

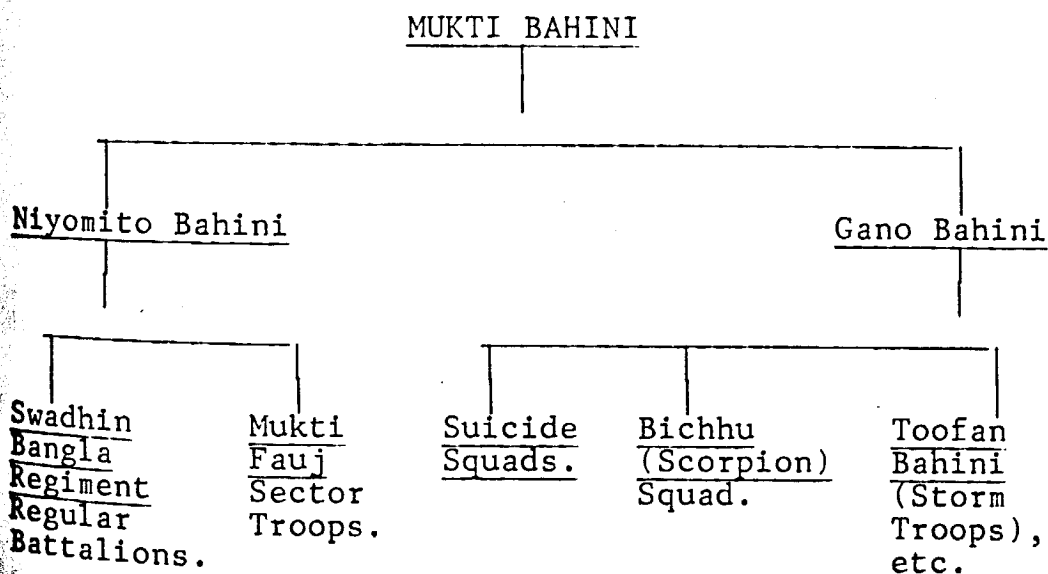
## CHAPTER - V

### THE MUKTI BAHINI COMES OF AGE

#### THE BAHINI ORGANISED

The name "Mukti Bahini", was a generic term which comprised various categories of freedom fighters (FF). At the time of its inception, it was known as Mukti Fauj. Later, it was renamed as the Mukti Bahini, possibly because 'Fauj' was an Urdu word.

From a spontaneously-formed, ill-assorted disorganised rabble, it soon grew into a very large, complex organisation of armed and trained men owing allegiance to the provisional government of Bangladesh, and operating under its own officers with their own chain of command. The Mukti Bahini organisation as it emerged finally in late summer of 1971 was as shown in the chart below:-



Besides the Mukti Bahini, there were other resistance groups also which deserve notice.

The increasing terror tactics of the Pakistan Army gave the Mukti Bahini more recruits than they could absorb. Thousands of Bengalees, old and young, including boys of tender age, volunteered for recruitment to fight the Pakistanis. Husbands separated from their wives, sons from their parents, brothers from their sisters, joined the Mukti Bahini

to give an appropriate reply to the Pak occupation force. In this way, by the end of April, the number of Bengalee volunteers rose to about 2,50,000(1). Col Osmani has aptly said: "The Mukti Bahini was manufactured overnight by the Pakistan Army. If the Pakistanis had only limited their action against selected politicians, Bengalees in the army and the police might have stayed neutral. It was only when information got around that the Pakistani army was out to kill Bengalee intellectuals and servicemen as well that they revolted to a man"(2). It is also interesting to observe that there were few from the refugee camps willing to join the Mukti Bahini. Out of more than one hundred thousand freedom fighters trained during this independence struggle, not even one per cent came from the refugee camps. The reason could be that most of the persons who took shelter in refugee camps had come with their families, hence they did not feel the urge to return to Bangladesh till they were absolutely safe, whereas those who reported to the youth camps had left their families behind in Bangladesh, and were all too eager to return after some training to fight against the Pak oppressors(3).

After the influx of the mauled, understrength EBR battalions into India, they formed the nucleus of the Bangladesh Army, or Niyomito Bahini. Their deficiency was made up by drawing manpower from the EPR, Police and battle-hardened guerillas. Out of the over 250,000 volunteers who had reported to the camps for training, the Awami League MNAs and MPAs selected those loyal to the Awami League ideals. After screening and a period of indoctrination, those recommended were trained at centres in West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura and Meghalaya in the use of light automatic weapons, mortars and explosives(4).

A regular Armed Forces Headquarters, with 10 officers under Col Osmani, was set up. Lt Col M.A. Rab(5) was appointed as the Chief of Staff, located within Bangladesh, while Col Osmani was based in India. Group Captain A.K. Khandker was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff with his office in Calcutta(6). On 15 July, the Bangladesh Commanders met Syed Nazrul Islam, the acting President of Bangladesh, and Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister, and formally swore allegiance to the Government of Bangladesh in an oath-taking ceremony.

Initially, the BSF alone was responsible for the border, and also provided some assistance to the Freedom Fighters as already described. But after the arrival in Bangladesh of two new Pak Army Divisions from West Pakistan, it was appreciated that the BSF was not capable of facing the situation. Hence on 16

May 1971, the Indian Army took over from the BSF the operational responsibility of protecting the Indo-Bangladesh border, and the latter was ordered to operate under the Army's over-all direction(7).

Meanwhile, Col Osmani, Major Shafiullah and Major Khaled Mosharraf met a Teliapara, a place in Sylhet district bordering India, and prepared what is known as the "Teliapara Document" outlining the strategy of the liberation war. It was decided that:

a) A big guerilla force would be trained to destroy the pro-Pak collaborators, disrupt communications to immobilize the Pak troops, and follow hit-and-run tactics against Pakistani posts and convoys so that the Pakistanis would live under perpetual tension and confusion.

b) The already trained forces inside the Mukti Bahini would be organised as Sector troops and placed in different Sectors for giving support to the guerillas.

c) Capable persons from the regular units and guerillas would be selected and trained to form a regular force to undertake armed actions against the Pak Army(8).

After the Teliapara Document was approved by the Bangladesh government-in-exile, a massive programme of recruitment and training of the Mukti Bahini started. The Government of India agreed to help, but this decision was conditional on the Mukti Bahini being led by the Awami League whose general ideological position was similar to that of India's.

### INDIA'S SUPPORT

From the very beginning, when after the 1970 General Election, Sheikh Mujib and his Awami League started their struggle against the Pak military junta for the restoration of democracy and assertion of political and economic rights of the people of East Pakistan, who formed the majority of the population of Pakistan, the sympathies of the Indian people undoubtedly lay with the politically and economically oppressed East Pakistan. In fact, the people of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam were the kith and kin of the Bengalees of East Pakistan. After the brutal Pak military crack-down in Dhaka and other places of East Pakistan in late March 1971, the Government of India expressed their shock at the ghastly Pak atrocities in East Pakistan, and conveyed their sympathies for the hapless people of East Pakistan. The Prime Minister of India in her speech in the Lok Sabha on 27 March

1971, "welcomed" the "democratic action" of the people of "East Bengal" and next day assured them of "the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the people of India"(9). And since then there was no let up in the flow of that sympathy and support for the struggle of the people of East Bengal(10). As discussed earlier in details, when the streams of East Bengal refugees started entering India in hundreds of thousands, reaching the monthly peak of 3,158,000 in May 1971, followed by the next highest monthly total of 2,056,000 in June, the East Bengal crisis posed a politico-economic threat to India too(11). Not only was India put under great economic strain in feeding, clothing, sheltering and medically treating millions of penniless refugees from East Bengal, but also faced with the threat to her security.

