### LOOKING AHEAD TO 1995

## Still Dreaming Those Schoolboy Dreams



HIS year will be special, for it will mark the 50th anniversary - not the end of World War Two great event as that was - but of my entering a classroom for the first time.

World War Two and I entered the classroom together. for we impressionable little tots were psyched by our teachers into believing that the skies would fall if someone called Hitler won the war. To prevent that calamity, we were instructed to bring a cigarettetinful of palm kernels to school each day.

It was never actually revealed to us how paim kernels would win the war. But our teachers were so hyped up the competition between those of us in Class One and the other classes - and also between the junior and the senior school that many of us were induced to spend part of each morning hunting for palm kernels in the bush before going to school

Yet woe unto us if we turned up late to school. We would be whipped for our unpatriotism as if we had been on Hitler's side. But oh. great was the day when we tiny Class One kids came first in the palm kernel collection stakes. Our teacher would be puffed up with pride - for all of five minutes - before resuming his merciless whipping of those who could not recite their tables flawlessly.

I bring this up because 50 years on, many Africans of my generation feel conned to within an ace of our sanity. We kids were told by our teachers. who had been told by their employers (the churches) which had been enlisted by the British Colonial Office, which was serving the British War Office, which was servicing the ego of Winston Churchill, that Hitler was out to enslave us.

Yet when the war ended.

For Ghanaian novelist, playwright and journalist Cameron Duodu. 1995 marks a special anniversary — it will be 50 years since he entered classroom. Perhaps overcome by the emotions of his memories, he has a dream about Africa ...

even those members of our families who had actually risked life and limb in Burma or East Africa, had to resort to rioting in order to force the British to fulfil the promises mainly about "democracy" and economic welfare - that these ex servicemen' believed the British had made to them Poor chaps — they were taught to believe that only a man called Goebbels indulged in propaganda

So the "ex-servicemen" joined hands with the African politicians who were agitating for the British to leave our shores. And what happened when the British handed power over to our politicians? Most of the politicians developed an amnesia equal to that of the British. Instead of breaking down the walls of the jails into which the British had thrown our outspoken leaders. our own politicians expanded the jails and added new of fences with hideous names such as "subversion" or "conspiracy to conspire" to those for which the British jailed them, such as sedition or criminal libel.

As for our economic well being, the least said about it

look into a crystal ball for 1995 and this is what I saw:

January 1995: An African Parliament is created with only 128 men and 120 women. voted for by all Africans. First item on the agenda: how to bring permanent peace into the lives of the Tutsi and the Hutu in both Rwanda and Burundi. Second item: how to repatriate all of Africa's refugees. Third item: how to transform Africa's huge, blood thirsty armies into productive organisations whose disciple is harnessed to (a) cultivate vast areas of land for food: (b) avert disaster in drought-stricken areas by drilling wells and (c) build enduring roads, using local stones and rocks, in the manner of Roman cobble-

February: An African Economic Community is treated. It organises pools of exportable commodities, into which all the producers of commodities currently ex ported in their unprocessed form, contribute money to build factories for manufactur ing finished products for ex port. Henceforth, no cocoa. tea, coffee, tinker, sisal, cot ton, sugar, meat and skins or,

other African country to be sold at the same price as the country of origin. Royalty payments to be collectable without exchange control.

April: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Nigeria Ghana and Sierra Leone join South Africa in selecting a Pan-African Cricket Team. This team beats the West Indies by four Tests to three in its first outing. Pakistan is next on the list. followed by India Applications from Australia and England are under consideration Sri Lanka and New Zealand are also on the waiting

May: Athletes in the Black Diasporá, a new body, cafi a Pan-African Olympic Games, to select athletes to represent Mother Africa at the next Olympic Games and World Championships. Europe and "White America" decide to take Africa to the International Court of Justice at the Hague for "grand larceny" of human resources. Africa counter-sues. claiming reparations in respect of slavery and colonial ism. The Court decides that the matter be settled at a special "Colour Olympics," at which black and white athletes



the better. Who now remem bers, for instance, that an ordinary "clerical officer" could aspire to ownership of a bicycle within one year of obtaining employment?

Pity that we cannot move the hands of the clock back and correct the mistakes of the past. But what about moving them forward: what would one like to see in Africa this coming year?

I dreamt I was allowed to

minerals can leave Africa as should compete against each raw materials. South Africa is other, to see who will win made technical consultant to

June: A Congress of African Women decides that during divorce proceedings women should disclose all their wealth as a sign that they are truly equal to men.

