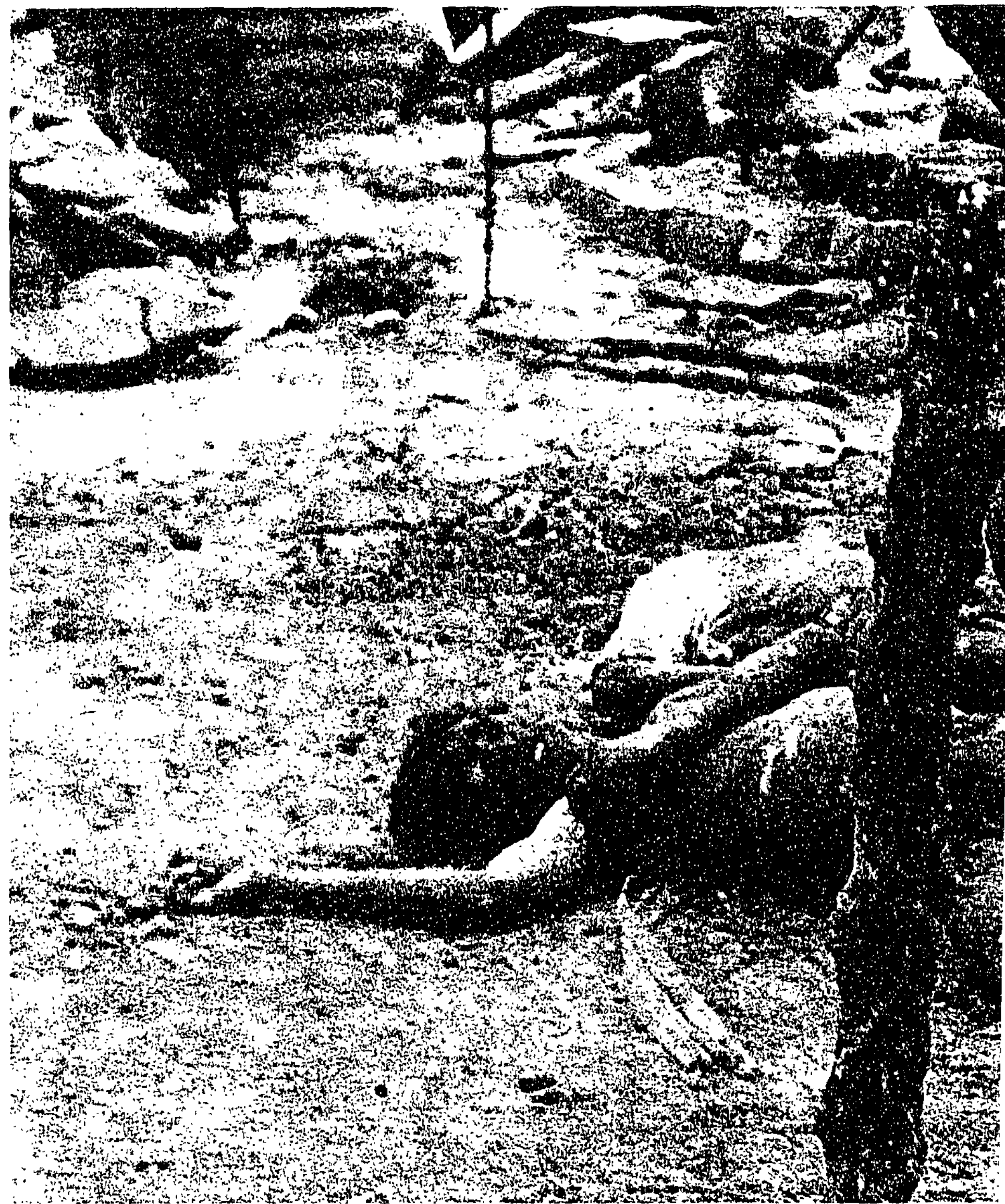


The Political Tidal Wave That Struck East Pakistan

By PEGGY DURDIN



Victims. The bodies of East Pakistani refugees caught, while sleeping, by

IT would be professionally gratifying but inaccurate to say today that on Feb. 28 when our plane landed routinely on the airfield of East Pakistan's capital city, Dacca, we had premonitions of the gripping, tragic human and political drama that was to be played out in its sprawling, disheveled precincts during the succeeding weeks.

We had come—my husband as a New York Times correspondent and I as a magazine writer on Asian affairs—to cover the meeting scheduled for March 3 of Pakistan's first freely elected National Assembly. Its task was to adopt a Constitution and end an era of military rule with the inauguration of a democratic system of government.

Everything, in fact, seemed peaceful and normal. Customs officials casually passed our baggage. Then we drove, in the crisp air and bright subtropical sun of Dacca's pleasant winter weather, past jerry-built buildings and tiny shops, down broad streets where dark-skinned, slender, white-clothed Bengalis strolled about their business and little motorized three-wheeled taxis, gay with flower-patterned tops, brightened the traffic.

In the Intercontinental Hotel, guests (including a large group of Japanese on their way to scale a Himalayan peak in Nepal) were enjoying a relaxed Sunday, lying by the swimming pool, chatting, drinking beer and buying curios in the lobby.

PEGGY DURDIN, who was born in China of missionary parents, has spent most of her life in Asia as a teacher and writer. She was recently permitted entry to mainland China, where her husband, Tillman Durdin of The Times, has been reporting since mid-April.

Catalyst. Sheik Mujib is surrounded by Bengali admirers in early March. A gentle militant, he touched off an East Pakistani independence movement that brought ferocious retaliation from the central Government. On March 26, he surrendered to West Pakistani troops, but his followers fight on.



