

Defacing Public Buildings with Graffiti; and a Word of Appreciation for a Contributor to The Daily Star

My good friend from the 1948 Bengali Language Movement, Oli Ahad is back on the scene, with a bang — indeed, a good case of political survival — having taken over several walls from Mahakhali to Maghbazar, with slogans calling for a fight against mastans and lawless elements. Some of the graffiti is also signed 'DL' which, I believe, stands for the Democratic League. It cannot possibly be the initials of the late poet and writer, DL Roy. I cannot imagine him joining Oli Ahad in the fight against mastans. He would not even know what this new breed — the mastans in Dhaka — does for a living.

It is my assumption that DL is the political organisation that Oli Ahad has kept going for a decade or so, through his sheer stamina as well as with a touching faith in its future. Whether it has any chance at all of taking power in this country one day, I would not know. However, unless the party stands for something totally unacceptable to me, like joining Myanmar in a federation with General Ne Win as its figurehead president or taking over Andaman Islands with the help of our navy which got a nice boost from the Prime Minister last week, I would wish DL every success, only as old friend of Oli Ahad. After all, what is friendship for.

Notwithstanding my friendship for this valiant fighter of the Language Movement, I must express my disappointment that Oli Ahad could not find a good Bangla name for his organisation. Of course, he would point to the general trend in his defence. What about Awami League? Or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, better known by its English initials BNP, with its Bangla name, if there is one, almost unknown to a lot of people? Again, the National Awami Party (NAP) retains its non-Bangla name even after it has split into different factions. It is both odd and sad that while these politicians surely thought in Bangla, they could not choose names of their organisations in our mother tongue.

It is sad — and odd. What is most tragic is that having shed our blood for Bangla, proclaiming from housetops that the Language Movement was the starting point of the liberation struggle, we have kept nearly 75 per cent of our people in the darkness of illiteracy. Now, when they hear our leaders talk about 'Education for all by the turn of the century', they can barely understand what this is all about.

WITH its graffiti, all in large types and rather artistically done, Oli Ahad's 'DL' is certainly up against a tough competition. It appears in the midst of calls for

the unconditional release of such questionable figures as Ershad and Golem Azam, the latter always described as a 'soldier' — luckily not a general — of the Language Movement. But they are not the only ones 'who must be immediately freed.' Judging by the number of walls they — or rather their ardent supporters — have taken over, again between Mahakhali and Maghbazar, right through the Tejgaon Industrial Area, the route I take every morning for going to the office, the campaign for the 'unconditional and immediate release' of Ashish Bhat and Kichlu Bhat is also going very strong. One should assume that 'unconditional release' implies that they should not be tried at all. Just set them free, with no questions asked.

with a smile. I feel assured that it is not his 'unconditional release' that is being asked for in all those slogans. It is something of a relief. The identity of Kichlu, not a particularly common name, leaves me more worried. During our university days, we had a friend by the same name who married a charming girl, one of our contemporaries, joined the film world and eventually became a leading Rotarian with strong commitments to social work. I find it hard to believe that after all these decades, he is still being regarded as a youth leader whose 'unconditional release' — from the film world or the Rotary International? — cannot wait a day longer. It will be reassuring to make sure that it is not the same Kichlu of our university days.

late Hasan Shahid Suhrawardy, published on the editorial page of this paper last Tuesday. Dr Anisuzzaman's contribution, just the kind that enriches a newspaper, was prompted by my tribute to Suhrawardy in this feature, 'My World' published last Friday.

May be, sooner or later, we will hear from other readers about Soumendra Nath Tagore, Lohani, S Wajid Ali and others like them and then we build up an anthology, titled, 'Profiles from the Oblivion.'

As it happens in this column from time to time, one topic leads to another and we move on without much of a sense of direction. (A critic of this feature would say, 'How true!')

A passing reference to British author-journalist Malcolm Muggeridge in the piece by Dr Anisuzzaman on Suhrawardy — Muggeridge and Shahid became good friends in Calcutta — brought to my mind recollections of the British journalist's memories, containing some fascinating chapters of his life in India, as an assistant editor of *The Statesman*.

The best part of Muggeridge memoirs relates to the British journalist's visit to Simla where he met and promptly fell in love with Amrita Sengh, that young painter, the daughter of a Sikh father and an East European — probably a Hungarian — mother, who was undoubtedly the pioneer in the modern art movement in India. Her promising career was cut short by her sudden death when she was still in her late twenties or thirties, but not before exhibitions of her paintings had earned her the recognition she deserved. Muggeridge recorded it all in his memories with a mixture of sadness, nostalgia and fascination.

