



# The Tearing of Bangladesh Out of Pakistan

by ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

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## PAKISTAN CRISIS

by David Loshak

McGraw-Hill, 152 pp., \$6.95

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Thirty-eight year-old David Loshak has covered a full quota of crucial conflicts since he stopped merely reading about modern history at Oxford. He has reported on the Six Day War in the Middle East, the Nigerian civil war, and—as South Asia correspondent for the London *Daily Telegraph*—the Cambodian crisis of 1970. In *Pakistan Crisis* he writes of the conditions that led to the brief Indo-Pakistan war which resulted in the birth of the world's newest state, Bangladesh. Although Mr. Loshak had completed his book before the Indians launched their attack last December, his account is valuable—not least because he was one of the few neutral outsiders to witness the horrors that preceded the outbreak of full-scale war.

Reports written by men who must rush from one area of conflict to the next (Loshak's new post is, ominously, Cape Town) frequently show signs of the tempo at which journalists are compelled to live and learn, and file their dispatches. *Pakistan Crisis* is no exception. Mr. Loshak's last-minute, four-page postscript, written just after the Indian army had captured Jessore but before the fall of Dacca, begins: "As anticipated, all-out war between India and Pakistan . . . eventually erupted on December 3, 1971." Yet he himself had not anticipated that India would go to war with Pakistan. Moreover, he predicted that, in the unlikely

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event that the two countries would clash, the conflict would break out "not on the eastern side, but along those same lines in the Punjab or Kashmir where so much blood has been mercilessly spilled in the years since Partition."

A more serious flaw (even the predictions of observers less harried than journalists can, of course, be proved false by subsequent events) is that the people involved in *Pakistan Crisis* lack life and depth. Despite all its bloody scenes, the book remains curiously bloodless. The people killed—and hundreds of thousands are killed—are paper cutouts. Even prominent figures seem curiously hollow or simply flat. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is seen not as a woman, and a complex one at that, but as an abstraction. (Mr. Loshak plainly dislikes Indian politicians in general and he treats Mrs. Gandhi in particular quite roughly.) Again, while Loshak takes time to portray Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan as a kind of morally warped and intellectually stunted Abraham Lincoln confronted with a modern Civil War, as a rule this erstwhile national leader seems as fleshless as a thin voice coming over a radio in a distant room. Both the wily West Pakistani politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who succeeded Yahya Khan as president, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the hero of the East Bengalis and now head of state of Bangladesh, are government information-bulletin constructs rather than vital individuals.

Mr. Loshak reached Pakistan in March 1969. On March 25 of that year President Mohammad Ayub Khan, the country's military dictator, stepped down in favor of his friend Yahya Khan, the army's commander in chief. A British-trained soldier who had never participated in politics (his hobbies were drinking and womanizing), the general scarcely seemed the sort of

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man capable of solving either of Pakistan's two most pressing problems: rampant corruption and the growing secessionist movement in East Pakistan. In his first broadcast to the people—delivered in English, the language he spoke at home and was most fluent in—Yahya Khan declared that his first duty as a soldier was “to save the nation from utter destruction.” And for a time it looked as if he might succeed. Shortly after imposing martial law—a measure that quickly restored order—the dictator-president explained at a press conference that his ultimate goal was to transfer power as soon as possible to “the elected representatives of the people” through “fair and free elections.” Subsequently, he announced that a general election would be held in both wings of Pakistan, West and East, in October 1970, and that the franchise would be extended to women. Such an election would assure East Pakistan, with 55 per cent of the geographically divided nation's population, a majority in the new national assembly.

