

Beijing Sticks to Communist Ideology

Catherine Sampson writes from Beijing

The November Beacon

We celebrated yesterday the first anniversary of the Framework for Transition to Democracy by the three alliances. The four sections and nine clauses of the 'Joint Declaration' read out to milling crowds of patriotic citizenry at three points within a half-mile radius with Baitul Mukarram at its centre — doomed autocracy and consigned it to where it should ever live — the garbage bin of history. A nation's most sacred papers are its constitution — one that the nation writes to abide by. The November Framework wrote a nation into democracy.

December 6 was a consummate beginning of the process of redeeming the provisions and pledges and promises of the Framework. And on February 27 and later in March came the two milestones, thanks to that unique one who promised and delivered and left and remains the hardest man to match, on our way to democracy. No one expected that the Framework would be fully operative as soon as the democratically elected government assumes office. But one is very right in hoping for a constant progress towards the full realisation of that document from which come the present political realities of the land. No doubt one or two or even three very big strides have been made towards that — and surprisingly enough, in one very important aspect the document's commitment was over-fulfilled — still there is a lot of way to go.

The unrealised pledges pose no problem except for the impatient ones. But disquieting is the development that some of these are passing into the zone of unrealisables. The traditionally castigated black laws — black because they cut into fundamental human rights — are some of these. And closer still to the true interests of the media — the point of autonomy of the state owned and dictated Radio and Television is another such unrealised promise which with each passing day is passing into the domain of the unrealisable. This is a sure way of how democracy can be undermined in a rather democratic manner. On the first anniversary of the Teen Jote Ruporekha or the Three-Alliance Framework we must, all of us, bind ourselves to resist such subversion of the strivings for a true democratic polity.

The Framework, or even the whole of the sacrosanct Constitution of Bangladesh are only some words joined to designate some structural arrangement of a society of human beings. Man does not live by such model, however powerfully enforced. The society needs flesh to allow the structure to hold together and derive justification for it in return — in shaping an organic body that would finally and eventually harbour a soul. How far have we travelled in our quest for such a body with soul that would soar? Perhaps not a very flattering distance.

The moment the three alliances agreed to cooperate, autocracy was a thing of the past. With the elections held and the new governmental taking charge — co-operation ceased. Some think that's what democracy is about. That it's not always true has been amply proved by the passage of the Twelfth Amendment and the passage into a parliamentary form. The nation is eagerly working forward to many more of such expression of co-operation starting with the question of quashing the infamous Indemnity thing. The Framework is our guardian angel keeping a constant vigil on our way — a beacon beckoning us ever to newer horizons of democratic dispensation of power and a democratic way of life. We take our hats off this day to the builders of the Framework and the Joint Declaration and keep wondering where have all of them gone.

Burning Indomitability of Human Spirit

It happened in the early hours of January 14, 1990. The prettiest flower in all of Kaliganj, perhaps the whole of the world, went out of their house to have a wash in the bathroom close by. Five or six men pounced on her in the darkness that was lingering. She was bound and doused petroleum oil over her body and then someone set the girl afire.

Freed instantly by leaping fire, she ran to her house. But wouldn't enter it — the doors left open by herself were inviting her to safety and life, but in vain. Lutfunnahar Daisy, a burning human torch, feared if she got in the whole home-stead would be turned into ashes in a conflagration. There she stood under a tall tree — and burned and burned. The trunk of the tree started singeing, and leaves — all of them — caught the fire and burned out.

Her parents got the scent of burning flesh and could only save a big chunk of charcoal that was minutes before the beloved of all Baligaon, her village, and Kaliganj, her thana — not only for her dainty and comely presence and winsome smile but because of her gifts of intellect and character. Two days later all of Bangladesh saw her on the pages of newspapers and fell in love with the face — that was not itself but a denizen come from some inferno and fighting to live in a Dhaka hospital. It was good that her pains ceased on the sixth day of the hopeless fight and she ceased to be.

Daisy's was a story of bestial cruelty — well, the beasts are not a thousandth part as cruel as the perpetrators of that night's orgy of inhumanity — as well as of the indomitability of the human spirit. One only hopes that the newspapers would present the nation with Daisy's smile lighting up the day, January 14, once every year. Let it be so that the burning girl's staying back from the house remain with us for years and years for what it was: the highest in all history to where human courage and fortitude and self-denial can rise. You were a delight to thousands while you were living, in death you are a darling to millions and an undying ideal for even our posterity.

On Monday the main culprit was sentenced to death and his four accomplices given life sentence. Even a harsher punishment would not make up in any measure the loss of Daisy — or any life whatsoever. But the judge hoped that this was being aimed at deterring the repetition of such crimes. Let us hope it does.

