

Bosnia Continues to Burn

Last Sunday, eight of the ten members of the Bosnian presidency, buried their differences and put forward a federal state plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is in response to the three-way partition plan put forward by the Serbs and Croats and one that is favoured by the European Community's Lord Owen and United Nations mediator Thorvald Stoltenberg. The Bosnian plan can be termed as a last ditch attempt to prevent the division of a country on religious and ethnic lines. The reason for the Bosnian Muslims to try to work to the very end to keep some form of unity of their besieged country is to prevent the Serbs from having it all their way. But the Bosnian choice may be more of a wishful thinking than a serious negotiating position. For militarily abandoned by the rest of the world, and the Muslim world doing no more than giving a lip-service to their cause, how much weight can the Bosnians carry in a show of power, which is what will ultimately determine the outcome?

Meanwhile the situation of the people of Bosnia becomes increasingly precarious. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata has launched a desperate appeal for more funds for her organisation to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Bosnian Muslims. She has earlier condemned the blocking of aid from reaching the starving people of Sarajevo. The Serbs in a move to force the surrender of Sarajevans have cut off the delivery of food, medicine, fuel, water, power, gas and all other essentials. Without fuel the water pumps are one by one grinding to a halt, further lowering the availability of water from 2.5 litres a day at present to perhaps total scarcity in a few days. It is reported that food supply in Sarajevo is likely to last a maximum of two weeks, and that also at bare minimum level of a few hundred grams per person per day.

The picture is clear. Those who have not yet been killed by bullets and mines will have to be finished off by starvation and disease. If ever there was a concerted move to eliminate a whole people just because of their religious difference, then it is happening in Bosnia. Thousands of innocent, unarmed Bosnian men, women and children have been killed just because the Serbs and Croats want their land. It is an aggression of the most barbaric type against a people.

There are two major sentiments that guide our views about Bosnia-Herzegovina. We want an immediate stop to the genocide that is being perpetrated against the Bosnians there. We demand an immediate cessation of the violence. Following the end of the violence, we want a negotiated settlement of the issue. But frankly, the situation is being dictated by the force of arms, and not that of logic or civilized values.

We have done so in the past and do so again — express our utter disgust at the double-faced role that western powers have played in that region. They turned the other way while the Serbs and the Croats massacred the Bosnian Muslims, forcing us to wonder how far religious bias actually clouded the so-called secular western mind. With all their concerns for human rights and democracy, they did nothing to save the helpless Bosnians. By their arms embargo, they only helped the genocide further, because all it did was to keep the Bosnians unarmed, while the Serbs had free access to the former Yugoslavian munition factories.

The role of the Muslim countries in not being able to put sufficient pressure upon the United Nations, or the western powers to play a more evenhanded role, showed — as never before — how little clout the Muslim allies of western countries have. The OIC's resolution after resolution brought little solace to the suffering Bosnians, as they never went beyond pious words.

We hope that the latest OIC Foreign Ministers Conference now being held in the Pakistani capital will chalk out some effective means — in terms of men, material and force — that will help to restore some semblance of justice and fairness for a people valiantly struggling for their most fundamental of all rights — their right to live.

Bravo!

Do we now dance, jubilant over our promotion to place 12 up from the abyss of poverty? No one in this land has done so. Even the government has let it pass as a credit-claiming opportunity. Very unusual for a government, for any government. Why? Evidently because no one in his senses glazes over being a little less smelly than what he was only days back. The government never told the people that the nation was that poor. Otherwise it couldn't spend so lavishly every evening on Iftar good's during the month of abstinence — Ramadan. Or the spacious roads of new Dhaka couldn't be choked with cars or our missions abroad be housed in the costliest quarters in the costliest cities of the world. The city population, literate and well-fed and with a lot of ambition, never cared to believe that Bangladesh was indeed among the poorest three in the world. So theirs was not the pleasure it was to rise a little above the poverty ladder.

The GNP is perhaps an index whereby nations can be ranged and arrayed in a certain fashion. But per capita figures derived from that can be as misleading as anything. First of all it isn't true of any individual in the land. Last of all it is untrue of all individuals of the land. For all one knows, most of the nations that come off worse than Bangladesh in the latest World Bank list, specially the African ones like Tanzania and Madagascar, may not be indeed in a shape bleaker than Bangladesh, if judged in state-of-the-individual terms. Wherever poverty is more shared than Bangladesh, people should be generally living better than they do here. No talk of poverty alleviation can be meaningful without having on the cards a programme for reducing the gap between the so-few commanding almost all of the wealth counted in GNP figures and the so-many that take the niggardly left-overs.

