

Valiant freedom fighters of the soil

AUTHOR: COLONEL TOWFICUR RAHMAN (RETD.)

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REVIEWED BY DR. MOHAMMED FARASHUDDIN

OF the few books written in English on the liberation struggle and the war of independence of Bangladesh, some cover either a specific battle of the war in a particular locality or aim at glorification of the contribution of individuals. The Guerillas of Dhaka in 1971

yet left a posh living for uncertain, thornful, but most difficult conditions to accomplish a dangerous mission to fight against a modern, well-equipped Pakistan Army.

"My decision to join the war of liberation to fight the enemy is the best decision I have ever taken, though it was also the hardest one" reflects the author Colonel Towfic 45 years after he and thousand others decided to jump into a war which was the most unequal in military strength but the need of the hour under the "Joi Bangla" rallying point. They saw, hard of and experienced the most humiliating, brutal, barbarous and merciless killing, looting, rape and arson perpetrated by the occupation army of Pakistan on the innocent unarmed civilians of the fifty six percent people of the country. The Book chronicles a reliable, neutral and impersonal yet emotional experience by a 16 year young boy, the heinous genocide unleashed by the Pakistani army in Dhaka, Chittagong and elsewhere on the fateful night following 25th March 1971 as well as the 'janajuddha' the guerilla warfare in particular, leading to the ignominious surrender defeat of that army to the *Mitra Bahini* of Bangladesh and India on the Victory Day, December 16, 1971.

Colonel Towficur Rahman (Retd.) spell bounds his readers into a breathless reading of his valuable addition to the literature on our War of Liberation catapulting them into a state of psychological participation in the struggle triggered by the clarion call of Bangabandhu, "the struggle this time is for our (economic) emancipation, the fighting this time is for our independence."

The book provides a firsthand account of the situation in the then Pakistan in the aftermath of the general election held on 30 December 1970 in which the Awami League under its leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman espousing the cause of Bangalee nationalism captured 167

out of 300 seats in the National Assembly. But the Military Junta refused to hand over power to the leader of the Majority Party, postponed the Assembly session and gave every indication of ruthless suppression of the will of the people. Young Towfic residing with affectionate parents and brothers in *Rashid Building in Chankharpool* used to hear the discussion about the miserable fight of the Bangalees, witnessed the 7th March upsurge and had to bear innumerable pains: The killing of two tender aged shopkeepers, Abul and Karim next door, burning of their shop, brutal murders at the Jagannath Hall, army's insistence of undressing of males to prove they were non-Hindus and so on. Towfic and his two friends Belal and

cherished independence.

The author's humane qualities in describing the warmth of the kishan family at Koroibari village also reveals how much universal mobilization took place within East Pakistan for snatching away the independence from the occupation force devoid of any moral strength. The Book also occasionally opens up the penchant of the young *muktijoddha* Towfic for the tender care of his mother.

The Book written in excellent yet easily understandable English is authored by Colonel Towficur Rahman (Retd.). It is bound to act as an eye opener to many like me who are curious to know to appreciate the sacrifice made by so many for achieving the political independence of

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Kamal thus agonizingly decided to join the Freedom Fighters and had a very invigorating session with Rezaul Karim Manik (BP, Shaheed). They undertook the most hazardously dangerous trip by rickshaw, bus, boat, on foot and running to reach the *Khelaghar* training camp in Agartala, India. Even if the journey to safety was a typical one, the four week training (condensed from six months) on guerilla warfare planning, strategies and operational tactics was the most demanding under extremely adverse living conditions. The respect and admiration with which the author describes the camp commander at the *Khelaghar* training camp, Captain ATM Haider very aptly demonstrate how the likes of Towfic have been totally inspired emotionally and prepared physically to win the struggle for the

Bangladesh towards the establishment of the welfare state in which the deprived would have their smile back in the Sonar Bangla.

