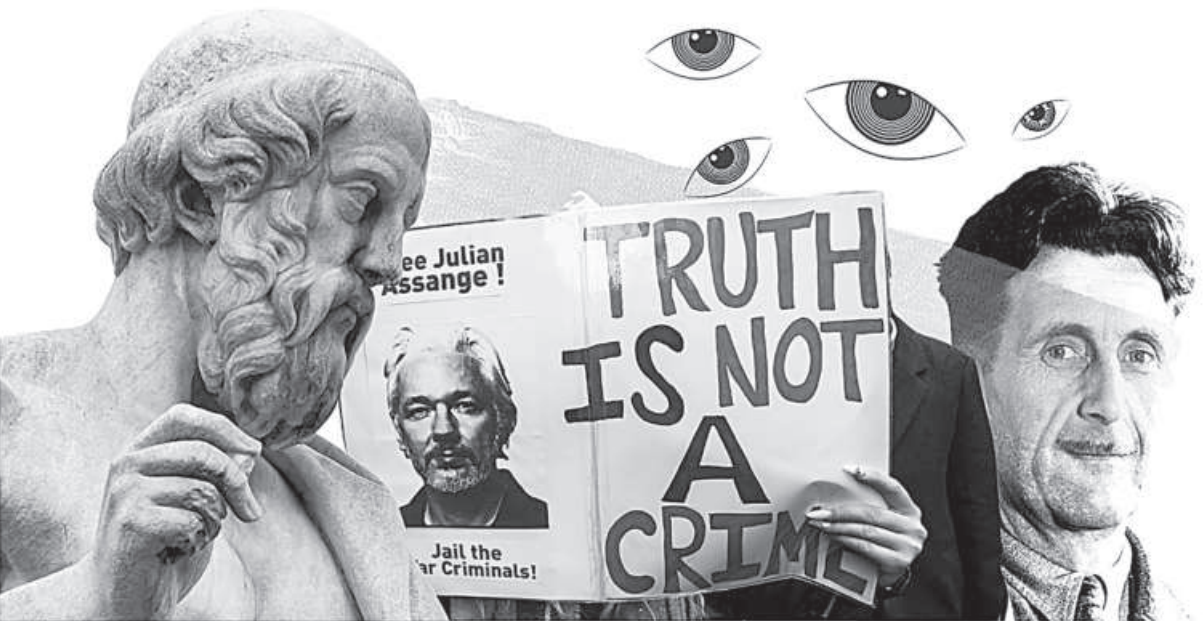




COLLAGE: TEENT AND TUNI

Why is the truth so important?



THE OVERTON WINDOW

Eresh Omar Jamal
is assistant editor at The Daily Star. His Twitter handle is @EreshOmarJamal

ERESH OMAR JAMAL

Many of us are familiar with the work (or name, at least) of the Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. Perhaps not as many, however, are familiar with his nephew, Edward Bernays. Bernays is considered to be a pioneer in the field of public relations and propaganda – and was referred to in his obituary as “the father of public relations.” During the 1940s, it was Bernays who had suggested that the US National Military Establishment be renamed to the Department of Defence, instead of the Department of War, so as to be “perceived” more positively by the masses.

In his short but brilliant book, *Propaganda*, Bernays openly wrote: “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power.” But this, perhaps, was not as much of a revolutionary observation as one might think.

In his monumental work *The Republic*, Plato, as part of his famous “allegory of the cave,” describes a scenario where people are held captive in a cave since birth, with their backs to the entrance, unable to face the opening, and with no knowledge of the outside world. Occasionally, however, people and other objects would pass by the cave entrance, casting shadows and echoes on the wall they faced; hence, the prisoners would falsely believe the sounds to be coming from the shadows. Suddenly, one prisoner is freed and is able to go outside for the first time. The sunlight, which he sees directly, initially hurts his eyes and he finds the new environment disorienting; when told the things around him are real, while the shadows were mere reflections, he cannot believe it. Gradually, his eyes adjust and he is able to look upon the sun itself and reason how the shadows he saw were cast by the light. Upon returning to the cave to share his discovery with his fellow captives, the prisoner (whose eyes had now adjusted to the light), was blinded by the darkness inside the cave, just as he was the first time he saw the light. The other prisoners, however, came to the conclusion that the journey had made him stupid and blind, and violently resisted his attempts to free them.