It must be something from our rabidly anti-imperialist past that we somehow feel good to see United States coming eighth on the WB list of GNP per capita table and Britain having no berth at all among the first fortunate dozen. Perhaps this again proves the futility of such tables in measuring the financial clout of nations.

From the rock-bottom to some rungs upwards — however lean the achievement may be, this is something for Bangladesh. From a population growth rate of 2.7 to something around 2.2 is good performance by all standards, specially in Bangladesh's circumstances. Bravo, Bangladesh!

Corruption Poses a Challenge for Our Law Makers

ON this morning of July 10, as I write, one does not know whether the promised Parliamentary Committee to probe into the Charges of corruption against the minister in charge of irrigation and flood control is going to be formed or not. The speaker has said that the Committee has died a natural death. The Opposition parties do not agree. Others from the Treasury Bench have reiterated the news of death, and with such an obvious sense of relief which makes the whole thing a little suspicious. Between the assertion of a finality of death and the claim that life is still there, the spectators of this bizarre drama are waiting, hoping the screen to be lifted again.

Supposing the screen remains there, separating the audience before and the actors behind. It will be the sad end of an evening's entertainment or worse. It will be a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous. The talk of corruption has nothing sublime about it. In fact, it is the most banal thing one could think of. But the Parliamentary Committee was something quite different. It all came in the high chivalric fashion: throwing the glove of challenge by the accused and the taking it up by the challenger. This was high drama and what is more it marked the promise of a

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Sangsad coming to its own. If carried to its logical conclusion, it would have raised the Sangsad and its Speaker in credibility, and it would have done credit equally to the Government and the Opposition, perhaps a little more to the Government than the Opposition. By drawing the lid over a seething cauldron, the Speaker has not done justice to his high office, and if he has done it under duress then he has forfeited nearly all the merit he has won so far. But I must stop here and remind myself that the issue is not dead yet, and those who, in a mood of obduracy or diffidence, if not in a sudden fright, have abandoned the game, may return to the field.

Everybody prays and hopes that the Committee will be formed and this will be, to use an overused journalistic, shot in the arm of our ailing democracy. We leave it on this note of uncertainty and turn to the ageless and inexhaustible theme: corruption. If prostitution is the oldest trade, corruption is the oldest malady. Unfortunately, like many practised after-dinner speakers, I do not have a Book

of Quotations handy and I have to start in a rather matter of fact way. We have corruption all around us, and according to many amongst us, it is on the increase. I do not know, I can only say that if the general opinion would have it so, it cannot be dismissed lightly. What I sometimes find difficult to explain is this: We, as a people, seem to have accepted

corruption as something quite normal and unavoidable and yet we seem to expect our politicians to be clean and beyond reproach. Our expectations are often belief. We grumble and grouse, not bothering to consider whether it is at all possible for politics and politicians to be clean, other things remaining the same. I could as well say, other things ensuring the steady growth of a culture of corruption.

In fact our attitude to corruption, in its familiar form, is, if anything, ambivalent. We disapprove of corruption in the

abstract, not so in its concrete manifestation. High officials who have been charged for corruption and have lost their job as a punishment have not lost a whit in social terms. This is particularly true of money-related corruption. There really is no social stigma about getting rich quick and through means clearly dubious. If any one of these people will spend a few million taka over a wedding re-

ception, very few eyebrows will be raised. And not to be invited to such a dazzling social event will disappoint many of us. Maybe it is because of our general poverty that we have a weakness for wealth, in the same manner as, because of our dark skin we have a weakness for fair skin. Coming now to political corruption, that is money-related corruption in political circles, more particularly the political circle in power, we have to take into account one factor. This will be no excuse for cor-

ruption, but it may help explain why things are so. I am driven to this thought because we can still remember days when a politician of long standing could be poor without people asking why it was so. Very few politicians, and very few high officials had the reputation of being corrupt. There was perfect transparency about their worldly possessions. This is no longer the situation.

Now the factor responsible for political corruption — not the only factor though — is this: we have had a plutocracy before we had our democracy. The plutocracy was primarily the gift of the last regime, which made a religion of corruption. The change of regime has not hurt this class of people who amassed wealth in the recent past. And wealth has created its own culture, political culture included. The whole composition of the Parliament has undergone a significant change, as a recent study by Prof Tahukdar Maniruzzaman has shown.

The Bengali tradition of middle-class leadership in politics, stretching from A K Fazlul Huq to Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, is going to be a thing

of the past. The *daal-bhaat* message of today has an ironic ring about it, when we remember who uttered it first and with what conviction.

