

THE SUNDAY TIMES, JUNE 13 1971

GENOCIDE

(PART 2 OF 3 PARTS. CONTINUED FROM DECEMBER 14)

PRODDED by Major Rathore, Iftikhar then went on to describe vividly how after much searching in Hajiganj he had discovered twelve Hindus hiding in a house on the outskirts of the town. These had been "disposed of." Now Major Iftikhar was on the second part of his mission: burn.

By this time the shop's door had been demobilised and we found ourselves looking into one of those tiny catch-all establishments which, in these parts, go under the title "Medical & Stores." Under the Bengali lettering the sign-board carried in English the legend "Ashok Medical & Stores." Lower down was painted "Prop. A. M. Bose." Mr. Bose, like the rest of the people of Hajiganj, had locked and run away.

In front of the shop a small display cabinet was crammed with patent medicines, cough syrups, some bottles of mango squash, imitation jewellery, reels of coloured cotton, thread and packets of knicker elastic. Iftikhar kicked it over, smashing the light wood-work into kindling. Next he reached out for some jute shopping bags on one shelf. He took some plastic toys from another. A bundle of handkerchiefs and a small bolt of red cloth joined the pile on the floor.

Iftikhar heaped them all together and borrowed a matchbox from one of the *jawans* sitting in our Toyota. The *jawan* had ideas of his own. Jumping from the vehicle he ran to the shop and tried to pull down one of the umbrellas hanging from the low ceiling of the shop. Iftikhar ordered him out. Looting, he was sharply reminded, was against orders.

Iftikhar soon had a fire going. He threw burning jute bags into one corner of the shop, the bolt of cloth into another. The shop began to blaze. Within minutes we could hear the crackle of flames behind shuttered doors as the fire spread to the shop on the left, then on to the next one.

At this point Rathore was beginning to get anxious about the gathering darkness. So we drove on.

When I chanced to meet Major Iftikhar the next day he fervently told me: "I burnt only sixty houses. If it hadn't rained I would have got the whole bloody lot."

Approaching a village a few miles from Madarfarganj we were forced to a halt by what appeared to be a man crouching against a mud wall. One of the *jawans* warned it might be a *faaji* sniper. But after careful scouting it turned out to be a lovely young Hindu girl. She sat there with the placidity of her people, waiting for God knows who. One



Bramanbaria. His mission: Another kill and burn.

Overwhelmed with terror the Bengalis have one of two reactions. Those who can run away just seem to vanish. Whole towns have been abandoned as the army approached. Those who can't run away adopt a cringing servility which only adds humiliation to their plight. Chandpur was an example of the first.

In the past this key river port on the Meghna was noted for its thriving business houses and gay life. At night thousands of small country boats anchored on the river's edge made it a fairy land of lights. On April 18 Chandpur was deserted. No people, no boats. Barely one per cent of the population had remained. The rest, particularly the Hindus who constituted nearly half the population, had fled.

Weirdly they had left behind thousands of Pakistani flags fluttering from every house, shop and rooftop. The effect was like a national day celebration without the crowds. It only served to emphasise the haunted look. The flags were by way of insurance.

Somehow the word had got around that the army considered any structure without a Pakistani flag to be hostile and consequently to be destroyed. It did not matter how the Pakistani flags were made, so long as they were adorned with the crescent and star. So they came in all sizes, shapes and colours. Some flaunted blue fields, instead of the regulation green. Obviously they had been hastily put together with the same material that had been used for the Bangladeshi flag. Indeed, blue Pakistani flags were more common than the green. The scene in Chandpur was repeated in Hajiganj, Madarfarganj, Kasba, Bramanbaria; all ghost towns gay with flags.

Laksham was an example of the other reaction; cringing.

When I drove into the town the morning after it had been cleared of the rebels, all I could see was the army and literally thousands of Pakistani flags. The major in charge there had camped in the police station, and it was there that Major Rathore took us. My colleague, a Pakistani TV cameraman, had to make a propaganda film about the "return to normalcy" in Laksham -- one of the endless series broadcast daily showing welcome parades and "peace meetings."

A 'Parade' and a Knowing Wink

I wondered how he could manage it but the Major said it would be no sweat. "There are enough of these bastards left to put on a good show. Give me 20 minutes."

