



# RIGHTING THE GRIEVOUS WRONG

## Farooq's confession

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discussed the matter with Major Rashid and it was decided that the final action would be taken on the early morning of August 15.

Around 1 O'clock on August 14, 1975, while Farooq was in his office, Major Rashid, Major Shariful Haque Dalim, Major Nur, Major Aziz Pasha, Major Rashed Chowdhury, Major Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Major Bazlul Huda and some other officers of Major Rashid's unit, came to his unit.

Farooq then disclosed the plan to them and said that there was no other way to change the Government in Bangladesh, Bangladesh might possibly become subservient to India, Army might not exist and it might be disbanded, and ultimately they would go into slavery. He further stated that the key person is Sheikh Mujib. It is possible to change by Proclamation through him. If he did not agree and if there was resistance, the country would not be saved, none of them would survive. As such he (Mujib) had to be executed. The political change (reaction) would be dealt with by Major Rashid. The country would be run by making (Khandaker Moshtaque would be made the president and he would run the country.) He briefed them about the operation plans. Major Dalim refused when asked to lead the main operation in the house of Sheikh Mujib. Then this duty was assigned to Major AKM Mohiuddin of his unit. He was told that Sheikh Mujib must not escape and that the entire area would be sealed off so that no one would be able to rescue him. Mohiuddin would talk directly with Sheikh Mujib and he would arrange to bring him there. If there was resistance or attack or counter attack, in that case, he would be brought down and executed. There would be tank support for the Artillery. They would support in case of attack from Rakshi Bahini or any other counter attack. The entire Field Regiment was deployed. The Artillery guns were targeted, firstly, towards the Headquarter of Rakshi Bahini and secondly, Mirpur Bridge. After giving the duties to Mohiuddin, Dalim informed that the First

## Shahriar's confession

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The troops thereafter boarded six trucks according to their groups. Shahriar also boarded a truck.

Shahriar stated that according to the final plan they started at about 4 O'clock in the morning, he was armed with an SMG. At about 5 he reached the east side of the house of Abdur Rab Serniabat at Minto Road. There Major Rashed Chowdhury, Captain Mostafa and another officer were waiting with their group and Major Rashed Chowdhury was inside the boundary of the house. At that time sounds of gunshots were heard from the west side of the house and he rushed inside. From there he (Shahriar) went to the Radio Station. Then he went to the front of the Radio Station and saw that one Habildar was announcing on the radio speaker the declaration of Dalim. At that time one Nayek from Artillery informed him that three trucks full of Rakshi Bahini force were approaching. Shahriar went out side the Radio Bhavan and disarmed them and sent them back. At about 6:30 in the morning he saw Major Dalim coming in a jeep fitted with SMG with some troops towards the Radio Station. He had an altercation with him over the announcement on the Radio and at that time Major Nur Chowdhury reached there in a jeep and tried to pacify him when he was about to leave.

However, on consideration of the entire circumstances he went inside the Radio Bhavan. Khandaker Moshtaque came there and at the main gate Shahriar, Major Dalim and Major Nur saluted him as per custom. He shook his hand with them. Shahriar and Major Rashid took

Field Artillery regiment was on guard duty at the house of the President, and that they might resist Mohiuddin. Since Major Bazlul Huda was Adjutant to the said Regiment it would be easier for him to manage those guards. As such, Captain Bazlul Huda, Major Noor Chowdhury, Major Mohiuddin were given the responsibility of the operation in the residence of President Sheikh Mujib at Road No. 32, Dhanmondi. Major Rashid was responsible for the said unit as CO 2nd Field Artillery Regiment but he gave his responsibility to Major Dalim and he took the responsibility of keeping contact with General Zia, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed and others. Farooq himself took the responsibility of the Tank Force. Major Rashed Chowdhury, Shahriar and others were with Dalim. Farooq told Mohiuddin to give uniforms to those officers who were in civil dress and also to supply ammunitions to those who were assigned with tasks. He asked Sharful Hossain to arm the tanks with ammunitions and not to start the tanks until he ordered.

Syed Farooq Rahman stated further that except the Tank Force other forces had left at about 4:00 to 4:30 in the morning to perform their respective missions. He started at about 5/5-30 with the tanks. Lt Kismat was in a tank just behind him while other tank crews were in different tanks. Sharful Hossain was in the last tank.