Twelve hundred miles of Indian territory separated West Pakistan from East Pakistan. And the Bengali-speaking Muslims of East Pakistan, who had long felt themselves to be cruelly exploited, when not grossly neglected, by the dominant westerners, had found a political leader of their own: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Branded by West Pakistani officials as a “communist,” a “disruptionist,” and an “Indian agent,” Sheikh Mujibur had been for twenty years as often in jail as out. (Mr. Loshak's opinions regarding the sheikh fluctuate between lenient and severe: at one point he calls him “essentially a moderate, even conservative leader”; elsewhere he deems him a destructive element.) As leader of East Pakistan's Awami League—Pakistan's first opposition party, which he had helped to found in 1949—Sheikh Mujibur had drawn up a six-point formula for regional autonomy. The program envisaged a weak federal government that would be responsible only for defense and foreign policy. To Loshak the six-point proposal which, among other things, called for separate but freely convertible currencies for the two wings of the nation, was “a prescription for chaos.” Indeed, the East Pakistanis' demand that this program be implemented wrought the chaos that helped to topple President Ayub Khan and to bring General Yahya Khan to power.

Pakistan's new president took a more tolerant attitude toward the Awami League's demands than had his predecessor. He wanted the new national assembly, when elected, to strive to find a workable compromise between national unity and provincial

autonomy. Furthermore, to assure a satisfactory relationship between the federal government and the provinces, he proposed that West Pakistan be divided into four administrative units, each to have equal status with East Pakistan, which would be considered a single administrative entity. Loshak dismisses this scheme as a “magic formula” that couldn't possibly work. Yet he does award Yahya Khan full marks for doing his best to heal the breach, at least at that point in the history of Pakistan's crisis. For not only did the president appoint five Bengalis to his cabinet, thus giving East Pakistan 50 per cent representation, but he also declared Bengali an official language, along with the already official Urdu, in both wings of the country. When Bengalis had called for equal language rights some twenty years before, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, had had them thrown into jail. (As Mr. Loshak points out, in 1948, when Jinnah announced that Urdu would be the nation's national language, fifty-five million Pakistanis spoke Bengali whereas only six million, in West Pakistan, spoke Urdu.)

Yahya Khan's plans, which might have staved off the breaking up of Pakistan, were smashed by nature. In August 1970, an unusually heavy monsoon created such havoc in East Pakistan that the promised elections had to be postponed until December. Then, in November, a disastrous cyclone caused far greater damage. An estimated half million, possibly even a million, persons were drowned in East Pakistan as waves swept over the coast, and the suffering caused by this calamity was aggravated by official neglect and indifference. The Pakistan government official in charge of rescue and relief, writes Loshak, “was a part-time official . . . with no contingency plans worthy of the name, no coordinating committees, no control room to organize the relief effort at even the simplest level . . . , no communications with great stretches of the affected area.” Assistance came only from a few “part-time officials, volunteers, and foreigners,” including British marines from Singapore. The West Pakistan army, many units of which were stationed on the coastal area, did little to help. (Later, however, they would be very active in raping and massacring East Bengalis.)

According to Loshak, foreign relief efforts seemed aimed not so much at succoring starving and homeless people as at improving the “images” of the countries involved. United States Ambassador Joseph S. Farland is depicted as a man who turned the American relief effort into an egregious personal exercise in public relations: “He was frequently photographed by the U.S. Information Services in various ab-

surd and contrived glad-handing situations.” A British naval task force, which finally brought 3,000 tons of relief supplies to the storm-struck area, set sail only a week after the cyclone had swept over the Bay of Bengal. The combined-services task force (equipped with helicopter and landing craft) might have further delayed its mission of mercy had not some Whitehall official suddenly realized that the cyclone was a “‘tailor-made’ opportunity for justifying the new British government's policy of maintaining a task force in the Far East.”

Yahya Khan was off in Peking on a four-day visit when the cyclone hit East Pakistan. When his plane landed at Dacca, the president, who had been celebrating the success of his China visit, got off the craft drunk. His subsequent “tour” of the disaster area was made in an airplane flying “much too fast and, at 3,000 feet, much too high” for the Pakistan leader to take in the scope of the damage done. “It didn't look too bad,” he was later heard to mutter. Sheikh Mujibur, on the other hand, toured the ravaged region for two weeks. Incensed by what he saw, and by what he did not see in the way of assistance, he accused the government of “criminal neglect” and warned that, if the election were once again postponed, the result would be civil war. President Yahya Khan replied that elections would be held on December 7 in all areas of the nation save nine East Pakistan constituencies that had borne the brunt of the storm. They would vote later.

