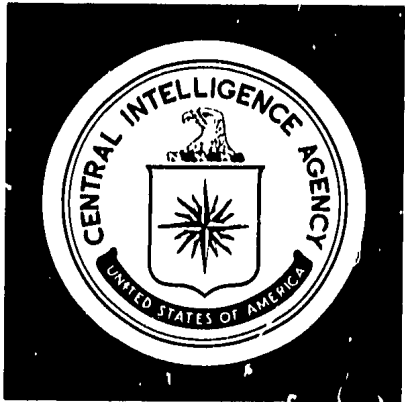
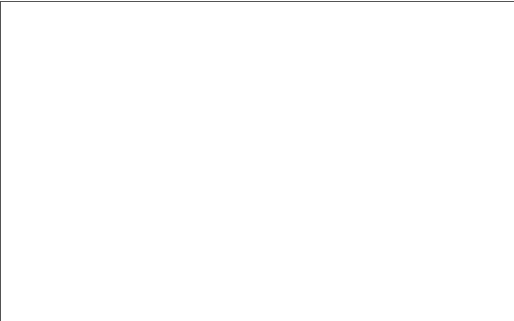


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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

CIA/OCI/IM/2047/72

Intelligence Memorandum

Bangladesh: Six Months of Independence



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
27 June 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Bangladesh: Six Months of Independence

The People's Republic of Bangladesh came into existence on 16 December 1971. It faced staggering difficulties. With a per capita annual GNP below \$100, at least 75 million people crowded into an area roughly the size of Arkansas, and periodic ravages of natural calamities, it had long been one of the world's most impoverished regions. Then came the natural and man-made disasters of 1970 and 1971: a cyclone and tidal wave claimed several hundred thousand lives in the southern part of the country in November 1970, and a comparable number probably died during the civil strife and international war that devastated the country in 1971; millions more were maimed, raped, orphaned, and left homeless.



Mujibur Rahman

Dominated by Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman, a charismatic and strong-willed man who commands wide national support, and aided by massive donations by foreign countries led by India and the US, Bangladesh has slowly begun to revive, but monumental problems remain. The government's efforts to create a functioning socialist, secular society are impeded by lack of resources. Endemic unemployment, commodity shortages, and inflation are exacerbated by the scarcity of money, materials, and equipment required for the revival of agricultural and industrial activity. Much of the transportation system has yet to be restored to its

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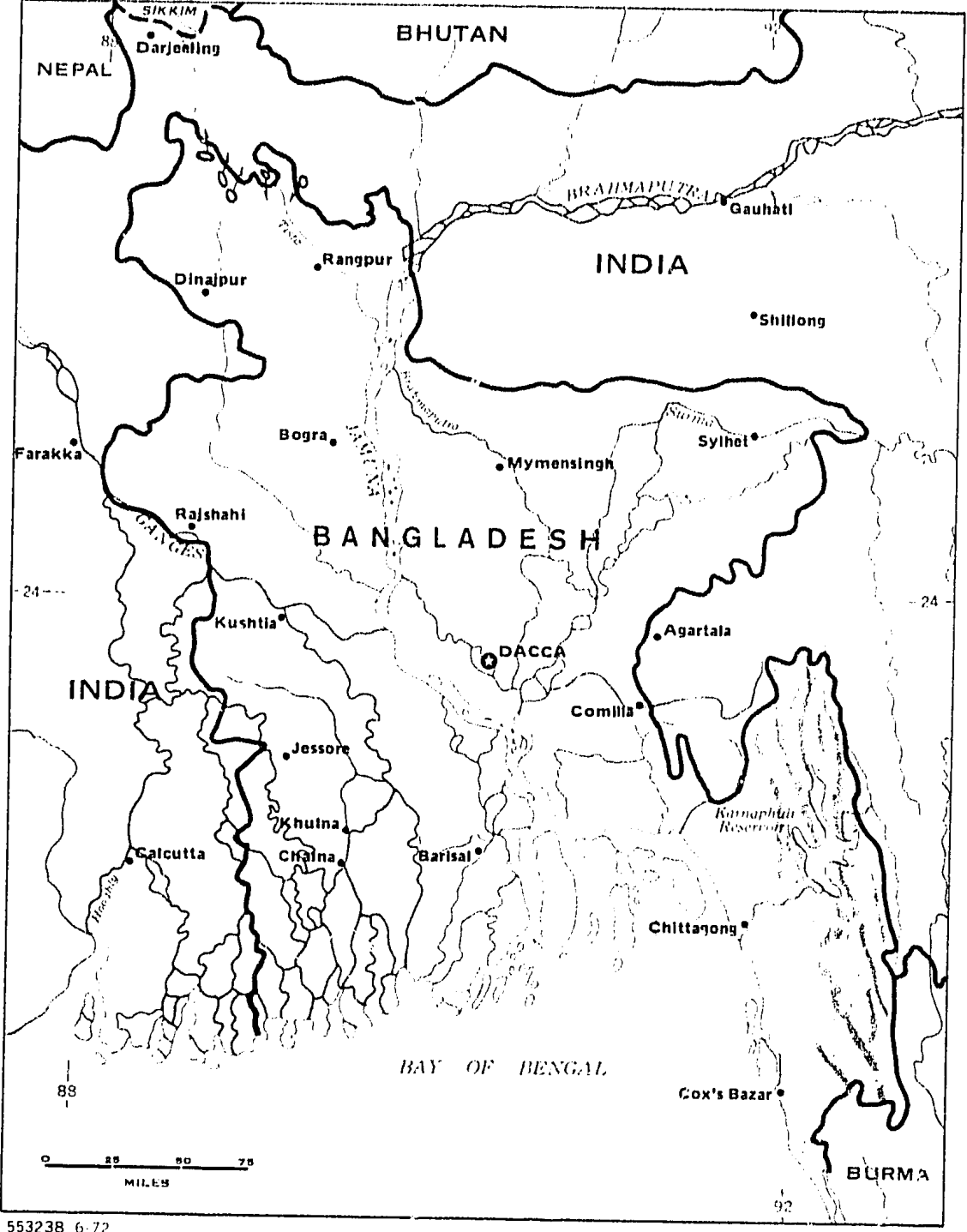
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pre-1971 condition, and the distribution of food and other basic supplies to many parts of the country is consequently badly impaired. Bangladesh remains a land of hunger, joblessness, bereavement, and desolation.

