

ADDRESS BY SENATOR KENNEDY
TO NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

Mr. MATHIAS. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) returned recently from an important visit to India where he viewed the plight of millions of East Pakistani refugees. On August 26, Senator KENNEDY outlined his findings and recommendations in an important

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speech before the National Press Club. As a member of Senator KENNEDY'S Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, I ask unanimous consent that the speech be printed in the RECORD.

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

ADDRESS BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY TO THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

I am grateful for this chance to speak to the members of the National Press Club and to share with you my experiences during a week-long visit to the refugee camps of India—to a scene which only can be described as the most appalling tide of human misery in modern times.

In just a few months, since early April, the civil war in East Bengal has driven nearly 8,000,000 men, women and children into India to escape conditions in their homeland. Unnumbered thousands of others have been slaughtered in the civil strife, or displaced within their country. Millions more in East Bengal face continued terror, disease and starvation, unless they receive immediate relief.

This stark tragedy is not yet understood by the world. And although it has been a source of urgent concern to me and the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees from the outset, I can tell you that not until you see it firsthand can you begin to understand its immensity. For only by being there can you sense the feelings and understand the plight of the people, and the forces of violence which continue to create refugees and increase the toll of civilian casualties.

In India I visited refugee areas along the entire border of East Bengal—from Calcutta and West Bengal in the west—to the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts in the north—to Agartala in the State of Tripura in the east. I listened to scores of refugees as they crowded into camps, struggling to survive in makeshift shelters in open fields or behind public buildings—or trudging down the roads of West Bengal from days and even weeks of desperate flight. Their faces and their stories etch a saga of shame which should overwhelm the moral sensitivities of people throughout the world.

I found that conditions varied widely from one refugee camp to another. But many defy description. Those refugees who suffer most from the congestion, the lack of adequate supplies and the frightful conditions of sanitation are the very young—the children under five—and the very old. The estimates of their numbers run as high as fifty percent of all the refugees. Many of these infants and aged already have died. And it is possible—as you pick your steps among others—to identify those who will be dead within hours, or whose sufferings surely will end in a matter of days.

You see infants with their skin hanging loosely in folds from their tiny bones—lacking the strength even to lift their heads. You see children with legs and feet swollen with edema and malnutrition, limp in the arms of their mothers. You see babies going blind for lack of vitamins, or covered with sores that will not heal. You see in the eyes of their parents the despair of ever having their children well again. And, most difficult of all, you see the corpse of the child who died just the night before.

The story is the same in camp after camp. And it is complicated by the continually growing number of civilian casualties overburdening an already limited hospital system. Most of these casualties have been brought across the border by their fellow refugees. Yet there also are large numbers of Indians whose border villages have been subjected to shelling from Pakistani troops. In addition, there are the untold numbers of victims who remain uncounted and unattended in the rural areas of East Bengal.

The government of India, as it first saw this tide of human misery begin to flow across its borders, could have cordoned off its land and refused entry. But, to its everlasting credit, India chose the way of compassion. The Indian Government has made Herculean efforts to assist and accommodate the refugees—efforts which history will record and remember.

But even this noble work is being defeated by the sheer numbers involved in this calamity. At peak periods two months ago, refugees were arriving in India at the rate of 150,000 a day. Today they still arrive at the rate of 25,000 a day.

And while the magnitude of the problem staggers the imagination, the individual accounts of the people who have fled East Bengal tear at your heart.

A 55-year-old railway employee—he was a Muslim civil servant with 35 years of service—told me of an unexplained noontime attack by the Pakistani army on his railroad station. "I do not know why they shot me," he said. "I don't belong to any political party. I was just a railway clerk." Now he sits idly in an Indian refugee camp, financially crippled, and with no prospect of returning to receive his long-earned government pension that was to begin next month.

Even more tragic are the experiences of the innocent and uneducated villagers. You can piece together the mosaic of misery from dozens of interviews among new refugees on the Boyra-Bongaon Road north of Calcutta.

On the day we traveled this 20-mile road, at least 7,000 new refugees were streaming along the banks of the border river crossing near Boyra. Nearly all were peasant farmers. Most were Hindus, from the Khulna and Barisal districts south of Dacca—on the fringe of the area affected by last fall's cyclone.

The very young and the very old were exhausted from many days and nights in flight—usually on foot. Many were in a visible state of shock, sitting listless by the roadside or wandering aimlessly toward an unknown fate. They told stories of atrocities, of slaughter, of looting and burning, of harassment and abuse by West Pakistani soldiers and collaborators. Many children were dying along the way, their parents pleading and begging for help. Monsoon rains were drenching the countryside, adding to the depression and despair on their faces. To those of use who went out that day, the rains meant no more than a change of clothes. But to these people it meant still another night without rest, food, or shelter.

