

Special Supplement

Great Independence and National Day

Monday, 26 March 2018

Liberation War...

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coming out of prison, he transformed Awami League into a powerful organization after assuming the responsibility of its acting general-secretary. In 1954, the Jukto Front (United Front) achieved unprecedented success in the election under the leadership of Haque-Bhashani-Suhrawardy and the youthful leader Sheikh Mujib. But very soon, by instigating a riot with the backing of Pakistani intelligence forces between the Bangalis and Biharis at Adamjee Jute Mills of Narayanganj, Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque was removed from the position of chief minister and Bangabandhu was arrested from his residence and taken to jail. Bangabandhu repeatedly warned the Pakistanis through his speeches in the Pakistan National Assembly during 1956-58 and vehemently protested the tortures, exploitations and discriminations against the Bangalis in a firm voice. He also noted in the Pakistan Assembly that the Bangalis would be forced to think and decide otherwise if the exploitations and discriminations were not stopped.



The Pakistani vested coteries foresaw the possibility of Awami League's victory and the defeat of Muslim League in the general election of Pakistan in 1958. They therefore made arrangement for silencing the voice of the Bangalis for good by imposing martial law and imprisoned many political leaders including Bangabandhu after arresting them.

After coming out of jail in 1962, Bangabandhu started to rebuild the banned Awami League. He began to execute a plan to make Bangladesh independent through an armed war by forming a nucleus for independence via the Chhatra League. With that same goal, he started to motivate the Bangalis towards freedom by announcing the 6-points for survival of the Bangalis in 1966. Three years after his arrest in 1966, the Pakistanis made final arrangement in 1969 for silencing him for good by hanging him in the gallows through filing the so-called 'Agartala Conspiracy Case'. However, after freeing him from jail in 1969, the then convener of students' action council Tofail Ahmed decorated him with the title 'Bangabandhu' on behalf of the council in presence of over 1 million people at Suhrawardy Udyan. The Pakistani army chief General Yahya Khan seized power at that time and declared Martial Law following the ouster of the so-called ironman of Pakistan Field Marshal Ayub Khan through the backdoor. Yahya Khan announced the holding of national election of Pakistan in 1970 with the precondition of acceptance of a Legal Framework Order (LFO). Bangabandhu gave his consent to participate in the election.

When we, a majority of the Chhatra League leadership, vehemently opposed participation in election by accepting the LFO, Bangabandhu said after summing up, "This election is not for going to power. You continue your job by considering this election as a referendum on independence. Tell people clearly in public meetings, there would be a 1-point (or independence) movement if the 6-points are not accepted. Utilise the election as the best opportunity for creating public opinion. The leader of the Bangalis would also be decided through this election. If the Bangalis cast their verdict in my favour, then I know how to throw the LFO into the Sindh River after crossing the Buriganga. Independence is our ultimate objective. Continue your work by reposing faith in me. I do not want to die as a betrayer—I want to uphold the honour of the Bangalis keeping my head high after freeing the country" (almost in Toto).

The main theme of LFO was that, none would be allowed to speak about regionalism or discrimination and the constitution of Pakistan was to be framed within 180 days. In case of failure to do so, the parliament would be dissolved automatically. Therefore, the Pakistani military had the notion that no party would be able to win absolute majority and the constitution would not be framed within 180 days. In that case, they would be able to make martial law permanent by putting blame on the political leaders.

March 1971 and...

