

Historic March

March 22, 1971



Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan Says

Left Spoke of Armed Struggle First

By Mahfuz Ullah fighters.

Explaining the political situation prevailing in the country before the start of the War of Independence, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the Minister for Labour and Manpower, said that the left-wing organisations raised the slogan of armed struggle for the independence of the country much before others thought of it.

The Left realised that whether it was a demand for autonomy or independence, nothing would be achieved without armed struggle, the minister said.

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, one time general secretary of East Pakistan Students Union (EPSU), was organising the peasants in Narayngdi when the War of Independence started. He was also then a member of the politburo of the Communist Organising Committee, a splinter group formed under the leadership of Kazi Zafar Ahmed. The other members of the politburo were Rashed Khan Menon, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Sunil Loha, Mostafa Jamal Haider and Haider Anwar Khan Juno.

Mannan Bhuiyan said though most of the Left groups had abandoned the politics of mass organisations influenced by the line expounded by Charu Majumdar at that time, "I never gave up the politics of mass organisations. I even had differences of opinion with some of my colleagues on the issue. Moreover, I believed that without the active participation of people no struggle could win."

Defending further the 'mass line', Mannan Bhuiyan said peasant movement is always a part of the national movement. "I explained the national question to the peasants in terms of their situation", added Mannan Bhuiyan.

Mannan Bhuiyan said that this was the reason for which the peasants of his locality participated actively in the War of Liberation and gave all out assistance to the freedom

Party led by Maulana Bhasani to boycott the elections of 1970, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "even if NAP participated the situation would not have been different," because "Awami League was enjoying the people's support. For Sheikh Mujib it was a correct decision to participate in the election. Through election he wanted to prove that it was he with whom the rulers of Pakistan should negotiate, not with anyone else. And we should not forget the reality that the Bengalees always vote for one party."

Mannan Bhuiyan further said that though the Left organisations pioneered the question of autonomy for 'East Pakistan' but they vacillated when the six-point programme was launched and "Sheikh Mujib became the symbolic leader of East Pakistan."

Referring to the preparation for an armed struggle, Mannan Bhuiyan said that during those days of March (1971) they organised volunteers from among the youths who were given training on how to make explosives. "But our emphasis was on politically conscious elements," he added.

Commenting on the role of Awami Leaguers in his locality Mannan Bhuiyan said that they wanted to get the Awami League workers in the preparatory struggle but "they were not there." The reality was "in my area they were not in a mood to fight," added the minister. Because, "if we look at the events in retrospect we see that AL was negotiating with the Pakistani rulers till the last moment. They failed to understand the writing on the wall. Awami League was thinking of a compromise."

Mannan Bhuiyan further said that for the same reason Mujib did not accept the slogan of armed struggle put forward by the leftists "nor had he any mental preparation for any armed struggle."

Colonel Osmany Tells Old Soldiers to Stand behind Movement Led by Mujib

THE EX-SERVICEMEN of Bangladesh on Monday demanded withdrawal of Martial Law and immediate transfer of power to the majority party of the country, reports APP.

At a rally held at Baitul Mukarram, the ex-soldiers also extended full support to the non-violent, non-cooperation movement launched by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The meeting outlined the importance of maintaining peace and tranquility in the rank and file of the people for the success of the movement.

In a resolution the meeting directed the ex-servicemen to maintain peace to safeguard the lives and properties of different communities of Bangladesh, keeping close contact with the Awami League volunteers. The rally also called upon the ex-army-men to help unarmed people in self-protection through organising Action Committees in every thana, sub-division and district.

Major General (ret'd) M. I. Majid presided over the meeting. Among others, the meeting was addressed by Colonel (ret'd) M.A.G. Osmany and commander Abedin.

Col. (ret) M A G Osmany, MNA-elect, in his speech, recalled the great qualities of patriotism, determination and valour exhibited by the ex-servicemen from Bangladesh whilst serving in the Army, Navy and Air Force, particularly during the 1965 war

Media Flashback
Compiled by Ekram Kabir, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Dipak Kumar Karmakar

when Bengalees established unprecedented records of valour in the face of odds in the air, on land — in the defence of Bedian-Kasur Sector covering the defences of Lahore — and at sea.

