

SHEIK MUJIB'S NINE MONTHS IN
PAKISTANI PRISON

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AHMAD SALIM

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Dedication
To,
SHEIKH HASINA
The Daughter of Bangabandhu
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

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Preface

Events have a way of sorting out the sheep from the goats. But so complex are human beings that, when it comes to us, we turn out to have the sheep and the goat blended in such a way that nobody can pigeonhole us. I am talking about the events of 1971; the army's crackdown on Dhaka on 25 March 1971; the Mukti Bahini's militant struggle against the army and the war which ended on 16 December 1971 making an addition to the map of the world—the independent state of Bangladesh. Can someone write an account saying exactly who was evil and who was good? Perhaps not, if only because many people commit acts of aggression in the belief that they are doing good. But such moral nuances aside, one can take sides with reference to universal moral norms.

For instance, all those who agree that murder and giving pain is morally reprehensible will agree that the military crackdown on Dhaka was wrong—not a tactical error alone (which it was) but morally reprehensible. They will also agree that decades of oppression will lead to ethnic assertion. The leader who mobilizes his people against this oppression will be a hero and the arrest of

such a leader (Sheikh Mujeeb ur Rahman) is, to say the least, a highly provocative act. Perhaps the apologists of the state will deny that there was injustice and oppression at all. Perhaps they will argue that the leader was a traitor. But a little reflection should change these views. That there was injustice is well documented. Let them read the accounts of the attempted suppression of the Bengali language,¹ the financial and power imbalance between East and West Pakistan² and so on. Let them, moreover, remember the contempt West Pakistanis often exhibited for Bengalis —something which even supporters of the state noted.³ Such evidence should be compelling unless one does not want to be convinced for some psychological perversity or sheer stupidity and ignorance. As for the other charge, that of treason. Well, that is a question of point of view. For the Bengalis, whose numbers exceeded those of West Pakistanis, Sheikh Mujeeb ur Rahman was not a traitor. He was the father of the nation.

The point is to realise that there is a clash of world views between the West Pakistanis and the Bengalis. But let us not remain prisoners of our world views. Let us get out of them to understand the 'Other'. And that is where Ahmad Salim comes in. He himself is not a prisoner of the typical West Pakistani point of view. Indeed, if any kind of prisoner, he is a prisoner of his conscience and intellect. His intellect helps him see through the lies and the myths the state creates to confuse the rest of us. And his conscience—it sends him to jail! In this case he wrote a poem on the death of students in Dhaka which landed him in jail.

Lal Hussain! O Lalon's kin,

Rise up! In Bengal your Madhus are being
massacred

They shot at the sons of Lalon time and again
In '48 in '52 and later on to.....
And today they are ablaze with the songs of
Tagore and Nazrul.

In this book Ahmad Salim tells us about Sheikh Mujeeb's arrest, incarceration in different jails in West Pakistan, mock trial and release by Z.A. Bhutto in January 1972. Such a book was needed for a long time since we in Pakistan do not want to remember the fateful year of 1971. Indeed, except for an outstanding history by Hasan Zaheer,⁴ all other books do not even give the facts correctly let alone the Bengali point of view. We want to shut our eyes to the killed youths; close our ears to the screams of the raped young women and prefer not to be told about the silenced intellectuals. But this is not the way to cease being prisoners of our own myths; our distorted versions of reality. Let us write, talk, paint-remember 1971 in all its brutal reality. Let us apologise to the dead. Let us seek understanding and forgiveness. It will not change the past but it may change the future. It will help us forge stronger ties with the Bangladesh of the future and, even more importantly, it may help us avoid the creation of another Bangladesh. Ahmad Salim's brief narrative helps us move ahead to the achievement of this goal.

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Note : The author requested Dr. Tariq Rahman to contribute this preface not because of his eminence as a linguist and a scholar but because he had decided to resign his commission as an armoured corps officer in 1971 on the grounds that he disagreed with the military action in Dhaka.

Ahmad Salim

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan's Failure in Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).
3. Siddiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977). See 'Chapter 1' for the behaviour of West Pakistanis towards Bengalis.
4. Hasan Zaheer, *The Separation of East Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

NIGHT OF THE GENERALS

March 27, 1971, a lovely day in Lahore. The city was full of flowers, colours, and fragrance. The writers, poets and intellectuals were gathering at Shah Hussain College, to go to the Shalimar Gardens in Baghbanpura to attend the annual Urs of the sixteenth century Punjabi saint-poet, Madhu Lal Hussain. The occasion provides an opportunity to dance with people the traditional dances of the Punjab. The devotees close to the shrine prefer *Bhangra* on the beat of dhol. They exhaust themselves dancing ecstatically. This has been going on for centuries and would continue because Lal Hussain is a symbol of protest in the Punjab. For he with Dulla Bhatti rebelled against the Mughal authority during the reign of Akbar the Great. He was haunted by Akbar's spies. *Dhamal* at the shrine in the last week of March is not just merriment but an expression of desire for freedom, love and justice.

But in 1971, the events of March 26 were haunting me like a nightmare. The entire party was sad with the reports of genocide in East Bengal. I proposed to them that this year instead of *dhamal* we should simply walk from Shah Hussain College to Lal Hussain's shrine bare footed with our heads down to express our shock and grief at what had happened with our Bengali brothers. Led by Professor Manzoor Ahmad, the Principal of Shah Hussain college and Shafqat Tanveer Mirza of Majlis-i-Shah

Hussain, our procession started from the college. It was the night of the Saint Madhu Lal Hussain who believed that the night grew long without his friend Madhu. In and around the saint's tomb this time, the songs of the devotees were louder than before and people were dancing in a state of frenzy. The ritual is that when you are at the shrine you must dance for the saint — and just keep dancing till you can't hold your head on your shoulders, until you almost bump into yourself or into the next dancer who was taking a hundred turns with each new beat. This is the anguish in the moment or its ecstasy. There is no pain on the face, just an expression of abandonment that comes to men not when they are awake or when they are asleep. It is devotion at its purest. But my steps were going wrong and on my lips were the verses of my new poem :

Lal Hussain! O Lalon's kin,

Rise up! In Bengal your Madhus are being massacred

They shot at the songs of Lalon time and again

In '48 in '52 and later on too

And today they are ablaze with the songs of Tagore and Nazrul.

Rise up Lal Hussain, Madhu is lonely, embrace him.

Combat with your songs the bullet whistling towards him.

Get up Lal Hussain,

Dulla Bhattis of Bengal are filing-up

Get up poet, where have you left your gun?

My poet, the night grows long without Madhu.

A few days later, I had come to know that the first target as the tanks rolled into Dhaka on the night of March

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25, were the students. The University canteen, which had traditionally been the centre of students politics, had been burnt and the owner of the canteen Madhu had been shot dead. In a killing rampage of only an hour and a half, four members of his family were martyred. Madhu Da had a big family — five sons and six daughters. The wife of his eldest son Ranjit also lived with them. Ranjit worked for an insurance company. Madhu Da, Ranjit, Bina Rani Dey were all killed at the same time. Mother, Jugamaya Dey, met the same fate alongwith her husband, son and son's wife, later the same night. Madhu lived in Dhaka University Shib Bari quarters in flat, 3/D. Such a big family lived in this small house. But the big family was no more. A military attack had eliminated the entire family in one night.¹

The people of East Pakistan were pained to see their overwhelming mandate for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman being illegally reversed by a megalomaniac general. Yahya Khan took power on March 25, 1969, and on the same day two years later he ordered the massacre the Bengalis. In December 1970, the first ever free elections were held in Pakistan. The result was a tidal victory for the Awami League in East Pakistan. Awami League had won 167 out of total East Pakistan's 169 seats in a House of 300 seats. It gave the Awami League an absolute majority throughout the country and entitled them to form the central government.

After the elections in December 1970, negotiations took place between Yahya Khan, Z.A. Bhutto and Sheikh Mujib. According to Muhammad Wasim² the final drama of the dismemberment of Pakistan was unfolded in four stages: the complex electoral process leading to the Awami League's victory in December 1970, the tense political bargaining between Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto

during the election and the postponement of the National Assembly session in March 1971, Mujib's rule in East Pakistan from 1st March to 25th March, 1971, and the subsequent military action which led to the surrender of the Pakistan army at the hands of Indian army.

On March 2, 1971, the illusion of a united Pakistan faded into oblivion. On March 6, 1971 Yahya Khan declared : "... Let me make it absolutely clear that no matter what happens, as long as I am in command of the Pakistan Armed Forces and Head of the State, I will ensure complete and absolute integrity of Pakistan"

It was a cruel joke on the part of the military dictator. Mujib immediately reacted. On March 7, he demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Martial Law and the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people as a precondition to attending the National Assembly session. He criticised Zulfikar Bhutto for obstructing the transfer of power. Bhutto maintained that the rule of majority for the whole country could only be possible if Awami League agreed to drop its six points programme and before the new constitution is made, power should be transferred to two majority parties, his Pakistan Peoples Party in West Pakistan and the Awami League in the East Pakistan.

Yahya Khan, faced with the Awami League's legislative strength and Mujib's de facto assumptions of power, rushed to Dhaka on March 15, to work out a political settlement. But it was like giving oxygen to a dying patient. On March 20, the combined advisors of Awami League and Yahya agreed on a draft proclamation which contained the outlines of an interim arrangement for transfer of power. But this agreement was not acceptable to Bhutto. His alternative proposals were to call the National Assembly session first, or to allow him more time to be negotiated directly with Mujib.

On March 21, having received "satisfactory clarifications", Bhutto joined the Dhaka-negotiations which were a complete failure and the meeting of the National Assembly scheduled for March 23 was again postponed. This chaotic situation ended with the formal dismemberment of Pakistan on December 16, 1971.

The decision to impose a military solution on East Pakistan was the result of a well considered policy. In West Pakistan, the general opinion was that the army action was a preemptive strike to check Awami League's conspiracy to dismember Pakistan. The world opinion on the other hand, widely maintained that Yahya deliberately dragged on talks with Mujib to gain time for the reinforcement of troops and was not serious in a negotiated settlement.

On March 21st a draft Presidential proclamation prepared by Colonel Hassan, member of the official negotiating team, was handed over to Awami League for perusal. After thoroughly examining it on March 22nd, the Awami League team met Yahya's team on 23rd. When they arrived, they were told by M.M. Ahmed that the six points scheme could be given effect to with some minor practical adaptations. At this Lt. Gen. Peerzada proposed that in order to examine the implications of financial and economic provisions, M.M. Ahmed should separately sit with Awami League team. Awami League initially refused to accept the proposal because they felt that Yahya's advisers were trying to prolong discussions on each clause in order to buy time for the military crackdown. After some discussion they agreed and March 23rd was spent in discussions. By the evening of 24th the Awami League had concluded discussions, however, a clause by-clause heading of the entire draft proclamation remained to be finalized.

The Awami League proposed that Dr. Kamal Hussain and Justice Connelius should sit together through the night of 24th to finalise the draft so that it could be put up before Sheikh Mujib and Yahya the next day. It is on record that Justice Connelius agreed but Lt. Gen Peerzada held him back saying, "No, we may discuss for a while, then we may meet tomorrow morning." When the Bengali team suggested that a time may be fixed for the following day, Peerzada again intervened and said, "This could be done by contacting him on the telephone." The Awami League team waited the whole day for a call from the official team but it never came.

The minority parties' leaders, Sardar Shaukat Hayat, Maulana Mufti Mahmood and Abdul Wali Khan were also in Dhaka and had met Yahya and Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman. Sardar Shaukat recalls:³ "We left Dhaka at 2:30 on the afternoon of 24th March 1971." Before leaving Dhaka, Mumtaz rang up Mujib ostensibly to say him goodbye but was informed that Mujib was still in the meeting. Our hopes soared. We thought perhaps some good may come out of the protracted deliberations. We were to be sorely disappointed.

"At twelve noon Mujib rang up. He told us that he had lost and requested Mian Sahib and me to leave Dhaka that day as it would be difficult to make his people distinguish between friends and foes. He went on to say, Shaukat Bhai, we may not meet in this world but we are sure to be together in the next as we had been together in the creation of our homeland Pakistan. It was a poignant farewell. Both Mumtaz and I were deeply touched by it."

Recalling his last meeting with Sheikh Mujib on March 24, Wali Khan record:⁴ "I had told Mujib that he was holding parleys with Yahya and Bhutto, and their advisors

were also holding meetings. Besides, I told him that Bhutto had said that there were only three parties involved in this issue. I also begged his leave as I was there for two weeks and was a bit tired. Further more, I said to him that it looked as if you people had agreed on policy matters and were only working out the details, so we should be allowed to go back. I was saying the same to General Yahya. Sheikh Mujib snapped, Yes, Wali Khan, leave this unfortunate land by first available flight. I then said, Why are you so dishearted ? At this Sheikh Mujib confided to me that the Generals had held a meeting from 12 noon to 7 a.m., yesterday, at the President's House and had decided to shoot their way through— the same words which the President had uttered, last evening. And when he came to bid farewell, he embraced me and said, 'Wali Khan! Pray for us; these people want our blood and they will have lot of Bengali blood to shed.' Then he said that it was probably the last time when we were seeing each other. I could visibly see tears in the eyes of Sheikh Mujib."

Mutmaz Ali Bhutto and some other members of the People's Party and Qayum Khan had also left Dhaka on the same day. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and some other PPP leaders, however, had stayed behind. Bhutto was still in Dhaka, when the holocaust began: He recalls: "At about 10:30 at night after finishing our dinner, we went to our rooms. An hour later we were awakened by the noise of gun-fire. A number of my friends came to my room and we saw the Army in action. We witnessed from our hotel room the military operations for about three hours. A number of places were ablaze and we saw the demolition of the office of the newspaper, The People. This local English daily had indulged in crude and unrestrained provocation against the Army and West Pakistan. With the horizon ablaze, my thoughts turned to the past and to the future. I wondered

what was in store for us. Here in front of my eyes I saw the death and destruction of our own people. It was difficult to think straight. Many thoughts crossed my mind. Had we reached the point of no return — or would time heal the wounds and open a new chapter in the history of Pakistan? How wished I knew the answer".⁵

Bhutto goes on: "If the regime had not acted on the night of the 25th, on the following day the Awami League would have declared the independence of Bangladesh. Everything was made ready for it - the state of their armed preparedness, the concentration of their forces and the barricades on the streets were visible proof of this. The general strike called for the 27th was obviously a blind to lead the regime astray. The intention was to proclaim the independence of Bangladesh on the 26th of March after Friday prayers." ⁶

On March 26th 1971, Yahya Khan in his address said, "I have ordered them (the Armed forces) to do their duty and fully restore the authority of the Government". Two years to the very day after proclaiming Martial Law and pledging himself as he expressed it, to strive to restore democratic institutions in the country, General Yahya found it necessary to employ the armed forces against the people of one province and to ban the political party which had secured an overall majority in the National Assembly. It is said while leaving for West Pakistan Yahya Khan told General Tikka Khan at the Dhaka Airport on March 25, "Sort them out!" In the ensuing weeks this phrase was on the lips of many army officers.

'Why did you initiate the genocide in Dhaka?' a journalist had asked Tikka Khan. His reply was that he didn't initiate any genocide. Some terrorists were making preparations at the Jagannath Hall to attack the petrol force with fire arms. After that, I sent some force to

Jagannath Hall. It is true that some Hindus died on the occasion. When two groups fight or are in a combat it can't be called genocide."

The students, no doubt, were warned, but those who were still around later said that most of them thought they would only be arrested. Led by American-supplied M-24 World War II tanks. One column of troops sped to Dhaka University shortly after midnight. Troops took over the British Council Library and used it as a fire base from which to shell nearby dormitory areas.

The first detailed story about crackdown captioned, 'How Dhaka paid for a "United Pakistan"?' was filed by the Daily Telegraph's Simon Dring. In his report, Dring gave the first eyewitness account of the terror campaign which Pakistani generals had designed to "SAVE" the "INTEGRITY" of the country.

Simon Drings further records that it caught them completely by surprise, some 200 students were killed in Iqbal Hall, the headquarters of the militantly anti-government students' union. Two days later, bodies were still smouldering in burnt-out rooms, others were scattered outside, more floated in a nearby lake, an art student lay sprawled across his easel.⁷ The military removed many of the bodies, but the 30 bodies still there could never have accounted for all the blood in the corridors of the Iqbal Hall.

"At another hall, reportedly, soldiers buried the dead in a hastily dug mass grave which was then bull-dozed over by tanks. People living near the university were caught in the fire too, and 200 yards of shanty houses running alongside a railway line were destroyed." Even after five days, there was still a pool of blood on the stairs in the house of Professor Jotirmoy Guha Thakurta and his wife Bashanti.

There was a fierce battle between the Bengali policemen and the troops at the Rajarbagh police headquarters. The late Jahanara Imam noted that most of the policemen were killed and rest had retreated. Many university professors including Prof. Moniruzzaman, Dr. G.C. Dev. Dr. F.R. Khan and Dr. A. Maqadir had been killed. The offices of "The People" and "The Ittefaq" had been burnt. Most of the market places and slums had been burnt to ashes including Rayer Bazar, Thathari Bazar. Naya Bazar and Shakaripotti. There were troops in the Dhaka club on the night of the 25th and till the morning of 30th March the dead bodies of some of the waiters were lying there.

On March 26, Yahya spoke to West Pakistani people. As David Loshak, in his remarkable account "Pakistan Crisis" remarks,⁸ Yahya Khan denounced Mujib's non-cooperation movement as "an act of treason" and Mujib and his party as "enemies of Pakistan" whose "crime will not go unpunished." This extraordinary and dishonest broadcast rang the death knell of the "integrity" of Pakistan, for "punishment" of the movement which had won most of the votes in December not only spelled the end of any voluntary union between the two wings.

"Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman's action in starting his non-cooperation movement is an act of treason. He and his party have defied lawful authority for over three weeks. They have insulted Pakistan's flag and defied the photograph of the Father of the Nation. They have tried to run a parallel government. They have created terror, turmoil, and insecurity. Millions of our Bengali brethren and those who have settled in East Pakistan are living in a state of panic. The armed forces located in East Pakistan have been submitted to taunts and insults of all kinds," The President said.

"I should have taken action against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his collaborators weeks ago, but I had to try my utmost to handle the situation in such a manner as not to jeopardize my plan of peaceful transfer of power. In my eagerness to achieve this aim I kept on tolerating one illegal act after another, and at the same time I explored every possible avenue for arriving at some reasonable solution," and alleged that Sheikh Mujib didn't respond in a constructive way. "Yahya Khan said that Awami League had flouted governmental authority even when the President was in Dhaka and he will not let go unpunished. "Mujib's obstinacy, obduracy, and absolute refusal to talk. These people are enemies of Pakistan and want East Pakistan to break away completely from the country. He had attacked the solidarity and integrity of this country. We will not allow some power-hungry and unpatriotic people to destroy this country and play with the destiny of 120 million people." Yahya Khan tried to give the impression that he had ordered the army to restore the writ of the state and was honest in transfer power to the elected representatives.

Loshak maintained that⁹ Yahya's speech was only a rationalization for what was intended to be unknown and unreported butchery of the Bengali people and for the steps taken to achieve it at the very time that the president still purported to be seeking a political solution. For this, by the Daily Telegraph's Simon Drings, Yahya Khan deserves to be condemned.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DAY AFTER

Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman was arrested from his Dhanmandi residence on the same night. He spent his last few hours exhorting large crowds in Dhaka to prepare for supreme sacrifice. As all chances of a settlement were gone, he issued a series of his last despairing orders, to sever the East wing from West Pakistan and left for his home to wait for his arrest. Most of his senior Awami League colleagues, lacking the courage to be martyred, started fleeing to India.

"Early in the evening they almost surrounded my house with commandos. They had planned to kill me if I had come out of my house, and then blame my own people for the outrage." Sheikh Mujib told David Frost in an interview on January 26, 1972. "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, they would have said, had been killed by the extremists of Bangladesh while the government was negotiating with him, and Yahya Khan had no choice but to take action against that."¹

"They would have killed my whole people." Sheikh Mujib continued, "I thought it would be better that I die and save my people who love me so much."² In fact, the Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) much earlier had indicated about his arrest.

In the first week of March, a message was sent from Dhaka by a RAW operative to Calcutta about the imminence of a crackdown on Awami Leaguers. This was supported by

reports of movement of troops from Karachi to Chittagong, and armour from the border of Dhaka. Sheikh Mujib's friends tried to convince him to leave Dhaka, but he refused. He, however, agreed that those Awami League leaders who want to leave may do so. A few hours before the crackdown most of them made their way to India in various disguises.

Anthony Mascaren, a reporter for the Morning News Karachi, who visited Sheikh Mujib's abandoned house a few weeks after the event in his book *'Rape of bangladesh'* gives a detailed account of what happened on the night of March 25, 1971. Around 8 p.m. on that fateful night an unidentified cycle rickshaw hastily pulled into the lane leading to 32 Dhanmandi and stopped outside Sheikh Mujib's residence. The driver was out of breath. He had peddled all the way from the cantonment with an urgent message for Bangabandhu. The unsigned message in Bengali was terse: "Your house would be raided tonight."³ He summoned Awami League's hard core, told them about the message and suggested them to disperse at once and go underground. Later, when asked that why didn't he himself go into hiding he answered: "I must spare the people. If I am not here, Yahya khan will burn Dhaka to the ground in his effort to find me."