India soon realised that the continued stay of the millions of refugees in India, and the likely influx of more millions from East Bengal, were sure to create social, economic, communal and law and order problems in the Indian border states. Moreover, many of the uprooted refugee youths could join the violent Naxalite movement then rampant in West Bengal. While India was in no way responsible for the massive upheaval in East Bengal, its effects clearly appeared ruinous for India. Hence, the Government of India became very keen, almost determined, to see a political solution emerging in Pakistan which could restore a climate of peace, enabling the refugees to return home.

However, the Pakistan government appeared totally disinclined to reach any political compromise with the East Bengal people and their leaders. The military action and savage brutalities continued unabated in East Bengal. India was doing its very best to mobilise international opinion to persuade Yahya Khan to come to a settlement with the Awami League. But this diplomatic pressure also appeared ineffective.

The East Bengal refugees had already proclaimed the establishment of their Bangladesh government and had raised the Mukti Bahini. Already the Mukti Bahini was engaged in skirmishes and continual hit-and-run clashes with the Pakistan Army in East Bengal. These operations of the Mukti Bahini appeared to be putting another type of pressure on the Pakistan government to achieve a political settlement. The total defeat of the Mukti Bahini and the freedom movement in East Bengal was, therefore, totally against the Indian interests. There was also the danger of leadership of the Mukti Bahini and the resistance movement passing into the hands of the ultra-leftists, Naxalites or

In the complicated and dangerous situation facing her, India found herself left with no alternative but to provide some organised assistance and some degree of guidance and control to the refugees and their Mukti Bahini. From May 1971 onwards, therefore, she was pushed into and became more and more actively involved as a party, in the Bangladesh turmoil, although the role was definitely not of her own choosing.

India's strategy, basically defensive, thus steadily developed to provide sufficient assistance to the Mukti Bahini and other armed groups to keep up their pressure on the Pakistan government, and to keep the freedom fighters themselves in control, to prevent their going out of hand and joining some destabilising ultra-leftist forces. The Mukti Bahini thus became the sword-arm of the Bangladesh struggle.

#### TRAINING AND DEPLOYMENT

During 11-17 July, a high level conference, attended by P.M. Tajuddin Ahmed and Commanders of the Mukti Bahini, was held at 8, Theatre Road, Calcutta, to discuss difficulties faced by the Mukti Bahini, and to decide on a coordinated course of action(12).

The following decisions were taken in this Conference:

- "1. Demarcation of the sector boundaries.
2. Organising the guerrilla war as follows:-
  - (a) Trained guerrillas to be inducted inside Bangladesh in groups of five or ten with specific tasks to be performed in specific areas.
  - (b) Guerrillas to be divided as follows:
    - (i) Action Groups: Guerrillas in these groups would carry out direct guerrilla operations against the enemy. They would carry 50 to 100 per cent weapons.
    - (ii) Intelligence Cells: Guerrillas in these groups would not normally get involved in fighting. They would rather concentrate on collecting information about the enemy and disseminate such information to all friendly forces. They normally would

not carry more than 30 per cent weapons.

(iii) Guerrilla Bases: Each such base would accommodate a number of safe houses, where the guerrillas would be sheltered, fed, provided with information and guided to their respective destinations. Each base was to have a medical group to treat the guerrillas whenever needed. Each base was under a political leader who was responsible for conducting psychological warfare aimed at breaking the Pakistanis morale and strengthening the Bengalees psychologically. Each base was also required to remain ready to absorb larger groups of guerrillas or soldiers from Niyomito Bahini for bigger offensives against the enemy.

3. The members of the Niyomito Bahini (regular army) were to be organised into battalions, forces and sector troops immediately.

4. About the military operations against the enemy, it was decided that:

(a) A large number of guerrillas would be sent inside Bangladesh to strike at the enemy at every conceivable(sic) place through raids and ambushes.

(b) Industries would not be allowed to run. This would be achieved by blowing up electrical poles and sub-stations, disrupting power supplies thereby.

(c) The Pakistanis would not be allowed to export any raw materials or finished products. This would be achieved by destroying the godowns where such materials were stored.

(d) Vehicles, railways, river craft which were used for movement of enemy troops and military supplies for the enemy would be systematically destroyed.

(e) Tactical plans would be drawn in such a manner that the enemy was forced to spread out.

(f) After isolating the enemy, the

guerillas would strike deadly blows to the isolated enemy groups"(13).

In the last week of June 1971, 1, 3 and 8 East Bengal Regiment Battalions were moved to Tura in Meghalaya, where they were reorganised and re-equipped. The 2 and 4 East Bengal Battalions, located in Tripura, were also similarly reorganised and re-equipped. In September, it was decided to raise three more East Bengal Infantry Battalions, with recruits mostly comprising trained Freedom Fighters. A nucleus staff was provided by milking the other five battalions. Thus, by the end of November 1971, there were eight East Bengal Infantry battalions fully equipped and available for operations, but the three new battalions had had little time for training(14).

In the first week of August 1971, approximately 80 ex-Pak Bengalee Artillery personnel, who had crossed over into Tripura, were collected and organised into No.1 Field Battery (Mujib), and equipped with four 3.7" Howitzer guns. In October 1971, the Second Field Battery was raised in Silchar area with six 105 mm Italian guns, and in November 1971, the third battery was raised and equipped with 105 mm guns. By the end of November, the East Bengal regular battalions were grouped into three brigades and named Z, K and S Force after the names of their Commanders - Maj Ziaur Rahman, Maj Khaled Musharraf and Maj Shafiullah respectively, as under(15) :-

a) 'Z' Force

1 EB

3 EB

8 EB

No. 2 Fd Bty (105 mm Italian guns)

b) 'K' Force

10 EB

11 EB

3 Fd Bty (105 mm guns)

c) 'S' Force

2 EB

4 EB

9 EB

No.1 Fd Bty (Mujib) (3.7" Howitzer guns)

Regular troops were equipped on similar lines as the Indian Army battalions(16).

550 A Mukti Bahini naval force, consisting of over 550 naval commandos, was formed out of the defected Bengalee personnel of the Pak Navy as well as some Bengalee volunteers. They were trained in under-water

sabotage with the help of limpet mines. By October, a small Mukti Bahini Air Force was also organised with two helicopters, an Otter aircraft and a Dakota, gifted by India, and fitted with bombs, rockets and machine guns(17).

EBR, EPR and Police personnel, not absorbed into the regular army battalions, called Swadhin Bangla regiments, were grouped into units and sub-units as sector troops to operate in their respective sectors. They had lesser fire power as compared to that of the regular battalions. The regular battalions and the sector troops, popularly known as the Mukti Fauj, were subject to army rules and regulations, and paid subsistence allowance, whereas the irregulars or 'Gano Bahini', popularly known as guerillas or Freedom Fighters, did not come under army rules, nor received any pay or subsistence allowance. However, after training, when they were sent into Bangladesh, they were paid some induction money to meet their expenses en route(18).

A total of 45 Companies of the Mukti Fauj (sector troops) were trained, organised and equipped for operations along the periphery of the Indo-Bangladesh border. The strength of each of these companies was approximately 200. A total of 9,660 men were trained, issued with small arms similar to the weapons of a rifle company of the Indian Army. These Mukti Fauj companies were located close to the border and organised and trained under the supervision of regular Indian Army formations and the Border Security Force. As most of the Mukti Fauj personnel were aged, they took very little interest in training, and were not willing to take risks. Their morale was low, and by and large, they set a bad example to the Freedom Fighters. The HQ of the Mukti Fauj was established at Kalyani in West Bengal.

