

Genesis Of Crisis

The people of Bangla Desh asked for autonomy but were forced to opt for independence. Mass killings, arson and rape left them no other choice. As the Bangla Desh leaders said, the concept of Pakistan which the Muslims of East Bengal had enthusiastically acclaimed in 1947 was buried by Gen. Yahya Khan under a mountain of corpses.

The origin of the crisis can be traced back to 1948. The first shock came when Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah told the East Bengalis that they would have to accept Urdu as the sole national language of Pakistan. This meant that Bengali, the mother-tongue of 52 per cent of Pakistan's population, would yield place to the language of only 7.2 per cent. A powerful agitation was launched against this arbitrariness, led by a law student of Dacca University. He was promptly expelled and sent to jail in 1948 for a brief term; a three-year sentence followed in 1949. This marked the beginning of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's career as a leader of the East Bengali people in their fight against the colonialism of West Pakistan.

Economic Disparity

Over the years, economic disparity between the east and the west became increasingly pronounced. By 1969-70, the per capita income in the west was 61 per cent higher than in the east. This was largely the result of systematic subordination of the interests of the east to those of the west. The foreign trade earnings of the east were used for the benefit of the west, while high tariffs and import controls were imposed to raise the prices of manufactured goods to provide fat profits to a handful of western businessmen. "Over the last two decades, East Pakistan's share of the total Pakistani export earnings has varied between 50 per cent and 70 per cent, while its share of imports has been in the range of 25 per cent to 30 per cent," as a group of three American economists has pointed out on the basis of official Pakistani data.

Economic domination was facilitated by West Pakistani control over levers of power. Of the 72 generals in the Pakistan army under Gen. Yahya Khan, only one was Bengali. In the central services, four-fifths of the senior posts were held by West Pakistanis.

Disenchantment with West Pakistan became specially acute after 1965. As a *New York Times* article says: "When the 22-day war found the Pakistan Government protecting the west, and not the east, Mujib and his friends became convinced the east could hope for nothing under Pakistan as then constituted." In February 1966, Sheikh Mujib announced his six-point charter of autonomy.

Mr. Bhutto tried to convince the East Bengalis that they had not been left to India's mercy in 1965; he hinted at promises that he had obtained from China to counter any Indian thrusts in the east. But this cut no ice. Nor did Mr. Ayub Khan's strident warnings

against traitorous "collusion" with India. Sheikh Mujib hardly needed to remind his people that the west had always adopted this propaganda line to defeat and divide the East Bengalis.

Mr. A.K. Fazlul Huq and Mr. H.S. Suhrawardy, the two tallest post-partition leaders of the east, were at one time or the other accused of conspiring with India. The pattern was repeated when Mr. Ayub Khan put Sheikh Mujib in prison in 1968 on a flimsy charge of having worked out with Agartala-based Indian agents a plan for creating an independent Bangla Desh. The trial proceeded for almost two years until the popular upsurge against Mr. Ayub Khan's regime obliged him to set the Sheikh free.

This was in March 1969, the same month in which Mr. Ayub Khan stepped down in favour of a martial law regime under Gen. Yahya. The circumstances in which he came to power obliged the general to promise to hand over power to the people after holding Pakistan's first-ever nation-wide election on the basis of adult franchise. In preparation for this, he lifted the ban on political activity on January 1, 1970, to mark the beginning of a hectic and eventful year in the country's history.

After a postponement, the elections were held in December 1970. Gen. Yahya and his aides waited for the result "with bated breath." He had expected that divisive trends, reflected in the multiplicity of parties, would prevent any group from getting a clear majority in its own right. But when this happened, he thought he would be able to manipulate the constituent assembly to decide in favour of a dispensation that left the armed forces with the final say in the shaping of the country's destiny. In any event, he had reserved to himself the power to ratify or reject the constitution.

Overwhelming Mandate

But unfortunately for him, the eastern wing gave an overwhelming mandate to Sheikh Mujib; his Awami League won 167 of the 169 East Bengal seats in the National Assembly. He was helped by two factors: first, the indignation of East Bengalis over Islamabad's tardiness in providing relief to the millions left destitute by a cyclone of unprecedented ferocity in November 1970; secondly, the East Bengalis' decision to turn the election into a referendum on the autonomy issue.

In the west, Mr. Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party bagged almost two-thirds of the remaining 144 seats in the National Assembly. But he was not content to sit in opposition; he told a mass rally in Lahore on December 20 that "majority alone does not count in national politics." He declared that the Awami League "must take into account" the wishes of the majority party of the west wing. This was obligatory, he said, because of Pakistan's geographical peculiarity.



Children giving a helping hand to the Mukti Bahini.

Mr. Bhutto grew increasingly intransigent as the time approached for calling the newly elected members of the National Assembly into session. He declared on February 15 that his party would boycott the session; he also threatened that his PPP workers would see to it that no members from other west wing parties attended either. Although other party leaders like Mian Mumtaz Daultana and Air Marshal Asghar Khan sharply criticised Mr. Bhutto's arbitrariness, Gen. Yahya gave in to him. In a broadcast on March 1, he announced that he was putting off the Assembly's inauguration scheduled for March 3.

Showdown Precipitated

This precipitated the showdown. The first slogans demanding Swadhin Bangla Desh were heard in the streets of Dacca. Sheikh Mujib was clearly not prepared to go that far; he opted instead for a civil disobedience movement to press his demand for transfer of power. This movement was an overwhelming success; even the Chief Justice refused to swear in the tough new Governor, Lt.-Gen. Tikka Khan, appointed by Islamabad to replace Admiral Ahsan who had advised against a confrontation with the Awami League.

It was in this atmosphere that the final round of negotiations began in Dacca after Gen. Yahya arrived there on March 15. Compromise proposals were formulated, one envisaging a provisional national government

under Sheikh Mujib and the second making over power to provinces even while Gen. Yahya remained in charge at the centre. Mr. Bhutto torpedoed both.

It is possible that Mr. Bhutto was not acting entirely on his own. He was either explicitly in collusion with the hawks in the army, or was being made use of by them. Even as the negotiations proceeded, troops in large numbers were being brought across from West Pakistan. On the night of March 25, the soldiers slipped into battle dress and struck without warning with automatic weapons and tanks. Twenty-four hours later, Mr. Bhutto said in Karachi where he flew back from Dacca: "Thank God, Pakistan is saved."

But as he made this comment, a radio station in Chittagong broadcast a proclamation of independence by Maj. Zia Rahman, speaking in the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The battle was now joined, even though the Sheikh himself had been taken into military custody. On April 10, the Bangla Desh government was formally constituted with the imprisoned Sheikh Mujib as President, Syed Nazrul Islam as acting President, and Mr. Tajuddin Ahmad as Prime Minister. The next day Mr. Ahmad broadcast from Free Bangla Radio. Maj. Zia Rahman, Maj. Saifullah and Maj. Khaled Musharraf were named regional commanders of the new Bangla Desh army. This was the end of the beginning; the final denouement was however still several months away.

Mukti Bahini Strikes

WHEN Pakistan's rapidly reinforced forces completed the recapture of major towns and strategic points by early May, Bangla Desh wore an air of deceptive calm. Foreign correspondents returning to Dacca in the first week of June—they had been bundled out of the country on March 26—saw it as "a sullen but pacified city". A British businessman returning from Dacca said: "There is no Bangla Desh except in the imagination of some political exiles in Calcutta." A report in the U.S. newspaper, *Christian Science Monitor*, on June 25, agreed: "It is true Bangla Desh is not visible as a going concern in East Pakistan soil at present."

These foreign visitors were jumping to conclusions. They missed what was happening in the depths of the countryside. The last pitched battle with the occupation forces ended only on June 20. This was in the Belonia salient, a long finger of land jutting into southern Tripura. Two companies of the Mukti Bahini, as the Bangla Desh army came to be known, held out for four weeks against a vastly superior Pakistani force backed by artillery and air cover.

But even before this engagement the Mukti Bahini realised that it would have to change its tactics. In preparation for a new phase of unconventional warfare, it had by the middle of June started training thousands of recruits in camps near the border.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Mukti Bahini, Col. M.A.G. Osmani, held in June the first conference of all



Col. M. A. G. Osmani, Commander-in-Chief
of the Mukti Bahini.

his sector commanders. This marked the beginning of co-ordinated and organised resistance to the occupation forces.

Mukti Bahini men defending Jessore in the early phase of the liberation war in Bangla Desh.



Soon, the Mukti Bahini was chalking up successes. Reporting from Dacca in *The Times*, London, in mid-July its correspondent reported that the Madhupur forest reserve in Mymensingh-Tangail districts "has been the scene of army operations for some weeks". Residents of Comilla "report considerable noise of firing most nights". In Sylhet, road and rail bridges have "again been the targets of sabotage". In Feni, located in the corridor linking the Chittagong area with the rest of Bangla Desh, "the main span of a bridge was dynamited expertly and has yet to be repaired."

Pakistanis suggested that actions such as this showed "evidence of considerable sapper skill," implying that "this can only mean that Indian army engineers are actively engaged." The correspondent added, however, the comment that "most foreign observers think it unlikely that the Indians would risk the capture of their own men in operations across the border".

Martin Woolcott reported in the *Guardian*, London, on July 13 that Islamabad had promulgated a martial law decree to enable it to draft any state employee in the west for service in the east. Three thousand policemen of all ranks have already gone, but "few of them are volunteers in spite of salary, promotions and other inducements offered by the government".

Campaign of Reprisals

Meanwhile the political offensive planned by Gen. Yahya Khan against the Awami League had proved a total flop. Begum Akhtar Sulaiman, daughter of the league's founder, Mr. H.S. Suhrawardy, had been roped in to subvert the elected members of the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly, but less than 25 indicated their willingness to co-operate with Islamabad.

In answer to the Mukti Bahini's operations, the Pakistan army began a campaign of reprisals. To quote Martin Woolcott again, all that was left of a village near a damaged bridge south of Brahmanbaria was an outline of black ash on the ground, and one still standing bamboo and grass hut. In Brahmanbaria itself, "whole streets are gone, houses blasted and empty." These reprisals continued right up to the moment of surrender; the ruthlessness in fact increased as the Pakistan army suffered growing losses in terms of men killed and wounded. But this only helped the Mukti Bahini to gain more support and more recruits.

And as trainees graduating from Mukti Bahini camps moved into action, foreign correspondents in Dacca were quick to acknowledge the turning of the tide. Michael Browne in a despatch to the *New York Times* on September 1 reported: "Guerrilla operations in East Pakistan against Gen. Yahya Khan's occupation forces



Major Jallil, Mukti Bahini Sector Commander for Khulna, Jessore, Faridpur.

are increasing dramatically in terms of the degree of organisation shown by the rebels as well as their capability to throttle communications and essential services."

The Mukti Bahini was also taking a heavy toll of collaborators. Mulla Ghulam Sarwar, chairman of the Khulna Peace Committee, was dragged out of his home by masked men in broad daylight, and left with his throat slit even though he was being guarded by ten Razakars at the time. Foreign correspondents reporting this incident mentioned that 50 other peace committee members had met with the same fate in the Khulna area alone. In sum, the Mukti Bahini was very much a going concern. No one dared any longer to dispute this fact.



Civilian victims of Pak bombing in Alamgir village, near Jullundur.

Beyond Che Guevara's Dreams

A success "beyond even the wildest dreams of a budding Che Guevara elsewhere": this was how UPI described the Mukti Bahini's achievements in a report from Dacca on November 17. Earlier, a dispatch in the *Sunday Times*, London, from its correspondent, Murray Sayle, said: "No Giap, Grivas or Guevara ever had it so good". The Bahini had "already scored successes which any Viet Cong commander would regard as a highly promising start".

By the time war broke out, the Bahini had increased its complement of regulars to eight battalions from the three with which it started. These regulars had, apart from the usual infantry weapons, two batteries of artillery. There was a naval wing as well, which included frogmen trained to carry out underwater sabotage. A dispatch from the AP correspondent in Dacca on November 21 had said this wing was operating gunboats "hijacked" from the Pakistanis in Khulna.

In addition to the regulars, Niyomito Bahini as the Bangla Desh Government called them, the freedom forces had two other components: Mujib Bahini and Gono (people's) Bahini. The exact numbers inducted into these is not available, but a reasonable guess is that the first organisation had at least 5,000 men and the second between 25,000 and 30,000 men.

Mujib Bahini was created for tasks deep inside Bangla Desh. It consisted for the most part of highly motivated student cadres, able to carry out not only military actions but also the very important duty of educating the people about their role in the liberation struggle.

Hit-and-Run Raids

The Gono Bahini operated both inside and in the border areas in conjunction with the Niyomito Bahini. Its task was to harry the enemy and disrupt his lines of communication by carrying out hit-and-run raids. It mainly concentrated on "targets of opportunity", meaning targets which chance offered, while raids on well-defended positions requiring a greater degree of skill and organisation were handled by the regulars.

The liberation forces were organised into nine sector commands headed by experienced officers. But complete co-ordination was scarcely to be expected in conditions of guerrilla warfare. A good deal had necessarily to be left to individual initiative and enterprise. Some friction did develop as a result but the total dedication of all participants to the cause of freedom helped to overcome the problem.

By December 3, the Mukti Bahini was already in control of sizable areas of Bangla Desh. Gen. Farman Ali admitted this when he told foreign correspondents in Dacca at the end of November that "Indians" held "four pockets" — three in Dinajpur and one in Sylhet district — and "several thousand yards of territory in Jessore." He also confessed that the Dinajpur areas had been lost "for months", and it was

impossible to retake them because of the terrain and the artillery support available from the "Indian" side. In Pakistani parlance, the Mukti Bahini was first described as "miscreants" and later as Indian "agents" or "infiltrators".

By November, the Mukti Bahini's complement of regulars was ready to take on the Pakistanis in limited engagements in border areas. In the south-western sector, several probes were launched from Meherpur in the north to Kaliganj in the delta. These were intended to throw the enemy off balance by obliging him to disperse his effort. The airfield at Jessore was subjected to intermittent mortar attacks from November 24. The road link between Jessore and Khulna was jeopardised by frequent sniping and ambushes. The result was a progressive isolation of the garrison in Jessore.

Border Town Freed

By Id day, November 20, the border town of Kaliganj 56 km south-east of Khulna, had been liberated by a Bahini column led by 30-year old Capt. Merul Huda. The Bangla Desh Home Minister, Mr. A.M.H. Kamaruzzaman, formally hoisted the green and gold flag here on December 2. In northern Bangla Desh, the Mukti Bahini had forced Pakistani troops to quit



the sub-divisional town of Pachagarh, just inside the border in Dinajpur district. With its liberation, the whole of the dagger-like enclave pointing towards Siliguri went out of the enemy's control. The Mukti Bahini's advance here was specially valuable as the corridor linking Assam with the rest of India is narrowest at this point.

Another enclave north of Lalmonirhat—the area around Bhurungamari, west of Dhubri in Assam—was also freed around this time. In fact, the Bahini had pushed in close enough to make the Lalmonirhat airfield unsafe for Pakistani operations. Its loss was anticipated by Pakistan which hurriedly completed in October an alternative airfield at Saidpur.

A third probe in the north was launched in November towards Hilli, explaining Pakistan's moves threatening Bakurghat across the border in West Bengal to get at the Bahini from the rear. This Bahini probe was obviously intended to push through towards the Brahmaputra, 80 km away, to cut off the whole of Dinajpur and Rangpur districts. Pakistani forces were predictably alarmed, but they only invited sharp Indian retaliation by attacking Indian territory.

Hideout of Siddiqui

In the north-east sector, the Bahini moved in from areas around the Meghalaya border in the north and Cachar district in the east to pin down the garrison in Sylhet. The terrain made it easier for guerillas to make deep forays, specially into the adjoining Mymensingh district. Just south of Mymensingh is Tangail, and the large Madhupur forest straddles the district boundary. This was the hideout of 23-year-old 'Tiger' Siddiqui and his boys who became a terror to the Pakistan army.

Along the Tripura border, the Bahini never gave the enemy respite all through the nine months of the liberation struggle. Some of the biggest actions in the period before the war were fought here. In November, Pakistan radio was reporting the skirmishes day after day, but attributing the assaults to Indian agents and regular troops. On November 15, it was said that constant intrusions were taking place in Comilla and Naokhali districts. Two days later, two Indian companies were alleged to have launched an attack north of Comilla. On November 21, Razakars were said to have saved road bridges from demolition by Indian agents. In fact, the radio claimed on November 22 that India, with 12 divisions deployed around the border, had launched an all-out offensive. But the *Washington Post's* correspondent in Dacca reported on November 29 that there was no evidence to support the charge.