It is difficult to erase from your mind the look on the face of a child paralyzed from the waist down, never to walk again; or a child quivering in fear on a mat in a small tent still in shock from seeing his parents, his brothers and his sisters executed before his eyes; or the anxiety of a 10-year-old girl out foraging for something to cover the body of her baby brother who had died of cholera a few moments before our arrival. When I asked one refugee camp director what he would describe as his greatest need, his answer was "a crematorium." He was in charge of one of the largest refugee camps in the world. It was originally designed to provide low income and middle income housing, and has now become the home for some 170,000 refugees.

It is time—it is past time—for Americans to understand what has produced this massive human tragedy, and to recognize the bankrupt response by our own nation.

The issue from the beginning in East Bengal has been self-determination and democratic principle. After years of political and economic domination by West Pakistan—after years of martial law and unfulfilled election promises—a free election finally was conducted throughout Pakistan last December 7th. The election was administered under martial law and, at the time, loudly proclaimed fair by the government of Presi-

dent Yahya Khan. It produced in East Bengal an overwhelming mandate—almost 80% of the vote—for the Awami League party and its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Awami League was thus given a majority in the forthcoming Pakistan National Assembly charged with drafting a new constitution for returning the nation to civilian, democratic rule. But what happened next formed a pattern of delay and deception, followed by the invocation of martial law once more. Negotiations between Sheikh Mujib and President Yahya over the party's six-point proposal for regional autonomy dragged on and deteriorated—erupting in terror and bloodshed suddenly on the night of March 25th.

While the East Bengalis negotiated for democracy and autonomy, the West Pakistan army prepared for systematic repression and organized terror. Countless thousands were butchered during the days that followed March 25th, and many millions more were dislocated within East Bengal. What I saw last week in India was the human debris from that night of terror and from the subsequent weeks of violence. Martial law remains, as does the military's violence. "Collective responsibility"—a policy of destroying whole villages on the suspicion that they harbor Awami Leaguers or Bengali guerillas—is now sanctioned by martial law, and it is reflected in the continuing flow of refugees.

Unfortunately, the face of America today in South Asia is not much different from its image over the past years in Southeast Asia. It is the image of an America that supports military repression and fuels military violence. It is the image of an America comfortably consorting with an authoritarian regime. It is the image of an America citing its revolutionary past and crowing about its commitment to self-determination, while it services military juntas that suppress change and ignore a people's aspirations.

The situation in East Bengal should particularly distress Americans, since it is our military hardware—our guns and tanks and aircraft delivered over a decade—which are contributing substantially to the suffering. And even more shocking is the fact that these military supplies continue to flow—apparently under instructions from the highest officials of our land. Pakistani ships loaded with U.S. military supplies continue to leave American harbors bound for West Pakistan troops. And it is all so shameful and so sad. For they could be halted with a simple stroke of a pen.

It is argued that the continuation of military aid to West Pakistan somehow gives us "leverage" to constructively influence the Pakistan military's policy in East Bengal. Well, where is that leverage? Where is the leverage to stop the use of U.S. arms which produce the refugees and civilian victims that we then must help support in India? Where is the leverage to halt the secret trial of Sheikh Mujib whose only crime is that he won a free election? Where is the leverage to prevent our humanitarian aid from being turned into military equipment, when American relief boats are transformed into American gun boats? Why, if we have the leverage to influence the government of Pakistan, must our great nation assist in this shabby and shameful enterprise?

It is time for Americans to ask their leaders: "Just what kind of government is it that we seek to influence—and for what purpose?"

For over ten tragic years, Americans have been asked to sacrifice nearly \$100 billion and 45,000 lives to uphold the concept of self-determination and democratic principles in a land 10,000 miles from our beaches. Today, in a land 12,000 miles away and with 5 times the population—America is being asked by its leadership to support the repression of self-determination—to cooperate in a conspiracy against the results of a free election.

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Consider another pitiful parallel: after all our sacrifice and all our effort in South Vietnam, we are confronted with a so-called "democracy" that is ruled by a military elite which still cannot conduct a "free election"—which calls an election "free" when it eliminates all significant opposition. Meanwhile, in East Bengal—less than 2000 miles from Saigon—we ignore the results of a free election only to help a group of generals suppress an electoral mandate and, in the process, to subvert all the principles for which we have sacrificed so much for so long.

You may say that we have no business getting involved—that we cannot police the world. That may be true. But the cold fact is that we already are involved in East Bengal. Our guns are involved. Our money—invested over two decades of economic assistance—is involved. It is not a question of whether we should be involved but, rather how we should be involved. It is not a question of whether we should spend funds but rather, how are we spending funds. Whether we supply more guns, or invest in the humanitarian programs to bring peace and relief to a desperately troubled area.

There is irony in the voices of the leaders of East Bengal with whom I talked and who now constitute themselves as the Government of Bengal Desh. These leaders will not come to America to ask for assistance. As one Awami League official said: "Many nations and people come to America to ask for billions of U.S. dollars for more guns, more supplies. We Bengalis ask only that you provide nothing—no guns, no money to either side—that you simply remain neutral." To me this seems both sound from a political as well as moral view. Neutrality, rather than the mindless and fruitless practice of following old habits in our dealings with military cliques in South Asia, may provide us with leverage which is real and effective.

