about all developments.

On 22 March 1971, Capt. Oli met Col. Chowdhury in his office to discuss their preparation and future plans. He was suffering from fever. Little did Oli know that it was to be their last meeting. Col. Chowdhury was arrested by the soldiers of 20 Baluch regiment on the night of 25 March 1971 and was brutally killed by the Baluch Regiment on the order of Col. Fatemi. The road communication between the Chittagong Cantonment and the 8 East Bengal Regiment was disrupted. On the morning of 23 March 1971 the people erected hundreds of barricades on the main roads all over Chittagong. The newly designed Bangladesh flag was also hoisted on all buildings. People were left with no alternative but to walk on foot and contact each other by telephone. The distance between the Chittagong Cantonment and 8 East Bengal's office in the city was about four miles. On 23 March 1971, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury and M. R. Siddiqui, the two senior most political leaders of Chittagong, left for Dhaka by car on the request of Major Zia and Capt. Oli, to meet Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and to brief him about the preparation of the 8 East Bengal Regiment at Chittagong. Capt. Oli and Major Zia wanted a clear instruction from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman about their role under the present situation. They wanted him to declare the independence of

Bangladesh before it was too late. They were anticipating a final crackdown by the Pakistani troops at any time. Unfortunately Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury and M. R. Siddiqui on their return journey met with an accident in front of the Nizampur College, which was about 31 miles from Chittagong City. Next morning M. R. Siddiqui informed them that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had no directions for them at that stage and only instructed them not to allow the unloading of a ship called "Swat". This ship, anchored at the Chittagong Port, carried a large quantity of arms and ammunition from West Pakistan. Zia and Oli were greatly frustrated at the lack of political direction. Mujib could not foresee the danger ahead; but they knew that Pakistani troops would strike them at an opportune moment. At about mid day on 23 March 1971, Capt. Amin Ahmed Chowdhury telephoned Capt. Oli that he and Brig. Majumder were ordered to leave for Dhaka by a helicopter. Capt. Amin Ahmed Chowdhury felt that the authorities were suspicious of them and that they might be placed under 'house-arrest' at Dhaka or, worse, be interrogated to obtain information about the morale and psychology of the Bengali officers and troops. However, Capt. Amin assured Oli that Col. M. R. Chowdhury would remain in Chittagong and the troops of the East Bengal Regimental Centre were fully prepared under his leadership to meet any situation. Capt. Oli requested him to establish contact by telephone on reaching Dhaka and to inform him about the situation there. If he did not call Oli by 10 PM, Oli should presume that they were taken into custody. In the same evening at about 8 PM Capt. Amin left a message for Oli with the duty clerk saying that they were all right and were staying with one of the friends of Brig. Majumder at Dhanmondi in Dhaka. So far they did not sense any danger for them but had been asked to stay in Dhaka until further orders. Capt. Oli communicated all this to Major Ziaur Rahman. During the whole period they were in a state of tension and great anxiety. They were certain that they would be hanged for mutiny in the army.

On 24 March 1971 at about 7 PM, Lt. Col. A. R. Janjua, Commanding Officer of the battalion, sent a message to Capt. Oli to the effect that the 106 recoilless rifles, which were brought from the 20th Baluch Regiment on loan, should be returned at once and that Oli should go personally to hand over the weapons. The instruction left him full of suspicion. The

journey from his location to the cantonment was not safe at all. He suspected that the Punjabis would ambush and kill him in the darkness. He got up from his bed and put on the uniform. He did not forget to carry a loaded pistol. Calmly he came down to the ground floor of the mess. He found Lt. Col. A. R. Janjua and Major Mir Shawkat Ali sitting together in the drawing room. Col. Janjua asked him to go immediately to return the rifles. Oli pointed out to him that an officer was not required for this trivial job. Capt. Oli suggested that one NCO could be deputed, or if he insisted on an officer, the duty officer of the day - Lt. Azam, a Punjabi officer could carry the weapon. The colonel, insisted that Oli should go in person. Capt. Oli's suspicion was further intensified. He refused to go during the night in the midst of political unrest. The colonel became annoyed and asked him to go back to his room. The news of these developments spread like wild fire among the troops. Capt. Oli was informed that some troops were getting ready to shoot the colonel if he insisted on Oli returning the rifle in person. Oli hurriedly left for the battalion lines thinking that any premature action on their part would jeopardize the plan and endanger their lives. On reaching the main gate of the Battalion Headquarters, Capt. Oli met Havilder Abdul Kader, who was with Oli in the 4 East Bengal Regiment, their parent battalion and informed him of the tense situation. Oli then found some troops with loaded rifles. Somehow he managed to cool them down. He assured them that he would order them into action when the time was right. At this critical point of time Subedar Major T. M. Ali, a Non Bengali JCO and the most senior among the soldiers, arrived on the scene. He maintained direct links between the troops and the commanding officer. Capt. Oli was worried and nervous to see him in the battalion lines. He immediately asked Oli to advise him as to what should he say to the commanding officer about this particular incident. Capt. Oli advised him to tell the colonel that the soldiers were agitated after hearing a lot of noise from the nearby areas and that Oli had handled the situation tactfully. Subedar Major Ali briefed the colonel accordingly and thus tackled the situation. He never disclosed the secret to anyone.

On 25 March 1971, officers and troops of 8 East Bengal Regiment were deployed to remove the barricades created by the civilians on the road between their location and the Chittagong Cantonment in order to

stop movements of Pakistani officers and soldiers. The colonel himself was supervising the operation. Major Kamal (Punjabi) and Capt. Aziz (Bengali) along with their troops from the East Bengal Regimental Centre started the cleaning and clearing operation from the other end. Capt. Oli was the only officer not directly deployed, thus he was sitting in the office pondering matters. All the incidents of the last 24 hours gave him a clear indication that something was going to happen that night. Around 11 AM he saw Col. Janjua along with Major Shawkat, Capt. Ahmed Ali, Capt. Sadeque, Capt. Khalequzzaman and Lt. Azam coming back with their troops to the battalion. The colonel explained to Oli about the change in the plan. He said that Major Zia along with some other officers and soldiers of the battalion had been given the task of clearing the road. While from the other end, Major Kamal and others, were given the task. Every one would have their afternoon and evening meals at the place of duty. As usual they left for the Officers' Mess after 2 PM and the colonel left for his residence. At about 4 PM Capt. Oli received a message from the colonel ordering him to be the duty officer of the day and Lt. Azam (a Punjabi Officer) to be the assistant duty officer. In fact there was no practice of having an assistant duty officer in the army. Oli realized that Lt. Azam's task was to keep an eye on him. In the meantime Major Shawkat, Capt. Ahmed Ali, Capt. Khalequzzaman and Capt. Sadeque were asked to stay in their rooms until further orders.

Capt. Oli left for the battalion headquarters accordingly. On arrival at the Battalion Headquarters in the duty officers' room he found that Lt. Azam was already sitting there. He seemed to be extra alert. He wanted to listen to all the telephone calls in Oli's presence, which was not a common practice in the army. His activities confirmed Oli's suspicions and prompted him to organize a revolt. Capt. Oli alerted his trusted Naib Subedar Abdul Hamid to remain ready with a platoon on the roof of the building, fully armed to meet any situation. He kept four armed guards slightly away from his room to keep a close watch on Lt. Azam. There were only about ten to twelve non-Bengali officers and troops in the battalion. The main source of worry was from the 20th Baluch Regiment and from an air strike. At about 4.30 PM Col. Janjua, along with his adjutant Major Mir Shawkat Ali, arrived in the office. The Charlie

Company, which was commanded by Major Shawkat in addition to his duties, was ordered to get ready. Col. Janjua and Major Shawkat along with the Charlie Company left without any arms for Chittagong Port to unload arms and ammunition from the ship 'Swat'. Gradually troops were dispersed and with every contingent one or two Punjabi officers were placed alongside the Bengali officers.

At 8 PM Capt. Oli tried several times to contact Capt. Rafique (Adjutant of EPR) over the telephone, but he was not available. It was necessary to brief him about the latest situation. The night was getting dark and Oli sensed an impending danger. Around 8.15 PM he decided to meet Major Zia at the Bayzid Bostami area – who was given the responsibility to clear the road towards the Chittagong Cantonment - to tell him about his feelings. Oli took a small truck from the battalion and told the assistant duty officer that he needed to carry food for the troops on duty clearing the barricades. He started for the destination along with a few soldiers and some foodstuffs for the on-duty personnel. Oli was surprised to see that all barricades were replaced on the roads and people were guarding them. He met Major Zia on the premises of the K. Rahman Coca-Cola Factory. He explained to Zia the latest situation and his apprehension about the possible crack down by the Pakistan Army. Zia was of the same opinion. They lost contact with Lt. Col. M. R. Chowdhury and Captain Rafique. Zia came back with Oli to the Battalion Headquarters on the pretext of having food in his residence. Lt. Mahfuz, Lt. Shamsher and Lt. Humayun were on duty on the same road at different places. Major Zia left for his residence at about 9 PM and Oli went to the duty officers' room. Oli thought if anything should happen, it would happen by one o'clock. Oli wanted to remain awake and near the telephone until that time. He wanted Lt. Azam to sleep during this period and remain away from telephone so that he might not hear any conversation of the Bengali officers. Therefore, Oli proposed that Lt. Azam should perform his duties from 2 to 7 AM and Oli should continue until 2 AM. Lt. Azam agreed to Oli's proposal and went to sleep in a nearby room. Major Zia came to the office after dinner and asked Oli if there was any message from the colonel; Oli replied in the negative. Zia informed him that the colonel had telephoned his wife and she in turn telephoned Major Zia's wife to pass on the message that Zia

should report to the Chittagong Port immediately for duty. This news perplexed them. They failed to understand, firstly, why the colonel should ring up his wife instead of the duty officer; and secondly, how could the colonel know that Zia would come to his residence at that time. Zia was supposed to be with his troops at Baizid Bostami area at that time. They discussed the pros and cons of the matter and decided that Zia should go to the Chittagong Port, since they had not received any information or instruction from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or his political associates in Chittagong. Moreover they had the Charlie Company already operating at that particular place.

It was about 10.30 PM; both of them were taken by surprise to see Col. Janjua and Major Shawkat entering the room. Capt. Oli became nervous because the colonel was not supposed to be there. Colonel Janjua said that Brigadier Ansari was waiting for Zia at the Chittagong Port and that Zia should immediately join Ansari. The colonel also ordered Lt. Azam to accompany Zia. He ordered Oli to be on duty the whole night and ordered Major Shawkat to go to the Officers' Mess for rest. He did not give them any chance to talk further.

The colonel further instructed Oli to send Capt. Khaleque along with his Company (Delta Company) to the transit camp located opposite Chittagong Port. Capt. Oli ordered the Delta Company to get ready within half an hour and sent a message to Capt. Khaleque to report for duty immediately. The colonel said that he had brought one truck from the navy with some naval troops and asked Zia to leave for the Chittagong Port on that truck.

At about 10.35 PM Col. Janjua, Maj. Zia, Maj. Shawkat and Capt. Oli were coming down the stairs. Lt. Azam was following them. Half way down Oli heard the telephone ringing and hurriedly went up to receive the call. He heard the voice of one of his close friends - Mr. Abdul Kader, the Vice President of Standard Bank, Chittagong. He informed Oli that the Pakistan Army started shooting and killing the unarmed Bengali civilians in Dhaka. Oli asked him to obtain further information from Dhaka. Kader said that there was no communication with the city. He had been trying to contact Dhaka since 6 PM, but had failed. The telephone exchange and

other modes of communication might have been taken over by the Pakistan Army. Kader received the news of the crack down from one of his relatives. His relative also informed him that the tanks and troops had been controlling and patrolling the streets of Dhaka since 1 PM. Lt. General A.A.K. Niazi, in his book *The Betrayal of East Pakistan* described the brutality resorted to by the Pakistani troops on the 25th/ 26th March '71 as follows:

On the night between 25/26 March 1971, General Tikka struck. Peaceful night was turned into a time of wailing, crying, and burning. General Tikka let loose everything at his disposal as if raiding an enemy, not dealing with his own misguided and misled people. The military action was a display of stark cruelty, more merciless than the massacres at Bukhara and Baghdad by Changez Khan and Halaku Khan, or at Jalianwala Bagh by the British General Dyer.

General Tikka, instead of carrying out the tasks given to him, i.e., to disarm armed Bengali units and persons and to take into custody the Bengali leaders, resorted to the killing of civilians and a scorched-earth policy. His orders to his troops were: 'I want the land and not the people.' These orders were carried out in letter and spirit by Major-General Farman Ali and Brigadier (later Lt. Gen.) Jahanzeb Arbab in Dhaka. Major-General Rao Farman Ali wrote in his table diary, 'Green land of East Pakistan will be painted red.' It was painted red by Bengali blood. This diary was found by the Bengalis when they occupied Government House on 14 December 1971. ...

... On the night between 25/26 March 1971 Yahya sneaked out of Dhaka before the start of military action. He told Tikka before leaving Dhaka, 'Sort them out.' Bhutto had remained behind to see what Tikka did. Bhutto saw Dhaka burning and heard the cries of the people, the crackle of burning material, the roar of tanks, the boom of guns and rockets, and the rattle of machine guns. (Niazi 1998: 45- 46)

Farooq Aziz Khan also wrote in his book *Spring 1971*: "The Rajarbagh Police Lines, the Dhaka University students' residences and the EPR centre at Pilkhana were attacked by the army. They opened up with tanks and heavy equipment. While the police forces and the EPR soldiers

returned fire and fought back with whatever weapons they had before they were forced out of the area suffering heavy casualties, the real massacre took place on the Dhaka University campus where unarmed students were killed in hundreds and buried in mass graves which the victims were forced to dig at gun point seconds before they were shot and killed and then pushed into the graves. I heard from a friend that when the Rajarbagh police lines were under attack, the police chief was relaxing in his Dhaka residence with friends. Such was the state of preparedness on our side” (Khan 1993: 55).

Capt. Oli was disturbed to receive the news from Mr. Kader, but assured him that they would fight back. He rushed to the ground floor to inform Zia about the news, but found it extremely difficult, as he was surrounded by Colonel Janjua and Maj. Shawkat. Zia was looking anxious and worried. Capt. Oli could not figure out what to do. He needed to inform and warn Zia that he was about to be made captive or killed. However, he was unable to talk to Zia in the presence of other officers but signaled him of impending danger. The colonel wanted to make sure that Zia left for the Chittagong Port in his presence. Maj. Zia along with Lt. Azam moved to the Chittagong Port to report to Brig. Ansari. The colonel left in his jeep for his residence and took Maj. Shawkat along with him. Oli felt a sensation in him beyond any description. He was also very eager to save Zia’s life. He desperately tried to find some one to follow Zia and inform him about the incidents at Dhaka and the imminent danger that awaited him at the port.

It was about 10.45 PM then. Oli knew that Capt. Khaleq had not yet left for the transit camp. He came to Oli’s office at that time and Oli told him everything about the crackdown at Dhaka and asked him not to go to the transit camp, but to bring back Zia instead. They had to fight the Pakistan Army or else the Pakistanis planned to isolate and kill them. Capt. Khalequzzaman, along with a few soldiers from his company, rushed out to bring Zia back. He had no risk because the transit camp was in the same direction towards the Chittagong port and his movements would not arouse any suspicion of the Pakistanis. Capt. Oli ordered Naib Subedar Abdul Hamid to open the armoury and issue weapons to all. In the meantime Oli arranged for the protection of the Officers’ Mess through

Mess Havildar Abdul Aziz, because Maj. Shawkat, Capt. Sadeque and Capt. Ahmed Ali (a Punjabi officer) were sleeping there. Oli contacted Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury through telephone and asked him to assess the situation at the Chittagong Cantonment. He was on duty at the Baizid Bostami area closer to Chittagong Cantonment. He telephoned Oli at about 11 PM informing him that he could not get very close to the cantonment, because of the heavy barricades created by the civilians. He could, however, hear the sound of firing and tanks. Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury did not have the necessary weapons at his place of duty nor sufficient troops to attack the Chittagong Cantonment. Oli asked Lt. Mobin to come back to the headquarters along with his troops. Oli also told him to contact Lt. Mahfuz on his way back and to ask him to report to the headquarters. Both of them reported to Oli, but could not bring all the troops back. The troops were dispersed at different places and they could not inform them all due to the shortage of time. Capt. Oli had total control of the situation and felt relatively at ease. Oli tried his best, in vain, to contact Col. M.R. Chowdhury and other Bengali officers at the Chittagong Cantonment. The Punjabi operators were placed on duty at the telephone exchange. Oli requested them to connect him to Col. M.R. Chowdhury and others. The operator replied that they were not available. Capt. Oli dispatched two small contingents to arrest Capt. Ahmad Ali from the Officers' Mess and Lt. Humayun Khan on duty at the Sholasahar Railway crossing. Both of them were arrested and brought before him by 11.30 PM. Oli made them sit in a separate room in front of his office and kept them under armed guard. He kept Major Shawkat informed about all incidents. Shawkat was still staying in his room at the Officers' Mess.

Major Zia could not move fast because of the barricades on the road. Capt. Khaleque met him near the Dewanhat Railway crossing about 3 miles from battalion headquarters and gave him the warning message. Zia returned to the headquarters at about 11.45 PM and jumped out of his vehicle. He quickly snatched a sten-gun from a Bengali soldier on duty in front of the quarter guard and shouted at Lt. Azam and other seamen in the same truck saying, "You surrender your arms; you all are under arrest." They were placed under arrest and kept in separate rooms on the first floor

next to Oli's room. Lt. Shamsheer and Lt. Mahfuz were given the responsibility of keeping an eye on the arrested persons.

Zia and Oli had a brief meeting and decided to carry out their plan without further delay. According to their earlier plan, Oli was supposed to go to the residence of Col. Janjua to arrest him. But at that moment he could not leave headquarters because no one except Oli had a clear idea of the latest situation. Therefore, he requested Zia to go personally to arrest Janjua and also to bring Major Shawkat from the Officers' Mess on his way back. Janjua was arrested and brought to the headquarters, accompanied by Major Shawkat. Janjua was made to sit in his office room along with Capt. Ahmed Ali. Lt. Humayun Khan and Lt. Azam were placed in a separate room. All of them were under armed guard with a clear order to shoot if they tried to escape. Security arrangements were tightened around the headquarters under the command of Naib Subedar Abdul Malek.

At this fateful moment Lieutenant General Mir Shawkat Ali, one of the respondents in this study said, after seeing Major Zia arresting Colonel Janjua, the commander of 8 East Bengal Regiment and thus committing an act of open rebellion: "Zia told me, 'This bastard (Colonel Janjua) was going to kill us. I have revolted. What do you say?' So I said that 'you are the commanding officer. As far as I am concerned I salute you.' We shook hands and Zia told me to come over to the battalion."

The Bengali military officers did not want to lose any time and hurriedly organized a meeting between Zia, Shawkat and Oli. They decided to go out of the city immediately and take stock of the prevailing situation. They needed to assess their own strength in terms of troops, weapons, ammunition and weaknesses. They feared that the Pakistani Military Junta might carry out an air strike the following morning, followed by attack with tanks under the command of the 20th Baluch Regiment. They did not know what to do with the arrested officers and soldiers. Finally it was considered necessary to kill them. They were shot and the dead bodies were lying on the floor. They decided to kill the Pakistani officers and jawans for two reasons. First of all, they did not know where to go from the battalion headquarters after the revolt.

Secondly, they had not yet made any arrangement for retaining the captured soldiers according to international law available for the purpose. Moreover, they were not sure of what would happen the next morning.

At about 0.30 AM Capt. Oli ordered Havilder Abdul Aziz, the Mess Havilder, who was responsible for guarding the Officers' Mess, to arrest Major Abdul Hamid and Capt. Nazar, both Pakistani officers of the EPR from the EPR Officers' Mess located just opposite to their Mess. The arrested officers were brought before Oli and he found out from them that they were given the responsibility to kill the officers of 8 East Bengal Regiment who were sleeping in their respective rooms. Both these officers were shot dead. In the meantime Brig. Ansari telephoned Oli to learn about the departure of Zia. Oli told him that he was on his way although Zia was sitting in front of him at that moment. At about 1 AM one havilder and two sepoy of the East Bengal Regimental Centre came to the 8 East Bengal Headquarters. They were weeping. They stated that the 20th Baluch Regiment, armed with tanks and heavy weapons, had attacked their family quarters and barracks, killing about 50 troops and officers. Col. M. R. Chowdhury was not available anywhere. Major Zia and Capt. Oli understood the gravity of the situation. Their troops were agitated; but they knew their strengths and limitations. They did not have enough arms and ammunition for launching a counter attack. At that time, their resistance was in "an embryonic stage".

At 1.15 AM Capt. Oli ordered all JCOs and other ranks of the battalion to assemble in the open space inside their headquarters. They were all brought to attention and Oli handed over the parade to Major Zia. Troops were asked to get ready within one hour in uniform with all available weapons and ammunition. They were going to vacate this location for good. Zia addressed the troops and asked them to be ready for supreme sacrifices for Bangladesh. None was allowed to carry anything other than food and ammunition. At that time most of the Bengali soldiers, who were deployed to clear off road blocks in the streets and unloading of ship 'Swat' at Chittagong Port, did not come back. For their safety and security a rear party was arranged. They detailed the rear party under Naib Subedar Abdul Malek to give necessary directions to the soldiers who would return afterward. Major Shawkat was asked to go out in a jeep to contact the

Awami League leaders and to tell them about the military decision to revolt. Shawkat came back at 2.45 AM, but had no instruction or information from the Awami League leaders. It looked like all were caught unaware. However most of them eventually joined the fight.

After the execution of commanding officer Janjua and his Pakistani associates when Major Zia delivered his first speech in the meeting of the officers and troops of the battalion organized by Capt. Oli, a description of the situation has been given by Lt. General Mir Shawkat Ali in the following words: “There Zia had to say something. There was no high place; there was an innovative couple of soldiers who rolled down a 45 gallon drum and brought it up there. Drum was erect. Zia stood on the drum and there he said that we have revolted and we will fight for the independence of our country and we declare independence and thus he gave the executive military order of moving from Solashahar market toward Kalurghat.”

At about 3 AM on the morning of 26 March 1971 Zia, Oli, other officers and soldiers finally left their Battalion Headquarters and went out of the city area to a place called Karal-Denga Pahar under Boalkhali Thana. It was a partially hilly area, away from nearby villages. On their way to Karal-Denga Pahar, they met Capt. Haroon Ahmed Chowdhury of EPR with his company at Kalurghat. He was coming to join Captain Rafique. They asked him to join them and he did so. On 26 March 1971 at about 10 AM, they took an oath according to the army custom by reciting the following: “We shall fight until death to liberate our motherland and will be faithful to the Government of Bangladesh under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman”. Major Ziaur Rahman conducted the oath ceremony.