WHEN President Mikhail Gorbachev dismantled the Soviet Communist Party, China's communists found themselves orphaned. Brought into being with the blessing of Lenin and his Comintern in 1921, the Chinese party has grown into the biggest in the world. It now faces an uncertain future.

In fact, party insiders in Beijing are now wondering if their days are numbered. In secret party documents obtained by Gemini News Service, the leadership admits that many people within China's party ranks doubt that the Chinese Communist Party can hold out given the collapse of the international communist movement.

It concludes that the greatest danger to the Chinese Communist Party comes not from other countries, nor from internal dissent, but from the potential for collapse inside the party itself.

In private, Chinese party members confirm that, since the fall of the Soviet Communist Party, a 'crisis mentality' has pervaded their ranks. They say that few party members, especially young ones, believe that the Communist Party has any future. Members say corruption has increased and some people have tried to disassociate themselves from hardline factions of the party.

On the record, Beijing has been cautious and diplomatic about the demise of Soviet communism, saying that bilateral ties will not be affected and that if the Soviet Union wants to dismantle the com-

The ripple effects of the dismantling of the Soviet communist party in the wake of the failed August coup are being felt in China. Debates are raging within China about the political system. Leaks from two secret documents, reports Gemini News Service, show that despite political changes in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union the remaining communist giant continues to cling to socialist thinking.

unist party, that is its own affair.

Ironically, it was the ill-fated, pro-democracy demonstrations in the streets of Beijing in June 1989 which seemed to ignite the flame of anti-communist protest and change throughout eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

After the army crackdown which left hundreds dead, a hardline backlash ensued. Beijing has spent the past two years, deep in a political mire, pitted against the democratic reforms of much of the rest of the world.

Beijing's hardline leadership was appalled when the at-

tempted coup against Gorbachev failed. Since Gorbachev's return to power and the dismantling of the Communist Party, party members in Beijing have been told privately by their superiors that Gorbachev is a traitor to socialism and that Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin is worse, and more powerful.

In the two secret documents being circulated among party members, Beijing accuses Gorbachev of conducting a witch hunt against communists. They warn implicitly that Chinese party members can expect a similar fate if they

abandon socialism. The documents reveal a feeling of crisis in the hardline leadership that many Chinese say is echoed in the party's middle and lower ranks. The documents appear to be an attempt to retain the loyalty of the country's 50 million party members by appealing to their vested interests.

One document claims that Gorbachev and Yeltsin have joined forces to carry out a 'great purge and white terror' — a capitalist-style attack on communists as opposed to a 'red terror' in which communists attack capitalists. The second document,

analysing changes in eastern Europe, makes equally alarming reading for Chinese party members who wonder what the future holds for them in the wake of the collapse of the world communist system.

It says: "The reactionary forces are getting more and more arrogant and party members are undergoing all kinds of discrimination and persecution. The landlords and capitalists are beginning to settle accounts and take revenge."

In a tone of outrage, it describes how former East German leader Erich Honecker was pursued and at one point reduced to living in a hostel. It also tells how a former Polish party official was forced to sell his family property and find temporary jobs.

Throughout eastern Europe, the document says, party bureaucrats and military officers have been fired and are now forced to sell cigarettes and newspapers in the subway.

Meanwhile, many dissidents have been delighted by the fall of the Soviet Communist Party, believing that it must hasten the end of the party in China. Some students considered demonstrating in support of what had happened in

Moscow, but lost their nerve. Party propaganda since the fall of the Soviet Communist Party has emphasised that China is different. In particular, Beijing has maintained that economic reform has raised the standard of living and left people satisfied with their lot.

Certainly the shops and markets in China's big cities are overflowing. Moreover, in the past two years, while people have been unable to express themselves in the political sphere, many have turned to business, and have concentrated on making money.

Perhaps the most decisive factor is the traditional cultural inhibition about confrontation and breaking out of the hierarchy. In Moscow's hour of confrontation, when the tanks were ordered onto the streets, Yeltsin was prepared to face them head on.

When the army was sent into Beijing's city centre in June 1989 by hardliners, pro-democracy politicians did nothing. For the past two years, no politician has publicly condemned what happened in Beijing.

The former party leader Zhao Ziyang is still under virtual house arrest, but even were he to emerge into the public eye, it is unlikely he would turn against the party which nurtured him. There are no Gorbachevs or Yeltsins in China, because China's political tradition is one of conformity rather than one of confrontation.

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From Mao to Peng



- 1949 Communist victory over Chiang Kai-Shek. People's Republic proclaimed under Mao Tse-tung.
- 1966 Mao launches Cultural Revolution. Widespread disorder results from purge of intellectuals and 'reactionaries'.
- 1976 Mao dies. Succeeded by Hua Guofeng.
- 1977-80 Deng Xiaoping gradually gains control.
- 1980 Deng institutes economic liberalisation.
- 1980-87 Reformists defeat conservative challenge. Zhao Ziyang emerges as Deng's successor.
- 1989 Zhao Ziyang ousted. Pro-democracy movement crushed.
- 1990 Hardline premier Li Peng dominates party.
- 1991 Party reaffirms faith in communism despite changes in Soviet Union.