Only Limited Gains

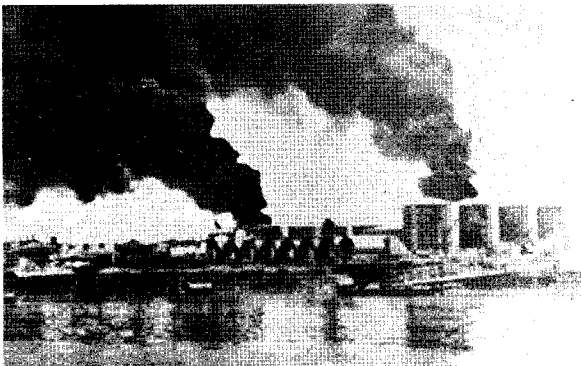
The Bahini's probes yielded only limited territorial gains, but they served several far more important purposes. First, it became extremely difficult for the enemy to obtain information about the forces opposite him. If he sent out a small detachment, it never went back. This forced him to undertake reconnaissance in platoon strength. But a party of this size is too big to operate without drawing attention to itself.

Secondly, Mukti Bahini operations had certainly an effect upon the morale of Pakistani forces. A report in the *New York Times* from Dacca on November 8 said: "An increasing number of officers and troops from West Pakistan have come to realise that their assignment here is likely to last a long time." Suggesting this was

Men of the Mukti Bahini carrying arms and other equipment

for Indian troops during the 14-day war.





Black columns of smoke rise from the massive blazing oil refinery at Chittagong, when Mukti Bahini men blew it up on December 4.

causing a decline in morale, the report added that "the increasing number of army casualties has apparently made it impossible to continue the former policy of flying the bodies of officers back to West Pakistan for burial."

The effect of all this upon collaborators can be readily imagined, more so as a leading light like Abdul Monem Khan, governor under Mr. Ayub Khan, was killed in his Dacca home while Abdus Sabur Khan, a former Central Minister, was injured.

The third aspect of Mukti Bahini operations was its role in disrupting the enemy's lines of communication. The railway from Comilla to Chittagong scarcely functioned after March.

An important bridge near Feni was blown up within the first few days, and railway track uprooted at many points. Pakistani efforts to repair the damage was stymied by attacks on work gangs, and more damage elsewhere.

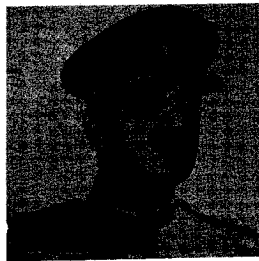
This harassment from within sapped Pakistan's morale and contributed greatly to the speed of Indian operations. But not to be missed either is what the Mukti Bahini achieved off its own bat. The liberation of Naokhali in the south-east, Mymensingh in the north, and a host of smaller townships elsewhere was the work of the brave and dedicated men who decided on March 25 to give the Islamabad junta a fitting reply.

Yahya Khan's Threats

PAKISTAN tried all along to convert the Bangla Desh crisis into an issue with India, hoping thus to make it seem yet another of the perennial quarrels between Islamabad and New Delhi. This effort became more pronounced as the Mukti Bahini's thrusts began to tell upon the nerves of the occupation forces. On July 31, 1971, Gen. Yahya charged India with persistent shelling of the East Pakistani border, and with preventing the return of refugees. He chose on this occasion to warn the world: "A total war with India is very near."

A Total War

In an interview to *Le Figaro*, Paris, he repeated the threat of war again. "If the Indians imagine that they can take a parcel of my territory without provoking a war, they will commit a grave error. He added: "Let me warn you and the world that this means war, a total war." To him every action undertaken by the Mukti Bahini was another instance of Indian aggression. Or so he wanted the world to believe.



General Yahya Khan... whose brutal repression of East Bengalis led to the dismemberment of Pakistan.

This interview was noteworthy for several ill-tempered references to Mrs. Gandhi. "She is neither a woman, nor a statesman by wanting to be both. If I meet her, I will say—shut up, woman."

In a broadcast on October 12 in which he announced his plans for transfer of power to civilians by the end of the year, he alleged that India "was making feverish military preparations for aggression against Pakistan". But the tone of his fulminations had undergone a slight change, possibly because he realised that time was running out for him.

In an interview to *Le Monde*, Paris, he said he did not want a war with India; he was prepared "to talk to anybody any day, anywhere, and also to accept any mediation to settle the differences between the two countries." To this, New Delhi's reply was that a settlement should be sought not with India but the people of Bangla Desh.

On October 17, he offered to withdraw his troops from forward positions if India would do the same. There was obviously belated realisation that the rash move was proving counter-productive. About this time, Gen. Yahya also made an appeal for U.S. "good offices" to resolve the "crisis" in the sub-continent in an obvious bid to queer the pitch for Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Washington. But New Delhi stood its ground: it turned down the plea for mutual troop withdrawals, saying that it could not take the risk of putting them back in peace-time stations far in the interior. In the context of Islamabad's repeated threats of war, India had to take into account the fact that Pakistan's bases like Kharian, near Sialkot, were very close to the border.

Bahini Pressure Tells

When the deceptive plea for withdrawals did not work, Gen. Yahya tried yet another gambit. He asked the U.N. to post neutral observers on his side of the border; this was in contrast to his earlier demand for posting them on both sides to which India had categorically said "no".

He changed his posture on the refugee issue as well. He had at first denied that a sizable influx had taken place into India; New Delhi was alleged to be collecting the destitute people of West Bengal to fill the camps. Later, Islamabad admitted that some two million East Bengalis had crossed over but India was inflating the figure to over nine million for political reasons. But in November Gen. Yahya finally took the stand that he was prepared to take back every genuine citizen of the east wing under an internationally supervised programme. The pressure of the Mukti Bahini was, indeed, beginning to tell.

In one of his last pronouncements before the war—this was made on November 26 at the inauguration of a Chinese-built machinery complex near Rawalpindi, he said: "If that woman (Mrs. Gandhi) thinks that she is going to cow me down, I refuse to take it". He added: "In ten days, I may be off fighting a war". As it turned out, this was a pointer to the shape of things to come.

War Breaks Out



The Prime Minister—on whom a grateful nation conferred the highest award, Bharat Ratna.

At the headquarters of an Indian division somewhere in Punjab, senior officers were dressing for a party to celebrate the GOC's birthday when word came through of Pakistani raids on Indian airfields. This was just after 6 o'clock on Friday, December 3. The party guests hurriedly made their way to the operations room, instead of to the officers' mess.

Pakistan had, indeed, achieved surprise. But there was no question of the enemy getting away with it because India's army and air force deployed along the 800-kilometre ceasefire line in Kashmir or along the international border from Kutch to Pathankot were fully prepared.

India's preparations had begun in the first week of October in response to the movement of Pakistani troops from their peacetime stations to positions menacing our territories. By the middle of October, the Indian build-up was very nearly complete. Leaving the cantonments in the rear, formations had dug themselves in at various distances from the border to man the several lines of defence.

No Other Option

There was no other option as General Yahya Khan had been threatening "total" war for several months. On November 23, he declared a state of emergency as foreign correspondents reported that the war fever in Pakistan had touched a new high. Speaking to correspondents at Rawalpindi on November 26, he had served what looked like an ultimatum when he said: "In ten days' time, I may not be here; I may be off fighting a war." India took him at his word, and proceeded to make appropriate preparations to defend itself.

Pakistan's friends were not too happy at the turn events were taking. Realising that the outcome might be disastrous for General Yahya's regime, Washington

took the lead in proposing withdrawal of troops on both sides of the border. Mrs. Gandhi quite rightly turned down this proposal; she pointed out that Pakistan's military bases lie close to the border while India's are located well behind. Kharian, the home of Pakistan's 6th armoured division, is less than 80 km from the sensitive Jammu salient, while the peacetime station of the Indian armoured division is some 640km from the border.

Events have proved the validity of the point made by the Prime Minister. India's forces were fortunately ready at hand when Pakistan made its pre-emptive strike. The air raids were followed quickly by heavy shelling on the ground all along the border from Poonch in Kashmir to Hussainiwala in Ferozapore district. Yet Pakistan could not risk launching a large-scale offensive in the manner of the Indian thrust into Punjab in 1965, because it knew that there would be swift Indian retaliation.

The deterrent effect of Indian preparations is best brought out by the fact that when ceasefire came on December 17, Pakistan had still not committed either of its two armoured divisions or its infantry reserves. India held back similarly but this was only to be expected; our only aim in the west was to prevent Pakistan from making any significant territorial gains for use as a bargaining counter vis-a-vis Bangla Desh.

Negligible Gains

This aim has been fully achieved in the north-western theatre, even though we did yield some ground in the Chhamb area and lost some of our enclaves like Hussainiwala and Kasowal on the Pakistani side of the Sutlej and the Ravi. Unfortunately for Mr. Bhutto, Pakistan's gains are negligible compared to Indian acquisitions of the Chicken's Neck salient south of Akhnur, a large area in the Shakargarh sector opposite Pathankot, the Sehjra bulge south of Khen Karan, and numerous Pakistani enclaves on our side of the rivers from Mamdot near Fazilka to Dera Baba Nanak, 64 km north of Amritsar. Not to be missed either is the tactical advantage gained by the takeover of hill features and posts in Kargil, Tithwal, Uri and Poonch.

The success this represents is made the more creditable because the Indian and Pakistani forces in the west were pretty evenly matched. We may have had a slight superiority in infantry but Pakistan had an edge in the number of tanks available to it in this theatre.

Lt.-Gen. K.P. Candeth estimates Pakistan's total strength in the north-western theatre, extending from Ganganagar district of Rajasthan to Kargil, at 250,000 regular troops. It has in addition a very large number of para-military formations such as Rangers and Frontier Scouts.

Published information suggests that Pakistan had ten infantry divisions available here, including two which are regarded as reserves at the disposal of its army

headquarters. The 1st armoured division is known to have moved out of Multan towards the Ferozpur-Ganganagar area, while the 6th armoured division was believed to be deployed along the Sialkot—Punjab—Narowal axis. Besides, there were three independent armoured brigades in the field, along with tank regiments attached either to Pakistan's corps headquarters or individual divisions.

But Pakistan tended to break up its formations and send them in a piecemeal fashion to various sectors. One brigade of a division assigned to Gen. Tikka Khan's Sialkot-based corps was known to have been switched to Lahore. Two regiments from the 6th armoured division were involved in the Chhamb battle. One regiment of the 1st armoured division was thought to be in Rahimyar Khan, opposite Bikaner.

The reason for this ad hoc pattern of deployment, which did violence to the cohesion of formations, may have been Pakistan GHQ's inability to assess Gen. Candeth's aims and intentions. Uncertain about what he was up to, Pakistan kept switching its forces from one sector to another in an attempt to anticipate Indian offensives.

Pakistan was known to be looking for some form of Chinese intervention to throw India off balance. But in the Ladakh area of the north-western theatre, as elsewhere along the Himalayan frontier, there were no movements of Chinese troops of any significance. Lt.-Gen. Sartaj Singh, commanding the corps guarding Kashmir, had of course a close watch maintained along the line of actual control in Ladakh, but the only report made to him was of the arrival of a few vehicles bringing some 100 people one day in probably routine turnover of personnel.

Special Problem

Disappointment with China, added to the setbacks suffered in the east, did no good at all to Pakistani morale. Many Indian formation commanders were surprised when highly rated Punjab or Baluch regiments broke off battle without putting up a determined fight. The quality of some of these regiments has perhaps suffered because of the induction of new recruits with training of ten weeks or less to make up for men transferred to the two new divisions Pakistan has raised.

These divisions, the 17th and 33rd, have been built around a core of regulars reinforced by reservists and raw men drafted from among young men now required to do compulsory military service.

Pakistan was also faced with a special problem on account of the East Bengalis in its armed forces. A brigade in the Lahore sector included four companies of the East Bengal Regiment. These had not been fielded together but dispersed among the other battalions of the brigade to minimise the danger of defections.

Yet the East Bengalis walked across to the Indian side wherever they could. They made it clear to newsmen that they had neither been captured, nor had they surrendered. They had only joined friends to be able to move to Bangla Desh to fight for their own country.

One East Bengali officer, a gunner, drove across in his jeep along with his batman who was also from Bangla Desh. This was highly risky; the jeep in fact got stuck in the defensive obstacles, and had to be retrieved by Indian troops. While he was making this dash to freedom he was in danger of being shot at by both sides. But mercifully this did not happen. Another East Bengali officer, a company commander trained for para operations, changed sides in the Pathankot area, bringing like many others valuable information to his Indian friends.

Some West Pakistani POWs, officers among them, have told their Indian captors that the armed forces did not want the war but it was forced on them by the generals dabbling in politics. But there are also many staunch and dedicated Pakistanis among the prisoners who either maintain stony silence or blame their misfortune on alcoholic leaders like General Yahya. Prisoners in this category maintain that Pakistan has not been defeated in the west; only its honour has been compromised by a cowardly and incompetent leadership.

This view is not to be dismissed lightly. The fact remains that Pakistan's strength in the west is largely intact, particularly in armour. The loss of tanks does not perhaps amount to much more than 15 per cent of the total strength, but attrition in terms of aircraft is somewhat higher. This no doubt means a setback but some imaginative Pakistani military planners may yet hope that their side can achieve a breakthrough in a chosen sector on the basis of local tactical superiority.

Shift In Balance

They may be pitching their hopes too high because local superiority can scarcely be achieved once India concentrates its full strength in the west minus only the nine or ten divisions manning the Himalayan frontier. It is also pertinent to consider the shift in the balance of power in the air that is bound to take place when India concentrates the bulk of its air force in one theatre.

Another point hawks in Pakistan should carefully consider is India's undoubted ability to withstand the rigours of a long war. Pakistan is handicapped in a strategic sense by its lack of depth; IAF planes can get at any target no matter how far it is in the rear. Pakistan is even more at a disadvantage because it has very limited capability for surviving a cut-off of imports that the Indian Navy has shown it can bring about.

Battle For Chhamb

EVEN before Pakistan raided India's forward airfields on the evening of December 3, its tanks and artillery had begun moving forward in the Bhimbar sector adjoining Chhamb.

But Pakistan tries to make out that when it struck at our airfields, it was only retaliating against Indian attacks in Sialkot and Lahore sectors in the north, and in the Rahimyar Khan area in the south. These probes, allegedly supported by the Indian Air Force, were said to have been launched shortly after midday.

Nobody has taken these protestations seriously. No general staff in its right senses would launch a strike across land frontiers without making a simultaneous attempt to neutralise the enemy air force. The onus for making the first move squarely rests with the Pakistan GHQ, as independent foreign commentators freely acknowledge.

From the very start, Pakistan directed its attention to Jammu and Kashmir for obvious political reasons. It must have known that it could not expect to make large territorial gains because of the very strong defences built up by us over the years. But it would have sufficed General Yahya Khan's purpose if he could take a big enough nibble for use as a bargaining counter.

Shelling began in Poonch and Chhamb sectors on the night of December 3, heralding a bid to break into these relatively isolated areas west of the Pir Panjal range. Until a short time ago, the only access to these areas was by a road from Jammu which crosses Chhamb near Akhnur to proceed through Naushera and Mendhar to Poonch. Now there is another road lying well to the rear, one of the several alternative lines of communication India has developed to make sure of uninterrupted access to vulnerable areas.

Enveloping Offensive

Beginning on the night of December 3, two major assaults were mounted by Pakistan against Poonch and Chhamb lying at the two extremes of this front. The aim may have been to develop an enveloping offensive from the two ends. But even if this failed, successful intrusions here would have enabled Pakistan to push infiltrators into the rear.

Pakistan's 26th infantry brigade mounted the attack on Poonch, the main thrust coming from Kahuta, near the Haji Pir Pass. The forward troops engaged

Indian tanks are ready for action near Munnawar Tawi river.



our defences around 8.30 p.m. in the open area to the east of the town. Simultaneously, commandos belonging to Pakistan's Special Services Group infiltrated behind our lines in a bid to capture a bridge over Kaini river to cut off the road leading from Poonch to Riasi. By the time the battle had fully developed, Pakistan was employing six or seven battalions, or upwards of two brigades.

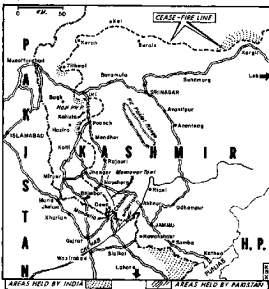
Pakistan's moves were bold but Indian forces in the area stood ready to meet just about every eventuality. Over many months they had gone through tactical exercises organised by their commanders in anticipation of what Pakistan might attempt. Every major formation established its own battle school to prescribe tasks and train men for them. The full value of this training was realised because there was no change of units or commanders in the preceding months in line with the wishes of the head of the corps, Lt. Gen. Sartaj Singh.