Plato uses this passage as an analogy to explain that most people are not only comfortable in their ignorance, but are also hostile to anyone who points it out. To put it in the words of Mark Twain, “It is easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.”

With scientific progress and the advent of advanced technology, the methods of population control, particularly through the use of information control, emotional manipulation, and mass surveillance have become predominant.

Of course, the creation of an all-powerful dystopia via perception control and mass surveillance – and the use of sheer force – was most chillingly described by George

Orwell in his book *1984*. Orwell's French tutor and fellow Eton College alumni, Aldous Huxley strongly believed that humanity will go through “one final revolution” as a result of scientific and technological breakthroughs, giving ruling elites much greater power to control populations and their behaviour, leading to the creation of such a dystopia – which he wrote about in his book *Brave New World*. Huxley, however, believed that the methods used would be different from what Orwell had described.

In a letter to Orwell, Huxley wrote: “My own belief is that the ruling oligarchy will find less arduous and wasteful ways of governing and of satisfying its lust for power... Within the next generation I believe that the world's rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into

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loving their servitude as by flogging and kicking them into obedience.”

Despite the differences in their books, both authors discussed in great detail the importance of perception control, which is necessary if a small group of oligarchical rulers are to control the behavioural patterns of entire populations – or those of a large majority, at least. That doing so is more than possible in the modern world can be clearly seen in Noam Chomsky's documentary *Manufacturing Consent*. In Chomsky's words: “The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.”

Hence, today, we see increasing amounts of “social debates” (whether in the media, in movies, etc), but centring the same subjects, while discussing others is sure to get you cancelled (as Chomsky has been done by the Western mainstream), if not worse. In other words, the range of subject matters politically acceptable to be discussed by the so-called mainstream population – the Overton Window – has shrunk immensely, yet it is a relatively widely held belief today that the number of taboo subjects that cannot be discussed has reduced (a classic example of Orwell's doublethink).

One of the strangest phenomena of this is the celebration of getting opinions and ideas from a seemingly diverse group of people (in terms of gender, race, looks, etc), which is fantastic – but only if aligned with the same agendas pushed by the mainstream (that is, tolerance in terms of diversity of opinions/ideas is deteriorating). The wisdom behind Voltaire's understanding that, “The right to free speech is more important than the content of the speech,” is being forgotten today even by some who claim to defend that right.

Another interesting outcome is the increased discussion of people's private lives in the mainstream and the decay of individual privacy. If information is power, the decrease in individual privacy can only render individuals less powerful, particularly in relation to the state, its actors, and its institutions, whose functioning has become increasingly opaque – especially under the pretext of protecting “national security.” Yet, the “overwhelming majority of information” classified in relation to the functioning of the state, according to Julian Assange – who has perhaps looked at more classified information than any human ever – is “to protect political security, not national security.” In other words, for the ruling technocrats to maintain their power. And yet, the rapidly growing tendency of classifying information, let alone its contents, is barely discussed by the same mainstream.

The major decisions that are taken by the biggest and most influential state and non-state actors, which affect global shifts, are being pushed to the fringes. And what we are left with are trivial discussions – debates between ideologues whose ideological roots are based on false realities, as we have less and less information publicly available about how the power machinery/hierarchy truly functions, and what decisions are taken by the ruling class behind closed doors.

The result, according to Assange, is that: “The world is not sliding, but galloping into a new transnational dystopia,” which is a “development that has not been properly recognised outside of national security circles” and has instead “been hidden by secrecy, complexity and scale.”

If what advances us as a civilisation is the entirety of our understanding, then our understanding of how human institutions actually function has to be expanded. And, at the moment, we are severely lacking in such information from big, secretive organisations that play a massive role in shaping how we all live.

