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Pakistani bombers 'hit rebel town'

Governor shot

By DAVID LOSHAK in New Delhi

PAKISTAN Air Force planes were reported yesterday to have bombed the East Pakistan town of Comilla as West Pakistan troops tightened their grip in the East wing of the State. At least 10,000 civilians are said to have been killed since the Army was ordered two nights ago to crush Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's independence movement.

The Sheikh, who has proclaimed East Pakistan to be the People's Republic of Bangla Desh (Free Bengal), broadcast a denial that he had been arrested.

Radio Pakistan had claimed his arrest, but the Sheikh said he was "still as free as Bangla Desh". The province would be free "in a day or two", and he urged the people to go underground, reorganise, and attack the invaders.

A clandestine radio message heard in New Delhi said he had set up headquarters at the port of Chittagong, where it was claimed that the Bengalis had won control.

Tanks used

While the Sheikh was denouncing what he described as the wanton killing of innocent people and appealing for world support, a Karachi broadcast contradicted reports of widespread fighting. Dacca, the statement said, was returning to normal.

Lt.-Gen. Tikka Khan, East Pakistan Governor and martial law administrator in the East, was said to have been shot dead when his home in Dacca was attacked. He was directing operations against the Sheikh's forces. Radio reports said his death was "unconfirmed".

Other reports spoke of up to 10,000 unarmed Bengalis being shot down by West Pakistan troops and tanks and artillery being used to wrest control of key centres and installations from the East Pakistanis.

There were severe clashes in Dacca and in nearly all major centres, including Naraguni, Chittagong, Comilla, Rangpur, Khulna and Jessore. Casualties were said to be heaviest at Chittagong.



At Jessore, more than 1,000 Bengalis, armed with spears and poles, were said to have been massacred when they tried to capture the airport.

"Freedom fighters" supporting Sheikh Mujib launched a guerrilla attack on government forces. There was street fighting in many other towns and key bridges, roads and rail installations were blown up.

Dacca Radio, which is controlled by Government forces, continued to broadcast claims that the situation was "under control". It repeated warnings of severe punishment if a new series of stiff martial law decrees were violated.

The truculent, almost savage tones of President Yahya Khan's speech on Friday night, are a sign that the regime has decided to stop at nothing to hold down the East wing.

The past two weeks of constitutional talks now seem to have been little more than a device to buy time to fly in extra troops and supplies. West Pakistan's Army in the east is now about 70,000 strong.

These are tough Punjabi and Baluchi fighting troops, many of whose officers are imbued with a deep racial hatred of the East wing Bengalis. They will not shrink from the most violent methods of repression, whatever the cost in lives.

The Army is in essence an occupying force in a wholly alien and hostile land. There is not a single Bengali who is not howling against Sheikh Mujib. Cut off from its bases and supplies in West Pakistan the Army can have no hope of suppressing the Bengalis indefinitely.

In Islamabad, the Pakistan capital, the Foreign Office called in the British and American Government representatives to complain about B.B.C. and Voice of America coverage of the war, according to Pakistan Radio.

Indian criticism

Sir Cyril Pickard, British High Commissioner, was apparently told that the B.B.C. and other British media had been issuing "unauthenticated and tendentious reports derived from sources known to be hostile to Pakistan".

In the Indian Parliament, Mrs. Gandhi described the military action in East Pakistan as "not merely suppression of a movement, but meeting unarmed people with tanks".

The people of East Pakistan had spoken with almost one voice when they had voted Sheikh Mujib's now-banned Awami League to the Pakistan National Assembly.

India is deeply concerned about the effect of the civil war on the already tense situation in West Bengal and its capital Calcutta, where strong anti-Government feelings could be exploited by disruptive elements. There is also the prospect of thousands more refugees flooding into West Bengal.

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