This maverick journalist never stopped creating waves with his unorthodox writings, not just with his frank admission of his affair with an Indian woman painter against the backdrop of a racially conscious conservative British society in Simla.

In 1957, Muggeridge became the first British writer to question in an article whether his country really needed a queen. The reaction against his article, published in the United States, was staggering. Muggeridge was ostracized, banned from appearing on BBC and kept out of smart social functions in London.

Now, three and a half decades later, the British media — and politicians — feel free to speculate on the possible end of the monarchy in favour of a presidential system.

It seems, some people cannot just help being ahead of their time. Malcolm Muggeridge, a friend of Shahid Suhrawardy, was certainly one of them.

MY WORLD

S. M. Ali

Having seen these slogans so many times, every day, I get a little curious about the identity of these two Bhai who are described as valiant youth leaders. Well, a Bhai should surely be a youth leader, but he could be as young as 20 or as old as 40. One would not refer to the

Would political parties which deface public buildings with graffiti try the walls of, say, the Ramna police station or of the houses on Minto Road? Would the Dhaka City Corporation dare act against these offenders who provide Dhaka with more eyesores?

deposed president as 'Ershad Bhat' or the controversial Jamaat leader as 'Azam Bhat'.

Then, one day, I discover to my dismay that we have an Ashish working with us as a journalist, a decent chap who occasionally writes good pieces on sports. I go up to him and ask if he is doing alright. He answers in the affirmative.

The message from DL, with this clarion call against mastans from Oli Ahad, has pushed all other slogans to the background, even those carrying the names of Ershad and Golem Azam. My friend would probably be deeply offended if I should suggest that DL's boys have used imported paint, strong and durable, in defacing these walls, without the slightest consideration for the cleanliness — or the plain spotless beauty — so thoughtlessly destroyed by these graffiti. Again, all these ardent supporters of Ershad, Golem Azam, Ashish, Kichlu and now Oli Ahad practise their own brand of shared discrimination. They write their slogans on walls of public buildings, educational institutions in the Tejgaon industrial area and factories — in other words, of places whose owners would not have the courage to protest. But would they dare deface the walls of the Ramna Police Station or, for that matter, of the houses on the Minto Road-Baily Road area? Finally, here's another challenge: would the Dhaka City Corporation make it a punishable offence for any party or organisation to deface the wall of a public institution or, for that matter, of any building?

READERS of this column should join me in thanking Dr Anisuzzaman, Professor of Bengali, Dhaka University for his illuminating biographical sketch of the

Artists Bring New Life To a Cold War Relic

Zakiah Omar writes from Berlin

The Berlin wall was the most striking symbol of East-West tension. Part of the wall that once stifled East German freedom is now the largest open-air art gallery in the world. But as Gemini News Service discovered, the future of the East Side Gallery looks bleak in the face of projects to develop central Berlin.

ARTISTS from around the world have breathed new life into what used to be a concrete symbol of oppression for people on the east side of Berlin. Between the main train station Hauptbahnhof of Berlin, on the former east side of the city, and the border crossing point Oberbaumbrücke (a bridge joining former East and West), a 1.3-kilometre stretch of the Berlin Wall still stands.



East Side Gallery manager Christine Maclean

On the formerly white-washed wall, which had faced communist Germany for nearly three decades, there is now a

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The History of Lionism in Bangladesh

by Ghulam Akbar Chowdhury

INADVERTENTLY or otherwise, distortion of the history of Lionism in Bangladesh has been going on for a long time. Many old guards of Lionism requested me several times to write a correct history of Lionism in Bangladesh but I did not do so with the hope that one day the truth would emerge automatically. Today Lions Club is a premier service club in Bangladesh doing a great humanitarian service, but it is time, albeit late in the day, that people should know how Lionism came to this country.

The first Lions Club of Pakistan was formed in Karachi with Cyrus A Minawala (owner of Hotel Metropole, Karachi), as District Governor, Mr M Wisaluddin, Senior Vice President of American Life Insurance Company (ALICO), as Deputy District Governor, and Dr Khambatta, Medical Director of ALICO, as District Secretary. As Cyrus Minawala had no organisational link, the main responsibility of organising and forming Lions Clubs in different parts of Pakistan was entrusted to Mr M Wisaluddin and Dr Khambatta.

