

## Boster Jr's letter and replies from The Daily Star editor

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Based on Mr Lifschultz's own writings it is apparent that the first meeting took place prior to the coup with a subject that was completely unrelated, the second meeting was apparently a short meeting held within the State Department in Washington DC in 1977, and a third meeting never took place as Dad apparently brushed him off. This certainly does not constitute "close communication for 30 years."

Back in May of this year, I spent 10 days with my Dad in his Virginia home and at one point I had occasion to ask Dad about Mr Lifschultz and his writings (which I had previously read but didn't believe were 100% credible). Dad dismissed Mr Lifschultz as one of the conspiracy theory type writers and indicated that he thought Mr Lifschultz believed he (Dad) himself was involved in the 1975 coup. It was also obvious to me that Dad had not wasted much time reading any of Mr Lifschultz's writings and didn't assign much credibility to his theories. If Dad did make a statement "not in my lifetime" in response to an unsolicited phone call, I'm pretty sure it would have been my Dad's way of telling Mr Lifschultz to "get lost". Your paper should have told Mr Lifschultz the same thing.

Yours Truly,

**Davis E Boster, Jr**

Eldest son and designated Executor of the Estate of Davis E Boster

### RESPONSE BY THE DAILY STAR EDITOR

"The text to which you refer was an "editorial preface" to the article by Lawrence Lifschultz which was

written by Star's editorial staff and not by the author. This "preface" wrongly stated that the author was "a close confidant of 25 plus years standing". This error is ours and not the author's, and for which we express our regret to both you and the Mr Lifschultz. We also publish below the author's own comments about your letter."

### RESPONSE BY LAWRENCE LIFSCHULTZ

There are several unfortunate aspects of Davis Boster, Jr.'s letter to *The Daily Star*. First among these is Mr Boster's point that I claimed to have been "a close confidant of 25 + years standing" of his father, Ambassador D Eugene Boster. At no point did I ever make such a claim. Davis Boster, Jr. appears to have reacted to *The Daily Star's* editorial preface to my article. Mahfuz Anam, the *Star's* editor has now apologized for the preface which was used to introduce my four part article.

Two days before I was informed of Davis Boster, Jr.'s "Letter to the Editor" of *The Star*, I wrote a detailed email to both editors of *Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Star* where I was highly critical of this ten sentence "editorial preface". In my view, the preface contained a number of inaccurate and ill worded statements that in several respects misrepresented the contents of the article which followed. I admire both newspapers and their editors otherwise I would not have published in their papers. However, even among the best mistakes get made. Matiur Rahman, and Mahfuz Anam have each

apologized for this lapse.

I did not consider myself a "close confidant" of Ambassador Boster and I have never claimed this anywhere or any place. I was in periodic contact with him over a very long period of time. However, there is no question that he shared crucial information with us about the fact that individuals at the US. Embassy had been in contact with men planning a *coup* against Mujib and that as Ambassador he had directed that all such contacts be permanently broken. As I have described, he was shocked after the *coup* that these contacts actually may not have been broken off.

Whenever I published something on these events I sent Ambassador Boster copies of the articles. This began with the first article "Bangladesh: Anatomy of a Coup" which appeared in 1979 in the *Economic & Political Weekly* (Mumbai). (My writings at this stage were banned in Bangladesh by Ziaur Rahman's government.) I telephoned Ambassador Boster on several occasions when I sent him materials in order to confirm that he had received the clippings and to ask whether he had found any inaccuracies. My contacts with him were mainly in the late 1970s and during the 1980s when I kept him informed of my correspondence with Stephen Solarz's Congressional office which at one critical stage investigated the issue of the "prior contacts" with those planning a coup that Ambassador Boster had described to us.

I had almost no contact with Ambassador Boster during the 1990s when I was preoccupied

with writing on the war in Bosnia and completing a book I was doing with Kai Bird on the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima. At the moment I am writing from Pakistan where I am on a brief visit. I do not have my files in front of me. But, to the best of my memory, I approached Ambassador Boster in the early part of this decade when I sent him clippings of articles I had written on the "Solarz Correspondence" and other matters related to the 1975 *coup*.

It was at this time during a telephone conversation to make arrangements to meet that we again discussed the issue of his "going on the record". I believe this is something he and I had also discussed earlier during the 1980s when I sent him the correspondence I had with Stephen Solarz and his staff.

It was later, around 2001, that he made the remark "not in my lifetime" but also indicated that he did not completely rule out the possibility of "going on the record" one day. Because of scheduling on both sides we were unable to meet up when I was in Washington. I was then a Visiting Scholar at Yale University's Center for International & Area Studies and also a "Senior Fulbright Scholar" based in Pakistan. My visit to the U.S. at the time was a very brief one and mainly involved visiting an ill parent. I had only a short window of time before having to return to Pakistan.

