VOL. CLXXVIII NO. 18 ★★

A Nation Divided

East Pakistan Is Seen Gaining Independence, But It Will Take Years

Bengalis Increasingly View The U.S. as Their Enemy; Learning to Be Guerrillas

Well-Fed Army, Ill-Fed People

By PETER R. KANN
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

DACCA, East Pakistan — An independent East Pakistan seems to be one of those ideas whose time is coming.

Travels across the ravaged land and talks with military participants in the civil conflict, its innocent sufferers and its diplomatic observers leave the distinct impression that someday East Pakistan and West Pakistan will be separate legally as well as ideologically.

How soon Bangla Desh, or Bengal nation, comes to pass—and the diplomatic assess-

This is the second of two articles on the situation in East Pakistan.

ments tend to be in terms of years, not months—depends on many factors. These include the degree of support India is willing to give the liberation forces, the weight of economic pressures on West Pakistan, the severity of future famine in East Pakistan and perhaps the policies of America and other world powers.

For the moment, both the Pakistan army and the Bengali independence movement seem to be overly optimistic about their capabilities and prospects. The army, currently running East Pakistan as a kind of reconquered colony, says everything is under control and is rapidly returning to normal. But all around is evidence of social chaos, economic collapse, public hostility, and gradually mounting guerrilla opposition.

Guerrilla Warfare and Patience

Bengali liberation forces still talk of massive offensives that will "liberate" the land as early as this fall, or of the Indian army coming to their aid, or of the Pakistan army simply tiring and going away. But the Pakistan army, tough and tenacious, seems determined to hold on here at all costs. The Indians, while aiding the Bengali resistance, seem anxious to avoid full-scale war. Many Bengalis don't seem to comprehend that guerrilla war, which they are beginning to wage with some effectiveness, is their only hope and that it requires much time and patience.

The fighting began March 25 with attacks by the Pakistan army on civilians in Dacca. The amount of blood that has been spilled in East Pakistan since then appears to rule out any sort of political compromise. Diplomats say that a minimum of 200,000 and perhaps as many as a million people have been killed in four months, most of them Bengali civilians slain by the Pakistan army. Six million refugees have fled to India, and millions more are displaced persons still hiding within East Pakistan.

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In the view of nearly all observers here, much more blood will flow, many more villages will be destroyed and many more people will be uprooted before the conflict ends.

If the war does result in Bangla Desh, America may be in trouble. By continuing to supply aid—and particularly arms—to the central government of Pakistan, the U.S. is increasingly coming to be viewed as an enemy by the Bengali people. Moreover, the longer the Pakistan army is able to maintain its hold on East Pakistan, the more likely it is that the Bengali independence movement will slip under Communist influence.

A Problem for India

This is one of the worries that lead some Indian policy makers to favor war with Pakistan. The odds are still against a full-scale war, but artillery exchanges erupt daily along the border. Presidential adviser Henry Kissinger, during recent meetings with American officials in Islamabad, the national Pakistan capital located in the West, is said to have called the odds for an Indo-Pakistani war better than one in three.

The scope of the Pakistan army's military problem here can be seen in a comparison with Vietnam. There, a million-man South Vietnamese army plus American troops and massive firepower must try to control a population of 17 million, many basically sympathetic to the government. Here, only 60,000 West Pakistani troops are trying to control a thoroughly hostile population of 75 million. East Pakistan, moreover, is surrounded on three sides by India, which is giving sanctuaries and supplies to the guerrillas. And the Pakistan army's supply routes from West Pakistan to the East must circumvent, by sea and air, 1,200 miles of India.

Of course, the Mukti Bahani, or liberation army, isn't the Vietcong. For one thing, the guerrillas aren't Communist. For another, they are not—or are not yet—very effective fighters. They have been at it for less than four months, and organization and discipline don't come naturally to most Bengalis.

