

U.S. Is a Laughing Stock in Asia

By Keyes Beech

NEW DELHI — (CDN) — The United States has emerged from the Indian-Pakistani war as the laughing stock of the Indian sub-continent.

When Dacca, capital of the new nation of Bangla Desh, fell to victorious Indian troops yesterday, Pakistan suffered a disastrous defeat and the loss of its eastern wing.

And the United States, because of its support of Pakistan, whose cause was doomed from the start, suffered a political disaster. In Indian eyes, Pakistan's

military defeat was in many ways secondary to India's political victory over the United States.

Why the Nixon Administration chose this course is as much a mystery to the American Embassy here as it is to the Indians.

Incredulity

Stunned incredulity is perhaps the most polite way to describe the reaction here to President Nixon's action in dispatching elements of the U.S. 7th Fleet to the Bay of Bengal at a time when the fall of East Pakistan, now Bangla Desh, was a foregone conclusion.

"It was all we needed," said a weary U.S. embassy official.

Whatever the purpose of the U.S. fleet movement was, all it accomplished was to further inflame Indian public opinion and provoke charges of "gunboat diplomacy."

If it was to evacuate American civilians from Dacca, the answer is that all but essential Americans were evacuated by air last Sunday.

Too Much Too Late

If it was to repatriate West Pakistani troops, it was a much too late, for the Pakistanis were about to surren-

der anyway.

If it was to match growing Russian naval strength in the Indian Ocean it merely succeeded in making Washington look ridiculous.

Even in the best of times, Indian-American relations followed a precarious path. Today American prestige was never lower.

By the same token Russian prestige was never higher — mainly because of three Soviet vetoes of U.S.-sponsored cease-fire resolutions in the United Nations.

Dismembered

In announcing the cease-fire on the western front, re-

garded by western diplomats as a master stroke, an Indian spokesman said yesterday:

"We have repeatedly declared that India has no territorial ambitions. Now that Pakistani armed forces have surrendered in Bangla Desh, and Bangla Desh is free, it is pointless in our view to continue the present conflict."

Having dismembered Pakistan, the Indian could afford to be generous.

"If the Indians were insufferable before," mused one longtime American resident of India, "you can imagine how much more insufferable they are going to be now."