As per the decisions of the July conference, held in Calcutta, Bangladesh was divided into the following 11 sectors:-

Sector No.1: Composed of the districts of Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts and a part of Noakhali district (area east of Muhari river), the sector was divided into 5 sub-sectors, with over 2,100 sector troops formed out of 1,500 EPR soldiers, 200 policemen, 300 army personnel, and about 100 from the navy and air force. Besides, there were about 20,000 guerillas of whom only about 35% were armed. At first, Maj Ziur Rahman was the Sector Commander. He was replaced afterwards by Maj Rafiq-ul-Islam(19).



Sector No.2: Covering the districts of Comilla, Faridpur, part of Noakhali, and Dhaka, the sector was divided into six sub-sectors, with approximately 4,000 sector troops and 30,000 guerillas. Maj Khaled Musharraf was the Sector Commander, later replaced by Maj M. Haider.

Sector No.3: Part of Maulvibazar sub-division, part of Brahmanbaria sub-division, part of Narayanganj, and Keraniganj sub-division formed this sector, which was divided into 10 sub-sectors, with around 10,000 men. Maj K.M. Shafiullah was the Sector Commander. But after the formation of 'S' Force, Maj Shafiullah took over as its Commander and Major Nuruzzaman succeeded him as the Sector Commander.

Sector No.4: Lying between Sylhet Police Station in the north and Habiganj Police Station in the south, this sector was divided into 6 sub-sectors, comprising about 3,000 sector troops and 8,000 guerillas. Sector HQ, originally located at Kanaiganj, was later moved to Nasimpur. Maj C.R. Dutta was the Sector Commander.

Sector No.5: It covered the northern part of Sylhet district, with 6 sub-sectors, having about 800 sector troops and 7,000 guerillas, under the command of Maj Mir Shawkat Ali.

Sector No.6: With Rangpur and Dinajpur districts, this sector was divided into 5 sub-sectors, having about 1,200 sector troops and 6,000 guerillas, under the command of Wing Commander M.K. Bashar. Its HQ was at Burimari near Patgram (Rangpur district).

Sector No.7: Comprising the districts of Rajshahi, Pabna, and Bogra and also a part of Dinajpur district, this sector was divided into 8 sub-sectors, manned by about 2,000 sector troops and 2,000 guerillas. When Sector Commander Maj Najmul Haque died in an accident during the war, Maj Q.N. Zaman succeeded him.

Sector No.8: Originally it looked after the districts of Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna, Barisal and Patuakhali, but later, Barisal and Patuakhali were excluded from this sector, which had about 2,000 sector troops and 7,000 guerillas. With 7 sub-sectors, its HQ was located at Benapole, under the command of Maj M.A. Osman Chowdhury. After 15 July 1971, Maj Manzoor, who had escaped from Pakistan, was appointed Commander.

Sector No.9: It comprised Barisal and

Patuakhali districts, and parts of Khulna and Faridpur districts also. Divided into 8 sub-sectors, and commanded by Maj M.A. Jalil, the area had about one battalion of the Army and about 15,000 guerillas.

Sector No.10: This sector had no territorial limits. It had naval commandos for mounting sabotage actions against Pak naval vessels. During different operations, the Commando groups would come under the control of the different sector commanders in whose areas the operations were to take place.

Sector No.11: This, consisting of Mymensingh district, was divided into 8 sub-sectors having a total of about 20,000 guerillas. Maj A.Taher was the Sector Commander. After he was injured in an action on 15 November, Squadron Leader Hamidullah took over(20).

Since the Mukti Bahini depended greatly on the Indian Army for supplies and training, six Brigadiers were deputed by the Indian Army in June to act as Sector Commanders and remain in constant touch with the Mukti Bahini. These Army Officers were directly under the operational and administrative control of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army. Their areas of responsibility - called "Jackpot Sectors" - were:-

Name of the Sector	Name of Sector Commander	Location of Sector HQ	Bangladesh Sector under command
1	2	3	4
A Sector	Brig J.C.Joshi	Binaguri	No.6 Areas west of Brahmaputra upto general line of lateral railway Rangpur-Dinajpur.
B Sector	Brig Prem Singh	Raiganj	No.7 Areas west of Brahmaputra, north of Ganga/Padma and south of lateral railway Rangpur-Dinajpur, with main towns - Pabna and Bogra.
C Sector	Brig N.A. Salick, VrC	Krishnagar	No.8&9 Areas south of Padma and west of Padma-Meghna, with main towns - Khulna and Jessore.

D Sector Brig Shabeg Singh, Agartala No.1,2&3  
VSM

Areas south of river Feni, west of Mizo Hills, North of Burma, with the main town - Chittagong.

E Sector Brig M.B.Wadke Masimpur No.4

Areas east of Meghna, north of Feni river, with main towns - Comilla, Chandpur, Dhaka and Sylhet.

F Sector Brig Sant Singh, Tura No.11  
(Later MVC  
called

F-J Sector)

Area of Mymensingh district, south of Garo Hills, west of Meghna, and east of Brahmaputra. Subsequently E-I Sector was carved out of F Sector in June 1971 reducing its area to include only the Garo Hills district of Meghalaya and Goalpara district of Assam along the international border south of river Brahmaputra upto the junction of river Santosh(23).

E-I Sector Lt Col V.N.Rao Jarain(Shillong) No.5  
C.O.5/5 GR(FF)  
(Later Brig  
K. Lakhpat  
Singh)

Area - Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya upto the junction of river Surma and international boundary.

Each Jackpot Sector looked after one or more Bangladesh sectors each of which was commanded by a BSF Commandant alongwith a Bangladeshi Mukti Bahini Commander who shared responsibility of the particular sector jointly(24). It was mainly through the Indian Sector Commanders that the Mukti Bahini maintained their link with the Bangladesh Forces HQ as well as HQ Eastern Command of the Indian Army. All the operational policies were formulated at the highest level jointly by the Eastern Command and the Bangladesh Forces HQ, and the implementation of those policies was the responsibility of the Indian and the Bangladeshi Sector Commanders. At times, however, contradictory orders were sent to the Sector Commanders which hindered their smooth functioning(25).

In order to cover the entire area of Bangladesh,

Freedom Fighters were recruited from all parts and trained in camps, located close to their areas. To obtain the right type of material for recruitment as Freedom Fighters, 25 Youth Camps were established with a capacity of 1,000 youths in each camp under the supervision of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India. Most of the Freedom Fighters were recruited from these youth camps. The youths were provided free rations and physical and unarmed combat training(26).

The largest number of freedom fighters came from the students and other youths. Perhaps it may be said that the students of Bangladesh made the maximum contribution to their country's freedom. These students, who formed the most politically conscious group and deeply committed to the independence of their motherland, were equally involved in party politics. Their divergent views often led to the sharpening of the political rivalry amongst different groups. However, these rivalries did not reach such proportions as to stand in the way of their freedom struggle. Just after two weeks of training, some of them dreamt of becoming Mao Zedong, Che Guevera, or Lawrence of Arabia, and sometimes refused to obey another student leader's command. The peasants turned out to be the best material for guerrilla warfare, as they did not have any vanity or false pride; they were sincere and dedicated to the cause of freedom. They never grumbled for the lack of jungle boots, or a blanket or even food, ever willing to do their job wherever they were assigned to. As the selection of recruits was made after screening by the Awami Leaguers in different reception camps, there were complaints that over-enthusiastic Leaguers did not select youths belonging to leftist parties. However, due to the intervention of sensible senior Awami League leaders, these problems were gradually settled(27).

