

**AWAMI
LEAGUE
RULE**

**GLIMPSES
FROM THE
INTERNATIONAL
PRESS**

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During the dark days of 1971, while the country was bathing in a stream of blood, the people manifested a burning desire for ushering in better days and accordingly made great sacrifices towards that end. A desperate nation fought agony and death at every stage to give birth to a new nation.

But the collective action of the nation to achieve freedom and emancipation were impeded by a living curse in the form of Awami League which formed the first government in Dhaka after the bloody war of independence was over on 16th of December, 1971. The Awami League — literally meaning People's League — pursued anti-people policies and continued to rule till the dawn of 15th August, 1975.

Awami League started with a multi-party presidential form of government and soon switched over to multi-party parliamentary system. Later it changed again into presidential form — but this time it was of a single party system. All the political parties were out-lawed. The Awami League went out of existence as well and instead came the BAKSAL — Bangladesh Krishok Sromik Awami League (Bangladesh Farmers and Labourers People's League).

The Awami League and later on the BAKSAL, then led by late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, ruled the country in the name of 'Socialism', behaved like despots and plundered the nation's wealth and betrayed the people's trust. The international community came forward for the reconstruction of the war ravaged country with billions of dollars worth of aid only to be squandered by the corrupt Awami League Govt. prompting the then U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to term Bangladesh as a 'bottomless basket'. They also destroyed the very vitals of the society from

within — owing to which reason even today Bangladesh finds it difficult to progress.

The enthusiasm and the burning desire of the independence of 1971 has evaporated in today's Bangladesh. The Awami League may try to disagree — but the fact remains that in the years between 1972 and 1975, that is, during their dictatorial rule, they committed crimes and offences against humanity, history, morality, values, country, nation, state, society, people and individuals.

The politics of destruction — destruction in all aspects including social values, morality and ethics — combined with violence and terrorism which the Awami League has always pursued and is applying presently, is absolutely clear to the people: (1) Where there is trouble, there is Awami League (2) Violence in our educational institutions is organised by the student wing of the Awami League (3) Unrest in industrial units and destructive activities of the trade unions are triggered off by the labour wing of the Awami League (4) Violence in the streets and prevention of vehicular traffic are either caused or provoked by the paid thugs of the Awami League (5) Behind almost every organised crime, there is the black hand of an Awami League stalwart (6) Mismanagement in financial institutions and large-scale embezzlement of funds to the tune of hundreds of millions of taka was done by people who are easily identifiable as Awami League leaders or supporters (7) Almost all the international smugglers, the defaulters who have borrowed billions of taka from banks and other development financing institutions and who have not repaid the same and persons who have taken capital out of Bangladesh are somehow or other directly related with the Awami League.

Although the Awami League has so far managed all these negative activities in a rather organised fashion, it is not considered to be a political party for the

purpose of formulating policy for nation's progress and people's well-being. Awami League is rather an efficient and well organised **Crime Syndicate**. They use violence to raise funds and then use the funds for further destructive activities — and the cycle goes on endlessly. The wily businessmen and the corrupt industrialists willingly give funds to Awami League to enhance their wealth by dishonest deals. A general allegation is that, the Awami League has foreign source of finance as well. There are also strong rumours that some of them are engaged in drug and woman trafficking and smuggling. This is not surprising.

The people are aware of what the Awami League is and what it stands for. This book is mere compilation of a very small portion of newspaper reports — prepared by the foreign journalists and published by the foreign press. People of Bangladesh and other countries who are concerned with Bangladesh must know and remember that it was Awami League who immediately after the independence of Bangladesh, introduced and carried out the politics of murder and secret killings, abduction and kidnapping, rape, violence and terrorism. Empty promises and misappropriation of relief materials received from abroad, elimination of political opponents and misuse and abuse of political power and wealth of the state, stealing and forcible occupation of properties and premises, hijacking and highway robbery, bank-robbery and embezzlement of public fund, arson and burning down jute-godowns, artificial famine and smuggling, gagging of press and suppression of judiciary, rigging in election and violation of constitution, hoarding and black-marketing and profiteering were the hallmark of their rule.

To top all of their crimes, the Awami League is guilty of destruction of dignity, hope and self-respect of our people.

The People of Bangladesh in general and the younger generation in particular are victims of nefarious propaganda. The whole nation is a helpless witness to the distortion of history, misreporting of facts and wrong interpretation of events by the propaganda-machine of the Awami League, supported and sustained by their ill-gotten wealth and their international mentors. Ironically, Awami League screams about "distortion of history". We hope this book will help them to see themselves in a mirror and in their true form.

We are a homogeneous nation and a compact society with high moral values upon which the Awami League has swooped like a flock of vultures ceaselessly feasting for decades together on the carcasses made by them. There is no doubt that the Awami League is a curse. But let us not forget that the people have not been condemned to this curse in perpetuity and are destined to live without this curse one day.

Dhaka, Bangladesh

July, 1992

Table of Contents

| Name | Page No |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Mujlb's man-made disaster area | 9 |
| 2. Bangladesh : Mujlb tests his strong arm | 13 |
| 3. Bangladesh : In the queue | 16 |
| 4. Bangladesh : The guns are still being used | 19 |
| 5. Bangladesh : Students with guns | 21 |
| 6. Bangladesh : Thug law | 23 |
| 7. Bangladesh : The legal thugs | 25 |
| 8. Bangladesh : Ever the victim | 27 |
| 9. The unluckiest country | 30 |
| 10. Bangladesh was born at the wrong time | 32 |
| 11. The Tragedy of Bangladesh | 36 |
| 12. Bangladesh : Dissent by fire | 42 |
| 13. A day In the death of Bangladesh | 44 |
| 14. Is Independence worth the price In Bangladesh ? | 49 |
| 15. Starvation In Bangladesh : A Failure of Leadership | 53 |
| 16. Bangladesh : Home truths | 56 |
| 17. Bangladesh Starving Flock to Dacca | 58 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 18. Bangladesh Fears Thousands May Be Dead as Famine Spreads | 61 |
| 19. Bangladesh, at Age 3, Is Still a Disaster Area | 65 |
| 20. Bangladesh : It's formal | 72 |
| 21. Dead go Unclaimed in Dacca as economic disorder grows | 74 |
| 22. Bangladesh : the price of corruption | 77 |
| 23. Where Hunger is the Only Constant | 82 |
| 24. Mujib turns Bangladesh Into dictatorship | 85 |
| 25. End of a honeymoon, Start of a courtship? | 88 |
| 26. Dacca tackles slum problem | 92 |
| 27. Starvation Called Only part of Bangladesh Tragedy | 96 |
| 28. Mujib : the boss.of Bangladesh | 99 |

The name of the capital of Bangladesh
is now spelled "Dhaka".

Mujib's man-made disaster area

THE GUARDIAN, February 18, 1973

Jacques Leslie on the slum clearance plan that went away

“Either give us food or shoot us” an old man here said sombrely. The sense of desperation that inspired that remark is palpable at this camp 14 miles from Dacca, Bangladesh's capital. Less than a month ago the roughly 50,000 residents here were ousted from their homes in Dacca's slums by armed soldiers and policemen and transported to this camp site on a barren island. The action was one of the first steps taken by the government— since Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, now Bangladesh's President declared an emergency and suspended the constitution.

Officials prepared for the forced migration only by demarcating plots of land and building a few latrines and water pumps. Now the latrines are full and no longer usable, and the camp smells of excrement. Most water pumps do not work. Many residents have not been registered, and so do not qualify for the food rations meted out in increasingly small amounts each day. The camp graveyard is already filled with the bodies of about 50 old people and babies who have died from disease or starvation.

Since January 3 : when the slum-clearing operation began; about 200,000 Dacca residents have been forced either to return to their native villages or to settle in one of three camps. While they lived in the city, most were able to support themselves as bicycle rickshaw drivers, domestic servants

manual labourers and beggars. Now, because from the journey camps is either prohibitively expensive or physically impossible, many have lost their means of livelihood and face starvation.

“This is not an act of God” Grace Samson, a Dutch Salvation Army volunteer who inspected Demra recently, said bitterly. “It’s an act of Government. It’s a man-made disaster” Government officials have defended the forced exodus from Dacca saying the slums were centres of crime and disease and that occupants had built unauthorised structures on Government property.

Some observers believe the action was designed to remove a potential spawning ground for political dissent and terrorism, which the Government is said to fear increasingly. Bangladesh Works Minister Sohrab Hosain, who last month announced the programme a week after it began said the slums were “places where social dissatisfaction leading to organised unrest and anti-social activities generate.”

At best the action reflects a cosmetic approach to the city’s problems, a desire to make its ills less apparent if not less real. Referring to a cleared slum on the road to Dacca’s Airport, one foreign official said “That whole area was a source of embarrassment to the Government.”

By its timing, the programme has worsened a smallpox epidemic, now spreading in Bangladesh. Migration to the countryside from Dacca slums which were infected with the disease, has caused outbreaks in nine previously healthy districts of Bangladesh a world Health Organisation official in Dacca said.

As visitors walked through the camp at Demra, one resident after another approached to beg for food or medicine. Visitors

were shown into a few hovels where obviously dying people lay on the ground. One woman grabbed a journalist's hand to press it against the stomach of her feverish infant.

The suffering here has not been prompted by a food shortage. Instead, it seems the result of the absence of planning and official indifference to the fate of these people. International voluntary agencies which could be expected to help were not even notified of the camp's existence until after they were opened. No agency is as yet involved. "Nobody was given any warning" said Eva Den Hartog, the Salvation Army's chief representative in Dacca. "They don't want any attention paid to this. They want it forgotten. "Each family at Demra was given a plot of 19ft by 9ft but no building materials. Houses were to be constructed only with the materials that could be salvaged from their Dacca shanties. The inevitable result is that most people sleep on the ground and have nothing more than mats or cloth above their heads. Many are already worried about what will happen when the monsoon rains come in two or three months. Then they will have no overhead protection and the ground will turn to mud.

Camp residents have been vaccinated but have received almost no other medical services. The only medicine stocked at a camp dispensary was a package of vitamin pills so spoiled they stuck firmly together, some vaccine and a few bandages. Officials said the doctor had gone to get medicine, but Den Hartog, who was making her third visit to Demra, said she had never seen a doctor there. A four-bed hospital for the camp's 50,000 inhabitants was empty. "The camp officials sleep there. it's quite obvious," Samson said. Camp officials showed disdain towards the residents. It is assumed that such officials, who are paid a little more than 10 dollars a month and food rations, supplement their incomes with supplies meant for

camp residents. About 30 policemen are stationed at the camp. They have prepared for possible hostility from residents by placing sandbags around their headquarters. “We are afraid of the people.” a rifle-bearing constable said “We are afraid of thieves. This is for our protection.”

The throng that gathered around the visitors as they toured the camp was frequently threatened by policemen. One old man displayed swollen hands that he said resulted from being struck with a stick by a policeman. Officials said the man had violated the camp curfew, which is imposed from 8 pm to 5 am.

Cradling the day-old corpse of her infant in her arms, a sobbing Bengali woman broke through the crowd to beseech camp officials to give her some cloth to wrap the baby for burial. She said that she had been asking for several hours, but that officials put her off by telling her she needed an application. “We were ordered by authorities to ask for an application for anything” said Dil Mohammad, chief official at the camp. Then in an apparent effort to impress his visitors. He declared suddenly that this woman needed no application. She was given the cloth. Each registered family receives a daily ration of one or two biscuits and a cup of milk, sometimes after waiting in line as long as five hours. The milk is highly diluted. “River water is better than the milk” one woman said.

Considering what has happened to these people, they seem surprisingly forbearing. But bitterness is starting to show. When a visitor commented to one resident that he came from the same district as Sheikh Mujib, whom many Bengalis revere as the father of their country, the man cut the visitor off saying : “Don’t talk about that nonsense.”

Then the man said : “I don’t know why the government has taken us here. We are unlucky people. The government doesn’t care for us. We have no future”— Los Angeles Times.

Bangladesh : Mujib tests his strong arm

THE ECONOMIST, March 3, 1973

From a Correspondent

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has already been re-elected to the national assembly of Bangladesh. He was one of 11 candidates returned unopposed when nominations were closed for the general election next Wednesday. The opposition parties are protesting loudly that their own candidates were forcibly prevented from filing nomination papers at least 17 constituencies including the Sheikh's own two seats. But their protests about election violations and violence are going unheard. They will anyway be swept aside, so everyone believes, in the tide of an Awami League victory.

Sheikh Mujib continues to be his party's greatest asset. The flagrant malpractices of his administration are blamed on others, and he still draws huge cheering crowds wherever he goes. This may be personality politics, but it is what the people of Bangladesh are used to. For 30 years they have followed the party that had the most compelling personality at its head; in the 1970 elections it was Sheikh Mujib who pulled the Awami League along on his coat tails, and he is expected to do it again. The only other forceful personality in sight is the veteran maoist, Maulana Bhashani, whose age (he is nearly 90) and reluctance to take part in parliamentary politics make him an unlikely challenger.

Food shortage and soaring prices have provided the opposition parties with a splendid issue, but they have failed altogether to

grasp it and to come up with an alternative programme, much less a united front. No fewer than 14 parties are contesting the election, most of them to the left of the Awami League. Maulana Bhashani's United Action Committee brings together several religious groups (which cannot operate on their own because of a ban on so-called pro-Pakistan parties) as well as assorted maoists. But their unity is tenuous.

Only two opposition parties are putting up a substantial number of candidates. The stronger of them is the JSD (National Socialist party, in the unfortunate English translation), a coalition between dissident ex-Awami League students led by Mr. Abdur Rab and another faction headed by a hero of the independence struggle, Major Jalil. Mr. Rab advocates "scientific socialism," by which he means revolutionary communism, and Major Jalil opposes what he calls India's exploitation of Bangladesh. They have a sizeable student following and, more important, they also have firepower.

The JSD, only six months old, is showing remarkable vigour, but it is still expected to run a poor second. The third place will almost certainly be taken by the pro-Soviet National Awami party, led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed. This party, which collaborated with the Awami League after independence, is still trying to live down its reputation as Sheikh Mujib's second team.

Sheikh Mujib has a double answer to his opponents. He has dropped some of the former Awami League legislators in favour of younger men to mute charges of corruption and nepotism (although two-thirds of the party's candidates are members of the outgoing assembly). And he has given his blessing to a para-military youth league for a trial of strength on the streets.

