

Gemini Creates a Sense of Journalistic Fraternity

More than 80 journalists from 20 countries have just met in Regina, Saskatchewan, for a seminar on Reporting the Developing World after the Cold War. It was the last of a series of events held in 1992 to mark the 25th anniversary of Gemini News Service. Taking part were senior Canadian newspaper, radio and TV journalists, editors from many developing countries, 14 Canadians who have worked at Gemini headquarters over the last ten years under fellowships, as well as students from the Regina University School of Journalism and Communication. The Regina School and Gemini News Service co-hosted the event, which was sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, and the two main Saskatchewan daily newspapers, the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix and the Regina Leader-Post. A book is to be produced based on the papers and seminar proceedings. Participants widely praised the seminar. These are the reports of three of them.

The Need to Remember the Readers Back Home

by Kuldip Nayar
Author and columnist from New Delhi

At the end of an exciting three days of sometimes quite heated debate, one point became clear: some of those who have reported on the Third World from the Western press have not always been objective — even allowing for the constraints inherent in political systems in which the principles of democracy may be observed only in the breach.

The exchanges between the two groups — the Western press and journalists from the Third World — also highlighted a fact not generally accepted by those of the developing world. This is that the Western press reports the Third World not for any lofty motives associated with the widening of understanding among the peoples of the world, but to have their readers know about the Third World in relation to themselves.

Foreign correspondents, it emerged, were sent out to report on developing countries in the context of how they related to the countries in which their newspapers were published.

In other words, the correspondents had to remember always that they were writing for the readers back home. Their interest in the developing country being reported had to be kept in mind all the time.

On the other hand, the journalists from the developing countries felt that the preference of the foreign correspondent to report only wars,

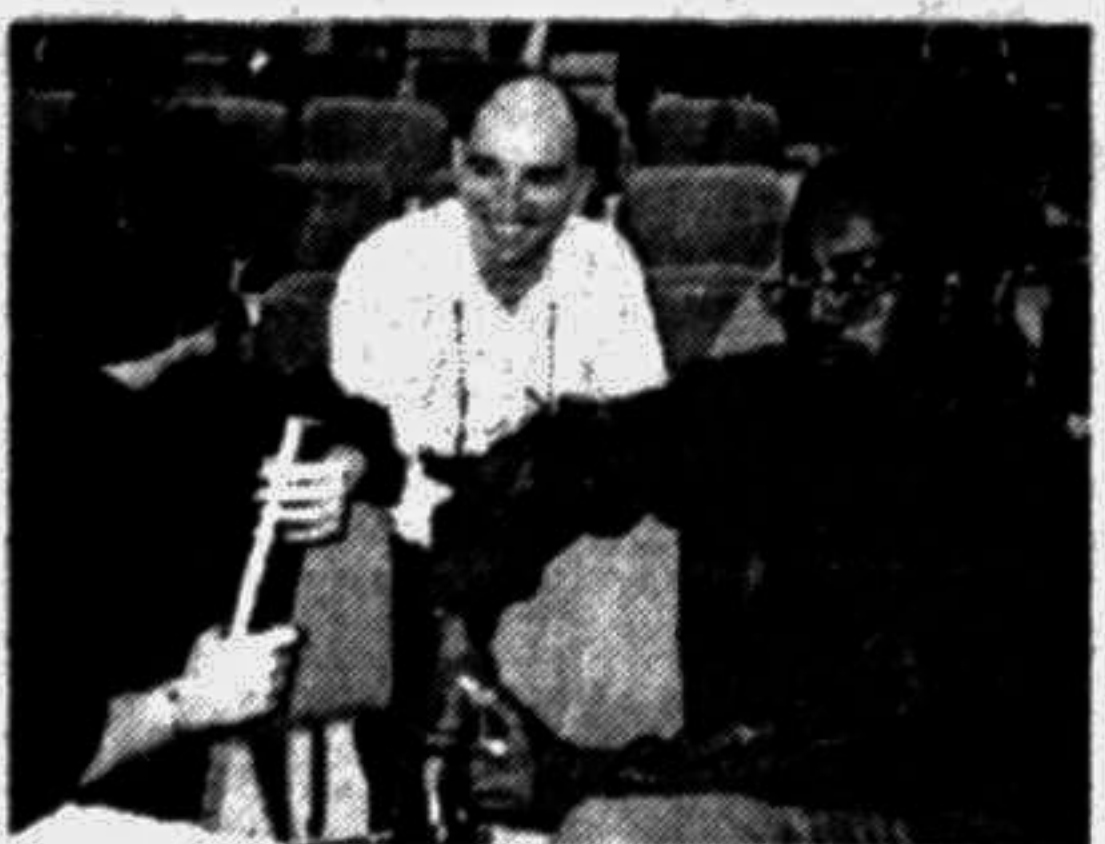
Moments in Regina...



