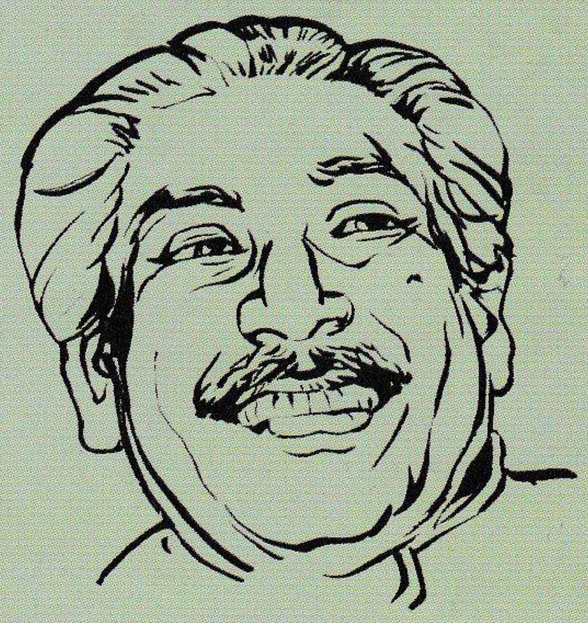
Father of the Nation Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Children - books series 2

Father of The Nation
His Life and Achievements





Father of the Nation Bongobondhu
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
Children-books series

Because of the spirit of fighting
heritage and resistance of the
Bengali Nation imbued
with the ideology of the Father
of the Nation, all the evil efforts
of the dictators, conspiry killers
and anti-liberation conspirators
have failed now totally....

The light of his ideals will show
the Bengali nation the path to
progress for all the time to come.
Our pledge should be such that
we shall unitedly work together
to finish the unfinished task of
building the golden Bengal of
Father of the Nation.

Sheikh Hasina

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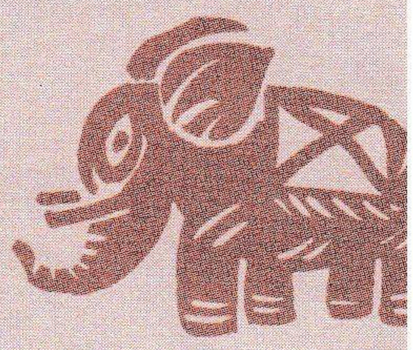
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Father of The Nation His Life and Achievements

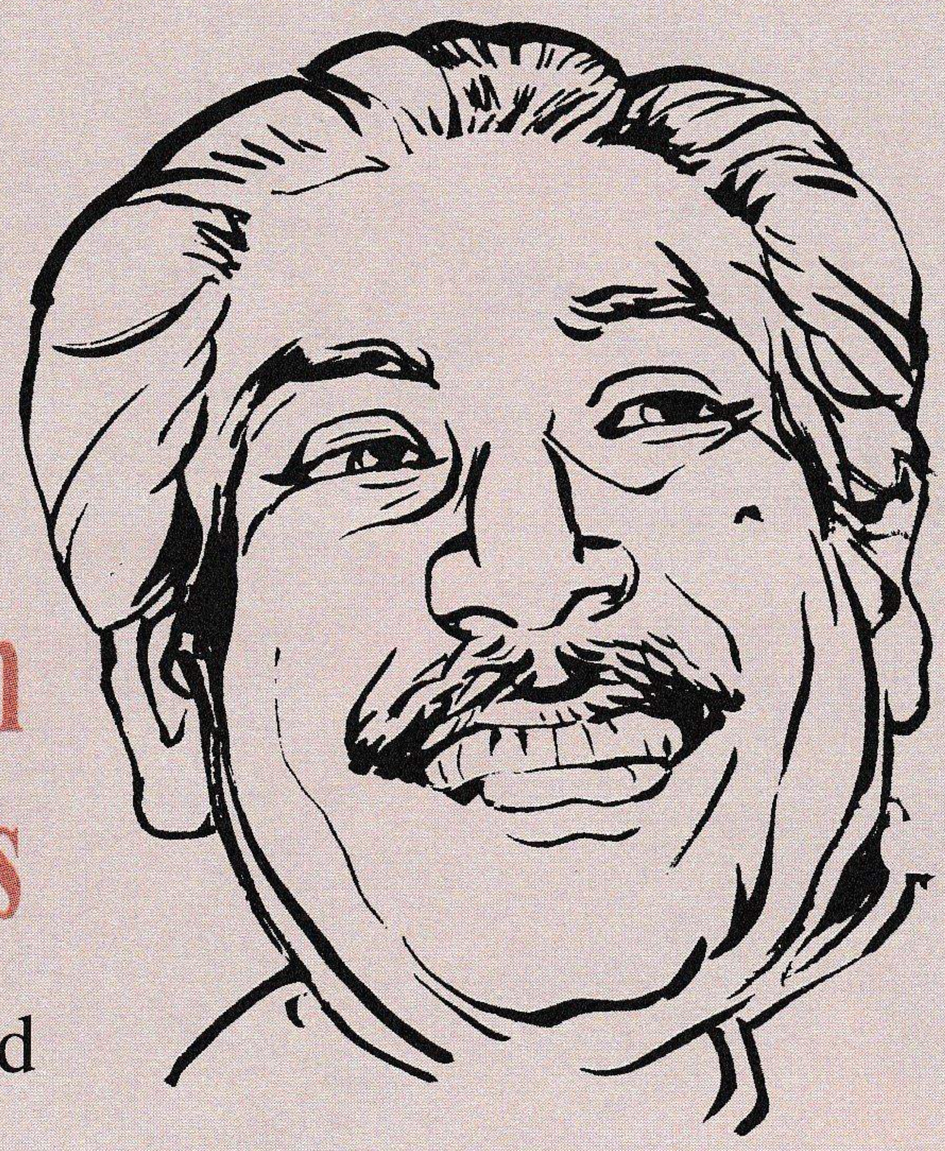
বাশিশুএ ৭২৩

FATHER OF THE NATION : HIS LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS (A Collection of essays, poems, stories, photographs and drawings on Bongobondhu). Edited by The Board of Editors. Translated from Bangla : Ali Ahmed. Publisher : Md. Nuruzzaman, Director, Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Doyel Chattor Sarok, Dhaka-1000. Cover & Book-Design : Hashem Khan, Date of Publication : March 2013.

Price : Tk. 300.00
US S 15.00

ISBN : 984-70076-0723-5

Father of The Nation
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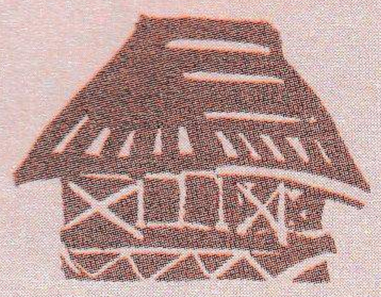
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Bangladesh Shishu Academy



Dedicated to Sheikh Russel who
was 10 years old in 1975.
He was brutally killed with his
father Bongobondhu and Family.
People of Bangladesh will
cherish his memory.





Bangladesh

In past our Bangladesh was known as Purbobangla (East Begnal). It was also called Purbobongo. In 1947, at the end of the British rule, a new state named Pakistan came into being. Then Purbobangla was renamed as East Pakistan as the whole country was named Pakistan. The other part of the country was named West Pakistan. The distance between the two parts was nearly 1000 miles. The two parts had their differences regarding many aspects including language, culture, lifestyle, climate etc. The only common thing was that majority population of both the wings were Muslims and that was the only common bond.

From the very beginning of the era of Pakistan it became evident that the leaders, politicians, bureaucrats and army-officers of West Pakistan were cunningly capturing the higher positions and powerful posts of the state and depriving the people of East Pakistan of their rightful shares. At that time (1947-48) 56% of the total population of Pakistan were Bangla-speaking. In spite of that, the then Governor General of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah, when he came to Dhaka, declared, 'Urdu shall be the only state-language of Pakistan.' No importance was given to 'Bangla', the mother-tongue of 56% of the population— the people of East Pakistan. The students and the common people jointly voiced their protest against the declaration.

Thus it was seen that for days and years together East Pakistan was being extremely neglected by the rulers of Pakistan. And West Pakistan was being developed by the earnings and assets of East Pakistan. East Pakistan's income was being used to modernize their cities and towns, roads and highways. On the other hand, East Pakistan's condition was decaying more and more. The West Pakistanis were occupying the higher posts of the state and also opportunities were offered to the people of West Pakistan in almost all the sectors including industry, trade and commerce and education. Thus the people of East Pakistan were always being bluffed and cheated by different tricks and excuses.

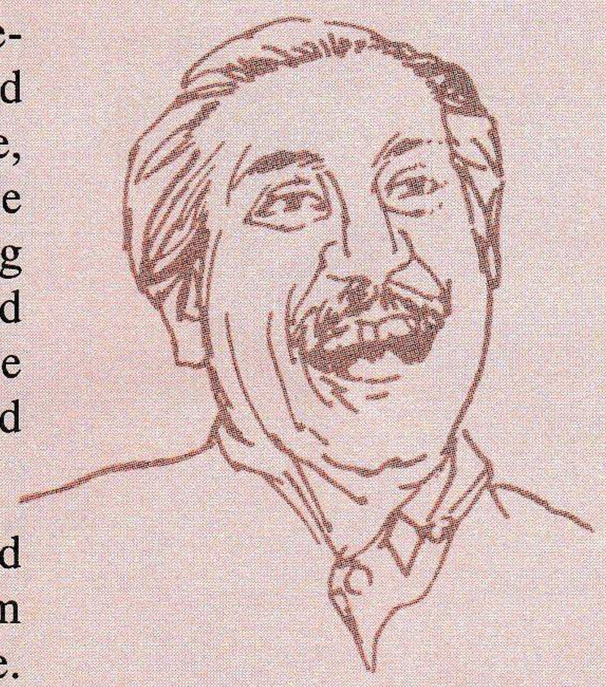
But why should the people of East Pakistan i.e. East Bengal accept this? Time and again they made strong protests and organized movements against this disparity. And then, obviously the protesters became the victims of repression and punishment, both physical and mental, in the form of imprisonment, torture and killing.

Form 1947 to 1971- during these 23 years the people of East Pakistan continuously raised protests and fought against the unfair laws and also torture and repressions of the Pakistani rulers i.e. the military rulers. Gradually they increased the momentum of the movements for realizing their own rights and finally made the hardest hit on 26 March 1971. Then they fought with arms against the Pakistan's invading army. During the nine months of liberation war, no doubt, 30 lakh people had sacrificed their lives, but at the end the Pakistani invaders were defeated and compelled to surrender. On 16 December a new independent country was born. This very country's name is Bangladesh.

Two

The important events of 23 years of struggle are- in 1948 the students and the common people of East Pakistan voiced strong protest when the Governor

General of Pakistan made his announcement that only Urdu shall be the state-language of Pakistan. At the same time a movement rapidly developed demanding recognition of Bangla also as the state-language. Following these, when in 1952 strong demands were raised for recognition of Bangla also as the state-language side by side with Urdu, police opened fire on the protesting students and common people. This firing of bullets did occur only to put an end to the demand for state-language by the order of then Muslim League government. Barkat, Salam, Rafique, Jabbar, Shafiur and many others embraced martyrdom. The date was 8th day of Falgun i.e. 21st February, 1952.



But the Bangalis were not at all terrified at these repression, killing and bloodshed. They rather made the movement stronger and at last the Muslim League government was compelled to accept Bangla also as a state-language. These happenings, on the other hand, helped to create such a situation as to gradually shift the reliance of the people on the Muslim League government. As a result Muslim League lost the election of 1954 and their government had to resign. The United Front (Juktofront) comprising of Awami League and other progressive political parties came to power in centre and also in the province of East Pakistan. But Juktofront was shortly removed from power at the trick of army and other ambitious leaders. A black law called 'section 92-ka' was used to expel Juktofront from power.

In 1958 the then army-chief of Pakistan Ayub Khan, all on a sudden, forcibly grasped the power. Martial law was promulgated all over country. Politics was banned and many pro-people leaders were put behind the bars. Their political activities were banned for 5 years by the enactment of another black law named 'EBDO'.

It is needless to say that the movement for people's rights in East Pakistan did never come to a halt for many a days. Many political leaders contributed to rouse the people against the injustice and repression of the Pakistani rulers. They were sent to prison and also cases were initiated in the courts against them. The people had respect and love for them and also they were grateful to these persons. Among them the front-runners were Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Haque, the lone leader of the oppressed Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Hossain Shaheed Sahrawardy and the like. With them yet another young leader established himself as a leader of the common people by applying his courage, intellect and organizing skill. He was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was later conferred on the title 'Bongobondhu' by the people out of their love for him.

In 1961, Pakistan's the then President General Ayub Khan decided to introduce a new education system recommended by Hamudur Rahman Education Commission. But the new education system proved to be a bar for the children of common middle-income-group families in their pursuit of higher education. Ayub Khan's martial law had then passed nearly three years. The students and the common people voiced their protest- 'We won't accept Hamudur Rahman Education Commission'. They ignored the harder laws of martial law. The movement reached its target and Hamudur Rahman Education Commission was nullified. People's victory was achieved initially.

In 1961 again, the Bangalis of East Pakistan decided that they would celebrate the birth-centenary of Viswakavi Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath is a poet of Bangla language. His poems, literary works, songs, dramas and paintings do certainly express the true feelings of the Bangalis. He has won the Nobel Prize

for his literary works in Bangla language and thus has achieved a glorious place for the Bengalis in the world. But the Pakistan military government opposed the preparations of the centenary celebration. They said that Rabindranath was a Hindu and so his literary works, songs and poems belonged to Hindu literature. Pakistan is a country meant for the muslims. In this way a false propaganda was initiated that 'Rabindranth's literary works were nothing but Hindu literature.' But why the spirited youngmen of Bangla and the admirers of Rabindranth should listen to these falses? They refused the baseless points and false propaganda of the autocratic Pakistan government. Tagore Centenary was celebrated throughout East Pakistan in a befitting manner. Rabindranath's songs found its place on common people's lips and flooded the whole country.

At the end of EBDO's ban of five years, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from jail. In 1966 he announced the 6-point demand of Awami League. This 6-point was well-thought and logical. The minimum rights of normal living of the seven and half core people of East Pakistan were expressed in this 6-point. Naturally the Pakistani military government apprehended danger in the 6-point and they were afraid. They understood that if 6-point was accepted, there would be an end to their deceiving so far they had been doing with East Pakistan. They would not be able to continue their looting and misappropriating the assets of East Pakistan. So, with an eye to undo the 6-point demand a number of cases were lodged against the people's beloved leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and following that he was arrested again. Not only Sheikh Mujib, but also many other leaders of Awami League and Bangali officers, both civil and military were entangled in such a case named 'Agartala Conspiracy Case.' At the same time, mental and physical torture and financial pressure also continued.

In the eyes of the Pakistan government Sheikh Mujib had committed a serious crime. Their accusation was that he had conspired with others at Agartala in 'Tripura to separate East Pakistan with a view to transform it into a separate country. Indian leaders and some high level govt. officers of East Pakistan ware also present there. The case was filed in such a way that Sheikh Mujib and other leaders and the govt. officers could be proved to have taken part in seditious activities and sentenced to maximum punishment to be kept in the prison or sent to gallows. They thought that if Sheikh Mujib could be rightly punished, then all movements against the autocratic rulers would come to an end. But their thinking was wrong.

Sheikh Mujib was a leader who had prepared himself step by step from his very boyhood to serve the country and its people. He could feel and realize the woes and worries of the people. He used to tell the people how the rulers were sucking them and taking away the land and crops of them in the name of politics. He used to stand beside the people to encourage them in their fight for realizing their right. He fought with them against wrong and injustice and also to realize their demands. That is why he could become the most beloved leader of seven and half core Bangalis within a very short time. Seeing him the people of Bengal also gained their courage and then Sheikh Mujib was no more a lone soul. All people of the country were with him. How could the rulers put this leader of the Bengalis behind the bars accusing him of treason? No, never could this happen. The students and the mass-people organized a fierce movement against the Agartala Conspiracy Case. They would break the jail-lock and free their beloved leader. The students added their 11-point to this demand. Thus the forces of three movements merged into one powerful mass-movement with an aim to dislodge the autocratic Pakistan government.

Sheikh Mujib's 6-point, the students' and mass-people's 11-point and the movement to free Sheikh Mujib from the Agartala Case- all the movements spread to villages, factories and workshops all over the country. The name of this movement was mass-upsurge of '69. The movement took such a strong shape that the Pakistan govt. could by no means stop the movement even after applying lots of autocratic measures. Ultimately the govt. was compelled to free all the political leaders including Sheikh Mujib. After his release from the prison, Sheikh Mujib was accorded a grand reception at the Race Course ground and there he was conferred on the title 'Bongobondhu' by the students and the mass-people. The all-powerful President Field Martial Ayub Khan resigned from his post after transferring power to the then army-chief Yahya Khan.



As Yahya saw the power of mass-movement and unity of the people, he did not dare to stick to power. Quickly he arranged for the general elections. In the elections the Awami League led by Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won majority votes on all Pakistan basis. But the military govt. of Pakistan would not hand over power to the Bangalis. The day 3rd March was fixed for the beginning of first session of the newly elected National Assembly in Dhaka. But on 1st March, Yahya, just like a shameless person, all on a sudden declared that the National Assembly session would not begin on 3rd March. He said, before the sitting the question of share of power would need to be solved.

'Impossible'- Sheikh Mujib roared. People had expressed their choice in favour of him. So he would now form the government and that too would be done through National Assembly session, not through secret discussion with anyone.

The people all over Bangla again voiced their roaring protest in utter despair- 'No, we are not going to accept it'. They told their leader Bongobondhu: We the Bangalis need no more to continue with West Pakistan. On March 2, standing among thousands of protestors Bongobondhu gave his call for non-coperation movement- the country would follow the instructions of Bongobondhu, not that of Pakistan government. Government offices, courts, banks would, from now on, follow Bongobondhu's instructions only.

On March 7, 1971 at the Race Course ground (presently Suhrawardy Udyan) before a historic gathering of lakhs of roaring Bangalis Bongobondhu declared in his spirited voice— "Turn every house into a fortress; resist the enemy with everything you have.... Remember: Having mastered the lesson of sacrifice, we shall give more blood. Insha Allah (By the will of the Almighty God), we shall be able to free the people of this land."

"The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for independence. Joi Bangla."

Three

After Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 7th March speech, every person in every house of East Pakistan i.e. the present Bangladesh felt a shiver of excitement while shaping his new dream to reality. Each and everyone went on uttering the slogan 'Joy Bangla, Joy Bongobondhu, (Victory to Bangla, Victory to Bongobondhu). Your address— my address, Padma, Meghna Jamuna'. 'Valiant Banglis take up arms, Liberate Bangladesh.'

War preparations were being talked of. In the premises of schools, colleges, madrashas, universities and towns and localities— everywhere boys, girls, youths and persons of all ages began to take preparations and training. Everyone is to take up arms if they want to liberate the country. All of them prepared



themselves according to Bongobondhu's instruction: 'Resist the enemy with everything you have.'

President Yahya and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto rushed in from West Pakistan. They want to reach a solution through discussions of understanding. But actually the discussion procedures were nothing but farce. In the name of discussion they were buying time and secretly bringing arms, ammunitions and soldiers from West Pakistan by ships. Weapons and soldiers were being ferried by aircrafts also.

Discussions continued for five days, but reached at no result. Bongobondhu and his party accepted no minimum deviation from their 6-point. He received total support of the people on the basis of 6-point and this support was exclusive. Yahya and Bhutto accepted 4 out of 6-points, but they did not agree with Bongobondhu on the points of separate army and separate currency.

Yahya and Bhutto talked to Bongobondhu till the afternoon of 25th March, 1971. But on that very night they passed order for 'Operation Searchlight' and secretly left Dhaka very quickly for West Pakistan. Around 11 p.m. the Pakistan army began to move with tanks, armored vehicles and heavy weapons. They indiscriminately shelled on the houses and shops on both sides of the road and destroyed everything totally. Also they went on burning those installations and everything they came across. Bullets were fired like raindrops on the people. Thousands of helpless people died that very night. The Pakistan army unabatedly continued their 'Operation Searchlight' for 72 hours in Dhaka city and other places of East Pakistan by killing and destroying any person or any thing. The whole world was stunned at this unprecedented cruelty of the Pakistani soldiers unparalleled in world history.

On that very night of 25th March Bongobondhu declared independence and made it known to the nation by a wireless message. Immediately after that Bongobondhu was arrested by the Pakistan army and taken to West Pakistan as quickly as possible. On the other hand, exactly at the same time the Pakistan army was shelling, burning and destroying Dhaka city unabatedly for seventy two hours. The roads turned red by the bloodflow of the Bangalis. Heaps of dead bodies were everywhere. Houses, workshops and factories, EPR Headquarters, Police Headquarters, colleges, university and student-halls were in fire.

At the very outset of the attack by Pakistan army with heavy weapons, the students and common people, Bengali jawans of EPR, the police force and the Ansars put strong resistance. That night they bravely fought against the Pakistan army for four to five hours and tried to resist as far as possible. But how far can you fight only with 303-rifles?

Yet their resistance efforts for these four to five hours proved that the Bangalis are a brave nation. They are not afraid to fight. Bongobondhu's declaration of independence and the resistance of the Bangalis against the treacherous sudden attack of Pakistani soldiers helped the frightened and panic-stricken common people to regain their courage and strenglh. And that was the beginning of our War of Liberation from 26th March.

On April 17, senior Awami League leaders like Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam, Capt. Mansur Ali, A.H.M. Qamaruzzman, with their aim to give a real shape to Bongobondhu's thought and ideals, made the formal declaration of forming a government of newly independent Bangladesh at Kushtia's Baidyanathtala. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected the President. But as Bongobondhu was then a prisoner in Pakistan's jail Syed Nazrul



Islam was made the Acting President in his absence; Tajuddin Ahmed became the Prime Minister. Col. M.A.G. Osmani was made the Commonder-in-Chief. Baidyanathtala was renamed as Mujibnagar. And again people began to call the revolutionary government of Independent Bangla as Mujibnagar Government. This Mujibnagar Government later, through well-thought and well-planned war strategy, spread the liberation war all over Bangladesh to its villages and remote places. The then Government of India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, came forward to give all sorts of support to this war for the sake of humanity and saving the people of East Bengal. Just after receiving two months' training form the Indian army the indomitable youths of Bangla with non-ending courage attacked again and again the camps and abodes of heavily armed Pakistani soldiers and made them panicky. Nearly one crore people of East Bengal had to take shelter in India after being attacked by the Pakistan army. Indian economy faced tremendous pressure as India was compelled to give shelter and food to these huge number of people.

The Pakistan army lost its ground just in nine months at the attack of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh supported by the Indian army. They became perplexed by the all-out attack of the combined forces. At last the Pakistan army accepted defeat and surrendered to the combined forces of Bangladesh and India at Ramna Race Course ground on 16 December, 1971.

Undoubtedly, the declaration of independence by Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujib on March 26, 1971 and the formation of Swaddin Bangla government under the leadership of Tajuddin Ahmed on April 17, 1971 were the two historic and brave steps taken to face the barbaric Pakistan army equipped with powerful and modern weapons.

The Bangalis won the war. East Pakistan became an independent country to be known to the world as Bangladesh. Unlimited lives and blood had to be sacrificed. The whole country was transformed to a pile of ruins by the Pakistan army and their collaborators— Al-badrs and Razakars. Thirty million souls sacrificed their lives, two lakh mothers and sisters lost their honour. In spite of these unbearable sorrows and sufferings even, the people of Bangladesh vowed to build a new country under their new national flag.

After 25 days of victory on January 10, 1972 Bongobondhu came back to Bangladesh. The Pakistanis were lastly compelled to release him. The people of Bangladesh welcomed their dear leader amidst joy and delight. With tears of joy in their eyes and hope of relief in their hearts they promised that as they had followed Bongobondhu's instructions to free the country, so they would strengthen Bongobondhus's hands in reshaping the newly independent Bangladesh.

It was a war-torn country. There was no money in the government treasury. The Pakistan army and their associates, Al-Badrs and Razakars had destroyed roads, towns, ports, markets and many other installations. Everything was to be newly rebuilt. The first need was to manage food for the seventy five million people and then to make arrangements for their education, health and residence. Bongobondhu turned these impossibles into possibles within only three and half year of time. His strong leadership put the country almost to the path of self-reliance. But he had to go farther. With a view to create a 'Golden Bengal' of his dream he placed before the countrymen a revolutionary plan. He formed only one political party with all the political parties who believed in independence and democracy and asked everyone to work for their newly formed party. The name of the party was 'BAKSAL' in short and in full Bangladesh Krishak-Sramik Awami League.

But Bongobondhu was not given any chance to give shape to a new Bangladesh. The enemies of the country and the forces opposed to independence had been preparing themselves to hit Bongobondhu the final blow, so that Bangladesh could not be self-reliant and the economic freedom of farmers, laborers and common people could not be achieved. A number of misled soldiers of Bangladesh army also joined this heinous conspiracy of the forces who had opposed the liberation war and were then conspiring to reinstate the Al-Badrs, Razakars and Al-Shams. In the first hours of 15th August, 1975 the killers attacked Bongobondhu's Dhanmondi residence in a surprising manner and killed Bongobondhu by firing bullets at him. Then his wife Fazilatunnessa, their eldest son Sheikh Kamal and his wife Sultana Kamal, their second son Sheikh Jamal and his wife Rosy Jamal, Bongobondhu's younger brother Sheikh Naser and youngest son eight year old child Sheikh Russel were killed brutally. At the same time the killers killed other relatives and members of their families who were directly involved with the country's politics. On that fateful night Bongobondhu's two daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana were not in Dhaka. They were in Germany. May be, it was a good luck for Bangladesh, they remained alive for the need of future Bangladesh.

Four

Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the greatest of all Bangalis of all time. He has liberated seventy five million Bangalis from the yoke of cruelty and oppression of Pakistan. He has presented them their thousand years' dream- an independent country. That is why he is the Father of the Nation.

Each child shall have to grow up precisely as a good citizen of the country. They need to know the history of their struggle for freedom, the history of their war of liberation. Why Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the Father of the Nation and why he is the greatest Bangali of all time— to help to know those events and history accurately this book 'Father of the Nation: His life and Achievements' has been compiled and prepared.

This book contains the detailed descriptions of the events how Bongobondhu injected courage into the hearts of the people of Bangla, how he had led them in their struggle against the autocratic rulers of Pakistan and how he fought against injustice and disparity from 1948 to 1971 for long 23 years. The writings have been carefully selected and special care has been taken to meet the requirements of the children. Some of the essays have been shortened and some essays have been commissioned to write. The artists have taken much pain to create the required illustrations. The rare and historic photographs on Bongbobondu's life and struggle have been collected as much as possible.

We, the members of the Editorial Board, do believe that the book 'Father of the Nation: His life and Achievements' is certainly a rich, valuable and historic book enriched by its writings, paintings, drawings and photographs meant for the children of our country.

Hashem Khan
Chairman
Board of Editors



We, the chairman and members of the Board of Editors, do hereby express our gratitude and thanks to all the contributors, artists, photographers, different organizations, firms and other persons whose active cooperation enabled us to prepare and publish such an important anthology for the children.

We have used many photographs of the Father of the Nation taken by noted photographers of Bangladesh at different times. They are : Golam Mowla, Mozammel Hossain, Md. Musa, Lutfor Rahman, Rashid Talukder, Aftab Ahmed, Zahirul Haque, Anwar Hossain, Khandakar Qamrul Huda, Pavel Rahman and the like. We have also used in this anthology a number of photographs taken by Mr. Kishore Parekh, a noted Indian photographer. Some photographs and drawings of Bongobondhu have been used more than once as they demanded their use because of the relevance of the events and historical importance. We think that the children and other readers would be able to realize the relevance of the repeatation of the said photographs and drawings.

We have not received most of the photographs directly. We have collected these from the album 'Father of the Nation' published by 'Father of the Nation Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust' and other books. We are expressing our special gratitude to the publisher of the said 'Father of the Nation Album' and the organization.

We could not take permission for using some writings and quotations about Bongobondhu of some writers as time did not permit us. We believe considering the use of this anthology by the children, they would consider the case favourably.

Father of The Nation His Life and Achievements

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In Bangladesh was I born and Bangla is the language I speak.
And the father of our nation is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
It is he who inspires me to tread the pathways of Bangladesh
Viewing its blue skies, heart full of hope, I stride this fertile land!

Syed Shamsul Haq
Translation : Fakrul Alam

There are a number of dates which we must bear in our memory. The 7th March of 1971 is one of those. ...The speech was just a call for independence. It was a directive for the ensuing war. This speech was the charter of liberation for the Bangalis. Its importance was more than that. Because on that very day the basis of the Bangladesh as a state took its form. The Bangalis refused Pakistan. And that day Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in people's feeling, was changed to the personality of Father of the Nation.

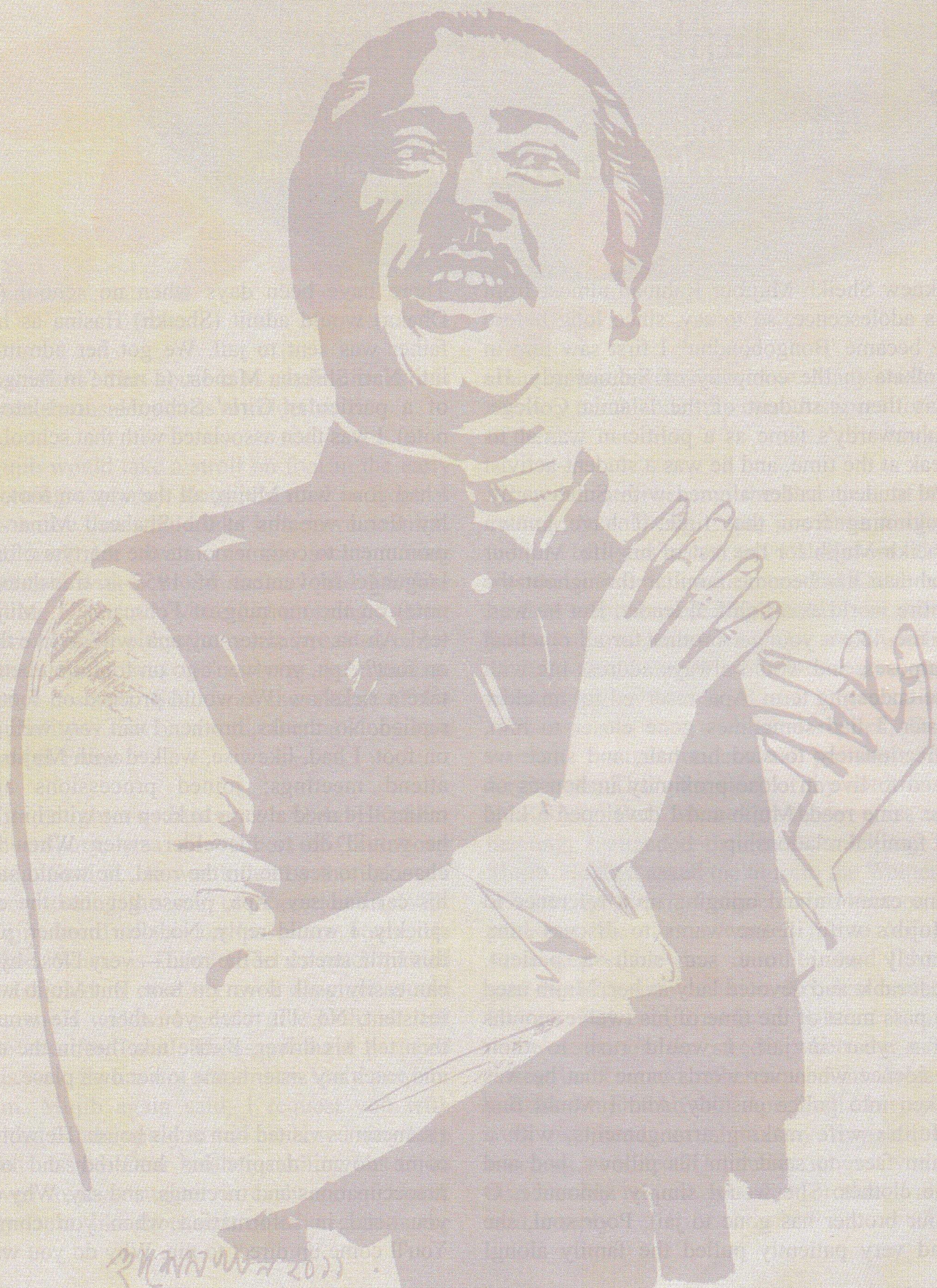
Muntassir Mamoon
Translation : Subrata Barua

... I could accept by no way his coming back to home at dead of night. In angry tone I used to say, "Why do you engage yourself in politics?" My father used to say. "Why do you talk like that ? You are same to me as the seven and half crore people are!"

... During stormy nights he could not sleep. He used to run about in the house with a rosary of 100 beads in his hand and would say, "Allah! Mine is a poor country, please help us." When we did request him to sleep for some time, he used to say, "You don't realize, no one will survive today."

He had nonending love for all.

Sheikh Rehana
daughter of Bongobondhu
Translation : Subrata Barua



Mujib As I Saw Him

Sufia Kamal

I knew Sheikh Mujibur Rahman almost from his adolescence, so to say, since long before he became 'Bongobondhu'. I first saw him in Kolkata in the company of Suhrawardy. He was then a student of the Islamia College. Suhrawardy's fame as a politician was at its peak at the time, and he was a student-activist and student leader aligned with Suhrawardy. Beginning from that time, I have known Sheikh Mujib for the rest of his life. Mujibur Rahman has become familiar throughout the entire world as a political leader. But he was, to me, like a younger brother for all practical purposes, and would always address me with the endearing term 'Apa' reserved for an elder sister. I had sometimes gone closer to him, affectionately tousled his hair, and since we used to live in close proximity in houses on the same road, Mujib and I developed a kind of familial relationship.

One cannot avoid bringing up a reference to Mujib's wife if one wants to discuss him. Rarely would one see such a patient, peaceable and devoted lady as her. Mujib used to pass most of the time of his twelve months of a year in jail. I would rush to their residence whenever words came that he was taken into police custody. And I would find Mujib's wife making arrangements, with a calm face, to send him his pillows, bed and the clothes. She would simply announce, O your brother has gone to jail. Poor soul, she had very patiently pulled the family along! There have been days when no school (in Dhaka) would admit (Sheikh) Hasina as her father was sent to jail. We got her admitted into Nari Shiksha Mandir, (a name in Bengali of a particular Girls' School— translator's note). I was then associated with that school.

I had gone with Mujib, all the way on foot, to lay floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar (a monument to commemorate the martyrs of the language movement of 1952— translator's note) on the morning of February 21. Mujib told, Ah-ha, my sister, my apa, will go like this on foot? Apa, you won't go on foot; you better take a rickshaw. We would proceed on foot. I replied, No, thanks, brother. I can very well go on foot. I had, likewise, walked with Mujib to attend meetings; joined processions and rallies. He used always to keep me with him as he would do to his elder sister. When he chanced to see me on the road, he would stop his car and say, Apa, please get into the car quickly. I would reply, No, dear brother, just this little stretch of the road— very close by, I can easily walk down on foot. But Mujib was insistent, No, I'll reach you there. He would then tell his driver, Please take her in the car and reach my sister home to her own place.

I sometimes visited him at his house. He would come down, despite his hundred and one preoccupations and meetings, and say, Why do you send in information when you come? You'll come up direct to me. Why do you wait

I had gone with Mujib, all the way on foot, to lay floral wreaths at the Shaheed Minar(a monument to commemorate the martyrs of the language movement of 1952 -
I had, likewise, walked with Mujib to attend meetings; joined processions and rallies.

downstairs? This house is as much mine as it is yours. I consider you as my elder sister.

Mujib would take a stroll on foot in the early morning everyday along the road in front of his house that would take him down to mine, and back. He saw me on one such morning and told with a broad smile, I had felt like calling out to you yesterday morning as they were cooking pithas(home-made cakes) in my house. But it was too early in the morning, and I desisted. Such was the extent of his cordiality— that he would take me along to a feast of Pithas!

My daughter's husband, Abdul Kahhar Chowdhury, was an officer of Chittagong Radio Station. He was killed by the Pakistani Army during the war of liberation in 1971. Mujib heard of this on his return home. He asked, Where is Dulu? I feel as much pained as I would in case my own daughter would become a widow. I would give Dulu all that she asks for. I said, Thousands have perished this way. So has my son-in-law. Only pray for him. Mujib again said, I request you with folded hands, apa, just tell me how I may help Dulu. I said, Dear brother, nothing has to be given to my daughter in exchange of blood. My Dulu, like thousands of other girls in the country, has become a widow. Many widows are very much under my care. Just pray for all of them.

When he later became the President of the country, he told me, Come just once to bless me. He had sent a car, and I also went. That was the first time I went there. BAKSAL had by then been formed. Mujib told, I am yet to find some one I may leave the responsibility of BAKSAL with. If you kindly agree, apa, please stay in charge of the Organisation. Whatever you say, will go. I replied, Dear brother, I don't understand politics; Just forgive me. That's the story of my not joining BAKSAL. But whenever there was any meeting, I attended that in the company of Mujib. He then asked me to form the Women's Wing of the Awami League and to become its president. He always wanted me to occupy some respectable post or other. And I have said on every such occasion, No, dear brother, I won't feel comfortable in politics. I may come down on the streets when the need arises, but I would rather not be involved in politics. Mujib then said, Apa, shall I keep you over my head, or show my respects by touching your feet? I humbly request you. I also humbly request you, dear brother, I also said in reply.

I had settled in Dhanmondi area before Mujib did so. There used to be problems to admit his children in any school during the days of his internment, and his wife faced difficulties taking a house on rent. Mujib emerged out of all these odds and difficulties as the leader. There is no limit to his sacrifices, and no boundary to his dedication. He used to love the country beyond all bounds of measurement. He had a kindly feeling for fellow human beings, and a chord in his heart would always respond to their sufferings. I cannot find in the whole world today a man of his qualities. He was not an escapist. He was the first to come forward and squarely face a crisis, a struggle or a conflict wherever any such calamity appeared. And he was not afraid of death. Millions of people rallied behind him with the cry of 'Mujib Bhai' and liberated this country. 'The Bengalis won't kill me'— Mujib had this faith in the Bengalis. Those very Bengalis have killed him. I do not know when there would be atonement for that sin of the Bengali nation. I do still feel Mujib with all my heart. I do not have the language strong enough to condemn those who are now setting afire his great legacy— the Golden Bengal. I only pray for the new generation of Bengalis to be imbibed with the ideals of Mujib's patriotism.

TWO

A thundering voice, overpowering the screeches and thuds of the frightening sounds of bombs and guns declared in the open expanse of the meeting ground on March 07, 'The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation'. The forward march of our war of liberation only trailed that voice.

There was an invitation to freedom in that voice of Bongobondhu, the Father of the Nation and the great patriotic leader of unbounded courage. This call for freedom was a call for the freedom of the country, the freedom of the human soul and a freedom of the inner strength of the self. That is why the unarmed and the distressed Bengalis could plunge into the war of liberation, and they destroyed the demonic powers to wrest freedom in a display of limitless courage.

The mothers sent to war their most precious gifts of own children, the wives their respective husbands and the sisters their brothers. The Pakistani barbarians, ignoring the piteous cries of the helpless, carried on with their cruel tortures and assaults. But they could not make any dent to the heroic struggle of the Bengalis. They marched forward inspired by the ideals of Mujib in their hearts and Allah overhead. The world at large watched in awe these sacrifices. But the great leader of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the humanist Russia came forward to our assistance.

Sheikh Mujib's clarion call to freedom for the liberation war of the Bengalis, therefore, will for ever be etched in golden letters as an awe-inspiring event in world history .

[Read out on April 14, 1996, in a gathering called to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence at Trafalgar Square in London.]

Joy Bangla
Joy Bongobondhu

Shawkat Osman

Joy Bangla.

Just two words. How strong can their impacts be?

My dear young friends, what will you say in reply if you are asked this question? You will surely be surprised and look at one another. What a question to ask! Just two words, and they have an impact of their own? And even if they have any, how little would that be? You will be churning it up in your minds, or will be asking one another. Or you might even think that the questioner must be eccentric. Eccentric or outright mad.

But no, nothing is wrong with the questioner.



Had you been at least thirty-five or thirty-six now, you would be able to realise how strong can the impact of the two words 'Joy Bangla' be. Let us presume, you are at least thirty-five or thirty-six years' old. It is 1997 A. D. when I am writing this. You were, in that case, born in 1962-63. How old were you, then, in 1971? It was eight or nine. Can anybody remember matters of such an early age? Let us presume one can. You would, then, be able to realise what the impact of those two words is— how powerful or strong. Joy Bangla.

The soldier proceeding towards the battlefield would chant the slogan 'Joy Bangla' at the top of his voice at the parade or marching time.

Just think of the battlefield. Fighting means either you survive, die or get injured. Just like gambling. You have taken a bet. Where it will all end , you do not know. You may die. You might also survive. Or you might also be injured. Just two words 'Joy Bangla' are providing you with the courage in the face of such adversities.



Those of us who had heard in our own ears the cries in unison of 'joy Bangla' in the voices of thousands of people know it very well that the roars of even a hundred oceans is nothing compared to that sound.

A person planning to set up a small restaurant or a tea-stall needs a name for his establishment. Well, the name is already there— Joy Bangla Restaurant or Hotel.

Just think of the battlefield. Fighting means either you survive, die or get injured. Just like gambling. You have taken a bet. Where it will all end , you do not know. You may die. You might also survive. Or you might also be injured. Just two words 'Joy Bangla' are providing you with the courage in the face of such adversities.



Why ten million people had to flee their homes? Well, the reason was the attack by the army. They had started genocide. Do you know why this genocide was launched? They first started killing the Hindus. Both the Hindus and the Muslims are Bengalis.

The name of the newspaper or magazine is 'Joy Bangla'.

A new bus will start plying on the roads—its name is 'Joy Bangla' Transport.

Will these two words remain like this?
No.

No one in this country could stay without worries in his own house after twenty-fifth March, 1971. Everybody was desperately looking for a safe place. India is the closest neighbouring country. Thousands of people— children and adolescents, old men and women, in a word, all categories of people— left their hearths and homes and proceeded towards the border. Border means the end of the country. There begins another country, another state. Ten million people got refuge at that time in the neighbouring state. They provided not only shelter for those long nine months, but also arranged for feeding those people. Arrangements for medical care were there for the sick and the others needing such care.

Why ten million people had to flee their homes? Well, the reason was the attack by the army. They had started genocide. Do you know why this genocide was launched? They first started killing the Hindus. Both the Hindus and the Muslims are Bengalis. They, more or less, look alike. The Pakistani soldiers faced a dilemma. They found out an easy solution— kill whomsoever you find. What is the need to distinguish the Hindus from the Muslims? They would shoot anybody from this country whether they were guilty of anything or not. Where did all those soldiers come from? They were soldiers of the state of Pakistan.

Pakistani soldiers in Bangladesh? What is this? Why should soldiers of another country come to our country? Our country at that time was not Bangladesh. This land was then called East Pakistan— a part of the state of Pakistan. The other part was called West Pakistan. Both these parts together made Pakistan. The other part lay at a distance of twelve hundred miles. Where did, then, Bangladesh come from?

In 1971, during the war of liberation, the invader Pakistan army and the Al-badr-Razakars would experience the shaking when they would hear the roar 'Joy Bangla'. They would flee away leaving their arms.

Bangladesh broke away from the united Pakistan and emerged as an independent country. And this breaking away meant war. East Pakistan had to fight for nine months. Thirty lac of our men and women lost their lives in that war. You had better not hear of the other losses in that war.

You should read history books to know all these. The story of those nine months is no pleasant tale. Imagine a situation where village after village is burning away. The Pakistani soldiers have set those on fire. Looting is also going on at different places. Girls are being forcibly snatched away from in front of their old parents. So many people hid themselves in jute fields for fear of the Pakistani army. Everybody was waiting as though without breathing. Because any sound would alert the sepoys of their existence.

Reports were heard of certain situations where the mother in hiding gagged the mouth of her infant with her own hand when it was about to cry out. The infant would die by asphyxiation if the gag was not removed in two-three

minutes. How long could an infant withstand this? Could the mother, in her terrified state, keep count of time? Besides, many persons will lose their lives if the Pakistani soldiers got hint of their presence there. The mother continued to press the gag of her hand nonchalantly on the infant's mouth. When the mother finally removed her hand, she found that her child was already dead. The unfortunate mother was sitting with her dead infant on the lap, not knowing what to do. She cannot even cry out for fear of making sounds. That could take the lid off her grief-filled chest. She was sitting glum-faced with the dead infant on her lap.

The whole atmosphere of Bangladesh was in those days suffused with tragic episodes of a thousand kinds like this one.

Didn't anyone in this country help the Pakistani soldiers? Well, why not? There were some people who were friendly to them. They would usher them to different towns and villages. They would think that Islam as a religion would be destroyed if the state of Pakistan does not survive.