There have been several outbreaks of violence. Major Jalil was seriously wounded last weekend while addressing election workers a few days after an Awami League candidate had been shot dead. The worst incident was the recent attack on a workers' barracks in Chittagong in which at least 12 people died. Awami League hooligans have been blamed for this assault as well as for an earlier one on the National Awami Party headquarters. But somehow Sheikh Mujib has managed to turn even the violence to his credit. The Awami League may use strongarm methods, so the argument runs, but at least it promises strong government.

Bangladesh : In the queue

THE ECONOMIST, July 14, 1973

With world food reserves at their lowest level for 20 years, Bangladesh, last year's neediest case, might have expected to be shouldered aside in the long queue for surplus grain. Yet, this year at least, it will probably get the 2m—3m tons of food from outside that it needs. The Bangladesh government has already used a third of its precious foreign exchange to buy more than 1m tons and the United Nations has pledged of about 700,000 tons from donor countries. Whether this food reaches the hungry is another matter : as it is transported up country in progressively smaller parcels, a substantial amount of it passes into the hands of corrupt officials who then smuggle it across the border to India where prices are far higher.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's answer to accusations of corruption and smuggling is to demand yet more food. He claims that the harvest this spring was not as good as the UN says it was, and points to flood damage in the north which has already affected more than 4m people. And he has a lobbyist in Washington trying to persuade Congress to divert American wheat shipments away from Russia to Bangladesh. The state Department is said to be "not averse" to the idea. Bangladesh is also quietly importing rice from Pakistan by way of Singapore.

Planners in Bangladesh, like planners everywhere, talk about reaching self-sufficiency in food production. Their current target date is 1978 but foreign economists dismiss this

as wildly over-ambitious and assume that Bangladesh will need food imports and aid well into the 1980s. The only way Bangladesh will be able to feed itself is by modernising its agriculture. But it is trapped in a familiar vicious cycle: as long as most of the country's foreign exchange earnings must be spent on importing food, it will be unable to buy the fertiliser, better seeds and irrigation equipment to increase the yield,

Farm productivity in Bangladesh is very low: 80-85 percent of the population is dependent on this sector, which produces only 50 percent of the gross national product. And agricultural growth at 2 f(1,2) percent a year cannot keep up with one of the world's highest rates of population growth, estimated at more than 3 percent. Under Pakistani administration, hardly any government investment was put into Bengali agriculture and the low prices offered to private farmers—less than half the world price for their main crop, rice—provided no incentive for private investment. Another and continuing disincentive is the high risk of an area that is regularly subject to cyclones, floods or drought.

Even so, economists believe that investment in Bengali agriculture could bring high returns, provided the present administrative muddle, with its overlapping mutually hostile ministries and its underpaid civil servants, is thoroughly sorted out, many of Sheikh Mujib's supporters recognise that such house-cleaning is overdue but the prime minister is reluctant to move because most of those who profit from the present system are mainstays of his own Awami League.

The first job of a reorganised and decentralised administration would be to ensure that the resources the farmers need are fairly and speedily distributed. At present the demand for fertiliser, more than double the supply, has created

lucrative opportunities for profiteering. The best way to eliminate this is to flood Bangladesh with fertiliser—if the money for it can be found.

If the farmers are given the chance, the potential is there for doubling rice output in 20 years. This would be more than enough to feed the population. But it would still not be enough to employ them, since new farming technology requires less, not more, manpower. So it will take more than a green revolution to save Bangladesh from revolutions of another kind.

Bangladesh : The Guns are still being used

THE ECONOMIST, September 15, 1973

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Shots rang out on the Dacca university campus one night last week, leaving four young men dead. They had apparently been brought there blindfolded in a jeep and lined up in a row before being riddled with bullets. This grim sequel to the recent student elections dramatises the growing incidence of political violence which has claimed many lives in the 20 months since Bangladesh broke off from Pakistan.

Many of the weapons handed out during the 1971 civil war are clearly still around despite Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's efforts to call them in, and they are being used more and more often. A drought last year and floods this summer, causing food prices to double, have led some desperate men to take up banditry in the countryside. But much of the violence is purely political and is fomented by three groups.

A pro-Pakistani group seeking to rally Bengalis against the Sheikh's alliance with India has become increasingly active. Its aim is to set up a Moslem state, and it echoes sentiments that have often been voiced both by Mr. Bhutto in Pakistan and by Maulana Bhashani, the Sheikh's most formidable critic in Bangladesh. This group appears to be building up an armed force with the notorious Razakars—the civilian volunteers locally recruited and armed by Pakistan in 1971—as a nucleus. Secret training camps have been set up in the hills near Chittagong, where the Bangladesh army was engaged in a

combing operation early this month. Official sources claimed that two camps were destroyed and 60 Razakars killed.

A second group contributing to lawlessness consists of maoist factions. One of these is active in the districts of Rajshahi and Pabna, and another farther north in Rangpur and Bogra. Each faction is operating on its own, but efforts are being made to unite them. West Bengal maoists across the border may be lending them a hand.

The third source of violence is infighting within the ruling Awami League itself. With so many guns about, it is not surprising that these should be brought into use to settle all sorts of scores. One explanation offered for the Dacca campus killing was that activists of student organisations allied to the Awami League had fallen out among themselves and staged this macabre drama to get the student elections rescinded.

Sheikh Mujib cannot expect to cope with this deteriorating situation with the police and military forces that are now available to him. They are too few—less than 100,000 only half of them armed—in a country with 70m people and an area of 50,000 square miles. So he must try to tackle the problem by political persuasion. This is why he recently invited two opposition parties to join hands with the Awami League in popular front. But both these new allies happen to be pro-Russian and consequently pro-Indian, which makes it likely that the new coalition will sharpen political polarisation and aggravate tensions rather than calm them. A great deal depends on how the economy performs in the coming months. A good rice crop is in the offing and industry seems to be reviving. But any improvement will probably be too small to clear the backlog of hunger and destitution on which violence breeds.

Bangladesh : Students with guns

THE ECONOMIST, September 23, 1973

An announcement that Bangladesh was to hold its first general election had been expected; the surprise is that it is going to hold it so soon. The statement on Sunday said that a new constitution should be ready by October and new electoral rolls by January, making an election possible early in the new year.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was quick to set the machinery in motion after his return from a prolonged convalescence in Britain and Switzerland. But the discontent during his absence has grown with his return. At a rally in Dacca on Sunday a student leader, Mr. Abdur Rab, accused Sheikh Mujib of failing to keep his pre-independence pledge that no one would starve in Bangladesh and then went on to threaten him : "You have used in your speeches the metaphor of weapons. But have you ever used a weapon? We know how to use real weapons."

Hostile students are a danger to Mujib; it was students who provided the backbone of the 1971 resistance against Pakistan. Mr. Rab's words voice the contempt that those who wielded a gun last year feel towards those who did not, or, like Sheikh Mujib who was in a Pakistani jail, could not. The guerrillas were supposed to have handed in all their arms months ago. But there are still enough arms hidden around the country to back up the threat.

Mr. Rab leads a growing number of students who advocate "scientific socialism." At the end of May the Awami League

student organisation split into “Mujibists” and “scientific socialists” because the would-be marxists wanted Sheikh Mujib to dissolve the national assembly and rule by decree—which he refused to do. Support for Mr. Rab's movement has been increased by economic troubles and by reports of official corruption. The “scientific socialists” are also thought to have several prominent, but secret, sympathisers within Sheikh Mujib's cabinet, including the ministers for finance, industry and foreign affairs.

Bangladesh : Thug law

The **ECONOMIST**, December 22, 1973

From a special Correspondent, Dacca

The discovery of five headless corpses on a Dacca street last week was only the most horrifying recent episode in what has become an epidemic of violence in Bangladesh. As the country celebrated its second anniversary of independence from Pakistan at the weekend there was a counterpoint of hair-raising tales of beatings and terrorisation at Dacca University by competing student factions. Street arguments which used to be merely shouting matches now escalate immediately into battles. Dinner guests in Dacca drive home only in convoy; villagers cower behind locked doors or hide out with neighbours to escape night raiders.

Sheikh Mujib has reacted to the growing anarchy by launching new law-and-order drive. He has announced that guns will be met by guns whether they are wielded by criminals or the assorted toughs sponsored by all the political parties. Wireless sets are being rushed out from Britain to strengthen the police communications network, which has so far failed to prevent successful raids on 30 isolated police posts. The main motive for these raids seems to have been the capture of weapons and ammunition, even though the obsolete rifles issued to the police have proved a poor match for the automatic weapons which rebels and plain thugs have been using since the 1971 war. Some 4,000 guns have been recovered in the past two months but tens of thousands of illegal weapons are

thought to remain at large. The only ground for optimism is that hidden weapons and ammunition deteriorate rapidly in the steamy climate.

The government tends to attribute the violence to "Naxalites". Thousands of these left-wing rebels did indeed escape over the border into Bangladesh after a harsh crackdown in the Indian state of West Bengal earlier this year, and joined up with gangs of local criminals. But villagers who have been attacked by armed raiders seldom confirm any political purpose. They have often identified the gunmen as educated youngsters claiming to be alienated from "the system"—even illiterate villagers use the English word "system"—and arguing that they have no other way of making money. Dacca residents point out some of the idle young clients of the Intercontinental hotel bar as gang leaders spending their loot.

The ordinary criminals and delinquent youths should be relatively easy to track down in a determined police drive. But the real test of Sheikh Mujib's political courage will be his approach to the gunmen protected or sponsored by the ruling Awami League. So far he has shown no readiness to put down his own muscle men. And the fact that he has drafted paramilitary forces from his own party and from its two pro-communist allies to help the police suggests that he is not going to do so.

Bangladesh : The legal thugs

THE ECONOMIST, April 6, 1974

When Sheikh Mujib of Bangladesh made his sudden dash to Moscow for medical treatment two weeks ago it was a reminder of just how fragile a one-man government can be. What if the reported diagnosis of acute bronchitis turns out, as some suspect, to be a cover story for a more serious disease? On present form, Bangladesh, without the unifying force of its father-figure-prime-minister, could lapse into anarchy within a week.

In fact, there has been a fair imitation of anarchy in the two-year-old Bengali nation for some time now. Since the police and the army proved to be incapable of stopping the violence in the country, the ruling Awami League party has set up its own vigilante bands. The most active of these, the Rakkhi Bahini, was empowered earlier this year to arrest and search anyone, anywhere, without legal restraint so long as it acted "in good faith". This "good faith" loophole seems to have been exploited to the full and the result has been a series of clashes between the Rakkhi Bahini and similar armed groups set up by opposition parties.

One such battle erupted on Sheikh Mujib's birthday last month when the leading opposition party, the National Socialists, set its thugs on the home of the home minister. The Rakkhi Bahini retaliated by shooting down eight of the demonstrators and two days later by burning down the National Socialists' party office, shutting down its newspaper and

hunting down its leaders. Some 200 of the party's workers are reported to have been arrested, including its president, Major Jalil, and its general secretary, Mr Abdur Rab. Sheikh Mujib then appealed from Moscow for a campaign against "enemy agents."

The Rakkhi Bahini has been accused by an outspoken left-wing weekly not only of murdering hundreds of opposition party workers but of many acts of torture, rape and arson. Last weekend these charges were backed up by a group of highly respectable citizens who formed themselves into a civil rights committee to provide legal aid for Bahini victims. One of the lawyers on the committee estimated that more than 5,000 people are being held as political prisoners. Few of these ever appear before a court, and many simply vanish.

Bangladesh : Ever the victim

THE ECONOMIST, August 17, 1974

Bangladesh has to be the unluckiest corner of the world. As if the 1970 cyclone, the 1971 war and the 1973 oil crisis had not done enough to wreck its subsistence economy, along came the 1974 floods to finish the job. The estimated death toll from the inundation of nearly two-thirds of the country is not dramatic by Bangladesh's own appalling standards—fewer than 3,000 lives lost compared with 150,000 in 1970—although many more will die from cholera, typhoid and lack of food. But to an economy that is already virtually bankrupt, and to a government that is losing credit every day, this latest disaster might be the final straw.

Although most of the summer paddy had already been harvested when the three major rivers in this country of rivers started overflowing in mid-July, some 750,000 tons of rice and 100,000 tons of jute are thought to have been washed away. This means a minimum loss of £18m from the jute—about 20 per cent of the country's increasingly meagre export earning. The rice will have to be replaced by import of around another 1m tons of grain (Bangladesh already had a deficit of 2m tons this year) since the newly-planted seedlings for the winter crop are likely to have been damaged by the flood and some stored grain must also have been lost. At the least, these imports will be prohibitively expensive; at the worst, impossible to find. The relief minister had said that the government has no alternative to feeding the flood victims until the winter harvest. But unless there is an unexpectedly generous response from a

wheat-short world, there will be nothing to feed them with. The poorest are already living on jute leaves and banana stems.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, now hopping from one devastated area to another in his Soviet-built helicopter, must be keenly aware that the future of his government may rest on its handling of the disaster. It was, after all, the inadequate response of the Pakistani government to the 1970 cyclone which paved the way to his own election victory later that year and to the war which gave birth to Bangladesh the year after. The least he will have to do is to impose stricter standards of discipline on the Bangladesh Red Cross, which is said to be the most corrupt single offshoot of a notoriously corrupt regime. One reason for the misery in the Bihari refugee camps has been the heavy losses of relief supplies as they filtered through Red Cross Channels.

The government is already criticised for having failed in its 32 months in office to make even a start on long-term flood control measures. These would be inordinately expensive, and to be fully effective would involve co-operation with India, Bhutan and China. That no joint flood control schemes have yet been agreed upon with India is one of the disappointed hopes of independence for which both governments can be blamed. But there is much that Bangladesh could have done, and still can do, within its own borders through labour-intensive projects to re-excavate silted channels and build embankments. If such programmes do not get under way, the floods, which are annual events in Bangladesh, will become more devastating year by year.

As the government pulls itself together to mount a relief operation, the homeless and hungry are looking to Dacca, itself under water and the centre of a cholera epidemic, to look for handouts from official and private relief agencies. But these

agencies are already scraping the bottom of the barrel and the international response to the prime minister's appeal for help has so far been tiny. The World Food Programme has offered \$6m, the International Red Cross has donated some \$400,000, the United Nations disaster relief office, Australia and New Zealand are giving \$20,000 each and Britain is sending a plane load of medical supplies. Very much more is needed if Bangladesh and its 75m people are to survive.

