

Lessons from Peru

Far from taking notice of the world-wide condemnation, especially from the United States, of suspension of democracy and all other moves which form part of an authoritarian system, the President of Peru, Alberto Fujimori seems to be moving just in the opposite direction. In his latest move, announced over the weekend, his administration has filed charges against its leading foe Alan Garcia, a former president, accusing him of possessing illegal arms. This is seen as a move aimed at strengthening Mr Fujimori's control over the country which the elected president-turned-dictator now wants to run without a constitution and a congress. Even a number of judges, accused of co-operating with "corrupt" politicians, have lost their jobs. By any standard, this is a dismal situation.

It is hard to say what gives Mr Fujimori the drive to persist on his dangerous course. Perhaps, part of the reason lies in the hesitation shown by the Organisation of American States (OAS) to take a tough line against Lima. In some ways, Mr Fujimori may still enjoy a measure of credibility with the OAS, a credibility that may well have a great deal to do with the Peruvian leader's own incorruptible record as well as with his announcement to return his country to what has been called "renovated democracy" within 18 months. No one has yet defined this "renovated democracy". It may well turn out to be either the "guided democracy" of the late President Soekarno or the "basic democracy" of the late Ayub Khan, if not a combination of both.

It is easier to tell President Fujimori that the so-called renovated democracy won't work, in the way a popular democracy should, than to explain to him what exactly would get his country out of the political and economic crisis which has been undoubtedly aggravated by the Peruvian leader's attack on the system. Yet, more and more analysts see the complexities of the situation in Peru, instead of judging the crisis in black and white terms. But what has happened in Peru can happen — and does indeed happen — in other Latin American states, in newly-emerging East European states, in the feuding republics of the former Soviet Union and, finally, in any new democracy in any continent. While there is no alternative whatsoever to a democratic system, most of these states are up against a set of challenges. The most important one is of making the democratic system perform against the backdrop of continuing domination of vested interests, political divisiveness, the administration's impatience with political dissent and backwardness of the economy. It is this kind of failure that turned the rule of President Corazon Aquino in the Philippines into a sad story of unfulfilled promises. Herein also lies a challenge facing Bangladesh. This is precisely the message the country has started getting now from the foreign media, the latest report in the *Economist* of London being a case in point.

There may not be a single prescription for putting the country, like Bangladesh, on the road to stability and progress, and as far away as possible from methods tried by President Fujimori. However, there are some established democratic norms, not to mention the evolution of a national consensus, which have yet to be tried with seriousness and vigour. One can understand why Mr Fujimori could not promote national consensus with drug barons and the privileged oligarchy that uses the state for its own purposes. But this is not the situation in Bangladesh, when it comes to exploring avenues for understanding between the ruling party and the opposition. The *Economist* might well have been thinking of this missed opportunity — and several others — when it suggested that the government of Begum Khaleda Zia has fallen victim to "complacency". The government will be well advised to take note of this warning.

Marine Trouble

We ought to be thankful that only two people lost their lives, rather than the 100 feared, in the ferry capsized off the coast of Sandwip on Friday. However, this sense of relief should in no way detract from the fact that the accident occurred when no storms were in progress, nor was there any report of collision with another vessel. That would leave two causes: over-loading and/or structural fault.

It is no secret that many of the marine accidents in this country occur due to boats and launches carrying far too many passengers. How such vessels manage to get away with carrying such dangerously excessive weight, despite the presence of policemen at ghats and jetties, is beyond our comprehension. The fatal risk inherent in over-loading makes this practice an outright criminal one, and the owners and operators of such boats should never be allowed to get away with it.

The government too has a major duty to perform here. The ministry of inland water transport ought to insist that all motorised and manually operated boats which carry passengers are adequately insured against accidents. This insurance should, as a matter of course, include compensation for passengers. Beyond that, the government ought also to find ways to make it legally-binding on river transport owners to compensate relatives of passengers who may lose their lives.