Learning to Be Guerrillas

But they are learning. In recent weeks they have been concentrating on disrupting the Pakistan army's lines of transportation; bridges are being dynamited and railroad tracks sabotaged. The key railroad line from Chittagong, East Pakistan's major port, to Dacca, its capital, has been put out of operation, and almost all supplies must move inland by riverboat. Electric power facilities in Dacca and elsewhere have been blasted. The guerrillas also are concentrating on assassinations of local people who collaborate with the army.

The Mukti Bahani enjoys some big advantages, though it is far from ready to benefit fully from them. Much of the land, outside the towns and off the main roads, is a vacuum that 60,000 soldiers can never hope to fill. At night the Pakistan army withdraws into military camps, but if and when the guerrillas learn how to use mortars and rockets, these camps could become traps rather than refuges.

The Pakistan army's crude and bloody tactics, while cowing most Bengalis, have been solidifying public support behind the independence movement and have left the Mukti Bahani with a sea of sympathizers in which to swim. A severe famine this fall or next, which

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A Nation Divided: East Pakistanis Likely to Win Independence—in Time

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Western economists consider likely, could possibly produce from the peasant sympathizers great waves of desperate and angry activists. "A nation with a well-fed army and an ill-fed people cannot survive," a Bengali professor says.

A clandestine meeting with a Mukti Bahani unit leader at a Moslem village deep inside East Pakistan provides some insight into guerrilla operations. It is early morning, and the leader is sitting in front of a peasant hut where he has been sleeping the past several nights. He is a former noncommissioned officer in the Pakistan army who, like almost all Bengali soldiers and policemen, joined the revolutionary movement in late March. (Some were subsequently killed, others fled to India.)

He leads a group of 37 men, armed mostly with old Lee-Enfield rifles. But they also have one or more light machine guns, grenades and dynamite. Some of the arms as well as the ammunition are supplied by India, to which this unit fled for several weeks in April. The unit isn't short of weapons or bullets, the leader says.

It doesn't receive any direct orders but reports on its operations by runner to higher Mukti Bahani headquarters near, or across, the Indian border. The unit depends for food and lodging on local villagers, some of whom are paid and others of whom make "voluntary contributions."

The unit has launched two attacks in this area in the past few weeks, one a raid on a police station in which 11 weapons were captured. It also blew up a bridge along the road. When Pakistan army troops reached the site, they were ambushed by another unit of Mukti Bahani. The Pakistan army is said to have suffered at least a dozen casualties. This 37-man unit hasn't had any casualties to date, nor have any of the men quit the unit.

The leader thinks the Mukti Bahani will soon win the war because the people are behind it and because, he says, 300,000 Bengalis are getting military training in India. The statement about public support is probably accurate. But the claim about military training, according to more reliable sources, is probably a tenfold exaggeration. And believing in quick victory is both naive and dangerous.

Little Realism on the Other Side

The Pakistan army, however, is hardly more realistic. A Pakistan general in Dacca flatly states that all guerrillas in the area where the Mukti Bahani leader and his unit are operating have been eliminated. The general says army casualties in all East Pakistan are averaging only five a day; diplomats estimate them at more like 50.

Army morale still seems to be generally high. But the conflict's initial stage, in which the army ruthlessly recaptured rebel-held towns in a spree of killing, looting and raping, has been over for three months, and the new stage of guerrilla warfare will be much more grueling. Many Pakistan soldiers came to East Pakistan thinking they would be here for only a month or two of combat, not as a semipermanent occupation army. The flat, marshy riceland of East Pakistan is misery to soldiers from the dry hills of West Pakistan. Scattered reports say that some West Pakistani military officers — including a senior navy commander and an air force general — are opposing the army's brutal tactics and slaughter of the civilian population.

The Pakistan army, however, doesn't appear to be cracking under any present strain. Two reporters, several score townspeople stand around, silently listening.

The reporters leave, turning a corner out of sight of the committeemen. The townspeople follow and rush up to them.

"The man talking was a non-Bengali. . . . No one agrees with what he says. . . . The peace committee is a trap for the people. . . . The army kills many people here. . . . We cannot talk or we will be reported to the army. . . ."

