

Where It Has Come to!

WHATEVER little remained of the people's confidence in the law and order environment has been rudely shaken by the dastardly murder of two lawyers, one in Dhaka and another in Bagerhat, on Sunday. Both the killings were executed in a pre-meditated and cold-blooded fashion before a large number of people, and in broad daylight, too.

Both the murders have given rise to many questions in the public mind to which we must find satisfactory answers at the earliest. This is for the first time that two lawyers have been killed. We demand neutral, impartial inquiry into the murders and urge the authorities concerned to bring the culprits to book within the shortest possible time.

New Gloss on Ties with Japan

DESPITE an initial diplomatic hiccup Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's visit to Dhaka did not only go well it has also produced an outcome the two countries can feel legitimately proud of. The biggest thing on the cards seems to be massive Japanese support for our physical infrastructure building projects, especially laying bridges across large rivers.

In hindsight, the potential radiance and hue to the relationship that lay embedded in the Mori visit embarked upon with a mission to muster support for Japan's candidature for a permanent seat at the UNSC was poorly grasped by our foreign office people as is evidenced by their making a mess of the prelude to his trip.

Again it is imperative to recall that prior to Mori's visit here the Japanese private sector leaders had expressed cynicism about our bureaucratic indecision, hartal culture, labour troubles and the like.

Salary-Performance Linkage

WE would like to share the Education Minister's optimism that the indefinite strike enforced by the teachers of the non-government schools, colleges and madrassahs to demand one hundred per cent salary support from government exchequer is coming to an end.

Although bringing an end to the already 40-day strike ought to be the immediate objective, the long-term aim should be to work out a system that ensures quality education for the students at these institutions. A centralised monitoring cell does not hold any comprehensive answer.

Murdoch with More Trivia: Rich Media, Poor Public

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi

Today's dominant Indian paradigm is "Murdochisation", i.e. violent reshaping of media institutions a la Rupert Murdoch, although without him. Murdochisation destroys the media's independence and obliterates the distinction between editorial and business functions to create cheap tabloids.

THE untimely death of Arvind Narain Das at 52 is an appropriate occasion to reflect on the state of the Indian press. What makes this timely is a sour irony. The Times of India, which gave Das his first job as a journalist didn't carry the news of his death or the Prime Minister's condolences on it.

This irony is part of a paradox that marks the Indian media's choice of what is relevant or newsworthy. It is also an eloquent comment on the journalists' place within many media organisations.

Today, India's "national" publications are in the grip of frivolous garbage-promoting journalism, which is shockingly insensitive to flesh-and-blood people but pervasively partial to the glitterati.

India's big newspapers vie with one another not to break stories or expose crime and corruption, but to glorify, titillate, and trivialise. For some, the priority is tawdry colour supplements obsessed with a microscopic super-heroic metropolitan elite.

Over the past few years, there has been a "dumbing down" of the media, a deliberate attempt to play up the trivial. Thus, Miss World stories with nudes quotes from dumb models are given higher priority than cyclones.

Another example is India's "conquers" Pakistan or Sri Lanka in cricket.

The worst is: India, Beauty Superpower, wins Miss Universe. What's suppressed is that India's women have worse malnutrition than women in sub-Saharan Africa—after a decade of war and famine. But telling the truth doesn't promote the "feel-good" factor, the Indian elite's daily steroid.

In line with dumbing down, many newspapers have sharply cut international coverage and reduced economic journalism to plain uncritical corporate reporting. Their coverage of social issues, science, health and ecology has declined. Space for comment and analysis has shrunk. Reviews of books, music and the theatre are disappearing.

This has little to do with economics. India's biggest newspapers have never been richer. Some of them earn profits of \$100 million or more—the same level as in the West. Most are potentially viable. And yet a majority have become victims of below-cost predatory pricing.

He promotes levels of censorship that even dictators would hesitate to enforce. He cut off BBC's entire transmission to China via satellite because it was critical of the Beijing regime and spoiled his market. India's own Murdochs too have censored the truth about fascists like the Sena or VHP.

