

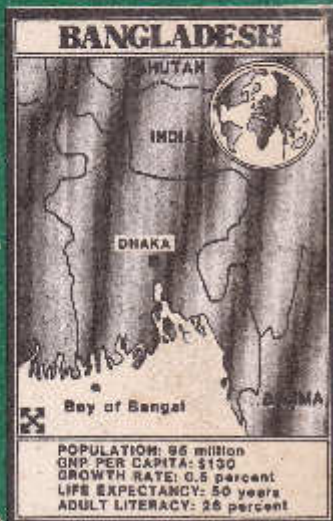
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Defence JOURNAL

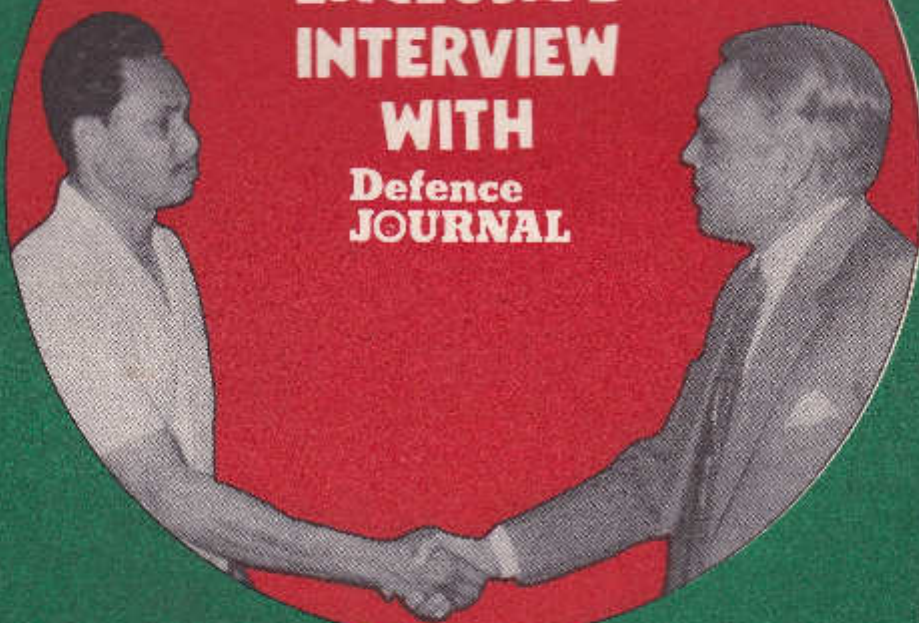
A MONTHLY MIRROR & DIGEST OF GEO STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

BANGLADESH:

The
Military
Factor



**GEN. H. M. ERSHAD'S
EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW
WITH
Defence
JOURNAL**



**A CHRONOLOGY OF
MILITARY COUPS,
MUTINIES & MURDERS
IN BANGLADESH**



**Gen. H. M. Ershad
A PROFILE**

NET PAID CIRCULATION EXCEEDS THAT OF ANY PROFESSIONAL
ENGLISH LANGUAGE MONTHLY IN PAKISTAN

Defence JOURNAL

A MONTHLY JOURNAL & DIGEST OF GEO-STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

Editor-in-Chief

Brig. Abdul Rahman Siddiqi (Retd.)

Editorial Adviser

Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi

REPRESENTATIVES:

United Kingdom:

Colonel Edgar O'Dallance,

Wakebridge Cottage, Wakebridge,

Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 5HD.

Tele: Dethick 627, Code (062-984)

U. S. A.

Mr. Barry D. Hoffman

31 Commonwealth Avenue,

Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Tele: (617) 267-5555

Canada

Mr. Osman Siddiqi

76, Charing Road,

Nepean, Ontario

Tele: (613) 723-2460

Saudi Arabia

Brig. Muhammad Nawaz

Pakistan Army (Retd.)

P. O. Box No. 10135 Riyadh

Tele: 464-2457 478-5900X3135

Punjab:

Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi

11, Fane (Justice Kayani Road)

Lahore-4. Tele: 66047

Capt. M. Arshad (Retd.)

B-25, G.O.R. No. 3, Lahore

Phones: 412642-410065

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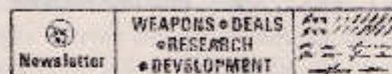
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Bangladesh—The Military Factor

On 15 February 1948, the 1st East Bengal Regiment (Senior Tigers) was raised at the Kurnitola Cantonment near Dhaka. During his first visit to East Bengal in March 1948, the Governor-General, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, reviewed the first ceremonial parade of the newly-born tiger cubs and generously complimented the men and officers on their excellent performance. He said:

"I am much impressed with the success you have achieved in such a short spell of time. If you work with the same spirit and enthusiasm in the days to come, I am confident, you will be second to none as soldiers."

"During the foreign regime you were classed as 'non-martial'. It is your country, your own state now and it is upto you to prove your worth."

According to an official pamphlet (*The First Tiger Re-union* -- An ISPR Publication, 1962) the Quaid-e-Azam's remarks, "created unbounded enthusiasm amongst all ranks, making them conscious of their stake in the honour of the Bengali Mussalmans."

The unnamed author of this brochure was none other than Colonel Muhammad Ataul Ghani (M.A.G.) Osmany who barely nine years later, would hit the headlines of the world press as the rebel leader of the *Mukti Bhaini* (liberation army) at war with its own parent country and its army. After liberation, more simply, separation from Pakistan, Osmany was honoured by the country of his (and his fellow freedom fighters') making —Bangladesh — promoted full general and appointed the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

At the time the 1st East Bengal Regiment was raised, Lieut. Col. Osmany was an RPASC (Royal Pakistan Army Supply Corps) officer posted in the GHQ S&T (Supply and Transport) Directorate. He converted to infantry subsequently by voluntarily dropping rank from lieut. col. to major to meet the service requirement as an infantry officer. Apart from his love for infantry, was his irrepressible ambition, one day, to be able to command the East Bengal Regiment, which opportunity he very soon had when he was posted as the centre Commandant of the East Bengal Centre in Chittagong and nicknamed Papa Tiger. He loved and cherished the nickname and carried it to his grave.

The 1st East Bengal Regiment, in due course, became the nucleus of a growing regimental fraternity as a second battalion (Junior Tigers) was added to it. Largely officered by West Pakistanis, the two Bengali battalions were manned predominantly by the Bengalis

who, as trained men, soon justified the Quaid's hope and confidence in their competence to be 'second to none as soldiers'.

As Papa Tiger, and later, as a senior general-staff officer at the GHQ, (full) Col. Osmany provided vital organizational and motivational support to the fledgling Bengali battalions. In his unbounded zeal to serve the interests of the battalions, he compromised much of his own impartiality as a senior officer together with a part of his total commitment to the Pakistan Army as an undivided national establishment transcending narrow parochial sensitivities and preferences. His close, almost one-sided, identification with Bengali regiments, quite inevitably, set him apart from the rest of the military family, until he came to be looked upon quite as a Bengali chauvinist and an outsider. Some of Osmany's exclusivism was rubbed off to the Tigers even in their most formative stages and except for their West Pakistani elements, they did not mix well with other units.

In 1963 the 1st East Bengal Regiment arrived in West Pakistan on its first tour of duty. Thenceforward Osmany got himself more involved with the affairs of the battalion than with his highly important job at the GHQ as the deputy director military operations (DDMO). During the 1965 war, the 1st East Bengal gave an excellent account of itself in the Bedian sector, south of Lahore, where it had been actively deployed. It won the largest number of gallantry awards of any infantry battalion — a real and true recognition of the courageous performance of its men and officers under Lieut. Col. A.T.K. Haque, a brave Bengali officer who himself earned a Sitara-i-Jour'at. Its battlefield performance at once brought the youngest Pakarmy battalion at par with its incomparably ancient — centurion and double centurion — peers and ensured its place in the history of the Pakistan Army. It had come through its baptism of fire with flying colours.

While the Senior Tigers were distinguishing themselves in action, a very frustrated and embittered Col. Osmany (he had already been passed over for his next promotion) had been busy compiling the history of the East Bengal Regiment at the GHQ. Although, officially still the DDMO, Osmany had nothing to do whatsoever with the conduct of war and was left alone to stew in his own juice and to scribble, scribble and scribble.

He retired an year later with the declared intention of settling down as a gentleman at large in Sylhet — his home district. He loved angling and the wonderful day-dreaming that goes with it. Fate had, however, earmarked him for a different kind of angling as an ardent Bengali chauvinist gradually but inexorably developing into a militant Bengali separatist. Ever so proud of the Quaid-e-Azam's stirring tribute to the 1st East Bengal and his earnest hope to see the Bengalis develop 'second to none as soldiers', Osmany, by a crazy act of fate, became instrumental in halving the Quaid's hope and prayer about the Bengali soldiers. They did indeed become 'second to none as professional soldiers by virtue of their excellent training in the Pakarmy — and especially the invaluable battlefield experience they gained through the 1965 war, but only at the expense of a soldier's unswerving loyalty and dedication to his country.

In retirement Osmany acted even more vigorously and vociferously as the oracle of the separatist lore than in service. By 1968, when the number of the Bengali battalions had already doubled and was about to be trebled and quadrupled, Osmany had assumed the role of the sole spokesman and champion of the Bengali soldiery. Behind the second

regimental reunion in February of that year, he was the moving spirit recounting untiringly the stirring war (1965) stories of the Senior Tigers and praising them sky high for their excellent morale and valour. His projection, however, was not unminged by a strong touch of irony for the *martial race* — more simply the Punjabis.

However, in spite of Osmany and his Bengali chauvinism, none could have foreseen and predicted in 1968 the great disaster that would overtake the army and the country only three years later. Yet from what one saw and heard of the Bengali jawans and officers, it would not be difficult to miss the canker of parochialism affecting their minds. (The Agartalla Conspiracy had become known by then.)

In 1969 March, the country was placed under martial-law. Later that year, however, elections were announced for October 1970 and political activity revived in January 1970 to get the electoral process under way. That brought Osmany (no lover of politics and its practitioners at one time in the typical British way that he scrupulously emulated) out in the open as a committed and overzealous (in love or hate he had been equally zealous) Awami Leaguer — the party which stood for total autonomy of East Pakistan. He ran for a national assembly seat in the general elections on the AL ticket and won.

Thereafter, through a horrible conspiracy of circumstances — not of his making — he found his inbred separatist clan to spout suddenly like a hidden spring. He remained in the forefront of Awami League's civil disobedience movement launched on March 2 by its leader. He commanded the ex-Servicemen rally in Dhaka on 23rd March — Pakistan Day (observed as Resistance Day — by the Awami League) to hoist the Bangladesh flag (in other words the banner of rebellion) and salute it. On that day Osmany was even ahead of some of his political mentors and superiors still busy talking to the President of Pakistan for a political settlement and therefore not publicly available to round off the symbolic significance of the occasion. The single act of flag-hoisting in the heart of city around Bait-ul-Mukarram broke off Osmany's last emotional and constitutional link with Pakistan and ensured his place as a rebel-turned-freedom fighter.

Within hours (maybe a day or two) of the military crackdown on night of March 25/26, Osmany crossed into India to regroup and reorganize the deserters of the East Bengal regiment and the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) and lead them in a bitter war against their own country. Almost simultaneously with the start of the civil war moved in the Indian Army, disguised as guerrilla fighters, to join forces with the rebels under its own over all command. It is difficult to decide what role Osmany, his men and officers had actually played in the civil war that was soon turned into the liberation war at India's instigation and with its active support. How much of Osmany's and his subordinate commanders' (Zia's, Khalid Musharraf's, Manzoor's etc) role was real and how much of it merely symbolical — is not easy to decide. What can be hardly denied is that the freedom-fighters (FFs) had throughout been under the overall control and command of the Indian Army.

It was the Indian Army that entered Dhaka and it was the GOC-in-C of India's Eastern Command, Lieut. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora who took surrender from the Pakistani Lieut. Gen. Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi. Osmany was nowhere to be found at the surrender parade. The surrender document itself was signed by the victorious (Indian) and the

vanquished (Pakistani) general to the exclusion of the Mukti Bahini. That the freedom-fighters return to Dhaka in the shadow of the Indian bayonets deprived their triumph of much of its gloss and glitter. Osmany had been painfully aware of the inauspicious circumstance and made himself scarce on the day he should have been most seen and heard.

Bangladesh was thus born out of the womb of armed struggle aided by a foreign power interested more in the break-up of its parent country — Pakistan — than the liberation and emergence as a sovereign and stable state. The 'victory day' on December 16, 1971, unfolded the bewildering spectacle of two foreign armies sitting in Dhaka without even the symbolical presence of the national army. The trigger-happy and unbridled guerrilla groups were scrupulously kept at bay from the capital city by the occupying Indian army. What sort of a victory day it was most people wondered.

Presently, however, elements of the various militant groups — this-and-that *Bhaini* — *Kader Bhaini*, *Mukti Bhaini*, *Lal Bhaini* — to name just a few sneaked into the capital to let loose a reign terror on their erstwhile Pakistani compatriots labelled as collaborators. These unarmed civilians suffered grievously and fatally at the hands of the unbridled armed hands. Thus even in the hour of national rejoicing there was much wanton violence and bloodshed to make the new country the unhappy inheritor and depository of a terrible legacy of blood. After evacuation of the Pakistan Army under the aegis of the Indian Army its subsequent voluntary withdrawal, Bangladesh, still without the nucleus of an organized armed force, became the happy hunting ground of the former guerrilla forces turned terror groups.

With his deeply-ingrained distrust and horror of a professional army, the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would not allow elements of the regular forces to regroup and reorganize themselves into a coherent force. 'I don't want to create a monster like the one we had in Pakistan'. He would say. He raised parallel para military forces to break the power of the regular establishment. Much like Bhutto in Pakistan who raised the Federal Security Force (FSF) as a counterpoise to the army, Mujib organized his *Jatiyo Rakhi Bahini* or National Security Force to nip the power of the military forces in the bud. The *Rakhi Bahini* enjoyed the protection and confidence of the prime minister (later president) without the disciplinary curbs and constraints associated with military and para-military forces. The supreme court in one of its judgements castigated the *Rakhi Bahini*, for operating outside the law, without a code of conduct and discipline. Mujib's inordinate patronage of his private force and studied neglect of the national army drove a deep wedge between them and the military.

As late as December 1975 three months after Mujib's assassination, Major-General Ziaur Rahman spoke of the army's plight under Mujib as follows: "We were not really an army and did not exist on paper. There was no legal basis for the army. There was no T.O.E. (Table of Organization and Establishment). Everything was ad hoc. The army was paid because Mujib said it should be paid. Our existence depended on Mujib's word. Our chaps went through hell and they suffered but did not complain because they were involved in serving the country and were willing to make whatever sacrifices that were necessary." (Anthony Mascarenhas: *Bangladesh The Legacy of Blood*, p. 34).

Yet another irritant between Mujib and the military establishment had been his persistent, proclaimed pro-Indian stance. The Bengali freedom-fighters nursed deep feelings of resentment against the Indians for dropping them out of the ground finale, the surrender parade, on 16 December 1971. Historically also, the Bengali Mussalmans had never had an easy equation with his Hindu counterpart for the latter's exploitative mercantilism, casteism and parochialism. All the atavistic resentments returned with a vengeance at the gross roots after independence. But Mujib and his coterie still carried their debt of gratitude to the Indians for their active role in the armed struggle against Pakistan.

Furthermore, Mujib's emphasis on the creation of a secular society also hurt the deep religious sensitivities of a large section of the armed forces as much as the broad masses. The expression, Mujibism standing for nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, incurred the wide disapproval of his people within and outside the armed forces.

Mujib's thoughtless treatment of the armed forces and his tinkering with the cherished religious values and sensitivities of the staunch Bangladeshi Muslims led eventually to his violent end. Two army officers, Farook Rahman and Khandker Abdul Rashid, aided and abetted by several others, cold-bloodedly plotted Mujib's assassination and carried it out in a brutal, almost orgiastic bloodbath involving his entire family but one, his daughter, Hasina Wajid who happened to be out of the country on the fateful night of August 15, 1975. Mujib was thus the first one to have fallen a prey to an embittered Bangladesh army born and raised through a terrible civil war.

After multiple murders, the two majors made history by seizing absolute power over the heads of their superiors, hand picked, a veteran politician, Khandkar Mushtaq Ahmad as the president and replaced the chief of the army staff, Major-General Shafiullah with the Major-General Ziaur Rahman the chief of the general staff (CGS). They installed themselves in the Bangabhaban, the President's House, from where they ran and controlled the state machinery, civil and military. This went on until the first week of November of that year when there was yet another coup engineered by Gen. Ziaur Rahman's, CGS, Brigadier Khalid Musharraf in collaboration with Col. Shafat Jamil, the Dhaka Brigade Commander. Brig. Musharraf put his chief of staff under arrest and sought his own promotion to the next higher rank and appointment as chief of the army staff. The man who stoutly opposed Musharraf was none other General M.A.G. Osmany, defence adviser to the president.

