Bengalis’ Land a Vast Cemetery

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DACA, Pakistan, Jan. 23 — “On this graveyard, we shall build our golden Bengal.” So reads a cardboard sign hung on a flagpole in the city of Khulna.

Not far from the flagpole, human bones, picked clean by vultures and dogs, still litter the roadside at various execution sites where the Pakistani Army and its collaborators killed Bengalis.

Bloodstained clothing and tufts of human hair cling to the brush on these killing grounds. Children too young to understand play grotesque games with the skulls and other bones.

This correspondent found, on a recent tour of the countryside, that almost every town in East Pakistan had one or more of these graveyards, where the Pakistanis killed hundreds of thousands of Bengalis, apparently often on a daily basis, throughout their nine months of military occupation. The killing ended last month when the Pakistani forces, all from West Pakistan, were defeated by the Indian Army and Bengali guerrillas in a 14-day war.

Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the Bengali leader who was recently freed from Pakistani imprisonment and came to Dacca to become Prime Minister in the Government of Bangladesh, has estimated that the Pakistanis killed three million of his people. While foreign diplomats and other independent observers do not generally put the figure this high, all say it was at least several hundred thousand and many put it at more than one million.

Furthermore, these observers say that if one counts all the deaths that relate to the Pakistani repression — such as the deaths among the nearly 10 million refugees who fled to India and among the millions of others disrupted inside East Pakistan — Sheik Mujib’s estimate may well be accurate. The Bengali leader has ordered a

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Evidence that a mass killing has been discovered at Khulna (1) and Dacca (2).

The Bengal countryside Is a Vast Cemetery

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house-to-house census to get a precise figure.

In Khulna, one of the Pak-
stani execution sites was a road on the edge of town that leads to the river. Though truckloads of skeleton bodies have been carried away from the proper burial sites, bones are still scattered along the roadside for over a mile. Many Bengali for-
eigners who live in Khulna say that at least 10,000 peo-
ple were killed at this site alone.

The execution area was off limits to the press, but the Khulna radio station is less than 100 yards from the road, and Bengali foreigners at the station, who say they were kept working at gunpoint through out the occupation, witnessed most of the killings either through the windows or from the front steps of the station.

Daily Killings Recalled

"They killed some people every day," said Mokheles Rahman, a radio engineer who was a con-
municant. "Sometimes five or six, Sometimes 20. On one day, 1,000."

"On Sept. 3, they killed the most—1,000 people. They fired indiscriminately into the crowd, most continuously for three hours. Then they threw many of the bodies into the river and they were carried out to sea."

Their voices were choked and their fists clenched as the radio station employees re-
called the murders and told of visiting engineers fortery and screaming in pain before they died.

One engineer said that sometimes the Pakistanis had put seven or eight Bengali prisoners in the same room and, then, to save ammunition, fired one bullet through all of them. After the attack they killed the Bengalis with bayonet charges.

Another announcer, Mazedul Haque, 25, vividly re-
membered the day the Pakistanis killed 500 people—"by shooting and by cutting their throats with long knives and bayonets."

"First the soldiers came and told us to come out and watch," he said, "They said, 'Come and see how we kill your people.' They were sharpening their knives on the stones. They didn't hold any way of torturing us mentally."

"All those months," Mr. Liwan, another 25-year-old tech-
cnician, said, "thousands of vultures were flying over our head. Now they are gone."

It almost seems, as one goes from place to place, that madness is more gruesome than the one before.

In Dacca, a 12-year-old boy, Habib Ramatullah, said he had seen Pakistani sol-
diers kill a man to death after hanging him upside down from a tree in front of the district courthouse. The boy said one of the judges

had died of a heart attack as he hung.

All the evidence now indi-
cates that the killings were on a wider scale, and more sadistic than foreign news-
exmen and other independent observers of the occupation had earlier thought.

According to confirmed re-
ports, the Pakistani troops in nearly every sector kept Beng-
ali women and children alive, often making them remain naked continuously in their bunkers. After the rebels surrendered on Dec. 16, the mutilated bodies of many of these women were found.

Other independent reports established that the Pak-
istani also killed many, if not most, of the Indian soldiers they took prisoner. In these cases, too, bodies were mutil-
ated.

Maj. Gen. M. S. Brar, com-
mander of India's Fourth In-
fantry Division, lost some of his men this way at Kushia. He says that at the time of the surrender, the opposing Pakistani commander, a Maj. Gen. Ansari, said he was un-
aware of the killing of any Indian prisoners. "I told him," General Brar declared, "Either you lost complete control of your troops or you are a bloody liar." It seemed obvious that General Brar be-
lieved the latter.

Some Opposed Killings

A Baptist missionary from the Myrinsingh district, Ian Hawley, reported that the Paki-
istani troops, as they re-
etreated, beat Indian for-
tunes and the guerrilla fight-
ers, killed their own wounded in a hospital or injured in a carrier, razakars — the home -guard collaborators they had trained and armed — by locking them in a building, throwing kero-
sene on the building and then setting it on fire.

In a few areas, the local Paki-
sastani commanders were apparently not in accord with the massacre's policy and tried to keep down the amount of slaughter. In Fa-
irdpur, for example, residents say that the officer who was in charge of the district for the last five months, occupation, Maj. Ata Moham-
med, was a comparatively good man.

But the officers who pre-
ceded him were evidently different.

At a Hindu temple on the outskirts of Faridpur, which the Pakistsani troops had de-
stroyed with dynamite, almost the entire stone floor around the altar was burnt to a dull red stain. The stain is from blood, for this was one of the places of worship of the Hindu god.

In the weeks since the fighting ended, local Hindus and their Moslem friends have tried many times, with-
out success, to scrub out the stain.

The minority Hindu com-
munity was a special target of the Moslem Pakistani Army.

"Many times during those months," said Jagdish Guha, a Hindu gas station manager who flew from Faridpur to live in the interior, "my mind was disturbed. What is the answer? Only that they were animals. There were no religious considerations. The Moslems and Hindus and Christians were brothers."

Mr. Guha said a group of save helping clean up the debris at the Hindu temple compound. Around at least 300 hundred Hindus and Moslems in Farid-
pur, he said softly, "I watched the Hindu priests at this tem-
ple feed the poor of all faiths for 40 years. And then the Moslem soldiers came and killed them. How can they call themselves Moslems? That is why I am helping now."

The yellow "Its" that the Pakistanis painted on the doors of Hindu homes and shops are still there, but the Hindu are slowly returning to Faridpur and other towns — the men first to survey the situation.

In every village and town, shuttered shops and houses and fields lying fallow are testimony to the numbers of people who were killed or who fled and have not yet returned.

Many of the elite were murdered, some in the last few days, before surrender, apparently as part of official Pakistani policy to try to de-
connect the Bengali leader-
ship.

Protestors, students, politi-
cal activists, journalists, engi-
neers and other technicians were all targets.

Every day, new mass graves are discovered. Every day, the newspapers run long lists of notices asking for information about missing persons.

In the capital, Dacca, many executives have been found — particularly in sections like Mirpur and Moham-
medpur, districts that are populated largely by non-Bengalis who collaborated with the Paki-

One corner of the zoo in Mirpur is strewn with skele-
tons with hands tied behind

backs. Many of the animals were also killed.

In the Sylhet neighbor-
hood of Mirpur, skeletons seem to lie beneath every bush and down every well. On the floor of a Bengali passa-

unruished house stands a large pile of crushed bones—
crushed, apparently, to pre-
vent identification. A well 60 feet deep is filled to within two feet of the top with human bones.

Family Sleeps Under Tree

Zebed Ali, a 35-year-old father of seven who fled Sylhet in the early days of the occupation, has come back to try to revive his small firewood business. His hut no longer exists, and he and his family are sleeping under a tree—but they have picked a tree some distance outside Sylhet, "It is too frightening to sleep there," Mr. Ali says.

A nine-year-old, Nazruul Islam, guided an American visitor to a field in Sylhet and said he thought his father was buried there, but he did not know just where.

His family fled Sylhet when the army came, he said, but his father returned later to try to harvest their rice, and that was when the Paki-

..."Dusk descended, the boy wandered through the field, pointing out corpses of bones with scraps of clothes and hair clinging to them. His eyes grew larger and his behavior was nervous and odd as he seemed to look for his father."

"Dig anywhere here," he whispered, "you will find more bodies."