They took jobs under the Pakistani Sepoys. They were formed into different groups called Al-Badr, Al-Shams, Razakar, etc. They would indulge in revelries in those dark days. Those names were wrapped in the garb of religion, although their professions were those of looters, killers and of hangmen.

You have only to imagine today how strong were the impact of those two words 'Joy Bangla'.

It would be easier for you to understand this from the following episode. I have told you before that ten million people took shelter in the neighbouring country. Well, one may not be able to remember all the names at all times. They would therefore address as— 'O brother Joy Bangla'. All the people of Bangladesh were then called by those two words.

Those two words, then, turned into an incantation. Something unknown and unseen would then be named with those two words.

A kind of viral fever became widely infectious at the time. It would cause a shivering in the body. After some time, there would be a remission of the fever, but the shiver would not go. What was the name of this disease? It was a 'Joy Bangla' disease.

Some people may feel like laughing now. But, in 1971, nobody could laugh at such a name of a disease.

Where did those words come from?

They are not words; they are rather a mantra. Who is the poet of this *mantra*? And why did a war start between the two parts of Pakistan? Why was the country flooded with repression and killings?

History will be able to answer those questions.

Know only this for now, West Pakistan used to exploit this territory called East Pakistan. The key to the entire machinery of the state was there in West Pakistan. Plots were hatched there.

Let me cite an example.

The jute produced in this country had a great demand in the world market. Export of this

jute would earn foreign exchange. Modern machinery would be purchased for this foreign exchange. But all those machinery used to be installed in West Pakistan. Karachi was then the capital of the province of Sindh. This port was famous for marine fisheries. This city of fisheries got transformed into a modern city thanks to the liberal use of foreign exchange earned through the export of jute. Well, a trickle would sometimes find its way into East Pakistan. A storm of protest raged over this exploitation, 'No, this exploitation shall not be allowed to continue.'

India was partitioned in 1947 to create the states of Hindustan and Pakistan. The break-up of Pakistan was completed in 1971. This break-up, of course, continued for twenty-four years since 1947. The crash came at the end. There was an artisan to this crash. He never vacillated or looked away from that target. His voice it was that chanted 'Joy Bangla'.

The matured mantra of 'Joy Bangla' pushed the people of this country along the road to war. This *mantra* wiped away all the frustrations of the people, and did away with all their fear. People were no longer afraid of voicing protests. The slogan became—

We trace our origins
To the muddy sands and waters of the Meghna, Jamuna and the mighty Padma.

Do you know the name of the poet-artisan of 'Joy Bangla'? you might have known by now, people do not pronounce 'Joy Bangla' at the beginning. They add before that, with love and devotion, 'Joy Bongobondhu'.

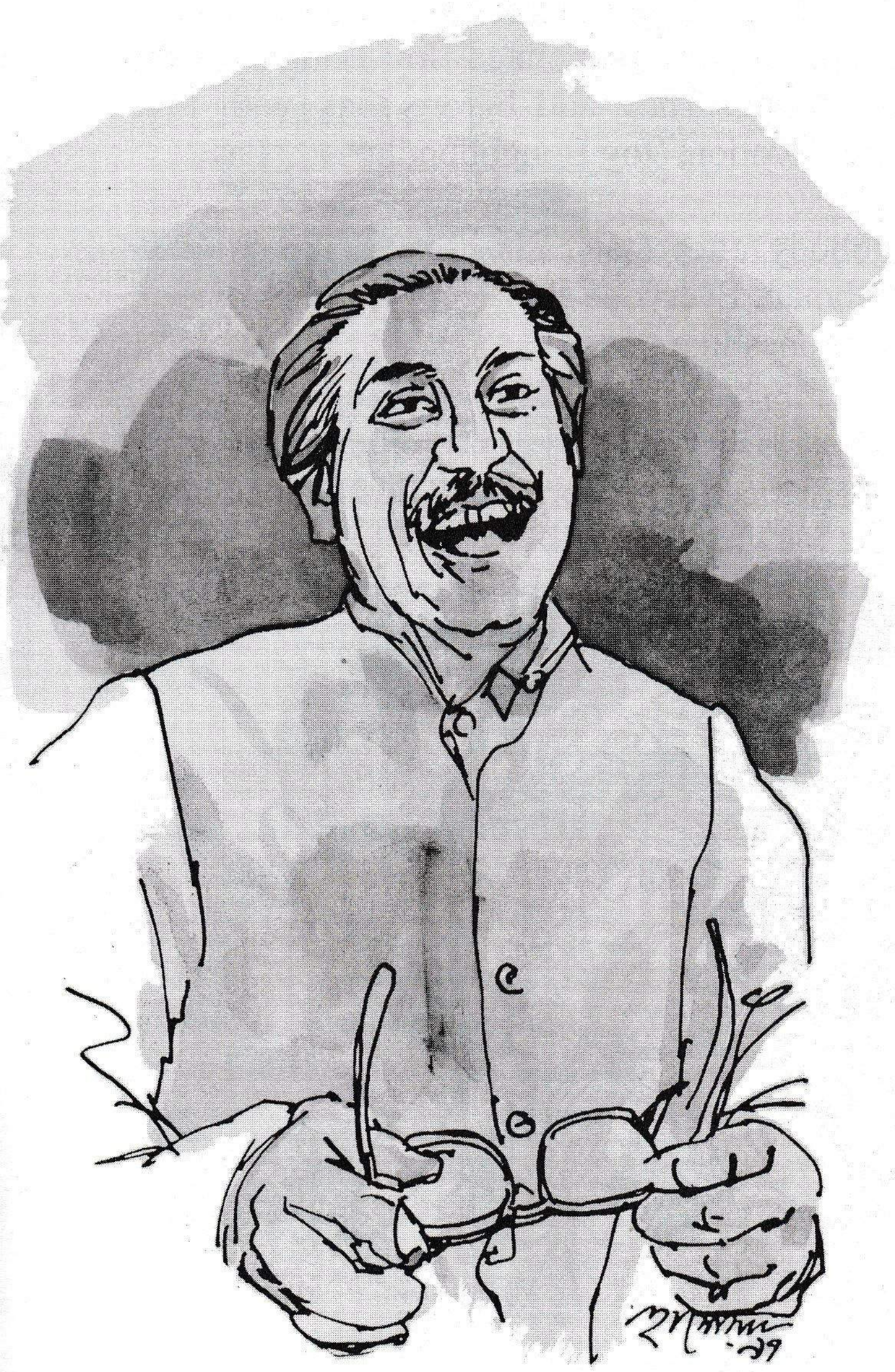
Nobody after that calls him Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Everyone shortens the names of their dear ones like this.

This article has been collected from 'Kishor Rachana'.



Bongobondhu as I remember him

Kabir Chowdhury



My younger brother, Munier Chowdhury, who became very famous for the composition of his dramatic work 'Kabar' based on the Language Movement of 1952, was personally far closer than I was to him. Some members of the killer 'Al-Badr' group, the hated stooges of the Pakistani Occupation forces, lifted Munier Chowdhury from his home and killed him on December 14, 1971, just two days before Bangladesh was liberated. We could never trace his dead body. The composer of 'Kabar'(literally, the grave) did not himself find any grave. Bongobondhu had a close and intimate relation with this Munier Chowdhury.

The movement for the autonomy of the Bengalis became very forceful from the very beginning of 1971. The consciousness of their Bengali-ness started gaining more and more strength in the minds of the people of this region. The peoples' interests in the history of the thousand-year-old literature of the Bengalis, their magnificent culture, the splendorous variety of their folk-life, their humanistic philosophy, etc. and a few incidents of Bongobondhu's company sparkle like those from a piece of diamond in my memory. Some of those were related to my works, to the discharge of my duties, and certain others are very personal.

With the unfolding of the consciousness of a separate Bengali identity, together with an intensification of that feeling, the

The Pakistanis could not kill him.
The heroic Bengalis won their
liberation on December 16, 1971,
through an armed struggle.
The indomitable freedom fighters,
nurturing the illuminated face of
Bongobondhu in their hearts, and
his spirited slogan 'Joy Bangla'
in their voices, had won this
freedom for the country.

indispensability of founding an independent and sovereign state for these Bengalis also became clear to many. And the very dear leader of the Bengalis, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, played a pioneering role behind all these.

I was working as the chief of Bangla Academy in February 1971. We observe February 21 with especial programmes, etc. every year. We arrange various types of discussions on Bengali language, literature and culture keeping in view the ideals of paying respects to the language martyrs. We thought of adding a new dimension to the observance of February 21 of that year, and decided to invite the shepherd-king of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib, as the Chief Guest to the series of programmes. His political manifesto, his lectures and speeches, his inspiring 'Joy Bangla' slogan and, above all, his incomparable leadership towards attaining autonomy for the Bengalis had, by then, carved out a unique place in the hearts of the people. All the people of Bangladesh had by that time gathered behind Bongobondhu the way all the children had run behind the pied piper of Hamlyn. That was the right time to bring him to the Bangla Academy as the chief guest.

I went to him with our request. He said in a tone of slight jest, Bangla Academy is a place for the scholars; I roam around in the fields. Why me? You rather select a respected senior researcher or a litterateur as the chief guest. I cannot recall exactly what he had said then, but I am certain it was something in that vein. However, he did not say all those in seriousness. Besides, he used to love Bangla Academy, and was, at the same time, respectful and affectionate to me also. He had come to attend the programmes of Bangla Academy on that occasion. He delivered the inaugural address as the chief guest. He gave a clarion call in his loud and sonorous voice to the artists, litterateurs and the intellectuals of the country to stand beside the common man, and that they should take an active part in all-embracing attempt at making the common man happy and rich. Bongobondhu also distributed certificates among the non-Bengali students who had come out successful in the Bengali language learning course conducted by the Bangla Academy. Among those students were a young man from Jordan, whose mother-tongue was Arabic, more than one white lady from the United States, whose mother tongue was English, a Russian young man with scholarship whose mother tongue was Russian, and a few young men and women from West Pakistan whose mother tongues were Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi. An aura of deep respect, happiness and a sense of satisfaction were reflected on the faces of those young men and women they were receiving the certificates from Bongobondhu's hands. His face also beamed with a smile reflecting happiness.

Bongobondhu passed an insufferable life of captivity in the enemy prisons of Pakistan for the entire period of nine months while the war of liberation had been raging. He heard the thudding sound of digging of his own grave just outside the walls of his prison cell. But he did not break down even for a moment. He made just one request to the Military junta of Pakistan. It was that when they would be done with their farcical trials and his execution by death, his dead body is sent to his dear motherland, the golden Bengal, where he would like to remain buried.

The Pakistanis could not kill him. The heroic Bengalis won their liberation on December 16, 1971, through an armed struggle. The indomitable freedom fighters, nurturing the illuminated face of Bongobondhu in their hearts, and his spirited slogan 'Joy Bangla' in their voices, had won this freedom for the country. That dear leader of theirs, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, returned to the free and independent Bangladesh to a hero's welcome on January 10, 1972. The unprecedented scenes, acted out that day, first, at the Dhaka airport, and, then, all along the road and, finally, at the Suhrawardy Udyan are simply unforgettable. But the piece of personal reminiscence I will now narrate belongs not to January 10, but to January 26, instead.

Bongobondhu attended a function, organised by the High Commission of India in Dhaka, at Hotel Inter-Continental on January 26, 1972.The occasion was the Indian National Day. Mr. J. N. Dixit was then the Indian High Commissioner. I also attended that party as an invited guest. Bongobondhu appeared in the Hall at a point of time. That was probably his first appearance in a formal gathering after his return to the country. We were standing in a queue in the main hall. Bongobondhu was approaching with slow but firm steps. I cannot express adequately in words how calmly he was carrying himself with a dignified personality: tall, erect, piercing looks from those bright eyes and the faint suggestion of a smile on his face. He was shaking hands with every one and exchanging a word or two with some. He stood for a moment when he came in my front, fixed the gaze of his eyes on mine, held my hands and then said, How're you? Then he entwined a hand of his on one of my arms and took a little walk taking me along. At one stage, he broke the silence only to pronounce in a soft, whispering voice, Munier is no more. Then he softly pressed my hand. Controlling my tears with some efforts, I disentangled myself and went back to my old place in the queue.

There are certain other memories like these. All those are still very bright and shiny in my memory. But those may wait for another day, another occasion, not here and now.

Bongobondhu Among Children

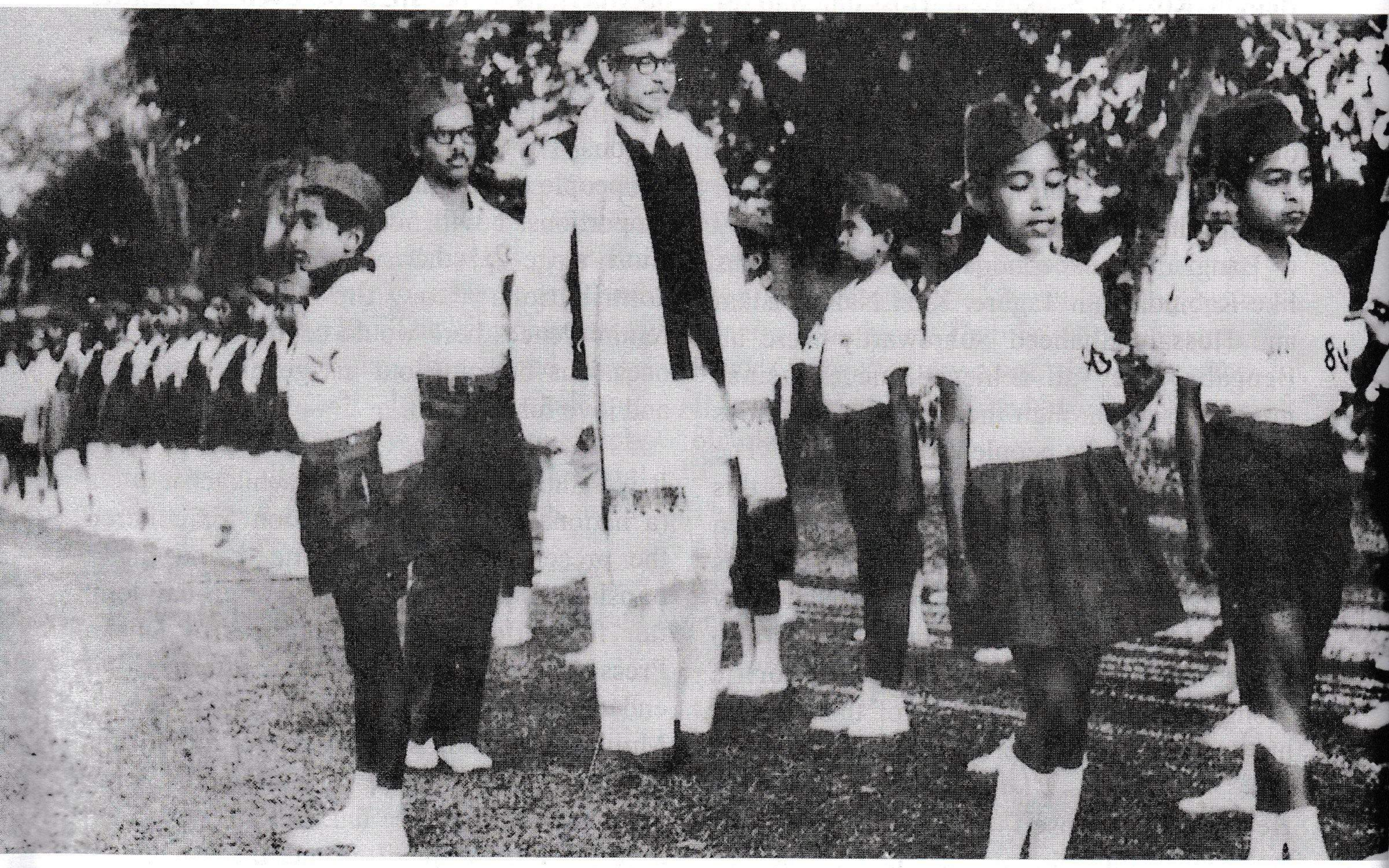
Rokanuzzaman Khan

Many very famous men and women were born in this beautiful Bangladesh of ours. Bangladesh is really proud to have borne successful sons and daughters like Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, Begum Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Ustad Alauddin Khan, Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin and the like. All of them except Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah were born in Bangladesh. Although born beyond the present-day geographical territory of Bangladesh, exceptionally talented persons like Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy were all Bengalis. They all achieved success, since immortalised, through their creative activities centring round the people of the country. The contributions of the successful son of this country, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have been immortalised in the pages of history. He has been crowned as the Father of the Nation by creating an independent country. He has also been crowned with the honorific 'Bongobondhu' by the people of this country in return for his love for them.

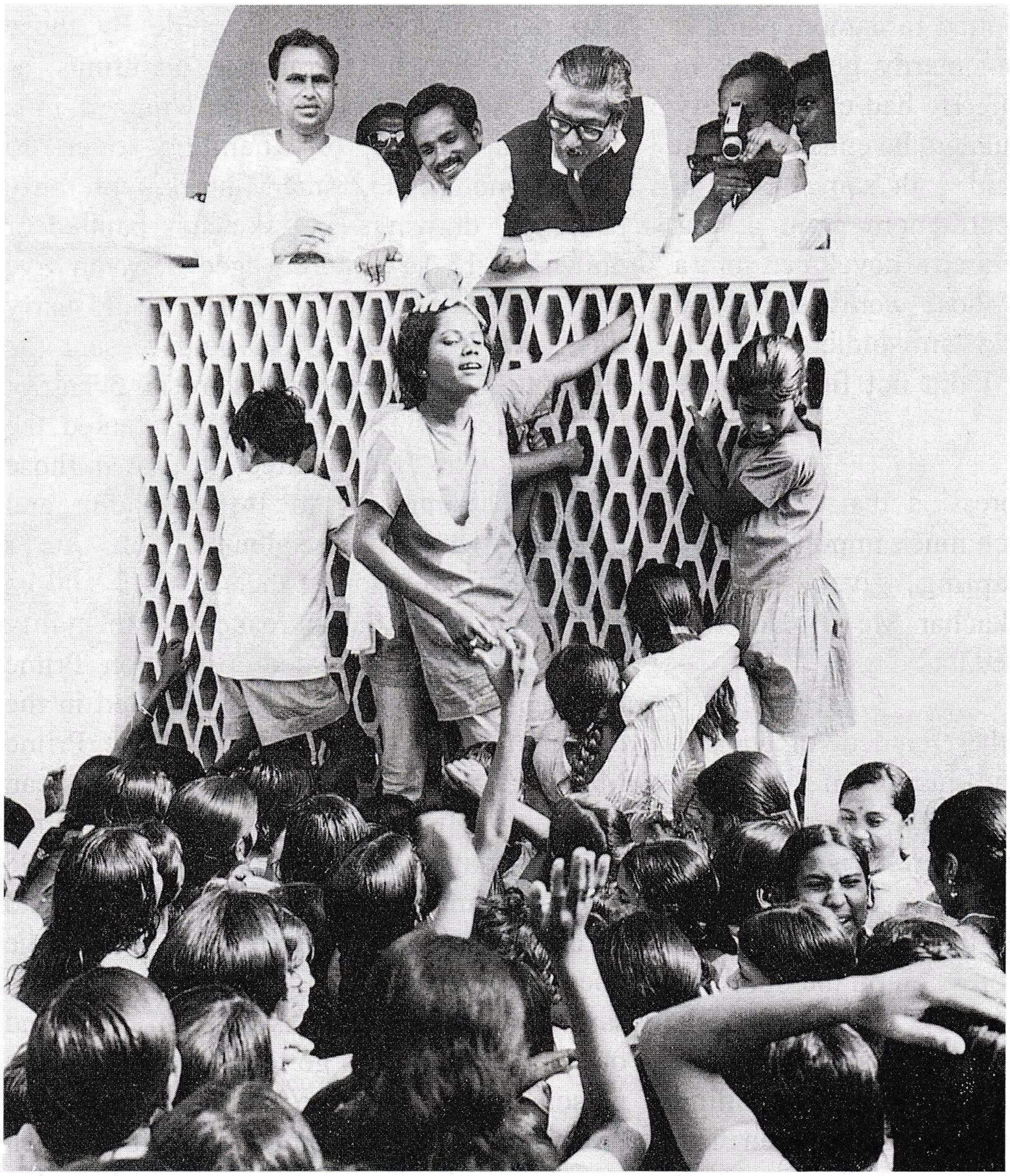
He elevated himself to the status of the architect of an independent country from his beginning as a student activist. He, of course, did not establish himself through the use of any fortuitous circumstance or opportunity. Almost every moment of his struggling life passed through facing very powerful obstacles. He had to build one brick of the edifice of this life of his upon another circumventing, day after day, all those obstructions. The span of even the entire political life of many a political leader of this country is less than the prolonged period of time of his life he spent in the Pakistani prisons. His generosity and genuine love for the people of Bangladesh has gained mythical proportions. I will not discuss, in this rather short write-up, the subject of his over-all contributions to the country. My reminiscences here would centre round a few occasions bringing out his genuine affection and love for children.

It was the winter of 1963. Kachikachar Mela (a national cultural organisation for children the present writer had founded and ran— translator's note) had arranged a ten-day-long fair for children at the premises of Dhaka Press Club. Beginning in the afternoon, it ended in the early evening everyday. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with a wrapper around his body, was sighted late one afternoon going around the stalls in the fair. But a beggar, with a torn quilt wrapped round his emaciated body, had all through been following in his footsteps.

This fair prided in a very special feature. Children would man every branch of its administrative structure right from the volunteer corps to its police force, detectives, judges, etc. The children and the adolescents would run the entire activities of the fair. And a remarkable incident happened centring round that man in a torn quilt. He was caught by the smallish detective branch of the juvenile fair. He was, in fact, a detective deployed by the government. A real-life detective could not evade the eyes of the amateurish child-detectives. Everyone was surprised. He was brought before the court of the fair to go through the trials. The adolescent judge (a girl-student of class x) took her seat in the court. And right at that moment, Sheikh sahib came rushing towards the make-shift courtroom. After listening to all that had happened, he said with visible annoyance, They would put a spanner even into my mingling with these sinless children to refresh my mind. He also told the man satirically, You must be a hero of a spy to have been caught at the hands of these child-detectives! Suffice it to say, the kids' police force of the fair, at the request of Sheikh Saheb, took the man out of the fair and



February 1974: Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman taking guard of honour at the conference of Kachikachar Mela.



Bongobondhu had true love for the children. He was specially concerned about the education, health and food of the children. In the photograph above he is caressing the students of a girls school in Rangpur.

released him there. The workers of the stall from Srimangal, at the end of the fair that year, decided to distribute some of their rare potted saplings to some distinguished persons. The cardamom sapling-in-pot was given to Mrs. Mujib, the orange sapling to Begum Rokaiya Anwar, the one of tea to Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin and the one of hilly pineapple to me. A photograph was also taken of the ceremony when the potted plants were being handed over to us. I had preserved a copy of that photograph. After a long time, in 1972, I got an opportunity and showed the photograph to Bongobondhu: the photo that showed Mrs.

Mujib accepting the potted cardamom plant. It appeared he had momentarily gone back to those old days in 1963. He had extraordinary memories. He recapitulated the episode of that detective. He then said with some remorse, We had sown that cardamom plant at our Dhanmondi residence and it developed into a largish bush. But all those were demolished under the boots of Pakistani soldiers in 1971. On my return home, I did not find a single surviving plant.

I was under the impression that the Sheikh family would not attach much importance to a mere cardamom sapling given by the youngsters of Kachikachar Mela. But that misgiving was dispelled that day.

The next one is another incident of another day. The country had just been liberated. Bongobondhu was going on a visit to Moscow in the earlier part of March. Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin gave the idea that we should send some gift articles through Bongobondhu that may create an impression on the minds of the people of that country. But which gifts could those be? Shilpacharya himself provided the answer: an album containing some drawings and paintings by children. The theme of the works would be the liberation war of Bangladesh and genocide. Those paintings would be done, and the drawings made, by those children who had been in Bangladesh, witnessed the liberation war, felt it with their hearts, and registered in the depths of their soul the terror of the genocide by the invading Pakistani forces and their collaborators. Things were done as planned. The children of a free Bangladesh with the touch of their brushes and paints unfolded in their works the world of the liberation war. How heroic were those paintings! And they also painted scenes of genocide by those beasts in human form; and Paintings of torture. An album was made wrapped in a beautiful packet for handing over to Bongobondhu , the Prime Minister, with thirty paintings, drawings and sketches painted or drawn by 15-16 children aged between five and twelve, both inclusive. He would carry this gift to Moscow. He would present the album to the children of Moscow on behalf of the children of Bangladesh. We wanted the children, who had painted or drawn those artworks, would go to Bongobondhu and personally hand over the album to him. One or two of us from amongst the seniors would be with them. But the bureaucratic mentality peeped in here and created obstruction. Prime Minister's Secretariat was then located in the old Gonobhaban. An official of the Prime Minister's Secretariat was the first to raise an objection. His contention was: The Prime Minister remains so busy during the whole day and so many visitors, both from home and abroad, come to call on him everyday that he does not find any time even to breathe, so to say. That gentleman advised me, I could find out an opportunity to go to Bongobondhu and personally hand over the album to him instead of embarrassing him going there with 'a bunch of kiddies'. But we were also unrelenting. We tried to convince him that the Prime Minister would surely be happy if 15-16 children meet him with the paintings and drawings done by them. He would be fascinated to see with his own eyes those very young children who had made these artworks, and those children, in turn, would feel inspired. But no, we could not get through so easily. Shilpacharya was annoyed at this. The Prime Minister's the then Press Secretary's daughter-child also had a painting in the album. He came forward to help us out. Our own efforts backed by his



March 17, 1975. The children of Kachikachar Mela, Khelaghar, Boy scout and Girl Guide have come to greet the Father of the Nation on his birthday. He also caressed and greeted the children. Just behind him is another dear scout of the children Rokanuzzaman Khan Dadabhai

intervention finally yielded positive results. The child-artists of the independent country got permission to meet their Prime Minister. The children were 14-15 in number. Three of us— Dr. Abdullah Al-Muti, Lutful Haider Chowdhury and I— accompanied them. No sooner had we entered the office-chamber of the Prime Minister than he stood up and smilingly welcomed them. I was instantly reminded of that famous line from a Tagore song: 'We all are kings in this kingdom of our king—'. How could Bongobondhu ignore the children, who were kings in all the countries at all times! He caressed them. I then opened the album and began showing to Bongobondhu one painting after another and, at the same time, was introducing the respective child-artist to him. He became fascinated, charmed. He said, It's impossible to believe our children can paint like this until

one sees these paintings. His eyes often got clouded when he focussed his attention on the subject-matter of some of the paintings. The children were surrounding him. Drawing one small child very close to him, he asked, What have you drawn? The child pointed to the picture painted by him/her. It was a scene of the liberation war. She had painted this picture on the basis of her/his ideas gathered through hearing stories of the struggle during those nine months.

When we were coming out at the end of the interview that day, Bongobondhu said, I have found peace for this little while during the whole day with its busy schedule. The company of the children has relieved me of all fatigues. I once thought I would inform that official in the Secretariat of what Bongobondhu has said, but I suppressed that desire because others were with me.

I would narrate one more episode now. It was February, 1974. The National Education Camp of Kachikachar Mela was going on at the Shahid Matiur Children's Park on the other side of the road in front of the Gulistan Cinema Hall of Dhaka. Children had come to the camp from different districts for training. The Prime Minister had a programme to visit the camp. But he sent information on the last day of the camp that he could not come. But he invited all the children to the Gonobhaban to meet him. He sent a few buses for the transportation of the children. We, along with the children from 17 districts, presented ourselves at the green compound of Gonobhaban, beside Ramna Park. He then inspected the Guard of Honour wearing a Kachikachar Mela cap, and took salutes of their march-past. He also witnessed their lathikhela in tune with the drum and the bass gong. At last he himself gave every one of the child a packet of sweets with his own hands. He happened to get a boy close to him and asked his name. The name of that boy, incidentally, was also Mujibur Rahman. Bongobondhu, on hearing the name, went beside himself with joy, embraced him and declared aloud, Got him, got my namesake!

The last time the children had a meeting with Bongobondhu was on his last birthday celebrations while he was still alive. The day was March 17, 1975. Children from four organisations gathered at the new Ganobhaban in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Boys and girls from the international organisations— Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides and the national organisations— Kachikachar Mela and the Khelaghar Aashar were standing in lines and waiting for him. The total number of members of the four organisations was eight hundred. Every one of them was there with the uniform of his respective organisation. He became just one of those children that day freely roaming amongst them on that charming, green expanse at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, accepting the children's heartfelt congratulations. The children, standing in lines, became very joyous getting their very favourite person quite close to them. Again and again were we reminded of the superfluousness of the formality called Protocol in the world of the children as we were witnessing that sight of a great union between Bongobondhu, on the one hand, and the children, on the other.

No sooner had he got down from his car at the Gonobhaban than a group of girls from

Kachikachar Mela surrounded him and started singing a song of Brotochari Movement. It is a famous song: 'Dear is he to us all/ Enjoys affection from all/ Essential for functions all/ We pray to thee, O God/ Give him a long life/ Give him a successful life.'

But the wishes of the girls from Kachikachar Mela that day was not to be fulfilled. He was not granted a long life. Hardly five months after this celebration, he, along with most of the members of his family, were brutally killed by the assassins. One does not always get what one would like to get. It does not very often happen that the wishes of the children, of the people of the country, are fulfilled. Or why had Abraham Lincoln to die at the hands of an assassin? Did anyone wish such a death for him? Did anyone desire the bare chest of Gandhi would be riddled with bullets? Or the lifeless body of Martin Luther King would crumple down on the ground with the assassin's bullets. We know, great men still do not die. I am reminded of the two very famous lines from Rabindranath's poem written after the death of Chittaranjan Das. I do recite today those two lines with all the respect and love in my mind for Bongobondhu:

'A deathless life did you bring with thee,
And bequeathed thou the same at death.'

A thousand salutations to you, the ever-living Bongobondhu.

This article has been taken from the magazine 'Dhanshaliker Desh' published by Bangla Academy.



There is a House

Shamsur Rahman

There is a house in this very Dhaka city of ours. It is not a palace. There never was any elephant or elephant-stable here. Nor was there any horse, nor a horse-stable, either. It is as ordinary a house as any other in the area. But once upon a time an extraordinary man used to live in this very ordinary house. His name is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was born in a rural village called Tungipara. He passed his childhood there. He swam in village ponds, walked around in fields covered with green grass and watched to his heart's content the flying-about of different kinds of birds with his two eyes. Mujib as a boy indulged himself in games and sports along with other boys in the village. His playmates accepted him as their team-leader while he was still a boy. He used to think, whenever he had some leisure from his studies, of those people who work in fields and meadows, and of those who barely survive on the meagre income they earn through carrying other people's loads for the whole day. The pains and sufferings of these people would move him very much.

One day he went to a large city for studies. He had mentally resolved to ameliorate the sufferings of the poor. He knew that taking just a resolve is not enough; one has to work heart and soul also. That is why he got involved in politics. Mujib had his initiation in politics while the English were still ruling our country. He got introduced to very important and famous leaders. He watched them from very close quarters. Take for example, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Moulana Bhashani and Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy. Sheikh Mujib enjoyed their affection and blessings. He learnt certain things from the experiences of these leaders. He could make good use of those later. One day he himself grew into a very great leader.

Pakistan was born out of the partition of India. Our country used to be a part of Pakistan from 1947 till March 7, 1971. But Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence on March 7 in a very large public meeting. Yes, Sheikh Mujib by then had become Bongobondhu to the people of this country. He had to suffer imprisonment and repression by the Pakistani Rulers in order to bring about smiles on the faces of the people of this country. He was sent to jail again and again, and conspiracies were hatched to make him walk to the gallows. But as a people's leader, he had been released as a result of people's protests and struggles. Bongobondhu had kindled the flame of independence in the minds of the people of this country. As a result, we tore the chains of slavery of Pakistan asunder and became free. The independent country of Bangladesh was born. Sheikh Mujib took the helms of the independent but war-ravaged country. He tried



his best to run the country beset with numerous problems. But a lot of people created many hurdles on different alibis. Those who did not want an independent Bangladesh and kept Pakistan alive in their

minds started with a renewed vigour to hatch conspiracies.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman continued to live at house No. 10 in Road 32 of Dhanmondi. He used to live like an ordinary man in an ordinary house. We actually forgot that the number of the house is 10. The number of the road, in fact, had become Bongobondhu's house number to us. 32, Dhanmondi, is the number of the house of Sheikh Mujib to all. This house in Road No. 32 became the destination of all the Bengalis because of this extraordinary leader. The foreigners also considered this house as the centre-point of Bangladesh

The person who had passed many years of his life in jail, never cared for his own comfort and relaxation, who had been elevated to the status of the Father Of the Nation because of his sacrifices and an uncompromising struggle for the cause of his peoples, was killed by a sudden onslaught by a few conspirators without conscience. His chest was riddled with a hail of bullets. Those blood-suckers of the assassins did not spare even the women. Their hands did not appear to have shaken to kill even Russell, a child and the youngest son of Sheikh Mujib.

That ordinary house at Road No. 32 is now the Bongobondhu Memorial Museum. If you ever go to that Memorial Museum, you will find that the walls of that very ordinary house is still riddled with bullet holes and splattered with traces of blood. You will find many more things there; some items of furniture like cots, dressing table, chair, etc. And your attention will be attracted to a few pictures. You will also see almirahs full of books. That tall, handsome man, whom the common people of this country would love and would call him

Blessed is the Man

Shamsur Rahman

Blessed is the man on whose name
Flutters Independence
Like a flag, Blessed is the man on whose name shower
Ovations of respect from the freedom fighters.
Crowning the head of the autocrat
Those pack of frauds.
See, none of their heads
Can rise a whit above your knees
In any way.

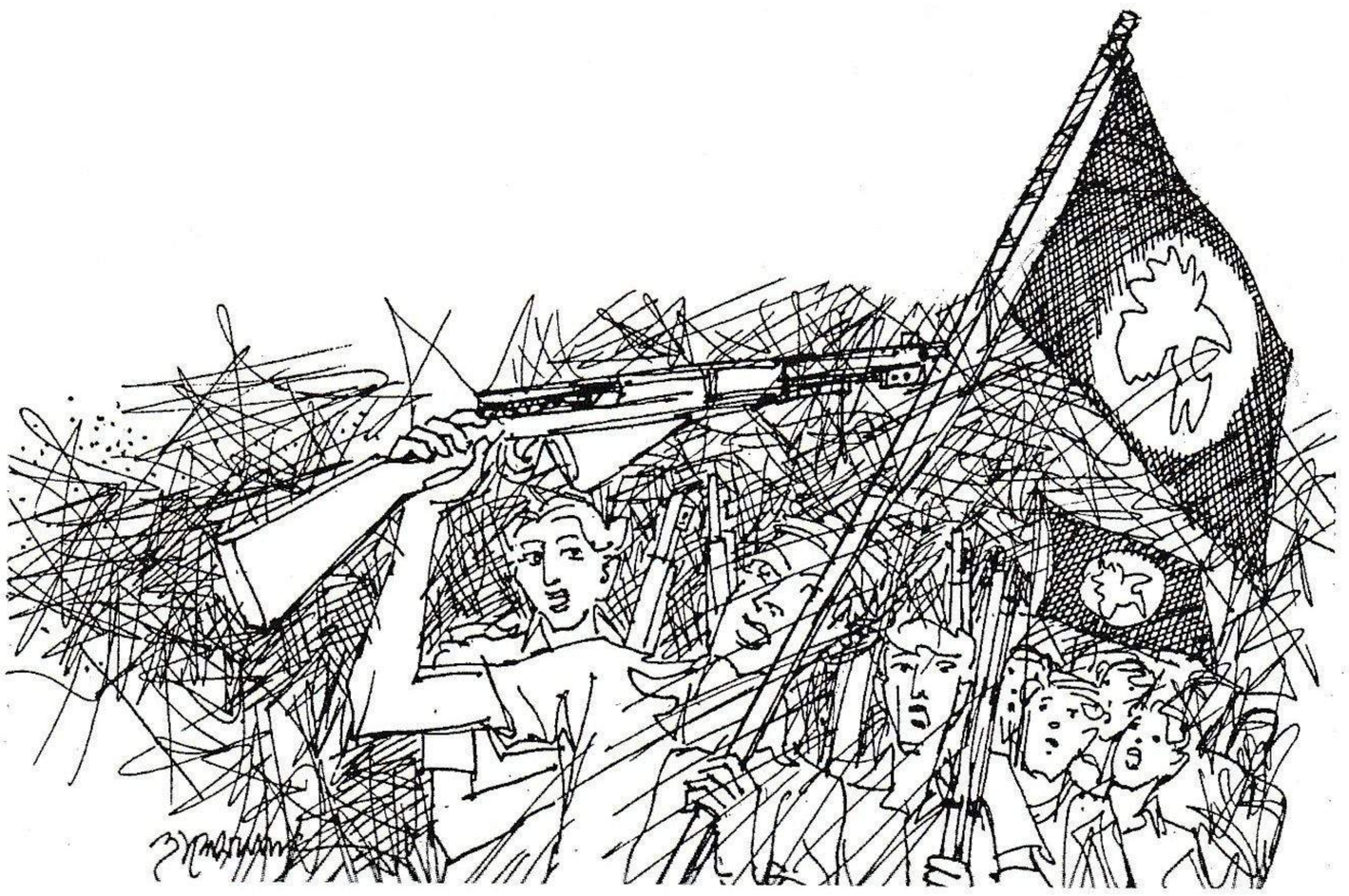
'Sheikh Saheb' used to read all those books. Some ordinary, old and used clothes of this extraordinary man of this ordinary house have also been preserved in Bongobondhu Memorial Museum. The small bicycle that the child Russell would smilingly ride is standing in a forlorn state in one corner. No one will ever fill in that vacant seat. Houses for the pigeons are there too. Bongobondhu would very much like pigeons. He himself would look after them and feed them as well. The pigeon-holes are lying unoccupied for the last twenty-one years. No, there would never again live any pigeon there. Nor would any peck at the grains around this place.

The mind feels worried whenever I step into that house at No. 32. It feels vacant. A drowsing noon interspersed with the cooing of turtle doves seem to fill in the entire inside of the chest. A soft and silent movement inside that house seems the only suitable thing to do. Many have been lying there asleep; they will be awakened, it seems, with a slight disturbance. Is it right to awaken them? If you go, step very softly and carefully on the stairs, because that is where Bongobondhu stumbled and fell after he had been hit by the assassins' bullets.

You will surely go to the house at No. 32. That is no king's palace, nor is that any zamindar's residence. There is no elephant in the elephant-stable, nor any horse in the horse-stable in that house. But there is history, a very substantial part of the history of Bangladesh. All of you have therefore to go there. A handful of hated killers wanted to delete that history. Did they succeed? No, they did not. No one will ever be able to do that however hard might one try.

I have a question to you: will you ever be able to forgive the killers of Sheikh Mujib? And the assassins of Russell? That ordinary house raising its head at No. 32 has also the same question.

Taken from Abu Hassan Shahrier(ed) 'Chokher Aloy Dekhechhilam', 1996.



There is No Death to a Son of History

Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury

Fifteenth of August is not the day of your death, Bongobondhu, it is the day of your birth. It is your birth from the womb of death; your birth through the bullets of the demons. Your birth is from the flow of your own blood on the brownish soil of Bangladesh. You are not just one, but hundred, thousand, millions of Mujibs today.



Painting : Hashem Khan 2011

Please accept our blood-soaked salutation, Bongobondhu. Every Age witnesses the advent of some people or other like you. Sometimes you are Isha Khan, sometimes Sirajuddowla, and at other times you are Titumir, Surya sen or Kshudiram. You are not just a leader, you are also a liberating father and a friend. You are the Himalayas of the indomitable youth of Bengal. You are the epoch-making, roaring waves of the Padma, the Meghna and the Jamuna. You have sacrificed yourself Ages after Ages for the sake of the people of Bengal. Sometimes it was Mirjafar who hit at your heart, sometimes Mushtaq, and Mohammadi Baig or the gang of Faruque-Dalim at other times. But the weapons of the barbaric killers could not put you to death.

It is a wide expanse: from Bhagirathi to Buriganga, from Plassey to Dhanmondi; from 1757 to 1975. The sound of the progression of time has dovetailed its chapters in the sky of Bengal in one and the same bloodletting game. One name, amongst all those, is the brightest— the morning star— in that history. Sheikh Mujib is that name. Mujib is no longer the name of a person; it is the name of a country, of a big chunk of the earth, of a map, and of a large population.

You, therefore, don't fall a victim to death, Bongobondhu. You have clinched victory over death. Please accept our martial salutation. You are the Padabali of Bengal; you are her Mongalkavya; you are the tune of Tagore songs; the rebellion of Nazrul; the dream of Jibanananda; the revolutionary voice of Sukanta. You are the thousand-year-old history of Bengal. You are a son to the history of Bengal. The barbaric demons in human form do not know that there is no death to a son of history. Death just does not occur to them. They do not taste defeat. They are victors for ever. You are, therefore a Lincoln, a Lumumba and a Gandhi in the country, and the gangs starting from Nathuram Godse and going up to Faruque and Dalim remain thrown in to the hateful garbage dump of history. Criers' mournful lamentations roar O Hossain, O Hossain every month of Muharram for the last nearly one thousand and five hundred years, but nobody, even for a moment, remembers the killers Yeazid or Simar. How can the gang of assassins obliterate your name from the soil of Bangladesh, or from the hearts of her people, or from the sweet tunes of her birds, or even from the melodious tunes of her rivers? You are the thousand-year-old landmass of Bangladesh. Your politics is sometimes a south breeze, and at other times it is the cyclone. Your body, being subject to decay, is not with us any more, but when I look around and find a farmer with a scythe in hand, a labourer with a shovel, a writer with a pen in hand, I see a Mujib in each of them. The name of Mujib is now a struggle, the last struggle for emancipation of the seventy-five million masses of people of Bangladesh.

Morning dew probably writes your name in secrecy on the petals of fallen jasmines in the garden. But this is not the ultimate truth in this country of six seasons. Dark clouds pregnant with tempestuous winds have gathered in the North-West. New war-drums are getting tuned in thunder. And the

rebellious youth of Bangladesh is throbbing with the thrill of destruction.
Suddenly when the night is far advanced
Does the life in patriotism blazing
Spills blood at seditious killers' hands
The Sun witnesses it all.

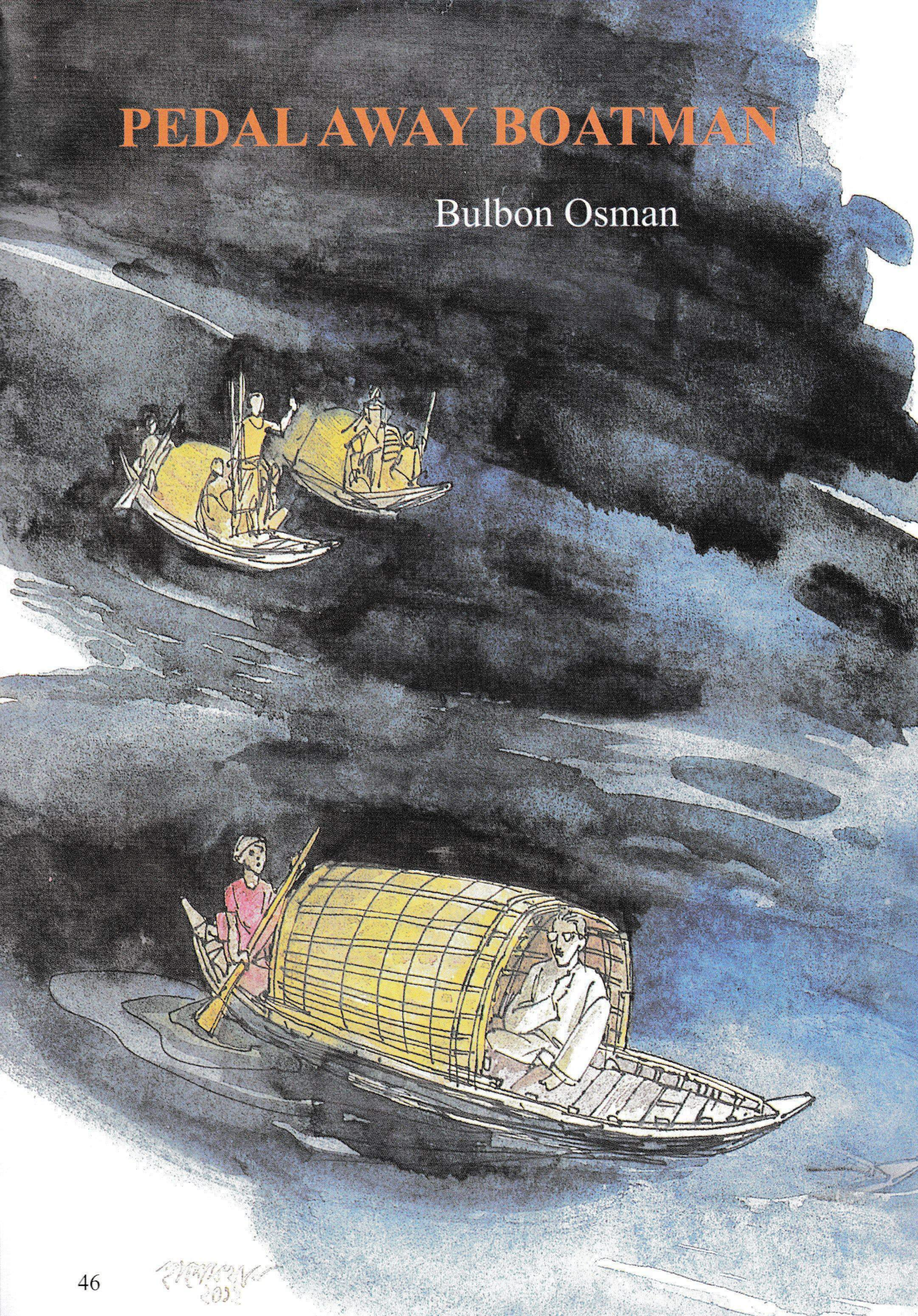
This Sun has not set, Bongobondhu. It has only been overshadowed by a fog of slander, blame and conspiracy. Our struggle is to tear asunder this net of fog. We declare in one voice with Sukanta even today:

"Fog dissipates, shall today do so or the day next
And wash away all that slanders vexed.
At enemy's hands till then shall sacrifice life
The flower of freedom shall bloom by that strife."