According to different press reports, around 11 p.m. troops surrounded the Intercontinental Hotel, Dhaka, and ordered more than thirty press reporters staying in there to stay inside the hotel or they would shoot them. Soon after that army crackdown started in different parts of the city and automatic weapons started pounding away at the city.

Before 11 p.m. Sirajul Alam Khan along with some other student leaders had met Sheikh Mujib at his residence and urged him to issue a declaration of

independence on his behalf and call upon the East Bengal Rifles (EBR) East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), Police and Ansaars to resist the Pakistan army. The Sheikh readily agreed. Later Sheikh Mujibur Rahman decided to stay at his home and wait for the events to unfold themselves. Although he feared bloodshed and violence but not at the scale with which it took place : Thousands of people were killed before the night was over. He didn't expect the operation to go beyond the arrest of party leadership and activists.

Meanwhile there were some family matters to be addressed as well. His wife, Begum Fazilatunessa, two daughters, and two of his three young sons were all with him in the house. He could not send his wife away, for she would refuse to go, but it was necessary that his two daughters should leave immediately. The elder daughter, Hasina, was twenty four, married and pregnant. The younger daughter, Rehana, ten years younger, was a student at the Dhanmandi girls' school. They were both taken to a friend's house. His wife, two sons, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russell, who he had named after the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, stayed with him. Jamal was seventeen, and Russell was six. Another son, Sheikh Kamal, was nineteen, a student at Dhaka University, and could be expected to look after himself. He was not at home that night, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not know where he was.

After deciding to keep his wife and his two sons with him, Sheikh Mujib was quite calm. Friends and well wishers kept calling to find out about his well being. This irritated him. "What do they expect?" he asked. "I am staying here because this is what I shall do. If I ran away, I would be capitulating to their designs." He perhaps, thought that very little of importance except for his own

arrest would happen. This was nothing new to him. He had been arrested five times, and each time they had attempted to break him but had always failed. They could have killed him, but that was a matter of indifference to him.⁴

According to a UPI report at around 12.50 a.m. after several attempts, the agency could through to Sheikh Mujib's residence and political headquarters on the phone. The unidentified person who answered the phone told them that Sheikh Mujib was there and that Awami League workers had blocked all the roads approaching his home. He also told that they have heard that two Awami League workers were killed by soldiers at one road block. The agency also reported that their efforts to get some more information from some western diplomats also were fruitless as they too didn't know what was happening. However, people kept calling Sheikh Mujib's residence to inquire about the situation. His servant gave an assuring reply.

Sheikh Mujib calmly puffing on his pipe sure of the fact that he had done everything that he needed to, waited for his arrest. By midnight he realized that things were changing rapidly. The telephone was ringing continually, the sounds of gunfires could be heard, and there was distant shouting. He knew nothing yet about the attack on the university, but he knew that the barracks of the East Pakistan Rifles and the police headquarters at Rajar Bagh were under fire. This could mean only that the Pakistani Army was determined to wipe out all the pro-Bengali military installations in the country. He dictated to a friend in the Central Telegraph Office the following short message to be sent down all wires. "The Pakistani Army has attacked police lines at Rajar Bagh and East Pakistan Rifles headquarters at Pilkhana at midnight. Gather

strength to resist and prepare for a war of independence." The military had made the first irretrievable mistakes: They had attacked the university and the police before seizing the telephone exchange.

"Gather strength to resist and prepare for a war of independence" was the most fateful sentence he had ever spoken. It was also the most dangerous because it was enough for the military authorities to charge him with treason. In a summary trial they could sentence him to death.⁵

Sheikh Mujib's wife, many months later, while remembering the events of that gory night narrated that her husband was unusually calm and remained calm as the noise of the shelling grew louder and news of the troop movements in Dhaka kept coming until the telephones went dead.

Sheikh Mujib realised that his two bodyguards who were hovering over him protectively would be of no use when the troops would come to take him. Raza and Moheuddin both were well built, sturdy men, absolutely devoted to him and had served him for many years were surprised when Sheikh Mujib told them to leave. They wanted to stay. Sheikh Mujib got angry and said, "I order you to go!" and they left the room and went downstairs. Then he asked his sixty-year-old maid servant Rana, explaining her politely that it would be dangerous for her to remain there. She, too, refused to go. Since she had always won all her arguments with him, he relented. The house boy also refused to go.

Later when people asked him why did he simply wait to be arrested, his reply was that there was very little he could have done. It was not a time for oratory, for giving detailed orders, or for mapping strategy. A nation of seventy-five million people was about to be plunged into war. "At such moments silence is the best strategy."⁶

Hence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went into his small study. Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, were his favourite writers and the study was full of their works. He leafed through some books and then wrote up his diary, which he had kept since he was an under graduate at Dhaka University, except for while he was in prison. Later he would say that one of the mistakes he made that night was not to safeguard his books and diaries, which could have been buried in the garden or given to friends for safekeeping. After that night he never saw them again.⁷

Major Bilal had a very special mission. At about 1.30 a.m. he was on his way to accomplish it with one tank, one armoured personnel carrier (APC), and a truck-load of troops, under his command. He was leading them towards Dhanmandi and they stopped in front of Sheikh Mujib's house. For a short period, most of his soldiers fired at that single house.⁸

Some shots were fired at the roof and through a window on the top floor. Robert Payne notes that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was in the bed. As soon as he heard the shooting, he sprang up and pushed his wife and youngest son into the bathroom. There were at least a hundred soldiers surrounding the house, and this disproportionate force suggested that the army believed his house had been transformed into a defense post. The soldiers were still firing into the air, and by this time the house had been completely encircled.

Although he had been calm all evening, Sheikh Mujib was now raged. There was something grotesque about the massive attack on a small unprotected house. There seemed to be hundreds of soldiers in the house and orders were being uttered in harsh voices, and the noise was deafening.⁹

" I was with my family in my bedroom ... I took leave of my wife ... She did not say a word. I only kissed her. A

farewell kiss, and we came out. I said you can stop shooting; I am here. What are you shooting for? Then they started moving from all sides ... to charge me. Then accidentally, one officer was here. He caught hold of me like this. 'Don't kill him' he said."¹⁰

"Sheikh you should come down", an officer called out in English on the megaphone. Mujibur Rahman stepped out onto his balcony and said, "Yes, I am ready, but there is no need to fire. You could have told me on the telephone and I would have come." The officer then walked into the yard and told Mujib that he was under arrest. Sheikh Mujib wearing maroon dressing gown and pyjamas, came where a young captain was standing. "You will come with me, Sir," he said in a firm, flat voice. Then they all drove away.¹¹

"They took me, dragged me and started raining blows from the back on my head and hit me with gun butts. They started pushing me here and there. The officer caught me but still they started pushing. And dragged me down and said "come on" I said, "wait. Allow me to bring my pipe and tobacco and say goodbye to my wife". I grabbed my pipe, then came again. I saw my wife standing here with my two children. Nobody was there and they brought the pipe for me, and clothes and something in a small suitcase. I went away. But I could see the fire from all sides and firing of the mortars all over Dhaka. They took me from here."¹²

Before entering the heavily armoured Toyota land cruiser outside the house, he ordered the soldiers to put in his luggage, a small bag with some clothes, which he had deliberately left behind. He looked grim, and expected to be shot before the night was over.

The young captain congratulated himself for being able to accomplish his mission without much effort and trouble. In this he was wrong. A night watchman standing near the garden fence next door was shot dead by the soldiers. They mistook him for a freedom fighter.¹³

"After his arrest Sheikh Mujib was kept in Dhaka Cantonment," accounts Major (Rtd) S.G. Jilani ADC to General Tikka Khan. "He was a very important security prisoner. We feared that some foreign countries, particularly India would try to help him to escape. His whereabouts were kept secret and was not kept at one place. Arrangements to send him to West Pakistan were twice cancelled fearing that the information has been leaked to India and the Indians may try to intercept the flight." After picking him up from his home Mujib was taken to the under construction National Assembly building.

An hour later another army truck arrived on the scene. This time the soldiers had a different mission. They had come to destroy the house and they did it in a manner worthy of an occupation army. According to Anthony Mascaren, "the only sign of life there was a large grey cat which came out and solemnly looked at us; three hens pecking in the dust and about a dozen pigeons in an assortment of cages behind the house. Bangabandhu's home had that haunted aura of abandonment. I was to meet time and again in other parts of East Bengal -- row of houses, whole villages and towns ghosted by people fleeing the terror."¹⁴

In late July, Amir Taheri of 'Kayhan International' also visited the house, and it gave the look of a haunted house. Most of the windows were broken and there were bullet marks on almost every wall.¹⁵ In the modest room that housed Mujib, Taheri found unopened letters, invitations to weddings and functions and pages of undecipherable scribbling in Bengali. All the letters had come in mid-March but Sheikh Mujib had no time to open them.

"On his desk we found Sir Ivor Jennings' "Constitutional Problems of Pakistan" dedicated to Mujib by his teacher, one Zuberi." Inside the cover Mr Zuberi

had written 'Politics leads to power but knowledge is power, too.' And Mujib had added that this book he had read every time, he had been imprisoned. This time, however, he did not have time to take the book along with him.

In other rooms there were books and records scattered everywhere as well as withered flowers, black flags and party slogans. The whole house looked like a place where a big party had been wrecked by some vengeful gate-crashers. ¹⁶

His village house was also not spared. In January 1972, he told Frost : "I wanted to save the lives of the patriots, but the brutes, after arresting me, destroyed my precious home. Both my father, ninety, and my mother, eighty years of age were living in my precious house, in the centre of the village. The army dragged my parents from the house and burned the house in front of them. They had no shelter." ¹⁷

"Why did you arrest Sheikh Mujib?" A journalist asked Tikka Khan. Tikka Khan replied that his coordination officer came running with a three band radio and said, "Sir, listen! Shetkh Sahib is declaring independence. And I myself listened to the declaration of independence at a particular frequency on the radio So I had no option but to arrest him."

"If Sheikh Mujib had gone to India along with Mr Tajuddin, in that case, what would you have done, Sir?" asked the journalist. "I know very well that a leader like Mujib would not desert his people. I would have searched for him in Dhaka, and wouldn't have left a single house unsearched. I had no intention to arrest Tajuddin or any other leader like him. That is why they could leave Dhaka so easily."

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRISONER

There are various conflicting accounts of how and when Sheikh Mujib was flown out of Dhaka. However, according to Amir Taheri's account in the 'Kayhan International', he was kept in Lyalpur (now Faisalabad) Jail.¹ His world consisted of four walls, a bed, a window so high that he could only have a fleeting view of the sky. It was a world he knew well for he had been imprisoned before. He often used to tell that except for his first short confinement he had always been kept in solitary confinement. "When they want to break you, this is their favourite weapon. In many cases they succeed."²

The sun rose, the shadows lengthened, darkness came, and there was only the small cell. The guards brought his food and then vanished, leaving him to his endless meditations. He did not know what town he was in, and if he had known, it would have been a matter of indifference to him. All that he knew was it was somewhere in West Pakistan. He used to wait for the moment when suddenly the cell door would be burst open and there would be a man with a machine gun standing there.³

However he was not physically tortured while in jail.⁴ "[My jailers] never dared to touch me because they knew I would kill myself if they went for that. Those poor officers who looked after me knew nothing. They used to come in and say salaam [greetings]. The worst thing was being kept

o long in solitary confinement. I had no connection ~~with~~ the outside world, no papers, no books, no letters from my family-nothing up to Dec. 27. The cell was always dark and cramped, and I saw nobody for the whole nine months except the officers who were guarding me and the people at the mock trial."⁵

The prison guards knew that he was an important prisoner, whose life was likely to be brief. Every week the prison governor despatched to Islamabad a report on his behaviour full of inanities like, he had taken food, he had not taken food, he had marched up and down his small cell, he had slept well or badly. President Yahya Khan was more interested in the statements he made, but apart from the obligatory "Salaam" in answer to the same greeting by the guards when they entered his cell, he remained silent.⁶

People all over the world committed to people's right to independence had started supporting Bangladesh liberation movement. In a letter to Yahya Khan, dated 2 April, the Soviet President, Nikolai Podgorny, expressed concern over 'the arrest and persecution of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other political leaders'⁷ and appealed for "most immediate" measures so as to put an end to bloodshed and repression against the population of East Pakistan and[to bring about a] peaceful political settlement. At some time during Yahya's negotiations with Sheikh Mujib, the Soviet Counsel General in Dhaka had called on the President. On 28 March, the Soviet Counsel General in Karachi had conveyed to the Pakistan government verbal message from Podgorny, seeking information on the events in East Pakistan. At the end of March, Yahya wrote to Premier Kosygin, explaining the background of the army action, and requested his help in finding a solution to the problem created by Indian interference.⁸

The April 2, letter was the first formal communication of Soviet views. Budapest Peace Conference, Toronto Conference of Concerned People, Gandhi Peace Institute Seminar, Americans International Council Conference, Commission of Churches on International Affairs, International Commission of Jurists and many such assemblies showed great interest in Bangladesh issue. They asked for an end to military repression, release of Sheikh Mujib, suspension of assistance to Pakistan, relief for the refugees and above all for a political solution of the crisis. A very strong lobby grew up in the British parliament and in the United States Congress urging suspension of all assistance to Pakistan and calling for a positive United Nations' role in the political solution of the crisis in Bangladesh. Refugees relief evoked interest in almost all the countries of the world. One of the hallmarks of this concern was the Bangladesh support concert organised by Pundit Ravi Shankar and George Harrison, in New York in August.' ⁹

The concern about the life of Sheikh Mujib was not baseless. Roedad Khan remembers that the question of Mujib's fate was raised by General Gul Hassan at one of the regular meetings which used to be held by Yahya Khan in the GHQ during April. The issue was formulated as a question, and Yahya went round the table asking each one, liquidation 'with or without trial' Some, including the two civilian participants, suggested he should be tried, but others, including the profunder, recommended 'without trial'. These were euphoric times; many senior officials regretted that the evil had not been eliminated in the first flush of army action. ¹⁰

Radio Australia reported that on the night of March 26, at 0018 hours after Mujib's arrest, Gen. Yahya Khan is

quoted to have said in private that "The Sheikh must die".¹¹ Even before the so called trial, Yahya was toying the idea of killing him quietly. He was acutely aware that he was treading a dangerous ground, and at the same time he was quite unable to disguise his hope that the prisoner would soon be dead. In July 1971 he said: "The Bengali leader is alive and well in a West Pakistani Jail. But I cannot vouch for Sheikh Mujib's life beyond today. He will be tried and that does not mean that I will shoot him tomorrow. He can die a natural death. He does no labour, has a small room with a bed, a fan, hot water, and a doctor in attendance. "My generals are pushing for a military trial for Mujib and for his execution. I have agreed, and the trial will be held soon."¹²

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was aware that his life depended upon the whims of the military dictator. He was, therefore, in the same position as the Bengalis during the first weeks of the massacre. "I was ready to be executed," he said. "A man who is ready to die, nobody can kill him." He knew nothing about the events that were taking place in East Pakistan, but he could guess much. If East Pakistan had been overrun by Yahya Khan's troops, if the Awami League had surrendered, then he would be killed. As long as Yahya Khan could find some use for him as a hostage, he would be permitted to live. He was allowed no newspapers, no books, no radio. He was given tobacco, his only luxury. Meanwhile he kept a count of the days, recited the Koran, gazed at the tiny patch of sky, and gave himself up to the interminable silences of prison.¹³

There were conflicting accounts about Sheikh Mujib and his family to create confusion about Bangabandhu. It was said that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's wife, who was under house arrest in Dhaka, was flown to Karachi, according to a reliable report received from Mujibnagar today, reported UNI. She was taken from her house at Dhanmandi area to the airport escorted by army jeeps and

put on board a Karachi bound plane. It was not known whether she was being detained in Karachi or some other place in West Pakistan.¹⁴ It was also reported that in June Sheikh Mujib went on a hunger strike but he agreed to eat when his wife and children were taken to see him. During the past few weeks he had been writing feverishly. No one knows what he wrote but some people say he was preparing his defence for the time he goes on trial.

Then it was said that he had gone mad and makes unintelligible "speeches" for hours. "But", notes Amir Taheri, "I have first hand information that this is not true. The Awami League leader is quite sound and has neither been tortured nor treated with disrespect."¹⁵

The Urdu daily Imroze which was managed by the sponsored National Press Trust quoting "well-informed sources" said Sheikh Mujib was being given special treatment and that a Government doctor examined him daily. "Imroze" claimed that Sheikh Mujib had two attendants. He received all the national newspapers daily, but no one was allowed to visit him. Some newspaper also published details of Sheikh Mujib's daily diet which included fish, rice, eggs, vegetables fruit, bread, butter to show that he was being well looked after.¹⁶

The guards, of course, knew who he was, and they treated him with respect, perhaps because they felt that a change in political fortunes was possible and he might assume the high office of the prime minister or even that of the president. This deference was expressed in, in half-smiles, and occasional whispers. But he knew during those long months in prison that enclosed in a vast cone of silence was little or no hope of escape in the foreseeable future. What sustained him was his integrity, his absolute refusal to believe that anyone or anything could break his spirits, and a strange, almost mystical belief in the

support of people at this adverse moment. He also knew that he was in their prayers. "I felt their love, and I returned their love," he said. "So it was when I was among them and it was the same when I was in prison. I loved them ardently, and this was enough to sustain me. If it had not been for their love, I would have died many times over."¹⁷

Far away from the Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal) and hovering between life and death, Mujib had some definite idea about the struggle of his people. "My spiritual link with the people was never snapped, not for a split second. If something dominates your mind, so constantly, so intensely, so completely, it becomes part of your being and you become a part of it. Naturally, you do have some sort of knowledge of its varied conditions. I did not know exactly what was happening at a particular point of time. But I did have a hang of it. Bereft of physical contact, my mind, absorbed in people, enlightened me. When for instance, sadness overtook me, I knew my people were in agony. When a flash of hope lighted my mental horizon, I knew they would survive.

"Call it intuition, telepathy, sixth sense or whatever you like. Or perhaps some divine inspiration. All I know is that my mind told me that victory was ours. So much blood could not go in vain. Blood, the vital fluid, sustains life and must also sustain a cause for which it is shed.

Besides, if an astrologer, a soothsayer, a crystalball gazer can claim to see the future, a deeply committed person should have greater reasons for an intimate knowledge about his object of interest.

"Around this time everybody who came to my cell looked less confident and complacent. The captors arrogance was not so evident. Instead, he seemed to have been disturbed by some unknown anxiety.

"It seemed significant to me, which was confirmed by their repeated attempts to get a statement from me which they might use for their own safety. I felt that it was an indication of a growing realisation of the hopelessness of their position. And so I had a reassuring feeling that they were not having a smooth sailing in my country. I refused to oblige them. I refused to say anything, write anything, sign anything.

"They had my body in their possession. They could, in a moment of utter desperation, do anything with it. But I was confident that if they took my life, my people would carry the struggle for liberation launched by me to its logical conclusion and get the price for it i.e. freedom.

"I could see a hangman's noose dangling in front of me, but at times it would look like a chain of flowers with a red rose representing a locket. It strengthened my uncanny feeling that the merciful God would spare my life at least till my life's mission was over. While many others dreamed dreams, I saw visions and the conviction was firmly entrenched in my heart that from the debris of Pakistan, independent Bangladesh would surely emerge. And if I had to be a victim of their mad fury following the eventual victory of Bengalis, I would have no regret. I would have no regret, if I had more than one life and if I were required to give all of them for the fulfilment of my cherished dream called Bangladesh. They could kill me only once. I knew each man has his appointed day. But I prayed: 'please let me die to the sweet sounds of Jai Bangla. "¹⁸

Although, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not at calm in the prison but he made it sure that the jailers don't get this impression. Once, when he was sentenced to life imprisonment, he said that he found himself working out quite calmly that with remission for the time spent in prison before trial and with a normal expectation of an

ultimate reprieve he could expect to be behind bars for only twenty years. "At that time I was only forty-four," he went on, "and twenty years would bring me to sixty-four. Well, at sixty-four I would still be strong enough to work for my people against their oppressors."¹⁹

The story is revealing because it shows that he had very little hope of seeing the oppressors being punished in his lifetime. It might happen in his old age, but it was much more likely that it would happen after his death and others would reap the harvest. Like all Muslims he used to recite the passages from the Koran that gave him comfort, and recited them interminably, and was grateful for them. He also reviewed his own strengths and weaknesses, and his long political life. He had made many small mistakes, but he was convinced that on all major issues he had acted rightly. He had no feeling of guilt. If they killed him, he would die with a clear conscience. This, however, was not acceptable to Bhutto. He feared Mujib's martyrdom would cause a great trouble for the armed forces and other West Pakistanis remained in the Eastern Wing.

