

## Is NAM Still Relevant?

The 10th meeting of Foreign Ministers of countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), opening on Wednesday in Accra, the capital of Ghana, will have a unique opportunity of evaluating the traumatic changes in the Soviet Union of the past two weeks, as part of its review of the world situation, a major item on the agenda of the four-day conference. However, whether or not the discussion leads to a consensus — here, Cuba may be the only member to regret the collapse of communism — participants cannot help asking themselves if their grouping has any role to play in the changing scenario. To put it plainly, the question is, is NAM still relevant to the world today?

There is nothing new about the identity crisis of this unique historical association. In its earliest days, especially in the sixties, its staunch advocacy of non-alignment as a practical proposition for developing countries in the international world carried weight. This advocacy was based on the belief that NAM members would contribute to the lessening of world tension by abstaining from defence alliances, set up by either the United States or the Soviet Union, or by declining to offer military bases to either superpower. There is little doubt that the stand by the grouping helped in reducing tension in some areas. If nothing else, NAM offered an alternative to conventional, often rigid, cold war positions taken by Washington and Moscow. True, much of the credit for this success went to the four NAM stalwarts, Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, President Sukarno of Indonesia, Pandit Nehru of India and President Nasser of Egypt. But, as a movement, the grouping had acquired considerable prestige and a measure of credibility, which, one must admit, started to disappear from the seventies onwards.

The failure of NAM was essentially political. It lost much of its credibility when Cuba, a staunch ally of the Soviet Union, took over the chairmanship of the association in the late seventies. Then, it proved totally ineffective in playing any kind of role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and in other regional disputes.

The meeting in Accra where Bangladesh has sent its Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman should take a stock of the situation, especially the movement's unimpressive performance during the past decades, and study prospects for its resurgence as a force in the international field. It may well be a question of giving NAM a new role in this fast-changing world.

In our view, one significant role the movement should now return to, with all its seriousness and vigour, lies in the economic field. It should serve as a driving force behind the efforts of the Third World to establish a just global economic order, through, among other measures, the reduction of disparities between the rich and poor nations. This was, indeed, the move taken by the Non-Aligned Summit in Algiers in 1974. Unfortunately, nothing much emerged from this move, except resolution after resolution adopted at various NAM meetings, just as nothing much was achieved from the Non-Aligned News Pool that set up in Belgrade to increase the flow of information among NAM members.

With the attention of international aid agencies and donor nations now focused on the economic needs of the Soviet Union and East European countries, there is a danger that the case of developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America may get less and less attention, even if it does not go by default. NAM can play a major role in dealing with this situation, perhaps by providing political strength to the Group-77, at the United Nations. In this context, Bangladesh should welcome the prospects of Indonesia taking over the chairmanship of NAM after the forthcoming summit. Under the guidance of President Suharto, Jakarta should be able to give the movement a new lease of life and provide answer to the question, "is NAM still relevant?" in a positive manner.

## Good and Bad News from Our Universities

A new University at Khulna opened its door on Saturday to the first batch of 80 students. Dhaka University Syndicate decided to restart its classes from 17th this month. Following on these two good news comes one from Mymensingh where the Agricultural University has been declared closed — upto 18 September — due to mounting tension following clashes between the student fronts of the two leading political parties.

We would like to congratulate the people of Khulna for realising their long cherished goal of having a University of their own. But at the same time we would like to make them aware of the mess in which other Universities have fallen. As a new campus and with only a handful of students, the Khulna University may not be subjected to the same cross currents of political forces now destroying the academic atmosphere in other Universities. But it may not be too early to take some precautionary measures — the foremost of which is to establish a close rapport with the students and instil in their minds a clear idea as to why there is this new University, what is its purpose and how it can and should contribute to national development.

