

Sheikh Mujib Murder Enquiry

FROM PAGE 2

"No. 768 - Law - A three member Judicial Inquiry Commission is hereby constituted to hold immediate judicial enquiry into the circumstances under which four prominent persons were brutally murdered in Dacca Central Jail recently. The Commission will be headed by Mr. Justice Ahsanuddin Chowdhury, Judge of the Supreme Court (Appellate Division) with Mr. Justice K.M. Sobhan, and Mr. Justice Syed Mohammad Hossain of the Supreme Court (High Court Division) of Bangladesh as members."

That a police case had been registered in Lalbagh Police Station, Dacca on 5 November, 1975, regarding the killings in the Dacca Central Jail on 3 November 1975. It appears that after some investigation the matter was referred to the C.I.D.

That despite the passage of more than six years, no legal proceedings have been instanced against the persons concerned. That in April, 1977 an Amnesty International Mission, led by Mr. Sean MacBride, one of the members of this Commission, visited Bangladesh, and in his meeting with the authorities, including the then President, discussed about the Jail Killing, and was told that the law would be allowed to take its course.

An extract of the report of the Mission is attached here as Annex D. That thereafter, it appeared that

the following officers involved in the murder, who had left Bangladesh for Bangkok on or around 3 September, 1975, were given diplomatic assignments.

The given diplomatic assignees were: 1. Lt. Colonel Shariful Huq (formerly Major) (Dalim), 2. Lt. Colonel Aziz Pasha, 3. Major Mohiuddin, 4. Major Shariar, 5. Major Bazul Huda, 6. Major Rashid Choudhury, 7. Major Noor, 8. Major Shariful Hussain, 9. Captain Kishmat Hussain, 10. Lt. Khairuzzaman, 11. Lt. Abdul Majid.

That it appeared that the said persons had been confirmed in their posts as published in the Bangladesh Gazette.

That the Commission, having regard to the above facts and circumstances, decided that one of the members of the Commission should proceed to Dacca to inquire on the spot as to what was impeding the processes of law and justice from taking their course in relation to the murders referred to above. That it was decided that one of the Members, Mr. Jeffrey Thomas, Q.C., should visit Dacca on 13 January, 1981, for such an on-the-spot investigation, accompanied by an aide. An application was made by the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Aubrey Rose, Solicitor, for visas, to enable Mr. Jeffrey Thomas and his aide to visit Bangladesh.

That the Bangladesh High

Commission kept the matter pending indicating that the visas would be issued in due time to enable the members to visit Bangladesh.

That on the morning of 13 January, 1981, when an urgent request was made to enable the members to take the British Airways flight in the same evening, the Bangladesh High Commission in London indicated that passports and visas would be returned on that afternoon. When these were called for, it was said that the Consular Section was closed.

That subsequently, the Bangladesh High Commission confirmed that they could not issue a visa for Mr. Jeffrey Thomas to travel to Dacca. The Secretary to the Commission confirms that despite letters, telephone calls, and personal visits to the Bangladesh High Commission in London, no letter of refusal to grant a visa or of explanation, or of any kind, has been received by the Secretary from the High Commission.

From the facts narrated above, the preliminary conclusions reached by us are:

- The processes of law and justice have not been permitted to take their course.
- It would appear that the Government has duly been responsible for impeding their process.
- These impediments should be removed and law and justice should be allowed to take their course.

In the shadow of a larger-than-life father

FROM PAGE 4

Later, my private tutor went and checked my exam paper which he always did. He found that the teacher had written next to my answer, "This girl doesn't read any book, she obviously goes around listening to political speeches only."

Later during my matric, I took the Social Knowledge exam without answering questions on the Pakistan chapter. That meant sacrificing 20 marks which was really risky because I could have failed. But it was like a principle, I refused to read anything about Pakistan on the textbooks.

We used to discuss all sorts of matters with father. He always spoke openly and seriously with us, he never treated us like kids or as someone who were too young to understand political things.

And whenever we had questions, we always went straight to him and asked. I had a bad habit in that I was very argumentative. I don't know why but I always used to argue with father. Whatever the topic, I used to contradict and argue with him. Mother used to get quite annoyed sometimes.

DS: You used to visit Bangabandhu in prison, of course. In what sort of a mood did you used to find him?

SH: We learnt one thing from our father, and that was to accept with a smile any kind of pain or sufferings. Father never used to sit in gloom if there was any danger or hardship. He always used to make light of any danger and laugh with it. It was a family trait.

My mother played a vital role. She was highly aware politically. During my father's absence, she had to look after Awami League as well as her family.

She used to take information to father and bring back instructions. It was a difficult job, because plainclothes policemen always used to shadow us.

Mother was supportive to the utmost. Father never had to worry about family problems, mother used to take care of everything.

DS: Did he used to talk about prison life much?

SH: Oh yes, he used to talk about the jail. Most of the times father used to be kept isolated from other prisoners.

Father used to talk about his own cooking, that is whenever he tried to cook something by himself. He used to have pet cats and birds in his separate cell. He used to talk about those.

Once a cat gave birth to some kittens and he got very worried when he saw the mother cat picking her kittens up with her teeth and take them with her here and there.

He didn't know cats do that until the eyes of the kittens are fully opened! He got worried about the kittens' eyes not opening. So he arranged for a vet to come and have a look at the kittens.

He used to really look after his cats, birds and a small garden he tended next to his cell. He always used to put out food for other wild birds and every time we

visited him, he would talk about the number of birds that came to eat in his garden that day.

DS: After the elections of 1970, we said that Sheikh Shaheb was the next prime minister of Pakistan. In your family circles, did you have any discussions like "my father is the next prime minister of Pakistan" or something like that?

SH: There was no scope for that!

Let me say this, when the Six Point Programme was presented by my father, it was more or less clear from then on that Bangladesh was going to become independent.

That is why, our thinking was not so much whether father would become prime minister of Pakistan; rather the thought was more on how Bangladesh would become independent. Within the family, it never simply occurred to us that we might have to go and live in Rawalpindi or Islamabad. My mother would never have gone over there anyway!

DS: Lot of people have commented that the house at No 32 Dhanmondi, with its low boundary wall and small area, was a big security risk. That the president's security could not be guaranteed in that house.

SH: My mother believed that my father had dedicated his own life for the welfare of the people. Father had

a tremendous faith in and love for the people of this country.

He felt that if he had gone to a well-protected house, then he would become isolated from the people. And my mother felt that if the family moved to an official place, then all the pomp and surroundings would spoil the children.


We were an ordinary family, and we wanted to maintain that life. Father, despite being the prime minister and later president, continued to lead an ordinary life.

I feel now that it was not the right approach. At least, some protection should have been provided by the government or the party.

But then, whenever somebody mentioned security, my mother always said that the ordinary people of this country would never harm him. She always said that those who stood guard would be the ones to turn their guns on him.

And that was what really happened. Wherever father might have been, he was murdered by people who were very close to him. Think of Khondker Mushtaque. And Major Dalim was virtually like a member of the family, his wife and mother-in-law used to come to our house all the time.

DS: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition, for your time.




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