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village because the condition of the earthen path was not good enough for a jeep to run on. Abdul Hakim's house was situated at the very entry point of the Domodorpur village. The road to Rangpur Cantonment was on the western side of the house. Some high ground beside the road was covered with hedges and bushes. Shahed Ali, Abdur Rahim and about ten other young men hid themselves in those bushes with knives, spears, axes etc. in their hands so that the Pakistani soldiers could not spot them. They waited for the Pakistani soldiers from the hidden position. Shahed Ali told the young men that he would first attack the officer sitting in front and then they would attack the soldiers sitting behind. He said their attack should be so quick that the soldiers do not get any opportunity to shoot them with their rifles. As soon as the jeep with the soldiers neared the high ground, Shahed Ali quickly emerged from the bushes and swooped down on the jeep bonnet and stabbed Lieutenant Abbas with his knife. Almost simultaneously the other young men pounced on the soldiers sitting behind the Lieutenant. Shahed Ali and others snatched away the arms from the soldiers even before they could sense anything. With this sudden attack the soldiers were at their wits' end. Then they all began to hit the Pakistani soldiers. Immediately, hundreds of people from the villages of Shommanipur and Domodorpur turned up there. After the attack of the villagers Lieutenant Abbas and other soldiers were almost dead. In the meantime, a Bengali soldier Nurul Islam of the neighboring village Monohorpur, who had come to Bangladesh on leave, appeared there. Experienced Nurul Islam told Shahed Ali and the other villagers that if the Pakistani army could see their soldiers in such a condition near the villages of Domodorpur and Shommanipur, they would start a mass killing operation in that area and demolish the villages totally. He requested the villagers to leave the army jeep and the wounded soldiers at a distant deserted place. On the request of the villagers, Nurul Islam drove the jeep with the wounded soldiers inside it to a deserted place named Dangirpar which was six kilometers away from Domodorpur and left the wounded people and the jeep there. Perhaps Shahed Ali was the first guerrilla soldier and leader in the Liberation War and his fellow soldiers were the ideal guerrillas and were able to successfully ambush enemy soldiers even without any training.

As Lieutenant Abbas's return was delayed, a rescue team of the Pakistani army searched high and low and after sunset they rescued him and his companions from Dangirpar in a miserable condition. Among them Lieut. Abbas's condition was the worst. The rescue team brought them back to the cantonment in a dying condition. Considering the Goneshpur area as the place of occurrence, the Pakistani army with an aim of taking revenge burned down the village on the following day. Then they also burned down the ideal village on the west side of the cantonment. After these villages had been indiscriminately burned down, the protests of the neighboring areas grew stronger.

After the villager's attack on the soldiers, the tension between the West Pakistani officers and the soldiers in Rangpur Cantonment gained momentum.

Several Pakistani officers were of the opinion of attacking and demolishing



Proving all notions and secret reports of the Pakistanis wrong, the Bangali nation gifted Bangabandhu with 167 out of 169 seats of Bangla and elected him as the supreme leader of the Bangali nation. This historic and memorable verdict of the people was an expression of support for the great liberation war. And Bangabandhu was given the singular mandate to declare independence. Many claim themselves to be the declarer of independence now-a-days. But apart from Bangabandhu, none had the legal right to declare independence, nor did they have credibility.

Millions of people descended on Dhanmondi Road-32 to convey greetings to Bangabandhu on his birthday on 17 March 1971. At that time, I informed Bangabandhu about the conspiracy by the Pakistani army to bring the arms stored with the Second East Bengal Regiment in Joydebpur by disarming the regiment on the pretext that there was a dearth of arms at Kurmitola (Dhaka) Cantonment. When I wanted to know what we should do under the circumstances, Bangabandhu roared back like a tiger, "You are a fool, what have you learnt that I shall have to tell you"? After pacing up and down, he said in an angry voice, "The Bangali soldiers must not be disarmed. Resist at the cost of anything." We therefore got the orders from our leader.

On Friday, 19 March 1971, the Pakistani invading forces led by Brigadier Jahanzeb suddenly went to Joydebpur (Gazipur) to disarm the Second East Bengal Regiment. At this time, the workers and masses of machine tools factory, diesel plant and ordnance factory assembled at Joydebpur from all sides with sticks, choppers, chisels, sickles, double-barreled guns etc. They erected a huge barricade by placing carriages of cargo trains, useless railway tracks, slippers, logs of large trees, wood, bamboo, bricks etc. at the Joydebpur rail-gate. Five barricades were erected from Joydebpur up to the road-junction, so that the Pakistani forces could not return with the arms. The second-in-command of the Second East Bengal Regiment Major K M Shafiqullah (later army chief) was ordered to open fire on the people. When the Bengal Regiment soldiers started to come forward by firing towards the sky instead of firing at the people, we took up position at the present-day Gazipur Central Jame Mosque. Then we took turns to fire bullets on the army with our guns and Chinese Rifles.

When we were putting up barricades, a convoy was arriving in Joydebpur from Tangail with rations. The masses blocked that ration-vehicle. The Chinese Rifles and LMGs of 5 soldiers were snatched. Meanwhile, Brigadier Jahanzeb ordered the Second East Bengal Regiment to remove the barricades from the rail-gate.

