

0417extract_us_senate

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RECENT EVENTS IN EAST PAKISTAN

**Extract from Record of the U.S. Senate containing letter dated April 17, 1971
from Dr. John E. Rohde, a physician evacuated from East Pakistan,
to Senator William B. Saxbe.**

Mr. SAXBE. Mr. President, I recently received a letter from a physician who worked in East Pakistan under USAID. He gives a good account of the recent events in East Pakistan. As you know, I objected last year to the sale of \$ 15,000,000 worth of military equipment to Pakistan because I feared the tragic consequences of this action. I have just co-sponsored Senate Concurrent Resolution 21 which urges the suspension of our military assistance to Pakistan until the conflict is resolved.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter from Dr. John E. Rohde because I feel that Senators should have the benefit of his insight.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

HUDSON,

OHIO

April 17, 1971

HON. WILLIAM B. SAXBE,

NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dear Senator Saxbe: Two days ago my wife and I were evacuated from Dacca, East Pakistan, where I have been posted for the past three years as a physician under USAID. I am certain that you are aware of the political events preceding the army crackdown on March 25th. As a result of complete censorship and the expulsion of journalists, banning of the major political party in Pakistan, and repressed information about the military campaign against the civilians of East Pakistan, it must have been difficult to obtain a clear picture of events since that date. From the outset of the army action, the American Consul General and his staff in Dacca, have continued to send detailed factual accounts enumerating first-hand reports of the situation. These reports have been carefully collected and verified before transmission to the State Department. Publicly the State Department claims they do not have enough facts; but I have seen the factual reports sent

daily from Dacca. The American Consul in Karachi stated to me that they only recently began to receive the accounts about the situation in East Pakistan, when the Consulate in Dacca has been transmitting information from the very start of the action.

Although Consul Blood's reports contain a more detailed account of the current situation, I wish to bring to our attention the observations I have made in the past weeks in Dacca. My wife and I watched from our roof the night of March 25th as tanks rolled out of the Cantonment illuminated by the flares and the red glow of fires as the city was shelled by artillery, and mortars were fired into crowded slums and bazaars. After two days of loud explosions and the continual chatter of machine-guns, we took advantage of a break in the curfew to drive through the city. Driving past streams of refugees, we saw burned out shacks of families living by the railroad tracks, coming from Gulshan to Mohakhali crossing. A Bengali friend living closeby had watched the army set fire to the hovels, and as the families ran out, he saw them shot down "like dogs". He accepted our offer to take him and his family of twelve into our home. In the old city we walked through the remains of Nayer Bazaar, where Moslem and Hindu wood cutters had worked, now only a tangle of iron, and sheet and smouldering ruins. The Hindu shopkeepers and craftsmen still alive in the bombed ruins of Shankari Bazaar begged me to help them only hours after the army had moved in with _ the intention to kill all inhabitants. One man had been shot in the abdomen and killed only one half hour before we arrived. Others were lying in the streets rotting. The day before we were evacuated, I saw Moslem names in Urdu, on the remains of houses in Shankari Bazaar previously a totally Hindu area. On the 29th we stood at Ramna Kali Bari, an ancient Hindu village of about two hundred fifty people in the center of Dacca Ramna Race Course, and witnessed the stacks of machine-gunned, burning remains of men, women and children butchered in the early morning hours of March 29. I photographed the scene hours later.

Sadarghat, Shakaripatti, Rayer Bazaar, Nayer Bazaar, Pailpara and Thatari Bazaar are a few of the places where the homes of the thousands are razed to the grounds.

At the university area on the 29th, we walked through Nagannath Hall and Iqbal Hall, two of the student dormitories at Dacca University shelled by army tanks. All inmates were slaughtered. We saw the breach in the wall where the tank broke through, the tank tracks and the mass grave in front of the hall. A man who was forced to drag the bodies outside, counted one hundred three of the Hindu students buried there. Outside were the massive holes in the walls of the dormitory, while inside were the smoking remains of the rooms and the heavily blood-stained floors. We also saw evidence of tank attack at Iqbal Hall where bodies were still unburied.