The euphoria of independence, the influence of Mujib, the presence first of Indian troops and now of growing domestic security forces, and—perhaps most important—the people's long familiarity with pain and privation, so far have prevented economic hardship from spilling over into uncontrollable disorder. Political stability remains fragile, however. Anti-government sentiment is beginning to increase and is likely to rise.

On the international front, Bangladesh has been recognized by over 70 nations. The main holdouts are countries friendly to Pakistan—China, the other Asian Communist states, and most of the Muslim countries. India and the Soviet Union, the chief supporters of the Bengali independence movement, are the nations with the greatest influence in Dacca. India has been Bangladesh's primary source of assistance, and Dacca is likely to remain heavily dependent on New Delhi for some time. Mujib's government is nevertheless aware that the US also is a major provider of economic assistance. It has therefore toned down its criticism of American policy and is seeking to maintain as independent an international posture as circumstances allow.

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Economic Problems...

Much of the war-ravaged Bangladesh economy remains crippled. The small industrial sector is operating at well below normal, and production in fiscal 1972 (July 1971 - June 1972) may be as much as 50 percent lower than the previous year. Industry continues to be plagued by shortages of raw materials, replacement parts, electrical power, fuel, and managerial expertise. Nearly all the cotton mills and about a fifth of the jute mills—the country's main industrial facilities—were still closed as of mid-May, and those that were open were operating only part time.

In an effort to revive the industrial sector, the government last March nationalized all jute and textile mills and several other categories of industry as well. The majority of the nationalized enterprises had belonged to West Pakistanis and therefore in effect had become ownerless; most other foreign-owned firms were exempted from nationalization. So far, nationalization has not helped much; since the take-overs, the regime has made little progress in coming up with the material and managerial resources necessary to reactivate production.

Agricultural production, which ordinarily employs 80 to 85 percent of the working population, is also below normal. Precise data are lacking, but for the 1971-72 fiscal year the production of rice, the main food crop, has been estimated at 15 to 20 percent less than in 1969-70, the last disaster-free year. Yields of the main export crops, jute and tea, are also low. The jute crop has been estimated at 30 to 40 percent below the previous year, and tea production is off by about 65 percent. In 1970-71 jute and jute products accounted for 73 percent of exports, and tea for 8 percent. Among the main causes of the agricultural shortfalls are the physical damage that occurred during last year's fighting (some 40 of the 128 tea estates were badly damaged, for example); the uprooting of millions of rural people which obstructed planting and harvesting; and continuing scarcities of basic necessities for agricultural production, such as irrigation pumps, fuel, fertilizer, seeds, pesticides, and draft animals.