Some Bangalis were martyred and hundreds of heroic people were wounded by the firing of Pakistani forces at Joydebpur. Now, the sculpture 'Jagrata Chowrangi' has been installed at the junction of four roads.

The next day, Bangabandhu mentioned about the Pakistani attack of 19 March during talks with General Yahya Khan; Yahya Khan then remarked that the people of Joydebpur had attacked the Pakistani forces with modern weaponry and Chinese Rifles, as a result of which many Pakistani soldiers were injured.

After 19 March, slogans were raised throughout Bangladesh, "Tread the path of Joydebpur – Make Bangladesh Independent", "Take the path of Joydebpur – Start the armed war".

In such a backdrop, the Pakistani invading forces started the most barbarous genocide in history under the 'Operation Searchlight' throughout Bangladesh, including Dhaka, on the dark night of 25 March. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence via EPR wireless from his historic road-32 residence at Dhanmondi (now Bangabandhu Bhaban) at midnight, i.e. early hours of 26 March. That declaration of independence in English was as follows:

"This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved".

The Mujibnagar Government or the first Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was constituted on 10 April 1971 at Mujibnagar of Meherpur by making Bangabandhu the President and supreme commander of the liberation war with the objective of giving final shape to his declaration of independence. Syed Nazrul Islam was made the Vice-President cum acting President in Bangabandhu's absence; Tajuddin Ahmad became the Prime Minister; Captain Mansur Ali, A H M Qamaruzzaman and the murderer Mostaq were made cabinet members, and General M A G Osmany was made the military chief. The Mujibnagar Government was formally sworn-in on 17 April 1971. Under the leadership of the Mujibnagar Government, the valiant freedom fighters liberated Bangladesh by fighting heroically and defeating the Pakistani forces. The barbaric Pakistani forces carried out indiscriminate killings and tortures during this 9 month-long war. Three million Bangalis were martyred and 200 thousand mothers and sisters lost their honour as a result. This 9 month-long armed war came to an end through the surrender of the Pakistani invading forces to the MuktiBahini and allied forces at Suhrawardy Udyan on 16 December 1971. We salute the valiant martyrs on the occasion of this great Independence and National Day. At the same time, we express our abhorrence for the barbaric Pakistani forces, all anti-independence Pakistani collaborators and war-criminals.

Joi Bangla.

Joi Bangabandhu. □

Translation: *Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed*

the villages surrounding the cantonment. But the senior officers asked them to keep calm for the time being and assured them of an appropriate action in future. On the night of 24 March Lieutenant Abbas was under treatment at the military hospital breathed his last. After his death there was more anger in the cantonment and a tense situation prevailed there. It was being discussed that a plan has been prepared at the Brigade Head Quarters to attack Domodorpur and other villages in the neighborhood.

After this event Shahed Ali, Lieutenant Abbas's attacker, left his village and settled at his workplace Lalbag Hat. He thought that since Lalbag Hat was far away from his village, the Pakistani army would not perhaps be able to apprehend him. After 25 March the Pakistani army began to search for the people who were responsible for Lieutenant Abbas's death. In the village of Shommanipur there was a wicked man named Amzad who worked as a spy for the Pakistan army. As his stature was short, the people of the region called him 'Gatia Amzad' meaning short-statured Amzad. This gatia Amzad told the Pakistani soldiers that Shahed Ali had been living at Lalbag Hat. He also took them secretly to Lalbag Hat and identified Shahed Ali. Two Pakistani soldiers suddenly appeared from behind and captured him. Within a moment strong and stout Shahed Ali pushed them down on the ground. But another soldier struck him hard in the head with his rifle and still another one hit him in the left eye with his bayonet. As a result, the eye stuck out of its place. The Pakistani soldiers put the seriously injured man at the back of their jeep and took him away from there beating him continuously. Later on, the members of Shahed Ali's family came to know about this incident and began to search for him. Next day, his mutilated dead body was found at a muddy place near Lahirir Hat about 15 kilometers away from Lalbag Hat. There were several bullet injuries and traces of torture on his body. His eyes were plucked out and his brain was scattered out of the skull. Shahed Ali's relatives brought his dead body to his village Shommanipur and buried him on the back side of his house.

