

JULIAN FRANCIS

OCTOBER 28, 2013 marks the 42nd anniversary of the publication in the Congressional Record of the "Testimony of Sixty", a collection of eye-witness accounts of the tragic situation in Bengal (East and West) at that time.

As I am the only person, currently living and working in Bangladesh, who was personally involved, in 1971, with the collection of many of these eye-witness accounts, I thought that your readers will be interested to learn how and why Oxfam-UK decided, in 1971, to publish this document.

In 1971, I was a young man of 26 years and I had the responsibility of coordinating the relief efforts of Oxfam-UK, which was assisting approximately 6 lac Bangladeshi refugees in many camps in the border areas of Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri, West Dinajpur, Barasat, Bongaon. As we were unsure how long the tragic situation would last, at any one time, we were always planning 6 months ahead, and in September 1971 we were assessing the future cost of assisting the refugees through the winter which, in many areas, would be severe. We needed regular and large sums of money each month.

This campaign, Oxfam's biggest ever relief operation after Biafra, and before Kampuchea, meant that Oxfam's fundraising effort and publicity had to be second to none -- better than others. To raise funds for a crisis which appeared to be never-ending needed a sustained fundraising strategy using advertisements which would both inform but also shock people into giving.

As the winter of 1971 approached, and with it the need for blankets and warm clothing, Oxfam ran campaigns to "Take a Blanket Off Your Bed" and "Buy a new sweater for Christmas and Throw Your Old Ones to Oxfam." The British Post Office, at the time, charged nothing for sending blankets and warm clothing by parcel postage if addressed to Oxfam, and the Royal Air Force air-freighted the blankets to Kolkata.

For those of us who have forgotten or are too young to remember, there were an estimated 10 million Bangladeshis existing in about 900 refugee camps. The logistics of feeding and caring for such a large number of people even now, after so many years, are difficult to comprehend. How was it done? It was done through the heroism of so many, and these men and women never sought fame or credit but insisted that they were just doing what had to be done.

It was difficult to keep the crisis on the front pages of the world's newspapers. The news of the genocide of March 25, 1971 put it on the front pages, and with outbreak of cholera in May and June, the humanitarian crisis was front page news once more. Again, when the camps got flooded that year, it was front page news. By September 1971, the British newspapers had headlines of "Carry on dying," "Can the refugees ever go home?" and "Pakistani famine is worse than Biafra." However, Oxfam, at its Oxford based Head Office, decided that it must find a way to shock the world's leaders to an even greater extent, to make them open their eyes and wake up. In a surprisingly short space of time eye-witness accounts of the tragedy were collected and published as "The Testimony of Sixty on the Crisis in Bengal." This carried

statements and articles written by famous persons such as Mother Teresa and Senator Edward Kennedy and well-known journalists such as Anthony Mascarenhas, John Pilger, Nicolas Tomalin, Clare Hollingworth and Martin Woollacott.

I personally collected many of the statements from people in Kolkata and I remember one day sending a telex to Oxfam full of statements, which took 75 minutes to send over the wires! Copies of "The Testimony of Sixty" were handed over to many heads of governments and its pub-

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lication coincided with the opening of that year's General Assembly of the United Nations where it was distributed to all ambassadors to the UN. The day before the official publication date, October 21, 1971, the British Post Office assisted Oxfam with telephone directories from all over the UK to pile up 49 million names on the pavement outside an Oxfam shop which was situated at 49, Parliament Street, London. 9 million represented the number of Bangladeshi refugees at that time in India and the other 40 million

names represented the number of people displaced inside (then) East Pakistan who were facing extreme hunger.

It is interesting to record is that although the USA was firmly supporting Pakistan in 1971, Senator Edward Kennedy, who had visited both East Pakistan and West Bengal in August 1971, brought "The Testimony of Sixty" to the attention of the US Senate, and it was published in full on October 28, 1971 in the Congressional Record, only one week after it was published by Oxfam in UK. Introducing the "Testimony of Sixty" to the United States' Senate, the Congressional Record states the following:

