

Bloodbath in Bengal

Washington's persistent silence on recent events in Pakistan becomes increasingly incomprehensible in the light of mounting eye-witness evidence that the Pakistani Army has engaged in indiscriminate slaughter of civilians and the selective elimination of leadership groups in the separatist state of East Bengal.

A State Department spokesman conceded yesterday that "we would be concerned if American weapons were used in circumstances such as these." But he insisted the United States has no first-hand knowledge that such is the case. This is sophistry. Only last month the Secretary of State, in his annual foreign policy report, noted that this country had agreed to sell additional equipment to the Pakistanis "for their largely U.S.-equipped army."

On any basis, the United States would have a humanitarian duty to speak out against the bloodbath in Bengal, as the Soviet Union already has done. Washington, as Pakistan's chief arms supplier, has a double obligation: to declare its disapproval of the tactics employed and to make clear that no additional American arms—including spare parts—will be sent to Pakistan until this savage repression in the East is stopped.

America's own interests call for it to do everything possible to help bring a speedy end to a civil conflict that could touch off a chain reaction of communal strife throughout the Indian subcontinent, with grave international implications.

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