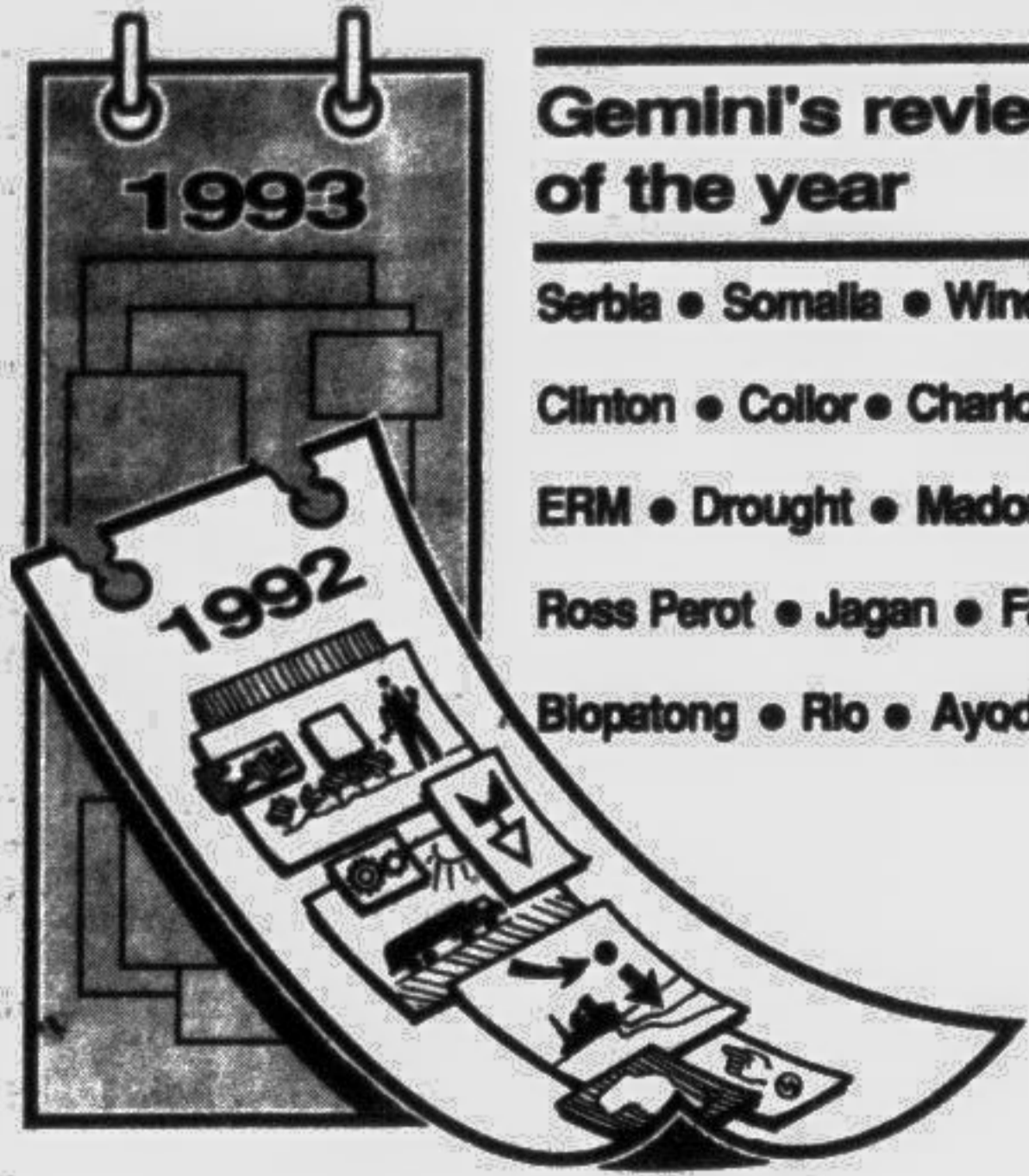


Gemini's review of the year

Serbia • Somalia • Windsor • Clinton • Collor • Charlottetown • ERM • Drought • Madonna • Ross Perot • Jagan • Fascism • Biopating • Rio • Ayodhya



1992—the Year the World Floundered

by Derek Ingram
Editor, Gemini News Service

Africa was a very different story. The Cold War had left bitter legacies — none more so than in southern Somalia, once wooed as strategically vital by the superpowers, slacked with arms by both and now left in turmoil. Warring factions remaining after President Mohammed Siyad Barre had fed in 1991 went on fighting and in their thousands the people died, mostly from starvation.

For much of the year the world took little notice. Overstretched aid organisations struggled helplessly as rabble armies looted the food shipments and children panted to death. Belatedly the UN sent a small contingent which could not cope either.

Then, in the last weeks of his presidency, George Bush decided to commit 28,000 troops to do what he called "God's work." With a small number from 12 other countries, the US went in under the UN flag. Some called it a return to imperialism and its timing was baffling.