The fall in agricultural and industrial output, in turn, has contributed to serious shortages of consumer goods, an inflationary spiral, and a worsening of the country's endemic unemployment and underemployment. Many consumer commodities are in extremely short supply, and since independence prices have risen from 50 to well over 100 percent. Hoarding, black marketing, and smuggling have aggravated the shortages and inflation, although these abuses are probably more a symptom than a cause. The unemployment

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problem is massive. According to some estimates over half the labor force is without work. Many people have flocked to the cities and towns in a fruitless search for employment, and new shanty towns have sprung up in Dacca and other urban centers. A severe housing shortage has affected many Bengalis, including most of the nearly 10 million who fled to India last year. Virtually all of these refugees returned to Bangladesh during the first three months of independence, and many found that their homes had either been occupied by others or destroyed during last year's strife.

The government has formulated a variety of plans for coping with the economic situation. It has talked about distribution of land to landless peasants, providing essential commodities through cooperatives and "fair price" shops, rationing, job creation, and salary increases for lower paid workers. For the most part, however, these schemes remain on paper. The government lacks both the funds and the administrative capability to implement them.



Makeshift Bypass for Destroyed Bridge

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Most Bengalis are accustomed to hardship. The unemployment situation has resulted in some clashes between Awami League and Communist labor organizations competing for scarce jobs, but violence growing directly out of economic difficulties has otherwise been limited. Famine is the specter most likely to trigger massive disorders, but thus far large-scale starvation has been averted. Foreign aid has played a vital role; of the 1.7 million tons of foodgrains pledged by foreign donors, about 700,000 tons had arrived by the beginning of June. The September-November period when food supplies in Bangladesh usually are at a low point may be a time of considerable stringency. The UN has appealed to member nations to pledge an additional one million tons of foodgrains for delivery during these months.

Although widespread starvation is not an immediate threat, there may be pockets of acute hunger. The country's internal distribution system, badly damaged last year, has been only partially restored. The onset of the annual monsoon rains last month has slowed repair work, and many rail and road bridges are still unusable. Most waterways, the primary means of transportation, are unobstructed, but many boats were destroyed during the war and have not been replaced.

Serious food scarcities and related disturbances have already been reported in a few localities. The shortages have been most severe in the northwestern districts, which are isolated by the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. The only bridge connecting this area with the rest of the country was destroyed last December by the retreating Pakistani Army, and repairs reportedly cannot be completed before September.

The two main ports, Chittagong and Chalna, have until recently been unable to operate at full capacity because of sunken vessels and mines left over from the war. A Soviet salvage team has been clearing the ports, and early this month Bangladesh officials claimed that normal operations had been resumed at both ports.

...But Political Stability So Far

Some criminal and political groups are trying to take advantage of the economic and social conditions, but they are not yet a serious threat to the regime. Bands of young men have roamed through rural areas, robbing and extorting. Many of these men are former activists in the fight for independence who subsequently found themselves without prospects for work or

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Ex-guerrilla Leader Turning in Arms

schooling. Some of them are still armed. Despite a government campaign to collect all unauthorized weapons, probably fewer than half were turned in. One official recently estimated that there may still be 100,000 or more weapons in unauthorized hands.

The hooligan bands have not been strong enough to challenge the government for control of any sizable areas. Earlier fears that much of the countryside would quickly fall under the control of young warlords have not been borne out. The most prominent strong man, Abdul Kader Siddiqui of Tangail district, who received world-wide publicity last December when he and his supporters publicly executed four men accused of having aided the Pakistan Army, has pledged his loyalty to Mujib.

Dissident political organizations have also failed so far to threaten the Awami League government. There are several extreme-left, violence-oriented groups, but they are small, fragmented, and only sporadically active. None of these groups is believed to have more than a few hundred active members.

Most of them formerly looked to China for inspiration and help, but Peking's support for Pakistan last year and the absence of Chinese influence or representation in independent Bangladesh has left these groups with no known outside assistance.

Some of the extremist groups were badly battered in internecine clashes with pro - Awami League guerrillas last year.

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Muzaffar Ahmed

Two larger, Moscow-oriented opposition parties—the Communist Party of Bangladesh and Professor Muzaffar Ahmed's wing of the National Awami Party—although occasionally critical of the regime have generally supported it. The chief of the more radical wing of the National Awami Party, octogenarian peasant leader Maulana Bhashani, appears to be trying to carve out a role as a non-violent opponent of the regime. But he also is reported to be seeking an alliance with a violent leftist group, the Communist Unity Center. Opposition to the government from the right is virtually nonexistent. Many of the country's conservative politicians collaborated with Islamabad, and very few are active now.

The makeup of the unicameral national legislature—currently in recess while committees work on a constitution—reflects the weakness of the political opposition. The legislature is composed of persons elected in December 1970 to the Pakistan national assembly and the East Pakistan provincial assembly. Mujib's Awami League won overwhelming majorities in both elections. When the assembly met briefly in April for its first—and thus far only—session, all but a handful of members belonged to the Awami League.