Plutocracy has brought its own compulsions in politics. We should not be surprised if — provided democracy does not die a natural death — charge of corruption in high places of politics becomes in Bangladesh as common as it has in Japan. Prevailing situation may well make corruption endemic.

It is against this backdrop that the significance of the proposed Parliamentary Committee is to be appreciated. The final rejection of the idea will be a most spectacular somersault of the party in power that it has yet staged. By resorting to that, the party may reap some short term gain but I doubt if it will. In a very confused scenario, our lawmakers are facing a challenge of proving their political skill, their sagacity and above all their good sense.

We are pleased that after an absence of several weeks from the columns of *The Daily Star*, caused by his other commitments, Prof Zillur Rahman returns to this paper as a regular columnist. As in the past, his 'Passing Clouds' will appear every other Tuesday, unless its publication is delayed or postponed for unavoidable reasons.

PASSING CLOUDS

Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

Ukraine Pipe Dream: A Button for 1,800 Warheads

by Andrei Martov in Moscow and Andrew Wilson in Brussels

The protracted and still unresolved dispute between Russia and Ukraine over the Black Sea Fleet, once the pride of the Soviet navy, shows just how uncomfortable relations are between the two nations. Fear, distrust and growing nationalistic feelings pervade such issues. Gemini News Service's Russian experts report that the stakes — and barriers to settlement — are heightened as the countries deal with nuclear war-

Ukraine: a new nuclear power



forces when the Soviet Union split. Seventy per cent of the officers manning the weapons in question are Russians. Because they serve the CIS, they are not required to take the Ukrainian loyalty oath; but the Ukrainian government, which is responsible for their upkeep, is putting pressure on them. Uncertain of their future, many have been tempted to accept Ukrainian jurisdiction and be assured of a rank in the Ukrainian army. Full membership in the nuclear club means having the ability to man, maintain, operate, modernise and eventually replace one's nuclear armaments. In this respect, technically, Ukraine has a start. As part of the Soviet Union, it had one of the country's most advanced technological bases. Today it can make almost any part of a strategic rocket in factories in Dnepropetrovsk, Kirovograd and elsewhere. It can also produce the guidance,

launching and tracking systems to go with them. The only thing it cannot produce is nuclear warheads. That, too, is possible with time and application. Ukrainian experts put the cost of achieving and maintaining a Ukrainian military nuclear capability at about \$40 billion. The immediate focus of its military programme is meanwhile on penetrating the secrets of the mechanism for launching the rockets, and the electronic codes needed to shorten flight times and point them at suitable targets.

As part of its arrangement with the CIS, Ukraine already has an electronic safety catch to stop any missile being fired without its agreement. What it wants is a finger on the trigger, a condition known as positive operational control. US intelligence experts say that with hard work the Ukrainians should get what they want within a couple of years. At this point it is necessary

to take in a detail missing from much public discussion. Many observers overlook the length of time needed to acquire the ancillary items required to become a fully operational nuclear power. The conventional wisdom on the topic, often alarmist in tone, is influenced by Russia's desire to jerk the US into action.

In the cool view of Russian arms control experts, Ukraine's quest for a nuclear trigger is at this point no more than a test for its technology. If it succeeds, Ukraine can go on to other steps. To obtain nuclear status vis-a-vis Russia, Ukraine must not only acquire technology for missiles but a whole world of other equipment or facilities — test ranges, spy satellites, cosmic communications, airborne early warning stations, and so on.

All these will incur trouble and expense. If Ukraine wants to show nuclear muscle, it would have done better to hang on to the tactical nuclear weapons it turned over for destruction last year. Discussion focuses heavily on technical factors. There are no less important human and political ones.

At the popular level, most Ukrainians are neutral or indifferent to the nuclear weapons question, being taken up with the problems of daily existence in an economy even worse than Russia's. This gives a clear field to the politicians. They have contradictory impulses. On one hand, all are dedicated to making Ukraine a world power. Nuclear status has become a part of this. On the other, they want Western economic and technical aid and complain that everything has gone to Russia. They do not realise that aspirations to nuclear status are the surest way to the country's isolation.

military divide, CIS nuclear forces officers have been badly disoriented by the end of the Cold War. The divide between capitalist and communist states once offered them a clear professional role and a simple perception of the enemy.

Now, as one officer put it, they 'live in a vacuum,' and relations between senior commanders — Russian and Ukrainian — at command headquarters in Moscow are said to be soured by brusqueness and mistrust.

