

Financing Industry

Lack of credit facilities is often identified by the business community as one of the key reasons behind the sluggish pace of industrialisation in Bangladesh. In recent years, the business community has been worried over the tight credit policy pursued by the government. Prospective entrepreneurs have also been vocal against the high 50:50 debt-equity ratio demanded by banks for making term loans. However, the squeeze on credit had come about as a direct result of the high rate of default among industrial borrowers in both the private and public sectors. In fact, reliance on commercial banks for project financing had become high-risk affair. In this backdrop, the government's decision to set up special funds for industrial project financing is a welcome move, which should go a long way to ease industry's current liquidity problems and reduce pressure on the banking system.

Over the past 28 years, industrial growth has moved at a snail's pace due to various factors. Lack of capital has always been a major factor hindering industrial growth, particularly in view of poor generation of domestic surplus, in both the private and public sectors. The lack of an efficient capital market meant that there were not many other avenues for prospective investors to explore. The government has been rightly concerned over widespread loan defaults which have put tremendous pressure on the banking system, kept the cost of borrowing high and had a generally negative impact on the economy as a whole. The need, therefore, was to create alternative sources of industrial financing, while ensuring the quality of loans sanctioned.

The industrial funds, to be set up through floating of bonds in local and foreign currencies totalling Tk 2,120 crore, would act as fresh injection into the economy. Since half the funds would come from non-resident Bangladeshis, this would not put any extra pressure on private savings locally. Although the government has not disclosed the procedures for disbursement of loans from the new funds, it is hoped that these would be simple and free of political considerations. Applications need to be assessed quickly, and evaluations made properly by well-qualified consultants. The equity requirement ought to be kept flexible, with feasibility of projects being the most important criterion for consideration. In other words, these new funds ought not to be allowed to fail, in the same way specialised banks had failed earlier.

Tale of a Master Plan

We have it on the authority of Rajuk Chairman Azizul Haque that 80 per cent of the structures in the city deviated from approved plans in varying degrees. He has blamed it on a certain 'culture' in the society to violate construction laws without accepting the responsibility on behalf of Rajuk that it has basically failed to put a brake on that very cultural syndrome.

If Rajuk in tandem with the HBFC had nipped the tendency in the bud with whatever strength of supervisors it could field during the early years of its inception it would have been a different story altogether by now. The malaise would not have spawned to make the 'manpower constraints' felt as severe as it is today. With corruption thrown in, the situation could not be any better. Ideally, it is on satisfaction that a construction project had proceeded along the lines of approved plans that loan installments were released by the HBFC. Commercial banks providing finances for building houses should have also insisted on such a condition for making further advances. And, structures raised on one's own money were subject to supervision by Rajuk anyway. Add to this the prime government lands that were being expropriated by chameleons changing skin with the coming of each successive government in power.

Rajuk chairman's disclosure about breach of plans came at a seminar on "Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan 1995-2015 Implementation Situation", held at its auditorium on Saturday. While appreciating the chairman's candid admission one cannot help noticing the uncertain grounds on which the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan stands in terms of implementation.

Reorganisation of Rajuk is absolutely vital for any planned urbanisation of Dhaka City. A decade ago it was a trust with built-in provision for community participation in its decision-making process. With that system discontinued, the key civic stake in its affairs has been dissolved. Little wonder, an organisation now being run by six all-powerful people is palpably short on accountability. This void needs filling.

Furthermore, it is of central importance to implementation of any city master plan that we have a coordinating body for the 51 utility and service organizations there are in the city.

Police Apathy

The Daily Star special correspondent was mugged on the airport road Saturday. On arrival at Zia International Airport after covering the Jessore killings he hired an auto-rickshaw to come into the city. The vehicle driver made two stops within a kilometer of the airport on the plea of engine trouble. The muggers took this opportunity to board the autorickshaw, rob the journalist and smear some sort of a paste on his face as they learnt the identity of their victim. Then they forced him out of the taxi and drove away towards the airport. The whole incident took place around 7:15 in the evening and within a hundred yards of a police patrol van. The predicament of the journalist was not yet over. He approached the police mobile team for help. They asked him to lead the police party to the spot but did not accompany him. The correspondent found another police van near Banani rail gate and sought their help to find out the muggers. But the police party refused to help because the place of occurrence 'did not fall within their jurisdiction'.