While the horse-trading was still on in the Bangabhaban, a most terrifying event (easily the ugliest even in Bangladesh's blood-soaked annals) took place in the Dhaka Central Jail where four of the top political leaders and founding fathers were gunned down in their prison cells. They were: Messrs Tajuddin, Nazrul Islam, Qamruzzaman and Mansoor Ali. The brutal act was committed with the approval of Brig. Musharraf and connivance of President Ahmad.

Barely three days later (Nov. 5-6, 1975) sepoys in the Dhaka cantonment mutinied and went berserk. They killed Musharraf, released Gen. Zia and reinstated him as the chief of the army staff. This was the famous '*Sepoy Biblobi*' or the Sepoy Revolt led by retired Lieut. Col. Abu Taher. The retired colonel was subsequently hauled up, court martialled

without a defence and hanged. Zia's ruthless disposal of Col. Abu Taher in sharp contrast to the treatment meted out to the original cains — the majors plotting and executing the first political murders of Mujib and his family. After the Sepoy Mutiny they were allowed to leave the country for a safe haven abroad. There were some more abortive in the country—the second Sepoy Biblobi (led by Sergeant Azfar of the air force who proclaimed himself the head of the state) and two by majors and lieut. cols. On the night of May 29-30, 1981, Bangladesh went through the trauma of seeing yet another head of the state being brutally done to death. This was President Ziaur Rahman and the man supposed to have patched the gory plot was himself a general officer—Major-General Muhammad Abu Manzoor, the divisional commander of Chittagong playing host to the President on a visit to his area. Manzoor was himself done to death couple of days later in a somewhat mystifying circumstance while in official custody. That brought Lieut. Gen. Ershad, the army chief of staff immediately, into prominence and eventually to power (see *Gen. Ershad — A Profile*).

An analysis of all the coups, mutinies and assassinations in Bangladesh (see *Documentation*) would highlight three major underlying elements: First, the temperamental volatility of the Bengalis, in particular, of the first generation of trigger-happy militants, secondly a natural tendency and talent for conspiratorial politics and thirdly the relative absence of established hierarchical distinctions between men and officers, juniors and seniors generally associated with the military profession. While liberation war inured the Bengalis (Bangladeshis) to the sight of blood it also gave them a thirst and a taste for it.

The picture certainly seem to have changed materially and apparently for the better since Gen. Ershad took over. "The Army today is united", Gen. Ershad confidently asserts (see *interview — post-script*) "we are one entity. There are no divisions between *Bhainis* and regular forces. In fact the days of *Bhainis* are gone. We have seen a lot of *Bhainis* out of the armed forces".

This would appear to be the truth also inasmuch the top brass of the Bangladesh army (brigs and above) consists predominantly of the 'repatriates' — those who had been on the wrong side of the fence (that turned to be the right and the lucky side eventually) during the civil war.

"It was none of our fault. We did not join because we were not here. But had we been here we would have surely joined" was Gen. Ershad's reply to one of my questions concerning those whom the civil war had passed by. The Bangladesh Army today is happily rid of the so-called freedom-fighters (FFs) actually the trigger-happy gangs who had been mainly responsible for much of the in-fighting that divided the armed forces and led to so many mutinies, coups, counter-coups and assassinations. Even to an outside observer the Bangladesh Army today appears to be disciplined and well-trained outfit. The officers and jawans are well turned out. They are tall (average height 5 ft. 9 inch) hard flinty fellows: they march rather than walk. Their saluting is perfect — longest way up and shortest way down.

Just the same, the army, can, by no means be considered a well-muscled force in terms of weapons (see *Table*). It has practically no offensive capability beyond the available

human resource that, if properly trained, led and motivated can take on an aggressor several times bigger and stronger. The paucity of arms in the peculiar geo-political context of Bangladesh is also a part of the high command's calculated strategic posture. The fact remains and is realistically accepted that the country can never be too strong militarily for its neighbours. Why should it even try to overreach itself therefore in an essentially vain and costly pursuit?

A former C-in-C of Pakistan Army, General Mohammad Musa had contemplated an area- or sector-based defence for East Pakistan while he was the general officer commanding (GOC) in Dhaka. He had recommended a drastic curtailment of the logistical tail to make each area and sector practically self-sufficient in the matter of reinforcements and resupplies. A protracted and effective defence of the country from Dhaka would be too difficult and costly given the type of difficult land and riverine lines of communications throughout the country. A combination of the human resource and terrain, skillfully exploited, would make the country's best shield against an outside aggression.

Regular army can at best serve as a symbol of the country's sovereignty and an invaluable instrument of internal security. Except for some insurgency problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, there is no over-the-horizon threat facing the country. Nevertheless, "friend or foe, none is permanent", observes Gen. Ershad. Relations may be soured with the best of friends at some stage. We should have an army that forms the nucleus to give leadership to the nation..."

As regards army's 'permanent' role in national affairs, Gen. Ershad's answer is candid and forthright. "Yes, the army must have a role to play. It has been the forerunner of independence. It fought against the establishment..." At another place he made the same point more tellingly: "Our armed forces are different from the conventional concept of an Army. We fought with the people for our independence, the highest political cause. We are the sons of the soil and are very much part of society..."

It is indeed difficult to contemplate return to a full civilian order in Bangladesh in the foreseeable future. The army in that country had come to stay whether as an actor at the centre of the stage or one waiting in the wings. The political process and persona there (much in the same way as here in Pakistan) are not as strong and cohesive force as to pose a serious threat to the reigning monarch, the military, for sometime yet that in real terms may mean years.

The bell would of course toll for Gen. Ershad's martial law-regime after the elections. But Gen. Ershad's civilian government would still be there if there is not yet another spell of madness overtaking the army's own rank and file. The native volatility of the Bangladeshis shall always remain the key factor in the country's affairs and a potential threat to its stability.

The military factor in today's Bangladesh equals if not outweighs all the other factors, put together. It is easily the strongest single force which ambitious politicians would also need for consolidating their own power base. As the largest single spender of the national resource the Army along with its sister services — the navy and the air force — is also the nation's largest single reservoir of trained manpower and 'leadership' as Gen.

Ershad would put it. Its penetration into the system — bureaucratic and political — is too patent fact to be overlooked and missed. It reigns supreme in a country known in united Pakistan for its aversion to and the military establishment and a horror of its power.

"I don't want to create a monster like the one we had in Pakistan, was how Sheikh Mujib would talk of the army." Whether one likes or not however the 'monster' has taken over. But it is the kind of *Beast* than can be tamed and domesticated by the *Beauty* of common national aims and aspirations.

— Brig. Abdul Rahman Siddiqi (Retd.)

TABLE

GDP 1982/3: Tk 287.13 bn (\$12.086 bn). 1983/4: 316.14 bn (\$12.672).

GDP growth 1983/4: 4.5%. 1984/5: 3.8%.

Inflation 1983/4: 8.0%. 1984/5: 12.0%.

Est debt 1983: \$4.0 bn. 1984: \$4.4 bn.

Est def exp 1984/5: Tk 7.050 bn (\$273.359 m). Budget 1985/6: 5.011 bn (\$185.593 m).

Est FMA 1983: \$0.3 1984: \$0.5 m.

\$1 = Tk 23.7578 (1982/3), 24,9485 (1983/4), 25.7903 (1984/5), 27.0 (1985).

Population: 102,000,000.

Men : 18-30: 11,855,000; 31-45: 8,149,000.

Women : 18-30: 10,991,000; 31-45: 7,683,000.

TOTAL ARMED FORCES:

Regular: 91,300.

Terms of service: voluntary.

Reserves: 30,000 (Bangladesh Rifles).

ARMY: 81,800.

5 inf div HQ. 13 inf bdes. 2 armd regts. 6 arty regts. 6 engr bns.

Tks: 20 Ch Type-59, 30 T-54/-55: It: 6 M-24 *Chaffee*. Arty: guns/how: 30 Model 56 pack, 50 M-101 105mm, 5 25-pdr (88mm), 20 Type-54 122mm; mor: 81mm, 50 Type-53 120mm. TAK: rcl: 30 106mm; guns: 6-pdr (57mm), Ch Type-54 76mm.

NAVY: 6,500.*

Bases: Chittagong (HQ), Dacca, Khulna, Chalna.

Frigates: 3 Br (1 Type 61, 2 Type 41)

FAC: (G): 4 O-24 (Ch *Hegu*) with 2 HY-2 ssm;

(P): 4 Ch *Hainan*: (T) 12 <: 8 Ch *Shanghai II*, 4 Type- 123K (P-4).

Patrol craft: 6 large: 2 Singapore *Meghna*, 2 Ind

Akshay, 1 Jap *Akagi*, 1 *Bishkali* (River).

Patrol boats: 5 *Pabna* (*Kacha*) river<.

Misc: 1 trg, 1 barracks, 1 log spt ships, 1 repair vessel, 2 O-69 coastal survey craft.

(On order: 4 *Hainan* FAC(P).)

AIR FORCE: 3,000: 23 combat ac.

FGA 2 sqns with 18 Ch J-6.

Interceptor: 1 sqn with 3 Mig-21MF, 2 Mig-21U.

Tpt: 1 sqn with 1 An-24, 4 An-26; (1 Yak-40, 1 DC-6).*

Hel: 1 sqn with 7 Bell 212, 2 206L, 6 Mi-8 *Hip*. 4 *Alouette III*.

Trg: 12 Ch CJ-6, 6 CM-170 *Magister*, 4 MiG-15UTI *Midget*.

AAM: AA-2 *Atoll*.

PARA-MILITARY: 55,000. Bangladesh Rifles: 30,000 (border guard).

Armed Police: 5,000. *Ansars* (Security guards): 20,000.

*Spares are short; some eqpt. unserviceable.

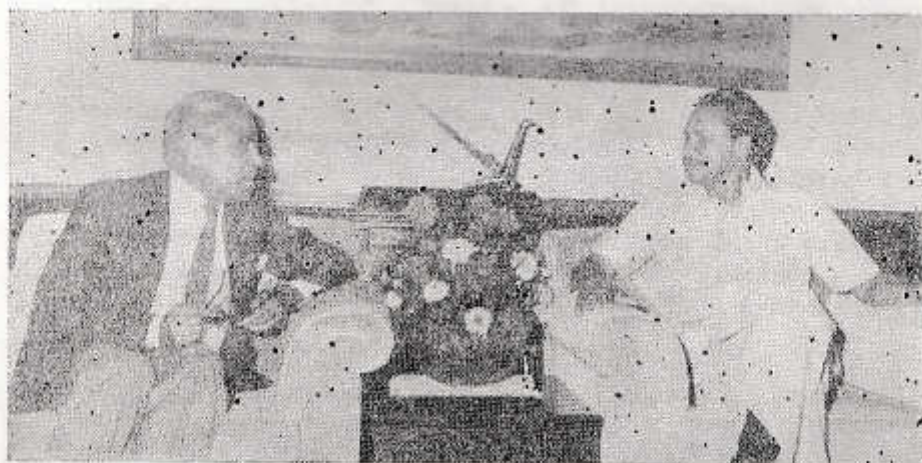
EXCLUSIVE

General Ershad's Interview

WITH

Defence Journal

In his first-ever interview with the editor of a Pakistani periodical (Brig. A. R. Siddiqi—ARS) the Bangladesh Chief Martial Law Administrator and President, Lieutenant-General Hussain Muhammad Ershad covered a wide range of topics concerning his country and his martial law administration. In keeping with the professional character of Defence Journal, as a mirror of military and geostrategic affairs, the interview focusses on military issues as distinguished from the problems of civilian politics.



As a defence magazine, the Journal strives to concentrate mainly on non-political, military and strategic affairs. However, where the military establishment itself may have been involved in politics either in aid of the civil power or in the direct administration of martial law, the Journal's analytical and professional interest in such a situation becomes evident and inescapable.

Defence Journal is where the military is. In broader terms, analysing the role of the military establishment in peace and war and its strategic, geostrategic or politico-strategic implications, remains the main function of the Journal.

Full text of the interview appears on the following pages.

Highlights

* (On his martial law)

"It was a journey from chaos to order, from despair to optimism and from economic disorder to development..."

* "... armed forces should not be kept out of the development process of the country. We want to be partners in progress..."

* "Army must have a role to play in national affairs... but military government cannot be a permanent affair."

* "Martial law is always an ad hoc arrangement and never a permanent measure."

* "I have no intention to stay as chief of the army staff once civilian process is restored."



* "The army today is united. We are one entity... We have seen a lot of Bahinis out of the army."

* "Our Army had a big stake in the war of independence."

* "It's martial law with a difference. It's people's martial law."

* "Friend or foe, none is permanent. Relations may be soured with the best of friends at some stage."

ARS: How would you compare the situation in which you assumed supreme power in your country to the prevailing one? Do you think you have been able to maintain and achieve your main aim?

Gen. Ershad: It will be, I believe, a comparison between two glaring contrasts. It was a journey from chaos to order, from despair to optimism and from economic disorder to development. Changes, and I can call them, radical changes, have been initiated in all spheres of national life i.e. in administration, in judiciary, in fiscal and economic policies and in land tenure system. Our main objective was to galvanise the immense potential of this land and its people into fruitful and meaningful productivity. We wanted to build a viable infrastructure so that there will be no retardation. After being in Government for four years I can say this much, and say it with confidence, that our mission has been fulfilled to a large extent.

ARS: What special role would you like the armed forces to play in the affairs of the country?

Gen. Ershad: Our armed forces are different from the conventional concept of an Army. We fought with the people for our independence, the highest political cause. We are the sons of the soil and, are very much part of the society. We share the happiness and the agonies of our people. Our Armed Forces, a disciplined, organised, patriotic and dynamic force, should not be kept out of the development process of the country. We want to be partners in progress. We want to be a part in the nation's thought process. But, I would like to make it clear that we do not want to play any political role. We made our views known to the nation that we do not want to impose anything on the country. Very soon we are going to have an elected Parliament. The elected representatives of the people will deliberate and decide on this question.

ARS: Do you think lifting of Martial Law can be an even more difficult operation than imposing it?

Gen. Ershad: Martial Law is always an ad hoc arrangement and never a permanent measure. Before lifting the Martial Law it has to be ensured that the circumstances leading to its advent must not recur. We, a military regime, want the country to go back to democracy and surprisingly some politicians do not. Is not it an irony? a soldier, will be able to give the country a real and a stable democratic system.

ARS: While paraphrasing Orwell, a noted commentator said: 'All military interventions — and withdrawals — are alike some are more dissimilar than others'. Would you like to comment?

Gen. Ershad: I do not subscribe to Orwellian theories. In fact, many of Orwell's futuristic views have not come true. The ideas he wanted to preach suffer from the weakness of generalisation, if not simplistic. The third world

countries have their own peculiar problems which cannot be judged or solved from a western Utopian perspective.

ARS: The frequent occurrence of military takeovers in a number of post colonial newly-independent countries has brought into usage a new science — 'coup — ology' — meaning the study and explanation of military coups. Would you like to throw some light on the roots of the problem?

Gen. Ershad: Many of the problems of the new emergent countries owe their origin to centuries of colonial rule and exploitation. Independence brings with it popular upsurge and rising expectations. In the absence of a strong political leadership capable of handling the multifarious problems of a developing country, and because of their failure to build a viable infrastructure for development, these expectations cannot be met, resulting in disillusionment of the people. Political institutions have no built-in mechanism to absorb the shock of crises appearing out of these disillusionments. This paves the way for military take over.

ARS: Before its emergence as a separate and sovereign state, your country was supposed to be non-martial with its well-known aversion to militarism and military rule. How would you explain the sudden upsurge of militarism — mutinies, coups and martial laws — in your country after independence?

Gen. Ershad: Our Army had a big stake in the War of Independence. Independence is the highest political cause. In fact, it was born out of the War of Independence, and steered through it. I would not call it 'the upsurge of militarism'. Far from it, responsibility of running the country was handed over to us. The Army had to take over in 1982 out of genuine concern for the country and the people. There was no option before us. Ours is a Martial Law with a difference. If one follows our track record from March 82 one would agree with me. Our people have hailed it.

ARS: Your people have undoubtedly shown a remarkable degree of tolerance to your somewhat prolonged military rule. Is it more out of a readjustment to the objective reality of military power or disinterestedness in the affairs of the country?

Gen. Ershad: Neither. On the contrary, it demonstrates our people's awareness. I have told you that this is a Martial Law with a difference. We do not fit in the classical description of a military Government. We had moved with ideas that were not mouth-eaten, we followed a course that was not trodden before. It is the people's Martial Law. It has given the nation a new identity, given the people a new sense of direction and pride, it has brought about positive changes in their life pattern and eliminated the stumbling blocks that so long retarded social progress. In essence, it is a revolution overwhelmingly appreciated and welcomed by the people.

ARS: What might have been the main internal and external challenges (if any) to your Government?

Gen. Ershad: Internally the challenges have been widespread poverty, compounded by periodic natural calamities. However, we have started moving forward. No, I cannot say we faced any external challenge. We have been able to improve relations with all our neighbours. SAARC is the manifestation of cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

ARS: One of the main problems of military regimes is the problem of legitimacy. How did your regime encounter and overcome this problem?