Although there were various kinds of hardships in the reception centres, where the Bangladeshi youths came for recruitment, there were very few cases of desertion which were due to extreme hardship, individual family problems, or frustration caused by long waiting at the camps pending selection for recruitment. For example, in a youth camp near Agartala, in end-July 1971, there were 3,000 young men waiting for over two months to receive military training where hygienic condition was pitiable, and food and water supply almost non-existent(28).

Initially six training camps were set up with a capacity of 1,000 trainees in each camp under the supervision of the Jackpot Sector Commanders. These

Freedom Fighters were located as under(29) :-

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<u>Formation Responsible</u>
a) Moorti (West Bengal)	A Sector	33 Corps/20 Mtn Div
b) Raiganj (West Bengal)	B Sector	- do -
c) Chakulya (Bihar)	C Sector	9 Inf Div
d) Deotamura (Tripura)	D Sector	57 Mtn Div
e) Masimpur (Assam)	E Sector	- do -
f) Tura (Meghalaya)	FJ Sector	101 Comn Z Area
g) Jharain (Meghalaya)	E1 Sector	- do -(500 capacity only)

One officer for 100 trainees, one JCO for 50 trainees, and one NCO for 20 trainees were provided as instructional staff. All Freedom Fighters were given four weeks' training which included weapon training, field craft, raids/ambushes, commando training including simple demolitions, and operation of pocket-size radio sets and transmission of messages in morse code at the rate of six words per minute. Subsequently, in August 1971, the period of training was reduced to three weeks only(30).

In July 1971, the number of trainees was increased to 12,000 per month and subsequently in September 1971, to 20,000. Correspondingly, the capacity of the training camps was increased and also some additional training camps were established, with the provision of additional instructional staff, as given below(31) :-

<u>Location</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<u>Formation Responsible</u>
a) Moorti	2,300	A	33 Corps/20 Mtn Div
b) Raiganj/ Naxalbari	2,300	B	20 Mtn Div
c) Chakulya	2,000	C	9 Inf Div

d)	Rampurhat	2,000	-	50 Indep Para Bde
e)	Agartala	4,500	D	57 Mtn Div
f)	Rangia	2,000	-	23 Mtn Div
g)	Masimpur	1,500	E	57 Mtn Div
h)	Silchar	1,000	-	8 Mtn Div
j)	Tura	1,400	FJ	101 Comn Z Area
k)	Dauki Area	1,000	E1	- do -
	Total	20,000		

By the end of November 1971, over 83,000 Freedom Fighters were trained, of which 51,000 were operating inside East Bengal. They were organised into teams of 10, squads of 20, and groups of 100 to 150(32). Each team was equipped with four .303 rifles, two SLR rifles, three sten guns and one light machine gun, plus two hand grenades per Freedom Fighter and sufficient quantity of explosive for demolitions.

To provide leadership, a total of 130 Officer Cadets were trained in Moorti Camp for three months. Besides, 500 specially selected youths were given passive resistance training, so that they could organise the training of other youths who could not be trained as guerillas(33). They were all inducted inside Bangladesh to organise such training.

Moreover, approximately 1,200 youths were given medical training and provided with medical kits to render medical aid to the needy people inside Bangladesh.

The responsibility for paying salaries to the Bangladesh forces was that of the Jackpot Sector Commanders. The monthly salaries were given according to the following rates :-

a) Regular Troops and Mukti Fauj(Sector Troops)

(i)	Commanding Officer	Rs.500.00
(ii)	Officer	Rs.400.00
(iii)	Officer Cadet	Rs.100.00
(iv)	JCO	Rs.150.00
(v)	OR	Rs. 75.00
(vi)	NCsE	Rs. 70.00

## b) Freedom Fighters

- |                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| (i) During training            | Rs. 30.00 |
| (ii) On completion of training | Rs. 50.00 |

Besides, two sets of Khaki uniform and a light bedding were issued to regular troops, while non-Service clothing like shirts, 'lungi' and a pair of PT shoes were provided to the Mukti Fauj and the Freedom Fighters. Certain other items like blankets, mugs, plates, etc., were also procured locally and issued. Free rations on the same scale as per the Indian Army and tented living accommodation were provided to all Bangladesh forces. In addition, where possible, some huts were also constructed for keeping arms, ammunition and stores. When the Freedom Fighters were inducted into Bangladesh, they were entitled for ration money at the scale of Rs.2/- per day(34). While the Jackpot Sectors were given a limited number of vehicles, no transport was provided to the Bangladesh forces, which used transport brought from Bangladesh or provided by Indian Army formations.

With the increased intake of trainees in the Mukti Bahini Training Camps, it became difficult to cope up with the demand for arms, ammunition and explosives, hence these had to be air-lifted from the Ordnance Depots to forward support areas. All casualties of the Bangladesh forces were treated in Military Hospitals. Bangladesh forces were provided with free transport on the road or the railway. However, the naval commandos and their stores had, for reasons of security, to be air-lifted to their launching areas, where necessary.

The Mukti Bahini guerillas were organised into various groups, as already mentioned. One of the groups was called the Suicide Squad, whose primary task was to kill prominent workers of the Muslim League and the Jamaat-i-Islami, Razakars, and the Pak government officials. They had orders to commit suicide, if necessary, to avoid arrest. Then there was the Bichchu(Scorpion) Squad, which reportedly had a female wing also, consisting of young girls whose duty was to carry out sabotage, subversion and espionage work in big towns like Dhaka and Chittagong.

Another group was known as the Toofan Bahini (Storm Troops) who acted like commandos(35). The grass-root organisation capable of sustaining guerilla warfare was readily provided by the Sangram Parishads, which had been organised by the Awami League in early 1971 in every village and town, but were operating underground after 25 March 1971(36).

According to Maj Gen Niazi, the relations between the Mukti Bahini and irregular Freedom Fighters were not always cordial, and there were at least two pitched battles between them(37). The Freedom Fighters were jealous of better service conditions enjoyed by the Niyomito Bahini and there were also conceptual differences. The Niyomito Bahini preferred to do sabotage work away from the locale of Pakistani troops. The Freedom Fighters, on the other hand, preferred to close in with Pakistani troops and fight it out with them.

## MUJIB BAHINI AND OTHERS

### Mujib Bahini

The precise reasons behind the creation of the hush-hush elite group called the Mujib Bahini are far from clear. It is claimed that it was just an extra insurance lest the control of the Mukti Bahini fell into the hands of the ultra-leftists of Bangladesh, especially the Maoists. Anyway, a force thoroughly loyal to Mujib and his ideology of nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy, (called Mujibism) was formed with college and university students belonging exclusively to the Student's League, the student wing of the Awami League. Four devoted followers of Sheikh Mujib (Tofael Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni, Sirajul Alam Khan and Abdur Razzak) were the leaders of this force whose strength rose to about 8,000 in November(38). Its members were given special training for 45 days in guerilla warfare and ideology. It was built up by Maj Gen S.S. Uban as an elite force with its own wireless system and special code of communication, outside the control of Col Osmani and even the Bangladesh government-in-exile, which caused much misunderstanding between various authorities concerned.

