



AMERICAN DOCTORS WHO EXPOSED THE NIXON-KISSINGER LIES

Dhaka's Cholera Research Laboratory as a witness to the 1971 genocide



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A group of protesters including former C.R.L. staff members and their families and local Bengali activists protesting at Sheridan Circle, May 1971.

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The air in Dhaka in March 1971 was thick with fear, but within the Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL), there was a different kind of stress. While US President Nixon and Henry Kissinger were busy reinforcing the bedrock of the US-Pakistan alliance by framing the burgeoning conflict in East Pakistan as a mere "internal matter," a small contingent of American doctors and scientists witnessed an atrocity that defied diplomatic euphemism.

Due to its strong ties to Pakistan as a Cold War ally, the Nixon administration declined to recognise the genocide. Approximately 750 American officials, doctors, and humanitarian workers were present in the city when the crackdown began. Most people remained silent—out of fear and out of protocol. However, a few could not. Archer Blood, the US Consul General, witnessed Dhaka's descent into terror and felt his conscience revolt. His now-famous "Blood Telegram" to Washington portrayed a city rife with burning homes, machine-gunned civilians, and the methodical slaughter of its intellectuals. It was a protest from within the US administration itself.

Meanwhile, a growing chorus of condemnation rose among non-diplomatic professionals. Individuals like Gulshan Ara and Shamsul Bari were already knocking on doors, trying to cut through the confusion. Many in Washington, however, continued to view Bangladesh as an "internal matter"—a struggle that was too far away, too complex, and too easily equated with another tragedy, Biafra. American politicians were reluctant to recognise a genocide in East Pakistan because of the aftermath of that Nigerian civil war, which featured images of malnourished children and an unsuccessful secessionist movement. Only when actual, indisputable human evidence began to emerge did the story start to change.

Silence did not endure for long. Congressmen visited refugee camps, and Senators received letters on their desks. Uncomfortable questions



Margaret Isenman, Anna Braun Taylor, and David Nalin seated in protest in Lafayette Park outside the White House, May 1971.

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began to be asked by journalists. However, when a group of unlikely heroes—scientists, physicians, and public health experts working at Dhaka's Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL)—stepped up, the floodgates truly opened. Established in Dhaka in 1960, CRL, supported by SEATO and American health agencies, became a prominent centre for cholera research, contributing significantly to cholera epidemiology and immunisation, including the development of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS). What began as a medical mission quickly evolved into one of the war's most significant human rights lobbying initiatives. Its doctors had no diplomatic responsibilities. They were not prepared for politics. But they had seen the truth.

Many CRL employees left when the violence broke out in March. But some, like Patrick Talmon and Henry Mosley, stayed in Dhaka and continued working at the lab despite curfews and violence. They observed the army taking over colleges and streets. Throughout the night, they heard gunfire. They saw bloodstained classrooms at the University of Dhaka and unclaimed bodies near the Racecourse. Candy Rhode, Anna Taylor, William Greenough, and other CRL figures—most of whom were far removed from the world of Washington lobbying—decided that silence was unacceptable. "We really cared about the people," Rhode later explained. "We cared that this was genocide. We cared that our own country was involved in sending arms... It was frightening for us at that time to be up on our roof in Dhaka, with bombs falling on the city, and to see that our (US) fighter jets were doing it." According to Rhode, the law of the jungle prevailed in East Pakistan, where mass killings of unarmed civilians, the systematic elimination of the intelligentsia, and the annihilation of

the Hindu population were underway.

A network of communication developed from Dhaka to Tehran to Washington. The testimonials, photographs, handwritten notes, and newspaper clippings that Mosley and Talmon risked their lives to bring out were sent to CRL figures based in Washington. They slept in cars, on friends' couches, and spent days knocking on office doors on Capitol Hill. These were field notes from a genocide, not diplomatic correspondence. Their messages, conveyed to Washington via Tehran, became one of the few continuing sources of eyewitness testimony. Mosley described killing fields with a clinical clarity he wished he did not possess. "Stories of massacres continue to be our daily fare. It makes My Lai look like child's play," he reported grimly.

a coordinated organisation tasked with ensuring that Congress had access to the data the State Department was refusing to provide. The group realised that, in order to link pro-Bangladesh activists across the United States, brief members of Congress, and supply evidence, they required a single focal point. This led to the creation of the Bangladesh Information Center, which over the course of the following six months developed into the hub of American grassroots activism for Bangladesh. Its efforts, including testimony, lobbying, and legislative briefings, contributed to the formulation of amendments intended to halt military and economic aid to Pakistan.