Sharon Marshall (Barbados), with Gemini General Manager Bethel Njoku



Joseph Ealodona (Papua New Guinea) National Broadcasting Commission



Rajah Manamavah (Namibia) Editor-in-chief, New Era with Daniel Nelson, Editorial Director (News), Panos Institute



Constance Lim (Canada) International Development Research Centre, Ottawa

The Special Moments I shall Remember

by Sharon Marshall
News Co-ordinator Caribbean Broadcasting Union

"REGINA? Never heard of it." That was the reaction of a friend when I told him I was leaving soon to attend a journalism seminar in Regina. To most Caribbean people, going to Canada means going to Toronto or Montreal.

But Regina was the location of Gemini News Service's 25th anniversary seminar, and I wouldn't have missed it for anything in the world.

It turned out to be three days of stimulating discussion around the theme of "Reporting the Developing World after the Cold War." The talk was frank and at times confrontational, but ultimately it helped to create better understanding between journalists from the Canadian media and those from the developing countries.

There were many special moments in Regina. Joe Tholoe (South Africa) making an impassioned plea to foreign correspondents to make ordinary men and women the focus of their reports instead of merely relying on a shopping list of interviews with political leaders to tell the story of South Africa. Zhu Yinguang (China) giving an inside account of how the Chinese media tried to cover the

Tenannen Square incident... and the positive and hopeful note of Elaine Shein (Canada) striking for a more open attitude to developing countries by a new generation of Canadian journalists.

Away from the University setting, the Saturday evening banquet at the Regina Inn provided a thoughtful address on the so-called New World order from the respected Canadian television journalist Knowlton Nash, and a mesmerising and provocative performance by Professor Rex Nettleford of Jamaica, who challenged us to recognise the value of our Creole culture and its contribution to the development of the Americas.

Then there was the trip to Saskatchewan farm, where we were warmly welcomed by a local family. As it turned out, they had spent some time in Africa and the furnishings in the farm house reflected this.

It also helped to explain why our colleague from Uganda, Wafala Ogatta, Editor-in-Chief of the Monitor, was able to talk to the farmer so animatedly. It brought new meaning to the terms "small world" and "global village."

But the end during image of our visit to the farm was Joe Tholoe riding in the cab of the

farmer's truck when we left the farm house to drive out to the wheat fields. I thought: "Now there's a picture for South African newspapers."

Joe brought to Regina copies of his newspaper, The Sowetan of Johannesburg, of which he is Managing Editor, and it was the article as much as the advertisements that helped to convey to me a fuller picture of black South Africans as real people beyond the headlines. Something, no doubt, Joe would approve of.

As Joe said at the closing session of the seminar, because of the personal contact we made with other journalists from around the world, news copy reaching us after Regina won't be just impersonal information.

Now different countries and regions will have a face and a name because we've talked with each other and we understand more about each other surely this will influence how we write about each other.

If for no other reason than building a sense of fraternity among journalists from the developing world the days in Regina would have been well spent. But we have also heard from our Canadian friends that the seminar taught them to view the world in a new way.

Crimson was the Dawn

by Jamal Arsalan

"CRIMSON! you aren't going to grow roses again?" Selim gaped at me. I told him coldly he was not being asked to lend a hand or even a shovel. His reply was that he was only interested in shovelling food into his mouth. He looked at my wife, hovering with a grim face over the breakfast table, and pronounced, "specially when the food is so scrumptiously delicious." She broke into a helpless smile. Then ventilated her grievance: when the roses, pink, yellow and almost blackish-velvety-red blossomed to be plucked by some of the neighbouring girls, it was her lot to shout and scream at them.