PEDAL AWAY BOATMAN

Bulbon Osman



It is the month of Chaitra. The dry sands at the landing place of the entrepot are whirling in the wind. The evening was then about to descend. A rather tall man came there at that time. A competition immediately set in amongst the boatmen on who would be able to make a passenger of this man in his own boat. It seemed this man was someone quite dear to them, and making a passenger of him would bring in a good name to a boatman.

The man, noticing the jostling among the boatmen, stopped in his tracks. He quietly thought of something for a while, and then said : Hi, where's boatman Siraj? The man's voice is deep and sonorous, generally not heard around this area. The boatmen stopped their jostling. Boatman Siraj replies from a distance:Here am I, brother.

: Let him come in front! The direction came from the deep-throated voice. The other boatmen started making room for Boatman Siraj to come forward. The boat reached right on the shoreline. A middle-aged man, boatman Siraj alights from his boat with the scull in hand and pulls tight at the boat so as not to let it tumble when the passenger gets on board. There are two more young boatmen in his boat other than Siraj himself. They look coppery and fresh. After getting on board, the passenger asked; Who are they?

My nephews— replies Siraj.

: Can you go on to the opposite bank?

The ebbtide in the river was at its peak then. They had to go to the North, and the flow of the river was rushing to the South.

: I can do anything if you order, replies the boatman.

: Let's go then. How long would it take?

: It would be nearly twelve in the midnight.

: Twelve— He uttered and thought of something.

: Uncle, dacoities often take place in this area during nights— said one of the youths.

: Is that so! The man appeared to have got some fun out of it. He said: let's start out. It would be a fun meeting with the dacoits. We would pass some good time gossiping with them.

The boatmen exchange glances. What does this man say! Gossiping with dacoits! The man's hands, of course, are empty, but we don't know what he may have in his pockets. He has white pyjama-punjabi on— quite loose-fitting— befitting his person. His hair and a thick pair of mustachios are showing streaks of grey, which has added to his ponderous airs. He has the airs of a zamindar. That makes the boatmen all the more worried. The dacoits don't care to chase common men!



A rush mat was spread on the floor planks of the boat. And a smallish pillow was there, too. He brought out a handkerchief from his pocket and placed it on the pillow. He then lay down straight on it. Stars were then peeping in the sky. A thin slice of the moon resembling a scythe was also visible in the sky.

The man, while lying down, was asking sparing questions to inquire after the family of Boatman Siraj. He appears to drown in deep thoughts between questions like how many children does the boatman have…..how much does he earn a day— how he manages his own family, etc. The light and air of Bengal softly rub a layer of affection on his person; he feels drowsy. And the rocking of the boat brings in a touch of sleep. The boat cannot move fast enough against the current of the water. The lapping of water on the hull below the stern of the boat breaks silence and creates a rhythm. The creaking sounds from the plying of the sculls also rhythmically join the sound of the lapping of water.

None can understand whether he is sleeping or awake. The night is advancing. The scythe-like moon has long since set. There are numerous stars in the sky. But it is overcast with a thick layer of darkness. The young boatmen suddenly became a little more alert. They had a feeling a few other boats were trying to approach very fast towards them targeting their boat.

They alerted boatman Siraj to this. He pricked his ears. Right! It appears three other boats behind his were together approaching very fast in his direction. They could not proceed fast enough as the current of water was against them, but they were moving faster than his own boat. Wrinkles of thought developed on the forehead of the boatman as well. But he kept up his face and said, Pull the boat faster, nephews, I don't feel quite well.

Two young men started pulling harder at the sculls, and the boat picked up a little more speed with a jerk. The man on the bed made a slight movement and said, what's happened to you?

: Nothing, I've asked them to pull a little harder— the night has advanced quite far!

: What time is it?

: Must be something like 10:30— 11:00, brother.

: How much more time would be needed?

: The time of high tide has arrived— not more than an hour would be needed.

: The man again fell silent. No one can follow the thread of his thoughts in darkness.

The slackening of the ebb tide made the sound of the oars of the boats behind falling in water clearly audible. And that sound was coming closer and closer with louder and louder noise. All three of the boatmen in Siraj's boat now started pulling together at the sculls, and their boat got speedier.

: What's happened to you, eh? The boat has been moving quite speedily. Why d'you pull so hard now?

: Those people have come quite close, brother—

: You keep on pulling the boat in your own way.

But they keep on pulling harder as before.

The three boats behind theirs have by then come still closer to their boat. Two of those boats almost sidled on both sides and the other was behind their boat.

: They are almost catching up with us, brother, said Siraj with a voice quivering with fear.

He said with a deep-throated voice: Keep on pulling the boat—

: They are almost catching up with us—

: Hi boatman, keep pedalling the boat: said he with a steady voice

Two of those boats came very close after a short while.

A voice said from behind: Stop or I'll shoot.

: What shall I do now, brother? Boatman Siraj uttered with almost a weeping voice.

The man stuck to his old decision: Keep on pedalling, Siraj—

A blank shot was fired from behind at that time, because the boat did not stop as they had ordered.

The man now called out to Siraj.

: Hi Siraj—

: Yes—

: Tell them, Sheikh Mujib is in the boat—

: He cried out: Sheikh Mujib is in the boat—

All the boats had by then stopped.

One of the men said aloud from behind: You should have told that before!

Siraj's boat slowly kept on moving ahead. They would soon reach the other shore. The remaining three boats did not proceed further. They had fallen quite far behind.

Sheikh Mujib and the Radio of the Country

Ashraf-Uz-Zaman

If someone asks me what the most memorable event of my life is, the answer would, without doubt, be: the broadcast of the speech of March 7 of Bongobondhu on the Radio of the government of Pakistan.

It was not as easy to broadcast, at that time, the speech of Bongobondhu, practically engaged in a war against Pakistan, from the publicity centre of the government of Pakistan as it is easy to write the sentence.

If we go back in time on the strength of my knowing him, we would find the boy Sheikh Mujib playing football in the Gopalganj High School playground. That was the earlier part of the third decade of the last century. He had on a shirt and a pyjama tucked up above the knees. My two younger brothers, Amir-Uz-Zaman and Ahmad-Uz-Zaman, were among the co-players. Mujib took his game all over the playground trying hard to score a goal, which, when finally done, saw the end of the game for that day.

Mujib, since then, while still a student, had a mind to forge ahead along with all around him. Sheikh Mujib was also the leader in the playground while playing football. He went to Kolkata, after passing Matriculation Examination from Gopalganj School, started putting up in the Baker hostel and got himself admitted in the Islamia College. We met again in Kolkata. He used to regard me as an elder brother because of his being a classmate of my younger brothers. He was elected the secretary-general of the students' union while still a student of the Islamia College. He also would take part in the cultural and sporting activities there. I remember to have composed a lyric for a farewell song, at his request, for rendering on the occasion of the send-off of a teacher of his college. A very reputed singer of Kolkata at the time, Dhiren Das, gave his voice to that lyric in the farewell meeting of the Islamia College.

Habibullah Bahar, the editor of the magazine 'Bulbul', was, then, associated with the Muslim League, and Sheikh Mujib's participation in politics began from there. He failed for various reasons, after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, to maintain harmony with the Muslim League. On return to Dhaka, he got involved in students' movements opposed to the League.

The students' community of Dhaka could not be one with the Pakistani mentality from the very beginning. They did not want to accept the proposal made in Dhaka by the founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, of Urdu being the sole State Language of the country. It became easy for Sheikh Mujib to form a party of the students, and open antagonisms developed between him on the one hand and his own party, on the other.

He won universal public support, so to say, as the unchallenged leader of the country while the Agartala Conspiracy Case was running. He had never won admittance in the arena of the country's Radio simply for political reasons. He used to say whenever we met, the country's Radio is forbidden to us, but please make occasional broadcasts of Tagore songs. I would listen to them if I could make time to do so. Tagore songs would, of course, be frequently forbidden for broadcast from Radio Pakistan.

I first discussed with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the matter of broadcasts from the Radio, after the removal of Ayub Khan and Monem Khan, consequent upon the unprecedented mass upsurge in the country. The people of the country had by that time endowed him with the honorific 'Bongobondhu'. He commented on the Radio immediately after we had met. He said, Close down the Radio if you cannot broadcast programmes consistent with the state of the nation. He had later come closer and said with a smile, Can't you broadcast from the Radio, at least for once, the Tagore song 'O, my golden Bengal, I love thee?'

Flouting a government ban, the Tagore song 'O my golden Bengal, I love thee' was broadcast the very next day thanks to the hearty co-operation of all the employees of Radio. And arrangements were put in place to dovetail all the Radio broadcasts to the on-going movement.

The military president Yahya Khan did not make much of a fuss over the Radio programmes. He himself, of course, had broadcast his speech over the Radio promising to hand over administrative powers of the country to the elected representatives of the people after holding a general election.

Everyone knows of the general elections and what happened after that. But the elections opened for me an opportunity to come closer to Sheikh Mujib. The Chief of every political party in the country was invited, on the eve of the elections, to broadcast on the Radio on behalf of his party their political programmes for the elections. I took Alim-Uz-Zaman Chowdhury, Assistant Director of the Radio, with me to the Awami League office at Segunbagicha with this news and extended an invitation to Bongobondhu to broadcast his speech over Radio. The Muslim League leader Fazlul Quader Chodhury, the leader of NAP(Bhashani), Moulana Bhashani, and the leaders of all other political parties were, likewise, invited to broadcast their speeches.

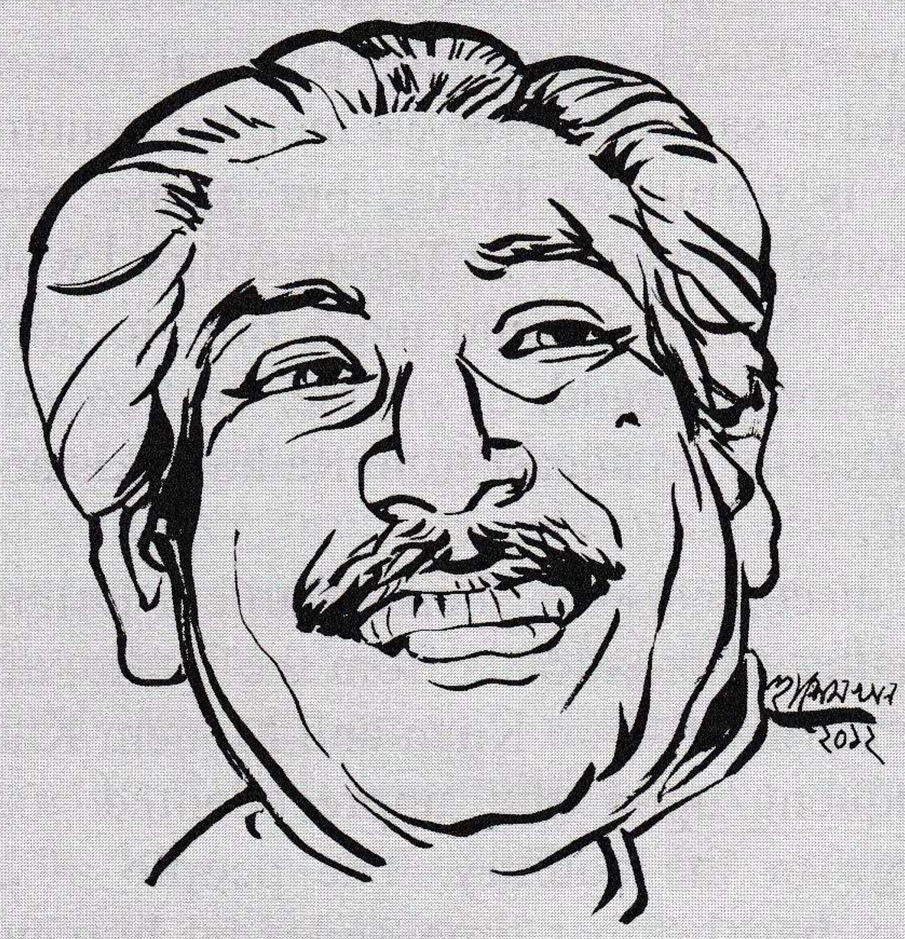
Bongobondhu said with a smile, The government of the country, at long last, has allowed my admittance to the Radio. But how much would I be able to say on behalf of my own party?

The government had earlier formulated a set of conditions for the broadcast of these speeches. These were: (a) The duration of the speech would be not more than 25 minutes; (b) Attacking any person or party anywhere in the speech would not be allowed; (c) Propagating effective information on one's own party; and (d) Submission of the written manuscript of the speech, for approval by the appropriate authorities, not less than ten days before the date of the broadcast.

Accepting the conditions, Bongobondhu said, since I am getting an opportunity for the first time to say something over the Radio of the country, I have got to abide by the conditions. I want always to abide by conditions, but all the past governments had misunderstood me. Who knows whether or not Yahya Khan would also misunderstand me?

He said, Close down the Radio if you cannot broadcast programmes consistent with the state of the nation. He had later come closer and said with a smile, Can't you broadcast from the Radio, at least for once, the Tagore song 'O, my golden Bengal, I love thee?'

Flouting a government ban, the Tagore song 'O my golden Bengal, I love thee' was broadcast the very next day, thanks to the hearty co-operation of all the employees of Radio.



Two student leaders, Tofayel Ahmed and Abdul Quddus Makhon, were present in the Segunbagicha office during these discussions. Arrangements were made to record the speeches at the Television Studios in the DIT buildings in order for the authorities to be able to simultaneously broadcast and telecast over the Radio and the Television, respectively, of one and the same speech of each leader.

Bongobondhu had prepared his speech in conformity with the conditions imposed by the government. But some controversies arose over the manuscripts prepared by the Muslim League leader Fazlul Quader Chowdhury and also by Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, and these could be resolved only after special discussions with them.

Bongobondhu, on arrival at the Television Studios, had become very happy at the sight of his boyhood friend, Amir-Uz-Zaman, and said— How could I avoid coming here since the elder brother caught hold of me and brought me here? (The Radio and the Television of the country, at that time, were, respectively, under the control of the two brothers— my brother and I.). There was power failure at the time of recording Bongobondhu's speech, and it could be properly done only at the second attempt. Recording of the speeches of other leaders was done at the studios of the Radio, but our Out Broadcasting Unit (OBU) had to be sent to Kagmari to record Moulana Bhashani's speech.

Elections were held very smoothly in the country. The employees of the Radio had to remain extremely pre-occupied for a few days with the broadcasting of the election campaign and the results after the elections were held. President Yahya Khan, before the commencement of the elections, informed the

It was the voice of the Radio Engineer deployed at the studio end— sir, we can't do the relay. We are under attack from all around. The Pakistani soldiers have come out of the tents and surrounded us.

We accepted it as a day of great defeat in life for us. Bongobondhu, when informed of this as he was proceeding towards the dais, had become very aggrieved, and, at the very beginning of his speech, informed the audience that his speech was not going to be broadcast over the Radio.

people of the country through a re-broadcast of his speech over Radio that he would hand over the reins of power of the country to its elected representatives if a smooth election is held.

Yahya Khan could not finally stick to his promises made through the Radio broadcast, and a great disaster came down all over the country. The leader of the Awami League, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was not called in to form the government despite his party having scored more than 98% of the votes in East Pakistan and a very comfortable majority in the context of the whole of Pakistan.

A country-wide mass movement very rightly ensued. The Bengalis, since the partition of India and creation of Pakistan, had been in many ways deprived of their rightful shares. Sheikh Mujib, having determined to do so, called for a country-wide non-cooperation movement. All the government offices, including the Radio and the Television, responded positively to that call. The participants in the movement, in certain parts of the country, were assaulted in the hands of the Pakistani Army.

Sheikh Mujib could realise a policy direction had to be given to the countrymen while the movement was going on. News was coming of the arrival of troops in plain loads from Pakistan and their massing at the Dhaka cantonment. Everyone needed to be cautioned. The way the country was then running, nobody could say with certainty what might happen at which time. Student leader Tofayel Ahmed, accompanied by Aminul Hoque Badshah, came in the morning hours of 3rd (of March) informed, Bongobondhu was going to address a public meeting at the Ramna Race Course on the 7th of March. They had come to inquire whether or not that speech could be relayed and broadcast to the country.

The radio had to run through serious crisis at that time. Mujib had called for a non-cooperation movement. The country was under Martial Law. A detachment of the Pakistani Army had taken position in the premises of the Radio since the call to hartal by Bongobondhu. The officials at the Radio had been working under a dilemma. We had been broadcasting daily news and programmes under the national hook-up through relay from West Pakistan, on the one hand, and programmes based on the ongoing movement and the Tagore song 'O my golden Bengal, I love thee', also on a daily basis, on the other. It was then completely against the law to broadcast anything from outside the studios other than a government programme.

The then Joint Secretary of the Department of Information, government of East Pakistan, Jahurul Huq, had, in the meantime, joined the Radio. He provided us with courage. He informed us that the Pakistan Army was then busy putting their own house in order; they would not bother to care about the broadcast or telecast of programmes over the Radio or the Television. We should, therefore, not let this opportunity of broadcasting Bongobondhu's speech go by the wayside, he said.

The pressure to broadcast the speech had been mounting on us from all around. The Awami League leaders and the students were visiting us with the demand as did telephone calls from people of all strata of society.

All grades of employees of the Radio had jointly decided to relay Bongobondhu's speech. When informed of our decision, Bongobondhu said, 'Please think well beforehand; I do not want to throw you into a danger.'

There was no obstruction from the government side to go ahead with our arrangements. All necessary works— installation of temporary telephone connection from the studios up to the dais from where the speech would be delivered, electricity connection, informing the Radio stations outside Dhaka of the news of relay of the speech— were completed on schedule. We had been going ahead, unworried, with our works as there was no obstruction to the programme of relay. We began our promotional announcements from 6th of March, and not before that date, as a measure of precaution.

A large dais was put up at the Ramna Race Course Maidan. It started filling in with men and women from the very morning. A sea of humanity was eagerly awaiting the arrival of Bongobondhu at the dais. We had completed all our preparations. We could not even imagine there could be any hindrance.

But hindrance did come, and come very powerfully. Bongobondhu had just then mounted the dais. He was acknowledging the congratulatory ovations from nearly a million human beings present there as he was proceeding to the spot fixed for him, just when the telephone connected to the studio of the Radio rang. It was the voice of the Radio Engineer deployed at the studio end— sir, we can't do the relay. We are under attack from all around. The Pakistani soldiers have come out of the tents and surrounded us.

We accepted it as a day of great defeat in life for us. Bongobondhu, when informed of this as he was proceeding towards the dais, had become very aggrieved, and, at the very beginning of his speech, informed the audience that his speech was not going to be broadcast over the Radio.

The employees of the Radio could not, of course, accept this defeat lying down. We had all come down from the dais while the speech was still on , and unitedly decided never to return to the Radio again.

The evening session of the radio was to start at 5:00 P.M. Dhaka Radio maintained a total silence. The officers of the Pakistani Military government at Kurmitola got fidgety.

Sudden shutdown of the Radio created a repercussion throughout the whole country. Joint Secretary Jahurul Huq found us out after nine p.m. at the residence of the Awami

League leader Nurul Islam at Dhanmondi. The Martial Law Administrator, Rao Farman Ali, had been desperately looking for us, he informed, and requested to immediately contact him.

No sooner had the telephone rang than Farman Ali picked up the receiver, his voice worried—Why did you shut down the Radio? Take steps to immediately go on air.

It's impossible to run the Radio without broadcasting the speech of Bongobondhu; none of the employees would join duties, told I.

But is it now possible to broadcast the speech? That was delivered during the daytime.

Leave it to us. The only thing needed was that none would create obstacles.

Allowed, But the Radio has to go on air right now.

Impossible! The concerned people are all scattered. We may go on air in the morning as usual. But I have another thing to say.

Further conditions?

No, it's a request. The Army contingent stationed at the Radio premises has to be taken back.

They would be withdrawn tonight.

We came out of the house of Nurul Islam that night and entered that of Bongobondhu, all in a spirit of victory. After thoroughly listening to us, he said, How would it be possible? I don't remember everything that was there in the speech. We told him, It would be made possible.

The speech, though could not be broadcast, was recorded for the studio. That would now be broadcast over the Radio.

He became visibly happy. We went on air right at 7:00 the next morning to tell millions of our worried listeners of the impending broadcast of Bongobondhu's speech delivered at the Ramna Race Course, and that historic speech was simultaneously broadcast from all the Radio stations of East Pakistan at 8:30 a.m.

I listened to that speech by Bongobondhu together with the members of his family, in his bedroom, on a special invitation from him. That continues to be a very memorable day of my life.

This piece has been taken from an anthology entitled 'Dhonya sei Purush' of 'Betar Bangla'

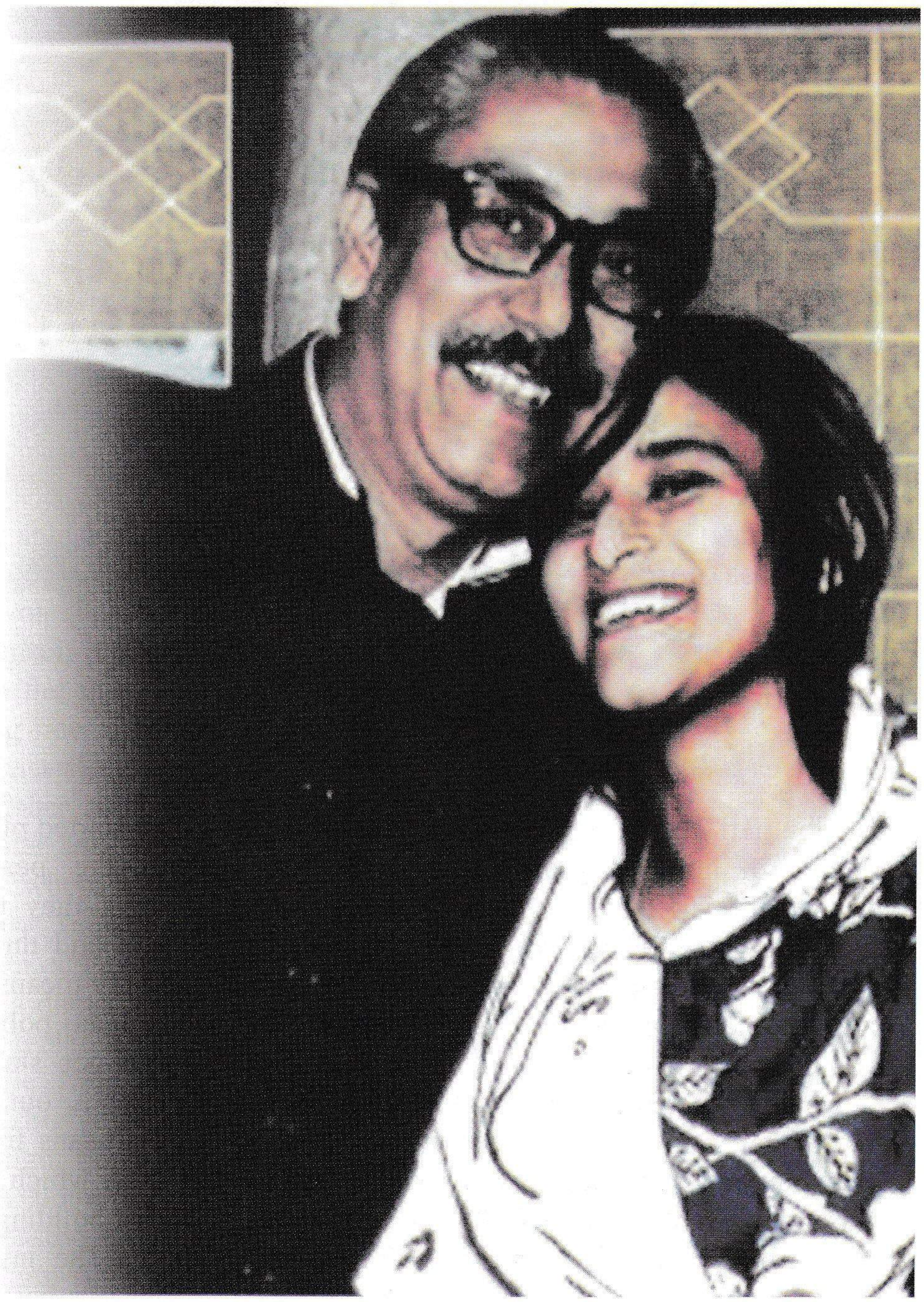


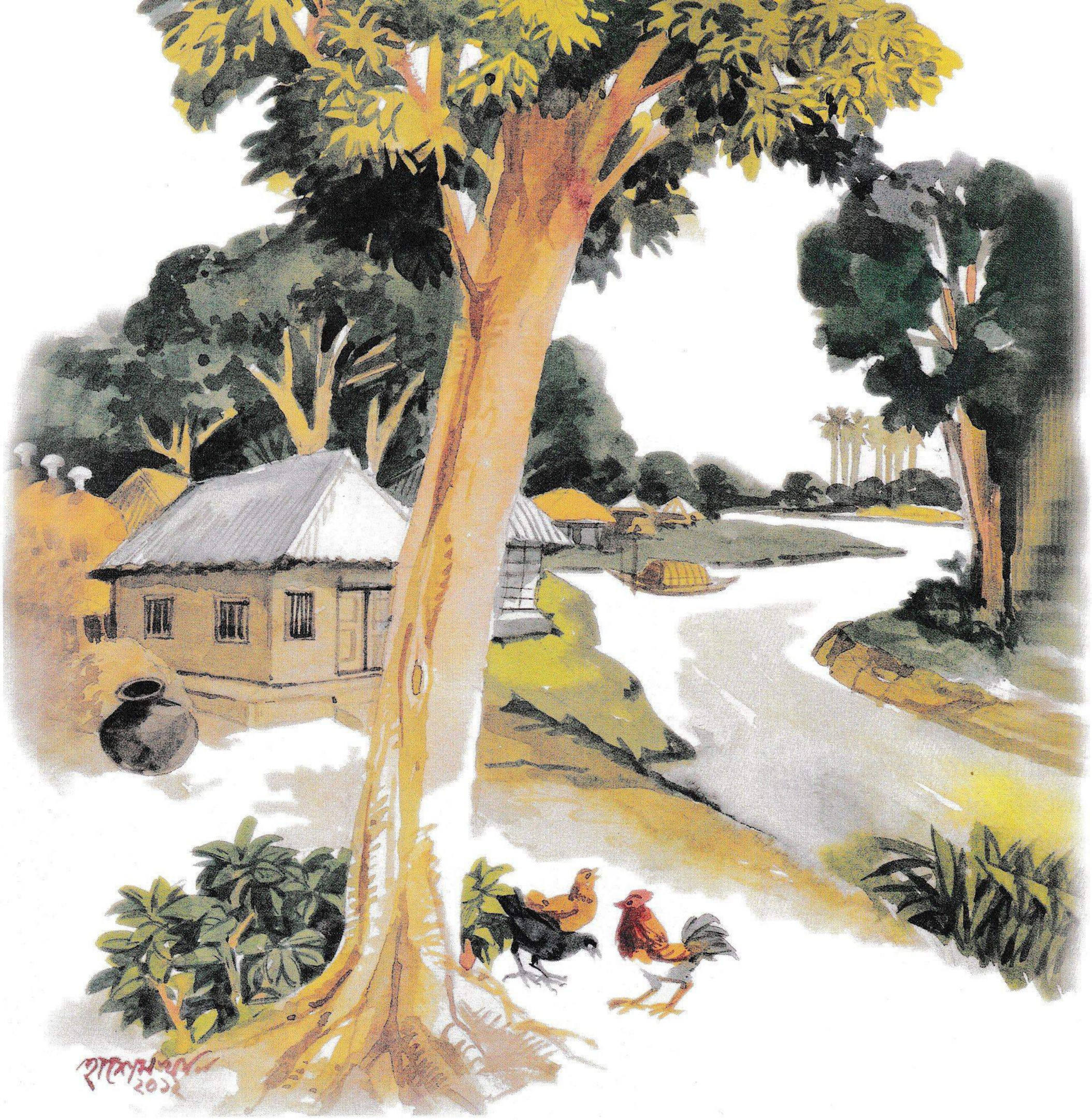


Sheikh Mujib, My Father

Sheikh Hasina

There stands a beautiful, picturesque village on the shore of the river Baigar. The name of that village is Tungipara. Baigar snaked her way down to a larger river, Madhumati. Baigar is just one of the many branches of Madhumati. There is a riot of green in the form of palm, tomal and hijal trees on both the shores of this river. Melodious tunes of bhatiali songs from the rich voices of boatmen holding helms of their boats are wafted to the shores. Twittering of birds and soft murmuring sounds of the river create an ethereal ambience.





Madhumati used to flow down, around a couple of hundred years before, along the fringes of this village. Human habitations grew along the shores of this very river. The river, as a result of the play of water-course on soft, alluvial plains, gradually changed course and has gone to a distance. Receding water-course left many sandbanks behind inviting people to found new villages. Our fore-fathers, nearly two hundred years ago, came and settled in this river-swept graceful little village with an avowed responsibility of preaching Islam. Their businesses were centred round Kolkata. They started ploughing fallow lands and, along with the peasants and cultivators living around, they turned the village into a self-reliant and thriving one. Country boats were the only means of transportation, to start with. Gopalganj police station, later, developed into a steamer station. Having bought lands in tungipara, our forefathers brought in masons and artisans from Kolkata to build residential houses, which were completed in 1854. Ruins of that building still bear witness to the ravages of time.The invading forces of Pakistan set fire to the two buildings inhabited at that time and

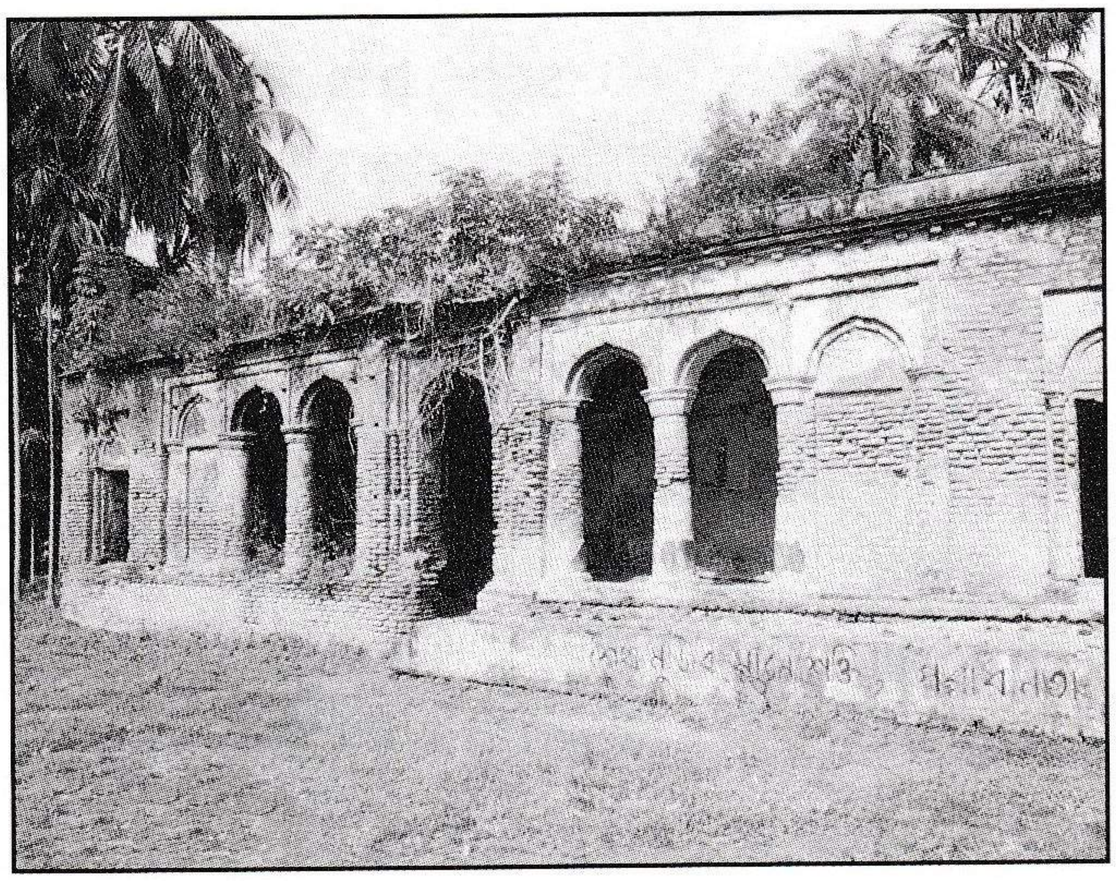
burnt those down. After they started living in these buildings, the number of people gradually started increasing, and surrounding areas also witnessed a growth in population. My great-grandfather, Sheikh Abdul Hamid, constructed a rectangular wooden structure of a four-roofed tin-shed house on the North-East corner of that very building. My grandfather, Sheikh Lutfor Rahman, raised his family in the self-same house. And my father was born here on March 17, 1920. My father's maternal grandfather, Sheikh Abdul Majid, at the time of his a'akika (a Muslim naming ceremony— translator's note), gave my father the name, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. My father was my paternal grandmother's first son after two daughters. That is why my paternal grandmother's father bequeathed all his landed property to my grandmother and declared, at the time of naming his grandson, 'Saira, dear, I have given your son such a name as would be famous throughout the world.'

My father passed his childhood splashing into the waters of the river of tungipara, often smearing himself with the dirt of the muddy tracks in the fields or getting himself drenched in sludge and turbid waters in the rains. He would often pass time watching how a babui (weaver-bird) weaves its grassy nest of intricate designs, how a kingfisher suddenly swoops down and dips into water and comes out with a fish in its beak, or where a doel (magpie Robin of Bangladesh— translator's note) builds its nest. My father always felt attracted to the sweet notes of a doel's tunes. He would very much like to feel one with nature, roaming around in the fields and pastures taking other young boys of the village with him. He often brought down the young ones of shalik and mynah (the former, a small, yellow-beaked and -breasted singing bird and the latter a black, medium-sized red-

My father passed his childhood splashing into the waters of the river of Tungipara, often smearing himself with the dirt of the muddy tracks in the fields or getting himself drenched in sludge and turbid waters in the rains. He would often pass time watching how a babui (weaver-bird) weaves its grassy nest of intricate designs,

beaked bird that can mimic human speech— translator's note) and would teach them whistling and mimicking human speech, respectively. He would take pets of dogs and those would do exactly as he would ask them to do. And the responsibility to look after those pets was entrusted to his younger sister Helen. He would not tolerate the least bit of





The remains of our house after the Pakistani invaders burnt that in 1971

negligence to his pets. The younger sister would often be subjected to his rebukes on that account. A small stream that connects baigar with madhumati flows by the South-Western fringes of our homestead. There used to stand a large kutchery house beside this stream. A teacher, a pundit and a moulvi were housed by the side of this kutchery house. They were appointed house tutors, and my father used to learn English, arithmetic, Bengali and Arabic from them.

The Tungipara-Gimadanga school was founded by our forefathers. It was then a primary school. It is at a distance of approximately one-and-a-quarter kilometre from our house. My father began his studies, first, in this school. Once when he was returning home from school on board a country boat during the rainy season, the boat capsized, and my father was thrown into the waters of the river. My grandmother, after this, did not let him go to that school any more. A little whiff of a boy, the apple of everyone's eyes, the sweet darling of the entire clan— a bit of his pains was, as if, the pains of all the rest of them! He was taken out of that school and admitted to Gopalganj Missionary School. Gopalganj was my granddad's workplace. He, from then on, continued his studies at Gopalganj. My granddad was once transferred for a while to Madaripur. My father therefore studied for sometime at Madaripur also. He later passed the rest of his adolescence at Gopalganj.

My father was very light of build. So my grandma always busied herself worrying about how to make her darling a little plump. My paternal grandparents would also address him by the endearing term khoka (A Bengali term of endearment used to address a male child— translator's note). And he was known as the 'elder brother' to his siblings and to the villagers junior to him. Since my grandma was always preoccupied with 'improving' her darling's health conditions, milk, posset and butter would be made at home. Fruits from our own gardens and fresh fishes from the nearby river would be kept especially prepared for her Khoka. My father was very lean and light of build right from his childhood, and there was therefore no end to my grandma's remorse as to why her darling child was not becoming a little plump, or putting on some weight. He would prefer ordinary cooked rice with fish curry and vegetables and would love to crown it with rice mashed in milk and ripe banana and, sometimes, a little molasses or treacle. My father had four sisters and a brother. Of the four sisters, two were senior to him. Those two elder sisters were always on their toes to ensure that their younger brother should not suffer in any way. The rest were younger, but the indulgence of Khoka with his grandparents was without any limit. There were a large number of others under our protection, who used to live in the house. Both of my grandparents would bring the children



He enjoyed care and affection of his parents from the very childhood

of their respective brothers and sisters, especially those children who had lost either or both of their parents. That is why seventeen or eighteen children grew up together.

My father was married when he was only ten. My mother was only three then. After my mother lost her father, her grandfather got this marriage solemnised and, then, bequeathed all his landed property to my mother and her sister. My (maternal) aunt was three/ four years' senior to my mother. Both the sisters were married to two cousins, and my grandfather was appointed the guardian. My mother was only six or seven when she lost her mother. My paternal grandmother, then, took to her. And my mother, from then on, started growing up in the family in the company of all those other children.

Besides his studies, my father was very fond of games and sports, especially the game of football. He would go to Chitalmari and Mollarhat across madhumati to play football.

ঢাকা।
১০.৬.৮৯

হাসু মণি

আমার মিষ্টি ও আদরের নিউ, তোমাদের চিঠি- কোচিংক্লাস, উত্তর ও রেজাল্ট কোন কিছু পাওনি, নিউ হাত বের করে তোমাদের কিছু তথ্য দিয়েছ ও আরিফ নীচে। তবু তোমার অনীকের মিষ্টি হাসি কোন কিছুর তোয়াক্কা করে না, অনীকের ক্ষুধা হচ্ছে, নাও, তোমরা অনীকের খাবার দাও, নিউ বলে কিছু খাবে না, কোন যে কুলে তোমাদের নিউকে নিয়ে হাসাহাসি করবে, তুমি তাকে বলবে, আমার মেয়ে, তোমাদের হাসু আমার ও তোমার সোনামণি, তোমাদের হাসি দুইজন মিলে সারাক্ষণ হাসবে। নিউ ভাব ও না, মুখটা সুন্দর করে হাসো। তোমাদের মুখ ভীষণ সুন্দর। মনে রেখো।

তোমার
মা বাবা

Letter to daughter. Sheikh Hasina was then in Sweden with her husband

English translation of the Father's letter to his daughter.

Dhaka

13.6.69

Dear Hasu,

Please accept my love and affection. I had received Wazed's letter and also sent a reply to it. He might probably have received it. I couldn't even have taken a good look at you after I had come out of the jail. I let you go only because of my consideration of your health conditions. Please take care of your health. How is Wazed? We all are fine here. Don't worry about us. You might have heard that Manik Bhai suddenly died in Rawal Pindi. You very well may guess my mental condition. Professor Haye has also died. We've lost two illustrious sons of Bangladesh. Don't you worry. Sweden is a beautiful country. You will like it very much.. Please write back.

Your
Abba.

Father's letter to his daughter. Sheikh Hasina was then in Sweden with her husband

Gopalganj school had a football team of its own. My granddad, on his side, was also very fond of playing football. He would often go to watch his son play the game. He would tell us, 'Your father was so lean and light of build that he would kick the ball hard and fall down on the ground.' Were my father in the earshot, he would protest then and there. We would heartily enjoy that kind of confrontation. The interesting episode behind this is that sometimes my father's team and my grandfather's team would play on opposite sides. Even nowadays, when I go to that area, I get to know senior people, who tell me stories from my father's childhood and adolescence days. We had a good enough collection of photographs and newspaper clippings depicting some memorable scenes from a few of those matches. The invading Pakistani Army set our house afire in 1971 burning it down, resulting in the destruction of it all.

He was very generous since his childhood. Scope of getting an education, even for boys, was not much in those days. Many would pursue their studies staying in what used to be called 'Jaigir' or 'Lodging' in other people's houses in exchange of tutoring their children during times out of the hours of his own schooling. Many were required to attend schools four or five miles away walking all the way, very often on dirt roads, or even mud tracks with occasional ferry crossings. They would take their morning meal and go to school, stay there the whole day without any food and, again, walk back home. Since our house was located at the Bank quarters, my dad would bring some of them home. He had the habit of taking a meal of rice soaked in milk on his return from school, and he would share the same with those friends brought along. Grandma told me that a few umbrellas had to be bought for my father every month.

I had collected quite some flowers and fancy leaves, squatted on the bare floor of the station building and started playing with Kamal. He suddenly asked me, 'Hasu Apa, may I address your abba (dad) as my abba (dad) for a little while?' When I remember those words of Kamal even today, I cannot control my tears.



Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Kamal

The reason was nothing other than my father giving away his own umbrella to some of the poorer students requiring to traverse a long distance in the sun or in rains, and who simply could not afford to buy an umbrella for himself. Even prescribed school text books would also be given away sometimes.

Grandma told us she used to wait under the shade of the mango tree for her son to return from school, and would keep an eye from a distance on the road. She found her khoka one day walking back with a wrapper around his body without his normal clothing he had gone to school in. What happened? Moved by the sight of a poor boy in torn clothes, he had given away all the clothes on himself.

My grandparents were very generous by nature. They did never rebuke when my father would give something away to someone. They would rather encourage him in matters like that. There are many more instances of my grandparents' generosity.

My father was afflicted with beri-beri while he was at school, and his eyes were affected. His schooling therefore remained suspended for four years. After recovery, he was again admitted to the school. He had a tutor at home at that time called Hamid Master. He was active in anti-British movements and had to suffer imprisonment for many years. In later phases of my father's life when he would be in jail at different times, or the police would come to arrest him, my grandma would, from time to time, name that master and weep. My grandparents were otherwise very liberal, and, instead of obstructing, they would always encourage him in his activities. My father's mind flourished in a very open and liberal atmosphere. My grandfather would not only not forbid an action that appeared to him justified but would encourage my father to do it.

One of the school teachers of my father's, having built a small organisation, would go from door to door to collect paddy, rice and money to help poor but meritorious students. My father would always be with him as one of his active workers, and would encourage others to do the same as well. He would protest wherever there was any injustice. One such protest got him entangled in a conspiracy hatched by some supporters of the then government and, after arrest, landed in jail, where he had to remain for a few days.

He was very much conscious of his rights while he was still an adolescent. The Chief Minister of United Bengal, Sher-E-Bangla (A. K. Fazlul Huq), had once gone to Gopalganj on a tour and visited the school (my father was studying in). The courageous adolescent Mujib raised before him the complaint of rain waters seeping through the roof of the school building, and attracted everybody's attention by extracting from the Chief Minister a commitment to get it repaired.

After passing matriculation examination from the high school at Gopalganj, he went to study in Kolkata Islamia College. He stayed at the Baker hostel. He, at this period, came in contact with Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy. And he got actively involved in the Holwell Monument Movement. His active political career began from this time.

He passed his B. A. in 1947. Riots broke out at the time of partition of India and the creation of Pakistan and the Dominion of India, and he played an active role in suppressing the riots. He continued to work at the risk of his own life. My second aunty (father's second sister) lived in Kolkata at the time. I have heard from her that sometimes, maybe, he would continue to work, unfed, for two or three days at a stretch. She would kind of force-feed him when he would sometimes go to her place to inquire after her. He never showed any leniency towards wrongs. He never retreated from taking a risk to his life in order to establish truth and justice.

