

Behind The
Myth of

3
million

Dr. M. Abdul Mu'min Chowdhury

**BEHIND THE MYTH
OF
THREE MILLION**

By

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Apart from his working association with Dr. Hasan Zaman at the Bureau of National Reconstruction (BNR), Dhaka, in late 1960s for undertaking many research works, he continued to write for many newspapers and also edited a few published from Dhaka and London.

He co-authored some periodicals and books including the Iron Bars of Freedom (1981) published from London during the period from mid 1970s and early 1980s with the late Dr. Matiur Rahman who himself authored a number of books on the political history of the Indian subcontinent until his demise in London In 1982.

Since late 1973, Dr. Chowdhury lives in England and works currently as a Management Consultant.

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PREFACE

Many myths have been formed around the creation of Bangladesh. Among them is the fiction that the defeated Pakistan Army savagely killed three million people and raped three hundred thousand women during their less than nine months unsuccessful fight to preserve the integrity of a united Pakistan.

Recalling this 'heinous' Pakistani crime with suave moral indignation was made into a national ritual. Not only the beaten Pakistan Army but also the subverted Pakistan came to be portrayed as inherently evil and her dismemberment a triumph of civilized values over barbarism. No less a figure than the 'Father of the Nation' was made to consecrate the lore. With his stamp of authority behind it, his grateful children were implicitly compelled into faithfully repeating it. Not to accept it as 'the whole truth, nothing but the truth' with unquestioning faith was to fall short of being a 'Bengali patriot'. In those hallucinatory days of 'liberated' Bangladesh, the premium for such a terrible shortcoming was not merely dear, but potentially fatal. The 'permanent disappearance' of Zahir Raihan, the celebrated writer and film director, who showed the audacity of forming and heading 'The Buddhijibi Nidhan Tayithanusandhan Committee' (The Fact Finding Committee on the Killing of Intellectuals), in January 1972 [1] was a calculated warning to all doubting Bangladeshis. Understandably, the sceptics kept quiet and the scoundrels and the credulous joined the chorus masters in singing the saga of three million 'martyrs' and three hundred thousand 'heroines'.

Once the 'Father of the Nation' had fallen into disrepute and even came to be accused of treachery to the Bangladeshi nation', some of the deified artefacts adorning the liberationist altar came to be seen as mendacious. But not this nor any other Pakistani crime; at least not officially. The successive masters of Bangladesh have shown no interest in exonerating Pakistan from any charges, however undeserved they might have been. Instead, by keeping them alive they skilfully played politics by veering on the sides of the accused and the accuser all at once. Alongside the dubious opportunism of the occupants of

power, the dwindling band of the conscious keepers of the 'Bengali spirit of liberation' have continued their efforts to keep the myth alive through a more vociferous recital.

Yet, over the years, questioning voices were heard. These were not from the much maligned 'pro-Pakistanis' alone, but also from among the unimpeachable 'liberationists' and their 'Indian comrades', including the highest Indian most generals who gave Bangladesh its 'Caesarean birth'. Some of the latter have, of course, their own fiction to sell.

Curiously, those in Pakistan have remained indolent. There was no attempt to refute any of the vile accusations, including this very loathsome charge. Instead, there appeared to be a misplaced hope that apologetic smile to any and every charge would help in taking the heat out and once sobriety was restored and goodwill regenerated, the time would arrive for the truth to come out. Despite its many attractions, such a stand back posture has helped in perpetuating the falsehood and possibly retarding the restoration of the brotherly relationship between the peoples of Pakistan and Bangladesh. [2] For the intention of the mythmakers was to harbour hatred.

In order to create a healthy relationship between the two peoples it is essential to admit, and where possible to take measures to amend, all past mistakes committed by either people and their leaders. However, it is imperative that such steps should be taken on both sides with fidelity to truth and not on opportunism or contrived facts and unfounded myths.

Like many other myths of its kind, the fiction of three million dead and three hundred thousand women raped was not politically innocent; and it is time to recognise this both in Pakistan and in Bangladesh. Not to do so would be a disservice to truth and damaging to the interest of the people of both countries, especially the people of Bangladesh. This would be so, for any further credence to such a poisonous myth would perpetuate the psychic isolation and the splintered Muslim self-view of the people of Bangladesh in their geopolitically island-like setting. This would not serve their enlightened national self-interest, nor their independence. Instead, this would help those in and outside their

country who wish to do away with their very existence as a Muslim nation.

BEHIND THE MYTH OF THREE MILLION is a re-examination of a sad chapter in the relationship of the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh and exposes its utterly contrived nature as well as the motive behind such inventiveness. I am one of those whose family were reported among the casualties of Pakistan Army's action in Dhaka on the night of 26 March 1971. Some of my personal friends within the 'liberationist' camp even had a condolence meeting for me in their Indian safe heaven! I am not alone in having been counted as dead. Countless other people could tell a similar story of their own. Some have even found their names engraved in the commemorative plaques solemnly dedicated in memory of the fallen heroes of the Bangladesh War. [3] Being one of many such 'reincarnated' beings, I feel duty bound to help remove the myth which is of no service either to my fellow countrymen or to history. Yet, mindful of the requirement of objectivity I have chosen to confine myself to published works and recorded sources and have analysed them with the utmost fidelity to the truth. The ultimate judgement lies with the reader and it is my hope that they would find the pages that follow both interesting and informative.

In putting facts over fiction, I risk ruffling the feathers of those who for all manner of reasons have allowed themselves to be beguiled. Even if a few of them start considering the facts and begin rethinking their position, I shall consider my efforts worth-while. For those who in their blinkered disposition refuse to distinguish facts from fiction and continue to follow the pied pipers of the 'spirit of liberation' fame, who have - to my mind and I hope many would agree with me - no better function other than leading the Muslim Nation of Bangladesh towards its national suicide, I can only pray for divine guidance.

A friend has helped me with source materials and other friends have joined him in encouraging me for a quick completion of the work. All of them have done so, I am sure, out of friendship and not for credit. The friend who helped me with source materials particularly wanted to remain anonymous. In deference to his wish, I refrain from naming him

and other friends. However, saliently and sincerely I acknowledge their debt and pray for their continued well-being.

February, 1996

(Dr. M. Abdul Mu'min Chowdhury)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Zahir Raihan was a Marxist who was said to have been disillusioned while in Calcutta and did not believe that the 'intellectuals' found murdered in Dhaka on the eve of 16 December 1971- who included his elder brother Shahidullah Kaiser- could have been killed at the behest of the Pakistan Army as has been alleged. The rumour has it that he also had incriminatory photographs of questionable activities of the Awami League leaders in India. While gathering information about the killing he was kidnapped in Dhaka in broad day light and was never seen again. There is no doubt that he was killed by either those who were at risk of being exposed or those who did not like the truth behind the killing of the intellectuals to come out.
2. For a cogent argument on this point cf. Syed Sajjad Husain, *The Wastes of Time: Reflections on the Decline and Fall of East Pakistan*, Notun Safar Prokashani, 44 Purana Paltan, Dhaka -1000, 1995: 265-84
3. Jauhuri, Tirish Lakher *Telesmat (The Riddle of Thirty Lakh)*, Asha Prokashani, 435 Elephant Road, Dhaka -1217, 1994: 74

Chapter - One
THE MAKING OF THE MYTH

1.1. A Belated Bust-up:

In May 1973, Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, a well known newspaper columnist and close associate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said: 'We are now saying three million Bengali's have been martyred. Without any survey we are telling three million Bengali's have died.' [1] After openly raising doubts about the alleged figure, Choudhury left Bangladesh for good for Britain.

It took another twenty years for the question to be raised again. Participating in a debate in the National Assembly of Bangladesh on 15 June 1993, Col. Akbar Hussain, a decorated 'Mukti Juddha' and a Cabinet Minister under both General Ziaur Rahman and Mrs Khaleda Zia, returned to the question. Making a pointed attack on the Awami League for its 'propensity to falsify history', he said that the Awami League had created the myth of 'three million killed', whereas in reality it was closer to a tenth of that figure. On the following day Shudhangshu Shekar Haldar, a Hindu member of Awami League, challenged Col. Hussain to substantiate his assertion with 'recorded proof'. Responding to the challenge, the Minister told the National Assembly that after the creation of Bangladesh an announcement was made to pay Tk. 2,000 to every family that suffered loss of life where upon only three hundred thousand families had claimed such compensation. Had there been three million individuals dead, their families would have claimed for compensation. Poignantly, Haldar could not, and did not, challenge the figure of those actually claimed compensation. Nor could he give any satisfactory explanation for the missing two million seven hundred thousand. Instead, he began inquiring as to what could have prompted the Minister to question 'a well-known fact'. The tactic was a clear one: if you cannot 'kill' the message, 'kill' the messenger. Having done that however, he requested the presiding Deputy Speaker to expunge Col. Hussain's remarks from the proceedings of the Assembly. At this point Abdus Samad Azad, standing in for the Awami League leader, stood up and spoke in support of his party colleague's demand for the effacement of the

remarks. His argument was: 'So far no one, including General Ziaur Rahman, has challenged the figure of three million. We had it from our leader Sheikh Mujib and it must stand as correct'. [2]

1.2. Mujib's Part in the Myth Making:

Indeed, it was Mujib's stamp of approval which gave the oft quoted number both its life and respectability. On 10 January 1972, the very day of his return to Bangladesh from prison in West Pakistan, he publicly announced:

..... "Three million people have been killed. I believe that there is no parallel in the history of the world of such a colossal loss of lives for the struggle for freedom." [3]

He repeated the same charge before the world in a television interview given to the British broadcaster David Frost. In the same interview, which was recorded at his private residence in Dhaka and was broadcasted from New York on 18 January 1972, he also made the astounding claim that the very house in which the interview was taking place had been destroyed by the Pakistani Army! [4] A day earlier the Time Magazine quoted Mujib saying,

'if Hitler could have been alive today he would be ashamed' [5]

During the following weeks and months, his insistence on the three million figure grew and it became his all-purpose 'opening song'. Let me give an example.

"The vice-secretary asked me to sit in the corridor crowded with at least 50 persons. He then walked into the office and informed Mujib of my presence. I heard a terrible growl and the poor man reappeared shaken, asking me to wait. I waited. One hour, two hours, three hours, four hours, then at eight o'clock I was still there in that damned corridor. At 8-30 a miracle occurred: Mujib was ready to receive me. I was asked to enter. I entered into a large room with a sofa and two armchairs. Mujib was sprawled all over the sofa and two fat ministers were seated in the armchairs with

their bellies in the air. No one rose. No one made a greeting and no one responded to mine. There was a very long silence until Mujib gestured to me to sit down. I sat on a small corner of the sofa and opened up the tape recorder preparing the first question. But, I didn't have time for that. Mujib started to shout: 'Hurry up, quick, understand?' 'I have no time to waste, is that clear?' 'The Pakistanis have killed three million people, is that clear? Yes, three, three, three.' (How he arrived at that figure, I'll never understand. The Indians speaking of the victims have never gone over the one million figure). I said: 'Mr Prime Minister...' Mujib started to shout again: 'They killed my women in front of their husbands and children, the husbands in front of their sons and wives, the sons in front of their fathers and mothers, the nephews before their grandfathers and grandmothers, the grandfathers and grandmothers in front of their nephews, cousins in front of cousins, aunts in front of uncles, brother-in-law in front of sister-in-law .. .' 'Mr Prime Minister, I would like .. .' 'Listen to her, she would like! She would like. You have no right to want anything, understand? Is that clear?'

This is the account of the well-known Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci's interview with Mujib. [6]

Yet, only on 8 January 1972 in London, on his way back to Bangladesh, the same Mujib had claimed that 'one million people had been killed in Bangladesh.' [7] One might wonder who updated the figure for Mujib? Was it done between his journey from London to Dhaka, via New Delhi or immediately after his arrival in Dhaka? It has been claimed by one of the 'involved' Indian organisers of the 'Freedom Movement' that 'By and by he [Mujib] came to know more details and later in Dacca he put the figure at 3.5 million' .[8] Since Mujib focussed on three million, rather than on his long time benefactor's averred three and a half million, one might think he was still hesitant to paddle out everything his 'involved' benefactors were handing him out. But, where did he get this figure from?

1.3. The Myth Makers at Work:

However inventive Mujib was with facts and however insistent he became with the fiction of 'three million killed' and 'three hundred

thousand raped', as we shall see he himself did not fabricate it. He simply parroted in public, what was given to him in private. In fact, the figure which he was eventually handed out, went through several updates at the hands of a number of involved quarters.

1.4. The Swadhin Bangla Betar:

Up to 10 December 1971, Mujib's own Awami League colleagues, few of whom ever ventured out to face the Pakistan Army and most of whom had reportedly spent their Indian sojourn in enjoyment with their friends and families [9] had been circulating an estimated casualty figure of three hundred thousand, through the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar'. [10] Even years later his party Vice President, Zahirul Qayyum, would implicitly contest the myth of three million by pointing to this estimate broadcasted by the official organ of the Bangladesh Government in exile.[11]

1.5. Indian Authorities:

Yet, on 7 January 1972 the Press Trust of India, quoting Sheikh Abdul Aziz, the newly appointed Communication Minister of Bangladesh [12], reported from Calcutta a casualty figure of over one million. However, the news communicated by the Indian national news agency stressed that the casualty toll was a provisional one and disclosed that the Government of Bangladesh was going to collect statistics in order to obtain the actual figure. Apparently, to give some credibility to the Minister's newly updated estimate, he was quoted as saying that in his own village the Pakistan Army had killed 107 persons. [13] There was no explanation as to how the estimated death toll rose by three-fold in a matter of three weeks, during most of which the 'culprit' Pakistan Army had been under Indian custody.

To be fair to the Minister, this figure of one million killed was floating around from the beginning of the insurgency. One Asad Choudhury wrote a poem, called 'Report 1971' at the start of the insurgency. In it he told his readers that the Pakistani Army had, by then, massacred one million Bengalis and have raped forty thousand women. [14] Likewise, on 24 June 1972 the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar' broadcasted a speech,

supposedly written by Maulana Bhashani, which, inter alia, claimed that 'after sacrificing one million invaluable lives, the struggling masses of independent Bengal would not accept any thing else. Their only road is either full independence or death.' [15] But, one might still want to know, why the Minister suddenly found this preferable over the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar's' hitherto 'official' figure of three hundred thousand?

