

East wing sealed off

By DAVID LOSHAK, in New Delhi

KILLING on a mass scale is under way in East Pakistan, caught in the grip of a vicious civil war, according to all available indications from the province, which is now virtually sealed off from the outside world.

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 Mujib 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

Continued on Back P. Col. 3

Diplomatic sources which still have tenuous radio links with their missions in Dacca, as well as foreign observers who have left the province since fighting began on Friday, say the 70,000 West Pakistan soldiers are showing no mercy in their bid to suppress the Bangla Desh independence movement.

Estimates of the number of Bengalis who have been killed range from 10,000 to 100,000. Whatever the true figure there can be no doubt not only of the Army's determination to impose its will on the province but of the relish and ruthlessness with which it will do so.

Hatred voiced

Many senior West Pakistan officers stationed in Dacca during the two years of President Yahya Khan's martial law régime have openly voiced their hatred of their Bengali compatriots.

The past two, always tense, years have encouraged this bitterness and rancour to smoulder and to grow.

The clandestine "Radio Bangla Desh," thought to be in the isolated tea plantation area in the north of the province last night announced that a provisional government had been set up headed by Major Jia Khan, chief of the Bangla Desh "Liberation Army," since March 25.

The Awami League leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, would "guide" the Government. He was directing the liberation struggle from his revolutionary headquarters in Chittagong, the radio said.

Capture hint

But the wording of the announcement contains a hint that Sheikh Mujib may have been taken prisoner by Government forces as they moved into position on Thursday night before fighting broke out.

In this case the Sheikh, described as "Pakistan's next Prime Minister" by President Yahya last month and as "a traitor" last Friday, may by now have been shot.

Thirty newspaper and television correspondents and cameramen from Britain, America, Australia, West Germany, Japan and other countries, who were rounded up by the Army on Thursday night and flown out of East Pakistan at gunpoint, yesterday spoke of being roughly treated by West Pakistan Army and Air Force officers.

Sir Donald Hock, of the

NINE BENGALIS CHARGED

Nine men were arrested in Birmingham yesterday during a meeting of 7,000 Bengalis called to express solidarity with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Six were charged with threatening behaviour, three with possessing weapons.

CYCLONE HITS COAST

Cyclone Mavis hit the West Australia coastline yesterday with 60 knot winds and heavy rain. Widespread damage was caused about 500 miles north of Perth. — Reuters

East wing sealed off

Australian correspondents, Germany said, had been detained and tortured in Dacca. A British writer, a woman, was beaten and cannot even sleep, and all news documents and private papers confiscated.

When some correspondents protested at this kind of treatment, an air force squadron leader threatened them with a pistol and said: "I have already killed some of my own countrymen. Now I can kill you."

The correspondents were taken into custody on Thursday night, after the breakdown of the constitutional talks between President Yahya and Sheik Mujib, and were locked under armed guard in a room at Dacca airport.

On Friday they were flown to Colombo by special military plane, and then to Karachi.

Victories claimed

With communications now almost entirely cut, the sporadic reports coming from Dacca and elsewhere in East Pakistan cannot be verified.

Sheikh Mujib's clandestine radio has claimed the capture of the key town of Rangpur. It said hundreds of young men surged towards the Army's district headquarters in the town and took it after a bitter fight with West Pakistan troops.

Since then, the radio claimed, all West Pakistan soldiers and border guards had retreated from the district; the radio said thousands of volunteers of Sheikh Mujib's Awami League were now marching on the capital, Dacca.

It also claimed the capture of Army cantonments at Comilla, Jessor, and Khulna by Bangla Desh forces.

According to the radio, West Pakistan forces have resorted to bombing undefended positions held by masses of Bengalis. It said that at least two hospitals, including one at Dacca, had been badly hit.

Helicopters were shelling the heavily populated towns of Comilla and Chittagong, in the south-eastern half of the region. Chittagong was the centre of greatest tension all through the crisis which led to the present fighting.

There is also concern that fighting may easily spread across the border, which is open for many miles. Like India, this could be a disastrous danger if the West Pakistani army adopted a scorched earth policy in a mood of sheer vindictiveness. Quality it does not lack.

Mrs Gandhi told the Indian Parliament on Saturday that India would play whatever part it could in alleviating the distress of the people of East Pakistan.

Despite pressure from many members to show a more positive response to the plight of innocent civil war victims, Mrs Gandhi spoke in cautious and moderate tones. She indicated that India could not openly support a "secessionist movement" in a neighbouring country.

India, she said, had to take into account the national and international repercussions of the crisis. But the Premier made clear that she deplored West Pakistan efforts to suppress the East wing's popular movement by force.

She said the borders with India would remain open for refugees. Her statement was welcomed by Radio Bangla Desh last night.

Following an emotional discussion in the Lok Sabha (Lower House), Pakistan protested to India about interference in its internal affairs. The Pakistan High Commissioner, Mr Hyder, also lodged a complaint about Indian news coverage.

There is no indication of how the estimated 800 British expatriates still in East Pakistan are faring, as the British High Commission in Dacca, along with all foreign missions, has been forbidden to use its transmitter.

But there is no great cause to fear for their safety.

CASUALTIES

By SIMON DRING

Continued from Page 1
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 the

Pretence dropped

The official Government Radio, broadcasting from Dacca, last night dropped its pretence that the situation was "normal" and "under control." It reported that "several thousand" extra troops had been airlifted to Chittagong to quell mass disturbances.

The official radio, as well as Pakistan envoys abroad, repudiated a report on Radio Bangla Desh that the martial law chief in East Pakistan, Lieut-Gen. Tikka Khan, had been killed by a "freedom fighter."

The Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi, Mr Sajjad Hyder, said yesterday Gen. Khan was "very much alive."

But the clandestine radio repeated its claim and said that four aides who were with him were killed also. Reports coming across the border in the Tripura region of north-east India said the general was a victim of a petrol bomb attack in Central Dacca.

Concern in India

The civil war in East Pakistan is causing mounting concern in India. The Indian Army Commander-in-Chief, Gen. S. H. F. J. ("Sam") Manekshaw, rushed to Delhi for consultations at Cabinet level.

India's own 'crisis-ridden' State of West Bengal, still chronically unstable and under President's rule direct from Delhi, borders on East Pakistan. There are fears that the wave of Bengali nationalism sweeping through the eastern half of the former State of Bengal may have serious repercussions on the Indian side.

There are about 100,000 Indian soldiers in West Bengal at present. They were stationed there to maintain order during the General and State elections earlier this month. Their presence now could prove vital to Indian security.

There are fears that conflict could spread to West Bengal in two ways. Feelings of solidarity with fellow Bengalis in East Pakistan could be exploited and whipped up by political agitators.

Significantly, the Marxists in West Bengal have already put forward their own version of Sheikh Mujib's now irrelevant "six points," and are demanding greater autonomy from New Delhi.