A second Murdoch obsession is hard right-wing agendas. In India, this translates into Hindutva, neighbour-bashing and virulent nationalism. Today's new hate journalism maligns all decent causes. Human rights advocates, feminists and secularists are branded as hopeless romantics with "termite in [the] spine and fungus in [the] brain." Here, abuse replaces argument. Reasoning goes out of the window.

Unless this trend is resisted, our media will lose its relevance. It is only because the press plays the function of a witness, a forum of debate, and a whistle-blower, that it enjoys credibility.

Over the years, India's media has attracted different kinds of talent. The post-Emergency "magazine revolution" and investigative journalism boom drew in idealists and activists. The 1980s saw the entry of scholars. Arvind Das belonged to this category. He enriched our understanding of Indian society, particularly Bihar, on which he wrote brilliantly.

Das's background was strongly left-wing: Naxalism, which in the late 1960s exercised a magnetic influence on the cream of Indian youth. Das was a topper and president of the St. Stephen's College union. He could easily have flourished as a historian. He came to the media more out of a sense of mission. As someone who introduced him to The Times of India, I can testify to this.

Das's death represents a loss to serious journalism dedicated to causes such as social justice and secularism. It also underscores the need to defend that tradition. Journalism can claim to be something like a noble profession only to the extent that newspapers don't get reduced to just another commodity, but convey positive values, aid private space for purposive news-gathering and thoughtful analysis.

The media can't enrich itself by keeping the public informed — and knowledge — poor.

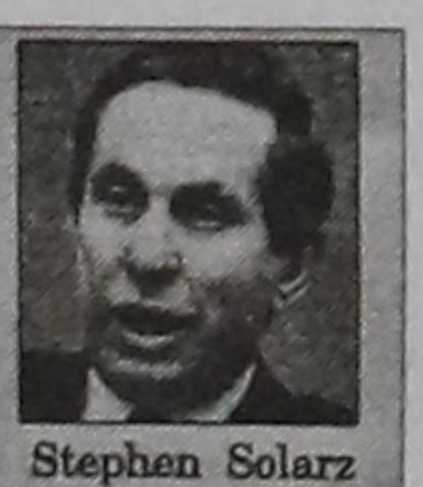
The Solarz Correspondence: A Congressional Inquiry Deliberately Derailed?

First of Three Parts

The three-part serial which we begin publishing today is an upshot of the questions Lawrence Lifschultz has raised in his previous serial 'Anatomy of a Coup: A Journey of a Quarter Century' about a possible CIA hand behind the fateful events of August 15, 1975.



Lawrence Lifschultz



Stephen Solarz

IN the winter of 1980 I received a phone call from a young aide to Congressman Stephen Solarz. He was responding to a letter I had written Solarz summarizing the results of a two-year journalistic investigation into the coup d'etat that had killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. My journalistic work had reached a formal barrier of sorts. Over two years we had interviewed scores of people and gained a great deal of insight into how the coup had been planned and organized.

However, there were contradictions that needed to be resolved particularly regarding the question of possible American links to the Mustaque network. A senior American diplomat, present at the US Embassy in August 1975, had described in detail how he had planned the coup. The CIA Station Chief at the time, Phil Cherry, had categorically denied that the United States was involved in the coup.

It had become clear that only the power to call witnesses under oath before a Congressional Committee could possibly resolve these conflicting claims. Solarz's aide for foreign affairs, was Stanley Roth. Today, he holds a senior position in the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary of State for Asia.

Twenty years ago, as a younger and perhaps more inquisitive man, Roth asked me how I thought the issue should be pursued. I suggested that Congressman Solarz pose a simple "yes" or "no" question in writing to the State Department. I urged Roth to stick forcefully to getting a "yes" or "no" response. A reply filled with the familiar State Department language designed to dissemble and obfuscate managed, whenever possible, to dodge the key questions.

I had written Solarz describing what my Embassy source had told me; that American personnel from the Embassy had held meetings in the period from November 1974 to January 1975 with representatives of a group planning a coup d'etat against Mujib. This diplomat believed that these contacts had continued until the coup despite the Ambassador's instructions that they should be broken off.

