

The tangail landings: a signal for victory



the guerrillas of Dhaka in 1971

in one place.

It was about three in the afternoon. When Brigadier Klair and Kader Siddiqui stepped down, five hundred freedom fighters and paratroopers received them with thundering applause.

Brigadier Klair came over to me and thanked me for the help and cooperation extended by the Mukti Bahini.

From the Indian officers I learnt that in the battle around Pungli Bridge, three hundred-seventy Pakistan soldiers were killed and more than one hundred injured. Six Indian paratroopers achieved martyrdom and 15 were injured. Over 600 Pakistani troops were taken prisoner.

After the meeting, Kader and Klair decided to move on to Tangail that same evening. Most of the town of Tangail was in the hands of the Mukti Bahini. However, a small contingent of Pakistani forces at the new Tangail town garrison had not yet surrendered though it was cut off from all sides. An attack was launched at four o'clock that evening with about 200 Freedom Fighters, supported by mortar and machine gun fire. Very soon, the enemy guns were silenced and the last remnants of resistance at Tangail ceased.

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It was as if they were floating in the air. Suddenly their bellies opened and parachutes began dropping.

The southeastern sky, as far as we could see, was covered with what looked like big balloons. On a sunny and breezy afternoon, the blue sky of Tangail was brilliantly recomposed with a spectacular view created by the paratroopers. For those who were lucky enough to watch, it

In the meeting, Gen Aurora indicated that Indian paratroopers could be dropped in Tangail by the end of November or early December. He asked me to return to Tangail as soon as possible and make arrangements to secure an area so that Indian paratroopers could land safely.

was an unforgettable moment.

At eight in the evening, Kader stopped by our camp. He reassured Peter that the landing was successful and that the paratroopers had made contact with the Mukti Bahini. Kader told us that the highways connecting Madhupur, Gopalpur, Kalihati, and Sholakura were now all under the full control of the Mukti Bahini. The fleeing Pakistani soldiers had been attacked from various positions on the Tangail-Madhupur Highway. About twenty vehi-

cles of the Pakistan Army had been destroyed and more than fifty soldiers had been killed. The Mukti Bahini had been able to capture a number of vehicles as well as a huge quantity of arms and explosives.

At five in the morning, Kader headed out with his troops to Tangail along the Mymensingh-Tangail Highway. Peter and I were also with him. We were welcomed at the liberated Kalihati headquarters by Commanders Nabi Newaz, Riaz, and Samad Gama. They reported that their forces were in full control of the Kalihati Police Station and that Tangail Highway was in our control as far south as Sholakura.

We then moved to Sholakura but were halted at the Sholakura Bridge by enemy fire. At this time, several volunteers arrived escorting a contingent of paratroopers. Behind the force of last night's gusty winds, these paratroopers drifted away from their targeted position and thus they could not join in the battle fought the previous night. Captain Peter was delighted to meet his colleagues, amongst whom was a young Captain.

Captain Peter then left us and joined up with the paratroopers and we resumed our advance to Phultala. Kader attacked Phultala with mortars and then sent about 300 fighters to take the village. By afternoon, the enemy fled and Phultala came under our control.

We learnt through radio contact that Brigadier Klair of the Indian Army was on his way to Tangail. I, with a team of freedom fighters, left for Pungli Bridge to meet the Indian paratroopers. As we walked on the road to Pungli Bridge, I came face to face with the bone-chilling scenes of last night's battle. Corpses of hundreds of enemy soldiers littered the road; the bodies sprawled from one side of the bridge to the other. We walked with care so as not to step on the dead. All around was a mass of twisted mangled bodies and body parts. Never in my life had I seen so much death



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