It is also claimed that the Mujib Bahini, originally named as the Bangladesh Liberation Force, was formed to provide the political infrastructure by giving ideological motivation to the Freedom Fighters inside Bangladesh to fight against the Pakistan Army. The whole of Bangladesh was divided into four areas under the control of the four leaders of this Bahini. Sheikh Moni controlled Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Sylhet districts and the Bhola sub-division of Barisal district; Abdur Razzak controlled the districts of Tangail and Mymensingh; Sirajul Alam Khan was in charge of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Bogra districts plus the Shirajganj sub-division of Pabna district; and Tofael Ahmed commanded the Mujib Bahini boys in the districts of Kushtia, Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Patuakhali



Barisal (minus Shola) and Pabna (minus Shirajganj)(39).

There had been occasional clashes between the Mujib Bahini and the Mukti Bahini, due perhaps mainly to lack of coordination. In several places the Mujib Bahini worked at cross purposes to the Mukti Bahini, and at one time they even gheraced some Awami League leaders in Agartala. Although things were sorted out afterwards, some members of the Mujib Bahini in Indian uniforms, carrying sophisticated weapons, were detected on the border of Sector No.2 and challenged by the Mukti Bahini to reveal their identity(40).

### Uban Force

Another special force, only 1,800 men, not belonging to either the Indian Army or the Mukti Bahini, commanded by Maj Gen S.S. Uban, took part in the Bangladesh Operations, especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to harass the Pak forces and destroy their lines of communication in the area. This was actually a small commando force, of which not more than 400 were deployed in action at any point of time. Maj Gen Uban was under the administrative control of Special Secretary to the Cabinet, while he was guided by the Chief of Army Staff as far as his operations were concerned. The Eastern Command of the Indian Army, the Bangladesh government-in-exile, or the Mukti Bahini had nothing to do with the operations of this special force, although Lt Gen Aurora had to arrange for its supplies and logistics. Uban commanded both the Mujib Bahini and this Special Commando Force, but they operated separately exclusive of each other's area of control or operation.

### Freelance Guerilla Groups

Besides the above-mentioned liberation forces, trained and equipped by the Indian Army and the BSF, eleven independent guerilla groups were also operating inside Bangladesh in the following sectors:-

(a) Jessore-Khulna sector - six groups led by Khizir and Riyasat (100 men), Sahjahan (250 men), Zia (200 men), Arifin (not known), Mehdi (75 men) and Hemayet (500 men).

(b) Dhaka-Comilla-Chittagong sector - two groups led by Nurul Afsar (400 men) and Haroon (100 men).

(c) Mymensingh sector - three groups led by Kader (approximately 17,000 young men), Abdul Mannan (85 men), and Anwaruddin (100 men).

Out of all these groups, five were cooperating with the MFs/FFs, but two groups belonging to the pro-Chinese National Awami Party were actively hostile to them, and operating along the sea-coast from Fakirhat to Mirsarai in Chittagong and Noakhali districts, and in Sibpur and Manohardi in Comilla and Dhaka districts. The Kader Bahini was the most important of these local forces which were equipped primarily with weapons snatched from the Pakistani forces. Abdul Kader Siddiqui, popularly known as Tiger Siddiqui, a former Non-Commissioned Officer of the Pakistan Army and later Awami League student leader, after whom this Bahini was named, reportedly organised a force of some 17,000 men, plus an auxiliary force of over 70,000 volunteers, mostly rural school students(41). The Kader Bahini became famous in June 1971 when they killed 16 Pakistani soldiers in a surprise attack on a Pakistani outpost in the Tangail area. On 12 August they attacked some Pakistani vessels in the Dhaleshwari destroying two of them and capturing a large amount of arms and ammunition, including Chinese and British rifles, light and medium machine guns, and 70,000 hand grenades. About 100 Pak soldiers were killed in this action. After being injured in the battle of Makrai on 16 August, Kader Siddiqui, along with his father, two of his younger brothers, and some armed followers, escaped to Tura on 24 August and stayed there till 20 September for medical treatment and training of his men. He had long discussions with Indian Army officers, especially Lt Gen Aurora and Brig Sant Singh, for planning future operations. The Kader Bahini was given considerable amount of arms, ammunition, wireless sets, and also some training by the Indian Army(42). It was provided ground support by the IAF during its attacks on Gopalpur and Ghatal Police Stations on 10 December, and on Tangail town the following day. After the Indian para drop, north of Tangail, on 12 December, the Kader Bahini joined with the Indian Para force and Brig Kler's troops in their advance to Dhaka.

Kader Siddiqui claims to have liberated 97 km of the road from Jamalur to Mymensingh, 48 km north of Dhaka, captured 7,000 Pak soldiers and 14,500 Razakars by 15 December, and destroyed 19 bridges on the road to Dhaka, three in Nagarpur, four in Kaddusnagar, five on the Tangail-Mymensingh road, and a big concrete one on the Gopalpur road. According to him, as a result of this, 195 Mtn Bde could advance faster than 4 Corps to Dhaka, although the route from Tura to Dhaka was 322 km long, as compared to the 129 km distance between Akhaura and Dhaka(43).

A guerilla force of approximately 500 men operated under the leadership of Capt Zia, an ex-Pak Army Officer, in Barisal-Morelganj area. They were helped with weapons, ammunition and explosives(44).

Another Force of about 350 ex-military personnel, who were grouped together locally in fighting against the Pak troops, operated effectively under the command of Hav Maj Hemayet. These guerillas had their HQ in village Kandi, under Police Station Kotalipara in Faridpur district. They had fourteen .303 rifles, one Chinese LMG, one Chinese SMG, and one G-3 rifle in their possession. The source of the supply of their ammunition was not known. Members of this Force were paid a salary ranging from R.50 to R.90 per month. Hav Maj Hemayet, who was popularly known as Major, was a terror to the Muslim League and Jamaat-i-Islami people who used to pay him protection money periodically for the security of their lives. Pak troops attacked his group several times, but returned with heavy casualties. The Hemayet Force supported the Awami League and fought in the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Their approach towards the Mukti Bahini was very cooperative, and Hav Maj Hemayet's attitude towards the Bangladesh Government was also favourable(45).

Despite the Awami League policy of excluding the other parties from joining the Mukti Bahini, the different progressive political parties of Bangladesh and their splinter groups either supported the Awami League or created their own forces during this liberation struggle. The pro-Moscow Communist Party of Bangladesh and its front organisations, namely National Awami Party(M), Krishak Samiti (Peasants' Association), Students' Unit, and the Trade Union Centre supported the Bangladesh government-in-exile and participated in the liberation struggle. They were active mostly in Ghorasal, Brahmanbaria, Narsingdi, Comilla, and Dhaka. However, during the freedom struggle they shifted their HQ to Calcutta. This group consisted mostly of well-educated people, and their leaders were Muzaffar Ahmed, Moni Singh Garo, Deben Sikdar and Thakur(46). But, after the formation of the Mujib Bahini, the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Bangladesh raised a force of 20,000 guerillas who became very active in different sectors of Bangladesh during the liberation war. After Muzaffar Ahmed, leader of NAP(M), complained against the Indian government's partiality towards the Awami League, his party also started getting assistance from the Government of India separately(47).