I had already published a detailed article in The Guardian (London) describing the views of this Embassy source, and the CIA Station Chief's denials. A similar article was about to appear in The Nation in New York. The Guardian article and other documentation had been provided to Solarz and Roth. I urged Roth to try to achieve one simple goal. Not ten, but one. There would still be other goals in the future to move forward on. I suggested to Roth that he ask the following question: "Did or did not the US Embassy have prior contact with a group planning Mujib's overthrow in late 1974 and early 1975?" "Yes" or "No." In the United States it is a tricky matter to lie to a staff member of a Congressional committee. Although it is frequently done, it might create problems. If discovered, perjury charges could potentially be framed.

The answer that came back in this instance was "yes". The State Department affirmed that there had, in fact, been prior contact. In a letter dated 3 June 1980, Solarz wrote to me: "With respect to the Embassy meetings in November 1974 - January 1975 period with opponents of the [Mujibur]

Rahman regime, the State Department once again does not deny that the meetings took place." This letter has been reproduced in Prothom Alo for the first time. Solarz's letter represented the first official acknowledgement by the US government that such meetings had in fact taken place. Their existence had only previously been reported by this writer based on US Embassy sources. We trusted our principal sources. Finally, here was an official acknowledgement making clear that what we had written on this critical point was absolutely accurate. "On the crucial question of CIA involvement in the post-January 1975 period, I have not been able to unearth any hard evidence in either direction", continued Solarz. "I find your allegations sufficiently disturbing to believe they merit further investigation."

Solarz went on to state: "I believe that such an investigation can really only be carried out by the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which has the best chance of obtaining access both to CIA cable traffic and to the relevant figures in the intelligence community." Solarz reported that he was forwarding "the materials you sent to me to Congressman [Les] Aspin, along with a letter urging him to look into the matter." At that time Aspin was Chairman of the Intelligence Committee. Aspin would later become Secretary of Defense in the first Clinton Administration.

In his letter to Aspin, Solarz wrote that he was forwarding Aspin materials "which contain disturbing allegations about CIA involvement in the 1975 coup which deposed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh." Solarz's letter to Aspin continued:

"Although I have made formal inquiries about Lifschultz's various charges with the State Department, I am not fully satisfied with all of the answers I received. In particular, on the crucial question of CIA contacts with the coup perpetrators in the January 1975 through August 1975 period, I have been unable to unearth any hard evidence either to confirm or refute the allegations. I quite agree with Lifschultz's statement that 'whether or not the United States had prior knowledge of these plans cannot be conclusively settled without congressional subpoena power.' Since a thorough investigation of CIA activities in Bangladesh is clearly within the jurisdiction of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence rather than the Foreign Affairs Committee, I am turning over Lifschultz's material to you, in the hope that you will take appropriate action."

However, a curious twist in the story, also emerged from Solarz's correspondence. While he reported that the State Department had admitted the 1974-75 "Embassy meetings ...

with opponents of the [Mujibur] Rahman regime," Solarz also noted that "the Department does claim that it notified [Mujibur] Rahman about the meetings, including the possibility of a coup." Solarz suggested that if Mujib had been "notified", then "this would seem to put these meetings in a less conspiratorial light." Certainly, the State Department while admitting the meetings had happened sought to portray them in quite an innocent light. The trouble was that our source, who had been in the Embassy and reportedly regarded them as innocuous either at the time they occurred or on the day Mujib was killed.

After receiving the Solarz letter I did some further checking on my own. I replied to Solarz on 8 October 1980. I wrote him the following: "Unlike the persons, who framed the Department's response to you, I believe there is something disturbing about the manner, style, and persons these contacts were made with. And I know for certain that there are silent officials in the State Department who are also disturbed not only about the way and with whom the 1971 contacts were made, but the fact that new contacts were again secretly maintained four years later with the identical group right up to the time they executed the coup against Mujib. Why, they ask, did we have these links? To what purpose?"

"The State Department now confirms the Embassy meetings in the November-January 1975 period. I have earlier underscored what I regard as the significance of this admission. In your letter you add: 'However, the Department does claim that it notified [Mujibur] Rahman about the meetings, including the possibility of a coup.' This does not tally with what our sources have told us and I would urge you to inquire more deeply into this. I have recontacted a number of people since receiving your letter and on this point they all seem to agree. You are either being deceived or the very language of the reply is meant to obfuscate the main point. Who, indeed, in the Mujib government was informed by our Embassy about the possibility of a coup? Was Rahman notified directly of these meetings, by whom, and on what occasions? If the Mujib government was so well informed about the coup, is it not strange that Mujib and his entire family were so easily killed and suffered so many casualties? (His complete family died from machine gun bullets except for two daughters who were abroad.)"