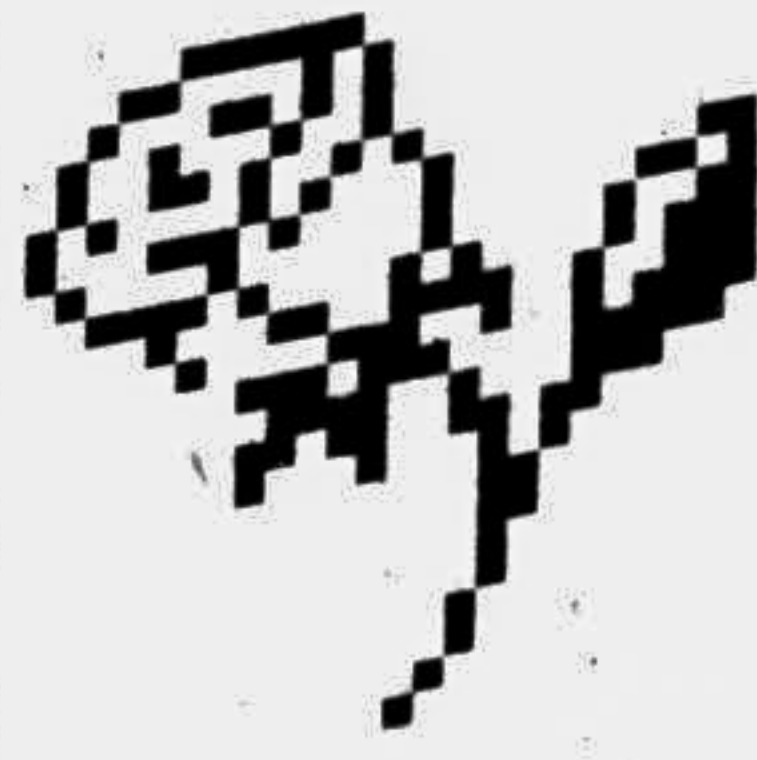
My daughter entered ostensibly for a drink of water but actually to whisper requests into her uncle Selim's ear. I warned that candy and toffee were still on the banned list. With a sardonic smile she appeared me: "I'm not asking for anything edible." I grunted that considering she was always chewing something from her own fingers to pencils, rubber, the toes of her doll and the long laces on her frock — she is five years old — there was hardly anything in the world that could be excluded from her taste buds.

"Chewing is not eating," she declared. Finishing her whispers, she added in normal tones that her mother was 'super' at chasing flower vandals. My wife's countenance, tone of voice, sarcasm and above all the ability to turn the raiders own words against them made her the most feared housewife among the apartment dwellers. Most naughty children fled merely on sighting her wrathful face at the window.

I am, of course, one of the unfortunate exceptions. So I am constantly running into sudden shocks and surprises. "This tea is too strong!" the words would be torn out of my mouth in horror. She has strict instructions to give me tea that looks as golden as honey and tastes just as summery, no milk, only sugar. Yet when I am practically dying for a cup of tea that will pick my body out of weariness and my mind from being battered by conflicting ideas — she gives me a jolt: a cup of tea only she can enjoy.

Her tea is placed in an aluminium pot and boiled for hours. I have seen regular tea drinkers like Selim splutter and plaintively beg her to serve something more moderate. Or she might put milk in my tea. Or no sugar knowing sugarless tea though good for her teeth gives me a stomach ache. Or too much sugar, so I get a toothache and do not have to trouble her for tea as I have to swallow — for at least a month — tons of anti-biotics and gallons of Homeopathic medicine. My teeth are in such a sad state that just anti-biotics or Homeopathy is not enough. I have to take both to the disgust of the two forms of medicinal practitioner!

But to get back to roses. That was another occasional need like tea — I do not drink tea in perspiring warm



"Call yourself a friend?" was my caustic rejoinder. He waved my "unsportsmanlike spirit" away, "anything for marital bliss." Selim, who can never eat enough to satisfy his stomach, joined Omar in another round of breakfast, particularly *paratha* and *moldar halua*. My daughter offered to dance for their entertainment if her mother would sing. I went to get dressed. We three were going to meet a VIP for a big contract needed by our advertising firm. I could not find my shaving kit. Now where would an angry wife hide such a thing? Fortunately I have a knack for finding things — divinely blessed, so it only works when Providence is pleased with me, not when I have messed up my life and that of others!

