Dhaka, Thursday, March 11, 1993-

### Policy of Disinvestment

The move by the government to sell out the country's 16 sugar mills, now under Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC), to the private sector has been long overdue. The fact that the measure, publicised on Monday, is described as a "prescription" by the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). shows how little long-range planning had been done by our own successive administrations on what should have been seen as an obvious remedy for a sick industry, the kind of industry which had been a burden on the country as well as a drain on our meagre resources. Seen from this perspective, here is an example why our own ministries should move fast, on their own, without being told by donor agencies what needs to be done to promote market economy to which Bangladesh has reiterated its commitment in loud and clear terms.

The case of the sugar industry provides a few other instructions for our planners. A major problem threatening the sector is rightly attributed to the country's liberal import policy, a policy that makes it possible for the product from India to sell here much cheaper than our own. As a temporary measure, we can protect our own sugar industry through tariff barrier, at the cost of the interest of our consumers. But how many of our sick industries which are hit by the staggering cost of production and mounting losses can be saved in this manner? The WB and ADB experts may now very well say, "We told you so, when our own officials and trade bodies should have said exactly what UN agencies have been screaming out. Herein lies the failure of our national planning which, stripped of our highsounding rhetoric, remains a dismal failure.

If there are no buyers for these 16 ailing sugar mills, they will face the danger of closure, resulting, among other things, the loss of jobs for some 30,000 workers, not to mention over five lakh farmers and their families which are dependent on sugar plantations. For any developing country, where the creation of new jobs is a major priority, this is, indeed, a frightening outcome of what is otherwise a sensible policy. One only hopes that a number of sugar mills, if not the majority, can be saved by the private sector through modernisation of plants, better management and reduction of costs, thus demonstrating its efficiency over that of the public sector which had so long operated them. Again, there needs to be co-operation between the private sector and the government in the deployment of workers, in the research and development of sugar or even in the switch-over from sugar plantation to some other crop. On this score, we should take lessons from other sugar producing countries, like India, Cuba and the Philippines, although some of them may well be facing problems threatening our own plantations.

Taking sugar as a case in point, we should immediately turn to other sick industries. Instead of dragging its feet or waiting for a signal from WB and ADB, the government should publicise a check-list of industries which should be sold to the private sector or closed down. Is the machine tools industry one of them? Again, what are the prospects for the newsprint mill in Khulna producing a quality product, cutting down its spiralling cost, meeting the internal demand and increasing its export with confidence it lacks today? Should it not be a candidate for disinvest ment? Again, if Bangladesh can import sugar under its liberal open-door trade policy, should it not atleast study the pros and cons of letting the media import its newsprint?

The authorities should not expect the private sector to buy only the losing and ailing plants. It should be asked to take over some profitable ones, it there are any in the public sector, as a part of the incentive for saving, say, the machine tools industry or the Khulna newsprint plant.

#### A Tribute to Shahabuddin

We join the legal community and, indeed, the cross section of the educated elite in the country in felicitating Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on his selection as an Hony. Master of the Bench of the Hon'ble Society of the Grey's Inn of the United Kingdom. It is a rare distinction earned by a select few eminent jurists outside Britain for their contribution to the enforcement of the rule of law, and to the legal profession and human rights. Two other great personalities in this region who have been recently awarded this honour are the President of India, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma and the late Chief Justice Sabyasachi Mukherjee, also of India.

The honour conferred on Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed is undoubtedly in recognition of his contribution to the transition from authoritarianism to democratic rule in Bangladesh in 1990-91, the process that involved the holding of free and fair election, unique achievements which earned him international praise. Again, only insiders would recall how he functioned as the Acting President of the interim administration, upholding the Rule of Law and setting the stage for the revival of parliamentary democracy under an elected government. To the nation as a whole, Shahabuddin was the saviour of the country, an enduring symbol of sanity and wisdom during a turbulent

In conferring the rare honour on the Judge, the British institution also took into account the legal standing of the Chief Justice in the international field, as it did in the case of others.

In responding to the felicitations accorded to him by the local Supreme Court Bar on Tuesday, the Chief Justice spoke with his characteristic humility of his role in the revival of democracy in Bangladesh. However, we are grateful to him for referring to the need for ensuring the independence of judiciary in Bangladesh as well as of making the system of justice ever more effective. We, in the media, are also pleased that, despite his modesty, he singled out what gave him particular satisfaction, the promulgation of ordinances to ensure freedom of the press. In the past, we saluted him for giving back to the media what it deserves. On this score, we salute him again.

