

CASUALTIES LIKELY TO BE HEAVY

By SIMON DRING

who left Dacca yesterday, 48 hours after the civil war broke out in East Pakistan.

HEAVY civilian casualties can be expected from the Army takeover of East Pakistan. The shelling of the capital, Dacca, has been cold-blooded and indiscriminate although there was almost no sign of armed resistance.

Heavy artillery shook my hotel as the Army moved into the city and I could see buildings burning in the distance.

The sound of machine-gun fire was coming from the direction of the university where the students include extremist elements of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League.

First detainees

It is not yet clear whether there have also been widespread arrests but many observers believe that Sheikh Muib will be one of the first military detainees.

The shelling, which started late on Thursday night, left Dacca and many other towns at least temporarily under Army control by Friday.

There were three hours of unprovoked shooting in Dacca after Government troops had taken control at midnight. They attacked key areas of the city and by morning several buildings were ablaze.

Streets were deserted on Friday but there were scattered outbreaks of small arms fire and shelling during the day as tanks

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and trucks loaded with troops in camouflaged combat dress moved through the capital.

Judging from the clashes in Dacca the number of dead and wounded among civilian populations of important towns will be very high, with light Army losses.

Communications between Dacca and the rest of the province and also the outside world have been severed and it is impossible to tell in Dacca how the occupation is proceeding.

The Army takeover came only hours after the collapse of talks to try to resolve the constitutional crisis.

Army commanders refused to explain what was happening on Thursday, except to say: "We are assuming control."

By 8 p.m. on Thursday it was obvious the crunch was about to come. The number of troops surrounding my hotel, the Intercontinental, were doubled.

All was peaceful until 11 p.m. when a Punjabi artillery captain suddenly came in and said that nobody was to leave.

He said: "I have my orders. I do not know what is happening. All I know is that if you come outside, I will shoot you."

Soon afterwards, scattered firing could be heard although cars were still moving in the streets and people were hurrying home.

The hotel closed the bar and restaurant and tried to send staff home but a curfew prevented them leaving.

No information could be obtained from telephoning embassies, and the editor of an anti-Government paper commented: "The Bengal dream is fading and I expect my paper to close, too."

As the firing in Dacca intensified early on Friday morning, there were reports that Awami League supporters were milling in streets and trying to build barricades. Most of the early shooting was from the airport area.

Mr Zulfikar Bhutto, the West Pakistan political leader, was kept under close surveillance at the hotel until he was flown out of Dacca with his aides on Friday morning, a puzzled and nervous man.

Gen. Tikka Khan, martial law administrator for East Pakistan, said over Dacca Radio on Friday that defiance of the administration had assumed alarming proportions beyond normal control of civilian police and soldiers. Steps had been taken to arrest the situation.

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