Mr. Kennedy: "Mr. President, the crisis in East Bengal is a story of human misery on a scale unequalled in modern times. It is a story of systematic terror and military repression, of indiscriminate killing and the killing and dislocation of millions of civilians. It is a story of death and disease, of too little food and water, of fetid refugee camps without hope and a countryside stalked by famine. And throughout it all the world has barely murmured a word. Perhaps this is because we are conditioned in the world we have created to accept such suffering and injustice. To many the plight of the Bengali people is just another link in the chain of war-ravaged populations stretching around the world in recent years. But perhaps, Mr. President, the public is silent because it does not know. To bring the facts more forcibly to the public's attention, the noted British charity, Oxfam, has recently published an impressive brochure entitled "The Testimony of 60 on the Crisis in Bengal." No one who reads this document can remain unmoved or uninformed as

the plight of the Bengali people. To share this eloquent statement with Members of the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it be printed at this point in the RECORD. There being no objection, the testimony was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:"

It is important to place on record that, although the US government supported Pakistan at that time, there was a huge outpouring of generosity and concern by the American people who put the fledgling Oxfam-America clearly on the map at that time. In addition, over half a million dollars of donated American medicines were sent to Oxfam for use in the refugee camps, and later, after liberation, in Bangladesh.

In 2007, the Liberation War Museum brought out an English facsimile edition so that more people could learn more about the history of how this nation was formed and the pain and suffering that was involved, and on December 16th 2009, the daily Prothom Alo published a Bangla facsimile edition which has reached many more readers.

This, then, is the story of how this historical document was prepared and why it was prepared. As someone who witnessed the very painful birth of Bangladesh, I am astonished that there are many who deny that genocide took place in Bangladesh in 1971. I strongly recommend that they read 'The Testimony of Sixty' wherein the eye-witness accounts will bring tears to their eyes.

The writer, who was Oxfam's 'Special Representative' in Kolkata in 1971, was awarded the 'Friends of Liberation War Honour' in March 2012 by the Government of Bangladesh. E-mail: julian@citech-bd.com

Shipbreaking industry: Future perspective

N. M. GOLAM ZAKARIA

SHIPBREAKING industry plays an important role in the economy of Bangladesh by supporting steel industry, shipbuilding industry and other heavy and light engineering industries, and also by generating employment. But problems regarding safety, health and environmental issues create a negative image for the industry.

Previously, shipbreaking was done in industrial nations, but because of the hazardous nature of the industry it shifted to south Asian countries where safety and environmental regulations are more relaxed. About 90% of shipbreaking in the world is done in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China.

International Maritime Organization (IMO) has been trying to implement guidelines/regulations/conventions for qualitative improvement of shipbreaking industry around the globe since 2003. The 'Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships' is one of them. The Hong Kong Convention (HKC) was adopted in May 2009 and started ratification from September 2009. It will come into force upon fulfillment of some requirements. It is applicable to all merchant ships greater than 500 gross tonnage (GT) as well as to all ship recycling facilities. The European Commission (EC) is also going to enforce the 'European Regulation on Ship Recycling' by the end of 2013. One of the key issues of both regulations, which directly affect the ship recycling industry, is the authorisation of ship recycling facilities. Many ship recycling yards which are not up to the mark may be eliminated because of restricted authorisation of ship recycling facilities.

When HKC comes into play, it is expected that a sea-change will occur in the shipbreaking industry. Even though Bangladeshi shipbreakers are generally the highest payers among shipbreaking nations, they will face difficulty in bringing ships from outside without having necessary approval of their ship recycling yards. For example, for breaking a European owned vessel, it is the obligation of the owner/buyer to ensure that the vessel which is going to a particular ship breaking facility has got the necessary infrastructure and approval/authorisation from reputed organisations like classification societies so that environmental issues, safety and health of the workers are maintained by

that ship recycling facility.

After framing of the Ship Breaking and Ship Recycling Rules 2011, there have been some positive changes in ship breaking industry in Bangladesh. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is working in Bangladesh for capacity building in shipbreaking industry. We should keep an eye on the activities of our main competitors like India and China because, to stay in this business, we need to achieve at least minimum standards in terms of health, safety and environment. We also need to take initiatives to cope with upcoming regulations for ship recycling industries.

The Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering of Buet is doing research work on shipbreaking industry in Bangladesh over the last couple of years. A few semi-

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nars/symposiums have been arranged in line with the research work to share the knowledge with all stake holders, including policymakers from the government. Recently, ClassNK had arranged expertise training workshop on Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM) for shipbreaking industry at Alang, Gujrat, India. Two faculty members from the department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering (including myself) participated in this extensive workshop, which was sponsored by the sub-project 'Modernization of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering Program at Buet' through UGC's Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP, CP#2083). Two IHM experts from Germany and Japan demonstrated all the aspects related to shipbreaking and recycling industries. ClassNK also arranged field visit to Alang shipbreaking yards (which is one of the biggest shipbreaking yards in the world) for practical demonstration and to show their activities in some yards.