They spent the whole day in that jungle trying to listen to the radio news and to establish contact with the Awami League leaders. They wanted to find out if there was any instruction for them from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The local Awami League leaders came to meet them and arranged food. But none could say anything about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or about the senior leaders. In the meantime they tried to establish contact with Col. M. R. Chowdhury and Capt. Rafique. But they could not obtain any information. Nothing was found right on 26 March 1971. No

body revolted on that day except 8 East Bengal Regiment. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not foresee the events. He possibly did not believe them or did not think of their support. Farooq Aziz Khan comments in his book Spring 1971:

Sheikh Mujib was the undisputed leader of 75 million Bengalis and he made the single largest contribution in uniting the nation against Pakistani domination; he spent more than 16 years in Pakistani prison and was implicated in a conspiracy case during the Ayub regime. But he was not a revolutionary leader like Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi Minh or Fidel Castro. Sheikh Mujib believed in constitutional politics and never thought of going underground during his long political career. That is why when the time came for him to act as a revolutionary he faltered and decided to give himself up and surrendered to the Pakistan Army at considerable personal risk. He probably thought that this was the best way for him to face the grave situation that had already slipped out of his hands.

‘He couldn’t have gone out of his house’, Tofael Ahmed, a prominent Awami League leader told me, ‘his house was surrounded by Pakistani commandoes and if he had tried to get away he would either have been arrested or killed. Bangabandhu knew that; besides where could he have gone? The Pakistanis would have found him out. The Indian border is at least 60 km away and he probably didn’t like to go there because as we heard he was not given a good reception in 1962 when he went to Agartala.’ (Khan 1993: 52).

Siddiq Salik echoed the same in his book *Witness to Surrender*:

The President's departure from Dacca was kept a secret—a greater secret than his arrival ten days earlier. A small drama was staged to deceive the public. The President drove in straight to Flag Staff House in the cantonment for afternoon tea. Before the light started fading, the President's cavalcade drove back to the President's House with the usual fanfare—the pilot jeep, outriders, the President's car with four-star plate and flag. But the President was not in the car. Brigadier Rafiq deputized for him. This blind was considered a great success, although Mujib's spies saw through the game. LieutenantColonel A. R.

Chaudhury, who was on Yahya's staff, saw the Dodge carrying the President's baggage to the airport and informed Mujibur Rehman. When General Yahya Khan entered the P.A.F. gate to board the plane at 1900 hours, Wing Commander Khondkar, who watched the show from his office, passed the word to Mujib. Fifteen minutes later, a foreign correspondent rang me from Hotel Intercontinental saying, 'Major, could you confirm that the President has left?'

By then, the night had already set in. Nobody knew then that it would be a night without a healing dawn at its end.

(Salik 1977: 69-70; also see Appendix- 3 & 4: 71-78 & 7980))

Fazlul Quader Quaderi very rightly points out:

This arbitrary postponement provoked demonstrations in Dacca and other cities on March 1, which the military decided to control by force. The military authorities conceded 172 deaths in the disturbances, though the Dhaka correspondent of The Observer (London) put the figure nearer 2,000. Despite this bloody provocation the Awami League refrained from taking a decision. Instead they launched a campaign of civil disobedience to demand a return of troops to barracks and an inquiry into the firings. The campaign of non-cooperation effectively transferred civilian authority to Sheikh Mujib but even in the massive rally of March 7 Sheikh Mujib still spoke of a united Pakistan with autonomy for each province. His preparedness for negotiation and commitment to the unity of Pakistan was demonstrated by his continuation of talks for the next two weeks despite the well-advertised influx of West Pakistani troops. Indeed, in retrospect it would appear that the West Pakistani officials were never negotiating in good faith; negotiations were a way to forestall an open break until sufficient numbers of West Pakistani troops could be brought on the scene to unleash a terror whose full dimensions are only now becoming known. The Awami League's commitment to a peaceful political settlement was convincingly demonstrated by the complete lack of preparation of the civilian population to the onslaught of military arms which was unleashed on them on the night of Thursday, March 25, 1971. (Quaderi 1972: 41)

Now the revolutionaries knew that they had to make their own plans to keep the Chittagong area under their control. They made a deployment plan for Chittagong city. Major Ziaur Rahman took over the command of the 8 East Bengal Regiment. They had only three hundred soldiers with .303 rifles and twelve LMGs, and just enough ammunition to sustain the Liberation War for 20 days. The deployment plan was as follows:

- a. One contingent, under Maj. Mir Shawkat Ali, to be deployed at the Chittagong Port area.
- b. One contingent, headed by Capt. Khalequzzaman, to be deployed at Kalurghat and the Chittagong Radio Station area.
- c. One contingent of EPR, under the command of Capt. Haroon, to be deployed at the Chittagong College and the Chittagong Medical College area.
- d. One contingent, under Capt. Sadeq Hossain, to block the reinforcement of the Pakistan Army at Sitakund.
- e. One contingent, under Lt. Mahfuz, to be deployed at Kalurghat to form a reserve.
- f. One contingent, under Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, deployed for the Radio Station Kalurgat and Chakbazar area.
- g. The Headquarter was established at Fultalla Primary School, Boalkhali under Capt. Oli Ahmad for coordinating the operations in Chittagong area.

Major Ziaur Rahman and Capt. Oli briefed all the contingent commanders. They were asked to avoid attack in the initial stage and resort to guerrilla warfare and defensive tactics. They were ordered to occupy their respective positions after sunset. Major Zia asked them to arrange their own logistics locally and keep Headquarters informed about situations every day through telephone or courier. The available weapons and ammunition were issued equally. No transports and wireless were available for use by the contingents. They were also asked to keep liaison with the nearest contingent commander. As a matter of fact all the commanders were asked to act independently and to include police and para-military forces with them. They wanted to surprise the Pakistani

soldiers by taking up positions in several places during darkness. All the contingents moved out accordingly. Zia and Oli, with two sepoys as their bodyguards, followed them. They stopped in a village after about two miles walk and slept in a school building. Next day they started walking to reach the Patiya police station needing to establish contact with others over telephone.

They failed to discover the exact location of Capt. Rafique, who had also deployed his troops inside the city. They heard from different sources that Rafique with his troops had taken up a defensive position in Halisahar and the Railway Headquarters areas with a view to blocking naval reinforcements. In the meantime, they found Subedar Mofiz of EPR going towards the city to meet Capt. Rafique with two truck loads of soldiers. They were also joined by about twenty policemen from Patiya. So two truck loads of soldiers and one truck load of police were placed under the command of Subedar Mafiz to take up a defensive position in the Chittagong Court Building area, which would also help establish contact with Rafique. Everyday several police and members of the auxiliary forces named Ansar were joining them from different places. Gradually students and labourers from different factories also joined them and they increased their strength to a sizable number.

However, they still faced the limitations in arms and ammunition.

The Political Leaders in Disarray

Zia and Oli kept on trying to find out if there was any announcement over the radio by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or his colleagues, or indeed any instructions from him. Meanwhile, they established contact with the local Awami League leaders, including Dr. Jafar, an eye specialist, Prof. Nurul Islam and some student leaders. None, however, knew the whereabouts of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or his senior colleagues. There was no instruction or guidance from the political leadership. Everybody was busy in getting out of the city to a safe shelter. Mr. Farooq Aziz Khan described how the Awami League Leaders had fled from the Dhaka city for a safe shelter:

Reaching his house after leaving Sk. Mujib's residence at about 10.30 PM Tajuddin changed his clothes and wearing a lungi and a kurta and

slinging a rifle on his shoulder, the three of them including Dr. Kamal Hossain and Barrister Amirul Islam headed for a friend's house in Lalmatia as arrangements were made earlier. According to Amirul Islam, Dr. Kamal Hossain declined to go any farther with his two friends and instead was dropped near road No. 15 where one of his relatives lived (Liberation War Documents, Vol. 15). He however told his friends that he would meet them as soon it would be possible for him to do so. Tajuddin and Amirul Islam went to their friend's house from where they planned to travel to India as soon as it was safe for them to undertake the journey. Dr. Kamal Hossain failed to turn up and the two left Mr. Musa's house in Lalmatia on March 27 when the curfew imposed in the night of March 25 was relaxed for two hours. Tajuddin and Amirul Islam played very important roles in the next nine months, particularly Tajuddin Ahmed, who made the most important contribution to our Liberation War in the absence of Sheikh Mujib. The two of them headed straight for the river Padma and crossed over to the district of Faridpur. (Khan, 1993: 53- 54)

Drawing on extensive research on the contemporary situation during the War, Maniruzzaman Talukder rightly confirmed in his book: "The EBR (East Bengal Regiment) and EPR (East Pakistan Rifles) officers requested the Awami League leaders to send them a message about the outcome of their talks with Yahya. However, the AL leaders either deluded themselves into believing as late as March 24 that Yahya was going to announce an agreement on the transfer of power, or they feared that a revolt by the Bengali officers might result in the displacement of the civilian AL leadership of the nationalist movement by the Bengali armed forces. In any case, no message from the AL leaders ever reached the EBR and EPR men." (Talukder, 1988: 86)

From the available information and circumstances, the Pakistani leaders were sure that their brutal actions taken in desperation, unleashing genocide, would quell the revolution by force, but unwittingly they fired the first shot in the break-up of Pakistan and thus prepared the Bengalis for total war (Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report, "1971: The Untold

Story)³. In the meantime they met a gentleman at Patiya named Mahmud who was looking for Capt. Oli. He proposed to Capt. Oli Ahmad to declare Independence of Bangladesh. Mahmud claimed to have good connections with the government of USA and assured them of necessary help from the 7th fleet including aircraft and heavy armaments anchored at Bay of Bengal. But Capt. Oli suggested Maj. Zia to go to Kalurghat Radio Transmission Centre and prepare his draft speech for the nation. The area was under their control. Mahmud informed them that he knew many officers and engineers serving in the radio station. Oli requested him to bring them at the Kalurghat Radio Transmission Centre in order to help them broadcast the declaration. He immediately left in a microbus and at about 1 PM returned with the following personnel: Belal Mohammad, Abdul Kashem Chowdhury, Abdullah Al Farooque, Kazi Habib Uddin Ahmed, Jahedur Hossain, Aminur Rahman, Syed Abdul Sarker, Shakuzzaman, Mustafa Anwar and Rezaul Karim Chowdhury.

Capt. Oli had many advantages over some of his colleagues, because he hailed from Chittagong area whose entire community supported them in their struggle and participated in various ways. They were still sitting in the Patiya Police Station which is only 10 KM from Kalurghat and it was around 2 PM when Zia and Oli left for their respective destinations by private jeep arranged by the Officer in-Charge of the Police Station. Oli stopped on the way at the Fultala Primary School to establish and organize the temporary headquarters. Maj. Zia left for the Radio Transmission Centre accompanied by Mahmud and the other radio station staff. Zia asked Oli to reach the place by 5 PM to finalize the draft of the Declaration of Independence. Oli reached his headquarters at 2.30 PM and got hold of some civilian officers of the Boalkhali Police

Station. He requested them to help him set up his temporary office. By 4.30 PM he set up his headquarters with police guards and a telephone connection. At about 4.35 PM he started for the Kalurghat Radio

³ On the magnitude of atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army to the unarmed civilians of East Pakistan during the nine-month long Liberation War, see “1971: The Untold Story” by the Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report 2000, published in India Today Group online.
<http://www.Indiatoday.com/itoday/extra/71war/atrocities6.html> 08/27/2000.

Transmission Centre in a private jeep. On the way he was surprised to see Maj. Shawkat and Capt. Khalequzzaman near the Kalurghat Railway Bridge. They were supposed to be inside the city in their respective positions. They explained to Oli that they failed to cross the bridge last night and they would do so on this night. He asked them to stay back until he returned and briefed them about the latest developments. They might be needed to move to Cox's Bazaar with their troops, to stop any 'beach landing' in their rear. They already knew about the planned Declaration of Independence, because they met Zia on his way to the Radio Station. Capt. Oli reached the Radio Station at 5.15 PM and found Maj. Zia waiting for him with a draft declaration. Zia was excited and tense. The original draft began by saying: "I Maj. Zia declare the Independence of Bangladesh and myself as head of the state". In the declaration, Zia asked all Bengali army officers, soldiers, paramilitary, Police, Ansar and civilians to join the Liberation War. He further said that 8 East Bengal Regiment had revolted on the night of 25/26 March 1971 against the Pakistan Military Junta and announced the names of all officers of the battalion. He appealed to the international community to extend their full support and to give recognition to Bangladesh as an independent country.

Siddiq Salik, a PRO in the Pakistan Army, who came to Bangladesh in January 1970 on duty and witnessed the surrender by Niazi, wrote in his book:

The rebels initially had all the success. They effectively blocked the route of the Comilla column by blowing up the Subhapur Bridge near Feni. They also controlled major parts of the Chittagong Cantonment and the city. The only islands of government authority there were the 20 Baluch area and the naval base. Major Ziaur Rahman, the second-in-command of 8 East Bengal, assumed command of the rebels in Chittagong in the absence of Brigadier Majumdar who had been tactfully taken to Dacca a few days earlier. While the government troops clung to the radio station, in order to guard the building, Major Zia took control of the transmitters separately located on Kaptai Road and used the available equipment to broadcast the 'declaration of independence' of Bangla Desh. Nothing could be done to turn the

tables unless reinforcements arrived in Chittagong. (Salik, 1977: 79-80).

Rehman Sobhan remarked: “On 27 March 1971 the people of Bangladesh and later the world heard the voice of an unknown major proclaiming independence for Bangladesh.” (Sobhan, 1993: 33).

Oli read the draft declaration very carefully. He felt that if the first sentence of the announcement, wherein Zia declared himself as the Head of the State went on air, there might be non-cooperation from the followers of Mujib, who were prepared for the movement under his leadership. Besides, the Bengali military officers did not have any political ambition. They had to fill up the vacuum and cover-up the failures of the politicians to save the nation from total massacre in the hands of the Pakistan Military Junta. This view was held not only by Major Zia and Captain Oli but by all the Bengali officers who joined the Liberation War. This was corroborated by the fact that when the Government-in-exile was formed in 17 April 1971 the military officers and soldiers fought under the political leadership headed by Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed.

The spirit of the action taken at that time is expressed by Sukhwant Singh who wrote: “Meanwhile, Radio Chittagong came on the air with Maj. Ziaur Rahman, a Bengali officer, announcing the formation of the provisional government of Bangladesh on 26 March. This was welcome news indeed to supporters of the liberation struggle, but the fate of Mujib and other top leaders of the Awami League still remained unknown” (Singh, 1980: 9). The Bengali military officers did not want to annoy any political leaders through their declaration on the one hand and the nation needed a direction at this critical juncture of the history, on the other.

Sukhwant Singh continues: “8 EBR, an all-East Pakistani battalion, killed its commanding officer and moved to the hills overlooking the base under its second in command Ziaur Rahman. He took over Radio Chittagong and raised the first cry of armed revolt against the military dictatorship. Zia was joined by elements of EPR and EBRC, and together they attacked 20 Baluch, which was firmly entrenched in the EBRC lines, with much success. Later, they occupied the whole of Chittagong town, causing damage to its non-Bengali colonies. They destroyed textile mills

set up by some of West Pakistan's 22 ruling families to exploit the protected markets of East Pakistan." (Singh, 1980: 10)

The sole intention of the Bengali military officers was to unite the nation through the Declaration of Independence and inform the world about the War of Independence. It was not their aim to challenge the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Having that in mind they eventually amended the first sentence of the draft and the rest remained the same. The amended sentence was as follows:

"I, Maj. Zia, declare the Independence of Bangladesh and myself as a Provisional Head of the state under the blessing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman".

Muhammad Shamsul Haque, once the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, wrote in his book that President Sanjiva Reddy [of India] at the banquet hosted by him on 27 December 1977 reverberated the spirit of friendship in the rich tributes paid by him to President Ziaur Rahman.

The following excerpt is illustrative:

"Your position is already assured in the annals of the history of your country as a brave freedom fighter who was the first to declare the independence of Bangladesh. Since you took over the reins of government in your country, you have earned wide respect both in Bangladesh and abroad as a leader truly dedicated to the progress of your country and the well-being of your people." (Haque, 1993: 96)

Major Zia declared the Independence of Bangladesh on 27 March 1971 from Kalurghat Radio Transmission Centre at Chittagong and Capt. Oli was beside him. Subsequently the announcement was repeated every hour both in English and Bengali for the next twenty four hours by Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, who was on duty for the protection of the Kalurghat Radio Transmission Centre. Both Zia and Oli left the Transmission Centre after giving these instructions to Lt. Shamsheer. At about 7.45 PM they reached the southern bank of the Karnafuli river and met Shawkat and Khalequzzaman. Capt. Oli realized that it would be madness for them to fight the War alone without weapons, ammunition and other necessary equipment. He discussed this issue with Maj. Zia, Maj. Shawkat and Capt. Khalequzzaman. They all knew that without external

help, they would not be able to sustain the fight for more than 30 to 40 days. Mahmud was asked to leave for Cox's Bazaar on the night of 27/28 March 1971 to contact 7th fleet. Unfortunately the plan did not materialize as he was killed on suspicion by the local people on 28 March 1971 at a place called Dolahazara on Cox's Bazaar Road.

The Declaration of Independence by Maj. Zia created a sensation, brought a sigh of relief to all sectors of society, gave a sense of direction to the nation, boosted the morale of the people and gave impetus to the sagging political movement in the absence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. People now could know what to do and where to go. Zia's announcement "was heard by many and passed on by word of mouth to those who had not" (Jacob, 1998: 34).

The War of Independence started from Chittagong. The military officers started with virtually no resources except a deep commitment and devotion to the cause of Independence of Bangladesh. The atrocities of the Pakistan occupation forces made them determined and courageous. On hearing the Declaration of Independence by Zia, many Bengali armed forces and civilian personnel organized themselves in hundreds of small groups and started resisting the Pakistan Army throughout the country. Most of the senior political leaders left for India in search of a safer shelter. They were not available to give leadership at least during the initial stage of the revolt.

Thus the course was determined for the people of East Pakistan, who through grueling ordeals and painful moments during the following nine months had the privilege of celebrating victory on 16 December 1971. What is unique about this chapter of Bangladeshi national history is that the military officers, mostly of the ranks of captain and major, were constrained to do what the political leaders were supposed to do. These officers, youthful but mature enough to respond to the demands of the time, did not fail to take the crucial decision and carry it out. The political leaders, on the other hand, failed in their avocation. Once the Declaration of Independence was made, a definite direction was pointed out, indicating the only highway open for the nation and that was the highway to the Liberation War.

As noted earlier in this Chapter, the military are unlikely to achieve a resounding victory in a national cause unless backed up by organized national efforts which can be properly mobilized by political parties and movements. During the course of the Liberation War this support was forthcoming but not before 17 April 1971. Till then the military officers were the lynchpins of the entire movement. Even after three decades of national liberation, the insiders' story, which has remained untold till now, is the key to an understanding of the genesis of the Liberation War.

The First Stage in the Liberation War

Major Shawkat and Captain Khalequzzaman were put in charge of Cox's Bazaar in order to recruit and organize the new freedom fighters and protect the coastal belt. Maj. Zia and Capt. Oli decided to undertake the following action programmes:

- a. Since their resources were very limited, they would resort to guerrilla tactics, ambush and engagement in defensive battles;
- b. they would open at least five to six battle fronts inside Chittagong city to disperse and draw the enemy in different directions;
- c. they would continue to draw support from the general public and from Awami League leaders and workers in particular;
- d. they would make a second announcement on radio to hand over power to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and declare Major Zia as the Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation Forces.

The Bangladeshi troops, although not well-equipped, were brave and also efficient in ambushes and guerrilla attacks that created terror in the hearts of the Pakistani occupation forces. They were, however, uncertain whether they would be able to maintain their capability, without a continued supply of weapons, ammunition and without a clear political direction.

They could not get any information about Captain Rafique who was commanding the EPR, nor could they ascertain his whereabouts. Capt. Oli sent his men to different places of Chittagong city, but to his surprise, they could not trace him. Later on, he came to know that Rafique had gone alone to Ramgar, a small town located near the Indian border about 50 miles away from Chittagong city. He wanted perhaps to establish contact with the neighbouring country. However, his departure meant that there was a communication gap and Captain Rafique did not leave any information. Consequently, many of his EPR troops joined 8 East Bengal and participated in the different battlefronts. The combined number of troops now reached nearly one thousand but they needed more officers to command them.

The Stage of Full Mobilization

The Bengali military officers were trying to establish contact with other Bengali officers in the Chittagong Cantonment to lead and command the troops operating in different parts of the city. There were 5 to 7 Bengali Officers in the Chittagong Cantonment; but they were not available. Captain Muslim, another freedom fighter, somehow managed to escape from the Embarkation Headquarters and organized a small group at Hathazari on the north of Chittagong Cantonment. He conducted battles in different places near the Chittagong University area. Captain Subed Ali Bhuiyan of EBRC had crossed the border by car along with his family on 28/29 March 1971 and reached India to ensure the safety and security for himself and his family. It surprised and shocked everybody that he too had left the battlefield at Chittagong.

Gradually some of the troops of the EBRC started to join the fight, reinforcing the strength of the rebel forces. Some of the troops quickly left for their respective districts, leaving the battlefield at Chittagong. There were two possible reasons for them to quit Chittagong: firstly, they might have been worried about the ultimate outcome of the war; secondly, in the light of the guerrilla warfare, they considered it more suitable for them to fight in their respective areas, where the terrain and people were better known to them. Communication was difficult. They did not have any telephone or wireless sets with the troops in different locations. It was very

difficult to ascertain who were fighting and where. Only 7 officers of the 8 East Bengal Regiment and Captain Haroon of the EPR continued to command the troops inside the city.

On 30 March 1971 there were fierce battles in some places of the city of Chittagong. The performance of the Bengali troops and a few Bengali officers were simply excellent. Many Pakistani soldiers were killed, but the exact number could not be ascertained. Some troops of the First Commando Battalion of the Pakistan Army landed in several places of Chittagong by C-130⁴. The Commanding Officer of the First Commando Battalion along with adjutant was killed in the action. At about 2 PM Capt. Oli brought to the notice of Major Zia the real state of affairs and requested him to change his plan. He persuaded Zia to make a new announcement. Both of them left for the Kalurghat Transmission Centre. At 5 PM Major Zia made an announcement, drafted by Oli and himself, saying that: “I, Major Zia, declare myself as Commander-inChief of the Liberation Forces of Bangladesh and hand over the power to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.” This second announcement was intended to show respect to democratic values and to the elected public representatives.

After the announcement was made, Oli along with Major Zia, returned from the transmission centre to their Headquarters in a jeep. On the way approximately one platoon of the Pakistan Army commando attacked them. The commandos missed the target and they reached their destination safely. Capt. Oli has faced death a number of times in his life and he is of the opinion that the final hour is only known to God. He, along with his comrades, joined the war for the liberation of Bangladesh, which was necessary for upholding and ensuring the fundamental rights of the Bengali nation. They believed that they were fighting for a noble cause; a cause created and nurtured by history.

On March 30 in the evening at 7 PM Maj. Zia told Oli that he intended to leave for Ramgar immediately and wanted to establish contact with the Indian Government to procure arms and ammunition. They could not capture the Chittagong Cantonment and the Chittagong

⁴ A specialized aircraft used for conveyance of military personnel.

Naval Base mainly due to the absence of a timely political decision.

Besides, one of the main personalities, Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury⁵, who planned the revolt, was killed by the Pakistan occupation forces on the night of 25 March 1971.

