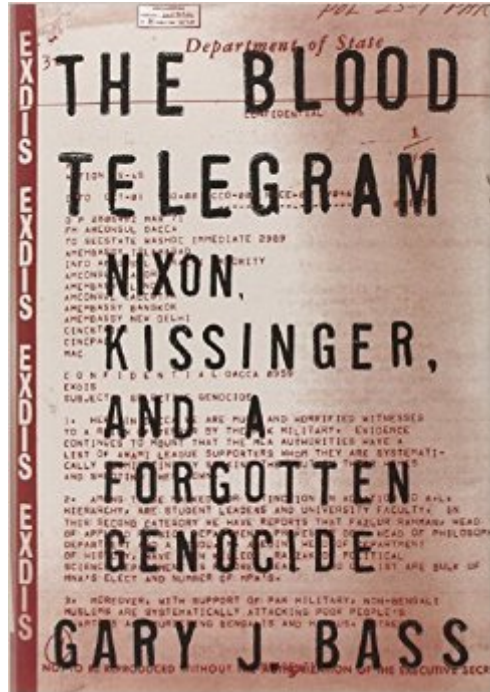


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The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, And A Forgotten Genocide



Synopsis

A riveting history—the first full account—of the involvement of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the 1971 atrocities in Bangladesh that led to war between India and Pakistan, shaped the fate of Asia, and left in their wake a host of major strategic consequences for the world today. Giving an astonishing inside view of how the White House really works in a crisis, *The Blood Telegram* is an unprecedented chronicle of a pivotal but little-known chapter of the Cold War. Gary J. Bass shows how Nixon and Kissinger supported Pakistan's military dictatorship as it brutally quashed the results of a historic free election. The Pakistani army launched a crackdown on what was then East Pakistan (today an independent Bangladesh), killing hundreds of thousands of people and sending ten million refugees fleeing to India—one of the worst humanitarian crises of the twentieth century. Nixon and Kissinger, unswayed by detailed warnings of genocide from American diplomats witnessing the bloodshed, stood behind Pakistan's military rulers. Driven not just by Cold War realpolitik but by a bitter personal dislike of India and its leader Indira Gandhi, Nixon and Kissinger actively helped the Pakistani government even as it careened toward a devastating war against India. They silenced American officials who dared to speak up, secretly encouraged China to mass troops on the Indian border, and illegally supplied weapons to the Pakistani military—an overlooked scandal that presages Watergate. Drawing on previously unheard White House tapes, recently declassified documents, and extensive interviews with White House staffers and Indian military leaders, *The Blood Telegram* tells this thrilling, shadowy story in full. Bringing us into the drama of a crisis exploding into war, Bass follows reporters, consuls, and guerrilla warriors on the ground—from the desperate refugee camps to the most secretive conversations in the Oval Office. Bass makes clear how the United States' embrace of the military dictatorship in Islamabad would mold Asia's destiny for decades, and confronts for the first time Nixon and Kissinger's hidden role in a tragedy that was far bloodier than Bosnia. This is a revelatory, compulsively readable work of politics, personalities, military confrontation, and Cold War brinksmanship.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book brings back vivid memories for me as I lived through the 1970-71 East Pakistan crisis as a young man in India. The author shows us a picture of the events leading to the creation of an independent Bangladesh from the vantage points of the US consulate in Dacca and the White House. To a lesser extent, there is also the view from New Delhi, both from the Indian govt and the US embassy. To say the least, I was shocked to read about the visceral hatred that Kissinger, Nixon and Zhou-en-Lai had for India and Indians and the impunity with which Nixon flouted US law in conducting foreign policy. In fact, one can see that Watergate, which happened some 12 months later, was only a matter of time because Nixon had such disregard for the law of his own land. One is used to foreign policy being conducted by most nations in a dispassionate manner, with their own nations' interests being the prime focus. But here, we see emotions and prejudice and sheer hatred dominating the thinking of both Nixon and Kissinger. Their private oval office conversations border on the extreme with Nixon saying in one place that what India needs is a mass famine and asking why India does not shoot the refugees if they find the millions an unbearable burden. The book says that Nixon was inclined to like the Pak military men because he was treated effusively when he visited them whereas Indian leaders were aloof and proud during his meetings with them in the 1950s. It seems a feudal mindset to make foreign policy decisions based on such flimsy reasons. For his part, Henry Kissinger also comes off as reckless and maniacal as he tries to goad China into threatening India, thereby risking a widening of the conflict into a direct clash between the USSR and the US.

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