NATO's Face-saving War in the Balkans

The bombing campaign appears to have two related objectives: to impair the ability of Yugoslav forces to wage war and genocide in Kosovo, and to erode the morale of Yugoslavia's political and military elite to the point that they will agree to peace. There already is evidence of dissent in Milosevic's camp; he fired his military security chief and replaced the official with a more loyal — and submissive — ally.

HE often-threatened and repeatedly postponed ▲ NATO bombing campaign against the Yugoslav military forces of President Slobodan Milosevic, widely known as the butcher of the Balkans, has

finally begun. In the initial stage of the NATO offensive - the largest bombing mission in Europe since World War II - aerial attacks were focused on wearing down Yugoslav air defences and destroying military and strategic installations across Yugoslavia.

After four nights of air attacks, the NATO warplanes moved into a campaign aimed more at cutting off Yugoslav supply lines to Kosovo and destroying storage and staging areas in the region.

For NATO, the attack represents an enormous gamble, in both political and human terms. But in the end, they had virtually no choice but to go ahead. They were forced to act by Milosevic's relentless military rampage in Kosovo and by his adamant and even contemptuous refusal to participate in a political solution to the war

They also were forced to act because they had been trapped by their own threats, since October, NATO had) repeatedly warned and threatened Milosevic that they would use force if he continued to brutalise Kosovo. Milosevic treated the threats contemptuously, as bluffs. The failure of NATO's policy is an object lesson of how not to conduct business with him. NATO appeared to ignore the overwhelming lesson of past dealings with Milosevic.

In 1991 less than 24 months after the Berlin Wall fell. Milosevic was fomenting Serb uprisings in Solvenia and Croatia. NATO and the US did nothing when the Yugoslav army attacked Solvenia and cracked "down on Croatian cities. The US excuse was that it was a European problem while Europe was not willing to act without US leadership.

Again, Milosevic went on a carnage in Bosnia for years. The Western leadership hesitated while Milosevic and his supporters systematically dismembered the Muslim majority in Bosnia.

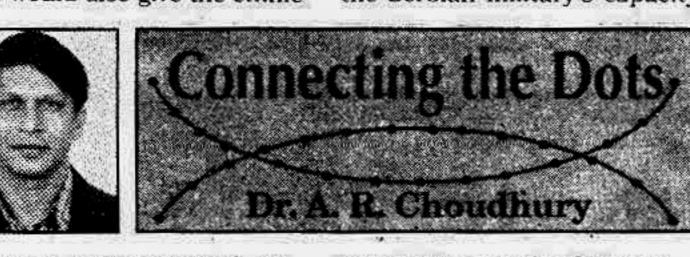
The war in Kosovo has followed the same, all-too-famil-

iar course. The massacre of innocent Muslims in Kosovo by the Serbians started about a year ago. The western world could have stopped him. But their empty talks only helped to solidify Milosevic's belief that NATO is not going to attack his country. Last October, as NATO was on the verge of using force, Milosevic promised to observe a cease fire on terms negotiated by US envoy Richard Holbrooke. However, he again re-

neged on his promise. Finally, fast-ditch diplomatic efforts during the talks outside Paris in February failed to resolve the crisis. While the ethnic Albanians signed the peace plan, the Yugoslav government rejected it, opposing a key part of the deal which calls for NATO forces to monitor and enforce the accord. The agreement would also give the ethnic chief and replaced the official with a more loyal - and

submissive — ally. In outlining the goals that NATO seeks to achieve through air power in the Balkans, President Clinton and other European leaders have indicated a slight but significant shift in strategy. They seem to have abandoned, at least for now, a negotiated solution to the problem there and seek instead to achieve military objectives. The central task now facing these leaders is to explain how these goals can be achieved

through air power alone. NATO has identified three reasons for its action. These include demonstration of the seriousness of NATO's purpose deter an even bloodier offensive against innocent civilians in Kosovo, and seriously damage the Serbian military's capacity



Albanians wide political autononiv in Kosovo while keeping the province within Serbia's

Following the failure of the Paris talks, Richard Holbrooke continued his negotiation with Milosevic but it didn't result in a commitment allowing NATO peacekeeping troops into

Milosevic has continually outwitted western negotiators. his domestic opponents and the victims of his aggression in Bosnia and Kosovo. 'Till now, he has anticipated his opponents' moves, forced them into positions that worked to his advantage and headed off dangerous attacks on his forces. He didn't believe that the NATO will act until the attacks actually started.