Gen. Ershad: We had no such problem. We have confidence in our people and decided to go to them and seek their verdict. We held a national Referendum and received their overwhelming mandate in favour of our policies and programmes, and my leadership. This regime is, therefore, legitimate to the extent any representative Government can claim to be.

ARS: A number of political scientists believe that after a prolonged spell of military rule return to full-fledged civilian order even if smooth, is hardly complete. In other words it would be only a transition from 'direct-complete' rule to 'indirect-complete' rule. Would you agree with the assessment?

Gen. Ershad: It is a hypothetical assumption and cannot be a truism and condition and assessment thereof varies from country to country.

ARS: Would you agree with Professor Samuel E. Finer's dictum that military intervention overwhelmingly occurs in those regimes of low or minimal political culture?

Gen. Ershad: There are instances of military interventions in countries that claimed to be of, what you call, higher political culture, and not in that remote past, in atleast two countries of Europe. The people of Bangladesh, who fought a war for their independence cannot, by any standard be described as politically unconscious. The military intervention may often be for serving greater national interest. It mostly occurs when the political machine fails to deliver the goods.

ARS: In the light of the above what is your own assessment of the politics of your country before or since you took over?

Gen. Ershad: Politics in Bangladesh, by and large, was a legacy of the colonial days. It was city-based, negative and agitation-oriented rather than development oriented. It failed because it could not cope with the new realities of the society, demands of the time and people's aspirations that independence arouses.

ARS: How do you view the political, pre-election scene in your country?

Gen. Ershad: Parliamentary polls are going to be held soon. People are evincing keen interest and the anti-election elements who usually thrive on chaos cannot afford to go against the popular mood any more. Democracy was never given a fair play in this country. This time it will be different. We are going to build a firm foundation for real people's democracy.

ARS: Do you think there is any possibility or necessity of evolving a strategic consensus among SAARC nations?

Gen. Ershad: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, SAARC has not been intended to be a military bloc. Far from it, it is a collective approach towards peace, security and economic development in the South Asian region and has been designed to expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation and accelerate economic reconstruction in each and among all member countries.

ARS: Do you have a message for the people and armed forces of Pakistan as the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and as a serving soldier?

Gen. Ershad: With Pakistan, we share a common religion, history and tradition. Relations between us are excellent. I wish the people and the members of the Armed Forces of Pakistan continued progress and prosperity. We, in Bangladesh, appreciate the strides they are taking in nation building activities. We pray Almighty Allah for their all round success.

Postscript

In addition to written replies to the questionnaire submitted in advance, General Ershad had two face-to-face sessions with *DJ's* editor-in-chief covering a wide-range of topics concerning his country, its problems and prospects. The General also graciously invited the editor to accompany him on one of his mass contact helicopter jaunts to let the latter see for himself the popular base, the General is working hard to build for himself and his government in rural areas.

Below are reproduced on-the-record excerpts (only) from the first interview on 15 March, 1986, each lasting well over an hour:

ARS: Have you been able to achieve the task you set yourself when you took over?

Gen. Ershad: There is always a gap between the objective and at actual achievement. No, we have not achieved the entire objective. It is just not possible to achieve the entire objective, but a lot has been achieved.

We certainly achieved what no other government achieved, in terms of a better image (of the country) decentralization, disinvestment, land reforms, rural uplift etc.

ARS: Unlike most would-be military dictators you declared your intention to intervene even before you actually took over. This shows you had a political ambition all along. Would you like to comment?

Gen. Ershad: No, this is not true. Its the people who wanted us to take over... They were sick and tired of the previous regimes.

(Nevertheless) military rule is not a permanent affair.

ARS: Don't you think, at the end of martial law, you would be leaving a host of problem for successor government. If only for the reason that the civilian government cannot move as expeditiously as a military government.

Gen. Ershad: I agree a civilian government cannot move as expeditiously as a military government. However, I don't think we would be leaving many problems for the successor government. (After a pause) we have been able to bring about much political stability... Ours has been pragmatic politics. There is no ad hocism in it. Successor government won't find it easy to demolish our system. Yes, it is difficult for a civilian government to move as quickly as a military government. But military government cannot be a permanent affair.

ARS: Why should you hand over power back to the civilians if the job is being well done?

Gen. Ershad: Because military government cannot be a permanent affairs.

ARS: Do you think there could be replay of the past and elections may have to be postponed once again?

Gen. Ershad: No question of yet another postponement. No replay of the past.

ARS: Is army going to play a permanent role in national affairs?

Gen. Ershad: Yes, the army must have a role to play. It has been the forerunner of independence. It fought against the establishment.

ARS: What about those army personnel, like yourself, who had no part to play in the freedom struggle?

Gen. Ershad: It was none of our fault. We did not join because we were not here. But had we been here we would have surely joined.

(After a pause) The army today is united. We are one entity. There are no divisions between *Bahinis* and regular forces. In fact the days of *Bahinis*

(*Mukti Bahini, Rakhi Bahini, Lal Bahini* etc.) are gone... We have seen a lot of *Bahinis* out of the armed forces.

ARS: Disengaging the military from civil affairs could be even more difficult than engaging it. Going back to barracks is always a complicated matter...

Gen. Ershad: Yes, that's why we are trying hard to get out.

ARS: Would you like to say something about Gen. Ziaur Rahman assassination?

Gen. Ershad: The civil government is entirely to blame for Gen. Ziaur Rahman's murder. Personal security of the President is entirely the responsibility of the civil government.

ARS: Would you stay as chief of the army staff after the election?

Gen. Ershad: No, not at all.

The General went on to add:

- * We would not permit radicals and communists to come and take over...
- * Jamaat-i-Islami is nothing but a rightist communist party...
- * We will not allow anyone to humiliate the armed forces and get away with it...
- * We are a Muslim country and I am the first president of Bangladesh openly advocating Islam...

..Imagine two ladies against one man.. What sort of an Islamic order is that?

ARS: But perhaps it would be alright under the Shariat law wherein two women are equated to one man. (Gen. Ershad laughs).

List of the second interview on 24 March, 1986. By then Gen. Ershad had announced his revised election programme and the 15-party opposition alliance led by Sheikh Hasina Waj'd had announced her party's decision to take part in the elections dispelling much of the uncertainty about their fate.

ARS: I must compliment you on successfully steering your country through the pre-election crisis. I think your election strategy has shown a rare combination of firmness tempered with flexibility.

Gen. Ershad: (Looking very pleased) Yes, the firmness of a soldier and the flexibility of a politician.

ARS: Can we call the disbandment of military courts etc. as partial lifting of martial law?

Gen. Ershad: Yes, it is part of the gradual return to the civilian order. But military courts can be revived (if and when necessary).

ARS: Do you envisage a permanent role for your armed forces in civil affairs? If you do, what shape it might take?

Gen. Ershad: I think I have already answered this question before... I cannot really talk about the future. This would be for the nation to decide. (For the present, however) people have joined my bandwagon.



ARS: How would you explain repeated military interventions proclamation of martial laws etc. in your country? Is it because of civilian failure or military's own ambition and thrust to absolute power?

Gen. Ershad: I think, I have already answered this question in writing. (*see written replies*).

ARS: Army takes the country over in a state of acute political instability and chaos often approaching total collapse. But when they quit the situation is hardly better. Would you like to comment?

(The real point was lost in the course of general discussion and was not subsequently pressed).

ARS: What is your strategic posture and threat perception? Considering the type of the terrain and people shouldn't you have more of irregular, territorial forces than regular military/para military forces?

Gen. Ershad: Friend or foe, none is permanent. Relations may be soured with the best of friends at some stage. We should have an army which forms the nucleus to give leadership to the nation. There is some insurgency problem up in the Chittagong hills tracts (but its under control).

Our is a people's army. There are some 40 Ansar battalions, 20 of which are mobilised. In addition we have the Village Defence Parties (VDPs) — some ten million young people, divided into boys and girls' battalions.

They wear red shirts and khaki trousers and can be mobilised in no time when required.

Lieut. Gen. Hussain Muhammad Ershad

A Profile

Tall, slim, fit, Gen. Hussain Muhammad Ershad, 57, wears the traditional four hats of a military ruler as the chief of the army staff, chief martial law administrator, supreme commander and the President of Bangladesh. It was in this descending order of precedence that one of his own commanders-in-chief and the last chief martial law administrator and president of united Pakistan General A. M. Yahya Khan, would place himself and insist on its strict observance. Yahya knew that all his power and preeminence, as the chief martial law administrator and president, flowed from his position as the commander-in-chief (as the chief of army staff was then designated) of the Pakistan Army.

Gen. Ershad does not insist on Gen. Yahya's order of precedence, nonetheless, he clings to his top army job as tenaciously as any military ruler would. Besides the power that ensues from the army command, it remains the only source of his legitimacy as the ruler entering the corridors of power at his own initiative and responsibility without the consent and approval of his people.

Gen. Ershad has surpassed all his civil and military predecessors — Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Khandkar Mushtaq Ahmad, Justice A.S.M. Sayeem, General Zia ur Rahman and Justice Sattar — in the sheer length (well over four years since March 1982 and still going strong) and relatively trouble-free smoothness of his tenure.

Among other things his 'period' so far has been distinguished by a total absence of attempted coups, assassinations and mutinies. There is also little doubt that he has managed to stabilise the political process either by breaking the political will of the people or detaching them from it through long years of martial law during which the politicians besides losing touch with the people, also seem to have lost much of their credibility and confidence. The conspicuous lack of resistance among the politicians to military rule and their protracted tolerance of it, shored or virtually destroyed in the public mind their activist image.

Prolonged civilian acquiescence in the military's seizure of the state apparatus and its absolute and unchallenged control by it, confirms the military government's legitimacy and its right to intervene in national affairs at its own will and initiative.

Gen. Ershad is admittedly one of destiny's favoured children. Like revolution, Destiny eats its own children; but while it is still smiling on its favoured ones it suckles and

tends them with the utmost of love and tenderness. No mother is kinder than Destiny while the charmed spell of good luck lasts. Thereafter there is only nemesis: hell to pay.

The liberation war in his country found General Ershad on the wrong side — as the adjutant of an infantry battalion 6 Bast Bengal in the Southern sector. Who would have ever imagined then that a Pakarmy ha'f Colonel would one day rise to become the absolute ruler of Bangladesh — a new sovereign entity carved out of its parent country — Pakistan.

Back to his country Major Ershad, together with his other Pakistani colleagues, was derided and looked down upon as a repatriate left out of the freedom struggle. The Freedom Fighters (FFs) under General M.A.G. Osmany (a Pakarmy full colonel turned commander-in-chief of the Mukti Bahini's and subsequently promoted full general) dominated the rank and file of Bangladesh's ramshackle, incipient armed forces that besides being ill-armed faction-ridden had been plagued by indiscipline, mutinous and trigger-happy groups. Young majors, glorying in and gloating upon their role in the freedom struggle acted over the heads of their seniors without a thought for military discipline and decorum. They had been unable as yet to shed their guerrilla mentality compounded with a lot of reckless bravado and chutspa. Each one of them would equate his importance to the role he thought he had played in the liberation war without regard to his actual rank and status in the army.

For several years after independence, the Bangladesh armed forces (in effect the army only) were little more than guerrilla bands with little use or value for the established standards and code of a regular military establishment.

The spirit of 'Tiger' Siddiqi — a self-styled brigadier of the Mukti Bahini — still pervaded the rank and file. The reputed guerrilla fighter, more than distinguishing himself in actual fighting, stole the limelight of the world media by actually bayoneting the poor Bihari (Pakistani) 'collaborators' savagely to death and grievous injury in front of TV cameras at the Dhaka Racecourse ground.

The enormous power and overweening vanity of the majors found its most terrifying expression in the brutal assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — the Bangabandhu and the founder of the state — on the night of August 15, 1975. That was the year of the majors and colonels in Bangladesh climaxed by the 'Sepoy Biplobi' or the Sepoy Revolt that miraculously brought the apparently self-effacing, humble and quiet General Ziaur Rahman to the fore and into the corridors of power — first as the army chief and then as the president.

Belying his bare appearance, General Ziaur Rahman proved to be an skilful tactician who knew how to hunt with the military hound and run with the political hare. Until his assassination in Chittagong on the night of 29/30 May 1982, Gen. Zia ruled his country through an ingenious mixture of benignly and brute force — generous to his friends and ruthless with his enemies. According to official records he hanged 1,143 in two months from 9th October 1977 after the abortive joint airmen-sepoy mutiny against him.

Gen. Zia's assassination in 1981 proved to be General Ershad's tryst with destiny. The grave crisis brought out the best in him as a strategist and a tactician. The real-life horror play in Chittagong had supposedly been the fevered brain-child of the local army commander, Major General Muhammad Abu Manzoor. On the map, and in terms of the location of

vital civil/military facilities (marine port, the country's second largest airport, the Bangladesh Military Academy, the East Bengal Regimental Centre and the HQs of Bangladesh Rifles) Chittagong was (and remains) Bangladesh's Achilles' heel.

Even a little slip, a little error of judgement on the part of the Dhaka High Command could have led to a terrible, unmitigated disaster. There could have been a frontal collision or even a prolonged and costly violent engagement between the rebel and the loyal forces. That, happily was avoided by the chief of the army staff's (Gen. Ershad) deft and thoughtful tactical handling of the grave crisis.

At the level of grand strategy, Gen. Ershad would not hasten to place the country under martial law and appoint himself the chief martial law administrator. A lesser man in his place would perhaps have found the temptation too hard to resist. But Ershad would not rise to the bait of power hurriedly taken in the wake of the brutal murder of the head of the state.

By doing so he did not only spare himself and the army the stigma of a possible indirect involvement in the whole blood-soaked affair but also left his own options open. Thereafter the road to absolute power lay open to him like the cave of the Forty Thieves before Ali Baba. He committed unflinchingly to his memory the magic formula of open sesame lest he forgot and got himself trapped like his luckless brother, Qasim. He would wait patiently until the Forty Thieves were destroyed and he alone became the master of all the treasures of the cave.

By far the most important action taken by General Ershad on the morning of 30th May, writes Anthony Mascarenhas (*Bangladesh A Legacy of Blood*), "was to ensure that the constitutional procedures were scrupulously observed. The President was dead. The Vice President would take over. Had the generals in Dhaka taken the opportunity to seize power for themselves they would have divided the army and precipitated a civil war.

"It had a salutary effect elsewhere. For one thing, it encouraged the overwhelming mass of troops and officers in the Chittagong area — even those who had mistakenly sworn allegiance to Manzoor at the start of the mutiny — to abandon the rebel group and bring a quick end to the mutiny. For another, it discouraged fence-sitting in other cantonments of the kind witnessed during previous crises. Once General Ershad had ensured the orderly succession as the constitution stipulated, the crisis was reduced to manageable proportions."

In the 1981 crisis, General Ershad might have taken a leaf from the book of one of his first Pakistani commanders-in-chief, Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan. Between 1953 and 1958, for full five years, the country was up for grabs. But General Ayub, a cautious man and calculating commander, would wait and see until the political process and the state apparatus irreparably broke down and the broad masses were ready to welcome military intervention as an act of deliverance and look upon the military commander as the real Messiah.

The general acclaim and welcome that the so-called October Revolution of 1958 received in both wings of the country proved the profound wisdom behind General Ayub's go-slow, watch-and-wait strategy.

What the future holds for General Ershad, none can foretell. The Bangladeshi politics have all along been most mercurial and unpredictable. Who could have ever predicted the grim fate that overtook Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family (with the solitary exception of his daughter, Hasina Wajid, who happened to be out of the country at the time) on the fateful night of August 15, 1975? Who could have ever imagined the founding fathers — Tajuddin, Nazrul Islam, Qamruzzaman and Captain Mansoor Ali — being gunned down in cold-blood in their prison cells?

In Bangladesh a national hero is hardly ever safe; he faces perennially the twin threat of both character and physical assassination. Not until one is beyond the pale of physical existence could one be enshrined as a hero in Bangladesh's volatile history.

To all outward appearances, General Ershad seems to be in full command of the situation at present. There is no threat within sight either to his hold on the military establishment or his grip on the civilian bureaucratic apparatus. The elections should give him another lease of life as a civilian president. His one major aim and consistent effort has been to turn Dhaka into the centre of his and the military's power (with all the instruments of bureaucratic authority at his command) and break up the hold, once and for all, of the urban politician, intellectual and agitator. His Upa Zilla (sub district) plan and programme in political terms, is aimed at decentralizing, diversifying and diluting the city-centred politics and eventually stretching it so thin on the ground that it ceases to be a force to reckon with.

The crowds that he draws during his helicopter hops to villages are not necessarily an index of his popularity. Most of these are manifestly stage-managed shows. Yet their value as a part of his mass contact tactic cannot be belittled.

In a country suffering from the trauma of coups, mutinies and murders of heads of state, above all, from a grinding sense of betrayal by politicians as a class, I have no doubt, that General Ershad should succeed where others failed provided he does not allow purely personal ambition to get the better of his sober judgement and rational behaviour.

