

Peace in Cambodia

The peace agreement signed Wednesday in Paris among Cambodia's four factions and their respective foreign backers brings to an end, hopefully, 21 years of conflict that left millions dead. However, the agreement, the result of countless sessions of talks and diplomatic toing and froings over the past several years, is only a means towards an end, rather than an end in itself. But because this means has eluded the international community trying to unravel the Cambodian knot for so long, the agreement naturally comes as a great relief to the peoples of Indo-China as well as governments in the region and beyond.

With the formalities over, the hard work now begins in earnest. The acceptance of all parties, including Phnom Penh prime minister, Hun Sen, of Prince Norodom Sihanouk as the head of the interim government, is a sure sign that success of the peace process may not be a pipe dream. Sihanouk has managed, despite great odds, to retain his independence of both China and Vietnam over the years, and thus is an acknowledged national leader — a distinction the other three leaders, Hun Sen, Pol Pot and Son San, will have difficulty claiming. The prince and the Supreme National Council (SNC), in which all factions including the Khmer Rouge (KR), are represented, will now have the difficult tasks of creating the correct atmosphere for elections and ensure that the coming polls are free and fair. The good will of the KR, one of the world's most seasoned as well as feared guerrilla groups at present, will be vital. The role of China will thus assume paramount importance, since Beijing is the principal foreign patron of the KR which is accused of killing over a million Cambodians during its rule in Phnom Penh between 1975 and 1978.

As is often the case in this kind of situations, Cambodia can expect to be the focus of international attention and sympathy for sometime. This will mean a great deal of financial and material aid from industrialised countries and international agencies. Cambodia, which will have to undergo some drastic disarmament in order to utilise the inflow of aid for development purposes, will have to put twice as much effort into preserving the peace than it did in achieving the agreement. Economic development and betterment of the long-suffering Cambodian people are not likely to come unless Cambodia's bitter rivals can somehow forget past animosity and begin to work together. Both China and Vietnam have a duty to make sure that this is the case, by refusing to support any destructive activities of their respective proxies.

With stability will also come business opportunities for countries of the region, as the new Cambodia will require new skills, technology, capital and manufactured goods. The newly-industrialised economies of south-east Asia are uniquely placed to turn the former killing fields into one huge new arena of entrepreneurial activities. But that should not preclude other countries with the appropriate products or the sort of skills that Cambodia will require at the initial stage of its reconstruction.

And this is where Bangladesh could come in, if our business community was shrewd enough. Despite our LDC status, we do have products as well as skills and services that would find a receptive market in Cambodia. But we need our government to play an aggressive role in promoting Bang-ladeshi products and businesses to enable our private sector entrepreneurs to make their mark.

Saving Palanan, Saving Ourselves

Serious concern is being expressed by the knowledgeable over the question of whether the Palanan rain-forest in the Philippines will survive into the third millennium of the Christian era. Experts have identified 15 ecological 'hotspots' around the world — and such 'hotspots' mean locations with exceptional levels of biological diversity and endemic species and very high rates of habitat destruction. The Philippine rain forests are considered the 'hottest of the hotspots', because the forests are the worst threatened of all rain-forests in the world. And Palanan, in the province of Cabayan, is the biggest and richest rain-forest of the Philippines and one of the best repositories of the world's plant and animal species. Losing Palanan, which is a certainty if massive and radical preservation missions are not effectively undertaken without the loss of a day, will be a big blow to attempts to keep the planet congenial for the existence of life.

Palanan has in its 200,000-hectre fastnesses many species of trees and birds so far unknown to science and a bevy of species only to be found there and nowhere else. If Palanan's destruction is a loss to the world never possibly to be made up, it is primarily a threat to the very existence of the species called Homo Sapiens. This most unfortunate change for the tragic has been, for the most part of it, caused by man's destruction of living things and their habitat and of conditions in which life sustains and flourishes. The Philippines — once priding in its having one of the most luxuriant nests of life vying for top honours with the Amazonian and Congo rain-forests — has only a paltry three per cent of the tree wealth it had less than a hundred years back. And Palanan is not the only alarm bell tolling in the region.