The unluckiest country

THE ECONOMIST, August 31, 1974

A Reader's view

SIR—Ever since 1968 I have been writing to you, off and on, on the subject of (then) East Pakistan and (now) Bangladesh. You are aware of the rise of Bengali nationalism and all the subsequent events. We put a lot of faith in Sheikh Mujib. We are now, as a nation, bitterly disappointed and ashamed of this Awami League regime.

The government, as you rightly point out (August 17th) is notoriously corrupt. It is incompetent and has proved to be totally inadequate in both expertise and ability. Under its supervision, so much world aid meant for the poor of Bangladesh has been smuggled across the border to India that the world is well aware that the Awami League will do it again at the expense of this year's flood victims.

Mujib is a weak man. We are now convinced that he became a leader by default. He and his party are failing to provide the leadership that is now required. The Bengali people could have done a lot within their borders, if there was leadership. The Mujib junta never fought in the freedom struggle and those who did fight, 20,000 of them, are in Mujib's jails. Leadership for the Bengali people can only be provided by these, and they must be released at once.

And before the world gives another dollar of aid one point must be borne in mind. Aid must be distributed by the United

Nations, after the UN forces have sealed the border of Bangladesh with India. India, with the connivance of the Awami League, has been the greatest beneficiary of the creation of Bangladesh. We did not want that either when we fought for our new country.

Yours faithfully,

S. I. Aziz

Romford, Essex

Bangladesh was born at the wrong time

SUNDAY TIMES, U.K. 22, september 1974

Jon Swain reports from Dacca

It might be any village in Bangladesh — any village because in this land the spectre of poverty haunts them all. This village happens to cling to the banks of the great Jamuna river south-east of Dacca — a beautiful spot for a tragedy. Like countless others, the village of Hanashar suffered disastrously in this year's flood. The river all but swept it into the Bay of Bengal. The waters of the Jamuna and the other great rivers of Bangladesh have subsided, but the misery lingers on, this was driven forcibly home last week during a visit to Hanashar organised by Abdur Razzaq Majumdur, subdivisional officer for the area. "Flooding I can no longer show you, but empty stomachs, yes," he said.

As we chugged downstream we saw rows of hungry children lining the river bank. Hearing the boat approach, a covey of them swooped out of the village. It was a strange company to be in Mr. Majumdur, a black umbrella shading him from the sun, dominated proceedings. Around him the villagers jostled and shoved for position—stunted old men, women aged beyond their years, and hundreds upon hundreds of half-starved children. They stared compulsively up at him. Mr Majumdur selected a girl at random and asked her to relate her story. She was a pretty little thing, in a torn and discoloured

dress, a six-year-old called Khurshida Begum, and she spoke shyly because she was embarrassed in the presence of a government official and a white sahib. Two of her brothers had drowned. She had seen them plucked from a tree by a wall of water, tossed in the air like corks, to vanish beneath the swirling waters of the Jamuna for ever. Since the floods she and her family had eaten only four meals in a week — chapatis, sugar cane, and the sticky pulp obtained from boiling plants and leaves. Rice was too expensive. So were fish and traditional vegetables. She could not remember the last time she had tasted meat.

The people of Bangladesh, 75 million of them, rank among the poorest of this world. The United Nations reckons the annual per capital income of the country is about £30. This would pay for a room for two nights in the Dacca Intercontinental where most Europeans stay, a towering palace in the midst of degrading squalor. Since the birth of Bangladesh out of the ruins of the 1971 war, many countries, notably the United States, India and Russia, have felt compelled to give this apallingly backward country a massive injection of aid. The amount is thought already to exceed 2,000 million dollars. In other words about £10 for every man, woman and child. Substantial humanitarian aid has also been pumped in by numerous charity organisations. This generosity averted a postwar famine and helped restore the country's badly damaged road and rail network. But increasingly it looks to no avail. The condition of the landless peasants visibly grows more desperate day by day. For some reason, Hanashar and numerous other villages received no government help during this crisis. In contrast other disaster areas got plenty.

Distribution of aid may often depend on the whim of the local government representative and it's far from certain that it

always goes to the most deserving cases. In the past the sale of relief goods on the black market became so common that the International Committee of the Red Cross at one stage decided to withdraw from Bangladesh altogether. Once familiar stories of hundreds of tons of high protein grain going bad in warehouses and being sold to farmers as chicken feed, have happily become the exception rather than the rule. Even so the wastage goes on. Agricultural experts here speak with anger of the case of two million pounds worth of brand-new irrigation equipment rusting away in the open in the district of Comilla. There is something both paradoxical and shocking about the set-up. The world has flooded Bangladesh with aid on a scale comparable to the Marshall Plan. Yet a small girl, 35 miles outside Dacca, was last week feeding on leaves in order to remain alive. Nor was she unique.

What then went wrong? In Dacca, which has its own brand of poverty, its dingy streets lit up by the fires of human misery, theories abound. Government officials, who for a developing Asian country are unusually accessible, gave as the root cause of the crisis the bewildering plague of disasters that since 1969 have made Bangladesh synonymous with horror.

"The shattered economy has never had the breathing space it needs to recover," they said, "The 1970 cyclone and the 1971 liberation war wrecked production and destroyed the country's infrastructure. In 1973 came a drought and last year saw an unprecedented rise in world commodity prices. Bangladesh was born at the wrong time."

Aid experts in Dacca, some of whom have a considerable working knowledge of this country and its subsistence economy, acknowledge this but without being over-critical they cite other reasons : inefficiency and corruption in the government, large scale border smuggling with India, the

non-mobilisation of the country's vast manpower resources. Food and Agriculture Organisation officials confidently assert that stamping out rice smuggling would largely obviate Bangladesh's need to import food—the biggest single drain on its capital reserves. But the border is long and loose and the government's counter-smuggling measures have little chance of success. The racket is too deep rooted for that. The land, they say, is very fertile, but ill-used.

By all accepted standards the country is bankrupt, its industry grinding to a halt. 40 per cent of its lorry fleet, vital for the transport of rice, stands idle. Jute production, its main foreign exchange earner, is falling. The government cannot afford to import the spares to keep the jute mills and the transport system running fully.

A third of the 26 million labour force is unemployed, rice prices have multiplied, yet salaries have scarcely budged. Hoping that the discovery of off-shore oil will get it off the hook, the government is soon to sign drilling contracts with several international oil consortia. The world must decide whether it can afford to continue to keep Bangladesh alive. A consortium of donor nations meeting in Paris next month will have this question very much in mind.

One veteran aid official commented: "What we witness in Bangladesh today is a glimpse of how conditions will be in perhaps the whole of the third world 10 or 20 years from now—starvation, disease, over-population, violence and poverty on a massive scale."

The Tragedy of Bangladesh

NEW STATESMAN, 27 September, 1974

Jonathan Dimbleby

Once when Sheikh Mujib drove through the streets of Dacca the crowds would wave and shout '*Joi Bangla*' - victory to Bangladesh. Now when he drives from his home to the office, flanked by police, his passage is studiously ignored. The Father of the People, instead of waving from the window, looks fixedly ahead. Mujib is much in need of friends.

The country is perilously close to chaos. Millions of people are hungry, hundreds of thousands are near starvation, and many are dying from lack of food. In the countryside local officials speak with real fear of the next three months. Which will be the worst time: the threat of mass starvation and a mob lynching in consequence. Dacca, already suffocating under the invasion of the hopeful hungry, now faces a further onslaught from the victims of this summer's flood. The population of the city has doubled to 3 million since liberation 33 months ago. The new arrivals live in slum squalor which must be unrivalled anywhere else in the world. If there is a free food handout they fight each other to get to the rice. Members of the intelligentsia speak of 'when' not 'if' the people rise up against them: 'They will kill us of course.'

Bangladesh is bankrupt. World inflation and the oil crisis wrung the neck of her fledgling economy. The price of rice has leapt fourfold in 18 months. Now, while civil servants, their pay frozen since 1970, spend their entire salary on food, the

poor starve. It is a moment for strong government. But as the storm gathers Sheikh Mujib retreats further and further into a world of self-serving make-believe — a world in which his people still love him, the Pakistanis are to blame, the outside world will come to his aid and Bangladesh will emerge triumphant. It is a sorry delusion.

As his country drifts towards the abyss he still spends half the day locked in private audience with the riff-raff of the Awami League who form his chosen circle of advisers and confidants. The man who takes all the major and most of the minor decisions in Bangladesh is surrounded by flatterers and sycophants, the prisoner of his vanity, caught between insecurity and arrogance, sold on the myths his acolytes peddle him — that he is the saviour of his people and that is all they know and all they need to know.

The best of the civil servants — no bureaucracy has better brains despair. They make plans, take them to Mujib get them signed. So a decision is taken the relief camps for the flood victims must be closed a menace to public health. The cumbersome machinery of state no bureaucracy has more red tape — lumbers into action. Two days later one of Mujib's cronies discovers the plan, thinks it may damage his standing, buttonholes him, and the Prime Minister countermands his own decision. The machinery grinds into reverse, another plan is scrapped. The camps stay open, the civil servants sigh, another political debt is paid and Mujib retains an old friend.

Too much is made of corruption in Bangladesh by glib moralisers from the outside world. At a low level where a man feeds his family today and hopes for tomorrow, it is inevitable. It is inevitable too among the small-timers of the Awami League, who for more than 20 years lived under the yoke of Pakistan, escaping the misery of oppression through the

politics of resistance in the backwoods; men who served the Awami League in the lean years, and were the more oppressed for it. When they came to office the dream-talk of opposition became the rhetoric of government. It was too much for them: seduced by the pickings of power they now drive around Dacca in secondhand cars, wear bright Western shirts, and sometimes eat out at the Intercontinental. In a bankrupt land, surviving on the black market, they are the consequence, not the cause, of chaos.

But there are others who have no excuse. The trendy, overweight young Bengalis who fill the bar at the Intercontinental, where West meets East, look much at ease with the world. They were the freedom fighters, the heroes of Bangladesh, the men who won the guerrilla war against Pakistan. Now they are the bar-stool 'students' who, unique in the world, are as important as they think they are. They have become political pimps, trading on their glorious past, making a fat living by easing the path of nervous Bengali businessmen in search of the permits and passes without which trade and commerce is impossible. They open illegal doors, threaten civil servants, influence politicians, and (by force of arms if necessary) terrorise their critics. They are the chosen offspring of the Awami Leaguers who, through the near charade of the ballot box, are the elected dictators of the country.

It is the men at the top of the Awami League who are the worst: ministers, civil servants and businessmen who have grown fat on the backs of those they led to freedom. Of course if they suddenly offered their ill-gotten riches to the nation those who starve would not grow fat. But they have taken up, sanctioned and all but imposed a way of life and thought for those around them and beneath them which is destroying Bangladesh. Each man thinks only of himself and of his

tomorrow. The purpose for which a million or more young men died has evaporated.....The pride and unity of the new nation has been broken into bickering pieces. Mujib promises to act, threatens the firing squad — but suggest a crony is corrupt and he reacts with myopic anger: 'It is a blasted lie; he was in prison with me. . . .' And so the crooked win the day.

In his crude way Kissinger was right: Bangladesh is an 'international basket case'. In an atmosphere of near panic the Government is trying to cope with the latest disaster. Foreign agencies, embassies and delegations demand facts and figures with the insistence of a demented computer; they complain when a harassed official from one department plucks statistics from thin air which are in conflict with those produced by the same method in another department; then in the air-conditioned comfort of the Inter-continental, downing expensive foreign booze, they debate whether or not the Government has exaggerated the disaster. Did the rivers *really* rise so high? Was the flood *really* the worst for 20 years? Are they *really* as short of food as they say they are?

It is grotesque debate conducted in a mood of cynical resentment by the men who, if they were not so demoralised, would be ashamed of themselves. Such questions are irrelevant. Bangladesh was at the point of breakdown before the floods, she was already bankrupt, short of food, and over-populated with starving peasants. The flood merely had to make things to be a disaster. It made things much worse. Despite the debate (the people will thank God) aid has arrived. Planes loaded with drugs, tents and blankets lumber into Dacca airports, ships filled with grain offload in the docks at Chittagong. Some lives at least will be saved.

But the international community has grown impatient with Bangladesh, is tiring of its toy. Exhausted by the terrible truth

that most of the relief operation of the last 32 months has been in vain, relief workers, embassy staff and UN officials turn on the Government and the people. Unmindful of the oppression of the past, they treat the Bengali with the arrogance of despair. They speak with contempt of the inefficient, and with impotent anger at the corrupt.

They should cease such whining and look at themselves; see what they done. For nearly three years the governments of the outside world have competed in the chaos; forced the inefficient into indecision; fed the corruption they now affect to deplore. They have given the wrong things at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. They have sent economic missions filled with goodwill and hot air and the papers pathetically report that yet another country has shown 'sympathetic interest'. They have piled high the desks of civil servants with conflicting plans for the solution of the flood/food/population crises. They do not know each other's minds and do not want to know. Money-lenders all, they seek to sink their talons in Bangladesh and keep them there. Already the deals she has done will leave the bankrupt nation in hock indefinitely.

Mujib would do well to throw half the foreigners out and start again. He should send back the tractors, bulldozers and trucks which waste fuel and have no spare parts; sink the speedboats and mend the sampans; tell the Japanese he no longer wants their luxury hotels and they shall not bribe his skilled workers into emigration. He won't do it of course. He should throw out too the remains of the parliamentary democracy which allows the rich to prattle of freedom and the poor to starve. He won't do that either. He should mobilise the unemployed, give food for work, have millions tilling the fields, building houses and roads, making dams and dredging rivers. But he won't do it. He is a good man who has failed,

who has lost the vicotry of Bangladesh. He still has a proud front : 'Bangladesh will never die. Bangladesh cannot die. Bangladesh has been created by the blood of 3 million people. Bangladesh people know how to work and fight....I have my good land, my good soil, good climate, and good people. A self-respecting nation. With people who are self-respecting a nation cannot die.

They are fine and moving words. You want to believe them. But his people are starving, and the self-respecting nation claws at foreigners for food. The rhetoric which turned a brave and much loved man into the leader of the poorest nation on earth is now unforgivably empty.

