

## FOCUS

## BNP, Caught in a Timeless Pattern

by Chandra Shekhar Das

NOT a week has gone by since Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) lost the privilege of being the party in power having been forced to concede the popular demand for paving the way for fair elections under a caretaker government, the leaders of the party of the late military supreme-turned president Ziaur Rahman have indulged in pre-election oratory that can hardly be ignored as polemical pronouncement. It smacks of bellicosity and brinkmanship. Those who thought that completion of its five-year term in the national parliament or Jatiya Sangsads must have transformed some of its aggressive instincts into energies vital for the nourishment of a fledgling democracy have already been proved day dreamers. Seemingly resolved not to waste any time either on the road or in the reign, country's first female prime minister's political organisation has triggered off a violent verbal assault with the express view of stealing the thunder of its rivals, observers and analysts feel.

Unable to help its fate of being detached from the public because of its stay in power, the BNP simply had no affiliation or in more functional way, no participation in the recent popular resentment. The whole country lay in a state of stasis as the opposition alliance called an 'until the end' non-cooperation programme to send the ruling party packing first by annulling the unilateral February 15 elections and then handing the onus on a caretaker government Armed with the members of the law enforcement agency and truly powerful student front, Khaleda's BNP government had initially rejected the nascent demand for the cancellation of polls and the announcement of fresh elections under a neutral caretaker government as 'illegal tantrum' of the opposition instead of feeling the pulse of the body politic which by then had been beaten

ing pretty fast indicating the relapse of a chronic disease. Nobel laureate and perhaps the most influential litterateur of modern times, T S Eliot has a line in one of his poems: 'History is a pattern of timeless moments'. The sublime atom of a great poetic perception has significance even in the unpoetic reality of Bangladeshi politics albeit in a roundabout manner. Truly history, more precisely the political history of Bangladesh is a pattern of

**What is doubly mortifying, the BNP though assuming the throne with popular mandate in 1991 doing in the process a world of good to its previous image of being a party based in the cantonment, failed to distinguish itself from the eventuality encountered by the deposed general Ershad's government which simply abused all institutions during a reign marked by all out efforts to stay in power at any cost.**

timeless moments like the mathematical phenomenon of recurring decimal it keeps on showing the same figure as far as the qualitative change in the generic behaviour of the political parties is concerned. The word change typifies a stifling continuity of changelessness in our political arena. Not that the coming a cropper of the BNP government which many are attributing to a bloodless public coup was an unprecedented happening.

Stepping too much on the gas for the 'power' mileage robbed the former president Ershad of complete control over the different law enforcing agencies. There came a time towards the end of his nine year regime of autocracy when the police, army and all other licensed gun wielders in uniform turned silent witnesses to the demonstrative as well as the destructive sides of public wrath. The concept of duty and devotion underwent transformation and waited patiently for the emergence of a new order. All these happened

meeting after the fall from grace, the party in a flagrant violation of its commitment to the democratic norm declared crusade against the government employees who drove the last nail in the BNP government's coffin by abstaining from work.

Whether the bureaucracy and other government functionaries were justified in their action is an altogether different ethical debate but the ominous fact that a political party freshly out of power can sound so threatening is a very sad commentary on all that have been said about the deontological obligation for institutionalising democracy. Tolerance, one of the basic tenets of democracy has been appallingly missed in the utterance of party that has enjoyed power for full five years. If the BNP can react at its first exposure of being on the road then, it is really mind boggling even to imagine what exactly the reaction of the parties awaiting their turns at the helm will be. Logic of illogicality would be galore to justify all transgressions.

Reports published in different newspapers say that not only the bureaucrats, other professionals and intelligentsia have come under the 'scare campaign' of the BNP. With the party leaders encouraging unrefined, indiscreet aggression and vengeance, the reports of death threats over telephone come as no wonder. There could be a tendency in different quarters to play down this trend as brinkmanship associated in all pre-election campaign, nevertheless the bellicose spirit prevailing in the air is highly debilitating for the elusive prospect of having the democracy on a firm platform.

