

# THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

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135, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

TEL: 01-353 4242. TELEX: 22874/5/6.

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## DIVIDE OR RULE?

TRAGEDY IS UNROLLING in East Pakistan as inexorably as the tidal flood wave in the Bay of Bengal last autumn. The difference is that this time the deaths and the suffering are man-made. It seems a prime example of man's inhumanity to man, made worse by the fact that it could have been avoided—not just in recent months but over the years. Pakistan was an unlikely enough State from the start, but it surely could have been made to work after a fashion. The present situation, in which the West Pakistan Punjabi-based Army has been sent in to hold down by force the 60 or 70 million Bengalis in the East, need never have arisen if more care and attention had been devoted to the needs of the East by former President AYUB KHAN.

But it was not so. To the natural antipathy between the peoples of the two wings was added gross economic, representational and social injustice—inflicted on the East by the West. Bengal earns half Pakistan's total foreign exchange through its jute exports, but over the years four-fifths of military and administrative expenditures and three-quarters of development expenditures have been in the West, with its smaller population. The situation continued uninterrupted, with the lid screwed down, during AYUB's benevolent dictatorship. When the present President YAHYA KHAN began to unscrew the lid with last December's elections, out popped a fully-fledged Bengali nationalism demanding all but complete secession.

Should Gen. YAHYA have acted as he now has? The answer depends on factors at present unknown or unclear. He could be proved justified if the action resulted, against all the odds, in yet producing a unified and peaceful Pakistan. This at the moment looks wildly improbable. The genie of Bengali nationalism and separatism is well and truly out of the bottle. Not all the bayonets from the Punjab will shove it back. Either, therefore, Gen. YAHYA will have somehow to contrive to get back on to the parliamentary negotiating track; or in the long run he will have to see the East go its own way, possibly in some kind of alliance with India or even West Bengal. If by some miracle the constitutional talks could be resumed, it would go its own way anyhow. The difference is that this could be a peaceful outcome, with some advantages still for the West out of a formal unity at the top. The other way, independence would come only after untold bloodshed and with no residual advantage for West Pakistan at all.