Dhaka, Wednesday, October 21, 1992

Yugoslavia's Chance for Peace

Ever since the Bosnian Muslims and Croats opted for secession from Yugoslavia through a vote and the Serbs rebelled against the outcome seven months back, it is an unmitigated tragedy for the Muslim-majority republic. More than 14,000 people have died, and one million displaced so far. International attempts to restore peace there have been thwarted time and again, mostly by the aggressive Serbian forces. Even UN mission to rescue the wounded, children and women along with reaching food, medical and other aid to the needy had to be postponed several times because of the increasing hostility between the rival parties.

Against such a backdrop, a fresh impetus has been provided to the peace process with the European Community taking a leading role. Reports have it that the Muslims with a majority of about 43 per cent in a total of four million inhabitants in Bosnia have accepted partial autonomy. Under the agreement, the republic will be divided in districts along geographic and economic lines, not the ethnic lines. Evidently, the EC-brokered peace formula has its merit; for it seeks to address the problems arising out of the ethnic and religious considerations not in a conventional and simplistic way. Rather, it does save the day for the warring parties by preserving the status quo as much as possible when everything appears to have gone out of control.

However, the problem is that the main culprits behind the lingering civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina are Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb fighters who are conspicuous by their absence from the negotiating table at Geneva. One wonders what effect the accord will have without the support of Milosevic and the rebels. Although Serb-dominated Yugoslavia's president Dobrica Cosic is in Geneva to talk peace, there is little chance that things will settle so easily in the most troubled spot on earth now. The seizure by Serbian police of the Federal Interior Ministry just at a time when the leaders prepare for peace talks exposes the tension between the federal authorities and hardline Serbian President Milosevic.

Nevertheless, considering the tragic development in the Yugoslav Republic there is perhaps little choice for the Serbs but to accede to the formula worked out. To avoid further blood-letting there, the warring groups should now find in the latest move a great opportunity. International communities have been unanimous in ostracising the Serbs because of their obduracy and cruelty. UN and other world bodies' sanctions have been aplenty, more will be on the card if they do not pay heed to international appeals. Apart from the political aspect of the issue, there is a humanitarian side as well - the latter calling for support for the Bosnian Mushms and Croats because of the fact that they are on the defensive.

Certainly, the Serbs have treated their neighbours very badly and an end to the hostility is not going to normalise the relations as before instantly. But with the return of the refugees under international supervision, the situation can gradually improve. The wound left open will take time to heal but the process must get a good start. Milosevic might do well if he followed in the step of Dobrica Cosic. It may be a last chance for him to seize, because the proposed settlement does not make any undue concession to either of the parties and yet takes into reckoning the country's integrity, while at the same time giving limited autonomy to the parties involved.

Let Moulvibazar Show the Way

Fruits to be fruits must be exotic. That seems to be the standard Bengali approach to fruits which they used to buy only when going to visit an ailing relative or friend. The homegrown pumelo or Batabi Lebu — the lemon from Batavia is on the way of being awarded a grudging and thesitant acceptance as a fruit which, for a long time to come, may not happen to jack-fruit.

Apples and grapes, oranges and pomegranates are the real fruits at the very sight of which the Bengalee knows he is going to have a real treat, a royal treat garnished with a lot of esteem and honour. Well, there is no denying the beauty of these beauties, but it is more the forbidding price than anything else that make these more fruity than the pedestrian banana or even the king of them all — mango.

Although fruit stalls on the city wayside are literally flooded with those imports and the sky is rent with claims to their origin in Australia and Pakistan, Kashmir and Darjeeling — the picture above is passing and much encouraging things are happening to our fruit situation. People are picking up all the 'sopetas' that come to market, papayas are selling at premium prices and growing shealth consciousness is prompting basketful of 'amlakis' to appear at many a street-corner. And a very good sign is that the native fruits are all the time gaining both in size and quality.

In such a hopeful situation mango presents a tragic and losing case whereas orange makes for a very uneasy situation. Universally loved by the Bengalees for its taste as well as for the belief in its health-giving qualities, orange is the only fruit invading Bangladesh from the east. It ever remained a mystery why the contiguous and identical Sylhet terrain could not produce any amount

of the fruit. A report from Moulvibazar, published in Monday's Daily Star gives a hint of an answer to the riddle. Although some seven lakh orange trees are there over an area of 2000 acres, the farming of the fruit continues to be as stunted as ever. For three reasons. First, those that grow it, have no knowledge of the matter. Secondly, there is no government help at all in the matter of promoting its cultivation through dissemination of required knowledge and other supportive measures. Reason number three is something out of this world. As the produces of these trees are taken for smuggled stuff by the police, the growers are compelled to sell these off too early and at uneconomic prices. There is no encouragement but then there are all the disincentives. Why

should it be so? Let Moulvibazar lead us to self-sufficiency in oranges which is about the only citrus fruit we do not produce but consume by the ton. It is Sylhet that gives us so many kinds of lemons and limes and pumelos. Why should we then be dependent on others for the best of them all — the orange?