The December election was fair, the voting went peacefully, and the turnout was heavy. Out of fifty-six million Pakistanis on the rolls, forty million went to the polls. Moreover, they showed that, though largely illiterate, they understood the issues, and knew what they wanted. The Awami League won 151 of East Pakistani's 153 seats, giving the League an absolute majority over all other Pakistani parties. President Yahya Khan quickly acknowledged Mujibur Rahman as “the next prime minister of Pakistan.”

In effect, the election had created a two-nation assembly. For though the People's Party of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not contest a single seat in East Pakistan, it took eighty-one seats of the West's 138, while the Awami League swept the East but contested only seven seats in the West, and lost all of them. Three weeks after the elections the Awami League announced that since it had clearly received a mandate from the people, it would form a central government and frame a new constitution. Bhutto refused to take part in the assembly on those terms, declaring on February 17, 1971, that neither he personally nor any of the newly



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—“continued to live in a fool’s paradise, even as the soldiers oiled their gun barrels.”

elected members of his People’s Party would go to Dacca, where the assembly was scheduled to meet on March 3.

Unable to reconcile the squabbling politicians, President Yahya Khan postponed the convening of the assembly to March 25, a move that resulted in an outbreak of fury in East Pakistan. A five-day general strike was called throughout the nation’s east wing. In Dacca the national flag was burned in public, and in its stead was unfurled the green, red and gold standard of Bangladesh, “Bengal Nation.” Thousands of frightened West Pakistanis camped at the Dacca airport, waiting to flee. In Chittagong, says Loshak, Punjabi factory managers and others from the West were burned alive, publicly beheaded, disemboweled, or dragged along behind moving vehicles, their heads smashing to pulp along the potholed roads. Hysterical mobs went on a rampage for an entire week.

By and large, West Pakistan army units stationed in East Pakistan remained inside their cantonments, apparently content to look passively on. Meanwhile, says Loshak, these 30,000 troops were being stealthily and steadily strengthened with reinforcements numbering 20,000, who were brought in from West Pakistan wearing civilian clothes. It had become crystal clear to the military that no accommodation with East Pakistan was possible. But, says Loshak, “this still did not dawn on the sheikh and his advisers. They continued to live in a fool’s paradise, even as the soldiers oiled their gun barrels.” He charges the East Pakistan leaders with naiveté in assuming that,

since the elections had been duly held, the people’s voice would be obeyed. The truth was, Loshak writes, “the army had had enough,” and the military “now saw only one realistic course: abandonment of the constitutional process coupled with the firmest possible military suppression of the inevitably ensuing Bengali revolt.”

The army leaders’ actions were based on their conviction that without a strong central authority Pakistan would disintegrate, because, if East Pakistan were allowed to go its own way, West Pakistan in turn probably would shatter into at least four parts, inasmuch as the Sindhis, Baluchis, and Pathans would seek to separate from the dominant Punjabis. And such fragmentation would spell the doom of the army. For twenty-three years Pakistan had been held together by the army; it was not about to abdicate. In East Pakistan the generals were merely giving the rampant mobs “a scaffold’s length of rope.”

The 20,000 extra West Pakistan soldiers who had been sneaked into East Pakistan were, writes Loshak, “thoroughly indoctrinated in dogmas of race hatred, regarding Bengalis as traitors, inferiors, and India lovers: ‘deserving’ to be butchered. The army was almost ready.” Yet, even at this late date, Yahya Khan appeared less resolute than some of the other top generals. He did not want to have to make the final admission that the transfer of power to a popularly elected government, with which he had identified himself, was a failure. And, as Yahya Khan hesitated, wondering if there were some

way to avoid the bloody suppression of one-half of his nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was advocating moderation, insisting that East Pakistan would gain nothing from secession and that the Awami League’s mandate was not for independence but simply autonomy. For a moment it looked as if, after all, Pakistan might draw back from the brink of dissolution.