Describing ex-servicemen as a great national asset, he pointed out that at this crucial hour of our destiny, it was their duty to stand solidly behind the seven and half crores of our people in the non-violent non-cooperation movement led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

— *The Pakistan Observer*, March 23, 1971

Maldives Islands Being Used By Pakistani Forces to Bring Troops to Bangladesh.

ACCORDING to a well-informed source in New Delhi, Britain permitted Pakistani warplanes and warships bound for Bangladesh to use freely

the British outposts at the Maldives and other privileges. This Britain did in response to a Pakistani request when Ceylon rejected similar requests from the latter.

Last month, in protest of hijacking and destruction of an Indian aircraft by Pakistani people, India put restrictions on any Pakistani flight over India. As a result, all Pakistani aeroplanes have to travel by rounding the southern side of the whole Indo-Pak subcontinent.

— *Sangbad* March 23, 1971

Support Liberation Movement of Bengal : C.P.I

ACCORDING to a Pakistan news agency at New Delhi and an English local daily newspaper, the Communist Party of India (CPI) urged Indian people to lend support and solidarity to the movement for preserving national identity of East Bengal people.

It was said in a proposal of the central executive committee of the party last Friday that the recent mass-upheaval in East Bengal has opened the door to a bright future. But it

has also given birth to a new era as far as Indo-Pak relationship is concerned.

— *Sangbad* March 23, 1971

Bomb-blast at Rangpur Again

RANGPUR, March 21— Last night a bomb exploded at the open compound of the local college. Being terrified by the sound of the bomb-blast, the local inhabitants came out of their houses. But, fortunately none was injured by the blast. It should be mentioned that within the last week as many as four bombs had exploded at Rangpur.

— *The Ittefaq* March 23, 1971

Bhutto Wants Tri-partite Deal

MR Z A BHUTTO emphasised on Monday the need for a "tri-partite agreement" between the "democratically elected two majority parties" and the armed forces for tidying over the present political crisis facing the country.

The Pakistan People's Party chairman was addressing an unscheduled press conference in his hotel room in the late evening shortly after returning

from the President Bhavan.

Mr Bhutto said that the President had apprised him of the 'general agreement' between the President and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He said that his party was now examining the terms of this agreement. He said that his party would strain every nerve to arrive at an agreement to all in the greater interest of the country.

Mr Bhutto said that he would have to consult his central committee on the question.

Mr. Bhutto told the newsmen that he had met the President on Sunday evening and again on Monday morning. He also mentioned that during his meeting with the President on Monday morning Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was also present. "I had a satisfactory meeting with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," he said. "I will welcome another meeting" he added.

Mr Bhutto, replying to a question, said that they were working for both interim and permanent arrangements.

— *The Pakistan Observer*, March 23, 1971.

Non-stop Non-cooperation

All Roads Lead to Dhanmandi No. 32

THE 21ST DAY of the non-violent and non-cooperation movement passed last Monday. Yesterday, Dhaka city again trembled with agitated people's meeting processions and sky-raging slogans.

Yesterday, from morning to evening, all the roads of Dhaka city were filled with enormous flow of processions and loud slogans for the establishment of rights.

The agitators also used anti-Bhutto slogans and expressed resentment against the military activities of killing helpless Bengalee people. Most of the people in the procession had in their hands flag of blackish green cloth, at the middle of which was red circle and there was the golden-coloured map of East Bengal in the middle of the circle.

Peacefully and in an orderly manner, the processions advanced towards the residence of Bangabandhu at Dhanmandi.

Yesterday, the greatest number of processions came out in the capital city. Especially, Baitul Mukarram, Shaheed Minar, Newmarket, Mirpur Road were filled up with processions.

As a matter of fact the wide road from Newmarket to Dhanmandi, looked like a restless human sea. The sun light of *chitra* was scorching and the pitch of the roads was

melting in the heat. But putting up with all these troubles untold number of people were passing roaring the words of determination.

Transport service was stopped in the afternoon from Newmarket to Mohamadpur. The area from Shukrabad to Road No 32, was full of people. People could hardly enter No. 32 from Mirpur.

Yesterday, the declaration of Bangabandhu was supported by a meeting of Bangladesh Christian Committee. A procession was brought out after the meeting.