Indonesia, specially its territories in Kalimantan and Irian Jaya, and Malaysia have among them the most spacious expanse of rain-forests in Asia excepting the Philippine woods. The forests in these two states are dwindling as fast. If the loss of Palanan is inconceivably dangerous, what can the combined vanishing of three of world's largest ecosystems mean to the question of man's physical survival — one shudders to contemplate. And all that notwithstanding, the three eminently reasonable states have yet to come up with a policy of how to stop the disaster.

We in Bangladesh however are in no position to lecture them on the ecological questions. We are trailing miserably even behind the erratic and almost anarchic India in this regard. One painful pointer to our performance is the fast disappearance of the species *Ficus Bengalensis* or the banyan tree — Bengal's very own gift to the world and to man. A more precious gift to society wouldn't be found easily. The banyan tree's fate is so analogous with the degeneration of the quality of society in Bangladesh that we choose rather not to feel the absence of that huge presence which kept whole villages under its wings — tucked away from the ways of the evil.

M-E Peace Conference and Possible Outcome

HAVING flown thousands of miles in his eight peace missions and spoken hundreds of thousands of words — some meaningful, some rhetoric, some hollow assurances to the feuding parties — Secretary James Baker finally succeeded in obtaining commitments — last minute hitches notwithstanding — from the historic enemies, the Arabs and Israelis, to come to the negotiating table — no doubt a major success.

When the front curtain of the Peace Drama in Madrid will be lifted on October 30, 1991, the world will not see the real actors of the peace drama but the two directors cum prompters — Bush and Gorbachev who are not likely to say how they are going to direct and prompt from behind the scene but will only deliver rituals and preach virtues of peace. Secretary Baker already expressed the US hopes when he said, "The negotiating process that we are seeking to launch with this invitation holds the hope of a new area in the Middle East..." He also said that "The road to peace will not be simple... Old suspicions will not disappear quickly; the gaps are real and the gaps will not be easily overcome." However, the world expects the US to handle the negotiations in an even handed manner but with total firmness. As the real negotiations are going to take place in the shadow conference outside the main theatre, the role of the US will be very crucial.

Political Setting

The pre-conference political setting may turn the face to face talks to Camp David style negotiations for separate peace treaties depending on who succumbs first to the behind-the-scene pressure. The Arabs are in total disarray because of the Gulf war. After the collapse

of the Soviet might the radical Arabs became orphans. The clever one, however, quickly changed side and is now looking for the US help to regain the lost territory.

Jordan's pro-western King who, unfortunately, found himself in the crossfire during the Gulf war was only too eager, of course rightly, to join the peace conference with the hope of regaining West Bank probably not for himself but for the Palestinians who may, one day, take over through sheer majority his East Bank — Jordan. Palestinians are paying the price for their thoughtless support for Saddam. However, at the initiative of the PLO and Syria, high level meeting of the concerned Arab states with the observers from other Arab states is now taking place in Damascus with a view to coordinating the Arab position. But after what happened in the Arab world recently one can not be sure of any unified Arab position. However, some coordination might help.

Israeli position was well known but the latest decisions on the formation of Israeli delegation do not augur well for the peace conference. Prime Minister Shamir himself with the support of his own advisers is leading the Israeli delegation though Foreign Minister David Levy who is seen as a dove was supposed to lead the delegation. This means that Israeli Foreign office is virtually out of the negotiating process. This reflects no trust not only on the Israeli Foreign Office but also on the US. This must have caused concern to the US administration as Shamir is the real hardliner. Even a couple of days ago, while speaking to the European Parliament in Strasbourg Shamir said — there shall be no exchange of "land for peace".

The US is, of course, the main player though the Soviet

Union would render assistance probably more in terms of moral support. Though both the US and Israel were against any Soviet role in the M-East peace negotiations, the situation changed because of the end of the Cold War and recent resumption of Soviet's diplomatic relation with Israel. Despite immense difficulties, the US acted diplomatically and with utmost patience during the last couple of months. Though this has nearly wrecked Baker's nerves, the job appears well done. Shamir was put in a position from where he could not say no to Baker. He said there was no al-

purpose of Israeli settlements was to create Jewish majority in the sensitive areas of the occupied territories so that these areas could be retained by Israel in the event of their withdrawal. The regions, which lie in the hills overlooking metropolitan Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, have been regarded as strategically crucial by both Israelis and Palestinians and were bloodily contested in two Arab-Israeli wars. Settlement activities were particularly concentrated in those strategic areas. Taking into account the total settlement programmes it is estimated that the construction will create a

crucial role in finding a durable solution that could establish peace in the region.