The SSG commandos were hit from the air in the woods below Poonch. But the reason why they soon fled back behind their own lines was the failure of the frontal thrusts. Unable to effect a link-up between the attackers and the commandos, Pakistan decided that wisdom lay in pulling out the latter to save them from decimation. A prisoner of war later confirmed that the commandos numbered 200, and were led by a Captain Mumtaz.

Second Try

After the first thrusts failed, Pakistan regrouped its forces for a second try on the night of December 9-10. The troops were forming up north of Poonch, but a swift blow dispersed them before they could be launched. Around this time, the IAF was called in to deal with the enemy's main supply base at Kahuta in the foothills. This town, near the Haji Pir Pass, was successfully plastered by Indian bombers.

Having beaten the enemy back, the Indian formations began a series of counterattacks with the aim of improving their defences. Several posts were captured on the Hajira-Kotli road, and a bridge on this was destroyed. At the time of the ceasefire, a dominant position had

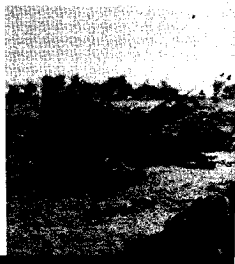


been achieved to blunt Pakistan's offensive capability along this axis leading to Poonch.

The second Pakistani offensive against Chhamb developed into the hardest-fought battle on the western front. According to Lt. Col. Basharat Ahmed, a POW, enemy troops had dug themselves in this sector two months ahead to mount a repeat performance of the 1965 assault which had brought Pakistani troops and armour to within 6.5 km of Akhnur, the vital road junction 35 km north east of Chhamb.

Chhamb has always figured in Pakistani designs on Kashmir because of its accessibility from across the border. Kharian, the big Pakistani base, is barely 80 km away as the crow flies. Secondly, the Pakistani Chicken's Neck enclave runs south of the Chhamb-Akhnur axis, exposing its flank. From the main Indian defences, access to

Gunners of an Air Defence Regiment (left) who shot down a Pakistani Sabre (right) in the Chhamb sector.





Lance Naik Padam Bahadur Thapa of 8 Gorkha Rifles, who had killed three Pakistani soldiers with his khukri in the Chhamb sector, talking to the Chief of the Army Staff, General Manekshaw, who is affectionately known to soldiers as 'Sam Bahadur'. Lance Naik Padam Bahadur Thapa presented his khukri to the General when he visited the Chhamb sector.

Chhamb involves crossing two rivers—the Chenab near Akhnur and the Munnawar Tawi, 2 km east of Chhamb.

The first attack here came early on the night of December 3, heralded by a heavy artillery barrage. Two infantry brigades, backed by a regiment of tanks, headed for Dewa Mandelia, an important hill feature inside the ceasefire line. The attack was held by our troops who knocked out six enemy tanks in the encounter.

The attack was pressed again, as was expected. On December 5, Pakistan inducted a fresh brigade and made two massive thrusts which cost it 23 T-59 tanks or half a regiment worth. But the enemy had plenty of punch left; he charged again and again obliging us to give up Dewa Mandelia and, a few hours later, Chhamb. The object of holding him up had however been achieved. Instead of reaching the Munnawar Tawi in six hours as he had planned he took 72 hours.

This gave time for the orderly withdrawal of the Indian brigade and supporting armour across the Tawi. As General Sartaj Singh says, not one man or tank was lost in the withdrawal made under cover of heavy artillery fire and simulated tank movements. At the same time, as our troops pulled back here, their comrades effected the capture of the 70 square kilometre Chicken's Neck. Pakistani resistance was light, and our battalion had sealed the neck in barely three hours.

Several Attacks

Pakistan was to make over the next six days—from December 7 to 12—several further attacks to push us further back from the Tawi. By this time he was using one division of infantry—two brigades forward and one in the rear—along the 10,000 metre battlefield. He had brought up more artillery too.

In the hard fighting that ensued, Pakistan managed on the night of December 9-10 to establish a 2000 sq. metre bridgehead across the Tawi. General Yahya Khan, corps commander here in 1965, was said to have flown in on December 10 to give his men a pep talk. On our side, General Candeth, the Army Commander, flew in on December 11 to study the situation on the spot, after a fresh Indian brigade had been brought in. There was no mistaking the importance both sides attached to the outcome of the battle.

On the night of December 10-11 we mounted a fresh offensive which pushed the enemy back to the west of Tawi. By December 12, the front stabilised with Indian forces dominating the no-man's land in between

the forces on either side. By this time, Pakistan had suffered at least 3,000 casualties and the destruction or immobilisation of at least 50 tanks. The enemy had little incentive left therefore to try conclusions again. But just to make sure that he would not, the IAF pounded his supply lines. In one assault on December 12, eight tons of explosives were dropped over enemy positions at Burejal, setting his petrol dumps ablaze and inflicting other damage. In fact, the favourable outcome owed a great deal to the stepped up Indian air effort from December 8 onwards. The Pakistan air force was using Mirage, MiG-19, and F-86 aircraft for its sorties, mounted mostly from closeby airfields such as Murid in Jhelum district. The Indian response built up to a point where we had for long spells our interceptors providing a protective air umbrella over the battlefield to chase away intruders.

Largely Local

In the rest of the Kashmir theatre, the action was largely local and small. The initiative was taken in almost all instances by the Indian side with the two-fold aim of safeguarding the defences of our lines of communication and of denying the enemy routes through which he might have launched infiltrators. But even this limited aim required courage and determination of a high order, as for instance in the capture of posts and positions in Kargil at heights of up to 4,800 metres. All the actions took place at night—the temperature when the highest point was taken was minus 17 degrees Centigrade.

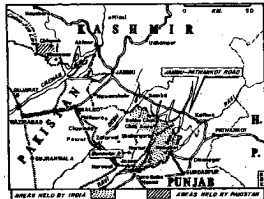
We are now securely holding 36 posts in Kargil to deny Pakistan any opportunity to interfere with the road to Leh. Likewise, posts have been occupied in the Lippla valley south of Tithwal to block infiltration towards Baramulla, and in the Uri sector to prevent sneaking into Gulmarg.

There was never any intention of taking over Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, as the Americans have sought to make out. But had Pakistan refused to heed Mrs. Gandhi's call for peace on December 17, it is quite clear that our forces would have pushed the ceasefire line back to make the defences of Kashmir fool-proof. For instance, the capture of the Partapur post in Ladakh obviously presaged a two-pronged thrust, from here along the Sheyok valley and from Kargil along the Indus to make sure that the northern reaches of the 1948 ceasefire line would be safe from any incursions launched from Skardu.

Shakargarh Probe

INDIA launched no major offensive in the north-western theatre during the 14-day war, but there was one in the making as the ceasefire came on the night of December 17. This was the gradually enlarged probe into the Shakargarh bulge opposite Pathankot. Launched on the night of December 5-6, it culminated in the biggest tank battle of the war on December 16.

The army began with two initial objectives in mind. It wanted to gain more elbow room for the defence of the Pathankot-Jammu road which runs dangerously close to the border with Pakistan. Secondly, it wanted to create a diversion to oblige Gen. Tikka Khan's Sialkot-based corps to move some of its strength away from Chhamb.



But the probe pushed ahead to the outskirts of Shakargarh and Nurkot, and within striking distance of Zafarwal to capture 60 towns and villages spread over 1,000 square kilometres of territory. It should have surprised no one if Indian forces had followed up with a really purposeful effort towards Pasrur, Chawinda and Phillaura which lie on the outer perimetre of Sialkot's defences. The jawans had fought through extensive minefields and crossed rivers and streams to arrive at level ground with few natural obstacles ahead. In time, one or more additional columns may have been launched southwards of Jammu to get at these defences from the rear had Pakistan chosen to continue the war.

Pakistan had very large forces in this general area—the equivalent of three infantry divisions between the Ravi and the Chenab, together with its 6th armoured division and two independent armoured brigades. Of these, over a division of infantry and two regiments of tanks were directly involved in holding the Shakargarh bulge.

The Indian assault did not bring into battle any of our reserves—whether of infantry or armour. But it left the enemy guessing. This prevented him from moving his armoured division anywhere else, and from committing any more of his troops in the battle for Chhamb. This was all that India intended to achieve in the defensive war it fought in the north-western theatre.

The bulge has several rivers and streams flowing through it. Counting east to west, there is first the Ravi running almost along the border at the bottom of the bulge. Then comes the Bein, followed by the Karir, the Basantar and the Degh. The terrain close to the border is full of ravines covered with elephant grass.

The probe into the bulge began with two prongs pushing down in a north-south direction between the Bein and the Karir, and between the Karir and the Basantar. The first was directed towards Shakargarh and the other towards Zafarwal. Shakargarh is about 20 km inside West Pakistan, whether one approaches it from east or north. Zafarwal, about 25 km west of Shakargarh, is only 10 km south of the border which runs east to west here before pushing to the north in the vicinity of Sialkot.

Third Thrust

A third thrust was made towards Shakargarh on the night of December 8-9 in an east-west direction across the Ravi from the direction of Dinanagar, a town about 16 km north of Gurdaspur in Punjab. All three thrusts were backed up by armour and artillery.

The capture of Pakistani posts overlooking the Jammu-Pathankot road was the first task. This was completed before December 6, within the first 24 hours. One post, Sukmal, was particularly bothersome because it had a very high observation tower which could have been used to direct the enemy's artillery fire on traffic using the road. Around and beyond the posts, Pakistan had large minefields, varying from 550 metres to 1450 metres in depth. These had been laid over the two previous months with a lavishness which suggests that Pakistan had almost inexhaustible stocks.

The thrust launched between the Karir and the Bein pushed over 6.5 km inside on the first night. It was focussed then on the fortified villages of Chakra and Dehra which were captured on December 11-12. The column then swung round to invest the large town of Sukho Chak, and the Chak Amru rail terminus. After these had been captured, the column broke into Mauriyal, a railway station immediately north of Shakargarh. At the time of ceasefire, the troops were only 500 metres short of the road linking Shakargarh with Zafarwal.

The parallel thrust between the Basantar and the Karir encountered a very large minefield, almost 1.6 km deep on both sides of the Basantar. The Grenadiers and the Madras Regiment who spearheaded the infantry

advance had trawl tanks available to clear the mine-field. But these began to get bogged down in the soft riverbed. The troops took to hand breaching of the mines. This delayed until the early hours of the next morning further advance over the bridge our engineers had quickly thrown across the river.

Once the advance infantry elements reached the western side of the Basantar to push on towards Zafarwal, they ran into two regiments of Pakistani tanks. This was, as one commander put it, a moment of crisis. But our hard-pressed forward elements were quickly reinforced as one squadron of Centurion tanks moved in behind another. As the battle was later described, our tank crew withheld fire until the enemy was less than 900 metres away. At that range, the Centurion's high velocity gun proved deadly.

During the night and the next day, December 15-16, 45 Patton tanks were destroyed or damaged; while India lost 15. But some of our tanks have been retrieved later. In earlier actions in the bulge, the enemy had lost 33 tanks. In other words, he had to sacrifice almost two regiments of tanks in his unsuccessful bid to contain Indian probes.

In the battle of December 15-16, the enemy had more tanks on his side than we could immediately deploy.

Yet he lost heavily because the Indian tank crews proved decidedly superior in their gunnery and in their ability to manoeuvre their Centurions around to gain positions of vantage. It does seem that rigorous training has yielded rich dividends.

The Poona Horse, the armoured unit involved in this battle, has again given an extremely good account of itself. It had done very well in 1965 as well, earning for itself the esteem of the enemy who often referred to it as *Fakhr-e-Hind*, or the pride of India.

A Neat Move

Even before the tank battle had ended, the infantry pressed on towards the Supwal Ditch, an anti-tank obstacle created by Pakistan for the defence of Zafarwal. This was a neat move designed to neutralise enemy fire from numerous pillboxes set up along the ditch by getting at it from the rear. Two prongs went forward, the Madras Regiment on the right and the Grenadiers on the left. Lt.-Col. W.P. Ghai of the first column fell in the battle; the doctor attending on him, Captain Surinder Nath, was also killed by an enemy shell. The second unit lost one officer and 21 other ranks, but it made the enemy pay far more heavily. Its 35th Frontier Force

Indian Army field guns firing at Pakistani positions
in the Punjab sector.





Lt.-Gen. K.P. Candeth, GOC-in-C, Western Command (second from right), looking at a destroyed Pakistani Patton tank in the Samba-Pathankot sector.

Rifles lost 90 men, including its commanding officer, Lt.-Col. Raja Mohammed Akram, and two company commanders.

The thrust mounted from the east on the night of December 8-9 crossed the Ravi at a ferry point close to Dinaagar. It first dealt with a number of border posts. The next evening the town of Nainakot, 10 km south-east of Shakargarh, fell to us. In this area, Pakistan had a reinforced infantry brigade plus one regiment of tanks. Mines had been laid elsewhere, and there were numerous dug-in positions along the line of defence. But for all this, tactical surprise was successfully achieved and the enemy pushed back 12 to 25 km.

Pitched Battle

After taking Nainakot, the Indian column bifurcated—one moving north-west towards Shakargarh and the other westwards to Nurkot, another sizable town 20 km from Nainakot. The first column was involved in a pitched battle with enemy tanks close to the Bein riverbed just east of Shakargarh. As many as 15 Pattons were destroyed or damaged. It was in this action that Lt. Nayak Iftikar was taken prisoner; he is a grandson of undivided Punjab's prime minister, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan.

The battle of the Shakargarh bulge did not end with the ceasefire. The enemy mounted three counterattacks using two brigades and three regiments of armour, backed up with heavy artillery shelling, and strikes from the air. The force employed was intended to achieve a quick decision in his favour, but Indian forces held their ground.

'The battle of the bulge confirms—according to Lt. Gen. K.K. Singh, the corps commander—the great improvement that has taken place in our fighting potential since 1965. The sudden expansion after 1962 had led inevitably to a dilution of the older formations. Many of the new recruits had not had adequate training before they were launched into action. Higher direction was handicapped by the fact that the grouping together of units into a new corps under Lt.-Gen. Dunn had barely begun when war broke out.

But there was nothing haphazard or hurried in our preparations this time. While General Yahya Khan was loudly holding out dire threats, India's leadership was quietly preparing to deal with any situation that the Islamabad junta might create. The result of the careful planning over several months is plain to see in the outcome in the Shakargarh bulge, as in other theatres.

Pakistan enjoyed in 1965 a marked superiority in the size of its tank strength, and the number and range of its artillery. The gap has now been closed with the weapons India added to its inventories. In fact, Pakistan would seem to have been overwhelmed in this bulge by the weight and accuracy of Indian artillery.

Indian air power also contributed a great deal to the success achieved here. Interdiction sorties were mounted to disrupt the flow of supplies from Pasur to Zafarwal, and from Narawal to Shakargarh. Interceptor aircraft were up in the air to head off enemy fighter-bombers as river crossings were made, while other IAF squadrons engaged enemy targets in the path of our advancing troops. Lt.-Gen. K.K. Singh is satisfied that we achieved local air superiority in this sector to give his troops freedom to push forward.

Capture Of Enclaves

INDIAN forces deployed along the 600-km. border stretching from the Thar desert to Gurdaspur, Punjab's northernmost district, had a two-fold role. The first was to hold the enemy tight at the frontier. The second was to prevent any breakthrough by suitable anticipatory actions to throw him off balance. Both postures were essentially defensive.

For fairly long stretches, rivers provide a natural barrier—the Ravi north of Amritsar to Gurdaspur, and the Sutlej between Ferozepore and Fazilka. Pakistan would have had to establish bridgeheads from which to launch itself into Indian territory in strength. Naturally, the enemy enclaves on our side of the rivers—as at Sehjra south of Khem Karan—prominently figured in his calculations.

The three bridges over the rivers along this border at Dera Baba Nanak, Hussainiwala and Sulemanke were, of course, prime targets. Of these, only the one at Hussainiwala is in Indian territory in our enclave on the Pakistani side of the Sutlej. In one of the earliest operations of the war, the enemy launched an attack on this enclave in brigade strength, supported by two squadrons of tanks. The bridge got damaged forcing our battalion to withdraw east of the river. But before it did so it knocked out 18 enemy tanks and 11 three-ton vehicles.

Of No Tactical Value

The enclave is of no tactical value, unless India wanted to use it as a bridgehead for launching an offensive. But some emotional importance attaches to this tiny piece of territory because of the Bhagat Singh Memorial across the river. But since it was extremely difficult to reinforce the men in the enclave, or replenish their supplies, there was no choice but to pull out as quickly as possible to cut our losses.

