

# BENGALIS DEPICT HOW A PRIEST DIED

## Newsmen Hear Both Sides Describe Pakistani Strife

The following dispatch is by one of the six foreign newsmen allowed into East Pakistan this week by the Pakistani Government for a tour with official escorts.

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Special to The New York Times

JESSORE, Pakistan, May 8 — In the Catholic hospital grounds of this smashed and burned city is the fresh grave of an Italian priest—the only foreigner known to have been slain in the fighting that has gripped East Pakistan for the past two months. The grave is that of the Rev. Mario Veronesi, 56 years old, who worked at the Roman Catholic mission here for 18 years.

Newsmen touring East Pakistan were permitted one hour by their military guides today for private interviews. Ordinarily, escorts are present at all times and most of the trips during the five-day permitted stay have been taken up by official briefings.

Father Veronesi was one of four Italian priests at the Fatima Catholic Hospital here. All were members of the Xaverian order. Two are physicians.

### Separatists Control Cited

According to witnesses, Jessore was controlled by Bengali separatists after the outbreak of fighting March 25.

Most of the population of East Pakistan is Bengali. The Government of the nation is in West Pakistan, which is separated from East Pakistan by more than 900 miles of Indian territory. A traditionally bitter and sometimes bloody rivalry exists between the Bengalis and the more prosperous West Pakistanis.

When the violence erupted, the Bengalis were pitted against the small number of West Pakistanis in East Pakistan.

The national army, consisting almost entirely of West Pakistanis, attacked, first in the major towns and later in the smaller ones. The long-standing anti-Bengali bitterness on the part of most of the army's officers and men was exacerbated by the slaying of a number of non-Bengalis here over a period of months.

### Night of Special Horror

The night of special horror for Jessore was April 4, four days after the local East Bengal regiment had revolted against the national army.

The army had smashed into the city, leveling many houses. At the Catholic hospital, according to witnesses, two soldiers arrived late in the afternoon as a doctor priest was about to operate on a girl. Witnesses said the soldiers began firing into the house and Father Veronesi walked out with his hands up. They said he was wearing no cassock, but his shirt carried a Red Cross badge. The grounds are clearly marked as a Catholic hospital. At this point, a soldier is said to have opened fire at the priest with a Sten gun, killing him instantly.

The witnesses said that troops then entered the church and shot four persons, including two women.

Troops on a truck reportedly opened the offensive in Jessore by firing a machine gun at all buildings as it passed along the street near the hospital.

### Question Unanswered

Two days ago, Gen Tikka Khan, military governor of East Pakistan, told foreign newsmen that the army had not desecrated or damaged any religious shrines. Asked by a reporter whether an Italian priest had been killed, he paused and said that an Italian journalist had been wounded. When the Italian ambassador to Pakistan reportedly visited the mission, military authorities informed him that Father Veronesi had been killed by the rebels, not the army.

Jessore and Khulna are among the most heavily damaged towns in East Pakistan. Many market areas and buildings are burned out, the streets deserted.

Throughout the tour, Government authorities and persons produced for interview have told of thousands of non-Bengali residents, including women and children, having been slain by the separatists, often after having been tortured.

### Decapitations Charged

At Khulna, newsmen were shown facilities where frames were said to have been set up to hold prisoners for decapitation. Fragments of bloody clothing and tresses of women's hair were strewn about. The place was said to have been used by Bengali insurgents for the execution of thousands of non-Bengali residents.

At no time have Government authorities disclosed any estimates of the number of Bengalis slain.

"When people start shooting, you shoot back," said the commander at one town. "We killed them all."

"You don't go around counting the bodies of your enemies, you throw them in the rivers and be done with it," he said.

Flickers of resistance by small Bengali groups apparently continue, but reporters have seen little evidence that any significant fighting continues.

The New York Times

Published: May 9, 1971

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