What we found was that Indian shipbreakers were conscious about upcoming HKC regulations, and were prepared to do anything for

their business so that it was not affected negatively by the upcoming regulations. In the meantime, ClassNK is working closely with at least half a dozen shipbreaking yards at Alang for the approval of ship breaking facilities. Experts from Japan regularly visit these yards to see their activities. They analyse the GAP for the specific yard and recommend additional requirements to comply with HKC. Once the shipyard meets the necessary requirements, it will be certified as HKC compliant ship breaking yard.

To comply with HKC, Indian shipbreakers have already got centrally operated Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facilities (TSDF), which are used by all 160-170 shipbreaking yards located at Alang. Due to their favourable geographical location, every yard is able to beach the ship very near to its plot. As a result, it is very easy for them to use heavy machinery/crane facilities for breaking ships. At the same time, bilge-ballast water management and fuel oil management can be easily maintained. These yards are working with academic institutions like IIT, and continuously presenting their research works in seminars/conferences not only in India but also outside. As a result, the international community is fully aware about their good initiatives and may consider India as a good option for their ship breaking when HKC enters into force.

We should keep in mind that shipbreaking is something which is definitely going to be affected by the upcoming regulations. To hold our position in world shipbreaking, there is no other alternatives but to comply with HKC. On the other hand, it is not possible to comply with HKC overnight. We must upgrade the infrastructure for upstream and downstream waste management, and health and safety issues of the workers before trying to get facility approval of the yard. If we do not start the process right now, we might lose the business of shipbreaking in near future. We should also strengthen industry-academia collaboration for research work. The government can utilise the expertise of the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering to improve overall standard and image of shipbreaking industry so that it can be sustainable in the long run.

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Improve professionalism in statistics

RITI IBRAHIM AHSAN

THE BBS was formed in 1974, when statistical units under different ministries were pooled under Ministry of Planning. In the following year, the Statistics Division was formed to coordinate the work of BBS at the higher level of the government. Renowned statistician Dr. Ghulam Rabbani was posted as the Secretary of the Statistics Division and the Director General of the BBS. In 2002, the Statistics Division was abolished and the BBS was placed under Planning Division of the Ministry of Planning. No action had been taken to strengthen BBS and make it an independent body. In fact, since Dr. Rabbani's retirement, the post had been occupied by officers of different discipline and not all of them have been practicing statisticians. It seems to be taken for granted that professional statistical work can be done by anybody.

The present government reinstated the Statistics Division in 2010. During this time, the cadre strength of BCS (Statistics) Cadre increased from 107 to 633. Officers of BCS (Statistics) Cadre were promoted and came to the leadership of the organization. Technical Committees were formed for each sector of the BBS. For the first time those committees were headed by an independent non-government person/academics having professional experience in the concerned sector.

Some of the prominent work initiated during this time were (i) Population and Housing Census 2011 using ICR machines and digital maps, (ii) Early dissemination of poverty data using Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010 (HIES) data, (iii) Preparation of Poverty Map, (iv) Preparation of National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS), (v) Finalization of Statistics Law, (vi) Starting rebasing to improve National Accounts data and increase the area of GDP, (vii) Introducing global pilot of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2012, etc.

In addition to these statistical programs, BBS started disseminating all the findings of censuses and surveys through its website. In 2012, BBS officials started working on modernizing both data collection and data dissemination. Instruments with indication of GPS were introduced to collect price data for providing indicators showing quarterly inflation.

The statistics produced by the BBS have

often been the subject of criticism because they do not always align to the administrative data collected by other agencies. The science of statistics requires estimations using probability analysis and a full understanding of the statistics produced by the BBS requires an understanding of the methodology. To increase understanding, users were made aware of the constraints of data sets through the publication of percentage of error for every estimate. Raw data was made available and processing was initiated to make online payment available to allow users to download data. BBS started collaborative data analysis programs with different research organizations.

The aforementioned accomplishments show that the BBS can be run efficiently if the correct guidance is available. Based on this evidence, the time has come for the BBS to be run by the BCS (Statistics) Cadre officers. Otherwise, all the efforts taken during recent years to develop the professionalism of BBS officials will go in vein.

The government should upgrade the status of the BBS and develop a National Statistical Organization (NSO) as an independent constitutional body. Government can constitute a commission to examine the issue and submit recommendations for upgrading the NSO into an independent organization.