As I have reported in the articles which have been recently published, I had hoped to see Ambassador Boster this year in the third week of July but he passed away before this meeting could take place. In my own view, he had his own reasons, some, not all, of which may have been personal, for not going on the record. I am not prepared to disclose these reasons except to his own son should Davis Boster, Jr. decide to meet me.

Thus, Davis Boster's statement that I claim to have been a "close confidant of 25 + years" is not based on anything I ever wrote or claimed. The Ambassador's son refers exclusively to the unfortunate preface by which the *Star's* editorial staff introduced my text. Nevertheless, I stand by every word in my article, and this includes the fact that Ambassador Boster did confide important information to us about events leading up to the *coup*. These facts were later confirmed, albeit rather reluctantly, by the State Department in correspondence with Congressman Solarz's office.

I think the main point that merits a reply in Davis Boster's "Letter to the Editor" is his claim that his father "thought Mr. Lifschultz believed he (Dad) himself was involved in the 1975 coup." Frankly, I find it extraordinarily difficult to believe Ambassador Boster could ever have made such a remark unless he was confused by the series of small strokes he had suffered in recent years. There is not a single sentence I have ever written that even remotely suggests such an absurd conclusion.

If Davis Boster, Jr. knew the history of these events, he would immediately know that such a comment is at variance with everything we have written about Ambassador Boster's role in 1975. The Ambassador's son reveals a complete lack of a detailed understanding of the story of the *coup*. His father was the man who tried to prevent the *coup* from happening by specifically ordering that contacts be ended from the Embassy side with anyone planning to overthrow Mujib. According to what Ambassador Boster told us, he banned any new contacts from being made. This is what we reported about the Ambassador's role long before we disclosed his identity this summer as a key source. I challenge Davis Boster, Jr. to find one sentence in anything I have

ever written regarding Ambassador Boster's role which is consistent with the claim he makes in his letter to *The Daily Star*. His view is simply not logical.

The real question is whether Davis Boster, Jr. seeks to challenge the key point regarding the fact that his father informed us about the existence of "prior contacts" with men planning a military coup and the Ambassador's efforts to break off all future contact with anyone plotting the overthrow of Mujib. Ambassador Boster identified for us a specific period of time in which these prior contacts had occurred. Without mentioning the Ambassador by name but citing a highly placed Embassy source, I wrote Stephen Solarz, the US Congressman, whose staff pursued the issue.

Ultimately, the fact of these contacts and the specific time frame provided to us by the Ambassador were confirmed by the State Department in a letter to Solarz. This demonstrated irrefutably the accuracy of what Ambassador Boster reported to us. Is Davis E. Boster, Jr. now claiming that his father never provided us with this critical information? If so, then his position is very puzzling. He appears to be allowing some other view of the world and his father to interfere with the truth. How did we know these specific dates? And, how do we explain the confirmation of this fact by the State Department to Solarz?

Davis E. Boster, Jr. puts forward the notion of Lifschultz being a "conspiracy theorist". I have always found this type of argument rather trite and a way of avoiding the facts. It also goes against the fact which I expressed to many people in 1975 regarding my early skepticism concerning any American involvement. The bogey of a "conspiracy theory" is often a way of simply disparaging those involved in a serious inquiry. What is the "theory" of the "theorist" in this situation? Is it that there were prior contacts that took place between the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka and the men planning to stage a *coup* against Mujib? If the State Department confirmed the existence of these contacts first revealed to us by Ambassador Boster, then is the State Department also a proponent of the same "conspiracy theory"? If so then perhaps Davis Boster, Jr. needs to attack the State Department which admitted these facts, and not me.

Ambassador Boster had two sons. The younger son, Dr. James Boster, has taken the trouble over several years of informing himself about the details (based on facts known to date) of his father's rather laudable role in the developments that preceded the August 1975 *coup*. He understands that his father actively tried to prevent a *coup* and played no role in its execution. This is the essential point. One day I hope to meet Ambassador Boster's elder son and clear up with him what appears to be a basic confusion regarding the history of this period. Everything I have heard about him indicates that he is an intelligent and decent man. I hope he will be open to such a meeting and discussion.

There are many Americans who are deeply concerned about various forms of intervention our country has embarked on around the world. I know many such individuals who are serving or once served in our diplomatic corps, our military and in our intelligence services. Many recognize the tragic and unpredictable consequences that flow from what Senator William Fulbright once called the "arrogance of power". I count among these "wise men" the former American Ambassador to Bangladesh, Davis Eugene Boster. Lawrence Lifschultz. Wah, Pakistan 26 August 2005