

... in East Pakistan today



called the "Liberation Troops" or Nukti Bahinis. The test of their strength will come within the next few months as the ground hardens and the West Pakistani army is mobile again.

Reliable sources indicate that much of the relief money and supplies sent to Pakistan are controlled by the military, and they are using a most callous system of food rationing. The people are faced with starvation or siding with the military.

The opportunity to prevent a major famine is slipping away. First India had the refugees of fear, next she may have the refugees of hunger. Responsible members of the world community must insist that strong action be taken now. Unless we respond, the reports of famine in the next few months in East Pakistan will weigh heavily on our conscience.

What can be done?

by Ronald MacIntosh

Essentially we find the task before us as one involving the bringing of pressure to certain moves in humanitarian, economic and diplomatic areas. A university campus provides some obvious contradictory conditions for such a task.

On one hand, students are more likely to understand the crisis in Bengal through their access to a greater volume of information as well as being possibly more able to react to this information with more concern than the general public.

On the other hand, the wide appeal and apparent urgency for economic aid is unlikely to auger well on student budgets, or on the time investment needed to organize such campaigns. The operations of a political pressure group seem more likely to suit student capabilities and interests.

The question, "Can we really do anything?" is bound to recur. Distances from the locus of decision-making appear insurmountable — in miles, in words, in concerns. It is entirely understandable why students might express gloom in persuading their government to make the sort of moral judgements that rise above constraints of world power politics.

One problem is the very style of Canada's foreign policy. The terms "adaptation", "accommodation" or "quiet diplomacy", so common in describing Canada abroad, seem responsive more to existent programs and alliances rather than to the growing incidences of human calamities like Biafra or Bengal as they happen.

It may be unwise for the government to be the slave of public PASSIONS; it would be even more ridiculous to ignore the trends of informed and concerned public discussion. The exigencies of a crisis situation are ill-served by lone-term policy commitments which often fail to parallel the intensity of public reaction to mankind's tragedies.

How can we make demands?

1. Write letters to Trudeau, Sharp and MP's.
2. Write letters to newspapers (especially those in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal).
3. Petition the government.
4. Organize teach-ins and seminars.
5. Present joint papers before Commons Committees or on the media. A recent study made by a Dal student on Biafra relief noted that the government took a harder line only when pressed by Opposition MP's in the question periods. The MP's were in turn responding

to their increased mail flow.

All these measures cannot fail to create a climate of opinion which Ottawa dare not ignore.

The very spontaneity of this sort of movement is a distinct advantage. We are, to an extent, above the political bargaining processes of the more institutionalized groups like the churches or the Red Cross (especially those sustained by the public purse). Ottawa cannot say very easily, "If we give you 'A' now, you can't have 'B' later." Our movement is temporary; we may not even have a "later".

Four additional beneficial assets to such a pressure group include:

- A) A proven accountability to public opinion.
- B) A high degree of internal cohesion and communication.
- C) Coherence and precision of the demands we make on the system.
- D) An independent source of income.

The goals we make today must be extremely high and we must make our endeavour bearing standards of excellence heretofore unheard of. Yet the cost of our failure as citizens of Canada, and of the world, is humanly prohibitive. For if we do not express our concerns to our rich and powerful governments here in the west now, then the only epithet we can pass on in history is written in the invisible tears of a fallen people.

What the government should do

A. Continue to raise the issue on the floor of the United Nations' General Assembly. The conflict within East Bengal is an international concern; bringing it before the United Nations would give it international recognition.

B. Press the United Nations to establish a genuine neutral relief effort within East Bengal.

C. Pursue and increase the government's aid commitment to India by a substantial amount. Five million dollars per month from Ottawa would meet the bill for the refugees for one day per month.

D. Ensure aid is delivered within East Bengal. While hoping that the United Nations would effect a neutral relief operation, Canada should nevertheless be searching all avenues to get relief into East Bengal while avoiding distribution through the military.

E. That Canada use its present long-term aid commitments to Pakistan as a means of modifying that country's position in East Bengal. Cessation of aid should be used as a threat but aid could also be used as an incentive to dissuade Pakistan from any further military operations. Canada ought to use its aid commitments in this way while joining with other aid donor countries to make the pressure more effective.