Pakistani troops were well trained and equipped with abundant weapons. On the other hand, the freedom fighters needed a continued supply of weapons to resist them. Maj. Zia, quite aware of the severity of the crisis, maintained a calmness throughout, although at the time, Zia did not know the whereabouts of his wife and children. Capt. Oli noted with astonishment that he uttered not a word about his family. All his worries seemed to centre on the War. Oli found him calm and steady, yet prompt in taking the major decisions.

Maj. Zia suggested that Oli should be in charge of conducting operations at Chittagong for such time as Maj. Shawkat remained at Cox's Bazaar. Major Zia left for Ramgar with only 20 troops. It was then 7.30 PM. Zia handed over to Oli charge of planning and control of affairs in the Chittagong District.

Later on, Oli ascertained that the enemy troops, who launched the attack on them on 30 March 1971 took position in a building located near the Transmission Centre. Capt. Oli ordered Lt. Mahfuz and Subedar Abdul Aziz to attack the enemy commando platoon. This was possibly their first real battle and it was a precious experience for them. Lt. Mahfuz and his troops inflicted a crushing defeat on the Pakistani Commandos, capturing all their weapons, ammunition, uniforms and wireless sets. They handed over the items to Oli in the morning of 31 March 1971 at 8 AM in the Fultala Headquarters. It was a great victory for the freedom fighters. Lt. Mahfuz and his troops displayed a truly heroic spirit. On the same day the Pakistani troops attacked the Bengali forces positioned at the Chittagong College, Shitakunda, and Halishahar area. The Bengali troops despite their

⁵ A critical report on the role of military in the war, published in The People's View (February 29, 1972), noted: "Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury is one of the high ranking army officers at Chittagong who first thought of armed revolt for the cause of the people of Bangladesh if such a call came from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman".

limited resources resisted the attack. The enemy suffered heavy losses and casualties.

The Indian BSF was on alert and the Indian Government was observing the situation in Bangladesh. Refugees from Bangladesh started crowding the Indian borders for shelter. The Pakistan occupation forces were relentless in their oppression. They started killing innocent civilians mercilessly. They attacked three residential halls of Dhaka University and killed hundreds of students. They even went inside the residences of Dhaka University teachers and on the night of 25 March 1971 killed at least 15 of them including Professor M. Maniruzzaman, Philosopher Gobinda C. Dev, Professor Abul Khair, Professor Muneir Choudhury and so on. According to one estimate, as many as 50,000 innocent people, living mostly in the slum areas of Dhaka city, lost their lives in the night of 25 March 1971 (Ali, 1973: 94). Oli contacted Major Zia through an EPR wireless from time to time and appraised him of the situation. Major Zia was not a man to remain silent. He was active in organizing the liberation forces and freedom fighters in different places of north Chittagong, Noakhali and part of Comilla district. He also organized training for them. He ordered the EPR troops to be stationed in different places and take defensive positions. Fierce battles took place all over Chittagong City and brave commanders and soldiers fought well in every action. Nobody knew the whereabouts of Major Zia except Oli. But Oli did not disclose the news of Zia's departure to any one until 7 April 1971, because Zia's absence might negatively affect the morale of the troops. It was a huge responsibility for Capt. Oli alone to organize food, arms, and ammunition for the soldiers and, above all, to keep regular contact with them. He made it clear to all commanders that they should gradually draw the Pakistani troops out of the city and inflict as many casualties as possible without spending more ammunition. Oli conducted the affairs on behalf of Major Zia from 31 March onwards. His principal aim was to reassemble with Zia finally near the IndiaBangladesh border at Ramgar for reorganization, regrouping and further help from India.

By this time, Capt. Haroon, Lt. Mahfuz and Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury along with their troops had taken a defensive position on the north bank of the river Karnafuli at Kalurghat. Capt. Matin of 4 E Bengal

along with his company was brought by Zia from the Comilla area and asked to take up a defensive position at Sitakund about 30 km on the north of Chittagong City, while Capt. Muslim was fighting the Pakistani troops in the Chittagong University area. They had driven the Pakistani troops out of the city area in three different directions and successfully divided their strength. The freedom fighters had an upper hand over them, as the Pakistani troops did not get any support from the local people.

It was clear that during the period between 26 March and 11 April 1971, the whole of greater Chittagong district and Chittagong Hill Tracts remained under the control of 8 East Bengal Regiment. Oli knew for sure that there had been successes in their ambush and attacks. However, in the absence of external help, they were not certain as to how long they could endure the pressure of the War, despite their best efforts. Moreover, Major Zia could not come back because he wanted to remain near the Indian border and at a centrally located place from where he could coordinate the battles in the three greater districts of Chittagong, Chittagong hill tracts and Noakhali. Capt. Oli had contact with him by wireless. By 6 April, they started receiving small quantities of arms and ammunition from the BSF, although not on a regular basis. Since the departure of Major Zia for Ramgar, Oli had to remain particularly vigilant until the withdrawal of Bengali troops from the Fultala Primary School.

On 2 April 1971 the Occupation Forces attacked the defensive positions at the Court Building and State Bank areas causing heavy casualties to both sides. The combined troops of the freedom fighters lost ten soldiers in these battles. Between the period of 3 April and 6 April 1971 there had been relentless street fighting in Chittagong City. On 6 April 1971 the Pakistani troops attacked the defensive position at Chawk Bazaar with tanks. Capt. Haroon and Lt. Shamsheer Mobin fought the enemy with great courage, inflicting heavy casualties on them and lost five soldiers. On 7 April 1971 the Pakistan forces attacked the Kalurghat Transmission Centre. Consequently, the Bengali troops were withdrawn. Maj. Shawkat along with Capt. Khaleq came back on 7 March 1971. They started visiting different positions in the area from 8 April 1971. Capt.

Khalequzzaman took a defensive position on the southern bank of river Karnafuli in support of others on the northern bank.

Maj. Shawkat took over the command of Chittagong from Capt. Oli. On 9 April 1971 one platoon of soldiers, led by Maj. Shawkat, raided and defeated the enemy positions at the Agricultural Building near the Kalurghat Radio Transmission Centre. It was a heroic action by him and the troops under his command. 30 Pakistani soldiers were killed in this battle. Since the Headquarters was located at the Fultala Primary School of Kalurghat, it was the target of Pakistani forces. At 6 AM on 11 April 1971 they attacked the defensive position at Kalurghat bridge area with artillery support and fierce fighting took place the whole day. The Pakistanis encircled the Bengali troops by the evening. The people of Boalkhali and Patiya were not safe and there could have been civilian casualties later on. Therefore, Oli considered it to be suicidal for them to stay there. Besides the troops did not have enough arms and ammunition. There was also a danger of being forced to move towards the Burmese border and be isolated from rest of the freedom fighters. The Pakistan Army had the plan to set fire and burn the local houses. The freedom fighters were not in a position to confront them without replenishing ammunition. There was no other alternative for them but to withdraw from there. Under these compelling circumstances, Major Shawkat and Capt. Oli ordered a withdrawal of the entire forces in order to avoid a massacre of the civil population in the hands of Pakistani forces.

On 11 April 1971 Oli recorded in his diary: “Left Kalurghat Bridge and ordered the withdrawal of complete forces to Ramgar via Banderban, Kaptai, Rangamati and Mahalchari to avoid the massacre of civilian population. Boalkhali and Patiya are very thickly populated; hundreds of civilian population may be killed by the Pakistani troops. My troops will also be cornered in the hilly areas, if there is a Pakistani attack, if we can not withdraw by this evening.” They had, therefore, to withdraw and leave for Ramgar to replenish arms and ammunition. Oli, Shawkat, Mahfuz and Khalequzzaman left for Ramgar on the night of 11 April 1971, along with the troops, following the long, perilous and mountainous routes through Banderban, Kaptai, Rangamati, Mahalchari and Matiranga. Facing great

odds, they did not lose heart. The savagery of the Pakistan Forces made them all the more adamant to face and crush the enemy. The Pakistani forces plundered the local villages one after another, destroyed houses and farms by setting fire recklessly, raped and/or killed innumerable women and massacred thousand of innocent civilians (Choudhury & Kabir, 1991). The atrocities by the Pak Army were so grave that Lt. Gen. AAK Niazi, who headed the Eastern Command, himself acknowledged the nature of savagery committed by his soldiers. (See Appendix- 6, Niazi, 1998: 282-283. See also The Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report, 1971).

Farooq Aziz Khan puts the gruesome period in the following terms:

“Those of my readers who were not in Bangladesh on the night of March 25 and the following months would never appreciate fully the agony through which the 75 million Bengalis had gone. The terror that was unleashed by Yahya’s army and their Bengali henchmen, who were religious fanatics, cannot be matched by anything that we read in history or see in the movies. My own description of the real situation will fall far short of what had actually happened. The pen may be mightier than the sword but it can hardly draw the true picture of what the Pakistanis did in Bangladesh in the nine months following the crackdown.” (Khan, 1993: 61) Major Shawkat, Capt. Khalequzzaman and Lt. Mahfuz stayed back at Mahalchari for stopping the advancement of the Pakistani forces towards Ramgar. Capt. Oli reached Ramgar on 13 April 1971 and met Zia to brief him about the latest situation.

The Taste of Victory During the Initial Stages

The next significant phase in the War of Liberation started when Major Zia instructed Oli to proceed to Mirersarai. The Pakistan forces launched

a major attack in Sitakund causing the freedom fighters to retreat. The message of the retreat shocked Major Zia. He felt that the forces there might have insufficient organizational skill to withstand an offensive. He was determined to stop the advancement of the Pakistani Army towards Mirersarai, located strategically between the Chittagong and Comilla Cantonments. Zia summoned Oli at the dead of night on 13 April 1971 and directed him to proceed to Mirersarai with the mission of thwarting the advancement of the enemy forces. Oli left to lead the operation to be launched at Mirersarai, about 35 miles away from Ramgar.

On 14 April 1971 Capt. Oli and his company of soldiers took a defensive position at Mirersarai and maintained complete secrecy regarding their position. Oli's strategy was to lure the enemy to come into a trap, as their arms and ammunition were simply not sufficient to directly counter the well-stocked and highly trained enemy forces. Oli's only advantage was his familiarity with the local landscape. He had two platoons of Ex-EPR and one platoon of newly trained freedom fighters for the operation. His Company was equipped with only one 3" mortar under Havilder Siddique, one MG under LNK Abul Hossain and one 75mm RR from the Second East Bengal Regiment. The Pakistani Brigade operating at Sitakund had all types of heavy and light machine guns.

But these odds failed against Oli's undaunted zeal and vigour. As Oli joined them, the soldiers were very much encouraged and pledged to fight with reassured energy and enthusiasm. He carefully surveyed the locality and chalked out the details of operation. He followed the 'defensive intelligence' strategy, which he learned and practiced while he was at the Lahore Cantonment under the command of Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury. In spite of their repeated attempts, the enemy forces failed to trace the freedom fighters' location. Oli observed the movements and behaviour of the Pakistani troops until 19 April 1971. It was early in the morning on 20 April 1971 that Oli started the usual business of going round the company's positions at different points. His personal escort Naik Faiz Ahmed of the 8 East Bengal Regiment accompanied him. But to his utter surprise he found neither the platoon commander Subedar Serajul Islam, nor the platoon Havilder in their respective trenches along with their troops. He decided to go round all the trenches to see whether the soldiers

had been on duty or not. Oli ordered all the soldiers and freedom fighters to go to their respective trenches and to be fully prepared for the attack. He categorically ordered them not to leave their respective positions until direct orders came from him as the company commander.

No sooner had he reached the main road he saw a microbus moving speedily towards their position. He stood still for a while hiding himself behind a bush. He found the microbus being followed by a truck, popularly called '3 tonner'. The subsequent events happened very quickly. The '3 tonner' entered the Bengali defensive position, followed by about 20 more trucks with Pakistani soldiers on board. The military build-up of the Pakistan side was clearly great. Oli intended to attack them suddenly and to take advantage of the initial shock and surprise of an unexpected attack. He ordered his company to fire on the enemy convoy. Lance Naik of the 2 East Bengal Regiment, Abul Hussain, who was in charge of MG detachment, put up gallant fighting and destroyed the rear most vehicle. The enemy soldiers were caught unprepared.

Havilder Siddique took the opportunity to fire a few rounds of 3" mortar on the enemy vehicles. The shots were accurate and the enemy could not find any routes to escape. Havilder Siddique was a brave fighter. The actions of other troops were also prompt and they carried out coordinated firing on the enemies from both sides of the Dhaka-Chittagong Trunk Road. Most enemy soldiers died inside their vehicles. The Pakistan artillery unit and mortar platoons fired back, but to little avail as they failed to locate the exact positions of the freedom fighters. They were trapped within the radius of the defensive positions. They could move neither backward nor forward. Oli was happy to see his combat plan succeed in the field. During this battle, he personally destroyed three enemy vehicles with a 75mm RR.

At about 3 PM, another platoon of Ex-EPR under the leadership of Subedar Saidul had another fierce battle with the enemy in the locality. During the action, L/N Abul Kalam of EPR died on the spot when a piece of splinter of a mortar-shell hit him on his chest. This fearless soldier joined those great patriots, who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the motherland. At about 2 PM Havilder Siddique received a bullet injury to

chest and later on he was removed to the nearby hospital for immediate treatment.

This was the first time since the start of the War that such a strong enemy force as large as a battalion was contained, trapped and crushed with heavy casualties. In this battle more than 150 enemy soldiers were killed and many sustained injuries and as many as 8 vehicles were completely destroyed. The battle continued from 6 AM in the morning until 10 PM at night. Later on Oli ordered his soldiers to move back to Mastan Nagar under cover of night. Mastan Nagar was their next defensive position.

The Battle of Mirersarai was significant and it offered hope to the freedom fighters. They gained confidence to proceed whatever might be the strength of the enemies. They were, however, well aware that the enemy forces would certainly arrange a counter attack to take revenge on them. In case the enemy reinforced themselves, it would not be possible for them to resist them from the defensive positions they occupied at Mirersarai with such meagre resources. Therefore, Oli considered it unwise to remain at Mirersarai. To form another defensive position towards the north, Oli withdrew the troops and moved to the hilly areas of Mastan Nagar. Amongst the civilians, Musharraf Hussain, MPA, especially extended his cooperation to the freedom fighters. His services were laudable. In the Battle of Mirersarai, one soldier was lost while five others were injured.

The Stage Set for a National War of Independence

After the withdrawal from Mirersarai on 20 April 1971, Capt. Oli along with Capt. Matin decided to occupy the small hillocks of Mastan Nagar, overlooking the Dhaka – Chittagong Highway. Capt. Matin, along with his company, occupied the western side of the highway, while Oli's company took position in the hillocks on the eastern side. Major Zia visited them at about 10 AM on 21 April 1971 and left after half an hour for his

Headquarters at Ramgar to coordinate the battles within the Chittagong and Noakhali areas. On 21 April 1971 at 11 AM the enemy attacked their positions, supported by artillery and tanks. They used tanks for the first time since 26 March 1971. The fighting continued for the whole day. The enemy forces were desperate to keep the Dhaka – Chittagong Highway clear for the movement of their troops. It was difficult for Matin and Oli to resist the huge force, despite their courage and dedication. Both of them decided to move to the next defensive position at Karerhat next day during the early hours. Oli fought successive engagements at Karerhat, Tulatala, Haku, Chikanchara, Baganbari and finally at Ramgar. Likewise, Maj. Shawkat, Capt. Khalequzzaman and Lt. Mahfuz fought engagements at Mahalchari and Guimara and finally moved to Ramgar to cross the border on the night of 2 May 1971. During these battles, they received a limited supply of arms and ammunition from the Indian Border Security Forces. India also supplied them with explosives to blow a few bridges out along their frontier.

Maj. Rafique stationed himself at Ramgar during this whole period and tried to establish contacts with the Awami League leaders and the Indian Border Security Forces. On 22 April 1971, he visited Oli at Karerhat with some explosives and stayed one night with him at the Karerhat High School. They were successful in drawing the Pakistani troops in different directions close to the Indian border. Maj. Khaled Musharraf, along with 4 East Bengal Regiment, located at Bramanbaria, and Major K.M. Safiullah along with 2 East Bengal Regiment, located at Joydevpur, joined the fight on 29 March 1971. Capt. Hafiz along with 1 East Bengal regiment, located at Jessore, joined on 30 March 1971 while Major Nizam with 3 East Bengal Regiment, located at Saidpur, joined the war subsequently. By the end of the first week of April 1971 numerous large and small groups organized themselves under the leadership of many Bengali Officers, JCOs and NCOs of the Army, EPR, Police and Ansar and started resisting the enemy all over Bangladesh.

Oli, Zia, Maj. Rafique, Shawkat and others reached the Harina Camp on Indian Territory on 3 May 1971 and soon afterwards, they started organizing themselves for the next battle. The Indian Border Security

Forces (BSF) were on alert along the border. BSF started helping the evacuation of unarmed civilians, rendering medical facilities, supplying a limited quantity of food stuff, arms and ammunition. By this time, the civil (political) government, with assistance from India, had organized its activities and started to exercise its authority in different spheres. A cabinet was formed and given the oath on 17 April 1971 under the direct guidance of the Indian government and army generals. Syed Nazrul Islam was made the Acting Vice-President and Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister. Eventually, for ensuring better management of the War of Independence, the entire country was divided into eleven “sectors”, headed by the following Sector Commanders.

Name of	Area	
S	Sector	No. 4
e		Sector
c		
t	No. 2	No. 5
o	Sector	Sector Chittagong and
r		Chittagong Hill Tract districts up to Feni River.
N		
o	No. 3	Noakhali District, Comilla
.	Sector	District up to Akhaura,
1		Bhairab Railway line, Part of
		Faridpur, and Dhaka District.

From Akhaura – Bhairab Railway Line – Eastern side of Comilla District, Habigonj and Kishoregonj Sub division and Part of Dhaka District.	From Eastern Side of Sylhet District up to East, Western Side of Sylhet – Douki Road. Western Side of Sylhet District, Sunamgonj Subdivision and up to Name of Commander	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Khaled Musharraf (from April 1971 to September 1971) • Major A.T.M. Haider (from September 1971 to December 1971) • Major K. M. Safiullah (from April 1971 to September 1971) • Major Nurruzzaman (from September 1971 to December 1971)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Ziaur Rahman (from April 1971 to June 1971) • Major Mir Shawkat Ali (June 1971) • Major Mohammad Rafique (from July 1971 to December 1971) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major C.R. Dutta • Major Mir Shawkat Ali (from July 1971 to December 1971)

Name of Sector	Area	Name of Commander
	Mymensingh Border.	
No. 6 Sector	Greater District of Rangpur and Dinajpur.	<input type="checkbox"/> Wing Commander M. Basher
No. 7 Sector	Rajshahi, Bogra and Pabna District.	<input type="checkbox"/> Major Kazi Nuruzzaman
No. 8 Sector	Kustia, Jessore, Khulna District and part of Faridpur District.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Abu Osman Chowdhury (from April 1971 to August 1971) • Major M. A. Mannan (from August 1971 to December 1971)
No. 9 Sector	Barisal, Patuakhali District and Part of Khulna District.	<input type="checkbox"/> Major A. Jalil
No. 10 Sector	River Ports including Chittagong and Chalna.	<input type="checkbox"/> Under the Naval Commandos.
No. 11 Sector	Part of Mymensingh and Tangail District.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Abu Taher (from August 1971 to November 1971) • Flight Lieutenant M. Hamidullah (from November 1971 to December 1971)

On the military side, three new brigades were raised after July 1971 and these were:

Name of the Brigade	Name of Brigade Commander	Period
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'Z' Force	<input type="checkbox"/> Lt. Col. Ziaur Rahman	<input type="checkbox"/> July 1971 to Dec. 1971
'K' Force	<input type="checkbox"/> Lt. Col. Khaled Musharraf	<input type="checkbox"/> Sept. 1971 to Nov. 1971
	<input type="checkbox"/> Major Abu Salek	<input type="checkbox"/> Nov. 1971 to Dec. 1971
'S' Force	<input type="checkbox"/> Lt. Col. K.M. Safiullah	<input type="checkbox"/> Sept. 1971 to Dec. 1971

The (political) Ministers had little idea about what was going on in the war zones. Indian army generals started monitoring the day to day affairs of the Freedom Fighters directly and, in some places, through the Indian Border Security Forces. The Bangladeshi politicians wanted to establish their control and command over the entire forces fighting for Independence; and with that end in view, they appointed Col. M.A.G. Osmani (Retd.), an elected member of Parliament from the Awami League, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Armed Forces. He was promoted to the rank of general from that of colonel, and another retired Col. Abdur Rouf of the Army Supply Corps was appointed his Deputy. Major Ziaur Rahman, Capt. Oli and other military officers always remained loyal to the Bangladesh Government-in-exile. They accorded their full support to Col. Muhammad Ataul Gani Osmani (Retired)- the Commander-in-Chief, although he was a retired officer and had nothing to do with the army. Besides he was an elected member of the parliament representing the Awami League. The Awami League Government could not rely on an officer in uniform with the position of commander-in-chief. Moreover they wanted to check and control the activities of Major Ziaur Rahman by placing Col. M. A. G. Osmani (Retd.) in charge. According to the announcement from the RadioKalurghat, Chittagong on the 30 March 1971, Major Ziaur Rahman continued to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Liberation Army. But immediately after crossing over to India, he was made the sector commander of No. 1 Sector (Greater Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tract and a part of the greater Noakhali District).

Hundreds of camps were set up along the India-Bangladesh border, with the assistance of India, to provide training and orientation to thousands of young freedom fighters. To their surprise, they observed that even after appointing a retired colonel (and a party man) as Commander-

in-Chief, the politicians still could not rest assured and could not place their full trust in Bangladesh Army. They started raising and patronizing a separate force, known as the Bangladesh Liberation Forces, popularly known as the Mujib Bahini, mainly constituted by the followers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Acting President and the Prime Minister of the Bangladesh Government in exile had little control over this special force. They were directly under the control of the Indian Army for all practical purposes⁶.

Here two things need to be clarified. The Bangladesh Government in exile, which was formed at Mujibnagar on 17 April 1971, consisted of the Awami League leaders. This government appointed MAG Osmani, a retired Colonel and an elected member of the parliament the Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh armed forces, and Major Ziaur Rahman, the commander of Sector One. The Bangladesh Army expected that Major Ziaur Rahman, who revolted from the Pakistan Army and declared Independence of Bangladesh, would be the Chief of Bangladesh armed forces. The researcher feels that this was due to several reasons. In the first place, the Government-in-exile took the responsibility of mobilizing the war efforts and put such a person in the position of the Commander-in-Chief who was an Awami Leaguer. Secondly, recalling the fact that the Awami League leadership failed to declare Independence of Bangladesh in right moment and it was done by a young and energetic army officer Major Ziaur Rahman, the government thought that Major Zia might emerge as a person more powerful than anyone else. He might not obey the instructions of the government.

This created a bit of tension in the minds of the Bengali military officers. The Bengali Army however ignored all these and fought gallantly under the leadership of Colonel MAG Osmani, who was later on promoted to the rank of a general.

⁶ In the same vein, after the Independence of the country, a separate force, called Rakkhi Bahini, was formed, controlled by an officer of the Indian Army, for the personal safety and security of the President of Bangladesh – Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – who was subsequently killed by a group of army officers and troops on 15 August 1975 in his official residence in Dhaka.