Bhutto was well aware of Yahya's determination to kill Mujib. He met the general to warn him that Sheikh Mujib was too big a man for Yahya to kill. The President was sitting in his office, with a heap of files on his desk, with an aide standing at his side, removing the sheets of paper one by one as the President signed them. The huge, erratic signature, done with a great flourish, like Napoleon's, could be seen from the other side of the room.

"You can talk to me while I sign the papers," the president said. "I am a busy man. The Chinese ambassador is coming for lunch." Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had walked in. "Mr President, I thought it was time we had an exchange of views," Mr Bhutto said. The president glanced up quickly, his thick eyebrows rising. "What made you think that the time had come, Zulfi?"

"You know very well what I am talking about, Mr President. The country is suffering terribly. Wages down, taxes up, the Army embroiled in East Pakistan, which is now bankrupt and totally unproductive, and our reputation as a civilised nation assailed by every gutter journalist without giving us a chance to be heard. We need new, imaginative polices...."

"Which you would like to direct?"

"I would direct them very well. You, Mr President, would Direct them better. What matters is a new approach — peace with eastern wing, free Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, lower taxes, put an end to corruption. The crackdown has gone on too long, and it should never have happened."

"You agreed to it, remember. In fact you were the first to suggest it."

"I agreed to a crackdown — not a civil war. Arrests, yes, not bloodshed."

The President smiled indulgently. "You agreed to everything, Zulfi. You know you did. Your are in this up to the hilt, and if necessary — thought it would be a waste of your time and mine — I could quote your own words. If you are trying to escape your responsibility, it's all cock and bull, as you know. Don't talk to me about freeing Sheikh or about corruption! We haven't any corruption, and I am not going to free Sheikh as long as I have any breath in my body."

"Is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman alive?"

"Of course, he is alive. When he is executed, there will be a public announcement."

"For God's sake don't execute him!"

"Why not, Zulfi?"

"Because it's bad for the country, because there is nothing to be gained by making a martyr of him. He is too big a man for you to kill!"

"Too big a man for me to kill?" the President said, and his face darkened. "You think I am not big enough to kill

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him? I'm the strongest man in this country and one of the strongest in the world, and they under-estimate me if they think I haven't the courage to put a traitor to death!"

"The whole world will come down on us! The Americans, particularly! They'll let you kill as many Bengalis as you like, but not Sheikh Mujibur Rahman!"

"I've got the Americans in my pocket. You can't tell me what the Americans will or won't do. Do you think Nixon cares what happens to the Sheikh? I know Nixon well. We are in constant communication. We understand one another. And Kissinger well, he's a Jew, but he has a head on his shoulders—and when I raised the question of Sheikh, he said, that's your internal affair'. And that is what it is going to be!"

An aide came into the presidential office, half running. When he reached the desk, he said in a booming voice: "The Chinese ambassador's car is coming up the driveway!" The President bounded out of his chair, smiled, assumed an expression of grave and calm benevolence, and was about to walk out of the room when he remembered that Bhutto was still sitting on the other side of the desk.²⁰

Bhutto was also aware that Mujib opted a martyr's death and expected the emergence of Bangladesh on his grave. Probably it was his aweinspiring image and undaunted courage which prevented Yahya's troops from moving him down on the night of 25 March 1971. But once he was arrested and Yahya claimed his capture, there had to be a trial before his execution. He had to be kept alive at least for a trial. It was rumoured in July that Mujib's trial would take place in early August.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRIAL

On August 3, 1971 Yahya Khan announced on the Television that Sheikh Mujib would be tried and said that being a citizen of Pakistan he would be dealt according to the law of the state. He had shifted from his electoral demand for provincial autonomy to secession from Pakistan. He was guilty of treason inciting people to take up arms and rebel against the state. Yahya said that he had nothing personal against Mujib and was sorry for what Sheikh Mujib had done for which he would have to suffer.¹

A day earlier, a press note issued by the Headquarters of the Chief Martial Law Administrator, had said that Sheikh Mujib will be tried by a special military court for "waging war against Pakistan" and other offences. "The trial will commence on August 11, in camera and its proceedings will be secret, the accused will be given proper opportunity to prepare his defence and will be provided with all facilities permitted by law including engaging a counsel of his own choice provided such a counsel is a citizen of Pakistan."²

Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh reacted sharply and warned Pakistan that there would be "serious consequences" if Sheikh Mujib was court marshalled. "To stage a farcical trial against the Sheikh is a gross violation of human rights and deserves to be condemned by the whole world." Mr. Singh said from the floor of the House.³ Mrs. Gandhi appealed to 24 countries to do something to

save Sheikh Mujib.⁴ The USA expressed concern for the second time to the Pakistan Government that any "summary action" in the secret trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will destroy all possibilities for a political settlement of the East Bengal Crisis.⁵

The Secretary-General, U. Thant said that the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was bound to have repercussions outside Pakistan. But Sheikh Mujib's impending trial before a Military Court was "an extremely sensitive and delicate matter which falls within the competence of the judicial system of a member State." In a Press statement, U. Thant said, he shared the feelings of many UN representatives that any developments concerning the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will have inevitable repercussions out side Pakistan." He said the trial was "a matter of extraordinary interest and concern in many quarters, from a humanitarian as well as from a political point of view." He informed that he had received, and was still receiving almost daily messages from UN representatives expressing serious concern about the situation in East Bengal.⁶

In Geneva, the International Commission of Jurists formally protested to President Yahya Khan against the scheduled trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A cable signed by Commission's Secretary General, Mr Alan Niall Macdermott, said "the International Commission of Jurists protests against the secret military trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Justice has nothing to hide."⁷

The international concern and reaction was understandable. The charge against Sheikh Mujib was one of "Waging war against Pakistan." This vague charge was subdivided into twelve specific charges, of which six carried the death penalty. If the prisoner was found guilty of only one of these charges, he could be hanged to death

or shot.⁸ The world was not to let the matter be treated so lightly. The Americans demanded and obtained an assurance that the death sentence against Mujib would not be carried out. Yahya might have been compelled to spare Mujib's life against his wishes but he was not prepared to give up his trial or release him, what to speak of negotiations with him. If the war had ended otherwise, and Yahya had survived in power, he might have still carried out the sentence.⁹

The trial was held in a new one-story red brick jail in Lyallpur, a hundred and fifty miles south of Rawalpindi. The judges and the witnesses were carefully selected, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was provided a lawyer chosen by the judges. The prisoner refused to defend himself and refused to consult with the court-appointed lawyer. The witness, flown in from East Pakistan, were journalists who reportedly had been Present during Shikh Mujibur Rahman's Speeches. Speeches originally made in Bengali were solemnly translated in Urdu, the judges took copious notes, and the prisoner remained silent. The trial was a farce, for the sentence had already been handed down.¹⁰ Yahya even started giving hints Sheikh Mujib was on trial since August 11, that he was likely to be executed. The military junta was determined to kill Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and they knew the result of the trial and the verdict of the Court.¹¹

August 17: a hot day in Lyallpur. Sheikh Mujib was lying in his cell. The heat came out of a cloudless sky where a golden hawk was diving and swooping with effortless grace, the prisoner gazed him through the bars. The prisoner enjoyed the intricate movements of the bird in the background of a blue sky. For almost twenty minutes Sheikh Mujibur Rahman watched the hawk from his cage. The scene changed instead of the diving and swooping bird there was a shaggy, bearded man with red-rimmed

glaring eyes. This was the new guard peering at him with smelling decayed teeth and unwashed skin. He had a heavy brutal face. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stepped back; the man smiled with satisfaction. Then there came the sound of the key grating in the lock. The seventh day of the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Although the red-brick courthouse at Lyallpur was next door to the main prison, four heavy iron doors, all of them standing at the end of long narrow corridors, had to be opened before the prisoner could enter the courtroom. Beside each door there used to be a soldier in battle-dress with a sub-machine gun.

When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman used to reach the large courtroom, with a raised platform, Pakistani flags and rows of benches, he being used to be oozed with complete disregard for the proceedings. He would neither defend himself nor attack his accusers. He preferred to use the weapon of silence. A difficult weapon to use. Sheikh Mujib acquired a skill in its use during his many trials. He spoke only once and that was at the very beginning of the trial when the presiding judge asked him if he wanted to make any statement in his defence. His reply was, "When you have finished me, I want my body to be taken back to my beloved Bangladesh."

Just before the trial officially opened for its seventh day proceedings, the defence attorney came over to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and whispered. "Won't you take any stand in your own defence?"

"No."

"You are making it very difficult for me."

"I know, but what can I do? I am elected Prime Minister. They have no right to sit in judgement on me or on my people. This court has no justification in law."

The Court proceedings started, the judges had taken their seats on the platform, the defence attorney sat on

the front bench with his face buried in his hands, and the prosecution attorney was whispering something to the man who later testified that he had heard Sheikh Mujibur Rahman say that his sole aim was to destroy the state of Pakistan. The witness was a portly businessman with a heavy moustache. He had been well rehearsed and recited his testimony like a parrot.

Later, when the defence attorney cross-examined the witness got flustered, mixed up dates and places, admitted that he was not present when these words were allegedly uttered by the Sheikh, but he had heard them from a friend, whose name he had forgotten. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman listened to these proceedings coming from a long way away. He was totally unconcerned. He closed his eyes as if gazing the golden hawk circling in the blue immense sky, free and untrammelled in its flight.¹²

Yahya Khan's statements in the last week of August, had left little room not to doubt that the trial would be unfair and that the verdict had been predetermined by the military junta. The court would simply read out the junta's verdict.¹³

The trial continued for one week, and every afternoon around four o'clock Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was returned to his cell. Now he was being allowed some reading material. Sometimes the defence attorney was allowed to call on him, but the prisoner rarely said anything. Once he was given a transcript of the morning's depositions and scrawled across it: "All lies!" On another occasion he wrote: "What is treason?"

Is it treason to believe we have been oppressed?"

It was in the middle of August President Yahya Khan after going through the previous day's file on trial in Lyallpur muttered. "I see that Sheikh still refuses to speak. Silence, Well, I can play that game, too. Tell the judges the

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trial is finished and sent the prisoner back to Mianwali. The trial doesn't matter in the least!"¹⁴

On September 1, Yahya told 'Le Figaro' a French newspaper that Mujib was the "enemy of Pakistani people." On September 29, Karachi based English daily Dawn published the press note issued by CMLA, "The trial commenced on August 11, 1971. The court, however, adjourned the same day in order to ensure fair trial and justice so that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could have a defence counsel of his own choice. On September 7, 1971, services of Mr A.K. Brohi and his three assistants, namely, Mr Ghulam Ali Memon, Mr Akber Mirza and Mr Ghulam Hussain were procured, and the examination of the prosecution witnesses started. The prosecution have so far examined 20 witnesses in support of the charges preferred against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The trial is in progress with Mr A. K. Brohi as the defence counsel."¹⁵ AFP despatch datelined Karachi September 21 said that Mujib's trial was still on. The official comment on the trial claimed that it was being held according to British judicial tradition. This allows for adjournments for "further information" and other procedural delays. The spokesman added that he could not say at what stage the trial was. The despatch further revealed that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was still considered to be a member of the National Assembly and his seat was not included on the list of those to be filled in the by-elections.¹⁶

Even at the time of the trial's announcement, an attempt to open a dialogue with Mujib was made through his defence counsel, A.K. Brohi and it was in the knowledge of Americans. At a proper time and through appropriate face-saving devices, G. W. Choudhury says Yahya was prepared to release Mujib. Jackson Papers on Bangladesh reveal with reference to Henry Kissinger that

'the release of Mujib was essentially a problem of face-saving'. Jackson himself calls the trial a 'trade off to pacify the hawkish generals before introducing various political measures.'¹⁷ Yahya was obdurate and would not budge an inch from his rigid stand. All these snubbing deeply hurt Yahya's ego, and he felt betrayed and humiliated before those who were advising him not to trust Mujib. Yahya had called him a traitor in his 26 March broadcast, and closed all chances of communication between the two after the army operation. In General Umer's opinion, as far as Mujib was concerned the President's mind was completely closed. Peerzada, who was dealing with the case, did not allow anybody to meet Mujib except Brohi (who was his defence counsel.) The suggestion that Yahya wanted to negotiate with Mujib through Brohi is not correct. If they had any idea at all to reach an understanding with Mujib to save the situation and wanted serious negotiations with him, the president would have turned to me. But once or twice when I tried to know something about Mujib, Peerzada would say, 'Don't interfere in this.'¹⁸

Yahya was faced with a number of difficulties in resolving the political tangle with the elected leadership of East Pakistan. Mujib remained the key to the solution and he was available. But Yahya had deprived himself of the option by calling him a traitor. As the army operation had led to a serious external threat to the entire country, it may be asked whether the junta should not have replaced Yahya with some one who could make a fresh start, free from the bitterness and personal antipathy to Mujib. Umer remembers that the point did come up once or twice.

"But the army circles in West Pakistan, by and large, did not agree. I do not think the majority of them were aware of the gravity of the situation in which the country was placed. At no time was the Indian intervention taken

seriously. Every one was taking things lightly. This partly explains why no one thought of a change at the top, which by itself might have made a difference. Yahya called Mujib a traitor, but then everyone in the army thought so. I do not think there was anyone in the army at that time, not certainly any one of us, who would have been acceptable for negotiating with Mujib. In any case, the situation had deteriorated so much that even those who thought somewhat otherwise were not prepared to step in and take the place of yahya."¹⁹

A group of West Pakistani intellectuals, political leaders, trade unionists, lawyers, journalists, writers, student leaders and university professors in an appeal to Yahya Khan demanded immediate release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the installation of a government of the elected representatives. The signatories among others included the leader of the Tehrik-i-Istiqlal, former Air Marshal Asghar Khan, Lenin peace Prize Winner, poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, President, Pakistan Socialist Party, C.R. Aslam, the former Editor of the English-language daily Pakistan Times, Mazhar Ali Khan, President, Pakistan Trade Union Federation, Mirza Ibrahim.²⁰ They pleaded that the formation of a democratic government was the best way to end the crisis threatening Pakistan's political and economic stability and "in keeping with the elementary canons of justice". If release was not possible, Sheikh Mujib, who is being tried by a military tribunal for high treason, should be brought to a proper judicial trial in open court, the statement said. The signatories said they were appealing to the President in the light of his recent interview with the American Newsweek magazine which quoted him as saying he would be prepared to release Sheikh Mujib if the nation demanded it.

Mujib, on the other hand was unaware of all these developments. In his first interview with a journalist since

his release and return to Dhaka, Sheikh Mujib narrated the details of his nine month ordeal in West Pakistani jails and his ultimate release by Z.A. Bhutto to Newsweek's Simon Dring.

"It was not even a proper trial. It was nothing but a court-martial, and they made it clear they want to hang me anyway. It was held in camera before an army brigadier who was the chairman, two colonels, a wing commander, a naval commodore and a district session's judge. The trial lasted six months. It was a farce. I said I was not defending myself. I explained to them that, as Yahya was the chief Martial-Law Administrator and the man who ordered the trial as well, it was useless trying to put up a defence because Yahya had said I had committed treason and must be punished. The question of my defense does not arise. I told the court. Tell! Yahya to do whatever he likes." I soon learned that the whole thing was just a cover up to hang Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, just something to show the world. So I told them. You go to hell! I will have nothing to do with it."²¹

In his interview with David Frost on January 26, 1972, Sheikh Mujib told that the government provided him a defence council but it didn't mean anything. "No use of defending me, because this was a mock trial. A farce. Then I got up in court and said, Mr Justice kindly ask the defence lawyers to go away. Because you know it is a comic trial. I am a civilian. I am not a military person. And they are giving me a court martial. And Mr Yahya Khan is the chief martial law administrator, who administers it. He is the confirming authority. He is the confirming authority of this court."²²

Although Brohi had been appointed on his request, after hearing the tape of Yahya's March,²⁶ broadcast in the court, Mujib refused to produce any defence and relieved Brohi. He said he knew that his fate was sealed.

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Nevertheless, Brohi continued to represent him at the request of the court, without any instructions from the accused. The prosecution submitted a list of 105 witnesses, but actually produced only about half of them. The substantive evidence was the statements of the Bengali army officers who confessed their involvement in rebellion against the government. The confessions were obtained in the police and army custody. Brohi wanted to call Cornelius, Peerzada, M.M. Ahmed, and Hasan as defence witness, but the court disallowed the request. On December 1, the case was closed, and on December 4 the court, except for its civilian member who was absent on that day because of the death of his father, unanimously found Mujib guilty of all the charges, and sentenced him to death, subject to confirmation by the Convening Authority, that is the CMLA. No judgment analysing evidence or reasons for the findings is required to be given by the military courts.²³

"After the court finished its sitting on 4th December. Immediately he (Yahya) called all the judges to Rawalpindi. To dictate the judgement, there they decided to hang me, "Mujib told Frost."²⁴

In East Pakistan the Bengalis did not know whether their leader was alive or dead. For them he was the President of Bangladesh, alive or dead. He had become larger than life a legend while he was still alive: silent, invisible, and far away. If president Yahya Khan thought that by keeping his prisoner in solitary confinement he was punishing the Bengalis, he was mistaken. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was all the more present among them precisely because he was absent. They fought in his name and died with his name on their lips.²⁵

CHAPTER FIVE

TO THE GALLOWS

In December 1971, Sheikh Mujib was shifted from Lyallpur jail to Mianwali Jail. According to one account in early December, "One night, a helicopter landed in the jail compound. We couldn't see who had got down from it since our cells were locked. In the morning we learnt that Sheikh Mujib had been brought to Mianwali from Lyallpur jail.

"He was lodged in the female barracks of the Mianwali jail; women were shifted to some other barrack. The female ward was right behind barrack No. 10, where Indian prisoners had recently been shifted", narrated one inmate.

When the news of Sheikh Mujib's arrival spread, some prisoners climbed the roof of their barracks and started abusing him. They threw shoes and stones in the compound of the female ward. Some of which hit the military guards.

Then the guards fired few rounds in the air and they dispersed but they continued abusing him from their cells. To calm them down, the Superintendent Choudhury Naseer made a round of the barracks and told them that Sheikh Mujib had been brought to Mianwali jail to be hanged. ¹ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had expected to be hanged anyway and now he spent his days waiting to be

executed. There could be no appeal, no reprieve. By his own conduct during the trial he showed that he neither demanded nor expected mercy.

The ruffle in the jail was just a trap. The jail authorities themselves created this situation so that the guards could use this disturbance as an excuse to kill Sheikh Mujib.² They even sent some hardened criminals to kill him. Sheikh Mujib later recalling the Eid day during his confinement said, "For a prisoner at the mercy of merciless mass murderers Eid is a forbidden dream. And I was no ordinary prisoner, but a sworn enemy of a dictatorial regime. So they did not let me out of my cell even on the Eid-day.

"Confined for many months (over eight months) then I had lost sense of time. With a grave already dug for me just outside the hell called a cell, every fraction of a second seemed to me to be an extension of life or a brief deferment of death.

"Like the last wish's fulfilment of one awaiting his execution, some fruit was sent to me by the jailer. It might have been a joke in the name of Eid. But it reminded me once again of my dear people at home and saddened my heart. The cruel scene of the night of 25th march when I was torn away from Bangladesh came vividly back to my mind and my heart bled again. How were my dear people celebrating the Eid? This was the question that I asked I didn't know whom.

"On that day, not knowing if I would ever see them again, I commended the safety and security of my dear people to the care of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate. That was my Eid."³

We often saw his cook when we went collect our rations. But we could never speak to him; someone from the jail staff was always with him. The ration clerk would

tauntingly ask the cook. How's the traitor faring? The cook would defiantly reply that the Sheikh was in fine health, sound in mind and that he would keep fighting for the rights of the Bangalis as long as he could," Mohan Lal Bhaskar an inmate in Mianwali jail narrated later.⁴

The mere fact that he was still alive meant that Yahya Khan was still trying to use him for some bargaining, and this indicated East Pakistan had not fallen completely under the sway of the military authorities. It also meant that fighting was going on, that the Bengalis were resisting with all their might, and that the army was hard-pressed. He knew his Bengalis, and he knew they would never surrender.⁵

One day, the deputy superintendent, Fazaldad, came to the barrack of Indian prisoners and picked eight prisoners at random from the first two cells. Bhaskar was one of them. They were taken to the female ward where Sheikh Mujib was imprisoned.

The police officer ordered them to dig a trench eight feet long, four feet wide and four feet deep. They immediately assumed that Sheikh Mujib was scheduled to be hanged that night and they were digging a grave to bury his body. They had no way of confirming their suspicion. "The grave was ready by nine. We returned to our barracks, waiting with bated breath the ominous news of Mujib's execution. Nothing happened throughout the night, it was dull and heavy."