He got himself admitted in the Department of Law in Dhaka University after the creation of Pakistan. He then lent support to the movement of the third and fourth class employees of the University and took an active part in it. He was arrested while taking part in a sit-in strike in front of the Secretariat. He was, of course, released after a few days. Each and every Bengali of Pakistan at that time became vocal in his protest against Pakistani injustices. The students community took an active part in this on-going protests and movements. My father was again arrested in 1949. I was very small then, and my younger brother Kamal was just born. My father did not have an opportunity to take a look at this newborn son of his.

He was in jail at a stretch till 1952. My mother along with us, the two little brother and sister, stayed at that time with our grandparents. Father was once taken to Gopalganj in connection with a case. Kamal had by then learnt to slowly babble a word or two. But he had never seen our father and did not know him, either. When I was running to my father and coming back again and again addressing him 'Abba, Abba', Kamal would only look with astonishment. There is a large pond within the compound of Gopalganj Police Station and there is a large playground beside it. The two of us, I, the young sister, and my little brother, would play in that field and run around there to catch grasshoppers. And, in between these, I would rush to my father and again come back to our play. At one point, I had collected quite some flowers and fancy leaves, squatted on the bare floor of the station building and started playing with Kamal. He suddenly asked me, 'Hasu Apa, may I address your abba (dad) as my abba (dad) for a little while?' When I remember those words of Kamal even today, I cannot control my tears. He is no longer in this world. Nor do we have anyone we may address as father. The assassins' bullets have snatched away not only my father's life, but my mother, Kamal, Jamal, or even our little Russell was also not spared from them. The newly-wedded wives of Kamal and Jamal, viz., Sultana and Rosy, respectively, the colours of henna on whose hands were intermixed with the blood of their chests, were also not spared. The killers did not stop there; my only paternal uncle, Sheikh Nasser, a young leader and my cousin, Sheikh Moni, his pregnant wife Arzoo, also my childhood playmate— all of them were mowed down. These killers simultaneously attacked and killed Abdur Rab Serniabat (my father's elder sister's husband), his thirteen-year-old daughter, Baby, and his ten-year-old son, Arif. Abdur Rab Serniabat's eldest son, Abul Hasnat Abdullah's four-year-old son, Babu, was also not spared by the killers. Colonel Jamil, who, on being awakened from sleep and told of the attack, rushed to the rescue of my endangered father, was also killed. What barbaric cruelty was that? My second paternal aunt has been lying paralysed as a result of bullet injury sustained that night.

Kamal had sought my permission that day to address my father as his as well, and I instantly rushed him to our father. When told of this, my father picked him up on his lap and profusely caressed him. Neither of them is alive today. My mind feels so troubled again and again today just to address my dad the way I used to do. I become extremely eager to enjoy my mother's affection and my brothers' nearness. But I won't get any of them however hoarse may I become calling for them. None of them would be able to respond any more. Will not the killers, who have brutally put an end to their lives with bullets, ever face justice?

[13.8.1991]

A Closer Look at Bongobondhu

Anisuzzaman

The renowned Indian economist Bhabatosh Dutta was appointed a teacher in Kolkata Islamia College in 1943. He recounted those days like the following in his memoirs 'Eight Decades' (Kolkata, 1988; Third Impression 1995):

The students received us with great respect. They also took great care to ensure that, since we are not Muslims, we should not be hurt in any way. Almost all the students are, of course, supporters of the League and votaries for Pakistan. So were the Muslim teachers. But there would be two groups to the elections of the college union. One group comprised the Bengali-speakers and the other the Urdu-speakers. The Urdu-speakers would consider themselves ahead more aristocratic than their Bengali-speaking compatriots. But the Bengali-speakers were in a majority. A slender boy named Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the leader of the Bengali-speakers. His principles till the last moment remained unchanged. Bongobondhu Mujibur finally succeeded in bringing in international recognition for the Bengali language. We got proof of how much the students of the Islamia (college) could do for us during the bloody communal riots of 1946. Danger loomed at every step of the way from Bullygunge to Islamia college. The students would walk us this stretch of the road. They would wait near old Bullygunge and would take us from there to the college at Wellesley street. They would again return us in the same way.

He has again mentioned those days of the riots elsewhere in the book:

I gratefully remember here those Muslim students of the Islamia college, who would accompany us to cross the dangerous area. The name of one of those students was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

These words from Bhabatosh Dutta constitute the preface to my article.

The political life of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman began as an activist of Muslim League. The basic themes of the Muslim League politics in those days were two: to establish a separate state for the Muslims on the basis of Two-Nation Theory; and ensuring autonomy for the Indian provinces. Mountbatten clearly told Jinnah, when the probability of founding the new state of Pakistan had come closer to reality, that if India were to be divided on the basis of his arguments, Bengal and the Punjab would, then, have to suffer the same fate. Jinnah protested, how can that be? They are, first of all either Punjabis or Bengalis, and Hindus or Muslims later; they bear the same traditions of the unity of language, culture, economy and history. Mountbatten replied, the same thing said about all the Indians. Jinnah

then fell silent. (Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, 'Freedom at Midnight', New Delhi, 1976). This statement by Jinnah was probably the first retreat from the Two-Nation Theory. The next to retreat is the political mentor of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, viz., Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. He and Abul Hashim on one side and Sharat Chandra Bose and Kiron Shankar Roy on the other tried, in vain, to establish a united and sovereign Bengal. After this, Jinnah declared in his inaugural address before the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, from now on, the Hindus will cease to be Hindus and the Muslims will cease to be Muslims— They will all be the citizens of Pakistan. Religion is a personal matter; it will have no relation with the governance of the state. But when Suhrawardy had proposed, in the last council meeting of the All Pakistan Muslim League in Karachi in December, 1947, that the doors of the political party should be opened to the non-Muslims after the attainment of Pakistan, Jinnah did not agree. When Suhrawardy formed a political party, it was also named 'Jinnah Awami Muslim League'.

Two separate states were demanded for the Muslims (of India) in the Lahore Resolution. This was scaled down to the demand for a single Muslim state through a resolution, in 1946, in the conference, held in Delhi, of the Members of the Legislative Assemblies belonging to the Muslim League. After winning Pakistan, the leaders in power at the time completely forgot about autonomy. Shaista Suhrawardy Ekramullah told the Constituent Assembly in February, 1948, that the people of East Pakistan thought that their region would be looked upon as a colony of West Pakistan. A few days after that Dhirendra Nath Dutta demanded that Bengali be recognised as a state language. During discussions on the country's first budget in March, more members than one spoke of separate interests of East Bengal, and Mahmud Hussain demanded 'Full Autonomy' for the provinces.

Despite these, the people of the country had different kinds of confusions relating to non-communal politics, provincial autonomy, state language, people's rights as citizens and good governance. The journey of the new state could begin in the right direction only after resolving confusions on all these issues. That possibility first arose in the form of the state language movement of 1948. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman appeared on the stage as a leader of this movement, and had his first taste of imprisonment.

Those leaders of the Muslim League, disillusioned after the establishment of Pakistan, who formed the Awami Muslim League with Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani as its President, the then imprisoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected as one of its joint secretaries. This incident indicates what a respect he commanded in politics even way back in 1949.

After his release from prison, Shekh Mujib devoted himself as a full-timer in organising the Awami Muslim League. But going to the prison and coming out of it became, as if, a daily routine for him. Still he did not backtrack on his convictions and a sense of duty, and did not get worried about his family's finances or its safety. He carried on with the movement and helped create public opinion; played a pioneering role to transform the Organisation from Awami Muslim League to just Awami League; he also spoke in the Constituent Assembly as well as in the Provincial Assembly demanding recognition of Bengali



At the time of tidal bore and flood Bongobondhu stood beside the distressed people

as a state language, asked to change the official name of Pakistan to a non-communal one, and also spoke in favour of joint electorate and provincial autonomy. If one scans through the debates of the Constituent Assembly and the (East Pakistan) Provincial Assembly, one will come upon many of his memorable speeches. He used to speak fearlessly, even while he was a provincial minister, caring very little of what the central government might think or what would happen in future. He had to pay a price for it, but that, at the same time, earned him more and more rooms in the hearts of the people.

In the Kagmari conference (of the Awami League) in 1957, Moulana Bhashani bade goodbye to West Pakistan. But he shortly left

the Awami League owing to differences with Suhrawardy over the question of provincial autonomy and Pakistan's joining (the SEATO and CENTO) military pacts (with U. S.), and formed the National Awami Party. He formed an All-Pakistan party, introduced a socialist agenda for it, emphasised on the foreign policy and, on that account, lent support to the Military Ruler Ayub Khan. Sheikh Mujib became the unchallenged leader of the Awami League after the death of Suhrawardy. Suhrawardy had accepted the numerical parity between East and West Pakistan and was rather ambivalent on autonomy issue. Sheikh Mujib, on the other hand, raised the issue of disparity between East and West Pakistan, emphasised on the numerical superiority of East Pakistan and asked for its recognition, and also demanded provincial autonomy. The Indo-Pak war of 1965 drove home to everybody that East Pakistan was left undefended. The resentment of the people of this region against the Centre increased as a result of this. Sheikh Mujib put forward his six-point programme. The left-leaning politicians said it was a programme of the United States of America. The government said it would destroy Pakistan. But Mujib's Organisation and his leadership in East Bengal gradually consolidated. Ayub Khan instituted 'The Agartala Conspiracy Case'. That really worked. People started considering Sheikh Mujib as the only defender of the interests of East Bengal. The students framed their eleven-point demands, which included the six-points, and launched a movement. Moulana Bhashani lent his support to that movement. Ayub took an unceremonious leave in the face of an uprising by the students and the people, and Sheikh Mujib became the 'Bongobondhu'. The successors to Ayub were forced to accept the majority of East Bengal over West Pakistan and the first general election in the history of Pakistan was held.

The election was also not held totally unhindered. Some had demanded 'Rice before Vote' and asked for the ballot boxes to be kicked about. They did not feel worried even though they were aware their suggested course of action would only prolong the Martial Law. Even though badly battered and mauled by a ferocious cyclone accompanied by a tidal wave of unprecedented height, East Bengal voted for Bongobondhu. His critics said Mujib would now compromise. Compromise he did not; the world rather witnessed during those twenty-four days of March, 1971, an unforgettable non-cooperation movement— the whole of East Bengal stood as one person with its head held high at the call of one leader. This was the apogee of his career and life as also the time of the hardest test. He had to take a decision from amongst many alternatives. He had been looking for a way to frame a constitution on the basis of six points within the framework of the state of Pakistan; but he was gradually coming to grips with the reality that a constitutional way to avert the crisis was fast receding. He was fully aware, on the other hand, that we had no preparation for a protracted war. He did not want to bear the responsibility of a collapse of Pakistan and the probable blood-shed in consequence. He was not sure either of international reactions to our declaration of independence (Unilateral declaration of independence. The U. S. and China would oppose, but India would support, this much he knew). He therefore kept the door to negotiations open. On the other hand, he had asked for preparations to be made for a war of freedom in his speech of March 07. This call was not ambiguous to anyone. He was never involved in the politics of hiding, and so stayed at home in the night of March 25, although he knew the Pakistanis could as well kill him.

Bongobondhu was absent during the war of liberation, although the war was conducted in his name. The renegade section of our political leadership that tried for a negotiated settlement with Pakistan also stated they were trying to save the life of Bongobondhu. Their attempt, as is well-known, ended in failure. Bangladesh was liberated and Pakistan was forced under international pressure to let him return to his country.

He faced mountain-high problems on his return to the country. He had to swim through a cross-current of conflicting demands and a plethora of urgent necessities each one of which cried for priorities. Some of these were— reconstruction of the war-ravaged country, winning international diplomatic recognition, transforming a provincial administration into a national one, a trial of the killers and collaborators; trial of the Prisoners-Of-War was a crying need while Bhutto threatened not to release the Bangladeshis stranded in Pakistan if the POWs were not released; the demand to annul the Collaborators' Act; the demand from the families of Bangladeshis stranded in Pakistan, and many others. He added 'Nationalism' to the three state principles, viz., Democracy, Socialism and Secularism declared in 1971. He made the freedom fighters surrender their arms and also made the Indian Army withdraw from the country with a view to making the independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh visible. Our Constitution was adopted in nine months and the general election was held in eighteen months. The infrastructure of the country was reconstructed as far as was practicable. And diplomatic recognition was won from many countries.

But the times were not as before. Arms and ammunitions were scattered throughout the country. Wrangles started brewing up within his party. A large segment of the students, otherwise his supporters, became a powerful rival only because they failed to win his blessings. The anti-Bangladesh forces felt emboldened enough to indulge in crimes ranging from looting of Post Offices to the killings of the freedom fighters. Controlling his own followers proved at times very difficult. The achievement of success by a clique of insiders to create a distance between him and Tajuddin Ahmed in an ambience like this proved very harmful. One has also to remember the unremitting antagonism of the U. S. Administration towards his government.

The list of the successes of Bongobondhu may be prolonged. A list of his failures and mistaken decisions under those adverse situations may also be prepared. He was a human being— and was therefore not above mistakes and failures. Many of his followers get excited at any criticism of his decision to form BAKSAL. They consider criticisms like this as a way of trying to justify the murder of Bongobondhu along with most of the members of his family. But that can never be. The only 'crime' Bongobondhu and his close associates were guilty of in the eyes of the killers was the creation of Bangladesh. It is useless to try to convince those who would not understand this simple truth. Those who attempt at belittling Bongobondhu, or make him smaller in their attempts at making him still bigger, have got to know this one thing: Bongobondhu has attained immortality in the pages of history; he is what he is— his pedestal is never to be smeared with dirt.



Peasant using cow and plough for cultivation (above)
Villagers catching fish



Photo : M A Taher

The Country of Farms and Farmers

Mohammad Farashuddin

In the backdrop of a prolonged struggle and tremendous sacrifices, the Bengali Nation gained its independence through a bloody war of liberation in December, 1971. The dictatorial rulers of Pakistan were compelled to honourably set the Father of the Bengali Nation and its life, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, free from the death-trap of their prison. On assumption of the reins of administration of the country, the undisputed and universally—acclaimed leader of our freedom struggle gave priority to some sectors. Development of the agricultural sector was one of those.

Bongobondhu used to nourish a measure of especial love and respect towards the cultivators of Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujib, because of his complete immersion in politics, toured every nook and corner of rural Bengal many times over. And in the process, he won genuine love, affection and profound respect from the peasants, labourers and other working people of the country. The Father of the Nation, in turn, remembered throughout his whole life this friendship based on mutual love. Eighty-Five percent of the people lived in villages during the time of Bongobondhu's



administration. More than half of our National Income would accrue from agriculture. The Father of the Nation would gratefully acknowledge the fact that the tillers of the soil in Bangladesh, putting in almost inhuman labour from sunrise to sunset, provide food for all classes of people of the country.

He was aware what a hard labour has to be put in the production of jute— the golden fibre of Bangladesh— by the farmers. He was also aware that during those nine months of do-or-die armed struggle for the liberation of the country, the womenfolk and the farmers of the rural areas made the freedom fighters' difficult jobs somewhat easier by providing them safe shelters and the war a loving, whole-hearted support. Bongobondhu was also aware of the tremendous mental pressure created on the occupation forces by the freedom fighters on the eve of their final assault duly backed by the moral support of the freedom loving people of all classes and kinds.. It greatly



helped free the country from the clutches of the Pakistani army. More than 2.2 million farmer families had to be rehabilitated after liberation of the country. The post-liberation government of Bongobondhu adopted certain very firm projects to implement it.

A few of the steps taken in the then just-liberated Bangladesh under the firm direction and strict leadership of the Father of the Nation are mentioned below:

1. Reconstruction of the damaged or destroyed agricultural infrastructure;
2. Supply and delivery of agricultural implements: 40,000 power-driven low-lift pumps, 2900 deep tube-wells and 3000 shallow tube-wells were supplied to the cultivators at a highly reduced price before the year 1973 was out;
3. 16,125 tons of seed-paddy, 454 tons of jute seeds and 1037 tons of wheat seeds were supplied on an emergency basis, free of cost or at a nominal price, among the farmers before the year 1972 was out.
4. One million Certificate cases instituted against the peasants and cultivators during the Pakistani colonial administration were withdrawn and all arrear agricultural loans including interest on them were waived;
5. Rents on lands up to a ceiling of 25 bighas were for ever abolished;
6. Minimum price with proper enforcement mechanism was fixed for paddy, jute, tobacco, sugarcane and certain other agricultural products in order to ensure a fair price to the growers;
7. Rationing facilities were extended to the poor farmers with a view to helping them; and
8. A system was put in place to facilitate the education of the children of the poor farmers by proving free education, or education at government expenses.

Besides, Mujib government framed the First 5-year Plan (1973) for the country keeping in view the structural perspectives of the development of the socio-economic conditions in the medium term. Development of agriculture was given the topmost priority with the aim of alleviating poverty at a faster pace. Proof of the devotion of the Bongobondhu government to the welfare of agriculture and the farmers can easily be found if we look at a few other statistical data. The percentage of landless farmers in the country was 35%. In order to increase the availability of more land, in addition to the existing Khas lands, for distribution among the landless farmers, he fixed the highest ceiling of land per family at 100 bighas. According to a preliminary estimate, food shortage in the war-ravaged newly-independent country was 3 million or thirty lakh tons, which is approximately 30-35%. The immediate shortfall was met by imports. But an attempt was made to attain self-sufficiency in food by enhancing production of agriculture through the introduction of improved methods of cultivation, improved varieties of seeds, expansion of the areas under irrigation, supply of agricultural implements, waiver of agricultural loans, withdrawal of certificate cases and distribution of khas lands among landless agricultural labourers. Bongobondhu began a strong personal initiative to arrive at an agreed principle with India for distribution of the Ganges waters. As a result, he was able to extract a commitment from India to have a share of 44,000 cusecs of water for Bangladesh as a lower riparian country. None of the successor governments could go anywhere near this target. The number of power pumps used in irrigation in 1968-69 was 11,000. This number rose to 36,000 in 1974-75. Land under irrigation, as a result, increased by one-third to 36 lakh acres.

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Bongobondhu saved the poor Bangladeshi farmers from the curse of the sky-rocketing of the prices of chemical fertilisers in the international market by providing them a huge subsidy. In 1972, the price per maund of urea, potash and TSP was taka 20.00, 15.00 and taka 10.0, respectively. The trend of developments in the field of agriculture set in motion as a result of getting more water from the river Ganga, expansion of irrigation facilities, improved seeds, use of fertilisers, insecticides and pesticides, distribution of khas land among the landless farmers and an agricultural policy providing price-support to the producers were the precursors to today's robust agricultural policy resulting in self-sufficiency in food.

Bongobondhu could realise, because of his hearty camaraderie with the peasants and cultivators and an experience gained over so many years in grassroot level politics that a thorough change in the agricultural sector was necessary. He was terrified of the loss of millions of lives as a result of forced collectivisation in agriculture in the post-independence Peoples' Republic of China and in the decade of the thirties of the last century in the then Soviet Union. He therefore took the necessary initiative to avert any possible catastrophe of death by starvation or famine at the beginning of our independence earned for the price of a huge bloodletting. After these short-term emergency measures, steps were taken, through the medium term first Five-Year Plan, to bring about certain measures of progress, development and stability. The Bongobondhu government, after this, began to take long-term measures. Sheikh Mujib tried to improve the lots of the rural masses through a sustainable structural adjustment by bringing about a true agricultural revolution through an exceptional reformation of the land-management system in the country. Bongobondhu declared the programme of action of his second revolution on March 25, 1975, at Suhrawardy Udyan. He declared in a very firm voice, I want to hit this hollowed-out social system. I want to go to a new system. Multi-purpose Co-Operatives will be formed in all the villages of the country. Make no mistake there. I will not take away your lands. There will be a compulsory multipurpose Co-Operative Society in each of the sixty-five thousand villages within the period of a Five-Year Plan. The land-owners will retain their lands under this Co-Operative system. Every able-bodied but unemployed person has to be registered as a member of this Co-Operative Society. Money will be given to them. Test Relief materials will be handed down to them. Works under the Works Programme will be handed down to them. Touts will be gradually eliminated from the Union Parishads. The country cannot otherwise be saved.

You will take the produce of your land, a portion will go to the Co-Operative and another portion to the government. There would be formed a council in every Thana. There would no longer be sub-divisions. Every sub-division will be upgraded to a district. There would be an administrative Council in each of the new districts. There would be a Chairman of this Council. All the employees at the district level will be under that Council. People's representation will also be in it.

The outline narrated above clearly speaks of the desire of the friend of the farmers and the Father of the Nation to bring about an irresistible force in agricultural productivity through the formation of a multipurpose, but truly production-oriented, Co-Operative

system by permanently bringing together the owners of land and the labourers. And thus he also wanted to ensure the rightful share of the agricultural labourers. The portion of the produce meant for the government would enable the government to provide money for peoples' welfare activities. The idea of local government in the villages and the unions, along with those in the thanas and the districts was very clear in his thoughts. Many people think that the exploiting classes brutally murdered Sheikh Mujib taking fright from the probability of his bringing about a sure justice of equitable distribution through the establishment of a strong local government and sixty-five thousand rural multipurpose co-operative societies and a sustainable development in agriculture.

On this day of profound sorrow, a fresh vow has to be taken to bring about solvency, happiness, love and peace in every house of the farmers of Bangladesh by successfully bringing to an end the works begun by the Father of the Nation. And that would enshrine the highest respects shown to him by the Bengali Nation.



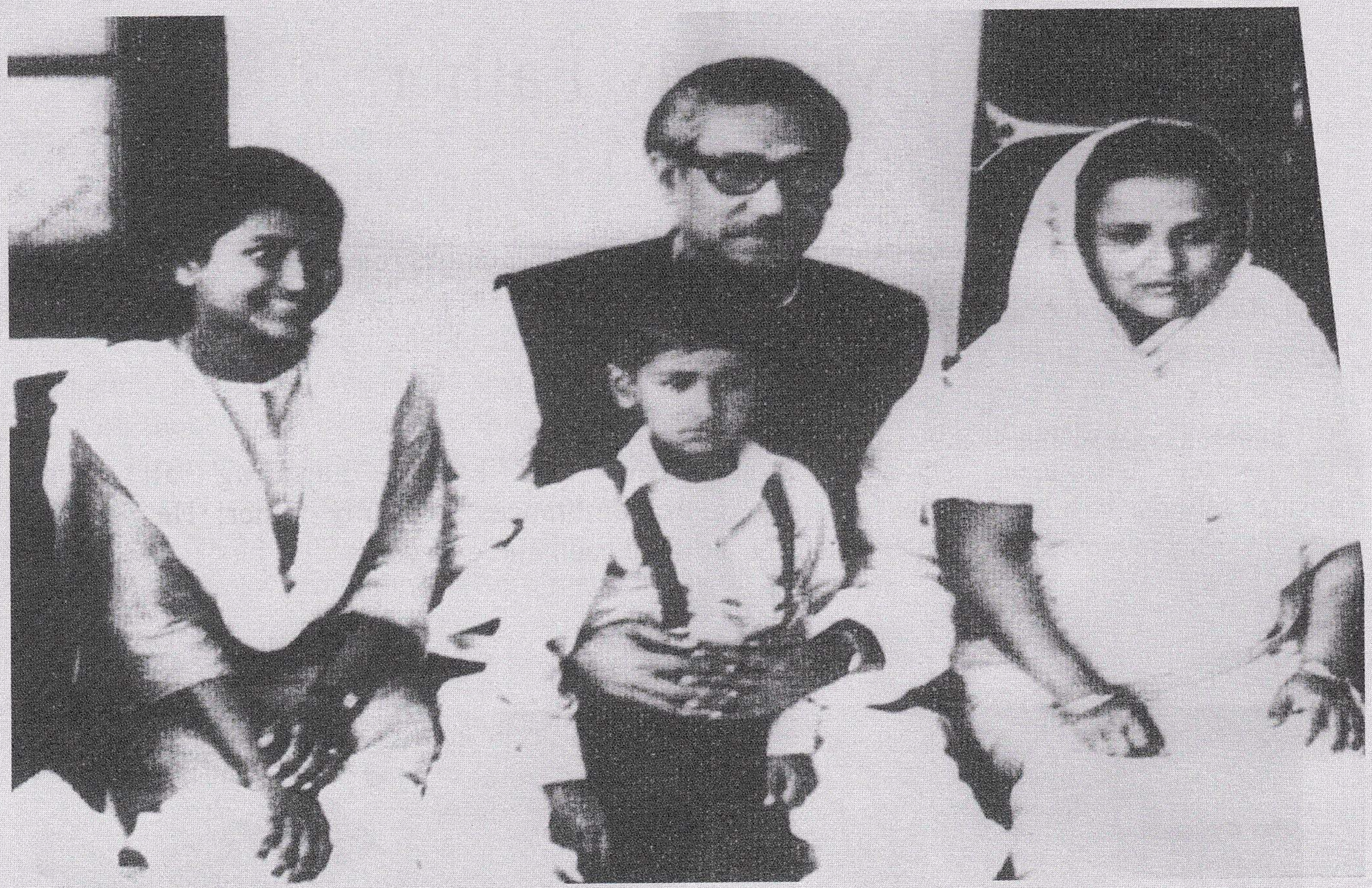
I Miss My Father

Sheikh Rehana

How can I end narrating all those remembrances from my father! He used to love each and everyone.



Sheikh Rehana and Sheikh Russel
with their father when he visited Japan



Rehana and Russel with Parents

Of all my brothers and sisters, I was the closest to him. I would pick up the first flower from the garden very early in the morning and would present it to him on every birthday of his. He would take a regular morning stroll along road no. 32. I could not keep pace with his strides, but I would wait for him at our gate. When he could come back, on his return journey, closer to home, I would run out to meet him.

We had a jasmine flower plant within the compound of our house. I would often make those into a wreath and give it to my father. I sometimes also became angry at my father for this or that reason. It sometimes happened that I had wanted to go somewhere and he did not allow it. So I became angry and stopped taking meals. I did not break fast in situations like this till my father personally caressed me into eating something.

And I could, under no circumstances, accept his coming home late at night. I would ask him in anger, 'Why do you indulge in politics?' My father would reply, 'Why do you say this? To me, Seven crore (seventy million) people (of the country) and you are one and the same!' That would make me all the angrier. And I would retort, 'I won't be able to share you with anyone else.'

I now realise my father did not expect a reply like that from me. I still cannot believe my father is no longer alive. It is painful to believe we would no longer see him, or talk to him.

I was then at school. I used to write him a letter every week while he was in jail during 1966-67. I would keep him informed of the family, of politics and of many other things. I would preserve news clippings of political nature. If I would fail, somehow or other, to write to him in any week, the first line of his next letter would be, 'Mom, are you unwell? There's no letter—!' He desired that I should go for higher studies. But that, unfortunately, was not to be!

I remember my father had asked all of us to leave our house at around 12 p. m. on the night of March 25, 1971. But we did not want to go. I cried aloud protesting this. Later, on his return home, my father told us that the sound of my cries rang in his ears even while he was interned in jail in Pakistan.

My father would trust people. He was very affectionate as a father. He desired us around him all the time. He would not sleep for the whole night if there were storms or cyclones. He would restlessly go from one room to another and back again with a rosary between his fingers, saying, 'Allah, my country is very poor. Have mercy on us!' If we would request him to take a little sleep, he would say, 'You don't understand this. No one will survive this catastrophe.' He had an unfathomable font of love for everyone.

He was the Prime Minister of the country. But while at home playing with us, he would, as if, turn into a child. Sometimes when we would be on the roof of our house, I would pull out his grey hairs. At a still later stage of his life, he would point at a cut mark on the scalp, while I would be pulling out the grey hairs, and say, 'You won't find my dead body, and even if you do, you won't be able to identify except by looking at this cut-mark.' My poor heart skipped a beat at this. I did not at all like the way he said this. So I did never ask him any question at any time. I would only say, please, abba, don't say things like that. But his prophecy became so cruelly true!

My father did not want me to go abroad. He said, you won't like it abroad, would be weeping there. O there's no need of your going to foreign countries. I did not follow his advice. But once abroad, I found he was true to the letter. I did not like it at all. But shame prevented me from telling him. Still after a few days, I told him over phone on August 13, 'I want to come back. I don't feel comfortable here.' He burst out laughing and said in a tone of consolation, 'Hmm! Didn't I tell you before? O. K. I am arranging to send you tickets. Don't you sulk!' That was the last I ever talked to him.

Oh, why didn't I listen to my father's advice, then! I had misfortune in store for me. Or else we could have gone away together.

No one would ever realise the insufferable torments we, the two surviving sisters, continuously undergo.

This article has been taken from an anthology titled 'Jonosamudre ek Manob'

পারুল ফুল

PARUL FULL

Bipradas Barua

Tajuddin got out of bed very early in the morning when it was the time for parul flowers to blossom. He could not properly sleep during the whole of the last night. But while on way to the Ramna park, he still felt he was quite fit and had no weariness at all. Will Bongobondhu look happy or unhappy when he lands in Dhaka, he thought while walking? Will he cover his face in shame with his hands and weep for the lost dreams of two lakhs of women?

Tajuddin trudged along and entered the Ramna park area through gate the back at of Hotel Inter-Continental. He would pluck parul flowers in the park, wreathe them into a garland to present to Bongobondhu on his arrival. One can buy garlands of roses, Chrysanthemums or of dahlias in the shops. He doesn't want to offer any of those to Bongobondhu. He could not afford the time so far to see whether or not the paruls have blossomed in their trees in the park. Neither the gardener of the park nor his own personal assistant knows there are two parul plants in the park. He himself, therefore, went out to look for those flowers. Once inside the park, he took the path straight to the south. He has come to the park after quite long time. A strong aroma from the trees and the fog assailed his face and the nostrils. The krisnachuda branches were hanging over his head; the bakuls and mahuas are on the other side. Two long, towering rows of kusum flowers are there in his front. Two ravens cawed in pleasure. The sky was visible through the sparse foliage. Last night's dewdrops on the leaves were not trampled on yet. The



first lights of the morning have become clearer. He covered his head with a part of the wrapper so nobody can recognise him. This was exactly the reason why he had brought the wrapper with him. Two or three morning-walkers sped past him without trying to identify who he was. Wisps of translucent fog were clinging to trees here and there like stray cloudlets. A light, unseen northern breeze was wafting more fog in the park. Have the paruls blossomed?
He could not make time to come to the park recently. He had returned home with his cabinet colleagues just the other day.

And the Pakistani Army surrendered on December 16, only twenty-six days earlier. Where was the time to find out whether the paruls or the golden ashokas were blossomed! He still has the knowledge that the paruls are in blossom and they may be wreathed into garlands. He would present Bongobondhu with a garland of the rare paruls. The very thought of Bongobondhu created a wave of emotions in his chest and it made its way up to the chest. He was walking along while, at the same time, taking deep breath. An unbounded, transparent and acrid smell again assailed his nostrils. Maybe, someone or other has just shaken the branch of a tree, or trampled on the dewy grasses causing emission of this aroma. Oh, for how long couldn't he take such deep breaths of fresh air! The whole of the country is stretching straight out of the stupor of the nightly fog with the happiness of Bongobondhu's return. Houses after houses are agog with pleasant conversation. Everybody and every media, be it the radio, the TV or the newspapers, and the common man on the street or the boatman in the rivers— were telling Bongobondhu was coming— coming at 10 A. M. on January 10.



He left behind four bhoj-pata trees, while listening to the cooing of the cuckoos, and reached the parul trees. Two of those trees were standing side by side. One of them was blooming with flowers while the other did not. What a beautiful sight! What a brilliance of the pale red colour! One of the trees is somewhat shorter while the other one is taller and a little more lively; its leaves are largish, the colour dark green, flower stems have shot out of the top of that tree. Flowers have started blooming on one of those.

Not a single blooming flower is there on the tree. Only a very few are there on the ground. Tajuddin picked them up with great care. They made a total of nine. He looked again very intently at the pale red and the white-yellow stems.

And he inhaled the light, sweet smell.

He saw the paruls after two long years.

He could not make time last year to see the paruls because of the struggle and the war of liberation.

He again looked up the tree.

No, the branches have not waddled up the trunk with all their flowers.

Nor have the seven brothers Champa and the lone sister Parul cried out saying, 'No, we won't give; no, we won't.'

There is no flower on the tree.

Tajuddin felt depressed. Why didn't he come still earlier in the morning! And who may it be that has plucked the flowers at the crack of dawn! Why didn't he take precautions last night, why wasn't a watchman deployed? The night watchman or the gardener could have been left with instructions. What would become of it now? Tajuddin became restless with the thought of what he could do. Another cluster of fogs came upon him like small cloudlets. These were translucent droplets of fogs. The transparent droplets could be clearly identified one from the other: like the crystals formed in ghee, or the fine crystal-like fine spots below a soft, fair skin.

Tajuddin mentally surveyed and did not find parul trees anywhere in the city of Dhaka he could go to pluck parul flowers. There was no other remarkable winter flower he could present to Bongobondhu. No, roses would look very cheap. And golden ashokas cannot be wreathed into garlands.

A boy, at this point in time, came and stood before him with quite a good number of paruls held in the space created by upturning the lower front flap of his shirt. Dried bits of straw were clinging on to his dew-drenched bare feet. A dew-drop was hanging from the tip of his nose. Small droplets of mist were clinging at the ends of his hair giving them a beautiful look. And he held out a pure smile on his lips. That smile looked as colourful as the paruls and felt as sweet.

Tajuddin said, will you sell the flowers to me/

The boy immediately replied, Yes, I will.

How much do you ask for them?

The boy said with a grave tone of voice, fifty taka.

Fifty taka is a bit too much.

Truly speaking, fifty taka would really be too much. He had climbed the tree, shaken it, resulting in the fall of those flowers on the ground below. He then picked them up from there. It did not cause him much exertion either.

The boy said, all right, please give me thirty taka, then.

Tajuddn said, even thirty taka would be a bit too much.

Moreover, he did not have with him so much money at the time. He felt in the pocket with his hand and found only two taka were there.

He, therefore, said, would you sell them for two taka only?

The boy cried out and said, only two taka?

Tajuddin hurriedly doffed his wrist watch and said, take this watch.

The boy took it in his hands and said, fine, excellent.

He apparently became very happy, took the watch and said, It is too much. Won't you mind?

He asked while pouring the flowers on to the wrapper of Tajuddin, what will you do with these flowers?

He placed the flowers at one corner of the wrapper, arranged them in a nice way, held the corner in one hand and then replied, I'll give those to Bongobondhu. He will come at ten this morning. I have come to pick up flowers for him. But you have taken possession of them all before I could do so.

The boy immediately said, I will not give you the flowers, then. So saying, he threw the watch on the ground below and upturned the front flap of his shirt to take those flowers back.

Tajuddin said, why won't you give them? Where is your objection in giving the flowers to Bongobondhu?

The boy hurriedly relied, I think, I myself will give those to him.

Tajuddin became surprised now, and asked, will you really give those to him on your own? I then return them to you. Here they are— .

The boy said, alright, you'd better give them. And also please take your watch back. I will not be able to go near him. You will be able to do so. You'd better give those to him.

Shall I give them? You are a very decent boy. Bongobondhu will arrive at ten in the morning today. Do you want to meet him? I am Tajuddin, the Prime Minister.

The boy got puzzled at hearing Tajuddin's name. And then he quickly asked, are you our Prime Minister? Have you made the country independent through a war? I have seen Pakistani soldiers in Dhaka city. I also hate them. Are you the Prime Minister of independent Bangladesh?

Any doubt? You may believe me.

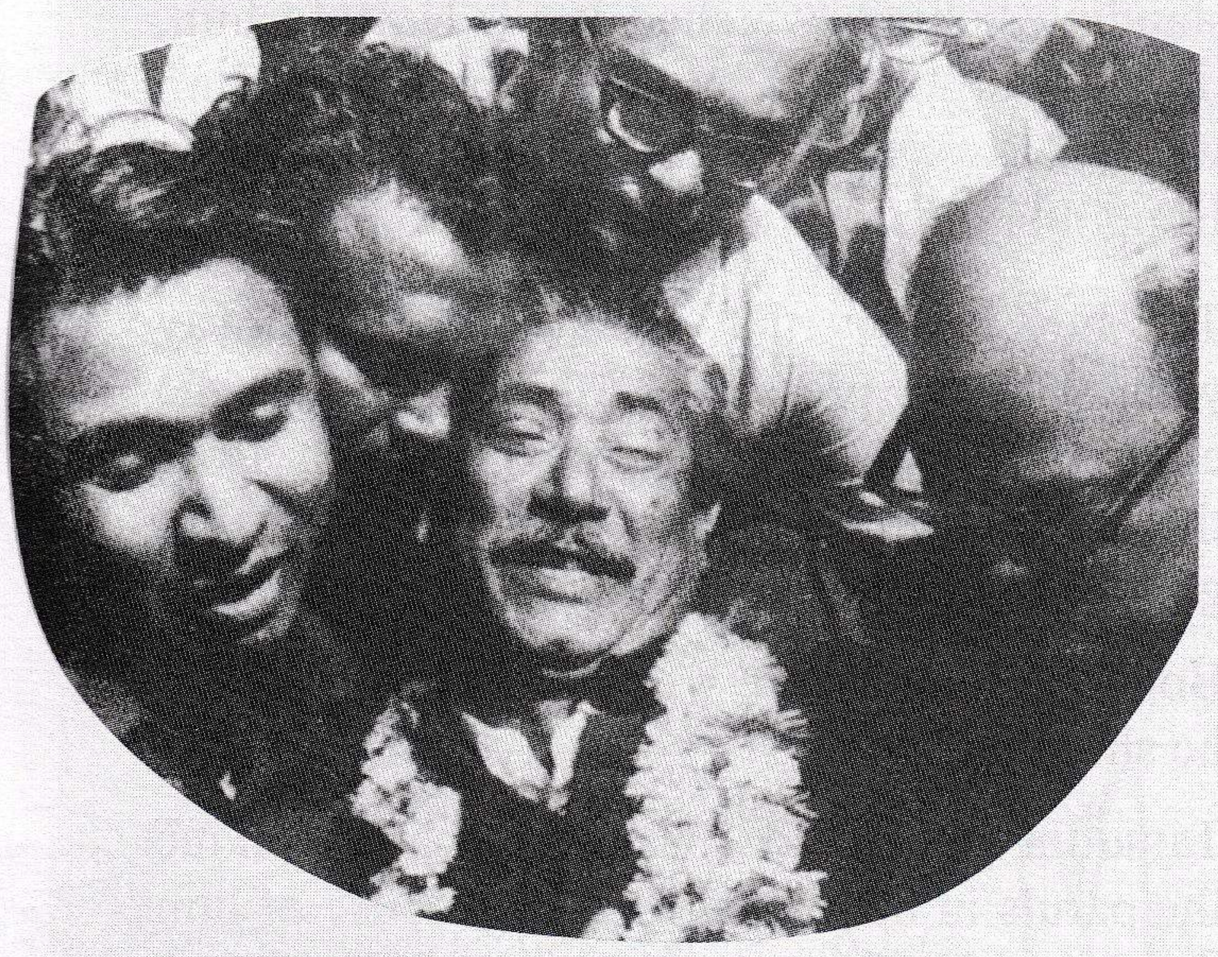
The boy became very pleased and could not decide what to do or not to do. He only said, you'd better give them. That would be more befitting. Bongobondhu would be pleased with that.

Tajuddin became very pleased and said, he will be all the happier if you give them to him. He loves young boys very much. He has a son of your age. His name is Russell.

The boy nodded his head rather forcefully and said, You'd better give them. Let me see if I can find some golden ashokas in the Baldha gardens. I hope, they will be available there.

January 10, 1972. After being released from the Pakistan jail Bongobondhu has come back to his own country





January 10, 1972. After coming back to his own country spending nine months in the Pakistani prison Bongobondhu is with Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam and others



Tajuddin said, listen to me, then, Bakul; please come to the meeting at the Race Course. Come straight to the dais. I will be there. I will introduce you to him.

How would I go there? How would I even reach you?

He made a quick search of the inside of his pocket and brought out a small piece of white paper, took a pen in hand and wrote down on that piece of paper, this boy Bakul is hereby permitted to go near Bongobondhu, and then signed underneath.

The boy said, I am going right now to the Baldha gardens. Golden ashokas and raj ashokas have blossomed there. I will bring those flowers for Bongobondhu.

The boy did not wait a moment more after this. He then ran out and was lost in the bushes and the fog of the park. A kutum bird was calling from some trees. Tajuddin wasted no time and returned home straight. There was a lot of works to do. The Inspector-General of police has to be given some further instructions. He has also to make enquiries from the Chairman of the Municipality to ascertain whether or not the roads and the alleys have been swept clean; there are some urgent discussions with the Ministers; has also to make queries at the Tejgaon airport to know if everything is all right. He made a good number of phone calls. He talked to Syed Nazrul, Qamaruzzaman, Mansur Ali, Sheikh Mani and Tofayel, one after another. A tempestuous hour passed. He has to make some further calls, appear for interview and has to scrutinise and decide on certain very urgent files. One after another; wave after wave. Bongobondhu, the apple of seventy million people's eyes; the dreamer of Joy Bangla and the architect of independent Bangladesh, is coming.

Bongobondhu was surprised at seeing the garland of paruls. He did not take it off his neck. It took them four hours to arrive at the Race Course from the Tejgaon airport. It was a sea of human heads on the roads and a flood of humanity in front of their vehicle; it was wave after wave. Everybody wanted to have a glimpse of him— if he could be touched just for once— if the man of their dreams could be felt with the hands! Bongobondhu could not properly articulate— could not put things in proper order— in his Race Course speech that day. It was, like in a poem, in hints and innuendos; the voice once got choked with emotions and tears. He could not speak even for ten minutes. He somehow finished his speech that day, weeping, halting, and in a choked voice. He was distressed, tired and grief-stricken. And the dream of the golden Bengal was in his vision.

That boy suddenly emerged out of the sea of humanity and appeared in front of the dais, with that piece of paper held aloft in his left hand like a flag and his right hand holding high a twig with a bunch of golden ashokas on it. Bongobondhu was then getting down from the podium with Tajuddin beside him. Both of them noticed the boy almost at the same time. Tajuddin asked his security people to bring the boy along. The boy now got drowned in the heaving sea of humanity. The boy called out to Bongobondhu once and again called the Prime Minister. He said I am that boy with parul flowers; I am Bakul. He again sank back in the human ocean. The boy's cries got drowned again in the roars of 'Joy Bangla' and the cacophony of human voices. And it floated above those once more.

Tajuddin asked his secretary to bring the boy near him. He then asked one security man, why didn't you bring him along so long? The deputy Inspector-general of police, who was standing behind, watched it all. He told him, please bring the boy along; I have given him words I would introduce him to Bongobondhu.

The boy had by that time floated far away what with the pressure of the crowd and the elbowing of the people. He cried out from there, Mr. Prime Minister, I am Bakul; I will go to Bongobondhu.

Bongobondhu asked, who is that boy? Why is he shouting?

Tajuddin replied, he is Bakul; he had given me the paruls in the morning. It is because of him that I could present you the garland of paruls.

Bongobondhu said, call him; ask him to come here.

The boy had, by then, floated still farther away from them in the pressing crowd.

He kept on calling aloud, Bongobondhu— Prime Minister—

Tajuddin pointed the boy out to Bongobondhu and said, there— quite far away—

While descending down the dais, Bongobondhu asked, do you have his address? Tajuddin replied, only if I can find him in the Ramna Park tomorrow morning; beneath that parul tree.

Bongobondhu said, would you please show me that tree? I also want to see the boy; please take me along.