The civil fighting has had calamitous economic effects. The immediate sufferers, of course, are the Bengalis, whose already desperately poor and overcrowded land has been rendered even poorer. Transportation is disrupted, commerce has collapsed, factories lie idle, public-works programs are at a standstill and crops go untended. One result, Western economists believe, could well be a severe famine late this year.

The rice crop will be affected because farmers have fled their paddies or fear to go out of their homes to tend the crop. Last year the food-grain harvest was 11.5 million tons; this year it will be no more than 9.5 million. East Pakistan's food-grain requirement is 13 million tons, and the deficit traditionally has been made up by imports, much of it through purchases for local currency of American surplus-food stocks. But now, because of the conflict, the distribution system can't handle the import load while the reduced crop makes the need greater.

One economist estimates that the distribution system would have to handle 300,000 tons of imports a month, whereas, even in normal times, it has never been able to carry more than half that amount. America already has stopped new food-grain shipments because rice is backed up on the docks of Chittagong. One reason, of course, is that to the Pakistan army administration, rice rates a lower priority than military supplies.

A Land of Little Hope

Even if famine can be averted both this fall and next, the economic punishment of this conflict will be felt for years, probably decades, and will cripple the land even if independence comes. In a sense it's like crippling a leukemia patient, for East Pakistan — with or without war — is a land of little hope. Already, 75 million people are packed within its frontiers, and the population will double in 25 years. People will then be living more than 3,000 to the square mile, and no one knows what they will live on.

But the economic situation here is also serious for West Pakistan. The West has always treated East Pakistan as a kind of economic fiefdom, pocketing foreign exchange from the export of East Pakistan's raw materials like jute and tea while using East Pakistan as a captive market for low-quality West Pakistani finished goods.

The main East Pakistan export is jute. Last year the jute crop was seven million bales. This year, Western economists say, the maximum will be 5½ million. But with the trading and transportation systems disrupted, much of it may never reach the mills. Even then, the mills are barely functioning: Only 36% of the jute-mill workers have returned to their jobs, and mill output in June was only 20% of normal. Economists say if that situation continues for several more months, overseas jute buyers will begin turning to other suppliers.

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lan population.

The Pakistan army, however, doesn't appear to be cracking under any present strain. To most of the military men this is a kind of holy war for the preservation of Pakistan and the purity of the Moslem religion. And if Pakistan's president, Yahya Khan, comes under political pressure in West Pakistan, it is more likely to come from hawks calling for even tougher measures than from doves. "West Pakistan will let itself be drained before it gives East Pakistan up," a European diplomat in Dacca says.

To help control the Bengali population, the army has been setting up a network of peace committees superimposed upon the normal civil administration, which the army cannot fully rely on. Peace-committee members are drawn from East Pakistan's non-Bengali minority (called Biharis) and from the membership of small, conservative religious-political parties like the Moslem League and the Jamaat-I-Islami. The peace committees serve as agents for the army, informing on the civil administration as well as on the general populace. They are also in charge of confiscating and redistributing shops and lands from "enemies of the people," like Hindus and pro-independence Bengalis. The peace committees also recruit razikars, or armed vigilantes. Many of them are common criminals who have thrown their lot with the army. "Biharis, Bengali opportunists, louts and thugs"—that's the capsule definition offered by one diplomat.

Terrors for Collaborators, Too

While the general Bengali population is terrified—and terrorized—by these local army collaborators, the collaborators also live in fear.

Dozens of peace committeemen have been assassinated by Mukti Bahani or by Bengali neighbors. In one town a peace-committee official sleeps on the floor of his house with three razikars lying on each side of him. In another town the peace-committee chairman has paid $625 protection money to the Mukti Bahani to prevent, or postpone, assassination.