Coming to the news of reopening of the Dhaka University it must be borne in mind that political parties have so far taken no step to clear the cloudy campus atmosphere. The Vice Chancellor Mr. Maniruzzaman Miah has made it clear that the causes for which the University was closed in the first place remain. While we can understand the University's eagerness to get on with its regular programme we, at the same time, cannot be oblivious to the security needs of our students. We find it reprehensible that our sons and daughters should be made to risk their lives on the campus because of the ambitions of political parties backing student groups. We express, our deep concern at the apparent indifference of political parties in solving the problem of campus violence. No follow-up steps came after the first meeting of the political parties, which at that stage gave us some reasons for hope. The parliamentary group which was supposed to look into this affair is yet to take shape.

Under these circumstances the decision by the DU Syndicate to reopen the University, though a welcome one, gives us reason for concern. The Syndicate was wise to set the date for reopening more than two weeks ahead. We think that the political parties should use next two weeks to make some serious efforts in solving the problem of campus violence. Some hard conclusions are likely to follow if the public senses any insincerity on the part of the political parties in this matter.

# Poverty, the Landless and Agrarian Reform

In a meeting of the National Economic Council in early 1987, President Ziaur Rahman remarked, "There are 68,000 villages in Bangladesh, let each village take care of its 15 poorest households. The problems of poverty and the landless could thereby be largely resolved without the grandiose rural development projects we are considering now". President Zia was absolutely correct. There are however many things that could be done but are never done. In fact, Bangladesh Land Occupancy Survey of the same year (1978) estimated that 1.77 million rural households were completely landless; they did not even own the land on which their mud huts stood. Obviously these are the poorest families. If President Zia's desire could be fulfilled then, poverty in its most miserable dimension of hunger and destitution would have been resolved to a large extent.

How it could be done? Not an easy task, but a great deal of progress can be achieved if stable income earning opportunities particularly through productive employment for the poor are created. If agriculture is growing rapidly, the manufacturing sector is expanding at an accelerated pace and the construction sector is booming, certainly why only 15 poorest families from each village, many more should find wage, employment and other income earning opportunities. In spite of it, poverty and unemployment will persist in families with no breadwinners or no workable adults who are sick, old and infirmed or disabled. For them social welfare programmes can be sustained only when the economy is expanding and the size of the GDP is large enough to promote the welfare of the underprivileged.

Today, when majority of the population has been marginalized and the annual development programmes are financed by foreign assistance, promotion of social welfare must be through expanding the scope of employment and income generation that ensure double digit growth of the economy on a continuing basis. The agrarian reform programme by creating millions of consolidated small farms for long-term contract farming should be covered under land and water development schemes. Inevitably, intensive agriculture should follow and existing irrigation facilities should be fully utilized. Most important, demand for farm labour would increase substantially.

But that will not be enough. There are too many labour chasing too few lands. More off-farm and non-farm employments for the poor and the landless are necessary. Here lies vital importance of the second objective of agrarian reform to create one million entrepreneurs spearheading the industrialization of Bangladesh.

### Co-existence of prosperity and poverty

Will industrialization banish poverty? The recorded evidence from other countries confirm co-existence of prosperity and poverty. The problems of underemployment and also open unemployment are enormous in Bangladesh today. Majority of Bangladeshis are absolutely poor meaning thereby that they cannot pro-

vide for themselves the recommended calorie needs on a daily basis. Land available would result in modern commercial agriculture covering near around seven million farm families which is less than the number of farmers including marginal farmers in existence. As a matter of fact, the very small near-landless farmers may not enjoy the access to consolidated one to two hectare farms. There simply is not enough land. Out of 12.03 million rural households reported by 1978 survey 11.01 million or over 91 per cent of the total owned upto two hectares of land. If in 1991,

If it is agreed that three million absolutely landless will be provided with homestead land at the rate of 0.06 hectare each (15 decimal of an acre), then only 180,000 hectares of land are required which is two per cent of the net cultivable land estimated to be available by the year 2000. As a matter of fact, homestead for the landless need not be at the cost of crop land. More than 180,000 hectares can be added to cultivation through land reclamation schemes.

The totally landless, the poorest of the poor three million rural households are the target beneficiaries of

skill development programmes; and, (iii) involvement of Grameen Bank to nurture million of micro-enterprises for stable income generation.