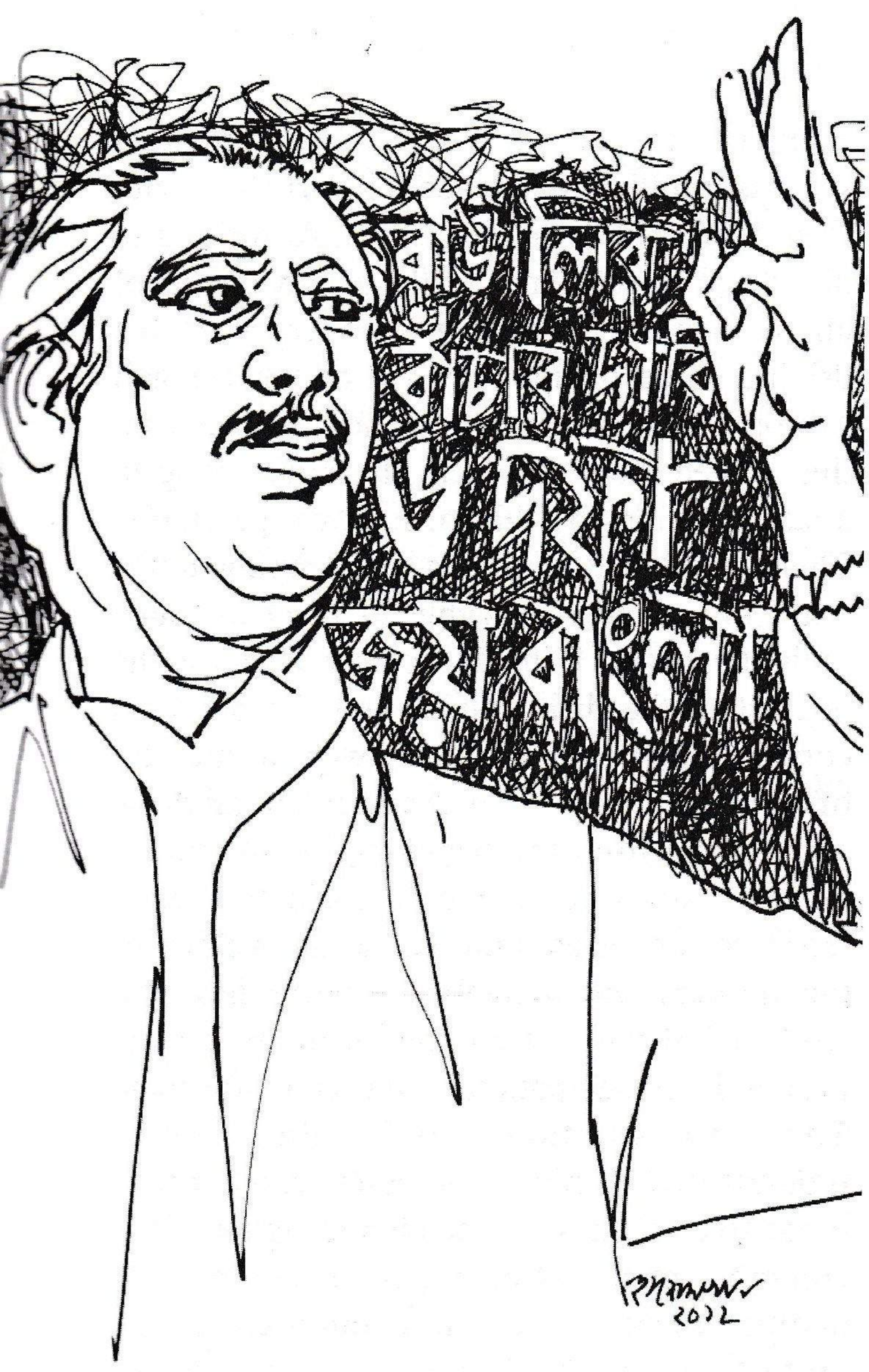
Tajuddin replied, alright.

The twig of golden ashokas with the flowers on it, at that particular moment, reached the hands of Bongobondhu via many other unknown hands in the crowd.

This piece has been taken from 'Muktizuddher Golposamagra'.

He is Our Identity

Atiur Rahman



He is, in fact, equivalent to our existence. Many of the foreigners still say, 'O you are from Sheikh Mujib's country? Why did you kill such a great leader?' Not just to foreigners, to millions of paupers and the oppressed of this country, it is 'the land of Sheikh'. But it is a matter of great regret that we have not been able as yet to articulate this truism in all its facets before the younger generation of this country. History is not a matter of study only to the historians. It is also a very interesting subject even to those among common men who are more or less conscious about society and politics. The Past, for that reason, is not just a stream of incidents of the by-gone days, it is also the arbiter of the present and the future. If one wants to liberate the common man from the sorrows and pains of everyday life, one has to encourage them to build a creative future taking inspiration from the achievements of the past, its heroism and pride. The study of history is all that important exactly for that reason. Those who do not want welfare of the common man, or them to be optimistic, always want to make history, especially that of the development of our nationalism, murky, confused and disputed. They do not want common men to take inspiration from our very clear and bright past and to know of the conspirators' limitless anarchy, maladministration, immorality, discrimination and untruthfulness so they may

He was a friend to all those commoners from the beginning of his life to its end. Never for a moment did this great leader forget his commitment to the welfare of the farmers and the labourers. He has also worked full-time, as an administrator, for the economic emancipation of the common man.

be organised and raise their voices against those. Social stability and economic development, so essential to ensure a decent life for the common man, would be impossible to attain if history is not allowed to go, unimpeded, along its own course. Forty years have rolled by. But we appear never to have got the reprieve to build the country in our own, likeable ways. The conspirators are still active and would like, at the first available opportunity, to take away the sense of respite from our lives. They want to disturb peace. Whereas there are so many opportunities to positively transform this highly potential Bangladesh. Transformation has been taking place in certain sectors. But there is still a substantial path to traverse. We have therefore to walk still faster.

The person, at whose behest we have gained this independent Bangladesh, has been dubbed a non-entity! Those who distort history are still very earnest in their endeavours. Why these falsehoods? Why this miserliness? He is above the ordinary, a truly extraordinary personality' Is there any way to deny that the immortal driving force behind our national history is Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman? He is, no doubt, the competent successor to the great leaders like A. K. Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy and Bhashani. Absorbing in him the very substance of the achievements of all of them, it was he who emerged as the driving force behind the rise of the Bengali Nation. He himself grew up and, together with this, pulled the rising Bengali nation along to a state of glory by dint of his own greatness. There was once a time when keeping touch with him made it possible to keep in touch with the entire Bengali Society because the neglected, the dishonoured and the deprived common men of this country were at the root of all his thoughts. He was a friend to all those commoners from the beginning of his life to its end. Never for a moment did this great leader forget his commitment to the welfare of the farmers and the labourers. He has also worked full-time, as an administrator, for the economic emancipation of the common man. The Constitution (of Bangladesh) promulgated by him is, in essence, an amulet protective of the socio-economic rights of the common man. After many a defile- and disfigurement, it is still committed to the protection of the common man's socio-economic rights. He made the common man,

The Constitution (of Bangladesh) promulgated by him is, in essence, an amulet protective of the socio-economic rights of the common man.

through that constitution, the owners of the Republic. Common man's awareness of their civil rights in Bangladesh is still quite keen owing to that ownership despite a lot of apprehensions and misgivings as to how much of those rights they are able to enjoy. We have to continue our unrelenting struggle to go back to the original consciousness contained in that document, a sweet fruit of our war of liberation. The values of our war of liberation have greatly been restored in the constitution as a result of the latest amendments. But Time inevitably stood as a constraint to removing all the debris. Yet whatever has been possible is no mean achievement.

The political commitment to making the people owners of the Republic did not develop in a day. A continual exposure to the deprivation, pain and suffering of the common man around him caused to develop a preference in Bongobondhu's mind for them. He was exposed to the ordeals of the farmers during his childhood and adolescence, and also during student days, he crisscrossed the whole of Bengal along with his political colleagues. And, as a result, he saw with his own eyes the travails of the farmers' community of the country. He had provided leadership to the struggle for the protection of the rights of the third- and fourth-class employees of Dhaka University and suffered imprisonment before he took an active part in the language movement. He devoted himself fully towards the formation of the United Front and thus laying the foundation of the self-rule for the Bengalis. He voluntarily resigned his post in the United Front cabinet in order to give full attention to the organisational activities (of the party). The rest of the history is known to all— how vocal was he in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan with a view to protecting the rights of the Bengalis, how he was sent to jail under Ayub Khan's Martial Law; and although allowed to come out after some time, how he was barred from political activities. He was again imprisoned in 1962. He declared his six-point programme in 1966 and was arrested in the same year in Agartala Conspiracy Case. He was relieved of the charges of sedition in the face of the violent mass upsurge of 1969, and was crowned with the epithet 'Bongobondhu' as a gift of love from the students and the people in a public meeting on February 23 of the same year. In the speech he delivered there, the common man's concerns were clearly articulated. He said, "—I want regional autonomy, I want a sovereign parliament elected under a universal adult franchise and I want a representation of East Pakistan proportionate to the strength of her population in politics, in the economy, services and jobs, in a word, in all spheres of the state and public life. I want fair wages to the labourers. And a fair price for the produce of the farmers. I also want freedom for the media and the journalists."

An intense mass upsurge after this led to Ayub Khan's downfall. Yahya became the new Martial Law Ruler. Yahya declared a date for national elections mainly as a result of pressures created by Bongobondhu. He first articulated the word 'Bangladesh' during the preparatory stages of the elections. He gave a unique expression to his love for mother Bengal preserved in the inner sanctum of his mind by stating— the name of East Pakistan will be Bangladesh. The flow of events after this started moving very fast towards the emergence of an independent, sovereign country named Bangladesh. No one can obliterate, even if one desires to do so, his contributions to making the backdrops of the best of our times, like 1971.

The observers of history may as well keep it in mind that Bongobondhu had, at every phase of our war of independence, an unstinted political power and authority. But after independence, it was not easy for Sheikh Mujib, first as Prime Minister and, later, as the President, to exercise his powers in the same manner. Bongobondhu's initiatives to reconstruct the country started getting impeded from the very beginning of independence owing to a host of problems like the sky-high expectations of the youths who took part in the war of liberation, the impact of oil crisis on the fragile economy of the country, a broken-down infrastructure, the rivalry and conflict between the members of the armed forces repatriated from Pakistan, on the one hand, and those who had taken part in the liberation war, on the other, a similar conflict and rivalry in the civil administration, the conspiracy of the politicians opposed to independence, the conspiracy of the Mushtaq clique inside the party, Bongobondhu's inability to resist the conspiracy to estrange him from Tajuddin, the food crisis and the excesses of the extremist groups in politics. Despite all these, his short-lived administrative period became remarkable for certain outstanding successes like putting the infrastructure back on track in the shortest possible time, winning international diplomatic recognition from a large number of countries and sending members of the allied forces back home. But Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, always indifferent to his own safety, who considered everything else more valuable than his own life, who was blind in his love for his countrymen, and who had exhausted himself by working day and night, was suddenly killed by a sudden attack by his enemies in the black night of August 15, 1975. The Bangladesh of the war of liberation was simultaneously thrown off her orbit. History, then, began going backwards. That black night appears to be still lingering. But at long last streaks of bright light has started piercing the patches of darkness and appearing on the horizon. The person who had never for a moment thought for himself, but at all times thought of the national interests of Bangladesh— that unquestioned leader, the greatest Bengali of all times, Father of the Nation Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is now lying in a peaceful rural setting at Tungipara, far from the din and bustle of the city life, its authoritarianism and its biting quarrels over mean self aggrandisements. Those he fought for throughout his whole life have now kept him lying down in a common way but with a very great affection. They have been paying him respects all the time.

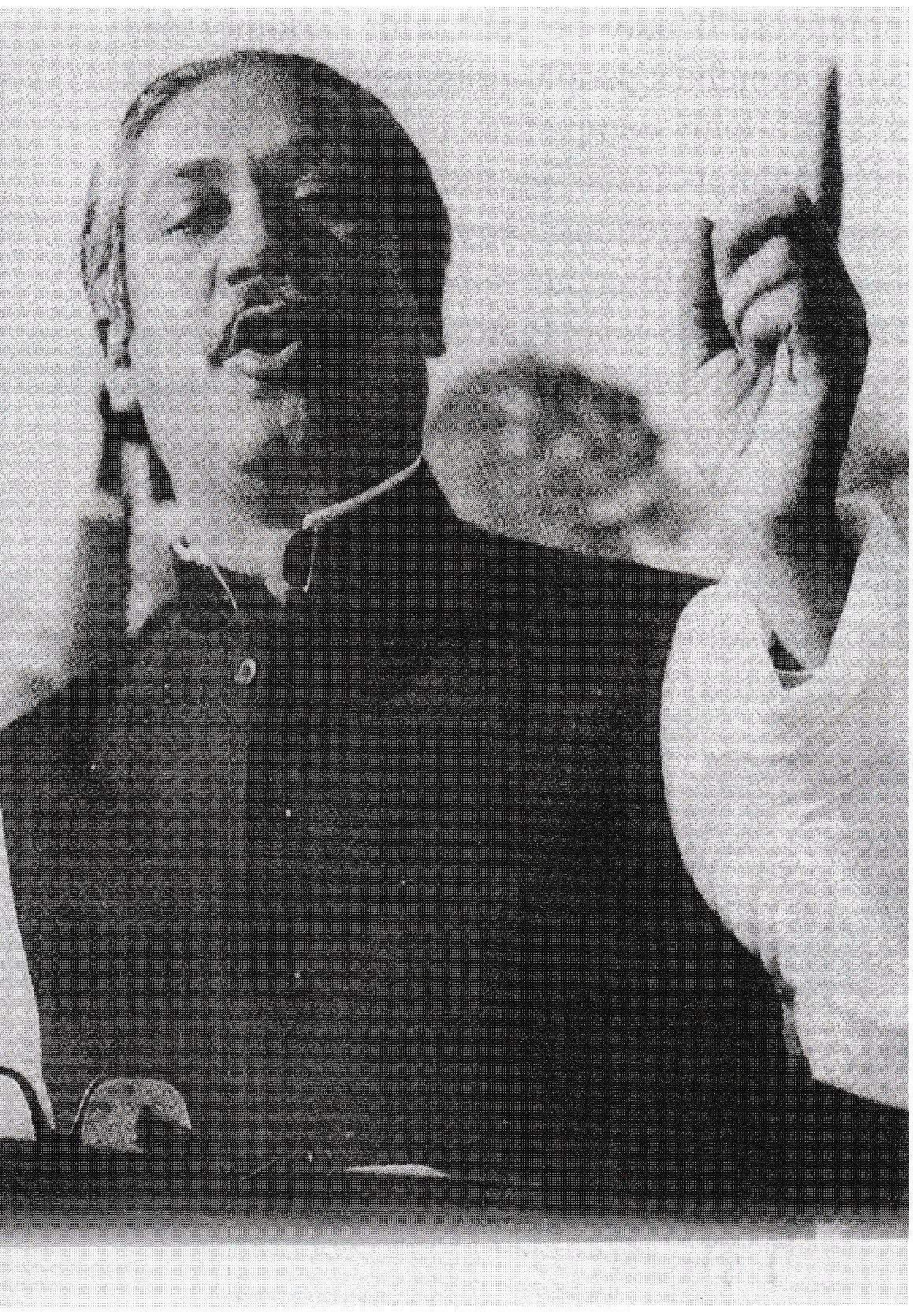
So not just verbal eulogies, nor useless hollow talks, but our earnest endeavour should now be to connect ourselves through our principles and works to all attempts at the welfare of the common man— a dream nourished by him throughout his whole life; and also how our thoughts on development can be tilted towards the welfare of the common man as also how we may make our development efforts more forceful.

We, of course, have got to go back to the days of the war of our liberation for that. We have to glean from his speeches the groups he spoke about more frequently. We have also to find out what kind of 'remarks' he would make at the time of giving administration decisions. Why has golden Bengal turned into a crematorium? He brought this question out of the deepest recesses of his soul. We have, therefore, after many days have rolled by and in these days of straight historical path, to follow the original spirit of the principles of development enunciated by him. We have still a long way to go. We have to undertake uninterrupted efforts to come back on to the road to the peoples' welfare-oriented as well as of the farmers' and the labourers' interest-serving development, as based on the constitutional provisions and as directed by him. Bongobondhu was deadly opposed to the idea of benefits only to a handful few. If we now truly want implementation of his ideals into practical works, we, then, have, of necessity, to adopt a people-oriented development strategy, inspired by a unique and unconventional sense of patriotism. Our policy makers have, to a great extent, been able to come out of the dragnet of foreign donors. They have been sending off fitting replies to the short-sighted and corruption-ridden policy makers by continually adopting different kinds of creative and highly potential initiatives. It may be said with certainty that Bongobondhu's people-oriented consciousness is a life-long companion to the Bengalis in their attempts at taking the country along the road to indigenous ways of development thereby dispelling all surrounding darkness. The sixth Five-year Plan and the Perspective Plan have been framed in the light of those thoughts and ideas of his. The greatest challenge of the time is to properly implement those Plans. We all have to join hands to meet the challenge. Let there be victory to Bongobondhu. Long live his dear Bangladesh.



The Dream of a Golden Bengal

Shahjahan Kibria



We may know of many surprising incidents from the childhood days of the father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, if we inquire after them. Sheikh Mujib's nickname was 'Khoka'. Khoka was returning home one day while he was a student of class four. He found an old, bare-bodied man on the way shivering in cold and invoking the name of Allah. He felt pity for the old man. He took off his own wrapper, wrapped it round the bare body of the old man and returned home.

It is another incident from another day. While returning home one rainy day with an umbrella over his head, Khoka found a classmate of his, also returning home, getting drenched in the rains as he had no umbrella of his own. He gave his umbrella away to the classmate and returned home drenched.

Khoka, while a student of class nine in Gopalganj Mission School, would take private lessons in the residence of a teacher of the school's, Rasaranjan Sengupta. On his way back home at the end of his lessons, Khoka found a boy walking along, bare-bodied. He took off his own vest, made the boy put it on and returned home with only the wrapper round his own body.

One may get an idea of the sensitivity of Mujib's mind from another incident. His father was at his work-place at Gopalganj and

Mujib was at their village home at Tungipara. There was then a famine-condition in the countryside because of poor harvest owing to natural disasters. Many people were suffering from near-starvation. Mujib, without telling anyone what he was doing, distributed among the poor the paddy stored in their own loft. On his father's return home, Mujib unabashedly confessed to him he had distributed the paddy among the poor as he could not stand their sufferings. The father knew his son better; he just kept silent.

While squatting down to eat during childhood, he would enquire whether or not all others at home had taken their meals. He could not outgrow this habit while he himself had grown up. He could not imagine taking food when someone or other at home had not yet done so. But showing just kindness to others does not, of itself, make a man great; it also requires a combination in him of a consciousness of protest against wrong-doing. One has to make a lot of sacrifices if one wants to keep this consciousness aloft. These sacrifices make people truly great.

The then Chief Minister of Bengal, Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq, along with his Minister of Commerce, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, had gone on an inspection of Gopalganj Mission School on January 16, 1938. The boys were suffering from many deprivations. The roof of the hostel building was dilapidated; rain-waters suck in through its many pores and cracks soaking the beds, books and other things of the inmates. The school authorities could not repair those for sheer lack of funds. But they did not put forth any request to the Ministers for its repair. Mujib, together with a few other fellow students, obstructed the way of Sher-e-Bangla and Suhrawardy and told them of their complaint. Mujib was a student of class vii at that time. Both Sher-e-Bangla and Suhrawardy praised him for his courage. Sher-e-Bangla had made a grant of Taka Twelve hundred only out of his discretionary fund for the repair of the hostel building.

Mujib felt attracted to all the religions since his adolescent days. His house tutor Shakhawatullah would narrate to him stories from different religions. He would say that the core message of all the religions is the same. His feelings of a deep sense of respect towards all religions also developed during adolescence. This turned him, in later life, into a believer in secular politics.

Another of his house tutors, Hamid Kazi, was a politically-conscious person. He was a supporter of anti-British movements. Mujib had learnt from him of the oppressions by the indigo planters. An adolescent Mujib felt inspired for the anti-British movements by hearing the stories of the coming of the English to this country, the treachery of Mir Jafar, the battle of the bamboo fort of Titu Mir, the rebellion of Fakir Majnu Shah, the self-sacrifice of adolescent Kshudiram for the country and the like inspired adolescent Mujib towards the anti-British movement.

Mujib got involved in political activities side by side his studies. He joined the All India Muslim Students' Federation in 1940. He attended the Bengal Provincial Conference at Sirajganj in 1942 as a delegate of the Faridpur district Muslim League. He got actively involved in the Pakistan movement in this year. He was elected a councillor of the Muslim League in 1943. Sheikh Mujib was elected unopposed the secretary-general of the Islamia college students' union in 1945. He joined the Muslim League provincial and



Bongobondhu discussing with common labourers

central convention in Delhi in 1946. He passed his B.A. examination from the Islamia college in 1947 and came to Dhaka after the creation of Pakistan. He got himself admitted into the department of Law in the University of Dhaka in 1948, and founded the Muslim Students' League on January 4. Bongobondhu became very vocal in his protest against Chief Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin's declaration in the Leguslative Assembly that ' the people of East Pakistan will accept Urdu as the state language'. An 'All party state language action committee' was formed on March 2 on the basis of Bongobondhu's proposal in a meeting in the Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall. The Action Committee called for a general strike for March 11 to protest the conspiracy of the Muslim League against Bengali language. Bongobondhu was arrested while protesting in front of the Secretariat on March 11.

After his release on March 15, a meeting of the All party state language Action Committee was convened on March 16 at the Dhaka University Amtala with Bongobondhu in the chair.

The Fourth Class employees of the Dhaka University started agitation in 1949 on various demands of theirs. The Dhaka University authorities imposed financial penalty on five students of the University, including Bongobondhu, on charges of providing leadership to this movement. Bongobondhu was expelled from the University for his refusal to pay the penalty. The others were exempted from the penalty on furnishing an undertaking. We find this uncompromising characteristic at every turn of his life. He was again arrested on October 14 for leading a hunger procession. We find Bongobondhu like this at the leadership of every democratic

movement, movement for autonomy and many other meetings for the independence of the country. He also played an active role in realising the demands of the police, the police that had arrested him so many times. He had advanced the independence movement of Bangladesh, step by step, in a very well-planned manner culminating in his declaration on March 7, 1971, at the Ramna Race Course (present-day Suhrawardy Udyan), 'our struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation; our struggle this time is the struggle for freedom'.

Two great qualities had found their ways in the character of Bongobondhu. One of these was— he had a deep sense of love and sympathy for human beings, and the other one was that he was always very active and vocal for the amelioration of those pains and difficulties. His voice of protest would always ring very loud against all wrongs and repressions. He was, like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, very kind on the one hand and totally uncompromising in the discharge of his duties, on the other.

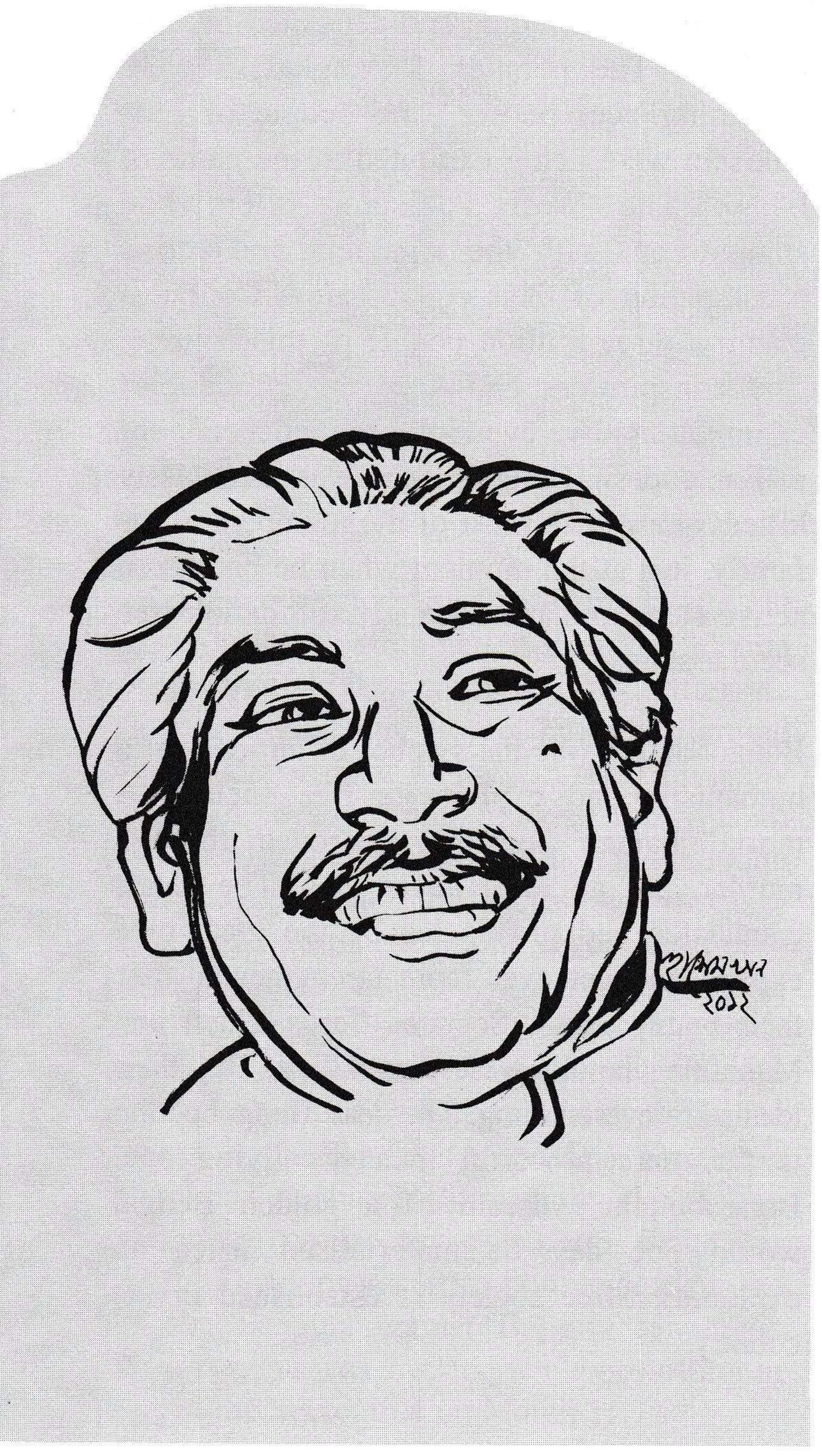
March 17 is the date of birth of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was born on this day in the village of Tungipara in Gopalganj district. He grew up, like the Nature in Bengal, sometimes in favourable conditions and sometimes unfavourable. His character made a synthesis of softness and hardness. The child that one day melted at the sight of a destitute old man by the way side, grew up to be as strong and fiery as a thunder for the independence of the country. His grave was dug beside his prison-cell in Pakistan, but he did not betray the cause of independence of his country even when he knew his death was but hours or days away.

Bongobondhu had thought, during the British times that driving away the British from this country will put an end to the exploitation of the people of the country. But he found, after the attainment of Pakistan, that the old process of exploitation had been going on, as before, in independent Pakistan. The Pakistani rulers have just replaced the British. The wealth of the country was looted and deposited in West Pakistan. The people of Bangladesh were becoming ever poorer. The people of East Pakistan were being exploited in the name of Islam. The West Pakistani rulers had slaughtered, with the abetment and active participation of their collaborators from this country, three million people of this country. The conspirators had kept this process of exploitation alive even after the independence of Bangladesh. Bongobondhu was mercilessly killed, along with most of the members of his family, just at the moment when he had taken active steps to materialise an exploitation-free secular state.

Bongobondhu was the symbol of an ideal of a humanistic and exploitation-free society. A mortal human body is destroyed through murder, but an ideal never dies. The ideals enunciated and propagated by the great men expand and get ever more strengthened after their bodily death. Socrates, Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi were also killed. But their ideals are ever-shining. The dead Bongobondhu is far more powerful than the living one. Bongobondhu's dream of a golden Bengal would one day be materialised when an exploitation-free society is established in the country.

In Remembrance of Bongobondhu

Razia Khan



It was the day of the eid immediately before the assassination of Bongobondhu. Film maker Ehtesham Rahman, like an elder brother to me, came with his family. He said: We would go to meet such a person today as fills one's mind to the brim even if one sees him from a distance. I accompanied them eagerly. I was standing among a milling crowd of visitors, almost flattened under pressure from all sides, at the official residence of Bongobondhu when a thunderous voice roared: Isn't that Razia?

Overwhelmed with surprise, I somehow muttered: Do you recall me? When he lodged in the Claridges hotel after his release from the prisons in Pakistan, I then happened to be in London. I had later returned home and joined my works in the Dhaka University— the heart full of happiness with the taste of independence. We had fled the country in terror in June, 1971. Breathing in freedom, it seemed, was very sweet. And satisfaction transcends all bounds when the leader of the country recalls a very ordinary person like me. We had been tenaciously sticking on to our stay in the country with massacres all around by the barbarians from Pakistan. An unknown boy had left a blue envelop in the office of my husband— send your wife away. They have been keeping a close watch on her. What more was needed! I boarded a plane with my two children on way to London with help from Aziz Mohammad Bhai. My life, on return,

found a new dimension with the presence of Bongobondhu in the country. A sweet stream of happiness, as though, was flowing amongst all those pains and destructions; but an end was put to that pleasure too early with the killing of our dear leader.

I had just finished taking my class at the university; dust from the chalk pencil was still on my fingers. I suddenly remembered that was the birthday of Bongobondhu. An unstoppable urge of a kind made me restless. I took a rickshaw and presented myself at the entry gate of Gonobhaban without any appointment. I was taken to the first floor within five minutes of disclosing my name. The Finance Minister, Dr. Azizur Rahman Mallick was with Bongobondhu in his room. Dr. Mallick and his wife, while I was at Rajshahi, would protect me as one of their own.

Bongobondhu formally stood up to receive me. I knew he was extremely busy; so I took my leave just after conveying him birthday wishes. He saw me off right up to the door. That was the last meeting. So much of generosity and warmth of heart, especially from the Head of the State to an ordinary citizen, was unbelievable. Many men, truly inconsequential, especially when compared with him, show neglect and disregard and pretend not to see even when I am in front of them. I will never forget that surprising meeting. Such a refined treatment as I got from a great man like him was beyond my expectation. That is why he is still alive in my consciousness. I pay him my deepest respects from this side for his having united my poor countrymen and daring them dream of independence. People of different ages and classes, inspired as they were by his leadership, laid down their lives in the war of liberation; and we could not keep that leader amongst us. The dimension of this failure and shame is beyond description.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude to those who have taken the initiative to publish this book in remembrance of Bongobondhu from Vienna, Austria. I wish and pray for their endeavour to be crowned with beauty and success and enriched with a profundity of intellect.

Precious little has been written on Bongobondhu; intensive research is also needed. We heard of one episode from the days of his youth from the deceased actor Abul Khair. He had come one day— we were suffused with joy at his unannounced arrival. He told that nobody would go to the room of Bongobondhu's tutor once when the latter was infected with smallpox. He would bathe his teacher with warm water and change his bed linen. How great a heart is needed for a very young man to take the risk to his own life to serve such a person with dangerously infectious disease! That fearless young man was able to bring lights to the hopeless eyes of his teacher. The arrival of actor Abul Khair that day appeared to me auspicious; I would remain ignorant of an unknown chapter of such an excellent character.

Joy Bangla, long live Bongobondhu. And long live all his dreams— dreams we have to fulfil unitedly. He awakened the nation that once was timid and backward, and proved successful in converting them to freedom fighters and that, too, while he was far away. It was possible only because of his towering personality and the inspiration provided by his epoch-making leadership. That one name used to work as an infallible mantra. That name is still our protective talisman.

Getting to Know Bongobondhu

Shamsuzzaman Khan

It was the year 1974. An opportunity suddenly arose of meeting Bongobondhu. I remember the date and it is also recorded in my diary. It was 9:00 in the morning on February 3. The venue was to be his Dhanmondi residence. We presented ourselves right on time. The party comprised the then Director-General of Bangla Academy, Dr. Mazharul Islam, writer-journalist and our friend, Rahat Khan, Zillur Rahman of the cultural wing of the self-same Bangla Academy and me.

There was then a large gathering of people in his ground floor drawing room. Bongobondhu had a lungi and Panjabi on with a brown shawl wrapped around his upper body; and he had a tobacco pipe in one hand and his favourite Erinmore tobacco pouch in the other. The face of the truly life-size man with a very strong personality started beaming with a bright smile when he saw us. He said to the others, 'No, no more talks today; you may go now; I gave them an appointment beforehand. I have some urgent discussions with them in private.' The roomful of people, whether willingly or otherwise, started exiting. He said, No, we won't sit here. Someone or the other would then surely come. I want to open my heart to you.

He was looking very handsome and lively. He rose and started moving slowly towards his study. We were following him as if spell-bound. Once inside the study, he moved closer to a bookshelf, and pulled out in a practised hand a volume by Mao Zedong. He then turned around to Dr. Islam, and said smiling, 'Not just Rabindranath, I also attentively read Nazrul, Sukanto, or even Mao Zedong.' Someone from amongst us said, 'The role of China during our war of liberation—' He did not allow him to finish that sentence. He said, 'These are two different things. Mao is a very great leader. He has fought a lot in his life-time. One has got to understand his life and thoughts. He brought independence to a vast but undeveloped country. That country has made such remarkable progress despite its having such a huge population. I have been trying to realise how that could be brought about.'

A shade of pain suddenly flitted over his face. He remained silent for a while. Then he broke silence, 'Politics is very complicated, cruel. So many unnatural things happen because of this. Otherwise, there could be no logic whatsoever for China not to support us. China has committed a grave wrong. Forget it, professor, let's sit down and talk.'

Bongobondhu sat down. Professor Islam and we also did the same. He said, 'Now, professor, tell me what you have come to tell.' Dr. Islam replied, 'Bongobondhu, we have taken initiatives from the Bangla Academy to organise an international literary meet. Renowned litterateurs from different countries

will attend. We want you as the Chief Guest in the conference.'

He appeared completely nonplussed. His reply: What do I understand of literature? What will I tell there! Please make a senior and universally revered litterateur or scholar do the job— the regard for the conference will go up. That used to be done before. I did, during my student days, attend a literary conference or two. No, I don't remember any political leader to have ever inaugurated any one of those— he smiled at this point, and to make the atmosphere a little light, he said, 'I read Rabindranath and love him. My sole capital in literature is this far and no farther. I feel hesitant to go around and mix with all those big names in literature, painting and scholarship with this little capital of mine.

He was told, it was the first national literary conference of independent Bangladesh. It has an altogether different significance. The conference will gain international reputation if you inaugurate it. Besides, it will also be a reflection of your and your government's stand with regard to democracy, freedom of expression and humanism.

He thought for a little while, and then said, 'Alright, I'll attend. Also please extend respectful invitation to my friend, poet Jasimuddin, and Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin. And please prepare a small speech for me and show it to me beforehand.'

Dr. Islam, Khondker Mohammad Ilias, Santosh Gupta, Rahat Khan and I together prepared that speech. Anyway, finishing the matter of the conference in a short while, he said, 'You people are litterateurs, journalists, cultural activists and researchers. You will probably write, some time in the future, on Bangladesh or on the war of liberation. I, therefore, want to tell you something today. He told all about how he had decided on the name 'Bangladesh' and he also told that he had been thinking of making the country independent since the decade of the 50s (of the last century). A dream of deciding on 'O my golden Bengal, I love thee' as the national anthem of independent Bangladesh would always burn like a light inside his chest, he said. He also informed he would feel thrilled whenever he listened to this song. I do not quite remember whether it was Rahat Khan or I who had raised the issue of Agartala Conspiracy Case. He laughed again and said, 'What conspiracy! Call it an attempt at our freedom. He then gave a detailed description on the matter and provided explanations, where needed. About our independence in 1971, he said, 'I declared independence in the night of March 25 (1971). That declaration was sent to all district Headquarters through the wireless system at the Police Headquarters. I also had established contacts with India through various channels. Otherwise, you would not so easily get arms and other help. We asked, 'But why did you allow yourself to be caught by them?'

He replied, 'Quite a few strands of thoughts worked in my mind with regard to this matter. First, they would kill many more people if they failed to arrest me; secondly, internationally, we would prove to be secessionists and an Indian lackey, and that would cut down on international sympathy for us and many more countries would nourish suspicion about our movement. I would say one more thing; I do not know how you would take it; nor can I say whether or not the professor would agree with me; but it's my

firm conviction that as my captivity in the hands of the Pakistanis increased worries and anxieties in the minds of my grief-stricken Bengalis as it helped people build a larger-than-life image of mine in their hearts. That was a great strength behind the war of liberation. I would remain just a life-sized Mujib were I in the government-in-exile. My captivity in their hands transformed me into an immensely powerful leader extremely popular and dear to all and sundry in Bangladesh. People quite carelessly and often with smile on their lips laid down their lives uttering my name. What an unfailing weapon was this slogan 'Joy Bangla'! I would transform into a still greater symbol if they would kill me. The people of Bangladesh would fight more militantly. Moreover, I took steps as I deemed fit in my understanding of the situation keeping in mind a respect to my nation that gave me such a dignified status, while my countrymen and the competent colleagues carried on the war of liberation.'

I ventured to ask, at this stage of our discussion, if we may raise issues more freely. He replied, 'I'm now sitting with you after having bid goodbye to all the others. You're people from the Bangla Academy; you write, you research; it is you who I can open my heart to. These will be of much use if you write history in future. You'll be able to write true history.'

We said, 'Values and structures of society appear to have collapsed. Anarchy and frustration are spreading all around. Religious communalism appears to be on the increase. Hijacking and highway robbery are making people fearful.'

He remained quiet for a little while; it appeared he was deep in thoughts. He then beamed in to a bright smile, took in hand his pipe, and gave a few quick puffs at it. He finally opened his mouth, 'You've studied a lot and understand a lot as well. But it seems as if you can't see certain realities of your own country. The country has just passed through such a devastating war. War makes a topsy-turvy of human values. It makes people reckless and unrestrained. That has also happened in our country. Hijacking and robbery have increased; rent-seekers have increased. These can't be eliminated in a day. It's a new situation. Many people have not deposited their fire-arms. The Islamist parties have all along been indulging in malicious propaganda against me— publishing anonymous or pseudonymous booklets. What the misguided faction of JSD (Nationali Socialist Party) not doing in the name of revolution! The miscreants are setting the jute godowns afire thereby weakening the economy further. They attack the police stations and looting away the fire-arms. Any other devastated country in our position would not be able to do in three years what we have done. No one praises us for that. What a state have the invading Pakistanis left the country in? The country was in ruins, as if a crematorium. What more shall I say! Sir(Moulana Bhashani) is a respected elder to me. The communal persons and parties have just been eagerly making use of his speeches and statements. They are laughing a devil's laughter using him as a shield. Seeing all these all around, I often feel like handing over powers to Tajuddin and retreat to a small shack in Bhola or Monpura.' His voice then sounded slightly aggrieved and frustrated.

We also became temporarily stupefied seeing this pain and frustration taking a sudden grip on the leader. Dr. Islam said, 'We're there,

Bongobondhu; there are thousands of your workers and supporters throughout the entire country; why do you get frustrated? Please be strong and send out your orders.' He replied, 'My dear professor, Bangladesh is a difficult territory. It seems I'm riding a tiger. Yes, I can, I can fix it all. But what can I do, whom shall I apprehend, everyone has family and friends. You'll then come with request to let them off. But it can't be tolerated for long. I have to do something really hard. I wanted to ride roughshod over them— over the rent-seekers and wrong-doers. Some of us did not like it. They criticised me. Where do I go now! That's why I say, I want to leave it all behind and go to a retreat at Bhola or Monpura.'

We now raise economic questions. He said, 'I had formed the Planning Commission with the best economists of the country. They could not materialise my dreams into reality. There is really a very wide gap between theory and the reality. They (the members of the planning commission) are good men, very learned, but they probably don't have an intimate enough knowledge about our rural people or their economy. I speak of golden men. Our peasants and cultivators are the golden men. They put in strenuous efforts throughout the whole year to produce crops, build houses and pedal boats. It is because of their labour that we lead a life of comfort and luxury and dream of becoming still more luxurious. Like the other working class people, our coolies and day-labourers, blacksmiths and potters and our fishermen have been keeping our society and the economy going. Everything would collapse without these people. We have talked of socialism, of cooperatives. I don't know if I would be successful given the conditions of the country and the ravenous appetite for material possessions of our middle class



people. But I am trying. I have extended a quick recognition to Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh is such a great leader and the gem of a man. I have been trying to learn from what they are doing. We may not fare very well with the establishment of heavy industries. I want to take up small and agriculture-based projects. I want to break out of the colonial framework. But that would be a really tough job. Even some of our MPs are against putting a ceiling of landholding at 100 bighas.'

He suddenly became somewhat excited, it seemed. He looked at Rahat and me and said, 'You must not be frustrated. Listen very attentively to what I now say, Mr. professor. Bengalis are very poor and distressed, in my language, 'paupers'. Whatever history have I read of these people, I have known they continue to be paupers and distressed for the last thousand years. He has no means, no wealth. And (they have) no cash in hand. I have read a novel called 'Kolkatar Kachhei' a few days back (it is a novel in Bengali by Gajendra Kumar Mitra of West Bengal, India— translator's note). That novel also depicts a situation showing extreme paucity of cash for the Bengalis. What piteous entreaties



(From R-L) Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, D. Mazharul Islam, Shamsuzzaman Khan, M. Zillur Rahman & Rahat Khan at Bongobondhu's 32, Dhanmondi residence.

Photo reproduction by M A Taher

would they make for just one poisha! Bengalis, it seems, were paupers even during the reign of Shaista Khan (the famous governor of Bengal province during the height of Mughal powers in India. His governorship is on record to have had supplies of essentials in abundance and they were available at an unbelievably cheap price. —translator's note). He could not buy anything even though they were very cheap. Dear professor, they are (meaning us) boys of just the other day. They won't understand. But you and I do know. Bengalis, especially the peasant Muslim Bengalis, would not have any cash in hand. We used to eat a full stomach of freshly-cooked rice only during the harvesting season. And some cash money would come to the family's coffers during the jute harvesting season. Our fathers and uncles would buy hilsha fish with some of that money. They would also buy saris for the mothers and unties and lungis for themselves. We would also get new clothes only once in a year— during the jute growing season. This is the economic condition of the Bengali Muslims.'

Our peasants and cultivators are the golden men. They put in strenuous efforts throughout the whole year to produce crops, build houses and pedal boats. It is because of their labour that we lead a life of comfort and luxury and dream of becoming still more luxurious. Like the other working class people, our coolies and day-labourers, blacksmiths and potters and our fishermen have been keeping our society and the economy going.

Think of an independent-sovereign Bangladesh, keeping those conditions in mind. The Bengalis have, in reality, become independent for the first time now. And cash money is also coming in the hands of the Bengalis for the first time. The matter is of great significance. There is an excitement for this. The Bengalis, especially the younger generation, are now unbound in spirit and behaviour; they are now bewildered by a very strong and sudden shock of social changes. Some of them are buying cars, others are puffing at 555 brand cigarettes, and still others are resorting to all types of anti-social activities including snatching and hijacking. A sudden taste of this unbridled freedom and cash-money-in-hand have made many of them puzzled. They would gradually be made conscious of their responsibilities by creating state institutions and by enacting necessary Acts and rules. It would be possible to bring them under control, must be brought under control. The country does not belong to the middle class only; my poor and distress do have a rightful share of this country as well. This latter group alone has made the real sacrifice. Economic emancipation will come only if I can bring about a change in their conditions. My countrymen call me 'the Father of the Nation'; so many of them have laid down their lives. My responsibilities are immense. Please help me, give me golden men and I will build a golden Bangladesh.'

Our discussion with him that day ended like this. He called in his cameraman Alam. He inquired after whether or not the new camera he had bought him was working well. He later had a group photograph with us. He instructed Alam, 'You'll reach them copies of this photograph at Bangla Academy. It has a different kind of importance.'

No, Mr. Alam never gave us any copy of any photograph. Despite making many rounds to him, Zillur Rahman could not get a copy of that photograph from Mr. Alam. All of us had disobeyed Bongobondhu's directives and orders. But that hearty and simple man could not disbelieve anybody. He would probably keep in store a great faith in that famous line from Rabindranath, 'It is a sin to lose faith in humans'.That was his undoing. He also believed Dalim and his gang. He allowed them to come to his house and go around to see everything.

TWO

Another opportunity opened before us to meet Bongobondhu for the second time and that, too, for a piece of work relating to Bangla Academy. Dr. Nilima Ibrahim was then the Director-General of Bangla Academy— our respected Nilima Apa. She had gone on a courtesy call to Bongobondhu after getting her appointment to the Academy. She had taken a few senior officers of Bangla Academy along with her. I was also a member on that team. Our colleague and short story writer, Abul Hasanat, was also there in the group. Hasanat was at that time very aggrieved with Bongobondhu. He had also made some reflections of that unhappiness in his short story collection 'It's the father who's responsible'. We told him, 'Politics is a difficult game. One may not understand everything if one does not observe things from within.'

He did not feel re-assured at what we had said. So, I asked him to join our team and to go there. You will tell him, face to face, the reasons behind your complaints and offended feelings. Abul Hasanat replied, 'Fine, I go there, tell him of my grievances and lose the job!'

I replied, 'I will take the responsibility of saving your job.'

He had finally agreed and we went to Bongobondhu's Dhanmondi residence under the leadership of Nilima Apa, and met him at his ground floor drawing room. Dr. Nilima Ibrahim exchanged greetings with him first. Bongobondhu, then, made inquiries after the ways the Academy had been running. The matter of non-compliance with rules and regulations in the past came up for discussion at one stage. Bongobondhu was quick enough to get the hint, and, without mentioning any name, said, descending into colloquial Bengali, 'Ya, sissy, all these are my faults. There has always to be a scapegoat!' He muttered under his breath, 'What else can I do? Whoever I entrust with some responsibility creates problems at his end.'

Dr. Ibrahim requested for his overall assistance and goodwill for the Academy. Bongobondhu replied, ' Bangla Academy will face no problem.'

