

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. He ran had ideas of his own. Jumping from the vehicle he *jan* 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 ruefully 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 Mudarfarganj 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 *fauji* 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 Bangladesh flag. Indeed, blue Pakistani flags were more common than the green. The scene in Chandpur was repeated in Hajiganj, Madarfarganj, Kasba, Brahmanbaria; 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."

Introduction over, Mahbub-ur-Rahman gave forth with gusto. "Punjabis and Bengalis," he said, "had united for Pakistan and we had our own traditions and culture. But we were terrorised by the Hindus and the Awami Leaguers and led astray. Now we thank God that the Punjabi soldiers have saved us. They are the best soldiers in the world and heroes of humanity. We love and respect them from the bottom of our hearts." And so on, interminably, in the same vein.

After the "meeting" I asked the Major what he thought about the speech, "Serves the purposes," he said, "but I don't trust that bastard. I'll put him on my list."

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.

This was a considerable logistical feat for a country of Pakistan's resources. More than 25,000 men were moved from the west to the east. On March 28 the two divisions were given 48 hours' notice to move. They were brought by train to Karachi from Kharian and Multan. Carrying only light bed rolls and battle packs (their equipment was to follow by sea), the troops were flown out to Dacca by PIA, the national airline. Its fleet of seven Boeings was taken off international and domestic routes and flew the long haul (via Ceylon) continuously for 14 days. A few Air Force transport aircraft helped.

The troops went into action immediately with equipment borrowed from the 14th Division which till then constituted the Eastern Command. The 9th Division, operating from Comilla, was ordered to seal the border in the east against movement of rebels and their supplies.

The 16th Division, with headquarters at Jessore, had a similar task in the western sector of the province. They completed these assignments by the third week of May. With the rebels -- those who have not been able to escape to India -- boxed in a ring of steel and fire, the two army divisions are beginning to converge in a relentless comb-out operation. This will undoubtedly mean that the terror experienced in the border areas will now spread to the middle point. It could also be more painful. The human targets will have nowhere to run to.

On April 20 Lt.Col. Baig, the flower-loving G-1 of the 9th Division, thought that the comb-out would take two months, to the middle of June. But this planning seems to have misfired. The rebel forces, using guerilla tactics, have not been subdued as easily as the army expected. Isolated and apparently uncoordinated, the rebels have nonetheless bogged down the Pakistan army in many places by the systematic destruction of roads and railways, without which the army cannot move. The 9th Division for one was hopelessly behind schedule. Now the monsoon threatens to shut down the military operation with three months of cloudbursts.

For the rainy season, the Pakistan government obtained from China in the second week of May, nine shallow draught river gunboats. More are to come.

These 80-ton gunboats with massive firepower will take over some of the responsibilities hitherto allotted to the air force and artillery, which will not be as effective when it rains. They will be supported by several hundred country craft which have been requisitioned and converted for military use by the addition of outboard motors. The army intends to take to the water in pursuit of the rebels.

There is also the clear prospect of famine, because of the breakdown of the distribution system. Seventeen of the 23 districts of East Pakistan are normally short of food and have to be supplied by massive imports of rice and wheat. This will not be possible this year because of the civil war. Six major bridges and thousands of smaller ones have been destroyed, making the roads impassable in many places. The railway system has been similarly disrupted though the government claims it is "almost normal."

The road and rail tracks between the port of Chittagong and the north have been completely disrupted by the rebels who held Feni, a key road and rail junction, until May 7. Food stocks cannot move because of this devastation. In normal times only 15% of food movements from Chittagong to upcountry areas were made by boat. The remaining 85% was moved by road and rail. Even a 100% increase in the effectiveness of river movement will leave 70% of the food stocks in the warehouses of Chittagong.

Two other factors must be added. One is large-scale hoarding of grain by people who have begun to anticipate the famine. This makes a tight position infinitely more difficult. The other is the government of Pakistan's refusal to acknowledge the danger of famine publicity. Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, the Military Governor of East Bengal, acknowledged in a radio broadcast on April 18 that he was gravely concerned about food supplies.