Basis of Negotiations

The principle of complete withdrawal from the occupied territories, the right of self determination of the Palestinian people on the basis of UN resolution 242 and 338 and proper security of Israel must guide the negotiations. Within the above framework the parties to the negotiations should make necessary concessions to make the conference a success. While the Arabs should be more tolerant and flexible Israel should also see that peace with Arabs will end constant animosity with them, which will finally legitimize its existence.

supervision for 3 to 5 years to build confidence after which the Palestinian people should be allowed to exercise their right of self-determination whether to remain an independent state or to join Jordan in Confederation.

5. Jerusalem — The best course would be to restore position that existed before 1967 war. As this seems almost impossible, Jerusalem may be declared an independent city state of the people of three religions — Muslims, Jews and the Christians with the freedom for other religions too — to be administered by the UN for an agreed period of time after which a formula could be adopted for self rule by the people of Jerusalem on representational basis without the interference from Israel or Palestine.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

Muslehuddin Ahmad

ternatives indicating sufficient US pressure and probably this is why he himself has taken charge of the negotiations. Any way, this time both Administration and the Congress appear serious about the settlement of the M-East problems. It is quite clear that Israel does not enjoy any more the status of exclusive strategic spot for the US. The world strategic picture has changed dramatically with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The US and the Allies fought a major war against an Arab country without any help what so ever from Israel. Indeed, the US forces landed in the Arab soil almost at moments notice, which was probably unthinkable during Cold War period. While joining the Administration in the peace process the US Congress must have considered all these aspects very carefully.

Israeli Settlement

Israel knew that once they will have to face this problem of withdrawal from the occupied territories. The basic

Jewish majority in a strip of West Bank territory 16 miles (about 25 kilometers) long and up to 12 miles wide along Israel's 1967 frontier. Israel has already annexed, though illegally, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights and created Jewish settlements in large areas there.

Difficult Negotiations:

Role of the US

It is going to be one of the most difficult negotiations the world has ever seen. Though Secretary Baker has advised against high hopes, the world expectation is there on peace as the US itself is directly involved. However, given the problems and the worst relationship existing between the two sides, failure also can not be ruled out forcing some parties to join Saddam in bomb making. As the UN and particularly Europe have no role to play and the Soviet Union has, at present, very little political influence, the US which worked so much to bring these unwilling parties to the conference table must play its

Suggestions on Possible Outcome

1. Israel withdraws completely from the West Bank leaving a small strip of land, size to be negotiated with the Palestinians, along side Israel which should be used as the security zone. The UN presence along the security zone will be necessary.
2. Total withdrawal from Gaza Strip.
3. Total Israeli withdrawal from Golan Heights. Agreement to be reached on no military installations of any kind by Syria up to a limit in the Golan Heights from where these may pose threat to Israel.
4. West Bank as Gaza would be the Palestinian state but would remain in Confederation with Jordan for an agreed period of time that would be necessary for building confidence between Palestinians and the Israelis. Alternatively, Palestinians must enjoy self-rule in West Bank and Gaza, after complete Israeli withdrawal, under UN

Lebanon

Israeli self-declared security zone should be vacated leaving a small strip of 'no man's land' under UN control. With the solution of the Palestinian problem security zone will not be necessary. Outcome, if any, of the peace conference must be fully guaranteed by the US and the Soviet Union. For the Palestinians the above falls far short of their demands and to the Israelis this could be an anathema but something of this sort seems to be the only way out.

We are happy to announce the starting of this new fortnightly column: Spotlight on Middle East by Muslehuddin Ahmad. The author, a former Secretary and Ambassador, is a specialist on the affairs of the Middle East, who has been writing for The Daily Star regularly for the past few months.

Swedish Election Changes Foreign Aid Outlook

Norman Preston writes from Skovde (Sweden)

Sweden's new Conservative-led government is unlikely to overturn the country's generous aid programmes to the developing countries in the short term. However, there is growing pressure for a rethink on aid in a longer perspective. Increased selectivity in choosing recipients is one area under scrutiny. Growing claims for assistance to eastern Europe are also likely to divert attention away from the Third World.



