

TOPIC 27

GENERAL YAHYA KHAN AND THE CREATION OF BANGLADESH 1971:

The ***Tashkent Declaration*** signed by the Indian Prime Minister ***Lal Bahadur Shastri*** and the Pakistani ***President Muhammad Ayub Khan*** was not at all approved by the general public, and was regarded as submission to India and humiliation for the nation. Politicians were already unhappy with Ayub Khan whose Government was celebrating the decade of various reforms. But he fell victim to the then Foreign Minister, ***Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto***, who exploited the whole situation. He resigned from office and after forming a party of his own, Pakistan Peoples Party, announced to "*defeat the great dictator with the power of the people*". As a result, he and others were arrested.

Ayub Khan tried his best to handle the situation by releasing a number of political prisoners, including the most popular leader of East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman. He held a Round Table Conference in Rawalpindi with all the well-known political leaders in March 1969, but it proved to be a stalemate, with the result that Ayub Khan was forced to hand over power to General Muhammad Yahya Khan, on **March 25, 1969**. Pakistan was now under the grip of another Martial Law.

Being deeply aware of the explosive political situation in the country, General Yahya Khan decided to transfer power to the elected representatives of the people and announced that the general elections would be held on October 5, 1970.

KEY POINTS:

- Following the declaration of martial law, the C-In-C of the army, General Yahya Khan was appointed Chief Martial law administrator and also took over as President.
- He announced that
 1. *Basic democracy* had not been a success.
 2. There would be a properly elected government.
 3. The ***one unit system*** had not worked, so there would be a return to Provincial government.
- Yahya was committed to bringing democracy to Pakistan based on "*one man one vote*".
- The one unit plan and the 1962 Constitution were annulled and Pakistan's four provinces re-established.
- From **Jan 1970** political activity resumed.
- The various parties began campaigning to elect a National assembly of 300 members.
- The assembly would have 120 days to draw up a new constitution.
- The elections were to be held in OCT 1970 but they had to be postponed because severe flooding in East Pakistan caused such chaos that voting was impossible.
- The elections were finally held on **7 Dec. 1970** and for the first time ever were held on the principle of one man one vote.
- The results were such a shock that they created constitutional crises in Pakistan.

Results:

- The election gave *Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)* led by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, 81 of the 138 seats in West Pakistan.



MEGA LECTURE

- There were 162 seats in East Pakistan and one party the popular *Awami League*, led by *Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman* won almost all of them.
- The Awami League had contested the election on a manifesto calling for political and economic independence for East Pakistan.
- The AL would also have a majority in the NA.
- Yahya could not allow the traditional dominance of West Pakistan to be overthrown.
- The AL won **160** of the **162** seats in East Pakistan because a sense of frustration felt by the people of in East Pakistan towards their countrymen in West Pakistan.
- West Pakistani felt their culture to be superior than east Pakistanis.
- Ruling class of West Pakistan believed that East Pakistan was not well represented in any aspect of Pakistan's administration, not for judiciary, not for civil service.
- In the army too the majority of officers were from West Pakistan.
- These resentments caused the people of East Pakistan to vote in overwhelming numbers for a party which promised them a real say in how Pakistan was governed.
- There were no botheration of economic development in East Pakistan.
- West Pakistanis were 15 % wealthier than east Pakistanis.
- There was the transferring of resources from east to West Pakistan.
- The single largest Pakistani export was jute which was grown in East Pakistan.
- The largest spending was on defense to protect the western Pakistani border with India.(no dispute between Eastern Pakistan and India).
- More than that the AL won their huge victory by campaigning on the basis of the **six** points.
 - (i) A directly elected government.
 - (ii) The federal government to control defense and foreign policy .all other decisions to be made at provincial level.
 - (iii) Separate currencies and financial policies foe East Pakistan, to stop all the money flowing from East Pakistan to West Pakistan.
 - (iv) The provinces to tax their people and send a share to the federal government. The federal government not to tax people.
 - (v) Each province to set up its own trade agreements with other countries and to control the money spent through this trade.
 - (vi) Each province to have its own troops.