In this connection, it is to be noted that the Indian authorities, including India's military establishment, have consistently maintained that so far as they were concerned the casualty figure stood at one million. What is more interesting, M.R.Akhtar Mukul, who as the head of the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar' and the presenter of its best known programme 'Charampatra' (Dire Letter) had been regularly disseminating out the three hundred thousand figure up to 10 December 1971, in his book of recollection 'Ami Bijoy Dekhechi' (I Have Seen Victory) he piously authenticated the one million casualty toll without ever mentioning his old vaunted death toll. [16] Those who are familiar with Mukul's professed willingness to lie for facilitating Indian cover-ups [17] would not be surprised at his volte face. Nor would they doubt that like Mukul, Sheikh Abdul Aziz was also made to endorse the figure deemed appropriate for the occasion by the Indian authorities.

In his reminiscence Field Marshall Sam Manekshaw simply presented the figure as a 'well-known fact' and expressed utter incredulity at the figure of three million with which Mujib's name became inextricably linked. [18] Likewise, in a mass produced video interview Lt Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora said that 'all of us knew' that the Pakistan Army had brutally killed 'about a million people'; yet Sheikh Mujib who 'was more an agitator and less an administrator' decided to 'make it more brutish' by saying that the Pakistan Army had killed three million Bengalis. He pointed out that Mujib's figure was 'absolutely impossible', because the Pakistan Army had 'simultaneously fought within the country and at the borders'. [19] Earlier, Maj.Gen.D.K.Palit, who also had a hand in 'the birth of Bangladesh engineered by the Indian Army', gave the same one million figure as if it was an indubitable fact which required no supporting proof. [20] Despite Palit's stance, one should heed the significance of the fact that neither Manekshaw nor Aurora have vouched for the authenticity of the Indian

figure beyond that it was a 'well-known fact' or some how 'known to us'.

The 'absolutely impossible' figure of three million to which Mujib publicly tied up his own name was not absolutely his own invention. The 'credit' for its fabrication was due to one Ehtesham Haider Choudhury, editor of the Dhaka daily Purbadesh and his Russian friend, the Pravda representative in Dhaka.

1.6. The Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA:

In a signed editorial under the heading of 'Hang the Yahya Junta' on the 22 December 1971 issue of the Purbadesh, Choudhury claimed that the 'enemy occupation forces have savagely killed about three million innocent people and more than two hundred intellectuals'. [21] Curiously enough, only on the previous day the same daily printed an eight column red coloured banner heading, asking: 'How many people of Bengal have been killed?' In it Ershad Majumdar, the paper's senior reporter, categorically said that 'every where people are asking: How many people of Bangladesh have been killed? How many 'lakhs' (unit of hundred thousand)? 10,20,30,40 or 50 lakhs? No one seems to have the answer. But the people are not likely to leave the question unanswered. Answer we must have.' [22]

Within days the Pravda printed a news claiming that over three million people have been killed by the Pakistan Army. The Soviet daily carried the news without mentioning the Purbadesh editorial. The report was credited to its Special Correspondent. ENA, the Bangladesh news agency, lifted the Pravda news and reproduced it in all major Dhaka dailies under the heading: 'Pak Army Killed Over 30 Lakh People'. Now it read

"The Communist Party Newspaper Pravda has reported that over 30 lakh persons were killed throughout Bangladesh by the Pakistani occupation forces during the last nine months, reports ENA.

Quoting its Special Correspondent stationed in Dacca, the paper said that the Pakistani military forces immediately before their surrender to Mukti Bahinis and the Allied Forces had killed about 800 intellectuals in the capital city of Bangladesh alone. [23]

The change from 'less than three million' of the Purbadesh editor into 'over three million' is to be marked. The effortless four-fold increase in the number of intellectuals allegedly killed is also to be noticed. We may also keep in mind Jyoti Sen Gupta's false claim regarding Mujib's announcement that 3.5 million people have been killed.

1.7. How Mujib Took to Parroting the Last Figure:

It was reported that on his arrival in Dhaka on 10 January 1972 the lobby behind the fabrication of the 'absolutely impossible' figure promptly briefed the returning Bangladesh leader with the added 'fact' of three hundred thousand women raped, who in turn immediately went on parroting it. [24] Thus, the self-serving fiction of 'three million killed' and 'three hundred thousand women raped' was created.

Notes and References

1. Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, Shahosh Kare Kichu Shaythay Katha Bala Proyjan, (With Courage a Few Truth Have to be Said), The Dainik Janapad, Dhaka, 20 May 1973
2. Cf. The Proceedings of the National Assembly of Bangladesh, 15 and 16 June, 1993.
3. Ramendu Majumdar, Bangladesh My Bangladesh': Selected Speeches and Statements, Muktaadhara. 74 Farashganj, Dhaka - 1, 1972: 140
4. Cf. M.R.Akhtar Mukul, Ami Vijoy Dekhechi (I Have Seen Victory), Sagar Publications, GPO Box 3057, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1391 BS (1984): 245.
5. Time Magazine, NewYork, 17 January 1972.
6. Oriana Fallaci, An Interview with Mujibur Rahman, L' Europeo, Rome, 24 February, 1972. [cf.' Text in Appendix - I]
7. Jyoti Sen Gupta, History of Freedom Movement in Bangladesh, 1947-73: Some Involvement, Naya Prokash, 206 Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta - 6, 1974: 445
8. Jyoti Sen Gupta, ibid .: 445
9. Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, op cit.
10. Yahya Mirza, Interview with Mr.Abdul Muhaimin, The Tarokalok, 1 March, 1990; and Jauhuri, Tirish Lakher Telesmat (The Riddle of Thirty Lakh), Asha Prokashani, 435 Elephant Road, Dhaka - 1217, 1994: 48.
11. Jauhuri, ibid: 48-49

12. Four new ministers were added to the five-men Government which in existence in Calcutta since April, 1971. The new appointments were made on 29 December 1971
13. Jauhuri, op cit: 63-64
14. M.R.Akhtar Mukul, op cit: 95
15. *ibid*: 95
16. *ibid*: 376
17. Manzurul Karim , *Betorkito Mujib (The Controversial Mujib)*
18. *ibid*::
19. Lt.Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora, Reminiscences of Bangladesh War (video interview), Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, 1994.
20. Maj.Gen. Palit, The Lightning Campaign: The Indo-Pakistan War 1971, Compton Press, Salisbury, 1972: 24
21. The Purbadesh, Dhaka, 22 December 1971.
22. The Purbadesh, Dhaka, 21 December 1971
23. The Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka, 5 January, 1972.
24. MaulanaAbul Khair, SowaJwab (Question and Answer) vol.5 quoted in Jauhuri, op cit: 53-54.

Chapter - Two
THE PROBITY OF THE MYTH

2.1 An Affront to Common Sense?

It has already been noted that Lt Gen. Aurora has dismissed the very claim of three million killed as 'absolutely impossible'. No firmer rejection of it could have been conceived.

2.2 Fabrication Can't Stand for Fact

Moreover, the way it had been fabricated by the Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA combined could hardly be said to be worthy of any confidence in terms of reliability and validity. Given the dislocated communication systems and the completely anarchic situation of the time, with the Bangladesh Government still waiting in Calcutta for the Indian permission to return to Dhaka [1], the editor gentleman was apparently in no position to make even a few random estimates with his correspondents outside Dhaka for producing a crude guess-work. This gentleman seemed to have simply taken the mean average of the five hypothetical figures mentioned in a plainly searching mood by his paper's correspondent only twenty four hours before.

2.3 Could the Indian Figure Be Any Better?

Some of the above reasons, for which no confidence could be accorded to the Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA combination's guesswork, apply equally to the figure adopted by the Indian authorities and to which Field Marshall Manekshaw, Lt. Gen. Aurora and Maj.Gen. Palit wanted us to repose our trust. One may ask, if the figure of three million was 'absolutely impossible', could the figure of one million be deemed within the realm of probability?

2.4 From Comparative Perspective

In answering the above we may apply a number of tests. Firstly, a comparison with countries which have all seen 'much bitter and prolonged armed conflict'.

Comparative Casualty Figures

War	Duration *	Casualty	Annual average
Vietnam	12	1,000,000	83,333
Algeria	7.5	100,000	13,333
Cambodia	23	1,100,000**	47,826
Afghanistan	14	2,000,000	142,857
Angola	16	300,000	18,750
Iran/Iraq	9	1,000,000	111,111
Bosnia	3 (up to March '94)	142,592	47,531
Sri Lanka	13	50,000	3,846
Bangladesh	0.75		
Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA		3,000,000	4,000,000
Indian		1,000,000	1,333,333

* in year **exclude the citizen who were killed at the hands of the Pol Pot regime.

In Vietnam the US waged a war of attrition of unprecedented scale for 12 years. There was barely any lethal weapon, excepting the atomic bomb, which the mighty Superpower did not use against the North Vietnamese Forces and their South Vietnamese proxies, the Viet Cong guerrillas. Thousands and thousands of tons of bombs were used for carpet bombing insurgent infested villages and valleys. Yet the total Vietnamese casualty figures during the 12 years of contest did not exceed one million or an average yearly toll of little over 83,000.

From 1954 to 1962 the Algerians waged an all-out guerrilla war against French rule provoking serious attacks against them not only from the French Government but also from the Algerian-born Frenchmen. In this seven and a half year long struggle for independence, 100,000 Algerians lost their life at a yearly rate of little over 13,000.

Cambodia has continuously suffered either direct foreign invasion or internal civil war at the behest of foreign powers or both, non-stop for over two decades. The VS alone has dropped 539,129 ton bombs on Cambodia. Yet, over a period of 23 years the Cambodian casualty figure stood at 2,100,000, averaging less than 48,000 a year.

The Afghan Mujahideen confronted Soviet occupation for 14 years. In the plains they fought against the Communist Superpower's tanks and armoured cars and on the hills and valleys they suffered savage aerial bombardment. Their total cost in life was 2,000,000 with an annual average of less than 143,000.

The 16 year long Angolan civil war in which the Government forces aided by the Cuban military personnels fought for the control of the country against the Unita rebels who had the backing of the USA and South Africa. The total loss in Angolan lives was 300,000 with an annual average of less than 19,000.

Between them Iran and Iraq have fought a particularly savage all out frontal war for nine years. In the war both sides even used forbidden chemical weapons and completely destroyed each others towns and cities. Even in that vicious war the average yearly loss of life was about 111,000.

Amidst untold Serb savagery and ethnic cleansing, implicitly facilitated by the Russians and the West European powers, the Muslims of Bosnia have been fighting a grim war to preserve their existence and the integrity of their country. During the first three years up to March 1994 the total casualty figure stood at 142,592 with an annual rate of 47,531.

In Sri Lanka, the Tamil separatists have been fighting a bitter war for the last 13 years. As on January 1996 the total casualty figure of that Indian engineered civil war in Sri Lanka has cost about 50,000 lives at an annual average of 3,846.

Compared to any of the above, as summarized in the preceding Table, either of the casualty figures for Bangladesh, i.e. the Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA three million, and Indian one million, look simply incredible. Lt. Gen. Aurora's description of 'absolutely impossible' could be appropriate not only to the Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA fabricated figure but to his preferred Indian figure as well. Both are inflated out of proportion to suit their much loved propaganda.

2.5 Some Indications of Combatant Casualty:

In this connection one might note that by trawling numerous participant accounts of the Mukti Bahini's 'heroic exploits and sacrifices' that have appeared in print, one would not be able to gather together a grand casualty figure of more than a few thousand. This was not surprising. First, the Mujib Bahini, a major component of the 130,000 or so Mukti Bahini [2], was specially trained and kept in reserve away from insurgency duty in case the ordinary Mukti Bahini become defiant of India and needed to be brought in line. Secondly, the ordinary Mukti Bahini's primary function was not so much to fight the Pakistan Army but to gather intelligence and to serve as scouts to the Indian Army. Last but not least, much of the publicized encounters between Pakistan Army and the Mukti Bahini were in fact clashes between Pakistan Army and Indian Forces in the guise of Mukti Bahini. As disclosed by Moralji Desai, who later briefly succeeded Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister of his country, about 5,000 regular Indian soldiers were killed while fighting in the disguise of Mukti Bahini. [3] This was further confirmed by the Indian Army's later demand for the formal recognition of these fallen soldiers. [4] Apart from the regular Indian Army, members of her Border Security Forces were also known to have fought under the guise of the Mukti Bahini.

2.6 The Extent of Civilian Casualty:

Apparently, the authors of the different casualty figures were aware of the miniscule size of the casualty among the Bangladeshi fighting men, including the Mukti Bahini. Their allegation of indiscriminate killing of civilians was partly intended to cover this up. But how plausible were these claims?

2.7 From Another Comparative Perspective:

To have a measure of their probability, let us compare the two vaunted figures with that of Nazi Germany's. The attempt at the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War, the most extensive and methodical effort of its kind ever, is a legend. It would be recalled that

over a six year period the Nazi Germany rounded up the Jews, not only from Germany but also from all other conquered countries of Central and Western Europe, herded them in Concentration Camps and systematically gas them to death on a mass scale. Altogether six million Jews were killed at an annual rate of 1.5 million. As against this, the rate implied in the two vaunted figures for Bangladesh would be as follows:

Purbadesh/Pravda/ENA - 4 million; and Indian - 1.3 million. Although the last figure is slightly less than that of Nazi Germany's, once the German territorial and population sphere, scale of operation, use of concentration camps and gas chambers were taken into account, the fantastic nature of both the figures for Bangladesh emerge with force.

In order to kill three million the Pakistan Army would have had to kill 11,494 persons a day non-stop from 26 March onwards. If on the other hand, they were to kill one million people, their daily killing would come to 3,831. Seen in another way, for the 60,000 Pakistan Army to kill three million and rape three hundred thousand women, each and everyone of them had to kill 50 persons and rape 5 women. In this context let me quote an apparent believer of the myth of three million:

"Considering that 60,000 armed officers and men had managed this abominable feat in course of few months, it would appear that each individual had on an average, committed about 50 murders, inflicted injuries on about 3 persons, raped about 7 girls/women, burnt numerous houses and looted a sizeable amount of money!" [5]

Plainly, despite his apparent agreement with the myth, the inner incredulity of the author of the above lines could not remain unchecked. His own exclamation mark said it all.