The Government of India, on the other hand, had their own reasons for getting involved in the East Pakistan crisis. This was reflected in the statement of K. Subrahmanyam, Director of Indian Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis. On 31 March 1971 he told in the meeting of the Indian Council of World Affairs in Delhi that “dismemberment of Pakistan was in India’s interest” and hence it would not be wise for India to waste the opportunity presented by East Pakistan crisis, an opportunity “the like of which will never come again” (Subrahmanyam, 1971).

While the Indian leadership was supportive of the Liberation War in East Pakistan, it was equally keen to ascertain the nature of leadership of the Bangladesh military. Troubled as India was by the pro-Chinese militants in the state of West Bengal (Brown, 1972: 287), India did not want to encourage such armed resistance in East Pakistan as it could lead to similar situation and strengthen the left forces there. Consequently, it was not until the second week of April 1971 when the Government of India learnt that East Pakistan’s political leadership had sworn support to the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s Awami League and found that the Awami League was not a left leaning political party, then they acquiesced in the formation of Bangladesh Government-in-exile.

That was not all. While advocating Indian military intervention in East Pakistan to help its separation from Pakistan, Indian leadership argued that “by such pre-emptory military moves India could ensure her security by preventing a radically left-oriented leadership from being installed in free Bangladesh (Peter Hazelhurst’s Report 1971; Subrahmanyam, 1971). With that end in view, the Government of India organized the Mujib Bahini, comprising the followers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

But the main battle was however conducted by the Bangladeshi armed forces and the freedom fighters. Not getting any support from the people of East Pakistan and being attacked from all sides in East Pakistan, which for all practical purposes was a distant foreign land to the soldiers of West Pakistan, the Pakistan Army became exhausted. Moreover, the objective before the Pakistan Army was not inspiring; it was merely to suppress the people of East Pakistan and keep East Pakistan as a captive land by force. The large-scale killing of the innocent people of East Pakistan, mainly to create an environment of fear all around for achieving their end, was also

demoralizing to the Pakistani armed forces. At the beginning they underestimated the fighting capabilities of Bengali officers, soldiers and civilians. The Pakistan Army thought that a heavy onslaught against the Bengalis would destroy their power of resistance and they would be left helpless to submit to the wishes of Pakistani ruling elite. The high ideals of freedom and independence in the free state of Bangladesh began to motivate the Bengali armed forces as days passed by and they began to emerge as an indomitable force. Moreover, being supported by the entire nation, which underwent a revolutionary zeal during the nine-month long Liberation War, the Bangladesh armed forces became practically invincible. It became gradually clear that they could not suppress the nation's desire and struggle for Independence. Ultimately, they had no option but to surrender and the Bangladesh Army won its War of Independence on 16 December 1971. (Appendix- 7)

Zia and Oli started the war without knowing much of the possible consequences. They revolted in the midst of great uncertainties and in the absence of any clear political direction and guidance. They, however, knew well that victory comes from courage, faith, patience and devotion to a cause, as professed and suggested in the Holy Quran (Ali, Vol. – 2, 1390).

Victory and help go with calmness of mind, faith, fidelity, zeal, and earnestness; not with greed, lukewarmness or timidity. Discipline and obedience are essential for service. The rewards for service are not to be measured by immediate results, but accrue in countless hidden ways for patience and restraint. Be strong against evil, but kind and gentle amongst yourselves: the seed will grow and become strong to your wonder and delight.

The researcher wants to close this chapter by quoting the comments about his role in the revolution made by Major Zia and Major Shawkat □ the two valiant freedom fighters □ at a later date (Appendix- 8).

“This officer played the main part which enabled 8th Battalion the East Bengal Regiment to revolt on the crucial night of 25/26 March 1971 at

Chittagong” (remarks of Ziaur Rahman on 8 August 1973). It may be noted that Zia’s view was endorsed by the first Chief of Army Staff, Maj. Gen. K.M. Safiullah.

This is corroborated by a statement of Brig. Mir Shawkat Ali. He said:

“This officer has an extraordinary ability to organize things. His services during war was commendable; he in fact was the first officer who took risk and on his own initiative informed Gen. Ziaur Rahman regarding Declaration of Independence on night 25/26 Mar 71.” (Remarks of Mir Shawkat Ali on 8 March 1974). Kader Siddiqui, another freedom fighter, known as “Tiger Siddiqui” in the circle of famed fighters in the Liberation War of 1971, writes: “A large number of military officers served with remarkable heroism under the leadership of Zia. Among them Major Abu Taher, Major Shafaat Jamil, Major Khaleque, Major Zia Uddin and Capt. Salahuddin's name are worth mentioning. Capt. Oli Ahmad's contribution is the highest or hundred percent for the success, credit and fame of Zia. Oli remained with Zia from the beginning of the war to the end of his life with highest faithfulness, allegiance and love.” (Siddiqui, 1992: 420)

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Chapter Eight

Political Consciousness and the Motivations of Key Military Officers

Introduction

This chapter explains the level of political consciousness and motivations of eight key Bengali military officers who played important roles in the Liberation War of 1971. Among the questions asked is why did they discard their professional code of conduct which was instilled in them through rigorous military training for years and join the war?

When the Liberation War began on 26 March 1971, fifty officers along with some four thousand of their troops from five cantonments in East Pakistan joined the war (Ahmed, 1995. 30, 178). Of them, 6 officers are still in the defense services of Bangladesh and so not available for comment; 12 of them have gone abroad and settled there; 16 of them have died; the rest have not been available for the purpose. A few of them have not been able to give time because of pressing preoccupations in their own business enterprises; in fact, two of them agreed, but when the researcher and his team reached the fixed destinations, they were not available. Four of them have answered in the negative, pointing out that they would have to remain outside the country for a few months. The researcher has been able to collect relevant information from eight of them. All of these officers

have retired from service. Three of them are involved at present in political activities as party activists; two are in commercial enterprises, and the rest are living peaceful retired lives.

All of these eight officers were actively involved in field operations and two of them were awarded BIR UTTAM (Great Hero), the second highest gallantry award, and two were awarded BIR BIKRAM (Notable Hero) the third highest award and two BIR PRATIK (Hero) for extraordinary heroism in the Liberation War, while another officer was awarded the Commendation Certificate of the Commander-in-Chief. They were young and idealistic. All of them were recruited as members of the Pakistan Officers' Corp. All of them had to undergo rigorous military training in the Pakistan Military Academy. All of them had to take the oath to work for the preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan. When zero hour came, they did not hesitate even for a moment to think of their oath and decided to get involved in liberating East Pakistan from the Pakistani forces and making it independent Bangladesh. So the key question is □ Why?

The relevant data on the level of their political consciousness and motivation, the sources of their inspiration and the spontaneous urge for their joining the war were collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire designed to generate information on broad issues (see Appendix □ 9) and then focussed through discussion with them. For the latter purpose, an interview schedule was already prepared.

The process of interview was a painstaking one. A prior appointment was made with each respondent. The timing and venue were such that they could speak in relaxed mood for quite some time and they were able to look at prepared notes, if necessary. The researcher along with two personal assistants was present with tape recorders so that the points of view and assertions of the respondents could be recorded in full and without any editing due to transcription. The interview of each officer lasted for more than three hours, and they were forewarned about all the requirements. [See Table 8.1].

When the researcher began the interview, he had a lot of apprehensions in his mind. Since this study is an objective account of the Liberation War of 1971, this demands a value free explanation of the motivation of key actors for shedding light on this particular phase of national history. Some of the key actors have however remained emotionally involved about their roles in the war, and treated their participation as the most precious achievement in their lives. Would they be able to provide an objective account of what they thought and did during those days? Could they be free from their emotional biases while responding to the queries? These are some of the questions that agitated the mind of the researcher.

The researcher has found, after the completion of the interview, that these inhibitions were not entirely ill-founded. He has found out that at least three of the respondents disagreed quite a bit from the focal point of inquiry and began talking how he thought about the independence of Bangladesh since childhood. The statements of most of them were very lengthy; at least two of them concentrated mainly on the contextual aspects of the issue. This has made the task of the researcher a bit difficult. He had to remain silent most of the time during interviews; he had to edit quite considerably the statements made by the respondents, which were quite often lengthy, occasionally irrelevant, especially on the background of the issue. He also had to edit many points on date and time.

Table 8.1:

What motivated them to join the War?

The political leaders, who were militant on the autonomy issue and uncompromising about the Six-Point Programme, still faltered and remained indecisive during those critical days of the last week of March 1971. When the Pakistan Army decided to strike on the midnight of 25 March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the recognized leader of the Bengalis, was arrested and taken to West Pakistan. Most of his followers and the top ranking leaders made their moves towards the Indian borders in the west, north and east, quietly, unnoticed by hostile elements and incognito. Some of them absconded and went into hiding. The military officers however revolted and decided to join the war.

When asked what motivated them to get involved in the war, Major General Ibrahim, then only a second lieutenant, said that he took it as "a golden opportunity" to free East Pakistan, which was, to him "almost a colony of Pakistan", so that the Bengalis would not have to continue as "second class citizens", and the officers as "second class officers". Major General Safiullah, who retired as the Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh in 1975, replied that he joined the war to make East Pakistan an independent state. Referring to the historical role East Pakistan played in the creation of Pakistan in 1947, he said in detail how the people of East Pakistan were deprived economically in united Pakistan during the previous 23 years and how they were made to suffer politically and culturally by the ruling elite in Pakistan. When, after the general election of 1970 the West Pakistani politicians and generals declined to hand over power to Awami League, which emerged as the majority party in Pakistan, simply because it was East Pakistan-based, the intentions of the ruling elite became clear and it was nothing but retaining it as a colony.

Lieutenant General Mir Shawkat Ali, then a Major, replied curtly to this question. When the Commander of 8 Bengal Regiment, Ziaur Rahman revolted and took a stand for the Liberation War, he (i.e. Shawkat) joined it. In his own words, "there was a fight and I had to join the fight;... an officer is first of all loyal to his troops. I was in 8 Bengal. So I fought for

Bangladesh." Major General Ejaj Ahmed Choudhury said in response that the reports of a brutal massacre by the Pakistan Army on the 25th and 26th March 1971 motivated him to join the war. In his own words, "Pakistan Army ruled this part of the country as their colony" and the nefarious moves initiated in March 1971 were designed to perpetuate their rule over East Pakistan.

Colonel Shafaat Jamil however was more forthright when he said : "I got myself involved in the war to defend my land and my people to whom I belonged and also to liberate the people and land from the outsiders, who kept on ravaging this country." In the similar vein, Major General Ainuddin, then a Captain, said: "It was my duty to rescue the people of Bangladesh, who were mentally prepared to get separated from Pakistan." That is why, as a trained soldier of East Pakistan he felt constrained to join the war. Major General Mohammad Abdul Halim replied that it was "Bengali nationalism, love for the Bengalis" that motivated him to get involved in the war. Major Hafizuddin's answer was also straightforward. He joined the war because he thought by doing this he joined "our people; people will support us and definitely this will be an act of patriotism".

In sum, the Bengali military officers joined the war to liberate East Pakistan from the clutches of the Pakistan Army and make it an independent and sovereign state □ where the Bengalis could live as free citizens and fashion their lives in accordance with their own culture and distinct social norms.

What was their overall goal?

The urge to liberate East Pakistan was not only the motivating factor, the independence of East Pakistan also became their overall goal in the Liberation War. When asked what was their guiding spirit in the war, Major General Ibrahim answered without mincing any words that “the only guiding spirit was independence, nothing short of it.” General Shawkat, in his usual way, responded that a soldier fights for his own country. In his own words, he fought because “my country was in trouble; so I have (sic) to fight to rescue (Bangladesh)”. Major General Ejaj felt that his guiding spirit in the War of Independence was to save “his country” and “its people from the unbelievable atrocities of Pakistani rulers”.

Colonel Shafaat Jamil, elaborating a little on this question, replied that “the guiding spirit was to gain independence for our (sic), from a colonial rule”. He also said that they (Pakistanis) had nothing in common with the Bengalis except the religious bond. To General Ainuddin, the independence of East Pakistan was a necessity because the ruling elite in Pakistan did not offer to the Bengalis their due share of the economy. In his own words, “The Pakistan military junta did not recognize the election result and they were not ready to hand over power to the Bengalis”. General Abdul Halim took it as an opportunity to stand by the people during their crucial hours. He stated that the guiding spirit was to have “a free country of their own, where our people can live with honour and dignity.” Major Hafizuddin’s guiding spirit in the war was “the love for my people” and the independence of East Pakistan. He felt that if Bangladesh could be liberated and made an independent state, they could have their Bengali cultural identity and that was the main guiding spirit.

The motivation of the Bengali military officers to join the Liberation War had another dimension, however. The political situation in East Pakistan, especially after 1 March 1971 when President Yahya Khan postponed the session of the National Assembly of Pakistan for an indefinite period, became marked by a deep sense of distrust between the people of East and West Pakistan. Even the cantonments were infected with the pervading schism. The West Pakistani military officers, most of

whom were in command even in East Pakistan, did not have the least trust in their colleagues from East Pakistan. One group began to treat the other group as their enemy. The situation became critical after 25 March when Capt. Oli Ahmad along with Major Zia revolted and the news of this rebellion spread to different cantonments. The conditions became quite uncertain and became epitomized in the statement of Major General Ibrahim when he said, "Either I follow their (i.e. the West Pakistanis) line or they will kill me." Even General Shawkat said, "if we are caught then Pakistanis will kill us." Thus, their patriotic feelings for East Pakistan and love for the people reinforced by the dire insecurity of their lives in the cantonments became the great motivating factor for the Bengali military officers to join the war and it continued to serve as their guiding spirit throughout the dark days of the War of Independence.

What do they feel about it now?

Do the Bengali military officers have any qualms about what they did during that period? The researcher posed a question □ "Do you feel very gratified now?" □ with a view to eliciting what they now think of their crucial decision taken three decades ago. In answer to this question Major General Ainuddin said: "I think the only good job I have done in my life is participating in Liberation War and liberating my country." Major General Ibrahim feels gratified at the remembrance that he was one of the freedom fighters. He is proud to recollect that he belongs to that group of persons who took up arms for fighting in the war. He might have been dead, but so what! With pride he remembers that he had a role in the creation of independent Bangladesh. Major General K M Safiullah speaking in the same vein has given out that they were able to free this country through a stream of tears and blood. In his own words, "We could

teach them (Pakistanis) a lesson that we cannot (sic) be taken for granted all the time. We feel gratified that we have been able to fight for and win our own rights.”

Lieutenant General Mir Shawkat Ali has said that their decision was correct at that point of time, but he would have been happier if the right kind of political environment could have been fabricated by the decisionmakers of Bangladesh after independence. Major General Ejaj feels greatly gratified. “Now we are independent; we are controlled no longer by the Pakistani junta; we decide our own fate and we take our own decisions”. Like Lieutenant General Mir Shawkat, Shafaat Jamil added that things could have been better in Bangladesh “with dedicated and honest leadership and by skillful handling of state-craft.” Major General Mohammad Abdul Halim has said that he is proud to have been a participant in the war. In his own words, “I consider myself one of the luckiest man as I could join and fight for my country”. He has also stated that “it is a rare occasion for anybody who gets the opportunity to fight the Liberation War”. Major Hafizuddin feels extremely gratified about his role in the war. He related that his life has been meaningful as “a citizen of a free country”. The reason being, as he sees is that “he could take part in the Liberation War”. It is a matter of great pleasure and deep satisfaction for him that he could “form a small part of the independence movement”. What do they mean by patriotism?

The freedom fighters of Bangladesh have been identified as the greatest sons of the soil of Bangladesh. The regard in which they are held, even the veneration, have been profound, and so has been the hatred or indifference to those who were opposed to the Liberation War of 1971. The nation has always looked at her valiant sons with a deep sense of gratitude. They are identified as great patriots because they joined the war against the heaviest of odds by risking their secure jobs, comfortable living, even the security of their lives and those of their family members. The researcher has, through this structured interview, tried to get their views on it. When asked how they conceptualize patriotism, the respondents answered differently on this issue. Shafaat Jamil thought of it as an “act of an individual to stand beside his own people and his own

land, against all forms of aggressions.” To Abdul Halim, a patriot is one who “upholds the truth and never bows down to any wrong doing”. A patriot, “always stands by the oppressed and fights against injustice”. In this case, the indifference by the West Pakistani ruling elite towards the Bengalis’ legitimate rights, their deprivation and sufferings during the last two decades gave rise to patriotism among the Bengali military officers”. Hafizuddin thought about it as the “love for his country, love for his countrymen”, and he feels strongly that a patriot is supposed to “fight and die for his own country”. To him, “my country right or wrong” and “my country, above everything else” constitutes the solid basis of patriotism. Ejaj Ahmed Choudhury, without philosophizing the concept of patriotism, stated that “I considered myself as a patriot and as such joined the Liberation War.” Mir Shawkat Ali has conceptualized patriotism as the love for his country. In his own words, “you are born in some place, you live there, you grow up there, you speak the language and that’s your birth place. You love your country like your mother.” General K M Safiullah, much like Mir Shawkat Ali, has said, “Bangladesh is my country; in this land I was born; this is my birthplace. So I have all the love and affection for this country and people.” Patriotism, being a state of mind to General Ibrahim, means “a commitment towards the people and the country”. He said that “patriotism is a feeling by which we sacrifice our own interest, our family’s interest, our group interest for the sake of the nation”. Mohammad Ainuddin has taken it as a kind of pride in his integrity, his birth place, his own language and the culture he is enriched with. He joined the war when he thought his sentiment was mauled by the conduct and actions of the Pakistani military junta in flouting the election result of 1970 and suppressing the legitimate demands of the Bengalis by force. In sum, patriotism to those military officers is nothing else than deep love for the people of East Pakistan and strong commitment for upholding their rights which were violated brutally by the oppressive regime of Pakistan. They joined the war to liberate East Pakistan, which was their motherland with a distinct life style, separate cultural pattern and value system. The independent Bangladesh would enable the people to fashion their lives in accordance with their value system. In fact, these officers thought in terms of nationalism and fought as Bengali nationalists in the sense of being

different from the people of West Pakistan both in language, culture, life-style and ethnicity and identifying themselves as sons of Bangladesh.

What would have happened if they had not succeeded?

Did they ever think of the consequences if the War of Liberation had failed? While joining the war, along with their troops, did they ever take into consideration the consequences that might follow in case of failure? In answer to the question □ “Did you know that failure in the war of independence would mean not only an end of your career but also an end of your life?” □ Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury has said that he was fully aware of its dire consequences. He would have been definitely court-martialed and put to death. Even then he revolted because he was convinced of the justness of the cause. He thought it right to give his life “for the right cause of the country”. He knew that participation in the Liberation War would amount to gross breach of discipline and because it was, to him, “a question of our prestige, our identity; as a patriot I could not be a silent spectator to all these barbaric actions of Pakistan Army”.

General Ibrahim representing the same view has given out that joining the war amounted to a mutiny against the Pakistan Army and failure meant death penalty for the mutineers, yet he did it only for the independence of Bangladesh. So “ my career, my life, my destiny” – all were enmeshed with the fate of “my country”. Shafaat Jamil has said more emphatically that he knew full well of its implications, yet having a firing squad in view, he could not be a silent spectator to the relentless “decimation of my

people and land”. He responded to “the silent call” of “my people and land” – and “came for help with arms”. Mohammad Abdul Halim elaborated it further by saying that in case it failed, “the politicians, businessmen, students and other people who joined the war could come back and re-start their normal activities”, but “for us, in the armed forces, punishment” was sure death. Yet he joined the war and “our consideration was 70 million people and their fate”.

Hafizuddin was even more emphatic when he said that “we had no other choice but to fight”, and “we knew what eventually was to come if we failed”. He said that his father was a member of Parliament of Pakistan at that time. “The Politicians”, he has said, “could sit around a round table and forget the past and make up the differences”, but for a soldier there would be no round table conference. For mutinous soldiers, a firing squad would have been ready. Md. Ainuddin has said that they were quite confident of the liberation of East Pakistan and the birth of independent Bangladesh because the entire population was with them. After the military crackdown of 25 March 1971, “we did not think of any consequence if we failed because the very existence of our homeland and our cultural heritage were at stake at that time”. General Shawkat has elaborately described how he took an oath of allegiance to Pakistan Army while he passed out from the Pakistan Military Academy and became committed to preserving “the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan”, yet he joined the war because “I had no option but to fight if I were to call myself a Bengali.” “If we failed,” it would be “a firing squad for me, it might be firing squad probably for most members of my family”, yet he joined the war.

In sum, these Bengali military officers, who were recruited in the Pakistan Army, trained and indoctrinated in the Pakistan Military Academy, knew very well the consequences which might follow if they did not succeed, but yet they joined the war because they were imbued with a very high level of motivation, in the first place. Secondly, they were confident of success because they felt that the people of East Pakistan were behind them as the strongest support base. Their love for the people and

the land, and probably their hatred for the atrocities committed by the Pakistani military junta to the people, and especially the Pakistani general's hatred to the Bengalis prompted them to do what they did and sustained them in their struggle for independence of East Pakistan. Highly politicized as they were, they could have felt the pulse of the people, who were vociferous with the demand for autonomy at the beginning and that for full independence since 25 March 1971.

Did they understand the political situation that prevailed in East Pakistan?

As military officers, they were neither supporters of any political party nor preachers of any political slogan, yet they were fully aware of the political situation in East Pakistan at that time. As it has been already stated, the Bengali military officers were fully aware of the revolutionary situation prevailing in East Pakistan since 1 March 1971. The chief political leader of East Pakistan was expected to declare independence of Bangladesh on 7 March 1971 in the mammoth public meeting held at Paltan Maidan. Their inaction on this count, especially their useless ongoing negotiation with the West Pakistani political leaders and generals, was strongly resented by the Bengali military officers. That they were disillusioned with the vacillating political leadership has been obvious in the statements of the respondents. General Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury stated that he was not a supporter of any political party though, yet he knew what was happening in East Pakistan. In his own words, "I was keeping myself abreast of day to day happenings in the country since February 1971". K M Safiullah however confesses that though politics was banned for the military, yet they have been drawn into it, by default, through situational pressures. He said that political situation in East Pakistan deteriorated in March 1971 for several reasons. The West Pakistani leaders could not believe that Awami League would have been able to score such a "thumping" victory in the 1970 general election, so that it could turn out to be the majority party in Pakistan, practically on the threshold of political power. This is what the ruling elite in Pakistan disdained most and they began to hatch a conspiracy to keep the Awami League out of power. The

postponement of the session of the National Assembly by President Yahya Khan on 1 March 1971 can be termed as the climax of that conspiratorial move. K M Safiullah stated that “the political situation at that time was so tense that nothing besides independence could have satisfied anybody”. General Ibrahim said in reply that they were aware of the political situation “through newspapers and contacts with the civilians”. Moreover, “our friends from Dhaka University” were also sources of manifold information. He however has said that “during the War of Liberation we were supporters of a political party which was guiding the war, though we were not, after the war”. It may be mentioned that General Ibrahim was a graduate of Dhaka

University, and as such he was in touch with his friends in the university.

