

Massacre of the Bengali intellectuals in 1971

RAFIQUL ISLAM

On the 25th March night of 1971 the Pakistan Armed Forces unleashed their 'Operation genocide' at the Dhaka University campus, EPR headquarters in Pilkhana and Rajarbag police headquarters simultaneously with full force. At that time I was a resident of the University quarters, Nilkhet, adjacent to Iqbal Hall

Jagannat halls. Pakistani soldiers massacred the teachers, students and employees in their own quarters throughout the day and night of 26th March and set the rooms of the residential hall in blaze. On 26th March, they dragged the corpses to the ground of Iqbal and Jagannat Hall and buried them in mass graves. They forced the students and employees to

teachers inside their own house; Dr. G C Dev of philosophy, Prof Muniruzzaman of Statistics, Dr. Jotirmoy Guha Thakurta of English, Dr. Fazlur Rahman Khan of Soil Science, Prof. Sharafat Ali of Mathematics, Prof. Abdul Mukhtadir of Geology, Prof. A.R. Khadim of Physics, Prof. Anudaipayan Battacharja of Applied physics and

nearby slumps along the old railway track were gunned down mercilessly by Pakistan troops. The dead bodies from the slumps were heaped in front of the Nilkhet petrol pump and burnt to ashes. About a thousand unarmed E.P.R recruits in Pilkhana were slaughtered mercilessly. Only in Rajarbag police line the invading Pak Army faced stiff resistance and tanks were brought in. A large number of resisting police personnel were butchered.

The entire Ramna and adjacent areas turned into burning inferno on 25th and 26th March, 1971. Besides Dhaka University campus, EPR and police headquarters, the invading Pakistan Army systematically destroyed all the slumps, bazars, fire brigade and police stations, newspaper offices, political parties' headquarters, residences of political leaders and the Shahid Minar in Dhaka city. Pakistan Army also launched a genocide campaign on the inhabitants of old Dhaka particularly in Shakhari Bazar, Tanti Bazar, Luxmi Bazar, Narinda, Moishandi etc. Kamalapur railway station and Sadarghat launch terminal also came under Pakistani campaign. Thus Dhaka witnessed the greatest exodus of the city dwellers in its history from 27th of March. By the end of March 1971, Dhaka became an empty and ghost city.

During the nine months of siege Dhaka city became a battlefield between occupying Pakistan Army and the valiant guerilla forces of the Bangladesh Muktibahini. The guerrillas launched assaults on Hotel Intercontinental and D.I.T Bhaban, and also at Farmgate area and different electric sub-stations. On the other hand, the Bihari areas, particularly Mirpur and Mohammadpur, became a slaughter house for the Bengalis. Thousands of Bengali young men and professionals were rounded up and thrown into torture camps in Dhaka cantonment. Hundreds of Bengali girls were abducted and kept in Pakistani camps for sexual abuse with the help of local collaborators. During 1971, Pakistan Marshal Law

authority raised several collaborating forces namely Peace Committee, Rajakar Bahini, Al-Shams and Al-Badar Bahini. Among the collaborators most ferocious was the secret Al-Badar Bahni whose duty was to trace the Bengali intellectuals, teachers, writers, scientists, doctors, journalists etc. and pick them up from their hiding places; then torture and kill them in a hideous process.

Thousands of Bengali intellectuals lost their lives in 1971. Among the Pak Army and Al Badar victims, the most prominent were poet Meherunnessa, journalist Shahid Saber, singer Altaf Mahmud, journalist Sirajuddin Hossain, journalist and writer Shahiddulla Kaisar; journalists Syed Nazmul Haq, Nizamuddin Ahmed, ANM Golam Mustafa and Selina Parveen; scientists Abul Kalam Azad, Siddique Ahmad and Amin Uddin; physicians Dr. Fazle Rubbi and Dr. Alim Choudhury. Among the Dhaka University teachers the Al-Badar killers abducted Prof Munier Choudhury, Prof Mofazzal Haider Choudury, Prof. Anwar Pasha, Prof. Rashidul Hasan, Prof. Santosh Bhattacharja, Prof. Abul Khair and Prof. Giasuddin Ahmed; and Dr. Mortuja (physician), Dr. Faizul Mahi and Dr. Sirajul Haq Khan.

These intellectuals were taken to Al Badar torture-camp situated in Mohammadpur Physical Training College. They first inflicted physical pains and then took them to Rayer Bazar slaughter house and Mirpur graveyard. In these two places the great minds of Bengal were brutally killed on 14th December just before the defeated Pakistan Army surrendered to the joint command of Bangladesh and Indian army. Thus the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators concluded their ethnic cleansing of the Bengali people in 1971. Though the Pakistan armed forces conceded defeat and surrendered, the Bangladeshi collaborators never surrendered. They are still active even after 40 years of independence.