### Most numerous category

The most numerous category, around 45 per cent of the rural households, in 1978 were the marginal farmers owning upto one acre of land. Many of them being near-landless depend primarily upon wage income for a bare subsistence living. On the average, such families own one-third of an acre of land only. A large number of them basically possess the homestead only. There is not enough land to settle this group as long-term lease holding farmers. At least half of them must continue to work for a daily wage. The land compensation payable to them will be partly required to release the mortgaged lands which are likely to be rampant in this category.

On the other hand, the 6.8 million small consolidated farms in order to intensify agricultural production would seek workers for land preparation, harvest and other related crop husbandry work. At the same time, agricultural mechanization would be necessary to adhere to the strict time schedule for multiple, double and triple cropping. Opportunities therefore exist to promote small scale agricultural service enterprise for these rural households by providing them with power tillers, harvesters, transplanters and other appropriate agricultural machineries and equipment through long-term credit so that productivity of farm work

is enhanced and the service enterprises act as the complement to small farmer development.

The basic elements of the agrarian reform programme has now been elaborated. It consists resumption of all cultivable land by government. In exchange, the non-cultivating landowners will receive attractive Compensatory Investment Entitlements which would enable them to rapidly transform themselves into urban or urbanized entrepreneurs. The cultivating landowners, sharecroppers and a part of the marginal farmers would become contract farmers. Marginal farmers left out so far would be assisted to become owner-operators of service enterprise for promotion of agricultural mechanization. Lastly, the homestead for the landless constitutes the vital poverty alleviation programme to draw the poorest into the mainstream of economic growth and development.

No country can progress without prosperous agriculture and the primary sector can be prosperous only if the tenurial structure is responsive to growth. Unless the country is rich in natural resources including very favourable land-man ratio, land reform cannot be postponed. Unfortunately Bangladesh is endowed with very few natural resources and land is extremely limited. For us agrarian reform is an absolute must.

The restructuring of the economy brought about through the agrarian programme would lay the foundation for the forward march to become the newly industrialising country (NIC).

## From LDC to NIC by Shated Latif

The entire cultivable area is equitably distributed among these people then everybody in the countryside would be practically near landless since the rural population in the meantime has increased by 40 per cent. Consequently agriculture will be permanently doomed to failure.

Given the utterly grim situation, no agrarian reform proposal can ignore the landless or near-landless who cannot be provided with consolidated farms for long-term contract farming.

What should therefore be done? It would be fairly accurate to state that the landless and the poorest are the same. There were 1.77 million such households in 1978. Today it should be at least three million, growing more than the total population because between now and 1978, many near-landless have become absolutely landless.

"homestead for the landless" component of the Agrarian Reform Programme. Simply giving away the plot of land measuring slightly less than half a 'bigha' would only frustrate the intention of the plan. There should be a package deal to build not only a permanent home, but develop the homestead as the venue for a stable source of income. The objective will be to create a home-based enterprise, for example, poultry. Cottage crafts can also be developed through appropriate skill development. Grameen Bank has established beyond doubt that if credit could be made available, the poor are capable of identifying productive opportunities to utilize such credit.

"Homestead for the landless" may therefore consist of three components: (i) award of developed homestead land in clusters to groups of absolutely landless families; (ii)

# The White Right Ready for War

Philippa Garson writes from Johannesburg

*Virtually overnight, the violence in South Africa has changed direction. The deaths of white extremists at the hands of white police in Ventersdorp has raised the prospect of a white-against-white civil war in addition to the familiar violence against blacks.*

of Afrikaners and of the AWP and the CP joining forces. As yet many have steered clear of the AWP because of Eugene Terre Blanche's excessive drinking, womanising and his alleged affair with journalist Jani Allen.

Initially founded on the Verwoerdian principles of apartheid — partition between blacks and whites in all but the economic sphere — the AWP now wants a 'volkstaat', an insular, independent, Boer state. This is a goal most far right-wingers share, though few can agree on which land to claim as their own or how to go about it.

AWP wants the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Northern Natal which adds up to half of the country.

According to the Centre for Policy Studies the AWP has a

hard core of between 50,000 and 70,000 supporters and a wider base of about 300,000 — more support than the IRA has in Ireland.

