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CELEBRATION IN JESSORE: Bengalis cheering as Indian soldiers entered their city in East Pakistan yesterday. The Indians are now pursuing the retreating Pakistani forces.

Bengalis Dance and Shout At 'Liberation' of Jessore

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Special to The New York Times

JESSORE, Pakistan, Dec. 8—The Bengalis danced on the roofs of buses. They shouted independence slogans in the streets. They embraced, they cheered, they reached out in spontaneous emotion to clasp the hands of visitors from other lands.

For Bengalis, today was "liberation day" in Jessore—the strategic city in East Pakistan that for eight months, until yesterday, had been under the control of West Pakistani troops, who had come last spring to put down the Bengali rebellion.

The "liberators" are Indian

troops. They are almost as happy as the Bengali secessionists whom India supports, but they did not have much time today to stop and celebrate as they continued to chase the retreating West Pakistani forces southeast toward Khulna.

The Indians, too, waved and smiled and posed for pictures from the tops of their armored personnel carriers and tanks while they waited, four miles from Jessore, for orders to move farther down to the Khulna road.

"They are fleeing in panic,"

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OBSTACLE: Bengalis inspecting the ruins of a concrete bridge that was blown up by Pakistani soldiers as they retreated from the strategic city of Jessore in East Pakistan.



HELPING THE ENEMY: Indian soldiers carrying a wounded Pakistani soldier on a stretcher along a road near Jessore. Photographs for The New York Times by RAGHUBIR SINGH

Bengalis Dance in the Streets of 'Liberated' Jessore

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an infantry captain of the Seventh Punjab Regiment said of the Pakistani troops. "They've got good equipment and defenses, but their morale is in their boots."

Most of the Indian troops are as different from the Bengalis as the predominantly Punjabi troops from West Pakistan were because the Indian soldiers are also heavily Punjabi. But cultural gaps between the Bengali secessionists and their Indian backers have been temporarily erased.

The jubilant Bengalis have pitched in to sustain the Indian drive by working with Indian troops to throw pontoon bridges across rivers whose permanent bridges are being blown up by the Pakistanis as they pull back.

Pontoons Inflated

A major bridge has been expertly demolished on the main road from the Indian border to Jessore, which is 23 miles inside East Pakistan. Five of the six spans of the steel and concrete bridge lie in the Kabathani River, as does the railway bridge 200 yards downstream.

The Pakistanis blew these bridges two night ago as they retreated to Jessore.

The scene today at the site, which is the town of Jhinger-gacha nine miles from Jessore, looked like a cross between a bucket brigade and the building of the pyramids.

On the muddy bank below the blown road bridge, hundreds of Bengalis in long rows passed logs down the line to be laid as planking for the approaches to a new pontoon bridge. As they worked in machinelike precision, brawny troops from the army engineers inflated huge pontoons with a compressor, carried them through knee-deep muck to the water and then began placing the aluminum spans across them. In four hours, the bridge was finished.

Everyone seemed unusually happy—the Indian troops, the Bengali workers and even the sidewalk superintendents.

Joyous reunions were taking place in the town of Jhinger-gacha between friends and relatives who had fled at different times and in different directions to escape the Pakistani Army and are now slowly returning. Some had gone to refugee camps in India, others into hiding in villages in the interior of East Pakistan.

An Old Friend

This correspondent also had a reunion, standing on the one intact span of the old bridge. "You remember me?" a voice asked in English. I did. He was Lieut. Akhtar Uzzaman, a 25-year-old commander of a company of the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Forces)—the Bengali insurgents.

Lieutenant Akhtar had first turned up in an enclave held by the guerrillas southwest of

Jessore a month ago. He said then that it would take the Mukti Bahini at least two years to win the independence struggle. "That was if we fought alone," he said today. "Now we have heavy help."

"This is a historic bridge for me," he said suddenly. "I used to come here to sail around on the water in the moonlight—with my girl friend." He smiled over the memory.

As a jeep carrying foreign newsmen rode from Jhinger-gacha to Jessore, villagers at the roadside kept shouting "Joi Bangla! ("Victory for Bengal") and reached out to try to touch the hands of the foreigners.

Shouts From Buses

The atmosphere in Jessore was even more exuberant. As Indian armored cars rolled by toward the fighting some miles off, buses filled from seats to roofs exploded in shouts of "Shadhin Bangla!" ("Independent Bengal!") and "Sheik Mujib"—a cheer for Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the leader of East Pakistan who is imprisoned in West Pakistan.

Some Bengali boys danced in the streets. The green, red and gold flag of Bangla Desh was fluttering on many buildings and houses.

For all its decibels, the euphoria was tinged by sadness.

The crowds in the streets represent only a small part of the city's original population of 30,000. Some of those missing

will return. Others are dead. Missionaries and other independent sources say that the Pakistani troops killed more than 5,000 of Jessore's people.

There have been many reports, hard to confirm, that the Pakistanis are killing and committing atrocities as they retreat. One Indian officer said that the Pakistanis had buried a man alive in a town in the Jessore district. People in Jhinger-gacha said some school children had been shot.

Just outside Jessore, the body of a man was lying in a field by the road. His left arm had been cut off and his chest had been scraped raw. Local officials said that Pakistani troops had killed him because he had passed to the Indians information about Pakistani positions.

Almost no damage was done to Jessore and its military cantonment in the Indian sweep. Apparently, this was because the major battle was fought north of the city, at a place called Durgabati.

Maj. Gen. Dalbir Singh, commander of the Ninth Infantry Division, whose troops took Jessore, said that the Pakistanis put up "a very fanatic, gallant fight" at Durgabati, but that once his men had "punched a hole" through the Pakistani defenses, the Pakistanis began retreating rapidly and made no further stand in the cantonment or the city.

The general, who briefed

newsmen at his headquarters in the cantonment, said that by yesterday at noon, he had seized the entire area.

He said that one group of Pakistanis had retreated to a place 15 miles down the road to Khulna but that another group—about 300 men—had been cut off and engaged by his troops after getting only about four miles out of Jessore.

A drive and a walk toward the fighting found a column of 14 medium tanks, 40 armored personnel carriers (holding 400 to 500 men) waiting for orders to move on the Pakistani force.

Several ambulances were also standing by.

Indian officials insist that their casualties are only "light to moderate," but it seems clear—after visits to the front—that while the Pakistanis may be suffering sizable casualties, the Indian toll is considerably higher than any official cares to admit.

Not far from the line of tanks and personnel carriers, where one could hear machine-gun and mortar fire about half a mile off, an army doctor told a colleague: "Get everything ready. We've got 40 to 50 casualties coming."

One wounded Pakistani soldier was brought in from the fight. He had been hit in the chest and left arm and had lost a lot of blood.

As Indian troops carried him off on a stretcher, the Moslem soldier moaned groaned: "Allah, Allah, Allah."