

East Pakistan:

An 'Alien Army' Imposes Its Will

DACCA—"Doesn't the world realize that they're nothing but butchers?" asked a foreigner who has lived in East Pakistan for many years. "That they killed—and are still killing—Bengalis just to intimidate them, to make slaves out of them? That they wiped out whole villages, opening fire at first light and stopping only when they got tired?"

The foreigner, normally a calm man, was talking about the Pakistani Army and the bloodbath it has inflicted on East Pakistan in its effort to crush the Bengali independence movement.

Most of the foreign residents—diplomats, missionaries, businessmen—also talk the way this man does now. They are bursting with three months of pent-up anger and outrage. And they are very eager to tell what they know to those foreign newsmen who were permitted to re-enter East Pakistan in the past fortnight and travel around unescorted for the first time since March 25, when the army began its suppression campaign.

Pakistan's military regime considers the foreign press implacably hostile, but it is desperate to prove to the world its claim that order has been restored, that the army is in control and that normality is fast returning to East Pakistan.

The army is, indeed, in control, except for a few areas near the border with India, where the Mukti Foj, or "Liberation Army," is active and growing more so—with aid from India.

Yet, East Pakistan is anything but normal. For this is clearly and simply a military occupation by an alien army.

Bengali police have been replaced by police from West Pakistan, the country's dominant wing that lies more than 1,000 miles away, with India in between. West Pakistanis are also being flown in to replace officials in every Government department, in some cases even down

to the level of typists.

Houses and shops of those Bengalis who were killed or fled to villages in the countryside have been turned over to Moslem non-Bengali residents of East Pakistan, who are collaborating with the army. The temples of the minority Hindus—the army's special scapegoats—are being demolished for no other reason than to demonstrate that those who are not part of the army's design of "Islamic integrity" are not true Pakistanis and will not be tolerated.

Bengali youths, who just over three months ago were exultantly marching through the streets and shouting their slogans of defiance at the military regime, now talk in whispers, slipping up to foreign newsmen for a few seconds to murmur some information about a massacre, the murder of a family member or the destruction of a village. Anonymous letters containing such details find their way every day into newsmen's mailboxes at the Hotel Inter-Continental.

The effluvia of fear is overwhelming. But there is also a new spirit. Many of the Bengalis—a naive and romantic people—realize now that no other country is going to save them, that they will have to do it all themselves and that it will take a long time.

Significant numbers of young men are slipping off to join the Liberation Army, which operates from border areas and from sanctuaries just across the border in India. Bengali guerrilla terrorism is increasing. A number of army collaborators have been executed, and more and more homemade bombs explode in Dacca. The resistance is still sporadic, peripheral and disorganized, but it is growing.

With each terrorist act, the army takes revenge, conducting reprisals against the nearest Bengali civilians. Several hundred civilians were reported to have been rounded up and mowed down by the Army in Noakhali District recently after the Mukti Foj executed a member of one of the army's "Peace Committees" and his wife and children.

The once widely held theory that the cost of the occupation would prove prohibitive and compel Pakistan to pull the army out fairly quickly has been discarded. Even without the World Bank consortium's massive annual aid, which has been suspended in censure of the repression, the Islamabad regime seems deter-

mined to keep its grip on East Pakistan.

President Yahya Khan's speech to the nation last Monday was supposed to have unveiled his long-awaited plan for returning Pakistan—East and West—to civilian rule. It turned out to be exactly the opposite—a declaration that the military dictatorship would continue, with a hand-picked civilian government as camouflage.

In his speech, which Western diplomats here described as "a disaster," the President, who is also army chief, heaped praise on the army for rescuing the country from "the brink of disintegration... by the grace of Allah." He also extended his "fullest sympathy" to the six million Bengalis, mostly minority Hindus, who have fled to India—"because of false propaganda by rebels," he said. He appealed to them to "return to their homes and hearths" for "speedy rehabilitation."

Just the day before President Yahya's speech, an army platoon stormed into several predominantly Hindu villages 30 miles from Dacca, killing men and looting and burning homes. Reports of similar pogroms come from other parts of the province. No one knows exactly how many Bengalis the army has killed, but reliable foreign sources here put the figure somewhere over 100,000—and possibly much higher.

The East Pakistani economy, which used to provide the national treasury not only with half its exports and foreign exchange but also with a captive market for West Pakistan's manufactured goods, has been badly crippled by the upheaval. However, the military regime seems willing—at least for the present—to pay the severe economic price of holding East Pakistan as a colony, no matter how sullen or resistant the population.

"It's a medieval army operating as if against serfs," said one Westerner here. "It will use any method just to own East Pakistan and keep milking it dry. Even if the Bengalis are serious about the resistance, it will take five to 10 years to make a dent."

—SYDNEY H. SCHANBERG

Since cabling this article, Mr. Schanberg, South Asia correspondent of *The Times*, has been expelled from Pakistan. On arriving in New Delhi, he said the Pakistan Government had ordered him to leave "in the interests of the security of Pakistan."