

We need to get the queen bees



FAREED ZAKARIA writes from America

"WHEN America and Europe are divided, when Japan is hesitant," Lee cautions, "the extremists are emboldened"

Richard Nixon once remarked that had Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew lived in a different country in a different time, he would have achieved the status of a major historical figure -- a Churchill, Disraeli or Gladstone. Lee recently turned 80, having for 45 years carefully observed international trends and maneuvered to keep his city-state secure and prosperous. While in Singapore last week, I asked him what he made of the European-American divide so evident in London. "The Europeans underestimate the problem of al Qaeda-style terrorism," he said. "They think that the United States is exaggerating the threat. They compare it to their own many experiences with terror -- the IRA, the Red Brigade, the Baader-Meinhof, ETA. But they are wrong."

He went on: "Al Qaeda-style terrorism is new and unique because it is global. An event in Morocco can excite the passions of extremist groups in Indonesia. There is a shared fanatical zealousness among these different extremists around the world. Many Europeans think they can finesse the problem, that if they don't upset Muslim countries and treat Muslims well, the terrorists won't target them. But look at Southeast Asia. Muslims have prospered here. But still, Muslim terrorism and militancy have infected them." Lee pointed out that Singapore and Thailand have both been targeted in recent years, though neither has mistreated its Muslim populations.

"The Americans, however, make the mistake of seeking largely a military solution. You must use force. But force will only deal with the tip of the problem. In killing the terrorists, you will only kill the worker bees. The queen bees are the preachers, who

But Lee urged Washington to use the United Nations, predicting (accurately) that "if the U.N. is not involved in postwar Iraq, Islamic extremists will exploit what will be portrayed as an American-British colonial occupation of Iraq. If, on the other hand, the Atlantic allies get their act together in the United Nations, it will signal to the world that they have set aside their differences to work for a higher cause -- that of bringing peace and stability to the Mideast."

teach a deviant form of Islam in schools and Islamic centers, who capture and twist the minds of the young." Lee pointed to the trial of Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, one of the plotters of the Bali bombing, sentenced to death by an Indonesian court. On hearing the sentence he said, "I'll be happy to die a martyr. After me there will be a million Amrozis."

Lee contrasted Amrozi with the charismatic religious leader Abu Bakar Bashir, spiritual head of Jemaah Islamiyah, the group that many of the Bali bombers belonged to. "Men like Bashir are the real force behind the terror," said Lee. "It is Bashir who churns out these kinds of people. But he was acquitted on the serious charges and was convicted on minor offenses for a four-year term."

I asked Lee how to handle this broader problem. "Well, America can't do it alone," he said. "You can't go into the mosques, Islamic centers and madrasahs. We don't have any standing as non-Muslims. Barging in will create havoc. Only Muslims can win this struggle. Moderate, modernizing Muslims, political, religious, civic leaders together have to make the case against the fundamentalists. But the strong, developed countries can help. The NATO allies must, as they did during the Cold War, present a solid block. Muslim modernizers must feel that the U.S. and its allies will provide the resources, energy and support to make them winners. No one wants to be on the losing side."

Lee was critical of both sides of the Atlantic alliance on Iraq. "When America and Europe are divided, when Japan is hesitant, the extremists are emboldened and think they can win against a divided group. The terrorists' tactics for the time being are to hit only Americans, Jews and America's strong

supporters, the British, the Italians, the Turks, warning the Japanese but leaving others alone. They intend to divide and conquer."

In an essay in Forbes last May, Lee criticized France and Germany for continuing to publicly oppose the United States over Iraq. "They help Islamic extremists recruit more terrorists," he wrote. But he then urged Washington to use the United Nations, predicting (accurately) that

"if the U.N. is not involved in postwar Iraq, Islamic extremists will exploit what will be portrayed as an American-British colonial occupation of Iraq. If, on the other hand, the Atlantic allies get their act together in the United Nations, it will signal to the world that they have set aside their differences to work for a higher cause -- that of bringing peace and stability to the Mideast."

I asked Lee what to do in Iraq. "Iraq has become a test of American perseverance," he said. "You must see it through, and I believe that you will. It is related to the larger struggle. You must put in place moderates who can create a modern society. If you walk away from Iraq, the jihadis will follow you wherever you go. You may think you've left them behind, but they will pursue you. Their ambitions are not confined to any one territory or people."

Fareed Zakaria is editor of Newsweek International.

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Feet on the ground, please!

