

# HISTORIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## AGENDA: CONFLICT IN EAST PAKISTAN - 1971

**Freeze Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1971

**NOTE:** All historic events preceding the freeze date cannot be changed. The date for the first session of this committee is 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1971.

### Introduction



The Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 was the direct military confrontation between India and Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Indian, Bangladeshi and international sources consider the beginning of the war to have been Operation, when Pakistan launched pre-emptive air strikes on 11 Indian airbases on 3 December 1971, leading to India's entry into the war of independence in East Pakistan on the side of Bangladeshi nationalist forces, and the commencement of hostilities with West Pakistan.

The Battle of Longewala, the most eventful and violent period of the 13-day war, took place from the 4<sup>th</sup> of December to the 7<sup>th</sup> of December this year, between the Indian forces and Pakistani forces have caused the loss of around 200 lives. This conflict arose from tensions that began due to the liberation war that has been taking place in East Pakistan. East and West Pakistan have been at war for the better part of the year with the casualty list ever increasing. Also, now with India also taking part in the struggle, the subcontinent region is on the verge of a war unless this committee is able to bring the matter to a solution.

The liberation war can be said to have started on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, 1971, when Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman declared East India's independence as the state of Bangladesh. Pakistani President Agha Mohammed Yahya ordered the Pakistani military to restore the Pakistani government's authority, beginning the civil war.

One of the best ways to prevent another Indo-Pak war would be to solve the East Pakistan crisis.



## **The East Pakistan Liberation War**

The liberation war began on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March after East Pakistan felt it was being economically exploited by West Pakistan, where all the political power lay. The people of East Pakistan also had a number of grievances. The fact that India lay right between the two parts of Pakistan did not help either. Administration in the two regions was also discontinuous and at times eccentric.

### **Language Controversy**

In 1948, Governor General of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared that "Urdu, and only Urdu" would be the federal language of Pakistan. Urdu was historically prevalent only in the north, central, and western region of the subcontinent. In East Bengal, the native language was Bengali, the most easterly branch of the Indo-European languages. The Bengali-speaking people of Pakistan constituted over 50% of the country's population. The government stand was widely viewed as an attempt to suppress the culture of the eastern wing. The people of East Bengal demanded that their language be given federal status alongside Urdu and English.

The Bengali Language Movement began in 1948, as civil society protested the removal of the Bengali script from currency and stamps, which were in place since the British Raj. The movement reached its climax in 1952, when on 21 February, the police fired on protesting students and civilians, causing several deaths.

Although the question of official languages was settled by 1956, the military regime of Ayub Khan promoted the interests of West Pakistan at the expense of East Pakistan. Despite forming the majority of the national population, the East Pakistani population continued to be under-represented in the civil and military services, and received a minority of state funding and other government help. This was mainly due to lack of representative government in the fledgling state. Mainly due to regional economic imbalances sectional divisions grew, and support for the Bengali ethnic nationalist Awami League, which invoked the 6-point movement for greater provincial autonomy. One demand was that East Pakistan be called *Bangladesh* (Land/Country of Bengal), which subsequently led to the Bangladesh Liberation War.

### **Political Differences**

Although East Pakistan accounted for a slight majority of the country's population, political power remained in the hands of West Pakistanis. Since a straightforward system of representation based on population would have concentrated political

power in East Pakistan, the West Pakistani establishment came up with the "One Unit" scheme, where all of West Pakistan was considered one province. This was solely to counterbalance the East wing's votes.

The East Pakistanis observed that the West Pakistani establishment would swiftly depose any East Pakistanis elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, such as Khawaja Nazimuddin, Muhammad Ali Bogra, or Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. Their suspicions were further influenced by the military dictatorships of Ayub Khan (27 October 1958 – 25 March 1969) and Yahya Khan (25 March 1969 – 20 December 1971), both West Pakistanis. The situation reached a climax in 1970, when the Awami League, the largest East Pakistani political party, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in the national elections. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (a former Foreign Minister), the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, refused to allow Rahman to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Instead, he proposed the idea of having two Prime Ministers, one for each wing. The proposal elicited outrage in the east wing, already chafing under the other constitutional innovation, the "One Unit scheme".

Between 10 and 13 March, Pakistan International Airlines cancelled all their international routes to urgently fly "government passengers" to Dacca. These "government passengers" were almost all Pakistani soldiers in civilian dress. MV *Swat*, a ship of the Pakistan Navy carrying ammunition and soldiers, was harboured in Chittagong Port, but the Bengali workers and sailors at the port refused to unload the ship. A unit of East Pakistan Rifles refused to obey commands to fire on the Bengali demonstrators, beginning a mutiny among the Bengali soldiers.



