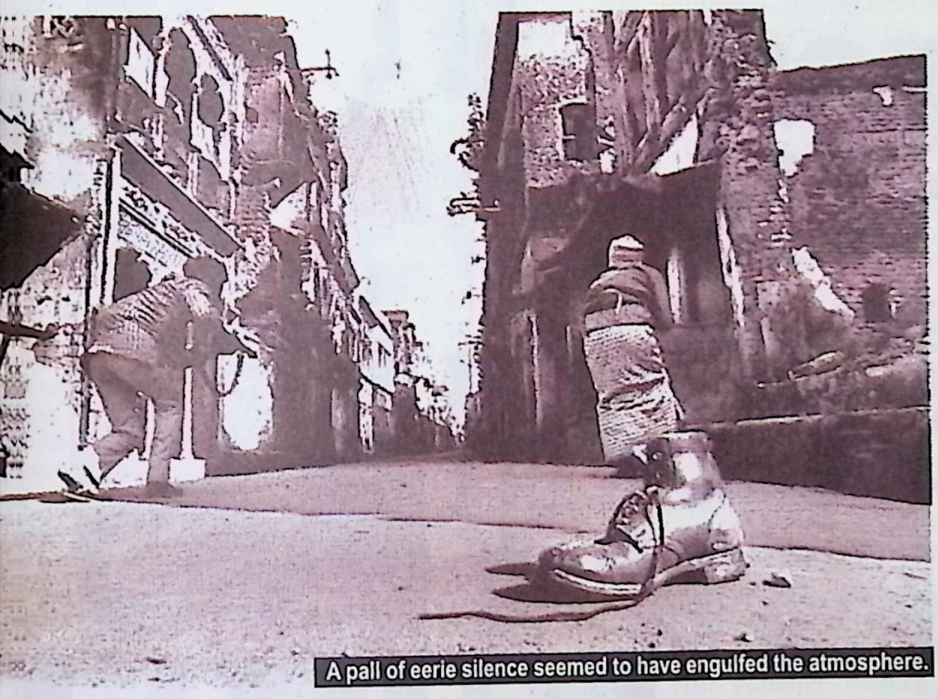
friend came in and casually said that talks between Sheikh Mujib and Yahya had failed not withstanding the consequences that could and did follow.

By 9.30 that night the performers had concluded that evening's performances. We were busy debating over the political strategies. Some one suddenly remarked "why is it so quiet"? We came out of the room. It was dark and the



A pall of eerie silence seemed to have engulfed the atmosphere.

Shaheed Minar, hardly visible in the darkness of night, was desolate. A pall of eerie silence seemed to have engulfed the atmosphere. A signal of something omimous seemed to have gone down my spine as a shiver. We decided to go to Bangabandhu's residence at road number 32 in Dhanmandi to find out what was going on. On our way, in a battered VW Beatle, as we came to the entrance of the Rokeya Hall, we were appalled to see a number of army trucks full of soldiers some of whom were busy removing the barricades in front of the hall. This was the first time that the army had dared to venture out of the cantonment. This perplexed us and again made me feel uneasy. At Bangabandhu's residence everything was quiet. A place that used to pulsate with hundreds of thousands chanting slogans, politically important people busily going in and coming out of the building, was now deserted. There were a couple of watchmen who told us that the leader had retired to his bed room and that he had asked every one to be vigilant. The army might crack down on the people of Bangladesh. We started for our homes with a heavy heart.

It was just over 11 at night that we heard slogans and commotions from the main street by the Rajarbag Police lines. The slogans were interspersed with distant crack and booming sounds of firing. We ran out of our home and saw the policemen in their civilian clothes with 303 rifles on the streets. The policemen were urging all civilians to go back to their homes. They also said that the army was coming towards Rajarbagh and Peelkhana, the EPR headquarters. That Bangabandhu had already declared independence over the wireless. They assured us that they would fight to the end of their lives. It must have been 11.30 when volleys of mortar shells and what seemed like canon balls started to land on the police lines. In response to one 303 bullet the Pakistan army fired thousands from a variety of firearms. In a matter of minutes Rajarbag police lines, at that time comprising bamboo walled tin shades, went up in flames. The fire was so pervasive that at home about a few hundred yards away from the lines in a lane the heat was unbearable. I remember dousing ourselves with wet towels that went dry every few minutes. The attack went on through the night. Towards the end of the night when the firing had become less infrequent and the 303 firing of the policemen could be heard no more; this is when we heard a knock on our front door. When I opened the door with utmost caution I saw two silhouetted bare-bodied figures in lungis with two 303 rifles. One of them said, "We fought to the last. Many of our comrades are no more. We are leaving for now, but we shall come back again. Please hide the rifles somewhere. Joy Bangla". And they disappeared in to the darkness of night. I was dumbfounded with two rifles in my two hands. There was an abandoned well in the back yard of our home. I released the rifles in the hole. Sat by it for some time. Water welled up in my eyes. I started to cry. It was a cry of despair, of sorrow, of failure and misery. I hadn't observed that the east had become light with the glow of the early morning. I rose and stood firm by the well and thought that this sin of the Pakistanis could not be allowed to go unchallenged. That we owed it to our motherland to avenge this ignominy. I had to do some thing. Soon the east became red with the light of the rising sun. It was the sun of freedom that also adorns our national flag.

How I wish this spirit of yesterday could be relived once more, now with a steadfastness of getting our motherland to help establish the values and the ideals for which so many of our compatriots had laid down their lives. To let the resolve of yesterday be fulfilled through a new resolve that would take our nation where we intended it to be a non-communal, pluralistic, honest and hard working nation. Don't we owe it to our martyrs? ■