

Starvation threat to E. Pakistan

By DAVID LOSHAK in Calcutta

STARVATION faces tens of thousands of East Pakistan villagers whose links with the outside world and their sources of supply have been cut off by the civil war that has raged for the past ten days.

MISSILES EMBOLDEN EGYPT

By JOHN BULLOCH
in Beirut

EGYPT'S new-found diplomatic confidence is based on a massive Russian build-up of missiles, men and materials, according to intelligence assessments in Beirut.

A Western diplomat said yesterday: "Egypt believes that Russia is prepared to play an active role if everything else fails. The Russians have been pouring in arms, faster than they did during the first cease-fire period, and Egypt now believes it is speaking from a position of increasing strength."

DEFENSIVE COMPLEX

The number of S.A.M. 3 ground-to-air missiles is thought to have trebled from 30 to 90. Originally the S.A.M. 3s, effective against low-flying planes trying to sneak in under a radar screen, were deployed only along the Suez Canal. Now a whole new defensive complex has been set up along the vulnerable Nile Valley between Cairo and Aswan.

More than 100 improved SAM 2 Missiles have been installed along the canal and on Egypt's Mediterranean coastline over the past month. Some 40 new planes have been delivered, as well as tanks, amphibious equipment

Although severely hampered by the difficult terrain and the hostility of the Bengal people, the West Pakistan Army is near, by sheer brute force, to winning the upper hand.

It is in firm control of Dacca and the five other main cantonments of the province, Rangpur, Jessore, Khulna, Comilla and Chittagong.

All it now needs is replenished supplies of food, fuel and ammunition, brought by air, to move out from the cantonment where it is impregably entrenched, to wipe out pockets of armed resistance at will.

'People's war'

The Army has already found that while it may be able to impose itself on the towns for the time being, it cannot possibly subdue the countryside. As one Bengali put it: "This is a people's war. It is the Army versus every Bengali. The Army cannot win."

Whatever the Army's successes in the short-term, this is almost certainly true in the long run. No observers here consider that the Army, however strong, can permanently hold down East Pakistan's 75 million people.

By launching a terror campaign in the name of Pakistan's unity, President Yahya Khan has brought not order but anarchy to the Eastern wing. There is no comfort in this for the Bengalis.

Chaos prevails

They are united to a man against the West Pakistan occupying force, but chaos prevails. Nearly all surface communications are cut, with roads blocked, bridges destroyed and rivers unsafe.

Vital supplies are running out fast and in many places are already exhausted. Although this has hit the Army, too, the Army can probably be relieved.

But desperate resistance fighters have had to come across the open border to their former foes in India's West Bengal for help. Sympathetic, though unofficial, organisations in Calcutta have given food, medicines and arms.

Supplies held up

The East Pakistan resistance movement has made Indian money an acceptable currency in its area to improve the flow of vital supplies. But with all normal supply lines ruinously disrupted, many thousands of people face a desperate situation.

So although the Army does not control the countryside, a region the size of England, it is too simple by far to say that the resistance forces are in charge.

Localities are almost isolated except for rudimentary telephone and minor road links. This has turned each small area into the local centre of power of whoever has clawed his way through the chaos to supremacy.