Besides meetings and processions were separately held by Dhaka Sellers Committee, Australasia Bank, Eastern Mercantile Bank, Commerce Bank, Purba Bangla Bastuhara Samiti, Standard Bank Karmachari Union, S.A.M. Account Samiti, P.I.A. Shramik Sangram Parishad, E.P.I.D.C. Shramik Sangram Parishad, Krishi Unnayan Sangram Parishad, Mirpur Sangrami Janata, Tailors' Association,

Shramik Union of Albert David Institution and so on. Processions were also brought out in some areas of the city even at night.

— *The Ittefaq* March 23, 1971

Continued Protests in Land and Water

THE GROWING annoyance of Bengalees has crossed the limits of land and now vibrates into the heart of rivers. Kananbala Biswas, secretary of Nabiganj Women's Awami League under Narayanganj, organised a boat procession on the river Shitalakhya as a protest against the Pakistani aggression and an affirmation of their continued support to the people's movement.

The boat rally started from No. 1 Dhakaswari Mill and travelled as far as Munshiganj. On reaching Munshiganj the procession returned to Narayanganj and from there it routed Demra, Murapara and various other locations.

KUSHITIA: Poets, writers, artists and intelligentsia of Kushitia brought out a big procession in support of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's four-point demands yesterday morning, reports APP.

The processionists, reciting poems and singing songs, marched through main-roads and visited Shaheed Minar where they solemnly affirmed to fight for the cause of Bengalees and Bangladesh.

Later in the afternoon the organisers held a public meeting followed by a session of 'Gano Sangeet' at the Public Library compound. Among those who addressed the meeting were professors Mahtabuddin Sarker and A. Zafar and Mr Mahbubul Alam.

Speakers in identical speeches pledged their full support to Bangabandhu in his struggle for our liberation from exploitation.

Prof. Anwarul Karim in his presidential speech said that the present awakening was in keeping with the glorious tra-

dition of the people of Bengal.

— *The Pakistan Observer* March 23, 1971

Jamalpur

EMPLOYEES of all categories of Provincial and Central Government, semi-government and autonomous bodies at a meeting expressed solidarity with struggle now under way, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Mr Intiaz Zaved Sub-Divisional Officer presided. In the meeting a Sangram Parishad of employees was also formed with the Sub-Divisional Officer and Circle Officer (dev) as President and Secretary respectively. As part of their programme, all local employees armed with lathis brought out a procession and paraded main streets of local town.

Dinajpur

THE PEOPLE of the Dinajpur district are observing non-cooperation movement peacefully for the 16th consecutive day in response to a call given by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The movement was launched on March 2 in protest against the postponement of the National Assembly session. Black flag continue to be hoisted atop all buildings including government offices, educational institutions, business centres and vehicles. The schools, colleges and government offices were boycotted by the students and employees.

A big procession was brought out yesterday under the auspices of district branch of the Awami League, East Pakistan Students Union (Mottia) and Purbo Bangla Biplobi Chhatro Union jointly which paraded the main streets of the town.

The processionists who carried lathis and other weapons shouted slogans demanding fulfilment of the right of the Bengalees. Processionists also demanded the transfer of power to elected representatives of the people and lifting of Martial Law.

— *The Pakistan Observer*, March 23, 1971.

The Day Gen. Majid Called

By S. A. Hussain

Nineteen Seventy-one. Anti aircraft guns are installed in and around Tejgaon airport. Sporadic killing of Bengalees already started by the Pakistani occupation army in the then East Pakistan. In spite of bolstering the strength in garrisons, the cantonments took on an air of abnormal and grave calmness.

Ships loaded with arms-ammunition started reaching Chittagong port from Karachi. The local Biharis engaged themselves to act as agents and nearest friends of the Pakistani Army. The whole atmosphere is charged with un-bearable suffocating, impatience and uncertainty in length and breadth of whole of East Pakistan. Blood of the Bengalee defence & ex-defence personnel was boiling to its highest degree.

At that crucial juncture Major General (ret'd) M. I. Majid gave a clarion call to the Bengalee ex-defence personnel on March, 22, 1971. In response to his bold and historic call on that day some thousands of Bengalee ex-army, navy, airforce personnel responded spontaneously.

They lined up themselves on white straight lines made of lime in front of the Baitul-Mukarram at 5 pm. Maj Gen Majid standing on the topmost step of the southern side of the mosque (North gate was not built at that time), with microphone in front. The then Col (Ret'd) M A G Osmani (who was elected in 1970 as an Awami League candidate to the National Assembly) took his position as commander of the lined up personnel.