Although Mujib has promised new elections, he has not yet committed himself to a timetable. Elections presumably will be among the subjects covered in the new constitution. A government spokesman recently told newsmen that the draft constitution was approaching completion and that the legislature would meet in July to consider it. He said the new charter would come into effect immediately after its adoption.

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Within the Awami League itself, only limited dissidence has appeared so far, even though the party encompasses a diversity of interest groups—peasants, students, and the urban middle class. Mujib—who is basically a pragmatic, middle-of-the-road politician—has been the unifying factor; no other politician enjoys comparable popularity and prestige, and, thus far, no one has dared challenge him. Mujib, for his part, is sensitive about criticism and has shown little willingness to tolerate dissent from within the party. He has kept the relatively few dissident members out of key party posts and has threatened to expel any who actively oppose his policies. Beneath the surface, however, a leftist faction led by Finance Minister Tajuddin Ahmed is trying to increase its influence.

Mujib's popularity with the masses, his determination to maintain personal control over the government, and his willingness personally to intervene when trouble occurs have been of critical importance in maintaining stability. The build-up of government security forces has also been a significant factor. The national police force has been expanded to some 36,000 men. The army has been increased from about 7,500 men in January to at least 12,000, with an ultimate target of 20,000. Two officially sponsored paramilitary groups—the 16,000-man National Defense Force, which seeks to absorb former guerrilla irregulars who fought against Pakistan last year, and the 20,000-man Lal Bahini (loosely translatable as Red Guards), composed of Awami League - affiliated labor union members—have also been formed. A small navy and air force have been established. [redacted] manpower targets are 2,000-2,500 and 3,000-3,500, respectively.

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The army and police have small arms, but transportation and communications equipment are insufficient and qualified support personnel lacking. Many of the army troops are trained soldiers who belonged to the Pakistan Army, but large numbers of the policemen are poorly trained. The National Defense Force reportedly is lightly armed, and US officials have described the Lal Bahini as "semi-trained." The air force has a few fighter aircraft and small utility planes captured last December from Pakistan, but most of these probably are damaged; the naval fleet consists of only a few patrol boats.

Problems Ahead

There are a number of potentially serious threats to political stability. The government's strength depends heavily on Mujib's personal popularity. No successor could command a comparable degree of public support. Mujib, at 52 years of age, is not known ever to have been seriously ill. He has held up well under the burdens of office since his return to Bangladesh last

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January from 10 months of imprisonment in Pakistan. He may have been ill or exhausted during the latter half of April when he was not seen in public for several days, but otherwise he has been maintaining an energetic pace. With most of his subordinates lacking both experience and prestige, however, Mujib must make—or believes he must make—a wide range of governmental decisions himself. He sees numerous visitors every day and makes frequent public appearances, speeches, and trips to various parts of the country. His strenuous schedule, coupled with the frustration of having to grapple with problems that are intractable, could eventually take a toll on his health.

Even if Mujib remains healthy, the crushing economic burdens may eventually erode popular support for his government. Some signs of public disenchantment have already begun to appear. Public criticism of the government began to increase in May. Food shortages in several areas were the main cause, but the country's other economic problems have also begun to affect attitudes toward the regime. Additionally, the public more and more resents the many Awami League officials who are more adept at self-enrichment than at easing the sufferings of the people. Murders of Awami League officials by radical leftists and other disgruntled elements reportedly have been increasing in some towns and villages. Even criticism of Mujib himself is surfacing, although he still retains wide popularity.

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Rising dissatisfaction with the Awami League may eventually lead to increased strength and cohesiveness among leftist opposition groups—and perhaps to a leftward shift by the Awami League as it seeks to forestall defections from its ranks. The most important of the more moderate leftist opposition groups, Muzaffar Ahmed's National Awami Party faction, is beginning to become more critical of the regime.

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Disillusionment with the regime is starting to emerge among university students, who often are harbingers of Bengali political trends. Students in Bangladesh are highly politicized; historically they have been in the vanguard of important political movements, including last year's liberation struggle. In elections at Dacca University last month, the student arm of Muzaffar Ahmed's National Awami Party replaced the Awami League's student group as the university's strongest student political organization. A general leftward trend among students and a split between leftist and moderate factions in the Awami League student organization were the main causes of the latter

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group's defeat.

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The ruling party itself implicitly acknowledged its own vulnerability late last month. Leaders of the Awami League, Muzaffar's party and the Communist Party of Bangladesh agreed to establish "all-party committees" to assist the government at all levels below the cabinet. The Awami League previously had steadfastly refused to share governmental responsibilities with other parties and still refuses to consider a coalition government.