A decision of this kind, taken without fuss or fuming, shows the mature approach now adopted on such issues. The cry that went up after our debacle in 1962 that India must not part with even an inch of its territory reflected the impotent anger of a weak country. Mercifully, this posture has been quietly discarded. India's defences are planned not on the basis of sentiments, but to win a war in its totality.

Having withdrawn from Hussainiwala, we lost no time in eliminating the nearby Pakistani bulge around Sehjra village. A part of the bulge is on our side of the Sutlej, but the village itself is across the river.

There were two reasons for the hurry. In 1965, a Pakistan armoured brigade was located at Sehjra to get into the Khem Karan battle from the rear. It was necessary to deny the enemy any opportunity for an outflanking move of this kind. Secondly, a breakout from Sehjra could have brought Pakistan quickly to the Harike bridge, a little way inside the border, opening a route to the rear.

The attack on the bulge was mounted on the night of

December 5-6. We went in along the Sutlej bed, the route used by Pakistan to maintain supplies to its troops. Sehjra village is located in an escarpment with a sheer drop of six metres to the river. The enemy never imagined that we would attack from this side, but the jawans did just that to take him by surprise.

Heavy Price

Similar moves to eliminate Pakistani enclaves which could endanger our defences were made all along the border from Fazilka in the south to Dera Baba Nanak, 60 km. north of Amritsar. The hardest fighting took place around Fazilka where Pakistan attempted to break out across the bridge at Sulemanke. The attack was made in brigade strength, but it was held at a moat laid out between Fazilka and Sulemanke.

At one stage, the enemy succeeded in crossing the moat to establish a foothold on the Fazilka side but he was successfully pushed back by a series of counterattacks mounted across flat country offering no cover whatsoever. Very heavy casualties were suffered in terms of those killed, wounded and missing. Of the 25 officers, 19 JCOs and 350 other ranks killed in the fighting from Ganganagar to Gurdaspur, Fazilka accounted for 12 officers, 10 JCOs, and 156 other ranks. The price was heavy, indeed, but it was worth paying to scotch what may have developed into a dangerous enemy thrust.

There were perhaps three other stretches across which Pakistan could have mounted an offensive. One is the Rania-Shamsher salient, just north of Attari, the last town on our side of the border





An Indian artillery gun firing across the border at Sehjra in the Khem Karan sector.

along the Grand Trunk Road running from Amritsar to Lahore. The second lies between the border posts of Fatehpur and Burj, a little further to the north. The third is the Pakistani enclave at Dera Baba Nanak across the bridge there.

Plans Foiled

The enemy, as we now know from POWs' testimony, had plans to launch an attack via Dera Baba Nanak on the night of December 6-7, but this was foiled by the capture of the enclave 24 hours earlier by an Indian brigade in one of the most brilliant actions of the war.

The Pakistani enclave was heavily defended. The two bunds which once carried the railway and the road are studded with concrete pillboxes and bunkers. The roof slabs are nearly 60 cm to 90 cm thick. No shelling, however accurate or heavy, could have made any difference. Even when a shell scored a direct hit on the top of a pillbox, only the cement got chipped off.

There are also six concrete and heavily camouflaged positions for mortars, and eight similar emplacements to hide jeep-mounted recoilless guns to deal with tank thrusts. Concrete communication trenches, totalling some 640 meters in length, link these positions together so that supplies can be kept up without break even in conditions of the most intense fighting.

Most of the 18 pillboxes had apertures facing both towards the river in Pakistan's rear and Indian territory opposite. In other words, Pakistan was ready to meet an attack wherever it came from.

But the defences proved worthless in the face of the surprise assault starting just after midnight. After keeping the enemy guessing by staging several feints in

the previous 48 hours, one column of troops sneaked in along the Ravi from the far end of the enclave. The enemy had no clue of what was happening until our troops struck at the core of his defences at the foot of the bridge. The mortar positions were never used, nor the lodgement for RCIL guns. Indian tanks rolled in with scarcely any opposition.

Luck certainly played its part inasmuch as the enemy's commander was either extraordinarily careless or totally dumbwitted. An Indian commando group had moved in several hours before the attack to capture one key point in his defences, but this was probably treated as an isolated action to be dealt with in due course. No effort was made to obtain reinforcements from the other side of the river. As a result, the enclave had been cleared by 4 a.m. on December 6, giving India control of the bridge. For this fine achievement, Brigadier Gauri Shankar has won a well-deserved Maha Vir Chakra.

Thrown Back

The enemy counterattacked 24 hours later, and tried to get behind Indian positions but was repulsed. Three days later, a cautious probe was mounted by our forces to push the enemy further back from the river. A post was captured, but it could not be held. Our men were thrown back, and Pakistan blew up the bridge to prevent further probes.

Pakistan also mounted attacks on the Ranian-Shamsher and Fatehpur-Burj salients. Initially, we suffered a setback when the enemy overran our post in Fatehpur and three others to entrench himself on a high bund which had two spurs converging just short of the river. This was on the night of December 3.

Three days later we mounted a counterattack which succeeded only because of the sheer grit and courage shown by our officers and men. Two majors were killed in the action while leading their companies. On December 11, a battalion of the Sikh Light Infantry pushed further forward to capture the Pakistani post guarding its enclave and threw the enemy across the river. At one point, our officers called for artillery shelling while hand-to-hand fighting was in progress. This involved great risk, but it hastened the enemy's rout. The pressure was kept up from the Indian side until Pulkanjari, the remaining post in Pakistani hands, was wrested back half an hour before the ceasefire.

Ranian, a post directly opposite the Ichhogil village on the Pakistani side, was the scene of very heavy fighting. It was the one point where the enemy expected to be able to breach India's defensive canal running, like Pakistan's Ichhogil, just along the border. The first attacks in battalion strength came on December 3, and by December 12 seven more followed. But none got through.

In sum, Pakistan failed to gain a lodgement from which to attempt a breakthrough. But right up to the ceasefire, we kept a sharp eye open for Pakistan's first armoured division. It was thought to have moved out of Multan towards Montgomery, and some elements of it were later reported to be around Bahawalnagar,



Major Hoshiar Singh
3 Grenadiers



2/Lt. Arun Khetarpal
17 Horse
(posthumous)



L/Nk. Albert Ekka
14 Guards
(posthumous)



Flying Officer
Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon
(posthumous).

opposite Ganganagar in Rajasthan. But it was never launched into action.

Lt.-Gen. Navin Rawley, the corps commander, refuses to speculate what went wrong on the Pakistani side. He does not, however, dismiss the theory that heavy IAF bombing of the wooded area around Haveli, across the border from Fazilka, may have succeeded in immobilising part of the armoured division's strength. The IAF encountered heavy flak

over the woods, and its bombs did touch off a series of explosions.

To Gen. Rawley, it is particularly gratifying that his troops had first-rate leaders. The officers personally led the attacks so much so that one or two battalions lost all four company commanders when they were killed or disabled. This quality leadership has certainly been a major factor that contributed to India's success in the 14-day war.



Jawans of the Dogra Regiment taking the Tricolour for hoisting on the Dera Baba Nanak bridge.

War In The Desert

WHILE India and Pakistan were each waiting for the other to launch a major offensive in the north-west, they mounted sizable thrusts across the Thar desert in the hope of drawing out the reserves held by both sides in the Punjab area. Unfortunately for Pakistan, its lunge into Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district at Longewala ended in total fiasco. But India pushed ahead from the Barmer border to Naya Chor, a town some 70 km from the district headquarters at Mirpur Khas and 150 km from Hyderabad.

Beyond Naya Chor lies Sind's irrigated belt served by good communication links. A breakthrough beyond Naya Chor would have been indeed a very serious matter for Pakistan, explaining the very tough resistance it put up here. From December 10, when Indian troops first contacted the town's outer defences, to the ceasefire on December 17, fighting raged furiously as both sides built up for a showdown. At the time war ended, Indian troops were occupying a position only 1.5 km from the town. Most of the area south of the railway line had been secured to pave the way for a final assault.

Even as the battle went on in front of Naya Chor, another Indian thrust was launched some 150 km to the south in the Rann of Kutch area. The major gain here was the culmination of a bulge into our territory at the centre of which stood the sub-divisional town of Nagarparkar, gaining us some 375 sq. km. With this in the bag, the Indian column edged northward to join up with the forces launched from the Barmer border at Chachro, about midway between the two thrusts.

Left Guessing

The forces available on the Pakistani side in southern Sind included seven battalions of regular troops, two battalions of auxiliaries, one squadron each of T-59 and Sherman tanks, two regiments of field and one regiment of medium artillery. Not all this was however committed; the enemy held back because he was left guessing whether the thrust to Naya Chor was only a diversion intended to facilitate a bigger and more determined push elsewhere.

Pakistan's fears were reflected in the strident American accusations at the United Nations and outside it that India was aiming at dismembering West Pakistan. It is possible that the drive into Sind was invested with political significance because of the parallel between the "Jive Sind" autonomist movement and the early phases of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's campaign for his six-point programme. But there was no basis whatsoever for these forebodings.

Only a limited effort was put into the several probes in Sind, clearly indicating that India's aim was only to acquire some real estate for possible use as a bargaining counter in an eventual peace settlement. It was in fact India's fear that Pakistan would make a big bid to grab parts of Rajasthan for a trade-off against areas it would lose in Bangla Desh. The final scenario, as it turned



out, was a very different one, but India can scarcely be blamed for grabbing a little territory as an insurance against the uncertainties of war.

The need for this insurance is readily illustrated from what happened at Longewala, an outpost 15 km inside the border and about 120 km north-west of the district headquarters of Jaisalmer. A Pakistani brigade—supported by three squadrons, or one regiment, of T-59 tanks, and another squadron of Shermans—launched an attack here on the night of December 4-5.

The Indian forces in this salient were taken by surprise. An attack was foreseen, but it was thought it would develop along a different route. The main Pakistani base in the region is Rahimyar Khan, an important railway junction on the Sukkur-Bahawalpur railway line linking Sind with Punjab. Moving out of Rahimyar Khan, Pakistani forces were expected to push 70 km due south to Tanot, just inside the border,

and thence to Ramgarh, another 50 km away. It was thought that the thrust might alternatively develop from Reti, a railway station some 60 km southwards of Rahimyar Khan, and move towards the Indian battalion headquarters at Sadewala on the way to Ramgarh. The second guess was nearer the mark; the enemy came from this general direction but one party of the column made for Longewala while the rest bypassed it to get on towards Ramgarh, from where Jaisalmer is only 70 km away.

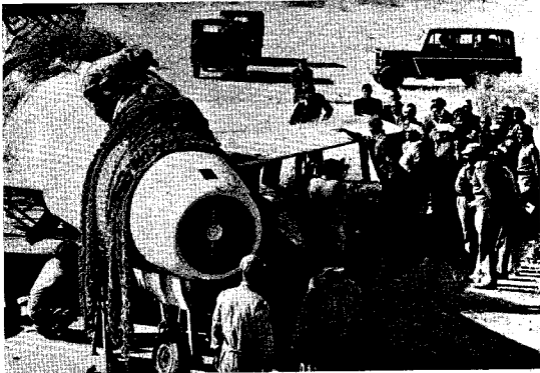
Longewala was held only by a company commanded by Maj. Kuldip Singh. The enemy probably overestimated the strength deployed because he need not have otherwise tried conclusions here before engaging his main target, Ramgarh. As it turned out, a patrol from Longewala got wind of the tanks moving towards it about 1 a.m. on December 5. The company asked immediately for reinforcements but the battalion commander, Lt.-Col. Mohammad Khurshid Hussain, was chary of committing his reserves before he knew where exactly the enemy would strike. He, however, despatched two recoilless (anti-tank) guns, just in case. These arrived at Longewala at 3.30 a.m. barely half an hour before the first Pakistani tank rolled up.

Maj. Kuldip Singh deserves full marks for holding up the enemy with the meagre force at his disposal. He was helped by the fact that his company was perched on a hillock-like sand dune. The time he gained allowed the divisional commander, Maj.-Gen. R.F. Khambata, to call in the I.A.F. The first sorties by two Hunters were above Longewala at 7.30 a.m., hitting at enemy tanks to blunt his thrust. Wave after wave of attacks followed to relieve Longewala and stop the column advancing with all possible speed towards Ramgarh.

A Close Shave

Meanwhile, Gen. Khambata had moved both armour and troops to join the battle. The first reinforcements arrived around midday and the rest by the evening. By the end of the day, 37 tanks had been put out of action, which meant the decimation of almost a whole regiment. Anti-tank missiles claimed 14, while the remaining 23 were the I.A.F.'s bag.

This was a close shave: the fortunes of battle were turned by timely air support. As it happened, the I.A.F. met with no opposition in the air because the Pakistan Air Force was too busy elsewhere to back up the Longewala thrust.



The Defence Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, looking at an IAF fighter aircraft, which was brought safely to its base by its pilot, Sq.Ldr. V.N. Johri, even though it was hit in three places and one of its wings was on fire.

The battle of Longewala continued for another four days, while Pakistan vainly tried to regroup its forces for a renewed attack. Ultimately the sheer weight of attacks from the air obliged the enemy to fall back. His vehicles were shot up from the air, with the result that even an orderly retreat was not possible. And as the intruders withdrew to Gubbar, a post on their side of the border, and beyond it, the Indian army followed in pursuit with the I.A.F. still hitting at them at will. Eventually, the pursuers were four or six kilometres across the border—posing a threat to the Pakistani township of Sandh—when the ceasefire brought the curtain down.

Even while the Longewala battle raged, other Indian forces made a cautious probe from a point some 40 km east. This led to the capture of Islamgarh, 16 km from the Jaisalmer border, on December 5, and of Bhaikhane-wala Khu, 13 km further north. The colourful camel-borne Jaisalmer Risala launched out on its own at another point almost 100 km east of Islamgarh to take over the border outpost of Bignot. An equally modest effort was mounted from the Bikaner border to capture posts at Rukanwala and Salamsar on December 6.

Commando Raid

In Kutch, the action began to yield results when two posts at Jaleli and Kalibet fell on December 7. The following day witnessed a commando raid on Virawah, some 30 km inside Pakistani territory north of Nagar-parkar. This was the handiwork of a para battalion used in a ground role; its commander, Lt.-Col. Bhawani Singh, who took over as Maharaja of Jaipur after his father's death two years ago, received the Maha Vir Chakra for this action.

Nagarparkar fell on December 9. Three days later the whole of the Chhad Bet enclave, handed over to Pakistan under the 1969 settlement, was back in Indian hands. By this time, the forces operating from the Barmer border had taken over Chhotul, a border outpost 100 km south-west of Barmer and 40 km north-west Virawah.

The para battalion led by Lt.-Col. Bhawani Singh which saw action in the Kutch sector. This picture was taken when the battalion took part in the Republic Day parade at Vijay Chowk, New Delhi.



This made it clear that the aim was to link up the two forces. This was effected, as stated, at Chachro. This is a town 73 km from Gadra Road, the town on the Barmer border from which the Naya Chor thrust was launched. Its peacetime population is some 10,000, of which only 4,000 Hindus remained behind. The other towns taken over in the drive to Naya Chor are Gadra, Pakistani counterpart of Gadra Road, Khimsar, 30 km to the south-west, and Khokrapar, 20 km south of Gadra.

A highlight of the operations in this sector was the laying out of 10 km of rail track, in replacement of sections pulled out by Pakistan, to reactivate the link between Naya Chor and Munaban, the station on the Indian border 40 km west of Gadra Road. The first rail traffic between India and Pakistan since 1965 carried supplies for our forces ringing Naya Chor!

Valuable Support

This rail link was a real boon to Maj.-Gen. R.D. Anand and his men in a terrain where 20 per cent of wheeled vehicles never reached their destination as they got bogged down in the sand. At times, the Indian forces had to depend on airdrops for drinking water.

All through the 14 days of war, from the time Gadra was captured on December 4 till the end, the I.A.F. provided valuable support, as Lt.-Gen. G.G. Bewoor, heading Southern Command, had handsomely acknowledged. Fighter-bombers provided close support to our own troops, while MIG-21 interceptors were on hand to chase enemy aircraft away — as evidenced by the dogfights in which one Pakistani MIG-19 was shot down over Naya Chor on December 10, and three F-104s over Naya Chor and Barmer on December 17.

At the same time, the I.A.F. carried out sorties well behind enemy lines to impede the flow of reinforcements and supplies. For example, an attack was made on the Mirpur Khas railway yard on December 9 and on Sukkur on December 16. But in the purposeful use of air power, there is no parallel in this war for the I.A.F.'s magnificent effort at Longewala.

Big Push In Bangla Desh

EVEN before war broke out it was clear that Pakistan's bottled up divisions in the east faced a hopeless situation. Only a fraction of Pakistan's large inventory of tanks, artillery and aircraft was deployed in this theatre because the war lords in Islamabad preferred to hold them in reserve for the defence of their homeland in the west. Even so, the speed with which Indian columns broke through to Dacca took Pakistan, and indeed the whole world, by surprise.

