Witness Calls E. Pakistan 'Terror Beyond Description'

By Lewis M. Simons
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A young American woman just returned home after two months' captivity in an East Pakistani prison said yesterday that the Bengali population has gone through "terror beyond imagination" during the army occupation of the province.

"It looks like Bangla Desh will be a reality," said Ellen Connell. "They'll get their freedom. And God knows they deserve it after the horrors they've been through.

Her main concern she said, now that India appeared near certain victory in East Pakistan, was the fate of some 10 million refugees. "It's a terrible problem," she said. "They're going to need all the help they can get."

Mrs. Connell, 23, was interviewed by telephone from the home of her parents in Dumont, N.J., after a flight from Calcutta, and "about two hours sleep last night." "I'm feeling absolutely marvelous," she said. "My husband, Paul, said she had lost weight, "about 20 to 30 pounds—her arms and legs are awfully thin," but that she was in good spirits.

Mrs. Connell and a British friend, Gordon Slaven, 20, were released from prison last Tuesday when Bengali guerrillas and Indian army forces entered the East Pakistani border town of Jessore. They had been imprisoned Oct. 9 after being captured by Pakistani soldiers in the town of Simulia.

Slaven and Mrs. Connell were members of Operation Omega, a London-based organization formed to aid the Bengalis of East Pakistan. When taken prisoners they were carrying 200 saris—clothing for the coming cold season. At the time of their capture, Connelly, a British schoolteacher, was himself interrogated inside East Pakistani guerrilla lines.

The Pakistanis, she said, had actually deserted Jessore the day before. "The Indian army was still there, but the squadron commander just walked into town, not even carrying a gun.

Mrs. Connell said she was one of 689 prisoners in the Jessore jail. Of this total, 550 were being held without trial, 29 women.

Most of the women arrested were Hindus who were seized when they returned to East Pakistan from Indian refugee camps to go about reestablishing their homes, she said. Pakistan had claimed that all refugees were welcome back to the East, but the war erupted.

[London Daily Telegraph correspondent Peter Gil reported from Calcutta that 50,000 refugees have returned to "liberated" areas in the last five days from camps in the Indian state of West Bengal. Quoting a "Western" relief worker, Gill said the refugees were returning "on their own initiative." India is supplying the returnees with blankets and food.

Discussing the plight of Bengali refugees in India, she said, "They must go back, they have no alternative. The Indians want them out.

Asked whether she believed India would forcibly eject the refugees, Mrs. Connell said, "No, they'll do it nicely. But they'll do it."

Dressed in a sari, Mrs. Ellen Connell arrives at London airport on her way from Calcutta to her parents home in Dumont, N.J. She was released last Tuesday after two months imprisonment in East Pakistan.