A Badda police officer said it was under their jurisdiction but concealed the identity of his colleagues who refused help. Badda is one of the six new police stations created recently to combat and contain rising incidence of antisocial activities. But the above behaviour pattern of the law enforcers only indicates the apathy and unfriendly attitude of a section of our police force towards protecting lives and properties of law abiding citizens of the country. If this can happen to a senior journalist then it can be easily imagined what the ordinary citizens can expect from our police force.

To minimise the risk of such mugging we suggest opening of an office at the airport where all outgoing babytaxis will be registered so that they can be easily identified when abetting in a crime.

The West's Dilemma with Russia's "Crash"

The looming spectre of Russia's bankruptcy is however most embarrassing to none other than the West itself — more precisely the United States, because it was the US sponsored and financed Russia's attempt at reforms.

RUSSIA — the successor state of a superpower — scaled down her status in search of a prosperity which she could never define. In 1991 when the Russians solidly stood behind a domestic Boris Yeltsin who formally dissolved the Soviet Union and promised economic and democratic reforms as an essential mantra of an instant affluence the visions of the West's bonanza were floating before their dazzled eyes. They were irresistibly attracted by the symbols of Western lifestyle — its Coca-Cola, Nike and McDonalds — so repeatedly flashed to them by the West's satellite TV networks and myriad other media.

A pampered Yeltsin even aspired to join the G-7, the hallowed club of leading industrialised countries and dreamt of becoming America's strategic partner. Now after eight years of Yeltsin's much-vaunted reforms Russia is sarcastically referred to as the most eligible member of P-7, the group of leading pariahs that have borrowed money from the IMF and failed to pay it back. During the last eight years of failed reforms Russia virtually lived on the scraps contemptuously doled out by the western countries to their former adversary.

The tall promises and rhetorics notwithstanding Russia's reforms were grossly bungled by Yeltsin and his advisers many of whom have already been dumped into the sewers by Yeltsin himself. Russia's unrelenting economic cataclysm owed, to a great extent, to sordid financial skulduggery so sustainably bankrolled by the foreign and domestic hustlers with the government's acquiescence. The country's economic woes were enormous even at the time of its breakup and they were consummated in eight destructively tormented years by Yeltsin's apparatus, his American handlers and pestiferous domestic oligarchy. The consequences are writ large on the face of the anemic giant which has to be administered

with regular dose of the elixir of western aid for mere survival. The country's economic statistics are depressing indeed. According to official source 53 per cent Russians today live in poverty and the number of the poor is escalating. Two per cent of the top income earners jobble up 57 per cent of the nation's asset. The country's foreign debt stands at \$180 bn. The super rich and transnational corporations have illegally siphoned abroad another \$180 bn. The domestic debt is closely trailing behind at \$161 bn. The country's socio-political scene is not conducive for any early recovery. The murder rate has risen to the world's highest while the male life expectancy has fallen to one of the world's lowest — now comparable to that of sub-Saharan countries. In the meantime most of the money given by the western countries was squandered away finding way into the pockets of the corrupt politicians, officials and businessmen.

However, with the rouble's crash in the August last Russia's misery has reached its rock-bottom. Yeltsin government has defaulted on \$40 bn of the West's rouble bond. Today the rouble remains merely as a 'store of value' having no strength of its own. The Russian government has also fallen behind on a further \$1.5 bn on the largest chunk of the dollar debt.

Worse still, the country will be unable to pay \$4.8 bn that is due this year to the IMF and the World Bank. With the last year's financial crash many of the Russia's tentative gains achieved during last few years have been blown away. Last year's harvest — the worst in 45 years — may result also in short supply of food. The plummeting of the price of oil — her principal source of foreign exchange earning has added to Russia's misfortune.

The foreign investors bruised by the collapse to Asian market do not want now to be crushed in Russia. Although the country's annual current account surplus is a healthy \$18 bn the government is reluctant to invest at home making the capital flight a possibility also in the future. The tax evasion is rampant. The inflation may rise more than 100 per cent if the government decides to pay off the wage arrears by printing money.

Awed by this grim picture of Russian economy and scorched by its default the western bankers are at a loss whether to continue lending to Russia in current situation. The looming spectre of Russia's

chances of getting the money back.