West Pakistani flame throwers lie on the ground of the Dacca race course. Such scenes of carnage became common as civil war engulfed East Pakistan.

Uptown, the city—an agglomeration of scattered, nondescript modern buildings, crumbling old colonial edifices from British days and teeming, incredibly filthy, and dilapidated shack areas—looked relaxed. Even on Sunday Dacca's air was business-as-usual; its population of more than a million busily spilled through the streets, shopping, trading, bargaining, strolling, eating and visiting.

BUT the very next day Dacca's air of preoccupation with routine, commonplace activities was shattered. Suddenly Pakistan President Yahya Kahn, 1,200 miles away across Indian territory in the national capital of Islamabad, announced the indefinite postponement of the Assembly, which Bengalis of the East had hoped would be their means to fulfilling long-cherished aspirations for self-rule and for freedom from the

exploitative domination they had long suffered from the vested interests of West Pakistan and the West Pakistan-run national Government. Almost within minutes of the broadcast announcement, and for weeks afterward, the volatile, bitter, angry Bengalis, from every walk of life, and including women, surged in enormous, shouting processions and demonstrations through the streets to show their resentment and assert their claim to self-determination.

Guided and inspired by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a tall graying 53-year-old leader blending an attractive gentleness with a stubborn devotion to Bengali rights, the people's movement swelled steadily, with disciplined, complete civil disobedience to Islamabad's authority and an amazing, voluntary, near-universal submission to an impromptu administration of their own.

But the impasse between the freedom the Bengalis were determined to achieve and the concessions the vested interests of the West and Pakistan's military dictator-president were prepared to give finally culminated in one of the bloodiest slaughters of modern times, as Pakistan's armed forces moved with total ruthlessness to reassert Islamabad's authority.

THE roots of this tragedy are in geography, history and the nature of man. East Pakistan is a part of the subtropical eastern region of the Indian subcontinent, an arc of river-laced flatlands extending several hundreds of miles inland from the Bay of Bengal. There are 110 million Bengalis in the region, 75 million of them in East Pakistan, the rest in India.

A short, small-boned, wiry, dark,

intense and high-spirited people, the Bengalis are ethnically and culturally distinctive. Talented in music and art, they have their own language and a notable body of poetry, novels, essays and drama written in their own script. Among internationally celebrated Bengali literary figures are the Moslem poet Nazrul Islam and the philosopher Rabindranath Tagore.

Bengalis are also distinctive for their poverty, one of the worst in the world, more terrible, a European diplomat in Dacca said to me with real pain and shock, than he had seen during his service in black Africa. Nature itself is not kind to the Bengalis. Except for jungled hills in the southeast, East Pakistan is a delta cut into fragments by the great, Himalayan-fed Brahmaputra and Ganges Rivers and their myriad, meandering, shifting subsidiary chan-

(Continued on Page 88)

East Pakistan

(Continued from Page 25)

nels, pouring oceans of water into the area. In addition, for five months of the year, the area is so heavily drenched by monsoon downpours that it becomes a lake whereon tiny boats ply between marooned clumps of bleak, thatch-roofed huts. Periodically, terrible hurricanes and devastating wind-driven tides inundate the coastal regions. Even in dry seasons, transportation is mostly by boat; roads are poor, bridges lacking.

East Pakistan has few mineral resources and little industry; income comes mainly from exports of jute, tea and tobacco, which cannot grow well in the monsoon months, and fish and timber. Food production is so inadequate that millions of tons of rice and wheat must be imported from the outside every year to prevent, not mere malnutrition, but widespread starvation. For some time much of this has been coming from United States aid shipments.

Per capita income is computed to be \$30 a year, a figure so low that many economists refuse to believe it, arbitrarily raising it to \$50 on the grounds that there must be some mistake in available data. Only 15 per cent of the inhabitants are literate.

Already the world's most densely populated overwhelmingly rural region, East Pakistan is about the size of New York plus Connecticut, but with huge, vacant tracts of deltaic, marshy forests (the Sundarbans), the habitat of the famous Bengal tiger. Yet East Pakistan has a population growth of more than 3 per cent. If birth control continues as ineffective as at present, it is estimated that by the year 2000 East Pakistan will have more than 100 million people in an area of only 55,000 square miles.

Nor has history treated kindly this benighted land. As part of Bengal, it was harshly ruled and plundered by Moslem conquerors from the 13th to the middle of the 18th century. They converted the inhabitants to Islam. Then, in the latter half of the 18th century, the British in India made Bengal one of the first areas of extensive up-country penetration and eventually used it as their base for the conquest of all of northern India. But from British times,

Moslem East Bengal, the present-day East Pakistan, always remained a relatively neglected, backward hinterland for the great port of Calcutta. In the early 20th century the area prefigured its attitude of today by agitating to be separated from the western half of Bengal and made a separate province.

Faithful to their Islamic heritage, the East Bengalis were ardent supporters of Pakistan when, in 1947, it was carved out of what had been British India as a national homeland for Moslems of the subcontinent. The eastern part of Bangla Desh (Bengal Homeland) became East Pakistan, the most populous of the five provinces of the bifurcated new nation.

But East Pakistanis were soon dismayed and dissatisfied to find themselves discriminated against and exploited by better-developed, more-prosperous West Pakistan, home of 55-million Urdu-speaking Punjabis. One of the East Pakistanis' first shocks came when no less a personage than the exalted Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, declared that they should give up their native language and adopt the Urdu used in the West. It was only after years of riots and demonstrations that Bengali was given the same status as Urdu as a national language.