The bombing campaign appears to have two related objectives: to impair the ability of Yugoslav forces to wage war and genocide in Kosovo, and to erode the morale of Yugoslavia's political and military elite to the point that they will agree to peace. There already is evidence of dissent in Milosevic's camp: he fired his military security

to harm the people of Kosovo. These are worthy objectives but the question is whether they

can be achieved through air power alone. On the contrary. the air war may unify the Serbian people around their leader, the unscrupulous Milosevic, and make the Serb offensive against the Muslims in Kosovo even bloodier.

Since the beginning of the

NATO raid. Serb atrocities in Kosovo have increased manifold. Muslim refugees are crossing the borders to neighbouring Albania and Macedonia in increasing numbers. With each passing day's new atrocities, NATO is now faced with a painful choice, it can either commit its ground forces against the Serbs, or let Milosevic and his forces continue with their massacres and ethnic cleansing that NATO's at-

tack has exacerbated. This poverty of options attests either to the inherent intractability of the problem facing NATO, or to their failure of imagination. NATO might not have been put in this tight box if it's members had taken the initiative, as they should have,

and stopped the war in Kosovo

six months ago. It is quite obvious that at present the NATO countries have no stomach for any serious ground combat. The absence of a viable ground option puts a heavy onus on the bombing campaign. But it is difficult to see how the bombing campaign by itself can save the innocent women and children from the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Serbian police units.

Kosovo is not an accident

and it didn't happen in a day. It is the product of mistakes committed by the US and Western Europe. They believed that by ignoring the problem for years they could stay uninvolved. The Serbs and the Kosovars like to talk about how their problems began about six hundred years ago when the Turkish army defeated the Serbs in Kosovo. When Tito's Yugoslavia first started to disintegrate, the orthodox Serbs tried to avenge their defeat by expelling the present overwhelmingly Muslim population of Kosovo. The western countries responded by verbally criticising the Yugoslav government and imposing an arms embargo on the country.

The arms embargo cut off arms to everyone except Milosevic and the Serbs. The Muslims were weakened irreparably. Milosevic took advantage of the situation and tried to extend his grip over the entire country. It seems that he only responds to the use of force. The only time he stopped his atrocities was when the Slovenian army defeated him and when the Croats and Bosnians acquired the military means to defend themselves on the ground.

What we can learn from his behaviour is that no amount of intricate balance of power games run by the NATO politicians will prevent Milosevic from doing more evil. His victims, like it or not, will have to be given the means to fight back. The western world must recognise that it is time to arm the victims. Arms embargo should be withdrawn so that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) can fight for themselves. Failing to do so, we now know, will permit the attempted annihilation of an entire population on the doorsteps of the West.

Framing and Covering up

It is time to put a stop to the insidious practice of "framing" people up and when not proven, to immediately start "covering up". Those who would cast a stone must remember they may be hit in return with the same stone and with the same vehemence that they would throw it.

HE primary objective of casting false allegations A against anybody is to spoil that person's chances of success in any given field. A spurious, concocted accusation is meant to defame character and destroy merit. As we all know merit is a disqualification in many de-veloping countries. It is murder all right, not meant to put the person in the grave but to leave him or her in limbo, in a form of living death. That gives the person initiating the made-up charges, or on whose behalf it is initiated, an advantageous po-sition as opposed to the victim. Sometimes the planted rumour fulfils the purpose, sometimes a fact is distorted to represent what is not the truth. Sometimes the truth is coloured.

This is not a national pas-

time in Pakistan, as in many other countries this victimisation is a serious profession. What is unique to Pakistan and many other third world countries is that the person or persons levelling the false accusations almost always get away with it. There is no punishment if the falsehood is discovered; this despite the fact that if the charges were proven it would have seriously discomforted the accused, including loss of life. job, status, prospects, etc — the person's whole future. To protect the perpetrators of false witness, if discovered, the art of the cover-up comes into play, this is done pretty systematically and effectively by initiating an "enquiry". Many a time the senior hierarchy may not themselves be involved, but in accepting the concoctions served up by their juniors in sworn statements they give an official credence to falsehood and are thus as culpable as the one making the concoctions. As such it is their responsibility to carefully sift through the statements.