The very short but fiery speeches of Gen Majid, Col. Osmani, and other organisers — Lt.Cdr. Z. Abedin, Flt. Lt. (Barrister) Khalilullah, S. A. Hussain (now NGO adviser), Ashraf Ali (presently communication officer Biman), Mahmudun Nabi (business magnet) exerted ray of hope and some sense of direction.

They advised the entire Bengalee ex-defence personnel to get ready for the crucial test. They were asked to train up the students, labourers, peasants, officials and all others, in operating/using small fire arms and basic close fight tactics.

They were also asked to keep themselves vigilant to fight mercenary army, snatching arms from their hands. The ex-defence personnel took vow, they would not take rest until that plundering army was driven out of the soil of East Bengal.

The sea of human heads, the anxious spectators gathered around the rally in horse shoe shape. Some thousands of them took place on the western side top of the stadium also.

Though the gathering was huge, but there was pindrop silence. They were attentively and seriously looking at the faces of the speakers with a hope of direction. Harmonising their voice with the ex-defence personnel in thundering "Allahu Akber", lead by the word "Naraye Takbir" uttered by Gen Majid and Lt Cdr Abedin, the area was shaken.

Maj Gen Majid is no more with us. Some times after independence, he became the victim of the consequences of physical torture meted to him by the brutal occupation army, during the Liberation War at his Fotulla residence.

The then Col. Osmani (later General) has left forever. Flt Lt (Barrister) Khalilullah passed away.

Rest of the organisers of that rare rally are still alive with grey hairs. Lt Cdr Abedin is now above 80.

Those pioneers also will be slipping away from this world gradually. Will it be decent to leave couple of blank pages in the independence history pivoting round the forgotten chapter of historic March 22?



Led by Begum Sofia Kamal, the Mahila Parishad march through the streets of Dhaka.

'If You Want to Stay Alive, Leave Bengal', People Tell Bhutto

THE STREETS in front side of the Hotel Intercontinental, where Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is staying, trembled with slogans of agitated people last Monday. Enraged people burst into anti-Bhutto slogans as they came in processions.

Every procession passing through Minto Road and Mymensingh Road lying beside Hotel Intercontinental was highly agitated. Some of the processions left Intercontinental and went to President Bhavan to show resentment. People of processions used slogans like, "Kick at Bhutto's Face, Make Bangladesh Independent", "YahYa-Bhutto, Beware", "Bhutto, Leave Bengal, If You Want to Stay Alive".

The processions approached Hotel Intercontinental even though the place was strictly guarded by armed men and additional military men with sten guns were seen there.

When Bhutto came back to the hotel from president Bhavan at noon, the number of processions started increasing. At this stage, three proces-

sions were seen. Each procession was reverberating with anti-Bhutto and anti-YahYa slogans.

By afternoon, besides the processions, slogans were also heard from the vehicles passing by the Intercontinental. The passengers of buses, trucks, even E.P.R.T.C double-decker buses, stopping for a moment near Hotel Intercontinental, shouted slogans and exhibited resentment.

The scene continued to be visible until 10 at night. It is worthy of mention that last morning while Bhutto went to the President Bhavan and came back to the hotel, he confronted similar adverse welcome of Bengali people. At this hour, people were seen to use slogans like, "Quit, Quit" and other satirical ones.

— *Sangbad* March 23, 1971

Boycott Pakistani Goods

SWADHIN BANGLADESH Shramik League Sangram Parishad, (Independent Bangladesh Shramik League

Action Committee) has urged people of all classes to begin Boycott of Pakistan-made Goods Week from today (Tuesday), 23rd March. Goods produced in West Pakistan will be abandoned this week.

Sangram Parishad has demanded the withdrawal of non-Bengalee soldiers from Bangladesh and return of Bengalee soldiers from West Pakistan. The Sangram Parishad also called upon the International Labour Organization (ILO) to co-operate with Bengalee people actively in their liberation movement. Sangram Parishad urged the countries providing arms to Pakistan to ensure that the arms are not used against Bengalee people.

If some reactionary factory-owner wants to close his factory, then the Shramik Unions of the factory should keep the factory the Parishad instructed.

Sangram Parishad also instructed the society of labourers to be aware of the secret removal of goods from Bangladesh.

The convener of the Kendriya Shramik Sangram Parishad requested the labourers to send to the central office the name-lists of volunteers.

— *The Ittefaq* March 23, 1971