



General Jagjit Singh Aurora, commander of the joint forces, and Pakistani General Niazi at the surrender ceremony.

# Thoughts on Victory Day

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**E**VERY year we celebrate two national days centering on our independence in 1971—March 26 as Independence Day and December 16 as Victory Day, the former representing the day we declared unilaterally our independence from Pakistan and our resolve to fight the Pakistan occupation army out of our soil, and the latter commemorating the day we emerged victorious not only on the battlefield but also on the political plane. I do not know of any other nation which won such pyrrhic victory in its war of independence as we did and which celebrates its independence twice each year with such festivity as we do.

We are a peculiar nation. If we scale greater heights one day, we quickly fall from the dizzy heights to the ground the following day never to be able to climb up again. If we close our ranks one day, we quickly fall apart the following day never to be able to rise and stand shoulder to shoulder again. In 1971 faced with a formidable enemy like the Pakistan occupation army, we rose as a nation united like it never was before, intent on fighting the enemy with whatever we had, even with bare hands and embracing martyrdom until victory was ours. I have seen with my own eyes how simple village folks coming as they did from all walks of life began declaring in one voice that East Pakistan stood buried and on its debris a new nation called Bangladesh had already emerged. It was the wee hours of March 26, 1971. I faced the biggest test of my life. I was a Major of Pakistan army in command of EPR troops of 14 Wing in Chittagong. On March 24 I was sent by my sector commander, a Lieutenant Colonel from Punjab, on a tour of inspection of my troops at the border. I was staying over night in a border outpost (BOP) on the Feni river bank a few miles upstream from Ramgarh. I woke up amidst noise in the BOP. The BOP Bengali troops had already risen in revolt ready to fight the Pakistan army after they heard at midnight over the EPR wireless network of Pakistan army's treacherous

attack on Dhaka University, Peelkhana, Rajarbagh police line and on East Bengal Regimental Centre at Chittagong resulting in killing of unarmed innocent Bengalis in hundreds. Three non Bengali troops of the BOP were already disarmed and kept under guard, while the fourth one had crossed over to India by swimming across the Feni river. The three non Bengali troops would have been killed if I had not waken up and ordered against their killing. As a true professional soldier I had always kept myself aloof from politics and it was beyond my comprehension that the bond of loyalty between the Bengali officers and troops and their non Bengali counter parts of the Pakistan armed forces, especially the Pakistan army based here in the then East Pakistan had already been snapped and that what was known as East Pakistan had already ceased to exist. Knowing that I was staying inside the BOP, people in hundreds from near by villages began milling around the BOP at that hour of the morning and chanting full throated slogans of "Joi Bangla" and "Joi Bangabandhu". They came to see me and hear from me. It was literally a sea of humanity. What would they expect to hear from me other than that I stood by them and that I would fight for liberating this country from Pakistan. I somehow summoned courage and found words to say that I was a son of this soil and that I would be with my people in liberating this country from Pakistan. The crowd roared in applause. I knew that it was these very ordinary people who transformed me in a matter of minutes from a Pakistani army Major into a freedom fighter in our glorious war of liberation.

While it is true that without Indian intervention we could not have defeated the Pakistani occupation army and liberated the country in such a short period of time, it is also a fact that the people's total involvement, their rock solid unity and their indomitable yearning for liberation made it easier for the allied Indian armed forces and the Bangladesh liberation forces to

defeat the enemy and force it to surrender with such ignominy as the world witnessed a massive force of 93,000 officers and troops laying down their arms and becoming prisoners of war. It goes to the credit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that under his leadership people rose to a man and took part in the war of liberation in whatever capacity they could.

On this day 38 years ago, as General Niazi signed the instrument of surrender and laid down his personal arms to General Aurora on the lush green Suhrawardy Uddyan in Dhaka, there was jubilation galore among people across the country. Full throated slogans of "Joi Bangla" and "Joi Bangabandhu" kept reverberating in the air. The Muslim League Jamaat-e-Islami quislings who had opposed the war of independence and actively collaborated with the Pakistan occupation army in committing war crimes and crimes against humanity were not to be seen anywhere. Some scenting victory of the people had already fled to Pakistan, while others went into hiding to avoid people's wrath. A few were caught and sent to jail.

What is the scenario today in Bangladesh as we celebrate our Victory Day? We do not hear those slogans of "Joi Bangla" and "Joi Bangabandhu" any more. These slogans were banned by Ziaur Rahman after he came to power following the tragedy of August 15 in 1975 because these remind us of the liberation war which the quislings find irksome. You could hear these slogans these days only from AL leaders and workers.

Where are the quislings of 1971? Ah, they are now prominent political leaders of the country. They are firmly entrenched in the society and in politics. Thanks to patronization by Ziaur Rahman, a valiant freedom fighter and Begum Khaleda Zia, his widow, these collaborators became ministers with our national flag flying in their car and at their official residence. They have the audacity to say in clear violation of the constitution of Bangladesh that we did not fight any liberation war in 1971. What we fought was a civil

war in Pakistan. They also say as their mentors in Pakistan do that it is India which dismembered Pakistan in 1971, much against the will of the people of this country.

It is an irony of fact that out of 38 years of our independence, the country has been ruled for almost 28 years virtually by political forces inimical to our core ideologies and our aspirations which we espoused during our war of liberation in 1971. No wonder we are still in search for our identity. Are we Bengalis or Bangladeshis? Should our country be a secular democracy or should we be called a moder-

ate Muslim country? Or shall we go the way Pakistan has gone?

The Awami League which led the political struggle for our freedom and led us finally to independence has to take full responsibility for the mess and the crisis the nation is faced with today. Their leaders have moved away from the ideals of democracy and from the causes and needs of the people. Their insatiable hunger for power and wealth has created a wall between them and the people. It is this wall which needs to be pulled down. It is national unity that we need to

forge to counter the forces of disintegration. Gone are the days of rhetoric and sham promises. A selfless, bold and patriotic leadership of the AL can bring about a national unity and pull us out of the woods.

On this auspicious occasion of Victory Day, let us make a solemn pledge that all pro liberation forces will work together to focus on national unity by stamping out corruption and religious fanaticism and extremism from the body politic of this country.

The writer is a former Military Secretary to the President.

## 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 para-military 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 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 para-military 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*  
(JAGJIT SINGH AURORA)  
Lieutenant-General  
General Officer Commanding in Chief  
Indian and BANGLA DESH Forces in the  
Eastern Theatre  
16 December 1971.

*AAK Niazi*  
(AMIR ABDULLAH KHAN NIAZI)  
Lieutenant-General  
Martial Law Administrator Zone B and  
Commander Eastern Command (PAKISTAN)  
16 December 1971.

পাকিস্তানি বাহিনীর আত্মসমর্পণের দলিল

Document of Surrender of Pak Army

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