He was extremely busy that day. We concluded our discussion, standing. I took Hasanat along and stood before him. He placed a hand on my shoulder and I felt as it were the touch of my father. He stretched the other hand and was softly poking one finger on Hasanat's chest while talking. I looked at Hasanat's eyes. Those were then the eyes mellowed with loveable softness. He had become completely softened with emotions. He did not say anything whatsoever. He just kept on listening to what Bongobondhu had been saying.

After coming out at the end of the interview, I said, ' Hi Hasanat, why didn't you say anything?' Hasanat replied, ' He is a political wizard. He made me completely charmed and overwhelmed. I just couldn't bring out even a word from my mouth. He just turned me into a molten material with his towering personality and his peculiarly own brand of intimacy.'

THREE

My third meeting with Bongobondhu took place in June, 1975, in his office at the time in Ganobhaban in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Professor Kabir Chowdhury had taken me to him. We went to meet him to discuss certain issues relating to our impending visit to

Moscow in a few days under the leadership of Professor Chowdhury. We were going to attend the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference. The team comprised four persons— the other two were Khandkar Mohammad Ilias and Mostafa Sarwar. Such a large contingent as we had formed generally does not go from a small country like ours. Two would be enough. But the party got enlarged at the desire of Bongobondhu. The Soviet Embassy wanted to be sure if Bongobondhu really wanted such a large team to go. Alexander Parsin a second secretary of that Embassy had come once to the President's secretariat to discuss this matter.

We found him pacing up and down in his room when Professor Kabir Chowdhury and I entered there. He, of course, proceeded forward and very warmly held his hands, took him to the sofa and made him sit there. I also sat down. Some members of the Students' League were there inside his room at that time. One of them told Bongobondhu, 'You attended the Students' Union conference also.'

He again became excited, and said, 'Why shouldn't I go? Am I the leader of you alone? I belong to all. I would otherwise not be able to be the Father of the Nation. He also said, 'I cannot always be satisfied at what you do. The members of the Students' Union are industrious, dedicated and self-sacrificing. They have identified themselves with the production process by making seedbeds at the Suhrawardy Udyan. I am going to form only one nation-wide political party; the self-sacrificing, honest people will push forward to the front ranks of that party through their sincere works; the worthless and the slogan-mongering people will fall behind. Just see, I have made Mr. Altaf a Minister. It is a matter of luck to get a person like him.'

The boys fell silent. He said, 'You may go now. I have an urgent discussion with the professor.'

He turned to me and said, 'I have briefed the three others beforehand. You were not there with them. Professor Chowdhury has done a good job by bringing you along. You are the youngest member of the team. You will follow the orders of the leader. Take care you do not harm the good name of the country. And take some of our papers with you. Farash (Farashuddin, his private Secretary at that time) and his team will make necessary arrangements for that.'

He then turned to Professor Kabir Chowdhury and said, 'Mr. Chowdhury, what an irony of fate, I joined and led one movement after another throughout my whole life for the establishment of democracy, suffered imprisonment so many times, and now I am going to form just a single party. The works of BAKSAL will start in full swing from August next. I did not want it, but I am forced into doing it. Different pro-Pakistani Islamist parties, the so-called armed peoples' Army of JSD (Bengali acronym for Nationali Socialist Party— translator's note), sarbahara (proletariat) party and the like are about to cause a break-down of the political and administrative stability of the country. They have been unjustifiably killing our people. Finding no other alternative, I am forming BAKSAL as a political platform of like-minded people, who are otherwise pro-liberation in mentality. I will not admit anyone to BAKSAL, who is either anti-socialism, or anti-liberation or anti-secularism. One more thing; this arrangement has been made not to perpetuate my powers but to save the country. I have, in my time, enjoyed a lot of power many have never even dreamt of in life. And

that power is the love of the people and their unprecedented support for me. Listen to me, professor, and you there, you also note it down, this one-party system of mine will be temporary. I will again go back to democracy once I save the country from the threatening counter-revolution. That would be a multi-party democracy. But I will try to make sure that my democracy does not become the democracy of the exploiters; and that our depressed people savour the taste of democracy.'

He said, 'I was advised not to pardon the collaborators and the Razakars. I was also given a very strong advice— Shamsuzzaman probably knows— to destroy the counter-revolutionaries. I did not do that, not when I fully knew of their heinous misdeeds. Images of innumerable faces of parents, wives and children floated before my eyes. I thought, will not Allah's throne shake, then? I wanted to be humanistic. I have not destroyed so many families. I could not do that when I am the creator of this Nation. History will one day judge whether I was right or wrong.'

There was no compulsion to joining BAKSAl. Many people did not join the party. Bongobondhu did not take any exception whatsoever to his. The journalists appeared to compete amongst themselves to join it. Many institutions and organisations lined up with garlands in hand waiting to join. But poet Shamsur Rahman, Nirmalendu Goon, Shaukat Osman, Abu Jafar Shamsuddin— did not join. I had seen late (president) Ziaur Rahman and his wife, in a meeting at the BAKSAL office, sitting beside Matia Chowdhury. Mostafa Sarwar conducted that meeting. They also enjoyed the cultural show at the end of the meeting. Their photograph was also published in the newspapers the next day.

Taken from the book 'Sheikh Mujib ekti lal golap'.

From Tungipara To Tungipara

Subrata Barua

I first saw Bongobondhu direct from a somewhat closer range in February, 1971. He had come to inauguarate that year's immortal 21st February programmes organised by the Bangla Academy. I do not clearly remember, but, I think, that year's programmes extended over a period of three days only. The dais was open on all sides. There was also no awning overhead. The Awami League had won a simple majority in the National Assembly elections held nearly two months and a half ago. The President and the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan, Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan had declared Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was going to be the next Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Martial Law in the country was coming to an end. A democratic dispensation was coming back again. There was an expectation of the coming of good days in everybody's mind. People would be able to freely express their thoughts. The elected representatives of the people would again be seated in the positions of power. And the country would march along the road to progress and development.

But would that really happen? There existed an apprehension of the dream turning into a nightmare side by side with the expectation for good days. Bongobondhu stood up to deliver his speech. I do not fully remember what he had then said; nor am I supposed to do so. But two things very clearly stand out in my mind. Bongobondhu had said he was not a scholar, nor an intellectual. He was a common man. And he practiced politics taking common men with him. He did not know how to practise it straitjacketed by the theories of pundits' based on calculations and measurements. It is the common man who is the universe of his politics. All his endeavours in politics are directed to their welfare.

He had said another thing. That related to his feelings of fear, apprehension and anxiety. He said the months of February and March are the months for the spilling of the Bengalis' blood. Winning an election was not the last thing. Conspiracies were afoot to scuttle the results of the elections. Conspiracies were being hatched to stop the Bengalis from occupying the powers in the Centre. Everyone, therefore, has to remain vigilant and careful. We all have to remain prepared at all times so that the struggle to realise the demands of the people of East Pakistan does not end in failure.

History bears testimony to the fact that the apprehensions of Bongobondhu at the time were not unfounded. The existence of the conspiracy came to light just in a matter of ten or eleven days. But the conspiracy to keep the people of Bangladesh under wraps was not successful, and those very people could not be silenced through intimidation, a carnival of destruction or genocide. Bongobondhu had declared in that emotionally aroused gathering

of lakhs of people on March 7 (1971) in (the Ramna) Race Course, 'The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation; the struggle this time is the struggle for freedom.' That declaration of his became a reality through the sacrifices of three million lives, the loss of honour by nearly a lakh of our mothers and sisters and the valiant resistance by farmers-labourers-students-commoners of Bangladesh.

Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman provided the leadership in the struggle of the people of the country for attaining an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. He was under captivity in the prisons of Pakistan— companionless and alone— during the war of our liberation. The military junta of Pakistan had incarcerated him and kept him completely cut off from the outside world in order to pulverise his mental strength. He was unable to know anything of the outside world. He could not even know what were happening in Bangladesh at that time.

But the absent Bongobondhu in those days was the true leader of the nine-month-long war of liberation. His seventh-



Sheikh Hasina praying for salvaltion of her father, also the Father of the Nation, sitting beside the grave at Tungipara

March-speech got transformed into the mantra for the inspiration of the people of this country. He was the Chief of the country— the President— during the period of the war of liberation. Syed Nazrul Islam carried out the functions of the acting President in absence of Bongobondhu.

The principal force behind the attainment of freedom was the courageous leadership of Shekh Mujib. The acknowledgement of this is enshrined in the constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh. He is the principal architect of this country— the Father of the Nation.

This man was the son of an ordinary middle class farmer's family from the village of Tungipara in Gopalganj under Faridpur. He possessed very intimate knowledge of the daily struggle for existence of the poor, working people of Bangladesh. The centre of his politics was the lives of these very people. And the strength of his politics was his love for them. That politics, again, was inseparably tied to the real lives of those ordinary men and women. That was the reason why that

politics never got bogged down in the quagmire of selfishness; nor was it ever circumscribed by the lifeless and conventional ways.

He got himself involved in political activities from his very student days. Never in life could he sever that tie again in life, because he actually got tied down not to politics but the love of the people. And he really knew that the bondage of love is a cruel one, and its price has to be paid for by sacrificing one's life.

And in politics? There also he had his unique set of characteristics. He continually nurtured himself into more and more maturity, came out to wider and wider arenas and effortlessly got himself connected to ever newer demands of newer times. And these acts of his getting connected were never motivated by any trickery, special motives, and he even lacked the conventional 'intelligence' of making hay as many others would do.

He had emerged out of a typically peaceful and undisturbed village of Bengal called Tungipara with its tall, shadowy trees, and twittering birds nestling in their spreading branches. He was bathed in the love of his people. He wanted to live for the people and among the people. But he was finally defeated at the hands of destiny. He, along with most of the members of his family, was killed in the morning of August 15, 1975, at the hands of a few misguided members of the Army of the very independent Bangladesh as a result of a conspiracy hatched by the reactionary exploiters. The bullets of the gang of killers did not spare even the women and the children that night.

But the absent Bongobondhu in those days was the true leader of the nine-month-long war of liberation. His seventh-March-speech got transformed into the mantra for the inspiration of the people of this country. He was the Chief of the country— the President— during the period of the war of liberation. Syed Nazrul Islam carried out the functions of the acting President in absence of Bongobondhu.

Where did all this blind rage originate from? What offence did this super-hero of the

Bengalis commit? Was his love for the people and the soil of Bangladesh the sole offence? The conspiring gang of killers took his dead body that day for burial back to his birthplace Tungipara. They had wanted to keep him permanently silenced under the soil of an isolated village. What a cruel irony— that self-same Tungipara is now the new place of pilgrimage for the Bengalis.

Taken from a Souvenir published by the Bangladesh Shishu Academy on the occasion of National Children's day.

That Adolescent From Gopalganj

Anwara Syed Haq

The name of this country of ours is Bangladesh. It is a sovereign, independent country. The national flag of this country is made up of red and green. It turns into a sight worth seeing when, on the independence and the victory day, that flag flutters atop every house and building, vehicle and in every field. The birth of Bangladesh as a sovereign, independent country in the map of the world took place only on March 26, 1971. The country, on that account, is probably not that old. But it really does not matter; this country has, even from before its birth, a very glorious past. And that is the birth of this country through an armed struggle. It means that Bangladesh was born by defeating the Pakistani armed forces in war.

It needs a mention that this Bangladesh of ours was previously named East Pakistan. And so we were then East Pakistanis. But we were a very unhappy Bengali Nation despite our being East Pakistanis. Because we had another part and that was located on the West of India, and called West Pakistan.

The people of that West Pakistan were very selfish. They used to keep East Pakistan in their grip by force. They would take away all the money and wealth of this country to West Pakistan. The distance between these two countries was one thousand miles. The huge country of India was and still is between west Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh. Communications between these two parts, therefore, were not good enough.

Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a very renowned leader from East Pakistan. He would always protest the selfish behaviour of West Pakistan. The Bengalis of East Pakistan launched a movement under his leadership to get their rightful share from the West Pakistanis. The ruling clique of West Pakistan did not look upon this movement favourably at all. They had implicated Sheikh Mujib in a trumped-up case and got him arrested. The name of this case was: Agartala Conspiracy Case. But the government of Pakistan was forced to withdraw this case in the face of a very strong protest from the people of East Pakistan.

Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, by that time, became known as the unchallenged leader of Bangladesh. His courage, strength, patience and honesty got currency as a by-word in every household in East Bengal. And he had been carrying on with his efforts to bring in smiles on the faces of the Bengalis. His ever-smiling face, bold movements, clear-cut speech and limitless courage was a matter of everyday discussion in Bengali households and greatly cherished there.

But how could Bongobondhu cover such a long distance? Who provided him with the courage to do so? He began suffering imprisonment from the early days of his life.

He passed most of his life, especially the golden days of his youth, in jail. Never did he give any undertaking to the government of Pakistan, nor signed any bond at their dictate, to get release from prison. He could never imagine, even in dreams, to gain any favour from any one at the cost of his country's interests. But who provided him with this courage? To speak the truth, he inherited this boldness by birth. He was, from his childhood, rather obstinate, reckless and completely unbending in favour of the truth. He was very attracted to games and sports. He could not carry on his studies for a few years as he was afflicted by a serious eye-disease, but that could not stop him from learning from nature as to how to become a true man.



Around this time, when he had become somewhat grown up, he attracted the attention of a very famous leader of Bangladesh, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy.

That was a very interesting episode. It happened way back in 1938. The then Chief Minister of Bengal, A. K. Fazlul Huq, and the Commerce and Rural Development Minister of his Cabinet, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, once went to inspect Gopalganj Mission School together. Sheikh Mujib was then a student in that school. Rain waters used to seep in through the pores of the dilapidated roof of the students' hostel. It was not repaired despite many applications to the authorities to do so. After these two ministers had inspected

Sheikh Mujib turned into the unquestioned leader of the people in Bangladesh. People would often go crazy to have a glimpse of him.

Ayub Khan got frightened of this popularity of Sheikh Mujib. He was then the Military President of Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib was hurriedly put behind the bars. It was then 1968. Thirty-four other leaders were arrested along with him.

the school and were returning to Gopalganj Dak-Bungalow, they found an adolescent boy was standing in front, obstructing their passage. A few other students were with that adolescent boy.

—Who are you, what do you want, Why are you obstructing our way? —asked the Chief Minister, A. K. Fazlul Huq. Both the Ministers were surprised at the boldness of the boy. When everybody around was rather intimidated by their presence, who could this boy be?

—My name is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sir. And the others here are my classmates. We have come to you, Sirs, with a complaint.

—Complaint, what complaint? -Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy eagerly asked.

—Sir, rain waters seep through the pores of our hostel building. That water get into our rooms and drench our books, bed, etc. —said Sheikh Mujib.

—But why this complaint to us? You have a school committee to look after things like these. —said the Chief Minister.

—We applied to them many times, Sir, but to no effect. The authorities do not pay any heed to our complaints.

Both the Ministers were amazed at this bold statement of Sheikh Mujib. He is a truly dare-devil boy, it seems.

Both the Ministers returned to the Dak-Bungalow. The Chief Minister, A. K. Fazlul Huq, thereafter, declared he was donating a sum of Taka 1,200/00 only from his discretionary fund for the repair of the roof of Gopalganj Mission School hostel. The Commerce Minister, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, sprang a still greater surprise. He sent out a small slip of paper to Sheikh Mujib with a request to meet him in the Bungalow that night. He then discussed many things with him. Suhrawardy, for some reason or other, felt that adolescent of a boy bears in him the spark he had been looking for throughout his political life in his heir. He gave Sheikh Mujib his Kolkata address and asked him to meet him (Suhrawardy) there.

Sheikh Mujib also thus found his mentor, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy. Later history bears testimony to the fact that Shaheed Suhrawardy did not commit any mistake in selecting his competent follower. The grave responsibility of bringing about full freedom for Bengal was, as if, unknowingly, handed down

to the youthful Sheikh Mujib of Bengal by his political mentor, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy.

Sheikh Mujib passed his Entrance Examination, the equivalent to the present-day Secondary School Certificate Examination, in 1942. He then passed his B. A. in 1947 from the Kolkata Islamia College. He was by then a solely-devoted worker of the Muslim League. He was at the fore-front of all the movements and agitations started or carried on by the Muslim League during those days. People around him were often amazed at the level of his inspiration and endeavours. Sheikh Mujib's presence in a meeting would, in itself, enhance its importance. But he was till then just a young man.

India was divided into three parts in 1947. Two parts on two sides of India became East and West Pakistan. And the larger part in the middle became India. The British so cunningly partitioned the sub-continent as to perpetuate rivalry and misunderstanding here, because the British would rule over the entire Indian sub-continent. The government of Pakistan, immediately after independence, sent Sheikh Mujib to jail. Getting out of the jail in the same year, he became one of the organisers of the Students' League. Politics, gradually, took the centre-stage in his life. He had come to Dhaka from Kolkata in 1947 and got himself admitted into the Department of Law in the Dhaka University.. But he was again sent to jail when he had come forward to lead the Fourth class employees of the University in their movement to realise their demands. He could come out on submission of an undertaking to the authorities, but he did not do so.

All the activities of the Muslim League, after the attainment of independence, turned selfish. They became lackeys to the government of Pakistan in place of working for the interests of the people. A. K. Fazlul Huq, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, losing faith in the Muslim League, formed the Jukto Front (United Front) in East Pakistan in 1954, and authored a 21-point charter of demands for the protection of the interests of East Pakistan or Bengal. The young leader, Sheikh Mujib, played an active part in the formulation of that charter of demands. He, then, accompanied the leaders and toured the whole of Bangladesh. He thus gained a direct knowledge of the pains, sufferings and the deprivations of the country. His young heart cried out in sympathy for the people deprived of their basic rights.

The Muslim League was badly mauled in the elections of 1954, and the United Front came out victorious. A cabinet was formed in East Pakistan under the leadership of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, but the government of Pakistan behaved like a jealous step-mother. The then Governor-General of Pakisan dissolved the cabinet (of A. K. Fazlul Huq) and imposed governor's rule in East Pakistan. Hundreds of leaders of Bangladesh were arrested and sent to jail. Sheikh Mujib was also arrested. But the people of East Pakistan became agitated at this behaviour of the Pakistan government. The governor's rule was again withdrawn from East Pakistan or East Bengal in the very same year, and all the leaders sent earlier to jail were also released from there. Sheikh Mujib was also released from prison.

Election to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly was held in June, 1955. Sheikh Mujib was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly. Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, later,

formed the government at the centre in 1956 with himself as the Prime Minister. The Awami League formed the provincial government in East Pakistan, and Sheikh Mujib joined the cabinet as a minister. But he left the cabinet after some time, and devoted himself to the organisational activities of the Awami Muslim League. He became busy organising the party in the right manner. He gradually made the people of the country aware of their rights. He continued to go around, day and night, in towns and cities,



Turn every house into a fortress; resist the enemy with everything you have. —The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for independence. On 7 March, 1971 Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave this daring call to the freedom-asking seven and half crore Bengali to join the armed struggle.

villages and entrepots and held meetings there, led processions and presented before the people the pitiable conditions of East Pakistan. He also presented before the people the true picture of how West Pakistan got enriched with the wealth of East Pakistan. All these efforts of his made the people conscious. The then President of Pakistan, Iskandar Mirza, observing all these and for certain other severe political conditions in the country, declared



During the nine months of liberation our mothers and sisters in the villages took up choppers, shovels and others weapons to resist the Pakistani invaders and Razzakar, Al-badars

He would tell the children: Patriotism is the best among all kinds of love in the world.

Martial Law in the country in 1958. Sheikh Mujib was again arrested. General Ayub Khan became the President of Pakistan shortly after this. He had captured power sending Iskandar Mirza into exile. Ayub Khan then forbade politics in Pakistan for six long years. Then came the year 1965 and Pakistan whimsically provoked a war with India. They started the war from West Pakistan and left East Pakistan completely defenceless. India could capture East Pakistan in the twinkling of an eye, so to say, if they wished to do so.

Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, observing the situation all around, raised the demand on behalf of the Awami League, in 1966 for greater provincial autonomy through his six-point-demand. It was a pro-people movement. Strong demands were raised, through this movement, for the grant of autonomy to East Pakistan. The population of the whole country lined up behind him in response to his call. All of them wanted autonomy. The students' community of East Pakistan joined this movement along with their eleven-point demands. The movement, therefore, became very forceful.

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But it was too late by that time for the government of Pakistan. The people of Bangladesh had awakened. The whole of Bangladesh became tumultuous with the demand for Sheikh Mujib's release. Ayub Khan of Pakistan got really frightened at this. The Agartala Conspiracy Case was withdrawn in 1969. That was not all; the prisoners were also unconditionally released.

A smile of victory spread over the faces of the people of Bangladesh that day. A mass reception was given to Sheikh Mujib. This reception meeting was organised in the Race Course, now Suhrawardy Udyan. And it was organised by the Central Students' Action Committee. The people of the country that day conferred on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, through the Students' Action Committee, the title of 'Bongobondhu'. He carried this glorious epithet like a crown on his head throughout his whole life and now even beyond it. The emotion, respect and love of the people of Bangladesh remain embodied in this epithet for all times.

Then came the year nineteen seventy. Elections to the National Assembly were held in East Pakistan. The Awami League won one hundred sixty-seven seats in this election out of a total of one hundred and sixty-nine. The people of the country were beside themselves with joy because Bongobondhu's opponent, The Pakistan Peoples' Party of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, could not win as many seats in the

National Assembly elections in West Pakistan. He, in fact, won far fewer votes. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would, therefore, be the Prime Minister of the country if democratic norms were to be followed. But, Alas, Bhutto of West Pakistan and his associates, the military leaders, did not allow it to happen. They brought Pakistani soldiers to East Pakistan, instead, and began oppressing the people of East Pakistan, or Bangladesh. You will read of that cruel oppression in full when you grow up. Was it just torture? Cruel genocide, loot, arson, rape— all were let loose in full force. The Pakistan Army swooped down on the unarmed and docile people of East Pakistan in full force on March 25, Nineteen hundred and seventy-one. They murdered three million Bengalis in nine months. The armed forces of Pakistan indulged in one hateful killing spree in human history. The rest of the world turned their faces away from Pakistan in hatred. But the military rulers of Pakistan, despite all those, carried on with their inhuman activities in East Pakistan. But was it that easy to suppress the people of Bangladesh once when they had been awakened by the magic touch of the great man? The unarmed people of Bangladesh organised themselves. And organise they did very quickly because they were, more or less, alerted by Bongobondhu's instructions of the probable future of the country. The Bengalis of East Pakistan, getting very quickly organised with the help of neighbouring India, swooped down on the military junta of Pakistan. An all-out war began— in market places, in the fields, in the swamps, in the villages, towns and in the capital. For us, it was guerrilla warfare and for the Pakistanis, it was a war of regularly turned-out soldiers. Bongobondhu was arrested by the Pakistani Army in the night of March 25. Before that and in the same night, Bongobondhu had declared independence. Bangladesh made for herself a position that night in the map of the world as an independent country.

We won victory through a war on sixteenth December, nineteen hundred and seventy-one. The Pakistani soldiers were completely defeated and arrested on this date on the soil of this country. Nearly one lakh soldiers were arrested at the hands of the Joint command forces. Joint forces mean the combined forces of India and Bangladesh.

Although Bongobondhu continued to remain arrested in the Pakistani camp during the period of nine months the war went on, the entire Bengali Nation had taken up arms through his inspiration. And our womenfolk in the villages also took up choppers, shovels and other weapons. It really means that every one joined our struggle for freedom. This peoples' war had actually very badly weakened the invading Pakistani Army. Unable to continue fighting any more, the Pakistani forces surrendered en masse to the joint forces.

A great war of independence like ours cannot be described in such a short span, because the father of our nation, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is also intimately involved with this freedom struggle. He has his contribution at every step of the struggle for our freedom. He even laid down his life, along with those of most of the other members of his family, for this independent country. His minor son, Sheikh Russell, was also killed along with him. This tragic incident took place on fifteenth August nineteen hundred and seventy-five. A few black sheep of the country are responsible for the death of Bongobondhu. They belong to the gang of Quislings and

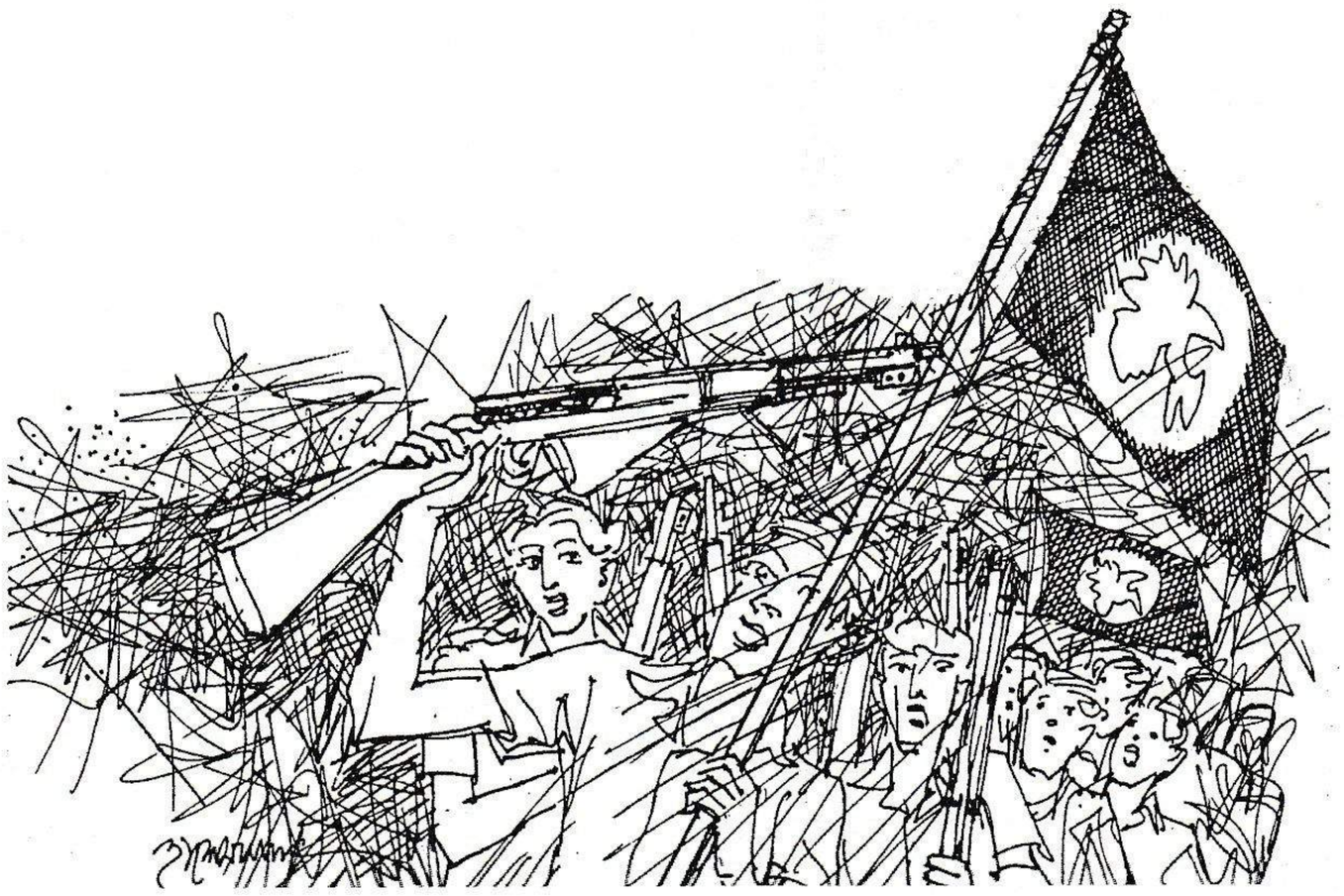
killers of Bangladesh. The people of this country got them arrested, tried them in the courts of law and they were hanged. Trial of the other gangs of black sheep of the country, who had joined hands with those of the invading army and killed innocent Bengalis, are now going on.

We should all know that Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave the last drop of his blood for this country called Bangladesh.

He used to love the children and the adolescents of the country very much. He would provide them with many types of help. The then recently-independent country did not have enough capacity to provide remarkable assistance to her people. But Bongobondhu, with his two large upraised hands, tried to re-construct the country as a self-reliant entity. He would often say, the children are the future of the country; the ability of this newly-independent country to stand among the comity of nations with her head erect in honour and pride depends entirely on them. He would further say, the people of the country must be patriotic; they have to love their country; and they have to think of the development of the country instead of always thinking of their own benefits and advantages.

He would tell the children: Patriotism is the best among all kinds of love in the world.

He himself was a true Bengali inspired by patriotism. Bangladesh was the country of his dreams, of his fulfilment. You would be able to know many more things about Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when you grow more in years. The name of Bongobondhu would remain mixed up with each and every particle of dust of this country so long as she survives as an independent country. The Bengali Nation would never forget that adolescent from Gopalganj.



Bongobondhu in His Family Circle

Baby Moudud



The family life of the father of the nation, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was one of happiness, satisfaction and joy. The principal sources of these were his parents and the wife. Bongobondhu never faced troubles nor suffered from complexities in his family life because of their benign supervision, love, affection, warmth of very liberal hearts and high intelligence. He was observed to properly discharge his responsibilities, first, to his parents and, later, towards his wife, relatives, children, family and, often, his party members. Each and every member of his family was politically-motivated and in possession of the values of the cultural and social life of the Bengalis; and they were, on the other hand, spontaneous in the observance of religious rites, in the display of modern thoughts and ideas, non-communal and peace-loving.

Mujib was born third after the birth of his two elder sisters. His father then used to work as a 'Peshkar' in Gopalganj court. His birth brought in a tiding of happiness not only in his own family, but among the entire clan as well as among his relatives. His maternal grandfather, immediately after his birth, performed the Muslim naming rite of 'Akikah' and gave him the name 'Sheikh Mujibur Rahman'.

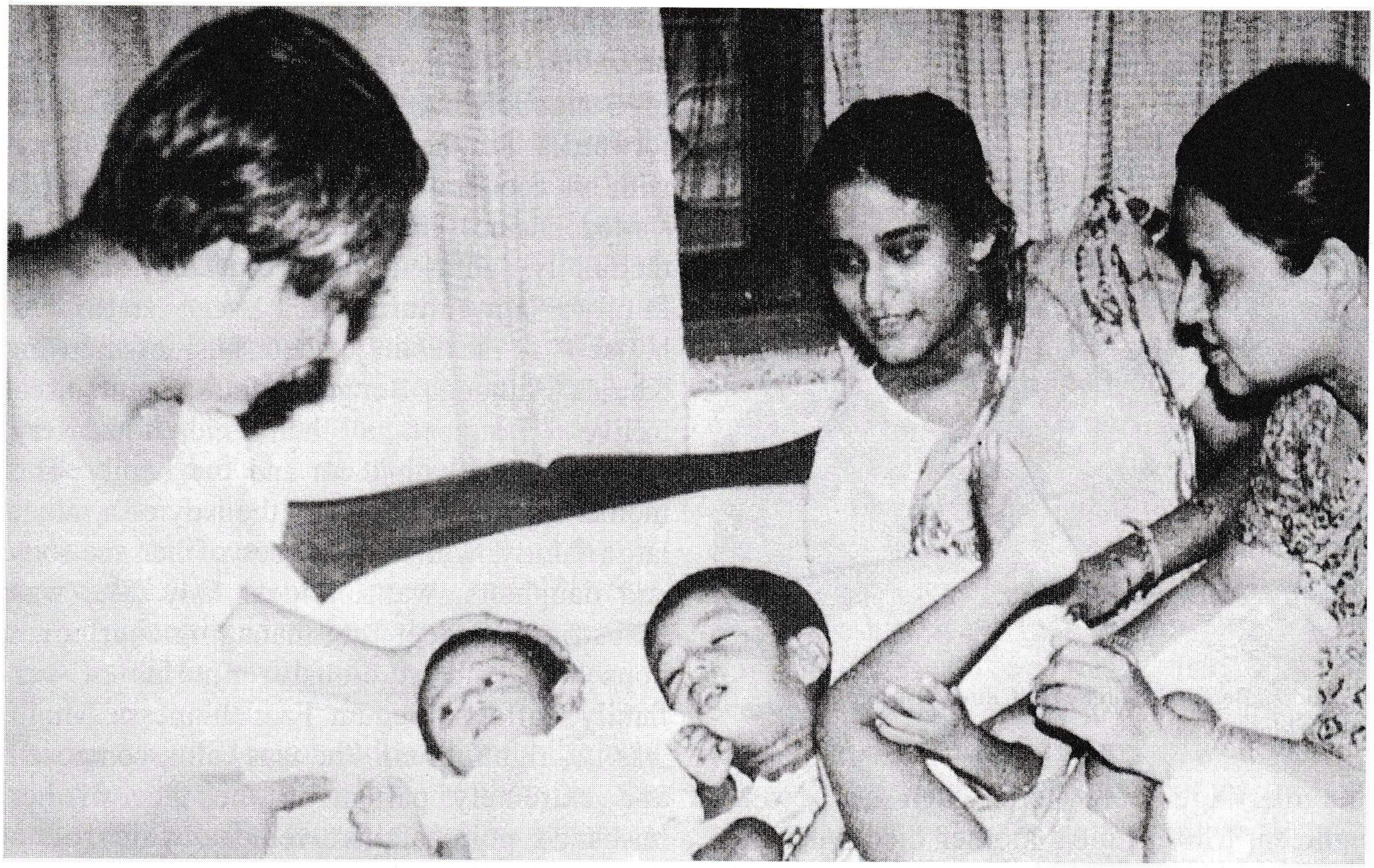
Bongobondhu Sheikh Mjibur Rahman was born in a very isolated rural village called 'Tungipara' surrounded by unspoiled greenery of nature. Rivers and canals were the only



means of connection to the outside world, despite the fact that Faridpur and Gopalganj were quite well-known towns in those days. The Englishmen used to run their administration from those places, they built their houses and the Missionaries used to run hospitals and schools.

Bongobondhu's forefathers had brought artisans and masons from Kolkata and built a large brick-and-mortar building at Tungipara in 1854. He passed his childhood and adolescence between Tungipara and Gopalganj. The rural beauty of nature, the river Modhumoti and the simplicity, scarcity, poverty and the struggle for survival of the people around him during his childhood and adolescence made him into a sensitive human being.

Mujib was nourished during his childhood by an incomparable love, affection and care of his parents. He grew up playing, studying and eating together with two elder sisters, three younger brothers and sisters, all kinds of cousins and the children of the many relatives. His parents would address him as 'Khoka', the two elder sisters as 'Li'le brother' and the juniors as 'elder brother'. Theirs was, more or less, an affluent rural family by the standards of the time; they had rice-paddy grown in their own lands, fishes were in abundance in the nearby Modhumoti river, smaller rivers and swamps, milk from their own cows— he was not afflicted by scarcity. Still, the simple and idealistic rural life-style helped shape him into an idealistic man of firm character.



Nanabhai (maternal grandfather) Bongobondhu caressing Joy and Putul. Beside them are their mother Sheikh Hasina and nani (maternal grandmother) Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib

Sheikh Mujib passed his childhood under the affectionate protection of his mother. His mother herself used to cook and feed his son with her own hands. His mother used to make his son drink heavily-boiled milk with a thin layer on it and also fed him butter, ghee, home-made cakes, curry made of climbing fishes etc., with a view to making her lean-bodied son a little plump and his intelligence sharper. He was initiated to studies at the hands of a house tutor. He had a few such house tutors to teach him all kinds of necessary education like the religious studies, Mathematics, History, Bangla and English. He was required to study under them in the mornings and in the evenings. Although he had begun his primary education at the Tungipara-Gimadanga primary school, he later transferred to Gopalganj school and studied there in class four. He had to undergo a surgical operation in his eyes while he was studying at Madaripur Public High School. His mother was beside him at that time. He got himself admitted to class vii in Gopalganj Mission School on his return from Madaripur. His house tutor of the time was Abdul Hamid Master. He heard from him the stories of anti-British movements, felt inspired and became inclined to politics. His courage and intelligence, later, attracted the attention of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fuzlul Huq and Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy.

He was married to his first cousin on the paternal side, Fazilatunnessa Renu, when he was just ten years old. Formal celebrations of



In London, Begum Mujib by her Ciling husband Sheikh Mujib's bedside

this marriage were held when he became eighteen. Mrs. Mujib's mother died when she was only three, and the future Bongobondhu's mother then brought the three-year-old girl-child home as his son's wife. Renu, therefore, studied under the house tutors like the rest of the children of the household. Renu, as a playmate and companion-in-studies of the future Bongobondhu during his childhood and adolescence, shaped up as an ideal partner of his life. She learned to understand her 'husband' while she was still a child, and became a very close collaborator of his activities, lifestyle, thoughts and ideas.

The family values he inherited from his parents were truly rare. Bongobondhu's parents, instead of ever raising any question, spontaneously helped their son's participation in social welfare activities side by side with his studies, his getting involved in the cultural life of the Bengalis, actively participating in the students' politics of Kolkata and, later, getting immersed in political activities at the national level and providing leadership there. The younger brother of Bongobondhu, Sheikh Abu Nasser, came forward at a rather early age to help his father with his economic activities for the family. He started business for the financial solvency of the family, and used to look especially after the family's agriculture. He later established himself as a distinguished businessman in Khulna. Although Bongobondhu's parents used to live at Tungipara, all their children had very sweet relation with them and the family. The mother of Bongobondhu as the lady of a rather large family, with the spouses of her six sons and daughters, was an ideal lady. She was industrious, adept at managing her own household and studiously mindful of her family's affairs. Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib was her rightful heir. She was calm, composed and extremely patient in the face of her husband's political involvement, which often led to his imprisonment, sometimes for prolonged periods. She was found tackling situations with patience while her husband was a political prisoner in the Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1968, or during the war of liberation in 1971 while Bongobondhu was in a death row in the Pakistani prison, and while she herself, along with her children, was a prisoner in the hands of the Pakistani Army. Not only did she keep her political prisoner husband supplied with necessary information and intelligence; she also often forced him to take political decisions at very crucial moments like making him refuse to participate in Ayub Khan's Round Table Conference by telling him, 'I will, then, address a public meeting in Paltan (Maidan) against you.' This piece of advice from Begum Mujib proved far more foresighted against the political leaders' urging him to take a temporary release on parole to join the Round Table Conference (of Ayub Khan).

Bongobondhu had complete trust and faith in, and love for, his wife. The nearness of his wife and her cooperation would favourably influence him during political turmoils, in putting order to his thoughts and in taking important decisions. Begum Mujib was the only companion to her husband while he was putting his thoughts in order as well as for discussions and advice till the last moments before he went out to deliver his historic speech of March 7. She had also listened to that speech sitting inside a car parked near the Shahbagh round-about. She equally patiently awaited her husband with equal courage and fortitude during the days of his captivity in 1971. She evoked honour and respect from all as a very kind-hearted lady with infinite patience.

The success of Bongobondhu's family life was as joyful as it made other members of the same family suffer sacrifices and as it turned extremely tragic. Both of his parents lived long. The Pakistani Army, during 1971, made his old parents wait on the road while they burned his village home to ashes. They looted the residence of his younger brother in Khulna. This younger brother fled the country and became a refugee along with the other members of his family in India. He later joined the liberation war. Bongobondhu's two sons, Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Jamal, joined the liberation war while the other members of the family were in Pakistan Army captivity in Dhaka. Mrs. Mujib later caused her parents-in-law to be brought to Dhaka and kept them in a hospital.

Bongobondhu's mother died on June 30, 1974 and his father died on March 30, 1975. Bongobondhu himself along with Mrs. Mujib, their three sons and two daughters-in-law were cruelly murdered at the hands of the assassins. Why his only younger brother had to meet with the same fatality? The assassins did not spare him either.

Only those who were closely in touch with his family will be able to feel how exemplary, joyful, satisfying and attractive was the family of Bongobondhu. He did not have expensive furniture, costly carpets, air conditioners, fixtures and fittings of foreign origin, chandeliers, costly clothing, utensils or crockery in his house. But he had the necessary materials required for a Bengali way of life. And there was a mark of taste everywhere: hearts full of love all around, and hard-to-find wealth of love, affection and sympathy in every nook and corner of that house. His two surviving daughters have converted the house into Bongobondhu Memorial Museum and dedicated it tot the people. They have also built a mausoleum of Bongobondhu at Tungipara.

Once when a team of policemen had come to arrest him, his eldest daughter, Sheikh Hasina, very softly told them, 'Please wait a little while. He has just fallen asleep after his return from a meeting in the early hours of the morning.' Sheikh Mujib often told his children at the family dining table, in March 1971, with six upraised fingers, 'We had so long six points; but it is just one.' His entire family had political idealism. Their relation with one another was so close and well-knit that each one of them was ready to make any and all sacrifices for Bongobondhu.

Bongobondhu and the Bangla Academy

Selina Hossain

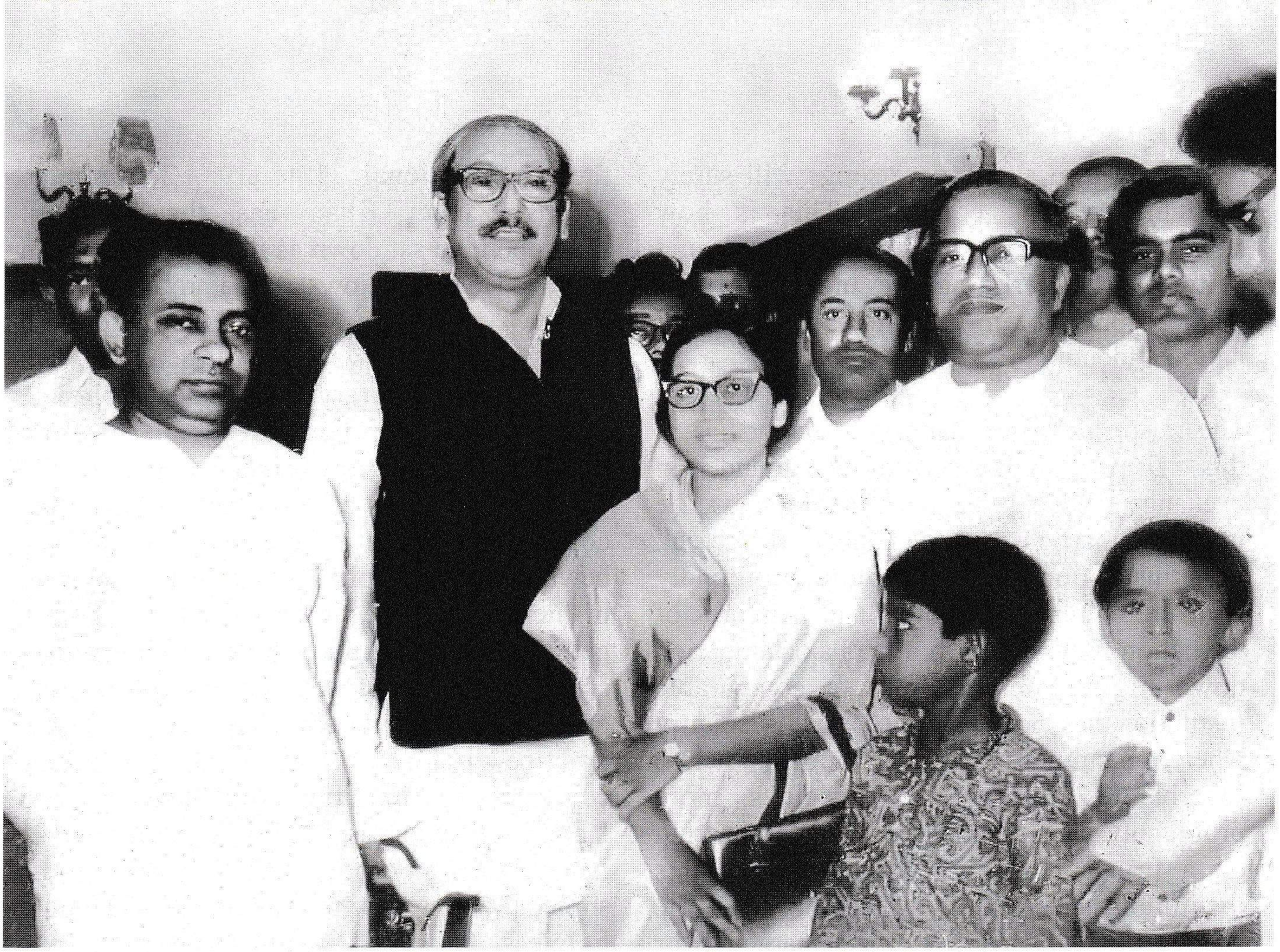
February 21, 1971, was an exceptionally bright and unconventional time in the life of the Bengalis, because the first general elections of Pakistan in its 24-year-old history were held in 1970. The human habitations in the coastal areas of the country were destroyed by a severe tornado accompanied by a tidal bore in November of the same year. People in their lakhs had lost their lives. The elections were completed in December. The Awami League, the party of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had won that election winning the majority of the seats. The Bengalis were about to occupy the administrative powers at the centre in Pakistan in its 24-year-old history. There was then no end to their expectations and excitement. The people of East Bengal were also glowing with a sense of dignity.