Shafaat Jamil however said in detail that he was quite aware of the political situation as a regular reader of newspapers, though he was not actively connected with politics. He stated that “people went ahead, although the leaders lagged behind”. The Awami League, which won the majority of seats in the election, and its leaders also “did not know what to do”. The military officers observed the situation closely and wanted to hear the right kind of message from the political leaders. Shafaat Jamil feels that even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman “failed to give proper leadership at that moment.” Mohammad Abdul Halim has said that he was not a supporter of any political party but he was aware of the political situation in East Pakistan from the date of postponement of session of the National Assembly. He was fully conversant of the content of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s historic speech on 7 March 1971 in the Ramna race course and followed carefully the happenings since the beginning of the Non-Cooperation Movement since then. He was greatly disturbed by the chain of events that followed, especially the “shootings” by the Pakistan Army and “massacres” at various places caused by them.

Major Hafizuddin has also reported that he was not a supporter of any political party, but he was well aware of the political situation of the country for several reasons. His father was a member of the National Assembly, in the first place. Secondly, he was on duty in one of the polling centres on the election day and he was happy to see the East Pakistan-based Awami League winning the election and becoming the majority

party in Pakistan. He thought that at last political power would be handed over to an East Pakistani political party, which might be able to rectify most of the ills connected with widespread deprivation of the Bengalis. Mohammad Ainuddin has also confessed that he was not a supporter of any political party, but he was deeply grieved to learn of the atrocities of the Pakistani soldiers after 1 March. The conspiratorial moves and vacillations of the ruling elite, especially in handing over power to the majority party became clear signals to many of them that situation in East Pakistan reached “a point of no return”. General Shawkat has been forthright on this point also. He has said that he was a soldier and “never bothered about politics”, but he was aware of the political conditions in East Pakistan through newspapers and radio.

When did they think of joining the war?

When these officers were appraised of what had been happening in East Pakistan in those critical days and that they were so strongly committed to the welfare of the people in their homeland, their joining the war was only a matter of time. When asked this question, Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury has said that “though I was profoundly moved by the speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of 7 March 1971 when he said ‘Ebarer Shangram Shadhinatar Shangram’ [This struggle is the struggle for independence] and though I thought of joining the war of independence after the failure of dialogue between Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and President Yahya Khan on 25 March 1971, yet in fact I did it at 1900 hours on 29 March 1971 after hearing the Declaration of Independence by Major Ziaur Rahman in the evening of 27 March 1971. It provided me direction to act.”

General K M Safiullah has answered in detail. He thought that “the change of government will take place after the election. A peaceful transition of power will take place”. But that did not happen. The West Pakistani authorities had a different plan. “In that plan the bringing of troops, massacre, everything was being devised in Dhaka”. Being threatened and enraged, “we revolted on 29 March 1971 and came to know that Major Zia declared independence from Chittagong on 27 March 1971. To General Ibrahim, 7th of March had been the key date. In his own words,

“on that day we thought that something is (sic) going to happen and we are going in it, we are going to join it and after 19th of March our thought better crystallized. When we received a news of what happened in Dhaka on the 25th night, so we had no second thought”. He has also said that “we could hear the voice of Major Zia declaring independence; that moment, to be very formal, we said, we go in it”.

Shafaat Jamil reported that “an independent country for the Bengalis” had been “my childhood dream”, but he could not do anything till March 1971. When Major Zia made a Declaration of Independence over the radio, that inspired the entire nation to fight back. He joined the war after that. Mohammad Abdul Halim responded by saying that he was watching the situation since the Non-Cooperation Movement was begun by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and remained mentally prepared. He further said that “at the very crucial moment I heard the voice of Major Zia declaring independence of Bangladesh on 27 March, although 8 East Bengal had already revolted on 26 March”. Then he joined and started fighting.

Major Hafizuddin joined the war in the morning of 30 March 1971 a few hours after he was disarmed. Having discussions with his colleagues in the army, he took the step. He came to know after he revolted, that Major Ziaur Rahman had already declared independence from the Kalurghat Radio Transmission Centre in Chittagong. Mohammad Ainuddin has given out that he was mentally prepared for it from the beginning of March but “finally decided after hearing the call and announcement of Major Zia from Chittagong”. He has also said that Major Ziaur Rahman issued a call to all for joining the Liberation War- “to all Bengal regiment, police, BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) to join the Liberation War and to liberate the country”. General Shawkat has said plainly that he did not think of anything. “My CO (Commanding Officer) was Major Ziaur Rahman. We revolted when he did it”- this is what he had to say in this regard.

Did they consult their colleagues about joining?

The Bengali military officers, highly politicized as they were and fully informed of the political situation in East Pakistan, took the key decision to join the war, not individually but in consultation with their colleagues, thus making it a kind of collective decision. Mohammad Ainuddin, while responding to this query, said that he discussed this with his colleagues and in view of the call of Major Zia he took the momentous decision. Mir Shawkat Ali reported that he was in close touch with Captain Oli and Major Zia and revolted along with his Commanding Officer Major Zia. It is difficult to say what the respondents would have done if Major Zia had not revolted and declared independence of Bangladesh; but it is true that Zia's action provided a solid support to their actions. Mohammad Abdul Halim has another story to tell. He was encouraged by his father who advised him to join the war. Shafaat Jamil said that he conferred with some battalion officers along with Khaled Mosharraf who was one of the Sector Commanders. Syed Mohammad Ibrahim has told that they were in a group and had been "consulting 24 hours round". K M Safiullah has reported that though "we never discussed what we were going to do, but we knew each other and knew what we were going to do". Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury has also told that he consulted his colleagues and decided to take "the arms, ammunition, equipment and ration of the troops with the then Major Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, Alfa Company Commander of the battalion."

Why did they think they would alter the state of affairs through war?

“How did you think you would alter the situation through war?” □ this question was put to them with a view to ascertaining the level of their self-confidence and their sense of political efficacy, and their answers reflect much of the national psyche of the time. The entire nation was in the grip of revolutionary feelings. After the general election of 1970 the people of all strata in the society expected that political power would be transferred to the majority political party, the Awami League, of East Pakistan. When they were denied of the opportunity of wielding power, the East Pakistanis in general were prepared for extreme measures. They thought of nothing short of revolution, and began to think themselves as a nation. Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury narrated that the Liberation War was supported by all sections of the society, the womenfolk included. Their moral as well as logistical support to the trained troops of the army, East Pakistan Rifle. Police practically made them invincible. These were the reasons of “my conviction that we would be able to alter the situation” for independence. Ejaj Ahmed Choudhury was wrong when he said that the Liberation War was supported by all; he was right however because those who opposed it constituted a bare miniscule group, only a handful of persons, hated by most of the Bengalis since then.

K M Safiullah stated directly that “we had to make this country free from foreign domination by fighting”. He also said, “we knew we would be through”. Syed Mohammad Ibrahim has told that war was likely to generate “a new leadership, a new thinking, a different concept of patriotism”. He said: “it is through war that we could bring in democracy.” Shafaat Jamil’s answer was more interesting. The Liberation War of 1971 was “a people’s war- the people versus a whole body of invading army”. He has said that the “process of attrition would be able to neutralize them (Pakistanis), weaken them and destroy their morale to fight and I think we did it”. He has emphatically stated that our strategy was to “weaken them morally, physically and psychologically by a process of attrition and

thereby making a final thrust and capture Dhaka and get our independence”.

Mohammad Abdul Halim said that it was a sheer good luck for Bangladesh that the military officers revolted and began the Liberation War. Their prompt actions, timely decisions and initiative were crucial. In his words, “Politicians joined the war much later; initially they were running here and there, looking for hideouts. The students, labourers and people from all walks of life gathered around us and we trained them to fight”. Mohammad Ainuddin has also said that he was quite optimistic about the outcome of the war because such fighters as Major Zia, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Shawkat, Shafaat Jamil and so on took part in the war. “I was quite positive that we can (sic) get the independence of the country”- was his emphatic assertion. Here again the disillusion of the Bengali military officers with the vacillating political leadership has been expressed.

What did they feel while receiving the Gallantry Awards?

The Bengali military officers did what they were expected to do by the nation in the most critical time of its history by resisting the powerful Pakistani occupation forces and being victorious at the end, thus making

Bangladesh an independent state. The nation remembers her valiant sons with a deep sense of gratitude. The gallantry awards were but tangible tokens of recognition by the nation. While receiving the awards, after two decades in 1994, these officers expressed deep satisfaction and stated the reasons for their joining the Liberation War. In this section, their reactions are noted.

Seven of the eight officers, who were interviewed, received gallantry award for their extraordinary bravery and crucial role in the war. Two of them were awarded Bir Uttam, the highest award for the surviving ones and the third and eighth Bir Bikram and the fifth and seventh Bir Pratik, the second and third highest award; while the fourth received Commendation Certificate from Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C). When they were asked about their reaction while receiving the gallantry award, Mir Shawkat Ali has expressed deep satisfaction for national recognition of their heroic role in the war. On the question whether his decision to join the war was adequately justified, he has replied in the affirmative and said, “we won the election; the power was not given to us; rather they made an onslaught on our civilian population, onslaught on the army”. Thus they turned out to be our enemy and “as a soldier it was my job to destroy the enemy”.

K M Safiullah has expressed profound satisfaction for the gallantry award of Bir Uttam. A brigade was organized and named after him □ SForce □ for conducting conventional warfare till the Victory Day. He has also given out that his decision to join the war was fully justified. He took up arms to save the honour of “my country and people” and the only satisfaction “I have that I have been able to take part in the war”.

Hafizuddin Ahmed, who was awarded Bir Bikram for gallantry, has said that “it was a great day for me to have been recognized by the nation”. He has further said that it gave him great satisfaction that he joined the war. Mohammad Ainuddin was awarded Bir Pratik for his bravery in the war field. He has expressed that were he not awarded, he would not fret or complain because he joined the war not for any prize or distinction but for the vindication of honour of his land and people. Syed Mohammed Ibrahim, who was also awarded Bir Pratik for his heroic command and

courageous leadership in the war, has also been deeply touched for this national recognition. He said emphatically that his decision to join the war was fully justified. In his own words, “There is no second option, no second thought; we were waiting for it”.

Why did military officers take on political roles?

Captain Oli Ahmad along with Major Zia and other Bengali military officers revolted in the night between 25 and 26 march 1971, reorganized 8 East Bengal Regiment for fighting against the Pakistan Army for liberating East Pakistan and Major Zia declared independence of Bangladesh right then, which was broadcast on 27 March 1971 through Kalurghat radio. The Declaration of Independence for a state is an expressly political act, done normally by the recognized political leader, commanding widespread allegiance of different sections of population.

The war of liberation or independence is also organized by political leadership, though fought by the soldiers and other armed personnel. In the case in question, these political decisions were taken by the military officers themselves, which were endorsed later on by the political leadership. How could they do it? Why did they do it? The responses furnished by the eight military officers provide intriguing answers.

Shaafat Jamil said that the political leaders of East Pakistan failed miserably to provide leadership at that point of time. Though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his Ramna Race Course speech announced that “the struggle of this time is for our liberation, for our independence”, yet he knew very little of what was to follow. In his own words, “the political leaders of all shades and opinions in our country failed to fathom it. As a result there was no physical preparation whatsoever”. He further said that “Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also failed to give proper leadership at that moment when the crackdown started”. Instead of giving proper leadership from within, “he courted arrest”. He has further said that “this was quite surprising to us because in every liberation struggle the number one man gives leadership”.

Ejaj Ahmed Chowdhury expressed that being in the cantonments the Bengali officers knew very well how the Pakistan Army became hostile to Bengali soldiers even before 25 March 1971. They knew not only about the massacres perpetrated by the Pakistan Army on the night of 25 and 26 March, they also feared that at any moment they might be disarmed. Mohammad Abdul Halim has said: “I did not know what exactly happened on 25 March, but I could feel that the situation was quite volatile”. Though the East Pakistani leaders were having negotiations with President Yahya Khan from 16 March, he said, “our politicians failed to understand that Pakistanis wanted only to buy some time for consolidating their position on the pretext of negotiations”.

General K M Safiullah has expressed similar views. He said that “in the guise of conflict with India” Pakistanis were “pouring in troops” to East Pakistan, but they, as military personnel, knew what they were trying to do. So all these measures “made us think about their dubious attitude”. Syed Mohammed Ibrahim has more or less similar views. Since the middle

of March, he said, “we were mentally ready to get a call from the political leader (sic), but we did not get a call from the highest political leadership. The formal call for the War of Liberation actually was articulated by Major Ziaur Rahman from Chittagong.” Hafizuddin Ahmed said, “we knew, the Pakistanis (sic) are going to destroy us. They are going to annihilate the Bangladeshi nation”. He said that “Bangladeshi battalions in other places were also disarmed”. Having all these in view he said, “we thought this was the right time to take up arms against the (Pakistani) military junta”.

Md. Ainuddin reported that the political environment in East Pakistan was such that since 3 March “nothing short of independence was acceptable to the common mass of the people”, but Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at that time was in dialogue for regional autonomy with the Pakistani generals. So he said that “naturally it frustrated us.” Elaborating in detail General Shawkat Ali has said that the situation in East Pakistan in March 1971 was quite volatile. “In such a situation”, he said, “there were lot of talks going on between Yahya Khan, Bhutto and Mujib. They were the political side, but as a soldier what I found in Chittagong is (sic) an ominous environment in which everybody was suspecting everybody”. In the absence of any political direction, under such critical situations Major Zia and Capt. Oli took up a resolute stand and revolted. Then Major Zia said: “we will fight for independence of our country and we shall declare independence” and then he gave (sic) the executive military order for moving from Solashahar Market towards Kalurghat” in search of a safe base for better organization. Zia then administered “the oath of allegiance to Bangladesh and promised to fight till the liberation of the country”.

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Conclusion

Focussing on the role and motivation of the Bengali military officers during initial but critical phase of the Liberation War of 1971, this study has analyzed in-depth its military dimension. The revolt of the Bangladesh military against the Pakistan Army was organized by Captain Oli Ahmad in consultation with Major Zia on the night between 25 and 26 March⁷. The independence of Bangladesh was declared by Major Ziaur Rahman on 27 March 1971.⁸ The Liberation War began by these officers at Chittagong from the night of 25 March 1971. This momentous decision of the Bengali military officers of Chittagong was followed by other military officers and forces under their command.

Not only did these officers start the war but they also carried it on their own till 17 April 1971 when the Bangladesh Government-in-exile was formed at Mujibnagar with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the President in absentia and Tajuddin Ahmed as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. In his address to the nation over Bangladesh radio on 11 April 1971, Prime

⁷ “This officer played the main part which enabled 8th Battalion The East Bengal Regiment to revolt on the crucial night of 25/26 Mar 71 at Chittagong (1972 ACR of Oli Ahmad, signed by Ziaur Rahman on 8 Aug 73 □ Appendix 8.)

⁸ “Captain Oli Ahmad in fact was the first officer who took risk and on his own initiative informed Major Ziaur Rahman regarding declaration of Independence on the night of 25/26 March 1971”. (1973 ACR of Oli Ahmad, Signed by Brig. Mir Shawkat Ali on 8 Mar 74 □ Appendix 8.)

Minister Tajuddin Ahmed said: “Ziaur Rahman is in charge of conducting and directing the war in Chittagong and Noakhali. In the face of massive counter-attack by the Pakistan Army from air, sea and ground the toughest resistance which our freedom fighters and brave people put up, will go down in the history of our Liberation War much like the resistance war of Stalingrad.” (Bangladesh Documents of Liberation War, II, 5). He further said that after this initial victory Major Zia established a planning cell for the conduct of war (Bangladesh Documents of Liberation War, II, 5). What led these military officers to come forward at this crucial moment of history? What circumstances motivated them to throw away their professional norms? Why did they do what the political leaders were supposed to do? This study, exploring the socio-political and economic conditions of East Pakistan which shaped the nationalistic aspirations of the Bengali military officers, and analyzing the constraints of political leaders at that time, has thrown some light on the transformation of a professional cadre to a band of revolutionary soldiers.

As discussed earlier, the Pakistan Army had a specific ethnic bias because of historical reasons. The British deliberately excluded certain groups and races of northern and eastern parts of India from the British Indian Army since the “Mutiny of 1857”. Recruitment to the British Indian Army was confined to the north-western part of India from the so-called “Martial Races” since then. After independence in 1947 the Indian Army discarded this and an arrangement was made for adequate representation of all those races and groups. In Pakistan however the myth continued. In 1971, East Pakistan’s representation in the defence services did not exceed 8 to 9 percent in both officer and other ranks. Thus the Bengali military officers had always smarted under a sense of deprivation and injustice. They pinned their hopes on the electoral victory, which they thought would help redressing some of their grievances. President Yahya Khan’s announcement on 1 March 1971 postponing the session of the National Assembly came to them as a rude shock.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the recognized political leader of East Pakistan and chief of Awami League, played a brilliant role in mobilizing the people for the attainment of regional autonomy. The SixPoint Programme, which was a veritable Magna Carta to the people of East

Pakistan, was initiated by him for ameliorating the depressed conditions of people. In the general election of 1970, the first ever general election held in Pakistan on the basis of universal adult suffrage during the last twenty three years of its life, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman emerged as the leader of the majority party in Pakistan by winning 167 out of 313 seats in the National Assembly. The people of East Pakistan also took the election as a referendum to the Six-Point Programme. After the election he began to think in the tradition of parliamentary practice that at last his party would be able to wield political power in Pakistan, and he interpreted the election result as the de facto transfer of power. He became busy in giving final touches to the proposed constitutional reorganization in the light of Six-Point formula. He began to play up his image as the majority leader in Pakistan. President Yahya Khan also termed him once as prospective Prime Minister of Pakistan and announced that session of the National Assembly of Pakistan would be held on and from 3 March 1971. The people of East Pakistan expected that at last their representatives would hold the rein of power in Islamabad.

Only two days before the session of National Assembly, much to the disappointment of all concerned in East Pakistan, President Yahya Khan announced on 1 March 1971 the postponement of session of the National Assembly, citing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's unwillingness to participate in the Assembly as the primary cause. That sparked rebellious demonstrations all over East Pakistan and it was taken as the most sinister move of the ruling elite in Pakistan to keep the Bengalis out of power for good. The students and teachers, labourers and workers, lawyers and literati professionals burst out in indignation. All of these social sectors felt that the Six-Point formula had outlived its utility and from different corners came out the vociferous demand for one-point action and that was the independence of East Pakistan.

Sheikh Mujib came under tremendous pressure from all the power bases of Awami League to declare independence. In a public meeting in Dhaka on 7 March he addressed a mammoth gathering of about one million people. There he put his demand quite forcefully but stopped short of declaring independence and pleaded for the transfer of power to the elected representatives. Simultaneously the Awami League under his

leadership launched a non-co-operation movement which put the Sheikh in absolute control of East Pakistan.

Faced with such a situation President Yahya Khan came to Dhaka, seemingly for a negotiated settlement of the crisis and prolonged the negotiation for about ten days on the one hand, and continued vigorous airlifting of soldiers and heavy weapons from West Pakistan, on the other. On 23 March 1971, the Awami League leaders presented a draft proclamation to the President, which in effect was to transfer power to the elected representatives on the basis of the Six-Point formula and hoped that the ruling elite would do that. President Yahya, however, without formally breaking the talks, decided to bring about a military solution of the problem. By ordering the reinforced armed forces to march against the unarmed civilians, he left Dhaka on the night of 25 March 1971. A veritable reign of terror was thus set in. Sheikh Mujib surrendered to the Pakistan Army and asked his party leaders to go underground.

At this critical moment of history of this land, a band of young Bengali military officers, fired with nationalistic zeal and patriotism of the highest order, responded positively to the yearnings of people of East Pakistan and took a momentous decision, first of all, through a mass revolt, then by issuing a declaration of the Independence of Bangladesh, and finally by launching the Liberation War through mobilization of their forces in all the cantonments. The Bengali military officers kept the flag of Bangladesh aloft till the formation of Government of Bangladesh in exile on 17 April 1971. This study has focussed on these military officers, their motivations, ideals and activities at this critical phase of history.

Pakistan came into being in 1947 through a voluntary union of East and West Pakistan. The main factors that led to the union were the predominantly Muslim majority in both the wings and their fear of domination by Hindu majority in united India. Apart from these two, most of the ingredients that generate in people a solid bond of unity and keep them going as a nation were absent in Pakistan. The people of East and West Pakistan had neither any experience of living together for generations within a continuing political framework nor had they been under any identical political institutions which might have fostered

common political perceptions, nor did they belong to a distinct cultural area. The only common bond that existed between the people of the two wings was a set of Islamic values and some experiences of the political movement for a separate homeland for the Muslims in the Hindudominated India on the basis of two-nation theory.

East Pakistan was separated from West Pakistan with more than 1000 miles of Indian territory lying between them. This geographical distance also created differences in the configuration of physical and climatic conditions in the two regions. The differences in topography and climate of the two regions not only generated differences in agricultural patterns but also nurtured different food habit, dress, rituals and customs, thus producing two distinct cultures. This exclusive geographical separation also prohibited the communication and social interactions between these two different socio-cultural units in the same country. The population was not evenly distributed in the two wings. The area of East Pakistan being six times smaller than that of West Pakistan contained 54 percent of the total population of Pakistan, thus the population density of East Pakistan being seven times higher than that of the other wing.

The topographical and climatic diversity also determined the linguistic complexity in Pakistan. East Pakistan had one dominant mother tongue, Bangla; but a totally different scenario existed in West Pakistan, where a complex polyglot was practiced. Bangla remained almost an unfamiliar language in West Pakistan; likewise the majority of Bengalis could never adopt Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu, which were spoken in West Pakistan. The differences in the alphabets and script imposed a barrier in the acceptance of language in both the wings.

Though the societies in East and West Pakistan were based on Islamic principles, still there remained basic differences in terms of attitude towards religion. In East Pakistan, Islam is more of a liberal type in the sense that more of its ethos rather than the archetypal rites and practices had appeal to the people. In West Pakistan, however, Islam is more conservative and orthodox. In terms of ethnicity, East Pakistan was more homogenous. The majority of its population (more than 97 percent) belong to one ethnic group, the Bengalis; in West Pakistan many ethnic and tribal

groups formed the social mosaic. For all these Pakistan has been known as a 'double country' since its inception.

National integrity in Pakistan demanded a policy package which might have motivated the people of the two regions to get closer through involvement in the carefully devised participatory programmes. It needed some creative steps which might have fostered unity and curb separatism. The ruling elite however pursued from the very beginning certain policies which, instead of bringing the two regions closer to each other, exacerbated the existing structural differences. The administrative policies through such instruments as the highly centralized civil and military bureaucracies, more in the format of British Indian control and domination of colonial India through the good old Indian Civil Service (ICS), resulted in the domination of West Pakistan over East Pakistan under the domineering role of the West Pakistan-based bureaucrats.

The bureaucrats in Pakistan, inheriting the intellectual orientation of the ICS and British Indian Army and apparatuses of colonial bureaucracy, being recruited and trained in the same tradition and working within similar institutional framework, became the most dominant social sector in Pakistan. The political system was also more or less similar to that which functioned in British India — a highly centralized and unitary system conducted by the bureaucrats. For historical reasons, there was an imbalance in bureaucracy in respect of regional representation right from the beginning. At the time of partition there were only two ICS officers from East Pakistan and till 1950 only 17 new recruits entered the Pakistan Civil Service out of a total of 175 such officers. Over the years East Pakistan's representation increased and in the period 1950- 68, 40 percent of the new recruits were from East Pakistan, though overall representation remained less than 30 percent in the civil service. This representation was however in the lower echelons and in departments which did not influence the vital areas of policy. Like the civil servants, all the top-ranking military officers were from West Pakistan.