Any accusation, when made, must be tested for reliability and those making the accusation must know that if allegations by them are found to be false they stand to face the same punishment as would the person facing the charges if they were found to be true. There has to be some accountability. So many accusations have been made publicly by so many people but very few have been proven, an overwhelming amount has been found to be sheer fabrication. Can anybody name one single person of consequence in Pakistan's history who has been convicted for making a false accusation? Even when someone has found falsehood to be contrived for

motivated reasons, has anyone

ever been brought to task? Some of the charges have been very serious, either the person being targetted is guilty. if not, then those that are victimising him or her are. It is true that sometimes facts are laid out in good faith and there may be sometimes perceptions which may colour the truth but most of the accusations are made in bad faith for gaining undue advantage, mainly by putting the person targetted at a disadvantage. It is time to put those making false allegations accountable, why not make one or two salutary examples? While there is no doubt that the Army has done yeoman's service by coming to the rescue of WAPDA but that is at the field operational level where the Army has deployed units to literally clean out WAPDA's muck at the linesman level, these troops remaining under the command of sub-unit, unit, subformation and formation

commanders. Some officers have been directly deputed to WAPDA for

believed to have alleged that the previous SDO in question was a person appointed by Ms Abida Hussain. Ms Abida Hussain has a different version in her fact sheet. First, this is one of nine meters on her farm in that vicinity. The readings for that offending location for 1996. 1997 and 1998 averaged 20000-22000 units. During 1996, the PPP was in power and Ms Abida Hussain was hardly in any position to get an SDO of her choice, PPP's Saleh Faisal

Hayat was. During January the old meter was changed by the new SDO even though Ms Abida Hussain had not requested it. In February the bill for the new meter (which clearly showed "meter changed") came to about 1400 units (cold weather is a lean period and then because of load shedding standby generator is being used). If the allegation pertained to 1998, it was the old meter that was the offending meter and it had been removed by the SDO much before the checking and at that time no allegations were made. If the new

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Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

some time, there is room for interdiction from the WAPDA hierarchy directly and that is as it should be. This interdiction can be for a good purpose and/or it can be for a nefarious purpose, we have to take into account the intent. And because there are very good reputations (not to talk about careers of various kind) involved, this is as good a time to treat one case as an example. Ms Abida Hussain's alleged pilferage of electricity has been in the news. that is a good case as any to make a case study of.

According to the WAPDA Chairman, Lt Gen Zulfikar Ali, an army checking party found one offending meter at her farm in Shah Jewna approximately 66 per cent slow. A commensurate calculation showed that for the past year (1998) this has caused Rs. 2 lacs plus loss to WAPDA. An FIR was registered and in a Press Conference thereafter, the WAPDA Chairman mentioned her case specifically as one of the legislators who have had FIRs registered or detection notices sent to. He gave this as an example of even-handedness in accountability. WAPDA's Chairman is meter is tampered with, it can have no bearing on the old meter or it's readings. That is a separate case altogether. Ms Abida Hussain alleges that she would hardly cheat for a couple of thousand units and the new meter can hardly show the average of the old one. She alleged a deliberate frame-up by the new SDO on behalf of her political rivals, mainly PPP's Saleh Faisal Hayat and Rao Sikander Iqual, incidentally from the clan of, if not the relation of. the WAPDA Chairman. The GOC concerned ordered an information enquiry and it should be no surprise that the enquiry backed up the version of the army officer concerned.

The WAPDA Chairman presented the Superintendent Engineer (SE) to support the allegations. Suddenly the same SEs because of whom the Army is in WAPDA in the first place have become the apostles of truth. As cautious citizens we must ask ourselves viz (1) why was the old meter changed? (2) Why are the calculations being made according to the old meter when the new meter is the offending meter? (3) Since the old meter had been removed earlier to the