There were rumours that on the night of the Sheikh's scheduled execution, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had met Yahya Khan and advised him not to execute Sheikh Mujib. He had impressed upon the President that if Mujib was executed, the Bengalis in East Pakistan would not sit idle, Pakistani armed forces, stationed in the East, from the highest officer down would become the target of their

wrath. They would not even spare their children. Acting on Bhutto's advice, Yahya Khan stopped Mujib's execution.

They were again called out the next day and asked to fill up the trench. But their joy was short lived. Fifteen days later, they were again called out and asked to dig a similar trench. But once again, Sheikh Mujib was not hanged. This process was repeated three times and each time, his hanging was deferred.^{6a}

A proposal for the release of Mujib in exchange for safe repatriation of the trapped West Pakistanis was also made by some Pakistanis. They thought that instead of accepting a defeat from the joint command, power could be transferred amicably to the acclaimed leader of Bangladesh. This was a very smart move. It would have provided for safe evacuation of Pakistanis from Bangladesh and would have also forced the withdrawal of Indian troops from Bangladesh. However, in Bangladesh it would have left a political void and a total security crisis and social chaos. This move, however, was rejected by Bangladesh and Yahya also backed out. Instead he ordered the execution of Mujib. On December 15, General Niazi offered to surrender and the next day he signed the instruments of surrender. Yahya delivered a fiery speech vowing to continue to fight despite a setback on the Eastern front.⁶

While General Niazi was surrendering on the race course ground in Dhaka, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was lying in the death cell in the prison. In the next cell a grave had been prepared, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was told that it was merely a slit trench to be used in the event of an air raid. He was mentally prepared to die.⁷

He did not know that he had become the first elected President of Bangladesh in his absence. He knew nothing about the establishment of the provisional government, or

about the Mukti Bahini, or about the victorious march of the combined Indian and Bangladesh forces on Dhaka. He knew nothing about the massacres of the refugees, or the sudden threat of a nuclear holocaust in the region when the Seventh Fleet steamed into the Bay of Bengal. The monsoon had passed, it was winter again, and he huddled under his blanket against the cold. In Dhaka the sun was blazing and the trees were in flower.⁸

Yahya had sent orders to the prison authorities to prepare to hang the prisoner, but they were to wait until they received a coded telegram before carrying out the death sentence. In the mean time Dhaka had fallen, but the coded telegram did not arrive.⁹

He had always been vengeful, and the idea of killing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was so pleasing to him that he deliberately delayed sending the coded telegram so that he could enjoy it all the more. He was drinking even more heavily than usual, and in an unguarded moment he confided his decision to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had returned from a meeting at the United Nations with the knowledge that more than half the delegates treated the military government of Yahya Khan with contempt.

"What do you think," Bhutto asked Yahya "what will happen to our soldiers in East Pakistan, if he is hanged?" To his complete surprise Yahya Khan had not given the matter much thought. He was in the habit of taking action and leave the consequences to look after themselves. Bhutto tried to explain in such an eventuality not a single soldier would be left alive.

Yahya Khan insisted that his order should be carried out. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would be killed in absolute secrecy, no one would know, and if necessary the order for the execution could be pre-dated to October. The world would be told that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been found guilty of high treason and executed.¹⁰ According to Mujib himself "Mr Bhutto told me that when Yahya Khan

wanted to hand over power to him he told him that he had committed a blunder by not killing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman right in the beginning."

Frost : He said that?

Mujib : Yes, Now kindly allow me, before I hand over the power to you, to kill Mujibur Rahman issuing the order in back date. But Bhutto didn't agree. ¹¹

However, Mujib remained ignorant of his status even after the removal of Yahya Khan, "the one officer, who was in charge of me one night at around 3 a.m, took me out of the jail to his bungalow. He kept me there for two days without any police or military guards. After two days, they took me to a deserted location in Chashma Barrage colony and kept me there for five or six days. Nobody knew where I was except those four officers."¹² Now from being the prisoner of Yahya Khan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had become a prisoner of Bhutto. For him it made very little difference. He was guarded round the clock by army commandos loyal to Bhutto. He was given no books or newspapers, and was not permitted to listen to the radio. He received no letters from his family. He still did not know that he was the elected head of independent state of Bangladesh, nor did he know that he owed his change of residence to Bhutto. He had simply been plucked out of one prison and placed in another. ¹³

On December 26, an army helicopter came and took him to a Bungalow outside Rawalpindi. He remained there, guarded by army Commandos, until his release, ¹⁴ on January 8, 1972. By this time, even without newspapers and radio, he was aware that there had been vast changes, and that with every change of prison his prospects to survive brightened up. His guards were coldly watchful, but they no longer looked murderous. He asked no questions, for he knew they were under oath to remain silent. He noticed that they sometimes jumped to attention when he passed them. ¹⁵

CHAPTER SIX

COMING HOME

On December 27, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was informed that someone had come to visit him. When he entered the room, he was surprised to see Julfikar ali Bhutto sitting with armed guards.¹ Sheikh Mujib had lost weight and thinned down a lot, there was more grey in his hair, he walked a little jerkily, like all those who had not had the pleasure of walking for quite some time.² "How have you managed to come here?"

Bhutto smiled and said : "I am the chief Martial law Administrator and the President."³ "Wonderful," Sheikh Mujib promptly aksed, " tell me whether or not I am free and then I will talk to you otherwise not."⁴

"You can leave whenever you wish" Bhutto said, but asked if he could stay for some time. Mujib realised that his freedom was conditional. It all depended on a satisfactory conclusion of negotiations. Bhutto told him what Yahya Khan had planned for him. Mujib realised that he was still in danger, living in the cloudy no man's land between prison and the promise of freedom.⁵

It was a meeting between two presidents. One had been in office for nine days, the other for nine months. One had received his power from a usurper while the other had been nominated in absentia by a liberated people. Ironies abounded this historic meeting. Sheikh

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Mujibur Rahman still did not know that he had been nominated as the president of Bangladesh by his people and Bhutto did not know what to do with him.⁶

Dr Kamal Hussain, a close aide of Sheikh Mujib, who was also kept in one of the Pakistani prisons, told this author in mid-1994 in Dhaka that he couldn't think that he would meet Sheikh Mujib while he was being shifted from Haripur jail to Sihala Rest House. "I think they wanted to give me a surprise. It was a very emotional moment. After parting we two didn't know whether we would see each other alive. The resistance had been successful. Bangladesh was in a position to stand up on its own," told Dr Kamal. "Mujib also told me that he first came to know about my imprisonment when he over heard in the court that after his trial Kamal Hussain's trial would start." When Bhutto visited Mujib on December 26, Mujib asked for a meeting with Dr. Kamal which Mr Bhutto promised for the 28th, and kept his promise.

Bhutto wanted from Sheikh Mujibur Rahman an assurance to try for renunciation, not a verbal assurance but a formal treaty, which he could show as an earnest of the Sheikh's good intentions. "I can't commit anything unless I have talked to my people," Sheikh Mujib told Bhutto. "Let me go back, and then I will talk to you." On that note the meeting between Bhutto and Mujib concluded.⁷ By then the Whole world was asking Bhutto to release Sheikh Mujib. The Soviet government, sent a plea couched in a warning that if anything happened to Sheikh Mujib, the responsibility of the consequences would on the government of Pakistan. However, Bhutto still hoped that Mujib would sign a document to work for a united Pakistan.⁸

Mujib told a foreign correspondent after his release, "We discussed all old problems and the things that

created them and then he appealed to me to keep some connections between the two halves of the country. I told him I could not say anything until I had found out what had been happening." I must meet my people, I must hear what they have to say."⁹

When it became clear to Bhutto that the prisoner had no intention of giving any such commitment and it was futile to keep him any longer, he decided to let Bangabandhu go.¹⁰

Twenty one days after the surrender of the Pakistan army, Bhutto finally decided to permit his prisoner to leave. Bhutto twice visited Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Always at night. Always without warning. On both occasions he asked him to keep some kind of association with Pakistan. When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reminded Bhutto that despite his promise to release him he was keeping him away from his people, Bhutto told him that it was important to continue the negotiations in search of possibilities to keep some link with Bangladesh. These could be continued elsewhere, Teheran, Ankara or at place of Sheikh Mujib's choice. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not interested in anything except for his return to his beloved people. He did not trust Bhutto, and distrusted him more every day.¹¹

At last, on the evening of January 7, 1972, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was told that a chartered Pakistani airliner, was waiting for him at the Islamabad airport. Bhutto wanted the departure to take place in utmost secrecy and it was not until two o'clock in the morning that the automobile carrying Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman moved towards the airport. Even on the way to the airport Bhutto was telling Sheikh Mujib about ties, "as strong as steel" that bound East and West Pakistan.

However, when Mujib asked if he was being flown to Dhaka, Bhutto said, "NO! we are flying you out to London" Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was surprised at this reply and was not sure that he was still a prisoner or a freeman, Bhutto still retained his options. On his orders the aircraft could return to Islamabad even halfway to London.¹²

Air marshal Zafar Choudhury, the person who took Sheikh Mujib out of Pakistan has given detailed account of the events of that evening in his book "*Mosaic of Memory*". "Can a Boeing fly non-stop from Pindi to London?" asked him, Aziz Ahmed the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

"Yes, if the winds are not too unfavourable," Zafar Choudhary replied.

"Sheikh Mujibur Rahman might have to be flown to London shortly, but it has to be done in a manner that the word does not get out before he reaches London. I am afraid, we'll be able to give you only very brief notice."

Two or three days after the query, Aziz Ahmed called Zafar Choudhry from Pindi early in the evening and asked him to be at Islamabad airport by 10 P.M. and to collect Mrs. Kamal Husain and her two children from Karachi and to go to the State Bank to collect some money in foreign exchange from Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Bank's Governor before that. "The impression I gathered was that this was meant for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I drove to the State Bank where Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan handed me a box containing a very large sum of money in U.S. dollars. He wanted a receipt for it and asked me to count the money. I asked him if the money had been already been counted, on his positive reply I signed the receipt and proceeded to Pindi and handed over the box to Mr. Bhutto at the President's House. Mustafa Khar was there with Mr Bhutto"¹³

Mr. Bhutto brought Mujibur Rahman and Dr. Kamal Hussain to the aircraft just after midnight, narrates Zafar Choudhury. They all boarded the aircraft together and there followed a very moving scene. The two leaders shook hands warmly, locked themselves in a lengthy embrace and Mujibur Rahman kissed Mr Bhutto on the cheek with tears in his eyes. It was a very emotional and charged parting and we all felt that we were witnessing history being made. The Boeing 707 took off for London, planning to land at Geneva airport if refuelling became necessary on its way to London. After the flight took off from Islamabad airport Bhutto is reported to have said, "the bird has flown away."

Initially, there was considerable tension on board the aircraft and we all felt uneasy. We did not know how our 'guests' would be disposed towards us and whether they would like to talk to us. Mujibur Rahman talked to Mrs. Kamal Hussain and asked how she and the children had been. I exchanged a few pleasantries with Dr. Kamal Husain. Then, dinner was served, everyone relaxed visibly and the tension abated. I moved up to the seat next to Mujibur Rahman and introduced myself. He responded very warmly and asked how PIA had fared during the war and if many aircraft had been lost, I told him that the only loss was a Twin Otter aircraft on the ground at Dhaka and, but for the capture of some of our people stationed in East Pakistan. PIA had been able to fly out its few aircraft located in East Pakistan. Afterwards it was Mujibur Rahman who spoke:¹⁴

"This man Yahya Khan has destroyed the country. Now we have Indians sitting in Dhaka, imagine Indians in Dhaka! If the Army had been able to hang onto even one district, I would have rallied my people, built a base, broken out of there and driven the Indians out of my country. But, now, everything has been lost. I don't even

know where to begin. But let me get back. I shall manage something. The Indians must be driven out first, every thing else comes afterwards.¹⁵

I am the leader of the Bengalis and my people will follow me anywhere. Look at Kamal Hussain sitting there. He was in jail with me. A very clever boy. I picked him up. I got him elected, and now he will be a minister. My people love me and will do anything for me. Bhutto is a good man. He has saved my life twice. You must stand by him. We shall keep in touch. Don't worry, I shall find some way of staying together. Yahya Khan had put me in jail and wanted me hanged. Now I shall have to say things to the Indians I don't mean."¹⁶

Breakfast was served early and I informed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that we would not be landing anywhere for refuelling and we would reach London in about an hour's time. The steward brought gifts we had put on board for the party at Karachi. For Sheikh Mujibur Rahman we had two smoking pipes and a small carpet woven as a prayer-mat. I said these were gifts for him from PIA as a token of this momentous flight. He stood up, shook my hand and accepted the gifts with effusive thanks. Holding out the prayer mat, he said. "I will pray for the PIA and for you, Air Marshal." He then asked him to make sure that at London Airport he was received by the "Foreign Office People." Zafar Choudhury sent the message to airport authorities to this effect. Sheikh Mujib, perhaps not satisfied with a simple message kept insisting that he should be received by none other than Foreign Office representatives.¹⁷

We landed at London around 6 A.M. and were parked some distance from the main terminal. Some airport officials boarded the aircraft and Mujibur Rahman asked "Are these people from the Foreign Office?" I answered

"Well, not quite, but they handle important visitors and will be taking you to one of the V.I.P. rooms where the Foreign Office officials would also be present." He disembarked rather reluctantly and we all proceeded to a V.I.P. room. Here, he asked me if I could help him ring up some friends, mostly at small restaurants run by Bengalis. The restaurants were closed at this early hour and there was no response from any of the numbers. He then desired to talk to Mahmud Haroon, who, he said, was a family friend. This number responded and Mr. Haroon came on the line. I discreetly moved away so as not to overhear the conversation. Some officials from the Foreign Office arrived along with Bengalis who had until recently worked at the Pakistan High Commission. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, "thank you very much for what you have done for me, Air Marshal. Now I will meet people from the Bangladesh Mission. After all, I am their leader—a peoples' man." After having delivered Sheikh Mujib to the British, Zafar Choudhury felt no need to stay any further and left.¹⁸

The plane landed at the Heathrow Airport at 6:36 a.m., January 8, just as the dawn was breaking. The first radio message from the pilot was received in London an hour earlier, and was immediately telegraphed to the Foreign Office. A Foreign Office automobile received the message just in time. He was the head of a state, but the usual twenty-one gun salute reserved for such dignitaries was lacking for Bangladesh had not yet been recognized by Britain.¹⁹

Anthony Mascarenhas in his account of Sheikh Mujib's arrival, short stay and departure from London says that Sheikh Mujib, soon after his arrival in a London hotel, told him, that he had a big scoop for him. "We are going to keep some link with Pakistan but I can't say anything more till I have talked it over with others." Apparently, Mujib and

Bhutto had arrived at some understanding on a 'link' between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Mujib however seemed to have given up any such notions, even before he arrived in Dhaka, after he learnt what had happened since his arrest.²⁰

International Herald Tribune reported that from London, the Sheikh talked on the telephone with his wife and children in Dhaka. It was their first conversation since the previous Pakistani government led by Gen. Mohammad Yayha Khan, seized him last March and imprisoned him on charges of treason. From Dhaka UPI reported quoting Sheikh Kamal Rahman, Mujib's eldest son, that his father's first queries were "Are you all alive? How is your mother?"

The Begum Mujibur Rahman, the 54-year-old politician's wife, was choked with emotion on hearing her husband's voice but later she and the younger children talked to him for half an hour, Bangladesh officials also talked with their leader and briefed him about the situation. The Bangladesh government chartered a plane to bring the leader home without knowing that a Royal Air Force plane had already been arranged for the purpose.²¹ Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Indian prime minister, telephoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and discussed things with him for 10 minutes. She asked him to stop in India on his way home to Dhaka and told him that she was sending a plane for him.

Mrs. Gandhi later said in New Delhi that the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a victory of the people of Bangladesh and India and of the world opinion. However, it was Comet airliner of the Royal air Force that winged him out of London on his homeward journey. His departure was a surprise too. For security reasons, no announcement was made in advance.²²

Prime Minister Edward Heath, who was in the countryside, quickly returned to 10, Downing street to meet Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The two leaders discussed issues for an hour in which Mr. Heath promised British help in the economic emergency facing the infant Republic of Bangladesh. He told the Bengali leader that British recognition of Bangladesh would only be possible once the Indian troops had withdrawn and the Bengalis were visibly in control of their own territory. For his part, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave Mr. Heath an account of what had happened to him since his arrest last March. ²³

At a news conference in London Sheikh Mujib said Bangladesh was, "an unchangeable reality". He appealed to all countries to recognize the new government, of which he was designated President, and to provide aid so that "millions of my people may not die."²⁴ When a reporter asked him why had he flown to London," he answered, "Don't you know that I was a prisoner? It all depended on Pakistani authorities."²⁵

While Sheikh Mujib was telling the news conference in London that the destination was chosen by the Pakistanis, in Islamabad president Bhutto was indicating that it was his own choice. One report was that the Pakistanis did not want to fly him direct to Dhaka or to any place in India, because it would be humiliating. Mr Bhutto reportedly suggested to send him to Iran or Turkey instead, but Sheikh Mujib preferred London if he could not go directly home. ²⁶

Asked whether he had been tortured or mishandled, he answered: "What do you mean-mishandled? Do you know that where I was imprisoned, it was the worst cell in the worst place, a condemned cell, solitary confinement?" To another question he said, "Do you know that they arrested my children and interned them? Do you know

that hundreds of thousands of buildings have been burned and children have been killed? How is that possible, tell me?"²⁷

There was a brief stopover in New Delhi. Almost the entire government came to the Palam airport to receive him. As the white RAF comet came in for the landing, there was a subdued roar of excitement followed by thunderous applause. For a few moments he stood at the top of the landing steps, looking dazed in the sunlight, and then he seemed to be running down the steps two at a time.

He was in no mood for making long speeches, and he preferred to talk quietly with Mrs Indira Gandhi, nevertheless a speech had to be made, and he spoke jubilantly into the microphone on the theme of his own journey from the darkness of prison into the sunlight of Bangladesh. After thanking the people of India, "the best friends of my people," he went on :

"This journey is a journey from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from desolation to hope. I am at last going back to Golden Bengal, the land of my dreams, after a period of nine months. In those nine months my people have traversed centuries. When I was taken away from my people, they wept. When I was held in captivity, they fought, and now I go back to them, they are victorious. I go back to the sunshine of their million victorious smiles. I go back to a free, independent and sovereign Bangladesh. I go back to join my people in the tremendous tasks that now lie ahead, in turning our victory into the road of peace, progress and prosperity.

I go back not with hatred in my heart for anyone, but with the satisfaction that truth has at last triumphed over falsehood, sanity over insanity, courage over cowardice, justice over injustice and good over evil."²⁸

In New Delhi he was elated and very tired, and when he reached Dhaka Airport later in the day he was even more elated and even more tired. He was weeping when he stepped down from the comet, and he seemed not to hear the delirious cries of welcome. As he told the Newsweek:

"I did not actually listen to radio or read a newspaper till Dec. 27, the day I met Bhutto. But I knew, I understood what had been happening in my country even during my months in solitary confinement. You see, I know my people; I know my forces; I know my organizational leadership; I know my student front; I know my labour front, and I knew they would fight every inch of the way. I sensed what was happening all those months, though I was alone with nothing to do but to think. I always knew my people were behind me. I knew that God would help me. I knew, too, that in the war between falsehood and truth, falsehood wins the first battle and truth the last. That's what kept me going. I never wept during all those months in solitary confinement. I never wept when they put me on trial. But I wept when I arrived back here and saw my wonderful Sonar Bangla [Golden Bengal]."²⁹

The first man to greet Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as his plane landed at 1:45 p.m. was bearded guerrilla leader known as Khasru, who was dressed in army fatigues and wore two pistols strapped to his hips. Thousands of people then rushed past guards from the East Bengal Regiment to engulf the Sheikh and he was unable to descend from the plane for 10 minutes.³⁰

Sheikh Mujib told his audience that Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's last words to him before his release were: "Try to keep Pakistan together," but he committed nothing. "But now I say to you Bengal is independent, and let the people of Pakistan and the

people of Bangladesh live happily, The unity of the country is ended."

Standing in the bright sun, the Sheikh appealed to his audience not to seek revenge for the three million Bengalis, he said, had been murdered by the Pakistani Army during the nine-month independence struggle, climaxed by India's victory in a two-week war that converted East Pakistan into Bangladesh. "Forgive them" he shouted to the crowd. "Today I do not want revenge from anybody. There should not be any more killing."

"The Bengal that will eat, smile, sing and be happy is my Bengal. Everyone in Bengal is now a Bengali and we must live together" he said.³¹

The massacres were over, the conqueror had been conquered, a new life was beginning, a new hope was springing up. One that bright sunlit day, in a race was springing up. On that bright sunlit day, in the race was bringing hope to all the other oppressed people in the world. It was a day to remember for such things do not happen often in the world.³² and I was singing with Faiz: *paoon sey laho ko dho daalo* (Wash the Blood of your feet).

CHAPTER SEVEN

DR KAMAL HUSSAIN

His Account of Imprisonment In Haripur Jail

Although I was lodged in haripur Central Jail on April 6th but actually I was arrested a couple of days earlier than that. I was kept in solitary confinement at the Haripur Jail and was not allowed to leave my cell from sun rise to sun set. However, I was allowed a walk in the prison's precinct after sun set.