# How Tito's Dream Turned into a Balkan Nightmare

The hightly images on television screens bring the barbarity of war and suffering of ordinary people in what was once Yugoslavia to the world's living rooms. Yet despite a glut of information, few can make sense of what is happening in this troubled part of Europe.

After a year of appalling suffering, besieged Bosnians are now hoping for some relief as the United States, in, a largely symbolic gesture, drops food and medicine for beleaguered war victims.

In a similarly symbolic move, the United Nations Security Council has decided to set up a war crimes tribunal. It is the first such international tribunal to be established since the Nuremberg and Tokyo war crimes trials after World War Two.

The question remains: why are people who have lived in harmony for nearly 50 years now committing such horrendous atrocities against their neighbours? In a new book, The Destruction of Yugoslavia (Verso, London) the Croatborn historian and journalist Branka Magas argues that the root cause is Serbian national-

combining political analysis with personal reflections, the book provides the first inside account of the tragic path leading to Yugoslavia's break-up.

The author laments the lack of understanding of what is an essentially complex situation among the Western media and especially the intelligentsia, who assume that the Balkan peoples "are somehow genetically programmed for violence and thus equally to blame for the cataclysm."

The real culprit for the destruction of her country, she argues, was a movement for "Serb national renewal." Yugoslavia "did not die a natural death: it was destroyed for the cause of a Greater Serbia." Serbia formed the basis of Yugoslavia. With the demise of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, a new Kingdom of Serbia was created. From 1929 it became known as Yugoslavia, the country of the South, or yug, Slave

From early days, the Croats resented being ruled from

F the full extent of the

activities of Israeli death

squads which stalk and

kill Palestinian youths in the

occupied territories became

known in the West, it could

further severely tarnish the

Israeli image that it is the

victim rather than the

perpetrator of violence. Which

is why, even while it has been

increasing its use of these am-

bush-style executions, Israel

has been clamping down on

the media which attempt to

report them. Through a com-

bination of physical violence,

censorship and voluntary com-

pliance by foreign journalists,

Israel has pretty much bottled

up most objective accounts of

overcome the efforts of human

rights organisations which

keep struggling to publicise

findings about the specially

trained squads which often

disguise themselves as

Palestinians, drive cars with

Palestinian licence plates and

typically shoot their youthful

victims at close range. The

Israeli organisation, Betselem,

is only one of a number of

creditable groups that have

confirmed the existence of

these death squads; others in-

clude Amnesty International

Middle East Watch, al-Hag and

the Palestine Human Rights

Information Centre (PHRIC)

based in Jerusalem and

sualty-figures covering the first

nine months of 1992, listing

each Palestinian killed by sus-

pected death squads by name,

age and locality, and corrobo-

rating the circumstances of

death from eyewitnesses. In

PHRIC recently released ca-

But it has not been able to

death squad operations.

barbarity of war and fordinary people in Yugoslavia: the making... The distin



Belgrade by a Serbian king. When the Nazis overran the country in 1941, many Croats joined them. A Fascist ustasha or rebel puppet Independent State of Croatia was set up under 'the leadership of Ante Pavelic, covering Bosnia as

palling brutality against Serbs took place. The policy was to "convert a third, expel a third and kill a third." More than one million Yugoslavs died in the ensuing civil war, leaving nearly every town and village with a legacy of hate.

Yugoslavia was reconstituted in 1945 as a federal socialist republic under Marshal Josip Tito. He asserted his independence from Moscow and won international acclaim as one of the founder members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Tito, son of a Croatian father and a Slovene mother, was resented by both Croats and Serbs. He tried to reduce the influence of both by increasing the status of other nationalities like Macedonians, Slovenes and Muslims. by Daya Kishan Thussu

The disintegration of Yugoslavia has unleashed the biggest crisis in Europe since 1945. The vicious war that followed has seen thousands killed and millions made homeless in Europe's worst refugee problem since World War Two. Why did a state so assiduously put together by Marshal Tito cease to be a nation just ten years after his death? As the US starts food drops to war victims, Gemini News Service reviews the first authoritative book, by a Croat-born author, on the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Raly Status unitholded not recognized as separate state

leader of the largest Yugoslav republic, says Magas, on a platform that was manifestly nationalist and anti-constitu-

tional." A purge of thousands of

liberal intellectuals followed.