KAZI ALAUDDIN AHMED

THERE is an almost proverbial saying in circulation that "when the doctor is sick, the whole world is sick". In such a situation the patients ailing with various types of diseases, requiring qualified physician's intervention, have to helplessly leave everything with providence. On the same analogy when the custodians of law and order turn out to be themselves outrageous law breakers, the law abiding citizens have no place to take shelter. Such a sequential transformation of the police saw its climax in recent times in Dhaka city alone.

Unfortunately, the name 'police' has turned into a synonym for corruption. But it is also true that there is a good number of policemen, of course in the upper echelon, who are not corruptible. Usually, these are the ones who have been in the police department through competitive examinations (BCS police) conducted by the Public Service Commission. And those currently occupying higher positions through promotions began their career in lower strata. Here, there are a very few who have been elevated in recognition of meritorious services in previous positions. Yet there are a few more who are reported to have been promoted on other spurious considerations which include their continued personalised services to their bosses, hot linkage with influential political leaders, 'natural' privilege accruing from their being residents of particular places where from some of the high-ups also happen to come.

These promoters, invariably wearing newer badges on their shoulders indicating higher ranks, perhaps have little way to shed the filth of corruption, accumulated over the past several years, from their body and mind. The new garb cannot veil their yesterdays. They come out to view with even a least provocation.

Dying in police custody of people has assumed an alarming height of late. Some of these cases are reported to have been on political victimisation while some are on grounds of the victims' refusal to concede the demands of the organized gangsters around their localities. And yet a few more have been snatchers on public thoroughfares, intercepted and often mercilessly beaten, their eyes gauged by a mob. There is however, no guarantee that in such wild gambles some genuinely innocent people fall prey to such dastardly acts.

A big number of them appear to

have joined the cavalcade of the street snatchers and extortionists at the bus terminals and on the highways. At its climax a small trader was reportedly robbed of two and a half lakh taka in cash by some police men attached to one police station in the city. One of the main culprits is yet to be arrested.

In every government there are invariably some over-enthusiastic elements who are out to pursue an undesirable and outrageous policy of total politicisation of the whole administration. The ultimate decision-makers give in easily to these impulsive activists without considering its far reaching effects. And it has been observed since long that behind such accession there always creeps in a crude idea, at least in the case of police administration that, it can be freely used against the political adversaries.

Upon investigation by the higher authorities of the police department the crime committed by the policemen was confirmed. As a measure of punishment the officer-in-charge of the police station was closed and all the 51 personnel of the same station were transferred enbloc to different police stations. And away on the streets reports about acts of extortion from small traders, peddlers in the footpath and drivers of motor vehicles by the police men on duty often come in the newspapers.

Even in the holy month of Ramadan, the scenario remained unchanged. On one hand the ever increasing prices of essential commodities/consumables has been putting tremendous pressure on the low and middle income group and on the other ever deteriorating law and order situation due to the inactivity and indifference of the police has been compounding human miseries.

The Prime Minister herself had expressed her deep concern about price spiral and even went all out to reprimand the Commerce Minister. On the other hand, she was reported to have expressed her dissatisfaction on the law and order situation. In consequence some measures were taken to contain aggravation. But unfortunately the result is yet to be encouraging. The reason, as many would think, can be attributed to the indifference of the implementers of the government order. Added to it, the present vicious flow of corrupt practices to the extent of snatching by the policemen, con-

tinue to keep the desirable law and order scenario at bay or at the mercy of the hoodlums. At its dizzy height, even the "RAT" a newly constituted rapid action team, was recently reported to have faced challenge from corrupt policemen when they were being intercepted at the place of occurrence.

often indifferent to taking orders from the departmental bosses. On the other hand, those affected due to such trading of good postings, invariably lose heart and even their usual agility to perform their jobs in new places without 'attraction'. In both the cases the law and order segment of the whole issue is at stake. Consequently, the 'image' of the government and the party in power is in jeopardy despite many express and apparently good intention to restore normalcy to law and order.

Some bureaucrats, precisely, some of the secretaries in the ministries are also observed to have been tuned to the same trend. Among them the majority has been on specific contracts having practically nothing to lose if their contracts are prematurely terminated. They too are on loose ends scarcely putting themselves up with the realities obtaining in the areas of implementation of government policies from time to time. They are again the tail-enders of the erstwhile civil service of Pakistan or EPCS. Some among them consider themselves clever enough to play their roles in line with their ill-informed ministers. They too are responsible for damaging the prospect of good governance stressed upon by the Prime Minister and her Cabinet. Members of the press perhaps would have taken the November 17 Press Conference of the Home Secretary on law and order situation as a classic example of complacency.