Such confusion lends weight to the urgency of a new round of what used to be called East-West disarmament talks. The threat of a new nuclear power may be for tomorrow, but accidents and illegal diversions are a danger for today.

ANDREI MARTOV is the pseudonym of a leading Moscow military commentator. ANDREW WILSON is the head of Europa, a Brussels-based news agency.

OPINION

Reducing the Size of Government?

Juned A Choudhury

Mr. Saifur Rahman, the oft-quoted Finance Minister, recently told his fellow Chartered Accountants that the government was planning to trim its size and a high level committee was being set up to examine the functions and structures of the different Ministries and other government offices which are at present highly overstuffed. He has also been quoted as saying that when he was Finance Minister in 1980-81, the payroll cost of the government was 1,100 crore Taka, whereas now it has increased to over 7,000 crore. 'Lesser the size, better the performance,' says he.

No sooner said than done. The government has already finalised formation of a six-member 'Administrative Re-organisation Committee' with Mr. Nurunnabi Chowdhury, Member, Planning Commission, as Chairman. Mr. Chowdhury is due to retire from service within weeks. Two other full-time Members are Mr M A Salam, a retired Secretary, and Mr. Nazrul Islam, a retired Additional Secretary. There will be three part-time Members: Dr AMM Shawkat Ali, Secretary, Post and Telecommunications; Mr B R Chaudhury, Director-General, NIPORT; and Eng. Maruf Mursheed, Joint Secretary (O & M), Ministry of Establishment.

Dr Shawkat Ali earlier worked with the USAID-funded Public Administration Efficiency Study (PAES) and also with the Matin Committee and has just returned from a two-week administrative study tour of UK Mr B R Chaudhury has earlier experience with the Mueyed Committee, the PAES and the Matin Committee.

So far so good. While this Committee will examine the justification of the existence of various government offices, the question that arises is whether there is justification for having a new Committee when the recommendations of earlier similar Committees have neither been discarded by the government nor have they been implemented.

During the last decade, the only successfully implemented report on administrative re-organisation was the Enam Committee Report. This Committee was formed in 1982 with Brigadier Enamul Huq Khan as Chairman and was called 'Martial Law Committee' on Orga-

To the Editor...

Parliamentary committee on corruption

Sir, Democratic decision to form a parliamentary committee to investigate into the changes levelled against a particular Minister and the Ministry has been lauded both by the politicians and the members of the public in general. In a democratic environment, this gesture is highly regular. We look forward to see how quickly and how effectively parliamentary decision is implemented.

We have a suggestion to make. Let the Minister against whom investigation goes on, resign temporarily until the investigation is over. Secondly we would like the parliamentary committee to be a kind of permanent one so that all the complaints against Ministers and MPs (treasury and opposition) are investigated by the same committee at any time to come.

Another ministerial committee may be formed to receive charges against civil servants, police officers, anti-corruption officers and allegedly corrupt officers of RAJUK, Customs and Income Tax offices and continuous investigations are carried out to wipe out corruption from the socio-economic and political atmosphere of the country. Our country cannot prosper steadily

Allegations of plagiarism

Sir, My attention has been drawn to the allegations of plagiarism against Dr Golam Hossain, Associate Professor and ex-Chairman of the department of Government and Politics of Jahangirnagar University, brought by noted political scientist Prof Talukder Maniruzzaman. The allegations were published in a section of the press recently.

There is no denying the fact that plagiarism is a criminal offence under existing laws of publication and it should not go unpunished. But the question is whether Dr Hossain is an accused of the offence. There might be similarities of opinions and ideas on certain issues between two scholars and researchers. That does not mean that one has plagiarised the other. The same case appeared to have happened be-

between Hossain's book, 'Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh', and Talukder's book, 'Military Withdrawal from Politics', in few chapters. The resemblance on some opinions and ideas could hardly prove that Dr Hossain has copied the book of Prof Talukder as has been charged by him. Hossain has used footnotes where his ideas and opinions resemble those of Talukder. He has given credit to him (Talukder) (pages 12, 168, 169, 199) and in the preface of the book, expressed gratitude to Talukder for extending cooperation in his efforts to write the book. His book was published nearly two and a half years earlier and its reviews were also published in various dailies and periodicals and also discussed on BTv. Can't one raise the question that the allegations after such a long time are rather intentional, particularly when Dr Golam Hossain has been under suspension till the Syndicate decides on report submitted by an enquiry committee after he pitched up a 'quarrel' with the VC of the university? Researchers and readers are in a better position to judge the allegations by comparing the two books.

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