

Remembering Nazrul

by Arshad-us-Zaman



sands of miles away would describe so vividly the victorious march of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk — the rhythm, the ecstasy of victory — profoundly moved my friend and colleague Atao, scion of a martial people. This was printed in our Pakistan Postasi. Our magazine had a tiny circulation but it was distributed to all in the media and intellectuals. It took everyone by storm. Atao's translation was reprinted by many newspapers.

My next encounter with Nazrul was in 1970. I had managed a transfer to Dhaka as the Director of Public Relations and Joint Secretary to the Government of East

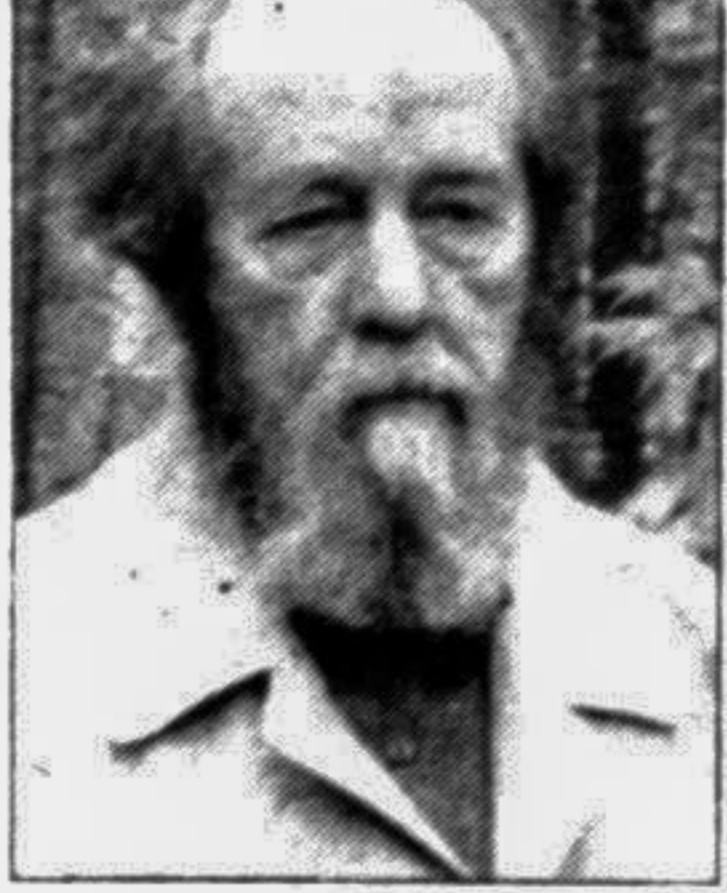
Pakistan although my normal place of posting should have been Islamabad. I had visited Dhaka a year before and had become convinced that my motherland was on the anvil of big events. In 1970 a Turkish press delegation visited Pakistan. The Foreign Secretary Sultan Mohammad Khan, with whom I had served in Turkey, asked me to accompany the delegation in its visit to various parts of Pakistan. In the delegation there was my friend Shevket Rado, editor of the largest pictorial weekly. During their visit to Dhaka, they had a complete exposure to cultural life here. Nazrul fascinated them. They

were thrilled by the performances at the Bulbul Academy. In my Directorate of Public Relations there was a film division whose head was Abul Khair, well known actor of film and stage. He came with the proposal for a film on Nazrul, first such venture by our department. I gave it my enthusiastic support. Abul Khair, who had unbending energy, set about the task thoroughly. He travelled everywhere including Churulia, the birth place of the poet in Burdwan in West Bengal. He went to Karachi, where the poet had been stationed during his career in the army. Khair prepared a fine colour documentary on Nazrul, which was ready in early 1971. Political events had taken a dramatic turn and neither Khair nor I had any interest in releasing the film then.

Shortly after the beginning of the War of Liberation Abul Khair told me that he wanted to move to Calcutta, like many others, because he felt he might be arrested by the Pakistani military since he was so frequently in the house of Bangabandhu at Road 32, Phamandi R/A. I tried to hold him back by saying that the Pakistani military would arrest me first since I was also frequently at that address. Finally in the middle of 1971 Khair went over to Calcutta with the Nazrul film securely under his arm. After Liberation Khair returned with the Nazrul film. In a cinema hall in Dhaka in free Bangladesh we screened the film with President Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury as Chief Guest.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman brought Nazrul Islam from Calcutta to Dhaka. He lived in a house in Dhanmondi. Like thousands of other Bengalis I visited the poet, whose soul-stirring poems had inspired us all. He is best described as the meteor, which appeared on the skies of bengal, cut a majestic path, burnt out and fell in a long silence as he had written in his unforgettable poems.