There is another serious area which the government should investigate on an emergency basis. That involves the river or sea worthiness of passenger vessels that ply our waterways. As is often the case with trucks and buses on our roads, doubts persist about the mechanical state of many of the boats, launches and ferries that have valid certificates from supposedly competent authorities. Accidents in good marine conditions immediately raise the question if the boat concerned had faults with its machinery or superstructure or not. A greater vigilance from the government is necessary to ensure that no boat below the required standard is given a certificate, and investigation should be launched at random to ensure that guidelines are being adhered to.

WHILE checking-in for the Thai Airways flight to Dhaka at Bangkok airport, I observed that a fellow passenger just ahead of me in the line was carrying a pair of brooms, nicely packed as a hand luggage. Expatriates in Bangladesh even buy their brooms from Bangkok? Amazing isn't it? The surprise on my face must have been very apparent. The Farang, Thai word for 'firing' in Bengali, smiled and said, "Yes, these are made in Thailand but I bought them at the export fair in Tokyo as samples for my friend working in an NGO of Bangladesh. These can be easily made for export." If 20 brooms are manufactured by one manday of work and one million such brooms are exported annually then 200 workers can find employment round the year and earn 3 to 4 million dollars in foreign exchange from Japan, if nowhere else.

I found out that out of around 25 billion dollars worth of exports each year, several million dollars worth of brooms also get exported from Thailand. Every dollar counts. Such brooms can easily be made in Bangladesh and at a lesser cost since labour is cheaper than in Thailand.

But why brooms, it is such an insignificant item? This was the particular response of some of my businessman friends at Dhaka. From brooms to nuclear plants, there are

Why Not the Broom for Growth?

millions of products that enter the international marketplace. For economic growth we should leave no stone unturned. Thailand exports brooms, they are also exporting automobiles. If it is a good business, let us do it: this is the right attitude conducive to economic growth.

Brooms lead to a very fundamental problem with the existing value structure of our middle class society. Broom any where else in the world is attached with a long handle made of wood or bamboo so that one can sweep the dirt without stooping down. But in south Asia, it is quite different because sweeping is a very lowly job and the obvious posture should be to bow deep down and perform the task. Sweepers in the sub-continent usually belonged to the untouchable class and how cold they be allowed to stand erect: this must have been the traditional perception which still prevails. Therefore, how can a 'Bhadralok' take up its manufacturing, he must not touch it by the longest barge pool.

Dignity of Labour

Dignity of labour, regardless of the type of work involved is painfully lacking in our part of the world. The same is not the case in East and South-east Asia. I was amazed when I referred to a Deputy Minister of an ASEAN country of a particular college in his country and he proudly told me that his sister was working there as a cook. My amazement was due to my nationality. I cannot imagine cutting the grass of the front lawn of my house in Bangkok. I must wait for the gardener sent out regularly by the landlord. Once when the gardener failed to come, the land lord himself walked in with the mower and did the

job. "It is good exercise", he told me. I have seen my neighbours sweeping the side-walks and the street adjoining their houses on the week-ends; not ashamed at all, while none in the Dhanmandi Residential Area would do the same even if the municipal sweepers go on strike for weeks.

There is a gulf of difference between our so-called Bhadralok culture, values and attitudes; and the modern work ethics that are so profound and steadfastly followed

in Asia, east of Bangladesh. We are not prepared to hold the broom and clean our own place of work. A Thai or a Chinese would not wait for the sweeper, and carry out the work himself. It is not a very small thing. It is a matter of significant difference.

Thus even if we can manufacture a million brooms and sell for 3 or 4 dollars each, we will not only hesitate but refuse inspite of the profitability of the enterprise. I once asked a very senior business-

Sweeping the floors of the textile mills and garment factories can accumulate a huge pile of bits and pieces of cloth and thread suitable as excellent pulp material for the manufacture of high-grade paper. But who will hold the broom and sweep the factory floors?