Army's checking and was in the custody of WAPDA, can it be tested as material evidence and be relied upon as anything could have been done to tamper with it? (4) Why and how did the news hit the print media only a day after the "raid" and three days before the FIR? (5) Has anybody been taken to task for this "leak"? (6) Why was Ms Abida served with an FIR when others were being served detection notices? Why this discrimination? (7) One believes that since Ms Abida moved a "breach of privilege" motion, the matter was enquired into from the WAPDA by the NA Speaker in his chambers, what was his opinion and why has he not gone public? (8) According to the army's sources, an enquiry has backed up the accusations. why not do an enquiry from outside the formation? (9) In the end, as a serving Federal Minister, does she not merit a fair hearing at least? This is a fit case for detailed enquiry. Since a Lt Gen is involved, let it be conducted by a person of equivalent rank but senior to Zulfikar as is the norm. If indeed Ms Abida Hussain is guilty as charged, then the law can always be applied as deemed fit and appropriate. On the other hand, if the en-

quiry reveals viz either that (1) it was a false allegation or (2) it was a frame-up and/or (3) there was a deliberate cover-up of the facts, once the charges were found to be false then a different situation exists. On any one of the counts the person or persons involved must get the same punishment that would be applicable to Ms Abida if the charges against her were correct. If the charges are proven, Ms Abida Hussain can go to jail. regretfully if they cannot be substantiated the WAPDA Chairman and all those in the process of defaming her in front of a virtual "kangaroo-court" must also face commensurate prison sentences. That is the essence of justice so that nobody "bears false witness". There is no joy in making such a proposal, unfortunately framing-up in Pakistan has gone too far. It is time now to either prove an allegation and if these are found spurious, those who make such allegations must be punished. Above all it is time to put a stop to the insidious practice of "framing" people up and when not proven, to immediately start "covering up". Those who would cast a stone must remember they may be hit in return with the same stone and with the same vehemence that they would throw it.

Thoughts on Proposed Biotechnology Institute in Bangladesh

TT was a privilege to be invited a few months back to **A**participate in the symposium and round table discussion on the role of Biotechnology and Biochemistry in national development. This meeting held in Dhaka on November 16, 1998 was jointly organised by the Bangladesh Biochemical Society and The Daily Star. It was gratifying to see that people from different scientific disciplines from academic institutions and research organisations got together with representatives from the Government and industry sector and after a honest and open discussion formulated and submitted a Biotechnology Policy to the Department of Science and Technology. Editor Mahfuz Anam pledged that all the resources of The Daily Star would be available on a continuing basis for raising public awareness about Biotechnology and for maintaining pressure on the decision-makers. The continued support from Mahfuz Anam for science and technology, and for knowledge-based growth and development of our country, makes him an invaluable ally in our effort to set up a viable biotechnology industry in Bangladesh. We are also very fortunate that three of our current Vice-Chancellors and the President of the Bangladesh Academy of Sciences are biochemists. The Chairman of the BCSIR is also a strong supporter of biotechnology. With the support of the Ministries of Science and Technology and Foreign

(nominated by the BAPTC) was recently elected to the Council of Scientific Advisors of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). Biotechnology in Bangladesh has influential friends in the right places and it would be unfortunate if we did not exploit the positive factors

The participants at the Biotechnology Symposium on November 16 were very happy to learn that the GOB had finally decided to establish the long awaited Institute of Biotechnology. In my personal capacity, and as a Scientific Advisor to the ICGEB, I had expressed my willingness to unconditionally extend any advice or support (as had been requested by the Secretary of the Department of S&T in his letter of congratulation) in the setting up of Biotechnology in Bangladesh. Since my return to Australia I have found it very difficult to obtain any information about the proposed Biotechnology Institute. It has just been brought to my attention that the Biotechnology Institute is in its final stage of planning. Without knowing what the plans are, or whether it is already too late. I am proffering my personal views on the proposed institute and some thoughts on the state of Biotechnology in Bangladesh in the hope that the relevant authorities will give it some consideration.

ment that because of lack of resources and the need to allocate these to more urgent needs, we

while they are still available. I have often heard the arguby Ahmed A Azad

As a first step we should urgently organise a conference/workshop in Dhaka of Bangladeshi scientists, both inside and outside the country, working in the agricultural and biomedical sciences. This conference could coincide with some early stage of the establishment of the proposed Biotechnology Institute.

should only attempt to introduce those aspects of Biotechnology that can be easily implemented without much capital expenditure or the need for very sophisticated technology. Bangladeshi scientists working in the plant tissue culture area have led the country in biotechnology research and their effort has resulted in private companies already adapting these techniques for mass propagation of valuable plants. The plant tissue culture scientists will tell you that what is now urgently needed is the ability to introduce contemporary molecular biology and genetic engineering technologies to the plant tissue culture research in order to produce genetically modified high yielding plants which are flood, pest and drought resistant. This will not only add value to what has already been achieved but also make us less reliant on imported technology and products. Molecular and cellular biology are also indispensable for drug discovery and production of diagnostics and vaccines. It is the biotechnological production of high value products that is likely to generate wealth and make us self sufficient in food and health care.