Solzhenitsyn has No Time for Writing: "It's Time to Start Rebuilding Russia"



GREETED with bread and salt and the emotional cheers of thousands, Alexander Solzhenitsyn returned to his homeland last Friday after 20 years of exile and said he will never write again. "I have already written all of my books and fulfilled my literary task," he told the ITAR-Tass news agency. "Now I don't have any time for writing. It's time to start the hard work of rebuilding and reviving Russia."

Solzhenitsyn's writings got him sent to the gulag as a young man in World War II and expelled from the Soviet Union in KGB handcuffs. His works detailing the cruelty of the communist system also won him the Nobel Prize in literature and acclaim as Russia's conscience and greatest living writer.

Solzhenitsyn, 75, looked pale and tired after his 38-hour trip from Vermont. "Hurrah!" shouted about 6,000 people who had stood in the rain for hours waiting for him to arrive.

"I know I am coming to a Russia that is torn, discouraged, disoriented, changed beyond recognition, convulsively searching for itself, for its own true identity," Solzhenitsyn said in a 10-minute speech. "I

hope in meeting with many people to verify my impressions and I am ready to revise them. But I would like during these meetings to help to find together with you a true path out of our 75-year-old quagmire, to find a future so that our people, our children, finally will discover the light of spiritual calm."

Solzhenitsyn stood with his sons Stephan and Yermolai and his wife, Natalia, who clutched a handful of white flowers. One of the signs held by the crowd read: "We ask for forgiveness, Welcome to your homeland. Before you all of Mother Russia is waiting for you."

Someone asked him whether Russia could be revived. "Yes," he said. "It will be difficult, not easy or fast, but we have lived through other hard times... Truly, our fate is in our own hands, beginning with every step of life, with every small choice... How life goes depends on us, and not on how someone from above in Moscow or somewhere else sends down a decision."

From Vladivostok, Solzhenitsyn plans to travel by train across the country to see the sweeping changes Russia has undergone since he was exiled from the then-Communist police state under KGB guard in February 1974.

He will live in a red-brick home over looking the Moscow River on the outskirts of the capital.

On his first stop on Russian soil in the Far Eastern city of Magadan, Solzhenitsyn stooped and touched the ground, looking exultant as a crowd of journalists and well-wishers pressed around him. "I am so overwhelmed with so many different kinds of emotions," he said.

Solzhenitsyn paid homage to those who perished in

labour camps in the region, the symbolic heart of the Soviet penal camp system. Magadan is in the Kolyma region, where an estimated three million inmates died in the camps from exposure and exhaustion. "I come to bow to the Kolyma land where may hundreds of thousands of our countrymen, who were executed, are buried... Today, in this period with so much political change, people easily forget these millions of victims," he said in a voice throbbing with emotion.

Solzhenitsyn, who hopes to

serve as an inspiration to Russia as it wrestles with the transition from communism, blamed the oppression of the Stalin era for many of Russia's problems. "The sources of today's flood of problems in the land are from those times," he said. "According to ancient Christian tradition, the earth is where the innocent victims are buried and it becomes holy, and we will hope that the Kolyma region will become the light for the future recovery of Russia."

AP report from Vladivostok

Gazi Abdulla-hel-Baqi, Assistant Registrar, Khulna and part-time teacher of English, Khulna University took part in an open to everyone international poetry contest "A Poem for Peace" in English, French, Italian, Spanish and German held at Torino in Italy in April 1994 and was awarded "Prize of Merit." His poem "Peace Lost and Regained" which is published in a special book by Centro Studi Cultura e Societa is reproduced below.

In the bleak distance of eternity
Is it not still told a Star of Order to be born?
The news as usual spread in skies, air and world,
For which the whole humanity remains worried.

But nobody knows who does what —
The moon and galaxies disappear from the skies,
Waves and billows recede from all banks,
Love and hope leave their sanctuaries.

None is able to cool the fire in stone
None is able to write Peace
On that sun that never sets.

Look at those flags, the proud fluttering of which
Engenders the innocent fall of
head
heart
and hands.

Ah! look at the immunity of Truth losing appallingly
How a Neanderthal peeps through a gunman's eyes!
Alas! the soul of Plato is mobbed and howling.

Coming down from the summits of conferences and meetings
As a daily auto-suggestion sing in unison with me:
"Throw all armaments in seas,
MAN is to be called PEACE
WORLD is to be named PEACE, and
Hoist all flags with PEACE inscribed."

Thus save the summits of
Pyramid, Tajmahal and the Statue of Liberty.

Nasiruddin: Man of the Century

Continued from page 9
specially for the Muslim community, could not be continued where 55% of the population was Muslim.

Cause of Women

It was again Nasiruddin who felt the urgent need to do something for the Muslim women.