Anyone who has any semblance of rationality would recognise that to produce any of the above killing rates, each and every member of the Pakistan Army would have to be more than a homicidal killing machine. Even the worst serial killers known in human history have not succeeded in killing people at such a high rate! On top of that make

them responsible for producing a rape figure of three hundred thousand. One needs to be extra imaginative to even contemplate the scenario. Probably, in spinning the telltale figures the spin doctors' head went spinning! Apparently, in hailing 'the Chief' all 'the Indians' went berserk.

2.8 From Ground Level Perspective:

According to the Government statistics, in 1971 East Pakistan had 69,774,000 people, 12,673,000 family households, 68,385 villages, and 4,472 unions. If either of the above imagined figures were placed alongside the above demographic facts the following ratio of casualty should in reality be found:

Demography and Implied Killing Rate

	@3 million	@ 1 million
Per 1000 people	43.154	14.385
Per 100 families	23.675	7.892
Per village	45.03	15.01
Per union	670.84	223.61

Hardly anyone in Bangladesh could relate his or her local knowledge of casualties to any of the above. Although Sheikh Abdul Aziz, the Communication Minister of Bangladesh of the time, had been quoted by the PTI claiming that his own village had suffered a total loss of 107 persons, personal enquiry has shown the utter baselessness of the reported claim. Some of the villagers who have lived through the terrible year of 1971 are still alive, they would freely testify to the make believe nature of the alleged casualty figure.

2.9 Certain Local Testimonies:

Jessore is a boarder district, nearest to Calcutta. The Provisional Government of Bangladesh was presented before the world at Baidayanathala, a border village of the same district and throughout the civil war the district remained a hotly contested and disruptive area. From a part of Jessore, Maulana Khandkar Abul Khair, a popular

religious preacher and published author of several widely circulated books, has said:

“I clearly remember, in our Jessore district there was hardly any village from which 20/25 people did not flee to India. But I shall be able to name numerous villages which did not experience a single killing. For example, my own village and a number of villages around did not encounter a single death.” [6]

Jauhuri, a Bangladeshi journalist wrote:

“It is beyond me how three million people could get killed in a guerrilla war of eight months and 21 days. The raping of two hundred thousand women is also beyond my comprehension

I have spoken to no less than five hundred peoples of different districts and have asked them, 'Has anyone in your family or among your relatives, friends or acquaintance been raped by Pakistani soldiers?' None affirmed, everyone said 'no'. It may be that some of them were ashamed to disclose. Besides, it is not impossible for the Pakistan Army to have a few characterless soldiers. But, how could these produce the figure of two hundred thousand? Moreover' how was this figure arrived at within a week of the liberation of the country? Who did the survey?" [7]

William Drummond of The Guardian was no less emphatic:

“The figure of three million deaths has been carried uncritically in sections of the world press. My judgement, based on numerous trips around Bangladesh and extensive discussion with many people at the village level as well as in the government, is that the three million deaths is an exaggeration so gross as to be absurd.” [8]

Peter Gill, another western journalist, said:

“Sheikh Mujib's wild figure of three million Bengalis killed during those 10 terrible months is at least 20 times too high, if not 50 or 60.” [9]

Reporting from the Noakhali district Abdul Muhaimin, well-known author, Awami League MCA and long time friend of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had this to say:

“As a Member of the Constituent Assembly I was entrusted with the responsibility of finding out the casualty figure for the whole of Noakhali district. After contacting different Police Stations and Unions the figure I had was less than seven thousand. Even after adding up the number of Razakars killed, the total did not exceed seven and a half thousand. At that time, Bangladesh had 19 districts. All these districts were not equally affected by the war. Noakhali was one among the districts which had seen severe fighting. If the figure obtained from Noakhali was seen as the mean average for the rest of the districts, even then the total killed would not exceed more than one hundred twenty five thousand.” [10]

So, we are not alone in casting our doubts! Even Sheikh Mujib and his colleagues were not convinced about the story of three or even one million dead and were eager to know the real facts! Was it then that despite telling us ‘children’ the ‘Ghost Story’, as grown-up men they knew all along that the ‘Monstrous Ghost’ did not exist?

Notes and References

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3. Oriana Fallaci, Interview with Morarji Desai, The New Republic, Washington, 2 and 9 August, 1975.
4. Souvenir of 45 Indian Armored Regiment, December, 1983; also Cf. Subir Bhaumik, Insurgent Crossfire: North-East India, Lancer Publishers, 56 Gautam Nagar, New Delhi, 1996 : 52
5. Abul Hasanat, The Ugliest Genocide in History, Muktaadhara [Swadhin Bangla Sahitya Parishad], 74 Farashganj, Dhaka -1, 1974: 79.
6. Maulana Abul Khair, Sowl Jawab (Question and Answer), vol.5; also cf. Jauhuri, op cit : 52.
7. Jauhuri, op cit: 14
8. William Drummond, The Missing Millions The Guardian, London, 6 June, 1972.
9. Peter Gill, Pakistan Holds Together, Daily Telegraph, London, 16 April, 1973.
10. Yahya Mirza, Interview with Mr Abdul Muhaimin, The Tarokalok, Dhaka, 1 March, 1990 cf. also cf. Jauhuri, ibid: 48-49.

Chapter - Three
MUJIB'S SEARCH FOR FACT

3.1. Mujib's Fact-finding Bodies:

As we have seen, according to the PTI news of 7 January 1972, the Bangladesh Government intended to establish the casualty figure. Despite his public utterances claiming that the Pakistan Army had killed three million people and raped three hundred thousand women, Mujib himself was fully aware of the fact that the figures he was made to quote had simply been plucked from the air and had no factual basis. Indeed, not only the post-16 December expanded Government of Bangladesh was on record committing themselves to conduct a survey for establishing the casualty figure, Mujib himself set up, not one but two separate bodies to find the fact of how many were killed.

3.2. Mujib Asked MCAs for Information on 'Genocide'

On 16 January 1972 newspapers in Bangladesh carried news saying that Sheikh Mujib had ordered his party workers and Members of the Constituent Assembly to collect detailed information on the Pakistan Army's 'genocide' in Bangladesh and to file them with the Awami League Office within two weeks. This is how the daily Bangladesh Observer, a stable mate of the Purbadesh, reported Mujib's move:

"Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Saturday asked the Awami League workers and MCAs to collect detailed reports on genocide, arson and looting committed by the Pakistani Army in Bangladesh and to submit these data to the Awami League Office within 15 days." [1]

It was not clear whether the instruction he had issued was an official one from the Government, or simply an informal move on his part as the Awami League chief. His next move in this respect seemed to suggest that it was an unofficial drive to mobilize the Awami League party machine for gathering 'on-the-ground' information. Whether formal or not, given the fact that in those euphoric days his words were heeded to as if they were 'edicts from the sovereign', the force of his instruction could not be underestimated. That it was more than a

general drive to gather information could also be seen from the fact that a specific MCA from each district was particularly asked to lead and co-ordinate the data gathering efforts. [2]

3.3. Mujib's Inquiry Committee

Within 14 days of the first move, Sheikh Mujib formally instituted a 12-member Inquiry Committee. On 29 January 1972 the Government decision and the membership of the committee was announced through a gazette notice.

Abdur Rahim, Deputy Inspector General of Police, was appointed the chairman of the Inquiry Committee and the members included:

Prof. Khurshed Alam, MCA (Comilla);
Mr Mahmud Hussain Khan, MCA (Bogra);
Mr Abdul Hafiz, MCA (Jessore);
Mr Mohiuddin Ahmed, member National Awami Party (NAP);
Mr Jalaluddin Miah, former Superintendent of Police;
Mr Muhammed Ali, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture;
Mr T. Hussain, Superintending Engineer,
Mr Muhiuddin, Director of Public Instructions;
Dr Mubarrak Hussain, Deputy Director, Health,
Wing Com. K.M. Islam, Bangladesh Air Force; and
Mr M.A. Hye, Deputy Secretary, Establishment Division,
Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Gazette notification said that the responsibility of the Inquiry Committee would be to establish the exact extent of the loss in life and property suffered by the people of the country due to the operation of the Pakistan Army and their Collaborators. Where possible the Committee would also identify the culprits by name. Hope was also expressed that the public would fully co-operate with the Committee by supplying them with information. The Inquiry Committee was asked to submit their report to the Government by 30 April 1972. [3]

3.4. Mujib's Rape Victims Became 'Bengali Heroines':

Clearly up to this point Mujib was not indolent on war victims; he was decisively moving to find out their precise numbers and arrange help for them. He was not alone in this as Sheikh Abdul Aziz's announcement of 7 January 1972 showed that the Government intended to establish a casualty figure. As a matter of fact, even before the newly appointed Communication Minister's disclosure, Qamruzzaman, the Home Minister of the four-member provisional Government of Bangladesh, had announced from Calcutta on 'Swadhin Bangla Betar' on 22 December 1971 that his Government had decided to describe every rape 'victim' as a 'heroine of Bangladesh's freedom struggle'. The next day this news was flashed in all Bangladesh newspapers, including the Purbadesh edited by Ehtesham Haider Choudhury. [4]

The Government of Bangladesh opened up a number of 'Centre for the Bengali Heroines' at Dhaka and other places. The Dhaka centre, housed at a large complex in the affluent Eskaton area, was headed by one Jahangir Haider, a relation of Mujib. This and other 'Centre for the Bengali Heroines' were given maximum publicity and once or twice news with photographs of Government sponsored marriages of a few such 'heroines' with 'patriotic and liberated Bengali nationalists' was published in the Dhaka newspapers. Among foreign visitors of the time, Kurt Waldheim, the Secretary General of the UN and his wife were also taken round to meet the 'heroines' housed in the Dhaka centre.

3.5. Mujib Instituted Compensation Scheme:

In January 1972 Mujib also announced a compensation scheme for the families of those who had been killed at the hands of the Pakistan Army and their collaborators. Under the scheme, every victim's family was promised TK 2,000 as compensation. [5] A media campaign was started to encourage victim's families to apply for the compensation.

3.6. Punishment for War Crime:

Alongside all these concrete actions, the Collaborators Ordinance was proclaimed to punish those who had supported the Pakistan Army and

had worked to preserve the unity of Pakistan. Thousands of Pakistani patriots, who were lucky enough to escape the indiscriminate killing' of the early days, were rounded up and placed under detention in jails crowded many times over their capacity limits.[6]

Apart from the systematic drive to penalize the huge number of patriotic Muslims and Buddhists who had refused to be beguiled by the Awami League/Indian machination, the Mujib Government also vouched for its determination to try and punish the members of the Pakistani Army for their alleged 'War Crime', Mujib presented it as a matter of personal honour and unequivocally promised that nothing would stop him from punishing the 'Pakistani War Criminals', [7]

3.7. Mujib Dearly Wanted Proof:

Clearly Mujib and his Government were not just slavish growlers intent on only slapping verbal accusations, they were determined vindictive who dearly wanted all manner of proof of 'Pakistani Crime', In this they showed motivation and made all conceivable moves to encourage, even entice, people in helping them with proof. The proof wanted was not water-tight evidence, only a nominal claim of sufferance, 'The Father of the Nation, Friend of Bengal, President of the Awami League and Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman' - as he was then respectfully mentioned in all official and unofficial references - had no reason for being disobliged by his idolizing 'liberated children', especially when they had a compensation of Tk 2,000 and other rewards awaiting for them. Yet, in the end Mujib and his Government preferred to keep studied silence over the outcome of their fact findings as if these have never been attempted. What happened then with the MCAs' report which was set in motion on 15 January 1972? What became of the report of the 12-member Inquiry Committee which was formed on 29 January 1972 and was asked to report on or before 30 April 1972?

Notes and References

1. The Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka, 16 January 1972.
2. Yahya Mirza, Interview with Mr Abdul Muhaimin, The Tarokalok, Dhaka, 1 March, 1990; also cf. Jauhuri, Tirish Lakher Telesmat (The Riddle of Thirty Lakh): Asha Prokashan, 435 Elephant Road, Dhaka - 1217, 1994 : 48.
3. Jauhuri, *ibid*: 65.
4. The Purbadesh, Dhaka, 23 December, 1971.
5. Yahya Mirza, *op cit*, also cf. Jauhuri, *op cit*: 50
6. M.M.Islam, The Forgotten Thousands, 23A Highbury Grange, London N5, n.d.:2 and Matiur Rahman and Naeem Hasan, Iron Bars of Freedom, Research and Documentation, London, 1980: 15
7. The Statesman, Calcutta, 11 January, 1972.

*Chapter - Four***THE TRUTH THAT MUJIB SUPPRESSED****4.1. The MCA's Report:**

The MCAs whom Mujib personally assigned to the task of finding the casualty figures of their respective districts apparently went ahead with their task. With the help of their local district, subdivision, thana, and union Awami League party and governmental machineries, the MCAs concerned begun collating the ground level known casualty figures.

As has already been mentioned, for the district of Noakhali, one of the worst war affected districts of Bangladesh, Abdul Muhaimin could gather together a total of less than seven and a half thousand reported losses of life. These included Razakars who fought to save Pakistan and were mercilessly killed by the armed Mukti Bahinis mainly after the surrender of the Pakistan Army on 16 December 1971. Even taking Noakhali as a representative of all the other 19 districts of Bangladesh, some of which hardly saw any action, the overall loss of life could not have been computed beyond one hundred and twenty-five thousand. [1]

Apparently, Abdul Muhaimin was not alone in coming up with such an unexpectedly disappointing casualty figure. A few others also came up with such unwelcome truths about the loss of life, property and honour. It has been said that once the MCAs concerned started reporting their preliminary findings to Mujib, the Bangladesh Prime Minister lost his trust in the ability of his Constituent Assembly colleagues to provide him with the expected 'proof of Pakistan Army's genocide'. Being disappointed at their inefficiency, he then formed the 12-member strong Inquiry Committee under Abdur Rahim. [2]

4.2. The Inquiry Committee Report:

The Inquiry Committee seemed to have also failed Mujib in giving him the kind of truth he was after. The Government of Bangladesh never said a word about officially receiving the report, which was, as per as the original Gazette notification, due on or before 30 April 1972 or what happened to the Inquiry Committee's work.