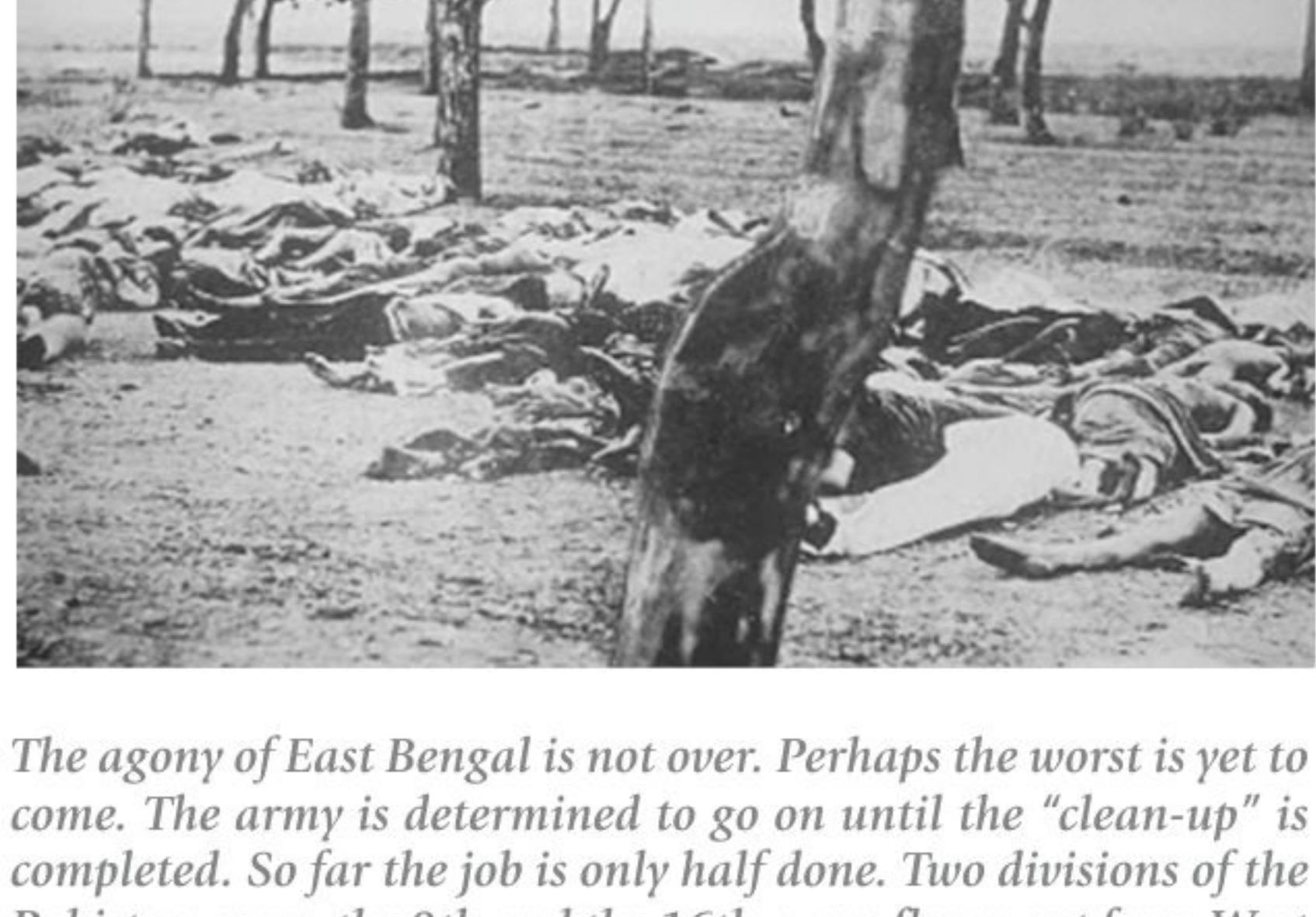
Lieutenant Javed of the 39 Baluch was assigned the task of rounding up a crowd. He called out to an elderly bearded man who had apparently been brought in for questioning. The man, who later gave his name as Moulana Said Mohammad Saidul Huq, insisted he was a "staunch Muslim Leaguer and not from the Awami League" (The Muslim League led the movement for an independent Pakistan in 1947). He was all too eager to please. "I will very definitely get you at least 60 men in 20 minutes," he told Javed. "But if you give me two hours I will bring 200."

