

book review

Mahbubul Haq — Time and Life

by A Z M Haider

Scion of a respectable Muslim family of Farhadnagar in Feni district, Mahbubul Haq had to give up education very early in life and take the responsibility of his family. He took a small job in Assam-Bangal Railway which took him to Dibrugarh in Assam. During his sojourn at Dibrugarh he got in touch with the railway employees union and soon became its active member. Later returning to Chittagong he continued his association with the railway labour union and by dint of his untiring effort and selfless service rose to the office of the President of East Pakistan Railway Employees League.

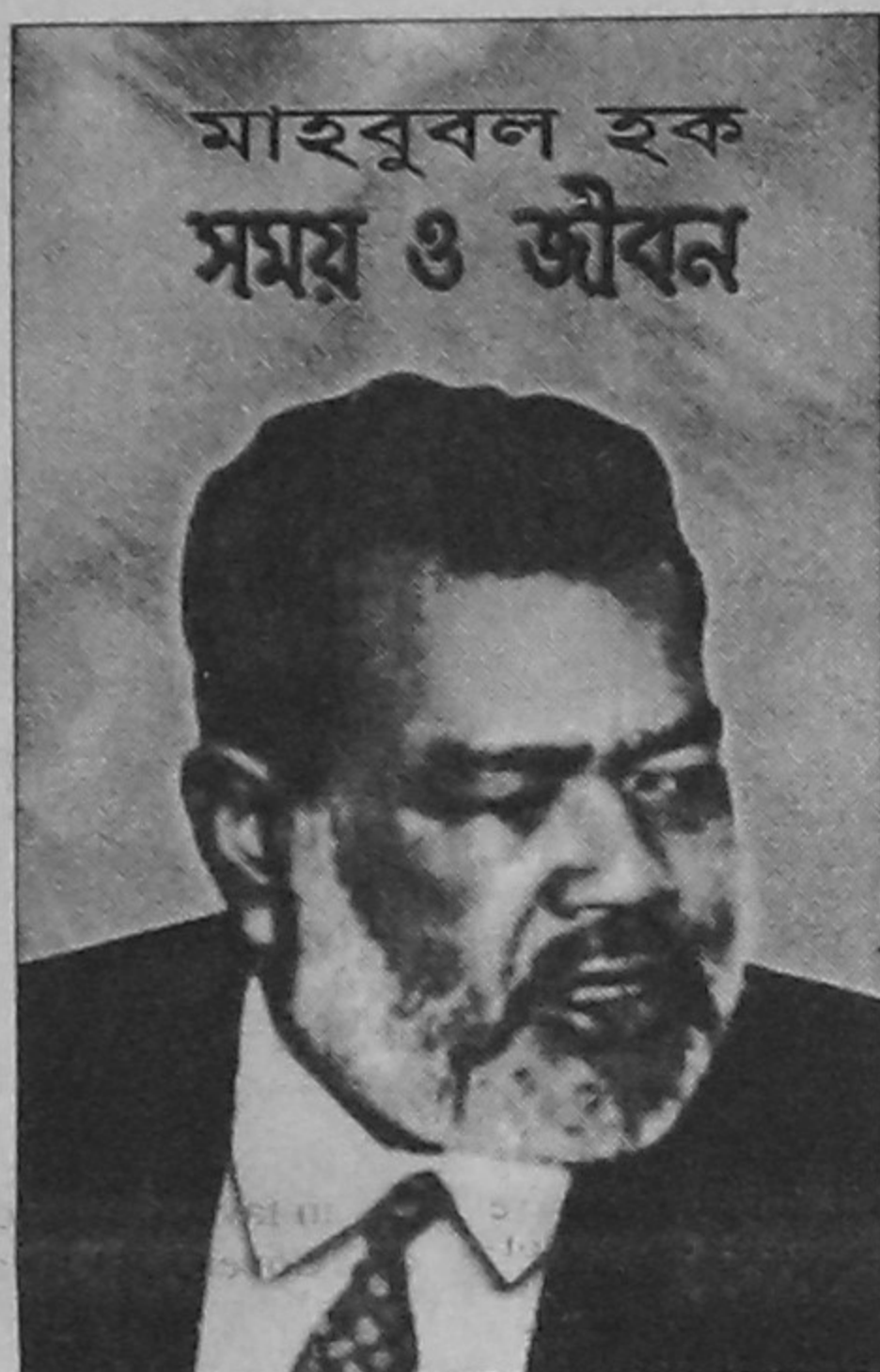
PAYING glowing tribute to the memory of late Hussain Shahed Suhrawardy, A K Brohi, a jurist of international eminence, described the late leader as one of the national heroes. Addressing a meeting at Dhaka in December 1964 to condole the sad and sudden demise of Suhrawardy, Brohi observed "we pay homage to our heroes to encourage birth of new heroes in future."