We are already lagging behind the developed countries by

a few decades in the disciplines of contemporary molecular and cellular biology and with each passing day we are falling even further behind. There is hardly a murmur about the urgent necessity of using Biotechnology to propel us into the next millennium, to provide our people with a decent standard of living, and to generate wealth for the nation. Concentrating on low technology pursuits alone will not get us out of the rut or allow us to take our rightful place among the community of nations. Even compared to our neighbours in the Asia Pacific region our expertise in molecular biology and cell biology is very low and world class facilities required for meaningful and competitive research are almost non-existent. The decision to set up a

Biotechnology Institute in Bangladesh is therefore a very welcome step. Ideally for a country with our population we should have numerous such institutes in all regional centres. But the reality is that in the near future we will struggle to have even one of a world standard. As an initial measure we need to set up one central Biotechnology Institute which focuses on genetic engineering and serves as the resource and reference centre for the entire

country. It should have world class expertise and state of art facilities in molecular biology, cell biology and immunology. fermentation technology and downstream processing, bioinformatics (computational biology), and adequate support in analytical and synthetic chemistry. In collaboration with synthetic chemists it should set up facilities for directed combinatorial chemistry. In the near future it should collaborate with physicists, chemists and IT experts to establish expertise and facilities in structural biology (X-ray crystallography, NMR spectroscopy and computational chemistry). The successful production of

a commercially viable and internationally competitive high value product requires a multidisciplinary approach and the availability of the requisite expertise, facilities and adequate operating funds. In the short term we should aim to establish one central institute that will be the equivalent of similar institutes in Singapore, Taiwan, Seoul, New Delhi and Hyderabad. It will be a waste of money to establish a token institute that is not even the equivalent of any one of many such institutes in neighbouring countries. It will require a lot of money and attempts should be made to

obtain additional funds from our own pharmaceutical companies and from international funding agencies. Since Bangladesh is a member of the ICGEB, and has an Affiliated Centre in Dhaka, this link should be exploited to the full. I find it difficult to conceive that in the first instance it will be feasible or practical to set up a state of art institute of the type described above anywhere other than Dhaka.

In house research in the proposed Biotechnology Institute should be confined to a very small number of carefully chosen projects where we would have a distinct competitive advantage. We cannot afford to compete with the rest of the world on every front and it is imperative that we find our own niche. One major role of this institute should be to collaborate with and provide high technology support to the biology research laboratories in Dhaka and the rest of the country. In the first instance the setting up of multidisciplinary research teams with complementary components from different institutions, and which can interact on a daily basis, should be attempted in Dhaka. This is because of the close proximity and on-going interactions between Dhaka University, BC-

Medical University, ICDDR,B, BAEC. BUET(chemical engineering) and the agricultural research institutes just outside Dhaka. This should not, however, preclude the setting up of traditional Biotechnology activities in regional centres provided that this does not negatively impact on the establishment of a central institute focused on molecular biology and genetic engineering. The proposed Biotechnology Institute should not attempt to duplicate the research already

being carried out in the various research organisations in the country but provide technical support and expertise that adds value to worthwhile research being carried out elsewhere. The major aim should be generation of intellectual property and major publications in reputable international journals. This is important to secure our commercial rights and to gain credibility in the international scientific community. This is an absolute pre-requisite for accessing grants from international funding agencies. Another major role for the proposed Biotechnology Institute should be as an advanced learning centre where experts, including expatriate Bangladeshi scientists, are called upon to organise and conduct workshops and seminars in new techniques and emerging areas of research. An advanced learning centre within the Biotechnology Institute will attract overseas experts on a routine basis only if it is set up in Dhaka. Many of the reagents for research in genetic engineering are not thermostable and will have to be brought in from overseas. The proposed Biotechnology Institute can function as a procurement; storage and distribution centre for the rest of the country. This will be highly facilitated by the Biotechnology Institute being located in Dhaka because of the international Airport and even bigger problems with constant power supply in the rest of the country. This is also a major factor in the optimum and safe maintenance and operation of

