

Bengalis Hunt Down Biharis, Who Aided Foe

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KHULNA, Pakistan, Dec. 19 —With the surrender of West Pakistani forces, nationalist Bengalis, armed with guns and knives, have been roaming the streets in this eastern town, hounding out members of the Bihari minority who collaborated over the last nine months in the suppression of the East Pakistani autonomy movement.

Gripped by fear, the Biharis, who are non-Bengali Moslems, have fled this town to nearby villages or have gone into hiding. Rows of shops owned by Biharis are locked up, some of them looted.

According to an Indian military source here, a few Bengalis and more than a hundred Biharis were stabbed or shot to death in clashes that followed a huge public rally held last Friday in the center of town to celebrate the defeat of the Pakistanis.

The mutilated bodies of a dozen Bengali men and women who were said to have been killed by Biharis in the last days of the war between India and Pakistan were exhibited at the rally, attended by more than 30,000 people. According to a witness, there were frenzied shouts of "Victory for Bengal!" and "Death to the traitors!"

Two Bodies in a Trench

Later this correspondent saw the bodies of two thick-mustached Biharis in trenches, their throats slit.

"Now that the Pakistanis are gone, naturally the Biharis are on the run," said the Indian Army source.

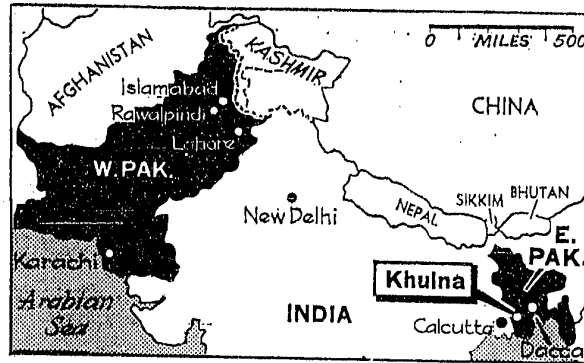
In East Pakistan, now recognized by India as the independent state of Bangladesh, the Bihari population is estimated at 200,000. Fifty thousand are concentrated in the Khulna District, which borders India.

Biharis were the favorites of the Pakistani military regime because most were fanatic anti-Hindus, which suited official policy. They acted as informers for the Government and manned most of the key security posts.

During the nine-month repression that preceded the war with India, Biharis enlisted as razakars, a paramilitary volunteer force serving as the vanguard of the terrorism let loose by the Pakistani Army on the Bengali population.

Biharis had also thrived as small traders. They were active members of right-wing Moslem political parties opposed to the popular nationalist party of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whom the military regime seized at the start of the crackdown.

The repression resulted in the



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One-fourth of the Biharis in the East are in Khulna area

flight of millions of Bengalis, many of them Hindus, to India. Biharis took over their property and their Government jobs.

Since the end of the war last Thursday, Indian military men have restrained the mobs from further killings in many towns, but neither the Indians nor the local people appear to have any sympathy for the Biharis. "Compared with the tens of thousands of people killed by these Biharis, this is nothing," a Khulna resident said of the reprisals.

The Biharis have been stripped of official positions given them by the Pakistani military government. The razakars are surrendering in large numbers and most, it is reported, are being executed by the Bengali guerrilla forces known as the Mukti Bahini.

But the guerrillas say it is not their intention to kill all the Biharis. At Phultala, 15 miles north of here, a dozen, aged 12 to 55, were imprisoned. Slumped

against the wall looking emaciated and frightened, they had not been given any food since they were captured two days before.

"Each one of these dogs are responsible for dozens of deaths," the 18-year-old guerrilla commander said. "They led the Pakistanis to rape our women, loot our homes. All these dogs deserve to be hanged."

"Are you going to kill them?" he was asked.

"No, it is not for us to decide their fate," he replied. "We will hand them over to the local police."

There is no police force in Phultala. A provisional Bangladesh government functions from Calcutta. Civil administration in occupied East Pakistan, although it exists in skeleton form, is far from effective.

In Khulna, apart from a few traffic policemen, the visible

authority lies with the Mukti Bahini and, in the background, the Indian military.

The Indian military say they are least concerned with the local administration. Maj. Gen. Dalbir Singh, who led the assault on the Pakistani garrison here and forced it to surrender a day ahead of the cease-fire, said his concerns were the movement of more than 8,000 Pakistani prisoners of war from this area to Indian camps, the re-establishment of basic communication lines and the withdrawal of his troops.

Asked whether the Indians should not protect the razakars as they do the Pakistanis, the general said the razakars were not covered by the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war. "They will be the responsibility of the Bangladesh government," he said. "Of course, we tell the Mukti Bahini chaps to give these Biharis a fair treatment and trial. Generally they listen to us."

However, the guerrillas are not equipped to detain or try large numbers of men. They do not even have enough money to feed them.

The provisional government has said that if the Biharis wanted to go to West Pakistan they would be permitted to do so, but the Government in the West has not taken any steps to aid the collaborators. Nor can the Biharis go back to India, which they left after bitter communal rioting at the time of the 1947 partition.

Asked where the Biharis would go eventually, a Bengali student pointed to the sky.