



A stranger in my own country EAST PAKISTAN 1969-71

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The 1971 East Pakistan tragedy was not just a failure of the military but also a collapse of civil society in the West Wing. The few voices raised against the military action were too feeble to make the army change its course, a course leading to military defeat and the break-up of the country. At the time, the author was General Officer Commanding 14 Division in East Pakistan. Apart from his direct narration of the events, his portrayal of the major dramatis personae, such as Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, Lieutenant General Tikka Khan and Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi, are insightful. A necessary text that demands scrutiny from all interested in the course of Pakistan's history.

A stranger in my own country EAST PAKISTAN 1969-71 Details

Date : Published 2012 by Oxford University Press

ISBN : 9780195474411

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Format : Hardcover 126 pages

Genre : History, Cultural, Pakistan, India, Biography, Politics

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From Reader Review A stranger in my own country EAST PAKISTAN 1969-71 for online ebook

Ibn Al-Saeed says

its a good one

Shawon Sarkar says

Just another book from a pakistani army officer,who tried to justify the genocide .

Nahian says

It is the kind of stuff you can expect from the co-planner of the 25th March massacre. He writes about “neutralizing” political leaders, student hostels, Teachers’ residents, cultural groups and “disarming” of East Bengal Regiments, EPR , Police in such a nonchalant way !

Interestingly, he was not in favor of the military crack-down. He has praises for Tikka Khan for butchering the Baluchs but he correctly assessed the grave consequences of repeating the same in East Pakistan. Rather, he believed the Bengalis should have been tricked into submission. He whines about ISI’s failure to predict Mujib’s landslide victory in election or otherwise it could have been stopped (!)

Like all typical Pakistani, he believes the Bengali uprising did not stem from the deprivations and mistreatment at the hands of Pakistanis but fueled by the Indians. He considers the Bengali leaders of that time as Indian agents and the Hindu population as Indian moles. He makes contemptuous remarks about Bengalis and their culture and language in general and shows abhorrence towards in Hindus in particular. His plan for the crack-down included “house to house search” in the hindu populated Dhaka old city, which was executed as per the plan.

The plan and the orders of the 25th March massacre were all verbal as confirmed by General Khadim. Ludicrously, the absence of written orders led Sharmila Bose to conclude there was no genocide. General Khadim also narrates how General Niazi vented on his first military briefing that, he will let loose his soldiers on the womenfolk of Bangladesh.

I would have given a one star rating to this too short and biased book, had it not been a primary source of history despite all its deficiencies.

Nick says

It had the potential to be a self serving narrative, or an objective view of the situation. It is a little of both. The author seems to have been part of the peace contingent of the Pakistani martial law regime which believed that a military solution would not work in Bangladesh/east Pakistan and that a political solution was

required. So from the perspective of criticizing the strategic foolishness of the Pakistanis, and their unnecessary cruelty in some regards, he is a good objective critic. However he was also one of the authors of operation searchlight. Yet he doesn't comment on any of the cruel excesses which that entailed. He gives us his orders list and tells us what the plan was. But he doesn't bother to tell us why the standard historical accounts of the operation are so much more brutal than what he describes. He is clearly pro martial law and pro Pakistan, so we would expect him to be ok with a certain level of harsh reprisals. But he doesn't acknowledge his role in that at all. And in this sense it was a self serving narrative. I still think it is worth reading though, to get the perspective of an even keeled non fanatic member of the Pakistani military. It is clear they felt isolated and beleaguered in east Pakistan. They felt that the awami league was stirring up trouble in a propagandistic and manipulative and untruthful way in order to advance its own interests. They felt that they along with the Bihari population was under imminent threat of communal violence, which did actually materialize at times. They felt like they're country was being destroyed by a group of self interested political radicals under Indian influence. And it's all true to an extent. Particularly the plight of the Biharis is something which is totally brushed aside by mainstream historical accounts of the war. The big takeaway of the book though, is that mujib should have been neutralized through political negotiations and not through military force. Once Pakistan committed to a military solution to the east Pakistan problem, it had already lost the war.

Tariq Mahmood says

In this short but penchant story, you can read a very emotive account of a patriot Pakistani officer narrating his 2 years of posting just before the start of the India-Pakistan war in East Pakistan. The general has held back no punches, he has blasted all of the army leadership for their weak and indecisive handling of a delicate political situation. For me, the war was won on two levels, on the political front by the Mujib Ur Rehman and his Awami League and on the front by the Indian Army operations. Bhutto had nothing to counter the well thought and laid out 6 points by Awami League. He relied on his simple Roti, Kapra aur Maqan rhetoric. I am beginning to wonder who was more naive electorate here, the West Pakistani or the supposedly simpler Bengalis?

The biggest institution in Pakistan for patriotic indoctrination is the Pakistan Army. That is why Punjabis and Pathans are more patriotic than Sindhis and Baluchis. The only way to increase their patriotism will be to include them in the army.

Maybe the War against the Taliban will force more disparate races to join as the traditional regions see their sons returning in coffins? Already there is an increase in ranks from the central Punjab instead of the traditional Potohar region in the army.

Ather Sheheryar says

waste of time and money

Muhammad Jahangeer Thaheem says

Truly said, what was happening in East Pakistan at that time.

Mansoor Azam says

Another account of tragedy in what was East Pakistan till 1971 by a serving officer of that time. I didn't expect much but had to read it out of my born curiosity of the whole affair. This book promised much but seems to be a hastily written account written in retrospect aimed at saving own face.

Though i must admit the writer didn't give him self too much laurels.

It is a written in good steed one must admit. Gen Khadim has taken into account all point of views and has tried to give a picture of moods and suspicions rampant in the East Pakistan of that time. Sadly, he could have written much more. privy to much information and experience i expected a lot of details even in the arenas of small unit actions and tactical decisions flowing from his office. But that is sadly missing. Military plans, preparedness, actions have only been briefly touched upon.

In the end it seems to be an effort coming out of the need of his inner self. despite the lack of traditional blame game at all corners it looks like an effort by a General to make his end safe. but, having said that, and knowing the General is a gunner and they are known to be keen and silent soldiers. This one has enough to pop the eyes of those who don't expect lips of Gunners moving. this one has moved his pen and scribbled some lines which give you ample picture of the troubles, challenges, apprehensions and problems faced by the Pakistani nation in months preceding the Winter of its discontentment.

P.S its neither a biography nor a military history piece....

Usman Ahmad says

An objective book which does not try to self-justify any of the crimes and atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army. A fresh inclusion the 1971 War literature. Opposed to the books written by other Pakistani Army men, this fully acknowledges the mistakes and is a balanced version of events. A valuable read.

Tahir Hussain says

another mian mithoo.need to enjoy good pakoras and samosa on its paper.

Riaz Ujjan says

Though the book is brief but gives an excellent account of events in east Pakistan which led to the creation of the state of Bangladesh written by an army officer or in other words eye witness of the happenings.

Khalid Khan says

This book gives you a high level view of the situation in East Pakistan before the breakout of full scale war.