Two days later some Pakistani soldiers along with their local associates turned up in the village of Shommanipur. These associates helped the soldiers recognize Shahed Ali's house. Then the soldiers started their oppression on the members of Shahed Ali's family. They hit Shahed Ali's first wife Ashrafunnesa in the head but she was somehow able to flee with the help of the villagers. His second wife Komola Shundori was brutally tortured by the Pakistani soldiers. The people of that village still remember the horrible scene of that torture. Following these incidents Ashrafunnesa went insane and Komola Shundori fell dead.

Shahed Ali and his family members are immortal personalities. They were the torch bearers of freedom but could not see that freedom. They had both imaginative and inspirational power. They sacrificed their lives for freedom. The best thing we owe to them is our respect and honor. □

Translation: *Professor M Jahurul Islam*

Journal Seventy-one

Sohrab Pasha

The world knows the name of the greatest Bangali – Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, They know about the invincible son of Bangalis His love for the homeland was sky-high – More precious and nobler than his own life.

Those who watch the world in wonder today after drawing his image The Beautiful Bangladesh is bright and beaming with glory, His dream was only a Bangla of Gold, not a crown of gold Letting the people of Bangla live well, and ending their nightmares, He was immersed and obsessed day and night with this longing Let their mind-spirits be joyful, let their voices sing the immortal song Let the birds sing above this green soil as the sunrays light up the dawn.

The world heard about his clarion call of nectar in Seventy-one That was the victory-song for the Bangalis' dream and freedom, 'The struggle this time is for independence' A war broke out; so many lives were lost unhesitatingly So many villages were burnt down by the barbaric fire, Bangladesh was benumbed in sorrow and mourning The resolute flag of victory was red with the blood of martyrs.

On that day the Bangalis got their free speech for watching dreams Unique is this land, and Bangabandhu its architect, The repugnant and crooked mist of subjugation is no more The world's best – this Bangladesh is a pride of the Bangalis.

Translation: *Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed*



Eternal Faces at Madison Square

Tarik Sujat

Bangladesh, Bangladesh... Who sing in such an intimate melody! As if an affectionate mother in unknown fear, were calling her offspring by dearest names. Sad notations spring from the eternal bond Between George Harrison and Ravi Shankar.

When Bob Dylan plays the guitar Solitary cuckoos– confined in the vicinity– Weep listening to the song of *Bangla Dhun*. Like roaring waves of the Padma, Joy Bangla– the victory slogan– Is resounded in every battle field in the world.

When Allarakha plays the tabla, When Ali Akbar Khan and Kamala Chakravarty Produce music with their sad fingers, Refugee camps at *Bangaon* find a new voice, Wake up in the music of newer hope.

Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Leon Russell, Ringo Starr... They all sing together for Bangladesh. Madison Square, Madison Square... Countless faces in the audience there, Skyscrapers are dressed in vivid lights, Freedom-loving young students, Stock-brokers from Wall Street, Salesmen from Masi, laborers from workshops, Poets-writers-painters-intellectuals All gather there.

Lonely benches in the park Remain no more lonely. Audience crowds under lamp posts, As melted lava erupts from volcanoes, Countless cars keep on coming With streams of light.

All faces of refugees, Hippi, and vagabonds Become one and inseparable, Bangladesh, Bangladesh... They sing together.

Manhattan speaks in a different voice, Bursts out in agitation, And chants 'Bangladesh, Bangladesh...' O, my Bangladesh, Through the proclamation of your independence, This lyric of eternal flame is composed for your freedom from subjugation, A celebration of life on the runway of living.

Madison Square Garden is the comrade of our emergence; Everywhere there were posters Of the depressing face of a hunger-stricken baby Wailing with an empty plate.

Sunday– another golden day in our history– Represents solidarity of souls, This day– broiled– has now mingled In our fiery month of March, In our triumphant month of December as well. The hours from two thirty at noon to eight at night are still bright being pierced by the hands of time.

Madison Square, you are my Race Course Ground, You are my Paltan Ground too, Faces there are still shining, Still stands there a battle-field That marks our struggle for freedom.

1st August, 1971... Through your concert My country, Bangladesh emerges all over the world.

Translation: *Anis Mohammad*