Bangladesh has two potentially serious problems involving minority groups. The more worrisome involves the roughly one million non-Bengali Muslims—generally known as Biharis—who first came to East Pakistan from eastern India in the late 1940s when the subcontinent was divided into Hindu and Muslim nations. Few Biharis, who speak Urdu, have been assimilated. Bengali-Bihari antagonism sharpened last year when many Biharis collaborated with the Pakistan Army. The Bengalis want revenge.

So far, however, a bloodbath has not occurred, partly because of Mujib's public urgings that the Biharis be left alone and partly because army and police forces have been guarding Bihari enclaves. Only one confirmed large-scale Bengali-Bihari flare-up has taken place since independence—a clash in March in the town of Khulna in which several hundred Biharis were killed. Food supplies for most Biharis—as well as for many Bengalis—have been scant, but large-scale starvation has been averted.

The longer term prospects for the Biharis are bleak. Few Biharis have jobs, and many are afraid to venture outside their enclaves. Given the scarcity of basic necessities for many Bengalis and the unlikelihood that popular anger at the Pakistan Army and its various collaborators will soon disappear, most Biharis have little hope of becoming self-supporting and of being accepted by the majority. Nor have significant numbers of Biharis been able to get out of Bangladesh. Although the Dacca government would probably be willing to release them to another country, neither Pakistan nor India—the two most logical possibilities—wants large numbers of jobless immigrants who would be a drain on the public treasury and a possible source of conflict with local ethnic or religious communities.

The other significant minority in Bangladesh consists of several hundred thousand tribal peoples, predominantly Buddhists, who inhabit the Chittagong Hills Tracts in the extreme southeastern corner of the country. The

Dacca government's authority in this area is somewhat uncertain. Many of the inhabitants resent what they regard as past discrimination by the Bengalis, and some collaborated with Pakistan. In March, the weakness of the government's position in the area was displayed when an armed band, made up of a few fugitives from Bangladesh and several hundred dissident Mizo tribesmen from an adjacent portion of India, was able to overrun two police posts. A joint effort by the Bangladesh and Indian armies routed the troublemakers, but they will continue to be an irritant to both governments in this remote region.

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Almost one sixth of the people in Bangladesh are Hindus, and the Muslim and Hindu communities have clashed violently in the past. But widespread appreciation among the Muslims of India's role in the liberation of Bangladesh, together with Mujib's strong advocacy of secularism, have prevented any serious Muslim-Hindu outbreaks in independent Bangladesh.

Relations with India and Pakistan

India is Bangladesh's closest ally and leading benefactor. Indian Army troops were welcomed as liberators last December, and developments since then have further strengthened ties between the two countries.

New Delhi has been the leading donor of economic assistance, budgeting some \$267 million for aid to Bangladesh. About \$217 million has already been allocated. The Indian pledges include 750,000 tons of foodgrains, of which 400,000 tons had reached Bangladesh by the beginning of June. The rest of the Indian assistance consists of a variety of essential commodities on a grant basis, and of soft loans that cover the establishment of foreign exchange reserves, the rehabilitation of transport and communications facilities, and the provision of several ships and aircraft.

Two major pacts have been signed between India and Bangladesh. A friendship and cooperation treaty was signed in mid-March, climaxing a two-day visit to Bangladesh by Prime Minister Gandhi. The treaty provides that the two governments will consult with each other immediately if either is threatened with attack by another party, that they will not enter into alliances directed against one another, that they will maintain regular contacts on major international problems affecting both, and that they will cooperate in science, culture, economics, trade, and water usage.



Mujibur Rahman and Indira Gandhi

A trade agreement signed in April seeks to facilitate trade and transportation between the two countries, both long obstructed by India's unfriendly relations with the previously unified Pakistan. The economies of India and Bangladesh are complementary in some respects: Indian textiles, industrial products, and some foodstuffs should find a ready market in Bangladesh, and certain Bangladesh products—wood, fish, and paper products, and possibly some raw jute may be marketable in India. Even if trade fails to increase markedly, both Bangladesh and eastern India could benefit from cooperative arrangements that may already be under discussion with regard to flood control, irrigation, cyclone warning systems, and development and linkage of power systems.

Some groups in Bangladesh have alluded to what they view as excessive Indian influence in Bangladesh. For the most part these complaints have come from businessmen who claim that the trade agreement is weighted in India's favor and from leftist political elements who believe that Indian

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assistance to the Awami League government has prevented the left-wing opposition from expanding its influence. A few Awami League politicians are also uneasy about India's role, but their concern appears directed more toward what they perceive as possible future domination rather than toward any relationship that has materialized.

