

# Day of Terror for 50,000 Bengalis: Thousands Were Slain, Homes Razed

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**KHOLAMURA, Pakistan, Dec. 28**—On Friday, Dec. 3, a dignified, wrinkled man named Hajiuddin who has a patriarchal white beard had just finished washing himself in preparation for evening prayer when a squad of West Pakistani soldiers burst into his family mosque.

It was the beginning of 24 hours of terror, Mr. Hajiuddin recalls, for his East Pakistani village of 2,000 and for some 50,000 Bengali farmers and fishermen in 70 surrounding villages.

Before the 200 soldiers finished the next day they had killed uncounted thousands, burned nearly every house to the ground and looted most of the stores in their campaign to put down the Bengali secessionist movement.

In the six villages in the area visited by this correspondent, the inhabitants estimated that each household had lost two or three members. There was hardly a house left standing.

Similar stories were told by men from other villages in the cluster, which lies on the west bank of the Buriganga River about 10 miles northwest of Dacca.

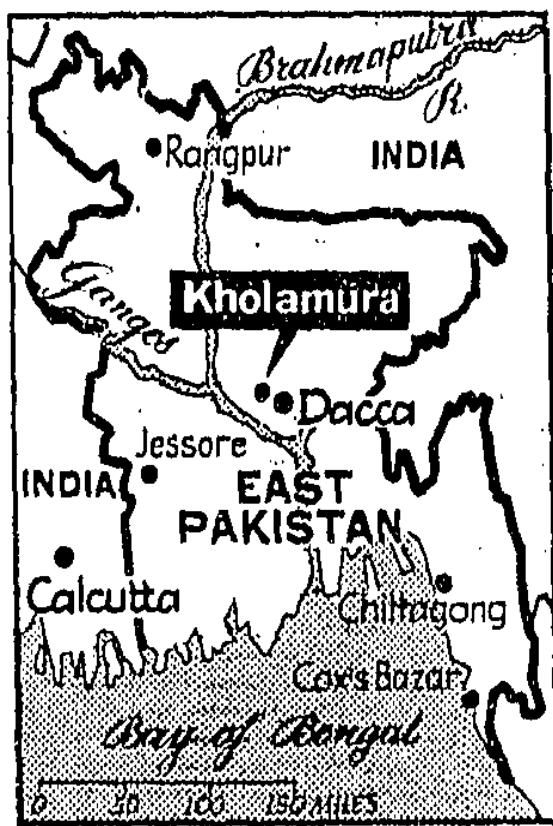
## 5 of 13 in Family Slain

Five of the 13 members of Mr. Hajiuddin's family were shot or bayoneted. His rice mill, storehouses and elaborate brick residence were burned. What the Pakistanis did to the women in his family he will not discuss.

"No man could repeat such a thing, it is too embarrassing," he said as he gazed over the ruins. The mango and banana trees in his yard were charred. On the river bank opposite dogs picked at a corpse.

"We had done nothing," he said softly, trying to explain why the troops came. "There were no guerrillas here, and no one in the village is involved in politics. Only Allah knows why man becomes mad."

The family mosque alone was spared, but in its owner's eyes it was defiled by the Pakistani troops who, though themselves Moslems, entered it on the holy day in their muddy boots and cursed the worshippers in vulgar language. Mosques are traditionally places of refuge and all who enter must remove their shoes.



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From the family compound the soldiers moved inland, burning every house in Kholamura to the ground.

## Child Shot as She Fled

Milah Dasi, a girl of 7 with large, sad eyes, was shot as she fled into the rice fields. Her face and chest were badly burned, leaving large scars, and her left arm is gone below the elbow. The terror of that night has also left her without a voice.

Jogesh Sarkar, a prosperous electrician, fled with his four children but left his eight cattle tied to the house. The soldiers piled straw on them and set them afire. Today a cow stood in front of the ruins, its disfigured body covered with charred skin.

At a neighboring house Myah Dasi, a young mother of three, could not run from the troops fast enough, the villagers related, because she was carrying her baby. A group of soldiers knocked her to the ground, took the suitcase she was carrying and began beating her and kicking her in the head. When she bled profusely they left her.

But, the villagers continued, they burned her mother alive in her thatched house and bayoneted her sister, who was also fleeing with a baby.

Half a mile away, across green fields of rice and mustard seed, the troops repeated the process in Khagail, a small village built on raised mud platforms to protect it from monsoon flooding.

"On that fateful night," Bahari Bhusan recalled, "I thought to myself that I am too old for anyone to bother with, so I stayed in my store."

The first group that came into his tiny grocery took his cash box, he said. The second group took all his rice, sugar and cooking oil. When the third group could find nothing to loot, the store was set afire.

"They told me to sit still and they would not hurt me," Mr. Bhusan said bitterly, "but the flames got hotter and I ran outside and hid under the roots of a big banyan tree."

A stooped man with sunken cheeks and gnarled hands, he is grateful to be alive, but he does not know what he will do "I lost everything I had," he said. "I'm too old to start all over again."

Many of the younger, more energetic villagers are beginning to rebuild their houses. From the rice fields came the sound of numerous hammers beating charred corrugated iron.

In most of the villages makeshift shanties of old iron sheets and burned timber have sprung up over the foundations of destroyed houses. The rice the villagers managed to hide from the troops is being spread out to dry.

Watching a heavily laden skiff glide by on the river, Mr. Hajiuddin said, "Once I ate fish and rice" — a traditional sign of prosperity. "Now I have only rice, but I am happy. At last I am a free man and can sleep at night. Our fear is gone."