Existential concern or electoral gimmick whatever may be the reason behind such martial oratory, all parties with BNP in particular would do well to remember what Coleridge once said: 'In politics what begins with fear usually ends in folly.'

Having failed to arrest the tide of public resentment while being in power, the BNP still smarting under the humiliation of unwelcome negation is literally crying for the blood of those opposed them. The public meetings and the hastily made daisies, a rather late, and unimaginative response to that of the different opposition parties have been resonant with the minatory oration of the BNP leaders including the former prime minister. Throwing aside the sagacity of watching the next move of its political rivals, the BNP has launched a potentially dangerous campaign against its opponents. In its very first public

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

report suggests that the indications for a lasting peace are not favourable. The protagonists in this Balkan mis-adventure appear to be just bidding time, and with every passing day the attraction of a Bosnia divided along ethnic lines increases. It is not at all clear that in a country where the Serbs and to some extent the Croats have engaged in a holy war to annihilate the Bosnian Muslims, that all three can live side by side in the future as if nothing happened. This is a fractured nation, perhaps broken beyond repair, with both its economy and its soul in pieces.

I think it is time to accept the reality that the dream of a multi-ethnic Bosnia is dead. It died in the face of an aggressive Serbian nationalism nurtured on a notion of ethnic purity and, historical, almost mystical persecution complex. It died in the face of an European passivity, which would allow a people to be slaughtered, because of ambivalence about their Europeanness.

If one is to be honest, the only really viable future is that of three different, ethnically predominant states in the former Bosnia Herzegovina. The greatest danger is that the Bosnian 'Muslim state', being the weakest militarily and lacking in strong sponsors because of its Islamic underpinnings, will be swallowed up by the expansionist Serbs and/or Croats. In view of the history of the Bosnian debacle, it is unlikely that the rest of Europe would intervene in any meaningful way to prevent this eventual. To avoid this very probable outcome, it is imperative that the Bosnian Muslims be able to defend themselves. Since Europeans are not in favour of this option, the only hope of deliverance from future of tyranny under the Serbs/Croats for Bosnian Muslims, is to pray that the Americans will allow them arms to fight for their survival.

## LETTER FROM HARVARD

## Bosnia, a Fractured Nation



## REFLECTIONS

by Dr. Omar Rahman

pened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The Muslims have of course gotten the worst end of the deal. After suffering from the genocidal slaughter of the Bosnian Serbs and to some extent from the Croats, they are now faced with the prospect of a truncated state surrounded by enemies militarily much more powerful than them. The irony in all of this is that it is the Bosnian Muslim state that causes the most concern in Europe. The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in the 1990's. Immigrants are the new 'devil' for the European right, whether they be skinheads in Britain, the party of Le Pen in France, or the Neo Nazis in Germany. In an earlier era when European economies were booming, they welcomed compliant Turkish, North African, and South Asian immigrants (many of whom were Muslim) to do the low paying dirty jobs that were beneath the dignity of the native Europeans. In a new world economy, with Europe falling behind in the economic productivity race, these immigrants who were welcomed with open arms have suddenly become a problem.

The fact of the matter is that the Bosnian Muslims never had a chance. Their tragedy was that they happened to be Muslim, at a time when militant Islam has supplanted the Soviets as the ultimate enemy in the consciousness of the west. The spectre of a Muslim state in Europe was, to put it mildly, a most unpalatable prospect for the rest of Europe, particularly Britain and France. The Muslim card was played masterfully by the Serbs who capitalised on the historical antipathy of Christian Europe to the spread of Islam. The last time that the Muslims had a significant visible presence in Europe was when the Ottoman Turks nearly captured Vienna in the 16th century. Images of the crusades, the holy fight of Christendom against militant Islam were the unspoken rhetoric of this propaganda war by the Serbs.

In more recent times, a resurgent right wing in France has scapegoated the Muslim

North African immigrant population as responsible for the economic woes of France in