I desperately felt the need of making some human contact so as to hear some word about the outside world but I was not allowed that. I was not only deprived of newspapers, radio etc. but was also not permitted to offer 'Juma' prayers alongwith other prisoners in congregation in the jail mosque.

When I asked for the jail rules to find out as to under which class of detainees did I fall, so as to secure my entitlement, I was told that in my case the situation was extra ordinary as no jail rules applied to me because I had been kept there under certain directives of the military headquarters, with the instructions that I should be kept in strict seclusion and be not provided with any means of mass communication what so ever. I remained without them unless I was taken out of the Haripur Jail and shifted to Sihala Rest House on Dec. 28th, '71.

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In the first month of my detention, civil and military intelligence officers in plain clothes used to come to question me. From their questions I would get the idea about what was going on outside. They thought that either America or Russia was behind us. Inturn I told them that we were elected representatives and expected to sit in the assembly but as they had not allowed us to sit there, naturally it resulted in an explosive situation which had also sucked them in especially after the session of the Assembly had been postponed, sine die.

Admiral Ahson was the Governor of East Pakistan at that time. On hearing the indefinite postponment of the session, I and Sh. Mujib rushed to him Expecting this possibility we had the draft constitution ready. I told Sh. Mujib to tell Adml, Ahson that people would not accept this as it would tantamount to total contempt of people's will and in that case he (Adml. Ahson) would be responsible for the consequences. I know Adml. Ahson tried to put this message through.

Mujib had told him in my presence that in order to cool the situation, he might announce that the session had been postponed for a few days because the sine die postponment of the said session would inevitably lead to an explosion. And the inevitable happened.

My interrogators would say that they knew that there was a conspiracy because me and my friends had gone across the border. They also enquired from me the meanings of "Mukti Bahini". From such questions I gathered that things on large scale had been going on outside. To me it seemed that strong armed resistance and fighting was raging outside.

They also told me that Sh. Mujib was going to be tried and that his and my lives were finished, so it would be better if I would tell them something about Mujib. I explained to them that what we did was open politics and

our actions were in public knowledge. I did tell them that we did resort to non-cooperation movement but we did this because we felt that it was our right to sit in the Assembly and to determine the course of future. As they had denied us our right therefore, we had decided that the same should not go unchallenged.

On hearing this, they said that it was a crime big enough to try me for treason. I had told them that in any case I was not denying what I had told them because I felt what we did, we did publically. I also told them that I had not at all done anything for which I could be hanged.

Myself, Mr Taj-ud-din and Nazrul Islam were the three persons entrusted by Awami League (AL) with the task to discuss the political dead lock with the three member committee appointed by Gen. Yahya with the objective to see if there could be any political solution for transfer of power to elected representatives on the basis of six points of Sh. Mujib. The written statement that I have given to you (Ahmad Salim) is a sort of summary of those talks.

Now, look at the contrast in South Africa. Within ten days of election, Mandela has been sworn in as President but in our case it was a powerful minority which was denying power to majority. It were not all the people of West Pakistan but the dominant civil and military elites who had enjoyed monopoly over power and were not willing to part with it.

So, that is how I got the idea how things were going on outside. After that there was a long lull. On Sept. 5th, late in the evening a Major came and gave me a paper which was a notice of the impending trial stating that I was to be charged of committing treason against Pakistan because of my prejudicial activities etc. etc. I enquired from Major that what does "etc. etc." mean as that was no way of notifying somebody about a trial, as one ought to be

specific about particulars of the crime. The major requested me not to ask these questions as he was just acting as a courier.

Now the trial was very much in the offing. Sometime in Oct. I was taken out of the jail block and taken to jail hospital where one room was to be converted as court room. I was looking forward to that because I knew that it would furnish me with an opportunity to establish me contact with the outside world. The wardens were probably strictly directed not to speak to me but out of their human nature of curiosity and desire to communicate, they told me sometime in Nov that they did not understand why the military team which had come to try me, and was staying at the Rest House, had suddenly left. On hearing this I became very upset because I was looking forward to make contact with outer world because I had been in solitary confinement for months. After months of solitary confinement one develops an uncontrollable urge to talk with somebody.

At that time I was also the Vice Chancellor of All Pakistan Bar Council which is the highest position in the lawyers' fraternity. I had expected that during my trial at least there would be some lawyers in front of whom could I ventilate my feelings. So, I was very much looking forward to my trial but on departure of military team I became very depressive and despite my repeated efforts to find a reasonable explanation for their departure, I could find none.

Few days later, some people came and started painting the white wall outside my cell in mud colour. On my enquiry they told that it was a civil defence measure. Immediately, I realised that this was a preparation for a longer war. On first Dec. sirens started to blare and all lights in the jail went off. You cannot imagine but it is a fact

that total darkness in a solitary cell is a frightening experience. Then sirens started to blare periodically. The jail staff would ask me to come out and stand under a tree. As it was bitterly cold in Nov. in Haripur because of the Himalayan winds, therefore, I used to go out covering myself in two blankets. When I asked them why were they making me come out like this, they would say that there were enemy bombers on the sky. I told them that my coming out and standing under a tree like that would make no difference because the bombs could even fall on trees and whatever had to happen would happen. And forcing me to come out like that would whether save my life or not but one thing was certain...I would catch pneumonia. I told the warden that in his and mine interest it was better if we stayed inside.

Then on 15-16th Dec. very dramatically all the lights came on. From that I inferred that the conflict had ended.

After that I noticed that there was marked improvement in my treatment. I found the Superintendent Jail expressing surprise over the non-availability of armed chairs and carpet to me, which he had finally realized was a must in that biting cold. So, these things duly arrived.

Similarly, there was noticeable improvement also in the type of food that was provided to me hence forth. Previously a tin bowl full of some 'Dal' (cereal) and bread were given but now two kinds of curries were brought in a tray. In my bewilderment I enquired about the reason behind this dramatic change in my treatment. They told that Doctor had directed them to provide me an improved diet. Then onwards, I found some improvement in my treatment every day.

One day the Superintendent Jail took me out for a walk around the jail, its factory etc. which turned out to be

more like a VIP walk. He also took me to a place where he asked me if I would plant a tree there, stating that all the VIPs had planted a tree there. From this improvement I concluded that whatever had been the outcome of this war, it had certainly helped in improving my position.

On another day the Superintendent said to me that you politicians hold fluctuating fortunes... one day you are down and the other day you go up again. From that I assessed that the conflict had ended in such a way that I would eventually be taken out of jail and allowed to go back.

On Dec. 28th, I was told to pack up as I was to be shifted to a new location.

AS : Were you denied newspapers even during your improved treatment days at Haripur Jail?

KH : Yes, I was denied newspapers. Anyhow, on 28th Dec. I was taken to Sihala Rest House and there apart from finding the newspapers, I also bumped into Sh. Mujib.

AS : What was your anticipation when you were taken out of Haripur Jail and what was your first reaction when you saw Sh. Mujib at Sihala Rest House?

KH : I had not thought that I would meet Sh. Mujib on that day because I had presumed that he would have been lodged somewhere else. It looked as if they wanted to give me a surprise. However, it was an emotionally over-powering moment because we did not know after parting whether we would see each other alive. And it was from him that I heard about the outcome of the war...that Bangladesh was in a position to stand up and that our side

had come out successful in the conflict. We expected that we could go back.

Mujib told that he first came to know about my imprisonment when he over heard his lawyer and the prosecution team saying that after his trial they would have to prepare for Kamal Hussain's trial. He also told me that when they asked him about his defence lawyer, he asked for me but the judges smiled and said that was not possible. When Z.A. Bhutto visited Mujib on 26th the latter asked for me and Bhutto promised to arrange our meeting in two days time and exactly two days later on 28th, I was meeting with Mujib at Sihala.

AS: What was Bhutto's overall attitude?

KH: I only saw him once during that period and that too, on the day we left. In between Mr. Aziz Ahmad visited us as we were getting very restless to leave for Bangladesh.

Every day we would press our incharge Colonel Abdullah that as war was over, we wanted to go back to our people and in turn he would tell us that arrangements were being made. Then, again one day Mr. Aziz Ahmad came to inform us that they were making arrangements. Mujib proposed that we be flown either by UN or Red Cross plane but Aziz Ahmad told that they wanted to fly us by PIA and were getting late because PIA flights were not allowed to overfly India. After mutual discussion we agreed to be flown to London. We flew on 7th of January and arrived in Dhaka on 10th Jan. to a historic welcome as million of people were present at the race course ground, later on came to be known as Suhrawardy Park, outside University.

There Sh. Mujib in his first speech had declared, "We had no bitterness against the people of Pakistan, we wish

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them well and all sort of prosperity. Let us recognise each other's sovereignty."

AS: Is it true that Bhutto had offered him some sort of confederation?

KH: Yes, there was a sort of appeal from Bhutto to Sh. Mujib when we were leaving Pakistan for London enroute to Bangladesh, and Mujib had told him that he would give the answer when he would reach Bangladesh, and within one hour of reaching Bangladesh he had given his answer to Bhutto. Mujib had said that after what had happened, it was not possible to maintain any other relation but to accept each other's existence as two sovereign countries.

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Appendices

Appendix-1

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT OF THE BULLETIN ISSUED BY THE SWADHIN BANGLA CHHATRA SANGRAM PARISHAD, READ AT A PUBLIC MEETING HELD IN DHAKA IN MARCH 1971

Bulletin No. 1

JOI BANGLA

(Proclamation of Independent and Sovereign
Bangladesh and Programme)

**INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN BANGLADESH
HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED**

The exploitation, maladministration and oppression of
the last twenty three years have proved that the only way

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for the Bangalis to save themselves from the nasty conspiracy of the foreign western colonisers is to live as free nationals of an independent country. The necessity has been proved beyond doubt by the foreign western exploiters' nullification of the people's verdict given in the last General Election.

"Bangladesh" is the name of an independent sovereign state...a geographical entity of 54 thousand 5 hundred and 73 square miles of area and the habitat of 7 crores of people. Three objectives are to be fulfilled through the establishment of the independent and sovereign Bangladesh :

1. to establish in the world a strong *Bengali* nation and to fully develop the language, literature and culture of the *Bengalis*,
2. to establish a peasants and workers government and build a socialist economy in order to eradicate disparity between areas and individuals.
3. to establish an unadulterated democracy ensuring freedom of the individual, freedom of speech and the freedom of the Press.

Programme for Conducting the Liberation Struggle

- (a) to establish Liberation War Committees in each village, locality, *Thane*, subdivision, city and district of Bangladesh,
- (b) to strive for the cooperation of all sections of people and unite them,
- (c) to form Liberation Army of workers in the industrial areas and of peasants in the rural areas,
- (d) to give up communal feelings based on Hindu-Muslim and Bengalis-non-Bengali sentiments and to maintain friendliness.

- (e) to maintain communication channels for an orderly advance of the liberation struggle and to put a stop to anti-social and violent activities including loot and arson.

Modalities of the Liberation Struggle

- (a) to consider the present Government as foreign exploitative and colonial and treat all the laws of this government as illegal,
- (b) to treat all western non-Bengali military personnel who are stooges of the selfish interests of the so-called Pakistanis as usurping enemy soldiers and eliminate the attacks among the enemy soldiers,
- (c) to stop paying taxes and rents to the foreign colonial and exploitative government,
- (d) to make armed preparations to resist, defeat, counter and finish army offensives on the freedom fighters,
- (e) to build up systematic, people-oriented organisations,
- (f) to use the song "Amar Sonar Bangla Ami Tomay Bhalohasi" as the National Anthem of the independent and sovereign Bangladesh,
- (g) to boycott all goods from the exploitative state of Pakistan and to organise a widespread non-cooperation movement,
- (h) to burn the flag of colonial Pakistan replacing it with the National Flag of Bangladesh,
- (i) to participate intensely in the liberation struggle by giving all-out help to the brave freedom fighters.

**BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN IS THE
SUPERME HEAD OF THE INDEPENDENT AND
SOVEREIGN BANGLADESH**

At this stage of the struggle the following slogans are to be used :

- * Long live independent and sovereign Bangladesh
- * Free Bangladesh
- * Great leader of independent Bengal...
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib.
- * Build fortresses in each village form
Muktibahinis.
- * Brave *Bengalis* take up arms ... make Bangladesh
independent
- * *Bengalis* unite for freedom.

VICTORY TO BANGLA AND BENGALIS

Joi Bangla

**Independent Bangladesh
Students Struggle Committee**

Appendix-2

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Pakistan Army has suddenly attacked the E. P. R. base at Peelkhana and Rajarbag Police Line and killed citizens. Street battles are going on in every street of Dhaka-Chittagong.

I appeal to the nations of the world for help. Our freedom fighters are gallantly fighting the enemy to free the motherland.

I appeal and order you all in the name of Almighty Allah to fight to the last drop of blood to liberate the country. Ask Police, the E. P. R., the Bengal Regiment and the Ansars to stand by you and to fight.

No compromise. Victory is ours.

Drive out the last enemy from the holy soil of our motherland. Convey this message to all Awami League leaders, workers and other patriots and lovers of freedom.

May Allah bless you.

Joy Bangla.....

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

25th March, 1971

Appendix-3

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOVEREIGN STATE OF BANGLADESH

(This is the text of the message broadcast on behalf of SK. Mujibur Rahman on March 28, 1971, by Maj. Ziaur Rahman. At 7.30 p.m. on the previous day he had declared independence in a similar message broadcast, also from Kalurghat Radio Station.)

“On behalf of our Great Leader, the supreme Commander of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we hereby proclaim the independence of Bangladesh.”

“And that the Government headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has already been formed. It is further proclaimed that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the sole leader of the elected representatives of seventy-five million people of Bangladesh, and the government headed by him is the only legitimate government of the people of the Independent Sovereign State of Bangladesh, which is legally and constitutionally formed, and is worthy of being recognised by all the governments of the world.”

“I therefore, appeal on behalf of our Great Leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the governments of all the democratic countries of the world, specially the Big

Powers and the neighbouring countries to recongnise the legal government of Bangladesh and take effective steps to immediatly stop the awful genocide that has been carried on by the army of occupation from Pakistan.”

“The guiding principle of the new state will be, first, neutrality; second, peace; and, third, friendship to all and enmity to none.”

“May Allah help us. Joi Bangla.”

Maj. Ziaur Rahman

27th March, 1971.

Appendix-4

The Daily Telegraph, London, March 30, 1971

TANKS CRUSH REVOLT IN PAKISTAN

7,000 slaughtered : Homes burned

By Simon Dring in Bangkok.

Who was in Dhaka during the fighting

In the name of "God and a united Pakistan."

Dhaka is today a crushed and frightened city. After 24 hours of ruthless, cold-blooded shelling by the Pakistan Army, as many as 7,000 people are dead, large areas have been levelled and East Pakistan's fight for independence has been brutally put to an end.

Despite claims by President Yahya Khan, head of the country's military government, that the situation is now calm tens of thousands of people are fleeing to the countryside, the city streets are almost deserted and the killings are still going on in other parts of the province.

But there is no doubt that troops supported by tanks control the towns and major population centres and that resistance is minimal and so far ineffective.

Even so people are still being shot at the slightest provocation, and buildings are still being indiscriminately destroyed.

And the military appears to be more determined each day to assert its control over the 73 million Bangalees in the East wing.

Blood Beaten Track

It is impossible accurately to assess what all this has so far cost in terms of innocent human lives. But reports beginning to filter in from the outlying areas, Chittagong, Comilla and Jessore put the figure, including Dhaka, in the region of 15,000 dead.

Only the horror of the military action can be properly gauged—the students dead in their beds, the butchers in the markets killed behind their stalls, the women and children roasted alive in their houses, the Pakistanis of Hindu religion taken out and shot en masse, the bazars and shopping areas razed by fire and the Pakistani flag now flies over every building in the capital.

Military casualties are not known but at least two soldiers have been wounded and one officer killed.

The Bengali uprising seems to be well and truly over for the moment. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was seen being taken away by the Army and nearly all the top members of his Awami League party have also been arrested.

Armoured attack

Leading political activists have been taken in, others have been murdered and the offices of two newspapers which supported the Sheikh's movement have been destroyed.

But the first target as the tanks rolled into Dhaka on the night of the 25th was the students.

An estimated three battalions of troops were used in the attack on Dhaka—one armoured, one artillery and one infantry. They started leaving the barracks shortly before 10 p.m.

By 11 firing had broken out and the people who had started hastily erecting makeshift barricades—overturned cars, tree stumps, furniture, concrete piping—became early casualties as the troops rolled into town.

Sheikh Mujib was telephoned and warned that something was happening, but he refused to leave his house. "If I go into hiding they will burn the whole of Dhaka to find me," he told an aide who escaped arrest.

200 students killed

The students were also warned but those who were still around later said that most thought they would only be arrested.

Led by American-supplied M24 World War II tanks, one column of troops sped to Dhaka University shortly after midnight. Troops took over the British Council library and used it as a fire-base to shell nearby dormitory areas.

Caught completely by surprise, some 200 students were killed in Iqbal Hall, headquarters of the militantly anti government students' union, as shells slammed into the building and their rooms were sprayed with machine-gun fire.

Two days later, bodies were still mouldering in burnt out rooms, others were scattered outside and more floated in a nearby lake. An art student lay sprawled across his easel.

Seven teachers died in their quarters and a family of 12 were gunned down as they hid in an outhouse.

The military removed many of the bodies, but the 30 bodies still there could never have accounted for all the blood in the corridors of Iqbal Hall.

At another hall the dead were buried by the soldiers in a hastily-dug mass grave and then bulldozed over by tanks.

People living near the university were caught in the fire too and 200 yards of shanty houses running alongside a railway line were destroyed.

Army patrols also razed a nearby market area, running

down between the stalls, killing their owners as they slept. Two days later, when it was possible to get out and see all this, some of the men were still looking as though asleep, their blankets pulled up over their shoulders.

In the same district the Dhaka Medical College received direct bazooka fire and a mosque was badly damaged.

Police HQ attacked

As the university came under attack columns of troops moved in on the Rajarbag headquarters of the East Pakistan police on the other side of the city.

Tanks opened fire first and then the troops moved in and levelled the men's sleeping quarters, firing incendiary rounds into the buildings.

It was not known, even by people living opposite, how many died, but out of the 1,100 police based there, not many are believed to have escaped.

As this was going on other units had surrounded the Sheikh's house. When contacted shortly before 1 a.m. he said he was expecting an attack any minute and that he had sent everyone except his servants and a bodyguard away to safety.

A neighbour said that at 1.10 a.m. one tank, an armoured car and trucks loaded with troops drove down the street firing over the house.

'Sheikh you should come down', an officer called out in English as they stopped outside.

"Sheikh Rahman replied by stepping out on to his balcony and saying "Yes, I am ready but there is no need to fire all you need to have done was call me on the telephone and I would have come."

The officer then walked into the garden of the house and told the Sheikh: "You are arrested."

He was taken away, along with three servants, an aide and his bodyguard who was badly beaten up when he started to insult the officer.

Documetns taken

As he was driven off—presumably to Army headquarters—the soldiers moved into the house, took away all documents, smashed everything in sight, locked the garden gate, shot down the green, red and yellow "Bangladesh" (Free Bengal) flag and drove away.

By 2 a.m. on the 26th fires were burning all over the city. Troops had occupied the university and surrounding areas and were busy killing of students still in hiding and replacing independence flagsen with Pakistani national standards.

There was still heavy shelling in some areas but the fighting was noticeably beginning to slacken. Opposite the Intercontinental Hotel, a platoon of troops stormed the empty offices of Dhaka's *People* newspaper, burning it down along with most houses in the area and killing alone nightwatchman.

Shortly before dawn most firing had stopped and as the sun came up an eerie silence settled over the city, deserted and completely dead except for the noise of the crows and the occasional convoy of troops.

But the worst was yet to come. At midday, again without any warning, columns of troops poured into the old section of the city where more than a million people live in a sprawling maze of narrow, winding streets.

For the next 11 hours they proceeded systematically to devastate large areas of the old town where Sheikh Mujib had some of his strongest support among the people in Dhaka.

English Road, French Road, Niar Bazar, City Bazar—meaningless names but home to thousands of people— were burnt to the ground.

"They suddenly appeared at the end of the street," said one old man living in the French Road Niar Bazar area. "Then they drove down it firing into all the houses."

The leading unit was followed by soldiers carrying cans of petrol. Those who tried to escape were shot; Those who stayed were burnt alive. About 700 men, women and children died there that day between midday and two o'clock.

The same was repeated in at least three other areas, all of them covering anything up to half an square mile or more.

As they left the soldiers took those dead they could away with them in trucks and moved on to their next target. Police stations in the old town were also attacked.

"I am looking for my constables," a police inspector said on Saturday morning as he wandered through the ruins of one of the Bazars. "I have 240 in my district and so far have found only 30 of them—all dead."