LI PENG

Thoughts on Foreign Aid, Development and the Denounced

SURVIVAL as a nation is never a problem. We are at present surviving at 8% of the domestic resources. We shall, as well, continue to survive with diminishing domestic resources so long as our response to the conditionalities of foreign assistance is positive.

What, however, stands in the way of healthy growth and development, are issues related to race, religion and culture which are glorified in the Third World countries. Frequent references appealing to the sentiments are made to these glories of the past without relating them to the present. In our situation, to be objective in analysis, failures to resolve a problem are ascribed to the incompetence, corrupt practices, exploitation etc. of the preceding regime instead of setting up examples of problem shooting.

Where easy money in the shape of foreign assistance is abundantly available, a corruption-free administrative system cannot be visualised and existence of corrupt practices cannot be altogether eliminated. In Bangladesh, for example, the gap between the slogan and the practice in this respect is remarkably pronounced when such slogans are raised, at the same time in practice, contradictions resulting therefrom hit the common man around his belt too hard to bear.

Past Perspective

Bangladesh is a part of the Indian sub-continent located in the delta region in the east having access to the Bay of Bengal through Chittagong and Mongla and as such, the areas presently comprising Bangladesh, could be reached from the ancient times both from the land as well as the sea mainly from Chittagong. Invaders, traders and religious leaders in the past utilised both of these communication routes for their own respective purposes.

Among the invaders/traders, the Mughals and the British have left behind durable impact over here. In respect of religion, the Sufis played a vital role in the interesting backdrop of the Vedic culture of India.

Mir Jafar

Now I shall make an abrupt reference to Mir Jafar Ali Khan, commonly known as Mir Jafar, the Traitor (though in the present context of international relations, a re-appraisal of his character is essential). He was one of the closest associates or the closest associate of Nawab Serajuddoula in which the ill-fated (?) Nawab reposed his total confidence. Everything went well till Mir Jafar came into a secret contact with Lord Clive representing the interests of East India Company, although, such contacts are widespread these days and contacts with the Clives are no more treated as secret. In Third World countries, these contacts take place on account of one thousand and one valid, cogent and compelling national requirements to seek financial assistance/technical co-operation for economic development. In the process, the fate of Serajuddoula is also decided. During our times, we have witnessed, with horror, the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and great Muktijoddah Ziaur Rahman, more or less, on the lines of Nawab Serajuddoula.

his ordinary death would have eventually exposed his incompetence as a ruler and his great love for a lustful life. The historians have, fortunately for him, closed that chapter placing him on top of our national heroes in spite of the reality that Nawab Serajuddoula was a Bihari by our common standard of judging things.

Mir Jafar, on the other hand, yearned for the throne with the assistance of a superior power at that time trading in India with the valid licence from Emperor Jahangir.

Mughal and British

In India, in the past, there have been lots of such examples of assistance having been called in and obtained from foreign powers — the most glaring of which was the combined support of the Indian rulers extended to Emperor Babar against Ibrahim Lodhi (a Muslim against another Muslim — no religious communalism which is however, being discovered now). Babar and Clive had identical immediate objective to capture the power. Over the period of time, the Mughals distinguished themselves by settling down in India and treated India as their motherland and did not, as such, transfer the local Indian resources abroad. The British Crown, to begin with, approved the appointment of Mir Jafar Ali Khan as the Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and took over, step by step, the control of India from the East India Company over a period of time. Then the British Crown ruled India from as distant a place as London. They introduced a highly efficient, honest and politically neutral cadre of civil servants recruited on merit, as an effective remote control device for ensuring an extremely efficient administration who, contrary to the Mughals, reformed or changed the local systems of India to conform to their need for governance as per the instruction of the Crown.

The British Way

What is remarkable about the subtle British way of handling crisis situation in India is that the Liberation Movement against them was blunted and it was interpreted by them, taking their both short and long-term interests into consideration and accordingly given a fresh sense of direction. As a result, the British remained safe and secure and also, honourable. They were shown great respect at the time of their winding up from here. Bharat vied with Pakistan and out-witted Pakistan in this regard by engaging Lord Mountbatten as sovereign India's first Governor General. This is a unique case of British diplomacy possibly rare in the contemporary history of the colonialists who were generally drawn in bloody civil wars and forced to quit their colonies, themselves bleeding. The British suffered no casualties in India. On the other hand, we are still bleeding.

