

I helped to kill Mujib, dare you put me on trial?

Let the Bangladesh government put me on trial for the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I say it was an act of national liberation. Let them publicly call it a crime.

I engineered the coup of August 15 last year to put the brakes on my country's headlong descent into hell.

I ordered Mujib's killing because I had personal knowledge that although he was head of state, he set free and protected his party henchmen of the Awami League, who, in the town of Tongi, near Dacca, raped and murdered a young bride and laughed in our faces when we tried to bring them to justice.

I ordered Mujib's death because he also ruthlessly killed some of his political opponents. Let the present government deny it, if it can, that it has evidence of this.

In law such a man is considered to be accessory both before and after the fact of murder. But in Bangladesh there was no law except Mujib's word. I wanted to re-establish the sequence of crime and punishment.

Sheikh Mujib had to die for four other reasons.

First, because of ill-conceived personal power he needlessly enslaved a nation which had willingly made him its father. Mujib's politics of deceit put brother against brother when he should have united the people. He crushed the Press. He reduced the national assembly to a rubber stamp for his personal whims. He sent thousands of people to jail because he would not tolerate dissent.

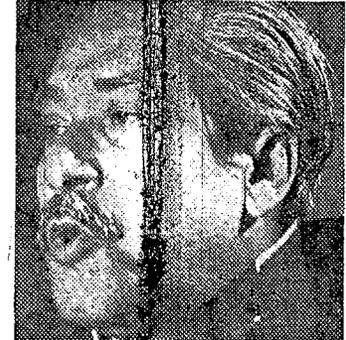
Secondly, Mujib and his family, his Awami Leaguers and corrupt officials plundered the country while the rest of the people starved.

Thirdly, Mujib's corrupt and worthless administration prostituted my country to foreign powers. By forever holding out



Farook; plotter

IN THIS remarkable article, the man who engineered the killing of the "father" of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in August last year, challenges the present regime to put him on trial for murder. The man, Lieutenant Colonel Farook Rahman, accuses the present regime, led by General Ziaur (Zia) Rahman of betraying a movement that considered reform so vital that it killed the state's founding father in an effort to achieve it. The article inevitably gives only one view of the crisis but it is crucial to understanding events in that tortured country.



Mujib: victim

a beggar's bowl he made us an object of international contempt. Last, but not the least, Mujib betrayed his faith, Islam, which is the religion of my people and the one thing which can give the ideological thrust to our forward march.

Thus Mujib, in the short space of 4½ years, almost destroyed the Bangladesh for which by his own admission 2 million people lost their lives in the 1971 liberation struggle.

Since I had no ambition for personal power, I agreed last August to a suggestion by my colleague, and brother-in-law, Colonel Abdur Rashid, that Khandakar Mushtaque Ahmed, a senior politician, be made president to replace Mujib. He was given the task of national reconstruction. At the same time I personally insisted that Major General Zia be appointed chief of staff of the army. I thought he could unite and build

up the force which had not only been humiliated by Sheikh Mujib but also had suffered terrible neglect at his hands.

In accepting the jobs we offered them, Mr Mushtaque and General Zia endorsed our reasons for the change. But they failed to follow through.

For his own reasons which were not known to us, Mr Mushtaque, during his presidency from August to November last year, kept putting off the economic, social and political reforms that were required. We gave General Zia timely warning of a counter-coup by officers immediately under him, but he did nothing to squash it. As a result Mushtaque and Zia were forced to resign on November 3 while we went into voluntary exile to prevent a civil war.

Four days later when our troops awakened to the power struggle among the officers, they revolted and reinstated General

Zia as the army chief in the hope of restoring the direction we set on August 15. Since then, they have been victimised for their loyalty and patriotism while those responsible for the counter-coup on November 3 were rather curiously released from jail last month without benefit of court martial. We were forced to remain out of our country "at the pleasure of the government"

As we have been accused of inciting indiscipline in the armed forces, let me set the record straight.

Colonel Rashid and I left the country last November and remained out of touch, but since then there have been at least four major incidents of men refusing to obey their officers' orders. The first was in Dacca second in Chittagong on February 28. The third a few days later in Bramanbaria and the fourth in Dacca—all before

Rashid and I returned last month on a brief visit to discuss our future.

I went to Bogra (north of Dacca) on April 29 to meet my troops at General Zia's request. Next day, Colonel Rashid was arrested and sent out of Bangladesh. I returned to Dacca on May 9 against the wishes of my troops, who suspected a similar trick would be played on me. I had been assured by senior officers that General Zia only wanted to talk to me, and that I would be allowed to return. In the event these assurances were worthless, Zia did not talk to me, but had me expelled again.

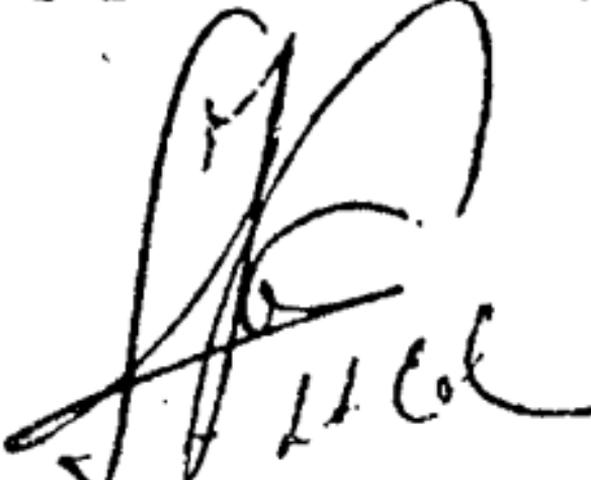
Some newspapers have suggested I was plotting a coup to remove Zia. I refute this utterly. I could have killed him in his office as I had a revolver in my pocket for self-defence, but I had no intention of killing him. I only wanted to give him

another chance to redeem his word before the troops.

The tragedy for the people of Bangladesh is that, apart from the dissolution of the assembly and a reduction in the price of rice—due mainly to the people's own action against smugglers—nothing has substantially changed. The repression continues, with the police replacing Mujib's Awami League as the instruments of terror. The Press remains gagged.

The grab for personal power grows noticeably stronger each day as the promise of early elections fades. Islam is still denied its rightful place in the life of the nation. Mujib's ghost lives in his successors, first Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed, and now General Zia. Neither has basically altered the patterns he set.

The danger to my country lies in the fact that Zia and his commanders cannot or will not come to terms with the forces of change. The people want a change but they are silenced by martial law. So the common soldier who is well-grounded in the common earth of Bangladesh speaks for them. In the absence of democratic expression (it seems there will be no elections) the troops constitute the most representative assembly in the country today. They are at variance with the senior officers who are pulling the other way. The government calls this "mutiny." If there is to be no change, why did Mujib have to die? Let Zia get on with my trial. The people will give their verdict.



Syed Faruk Rahman
26/5/76.