The policies of administrative and political centralization thus demonstrated the domination of West Pakistan. In the first decade following independence, Bengali participation in national policies was limited, but the parity among the political elite had a balancing effect.

After the military take over in 1958 it was totally lost, because military rule was in effect a rule of the bureaucrats where the representation of the Bengalis was the minimum. The pursuance of this kind of policy first prompted the Bengalis to raise the issue of regional autonomy. The cultural policy of assimilation in a heterogeneous society of Pakistan provided a wider emotional appeal to the demand of autonomy and helped develop a linguistic nationalism in East Pakistan. The ruling elite believed that the two regions could be held together only if there were one language and one culture in Pakistan. Their insistence on making Urdu the only state language in Pakistan, even though Urdu was practically unknown in East Pakistan, was opposed tooth and nail as it was taken to keep them subjugated politically, educationally, culturally and administratively. The central government still then persisted till 1956 when the constitution recognized both Urdu and Bangla as the state languages of Pakistan, after a gory language movement in 1952. The language movement helped foster the beginning of Bengali nationalism and set a pattern of student-literati-professional alliance which began to be used in subsequent movements against West Pakistan.

In sum, the policies of administrative and political centralization and the assimilationist cultural policy, pursued by the ruling elite, not only alienated the people of East Pakistan from the overarching framework of Pakistan but also made them conscious of their separate identity as a people. The rule of the West Pakistan-based bureaucrats always reminded them that they were neither equal partners and participants in the affairs of Pakistan nor masters at their own home.

While the administrative policy of centralization and cultural policy of assimilation added an emotional appeal to the demand for autonomy and helped develop a linguistic nationalism among the various classes in East Pakistan, the economic policies, which directly affected the emerging middle classes, led to a wholesale alienation, added militancy to the autonomy movement and helped strengthen nationalistic bond among the Bengalis. The Bengali military officers were deeply influenced by it.

As it has been already discussed, the two regions of Pakistan were dissimilar in many respects, but they were similar in that both were

industrially underdeveloped and had been the producers of agricultural raw materials. At independence, the industrial bases of two regions were almost of the same size. The small gap that existed between the two regions widened rapidly over the years and in the 1960s it took critical proportion. In 1949/50 the disparity was 19 percent but in 1959/60 it rose to 32 percent and in 1969/70, to 61 percent.

These differential rates of growth in the two regions were primarily due to different rates of industrialization. In East Pakistan the industrial sector accounted for 9.4 percent of regional output in 1949/50 and it rose to about 20 percent in 1969/70, but in West Pakistan the industrial sector came to account for almost a third of the regional output, though it was only 14.7 percent in 1949/50. The principal reason for the differential rates of growth in the two regions was the differential shares of investment and various policies the Government of Pakistan followed since 1948. East Pakistan's share of investment varied from 21 percent to 26 percent in the 1950s and from 32 percent to 36 percent in the 1960s, but by far the larger shares of both revenue and development outlay went to West Pakistan. During the pre-plan period (1947- 1955), the per capita development and revenue expenditures on an average were Rs. 22.08 and Rs. 37.75 respectively in East Pakistan as against Rs. 108.03 and 201.94 respectively in West Pakistan. A similar policy was followed in respect of allocation of foreign aid and loans. East Pakistan received only 17 percent and 30 percent of the foreign aid and the US commodity aid, whereas West Pakistan enjoyed 83 percent and 70 percent of the external assistance.

Disparity in the allocation of resources, both domestic and external, in the two regions was the inevitable outcome of the development strategy pursued in Pakistan. An entrepreneurial approach based on a one-economy policy in Pakistan comprising basically two different regions lying far apart from each other was the main feature of the development strategy. The bureaucrats defended it on grounds of efficiency and productivity. West Pakistan had a large stock of social and economic overheads in the form of power, transportation and communication facilities and higher ratio of natural resources with relatively lesser density of population. The West Pakistan railway system was more developed and less affected by partition. The port of Karachi was more developed. In East Pakistan

transport and communication facilities were poor. Chittagong port was yet to be developed. Under these circumstances, the adoption of one-economy policy based on an entrepreneurial approach accelerated the rate of disparity.

The allocative bias in favour of West Pakistan, concentrating nearly 75 percent of the total expenditure in a region where only 46 percent of the total population lived, generated not only income and employment opportunities, but also a favourable climate for private investment. Such financial institutions in Pakistan as the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP), the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation (PICIC) also followed a kind of discriminatory attitude to East Pakistan.

Apart from the disproportionate expenditure and differential growth of the private sectors in the two regions, disparity increased because of the government's agricultural policy. The Government of Pakistan adopted a policy of industrialization through private sector and to make industrialization a success, fiscal and monetary policies were geared to extract adequately the surplus from agriculture and thus re-channel it to industries. It was estimated that over 15 percent of the value of gross agricultural output was extracted and re-directed to industries and manufacturing. Its burden on the farmers was over 10 percent of their income. East Pakistan was severely affected by the policies because East Pakistan accounted for a larger share of export than West Pakistan and a greater proportion of agricultural goods in total export package. The transfer of surplus from agriculture to industry was in effect a transfer of agricultural surplus of East Pakistan to industries in West Pakistan. Furthermore, through a surplus in international trade and a deficit in the inter-wing trade, a sizable amount of East Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings was diverted to West wing. Added to this was East Pakistan's foreign aid which was utilized in West Pakistan. Mahbub-al Haq estimated that such transfer amounted to Rs. 210 million per year from 1950 to 1955 and perhaps Rs. 100 million a year from 1956 to 1969. The advisory panel of economists showed that net transfer amounted to Rs. 31,120 million at the rate of 1,556 million a year. In other words, West Pakistan grew at the expense of East Pakistan. All these created an awareness among the

Bengali elite and they became anxious for effective participation in the political system, especially at the policy-making level. When they felt that the bureaucrats-dominated system prevented them from enjoying equal share of the national pie, they became determined to bring about a structural change in the system. The SixPoint Programme, which was a reaction of, and a challenge to, the policy measures of the bureaucrats, can be understood only in this context.

The Six-Point Programme was a significant politico-economic document. Politically it sought to re-structure the political system in a manner which might ensure effective participation of the Bengalis; economically, it was designed to put the East Pakistani resource management at the disposal of the Bengalis; militarily, it wanted to make East Pakistan self-sufficient militarily. The Six-Point Programme, thus fabricated in 1966 differed radically from the Bengalis' autonomy demand of the 1950s in that it advocated that regional governments have the right to establish separate trade and commercial relations with foreign countries and keep separate accounts of foreign exchange earning and suggested that the regions have their own military or para-military forces. For all practical purpose, a confederal rather than a federal form of government was built into the Six-Point Programme.

For its radical nature and built-in suggestions, its appeal to the different social groups in East Pakistan became so great. It had an emotive appeal to the rising businessman and industrialist, because it meant the elimination of competition from the West Pakistani big business houses. It attracted the urban salaried professionals because in it they saw an opening to further prospects. Bengali bureaucrats supported it enthusiastically because they found in it the key to their independence from centre's control and prospects of their promotion to the decisionmaking structure. The army officers favoured it because it meant an unlimited scope for their promotion and consolidation of their position in East Pakistan. These groups in fact were the main constituencies of the Awami League and in effect the linchpin of the politically relevant strata of the society. The workers lent their support because their lower wages, coupled with the fact that many of the industrial establishments in East Pakistan belonged to the West Pakistanis, led to an admixture of class,

regional and ethnic conflicts. The rural farmers were looking for a change, and the Six-Point Programme became a symbol of change to them.

The 1970 general election worked as a catalyst to sharpen the eastwest confrontation still further. The Awami League representing the emerging middle classes in East Pakistan took the election as a referendum to the Six-Point formula. The election results were more than what they expected, winning an absolute majority in the National Assembly of Pakistan. The Awami League expected, very rightly, to come to power after the election. The ruling elite in Pakistan, however, was adamant to keep the Awami League out of power and unwilling to protect Pakistan with the primacy of the Bengalis. President Yahya's sudden announcement of postponement of session of the National Assembly on 1 March 1971 became the turning point. The Six-Point formula, at that point of time, unwittingly became transformed into a one-point demand and that was for an independent Bangladesh.

The ruling elite of Pakistan comprising some of the senior most bureaucrats and top level generals wanted to buy some time. President Yahya Khan came to Dhaka seemingly to work out a political settlement of the crisis; it has however been proved that their intention was to reinforce their position in East Pakistan by bringing in more men and materials, both by air and sea, from West Pakistan under the cover of a prolonged negotiation. Sheikh Mujib and his advisers however took the negotiation seriously and continued it in right earnest till 25 March 1971 and hoped that the Pakistanis would finally respect the verdict of the poll. Only the Bengali military officers, especially those stationed in Chittagong, because of their nearness to the only sea-port, knew what was happening and how massive preparations the Pakistanis were making.

At the crucial stage of negotiation, the generals from West Pakistan played vital role. They were primarily concerned with the defence and defence forces in Pakistan. They thought that the regional government's control of currency, foreign exchange earnings, foreign trade and taxation, as envisaged in the Six-Point Programme, would result in a drastic weakening of the defence of Pakistan through a drastic cut in the size of Pakistan Army. To the Bengali leaders, however, the defence of Pakistan

was nothing more than the defence of West Pakistan. The 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, during which East Pakistan was totally defenceless, left an indelible impression in the minds of the Bengali elite. The ruling elite of Pakistan, especially the generals who were dominant at that stage, denounced the Six-Point Programme as secessionist, condemned the Awami Leaguers as traitors and decided to undertake a military solution to the political problem. Thus, without formally breaking the talks President Yahya Khan launched the cowardly attack on the night of 25 March 1971 and left Dhaka.

A revolution as it is understood in this study, in the sense of “a challenge to the established political order and eventual establishment of a new order, radically different from the preceding one” had its full play in East Pakistan. The legitimacy of the system was completely eroded after the general election and the authority disintegrated. The Bengali military officers, though junior in ranks, played a historic political role at this crucial moment and helped shape the destiny of the nation as leaders of Bangladesh Revolution of 1971. Unlike their counterparts in some other countries, at that point of time, they moved adroitly, not to take over political power for themselves but to rid East Pakistan of the marauding occupation forces from West Pakistan and to make it an independent Bangladesh. This may be treated as a case study of a band of military officers and soldiers who, being fired with a nationalistic zeal, stood by their brethren to fight for independence even at the risk of their lives and social position. What is of significance is that though in most cases the political leaders initiated the moves and the trained military worked under their guidance and supervision, in the case of Bangladesh Revolution the military personnel took up the initiative at the critical moment and continued the holding war-operation till the formation of Mujibnagar Government in-exile. The military remained the symbol of independence till then, and as regimental colour they kept the flag of Bangladesh aloft.

At that time there were about 50 Bengali trained military officers and approximately 5000 soldiers stationed in Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore, Saidpur and Dhaka Cantonments, in addition to about 15,000 members of East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), a para-military force trained for guarding the national frontiers. The Chittagong cantonment had an added advantage in

the sense that the Bengali military officers of Chittagong Cantonment had ample opportunity to watch closely how, during those days, the Pakistani strategists were reinforcing their grip over East Pakistan by bringing in more and more arms through the Chittagong Port. The Comilla Cantonment being closer to it provided suitable opportunity for easy communication amongst them. Chittagong, moreover, had one radio station.

The Bengali military officers, who played crucial role in the Liberation War, were highly politicized and intensely nationalistic. Recruited and socialized under the shadow of Ayub Khan's martial law, they became not only conscious of regional imbalance in the armed forces, but many of them also were victims of discriminatory policies. Their complaints became louder when regional conflicts were diverted from normal political channels of expression and deflected into bureaucracy, and bureaucracy turned into arena for covert forms of political struggle after the imposition of martial law in Pakistan.

Many of the military officers established linkages with the dominant East Pakistan political party, the Awami League and remained on good terms with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Many of them supplied secret information to the Awami League leadership and provided materials, which helped them sharpen the case of autonomy. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Bengali civil and military officers lent full support to Sheikh Mujib's call for civil disobedience and non-cooperation movement which paralyzed the entire administration in East Pakistan from 01 March to 25 March 1971. Only in this context, the role of the Bengali military officers can be properly appreciated.

The facts revealed from the carefully conducted interview of the eight war heroes also testify to the nationalistic orientation of the Bengali freedom fighters. All of them expressed the view that the Liberation War provided them a "golden opportunity" to free East Pakistan, which was more like "a colony of Pakistan". The urge for liberating East Pakistan from the clutches of the marauding Pakistan Army and making it an independent Bangladesh, that is why, became the guiding spirit in the war. Even today with profound nostalgic remembrance they recollected their joining the war as the greatest deed done in their lives. That they could

stand by their oppressed and suffering brethren in times of crisis still enlivens them in their public discourses. They were in the know of what was happening in East Pakistan during the early months of 1971 and joined the war not as supporters of any political party but as patriotic citizens of Bangladesh. All of them expected that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would declare Independence of Bangladesh on 7 March 1971 and most of them thought that it was the most propitious time. When they heard of East Pakistani leaders' eagerness for negotiation with the ruling elite of Pakistan from 16 March, most of them were dismayed at the thought that this was nothing but a ploy for the West Pakistani generals to buy some time for adequate preparation. That speaks why all these officers took it as momentous decision when they heard from Chittagong Radio Station the announcement of independence by one of their colleagues, Major Zia on 27 March. Some of them had discussions with their colleagues and soldiers and joined the war without any hesitation. They took the Liberation War as the 'people's war', a "war between the people and a body of invading army".

The declaration of independence for a state is expressly a political act, done normally by a recognized political leader commanding widespread allegiance of different sections of the community, and fought by the trained soldiers. In this case, it was done by military officers because political leadership was trapped in an "arranged negotiation", which was, in the words of Mascarenhas, "the worst political deception of the century" (Mascarenhas, 29 April 1971) and thus faltered and fumbled and ultimately failed to take a decision at the crucial moment. The Bengali military officers felt that "nothing short of independence was acceptable" to the people and they responded effectively to the cherished dream of the people of Bangladesh. Having some arms and armed personnel at their disposal and fired with nationalistic zeal of the highest order, they went ahead and succeeded where the political leaders failed. They had, in fact, no political axe to grind and when the Bangladesh Government-in-exile was formed at Mujibnagar on 17 April 1971, they came under the direction of the government and ultimately achieved the people's dream of 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal) □ an independent Bangladesh after nine-month

long grueling fights on all fronts and celebrated the Victory Day on 16 December 1971.

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APPENDIX- 1 Chart Of Bengali Officers And Soldiers Located In
East Pakistan

1. Chittagong Cantonment to include Chittagong City Area Total Strength was: a. About 2000 untrained recruits, and b. 200 trained soldiers.	Chittagong Cantonment (East Bengal Regimental Centre) <u>Officers</u> 1. Brig. M.R. Majumder (taken to Dhaka on 23. 3. 71) 2. Lt. Col. M.R. Chowdhury (killed on night 25. 3. 71) 3. Capt. Mohsinuddin Ahmed (hanged for mutiny in the year 1981) 4. Capt. Enamul Haque 5. Capt. Abdul Aziz. 6. Capt. Subed Ali Bhuiyan Capt. Amin Ahmed Chowdhury (taken to Dhaka on 23. 3. 71)
Chittagong City Total strength was about 700 soldiers. a. 300 soldiers were present and the rest were on leave and at Kharian Cantonment of West Pakistan.	8 East Bengal Regiment <u>Officers</u> 1. Major Ziaur Rahman (who became the President of the Republic and was killed by a group of military officers on May 30, 1981) 2. Major Mir Shawkat Ali 3. Capt. Chowdhury Khalequzzaman 4. Capt. Sadeq Hossain 5. Capt. Oli Ahmad 6. Lt. Mahfuzur Rahman (hanged for mutiny in the year 1981) 7. Lt. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury (arrested on 11. 4. 71)
East Pakistan Rifle Total Rifle strength was about 10 to 15 thousand for East Pakistan	Officers of EPR at Chittagong City 1. Major Shamsuddin Ahmed 2. Capt. Rafiqul Islam 3. Capt. Harun Ahmed Chowdhury

Officers on different duties at Chittagong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capt. Mulemuddin 2. Capt. Abul Basher
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<p>2. Comilla Cantonment</p> <p>Total strength was about 700 soldiers.</p> <p>a. About 600 were present and the rest was on leave.</p>	<p>4 East Bengal Regiment located at Brahmanbaria about 50 miles away from the Cantonment</p> <p><u>Officers</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Major Khaled Musharraf (who was killed by the soldiers during a mutiny on 8 November 1975) 2. Capt. Shafaat Jamil 3. Capt. Abdul Matin 4. Capt. Ainuddin 5. Capt. Abdul Gaffar Halder 6. Lt. Mahbubur Rahman <p>Lt. Fazlul Kabir Lt. Harunur Rashid</p>
Officers on different duties at Comilla Cantonment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Major Khaleque (killed on 30. 3. 71) 2. Capt. A.T.M. Haider (was killed by the soldiers during a mutiny on 8 November 1975) 3. Lt. Imamuzzaman
<p>3. Dhaka Cantonment</p> <p>Total strength was about 700 soldiers and out of this about 100 soldiers were on leave.</p>	<p>2 East Bengal Regiment located at Joydevpur about 25 miles away from Dhaka Cantonment</p> <p><u>Officers</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lt. Col. Rakibuddin (he did not join the war) 2. Major. K.M. Safiullah 3. Major. Nurul Islam 4. Major. Moinul Hossain Chowdhury 5. Capt. A.S.M. Nasim 6. Capt. Azizur Rahman 7. Lt. Ejaz Ahmad Chowdhury 8. Lt. S. Gulam Helal Murshed 9. 2nd Lt. Muhammad Ibrahim

Officers on different duties at Dhaka Cantonment	1. Capt. A.J.M. Aminul Haque 2. Capt. Akbar Hossain
4. Jessore Cantonment Total strength was about 700 soldiers. a. About 350 soldiers were on leave b. About 150 soldiers	1 East Bengal Regiment Officers 1. Lt. Col. Reazul Jalil (he did not join the war) 2. Lt. Hafizuddin 3. 2 nd Lt. Anwar (died on 30. 3. 71)
lived with their family. c. About 200 soldiers joined the war.	4. 2 nd Lt. Shafi Washiuddin (he did not join the war)
5. Saidpur Cantonment Total strength was about 700 soldiers. a. About 400 soldiers joined the war. b. The rest were on leave.	3 1 st Bengal Regiment <u>cers</u> 1. Major. Nizam (killed in the action in March 1971) 2. Capt. Mohammad Ashraf 3. Lt. Anwar Hossain 4. Lt. Mukhlesur Rahman 5. 2 nd Lt. Rafique (surrendered to Pakistan Army. Later on killed.)
6. Besides these there were about 30 Bengali Officers in different Cantonments:	a. Army Medical Corps b. Army Officers of different Arms (came on leave) c. Officers of different Arms posted in these five Cantonments on various jobs. d. Officers of Air-Force/ Navy.

APPENDIX- 2

THE SIX POINTS

The text of the Six Point Formula as originally published and subsequently amended in the Awami League's Manifesto.

POINT I

The Constitution should provide for a Federation of Pakistan in its true sense on the basis of the Lahore Resolution, and Parliamentary form of Government with supremacy of Legislature directly elected on the basis of universal adult franchise.

Amended:. The character of the government shall be federal and parliamentary, in which the election to the federal legislature and to the legislatures of the federating units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in the federal legislature shall be on the basis of population.

POINT 2

Federal government shall deal with only two subjects, viz. Defence and Foreign Affairs, and all other residuary subjects shall vest in the federating states.

Amended: The federal government shall be responsible only for defence and foreign affairs and, subject to the conditions provided in (3) below, currency.

POINT 3

1. Two separate but freely convertible currencies for two wings may be introduced, or

2. One currency for the whole country may be maintained. In this case effective constitutional provisions are to be made to stop flight of capital from East to West Pakistan. Separate Banking Reserve is to be made and separate fiscal and monetary policy to be adopted for East Pakistan.

Amended: There shall be two separate currencies mutually or freely convertible in each wing for each region, or in the alternative a single currency, subject to the establishment of a federal reserves system in which there will be regional federal reserve banks which shall devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another.

POINT 4

The power of taxation and revenue collection shall vest in the federating units and that the Federal Centre will have no such power. The Federation will have a share in the state taxes for meeting their required expenditure. The Consolidated Federal Fund shall come out of a levy of certain percentage of all state taxes.

Amended: Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the federating units. The federal government shall be provided with requisite revenue resources for meeting the requirements of defence and foreign affairs, which revenue resources would be automatically appropriable by the federal government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the Constitution. Such constitutional provisions would ensure that the federal government's revenue requirements are met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over the fiscal policy by the governments of the federating units.

POINT 5

1. There shall be two separate accounts for foreign exchange earnings of the two wings.
2. Earnings of East Pakistan shall be under the control of East Pakistan Government and that of West Pakistan under the control of West Pakistan Government.
3. Foreign exchange requirement of the Federal Government shall be met by the two wings either equally or in a ratio to be fixed.
4. Indigenous products shall move free of duty between two wings.
5. The Constitution shall empower the unit Governments to establish trade and commercial relations with, set up trade missions in and enter into agreements with, foreign countries.

Amended: Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units, under the control of the respective governments of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirements of the federal government shall be met by the governments of the federating units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Constitution. The Regional Governments shall have power under the Constitution to

negotiate foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the federal government.

POINT 6

The setting up of a militia or a paramilitary force for East Pakistan.

Amended: The governments of the federating units shall be empowered to maintain a militia or paramilitary force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.

APPENDIX- 3

Allotment Of Troops To Tasks

DACCA

Command and Control: Maj.-Gen. Farman with H.Q. M.L.A.
Zone B.

Troops:

H.Q. 57 Brigade with troops in Dacca, i.e. 18 Punjab, 32 Punjab (C.O. to be replaced by [Lt.-Col.] Taj, GSO I (Int.)), 22 Baluch, 13 Frontier Force, 31 Field Regt., 13 Light Ack-Ack Regt., company of 3 Commando (from Comilla).

Tasks:

1. Neutralize by disarming 2 and 10 East Bengal, H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles (2500), Reserve Police at Rajar Bagh (2000).
2. Exchange and transmitters. Radio, TV, State Bank.
3. Arrest Awami League leaders—detailed lists and addresses.
4. University Halls, Iqbal, Jagan nath, Liaquat (Engineering University).
5. Seal off town including road, rail and river. Patrol river.
6. Protect factories at Gazipur and Ammo Depot at Rajendrapur.

Remainder: Under Maj.-Gen. K.H. Raja and H.Q. 14 Div.

JESSORE

Troops:

H.Q. 107 Brigade, 25 Baluch, 27 Baluch, Elements of 24 Field Regt.,
55 Field Regt.

Tasks:

1. Disarm 1 East Bengal and Sector H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles and Reserve Police incl. Ansar weapons.
2. Secure Jessore town and arrest Awami League and student leaders.
3. Exchange and telephone communications.
4. Zone of security round Cantt., Jessore town and Jessore-Khulna road, airfield.
5. Exchange -at Kushtia to be made inoperative.
6. Reinforce Khulna if required.