During this brief period of hope the president announced that he would go to Dacca to talk once more with the sheikh. After the pair met, on March 15, it appeared that the assembly might convene, with each wing producing its own version of a constitution for the assembly to judge and try to reach a consensus on. Bhutto, summoned to join the talks in the presidential villa in Dacca, was greeted on arrival by hostile demonstrators and had to be heavily escorted by armed bodyguards. The Awami League declared that Pakistan’s Republic Day, March 23, should be celebrated in East Pakistan as Resistance Day, and hundreds of new Bangladesh flags went up all over Dacca. Two days later Yahya Khan and Bhutto returned to West Pakistan. The negotiations had failed.

In Dacca, Mujibur awaited arrest in his home while, according to Loshak’s account, “most of his senior Awami League colleagues, lacking the stuff of martyrs, were busily fleeing towards the border and the sanctuary of India.” On the night of March 25, army tanks rolled into Dacca. Their first targets were students, 200 of whom were caught and killed in the headquarters of the students’ union, which was sprayed with shells and machine-gun fire. Soon the army had ignited fires throughout the city. In the Hindu areas of Dacca, Chittagong, Jessore, and other towns people were summoned from their homes, then shot in groups. Attempting to smash the Bengal national movement by destroying its brains, the army sought out and murdered students, teachers, journalists, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and other professionals. Loshak comments: “Sheikh Mujibur had warned his Bengalis that they might have to sacrifice a million lives to win their nation; President Yahya took a similar, though less heroic, decision: to take those Bengali lives to save *his* nation.”

Loshak, who asserts that Pakistan’s internal conflict brought “more misery to more people than any recent crisis—Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, or even Biafra,” scathingly criticizes the United States for its pro-Pakistan attitude and behavior after the army had begun their massacre of the East Bengalis. He regards America’s official backing of Yahya Khan as a policy of unspeakable cynicism. “One would have thought,” he writes, “that quite apart from being disastrous, the Paki-

stan military government's policies have been so savage as to be unworthy of any civilized nation's support."

The savagery was not all one-sided. Bengali mobs butchered thousands of non-Bengalis living in East Pakistan—not just Punjabis but also Biharis, refugees from India during the 1947 Partition, when millions of Moslems fled to Pakistan. The mobs "hacked them to death, burnt them alive, cut their throats—men, women and children sparingly." As many as 100,000 non-Bengalis may have been slaughtered. Loshak speculates that the worst atrocities committed by the East Bengalis occurred mainly after the West Pakistan army struck, and that it was the army that touched off the reign of terror, after March 26, by razing whole villages, setting up concentration camps, indulging in systematized rape, and choking rivers with corpses—until, at last, India intervened.

Mr. Loshak sees Pakistan as a nation that was doomed from the start, as a patchwork political entity whose "pathetic fallacy" was that it believed itself to be something it never really was. Pakistan, he writes, "has always been a fiction, a nonsense, a non-nation which other nations have gone on pretending is a nation." Punjabis and Bengalis, he believes, have as little in common as have "Scots and Turks . . . or Cubans and Lapps." The "cement" of Islam failed to unite West and East Pakistan.

Loshak is by no means certain that India can long avoid sharing Pakistan's fate. He accuses Prime Minister Gandhi of displaying "open contempt for the democratic process" wherever she sees fit, and he describes India's parliamentary democracy as "foundering in a sterile mass of politicking and rubber stampism"—the very phenomena that led to the establishment of military dictatorship in Pakistan. Furthermore, Loshak regards the creation of Bangladesh as an act that will only lend impetus to an ongoing struggle by millions of other peoples in Pakistan, India, and Ceylon who, he believes, are ripe for revolution. Presumably, then, Mrs. Gandhi soon could find herself as helplessly in the grip of events as did Pakistan's luckless military chiefs. Loshak also points out that before the Indian army entered the conflict Maoist guerrillas in East Pakistan were busy setting up a "people's liberation council" in each village, and were administering rough justice through "people's courts," Viet Cong-style. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, now Bangladesh's prime minister, professed himself to be the main bulwark against a floodtide of Maoism that threatened to swamp the Bengali nationalist cause. In Loshak's opinion, this is still a serious threat—one with which neither the

sheikh nor Mrs. Gandhi may be able to cope. He is convinced that India will fight as ruthlessly as Pakistan did in the event the Bengali Maoists or nationalists or a combination of the two attempt to achieve independence for West Bengal, India's most highly industrialized state. But would India succeed where Pakistan failed?