There is a stiff resistance to its reputation this time. According to both the financial institutions and their political masters in Washington it is useless and even counterproductive to extend any more financial assistance to Russia unless she drastically changes her way of governance and more importantly her world view which is in the offing. Russia's post-Cold War constituency in the US politics has contracted to the extent that she no more enjoys any support for further loan either in the US Congress or White House. However, the US politicians having interest in Russia urge a new focus: loan

There seems to be a process of brinkmanship on both sides about the fate of fresh IMF loan. The IMF mission was in Moscow recently to iron out the differences in attitude and convince the Russian government about the inescapability of a structural reforms which Moscow is reluctant to accept in totality. While Russian side finds IMF insistence on higher taxes and lower revenue impractical, the latter sees the main assumption in the budget on the exchange rate, inflation and revenues and spending as ridiculous. There is hardly any meeting of mind.

The rift is deeper. Underneath there is a wide gap between the perceptions of the West and the new Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov who now practically runs the show in Moscow in absence of a presidential guidance because of Yeltsin's failing health. The US is visibly unhappy about the recent changes in the Russian government. He had a manageable working relationship with the governments of earlier prime ministers but finds Primakov unduly assertive. As a result the gap is widening. It is not surprising that the IMF package agreed upon last July was suspended since Yeltsin sacked Sergi Kriyenko. Primakov loathes what he calls a 'unipolar' world and views the IMF not as a global financial referee but as a tool of American economic hegemony. In the meantime, while acknowledging Primakov's ability as Moscow's new political master the West is certainly not liking Russia Pursuing a hostile policy in global affairs.

But even after watching Moscow devalue its currency default on its rouble debt and allow its banks to stiff their creditors and steal their depositors' money the West is once again likely to come to Russia's

rescue. The hints to this effect was sufficiently dropped by none other than the US President Bill Clinton who is his state of the union address last January reiterated his resolve to expand the American 'work with Russia to safeguard nuclear materials' of that country still bristling with thousands of deadly warheads. He then proposed to spend an additional \$4.2 bn for Russia over next five years. As there will be no congressional support for such expenditure the only way is to make a case in the form of US foreign policy and national security. Clinton did exactly that in his address.

Any alternative to the American refusal to rescue Russia will be dangerous not only for US national interest but also for the international security. Because it will mean loose control on her nuclear button as well as the sale of warheads and weapon grade plutonium to the rogue nations. The unpaid scientists may provide nuclear secrets to the bomb-crazy countries. As a matter of fact the loose nukes have now replaced the nuclear stand off of Cold War period as the single most foreign policy concern on which there is a surprising consensus among foreign policy elite in the United States. According to the National Security Council in the US 'the economic collapse of Russia is the single greatest threat to US National Security'.

It is this loose nukes which has a lot to do with the IMF and its ongoing negotiations with the government of Primakov. Washington is genuinely scared at the unfolding collapse of new Russia. So there is a subtle connection between Clinton's pronouncement and IMF's grudging return to Moscow. The Americans worry over the possibility not only of the Russian nukes reaching the hands of Saddam Hussein and likes but also a post-Yeltsin government elected in the midst of economic chaos and returning an openly hostile man to Kremlin.

PERSPECTIVES
by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

bankruptcy is however most embarrassing to none other than the West itself — more precisely the United States, because it was the US sponsored and financed Russia's attempt at reforms. The western donors ignored or overlooked Russia numerous failures in the past and continued to pump money for a friendly and prosperous Russia. But this time the failures are so extra-ordinary that the donors really do not know what to do with those failures and stop her possible collapse. Earlier whenever Russia was in a scrape a word of guidance from Washington to the world's financial overseers could be enough to overrule their bureaucratic scruples as regards Russia's wobbly public finances, the risk of misuse at the recipient's end and slender

not to bail out the Russian government but to build Russian middle class that would be conducive both for democracy and a domestic market. On the other hand the new rulers at Moscow installed after the crash do not tend to take the responsibility of loans that formed part of their predecessors' experiment in what they call 'wild capitalism'. Moreover, according to them, much of Russia's plight are precisely due to IMF and western advice on such matters as budgetary stringency and blanket privatisation — at least in short term. They also demand a special treatment for Russia in matters of its economic reconstruction even if a Marshall Plan II is not contemplated for her. After all, she dumped communism not for nothing!