On the day the Home Secretary had claimed that the law and order situation was improving, 'unbelievably' there were at least four murders in the metropolis, of which one infant girl was killed by slaughtering. A hotel manager was hit by bullet along with four others. A sweet-meat shop on Green Road was robbed of Tk. 70,000/- by the hoodlums, etc. And away in the districts things that day were reported to be no better. Rather, it showed an alarming trend of going down.

Even though these reports are treated as politically motivated, we have an instant corroboration of the ever worsening law and order situation from one of the donor agencies USAID on November 18. Deep concern was expressed by the Deputy Administrator of USAID Mr Frederick Shak during his meeting with the press men in the city. So, it is high time that we no longer befool ourselves. Let us act on realities and mend our fences quickly.

Kazi Alauddin Ahmed is an industrial consultant

Selecting the right kind of biography

YASMEEN MURSHED

LIVES of great men all remind us how far removed they are from our own. Official biographies are often dull and difficult going for those who do not have to read them. For those of us who read for pleasure, choosing the right kind of biography becomes a matter of some thought and much selection.

These days more and more not-so-famous men and women from all over the world are sharing life experiences with us in their memoirs or biographies. The best of these books evoke a time and place that is filled with the magic of nostalgia and succeed in bringing to life the unique even eccentric characters that abound in many families and strike a chord of recognition in our own memories.

I first discovered this genre of intimate half recipe-half anecdote or part-narrative part-cookbook memoir with Elizabeth Luards' "Family Life, Birth, Death and the Whole Damn Thing" (pub: Corgi Books 1996). Ms. Luard is a prize winning food writer, novelist and natural history artist and now a full time writer. She says in the introduction that "This book is no self improvement manual. It is simply one woman's account of how one family, shaped by time, place and social habits, coped with the business of reaching adulthood."

It is of course considerably more than that because Ms. Luard "a daughter of the Sixties... a one-time part-time flower child" was a part of the young set in London that included many who became the pop idols of their generation.

Her husband Nicholas was co-editor of Private Eye the iconoclastic magazine of that era and with his friend Peter Cook, the great comedy writer and dramatist (remember Beyond the Fringe and Oh Calcutta), was involved in many other ventures in the music and pop scene of that heady

era.

The extent of their social ambit becomes apparent in the anecdotes about their life in London. For instance when organising a concert for Amnesty International, they asked their good friends the Beatles to play but since the group was already engaged elsewhere

family had to face the loss of a beloved eldest daughter, Francesca who tested positive for the HIV virus and shortly before Christmas 1994 died of AIDS related cancer. The final three chapters not only describe the family's response to the illness but also contain Francesca's own eloquent, humane

when the young Ruth desperately tried to steer her manic mothers' cooking towards something edible for the frequent guests at their home, to later years we meet the characters who shaped her tastes and dominated her world -- her long association with the fascinating gourmand Monsieur du Croix who served Reichl her first soufflé to those at her politically correct table in Berkeley who championed the organic food revolution in the 1970s. Spiced with her infectious humour and sprinkled with her favourite recipes this is a witty and compelling chronicle of a culinary sensualist's coming of age.

From the South Asian Diaspora comes the elegantly crafted "Monsoon Diary, A Memoir With Recipes" by Shobha Narayan (pub: Villard Books, New York 2003). This account of a South Indian childhood peopled with the eccentric characters of a small town and an extended family delights with its illuminating look at culture and food. The unusual vegetarian recipes are matched by stories as varied as Asian spices and the mouth watering descriptions of meals consumed in the backdrop of quirky customs and solemn rituals that surround the daily lives of so many South Asians whether they live at home or in the alien setting of the west.

Many of the characters of Ms Narayan's childhood will strike a chord in our own memories of growing up. There is Raju the milkman who named his cows after his wives, the *dhobi* who daily sets up his ironing stand in their front yard and picked up red hot coals with his bare hands and of course the aunts, uncles and grand parents with their individual quirks and good or bad humours.

This is a delightful book and one which takes me to the subject of yet-to-be-written books. When will be get a book of food memoirs in English by a Bangladeshi writer that is as delicate and enjoyable as these?

TALKING BOOKS
This journey through life from early marriage to maturity, from the dizzy days of the early Sixties to thoughtful middle-age, of a woman who has been a full-time and devoted mother and who is now a professional writer and painter, full of courage, tenacity and imagination is one of the most moving books I have ever read.

they recommended "this new pop group who are not so bad - The Rolling Stones"! As she observes "No one had yet become too famous to speak to anyone else". So the pages abound with interesting stories about Larry Olivier and John Osborne, Cat Stevens and Pink Floyd, Michael Hasting, Barry Humphries, Gerald Scarfe and the inimitable Mary Quant who changed the look of an entire generation.