The book entitled "Mahbubul Haq — Time and Life" published by Mahbubul Haq Memorial Committee and edited by senior journalist Ershad Mazumder is a testament of the manifold qualities of head and heart of the man universally adored and admired by his friends and foes. If Mahbubul Haq had not risen to the stature of a hero, he had all the attributes that could contribute to the making of a hero. During his short life span of little over fifty years he led an active life of less than thirty years. If Mahbubul Haq had lived little longer, at least 20 years more, he could have made immense contribution to the enrichment of our national life which would have qualified him for much higher place in the roll call of national honour.

The 174 page book on Mahbubul Haq is not a biography, nor an autobiography. It is an anthology of memorable speeches he delivered in vindication of the justness of East Pakistan's (now Bangladesh's) cause in the National Assembly of Pakistan. Besides, it has two parts the first part containing a fairly long write-up on his life and activities by his daughter Aynun Nahar Rekha and the second part consisting of articles written by leading journalists, foremost union leaders, politicians, parliamentarians and leaders of the business community etc.

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The Railway employees union is too small a frame to contain Mahbubul Haq a man of talent and dynamism. He required a much larger area to operate. His election in 1962 to the National Assembly of Pakistan gave him a giant leap forward to the national scene and work for a much greater cause. Indeed his march from labour league to national politics and finally to membership of the National Assembly of Pakistan presents a chequered career interspersed with reverses and successes, agonizing de-

spair and glorious victory. Having lost his electoral contest with Abdul Jabbar Khaddar in the then East Pakistan Assembly in 1954, he won the National Assembly poll in 1962. His electoral victory was based on his selfless service to people of his constituency. After electoral debacle in 1954, he went to his village home in Farhadnagar, remained entrenched there, worked for his people and thereby acquired their love and confidence. Peoples unbounded love for him helped him return to the National Assembly.

In the National Assembly he fearlessly fought for the cause of the neglected and the exploited East Pakistan. His parliamentary eloquence coupled with marshalling of incontrovertible facts and figures humbled his adversaries from West Pakistan and earned for him respect and admiration of his colleagues and East Pakistani compatriots. In espousing the cause of East Pakistan he defied red eyes of then military dictator Ayub Khan.

As has been stated, the book is a collection of write-ups by leading journalists of the country. All of them without exception recalled in their write-ups Mahbubul Haq's invaluable contribution to newspaper management in East Pakistan. He raised the institution of newspaper editor to the level of a force in society obeyed by all and sundry.

It is an unmitigated tragedy that a man of Mahbubul Haq's standing and stature, who all his life upheld the cause of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) should suffer for it. He was imputed the ignominious allegation of being an anti-Bangladesh element and a Pakistani agent. Nothing could be a greater travesty of truth than this. This incrimination broke his heart and he died a premature death in June 1974.

Printed in 1999, it is a hard-bound book with art paper cover bearing Mahbubul Haq's portrait. On the whole, it is a well-produced book.

profile

Jacques Prevert, A Hundred Years Old And Younger Than Ever

By Sylvie Thomas

Jacques Prevert was born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, next to Paris, on 4th February 1900. He was very fond of the popular expression, "Don't tell your life story." However, in the centenary year of his birth, publications, shows and exhibitions vie with each other to acclaim the poet who, according to a survey last December, was hailed as the "writer of the century."

