

“At one crossing point in West Bengal, a slippery track through flooded fields, in mud and pouring rain we counted refugees passing at the rate of 70 a minute in a continuous stream. That is over 30,000 a day from this one point alone, day after day. It is difficult for a western mind to conceive the enormity of these numbers. Many had walked for four or more days. Saddest of all are the old people.”
– Marilyn Silverstone, Testimony of Sixty.

(“Mahanagar” in 1963, “Charulata” in 1964, and “Kapurush” in 1965) as a still photographer. Her book Amar Chokhe Satyajit is about her time and experiences with the filmmaker and his family.

Sayeeda Khanam was the first female, Muslim professional photographer of Bangladesh. She was born on December 29, 1937 in Pabna district. In 1956, she began her career as a photographer for Begum, the only newspaper dedicated to women at the time. In her photographs, we find such intimate moments as Sheikh Mujib visiting his ailing father in PG Hospital, national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam with his wife Promila Devi, and of classical musician Annapurna Devi taking lessons from her father, maestro Ustad Baba Alauddin Khan. She also photographed Mother Teresa, master painter Zainul Abedin, and Queen Elizabeth II's 1966 visit.

Recipient of the Ekushey Padak in 2019, Sayeeda Khanam passed away on August 18, 2020.

ANNE DE HENNING

"I don't think you can ever get desensitised to images of war because they're always about separation, death, destruction... the same pictures and the same awful results of what fighting brings upon the civilians, and also, of course, the fighters. So, I don't think anyone should be desensitised. I don't think anyone can get desensitised."

These words were spoken by French photojournalist Anne de Henning, born in Paris in 1945, who is among the few women photographers to have witnessed the conflicts in Vietnam and Bangladesh. She was the only female photographer who travelled to East Pakistan in April 1971, during the early stages of the war.

In March 1971, de Henning had been photographing in Nepal when she read in the news that fighting had erupted in Dhaka. At that time, the Pakistani authorities were not letting foreign journalists into the country, obviously to keep them from reporting on the atrocities against the civilian population. Upon hearing this, de Henning felt compelled to fly to Kolkata to try and get into East Pakistan and share with the world what was happening. After several failed attempts to cross the border near Kolkata, she teamed up with three colleagues: photographer Michel Laurent, AP correspondent Dennis Neeld, and CBS correspondent Patrick Forest. They hired a beat-up car, loaded it with three jerry cans of petrol, reached the border with East Pakistan further north on April 6, and managed



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A Mukti Bahini fighter with a 303 Lee Enfield rifle slung over his shoulder, Kushtia, April 8, 1971

PENNY TWEEDIE

Penelope Tweedie was born on April 30, 1940, in a farming family in Hawkhurst, Kent. She studied photography at the Guildford School of Art from 1958 to 1961 under the legendary Ifor Thomas. Her first work was with Queen Travel Magazine in 1961. Two years later, she quit to pursue a freelance career, setting her own socially concerned assignments, which included covering homelessness, teenage pregnancy, and alcoholism. She spent four decades working for charities and non-governmental organisations but suffered disappointments professionally, such as when the offer of a prominent staff position on the Daily Express was retracted after the British National Union of Journalists said it would be unthinkable to send a female photographer to a train crash.

After being turned down for commissions to cover the crisis in East Pakistan, British photojournalist Penelope Tweedie interestingly set out to photograph Air India's in-flight meals at their Heathrow kitchens in exchange for a ticket, and made her own way to Kolkata in 1971.

Once there, she was hired by The Sunday Times. Tweedie and a number of her coworkers (Simon Dring, Philip Jacobson, Bob Whittaker and Peter Gill) met in December and crossed into East Bengal by rickshaw, but they were detained as spies and imprisoned in a Kolkata jail. Once freed, all of them were photographed together by William Lovelace. She borrowed cameras after being freed, and the images she published of the war in Bangladesh depicted the suffering of refugees, as well as the bodies of Bengali intellectuals who had been killed by the retreating Pakistanis.

She worked extensively in the refugee camps. The suffering of women and malnourished children was portrayed vividly in her work. One of her photos of a dog digging out corpses from shallow graves was synonymous to the testimony provided by Friends of Liberation War

Honour recipient volunteer Anjali Lahiri (1922-2014). Tweedie worked briefly in Khulna, then travelled to Dhaka with the joint forces of Mukti Foj and the Indian Army. She visited Rayerbazar, where the mass killing of intellectuals by the Pakistani army and Al-Badr took place.

In one of Marc Riboud's photos, Tweedie is seen taking photos of the surrendered Pakistani army in Dhaka. When Bangabandhu came back to Bangladesh, she was there alongside other photographers.