KHULNA

Troops:

22 FF

Tasks:

1. Security in town.
2. Exchange and Radio Station.
3. Wing H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles, Reserve Companies and Reserve Police to be disarmed.
4. Arrest Awami League students and communist leaders.

RANGPUR-SAIDPUR

Troops:

H.Q. 23 Brigade, 29 Cavalry, 26 Frontier Force, 23 Field Regt.

Tasks:

1. Security of Rangpur- Saidpur.
2. Disarm 3 East Bengal at Saidpur.
3. If possible disarm Sector H.Q. and Reserve Company at Dinajpur or neutralize by dispersal Reserve Company by reinforcing border outposts.
4. Radio Station and telephone exchange at Rangpur.
5. Awami League and student leaders at Rangpur.

6. Ammo dump at Bogra.

RAJSHAHI

Troops:

25 Punjab

Tasks:

1. Dispatch C.O.—Shafqat Baluch.
2. Exchange and Radio Station Rajshahi.
3. Disarm Reserve Police and Sector H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles.
4. Rajshahi University and in particular Medical College.
5. Awami League and student leaders.

COMILLA

Troops:

53 Field Regiments, 1½ Mortar Batteries, Station troops, 3 Commando Battalion (less Company)

Tasks:

1. Disarm 4 East Bengal, Wing H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles, Reserve District Police.
2. Secure town and arrest Awami League leaders and students.
3. Exchange.

SYLHET

Troops:

31 Punjab less company

Tasks:

1. Radio Station, Exchange.
2. Koenig Bridge over Surma.
3. Airfield
4. Awami League and student leaders.

5. Disarm Section H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles and Reserve Police. Liaise with Sikandar.

CHITTAGONG

Troops:

20 Baluch, less advance party; company 31 Punjab present ex Sylhet; Iqbal Shafi to lead a mobile column from Comilla by road and reinforce S.T. 0100 hrs (H hrs) on D-Day.

Mobile Column: Brig. Iqbal Shafi with Tac H.Q. and Communications; 24 Frontier Force; Troop Heavy Mortars; Field Company Engineers; Company in advance to Feni on evening D-Day.

Tasks:

1. Disarm E.B.R.C., 8 East Bengal, Sector H.Q. East Pakistan Rifles, Reserve Police.
2. Seize Central Police Armoury (Twenty thousand)
3. Radio Station and Exchange.
4. Liaise with Pakistan Navy (Commodore Mumtaz)
5. Liaise with Shaigri and Janjua (C.O. 8 East Bengal) who have been instructed to take orders from you till arrival of Iqbal Shafi.
6. If Shaigri and Janjua feel sure about their outfits then do not disarm. In that case merely put in a road block to town from Cantt. by placing a company in defensive position so that later E.B.R.C. and 8 East Bengal are blocked should they change their loyalties.
7. I am taking Brig. Majumdar with me. Arrest Chaudhry (C.I. E.B.R.C.) on D-Day night.
8. Arrest of Awami League and student leaders after above accomplished.

APPENDIX- 4

OPERATION SEARCHLIGHT—1

Major-General Khadim Hussain was brooding over the possible outcome of political talks on 25 March when his green telephone rang at about 11 AM. Lieutenant-General Tikka Khan was on the line. He said, 'Khadim, it is tonight.'

It created no excitement for Khadim. He was already waiting for the fall of the hammer. The President's decision coincided with the second anniversary of his assumption of power. General Khadim passed the word to his staff for implementation. The lower the news traveled, the greater the sensation it created. I saw some junior officers hustling about mustering some extra recoilless rifles, getting additional ammunition issued, a defective mortar sight replaced. The tank crew, brought from Rangpur (29 Cavalry) a few days earlier, hurried with their task to oil six rusty M-24s for use at night. They were enough to make a noise on the Dacca streets.

The general staff of Headquarters 14 Division rang up all the outstation garrisons to inform them of H-hour. They devised a private code for passing the message. All garrisons were to act simultaneously. The fateful hour was set at 26 0100 hours—1 AM 26 March. It was calculated that by then the President would have landed safely in Karachi.

The plan for operation SEARCHLIGHT visualized the setting up of two headquarters. Major-General Farman, with 57 Brigade under Brigadier Arbab, was responsible for operations in Dacca city and its suburbs while Major-General Khadim was to look after the rest of the province. In addition, Lieutenant-General Tikka Khan and his staff were to spend the night at the Martial Law Headquarters in the Second Capital[□] to watch the progress of action in and outside Dacca.

[□] A complex of surrealistically modern red-brick buildings, designed by the famous American architect Louis Kahn. Still incomplete, it had been started during the Ayub Khan regime (October 1958-March 1969) as a sop to mounting Bengali

A few days earlier, General Yahya had sent Major-General Iftikhar Janjua and Major-General A. O. Mitha to Dacca as possible replacements for Khadim and Farman in case they refused to crack down. After all, they had formed General Yakub's team until very recently and might still share his ideas. General Hamid had even gone to the extent to questioning Khadim's and Farman's wives to assess their husbands' views on the subject. Both the generals, however, assured Hamid that they would faithfully carry out the orders.

Junior officers like me started collecting at Headquarters, Martial Law Administrator, Zone 'B' (Second Capital) at about 10 PM. They laid out sofas and easy chairs on the lawn and made arrangements for tea and coffee last night. I had no specific job to perform except 'to be available'. A jeep fitted with a wireless set was parked next to this 'outdoor operations room'. The city wrapped in starlight, was in deep slumber. The night was as pleasant as a spring night in Dacca could be. The setting was perfect for anything but a bloody holocaust.

Besides the armed forces, another class of people was active that night. They were the Awami League leaders and their private army of Bengali soldiers, policemen, ex-servicemen, students and party volunteers. They were in communication with Mujib, Colonel Osmani and other important Bengali officers. They were preparing for the toughest resistance. In Dacca, they erected innumerable road blocks to obstruct the march of troops to the city.

The wireless set fitted in the jeep groaned for the first time at about 11.30 PM. The local commander (Dacca) asked permission to advance the H-hour because 'the other side' was hectically preparing for resistance. Everybody looked at his watch. The President was still half way between Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Karachi. General Tikka gave the decision. 'Tell Bobby (Arbab) to hold on, as long as he can.'

resentment sharpened by the construction of a new federal capital at Islamabad in West Pakistan. The Second Capital stands on the south-western fringe of Dacca airport.

At the given hour, Brigadier Arbab's brigade was to act as follows:

13 Frontier Force was to stay in Dacca cantonment as reserve and defend the cantonment, if necessary.

43 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Regiment, deployed at the airport in an anti-aircraft role since the banning of over-flights by India, was to look after the airport area.

22 Baluch, already in East Pakistan Rifles Lines at Pilkhana, was to disarm approximately 5,000 E.P.R. personnel and seize their wireless exchange.

32 Punjab was to disarm 1,000 'highly motivated' policemen, a prime possible source of armed manpower for the Awami League, at Rajarbagh Police Lines.

18 Punjab was to fan out in the Nawabpur area and the old city where many Hindu houses were said to have been converted into armouries.

Field Regiment was to control the Second Capital and the adjoining Bihari localities (Mohammadpur, Mirpur).

A composite force consisting of one company each of 18 Punjab, 22 Baluch and 32 Punjab, was to 'flush' the University Campus particularly Iqbal Hall and Jagan Nath Hall which were reported to be the strong points of the Awami League rebels.

A platoon of Special Service Group (Commandos) was to raid Mujib's house and capture him alive.

A skeleton squadron of M-24 tanks was to make an appearance before first light, mainly as a show of force. They could fire for effect if required.

These troops, in their respective areas, were to guard the key points, break resistance (if offered) and arrest the listed political leaders from their residences.

The troops were to be in their target areas before 1 AM but some of them, anticipating delay on the way, had started moving from the cantonment at about 11.30 PM Those who were already in the city to guard the radio and television stations, telephone exchange, power house and State Bank etc., had also taken their posts much before the H-hour.

The first column from the cantonment met resistance at Farm Gate, about one kilometre from the cantonment. The column was halted by a huge tree trunk freshly felled across the road. The side gaps were covered with the hulks of old cars and a disabled steam-roller. On the city side of the barricade stood several hundred Awami Leaguers shouting *Joi Bangla* slogans. I heard their spirited shouts while standing on the verandah of General Tikka's headquarters. Soon some rifle shots were mingled with the *Joi Bangla* slogans. A little later, a burst of fire from an automatic weapon shrilled through the air. Thereafter, it was a mixed affair of firing and fiery slogans, punctuated with the occasional chatter of a light machine gun. Fifteen minutes later the noise began to subside and the slogans started dying down. Apparently, the weapons had triumphed. The army column moved on to the city.

Thus the action had started before schedule. There was no point now in sticking to the prescribed H-hour. The gates of hell had been cast open. When the first shot had been fired, 'the voice of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came faintly through on a wavelength close to that of the official Pakistan Radio. In what must have been, and sounded like, a prerecorded message, the Sheikh proclaimed East Pakistan to be the People's Republic of Bangla Desh.' The full text of the proclamation is published in *Bangla Desh Documents* released by the Indian Foreign Ministry. It said, 'This may be my last message. From today Bangla Desh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangla Desh, 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 Bangla Desh and final victory is achieved.'

I didn't hear this broadcast. I only heard the big bang of the rocket launcher fired by the commandos to remove a barrier blocking their way to Mujib's house. Lieutenant-Colonel Z. A. Khan, the commanding officer, and Major Bilal, the company commander, themselves had accompanied the raiding platoon.

As the commandos approached Mujib's house, they drew fire from the armed guard posted at his gate. The guards were quickly neutralized. Then up raced the fifty tough soldiers to climb the four-foot high compound

wall. They announced their arrival in the courtyard by firing a sten-gun burst and shouted for Mujib to come out. But there was no response. Scrambling across the verandah and up the stairs, they finally discovered the door of Mujib's bedroom. It was locked from outside. A bullet pierced the hanging metal, and it dangled down. Whereupon Mujib readily emerged offering himself for arrest. He seemed to be waiting for it. The raiding party rounded up everybody in the house and brought them to the Second Capital in army jeeps. Minutes later, Major Jaffar, Brigade Major of 57 Brigade, was on the wireless. I could hear his crisp voice saying 'BIG BIRD IN THE CAGE... OTHERS NOT IN THEIR NESTS... OVER.'

As soon as the message ended, I saw the 'big bird' in a white shirt being driven in an army jeep to the cantonment for safe custody. Somebody asked General Tikka if he would like him to be produced before him. He said firmly, 'I don't want to see his face.'

Mujib's domestic servants were released immediately after identification while he himself 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. Subsequently, when complications arose about the 'final disposal' of Mujib (such as international pressure for his release), I asked my friend Major Bilal why he had not finished him off in the heat of action. He said, 'General Mitha had personally ordered me to capture him alive.'

While Mujib rested in the Adamjee School, the city of Dacca was in the throes of a civil war. I watched the harrowing sight from the verandah for four hours. 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.

At about 2 AM the wireless set in the jeep again drew our attention. I was ordered to receive the call. The Captain on the other end of the line

said that he was facing a lot of resistance from Iqbal Hall and Jagan Nath Hall. Meanwhile, a senior staff officer snatched the hand-set from me and shouted into the mouth-piece: 'How long will you take to neutralize the target? ... Four hours! ... Nonsense ... What weapons have you got? ... Rocket launcher, recoilless rifles, mortars and ... O.K., use all of them and ensure complete capture of the area in two hours.'

The university building was conquered by 4 AM but the ideology of Bengali nationalism preached there over the years would take much longer to subdue. Perhaps ideas are unconquerable.

In the rest of the city, the troops had accomplished their tasks including disarming the police at RajarBagh and the East Pakistan Rifles at Pilkhana. In other parts of the city, they had only fired a sniping shot here and a burst there to create terror. They did not enter houses, except those mentioned in the operational plan (to arrest the political leaders), or those used by rebels as sanctuaries.

Before first light on 26 March, the troops reported completion of their mission. General Tikka Khan left his sofa at about 5 AM and went into his office for a while. When he reappeared cleaning his glasses with a handkerchief and surveying the area, he said, 'Oh, not a soul there!' Standing on the verandah, I heard his soliloquy and looked around for confirmation. I saw only a stray dog, with its tail tucked between its hind legs, stealing its way towards the city.

After day-break. Bhutto was collected from his hotel room and escorted to Dacca airport by the Army. Before boarding the plane, he made a general remark of appreciation for the Army action on the previous night and said to his chief escort. Brigadier Arbab, 'Thank God, Pakistan has been saved.' He repeated this statement on his arrival at Karachi.

When Bhutto was making this optimistic remark, I was surveying mass graves in the university area where I found three pits—of five to fifteen metres diameter each. They were filled with fresh earth. But no officer was prepared to disclose the exact number of casualties. I started going round the buildings, particularly Iqbal Hall and Jagan Nath Hall which, I had thought from a distance, had been razed to the ground during

the action, Iqbal Hall had apparently been hit by only two, and Jagan Nath Hall by four, rockets. The rooms were mostly charred, but intact. A few dozen half-burnt rifles and stray papers were still smouldering. The damage was very grave—but not enough to match the horrible picture I had conjured up on the verandah of General Tikka's headquarters.

The foreign press fancied several thousand deaths (in the university area) while army officers placed the figure at around a hundred. Officially, only forty deaths were admitted.

From the university area, I drove on the principal roads of Dacca city and saw odd corpses lying on the footpaths or near the corner of a winding street. There were no mountains of bodies, as was alleged later. However, I experienced a strange and ominous sensation. I do not know what it signified but I could not bear it for long. I drove on to a different area.

In the old city, I saw some streets still barricaded but there was no one to man the road blocks. Everybody had shrunk to the sanctuary of his house. On one street corner, however, I saw a shadow, like a displaced soul, quickly lapsing into a side lane. After a round of the city, I went to Dhanmandi where I visited Mujib's house. It was totally deserted. From the scattered things, it appeared that it had been thoroughly searched. I did not find anything memorable except an overturned life-size portrait of Rabindranath Tagore. The frame was cracked in several places, but the image was intact.

The outer gate of the house, too, had lost its valuable decoration. During Mujib's rule, they had fixed a brass replica of a Bangla Desh map and had added six stars to represent the Awami League's Six Points. But now only the black iron bars of the gate, with holes for the metal fixtures, were there. The glory that had quickly dawned, had quickly disappeared.

I hurried back to the cantonment for lunch. I found the atmosphere very different there. The tragedy in the city had eased the nerves of defence personnel and their dependents. They felt that the storm after a long lull had finally blown past leaving the horizon clear. The officers chatted in the officers' mess with a visible air of relaxation. Peeling an orange. Captain Chaudhry said, 'The Bengalis have been sorted out well and

proper—at least for a generation'. Major Malik added, 'Yes, they only know the language of force. Their history says so.'

This is an extract from Salik Siddiq's book *Witness to Surrender*, Dhaka, University Press Ltd. 1997, pp. 138- 144.

APPENDIX- 5

OPERATION SEARCHLIGHT—II

Although Dacca had been benumbed overnight, the situation in the rest of the province continued to be fluid for some time. Chittagong,

Rajshahi and Pabna, in particular, gave us anxious moments for several days.

The total number of Bengali and West Pakistani troops in Chittagong was estimated at 5,000 and 600 respectively. The former consisted of trained recruits at the East Bengal Centre (2,500), the newly raised 8 East Bengal, East Pakistan Rifles Wing and Sector Headquarters, and the police. Our troops were mainly the elements of 20 Baluch whose advance party had sailed back to West Pakistan. A senior non-Bengali army officer in Chittagong, Lieutenant-Colonel Fatemi, was ordered to hold ground to allow time for reinforcements from Comilla to arrive.

The rebels initially had all the success. They effectively blocked the route of the Comilla column by blowing up the Subapur Bridge near Feni. They also controlled major parts of Chittagong cantonment and the city. The only islands of government authority there were the 20 Baluch area and the naval base. Major Ziaur Rehman, the second-in-command of 8 East Bengal, assumed command of the rebels in Chittagong in the absence of Brigadier Mozumdar (who had been tactfully taken to Dacca a few days earlier). While the government troops clung to the radio station, in order to guard the building, Major Zia took control of the transmitters separately located on Kaptai Road and used the available equipment to broadcast the 'declaration of independence' of Bangla Desh. Nothing could be done to turn the tables unless reinforcements arrived in Chittagong.

The G.O.C., Major-General Khadim Hussain, learnt about the stoppage of the Comilla column about fifty minutes past midnight on Dday. He ordered Brigadier Iqbal Shafi to cross the nullah (ravine), leaving the bridge in hostile hands, and make his way to Chittagong at the earliest opportunity. Brigadier Iqbal Shafi, however, could not make any headway without taking the bridge. This he did next day by 10 AM the column moved, but again it was pinned down by hostile fire at Comeera, about twenty kilometres short of Chittagong. The Advance Company suffered eleven casualties including the commanding officer, who was killed. The column lost contact with Brigade Headquarters (Comilla) as well as with Divisional Headquarters (Dacca).

The lack of information about the column raised much apprehension in Dacca. It might have been butchered! If so, what would be the fate of Chittagong? Would it remain with the rebels? With Chittagong in hostile control, what would be the outcome of operation SEARCHLIGHT?

The G.O.C. decided to locate the missing column himself in an army helicopter next day. He would fly to Chittagong first and then follow the Chittagong-Comilla Road so that, if the column had meanwhile made any progress, he might find it on the outskirts of Chittagong. As his helicopter fluttered close to the Chittagong hills to land in the 20 Baluch area, it attracted small arms fire from the rebels who had taken up positions on the high ground. The chopper was hit but sustained no serious damage. It managed to land safely. The G.O.C. got down for a quick briefing by Lieutenant-Colonel Fatemi on the Chittagong situation. The Colonel triumphantly reported his success in controlling the East Bengal Centre by killing 50 and capturing 500 rebels. The rest of Chittagong, however, was still with the rebels.

As the G.O.C. walked to the helicopter to continue the search, he saw a terror-stricken woman with a baby in her arms. She was the wife of a West Pakistani officer desperately seeking to be evacuated to Dacca. She was accommodated.

The helicopter was in the competent hands of an ace pilot, Major Liaquat Bokhari who was ably assisted by Major Peter. They flew the G.O.C. along the Comilla Road, but could not see anything because of the low cloud formation. When they were approximately over Comeera, the G.O.C. studied the quarter-inch map spread on his knees, looked out and ordered the pilot to go down through the clouds. As the helicopter descended and the G.O.C. craned his anxious neck to locate the column, a quick splash of bullets sprang up from the ground. The pilot pulled up instinctively. Nevertheless, his machine was hit. One bullet grazed the tail while another pierced through its belly, only inches away from the fuel tank. Major Bokhari, apparently unperturbed by the incident, said to the G.O.C. 'Sir, do you want me to make another attempt.' 'No, make, for Dacca direct.' The mission had failed. The column was not located.

Meanwhile, General Mitha had sent a commando detachment (ex 3 Commando Battalion) from Dacca to Chittagong by air with, the same mission—to link up with the column. The detachment did not know the location of the missing column or the rebels' position. They had to rely on their own intelligence. A Bengali officer, Captain Hamid, appeared from nowhere and said to the commanding officer of the commandos, I have come from Murree to look up my parents in Chittagong. I know the area. May I go with you as a guide?' His offer was accepted.

The day (27 March) the commandos were to undertake the search/link up operation, the G.O.C. moved his tactical head quarters to Chittagong and sent a column of 20 Baluch on the same mission but on a different route. The success of the operation hinged on a link up of these three columns. The 20 Baluch column got involved with the rebels soon after leaving its unit area but the commandos dashed to the target, the Bengali officer with them. They had not got very far when they came under cross-fire from the hills flanking the Chittagong-Comilla Road. Thirteen of them were killed including the commanding officer, two young officers, one junior commissioned officer and nine other ranks. The effort had proved both abortive and expensive.

At the other end, Brigadier Iqbal Shafi had himself assumed the command of the column after the Comeera incident. He sent for a battery of mortars which joined him from Comilla on 27 March. He planned a dawn attack for 28 March. The attack was successful. He broke the resistance and cleared his way to Chittagong. He finally reported his presence at Haji Camp, the pre-embarkation resting place for pilgrims, on the edge of Chittagong City.

Next to Haji camp were the Isphahani Jute Mills where, before the arrival of our troops, an orgy of blood was staged by the rebels. They collected their helpless non-Bengali victims—men, women and children—in the club building and hacked them to death. I visited the scene of this gruesome tragedy a few days later and saw blood-spotted floors and walls. Women's clothes and the children's toys lay soaked in a congealing pool of blood. In the adjoining building, I saw bed sheets and mattresses stiffened with dried blood. While this happened the Pakistan

Army was still attempting a link-up of the three columns. The link-up was effected on 29 March and the happy news was radioed to Dacca, where tense officers in the operations room heaved a sigh of relief. But it was too late for the victims at the Isphahani Mills slaughter-house.

The only success in Chittagong so far had been the unloading of 9,000 tons of ammunition from the ship which had been gheraoed,[□] by the Awami League volunteers since mid-March. Brigadier M.H. Ansari, who had flown from Dacca, had mustered all available resources—an infantry platoon, a few mortars and two tanks—and formed a task force. The Navy had lent the support of a destroyer and a few gunboats. He had achieved this success with marvelous skill. Later an additional battalion was also flown from Dacca to Chittagong.

Although the situation with regard to the availability of resources had improved, the main battle for Chittagong had yet to be fought. The radio transmitters, East Pakistani Rifles Sector Headquarters and the Reserve Police Lines in the District Courts area (the concentration point for the policemen, ex-servicemen and armed volunteers) remained to be cleared before the general flushing out of the area could be undertaken.

General Mitha was the first to have a go at the transmitter building. He sent a commando detachment to blow it up. His troops approached the target from the flank, following the river-route. They soon came under fire while still in country boats. Sixteen of them were killed. Mitha's second attempt too proved abortive and highly expensive. Major-

□

Literally, to isolate and cordon a target

General Khadim then sent a column of 20 Baluch under LieutenantColonel Fatemi. Once again, Fatemi managed to involve himself in some sort of engagement with the rebels on the way and never reached the transmitters. Finally, two F-86s (Sabres) from Dacca had to knock them out. I visited the sight a few days later and found the building well fortified with pillboxes and foxholes—all interconnected with a fine network of trenches. The building was intact.

The other principal target was the East Pakistan Rifles Headquarters where 1,000 armed rebels were well entrenched. Located on high ground, they had artfully laid their defences along the embankment with holes and slits to facilitate small arms fire. Our troops knew the odds and prepared a massive attack to neutralize them. The attacking troops, approximately in battalion strength and the support of a naval destroyer, two gunboats, two tanks and a heavy mortar battery. The battle raged for three hours before the defiant rebels could be subdued. This happened on 31 March—the sixth day of operation SEARCHLIGHT.

The next target was the Reserve Police Lines where 20,000 rifles were reportedly stocked, to be used by an assortment of rebels. A battalion-strength attack was launched there, too, but the defenders proved less dogged than the East Pakistan Rifles personnel and then withdrew towards the Kaptai Road.

The key role in neutralizing these points of resistance was played by Brigadier Ansari. His gallant services were later recognized by the award of the Hilal-i-Jurat and promotion to the rank of Major General (although earlier he had been superseded).