JACQUES Prevert could be very hard on people. He did not like school or servicemen or priests. He was regularly sent out of class for being a troublemaker. In short, he could have turned out badly. However, once he turned twenty, he discovered poetry, then the cinema, and then painting. He met Robert Desnos, Louis Aragon, Max Ernst and Picasso. He frequented Andre Breton and the Surrealists. From 1932, he drafted sketches for *Le Groupe Octobre*, a communistic theatre troupe. He wrote *L'Affaire est dans le Sac*, directed by his brother Pierre. He was designated as the best script-writer of his time in 1935 with *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, directed by Jean Renoir. The following year, he started collaborating with Marcel Carne and this resulted in films such as *Drole de Drame* with Louis Jouvet and Michel Simon, *Qual des Brumes* with Jean Gabin and Michele Morgan and *Les enfants du Paradis* with Arletty and Jean-Louis Barrault.

In 1945, his collection of poem, *Paroles*, was published. After the war, in the Saint-Germain-des-Près quarter of Paris, Serge Reggiani, Mouloudji, Juliette Greco and Yves Montand with *Feuilles d'Automne* (autumn leaves) sang songs written by Prevert. There followed political commitment and publications: *L'Opera de la Lune*, *La Pluie et le Beau Temps*, *Diurnes*, *Fatras*, etc. The photographer Robert Doisneau immortalised the poet who died on 11th April 1977.

Prevert's dense life is recounted in a new biography by Yves Courrière (published by Gallimard) which is likely to become a work of reference on the subject. At the same time, there is a re-edition of Bernard Chardere's Jacques Prevert inventaire d'une vie. The story of this free man's life can be relived in a set of four CDs which largely uses the archives of Radio France and of the National Audiovisual Institute with interviews, personal accounts and poems that are narrated or sung (1).



A surrealist photograph of Jacques Prevert

Many of the poet's works are also being re-edited. Gallimard is bringing out *La Cinquieme Saison* in its Folio edition. Imaginaries, which came out in 1970, and out of print, is going to be published in the Blanche and Folio collections. Three works of texts from the 30s and a collection of poems, none of which has been published before, are being prepared. Gallimard Jeunesse is presenting two collections of little-known plays and sketches, entitled *A Perte de Vie* and *Le Beau Langage*.

Monza publications is bringing out two works that have never been published before, the script of *Les Enfants due Paradis*, which had a different ending than in the film, and *Charmes de Londres*. The Tsipika publishers in Antananarivo, are preparing a bilingual French-Malagasy anthology of Prevert's texts.

Finally, on the initiative of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a portfolio is being published by the Association pour la diffusion de la Pensée Française.

Exhibitions tour all of France until

the end of the year. A vast retrospective (which keeps on growing). *Le Siecle de Jacques Prevert* (the Century of Jacques Prevert), is practically exhaustive. *Duheme/Prevert*, in the Manche department, shows the illustrations made by Jacqueline Duheme for Prevert's works. *Les Ecorches* presents thirty collages. Other exhibitions will be held in the summer in Saintes at the *Abbaye-aux-Dames* and in Cherbourg at the T Henry Museum. There will also be a Doisneau/Prevert exhibition called *A l'Imparfait de l'Objectif* (2).

In the theatre, Brigitte Fossey and Catherine Arditi are acting in *Paroles* (3). The L'Instant Meme theatre troupe is presenting a few *Contes pour Enfants pas sages* (tales for naughty children), in particular those speaking of Africa (in July at the Avignon Festival and in August at the Parc Floral in Paris and the show will go on tour in Morocco, with the French Institutes, in November).

The University of Montreal, in Quebec, will present *La Croix en l'Air*, a fierce anti-militarist performance.

poems

Monsoonal Poems of Rabindranath Tagore

Song of Newly-arrived Rain Naboborsha

Translated by Fakrul Alam

My heart dances, like a peacock dancing, my heart dances this day.
Like a peacock fanning its tail rapturously,
Shimmering with joyous thoughts and emotions,
My eager heart peers at the sky for some visitation.
Like a peacock dancing, my heart dances this day!