In one roadside village a peace committeeman who two days before had turned several Bengalis over to the army was routed out of his bed at night by Mukti Bahani. He was given an hour to say good-bye to his mother. Then a "people's court" was convened in his front yard with neighbors summoned as jurymen. He was convicted and executed, and his body was left in the road as a warning to other collaborators.

Then there was this encounter by two reporters with a small-town peace committee. The Mukti Bahani had made a small foray into the town the previous night, firing a few stray bullets, destroying a telephone at the railroad station and robbing the station safe of about $3.00. The attack could hardly have been less effectual.

Condemning the "Antielements"

But to listen to the peace committee it had been an epic assault. "Forty Mukti Bahani came armed with automatic weapons," the committee chairman, an elderly Bihari, says. A half hour later the tale had escalated into an attack by 100 Mukti Bahani men carrying machine guns. "What could we do?" he asks. "The razikar have only four rifles, the army is stationed 10 miles away, maybe there will be more attacks." The committeemen know that they themselves are targets. Death shrouds have been left at night on their doorsteps as a sign that they are marked men.

Like the army, the peace committee blames all troubles on miscreants and goodas (criminals), Indian infiltrators and a few misguided individuals—all of whom are lumped together under the term "antielements." All townspeople support the army and the peace committee, these committeemen say. As they talk to the

Commerce is almost at a standstill in many areas. Most towns are reduced to a fraction of their former population; a majority of their people are dead, have fled to India or are hiding in the countryside. Retail trade in Dacca is only 35% of normal and in other towns considerably less. Even where shops are open, people have little money to spend and no inclination to spend it.

A Spreading Economic Crisis

Western economists in Dacca say the economic crisis already is starting to spread to West Pakistan, where factory laborers are beginning to be laid off. West Pakistani goods that were sold in the captive market of East Pakistan aren't very competitive in other countries.

All this, plus the loss of East Pakistan tax revenues and the added costs of maintaining an army of occupation in East Pakistan, will have reduced Pakistan's foreign-exchange reserves to a critically low level by October, the economists here say. Whether foreign-aid donors will help bail out the Pakistan government remains to be seen.

America's aid program to Pakistan is in a state of considerable confusion, especially to the people here. Officials in Washington say economic aid is continuing to both West and East Pakistan on a case-by-case basis. But, in practice, this means the East is getting little help. The Nixon administration says it isn't granting any new military assistance to the central government of Pakistan. But goods contracted for prior to March 25 are still being sent, although the administration contends that these are generally sales of such things as communications equipment, not arms.

All this has left the Bengalis confused and angry, and it is awkward to be an American visitor in East Pakistan these days. Those few Bengalis who risk arrest by talking to a stranger invariably ask why America continues to ship supplies to the Pakistan army.

"We hear on Pakistan radio that two American ships are bringing ammunition to the army. But the Canadian people support our cause. We are grateful to the Canadian people," a teacher says, trying to be as polite as possible. "We understand that you must make money by selling guns to Pakistan, but please sell us rifles, too," a lawyer pleads.

A student says: "At Kent State you lost four students and the whole world protested. Here thousands of students have been killed by the army, but does the world care? You supply guns to the army. If we were European, you would care."

China, for short-term national reasons rather than long-term ideological ones, is the only other important power supporting Pakistan. "The cradle of democracy, America, and great revolutionary China are allies giving aid to the Pakistan army, which is suppressing our freedom and slaughtering our people. Why is this?" a college instructor asks.

During his meetings in Islamabad, Mr. Kissinger was pressed by some Dacca-based diplomats critical of America's friendly relations with the Pakistan government. Mr. Kissinger responded with a question. Would a change in American policy make East Pakistan independence likely in two years or five years rather than 10 years? There was no definitive answer. But whether Bangla Desh comes to pass in two, five, or 10 years, its citizens are likely to have long—and not very fond—memories of America's role in their revolutionary war.

French Auto Output Rises

PARIS—French auto production rose in the first half to 1,553,120 vehicles from 1,459,781 in the like period a year earlier, the Automobile Producers Federation reported. Exports rose to 848,421 from 805,141.