## The 1970 Cyclone

# East Pakistan Storm Toll May Hit 20,000

DACCA, East Pakistan (AP) — A Rescue Commission official said today the death toll could climb to more than 20,000 persons from a cyclone and tidal wave along East Pakistan's Bay of Bengal coast.

An official of the central government said he was told by an official of the Barisal District, 70 miles south of Dacca, that an area on Bhola Island was "washed away." The official said the area had 18,800 residents.

Another commission announcement said 13,800 natives were stranded on another island but were in no immediate danger. Directors of the rescue operation were inspecting the 258-mile coastline from Khulna to Cox's Bazar by air, and reported extensive damage.

The number of confirmed dead was 699, with at least 2,000 missing, officials said. "The un-

getting ready to take on relief supplies.

Officials said at least three million live in the coastal areas hit by the cyclone. The region has been hit by disastrous cyclones—the name for hurricane-like storms in the Indian Ocean—13 times in the past two centu-

## No Rescue For These Climbers

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP) — Warren Harding and Dean Caldwell geared up to continue climbing El Capitan today, their 23rd day of clinging to a sheer wall of the

Hatia, 20 miles from shore, has a population of at least 200,000. District commissioners said the island was devastated.

One eyewitness said there were 350 bodies along one eight-mile stretch of Pakistan's coastline. Communications were down between the interior and much of the 250 miles of coastline hit hardest by the storm's 150-mile-an-hour winds and 20-foot waves.

There were reports of thousands of persons missing along the coast and on the offshore islands.

A rescue party left for the island of Dubla, where 13,000 Hindus assembled for a religious festival were believed trapped.

No word had been received from a 14-member party of World Bank experts and consultants who left Tuesday on a tour of areas that later received

Political leaders in East Pakistan were deeply critical of the central government's initial response to the disaster. A statement released by eleven political leaders in East Pakistan ten days after the cyclone hit charged the government with 'gross neglect, callous indifference and utter indifference'. The Pakistani government only deployed a single helicopter to relief operations, with Yahya Khan later stating that there was no point deploying any helicopters from West Pakistan as they were unable to carry supplies.

India became one of the first nations to offer aid to Pakistan, despite the generally poor relations between the two countries, and by the end of November had pledged \$1.3 million (1970 USD) of assistance for the relief efforts. The Pakistani

The Canadian government pledged \$2 million of assistance. France and West Germany both sent helicopters and various supplies worth \$1.3 million.



Ordered by the central government in West Pakistan, this was seen as the sequel to "Operation Blitz" which had been launched in November 1970. The original plan envisioned taking control of the major cities on March 26, and then eliminating all opposition, political or military. Bengali intelligentsia, academics and Hindus were targeted for the harshest treatment, with significant indiscriminate killing taking place.

West Pakistani military and civilian elite, who sought to create a cohesive polity unified by Islam and the Urdu language, viewed Bengali culture and language as closely linked to Hinduism and consequently, a threat to their conception of an Islamic nation. Local Islamist organizations in East Pakistan, such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and its student wing IslamiChhatraShibir (ICS), similarly opposed the creation of a secular state and collaborated with the Pakistani military.

Not surprisingly, Hindus and the Bengali secular intelligentsia were the primary targets of the Pakistani onslaught, that resulted in an estimated three million deaths, more than ten million displaced, and the mass rape of 200,000 women and girls.

A number of professors from Dhaka University were killed during the first few days of the war.

The main phase of Operation Searchlight ended with the fall of the last major town in Bengali hands in mid May.

## **Major Events**

### **The Jinjira Massacre**

The army started to amass forces around Keraniganj from the midnight of 1 April. They took control of the Mitford Hospital by the river. At around 5 am they commenced the attack by throwing flares from the roof of the mosque adjacent to the hospital. The army moved into Jinjira and opened fire on people. The massacre continued for nearly nine hours. One of the largest such executions took place beside a pond near the Nandail Dak street where 60 people were lined up and shot. The soldiers also fired on the houses using gunpowder. More than a thousand people died in this massacre.

# The Blood Telegram



## POL 1 PAK- US Department of State TELEGRAM

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ACTION: NEA-08.

