

Volume 2

Number 091

The Independence of Bangladesh - III

Lead: In 1947, at the partition of India, two regions were set up, a thousand miles apart which would become a homeland for Muslims and a separate Islamic Republic known as Pakistan. In 1971 East Pakistan declared independence.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: From the beginning the two regions of Pakistan were incompatible. Despite their shared religion, the majority of East Pakistan who spoke Bengali felt their second-

class status. Most of the army and civil service came from West Pakistan and spoke Urdu the language of the West. Attempts were made to recruit more Bengalis but by the 1960s only a third of the civil service of East Pakistan came from there. Most of the national budget was spent in the West even though most of national income came from the sale of jute and tea grown in East Pakistan.

The discontented Bengalis found a spokesman in Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was one of the founders of the Awami League organized as an opposition party by middle-class Bengalis. Mujibur issued a manifesto calling for recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan

and for more autonomy for East Pakistan. In the elections of 1970 the Awami League won all but two of 169 seats allotted to the East in the National Assembly. That meant a majority and the government began to negotiate with the Awami League.

At the same time troops from West Pakistan were brought. When the talks began to fail, the government troops attacked, arrested Sheikh Mujibur and went after suspected supporters of the Awami League. The League's leaders fled to Calcutta and set up a government-in-exile. Millions of refugees, mostly Hindus fled across the border into India which viewed the situation with mounting alarm. On December 3, 1971 India intervened

with a major force and within two weeks the Pakistan resistance was over. Mujibur was released and returned home to a hero's welcome. In January he became the leader of the new nation created out of East Pakistan Bangladesh.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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