

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.

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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 Maccarenas, 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 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@ctech-bd.com

Shipbreaking industry: Future perspective

N. M. GOLAM ZAKARIA

HIPBREAKING 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 ship breakers 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.

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nars/symposiums have been arranged in line with the research work to share the knowledge with all stakeholders, including policymakers from the government. Recently, ClassNK had arranged expertise training workshop on Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM) for shipbreaking industry at Alang, Gujarat, 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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ACROSS
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6 Severe
11 Porpoise's place
12 Boise's state
13 Sustocash half
14 Jingle writer
15 Boat part
17 Maturity
18 Laughed gleefully
22 Valiant person
23 City on the Rio
27 Muslim 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
41 Some smiters
45 Smithy sight
46 Move smoothly
47 Accomplishments