That was the milieu and the only unusual aspect was that the author did not "do drugs" and the "singles scene" but had a healthy family life with four children and a large convivial circle of friends. The Luards eventually went off to live in a remote village in Andalusia and the best part of the book is the description of the food markets and restaurants of southern Spain as well as the mouth watering recipes that the author cooked up.

Although this tenderly, even passionately written memoir is redolent with the images of good friends, colourful festivals and delicious meals, nevertheless the closing chapters are poignant and painful because the

and all too brief account of the illness.

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In the same genre is Ruth Reichl's Tender at the Bone, Growing Up at the Table, (pub: Broadway Books 1998) and Comfort Me With Apples, (pub: Random House 2001) are similar in some respects since the author is a well-known food writer and columnist but grew up in a Jewish family in New York. At a very early age Reichl discovered that "food could be a way of making sense of the world ... If you watched people as they ate, you could find out who they were."

With an acute sense of observation, she describes a life determined, enhanced and defined in equal measure by a passion for food, unforgettable people and the love of tales well told. From her childhood experiences,

Ardeshtir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

WE must somehow learn to laugh at ourselves, at our petty foibles, our comic weaknesses, habits and errors. To be able to do so, to shrug off complexes that make us take every single thing so seriously, is one of the first signs of maturity and self-confidence.

Ayub Khan, President and General, and later President and Field Marshal, was a handsome man with a twinkle in his eye. There is an old and famous story, possibly apocryphal, about him that is applicable to the present season. From the very beginning of its life, the learned men of the book who guide the morals of this nation have been unable to reach an agreement on the planet moon and its appearance and placing in the night sky. Each first of Ramzan and each Eid have been hotly disputed, with the divines of one area of the country sighting the moon on one evening and others not spotting it at all. One year, early in his regime, Ayub decided enough was enough. He was tired of double or triple Eids being celebrated, tired of the inability of the holy men to decide in unison. He gave orders that the moon-experts in all areas of the country would be instructed by his military commanders that they would, in complete unison, 'sight' the moon on one evening, so that for once in its life the entire nation would celebrate Eid on the same day.

Sure enough, from Karachi to Peshawar the divines spotted the moon on the announced evening. However, up in Quetta, Maulvi Tabassum declared that he had not sighted the moon, and that the faithful would continue to fast the following day. As the story goes, a furious Ayub, ordered the GOC commanding the Division in Quetta to ensure that the mauvi did see the moon.

The General sent for the stubborn mauvi, turned his head heavenwards, and asked 'Mauvi Sahib, chand dekha?' 'Nahi dekha' said the resolute man. The General then turned him around 180 degrees, told him to peer downwards, and asked 'West Camp dekha?' 'Dekha,' murmured the learned man. 'Good,' said the General, and asked him to look upwards. 'Abb chand dekha?' 'Dekha, dekha,' said a nervous mauvi, and thus was Eid celebrated the next day in Quetta and the entire country.

On to Zia-ul-Haq, General and President. As with many military men, Zia was highly flattered and pleased with himself when our academic institutions, as is their sycophantic wont, insisted on conferring honorary degrees upon those who reach the top slot. He rather fancied himself when

wearing a mortar-board with a gold braided gown over his cavalry uniform.

In 1986, Zia visited Thailand and knowing how enamoured he was with academic honours, his aides and advisors got to work. The Bureaucratic Bunglers of Bangkok joined them. What actually transpired was rather funny. I wrote a letter to the editor of

Khwaja Nazimuddin, a man of noble birth, rotund but as straight as they come, was a Cambridge man who had renounced his knighthood. Lastly, the first of them all, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, whose words we are exhorted to heed day after day, on October 4, 1942 replied to a letter addressed to him by Vice Chancellor Ziauddin of Aligarh:

In 1986, Zia visited Thailand and knowing how enamoured he was with academic honours, his aides and advisors got to work...I wrote a letter to the editor of Dawn which was printed in June that year : "Thammasat, the University of Moral and Political Sciences of Thailand, for reasons it does not have to explain, refused to confer a doctorate upon General Zia, during his recent state visit to that old cultured country. As a sop, the smaller University of Chulalongkorn was forced to oblige.