They do not like the planting of an Israeli embassy, flying the blue and white Star of David flag, in Amman. They do not want to meet Israeli tourists flooding into the kingdom. As The Jordan Times editorialised: The national pst

chology" cannot be expected to

be "transformed overnight

from an atmosphere of animos-

. ity and mistrust to one of trust." Nullifying one agreement while adhering to another will not lead the Arabs to trust is-

By procrastinating and prevaricating, Rabin has undermined his own and Israel's credibility and the validity of the Oslo accord. Syria and Lebanon now doubt the seriousness of any peace treaty signed by the Jewish state and Jordanians question the wisdom

of their treaty. Israel's refusal to commit itself to withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon has deadlocked negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

If there is no early breakthrough in 1995 on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese tracks Rabin's fragile coalition government will have to postpone beacemaking until after Israel's 1996 general election. If this happens the peace pro-

pronunciation of the new

able product. The will is there

but the grammar and composi-

tion have resorted to hartal or

blockade. Such fashionable

users of English care a hoot

whether 'grammar' is 'gramer'

(no. it is urban!), and

composition refers to the

English sentences or to pho-

comes in distorted English via

the microphone. The incorrect

pronunciation of foreign

proper nouns/names could be

tolerated initially, but when

the news sentences follow a

free grammar policy, it is not

to support our free market

policy. Before going on the air.

the newsreader is supposed to

be briefed by the research cell

(bacteria-free) on the correct

The local wireless news

tography.

initiative from collaborationist"

The defeat of peace-making could drive the Arab world to the brink of another "disaster" on the scale of the catastrophes which followed Arab defeats in the wars of 1948 and

MICHAEL JANSEN was

words in the bulletin. The

same research unit can also

medium private school. He

tells me that English is taught

in spoken Bengali! While living

abroad, he started in KG in

English, and did not know the

native tongue: so he had to be

taught English in English, as

the local teacher did not know

Bengali. Now he is bold enough

to point out the lapses in my

sentences. So I use him

(hoping that Harkin would not

object) as a spell-checker,

when in a hurry, as the dic-

tionary or spell checker in the

computer word processor

shows the American spelling

English should also be spoken

In the local English classes,

on the screen.

My son is in an English-

brief Radio Bangladesh.

ATE Professor Nurul Momen, the playwright with a penchant for writing witty dialogue. portrayed the character of a household servant, Abdul by name, who had two kinds of wage demands. If he was al lowed to make household pur chases, his salary was negotiable and could be brought down to Taka fifty per month. Without right to household purchases and access to market, his salary demand was four-fold more. On enquiry as to why the first wage demand was lesser than the last one the servant told the employer that prosperity of all, servants to sovereigns, thiefs and thugs.

began from free market econ

omy which yields fringe bene

The British East India

fits sweeter than salary.

Company perhaps had advance knowledge about this free market operation by servants and their benefits that lay at the fringe. So far the wages were concerned, the Company paid a ludicrously paltry sum of five pounds starling to other employees including Robert Clive as his annual pay as a clerk. The pay Clive received was not enough even in the theri Indian standard, to keep body and soul together. But Clive's body gained weight in India and his soul did not live his body in disgust for want of nourishment. After ten years when Clive returned to England, his neck grew big belly bulged out and the pocket contained ten thousand pounds sterling in cash, other valuables in kind notwithstanding. The difference between Professor Momen's domestic servant and those of East India Company did not lie in kind but in quantum. In their common pursuit of sucking both pilfered the master's purse and traded the trust Robert Clive and his legion of other English looters milked and looted the then India, a political carrion exposed to hungry vultures, local or alien, who joined hands in their common bid of unholy gain This is an old game played in the dark or under shadows. In every phase of history the powerful or those nearer to power source grabbed and

N September 1989 —

when I first met him.

Abdur Rahman did not

impress me at all. A squeaky

complexion did not reflect his

affiliation with the tough

est station călled Supatin. Our destination - Katka Game

Sanctuary which was located

three hours away by boat. We

were passing through Chhoto

Katra - a tiny creek in the

eastern Sundarbans - this

gentleman Abdur Rahman and

three others were accompany-

the misty moist air of the late

September overcast hight. Our

boat was moving slowly pierc-

ing through the ghostly silhou-

ette of the forest on the both

sides. Occasional hootings of

owls and sounds of flying wings

among leaves only hightened

In this particular sport last

year, a divisional forest officer

killed a notorious man-eating

tiger. The tiger was wanted for

killing a forest guard - Kawser

All. Kawser came to the forest

with three others to collect

of collecting seeds. The man-

eater caught hold of him just

as he came down from the

trawler and stepped inside the

forest. His friends, who were

carrying rifles, could not save

him as they could not fire fear-

ing the bullet might miss the

Katka rest-house at 8 pm with

a lot of enthusiasm. I went to

the Katka forest authority

while rest of my team left for

Anyway, after reaching

target and kill Kawser.

our fears.