One of the biggest massacres of the entire operation in Dhaka took place in the Hindu area of the old town. There the soldiers made the people come out of their houses and then just shot them in groups.

This area, too, was eventually razed.

The troops stayed on in the old city in force until about 11 p.m. on the 26th, driving about with local Bengali informers.

The soldiers would fire a flare and the informer would point out the house of staunch Awami League supporters. The house would then be destroyed— either with direct tank or recoilless rifle fire or with a can of petrol.

Meanwhile, troops of the East Bengal Regiment were being used in the suburbs to start moving out towards the industrial areas of the city—Tongi and Narayanganj—against centres of Leftist support for the Sheikh.

Firing continued in these areas until early on Sunday morning but the main bulk of the operation in the city was completed by the night of the 26th — almost exactly 24 hours after it began.

One of the last targets was the Bengali language daily newspaper *Ittefaq*. Over 400 people had taken shelter in its offices when the firing started.

At 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the 26th four tanks appeared in the road outside. By 4.30 p.m. the building was an inferno. By Saturday morning only the charred remains of corpses were left.

As quickly as they appeared the troops disappeared off the streets. On Saturday morning the radio announced the curfew would be lifted from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m.

It then repeated the martial law regulations banning all political activity announcing Press censorship and ordering all government employees to report back for work and for all privately owned weapons to be handed in.

Thousand's flee

Magically the city returned to life and panic set in. By 10 a.m. with pulls of black smoke still hanging over large areas of the old town and out in the distance towards the industrial areas, the streets were packed with fleeing people.

By car, in rickshaws but mostly on foot carrying their possessions with them the people of Dhaka were leaving. By midday they were on the move in their tens of thousands.

"Please give me a lift, I'm an old man," "In the name of Allah help me," "Take my children with you," came the pleas.

Silent and un-smiling they passed and saw what the Army had done. It had been a thorough job, carefully

planned and meticulously executed and they looked the other way and kept on walking.

Down near one of the markets a shot was heard. Within seconds 2,000 people were running, but it had only been someone going to join the queues already forming to hand in their weapons.

The Government offices remained almost empty. Most employees were leaving for their villages.

Those who were not fleeing wandered aimlessly around the smoking debris of what were once their homes, lifting the blackened, twisted sheets of corrugated iron used in most shanty areas as roofing materials to save what they could from the ashes.

Nearly every other car, if it was not taking people out into the countryside, was flying a Red Cross and conveying dead and wounded to the hospitals.

And in the middle of it all occasional convoys of troops would appear, the soldiers peering unsmiling down the muzzles of their guns at the silent crowds.

On the Friday night as they pulled back to their barracks, they shouted "Narai Takbir," an old Persian war cry meaning "we have won the war."

On Saturday when they spoke it was to shout "Pakistan Zindabad"— "Long live Pakistan."

Most people took the hint. Before the curfew was re-imposed the national flag of Pakistan, apart from patrol, was the hottest selling item on the market.

As if to protect their property in their absence, the last thing a family would do before they locked up their house would be to raise the flag.

At four o'clock the streets emptied again, the troops reappeared and silence fell once more over Dhaka.

But firing broke out against almost immediately. "Anybody out to doors after from will be shot," the radio had announced.

A small boy running across the street outside the Intercontinental two minutes after curfew was stopped, slapped four times in the face by an officer and taken away in a jeep.

Another unfortunate night-watchman this time at the Dhaka Club, a leftover bar from the colonial days, was shot when he went to shut the gate of the club.

A group of Hindu Pakistanis living around a temple in the middle of the racecourse were all killed, apparently for no reason at all except they were out in the open.

And refugees who came back into the city when they found roads leading out were blocked by the Army told how many had been killed as they tried to walk across country to avoid the troops.

Beyond those roadblocks is more or less a no man's land, where the clearing operations are still going on. What is happening out there is anybody's guess—except the Army's.

Many people took to the river to try to escape the crowds on the roads. But they run risk of being left stranded waiting for a boat when curfew fell.

Where one such rroup was sitting on Saturday afternoon, there were only bloodstains next morning.

"Traitors" Charge

Hardly anywhere was there evidence of organised resistance to the troops in Dhaka or anywhere else in the province. Even the West Pakistani officers scoffed at the idea of anybody putting up a fight.

"These men," said one Punjabi lieutenant, "could not kill us if they tried."

"Things are much better now," said another officer.

"Nobody can speak out or come out. If they do we will kill them. They have spoken enough. They are traitors and we are not. We are fighting in the name of God and a united Pakistan."

The operation, apparently planned and led by Gen. Tikka Khan, the West Pakistani military governor of the East, has succeeded in driving every last drop of resistance out of the people of Bengal.

Only the propaganda machine or the Indian Government is keeping the fight going apart, from a Leftist underground group operating a clandestine "Bangladesh" radio somewhere outside Dhaka.

Even if time erases the scar that marks the end of the dream that the people of East Pakistan thought was democratically theirs, it will take more than a generation before they live down the fear instilled in their minds by the tragic and horrifying massacres of last week.

If anything is to be salvaged from the ruins of Sheikh Mujib's movement, it is the realisation that the Army is not to be under-estimated again and that for all the speech making of president Yahya about the returning of power to the people, the regime did not really ever intend to abide by the results of any election—fairly won or not.

Appendix-5

April 5, 1971

TIME

PAKISTAN: TOPPLING OVER THE BRINK

First Shot

Until last week, Pakistan's political leaders seemed on the verge of settling their differences. Then in rapid order, three events carried the nation over the brink of violence. In Chittagong, a mob surrounded West Pakistani troops unloading supply ships. Where the first shots came from is unclear, but when the troops opened fire, 35 Bengalis were killed. Their political leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, called a general strike to protest. Then Yahya Khan outlawed Mujib and his Awami League Party as "enemies of Pakistan" and ordered the armed forces to "do their duty."

In Dhaka, army tanks and truckloads of troops with fixed bayonets came clattering out of their suburban base, shouting "Victory to Allah," and "Victory to Pakistan." TIME correspondent Dan Coggin, who, along with other newsmen, was subsequently expelled from Pakistan reported: "Before long, howitzer, tank, artillery and rocket blasts rocked half a dozen scattered sections of Dhaka. Tracers arched over the darkened city. The staccato chatter of automatic weapons was punctuated with grenade explosions, and tall columns of black smoke towered over the city. In the night came the occasional cry of 'Joi Bangla (Victory to Bengal)', followed by a burst of machine-gun fire."

The army ordered a strict 24-hour curfew in Dhaka, with violators shot on sight. But soon the Free Bengal Revolutionary Radio Centre, probably somewhere in Chittagong, crackled into life. Over the clandestine station, Mujib proclaimed the creation of the "sovereign, independent Bengali nation," and called on its people to "resist the enemy forces at all costs in every corner of Bangladesh." The defiant words, however, lacked military substance. At 1.30 a.m. the following day, soldiers seized the Sheikh in his home. Meanwhile, scattered rioting broke out in West Pakistan to protest the prospect of prolonged military rule.

The rupture in Pakistan stemmed from the country's first experiment with true democracy. After it was founded in 1947, Pakistan was ruled on the basis of a hand-picked electorate; Martial Law was imposed after an outbreak of rioting in 1969. During those years, Pakistan was divided by more than geography. Physically and psychologically the 58 million tall light skinned people of the West identified with the Islamic peoples who inhabit the area of land stretching as far as Turkey. The smaller, darker East Pakistanis seemed to belong to the world of South and South-east Asia. More divisive yet was the fact that the westerners monopolised the government and the army had dominated the nation's commercial life. The East Pakistanis have, over the years, earned the bulk of the country's foreign exchange with their jute exports, yet the majority of schools, roads, new factories and modern government buildings went up in the west.

Eager to relinquish power and return the country to civilian rule, Yahya called elections last December for a National Assembly to write a new constitution. East Pakistanis gave Sheikh Mujib's Awami League 167 of the region's 169 seats and an overall majority in the combined

nation's 313 seat assembly chamber. Mujib's platform called for a virtual dismantling of the central government, leaving it in charge of defence and diplomacy and giving the provinces total control of taxes, trade and foreign aid.

Determined to hold the country together, Yahya resisted Mujib's demands for autonomy. Postponing the Constituent Assembly, he flew to Dhaka, and in eleven days of meeting with Mujib came almost within sight of a compromise agreement. Yahya, however, demanded that the leader of West Pakistan's majority party, ex-Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, also be a party to the agreement. Bhutto insisted on heading the foreign ministry while Mujib maintained that with an overall majority, he had the right to form a government without Bhutto.

Mendicant Among Nations

If East Pakistan eventually takes its place in the world community as Bangladesh, it will have the world's eighth largest population and lowest per capita income (\$50 a year). It will, inevitably, become a mendicant among nations, and the U.S. will face the need to increase the \$ 150 million a year in foreign aid that it now gives to the combined wings of the country. East Pakistan has little industry to speak of, and the world-demand for jute is gradually dropping. West Pakistan will also be left smaller and poorer, though it now has the beginning of an industrial base, consisting primarily of textile mills.

If anyone gains from the sorry split, it will be India, which would face a greatly weakened adversary. Mujib has indicated that he would like to establish friendly relations with New Delhi and, particularly, with the Hindu Bengalis just across the border. He does not share West Pakistan's hostility toward India over the disputed territory of Kashmir. West Pakistan, left with a smaller economic base

and without the East's foreign exchange earnings, could not easily maintain as strong an army as the one that went to war with India in 1965. But thoughtful Indians could not regard their neighbour's troubles with too much satisfaction. India itself is, by no means, immune to the centrifugal forces of tribalism and many of its people remember all too well Nehru's recurring nightmare: a subcontinent alternating between periods of political unity and bloody interludes of division and strife.

"Raise Your Hands and Join Me"

When West Pakistani soldiers arrested Sheikh Mujibur ("Mujib") Rahman last week, they gave him a chance to add to an unenviable record. Mujib has already spent more time in prison than any other major Pakistani politician; nine years and eight months.

What makes the Sheikh so unpopular with West Pakistanis is the fact that for more than 23 years he has been the leading advocate of *Purbodesh* (regional autonomy) for East Pakistan. In last December's elections, *Purbodesh* was Mujib's chief issue. After visiting the Cyclone-devastated Ganges Delta region just before the general elections, he declared: "If the polls bring us frustration, we will owe it to the million who have died in the cyclone to make a supreme sacrifice of another million lives, if need be, so that we can live as free people."

Grey-haired, stocky and tall for a Bengali (6 ft.) the bespectacled Mujib always wears a loose white shirt with black, sleeveless, vestlike jacket. A moody man, he tends to scold Bengalis like so many children. He was born in the East bengal village of Tongipara 51 years ago to a middle class landowner (his landlord status accounts for the title of Sheikh). Mujib studied liberal Arts at Calcutta's Islamia College and Law at Dhaka University. He lives with

his wife Fazilatunnessa, three sons and two daughters in a modest two storey house in Dhaka's well-to-do Dhanmandi section. Except for a brief stint as an insurance salesman, he has devoted most of his time to politics. First he opposed British rule in India. After the subcontinent's partition in 1947, he denounced West Pakistan's dominance of East Pakistan with every bit as much vehemence. "Brothers," he would say to his Bengali followers, "do you know that the streets of Karachi are lined with gold? Do you want to take back that gold? Then raise your hands and join me." He was first jailed in 1948, when he demonstrated against Pakistan Founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah for proclaiming Urdu the new nation's lingua franca.

Yet he has remained, in many respects, a political moderate. He is a social democrat who favours nationalising major industries, banks and insurance companies. In foreign exchange policy too, he follows a middle course. Where West Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto favours closer ties with China and the Soviet Union and is stridently anti-India, Mujib would like to trade with India and is regarded as moderately pro-Western.

Appendix-6

Kayhan (International), August 1, 1971

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF SHEIKH MUJIB

By Amir Taheri

In the middle of Dhaka's fashionable Dhanmandi district there is a pale yellow three-storied building which is said to be haunted by ghosts in the dark nights of the monsoon. Most of the windows are broken and there are bullet marks on almost every wall. The wild ivy pursues its green conquest of the mud-brick walls encouraged by generous rain. Amid of thick leaves of the old trees there are soaked little slogans saying: Joy Bangla (Long Live Bengal).

people who pass from the street on which the houses are situated make sure to keep their distance from this badly designed semi-Georgian house that has already been shrouded into legend.

The house belongs to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the goaled leader of the Awami League whose meteoric rise to popularity and his equally sudden decline and fall have become something of a dream mixed with hints of nightmare to the millions of people who were stirred up to hysteria by his fiery speeches over no more than a year.

In the modest room that was Mujib's house we found a pile of letters still unopened invitations to weddings, requests for this or that and page after page of, for us, undecipherable Bengali scribblings. All the letters had arrived at the house in mid-March but the Sheikh, who was arrested on March 26, had no time to open them.

On his desk we found Sir Ivor Jennings, "Constitutional Problems of Pakistan" dedicated to Mujib by his teacher, one Zuberi. Inside the cover we read: "Politics leads to power but knowledge is power, too. And Mujib has added a few sentences saying this was the book he read every time, he was thrown into prison. This time, however he did not have time to take the book with him.

In other rooms there are books and records scattered everywhere as well as withered flowers, coloured bulbs, black flags and party slogans. The whole house has the aspect of a place where a big party has been wrecked by the intervention of vengeful gate-crashers.

The Sheikh must have been quite a desperate man during the last 48 hours of his freedom. With a thumping electoral victory behind him and with no opponents in sight in East Pakistan he had obviously found himself the Messiah of 75 million desperately poor East Pakistanis.

Throughout the complex game of manoeuvres and counter-manoevres that followed the election—the first in Pakistan's history.... the Sheikh had conducted himself with masterful composure and always contriving to appear to the wronged side.

He had managed to advocate his six-points with complete freedom despite the fact that the programme was a truly revolutionary one which if implemented, would have led to a virtual end to central authority in East Pakistan, at the same time he had succeeded in holding his Party together, and the Awami League which he headed with a spectrum of various political ideas and socio-economic interests. Inside his central committee there were sworn pro-Mao Communists, anti-Communist landlords and rich merchants, nihilistic student rebels, pompous middle class lawyers and rustic jute growers from the dark hinterland.

The election had been held for the formation of a constituent assembly that would write a constitution for

Pakistan. But in the last days of March the Sheikh, no doubt egged on by his extremist lieutenants, asked the military government to agree to an immediate transfer of power to the assembly.

In doing so he was encouraged by numerous West Pakistani leaders including Qayyum Khan of the Muslim League and other lesser figures such as Air-Marshal Asghar Khan, Nasrullah and Mian Mumtaz Daulatana. So he thought that his call for an immediate end of martial law and hand over of power to the assembly would be backed by the West Pakistanis as well. The only man he did not count on was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Chairman of the West Pakistani People's Party.....the second largest group in the assembly that never met.

Mujib accused Bhutto of having caused the postponement of the assembly, and when a fresh date was given by the President, Mujib was no longer interested in constitutional niceties alone. He wanted power then and there. Looking around him he found the military chiefs weak and undecided and thought Yahya Khan would balk at the thought of plunging the nation into, what Mujib was convinced, would be a long and bitter civil war.

To this was added his demand for an enquiry into shooting incidents that had claimed over 300 lives in East Pakistan in the second week of March. What, in effect he asked for, was a trial of the generals responsible for martial law in East Pakistan.

There was a remarkable degree of naivete in his moves. He wanted the generals to hand over power to him and agree to be tried by him. At the sametime he had no definite strategy for imposing his will upon them.

By mid-March his "Hartal" (strike) movement was in full swing although he was still negotiating with President Yahya. He talked as if he had already seized power and made it clear that from then on he would be dictating his

terms to the military government as well as the assembly members elected in the west wing.

Beyond saying he would put the generals on trial, Mujib had no well-defined policy to offer as the basis for the activities of the government he proposed to form. He did not say whether this would be a government for East Pakistan alone or whether he was aiming at creating a government for both wings. The first alternative is more plausible since the Awami League would not have been able to completely ignore Bhutto had it had a chance to form a national government.

Negotiations between Mujib and Yahya Khan dragged on and both sides gradually grew impatient. Yahya wanted Mujib to join the assembly as majority leader, help draft a constitution and then head a civilian government. The only conditions were that end his "hartal", withdraw the demand for the trial of the army chiefs and drop his insistence on forming two separate assemblies... one for each wing of the divided country.

Mujib was adamant. He argued that the martial law government had lost its authority in East Pakistan and that he accepted nothing less than *carte blanche*. He told Yahya Khan that this party had won a free election and thus was entitled to power. What the military government did in West Pakistan was of no concern to him.

It was at this point that the talks broke down. Neither side knew what the next move would be. The breakdown of the talks was hailed by the extremists in Awami League as a "victory". They began organising group of armed volunteers and asked Bengali soldiers and policemen to rebel against their West Pakistani officers.

Yahya Khan, on the other hand, was not given a chance to weigh the results of his nightmarish encounter with the

Sheikh. He saw his army on the verge of disintegration and his government about to lose control not only in East Pakistan but also in the West Wing. For, had Mujib succeeded in doing what he had set about to do, the military government would have collapsed in West Pakistan also. Finding himself in a hopeless situation the President chose military action as the sole way out of the crisis.

By doing so he also solved a problem that must have been plaguing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—viz. what to do next? For Mujib, having successfully pulled off his "hartal," still had to eliminate the army from the scene and establish some form of order in the turbulent country at the mercy of "goondas" (thugs) and Naxalite rebels. He would have been completely unable to achieve the double objective and since he had no more cards to play he decided to allow events to take their "natural" course. Having forced the army into a head on collision with the Awami League, the Sheikh did not have the ghost of a policy designed to save his party from destruction.

He was urged by his militant juniors to declare the independence of "Bangladesh" and to immediately invite military aid from India. He was not sure India would be able or willing to embark upon a war with Pakistan on his behalf. He knew there would be violent repercussions in West Bengal... a development the Indians do not welcome. Somehow he was expecting some kind of a miracle that would save him from having his back to the wall.

His middle-class supporters were gradually leaving the band-wagon. They had joined it in the hope of getting a share in East Pakistan's trade, then entirely in the hands of the West Pakistanis. They had certainly not backed the Sheikh in order to be plunged into a civil war that would mean their own economic ruin as well.

All the properties strata of the society were by then frightened and chose "law and order", withdrawing their support from Mujib although not saying so openly. Mujib had asked them to starve the army. But supplies continued to flow into the barracks. Notables began to have secret meetings with the military chiefs.

The extremist students were also abandoning Mujib for entirely different reasons. They wanted him to do a Mao while he was trying to do a Gandhi. In the last fateful hours of his career the Sheikh was left with the unreliable support only of the unorganised mass of the Bengali peasantry. The pace of events was too quick for him and soon his authority was superseded by that of men like Tajuddin Ahmed, the Awami League's secessionist secretary-general and student leaders like Noor-e-Alam Siddiqui and A.S.M. Abdur Rab.

On the other side the initiative was in the hands of Lt. General Tikka Khan reputed to be the toughest officer to come out of the Punjab for a generation.

There was no room on such a stage for romantic, indecisive and utterly confused political actors such as Mujibur Rahman. From then on the only valid dialogue was that spoken in the language of bullets.

The Awami League extremists hastily announced the birth of their independent "Bangladesh" while Mujibur Rahman sat in his house in Dhanmandi ready to be arrested by the army.

Mujib was seized and flown to Karachi in the early hours of March 26. On the plane he slept for just over an hour. He did not talk to anyone. At Karachi airport he had to change planes for Quetta, the capital of Pakistani Baluchistan. He was taken into the VIP lounge and offered English tea. He asked for black coffee. Then two policemen posed behind him and a snap-shot was taken.

Few people know of Mujib's whereabouts at present. He is being moved from one prison to another. Last month he went on a hunger strike but he agreed to eat when his wife and children were taken to see him. During the past few weeks he has been writing feverishly. No one knows what he is writing but some people say he is preparing his defence for the time he goes on trial.

There are rumours that he has gone insane and is making unintelligible "speeches" for several hours a day. But I have first hand information that this is not true. The Awami League leader is quite-sound and has neither been tortured nor treated with disrespect. In fact, he is being treated as if he were a VIP spending sometime behind bars.

A group of lawyers and military chiefs are preparing the case against him. He is expected to be put on trial within the next few weeks on a charge of high treason. The maximum penalty would be death by firing squad.

Few people in West Pakistan believe Mujib will be executed. No political executions have taken place in the history of Pakistan so far and there are strong reasons to believe that this tradition will not be broken. Most West Pakistanis were convinced Mujib was a secessionist and involved in a conspiracy planned by the Indian government. In East Pakistan it is still practically impossible to assess Mujib's present standing. Few people like to talk about him, and those who do, are former members of his party who now accuse him of having led his people into a trap.

Meanwhile; Mujib still has to give his version of Pakistan's bloody nightmare. When his trial opens in Islamabad he will be facing the judgement not only of a court-martial but also of history.