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"Thammasat, the University of Moral and Political Sciences of Thailand, for reasons it does not have to explain, refused to confer a doctorate upon General Zia, during his recent state visit to that old cultured country. As a sop, the smaller University of Chulalongkorn was forced to oblige. The programming civil servants and diplomats of both countries -- Pakistan and Thailand -- stand answerable for this avoidable disavowal done to our head of state, to our state and thus to its people.

"Why did they all not do their homework? Had they done so they would have learnt how the Thai universities had rebuffed their own prime minister, Prem Tinsulanond. As for our men, they should certainly have remembered how Oxford reacted to the political record set by the former people's prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, when it was announced that his old university could find no justifiable 'cause' to confer upon him a doctorate of his asking.

"Our earlier ruling dictators were less presumptuous. Rangaela Raja Agha Mohammad Yayha Khan, loved life and what it had to offer and had neither the time nor the inclination to seek honorary honours. Ayub Khan did manage to obtain a doctorate from the modest campus at Kandy. Iskander Mirza was content with his rank of Major General and the many mentions in dispatches he was awarded whilst serving on our North West Frontier. Ghulam Mohammad was an accountant, steeped in finances, disinterested in the real or imaginary virtues of scholarship.

"While I appreciate very much indeed the spirit which has actuated the court to take this decision [conferment of an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws] I have, most reluctantly, to say that I have lived as plain Mr Jinnah and hope to die as plain Mr Jinnah. I am very much averse to any title or honour and I will be more happy if there was no prefix to my name."

"Thammasat is to be commended for upholding its independence and its principles. But we must commiserate with Chulalongkorn (named after the great King of Siam who was tutored by Anna Leonowens, was so sufficiently enlightened that he abolished slavery and introduced many social and educational reforms) for its inability to withstand pressure. The convocation conferring the honorary doctorate upon Zia-ul-Haq was reportedly held in camera and attended by a mere 50 members of the faculty."

Soon thereafter, I was invited to a reception for the President General on one of his frequent visits to Karachi. When it came to my turn to shake hands, wily Zia, with a smile on his face, commented how much he had enjoyed reading my letter and asked me to let him have a copy of anything of interest I may write in the future.

According to his own admission, Zia read eleven national newspapers before he bedded down and scrawled remarks thereon -- 'investigate', or 'more info required', or 'good', or 'shocked', or 'grieved', or even both 'shocked and grieved'. These last three remarks drastically increased over the months and years, so much so that in 1983, perturbed by the reckless maligning of our supreme leader through daily accusations that

he was beset by shock and grief, and I myself grieving for the state of the nation's health, I lodged a complaint in September of that year with our newly appointed Ombudsman, seeking help and relief:

"Congratulations! Placed as you are, high in the hierarchy, I feel sure you will be able to do some good.

"Whilst doing good, we must hope you will effectively deal with the pervasive endemic sycophancy, that weapon of destruction wielded the lowly. Someone already has tried to call you God Almighty (*The Muslim*, September 6). A blasphemous act by any book, but you will, I suppose, forgive him.

"The complaint I make today (No.001 for identification purposes) is against the ministry of information, which I charge with overexposing our President, bringing him and his government into disrepute and upsetting the people in the process. May I suggest that you count how many times the word 'Zia' appears in the press each day and out of that total number how many times his name is headlined. A few instances : a bus tumbles into a ravine, and we read 'Zia shocked.' A 97-year old poet dies and 'Zia grieved.' An earthquake occurs in Bulgaria and 'Zia shocked.' The minister of mines in Outer Mongolia dies and 'Zia grieved.' Are we being ruled by a man perpetually either in a state of shock, or overcome by grief?"

This was followed up in November with a reminder:

"There has been no improvement. Sent herewith is the front page of the 'Morning News' (a government publication) of November 17. 'Zia' appears in five headlines and 'Zia' or 'General Zia' or 'the President' or 'President Zia' or 'President General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq' all told appear 35 times. And, whereas previously Zia was alternatively either shocked or grieved, he is now overcome by both traumatic sentiments at one and the same time. He is both 'shocked and grieved.' This is shocking news."

Ombudsman Sardar Iqbal, fortunately endowed with that rare quality, a fine sense of humour, reacted. 'But surely Mr Cowasjee, you can't be serious.' 'As serious as I can be, Ombudsman, save us!'

As a nation we are more than consistent. In the first column on the last page of Dawn, November 22, "President General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Jamali on Friday expressed deep sense of shock and grief....." We have progressed from solo to duet.

Ardeshtir Cowasjee is an eminent Pakistani columnist.