Wiser after the event, military commentators abroad are now comparing Indian performance in the 14-day war to Hitler's blitzkrieg through France in 1940. But they still miss the crucial political factor which contributed to the success of the joint Indian Army-Mukti Bahini command under Lt.-Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora. The people of Bangla Desh were wholeheartedly on India's side, while Pakistani troops could rely on only a handful of collaborators. This tilted the balance against Lt.-Gen. A.A.K. Niazi and his army of occupation even more heavily.

As Brig. R.N. Mishra, who led the victorious Indian and Mukti Bahini columns into Dacca, said the local people helped to speed the advance by making available boats for the river crossings. Villagers came forward to guide Indian troops making cross-country marches. They provided food and, more important still, brought invaluable information about enemy positions. Many lives were saved because advancing jawans often knew where minefields had been laid.

Overriding Factor

All this friendly support accelerated the advance towards Dacca, gaining for India and Bangla Desh valuable time. Speed is important in any war, but the overriding consideration before Gen. Aurora was to allow Pakistan's friends no time to intervene on its behalf. What they would actually have done is anyone's guess, but the fact is that the precipitate collapse of Pakistani resistance foreclosed the issue. The U. S. Seventh Fleet was still a long way off when Indian troops accepted the surrender of Maj.-Gen. Jamshed at the gates of Dacca.

Islamabad had from the beginning aimed at fighting a holding action to delay Indian advance until international pressure or the hoped-for Pakistani successes in the west compelled New Delhi to opt for a cease-fire on the 1965 pattern. This is why it had created a very strong outer line of defence running through Jessore, Hilli, Dinajpur, Sylhet, Comilla and other points along the 2500 km border with India. Shell-proof bunkers, anti-tank ditches, and deep minefields were carefully prepared, while adequate supplies and ammunition were stocked up to withstand a long siege.

There was a second line of defence in depth, covering points on rivers Indian troops would have to cross on their way to Dacca. One such was Bhairab Bazar, a town on the Meghna, where a key road-cum-rail bridge



on the Dacca-Comilla route is located. This town held out until the end, although it became militarily unimportant once it was bypassed by the Indian army columns. Another such point was Kamarkhalighat on the wide-flowing Madhumati offering access to Faridpur from the Jessore side.

Niazi's Confidence

The third line of defence was the triangle around Dacca formed by the Meghna, Lakhya and Burhi Ganga rivers. Some foreign commentators say that pillboxes and dug-outs were scattered throughout this area, but it seems that Gen. Niazi was so confident of holding Indian thrusts at the border that he had not really got down to organising Dacca's defences. This explains why he decided to surrender without a fight.

Gen. Niazi took over command in Bangla Desh from Gen. Tikka Khan at the end of August when the latter was sent back to the west to make room for a



A jawan examines one of the Chinese weapons captured by Indian troops in Bangla Desh.

civilian Governor, Dr. Abdul Motaleb Malik. By then, Islamabad had very nearly completed its build-up of troops in the east. From 14 battalions in March, the number had gone up to 35 battalions of regular troops supported by four companies of Desert Rangers, 17 companies of East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces, and 22 companies of an industrial security force. These para-military formations consisted almost wholly of West Pakistani personnel.

Strength In Tanks

By the time war came, these forces were deployed under five divisional headquarters. The 14th Division operated out of Dacca, the 9th from Comilla, the 6th from Jessore, and the 16th from Natore, a cantonment town some 40 km west of Rajshahi. The 36th divisional headquarters under Maj.-Gen. Jamshed controlled the para-military formations.

In support of the infantry, Islamabad had stationed in the east almost two squadrons of Sabres, or 23 in number according to one foreign source. The strength in tanks—either American-built Chaffees or Walker Bulldogs—was a little over one regiment. In other words, less than 10 per cent of Pakistan's strength in combat aircraft, and under 5 per cent of its tank holdings, were deployed in the east.

Also available to Gen. Niazi were six regiments of artillery, five mortar batteries and some miscellaneous guns, making a total of less than 200 pieces. In contrast Gen. Tikka Khan, as Commander of a Corps, used six or seven regiments of artillery in the small Chhamb sector alone.

Indian and Mukti Bahini forces were undoubtedly superior in numbers and firepower. Their exact strength has not been disclosed, but Western correspondents reporting from Dacca kept saying (on the basis presumably of information given to them by Pakistani sources) that nine Indian divisions participated in the assault. This probably exaggerates the actual troops available to Gen. Aurora for the operation because Eastern Command must have held back a substantial part of its total strength to keep an eye on the Himalayan frontier. The passes were, no doubt, covered with snow, but it would be a mistake to think that a determined force would not have got through if it wanted to.

Indian and Mukti Bahini forces were controlled from three corps headquarters headed by Lt.-Gen. T. N. Raina in the west, Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh in the east, and Lt.-Gen. M.L. Thapan in the north. They master-minded the thrusts launched from the areas assigned to them, but each of them also had important responsibilities for safeguarding vital but vulnerable areas lying alongside or perilously close to the border as, for example, the Calcutta industrial belt, the narrow Siliguri corridor which links Assam with the rest of India, and Tripura's capital, Agartala. In other words, each corps had to earmark forces for defence against any unforeseen attack from the Pakistan army.

Extra Equipment

Most of the troops available to Eastern Command belong to mountain divisions. Medium artillery is not included in their normal complement, because it would impede their mobility in hilly terrain. Again, few bridging platoons—a body of engineers specially trained and equipped to throw bridges across rivers—are needed in the mountains. It was necessary, therefore, to provide both extra equipment and training to enable these divisions to cope with their tasks in Bangla Desh.

Fortunately, Eastern Command set about preparing for the contingency long before the war actually broke out. The writing on the wall became increasingly clear as border incidents multiplied. There were 1,600 instances of shelling or encroachment, and 164 cases of sabotage in the eight months from April to November. Gradually, an infrastructure was built up along the border to provide the logistic base for operations. This had to be done from scratch because few troops were normally deployed around East Bengal. For instance, only a battalion was positioned at Agartala.

A great deal of staff work was done to make sure of complete co-ordination with Eastern Air Command at Shillong and Eastern Naval Command at Visakhapatnam, with the Border Security Force, and finally with the Mukti Bahini's top echelon consisting of the Commander-in-Chief, Col. M.A.G. Osmani, and his sector commanders.

When the zero hour came, every component of the composite forces knew what was required of it. The Indian strategy, as it unfolded, was to rely as much on tactical surprise as on cutting up the enemy's forces into isolated pockets to defeat them more easily. Feints organised to mislead the enemy about the direction of advance often caught him on the wrong foot, as at Jessore and Comilla.

Minimum Damage

Indian and Mukti Bahini columns cut through the neck from Balurghat in West Bengal to the Brahmaputra in the east at an early stage to bottle up the enemy forces in Dinajpur and Rangpur districts. A similar thrust from Kamalpur on the Tripura border to Maulvi Bazar, an important communications centre, made sure that troops to the north would not be able to fall back on Dacca. Again, the quick advance from southern Tripura to Feni, and then on to Naokhali completely isolated the Chittagong sector, cutting off at the same time the only possible line of retreat.

The allied Indian-Mukti Bahini command was predictably anxious to minimise damage to the Bangla Desh economy. This was one reason for avoiding fighting in built-up areas within the cities. Moreover, the aim was not to seize individual cities but to proceed with the maximum despatch to Dacca to get at the core of Pakistani defences. This explains why no attempt was made to rush into heavily defended cities and towns like Khulna in the south-west and the Comilla cantonment in the east. Once these had been surrounded, the garrisons were completely neutralised. They could be left to be dealt with later.

It was intended from the start to use every inducement to make Gen. Niazi agree to an early surrender.

This gambit worked. Surrender began to be considered seriously as early as December 10, or only after six days of the war. At that time, however, the Pakistani command was hoping to be allowed to pull out of Bangla Desh from agreed points at which it expected the U.S. Navy to pick up the men for transfer to the west. This was the plan proposed by Maj.-Gen. Rao Farman Ali, the Number 2 man in the military hierarchy, in a message on December 10 to U.N. headquarters in New York via Mr. Paul Marc Henri, chief of U.N. "East Pakistan" relief operations. But as India refused to look at the proposal, Islamabad quickly declared that the message "said to have been sent" by a member of the Governor's staff was "unauthorised."

Exceptionally Light

Mercifully, Indian casualties were exceptionally light in the Bangla Desh operations, although several columns had to travel 160 km or more, and overcome many obstacles on the way, to get to Dacca. The losses were lighter even than in the western theatre although the war there was for the most part a defensive action to deny Pakistan any opportunity to intrude into Indian territory.

Credit for the superb planning that made it possible to keep losses down should go to many men operating from the command headquarters of the three Services and in the directorates of operation in New Delhi. But the man to whom the lion's share should be given is undoubtedly Lt.-Gen. J.S. Aurora, who was ably assisted by Maj.-Gen. J.F.R. Jacob, his Chief of Staff.

Arms abandoned by the Pakistani army near Khulna.



West Of The Padma

PAKISTAN'S military leaders made a serious miscalculation about Indian intentions. They thought India would not dare overrun Bangla Desh because the international community would strongly disapprove of it. As Maj.-Gen. Farman Ali, who acted as Lt.-Gen. Niazi's principal spokesman, put it to foreign correspondents in Dacca on November 26, the world would not "allow" a war.

The Pakistani command evidently thought that India may make only limited thrusts to carve out a chunk of territory and instal the Bangla Desh Government on its own soil. To quote Gen. Farman Ali again, "the Indian strategy is still limited. They aim at capturing some territory and turning it over to the Bangla Desh people."

It was perhaps because of this assessment that a large part of Gen. Niazi's strength was positioned right at the border, or very close to it. Once Indian and Mukti Bahini forces broke through the first line, the enemy could not muster enough forces to stop their onward march.

The penalties the Pakistani strategy invited can be readily illustrated by the way the battle developed in south-west Bangla Desh, or the Jessore sector as it came to be called. In this area, separated from the rest of the country by the wide-flowing Padma (local name for the Ganges), Pakistan had deployed its 9th division under the command of Maj.-Gen. Ansari, plus a large complement of para-military forces. Before March 1971 Pakistan had only a brigade in the area but it gradually trebled its strength.

Even before full-scale war broke out on December 3, this sector had witnessed a major engagement at Boyra, 80 km north-east of Calcutta. It began as an artillery duel on November 21, but soon tanks were brought in by both sides. It seems the Pakistani commander underestimated the strength available on the Indian side of the border and brashly pushed ahead into our defences. He was allowed to come in to give our forces lying in wait a better opportunity to deal with the intruders. By the end of the day, the enemy had lost eight tanks, one of them at a position occupied earlier by our company commander.

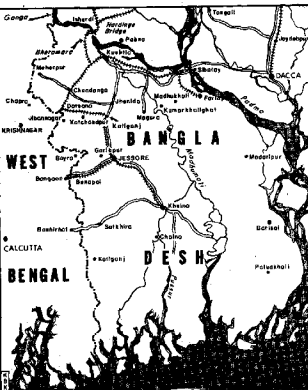
More Disastrous

The Pakistanis were back again the next day in a bid to retrieve their position. This time they called in the Sabres to provide support from the air. This engagement proved even more disastrous: the enemy lost another six tanks, and three Sabres to boot. In other words Pakistan had sacrificed a whole squadron of tanks in a border skirmish, which left it with only one more squadron west of the Padma. As Gen. Aurora commented later, the Pakistani commander fought more by *josh* than by reason.

As tension built up around the Bangla Desh border, Indian forces organised a series of troop movements to mislead the enemy about their actual deployment. In the upper part of the south-western sector, for example, the impression was given that Indian forces would in the event of war launch attacks from Meherpur towards Kushtia, or from Shikarpur a little further to the north. To suggest the positioning of tanks opposite Meherpur, trucks without silencers trundled back and forth. Troops moving to the actual site from which the thrust was eventually launched would spend some time opposite Meherpur on the way.

These feints would seem to have achieved their purpose in gaining tactical surprise when the move into Bangla Desh began on the night of December 3-4. One thrust was launched from Tungi, about 40 km south of Meherpur, towards Jibannagar and Kotchandpur along a line running 30 km north of Jessore, and aiming for the brigade headquarters at Jhenida. A second thrust was mounted from Boyra along *kutcha* tracks to get to the area just north of Jessore.

The first thrust was masterminded by Maj.-Gen. M.S. Brar of the 4th mountain division and the second





A bridge on the Padma destroyed by the retreating Pakistani soldiers.

by Maj.-Gen. Dalbir Singh of the 9th division, both operating under Lt.-Gen. Raina from his newly set up corps headquarters at Krishnagar, 100 km north of Calcutta.

Gen. Brar left, as was to be expected, one of his three brigades on the Indian side of the border to serve as a reserve. He went in with the two others towards Jibannagar, a well-prepared position. Moving off the road into paddy fields, the Indian forces managed to get at Jibannagar from the rear. Having taken this, another feint was staged to give the impression that the column was moving south-east towards Jessore, but in fact it went north to get astride the road running from Darsana on the border to Kaliganj, half way between Jessore in the south and Jhenida in the north. Battle was joined at Utthali, 12 km from Jibannagar. This was another well-prepared position, intended to block any thrust from Darsana, but in the event, the thrust came not from the west but from due south, along a *kulcha* track over which an advance was hardly to be expected.

From Utthali, the column swung west to take Darsana from the rear. This fell on December 4. The enemy defences collapsed within five hours; he put in a counter-

attack later but was beaten back. From Darsana, two choices were open—a move to the north-east towards Chuadanga or back again to Utthali to go on to Kotchandpur, about 25 km east of Darsana. It was the second choice that was adopted.

Move Anticipated

The enemy anticipated the move and rushed troops ahead to block our advance midway between Utthali and Kotchandpur. Serious fighting took place at this point, close to Suadhil village. Once this was cleared, Kotchandpur offered scarcely any resistance. It was captured at 5 p.m. on December 5. General Ansari tried to force his men to make a fight for it, but they pulled out nevertheless.

From Suadhil, one column of the Indian forces pushed northwards across paddy fields to cut the 40 km road running from Chuadanga to Jhenida. This was of battalion strength supported by a squadron of tanks. The object was to split the brigade operating between the two points to make it easier to deal with the divided forces. At the same time, another force went cross country from Kotchandpur to Jhenida. The enemy

was expecting the attack only later; he thought our troops would first move from Kotchandpur to Kaliganj and then turn north to Jhenida along the Khulna-Jessore-Kushtia road. He was taken aback when the troops appeared outside Jhenida; it fell more quickly than expected. This necessitated the airdropping of food supplies to the advancing forces.

The roadblock on the Chuadanga-Jhenida served its purpose admirably. The troops to the west, led personally by the Jhenida brigadier, had no chance to fall back to Jhenida; the command of the rest of the brigade was taken over by an officer at the divisional headquarters.

Little Resistance

As the Jhenida action developed, another column was moving from Kotchandpur towards Kaliganj, about 20 km further east. This township fell without much resistance on December 6, the troops retreating further east. Once both Jhenida and Kaliganj were gone, the enemy decided that he could not hold out in Jessore any longer. He quit on December 7, leaving over 2,000 truckloads of ammunition, an almost undamaged airfield which was later put to good use by the IAF, and a fully operational microwave station. Another 500 truckloads of ammunition was recovered from the brigade headquarters at Jhenida.

Jessore's fate was sealed because Gen. Ansari had committed his troops for defending the approaches to the city from the Indian border. Our troops pushing forward from Boyra across paddy fields engaged the enemy around a place called Garibpur, lying between Chaugacha and Jessore. The well-prepared Pakistani defences along the main road running from Calcutta via Benapole to Jessore were never brought into use, because the Indian column took good care to avoid a frontal battle. These were indeed formidable defences: pill-boxes, minefields, and anti-tank ditches were arranged along the road in layer after layer.

Once Jessore fell, the Pakistani troops made a rush for Khulna. No serious attempt was made to prevent this flight because Khulna had already lost all military significance. The exit to the sea was effectively blocked by the navy from the east. Later, the navy used its landing craft to get troops into Chaina, further down the Pussur river. This fell on December 10, with the result that the troops in Khulna were completely bottled up. They held on till Gen. Niazi's surrender.

With the fall of Jhenida, the Pakistani brigade headquarters shifted to Magura, some 30 km further east. An Indian brigade marched through the night from Kaliganj to Jhenida, and then on to Magura to arrive there in the evening, covering a total distance of 50 km. The sheer speed of the advance unnerved the enemy; he pulled out of Magura ten minutes before the first

Indian Jewans and Mukti Bahini men advancing in Bangia Desh.





