



THE SUNDAY TIMES, JUNE 13 1971

# GENOCIDE

...thousands of other people in Bangladesh, he had made the mistake—the fatal miscalculation—of raising within sight of a Pakistani army garrison.

He was 24 years old, a slight, dark-skinned boy, and he was looking towards the sky as if to be struck.

"Naturally we would have killed him as he ran," I was informed shortly by Major Mathers, the G-4 Ops officer of the 9th Division, as we stood on the outskirts of a hamlet near Dhaka. "But we were thinking him and his unit were just one more unit and I see you have a respectable stomach."

"Why did you?" I asked, not



by **ANTHONY MASCARENHAS**  
(the background to the writing and publication of this remarkable report is told on Page One)

"For God's sake don't shoot!" I cried. "It's a mistake. It's a mistake!"

Mathers, however, gave a curt look and fired a warning shot.

As the men sank to a crouch in the first stages of dawn, two more men were already on their way to drag him in.

...in the command of the 9th Division (first administrative headquarters in East Bengal) in 1971. I have seen thousands of other human beings and those who had the humanity to try to help them. I have seen the horror and suffering of those who were... I have witnessed the cruelty of... and those...

...I have witnessed an event which has been called the 'Blood Telegram' in 1971. This was an event which... I have witnessed an event which has been called the 'Blood Telegram' in 1971. This was an event which... I have witnessed an event which has been called the 'Blood Telegram' in 1971. This was an event which...

...which suggested that the... was not the result of a... or... in... in... in...

...I was... that... to be... when... that... 1971... look... the... of... from... the... military... there... the... of... when... the... movement... after... the... from... the... President... 1971...

A Sunday Times article by reporter Anthony Mascarenhas exposed for the first time the scale of the Pakistani army's brutal campaign to suppress the independence struggle of East Pakistan in 1971

# THE UN'S SILENCE

**MOZAMMEL H. KHAN**

**D**ESPITE history's numerous precedents, the word "genocide" did not exist until legal scholar Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who found shelter in the United States, coined the term in 1943. On December 9, 1948, the UN unanimously adopted a convention on genocide, identifying it as a crime "committed with the intention to destroy in whole or part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Called The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, it was adopted by the General Assembly on December 9, 1948, and came into effect on January 12, 1951.

The word "genocide" that gradually entered the lexicon of international law has been used to officially characterise the mass slaughter of Armenians, Jews and Rwandans in the 20th century. The UN recognised as genocide the killing of hundreds of thousands of Armenians between 1915 and 1917, the mass murder of Jews by Nazi Germany during World War II, and the killing of an estimated 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis by their Hutu compatriots in 1994.

Genocidal expert A. Dirk Moses (August 27, 2010) claims, "In 1971 Pakistan Army's brutal, indeed genocidal, suppression of the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) autonomy/independence movement received more international attention than any other of the above-mentioned cases, yet nothing was done by the UN or nation states to interdict, let alone condemn, the killing". The term "genocide" was used extensively by

eyewitnesses, journalists, and politicians throughout 1971 and subsequently to describe the mass killings in Bangladesh. And for the first time since Nuremberg and Tokyo, war crimes trials were seriously considered, in this case by Bangladesh in 1972, which wanted to prosecute numerous Pakistani soldiers and their local collaborators. The trial issue was even listed at the International Court of Justice in 1973, the first time that such a thing had occurred.

**It would be relevant to look back at how the international media reported the massacre. On March 27, 1971 the American Consul**

It would be relevant to look back at how the international media reported the massacre. On March 27, 1971 the American Consul General in Dhaka, Archer Blood, sent a telegram to Washington headed with the phrase "Selective Genocide". *The New York Times* editorial of April 7, "Bloodbath in Bengal," condemned Washington's silence on what it called the "indiscriminate slaughter of civilians and the selective elimination of leadership groups in the

separatist state of East Bengal." Only a day earlier, with the carnage continuing without condemnation from the White House, Blood and twenty-nine diplomatic colleagues sent another telegram from Dhaka – the celebrated "Blood Telegram" – to the State Department headed "Dissent from U.S. Policy toward East Pakistan." This unprecedented cable is worth quoting, at least partly: "Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy... But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, on the grounds that it is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state".

Peggy Durbin, in a piece in *The New York Times* in early May, called the killing "one of the bloodiest slaughters of modern times." The breakthrough came in mid-June when Anthony Mascarenhas, assistant editor of the *Morning News* in Karachi and an official war correspondent attached to the 9th Pakistani Division in East Pakistan, fled to London to report what he had seen. *The Sunday Times* devoted a long article in his own words and an editorial, both under the prominent headlines of "Genocide." An editorial in the *Hong Kong Standard* spoke of "Another Genghis!" a few weeks later, playing on the fact that the Pakistani military general was named Tikka Khan. "Tikka Khan and his gang of uniformed cut-throats will be remembered for trying to destroy the people of half a

nation," opined the daily. In the backyard of the UN headquarters, on August 1, 1971, The Beatles organised 'The concert for Bangladesh' in front of a 40,000 live audience to raise international awareness about the genocide in Bangladesh. Senator Edward Kennedy, the influential American politician, was one of the first international figures to alert the world of the Pakistani army's genocide in Bangladesh.

On June 3, 1971, U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, wrote to the President of the Security Council, saying, "The happenings in East Pakistan constitute one of the most tragic episodes in human history. Of course, it is for future historians to gather facts and make their own evaluations, but it has been a very terrible blot on a page of human history". However, the UN engagement on East Pakistan, then, was driven by humanitarian, not human rights, issues. But the Security Council never took the hint of U Thant and did not explicitly consider the situation on the subcontinent until an outright international conflict was on its hands in December, when India joined the war in favour of Mukti Bahini (Bangalee freedom fighters). However, the Security Council's effort was directed towards ordering a ceasefire to maintain the status quo which was tantamount to letting the genocide continue. It was successive Soviet vetoes that enabled the combined forces of India and Mukti Bahini to bring the perpetrators of the crimes to their knees resulting in the birth of Bangladesh, thereby bringing an end to the genocide.

CONTINUED ON PAGE