Peace Must be Made

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

India will not give up Kashmir. To hope that it will do so by our merely asking for it is folly. First things first — we, and they, must ensure that no more Kashmiri lives are lost through the fault of either side. Talks and more talks must continue, on and on.

all to do with territorial gains and losses. The war of 1870 was swift and decisive. Then came World War I, fought over four long bitter years from 1914-1918, which cost the lives of almost 15 million Frenchmen and marginally less Germans. World War 2, lasted for six years during which over 600,000 Frenchmen and 4.5 million Germans were killed.

The impregnable Maginot Line and the mighty Siegfried Line proved useless. When Germany was divided in 1945, no one doubted that one day it would rise again, but few alive today thought this would happen in their lifetime. But it did. It was all a question of time — time, the great healer — and circumstances. Germany is one today, and France and Germany stand united in a united Europe. As for Qazi Hussain Ahmad, he is not as scary as his press photos and his fiery utterances make him out to be. A year or so ago, one of his naib-amirs came calling to tell me that his Amir was in Karachi for a Jama'at conference and it was his 'kha'yaish' to call on me.

I would call on Qazi, I replied. So, I was invited to dinner. The Qazi ran true to form. Itching for confrontation, ready for a fight. The preliminaries dispensed with, he announced that he reads what I write and does not agree with any of it. As our conversation went along, he conceded he agreed with certain points. By the end of the evening, he admitted that he agreed with the

larger part of what I wrote. He was keen to discuss religion. I was not. He asked when the Zoroastrians, the Parsis, had first come to Karachi. In 1847 or so, I said, but he heard 1947. (With him as is the case with far too many in this country, the world was created in 1947) as it is that year we ran from Iran, he asked?

That was over 1300 years ago, I explained, when the Zoroastrians suffered oppression and persecution by the conquering Arab Muslims and decided to leave for more peaceful shores. At this, he banged his fists on the table, told me I was wrong, that Muslims never commit 'zulum'. I reminded Qazi of the Battle of Qadisiya. (Before Yasdehird III sat upon the throne of Iran, the Muslim Arabs, driven by poverty and religious fervour, had begun to attack the rich lands bordering their deserts. In 636 AD they overran Syria and Mesopotamia and met the Imperial Iranian Army at Qadisiya. A bitter battle was fought and the Arabs were victorious.) I reminded him of the oppression that started thereafter. But, I said, I am not interested in what happened over 13 centuries ago and am certainly not willing to argue or fight about it, so let's agree that there was no persecution, that there

Then why did you leave Iran and come to India, he asked? The Zoroastrians had set sail for better climes, for the largely uninhabited island of Madagascars where the 'aabo-hawa'

was excellent, food grew in abundance, and the wildest of animals were fun-loving apes. During the voyage our spirited navigators imbued to such an extent, befuddling their senses, and they sailed off-course, eventually landing at Surat, on the west coast of India. Tired, there they stayed, and were welcomed by the benign monarch Javed Rana. There ended that lack. Qazi again took off on his favourite topic, reminding me that I lived in a Muslim country. I needed no reminding on that score, I assured him. Whereupon he picked up a knife. Were someone to hold this at your throat and tell you he would kill you unless you recite the Holy Kalma, what would be your reaction, he asked?

I requested him to put down the knife, recited the Kalma for him, explaining that I was not willing to die for my religion and certainly did not wish to die for his. Thereafter he adjudged me to be a reasonable man, and we parted as friends. The cynics say that the Indians are wily and capable of inveigling us into situations from which we will not be able to extricate ourselves. Who is to blame if we are inveigled? Pragmatic they are. They know what they want and they know what they can get.

One story, symbolic though it may be, augments the point. In 1965, the powerful Bombay-based consortium Associated Cement Company (ACC) owned two excellent well-run cement

manufacturing units, one at Wah, one at Rohri. No profits were being repatriated to India and there was no hope of any Pakistani buying the units and resuming the sales proceeds. The Hindu and Parsi directors met, decided it would be wise to abide by the promise of the old saying 'Wania moche neech' (no English phrase literally translates this). They had done their homework and knew there was but one man in Pakistan to whom they could talk, with whom they could settle, and who would deliver what he promised. That man was the Nawab of Kalabagh, Ayub Khan's Governor of West Pakistan. The Chairman of ACC, Dharamsey Khatau, was asked by the Board to meet Kalabagh. His instructions: 'Pooroo kari ayo.' Khatau arrived with his director, Bobby Mistry.