It is most significant [writes Loshak] that the Marxist extremists of West Bengal, like the Awami League, have formulated their own version of the Six Points. In Calcutta, a vast and ghoulish refugee camp in itself, a collapsed, anarchic city in which civilization has visibly been beaten, there is a seedbed for a rampant, violent communism, or any other "ism." Not only extremists but even the moderates there believe that their city and their province is exploited and neglected by an uncaring, rapacious, and distant central government, nearly 1,000 miles away in New Delhi.

West Bengal thus contains a mirror-image of those forces that tore Bangladesh out of Pakistan.

Are the Indian authorities aware of what this portends? Mr. Loshak doubts it. Throughout the Pakistani crisis, he writes, the atmosphere in India was one of "hysterical make-believe. The Indian parliament, whose proceedings normally bear scant relevance to the real world . . . discussed Bangladesh in a haze of total fantasy." If Mr. Loshak is right, the Indian subcontinent hasn't yet seen the end of its post-British Empire partitioning.

**BRING ME A UNICORN:  
Dairies and Letters of  
Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1922-1928**

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 259 pp., \$6.95

Reviewed by Glendy Culligan

■ Looking back on a life that most scenario writers would hesitate to invent, Anne Morrow Lindbergh faced a technical problem. The usual autobiography would entail "putting the material into orderly chapters, finished portraits, and polished phrases," Mrs. Lindbergh reminds us in her preface to *Bring Me a Unicorn*. That method favors unity, but "what remains . . . is the point of view of a mature person . . . seen at the end of a telescope." So retouched, she felt, the picture might be "mild, pleasant, and perhaps edifying, but on the whole, static."

There is nothing static about her alternative. Seeking to be "an honest witness" to her own history, Mrs. Lindbergh decided to waive hindsight. The resulting blend of her youthful letters and diaries achieves both spontaneity and art, thanks in part to her style, in part to a built-in plot and a soul-searching heroine worthy of a Brontë novel.

In only one respect does Mrs. Lindbergh fail to meet her own standard of candor. When she introduces herself as "this quite ordinary person" any reader with a long memory is bound to smile.

## Your Literary I.Q.

Conducted by David M. Glixon

OF OR PERTAINING TO

Each of the zoological adjectives in Column 1 should suggest one of the animal characters in Column 2, especially when you are aided (?) by the names of their authors in Column 3. You are to key Columns 2 and 3 to Column 1. Our zoo-keeper, Sara Charlotte Moss of North Hollywood, California, yields up the keys on page 76.

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|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. bovine ( )      | A. Bambi       | a. Joy Adamson          |
| 2. canine ( )      | B. Brer Fox    | b. Cervantes            |
| 3. cervine ( )     | C. Buck        | c. Dickens              |
| 4. cetacean ( )    | D. Capt. Flint | d. Joel Chandler Harris |
| 5. colubrine ( )   | E. Elsa        | e. Kipling              |
| 6. corvine ( )     | F. Ferdinand   | f. Munroe Leaf          |
| 7. equine ( )      | G. George      | g. Jack London          |
| 8. feline ( )      | H. Grip        | h. Melville             |
| 9. hircine ( )     | I. Gruff       | i. Norse tale           |
| 10. leonine ( )    | J. Kaa         | j. George Orwell        |
| 11. piscine ( )    | K. Moby Dick   | k. H. A. Rey            |
| 12. porcine ( )    | L. Napoleon    | l. Saki                 |
| 13. psittacine ( ) | M. Rosinante   | m. Felix Salten         |
| 14. simian ( )     | N. Salar       | n. R. L. Stevenson      |
| 15. vulpine ( )    | O. Tobermory   | o. Henry Williamson     |