Our journey was spooked by

ing me with Mark-4 rifles.

We had started from a for-

wilderness of the Sunderbans.

### Distant Drum M N Mustafa

gorged riches and wealth which belonged to the people whom, ironically, the king or

his men professed to serve. On taking charge of all purchases for the Company, Robert Clive found his pockets weighed heavier. His tongue and tastes had much to choose from. With about 9 shillings visible pay per month, his invisible income soared and swelled. None questioned his prosperity for twenty years. On his return to England after founding an empire through tricks and chicanery the British suddenly got back their moral sense to question how an obscure urchin, picked up fostered and very unmeritedly raised to the highest pinnacle of affluence and pageantry by that deluded company.

In the art of pillerage or stealing, domestic servants like Abduls, and Lord Clives. Fouquets. Marlboroughs and Mazarins, wherever they stand socially, make a common fraternity. Picking at domestic or at state jevel is thieving both de jure and de facto. Servant Abdul or Duke Marlborough or Tax Collector Fouquet all stand on same plank shorn of their social status. Because of unscrupulous, silent and surreptitious picking by man vested with power, human trust changed direction from man to animal. King Charles II of England preferred his spaniel to human guard to sleep in his room, mate, litter and give suck. Frederick the Great of Austria allowed his greyhounds to sleep in his bed room, he raised monuments on their graves and gave order to bury them near his grave.

Anne, sister of Queen Marry, who died in 1695, was a timid girl but pure in morals and strong in feeling. She maintained her childhood friendship with Sarah Jennings for whom she sacrificed her royal status to establish parity with her commoner friend. On becoming the Sovereign. Queen Anne raised the status of Sarah's husband

from Earl to Duke of Marlborough. Sarah was promoted to a Duchess and was appointed Comptroller of privy purse, the Queen's personal finances. Using her hypnotic influence on the Queen, Sarah had her husband appointed Captain-General of land forces. Here the Captain-General found a virgin field to graze about and glean from. He embezzled huge money through a contractor who supplied bread for the English army. He collected toll of 2% from funds given by other nations to support English war efforts with France. It was brought to the notice of the Parliament which condemned the Duke by 276 to 175 votes and the Queen dismissed her life-time friend's husband from all offices. With character sullied. the Duke went on a self-exile

to wipe off the stigma of

thieving public money.

Born of poor Sicilian parentage with an Italian tongue and, as he claimed, a French heart Guilio Mazarini came to Paris first as a papal nuncio. He attracted the attention of French Chief Minister Richelieu who while dving. recommended to the five-year old King to make Mazarini the Chief Minister Mazarini thought everybody corruptible and was insensitive to integrity. With this built-in idea about human nature he started looting. Amid the destitution of French people Mazarin amassed a fortune which Voltaire reckoned at 200,000,000 francs. He deflected the military appropriations into his personal coffers. took exorbitant bribe to offer appointment and lent money to the king at high rate of interest. As an example of his affluence he gave one of his nieces a necklace which is still among the most costly jewelry in the world. But destiny did not allow him to enjoy the riches he pilfered. The hiding place of Mazarin's hoard was revealed to the king who confiscated the riches. The public

of Paris gave currency to a wit. Mazarin's physician Dr Guenot, who could not save Mazarin's life to enjoy the riches he built up dishonestly, was voted by the public to receive state honour. The people claimed that the doctor by not saving Mazarin's life did a national service. Because it was a good doctor who killed Mazarin.

Nicolas Fouquet, Superintendent des Finances of French Ministry of Finance under King Louis XIV, was a king of embezziement. In charge of tax collection and expenditure. Monsieur Fouquet misappropriated huge funds from public treasury and spent part of them to live luxuriously which aroused suspicion of the young king. He built a magnificent Chateau Vaux-Le-Vicomte at a cost of eighteen fullion livres in an area of three villages. He built a library with 27000 volumes. Women of highest nobility went secretly to give him company at extravagant pricès. Poets like Corneille, Moliere. La Fontaine graced his salon. He was an envy of all tax collectors. The King eyed Fouquet's

pomp and source of income with suspicion and instructed Chief Minister to probe the superintendent's methods and means of earning. In one evening on August 17, 1661 Fouquet invited the young King to a fete at Vaux. Six thousand guests were served on plates of silver and gold. Moliere staged a play for entertainment of the guests. It cost him 1,20,000 livres and his liberty. Biding his own time the King subsequently arrested Fouquet, brought him to trial which dragged on for three years and sentenced to imprisonment for sixteen years. He languished in the fortress of Penerolo, ruminating the varted tastes of black money and the consequent sourness it created.

in one of the paintings bought with stolen money by Fouquet was shown a squirrel climbing a tree. The squirrel asked himself - 'quo non ascendum' - to what may I not ascend? Abdul and his other friends may be told that ascension by foul means predestines equally a rough fail.