CARL BILD
New Swedish Prime Minister

ELECTION of a right wing government in Sweden is likely to bring about a new foreign policy framework that will signal a decisive break with the liberal policies of the Olof Palme era.

But the precarious political balance following the mid-September elections will mean that in the short term changes will be minor, though decisive for some programmes. The uncertain election outcome means that several of the smaller political parties can exert disproportionate pressure on issues such as foreign aid and Swedish policy on granting political asylum.

With less than a majority of seats in Riksdag (parliament), the Conservative-led coalition has little room for manoeuvre. It can expect strong resistance from at least two sources on any aid-cutting measures.

Bengt Westerburg, leader of the Liberal Party, was one of the few politicians to campaign on a foreign-aid friendly platform prior to the election. The newcomer Christian Democratic Party is also expected to maintain a sympathetic international view.

Sweden has had a very distinct foreign policy profile in recent decades. It has been one of the most generous providers of aid to poorer countries. By the late Eighties its longstanding Social Democratic government had raised net foreign aid to around one per cent of Gross National Product (GNP), far surpassing most other industrialised countries.

In the North-South debate Sweden has also been one of the western world's most active supporters of the South.

Now that focus is about to change. Carl Bildt, the new Prime Minister, and Conservative Party leader, has for some time argued the need for a fresh direction in foreign policy.

Bildt wants to align his

country's policies more closely with those of the European Community (EC) to achieve what he calls "a clear European identity." He would also like to reduce Sweden's 13.9 billion kronor aid budget (about \$US 2 billion) by around one billion kronor.

In contrast to the low election profile of aid and immigration issues, EC membership has been widely debated in Sweden over the past year. With a formal application for membership now tabled, Bildt is strongly aware of the need to avoid unnecessary complications in Sweden's EC negotiating position. In July he also wrote that his country needed to "change the profile of its United Nations politics," to bring it more into line with European views.

According to one local commentator Sweden's special voice at the United Nations could be silenced. Political sci-

entist Dr. Ulf Bjereld of Gothenburg University, recently pointed out that while Sweden's right wing government of 1976-82 did little to change the direction of foreign policy, the situation is now quite different.

He said: "In Carl Bildt the Conservatives have a capable and engaged foreign policy leader who will prioritise these issues in a completely different manner from his colleagues of 1976-82. The pre-conditions for a right wing government to force through changes in Swedish foreign policy are therefore quite different."

There is also strong popular support for a change in direction of foreign policy. Official backing for distant causes in Vietnam, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and Cuba, has long been remote from many ordinary Swedes. Aid to Cuba is almost certain to disappear.

There is also a rising concern about the democratic credentials of other recipients. The new government is unlikely to do much until it has digested the results of a special examination into aid policies which it has commissioned.

Meanwhile the question of aid to the Baltic republics is much closer. Through ties of history and kinship many Swedes are more sympathetic to programmes of assistance for their newly-independent neighbours across the Baltic.

An indication of the depth of these feelings is shown by the hankering of the populist New Democratic Party. Less

than a year after its formation the party polled almost seven per cent of the vote, gaining a strategic balancing position in the Riksdag. It wants to divert half of Sweden's aid budget away from traditional recipients to the Baltic States.

Diverted aid is unlikely to assume these proportions. While the Conservatives have backed a Social Democratic plan to give the Baltics 300 million kronor from the existing aid budget, the Liberals,

the Leftists, and the Centre Party are opposed to the idea.

Changes must also be seen against the background of a struggling domestic economy. GNP stagnated in 1990 and is expected to have fallen by one per cent in 1991.

Unemployment, in a country which has long prided itself on maintaining work for virtually all who wanted it, will soon reach an uncharacteristically high four per cent. Economic problems and

unemployment were the major election issues according to one survey.

On immigration and asylum issues there is unlikely to be much change from the tougher guidelines which were put in place at the end of 1989. Since then more than half of asylum seekers have been turned away, and Sweden's immigration numbers trended downwards for the first time in almost a decade.