Since then the entire government machinery has been used to suppress the fact of the food shortage. The reason is that a famine, like the cyclone before it, could result in a massive outpouring of foreign aid -- and with it the prospect of external inspection of distribution methods. That would make it impossible to conceal from the world the scale of the pogrom. So the hungry will be left to die until the clean-up is complete.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The power of forgiveness

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

FREEDOM fighter, prisoner, president, statesman -- all in one lifetime. That was Nelson Mandela, the icon who passed away on December 5 at the age of 95, leaving a moral vacuum that can never be filled!

Mandela, who led the fight against the apartheid South African regime, is hailed across the ideological spectrum as one of the greatest leaders of history. President Obama aptly described him as a "giant of history, who moved a nation toward justice and in the process moved billions around the world." However, it might be useful to remind ourselves that Madiba (Mandela's clan name) did not lead a charmed life. He walked a long, rocky road. From his participation in the armed struggle against racial oppression in South Africa to 27 harsh years in prison, he lived through deprivation, abuse and torture. As recently as the '80s, the United States, United Kingdom and many other countries opposed the anti-apartheid struggle and branded Mandela as a terrorist.

The above account is not intended to question the sincerity of the tribute that Nelson Mandela received from world leaders, but to dwell on the everlasting lessons we can learn from his exceptional life. Amongst the many qualities that characterise this great man, there are two that I wish to highlight, especially given the backdrop of the prevailing political culture. First, Mandela's exceptional ability to forgive his detractors and to heal the wounds inflicted on his people, in the larger national interest. Second, his astuteness, which enabled him to relinquish power at the pinnacle of his popularity.

Nelson Mandela never sought revenge against those who endeavoured to demoralise him and defeat his cause. He had a great ability to forgive and consciously chose the path of reconciliation through kind gestures toward his opponents. After leaving Robben Island prison in 1990 as a free man, he said: "As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."

True to his words, Mandela negotiated peace with the very people who had tortured him and even forgave the jailors who had mistreated him and destroyed letters from his family during the difficult years of separation from his wife and children. He did this not because he was weak, but because he realised that empathy and love, not vengeance and hatred, would unite his fractured nation, ravaged by years of mistrust between the blacks and the whites.

Mandela promised he would be a one-term president despite being elected to the presidency with a landslide in 1994. At that time racial tensions still rocked South Africa and the nation could have erupted into a civil war. However, through his firm leadership and forgiving nature Mandela ensured a peaceful transition from apartheid to multiparty democracy. He retired in 1999 assuming the unofficial role of elder statesman.

As we salute Nelson Mandela and underscore his ideals of empathy and forgiveness, it is disheartening to witness the confrontational and manipulative politics in the world today. The prevalent system seems to be the Machiavellian brand of politics constructed by Niccolò Machiavelli -- a politician who lived in Florence 500 years ago. In his manual of political ethics "The Prince," Machiavelli proposed that violence was necessary to stabilise power and that one was justified in using force to eliminate political rivals and subjugate resistant populations. He advised leaders to instill fear not only among their foes but also among allies, his basic assumption being that the world is evil and one must learn to be evil to survive. Fortunately, Machiavelli's political career was short-lived. The Medici rulers of Florence suspected him of plotting against them and imprisoned and tortured him. He died in exile -- lonely and disgraced.

While it is incongruent, almost sacrilegious, to compare Mandela and Machiavelli, it might be instructive to reflect on the legacy that they have bequeathed to the world. Machiavelli's name is synonymous with political deceit, cynicism and the ruthless use of power, while Mandela symbolises all that is good in humanity. Madiba's precept challenges Machiavelli's theory that politics needs to be played with force and deception. His success has proved that love, forgiveness and trust can achieve greater gains.

Mandela's conciliatory politics and his gracious exit from power could serve as a guiding light to Bangladesh's leaders, who seem locked in a bitter power struggle. One wonders, what legacy do they want to leave behind? Which road do they want to travel? Machiavelli's path of deception, force and violence or Mandela's path of "inclusion, generosity and truth" that enables one not only to change "laws, but also hearts."

Perhaps the answer lies in Nelson Mandela's own words: "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."