After the operation, Major Rashid asked him to go inside the Radio Station and there he saw Rashid, Dalim, Shahriar, Rashed Chowdhury, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, Taheruddin Thakur and some others of the Radio Station. Then Rashid informed him that Khandaker Moshtaque was going to be the president.

Thereafter he left for the Army Headquarters, where he went to the chamber of Chief of General Staff (CGS) Brigadier Khaled Mosharrar. The CGS expressed his annoyance on the killing of Sheikh Mujib. He asked him to report to Banga Bhavan. Accordingly, Farooq went to Banga Bhavan and he worked as special assistant to then president Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed.

Khandaker Moshtaque inside the Radio Bhavan. Then Rashid, Nur and Dalim went away. About 20 minute later, Taheruddin Thakur came to the Radio Station and on the instructions of Khandaker Moshtaque, Taheruddin Thakur drafted his address. Thereafter the address of Khandaker Moshtaque was recorded and on his direction Taheruddin Thakur also drafted the declarations of allegiance of Chiefs of the Forces. Sometimes later, the Chief of Staff of the Army and Deputy Chief of the Army came to the Radio Station followed by Chief of Air Force and Navy. Khandaker Moshtaque talked to them and thereafter they read the address of allegiance, which were transmitted on Radio. At about 10:30 to 11:00 Khandaker Moshtaque went to Bangabhaban and Shahriar went there at about 12:30 and then again returned to Radio Station a little later.

Khandaker Moshtaque took oath as President and the Cabinet was formed in the afternoon. At night Major Dalim showed him pictures of the dead bodies of Sheikh Mujib and his family members. Shahriar further stated in his confessional statement that in between August 17 and August 19, 1975, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed appointed General Osmany as his Defence Adviser and he appointed Shahriar as his Staff Officer. Thereafter, on August 24 or 25, Ziaur Rahman, was appointed Chief of Army Staff. Few days later a new post of Chief of Defence Staff was created and Major General Kholilur Rahman was appointed in that post and he was appointed his staff officer and accordingly he joined there.

and Major Faruque were present, Taher said.

Taher added when Moshtaque asked the army officers about the condition of their movement, they replied that the boss was taking preparations for everything.

According to Taher's confessional statement, the primary plot was made centring Chittagong divisional conference organised by Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development in Comilla. The conference was organised with the guidance of the then vice-chairman of BARD Mahbubul Alam Chasi, the other leading protégé of Moshtaque, and under patronisation of the then commerce minister Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed.

On the second day of the conference Moshtaque introduced Chasi and Thakur to Major Rashid and Major Bazlul Huda in civil dress with whom Moshtaque held a meeting there.

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senior officer, I cannot be involved in such things. If you junior officers want to do it, go ahead.

A.M. Did you specifically tell General Zia that your intention was to overthrow Sheikh Mujibur Rahman?

ER. Remember that I was meeting the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, a Major General, and if I bluntly put it that I wanted to overthrow the President of the country, straightway like that there was a very good chance that he would arrest me with his own guards there and then and put me into jail. I had to go about it a bit round-about way. Actually, we came around it by saying that (there is) a lot of corruption, everything is going wrong, the country requires a change... Yes, yes let us go outside and talk in the lawns.

A.M. Zia told you this?

ER. Yes. Then we go up to the lawn and I told him that we are professional soldiers, we serve the country, we do not serve any individual. The army, the civil (service), the Government, everybody is going down the drain. We have to change it, we the junior officers, have already worked it out. We want you support and your leadership; and he said, I am sorry, would not like to get involved in anything like that. If you want to do something, the junior officers should do it themselves.

A.M. He didn't report you to the President, for even suggesting this?

ER. No, but he did tell his ADC that I was not to do or if I asked for interview anytime, not to be given.

A.M. You mean, after this meeting he let it be known to you that he didn't want to meet you again?

A.M. So the first man to be approached from the army backed out but General Zia waited and watched while the junior officers plotted Mujib's downfall. Within eight months the strategy would pay off. General Zia would be running the country. Denied leadership from the army, the Colonels turn to a civilian and a politician, the man on the left, Khondakar Moshtaque Ahmed.