Much of the rest of Africa was plagued by drought and a continuation of old wars. High hopes of peace in Angola had faded by December. Fighting between the UNITA rebels of Jonas Savimbi and the Luanda government had stopped for a time and multiparty elections were held surprisingly peacefully.

The result was indecisive and Savimbi rejected it, despite the observers' verdict that it had been fair. He would not wait for the required second round of polling and UNITA swiftly occupied more areas of the country.

In Mozambique, too, the agony went on. It was now wracked by drought as well as war and the rebel Renamo movement was slow to make peace. Agreement between Renamo and the Maputo government was finally signed in Rome on October 4. After 16 years of war fingers were crossed that peace would at last come. UN observers moved in and Zimbabwe began to withdraw the 5,000 troops it had committed to Mozambique to protect communications to the coast.

The civil war in Liberia showed no signs of ending and now spilled into Sierra Leone. The Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping force, exasperated by attempts by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front to capture Monrovia, found itself battling to defend

southern Africa for the second year devastated agriculture in southern Zimbabwe, Malawi, parts of Zambia, South Africa and neighbouring countries. Crops shrivelled to dust and huge numbers of wildlife died. Bulawayo was almost down to its last drops of water when rains at last brought relief.

Yet all was not gloom in Africa: despite economic stress as donor countries, the World Bank and IMF pressed structural adjustment and political reform, large areas remained stable. Almost every other country held multiparty elections.

Following Zambia in 1991, Seychelles, Cameroon, Kenya, and Tanzania set out on the multiparty road. Ghana and Lesotho began to move from military to civilian rule and Nigeria struggled along the same path.

Only Sierra Leone went the other way. On April 9

Buzzwords of 92



President Joseph Momoh, who had agreed to multiparty politics after a referendum, was ousted by young army captain Valentine Strasser.

In Seychelles ex-president Sir James Mancham returned from a 15-year exile to fight a multiparty election to choose a constitutional commission. It resulted in victory for the man who had ousted Mancham, President Albert Rene. Then the commission's draft was rejected in a referendum and it was back to the drawing board.

Multipartyism in some places made a bad start. In Cameroon President Pau Biya narrowly won an October presidential poll. The opposition alleged irregularities, riots broke out and an emergency was declared. In the Central

political parties. The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) did not sit after Boipatong. Yet much talking still went on behind-scenes and in November de Klerk suddenly announced that an interim government should be put in place by April 1994. The ANC said this was too far off and pointed out that the country's economy was bleeding.

In December a three-day meeting between ANC and the government raised hopes of an interim government by May 1993. Ominously Buthelezi announced plans to turn Natal and his KwaZulu homeland into an autonomous state.

In 1992 for the first time South Africa accepted the presence of international monitoring groups. A small number of observers were sent by the UN, the Commonwealth and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to suggest ways of reducing the level of violence.

An encouraging feature of 1992 was the growth of international monitoring and peacekeeping operations. Mainly this was happening through the UN, but the Commonwealth, the European Community and even such bodies as the OAU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were playing a role.

Election monitoring was becoming increasingly acceptable. The Commonwealth found an important new role in helping with election preparations, constitutional drafting, improved parliamentary practice and observing the polls. The Americans were also increasingly active through the Carter centre to promote democracy.

Under its new Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN found itself involved in a record number of operations and it was increasingly stretched. Boutros-Ghali, less smooth than his over-diplomatic predecessor Perez de Cuellar, ruffled the West by suggesting it was showing more concern for Yugoslavia than for Somalia. Third World countries worried that since the Gulf War the UN was beginning to be run by the US and its Western allies on the Security Council.

At the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Jakarta, Prime Minister Mahamad Mahathir of Malaysia spoke for many countries when he said that "recent history must convince us that a unipolar world

emerged that elements of the army and police were stirring trouble, and that de Klerk must have been privy to it. His integrity had become suspect.

In one of the worst incidents IFP followers were accused of killing 45 people in Boipatong township near Johannesburg. In another, ANC supporters marching in the Ciskei homeland were mown down by troops and 29 died.

For much of the year little formal negotiation took place between government and the



"...now no one seemed to know which way to turn next. The world was walking blindfold into 1993"

of change still seemed remote and certainly it was not something the US was going to favour. But the problem would not go away.

The area causing most concern by the end of 1992 was the Balkans. Throughout the year war raged in the central part of what was Yugoslavia, mainly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which found itself being carved up by the Serbs and the Croats.

No faction was blameless, but as the year wore on it became increasingly clear that attempts were underway to create a greater Serbia. Soon the Serbs held two-thirds of Bosnia.

The suffering was immense. For the whole year Sarajevo, a city for ever associated with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand which precipitated World War One, was under siege.

The ugly term ethnic cleansing suddenly came into use as whole communities were uprooted and thousands held in detention. In a year which had seen fascism emerging again in Germany the concentration camp came back into existence, and Europe once more saw thousands of refugees fleeing from political and religious persecution.

The European Community had come into existence with the aim of preventing situations like this ever arising again in Europe, but it seemed unable to cope. Pushed along by Germany, it complicated the problem by recognising Croatia and Slovenia as sovereign states.

