

Martyred Intellectuals

The enemy's target was to break the intellectual backbone of the nation...



From top left: Munier Choudhury, Serajuddin Hossain, Dr. Alim Chowdhury, Mofazzal Haidar Chaudhury, Shahidullah Kaiser, Dr. Fazle Rabbi. Second row: Nizamuddin Ahmed, Anwar Pasha, Syed Nazmul Haque, Syed Abdul Mannan, Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Ghyasuddin Ahmed. Bottom row: Rashidul Hasan, Dr. MAM Faizul Mahi, Dr. MA Khair, Zahirul Haq, Selina Parvin, Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya, ANM Mustafa.

Shahidullah Kaiser

Journalist and novelist, born on 16 February 1927 in Mazupur village of Feni.

After completing honours in economics from Presidency College in 1946, Shahidullah Kaiser enrolled for the Master of Arts in economics at Calcutta University, but could not sit for the final examination. He was a member of the provincial Communist Party of East Pakistan and also played an important role in the Language Movement in 1952. He suffered imprisonment several times.

Shahidullah Kaiser started his career in journalism in 1949 with the weekly Ittefaq in Dhaka. In 1958, he was appointed associate editor of the Sangbad, and continued to work there until his death.

Shahidullah Kaiser was also a novelist of note. He came into the limelight with Sareng Bau (The Captain's Wife). His other novels include Sangshaptak (The Indomitable Soldiers), Krishnachura Megh (Krishnachura Clouds), Timir

Balay (The Circle of Darkness), Digante Phuler Agun (The Flaming Horizon). Shahidullah Kaiser was the recipient of the Adamjee Literary Award (1962) and the Bangla Academy Award (1962). He was picked up by the Al-Badr on 14 December 1971. Alas! Never to return.

Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya

Born on 30 August, 1915 in Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka district, Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya graduated from Dhaka University in 1937 with Honours in History and obtained MA degree in 1938 from the same institution occupying first position in the first class in both the examinations.

He started his academic career as a lecturer in Jagannath College in 1939 and worked there until 1949, when he joined the History Department of Dhaka University as a Senior Lecturer. A scholar in Sanskrit literature and ancient history of Bengal and India, Bhattacharyya served Dhaka University as a devoted

teacher and a scholar until his death (14 December, 1971) in the hands of the cohorts of the Pakistan army.

Prof. Munier Choudhury

Born in 1925 at Manikganj, Dhaka. Hailed from Noakhali. Joined the department of Bangla as a lecturer in 1955, before that he was a part time teacher in the English department. He was an M.A. in English, but while he was interned at Dhaka Central Jail (1953-54) during the Language Movement he did his M.A. (first in first class) in Bangla also.

He became Reader in 1962 and Professor in 1970 and the Dean of the faculty of arts in 1971.

His notable literary works include Raktakta Prantar, Kabar, Dandakaranya, Mir Manash, Palashi Barrack o Annanya, Bangla Gadyariti.

He denounced the title 'Sitar-I-Imtiaz' awarded to him by the Pakistan government (1966) during the non-cooperation movement (1971).

The members of the Al-Badr killed him at the dawn of our liberation. His dead body could not be identified.

Mofazzal Haidar Chaudhury

Mofazzal Haidar Chaudhury, born in Noakhali in 1926, joined the department of Bangla of Dhaka University in 1955. He studied at London University for a couple of years in linguistics. He was awarded 'Sahitya Bharati' by the Viswa Bharati University, Santiniketan. He became Reader in Bengali in 1970. His famous writings include Bangla Banan o Lipi Sanskar, Rabi Parikrama, Colloquial Bengali, Bhasa o Sanskriti, Sahityer Nava Rupayan etc.

He was picked up and killed by the Al-Badr on December 14, 1971.

Rashidul Hasan

Rashidul Hasan, born in 1932 in Bhirbhum district of West Bengal, migrated to this part of the subcontinent then under Pakistani rule in 1949. He obtained BA(Hons.) and MA in English from DU in 1957 and 1958 respectively. He taught at various colleges including

Narsingdi, Pabna Edward College and Krishna Chandra College of Bhirbhum in West Bengal. Finally, he joined the English Department, DU, as a lecturer in 1967.

He was a liberal democrat and a life long fighter against fundamentalism and communalism.

A close friend of Anwar Pasha, Rashidul Hasan was picked up together with his friend Anwar from the same flat within the DU campus.