A.M. Col. Rashid you and Cornel Farooq made Mr. Moshtaque, President after Mujib's death. Did you bring him into the front before that?

A.R. Yes, I had the first talk with him during the first week in August and subsequently I met him on 12th, 13th and 14th.

A.M. Did you discuss the killing of Mujib with him?

A.R. Not the killing, but it has been shown in a way that they are to be removed by force from the power and it may lead to a killing of Sheikh Mujib.

A.M. Could you give me some idea what you talked about?

A.R. Yes, after the discussion I asked him two particulars questions, that according to him, as he was close to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I asked him that could you feel that this country can progress under the leadership of Sheikh. He said there is no possibility, and then I asked him that it there was no possibility, as you feel so as another political leader then why didn't you advise him to current him. He said that, for us it is very difficult.

A.M. You mean difficult to remove or difficult to advise him?

A.R. Difficult to remove him and difficult to advise him also.

A.M. Did you give him any indication of what you were planning?

A.R. He said, Well, if somebody had that courage and guts to do it, well, that's a good think probably for the future leaders whom we are going to choose... So we just

Taher said in June 1975 Moshtaque attended several functions where army officers attended and adverse reaction was made even in loud voice against Bangabandhu.

He also said Moshtaque had intimacy with two generals of Ayub era -- Gen MI Karim and Gen Chowdhury -- who visited his Gulshan residence a few times.

Taher said on August 15, 1975 he prepared the brief radio speech for Moshtaque which was broadcast in his own voice.

Following his directive Taher also prepared a draft of the oath of allegiance which the chiefs of three services, BDR chief General Khalil and IGP Nurul Islam read out in phases by 10:30am.

Taher also prepared the draft of the president's address to the nation over radio and television.

The then president Moshtaque, Maj Rashid, Maj Faruque, Maj Dalim, Maj Bazlul Huda, Maj Pasha, Maj

wanted to know that he had no programme of immediately going outside the country anywhere.

A.M. Did he specifically asked you whether you would be available the next few days?

A.R. Yes.

A.M. Is that what you asked? Is that your intention of going on 13th?

A.R. Yes.

A.M. You didn't give him any idea of the date of the coup?

A.R. No... because how could I trust, he also might tell it to Sheikh and become his right-hand.

A.M. Did you get the impression that he was playing along with you?

A.R. Yes.

A.M. So, here was another man, one of Mujib's ministers, also waiting and watching for the big moment when he knew the leader would die.

Farooq and Rashid were ideally placed in Dhaka to carry out the coup. Rashid commanded the 2nd Field Artillery conveniently based in the capital and Farooq led the Bengal Lancers, Bangladesh's only tank regiment. Between them they had more fire power than anything Mujib could hope to muster.

A.M. Did you have any date in mind?

ER. Then I started thinking when it would be the best but at that time I had already started a series of training, unit training, by which every month, twice every month, we had night-training.

A.M. You are referring to your Bengal Lancers?

ER. Yes, the Bengal Lancers and the 2nd Field.

A.M. But this was the normal training exercise and nothing specifically to do with the killing of Mujib when this exercise was started?

ER. No, it was specifically with the operation in mind that I started to build up this thing, because you had to start the operation.

Unnecessary movement or unprogrammed activities, suddenly on odd nights, would be noticed, so from March I had started this night-training business so that twice a month.

A.M. Night-training of the tank regiment the Bengal Lancer.

ER. And also the 2nd Field.

A.M. Coordinated with the 2nd Field Artillery, which is Colonel Rashid's regiment.

ER. He had come back from India by that time, and I told him to do it so that if we ever did anything, we would have a convenient time and place which to everybody it would look and sound normal.

A.M. Why did you pick August 15th 1975 as the day for Mujib's assassination?

ER. First, it was a night-training. 14/15 night was one of the night-training nights. Second, monsoon. In monsoon, Bangladesh is very difficult place to attack, and India, even if it did, would have tied up 6 to 8 India Army Divisions.

A.M. So you thought that if Mujib was removed on 15th August in the middle of the monsoon the Indians couldn't react fast enough.

ER. Yes.

A.M. Why did you have India in mind? Did you anticipate some trouble from India?

ER. Yes, because one of the treaties Sheikh Mujib had signed with India was (that) in case of any trouble he would call in the Indian army.