# A One-in-three Chance



Procrastinating on peace

Continued from page 9 thority.

During the second stage Israel is supposed to withdraw its troops from populated centres in the West Bank before the holding of a Palestinian election for a self-rule council. Instead, citing the need to

protect settlers illegally planted in Palestinian towns and villages. Rabin is offering a selection of unacceptable alternatives. Among them are: holding elections while the troops remain in occupation. partial pull-out, stemporary withdrawal, and joint control.

Palestinian Election Commissioner Saeb Erekat flatly rejects the alternatives and charges Israel with refusing to implement the Oslo accord. The object of the accord, he says, "is the gradual termination of the occupation" not "legitimisation of the occupa-

While stalling on the withdrawal of its occupation army from the West Bank, Rabin continues to build and expand its settlements there and round Palestinian East Jerusalem. This amounts to violation of the Oslo accord. which stipulates that neither side should do anything to preempt negotiations on the final status of the occupied territo-

For the process of accommodation between the Palestinians and Israelis to survive, Rabin will have to show that he is prepared to abide by the Oslo accord and end the occupation. He will have to do this in the first weeks of 1995 because the accord, the peace process and the Palestinian

National Authority are rapidly losing credibility among Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, while Islamic and secular leftist opponents of the peace deal are gaining ground.

If Rabin fails to observe the agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, there will be no peace with the Palestinians, and if there is no peace with the Palestinians there can be no peace with Syria and Lebanon.

Israel's low-level diplomatic relations with Morocco and Tunisia will be frozen if not suspended. And the Gulf rulers who expected the US to reward them with a regional settlement for their participation in the coalition waging war on Iraq in 1991 will be jeopardised.

If Rabin honours his commitment to withdraw from scraps of occupied Jordanian land by February. Jordan will pursue normal relations with Israel. But only at the risk of popular insurrection.

Success in Jordan in the absence of progress on the Palestinian front will be a source of instability, because a majority of Jordanians - and not just the Palestinian half of the population - remain suspicious of the peace deal King Hussein signed with Israel.

TE export of perish. Poor English, less export. One per cent less export is a few hundred crore less dollars per annum. The new national policy has confirmed the compulsory reintroduction of English from the school to the university stages. The weak areas are known to the curriculum experts, for remedial planning.

A sample scrutiny of local use and practice of English reveals the gaps the man-hours and teaching methods. The small advertisements, enriched with adjectives of tropical colours in our black-andwhite media suggest that more swimming lessons are needed for the navigation of English in this deltaic region. The atrocities literarily committed on the state electronic media indicate that even the users of English at the supervisory and business levels have become rusty under the tidal wave of

nationalism. The labels in English on our small-industry consumer goods packages provide evidence that English is not a consum-

the Community, with a remit to increase "value added" in Africa within five years. Otherwise, President Nelson Mandela will be sent back to Robben Island African Musical Exchange

March : African musicians \_ meet in Zaire and establish an Records made in any African country can be pressed in any

July: X#\$???\*\*+\*\*?

Gosh! My wife has kicked me awake because I have been talking in my sleep! Goodbye crystal bali. Happy 1995.

- GEMINI NEWS

cess will wither and die. The death of the peace process will lead to an increase in violent attacks on Israelis in the Palestinian occupied territories and south Lebanon. The Islamist opposition to the peace process will seize the

leaders. Pro-Western Arab rulers supportive of peace will be more vulnerable to destabilisation by Islamist militants.

Particularly susceptible are the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Kuwait. Egypt and Tunisia where mass unemployment. corruption, rising prices and misuse of resources have already produced popular discontent

Anger over the failure of the peace process could exacerbate discontent produced by the erosion of living standards of ordinary people in these countries and lead to "Algerianisation" (Islamist insurgency), full-scale civil insurrection, or coups.