The Indians, for their part, have made a considerable effort to avoid the appearance of excessive interference. The withdrawal of the Indian Army was completed by mid-March, with New Delhi apparently even more anxious than Dacca to get the Indian soldiers out. Some Indian military and technical advisers probably remain in Bangladesh, however.

Indian combat troops would probably return to Bangladesh should uprisings occur that the Bangladesh security forces could not handle.

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Indian fighting units have returned to Bangladesh in only one instance. Several hundred Indian troops have been helping Dacca's forces pursue rebel bands in the Chittagong Hills, the country's most isolated and primitive region. Dissidence in this region is a problem for both countries; most of the active rebels in the area are Mizo tribesmen from India who move back and forth across the borders between India, Bangladesh, and Burma.

The people of Muslim Bangladesh have long feared and disliked Hindu traders from India who dominated Bengali commercial affairs prior to the partition of the subcontinent. In the weeks immediately following Pakistan's surrender last December, a number of Indian merchants moved into Bangladesh in the wake of the Indian Army. The Indian Government has restricted cross-border movements by these traders, and in the trade agreement of last April, New Delhi stipulated that private Indian businessmen would not be permitted to participate in most categories of trade between the two countries. New Delhi continues to emphasize that its policy is to minimize private participation in trade and aid relations with Bangladesh. Additionally, both governments are trying to reduce smuggling by profiteers seeking to market goods from Bangladesh in India.

Another potential source of disagreement between New Delhi and Dacca is the disposition of Pakistani prisoners of war being held by India. The prisoners number about 93,000, including more than 70,000 members of the Pakistan Army, some of whom are alleged to have committed atrocities in East Pakistan last year. Popular demand for the punishment of the accused soldiers is strong in Bangladesh, and the Dacca government

hopes to start trying them soon. Pakistani President Bhutto, however, has stressed that the transfer of Pakistani soldiers to Bangladesh would seriously jeopardize prospects for the Indo-Pakistani summit talks scheduled to begin later this month. New Delhi, reluctant to provoke a cancellation of the summit, has refrained from announcing any specific plans for handing Pakistanis over to Dacca. Nevertheless, Indian officials have asserted publicly that Bangladesh has the right to try persons accused of war crimes and that those against whom Dacca has well-documented cases will be turned over. So far these statements have headed off any conflict with Bangladesh over this issue.

The accession of Bangladesh to the Geneva Conventions in April removed the main legal obstacle to such a transfer. Under the conventions, India, as a signatory, was barred from turning over prisoners of war to a non-signatory.

New Delhi has emphasized that repatriation to Pakistan of the bulk of the prisoners—those not accused of war crimes—cannot be arranged without the participation of Dacca. This condition, the Indians hope, will compel Bhutto to recognize the independence of Bangladesh. Mujib, for his part, has reiterated that Bangladesh officials will not meet with their Pakistani counterparts to discuss prisoners—or other bilateral issues, such as the division of assets and liabilities of the formerly unified Pakistani state—until Islamabad has extended recognition. Dacca also has rejected any possibility of canceling the war crimes trials in exchange for Pakistani recognition.

Pakistan's strongest bargaining chip in any bilateral negotiations is the Bengali minority living in Pakistan. Among these 400,000 Bengalis are a few professional people, 24,000 to 28,000 military personnel, and 12,000 to 16,000 civil servants whose abilities would be useful to a country in which skills and experience are in short supply. Some of these Bengalis have lost their jobs and been subjected to living and working restrictions over the past year, but in general they have not been badly mistreated. A Red Cross official in Pakistan has estimated that at least half the Bengalis there would like to emigrate to Bangladesh. Dacca has ruled out a population exchange with Pakistan involving either Pakistani prisoners of war or the several thousand Bengalis and Biharis being held in Bangladesh jails on charges of having collaborated with Pakistan. This stand is mainly a consequence of the strong popular demand in Bangladesh for punishment of war criminals and collaborators, but it may also reflect a certain ambivalence about bringing home large numbers of Bengalis who would compete for scarce jobs.

Extensive trade was carried on between the two wings of Pakistan prior to their separation. West Pakistanis sold foodgrains, tobacco, cotton textiles, and other manufactured goods in the eastern wing, while jute goods and tea moved from east to west. Both Bangladesh and Pakistan still need such items, but trade is blocked by political obstacles. The resumption of some commerce using Ceylon or other third parties as intermediaries is possible, but direct bilateral trade probably will not occur in the absence of Pakistani recognition of Bangladesh. Some progress may also be necessary on other bilateral problems, such as the return of Pakistani war prisoners, the apportionment of unified Pakistan's assets and liabilities, and possibly even future demands by Bangladesh for war reparations, before a significant level of trade can be re-established.

