

The Ravaged People of East Pakistan

By ALVIN TOFFLER

A planetary catastrophe is taking place in Asia, a human disaster so massive that it could bathe the future in blood, not just for Asians, but for those of us in the West as well. Yet the response of the global community has been minimal at best. In the United States, the official response has been worse than minimal and morally numb.

I have just returned from Calcutta and the border of East Pakistan, where I conducted interviews with refugees avalanching into India as a result of the West Pakistani's genocidal attack on them. Since March 25, West Pakistani troops have bombed, burned, looted and murdered the citizens of East Pakistan in what can only be a calculated campaign to decimate them or to drive them out of their villages and over the border into India.

Part of the time I traveled with a Canadian parliamentary delegation. We saw babies skin stretched tight, bones protruding, weeping women who told us they would rather die today in India than return to East Pakistan after the tragedies they had witnessed, total wretchedness of refugee camps, and the unbelievable magnitude of this forced human migration—6.7 million refugees pouring into India within a matter of four months.

I saw Indian villages deluged by masses of destitute refugees, every available inch crammed with bodies seeking shelter from the blistering sun and the torrential rain. I saw refugees still streaming along the roads unable to find even a resting place. I saw miserable Indian villagers sharing their meager food with the latest frightened and hungry arrivals. I saw thousands

of men, women and babies lined up, waiting patiently under the sun for hours to get their rations. These pitiful few ounces of rice, wheat and dahl provide a level of nutrition so low that it will inevitably create protein breakdown, liver illness, and a variety of other diseases in addition to the cholera, pneumonia, bronchitis that are already rampant. I saw Indian relief officials struggling heroically, and with immense personal sympathy, to cope with the human tidal wave—and to do so on a budget of one rupee a day—about 13 cents per human.

It is now clear that famine will further devastate East Pakistan this fall, and that millions more will seek refuge in an India already staggering under the burden.

Under these circumstances, one is forced to protest the callousness and stupidity of American policy. On the one hand we promise India \$70 million in relief funds. On the other, we continue to supply arms to the same West Pakistani generals who launched the bloodbath, so that they can terrorize even more of their subjects into fleeing across the Indian border. The House vote this week to suspend aid, including military sales, to Pakistan is belated recognition of our sorry role.

In terms of *realpolitik*, the continuation of military aid to West Pakistan is supposed to buy us influence with the ruling junta, and help offset Red Chinese influence. (Ironically, the Red Chinese are also aiding the West Pakistani generals.)

Yet the heaviest stream of refugees is pouring into West Bengal, which is not only India's poorest and most overcrowded state, but the most politically unstable. Between Calcutta and Bon-



goan on the border, some 50 miles distant, I saw scarcely a house that didn't have a hammer and sickle painted on it. Maoists, anarchists, and conventional Marxists attack each other and the less radical parties with violence

as well as rhetoric. Strikes, demonstrations, and political assassinations are already a daily occurrence. West Bengal, even before the invasion of refugees, seemed about to explode.

By shipping arms to the West Pakistanis, we are partially responsible for pouring millions of hungry, sick and angry refugees directly into this tinderbox. This vastly increases the likelihood of a bloody upheaval on the Indian side of the border as well, in which the power of Maoist movements could only grow. Thus, even if one unquestioningly assumes the necessity to halt the spread of Chinese Communist influence, our policy seems idiotic. We hang on to the shreds of influence in West Pakistan at the cost of losing it in India. Worse, we pave the way for a bigger, bloodier and even more bitter Vietnam in Asia.

But there is a simpler, less political reason why our aid policy must be changed. On grounds of simple humanity, the failure of our Government to express official concern for the ravaged people of East Pakistan, its alliance with the undemocratic generals of Islamabad, and its cruel insistence on sending still more arms to the killers is morally repulsive.

The emergency in East Pakistan demands a more than minimal response. We need to pump immediate life-saving baby food, powdered milk, antibiotics, anticholera vaccines and similar supplies into India. But beyond that, decency and political realism both demand an immediate end to the arms shipments.

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