Mahmud Alam, then looking after the affairs of ACC in Pakistan, asked Kalabagh if he would meet the two. Of course, was the answer, and they will stay as my guests whilst in Lahore. Alam thanked him, and then quietly informed the household Comptroller who was standing by that Dharamsey was a vegetarian. Kalabagh overheard the exchange and butted in. 'As long as Khatau is under my roof, no meat will be served at my table.'

Throughout Khatau's stay Kalabagh ate daal-bhaat, dahi, and tarkari. Khatau proposed a price and said that over a specified period of time India would

accept cement across the border in lieu of cash. The Nawab nodded, and said it seemed reasonable, and asked Alam if Pakistan could deliver. Yes, came the answer. 'Done,' pronounced Kalabagh. Then came the '65 war. Many politicians tried to persuade Kalabagh that the two plants could justifiably be taken over as enemy property without any compensation being paid to the Indians.

'Over my dead body,' said the Nawab, 'my promise will be kept.' Thinking and attitudes have changed, gentlemen of their word are now few and far between. When the Pradhan Mantri dined with our Wazir-e-Azam, Nawaz did not eat daal-bhaat. The banquet menu read: 'Cream of Mushroom, Assorted Breads/Katama; Lahori Fried Curry, Channa Masala; Pava Curry, Paneer Kofta Masala, Taka Tin, Curry Pakora, Seekh Kebab, Palak Paneer, Chicken Karahi, Sarson ka Saag, Vegetable Pillau, Roti, Kulcha, Makai ki Roti, Gajjar ka Halwa, Pethay ka Halwa, Gulab Jamun,' all accompanied by Lassi. India will not give up Kashmir. To hope that it will do so by our merely asking for it is folly. First things first — we, and they, must ensure that no more Kashmiri lives are lost through the fault of either side. Talks and more talks must continue, on and on. Nawaz will have to make a reciprocal trip to India, after having practised squeezing himself into and out of a Maruti.

The author is an eminent columnist in Pakistan, and is highly respected for his bold writings, especially against corruption. We take pleasure in announcing the start of his column.

To the Editor

A tempest in the teapot?

Sir, One of the premier English dailies in Dhaka has taken the burdensome task of providing valuable space to some writers who might have attended the 'ill-fated' 'Calcutta Book Fair' last month. But instead of telling the readers the positive outcome of this 'Book Fair', these writers had decided to paint a very grim picture of the same. That ought to be a faux pas!

Unlike Dhaka, the city of Calcutta is not the capital of a country, but in many respects she surpasses the pomp and décor of many other capital cities. Calcutta is home to many writers, intellectuals, dramatists, connoisseurs, and anything like it. Thus, every year during winter season the city hosts a 'Book Fair'. I read in the newspaper that this is the salient most secular event the city showcases every year. The popularity of the fair had grown by leaps and bound. Book lovers from all over West Bengal descend on the fare. It's almost a ritual these days for Bengalis of West Bengal to visit the fair.

In Bangladesh, we have such book fair on the scale it is being done in Calcutta. My observation regarding the events we dutifully celebrate in Bangladesh is that we observe mostly non-secular festivals. Only secular festivals those we celebrate officially are the Language Martyrs Day, Independence Day, Victory Day, Bengal New Year's Day. However, if one counts the number of days we celebrate festivals, one will find that the scale will tip towards religious festivities. One has to be a bit imaginative to observe secular

events. The book lovers of West Bengal deserve to be congratulated for coming up with the idea of hosting such a mammoth fair.

This year's Calcutta Book Fair was very special because Prime Minister of neighboring Bangladesh had visited the fair with her official entourage. Moreover, a large contingent of writers, journalists, and what not was shadowing the Prime Minister. It was reported that in a meeting organized by the fair committee a speaker addressed Bangladesh's Prime Minister as 'Chief Minister'. Of course, this immediately became the topic of hot debate for visiting Bengalis from Bangladesh.

Upon returning to Dhaka, some of the reporters and writers waste no time to wage their crusades to belittle the organizing committee of the book fare. One writer was particularly critical because to him the dais was not decorated well enough to invite the Prime Minister of a country. This particular writer went as far as saying that the Bengalis of Bangladesh are different from Bengalis of West Bengal. This author even quoted Bangladesh's poet laureate Shamsur Rahman saying something similar to this, which I find hard to believe.