Only, if he could resist the dictator's ultimate arrogance and belief in his own infallibility he could go down in history as another Kemal Ataturk. The task General Ershad has saddled himself with is likely to grow in complexity and magnitude in time rather than get any easier and any closer to fulfilment. It is like a tangled ball of thread with both ends lost in the mesh. The only way to tackle the ball is to go on trying with steady hands, and unwavering eyes.

So all the very best of luck and success to the man holding and smoothing out the tangled ball of thread in Bangladesh!

Bangladesh Power Politics: Ziaur Rahman's Syndrome

Dr. Golam Hossain

The short and turbulent history of Bangladesh presents an almost kaleidoscopic pattern of power play with the stained glass pieces falling into ever-changing shapes and configurations even with the slightest tilt of the hand. It had been full of stunning surprises, sudden upheavals, like the outbreak of a cyclone or a tornados and cold-blooded grisly murders of heads of state.

Perhaps, the most bewildering feature of the land — reputed for its deep aversion and determined resistance to military rule in a united Pakistan had been the plethora of coups and mutinies almost at all levels of military heirarchy — from General to Jawan.

Born out of mass desertions and mutinies under persistent political pressure, incitement and indoctrination, Bangladesh Army little remembered the traditions of discipline, loyalty and an orderly behaviour which it once owned as a part of its parent organization — the Pakistan Army — but that it refused to inherit. The result was the emergence of a loosely-knit, quasi-professional establishment where majors could order major generals about, promote and retire them. What happened after the Majors' Coup in 1975 had a rare combination of the grotesque and the bizarre when the coup makers installed themselves at the President's House and ruled the country from there over the heads of their civil and military superiors.

It goes to the credit of the late General Ziaur Rahman to have put the army back on the rails and restore the hierarchical status quo. Most tragically however he himself fell a prey to a grisly army conspiracy.

Gen. H.M. Ershad carried his predecessor's good work to greater maturity and fullness. The army under him today has the appearance of a disciplined and a loyal force. It is to be hoped that it would continue to grow from strength to strength in the best traditions of professional loyalty and discipline.

— Defence Journal

Throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, most of the new states achieved independence through nationalist movements. In their struggle for freedom, the

nationalist leaders assumed that all their country's misfortunes were caused by foreign rule, and all would be well if they became independent. Colonialism was thus

seen as the main obstacle in the path of national development, which not only cramped economic and social growth but also brought about cultural degeneration. However, at the same time, the leaders of the independence struggle, in spite of their antipathy towards foreign rule, were influenced by the political ideology and institutions of the colonial masters. After independence, they did not entirely reject the institutions and structures of government introduced by the erstwhile foreign rulers, but in most cases, continued with them while some adopted a democratic system and allowed a free press to flourish. They also favoured a system of direct elections and respected the independence of the judiciary.

Nevertheless, in some cases, the nationalist elites made qualitative changes in the inherited institutions or rejected the western model of parliamentary democracy. This was necessary as their primary task was to evolve modern organisations and institutions required for maintaining activities associated with modern nationhood.¹ While the development of a cohesive and progressive nation remained the over-riding concern, its achievement was difficult, as it was observed in some cases that the question of national integration and forming a stable government defied solution. Personal rivalries, group interests, economic exploitation of the poor became serious obstacles in the way of establishing a stable political order and effective government. In many states, consequently, inculcating a sense of integrated national identity among the people, institution building, social and political development have remained more as desired goals than actual achievements.

This is mainly because independence movements were participated in by different classes and groups—students, labourers, peasants and professionals. Though they

had fought under one banner and for a single objective, the situation did not remain the same after independence was attained. These groups never integrated and fused into disciplined parties or even a nation. While the leaders wanted the members of the various groups who took part in the freedom struggle to work hard, to remain disciplined and work for national development, the groups themselves raised vociferous demands related wholly to their sectional interests. As these could not be fulfilled by the ruling elite, the masses often developed a sort of a fatalistic attitude and resignation to the state of affairs. Frustration and dissatisfaction also set in among the masses and often took the form of widespread agitations and demonstrations against the government.² As a consequence, leaders often resorted to repressive methods to silence dissent and criticism. As a matter of fact, the past experience with colonialism helped produce an authoritarian attitude in the political culture of these countries, and the leaders under pressure of circumstances turned towards authoritarian solutions. Moreover, the tendency of the nationalist leaders to consider themselves superior to others owing to the fact of their having led the freedom movement, often made them a victim of personalisation of power, encouraged the privatization of government, creation of private armies or militias, dynastic rule and a one-party authoritarian state leading to political instability.³ As a result many of such governments have been overthrown by military bureaucratic elites acting in league with some power hungry politicians.⁴

In the recent past, the military, in collusion with the bureaucracy hostile to civil political regimes, have taken over the reins of government in many Asian, African and Latin American countries. It may be argued that failure of political leaders in power, weak political institutions, wide-

spread corruption and the excessive ambitiousness of the armed forces have led the latter to intervene in political and governmental affairs. As a result of these factors the governments in many countries have come under military control, some for long periods of time.⁵

In the countries where the military has taken over power by violent means or through a bloodless coup, it has claimed to have done so to maintain law and order, restore democracy and save the nation from disintegration. But only in a few cases has the military regime actually handed power back to the political leaders. Instead, military regimes have continued to rule through a strategic subterfuge: they invariably raise a civilian democratic facade with the help of the over-willing band of self-seeking politicians. However, this process of civilianisation involves holding of elections to win a popular mandate and legitimacy for continuance of rule. Obviously in this process the hold of the army may weaken in the face of mass upsurge. To pre-empt such a possibility, popular institutions on a large scale, are required, and the military leaders themselves float political parties with the connivance of the politicians.⁶

Bangladesh Development. Bangladesh has followed this course of developments. The political leaders failed and the military leaders took over through a bloody coup. Then they held elections to legitimise their continuance in power and later formed a political party—the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). This is an important case in the history of the civilianisation of military regimes that deserves to be studied from an academic point of view. The purpose of this paper is to understand the process of civilianisation of the military regime of General Ziaur Rahman in Bangladesh. An attempt has also been made to examine the extent of the civilian

transformation of the military regime through the party he formed.

Bangladesh emerged as a nation-state in 1971. This was the final outcome of a nationalist movement, and like many other nations of Asia and Africa, it won independence after a protracted war of liberation. After independence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the freedom movement, organized the government on a parliamentary model based on liberal democratic values and beliefs. The system was a multi-party one as was extant in neighbouring India and some other Asian countries, but this model did not last long as the Awami League (AL—Mujibur Rahman's party) government eventually disbanded all the parties. The banned parties went underground and fought armed battles with the government at several places. The National Awami Party — Bhashani (NAP-B), the United People's Party (UPP) and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) worked in the frontline of the underground parties with some student support.⁷

These parties, however, failed to provide a viable national alternative to the AL, and the party under the leadership of Mujibur Rahman was the only dominant organisation in the country during the period 1972–75. The reason for this was that the AL had led the war of independence and its leaders could successfully claim, in the initial days of euphoria, an aura of popular acceptability. Consequently, effective opposition parties could not grow up and Bangladesh failed to develop a competitive party system from the very beginning as had happened in Pakistan also.

As in other newly independent countries, Bangladesh had to deal with diverse problems from its very inception. The AL government under Mujibur Rahman

faced, the immense difficulty of accommodating the various groups which had participated in the war of independence. The situation was compounded by the fact that the AL had very little experience of political management and could not cope with the problems it had to deal with. This point is of relevance to this part of the world where political parties have never been a major decisive instrument for framing public policy or for projecting alternatives. Political parties have also had fewer opportunities for open activities as competitive politics was generally throttled by the ruling elites. This paucity of opportunity for political parties to ensure largescale popular participation can partly be blamed on the colonial legacy. Moreover, after independence, many restrictions were imposed on the free functioning of political parties.⁸

Such factors were hardly congenial for parties to serve as agents of effective allocation of values or as an arena for conflict resolution or as meaningful foci for civic loyalty.⁹ To add to this, Bangladesh had its peculiar socio-political history. Expressing his opinion, Emajuddin Ahmed, a Bangladeshi scholar observes that the endemic poverty of the people, intense factionalism among the various social groups and classes, and a network of patron-client relationships reaching from rural grassroots to the central politico-bureaucratic elites at the national level have resulted not only in organizational weaknesses and a very low level of institutionalization of policy, but also in structural fragmentation.¹⁰

As a revolutionary upheaval generally leads to violence and political turmoil, Bangladesh faced serious problems in the political and economic fields. The inner conflicts and dissidence within the ruling AL (which included even the use of arms), social insecurity, corruption, looting of

banks, inflation with continuously spiralling prices of essential commodities and an overall deterioration in the social and economic life of the people led to severe criticism from the opposition parties, which was, of course, sometimes exaggerated and even irresponsible. The AL was greatly disturbed by the prevailing conditions and reacted sensitively. A tripartite¹¹ alliance formed by the party to deal with the situation did not succeed, and Mujibur Rahman declared emergency in a bold attempt to overcome the crisis and to implement, what he called, a "Second Revolution Programme". It is probable that Mujibur Rahman's desire to remain in power led him to convert the parliamentary system into a presidential form under the rule of one party—the "Bangladesh Krishak Shramik Awami League" (Baksal). This move led to the breakdown of the multi-party system in Bangladesh. Mujibur Rahman's presidential form of government did not last long. It was overthrown on August 15, 1975 by a military coup.

Gen. Ziaur Rahman's Rise. After the coup, a government headed by Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed was formed to project a civilian appearance as the real power was with the army, particularly with the leaders of the coup. The seven majors who had led the coup took the senior officers by surprise. They made the Bangabhaban (official residence of the president) their permanent residence and operated from a "Martial Law Control Room" located in the building, while the senior officers remained in the cantonments.¹² The situation was highly fluid during the first few days after the coup and this led to negotiations between the coup leaders and the senior officers. The circumstantial evidence shows that the coup leaders were powerful enough to replace Major General Shafiullah by Major General Ziaur Rahman as the army chief

of staff.¹³ General (Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani was appointed defence adviser to the president.¹⁴ The reasons for the appointment of General Ziaur Rahman as chief of army staff were his role in the war of liberation, his non-controversial personality and perhaps his non-involvement in the coup. It meant that General Ziaur Rahman was generally acceptable to the army, which had re-established its authority after the overthrow of Mujibur Rahman.¹⁵

Many junior officers and a few senior officers in the army were promoted, and a "Revolutionary Council" consisting of both senior officials and leaders of the coup was formed. While the revolutionary council looked after the tasks of national security, recovery of unauthorised arms and an anti-corruption drive, the Mushtaque government devoted itself to civil administration. The government dropped the district administration scheme of the Baksal and scrapped presidential order No. 9 to restore the powers of the bureaucracy.¹⁶ It also announced that political parties would be allowed to function from September 1976 and that general elections would be held in February 1977. Economic activities received a spurt and businessmen and industrialists regained confidence since Mushtaque Ahmed was a believer in free economy.¹⁷

The radical political parties and the pro-Islamic groups welcomed the coup. Some foreign countries like China, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recognised the new government of Bangladesh. The JSD initially supported the coup, but later became critical of the rightist orientation of the Mushtaque government. On October 16, 1975, when Mushtaque Ahmed met the members of parliament, a majority of them bitterly attacked him and accused him of being involved in the murder of Mujibur Rahman. The prevalence of this

view was supported by leaflets distributed all over Dhaka, charging Mushtaque Ahmed with involvement in the coup and demanding punishment for the killers, restoration of democratic government and release of arrested Baksal leaders. In this troubled situation, Gen. Ziaur Rahman made an attempt to align himself with the anti-Mujibur Rahman forces to consolidate his position.

Second Coup. General Ziaur Rahman's meteoric rise to power and his alignment with the anti-Mujibur Rahman forces was disliked by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf, who was reputed to be pro-Mujibur Rahman. A conflict developed between the two. The brigadier, taking advantage of a demonstration staged by pro-Mujibur Rahman students against the killing of Mujibur Rahman, condemned the brutal deed and condoled the death of the assassinated leader. At the same time a section of the army had become critical of Ziaur Rahman's policies while bitter relations also prevailed between the senior officers and the seven majors. Khaled Musharraf utilised the opportunity to unite all the anti-Ziaur Rahman elements and staged the second coup on November 3, 1975, with apparent success. Ziaur Rahman was arrested while the August coup leaders were forced to surrender. Khaled Musharraf also negotiated with Mushtaque Ahmed and compelled him to hand over power to the chief justice of the supreme court, Justice A.S.M. Sayeem on November 5, 1975. To further neutralise opposition, the brigadier sent the coup leaders abroad, but this move caused much surprise in Dacca, when it became known that four Baksal leaders¹⁸ were found dead in the central jail before the majors were flown out.¹⁹

On the same day a procession was taken out by the pro-Mujibur Rahman students from Dhaka University to the former

residence of the slain leader to observe Bangabandhu (friend of Bengal) memorial day. This suggested collaboration between Khaled Musharraf and a group of Dhaka University students and some Baksal leaders. To counteract the pro-Mujibur Rahman offensive, the JSD and Sammabadi Dal distributed leaflets among the *jawans* (soldiers) at the Dhaka cantonment charging that Khaled Muhsarraf was an Indian agent and describing the coup of November 3 as an attempt by the Delhi-Moscow axis to re-establish its control over Bangladesh.

On November 7, 1975, the *jawans* of Dhaka cantonment marched out in a body and killed Khaled Musharraf along with his close associates. The *jawans* then freed Ziaur Rahman, who was under house arrest and, celebrated the victory as that of the "nationalist" forces in Bangladesh, shouting slogans of "*Bangladesh Zindabad*" (Long live Bangladesh) and "*Sepoy Revolution Zindabad*" (Long live soldiers' revolution).²⁰ General Ziaur Rahman was reinstated as the chief of the army staff and elevated to the position of one of the deputy chief martial law administrators (DCMLA), while president Sayeem was made chief martial law administrator (CMLA).

After Ziaur Rahman was reinstated, it was announced that general elections would take place in February, 1977. The new Sayeem government released the JSD leaders Major (Retd.) M.A. Jalil, A.S.M. Rab and others who had been imprisoned during the Mujibur Rahman regime. But the JSD again distributed leaflets accusing Ziaur Rahman of being led by rightist reactionaries and pro-American elements. This resulted in the killing of several officers by *jawans* in the Dhaka and Rangpur cantonments. In a statement Jalil and Rab urged the *jawans*, workers and peasants to form a "revolutionary council" to bring about a

"revolution of the proletariat"²¹, and tried to stage a coup on November 24, 1975. The attempt was foiled and the JSD leaders were arrested. General Ziaur Rahman appeared to have gained some control over the situation, particularly of the faction-ridden army, and in an early morning broadcast on November 25, 1975 warned against "foreign agents engaged in conspiracy against our independence."²²

The pro-Chinese radical parties issued leaflets accusing the JSD leaders of being agents of India and wanting to destroy the Bangladesh armed forces. Similarly, many other political groups also supported the government and Ziaur Rahman. At the same time, the JSD, a few leaders of the Baksal and two factions of the Sarbohara Party, one led by Kamal Haider and other by Lt. Col. (Retd.) Ziauddin, attempted to overthrow the Ziaur Rahman government.²³ The attempt did not succeed. The military government under Ziaur Rahman tackled the situation by strengthening the security and armed forces. It regrouped army units, replaced or transferred officers, enhanced the budgetary provisions for the armed forces and extended fringe benefits and other facilities to the army personnel. The regime offered the army "a place of honour in national life". By these measures, Ziaur Rahman succeeded in restoring some sort of discipline in the army.²⁴

General Ziaur Rahman, although appearing to have restored discipline in the army, faced several more coup attempts. He crushed these and took other measures, such as forcibly ousting his main rival, Air Vice Marshal M.O. Tawab, another DCMLA. He also had Lt. Col. (Retd.) Abu Taher executed at the Dhaka central jail on July 21, 1976. By removing Tawab, said to be an extreme rightist, and Taher known to be an extreme leftist, Ziaur

Rahman managed to win over moderates and centrists and consolidate his power through majority support in the army.²⁵

Ziaur Rahman, who had emerged as the strong man through all the coups and counter-coups, however, found it difficult to govern the country. On the civil side there were demonstrations, strikes and political agitation, while the divided, sub-divided and factionalised army could not be depended upon to help him continue in power. Sensing his insecurity, the general like Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, Calles and Cardenas in Mexico and Park Chung-hee in South Korea, sought civilian support to consolidate his power. As the credentials of the government were much debated in those troubled days, establishing the legitimacy of his regime became imperative for creating a respectable image at home and abroad.²⁶ The support of the people was also needed to ward off further coups and provide security to the regime.

