



Strategy and tactics of the Liberation War

Here we publish an excerpt from Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) A. K. Khandker's speech on the strategy and tactics of the Liberation War. Mr. Khandker was the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Bangladesh Armed Forces during the Liberation War.

AIR VICE MARSHAL (RETD.) A. K. KHANDKER

THE canvas of Bangladesh's Liberation war is very wide. Armed resistance is an important part of that canvas. Here, I will focus on the strategy and tactics of the armed struggle. (...) Probably on April 4, military leaders, who initiated armed resistance after the crackdown on March 25, met at a tea garden at Teliapara in Sylhet. Colonel Osmani, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Shafiqullah, Major Ziaur Rahman, Colonel Rob and many others were present at the meeting. They discussed about possible sources of obtaining arms and the political strategy of approaching these sources. They thought that the most convenient source would be India, and an independent government should be formed to approach it. In the first week of April, political high-ups of both India and Bangladesh came to an understanding about training of 5,000 freedom fighters each month who would later join the fight inside Bangladesh. It was really difficult to train a force properly within such a short period. Before going into details of what happened to these freedom fighters I would like to draw your attention to another relevant fact. Youths were the main target of Pakistani Junta's atrocity because they realised that the youths were the driving force behind the Liberation War and without nabbing these fighters they would not be able to suppress the freedom struggle. So repression on young people continued on an increasing scale inside the country and thousands of young people crossed the border into India to save themselves. To accommodate this huge inflow of youths we opened around 100 reception centres along the border. Primarily, they were kept in these centres. We also established 24 to 25 Youth Camps from where we recruited young freedom fighters. Elected people's representatives were entrusted with the responsibility of recruiting these young fighters. With all the benefits of this process there were also some difficulties. First, political consideration took precedence over physical stamina and political consciousness of the young people. Secondly, as all of the recruited members were member of AL, youth followers of other parties got very upset over this recruitment policy. (...)

During July, there was a plan to form a brigade that would recover a free zone and establish control over there. To me it was a wrong decision and I opined to Tajuddin Ahmed and Colonel Osmani that in a plain land like Bangladesh, it would not be possible for a brigade to keep hold of a free zone fighting against the well-equipped Pakistani force. Rather, it would severely hamper our original strategy of guerilla war. However, the brigade was formed and Ziaur Rahman, the most senior among the EBR officials, was appointed as the brigade commander. From July 10 to 15, Sector Commanders met at the headquarters of the Liberation Force in Calcutta. In the beginning, some commanders proposed formation of a war council. Major Ziaur Rahman played a significant role behind this plan, among others. Colonel Osmani took it personally and got furious over this plan. Later, Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed persuaded him to withdraw his resignation letter, and he did so. (...) Several important decisions were taken in these meetings. Existing sectors were restructured and number of personnel for regular and militia forces was fixed. Militias were formed with trained youths and general people. (...) During mid-August, it was decided that every month 20,000 freedom fighters would be trained who would enter inside Bangladesh to join the fight. At the end of August, the Indian Army agreed to provide us more arms. In the meantime, our war effort slowed down due to various practical difficulties. So the leadership was trying to reinvigorate the war effort. We decided to issue an operation order in the last week of September. It was circulated in the first week of October. The circular was very important. (...) It was planned that we would diffuse the brigade into small platoons, companies and sections and send them inside Bangladesh. And these small forces would lead the large number of freedom fighters who were suffering from lack of guidance. We immediately got the benefit of this new tactics. (...) In the circular, we mentioned guerilla warfare for the first time in writing. We did not have strong bases for conducting guerilla fight except in Kader Siddiqi's area. (...) However, we succeeded



Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) A. K. Khandker

in coming out of the sluggish situation and reinvigorate the war effort through successful raids in Chittagong and Khulna ports. In the first week of May we recruited 300 youths with some members of the naval force. We arranged training for them at Bhagirathi River near the historic sight of Palashi. (...) This was a secret arrangement. Very few people were informed about it. We used Limpet mine for destroying ships. (...) Our brave boys successfully destroyed many commercial ships. It sent a message worldwide that a full intensity war was going on inside Bangladesh. Earlier, Pakistan had propagated globally that the war was being stopped. After these naval raids, they were forced to stop their propaganda because foreign ships refused to enter Bangladesh for fear of raids. (...) It also heavily obstructed prospective arms shipments for Pakistan. (...) In the end of October, a joint command was formed. (...) The question is whether it was important to form a joint command. (...) Earlier, Indian forces used to send Bangladeshi freedom fighters inside the country without consulting with the Bangladeshi Sector Commanders. As a result, the

freedom fighters got confused about their targets. (...) I think that formation of joint command diffused confusions and enhanced efficiency of the freedom fighters. (...) Now, I would like to talk about an important war that took place at Chowgacha, Jessore on November 21. In that war, Indian and Pakistani forces, for the first time, engaged in a frontal fight where air operation was conducted for the first time. (...) Now I would like to focus on the role of Bangladesh's air force during the Liberation War. On May 12, I crossed the border into India with 10 operational pilots. Next day, we reached Calcutta and met Tajuddin Ahmed, some ministers and Colonel Osmani. After having discussions with them I went to Delhi to seek help from the Indian side for raising an air force. I did not get any immediate response. (...) Later, India gave us three aircraft. With these aircraft and all our pilots and technicians we gathered at Dimapur Air Field on September 28 and started our preparation for air raid inside Bangladesh. (...) On December 3, Bangladesh Air Force heavily bombed a fuel depot in Narayanganj and Godenail and the fuel refinery in Chittagong. These air raids had a crippling effect on the Pakistani force. For the sake of history, it should be recorded that Bangladesh's Air Force conducted the successful raids on two important strategic targets, not the Indian Air Force. (...) On December 16, being directed by the cabinet of the exiled government, I attended the surrender ceremony at Racecourse. (...) We often forget an important point in discussions on the Liberation War. According to my estimation, during the second week of December the number of freedom fighters was around 1 lakh 15 thousand. 70-80% of them came from peasant background. Our history does not recognise their role properly. We often forget that the Liberation War was a people's war and a national war.