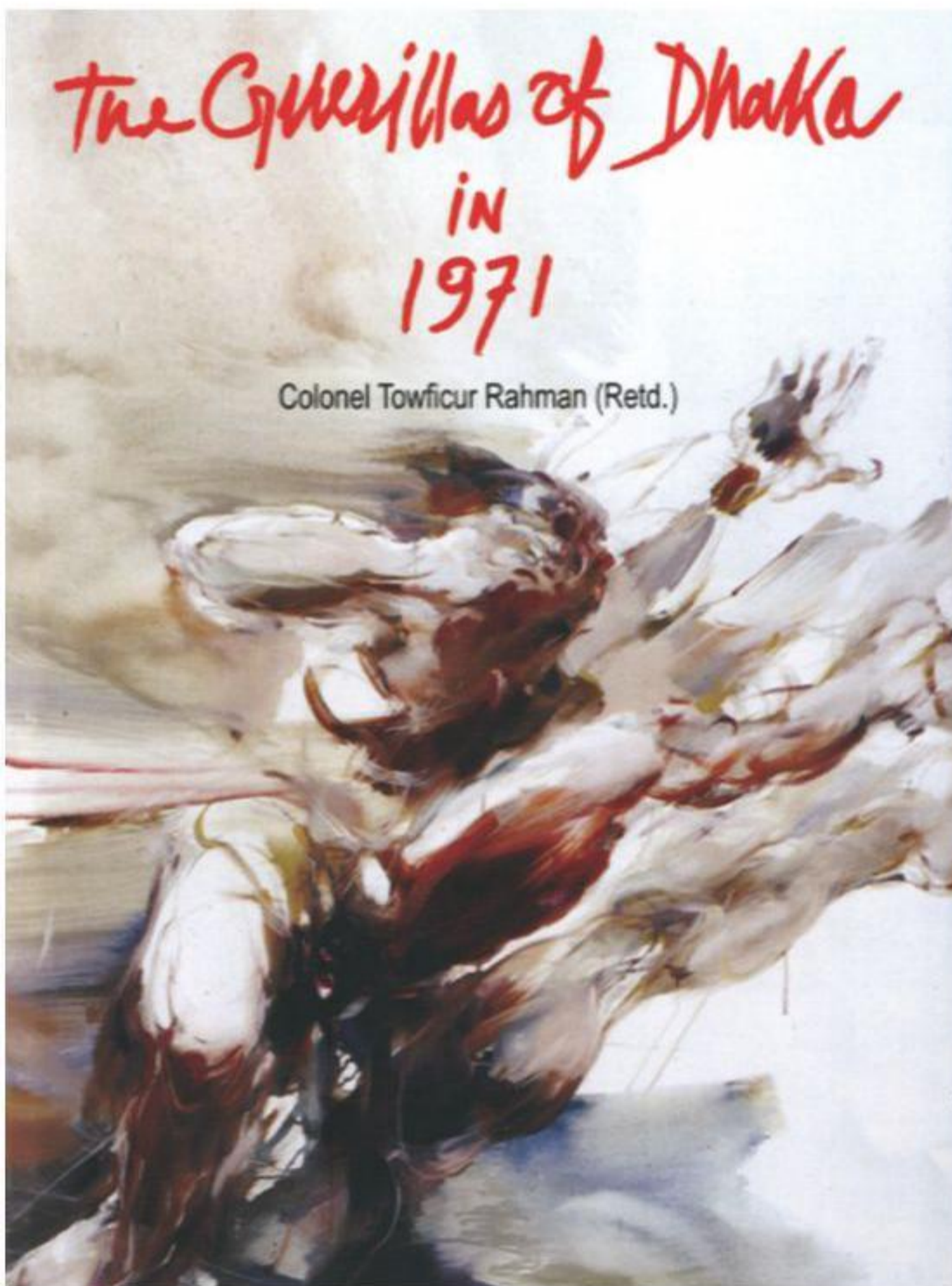
The Guerillas of Dhaka in 1971 also provides a reminder warning about the so called Sixteenth Division freedom fighters the misdeeds of many of whom are breaking hell in the life of people. The Book mistakenly mentions that the vanquished Pakistani Army surrendered their sword and honor to the Indian Army in the then Race Course of Dhaka on 16 December 1971. Actually, the surrender instrument was handed over to and accepted by the Commanders of the joint force of India and Bangladesh.

The author has revealed through the valuable expression in the book his highest level of patriotism for the

dear motherland and demonstrates the usual impatience at the 'slow' pace of solution of all the problems of the country. The Guerillas of Dhaka in 1971 is and should be a valued treasure in the library of every individual wishing well for the country. The readers of the Book would certainly enjoy to learn that celebrity artists such as, Md. Shahabuddin Ahamed, Nasiruddin Ahmed Bachchu, Raisul Islam Asad and Azam Khan contributed to the creation of Bangladesh as guerilla fighters. The Book also confirms that most of the inhabitants of the country under occupation of the barbarous army were freedom fighters in their heart, soul and activities. The kind of Dr. Syed Mahbub Ali, Najibullah Jon, Chairman Ahmed Ali, Hamid Master, Ferdous Najmi, Nazimuddin Ahmed, Ariful Moula, ATM Moniruddin, Mr. and Mrs. Nedu Khan and innumerable others including the caring homemakers contributed, in no less way than the freedom fighters on record, for the liberation of Bangladesh. The Book's description of the guerilla operations such as the DIT Tower bombing, the Muslim Commercial Bank Raid and the Kakrail Petrol Pump blast shows how difficult it has been to plan, organize, maintain time and to actually operate such guerilla attacks. The successes in these operations have been enormously enthralling to the freedom fighters in redoubling their efforts as these have been chilling to the demoralization of the enemy.

No appreciation will be too high for the task made by Colonel Towfic in actually fighting for our independence and also for keeping records for so neatly publishing this treasure, The Guerillas of Dhaka in 1971. For me this review opens the window to reiterate my most profound and respectful salutations to our valiant freedom fighters without whom I would not have been what I am today.

The reviewer is a renowned academician and former Governor of Bangladesh Bank.



(The Book) adroitly, authoritatively and objectively written by Colonel Towficur Rahman (Retd.) is a refreshing departure from the milieu. The book is a major contribution in the "hit, run and win" tactics adopted by the mostly teen aged Mukti Joddhas who were by and large apolitical and