

War comes at last to a divided nation

From RALPH BLUMENTHAL
of the New York Times

NEW YORK, March 28. — Civil war between East and West has been a constant spectre in Pakistan.

Separated by 1100 miles of Indian territory, the two parts are bound chiefly by their common religion: their 110 million constitute the world's largest Moslem State.

But in other ways they are as different as the Roman Catholic countries of Spain and Poland.

The Bengalis of East Pakistan are a small, dark people proud of their poets and scholars. Their life in the humid Ganges-Brahmaputra delta revolves around the monsoon — nourished rice crop, their culture is akin to that of the Bengalis of neighboring India.

The Punjabi — dominated West Pakistanis, heavier and lighter-skinned, are considered more martial and stolid. Their culture is rather Middle Eastern and their Urdu language, a Persianised Arabic written right to left, is incomprehensible to the Bengalis.

The West Pakistanis eat grain and meat and generally enjoy a higher degree of industrialisation than their eastern countrymen.

Despite the east's larger population — about 75 million to the west's 55 million — the west has always dominated.

Bengali nationalists have charged that West Pakistan has been as much of a colonial exploiter as was Britain a generation ago.

Figures show wheat and rice prices twice as high in the east as in the west,

although the Bengalis earn on the average only half as much as their western countrymen.

Six times as much electricity is produced in the west, four times as much foreign aid is spent there, three times as many imports are consumed there, twice as much development money is allocated there and nine times as much in defence funds are spent in the west as in the east.

Despite their large population, the Bengalis have only 13 per cent of the electrical power, 25 per cent of the telephones, 20 per cent of the motor vehicles and 15 per cent of the trained secondary school teachers in the country.

Bengali demands for a share in national wealth and resources — such as they are — became enshrined in the programme of their fiery leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a moderate socialist and fervent Bengali nationalist who has been periodically jailed for his role in leading the East towards autonomy.

After Sheikh Mujib won an astounding 98 per cent of the eastern vote for his Awami League last December, he felt he had won not only an absolute majority in the Constitutional Assembly but also a mandate to press his demands for virtual independence from the west — with only national defence and currency in common.

Aware that he would be outvoted in the Assembly, Sheikh Mujib's western rival (Mr. Ali Bhutto) balked at attending the first session, which had been scheduled in Dacca on March 3.

Sheikh Mujib was under pressure from the nationalist forces he has been leading for more than a decade. They would hardly accept compromise now, when they had for the first time the votes to force through their autonomy programme.

President Yahya Khan became the mediator. It was the gruff general from the Punjab, the martial law administrator who took over from the discredited dictator Ayub Khan in 1969, who had called December's elections in the first place. But he stipulated that the "integrity" — presumably unity — of Pakistan was to remain intact.



Sheikh Mujib addresses his supporters shortly before troops from the West moved against the Bengali nationalists.

ITALY WILL BACK SUEZ PIPELINE

ROME, March 28 — Italy yesterday told Egypt it was prepared to back the projected Suez to Alexandria oil pipeline to the extent of \$25 million.

The Italian Foreign Minister (Mr. Moro) made the offer to Egypt's Foreign Minister (Mr. Riad) during talks in Rome. Later, Mr. Riad flew to Pisa for talks with visiting President Tito of Yugoslavia.

The Suez - Alexandria pipeline project has already received a pledge of financial support from Britain, and Egyptian sources said France and West Germany were expected to announce support shortly.

During their lengthy discussions, the two Foreign Ministers discussed the situation in the Middle East, with particular reference to the Suez Canal, the sources said.

Mr. Moro informed Mr. Riad of the results of his recent contacts with the Israeli and American Governments, and said he believed the American attitude to the Middle East question was undergoing a change.

Mr. Riad replied that Egypt was anxious to see

this shift in attitude translated into action.

He said Egypt was grateful to the Italian Government for its efforts through diplomatic channels towards a peace settlement, the sources added.

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Still missing, 26 years later

MUNICH, Mar. 28. — More than one million German soldiers are still officially listed as missing, 26 years after the end of World War

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General has climbed from
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