Closely related to the question of Pakistani recognition are relations between Bangladesh and China, the only major power that has not recognized Bangladesh. The Chinese did recently offer to buy some \$12 to \$15 million worth of jute from Bangladesh, but Peking is not likely to extend diplomatic recognition soon unless its Pakistani ally does so. The Dacca government has expressed concern that the Chinese might veto Bangladesh's admission to the UN, but a high official in the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry recently told the US charge that Dacca had learned from third parties that a Chinese veto was not likely. Meanwhile, many Bengalis continue to resent Chinese support of Pakistan. Speeches by Bangladesh officials still sometimes cite Peking as bearing some of the responsibility for Bangladesh's problems.

Relations with the Soviet Union

Moscow moved quickly to capitalize on the good will created by Soviet support for the Bengali independence movement. On 24 January the USSR became the first major power to recognize Bangladesh. Five Eastern European allies of the Soviets and Mongolia were among the first thirteen countries extending recognition. Shortly after the conclusion of the Indo-Pakistani war, a trade agreement was signed providing for the exchange of goods worth about \$14 million each way. Trade pacts were also signed in February and March with Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Bulgaria.

By the end of March the number of Soviet officials posted in Bangladesh had risen to 75-100 from a pre-independence level of 30 to 40. There have been visits by a variety of Soviet cultural and academic delegations, exchange visits by Soviet and Bengali trade union delegations, heavy placement of Soviet articles and films in the Bangladesh media, establishment of

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scholarships for study in the USSR, and participation in the establishment of Bangladesh-USSR Friendship Society branches around the country. The public apparently is favorably disposed toward the USSR, and very few objections have been heard regarding the Soviets' high visibility in the country.

Mujib's visit to Moscow from 1 to 5 March marked a high point in Bangladesh-USSR relations. In a communique issued at the end of the visit Bangladesh associated itself with the Soviet position on a variety of international topics, including the Vietnamese Communists' seven-point program, the 1967 UN resolution on the Middle East, and the proposed conferences on European security and world disarmament. The Soviets committed some \$52 million of relief and development aid to Bangladesh, most of this—\$42 million—was development aid reallocated from credits extended to Pakistan prior to Bangladesh's independence. Projects being constructed under these credits are a thermal power plant, an electrical equipment factory and radio

