

# The story of reality . . .

## West Pakistan may pay price

by Lesley D. Griffiths

If Canada thinks she has problems in establishing a national identity, try to imagine how it would be if your country was split in two by a thousand miles of territory belonging to a none-too-friendly neighbour.

By sea, it's a three thousand mile journey from one part to the other. Each half has a totally different terrain and climate, and supports peoples of different ethnic origin, temperament and culture. They don't eat the same food, or wear the same clothes, or speak the same language. Islam is about all they do have in common. And the dissent between the Arab League nations attests to the instability of that as binding force.

Fifty-five per cent of the Pakistani population live in East Bengal. The great majority are of Caucasian origin, closely related to the people of Southeast Asia, whereas the Aryan Punjabi and Pathans of West Pakistan look towards Persia and Afghanistan. The Bengali's are short (average height just over 5 ft.) and dark skinned, though with a great variety of physical features.

East Bengal is a rich alluvial delta area, relying on a monsoon rice-jute agriculture, while West Pakistan, much the larger province and geographically more diverse, is dominated by an irrigated wheat-cotton-rice agriculture.

Bengal is famed for its art, music, dance, poetry, and philosophy. Its culture is epitomized in the talents of Nobel prize winner Rabindranath Tagore.

By reputation the Bengalis are a sensitive, emotional people with a keen love of political activity and intellectual disputation. This is in sharp contrast to the values of Punjabi society which is essentially pragmatic, with a respect for military precision, administrative talent and western social practices. As Ralph Brailbank says in his book "Research on the Bureaucracy of Pakistan", (1966):

"Probably no region in India (certainly none in North India) could be more opposite to the Punjabi in externals and in spirit than East Bengal which was joined together with West Pakistan with no more common band than Islam."

In 1947, Britain divided the subcontinent with India and Pakistan. Partition was accompanied by rioting and bloodshed, and the mass movement of peoples across borders. Ninety per cent of the Moslem refugees from India crossed into West Pakistan. From the beginning the Bengalis were under — represented at all levels — perhaps predictably considering the general admiration within West Pakistan for the machinery of British bureaucracy as opposed to the Bengali indifference.

Due to this lack of involvement in both the civil and military service, the imposition of martial law in 1958 and 1970 was felt more keenly in East Bengal as they



were deprived of their principle means of political participation.

The issue of a national language was also a serious source of antagonism between the two provinces, especially during the first decade after Partition.

In 1949, the government declared that Urdu would be the national language, but continued civil disorder forced them to change to a two-language policy in 1956, though there is evidence that Urdu is still given preference.

Perhaps in the long run, the government's trade and economic policies have been most detrimental to the relationship between West and East Pakistan. Hard-earned foreign currency from the East's jute exports has been used chiefly to develop industry in the West.

Foreign aid programs have been largely centred in the West, and there has been a general drain of East Pakistan's resources, which is capped by the typical Punjabi attitude of condescension which seems to assume that East Pakistan is a backward area culturally as well as economically.

As a final comment on Pakistan's treatment of East Bengal, consider the name Pakistan. This is what Bengali children are taught in school:

"Pakistan is both a Persian and an Urdu word, composed of letters taken from the names of our homelands: that is Punjab, Afghana, Kashmir, Iran, Sindh, Turkharistan, Afghanistan and Baluchistan."

There is no mention of the Bengalis, who, after all formed the majority of the country's population. West Pakistan may pay a dear price for their omission.

## Bengalis face potential famine

by Mary McQuaid

For years the people in East Pakistan have felt that they were being treated as second-class citizens. West Pakistan dominates the military, the civil service and business. The wealthy families are West Pakistanis.

In 1970 their resentment came to a head when a cyclone and tidal wave killed over two hundred thousand East Pakistanis. The East was angered by the inefficient response of the government.

In the December election the people of East Pakistan gave decisive voice to their frustrations. To the government's surprise almost 90 per cent of the votes in East Pakistan were for the Awami League headed by Sheik Mujibu Rahman. This gave the Auvomi League a majority in the National Assembly which had promised a revised constitution and to return the country to civilian rule.

Negotiations between the Sheik and Yaha Khan over the party's six-point proposal for autonomy dragged on and ended abruptly on the night of March 25. The West Pakistan army, estimated at 50,000-70,000 were ordered into East Pakistan. Sheik Munjibu declared the establishment of Bangla Desh. The war was on. Washington Monthly, 1971.

The East Bengalis were preparing for autonomy and democracy — they received a terrible shock. An estimated 15,000 were killed when the army entered East Pakistan. They met little organized resistance. Sheik Munjibi was captured and communications cut off. The reports from government controlled media assured the world that the uprising was dealt with and normalcy was returning to East Pakistan. The millions of refugees who surged across the border, many with bullet wounds, told the world another side of the story. Who were the refugees? They were terrified, hounded, helpless people, most of them plainly not an army of resistance fighters.

Would you like to see pictures? The refugees are not very photogenic. A child still nursing at the breast of its dead mother is not a pretty sight. Nor is seeing a child paralysed for life from a bullet wound in his spinal cord. Sorry — no pictures.

The last figures estimate the refugee population at 9.3 million. India is a poor country: this is a heavy burden for her. Already hostility is growing toward hosting these refugees. Relief programs have been set up and money is coming in from other countries, but this is only palliative treatment.

What is India to do with these millions of displaced people? India has said they must go home when the political situation is improved, but the military government of West Pakistan has gone too far. These people cannot go home until President Yaha recognizes that Bengala Desh must become a reality.

Under cover of the monsoon rains (which last from June to October), a number of Bengalis have made their way back to East Pakistan and make up what is