Restoring Political Order. Like most military rulers, Ziaur Rahman told the nation that he was a "soldier" and not a "politician" that the regime was "interim", "non-partisan" and "non-political", and that his aim was to restore democracy to the people through fair and free elections.²⁷ But, also like many other military rulers in Asia, Africa and Latin America, he did not return power to the political leaders, and instead tried to carve out support at popular level for himself. Meanwhile, an animated debate ensued in Bangladesh political circles about the restoration of democracy and free functioning of political parties. This development was in keeping with Bangladesh's political tradition and the historical role played by political parties. The liberation movement was organised and led by a political party — the Awami League —, and the nation itself had a proud legacy of democratic move-

ments. Ziaur Rahman, consequently could not afford to ignore the importance of political parties. On July 28, 1976, President Sayeem promulgated the political parties regulation (PPR)²⁸ under which political parties were allowed to function provided they got their programmes approved by the government.

Furthermore, the law and order situation in the country had deteriorated and there was continuous pressure on the border from the pro-Mujibur Rahman elements who had fled to India.²⁹ Ziaur Rahman's sense of insecurity grew and he took over the power of the CMLA on November 30, 1976, leaving President Sayeem merely as a ceremonial head. Ziaur Rahman then appointed DCMLAs and zonal martial law administrators (ZMLAs). On the same day, political leaders, including former president, Mushtaque Ahmed, M. A. Jalil, A.S.M. Rab and Mohammad Farhad were arrested. It was evident that Ziaur Rahman was trying to consolidate his power. He, however, proved himself to be a capable and strong administrator, and came to realise the need for a strong popular base to counter the opposition. Appreciating the fact that such a base could only be formed by the local bodies as Ayub Khan had done.³⁰ Ziaur Rahman's government announced that elections to the union parishad, district councils and municipalities would be held in 1977. Elections to the local bodies aroused considerable interest in the rural as well as the urban areas and generated a lot of political activity.

Having taken the above steps, Ziaur Rahman proceeded to further consolidate his position by cultivating some foreign powers and also rightist groups at home. He attended the 43-nation Islamic conference at Istanbul in May 1976, concluded a trade agreement with Pakistan and paid a goodwill visit to China in January 1977. Evidently the general received some assu-

rance of support from foreign friendly powers.

Consolidation. Ziaur Rahman took over the presidency on April 21, 1977. Through a martial law proclamation, which was subsequently ratified in the form of the 5th amendment of the constitution, he enunciated certain objectives of the republic. Significantly, he dropped the word "secularism" from the Bangladesh constitution and entrusted "absolute faith and trust in Almighty Allah". The proclamation stressed solidarity of Bangladesh with the Muslim states. With a view to gaining support from the business community, Ziaur Rahman assured that there would be no nationalisation without compensation.³¹ These changes in the policy of state, helped him to gain support from the pro-Islamic as well as moderate and rightist groups. Finding himself in a position to go ahead with his plans, Ziaur Rahman announced that he would seek a popular mandate to remain in power as well as for his 19-point programme,³² through a referendum. In the referendum, which was held on May 30, 1977, the general received a massive vote of confidence (98.88 per cent). It added to Ziaur Rahman's confidence and political stature.³³ The military regime, henceforth, became formally involved in politics. It appeared that with the referendum, the general had laid the foundation of his future political career, and it was expected that he would either join one of the existing parties or form a political organisation of his own.

When conditions seemed to have settled down to a calmer political atmosphere, an abortive attempt was made to stage a coup on September 30 and October 2, 1977, in which eleven air force officers and ten *jawans* were killed.³⁴ There was general of surprise and shock in the military government and the people. It was evident

that discipline had not yet been restored in the armed forces, and political leaders argued strongly for holding early elections and handing over power to the civilians to ensure normal political life.

The results of the Union Parishad and municipal elections showed that the wind was blowing against the continuance of military rule for an indefinite period. People were getting restive. Throughout 1977, Ziaur Rahman faced tremendous pressure from the major political parties and students for holding early elections. Demonstrations in favour of restoration of democracy were widespread and even those groups and political parties which supported the Ziaur Rahman regime, demanded restoration of popular rule. All these circumstances only convinced the general that he needed more organised political support. On December 8, 1977, he met leaders of different political parties to discuss plans to restore democracy in the country.³⁵

Shortly afterwards it became clear what Ziaur Rahman had in mind, when on the eve of the victory day on December 16, 1977, he admitted in the course of his address to the nation that there was a political vacuum in the country and announced his decision to form a political front. In this manner, he initiated a democratic alternative to fill the void. Soon after the announcement, leaders of different political parties met and laid down two conditions to participate in the process of democratisation. First, the lifting of the ban on activities of political parties and, secondly, a firm time schedule for elections. On January 28, 1978 at a public meeting in Chittagong, Jamaluddin Ahmed, industries adviser to the president, announced the general's decision to form a national political front of different parties and groups.³⁶

Meanwhile, Ziaur Rahman managed to survive a number of military coup attempts against his regime. This indicated that he did not enjoy the complete trust of the army which was infested and weakened by factionalism and internal conflicts. Given its nature, the army was incapable of sustaining any government for a long period of time.³⁷ While this unstable support base of the army must have made the general feel insecure and look for popular support, he, at the same time could not depend on the backing of the existing political parties. It was probably for such reasons that he sought to introduce a new method of politics in the country. He declared "I will make politics difficult"³⁸ and bitterly criticised the "Sunday Chamber" politicians who did not have any link with the masses. He argued that politics should be "rural based" and "people based".

The General toured the country delivering speeches in which he pleaded that the vast majority of people who lived in the rural areas and constituted more than 85 per cent of the population, should have their say in the country's political affairs. At the same time he articulated the idea of a broad-based nationalist front. It was apparent that he was seeking popular support for his proposed new political front, which became a reality on February 23, 1978 when the formation of the Jatiyabadi Ganotantrik Dal (Jagodal) was announced in Dhaka.³⁹ The new party, with the blessings of Ziaur Rahman, had the backing of some of the old guard of Bangladesh politics. With the formation of the Jagodal the General did not desire to align himself with any of the existing political parties. He had come to understand the weaknesses and failures of the country's political organisations and their leaders. The shrewd leader that he was, it was a clever move on his part to talk to all the political parties and

groups and keep them guessing before the new party was launched. His tactics further contributed to the weakening of the existing political parties because many leaders and workers of these organisations joined the Jagodal. It was also felt for a while that Ziaur Rahman himself would lead the Jagodal, but he abstained from taking its membership.

On April 21, 1978 he announced that the presidential election would be held on June 3, 1978.⁴⁰ The sudden proclamation of the date of the presidential poll took everyone by surprise. He had perhaps calculated that this unexpected announcement would give very little time for the opposition parties to organise themselves and thus ensure his victory. It is likely that Ziaur Rahman wanted to strengthen his own position as an elected president before the parliamentary elections scheduled for February 1979.

Nationalist Front. Although, Ziaur Rahman had backed the Jagodal and signed its manifesto, he sought to carve out much broader political support for himself. He entered into an electoral alliance with the six political parties comprising the Jagodal, the National Awami Party-Bhashani (NAP-B), the Bangladesh Muslim League (ML), the United People's Party (UPP), the Bangladesh Labour Party (BLP) and the Bangladesh Scheduled Caste Federation (BSCF). He became the chairman of the alliance, named Nationalist Front, contested the election as its nominee, rather than that of Jagodal alone, and won a massive victory. He received 76 per cent of the total votes polled which was 53 per cent of the electorate.⁴¹ The focus of the Nationalist Front was the general's 17-point socio-economic programme, his achievements in office, and amendment of the constitution providing for a presidential model under the multi-party system. Ziaur Rahman's main rival was the

retired General M.A.G. Osmani, who was nominated by a political front known as the "Ganotantrik Okkyo Jotey" (Democratic United Front). It comprised the Awami League (AL), the National Awami Party-Muzaffar (NAP-M), the Bangladesh People's League (BPL), the Jatiya Janta Party (JJP), the Krishak Shramik Party (KSP) and the Bangladesh Jatiya League (BJL). It polled only 21 per cent of the votes cast.⁴²

The General's election as president was an important triumph for him. It gave him national stature and established his credibility in the minds of the people, and undoubtedly influenced the later political trends in Bangladesh.

Formation of BNP. The Nationalist Front which supported Ziaur Rahman in the presidential election, was a conglomerate of pro-Beijing radicals, the ML and liberal democrats, and it was obvious that the politicians of such widely differing persuasions and ideologies, could neither adhere together nor move in the same direction. Ziaur Rahman carefully observed the behaviour of the Nationalist Front and became convinced that it could not be integrated into a single party, while he wanted a broad-based political platform consisting of like minded political groups and parties.⁴³ The prevailing political conditions, the dissensions within the Nationalist Front, the fragmentation of the opposition parties and the impression he created by his massive victory as the right man of the time, helped him to launch the "Bangladesh Nationalist Party" (BNP). This was to become the means through which he could propagate his ideology and programme to the nation and also to consolidate his position and gain support.

Shortly after the election in June 1978, the General and his associates made their

intention apparent about creating a new party. Through repeated public utterances, they tried to create an atmosphere congenial for the creation of the proposed party backed by the army. These leaders also tried to spell out the nature of the party in their speeches and statements. Ziaur Rahman declared that the election was not an end in itself and the main task before the government was to build the nation for the ninety million people who struggled and won freedom. To achieve that end, he advocated "unfettered democratic rights, a production-oriented economy, progressive politics and stability". He declared:

....the people of Bangladesh wanted politics of peace and democracy. They wanted a variety of politics which would help consolidate Bangladesh nationalism and bring about economic progress. The root of politics and democracy must be established at the people's level everywhere in the country.

The general attached great importance to strengthening national unity and enlarging it.⁴⁴ The election was thus only a means for further strengthening the forces of national progress.

On another occasion, Ziaur Rahman said that the people's verdict of June 3, 1978 based on the promises he had made must be honoured. He would bring about changes in the country's politics, administration and the system of the government, and towards this end he hoped that different leaders of the Nationalist Front would further close their ranks to achieve greater unity. Their unity was sought to make the president's 19-point programme effective and successful and bring about economic emancipation of the people.⁴⁵

In an interview the president felt that without a unified centre, there could be no unity of action or national discipline.⁴⁶

Evidently, he had in mind the Jugto Front politics in East Pakistan after the 1954 elections. He said that the new party would start a new process to strengthen national unity and ensure people's participation at all levels. The new organisation would be nationalist in character, modern in outlook and balanced in composition. According to the General:

...the old political parties, bound by legacies of the past failed to cope up with the challenges of the new situation which developed in the wake of the emergence of Bangladesh. The old slogans, old programmes and old outlook denied them the opportunity to tackle the problem of building up a new democratic order in independent Bangladesh.

He further observed that:

...unfortunately, the nationalist democratic forces failed to achieve a broad unity in the face of that challenge. So the need for a new political order had acquired urgency in the light of the massive popular mandate. The institutional and political vacuum should be filled by forces of nationalism, democracy and progress.

President Ziaur Rahman also said that he was committed to take "politics down to the common people and make democracy meaningful for the vast millions." The new party aimed at carrying "that struggle for unity to a higher level by merging the nationalist progressive forces on a broader platform."⁴⁷

Jamaluddin Ahmed, minister for industry, Abdul Momen Khan, minister for food and Shamsul Huda Choudhury, minister for information and broadcasting supported the president and observed that a recurring change in the politics of the country,

the formation of Jagodal, the declaration of a presidential election foreshadowed the formation of a "new" political party. According to them it was General Ziaur Rahman's earlier intention of forming a political party consisting of groups and individuals of broadly similar frame of thinking.

Ziaur Rahman, however, found it difficult to make the Jagodal a broad based party. It consisted of three broad categories of politicians in Bangladesh: leftists, rightists and centrists, but the people did not accept either extreme leftist or extreme rightist perspectives. The General and his associates wanted a centrist national party which could ensure social justice and democracy and safeguard the unity of the country. They believed that the Nationalist Front was not adequate for that purpose, and it was doubtful if the various units could be forged into a united party. The Nationalist Front was formed for a specific purpose, and once that was achieved, its utility had ceased.⁴⁸

Masihur Rahman, minister for railways and communications and chairman of the NAP-B, Moudud Ahmed, minister for posts, telegraph and telephone, Captain (Retd.) Abdul Halim Chowdhury, minister for local government and Enayetullah Khan, minister for petroleum were also critical of the Nationalist Front for its disunity and factionalism, and in this context mentioned the failure of a similar platform, the United Front in 1954. It was pointed out that a party was more integrated than a loose front. While a front member can change his allegiance and leave the organisation, a member of a party elected to the parliament on a party ticket would lose his membership according to the provisions of the constitution. The ministers argued that a front in comparison to a party provided more scope for defections. Their view was that

due to the political vacuum created by the failure of the AL and the absence of a strong and disciplined political party to fill it and the prevalent socio-economic situation in the country made it imperative to form a "new" party. This would help to bring together all the nationalist democratic forces. The BNP, therefore, was the outcome of an attempt at such polarisation and represented the merger of six political parties.⁴⁹

After lengthy deliberations and discussions, the components of the Nationalist Front, except for a handful of leaders and their groups, decided to join the new party.⁵⁰ On September 1, 1978, General Ziaur Rahman announced in Dhaka the formation of the BNP and floated it as a broad based national organisation with a wide-ranging socio-economic programme based on his 19-point electoral commitment.⁵¹ It can be appreciated against the background explained earlier that both the Jagodal and the Nationalist Front were the president's experiments to prove the feasibility of the new political process planned by him.⁵² Thus, the general who entered the stage of Bangladesh national politics as an army officer, gradually assumed the role of a seasoned and consummate politician.

Analysis. This study indicates that martial law is no substitute for the normal democratic process. If martial law is prolonged indefinitely, it becomes inimical to the interests of the country and to its own in the long run. The recent history of Bangladesh shows that the people had fought against the martial law of Ayub Khan in the 1960's and of Yahya Khan in 1971, finally to win independence and establish democracy. Martial law in Bangladesh also posed problems for the military rulers, and Ziaur Rahman had to restore a democratic process in the country. He, however, proceeded cautiously and

tactfully. He blamed the politicians for the disorder, observing that "it was not the military, but the politicians who imposed martial law in the country."⁵³ He also held the politicians responsible for the corruption and instability which led to the coups.

Moreover, the General did not hand over power to the political leaders after establishing order and security, and continued to remain in authority by manipulating the political parties, holding elections, forming a political front to obtain popular support for his candidature, and finally to establish order and legitimacy of the government he headed. The formation of the BNP may also be regarded as a means adopted by Ziaur Rahman to perpetuate his stay in power, supported by a broad based political party in order to communicate his ideas to the masses, to create a support base at the grass-roots level and to resolve the crisis of legitimacy and perpetuation. But it might also be said that the General, following the Kemalist model, started the process of democratisation and civilianisation of a military regime. It certainly helped him to continue to remain in power, with a respectable image at home and abroad.

The BNP is a unique party in many ways. It was created by a military ruler within the framework of a junta regime, and can be compared to the formation of the Republican People's Party by Kemal in Turkey, the National Revolutionary Party of Park Chung-hee in south Korea, the (Convention) Muslim League of Ayub Khan in Pakistan, the Popular Revolutionary Movement of Mobutu in Zaire and the Ressemblément du Peuple Togolais of Eyadema in Togo.⁵⁴ All these were formed by the generals to give their regimes a civilian profile for a respectable image at home and abroad. These parties, in many ways helped the generals

to remain in power by creating some civilian support for them. But these unlike the AL and JSD in Bangladesh, the National Congress in India and the People's Party in Pakistan, were political parties which were brought into being by the government in power and were not a result of popular movement outside the office. This is an important development in the recent history of politics of the developing countries.

General Ziaur Rahman organised the BNP with branches and affiliated bodies all over the country. The party publicised the socio-economic and political programmes of the president and obtained support from all sections of the population. Its leaders were drawn from different political parties and groups, and consequently the BNP developed as a broad based political party with diverse elements joining hands ostensibly for serving the national cause. In reality, however, the various factions in the party continued to pull in different directions, although they remained within the fold of the party owing to the towering personality of the general. The BNP contested two elections and won both by thumping majorities, ruled the country from September 1978 to March 1982, and played a decisive role in the political development of Bangladesh. It can be said that the BNP was born in power, grew with power and continued in power until it was ousted by another army officer—General Ershad—in March 1982.

Ziaur Rahman's grand experiment in civilianisation of his military regime through the BNP is an important but unique development in the history of military politics in the developing world. The BNP was, however, designed for a specific purpose in the situation then prevailing in Bangladesh. Thus, it is necessary to note two important aspects of

the party. First, that it was created by a military government in office, and secondly, the central philosophy behind the creation of the party, lay in the two-pronged strategy of Ziaur Rahman. On the one hand it was devised to provide for a civilian end to balance the faction-ridden army, and on the other it was intended to serve as a counterweight to the General's political opponents (mainly Awami League) in the field of national politics. In order to ensure for himself an unshakable command over the entire national situation, the president retained all the apex positions and became a father figure, like De Gaulle in France. He was the army commander, head of state and government and chairman of the party—all rolled into one. While the origin, the growth and the performance of the ruling party reflected the focus of the working of the military government in the country, the usual distinction between the party and its founder and between the party and government got blurred under the dominating personality of President Ziaur Rahman, the ruling military general. In other words, the BNP was a projected civilian facade of the military government under the General.