Back again to the subject — Mir Jafar, who is the most hated character in our history for having collaborated, to obtain power, with East India

Company. Toppling of Nawab Serajuddoula by assassination was incidental. Collaboration with a mighty, superior foreign power was the main issue. In that process, the unfortunate assassination of the young Nawab was the minimum bloodshed required. Have we after achieving independence twice, been able to reverse that trend? Is there an iota of change ever since? If not, then Mir Jafar does deserve, at least, that 'dignified' treatment which is meted out to men of his type or standing at present in our political arena competing for obtaining assistance from abroad for the country's economic development. In honestly measuring up the present concept of co-operation for development, can we totally exclude Mir Jafar Ali Khan from our considerations?

Campus Violence

Abruptly again, I choose a concrete subject for discussion — the campus violence. Why all are quiet on its international dimensions? Involvement of teachers is believed to be direct. Also the identified forces of terror are on record as operating freely, with sophisticated unauthorised arms. Destabilising a democratically elected government through such violence is an expression of helplessness on the part of the government itself. This is, moreover, not seen as the ultimate objective of the campus violence, either.

The campus violence rather covers a much larger canvas aiming at a much greater target of crippling the nation. It envisages prevention of the emergence of outstanding boys and girls from taking leadership, on merit, firstly at the national level and then, on the international forum, in their respective fields. This, therefore, eventually encourages the growth of the mediocres, as a class, who are easy to handle everywhere and at all levels. Frequent closure of the educational institutions due to the violence, resulting into session jams for that matter, is the initial part of the total plan to set in motion, consciously, definite hindrances in the way of

the healthy development of the younger generation who will replace the present without being able to create its own capabilities. Already the talented and outstanding boys and girls, being disillusioned, are migrating from this country in growing numbers to which we should perhaps wake up to see if there is still time left to close up the gaps in which the superior forces from abroad have their right to step in.

In Changed Perspective

Times have changed. The invaders shall not come any more on the horses' back swinging their swords, to conquer a country and to capture its resources. Mir Jafar, if at all taken seriously at this stage, has an altogether different face now operative, at the same time, in politics, trade, industry, bureaucracy etc. In point of fact, he stands 'institutionalised'.

A sovereign parliament, form of government, nationalism, demand for the repeal of all black laws etc., etc. are exercises failing to do any good to the common man who, paradoxically, is being systematically fleeced by soaring prices and, to be swallowed any moment if the law and order machinery goes wrong.

To the Editor

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Deforestation in Burma

Sir, In urgent need of foreign exchange due to the embargo by the world bodies after the brutal takeover of 1988, the military junta in Burma had no alternative but to sell off the country's natural resources to buy arms for the war on indigenous population.

reached agreement by arms worth nearly US \$1 billion from China. The two countries signed a longterm deal late last year for equipment ranging from jet fighter to small arms. At least half the US \$900 million debt would be repaid in rice and wood.

UN sources who have contact with Burma's forestry department say many of its officials shocked at what was happening they had but little power to stop that. The trade is in the hands of Burma Timber Enterprise headed by Li. Gen Chit Shwe.

A UNDP seminar-cum-study tour says the sustained yield concept in teak management has been steadily violated by the military government since its inception in 1982 despite repeated protests by the Forest Department. By way of insistent demands through the military executives of Timber Corporation to constantly increase production of teak to earn hard currency to maintain the military in power, the capacity of the important teak

forest to sustain constant yields has been impaired for many decades to come. The destruction of forest cover through indiscriminate and uncontrolled logging has well contributed to an accelerated rate of deforestation each year in Burma. The destruction of forest cover in the country probably exceeds well over 1.5 million acres yearly. The military government which has controlled the country for 28 years shows no concern for this problem that strikes at the root of the nation's very existence.

Sub-Post Office needed

Sir, Rampal is a historic and populated place in Munshiganj district. A branch post office is working here since the British time. But the post office doesn't have a delivery postman whereas the size of population under its coverage jurisdiction is above one lakh. There are a number of primary schools, two high schools, one degree college, three banks, Health and Family Planning Centre, a number of textile factories, a hundred garment factories and three markets. Besides, a few thousand youths from this area are working in Japan, Germany and Middle East; their remittances amount to a minimum of Tk 15,00,000 which, at present, has to be transacted through the distant Rikabi Bazar sub-post office, at a great risk.

Concerned authorities have time and again been requested to transform the said branch-post office into a sub-post office but to no effect as yet.

Therefore kind and earliest attention of the Post and Telegraph Ministry is earnestly sought to the matter.

M. G. Haider Siddar for residents of Rampal.

Student politics

Sir, Once, a philosopher commented something like — "If religion creates no brotherhood and sympathy, it should be rejected". The comment reads a little rough but it is not the fault of the religion but of those who use religion for realizing their narrow interests.

Meanwhile, such type of comment can be well fitted with our present-day students' politics. I would say that "if student politics only creates campus violence and academic indiscipline, it should be banned."

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