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By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Diamond stats
 - 7 Song by the Kinks
 - 11 Brain cases
 - 12 Press
 - 13 Checked out
 - 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 "Ap-plause" sign settings
 - 25 Once called
 - 26 Lohen-grin's love
 - 27 Soup base
 - 29 Wrestling spots
 - 33 Boat back
 - 34 Say without thinking
 - 35 Damaged
 - 36 Sweat-shirt variety
 - 37 Important times
- DOWN**
- 1 Took steps
 - 2 Famed Roman fountain
 - 3 Elementary
 - 4 Stag's pride
 - 5 Makes a bow
 - 6 Blue
 - 7 Sheet stuff
 - 8 Pizza sauce staple
 - 9 Pin-points
 - 10 Short sock
 - 16 Oboists' needs
 - 18 "Hamlet"
 - 20 Dined at home
 - 22 Overall feel
 - 23 November
 - 24 Jackson 5
 - 25 Had a snack
 - 26 Preten-tious
 - 30 Tax cheat's worry
 - 31 Stale
 - 32 Ranch animal
 - 34 Dog's treat
 - 36 Produc-er's hope

POSED CAGES
TIGAME AGENT
VIENOMOSE
OLD ONE RUE
TOR NIL GEL
STATIC BEDS
SIBUCOLITIC
STUBSABLES
PAL AIM BOLE
AILLATABODE
SPOIL DANES
MECCA ALERT
SLIKES SAYISO

Yesterday's answer

- 10 Short sock
- 16 Oboists' needs
- 18 "Hamlet"
- 20 Dined at home
- 22 Overall feel
- 23 November
- 24 Jackson 5
- 25 Had a snack
- 26 Preten-tious
- 30 Tax cheat's worry
- 31 Stale
- 32 Ranch animal
- 34 Dog's treat
- 36 Produc-er's hope



A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

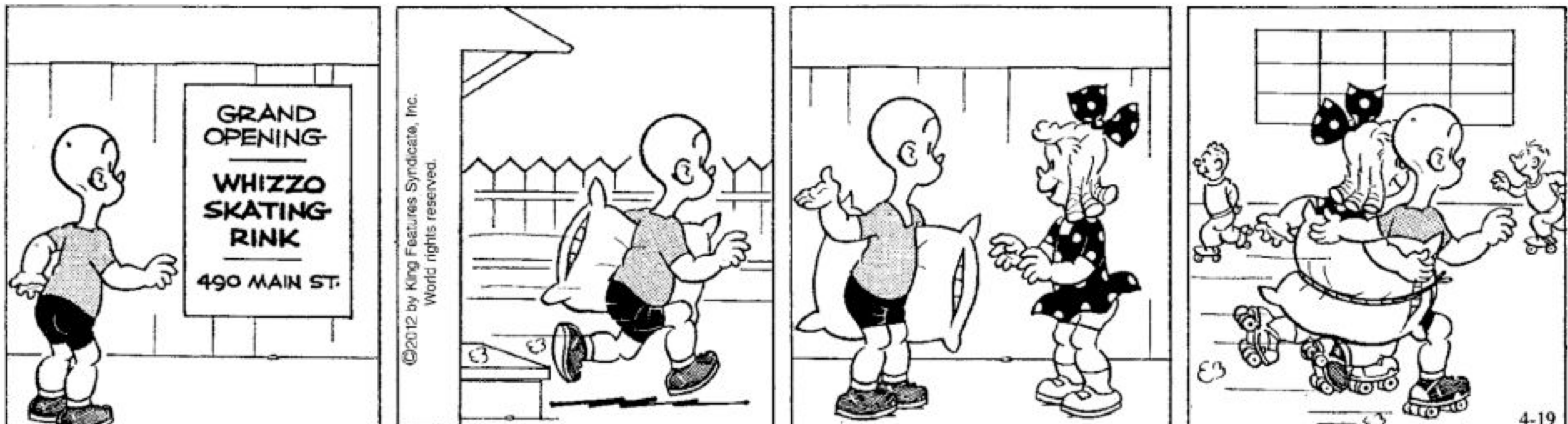
On letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

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

BEETLE BAILEY



HENRY



QUOTABLE Quote

"Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught."

Oscar Wilde