

Biharis and Bengalis Clash, Hundreds Reported Killed

From News Dispatches

DACCA, March 13—Hundreds of persons were killed and wounded in a weekend clash between Bengalis and Biharis in the southern Bangladesh city of Khulna, reliable sources said today.

UPI reported that estimates of the number killed ranged between 300 and 1,000 and that hundreds of the victims were Biharis. According to other reports foreign relief authorities said the casualties were "closer

to 800 killed or wounded," but did not specify whether they were Biharis or Bengalis.

International Red Cross officials said at least 240 persons had been admitted to hospitals, but they refused to confirm or deny unofficial reports of the killings.

Red Cross representatives moved into the area within hours after the violence broke out. Red Cross sources said Indian troops on their way back to India were the first

forces to enter the area. They brought the situation under control and Bangladesh troops later took over, the Red Cross sources said.

The last Indian forces in Bangladesh were pulled out of the country yesterday. Although their strength has been reduced since the return to Dacca of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman last January, the Indians have provided basic security throughout the country.

Observers have frequently expressed the fear that once the Indians departed, the Bangladesh forces would not be able to cope with the results of hatred between Bengalis and Biharis, many of whom cooperated with Pakistani troops during the nine-month civil strife in the former East Pakistan.

The Bihari minority in this newly created Bengali nation are north Indian Moslems who settled here when Pakistan was created in 1947.

The trouble at Khulna, about 80 miles southwest of Dacca, started last Friday but there are conflicting accounts of exactly how the massacre began.

According to one version, the Biharis objected to Bengalis taking their jobs at one of the jute mills in the city. Later, a Bengali's body was discovered near the Bihari colony, this version said, and Bengalis poured into the area armed with lengths of bamboo, knives and machetes.

Most of the dead were thrown into the river, while the wounded were left where they lay, according to the reports reaching here. Killing

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continued through Saturday night, but by yesterday all was quiet.

In the Bihari suburb of Mohammedpur outside Dacca, where fighting between Bengalis and non-Bengalis took place during January, 13,000 persons who had taken shelter in the local high school were moved to two other refugee camps today so that the school could be opened for about 140 Bengali students.

Government promises of alternative accommodation with shelter, electricity and water were not forthcoming. As night fell, thousands of men, women and children were trying to erect makeshift tents of blankets and lengths of cloth. The Red Cross was providing plastic sheeting and food for the displaced Biharis.

In the southern port of Chittagoing, Bangladesh's second largest city, five Biharis have been reported killed since Indian army troops withdrew from there six days ago.

There have been no reports from the northwestern city of Saidpur, where a concentration of about 400,000 Bihari Moslems were last week considering an attempt to try to cross the border into India.