Appendix-7

The Statesman, August 11, 1971

MUJIBUR'S TRIAL BEGINS: INDIA APPEALS TO NATIONS

Rawalpindi, August 11,... Informed Government sources said that the Awami League leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, went on trial today in a fight for his life against charges that he waged war against Pakistan reports AP.

The proceedings were secret.

The Government refused to confirm officially that the trial had begun. It also refused to disclose the location of the military tribunal, the names of the judges or the defence attorney.

Three foreign radios....Radio Accra, Radio Cologne and Radio Australia reported today that the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had opened in camera, but did not quote any source.

Mrs Gandhi has appealed to 24 countries to save the life of Mr Rahman, writes our special correspondent in New Delhi.

The Soviet Union also likely to issue an appeal in this regard.

India's External Affairs Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh has sent a cable to the UN Secretary General on the same subject.

The USA today expressed concern for the second time to the Pakistan Government that any "summary action" in

the secret trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will destroy all possibilities for a political settlement of the East Bengal crisis. AP report from Washington.

The Secretary of State, Mr Rogers, passed on to Pakistan Ambassador Mr. Agha Hilaly, a telegram from 11 U.S. Senators and a letter signed by 58 Congressmen asking Pakistan to show compassion towards the Sheikh.

At the same time a State Department spokesman reacted stiffly to the Pakistan Government's decision to refuse permission for the Democrat Senator, Mr. Kennedy to visit Islamabad and Dhaka.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's wife, who had been under house arrest at Dhaka, was flown to Karachi a few days ago, according to a reliable report received at Mujibnagar today, writes UNI.

She was taken from the house at Dhanmandi area to the airport with Army escort and put on board a Karachi bound plane.

It is not known whether she was being detained at Karachi or some other place in West Pakistan.

Radio Australia said the result of the trial was a foregone conclusion. "There is only one verdict: Guilty".

On the night of March 26, 18 hours after Sheikh Mujib's arrest, Gen. Yahya Khan had branded him as a traitor and an enemy of Pakistan. "No one in Pakistan, especially a military court, dare go against Yahya Khan", the radio said.

Gen. Yahya Khan is quoted to have said in private that "the Sheikh must die", the radio said.

The Prime Minister's cable to all big Powers, the Western countries and certain countries of Africa, Asia and West Asia has been addressed to Heads of Governments and despatched through Indian Missions abroad.

She has said in cable : The Government and people of India as well as our Press and Parliament are greatly perturbed by the reported statement of President Yahya Khan that he is going to start secret military trial of Mr. Mujibur Rahman without affording him any foreign legal assistance. We apprehended that this so-called trial will be used only as a cover to execute Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This will aggravate the situation in East Bengal and will create serious situation in India because of the strong feelings of our people and all political parties. Hence our grave anxiety. We appeal to you to exercise your influence with President Yahya Khan to take a realistic view in the larger interest of peace and stability in this region."

Mrs. Gandhi's message, however, has not been addressed to China and West Asian countries except the UAR and Iraq. The selective list includes: The UAR, Ceylon, Tanzania, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Nepal, Malaysia, Zambia, the USSR, Canada, France, Italy, Singapore, Sweden, Holland, Japan, the USA, the U.K, West Germany, Ghana, and Yugoslavia.

The Foreign Minister, Mr Swaran Singh, said in his cable to U. Thant: "We are distressed and shocked by the announcement made in Rawalpindi that they propose to commence Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's trial from tomorrow. This announcement comes in the wake of the several categorical statements which have lately emanated from President Yahya Khan about Sheikh's culpability in waging war against Pakistan and in having indulged in treasonous activities.

"Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is an outstanding leader of his people, much beloved and much respected. His victory at the polls in December, 1970 was perhaps the most magnificent one, in any similar election anywhere in the world in recent years. Our people, press, Parliament and

Government are all convinced that the problems which have been created for us by the Pakistani action in East Bengal will be multiplied ten-fold if the Government of Pakistan does something precipitate and extreme in the context of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's life and welfare.

"We would like to appeal to your excellency, to take urgent steps to request the Government of Pakistan not to take this action which is certain to make their difficulties and ours very much worse. Anything they do to Mujib now will have grave and perilous consequences."

Asked whether he had discussed the issue with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr Singh told the Rajya Sabha today that Mr Gromyko was strongly in favour of persuading Pakistan not to go ahead with this 'type of sham trial'.

He also told the House that the Government was greatly concerned at the threat held out by the Pakistan president to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Asked by Mr. A.D. Mani whether the Government would take initiative in having a Commission of International Jurists appointed to investigate the war-crimes committed by the military rulers of Pakistan in Bangladesh, the External Affairs Minister said it was a suggestion for action. However in his opinion, it would be more effective if the initiative was taken by the Indian member of the International commission of Jurists.

The Secretary-General, U. Thant said yesterday that the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was bound to have repercussions outside Pakistan, Reuter adds from United Nations.

But the Secretary-General said, Sheikh Mujibur's impending trial before a Military Court was "an extremely sensitive and delicate matter which falls within the competence of the judicial system of a member State."

In a Press statement, U. Thant said, he shared the feelings of many UN representatives "that any developments concerning the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be inevitable having repercussions outside the borders of Pakistan."

He said the trial was "a matter of extra-ordinary interest and concern in many quarters, from a humanitarian as well as from a political point of view."

He said, he had received, and was still receiving almost daily expressions of serious concern from UN representatives about the situation in East Bengal.

In Geneva, the International Commission of Jurists yesterday formally protested to president Yahya Khan against the scheduled trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A cable signed by commission's Secretary General, Mr. Alan Niall Macdermott, said "the International Commission of Jurists protests against the secret military trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Justice has nothing to hide."

A London report says: The London lawyers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman claimed today he was being denied all access to legal aid, reports Reuter.

Lawyers Bernard Sheridan and Company took the unusual step of writing a letter to The Times about the case. They did so, the letter said, so that readers might know more precisely the efforts which had been made by lawyers to secure for him a fair trial.

"Although Sheikh Mujibur was arrested at the end of March this year following up on his success at the polls, he has been denied all access to legal advice."

The letter added that they had seen the Pakistan High Commission in London in June and written a formal request to be allowed to see him but had not received a reply or acknowledgement.

Further requests made in person in Pakistan by a member of the firm accompanying Mr. Sean Macbride (senior counsel) were also not acknowledged, the letter said.

A Cairo report says: UAR's leading newspaper, Al Ahram, expressed concern yesterday at the announcement that East Bengal leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was to be tried by a military court.

The newspaper said: "National unity cannot be secured by military or secret trials and cannot be protected by the majority under an iron rule."

The Paper said the interest shown in the fate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was neither an expression of interference in Pakistan's internal affairs nor a confirmation of the separatist call from the national soil both principles of interference and separation were rejected categorically and unequivocally.

"This interest is rather due in the first place to a belief in the necessity for preserving national unity in Pakistan in both its eastern and western provinces. This national unity is a sound expression of the aspirations of the masses and their leaderships in both the provinces", the paper added.

Appendix-8

August 12, 1971

THE TIMES

EDITORIAL: THE FATE OF SHEIKH MUJIB

For a country of Pakistan's legal traditions and international standing the decision to try Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in secret is lamentable. The charge of "waging war against Pakistan" is on the face of it absurd, an inflation in words of a retrospective judgement arrived at by the military leaders whose disastrous policy was put into effect when Sheikh Mujib was arrested.

The opportunities for defence that should be freely available even to a man who is tried in secret have at least in part been denied, judging from the letter we published yesterday from his lawyers in London. In view of the Pakistan Army's record in East Pakistan since the end of March it is difficult to have any confidence that this secret trial by a military court will abide by acceptable rules of law. The manner of it is shameful, and where justice is secret there is a strong assumption that it is in fact unjust. It will be a catastrophe if a country where the legal profession has done its best to uphold the rule of law throughout a long period of military dominance should now damage itself in the eyes of the world.

Such must be the reaction even of many who are still fully prepared to accept the desirability of keeping Pakistan united so long as there is a realistic chance of

unity. Major adjustments within the broad framework of unity must now be the only way that will prevent ten times as much suffering for East Pakistan as it has already endured. Sheikh Mujib is the only leader of East Pakistan who is in a position to negotiate a settlement, and avert a further tragedy.

What hope can there be in Pakistan's serious intention of resuming negotiations if a death sentence is imposed? Sheikh Mujib is so clearly the only man who commands in East Pakistan the public confidence that could help to persuade his people to accept a new relationship between the eastern and western wings of the country. The pretence that any other organization but the Awami League can do this underlines the political inexperience of the military rulers in Dhaka. The claim that Sheikh Mujib has himself forsaken any chance of keeping Pakistan united is an assertion after the events of March: the Pakistan Government's own White Paper does not offer any conclusive statement by Sheikh Mujib showing that he saw no solution but independence for East Bengal. If he is removed from the scene his place would be taken by more extreme...not by more moderate...leaders.

There is much room for argument over the concessions that both sides would have to make if any kind of compromise is to be reached that would preserve Pakistan's unity. While the present tension lasts no one could define the part Sheikh Mujib might play in such negotiations, though he would seem to be the indispensable person who could finalize any settlement. If then, he were to be sentenced to death in this trial the action could only confirm in the minds of all observers that the political policy of the Pakistan Government had shown itself to be quite incapable of moving towards any sensible settlement.

Conditions have been such as to make a balanced picture of this year's events in Bengal very difficult to obtain. Yet attempts made by Pakistan spokesman to correct any bias that seemed to exaggerate the brutality of their military forces have done little to rebut the evidence that the repression then begun in East Pakistan was disastrous and grossly excessive. It must therefore be emphasized that such critical opinion would be angered to the point of final alienation by a death sentence on Sheikh Mujib.

The hopes of negotiation would be dashed by it. The credit of Pakistan would be irretrievably lowered with the inevitable result that new attitudes to the situation would come to be adopted. Policies for aid would come up for scrutiny, particularly in the United States, not because anyone believes that aid can or should dictate the actions of governments but because public feeling might at least demand abstention. From that would follow a re-consideration of the possibility of reconciling East Pakistan. Inevitably many governments would find themselves taking a new look at the new situation confronting them. We must all make the strongest pleas that Sheikh Mujib be spared.

Appendix-9

August 17, 1971

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

AFTER VISITING REFUGEES IN INDIA KENNEDY HITS PAKISTAN 'GENOCIDE'

New Delhi, Aug. 16, (NYT).—Sen. Edward Mr. Kennedy, D. Mass., today denounced Pakistan's military repression in East Pakistan as genocide and said that the secret trial of the East Pakistani leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was "an outrage of every concept of international law."

At a news conference here as he ended his week-long visit to India, the senator also blamed the Nixon administration policy of continued arms aid to Pakistan for the severe damage to U.S. relations with India.

Sen. Kennedy spent most of his time here visiting the squalid border camps that hold more than seven million East Pakistani refugees who have fled the military repression. He said today that President Nixon's policy "baffles me...and after seeing the results in terms of human misery, I think it's an ever greater disaster."

Of the new, 20-year Soviet-Indian friendship treaty signed here a week ago, the senator said that he saw "nothing inconsistent" with India's state policy of non-alignment and did not think the treaty was "in any way disadvantageous to United States friendship with India."

Treaty with U.S.

"As a matter of fact" he said, "the Indian foreign minister (Swaran Singh) has indicated publicly that he is willing to sign a similar treaty with the United States."

Sen. Kennedy, who came to India in his capacity as chairman of the Senate judiciary sub-committee on the refugees, said that he believed that a political solution to the East Pakistan crisis was possible "but I don't pretend to have that political solution."

The crisis erupted March 25 when the Pakistan Army, composed of West Pakistanis, launched a surprise military offensive to try to crush the Bangali independence movement in East Pakistan.

Sheikh Mujibur, leader of the Awami League party which, last December, won a majority in a National Assembly that has yet to meet, was arrested in Dhaka on the first night of the army attack and later flown to West Pakistan. His trial on charges of waging war against Pakistan and other offences was scheduled to begin last week somewhere in West Pakistan but there has been no information on it or on his fate.

"The only crime that Mujib is guilty of", Sen. Kennedy said, "is winning an election".

Appendix-10

THE STATESMAN, SEPTEMBER 19, 1971

RELEASE MUJIBUR UNCONDITIONALLY CALL BY 24-NATION CONFERENCE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BANGLADES

From our Special Representative

New Delhi, Sept. 18—Delegates from 24 nations attending the International conference on Bangladesh gave a unanimous call here today for unconditional release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman whom they described as the unquestioned leader of the people of Bangladesh.

The three-day conference, which began its deliberations by observing two minutes' silence in memory of those killed in Bangladesh, appealed to people of the world and its governments to bring pressure on the military Government of Pakistan "to desist from the grave violation of all canons and laws governing civil liberties and human freedom recognized in all civilized communities."

The resolution moved by the chairman of the conference, Mr Jayprakash Narayan, was adopted with the entire assembly standing to signify its unanimous support.

Mr. Narayan, in his address, indicated "the world outside India, except Soviet Russia", for failing to

condemn the rulers of Pakistan for their crimes. Urging that the conference unequivocally condemn these rulers, he added that, "condemnation alone will not do, however." As far as he was persuaded that the refugees would never return home until every Pakistani soldier had departed from Bangladesh and Bangladesh itself had become an independent sovereign country.

Different Case

He was aware, he added, that his brief would immediately raise the spectre, particularly in the minds of delegates from the Third World of disintegration of established nation-States. "No sensible person would really want that," he said, "but it would be wrong to generalize." The case of Bangladesh was different in important respects from all other cases that had occurred in recent history.

"First, there is no other nation-State in the world like Pakistan, the two parts of which are separated by over 1,000 miles, not of sea...some 700 miles... as in the case of Malaysia, but of Indian territory. Secondly there is nothing in common between the eastern and western wings of Pakistan except religion. Thirdly, the eastern wing had the majority, nearly 60% of the total population of Pakistan. Fourthly, due to a number of circumstances, political and economic, power was always held by a small oligarchy of West Pakistani military officers, with the result that East Pakistan was reduced to the status of a colony."

Yet Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had never thought of secession. "In fact, the Sheikh is on record as saying that a majority never secedes from a minority. Accordingly, the platform on which he had fought the last general election did not go beyond the demand for full internal autonomy. His victory, however, threw the rulers of Pakistan into a

panic, because it meant two major changes in the balance of economic and political power within the State...power to pass over from the military-civil oligarchy to the people, and shifting of the centre of power from the west to the east." The rest was recent history and Mr Narayan wondered how anyone could blame the Bangalis for having proclaimed independence in the face of the unprecedented tyranny let loose by the West Pakistani Army.

The Bengalis, he added, had no alternative after what the Pakistanis had done to them since the midnight of March 25-26. "As a freedom fighter myself, I have no hesitation in saying that I would have done the same had I been in their position. In fact, I doubt if any self-respecting person or people anywhere in the world would act differently in similar circumstances."

Pakistan No More

Therefore Mr Narayan added, it should be clearly understood that Pakistan as the world knew it was no more. Quoting Mr. Tajuddin Ahmad, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, he said the country lay buried under a mountain of corpses.

While welcoming action on humanitarian and political levels Mr. Narayan commended to the delegates the formation of an armed international brigade like the one during the Spanish Civil War. "In this connection the reported offer of Mr. Andre Malraux who, besides being a renowned author, was also a guerrilla leader in the Spanish Civil War and a Maqui leader in France during World War II to come to the aid of Bengali guerrillas, should be warmly welcomed and further explored."

Mr. narayan also suggested that the conference consider "concrete proposals for governments of the world," or such of them as we can hope to influence in some manner, for extending moral, political and material

support to the Bangladesh Government and its war of liberation." What Bangladesh was fighting against was the "Hitlerian junta in power in Islamabad which is keeping in subjugation the people of West Pakistan no less than the people of Bangladesh," he said.

Ceylon's Mr Gunawardene, who had represented his country in the U.N. for over a decade, said: "Recognition of Bangladesh would be the victory of morality, the victory of right", adds UNI.

He said Ceylonese were deeply moved by the tragedy of Bangladesh and did not view the happenings there as Pakistan's internal matter. The people of Bangladesh had exercised their right of self determination and it was the duty of the world community to ensure that they got their legitimate right.

Mr Gunawardene, along with nearly all the other speakers, called upon the U.N. to take effective measures for the freedom of Bangladesh and ensure that there was not a single soldier of the "occupation force" left in East Bengal, and that their beloved leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was freed.

Appendix-11

HINDUSTAN STANDARD, NOVEMBER 6, 1971

W. PAK INTELLECTUALS WANT MUJIB'S RELEASE

Lahore, November 5. The immediate release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the installation of a government of those elected in Pakistan's first general elections last December have been urged by 42 signatories to an appeal to President Yahya Khan, says Reuter.

The signatories, who include the leader of the Istiqlal Party, former Air Marshal Asghar Khan and the Lenin Peace Prize Winner, poet Faiz Ahmad, said the constitution of a democratic government was the best way to end the crisis threatening Pakistan's political and economic stability.

Sheikh Mujib's release, said the signatories— political leaders, trade unionists, lawyers, journalists, writers, student leaders and university professors... would be "in keeping with the elementary canons of justice."

If release were not possible, Sheikh Mujib, who is being tried by a military tribunal for high treason, should be brought to a proper judicial trial in open court, the statement said.

The appeal coincided with the president's arrival here yesterday from Rawalpindi on a three-day visit.

The signatories said they were appealing to the President in the light of his recent interview with the

American Newsweek magazine which quoted him as saying he would be prepared to release Sheikh Mujib if the nation demanded it.

The statement said the best way to end the grave political crisis threatening Pakistan's political and economic stability would be to establish a democratic government.

Such a government could be constituted by the representatives of the people who were elected in the country's first general election in last December.

Heading the list of the signatories was the chief of the Istiqlal Party, retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan. Others included the leader of the Pakistan Socialist Party, Chaudhury Aslam, the former editor of the english-language daily Pakistan Times, Mazhar Ali Khan, the president of the Pakistan Trade Union Federation, Mirza Mohammad Ibrahim, and Lenin Peace Prize Winner, poet Faiz Ahmad.

The majority of the signatories are Left-wingers and the appeal is the first such to be made to the president in Lahore, considered to be the biggest anti-Mujib centre in Pakistan.

Appendix-12

January 10, 1972

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

AFTER FREEDOM FLIGHT TO LONDON MUJIBUR DUE IN DHAKA TODAY; APPEALS FOR RECOGNITION, AID

London, Jan. 9 (NYT) : Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, free after nine months and two weeks of detention in West Pakistan, flew to London yesterday and left for home today aboard a jetliner put at his disposal by the British government.

At a news conference while in the British capital, the leader of the East Pakistani independence movement called his new nation of Bangladesh "an unchallengeable reality." He appealed to all countries to recognize the new government, of which he had been named president, and to provide aid so that "millions of my people may not die."

The excitement surrounding the Sheikh in London was all the greater because his arrival was totally unexpected.

Friday night in Islamabad, Pakistan's new president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, kept his promise to let Sheikh Mujibur leave. He put the Sheikh aboard a Pakistan Air Lines plane that arrived here at 6:36 a.m. yesterday.

The British Foreign Office got word only shortly before arrival. An official, Ian Sutherland, rushed out to the

airport in time to greet him and escort him to Claridge's Hotel. By then Bangladesh representatives here had booked a suite for him.

Heath Sees Him

Prime Minister Edward Heath, who was in the countryside, quickly agreed to come back to 10 Downing Street to meet with the Sheikh.

The Sheikh and Mr. Heath talked for an hour last evening. Mr. Heath promised that Britain would do all it could to help in the economic emergency facing the Bengalis' new People's Republic of Bangladesh. But he said that British recognition of Bangladesh would have to wait a while, possibly until Indian troops had been withdrawn and the Bengalis were visibly in control of their own territory.

For his part, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave Mr. Heath an account of what had happened to him since his arrest last March. Mr. Heath took the Sheikh to his car on Downing Street as the meeting ended.

Before he boarded the plane to leave London today, the Sheikh told newsmen that he was "very satisfied" with his talks here. British sources reported that the Bengali leader had said during the talks that he favored Bangladesh membership in the Commonwealth, but he made it clear that he would have to consult his government before deciding to apply for membership.

Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Indian prime minister, telephoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and spoke with him for 10 minutes. She asked him to stop in India on his way home to Dhaka and said that she was sending a plane for him.

Mrs Gandhi later said in New Delhi that the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a triumph for the peoples of Bangladesh and India and or world opinion. Reuters reported.

Despite Mrs Gandhi's offer of a plane, it was a Comet airliner of the Royal Air Force that winged him out of London on his homeward journey today. His departure was a surprise too, since, for security reasons, no announcement had been made in advance.

The Associated Press reported from Nicosia, Cyprus, tonight that the plane made a two-and-one-half hour refuelling stop at the British air base of Akrotiri, in the south of Cyprus, this evening. It left there at 1800 GMT, and was expected to arrive in New Delhi in the early morning hours of Monday.

Cyprus's president, Archbishop Makarios, sent a message to the Sheikh during his stopover, offering him and his government best wishes for the future and congratulating him on his release.

