

activity in the United Nations. There were the Anglo-French proposal and the polish draft. Intensive consultations continued backstage trying to find a solution to the conflict acceptable to Pakistan, the USA and China. The results were negative in the face of the resolute stand of the USSR and its threat of using the veto. Eventually Pakistan sent Bhutto to New York as a special Emissary. He requested for a session on 15 December. By the time this meeting would be convened it was clear that Pakistan has lost the war to the Bengali Freedom Fighters and was in the process of surrendering to the Allied command in Dhaka.

On 16 December 1971 Pakistan Army surrendered to the Allied Forces. Lt. General Niazi signed a formal instrument of surrender on behalf of the Pakistan Forces in Dhaka. More than 93,000 Pakistani soldiers became prisoners of War.

Yahia Khan had to hand over power to Bhutto after the surrender of the Pakistani forces in Dhaka. Bhutto decided to release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from Jail in Pakistan. On 8 January 1972, Sheikh Mujibur was released from the Pakistani prison and on 10 January he returned to Bangladesh after a short visit to London and New Delhi. With his return, the independence of Bangladesh had attained its fullness.

Thus the Independent state of Bangladesh was emerged on 16 December 1971, as an independent actor at the global scene. The nationalism that gave birth to Bangladesh had its primary sources in language and culture and not in religion. The main tenor of this nationalism can be illustrated from a poster that was widely used during the tumultuous days of March 1971; it read: "Hindus of Bengal, Christians of Bengal, Buddhists of Bengal, Muslim of Bengal – we are all Bengalis." (In original Bengali poster read: *Banglar Hindu, Banglar Christan, Banglar Boudha, Banglar Musalman – Amra Sabai Bangali*). It is worth nothing that the Muslims have been mentioned last. It does show how the majority community considered the minorities).

The war of liberation was a success because both civilians as well as the military forces fought it with full commitment. The political leadership, people's participation and military skill of the Bengali Fighters all contributed to the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. This civil-military resistance will remain a glorious chapter in our history forever.

Bangladesh war of Liberation: Role of Big Powers

India

India's initial contribution in providing shelter and food to the millions of refugees, who crossed borders to India and subsequent military help with arms, ammunitions and soldiers, was significant and impressive without the all round help from India, the war would have been a prolonged one. For

the refugees and distressed people of Bangladesh some international assistance was found but India had to bear nearly 90 percent of the burden. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Ministers of India, herself undertook a tour of several Western countries and personally briefed the leaders of the UK, USA, France and Germany – as result she got some understanding in London, Paris and Bonn, but very little from Washington. Mrs Gandhi was disappointed with the absence of realism among the leadership of these countries – who are major democratic economic giants and valued human rights. On 31 March 1971, the Indian Prime Minister moved a resolution in both Houses of the Indian Parliament expressing “profound sympathy for and solidarity with the people of East Pakistan in their war for a democratic way of life.” India invaded Pakistan in co-operation with the Bengali freedom fighters on November 1971. On 3 December, Pakistan declared war against India. The general public did not hide their feelings for the Bangalis. Their sympathy soon turned into support. Many Indians welcomed the Bangali fighting as evidence of the breakup of Pakistan.

Leftist members of the Indian Parliament interrupted legislative proceedings in New Delhi to demand that full moral support be extended to the East Pakistanis. On March 27 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi described the killings in East Pakistan ‘as not merely the suppression of a movement but a meeting of unarmed people with tanks’.

Millions of Bangalis went across the border and India offered them asylum. This cannot be considered as a violation of international responsibility by India. International law confers upon every person a right to seek asylum. It is one of the fundamental human rights granted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to article 14, every individual has ‘a right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution’. Individuals may invoke this right in the event of persecutions genuinely arising from political crimes. The people of East Pakistan in terror, through fear of their lives, and injury to properties, lawfully sought sanctuary in India. To return them back to East Pakistan would have been to force them into hands from which they escaped due to the fear of humiliation and death. Such a step would have been contrary of the spirit of Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Moreover India was specially obliged not to expel or return refugees to EP where their ‘life or freedom would be threatened on account of ... race, religion, nationality or political opinion.

In this connection however the role of India’s radio broadcasts needs to be mentioned. Ever since the inception of the crisis, the India took the side of the Bangladesh liberation movement for the mass media of an independent state may take whichever side in the crisis it may wish. Following the Second World War, the Greek communist rebels, for example, were assisted

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by broadcasts from a station in Yugoslavia. By announcing the number of refugees everyday, India's radio covertly informed the people in EP that India was prepared to grant them asylum. India's grant of asylum was the only safeguard for the victims of the Pakistan army massacre which the international community was unable to prevent. India's armed assistance strengthened the forces of the people of EP in resisting Pakistan's resort to force. In view of Pakistan's forcible denial of self-determination, India's armed assistance to the EP appears to be the most appropriate and effective assistance in enabling them to realize their right.

After the massacre of March 25 in Dhaka, violence spread throughout East Pakistan. A flood of refugees went across the borders and took shelter in India. In the face of this refugees invasion, India adopted a policy whose impact on the events in East Pakistan was decisive. In the first phase – India granted sanctuary to these refugees. The members of the newly formed Bangladesh provisional government were given political asylum. India allowed the Bangladesh provisional government to use Indian radio services for broadcasts intended for Bangladesh. The Bangladesh provisional government in exile also got facilities to recruit and train guerrilla forces on Indian soil. In the second phase – India adopted various measures of direct and indirect assistance to the Bangladesh Provisional government in exile. These included an increasing active military assistance in terms of training, arms and ammunition to the Bangladesh guerilla forces to fight the Pakistan army in East Pakistan. In the final phase – the Indian army invaded East Pakistan by a massive land and air attack in support of the Bangladesh liberation forces. This eventually led to the unconditional surrender of the Pakistan army to the allied forces of the Indian army and the Bangladesh liberation army. East Pakistan was thus physically overpowered.

India's involvement in the E P crisis went far beyond its mere logistic support and armed assistance to the Bangladesh liberation war. The Indian army physically invaded Pakistan in support of the Bangladesh freedom war. The grounds of justification for this action which India had put forward were as follows. First, India constructed Pakistan's air attack of 3 December 1971 on the Indian airfields and border village as an act of aggression which allowed Indian to act in self-defence. Second, India charged Pakistan with acts of committing genocide against the Bangalis whom it forcibly denied their equal rights and self-determination. This in effect justified India's action under the doctrine of humanitarian intervention. And finally, following the diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh by India, the latter had legitimately entered into the territory of the former on the invitation of its government. It was the stability of the Indian regime that permitted it to pursue a policy of moderation with respect to events in E P, wrote U.S. journalist Selig Harisson. In an interview (*Washington Post*, on 14 April 1971), Mrs. Gandhi averred that 'any country, situated as we are, always

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has to be fully prepared for any contingency'. In a reply to a question from Harrison concerning the likelihood of a cooling off in E P, she remarked, 'anything is possible', and then asked rhetorically whether there was any desire on the part of the central government of Pakistan to cool off. Demands for an independent E P, she said, 'would not have arisen if Sheikh Mujibur Raman and President Yahiya had gone with their negotiations for a confederation agreement. It was only when Sheikh Mujib driven to the wall that there was a turn in the direction of independence.' A message from Chou En-lai supporting Pakistan, she added, did not alter her announced solidarity with the freedom fighters.