Rhetoric and reality

...Where, after three weeks of mess, bloodshed, do the military rulers of Pakistan now stand? Superficially they prosper. Bangla Desh's bands of "liberating fighters" have never coped and will never cope with the Pakistani Army in force. That force is being deployed to flatten unrest. Yahya Khan will soon have most cities and towns on a tight rein. He will also have all the Chinese spare parts, overflying rights, and hire purchase rhetoric he can take. For the moment the Awami League "militants" are dead, incarcerated, or negligible. Pakistan is cowed but united.

Yet the true balance-sheet is very different. Perhaps (ideally and even at some cost) Pakistan is more secure than before. The conventional martial law can maintain that state, and if famine saves revolt, bring smouldering servility. But Yahya must be forced to take a wider view. Maybe a coordinated Bengali resistance movement will need years to organise, but in the meantime Bangladesh will remain one of the most populous people on earth, always simmering in crowds, always ready to overwhelm and slaughter patrols or lone Punjabi soldiers. The province—head for head—provides a majority of Pakistanis who have to be held down by tanks and planes and the gunpowder fines of terrorisation. To return, as in any prophecy can be seen. There is no decent hope of passing the buck to some civilian regime since virtually every civilian politician—bar the ancient, shaken, isolated, Yahya, indecisively at his announcer last December. Collaborators with Islamabad will have no democratic justification; they will not be able to appear in public without peril.

The Eastern prospect, in short, is long, weary gloom—economisation, stagnation, revolution, murder, the slow growth of extremism. Even Chinese friendship has a touch of poison in the embrace. Peking may care little if Maoist Bengalis like Mukti Bahini fail at least as the wrong end of Yahya's bayonets: anything to worst the pro-American Sheikh Mujib. But once the Awami League is defeated, East Pakistan is given over to wild men of rebellion, then only the most stupid of generals will be surprised to find

The Barbican: a heartless City?

Given the penny-pinching spirit of the times it is not impossible that the City of London will back out of its Barbican Arts Centre project at the last moment. The Court of Common Council tomorrow has to decide whether to go ahead with the scheme or to adopt one of a number of suggested alternatives inspired by narrowly commercial considerations. To abandon the Arts Centre at this stage would be to convert the whole of the Barbican project into a nightmare planner's folly—a supposedly unified concept deprived of its heart.

As a twentieth-century city centre development, the Barbican scheme is potentially worthy of London—darving, imaginative, and exploiting contemporary building technology to the full. But the intention is that the building will work as well as work there. The falling of the City of London now is that it is dead at night. It will remain dead at night...