Many other small groups compete for support of a relatively small portion of the South Africa population. Only 14 per cent of the population is white but of this group, an increasing number, now about 45 per cent, support the right wing, if not the ultra right groups.

Many farmers, uncertain about the future of their farms since the scrapping of the Land Acts earlier this year, have become increasingly supportive of the right.

Close links have always existed between the AWP and the Conservative party, with much overlapping membership, but the Battle of Ventersdorp has

pushed the CP further right. It is showing signs of moving towards the same 'volkstaat' goal and the adoption of military tactics and is gaining more support amongst whites.

Support for the Herstigte Nasionale Party, led by Jaap Marais and espousing the idea of partition rather than a volkstaat (which would according to Marais give "the blacks" too much land) is steadily dwindling. The party, which still has its core of faithful supporters is likely to die out in the near future. It has no representation in Parliament and contests fewer seats every year.

Several disparate groups have adopted the volkstaat policy, which sprang from the Afrikaner Volkswag, a movement led by theologian Professor Carl Boshoff. He and

his followers are intent on establishing their own 'country', Orania, in the Northern Cape.

The Vereniging van Oranjerwerkers is one of a handful of small fundamentalist groups striving to implement their own volkstaat. Closely linked to the Volkswag, this insular group of people live in the small Eastern Transvaal town of Morgenster, led by the son of Hendrik Verwoerd, architect of apartheid and former South African prime minister. They refuse to interact with or employ blacks.

The Boerestaat Party, led by Robert Van Tonder, wants the old Boer republics to be reinstated. This party has minimal support. Van Tonder's ex-wife reports for the South African Press Association, where most Boerestaat Party coverage originates, and its importance as a political player is thought to be exaggerated.

To date, scattered attempts to establish a volkstaat have

not amounted to much. There are signs however of increasing unity and if the CP — or a coalition of right-wing forces — enters the negotiations on this basis the idea might go further than rhetoric.

According to Wim Booysse, political analyst and risk consultant, "the right will become a terrorist rather than a revolutionary threat. They have not got the capacity to wage a revolution. Their access to sophisticated weaponry is minimal. They will however play a destabilising role."

Booyse predicts more attacks on National Party targets and continued efforts by 'third force' white mercenaries to destabilise black communities and fuel conflict between the ANC and the mainly-Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party, led by Mangosuthu Buthelesi.

Some political observers believe the CP may seek a closer alliance with Inkatha on the basis that both parties could push for nation status in a federal system.

The grim economic climate, soaring rate of inflation and mounting political uncertainty can only strengthen right-wing dissatisfaction with the government and fuel a militancy born from insecurity and anxiety.

— GEMINI NEWS  
PHILIPPA GARSON is a Journalist with the Weekly Mail of Johannesburg.

## The defenders of apartheid

<p><b>Right-wing groups in South Africa include a growing number of political parties, vigilantes, cultural groups and paramilitary organisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• membership numbers only estimated.</li> <li>• want whites to live separate from blacks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB)</b> (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) Leader: Eugene Terre Blanche</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paramilitary organisation which frequently holds armed rallies</li> <li>• prepared to use violence to defend white supremacy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conservative Party</b> Leader: Dr Andries Treurnicht Created: 1982</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• official opposition since 1987</li> <li>• supports one white nation with black national identity according to language</li> <li>• considered non-violent action to oppose reform</li> </ul>	<p><b>Boerestaat Party</b> (Boer State Party) Leader: Robert Van Tonder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connected with terrorist activity</li> <li>• aims to create separate, all-white Boer state</li> </ul>
<p><b>Die Oranjerwerkers</b> (The Orange Workers) Leader: ex-missionary Hendrik Fransch Verwoerd, son of apartheid founder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aims to create mini-white states free of blacks except for 'visitors'</li> </ul>	<p><b>Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP)</b> (Reconstituted National Party) Leader: Jaap Marais</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• believes South Africa belongs to whites</li> <li>• held only 1 seat in parliament since 1970; currently has no seats</li> </ul>

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.