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Munier Choudhury



Serajuddin Hossain



Dr. Alim Chowdhury



Mofazzal Haider Chaudhury



Shahidullah Kaiser



Dr. Fazle Rabbi



Nizamuddin Ahmedx



Anwar Pasha



Syed Nazmul Haque



Syed Abdul Mannan



Dr. Abul Kalam Azad



Ghyasuddin Ahmed



Rashidul Hasan



Dr. MAM Faizul Mahi



Dr. MA Khair



Zahirul Haq



Selina Parvin



Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya



ANM Mustafa

(Zahurul Haq Hall) and witnessed the brutality of the Pakistan Army. At the outset Pak Army used heavy machinegun, mortar, rocket launcher and artillery fire on the residential quarters and halls of the Dhaka University particularly in Iqbal and Jagannat Hall areas.

In the early hours of 26th March, heavily armed Pakistani troops entered the residential halls and quarters situated in and around Iqbal and

carry the bodies of the killed students and teachers, dig mass-graves and throw them into the graves. Later on they shoot and kicked them into the mass-grave. The barbarity perpetuated by the Pakistan Army on 25th and 26th March 1971 in Dhaka University campus has no parallel in the history of our time.

Between 25th and 27th March, 1971 the Pakistani solders brutally killed the following Dhaka University

Mr. Mohammad Sadeque, a teacher of the University Laboratory School. Among them Prof. Muniruzzaman, Dr. Fazlur Rahman and Dr. G C Dev were killed along with their family members. A large number of students and employees of the Iqbal, Jagannat and Rokeya Hall, Dhaka University teacher's club were also killed. Among them were Madhuda (the owner of Madhu's canteen) and his family. The inhabitants of the

My brother Munier Chowdhury

SHAMSHER CHOWDHURY

During those dreadful days of Pakistani occupation, BBC became the most popular form of media for the entire nation. People relied more on the BBC than any other news service. About 48 hours before the surrender of the Pak army, my brother Munier Chowdhury and I were listening to the BBC, sitting on the outer balcony. When the commentator over the radio announced, "The guns of India are rattling 28 kilometers from the capital Dhaka at a place called Daudkandi," my brother embraced me and said, in a voice choked by emotion, "Look, brother, our independence is irresistible." Little did I know then that this was the last day of his life and that he would be kidnapped never to be seen again. 40 years have passed since the day he was taken away by some members of the infamous Al-Shams and Al-Badar, two of the collaborating wings brought up by the then occupation forces of Pakistan.

They came around 11:30 a.m. on 14 December and began to fiercely hammer on the iron-grilled gate of the main entrance to the compound of our residence. I came out of the house and, on their repeated insistence, opened the gate. Three of them came in with their faces covered, wearing black shewar and kameez, a popular dress worn by both men and women in West Pakistan. They asked for my brother who along with me was get-

ting ready for a quick lunch since there was a lull in the bombing by Indian MIG 29. We already had our bath and were getting ready to join our mother at the dining table, where she was anxiously waiting for us. She hardly knew what was going on outside the house only 30 yards away from the room in which she was waiting with my sister-in law Lily Chowdhury, who was on the second floor of the house with her twelve year old son Mishuk Munier. Mishuk, very recently, met an untimely death in a gruesome road accident.

In just about ten minutes, these hyenas took away my brother Munier Chowdhry right in front of my eyes. And there I stood, dumbfounded, for a very long time. I went to mother first, and as soon as I told her what had happened she broke down in tears. Mother passed away about 12 years ago, and every time I used to go near her, until the day she died, she used to say to me, "Son, why did Allah take his life instead of mine? My son was a gem of a boy; ever so clean of heart, kind and generous. Who would kill a man like him, who had never raised a finger against anyone?" She used to ask me the same question, over and over again, to which I had no answer.

My sister-in-law always felt that had I been a little more alert, I could have found a way out for my brother to escape. I do not know the answer to that too, except for the fact that I have since that fateful day been living with

that burden in my chest for 40 long years. Forty years have passed since that day; we neither found his dead body nor did we know how brutally he had met his death. For two of the longest days of my life, after the surrender of the Pak occupation forces, with the help of a Colonel of the Indian Army and two soldiers, I went through every nook and corner of the city and its outskirts trying to find my brother's body. Finally, after two days of failed search, on the evening of 18 December, my mother called me to her bedside and said, "Son, abandon the search, even if you find the body it must be in a mutilated condition in a ditch beyond recognition. I have lost one son and do not wish to lose another one. They say that some of those killers are still prowling around." As for me, I no more have a howling pain but the deep scar lingers on.

To be honest, the death of Munier Chowdhury has influenced my life in more ways than one. He was a giant of a man, in every sense of the term, and yet so humble, and extremely tolerant of others' views. He treated his students as members of his family. He was a visionary and a thinking man way ahead of his times.

Like our father, he believed in the eternal power of education and education alone. Contrary to popular belief, he was a man who had an unflinching faith in his Creator.

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