Even though the United Nations Refugee Commission recommended in July that Yugoslavian asylum-seekers not be repatriated, the Swedish authorities continued to turn them away as late as September. — GEMINI NEWS

NORMAN PRESTON, a New Zealander, is a freelance writer and journalist based in Sweden.

OPINION

What's in a Name!

A rose is a rose — so said Shakespeare many centuries ago. Calling rose by another name would neither diminish its unparalleled beauty, impair its incomparable fragrance nor diminish its allure — a rose is a rose and will remain so eternally. On the other hand — any common wild flower even if given an attractive name, will not become an adornment in any one's drawing room.

It is not the name, but the quality, substance and essence of something that makes it attractive, desirable and earn a place of respect. A name may not impart any special quality to its bearer, but names have certain value in the human society. Name and title appropriately presented in the correct frame of reference add dignity to the bearers. There was a time, not long ago, the name and designation of public officers commanded respect from the people. But, with the passage of time and frequent abuses of these offices by successive office holders has degenerated the dignity and respect for these offices in public's mind.

Names are important as a person carries the same name all through his life and a person is identified and addressed by his name. Adoring parents give attractive names to their children so that the very names might add something of quality and beauty to their children's lives. Many parents also name their children after saints or great men hoping some virtue or nobility will rub off on the children from the names they carry.

In Bangladesh, most children not only have a formal name but also a nick or pet name. Generally, only close family members or friends address the children by these names. As the child attains maturity, the pet name falls into disuse and is forgotten. It will appear incongruous and even embarrassing for a grown up man to be addressed as Lebu, Paltu or Chofon. But, all the same, times change and

new trends and fashions emerge — and what was not done or was unthinkable becomes a fad.

Since, Bangladesh became a sovereign nation — a new fashion appeared in names. It became fashionable for young people, specially student and union leaders and aspiring politicians, to add their nick names at the end of their given or formal names. The idea possible was that this will endear them and bring them closer to the people and they will be on their way to become national leaders and bask in the limelight and enjoy all the other goodies that go with it. Thus, someone with a perfectly respectable name, a name which has some real meaning becomes a Jhantu, Nannu or Babla. This also makes it difficult for the uninitiated or a foreigner to distinguish between the family or surname and the assumed one. Of course, it seems, some of these people with political aspiration have succeeded in meeting their objectives. Whatever their merit, these appendages which pass for names do not add any dignity to their bearers or the offices they hold.

Another new trend has appeared in names — this is the practice of adding professional titles and sometimes even dubious ones as prefixes to names. Thus, it is not uncommon to find an Engineer such and such, or a Professor/Principal so and so or a Barrister Jadu or Madhu in the public arena and limelight. There is nothing wrong or unethical about this new trend or practice as the man on the street doesn't care if a man is an engineer or a professor, but, at the same time this can be misleading and some can even perceive this as professional misconduct. Only country where the professional qualification of an engineer is used as a prefix to a name is Germany, but, only for professional introduction and no other purpose. An engineer is

only an engineer when he is working in his professional capacity and it is silly to go around calling oneself an engineer when he is marketing for fish or vegetable. This is a sign of cultural immaturity and also possibly come from a sense of personal inadequacy.

To many, the rather casual and cavalier use of the title Professor is distressing if not downright ludicrous. The title Professor is usually earned or bestowed on an eminent scholar by a major university after he has taught for years, sometimes for decades and has many research papers published in professional or conducted important and significant research projects. This position of honour is attained by someone for his contribution in his field of studies and usually almost at the end of a distinguished academic career and is not taken lightly in the Western countries. But, here, we have too many self styled Professors who might have taught for a few years in rural colleges.

It might be a folly and treading on dangerous grounds to say anything about Barristers or people of their profession — one has to do this at the risk of being sued for libel or slander. But, the heart of the matter is that we have too many Barristers now on public view and they are better known for their under achievement than any real accomplishment. The best example was by one honourable Member of the Parliament who disrupted the inaugural session of the Parliament by his vehement insistence that he was a Barrister (as is being an M. P. was not important enough) and sought to have the privilege of being the first speaker. Both Gandhi and Jinnah were eminent Barristers, neither of them had to invoke even for once that they were Barristers to draw the public's attention or respect.

Naz Shafiq
Motijheel C. A., Dhaka 1000