On 6 June 1972, William Drummond reported:

"Since the third week of March, when the Inspector General's office in the Bangladesh Home Ministry began its field investigations, there have been about 2,000 complaints from citizens about deaths at the hands of the Pakistan Army have been received." [3]

Later, sources in Bangladesh reported that the draft report showed an overall casualty figure of 56,743. When a copy of this draft report was shown to the Prime Minister,

"he lost his temper and threw it on the floor, saying in angry voice 'I have declared three million dead, and your report could not come up with three score thousand! What report you have prepared? Keep your report to yourself. What I have said once, shall prevail.'" [4]

4.3. The Claim for Compensation:

Seemingly, the claim for compensation from the families of the war victims also did not bring much joy for Mujib and his Government. As has already been mentioned, according to Col. Akbar Hussain's disclosure at the National Assembly of Bangladesh, the number of claimants did not exceed three hundred thousand. But, according to Abdul Muhaimin, the Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, had informed him that,

"Only 72,000 claims were received. Of them relatives of 50,000 victims had been awarded the declared sum of money. There had been many bogus claims, even some from the Razakars, within those 72,000 applications." [5]

Whatever be the actual figure, the 'victims' whose relatives were compensated might not be all victims of the Pakistan Army. A large number of refugees, 1.6 million according to one Awami League journalist [6], died in Indian refugee camps. Those who claimed

compensation, also included families of many such dead refugees. Besides, there were also many false claimants.

4.4. The 'Bengali Heroines':

Once the euphoria of 'liberation' started ebbing, the Bengali heroines silently disappeared from the news. One of the later-day myth makers could only report in 1974 that altogether about a hundred of them had been given into marriage at the various centres. [7] How many heroines were housed at such centres, how and when such centres were closed and what happened to the inmates, remained a closely guarded secret up to now. Here too, apparently the hard facts were too embarrassing to be disclosed.

There is little doubt whatever 'hard facts' Mujib had received from his MCAs and the Inquiry Committee, that these did not come anywhere remotely close to the three million figure raised and by implication made the claim of the alleged systematic killing aimed at genocide look ridiculous. Not surprisingly Mujib and his Government hurriedly placed a firm lid on the 'hard facts'. Led by him, very conveniently they all went crying for the three million dead and three hundred thousand raped and spat venom on the Pakistani Army and their collaborators who, after all, had no chance of replying.

Notes and References

1. Yahya Mirza, Interview with Mr Abdul Muhaimin; The Tarokalok, Dhaka, 1 March 1990; also cf. Jauhuri, Tirish Lakher Telesmat (The Riddle of Thirty Lakh) Asha Prokashan, 435 Elephant Road, Dhaka -1217, 1994: 48.
2. Jauhuri, *ibid*: 64-65
3. William Drummond, The Missing Millions, The Guardian, London, 6 June, 1972.
4. *op cit*: 64
5. *ibid*: 50
6. Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, Shahosh Kore Kichu Shotto Katha Bala Proyojon (With Courage a Few Truth Need to be Said), The Dainik Janapad, Dhaka, 20 May, 1973.
7. Abul Hasanat, The Ugliest Genocide in History, Muktaadhara Swadhin Bangla Sahitya Parishad, 74 Farashganj, Dhaka - 1, 1974:78

*Chapter - Five***THE RECYCLING OF THE MYTH****5.1. The Later-Day Peddlers of the Myth:**

Because Mujib and his Government could not face hard facts and continued to assert unfounded claims, certain individuals and groups hurbouring hatred against Islam and Pakistan had a 'field-day'. Since they had no fresh accusation to make against Pakistan, recycling the old accusation, however ridiculous, became their preoccupation. Numerous articles and a large number of books were written not only with the avowed aim of recording 'Pakistani Crime' but also conveniently saying hosanna to the 'greatest Bengali of all time' and claiming a share of the glory that was the 'freedom movement in Bangladesh'

The situation was opportune. While the Indians professed to having trained 130,000 'freedom fighters' [1], 3,300,000 actually claimed that distinction and obtained certificates by all manner of means to prove that they were bona fide. [2] Those who could not make such a claim because of age, domicile, or some such reason, became seers, soothsayers, or, at the very least, sufferers for Bangladesh. All of them sang and swore. Indeed, what better target for swearing could there be, other than the 'abnormal Pakistan' and the 'abominable Pakistan Army'?

5.2. Two Examples:

To give some idea of the recycling enterprises of the time, I shall choose two out of the many possible: Abul Hasanat's 'The Ugliest Genocide in History' and Jyoti Sen Gupta's 'History of Freedom Movement in Bangladesh 1943-1973 - Some Involvement'. Both of these were written in 1974, the first by a retired Bangladeshi police officer and the second by an Indian journalist from West Bengal.

5.3. The Ugliest Genocide:

The author of 'The Ugliest Genocide in History', Abul Hasanat was a retired Inspector General of Police and a professed atheist in his

seventies. Although he opted for Pakistan in 1947 and had enjoyed the highest office in its Police Service, he did not find any difficulty in depicting his once chosen country 'A Geographical Monstrosity' [3] and saying that 'Jinnah Arrogantly Merged the Two Wings'. [4] As if this was not enough for him to say 'Hail Bangladesh', he went on reciting hosanna to Mujib:

“Bangladesh is the sole handiwork of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, our great leader, devotedly served by a band of tireless workers and supported by 99% of the population. Any Zaid, Amr, Bakr with a fair capability can top the Army, Navy, Police and Civil Services but a leader like Mujib is a rare product of a century or so. We salute Mujib for his unswerving devotion to a just cause, his unflinching fortitude in suffering and his unflagging conviction about the ultimate victory. His has been the victory and we share the glory.” [5]

Of course, as expected of his kind, he did not forget those who really mattered:

“We salute our great neighbour, the biggest and the most stable post-war Democracy. In spite of tremendous difficulties, it has never thought of Martial Law or a hand-over to the Army. It has been led by illustrious and irreproachable figures - Nehru, Shastri and Mrs Gandhi.

Mrs. Gandhi has upheld lofty human principles by coming all out for the stricken people of East Bengal. Her people have supported her in the noble struggle, and her armed forces in alliance with our Mukti Bahini have taught the Punjabi-Pathan hordes the lesson of their life. We shall be eternally grateful to the Indian people, so near and dear to us.” [6]

“In this connection,” wrote Abul Hasanat, “let us recall the MARVELOUS SELF-RESTRAINT OF INDIAN HINDUS!” [7] and went on recycling the proof of the Pakistan Army's Punjabi-Pathan hordes' 'The Ghastly Genocide' [8] A large selection of foreign journalists' reports which appeared in world press before December

1971 accusing Pakistan of committing genocide in East Pakistan were, of course, included. But despite every conceivable hyperbole, so far as the 'concrete proof' only the following were provided:

- * Kushtia, a city of 40,000 looked 'like the morning after a nuclear attack' [9]
- * 400,000 women, known to have been raped. [10]
- * 200,000 fell pregnant to West Pakistani soldiers. [11]
- * About 400 killed at Chuadanga. [12]
- * 200 students Killed at Iqbal Hall [13]
- * 20,000 killed in Jessore town. [14]

5.4. History of Freedom Movement:

Reserving comment on the concrete 'facts' made available by Abul Hasanat, let me turn to Jyoti Sen Gupta. He was, by his own claim, someone who had also some involvement in the struggle of the Bengalis of "East Pakistan". This claim coming from a foreign journalist may sound strange. But, then, India was not a passive neighbour; nor was Gupta an ordinary news reporter. He was in the 1950s, as he said by quoting Pakistan intelligence, 'at the top of the list as a dangerous man who is out to destroy Pakistan.' and thereafter 'in constant touch with developments secretly taking place in East Pakistan'. [15] His 'insider' story is fascinating and throws light on the extent and depth of Indian 'political engineering' behind the rise of Bangladesh and therefore deserves our close attention.

Apart from other issues, Jyoti Sen Gupta did not forget covering the 'Full-scale Genocide' [16] which Pakistan allegedly committed in Bangladesh. More significantly he claimed that Pakistan Army had killed 3.5 million [17] and this figure had supposedly been mentioned .by Sheikh Mujib. [18] To lend credibility to his claim, he has recycled varieties of 'proofs' from different sources, including the Government of India. Let me list those mentioned:

- * All the inmates of Jagannath Hall and Iqbal Hall were slaughtered. [19] At Iqbal Hall, although the number killed is uncertain, not one survivor was found. At Jagannath Hall all

103 students were killed. Some students were forced at gunpoint to dig a mass grave in the field of the hall and they too were shot. [20]

- * All the inmates of Ruqaiya Hall were kidnapped to the cantonment and those who resisted were killed. Many jumped from the windows and many others committed suicide. [21]
- * Ten faculty members of Dhaka University were killed on the night of 26 March 1971. [22]
- * 50,000 Buddhists were slaughtered. [23]
- * 7,000 bodies were seen scattered near a Church in Jessore. [24]
- * Most of 5,000 Policemen at Dhaka barracks had been killed [25]
- * 60 per cent police force were killed [26]
- * 25,000 to 35,000 killed in Shakharihatti (a Dhaka street) alone. [27]
- * 500 were burnt at the office of Ittefaq. [28]
- * 250 murdered at Ramna Kalibari. [29]
- * At least 17,000 Awami Leaguers were killed [30]
- * 100,000 killed in the district of Khulna. [31]
- * 100,000 killed in Chittagong [32]

5.5. Sifting facts from fictions:

There was no disagreement on the fact that on the night of 26 March 1971 the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan was sent out of their barracks to re-establish government authority and to sort out the secessionists. Like any such army crack down, it was swift, sharp and brutal. There could be no doubt that many innocent, as well as not so innocent, people got killed, not just on that fateful night but throughout the nine months desperate battle to save the integrity of the country. The question is not whether, but how many (and in what manner, perhaps) people were killed?

In the confusing situation of a civil war, especially one that is characterised by insurgency and guerilla warfare, where the bulk of the civilian population found themselves engulfed by the conflict, often literally at the middle of cross fire, people's falling victim at the hands of either of the fighting forces was almost inevitable. In such a

situation, a certain degree of confusion and misreporting were also expected. Moreover, as in with any war, deceit, disinformation and propaganda had their part. In the light of all of this, the charges against the Pakistan Army that were repeatedly alleged all over the world, the degree of magnification was astounding by any previous known standards though, were understandable. But what was perplexing was the attempt to pass on these highly exaggerated 'reports', saturated with lies, under the guise of authentic accounts long after the end of the conflict when a little endeavour on the part of the writers could have helped establish the hard facts. This could not be innocuous.

5.6. The Alleged Killing at the Dhaka University:

Both Abul Hasanat and Jyoti Sen Gupta have made pointed claims about the Pakistan Army's killing of students and teachers in the Dhaka University on the night of 26 March 1971. In Western democracies' an armed attack on teachers and students is not easily understood, far less considered justifiable in any circumstances. Therefore, the reported killing provoked a deep sense of outrage and condemnation. [33] The fact that some of the student dormitories were transformed into arsenals and insurgency training centres [34] and a number of the university teachers were actively involved with the secessionist movement [35] were suppressed. That the secessionists were buying arms years before the Army crack down was disclosed by Gupta himself. [36] Those who were involved in organising armed training have themselves reported that at one time there as even a plan for some of them to have military training in Indonesia. [37]

Although Jyoti Sen Gupta avoided specifically quoting the number of those killed at Iqbal Hall, the headquarters of the secessionist student leadership, he has left ample hints that it was very high. Abul Hasanat, on the other hand, has dispensed with all these clever tricks and has given a precise figure of 200. Since at the time in question I was a House Tutor at that very hall and survived the fateful night in one of the staff quarters within the building, I can claim to be an eye witness to it all. I can categorically say that on that night student activists hurriedly evacuated the hall hours before the arrival of the Army and only one student - Chishti Helalur Rahman- was killed. Indeed, if I remember

correctly after Bangladesh came into being the hall administration had a total casualty figure of sixteen from among their resident and non-resident students numbering over two thousands for the whole length of the conflict. Two of my former colleagues at Iqbal Hall -Prof. Anwarul Haque Sharif (now at Jahangirnagar University) and Prof. Saefullah Bhuiya (still at Dhaka University) - are still alive and can corroborate what I have said here. Besides, if Gupta and Hasanat were interested in factual truth, they could have taken the trouble of contacting either the university or the hall authorities and certainly find out the definitive figure. What stopped them. form doing so?, one must ask.

Likewise, the killing at Jagannath Hall has been deliberately exaggerated. A poorly recorded video film of the Army movement within the hall premises was later produced. The video, it was claimed, showed the Army using bull-dozer for digging a mass grave. Although special viewing have been arranged to show the video film in and outside Bangladesh, surprisingly up until now no one has bothered to look for the alleged mass grave. Gupta, who has shown a special interest in Jagannath Hall, would have been more believable if he had enquired about the mass grave and had ascertained from the hall authorities the total number of casualties, not only on that night but throughout the whole war. The plain and simple truth is that no such grave existed and that was the reason why the author of the 'Freedom Movement in Bangladesh' stayed away from the supposed Pakistan Army 'killing field'.

In this connection it is worth recalling that immediately after the fall of Dhaka to the Indian Army, there were newspaper reports claiming unearthing of mass graves. But, none of these were seriously followed up and later the stories of these mass graves were conveniently forgotten. Even our two authors avoided any reference to them. However, on the unearthed mass graves William Drummond reported:

“Of course, there are ‘mass graves’ all over Bangladesh. But nobody, not even the rabid Pakistani hater, has yet asserted that all these mass graves account for more than about 1,000 victims. Furthermore, because a body is found in a mass grave does not necessarily mean that the victim was killed by the

Pakistan Army. In the days immediately preceding the March 25, 1971 crackdown by the Pakistan Army, virtual anarchy prevailed in the province. In fact a sinister suspicion has arisen since, that the bodies discovered in mass graves might well have belonged to Biharis, perhaps even Bengalis killed by other Bengalis.” [38]

Unlike Iqbal Hall and Jagannath Hall, both of which at least came under fire and suffered casualties, Ruqaiya Hall did not come under the Army's attention either on the night of 25 March 1971 or at any other time. Although Gupta has not mentioned the source of his accusation; it is apparently based on a leaflet that was circulated in London. The Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University, Syed Sajjad Husain, on his visit to London in 1971 was told about this leaflet:

"When I went to Tanveer Ahmed's (Education Attaché) room, whom I knew before, we talked on various matters. He pulled out a leaflet written in large English letters from his drawer and showed it to me. He said a Bengali woman, who was known to him, was distributing it on the streets of London. The leaflet had it, 'If you have any conscience, then protest against the beastliness.' Under it there were a number of horrifying tales. A father was quoted saying that on the night of the 25th the Army entered the women's hall in Dhaka. There they have not only gunned down many girls, but have also committed beastly oppression on them. The homosexual Pathan soldiers have raped the girls in beastly manner. The father further said that when these were enacted on the ground floor, about fifty girls saw this from the upper floor. When they realised that their turn would come next, they committed suicide by jumping from the upper floor. Included among them was the daughter of the narrator. When Tanveer Ahmed protested and told the lady that she should know that there was no truth behind this, her reply was "Every thing is fair in love and war".