West Pakistan reacts:

- In Jan 1971, Yahya visited Mujib-ur-rehman to persuade him not to form the next government and that he should not use the new assembly to create a new constitution limiting the power of the central government.
- In Feb 1971, Bhutto announced that the PPP would not join National Assembly unless Mujib reached an agreement about power sharing.
- On 1st March 1971, Yahya postponed the opening of the assembly without setting a new date.



MEGA LECTURE

- The people of East Pakistan considered that they had been betrayed and immediately began a campaign of civil disobedience, strikes, demonstrations and refusing to pay taxes.
- When it became clear that the power of the central government had broken down in East Pakistan Yahya appointed **General Tikka Khan** as Chief Martial law administrator there.
- On 15 March Yahya and Bhutto met Mujib in Dhaka for talks to resolve the situation but no agreement could be reached.
- On 25 March Yahya flew back to Islamabad and the next day Bhutto also left Dhaka.
- That night Tikka's men moved in on the AL, Mujib was arrested and hundreds of his supporters and colleagues were arrested or killed.

The outbreak of Civil War:

- Yahya sent the army into East Pakistan to Keep Order and the AL was banned.
- Yahya claimed that Mujib was claiming to declare independence.
- On 26 March the Sovereign Republic of Bangladesh was announced in a secret radio broadcast from Dhaka.
- The government reaction was harsh, thousands of Bengalis were killed, press censorship was imposed and all political activity throughout Pakistan was under control of East Pakistan.
- Yahya ordered the Pakistan army to take control of East Pakistan.
- The measures were supported by all the political parties in West Pakistan and Bhutto claimed that "*Pakistan has been saved*".
- Rather than being saved the reality was millions of Bengali refugees were across the border to India and civil war was now inevitable.
- On 31 March India declared its supporter for "the people of Bengal" against West Pakistan and trained a rebel Bengali army called *Mukti Bahini*.
- Yahya Khan sent more troops into East Pakistan and by early April the army had gained control of most of the major towns and was successful in driving off the East Pakistani rebels.
- On 21 Nov. the Mukti Bahini launched an attack on Jessore knowing that the Indians were supporting the rebel forces.

War with India:

- On 3rd December Pakistani air force launched attack on northern India to prevent East Pakistan.
- On 4th December India attacked East Pakistan from air, ground and sea simultaneously.
- Within two weeks the Indian forces had surrounded Dhaka.
- The Pakistan Army tried to divert the Indian army from East Pakistan by launching attacks in Kashmir and Punjab.
- The UN Security Council had been trying to find a solution to avoid war.



MEGA LECTURE

- Bhutto attended UN talks in NY and a resolution was passed calling on India and Pakistan to stop fighting and withdraw from East Pakistan.
- No proper solution was carried out due to veto of Russia in favor of India.
- Bhutto returned to Pakistan knowing that Pakistan had to win the war on its own.
- Just a week after arrived in Pakistan, Yahya accepted defeat and ordered the army in East Pakistan to surrender.
- The separation of East Pakistan came as huge shock to the people of West Pakistan.

Reason for defeat:

- The main reason for the army's failure was that the people of East Pakistan were determined to resist West Pakistan.
- Muslim soldiers had little heart for such a fight in which they would have to put up armed resistance against fellow Muslims.
- There wasn't any support of allies for Pakistan particularly from China and USA.
- India was properly supported by USSR and by the Bengalis themselves.
- Weak and indecisive role of UNO.

Consequences of war:

- Defeat brought disgrace for Yahya and for the army.
- On **20 December 1971** Yahya resigned as President and replaced by Bhutto.
- On **21 December 1971**, the Republic of Bangladesh was officially declared.
- In Jan 1972 Bhutto released Mujib from prison.
- On 10 Jan 1972 Mujib became the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Reasons for Separation of East Pakistan 1971:

East Pakistan was at a distance of 1600 km from the west wing with a large hostile Indian territory in between. Had East Pakistan been contiguous to west Pakistan, the separation would never have taken place. Political grievances of the people of east Pakistan was one of the most important reasons. The province had a larger population (56%) but their political power was in the hands of west wing politicians. They had the grievances of underrepresentation. They demanded more seats in the central assembly and the greater share in the cabinets because of the larger population.

