

Pakistan Condemned

The report of a World Bank mission to East Pakistan last month is a devastating indictment of the West Pakistani military crackdown in Bengal. It strongly challenges the Administration's policy of continuing both military and economic support for the Yahya Khan regime in Islamabad.

Excerpts from the report, published in this paper yesterday, tell of death and destruction throughout the region. A mission member describes the Bengali town of Kushtia, for example, as looking "like a World War II German town having undergone strategic bombing attacks" as a result of twelve days of "punitive action" by the West Pakistani Army. The Army, he reports, "terrorizes the population, particularly aiming at the Hindus and suspected members of the Awami League."

This official confirmation of earlier widespread reports of barbaric action in East Pakistan renders inexcusable any further shipment of American military equipment to the Pakistani armed forces. Military supplies already en route to Pakistan can and should be promptly diverted, just as food shipments were diverted from Chittagong soon after the outbreak of fighting. There are clear grounds for suspending all further military and economic aid to the Pakistani Government, excepting relief supplies, until the reign of terror in East Pakistan is ended and steps are taken to restore power to elected representatives of the people who are currently in prison or in hiding.

The World Bank also offers strong practical grounds for a moratorium on development assistance. Contrary to Pakistani Government claims, the mission reports that "the situation is very far indeed from normal, nor are there any signs that normality is being approached or that matters are even moving in that direction." Citing disruption in East Pakistan caused by "the general sense of fear and lack of confidence on the part of most of the population" and "the complete dislocation of the communications system," the report concludes that new international development efforts "will have to remain in a state of suspension for at least the next year or so."

Ten members of the eleven-nation Aid to Pakistan consortium apparently concurred with that finding when the group met in Paris last month. The United States inexplicably did not. Continuation of American development assistance to Pakistan is incomprehensible in the face of that international consensus and of the damning evidence contained in the World Bank report.

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