The break-up of Yugoslavia, argues Magas, was due to Serbia's decision "to challenge the entire post-war federal order in favour of its own domination, or, failing that, a Greater Serbia."

The Serbian nationalists undermined the decentralisation embodied in the 1974 constitution which had ensured a devolution of powers to the republics and provinces.

"The more the Serb nationalists embraced the cause of Yugoslavia, the more anti-federal that Yugoslavia of theirs became — and inevitably, the greater was the resistance to it in other parts of the country." Unequal economic development was another reason for anti-Belgrade feelings. Concentration of economic power at the Yugoslav centre led to concentration of political power as well, which in

practice meant Serbian domination.

The other republics wanted to decentralise the Yugoslav National Army, a crucial actor at the national level. This was resisted by the Serb-dominated army.

The break-up began in June 1990 when Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. Croatia, Yugoslavia's second largest republic, had, unlike Slovenia, a sizeable Serb minority. Milosevic sent in the Yugoslav National Army. It was Europe's first war in 46 years. An estimated 10,000 were killed and thousands made homeless.

the European Community recognised Slovenia and Croatia in January 1992, although EC conditions on constitutional freedoms and minorities rights had not been fully satisfied. After months of dilly-dallying, the US, too, recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia in April 1992.

"Washington, busy with more pressing problems in the strategically-vital Gulf region, avoided 'getting sucked into a quagmire." With the Cold War over, Yugoslavia had little strategic value for the US. Last August, Secretary of State James Baker was reported to have said: "We don't have a dog in that fight." While the US professed to encourage self-determination for all people, it wanted Yugoslavia to remain united.

Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia are independent countries recognised by the UN. But the EC and the US still regard Serbian aggression as an internal ethnic conflict rather than a cross-border invasion

UN peacekeepers have so far failed and the no-fly zone established by the UN last year, unlike in Iraq, has not been enforced.

Meanwhile, it is the Bosnian

Sanctions, mediation and

bracing international law.

Meanwhile, it is the Bosnian Muslims who have suffered most. At a summit in Spring Karadjordjeve. and Croatia's President Franjo Tudiman proposed dividing up Bosnia Herzegovina along ethnic lines leaving "just a little bit of Bosnia," as Tudiman put it, for Muslims. The West, unwilling to create a Muslim-majority state in Europe, let Croatia and Serbia get their share of the Bosnian cake. Today nearly 80 per cent of Bosnian territory is under Serbian and Croatian control.

Magas writes: "The West has decried Serbia's and Croatia's annexationist ambitions, and yet continues to press ahead with cantonisation. It pays lip service to the integrity of the Bosnian state, and yet, by maintaining the arms embargo, denies it the means to defend that integrity."

The book has little to say about why Germans were so insistent on recognising Sloventa and Croatia. It would be politically naive to believe that their concern stemmed from purely altruistic reasons. Serbs are naturally suspicious of Germany's role, fearing a revival of old alliances. Their leaders continue to exploit this fear, using the state-controlled media. The Serbs also complain that from the start, the war has been reported in the Western media literally from the Croatian and Bosnian sides

Until the food drops, the US was conspicuously absent. The US would have preferred Yugoslavia to remain a unitary state because it did not want an assertive Germany in a post-communist Europe.

Magas, now living in London, says that given US interests in the Arab-Islamic world, Washington will try to stop the conflict escalating into a Balkan war. But if European nationalism, which has shown tendencies of fascism, is not controlled, the already volatile situation may turn into a Balkan nightmare.

## Media Silence on Israel's Death Squads

by Mitchell Kaidy

Through a combination of physical violence, censorship and voluntary compliance by foreign journalists, Israel has stopped reports of its death squads which stalk and kill Palestinian youths in the Occupied Territories.

ambushed and killed, according to the study. In the first nine months of 1992, 28 Palestinians have been gunned down by undercover units, or over 40% of all Palestinian deaths — a much higher rate than the previous four years.

In the 29 deaths investigated in 1991, the victims were shot at close range at least once and, after being wounded, seven youths were beaten to death, the report said. Some were taken to hospital, where they later were reported to have died, but in other cases medical assistance

was prevented by soldiers.

While there is no clear explanation of which Palestinians are being targeted, the Israeli military has been known to select suspected leaders of guerilla group such as the Black Panthers and Red Eagles, usually on the run and in hiding from the Israelis. Others appear to have been targeted for writing graffiti or masking themselves and throwing stones.