Professor Kabir Chowdhury was then the Director of the Bangla Academy. He took pains to set the programmes of the immortal 21st in a very special way. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman inaugurated the programmes. That was the first time he had come to the Bangla Academy as its invited guest.

Prof. Kabir Chowdhury has written thus about the matter of inviting Bongobondhu to the Bangla Academy: "When we had gone to him with the request to inaugurate the programmes, he told me with his usual charming smile, why me? I am a man of the fields, don't have much of studies behind me; you better get it inaugurated by a scholar or litterateur. That would be quite befitting. But when we had put forward our arguments why we had chosen him, he again smiled his usual smile, but accepted our proposal this time. In his inaugural address, he, in his sonorous voice and in his usual inspiring tone, urged upon the artists, litterateurs and intellectuals to stand by the side of the common men and to try, together with them, to make all-out efforts to transform their lives into happy and prosperous ones. A part of the inaugural session consisted of giving away certificates by the chief guest and inaugurator among the successful non-Bengali students, who had completed their Bengali-learning course conducted by the Bangla Academy."

The immortal martyr of the great war of liberation and a professor of the Department of Bengali, University of Dhaka, Prof. Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, has written thus, "The programme of the Bangla Academy of a week of remembrance of the martyrs has begun at 4:00 in the afternoon. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the Chief Guest. He talked of Bengali culture."

He has made a reflection of his political philosophy in the programmes of the Bangla Academy. He has asked the votaries of Bengali culture, the writers' community, to stand by the side of the common man. He did not forget to mention the significance of realising the indigenous roots of our culture side by side



1974, As Soon as Bongobondhu had reached Bangla Academy to inaugurate the International Literary Conference, he was welcomed by the then secretary of Bangla Academy Prof. Lutful Haider Chowdhury (Left), 3rd from right: the then Director General Prof. Mazharul Islam and in the middle writer Selina Hossain

with creating a reflection of life in literature. His wisdom lies here in pointing out the place of pride for Bangla Academy. He knew, one of the principal characteristics of a national entity lies in the recognition of the mother tongue in education, culture and, in fact, every other sphere of the lives of the people.

The political wisdom of Bongobondhu was intimately connected to his conscious cultural transparency. The government had banned broadcast and telecast of Tagore songs from Radio Pakistan and Pakistan Television, respectively in the decade of 1960s. The leading intellectuals of the country had lodged strong protests against this. The Pakistan government was later forced to withdraw this ban. The very foundation of Ayub Khan's Martial Law had crumbled under its impact. The government was constrained to withdraw 'The Agartala Conspiracy Case' against Bongobondhu, and he was released from jail.

He said, in his speech delivered at the Race Course on February 23, 1969, "We read and study Mirza Galib, Socrates, Shakespeare, Aristotle, Dante, Lenin and Mao-Zse-dong for the acquisition of knowledge. And this bankrupt government has banned the writings and songs of Rabindranath Tagore, who is a Bengali poet and who has become world-famous by writing poetry in Bengali. We do not accept this condition. We surely will read Rabindranath's writings, sing the songs

written by him and Tagore songs will surely be sung in this country." This is how Bongobondhu had entwined politics and culture by underlining the inevitability of Tagore's presence in the intellect of Bengali national identity.

The raison de'tre of Bangla Academy lies in this truism. Bangla Academy was founded in exchange of the price paid in blood by the immortal martyrs of the language movement. This institution resonates more profoundly with the cultural aspirations and activities of the nation. Beginning from the Pakistan period down to the present times, a comparable Institution has not developed in this country where the cultural under-pinning of the nation reverberates in her sub-conscious more profoundly. Bongobondhu had laid this truth on a firmer foundation by coming to this institution. The Burdhawan House of the Bangla Academy was, therefore, targeted for attack by the Pakistan government. This clearly shows how an otherwise unostentatious building transforms itself into a symbol of the national identity. The Academy does not remain just a building or some buildings made out of wood and bricks. The invading forces from Pakistan, therefore, bombed out the wall of Burdhawan House in the black night of March 25. And the great war of liberation of the Bengalis began in that very night.

Bangla Academy organised an international literary conference in 1974 in independent Bangladesh. The researcher-folklorist Shamsuzzaman Khan was then the head of the cultural section of the Academy. A few of them, including the Director-General of the Academy and himself, had gone to Bongobondhu;s residence at 9:00 in the morning of February 3, 1974, to invite him to the International Literary Conference. Shamsuzzaman Khan has thus written: Bongobondhu sat down as did Professor Islam and we. He said, "Now, tell me professor, what brings you here." Dr. Islam replied: "Bongobondhu, we are organising an international literary conference from the Bangla Academy; famous litterateurs from different countries are expected to join. We want to have you as the chief guest of the conference." He appeared completely bewildered. His reply: "What do I understand of literature? What would I say there? Please get it done by a senior scholar or universally-acclaimed litterateur; that would enhance the prestige of the conference. That used to be the practice before. I attended a literary conference or two during my student days, and I don't remember any politician to have ever inaugurated any of them." So saying, he smiled. With a view to making the situation a little easy, he said, "I read Rabindranath, love him— and that is all the literary capital I have. I feel hesitant to go before all those famous scholars, artists and litterateurs from home and abroad." He was told it was the first international literary conference of independent Bangladesh. It has a special significance of its own. Your inaugurating the conference will provide it with an international respectability. It will, moreover, provide a reflection of your and your government's outlook on democracy, freedom of expression and human rights. He thought for a little while and then said, "All right, I'll go. Also please invite my friend Jasimuddin and Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin with special respect."

It is once again evident from this how respectfully did Bongobondhu look upon the cultural personalities of the country. He was a person of profound consideration as to whose

participation in the Bangla Academy programmes would make them up to the mark.

Professor Anisuzzaman has written thus of the international literary conference: "A significantly large literary conference was organised by the Bangla Academy while Mazharul Islam was its Director-General. It was inaugurated by Bongobondhu. Many famous writers from Bangladesh and West Bengal joined this conference. I presided over one session of the meet."

Writer Rabeya Khatun Wrote: "The Academy premises were overflowing with spectators and audience on the first day of the 1974 conference. The dais was erected in front of the new building. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujib has come as also have the writers and scholars from West Bengal."

The litterateurs, Anwar Alimjhanov and Mariam Salganak ,and a few others from the Soviet Union attended the literary conference. Litterateur Hasso Grabner from the then East Germany and Mi. Pi. Hasbatar from Mongolia also attended the conference. A large number of poets and writers from India, including the Hindi writer, Mulk Raj Anand, litterateur Annadashangkar Roy, historian Dr. Niharranjan Roy, Folklorist Dr. Ashutosh Bhattacharya and poet Shakti Chattopadhaya, attended the conference.

Bongobondhu brought the artists, writers, poets, essayists and researchers in the forefront at this Bangla Academy-sponsored literary conference with a view to introducing them to the writers from abroad. He deeply evaluated the importance of cultural guidance from the point of view of political wisdom. The Bangladeshi writers, young and old, had made the Bangla Academy premises abuzz with their active participation during those days of the conference.

Bongobondhu is the dreamer of an independent country, and he inspired the Bengali Nation with that dream. He deeply realised that Bangla Academy, founded as it was in exchange of the price paid in blood by the martyrs of the language movement, is no ordinary institution. And he had delivered his speech in the conference in that light.

He attended only two programmes of the Bangla Academy as an invited guest. One of these was the programmes of the 21st February in the year of our independence. He analysed the identity of the cultural strength of the Bengalis as a part of the political consciousness of the peoples' lives. He had also asked the writers to be the portrayers of that life.

He came for the second time in an international literary conference. Literature reflects in totality the picture of how a nation conducts its life. Respect for, and the pride of, a country enhances as its literature gets introduced at the international level. This is especially true for a small poverty-stricken country, whose literature-art-music-films-sports,etc. can take it to newer heights with every success attained in any of those fields. Mediums like these can brighten the identity of creativity of a country. Bangla Academy translates the literary works of the country into other (actually, a few and only in English) languages.

Bongobondhu, wit his long-range foresight, clearly defined the role of the Bangla Academy, and delineated in general terms how Bangla Academy would be the symbol of nationhood.

The Return of Bongobondhu to His Homeland, 1972

Muntassir Mamoon

The invading Pakistani forces and their accomplices surrendered to the joint forces of India-Bangladesh on December 16, 1971. There were jubilations all over the country; a question was still hanging on everyone's lips: Bongobondhu is not there. He was till then a captive in a Pakistani prison. No one was ready to accept the idea of full independence till his return to the country.

A rumour suddenly started making the rounds that Bongobondhu was returning. The war-ravaged, tired Bengalis got awakened in a moment, it seemed. He would return on January 10. As they had all rushed to the Ramna Race Course on March 7 to listen to his speech, so did they rush again, nearly a year after that; but some of them went to Ramna while the others took the road to the Tejgaon Airport. Both sides of the road from Tejgaon to Ramna were also thronging with an expanse of human heads. Every one effortlessly scaled the borders of restrictions once the plane landed with Bongobondhu inside it. Tajuddin Ahmed and his colleagues tightly hugged him the moment he came down the gangway. Bongobondhu then started out for Ramna.



Bongobondhu reached Bangladesh from Pakistan Jail on 10th January, 1972. On his way to Dhaka, he stopped at Delhi to Thank the Indian people and leaders of the government, President v.v. Giri, prime minister Indira Gandhi and Bongobondhu in front of President house.

Ramna of January 10 (1972) experienced almost similar excitements as it did on March 7 (1971) with an added element of happiness in the latter event, because he has returned. He had a call for freedom in his speech on March 7 and that of January 10 contained clear signs

He reminded the assembled gathering, "You also know that I was ordered to be hanged. A grave was also dug for me near the cell I used to stay in. I am a Muslim, and a Muslim dies but once. I, therefore, decided not to bow down to them."

of anxiety. What would become of this country? —Of his golden Bengal, since everything was in ruins? Bongobondhu mounted the podium at the Ramna Race Course (on that spot in the Suhrawardy Udyan from where he had delivered his March 7 speech). His voice was quivering with emotions. He said many things [ref: his speech dated January 10, 1972], but I am referring to the very important issues here.

Pakistan's President Bhutto had informed Bongobondhu prior to his departure for Dhaka that East Pakistan had become Bangladesh, and he would then return as the leader of that country. Could there be a confederation between Bangladesh and Pakistan? Indian diplomat, Shashanka Banerjee, who was also returning to Delhi by the same plane as did Bongobondhu, informed us of this. Shashanka Banerjee wanted to know what Bongobondhu had said in reply. Bongobondhu had said, 'Not during my lifetime.'

He told the meeting on January 10 about this in his speech, 'Mr. Bhutto requested me when I was released from the prison in Pakistan to try to maintain a loose relation, if possible, between the two countries. I told him I cannot tell you anything about this till I return to my people. I would now like to tell him, 'Mr. Bhutto, live in peace.'

He gave credit to the common men for bringing freedom to Bangladesh, and said,—'You, the people of Bangladesh, have brought that independence.' 'Bangladesh has gained independence' —he said towards the end of his speech. 'Mujib would be the first to lay down his life to protect that freedom if anyone now tries to steal it away. He then said emphatically in a loud voice, "This independence will not be allowed to be destroyed till just one Bengali is alive.'

He was till then probably not aware that the Islamic countries had extended their support to Pakistan. But he did not forget that religion is inextricably related to the lives of the Bengalis. He reminded the assembled gathering, "You also know that I was ordered to be hanged. A grave was also dug for me near the cell I used to stay in. I am a Muslim, and a Muslim dies but once. I, therefore, decided not to bow down to them." He said to remind the people— "Bangladesh is the second largest Muslim country in the world. She is placed second only to Indonesia. From the point of view of the number of Muslims in a country, India is the third and Pakistan fourth."

He reminded people of Islam for other reasons. Pakistan has always threatened and exploited Bengalis in the name of religion. The leaders of Pakistan would always cry 'Islam in danger' whenever there was any movement demanding justice. The Bengalis were in league with India or Indian Hindus. He wanted to break out of the circle of ruling on the pretext of religion. He did not forget even for a moment that he was a Bengali, even though he claimed himself to be a Muslim, which he was. That was why he had reminded his audience, in several parts of the speech— "I will say, while walking the gallows, I am a Bengali, Bangladesh is my country, Bengali is my language. Joy Bangla." He then said, "The Pakistani army has killed the Muslims of this

country in the name of Islam, has dishonoured our women. I do not want defilement of Islam. I want to say in a very clear and unambiguous language that ours would be a democratic, secular and socialist country. The labourers and farmers, Hindus and Muslims will live in piece and happiness."

He kept this promise of his. Some people say he spoke of socialism under pressure from the leftists. He was not in contact with any leftist whatsoever while he was delivering this speech. He had come straight to the dais just after getting down from the plane. He, therefore, spoke of socialism as well as of secularism after proper deliberations. I want here to emphasise on secularism, because a declaration like that, in the backdrop of that time, was completely new. He later explained in detail what he meant by secularism, "Bangladesh will be a secular state. Secularism does not mean a state where there would be no religion. The Muslims will follow their own religion, Islam. There is no irreligious-ness in this soil; there is secularism. There is one meaning to this, there would be no business here in the name of religion. There would be no looting in the name of religion. Producing Al-badrs and razakars by indulging in politics in the name of religion would no longer be allowed in Bangladesh. Communal politics will not be allowed." It is specifically for this reason that he enshrined the four basic principles in the Constitution, viz., democracy, Bengali nationalism, socialism and secularism. Not just this; he also forbade religion-based politics to make it commensurate with the basic principles.

General Zia scrapped all these basic principles in 1975, because he wanted, mentally, to remain closer to Pakistan, and wanted us to be his fellow travellers. Bongobondhu had correctly foreseen— Al-badrs and razakars would again be produced in the name of religion. We see this happen after 1975. That is why, at the beginning of the speech, he probably said- "conspiracy has not stopped as yet." His forecast proved true. Lt.-General Zia had started out for Pakistan. His followers had a craving to reach Pakistan. As I mentioned earlier, there was a kind of anxiety and unease in the speech of 10th January. What would happen? What if he cannot fulfil the hopes he had raised? Instead of suppressing the anxiety, he said— "Millions of people in our golden Bengal are today without shelter and houses; they are penniless. I beseech the people of the rest of the world, in the name of humanity, to come forward to help these poor people without shelter. I am telling my countrymen, not as a leader, but as their brother, this freedom of ours would prove a failure if our ordinary citizens do not get food and shelter and our young men and women do not get works to do. We have therefore a lot of works to do.

He did not forget about genocide, although he could not till then realise its extent as he was under captivity in West Pakistan. He said, "those who have wrongfully killed our people will surely face trial. There is hardly any family in Bangladesh that has not lost some of its members.— I now appeal to the United Nations to constitute an international tribunal to inquire into, and to find out the extent of, the indiscriminate genocide the Pakistan army carried out in Bangladesh."

I would finish with what Bongobondhu had said at the beginning of his speech— "Bangladesh will survive as an independent country throughout history. There is no power on earth that can Suppress Bangladesh."

January 10 is nowadays observed as the day of homecoming of Bongobondhu.

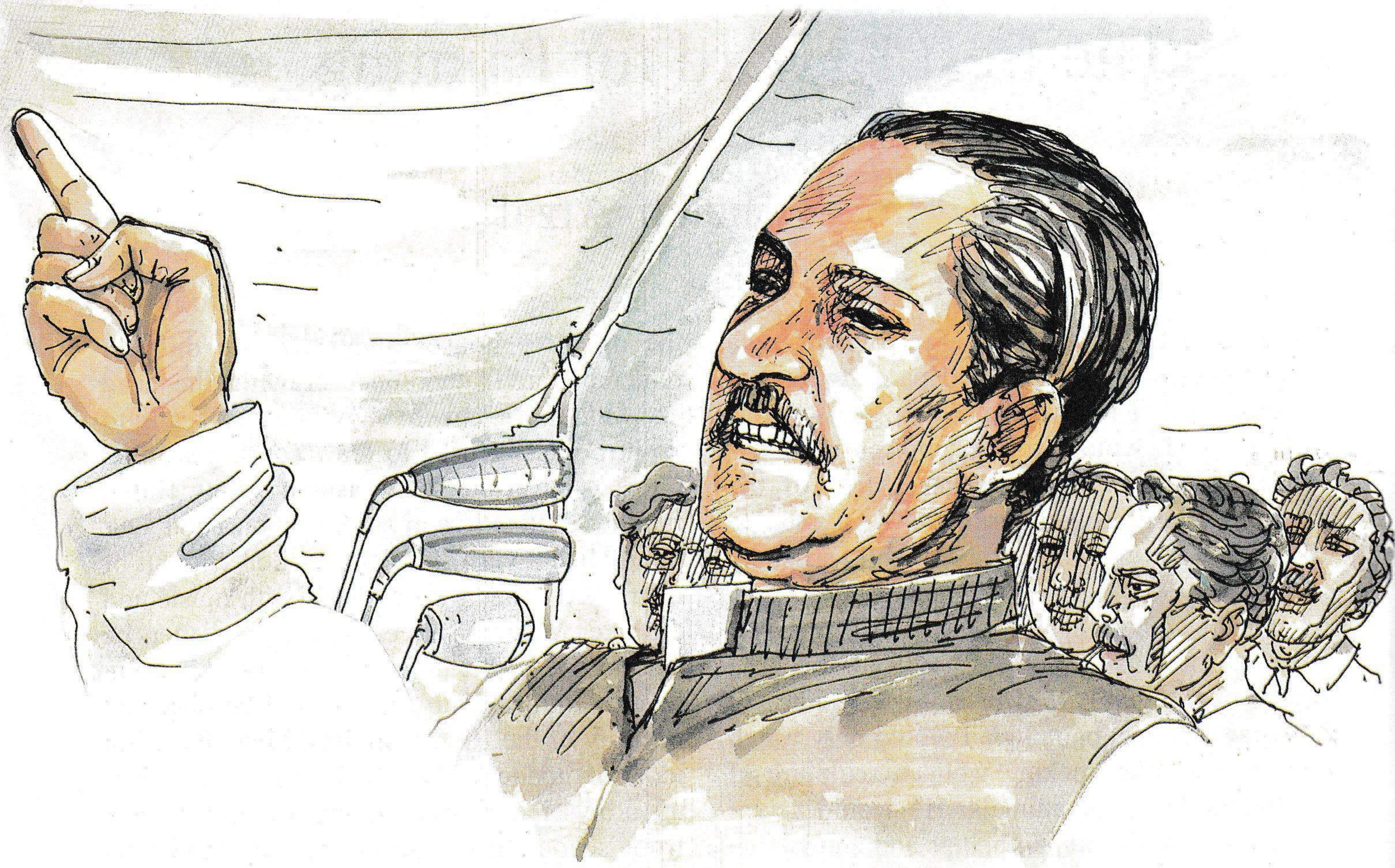
The Best Reward for Painting

Sheikh Afzal

The year was 1969. I was then only nine and a student of class iv. I started painting since I was a child. They were of cows, goats, birds, ghosts— I would fill in my entire class notebooks with their images. Most of the people of my neighbouring villages used to know me for my reputation as a child artist.

I cannot say with any measure of certainty where this inspiration came from, because none of my family was in any way connected to drawings and paintings. I would only watch my father often making wooden sculpture of different kinds of animals. He would sculpt images of birds, human beings and animals on the doors of houses and show me those. I remember my father once drawing the head and mouth of a cow to show me how really to do it, because I used to draw cows, goats and tigers —all in the same fashion. Many Hindu families used to live in our neighbourhood. Our family had a very excellent relation with all of them. My father was involved with music and the like. Musical soirees would very often be held in one or the other of those neighbouring Hindu families. Durgapuja would be observed in many of the Hindu families. Many beautiful idols of goddesses would be made. I took it upon myself very often to watch, on way back from school, the process the clay-modellers





adopted to shape the idols. I would be greatly pleased to watch them shaping up the idols. I would, on return home, sitting in our jute stick shack, stealthily shape exact replicas of small-sized idols.

The reason behind this stealthy imitation was my second uncle, who was of a very stern temperament. He was deadly against music, painting, watching the idols of gods and goddesses in the Hindu neighbourhoods, not to talk of making one at home. All these were strictly forbidden in our house. And my father was the exact opposite of what my uncle stood for. He was fond of the game of football, would indulge in music and sculpt different shapes on or with wood.

But this suffocating atmosphere did not last for long; we started observing that the uncle gradually began liking our drawings and the shaping of earthen idols. After I was caught in his hands stealthily painting and shaping idols of gods and goddesses, his steely mind began to melt; he, then, permitted me to do all those openly. So these activities became easier to carry on with.

My maternal uncle, Ghulam Raisuddin, had come to my classroom in the school one day and told me, 'Show me how may you draw.' So saying, he made one of my classmates sit



before me and ordered, 'Now draw his image.' I immediately did as I had been asked to. He more or less liked the work and said, 'Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would address a public meeting at Harinarayanpur. You have to draw his image that day. I instantly agreed. The next day, my uncle brought home to me a few photographs of Sheikh sahib for me to practise drawing their likes. I did it so many times that I could almost do it without even taking a look at any of the photographs.

I readied myself with an early breakfast and paper, pencil and board at the ready on the date, I have now forgotten, of Sheikh sahib's arrival at Harinarayanpur. I had asked, on the previous day, my first cousin on the maternal side, Rouf, also a classmate, to accompany me.

He reported at our house in the morning. A little while later, a group of six or seven persons comprising my cousins on the paternal side, viz., Abu Bakar, Ishaq, Mazid and my elder brother, Tobarak, with my maternal uncle Rais in the lead, arrived at our house to fetch me. All of them were college students except my own elder brother, Tobarak, who was a student of class viii. Anyway, we started out at around six in the morning. Harinarayanpur is at a distance of six or seven miles from our house. We landed in a flood of humanity when we hit the wider road. Thousands of people were going in processions to attend Sheikh sahib's public meeting. There were men and men all around. We also merged with them and became a part of that big procession. The road seemed never to end. My feet and the legs were aching from walking. The closer we were approaching to the venue the more nervous did I feel at the sight of the sheer number of people. I started thinking within myself, but, it would have been better not to come at all. I had no previous idea that so many people attend any public meeting. Were I to know, I would probably not have agreed to draw the pictures in the first place.

We shortly arrived at the playground of the Harinarayanpur School. Tens of thousands of people were already there. A large stage was visible at a distance. I have to go there. I was in the middle of our small team with uncle Rais in front and the others bringing up the rear. Uncle Rais elbowed his way through the crowd to reach somewhere near the stage along with me. He lifted me up and seated me near a pole in the South-East corner of the stage. I ensconced myself there with the pencil and paper ready. The stairs rising up to the stage ended at a spot to the left from where I was sitting. The crescendo of the slogan 'Your brother my brother, brother Mujib brother Mujib' suddenly scaled a notch higher. I looked in front and saw a man— very tall, with a shock of unkempt grey-black hair, pushed to the back probably by hand, and a matching pair of moustaches of the same admixture of grey and black; I instantly recognised it was Sheikh Mujib. Once on the stage, he went straightway for the microphone. He began his speech in his usual sonorous and confident voice. It was hardly a ten/ fifteen minutes' affair, and I also finished drawing my image of him by that time. Once the speech was finished, he proceeded towards me and told, 'Let me see what you have drawn.' I stretched my little hand along with the paper and the board towards him. He saw it and praised. He asked my name, the class I was reading in, etc. and, finally, said, 'Zainul Abedin is a friend of mine. Come to Dhaka after you have passed your Secondary School examination, I will get you admitted to the Art

College. He then brought out a twenty-Taka note from out of his pocket, gave it to me and said, 'Take some sweets and meet me afterwards.'

No sooner had Sheikh sahib descended down from the stage than it started raining heavily. Hundreds of people almost mobbed me immediately after the rains stopped, and began asking questions on what I had drawn on the stage, what he had asked me and the like. My uncle had to lift me up to show to the people, and he answered all their questions.

Meeting him later on the day became impossible what with the rain and the severe rush of people. I returned home with the drawing initialled by Sheikh sahib and, following his advice, began practising heart and soul, right from class iv, with the aim at ultimately getting myself admitted to the Art College. I, from then on, became known in the entire area as the Afzal who had drawn Sheikh Mujib's image. This is the most memorable event of my life. Later, I gathered a world of experiences with regard to drawings and paintings. Since I was known in the wider area, I was called in any and all occasions to draw or paint pictures.

I became very famous in the whole area after I had drawn Sheikh Mujib's picture. I had been carrying on with music and painting along with my studies in the school.

The period of 1970-71 was an unspeakably difficult one. I had been dreaming of getting admitted to the Art College to be a great artist after having gone through the war of liberation and victory over the invading Pakistani army. But 1975 witnessed the pulverization into dust of all those hopes and dreams. Sheikh sahib and most of the members of his family were assassinated at the hands of a few misguided and unscrupulous members of the army.

I passed my Secondary School Certificate examination in 1976. I wanted to get myself admitted to the Institute of Fine Arts. Bongobondhu had promised he would get me admitted. I appeared at the admission test and was admitted there. I passed seven years there as a student. Many things happened in between. I went abroad on scholarship for higher studies. Now I have been teaching in that very Institute of Fine Arts. I now enjoy some status and familiarity. The number of awards I have won at home and abroad is also not negligible. Some of these are quite respectable. I have also done quite well in my studies abroad. I have been able to create a positive image as 'Afzal of Bangladesh' there.

My works are sold at quite good prices when Painting exhibitions are organised; but can any price be higher than the twenty-taka I had received from Bongobondhu by drawing his picture? Is it ever possible for me to forget— 'You'll take sweets— meet me'? Could anybody else forget it? People of my area still identify me as 'that Afzal who had drawn Bongobondhu's picture'. Ordinary people remember me because of him.

Can any reward be greater than having seen Bongobondhu face to face, drawn his image and having won his praise, while I was still an adolescent; at least not so in my life. Even if I win some very remarkable award in future, I would still say the greatest reward I got was the one I was given by drawing Bongobondhu's image.

The Colourful Bongobondhu in My Memory's Album

Lutfor Rahman Riton

The most colourful picture in my memory's album is that of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation. I had won a few colourful feathers of proximity to Mujib while I was still a small boy. I had become a member of Kachikachar Mela in 1972. There I was a student of music and painting department. I had the sole dream then— I would be an artist. I used to draw and paint a lot— in groups, and would sing, almost continually— again, in groups.

Rokanuzzaman Khan alias Dadabhai, the director of Kachikachar Mela, one day asked all of us to draw or paint pictures on the war of liberation: paintings on seventy-one. It could be on any subject one liked so far as they related to 1971— genocide, repression, torture, arson, battles or resistance. We jumped on the works of paintings on the liberation war with great enthusiasm.

Dadabhai took us one evening to the Ganobhaban— to Bongobondhu with our paintings and drawings in a rather large packet. He had very attentively examined our works. Dadabhai was introducing the artists, one after another, who had painted the particular pictures, while Bongobondhu was examining his work of art. Bongobondhu, while examining my painting, said as if in surprise, 'O, have you painted this?' I nodded my head in pride, yes, I have— the dangerous military personnel of Pakistan have set a village home on fire, one of them have shot the family father to death, his corpse lying in the courtyard. Another military man was killing the young brother with his bayonet. Another one lifted his bayoneted rifle skyward with a baby-in-arms stuck at the end of the bayonet; the mother of the family was wailing while holding the legs of still another; still another military man was dragging the sister, an end of her sari very tenuously sticking on to her body while the rest is trailing along on the ground; a patch of this white sari is soaked with the fresh blood of her father…

We were shown on nightly TV news bulletin. It was a black and white affair then. Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin and Dr. Abdullah Al-Muti Sharfuddin were with us besides Dadabhai. Almost all the dailies published on their front pages the photograph of Bongobondhu along with a group of child-artists, who had painted pictures of the war of liberation, of genocide. The idea was Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin's. He would almost regularly come to the painting classes of Kachikachar Mela. Painting classes of the central Mela would first be taken in the campus of the Wari Silverdale kindergarten; they would later be taken at the Joykali Mandir road. We would sit in lines to paint on cartridge papers stuck to the hardboard on the easel. Shilpacharya had, on many occasions, corrected my sketches— no, no, not that way, draw it this way. And, on so many occasions, did he teach me the ways of mixing watercolours of

different hues and their applications. And— hold that brush this way, and mix the colours like this, and then give the brushstrokes this way—.

He would feel very comfortable with the Mymensingh dialect. That self-same Shilpacharya wanted us the children-adolescents draw and paint on different aspects of the war of liberation. According to his plans, three hundred paintings and drawings were selected from among many. An exhibition was organised with our paintings at the Mela House. Tajuddin Ahmed, the Finance Minister of the government of Bangladesh, and the chief organiser of the war of liberation, inaugurated the exhibition on March 26, 1972. Shilpacharya had selected 70 out of those three hundred paintings, and we had gone to Bongobondhu with those seventy paintings. Shilpacharya was going to

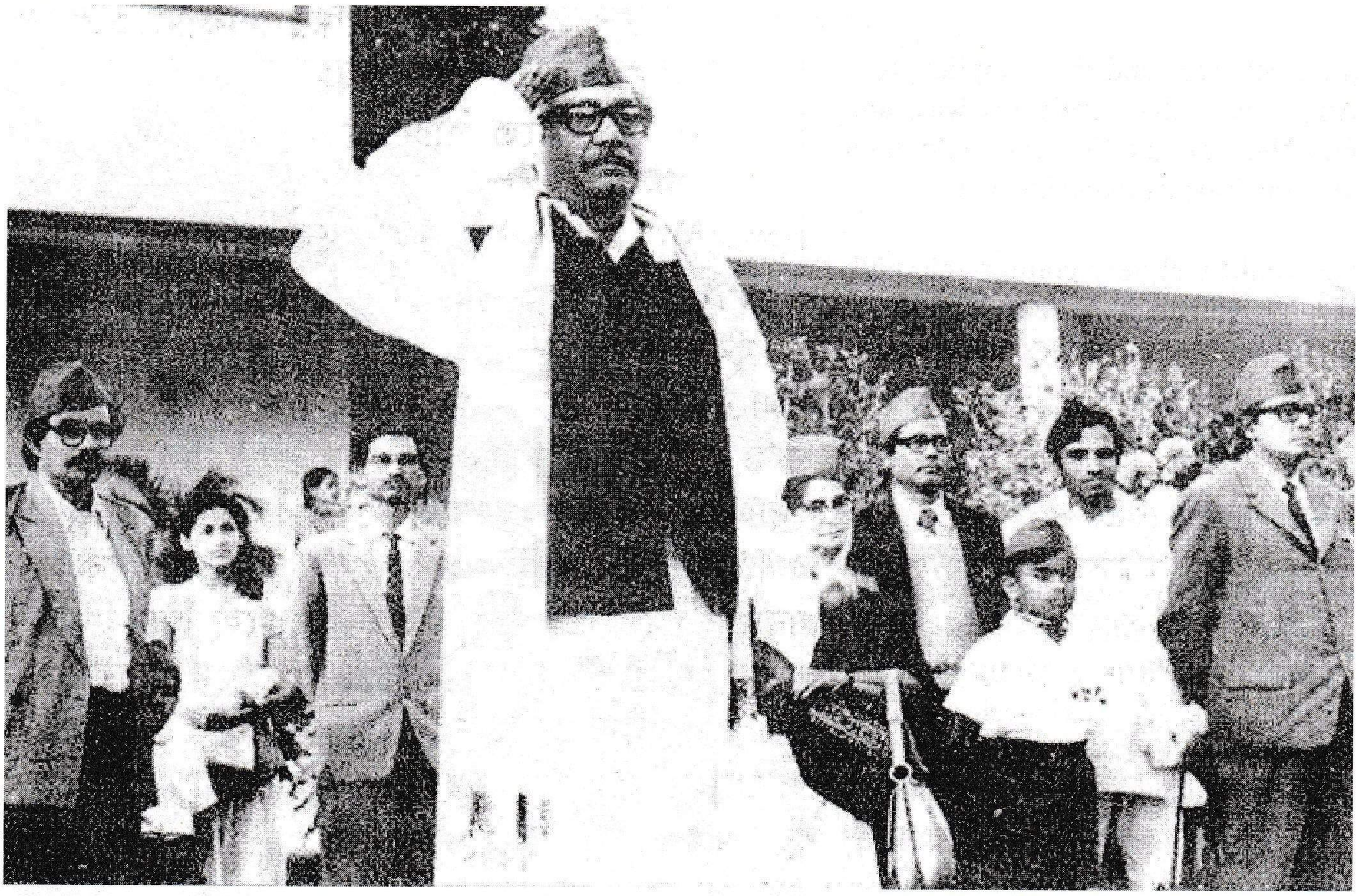


Lutfor Rahman Riton's (age 9 yers and 6 months) painting on war of liberation in 1972

London for treatment. He wanted to take our works there. He wanted the world to see how the children visualised the barbarous and brutal criminality of the Pakistanis. Bongobondhu was also one with Shilpacharya; yes, let the world see the artworks of our children on the war of 1971 and judge whether or not our war was essential and justified.

Shilpacharya had really taken our paintings to London. The paintings were exhibited at the Commonwealth Institute, London, from June 22 to July 31. The then Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dr. Kamal Hossain, had inaugurated the exhibition. The Bangladesh High Commission in London had also organised exhibition of those paintings in a total of eight cities and countries including Canada. A large number of art enthusiasts went to those exhibitions in all those places. Newspapers and journals in all those places published many of those paintings on Bangladesh's liberation war by her children. And they created a sensation in those countries. Paintings on genocide and the war of liberation by children had created a stir abroad. Most of the international media, including BBC, gave sufficient importance to the rather innovative subject-matter. Bongobondhu became very happy witnessing the unfolding of history through the pencils and brushes of the child-artists.

We were shown on the regular newscast of Bangladesh Television at the night after we



1974. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman taking salute of the little friends of Kachikacchar Mela at Gonobhabon. Beside him in between Rokanuzzaman Khan Dadabhai and poet Sufia Kamal is young Lutfor Rahman Riton with Kochikachar mela's cap on head. At the extreme left is Montu Khan

had gone to see Bongobondhu under the leadership of Dadabhai and as planned by Shilpacharya. Oh, what a great pleasure it was to watch myself beside Bongobondhu on the Black-and-White television! There were not so many TV channels in those days. The one and the only channel was the Bangladesh Television, and it had millions of viewers. Just a few seconds footage on the national news made me 'famous' overnight! I would otherwise often be seen in the children's programmes on the Television. But my few seconds of sighting beside Bongobondhu raised me almost to the status of a 'star'. Both known and unknown people in the school and on the streets would be surprised all the more to 'discover' me— didn't we see this little boy with Bongobondhu on the TV. I was walking on clouds! Was it only the television? Almost all the dailies next day front-paged a photograph of Bongobondhu with a group of children. I was standing near him, very close to his shoulders. I do preserve a clipping of that news photo. I later heard from Dadabhai that a few of those paintings were sent to Moscow as a state gift.

The national education camp of Kachikachar Mela in 1974 was organised in the Shaheed Matiur Children's Park on the Eastern side of Gulistan cinema Hall across the road. About a thousand children and adolescents took part in that, hitching tents in the camps of the central Kachikachar Mela. I had earned the highest

award 'Dolmoni' in that camp. One lovely afternoon, at the fag-end of the camp, we had boarded a few buses and went to see Bongobondhu in Ganobhaban.

I led the march past. Bongobondhu took the salute of the march past. That little I of the time placed the cap of the Kachikachar Mela on that tall Bongobondhu's head. He had to bow down to an unimaginable level to receive that 'gift' from that Lilliput of a friend from the Mela.

This scene was shown in the cinema houses of Bangladesh for many days afterwards through the government publicity department trailers. The famous newscaster, Sarkar Kabiruddin, used to read this news. He is now working for the Voice of America.

I had gone to Berlin on July 10, 1974, as a representative of the children of Bangladesh in my capacity as one of the members of Kachikachar Mela. East Berlin was then the capital of the Socialist East Germany. Panna Kaiser of Khelaghar was the leader of our team. She is the wife of the martyred intellectual Shahidullah Kaisar and mother of the actress Shami Kaisar. This representative team of children consisted of six members including me. I was the only boy; the rest were girls. One of those girls is very famous now; she is Mita Huq, an accomplished artiste of Tagore songs.

We stayed in Berlin for twenty days. We rendered the song 'The train goes jhik-jhik' in Bangla in a very large stadium with nearly ten million people watching us. I could whistle very well with my lips, like they do in the train. This song became very popular in the children's camps in East Berlin. Children from twenty or twenty-five countries would express their joy by uttering Jhik Jhik Jhik Jhik sound. The music and the rhythm of this song might probably have charmed them.

A day was reserved, in the schedule of programmes in East Berlin, for the boys and girls of each country to wear their respective national dress. All the girls of our team, including sister-in-law Panna, wore beautiful saris. The colour of Ms. Panna Kaiser's sari was turquoise blue. She was extraordinarily beautiful, and looked like a fairy in that dress. The attention of the media that day was stolen by our girls causing utter jealousy to the boys and girls of other countries present there. All the cameramen, i.e., photo-journalists that day were continually clicking the shutters of their cameras aiming at our girls from different angles.

Well, the national dress for Bangladeshi girls may be saris, but what about that for boys? Should I get down to the field with a lungi on? No. I presented myself in a short while in the open stadium with pajama-panjabi and a Mujib-coat. Uproar was set in motion in a matter of moments. The photo-journalists now began to mob me. They were continually pressing the shutters of their cameras. I was overwhelmed in the lights of the flashguns. Leaders of the representatives from different countries came rushing to me and, one after another, began shaking my hands saying, 'Shek mujibur rokman, Bangalades—'.

The photo-journalists also patted my back—Hallo Shek mujibur Rokman. I was then overflowing with happiness, and was almost jumping in joy. The whole world knows the architect of a just-liberated country, our Bongobondhu, our Sheikh Mujibur Rahman! His name, epithet, photograph, even his dress is known to the world! Only one leader in the entire world puts on white pajama-panjabi with a half-sleeved coat, and that leader is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. His dress has

become a trademark to the people around the world. And that is exactly the reason why people all around burst out with joy when they saw me in that trademark of an outfit and said, 'hallo Shek Mujibur Rokman—.

Berlin TV news featured us that evening. That was my first experience of watching my own colour-image on the TV screen. I did not have an opportunity to watch a colour TV before that time.

Seven or eight newspapers of East Berlin published on the next day a photograph of a tiny Bongobondhu with his trademark white pajama-panjabi and a half-sleeved black Mujib-coat. That is what was written in the caption of the photograph. Our interpreter, a young German girl, read out and translated for me the original German writing on the newspapers.

When I look back today, nearly thirty-seven years earlier, on that particular day of wearing national dress in East Berlin, I am reminded of how, just co-incidentally, I was able, by wearing a white pajama-panjabi with a black Mujib-coat, to hide, without really knowing it, the sheer lack of our national dress. And, even now, forty-one years after independence, we do not have a 'national dress'.

The birthday of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, March 17, is now a days observed as our National Children's Day. Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, was present as the Chief Guest on August 29, 1996, at the programme to celebrate the completion of the first year of publication of the monthly children's magazine 'Chhotoder Kagaj' (literally, Children's papers--translator) edited by me. Our little friend, Sabrina Nodi, in that colourful meeting at the National Museum Auditorium had raised a few demands in her speech. She had said, 'You are very busy, honourable Prime Minister. Still we ask for just a day from you in a year in which you would be only with children and adolescents, and will attend their programmes only. And you will think only of them. That day will be the Bangladesh's Children's day like its larger counterpart International Children's Day. I hope, you will accept the demands of a little friend like me. Because our magazine has written you are a friend to the little children. A friend has to keep another friend's requests—' (Monthly Chhotoder Kagaj, September 1996 issue). The then Prime Minister said in reply to Nodi's demands, '—And I will try to pass one day with you all in a very nice way. That day will be devoted to the children, and only to the children and for nobody else. I am yours…' (Monthly 'Chhotoder Kagaj, September 1996 issue).

We later got a day, March 17, as the National Children's Day. In India, Nehru's birthday is that country's Children's Day. And our Children's Day is the birthday of Bongobondhu. Nehru used to love children very much. He used to buy a lot of dolls and toys he visited at any particular time. A beautiful doll museum has been established in Delhi with all those dolls and toys. Its name is Nehru Doll's House. When I look at the photograph of Bongobondhu, taken in my childhood, at the most colourful page of my memory's album, I again and again think that had this big-statured, big-hearted man been alive, our children would have got not just a doll's museum but also brightly colourful lives like those of dolls. Happy birthday, Bongobondhu! Happy birthday, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—!

Cartoons and the War of Liberation

Reaz Ahmed

Cartoons: these are used mostly in the newspapers and magazines. Their reaches have extended very far these days. Films are also made in different dimensions. Cartoons are used in television serials and stories, published in instalments in journals, magazines and even in daily newspapers.

Films and television serials made through the medium of cartoons and funny pictures are matters of considerable interest to the children. Children all over the world, as also in our country, are so fond of stories and fictions made through the medium of cartoons that they continue to sit for hours on end before their television sets gulping them down in complete forgetfulness of their studies or other regular works. These are used not just to create humour or fun— a lot of hard, and often bitter truths, are told through them. Many problems cannot be articulated direct; but they may very easily be portrayed through the cartoons. The artists can also intelligently put forward ideas of solving tricky problems through this medium.

Our artists, during the days of united Pakistan and before Bangladesh was created, could not easily draw political cartoons even if they so wished. There were restrictions also on newspapers and journals to publish them. Some newspapers and magazines, despite the restrictions, would, very tactfully and in the guise of drawing social and ordinary cartoons, publish cartoons depicting political theories or carrying political messages.

Artist Kazi Abul Kashem, under the pseudonym of 'dopeaja', provided a boost to the movement for making Bengali the state Language of Pakistan by drawing a good number of cartoons around 1952. He resorted to saucy criticisms of the then Muslim League leaders through some of his cartoons. Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin and artist Quamrul Hassan during that period (in the decade of 1950s), would, periodically, draw cartoons. Quamrul would draw cartoons under the pseudonym of 'Bhimrul'. At a later period, Quayum Chowdhury, Hashem Khan (under the name of Chhabi Khan), Kalam Mahmud and Rafiqun Nabi (Ra-na-bi) used to draw cartoons on different social and other issues. An artist under the pseudonym of 'Arupa' had, for a long time, been drawing cartoons in the strips of daily newspapers. But political cartoons and cartoons on administrators and rulers were forbidden.

It was a matter of fear to draw and publish any political cartoon for nearly a decade of Ayub Khan's Military rule beginning from 1958. The English-language weekly *Forum* would publish, during the later part of 1960, with its cover featuring political cartoons by Rafiqun Nabi (creator of the famous cartoon character 'Tokai' and popularly known by the name 'Ra-na-bi). These cover cartoons were probably

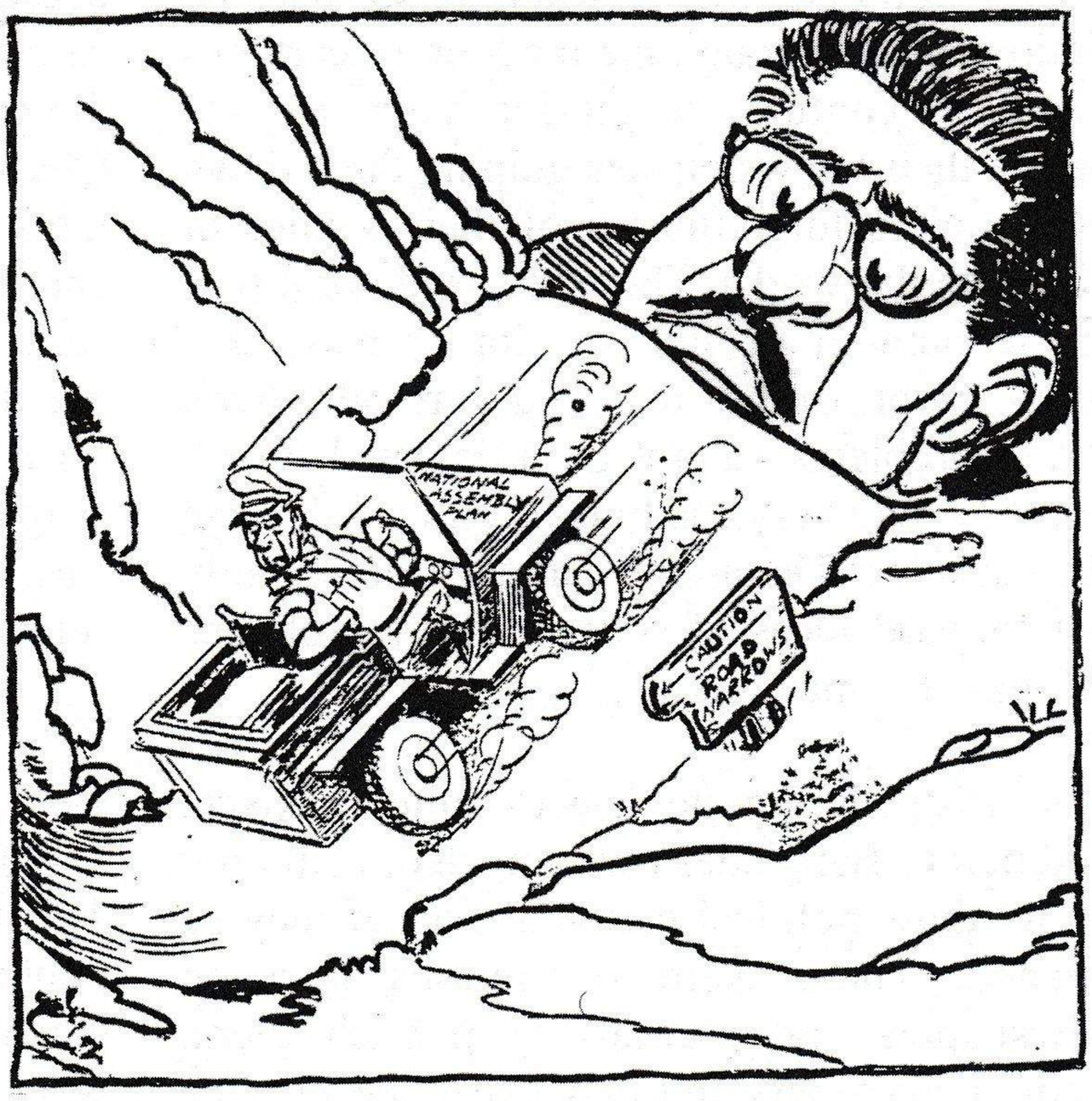
the first direct political cartoons, and their principal characters were Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Yahya Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the election of 1970. It is learnt that some political cartoons would periodically be published in the Students' Union-run Magazine 'Runner', the English-language 'Daily Express' and in some mini-magazines.