Bangladesh : Dissent by fire

THE ECONOMIST, September 28, 1974

From a Special Correspondent

Flying to New York on Monday to address the United Nations General Assembly, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the prime minister of Bangladesh, said at Dacca airport that "my mind will always be with the people of my country". More to the point is whether the minds of Sheikh Mujib's people are still with him. His popularity, colossal after the 1971 war of independence that broke Bangladesh away from Pakistan, has been badly dented, even if it still exceeds that of any of his political rivals, inside or outside the ruling Awami League. Galloping inflation—the price of rice has tripled this year—serious shortages of all essential goods and large-scale corruption have combined to make this a time of widespread disillusionment.

Earlier this year it looked as though the discontent might boil over. For the first time the fragmented opposition showed signs of uniting itself against Sheikh Mujib's government. Six opposition parties formed a united front under the leadership of the nonagenarian Maulana Bhashani, formerly one of Sheikh Mujib's mentors. But on returning home in April from medical treatment in Moscow for "acute bronchitis" the prime minister hit back hard. Declaring a limited emergency, he told the armed forces to confiscate all unauthorised firearms left over from the war, stamp out corruption and smuggling and deal ruthlessly with what he called subversive elements. Strikes and public

demonstrations were banned, and later Sheikh Mujib even had Maulana Bhashani placed under house arrest.

Perhaps as a result of the crackdown, the official opposition seems to have made no headway since then, despite the deepening economic crisis in the wake of this year's disastrous floods. But a faceless opposition continues to be active below the surface. It is illustrated by the frequent reports in the Dacca press of assassinations, sabotage and the outbreak of mysterious fires at factories and storage sheds. The most striking was the explosion which wrecked the country's biggest fertiliser factory at Ghorasal earlier this month, adding an expensive new item to Bangladesh's crippling import bill.

By no means all this random violence is politically inspired, but some of it is. The resurgence of dacoity and the widespread breakdown of law and order are a direct result of the government's inability since it took office to offer the country's 75m people a reasonable chance of a better life. At a recent meeting with foreign correspondents in Dacca, Sheikh Mujib contemptuously dismissed these hidden agitators as "rabble-rousers". It was an unfortunate choice of words, for the Pakistani army employed the same expression for the Bengali resistance movement in 1970.

A day in the death of Bangladesh

THE GUARDIAN, October 2, 1974

JACQUES LESLIE on allegations that the famine has not been caused by floods : Dacca, Tuesday

A SOBBING Bengali mother watches helplessly as her emaciated baby, in the grip of death spasms, involuntarily rolls his eyes upwards. Shaking his head to emphasise his incredulity, a Westerner tells how, as he went to work one morning, he was approached by a beggar holding a dead child in her arms. In the midst of conversation in his living room, a middle-class Dacca resident speaks loudly to drown out the pleas of a beggar standing on his doorstep, asking for food. When the owner's distracted guest calls attention to the beggar, the owner asks a servant to chase the beggar away, then explains matter-of-factly that up to 100 beggars now come to his door each day.

Dacca, Bangladesh's capital, has become a city of despair. In the last few weeks thousands of villagers, driven from their homes by floods, have come here hoping to find food. Most have failed. Dacca residents now make a distinction between "professional beggars," mostly crippled and diseased people for whom begging has long been a full-time occupation, and others who have had to beg in the last few weeks to avoid starvation. The people most threatened with starvation are those whose role in Bengali society is most marginal—widows, old people, and children. Scarecrow physiques and distended stomachs are a common sight among

children here. Some men have returned to the fields as flood water recedes, leaving behind their wives and children to fend for themselves in Dacca. These people now go house-to-house in search of food. Many have become demoralised and sit dejectedly on Dacca pavements, their few possessions usually in a bundle beside them. "When I came here. I hoped people would be kind, but I have been disappointed," said Gulapi Bibi, a 25-year-old woman who was sitting on the kerb with her nine-year-old sister and three year-old son. "Whenever I beg, people ask me why don't I work," she said through an interpreter. "But where can I work? There is no work." She talked in a monotone, sometimes cradling her head in her hands, never looking up to see her questioner. She had said she last eaten more than a day ago. Her child was emaciated.

Untill police cleared them away a few days ago, many destitute people lived on the platforms of Dacca's railroad station. On a tour one afternoon a visitor saw two babies on the verge of death and many others suffering from malnutrition. Flies had settled on many children, who seemed too weak to brush them away. A 22-year-old widow sat on the platform with her four-year-old son and two older girls. She had come to Dacca a week earlier after going three days without food in her village 20 miles away. When neighbours heard she was gone to Dacca, they asked her to take the two girls whom they said they could no longer feed. The widow said she got her last meal the day before by begging in front of a restaurant. She was given a rice broth which would otherwise have been thrown out. Asked who was to blame for her condition, she said: " I don't know who is responsible, I blame my own destiny." But other Bengalis who had gathered around as the questioning went on rejected her answer. "She is from the countryside to her hunger seems nothing. She should blame the Government."

In fact, while Bangladesh officials say flooding is the sole cause of the current famine, many foreign observers here believe the Government is also to blame. Some charge that the Government's rationing system is designed primarily to prevent political unrest rather than to relieve starvation. Some also accuse the Government of mismanagement and condoning smuggling of food out of the country. "The famine is not so much the result of the flood as it is hoarding, smuggling, and the fact that the landless labourer is outside the rationing system," said one resident economist.

Actual food shortages are not the only reason for the famine. The country's immense economic problems and a psychology of scarcity also contribute. In one village people may be starving, while in a near by area there is enough to eat. Some villagers are apparently surviving by eating herbs, fruit and small fish.

But for probably millions of people, rice is no longer available. Bangladesh's domestically produced rice is sold on the open market at a price roughly triple what it was a year ago, Bangladesh's unemployed. Who comprise a staggering 30 per cent of the work force, cannot afford the rice.

The only other source of food grain is import, almost all of which goes into Bangladesh's rationing system. Until recently, however, only about 1 per cent of food in the rationing system was distributed as emergency relief to people most in need of it, according to one economist estimate. The rest went to soldiers, policemen, civil servant, and people with influence who were able to obtain ration cards.

Because of the floods, the priorities have now been shifted so that about 10 per cent of food in the rationing system is used for emergency relief. But this is not nearly enough to feed

the starving in addition, poor roads prevent food from being transported to some rural areas where there is famine.

Explaining the reasoning behind the government rationing priorities, one foreign observer said: "Starving people don't riot. They don't have the strength to, People who fear starvation might." Some observers also charge that government officials profit from smuggling of rice across the border into India. While estimates of the amount of smuggling go as high as one million tons a year, almost as much as the damage done by the floods (estimated at 1,100,000 tons), it is more likely that the smuggling figure is closer to 100,000 tons.

Bangladesh officials have recently tried to mobilise public against retail rice merchants to force them to lower price. While the price of rice has dropped slightly. Some merchants are said to have reacted by refusing to sell at all. Several factors could compound Bangladesh food problems in the future. First the present crop, to be harvested in the winter, is timed to coincide with the end of the monsoon. This year, however, it was planted late because of the floods. It could become vulnerable if the monsoon doesn't last longer than usual. The winter crop provides 58 per cent of Bangladesh rice production. Probably more significant, Bangladesh's chief fertiliser factory blew up September 11, Six to 18 months will be needed to repair it. The explosion was apparently the work of saboteurs. The factory's output was about 250,000 tons of fertiliser per year. Since use of fertiliser increases rice yields here by a factor of two to 10, the explosion could easily mean a loss of more than a million tons of rice, comparabile to the destruction caused by the floods. The effects of the fertiliser loss will not be felt until next year.

At the same time, agricultural production must keep pace with Bangladesh's population which is growing at a rate of more than 3 per cent a year. With the population now approaching 80 millions, the yearly increase is about 2,500,000. Population pressures have already forced farmers to cultivate areas particularly vulnerable to floods and other natural disasters.

— Los Angeles Times.

Is independence worth the price in Bangladesh ?

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR Boston, USA : October 18, 1974

By Daniel Southerland

Staff Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dacca, Bangladesh

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, is no longer the popular hero he was three years ago. When he returned triumphantly from a West Pakistan prison to assume the leadership of his new nation, the people of Bangladesh were ready to do anything for him. But corruption, a decline in already low living standards, and widespread food shortages have disillusioned many. In some of the country's villages, the Sheikh may still be above criticism. But among the more sophisticated poor of the cities and towns, dissent has been growing steadily.

Criticism grows

"Our leaders are heartless." said a middle-aged street peddler in Dacca, the capital city. "They are stealing the relief goods." "Under Ayub the people were poor, but they didn't have to go begging in the streets like this." said a darkskinned man with a white beard, one of the many recently driven into Dacca in search of food. The man was comparing the current government with that of Ayub Khan, who served as president in the period before Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan. Just a few years ago making such a comparison so favourable to

General Ayub and so unfavourable to Sheikh Mujib would have been virtually unthinkable. "People have been made into savages." continued the old man. "They are having to raid the garbage dumps to find food."

The government is not winning any friends among the malnourished poor who have streamed into Dacca over the past month or two. Having left the rural areas because of floods and food shortages, many of these people have taken to begging in the streets of the capital city. But the government seems determined to keep them off the streets and has rounded up quite a few at gun point and taken them to camps. There they are fed a few wheatcakes each day, sometimes supplemented by some onions and milk.

Once locked into a camp, the people say they cannot get out again. At a school which had been transformed into such a center for the destitute, the people spoke of being in a "concentration camp."

Degradation and hunger

"We did better at begging than this," said an emaciated man from Mymensingh to the north of Dacca. "Conditions outside the camp were better than this." The man's wife was incoherent with grief. She had just lost her child to starvation. Its tiny body lay wrapped in a dirty blanket on the concrete floor of one of the schoolrooms. In some cases, the soldiers who rounded people up did it so swiftly and brutally that children were separated from their parents in the process. "I lost my child when they brought us to this camp." wailed a middle-aged woman from Rangpur district in the northwestern part of Bangladesh. "I came to Dacca in search of food, and now I have lost my child." "Stop talking about it, woman!" barked her husband. "They will not help you."

What independence?

"What kind of an independent country is this where they keep people caged up?" asked an angry man at the same camp. On a blackboard at the camp, a government official had written in chalk, for this reporter's benefit, a schedule of feeding times for the people. If the schedule was to be believed, the people were getting bread and milk or bread and lentils three times a day. "Don't believe it." several people said. They declared that they were only getting one meal a day of one or two thin wheatcakes per person.

At the Mirpur camp on the northwestern side of Dacca conditions were considerably better. The Salvation Army had brought extra rations to this camp and was also providing medical treatment.

Held by force

But here, too, the people said that they had been brought to the camp by force and were not allowed to leave it. "The government officials don't really care about the people, but they are worried about their international image." said a volunteer relief worker at one of the camps. "That's why they are rounding the people up and taking them off the streets." he said. "They don't want the people to be seen."

Whether the discontent of the poor masses will ever be channeled into organized opposition movements remains to be seen. Longtime residents of this part of the world contend that the Muslim Bengalis are capable of accepting endless suffering.

Seeds of rebellion

But there are opposition groups in Bangladesh, small and fragmented though they may be, which are bent on getting a revolution going. While these groups have yet to mobilise

many of the poor, they have had a definite appeal for some of the Bengali "freedom fighters" who waged a guerrilla war against the West Pakistan Army before the liberation of Bangladesh and now feel betrayed by Sheikh Mujib and the men surrounding him. One of the most prominent among these dissidents has been a lieutenant colonel who was once a liberation war hero and later the commander of the Dacca army brigade. He went underground several months ago.

Starvation in Bangladesh : A Failure of Leadership

DAILY NEWS, New York, USA, Nov. 1, 1974

By STAN CARTER

Diplomatic Correspondent of The News

Dacca, Bangladesh, Oct. 31— There was a dead look in the child's big, brown eyes. He was 5 years old and his first name was Amul. No one knew his last name. A pretty, blonde nurse ran her finger gently around the boy's face. She was a Dutch girl, from the Netherlands Salvation Army, who came to this country on the Indian subcontinent to try to help the poor and the ill and the starving. The caress did not bring any change, expression in Amul's eyes. He did not speak. He just stared vacantly into space. "We think he will die in three or four days," the nurse said.

Amul is one of the 1,400 persons at the Mirpur feeding station in Dacca. It is one of three such station known locally as "gruel kitchens" in the capital of this Moslem country that won its independence three years ago after a war between India and Pakistan.

When the new country was created from what was formerly East Pakistan, foreign diplomats predicted that it would become an international "basket case". What has happened in Bangladesh has borne out their predictions. It could have been different— the diplomats' predictions could have turned out to be wrong— if Bangladesh had had better leader.

Even though 77 million people are crammed into a country the size of Florida, the land is fertile. The country grows 12 million tons of rice a year, not quite enough to feed the population. But it could grow more, if the government concentrated its resources on making agriculture more efficient.

Instead, adopting the idea of socialism without the experts to make it work, it has opted for the Soviet system of trying to build up industry, but without much success. While the steel mills that it envisions remain on the drawing boards, much of the jute that produces foreign exchange and one million tons of the rice that it grows are smuggled out of Bangladesh to India, where they fetch higher prices.

The draining of the country's resources is made possible by widespread corruption in the government. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the George Washington of Bangladesh who is prime minister, may not, accepted a bribe. But there are widespread rumors that his wife does— and there is no doubt at all that other officials do. If they did not the smuggling would be impossible.

After three years of war and mismanagement, the heaviest rains in 30 years flooded six-sevenths of Bangladesh three months ago. The floods destroyed much of the summer rice crop.

Foreign diplomats say that as many as one million persons may die of starvation or of diseases brought on by malnutrition.

The government has done its best to provide food for city dwellers, who would be the most likely to create disturbances, virtually spending itself into bankruptcy to buy wheat and

other grain from abroad. Secretary of State Kissinger, who arrived here yesterday and left this morning, promised another 100,000 tons of U.S. wheat in addition to 100,000 tons of wheat and 50,000 tons of rice that already are on the way here from the United States.

Bangladesh : Home truths

THE ECONOMIST, November 2, 1974

The last thing Bangladesh can afford right now is a political crisis. Its people are hungry: ministers admit that 5,000 have already starved to death and some foreign observers claim the real figure is nearer 100,000. Its coffers are empty; this year's deficit is running ten times higher than expected and the government is pleading for an extra \$800m in foreign aid. And its rich uncles are reluctant: the first meeting of a 22-nation aid consortium last week produced no concrete commitments. Yet this is the time Sheikh Mujib chose to fire his finance minister, Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed, whose prestige in the country was probably second only to that of the prime minister himself.