But language was only one of the differences between the Moslems of the East and the Moslems of the West. The Easterners were rice eaters with a flexible, light-hearted temperament like the peoples of Southeast Asia; the Westerners dour, rigid wheat-eaters who looked to the Middle East. Easterners were more naturally democratic, Westerners more adjusted to autocratic and military rule. Easterners were more liberal Moslems and preferred a secular state; Westerners, more fundamentalist and insistent upon reinforcing Islamic doctrine and attitudes with state authority. Purdah for women was far more common in the West than in the East. In the West the claim to Moslem-inhabited Kashmir, seized, except for certain mountain areas, by India at the time of partition, was a passionate cause motivating deep bitterness toward India; the East regarded the Kashmir claim with relative indifference and regretted the cutoff of trade and

cultural relations with India caused by strained Indo-Pakistani relations.

For many years East Pakistanis earned most of the nation's foreign exchange with their exports, only to find the proceeds used to build up industries in the West, which exported inferior consumer items at higher than world prices to the East under the protection of tariffs and exchange controls. Most big Pakistan state development projects—the dams, irrigation canals, power stations, land reclamation schemes, basic industries and even the expensive, grandiose national capital in Islamabad—went to the West. Most defense establishments with their enormous expenditure were located in the West; less than 10 per cent of the military personnel for the armed forces was recruited in the East. The West got the biggest bite from foreign aid and East Pakistanis found that most of what new enterprises did locate in their area consisted of branch factories, banks, insurance companies and trading firms run by entrepreneurs of the West transmitting their profits to head offices in Karachi and Lahore.

"We are only a colony and a market," became the lament in East Pakistan.

During the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war, East Pakistanis were shocked to find most of the national forces defending the West and few allotted to block India from marching into the East. More embittering still, when cyclone winds and tidal waves devastated much of East Pakistan last November, killing up to half a million people in one of the worst disasters of all time, little aid came from West Pakistan and less sympathy. Foreign countries were the first to help, and in the end provided most of the relief.

PARALLEL with the development of East Pakistan's disillusionment and bitterness over the years was the career of the country boy named Mujibur Rahman (Sheik is a hereditary title passed down from Middle East ancestors of long ago). One of six children of a prosperous land-owning father and a devoutly Moslem home - and - family - centered mother, Mujib was born in the East Bengal village of Tungipara. His precocious education, interrupted by three years of glaucoma necessitating operations on both eyes, was at a nineteen-twentieths mission school where he showed no special aptitude for book learning but was liked by both teachers





LAND OF AGONY: Neither nature nor history has been kind to East Pakistan. Above, villagers wade through receding tidal waters after last fall's cyclone, which took half a million lives. Below, refugees from this spring's police action by West Pakistani troops, which has been compared in barbarity with the Mogul invasions of the 15th and 16th centuries.



and fellow students for his ability to get along with people and for his skill in sports.

But since the subcontinent was already agitating for an end to British rule and the Moslems for an end to Hindu domination, Mujib at this early age became interested in the politics of independence and Moslem rights. As a teenager he spent the first of what were to be many periods in jail. He was held for a week for showing his nationalistic sentiments by throwing stones at a British police station. This incarceration, he is quoted as saying, "ended my boyhood."

He became still more deeply involved in nationalistic and anti-Hindu politics when he went to Calcutta at the age of 22 for liberal arts study at Islamia College. He became an organizer of student activities and a campaigner in local elections as a member of the new Moslem League. At this time he was described as "intense, warm, gregarious, not particularly studious and obsessed with politics," adjectives generally applicable to him today. The intensity is hidden behind a relaxed manner, a soft voice even when enunciating basic political convictions, a twinkle and a quizzical smile—except when he is completely capturing an audience with an impassioned speech.

After graduating from Islamia, he entered the University of Dacca in 1947 to study law at his father's request.

When the subcontinent that year achieved independence from Britain as two separate nations, India and Pakistan, Mujib felt that both nationalistic and Islamic aims had been accomplished. He quickly found a new focus for his political activity—in agitation against what he soon concluded was unjust treatment of East Pakistan within the union with the West. He resigned from the Moslem League and joined nationalistic Bengalis in opposition to Jinnah's effort to make Urdu the national language of the new state. His participation in the so-called "language movement" and in strikes and illegal agitation brought him a brief jail term in 1948 and a three-year sentence in 1949. He was expelled from the university, without his law degree.

Then victory was won on the language issue and Bengali made coequal with Urdu as a national language. With seemingly better prospects in view for the East, Mujib, after finishing his prison term, settled with his wife (he had married when still in his teens) and children in a big, nondescript, two-story house in the Dhanmondi district of Dacca that he has occupied ever since. He envisaged a future of more conventional public activity. He had become a founder and important member of the new East Pakistani party, the Awami (People's) League and as a League candidate was elected to the provincial

Assembly. He was made a minister, went with a delegation on a trip to Communist China, toured Europe, including Russia, and paid a visit to the United States. Named a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, he helped draft the 1956 Constitution.

BUT when Field Marshal Ayub Khan established, in 1958, a military dictatorship which later evolved into an authoritarian "guided democracy," vested interests in the West increased their domination over and exploitation of the East, causing Mujib to return to his old anti-Establishment role. As an Awami League leader, he became a spokesman for political democracy and fair treatment for the East. His activities brought him two jail terms, a year and a half in 1958-59 and six months in 1962.

But when free he continued his political activity, tirelessly touring the province and displaying qualities that Bengalis, many Europeans and some of the more discerning West Pakistanis who have observed him attribute to him today. As a Dacca student leader expressed it recently: "He knew and felt the *nari* [pulse] of the people." Totally unimpressed by wealth or status, he showed an obviously sincere devotion to the people. He treated every Bengali he met, however poor or humble, as a human being worthy of care, help and respect, never forgetting his name and his family circumstances. The Bengalis, in return, trusted him and believed in his honesty, selflessness, courage and his willingness to sacrifice himself for them.

