



RIGHTING THE GRIEVOUS WRONG

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Villain behind the putsch

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Khanadaker Moshtaque Ahmed had always appeared with a baleful look in his activities even when the Liberation War was being fought. Though he had failed in the plot to split the movement for independence in 1971, he indeed succeeded four years later in the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members.

How much Moshtaque had been involved in the plot to assassinate Bangabandhu and his family members was evident from his own statements quoted by Taher Uddin Thakur in his confessional statement to the court. Taher was one of Moshtaque's two leading associates in the sinister activities before independence.

"So it's good news you are getting promotion. Just wait. There is no certainty as to what will happen," Moshtaque told Taher on August 13, 1975 following a meeting between Taher and Mujib at Gano Bhaban the same day when Mujib indicated Taher's promotion.

Moshtaque also advised Taher not to go outside Dhaka and asked him to meet him at his office the following day (August 14), said Taher, who emerged as a political leader of the putsch that killed Mujib.

"I reached the Secretariat at around 1:00pm on August 14. Brigadier Zia came twice that week. He and his people had become restless to do something quickly. When I asked, Moshtaque said they wanted to change power by force. They are ready to do anything, if necessary," Taher said in the statement.

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Khandakar Moshtaque Ahmed with killers Farooq (L) and Rashid (R) in the VVIP lounge of Bangabhaban on August 15 after 12pm.

Farooq's confession

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman gave a confessional statement to the trial court, on December 19, 1996, about the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In 1974, some untoward incidents happened when the accused A-1 went to Demra, Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Narsingdi area, for recovery of arms and ammunitions which was within the knowledge of the President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman but he had not taken any action. As such, he developed disrespect for the leaders of Awami League. At that time some officers and troops from First Bengal Lancer ransacked the house of Gazi Golam Mostafa in consequence of an unpleasant incident involving

the wife of Major Dalim and the son of Awami League leader Gazi Golam Mostafa at the Ladies Club. Following this incident Major Dalim, Major Nur and some others lost their jobs because of breach of discipline. At that time, the then Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Major General Ziaur Rahman along with his family members used to walk down to his residence. He used to discuss the situation of the country with the accused (Farooq) and one day, during conversation, he instigated him to do something to salvage the country.

In the first part of 1975, BKSAL was introduced and appointment of District Governors was in process. After his conversation with Major Rashid about bringing about a change in the country, it was decided that no change in the country can be possible without

bringing Sheikh Mujib to the cantonment. It was also decided to discuss the matter with General Ziaur Rahman and accordingly in the month of April the accused (Farooq) went to his house and discussed the precarious situation of the country. When asked for his suggestion, General Zia, instead of promising any help, told them to do whatever they could on their own. Later on he went to the house of Major Rashid and informed him about his (Zia's) views. Rashid replied that he (Dalim) should not worry about that. Since that was a political matter he would deal with it. Later on, Major Rashid contacted both Zia and Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed.

The accused (Farooq) further stated that according to the plans Major Khandaker Abdur Rashid by way of his political contacts used

to keep in touch with his relation, the then Commerce Minister Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed. Major Rashid discussed with Dalim and Moshtaque that BKSAL has to be scrapped, if necessary Sheikh Mujib has to be killed otherwise the country and the Nation would not survive. The accused (Farooq) logically supported the view and Khandaker Rashid informed the accused (Farooq) that Zia would also support them if Sheikh Mujib is killed.

He stated that on August 12, 1975, he had celebrated his marriage anniversary and in that function different officers and relations were present in the Officers Club. At the end of the function around 12.30am according to plan, he (Farooq)

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A glimpse into the dark design

ITV Interview with Lt Cols Farooq Rahman (FR) and Abdur Rashid (AR) on August 2, 1976 by Anthony Mascarenhas (AM)

A TV Interview with Lt Cols Farooq and Rashid about the first coup in Bangladesh and killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15th August 1975 broadcast by the ITV.

Having not been a witness to the coup which none could describe accurately it is possible to have a glimpse from the interviews given by the ringleaders. Thus an interview report received from London is reproduced below. The report is not edited and given as it has been received:

"The following interview with Lt Cols Farooq and Rashid was broadcast by the ITV on 2nd August 1976. They were interviewed by Anthony Mascarenhas of the Sunday Times for the current affairs programme 'World in Action'."

Narrator: A year ago this month, this man, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the President of Bangladesh was killed in a military coup. The act was all the more tragic because four years earlier he (had) led his country to independence. (Slogans)

Narrator: Tonight, two Bengali army Officers Lt. Col. Farooq Rahman and Lt. Col. Abdur Rashid tell why they overthrew and killed Mujib, the man who had been called the Father of Bangladesh. (Slogans)

Killing Sheikh Mujib, Serniabat and Sheikh Moni, I was 99% sure that would be achieved. What I was not sure was the aftermath. For that I was used the tanks as a psychological threat.

Narrator: One man close to the tragic events in Bangladesh over the last five years as journalist. Anthony Mascarenhas. He himself was a close friend of Sheikh Mujib and it was he who first broke the story of Bangladesh's

bloody struggle for independence over Pakistan in 1971. Tonight he traces the story of last year's coup and talks to the two army officers who murdered Mujib.

A.M. Did you make any effort to make it know to Mujib that this should be changed?

A.R. Well, no, I cannot make any effort because. I am just a junior officer in the army. I have no hand to tell him that you should correct yourself.

A.M. In these circumstances, could you have forced him to resign or was it necessary to kill him?

A.R. As I said earlier onbut he is not an administrator, the only thing that he has got a very good quality to agitate the general mass. So he (had) remained alive it would have been very difficult for us to conclude the situation -- he is being more experienced on the political side. (Slogans)

A.R. So just to stay in power he would have done any sort of mischievous act at the cost of even the country.