On December 18, 1971, a victory rally at Dhaka Stadium put Tweedie in an unexpected position that would affect her professional career. A few Mukti Bahini irregulars started jeering at a number of prisoners who Tweedie accurately surmised would be executed for the benefit of the

international press. She did not want to capture this horror, but the two photographers who stayed went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for their photos. The Sunday Times terminated her contract the following day, which may have been a coincidence. That incident followed Tweedie for years, but she never regretted following her heart.

Tweedie was her own worst critic, and photojournalism was her passion. She took her own life on January 14, 2011. It appears she was dejected about the lack of chances in her chosen field. The National Library of Australia acquired her entire library in 2013, which was its first acquisition of the lifetime work of a female photographer.

MARILYN SILVERSTONE

Born in London in 1929, Silverstone

began to photograph professionally as a freelancer in 1955, working in Asia, Africa, Europe, Central America, and the Soviet Union. She became an associate member of Magnum Photos in 1964, a full member in 1967 (as one of the only five women members), and a contributor in 1975.

In 1959, she was sent on a three-month assignment to India, but ended up moving to New Delhi and was based there until 1973. During that time she produced a number of books, including "Bala: Child of India." In 1970, Silverstone covered the local inhabitants who survived the devastating cyclone and the tidal wave at Charkukri Mukri island of Bangladesh.

When the war broke out in 1971 and people took refuge in bordering areas, she visited Salt Lake camp hospital in Kolkata, Haringhata camp, Helencha camp, Chandranathpur camp near Silchar, Bagchara Camp in 24 Parganas, the transit camp at Agartala airport and camps near Siliguri, and took photos of the crowded camps and skeletal children. The heartbreaking stories of motherless, undernourished children and people lying in makeshift hospital beds during the cholera epidemic, and the perilous journey of refugees, were graphically portrayed in her work.

She also visited the Liberation Army training camp in the eastern sector of Bangladesh, where 600 volunteers, schoolboys, village youths and shopkeepers received training to use machine guns and light machine guns. Post-independence, she travelled to Dhaka in 1972, when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed the biggest rally ever held at the Ramna Race Course. There, she produced an iconic portrait of Bangabandhu crying while addressing the nation. From photographer Amiya Taralder's view, we can see Marilyn standing in the back of Penny Tweedie and Rashid Talukdar sitting on the left. Interestingly, Silverstone also took photographs of paintings made by children who went through the trauma of war and painted some horrifying images of the Pakistani army's torture.

Silverstone, whose photographs have appeared in many major magazines, including Newsweek, LIFE, Look, Vogue, and National Geographic, became an ordained Buddhist nun in 1977. In 1999, she returned to the US for cancer treatment. She died in the same year in Shechen Monastery near Kathmandu, which she had worked to establish and maintain.

MARY ELLEN MARK

Mary Ellen Mark was an American photographer born on March 20, 1940 in Pennsylvania. She began photographing with a Box Brownie camera at age nine. She joined Magnum Photos in 1977 and left in 1981, joining Archive Pictures. In 1988, she began her own agency.

Like Sayeeda Khanam, Mary Ellen Mark was also a unit photographer on movie sets, shooting production stills of more than 100 movies, most notably Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now (1979) and Baz Luhrmann's Australia (2008). For Look magazine, she photographed Federico Fellini shooting Satyricon (1969).

Mark was well-known for establishing strong relationships with her subjects. She published her famous book "Falkland Road: Prostitutes of



A.P correspondent Denis Neeld watches photographer Michel Laurent pin a Bangladesh flag on Anne de Henning's shirt, April 9, 1971.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE DE HENNING

to convince the border security forces to let them in.

On the way, they witnessed crowds of people getting ready to fight, but the streets were eerily empty and a lot of refugees were crowding at the station. People had also come to see the journalists on the train to share the news and appeal for help. They travelled all the way to Rajbari, guarded by the Mukti Bahini. But on the night of their arrival there, the Pakistani army was crossing gunboats to the Padma River, which posed a huge risk to them being caught and held. De Henning aimed to go in with precision and leave immediately to get the news out. She decided to return to Kolkata on her own after a week. Her colleagues gave her their films and articles.

One of her signature photos, which has been widely circulated, depicts a bare-chested freedom fighter with an old British 303 rifle over his shoulder, wrapped in a lungi, walking briskly to join his combat unit.

She flew back to Bangladesh from Kolkata in April 1972, as she wanted to return to the free country and cover Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech, where she produced some rare portraits of him in colour, in which prominent national leaders such as Tajuddin Ahmed can be seen beside him.



Penny Tweedie in Dhaka taking photos of surrendered Pakistani Army. PHOTO © MARC RIBOUD/FONDS MARC RIBOUD AU MNAAG