expensive state of art equipment. Finally, it is important to take stock of what expertise we really have and what are the areas of research we might be internationally competitive in. As a first step we need to have a register of our scientists with the necessary expertise within the country and outside the country so we can have a realistic view of our capabilities, and additional areas in which we need our scientists to be trained. Dr. Khalilur Rahman, Counsellor of our Embassy in Geneva, has volunteered to lialse with all our overseas missions to seek their help in preparing such a register of expatriate Bangladeshi scientists, and S&T can do the same within Bangladesh. It is, however, very important that ex-

SIR. BIRDEM, Bangabandhu perts are identified strictly on the basis of referred publications in international journals, patents and demonstrated experience in contemporary technologies. Such a register will also help us form an independent Scientific Advisory Committee that is essential for overseeing the activities of the proposed Biotechnology Institute and to provide independent advice on Biotechnology to the GOB. If the necessary expertise is not available within the country then we should create the right conditions to persuade our bright young scientists to either return permanently or at least be involved in the training and education of young researchers within the country. This approach has made a very big difference in the countries in the Asia Pacific region. As a first step we should ur-

gently organise a conference/workshop in Dhaka of Bangladeshi scientists, both inside and outside the country, working in the agricultural and biomedical sciences. This conference could coincide with some early stage of the establishment of the proposed Biotechnology Institute. This will generate awareness of what research areas we are involved in and what expertise exists within our broader scientific community. This will also allow us to take the first steps towards the rational and unbiased selection of a very small number of projects of national importance where we can expect to make a significant contribution and have a positive outcome. Representatives from the relevant ministries of the GOB, senior academic administrators, and representatives from the relevant industry and financial sectors should be invited so that they can see first hand what Bangladeshi scientists are capable of and how this enormous potential can be harnessed for national development. Biotechnology in Bangladesh can only succeed if there is a true meeting of minds and if there is a genuine partnership between science and industry for product development with the active encouragement and support of the Government.

I hope the relevant authorities will give due consideration to the views I have expressed here, and discuss these with practising scientists before formalising the final plans for the proposed Biotechnology Institute. Consultation and co-operation at this stage will ensure that we do not make costly mis-

takes that we can ill afford. The writer is a Chief Research Scientist in the CSIRO Division of Molecular Science in Melbourne, and a Scientific Advisor to the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and a number of academic research centres in the Asia Pacific region. The opinions expressed in this article are not meant to reflect the views of either the CSIRO or the ICGEB.

Good Friday: A Death that Brings Redemption

ODAY is Good Friday. This day the whole Christian community commemorates the redemptive death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. During the reading of the passion of Jesus. the whole worshipping community kneels down at the moment when the test speaks of the death of Jesus Christ. It's a great mystery which surpasses every human reasoning. A human person sent by God as his complete revelation undergoes tremendous suffering and embraces death on the cross for the ransom of many? This death is unique, because this brings eternal redemption for the whole mankind.

Affairs a Bangladeshi

Good Friday and Biblical Context

Old Testament: Man's sinful nature: The truth that runs throughout the whole Old Testament of the Holy Bible is that God created. everything good. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31). However, even though God created man best among all creatures by offering him His Spirit (Genesis 2:7) he failed to remain faithful to his innocent condition. He falls. He falls because of the sin of pride and thus comes the advent of sin in this world. This is a sin disobedience (Genesis 3:12). Adam. a Hebrew originated word which means mankind, brings the existence of sin in this world. God the Merciful Father: Punishment

and death naturally is the result of this sinfulness. But the history of salvation narrated in the Old Testament reveals the nature of God in a very different way. This God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who brought out his own people from Egypt where they were experiencing slavery, is a God of mercy and full of compassion. He wants change of heart. Even the sin of man is like crimson-God's mercy is beyond. He is a forgiving God. As the history of Israelite runs through this fundamental aspect of God the Father becomes more and more highlighted. Through the prophets God continually invites his people to turn to Him. He declares his promise of the one who will carry the weight of sins of mankind by his tremendous suffering. And his total sacrifice will bring salvation for all making a new covenant with God who then will write his commandments in their heart (Prophet Jeremiah 30:31). He is known as a suffering servant, a lamb being carried to be slaughtered.