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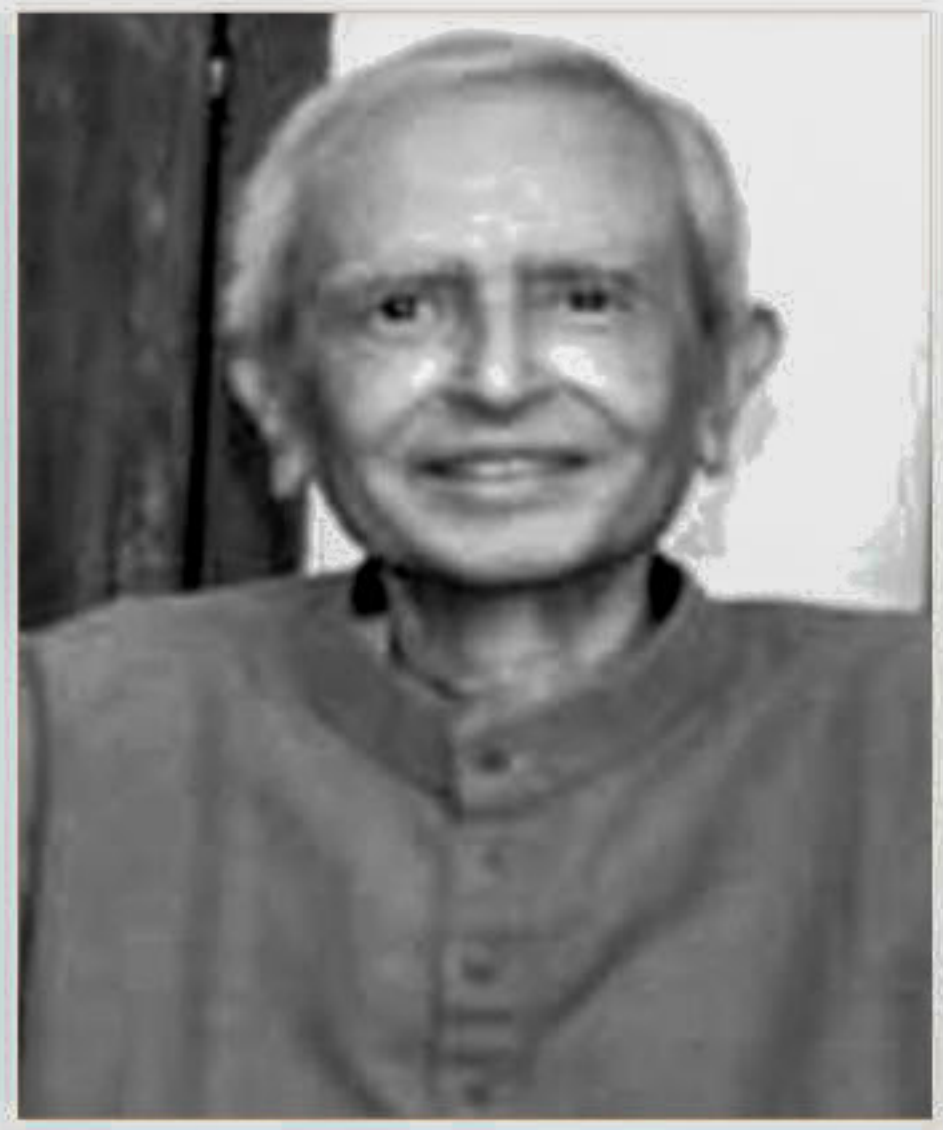
MY FRIEND FAIZUR RAZZAQ

A legacy of excellence in public service

KHALID SHAMS

HE passed away quietly and unheralded. Probably, that was how he would have preferred to go, after having courageously and gracefully battled a deadly cancer of the kidney for six years. He was the epitome of everything that was good in our traditional public service. Civil bureaucracy from time to time, has been derided as a colonial legacy. Nevertheless, whether we like it or not, many of our great institutions have been in fact, inherited from the British regime. University of Dhaka, the zilla schools, the judiciary, the legal system, local government, the armed forces, the railways and finally, our much vaunted Westminster model of parliamentary government itself that we have been desperately trying to turn into a meaningful reality.

Faizur Razzaq, belonged to a dynamic generation of the '60s, the new emerging middle class in East Bengal, striving hard to excel academically. This generation also took great pride in a burgeoning national identity, trying hard to promote democratic values and demonstrating an earnest commitment to public service for development. He was recruited into the top echelon of the government through a very rigorous selection process of the Central Public Service Commission. He obtained a Master's degree from Harvard University in economic development. He was a seasoned, well-tested field administrator as well as the chief executive of corporate entities within the government and outside. He had served with distinction as secretary to the Ministry of Energy, managing



Faizur Razzaq

director of Bangladesh Biman, director general of Bangladesh Television, Secretary of the Election Commission and numerous other government agencies. His last assignment was that of the managing director of Grameen Fund, a social venture fund which was set up at the instance of Professor Yunus of Grameen Bank. He also represented Bangladesh in the Asian Development Bank, in his capacity as an alternate executive director, late in the '90s. He had served ADB with great distinction and demonstrated his professional excellence. So much so that the then President of ADB, Tadao Chino, very keenly wanted Razzaq to join his management team as a vice president -- he would have been the first