I told Tanveer Shaheb that I myself have spoken to Mrs Ali Imam, the Provost of the women's hall. What I have learnt from her was that after 7th March most of the girls left the hall. On

the 24th there were only five girls in the hall. When rumors started spreading in Dhaka about the possibility of Army action, under Mrs Imam' s directive these girls left the hall and took shelter in the home of a House Tutor. So there could not be any question of oppression or rape being suffered by the girls of the hall." [39]

Gupta's list showing 10 faculty members had been killed is largely correct. The total was nine rather than 10 [40] and the responsibility for it was admitted by the Pakistan military authorities. But, strangely he has also quoted two other lists which were circulated by the Indian Government on the authority of foreign witnesses. [41] That some of the names included in those two lists were either nonexistent or suffered no harm was glossed over. That it has shown how some so-called foreign eye witnesses deliberately took upon themselves the task of spreading lies in order to inflame the situation was never pointed out. In this connection, it may be recalled that during the conflict a number of faculty members led by the Vice Chancellor issued a statement listing the correct casualty figure. Yet, some interested quarters abroad condemned their efforts as 'Pakistan Government instigated lies' and all of them were made to suffer in 'liberated' Bangladesh. [42]

The discrepancies between his own list and two other lists which he had included in his book should have made Gupta realise the gap between what was reported and what in fact had happened and led him to be more observant. Had either Gupta or Hasanat been a little more caring about the factual truth, rather than being over-sanguine in condemning Pakistan and her Army indiscriminately, they would have visited the Dhaka University. There they would have seen a comprehensive list of 'martyrs' on public display with the names of all those staffs and students of the university who had lost lives during the whole conflict. And from that plaque they could have counted that the total losses suffered was no more than ///. The fact that they did not, shows their buccaneer approach to truth and the utter hollowness of their casualty figures.

5.7. The Alleged Killing in Other Parts of Dhaka:

Writing about the Rajarbag police barracks, Jyoti Sen Gupta has recorded, on the authority of an American report, that most of the 5,000 policemen who were killed were those who advanced on the night of 25 March 1971 to resist the Pakistan task force intending to quell the disturbance. This claim appeared on page 284 of his book. Yet, on page 274 of his book Gupta himself told us that 'Rajarbag had about 2,500 jawans of Special Force and the Provincial Police Force'! On page 276 he transformed this 'about 2,500' into a firm figure of 2,500 'Bengali policemen'. What Gupta noted in terms of figures was in complete disregard of truth. This became obvious when he made further astounding claim that 60 per cent of the country's police force were killed. The missing members of the Police Force were not beyond accounting. The Police establishment records were in existence. Anyone inclined to believe this Indian propagandist would be well advised to check with the Police Headquarters to find out the enormity of his lie.

Talking about the exactitude of numbers, I would like to ask readers to compare Gupta' s number from 25,000 to 35,000 killed at Shankaripatti, to Anthony Mascarenhas' s estimate of 8,000 for the same part of old Dhaka. [43] The source of the American report of implied 5,000 killed at Rajarbag was, none other than the Goanese-born journalist [44] who was later rewarded by the Mujib Government with 'a London House' for his service in putting slur on Pakistan. [45] At least Gupta could take pride in having beaten the 'defecting' Pakistani journalist in the 'make-up your number' game with regard to Shankaripatti. As seasoned propagandists, perhaps, both of them knew that few readers would ever bother to see whether a small narrow street, where the alleged killing took place, could have accommodated such a number of people. Had either Gupta or Mascarenhas ever visited the street, they would have been ashamed to put such a figure.

One is tempted to say the same as regards Gupta' s casualty figure concerning Ramna Kalibari which got virtually destroyed on the night of 25 March 1971. It was one of the clandestine 'meeting place' of the 'liberationist' student leaders [46] and that could be the reason why it

attracted the Army's seize. Anyone who has seen the temple, with no housing facilities around, would find it difficult to understand where from such a large number of people came to be there. Such a temple normally accommodates a priest and his family. For a family of priest to provide 250 'martyrs' for the 'freedom movement in Bangladesh' must rank as an extraordinary contribution.

Similarly, one wonders how and where Gupta got the figure of 500 burnt to death at the Ittefaq office from? The Ittefaq newspaper office is under the same owners who to-date have not said anything to support for Gupta's claim. Why not, if it was the truth? My checking shows that no one can remember reading in the paper a claim such as Gupta's. It is amazing what Gupta could see from Calcutta, could not be seen by the owners or their management some thing which supposed to have taken place in their premises. What an amazing example of Gupta's journalistic integrity.

5.8. Fifty thousand Buddhist Killed?

Gupta has revamped an old report which claimed that during the early period of the conflict some 50,000 Buddhists were slaughtered by the Pakistan Army in the north of Bangladesh. But, was there even a remotely causal explanation why the Buddhist had to suffer such a retribution at the hand of the Pakistan Army? The answer is none. On the contrary, others have reported that through out the conflict, the Chittagong Hill Tract, where the country's Buddhist population were and still are concentrated, was a no-go area for the pro-Bangladesh insurgents. Moreover, it is a well known fact that the Chakma Chief, Raja Tridiv Roy, staunchly stood against the dismemberment of Pakistan. Even now his loyalty towards united Pakistan is such that he has remained a Pakistani citizen! It was not the Raja alone, other tribal chiefs and notables, belonging to the area and having the Buddhist faith, also stood up for Pakistan. Because of their unflinching faith in Pakistan some tribal chiefs were put behind the bars by the Mujib Government as 'Pakistani collaborators'. [47] Anyone who is familiar with the current Chakma insurgency in Bangladesh would know that it all began because of the Buddhist Chakma tribesmen's refusal to be counted as part' of Mujib's 'Bengali Nation' . [48] Against this

background, Gupta's attempt to recycle propaganda report is nothing but tall tale. I have heard some of my countrymen making statement of anguish against Pakistan Army, but I have heard none accusing Pakistan Army of killing any Buddhist tribesmen. I am sure, if Gupta had bothered to check with any member of the Buddhist faith of Chittagong Hill Tract, the Buddhist tribesmen in their characteristic politeness would have invited him in and cooperated with Gupta's enquiry. Gupta did not do that since he knew that the result of his inquiry would have been unfruitful for him.

5.9. Seventeen thousand Awami Leaguers Killed?

Another revelation from the same author was that during the disturbance a total of 17,000 Awami Leaguers gave up their lives for Bangladesh. However, it was strange that he could name only one Awami Leaguer - Mosihur Rahman, MNA from Jessore [49] Like most of his claims, he did not feel the necessity of telling us where he came to have this figure from.

Why could not Gupta name more than one Awami Leaguer? The answer is no Awami League parliamentarian, other than Mosihur Rahman, was killed. The plain truth is that not a single provincial, district, subdivision, or even thana Awami League office bearer 'gave his life' for Bangladesh. Nor any of the publicly known figure of its students or labour wing was reported to have been killed.

5.10. Alleged Destruction and Killing in Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna and Chittagong:

Abul Hasanat, the author of The Ugliest Genocide stated on the strength of an agency report which in its turn based its news on the authority of a certain World Bank Team that while liberating Kushtia from the Mukti Bahini, the Pakistan Army had turned Kushtia town of 40,000 people into an utterly devastated land, as if it had suffered a nuclear attack. The implication was that none of its inhabitants was spared. This again was nothing more than a fantasy. If our author really believed in what he stated, he would have immediately visited the town after the evacuation of the Pakistan Army, with the intention of helping

anyone who may have survived the alleged army action. That would have been an utmost priority for a professed humanist like Hasanat. As an experienced and well read police officer, he would have known that even Hiroshima and Nagasaki had their few survivors. Had he made such a visit, he would have found that what he stated was lie. He did not do that because in that case he would not have been able to avail the opportunity of re-telling the tales of the 'Ghastly Genocide' supposedly committed by the 'Punjabi-Pathan hordes'!

The claims that 20,000 were killed in Jessore town, 100,000 in Khulna district and 100,000 in Chittagong also fall into the above genre of lie. If these were true why did not both the claims attract simultaneous attention of both the authors? The plain and simple answer is that each figure was cooked up story of each propagandist. Besides, both Jessore and Khulna do still exist and at least a portion of their present day population had lived through those troublesome days. It is easy to establish the truth by questioning the local people. Earlier, we have seen a reputable author from Jessore, Maulana Abul Khair, telling us what the real condition of his district was. After reading the statements of Abul Hasanat and Jyoti Sen Gupta and then listening to Maulana Abul Khair, the man from the spot, one could not help but feel revulsion towards the myth makers.

5.11. Four Hundred Thousand Raped and Two Hundred Thousand Pregnant?

Apparently Abul Hasanat was not least bothered about what ordinary men and women on the spot would think of his shameless efforts, so long the 'Men That Mattered' [50] were pleased. For the benefit of his mission, he was even prepared to up-stage the 'Men That Mattered'! Otherwise he would not have belched out the above, when even his 'great leader' the 'rare product of a century or so' could not contemplate mouthing the same!

This product of superhuman divination was on the authority of a Sydney Surgeon who had purportedly spent six weeks in Bangladesh. The figure quoted give away the lie. Anyone with a minimum knowledge of female physiology would find the alleged 50 per cent

pregnancy, rate utterly unbelievable. The good doctor had further said, we were reminded by our good author, that 'Between 150,000 and 170,000 of the 200,000 who fell pregnant were aborted in highly undesirable but unavoidable conditions before we even knew the problem existed.' [51] So at least between 30,000 and 50,000 raped victims were known and they and their babies were cared for? Lest you want to know where these victims were, the honest doctor has already provided the answer: 'As soon as they gave sarees to them a number did hang themselves. Many tied stones to themselves and jumped off bridges. Thousands of survivors have been abandoned by their families...' [52]

But what we would like to know how all these figures were arrived at? What happened to the remains of those who hanged themselves with saris (given by an agency?) or jumped off bridges? What happened to those abandoned thousands? If the Surgeon from Sydney could have all these information, surely our author could have also obtain them. Why he did not? Moreover, why the then Bangladesh Government kept these highly incriminatory facts hidden? Most of all why the 'guardians of the spirit of liberation' did not collate a few shred of such a damning truth? As we have seen earlier, Jauhuri, the Bangladeshi journalist, did try to find from the people from various districts of the country and none claimed to have personally known an incident of rape.

So what is to be made of such allegations? There must be one and only one conclusion: they were manufactured in the same manner as the myth of three million was manufactured.

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34. I can say this from my personal knowledge of Iqbal Hall and the bungalow next to it, which later became Abu Sayeed Hall.
35. For an account of such a teacher's secessionist activity as early as 1954 Cf. Alexander Campbell, The Heart of India, Constable & Company Ltd, London, 1958: 258-68 This Lecturer in Political Science, was rewarded by India in 1972 with an honorary doctorate and Bangladesh Government appointed him as the country's first National Professor.
36. Jyoti Sen Gupta, op cit : xxiii
37. Kazi Arif Ahmed's interview in The Weekly Meghna, vol.III, no. 14, Dhaka, 18 March, 1987.
38. William Drummond, The Missing Millions, The Guardian, London, 6 June, 1972.
39. Syed Sajjad Husain, op cit : 65-66
40. ibid:
41. Jyoti Sen Gupta, op cit : 283;286
42. Among them were Syed Sajjad Husain, Dr Mohar Ali and Dr Qazi Deen Mohammed.
43. Anthony Mascarenhas, The Rape of Bangladesh, Vikas Publications, 5 Daryaganj, Ansari Road, Delhi - 6, 1971 : 114
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45. After Mujib's death this Bangladesh Government demanded the return of the money which was taken from the London branch of the Sonali Bank and it was widely reported in London's Bengali press.
46. Kazi Arif Ahmed's interview, opcit.
47. ibid
48. ibid
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50. Abul Hasanat, op cit: 17;73
51. ibid: 77
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Chapter - Six
THE FORGOTTEN HUMANITY

6.1. The Other Side:

It is admitted that there have been victims in this conflict. Some victims were totally innocent, who were caught up in the crossfire. Some of the victims died while they were actively engaged in combating Pakistan defence forces. This is one side of the story which has been magnified many folds with the sinister idea of falsifying those who tried to defend Pakistan from being dismembered.

What about the other side? The so-called liberators took innumerable human lives, inflicted physical injuries and left many of them mayhemed in their attack both on army and civilian who were loyally defending the country. Yet, in recounting this sad conflict hardly any notice was taken of these other victims: the Pakistan Army personnel and their families who were killed by their one time brothers and colleagues who together took oath to defend Pakistan; the Bihari civilians, many of whom committed no crime other than remaining loyal to Pakistan and above all the countless East Pakistani Muslims who refused to be beguiled by the Indian/Awami League's plot and either remained silent or had taken part in the struggle to save Pakistan.

It should not be forgotten that in war, a side claiming to be on the right side can not abandon the time honoured norms for waging war. Nor can they expect to be condoned simply because their opponents had violated those norms. Having noted this central code of behaviour, let me ask a simple question to those who suavely condemned the Pakistan Army for all manner of atrocities whether they would at least concede that atrocities were also committed by them on the other side. If 'abnormal Pakistan' did not care to punish its 'killers', what stopped the 'civilized' and 'morally sensitive' Bangladesh Government to punish its own offenders? Even if these 'Men That Mattered' were busy with other matters, what stopped men of 'PEACE and JUSTICE' like Abul Hasanat [1] from coming out with another tome, like his 'The Ugliest Genocide', 'Addressed to' those 'Men That Mattered' in the 'liberated' Bangladesh? Their very silence shows, like their loathsome figure

game, their protestation for civilized human values, their cry in the name of suffering humanity and their call for justice, were all fraud.