Moulana Saidul Huq was as good as his word. We had hardly drunk our flit of the deliciously refreshing coconut milk that had been thoughtfully supplied by the Major when we heard shouts in the distance. "Pakistan Zindabad!" "Pakistan, army Zindabad!" "Muslim League Zindabad!" they were chanting. (Zindabad is Urdu for "Long live!").

Moments later they marched into view, a motley crowd of about 50 old and decrepit men and knee-high children, all waving Pakistani flags and shouting at the top of their voices. Lt. Javed gave me a knowing wink.

Within minutes the parade had grown into a "public meeting" complete with a make-shift public address system and a rapidly multiplying group of would-be speakers.

Mr. Mahbub-ur-Rahman was pushed forward to make the address of welcome to the army. He introduced himself as "N.F. College Professor of English and Arabic who had also tried for History and is a life-time member of the great Muslim, League Party."



The agony of East Bengal is not over. Perhaps the worst is yet to come. The army is determined to go on until the "clean-up" is completed. So far the job is only half done. Two divisions of the Pakistan army, the 9th and the 16th, were flown out from West Pakistan to "sort out" the Bengali rebels and the Hindus.

of the *jawans* had been ten years with the East Pakistan Rifles and could speak bazaar Bengali. He was told to order her into the village. She mumbled something in reply, but stayed where she was, but was ordered a second time. She was still sitting there as we drove away. "She has," I was informed, "nowhere to go -- no family, no home."

Major Iftikhar was one of several officers assigned to kill and burn missions. They moved in after the rebels had been cleared by the army with the freedom to comb-out and destroy Hindus and "miscreants" (the official jargon for rebels) and to burn down everything in the areas from which the army had been fired at.

Three shots to kill a man
This lanky Punjabi officer liked to talk about his job. Riding with Iftikhar to the Circuit House in Comilla on another occasion he told me about his latest exploit.

"We got an old one," he said. "The bastard had grown a beard and was posing as a devout Muslim even called himself Abdul Manan. But we gave him a medical inspection and the game was up."

Iftikhar continued: "I wanted to finish him there and then, but my men told me such a bastard deserved three shots. So I gave him one in the balls, then one in the stomach. Then I finished him off with a shot in the head."

When I left Major Iftikhar he was headed north to

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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.

CRYPTOQUOTE

X GRK G N A T Q L U M F D R G ' X
U H Z H X X R K A : G D H U T Q F D R G ' X
S Q X X L N B H : R U T X W T H U B A A Q W
R K H T Q L U M G D H L O S Q X X L N B H .
— I K R U Z L X Q I R X X L X

Previous Cryptoquote:

TO FIND OUT WHAT ONE IS FITTED TO DO, AND TO SECURE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO IT, IS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS.

— JOHN DEWEY

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Diamond

2 Stats

7 Sons by

11 Train

12 Press

13 Checked

14 Bottle part

15 Contents of Pan-dora's box

16 Fit for a king

17 Back-gammon need

18 Bill makers

19 Croupier's tool

21 Capture

22 A "pleasure"

sign settings

25 Once called

26 Lohengrin's love

27 Soup base

29 Wrestling spots

33 Boat back

34 Say without thinking

35 Damaged

36 Sweat in the variety

37 Important times

Yesterdays answer

10 Short

16 Oboists' needs

20 Dined at home

22 Overall

23 November

24 Jackson

25 Had a snack

28 Pretentious prop

30 Tax

31 Stale

32 Ranch

33 Feels

34 Dog's treat

36 Producer's hope

38 Ask

39 Turn

40 Wobble

41 Stabs

42 Press

43 Checked

44 Checked out

45 Contents

46 Fit for a

king

47 Back-gammon

need

48 Bill makers

49 Croupier's

50 tool

51 A "pleasure"

sign settings

52 Once called

53 Lohengrin's

love

54 Say without

thinking

55 Damaged

56 Sweat in the

variety

57 Important

times

58 Grand opening

59 Whizzo skating

rink

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