A.M. So you thought that Sheikh Mujib, before he died, may have summoned the Indian troops to protect him?

A.M. Lancers had the tanks...

A.R. Yes. A.M. That is all the tanks that Bangladesh had.

A.R. Yes.

A.M. How many tanks was that?

A.R. That was 20/30 tanks.

A.M. 30 tanks -- how many people involved?

A.R. It was about a total of 700 men.

A.M. 700 men, 30 tanks, how many guns?

A.R. I had about 18 guns?

A.M. What guns were those?

A.R. 105 mm.

A.M. You were planning to overthrow Mujib with 28 tanks, eighteen 105 mm guns and 700 men.

A.R. Yes.

ER. But Colonel Rashid thought that it would be better to have some officers with personal grudge. So we got in some of those officers who had been retired prematurely on the 14th, night.

A.M. You bought them into the... on the night of the 14th, that is only hours before Mujib was killed.

ER. Yes. They were told that we were planning something. You come to the new airport.

A.M. On the 15th morning between 5.00 and 5.30 you sent your teams out to their allotted targets. What did you do? What role had you assigned yourself?

ER. My main role was to neutralise any opposition.

A.M. The plotters expected that the opposition would be coming from the Rakshi Bahini, Sheikh Mujib's personal bodyguard. There were 3,000 men of this paramilitary force in Dhaka. But they were armed with only light weapons. So the plan that Colonel Farooq devised was simple.

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

A.M. How many tanks did you have?

ER. We had on the road on that day 28 medium tanks.

A.M. And what armaments and ammunition did you have?

ER. We were not issued with ammunition.

A.M. Do you mean the tanks were unarmed?

ER. Yes.

A.M. In fact, no ammunition at all in the tanks?

ER. No.

A.M. How did you ... why did you take them out?

ER. I did not expect that everybody would have common knowledge that we didn't have ammunition. I thought, it would be just a knowledge to a few important people that the tanks didn't have ammunition... I mean it was of game of sheer bluff.

A.M. Colonel Farooq's tanks may have had no ammunition, but the field guns of Colonel Rashid were amply supplied. His guns began firing over the top of Mujib's house. The objective was to overawe the Rakshi Bahini and to prevent them form going to Mujib's assistance.

A.M. So you moved on the Rakshi Bahini headquarters with 30 tanks.

ER. I left the garage with 28 tanks, but when I actually came out of the second capital I had only one tank following me when I crossed the airport.

A.M. You lost the other 27?

ER. Got stuck up some where in the cantonment or in the airport.

A.M. And what did you do?

ER. I didn't do anything. I just went on -- broke through the wall, the perimeter wall, of the airport, smashed a couple of trees, crossed and I found a brigade of 3,000

Rakshi Bahini lined up, 6-deep. They were battle-equipped, full helmets... and all that sort of things... the driver said, what am I supposed to do, and I said you drive past right 6" in front of their nose: told the gunner to keep his gun pointed towards them and told the rest of them, the other chaps to look brave, and we just did it like that and those chaps kept on looking at us, and we kept on looking at them and I told the driver if they did start something, you just steer right and drive on.

A.M. So you were going to run over them if any opposition took place?

ER. That was the only one thing I could think of, there was nothing else I could do.

A.M. So in point of fact, you reduced Sheikh Mujib's private elite force of 3,000 men with a single, unarmed tank?

ER. Once a troop does not react normally, it takes them quite some time to react again. As far as I was concerned, psychologically I was sure that they were not going immediately to react. They would, you know, start studying the situation, and once somebody starts studying situation, they didn't take any action.

A.M. So you went on to your other targets.

ER. I then on to Sheikh Mujib's house. At Sheikh Mujib's house they... stopped me and said that everything is all right.

A.M. All right meaning what that Mujib had been killed?

ER. Yes.

... From there I went to the Radio Station to check if the Radio Station had been seized, I saw that the Radio Station was secure. And at the Radio Station Mr. Khondakar Mushtaque had declared himself President and had made some announcement.

A.M. So, the man you selected before the coup, Mr. Moshtaque Ahmed had made himself President?

ER. I was introduced to him. It was the first time I was introduced to Mr. Mushtaque. He told me to sit down but I was feeling uncertain I had to do regrouping. After a military operation, you have to do regrouping.