When the 22-day, 1965 Pakistan-India war found the Pakistan Government protecting the West and not the East, Mujib and his friends became convinced the East could hope for nothing under Pakistan as then constituted. The Awami League announced the now-famous six-point program calling for wide autonomy for Pakistan's provinces.

Marshal Ayub found Sheikh Mujib's campaigning for the six points intolerable and arrested him in May, 1966, on charges — later found to be trumped up—of participation with some army officers and Indians in a plot to make East Pakistan independent. Public opinion became so inflamed as the so-called Agartala Conspiracy Case went through protracted court hearings that by 1968 the East was in a state of virtual revolt. Its massive opposition to the Ayub regime merged

into a similar upsurge in the West, causing Marshal Ayub to release Mujib, resign and turn the Government over to military control under the armed-forces commander, Gen. Agha Mohammad Yahya Kahn. A million cheering people turned out in Dacca to welcome Mujib from prison, and he was borne through the streets on a platform like an emperor. He had been, on this occasion, more than two years in military and civilian jails, part of the time in solitary confinement.

When the 1970 Assembly elections came along, Sheikh Mujib's popularity was translated into an overwhelming vote for candidates of the Awami League, of which he was now head. The League won 167 out of the 169 seats assigned to East Pakistan, more than half the total of 313 for the whole country. The League made little effort to win seats in the West.

By the time of this March's constitutional crisis, Sheikh Mujib's popularity had reached a peak. For an ordinary Bengali just to touch his clothes was a good talisman. His word had become law. Yet, operating from his house in Dhanmondi, he remained friendly and approachable, every day seeing scores of people singly and in groups.

TALL for a Bengali—5 feet 11—he has a heavy shock of slightly graying hair, alert, expressive black eyes, and a well-groomed mustache. He often donned the wrap-around skirt or lungi of the common man in the East, but usually wore a loose black vest over billowing white cotton pantaloons and a long-sleeved, pyjama-style shirt which is traditional dress-up wear in East Pakistan.

His eyes are weak as a result of the glaucoma attack in youth and he has to wear glasses. An inveterate pipe-smoker, he likes foreign makes but insists his pipes are about the only non-Bengali thing that he uses.

Despite the hectic times in March his whole family—his wife, three sons and two daughters — somehow managed to share his house with the milling groups and individuals constantly in and outside it. "I once liked to garden," Sheikh Mujib observed ruefully during one visit, "but as you can see the people have taken over."

He also once liked to read—Tagore and Bernard Shaw are favorite authors—but had to drop this, too. His liking for Tagore is indicative of the fact that he is not an intoler-

ant, fundamentalist Moslem. He exalts the culture of the Bengalis, be they the Hindu Bengalis who choose to be in India or the Moslem Bengalis of East Pakistan. He is opposed to religious states and believes in secular, democratic regimes and Socialist policies.

Warm-hearted and generous, he is known as an individual who is likely to turn out his pockets and give whatever he has to any unfortunate who approaches him. Close associates do not rate him as an intellectual or particularly competent in sorting out complicated problems. He seems to lack the domineering quality that a really great leader seems to need, though those who know him claim that while he readily listens to advice he makes the decisions himself in the end.

East Pakistan's and Sheik Mujib's aspirations became passionately enshrined in the six-point program worked out by the Awami League in 1966, the year after the war with India had stirred the East's resentments and distrust of the West to a new pitch. Specifically, the six points provided for a federal, parliamentary government that would leave very limited powers with the center. The national Government would be responsible only for defense and foreign affairs, the latter restricted by certain provincial rights. There would be two separate, freely convertible currencies, one for East and one for West Pakistan or, if a common national currency, a system that would give East and West the right to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one to another. The provinces would collect taxes, sharing out an agreed proportion for the support of the central Government. They would also control their foreign-exchange earnings and foreign aid and maintain their own militia for provincial security.

When President Yahya Khan called for the 1970 Assembly election, Sheik Mujib and his Awami League won over the majority of the voters with both the six-point program and a promise of extensive socialization of the economy. The next largest party, the Pakistan People's party of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, won 83 seats entirely in the West on a platform that was also socialistic but without provisions for provincial autonomy.

Mr. Bhutto, a smooth, nimble-witted, ambitious lawyer and wealthy landowner, formerly foreign minister in the

"guided-democracy" regime of Field Marshal Ayub Khan that preceded the Yahya Government and a long-time friend and drinking crony of the President, charged the Awami League program would lead to the disintegration of Pakistan. He insisted that he and Sheik Mujib should agree on basic points for a constitution and other arrangements for sharing power acceptable to both before the Assembly met.

Four days before the scheduled Assembly session he said that the meeting should be postponed to allow for these prior agreements, or else the 120-day time limit set for adopting a constitution should be lifted to permit prolonged, indefinite consideration of constitutional issues. If his demands were not agreed to, he threatened to call for strikes and large-scale civil disobedience in West Pakistan.

President Yahya Khan's indefinite postponement order in effect bowed to Mr. Bhutto's demands. To nationalistic East Bengalis it looked like a blockage, dictated indirectly by Mr. Bhutto, of their hopes for the national system and the autonomy that their majority votes would automatically have given them if the Assembly had met on schedule.