A pile of Pakistani arms captured by Indian troops.

Indian elements arrived. From Magura, the advancing column moved on towards Kamarkhalighat after fording a river, and thence to the banks of the Madhumati.

Once Magura was taken, Gen. Brar brought his reserve brigade into battle and sent it along the 140 km-long Jhenida-Kushtia road. By the afternoon of December 10, the column was at the gates of Kushtia, and went half way through the town when the enemy counterattacked, pitting a full squadron of his tanks against only half-a-squadron of PT-76 accompanying the Indian brigade. This was a bad blow; substantial casualties were suffered, and four Indian tanks were lost, while one Indian officer and 30 jawans were taken prisoner. The brigade fell back to a position outside the town to wait for reinforcements.

Added Punch

These arrived fast. Gen. Brar pulled out artillery and armour as well as some troops from Magura, and brought them up to Kushtia—covering 80 km in just over 24 hours. With this added punch, the brigade broke through into Kushtia on December 11.

In Kushtia, the enemy had an understrength brigade group, consisting of the resident garrison as well as troops falling back along the road from Meherpur. From here they rushed to Bheramara, some 30 km west,

to get to the Hardinge Bridge spanning the Padma. They aimed at getting across to seek refuge on the other bank. Our brigade went in pursuit. The infantry got across, but the vehicles and the guns were still on the western bank when one span of the key bridge was blown up.

Massive Crossing

Gen. Brar left a brigade to do the mopping up, but took back everything else to the banks of the Madhumati. With two brigades now in position there, he attempted a massive crossing of the river to capture Madhukhali, the last major enemy position before Faridpur. One brigade crossed the river south of Madhukhali to take the township from the rear, and another crossed to the north to push him down. The enemy again decided that he could not afford to fight it out; he tried to retreat towards Faridpur but the brigade in the rear blocked his way. In the ensuing skirmish, the enemy lost 121 dead while over 400 were captured.

On the morning of December 16 word came from Gen. Ansari that he wanted to surrender. By 3-30 that afternoon, he had formally laid down arms on the banks of the Madhumati while the only troops still holding out in this south-western sector at Khulna did so the next morning.

Battle For Dacca

For the Pakistani generals in Dacca, December 9—the seventh day of the war—marked a decisive turning point. An Indian column had advanced from Akhaura via Brahmanbaria to Asuganj, a river port on the Meghna 80 km north-east of Dacca as the crow flies. True, the Meghna had still to be crossed. But as the generals were to discover the next day, plucky helicopter crews of the Indian Air Force were able to ferry across a whole brigade, together with nine guns and other supplies, in a 24-hour period.

Rushed Headlong

A second column was at Daudkandi, another town on the Meghna south of Asuganj and only 40 air kilometres away from Dacca. Entering Bangla Desh north of Comilla, the column bypassed this strongly held divisional headquarters and rushed headlong to Daudkandi along a 30 km-long road. It took, however, the precaution to set up a roadblock to the rear of Comilla to prevent the enemy from coming in pursuit.

A third column was at Chandpur, further south on the Meghna and a major staging point for steamers plying between Dacca and Chittagong. This thrust had covered some 70 km from the Tripura border, bypassing Laksham which fell only on December 10.

These threats from the east had to be reviewed by the generals in the light of the developments in the north and the west. Moving from the Meghalaya border, Indian and Mukti Bahini forces surrounded Jamalpur, 45 km inside Bangla Desh. Once it fell, they would be launched on the road leading to the Dacca area via Tangail and Joydevpur. In the west, the enemy was falling back slowly to Kamarkhalighat on the Madhumati river. Once the Madhumati was crossed, there was nothing to stop the advance to Faridpur, the district to the south of Dacca across the Padma river. In sum, Gen. Niazi could begin to see what was in store for him.

The two airfields in Dacca, Tejgaon and Kurmitola, had already suffered heavy damage. Repairs were, of course, still possible but only if the IAF stopped raids long enough to get the work done.

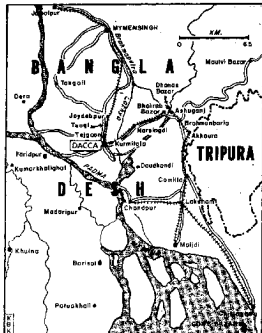
And to add to Gen. Niazi's discomfiture, the navy's ships and carrier-borne aircraft were making short work of port facilities at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. Troop-carrying launches and steamers were under severe attack from the air on the river routes leading into or out of Dacca to bring home the risks of attempting to escape. Not surprisingly, Gen. Farman Ali sent off on December 10 his message to the UN suing for peace.

Bombing Pause

The foreign community was pressing for evacuation, but it was not enough for India to halt air strikes for the short period rescue aircraft were in Dacca. The runways were so damaged that New Delhi had to agree to a 24-hour bombing pause to enable Dacca to put them back in operation. Eventually, 350 foreigners left on December 12 but only after the generals had agreed that outgoing planes would make a halt at Calcutta to enable India to make absolutely certain that no Pakistanis would escape from Bangla Desh on these flights.

Meanwhile Indian and Mukti Bahini forces continued to press forward. From Chandpur, a column was moving north-east towards Dacca, evidently to link up with the other already at Daudkandi. With the crossing of the Meghna at Asuganj, the foothold across the river was gradually enlarged as more troops and material were brought across, some of it on rafts. Medium guns were dismantled to make a manageable load. There was no other choice because the retreating enemy had blown up the bridge which links Asuganj with Bhairab Bazar, on the other side of the river. This was a setback not merely affecting the advance but also in a more long-term sense because rail traffic between Dacca and Chittagong cannot be resumed until the damage is repaired.

On December 11, the Indian Air Force provided the logistics for landing a paratroop battalion in the Tangail area. As the commander, Lt.-Col. Pannu, said later, hundreds of villagers assisted in retrieving the equipment dropped from the air which included its battery of 75



Indian Air Force transport planes dropping paratroops in the Dacca area.

mm guns. The paradrop was not a sudden decision: it formed part of the operational plan from the start. The object was to secure bridges and communication points in advance of the arrival of the main column moving in a north-south direction from Jamalpur. This task was successfully completed. In addition, the battalion positioned itself astride the Dacca route to block the retreat of enemy troops falling back from the north.

After completing its build-up at a point south of Bhairab Bazar, the column from the east moved on to Narsingdi, capturing it on the morning of December 11. This town, 35 km from Dacca, is roughly midway between Bhairab Bazar and Dacca. With only one more river to cross, Eastern Command could well claim that the battle for Dacca had begun. Even Pakistan Radio began admitting that the situation was "grim". Yet Gen. Niazi was telling foreign correspondents in Dacca that he would fight on till the bitter end. "Gentlemen, you will see my dead body, or I will go forward". This was presumably his answer to Gen. Manekshaw's renewed call for surrender.

As the Indian Army Chief put it, escape by sea or air was no longer open. No assistance could come from West Pakistan. Continued resistance would mean the needless death of many soldiers. It would at the same time jeopardise the lives of West Pakistani men, women and children unless the Pakistan army made over the responsibility for their protection to the allied Indian and Mukti Bahini command in good time before the situation went out of hand.

Deceived By Yahya

Gen. Niazi was later to admit that he was deceived by Gen. Yahya Khan. According to a BBC correspondent who talked to the general just before he surrendered, he had been told that decisive intervention by the USA and China was imminent. The confession fits in with the general trend of Pakistani propaganda as the noose tightened round Dacca: the troops were told that a "big change" was in the offing.

But none was to come. The column advancing from Narsingdi was 48 hours later at Demra, an industrial complex north-east of Dacca. The forces coming down south from Jamalpur had linked up with the paratroop elements at Tangail, after marching some 70 km. They next moved on to Joydevpur, another 50 km to the south-east. This was where the last big battle was fought, barely 30 km from Dacca, on December 14.

There were some further skirmishes as advancing troops wrested control of Tungli, a suburb 10 km towards Dacca, and again on the very outskirts of the city. But these were actions fought by dispirited troops whose only object was to gain a few hours' respite for the Dacca garrison. The column from Narsingdi was by now only 12 km from Dacca, moving in from north-east after crossing the Lakhya river at four points.

Game Is Up

The prisoners taken in these actions included Brig. Khader Khan, commanding the 93rd infantry brigade, along with two lieutenant colonels — a sector commander of the para-military forces and a district martial law administrator.

With Indian troops almost breathing down his neck, the Governor, Dr. A. M. Malik, lost his nerve. He called his "cabinet" for a session at midday on December 14. Indian intelligence got advance information of the meeting, and it was immediately decided that IAF should strike at Government House exactly at that time. As foreign correspondents reported from Dacca, the air attack did the trick. Sitting in an air raid shelter, Dr. Malik borrowed a BBC correspondent's ballpoint pen to write out a letter of resignation. Clearly, the game was up.

His ministers and senior officials followed suit. They all rushed to Hotel Intercontinental, declared a neutral zone under Red Cross control, to take up residence. By 2.30 p.m. New Delhi received a message from the Swiss headquarters of the Red Cross advising that they had been admitted to the zone in terms of the Geneva convention, and requesting the Indian and

Bangla Desh governments to guarantee their safety. As an official spokesman said in New Delhi that evening, "it seems that civil authority in Dacca has abdicated in favour of Bangla Desh."

December 14 was also marked by a frantic bid to organise the defences of Dacca. Gen. Niazi transferred his headquarters out of the cantonment into the university campus. Immediately a warning was issued that the responsibility for consequent damage to a major civilian asset like the university would rest on the Pakistani occupation forces. The IAF mounted sorties after sorties the next day to tell Gen. Niazi that he would be pursued wherever he moved.

Radio Watch

On December 15, a message signed by Gen. Niazi and witnessed by Gen. Farman Ali was received in New Delhi through the U.S. Embassy offering to surrender, provided Pakistani troops were allowed to move out to agreed points for repatriation under neutral auspices. This was the same proposal that Gen. Farman Ali had made on December 10, and was just as unacceptable to Indian and Bangla Desh authorities.

In his reply to Gen. Niazi, Gen. Manekshaw unilaterally offered to halt air action till 9 a.m. on December 16 to give the beleaguered Pakistani command time to think things over. He established a radio watch to receive any message that Gen. Niazi might send.

It was only half an hour before the deadline that Dacca transmitted a message to Gen. Manekshaw asking for a six-hour extension of the deadline to

negotiate the details of the surrender. At 10 a.m., the reply accepting the request was conveyed. Three hours later, Gen. Jacob flew into Dacca by a helicopter with the surrender terms. At 2.45, the terms had been initiated by Gen. Niazi to set the stage for the final signatures at 4.30 p.m.

In the meantime, a battalion of the Indian army had already entered Dacca at 10.40 a.m. It just walked in when it found that the enemy had left an important bridge on the outskirts unguarded. This battalion accepted shortly thereafter the surrender of Maj.-Gen. Mohammad Jamshed, in charge of Dacca's defences on this perimeter. Another four Indian and Mukti Bahini battalions, headed by Gen. Gandharv Nagra, marched into the city at 3.30 p.m. Finally came the surrender of Gen. Niazi, Gen. Farman Ali and the rest of the Dacca garrison at a historic ceremony at the race course grounds amid deafening shouts of "Joi Bangla", and "Jai Hind", as well as other slogans in honour of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Mrs. Gandhi. There were cascades of flower petals for the Indian forces, and a string of imprecations for Gen. Niazi and his men.

But the rejoicing over liberation was marred when Dacca citizens discovered the next day the mutilated bodies of 30 doctors, teachers and lawyers in a brick kiln compound on the outskirts of the city. This senseless atrocity was perpetrated by a secret organisation, Al Badr, reared by the Pakistan army, only 24 hours before the surrender.

This act of vengeance epitomised the reign of terror Pakistan had unleashed since March in the hope of cowing down the people of Bangla Desh. But the killings only steeled the people's resolve to be free.

Maj.-Gen. Jamshed of the Pakistan army (centre) flanked by Maj.-Gen. Gandharv Nagra (left) and Brig. H.S. Kler after his surrender.





Just a day before their surrender Pakistani soldiers rounded up nearly 200 Bangla Desh intellectuals and killed them brutally. Their bodies were discovered in a brick-kill on the outskirts of Dacca.



The historic ceremony at Dacca Race Course where Lt.-Gen. A. A. K. Niazi [right] signed the surrender documents and handed them over to Lt.-Gen. J.S. Aurora, Allied Commander.



Pakistani soldiers walking away after surrendering their arms in Dacca.

Glory In The Sky

WHEN Pakistan launched its pre-emptive strike the IAF was in a state of total readiness. It was only waiting for the word "go". Forward bases in both the east and the west had their hangars empty, and aircraft dispersed in camouflaged pens. Servicing facilities had been sent underground. Ack-ack guns were in position, hidden under green and khaki canopies. There was no question whatsoever of the enemy taking us by surprise.

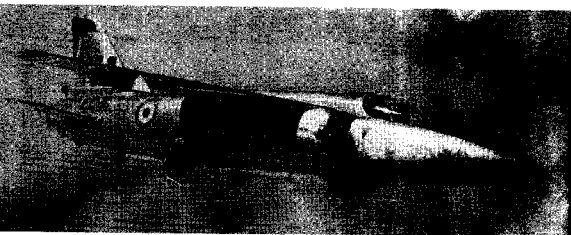
Dismal Failure

In the event Air Marshal Rahim Khan's jets, which came over our airfields on the evening of December 3, failed to get any planes on the ground or put any runways out of commission for more than a couple of hours. The fact that the IAF retaliated the same night with 500 sorties, starting immediately after the Prime

otherwise have been impossible for the Indian Navy to hit at Karachi with such deadly success.

Since Pakistan has a sizable air force manned by highly trained pilots, the question is why it failed to do any better. This is a riddle which officers and men of the IAF keep pondering as they look back on the 14-day war.

One theory is that Air Marshal Rahim, a Bhutto man as subsequent events have proved, did not have his heart in the war. Another is that the serviceability of Pakistani planes was affected by the fact that the Bengali maintenance crew, some 15 or 20 per cent of the total, were shunted out of sensitive jobs. Or was it that Pakistan's Chinese-built aircraft were handicapped by a lack of spares, following the suspension of Soviet arms supplies? While the MIG-19s were used to some extent in a ground support role in Chhamb and Shakargarh



A Gnat of the Indian Air Force which again proved a terror to the Pakistan Air Force.

Minister's broadcast to the nation, proves that Pakistan's bid to copy Israel's crippling swoop on UAR airfields in 1967 was a dismal failure.

In the east, the PAF was virtually pushed out of the skies on the very first day. On December 6, the BBC correspondent in Dacca confirmed that "the PAF has been practically wiped out." On December 9, a spokesman in Rawalpindi admitted that the Pakistani forces were left without air support.

As the days went by, the intensity of Pakistan's air operations in the west also declined. On several days there were no daylight attacks on our airfields. There was a fall also in the ground support effort—aircraft flying over battlefields to sustain action by the army. The PAF fell down even in its defensive role. It would

sections, the IL-28 bombers gifted by Peking failed to make an appearance in the war.

Best Guess

While a final answer must obviously wait, the best guess for the moment is that Air Marshal Rahim was trying to conserve his strength to cope with a major Indian offensive into West Pakistan. Pakistani pilots seemed to have strict instructions not to risk their planes, explaining why they often broke off an engagement as soon as it was joined. It also explained why the PAF did not press its attacks home in the face of ground fire. On most daylight raids, intruding aircraft would make just one pass and then head for home, shedding their bombload wherever they could.



Air Force technicians arming a fighter aircraft at a forward base.

The order to play safe contrasts with the IAF's readiness to accept, if necessary, one-to-one losses. India has an obvious advantage in having a domestic supply base; both the Gnats and the Mig-21s are built at home. The Indo-Soviet pact of August 1971, assuring Soviet support for India's security, is another plus factor. It gives the IAF confidence that it can obtain replacements for its Soviet-built fleet of SU-7 fighter-bombers, AN-12 transports and MI-4 helicopters. The Pakistanis have no such assurance with regard to their American-built Sabres and F-104s. Any bid by Mr. Nixon to pass on more American equipment, directly or indirectly, would run into very tough opposition from the U.S. Congress.

Only One Hit

With the PAF evidently deciding to pull its punches, it could scarcely achieve striking results. Our major base at Pathankot, only 20 km from the border, was bombed 36 times by night and six times by day, apart from eight to ten raids which turned back even before they got to the target when they found IAF aircraft already in the air waiting for them. The total damage done was one hit on the runway by two bombs. The craters were repaired in 45 minutes!