Special issue of Shaogat was dedicated for the women writers and he inspired Muslim women to write. In this connection, one is tempted to recall from a letter by Sufia N. Hossain in response to the editor's invitation, where she expressed her regret as she was not accustomed to write an article but she lamented to see the list of a very few Muslim women writers. The letter was dated 23 July 1929. However, it may be noted that Sufia N. Hossain used to contribute poems and short stories to Shaogat regularly. Shaogat brought out the special issue in Bhadra 1336, where the editor commented on education of women and their rights, overlap with veil, prejudice and oppression in the name of religion. Begum Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain, who was a pioneer among Bengali Muslim women litterateurs, used to contribute to Shaogat. Mrs. M Rahman, Mrs. R S Hossain, Razia Khatun Chowdhurani, Akhter Mahal Syeda Khatun, Sajeda Khatun, Motaheera Banu, Mahmuda Khatun Siddique are also to an extent the products of Shaogat.

Nasiruddin did not stop here. He thought it fit to bring out a separate weekly for women. In July 1947 Weekly Begum was published from Calcutta and Begum Sufia Kamal was its first editor. After partition of British India when Nasiruddin's printing press was also a target of Hindu-Muslim riot he decided to move to Dhaka in 1950 and started publishing Shaogat and weekly Begum which was the first such magazine for women in the erstwhile Pakistan.

Begum Club

Nasiruddin practically imbued the women community with the spirit of freedom of expression. To get rid of conservatism and to spread the idea of free thinking Mohamad Nasiruddin established Begum Club where women writers exchanged views and ideas. Weekly Begum and the Club had in fact played pioneering role in bringing qualitative changes in the mental make-up of the women in our middle class society. Nasiruddin's only daughter Noorjahan Begum steered the wheel of the vehicle which got rolling by grand old man.

The Weekly Begum is now at the command of Noorjahan but there is hardly two opinions that it requires to be continually upgraded to keep pace with the fast changing technology of communication.

Shishu Shaogat

Mohamad Nasiruddin gave a serious thought to groom the

A Forum for Nazrul

Nasiruddin provided a forum to Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam to his meteoric rise and it was Nasiruddin who always projected Nazrul and his works until his death. On the occasion of his birth anniversary in 1993 Nasiruddin recalled the colourful struggling life of poet Nazrul Islam and said his last writing Kabir Mukti (salvation of the poet) also appeared in the Shaogat. Since the death of Poet Nazrul in 1976 Nasiruddin, along with other litterateurs, advocated relentlessly for establishment of a mausoleum on the grave of the poet and an institution where research could be carried on the poet's works. In May 1976, Nasiruddin raised his voice for a house in the name of Nazrul which would be a store house of the poet's works, musical records, cassettes and research writings on him published at home and abroad along with props used by the poet. However, Nazrul Institute was set up in the same house at Dhanmondi where Nazrul passed his last days of life. Nasiruddin presented the nation with his monumental work 'The Age of Shaogat in Bengali Literature' consisting 1700 pages. The Nazrul Institute also published a book by Nasiruddin Nazrul Islam in 'Shaogat Age'. These are indeed an added gift from Mohamad Nasiruddin for which the nation will remain ever grateful.

Nasiruddin was decorated with many prestigious awards which include Ekushe Padak, Swadhina Padak and Bangla Academy Fellowship. One could believe it or not Nasiruddin was found reciting the very poem of Rabindranath Tagore 'Pather Sathi' which he published in the second issue of Shaogat, before embarking on his last journey from this world.

Tribute

Continued from page 9
lished the weekly Begum. He also established the Begum Club more to serve the cause of women.

He was never lured by fame or power. Rather he was shy to acknowledge any kind of appreciation for his magnanimous deeds.

The larger section of the society threatened him for doing something allegedly un-Islamic. But they knew themselves very well that in Islam to acquire knowledge is a must for every body irrespective of sex. But to dominate the womanfolk and to treat them virtually as slaves had been the preferred process in the society. Nasiruddin pointed this out boldly and firmly. He tried to establish the fact that the Muslim women are national human beings who have every right to know and enjoy the cultural and literal heritage of the country.

His longevity was a boon to the nation. No doubt we suffer a tremendous loss of an efficient editor and a great reformer in his death.

D-Day Commemoration Gathers Momentum

Kofi Akumanyi writes from London

THE programme to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-Day in Britain is under way with a series of high profile activities of military and civilian events to remember the day — 6 June 1944 — that changed the course of World War II.

The national commemorative theme — the nation gives thanks — is designed to provide Britons with an opportunity to remember the D-Day legacy of democracy, free speech and the British way of life.

The highlights includes a parade of 20,000 veterans in Southampton on England's south coast, and other military events. Churches also play an important role, with special services throughout the country.

On 14 and 15 May, seven overseas air forces participated in 'Fighter Meet 194', the annual show the Royal Air Force (RAF) had selected as its tribute to the men and machines of D-Day.