As Dacca erupted with angry demonstrators shouting slogans against the President and Mr. Bhutto and chanting "Joi Bangla" ("Hail Bengal") and "Sadhin Bangla" ("Independent Bengal"), Sheik Mujib on March 2 proclaimed a five-day, provincewide general strike; it stopped work everywhere, including all Government offices, closed every shop and halted all mechanical transport, including bicycles.

Dacca became a city of eerie quiet except for the mass meetings held day after day in open places and the parades of chanting demonstrators. Since the only way to get around was on foot, my husband and I daily walked 10 to 20 miles through the wide, trafficless streets, past the shuttered shops and empty markets. We were viewing one of the most extraordinary displays ever to occur anywhere of virtual universal voluntary compliance with the directives of a leader with no machinery for their enforcement except persuasion by little squads of patrolling Awami Leaguers, and the mutual trust and shared convictions of himself and the Bengali people.

"Gandhi at the height of his popularity during the struggle against British rule in India was never able to get more than 1 or 2 per cent of Govern-

ment workers to go out on strike," a member of the Indian diplomatic mission in Dacca observed. "Here everybody has quit."

THE high-pitched fervor sometimes turned xenophobic not only against West Pakistanis—who in some cases were killed on the streets and in their homes and often had their shops looted—but against Europeans. At the Intercontinental Hotel, Awami League gangs tore down all English signs, including the name of the hotel in electric lettering high up on one side of the building. A shot was fired through a lobby window and such hostility was shown for some days toward foreigners that the Swiss manager of the hotel closed the swimming pool and asked all guests to stay in their rooms except for meals. These, because the strike and transport difficulties had depleted staff, became self-service repasts consisting chiefly of rice and several kinds of curries.

On the first day of the general strike particularly emotional groups of demonstrating, shouting teen-agers near the great Baikul Mokarrum Mosque started to attack my husband and me with iron bars and long poles. Miraculously an Awami Youth patrol spotted us and, in the nick of time, pushed in quickly between us and the assailants, beating them off with their own poles and deftly herding us down narrow alleyways to safety in a local Awami League headquarters.

But this xenophobic aspect soon faded under stern orders from Sheik Mujib and other Awami League leaders and the popular feeling toward foreigners progressively became one of exhilarated friendliness.

The martial-law authorities representing Islamabad's military rule in the East ordered Government servants back to work, without success. They clamped a nighttime curfew on East Pakistani cities and when it was widely and deliberately violated they shot into crowds, killing scores of people in Dacca and other places.

Impressed by the manifestations of popular sentiment in the East, President Yahya Khan reversed himself on March 6 and announced a new date, March 25, for the National Assembly meeting, adding fuel to the fire by laying blame for the impasse that had occurred on the Awami League.

Too much had happened by now for such a move to pla-

cate the aroused Bengalis. They were inflamed by the army killings, by a statement in the President's Assembly announcement that he was determined to insure the "complete and absolute integrity" of Pakistan and had ordered the armed forces to act toward this end, by the sending in of reinforcements to the 30,000-man military force already in the province, and by the replacement of a moderate military Government and a moderate martial-law administrator with a Punjabi general, Tikka Khan, known for his toughness and ruthlessness. The Bengalis feared the new date for the Assembly was not set as an act of good faith and that machinery was being put into place to suppress them regardless of the scheduled meeting.

THE effectiveness of resistance was made manifest when the Chief Justice of the Dacca High Court, B. A. Siddiqui, on strike like all other Government personnel, refused to swear in the new general as Governor. Then a large mass rally led by student activists, with the participation of labor and many other groups, declared the independence of Bangla Desh and symbolically burned the Pakistan flag. I visited student leaders at this time and found them absolutely determined to have independence and unshakably confident that Sheikh Mujib would go along with their aims.

Sheikh Mujib gave East Pakistan's reply to the President when he laid down a promised long-range action program before a cheering, excited mass meeting on the race course on March 7, attended by a half-million persons shouting: "Joi Bangla," "Bangla Desh shadeen" ("Independent Bengal") and slogans against the President, Gen Tikka Khan and Mr. Bhutto, and singing the newly popular old song written by Tagore,

"Bengal, My Golden Bengal." On the speakers' platform was the new flag of Bangla Desh—a map of the area set in a red circle against a dark green background.

Sheikh Mujib said the Awami League would "consider" attending the Assembly meeting on March 25 if President Yahya would end martial law, pull back troops to their barracks, conduct an inquiry into the curfew-time killings and transfer his power before the Assembly met to the elected representatives of the people—that is, to the National Assembly. This was drastically changing the game. The League and other political parties had participated in the National Assembly elections in 1970 on the basis of tacit

the East. League leaders insisted at this stage that they did not mean independence, but they admitted more radical elements could push matters to a proclamation of independence. To prepare the way for self-rule and to carry out a course of nonviolent noncooperation with Islamabad, Sheikh Mujib ordered continued indefinite strikes in selected Government offices while authorizing work under Awami League direction in others and throughout the private sector.

The system that was established in effect bypassed central authority, symbolized by the martial-law troops, and set up a parallel government directed by the Awami League. Sheikh Mujib ordered

66Much will depend on how really determined the Bengalis are. By all ethnic, cultural and geographical standards, they deserve to be a nation on their own.99

acceptance of the President's stipulations that his martial-law regime was to keep power until the Assembly could meet and adopt a new constitution under which a new Government would then and only then take over. The President had also made it clear in a Legal Framework Order that he would veto the new constitution if it did not preserve the unity and integrity of the country, another stipulation also tacitly accepted by participants in the Assembly elections.