1967.

born in the US. Itves in Cyprus. and has covered the Middle East for many years.

by Alif Zabr

Supati. I did not see much of Abdur Rahman later, but I and practised, (with occasional use of Bengali for the backward students in the lower classes). As for the numerous Tutorial schools seen on every second street, some of the elaborate signboards send me back to the dictionary! During my schooldays, the English Conversation class was separate and compulsory, and we had to face a viva voce test in this world language. Why not introduce such a system here

and now?

For the lakhs of Bangladeshis seeking jobs abroad. English is a vocational passport. The knowledge of English has no value if it cannot be used easily and confidently at the user's level. Further improvement comes from usage. Mastery is selfmotivated. If the foundation be right, the superstructure will take care of itself. Developing a style is another world of mystery, imagination and technique (good cooking comes from practice, not reading). Perhaps I am straying from the

topic under discussion.

#### by Khashra Choudhury

Fish-eater of the Sunderbans

heard a lot about him from the Katka game warden. middle-aged man. His pale-Just six months ago, Abdur

Rahman was posted to the Katka reserve. His job was to guard the forest from wood poachers, deer trappers and

Unfortunately, the fishes seemed to be less interested in baits during winter. So Abdur Rahman, driven by an abstruse urge for fishes, used to go down into the cold water to catch a fish with his bare

humid for the coast guards to bear. But it was the resting time for carnivorous animals. As they were approaching a

bush, suddenly Bazlu's eyes caught some movement in the bush. In awe, he saw this tiger looking straight in to his eyes. A cold feeling swept through



collecting twigs to feed the cleer. As Katka is far away from any habitation, very few shooters dare coming here. But this area was frequently visited by pirates. Abdur Rahman's job was just protecting the forest

from these thugs. But what stuck me about this guy was his fondness for fishes. As Katka was a serene place, one fish-monger and his group of fishermen and set up a hut. There were plenty of catch, specially in the late monsoon. There were plenty of fish to give away to the forest authorities' kitchen, i.e., to Abdur Rahman's appetite.

But in the winter, the Sunderbans canals were scarcely populated by fishes and the fish-monger called Chittababu of Charduani could not afford to provide Abdur Rahman and the others in the forest office any fish. In such a time, the rangers became vegetarian. Except for Abdur Rahman.

Abdur Rahman would even trade his life for a fish in his diffiner. Because, for him no fish mean no appetite.

His colleagues gathered from his behaviour that Rahman had in his thoughts fish, fish and only fish. He would have, at least one and a half kilograms of fish everyday which is the same amount of fish an otter consumes daily.

Deprived by the fishermen Abdur Rahman himself had to try his hand in angling.

hands!

in this part of the Sundarbans specially, which faces the Bay of Bengal, catching fishes by diving was a very dangerous game. The canal was infested with sharks and crocodiles - both having infamous reputation of being aggressive. Nobody, except Abdur Rahman, would even dream about diving in this water. And Abdur Rahman successfully fished everyday with his bare hands. And those aggressive water bodies, for reasons not understood, never attacked him. Perhaps they misunderstood Abdur Rahman for something else other than a

human being! Abdur Rahman's another passion was collecting floating materials from the sea. When he is on duty to guard the coastal areas he would keenly pick up bottles, coconuts, plastic materials for the whole day, pack these and take them

One day Rahman and another forest guard Bazlu, were looking for floating materials on the coast. They were halfway in to the famous Tiger Point in the Eastern Sunderbans. Bazlu was walking some ten to twelve steps behind Rahman. Rahman's eyes were fixed on the coastline where the jungle had started growing. The pattern of the jungle was irregular in this part. It grows here and there. It was 10 am and already very

his spine. "Stop"! he instinctively shouted to Abdur Rahman. But it was already too late. Rahman already came face to face with the tiger. The tiger lowered his head and drew back its hunches to launch a deadly leap.

Bazlu was carrying a rifle. But he dared not to make a single move for the 'surprised' tiger might feel provocated to rush on to him. But fortunately, the tiger, did not attack. The three of them stood still for seconds, which seemed like ages to Bazlu who later told me the story.

Finally, the tiger broke the deadlock by retreating among ghastly growls. Perhaps, it had lost its courage or that it did not have a strong appetite. It turned around and walked away slowly into the deeper

As the tiger disappeared. both the stunned men came to senses only to see where the tiger was standing a few moments ago. They found a partly eaten body of a male deer in

the bush. Once again an aggressive animal did not attack the fishcrazy Abdur Rahman. It must have been a miracle.

I had forgotten to ask Bazlu. when we were talking at the Katka forest office, whether Abdur Rahman brought some portion of the deer meat in the absence of its predator - the Royal Bengal