One theory has it that Sheikh Mujib sacked Mr. Ahmed to prove to Mr. Kissinger, who passed through Dacca on Wednesday, that Bangladesh is turning away from India and Russia and towards the United States. Mr. Ahmed, who headed the provisional government of Bangladesh in Calcutta during the 1971 war, is undoubtedly friendlier towards the Indians and the Russians than some other Bangladesh ministers. He has advocated closer ties between the ruling Awami League and pro-Moscow parties, although he also supports the idea of negotiating with maoist groups for a broadly based government of national unity.

But what is more likely to have brought Mr. Ahmed and Sheikh Mujib to breaking point was the finance minister's

hard-hitting delivery of some home truths. After returning from an aid-seeking tour abroad on October 14th, Mr. Ahmed publicly acknowledged that Bangladesh had squandered the tremendous goodwill — and the generous aid — it had started its life with less than three years ago. He cited official corruption and inefficiency as major reasons for the country's quickening downward slide. Sheikh Mujib's first reaction was to fire him. His second should be to follow his advice.

Bangladesh Starving Flock to Dacca

WASHINGTON POST, November 8, 1974

Driver Rahman of a destitute carrier instructed to pick up only the newcomers from the country-side, not the urban poor and the beggars of Dacca and to take them to the camp. Government officials explain that the camps have been set up to combat the present emergency. The cities have a system of rationing which guarantees their residents a minimum of food from government-run stores. However, the newcomers from the country-side are not eligible and they cannot get enough food after they come, so they are picked up and taken to the camps. "You have to keep the city people happy," one official explained. "Otherwise they would tear us all to pieces."

But the very poor of Dacca have been beaten down by raging inflation, and corrupt officials sometimes ask for bribe before they will issue a ration card. Therefore, if Rahman sees someone dying on the street, he won't ask too closely where he is from. He will look for telltale signs of newcomers such as a few belongings done up in a cloth.

Rahman explains to the refugees that the city can provide food for them and that the constables are here to get them to the camps. One old man, dressed in a pair of homemade burlap bag pants with "Product of U. S. A." printed on them, climbs willingly into the truck. But another, with half-dead child, says that he does not want to go to the camps and that he will take the next train back to Mymensingh when he came. In this case

Rahman takes a firm line, and the man is bundled into the truck by the constables. The trains have long since stopped asking people to pay but Rahman knows the man will simply go to another street and beg. "Their thinking is that begging will be more beneficial," he says. "But the child would certainly die." Although Rahman tries to avoid force, the truly destitute who have nowhere to go are not at liberty to refuse the city's hospitality. Rahman picks up 76 people from the railway station, and the truck, horn shrieking, drives through the narrow, crowded streets of Dacca to a camp at Mirpur on the outskirts of the city. There, in an unfinished building that was designed to be a soap factory, the refugees are registered and fed at government expense. They are given cholera and smallpox shots and free milk until they are healthy enough to go home.

There are 3,000 persons in this camp now. There are about 2,000 more refugees on the city's relief rolls.

No one knows the extent of the disaster in terms of human tragedy. In this country there are no reliable statistics and communications are so bad the people have died by the hundreds in the more remote provinces without anyone in the government hearing about it. What is known is that heavy rains in the summer caused flooding in the northern districts where the Bramaputra River flows south out of India. The floods drowned the summer crop and in the hardest hit districts the all important winter crop, which is harvested in November and December, was never planted.

The crop failure was not countrywide but because of the government's inability to distribute its available food supplies to the worst areas and because of widespread corruption, hoarding and smuggling of rice into India, a potentially manageable shortfall in the harvest became instead a national disaster.

Estimates of the number of people who have died since the famine began in August are between 50,000 and 100,000. It is difficult to judge because there is malnutrition in Bangladesh even in the best of times. The average annual death rate is 17 per thousand, nearly twice that of the United States. In times of famine rural people have tended to head for the capital. The Dacca district, which includes the city and the surrounding area, supports a population of nearly 8 million people.

Two weeks ago people were pouring in from the country at a rate of 5,000 per day. Today, with emergency "gruel kitchens" set up throughout the country and with food from abroad now coming in, the rate of inflow has been cut by half. A new harvest will be coming in over the next two months, and in places where the floods did not destroy the planting a bumper harvest is expected.

Country people are going home now in greater numbers because of the harvest. But the tragedy is that the famine need not have been so serious or prolonged if the government had been organized properly to distribute food to the flooded areas.

Bangladesh Fears Thousands May Be Dead as Famine Spreads

THE NEW YORK TIMES, November 13, 1974

By KASTURI RANGAN

Special to the New York Times

DACCA, Bangladesh, Nov. 12—The fear of widespread famine that haunted Bangladesh a few weeks ago has become reality. Officials here concede that they were not prepared for the widespread devastation that has occurred despite a substantial flow of foreign food and economic aid. An official of the nation's planning commission said that several thousand people may already have died and that many thousands might die in the next few weeks because of malnutrition. "The maximum damage has been done" the official said. The future seems hopeless. He compared the present famine conditions with the situation during the great famine of Bengal in 1943, when hundreds of thousands died of starvation. "The difference today," he said, "is that we have been able to save five million lives." He said that 6,000 gruel kitchens, or feeding centers, set up by the Government throughout Bangladesh were keeping that many people alive.

Government planning has been upset because the number of persons made destitute by the famine has been at least three times more than the total anticipated. In August, when the Government made its plans to open gruel kitchens, it was thought that about 4,000 feeding centers would be sufficient to feed an anticipated two million persons.

September Was Critical

Until the end of September, fewer than 3,000 kitchens were functioning and most of these were not receiving regular supplies. The Government had no stocks of food, and imports were at a low level. For the whole of September, a most critical period, only 20,000 tons of food grains reached the ports. This compares with more than 250,000 tons expected during this month and next.

Because there now are more gruel kitchens, even these large imports are insufficient. Demand from the kitchens has substantially affected supplies to the regular rationing outlets, on which the bulk of the working population in this country of 75 million depends. Prices of rice and wheat in the open market are so high that most of the population cannot afford them.

The result is a nightmarish situation in which perpetually hungry people survive solely on Government dole. Even the ration available in the kitchens is less than a marginal diet. Each of the 1,000 or more people who crowd around a feeding center once a day is served one roti (unleavened bread) or four ounces of a porridge made from rice and lentils. In some places the ration consists only of "survival biscuits," mostly donated by the United States.

Although harvesting of the autumn crop has begun and some of the destitute have begun leaving the cities in the hope of finding employment and food in their villages, officials believe the kitchens will have to be maintained at least until the end of the year. Many of the destitute lost everything—their homes, jobs and property—during the recent floods and there is nothing for them to return to.

In Tangail, 60 miles north-west of here, 2,000 persons are being fed at a large gruel kitchen. Most of them have come

from northern districts, which were the worst hit by the floods. Tara Banu, a 30-year-old widow from the northern district of Rangpur, has existed on gruel-kitchen rations for the last two months. Her husband died in the floods and two of her children died of malnutrition last month. She is left with only a 3-year-old girl, and their home is a sidewalk in the bazaar. "I have nothing at home," she said, "If the kitchen is closed I will have to beg—else I will die. But I want to live for the sake of my daughter." It is evident that there are many destitutes in the same situation as Tara Banu. They have no hope of living for a long time.

Government officials, who have become reconciled to large-scale deaths from starvation, are now worried about future food prospects. The flooding and famine have helped Bangladesh win international attention. Although more than 20 countries have offered food shipments, the Government is left with a deficit of one million tons for the year that began in July.

The floods in July and August washed out the bulk of the summer crop and late sowing has cut the autumn output. Officials say that a shortage of fertilizers and seeds will reduce the winter crops, which also depends on the timely arrival of the rains.

The incoming shipments of food supplies "have certainly improved the food position now," said A. M. Khan, the Food Secretary. "But the situation may start deteriorating again from February."

On the economic front the prospect is even bleaker. The situation is deteriorating so fast that officials have stopped working on development plans until the outlook for foreign aid and the food-supply situation become less uncertain. A

recent meeting of 22 nations on aid to Bangladesh reportedly agreed that the country would need about \$1.2 billion in aid this year, and that each country should pledge a substantial amount. However, many of the countries are said to have made aid conditional on a devaluation of the Bangladesh currency, which is highly overrated, and measures to increase industrial production, particularly in the jute industry. The Government has balked at both these demands. Although devaluation might be good for the economy in the long term, it would immediately push up domestic prices already very high because of inflation and scarcities.

A shortage of raw materials and chronic labour problems have dislocated most industrial production, and the Government has no immediate solution. Furthermore, much of the land used for growing jute now is used to produce rice. Officials talk of a large inflow of petrodollars from Arab nations sympathetic to the plight of a sister Moslem nations. The Government is determined to explore these sources fully before submitting to pressure for devaluation from the World Bank and Western countries.

Bangladesh, at Age 3, Is Still a Disaster Area

THE NEW YORK TIMES, December 13, 1974

BY BERNARD WEINRAUB

Special to The New York Times

DACCA, Bangladesh—After three years' existence Bangladesh has a bankrupt economy. Thousand of her people have died of starvation, and corruption, entwined with a chaotic bureaucracy, is continuing to thwart development. There are political killings and violence.

Three years ago the United Nations estimated that Bangladesh would need \$1.5 billion in foreign assistance to recover from the violence that accompanied her birth—nine months of Pakistani Army terror and three weeks of war that destroyed crops and wrecked factories, bridges, railways and dwellings.

The independence of Bangladesh, the former eastern wing of Pakistan, was greeted with a burst of euphoria here and an outpouring of international support. By next summer nearly \$3 billion will have been committed, but—to the increasing sorrow of donors—the nation has failed to develop a governmental structure, is mired in corruption and has yet to shape a coherent agricultural policy to cope with the birth rate. Per capita income is \$ 67 a year—about the lowest in the world.

A Worrisome Portent

Bengalis, relief officials and diplomats are alternately despondent and alarmed about the dimensions of the problems in the most overcrowded nation in the world. A United Nation official commented : "What may happen in the nineteen-eighties in India and the rest of South Asia is happening here right now." A senior Bengali economist said : "I have lost hope. I don't know what will happen next. Even I find it difficult to feed my own family. I see no change here except for the worse." A prominent official said : "It's not only desperate but tragic. It's desperate because of a combination of international and national events, and it's tragic because of what's happening to our people. Look outside. Look on the streets."

Thousands have died of starvation, largely because of floods that devastated the summer crop. The price of coarse rice has increased by 240 per cent in the last year. The jute mills, the main export earner, are producing 40 per cent less than four years ago. Thousands of farmers have sold their pots and pans their bullocks, even their land to buy food, and are now forlorn squatters in the villages. The streets of Dacca are filled with women begging for money and children carrying naked, often frighteningly thin infants. Hungry families sit silently by. A woman carrying a dead child wails outside the building that houses the American Embassy.

With seven babies born every minute, the population is growing by 3 per cent, or two million, a year. Nearly 80 million people live in an area the size of Wisconsin, which has a population of less than five million. At the present rate of growth Bangladesh will at least double in population in two decades. "It is impossible to think that this population level will be compatible with anything other than the merest

survival on the basis of an international dole," the World Bank has reported.

The Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has made only one brief reference to birth control in speeches over the last three years. A population-control plan, to send health workers with family planning materials into rural areas, was to start last summer but remains sidetracked. A West German team arrived recently for a scheduled two-week visit to work out a program to assist birth-control efforts it left after a week saying, in effect, that when the nation was serious about population control it would return. Government officials, who concede that Bangladesh is vulnerable and ailing, say that geographic and historic factors—25 years of exploitation by the Pakistani Government, and periodic cyclones floods and droughts—have left her shattered.

Bangladesh was part of Pakistan when the Moslem state was created in 1947 at the end of British rule on the subcontinent. The western wing, where the Government was based, received the bulk of development funds, foreign aid, public-works projects and industry. The eastern wing, a thousand miles across-India, was sapped of its resources, which paid to help develop the west, and the Bengalis complained that they were left to the mercies of the Punjabis of the west. Bangali grievances exploded three years ago, resulting in the breakup of Pakistan. "Before the war we never had the chance to develop our political leaders, bureaucrats, businessmen. a senior official explained. "Except for a few telephones and tall buildings in Dacca, we had nothing. We are like a medieval society, a village society." "The war was a shattering thing." he continued. "Eighty per cent of our managers were non-Bengalis, and they left. Our civil servants were non-Bengalis. Our banks, our export-import businesses, our

communications system, our factories—these were run by non-Bengalis. If there is corruption and lethargy now—if people don't have a vision of society—it's because we never had the experience to build on.”

A lawyer and prominent intellectual voiced a different view, one widely held : “These people have created a society of plunder. They have never made money in their lives, and suddenly they are in charge of factories and giving out licenses and permits. They can write out checks and sell stock. It has gone to their heads.”

Key Enterprises Taken Over

The 54-year-old Prime Minister and the governing Awami League have come under increasingly angry criticism. Two years ago, even last year, it would have been unthinkable for most Bengalis to criticize Sheikh Mujib, who led the independence struggle. Today the most pointed criticism to be heard, even among Government officials, is that life was better under the Pakistanis. “It's a tragedy,” a publisher said, “The Government does not have the passion or the ability to look into the problems, to understand what they should do. They don't think of Bangladesh as a nation. It's like a tribal head running a village, with favorites and relatives in power.”

Virtually all the industries, abandoned by their Pakistani managers, as well as banks, insurance companies and inland water transport, were nationalized in March, 1972, and placed in the hands of Awami League figures. These were a mess. A foreign economist said. “They sold off equipment, smuggled stock out, took-bribes.” All the enterprises are losing money now. The steel, engineering, ship-building, paper and fertilizer industries are working at such a dismal rate that their combined production this year was 9 per cent of the goal.

Commodity prices have climbed 400 per cent in the last year. At the same time key imports have climbed 80 per cent over last year while exports of jute and tea have risen only 10 per cent. The trade gap this year is more than \$1-billion.