### DU reopening

Sir, It is good that Dhaka University is reopening, hopefully, on September 17 next. The authorities have decided it after reviewing the situation and also paying heed to the growing demand from all quarters including students and guardians. It is also good that the authorities hope the law enforcing agencies as well as political parties and student organisations would help maintain peace on the campus.

Well, the greater number of public also do hope so. But exactly they also remain apprehensive of any disruption any time again. Because they do not know how much and what measures the political parties have taken to ensure peace on the campus. They do not know how effective the law enforcing agencies have been made to neutralise the warring factions whoever they may be, at the time of action.

Actually, many guardians are still in great hesitation to send

their wards, no matter they are adult enough to take care of themselves. Such peace loving guardians were expecting some positive say, rather concrete programmes from the political parties, student organisations or for that matter from law enforcing agencies, as or towards effective deterrence to occurrence of violence.

Violence, as it breaks out on the campus if not wantonly but for no great cause either, on most occasions, can be well contained, we still do believe — not by hoping, but by determined process. The authorities concerned and the influential quarters should ensure things, as much as practicable, before the reopening date and assure the less confident guardians.

A guardian  
Dhaka.

### Office timing and weekly holiday

Sir, Weekly holiday and office timing become subjects of controversy every few years. Many 'alternatives' have been tried during the last few decades but none seemed satisfactory.

Inevitable conclusion is that one-day weekly holiday is inadequate while two-day holidays prove inexpedient. Perhaps, the following alternative may suit our conditions as a better compromise: 07:30 am to 02:30 pm on Monday through Thursday and on Saturday without break, 07:30 am to 11:30 am on Friday, and weekly holiday on Sunday.

All concerned may please give it a thought.  
Maqbul Ahmad  
Khalfarhat, Noakhali.

## OPINION

### Collective Bargaining

A disturbing tendency has crept into our society for quite sometime; which was not so prevalent in the previous generation. Unless it is contained to reasonable limits, administration at all levels, in all sectors, might face break-down level. In fact the symptoms are already manifest.

This fashionable pastime is group bargaining, which has now assumed almost uncontrollable proportions. Pressure groups agitate for certain demands, or oppose some new policy decisions, and hold the administration at ransom till the demands are met. This is not a new phenomenon, but it has lately mushroomed into a cult of indiscipline, sometimes leading to violence. It causes avoidable loss to the daily contribution towards national development, and the peaceful pursuit of daily work and business activities.

At least three aspects are involved: the resistance to change; lack of tolerance; and the defiance of authority. The resistance could originate from a sense of insecurity and distrust; intolerance may be classified as a form of inferiority complex and undemocratic; and defiance is a sign of indiscipline.

What should concern the social scientists is the participation in these demonstrations by innocent persons who follow the leaders blindly; assuming that all leaders are right and infallible. The credibility of these leaders who organize agitations, protests and 'haraals' have to be analyzed, and any proposal not in public interest have to be pointed out. This is normally done by the two confronting parties at the negoti-

ating stage, after the agitation has started, and some damage had already been done. The group leaders, in their zeal, apparently sincerely believe that they were right, and tend to become obstinate, backed by the group pressure. The negative scenario is the suspected manipulation of the group by vested interests. What is needed is re-orientation programmes for such leaders, for analysis of the situation; identifying the options; and choose the right option for collective bargaining, in a spirit of mutual trust. For years, an in-built notion has been prevailing that all establishments are anti-people. It is time to start believing that an elected government is not supposed to take policy decisions against public interest. Unfortunately the previous autocratic regime lasting for nine years might have cemented such notions in the public mind.

The people feel aggrieved, and the leaders are untrained, and ruled by passion. In the 5-year Development Programme, there should be some project, on a long-term basis, for providing re-orientation courses for inculcating the right leadership qualities. One must learn to be right, before one could aspire to be a leader (at any level, be it a class monitor in a school, a labour union leader, a political leader, or a group managing director). At lower levels, dealing with 'trained and experienced leaders could prevent considerable national wastage. At present a lot of man-hours are wasted fruitlessly trying to seek a consensus.