

# SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

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INDEPENDENT OF ALL GROUPS

## THE VICTIMS

IT is hard for the Western mind to absorb the full dreadfulness of the civil war in East Pakistan. As with Biafra, as even with Vietnam, the drama is almost too painful and at the same time too remote to be fully comprehended. Once again, it seems that the full fury of the latter part of the 20th century has fallen upon one of the poorest and most vulnerable of peoples.

It appears that many thousands have already died in the first hours of the conflict. Nothing else is to be expected when an army turns its force upon a helpless, if irreconcilable, population. The country which was conjured into being by an exercise in political adroitness in 1947 is falling apart amid carnage.

There is a grim historical consistency in this. For the present, at least, the affluent white nations have moved into a period of stability. It is uneasy and threatened stability, no doubt, but it exists.

The brunt of the historical process is now borne by the coloured peoples.

It even seems that Providence is visiting a special harshness upon them in the form of natural disaster. Only a little time ago East Pakistan was ravaged by an unprecedented flood with a terrible toll of life. Now it is swept by a cruel war.

Perhaps out of the present convulsion a more workable political structure in the Indian sub-continent will be born. Whatever happens, the old Pakistan is dead. The rulers are trying to deny that fact by arms, but the attempt cannot be other than tragic folly.

Meanwhile there is little this country can do to lighten the horror. As soon as possible, relief of the suffering millions will become a duty. For the rest, we may feel humbly grateful that our own portion of the globe enjoys the sombre calm of the nuclear stalemate.