The NSO could be named as the National Statistical Commission (NSC). There could be three Bureaus under the NSC. The first one is the Bureau of Statistics, which will be responsible for administering all the censuses and surveys and produce reports. The second one is Bureau of National Accounting, which will be the only user of the data produced by BBS and prepare all economic indicators, and the third one is Bureau of Human Resource Department, which could be entrusted with all the administrative work and skill development trainings of the NSO. There could be Research Unit directly working with NSC. The organization must be lead by a reputed statistician.

All data users should speak up. Time has come for the citizens to participate in nation building effort and urge the concern authorities to promote professionalism of this technical institution.

The writer is a former secretary. E-mail: riti@ritahs@hotmail.com

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 "The Hobbit" hero

6 Severe

11 Porpoise's place

12 Boise's state

13 Succotash half

14 Jingle writer

15 Boat part

17 Maturity

18 Laughed gleefully

22 Valiant person

23 City on the Rio Grande

27 Russian range

29 One of the Great Lakes

30 Croquet need

32 Factory

33 Without equivocation

35 Buddy

38 Computer "take back" command

39 Greatly impressed

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45 Smithy

46 Move smoothly

47 Accomplishments

DOWN

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3 Grazing spot

4 Funds

5 Beginning

6 Florida

7 racetrack city

7 Find a sum

8 Hindu hero

9 Carpet type

10 Sharpen

16 Building wing

18 Buddy

19 Zeus' wife

20 Vaccine type

21 Dramatic percussion

24 One of the Great Lakes

25 Toy store buy

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28 Second stories

31 Large cask

34 Wise saying

44 Gender

35 Singer

36 Editor

37 Rice

38 Volcano

40 Humor

42 "My country — of thee"

43 Poem of praise

Saturday's answer

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

9-30

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

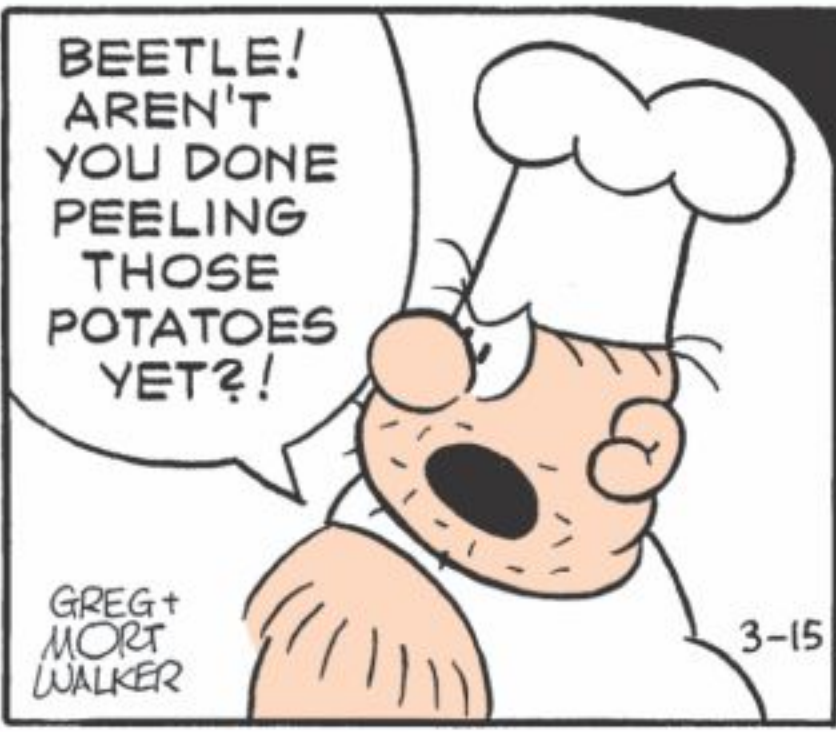
On letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

9-27 CRYPTOQUOTE

RE IWVIMK GO R VIMOUE
TPU PRO LRNI RJJ KPI
LGOKRDIO KPRK BRE QI
LRNI GE R YIMA ERMUT
HGJN. — EGIJO QUPM

Yesterday's Cryptoquip:
DESTINY IS THE
INVENTION OF THE
COWARDLY, AND THE
RESIGNED.
-- IGNAZIO SILONE

BEETLE BAILY



HENRY



by Mort Walker



by Don Tranchte



QUOTABLE
Quotes

"In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."

Thomas Jefferson