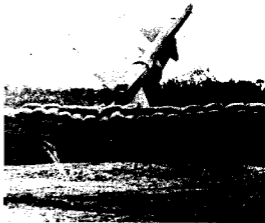
Even during this time, the airfield was able to receive back its planes then in the air. Another bomb struck a hangar, an empty one, while some hits were scored on auxiliary buildings. The total casualties suffered was one man seriously injured.

Adampur, another major base close to Jullundur, received 91 air raid warnings (including one five minutes after ceasefire). On only three occasions the intruders came close enough to attempt bombing but the nearest a bomb dropped was 10 km away.

The IAF, on its part, launched an all-out effort. Western Air Command flew over 4,000 sorties, and the eastern 1,978 during the war, making an average of over 420 per day. (One aircraft flying one mission is one sortie). The IAF had to put everything it had into the effort; it took out even its moth-balled fleet of obsolete Vampires and Mysteres for use in areas where little opposition was expected.

Concentrated Bombing

Helicopters of Eastern Air Command were fitted with rockets and machineguns for use in a ground support role. Finally, the long-range bombing capability was augmented by fitting AN-12 transports for the task. These slow and oversized planes were used for concentrated bombing of targets like the Changa Manga area, across the border from Fazilka, where Pakistan's first armoured division was thought to be lying in wait for a lunge into Punjab. They were also used for a strike over Haji Pir Pass, despite the hazards of flying large aircraft at low altitude through mountain passes.



A surface-to-air guided missile on its launching pad. These missiles proved a great deterrent to Pakistani air attacks during the recent war.

In the eastern sector, the IAF stood by to drop a para battalion behind Jessore, and another at Tangail. Only the Tangail drop was actually made, the first in the IAF's history, while the other became unnecessary when troops on the ground pushed ahead faster than expected. The 12 helicopters available to eastern command moved a brigade across the Meghna on December 10-11. A battalion was lifted to Sylhet on December 8 from an improvised helicopter base 56 km away; this was preceded by rocket attacks on enemy positions from a helicopter.

Tight Coordination

The IAF was working very closely indeed with the other two services, with its own men posted at command and corps headquarters to ensure tight coordination. In Longewala in Rajasthan and in Chhamb in Kashmir, for example, support from the air was decisive in hurling the enemy back. Likewise the IAF kept the two air bases near Karachi, Masroor and Drigh Road, heavily engaged to let the navy have a go at Pakistan's destroyers as well as harbour installations.

The IAF's total performance represented a combination of five separate roles. First, it was defending Indian air space against enemy intrusions. The warning system offered no help since low-level flights escape radar detection. The IAF had also to provide occasionally an air umbrella over important targets, with its planes hovering in the air to give chase to the enemy. Residents in Delhi noted, for instance, Gnats scrambling into the air every few minutes on the afternoon of December 12 when the Prime Minister addressed a massive rally. Likewise, an air umbrella covered the evacuation of our battalion from Hussainiwala when this untenable enclave was given up. In the Sakargarh sector, a similar exercise was carried out when our tanks were fording the Basantar and Bein rivers.

Secondly, the IAF was trying to reduce Pakistan's capability to wage a long drawn-out war. This was the reason for its attacks on the storage tanks of the Attock oil refinery in the west and the Chittagong refinery in the east, and on a gas plant at Khairpur, 20 km southwest of Sukkur, which pumped Sui gas northwards to Punjab.

Thirdly, the IAF was plastering troop and tank concentrations to prevent the enemy from launching his offensives. The raid on Changa Manga has already been mentioned; it formed part of a large search-and-destroy operation undertaken at the instance of Western Army Command on the night of December 3-4 to prevent Pakistan from breaking out. "We struck at anything which looked suspicious", as Air Commodore Lazaro - IAF's liaison man at Gen. Candeth's headquarters - put it.

Similar assaults from the air were mounted on Kahuta where the enemy was forming up to make a renewed bid to grab Poonch. Heavy raids were kept up along the whole Punjab front, from the start of the war till the ceasefire, to hinder the transfer of troops and equipment from the rear to the front. Some of the marshalling yards hit in furtherance of the effort were Narawal junction in the Shakargarh sector, Raiwind, 40 km southwest of Lahore; Lodhran, 70 km south of Multan, Bahawalpur, Rahimyar Khan and Hyderabad.

Fourthly, the IAF was providing ground support to our own troops by direct intervention at the frontline to pound enemy infantry, gun positions, pillboxes, bunkers, and tanks. The level of such support increased as the war progressed, with the IAF switching more of its squadrons to this task instead of the long-range raids undertaken at the start against enemy air bases.

Psychological Pressure

Fifthly, the IAF helped to build up psychological pressure on Pakistani troops and their commanders in the east by bombing vessels in which they were retreating from the border towards Dacca and Narayanganj. This lent added weight to Gen. Manekshaw's surrender call.

India certainly has an advantage over Pakistan: it has a bigger and better equipped air force. But pluck and grit also played a big part in making possible the success it achieved. Flying officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon took off in his Gnat from Seinagar while the airfield was under attack on December 14 from six Sabres. He downed one and hit another, but he was still not satisfied. He chose to try conclusions with the remaining Sabres, and went down gallantly. This won the Air Force its first Param Vir Chakra.

A hangar at Dacca airport after a bombing raid by Indian Air Force jets.



India Rules The Waves

VICE-ADMIRAL MUZAFFAR HUSSAIN, chief of Pakistan's navy during the war, had high ambitions. The evening the war started, the U.S.-built submarine, *Ghazi*, was sneaking up to Visakhapatnam for a pre-emptive strike aimed at the Indian aircraft carrier, *Vikrant*. Another of his submarines was on the prowl in the Bay of Bengal to counter India's plans to blockade Bangla Desh ports.

Unfortunately for him, these ambitious plans misfired. The Indian Navy sent both submarines down to the bottom of the sea, and quickly gained complete control over Bangla Desh waters. Simultaneously, India's western fleet carried out daring raids on Karachi to cripple the enemy warships and inflict heavy damage on port installations. By December 12, Pakistan was warning neutral ships against proceeding towards Karachi. This was clear acknowledgement that the Indian Navy had established tactical control over West Pakistani waters as well. Not surprisingly, Vice-Admiral Muzaffar Hussain has been given the sack by Mr. Bhutto.

In contrast, 130 merchant vessels came safely into Indian ports during the war. The restrictions initially placed on Indian ship movements, a precautionary move, were relaxed once the navy had bottled up the Pakistani fleet in Karachi.

Principal Task

Keeping the country's sea-lanes open, and choking off the enemy's, constitute the principal task of a navy in wartime. In this, the Indian Navy achieved a success few had expected. In addition, carrier-borne aircraft lent powerful support to the Bangla Desh operations by carrying out non-stop raids on ports from Khulna at one end to Cox's Bazar at the other to bring home to Gen. Niazi and his superiors in Islamabad that escape was out of the question. On two occasions, the navy carried out landings at Chalna and later at Cox's Bazar — to hasten the end of the war.

The navy established many firsts in this war. In 1965, the *Vikrant* was undergoing repairs at the Mazagon docks in Bombay, and had therefore no part to play in the conflict. Again, the Navy's landing craft had never been brought into use. For the submarines and the missile boats recently acquired from the Soviet Union, the war provided an early opportunity to show their paces. On December 3, the *Vikrant* was quietly lying in wait in the Andaman Islands, some 960 km south of Cox's Bazar. By 10.30 a.m. the next morning, the Seahawk fighter-bomber squadron it carried had opened the account with a raid on Cox's Bazar airfield and port installations.

The *Vikrant* started life as a carrier in the British navy. Purchased in 1957, it was modernised and refitted for service in the Indian Navy to join it in 1961. Apart from the turbo jet Seahawks, it carries a comple-

ment of French-built Alize aircraft for anti-submarine patrol and some Alouette helicopters.

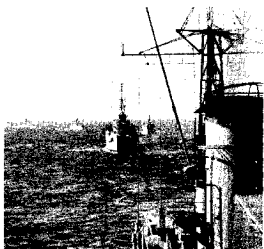
During the war, the *Vikrant* headed a sizable task force which included destroyers and frigates. These were needed to guard the carrier against submarine attacks, and to help in the interception of enemy shipping. Over the fortnight the war lasted, the navy seized a large number of Pakistani merchant ships and coastal oil tankers and interrogated neutral shipping to enforce contraband control. This became all the more necessary when Pakistani ships downed their own colours, and tried to sail away under neutral flags.

Alizes' Contribution

The carrier, with its 1,500-member crew, evidently sailed back and forth to keep the enemy guessing where the next attack would come from. The Seahawks, which flew a total of 400 sorties, concentrated after the first week on gunboats and other craft to underline Gen. Manekshaw's warning that "certain death" awaited any troops that might try to sneak out. The Alizes also contributed to this effort; depth charges intended for submarines were dropped on gunboats at Mangla to send them to the bottom.

Perhaps it was an Alize patrol that first detected an enemy submarine off the Chittagong coast on December 4-5. Since details of this action have not been disclosed by the navy, one can only guess that the alert from the Alize brought anti-submarine craft converging

A task force of the Indian western fleet off Karachi harbour on December 5. The task force played havoc with Pakistani warships.



on the spot. Soon after they went into action, signallers intercepted a distress call "bachao, bachao". The next morning an Alize patrol reported tell-tale patches of oil, indicating that the submarine had been sunk. This would have been a Daphne class submarines, one of the three Pakistan recently acquired from France.

The *Ghazi* had been sunk 48 hours earlier, but the news was broken to the world on December 9. The navy knew by the morning of December 5 that it had achieved a kill when two fishermen netted life jackets with U.S. markings, but it was thought the submarine may have belonged to another power friendly to Pakistan. Naval divers were sent down to investigate, and they eventually came up with fool-proof evidence, in the shape of logbooks, that it was the *Ghazi* down on the ocean floor.

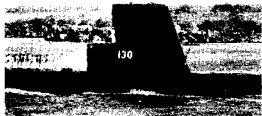
Technically, the *Ghazi* was on loan to Pakistan from the U.S.A. since 1964. It was active in 1965 in the Arabian Sea, and laid claim to sinking the *INS Brahmaputra* (which is however still in service). But the truth may be that the *Ghazi* itself was hit because it was there after in Akara undergoing repairs for many months.



Some of the ships damaged by naval aircraft when the Chittagong harbour was bombed.

consisted of several destroyers and frigates with some Osa class missile boats in tow. So far as is known, the Indian Navy has six of these Osa class 200-ton boats which can fire a missile at targets up to 24 to 28 km away, making them suitable for both off-shore bombardment of the enemy coast as well as his ships.

As the task force reached Karachi, getting at one time to within 25 km of the shore, it encountered opposition from the Pakistani destroyer, *Khaiber*. The destroyer received a direct hit, and was seen breaking into two. *Shahjahan*, a sister destroyer, came to the *Khaiber's* rescue, only to receive a knockout blow itself. Radar screens monitoring the action showed that it disintegrated immediately. A third ship was also hit, touching off a tremendous explosion. This was possibly a minesweeper.



A view of the *Ghazi* sunk by the Indian Navy off Visakhapatnam on December 3.

Covered With Smoke

After this engagement, the task force headed at high speed for the harbour. Shortly after midnight, Karachi residents were thrown into panic by the bombardment of the port area. Oil storage tanks at Keamari were hit, the flames rising high into the sky. An evacuee from Karachi said in Teheran some hours later, "Karachi harbour is ablaze." The sky, in fact, remained covered with smoke for five days. On December 6, Pakistan radio admitted the loss of one destroyer, and reassured its listeners that a large number of officers and sailors had been rescued from the sea.

It must have moved from the west to the Bay of Bengal at least 10 days ahead to get to Visakhapatnam on the night of December 3-4. An alert patrol spotted it on its sonar equipment, a submerged mechanism which sends out sound waves to get an echo back from metallic masses in its vicinity. This was even before Mrs. Gandhi had made her broadcast accepting Gen. Yahya Khan's challenge. Visakhapatnam sought instructions from New Delhi to receive the immediate answer that the intruder should be dealt with at once.

In the west, the Navy opened the account with its raid on Karachi on the night of December 4-5. As reports from Karachi later confirmed, the IAF had made heavy attacks on the two military airfields around the city five hours before the naval task force showed up opposite Karachi. There was another massive air raid to coincide with the naval action. As a result, calls for help sent out by a maritime reconnaissance aircraft went unanswered.

The task force under the command of Rear Admiral E.C. Kuruvilla was led by the cruiser, *INS Mysore*, an

With two of its five destroyers gone, Pakistan had no capability left to challenge India on the sea. To drive the point home, Rear Admiral Kuruvilla mounted a second strike on the night of December 8-9. Taking along the supply ship, *Deepak*, to refuel at sea, a task force swept the whole Makran coast and pounded Karachi again. It went as far as Jeewani, a small harbour only 24 km east of the Iran border, and also attacked Swadar, 48 km from Jeewani and 350 km from Karachi. This was presumably intended to get at any Pakistani naval units in hiding there.

At Karachi, the force went up to 8 km of the harbour and struck the oil installations again. In the operation,

a British merchant vessel was unfortunately hit, prompting Mrs. Gandhi to send a message to the British Prime Minister conveying her deepest regrets and offering to pay compensation. During this raid, enemy aircraft tried to get at the task force but were unable to hit any naval unit.

While the task force was returning from this action, a Pakistani submarine got on its tail. The anti-submarine frigate, *Khatri*, went to deal with it. In the resultant action, it was hit by three torpedoes and sank in less than three minutes. There was no confusion or panic on the part of Captain Mahendra Nath Mulla. He ordered his men to abandon ship, supervising the details when he went down with the frigate in the best naval tradition. This and one naval aircraft were the only losses of any consequence the navy suffered during the war.

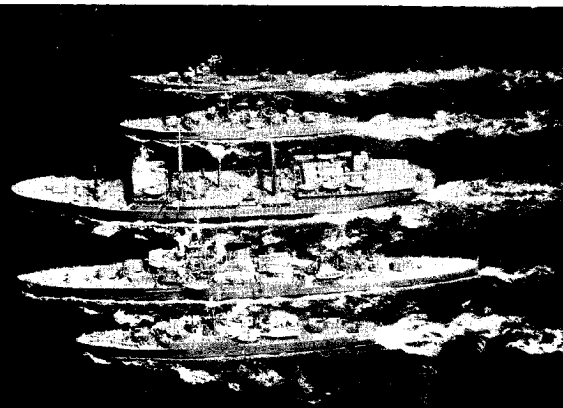
Pakistan claimed that it had sunk one of our submarines. An attempt to do so may have been made while the subs were prowling along the west Pakistan coast to discourage the enemy from pulling his naval or merchant ships out to sea, but it did not succeed. All units of the Indian Navy's submarine squadron are in fine shape at their base in Visakhapatnam.

In extenuation of what India did to its navy, Pakistan came out with the story that Soviet personnel were participating in the operations. A circular telegram from Islamabad asking its foreign missions to publicise the charge also referred to the mysterious presence of a Russian trawler in the Bay of Bengal when the Indian Navy was mining the approaches to Bangal Desh ports, and to Russian submarines prowling in the Arabian Sea. Whether these units were there or not, they had nothing to do with India's war with Pakistan. The success of the Indian Navy was all its own handiwork.

Proud Moment

It was a proud moment indeed when Rear Admiral Shariif, Chief of Pakistan's Eastern Naval Command, walked up to Vice-Admiral N. Krishnan, his Indian counterpart, and said to him: "Admiral Krishnan, sir, soon I will be disarmed. Your Navy fought magnificently and had cornered us everywhere. There is no one I would like to surrender my arms to other than the Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Fleet."

Ships of the western fleet replenishing while sailing at high speed before going in for action off Karachi.





The British Prime Minister, Mr. Edward Heath, opens the car door for Sh Mujibur Rahman outside 10, Downing Street, London, after their talk.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on his arrival in Delhi from London.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman being taken in a triumphal procession after his arrival in Dacca.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman signs the oath of office in Dacca making him Prime Minister of Bangla Desh. With him is the new President, Mr. Abu Syed Chowdhury.



Lt. Sheikh Kamal, son of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, embracing his mother after the liberation of Dacca.

Mujib Takes Over Reins

As the war ended with Gen. Yahya Khan's acceptance of India's unilateral ceasefire offer, a message went from Islamabad to Mr. Bhutto, then in New York for Security Council meetings, asking him to rush home. Public indignation over Pakistan's military humiliation had unnerved the generals. Fearing a coup by younger officers, the junta quickly decided to hand over power to Mr. Bhutto on the strength of the impressive mandate he had won from the people of West Pakistan in the December 1970 election. He returned to Islamabad on December 20 to be immediately sworn in as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Picking up the pieces of a shattered country Mr. Bhutto made a desperate bid to open a dialogue with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He took the Sheikh out of the Mianwali prison, countermanding Gen. Yahya's execution order, and put him in "protective custody" in a bungalow in Rawalpindi. Over a fortnight, between December 26 and the Sheikh's dramatic journey to London as free man on January 8, there were several rounds of talks centred on the theme that a predominantly Muslim Bangla Desh should, in its own interests, agree to some arrangement however loose to preserve the concept of Pakistan.