In New Delhi, United Press International reported, a protocol aide said that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be accorded full honors as a visiting chief of state when he arrives at 8 a.m. local time (0230 GMT). India's President V.V. Giri and Prime Minister Gandhi were scheduled to greet him at the airport, along with the Indian cabinet.

Talks in New Delhi

The Sheikh was expected to spend about four hours in talk with the Indian leaders before flying on to Dhaka, his capital, where workers were toiling through the night to prepare the celebration of his arrival, UPI said.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad proclaimed Monday a national holiday as people carrying bedding and food poured into the Dhaka airport for an all-night vigil to await their leader. Officials said that more than one million, almost the entire population of Dhaka,

were expected to mass at the airport and along the route to the city centre, UPI reported. The Sheikh was slated to address an open air rally in the morning.

Why Sheikh Mujibur came to London was something of a mystery. He said at the news conference that the destination was chosen by the Pakistanis, while in Islamabad President Bhutto was indicating that it was the Sheikh's choice.

One report here was that the Pakistanis did not want to fly him direct to Dhaka or to any place in India, perhaps because this would seem a humiliation to them. According to this report, Mr Bhutto suggested Iran or Turkey instead, but Sheikh Mujibur preferred London if he could not go directly home.

Yesterday, from London, the Sheikh talked on the telephone with his wife and children in Dhaka. It was their first conversation since the previous Pakistani government led by Gen. Mohammad Yahya Khan, seized him last March and imprisoned him on charges of treason.

From Dhaka, UPI reported that Sheikh Kamal Rahman, the eldest son in the family, said his father's first question was, "Are you all alive?" The son added: His second question was, "How is your mother?"

The Begum Mujibur Rahman, the 54-year-old politician's wife, was at first too choked by emotion to talk on the phone, the son told UPI. But later she and the younger children spoke with the family chief during the half-hour conversation.

UPI said also that government leaders of Bangladesh had telephone talks with the Sheikh, briefing him on events of recent months. The Bangladesh government arranged the charter of a plane to bring the Sheikh home. Without knowing that the British were organizing his flight on an RAF plane.

Flying home with the Sheikh were Kamal Hussain and Mr. Hussain is a close adviser to Sheikh Mujibur, and was a member of the National Assembly. He had been in Custody with the Sheikh in West Pakistan.

At his news conference in London, Sheikh Mujibur disclosed that he had been under sentence of death in West Pakistan and held in a cell for condemned men. The intense heat was terrible, he said, and he was in solitary confinement that was hard to bear. He had not even known of the war's result until Mr. Bhutto told him, the Sheikh reported.

To those who had known him before last March, he looked thinner and, understandably, tired. But he spoke precisely and carefully in slightly accented English, obviously in full control.

'Unbounded Joy'

"Gentlemen of the press," he began, "today I am free to share the unbounded joy of freedom with my fellow countrymen."

"We have earned our freedom in an epic liberation struggle. The ultimate achievement of the struggle is the creation of the independent, sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh, of which my people have declared me presidet."

He appeared to leave no doubt of his own determination to keep what was once Pakistan's eastern wing independent. He said that Mr Bhutto had appealed to him to find "some possible link" with Pakistan but that he could say nothing about that until he got home.

He praised those countries that had helped the Bengalis mentioning India, the Soviet Union, Poland, other East European countries, Britain and France.

He then added thanks to people elsewhere, including "the people of the United States." Asked later about the pro-Pakistan position of the Nixon administration, he said that he knew little of what had happened, was sure the American people were in favour of Bengali independence, but did not know about the administration.

Appendix-13

TRANSCRIPT : DAVID FROST INTERVIEWS MUJIB

The Frost Programme from Bangladesh
The plane touches down

Frost : It's good to see you after the delay.

Reporter : Just say something for the television viewers of Bangladesh.

Frost :: I just share your joy that the dark days are over and I hope that the sunshine that greets me here will be apparent throughout the nation as soon as possible. It's been a thrill for the whole world and when Sheikh Mujib arrived in London last Saturday, I think that the whole world rejoiced. I certainly rejoiced and I rejoice to be here.

Reporter : Well, will you please sum up our revolutionary struggle?

Frost : I will do that better when I leave, I think. I don't think I'm an expert yet, do you? But I am just very happy, that's all. Happy to be here and happy at the outcome. It's a pleasure to be here and thank you very much. (Frost travels on through people)

Frost : It is so good to see you.

Mujib : I am so happy to see you. Just now I am holding a press conference.

Frost : So, we can't do our interview now, but we shall listen.

Mujib : Tomorrow.

Frost : Tomorrow would be lovely. (Man shouts)

Frost : As you can probably see here in Sakharipatti life in the new-born State of Bangladesh is returning to normal... or at least as normal as it possibly can, considering the events of the past few months.

(Events like this : These were houses, and then what happened here in Sakharipatti was simply terrifying. A West Pakistani army tank at that end, a West Pakistani tank at this end. First of all shelling in this densely populated area. The results you see all around me. Then the resistance was softened up with light machine guns and then the troops moved in, simply and terrifyingly to each house, abusing the surviving residents upto the roofs, where they were bayoneted and in many cases thrown back down into the streets again. It's estimated that 10,000 people died here in Sakharipatti alone).

But now a new nation has been born. Today Sheikh Mujib, the beloved leader of that new nation, talks on television for the first time: His story of the past few months of bloodshed out of which Bangladesh has been born. Joy Bangla. (Loud shout goes up)

Frost : On the night that you were arrested, on the night when infact West Pakistan was about to invade, they had been talking with you for some time and disguising their intentions, and then they invaded. Now, you were at home at eight o' clock on the night you were arrested. And you got a warning. I believe by telephone, that the army was on the way. Why did you decide to stay and be arrested?

Mujib : You see there is a most interesting story on this point. Early in the evening they almost surrounded my house with commandoes and they wanted to kill me if I came out of the house, and then blame the outrage on my own people. Mujibur Rahman, they would say, had been

killed by the extremists of Bangladesh while the government was negotiating with him, and Yahya Khan had no alternative but to take action against that.

Frost : Certainly that's, oh I see.

Mujib : That was the first idea. Next : I knew they were brutes.

Frost : Brutes?

Mujib: Brutes, Uncivilised. They would kill my whole people, who would be massacred. I thought it was better that I should die and at least save my people who loved me so much.

frost : You didn't want to run. I mean you could have gone to Calcutta perhaps, and flown.

Mujib : I could have gone any place if I had used money and if I was ready to go. But how could I leave my people? I am the leader of a nation. I can fight and die. But I asked my people to resist.

Frost : You were right, of course, this is what in the past nine months made you such a symbol for your people to believe in. They think of you now as almost a God, don't they?

Mujib : I don't say that. I wanted to save the lives of the patriots, but the brutes, in arresting me, destroyed my precious home. Both my father, ninety, and my mother, eighty years of age were living in my precious house, in the centre of the village. The army dragged my father from the house and burned the house in front of them. They had no shelter.

This is the way they burned everything. I thought that if they get me, at least they would not kill my unfortunate people, for a I knew my party was sufficiently strong. I had organised the party and the people behind it. They would fight it out. And I had told them, you must fight every inch. I had told them it might be my last order. Until we were emancipated, we would continue to fight and struggle.

Frost : How did they actually arrest you? It was one thirty in the morning, wasn't it? What happened?

Mujib : I was staying with my family in my bedroom and this-they started machine gunning from this side, shooting from this window, all broken you know and the bullet entered my bedroom. My six year child sleeping on the bed,... I will show you.

Frost : But where were you?

Mujib : I was here. This is my bed.

Frost : And the machine gun bullets came through?

Mujib : From these windows.

Frost : Your wife was here?

Mujib : Yes, with two children.

Frost : Where did the Pakistani troops come in?

Mujib : All sides.

Mujib : They were shooting from that side. Then I told my wife to sit here with my two children. I went out.

Frost : You went out this way?

Mujib : Yes I came here, took leave of my wife.

Frost : Leaving her here?

Mujib : Yes.

Frost : What did she say?

Mujib : She did not say a word. I only kissed her. A farewell kiss.

Frost : Just a farewell kiss.

Mujib : A farwell kiss and we came out. They were shooting from that window. The door opened. I opened it. I came out. I said you can stop shooting; I am here. What are you shooting for? Then they start moving from all sides... to charge me. Then accidentally, one officer was here. He caught hold of me like this 'Don't kill him' he said.

Frost : Just one officer stopped them?

Mujib : This time. Then they took me, dragged me from here and they started raining blows from the back on my head and then from their guns in the back. You know. They started pushing me here and there. The officer caught me but still they started pushing. And dragged me down and said "come on". I said ;'wait'. Allow me to bring my pipe and tobacco and say goodbye to my wife. I grabbed my pipe, then came again. I saw my wife standing here with my two children. Nobody was there and they brought the pipe for me, and clothes and something in a small suitcase. I went away. But I could see the fire from all sides burning everywhere, shooting the mortars all over Dhaka. They took me from here.

Frost : And as you left 32, Dhanmandi, did you think you would see it again?

Mujib : I knew I would not ... I thought that was the end. If I died as the leader, at least they (my people) will not be ashamed, but if I surrendered to them, my nation, my people of my country would not be able to show their face to the world.

Frost : You once said you could not kill some one who was ready to die, didn't you?

Mujib : I did. You can kill a man physically but you cannot kill a man's soul. You can't. It's my fate. I am a Mussalman. And a Mussalman dies only once. I am a leader of this nation. There is nothing I cannot expect from them. They are giving everything for me, because I want to give everything for them. And to make them free, I want to see my children happy... by my children I mean these unfortunate people of Bangladesh. And today they are free. I am willing to die. This is my last wish, you know.

The have taken my furniture, my chairs, my mirrors, my clothes and my childrens' clothes and everything. I only mind the fact that they have taken my life's history. I

had diaries for 35 years of my political life. I have a wonderful library. They have taken every book of mine. And all my documents. Everything has been taken by the Pakistani army.

Frost : Again, again the question comes so often why? Why did they? Why take everything?

Mujib : I don't know. They are not human beings. They are They are They are fanatics. They are inhuman, uncivilised creatures. This is a small thing of mine. I don't mind it. Think of all this when they have killed a 2 years old child, a year old child. Five year old children, women,. Think about that. They have no heart, no homes, I have shown you how they burned the poor cottages, they are absolutely hungry people. With the fire burning people rush from their houses, they can't live there. They rush to stand outside in the thousands.

Frost : Forced out of their houses and when they're in the open, gun them down.

Mujib : That's right.

Frost : They just did it to anybody?

Mujib : Any people. They feel that everyone is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's follower. Everyone should be killed.

Frost : When you see people, human beings do something like that do you feel that human beings are basically good or does that make you feel that the human being is basically bad?

Mujib : There is good and bad everywhere people have animal qualities I know; but these people are worse than animal. They kept torturing my people, five days, ten days, fifteen days, torturing and having them killed.

They made a court martial with five military officers and one civil officer and that trial is in *camera*. That is inside Lyallpur Jail.

Frost : What did they charge you with?

Mujib : The charge is treason. One against the Pakistan Government. Against their armed forces. Wanted to make Bengal independent! In all 12 charges. And for six charges punishment is hanging.

Frost : An did you have any defence? Did you have a defence?

Mujib : The government had given defence first. Mr. Brohi. But when I saw the situation and the position. I thought, no use of it.

Frost : Pardon?

Mujib : No use of defending me, because this was a mock trial. It is a farce. Then I got up in court and said, Mr. Justice kindly ask the defence lawyers to go away. Because you know it is a comic trial. I am a civilian. I am not a military person. And they are giving me a court martial. And Mr. Yahya Khan is not only the president, he is the chief martial law administrator, who administers it. He is the confirming authority. He is the confirming authority of this court.

Frost : Did you carry on going to the court or did you stay away?

Mujib : I had to. I was a prisoner.

Frost : You didn't have much freedom of choice. Did they ever reach an official verdict, I mean, this group?

Mujib : After the court finished the sittings on 4th December. Immediately he (Yahya) call all judges to Rawalpindi. To dictate the judgement, there they decided to hang me.

Frost : And indeed I believe that you discovered that in the next cell to you, they were digging a grave.

Mujib : Yes. When I---they removed me from Lyallpur Jail to Mianwali Jail again, just near my cell they were digging the grave.

Frost : You knew they were doing that?

Mujib : Yes. I seen that with my own eyes. And I say I know this is my grave perhaps. Alright I am ready.

Frost : Did they say yes this is your grave.

Mujib : No, no they don't say that.

Frost : What did they say?

Mujib : They said, no, no, no, no, we are making some of these men, in the event of a bomb attack, you can take shelter. I said the wall in all sides is small, very thin. Don't try to fool me. I understand.

Frost : And at that moment in time, what were your thoughts. Had you thought that you were about to die, all the nine months or were you suddenly?

Mujib : No, no, I know all the nine months that any time I can die.

Frost : And how did you face up to that? Did you pray?

Mujib : I always. I can always because I can face my conviction. I can face for my principle. I can face for my 75 million people.

Frost : Do you think first of your country for instance, or your wife and children?

Mujib : No I think for my country and my people.

Frost : Because they need that?

Mujib : And you know that I know that human beings have to die one day, today tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, then every human being should die later than this man.

Frost : Like a courageous man.

Mujib : Yes, like a courageous man.

Frost : And how were you saved? How were you... who saved you from that grave?

Mujib : I think the God, the Almighty God saved me and the inspiration of my people who had started fighting, yes.

Frost : Did the jailer move you at one point? Did he move you away when Yahya Khan came to collect you, to kill you, I read one account?

Mujib : They created a situation inside the jail. They sent some assassins to the jail and they mobilised the prisoners in the jail to create a disturbance. The guards would use this disturbance as an excuse for killing me. The one officer, who was in charge of me, started moving me. Something like that. As far as he knew Yahya Khan's days are numbered. At 3 o'clock at night, he took me out of the jail and took me in his bungalow for two days without any police or military guards. After two days, from there they took me to another deserted area of Chashma Barrage, a colony, Chashma Barrage colony. They kept me for five, six days. Nobody knew where I am except the four officers.

Frost : I wonder what has happened to them?

Mujib : I don't know. I don't think they can do anything to them. But I wish them good luck.

Frost : And missed even when Yahya Khan was handing over to Mr. Bhutto. I gather he again suggested that you should be hanged. Is that right?

Mujib : Absolutely.

Frost : Mr Bhutto told you?

Mujib : That is a most interesting story. Mr. Bhutto told me that when Yahya Khan wanted to surrender power to Mr Bhutto he said, Mr. Bhutto I have committed a gross blunder in not killing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman before.

Frost : He said that?

Mujib : Yes, Now kindly allow me before handing over the power to kill Mujibur Rahman giving the order a back date. Hang him now and then I hand over the power. But Bhutto refused.

Frost : Did Bhutto tell you what he said?

Mujib : Yes.

Frost : What did Bhutto say?

Mujib : Bhutto said that I can't allow, because there will be a serious reaction. One lac 20,000 armed forces and civilians have been arrested in Bengal in the hands of the allied forces of Bangladesh and Indian army. If you kill Mujibur Rahman now and I take over the power, not a single soul will come from Bangladesh to West Pakistan again. And the reaction in West Pakistan, and my position will be precarious.

Frost : And today there...

Mujib : I am grateful to Mr Bhutto, no doubt about it.

Frost : No doubt about it yes. And today there is Yahya Khan. If you came face to face with him today, what would you say to him.

Mujib : He is a criminal. I don't like to see his photo even.

Frost : You don't?

Mujib : He has killed my three million people of Bangladesh by his forces, his soldiers.

Frost : Mr. Bhutto has him under house arrest. What should Mr. Bhutto do, do you think?

Mujib : Do no obvious harm. You know what else has happened in Bengal? I'll tell you 3,000,000 people have been killed including children, women, intellectuals, peasants, workers, students and at least 25-30 percent houses burnt and looted. All the food godowns have been destroyed.

Frost : And how do you know that the number was as high as 3 million?

Mujib : I have my machinery you know. You know that before my return they had started collecting information.

Moreover I have my own militia, my own Awami League Party has a base in every village, every union, every sub-division and messages come through from all over the areas. We have not finally calculated, and the number might be more.

Frost : And this was just pointless killing. They just dragged people out of their houses?

Mujib : Yes, they were absolutely peaceful people who lived in their houses, in the village, knew absolutely nothing of the war.

Frost : Why, why, why?

Mujib : I don't know. I can't understand it. It never happened in this world, never in the history of the world has such a thing happened. This is most unfortunate.

Frost : And it was Muslim killing Muslim?

Mujib : Ya, they claim to be Muslims. How could a Muslim kill a Muslim girl?

Frost : How did they do that?

Mujib : They have done it. We have rescued thousands. We still get them from out of the camps. The husbands were killed, the fathers were killed.

They have raped daughters in the presence of their fathers and mothers and raped mothers in front of their sons. You can't think of this. I can hardly stop my tears. How these people can do it they claim to be Muslims.

Do you know the story of some of the killings? I have a friend, one of the top leaders of my party. Mr. Mushir Rahman, he was minister in the government of Bangladesh. He was killed. They tortured him for four days. They first cut one of his hands and then the other. Then his ears, then his legs. For 24 days they tortured that poor man.

He was not the only one, many leaders, many workers, many people, many government officials were taken into

custody and killed after being subjected to torture from seven to ten days. Even if a tiger kills a man it does not kill like this.

Frost : And what did they hope to achieve?

Mujib : They wanted to control the administration. They wanted to keep this land a colony.

Frost : And they took out and killed 130 intellectuals even as the war was ending, here in Dhaka?

Mujib : Just one day before the surrender in Dhaka. They killed 300 not 130, 300 intellectuals from the University; from the medical college.

Frost : Where did they take them?

Mujib : They take them to Kurmitola. They kill them in their own houses. They have given curfew and people are in the house then they enter the house and kill them.

Frost : Was Yahya Khan using the curfew so nobody knows what's going on? Do you think Yahya Khan was a weak man, lead into evil by others or was he an evil man himself?

Mujib : He is certainly an evil man and his own friends who were his colleagues, they were evil too. He cannot shuffle off his responsibility to others. He is an absolute hypocrite, a dangerous man from what I could see of him during my talks with him when he was the president and I was leader of the majority party.

Frost : He mislead you, didn't he?

Mujib : He could not mislead me. I understood what he was going to do. But I was preparing to hit and he has got hit.

Frost : Preparing to do what?

Mujib : Hit him back. And he has go the hit-back. My people migrated.

Frost : Did you see him after you were imprisoned?

Mujib : No, no.

Frost : What do you think would be the right thing for Mr Bhutto to do to him now?

Mujib : He should give him a full trial—open trial, I think.

Frost : Do you think Mr. Bhutto will do that?

Mujib : He should.

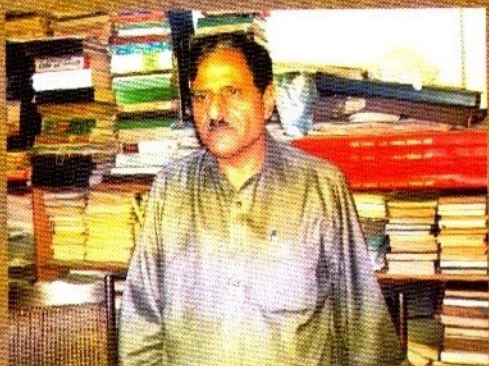
Frost : What do you think now of Mr. Bhutto? Do you think now that one day as Prime Minister or President of Pakistan, Mr. Bhutto will ever visit free Dhaka? Will he ever come here for talks?

Mujib : I don't know. I don't know. But let him realise the reality now, that Bangladesh is an independent country and that there is no good of shouting now that Bengal is his territory. It is not.

If they still stick to that *claim of one Pakistan* they do know I am the majority and I could have claimed that I was the president and personal administrator of Pakistan and that all Pakistan was my territory.

I can call a meeting of the National Assembly, declare the name of the whole country as Bangladesh, and tell them that West Pakistan is my territory. I can ask Bhutto to get out and tell him that I am appointing the governors of Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan. I can tell him that it is in my territory and you withdraw or I will send my army with the allied forces, and occupy West Pakistan.

But I don't want this trouble. I have no ambition for territory. Let Mr. Bhutto be happy with West Pakistan, if they want to use the name of West Pakistan. Let them do it. I have no objection. I want to be happy with my people in Bangladesh. And Bangladesh is a sovereign independent country.



Ahmad Salim

Ahmad Salim was born January 26, 1945 at Pind Dadam Khan, Jhelum, he is a well known Punjabi poet and writer across the borders. He supported the cause of Bangladesh Liberation war during 1971 and was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and lashes.

He was Punjabi Language Instructor at Sindh University, teacher in ethical behaviour at NED University, Karachi, Punjabi Language and Literature teacher at Karachi University, Visiting scholar at National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad. He has been a contributor to dailies Dawn, Jang, Star, The Muslim, Frontier Post and weeklies viewpoint and The Friday and monthlies Herald and Newline. He edited a number of Journals during 1981-92.

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