F. To seek a solution to the conflict by taking initiatives jointly with other countries.

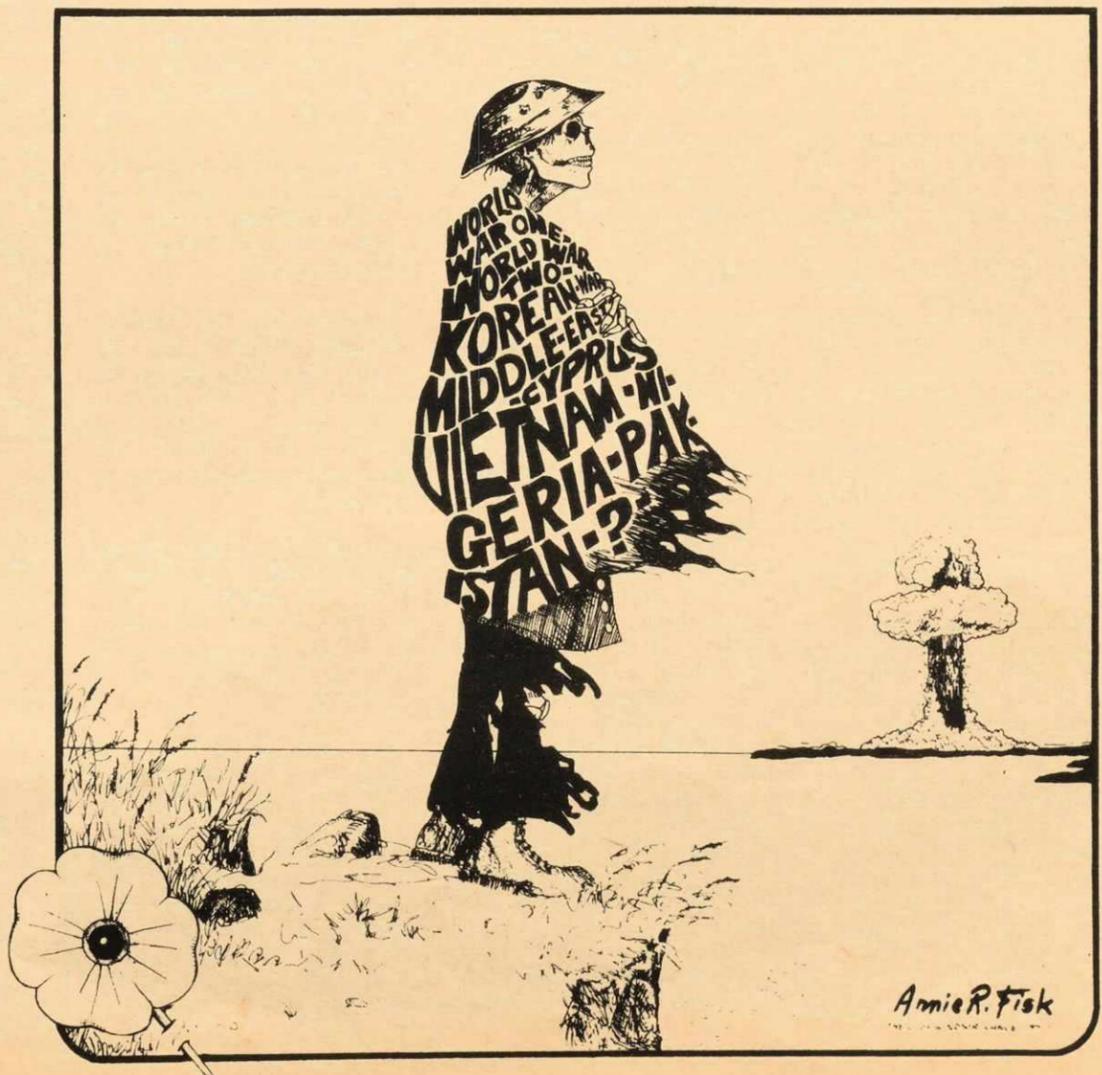
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GOVERNMENT...
LET THEM KNOW
YOUR VIEWS!

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