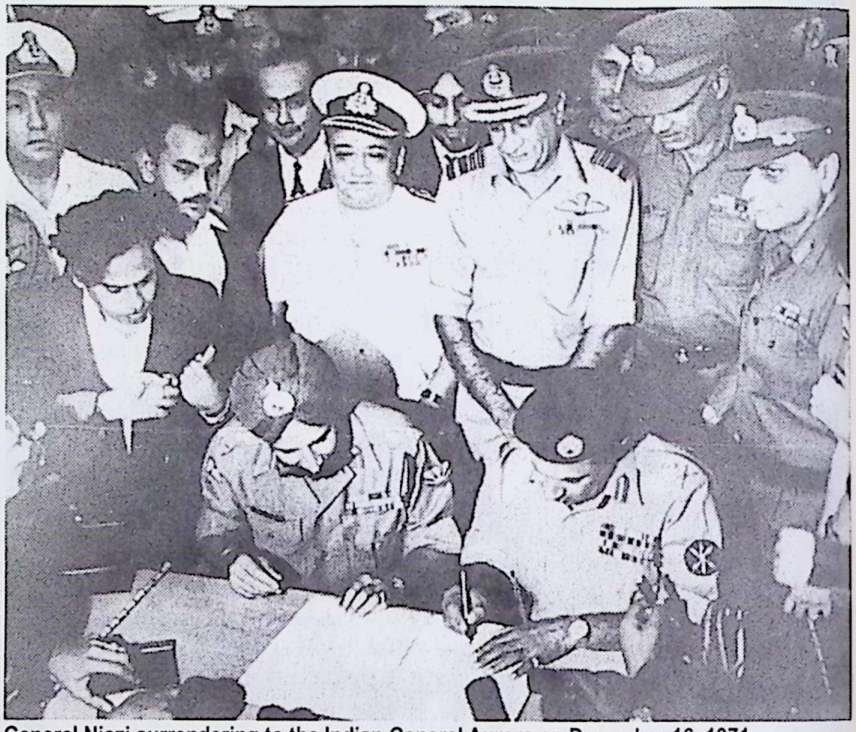
Sentiments in Sepia

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The recent black and white photo exhibit at the Indian High Commission premises, Dhanmondi, stirred up the imagination, thoughts and memories. The black and white photos were dramatic and artistic to say the least. Although not taken by professionals, presumably, they were soul-stirring.

The photographs brought in the subjects, as well as the enveloping landscape around. Hence, one got a good taste of the scenic effects of the historic events: This included famous personalities -- who were heroes of the Liberation War -- Indian "jawans", Bangladeshi onlookers, the hapless people killed in the genocide of 1971. Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Lt.General Aurora of the defending Indian army in the then East Pakistan and their families were in the spotlight of the exhibit. The common people too were often in the limelight so that the drama of the Liberation War had included the average soldier -- whether Indian or Pakistani --and the overwhelmed prisoners of war (POW), as well as the dazed Bangalee onlooker.

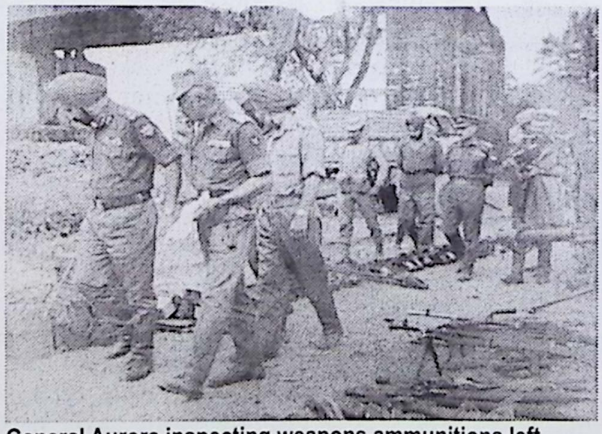


General Niazi surrendering to the Indian General Aurora on December 16, 1971.

The inclusion of the carcasses of the Bangalee victims of the genocide were not repulsive or frightening. One could take them in one's stride, as events of the past. They stirred up one's feelings. Yet, one didn't shake or cringe with horror. It was as if the photographers had seen the images behind some pale tinted glasses. As the pictures were contained in two rooms, accompanied by clearly typed footnotes, the gallery visit was not tiresome in any way. One took in the photo exhibit within a spell of minutes.



Senior Pakistani officer surrendering to the Indian army.



General Aurora inspecting weapons ammunitions left behind by Pakistanis.

One of the photos saw Sheikh Mujib's residence, with a Pakistani bunker on top of it. Coconut leaves waved behind, while people appeared to be going about their everyday work, with the inclusion of a car. The waving flag atop the sand bags lent interest of today, yesterday and tomorrow. If one were to compare this with scenes around Bangabondhu's residence today it was interesting and evocative. It satisfied one's curiosity apart from whetting one's appetite for historic scenes.

There were also scenes of the Bangladeshi victims of 1971. This ushered in images of cruelty and heartlessness: To the last point and beyond, one saw corpses with bare torsos, limbs and visages of what appeared like dumped, rag dolls. They were scattered on the sepia foreground with waves of pale grass. They had died in a cruel manner, but not in vain. In the second picture -- the retreating Pakistani army had been included -- and