6.2. The Killing of the Biharis:

To give an idea of heart-rendering savagery which was committed against the 'Bihari' Muslims, I shall confine myself to the testimony, not of those who supported Pakistan, but of those who took part in dismembering Pakistan. Such a well-known 'Bengali nationalists', M.R. Akhtar Mukul in his 'Ami Bijoy Dekhechi' (I Have Seen Victory) stated:

“At around sunset they came back. But, the report they gave about Shantahar is difficult to narrate in words”. Since I was busy with various tasks and also because train and road communications were cut off, I could not obtain any information about this railway town. For three days in Shantahar medieval fiendish killings have been carried out. Now the town cannot be entered into, because of the stench from the dead bodies.” [2]

From the river crossing-point in Khetlal, the same writer reported this:

"There is a wooden bridge to help private car, jeep and pedestrians to cross the river. But its middle portion is missing. Someone has removed it. To speak to the local people I got down from the jeep along with Mr Asad. Seeing my large body, big moustache and long hair, the locals started whispering with one another suspecting me to be a non- Bengali. I sensed my heart getting cold out of fear. Luckily, I am an accomplished speaker in Bogra's local tongue. My habitual jokes and manner of speaking removed their suspicion and helped make certain rapport between us. Afterwards I came to learn that they have been engaged in a awesome mission. The non-Bengalis from Jaipurhat-Pachbibi area who have been fleeing towards Dhaka through Bogra were finished off here on the bank of the river. Women and children have been kept unharmed in a homestead.

For a number of days the villagers have been doing this at night with 'mashals' in hand." [3]

These Bihari Muslims had no other fault except that they were non-Bengalis. They did not even have the chance of 'collaborating', as alleged, with the Pakistan Army. Beside, is it a crime to stand up and fight for one's own country? If any, those so-called 'liberators' who actively and brazenly collaborated with the Indians to destroy Pakistan - a sovereign country - should be guilty, not those who tried to safeguard a well-established country as being moral duty.

The retribution that was meted out to them after Bangladesh came into being had few parallel in savagery. Many of the males became victim of a systematic program during and after the fall of Dhaka to the Indian Army. According to one source, their number killed 'is estimated in thousands.' [4]

Those who survived this carnage were deprived of their hearths and homes, stripped off all their possessions and denied their jobs and sources of livelihood. The miserable plight in which they found themselves evoked this appeal from Abul Fazal, the well-known author and educationist:

"... they are utterly helpless and dispossessed. Most of them are women and children. They have no means of livelihood, no occupations or anything to cling to. They cannot envisage a future. This is a queer and pathetic problem. Theirs is a human problem. When some of them are found in bad health, wearing tattered garments, hungry and helpless, begging alms with tearful eyes in streets and market places, this morbid scene appears to me as a great insult to humanity. Any sensitive person cannot stand such a sight." [5]

Yet, persons like Hasanat, Gupta and their associates have little time to mention any of these, far less to acknowledge that the Bihari Muslims and many other Muslims of East Pakistan too have suffered and got killed and became the subject of atrocities.

6.3. The Pakistan Supporters:

At least the plights of the Bihari Muslims have been mentioned by writers such as Mukul and had compassion from Abul Fazal. But few have spoken about the treatment meted out to the men and women who have either served Pakistan faithfully in the past or refused to join the conspiracy to destroy Pakistan.

Many of these were killed in the conflict on the spot and many more were killed cold-blooded after the conflict was over. After the fall of Dhaka countless persons were 'lynched, flogged, flayed, mutilated, cleaved and butchered'. [6] Let me mention a few.

Ajmal Ali Choudhury, a Muslim League leader and a Minister of Commerce of Pakistan at one time, who played absolutely no part during the conflict was taken out from the Dargha of Hazrat Shah Jalal in the heart of Sylhet town in broad day light and killed. Thereafter his body was mutilated and was left in an open field for public display near the Government College. For three days his family was kept away from collecting his dead body. Thus, this good patriot and decent Muslim was deprived of his entitlement of a decent burial. Dr Abdul Majid, another Muslim League leader, was similarly gunned down and his dead body was desecrated.

Earlier during the conflict, Abdul Mu'nem Khan, another Muslim League leader, and a former Health Minister of Pakistan and former Governor of East Pakistan, was gunned down at his Dhaka residence in presence of his family. Like Ajmal Ali Choudhury, Abdul Mu'nem Khan was also living in retirement and had no role either way during the conflict. Their only 'crime' appeared to have been that they worked for the creation of Pakistan, served it faithfully and did not renounce their allegiance in favour of 'Joy Bangla'.

Maulvi Farid Ahmed, Vice President of Pakistan Democratic Party and a former Commerce Minister of Pakistan, was detained in Dhaka. While under detention, he was 'whipped first and then his skin was cut by sharp blades and salt was added to his wounds'. After this beastly

treatment, he was put to death. His dead body was mutilated and 'desecrated in a wild fury'.

Maulana Asadullah Shirazi, a former Member of the National Assembly, writer, poet and sufi and the eldest son of the famous poet and Khilafat Leader Ismail Hussain Shirazi, was dragged through the streets of Sirajgonj, with a hook pierced through his nose. After this act of utter barbarity he was 'trailed to the place of his martyrdom'.

Prof. Tariquillah, Bengali Department of Choumuhani College, Noakhali, was arrested and then taken before a gathering where he was commanded to recant his support for Pakistan. This man of true faith told his captors that if he was not convinced that Pakistan was created mainly in the interest of the Bengali Muslims and that they still needed the Muslim State of Pakistan in their own interest, he would have joined them. Since that was his faith, he could not recant his support for Pakistan even if it meant death to him. And death he met under a hail of bullet.

Muhammad Illyas, a student leader belonging to Islami Chatra Sangha, 'was tied to a rear wheel of a slowly moving motor vehicle and was trailed to Feni from Dagan Bhuiya, ten miles away, where he was whipped by the Indian Army. Hot iron rods were used on the moribund body of helpless Illyas. His eyes were gouged out; his ears and nose were clipped. Finally, he was tortured to death and his dead body was displayed at a crossroads in Feni.'

Maulana Azharus Sobhan, a prominent alim and the principal of Mithachara Madrasa, Chittagong, was severely flogged breaking several of his bones. "Three of his students were beheaded in his presence. A garland of the heads of three students was put around his neck and he was kept standing for three consecutive days' before he was killed.

Maulana Pir Dewan Ali of Dhaka was 'shaved of his beard and flogged cruelly'. With his bones broken, he was tied by his hands and legs and 'thrown into the middle of a river' to sink alive.

Jalaluddin, a boy of 14, from Kaliganj in Dhaka district, the constituency of Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister of the Bangladesh Government in exile formed in India, was buried alive. 'He was forced to dig his own grave, to fix it with the thorns of date trees and finally he was made to lie on this thorny bed to death.' [7]

6.4. A Survivor's Account:

These are the tales of a few. It is difficult to give the precise figure of how many people met their death in this way. However, it can be said with utmost honesty that they number many thousands. Those who survived various forms of brutalities were greater in number than those killed. To give some idea about their ordeal, I shall quote the account of two persons only:

“Typical of the intolerance and vindictiveness displayed towards the intellectuals who did not vocally support the Awami League was the case of Syed Sajjad Husain, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University. He earned the party's wrath by declaring his opposition to secession in a press statement. The "Free" Bangladesh radio operating in Calcutta sentenced him to death for his offence and three days after the fall of Dhaka, on 19th December, a band of armed guerrillas raided his private residence, beat up his protesting wife and daughters, broke into his room, and dragged him away to a Mukti Bahini camp. Here he was stripped of all his clothes, except the trousers, beaten black and blue, blindfolded, handcuffed and gagged, and left, tied to a post like an animal, to wait execution the following morning. The next day at dawn his executioners took him to a public square, stabbed him in six places and dealt him a shattering blow on the spine. When he collapsed, bleeding and unconscious, they thought he had died and moved off. He survived miraculously after being rescued by a passer-by who recognised him, but remained almost totally paralysed from the waist down for a month and a half. When after some treatment in hospital he partially regained the ability to move about on crutches, the Government had him removed to the Dhaka Central Jail. There he was detained for two years. The former

Vice-Chancellor is a permanent paraplegic today with both legs affected and needs a staff to balance him.

"In the like manner Hasan Zaman, director of the Pakistan Bureau of National Integration, an outspoken defender of Pakistan's ideology, was seized from his home on the same day as Syed Sajjad Husain and left for dead in the same square, bruised, blind-folded and handcuffed, He too was subsequently detained in Jail for two years. For several months after the assault Hasan Zaman could not walk erect because of the tortures he had undergone." [8]

Some writers on Bangladesh have argued that the killings and punishments of Pakistan supporters that went on after Bangladesh came into being was an inevitable vendetta carried out by the over zealous Mukti Bahini and the Government of Bangladesh had no hand in it. Yet the case of Syed Sajjad Husain showed that it was the exiled Government of Bangladesh in India which 'sentenced him to death', announced the sentence through its radio for no other reason other than for his statement opposing secession. How then the Government of Bangladesh could be absolved of their responsibilities in these horrendous crimes?

6.5. Could Mujib be Absolved?

Lest doubt remains, let me give another instance with regard to Mujib's own ingenious argument in support of these brutal killings by his own Mukti Bahini.

"As a frenzied, shouting mob of 5,000 Bengalis screamed encouragement, young Mukti Bahini guerrillas methodically tortured four suspected Pakistani quislings. For 30 minutes, the guerrillas battered the bound bodies of the helpless prisoners with kicks and karate blows with the bayonets, Quietly and systematically, they began stabbing their victims over and over again - all the time carefully avoiding the prisoners' hearts. After more than ten minutes of stabbing, the grisly performance seemed at an end. The soldiers wiped the blood from their bayonets and begun to depart. But before they left the scene, a

small boy - perhaps a relative of one of the victims - flung himself on the ground next to a prisoner's near lifeless body. In an instant the guerrillas were back, kicking the boy and beating him with their rifle butts. And as he writhed, the child was trampled to death by the surging crowd."

This horrendous bloodletting took place next to Dhaka stadium. The man who ordered the public killing and personally saw the order being carried out is Abdul Kader Siddiqui, the Mukti Bahini commander from Tangail. [9].

During her interview with Mujib, Oriana Fallaci, the Italian journalist, wanted to know what the Bangladesh leader thought of this massacre. The following conversation took place between Mujib and Fallaci:

Mujib - Massacre? What massacre?

Fallaci – The one committed by the Mukti Bahini at the Dacca stadium.

Mujib - There has never been a massacre at the Dacca stadium. You are lying.

Fallaci - Mr Prime Minister, I am not a liar. I saw the massacre with other journalists and 15,000 persons. If you'd like, I'll show you photographs. My paper has published them.

Mujib - Liar, they were not Mukti Bahini.

Fallaci - Mr Prime Minister, please do not repeat the word liar, they were Mukti Bahini and they were led by Abdul Kader Siddiqui and were in uniforms.

Mujib - Then it means that those were Razakars that had opposed resistance and Siddiqui was compelled to eliminate them.' [10]

A substantial proportion of people of all ranks and professions had indeed opposed the conversion of East Pakistan into Bangladesh and a good many of them even took arms alongside the Pakistan defence forces. [12] Countless of these men, old and young, were eliminated in the 'liberated' Bangladesh with the connivance of Mujib and his Government.

Notes and References

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10. Oriana Fallaci, *An Interview with Mujibur Rahman*, L'Europeo, Rome, 24 February, 1972. For Text Cf. Appendix - 1.
11. Cf. Prof. Muzaffar Ahmed's interview in *Basant Chatterjee, Inside Bangladesh Today: An eyewitness account*, S. Chand & Co (Ptv) Ltd, New Delhi, 1973
12. In June, the Amir of East Pakistan Jamat-i-Islami told newsmen that a total of 120,000 civilian volunteers have completed military training with a view to defend the integrity of Pakistan. Cf. Jyoti Sen Gupta, *Freedom Movement in Bangladesh 1947-73: Some Involvement*, Naya Prokash, 206 Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta - 6, 1974: By December their number doubled.

Chapter - Seven
THE GLIMPSES OF TRUTH

7.1. The Scale of magnification: 60 times?

The self-serving story of 'three million killed and three hundred thousand raped', however vociferously recited, soon lost its credibility. The foreign journalists who were partly responsible for creating the hallucinatory atmosphere of 1971 through their often unfounded and/or exaggerated reports were the first to point out the utter fantasy of three million killed. Within a few months after the end of the war, William Drummond of *The Guardian* wrote:

“This. figure of three million deaths has been carried uncritically in sections of the world press the scale of the atrocities claimed by the Mujib Government has been blown out of proportion.” [1]

Peter Gill of the *Daily Telegraph* was more dismissive:

“The Pakistan soldiery in the East during 1971 was suppressing a rebellion, and not in occupation of a foreign country. Sheikh Mujib's wild figure of three million Bengalis killed during those 10 terrible months is at least 20 times too high, if not 50 or 60. And what of all the killing that the Bengalis did whenever they had a chance?” [2]

7.2. The Categories of People ‘Killed’

The people who got killed at the hands of the Pakistani Army were not the only casualties of the war. The hands of the 'liberationists' were no less blood stained. If anything, the allegations of wanton killing against the Pakistan Army were mostly baseless, with only a few which might at best have circumstantial, rather than indubitable, evidence to back them up; whereas the instances of the Mukti Bahini's killing of non-combatants and detainees were so well documented that no amount of subterfuge could conceal them. The killing of suspected- Pakistan supporters by Abdul Kader Siddiqui's uniformed men, for instance, could never be considered anything other than a war crime. Apart from

those, whether armed or unarmed, who got killed on both sides, there was another group of victims. Irony is that they were made victims by their fellow 'Bengalis'. Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, the columnist, disdainfully wrote:

“Now we are saying three million Bengalis have been martyred. Without even having a survey we are claiming that three million Bengalis have died. But those of us who went to Mujibnagar and took up administrative responsibilities were responsible for the death of four hundred thousand children, one million women and two hundred thousand old people, out of the ten million Bengalis who took refuge in India. The records of their death exist in the newspapers of Calcutta and in the refugee related documents of the Government of West Bengal....A section of our public representatives have taken away food from the mouth of these women and children and have sold the goods that came from foreign countries as aid to the refugeesMillions and millions taka's worth of foreign aid came and most of them disappeared in the cavern of corruption.” [3]

It was not Abdul Gaffar Choudhury alone, M.R. Akhtar Mukul, another leading liberationist, has also provided us with a vivid eye witness account of this heartless killing of hapless women and children at the hands of the Awami League politicians. [4]

7.3. Cover-up and Disbelief

Had the Mujib Government shown confidence in the people of Bangladesh and let them have the findings of their own MCAs and the Inquiry Committee and released other related information such as those regarding compensation applied for and compensation actually provided, a more reliable picture of the nature and extent of losses on all sides would have emerged and an informed discussion and debate could have taken place. The authors such as Abul Hasanat and Jyoti Sen Gupta have also tried to keep the people of Bangladesh in a land of utter fantasy and falsehood. Moreover, successive Bangladesh Governments have found it expedient to live with, and often make use of, this falsehood.