Tales of corruption—and visible evidence of it—abound in Dhaka. A former official has said that one out of 7 tins of baby food and one out of 13 blankets reach the poor. Allegations are voiced against Gazi Gulam Mustafa, head of the Bangladesh Red Crescent and chairman of the Dhaka city branch of the Awami League, and against members of Sheikh Mujib's family and senior officials in the Industries, Communications and Commerce Ministries. Discussing a Cabinet minister a Bengal economist said : "After the war you could bribe him with two cartons of imported cigarettes. Now it's at least 100,000 takas [about \$12,000]."

Premier's Nephew Accused

Bribes are paid to Awami Leaguers to ease the path of businessmen in search of permits as well as to recover abandoned property. An elderly non-Bengali who returned here recently from India and had the approval of Sheikh Mujib to reopen his pharmaceutical plant was ordered to pay \$30,000 by the Sheikh's nephew, who had taken over the building. Estimates of the smuggling of rice to adjoining West Bengal, in India, range from 300,000 tons to startling million tons (the Indians pay in rupees, a much stronger currency).

Recently 70 Bengali economists, writers and lawyers, headed by Dr. Anisur Rahman, a distinguished former member of the Planning Commission, issued a statement saying that the recent famine was man-made and "the direct result of political and economic laissez-faire by a class of people who

were given to shameless plunder, exploitation, terrorization, flattery, fraudulence and misrule.” The statement said the Government “is clearly dominated by and is representative of” smugglers and profiteers.

Sheikh Mujib's associates concede that he is a poor administrator. Such minor matters as exit and student visas, requests for vacations abroad and approval of technical assistance personnel wind up on his desk. “He likes people to touch his feet, address him as a patriarch,” said a Bengali who knows him. “His loyalties are to his family and the Awami League. He doesn't believe that they are corrupt and can betray him.”

Sluggish Bureaucracy

The corruption is one aspect of the stifling of development; another is the woefully sluggish bureaucracy, Civil servants, underpaid and wary of Awami League interference, are often inept. The approval of a foreign consultant's contract went through 204 hands. “You talk to them about a project.” a foreigner said “then they ask you to send a letter. You draft a letter. It takes six months to get a reply.”

After the devastating storms of 1970 the World bank allocated an emergency \$25-million reconstruction loan; so far the Government has spent \$2-million of it. To middle-class Bengalis—whose salaries have been frozen while prices have quadruple the singular tragedy is that Sheikh Mujib has failed to exploit his overwhelming popularity. In the first election, held last year, the Awami League won 308 of 315 parliamentary seats.

Despite that popularity the Prime Minister, not satisfied with the 50,000 policemen and soldiers, has developed his own 10,000-man security force, organized from among the Bengali

guerrillas who fought in the war. Critics say that members of the force armed with machine guns terrorize the countryside, arrest people without warrants impose curfews on villages to search for weapons and serve as a repressive instrument for the Government.

As for the economy, Sheikh Mujib is pinning his hopes for improvement on oil exploration in the Bay of Bengal and increased aid from Middle Eastern oil producers. It is only in the past year, and after repeated pleas, that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates have started assisting Bangladesh; their aid has reached \$100-million.

U. S. Leads the Donors

The largest donors have been the United States, with more than \$520 million; India, which fought beside the Bengalis against the Pakistanis, the United Nations and the World Bank. This year the United States has pledged more than 250,000 tons of food and will probably allot more soon.

Despite the adverse results, relief agencies and foreign missions are stepping up their efforts. The current harvest has temporarily lessened the threat of widespread famine, but officials foresee a lean period in January and February, before the spring harvest. Donors of aid have told the Government that it must undertake emergency programs to reduce the birth rate, improve agricultural yields and combat smugglers and black marketeers.

“The trouble is that no one sees any real commitment or energy,” an aid official said; “Everyone seems to be worried but the Government. You have all the agencies, and most government, caring about Bangladesh because this is a testing ground. If we can't do anything here, we'll be heading for sorrow in this region.”

Bangladesh : It's formal

THE ECONOMIST, January 4, 1975

States of emergency blanket the sub-continent like monsoon rain and on December 28th Bangladesh announced its own. Legal restraints on arrest and detention without trial were removed, free speech as a constitutional right was suspended and clamps were imposed on the publication of anything deemed to endanger the national interest. So what? Bangladeshis have been arrested and detained and newspapers censored with or without a formal emergency. The decree formalises, and hardens, an existing situation.

The pretext for the decree is the disruption caused by hostile elements in collusion with "the collaborators of the Pakistan army [read right-wing Moslem groups], extremists [read maoist-inspired left-wingers] and enemy agents in the pay of foreign powers [whoever they are]." Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the prime minister, said that 3,000 officials of his ruling Awami League had been killed in the past three years, including six members of parliament, one of them in a mosque on Christmas Day. What he did not say was that many of these officials were hardly innocent victims. In some instances, Awami Leaguers have slugged each other in pursuit of political spoils. And black markets for essential supplies, and the smuggling traffic to and from India, have bred their own kind of criminal.

The question is whether the decree is an alternative, or an addition, to the long-rumoured constitutional changes. With his personal prestige and his overwhelming parliamentary majority, Sheikh Mujib has never been short on authority. But for some months he is believed to have been considering a move either to an authoritative presidential system or to a formalised one-party system. If this is true the emergency decree will help stifle opposition to change. Bangladesh urgently needs political stability if it is to emerge from its economic problems — but not necessarily the sort of political stability that Sheikh Mujib now shows signs of having in mind.

Dead go Unclaimed in Dacca as economic disorder grows

DAILY TELEGRAPH, 6th January, 1975

By PETER GILL in New Delhi

BANGLADESH is sinking steadily into uncharted depths of human misery as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister, rails in vain against the perpetrators of economic disorder. Despite excellent harvests in the countryside, an Islamic welfare organisation last month collected and buried 879 crowses from the streets, railway stations and hospital mortuaries of Dacca. As a result of starvation. The organisation said it collected 2,443 unclaimed bodies during the last half of 1974, more than 1,500 of them from the streets. The December figure represents a sevenfold increase over July, and is almost twice the number collected during the severe famine month of October. The body of a young man lay stretched out in the winter sun last week within 500 yards of Dacca's only international hotel. Cars and pedestrians on the busy airport road travelled past the corpse for several hours before it was removed. Professional beggars in Dacca have been supplanted by a new class of desperate and uprooted people from the countryside. Fathers sit listlessly on the pavements with their children and sob.

Canute-like Mujib

Sheikh Mujib, who a week ago assumed dictatorial powers under a new state of emergency, seems incapable of firm or effective government. He is compared by some of his

countrymen to King Canute-impotently ordering a sea of anarchy and economic dislocation to retreat. The jute mills responsible for a major part of export earnings are functioning at a third of their capacity because of rash nationalisation measures and a dearth of spare parts. Tea companies, owned principally by the British, are reported to be more than £4 million in debt and "working only for the banks."

Pegged to rupee

The Bangladesh taka, supposed to be pegged at par to the Indian rupee, is derisively over-valued. Black market in foreign currency, indirectly encouraged by the Government because of concessions to Bengali immigrants to Britain, means that a pound note can be sold illegally at well over twice its official value. Ministers explain that the state of emergency was a manoeuvre to "raise the morale" of the security forces by removing judicial challenges to their authority to arrest and detain without trial. The much disliked Rakkhi Bahini (Security Forces) which come directly under the control of the Prime Minister, were condemned by the Supreme Court last year as acting in a "highly irregular" and "absolutely unorthodox manner".

'Best liability'

Sheikh Mujib, who is described as "the best liability Bangladesh has got," is both revered as a father figure and denounced as incompetent. He takes immense interest in small acts of patronage, and important decisions are shelved. Senior Bengali officials complain that their authority is constantly undermined by the Prime Minister, who listens attentively to junior officers with family or personal connection. Sheikh Mujib refuses to read Western Press criticism of his Government, which he dismisses as a "Jewish plot" born out

of his support for the Arabs. The emergency declaration has been followed by the arrest of a leading civil rights lawyer and an erring government M.P., and the alleged killing of a notorious underground guerrilla. But most observers are convinced that the government has no definite programme for halting economic and political decline in Bangladesh.

Political sources say that Mujib will move soon to scrap further parts of the Bangladesh democratic apparatus. It is said that he plans to declare himself president, and that the new state of emergency will serve to silence criticism within his own Awami League party.

Bangladesh : The price of corruption

THE FINANCIAL TIMES, January 6, 1975

By KEVIN RAFFERTY

DR. A. M. BOERMA, Secretary General of the FAO, recently appealed to the rich nations to provide more food aid to help serve off starvation in Bangladesh. But at the same time some prominent and often highly placed Bengalis are beginning to say that the aid-givers should withdraw leave Bangladesh to its ownself.

Bangladesh is the end of the great development dream. Elsewhere the World Bank and other rich nations give aid and can pretend that they are helping the process of development, that slowly the people will get richer and in a few years or in a few decades the country will "take off." In the case of Bangladesh, the best they can pretend is that they are pouring money in to stop the people becoming poorer.

Clearly it is a losing battle. Bangladesh is growing poorer every day. Difficult as it is to imagine, the economy to-day is in a worse state than at devastated independence. The foodgrain gap is higher than ever before. Production of its one non-food crop, jute, which provides both its major industry and 80 percent, of its export earnings, had fallen by 50 per cent. Industrial production is still not up to 1969-70 levels, although the population has advanced by several million.

Spectres of unemployment, hunger, and death stalk Bangladesh on a large scale. Mr Cole P. Dodge, the Oxfam Field Director in Bangladesh, told me that the northern districts

of Rangpur and Dinajpur were as bad a famine area as he had ever seen in the world.

Before blaming the Government for its part in the continuing tragedy of Bangladesh, it has to be admitted that the situation is not entirely its own fault. In a single year world prices rose so sharply that Bangladesh had to pay an extra 85 percent for the same volume of essential imports, while its own exports rose by a mere 5 percent.

Bengalis complain that there is an element of mockery in the attitude of the aid-givers. The rich nations, which now include the Arabs, first put up the prices of their essential goods like oil, food, fertiliser, and basic capital goods to cripple the economy, then offer aid.

Waste

But even granting these difficulties, it is also true that the Bangladesh Government has done its best to make the worst of a bad job. What upsets aid-givers that they are expected to plug rather large holes in the Bangladesh balance of payments, then see corruption and waste preventing any progress. In other developing countries aid is used to "top up" the last 10 percent of the development effort. In Bangladesh's case the need is more extreme. Import needs are about \$1.5 bn. but exports in the current year, at the most optimistic estimates, will not reach \$450m. leaving a gap of \$1.1bn. to be financed from aid and other foreign borrowings.

Some aid donors, having provided vital engineering spares for industry this year, were flabbergasted to be asked to pay 150 percent duty and tax so that the goods could be released from customs. In these circumstances the aid donors are angry when they see the Bangladesh Government push through a series of so-called "socialist" measures which have done little

more than inflame the most outrageous expectations of labour leaders and meanwhile tie up every decision in so much red tape as to stifle productive initiative. They see racketeers and corrupt elements get away with vast profits, usually because of their political connections.

Mr. Toni Hagen, the founder of the vast UN aid operation, estimated that only one-seventh of relief goods reached the person for whom it was intended. One highly placed official told me in almost abject despair : "The British built an administrative machine that was used mainly to shunt bits of paper from desk to desk. Here, even that operation is subject to bribery and corruption."

Nobody knows the extent of corruption in the country. Some foreigners estimate that up to 2m. tons of rice and up to 1m. bales of jute are annually taken across into India. More realistic figures might be half of these estimates, but even such supplies on the Bangladesh open market would do much to ease the country's problems. The operations are being managed by important people.

Land sold

But corruption run by leading political figures is not the only way in which the ruling Awami (People's) League party is ruining the country. The tight food situation and famine in rural areas is having a disastrous effect on the rural social structures. In many districts, particularly in the north, farmers are selling their land to buy food. I met a family of eight sitting near the river in Old Dacca, finishing off their food. "Where have you come from?" I asked. "From Faridpur." "How much money have you got?" "We have spent it all on food." "How much food have you got left?" "We have just eaten the last of it."

It is estimated that there have been 100,000 land transfers in northern Bangladesh. The main beneficiaries, buying up the land cheaply, have been leading local lights of the Awami League.

Even in districts which do not face such immediate problems it is clear that the influence of leading members of the ruling party is not helpful. I travelled to Sonargaon, 25 miles from Dacca, once the capital of Bengal in the Moghul days when East Bengal was renowned for fine muslin and precious spices. Living conditions were tight and people going on the breadline. Many villagers had little land and no work. I asked about the role of the largest landowner, a district officer in the Awami League who owned 600 acres. I was told that he was rarely seen as he spent most of his time attending to multifarious interests in Dacca, Chittagong or outside the country.

It is in these circumstances that several highly-placed people have begun to mutter privately that it would be better to do without aid. "Aid merely allows the Awami League to live off the fat of the land. It would be far better to let the country fend for itself, let the people suffer and rise up and kick the rulers out", is a typical argument.

The attitude of the aid donors is also sometimes puzzling. They are, at least in their public utterances, anxious to pull Bangladesh from the brink of poverty and particularly to assist the poorest of the poor. Yet Japan, for example, is still planning feasibility studies for a bridge across the Jamuna River which would have to be at least eight miles long, would cost more to maintain each year than the highest estimate of social benefits, and would be permanently vulnerable to being

left high and dry by the river, which constantly changes its course. A good ferry service could be installed now, and would save millions of takas.

Aid-givers compete with one another to sell goods which may not be compatible with the needs of Bangladesh. And yet when all is said and done, the aid donors and Bangladesh are failing. Bangladesh is getting poorer. The population could reach 200m. by 2020 in an area smaller than the U. K.

The real problem for those seriously concerned about the welfare of the poorest Bengalis is that talk of revolution is fine, but it is not easy to see either leaders for it or any orderly way out of it. Bangladesh may be riper for revolution than anywhere else, but the starving people converging aimlessly on Dacca seem to prove again that hungry, hopeless people make the worst revolutionaries.