On 9 September 1971, the Bangladesh government-in-exile formed a Consultative Committee

representing various political parties of Bangladesh which supported the Bangladesh government-in-exile. This Committee comprised Bhashani, Moni Singh, Muzaffar Ahmed, Monaranjan Dhar, Tajuddin Ahmed and Khondekar Mushtaq Ahmed. The support given by the Chinese government to the Yahya regime during the liberation movement created confusion among the leftist parties of Bangladesh. Some of these leftist groups such as NAP(B), Co-ordination Committee of the Communist Revolutionaries (CCCR), Communist Workers' Association (CWA), Bangladesh Communist Party (Hatier Group), East Pakistan Communist Party (ML), and Communist Samhati Kendra (Communist Solidarity Centre), led by Amal Sen, came over to West Bengal and formed Bangladesh Mukti Sangram Samonnoy Committee (Co-ordination Committee for the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle) with Maulana Bhashani as the Chairman. It was reportedly backed and supported by CPI(M) of India, which opposed the Chinese attitude towards Bangladesh and supported the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle, but did not like the dominance of the Awami League or the Indian Government(48). However, Bhashani severed his link with this Committee and gave full support to the Awami League government-in-exile. Nevertheless, a section of the EBCP(ML) led by Mohammed Toaha and Abdul Haq opposed the Awami League leadership, and fought against both the Pakistan Army and the Mukti Bahini. While they condemned the Chinese policy towards the liberation war, they described the Awami League-led movement as a conspiracy of Soviet Social Imperialism and Indian expansionism(49). They raised 10,000 "red" guerillas and fought some actions with the Pak Army in different parts of the country. They also clashed with the Mukti Bahini in the districts of Chittagong, Jessore, Khulna, Rajshani and Pabna. They fought courageously against the Pak Army at Ramgati in Noakhali district, but as they were poorly equipped, most of them were killed, and the remainder went underground.

At the early stage, the Matin-Alauddin group of EBCP in a bid to liberate Pabna town, reportedly killed over a hundred Pak troops with the help of police and other freedom fighters. Later, they switched over to the Chinese line of thinking. On the other hand, the Ohidul group of EBCP with their 1,000 guerillas cooperated fully with the Awami League. Another militant group of East Bengal Workers Movement also fought against the Pak troops from inside Bangladesh, but this ill-equipped group lost most of its men. Another pro-Peking group, known as Mythi group after the name of its leader Agni Prabha Mythi, fully cooperated with the Mukti Bahini as guerillas.

The Sarbahara Party (Party of Proletariat), led by Shiraj Sikdar, with its limited strength, also fought well against the Pak forces from inside Bangladesh(50). Derisively called "Mao Test Tube Group", this party had its HQ in Kumarkhali in Barisal district. According to Maj Gen Farman Ali of the Pak Army, this terrorist group was responsible for the political murders during October-November 1971(51). Two other pro-Peking leftist parties were Menon-Kazi Zaffar group and Mashiur Rahman-Nurul Qadir-Huda group. While the former cooperated with the Mukti Bahini, the latter, more socialistic in out-look, was ineffective(52).

As the leftist groups were not generally included in the Mukti Bahini, they set up independent forces. Professor Muzaffar Ahmed and a student leader, Abdul Hakim, both belonging to the National Awami Party (pro-Moscow) set up an independent force, consisting mainly of students. Similarly, Maulana Bhashani along with Toaha and Khusro organised a youth force loyal to the National Awami Party (pro-Chinese). The main objective of this force was the elimination of the rightist elements in the country(53).

The Bengalee guerillas not only carried out sabotage activities inside Bangladesh, but also set about killing pro-Pakistani, non-Bengalee elements as well as Bengalee collaborators of the Pak rulers. They also sought to infiltrate their agents among the Razakars and other elements loyal to Pakistan, and launched a psychological warfare by focussing powerful propaganda towards the people of Bangladesh(54).

### OPERATIONS

The armed freedom struggle of the people of East Bengal can be broadly divided into four phases:-

- 1) Period of unorganised resistance (25 March to 15 May 1971).
- 2) Creation and training of the Mukti Bahini (mid May to end June).
- 3) Monsoon offensive (July-August).
- 4) Period of increasing guerilla warfare (September to 3 December).

Developments during the period of unorganised resistance have already been described. With India getting involved in the struggle, it was decided to increase the pressure on Pakistan and to plan on a long-term basis to meet all eventualities if the

crisis worsened.

Till May 1971 the Pak troops crossing into the Indian territory while chasing MFs were allowed to return. But this concession was discontinued from 1 June.

On 1 May 1971, the COAS issued Army Headquarters Operation Instruction number 52 to GOC-in-C Eastern Command, pertaining to operational contingencies within East Bengal.

### Overall Aim

The overall aim of the Operation Instruction was:-

a) to assist the Provisional Government of Bangladesh in rallying the people of East Bengal to support the liberation movement;

b) to raise, equip and train East Bengal cadres for guerilla operations for employment in their own native land with a view:-

(i) initially to immobilising and tying down the Pak Military forces in protective tasks in East Bengal;

(ii) subsequently, by gradual escalation of guerilla operations to sap and corrode the morale of the Pak forces in the Eastern theatre, and simultaneously to impair their logistic capability for undertaking any offensive against Assam and West Bengal;

(iii) to avail the guerilla cadres as ancillaries to the Eastern Field Force in the event of Pakistan initiating hostilities against us.

### Tasks

GOC-in-C Eastern Command was given the undermentioned tasks:-

a) Advise, guide and encourage the Provisional Government of Bangladesh with the overall context of an independent East Bengal in such a manner so that their concurrence is obtained with regard to :

i) the set-up for political and military organisation for waging war;

ii) the size of the guerilla force;

iii) the scope and intensity of guerilla operations to be conducted in East Bengal;

iv) the evolution of an effective intelligence set up.

b) Plan for organising and equipping a guerilla force, initially limited to some 20,000 men; which could subsequently be enlarged to 1,00,000.

c) By a process of gradual escalation, enlarge the scope of guerilla operations in East Bengal.

d) Perfect the organisation for waging guerilla warfare in East Bengal(55).

While planning operations, the following guidelines were kept in view:-

a) Stage 1:

(i) The border in respective sector areas was to be kept 'hotted up' with a view to keeping a large number of Pak troops tied down.

ii) The isolated Pak BOPs, where retaliation by Pak troops was difficult, were selected and eliminated by the Bangladesh forces with the help of the Indian troops. Artillery and mortar fire support for the capture of such BOPs was provided by the Indian troops and the BSF, when within range.

b) Stage 2:

(i) Induction of the Freedom Fighters inside Bangladesh into various safe havens, where support from local population was readily available, was planned by the Sector Headquarters in conformity with the total number of the Freedom Fighters to be inducted, which was laid down by the Headquarters Eastern Command.

(ii) Destruction of rail, road and inland water transport was planned progressively deeper inside Bangladesh with a view to isolating forward areas and the main support areas such as cantonments and troop concentration areas(56).

(iii) In order to establish guerilla bases deep inside Pak territory, 145 selected students were trained and were infiltrated inside Bangladesh.

c) Stage 3:

The destruction of installations, machinery and big industrial estates including tea factories, petrol dumps and other installations in Jessore, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rangpur and Dinajpur was undertaken by specially planned raids.

Swadhin Bangla Regiments (East Bengal Regular Troops)

They were mainly employed for the elimination of the Pak BOPs in conjunction with Indian regular troops. Out of five East Bengal regular Battalions which were initially available, 1, 3 and 8 East Bengal Battalions with 'Z' Force Headquarters, located at Tura, were employed in the area of Mymensingh district for elimination of the Pak BOPs, and the other two were employed in the areas of Comilla and Belonia Bulge.

The 'Z' Force was given the task of capturing Kamalpur and Naokuchi Pak-held BOPs. Attacks on these BOPs did not succeed and the EB troops suffered fairly heavy casualties. The task of gaining a lodgement area for subsequent operations in the area of Kamalpur in Mymensingh district which was originally planned for the 'Z' Force had to be changed as the EB troops were not fully trained and needed more experience. Further attacks on Pak-held BOPs were not undertaken.