Some journalists who have attempted to lift the cover on the covert squads have been physically roughed up and had their press credentials suspended. Three British reporters, Paul Taylor and Steve Weisman of Reuters and Andrew Whitely of the

Financial Times, suffered the loss of press credentials for reporting too candidly about the death squads. After their credentials were restored, Taylor said a small device was detonated under his car, and Weisman told of having been attacked by several men on a Jerusalem street.

His 1974 constitution cm-

phasised the statehood of the

six national republics, Serbia,

Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia,

Montenegro, and Bosnia

Herzegovina, and gave Scrbia's

Kosovo and Vojvodina, direct

representation at the federal

level. It also guaranteed the

rights of minorities inside

charismatic and long-serving

president in 1980, cracks be-

gan to appear. Tito was re-

placed by an eight-member

collective presidency, made up

of representatives of the six

republics and the two au-

tonomous provinces. One year

after Tito's death, the neo-

conscrvatives quelled a student

demonstration in Kosovo. In

1984, intellectuals in Belgrade

were put on trial for taking

part in unofficial debating so-

Slobodan Milosevic came into

being in 1987, following a

coup within the ruling party,

The League of Communists of

Serbia. Milosevic became

The regime of President

After the death of the

each republic.

two autonomous provinces

But it is doubtful that censorship and even the threat of force could completely blank out objective reporting without the compliance of foreign journalists — especially Americans. For example, after a new conference by PHRIC discussing their detailed report on unarmed civilians being summarily executed, the Washington Post's David Hoffman took it upon himself to write about the victims having been members of 'Palestintan cells', which the headline writer then highlighted. The tendentious result of this - and implying that the Palestinian victims were armed - was gratuitously and inaccurately to portray the Palestinians as hard-core terrorists who deserved what they got.

Rarely have American journalists sought corroborative evidence from witnesses; they usually accept the Israeli army's version of events. By this uncritical acceptance American journalists almost never dignify Palestinians as human beings who bleed, suffer pain, have families, career aspirations or anything else that might induce sympathy for them.

And hardly ever do American journalists reflect even the guarded criticism of the death squads that has appeared in the Israeli media Their journalistic treatment of Palestinians is best gleaned by holding it up against similar stories about Palestinian killings of Israelis, where the onus is usually pinned on the murderous' Palestinians, with pictures of the deceased Israeli shown prominently, and the family depicted grieving. Such treatment is almost never accorded a grieving Palestinian family which has lost a youthful member to summary treatment without being charged, tried or sentenced, and about whom both Israeli and non-Israeli human rights groups have protested and offered challenging views.

Vivid, accurate reports of what happened to Jamal Ghanim, for example, would certainly have galvanised American sympathy for the Palestinians and renewed criticism of Israel. Ghanim, 19, was one of the death squads' sudden and unaccountable victims in March 1992. He was playing soccer when he was shot at close range by four men in civilian clothes in front of several hundred spectators. When he spotted the men coming towards him across the pitch, Ghanim raised his arms in surrender; to no avail: as he lay on the ground shot and wounded, one soldier pinned him down with his foot and he and the others short

him repeatedly.

In another case last April,

14-year-old Muhammad Ja'afira of Tarqumiya in the' West Bank was on his way to the mosque when six Israeli soldiers disguised as Palestinians pulled automatic weapons from under their clothes, shot him and then refused for two hours to let ambulances into the village. Ja'afira bled to death. Two Israeli civilians, who witnessed the execution, were arrested and charged with interfering with the army when they told the press what they saw.

The PHRIC booklet, Targeting to Kill: Israel's Undercover Units, overflows with such tragic accounts. But the overarching tragedy is that of the American media turning a blind or biased eye on the death squads, unable to get themselves to report what is available to them from eyewitnesses or the human rights organisations.

— Third World Network Features/Middle East International

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#### OPINION

#### Has Germany Forgotten its Past?

Republic of Germany. The people enjoyed a very high living standard and were happy and peaceful. The country enjoyed about 40 years of ideal democracy — served on a "silver platter" by the victorious allied powers.

The world was in order. The post-war German generations avoided the uncomfortable past history; it should have discussed and analysed instead. The well-behaved citizens used to say "shameshame" at the mention of Adolf Hitler or his Nazi party. Bonn's so called "nice weather" democracy flourished while Europe and the world remained divided between two blocks. Thus there was no reason in that context for the Germans to make any correct analysis of the past.