The main operations in Chittagong were over by the end of March, but the mopping up action continued until 6 April. The other two towns where the rebels had an upper hand were Kushtia and Pabna. Let us see how our troop fared there.

Kushtia, about 90 kilometers from Jessore, is an important road and rail junction. Our troops were not permanently located there but, on the D-day, 27 Baluch (Jessore) had sent one of its companies 'just to establish our presence there'. For want of proper briefing the company carried only small arms, a few recoilless rifles and a limited quantity of ammunition. They thought that they were going on normal internal security duty, which usually did not involve heavy fighting.

The company commander distributed his manpower in small groups and assigned them the task of guarding the telephone exchange and VHF station. He also sent small parties to arrest the local Awami League leaders—but they had all left. He established his presence, after killing

five rebels on the first day (26 March). Thereafter it was only enforcement of curfew and collection of arms from the civilians. Two days passed peacefully.

On 28 March, at about 9.30 PM, the local Superintendent of Police, pale with fear, came to the company commander, Major Shoaib, and reported that the rebels had gathered in the border town of Chuadanga, about 16 kilometres from Kushtia and were about to attack the town at night. They were also threatening to kill all 'collaborators'. The company commander passed a word of caution to his platoons, but the troops did not take it very seriously. They did not even bother to dig their trenches.

The attack commenced at 3.45 AM (29 March) with heavy mortar shelling. It jolted our troops out of all illusions of safety. They soon realized that the attackers were none other than the troops of I East Bengal which had been sent out from Jessore cantonment 'for training'. They had been joined at Chuadanga by the Indian Border Security Force (B.S.F.). (Four Indian B.S.F. soldiers were captured near Jessore and two near Sylhet.)

The scene of the battle was the police armoury occupied earlier by our troops. The rebels managed to climb into the adjoining three-storey red brick house of a local Judge and used it as a vantage point. From there they sprayed bullets into the police building. At dawn, five of our men lay dead in the compound. By 9 AM, the toll had risen to eleven. In the next half-hour, nine more had fallen. Only a few survivors managed to escape to the company headquarters about a kilometre away. Shortage of ammunition and lack of cover were the immediate causes of the disaster.

The other posts in Kushtia town—the telephone exchange and VHF station—had simultaneously come under equally severe attack. So neither of the posts could reinforce the other. In the company headquarters, eleven lay dead at one place and fourteen at another. In all, twenty-five out of sixty men had been massacred in the early part of the engagement. Frantic messages for help were sent to Jessore and even an air strike was requested, but nothing reached Kushtia. The last message received from Jessore by the end of the day said, 'Troops here already committed. No

reinforcement possible. Air strike called off due to poor visibility... Khuda Hafiz!’

Major Shoaib collected the remnants of his command to reorganize them. He found that only 65 had survived out of 150. He decided to abandon Kushtia and take the survivors to Jessore. He lined up one threeton truck, one Dodge and six jeeps. The convoy left at night with the company commander in one of the leading jeeps. They had traveled barely 25 kilometres when the leading vehicles, including the one that carried Major Shoaib, caved into a culvert which had been cut by the rebels in the centre deceptively covered from the surface. As soon as the convoy stopped, it came under intense fire from both sides of the road. Our troops jumped down and hit the ground but bullets continued to rain on them. Only nine out of the sixty-five managed to crawl out and disappear into the country-side. Most of them were later captured by the rebels, and subjected to a barbaric end.

The story of the Pabna action has many features in common with the Kushtia catastrophe. Here, a company of 25 Punjab had been sent from Rajshahi 'just to establish our presence'. The 130 men had arrived in Pabna with only first line ammunition and three days rations. On arrival, the company was split into small detachments, which were posted at vulnerable points like the power house and the telephone exchange. They also visited the residences of local political leaders but found no one. The company established its presence without any resistance and lived in peace for the first thirty-six hours. Then at about 6 PM, on 27 March, all the posts came under intense fire from across the nullah (ravine). The rebel force consisted of an East Pakistan Rifles Wing (900 men), 30 Policemen and 40 Awami League volunteers. They didn't know our strength. They therefore kept on firing from a distance without assaulting our positions. Our troops also opened up but shortage of ammunition imposed heavy restrictions on the volume of fire. One N.C.O. and two other ranks were wounded in this initial encounter.

Captain Asghar, who was being constantly harassed by a rebel light machine-gun, decided to silence it. He took a few volunteers with him and charged its position. He knocked it out with a hand grenade which

exploded right inside the post. But at the same time, another light machine-gun sent a burst into Captain Asghar. Badly hit, he swerved around to take cover behind the pillar of the gate, but collapsed. The raid was called off. Another attempt was made by Lieutenant Rashid, who also died in action.

Meanwhile, all the posts were wound up except that at the telephone exchange. The rebels also regrouped, then launched an all-out attack. The lightly equipped defenders realized their folly, but too late. They had to pay very dearly for it. They lost two officers, 3 JCOs and 80 other ranks. One more officer and 32 other ranks had been wounded. Repeated calls for help were sent, in consequence of which a helicopter came to evacuate the wounded, but could not land. Major Aslam from Rajshahi, however, managed to reach Pabna with eighteen soldiers, one recoilless rifle, one machine gun and some ammunition, and managed to extricate the survivors. He loaded the wounded into the Dodge and sent them to Rajshahi across country, to avoid possible resistance on the way. He took the able-bodied with him to fight his way back to Rajshahi by road. Meeting heavy resistance on the way, he took to the countryside, where they had to wander for three days without food or water. When this column finally reached Rajshahi on 1 April at 10 AM it consisted of only eighteen soldiers. The rest, including Major Aslam, had been killed en route.

Thus Chittagong, Kushtia and Pabna turned out to be the towns where we suffered the severest casualties. These places were cleared on 6 April, 16 April and 10 April respectively. In other areas where we were in strength, we regained control without much resistance.

The rebels did not settle the score with West Pakistani soldiers only. They also killed civilian dependents with equal barbarity. It is not possible here to document all such cases but I quote an episode to illustrate this point.

2 East Bengal, which had a sprinkling of officers, JCOs and NCOs (technical trades only) from West Pakistan, was located at Joydevpur in an old palace about 30 kilometres north of Dacca. As a part of the general scheme, the East Bengal battalions had been kept away from the cantonments, to avoid trouble with West Pakistani units. Three companies of 2 East Bengal had moved to Gazipur, Tangail and Mymensingh 'for

training'. The fourth company was in the battalion headquarters located in the old palace building at Joydevpur. This is same place where I had witnessed the colour-presenting ceremony in February 1970.

The battalion revolted on 28 March after exchanging information with other Bengali units. Their first action after this change of loyalties was the massacre of their West Pakistani colleagues and their families. One Subedar Ayub, who had served the battalion for over twenty years, managed to escape from this systematic butchery and reached Dacca cantonment about midday on 28 March to break the news. I saw him when he arrived in the headquarters—pale with fear, with spots of white forth settled at the corners of his dry lips. Everybody tried to console him but he was too shaken to accept a cup of tea or piece of advice. He asked for help—immediate help.

A Company of Punjab Regiment was dispatched. A few young officers accompanied the reinforcements voluntarily. As the reinforcements reached the battalion headquarters, they saw the most gruesome sight of their lives. On a heap of filth lay five children, all butchered and mutilated, their abdomens ripped with bayonets. The mothers of these children lay slaughtered and disfigured on a separate heap. Subedar Ayub identified, among them, members of his family. He went mad with shock—literally mad.

Inside the palace compound was a parked jeep fitted with a wireless set. The tyres were flat and the seats were soaked in blood. A few splashes of blood had settled on the wireless itself. 'Search-lighting' the interior of the building, they found blood-stained clothes in the bathroom. They were later identified as the garments of Captain Riaz from Gujranwala. In the family quarters of the other ranks, they saw a young mother lying dead, an infant trying to suckle the withered breasts. In another quarter was huddled a terror-stricken girl, about four, who cried out at the sight of the soldiers, 'Don't kill me, don't kill me please till my father comes home.' Her father never came home.

Similar stories were reported from other stations. Some of them sounded too melodramatic to believe but they were all essentially true.

General Hamid, Chief of Staff, Pakistan Army, told me a few months later that the blame for this suffering must lie on Lieutenant-General Yakub 'who had opposed the arrival of West Pakistani troops in early March. Had he allowed us to build up the forces in time, there would have been West Pakistani troops in all major towns to prevent these wild killings.'

General Yakub, it may be recalled, had opposed the move at a very delicate stage of political negotiations. If General Hamid had made his mind clear to Yakub on the eventual crack-down, I believe General Yakub's reaction would have been different.

Now that General Yakub was no longer on the scene and the Army crack-down, with all its ugly repercussions, had commenced there was no bar to the dispatch of troops. Operation GREAT FLY-IN was thus started as early as (but not before) 26 March. The arriving troops were quickly dispatched to areas under pressure.

Once the situation had stabilized in the key cities, strong columns of troops were sent to provincial towns. Let me describe here the march of one column from Dacca to Tangail on 1 April, which I accompanied. The main column, loaded in trucks fitted with machine-guns, moved on the main road while two companies spread out over about five hundred metres on either side of the road. These foot columns were equipped for all contingencies—both animate and inanimate. Nothing was to escape their wrath. Behind the infantry column was a battery of field guns which fired a few shells at suitable intervals in the general direction of the mob. The artillery bang was enough to scare away any rebels in the area.

The infantry column opened up on the slightest pretext or suspicion. A stir in a bunch of trees or a little rustle in the air was enough to evoke a burst of automatic fire or at least a rifle shot. I remember that a little short of Karotea, on the Tangail road, there was a small locality which hardly rated a name. The searching troops passed through it, putting a match to the thatched huts and the adjoining bamboo plants. As soon as they advanced ahead, a bamboo stick burst with a crack because of the heat of the fire; everybody took it as a rifle shot by some hidden 'miscreant'. This

caused the weight of the entire column to be riveted on the locality and all sorts of weapons fired into the trees. When the source of danger had been 'eliminated', a careful search was ordered. During the search, the column stood at the ready to shoot the 'miscreant' on sight. The search party found no sign of a human being—alive or dead. The bamboo crack had delayed the march by about fifteen minutes.

Karotea was a modest town surrounded by a thick growth of wild trees. It boasted a local bazaar consisting of a single row of shops. The people had already fled their homes. Where had they gone? It was difficult to investigate. The column halted there, surveyed the town, burnt the bazaar and set fire to some kerosene drums. Soon, it developed into a conflagration. The smoky columns of fire smouldered through the green branches of the trees. The troops did not wait to see the fruits of their efforts, they soon moved on. When we reached the other end of the town, I saw a black lamb tied to a spike, trying to wriggle out of its gutted abode but with no success because the rope was tightening round its neck with every additional attempt at liberation. It must have strangled itself to death.

A few kilometres further on, we saw on the road-side two V-shaped trenches, newly dug but hurriedly abandoned. Probably the rebels had prepared these positions to meet us but after hearing the bang of guns, had decided to leave. Whatever the case, the column could not advance without flushing the area. As the troops scanned around, I walked into a mud hut to see how the people there lived. The interior was neatly plastered with clay—a mild grey shade. A framed portrait of two children, probably brothers, hung on the front wall. The only furniture in the hut was a charpoy and a mat of date leaves. On the mat was a handful of boiled rice which bore the finger prints of infant eaters. Where were they now? Why had they gone?

I was awakened from these disturbing thoughts by a loud argument between the soldiers and an old Bengali civilian whom they had discovered under the banana trees. The old man had refused to divulge any information about the 'miscreants' and the soldiers threatened to kill him if he did not co-operate. I went to see what was going on.

The Bengali, a walking skeleton, had wrapped a patch of dirty linen round his waist. His bearded face wore a frightened look. My eyes, following his half-naked body down to his ankles, settled on the inflated veins of his dusty feet. Finding me so inquisitive, he turned to me and said, 'I am a poor fellow. I don't know what to do. A little earlier, they (the miscreants) were here. They threatened to put me to death if I told anybody about them. Now, you confront me with an equally dreadful end if I don't tell you about them.' That summed up the dilemma of the common Bengali.

The column, maintaining its diligent pursuit on the way, finally reached Tangail in the evening. It replaced the Bangla Desh flag with the national flag on the Circuit House, fired eight shells in the environs to announce its arrival and settled down for the night. I returned to Dacca. The widespread killings zestfully reported by a hostile world press, did not take place in the initial phase of operation SEARCHLIGHT. They occurred in the subsequent period of prolonged civil war. Infantry columns on clearing missions were sent from Comilla, Jessore, Rangpur, Sylhet and other places. Usually, they moved along the metalloid roads, leaving the option to the rebels to slip into the countryside or recede to the borders and eventually into the lap of their Indian patrons. The speed of these operations depended on the availability of troops and their resources.

Additional manpower and resources became available between 26 March and 6 April. During this period there arrived two divisional headquarters (9 Division, 16 Division), five brigade headquarters, one commando and twelve infantry battalions. They had all left their heavy equipment in West Pakistan as they were to quell a rebellion rather than fight a proper war. Three more infantry battalions and two mortar batteries arrived on 24 April and 2 May respectively. The paramilitary forces funneled into East Pakistan between 10 April and 21 April included two wings each of East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (E.P.C.A.F.) and West Pakistan Rangers (W.P.R.), besides a sizeable number of Scouts from the North West Frontier. They were mainly taken in place of defecting East Pakistan Rifles and police.

Whatever reinforcements arrived from West Pakistan, were used to complete operation SEARCHLIGHT Which was never formally closed but was deemed to have achieved its end by the middle of April when all major towns in the province had been secured. □

I have not been able to collect the figures of casualties suffered or inflicted during operation SEARCHLIGHT except those I have mentioned in the course of this narration. But I can vouch for the strength of my assessment that the number of lives lost in the clashes barely touched the four figure mark. If the foreign press made the world believe that several million people perished, the blame lies with those who expelled the foreign press from Dacca on 26 March (evening) and forced

□ The major towns were secured on the following dates: Paksy (10 April), Pabna (10 April). Sylhet (10 April), Ishurdi (11 April), Narsindgi (12 April), Chandarghona (13 April), Rajshahi (15 April), Thakur-gaon (15 April). Kushtia (16 April). Laksham fl6 April), Chuadanga (17 April), Brahmanbaria (17 April), Darsana (19 April), Hilli (21 April), Satkhira (21 April), Golundu (21 April), Dohazari (22 April), Bogra (23 April), Rangpur (26 April), Noakhali (26 April), Santahar (27 April), Siraj-ganj (27 April), Maulvi Bazar (28 April), Cox's Bazar (10 May). Maulvi Hariadi May).

them to base their stories on the fantasy of Indian propagandists or the whims of opinionated tourists. If the foreign journalists had been allowed to stay in East Pakistan after 25 March, even the most biased among them would have witnessed a reality which, though tragic, was far less gruesome than what appeared in their stories.

These are excerpts from Saliks Siddiq's book Witness to
Surrender, Dhaka, University Press Ltd. 1997, pp. 146- 157
APPENDIX- 6

CONFIDENTIAL

IMMEDIATE

HQ Eastern Command Dacca
Cantt.

Tele: 251721/ R/ AI

15 April 1971

To:	Comd 9 Div	Comd CAF
	Comd 14 Div	ACC PAF
	Comd 16 Div	OC 3 Cdo Bn
	DG EP CAF	OC Log Fit
	Comd EP Log Area	OC 604 FIU
	CONCEP	OC 734 FIC
		OC 27 GL Sec
Info:	HQ MLA Zone 'B'	Det ISI
Internal:	GS Branch	Estb. Branch
Distr:	HQ Def Coy	

Subject: Discipline – Troops

1. Since my arrival, I have heard numerous reports of troops indulging in loot and arson, killing people at random and without reason in areas cleared of the anti state elements. Of late there have been reports of rape and even the West Pakistanis are not being spared;

on 12 Apr. two West Pakistani women were raped, and an attempt was made on two others. There is talk that looted material has been sent to West Pakistan through returning families.

2. I gather that even officers have been suspected of indulging in this shameful activity and, what is worse, that in spite of repeated instructions, comds have so far failed to curb this alarming state of indiscipline. I suspect that COs and OSC units/sub-units are protecting and shielding such criminals.
3. Here I wish to sound a note of warning to all comds that if this tendency is not curbed and stamped out at once, it will undermine battle efficiency and discipline of the Army. It is a contagious disease and you must be fully alive to its adverse effects and farreaching consequences; some day it may well boomerang involving our own women-folk and your own person. It is not uncommon in history, when a battle has been lost because troops were over indulgent in loot and rape.
4. I, therefore, direct that the troops must be got hold of and the incidence of indiscipline, misbehavior and indecency must be stamped out ruthlessly. Those, including officers, found guilty of such acts must be given deterrent and exemplary punishment. I will NOT have soldiers turn into vagabonds and robbers. Such elements must be given no quarter, mercy or sympathy.
5. I would also like to remind comds, that we have a sacred mission before us and we are yet very far off the goal set before us. Nothing must detract us from the fulfillment of the task entrusted to us. Indiscipline will only undermine it
6. I would like every soldier in this Theatre to be an embodiment and an example of discipline. As far as the officers are concerned, I wish to remind them that they have a code of honour and conduct, and as gentlemen and officers I would like them to abide by it. This is necessary if we are to achieve the aim and win back the people of this Province.

7. These instructions equally apply to all intelligence agencies MP and SSG operating in East Pakistan.

Sd/- Lt.-Gen.

Commander Eastern Comd

(Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi)

CONFIDENTIAL

APPENDIX- 7

TEXT OF INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER

The PAKISTAN Eastern Command agree to surrender all PAKISTAN Armed Forces in BANGLA DESH to Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA, General Officer Commanding in Chief of the Indian and BANGLA DESH forces in the Eastern Theatre. This surrender includes all PAKISTAN land, air and naval forces as also all paramilitary forces and civil armed forces. These forces will lay down their arms and surrender at the places where they are currently located to the nearest regular troops under the command of Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA.

The PAKISTAN Eastern Command shall come under the orders of Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA as soon as this instrument has been signed. Disobedience of orders will be regarded as a breach of the surrender terms and will be dealt with in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war. The decision of Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA will be final, should any doubt arise as to the meaning or interpretation of the surrender terms.

Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA gives a solemn assurance that personnel who surrender shall be treated with the dignity and respect that soldiers are entitled to in accordance with the provisions of the GENEVA Convention and guarantees the safety and well-being of all PAKISTAN military and paramilitary forces who surrender. Protection

will be provided to foreign nationals, ethnic minorities and personnel of WEST PAKISTAN origin by the forces under the command of Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA.

JAGJIT SINGH AURORA

Lieutenant-General

General Officer Commanding

Martial Law Administrator Indian and Bangla Desh Forces
Zone B and Commander

in

The Eastern Theatre

16 December 1971

AMIR ABDULLAH

KHAN NIAZI

Lieutenant-General in Chief

Indian and Bangla Desh Forces

Eastern Command (Pakistan)

16 December 1971

APPENDIX- 8

ACR REPORTS OF OLI AHMAD, 1972 AND 1973

Number : SS – 9706

Name : OLI AHMAD, BIR BIKRAM

PART II – REPORT BY INITIATING OFFICER AND GRADING

Period of Report the Officer served under your command : -

From to

How employed, with dates

1. Section ‘A’ – Performance, professional capabilities and Character Traits (Refer to Instructions and points Vide Anx ‘A’ and ‘B’ to GHQ letter No..... dated)*

An extremely loyal, brave and devoted officer who would take any amount of risk to complete a given task. He has a very quick uptake and can assess any difficult situation with ease and at times admirably well. He is highly reliable and is very considerate to his subordinates.

This officer played the main part which enabled 8th Battalion The East Bengal Regiment to revolt on the crucial night of 25/26 Mar 71 at Chittagong.

Throughout the war of independence 1971, this officer displayed cool courage in the face of heavy odds and enemy opposition. He has taken part in many actions admirably. As Brigade Major he performed excellently, most of the time also performing as DQMG.

His leadership qualities in the field during the war was a matter of inspiration for others including Indian Officers who were associated with ‘Z’ Force from time to time.

2. Section ‘B’ – Above Average :

Should improve his spoken English, a little.

Signed by Ziaur Rahman
Brigade Commander 44 Brigade
Initiating Officer’s Initials and date
Brigade Commander 44 Brigade

Initial of Officer reported upon/Initiating Officer if

Communicated in writing with date.....

* Officer's performance during the Liberation war also to be included in the report.

3. Grade in present rank : OUTSTANDING

Number : SS – 9706 Name : OLI AHMAD, BIR BIKRAM

14. Remarks (See Instruction):

I concur with the report of the initiating officer.

Signed by Brig. K.M. Safiullah
Signature and rank.....

Name K. M. SAFIULLAH
COS Bangladesh Army

Date 17 Sep 73.

Number : SS – 9706 Name : OLI AHMAD, BIR BIKRAM

14. Remarks (See Instruction):

This officer has an extraordinary ability to organise things. He is extremely hardworking and is capable of taking much greater responsibility than his rank demands. This officer if properly guided will be an asset to the army. His services during war was commendable – he in fact was the first officer who took risk and on his own initiatives inform Gen. Ziaur Rahman regarding declaration of Independence on night 25/26 Mar 71.

Signed by Mir Shawkat Ali
Signature and rank.....

Name Mir Shawkat Ali
Brig. Commander

Date 8 Mar 74.

PART VI – REMARKS BY NEXT SUPERIOR REPORTING OFFICER

15. Period served under your command:

From.....To.....

16. Remarks based on:☐ intimate contact/ frequent/
infrequent observation

17. a. Do you support recommendations NO /YES ☐ /EXCEPT
in Parts III to IV?

b. Give your recommendations on points of dissent, if any :-

c. Grading in present rank:- Above Average

18. Remarks (See Instruction):

An extremely loyal officer who is very brave and upright. He is very intelligent and full of initiative.

Signed by Major Gen. Ziaur Rahman

Signature and rank.....

Name Major Gen. Ziaur Rahman

Appointment and Unit DCAS

Date 20 Aug 74

APPENDIX- 9

Questionnaire

1. Name & Address:
2. The sector you fought in:
3. Please identify some of them you fought with:
4. How do you conceptualize patriotism?
5. Did you consider yourself as a patriot when you joined the war?
6. Do you feel very gratified now?
7. What motivated you to get involved in the war?
8. What became your guiding spirit in this war?
9. Were you aware of what was going to happen in Pakistan on 25 March 1971?
10. Did you expect that the Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh would be made any time?
11. What was your reaction when you heard of military crackdown by the Pakistani Leaders on 25 March 1971?
12. Did you not know that participation in the War of Independence would amount to breach of discipline of your service regulations?
13. Did you know that failure in the War of Independence would mean not only an end of your career but also an end of your life?
14. When did you think of joining the War of Independence?
15. Did you consult any of your colleagues or friends when joining the war?
16. Did you feel any compulsion to join it?
17. Were you aware of the political situation prevailing in East Pakistan? When?

18. Under whose leadership did you fight?
19. Who do you think was your role model in the war field?
20. Please narrate your experiences as a war-hero when you received the gallantry award?
21. Were you a supporter of a political party?
22. How did you think you would alter the situation through war?
23. Do you think that your decision to join the war was adequately justified?
24. Did you get any inspiration from any book you read?

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