Where Hunger Is the Only Constant

KANSAS TIMES, U.S 20 January, 1975

By Julleo Scherer

Dacca— In the village of Mirpur, a soldier stands with shotgun poised guarding the refugee camp. Inside the gates are piles of wood, dirt and mud and in the middle a small lake of stagnant water. Around the lake, men on one side and women on the other, the refugees queue up for their day's ration. They are all pupils and bones and they gaze out of the depths of the inexplicable as they make their way towards a big pot of bean gruel. In some mysterious way their hearts and lungs continue to function in their hollow, bloodless insides. In barracks with cement floors and brick walls, children sleep or cry. Naked or almost naked, they take up hardly any space. Their skin is lacerated with ulcers and a white secretion flows out of their black eyes. Flies circle about them so dense they look like one animal with millions of tiny entrails. Abdul Majeed, who is in charge of the camp, says he can tolerate his job because he has come to believe that the refugees don't suffer, that their souls flee their bodies long before they dying breath. "They are nothing but hunger," he says.

Hunger is the theme of the Asian subcontinent. A companion through the centuries, it devastates and wipes out life just like floods or drought. It is always present. It doesn't arrive; it is here. Thirty years ago when Bangladesh was a

province of India and India was ruled by the British. Nehru wrote "hunger has arrived — ghostly. overwhelming, indescribably horrible. Men, women and children are dying every day for lack of food.

"All over the world, men are dying in battle. Their's generally is a quick death, and often a brave death—death for a cause, death with a purpose, death which in this crazy world of ours seems the inexorable logic of events, a sharp ceasing of life which we cannot control. Death is fairly common everywhere. "But death here has no purpose, no logic, no finality; it is the result of man's incompetence and callousness . . . A million will die, 2 million. 3 million. No one knows how many children will barely escape death, only to survive scared, shattered in both body and soul. And the fear of hunger and disease will continue hovering over the country."

Cholera roams the streets as free as the crows. Out of every 1,000 people there are two or more cholera victims. No one really knows. Health officials have given up their efforts to control it. They have confessed. matter of factly, with neither sadness nor resignation. "The epidemic is beyond our control." Cholera ravages its victims with the intensity of a thousand simultaneous diarrhea attacks. Within minutes the victim loses 10 per cent of his body weight. He's left without any body salt and he remains dry, motionless. He neither sleeps nor passes out; he oscillates somewhere between time and eternity.

We have seen them in the Mahakhali hospital; their eyes are half shut, they are too weak even to close them; their mouths hang open, they haven't the energy even to ask for a drink of water. The victims are so countless and the scene is so repetitious, that man's sensitivity toward his fellow man begins to dissipate, and he becomes afraid for himself. So

threatened, he begins to slip into a dangerous fatalism whose ultimate expression is impotence.

Zainal Abdin is the best known artist in Bangladesh. His paintings, portray the misery of Dacca. "because my eyes can see nothing else"; his paintings depict death in Dacca. "because nothing else touches my heart." His house is solidly built in a good section of Dacca. Food is plentiful. His two sons are healthy and strong. "I have everything," he says, "in a world which has nothing. I feel like an exploiter." There are times when he cannot endure the cawing of the crows. There are days when he cannot bear to go out into the street. "Consciously, I would like to become unconscious."

Richard Levine, an epidemiologist from the United States, has been touring Bangladesh for two years. He has seen the extortion by health officials, ever greedy for money. "In a normal society," he says, "if a man is robbed, he loses some money. But in Bangladesh, if a man is robbed, he loses his life."

Caton Cuellar, a doctor from Tamaulipas, Mexico, who is studying diseases spread by mosquitoes, relates a fact which here seems nearly superfluous : "There are no death certificates in Bangladesh."

Sarder Ashrafuddin, deputy director of the school of psychology in Dacca has known Bengalis who pray to the food they eat: Allah embodied in a wheat cake, in rice or in bean soup. "Some mothers", he says, "themselves starved, can't help from snatching food out of the mouths of their children. When the little ones die, the mothers cry, they cry desperately. Hunger is the loss of personal identification, existence without any starting point."

The minister of health a rotund man who offers his guest tea, cookies and bananas, says: "To varying degrees, 50 per cent of all Bengalis are hungry."

Mujib Turns Bangladesh into dictatorship

DAILY TELEGRAPH, London, January 27, 1975

By **PETER GILL** in New Delhi

SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, Bangladesh Prime Minister, has kicked over the last visible traces of parliamentary democracy in his country. In a one-hour session parliament in Dacca on Saturday the ruling Awami League used its sledge-hammer majority to declare Sheikh Mujib President and to authorise him to establish a one-party state. Democracy was buried with a minimum of fuss. Countering an opposition plea that there should be three days of discussion on these sweeping constitutional changes, the Government carried a motion debarring any debate on the measures.

British help

Sheikh Mujib, undisputed leader of a country ruined but proudly independent after nine months of civil war against Pakistan in 1971, told MPs that parliamentary democracy was "a legacy of colonial rule." British experts helped draw up the Bangladesh constitution. He denounced the country's independent judiciary as colonial and "preventing quick justice." The President now enjoys the power to dismiss judges at will, and civil liberties, if enforced at all, will be enforced by a special court appointed by the new "Parliament." The new constitution authorises Sheikh Mujib to establish a "National Party" by executive order. It will be the only legal party in the

land and any MP either refusing to join or voting against it will lose his seat.

Criticism of the move in Dacca was understandably muted, but five of the Opposition's eight members in a parliament of 315 walked out in protest. Eleven MPs of the Awami League were not present to vote. Among them was Gen. M. A. G. Osmani, leader of the Bangladesh guerrillas at the time of independence and a former minister. He is reported to have resigned from the party.

Sheikh Mujib can now rule Bangladesh autocratically until 1980. The new constitution also extends the life of the nation's Parliament, elected in 1973, for a further two years until 1980, but it need only meet briefly twice a year. Government will be conducted through a vice-president, a prime minister and a Council of Ministers. Mr. Syed Nazrul Islam, Acting President of the Bangladesh Government in exile during Sheikh Mujib's imprisonment in Pakistan during 1971, becomes Vice-President, and Mr. Mansur Ali, Home Minister, becomes Prime Minister. They and other Ministers were sworn in by the President yesterday.

Sheikh's qualities

Foreign observers of the gathering economic and social crisis in Bangladesh do not doubt that the country needs dictatorship nor that Sheikh Mujib has qualities of benevolence. The issue is whether his fresh powers and new mandate will make any material difference to the country's steady slide into famine and anarchy.

Sheikh Mujib declared a state of emergency a month ago which has been followed by several arrests and the killing of Siraj Sikder, a Left-wing guerrilla leader. But it is already doubtful whether the emergency can be used by the

Government to restore a modicum of good administration, almost totally lacking at present, or to revive the nation's sagging morale.

The new President has few administrative qualities, as he has abundantly demonstrated in the past three years, and his style is that of an avuncular despot. He takes immense interest in the promotion and views of some petty officials and issues of importance are often shelved.

The creation of a single party state will tend to exacerbate corruption rather than remove it as the only check on overbearing local Awami Leaguers will be the overburdened President. Extremist guerrilla and robber bands in the countryside are likely to gain more support as opponents of the regime are forced underground to continue their activities.

End of a honeymoon, start of a courtship?

THE GUARDIAN, January 31, 1975

BANGLADESH has been the biggest success story for Indian arms and diplomacy. The liberation went off almost like a text book exercise and every stage of the diplomacy that followed was supervised personally by Mrs. Gandhi. She handled it with a degree of skill and delicacy not usual in New Delhi's diplomacy. India did more to reconstruct Bangladesh after the war, and feed it in the first desperate days, than its own strained resources would have justified. New Delhi took up and defended all Dacca's causes even after they ceased to be defensible, including the argument that Pakistan owes Bangladesh huge amounts as part of the division of assets. Indian businessmen, anxious to make a killing in Dacca's wide-open markets, were forbidden to move in, lest they throw their economic weight about and become too painful a symbol of exploitation. When Sheikh Mujib began finding it hard to keep order, New Delhi quietly trained and equipped a private army for him, the Rakkhi Bahini. Like a damsel rescued by a knight, Bangladesh could do no wrong. Hardly a word against it was ever breathed in the Indian press. But four years have now passed, the honeymoon is over and the damsel looks less beautiful. A foreign newspaper report on starvation and mismanagement, with Sheikh Mujib himself as the villain, was recently reprinted on the leader page of The Times of India. Criticism of his ostrich-like failure to control corruption has now crept into cartoons and editorials.

In Bangladesh anti-Indian feeling was, present from the start. But until recently it amounted to little more than the ignorant grouses of the multitude, forced to buy everything Indian at many times the price Pakistani things used to cost. India could say inflation was no fault of hers. If a sixth of the rice and jute crops was smuggled across from Bangladesh every year, India would say it was up to Bangladesh to stop it. But now, as Bangladesh nears economic collapse, and possibly political breakdown as well, less friendly, sentiments are coming to the surface. Smuggling rice and jute is, after all, not only bad for Bangladesh but also good for India. West Bengal is desperately short of rice these days. The Indian jute industry, in the doldrums throughout the Pakistan era, has revived. It lives largely on smuggled jute and operates in direct competition with Bangladesh.

Now a relatively new dispute, this time between governments, not businessmen, is simmering over the international boundary in the Bay of Bengal. The issue is far from academic because of the feverish search for offshore oil. Much more menacing is the argument over sharing the waters of the Ganges. Much of this is about to be diverted from Bangladesh farmers by a huge Indian dam at Farrakka. Negotiations are deadlocked and now await a crucial meeting between Sheikh Mujib and Mrs Gandhi for which no date has been fixed.

Worse than all that, what happens if Bangladesh falls apart? The Indian Army could move in from three directions in a matter of hours. But for what, then, would the glorious war of liberation have been fought? Already, Mr. Bhutto makes witty asides in some of his speeches in Urdu, remarking that some people do not seem to be enjoying their independence all that much. More privately, Pakistanis are beginning to gloat about

some liberated territories proving harder to digest than to liberate.

Even if it does not fall apart, a continuously degenerating Bangladesh can become a dangerous power vacuum. There are already reported to be close links between Naxalites guerrillas, and other groups on both sides of Bengal and Sheikh Mujib's well-armed opponents have also restored old links with Naga and Mizo nationalists. If Nagaland and Mizoram had been as delicately handled after the Bangladesh war as Dacca itself, both insurrections might by now have been ended. In both territories centrist governments have come to power, pledged to negotiate peace from a middle position, without insisting on separate statehood even as a bargaining stand.

But New Delhi was slow to respond, and seemed indeed to have been disconcerted by the victory of the Naga United Democratic Front in last February's elections. Peace changes may have been further sabotaged by local Indian officialdom which has learned nothing and forgotten nothing and has a vested interest in a continuing emergency.

The nationalists in both territories depend on China for supplies and training. For the moment in Nagaland the Indian Army is on top, having just intercepted an important group on its way to China and arrested a number of senior leaders. But in Mizoram rebel officers have been openly operating in towns, making speeches, recruiting and collecting taxes.

Behind it all, the lurking enemy remains China—the threat which turns neighbours into vital buffer states and lends strategic importance to mountain tribesmen who would not otherwise matter. But is China really the enemy? It hardly talks like one these days and there are constant rumours of rapprochement. If that happened, the heat could be taken off the whole length of the frontier. Anyone trying to explore the

prospects in New Delhi finds himself in a world of tweedledum and tweedledee. The Chinese, who man their huge embassy with a skeleton staff headed by a charge d'affairs, say they are ready for detente: they are waiting only for the Indians to respond.

The Indians say they, too, are ready but are waiting for the Chinese. The Chinese say that since it was the Indians who first withdrew their ambassador in 1961, they should be the first to send an ambassador back. Nonsense, the Indians say, our man in Peking at the time merely fell ill. It was their man in Delhi who left in a huff so it's up to them.

The Chinese diplomats complain they cannot move freely around, that when they ask for a permit they get no reply and that they cannot even leave India without a permit. The Indians reply that their men in Peking are hardly better off, to which the Chinese counter-reply that at least in China everyone is treated alike.

The key to the impasse probably lies in Moscow. In the Bangladesh war India came under the Soviet umbrella and in more ways than one she finds it cosy. The arrival of a Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi might make it less cosy. For the moment the only breakthrough is the news that the Chinese will take part in the world table tennis tournament in Calcutta next month. In Peking's foreign policy, big things have been known to start with table tennis.

Dacca tackles slum problem

55,000 refugees placed in a camp, but that too,
has its own 'horrors'

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, March 26, 1975

By Joe Gandelman Daily News Foreign Service

TONGI, Bangladesh — There was a time when Hatim Walli pedaled a bicycle rickshaw and was able to support his family of seven. Then one day, the government came and forcibly removed him from his old Dacca home — in a "bustee" or slum — and shipped him by truck to Tongi, here on the outskirts of the city, where he was given land and, theoretically, a new start. The bustees, meanwhile, were leveled. Hatim Walli wanted to continue driving his rickshaw in Dacca, but officials there wouldn't issue him a license until he paid a 40 taka (about \$6) bribe. When he told the officials that he couldn't pay the fee, they retaliated by asking him questions in English. "Why should I know English?" he shot back in Bengali. "If I knew English, I'd be a clerk and not be pulling a rickshaw!" So he stays at Tongi.

WHEN Ahan Bhanu's husband was a rickshaw-wallah, they had an income, Mrs. Bhanu also received 30 taka (about \$4) a week plus free food as a baby-sitter in Dacca. However, the government took her from Dacca's bustees to Tongi, where she now gets free food and land — but does not work. She will not leave Tongi to return to her job. "I could make more money if I was working" she freely admits, "but if I leave here, I will lose my land and someone else will take it." So she stays at Tongi.

Hatim Walli and Ahan Bhanu are just two of the 55,000 persons — including some 6,575 authorized families and 2,000 unauthorized families — living in Tongi. They are here because Mother Nature was in a brutal mood last summer. Floods, the worst here in memory, were followed by a famine that took anywhere from (officially) 27,000 to (unofficially) 300,000 lives and sent thousands of Bengalis in search of food, shelter and employment. High hopes rested on the cities, and Bangladesh's capital became known as "Golden Dacca" to many displaced persons. But the "gold" proved as elusive as any fabled treasure.

ONCE In Dacca, The refugees had to pay rent for living in the bustees. The fee was paid to two Bengali organisations that had no legal claims to the land but were politically powerful.

The "Lord of the Bustees" was Gazi Golam Mustafa, Bangladesh's Red Cross chief, who is widely believed to have siphoned off and sold huge chunks of relief goods to line his own pockets. Mustafa, privately called "a really nasty guy" by one relief official, is a touchy subject indeed with the Bangladesh government. However, the bustees themselves became even touchier. Dacca's residents complained that crime was increasing. The streets became a nightmare of countless beggars and the corpses of starvation victims. The city simply could not absorb the influx.

