

Pakistani general, near to tears, signs at racecourse ceremony

From Peter O'Loughlin
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Shooting still sounded in the background as, in fading light, crowds surrounded a table set up in front of Dacca racecourse and Lieutenant-General A. A. K. Niazi, looking grim, signed the terms of surrender.

Hundreds of Bengalis shouting *Zindabad* [Long live] were kept back by Indian troops who cordoned off the racecourse. General Niazi was near tears as he moved away, surrounded by cheering *Bangla Desh* people.

Lieutenant-General J. S. Aurora, the Indian commander, a turbaned Sikh, was hoisted on to soldiers' shoulders as dusk fell.

Shouts of *jai Bangla* [Victory to Bengal], fusillades of shots and the cheers of thousands of Bengalis greeted Indian parachute troops as they entered Dacca today. Bengalis mobbed the first jeeps that swept into the city, hugging and kissing the burly Sikhs of the 2nd Parachute Regiment.

They threw garlands of marigolds and bunches of red frangipani. Excited crowds danced on the roofs of buses carrying Indian troops and pitchers of water were brought from homes for the thirsty soldiers.

The Indian troops were commanded by Major-General Gandhary Nagara, whose men had been in action until 8.30 am

local time, when word was passed to him from Pakistan headquarters that it had agreed to a cease-fire. General Nagara met General Niazi at about 10 am.

Colonel Pannu, commander of the 2nd Parachute Regiment, said General Niazi was "full of beans". "We talked soldier to soldier and swapped dirty jokes", he said.

Lieutenant-Colonel B. P. Hihye, an Indian officer who witnessed the surrender ceremony, said that contingents of Pakistan and Indian troops were drawn up near by as the documents were signed.

"Then Aurora stripped Niazi's insignia of rank off his shoulders—it is the custom", he said. "The Pakistan troops who had arms laid them down. Aurora was raised on the shoulders of the crowd and every Indian officer was mobbed by people throwing flowers."

Crowds of Bengalis, many carrying rifles and sten guns, gathered outside the Intercontinental Hotel, declared a neutral zone by the Red Cross, where East Pakistan civil government officials, including Mr A. M. Malik, the Governor, had been hiding for two days.

Excited Bengalis shooting into the air may have provoked a clash between the retreating Pakistani troops and the Indians in front of the hotel in which at least three people, including one Pakistani soldier, were killed.

One American bystander was wounded.

Indian troops had mounted a guard round the hotel to protect the Pakistani officials. Indian and Pakistani troops intermingled in the city and, except for a few incidents, the Pakistan Army accepted surrender stoically.

The first Jeep to come into the city contained Colonel Pannu. He was mobbed by joyous Bengalis as the vehicle pulled up in front of the Intercontinental Hotel. Blood was still wet on the seat beside him.

"I have been ordered to guard this neutral zone to see that no harm comes to those inside", he said.

Dacca had been under virtual siege for the past week. This was ended by the last-minute capitulation by the East Pakistan high command, who agreed unconditionally to India's surrender ultimatum just 10 minutes before it was due to expire.

They had to get the United Nations to relay the message to Delhi as the East Pakistan military communications network had been put out of action.

The Indians moved into the city at about 1.30 pm local time and began to secure important Government buildings. "We are going to get life back to normal so that there will be no disturbance, no damage to Government property, then we shall go home", Colonel Pannu said.—AP.