

How Tito's Dream Turned into a Balkan Nightmare

by Daya Kishan Thussu

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 nightly 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...



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 well. Under this regime, appalling brutality against Serbs took place. The policy was to 'convert a third, expel a third and kill a third'...

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.



His 1974 constitution emphasised the statehood of the six national republics, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and gave Serbia's two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, direct representation at the federal level. It also guaranteed the rights of minorities inside each republic. After the death of the charismatic and long-serving president in 1980, cracks began to appear. Tito was replaced by an eight-member collective presidency, made up of representatives of the six republics and the two autonomous provinces...

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. Under German pressure, the European Community recognised Slovenia and Croatia in January 1992, although EC conditions on constitutional freedoms and minorities rights had not been fully satisfied...

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.

1991, 29 Palestinians were 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 guerrilla groups 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. 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 'Palestinian 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

tenced, 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 shot him repeatedly. In another case last April,

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 Hon'ble 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 time. 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.

To the Editor...

BTV's 'Manabdhikar' Sir, BTV aired a new magazine named 'Manabdhikar' 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. Rouf 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 Manabdhikar news. The writer and presenter 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 ap-

plicants would be selected on district-wise quota basis, depending on the break-up of the population of each district vis-a-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. Many, like me who were not successfully 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 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 balloting, 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 niyat 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 balloting was held? An interding pilgrim

OPINION

Has Germany Forgotten its Past?

by Sobhan Choudhury 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 claps, of local citizens. The politicians stand by indecisive and 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 choose. The author is a Bangladeshi who lives in Frankfurt, Germany. He has sent this piece by mail.