It also needs to be mentioned that Ziaur Rahman's civilianisation experiment, though not unusual in the circumstances obtaining in the developing countries, yielded a singular result not found elsewhere. The uniqueness lay in the fact that the BNP could survive its military founder and get itself voted to power with a massive majority after the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman in 1981. This political development represented the uncommon case of a creation of the army getting civil sanction even after the withdrawal of military rule. But this new political phenomenon did not prove durable. Justice Sattar of the BNP, who was elected president after the assassination of General Ziaur Rahman (and withdrawal of martial law)

failed to protect national politics from the strong dictates of General Ershad, the chief of army staff. It was not long before the army once again returned to power.

Taking an over-view of the situation, it can reasonably be said that the transfer of power from the military to the civilian authorities, effected through the BNP was more a facade than what it appeared

as when the party secured a massive mandate from the people. But then this success was largely due to the dominant personality of Ziaur Rahman and his deft handling of the situation. Taking all the factors into view, it may be opined that in this way, the role of the military in politics in developing countries, including Bangladesh, has come a full circle — from military to military through a civilian facade.

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- 3 S.P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Society*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1964, p. 5; Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1980, p. xv.
- 4 Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 2.
- 5 Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Studies in Military Style*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976, pp. 7-22; Henry Blenen and Martin Fitton, "Soldiers, Politicians and Civil Servants", in Keith Panter-Brick, *Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria*, Frank Cass, London, 1978, pp. 27-57.
- 6 See V.P. Bennett, "Patterns of Demilitarisation in Africa", *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Vol. ix, No. 1, 1974, p. 6.
- 7 Author's interview with Akhteruzzaman, vice-president and former general secretary of Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) in May 1981. The Bangladesh Communist League led by Serajul Alam Khan (known to be JSD theoretician) was the underground base of JSD and East Bengal Workers Movement (Purba Bangla Sarbojha Party) led by Seraj Sikder was supported by NAP-B. See also *Maulana Bhashani's Bibrte* (Maulana Bhashani's statement), December 2, 1973 (n.p.). The UPP worked as the mass front of Bangladesh Communist Party-Leninbadi (BCP-L). For details see Talukder Maniruzzaman, *The Bangladesh Revolution and its Aftermath*, Bangladesh Books International, Dhaka, 1981, pp. 163-179.
- 8 Emajuddin Ahmed, Mohammad Mohabbat Khan and Habib Mohammad Zafarullah, "The 1979 Parliamentary Elections of Bangladesh: An Analysis of Voters Choice", *The Dhaka University Studies*, Dhaka, Part A, Vol. XXXVI, 1982, p. 122.
- 9 Richard Sandbrook, "Patrons, Clients and Factions", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1972, pp. 109-110.
- 10 Emajuddin Ahmed, "Neo-Colonialism: Centre-Periphery Relationship — Developing Countries and Political Development", *Dhaka University Patrika*, Vol. 10, December 1979, pp. 189-191.
- 11 The tripartite alliance consisted of AL, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and NAP-M; see Lawrence Lifschultz, "Bangladesh: A State of Siege", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 30, 1974, p. 51.
- 12 *The Times*, London, August 23, 1975, (despatch by Peter Hazelhurst).
- 13 *Radio Bangladesh*, Dhaka, August 25, 1975.
- 14 *The Statesman*, Calcutta, August 25 & 26, 1975.
- 15 Robert S. Anderson, "Impressions of Bangladesh: The Rule of Arms and Politics of Exhortations", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, 1976, p. 20.
- 16 See Emajuddin Ahmed, "Dominant Bureaucratic Elites in Pakistan and Bangladesh", *The Journal of Social Studies*, No. 6, 1979, pp. 23-119; interestingly it may also be added that the advisory council of the president which worked upto June 3, 1978, comprised 31 persons in all, out of whom 24 were either civil-military bureaucrats or technocrats. Under the Presidential Order No. 9, any government officer could be removed from office at any time without showing any cause.
- 17 Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed stated disinvestment and denationalisation. See *Goshnapatra* (manifesto) of *Democratic League*, published in Dhaka, 1976.

18. Tajuddin Ahmed, Sayeed Nazrul Islam, Mansoor Ali and A.H.M. Kamruzzaman were found dead in Dhaka central jail.
19. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, November 6 & 7, 1975.
20. The author got the details about the November 7, 1975 coup from Subedar Major (Retd.) Anis, a leader of the revolt and presently security officer, BNP office, Dhaka. Also see Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of Mujib Regime and its Aftermath", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, 1976, pp. 119-129.
21. Lawrence Lifschultz, "Abu Taher's Last Testament, Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, August 1977, pp. 1309-1328; also see "Bangladesh: State and Revolution", *Frontier*, Calcutta, December 13, 1975.
22. "Zia's Speech to the Nation", *Radio Bangladesh*, Dhaka, November 25, 1975; see Lawrence Lifschultz, "Bangladesh: The Crisis has not passed", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 5, 1975, p. 33.
23. Talukder Maniruzzaman, *The Bangladesh Revolution and its Aftermath*, op. cit., pp. 202-205.
24. "Zia's Budget Speech", *The Daily Ittefaq*, Dhaka, June 27, 1976. The budget allocation was increased from 13 per cent in 1974-75 to 32 per cent in 1975-76.
25. *The Economist*, London, September 25, 1976.
26. The regime depended heavily on US aid and it was felt that its image would improve with the US administration, the Congress and press if elections were held; see *The Azad*, Dhaka, July 2, 1978; A. Lindquist, "Military and Development in Bangladesh", *IDS Bulletin*, IX: 1, 1977, p. 14.
27. Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1980, p. 132.
28. The PPR (like the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in Nigeria in 1979) had allowed the indoor functioning of political parties seeking licence and permission from the government, but prohibited any foreign supported political party and any underground armed political activities. It also prohibited propaganda of any personality cult. It required the maintenance and operation of a political party's funds through a scheduled bank with periodic audit. The PPR said that any party that fails to win 10 per cent of the seats in the election would automatically cease to function as a parliamentary party and that seats won by such party would fall vacant and would be recontested as bye-elections; see *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, July 29, August 5 and October 25, 1976.
29. Talukder Maniruzzaman, *The Bangladesh Revolution and its Aftermath*, op. cit., p. 201.
30. Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1976: Struggle for Survival as an independent State", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, 1977, pp. 191-200; *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, November 8, 22, 1977.
31. *The Bangladesh Times*, Dhaka, April 23, 1977, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, April 24, 1977.
32. "19-Point Programme", Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, May 1977.
33. M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1977: Dilemmas of the Military Rules", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1978, pp. 126-134; *The Economist*, London, June 4, 1977, p. 80; *The Statesman*, Calcutta, June 11, 1977; *The Bangladesh Times*, Dhaka, June 1, 1977.
34. The abortive coup first started in Bogra cantonment on September 30, 1977. It reached Dhaka cantonment on October 2, 1977. A group in the army disloyal to Ziaur Rahman, staged the coup at the time when the Bangladesh administration was busy holding negotiations at Dhaka airport to end the hijack of a Japan Air Lines aircraft. The insurrection was suppressed successfully with casualties of about 230 on both sides. Later about 500 persons were tried out of whom 92 received death sentence for inciting the rebellion. See M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1977: Dilemmas of the Military Rulers", op. cit., p. 130; *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, October 3, 1977; *Naya Jug*, Dhaka, October 9, 1977, and *The Economist*, London, December 24, 1977.
35. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, December 9 & 10, 1977.
36. *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, January 29, 1978.
37. Talukder Maniruzzaman and UAB Razia Akhter Banu, "Civilian Succession and 1981 Presidential Elections in Bangladesh", in *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in New Commonwealth*, edited by Peter Lyon, James Manor and Hugh Tinker, (forthcoming), p. 4.
38. *Bichitra*, Dhaka, September 29, 1978.
39. *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, February 24, 1978; also see *The Azad*, Dhaka, March 16, April 17, 1978.
40. *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, April 22, 23, 1978.
41. See "Bangladesh Election Commission", *The Azad*, Dhaka, June 6, 1978.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Holiday*, Dhaka, June 29, 1978.
44. Author's interview with President Ziaur Rahman on May 23, 1981.
45. *Holiday*, Dhaka, June 5, 9, July 9, 1978.
46. *Ibid.*, August 27, 1978.
47. Author's interview with President Ziaur Rahman on May 23, 1981.

- 48 Author's interview with Jamaluddin Ahmed, Abdul Momen Khan and Shamsul Huda Choudhury, ministers, on several occasions in May and June, 1981. See also *Bichitra*, Dhaka, September 29, 1978.
- 49 *The Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, August 28, 1978; *Bichitra*, Dhaka, September 29, 1978. Author's interview with Maudud Ahmed, deputy prime minister, on August 14, 1982 and with Abdul Halim Chowdhury, minister, on June 9, 1981.
- 50 Among the leaders of the Nationalist Front, Nurur Rahman, Anwar Zahid, Maulana Abdul Matin and Kazi Zafar Ahmed did not join the BNP and argued to continue the front. Kazi Zafar Ahmed resigned from the cabinet. A few days later Enayatullah Khan also resigned from the cabinet and BNP.
- 51 M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1978: Search for a New Party", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, 1979, pp. 191-197.
- 52 *Bichitra*, Dhaka, September 29, 1978.
- 53 *World Times*, London, Vol. 2, No. 46, May 24, 1979, p. 4.
- 54 Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Civilianization of Military Regimes: A Comparative Analysis", *BISS Journal*, Dhaka, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1980, p. 45.

DOCUMENTATION

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH:

Land and People

People : Population (1984 est): 99,585,000. Age distrib. (%): 0-14: 43.2; 15-59: 52.4; 60+: 4.4. Pop. density: 1,740 per sq. mi. Urban (1981): 15%. Ethnic groups: Bengali-98%, Bihari, tribesmen. Languages: Bengali (official), English. Religions: Moslems 83%, Hindu 16%.

Geography: Area: 55,813 sq. mi. slightly smaller than Wisconsin. Location: in S. Asia, on N bend of Bay of Bengal. Neighbours: India nearly surrounds country on W, N, E; Burma on SE. Topography: The country is mostly a low plain out by the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers and their delta. The land is alluvial and marshy along the coast, with hills only in the extreme SE and NE. A tropical monsoon climate prevails, among the rainiest in the world. Capital: Dacca. Cities (1984 est): Dkaka (met.) 3.5 min.; Chittagong (met.) 1.4 min.; Khulna (met.) 623,000.

Government: Type: Martial law. Head of state: Pres. Hossain Mohammad Ershad, b. Feb. 1, 1930, in office: Dec. 11, 1983. Local divisions: 20 districts. Defence: 1.6% of GNP (1982).

Economy: Industries: Cement, jute, textiles, fertilizers, petroleum products. Chief crops: Jute (most of world output), rice. Minerals: Natural gas, offshore oil. Fish catch (1982): 736,000 metric tons.

Electricity prod. (1982): 3.3 bln. kwh. Labour force: 74% agric.

Finance: Currency: Taka (Mar. 1985: 26.5 = \$1 US). Gross domestic product (1983): \$11.2 bln. Per capita income (1983): \$119. Imports (1983): \$2.4 bln.; partners: Jap. 13%, U.S. 8%. Exports (1983): \$782 mln.; partners: U.S. 10%, Sing. 11%; Pak 5%. International reserves less gold (Mar. 1985): \$357 mln. Gold: 54,000 oz t. Consumer prices (change in 1984): 12.1%.

Transport: Railway traffic (1982): 5.3 bln. passenger-km; 844 mln. net ton-km. Motor vehicles: in use (1981): 35,000 passenger cars, 21,000 comm. vehicles. Chief ports: Chittagong, Khulna.

Communications: Telephones in use (1982): 122,000. Daily newspaper circ. (1983): 6 per 1,000 pop.

Health: Life expectancy at birth (1978): 45 yrs. Births (per 1,000 pop. 1984): 45.2. Deaths (per 1,000 pop. 1978): 17.3. Natural increase (1982): 2.7%. Hospital beds (1979): 17,494. Physicians (per 100,000 pop. 1977): 8.

Education (1984): Literacy: 25%. Attendance: 65% primary school; 25% secondary school.

Major International Organizations: UN and its specialized agencies.

Embassy: 2201, Wisconsin Ave. NW 20007; 342-8372.

Moslem invaders conquered the formerly Hindu area in the 12th century. British rule lasted from the 18th century to 1947, when East Bengal became part of Pakistan.

Charging West Pakistani domination, the Awami League, based in the East, won National Assembly control in 1971. Assembly sessions were postponed; riots broke out. Pakistani troops attacked Mar. 25; Bangladesh independence was proclaimed the next day. In the ensuing civil war, one million died amid charges of Pakistani atrocities. Ten million fled to India.

War between India and Pakistan broke out Dec. 3, 1971. Pakistan surrendered in the East Dec. 15. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became prime minister. The country moved into the Indian and Soviet orbits, in response to U.S. support of Pakistan, and much of the economy was nationalized.

In 1974, the government took emergency powers to curb widespread violence; Mujibur Rahman was assassinated and a series of coups followed.

Chronic destitution among the densely crowded population has been worsened by the decline of jute as a major world commodity.

A Ganges waterpact with India, signed 1977, was recommitted by the 2 nations, 1979. Martial law, in force since 1975, was lifted on Apr. 6, 1979, prior to the opening of the new parliament.

On May 30, 1981, Pres. Ziaur Rahman was shot and killed in an unsuccessful coup attempt by army rivals. Vice President Abdus Sattar assumed the presidency but was ousted in a coup led by army chief of staff Gen. H.M. Ershad, Mar. 1982. Ershad promised a return to democracy but by 1985 was still ruling by martial law.

LIST OF OFFICERS CONVICTED BY GENERAL COURT MARTIAL AND HANGED FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT ZIAUR RAHMAN:

1. BA-185 Brigadier Mohsinuddin Ahmed, Commander, 69 Infantry Brigade.
2. BA-200 Col. Nawazesh Uddin, Commander, 305 Infantry Brigade.
3. BA-212 Col. Muhammad Abdur Rashid, Commander, 65 Infantry Brigade.
4. BSS-675 Lt. Col. Shah Mohammad Fazle Hussain, CO, 6 East Bengal Regiment.
5. BA-301 Lt. Col. A.Y.M. Mahfuzur Rahman, Personal Secretary to President from C-in-C Secretariat.
6. BA-400 Lt. Col. Muhammad Dilawar Hussain, Asstt. Director Ordnance Services.
7. BSS-722 Major Gias Uddin Ahmed, 2nd in Charge, 11 East Bengal Regiment.
8. BSS-839 Major Rawshan Iazdani Bhuiyan, Brigade Major, 65 Infantry Division.
9. BA-1167 Major Mohammad Mujibur Rahman, OC, 112 Signal Coy.
10. BSS-1070 Captain Mohammad Abdus Sattar, 6 East Bengal Regiment.
11. BSS-862 Major Kazi Mominul Haque, 2nd in Charge, 1 East Bengal Regiment.
12. BSS-1526 Captain Jamil Haque, 21 East Bengal Regiment.
13. BSS-1742 Lt. Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan Khan, 6 East Bengal Regiment.

COUPS, MUTINIES AND ASSASSINATIONS IN BANGLADESH

- August 15, 1975 Murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family at his Road No. 32, Dhanmondi residence masterminded by Majors Farook Rahman, Khundker Abdur Rashid and supported by Majors Sharful Haq Dalim, Pasha, Huda, Mohiuddin, Noor, Shahjahan, Squ. Ldr. Liaquat, etc. Major Noor fired the burst from his stengun killing Mujib on the spot.
- Nov. 2, 1975 (i) Counter coup against the Majors and their leader/appointee, Gen. Ziaur Rahman (to streamline chain of command) by the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Brig. Khalid Musharraf and Shafat Jamil, Commander 46th Brigade (Dhaka Brigade).
- (ii) Four of the founding fathers of Bangladesh. Tajuddin, Nazrul Islam, Mansoor Ali and Kamruzzaman killed outside their jail cells — by Risaldar Muslehuddin.
- Nov. 3, 1975 Majors Dalim, Noor, Huda, Pasha and Shariar sent into exile with Farook and Rashid.
- Nov. 4, 1975 Brig. Khalid Musharraf's bid to become chief of army staff in place of Gen. Zia-ur-Rahman who had resigned earlier and was later arrested.
- Nov. 5-6, 1975 Khandaker Mushtaq also forced to resign and Chief Justice Abusadat Mohammad Sayem sworn in as President on Nov. 6. Khalid Musharraf's and Shafat Jamil's abortive coup failed largely because of their own indecision and pro-Awami League or pro-Indian leanings.
- Nov. 6, 1975 The Great Sepoy midnight Mutiny led by retired Lt. Col. Abu Taher. Khalid was branded traitor and Indian agent. The Sepoy slogan: 'Sephai, Sephai, Bhai, Bhai, officer De Rakta Chai. Subedar Uppere officer uni. (All soldiers are brothers. Blood of officers wanted. No rank above Subedar).
- Nov. 7, 1975 Khalid Musharraf and Cols. Huda and Haider gunned down by jawans of Bengal Lancers 82 Field Artillery. Gen. Zia rescued and reinstated. Jatyo Samaj Tantrik Dal — JSD (Socialist Party) dominated the revolt. Biplobi Sainak Parishads (Revolutionary Soldiers' Councils) formed.
- Nov. 23, 1975 Gen. Zia hits back, Col. Abu Taher arrested.
- April, 1976 Majors Farook and Rashid attempt an abortive coup against Zia-ur-Rahman.
- July 21, 1976 Col. Abu Taher hanged.
- April 21, 1977 Zia becomes military President of Bangladesh.
- Sep. 25, 1977 Gen. Zia visits President Anwar Sadat in Cairo and is tipped off by him about yet another impending coup.
- Sep. 27, 1977 On returning home, Zia cancels an air force function where the impending coup was to begin. A JAL DC-8 bound for Bangkok hi-jacked and force landed in Dhaka.
- Sep. 28, 1977 The second 'Sepoy Biblob' Seargent Azfar of Air Force declares himself head of state. It happened suddenly while several senior officers were gathered at the airport talking to hi-jackers.
- October 2, 1977 The mutiny ends. Gen. Zia narrowly escapes death. Zia comes down with a heavy hand on the mutineers troops and 'massacres' them ruthlessly.
- June, 1978 Presidential elections held. Zia faces Osmany and defeats him.
- May 1980-March 1981. Two more abortive coups by Majors and Lieut. Cols. against Zia.
- Night, May 29-30, 1981. Gen. Zia assassinated. Chittagong under the orders of the local military commander, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Abul Manzoor. Gen. Manzoor was later hauled up and killed.
- March 24, 1982 Gen. H.M. Ershad seizes power in a peaceful, pre-dawn military coup.

