

Hindus Are Targets of Army Terror in an East Pakistani Town

The following dispatch was written by a New York Times correspondent who was expelled from East Pakistan Wednesday.

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Special to The New York Times

FARIDPUR, Pakistan, June 29—The Pakistani Army has painted big yellow "H's" on the Hindu shops still standing in this town to identify the property of the minority eighth of the population that it has made its special targets.

Members of the Moslem majority—who, though not exempt from the army's terror, feel safer than the Hindus—have painted on their homes and shops such signs as "All Moslem House."

The small community of Christians, mostly Baptists, have put crosses on their doors and stitched crosses in red thread on their clothes.

Compared with some towns in East Pakistan, Faridpur, which sits in the central part of the province 85 miles by road and ferry west of the capital, Dacca, suffered only moderate physical damage when the army struck here in April. The attack was part of the offensive begun March 25 to crush the Bengali autonomy movement.

Though a number of shops, most of them belonging to Hindus, have been razed in Faridpur, most of it is physically intact. But every other aspect of life has been shattered, and the hate and terror and fear that wrack the town make it typical of virtually every community in this conquered province of 75 million people.

Eased Up on Executions

Only about half of Faridpur's 35,000 people have returned, although the flow has been growing. Recently the army eased up on its executions and burning of villages in an attempt to demonstrate that normality has returned. The change in tactics began in mid-June, just before the central Government announced that it was allowing foreign newsmen back into the region.

An undetermined number of Faridpur's 10,000 Hindus have been killed and others have fled across the border to predominantly Hindu India.

Some Hindus are returning to Faridpur, but it is not out of faith in a change of heart by the army but rather out of despair. They do not want to live as displaced persons in India and they feel that nowhere in East Pakistan is really safe for them, so they would

rather be unsafe in their own town.

A Hindu barber said that he was still in hiding but that he sneaked into Faridpur every day to do a few hours' work to earn enough to eat. "I come into town like a thief and leave like a thief," he said.

Those Hindus who have slipped into town keep guards posted at night. "None of us sleep very soundly," a young carpenter said. "The daylight gives us a little courage."

'This Is Our Home'

A 70-year-old Hindu woman who was shot through the neck said that as bad as conditions were and as frightened as she was, "this is our home—we want to stay in golden Bengal."

On April 21, when the army rolled into Faridpur, the old woman and her 84-year-old husband ran to seek refuge in a Hindu village, Bodidangi, about three miles away. The next day the army hit Bodidangi and, reliable local reports say, as many as 300 Hindus were massacred.

The old woman stumbled and fell as she tried to flee Bodidangi, she related, and two soldiers caught her. She said they beat her, ripped off her jewelry, fired a shot at point-blank range into her neck and left her for dead.

She and her husband had owned a small piece of property on which they rented out a few flimsy huts. Only the dirt floors are left, she said.

The campaign against the Hindus was — and in some cases still is—systematic. Soldiers fanned through virtually every village asking where the Hindus lived. Hindu property has been confiscated and either sold or given to "loyal" citizens. Many of the beneficiaries have been Biharis, non-Bengali Moslem migrants from India, most of whom are working with the army now. The army has given weapons to large numbers of the Biharis, and it is they who have often continued the killing of Hindus in areas where the army has eased off.

Hindu bank accounts are frozen. Almost no Hindu students or teachers have returned to the schools.

Assurances by Yahya

President Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan has appealed to the Hindus to return from their hiding places and from India—possibly four million of the six million Bengalis who have fled to India are Hindus—and has assured them of an equal role in East Pakistani

life. However, army commanders in the field in East Pakistan privately admit to a policy of stamping out Bengali culture, both Moslem and Hindu—but particularly Hindu.

Although thousands of "antistate" Bengali Moslems have been killed by the army, the Hindus became particular scapegoats as the martial-law regime tried to blame Hindu India and her agents in East Pakistan for the autonomy movement.

In Faridpur—and the situation was much the same throughout East Pakistan—there was no friction to speak of between Hindu and Moslem before the army came.

The army tried to drive a wedge between them. In April, as a public example, two Hindus were beheaded in a central square in Faridpur and their bodies were soaked in kerosene and burned. When some Hindus, trying to save

their lives, begged to convert to Islam, they were shot as unworthy nonbelievers (in some cases, however, converts are being accepted).

The army also forced Moslems friendly to Hindus to loot and burn Hindu houses; the Moslems were told that if they did not attack Hindus, they themselves would be killed. Most of the Hindu houses in the region around Faridpur—some say 90 per cent—were burned as a result.

Still, there is no sign of a hate-Hindu psychology among the Bengali Moslems. Many have taken grave risks to shelter and defend Hindus; others express shock and horror at what is happening to the Hindus but confess that they are too frightened to help.

Many Bengalis, in fact, feel that the army has only succeeded in forging a tighter bond between Hindu and Moslem in East Pakistan.