So, in his first show of strength after the emergency was declared, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, much to the satisfaction of Dacca's residents, levelled the slums and resettled the refugees in various government-run camps outside the city. Part of the reason, knowledgeable analysts say, was Mustafa's influence there.

In recent months, Tongi has become a favourite "horror" story for foreign journalists briefly visiting Bangladesh. On the

surface, the camp, with its huge collection of dilapidated, makeshift shacks around 12 centres and an equal number of villages, is merely a transplanted slum.

But, as Sheikh Moni, President Mujib's nephew and editor of two Bangladesh Newspaper, warns: "You should not compare standards here with Australia, but with what our people are normally used to."

IN A RELATIVE SENSE, Tongi, while uncomfortable to the Western eye, is certainly a step up for former bustee dwellers who came from even worse places. It is somewhat cleaner than the old slums. It has medical facilities — five hospital tents with a doctor on duty— and smallpox has been nearly eradicated. In the old slums, obtaining food was part of a daily battle for survival, often ending in humiliating begging. But at Tongi, flour, oil, crackers, wheat, firewood and cloth are freely distributed. Families also get one pound of powdered milk per day (it is liquefied first; when dry powder was distributed, some residents sold it to black marketeers for a hefty profit). Yet Tongi is virtually nonfunded. The Red Cross supplies the food, and all the government has done so far is to sink a new tubewell. However, experts warn that if too much is done, it could bring a massive influx to the camps of desperate people seeking food and shelter. Although Tongi — in the context of Bangladesh — may not be as terrible as some say, it faces an uncertain future — psychologically and perhaps otherwise. For one thing, though Dacca's slum life was hard, many bustee wallahs at least had jobs there. Only 5 per cent in the camp have steady employment, and some 15 per cent work irregularly, pedaling rickshaws, driving "baby taxi" and pulling handicrafts. The rest do nothing.

There is no employment plan, since no funds are available. Some critics say the camps merely encourage people to depend

on government for all their needs, a foolish dependence given the tight international monetary situation, which makes foreign aid uncertain. Government officials reject suggestions that the camps have decreased motivation to find work. "Our people are not lazy people. but hardworking" said Bangladesh's Commerce Minister, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed. "Bangladesh's basic trouble is that we do not have enough job opportunities for our people."

MEANWHILE, THERE ARE rumors that the camp will become permanent. And some relief officials privately grumble that Tongi is run by corrupt officials far more concerned with designing flashy new playgrounds for the camps' children than with preparing to do battle with the real threat — the rain. For, when it rains, Tongi camp will quickly become Tongi swamp. Tongi is totally exposed to the elements and virtually unfortified. Experts gloomily predict that when it rains, Tongi will be submerged in up to 8 feet of water. And then the nightmare will really begin for all these who stay at Tongi.

Starvation Called Only Part of Bangladesh Tragedy

EVENING JOURNAL, Delaware, U.S. 13 May, 1975

By JOHN D. GATES

The well-publicized nutritional and political struggles of Bangladesh are only parts of the problem, says Messick Professor of Public Administration William W. Boyer of the University of Delaware. Boyer has just returned to the university after a month in Bangladesh studying development administration—government management of economic growth and social change—for the Asia Foundation. There isn't an area of human endeavor in Bangladesh that is free from major difficulty. Boyer said in a recent interview.

Imagine taking a month or more to cross the state of Wisconsin and you have a grasp of the transportation problem. It sometimes takes a truck several months to go from the port of Chittagong to the capital of Dacca, although the entire country is about the size of Wisconsin. Small slow ferries crossing large rivers is the principal problem here, Boyer says. As many as 50 trucks can be sitting in line waiting to cross a river on a ferry that may hold only two at a time "It can take days", Boyer adds.

Political corruption continues to stall much potential progress. Cement is piled on a dock and spoiled by rain. Food imports are smuggled out of the country for the profit of a few while millions starve. Industry is unproductive.

Starvation continues to be the number one problem. One member of parliament told Boyer that 25 per cent of the people in his district were at or below starvation diets. That means, by Bangladesh standards, half a meal a day every other day.

Bangladesh is the most thickly populated country in the world, containing about 75 million people. "Babies," Boyer said. "I never saw so many mothers with babies, all under 1 year old. Or so many gaunt, skeletal people begging for food or cloth or money, he added. Population control is crucial, but difficult. In neighboring India, for example, it is estimated that statistically, a father must sire seven children to have two surviving sons who will care for him in his old age, Boyer said. Food production holds a glimmer of hope. Experts estimate that Bangladesh could double its rice production using modern agricultural methods, which would provide enough food for even the expected population growth.

In Boyer's specialty, public administration, Bangladesh does not excel. "No one can make a decision," Boyer says. He tells the story of a boxcar full of medical supplies sitting on a siding in Dacca because a minor official in charge of boxcars sitting on sidings said he needed permission from a higher authority to unlock the car and move the supplies.

A frustrated American aid official hired some laborers to smash the locks on the car so that he could point out to the minor Bangali official that permission to unlock the car was no longer needed. While things may be slightly better today than they were before January, they are not as good as they were back in the days before 1971 when Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan. Boyer says nearly everyone would agree that economically, the Bangalis were better off then. For one thing, there were fewer of them. For another, with Bangladesh's independence came nationalization of industry, whose

productivity has fallen as a result. Uncertain markets and political corruption make industrial production a speculative affair at best.

Boyer, who came to the University of Delaware in 1969 as chairman of the political science department, first became interested in Asia in the late 1960s while a professor at the University of Pittsburgh. He had been asked by the U.S. State Department to conduct a seminar in public administration for visiting foreign government officials from Asia. Later the state department sponsored a worldwide speaking tour by Boyer.

Bangladesh was not a "fun kind of trip". Boyer said, "There wasn't much to do. I read a lot of books." He speculates that the reason the country receives so much help from around the world—\$2 billion plus since 1972, more than \$500 million of it from the United States—is because its plight provokes compassion. There's nothing strategic about Bangladesh, he says a government official told him while he was there. "It's funny though," he continues. "You ask someone why he's there and he'll almost never talk about compassion. People don't like to admit compassion."

Boyer has already completed his report for the Asia Foundation which carries on assistance programs in 14 Asian countries. Part of that report deals with Bangladesh requests for foundation assistance in developing public administration capabilities. "I hope it will do some good," Boyer says of his report.

Mujib : the boss of Bangladesh

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, Monday, June 23, 1975

By Joe Gandeiman Daily News Foreign service

Dacca—No one called it a harmless schoolboy's prank. There were seven of them, Dacca University students, and they were leading out seven other students. It was a quiet night. As the countless palm trees that speckle this city looked on in almost obscene non-involvement, shots rang out. The seven students had shot, the others, their political rivals.

Student politics on the Indian subcontinent is seldom entirely isolated from the day to day intricate maneuvers with in key power centers nor was it on that day in April, 1974. According to reliable and highly knowledgeable sources. "The Dacca University massacre was the beginning of a battle for succession."

EARLIER That MONTH, then Prime Minister (now President) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman began coughing blood, and intimates feared tuberculosis. So Mujib was immediately shipped off to Moscow for treatment. (It turned out not to be serious)

Meanwhile, within his cabinet, jockeying for power began. Since student political muscle is vital in South Asia, it was manifested in the university. The two groups of students reflected factions within Mujib's cabinet, and one student faction had decided to eliminate the competition for the apparent upcoming national power play. Yet there was little

other recourse under Prime Minister Mujib. Unlike France's late President Charles de Gaulle who "institutionalized" Gaullism—that is, transferred the force of his vibrant personality upto France's frail political institutions—Bangladesh's only viable institution at that time was Sheikh Mujib. Today, some have begun to question the viability of even that solitary institution.

WHEN MUJIB TOOK OVER in 1972, many Bengalis feared he would become "merely another Kerensky" (the Socialist who preceeded the Communist take-over in pre-Soviet Russia). For, despite Mujib's genuine charisma, authority structures in post-independent Bangladesh were largely meaningless; even the police were considered laughable by the masses, a fact underscored by nearly nonexistent law and order during the country's first two years. As Bangladesh rapidly became synonomous with chaos and virtual anarchy, Mujib, in a surprise move late last year, imposed emergency powers. This January, in another step seemingly out of character, he made himself "President" in a one-party state. "Sheikh Saheb" lost little time in donning the cloak of benevolent dictator. He gave the city's landlords 48 hours' notice to paint over all political graffiti on their property or face imprisonment, and the slogans came down. He locked the gates of the government secretariat at 10 a. m. so late comers couldn't enter. He moved the beggars out of the city and cleared the slums, helping to boost smallpox infection in the process. But now, the people are again arriving late, the beggars have returned, and smallpox is spreading like wildfire.

To instill law and order (an estimated 100,000 guns, rifles and other weapons still in circulation from the "liberation struggle" have led to literally thousands of political assassinations), the Sheikh created his own personal army : the feared and despised Jatyo Rakkhi Bahini.

That the Rakkhi Bahini is not the Bangladesh government's favorite subject became evident soon after a foreign correspondent for a major news magazine wrote a story critical of it. Word quietly passed that he would be barred from Bangladesh in the future.

Why all the sensitivity?

Perhaps it is because the Rakkhi Bahini, a paramilitary organization, is a suffocating presence with its formidable arms and transportation pool. Or, maybe the reason is its embarrassing strength. It already comprises some 25,000 persons and projections indicate that upon completion it may surpass not only Pakistan's old military presence, but also that of the British Army.

The Rakkhi Bahini has been accused of widespread tortures and killings in the name of "The Father of the Nation". Its symbol, in fact, is an armband with a drawing of a forefinger emphatically pointed upwards which represents Mujib's frequent gestures while speaking.

Bengalis also insist there is an elaborate intelligence-gathering operation, not unlike the one in effect during the old Pakistani days. People talk most freely behind closed doors. Even at Dacca's famed press club, as an Indian journalist stationed in Dacca put it : "People used to talk about all kinds of things, but now all they talk about are things like the weather and Canada." Besides crushing internal dissent, the government is trying to tighten up on information "bad for the country's image" abroad. One stringer for a Hong Kong news magazine was immediately fired from his Bangladesh news agency job after writing anti-Mujib articles.

Similarly, those who leak information to the foreign press face retaliation, as a leading Bangladesh civil liberties lawyer

found out. He was imprisoned after being traced as the anonymous source of less than flattering comments about the Bangabandu's Golden Bengal.

Despite this, bengalis feel restrictions in the "new" Bangladesh might be worth it if only there were alleviation of the country's staggering problems. Such a magical transformation, however : is extremely unlikely, given the sobering realities. A seemingly "jinxed" country, Bangladesh has endured four major disasters over the last four years a cyclone and tidal wave (1970), a war (1971), a famine and flood (1974)— and figures indicate the future isn't too promising.

Roughly the size of Iowa, Bangladesh contains 87 million persons, ranking as eighth-largest and among the most densely populated countries in the world. Eight babies are born every minute in Bangladesh; by the turn of the century the population is expected to triple. Its per capita income is \$50 a year actually less than before independence.

To cope with the grim outlook, Mujib's government has conducted "relief diplomacy" by pleading for foreign aid and by having Dacca's controlled press run as many pictures of flood and famine victims as possible, to touch tender diplomatic consciences. "At one point it was enough to make you lose your breakfast." complained a queasy Indian.

Much aid, once Acquired, is openly sold in shops. Blankets, jams, canned goods, powdered milk — all are available (for a price) in Dacca's stores. One non-Western embassy estimates less than 15 per cent of aid actually reaches the people. "The fault is not with our government but with the governments that committed themselves to helping us but did not get the food here on time." insisted Sheikh Moni, Sheikh Mujib's nephew, when asked about the recent famine.

Sheikh Moni, though, eats quite well. Since independence he has become a powerful youth political leader, editor of two newspapers and owner of two cars and two houses he "liberated" for himself. Sheikh Moni, called "nephew of the nation" by the more sarcastic, suddenly came into a lot of money when Uncle Mujib came into power.

"Mujib should be considered akin to Mayor Daley," explained a Bangladesh analyst well known in the United States. "Sure, there's corruption. But he functions through a political patronage machine which, used correctly, can help speed up development."

Most importantly, for the first time, once-fervent supporters are beginning to wonder aloud whether Mujib is capable of doing anything with Bangladesh except turning it into a nation of chanting sycophants.

Meanwhile, the cannonization of Mujib continues in a style reminiscent of Chairman Mao. Huge ornate posters illustrate scenes from Bangladesh's history and picture a courageous Mujib, jaw thrust out, leading "his" people to a yet-undiscovered prosperity. The Sheik's portrait and quotations from his rather sparse thoughts adorn the streets.

This has led many here to accuse him of unabashed megalomania, a charge not at all undercut by the nearly 3½ column lines of newsprint now required to write Mujib's name. He is usually referred to as "Chairman of the Krisak Sroamic Awami League (Bangladesh's single party), Father of the Nation, President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

"Say it 10 times fast, and you become a government minister," snorted one observer.

Yet, in the long run this could pay off by restoring a semblance of authority. As top Bangladesh political analysts

point out, in other post-revolutionary societies (notably North Vietnam after the French; China, Cuba, Algeria and now Comodia) political repression was necessary to consolidate gains.

"The Sheikh can still be great if he has that certain fiber, that certain steel," an often-critical Bangladesh writer says, "If he can act like Stalin, we are saved. But if not, and if the drift and chaos continues, God save this country."

"Either give us food or shoot us."

—The Guardian

Feb. 18, 1973

"This is not act of God. Grace Samson, a Dutch Salvation Army volunteer, who inspected Demra recently, said bitterly : It's an act of Government. It's a man-made disaster."

—The Guardian

Feb. 18, 1973

Whether this food reaches the hungry is another matter.

—The Economist

July 14, 1973

Such house cleaning is over due but the Prime Minister is reluctant to move because most of those who profit from the present system are mainstays of his own Awami League.

—The Economist

July 14, 1973

The poorest are already living on jute leaves and banana stems.

—The Economist

Aug. 17, 1974

Under it's supervision, so much world aid meant for the poor of Bangladesh has been smuggled across the border to India that the world is well aware that the Awami League will do it again at the expense of this year's flood victims.

—The Economist

Aug. 31, 1974