No EC country wanted to get militarily involved in the historically turbulent Balkans. The concentration was on mediation and ceasefire negotiations. British Prime Minister John Major convened a conference of all the parties in London. Most made promises they promptly broke as soon as they got home.

Lord Owen, for the EC, and Cyrus Vance, for the UN, shuttled around Europe and had some success — for example, in securing with UN help a withdrawal of Serbians from the peninsula overlooking the damaged historic city of Dubrovnik and making it a demilitarised zone.

The UN became increasingly involved, so that by December it had 23,000 troops policing enclaves in Croatia and ferrying food across Bosnia-Herzegovina. Airlifts helped build supplies in Sarajevo for the winter.

Ethnic cleansing was being directed at the Muslim communities of Bosnia, and many Muslim countries became restless over the West's apparent lack of concern for these communities. Middle East countries threatened to flout the UN arms embargo and give the Bosnian Muslims funds to buy weapons to defend themselves.

As the year closed, pressure grew for the UN to move from its passive policing role to one of peace enforcement. Western countries were determined to keep their troops out of the fighting, but no one really knew what to do and fears of major war in the Balkans were higher than at any time since the trouble started. Again, leadership was missing.

The EC had many other

things on its mind. The Maastricht Treaty, for instance. At the end of 1991 the 12 countries had left Maastricht happy with an agreement that would bring them closer to economic and political union. The British had opted out of parts of it and helped water down references to federation and a common currency.

A year later the landscape had changed. Denmark voted by referendum against the treaty and France voted Yes by only a whisker. The British prevaricated on ratification. Anti-EC forces wailed up again and Prime Minister Major was forced to go slow. Then came Black Wednesday — the day, September 16, when pressure on sterling cost Britain £2 billion in foreign reserves and forced it to leave the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). Pressure on the lira forced Italy to quit it as well.

The pound floated down by 20 per cent only days after Major had pledged it would not be devalued, further fuelling anti-EC feeling in Britain — all at a time when Britain was holding the six-month presidency of the EC.

In December, at the end of the presidency, Major at last had some luck. He chaired a final summit in Edinburgh that restored some harmony among the 12 leaders. It made a pact on financing, agreed to Danish opt-outs on Maastricht like those given to the British and paved the way for enlargement of the Community.

Major was having an extraordinary year of triumph and tragedy. The man who had succeeded Thatcher in 1990 waited almost to the end of the Conservative Party's five-year term in office in the hope that recession was ending, then called an election for April 9.

The opinion polls showed the Labour Party set to end 13 years of Tory rule. They were wrong. Major, the man critics labelled grey, won by 21 seats. It was only one-fifth the size of Thatcher's majority, but he was now able to claim to be Premier in his own right.

After the election nothing went his way. The recession deepened, his ministers went from blunder to blunder, scandals abounded, and then came Black Friday. Rarely had there been such a quick political fall.

On top of this, came the plight of the world's most publicised monarchy. In the 40th year of her reign Queen Elizabeth met what she called in the saddest speech of her reign her "annus horribilis." For months the tabloid press had been digging away at the antics of the royal relatives. Although much press behaviour was scandalous, there was substance in the stories. All was not well in the House of Windsor.

The marriages of all the Queen's children (Prince Edward being unmarried) had fallen, or were falling apart. Princess Anne divorced her husband and remarried in December, the Duke of York was separated from his wife, Sarah, and then the Prince of Wales and Princess Diana separated. All this fuelled criticism of the fact that, under a deal done by her father in 1937, the Queen paid no income tax.

Continued on page 11

So that was 1992



Notes

Another year of...
Midwest peace talks
IRA violence
Quarrels with Iraq
Recession Aids
September: 3 million homeless in Pakistan floods
October 4: El Al plane crashes on Amsterdam 70 die
October 12: 500 die in Cairo earthquake

the capital. Fighting was the heaviest for two years.

The fourth area of major conflict remained south Sudan, where the almost totally unreported war intensified as the Islamic fundamentalist government made new efforts to break the rebels. Towns were captured and peace talks were opened and adjourned in Abuja, Nigeria. But fighting went on: UN aid was blocked, and the plight of refugees became ever more serious.

Failure of the rains in

African Republic elections on October 28 were canceled by the Supreme Court three days later because of irregularities. And in Togo transition was stalled when President Etienne Eyadema refused to step down.

In Ghana military ruler Jerry Rawlings donned a civilian suit, fought a multiparty presidential election and won. Parliamentary elections were to follow on December 29. In Kenya, President Daniel arap Moi, a reluctant convert to

emerged that elements of the army and police were stirring trouble, and that de Klerk must have been privy to it. His integrity had become suspect.

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is every bit as threatening as a bipolar world. A new world order could not be determined by the few and forced on the many. He warned: "Without the option to defect to the other side, we can expect less wooing but more threats."

Pressure was growing from developed and developing countries for reform of the UN system, with enlargement of the Security Council to include more permanent members such as India, Indonesia, Japan and Germany. The likelihood