The two ensuing weeks have documented the planned killing of much of the intellectual community, including the majority of professors of Dacca University. These include : Professor G. C. Dev, Head of the Philosophy Department; Professor Maniruzzaman, Head of the Department of Statistics; Professor Jotirmoy Guhathakurta, Head of the English Department: Dr. Naqvi and Dr. Ali, Head of the Department of History ; Professor Innasali, Head of the Physics Department and Professor Dr. M. N. Huda, Head of the Economics Department, former Governor and Finance Minister were shot in their

quarters, injured and left for dead. Many families of these professors were shot as well. Full documentation of the people is difficult due to the army's thorough search leaving Dacca. Complete censorship was facilitated when three prominent mass circulation dailies were burned: The People, The Ittefaq and the Sangbad.

Military action continued after the attack of the first two days. We listened as the early morning of April first was wracked for two hours by artillery pounding Jinjira, a town across the Buriganga from Dacca, that had swollen in size with an estimated one hundred thousands civilians fleeing terrorized Dacca. Radio Pakistan continued to broadcast that life in Dacca had returned to normal but we witnessed a nearly a deserted city.

In Gulshan, one of the suburban area of Dacca, where we lived, we witnessed the disarming of the East Pakistan Rifles, stationed in the Children's Park across the street, the army looting the food supplies from the market nearby, and finally the execution of several EPR as they were forced by Punjabi soldiers onto a truck to be "taken away". The mass execution of several thousands of Bengali policemen and East Pakistan Rifles is already documented. We also witnessed from a neighbour's house, army personnel fire three shots across Gulshan Lake at several little boys who were swimming. Nearly every night there was sporadic gunfire near our home adding to the fear of twenty-six refugees staying with us. During the day Pakistan planes flew overhead to their bombing missions.

It would be possible for me to chronicle many specific atrocities, but we have left close friends behind whose lives might be more endangered. It is clear that the law of the jungle prevails in East Pakistan where the mass killing of unarmed civilians, the systematic elimination of the intelligentsia, and the annihilation of the Hindu population is in progress.

The reports of Consul Blood, available to you as a Congressmen, contains a more detailed and complete account of the situation. In addition, he has submitted concrete-proposals for constructive moves our government can make. While in no way suggesting that we interfere with Pakistan's internal affairs, he asserts, and we support him, that the United States must not continue to condone the military action with official silence. We also urge you to read the Dacca official community's open cable to the State Department. It is for unlimited distribution and states the facts about the situation in East Pakistan.

By not making a statement, the State Department appears to support the clearly immoral action of the West Pakistani army, navy, and air force against the Bengali people.

We were evacuated by Pakistan's Commercial airline. We were loaded on planes that had just disembarked full loads of Pakistani troops and military supplies. American AID dollars are providing support of military action. In Teheran, due to local support of Pakistan, I was unable to wire you the information I am writing.

Fully recognizing the inability of our government to oppose actively or intervene in this desperate oppression of the Bengalis, I urge you to seek and support a condemnation by Congress and the President of the United States of the inhuman treatment being accorded the seventy-five million people of East Pakistan.

No political consideration can outweigh the importance of a humanitarian stand, reiterating the American belief in the value of individual lives and a democratic process of government. The action of President Yahya banning the democratically elected majority party, who had ninety-eight percent of the East Wings electorate backing them, ought to arouse a country which prides itself on the democratic process.

We urge you to speak out actively against the tragic massacre of civilians in East Pakistan.

Sincerely yours,

JON E.

ROHDE, M.D.

*(Mr. William B. Saxbe's speech in the U.S.
Senate on April 29, 1971)*

Source: Bangladesh Documents, Vol – 1, Page No – 349 - 351