Yawning Gap

The yawning gap between the growth performance of South Asia on the one hand and the rest of Asia on the other cannot be explained only in terms of resource endowment or right policies and programmes. A significant component of the answer lies in the midst of our traditional values and attitudes towards work in particular. We abhor not only the broom since the Bhadralok cannot touch it, but any profession where one has to stoop, kneel or bend, is looked down upon. The preferred occupation is that of a useless clerk. For the same reason there is no concept of the gentleman-farmer of 'Bhadralok-Krishak' in Bengal, while it is the educated gentleman-farmers who did and are still doing the research and development work on their own in order to bring about the modernisation of agriculture in Thailand.



WINDOW ON ASIA

Shahed Latif

man and successful at that as to why he is not trying to set up a garment factory although he is involved with the textile trade for the last three decades. His reply was immediate: "After all what it garment industry — it is only a large-scale tailoring shop and definitely I am not interested to become the tailor master."

Garments bring in a billion dollars. Through backward linkages, a very large textile industry should have been established by this time.

Manila Revives Nuclear Plant, Marcos Ghosts

PRESIDENT Corazon Aquino's decision to settle out of court a civil suit her government has filed against the builders of a mothballed nuclear power plant has revived an old controversy that previously rocked the regime of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The decision, announced in early March, paved a way for possible opening of the US \$2.1 billion nuclear power plant in Bataan province, about 60 miles west of Manila. The site is believed to be on an earthquake fault and near a dormant volcano.

The decision put Mrs Aquino into odd Marcos shoes and pitted her other officials against anti-nuclear activists with whom they used to link arms in several street marches to protest against plans to operate the plant during the late dictator's time.

The Philippine government chose an out-of-court settlement after Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Electric Corporation agreed to pay US \$100 million in damages, correct defects in the plant's construction and operate it for 30 years starting 1995.

The compensation includes US \$10 million in outright cash and US \$90 million in credit and discounts on future purchase of goods and services from Westinghouse.

The settlement was reached during last-minute negotiations one day before a jury trial was scheduled to take place in New Jersey's federal court. It has yet to be approved by the Philippine Congress and Westinghouse board within a six-month period. (Congressional elections is scheduled on May 11.)

Under the draft accord,

the Philippines would borrow US \$325 million — possibly from the United States Export and Import Bank — to enable Westinghouse to upgrade the facility over a three-year period to meet US safety standards.

Westinghouse will have a contract to run the nuclear power plant for 30 years and get a portion of the revenue. Another part of the revenue will be used to repay the loans from the US Export and Import Bank.

Westinghouse expects to make about US \$40 million a year plus 2.9 cents per kilowatt hour as an incentive to produce more power after the plant becomes operational by 1995.

Casiano Mayor writes from Manila

to recover foreign loans the government incurred in building it.

Politicians and anti-nuclear activists, who vigorously protested against operating the plant, this time accused Mrs Aquino and her government of reneging on their previous promise not to open the nuclear power facility.

Receiving most of the flak are Senator Rene Saguisag and former Justice Secretary and Ambassador to the United Nations, Sedfrey Ordonez, who are part of the Philippine panel which negotiated the settlement. Both are militant lawyers who used to join anti-nuclear street marches during

the Marcos time.

"I am really disappointed with you," Sister Maryjohn Manzanan, a Catholic nun who heads the militant Citizen's Alliance for Consumer Protection, told Mr Saguisag. "I am sorry but I can't believe my ears because we were together against this whole thing a few years ago."

The scene was confrontation between Sister Manzanan and Senator Saguisag during a Senate hearing after the former activist-turned senator appealed to protesters to hear the side of the panel members and nuclear experts' testimony in the Congressional hearings.

Mrs Aquino said she would consider holding a referendum to decide on the controversial issue and rejected suggestions she has changed heart by agreeing to the out-of-court settlement.

