

## Sticks and Spears Against Tanks

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NEW DELHI, March 28- The people of East Pakistan, armed with sticks, spears and homemade rifles, are mounting a resistance movement against a military force from West Pakistan that is armed with planes, bombs, tanks and heavy artillery.

The resistance, which began after a surprise attack on the civilian population by the Government force three nights ago, sprang from a nonviolent drive for provincial autonomy.

The East Pakistanis tried to claim the majority political power they had won in the elections last December, and the army moved to prevent this.

Earlier this month, Maj. Saddiqui Salik, public relations officer for the martial-law administration in East Pakistan, was telling foreign newsmen about the role of the Pakistani Army in dealing with disobedient civilians.

"When you call in the army," said the tall West Pakistani officer, "it's a last resort. The army would shoot to kill."

The remark was prophetic. Two weeks later, starting last Thursday night, the Pakistani Army apparently began killing anybody who moved in the streets of Dacca or who shouted defiance from a window. The troops used artillery, machine guns, recoilless rifles and rockets against East Pakistani civilians to crush the Bengali movement for self-rule.

It seems certain that thousands of Bengalis will be killed, but their dedication to the self-rule movement and to their leader, Sheik Mujibur Rahman, is deep-so deep that it is questionable whether what is virtually a foreign army from a region 1,000 miles away can control East Pakistan indefinitely.

East Pakistan and West Pakistan are divided by the northern breadth of India. Their peoples have different languages, cultures, physical appearances. Ever since the country was carved out of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 on the basis of the Moslem religion shared by the two regions, the West has dominated the East.

The army comes from the West, big business is concentrated there, the per capita. income is higher, prices are lower. Everything is better for the 55 million West Pakistanis than for the 75 million East Pakistanis. Many Bengalis, as the people of East Pakistan are known, had fled the city in the last few weeks for home villages in the interior. Foreign newsmen, including this correspondent, were expelled from East Pakistan on Saturday. Their film and notebooks were confiscated in thorough body and luggage searches.

But from the spotty and hard-to-evaluate reports now coming across the border into India, it appears that the army is intensifying its attempt at suppression and that resistance among the Bengalis is growing.

Most of the foreign exchange earnings and taxes went for development projects in the West and for the support of the army, which consumes more than 60 per cent of the national budget. Fewer than 10 per cent of the troops are Bengalis.

IN EMBATTLED DACCA: West Pakistani soldiers driving through the city Friday morning. Through loudspeaker, they ordered civilians to take down the black flags that dissidents had raised in defiance. This televised scene, from film smuggled out of East Pakistan by A.B.C. News, is one of the first views of Dacca since fighting began.

The army has acquired most of its weapons from the United States, the Soviet bloc and Communist China. So far, none of the major powers have criticized the army's action in East Pakistan.

Heavy secrecy surrounded the political talks in Dacca whose breakdown was followed by the army's surprise attack. But the

bits and pieces that have come to light make it clear that the power establishment in the West never intended to let Sheik Mujib win a significant measure of autonomy for East Pakistan.

Many observers believe that the dominant political leader of West Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was used by the army and major West Pakistan business families to sabotage the talks so that they could keep control of East Pakistan.

President Aga Mohammad, Yahya Khan, whose image as a politically decent general sympathetic to the Bengali's grievances, has changed drastically-said had because Sheik let an agreement to be negotiated at a session of the newly elected National Assembly. But Sheik Mujib knew that he had to get an agreement in writing before the Assembly met.

The talks dragged on for 10 days and the Bengali "bush telegraph" said that they were taking too long, that something was wrong.

During this time, Sheik Mujib and his Awami League defied the martial law administration by leading a non violent movement of non- cooperation with the virtually unanimous support of the population.

Sheik Mujib's followers took over certain Government agencies, closed others and ignored directives, such as the one that ordered civilian defense employes to report to work or face 10 years "rigorous imprisonment." The green, red and gold flag of Bangla Desh-Bengali for Bengal Nation-was un- veiled and militant students and workers began demanding complete independence, not simply semi autonomy. But those buoyant days for the Bengalis ended quickly. After initial reports of progress the talks slowed and fears of an army crackdown revived.

Troops were flown in daily from West Pakistan and many Bengalis began to believe that the negotiations were being deliberately pro- longed to give the Government in West Pakistan time to get heavy reinforcements to the East.

Clashes between civilians erupted in several towns and a number of deaths were re- ported. Sheik Mujib denounced what he called

"a reign of terror in a statement distributed last Thursday just before 7 P.M. Four hours later, the troops moved into the streets and began firing.

No one knows whether the 51-year-old Sheikh Mujib is alive and free, as the clandestine radio of Bangla Desh asserts, or under arrest, as the army insists. But alive or dead, he is the symbol of resistance in East Pakistan.

In addition to the unconfirmed reports of organized operations against the West Pakistani troops, there are some clearer clues that there is resistance.

On Friday morning, 15 rigid new regulations were issued, including one aimed at the noncooperation movement. All Government employees were ordered to report to work by 10 A.M. Saturday or face trial in a military court.

At 12 noon Saturday, radio Pakistan announced that all department heads had to submit the names of absentees to martial-law headquarters. There seemed no reason for this order unless large numbers of Bengalis were still staying away from their Government jobs.

To the witnesses of the first night of killing in Dacca, it seemed that the Bengalis were lost against the firepower of the troops. But there are two major factors from the Bengalis' side aside from the possibility of foreign intervention of which there has been no hint.

One is that the naiveté of these people was buried with those who died the first night. Bengalis have always talked about winning their rights, about fighting back the time is coming" was a phrase often heard but now they are going grimly about the job.

Perhaps just as important is the geography of East Pakistan. The land is a soft-soiled plain veined with thousands of tributaries of the Ganges-Brahmaputra system that make cross-country travel difficult all the time- and impossible in many areas during the five months of the monsoon rains.

Few of East Pakistan's 55 thousand square miles are surveyed or mapped. A guerrilla force could make life a misery for troops who did not speak the language or know the river currents.

Some rivers even change their course occasionally during the monsoons. Destroying one ferry could strand a battalion. Bombing would not be effective, even if Pakistan had the bombs and planes for such an offensive.

The population is widely scattered, often living in small family compounds rather than in towns or villages. There are few good roads or railroads. Telephone and telegraph communications are limited and, in some areas, nonexistent. Chittagong, on the Bay of Bengal, the only port where troop, and supply ships of any size can dock, is linked to Dacca by roads, railroads and ferries that are extremely vulnerable.

The exact number of West Pakistani troops in East Pakistan is unknown. Some diplomatic sources estimate that there were 25,000 before the crisis. Since then, troop ships have been dispatched from Karachi and one report said that some had reached Chittagong. Daily flights also carry troops from the West.

Fresh estimates place the troop strength at over 30,000 and some reports put it as high as 60,000, though this seems high.

Another problem for the West Pakistanis is the fact that all flights must take the long 2,800-mile route by way of Ceylon. India banned Pakistani flights over her territory in early February after two Kashmiris hijacked an Indian Airlines plane to Pakistan and blew it up there.

If Ceylon were to change her mind and deny Pakistan landing and refueling rights, the military offensive would be badly hurt. The Pakistanis are already low on airplane fuel and one recent report said they had asked Burma for supplies.

Yet in the end, the terrain may be the decisive factor, for while the army may keep a grip for some time on the cities Dacca, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi it seems doubtful it could move effectively in the primitive interior.

*The New York Times, March 29, 1971*