In the month of October, the 'Z' Force battalions were shifted to the area of Silchar where they were to conduct operations for the destruction of tea factories in Sylhet district and then extend their activities deeper inside Bangladesh with a view to isolating Sylhet by disrupting rail and road communications. Out of these three battalions, one battalion was employed in the area of Dauki with a view to posing a threat to Sylhet from the north. 2 and 4 EB battalions located in Tripura were employed in small-scale operations in the areas of Belonia Bulge and Saldanadi salient.

The other three Battalions which were subsequently raised in the month of October did not take part in any operations till the outbreak of hostilities. However, they carried out their training and reorganised during this period.

Mukti Fauj (Sector Troops)

A total of 45 Mukti Fauj Companies were mainly deployed along the border inside the Indian territory. These companies were controlled and led by the Bangladesh officers. In conformity with the Jackpot sectors, the Bangladesh Sector Headquarters were located in suitable places for the conduct of



operations of the Mukti Fauj and Freedom Fighters. Five to six Mukti Fauj Companies were allotted to each Bangladesh Sector. Most of the Mukti Fauj rank and file were elderly and were not willing to undertake risks. They generally confined their activities close to the border. The tasks carried out by these companies were:-

a) Limited operations along the periphery of the border against the Pak troops such as raiding of the BOPs, ambushing the Pak patrols and patrolling of the border areas.

b) Provision of firm bases close to the border for the conduct of operations by the Freedom Fighters.

c) Laying of road blocks to cut the withdrawal routes of the Pak troops occupying BOPs in conjunction with attacks by the Indian and East Bengal troops on such posts. They managed to inflict some casualties on the Pak troops and prevented them from reinforcing their posts.

#### Gano Bahini (Freedom Fighters)

On completion of their initial training, the Freedom Fighters were brought from their training camps to the forward support bases, located close to the border and Indian BOPs, occupied by the BSF and regular troops(57). In these forward support bases the Freedom Fighters were gradually "blooded" on operational tasks such as patrolling and raids. These operations were gradually launched deeper inside Bangladesh for the destruction of rail and road communications, power supply, police stations and elimination of the Pak collaborators.

After about 15 days of such activities, these Freedom Fighters were infiltrated inside the Bangladesh areas to which they belonged. The efforts towards induction of panic groups deep inside East Bengal for destruction of communications and harassment of the Pak Army in towns were made from May onwards. However, the outcome of these missions was, by and large, poor and most of the panic groups returned unsuccessful. Since the achievement of panic groups was below expectations, a general directive was issued for carrying out more operations across the border with the aim of 'hottening up' of the border. With increased number of the FFs being turned out from the training camps, forward bases were established inside East Pakistan from July onward. By June the Pak troops had moved back considerably in the interior, and to take advantage from the situation it

was proposed that ex-gunner officers then in the employment of the BSF be ordered to occupy suitable OPs inside East Pakistan for directing fire. By the end of August a total of approximately 10,000 Freedom Fighters were infiltrated inside Bangladesh. During the months of September, October and November, as the capacity of the training camps increased to 20,000 per month, a large-scale induction of these Freedom Fighters inside Bangladesh also became possible in most of the areas. As a result, by the end of November, approximately 51,000 Freedom Fighters were infiltrated inside Bangladesh. They were organised into teams, squads and groups based on thanas. Each thana had four to five such groups operating in the area. The leadership emerged mostly from within the Freedom Fighters who were picked up during their training and were given additional training to enable them to lead their squads/groups for conducting guerilla operations inside Bangladesh. In the first week of November 1971, the balance of approximately 25,000 Freedom Fighters, who were awaiting induction inside Bangladesh, were organised into companies. Officers, JCOs and NCOs from the Commando Wing of the Infantry School, and Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, were provided to lead these companies(58). They were employed on limited tasks in conjunction with other formations. Operations were also undertaken to eliminate the Pak BOPs, which totalled 115 at the beginning of the guerilla war, but were reduced to 51 at one time as a result of these operations. But later, as the Pak rulers moved more forces into Bangladesh, some lost BOPs were reoccupied, raising the total number of BOPs under their control to 73 in early December 1971. As a result of attacks by the newly inducted Pak regulars, guerillas' losses in men and arms rose quickly. Hence instructions were issued to the guerillas, who were not till then trained and organised enough, to wait for some time before starting a frontal warfare. While the regular forces of the EBR were allowed to fight limited engagements, the Sector Troops and Freedom Fighters were to undertake only guerilla-type missions. The Pak BOPs were not to be attacked directly by the irregulars, but merely harassed from long distances and their supply parties ambushed. In some of the liberated areas the Indian Army and BSF troops were to support the guerillas. It was decided to carry the guerilla war into the interior of East Bengal in the next stage, so that it could become a real People's War. Hence, a plan was worked out for the induction of guerillas into every district, and arrangements were started to feed and provide them safe refuge(59). The base structure comprising various cells of Underground Organisational Workers were first sent into each district, and after they got

settled, groups of the Freedom Fighters followed. This complex exercise was carried out efficiently, and in a little over three months (September-November) about 51,000 Freedom Fighters were inducted, who were already operating inside East Bengal when the war started in December.

After receiving month-long training in India, the first batch of 110 Freedom Fighters was infiltrated into Madaripur area of Bangladesh in July 1971. A total of five tea factories were damaged or destroyed, and a total of 14 tea gardens were reported to be out of production by end of this month. Considerable damage was caused by sabotage in the inland water port of Naranyanganj. Four ferries and 49 rivercraft were damaged or destroyed; a total of 825 ambushes and raids were organised and a total of 124 road/rail bridges were either destroyed or damaged in July 1971. The demolition of the Narsingdi Railway bridge, north-east of Dhaka, disrupted all rail communications between Dhaka, Comilla and Chittagong. Fourteen train/rail bogies were derailed and 34 sections of rail track were either removed or destroyed. A total of 70 sections of telephone/telegraph poles and 67 power pylons were damaged. The Pak troops reportedly suffered over 4,000 casualties, including 63 officers, as against the Freedom Fighters' casualties of 97 killed, 162 wounded, 51 taken prisoner, and 129 missing.

The FFs continued to dominate or partially hold a few peripheral and riverine pockets on the Indo-East Pakistan border, particularly in the Rangpur sector. The Pak troops made two attempts to evict the FFs from these pockets but met with only partial success and at a considerable cost to themselves. The FFs continued to dominate the following areas:

- i) opposite Siliguri - Pachagarh Salient
- ii) opposite Jalpaiguri - Patgram Salient
- iii) opposite Raiganj - Pirganj Area
- iv) opposite Cooch Bihar - Bhurungamari Salient
- v) opposite Shillong - Sunamganj Area

In the month of August, the number of Bangladesh salients and pockets dominated by the FFs increased to seven, with the addition of the following:-

- i) The Belonia pocket in Tripura.

- ii) The pocket northward of Kailashahar in Tripura.

Besides the three Battalions of EBR troops under training in Tura and another two Battalions functioning in the Comilla area, the over-all fighting strength of the MFs and FFs in August were 5,528 and 22,643 respectively, out of which 5,966 FFs were already operating deep inside Bangladesh and making their presence felt in the districts of Dhaka, Comilla, Noakhali, Faridpur, South Mymensingh, and North Chittagong.

In August, a total of 13 tea factories, one jute mill, and three godowns containing approximately 11,475 tons of jute at Godnail, Narayanganj, and Narsingdi were damaged or destroyed. As a result of over a thousand ambushes and raids organised during this month, 133 road/rail bridges, 23 trains/rail bogies, 46 sections of rail track, and 142 sections of telephone/telegraph lines and poles were damaged or destroyed. The Pak troops suffered about 1,100 casualties against the MF/FF casualties of 692, including 127 killed, 189 missing and 34 taken prisoner.

