



United Press International

AFTER CLASH WITH GOVERNMENT TROOPS: East Pakistani resistance fighters lie among weapons and ammunition

Hours of Terror for a Trapped Bengali Officer

By **SYDNEY H. SCHANBERG**
Special to The New York Times

AGARTALA, India, April 13 —On the night of March 25, Dabir recalls, he and the two other East Pakistani officers in the 53d Field Artillery Regiment were standing outside when they heard their commander tell the West Pakistani officers he had summoned to his office:

"All of you go now to the city, and by morning I want to see the whole of Comilla filled with corpses. If any officer hesitates to do so, I'll have no mercy on him."

Late in the afternoon of March 30, Dabir says, after five days of house arrest for himself and the two other Bengali officers, the West Pakistanis sent an officer to their room to execute them—but Dabir, wounded, escaped by feigning death.

He has now joined the forces fighting for the independence of Bangla Desh, or Bengal Nation, as the Bengali population has named East Pakistan.

Killing Their Comrades

Dabir's experience was apparently no exception. All over East Pakistan—according to Western evacuees, and Bengali soldiers and refugees—West Pakistanis, who dominate the armed forces, were killing their East Pakistani comrades in uniform to deny the independence movement a cadre of military leaders. The sources report that the families of many Bengali officers were also rounded up and killed.

The breakdown of the code of the soldier—officers and troops killing men with whom they had fought—perhaps depicts as well as any other facet of this conflict the depth of the racial hatred felt by the West Pakistanis, who are Punjabis and Pathans, for the 75 million Bengalis of East Pakistan.

The killing of Bengali soldiers began on the night that the army launched its effort to try to crush the independence movement.

Dabir, a slightly built second lieutenant who is 20 years old and unmarried, told his story of that night and the days that followed to this correspondent at a post in the eastern sector of East Pakistan.

Dabir is not his real name; he asked that a pseudonym be used on the chance that some members of his family—his parents, a brother and three sisters—might still be alive.

Given Office Duties

Talking in a soft, almost unemotional voice, he gave this account:

After the West Pakistani officers left the commander's office and headed for the armory to get their weapons, the three unarmed Bengali officers were called in and placed under what amounted to house arrest, although the commander said they were being given office duties.

That night, which they were made to spend in the room next to the commander's, Dabir could not sleep. At 1 A.M. seven or eight shots were fired somewhere in the compound.

During the next three days, as Dabir and the two others, both captains, answered telephones and shuffled papers under the watch of sentries, they heard the sounds of machine-gun, small-arms and artillery fire in the distance.

Through a window they saw the 60 Bengali soldiers of the regiment being taken off behind a building, their hands in the air, by West Pakistani troops. Then the

three heard a sustained burst of firing and assumed that the Bengalis had been killed.

All pretense was dropped on March 29 and the three officers were locked in a room together. They passed the night in fear.

On the afternoon of the 30th a West Pakistani officer walked up to the door and broke the glass with the barrel of a submachine gun.

One Bengali captain fell to his knees and begged for mercy. The answer was a burst of fire. The West Pakistani then fired a second burst into the other captain.

Dabir pressed himself against the wall next to the door. The West Pakistani tried the locked door, cursed and went away for the key.

Dabir threw himself under his cot and covered his head with his hands. The man returned. "I shrieked," Dabir said. "He fired. I felt a bullet hit me. I made a noise as if I was dying. He stopped firing, thinking I was dead, and went away."

Poked and Prodded

One bullet had struck Dabir's right wrist, another had grazed his cheek and a third had ripped his shirt up the back. He rubbed blood from his wrist over his face and held his breath when other officers returned to make sure all three were dead.

The West Pakistanis poked and prodded until they were satisfied. For the next two and a half hours soldiers kept coming into the room to view the spectacle. A Punjabi sergeant kicked the bodies of the two captains. Each time Dabir desperately held his breath.

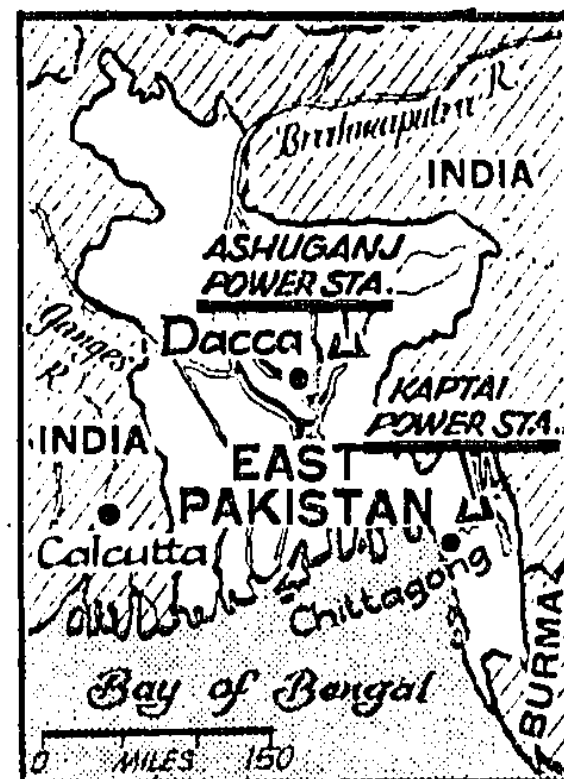
"Time passed," Dabir continued. "The blood dried and

flies gathered on my wound. The smell was bad."

After seven hours Dabir left by the window and dropped four feet to the ground. A sentry heard him and began firing, but it was dark and the shots went wild. Other soldiers in the compound also opened fire, but Dabir made it past the last sentry post, crawled through a rice paddy, swam across a small river and escaped. The next day a country doctor removed the bullet from his wrist and bandaged him.

Dabir looks like a boy—he weighs only 120 pounds—but his manner leaves no doubt that he is fully grown now, only three months after graduating fourth in his class from the military academy at Kakul, in West Pakistan.

His hatred for the West Pakistanis is intense but controlled. "Without any reason they have killed us," he said. "They have compelled us to stand against them."



The New York Times April 17, 1971
Power stations, shown by underlines, were said to be targets of saboteurs.