The nations of that region are struggling today against heavy odds to achieve democratic government. We in America do not fully realize how the spirit of democracy flourishes there. India a few months ago held, for the fourth time, the largest free election in the world. For Pakistan it has taken a longer period to arrange free elections. But the significance of last December's vote was not missed even by the martial law authorities in West Pakistan. They proudly and rightly, proclaimed it as a milestone in Pakistan's history. It had presented Pakistan with its first real opportunity to bridge its regional divisions and develop democratic institutions.

So it was that civilian leadership emerged in Pakistan, capable of pulling together the forces of history—of preserving the unity of Pakistan and the stability of the region. The full folly of the West Pakistan army's bid to undo what a whole people had set in motion—to suppress its best hope for unity—can only be understood in this context.

If some political solution is not found soon—if some mechanism is not established for cooling tempers and furnishing relief—the situation in East Bengal threatens to develop into terminal cancer both for Pakistan and Eastern India. For no issue has had more disruptive impact on the subcontinent since partition in 1947.

The implications for American foreign policy are clear.

First, we must arouse America to the real human tragedy now taking place in Pakistan and India. The tragedy of East Bengal is not only a tragedy for Pakistan. It is not only a tragedy for India. It is a tragedy for the entire world community, and it is the responsibility of that community to act together to ease the crisis. If America is to fulfill its role as the leading humanitarian nation of the world community, then America must take the lead in bringing international aid and relief to the millions of refugees and other victims of this international conflict.

We know, however, that the response of the United States and the international community has been far short of the need. To date, the United Nations has given less than \$150 million for relief. Of this total, the United States has pledged about \$80 million.

To be sure, as the Administration pointed out with pride, we have pledged a larger share of the total than the rest of the world combined. But the pride is quickly dispelled by the vastly greater burden now being carried single-handedly by the government and the people of India. When we realize that India herself faces the prospect of a budget for refugee relief of \$500 million to \$1 billion in the next year alone, we realize how little the outside world is really doing, and how paltry the American contribution really is.

Simple humanity demands that America and the United Nations must accept the truth that this heavy burden should be borne by the entire international community, and not by India alone. Consistent with the financial support we have traditionally given to United Nations aid and relief activities in the past, as well as with the level of support we are currently giving as a member of the international consortium for aid to that part of the world, the United States must be prepared to contribute at least 30 to 40% of the relief effort for East Bengal. If a billion dollars is needed through the United Nations, then America must have the courage not only to demand that the U.N. meet the need, but also to provide the \$300 to \$400 million that will be required as the American contribution to the effort. When Congress returns in September, I intend to offer appropriate legislation to achieve this goal.

Second, we must do an about-face in our relations with the nations in the area. Most important, our government must stop preaching "restraint" to India and start showing "restraint" ourselves toward Pakistan. We must end immediately all further U.S. arms shipments to West Pakistan. We must end all other economic support of a regime that continues to violate the most basic principles of humanity. We must demonstrate to the generals of West Pakistan and to the peoples of the world that the United States has a deep and abiding revulsion of the monumental slaughter that has ravaged East Bengal.

My experience in the field last week has strengthened these views immensely. No American who has seen the faces of children too weak to cry, too tired to live, too shocked to care, could settle for less. No American would recommend less against a government that tries a political leader in secret—and, as many fear, may put him to death—for the crime of winning a free election.

No American would support a regime that is alien to the principles for which so many of his fellow citizens have given their lives in virtually every corner of the world.

I do not, at this time, suggest a break in our diplomatic relations with Pakistan. Let us continue to talk urgently. Let us express our candid views. Let President Nixon make personal representations to President Yahya Khan about every aspect of the crisis. To the beleaguered Government of India let us reaffirm our faith in the ability of men of good will everywhere to work together to end the crisis.

Third, I believe that the United States should work strongly within the framework of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization to bring as much pressure as possible to bear on the Government of West Pakistan to modify its cruel policy of repression toward East Bengal. If no alleviation of these policies is immediately forthcoming, the United States should lead the other SEATO nations in seeking to terminate the participation of Pakistan in the organization.

Similarly, we should re-examine every other bilateral and multilateral relationship we have with Pakistan. No forum of this nation, no forum of the world community,

should hesitate to focus the bright light of informed opinion on the nightmare of terror and inhumanity now being perpetrated in South Asia.

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees, I plan to file a formal report on the findings of my recent field investigation. Our Subcommittee will conduct further hearings at the end of September. These hearings will be an effort to document what our government is doing, what it is prepared to do, and what it is capable of doing to provide the leadership necessary to bring peace and relief to South Asia.

The prayers and dreams of people like those in East Bengal were stated eloquently a generation ago in the magnificent verse of Tagore, Bengal's greatest poet and philosopher. As Tagore wrote in an immortal ode to peace and freedom in words that could describe the aspirations of East Bengal today,

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls . . .
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake."

With words like these as our inspiration, America can find the will to help these dreams come true.

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