As we have seen, despite the attempt to foster and perpetuate the myth, the public disbelief expressed itself in all manner of ways. The extent of the public incredulity was such that even some of the Awami Leaguers began publicly questioning the exaggerated claim. Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, Zahirul Qayyum and Abdul Muhaimin were only a few of these questioning Awami Leaguers.

7.4. Where Lies the Truth, Then?

The claim of ‘three million killed and three hundred thousand raped’ may have been utter concoction. But where does the factual truth lie, then? Is there any hope of finding them after a lapse of twenty five years?

We have been provided with a glimpse of the truth by an important body like the Bangladesh International Institute of Strategic Studies. Writing in the October 1993 issue of its Journal, Abdur Rab Khan, Senior Researcher of the Institute has shown that eight hundred thousand people had sacrificed their lives during the prolonged struggle for the creation of Pakistan. As against this, during Indo-Pakistan war leading to the creation of Bangladesh 11,000 soldiers on both sides were killed. [5] During the period of civil war between the Pakistan Army and the Bangladeshi rebels prior to the war itself, a total of 50,000 lives were lost. [6]

The Senior Researcher of the Bangladesh International Institute of Strategic Studies has not given any break-down of the 50,000 casualty figure. However, his figure includes all categories of victims, not just the Bangladesh partisans killed at the hands of the Pakistan Army. On the basis of what we have learnt from different sources about the various categories of people who have lost their lives during the conflict, there is no reason to pretend that the casualties suffered by the Biharis and the supporters of Pakistan, as well as by the Bangladeshi refugees were numerically any smaller than the losses met by the Bangladesh partisans.

The Army authorities in East Pakistan have never claimed that their efforts to quell the secessionists was an easy task. Nor have they ever said that during their drive to save the integrity of Pakistan, no innocent civilians, were killed in the cross fire. But, the claim of wanton killing by the army, far less the allegation of systematic genocide by them, is simply untenable. Were it otherwise, Mujib and his Government would not have suppressed the truth; nor would the propagandists remained content in merely reciting their claim. Certainly, they would have tried to display factually what the Pakistan Army did.

Notes and References

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5. Subir Bhaumik, Insurgent Crossfire: North-East India, Lancer Publishers, 56 Gautam Nagar, New Dehli - 110049, 1996: 8
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Chapter - Eight **BEHIND THE MYTH**

8.1. Why The Myth-Making?

So far I have examined the myth of 'three million killed and three hundred thousand raped', including the history of its fabrication and recycling. I have also given the reader a glimpse of the factual truth about the total number of people who could have lost their lives. The scale of exaggeration is stupendous. However, in order to put it in its proper perspective, it is necessary to look at the mind and the motive of the myth-makers.

8.2. The Mind and Motive of the Myth-Makers

Pointing to the Indian habit of exaggeration, Robert Fick, the 19th century German orientalist, had once remarked that in making up numbers the Indians have always been very liberal with 'zero'.^[1] In setting up the fiction, the Indian policy planners seem to have remembered that at least some people in the world could be aware of their habitual liberality in matters of number and they have therefore made sufficient allowances for such people. Western world's ingrained prejudice against Muslim Pakistan was another reason which might have emboldened the Indian policy makers in thinking that their exaggeration would escape the scrutiny of such prejudiced Western minds. Looking back one will have to concede that in 1971 they hugely succeeded in making the world, especially the Western world, believe in their concoction about genocide in East Pakistan.

It was not the first time that the Indians have successfully duped the world with charges of wanton killing against the Muslims. For such instance, one has only to open a history book on Muslim Bengal. The Muslim conquerors of Bengal have been blamed for the destruction of the Buddhist university of Nalanda and with it the Buddhist faith in North-East India. They have been suavely condemned as blood thirsty barbarians whose sole mission was to destroy the culture and religion of the land. The indignation behind such condemnation could not be

any stronger. Let me give an example from the renowned Bengali scholar and a National Professor of India, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee

“The conquest of Bengal by these ruthless foreigners was like a terrible hurricane which swept over the country, when a peace-loving people were subjected to all imaginable terrors and torments - wholesale massacres, pillages, abduction and enslavement of men and women, destruction of temples, palaces, images and libraries, and forcible conversion. The Muslim Turks, like the Spanish Catholic conquistadores in Mexico and Peru and elsewhere in America sought to destroy the culture and religion of the land as the handiwork of Satan.” [2]

Yet, the Buddhist, whom the Muslims had supposedly driven out of the area after destroying their monasteries and educational institutions, had welcomed the Muslims as avatar-like liberator: from the oppressive Brahmanical rule, as was testified by the Sunnyo Puran. [3] Their scholars have also given eye witness account that Nalanda was fully functioning decades after it: supposed destruction [4] and the Muslim attack on the nearby Uddandapur monastery was brought about by the Bengal's Hindu king's agent provocateurs' feigned plea for help. [5]

But, in spite of these indubitable evidence, the allegations were still treated as true. To give an example, a follower of Dr Ambedkar who has just written a scholarly book exposing all manner of Brahman chicanery in distorting ancient Indian history for the subjugation of the native population. Yet, the same author has allowed himself to be duped by the Brahmanical historians of Muslim Bengal in restating their contrived charges against the Muslims of committing atrocities towards the Buddhists without any hints of skepticism, far less disbelief. For, it has been artfully handed down to him through their so-called historical works. [6]

With such tangible proof of the efficacy of their well orchestrated accusations of the past, it is but natural for the Indian policy planners to have confidence in raising the cry of genocide against the Muslim Army of Pakistan. It is in the tradition of their 'Itihas-Puran' and is part

of Kautilya's prescription, which, by the admission of Indian scholars, 'his South Asian descendants have adopted [7] in modern time with success. Irony is that a few people have the required understanding of the Indian mind to identify and counter the Indian subversion.

Moving from the Indian mind to Indian motive in creating the myth, one is bound to ask this question: Why was there such a mala fide propaganda? What did they expect to achieve out of this chicanery?

8.3. A Western Journalist's Explanation

William Drummond, the British journalist, did also raise similar question: ‘Why then has Mujib propagated this genocide claim?’ The answer he found was:

"The first and most obvious reason is to galvanise Bengali opinion against the Pakistanis. A second reason is to lay the blame for Bangladesh's economic ills at Pakistan's door. If you are unemployed or if your wages have been cut, it is because the barbarous Pakistan Army has looted, raped and killed. A third and perhaps the most important reason, is that Mujib is using this claim as a bargaining tool with the Indian's to get captured Pakistanis turned over to Bangladesh." [8]

8.4. Why Galvanise Public Opinion Against Pakistan?

Why was it still necessary to continue to galvanise public opinion in Bangladesh against Pakistan, particularly when East Pakistan stood separated from West Pakistan? Was it simply to lay the blame for Bangladesh's economic ills at Pakistan's door or to use it as a bargaining tool to get the Pakistani prisoners of war for trial in Bangladesh? In this respect although William Drummond did put his finger on the pulse, he has not been able to read the rhythm properly.

The history bears testimony that Mujib and his Awami League had always indulged in the cheap politics of blaming their opponents - right or wrong. It is equally true that they have never shown any moral qualm when it came to blaming Pakistan. Before 1971 they blamed

West Pakistan for the every conceivable ills taking place in East Pakistan [9] and, to a large extent, they succeeded in making a section of East Pakistanis believe in their lies. After the creation of Bangladesh, they tried the same tactic. In an effort to explain away the piteous state they themselves have brought their countrymen into, Mujib and his cohorts resorted to all kinds of spacious arguments for making Pakistan their scapegoat. But this became worn out in no time. Faced with damning criticism [10] and open ridicule, they soon gave it up. Likewise, the puerile move to bring back a number of Pakistani prisoners of war for trial in Dhaka for the alleged war crime had to be quickly abandoned by them.

Were these the primary motives behind their propagation of the myth, then with them its paddling should have also stopped. It did not stop. This clearly shows that despite their short term instrumental value these were not the primary reasons for propounding and recycling the fiction. Moreover, if they were the real reasons, Mujib and his Awami League would have had a part in its invention. Yet, as we have seen, the history of the creation of the myth and its tell-tale provides a different picture. The 'foundries' from which the myth was produced in stages; and the quarters which carried its dissemination did not belong to Mujib or his Awami League. In this whole saga Mujib and his Government were more of a 'his master's voice'. Of course, they did not stop propagating the fiction even after discovering that it was a brazen lie. But that is a different matter. As I shall show later, Mujib was not in a position to stop but to act as a puppet on the string.

All Mujib really wanted was power and position for himself. As united Pakistan was an obstacle for him in gaining power, he resorted to acts which would undermine Pakistan, even if it meant inviting India's aggression for the destruction of Pakistan. Once he had his Bangladesh with himself as its 'ile Duce', he had no more reasons for abusing Pakistan. On the other hand, not only for the benefit of the people of Bangladesh, but also for his own benefits Mujib should have brought Bangladesh into the fold of Islamic world and re-cultivate mutual interests with Pakistan. His journey to Lahore for taking up Bangladesh's seat in the Islamic Conference was an indication of his recognition of this indubitable fact.

If either Mujib or his Awami League had no particular fear from Pakistan, why did he and the Awami Leaguers continued paddling the myth? To put it differently, in whose interest was this propagation of the myth being carried out?

8.5. Indian Stalking Hands

To unravel this mystery we may begin with the traffickers of the myth such as Abul Hasanat and Jyoti Sen Gupta. By his own admission Abul Hasanat was an atheist. His hate for 'Islamic' Pakistan and its Muslim inhabitants on the one hand, and his love for 'secular' India and its 'marvelous' Hindus on the other, were undisguised in his book. Because he had inner disquiet about Mujib, he had taken upon himself the task of advising Mujib to keep away from Pakistan. However self-motivated, Abul Hasanat was not speaking for himself only. In order to find out what he was really upto, one has only to know about his publisher, Babu Chittaranjan Shaha of Muktheadhara. By his own confession, Shaha has been financed by the Indian Government. What is more, Shaha is on record admitting that it has been a policy of Muktheadhara to 'alter and amend' all their publications in order to 'tune' them in line with the Indian policy objectives. [11]

Jyoti Sen Gupta was a self-confessed organiser of the 'Freedom movement in Bangladesh' on behalf of India since 1954. It was he who, in conjunction with the Deputy High Commissioner of India in Dhaka, had brokered the 'secret pact' between Mujib and the leaders of the then East Pakistan Congress for 'secularising Pakistan' as a preparatory step towards its eventual destruction. After escaping arrest in Dhaka, with the help of some of his helpers' within the Civil Service of Pakistan such as A.K.M.Ahsan (Deputy Secretary Home), Shamsur Rahman Khan (Joint Secretary) and Sanaul Haque (Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet), Gupta remained actively involved in advancing the secessionist cause, including finding arms for them in 1968 while the Agartala Conspiracy trial was going on and liaising with the Soviet Superpower on their behalf. Gupta was intensely active in undoing the foundation on which Pakistan was created and preserved. It was within this framework of repudiating the very logic of having any separate

Muslim homeland in the subcontinent that he portrayed the members of Pakistan Armed Forces as incorrigible brutes. In several places of his book, a hypocritical Gupta even made claims that Mujib had announced that the Pakistan Army had killed three and a half million Bengalis. [12] Why was he so keen to raise the stake by giving currency to a more extravagant casualty figure even by falsely quoting Mujib? Given Jyoti Sen Gupta's background in Indian intelligence, should we not see him as an Indian stalking hand?

Likewise, it is not difficult to discern the same Indian unseen hands behind Ehtesham Haider Choudhury's invention. He was a communist 'sleeper' working in the Purbadesh, owned by Hamidul Haque Choudhury, a former Foreign Minister of Pakistan and an outspoken upholder of united Pakistan. The pro-Moscow Communists [13], like the East Pakistan Congress [14], never had loyalty to Pakistan and they were working for its dismemberment since its creation. Both the groups were supported by the Indian intelligence. With the conversion of East Pakistan into Bangladesh, and his employer Hamidul Haque Choudhury sheltering in West Pakistan, Ehtesham Haider had no difficulty in coming out of his closet and please his 'handlers'. It was possible that the old 'station chief' Jyoti Sen Gupta, who arrived in Dhaka along with some of his old secessionist associates within the civil service three days before the appearance of Ehtesham Haider's concoction [15], and had close links with the Russians [16], had played a part in setting up the whole thing. The timing of the appearance of the editorial was also significant, for it was the day on which the Bangladesh Government in exile came from Calcutta to take charge of the new state.

8.6. Indian Ploy in Getting the Genocide Charge Stick

While although India floated the fiction of three million killed from behind the scene, India's senior most generals had put forward the 'moderate' figure of one million killed. This she did almost silently without ceremonial. As I have shown earlier, the Indian figure is absurd as much it is impossible. The figure has no factual basis. Why did Indian conspirators then advance the lower figure in this stealthy manner? The ploy is not that difficult to comprehend. In questioning

the preposterous claim of three million killed, sceptics will quote, and by implication accept, this 'moderate' Indian figure. An example of how this tactic worked could be found in Oriana Fallaci's implicit acceptance of it in the same stride as her rejection of the three million figure vaunted by Mujib. [17] Yet, the end result remained the same. The Pakistan Army remained accused of genocide! And this was what counted most.