The Netherlands, France, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, the United States and New Zealand flew in modern jet aircraft to join a total of 70 in the displays, while a range of World War I and World War II machines, including a replica Fokker Triplane as well as Lancaster, Spitfire, Hurricane, Dakota, Corsair, Catalina, Messerschmitts and Fieseler Storch, were on show.

Commenting on the commemorative programme, Prime Minister John Major said he hoped people of all ages would participate in a national thanksgiving this summer. The 50th anniversary of D-Day is a huge national event and I intend it to be commemorated on a national scale. It changed our future — the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy laid the foundations of the peaceful and free Europe we take for granted today," he added.

Queen Elizabeth II and other members of the Royal Family will be at the centre of all the commemorative events both in Britain and France. On 4-5 June, they will be in Portsmouth, southern England, where the programme includes a military display and a Guildhall dinner with the French President Francois Mitterrand.

On Sunday 5 June, after attending an open air church service, the Queen and some members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, and government officials will travel to Normandy on HMV Britannia.

On arrival the same day, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York will observe a parachute drop by British, Canadian, French and Polish forces near Ranville. Then, the Prince will unveil a statue at Ranville and review the parachute regiment's beating retreat while the Duke of York attends at Te Deum service at

How American Journalists Covered World War II

Voss, historian at the Portrait Gallery, the story of how that war was reported unfolds.

Of the thousands of American reporters who covered the war, the exhibition focuses on 33 photographers, combat artists, reporters, broadcasters and censors who especially stood out.

World War Two journalists faced many of the same hazards soldiers did. By the end of the war, 37 American journalists had died, including Ernie Pyle, the Scripps-Howard newspaper columnist, whose sympathetic coverage of the average enlisted man earned him the nickname, "soldier's friend."

Pyle who won a Pulitzer Prize for distinguished reporting in 1944, died from a Japanese sniper's bullet on the lonely Pacific island of Ie Jima.

A number of correspondents became prisoners of war, among them Life magazine photographer Carl Mydans and his wife Shelley, who spent 21 months in Japanese prison camp in the Philippines.

Edward R Murrow's broadcasts from London during the German air blitz brought the war into America's living rooms with unmatched vividness.

His broadcasts had moral

Memories in Normandy

Continued from page 9

thereby saving him from the fate of many of his comrades who were shot on the spot, below him. The townhall also has the first American flag which flew over the French soil and one of the first markers of "freedom way" followed by General Patton from Utah Beach.

Along the coast, Pointe du Hoc is incontestably the most spectacular place. This steep cliff, overlooking a narrow pebble beach, held out for two days against the American rangers. Of the German fortifications, only a chaotic mass of bunkers remains, devastated by bombs and by time. However, if one looks at the marks made by the shells fired, one can well imagine the violence of the combat between men. From the only bunker which was later restored, one can sense the shock and fear that these defenders must have felt when this Armada suddenly came into view on the horizon. A revealing detail is a sign at the entrance to the place saying, "Possibility of explosive materials. No excavating allowed."

A Final Salute

Although most of these sites can be viewed with the eyes of an average tourist, even though they are the witnesses of a tragic history, the cemetery and Normandy Memorial in Colleville-sur-Mer call for respect and meditation. In an area of nearly seventy hectares, 9,386 Americans give their fi-

weight, and his reports on the war in Europe prepared Americans for the inevitability of their involvement in that conflict," Voss said.

Murrow was later to serve as director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) from 1961 to 1964.

Exhibit-goers may watch videotaped interviews with distinguished journalists, including Army cartoonist Bill Mauldin on the subject of his much-publicized encounter with General George Patton. Patton felt that Mauldin's gritty satires on the lot of the average soldier were fomenting rebellion in the ranks.

In other interviews, CBS commentator William Shirer describes his first impressions of Adolf Hitler and his experiences with censorship in wartime Germany; John Hersey tells how he came to write "Hiroshima," the story of the effect of the atomic bomb on the citizens of that Japanese city.

World War Two was a landmark for journalism in several respects, Voss told USIA in a May 12 interview.

"It was the first war broadcast via radio," he observed.

"The photo essay, pioneered by Life photographers Margaret Bourke-White and Carl Mydans, matured and reached state of the art.

"The technology of printing photos advanced, as did camera technology; there were faster lenses, faster film. You could take photos at night.

"Telecommunications had developed so that stories could be transmitted quickly. Print reporters found they could get through to their home offices in two or three minutes, provided they could get through the censor," Voss said.

The need to censor material that would have helped the enemy was accepted by journalists, "and they were willing to go along with the ground rules," Voss said.

Many exhibit items came from censorship records at the National Archives, Voss said. Others came from various sources, including the reporters themselves, he said.

—USIS



This photo, taken in early 1944 shows Marshal Rommel (2nd R) inspecting building work of the Atlantic Wall as the German army goes into high alert in anticipation of the allied invasion. —AFP photo