The Killing at Hariharpara
Survivors Say 20,000 Bengalis Were Executed

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HARIHARPARA, Bangladesh, Jan. 9
The survivors are returning to the killing ground.

And the survivors of the killing at Hariharpara are among the luckiest of any who escaped the Pakistani army. For this village near Dacca was not just a scene of brutality. It was an extermination camp.

In one month, April, Pakistani firing squads are reported to have systematically eliminated 20,000 Bengalis here.

According to eye witnesses, this is what happened:

Beginning at sundown each evening, the soldiers dragged the Bengalis, men and women, bound together in batches of six and eight, to the Buriganga riverfront to be killed.

While their executioners loomed above them on a wooden pier they were made to wade out into knee-deep water. Then the rifles opened up. And the firing and the screaming shattered the hot night air until dawn.

Each morning, village boatmen were forced to bring their high-prowed craft into the bloody water and haul the bodies out to midstream, where they were cut loose to drift downriver.

Victims were brought to Hariharpara by trucks from other villages, from the nearby town of Narayanganj and from the East Pakistani capital of Dacca, eight miles to the north.

Their hands tied behind their backs, they were kept prisoners in a large riverside warehouse of the Pakistan National Oil Company until their time came to die.

See EXECUTE, A10, Col. 1

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EXECUTE, From Al

Mohammed Masud, the of-

ficer in charge of the Fatatuf

Police District, was one of

many local people who wit-

tnessed the massacres.

"I can't forget it. I was

pointing to a small yellow

building a hundred yards

upstream from the oil-skid

pick."

"There is nothing I can

tell you that would fully

describe the horror of this

butchery," said Masud, an

articulate, man of 48 with

thick gray hair and the de-

mure of a school teacher.

"It became a crime to be a

Bengal," he went on. "The

soldiers would say: 'Are you

a Bengal?' and if you were

you would be killed."

One morning, he said, he

saw a thousand heads hewn

in the water before the

boatmen came. "There were

so many that the Pakistanis

never noticed one man who

slipped into the water as if

death and then swam quietly

upstream to my headquar-

ters. We clothed him and

helped him slip away. I

think he is still alive."

Masud said there were

two Pakistani army officers

in charge of the execu-

tions. He identified them as

Captains Fawzi Parvez.

"I will never forget them," he

said as he pointed to their

names in a thick blue

ledger.

"The barbarity. The bloody

slaughters."

The special targets of the

executioners were members

of Sheikh Mujibur Rah-

man's Awami League, stu-

dents, professional people

and others of some accom-

plishment. Masud said, on

April 18, he recalled, Capt.

Fawzi ordered him to round

up all the Awami League-

ners in Harirparwa for summary

execution, or he would do it.

"I decided I couldn't do

it," he said. "I went home to

await my fate. But the has-

band never came for me. I

suppose he was getting his

fill of killing anyway."

Vultures

For three weeks after the

massacres had tipped over

the banks of the river the

water were thick with dog's

vultures and shiny black

crows, all gorging on human

flesh. "They were so glutted

they could not dispose of it

all," he said.

While their huts are dis-

rectly opposite the Paki-

stani soldiers, Masud and

the villagers reserve a large

measure of loathing for a

group of enemy within the

350 Biharis who lived among

them.

"My god," said Masud.

"The Biharis did everything

the soldiers told them to

kill people. Catch those.

Finger some others. My God, what the Biharis

did to us."

The Biharis came to live

at Harirparwa in 1947, at the

time of Pakistan's parti-

tion from India. They were

a Muslim minority in the

village of a thousand Ben-

gali Hindus. Why there

were inevitable differences

over the years, the two

groups generally lived in

peace. In many parts of the

country, the ambitious Biharis

have incurred the dislike

and envy of the Bengalis

through their comparative

wealth. But in Harirparwa

both groups were equally

poor.

The Biharis lived in tiny

split-bamboo and metal-

roofed huts while the Bi-

haris lived in a maze of

dark, dank apartments in a

crumbling brick building

on the roadside.

Sitting in one of the calf-

like apartments, now used

as headquarters by a band

of 35 Mukti Bahini guerril-

las, Masud and several vil-

lagers recalled how the deli-

cate ethnic balance was irre-

versibly smashed. At about

1 p.m. March 26, just hours

after the Pakistani army

launched its merciless crash-

down in Daca, about 300

soldiers marched into the

village from their camps at

two nearby vegetable oil

mills and a power plant.

The soldiers gave weapons

to the Biharis. Then, to-

gether, they began looting

Bengali houses. The people

scattered in fear but came

back after the troops left.

The next day the troops

returned. By then, the vil-

lage's one land-owning fam-

ily, "our rich family," had

fled. The soldiers burst into

their house, shut to death a

young relative of the family

and his friend. "The Biharis

had told the soldiers they

were there," a villager said.

The killing at Harirparwa

had begun. The Biharis

seized their pitiful few

belongings and ran from

their village. Most of them

traveled, carrying thin

mudly roads and over fields

to Aragata, an Indian bor-

der post where the houses

were housed in refugee camps.

As the refugees fled

from Harirparwa, the sol-

diers and the Biharis sacked

the village, stripping two

small brick Hindu temples

of everything from a silver

image of Lord Krishna to

the windows and doors,

burning out the only three

brick residences and disman-

tling the 200 huts to sell the

handcarved beams and

ruzzed roof sheets. "Our

village became a den of the

Biharis," said one of the

Mukti.

Then, after many months,

came the two-week war be-

tween the armies of India

and Pakistan and the deci-

sive Indian victory which

created the independent Ben-

gali nation.

On Dec. 15, a day before the

war ended, the Biharis

fled from Harirparwa to Bi-

har colonies at Mohan-

mudir, Aminpur and

the Adamjee jute mill, on the

outskirts of Daca. They are

still there, surrounded by In-

dian troops and living in ter-

ror of Bihari reprisals.

Refugees Returning

Some of the refugees are

returning to Harirparwa. So

far about 300 of the original

1,000 refugees have made a

trip back from Aragata.

Some of them were pro-

vided transport and a few

supplies by the Indian gov-

ernment and the United Na-

tions. Others returned as

they had gone on foot and

with almost nothing.

A few -- no one seems to

know exactly how many --

died in the camps and along

the treacherous route. Oth-

ers are afraid to leave the

security of the camps for

the uncertainty of life in

their homelands. The Ben-

gladesh government has
given them a small amount

of aid for making beds and

some men earn a few rupees

by working as day la-

bourers in the surrounding ar-

eas.

The village's neat rice

paddies and fields are fal-

ing and untended, the last

crop carried off by the Bi-

haris.

Most of those who have

come back are living in the

ramshackle apartment build-

ings. Officials have been able

to save together a few ma-

terials to rebuild some bam-

boos.

In the open field where

their houses used to be there

is nothing. The low, re-

ctangular mounds that

were the mud floors are gro-

ing like row upon row of

garves in an abandoned

cemetery.

An old woman dressed in

a ragged blue sari gently

launched a long bamboo

stake jutting from the cor-

ner of one of the mounds.

"This was my home," she

said. "This is where she went."

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