The Awami League's new demands were evidence of an intention that later became clear to use the newly aroused feelings and unity of the East Pakistanis to obtain, by agreement if it could, self-rule for

East Pakistanis not to pay central Government taxes while continuing payments to the provincial coffers; he directed the setting up of road blocks against military movements and asked workers to mobilize against military use of railways and ports; he took over radio stations, telecommunications, foreign trade and the banking system, including control of money transfers from East to West. He called for the organization of resistance groups in labor unions, villages and urban neighborhoods and by closing all educational institutions freed the students—a tough, politically experienced key factor with their 700,000-man organization—for resistance activity.

"Our people have already proclaimed to the world that they shall no longer allow themselves to be exploited as a colony and a market," he said. "I pledge to lead the people to emancipation; I am prepared to shed my blood for freedom; this is a fight for freedom, liberty and self-determination. Everyone must be prepared for sacrifice, even death."

Radical students later said he used the word independence in this passage, but this did not appear in most translations of his Bengali address. But he had, in effect, hurled defiance at the President and

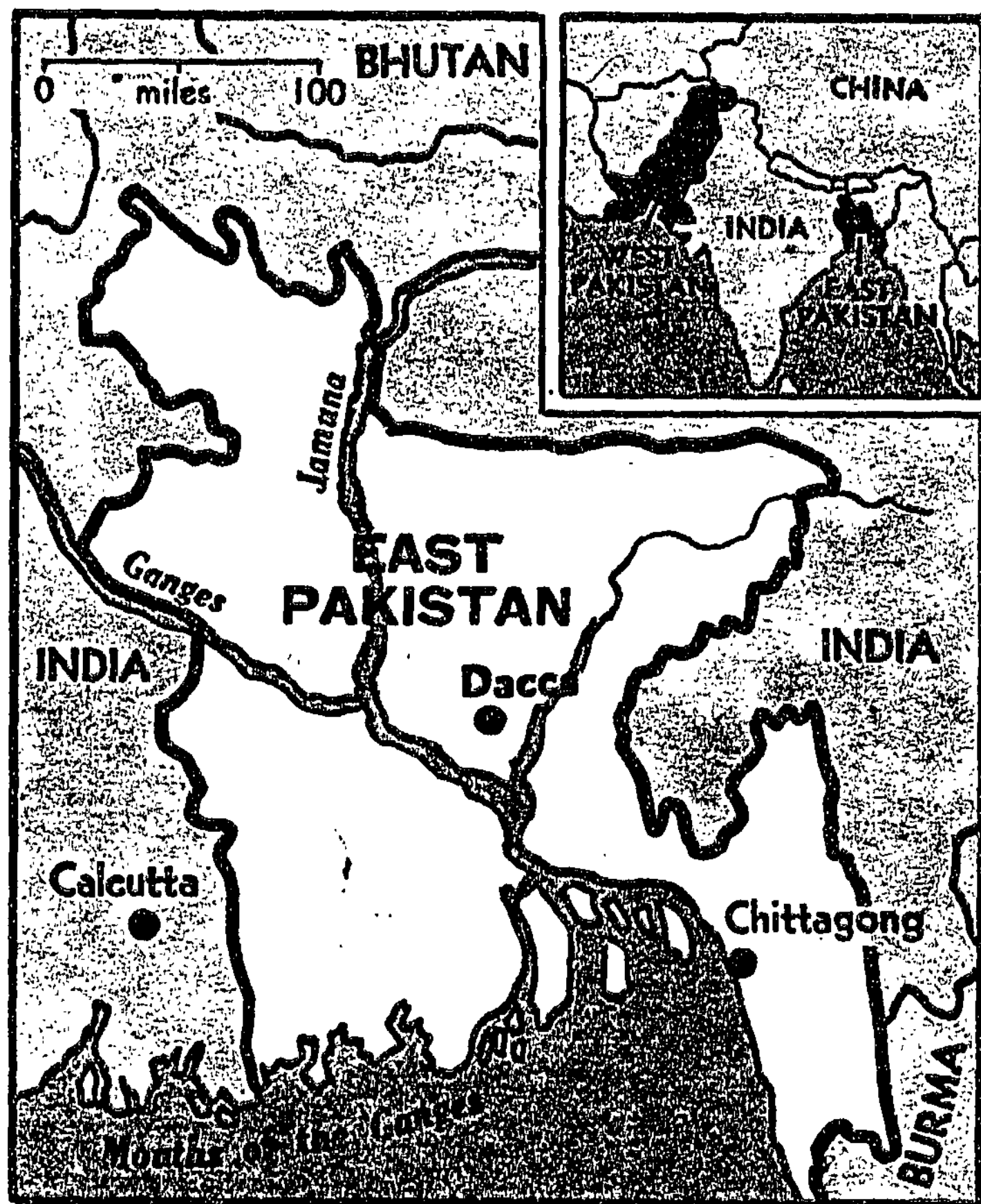
proclaimed a wide-ranging confrontation between his nationalist movement and Islamabad's martial-law authorities. In fact, the die was cast on March 7. Even if Sheikh Mujib did not intend to go for secession (and he afterward continued to talk in terms of continued East-West union under the loose confederation formula implicit in his six points), he had loosed forces and enthusiasm that would inexorably carry the movement he had launched to a complete break with West Pakistan.

THE President waited for a week, conferring in Islamabad with Mr. Bhutto and other Western political leaders, before he finally flew to Dacca on March 15 to talk with Sheikh Mujib and others there, taking the long six-hour flight from Karachi around the southern tip of India that had been made necessary by an India ban on flights over its territory by Pakistani aircraft. The mood in Dacca was hostile when he arrived. No local leader met him at the airport; he came into a heavily guarded Presidential mansion in an armed convoy; in the evening a student group braved possible shooting from security forces to march past the house and shout slogans against him.

