

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

With 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 operations.

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 Korologos 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.

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

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 business-publishing venture, hailed by Izvestia's editor-in-chief as a 'unique opportunity to reach decision makers in the most exciting developing market in the world.'

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 anti-communist 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.'

Propaganda was an inseparable part of Cold War diplomacy. In the 1950s the American media were harnessed to give ideological justification to US foreign policy.

Public diplomacy was geared to face the communist threat and save the 'free world' from Soviet 'tyranny'.

An International Information 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 Information Agency, the Department of State and Defence and the CIA.

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.

Daya Kishan Thussu writes from London

who had a self-proclaimed mission of fighting communism, 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.

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 diplomacy.

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

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 bloc.

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

President Ronald Reagan,

How the Cold War was won

Infographic showing a globe with arrows pointing to various regions. Text boxes list: 'Broadcasting played a key role in the ideological battle during the Cold War. These are some of the main Western stations', 'Voice of America', 'Radio Marti', 'Radio Liberty', 'Radio Free Europe', 'Radio Monte Carlo'.

The Troubled Shores in the Pacific

by Syed Badrul Haque

Japanese for more than six months and had so hopefully advanced the chances to settle the long elusive Kuril dispute. 'Domestic Problem' cited to cover up this diplomatic 'oddy' 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 presence on the part of Mr Yeltsin. This was crucial to keep up the national image he had so carefully built for himself as an architect of new Russia, still not out of the woods.

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

opposition to the Kuril settlement in the Russian Parliament was booed 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.

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

exposure to the outside world. Skewed in such a manner, the inward-looking Russians operate on flawed 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.

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 manoeuvring 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.

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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.

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 reasons:

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) Time factor is another defect of this system. For 50 items, 50 minutes is too long a time. Those who know answers will 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.

4) 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 matter.

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

gesture would be a welcome 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 flourishing Pacific Commonwealth.

Despite all geo-political compulsions to remove this flashpoint for any future conflict, prognoses coming from within Russian yet any such eventually 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.

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To the Editor...

"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.

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 is 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 mental 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 trait.

Md Abdur Rouf Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall, DU.

Fertilizing fatality

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

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

should have been of grave concern to her citizens and the Earth Savers alike.

Whether this dangerous substance will because for human benefit or is only potentially harmful to environment makes no difference, since the chemical has been labeled injurious to the habitat.

On the part of LDC 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 view.

Whatever her preference may be for her targets, such hazardous materials are likely to produce disaster as fatal as that of Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

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.

In any case, this toxic business can possibly cause catastrophic damage to this agro-based poor nation making efforts for higher yields.

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