In September/October 1957, I first received letter from Mr Wisaluddin in which he requested me to form the Chittagong Lions Club. This was followed by letters from Dr Khambatta and Mr Shaifque A. Mansour, a Palestinian, who was the Middle East and South Eastern Region representative of Lions International Headquarters. At that time I was associated with ALICO at Chittagong. As I was very busy with my own occupation, I wrote to them saying that I would discuss with them the details about the formation of Chittagong Lions Club at the forthcoming ALICO Conference in Lahore in February 1958. The discussions took place in Lahore as planned, and Mr Wisaluddin and Dr Khambatta requested me to form the Chittagong Lions Club at the earliest. I still remember the words of Dr Khambatta: 'Mr Chowdhury, God has given you eyes to see, legs to walk, hands to work, and a high place in society. It is your duty to help the less fortunate people and God will look after you'. His words inspired me and I promised him that Lions Club would be formed in Chittagong without any delay.

After returning to Chittagong from Lahore in the second week of February 1958, I received a letter from Lions International Headquarters mentioning that an old Lion, Professor Otis Coffee, was in Chittagong and would extend to me all possible cooperation regarding the formation of the new club. I immediately contacted Professor Otis Coffee who was associated with Chittagong Commerece College. I also contacted leading person-

Although Chittagong Lion's Club was the first Lion's Club in Bangladesh, the Charter presentation to the club was delayed due to some technical reasons. Dhaka Lion's Club received its charter earlier, as a result.

alities of Chittagong and convened the first meeting at Hotel Mishka, Chittagong. Thus the first Lions Club of Chittagong was born sometime during February or March 1958 (I do not remember the exact date). In the same meeting I proposed the following names as members to the first Lions Club of Bangladesh: President: Professor Otis Coffee; First Vice President: Mr. Ali Khan, Editor, Eastern Examiner; Second Vice President: Mr. Hafizullah, Chief Auditor, East Pakistan Railway (the then); Third Vice President: Mr Saadi, Manager, Philips; Secretary: Mr. Ghulam Akbar Chowdhury; Treasurer: Mr M. R. Siddiq. My proposition was unanimously supported.

Naqvi, also an ALICO executive, as Secretary. The third Lions Club was formed in Sylhet with Mr. M.A.W. Chowdhury, an ALICO executive, as Secretary. Thus throughout the then Pakistan, ALICO executives played a pioneering role in spreading Lionism. In the second term of Chittagong Lions Club, I had to decline an executive position in the club as I was very busy with my career. Unfortunately as the new committee could not maintain the momentum developed in the Club's first term, the Club's activities gradually slowed down and attendance fell drastically. So in 1960, before the election of the third term, most of the members came to

struction and loss of lives. With the help of my colleagues, I started collecting funds and material. The people of Chittagong responded generously to our appeal for donation. The priorities were to bury the dead bodies, to reconstruct the devastated villages, and to provide the affected villagers with the basic necessities and medical help so that they could start their life anew. By the grace of Almighty, the Lions Club of Chittagong, achieved all the objectives.

This tremendous achievement of Chittagong Lions Club inspired all the Lions Clubs of the then Pakistan and placed the name of Chittagong Lions Club firmly in the map of world Lionism. The Acting-President



Some of the office bearers and members of Chittagong Lions Club, 1960: Sitting (left to right): Mr. Bamber, Mr. Bob Fowler, Mr. Nasir Sani, Mr. A.T.S. Mohsin, Professor Otis Coffee, Mr. Saadi, Mr. G.A Chowhury Islam. Standing (right to left): Mr. Nasirul Huq, Mr. Fernandes.

Among the other prominent members were: Captain CS Ahmed (Head of the then East Pakistan Navy), Mr. Nasir Sani (ESSO), Mr. A.T.S. Mohsin, Mr. K.A. Dewan, Mr. Nasirul Huq (ESSO), Mr. Fernandes (Gillander, Arbuthnot & Co), Dr. A.F.M. Yousof, Mr. Bob Fowler, Mr. Sultan Khan, Mr. Shamsul Islam, and Dr. Sultan Rashid. It may be mentioned that Chittagong Lions Club was classified club having only the top man from each profession. Although this was the first Lions Club in Bangladesh, the Charter Presentation to the Club was delayed due to some technical reasons. Dhaka Lions Club received its Charter earlier, as a result.