The regular columns "MY WORLD" and "Write to Mita" are held over for next week under unavoidable circumstances.

The Hard Truth Visible Beneath the Tough Talk

by William Saudi
Editorial Director, Sunday Times of Zimbabwe

JOURNALISTS influence politics, but politics also influences journalists. This hard truth was visible at Regina beneath the bashing of the West by the participants from Third World countries and the defence that the Canadians journalists put up.

Coming from different climates, the media men and women reflected the atmosphere of poverty or plenty in which they had grown up. At times they talked at each other.

The question asked by journalists and broadcasters from Africa, Asia and the West Indies, was this: Why didn't their struggle, out in the cold, to develop their areas make news in the West, which still received front page attention in their own world?

The reply by the journalists from the West was brutally frank: the newspaper business was not an altruistic venture. Theirs was as hard and competitive job as that of their counterparts from the developing world and they had to sell what their readers wanted.

The discussion did not meander into a sterile debate on what made news. The participants were too reasoned to get lost in clichés and shibboleths. They appreciated each other's point of view and the predicaments they faced.

As in the world, so in journalism: there is no black or white. There is a grey area. This, in essence, represented the consensus in Regina. How to accommodate each other was the mood.

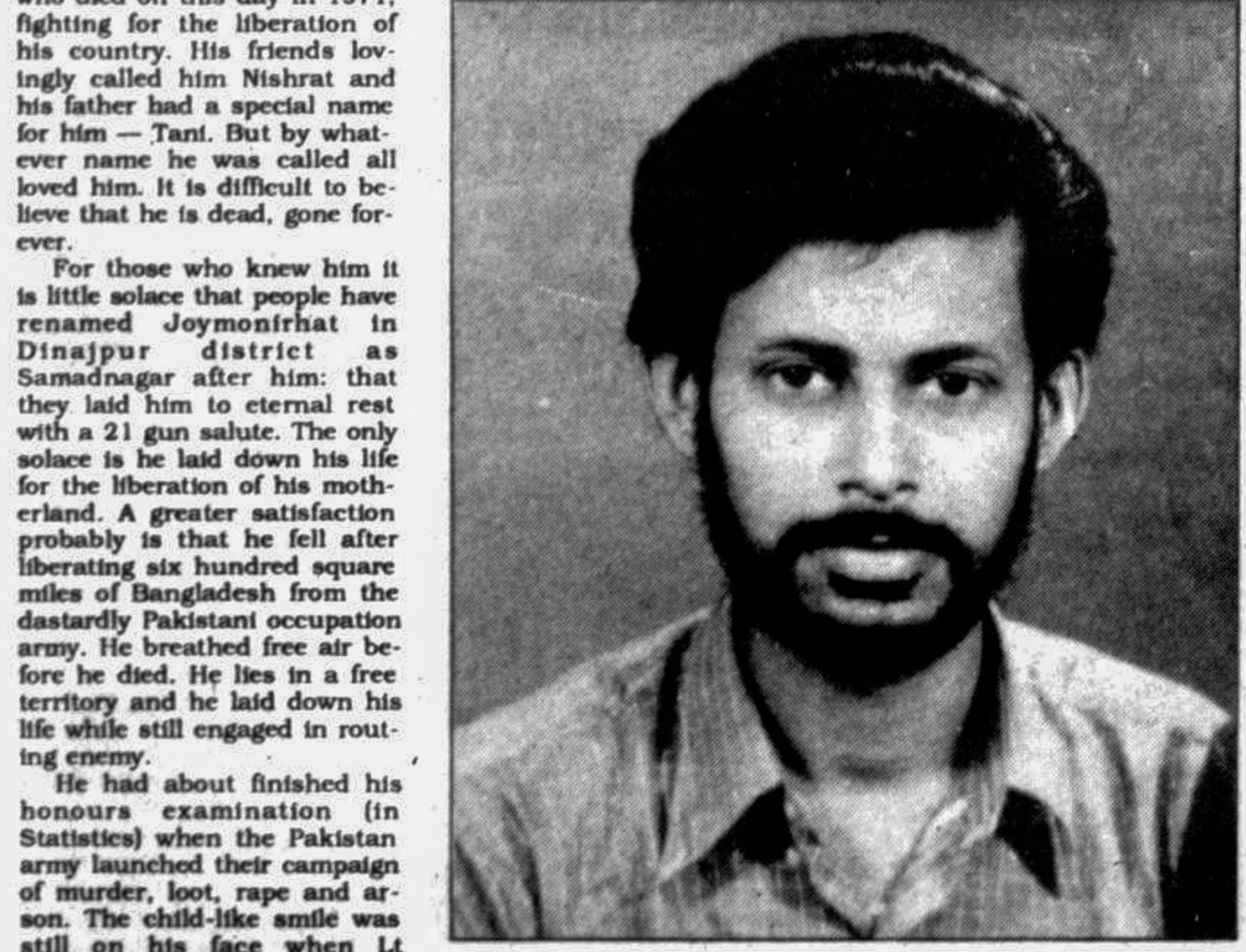
Probably this was not the first meeting to realise that, but it was another effort to demolish prejudice against the news from the Third World