Anti-Red Propaganda Mills Starved of Fodder

ITH the ending of East-West tension, the US anti-communist propaganda machine is

facing an identity crisis. The propaganda industry was one of the US's biggest industries, created by the US administration during the Cold War to "save the world" from Communism and make it safer for democracy.

At a time when the US faces a serious crisis with its budget deficit, questions are being raised about the relevance and future of US propaganda opera-

A presidential advisory panel recommended in August that anti-communist news and propaganda broadcasts should be gradually phased out.

It argued that in the post-Cold War world services such as the Munich-based Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe were a costly anachronism.

The chairman of the advisory commission on public diplomacy, Tom Korologoes said: "The world has changed. Their goals have been achieved, they have succeeded."

Just how great the change has been was reflected in a recent announcement from the BBC World Service. It has signed a deal with Russian authorities to enable the BBC to broadcast programmes to China via transmitters in the former Soviet Union. China has been blocking the BBC World Service since the violence in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Ironically, among the facilities granted to the BBC are the transmitters in Tashkent, once used for jamming BBC broadcasts to the former Soviet

Instead of blocking each other's broadcasts, today the former adversaries are sharing their information resources. The Russians can read about the US through the Russian edition of The New York Times and watch the Cable News Network (CNN).

In July, London's Financial Times and Moscow's Izvestia announced a joint businesspublishing venture, hailed by Izvestia's editor-in-chief as a "unique opportunity to reach decision makers in the most exciting developing market in

HE post cold-war outlo-

the Kuril islands.

Daya Kishan Thussu writes from London

Propaganda was a key component of superpower diplomacy during the Cold War. Billions of dollars were spent on propaganda stations like Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. Many believe they played an important part in ending communism in the Soviet bloc. But now in the post-Cold War world when Moscow is eager to sing to the tune of Uncle Sam questions are being raised about the relevance of anti-communist propaganda machinery in the US.

the world." Many other joint ventures are in the offing.

Recognising the changing nature of global politics, the American international affairs journal, Problems of Communism, is also to close since the problems of communism are there for all to see.

As its name suggests, this upmarket intellectual journal became one of the more sophisticated forums of the anticommunist views that characterised US foreign policy during the Cold War.

During the years of confrontation, in Western countries and especially in the US, anti-communism took the form of what Noam Chomsky has called a 'national religion.'

Broadcasting played a key role

in the ideological battle during

the Cold War. These are some

of the main Western stations

Voice of America

worldwide in English

Broadcasting

and 45 other

Radio Marti

Spanish language

beamed at Cuba

Radio Liberty

Beamed at Eastern

Europe and USSR in

Radio Monte Carlo

service to Middle East

Arabic and French

more than 20

Radio Free Europe

IV Marti

programmes

languages

How the Cold War was won

Propaganda was an inseparable part of Cold War diplomacy. In the 1950s the American media were harnessed to give ideological justi-

fication to US foreign policy. Public diplomacy was geared to face the communist threat and save the "free world" from Soviet "tyranny".

An International Informa tion Committee was established to "plan, co-ordinate and implement international information activities in support of US policies and interests relative to national security."

The Committee organised Project Truth, a campaign for an ideological war against the "evil empire" - a collaborative effort between the US Infor-

mation Agency, the Departments of State and Defence and the CIA.

Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty were established to influence people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Both were covertly backed by the CIA until the US Congress took over responsi bility for their funding in 1971

Officials claimed the RFE played an important role during the 1968 Prague Spring and also encouraged the formation of the Solidarity movement in Poland in the early 1980s.

RFE and Radio Liberty claimed to have 46 million listeners per week. To the Soviet Union, they broadcast in Russian, Belorussian, Estonian, Georgian, Ukrainian, Lithu snian and many Central Asian languages. To Eastern Europe they broadcast in Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian and Slovak.

The belief was that propaganda could be used to persuade the governments to introduce capitalism in the eastern bloc. Western broadcasts were jammed by Moscow, but this was not reciprocated by the West, being accustomed to dissenting voices.