I think the writers of Bangladesh are overplaying this flap over wrongly addressing the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as 'Chief Minister'. We should look at the positive side of the trip taken by our people. I'm sure our fellow Bengali brothers and sisters in West Bengal were excited to see so many distinguished Bengalis from Bangladesh in their homeland. We have remembered one thing that the ancestors

of a large number of people in Calcutta were originally from East Bengal. For example, there was a large influx of Hindu population migrating to West Bengal from our side in the aftermath of partition in 1947. West Bengal's Chief Minister Mr Jyoti Basu himself is originally from Dhaka area.

To me, the most salient feature of this year's Calcutta Book Fair is that finally after fifty plus years the two Bengals met each other under the pretext of this mammoth secular festival. The moment needs to be immortalized. Instead of lashing out unkind words, we should celebrate the meeting of the minds.

Let us avoid any further imbrolio over the issue of who slighted who. Why not characterize it as a *bête noire*?

Dr A H Jaffor Ullah
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

II

Sir, I have read with profound shock and sorrow the earlier sketchy news of our PM's last Calcutta visit. Mr Hannan's well-written piece (DS) has put matters in full perspective.

I do not believe that calling the PM as chief minister was a slip of the tongue. The organisers were all literate people and they know the difference between the two posts. It was deliberate. Just to belittle us.

Where India is concerned, Bangladesh never has an equal say, not to speak of even a remotely upper hand. Just take the case of the umpteen number of unequal treaties with our big neighbour — particularly the last one — the Ganga Waters. Why, what India has promised to release in the

lean season does not even reach their side of the border! We will never get the water that we justifiably need. In fact, only during the two years after the death of Indira Gandhi that Bangladesh received some semblance of an equitable share of the waters. Shipping agreement is another one. If there is an agreement on sale of gas, I assure you, it will again be unequal.

There are so many things that can be said. One thing is for sure. It is WE who are less than what we should be. We have no pride. We are jealous of other's success. We are corrupt. We have a tendency of doing *Hujooir*. Our leaders have done it with Pakistan for 25 years and now we are happily making the same mistakes — just for some personal gains. My heart bleeds when I see where we are and where we could have been. However, I do hope all is not lost yet.

Javed Helali
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Right to know

Sir, The Prime Minister in a reply to a BNP legislator recently has angrily accused opposition for Jessore carriage.

We as simple citizens are under the impression that our Prime Minister surely is the only person in Bangladesh who receives correct information with all evidences from CID, DB, Special Branch, NSI, DGFI etc.

Transparency demands that people also have right to know. We have the right to know what action, if any, she had taken against the culprits. If no action has been taken, then why not? M Saleem Ullah
Advocate
Dhaka

Art Buchwald's COLUMN

No News is Good News

I don't know if you noticed it, but there is no foreign news in the United States anymore. Someone has decided Americans aren't interested in what is happening overseas. The editors are guessing we would much rather know about events in Washington and Hollywood.

Ordinarily, this could be a problem because Americans should be well-informed as to what is going on all over the globe. Instead, that time on the news is devoted to a new pill for seasickness. While on the one hand this is a downer, there is a big plus in not knowing what it going on. If you are not aware of a crisis, it is not a crisis.

Take the country of Dimbledee. Its government has been overthrown three times this year. The North has attacked the South, the East has attacked the West. There are refugees everywhere, food is in short supply, and there are reports of typhoons coming in from the Atlantic.

None of this has reached any of the evening news shows because of the Monica Lewinsky-Bill Clinton scandal.

But a few in Washington are concerned. Doug Bibby of the CIA says to his team, "Should we release the details of what is going on in Dimbledee?" His aide says, "The State Department insists we keep it secret. If what is going on there gets out, we'll have to do something about it. If nobody knows, then we don't have to act."

"Are you telling me that our foreign policy is to sweep everything under the rug so that we're not obligated to prevent something from happening that has already happened?"

"That's the policy. The way to avoid another Vietnam is not to know Vietnam. That's a major threat. Fortunately, the American people no longer care what is going on in the world unless it affects the price of coffee or Hondas."

"It makes sense. Then mum's the word. We'll feed the networks more stuff on the Salt Lake City Olympics scandal."

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