They were always more ministers from the west wing than from east Wing in all cabinets. The long presidential rule of Ayub Khan increased their sense of deprivation. After the election of 1970 when Awami League won majority of seats in the national assembly Mujib was not allowed to become the PM of Pakistan and to form his cabinet.

The other important reason was economic. The export of raw jute from EP was the main source of foreign exchange earnings and revenue to central government. This earning was spent more on the development of the west wing. And the east wing received a small share of development funds.

Greater and faster industrial development took place in west wing. The industrial units opened in EP mostly belonged to the industrialist of West Pakistan. The result was that there was the continual transfer of capital from east wing to west wing. Most of the banks insurance companies and big commercial firms had their head offices at Karachi. There was greater prosperity in west wing and more poverty in east wing.

The behaviors of west pak. Administrative officers who were posted in East Pakistan were hateful and humiliating with the Bengalis. Hatred developed between the people of east Pakistani people and west Pakistani people. India's hostile propaganda also poisoned the minds of the people of EP.

In the armed forces Bengalis share was only 10 percent. People of EP felt deprived .East Pakistan's share in central government services was only 15 percent

The language problem was also an important reason. It was a big hurdle in creating solidarity and unity in the Pakistani nation.

Indian military intervention became the immediate reason. Indian army attacked and entered in EP from many sides in Nov. 1971. This resulted in surrendered of Pakistani army in 16 Dec 1971 when Bangladesh created.

SHEIKH MUJIB:

Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman was born on March 22, 1922, at Faridpur, now in Bangladesh. He was an active member of the Muslim League in pre-Independence India. After Independence, Mujib-ur-Rahman remained active in politics. As a law student in March 1948, he was arrested for leading a black-flag demonstration against Jinnah on the issue of making Urdu as the State language. Along with **H. S. Suhrawardy**, he organized the Awami League in 1949.

After the death of Suhrawardy, Mujib-ur-Rahman revived the **Awami League** as a political party in January 1965. This time to contest the presidential elections as a component of the **Combined Opposition Party**, which nominated Miss Fatima Jinnah as the opposition candidate for the presidential post against the candidature of Ayub Khan.

The newborn country's initial Government was formed in January 1972, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman, who became the Prime Minister. In early 1975, Mujib-ur-Rahman became the President. He was, however, unable to stabilize the political situation, and was assassinated in a military coup on August 15, 1975, at his residence. Khandaker Mushtaq Ahmad was made the new President of Bangladesh.

EXPECTED QUESTIONS:

- Question No.1:** Explain three reasons why Bangladesh was created in 1971. (7) June 2000 Q.5 b
Question No.2: Why did Mujib ur rehman and Awami League demand six points? (7) June 2001 Q.5 b
Question No.3: Why was Pakistan unsuccessful in the 1965 and 1971 wars against India? (7) June 2002 Q.5 b
Question No.4: Why did East Pakistan wish to break away from Pakistan? (7) June 2003 Q.4 b
Question No. 5: Why was India successful in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan? (7) June 2006 Q.4 b
Question No.6: The six points made y Mujib urRehman and the Awami League was the most important factor in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.(14) June 2006 Q.4 c
Question No. 7: the geographical position of East Pakistan was the most important reason for the creation of Bangladesh in1981. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer. (14) Nov 2007 Q. 5 c
Question No.8: Were economic factors more important than any other factor in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971? Explain your answer. (14) June 2009 Q.5 c
Question No.9: political factors were more important than any other factor in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer. (14) June 2011 Q. 5 c
Question No. 10: why was India successful in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan? (7) June 2012 Q.5 b