Anwar Pasha

Born on 15 April 1928 at Dabkai village in Murshidabad, India. He did his MA in Bangla from Calcutta University in 1953. In 1958 he joined Pabna Edward College and then, in 1966, the Department of Bangla, Dhaka University.

Anwar Pasha made his debut as a writer with Hasnahena, a collection of literary essays. He also edited four ancient and medieval Bangla poems. His writings were published in many journals, including the quarterly Kabita, published from Kolkata and edited by Buddhadev Bose. His notable writings include Nadi Nihshesita Hale, Nid Sandhani, Rabindra Chhotagalpa Samiksa (Vol. I 1963, Vol. II 1973), Sahityashilpi Abul Fazal.

Anwar Pasha was picked up from his university flat and brutally killed with other intellectuals. He was posthumously honoured with the Bangla Academy Award for his literary achievements.

Dr. MAM Faizul Mahi

Dr. Faizul Mahi was born in 1939 at Feni. He was very much dedicated to the cause of the war of liberation that was going on from March to December, helping the freedom fighters from within keeping a low profile. But he could not keep secret his real identity from the watchful eyes of the collaborators some of whom happened to be his colleagues within the IER.

Mahi joined the Institute of Education and Research in 1968 after obtaining Ed.D (doctorate in education) and then soon became Senior Lecturer. He was a dedicated teacher.

The beastly Al-Badr group

picked him up on 14 December from his residence.

Ghyasuddin Ahmed

Ghyasuddin Ahmed was born in Narsingdi in 1935. He passed MA in History from Dhaka University in 1957. He joined Jagannath College in the History department as lecturer and later joined Dhaka University in 1958. He went to the UK with Commonwealth Scholarship in 1964 and obtained Honours degree in World History from London School of Economics.

Accused of helping the freedom fighters he was taken to Dhaka Cantonment for questioning. He was released after a few days. Then again on 14 December 1971 he was picked up from Mohsin Hall by the Al-Badr killing squad. On 4 January 1972 his clothes and mutilated body were identified in Mirpur area.

Mohammad Fazle Rabbi

Dr. Mohammad Fazle Rabbi was born in Pabna in 1932. He was an activist during the Language Movement in 1952. He passed MBBS from Dhaka Medical College in 1955 and received gold medal for securing top position in MBBS examination. He obtained MRCP in cardiology from Edinburgh in England and worked at various hospitals in that country to acquire experience. In 1962 he obtained MRCP in general medicine from England. He came back to the country in 1963 and joined Dhaka Medical College and Hospital as associate professor of medicine.

He was first to talk about the concept of people-oriented health care system in 1969. Besides teaching he used to do research also. His research-based articles have been published in British Medical Journal and Lancet.

It transpired that on 15 December midnight Dr. Rabbi along with some other intellectuals were taken in a truck from the Lalmatia Physical Training Institute to the Rayerbazar brickfield and murdered in a brutal manner. His dead body was identified on 18 December.

Selina Parvin

Selina Parvin was born in Noakhali in 1931. She was a poet

and a journalist. She had her primary education in Feni. She became an avid reader of Bengali literature. She took a job at weekly 'Lalana'. Then she started her own literary magazine 'Shilalipi'. She also began to write poems, short stories and essays. On 14 December 1971 she was murdered by Al-Badr.

Nizamuddin Ahmed

Nizamuddin Ahmed was born in Munshiganj in 1929. He was a journalist. He passed MA in economics from Dhaka University in 1959. Later he joined Pakistan Press International. He became the editor of PPI in 1969 and was promoted to the rank of general manager.

Nizamuddin Ahmed was an ardent supporter of the liberation war of Bangladesh. He used to send news items on the atrocities of the Pakistani forces to various foreign news media. He had taken New York Times journalist McBrown to a guerrilla camp to collect authentic news. He provided BBC with authentic news. For this reason he was taken to General Rao Forman Ali's office on two occasions.

On 12 December 1971, Nizamuddin was taking his lunch when members of Al-Badr picked him up from his residence. His body was never found.

Syed Nazmul Haque

Syed Nazmul Haque was born in Khulna in 1941. He passed B.A. (Hons) and M.A. in Political Science from Dhaka University in 1963 and 1964 respectively. He took an active part in the anti-martial law movement in 1962. He was arrested for disrupting the convocation programme on the DU campus in 1964 where the then governor of East Pakistan Abdul Monem Khan was present.

On 6 August 1971 he was arrested in Dhaka and sent to a prison in West Pakistan. He was pressurised to testify against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a secret trial. On getting release in November 1971 he came back to Dhaka. On 11 December 1971, he was picked up from his Purana Paltan house by the members of Al-Badr. His dead body was never found.