My letter to Solarz raised another point: "Are we being presented with an intelligence community tautology here? Does the State Department response mean the US government informed certain members of the Mujib government about the possibility of the

coup? If so, what does this mean, when in fact the coup itself was organized by a faction of the government itself. The coup was an inside job by conservative elements within Mujib's own party, his own Cabinet, and his own national intelligence service - all with unusual past associations with the United States. Now does the State Department mean the Embassy informed one of these individuals of the possibility of a coup? It reminds me of the old story about the United States warning the Diem government in broad terms that there might be trouble, when in fact Colonel Lansdale's unit had a liaison officer at the headquarters of the generals planning the coup. The days we could or might like to be naive about such matters have long past."

"You say that since Mujib was allegedly informed by our Embassy of the meetings with his opponents, 'including the possibility of a coup', then these meetings may now be seen in a less conspiratorial light. Our State Department sources question the veracity of this official explanation and it now remains the duty of Congress to get to the bottom of this conflicting testimony. Can you provide us proof of this contention, i.e. documents? We have been denied the documents under the Freedom of Information Act that would resolve the issue. We also fear certain agencies and personalities concerned may have already destroyed important documentary material. But the only possibility to gain access to still extant material is by Congress concerning itself with the matter. On the question of seeing things in a less or more 'conspiratorial light', as you put it, I would simply like to see everything in the open rather than in the shadows of shallow answers. Precise answers to precise questions are required. I also unfortunately do not happen to know any coup which has ever taken place which did not involve some element of conspiracy... Indeed, if more coups could only be 'organized' in a more above board manner, we might in fact not have so many and a few more democratic rights might be intact around the globe..."

"I believe the State Department response raises more questions than it answers. But the first step towards a fuller and more accurate picture of this affair would be a precise (as opposed to totally vague) answer as to whom informed the Mujib government was informed. I dare say - having been brought to the lip of the cup - we will now be told the water is 'classified' and not for drinking."

I also informed Solarz that in September 1978 I had interviewed Philip Cherry who had been the CIA Station Chief in Dhaka at the time of the coup. Cherry had categorically denied that any meetings had taken

place at the Embassy with opponents of the regime who had been planning the coup. "The State Department has now confirmed the existence of these meetings," I wrote Solarz. "Mr. Cherry may be sincere in his remarks. But, I submit that there may also be a contradiction here worthy of further Congressional inquiry."

I concluded my letter to Solarz by addressing issues of prejudice and objectivity. "As far as there being any axe to grind on the issue of 'conspiratorial light' is concerned, I might make one statement. In 1975 while reporting the coup d'etat as the Far Eastern Economic Review's South Asia Correspondent, I rightly dismissed Indira Gandhi's innuendoes and the unspecific talk of the Moscow oriented Communist parties of India and Bangladesh about foreign involvement in Mujib's assassination as specious propaganda."

"But when new information was provided us by senior US

officials present at the American Embassy in Dhaka and from well-informed Bengali sources, both civilian and military, it became necessary to completely re-examine our earlier reports and conclusions. So, we might confess that we were the first to reject 'conspiratorial lights' in 1975, and to describe the coup as the unilateral action of six junior officers and the 300 men under their command. We were wrong."

"One last point. Let another misunderstanding not arise which could deflect from the fundamental issues concerned here. Our inquiries have nothing to do with an ex-post facto vindication of Mujibur Rahman's regime - that we leave to his various hagiographers. In 1974 while I was Bangladesh correspondent of the Far Eastern Economic Review, the magazine was banned on three occasions by the Mujib government for articles considered too critical for circulation. Furthermore, my editor was virtually told by high officials in the Mujib government during a visit to Dhaka in late 1974 that he should consider replacing his correspondent."

The writer is working as a Research Associate at the Yale Centre for International and Area Studies, Yale University. He was recently named a Fulbright Scholar for South Asia.