Bangladeshi to occupy such a position -- back in 2001. In fact, the President of ADB himself came all the way to Bangladesh, only to lobby with the finance minister and the prime minister, so that the government would agree to ADB's proposal. Unfortunately for Bangladesh, the government did not agree because of internal bureaucratic wranglings. As a result, we lost an opportunity of having a Bangladeshi vice president capable of influencing strategic policy making in the most important financial institution of the region. He would be a role model for young civil servants today. Like a true public servant, he performed his duties with great humility. He would shun publicity like the plague. He was ever polite, most polished and erudite in his manners. He was not only highly accomplished academically, but also professionally trained in policy making that required application of interdisciplinary skills, with an amazing capacity to interact with different categories of people, at home as well as abroad. He had a way of making friends with strangers, winning an adversary over to his side. Even in the midst of a heated debate, he would break into a heart warming smile. I had never seen him lose his temper or speak to any one out of anger. Throughout his professional career as a civil servant he remained passionate about attaining perfection. Most importantly, he demonstrated ethical values of the highest order that are lacking in public service in today's turbulent times. While corruption became the norm, he remained steadfast in terms of his personal integrity. He was truly a non-partisan, a pure professional, in the midst of rampant partisan politics. He

remained humble, yet fiercely dedicated, when civil servants these days tend to be arrogant and indifferent to their tasks. I have often asked myself this question: "How does a civil servant acquire excellence?" Good academic qualifications, practical work experience, personal integrity, dedication to one's work, firmness at times of crises, etc are all necessary, but they are not sufficient for attaining excellence. Dr. G.C. Dev, who was not only an eminent teacher, but also delved deeply into basic moral issues of our society, summed up the paradox of modern professionalism very neatly. Simply put, it means that we do not practice what we preach in our respective occupations, whether as an engineer, or an administrator or a politician. He writes in his book titled *Aspirations of the Common Man*: "We must remember that this badly needed reform cannot be effected by mere profession. It has to be done by practice, hard practice, I should say. The great gap between modern man's profession and practice is the root cause of his almost endless troubles and, for the sake of a better world and a better existence, we must put an effective brake on this disparity." In performing his tasks Faizur Razzaq adhered to the highest ethical standards, a pre-requisite in current public administration. I would illustrate this with an experience which I shared with him during the tail end of his career. I was astonished to learn that every September, he would visit the office of the assistant commissioner of income tax, a junior officer under the National Board of Revenue, to personally submit his tax papers. As a senior government officer there was no need for him to physically hand over the tax

returns; it would be normally expected that his private secretary or personal assistant would do the needful. But Razzaq felt that he was publicly accountable and it was his moral obligation to submit the return personally to the concerned tax officer. In spite of being a secretary to the ministry, he took great pains to explain to a junior official the details of his tax assessment. Even during his terminal illness he was extremely anxious to discharge this particular responsibility. On several occasions he had asked me to submit applications on his behalf to the concerned officer, explaining the nature of his illness, regretting his inability to file the return personally within the prescribed dateline. Paying duly assessed taxes regularly and disclosing to the concerned officer, all information relating to his income and assets owned by him, was part of his elan of public service. Now that we have lost Faizur Razzaq forever, I realise what a precious legacy of public service he has left behind for all of us. It is a legacy of professional excellence, combined with personal integrity of the highest order. Above all, he stands out as a great human being, full of empathy for people whom he had served with all humility, without any fear or favour. In these difficult times, when partisan politics reigns supreme, can we aspire to build a public service based on these universally recognised, time honoured values? These values, in the ultimate analysis, represent the bedrock on which good governance is founded. Time seems to be appropriate that we initiate a debate in these matters involving all the concerned stakeholders. The writer is retired Civil Servant.