A.M. So the first of the men who had quietly waited on the sidelines. Moshtaque Ahmed, became President.

On 15th August when he handed over to Khondakar Moshtaque Ahmed, as new President in succession to Sheikh Mujib, he was 83 days in office. Did he fulfill your expectations?

ER. No, he, promised, but he did not.

A.M. Did he continue Mujib's policies or did he make a change in them, in the policies?

ER. He said he would but, he did not at that time.

A.M. On 3 November last year Moshtaque Ahmed was removed by Brigadier Khaled Musharrar who immediately promoted himself to General. Within four days Brigadier was dead, killed in yet another military uprising. Then the second man who had bided his time. General Zia, was brought to power. Only this time, for his own safety, he removed Farooq and Rashid. Such is the law of the jungle. They have been kept in exile and Bangladesh's brief history has learned to live with the coup d'etat. After Moshtaque was removed in November 1975 and General Zia, to all intents and purposes, is running the Government has he changed in anyway Moshtaque's policies?

ER. General Zia has done absolutely nothing and he is not capable of doing anything.

## Villain behind

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According to Taher, Moshtaque had said he conveyed his opinions, as there is no alternative to it. Moshtaque also asked him to remain with them before leaving that day.

Moshtaque had always been confident about his action and plans and it was evident in his comments on different occasions in August as Taher quoted him.

"You have become the governor. Do you think you will be able to start work?" Taher quoted Moshtaque as saying to Ali Amin, who was the newly appointed governor of Brahmanbaria and Moshtaque just attended a reception to him in August in 1975.

A Dhaka divisional self-reliance conference was held in May or June in 1975 at Gazipur Salna High School where four to five army officers including Major Noor, Major Shahriar

and Major Faruque were present, Taher said.

Taher added when Moshtaque asked the army officers about the condition of their movement, they replied that the boss was taking preparations for everything.

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Mohiuddin, Maj Shahriar, Maj Noor, Maj Rashed, Maj Sharful, Cptn Kismat Hashem, Cptn Nazmul Hossain Ansar, Cptn Nurul Huda, Cptn Majed, General Zia and I unitedly prepared the list of cabinet members, Taher said.

The members of the cabinet were then brought to the Bangabhaban and it was decided that Syed Nazrul Islam, Kamaruzzaman, Monsur Ali and Tajuddin Ahmed would be put on surveillance in their respective houses.

Moshtaque analysed the overall situation and informed the meeting that Sheikh Mujib, members of his family, Serniabat and his family members, Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni, his wife and others have been killed. He also informed that arrangements have been made to bury Sheikh Mujib in his village home and others in Dhaka, Taher said in his confession.

The role of Moshtaque during the Liberation War while he was in-

charge of the foreign ministry of provisional Bangladesh government foretold that 1975 would happen when he worked with a US plot to split Awami League on the question of independence and thus to split the war of independence so that Bangladesh cannot be born.

The Guardian reported this quoting documents of a study, commissioned in 1973 by Carnegie Endowment, of the conduct of US policy during 1971 Bangladesh crisis.

"What the Carnegie documents make unequivocally clear is that secret contacts were made in 1971 in Kolkata with a faction of the Bangladesh Provisional Government in the hope of splitting the independence movement and arriving at a settlement short of independence.

"The US contact was made with the Moshtaque faction of Awami League in Kolkata and was highly sensitive since they bypassed the

provisional government in the person of the then prime minister Tajuddin Ahmed.

"Absolute discretion and secrecy was the key to splitting the Bengali leadership and supporting that faction which would be prepared to compromise with Pakistan and not demand full independence."

Moshtaque's secret liaison, however, was discovered in October 1971 and he was placed under virtual house arrest in Kolkata.

Following independence Mujib made the biggest mistake in his life by pardoning the proved betrayer. And in the greatest irony in Bangladesh's history in 1972 on Mujib's return from jail in Pakistan, Moshtaque greeted Mujib publicly with a kiss.

[Source: Confessional statement of Taher Uddin Thakur, The Guardian, Wednesday, August 15, 1979-Lawrence Lifschultz, formerly South Asia Correspondent of the "Far Eastern Economic Review".]