Supporters argue that Western propaganda was a cost-effective weapon in the ideological war as it tied up Soviet resources. It has been estimated that the Soviets spend about twice as much on jamming as Washington spent on broadcasting to eastern

The war of words receded during the brief period of detente in early 1970s. But anti-Moscow sentiments revived after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

President Ronald Reagan,

who had a self-proclaimed mission of fighting commu nism, took a special interest in

anti-communist campaigns. Under Reagan, \$1.5 billion were spent to modernise the Voice of America (VOA), the external service of the US Information Agency, broadcasting worldwide in more than 45 languages. Additional languages were added and its broadcasting hours were increased. And in 1983 Radio Marti (named after the Cuban national hero, Jose Marti), VOA's 14-hour daily broadcasting service to

Cuba, was established. in 1990, the Bush administration launched TV Marti to encourage opposition to Fidel Castro. It cost the US tax-payer \$18 million annually. But it failed because Havana successfully jammed the illegal beaming of anti-communist mes-

Changes in global politics do not seem to have affected the Caribbean island's difficulties with the US and even today Radio Marti and TV Marti are among the last remnants of Cold-War propaganda diplo-

For its part, the Soviet Union practised its own form of propaganda diplomacy. For Moscow the battleground was not the West but the Third World.

Anti-capitalist propaganda filled the airwaves from Moscow. Radio Moscow broadcast to many developing countries in their own languages, including Hindi, Persian, Pushtu, Thai and Swahili.

Services, of the Soviet news agency TASS were given free to many developing countries.

The other dimension of Soviet propaganda diplomacy was sending free or highly subsidised copies of Soviet

propaganda journals and books which were hardly read in any but the avowedly socialist

countries. Progress Publishers became a household name in many developing countries. However, all this is now changing. The rules of the market have come into play and socialist brother-

hood has taken a back-seat. Clearly, given their tedious style and bulk most of these books and journals did little to change people's thinking in

the developing world. But for lovers of literature they provided excellent, cheap, hard-cover editions of classic Russian literature.

What is the future for the propaganda industries, now the Russian and Eastern European governments have rushed to adopt capitalism? The anti-Soviet propaganda machines are facing redundancy. But given the nature of politics there will always be need for some real or imag-

Washington there is talk of starting a "Radio Free China" and the BBC is increasing its broadcasts to the socialist The ending of the Cold War has deprived the US of a familiar enemy. Since then the

ined new enemies. Already in

search is on for a plausible and strong adversary who is capable of threatening the "civilised world."

In 1989 the top enemy was drugs. A former US ally, Saddam Hussein took that mantle in August 1990 after his invasion of Kuwait. The media manipulation during the Gulf crisis demonstrated that propaganda remains an essential part of US foreign policy. During the Gulf War the USbacked "Voice of Free Iraq" beamed anti-Saddam propa-

In the late 1990s, the focus of such attention may be militant Islam or the Economic power of an assertive Japan. If that happens the US propaganda mills will have to hire an entirely new breed of experts. - GEMINI NEWS

DAYA KISHAN THUSSU is Associate Editor of Gemini News Service.

gesture would be a welcome

The Troubled Shores in the Pacific

ok could have been a lot merrier for the world, but for the long shadow cast by the unresolved dispute between Russia and Japan over

The Northern Territories as the Kuriles are called by the Japanese is a barren, weatherbeaten archipelago lodged in Japan's northern border waters. These strings of small islands were pocketed by Stalin in the waning days of World War II by courtesy of President Roosevelt under provisions of secret Yalta protocol. This was conceded as an inducement to enter the war against Japan. But for this act, Japan's 'northern gates' would have remained, by all reckoning, historically a non-issue.

President Yeltsin cancelled his scheduled visit to Japan on September 13, only days before, much to the embarrassment of the host nation, Japan. Till August, Mr Yeltsin's aides were trying to keep the trip on the rails, and Japan was optimistically looking forward for a breakthrough of the impasse that overhanged for nearly half a century. But, the acrimoniously orchestrated debate in the Russian Security Council coupled with political heavy weather built around a wide spectrum of the Russian citizenry, however, caused the trip to tumble. Evidently, it marked the end of the quiet diplomacy conducted patiently by both the Russians and

Japanese for more than six months and had so hopefully advanced the chances to settle the long clusive Kuril dispute. 'Domestic Problem' cited to cover up this diplomatic 'oddity' was a pure smoke.

Still so very real, the political damage that Mr Mikhail Gorbachev had suffered on his return home empty-handed, Moscow's demarche on the Tokyo visit was an act of prescience on the part of Mr Yeltsin. This was crucial keep up the national image he had so craftily built for himself as an 'architect of new Russia, still not out of the woods. 'Legitimacy and Justice', a phrase so often used by Mr Yeltsin, however, had to yield to realpolitik; emotions were stirred up blowing beyond proportion the economic and strategic significance of the islands to their legitimate mod-

est value. In a conciliatory gesture, Japan was prepared to go half way to settle the score at the 1956 Summit statement offering to return two of the islands while leaving open the status of the other two.