Dacca seethed. Black flags that Sheikh Mujib had asked everyone to hoist to manifest nationalist sentiments sprouted on every house, flew from every vehicle. Daily demonstrations—of shabbily dressed workers, of women in bright saris, of striking civil servants, office clerks, university staffs—straggled through the streets, usually ending before Sheikh Mujib's house with noisy proclamation of independence slogans. Declarations of support for the Sheikh came from virtually every group, every important leader in East Pakistan.

Aged Maulana Bhashani, one-time political enemy of Sheikh Mujib as head of the radical left-wing National Awami party, went about the country making speeches advocating support from all, including the Marxist left, for Sheikh Mujib and his program.

Despite injunctions from the Sheikh and others that the movement was to be kept nonviolent and tolerant of all who lived in Bangla Desh, attacks on and sometimes the killings of non-Bengali Pakistanis continued. In Chittagong there were pitched battles between Bengalis and non-Bengalis, with heavy casualties on both sides. Meanwhile, the military



FORMERLY EAST BENGAL: East Pakistan, separated by 1,200 miles of Indian territory from West Pakistan, is about the size of New York plus Connecticut, and is populated by 75 million Bengalis. The literacy rate is 15 per cent; per capita income, \$30 a year.

forces were kept sullenly in their barracks along with Gen. Tikka Khan, waiting for the time when they would be called on to act.

In his Dhanmondi house, as crowds trampled his lawn and flowed into his sitting room, Sheik Mujib had premonitions of the trials and bloodshed to come. He told delegations to be prepared for the ultimate sacrifice and warned them that they must realize he might not always be left free or alive to lead them. But he always responded to his deep conviction and feeling that he was the instrument of his people; he would say, "I will do what the people want, what the people tell me." He seemed borne along by the passions of a movement that now had its own momentum.

"Why can't they let us part as brothers?" he once said in an exasperated comment on the attitude of the Western Establishment. "I am a man of peace and non-violence. If it comes to bloodshed and war, others will take over, more radical — very possibly the Communists — and there will be another Vietnam."

HE and his advisers repeatedly talked of their fear that the Punjabi soldiers who largely made up the Pakistani

Army would bathe the East in blood and, if they finally had to give it up, would pull out in an orgy of killing and destruction. The East Pakistani leaders pleaded with foreign newsmen to present this fear to the world in the hope that foreign powers would bring pressure to bear on Islamabad against such an eventuality. "Genocide" became the Bengali stock description of what had already happened — and, in fact, of what was to come.

The Dacca talks eventually encompassed most of Pakistan's party leaders. In their final stages Mr. Bhutto and a battery of his aides arrived to take part. All during March, Sheik Mujib and his aides seemed to be playing a devious game and refusing to be candid about their aims and strategy. (In fairness it must be said that this was the only tactic open to them, since an open stand for independence would have made them immediately liable to charges of treason.) They consistently maintained that they were for a united Pakistan under the six-point scheme. But Sheik Mujib never showed the slightest interest in being a national leader of East and West, of taking the position of Prime Minister of an all-Pakistan

Government that the Assembly majority entitled him to. President Yahya had on one occasion referred to him as the future Prime Minister. And a large number of West Pakistanis — representing groups and underdeveloped provinces such as Baluchistan which resent military domination and commercial exploitation—were willing to have Sheik Mujib as a national leader.

WESTERNERS were therefore nonplused when Sheik Mujib, who had not even visited West Pakistan after his party's Assembly victory made him by great odds the national figure with the biggest mass following, virtually turned a cold shoulder to a position of all-Pakistan leadership that might have enabled him to redress Eastern grievances, in spite of possible lack of whole-hearted support from the army, the bureaucracy and other vested interests of the West. In any case, he fostered a movement based on a separatist attitude and animosity to West Pakistan.

I asked him a few days before he was to observe his 53d birthday on March 17 if he might use the occasion to proclaim the independence of Bangla Desh. He parried the question, saying cryptically, "Well, you know the tendency." He always returned to the assertion that he was only the instrument of the people, saying, "If the people want it that way, that is the way it is going to be." It was clear that a lot of the people, probably a vast majority, wanted independence.

At one stage of the bargaining, the Awami League sought to get a Presidential proclamation withdrawing martial law, allowing provincial governments to be set up by recently elected provincial assemblymen, and agreeing to a meeting of the National Assembly in the form of two committees, one of members from East and one of members from West Pakistan. In a later broadcast to the nation, President Yahya said he was prepared to go along in principle with this plan but on the condition that all other political leaders besides those of the Awami League agreed to the scheme. He said he found other leaders, particularly mentioning Mr. Bhutto, "unanimously opposed" on the grounds that after his proclamation ending martial law no other central authority would exist; only the provincial Governments—with the result that chaos would ensue. The President said other po-

litical leaders argued that if martial law was to be lifted the National Assembly should first meet and pass an appropriate interim constitution for Presidential assent.

Mr. Bhutto later reported that in his talks with Sheikh Mujib the latter indicated he wanted the two sections of the Assembly to adopt separate Constitutions, one for the East and one for the West, after which the two committees would come together and consider ways for the two wings to coexist, presumably in a confederation of some kind based on the Awami League's six points. Mr. Bhutto stated at one stage that he had rejected a proposal from Sheikh Mujib that he be Prime Minister of West Pakistan, leaving Sheikh Mujib to be Prime Minister of East Pakistan.