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SUBJ: DISSENT FROM U.S. POLICY TOWARD EAST PAKISTAN

JOINT STATE/AID/USIS MESSAGE

I AM AWARE OF THE TASK FORCE PROPOSALS ON "OPENESS" IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE, AND WITH THE CONVICTION THAT U.S. POLICY RELATED TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST PAKISTAN SERVES NEITHER OUR MORAL INTERESTS BROADLY DEFINED NOR OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS NARROWLY DEFINED. NUMEROUS OFFICERS OF AMCONGEN Dacca, USAID Dacca AND USIS Dacca CONSIDER IT THEIR DUTY TO REGISTER STRONG DISSENT WITH FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THIS POLICY. OUR GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO DENOUNCE THE SUPPRESSION OF DEMOCRACY. OUR GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO DENOUNCE ATROCITIES. OUR GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO TAKE FORCEFUL MEASURES TO PROTECT ITS CITIZENS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BENDING OVER BACKWARDS TO PLACATE THE WEST PAK DOMINATED GOVERNMENT AND TO LESSEN LIKELY AND DESERVEDLY NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS IMPACT AGAINST THEM. OUR GOVERNMENT HAS EVIDENCED WHAT MANY WILL CONSIDER MORAL BANKRUPTCY, IRONICALLY AT A TIME WHEN THE USSR SENT PRESIDENT YAHYA A MESSAGE DEFENDING DEMOCRACY, CONDEMNING ARREST OF LEADER OF DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED MAJORITY PARTY (INCIDENTALLY PRO-WEST) AND CALLING FOR END TO REPRESSIVE MEASURES AND BLOODSHED. IN OUR MOST RECENT POLICY PAPER FOR PAKISTAN, OUR INTERESTS IN PAKISTAN WERE DEFINED AS PRIMARILY HUMANITARIAN.

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The Blood telegram (April 6, 1971) was seen as the most strongly worded expression of dissent in the history of the U.S. Foreign Service. It was signed by 29 Americans. The telegram stated:

*“Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West [Pakistan] dominated government and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact against them. Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy, (...) But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional civil servants, express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected.”*

In an earlier telegram (March 27, 1971), Blood wrote about American observations at Dhaka under the subject heading "Selective genocide":

- 1. Here in Decca we are mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by the Pak[istani] Military. Evidence continues to mount that the MLA authorities have list of AWAMI League supporters whom they are systematically eliminating by seeking them out in their homes and shooting them down*
- 2. Among those marked for extinction in addition to the A.L. hierarchy are student leaders and university faculty. In this second category we have reports that FazlurRahman head of the philosophy department and a Hindu, M. Abedin, head of the department of history, have been killed. Razzak of the political science department is rumored dead. Also on the list are the bulk of MNA's elect and number of MPA's.*
- 3. Moreover, with the support of the Pak[istani] Military. non-Bengali Muslims are systematically attacking poor people's quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus.*

## **The MuktiBahini**

The MuktiBahini is a popular Bengali term that refers to the guerrilla resistance movement formed by East Pakistani military, paramilitary and civilians.

Following the start of Operation Searchlight by the Pakistan Army on 25 March 1971, Bengali military and paramilitary units revolted across East Pakistan. They were joined by thousands of Bengali civilians from a wide strata of society, including villages and elite urban areas. The Bangladeshi Declaration of Independence was proclaimed from Chittagong by members of the MuktiBahini on behalf of Prime Minister-elect Sheikh MujiburRahman- who was detained by the military junta in West Pakistan.

Women were at the forefront of the Bangladesh liberation struggle. The MuktiBahini trained several female battalions for guerrilla warfare.

The launch of **Operation Chengiz Khan** by West Pakistan on North India finally drew India into the Bangladesh conflict. A joint command was established between Bangladeshi and Indian Forces. The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi authorized diplomatic, economic and military support to the Bangladesh Forces in April 1971.

## **Operation Jackpot**

**Operation Jackpot** also refers to the simultaneous attacks of Bengali naval commandos as part of MuktiBahini on 15 August during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The commando operation that sabotaged Pakistan Navy and her assets in Chittagong, Chandpur, Mongla and Naryanganj on August 15 is known as "Operation Jackpot".

## **Indian Involvement**

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 27 March 1971 expressed full support of her government for the independence struggle of the people of East Pakistan. The Indian leadership under Prime Minister Gandhi quickly decided that it was more effective to end the genocide by taking armed action against Pakistan than to simply give refuge to those who made it across to refugee camps. Exiled East Pakistan army officers and members of the Indian Intelligence immediately started using these camps for recruitment and training of MuktiBahini guerrillas.

## Genocide by Pakistan army 1971



The genocide by Pakistani forces caused widespread international outrage against West Pakistan. In the United States, Democratic senator Ted Kennedy castigated the Nixon administration for ignoring the genocide of Bengalis in East Pakistan. The Nixon administration in the US enjoyed close ties with Pakistani military junta due to its policy of rapprochement with Communist China after the Sino-Soviet split.

French Minister of Cultural Affairs Andre Malraux vowed to fight on the battlefield alongside the Bangladesh Forces.