Interference with the Constitution: Pre-Election Politics

The mainstream opposition comprising the 15-party and the 7-party alliances have strongly protested against the amendment to the Representation of the People Order (PO 155) barring a candidate for election to parliament from contesting in more than five seats. Expressing sharp reaction to the proclamation of an ordinance in this connection the two alliances said yesterday (15 March) the government action proved once again that it was not willing to hold a free and fair election.

The ordinance has come at a time when the two alliances were considering a CPB (Communist Party of Bangladesh) sponsored proposal to contest the ensuing parliamentary elections putting up Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia as their candidates—each for 150 seats.

Talking to journalists immediately after the announcement of the ordinance Sheikh Hasina said, "This government has no constitutional right to amend the constitution. President Ershad repeatedly pronounced that he would not touch the constitution".

She said that President Ershad had categorically said in his March 2 announcement that he would not interfere with the constitution and the just-effected amendment to the constitution was a breach of his commitment. She said we have been carrying on the five-point movement for restoration of democracy through free and fair election. But government ignored this demand, she added.

She said, in this situation we two had thought of contesting in all 300 seats aiming at restoration of a congenial

atmosphere, but right at that moment the government had trampled down under feet the aspirations of the people. In a statement the politburo of the Workers Party said that the government had virtually amended the constitution in the name of amending the representation of the People Order.

It said, "There is clear mention in the clause 71(2) of the constitution that any person can contest in two or more constituencies". It said that the proposed election had no constitutional and legal basis as a result of the latest amendment to the Representation of the People Order.

The politburo of the Workers Party (Menon) further said that there was no scope for participation in the election due to the amendment to the constitution in the name of tactics. It called upon the people to make a success the action programme of the two alliances that includes observance of countrywide hartal on March 22.

In an emergency meeting of the 15-party alliance central leaders held with Sheikh Hasina in the chair it was observed that the government action had made it clear that it wanted to "score goal in an one-sided game".

The meeting said that the desire of the two alliances to face the electoral challenge of the government had cowed down it and hence the ordinance had been promulgated. It said that the government had interfered with the constitution through the amendment of the representation of the People Order and thus virtually amended the constitution. Consequently, the constitutional crisis will be further complicated, it added.

The alliance leaders said that the government had no right to amend the

constitution and its action had exposed its scheme regarding the constitution. The alliance urged the people to make a success its action programme to force the government to accept the opposition demand.

In an emergency meeting of the 7-party alliance leaders with BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair it was stated that the government was panic-stricken at the possibility of the two alliances' participation in the election under a blueprint" to turn it against the government and consequently the ordinance had been promulgated. The meeting said it was once again proved beyond doubt that the government did not want the opposition to take part in the election and free and fair election could not be held under it.

It said that the government had virtually conceded to defeat by promulgating the ordinance. The alliance instructed its units to take preparation in full swing to make a success its action programme.

CPB, NAP (Harun), Janadal (Huq) and Jagpa issued separate statements condemning the government for the ordinance.

The New Nation,
Dhaka, March 16, 1986.

WRIT AGAINST PO 155 AMENDMENT FILED

AL, BNP Challenge Change in Polls Rule

Sheikh Hasina, President of Bangladesh Awami League and Mr. Mohammad Abdul Barez, a former Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait and a leader of the BNP filed two separate writ petitions on Tuesday (18

March), in the High Court Division, Dhaka challenging the legality of the Ordinance No. XVIII of 1986. The ordinance prevents a citizen of Bangladesh from contesting from more than five constituencies in the parliamentary elections. The Ordinance, the petitioners said, has been made without lawful authority and was of no legal effect.

The writ petitions have been filed in the court of Mr. Justice Latifur Rahman and Mr. Justice Aminur Rahman Khan. The admissibility of the writ petitions will come up for hearing today (Wednesday).

The facts of the Petition in short are that: The petitioner and her political party and the 15-party alliance and the seven-party alliance being determined to prevent the respondent from holding one-sided mock election and to give the people an opportunity to register their vote against such a negation of democracy. It was decided that the petitioner and the leader of seven-party alliance would jointly contest in all three hundred constituencies with a common symbol. This news was published in different newspapers on March 13, last.

Ordinance No. XVIII of 1986

But suddenly the Government promulgated an Ordinance on March 15 last with a malafide object of depriving the petitioner as well as the leader of seven-party alliance of their constitutional right as provided in Article 71(2) of the Constitution, to participate in the forthcoming election.

The Ordinance has purported to amend the Representation of People Order (P.O. 155 of 1972) introducing a new Article 13-A to the effect, that no person can contest elections from more than five constituencies and that every candidate

shall with his nomination paper a declaration that he is not contesting elections in more than five constituencies. It is further provided that if a candidate becomes a candidate for elections from more than five constituencies, his nomination paper for elections from all his constituencies shall be treated as null and void.

The petitioner submitted that the Ordinance is manifestly inconsistent with Article 71 of the Constitution and the Ordinance is unconstitutional, made without lawful authority and void.

The petitioner submitted that the Ordinance by purporting to amend the Representation of People Order to deprive the petitioner of her constitutional right to contest from any number of constituencies is manifestly inconsistent with Article 71 of the Constitution and thus is palpably unconstitutional and void.

The petitioner submitted that the provisions of Article 71(2) expressly prohibit the imposition of any limitations on the right of a person to contest from any number of constituencies.

The petitioner submitted that Article 13A(3) contains a Penal provision. In the constitutional provision there cannot be any penal clause.

The Deputy Attorney General appeared for the State and took adjourned for the day and it will come up for hearing today (Wednesday).

Dr. Kamal Hossain, Mr. Shamsul Huq Choudhury, Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Shaikat Ali Khan, K.S. Nabi, S. S. Halder Amirul Islam, A. Y. Masihuzzaman, Alimuzzaman Chowdhury, Aminul Huq, Sheikh Ansar Ali, Salahuddin Advocates, appeared for the petitioner.

A similar petition has also been filed by Mr. Md. Abdul Barek, former Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait and a BNP member challenging the said Ordinance and in this matter the Government will also make its submission today (Wednesday).

Messrs T. H. Khan, Julmat Ali Khan, Jamiruddin Sircar, Rafiqul Islam Miah, Mvi Md. Wahidullah and Mr. M. A. Wahhab Mian, advocates appeared for the petitioner.

Bangladesh Observer,
Dhaka March 19, 1986.

Court Rejects Writ Petition

Dhaka, 20 March

The two-member bench of the High Court Division of the 'Bangladesh Supreme Court has summarily rejected the writ petitions filed by Awami League President Sheikh Hasina Wajed and the member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party M.A. Barek, in which they challenged the legality of the order issued by the Chief Martial Law Administrator, Lt. General Ershad that a single person cannot stand from more than five constituencies in the parliament election scheduled to be held on April 26.

The High Court Bench comprising Justice Latifur Rahman and Justice Aminur-Rahman Khan said that the court had no jurisdiction to entertain the writ petitions of Sheikh Hasina and Barek because these related to orders passed by the Chief Martial Law Administrator regarding elections and parliament.

The judges pointed out that there existed orders passed under the martial law proclamation of March 24, 1982, that laws

made by the Chief Martial Law Administrator regarding elections and the parliament could not be questioned in any court.

Secondly, the court accepted the argument, in the context of specific clauses in the martial law proclamation including those added later on in 1983, that the Chief Martial Law Administrator could suspend the constitution, revive it partially or fully or could amend it.

In course of delivering the decision, the High Court Bench also observed that at present the supreme law of the country was the martial law proclamation and the law-giver was the Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Even the Supreme Court itself functions under the authority derived from the martial law proclamation and not from the Constitution which is now not in operation. Therefore, as long as the verdict of the High Court Bench remains valid—that is, unless it is overruled by the Appellate Division—the point has to remain undisputed that all rules of the game relating to the parliamentary or presidential elections will be set by the Chief Martial Law Administrator.

This position can alter only if the Chief Martial Law Administrator changes his mind or martial law itself comes to an end. But after Thursday's (20 March) finding of the High Court bench the inescapable impression one gets is that one shall not get any relief, beyond what the Chief Martial Law Administrator will prescribe, from the courts in respect of matters pertaining to elections and of course about what are still supposed to be fundamental rights.

In the context of such a legal situation a political party which had so far thought that there was not much sense in taking

part in elections under martial law might feel strengthened in its belief. On the other hand, a political party which was thinking that it was better to take part in the elections shall have to do so knowing fully what the limitations are. However, those who believe that civilianization at any cost is better than the continuation of rule by martial law proclamation should not have any problem taking their decision.

GOVT. COMPLETES 4 YEARS

Ershad Thanks People, Armed Forces

Dhaka, 24 March

President Hussain Muhammad Ershad on Sunday (23 March) felicitated and thanked the people, members of armed forces and civil administration and others whose hard work, dedication and tireless efforts have helped in the attainment of progress and development of the country through implementing far reaching reforms in socio-economic and political arena, reports BSS.

In a message on the eve of the completion of four years of the present government the President said it is a memorable event of hopes and inspiration in the history of national life. "We had to accept the onerous responsibility of running the administration of the country four years ago for greater national interest in the back-drop of socio-economic and political situation obtaining that time", he said adding: "That was a very difficult challenge".

He said: Our path was not strewn with flowers. We had to surmount many a problem and calamity during the last four years. But we have been able to establish the nation on a firm foundation with our unflinching faith in Allah and

active and unstinted support of the people of all walks of life."

President Ershad said unthinkable changes have been attained in all spheres of national life during the four years. The nation has not only got rid of a condition of anarchy, but achieved desired success in various sectors. The country is certainly making a stride forward towards progress. Far-reaching socio-economic and political reforms have been implemented. As a result, unprecedented vivacity has

been created today in the national reconstruction activities. He said in order to further consolidate the success and establish it on firm foundation, we have continued our sincere efforts for establishing a real democratic system. Our initiative for holding forthcoming parliamentary election by ensuring participation of all has given testimony to our desire for establishing a real representative democratic government.

Daily News,
Dhaka, 24 March, 1986



Newsletter

WEAPONS • DEALS
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US FY '87 Defence Budget

Three Percent Increase Envisaged

Despite new deficit-cutting laws, the Pentagon has proposed to increase Fiscal Year 1987 DOD spending by almost three percent over FY '86. While most aircraft and missile programmes were spared, some, including the Fairchild T-46A trainer and several USN shipbuilding projects fell victim. Meanwhile, the Pentagon's "Annual Report to the Congress, FY 1987" reveals several new Soviet military developments.

The \$311,600 million (budget authority) request includes \$274,300 million in actual outlays. US lawmakers have already "declared war" on this and said the Gramm-Rudman deficit-cutting measure enacted late last year will force a major outback. But Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger said: "The budget proposed is the minimum I can recommend in good conscience to fund a secure deterrent at a prudent level of risk."

The DoD plans, in FY 1987, to authorize \$86,400 million for operations and

maintenance; \$95,800 million for weapons procurement; and \$42,000 million for RDT&E. Actual outlays for those categories would be \$82,300 million, \$78,800 million and \$32,400 million, respectively. The USAF would receive the largest share with budget authority of \$105,200 million and \$92,200 million in outlays, followed by the USN/USMC with \$104,500 million authorized and \$93,900 million in outlays. The US Army would get \$81,500 million authorised, with \$74,600 million in outlays. The largest single request was for the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). If approved, SDI would increase by 75% in the coming fiscal year. SDI funding in FY 1986 totals \$2,750 million, about \$1,000 million less than sought. The FY 1987 request is for \$4,800 million.

Regarding Soviet ICBM and SLBM modernization, Weinberger's Annual Report disclosed that at least three new ICBMs are being prepared for flight testing within the next five years, with a

silo-based heavy ICBM follow-on to the SS-18, a new version of the SS-x-20, and new version of the SS-25, potentially with a MIRVed payload. It was also noted that the Soviet SU-25 Frogfoot was based in Eastern Europe for the first time in 1985. One Soviet SU-25 regiment was assigned to a base in East Germany and a Czech squadron began re-equipping with SU-25s. Meanwhile, said Weinberger, Soviet advances in air defence will threaten US aircraft, and the Warsaw Pact nations are establishing bases in Eastern Europe from which to launch the high-performance, long-range SA-5 SAM. He also expressed concern over introduction of the SA-11 and the SA-X-15 and said the SA-X-12 mobile tactical SAM is expected to reach operational units soon.

The USAF requested 21 Lockheed C-5Bs, 48 McDonnell Douglas F-15C/D/E aircraft, eight McDonnell Douglas KC-10A tankers, new engines for 50 KC-135s and three Lockheed TR-1/U-2 aircraft. It also requested \$3,923.9 million for 96 F-16C/Ds and 120 F-16CM aircraft. The F-16CM would be a modified and less expensive version of the F-16C for less comprehensive but still multi-role missions. The USAF has begun a competition for replacement of Air National Guard interceptors, with ten aircraft funded in FY 1986. The FY 1987 request is for twenty aircraft worth \$447.3 million. General Dynamics is expected to bid its "specially configured" F-16C while Northrop will offer the F-20 Tigershark.

Weinberger said that the Fairchild Republic T-46A trainer programme, which is experiencing cost and schedule problems, would be terminated. He also said there is "a very compelling, persuasive case for modernization (of the Cessna T-37, the current USAF trainer)". Fairchild Industries says it is "supporting continuation of the programme in Congress, and were

optimistic that the programme will go forward".

The McDonnell Douglas C-17 airlifter procurement programme would begin in FY 1987 with the request for advanced procurement funds in support of purchase of two aircraft in FY 1988. The Pentagon plans to begin multi-year (three year) procurement of the Texas instruments HARM missile, with 3,240 missiles for the USAF and USN each year.

Funds are requested for 21 new warships and three conversions, including four Los Angeles-class attack submarines and one Trident submarine. Also requested are funds for two Aegis cruisers, three DDG-51 Aegis guided missile destroyers, two oilers and one fast combat support ship. The budget would also fund advanced procurement items needed for a newly designed SSN-21 Sea Wolf attack boat to be built in FY 1989. The USN is seeking \$3,066.2 million for 21 Trident 11 SLBMs.

USN warship planning, however, would suffer somewhat. The LHD-1 shipbuilding pace will slow with the fifth ship to be requested in FY 1991 versus a year earlier. Delivery is now projected for FY 1996. As the result of reliability problems with the LCAC, the USN will postpone procurement of additional air-cushion craft until FY 1988. A total of 33 have been authorized to date, and the USN wants 90.

In FY 1987, the USN is seeking 17 SH-60B and seven SH-60F ASW helicopters. Being emphasized is SH-60F procurement in the near term. Follow-on SH-60B procurement would be at a rate of six per year up to FY 1990. The USN will begin purchasing airships in FY 1987 to serve as platforms for radar surveillance, with Airship Industries and Good-year Aerospace competing. In addition, the USN is studying Advanced Tactical Aircraft

(ATA) concepts that could lead to the introduction of a Grumman A-6 Intruder attack aircraft replacement in the 1990s. It is also seeking \$52 million to buy 685 GD Stinger LW air defence missile systems to protect warships against low-flying fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.

