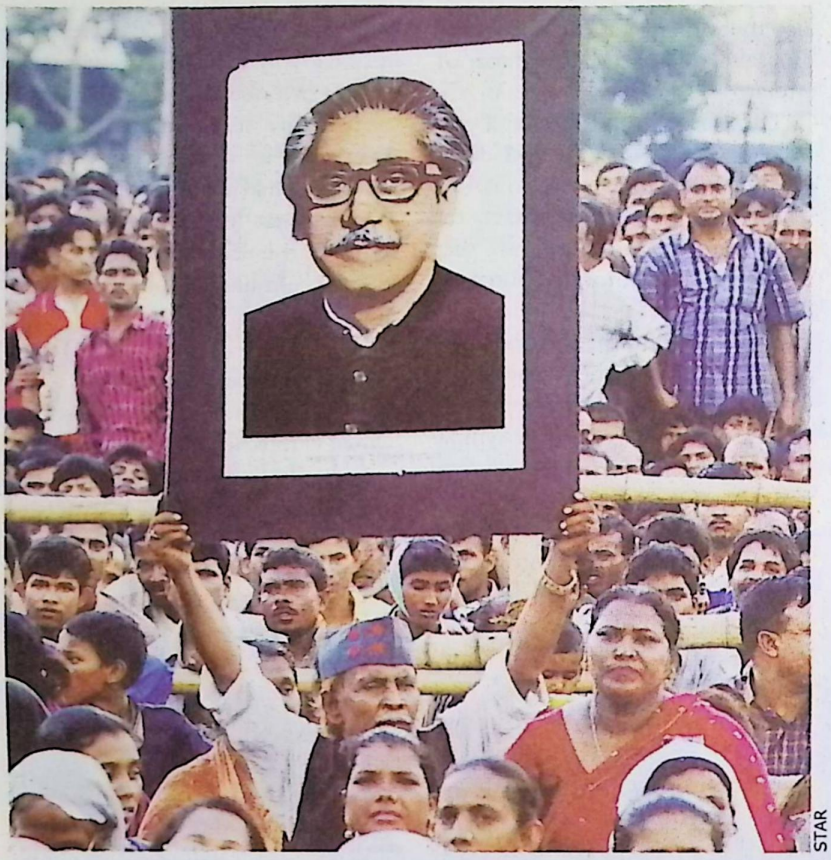


STAR

Left behind by history

The deviation in pattern came after the leftist camp split internationally on the basis of the pro-Soviet and pro-Peking factions. Interestingly, around that time, the leaders from East Pakistan Communist Party also submitted two theses on the state of Pakistan. Khoka Roy basically said what he had repeated to Mujib while Md. Toaha argued for a national liberation struggle. In fact, Toaha had as early a 1950 written a veiled essay along the implementation of the Lahore Resolution where the intentions were not kept a secret.

The pro-Peking lot was very anti-Mujib, partly because of his role at Kagmari, which suggested to them that he was pro-western, and partly because he had taken the nationalist struggle under his control away from the Left.

In the odd contest between the "national" and the "social," the socialists were getting bashed. The man they had held in contempt for long was becoming or had already become the national leader. While in their secret meetings they openly took resolutions for independence, they also took a few against Mujib. In reality, the man had run past their history and left them with few options except to lambaste him and lament the cruel turns of history.

By 1966, after the 6-points autonomy political formula of Awami League was presented, nothing was left on the screen except the political imagination of Sheikh Muib and his followers.

There were critiques of this formula such as that of Comrade Abul Bashar, arguing that it would hurt the best interest of the poor and the people, but the course was set. Though some leftists even joined hands with the Pakistani intelligence to thwart the 6-point movement, nothing worked. The march to the final historical encounter had begun.

A side-note on the leftists that is ironical is the rise of the Left cell under Sirajul Alam Khan, the permanent myth- and mess-maker of Bangladesh politics, inside the Awami League. At present a supporter of the government in power, by 1960 he had formed a Marxist-laced pro-independence cell secretly within the Awami League. It grew and swelled in strength, and the largest group of organised leftists was actually inside the party the communist orthodoxy hated most. They were clandestine, but also linked to the party, and were an effective foil to the right wing sympathies of Sheikh Mujib and his nephew Sheikh Moni.

That must have been a strange fact for Mujib to behold, because, having broken the party in 1957 on the grounds of an attempt to purge the party of the Left, its power had never risen so high in the party as it did under Khan's leadership. Its later impact and journey is another story.

Birth of the superhero

The iconic and defining political struggle, legal fight, court case, and momentum of emotions all encapsulated by the burgeoning nationalist struggle that matured into open street revolt that was triggered by the Agartala Conspiracy Case. Just as the 1952 Language Movement, the Agartala Conspiracy Case is defining in its perspective: its scope is not about an individual history but a culmination of histories.

Based on written and oral testimonies, we find that the old Inner Group of Moazzem Chowdhury was also connected, albeit indirectly, to the case. It appears that there were two groups of members, and in the slightly later stages, a number of new members or associates are noted that included civil servants like Ahmed Fazlur Rahman and others who were also involved directly with the later Agartala case.

The main initiative, however, came from a bunch of mid-level officers of the armed forces led by