"We have consistently said that we are not against nuclear power plant per se," Mrs Aquino said. "We have opposed the operation of the Bataan nuclear power plant because of unresolved safety concern. We are open to the idea of having the matter subjected to a referendum if Congress so decides as part of the ... political and constitutional process to hear out everyone on this issue."

Negotiators said they were forced to agree to the out-of-court settlement on perception that a favourable verdict would likely award a smaller amount because of Westinghouse's alleged ailing condition and to ensure that it would undertake rehabilitation

Some critics said nuclear plant site, 16 kilometers southwest of the dormant Mount Natib volcano, made the operation of the nuclear power plant unsafe even if it is upgraded to international standard.

In June last year, Mount Pinatubo volcano, some 300 miles north of the nuclear plant erupted after more than 600 years of dormancy and forced the United States to withdraw from Clark Air Base.

Senator Jovito Salonga, who is seeking the presidency in the May 11 elections, claimed the Philippines was short-changed in the deal. "It seems the Philippines got nothing out of it. It's a pity that after we were cheated, we have to be at the losing end of the deal... I can't see the logic and justice in this," Mr Salonga said.

House Speaker Ramon Mitra, who is also a presidential aspirant, opposed the out-of-court settlement because it rewards "the crooks and bribe-givers."

Senator Saguisag accused some politicians of using the nuclear plant issue to boost their election bids instead of seriously studying the issue in congressional hearings.

"This draft is an unsigned and unbinding proposal. The case [in New Jersey] has not been dropped — it was only suspended," Mr Saguisag said. "That is why I made sure that the agreement would have to be approved by Congress."

Analysts said the way the controversy is going it would take a new Congress to finish hearings on the issue when its members shall have assumed office starting on the first day of July.

— *Depthnews Asia*

Critics say the Philippines was short-changed when it agreed to an out-of-court settlement over a controversial nuclear plant. Some say it rewards the 'crooks and bribers.'

"Of Christ, Christianity and the Easter

CHRIST died for our sin.... He was buried on the third day" (Holy Bible, 1 corinth ... 15: 3-4). This verse enshrine the essence of the Christian faith. It contains the essential message of Easter, the most important event in the church year. Three great truths are emphasized. On Friday Jesus died on the cross. On Saturday He laid in Joseph's tomb. On Sunday He rose from death. Deny these fundamental facts and you negate Christianity.

Christ was unique in his death as in His birth. In a perceptive and picturesque statement of a great truth, it was told that "the cradle and the cross of Christ were hewn from the same tree". The incarnation was solely with a view to the crucifixion.

The Lord's death was unique in that it was the only death that fulfilled millennia of prophecy. The sufferings and death of the Messiah were not only foreshadowed in meticu-

lous detail in the Jewish sacrificial system, but they were foretold by the prophets. It has been stated that even in his tragic hours on the cross, thirty-three separate Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled.

He was the only Person to whom death was not inevitable. Jesus said, "I lay down my life.... No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10 : 17-18). To Him, death was deliberately chosen. He "gave himself for us", wrote Paul to Titus (2 : 14). He was not dragged to the cross, but drawn by quenchless love.

To Him alone, death was not a result of sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6 : 23), but as He did no sin, He did not need to collect its wages. This left Him perfectly free to assume the burden and guilt of the world's sin and to provides deliverance from its

bondage.

His was the only death accompanied by miracles. It was appropriate that a life replete with miracles should conclude with a series of miracles. There was the mysterious darkness which was no eclipse since the moon was then at its farthest from the sun. And it lasted not for a few minutes but for three hours.

There was the miraculous rending of the veil, sixty feet long and thirty feet wide, re-

quiring three hundred men to handle it. The rent was from top to bottom, by no human hand. A mighty earthquake accompanied His death.

"Rocks were rent and grave opened... Many bodies of the saints which slept arose... and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:52) are conclusive evidence of His power over death.