#### THE-CULTURAL-FRONT

Any account of the resistance groups will remain incomplete without mentioning the role played by Bengalee intelligentsia comprising writers, poets, journalists, singers, dramatists, painters, and officials and technicians of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. From 25 May 1971 this Betar Kendra, located in Mujib Nagar, started broadcasting nationalistic and patriotic programmes to motivate and inspire the Freedom Fighters and the people of Bangladesh at large. Besides the broadcast of news in English and Bengali, the following special programmes were launched for daily transmission:-

1. Agnishikha (The flame): A programme for the freedom fighters.
2. Bajra Kantha (Voice of thunder): The taped speeches of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
3. Charam Patra (The ultimatum): A satirical programme praising the Freedom Fighters and threatening the enemy with dire consequences if they did not surrender immediately.
4. Darpan (Mirror): A politically analytical programme.

5. Jagarani (Awakening): A revolutionary musical programme.
6. Oikatan (Musical harmony): A choral programme.
7. Rakta Sakshar (Impression in blood): A nationalistic, literary programme.
8. Special English programme for foreign countries.
9. World opinion: Excerpts from different newspapers and comments of the prominent world leaders on the liberation war.

The morning broadcast started every day with recitation from the Quran, and recitations from the Gita (for Hindus) and Tripitaka (for Buddhists) twice a week(60).

The contributions of Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Prof. Abdul Hafiz, Abu Toab Khan, Dr. A.R. Mallick, Dr. Ajoy Roy, Dr. Anisuzzaman, Badrul Hasan, Faiz Ahmed, Gaziul Haque, Mahadev Saha, Dr. Mahmud-ul-Islam, Mahboob Talukder, Dr. Mazharul-Islam, Mujib Bin Haque, Nasima Chowdhury, Nawjesh Hossain, Nirmalendu Gun, Ranesh Das Gupta, Dr. Sarwar Murhshed, Satyen Sen, Shanjida Khatun, Shawkat Osman, Sikandar Abu Zafar, Syed Ali Ahsan, Umme Kulsum, Wahidul Haque, and Zaheer Raihan were very valuable. Their articles, stories, dramas, poems and songs inspired the people to fight courageously. Painters like Dey Das Chakraborty, Kamrul Hasan, Nazir Ahmed, Nitin Kundu, and Pranesh Mandal also played an important part. Singers like Abdul Jabbar, Ajit Roy, Apel Mahmood, Arup Chowdhury, Kaderi Kibria, Kalyani Ghosh, M.A. Mannan, Manna Haque, Nawsher, Probal Chowdhury, Rafiqul Alam, Rathin Roy, Smar Das, and Swapna Roy inspired people with their revolutionary songs.

Some of the songs which became very popular were:-

- 1) Ek Sagar Rakter Binimoye Banglar Sadhinata Anlo Jara (Those who brought independence in exchange for a sea of blood), sung by Swapna Roy and others.
- 2) Janatar Sangram Chalbe Chalbe (The people's war shall continue, shall continue), written by Sikandar Abu Jafar.
- 3) Joi Bangla, Banglar Joi (Victory for Bengal).

- 4) Mora Ekti Phulke Bachabo Bole Judhha Kari (We fight to save a flower), written by Gobinda Halder and sung by Apel Mahmood.
- 5) Sona, Sona, Sona, Loka Bale Sona, Sona Noi Tato Khati, Loke Jato Bale, Taro Cheye Khati Amar Bangla Desher Mati (The soil of my Bangladesh is purer than pure gold), written by Abdul Latif.
- 6) Tir Hara Oi Dhewar Sagar Pari Debo Re (We shall cross this wavy ocean which has no shore), sung by Apel Mahmood(61).

Dramatists Hasan Imam, Sumita Devi, Raju Ahmed, Shubhas Dutta, Narayan Ghosh, and Madhuri Chatterjee were reputed participants in the radio programmes. However, the most popular programme was "Charam Patra", by M.R. Akhtar (Mukul), which combined satire with seriousness to make a great impression on the people. Over twenty newspapers came out during the war of liberation, only some of which were printed. Others were cyclostyled or even hand-written, to inspire the people to fight for freedom.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Bhuiyan, p.204.
2. Ibid., p.203.
3. Islam, pp.199-200.
4. Ibid., p.113.
5. Ibid., p.114.
6. From Official Records.
7. Islam, p.201. However, according to Maj Gen Sukhwant Singh, the Indian Army was asked to take over the guidance of all aspects of guerilla warfare on 30 April. Sukhwant Singh (Maj Gen), (I) p.35. Lt Gen B.N. Sarkar, PVSM (Retd) has, however, said that on 9 May 1971 he was told by the Army Chief that the Govt. of India had decided to extend support to the Mukti Bahini and number of Brigadiers, Lt Cols and Majors were urgently required to be sent to the east to train the Mukti Bahini. In August 1971, the, then Maj Gen, replaced Maj Gen O.S. Kalkat as Director of Mukti Bahini Operations, to work under the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command. - Interview with Lt Gen Sarkar on 17 January 1984.
8. Maniruzzaman, p.112.
9. BD I, p.669.
10. Ibid., p.672.
11. BD II, p.82.
12. Those who attended the conference were:  
(1) Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed (2) Col(Retd) M.A.G. Osmani (3) Lt Col M.A. Rab (4) Gp Capt A.K. Khandker (5) Maj (Retd) Q.N. Zaman (6) Maj C.R. Dutta (7) Maj Ziaur Rahman (8) Maj K.M. Shafiullah (9) Maj Khaled Musharaf (10) Maj Mir Shaowkat Ali (11) Wing Commander M.K. Bashar (12) Maj Osman Chowdhury (13) Maj Rafiq-ul-Islam (14) Maj Najmul Haque (15) Maj M.A. Jalil (16) Maj A.R. Chowdhury - vide Islam, p.190.
13. Islam, pp.191-192.
14. From Official Records.
15. Ibid., p.151.
16. Ibid., p.165.
17. Samant, (Capt), IN's Report. From Official Records.
18. Islam, pp.195-196.
19. Ibid., Maniruzzaman, p.114.
20. Islam, pp.193-195.
21. From Official Records.
22. From Official Records.
23. From Official Records.
24. Sodhi, p.48.
25. Islam, pp.198-199.
26. From Official Records.

27. Islam, p.187.
28. Ibid., p.199.
29. From Official Records.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Khan, p.98.
36. Ibid., p.100.
37. From Official Records.
38. Maniruzzaman, p.115.  
Gen Uban says the number was 10,000.
39. Bhuiyan, p.248.
40. Ibid., p.249.
41. Siddiqui, p.107. According to another source out  
of 15,000 personnel of Independent guerilla  
groups operating in Bangladesh, Kader's followers  
numbered only around 4,000.  
From Official Records.
42. Siddiqui, pp.248 and p.257.
43. Ibid., pp.281-282.
44. From Official Records.
45. From Official Records.
46. From Official Records.
47. Bhuiyan, p.250.
48. Ibid., p.251.
49. Ibid., pp.251-252.
50. Ibid., p.253.
51. From Official Records.
52. Ibid.
53. Khan, p.99.
54. Ibid., pp.100-101.
55. From Official Records.
56. From Official Records.
57. Ibid., p.11.
58. Ibid., p.12.
59. From Official Records.
60. Islam, pp.216-217.
61. Ibid., pp.219-220.

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