Rain-laden clouds roll across the sky, reverberating,
Rainwater cascades down time and again
Tender rice-plants bend and sway,
Frogs croak on as spent doves keep shivering in their nests.
Rain-laden clouds roll across the sky, reverberating!

Moist-dark blue clouds tint my eyes, make them, sky-blue!
The newly sprouting grass of the shaded forest
Spreads out and becomes my place of rest.
Aroused kadamba trees kindle my heart.
Lovely moist-dark blue clouds tint my eyes!

Who unravels her hair in the turret of the sky today?
Who covers her bosom languorously
With her newly woven sky-blue dress?
Who frisks amidst sudden spurts of lightning?
Who unravels her hair in the turrets of the sky today?

Who sits amidst the riverbank reeds, dressed all in gree?
Who could it be, tearing off the tender jasmine,
While gazing for someone absent-mindedly,
Even as her pitcher floats away from the quay?
Who sits amidst the riverbank reeds, dressed all in green?

Who swings on secluded bokul branches today, swaying to and fro,
Scattering bokul flowers in quick showers?
Borders of her sari quivering against the sky,
Tresses flying in her eyes momentarily and then unraveling,
Who sways on secluded bokul branches today, swaying to and fro?

Who moors her boat amidst blooming *ketaki* flowers with maidenly ease?
Bunches of moss and cotton-plants
Loosely drape her sari's borders:
She stirs my soul with her tear-filled rhapsody of the rain.
Amidst blooming *ketaki* flowers she moors her boat with maidenly ease!

My heart dances, like a peacock dancing, my heart dances this day.
Showers stream down on newly sprouted branches,
Songs of crickets stir forests,
The rampaging river roars over banks and reaches the village,
My heart dances, like a peacock dancing, my heart dances this day.

An Ashar Day

Ashar*

Thick new clouds fill the Ashar sky this day;
Children, don't go out, outside the house don't stray!
The rain keeps pouring endlessly
Aush-rice fields fill with water steadily
Behold ink-black clouds darken the other shore.
Children, don't go outdoors any more!

Bring in the white cow — don't you hear it mooing?
Soon daylight will fade and night will be falling.
From the doorway see if you can tell
If from the field have returned all.
What impulse has set the cowboy roaming?
Soon daylight will fade and night will be falling!

Listen to the boatman being called on the other shore,
His boat will not be ferrying people anymore!
The east wind blows: no one to be seen on the shore;
Waves roll over banks as the river overflows,
The pouring rain splashes into the ground.
The boatman won't be ferrying anymore people around!

Children don't go out today, outside the house don't stray!
The sky darkens, and there is little left of the day.
Thick showers will drench your clothes
And you'll spill in the slippery paths to the ghats.
Behold the wind making the reedforests sway.
Children don't go outdoors today!

* The third month of the Bengali calendar (from the middle of June to the middle of July) and the first of the two months of the monsoon season.

About the writer: Fakrul Alam is Professor of English at Dhaka University.

Poems by Abak Hussain

1. I sometimes fall	He can't read
Fall from	3.
The	Banana skins and cigarette butts
Top of a tower	Plastic bags and old beer bottles, punctured tires and
Ten metres high	fifty year old mags
Higher than a puppy	A crow a hawk a dog a man
Dog's tail	386 DX
I fall into	Leftovers from old machines
Something that	They all serve each other
Feels	4.
Like	Twenty inch phantasmagoria
Soft	Images fan out
Fluffy	All too familiar Vietnam
Stuff	Groovy funky kinky retro queens, thump thump thump
2.	Orson Welles and Larry King
ABC	I have
I hear a rooster chuckle	Done enough travelling
	At least for today

Mr. Truthful's and My Accident

Zia Hyder

One day
In order to flee from me
As Mr. Truthful ran and ran
He pushed me
And then the accident

With legs plastered
The physicians
have laid me on the floor
The same day
My twin
Running over Mr. Truthful
Drove off with his expensive car

The physicians
have laid Mr. Truthful
Beside me
On the floor
His whole body is plastered with
Blood soaked bandage
Even the face can't be seen

Translated by
Qazi Mostain Billah