Isaian prophecy: Suffering Servant of Yahweh: Suffering, when it is redemptive. brings glory and exultation. Death then becomes not a loss of life but a source and means of life. God speaks through the Prophet of this man who will buy salvation by his suffering and death. His identity in the Isaian prophecy is the Suffering Servant of Yahweh who says:" I offered my back to those who struck me. my cheeks to those who tore at my beard. I did not cover my face against insult and

by Rev Fr Patrick Gomes

spittle". (Isaiah 50:4-7) Like many prefigurations e.g., Isaac, Joseph, Paschal lamb, this Suffering Servant is a protrait in a very vivid way. In the book of Prophet Isaiah we read God saying about his Suffering Servant that "As the crowds were appalled on seeing him - so disfigured did the look that he seemed no longer human — so will the crowds be astonished at him Without beauty. without majesty no looks to attract our eyes; a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. ... And yet ours were the suffering she bore, ours the sorrows he carried. He was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 52:13-53-12). This song of the Suffering Servant holds a very particular position in the Sacred Scripture. It signals directly to Christ the Crucified.

New Testament: Suffering Servant, the Crucified Christ: The prophecy about the Suffering Servant is fulfilled through the redemptive passion and death of Jesus. In fact this takes the climactic factor of the entire plan of salvation. All the four Gospel writers place this passion narrative with much attention each presenting Christ as the one who is rejected, despised, who carries

the Cross for our sins and finally dies on the cross for our salvation. Such is the power of his blood, of his death. His death is not a simple death as by his death he is glorified by God the Father, so also whole mankind. St Paul in his letter says: "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in the human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exulted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name . and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:8-10) And this had to take place because Man had to experience forgiveness of the merciful Father. Liturgical Context

The liturgy or the religious service starts today in the Church at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Each Church is full today with the worshiphers. The Church is not decorated: the bare alter has only the necessary books for the ritual. The priest comes with red vestments symbolizing the sacrificial death of Jesus. He prostrates - a gesture that tells us of Christ's total submission to the will of God. After the

characteristics of the servant of Yahweh. The letter of St Paul from the New Testament speaks about Christ who became obedient to the Father till his death on the cross. The long passionate narrative is read from the gospel of St John. After a brief reflection by the priest there are prayers for various intentions which include also intentions for the country and our state leaders. The third part of the liturgy is the procession with the Cross and adoration. Holding the Cross up the priest says or sings: This is the Holy Cross on which our Savior gave his life for our salvation; come let us adore him. The people kneel down and say or sing: Cross holy, the only hope of our salvation; with bowing head we adore you! After this all come in procession to pay respect to the crucifix by kissing it and placing offerings in the plate as a sign of mortification and charity. During this time penitential hymns are sung. The final part of the Good Friday is receiving the Holy Communion where according to Catholic faith Christ himself is present. The priest and the worshippers leave the Church in silence. On this day there is also the prayer called the way of the Cross. Today all adults keep fasting.

Practical Context Jesus died on the cross so that mankind be made free from sins. The total

prayer, starts the reading from the Holy liberation from sin is the only purpose of Bible: from the Old testament, a reading Jesus' death on the cross. Today our from Prophet Isaiah that speaks about the reflection needs to be from the practical reality. The world needs to be free from many bondages from sin. Even in our own personal life we are chained with many sins; hatered, zealoucy, pride, consumerism, murder, theft, killing, cheating, bribery these are daily events that we see or read in the newspapers. Good Friday calls upon us to make an examination of conscience of our individual religious and moral life and asks us to repent for our sins and start a new life where there will be religious values that we find in Christ and in his Conclusion: Like that repentant thiel

who received the promise of Paradise we come to the crucified Christ with our contrite heart praying: Lord have mercy on me and cleans me of my sins; Wash me more and more and make me whiter than snow (cfr Psalm 52). Through fasting, penance and works of mercy we make reparation for our sins confessing them to God and to one another, effecting reconciliation with God and with one another. The cry of Jesus with his hands extended on the cross calls all mankind of today and tomorrow to make this conversion of heart a reality in personal life in community, and globally in the whole human society. May we all regardless of faiths, be filled with the blessings and power of the Cross and thereby bring a total renewal in our life.