Projonmo 71-a flicker of hope

Durdana Ghias

COUNTLESS days, countless hours and countless moments have passed since the day the independence came to this country. But how many of us have really had the true feel of independence in a country where the trial of war criminals is still a far cry.

"We have been seeing this for a long time, since our childhood. We grew up seeing the killers of our parents being raised socially and politically. Now we think this should stop and to stop this we have created Projonmo 71," said Shaheen Reza Noor, son of martyred intellectual Journalist Serajuddin Hussain, Assistant Editor of The Daily Ittefaq.

According to the children of the martyrs, inactivity on the part of the pro-liberation forces has contributed to the rise of the anti-liberation elements.

Projonmo 71 was formed by the children of the martyrs to counter the anti-liberation elements in the country and to make social and political efforts for the trial of war criminals. Its aim is to create a state with the values of democracy, communal harmony and progressiveness based on the constitution of 1972.

Since the independence of the country gradually the families of the martyrs were almost

razed. The families became weak financially because most of the martyrs were the sole breadwinners of their families. Their children lost their financial security and then they lost their social position.

"I had to struggle a lot with my three children after my husband was martyred. I got almost no support from anyone to raise my children. I had to depend on my job of a school teacher to raise my three children," said Hasina Chowdhury, wife of litterateur and martyred intellectual Rafiqul Haider Chowdhury.

The pro-liberation forces could not counter the anti-liberation elements at the right time because political weakness, ethical weakness and the politics of murder weakened the social structure after the independence. This situation contributed to the rise of anti-liberation elements. They were able to create a strong place in the state system, said Noor.

It is quite unfortunate that the nation is yet to evaluate the martyrs. After the father was martyred their children had to struggle to continue and finish their studies. Those who could complete their studies were able to do so because of their own efforts.

"The enemies of the state took the places of power of the state," he said.

Projonmo 71 wants the return of the ideals for which their fathers and mothers sacrificed their lives. They believe that if the anti-liberation elements cannot be stopped then the values of the war will be tarnished more and more.

"Our main demand is a special tribunal for the trial of war criminals and crime against humanity because in the existing laws we will need witnesses which will be very hard to find now. Contemporary newspapers can be presented as evidence in these trails," said Noor.

"In March, 2007 we placed our demand to the present government. Now we are doing mass communication to fulfill our demand. We will have to force the government by forming strong public opinion for the trial of war criminals. Hundreds of cultural and social organisations are with us," he said.

According to Noor, annulment of the collaborator act is a reason the collaborators remained unpunished.

"Till the day of the killing of Bangabandhu there were 11,000 collaborators in jail facing charges of murder, rape, looting etc. But they were released after the collaborator act was annulled after his death," he said.

To counter this situation, Projonmo 71 started its journey in

the first week of April of 1991 from the residence of martyred intellectual Shahidullah Kaiser. In October the same year and at the same place the name Projonmo 71 was selected from nine other names. Through a press conference on October 29 the organisation was formally initiated.

On December 5, 1991 a 25-member executive committee was formed and artist Deepak Roy made the design of its symbol and organisational flag. The aims of the organisation are

-- To write the true history of the liberation war and stop distortion of the history in the textbooks, other books and documents and taking steps to amend the flawed information.

-- To organise the pro-liberation forces in the country to uphold the values of the liberation war.

-- To make a list of the true martyrs of the liberation war and carry out an investigation to find out the families and children of the martyrs.

-- Collecting, compiling and publishing the biographies of the martyrs centrally and locally to preserve the memories of the martyrs.

-- Start a campaign for naming educational institutes, other institutes and streets after the names of the martyrs.

-- Arranging discussion meetings, seminars and sympos-



iums, cultural programmes, photography and art exhibitions through the central or local branches of the organisation and taking initiatives so that these are published in the newspapers.

-- Collecting the evidence of mass killing by the Pakistan Army and their collaborators which are scattered across the country.

-- Erecting memory plaques at places where the freedom fighters were engaged in fierce battles with the Pakistan Army. The plaques should contain a detailed description of the battle, the names of those who took part in the battle, who were

injured and who were killed in the battlefield.

-- Taking initiatives to construct museums on the liberation war at the local level and centrally.

-- Publishing the list of collaborators and war criminals in the liberation war and build public opinion for special laws for their trial.

-- To stop communal forces by establishing a secular state.

Its branches have been opened in Chittagong, Khulna, Rangpur and Mymensingh.

The writer is a reporter of Star City.