Additionally, we must be open to allowing the constant questioning of whatever views we hold – including the questioning of why we believe what we believe. Because, the ultimate tool that can progress humanity and ensure that human decision-making is free, is the truth. Not my truth, nor yours, but the truth about reality and how the world really works. And if we are to arrive at that, we mustn't be afraid to allow what we “perceive” as truth to be questioned by those who view the world differently.

To find the truth, we must also be willing to examine as much information as possible, not only information that comes filtered through any gatekeepers – whose perceptions are just as vulnerable to corruption as ours are, and who can just as easily misinterpret and misrepresent information as we could.

52ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONCERT FOR BANGLADESH The unsung heroes who introduced Bangladesh to the world



Muhammad Asiful Basar
is senior lecturer (on study leave) at North South University and a PhD student at the University of Antwerp. Reach him at muhammad.basar@student.uantwerpen.be

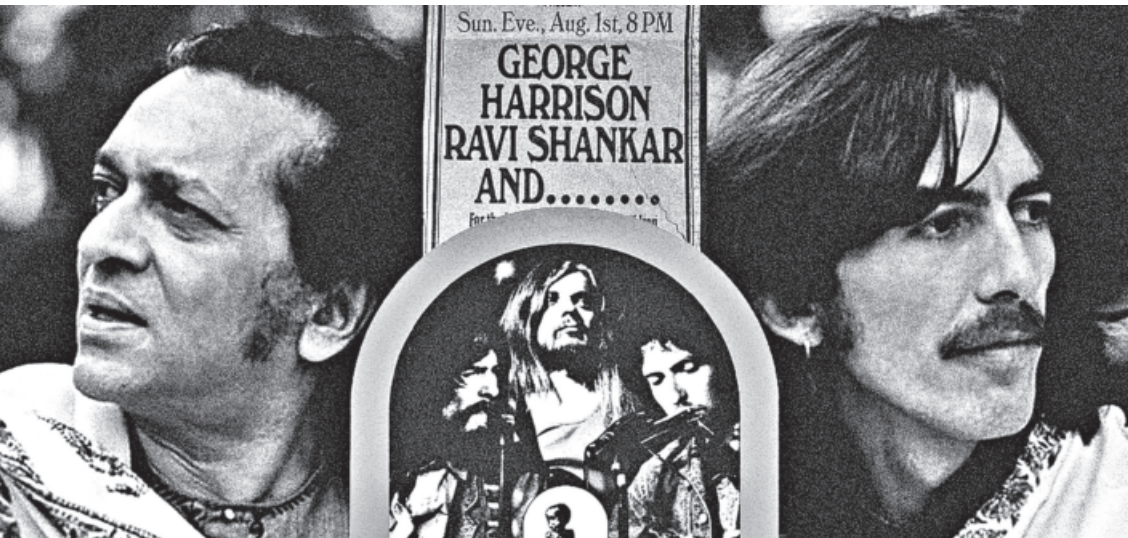
MUHAMMAD ASIFUL BASAR

*“My friend came to me
With sadness in his eyes
He told me that he wanted help
Before his country dies
Although I couldn't feel the pain
I knew I had to try
Now I'm asking all of you
To help us save some lives
Bangladesh, Bangladesh
Where so many people are dying
fast
And it sure looks like a mess
I've never seen such distress
Now won't you lend your hand
and understand?
Relieve the people of
Bangladesh...”*

This is how George Harrison introduced Bangladesh at the Madison Square Garden in New York City on August 1, 1971. With his long-time friend Ravi Shankar, he appealed to the 40,000 spectators and numerous onlookers around the world to stand by Bangladesh, a “non-recognised” country that was fighting for its rightful cause. Prior to this, the crisis in then East Pakistan had received little attention globally, particularly among US' youth who had limited

in East Pakistan. Deeply affected by this distressing report, renowned Indian classical musician Ravi Shankar (himself a Bangalee) brought the issue up to Harrison, his friend, to organise something for those who were not receiving sufficient attention from the international community. George Harrison, who had just left The Beatles a few months prior, took this as a call of duty and initiated correspondence with his musical colleagues and friends, including Bob Dylan and former bandmates John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and Ringo Starr. Lennon declined to participate due to personal reasons, but the others joined the cause. It is worth noting that, a few weeks after the successful Concert for Bangladesh, Lennon released his renowned composition “Imagine.” One may speculate that perhaps this song emerged from his anguish over not being able to partake in the charity concert that garnered massive global acclaim.