8.7. India Wanted Bloodshed

Many people, unaware of Indian stratagem, failed to see India in its true colour in 1971. They thought that the conflict between Mujib and Yahya was wholly of Pakistan origin and it came to a head because of the unwillingness of the country's military regime to hand over power to the elected majority represented by the Awami League. A reluctant India, moved by humanitarian motive, came out in support of the 'democratic forces' and helped 'liberate' Bangladesh. Little they realised that Mujib was under the 'patronage' of India for a long time, and through him India was engaged in dismembering Pakistan. With the Indians now openly priding in their success and describing Bangladesh as 'the only case of a patronised insurgency in South Asia whose objectives were successfully achieved' [18] some of those uninformed impressions have changed. However, still some people have been left with the perception that the Yahya regime's refusal to accommodate the wishes of the people of East Pakistan and their resorting to Army action against the Awami League were responsible for the bloodshed. Hardly they realise that the actual facts surrounding Yahya's military action were wholly the opposite. From behind the scene it was India who instigated Mujib to create the political disagreement and then pushed him to transform it into a bloody armed conflict. The failure to recognise this hard fact is responsible for all manner of confusions, including the inability to detect the Indian design behind the clamour about genocide.

8.8. Indian Stalking Hands in Six-Points to Secession

Mujib had been in receipt of Indian patronage since mid-50s, if not earlier. When he begun campaigning for his Six Points, it was prima

facie aimed at removing economic disparity between East and West Pakistan and for achieving provincial autonomy for East Pakistan. It could be argued that whatever was the ground for his demand, if the interest of the people of East Pakistan was his real concern, then he would have dropped them immediately once in 1969 the 'principle of one man one vote' was established and West Pakistan itself was broken into four provinces. For, these gave East Pakistan a firm control over the whole of Pakistan, opening up opportunities not only for redressing all her 'grievances', but also for steering the future course of Pakistan's development in consonant with East Pakistan's interest.

It was later claimed by Mujib and his associates that he did not avail the opportunity to lead Pakistan because his ambition was Bangladesh, without which the 'Bengali nation' could not have a sense of self-fulfilment! It was all bunkum. But, even if that was his aim, he had the opportunity to achieve Bangladesh, and that too, without bloodshed.

This side of the history is unfortunately not widely known. Let me give it in the words of some one who had reason to know about it. This was Abdur Razzak who said:

"Yahya gave such an offer that a compromise was reached. The offer was, Bangabandhu would become Prime Minister and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Yahya also agreed to all of Bangabandhu's Six Points demands except the one stipulating two separate currencies for East and West Pakistan. On the Awami League High Command's advice Bangabandhu accepted the compromise. We were greatly disheartened by this. Hanif got the news first and passed this to (Mrs) Sheikh Mujib. This proposal was given to Bangabandhu and his High Command on 22 March 1971 and they accepted it. It was to be finalised on the 23rd, and both the sides were due to issue a joint declaration. Begum Mujib sent the news to me through Hanif. Then I took Brother Sheikh Moni, Tufail and Sirajul Alam Khan with me and together we went to the residence of Bangabandhu. I am talking about the evening of the 22nd March. Like a mad person Bhabi (Mrs Mujib) said, 'It is a catastrophe, you dissuade your leader'. She

was a great woman. We stayed put in her drawing room. At nine in the evening Bangabandhu came. Seeing five of us he straight went to his up-stair bedroom without saying a word ... Before we left, he advised us to stay away from our home during the night. I spent the night at the residence of Anwar Hussain Manju. Next morning again I went. On reaching his residence, I came to learn that for the whole night Bangabandhu did not sleep. Bhabi said, you have set the fire on and for the whole night he did not come to bed.

He spent the night spacing on the veranda. After a little while Bangabandhu called me up-stair. I sat close by. He said, 'You must not tell anyone, not even to your friends, what I am going to tell you.' I nodded. He said, 'You are right. I have thought about it for the whole of last night. No risk, no gain. Would you be able to carry the first stage? Be careful, don't tell anyone. I have decided what am I going to say to Yahya Khan.' I told him, 'We shall be able to carry through the first stage. It will be better if you can also arrange Indian help.' Afterwards we had breakfast. Together we came down. Bangabandhu called Mr Nazrul Islam, Brother Tajuddin and Mr Mushtaque and took them to the library room. They all came out dark faced. I took Bangabandhu to the President House. There he recanted from yesterday's agreement and demanded for the handing over of power to the East Pakistan Assembly. The world does not know the contribution of Begum Mujib in this. But we know.' [19]

Abdur Razzak, the narrator of the above piece, and his friends were all actively linked with the RAW, the Indian foreign intelligence agency. [20] It was not the first time that Mrs Mujib had intervened with her husband decisively at a critical point [21], and it would not be surprising if the RAW had also spoken through her. What seems to have influenced Mujib in recanting the agreement that was reached on 22 March 1971 was the Indian wish passed through these RAW' link - persons' rather than their own power of persuasion.

Faced with Mujib's volte face and demand for independence, Yahya Khan still remained conciliatory and offered to hold referendum to

ascertain the wishes of the people of East Pakistan. Instead of taking advantage of Yahya's offer, Mujib insisted on immediate independence. This hardly left any scope for a peaceful resolution of the political crisis. Moreover, preparations for a rebellion by certain pro-Awami League officers in uniform [22] led to the hasty and ill prepared Army crack-down. Some of the leading lights among these officers had been working for the RAW since 1962 [23] and it was clear that their preparation for the rebellion was instigated by India.

At that time, the public did not know the machinations. But at least a few foreign governments, other than India and Pakistan, had the knowledge of the dark side of the conflict. Thus, in his statement to the House of Commons, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the then British Foreign Secretary, disclosed:

"The President of Pakistan, as we understand it, was faced with a situation in which his country might have been divided in half. We must allow the Pakistan authorities to deal with this matter without our intervention ... The ironic aspect of this situation was that for the first time [sic] it was possible for an East Pakistani to be Prime Minister of a united Pakistan, and this opportunity has slipped. [24]

Very few people in the world took notice of Sir Alec's statement, thanks to the Indian hype about the 'macabre tragedy being enacted so close to our border' [25] But now we can say without any shadow of doubt that the 'macabre tragedy' was, in the first place, of Indian making, and it was deceptively hidden from the world with the help of the feigned allegation against the Pakistan Army.

8.9. Why India Created the Macabre Tragedy?

India needed to write the separation of East and West Pakistan in the boldest 'letters of blood'. There were a number of reasons for that - both immediate and long term. A peaceful political settlement within the framework of a united Pakistan would have deprived India of her chance of dismembering Pakistan through bitterness. To create bitterness and hatred among the Muslims of East and West Pakistan

was the cherished desire of Hindu India, as this was the only method through which the separation of East and West Pakistan could be made durable and perhaps permanent. Moreover, agreed settlement could have made two Pakistans in the subcontinent: independent East Pakistan and independent West Pakistan. Peaceful division would not have envisaged alteration of East Pakistan's name to Bangladesh. This was not acceptable to India. India's attack was on the Islamic name of Pakistan and its Islamic identity. Her own strategical analysts had no misgiving on this.

Although, a peaceful transition of East Pakistan to independent Bangladesh would have weakened Pakistan, it would have deprived India of the chance of creating a flaccid pro-Indian state on the soil of East Pakistan, which was urgently needed for the defence of North-East India. [26] Nor would it have left enough bitterness in the minds of the people of the new state to foreclose the possibility of their wanting to realigning themselves again, in some form or other, with Pakistan. India knew fully that the alleged 'Pakistani economic exploitation' was a hoax and once separated the people of Bangladesh would discover it in shortest possible time.[27] To remove these possibilities and to take the initiative directly in her own hand, she needed the 'macabre tragedy'. It was the only means through which she could create a state out of her own clone and still hoodwink an unsuspecting East Pakistan and the world at large.

8.10. Mujib's Last Minute Second Thought

Mujib wanted to be an 'ile Duce' by hook or by crook. This unqualified thirst for supreme power drove him to seek Indian patronage in the first place. But, like any client, his own goal and that of his patron's were not wholly the same. Mujib was not that unintelligent as to be unable to read the meaning behind the Indian push for a bloody separation between East and West Pakistan. But, having travelled to the brink at the behest of the Indians and their fellow travellers in East Pakistan, he had few option left either to defy them or to step-back. Still he had a second thought and hence his last minute decision to stay out of India's absolute control by 'courting arrest' and then the gentlemen's agreement with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to keep Bangladesh within a confederated

Pakistan. [28] That Mujib was genuine in his assessment that a loose federation between East and West Pakistan within the framework of a united Pakistan was still his and his peoples best route for escaping 'total destruction' at the hands of India, was confirmed by his discussion of the subject with Anthony Mascarenhas at the Claridges Hotel in London. [29]

8.11. Mujib's Predicament and Indian Unease with Him

Mujib's second thought was too belated to be of any practical use. Of course, this could not be taken kindly either by India or by his own pro-Indian associates, even though out of necessity they all had to pursue the secessionist cause in his name and later crown, him as the 'Father of the Nation'. It has been reported that on meeting Tajuddin Ahmed, an irate Mrs Gandhi retorted: 'Where in the world has a general surrendered to the enemy leaving his soldiers standing in the battle field?' Some of his pro-Indian associates would also continue wondering loudly: 'What understanding he has had with Bhutto before he finally left Pakistan?'

Mujib's telephone call from the Claridges to Mrs Gandhi and the Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad in New Delhi said to have finally 'persuaded' Mujib in publicly saying 'there could be no question of Bangladesh remaining a part of Pakistan.' [30] Despite his public utterance, it was doubtful whether Mujib gave up the hope of eventually realigning Bangladesh with Pakistan as a means of escape from India's stifling embrace. However, one does not have to be a clairvoyant to anticipate that the horrendous tales of genocide was a useful antidote to Mujib's belated second thought. After all his old friend Anthony Mascarenhas also warned him off on the same line. [31]

Mujib had an unease in him due to his absence during the 'liberation struggle'. [32] His willingness to join the drive to 'make Pakistan look more brutish' was partly due to this unease. Besides, 'shrewd and calculating and yet easily disarmed by flattery into a sense of power and ability that never really existed', Mujib was given to playing different lobbies 'using one against the other, as it suited him at moments of fast changing political developments', in which he was not

averse to falsification 'to create new legends and myths'. [33] He was not morally discerning. Nor was he situationally placed to accept the factual truth, which his MCAs and the Inquiry Committee have found. It would have amounted to challenging the myth of one million which the Indians were circulating.

8.12. The Ultimate Function of the Myth

Thus, the accusation of genocide against the Pakistan Army remained officially unquestioned in Bangladesh, giving Indian proxies within the country the sanction they needed to propagate it to the new generations through text books and other means. Col. Akbar Hussain's snipe at the myth and the scholarly revision of it by the Senior Researcher of the Bangladesh International Institute of Strategical Studies were the limits up to which a Bangladesh Government could dare to go in repudiating the make believe genocide claim.

Since the myth has been left alive and kept in circulation by India and her proxies in Bangladesh, one is bound to conclude that as far as India is concerned the fiction has not out lived its utility. One should therefore ask oneself, what further use the genocide story has for India?

It is a useful device for fomenting the 'injured psychology' which a section of Muslims of Bangladesh came to have in 1971 because of the wild propaganda about the alleged genocide. Over and above, it is also a good means for spreading the same injured psychology among the new generations. It is pursued with a view to inculcate in all of them a deep seated emotional revulsion against what is left of Pakistan. India is hoping that through this process she will be able to create a permanent emotional and psychological breach between Bangladesh and Pakistan, and at the same time produce a kind of splintered Muslim self-view among the majority population of Bangladesh. With such splintered self-view, they will have neither the urge, nor the confidence for breaking out of the Indian embrace. Besides, those who will not succumb to any of this, and will dare to raise their voice, can be silenced in the name of the 'three million killed and three hundred thousand raped'. While all this will go on, India and her Bangladeshi proxies will have a conducive ground and the necessary time for

precipitating Bangladesh's 'collapse and eventual merger with India to realise part of the Brahmanic dream about Akhanda Bharat' [34] for which they were and still are working conjointly.

In this connection, one should not forget that some of the strategical considerations which made India more determined to seek the destruction of East Pakistan has remained unfulfilled even after the creation of Bangladesh. [35] On top of those, some new compulsions have also arisen [36] Besides, there is no basis to think that with the creation of Bangladesh the central foreign policy objective of India, i.e. a reunified India, which her founding fathers had set before her [37], has changed. The very title of Jyoti Sen Gupta's book - History of Freedom Movement in Bangladesh, 1943 - 1973 - says volume about this continued Indian aspiration.

If the Muslims of Bangladesh really want to save themselves from utter destruction that is awaiting them, the threat about which even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had his inner concern [38], then my fellow countrymen must look for the ways and means of 'defeating' the Indian thrust. A vigorous rejection of the myth of 'three million killed and three hundred thousand raped' would be a step in that direction.

The End

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13. After Pakistan came East Pakistan's Communist Party continued as an affiliate of the Communist Party of India. Following the split between the followers of Soviet and Chinese lines the Pro-Moscow communists in East Pakistan under their mainly Hindu leadership maintained their organisational affiliation with the Communist Party of India.

14. Cf Congress leader Monoranjan Dhar's interview in Basant Chatterjee, Inside Bangladesh Today: An Eye Witness Account, S. Chand & Co. (Pvt) Ltd, New Delhi, 1973.
15. Jyoti Sen Gupta, op cit: 434-36
16. Jyoti Sen Gupta was originally from my home district Sylhet. In 1972 I had a meeting with him in Dhaka at the house of Justice Ranadhir Sen where in presence of journalist Mubaidur Rahman he narrated many stories about 1971 including how he supported a number of top Awami League leaders in 1971 by obtaining financial assistance from the Soviet embassy.
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36. This includes the needs of Indian business to compete in the emergent South-East Asian market, especially those in Indo-China which were so long under state monopoly.
37. Cf. Minute of Mountbatten's meeting with B.C.Roy on 12 January, 1948 in Appendix -3
38. Wolpert, op cit, [Cf. the Text of the Bhutto-Mujib Exchange in Appendix -2]