In April 1991, Kuril residents, economically in a sorrier plight, said 'no' to Mr Gorbachev, almost to one man when he visited Tokyo. Mr Aleg Rumyantsev, leader of the

by Syed Badrul Haque opposition to a Kuril settlement in the Russian Parliament was boord and jeered during his visit to the Kurils: Historically, the relation

between Russia and Japan had not been better either. Early on, 200 years ago, the two countries remained locked contesting the possession of the 1,200 km chain of more than 30 islands, stretching from Hokkaido to Russia's Kamchatka peninsula. In the wake of the decommunism spree, several

Soviet Republics forged during the heyday of the Czars in the 19th century dismembered themselves from the union and returned to their geo-political context. Licking the wounds of losing such a vest empire, incidentally the biggest on the planet, and no more basking in the super-power status, the Russians were in no mood to cede any further what they euphemistically called their national patrimony. It would be a good riddance to imperial aberrations that the Russian psyche had inherited as a legacy from the Czars.

For nearly three quarters of a century, the Russians were on a doctrinaire diet that offered no transparency in their

exposure to the outside world Skewed in such a manner, the inward-looking Russians operate on flowed assumptions. The world may have to wait till a change arrives in their mental perception in order to communicate with them in a way as obliged in a changed world scenario. In a jagged and divided political landscape as obtaining in Russia currently, President Yeltsin faces a serious challenge to his leadership and vision. He needs a hand and surely, all is not lost yet on Mr Yeltsin.

The Kuril setback has denied the World War II peace treaty and a fully revived normal ties to both Russia and Japan. This vacuum set in motion a new manoeuvering in the power-realignment process, especially in the Pacific zone, albeit in a low key. It is however, not time yet to get a clearer perspective of the emerging scenario. The treaty deficit between the two countries crippled them in no

small measure to play their designated role in the world arena that had pointedly undergone a sea-change, no less epochal, after dismantling of the Soviet Union.

The ignominy of suffering foreign domination of her own territory and also as a victim of the atomic bomb, Japan has paid heavily for her war crimes

With the Western endorsement at the recent Munich economic summit meeting and the issue so being internationalised, Japan's claim to restore sovereignty over all the four islands stands far more bolstered up than before. If one may surmise in this context, Japan, after another found fiasco this time, is likely to take a tougher stance in future negotiations, not to agree to short of four islands in a row.

To set the record straight, Russia, in all fairness, should return the 'war booty' to Japan to whom it rightfully belongs, and so, consign the last vestiges of the second world war to history. Pertinently, this

contribution to revamp the peace optimism generated in the post cold-war climate.

Hamstrung as both countries are over the Kuril issue, there seems no way out to skirt this confrontation which cost the Japanese their territorial claim and the Russians their much-needed Japanese yen. Failure to resolve the issue shall only be a mutual defeat, and in that situation the West may find themselves utterly inadequate to revive the comatose Russian economy asking for billions of dollars in aid. It is only Japan that fits so eminently in the role, and can promote Russia to become a dynamic member of the flour-

ishing Pacific Commonwealth. Despite all geo-political compulsions to remove this flashpoint for any future conflict, prognoses coming from within Russian yets any such eventuality for a very long, long time. Back to square one, it is now all a waiting game.

The writer had served as journalist both in print and broadcasting media and Press Information Department, and as a Public Relations Officer to the President, People's Republic of Bangladesh

OPINION

Objective System: A Threat to Learning

The backbone of the nation is becoming weak day by day due to various drawbacks and problems in the existing system of education and most of them are bound up with the socio-economic factors .But for all this, our social thinkers and top-ranking educationists of the government are not sitting idle. They are awfully engaged in chalking out the latest models of reforms to solve this herculean problem. And though it is too late, the objective system of exams has, of late, been introduced by our educationists at the secondary level.