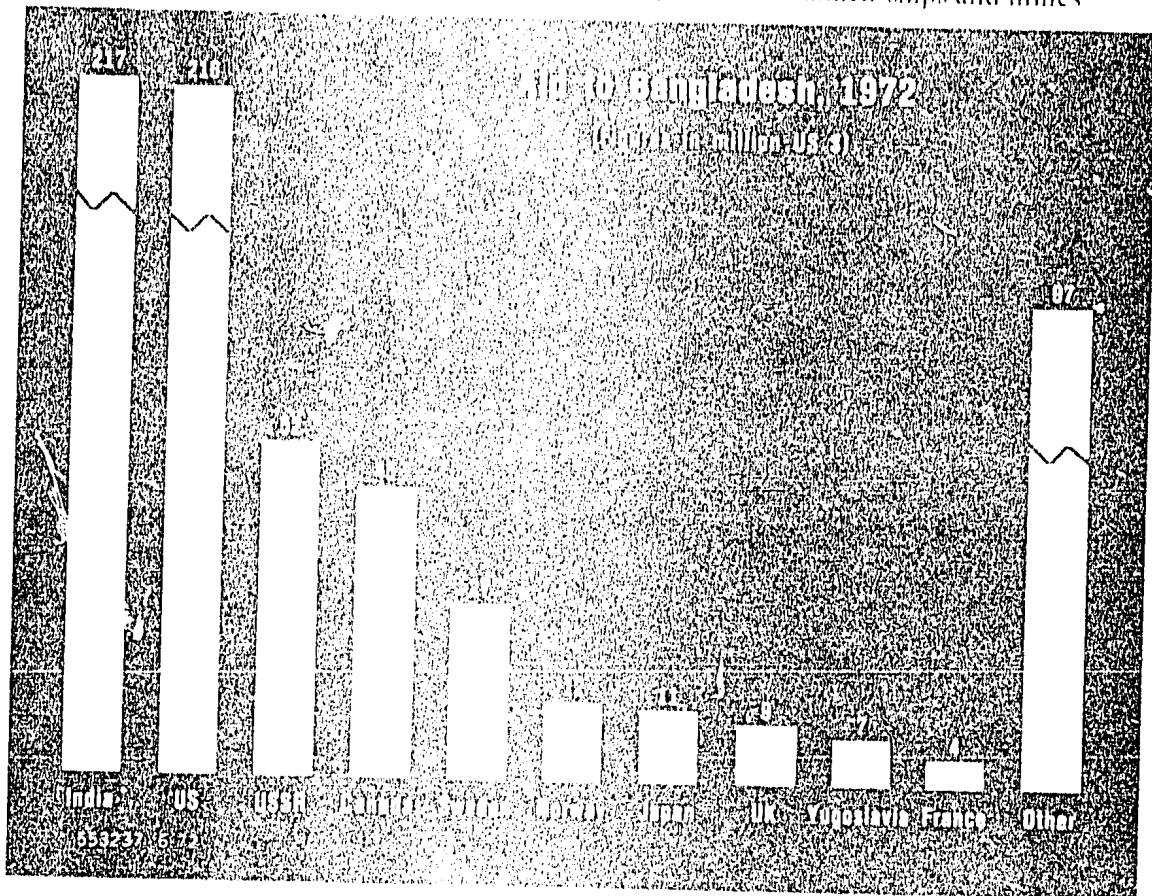


Mujibur Rahman and L. I. Brezhnev in Moscow

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transmitters. The Soviets also plan to continue oil and gas prospecting activities begun ten years ago. In addition, Moscow extended at least \$10 million in new relief and rehabilitation assistance, including food, locomotives, fishing vessels, cargo ships, and the loan of four MI-8 helicopters for relief work. The communique made no mention of military assistance, although Soviet Defense Minister Grechko's participation in the talks indicated that the subject was probably discussed. The Soviets further strengthened their ties with Bangladesh by offering to clear sunken ships and mines



from the ports of Chittagong and Chalna - an offer Mujib accepted after the UN delayed in committing itself to provide similar assistance.

Although the assistance pledged by the Soviets is far exceeded by the \$216 million promised thus far by the US, the Dacca government has been

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more voluble in expressing appreciation for the Soviet support. Mujib, when publicly naming foreign governments to which he feels a debt of gratitude, usually places New Delhi and Moscow at the top of the list. Nevertheless, he has reiterated—even over Soviet television—his determination to maintain an independent posture in international affairs and to reject any offers of aid accompanied by political conditions. His endorsement of Soviet positions on international issues in the March communique probably resulted at least in part from his delegation's inexperience in international dealings, coupled with the lavish red-carpet treatment the delegation received in Moscow.

Moscow's effort to ingratiate itself with the Bengalis has prompted some speculation that the Soviets wish to establish a naval base at the Chittagong port. But Moscow, which already has a number of ships in Chittagong in connection with its harbor salvage operations, probably would be reluctant to jeopardize its influential position in both India and Bangladesh by pushing for extensive naval privileges. New Delhi and Dacca would probably interpret anything resembling a naval base as a sign of excessive Soviet influence in Bangladesh. A joint India-Bangladesh declaration issued in March included an assertion that the Indian Ocean area should be free of great-power rivalries and foreign land, air and naval bases.

Relations with the West

Public and government attitudes in Bangladesh toward Western countries have been shaped mainly by each country's policies toward the sub-continent in 1971 and its performance in recognizing and assisting Bangladesh in 1972. So far, last year's policies appear to have weighed more heavily than this year's assistance. For example, the UK—like the USSR—has granted relatively limited economic assistance, but is viewed sympathetically because it is regarded as having supported Bangladesh. London—like Moscow—further strengthened its standing by recognizing Bangladesh relatively soon after independence. The UK and the Scandinavian countries were the first important Western European countries to recognize Bangladesh.

Frequent signs of official hostility toward the US marked the first few weeks of independence. Even in the early days of independence, however, Mujib voiced hope for good relations with the US and publicly reiterated his gratitude for support received from the American public and press. In the spring, official resentment toward Washington abated somewhat, especially following US recognition on 4 April. Dacca's awareness that it must rely on the US for a large part of its economic assistance has probably been the most important factor muting its complaints about past US policy. US pledges by

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the end of May to contribute \$126 million to the relief efforts being carried out under the auspices of the UN and private American voluntary agencies, together with a bilateral US grant of \$90 million, make Washington second only to New Delhi among donor countries. Total US assistance was almost one third of the world-wide sum of nearly \$700 million.

A faction within the government, led by Finance Minister Tajuddin Ahmed, voices strong anti-American views, but most key officials—and most importantly, Mujib himself—have sought to maintain a pragmatic and genuinely non-aligned foreign policy. A worsening of domestic economic and security problems, however, might well lead to increasing criticism of Washington as Bangladesh politicians search for scapegoats.

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