Samuel Jaffe's seminal book, *An Internal Matter*, details this extraordinary alliance. According



Protesters chant slogans in Philadelphia against the US government's policy of supporting the Pakistani military dictatorship, 1971.

Rhode and Taylor repeatedly presented these documents to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, which was chaired by Senator J. William Fulbright. Congressmen like Edward Kennedy, meanwhile, visited refugee camps in India and returned in shock. The informational barrier that had prevented the truth from emerging gradually began to break. The congressional record was irrevocably changed.

"Fully recognising the inability of our government to oppose actively or to intervene in this 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 to the 75 million people of East Pakistan," Jon Rhode wrote in a letter to Senator William Saxbe.

Vigils were organised in Washington by Father Tim, Anna Taylor, and others. They collected clippings, photographs, and letters from Pakistan's strictly regulated press. The dossiers made their way to legislative desks, while the vigils attracted inquisitive onlookers. In a letter to Congressmen, Taylor wrote: "This is not some inevitable calamity but the result of a premeditated policy of genocide, ruthlessly carried out by the government of West Pakistan. Would you have authorised American

to Jaffe, the persistence of the CRL group formed the foundation of the entire pro-Bangladesh movement in the United States. Even though the US administration continued to openly support Pakistan, the people—officials, researchers, doctors, students, and activists—told a different story. And that story mattered.

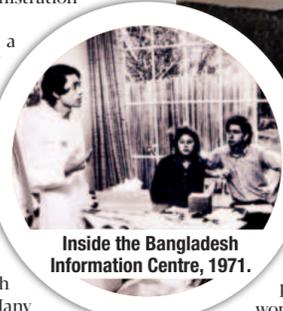
CRL holds a unique position in the history of Bangladesh's Liberation War. It was not a political organisation, but rather a medical research facility. Yet it acted in 1971 with a courage that many administrations lacked. Its scientists were inclined to see human suffering clearly; they were able to speak honestly because they were not bound by diplomatic or bureaucratic restraint. For whatever reason, they became among the first and most effective witnesses to genocide—and among the witnesses who refused to allow geopolitics to silence the truth.

In Bangladesh, ORS, vaccinations, and advances in public health are frequently used to recall the legacy of CRL. However, its moral legacy from 1971 remains equally significant. A small group of medical professionals and researchers chose a different path and spoke the truth when governments remained silent and superpowers calculated their own interests.

"America supported Pakistan during 1971" is a common historical assertion. However, that is only part of the truth. Decisions are made by governments. History is made by people. And in 1971, some of the earliest and most courageous narrators of the genocide in Bangladesh were cholera researchers and scientists trained to save lives, not to fight political battles. Perhaps because of its non-political character and life-saving mission, the Cholera Research Laboratory did what every humane, moral, and ethical being ought to do. The CRL figures acted according to their training—not only in medical science, but also in moral responsibility—regardless of who stood to gain and who did not.

The CRL, which after independence became icddr,b, is remembered for its moral bravery and the resolve to speak out when it would have been easier to remain silent, to document the truth when doing so was dangerous, and to stand with a nation fighting for its birth.

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Inside the Bangladesh Information Centre, 1971.

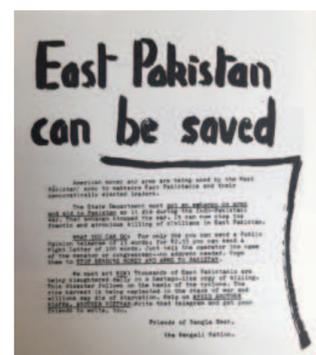


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An early flyer written by former Cholera Research Lab staff and families in Boston to raise awareness about the war in East Pakistan, April 1971.

aid to Hitler? The present situation is entirely analogous.'

By the middle of 1971, CRL's unofficial network had developed into