

Hero of the East Pakistanis

Mujibur Rahman

By TILLMAN DURDIN
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DACCA, Pakistan, March 14—Most busy officials display a certain amount of tension and preoccupation, but not Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the Bengali nationalist who has emerged in recent months as the undisputed leader of the people of East Pakistan. In person-to-person deal-

Man
in the
News

ings, Mujib, as he is familiarly called by practically everyone, always seems relaxed and cheerful. He

even delivers denunciations with a twinkle in his eyes.

The easy aplomb that makes Sheik Mujib a winning personality in private doubtless also contributes to his extraordinary crowd appeal. But before the masses his diffidence disappears and he becomes a vehement orator with power to stir his people to cheering enthusiasm.

Sheik Mujib's position of leadership at the age of 50 is the culmination of almost a lifetime of political struggle, usually against vested interests and governments. Born March 17, 1920, in the East Bengal village of Tongipara into a modestly well-to-do Moslem family, Mujib grew up as an extroverted open-handed, sports-loving country boy, not especially good in school but fond of people and well-liked by teachers and fellow students.



Associated Press
Riding wave of popularity amounting to mass worship
(Sheik Mujib talking with followers in Dacca on Friday)

A Student Activist

At 22, when he went to Calcutta to get a liberal-arts degree at Islamia College, he was a prominent student leader and an activist in the newly formed All India Moslem League.

After graduation from Islamia, Mujib returned to East Bengal to enter Dacca University to become a lawyer.

By 1947 he discovered that his native East Bengal, now the province of East Pakistan in a nation of two parts separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory, was being kept in a subordinate position.

He resigned from the Moslem League and became an advocate of Bengali rights, a role that quickly got him in trouble with the ruling authorities.

He went to jail briefly in 1948, and in 1949 was sentenced to three years in prison for having participated in illegal demonstrations and strikes.

By the time he left prison, he settled for a few years into a less conspicuous role.

He became a key member of the newly organized East Pakistani party, the Awami

(People's) League, and was elected to the Provincial Assembly.

But when Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan established a military dictatorship in 1958, Sheikh Mujib again assumed a prominent Opposition role.

His new activity resulted in jail terms in 1958 and 1962.

Six-Point Program

In 1966, Sheikh Mujib and his associates advanced a six-point program that would give the provinces internal self-rule, control over their own foreign trade, taxation and foreign aid and leave to the central Government only defense and some aspects of foreign relations.

Marshal Ayub had Sheikh Mujib arrested in May, 1966 on charges of participation in a plot to make East Pakistan independent. By 1968, East Pakistan was in a state of virtual revolt. Widespread opposition to the Ayub Government led to turmoil in the West, causing Marshal Ayub to release Sheikh Mujib and to resign.

Sheikh Mujib's popularity was translated into an overwhelming vote for candidates of the Awami League, of which he had become head.

Today Sheikh Mujib is riding on a wave of popularity that amounts to mass worship. His word has literally become law.

The "Sheikh" in his name is not a title, but simply an

honorific meaning that his father is a land owner.

Tall for a Bengali—5 feet, 11 inches—he has a heavy shock of graying hair, alert expressive black eyes, and a well-groomed upturned mustache. He usually wears a loose black vest over the billowing white cotton pantaloons and long-sleeved pajama-style shirt that is traditional Moslem dress here.

Sheikh Mujib has weak eyes as a result of glaucoma that kept him out of school for three years when he was a teen-ager. An inveterate pipe-smoker, he likes foreign makes but insists that his pipes are about the only non-Bengali thing he uses. He lives in a fashionable quarter of Dacca with his wife, Fajilotdun, three sons and two daughters.

He thinks the proper political system for Pakistan at this stage is democratic socialism. His program calls for the nationalization of major industries, banks and insurance companies—a procedure roughly along the lines now being pursued by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in India.

Friends do not rate him as an intellectual. He readily concedes that he needs expert advice in many fields.

MMR Jalal.