The second instalment appears tomorrow.

Janmashtami The Philosophy of Shri Krishna

by Prem Ranjan Dev

SHRI Krishna, the forerunner of the Hindu Renaissance, has not only evoked wide response from His contemporaries who became, in astoundingly large numbers, his disciples, transforming their life-pattern and attaining transcendental heights through spiritual awakening, but also intellectuals of later times who have come out with their own assessment of one of the world's greatest personalities known to history. The exponents of philosophy and of comparative religions too have not lagged behind in presenting to the posterity their views of the Great Master's life, teachings and work.

Lord Shri Krishna manifests Himself in human form to crush and annihilate worldly vices and revive eternal values. Shri Krishna has bound Himself to man and in that consists the greatest glory of human existence. He came down with His full divine manifestations and raised human civilization to a celestial plane. Shri Krishna is the source and eternal abode of unbounded 'Shakti' which is as real as Himself. Shakti is Krishna's shakti and dependent on Him. Shakti and shaktiman being identical, they are one and indivisible. Creation means the manifestation of his shakti and therefore is real.

The subjective shakti is identical with Krishna. The sweetness and charm of His eternal lila is being enacted and occasionally it is staged in this moral sphere by dint of His subjective energy. The personified embodiment of this delightful shakti is Shri Radhika, the reflex self of Shri Krishna. The objective shakti is the agent responsible for the manifestation of this vast panorama, called the Universe. It is the transformer and of the creative energy of Brahma

working objectively. Brahma is not only the form-giver but also is the ingredient, the material cause of the Universe. Due to this fact He is the component part and the in-dwelling spirit simultaneously. The energy involved in this huge universe is the bahiranga or the objective shakti of Shri Krishna.

In Him, Shri Radhika and Shri Krishna are united and they have become one entity. An intense, incomprehensible love has obliterated their individual identities and unified them completely in one personality. Shri Krishna focused on the unity of religions. His Gita is a deep reservoir of knowledge. There is also a wide range of spiritual disciplines and practice, such as Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and Tantra. These disciplines are significant to Hindus as well as practical and beneficial to all of humanity. The meanings and intention of the Gita have historically found elaboration and explication in the Smritis, the two great epics and various major and minor Puranas. Shri Krishna attracts all beings towards Himself so that they may realise the depth of His infinite mercy and love. He maintains as existence of concrete bliss. The unity of the creatures of the cosmos is part and parcel of Lord Krishna. There is a chronological order in the manifestation of the supreme Lord. Glories to the congregational chanting of the Holy Names of Shri Krishna which sweeps the dirt accumulated on the mirror of the heart and extinguishes the great forestfire of worldly suffering. A believer exclaims: Oh Krishna! A moment seems like an age - my eyes are like rain clouds in their incessant crying. The whole world has become void in your absence.



To the Editor ...

Garbage problem

Sir, Losing its charming look Dhaka has turned out to be a city of garbage. Refuse remains piled up for days together causing a breeding ground of mosquitoes, polluting environment and posing health hazard. But DCC, that is responsible for keeping the city clean seems to be reluctant to deal with the problem.

The garbage collectors of DCC are not found cleaning up wastes regularly and there is no

denying that the city dwellers lacking in civic sense dump waste products here and there despite garbage containers provided by DCC.

To make the capital free of garbage, the DCC authorities can increase salary of the garbage collectors and give them extra benefits and privileges. They can also motivate people to put garbage at the right places within scheduled period of time.

Ahmad Mohammad Farukh Dhaka

Hawkers hatao

Sir, It has been noted during the last few years traffic condition in Dhaka City has worsened to a great extent. This is mainly due to hawkers who occupy most of the open spaces on the roadside and clutter the pavements. Thus, people walk on the road instead of obstruct the vehicles to move creating traffic jams.

Market area, Purana Paltan, Shantnagar and Motijheel to name a few.

Strict enforcement of the law prohibiting occupation of the footpaths by the hawkers and finding alternate space for the rehabilitation of the evicted hawkers possibly is the answer to the hawker problem. I would therefore request the city fathers to find an alternate area for these hawkers so that they can be rehabilitated. Rafia M Ahmad 6 Mymensing Road, Dhaka