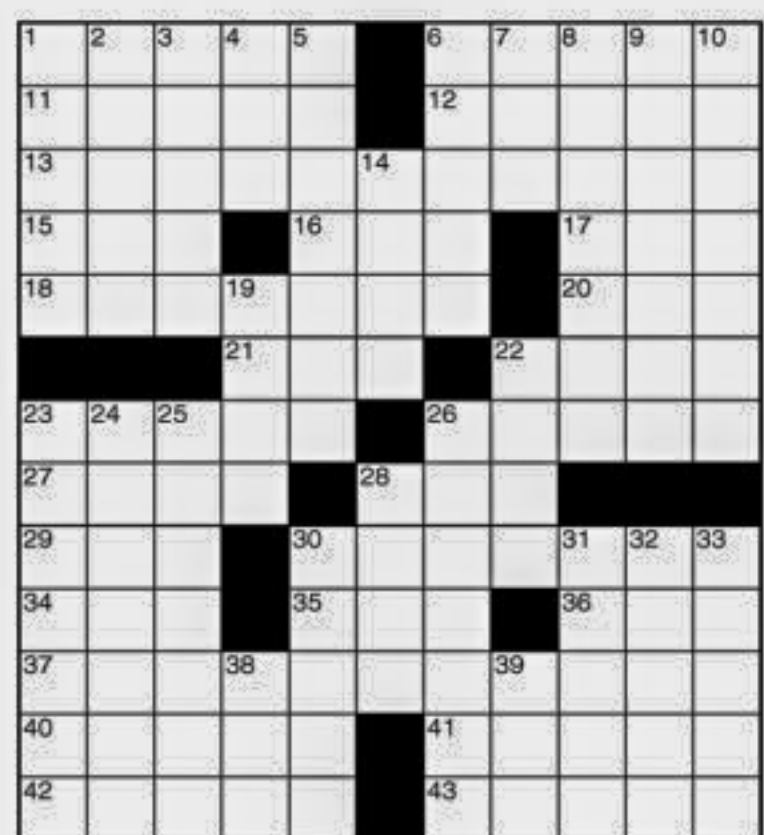
QUOTABLE Quote

Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship.

Buddha

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Rich blue stone | 1 Intense beam |
| 2 Pageant crown | 2 Higher than |
| 11 Tolerate | 3 Stacked |
| 12 Velocities | 4 Lupino of films |
| 13 Rooftop energy sources | 5 Belgrade native |
| 15 Cain's mother | 6 Commerce |
| 16 Naught | 7 McKellen of "The Hobbit" |
| 17 Espionage org | 8 Admitted an error |
| 18 Timber tree | 9 Take over for |
| 20 Spanish king | 10 Rated, as gold |
| 21 Playground game | 14 Hunger reminder |
| 22 Peace symbol | 19 Sch. orgs. |
| 23 Writer Sontag | 22 Warning word |
| 26 Used oars | 23 Cruel ones |
| 27 Picnic pests | 24 Mythical creature |
| 28 Play on words | 25 Metal marble |
| 29 Conk out | 26 Cattle thief |
| 30 Optimal option | 28 Crime doer, to cops |
| 34 Rink surface | 30 Wearing less |
| 35 Museum focus | 31 Competes in the ring |
| 36 Poem of praise | 32 Draw out |
| 37 Abdominal network | 40 Nonsense |
| 40 Nonsense | 33 Exams |
| 41 Put in office | 38 Big galoot |
| 42 Villain's look | 39 Quarterback |
| 43 Gets up | Manning |



Yesterday's answer

SLOPE ARID
TAPES DORIC
EVENT HYENA
AIR ADO PER
MEAL TICKETS
EEK NATO
SODAS LATEN
ARES MAC
LIFT TICKETS
AGE AXE AHA
MINTS SATIN
INSET UPEND
SEXY PERKY

CRYPTOQUOTE
ESQV UL X IXCQL NFYCULOV T RB
CSHFYV XCT VWRYSUTVYVT RB
UWZXUCXHUSC. - QSEHXUYV

YESTERDAY'S CRYPTOQUOTE:
TRUE LOVE COMES QUIETLY, WITHOUT BANNERS OR FLASHING LIGHTS. IF YOU HEAR BELLS, GET YOUR EARS CHECKED. - ERICH SEGAL

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte

