

Rebel Leader Arrested in Pakistan War

NEW DELHI, March 27 (Saturday) (AP)—Radio Pakistan announced today that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested only hours after he proclaimed independence for East Pakistan. Civil war raged in East Pakistan, claiming heavy casualties in some areas.

The radio, quoting an official announcement made in

in the East Pakistani capital of Dacca, said Sheikh Mujibur was taken into custody at his residence in the city at 3:30 p.m. (EST) Friday.

The 51-year-old Awami League leader was arrested as the West Pakistan-dominated army sought to reassert its control in the Eastern province.

Reports reaching neighboring India indicated the army was gaining the upper hand in the battle against East Pakistan citizens and militia-men.

United News of India said in a dispatch from the Indian border town of Agartala that the army had occupied the headquarters of the East Pakistani Rifles, the provincial militia, in Comilla district, after a prolonged fight.

The army also was reported to have occupied police stations in East Pakistan's Comilla and Noakhali districts. The agency said there were heavy casualties on both sides.

[The Press Trust of India reported at least 10,000 civilians were killed in bitter fighting throughout East Pakistan as troops used tanks and artillery, according to Reuter.]

Radio Pakistan reported that a 24-hour curfew imposed in Dacca Friday was lifted for a nine-hour period this morning, indicating the army was in control of the city.

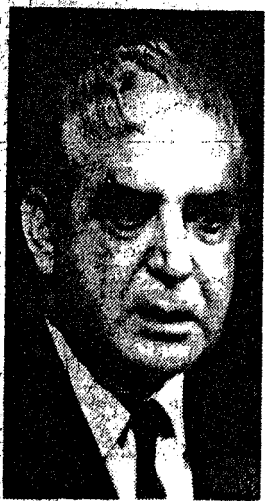
President Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan imposed martial law in the province in an attempt to put down what amounted to civil war.

"I have ordered the armed forces to do their job and fully restore the authority of the government," Yahya said in a 20-minute broadcast.

He said Sheikh Mujibur and other Awami League leaders were "enemies of Pakistan."

Yahya accused Sheikh Mujibur of treason and outlawed all political parties including the powerful Awami League, headed by Mujibur, which won a majority of seats in last December's election for a national assembly.

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YAHYA KHAN
... sends troops

Leningrad Trial Account Is Published

By Stephen S. Rosenfeld
Washington Post Staff Writer

A detailed courtroom account of the secret trial of a group of Soviet Jews in Leningrad last December, culminating in dramatic vows that "some day (we) shall still live in Israel," has reached the West and is being published in The Washington Post today.

Going far beyond the garbled fragments that filtered out at the time and since, this Russian-language account makes explicit that the fundamental accusation against the nine Jewish and two non-Jewish defendants was not hijacking, as commonly believed, but attempting to leave the Soviet Union without official permission.

The Jews in the group planned to abandon in Sweden a 12-seater commercial plane they had hoped to divert from a local Soviet route, then proceed to Israel, the country

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The assembly never met because of the constitutional crisis.

As Yahya spoke, radio monitors in India picked up a message broadcast from clandestine radio transmitters inside East Pakistan announcing independence for the province—which is separated from West Pakistan by 1,000 miles of Indian territory.

"The sheikh has declared the 75 million people of East Pakistan as citizens of the sovereign independent Bengali nation," Indian monitors quoted an announcer as saying.

The radio station used by the sheikh called itself the Voice of Independent Bengal. It broadcast an appeal to the United Nations and to other Asian and African governments to rally to its cause.

The Indian news agency PTI said last night that forces loyal to Sheikh Mujibur had captured the Chittagong station of Radio Pakistan, forcing Pakistani government troops to retreat, after fierce fighting, according to Reuters.

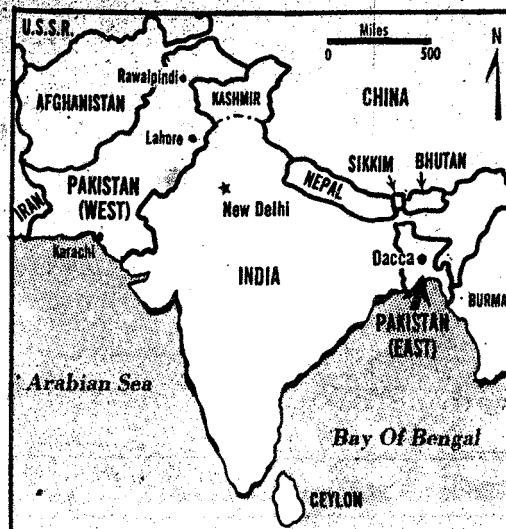
Reliable reports in Calcutta said at least 10,000 troops from West Pakistan had landed in eastern ports, bringing the total stationed there to about 70,000.

United News of India, in a dispatch from the east Indian state of Assam, reported heavy casualties in the provincial capital of Dacca.

The news agency dispatch also quoted reports from the border that a railway bridge had been blown up and a railway station destroyed near the Indian frontier city of Agartala.

Other reports along the 1,349-mile border between India and East Pakistan told of battles involving West Pakistan-dominated troops and East Pakistan police and a paramilitary organization known as the Pakistan Rifles.

Direct communications from East Pakistan were blacked out as Yahya ordered press censorship throughout the province.



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The Washington Post

gathered in thousands to seize the local airfield.

A large number of people were reported killed in the same city when a crowd attacked the jail in an attempt to free persons arrested by martial law authorities earlier in the day, the agency added.

A State Department spokesman in Washington said Americans reaching the U.S. consulate in East Pakistan had reported that Pakistani troops and tanks had spread through Dacca and "extensive firing, including the use of tanks," was under way.

Press officer Charles Bray said reports coming from Consul General Arch K. Blood in Dacca were fragmentary. "We are watching developments closely and with concern," Bray said.

There have been no reports of harm to about 1,100 Americans, including 200 officials and their dependents now in East Pakistan.

The struggle now going on in East Pakistan is part of the African-Asian movement for liberation from colonial dominations, the broadcast said.

Rivalry has existed between East and West Pakistan ever since Britain carved the dominion from British India nearly 24 years ago.

Separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory are East Pakistan with a population of more than 70 million Bengali-speaking Moslems and West Pakistan, an arid country bigger than Texas and Louisiana together, inhabited by 50 million Urdu-speaking Moslems.

West Pakistan has 85 per cent of the nation's land and only 46 per cent of its people.

Sheikh Mujibur has been campaigning for independence for East Pakistan's 70 million people and freedom from what many believe is exploitation by West Pakistani authorities.

In his 20-minute broadcast, Yahya declared that the non-cooperation movement begun three weeks ago by Mujibur and his Awami League followers "was an act of treason."

"In view of the grave situation prevailing in the country," he said, "I have decided to ban all political parties including the Awami League." Yahya said he still hoped to reach a solution of the conflict, and "my aim still remains the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people."

"I should have taken action against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his collaborators weeks ago, but I kept on tolerating one illegal action after another because of my keenness to arrive at a settlement," Yahya said. "But Sheikh Mujibur failed to respond in a constructive manner."

India's Parliament Hears Bengal Plea

By Dilip Mukerjee

Special to The Washington Post

NEW DELHI, March 26—India is officially maintaining a studied silence over today's tragic developments in East Pakistan but there is no mistaking widespread sympathy and support for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his cause.

As news reached here of battles between President Yahya Khan's troops and Bengali civilians in East Pakistan towns, left-wing members of Parliament interrupted proceedings this afternoon to demand that New Delhi should extend full moral support to East Bengalis in their struggle against military oppression. One member asked that India raise matter in the United Nations and arrange for overland transit facilities for Bengalis now in fear of their lives in West Pakistan.

Government spokesmen declined to make any comment but it was learned that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has called a cabinet meeting Saturday morning to discuss what India's response should be.

Overflights across India between Pakistan's two wings are already banned because of the hijacking of an Indian aircraft to Pakistan in January. This obviates the embarrassment India would have faced

later that at least eight persons were killed and more than 100 injured when Pakistani troops fired on demonstrators at Ramgarh near the border with the Indian state of Tripura.

The agency said that at

Rajshahi, 125 miles north of Calcutta, troops shot their way into the local radio station, killing or arresting employees who offered resistance.

At Jhinaidaha in the Jessore district, the agency said troops opened fire on residents who

War Rages in Nation

now if Gen. Yahya had wanted to rush troops across Indian air space.

Most observers here feel that Yahya has had to give in to hawks in his army and bureaucracy who ruled out a compromise settlement with Rahman. The decision in favor of showdown was probably taken at the end of last month when Yahya abruptly announced postponement of the

inaugural session of the newly elected national assembly.

But Yahya went through motions of negotiating with Mujibur in Dacca for 11 days, these observers say, to buy time to move reinforcements.

In an editorial today, the leading English daily, the Times of India, says the battle in East Pakistan can end only in one way—independence and sovereignty for East Bengalis.

"The issue is of direct concern to New Delhi because the rise of an extremist movement in its backyard cannot prejudice India's security," it said.

The Statesman, another major daily, said that "it is highly unlikely that repressive measures will immediately succeed in breaking down Bengali resistance. The result will almost certainly be violence on a large scale."