

# TIME

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## BANGLADESH: Vengeance in Victory

For nearly nine months Pakistani soldiers routinely raped Bengali women, razed houses and shot unarmed villagers in a campaign of terror designed to intimidate and pacify East Pakistan. That brutality became one of India's justifications for attacking in the East, and critics of U.S. policy pointed it out as a reason why the U.S. should not be associated with the military regime of Islamabad. Sadly, but perhaps inevitably, brutal acts of revenge by the other side are following India's military triumph and the establishment of what is now the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

In Dacca last week, a rally held to seek the release of the imprisoned Bangladesh leader Sheik Mujibur Rahman suddenly became a public execution. Four trussed-up men who had been accused of assaulting Bengali women were brought to a public park near the Dacca Race Course, where the rally was being held. As thousands of spectators cheered, the men were tortured for more than an hour and then bayoneted to death. Other prisoners, particularly razakars, or members of the army-backed East Pakistani militia, have been summarily executed since the war ended. What distinguished the Dacca incident was the fact that Western newsmen were on hand to record the scene and send out photographs despite the determined censorship efforts of Indian authorities.

To deter that kind of visceral revenge all across Bangladesh, Indian troops were doing their diplomatic best last week to disarm the guerrilla Mukti Bahini, who now number about 100,000. The Bengalis' desire for retaliation against their oppressors was intensified by evidence that Pakistani soldiers had committed atrocities even after it was apparent that the war had been lost. In Dacca, Indian troops discovered a mass grave containing the mutilated bodies of 125 of the 400 leading Bengali intellectuals who had been kidnaped in the last days of the war. They had apparently been killed a few hours before the Indians took control of the city. If Bengalis seek revenge for such murders, they may slaughter many of the estimated 1,500,000 Biharis—or non-Bengali Moslems—who now constitute an imperiled minority in the new state.

With considerable uncertainty, Bangladesh last week also took the first steps toward establishing an independent government. Since West Pakistan's suppression last March of the Awami League, which had pressed for autonomy in the East, a Bangladesh government in exile has been working from inside India. Last week its leaders flew home from Calcutta's Dum Dum Airport in an Indian air force Caribou, one of the few aircraft that could land on Dacca airport's bombed-out runway. Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam, Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed and Foreign Minister Khandikar Moshtaque were wildly welcomed by 100,000 Daccans who had flocked to the airport to meet them. One of the incoming government's first acts was to pay a call on the wife of Sheik Mujib, who is still a captive of West Pakistan.

Formidable Tasks. The tasks facing the new leaders of Bangladesh are formidable to say the least. So far, their government has been recognized only by the kingdom of Bhutan and by India. Soon relief supplies from the U.S. and other nations will arrive to begin the task of rebuilding the country and providing for the 10 million Bengali refugees who will be swarming back from West Bengal. Longer-term economic aid for Bangladesh development, however, will have to wait until the government proves its viability. Politically there is trouble ahead, too. Growing radical factions in the youthful Mukti Bahini clearly are not content with the prospect of being ruled by the middle-of-the-roaders of the Awami League. Independence, in short, appears to be just the beginning of trouble for Bangladesh.

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