Tale of a Freedom Fighter

by Ataus Samad

Kishoreganj, got in touch with Major Nurul Islam, received a crash course in use of arms and were now back with six 303 rifles, several hundred rounds of ammunition and half-a-dozen grenades. That was the time when most others were making their way out of Dhaka to safety.

But it didn't take very long for them to understand that they could do little with their arsenal. Samad and his friends thought of forming the nucleus of a guerrilla group. He made trip to the interior of



did not want to lose a moment more. While trying to establish contact with a training camp near the eastern border he kept up his activities. He engaged himself in smuggling into Bengalee army officers who wanted to get out of Dhaka cantonment and reach the

Mukti Fauj headquarters. Finally, he himself establish contact with the headquarters and decided to leave home.

In the meantime his younger brother had left home and started participating in the resistance struggle that was going on in the northern areas. Ashfy as he was popularly known, and his parents at that stage did not even know that his brother had been injured in a fight with the Pakistan army at Roumari Rangpur. When Ashfy was leaving home he told his mother, "We are four brothers, Mother, why don't you dedicate at least two of them for the motherland." With tears in their eyes his parents let him go. Very soon the third brother Ishtiaque Aziz Ulfat was also to leave home and to become a guerrilla. Ulfat was among the first batch of trained guerrillas who initiated sabotage operations in the Comilla sector. The fourth brother also, in course of time, was to associate himself with a guerrilla cell which Lt Samad organised just before his departure from Dhaka. Ulfat worked with this cell during the Crack Platoon's actions in Dhaka which resulted in explosions at hotel Inter-continental, blowing up of the power substations in Dhaka and attack on the military police camp at Farm Gate.

Lt Samad after his departure from Dhaka came home only once in the month of June. That was the last that his parents and near and dear one saw of him.

Soon after his return to camp from Dhaka Ashfaq Samad was selected for training as commissioned officer. He successfully completed his

training and was sent to liberate areas in the north of Bangladesh. He became a company commander.

After his company, along with others had liberated more than 600 square miles Lt Samad reached a place called Rajganj. The Pakistan Army had set up a strategic stronghold there. If they could be routed from this bastion the occupation army's next line of defence would recede to Kurigram. Lt Samad and his fellow officers were planning to launch an attack on this strong hold when he received orders transferring him to sector headquarters.

His reaction was typical of him. He sent a message through courier that he would report to duty in four days' time. He did not want to miss the big assault. After all he had been planning it.

The date of the assault was fixed on November 19, 1971. It was the same day that his parents, being hounded by the Pakistan army, left Dhaka for a sanctuary either in a liberated area or in India. They had also hoped to meet their eldest son.

The occupation army's position was strong indeed. Over the bridge on the river Dudhkumar they had placed six medium machine guns. Across the river they held fortified positions in several buildings where there were at least three more medium machine guns with them. The enemy had a good sight over the plain area on the west of the river.

The Mukti-bahini and the allied forces decided to launch a five company strong attack — two of the companies were of the Mukti Bahini commanded by Lt Samad, one was a Rajput company commanded by Major

How's that

by Gazi Sadeq

Human body is designed so that we cannot pat our own back even if we like doing so.

It is interesting to know that neither can we kick ourselves too easily when we feel that way to go.