A.M. So you would think that had Mujib remained alive he would have turned the tables on you?

A.R. Yes, that would have been his first effort.

A.M. So you had to kill him.

A.R. Yes, I had to.

FR. I decided that he should go, but then in March 1974. I was until then a purely professional soldier, I didn't have any political understanding and one thing I did know was that if you removed him what would happen, what would be the reaction. I had to talk, read a lot, catch up on various, subjects, including economics, because up until that time people had been saying that Bangladesh is not viable State. So, I had to prove to myself that, is it not a viable State or is it because of Sheikh Mujib it is not a viable State.

A.M. Once set on removing Mujib, the young Colonels had to find someone to put in his place. Their obvious choice was a man of their own kind, an army man, so they approached Major General Zia.

FR. The first obvious choice was General Zia, because, at least, he was not furnished. So after a lot of arrangements I managed to see him on 20th March 1975 in the evening. General Zia said I am a

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Begum Mujib watches as Bangabandhu takes his meal.

Shahriar's confession

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan gave his confessional statement about the killing of Bangabandhu before the court on December 11, 1996.

In brief the statement is -- While he was in Comilla in 1973 as the Chief Inspector, Army School of Physical Training, Major Shariful Haque Dalim, Captain Bazlul Huda and Major Aziz Pasha were posted at 1st Field Artillery Regiment at Comilla and from there on he became very close to them. During that time, following the harassment of Major Dalim's wife and some of his relatives in a family function at Dhaka, some of the officers and men of other ranks of Lancer unit and 2 Field Artillery Regiment of the Army attacked and ransacked the house of Gazi Golam Mostafa, an Awami League leader. Because of this incident, allegations of breach of discipline were brought against Major Dalim, Major Nur and some other army officers. Dalim expressed his regrets and went to the house of Bangabandhu and appealed for justice but could not get any. At the end of 1974, Major Dalim went to England for his treatment and returned home possibly in January 1975 and joined his earlier place of posting at Comilla. In the meantime, being frustrated, this accused (Shahriar) resigned from the Army and started a business of dealing in old TV and Refrigerators at Dhaka, in the name and style of

'Shery Enterprise'.

Meanwhile, Major Dalim, Nur and some other officers lost their jobs on the allegation of breach of discipline. One day Major Dalim came to his business office and lamented that it is a far cry to get any justice for freedom fighters like them, rather it was difficult for them to survive. Nobody would care about them even if they die on the road. He further said that on one hand Sheikh Mujib was brain washed and on the other, everybody surrounded him in such a way that he was not allowed to know the truth. This must be redressed. This accused (Shahriar) also added that these wrongs must be righted. At that time Major Dalim, Major Aziz Pasha and Captain Bazlul Huda used to visit the business centre of this accused (Shahriar) quite often and they used to criticise the activities of Awami League Government, Sheikh Mujib and other leaders.

In the meantime, Major Khandaker Abdur Rashid of 2 Field Artillery Regiment returned home after his training in India and again joined as its Commanding Officer. Major Dalim contacted him and updated him about these incidents and entreated him for his help to redress his grievance. He also promised co-operation in this respect. On 13th August, 1975 at about 10-30/11 at night Major Dalim and Major Nur went to the house of this accused (Shahriar) at the cantonment and took him to the house of Major Rashid. At one

stage of their discussion Rashid told Dalim not to worry because Farooq would be with them. He stated further that on August 14, 1975, afternoon while he was in his business office, Khandaker Abdur Rashid and Major Nur came in a car and took him to the residence of the then Minister Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed at Aga Mosi Lane where they were received warmly. From there they went to a place near the Hotel Sheraton by a car and discussed the plans.

At night Major Farooq briefed the order group that had assembled in the tactical Head Quarters of his Regiment. There in the order groups, Major Mohiuddin of Lancer, Major Sharful Hossain, Major Firoj (Perhaps), Captain Sayed, Captain Shahid or Shahed, Lt. Nazmul Hossain, Lt. Kismat Hashem, Risaldar Moslehuddin and 8/10 others were present. He (Shahriar) heard how the deployment would be made at the last stage of the briefing. Farooq said it was to be from the parliament area, Asad Gate to Lake Circus, on the south of the residence of the President from Minto Road, residence of the Ministers and Shahbagh area, Airport area and Suhrawardy Garden area. After the briefing Farooq and Major Rashid talked privately. Then he (Shahriar) went with Major Rashid to his unit line. There he and Major Rashid Chowdhury were given the uniforms of Major Bazlul Huda

and Major Aziz Pasha respectively. Major Dalim and Major Nur brought their own uniforms and they all put on their uniforms and stayed there for a while. At that time Major Rashid and the officers of his unit were not present there. The officers of other ranks and men were taking their preparations. Within half an hour, two groups of troops from Artillery were made ready. It consisted of about 80/90 men of different ranks. The group of about 15 men stood separately who took preparations for duty from the corner of Shahbagh to Radio Station. At that time Major Rashid returned and he (Shahriar) had a conversation with him and other officers. On the basis of activities there he said that all these preparations appeared to be of mutinous in nature or of an uprising but not like IS, duty, and to this Major Rashid replied that they should see what might happen. Thereafter, their duties were distributed. The area of Minto Road and the residential area of the ministers were assigned to Major Dalim, Major Rashid Chowdhury, Captain Mostafa and another officer. Shahriar was given the charge of the Radio Station. The duty for the area from Asad Gate to Lake Circus area and the area of the residence of the President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was given to Major Aziz Pasha, Major Bazlul Huda, and Major Nur.

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