V-22 (JVX) funding would drop to \$392 million in FY 1987. The USN wants 120 McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet strike aircraft worth \$3,466.7 million and is seeking \$405.9 million for advanced procurement of parts for multi-year purchase starting in 1988. The USN envisions an FY 1988 start for a competitive, five year multi-year procurement of 753 F/A 18s. The U.S. Army would buy 840 General

Dynamics M-1 tanks, 870 FMC Bradley Fighting Vehicles, and 300 FMC M577A2 armoured command post carrier.

The US Army Advanced Rotorcraft Technology Integration (ARTI) R&D programme would continue leading to purchase of the LHX helicopter. Interim Sgt. York (DIVAD) replacement air defence weapons would be purchased. Despite some remaining problems, the US Army requested \$238 million for procurement and R&D of the Lockheed Aquila RPV. In FY 1987, \$48.7 million is requested to develop a Dragon anti-armour missile follow-on. Missing from the FY 1987 budget request was \$10 million to start up the Armoured Gun System (AGS) programme.

India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) Top-Secret Failures

How and why was RAW formed? What caused the Army-IB war? Did Y.B. Chavan really use RAW against Mrs. Gandhi? How serious were RAW's blunders on the borders? Was RAW unaware of the coup that overthrew Mujib-ur-Rehman? Did RAW fall in Punjab? Did Mrs. Gandhi unleash RAW upon the Opposition in the days of the Emergency? Did Charam Singh use RAW and Mossad to meet Moshe Dayan clandestinely when he was PM in the late '70s? Is RAW today plagued by trade unions? Can super sleuth Sankaran Nair pull RAW out of the morass?

Jasvinder Singh investigates the top-secret, controversial agency which is seeking a new role after its failure to prevent Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and the "Frenchgate" spy scandal. Plus an exclusive, never before insight into Sankaran Nair's top-secret Cadre Review of 1985.

India's premier intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Cabinet Secretariat, began its stealthy operations with a string of spectacular successes followed by a string of spectacular failures. Soon after its inception, it was trapped in a tangled web of controversies; murky peccadilloes and politicking have been tragic landmarks in the brief but chequered history of RAW. A

common perception is that the seeds of discord were sown by Mrs. Indira Gandhi who regarded RAW as her personal intelligence force. Members of the Congress looked at it with suspicion; the Opposition with fear.

The Army vs The IB

After the war-clouds of the 1965 Indo-Pak operations had blown over, an

unsavoury controversy arose between the military authorities and the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Incidentally, the IB at that time was responsible for both external and internal intelligence and RAW came into existence a few years later. The verbal fusillade between the two began with the military top brass claiming that the IB had let them down during the war. The military cited various instances when the IB had colossally failed to provide proper strategic information. Quickly, this war of nerves between the two arms of the country's security services reached the top echelons of both organizations. The euphoria of battle victory was replaced by a bitter mudslinging match.

The military top brass, time and again, pressed home their complaints against the IB. According to Army field commanders returning from the battlefield, the IB had failed to provide them adequate information about the Ichogil irrigation canal, situated inside Pakistan. The Ichogil canal was, in fact, constructed by Pakistan to obstruct the movements of the advancing tanks of the Indian Armoured Corps. And, in peace time, the canal was used for irrigation purposes. But, by flooding the canal, the Pakistani Army commanders used it successfully as a shield to prevent the advance of Indian tank formations.

Since the very existence of the Ichogil canal did not appear on the battle maps of the Indian Army, our jawans paid heavily with their lives for this major intelligence blunder. As the controversy raged, the Government decided to set up an inquiry commission under the then Defence Secretary P.V.R. Rao to investigate the entire army-IB face-off.

In the teeth of increasingly aggressive postures by the military high command, the IB top brass refused to accept any

responsibility for the intelligence failure. The IB, the sole intelligence agency operating at that time, said there was no reason for it to be browbeaten by the military since the IB boys had done their job well. The IB disputed the military's charge that proper intelligence information was not provided to the Army. The IB claimed that the controversy was the result of the age-old antipathy of the Army towards civilians. The military top brass always looked down upon the civilian IB, claimed an IB spokesperson.

The military authorities, meanwhile, had long been demanding greater control over the section of the IB that dealt with military intelligence needs. By proving the IB's failure the army tried to grab some of the IB's powers. The seeds of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) were sown at this unstable time.

Battle-lines were drawn. The P.V.R. Rao Committee began its deliberations. Top brass from the army and the IB were asked to depose before the Rao Committee. B.N. Malik, the then IB chief, set up an inquiry headed by K. Sankaran Nair, the Deputy Director of the IB and a specialist on Pakistan to boot to go into the controversy and prepare a brief for B.N. Malik. The IB's prestige was at stake. Sankaran Nair dug through piles of intelligence reports fed to the Army and emerged with startling facts. Sankaran Nair's investigations revealed that the Army authorities were actually supplied with over 40 border intelligence Reports that related to the Ichogil canal. Sankaran Nair's sleuthing also revealed that the extensive reports prepared by the IB not only contained detailed reports about the existence of the Ichogil canal but also gave calculable information on the route of the canal as well as precise details of the locations of defensive bridges, embankments and pill-boxes built over it by the

Pakistani Army. Sankaran Nair's report certainly improved the IB's position and buttressed its case which was then presented to the Rao Committee.

Eventually, the P.V.R. Rao Committee also absolved IB by giving it a clean chit. It stated that if the Ichogil canal did not appear in the battle maps of the Indian Army commanders, it was not the fault of the IB which had regularly sent Border Intelligence Reports to the military commanders. The Committee, in fact, indicted the Directorate of Military Intelligence for not transmitting the crucial information to its field commanders.

Birth of Military Intelligence

The army-IB controversy ended amid feelings of rancour and generated bad blood all round the Home Ministry. The late Y.B. Chavan helplessly witnessed this sordid drama that reached its denouement with petty squabbles among men from his own ministry. But, surprisingly enough, despite the P.V.R. Rao Committee report which gave a clean chit to the IB, the defence ministry under Chavan floated a paper stressing the need to improve the field of military intelligence.

The defence ministry's paper made numerous suggestions to improve military intelligence. The implicit aim of the exercise was to prepare a backgrounder in favour of establishing a separate intelligence service catering exclusively to the needs of the military services. This paper, while making waves among the stodgy, fuddy-duddies of the Home Ministry, underlined the basic difference between intelligence information collected from the military angle and information collected for other purposes, and concluded that such a need could only be fulfilled by setting up a separate intelligence agency. Chavan approved of the move since the changes

suggested in the paper would also consolidate his own power, because under the existing system a single, integrated intelligence agency was only answerable to the Home Ministry.

Two years of indecision followed as the Defence Ministry paper shuttled between North and South Block, couched in various ministry files. The final decision was postponed until after the ruling Congress party's first split in 1968.

Y.B. Chavan vs Indira Gandhi

After Lal Bahadur Shastri's death in Tashkent, Mrs. Gandhi ascended to power and although Y.B. Chavan retained his place in her cabinet as home minister, his loyalty towards her leadership was suspect. He was perceived as a fence-sitter and this impression was vindicated at the Congress working committee meeting at Bangalore, where the two factions of the Congress disagreed over the selection of the Presidential candidate. Under such unstable circumstances, Chavan's presence in the Cabinet was considered a potential risk, and Indira Gandhi's advisers suggested that she clip his wings. In a letter published in *The Times of India* on July 1, 1985, I.K. Gujral stated: "The kitchen cabinet even suspected Chavan, who was then home minister and in charge of intelligence, to be behind the tapping of the PM's telephones". According to a veteran Congress leader: Mrs. Gandhi seized upon the question of bifurcating external intelligence from internal intelligence and brought it under the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

Cleverly, Mrs. Gandhi used those very recommendations of the defence ministry in the formation of a new intelligence agency. In the third volume of his autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, Morarji Desai wrote: Mrs. Gandhi deliberately

created a super-agency under a Kashmiri officer of her own choice. The agency was created in 1967-68 with my consent as Finance Minister. Further recalling the scenario under which the new intelligence agency came into existence, Desai lamented: "I cannot forgive myself for my stupidity in not seeing the political implications of that seemingly innocent action. This was the instrument of coercion which Mrs. Gandhi used against all those came under her surveillance, including members of her own cabinet."

Indo-Pak 1971 War

While the 1971 Indo-Pak War raged on, the eastern front, a mysterious cloak-and-dagger game was being played between the intelligence networks of both countries on the western front. Most of the information supplied to the War Office, surprisingly, came from RAW reports and not military intelligence reports. RAW, with scarcely three years experience, had penetrated enemy columns and cultivated a string of spies on the border who would act as double agents and "trade" information relating to military movements with both sides.

RAW collected a lot of information regarding an unusual build-up at Quetta. It transpired that one reserve division of the Pakistani Army based at Quetta was being moved towards Kharian, near the border. The Pakistani plan was to move the reserve troops into the Changamanga forest (that touches the border) and open a new battlefield. The main thrust of the Pakistani plan was to activate the entire front all at once and use it as a camouflage to concentrate its attack on the western front. Timely information on the enemy's movements did help India. But not for long. Within a few days, RAW's communication line was suddenly disrupted and India lost track of the enemy

columns at a time when it could not afford to. This had disastrous consequences: when war broke out, India could fight effectively only with the help of the Air Force.

RAW's Bangladesh Connection

The liberation of Bangladesh was another feather in RAW's cap. Says a senior intelligence official: "Bangladesh was the result of a 10-year-long promotion of dissatisfaction against the rulers of Pakistan. The real seeds of discontent in East Pakistan were sown by the arrogant, power-crazed Punjabi ruling elite from West Pakistan. When the simmering disenchantment of two decades began to boil over, India grabbed the opportunity. RAW's successes included winning over Mujib-ur-Rehman, funding his election, training and arming the Mukti Bahini.

Three years after the liberation, RAW received a stunning blow when Mujib was assassinated and his Government overthrown in a bloody coup. India's super-intelligence agency had failed to assess the discontent brewing against Mujib's regime. The result was the ascension to power of a military regime that made no bones about its hostility towards India. Indian diplomacy, even today, has been unable to recover those losses despite Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's new subcontinental initiative.

RAW's current covert Pakistan operations are: Monitoring Pakistan's progress with the N-Bomb. The agency has been submitting highly authentic reports. Monitoring the movements of Sikh extremists crossing the border into Pakistan. (RAW failed to take counter-measures against extremists training camps located in "safe harbours" in Pakistan. Senior RAW operatives, however, refuse to acknowledge their failure. According to them, their

responsibility lay merely in gathering information. They are quick to point out that providing solutions is basically the Government's prerogative.)

RAW's Labour Pangs

"It will not be another police force," said Indira Gandhi to the top bosses of the new intelligence outfit when outlining the objectives of RAW. Mrs. Gandhi next asked R. N. Kao, then joint director, Intelligence Agency. Kao was entrusted with the job both by virtue of his vast experience and his loyalty to Mrs. Gandhi. The nucleus of the new organization was to be formed by the sleuths who manned the foreign desk of the Intelligence Bureau.

But RAW's birth was not a smooth affair. The officials of the Intelligence Bureau resented this bifurcation. A veteran RAW officer told this correspondent: "The Intelligence Bureau was very upset because its empire was cut into two and the glamorous part of its body was dissected away from the parent body. The then director of the Intelligence Bureau, Mr. Hooja, fought this move tooth and nail. In the bitter struggle that followed the formation of RAW, the two organizations began to indulge in petty squabbles, each playing the game of one-upmanship. Says a senior RAW operative: The Intelligence Bureau bosses even denied us things like furniture and office space in their building. In spite of internal bickering RAW survived due to Mrs. Gandhi's patronage.

RAW Facts

RAW expanded fast. It grew from having an annual budget of Rs. 2 crore in 1969 and 250 personnel to a budget of Rs. 10 crore and employing 7000 personnel within a few years. Today, it has 8000 people on its rolls and its annual budget has risen to Rs. 30 crore. Basically,

all intelligence budgets are flexible and responsive to sudden needs, and RAW's budget is expected to rise further as a result of RAW chief Garry Saxena's policy to switch to electronic methods.

Today, RAW operatives are active in over 100 countries. Their jobs range from the routine collection of information on the attitudes of various countries towards India (which is normally done by spies functioning under diplomatic cover) to stealing documents from irksome neighbours like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The excesses committed under the Emergency against the Opposition parties were masterminded by RAW. RAW has been accused of providing complete support to the "instruments of coercion," to use one of Morarji Desai's oft-repeated quotes. In the Emergency's aftermath, RAW's image touched an all-time low. Jagjivan Ram, who was Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet colleague, suspected she was using RAW to keep tabs on him. Ram testified before the Shah Commission that his telephones were tapped and his movements monitored. Senior RAW officers, however, deny such allegations. Even during the worst days of the Emergency she did not use RAW as an instrument of repression, said a senior RAW official. Only the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), IB and Revenue Intelligence were used to tighten the screws, he added. According to this source, RAW had become a favourite shipping boy in the post-Emergency euphoria because of Kao's close links with the Gandhi family. Another theory is that a clique within the IB was largely responsible in sullyng the image in the post-Emergency period. In the early days of the Janata, in 1977, a massive campaign was launched against the evils of the Emergency. At that time,

the top brass of the IB used RAW as cannon fodder to save their own skins.

RAW & Charan Singh

According to reliable sources, Mr. Mathur, an Assistant Director of the IB, left no stone unturned to get close to the then Home Minister, Charan Singh. Charan Singh was approached through his son-in-law S.P. Singh, and an intelligence officer of RAW who was close to Mathur. Charan was told that the IB was "active" during the Emergency due to "strict instructions" from the top and as such could not be held responsible. A deal of sorts was struck between Mathur and Charan Singh and thence began a massive "Indira hunt" which preoccupied the Home Minister for most of his time in that post. So obsessed was Charan Singh with his new job that the then CBI Director, Mr. Narasimha was assigned to a special mission to personally fly to Geneva and Washington to unearth Mrs. Gandhi's hidden treasures. So, RAW was doing for Charan what it had done for Mrs. Gandhi under the Emergency. In fact, the IB and the CBI in a joint operation during the Janata rule, dug up Mrs. Gandhi's Mehrauli farm but with little success.

RAW & Morarji Desai

A veteran RAW officer revealed that Morarji Desai also used the services of RAW. He revealed that the controversial visit of the then Israeli foreign minister Moshe Dayan to Delhi was organized by RAW. He said: "Morarji arranged his meeting with Moshe Dayan through RAW and Dayan was actually flown to Delhi under the joint management of Mossad (the Israeli intelligence outfit) and RAW. It was after this operation that Desai realized that intelligence works it where diplomacy fails. Santook was the chief of RAW when this operation was undertaken.

Desai had eased out Sankaran Nair who had taken over after Kao had resigned within a few weeks of the Janata's coming to power.

RAW & Trade Unions

Mrs. Gandhi's return to power on the 1980 wave coincided with one of the worst crises faced by RAW. For the first time in its history, the citadel of espionage came under attack from its own operatives. The intelligence agency was invaded by trade unions. According to union leaders, years of abject neglect of the employees and rank mismanagement were the main causes of frustration. In June 1980, the Employees Union was formed to air their grievances. The official response to this alarming development, was indifference. Says a union leader: "The prime cause of resentment is the fact that in the 12 years of RAW's existence, not a single employee has had his service confirmed. The only confirmed employees are the ones confirmed prior to 1968 by the IB."

In 1982, Kao recommended a thorough review of the working of RAW. And hence the Cadre Review Committee (CRC) was born. Headed by the former RAW chief, Sankaran Nair, the Committee was meant to make recommendations, both administrative and management-oriented. Our sources have revealed that this report was made ready on May 15, 1985. The delay in the finalization of the report was caused because of Sankaran Nair's involvement in other assignments. Now, this year the Committee has made some very "realistic but expensive recommendations". It is reliably learnt that if all the recommendations of the Cadre Review Committee were to be implemented, it would cost the exchequer an additional Rs. 1 crore which would be spread between RAW and the IB.

The main features of the Cadre Review Committee's recommendations are:

- (1) More posts to be introduced at the higher levels of all the 60 cadres in the intelligence organization to ameliorate the existing stagnation.
- (2) Extra allowances to be given to operatives working in abnormal conditions of hardship, high altitudes and separation from their families. Under the existing system, RAW operatives working at an altitude of 10,000 feet are denied winter clothing.
- (3) Clear the way up the hierarchy for professionally superior sleuths by axing the deadwood in the organization, who have, by virtue of their seniority, blocked the careers of highly competent spies.
- (4) RAW operatives to be sent for overseas courses at Harvard and Oxford for education in subjects like international politics, the arms race, foreign affairs. At present this luxury is enjoyed by IAS cadres only.
- (5) A major modernization drive to be made within the intelligence services to improve the existing "primitive" infrastructure. This is basically aimed at improving the counter-espionage activities of RAW.
- (6) More administrative powers to be given to the chiefs of the IB and RAW to ease the "stranglehold of the bureaucrats of the Finance and Home Ministries." In the existing set-up, the bureaucracy wields "too much power with no responsibility towards the intelligence operations."
- (7) Special Acts to be passed to curb indiscipline in high security organizations. The formation of a Departmental Grievances Redressal Committee to look into staff complaints is recommended.