Finally, his was the only death that made possible the forgiveness of sins an experience to which myriads can tes-

tify.

Two other important things about Christ emerge from the above quotes (verses). First, He was truly a human, because He died. Death is characteristic of mankind. In this fact lies the necessity for the incarnation. He was also really God because He rose from the dead. Man cannot rise from death. Jesus was infinite.

Exactly in the manner and for the purpose revealed in the scripture He died for our sins. He was buried, not in a common grave, but in a new tomb. He rose again on the third day under the circumstances recorded in the scripture. It was a bodily resurrection. When the women and Peter and John looked into the tomb, it was empty except for the grave clothes still lying in the folds that had encased Him. The butterfly had flown,

leaving an empty chrysalis.

But how can the resurrection be explained? Christ's body must have been removed either by human or super-human hands. If by human hand it must have been by the hands of friends or foes. His foes would not, because that would look as if he really had risen. His friends could not remove, because the body for the tomb was sealed and a guard of sixty soldiers watched to ensure that it was not rifled. The only alternative is that "God the Father... raised Him from the dead" (Bible Galatian 1:1).

If Christ did not rise from the dead as His disciples claimed, we cannot account for the complete transformation of these men who had been cowering behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Their radiant joy and fearless witness is testimony of His transformation.

The writer is Secretary, H I Alumni Association of Bangladesh.

To the Editor...

Government offices

Sir, Have you ever been to a government office to get something done? If you have, then you would realise why Bangladesh is such a poor country.

The offices are usually drab, gloomy buildings which look about a 100 years older than they are. Several desks are arranged within on room. And behind the desks sit some of the biggest egotists in the country.

As you come to the desk that you want, you are invariably given a look that tells all. It says, "Why bother coming to me, I really don't want to work."

Anyway, you hand over the paper or ask for whatever it is that you want. The man looks at the paper and gives you a disgusted look. You have just ruined the little nap he was going to take. Grumbling, he takes out a pen and just as he is about to write down the necessary into, one of the other workers cracks a joke.

So, your man gets into a very jovial mood. He starts telling everyone about one of his recent experiences (which is bound to be boring). Someone else starts discussing the political scene. That really does it. The whole office gets into an animated conversation, analysing like some CIA ex-

perts, the balance of power and forecasting the future. Everyone has a view about this and is willing to spend hours getting his views through.

Meanwhile, you sit there listening to these political pundits while the time ticks by. You have some other places to go so you try to tell the fellow without seeming rude to stop talking and get moving. He apparently, can't hear because he never notices your signals.

Finally, after what seems like hours, he gets back to your paper. He points out the sleights mistakes and tells you in no uncertain terms what he

thinks about mistakes. Anyway, he hands you back the paper with the necessary additions. You get up and turn to leave.

Out of politeness you start to say thank you. Then the thought crosses your mind.

What are you going to thank him about? For keeping you waiting one hour for what should have taken five minutes.

For being rude because you asked him to do what taxpayers pay him to do. No, you think, saying 'thank you' would be lying. So you walk out of the office and see someone else coming in. It's hard not to feel sorry for the poor fellow who

is probably going to get the same treatment. As you get into the car the thought crosses your mind that if there was a revolution in our country, these government workers might be the first to feel the heat. They deserve it after all.

Ahmad Shaheab
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

"Irish Tragedy"

Sir, The recent letter, in your daily, so anguished in tone, from a teacher of St. Gregory's School, prompts me to write this to tell him, that

all is not lost yet. He laments why it could not be one of his students, who wrote the letter on the Irish Tragedy, instead of a 'bidesh'. Perhaps his students will write, at some later point but please, Father, do not be so disheartened and do not feel your 45 years stay in this country has been in vain.

It has not; remember the good things that have come of your stay and forget that of your unwritten letter. And I am sure, your cup will always be half full and not half empty. That silver lining is there, believe me.

P Haque
Dhanmandi, Dhaka