But it is a matter of great regret that this internationally accepted and very useful system of exam has proved to be simply a dire threat to our education for the following rea-

a) That out of 100 marks in one paper, subject pass marks for the essay type questions and that for the objective type questions are not separately required for which the examinees can easily manage more than 33 marks with the help of objective part of the question. They are averse to take the trouble of working hard for the essay type questions. To speak in more clear terms, the students do not feel paying heed to advice of the teachers and are indifferent to their class works, lessons and home

ing 500 objective questions,

leaving behind the huge course of the syllabus, will simply impede the development of education .The student will simply get by heart those 500 items of the objective question and try to answer in full. It is very shocking to note that most of them secure more than 30 marks in the objective question, whereas less than 10 marks in the essay type questions. So it appears that majority of the students depend on the objective questions and thus deprive themselves of the vast ocean of knowledge.

c)The nature of the objective type questions is such that the examinees can help one another in the exam-hall. While reading the four answers, the familiar trick is to read the correct one loudly so that others easily catch it.

d) Time factor is another defect of this system. For 50 items, 50 minutes is too long a time. Those who know answers well can easily answer in 20 minutes. The rest of the time the examinees spend in talking to each other, in cases providing unlawful aid to the incapable ones.

e) Lastly, most of the teachers and staff are not quite conversant with this newly introduced system, for which, they naturally cannot guide the students properly in the

In fine, standing on the edge of my 32 years' experience in the teaching profes-

sion, I dare to suggest the following for the fruition of the system.

1)As 100 marks have been

divided into two parts, that is 50 for the objective and 50 for the essay-type, it should be the rule that one has to pass each part separately. 2)To avoid unwanted gos-

siping, lottering etc of the students in the examination hall, the number of questions should be increased, so that the students have a full-time involvement in the exam-hall.

3) Four sets of objective questions should be supplied with all items separated for each set, so that none can take the opportunity to help others as each student will be busy with his/her own set of questions.

4) Correction formula which is followed in every developed country, should be introduced. Correction formula means incorrect answers has to be deduced from the correct answers. To make the students alert and laborious, this formula is very useful.

staff should be made familiar with this system through different seminars and workshops for overall benefit from the system. They should have fair and clear ideas to set questions and to examine the papers properly.

5) Last of all, the teaching

Obaidul Hoq Mia Sr Asstt Master Dhaka Govt Muslim High

"Tumhari Amrita"

Sir, When the news came, that Shabana Azmi and Faruque Sheikh were coming to Dhaka for play reading of "Tumhari Amrita," the citizens of Dhaka naturally looked forward to a show, they could afford to see, specially when the sponsors announced that social changes are the theme of such play readings. Shabana Azmi is well known for her participation in genuine social causes.

The residents of Dhaka naturally wished that they could see them at the Shilpa Kala Academy or on the TV. But none of these came through. Only the VIPs/CIPs could enjoy the show by paying Tk 1000/00. This needs reminding us that our per capita monthly income in Tk 650/00 or less. This disparity should make us all ponder, in which direction we are all moving to. Are we going to create a society of twenty two, or twenty two hundred families?

Shahabuddin Mahtab Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka.

Talking big is a vice

Sir, Understandably, mental tensions oppress one most. Everyone, in course of his life develops defence mechanisms to combat those agonies. Some intense thinkers perhaps do not let the causes of those mental tensions to undetected. But mere detection cannot put an end to this evil. It is to be followed by elimination which requires mobilization of some capabilities stemming from cognitive faculties. .Talking big is the mother of

many of our metal tensions. All big talks do not necessarily come to be true and they do not usually meet a surge of criticism from the surroundings. If this onrush of bitter words is somehow withstood, the next course of events again favours the big-talker.

Many of the big-talkers fail to take lessons from preceding defeats. In shattered mental stage of affairs they have the lone escape route to blame on their destined characteristic

Md Abdur Rouf Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall, DU.

to Bangladesh.

Sir, A US Federal Grand Jury has recently indicted four American companies for exporting hazardous toxic waste

Fertilizing fatality

While Bangladesh could duel on "survival of the country" at the Earth Summit, the illegal import of toxic waste

Earth Savers alike. substance will because for hu-

should have been of grave con-

jurious to the habitat. On the part of LDC

Whatever her preference may be for her targets, such hazardous materials are likely to produce disaster as fatal as

As a matter of optimism, however, the earth is rich with alternatives Bangladesh can choose from, specifically for her agricultural needs, besides domestic indigenous and modern safe fertilizers coupled with advanced cultivation methods and economical equipment available today.

ness can possibly cause catastrophic damage to this agrobased poor nation making efforts for higher yields.

M. Rahman Zila School Road, Mymensingh

own home ground and also no

cern to her citizens and the Whether this dangerous man benefit or is only potentially harmful to environment makes no difference, since the chemical has been labeled in-

Bangladesh, purchasing toxic materials is a highly risky dealing, no matter how carefully handled; rather nuclear technologies can be much safer from operational point of

that of Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

In any case, this toxic busi-

tasks.

b) This system, by supply-