Tumultuous Changes

But the Sheikh refused to commit himself even though he hardly knew of the tumultuous changes that had taken place since his arrest on the fateful night of March 25. Mr. Bhutto was now faced with a dilemma. The Sheikh's return to Dacca would undoubtedly strengthen the government of the new State, and give it added legitimacy. But to hold him back in the hope of striking a bargain might only make for more bitterness. In the end, Mr. Bhutto chose wisely to set the Sheikh free.

At 3.30 a.m. (IST) on January 8, Mr. Bhutto escorted the Sheikh to the airport and put him on board a special PJA Boeing. The news reached Delhi and Dacca later that day that the Sheikh was being taken to an undisclosed destination. Both capitals waited with bated breath until a flash from London announced his arrival there just after midday. Before the evening was out, the Sheikh had spoken on the telephone to Mrs. Gandhi, then visiting Lucknow, and accepted an invitation to make a brief halt in Delhi on his way to Dacca.

On Sunday, January 9, he started for home in an RAF Comet placed at his disposal by the British Government and landed in Delhi to a warm and tumultuous welcome. The President and the Prime Minister were on hand to greet him. A few hours later he reached Dacca where a million people, dancing and surging with joy, received him. He was taken in a triumphal procession to the historic Race Course where the Bangabandhu delivered his final reply to Mr. Bhutto when he made it clear that there could be no link between Bangla Desh and Pakistan.

The Sheikh immediately got down to the task of giving



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sobbing at the Awami League office in Dacca while listening to accounts of atrocities committed by the Pakistan army in Bangla Desh.

stability to the new State born-out of so much suffering and travail. Within two days he proclaimed a provisional constitutional order plumping for a parliamentary form of government. He took over as Prime Minister after stepping down as President which office went to Mr. Abu Syed Chowdhury, a former judge.

Sense Of Security

The Sheikh also set in motion the process of constitution-making when he announced that all members elected to the national and provincial assemblies would constitute the constituent assembly. He next turned his attention to the restoration of a sense of security in the country. Putting his prestige behind his appeal he ordered all Mukti Bahini men to surrender their arms. By and large there has been compliance with his directive.

All these steps have served to convince the world that Bangla Desh has come to stay as a viable State. In spite of Mr. Bhutto's threats several countries have recognised the new State and it will not be long before it will take its rightful place in the community of nations.

Bhutto's Limited Options

MILITARILY, it will make no sense for Pakistan to opt for another round of fighting. The odds against it are now longer than on December 3.

Mr. Bhutto is not cut out to be a moderate. He is also a prisoner of his own past. But in the new situation it is his right-wing rivals like Janat-ul-Islami who have taken up his cry for permanent confrontation with India, while he says he wants a dialogue with India to settle all outstanding disputes.

It is possible that he and his senior military advisers realise that another trial of strength would be fraught with the gravest risk for Pakistan. They know that India would now be able to field up to 18 divisions in the west without drawing on the troops deployed on the northern frontier. This would give India a clear edge in terms of manpower, making for a completely different situation from that of September 1965 or December 1971 when the two sides were pretty evenly matched.

Despite the losses suffered in the 14-day war, Pakistan's armour remains largely intact. But two factors are likely to cool the ardour of its tank commanders. First, India's advantage of larger tank holdings will make itself felt much sooner in a one-front war. Secondly, Pakistan can scarcely be happy with the quality of the Chinese-built T-59 tanks which form the core of many of its armoured regiments.

Pakistan's air force has suffered a crippling blow already. The entire fleet of F-104 Starfighters has been accounted for by the IAF. The eight Sabre squadrons have taken heavy losses. With this diminished strength, Pakistan can hardly wish to try conclusions again.

The Pakistan Navy is now in a shambles. With only three destroyers, two frigates and two submarines left, it will have a hard time coping with the challenge if India applies its full strength to the west. Karachi, Pakistan's only port, will be under blockade right from the start.

In sum, Pakistan cannot risk another gamble unless it is fairly sure that it can bring in an outside power to help redress the balance. Mr. Bhutto lays claim to a special rapport with the leaders in Peking, but this may be of little value in practice. Nothing short of a full-scale invasion across the Himalayas will suffice to

bail out Pakistan. But it is extremely unlikely that China will wish to go that far.

Sooner or later, Pakistan will have to face the fact that it is only half the country it was, and trim its military ambitions accordingly. Defence accounted for 57.5 per cent of its central budget in 1971-72. Now that it will receive no revenue from its eastern wing, a defence budget of this order will swallow up over 80 per cent of its national revenues. No government can bear such a burden. Again, the nation's foreign exchange earnings are now halved, steeply raising the share preempted by debt service.

As time goes on, Mr. Bhutto will have no choice but to cut Pakistan's war machine down to size. The impressive victory his party won in the 1970 election owed a good deal to the promises he held out to the deprived segments of the population. He has to make some effort to redeem these pledges if he is to consolidate his position within the country.

As one can see, he is trying to get his countrymen to accept the new realities. His position on Bangla Desh now is, ironically enough, the same as that of the Awami League before March 25. The original concept of Pakistan, as defined in the Muslim League resolution of 1940, was that it would consist of "independent states" carved out of the Muslim majority areas of the sub-continent. Mr. Bhutto's heavy emphasis on the Muslim character of East Bengal is a plea to Sheikh Mujib to overlook the killings of millions of Bengalis and the uprooting of many more and accept some kind of a link with West Pakistan, no matter how insubstantial. The reason for this desperate effort to erect a facade of Islamic solidarity is that the *raison d'être* of Pakistan, as conceived by its founders, collapses with the rejection of Mr. Jinnah's theory by Bangla Desh.

The rightists are busy perpetuating a new myth that Pakistan was not defeated by India but betrayed by its drunken generals. Had they held out only a few days more, "our friends—specially China—would have surely intervened." One Urdu newspaper is believed to have suggested that "the wretched rulers" had been bought over by the enemy through various allurements including huge sums of cash in foreign countries. These myths are understandably popular among hot-blooded junior officers. Mr. Bhutto, as clever a politician as any, has decided that the only way he can prevent a total collapse of the morale of the country, as well as the armed forces, is to throw the whole blame for the military debacle on the Yahya coterie.

This is why he has sacked some 20 generals. All principal staff officers at Army Headquarters—except for the new C-in-C, Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan—stand dismissed. He has also got rid of four lieutenant-generals serving as governors, two others heading corps, and some eight major-generals and many more brigadiers. The navy has lost its chief, two rear-admirals, and two commodores. But the air force—led by Mr. Bhutto's friend, Air Marshal Rahim Khan—has escaped unscathed.

President Bhutto





Munnawar Tawi where Indian and Pakistani troops fought the fiercest battle of the 14-day war.

The War — Day by Day

Dec. 3: Pakistani fighter planes launch pre-emptive strikes on a number of Indian airfields — Amritsar, Avantipur, Ambala, Agra, Jodhpur, Pathankot, Srinagar and Uttarai — but cause little damage. At the same time, Pakistan launches heavy ground attacks at a number of points all along the western border, including Sulemanke, Khem Karan, Chhamb and Poonch.

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Defence Minister, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, and the Finance Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, rush back to the Capital. Emergency meeting of the cabinet decides to put the country on war footing. The President proclaims state of emergency.

The Indian Air Force goes into action, launching retaliatory strikes on Chanderi, Shorkot, Sargodha, Murid, Mianwali, Masroor (near Karachi), Risalwala (near Rawalpindi) and Changa Manga (near Lahore).

Dec. 4: Pakistan says it is in a state of war with India. Indian troops cross into Bangla Desh. The eastern and western fleets of the Indian Navy go into action.

In the first day's fighting, Pakistan loses 33 planes, either shot down or destroyed on the ground. These include three Mirages, two F-104 Starfighters, 19 Sabres, five B-57 bombers, three light air observation aircraft and one transport plane.

Twelve Pakistani tanks are destroyed, six in the Ferozepore sector and an equal number near Chhamb.

Two Pakistani gunboats are sunk and a merchant vessel is captured in the Arabian Sea. IAF planes destroy six powerboats and damage another 20.

India loses a total of 13 planes, 11 in the west and two over Bangla Desh.

The U.N. Security Council meets in emergency session to consider the "deteriorating situation which has led to armed clashes between India and Pakistan."

Dec. 5: In concert with the Mukti Bahini, Indian forces liberate some territory in Bangla Desh.

Pakistan launches a major thrust, sup-

ported by armour, at Longwala. The attack is repulsed.

A Pakistani attack near Poonch is beaten back.

A task force of the Indian Navy, in a bold attack on Karachi harbour, sends to the bottom two Pakistani destroyers, the *Khanber* and the *Shahjehan*. Harbour installations are pounded.

In another operation in the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Navy sinks an enemy submarine and launches round-the-clock bombardment of the ports of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in the east. Indian Naval planes pound targets in Khulna, Chalna and Mangla ports, Chittagong airfield and military installations nearby.

Approximately two brigades of Pakistani troops, supported by an armoured regiment, launch attack on Indian positions in the Chhamb sector.

In the Security Council, the Soviet Union vetoes an American resolution calling for immediate end to hostilities and withdrawal of forces from each other's territory.

Dec. 6: Indian forces evacuate Chhamb in the face of relentless enemy pressure.

In the eastern sector, Indian forces capture Feni and Hilli. Other gains include Nawabganj, 32 km south of Rangpur, and Jaintiapur in the north-eastern corner of Sylhet district. Sultanpur, on the route from Akhaura to Brahmanbaria, is also captured.

The Prime Minister announces in Parliament recognition of Gana Prajantriya Bangla Desh.

Pakistan breaks off diplomatic relations with India.

Dec. 7: Jessore is liberated by Indian forces. In the same sector, the vital communication centre of Jhenida falls while the capture of Meherpur opens the way to Chuadanga and Kushiya. The smaller towns of Sarsa and Mancharpur are liberated. Lalnonirhat airfield is captured by Indian forces. Indian troops free Sylhet and Maulvi Bazar after landing by helicopter.

In Kashmir, an area east of Chhamb, known as "Chicken's Neck" is occupied by Indian forces. An Indian thrust towards Sialkot cuts 19 km deep into Pakistani territory.

In Sind, Indian troops make deep inroads in Barmer sector. In Kutch, the posts of Jaleli and Kalebaig, as also Chhad Bet, are captured.

The U.S.A. and others take the issue to the General Assembly under the "uniting for Peace", resolution. The Assembly calls for ceasefire and withdrawal of troops.

Dec. 8: Comilla and Brahmanbaria are captured placing the entire sector opposite Tripura under Indian control. Indian forces advance towards the river ports of Chandpur and Daudkandi, liberating Elliotganj.

On the western front, Indian troops capture an area of 2,070 square km in the Barmer sector. Further south, in Kutch, a commando raid towards Virawah is launched. In the north-west, Indian forces capture Takhtpur, 16 km north-east of Dera Baba Nanak. Two posts near Kargil are also taken. Bhutan recognises Bangla Desh.

Dec. 9: Indian Navy goes into action off Karachi again, destroying three more Pakistani warships, doubting the enemy's losses. The sinking of the *Chazi* on the night of December 3 is announced.

In the east, the three river ports of Chandpur, Daudkandi and Ashuganj are occupied. Jamalpur in Sylhet district is surrounded.

First signs of Pakistani crack-up available as Maj.-Gen. Farman Ali sends message to the U.N. suing for peace. Islamabad countermands message.

In the west, Nagarparkar in Sind is captured. In Kashmir, nine Pakistani posts in the Kargil sector are taken.

Dec. 10: Indian forces cross the Meghna river and are in a position to launch an assault on Dacca.

In the west Indian forces fall back in the Chhamb sector.

In Kutch, Vingor and Virawah fall to Indian forces.

Dec. 11: Indian forces capture a string of important towns—Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Chandpur and Hilli—in Bangla Desh.

In the west, Indian forces, counter-attacking in the Chhamb sector, cross the Munawar Tawi river, holding its western bank.

Pakistani losses in planes and tanks now stand at 77 and 141, respectively.

Dec. 12: The war of liberation in Bangla Desh moves to a climax. The battle for Dacca is about to begin. Indian paratroops land in the Dacca area.

In the west, at the northern and southern extremes, the Kargil sector is virtually swept clean of Pakistani troops. In Chhamb, a determined enemy thrust is repulsed.

Enemy gunboat sunk in the Bay of Bengal. Pakistan's naval losses now stand at 16 gunboats, three warships and two submarines. India loses the frigate, *Khukri*, in the Arabian Sea.

Dec. 13: With all eyes turned towards Dacca, there is a virtual lull on other fronts in the east as well as in the west. India's largest gains are in enemy tanks, 14 of which are knocked out in the previous 24 hours. One more has been taken intact.

The nuclear-powered American aircraft carrier, *Enterprise*, and a Seventh Fleet task force of several ships and destroyers leave Viet Nam waters and head for the Bay of Bengal.

Dec. 14: Indian forces contact Pakistani defences in Dacca for the first time. Two Indian pincers take Tangail, Joydevpur and Tungi before closing in on the Bangla Desh capital. A third prong from Narsingdi advances to within 9 km of Dacca. Chittagong harbour, pounded by Indian naval ships, is ablaze.

Meanwhile, the civilian Governor, Dr. A.M. Malik, quits his post and along with his family takes refuge in Hotel Intercontinental which has been declared a neutral zone by the International Red Cross. Top officials of Islamabad's regime in Bangla Desh resign *en masse* and follow suit.

In the west, Indian thrusts in the Shikargarh region result in the seizure of 900 sq. km of Pakistani territory. In Sind, Indian forces gain control of the area south of the railway track in the battle for Naya Chor.

The Soviet Union kills yet another American move in the Security Council seeking to call upon India to accept an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of its forces from "Pakistani territory."

Dec. 15: Indian infantry columns enter Dacca. Meanwhile the U.S. Seventh Fleet's task force heads towards the coast of Bangla Desh. Japanese sources report from Tokyo that a Soviet missile frigate and a battleship have passed through Tsushima Straits and are presumably heading towards the Indian Ocean. Lt.-Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, commander of the Pakistani forces in Bangla Desh, offers a ceasefire. But Gen. Sam Manekshaw, Chief of Staff of the Indian Army, demands complete surrender by 9 a.m. the following day.

Dec. 16: Gen. Niazi surrenders unconditionally, and India declares a unilateral ceasefire on the western front. The instrument of surrender is signed in Dacca by Gen. Niazi and Lt.-Gen. Jagjit Singh Arora, allied commander.

Pakistani thrust in the Pathankot-Samba sector, backed up by armour, makes no headway.

Dec. 17: Pakistan accepts India's ceasefire offer, and fighting on the western front also stops.

The Final Tally of War

THE Defence Minister, Mr Jagjivan Ram, gave this final tally of the 14-day war in the course of a statement in Parliament on December 18:

Indian troops along with the Mukti Bahini liberated Bangla Desh inhabited by 75 million people.

On the western front our troops occupied nearly 50 posts in the Kargil, Gurois and Uri sectors. In the Tithwal area a substantial part of the Lippa Valley came into our hands. Some commanding heights were taken in the Poonch-Rajouri-Naushera sector.

The whole of the Chicken Neck's salient near Akhnur and a large area in the Shakargarh-Zafarwal salient were wrested from the enemy. The Pakistani enclave at Dera Baba Nanak was taken.

Several posts were captured on the border stretching from Dera Baba Nanak to Fazilka.

In the Bikaner sector, Rukanpur, Ranhal and Bijnot were captured. In the adjacent Jaisalmer sector our troops were between 6 and 12 km inside Pakistani territory.

The big thrust in the Barmer area gave us effective control right up to Umarkot and Naya Chor, 45 km inside Sind.

In Kutch a number of posts including Chad Bet were taken, and the entire Nagarparhar bulge was in our hands.

Against this impressive list of gains, Pakistan could seize only a small area in Chhamb, an enclave near Hussainiwala, and a lodgement in the Fazilka area.

Pakistan lost 94 aircraft, 246 tanks, two destroyers, two submarines, two minesweepers and 16 gunboats. Indian losses totalled 45 planes, 73 tanks and one frigate.

Nearly 93,000 prisoners were taken in Bangla Desh.

India lost 1,047 soldiers dead, 3,047 wounded and 89 missing in Bangla Desh. On the western front our losses amounted to 1,426 killed, 3,611 wounded and 2,149 missing. Pakistan has not yet announced its casualties.