## Timeline

- **March 9:** Workers of Chittagong port refuse to unload weapons from the ship 'Swat'.
- **March 10:** Expatriate Bengali students demonstrate in front of the United Nations Headquarters and calls for UN intervention to put an end to violence on Bengali people.
- **March 16:** Yahya Khan starts negotiation with Sheikh MujiburRahman.
- **March 19:** Nearly 50 people die as Pakistan Army opens fire on demonstrators at Jaydevpur.
- **March 24:** Pakistan Army opens fire on Bengali demonstrators in Syedpur, Rangpur and Chittagong. More than a thousand people are killed.
- **March 25:** Pakistan Army starts **Operation Searchlight** in Dhaka and rest of the country, attacking general civilians, political activists, students, and Bengali members of armed forces and police
- **March 26:** At 1.15 AM, Sheikh MujiburRahman is arrested by the Pakistani 3 commando unit. Independence of Bangladesh is declared by Father of the nation BongoBondhu Sheikh MujibiurRahman few minutes before he was arrested by Pakistani occupation army. At 2.30 pm Independence of Bangladesh was declared by Awami league leader of Chittagong M. A. Hannan on behalf of Bongobondhu Sheikh MujiburRahman from Kalurghat. This is Bangladesh's official Independence Day.
- **March 31:** Kushtia resistance begins.
- **April 2:** Jinjira massacre.
- **April 6:** The Blood Telegram
- **April 10:** A provisional Bangladesh government-in-exile is formed.
- **April 18:** Battle of Daruin, Comilla and Battle of Rangamati-Mahalchari waterway, Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- **April 24:** Formation of Bangladesh Action Committee at Coventry, UK by non-resident Bangladeshis.
- **April 28:** Tajuddin pleas for arms aid to neighbors.
- **May 5:** Gopalpur massacre.
- **May 15:** Indian army starts aiding MuktiBahini.
- **May 20:** The Chuknagar massacre takes place at Khulna where the Pakistan army kills nearly 10 thousand people

- **July 11–17:** Sector Commanders Conference 1971.
- **August 16:** Operation Jackpot, Bangladesh naval commando operation.
- **August 30:** Pakistan Army crackdown on Dhaka guerrillas.
- **September 5:** Battle of Goahati, Jessore.
- **September 28:** Bangladesh Air Force starts functioning.
- **October 13:** Dhaka guerrillas kill Abdul Monem Khan, governor of East Pakistan.
- **October 28:** Battle of Dhalai Outpost, Srimongol.
- **October 31 to November 3:** Battle of Dhalai: Indian attack from Tripura into East Pakistan to stop Pakistani cross-border shelling.
- **November 9:** Six small ships constitute the first fleet of Bangladesh Navy.
- **November 16:** Battle of Ajmiriganj, an 18-hour encounter between MuktiBahini and Pakistan army.
- **November 20 to November 21:** Battle of Garibpur: Indian attack in Boyra salient in East Pakistan
- **November 21:** Bangladesh Armed Forces is formed.
- **November 23:** Yahya Khan declares a state of emergency in all of Pakistan; prepares for war.

#### -----FREEZE DATE-----

- **December 3:** Bangladesh Air Force destroys Pakistani oil depots. War between India and Pakistan officially begins when West Pakistan launches a series of preemptive air strikes on Indian airfields.
- **December 4 :** Battle of Longewala; Indians stop a Pakistani invasion directed at Jaisalmer. Naval attack on Karachi, headquarters of Pakistani Navy. UN pressurises India to put an end to the dispute.
- **December 5:** HQ18 (Pakistan) is bombed, along with several other areas.
- **December 6:** East Pakistan is recognised as Bangladesh by India.
- **December 8:** Emergency meeting called in the General Assembly



- **December 9 and 10:** Pakistan launches an offensive on India. Alleged help from within East Pakistan allows Indian forces to penetrate deep into the country.
- **December 14:** Systematic elimination of Bengali intellectuals is started by Pakistani Army and local collaborators.
- **December 16:** Lieutenant-General A. A. K. Niazi, supreme commander of Pakistani Army in East Pakistan, surrenders to the Allied Forces (MitroBahini) represented by Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Arora of Indian Army at the surrender. India and Bangladesh gain victory.
- **January 12:** Sheikh MujiburRahman comes to power in newly-founded Bangladesh.

**NOTE:** All events before freeze date have taken place. The current time in session is the freeze date (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971 1630 hours).

Events taking place after the freeze date historically may be altered i.e., they can be considered to have not occurred. The timeline from December 3<sup>rd</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> is provided to act as a broad guideline.

## **References:**

1. *Death by Government* by R J Rummel
2. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* by Susan Brownmiller
3. *The Rape of Bangla Desh* by Anthony Mascarenhas.
4. *Tormenting Seventy One* by Shahriar Kabir