Sometime during October/November 1960, a terrible cyclone and tidal bore hit Jallapara near Chittagong Port, completely devastating several villages and killing many people. On hearing the news, Mr. A.T.S. Mohsin and I were elected as President and Secretary, respectively.

of Pakistan, Lieutenant General Burki, visited Chittagong to see the rehabilitation efforts of Chittagong Lions Club. The Government of Pakistan wanted to confer an honour on the person under whose leadership such a great humanitarian job was done. As I was opposed to Martial Law government, I personally could not accept any such honour, and so recommended that the honour be conferred on Professor Otis Coffee, the first President of Chittagong Lions Club. At that time, he was the only non-Pakistani to receive such an honour. The tremendous work of the Club provided a new dimension to the future role of Lionism in Bangladesh. In the Lions Annual District Conference held in Karachi in

New World Heritage Centre Will Promote Safeguarding Sites

UNESCO has created a World Heritage Centre to better promote the preservation of both the world's physical and natural heritage, the Organization's Director-General Federico Mayor announced early last month. The Centre, which will be located at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, groups together UNESCO professionals from both the culture and science sectors to implement the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Previously, separate sectors had managed the Convention. The Convention, with its famous World Heritage List, established the principle that all nations must take responsibility together to preserve our common heritage. The Convention, which lays out preservation guidelines, has now been signed by 127 states. The List now comprises 358

natural and cultural sites deemed to be of outstanding universal value. The World Heritage Centre is charged with giving the World Heritage Convention a new boost, and will enjoy all the autonomy necessary to do its work. Mr. Mayor said as he opened festivities for the 20th anniversary celebrations at UNESCO. The new Centre director, Bernd von Droste, believes the concentration of science and culture in one unit will create a new synergy, for instance, through the links between biological diversity and cultural diversity. The Centre will bring together experts in the field of protection of monuments and sites, law, communications, project preparation and fund raising. The announcement came as UNESCO kicked off a summer long open house in celebration

of the Convention's 20th birthday. There will be rotating exhibitions on World Heritage Sites in 27 countries which started with photographs of Chinese sites 8-14 July and will end with photos of Budapest and the heritage village of Holloko in Hungary from 5-8 October. Greece held a round table on Greek cinema with participants like noted film maker Costa Gavras on 20 July, then over six days six films set in Athens were shown. Other films follow throughout the summer on restoration and conservation work being done all over the world. Scale models of such famous sites as the German Aachen Cathedral, the Sun Temple at Konarak in India and a Romanesque Monument from Arles, France are to enliven the Fontenay main floor and gardens. A Bavarian beer tent is to slake the thirst of the thousands of tourists visiting the open house.

WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,
I am a housewife with three children to look after and therefore have no time to work outside home. Now-a-days I am often asked if I do anything meaning do I have a profession. This makes me feel inferior to all the other women who are professionals. Most of my friends work and I feel out of place in their presence. What can I do from getting a complex, please advise.
Sakina, Lalmita

Dear Mita,
I was troubled with a man a year ago. The relationship was very serious. But when asked to make a commitment, he just backed out. It was very painful, but slowly I am getting over it. Now it has become very difficult for me to trust another man. What if the same thing happens again? I cannot bear the thought of another disappointment. Please help.
Rita, Shegun Bagicha.

Dear Sakina,
Your letter is interesting and contemporary. As we change from a traditional society where women were not allowed to work outside to a modern one where more and more women are venturing out, these questions will automatically come up. Please don't be ashamed for staying home to look after the family. This is a privilege that will end all too soon. The important thing is to keep your mind alert and curious no matter what you do. Your children will grow up all too soon and meanwhile, if you have prepared yourself for the outside world, there should not be any problem.

Dear Rita,
It is natural for you to have such feelings, but don't let it make you to have such feelings, but don't let it make you cynical. Everyone is entitled to make mistakes and it should not change people to such an extreme degree. You should learn and use the unpleasant experience to your advantage. Take it easy, when the time comes you will meet the right man. Meanwhile, have a good time and pursue your interest/career etc.

Dear Mita,
I have been bothered by a certain problem for the last few years, but never had the courage to tell anyone. The problem has now become very serious and I cannot handle it alone. My husband has had relationships with other women and I have ignored it, but now my children have grown up and they feel humiliated when other people talk about their father. Moreover, he seems to be getting serious about one particular woman, something he never did before. What should I do? I don't want to leave him because I am not ready for it. Please help me as I am truly desperate.
Anonymous.

WRITE TO MITA

Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage counsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, and social and interpersonal relationships. Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star, GPO Box 3257 or to 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.