Nineteen ninety was the year of German Unity. Everyone was excited and joyful but soon reality came home. Federal Government-sponsored steps in the old German Democratic Republic (GDR) created adverse consequences. For example, unemployment rate in ex-GDR rose to 30%. Germany is compelled to be a debtor more and more. Taxes have been raised, expenditure for social welfare has been reduced. Many Germans are unhappy. Democracy and politics arc put in a dilemma.

But then, how could democracy be in jeopardy be-

cause the economic situation is not rosy? It shows that we are helpless, afraid and without fundamental principles, if our economy does not run smoothly. It means that Federal Republic existed because of her prosperous economy. The economy was every-

for public moral. Let us remember the situation in 1933. About six million people were unemployed. It was accompanied by intense misery and sufferings. But it was not harsher than in other countries, including USA. It was only in Germany that a "mad personality" rallied the whole nation behind the slogan that the Jews, democrats and left wing groups were responsible for this disastrous situation. Adolf Hitler with the total support and cheers of all civilized Germans destroyed democracy and built coneen-

thing and it was the substitute

During the last forty years the Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic repeatedly guaranteed that Hitlerism is for all time destroyed; so long Germany itself believed it. Slowly it is becoming clear that decades of joint effort to combat the dark history of the past was based on a thin layer of ice.

of ice.

Germany has been suffering from a disease that all must

have known. The infection has progressed too far. The immune system has failed. "Germany for the Germans" — and these "Germans" were responsible for the destruction of the country in the past: Have

we all forgotten that? Two years after the unity, the news media are full of stories about right radicals. They are setting fire to homes of foreigners, destroying Jewish cemeteries and memorials, even attacking police and politicians and those who are against the right radicalism. They are back in full strength as armed-youth Nazis - as if they were always there and just woke up from a long sleep. They are not alone -their brutal actions are carried out with the sympathy, support, and in the midst of clasps, of local citizens. The politicians standby indecisive and helpless.

helpless.

The German Unity along with all the problems challenging the existence of German democracy has surfaced for the first time after forty years. Future will only reveal whether Germans repeat the same mistake or learn something not only from the dark history of the past but also from decades of democratic existence. It is for the Germans to

The author is a Bangladeshi who lives in Frankfurt, Germany. He has sent this piece by mail.

#### BTV's 'Manabadhikar'

Sir. BTV aired a new magazine named 'Manabadhikar' on 17th February. It was a good programme. 'Amar Adhikar' (our rights) was a good and educating discussion. The main feature on late deputy super of Customs department Mr. Roul came as a shocking reality to us. It's really horrifying to know that the administration is capable of such an outrageous injustice to people. Mrs, Dilruba Haider was good with her Manabadhikar news. The writer and presentator Mr. Saiful Islam Dildar and the producer Mr. Lutfar Rahman Talukdar did a great job.

Audity Azimpur, Dhaka.

#### Hajj policy

Sir, The government had notified on the 12th January that it would permit 12,000 people to 80 this year for Hajj from Bangladesh under official management, and that the applicants would be selected on district-wise quota basis, depending on the break-up of the population of each district visa-vis the population of the entire country. Dhaka district was allocated a quota of 508.

The 15th February was the last date for depositing with the government applications for performance of the pilgrimage and, accordingly, many submitted their applications after depositing the sum required by the government.

Ballotting took place at Dhaka, as elsewhere in the country, on the 16th February and, apart from the lucky 508 from Dhaka district, all the other applicants from the district were also ballotted for the waiting list.

ballotted from Dhaka district at the first instance were, when approached, comforted by concerned officials with the assurance that, if this year's trend follows the pattern of the past several years, the quota of a large majority of the other

Many, like me who were not

districts of the country would go unfilled and that we would Insha-Allah also be able to fulfil our ambition of performing one of the farz enjoined on us by Islam.

All these days have elapsed since the ballotting, but the government has not yet taken steps to let the persons, who were not successfully ballotted at the first instance, know the fate of their applications. It the aggregate number of applicants is made public, and if that number is below 12,000 we could at least rest contented that we would be able to fulfil our niyet of performing the Hajj.

May I, therefore, request the government to announce, without any further delay, the total number of applications received by it for performance of this year's Hajj and relieve us from the anxious days we are passing through since the initial ballotting was held?

An intending pilgrim