Harrison and Shankar then grouped several of the most luminous pop stars of the 70s under one roof and named the



COLLAGE: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

knowledge about the situation and were unaware of their government's involvement. The global media also considered the war Pakistan's internal conflict, and no one had presented it as Bangladesh's crisis till then.

At the onset of the conflict, a significant number of Bangalee refugees were able to escape the genocide perpetrated in East Pakistan by the Pakistani military, and sought shelter in various camps in India. However, these refugees encountered additional challenges such as the risk of starvation, inadequate sanitation, and the spread of life-threatening diseases like cholera. In June 1971, *The Sunday Times* published an influential article by Pakistani journalist Anthony Mascarenhas titled “Genocide,” which exposed the horrifying atrocities committed by the Pakistani forces

event Concert for Bangladesh. The lineup of performers was truly remarkable: Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr, Leon Russell, Klaus Voormann, Billy and Don Preston, bands Badfinger and The Hollywood Horns, Ustad Allarakha, Ali Akbar Khan, and, of course, Harrison and Shankar themselves. The aim of this monumental concert was to collect as much money as possible for the victims of the Bhola cyclone and the Bangalee refugees living in Indian camps.

It is important to note that, prior to this event, the name Bangladesh had not been officially recognised by any country, and even Bangladeshis themselves had doubts about receiving support from the West during that critical time of the war. Furthermore, a positive branding of Bangladesh had not yet been established in the

missions in the refugee camps in India and to Bangladesh directly.

It is rather astonishing that the government and people of Bangladesh have shown relatively minimal recognition for the two prominent musicians who played a significant role in introducing the country to the world. Despite their selfless dedication to the people of Bangladesh, these musicians have not been acknowledged with the highest honour of the country for non-nationals, the Swadhinata Sammanona. Furthermore, there has been no establishment of a musical school, gallery, or a prominent street named after them. Is it really unreasonable to expect for Bangladesh to acknowledge and honour these often overlooked foreign individuals who played a significant role in promoting the name of Bangladesh internationally, even prior to its establishment?

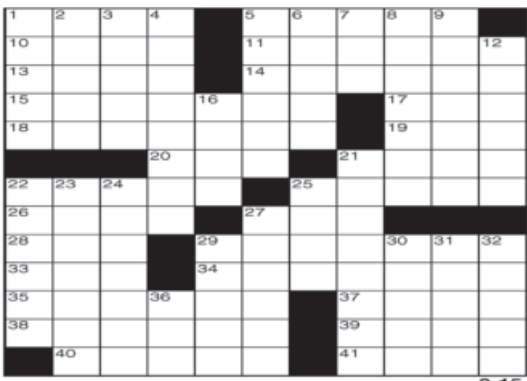
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Scorch
5 Former vice president Agnew
10 Ore source
11 Sidewalk material
13 Prepares for war
14 Drake or Dre
15 Menu fish
17 Make a knot in
18 Ladies of Spain
19 Lupino of film
20 “Platoon” setting
21 Delighted
22 Pretentious
25 Printer's need
26 Used to be
27 Sheep call
28 Clerk on “The

Simpsons”
29 Imagine
33 “Losing My Religion” band
34 Fur trader
35 Neatly dressed
37 Mother of Castor and Pollux
38 Sound system
39 Historic times
40 Halts
41 Rational

DOWN
1 School group
2 Singer Lena
3 Don Draper, for one
4 Answer
5 Roller coaster sound
6 Fruit basket

items
7 Little rascal
8 Gator or gecko
9 New York natives
12 Tire features
16 Ask for divine help
21 Wrestles
22 Oscar and Tony
23 Iterates
24 Jazz band instrument
25 One of a bear trio
27 Pack animals
29 Exorbitant
30 Sung drama
31 Car type
32 Make blank
36 Paid player



SATURDAY'S ANSWERS

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