WITHOUT Awami League leaders free to explain themselves, the world may never know whether the proposals they advanced in the last stages of the Dacca talks were, indeed, their final positions. Accounts have all come from others present, chiefly the President and Mr. Bhutto. These two participants maintain that Sheikh Mujib told political leaders on March 23 that his proposals were final and he would make no further changes. However, high Awami League leaders met with Presidential advisers on March 24 and told foreign correspondents they had arrangements for further meetings the next day.

They never had a chance to convene. On March 23, the anniversary of the Lahore Declaration in which Moslem leaders of India first projected a separate Moslem nation in the subcontinent three decades ago, the Bangla Desh flag was hoisted on Sheikh Mujib's house and demonstrators marched past and tore up the national flag. Sheikh Mujib declared a general strike for March 27, and his opponents later said a declaration of independence was, in fact, planned for March 26.

On the night of March 25 the armed forces struck without warning. The President had just taken off to fly back to West Pakistan. In Karachi at 7 P.M. on the night of the 26th, almost 24 hours after the military crackdown in the East had begun, the President in a broadcast to the nation announced he had authorized the armed forces to restore the authority of the Govern-

ment in the East. He pronounced the Awami League outlawed and declared Sheikh Mujib a traitor, in effect guilty of flouting Government authority, insulting the armed forces and bringing the nation to the verge of disintegration.

Sheikh Mujib and his collaborators had pushed matters further than the President was willing to tolerate without the use of force. The Sheikh had all along declared himself a man of peace and advocated nonviolence for his followers, despite the fact that more radical elements had for weeks been collecting guns and making homemade explosives for the anticipated showdown with the army.

It is impossible to know at this stage whether Sheikh Mujib simply miscalculated, thinking he could get his sweeping demands through agreement, and did not really think the President, who had gone to unexpected lengths of compromise, would finally call in the military. It is possible he had lost control of revolution-minded colleagues like Tajuddin Ahmed, the Awami League secretary general, and had gone too far along their road to turn back even if he had wanted to.

THE crackdown was brutal, in the tradition of the Moguls and their bloody 15th- and 16th-century conquests. I had left Dacca by that time and can only judge by accounts of those who stayed behind what happened, and accounts vary widely. But it is plain that in Dacca the Punjabis of Gen. Tikka Khan moved in with tanks, mortars and machine guns against a surprised, unalerted city at about 9 P.M. Selecting Awami League offices, houses and dwelling areas of strong Awami League supporters as their targets, the troops unloosed a terrible orgy of killing and destruction. Buildings and clusters of buildings were shelled and then burned, often with the shattered occupants inside; Hindu areas and workers' concentrations in the old section of the city were heavily attacked.

When Sheikh Mujib heard what was happening he sent his family away and dismissed everyone at his home at about 10 P.M. except for three aides and a bodyguard and sat down to wait. Foreign correspondents who telephoned the house at 1 A.M. the morning of March 26 were

told he was still there, still waiting. At about 1:30, a military group approached his house and, after firing an automatic volley over the roof, called for him to surrender. He appeared at a second-story window and reportedly said, "Yes, I will come down. I am a man of nonviolence and if you had telephoned I would have come over to your headquarters."

The soldiers handed him into a military vehicle, shot a



YAHYA KHAN: President of Pakistan. Will his troops "restore order" in East Pakistan, or bog down in an endless guerrilla civil war?

guard at a neighboring house who showed signs of intervening, and drove away. Reports are that their prisoner was flown later to West Pakistan and incarcerated in the ancient Mogul fortress of Attock, 45 miles west of Rawalpindi, long used for political detainees. Thus the man who was largely instrumental in leading his people to the point of revolt left it to the leadership of others.

The slaughter at Dacca was duplicated on a smaller scale at other centers. At first, apparently, resistance was slight. City dwellers began to flee by the hundreds of thousands to the countryside, seeking refuge in ancestral villages from the urban danger. At Dacca shooting on a diminished scale went on for two weeks, sometimes betokening more crackdowns by the armed forces, sometimes indicating insurgents were fighting back, sometimes revealing vendetta conflicts between civilian non-Bengalis and Bengalis. The fatalities in

Dacca alone in the first few days have been estimated in the thousands. Simon Dring of The London Daily Telegraph, who was present, figured a 7,000 total for the capital and many thousands more elsewhere in the province. In many cases troops hurriedly dug mass graves and disposed of piled-up bodies.

Resistance stiffened once the first shock of attack had passed. In the cities it was sporadic, in the countryside more organized. Resistance forces declared themselves a Liberation Army and proclaimed an independent provisional Government of Bangla Desh. Planes began bombing points in rural areas. Arms and infiltrators, Islamabad claimed, began to arrive from India. Islamabad sent more reinforcements and shiploads of equipment and military supplies to the East. A civil war was under way, developing in the guerrilla pattern that characterizes such conflicts in these times.

It is too early to tell how things will develop. The scope of the resistance and the range of support within the populace are not yet clear. But if even a few million of the people of East Pakistan fight or support the fight against Islamabad's forces of 40,000 to 50,000 men it is difficult to see how the rebels, with arms from India and sanctuary available in Indian territory, can be defeated by Government troops that have to be supplied by a 3,000-mile route around the tip of India.

New York Times correspondent Sydney H. Schanberg, who has been as close as newsmen can get to the scene, has cabled: "The prospect is for a long, sullen war. Most diplomats and foreign observers believe that the Bengalis, by hanging on, will eventually make life untenable for the West Pakistanis. But these observers also agree that, unless foreign powers put an economic squeeze on the Pakistani Government, it could be years before the Bengalis finally win their freedom."

Much will depend on how really determined the Bengalis are. By all ethnic, cultural and geographical standards, they deserve to be a nation on their own. After what has happened they can be kept part of Pakistan only as a beaten, bitter people. ■