

Pakistan Story

The extent of the Pakistan tragedy in March, when the two parts of the country were brutally torn apart, is bit by bit becoming known, with the most substantial information to date provided by a group of six foreign correspondents admitted to East Pakistan for an officially conducted look. As a whole these observers have written guardedly, through censorship, but one of them, Mort Rosenblum of the Associated Press, has instead left the country and filed his dispatches from Bangkok. The story he tells is one of hatred and horror, in "a civil war of staggering butchery," of a national economy on the brink of ruin and of political chaos.

The deaths, by Mr. Rosenblum's rough estimate, may number half a million. The devastation, he says, defies belief. Millions of people face starvation, from famine and from the halted distribution of relief for earlier, and natural, disasters. The picture could not be more grim.

From Mr. Rosenblum and other sources it is clear that an unknown number of the killings were done by East Bengalis, in hatred and vengeance against West Pakistanis, and against other non-Bengalis in the population. But it is clear also that the savage tearing apart of the nation is to be laid first of all on the army of Pakistan and those who gave it its orders.

One tale is that the deaths from army action in Dacca, the East Bengal capital, came to about 150, which is obviously a gigantic lie, and that in any case the army struck to avert an armed rebellion scheduled for the early morning of the day after the army went into action. Of this no evidence has been brought forward.

The fact still seems to be, as it seemed to be at the first, that the government of Pakistan was determined not to let the East Bengal Awami League assume the power it had won in a National Assembly election, and that from this determination stemmed the carefully planned onslaught of March.

While its full consequences are yet to be known, it is plain already that Pakistan as conceived by its creators has ceased to exist, that an already-shaky economic structure has been brought near to the point of no-repair, that a generation of hatred has been assured and that new opportunities have been opened to political elements whose purposes have little to do with the national good of Pakistan.