The Testimony of Sixty



In October 1971, OXFAM put together a document called "The Testimony of Sixty", it was made to inform the world about the humanitarian crisis caused by Bangladesh's War of Liberation. Sixty people including Mother Teresa, Senator Edward Kennedy and John Pilger wrote exclusive accounts of what they saw and the situation on the ground. The powerful document provided more than just eyewitness accounts, but insight into a tragedy of untold proportions. The following excerpts paint a devastating picture of the war of survival borne out of the war of liberation.

"I have just left one of the innumerable refugee camps which border the Indo-Pakistan frontier. A small camp it has 6.000 people (Salt Lake has 300,00): an 'acceptable' camp. I use this shocking word for nothing is really 'acceptable' in saying that misery i well organised. I saw what the Indian Government i doing to give at least shelter and something to alleviat famine. I saw, too, the efforts made by several foeign an international charities: maybe a ray of hope, but a ra only, because the situation is getting worse. The mass o refugees is growing quickly, tomorrow, their emotio being over, their conscience being relieved, the rich cou tries will forget Bengal, whereas it needs help more tha ever.

It seems to me obvious that in the face of such a dra matic situation, private and charitable giving is no enough. Only a huge and concerted action by govern ments can put an end to the tragedy."

Vincent Philippe
Feuille D'avis de lausanne

"It was a Saturday and with the monsoon starting heavy rain had fallen for nearly five hours. There was a little, almost unofficial camp, not far away from our hospital-perhaps a thousand people huddling in shelters on the roadside or even without shelter at all. In a few large bamboo type huts a number of families had crowded-perhaps 12 families to a hut.

But the huts had been built below flood level and the water had risen in the huts to a depth of about two feet. A crowd stood around one in particular. With the endless rain the roof had given way. Most of the people had got out But a baby, knocked on to the ground had either drowned