The Bangladeshi artists did not get much of an opportunity to work on the theme of the great liberation war of 1971. Quamrul Hassan drew 'This beast is now groaning under the pains of death' in a series under different captions in imitation of his own very famous poster 'This beast has got to be killed' and got them published in the weekly 'Joy Bangla', published from Mujibnagar. 'Banglar Bani' and the English-language daily 'The People', also published from Mujibnagar, used to publish many cartoons almost everyday. A good number of cartoons have also been traced back on the pages of 'Ronangon', 'Sangrami Bangla', and 'Biplobi Bangladesh', published in print or hand-written from different parts of the liberated areas of the country. Bangladeshi Nobel Laureate in Peace, Dr. Muhammad Younus, used to publish from Chicago in the U. S. a journal under the title 'Bangladesh Newsletter'. He himself would draw the cover cartoon for each issue of the journal.

The contemporary history of 1970-71 runs something like the following—



Pakistan, 1970: Law of Jungle artist: Ahmed



National Assembly closed- 1971: Retreat in fear of Sheikh Mujib, artist : Ahmed



Election publicity, 1970
Weekly Forum
December, 12, 1970
Artist : Rafiqun Nobi

one reads of the general elections in Pakistan, the emergence of the Awami League with absolute majority in the National Assembly (Central Parliament) of the country, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as its leader, the likely Prime Minister of Pakistan. But the then Military President of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan, started dillydallying with regard to relinquishing power to the elected representatives of the people. Leader of the Pakistan Peoples' Party, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, stoked it further. Many Members of the National Assembly (equivalent to M.P.s elsewhere) from West Pakistan were willing to come to attend when it was called to sessions for March 1, 1971, but Bhutto obstructed them from coming. The whole country burst into a severe agitation when the Assembly session, called for March 1, was cancelled. Bongobondhu called for a non-cooperation movement on March 3. He declared in a mammoth public meeting in the Raman Race Course (now Suhrawardy Udyan) on March 7, 'The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation; the struggle this time is the struggle for freedom.' The agitation got spread throughout the whole country; the military government imposed curfew, but the people defied it and came out to the streets in many places. General Yahya then came to Dhaka for negotiations. The negotiations were a subterfuge to cover up movement of the armed

forces from West Pakistan to Dhaka. The General ordered army crackdown and stealthily left Dhaka on March 25.

The Pakistan army began its 'Operation Searchlight' in the night between 24 and 25 March. A widespread genocide was carried on throughout the whole of Bangladesh from March 25 to December 16. The Pakistan Army was aided and abetted by the Muslim League and the fundamentalist clique, including the Jamat-e-Islami. The whole country suffered



Awami league's victory allover Pakistan, 1970; Bhutto's victory in West Pakistan, 1970 Pakistan Forum (America, Canada) January, 1971



Challenge : Mujib and Bhutto, Weekly Desh, March, 1971



Bongobondhu : Speech on 7 March



Let us destroy the enemy - Sheikh Mujib. Artist : Kutty. The Statesman. April 13, 1971

indiscriminate repression and genocide with the help of Al-Badr and Al-Shams under cover of the so-called Peace Committees. Nearly ten million people took shelter in the neighbouring country, India. Tajuddin Ahmed (1925-75) formed the interim government of Bangladesh in Mujibnagar on April 10. The Freedom Fighters, organised by the interim government began a war of resistance throughout the whole country. The government of India at that time officially took up the responsibilities for the refugees, and began to provide all kinds of assistance to the Mujibnagar government. The Yahya government wanted to hang Bongobondhu, already under arrest in a Pakistani prison, through a farcical trial. U.S.A. and China sided with Pakistan while the then Soviet Union came to back Bangladesh. More than 93,000 armed forces personnel surrendered to the joint command of India and the Freedom Fighters on December 16, 1971. A new independent and sovereign country called Bangladesh takes its place of pride on the Map of the world.

Kolkata dailies like— Anandabazar Patrika, Amritabazar Patrika, Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The Statesman, Hindustan Standard, Daily Jugantor, weekly Desh; the mass-circulated Mumbai weekly Blitz, weekly Himmat; the Pioneer from



Independent East Pakistan (Bangladesh)
Artist : Jibberd, the Guardian, March 27, 1971

Lucknow; A. J. Vanarasi regularly published cartoons in favour of the liberation war of Bangladesh. The sensitive minds of the artists were moved by the indiscriminate genocide, the huge problems of the refugees, the discussions by the different powers and distinguished persons and their comments. Chandi Lahiri, Sufi, Madhavan Kutty, Amal, Rashipuram Krishnaswami Luxman, ebati Bhushan, Sudhir Dar and some other artists like them drew innumerable cartoons. They had silently played a very great role in mobilising the world public opinion in favour of our freedom struggle and the war of liberation. The news media of India, at that time, were divided into three groups so far as their treatment of the news on Bangladesh and the war of liberation of 1971 were concerned. All the newspapers and journals



Sheikh Mujib telling Yeaya : Why are you murmuring? I propose also full autonumy for the minorities of West Pakistan.
Artist : Abu Abraham, The Indian Express

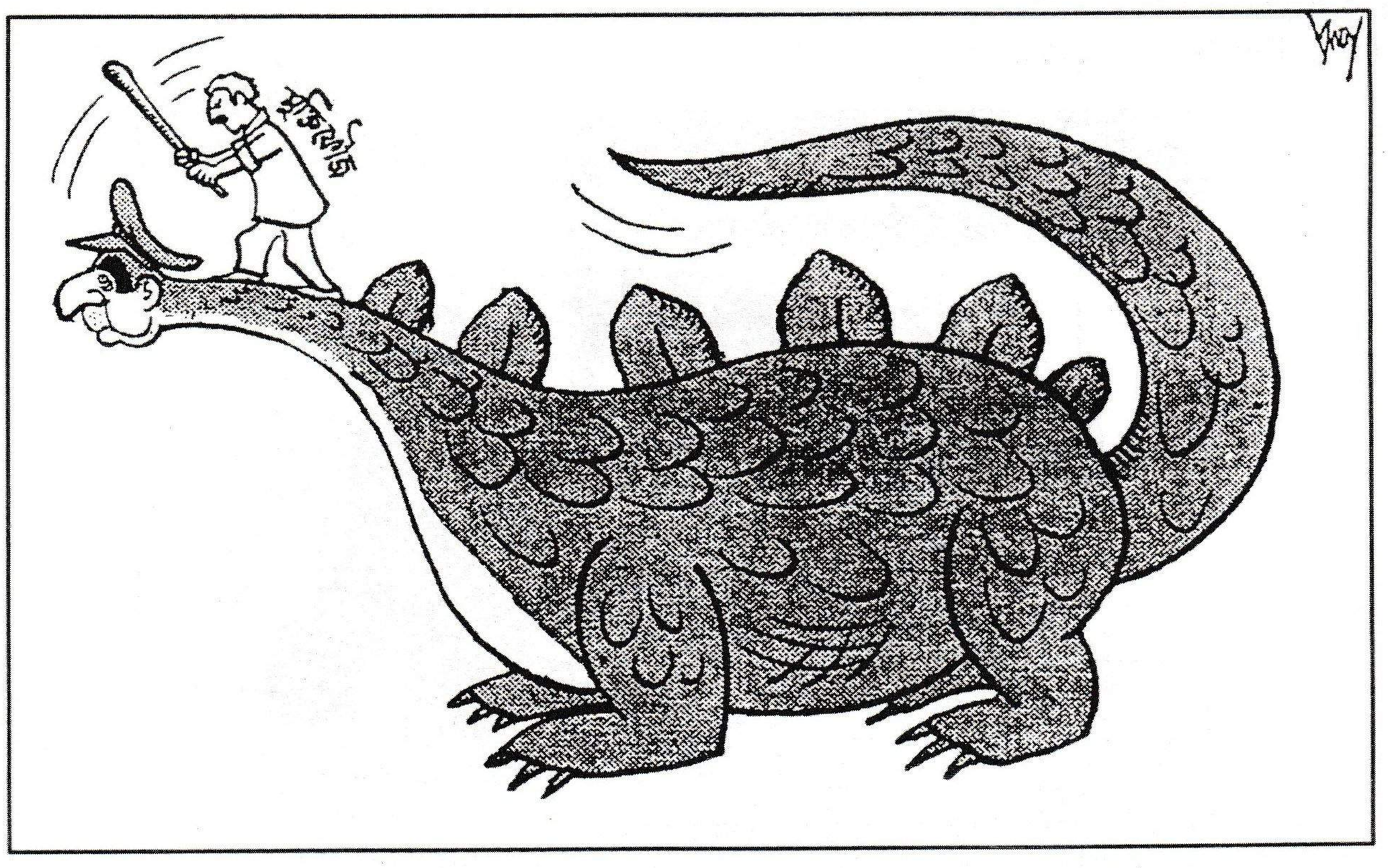
published from Kolkata, other than those published in Urdu, were very vocal in their support of the Bangladesh cause. I have not succeeded in collecting the newspapers of South India; but whichever number and types of those from North India have I been able to collect shows they were more or less vociferously supportive of our cause. The mass-circulated and very influential international print media, including those from the United States, whose government, incidentally, was the principal ally of Pakistan, were found very openly supportive of Bangladesh. Ten million refugees, leaving their hearths and homes behind,



Yahya's discussion with Mujib regarding 6-point, March 1971. Bhutto also came. Artist : Amal. The Statesman, March 23, 1971



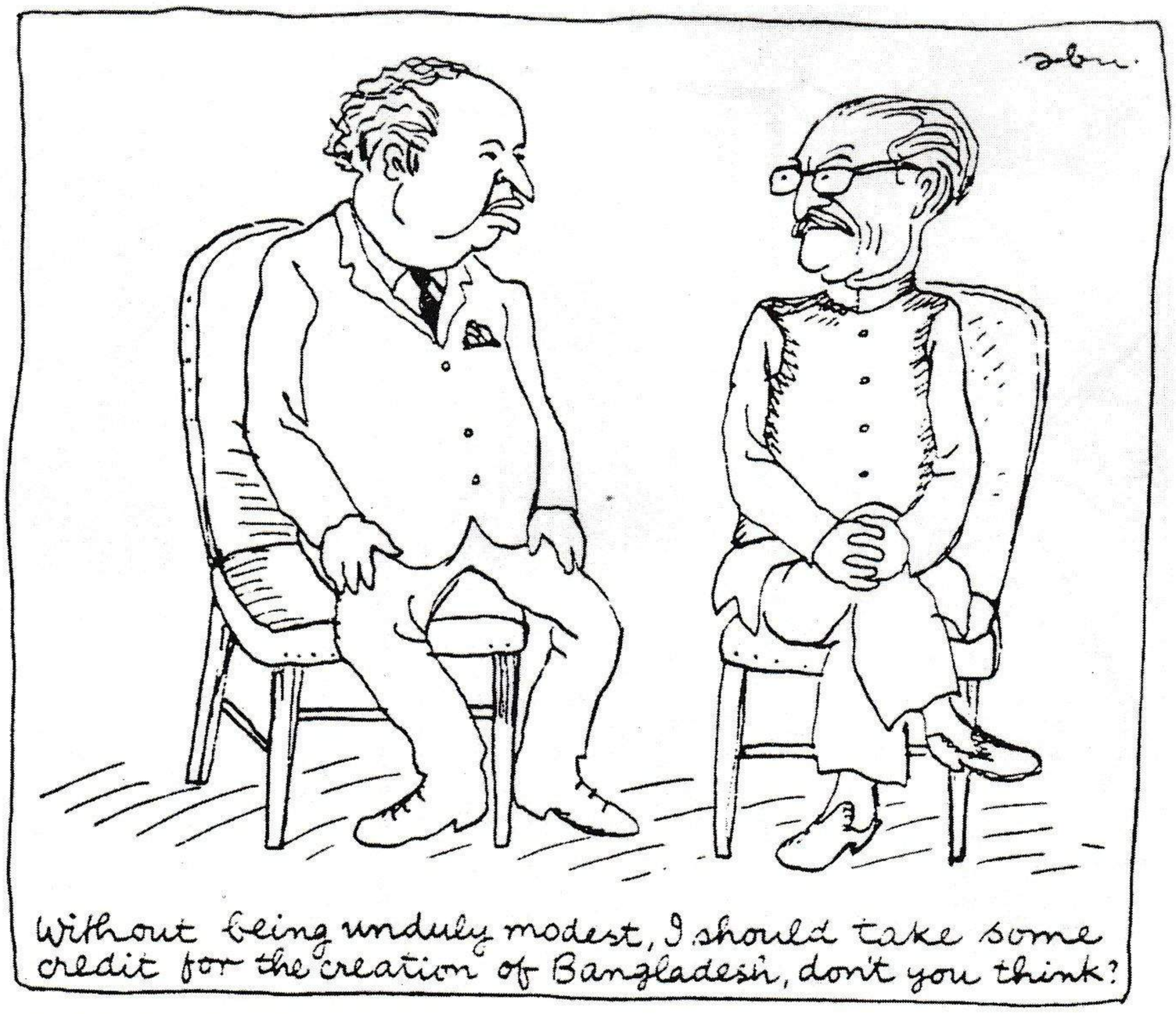
From the voice of one Mujib to all Mujibs — Artist : Pirali. Weekly Joy Bangla, December 16, 1971



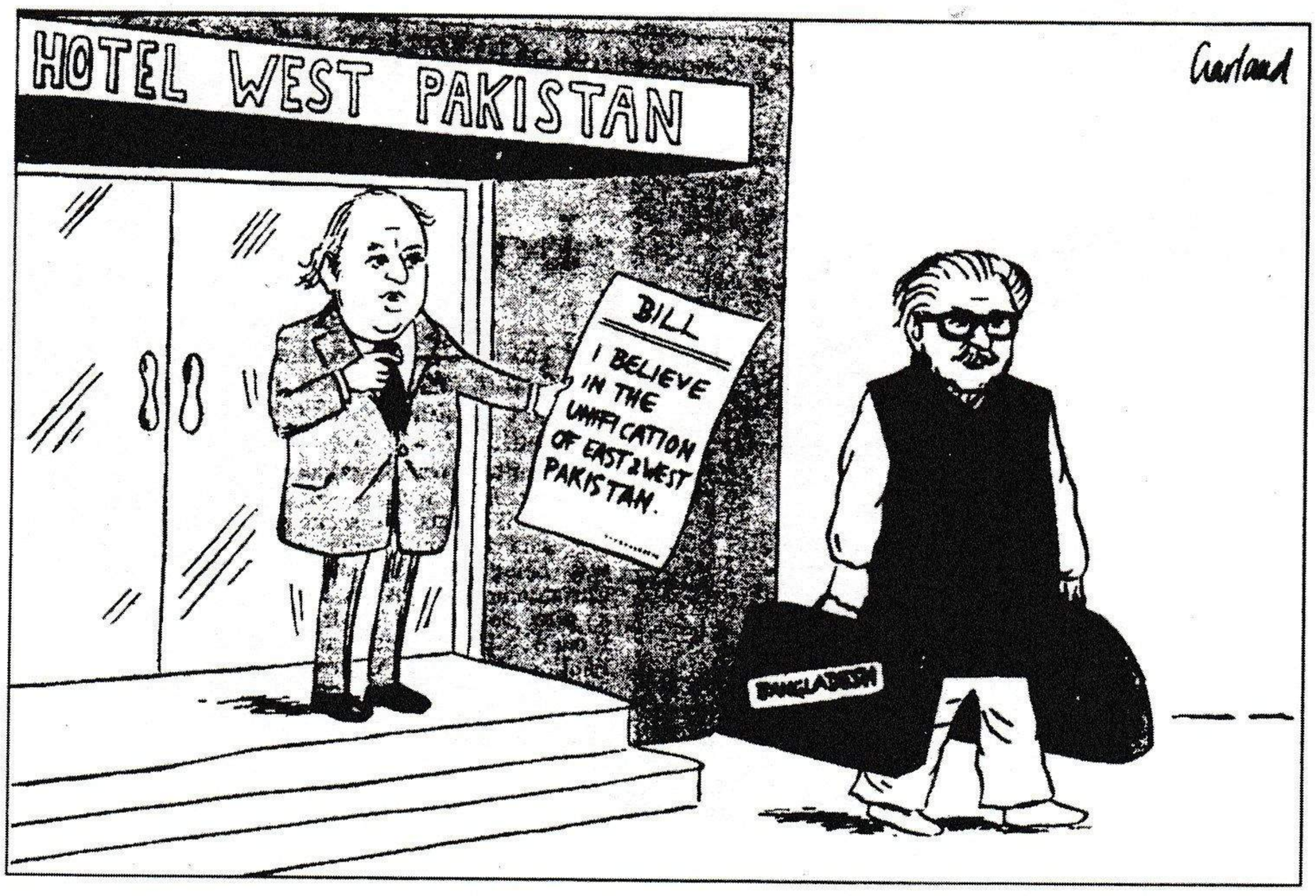
Demon Yahya at wit's end due to allout attack by the Freedom Fighters. Yahya surrenderd : Bangladesh is free, all are welcome. Artist : Sudhir Dar. Hindustan Times, December, 1971

were forced to take shelter in India. The newspapers and journals contributed very greatly to awakening world public opinion towards the plight of refugees by publishing their photos and fitting stories.

British newspapers and journals— The Guardian, The Times, The New Statesman, The Observer, The Daily Express, The Daily Telegraph, The International Herald Tribune, The Daily Mail, The Sunday Times, The Economist; The Far Eastern Economic Review (now defunct), published from Hong Kong, French Daily Le Monde, The New Gazette of



Artist : Abu Abraham. The Indian Express, December 22, 1971

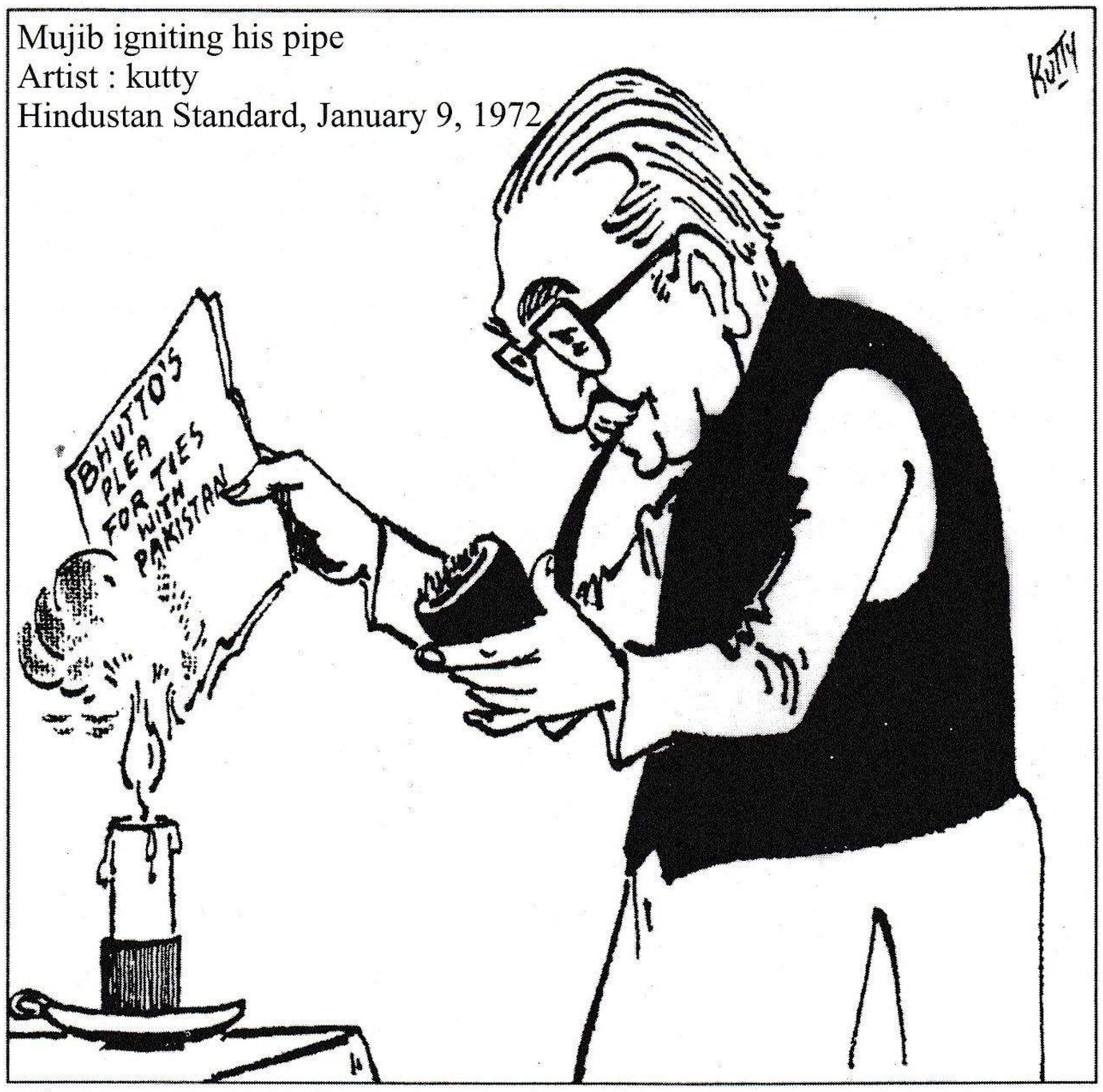


At last Bhutto was compelled to release Sheikh Mujib from Pakistan's prison.

Her, Sir,— the bill, better, better you take it with you.
Artist : Garland, Daily Telegraph, January 4, 1972



Absconding, Street Poster
Artist : Chandi. Amritabazar Patrika, January 8, 1972



Mujib igniting his pipe
Artist : kutty
Hindustan Standard, January 9, 1972



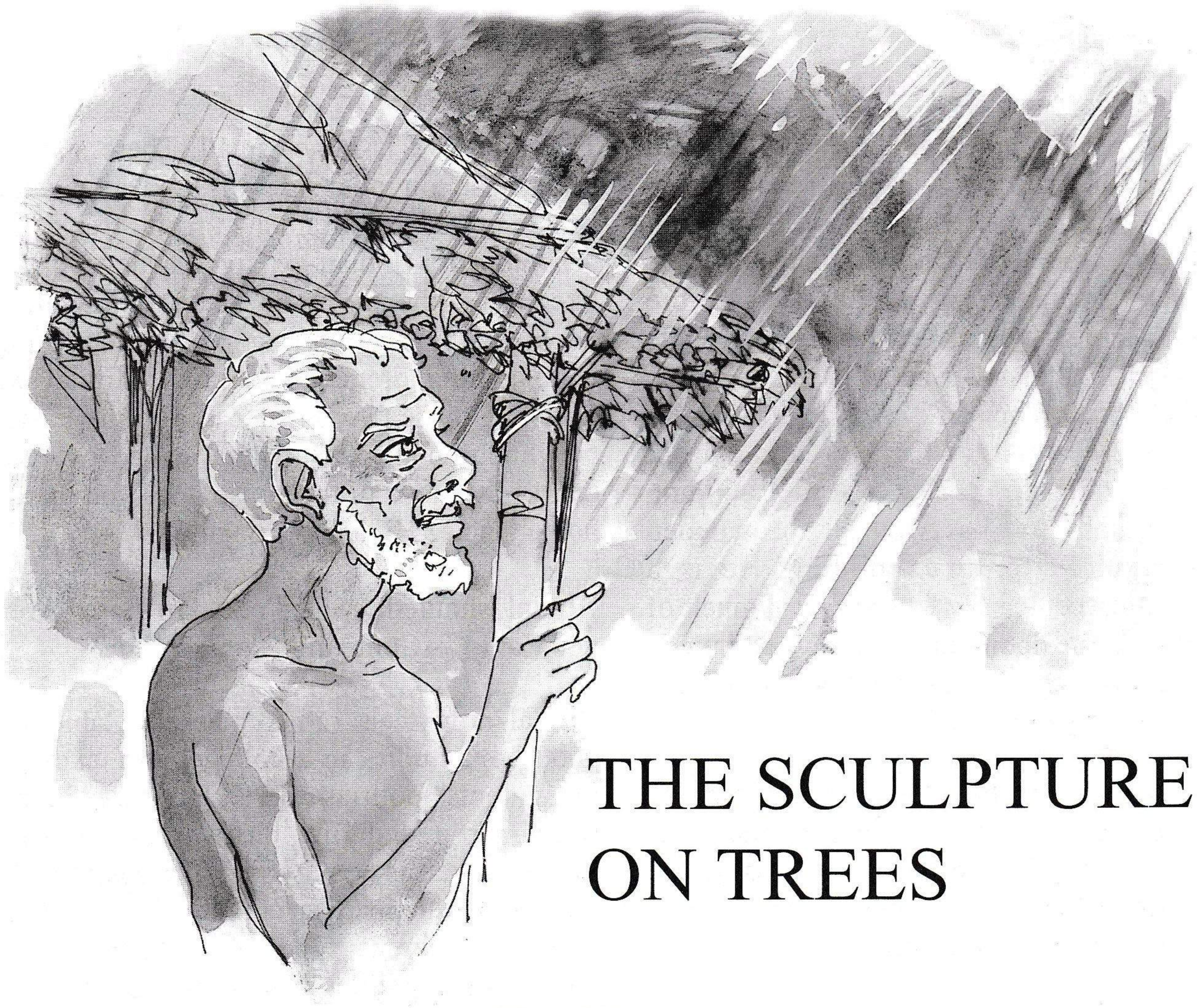
Crime of the Pakistanis in Bangladesh
Artist : Ravindran, Hindustan Standard, January 10, 1972

Belgium, The Age of Australia; The Province and The Vancouver Sun of Canada; The Newsweek, Time, The New York Times and others from the United States published cartoons on Bangladesh and the role of the international community on the situation. The cartoons were drawn by artists— Brad Holland, Calman, Cumming, Garland, Jibberd, Heine, Jensen, Keith White, Trog, Peterson, Hubing, Pat Olifant and many others. These cartoon-artists did not hesitate even for a moment to take up their brushes in favour of the Bangali Nation and embracing the truth, staying thousands of miles away and depending solely on the news they read in the media.

A look at those cartoons, published in the international media, easily convinces one what a great role they played. History of Bangladesh's freedom struggle written so far, unfortunately, makes no mention of cartoon journalism.

It is remarkable, however, that Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the only political hero of Bangladesh in the cartoons of the international press; the whole world identified Bangladesh with Bongobondhu. These cartoons depicted Yahya and Bhutto as the principal villains or anti-heroes; Nixon, Kissinger and Mao Tze Dong as its allies and, later, Indira Gandhi, and Sharan Singh were depicted as Bangladesh's friends. In the international arena, the cartoons made references to countries like India, Soviet Union, China, the United States, the United Kingdom and the UN and its Secretary-General, U Thant. Cartoons published during April-May depicted the government-in-exile and the problems of the refugees and those published during July-August depicted Indo-Soviet Treaty and the appointment of a new governor. Besides these, the cartoons published during September-October dealt with desertion of the Pakistan side by the diplomats, the untenable conditions of Yahya Khan and the supply of arms by USA and protests and resistance to that.

At a later period, many cartoons depicted the Indo-Pak war, the debacle of Yahya, Bhutto and Nixon, or of the US. Finally, during November-December, the victory had been very widely depicted through the cartoons. In 1972, the release of Bongobondhu from the Pakistani prisons, his triumphant return to home and his meeting with Bhutto. If one takes account on a monthly basis, one would find that the largest number of cartoons was published in December, 1971. One thing is worth mentioning here that none of the Generals,e. g. General Niazi, who had acted in Pakistan, or fought in Bangladesh against it, other than Yahya Khan, was ever made the subject-matter of any of the cartoons anywhere. The absence of cartoons on the freedom fighters, who had played a very great role in winning freedom, or on the leaders, who had taken stands either for or against Bangladesh, cannot be missed. The reason, perhaps, is that the outside world or the international media was familiar with only three characters, viz., Mujib, Yahya and Bhutto. The entire drama surrounding the emergence of Bangladesh is seen to revolve round the character of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and just a few others. The outside world, therefore, would equate Bangladesh with him.



THE SCULPTURE ON TREES

Sharif Khan

Hiralal Pal has already lived three-fourths of his life, and just a quarter is left for him to go along. But he still feels very restless and does not want to pass some time quietly inside his house. The rainy season has set in. The siesta after lunch today has really caught him off guard. The bottom of the sky seems to have come unstuck and a heavy downpour has come on to the earth. ; he would otherwise have taken the torn umbrella under the armpits and started out by now for the neighbourhood of the fishermen, and would be discussing all sorts of things with Shailen Koiborto in the latter's front verandah. That Shailen Koiborto is now the only surviving member of his generation in this village.

His is a real hut with the floor and its protrusion outside the jute stick fencing is made of beaten earth, and the roofing is of old and worn-out dried straw. Rainwater therefore drips down on a few spots on the floor; earthenware pots and pans have to be placed on the floor on those spots in order for the floor not to get soggy there. Lying down at night on rush mats even becomes difficult as the back gets damp and even wet.

The wind is blowing with quite some speed now. Splashes of the driving rains, pushed in by the wind, also find their way inside the house through the chinks in the jute stick side-fencing. The son's wife has gone to the southern neighbourhood. Afzal Kazi of the

Kazi household had supplied on purchase a few hanks of threads to weave a scooping net for him. It was, in fact, the son's wife who had taken the work of weaving the net.The weaving of the net finished jut today— before the rains came. She has left just a little while ago to reach the net. She will likely return with the money. The son is a carpenter. He has gone to the upazilla town. The rice merchant Araz Ali is putting up a two-storied building there. Hiralal's son has won all the wooden works required for that building. He is a renowned carpenter. He can make as much of best fittings for doors and windows as he can shape up different designs on wood. One may call him an artist of wood.

The only grandson Ratan is also not at home now. He has gone for angling in the river 'Chitra', as he does almost every day. He always returns home with enough fish to meet the family's own needs of protein.

There is nobody at home now. Old Hiralal, therefore, placed the pots and pans at their designated spots for raindrops to fall into; reed matting was hung on the fences. He then got down to the veranda, squatted on a short-legged seating stool and started silently watching the rains while keeping his ears pricked to the rhythmic sound of rains hitting the earthenware pots inside the room. He is now 76, but the eyesight has not gone fully dead till now. He has become somewhat bent at the waist. Yet he still retains quite some strength. His beard and moustache had all gone gray and the hair on the scalp is thinning. Furrows in their hundreds cover his body and the forehead. All the pictures of a truly hard life he led are on display on the skin of the body. And, as though, all the history of Bangladesh is writ large in the furrows of his forehead.

The courtyard is rather small. There stands a basil bush on one side of it. There stands beside this a Karamcha fruit tree. Two bosontobauri (Indian— Nightingale— calling like 'Bou-kotha-kao'— translator) birds gulping down the ripe karamchas, even though they were getting drenched in rains. Hiralal was watching those two birds. Zahid of the Eastern Neighbourhood, at that time, called out from out of the arena of the house, 'Are you there at home, uncle? Hi, uncle Hiralal—'

Hiralal shouted back, 'Yes, I'm here. Aren't you Zahid/—Come in— come in.'

Hiralal now feels rather pleased. Zahid is a good boy; studies in a college, and takes part in students' politics there. His three uncles were martyred during the war of liberation. Zahid himself is crazily fond of Bongobondhu. He visits Tungipara a couple of times every month. Different types of information on international politics can be heard from him. Hiralal, at his age, loves to hear those stories.

Zahid entered the small courtyard. He closed the umbrella, stepped up on to the veranda and said, 'There's great news for you, uncle.'

Hiralal looked with his eyes wide open, 'What news can there be for me? Has Ratan hooked a large Pangash today?'

'Oh, no, no. What's it that you say, uncle.' So saying, he drew the other short-legged stool closer and sat on it, face to face with Hiralal, and said, 'Some people have come from Dhaka. They have somehow come to know you are in possession of a handkerchief previously belonging to Bongobondhu. They will reach you any moment from now. Babar Ali, commander of the upazilla unit of the

freedom fighters, is leading them along. They are very respectable people from the Liberation War Museum of Dhaka. You surely know, the government has allocated a large plot of land at Agargaon, Dhaka, for constructing the Liberation War Museum. Construction on the land has already begun. I will take you to Dhaka on the day this museum opens fully to the public.'

Hiralal's eyes moistened at this. Spreading a weeping-like smile on his sunken face, he said, 'I can't go to Dhaka at this age, Zahid. How many days more would I live?' After a pause, he added, 'Where would Bongobondhu's handkerchief come to me from?'

'Ratan had told it to Hafiz. He told his father, and his father, in turn, told the commander. Do you really have it with you?'

Hiralal replied, 'No, no, these are all lies. Let Ratan come home today! I'll give him a few beatings on his back.'

'Ratan has further told you are also in possession of my three uncles' vests and gamchhas (a thinly-weaved handloom napkin or towel— translator) soaked in their blood. They reportedly also have bullet-holes on them.'

'No, No, these are all lies. But, of course, your uncles and I fought in the same front. They were martyred before my very eyes. But, then, gamchha, lungi, and vests— these are lies. I was also wounded. It was a very hard choice between saving my own life and picking up gamchha-lungi.'

'Their coming would, then, go in vain. They have come from Dhaka with so much hope!'

Hiralal, while drying his wet hands with the corner of his dhoti, said, 'Who are they, really?'



'Didn't I tell you a long time back a Liberation War Museum has been established in Dhaka? These people are from that museum. They have been scouring the whole country to find out souvenirs from the war of liberation.'

'That's fine. But, then, I don't have anything with me. Let Ratan come today!'

Ratan entered the courtyard at that time soaking in rain waters , although he had been shielding himself under a makeshift umbrella of a large leaf of a variety of arum. He had the fishing gear in his hands; the fish-creel full of fishes. Hiralal cried out, ' Ratan, come hither!'

Ratan became somewhat nervous and asked, 'What's the matter, granddad?'

'The matter is thy head! What didst thou tell Hafiz? I'm reportedly in possession of blood-soaked vests and gamchhas! Of Bongobondhu's handkerchief!

Ratan went dead quiet. He greatly fears his grandfather. He, therefore, left the fishing rod in the courtyard and, without saying a word,



got into the small kitchen-house with the fishing-creel in hand. Ratan's mother also arrived around that time taking shield under a banana leaf, but getting wet, notwithstanding. Zahid asked her, 'How are you?'

'Fine. And you?'
'Yes, I am fine, too.'
Ratan called her right at this moment, 'Ma'.

She stepped on to the kitchen.

Zahid turned round to Hiralal and said, 'Let me take your leave, than, uncle. Let me go there and ask them rather not to come. There's no use in unnecessarily wading through this mud and sludge.'

'All right, you may go. Well, by the way, 15th is quite close now. Please take me along to Tungipara this time as well. Ratan would also accompany us.'

Yes, I will. Don't worry. I also took you there last year.'

Zahid went out of the house. Hiralal stood up, the dhoti was above his knee-caps. He held a corner of the dhoti and cried out, 'Ratan, come here.'

Ratan came out of the kitchen-shack, went to his granddad, drenched in rain waters, and stood before him without fear. Hiralal said, 'You, great fool! Why did you tell all those things?'

Ratan was about to respond, when Babar Ali was heard outside. He then entered the courtyard along

with another three gentlemen. Hiralal stood up. Ratan went inside to fetch a mat weaved out of date-palm leaves. Babar Ali along with those three gentlemen came up on the little veranda. They were all soaked in rain. Their feet and the sandals were indistinguishable admixtures of murky water and sludge. They, of course, had umbrellas with them, but they could hardly provide any protection against such torrential rains as were pouring down then. Ratan laid down the mat for them. Babar Ali Introduced those three gentlemen to Hiralal; Ratan was also not excluded. They exchanged greetings. Ratan fetched a couple more of short-legged seating stool. Babar Ali and Hiralal squatted on the mat, and then they began discussions. Hearing them out and comprehending things well, Hiralal could not tell a lie this time. His eyes moistened. At last he said, 'Yes, I have them all. Bongobondhu's handkerchief is also with me in the tin-box there.'

Eyes of all of them began to shine hearing this. One of them asked, 'How did you get that handkerchief?'

Hiralal gave a wan smile and replied non-chalantly, 'I would then make earthenware. We are a caste of potters— a profession for countless generations. All the works were with earth. I left the ancestral profession after independence. One reason was acute scarcity of suitable clay, but more important was the change in people's lifestyle— hey greatly switched over to metallic pots and pans. I became an apprentice of carpenter Omar Ali and learnt the trade in a rather advanced age. I also made my son learn it. This Ratan, my grandson, is only 15 now. He is already as adept a carpenter as his father. Well, I was thirty-six years' old in 1971, and had strength in me. The military had come one day and burned down all the houses in our Pal neighbourhood. They shot my wife, two of my sons and my beloved daughter to death. They had been shaping up an earthenware pitcher then. They had thought they would not be shot if the military found them working. The sodden dough of earth got swept with their blood. If pitchers or other utensils were made with that dough, they would be blood-red. I escaped. That Zahid there— I fled the country together with his father and the uncles. My eldest son, father of this very Ratan, was also with us. We had gone through a hell of a lot of troubles to reach Kolkata via the port of Haldia after having braved through the Sundarbans. We received training there, and, then, after making very long detours, we crossed Meghalaya border to reach our country in August; and, then, on to this Fakirhat. We soon entered the Sundarbans and put up our lairs there. We had quite a few engagements with the Pakistan army and their local collaborators. Zahid's three uncles embraced martyrdom at the battle of Chalna port. I also received a bullet injury in my knee. Ratan's father was hit in the abdomen. We two came back from the jaws of death.'

Hiralal started panting at this point. He removed his dhoti from his knee-area and showed the mark of bullet-wound there. He began again, 'The country became independent. I got my son married, and we re-entered the business of pottery. My son and I would go to Fakirhat twice a week with large wicker baskets, full of different kinds of earthenware pots and pans, on our head. Well, that fateful day was a Wednesday. We were proceeding towards the market place. The usual heavy load of earthenware pots and pans were on our heads. No sooner had we hit the macadam road than the sound of motorcycles

and whistle blows reached our ears. I tried to step away on to one side of the road, but lost my balance and fell down on the macadam road. This fall resulted in my sustaining cuts on one elbow and the forehead. And the wicker basket load of pots and pans fell to the ground and easily got splintered into many pieces. The rather narrow macadam road got clogged. I looked back and found an endless row of different types of motor vehicles standing still behind me; and there appeared to be numerous policemen. I started shaking with fear. My son was standing beside me with his load of earthenware utensils in the wicker basket. He could not take the basket off his head alone, and could not, therefore, come to my aid. And I lay there profusely bleeding.'

Coming up to this point, Hiralal again stopped. His panting had increased. Tears came to his eyes. He wiped them with a corner of his dhoti and said, 'The one who had elbowed his way forward through the crowd and pulled me up on my feet was Bongobondhu himself! I was, then, transformed, as if, into a boulder of stone! Was it possible that Banhabandhu himself was in front of me, holding my hand! He dusted my hair, asked my name, and, then, brought a handkerchief from out of his pocket, rubbed the blood from my elbow and forehead and asked, 'Could you recognise me?' I was, as if, a chunk of stone then. But I replied, 'How can I not recognise you? We had made a clay idol of you during the war of liberation, placed it below the basil plants, and performed puja so many times! We had plunged into the war and liberated our country.'

He had placed a palm of his hand and said, 'I am really sorry. You fell down today, and sustained injuries, only because of me. And you have suffered a great loss. I am on way to Khulna from Bagerhat, and am in quite hurry!' Immediately after saying this, he brought out three one-hundred-taka notes from out of his pocket, and offered them to me, but I refused them. I bowed down and touched his feet as a mark of respect to him. Ratan's father was standing, like a dumb person, with his load, like stone. At my refusal to accept the money, he smiled and made further inquiries after my family and finances. He then lightly touched this wound on my knee with the fingers of his right hand, and said, 'You shed so much blood during the liberation war! I became the cause of shedding your blood again! I was in a hurry to return to Gopalganj from Bagerhat via Khulna. That's why— Please forgive me.'

Hiralal Pal stopped again. There appeared tears in his eyes. He said, 'He was an angel of a man, as soft as fine clay. His mind was even softer than the dough of pottery clay. A man like that was killed! And you couldn't do anything?

One of the gentlemen said, 'The case has been tried and the killers hanged.'

Hiralal exhaled a deep sigh and said, 'You can never get back that man. He was killed and nobody could do anything. Wasn't there any man from Bangladesh in Dhaka on that day? Had I been there, I would see how they could kill Bongobondhu.'

One of the gentlemen, with a view to bringing about a turn in the discussion, 'Bongobondhu's residence has now been converted into Bongobondhu Museum.'

'I have heard of it from Zahid.'

'Would you like to go visit that museum?'

'I have a desire, of course. Zahid has assured to take Ratan and me along with him. I also want to have a glimpse of the eternal flame before I die.'

'Have you ever been to Dhaka?'

'No, none of my forefathers even ever went to Dhaka.'

Another elderly gentleman said this time, 'You may show those things to us. No, no, we won't take them if you do not want to part with them.' Hiralal got up from his squatting position and went inside his house. Ratan's mother came out of the kitchen-shack at that time with a veil drawn over her head. The rain had stopped a little while earlier. She stepped on to the veranda and said from behind her veil, 'You'll be able to see Bongobondhu if you go behind the house.'

Ratan's mother followed her husband into the house; Ratan had done so earlier after his grandfather.

Babar Ali alone had got down from the veranda and went behind the house. He cried out after a short while. That made the other three gentlemen hurry after him there. They began to have palpitations at what they saw there, and tears started moistening their eyes. There were two statues of Bongobondhu hidden behind creepers and bushes. One of those was standing in the manner of delivering his speech on March 7 with the upraised forefinger. The other one reminded of that tragic night— the dead body of Bongobondhu was lying on the stairs of his house at (road) No. 32 (Dhanmondi) with the pipe in hand.

Those three gentlemen together with Babar Ali were stunned, as though, turned into stones. They went near them; touched them with their hands, and, then, they turned behind and found Hiralal coming towards them. One of them rushed towards Hiralal, embraced him and cried out with joy, 'What a piece of art have you created! How could you possibly do it!'

Hiralal replied, 'I did not do it; it is Ratan who has created it.'

They now surrounded Ratan, who said, 'Granddad had guided me and I chiselled the wood to shape it up like this. We had two two-hundred-year-old teakwood trees of very large circumference here. There would be performed puja of goddess Manasha at the foot of these trees. The last Sidr witnessed one of the trees uprooted while the other got broken roughly in the middle. They were trees from the Manasha Puja yard. They could not be put to any other use. The whole clan would then be wiped out by snakebites. I chiselled and shaped that tree over there, which got broken down at a height of seven feet, into the likeness of Bongobondhu delivering his speech on March 7 with the upraised forefinger. And I sawed the tree that had got uprooted. I then worked on the lain down trunk and chiselled it in to the shape of the dead body of Bongobondhu. The circumference of the tree was very large, and it had two big branches. Shaping up the hands, therefore, posed no serious problem. The pipe in his hand could also be shaped.'

All three of them embraced Ratan. And they began to weep with joy. This boy himself does not know what surprising pieces of art he has created. He would not have kept them hidden were he to know this. It is a great creation; great pieces of art. It was such a lively wood engraving it appeared, as it were, Bongobondhu was really delivering his 7th

March speech with the upraised forefinger. And he has been lying down as a corpse on the stairs of his residence at No. 32 (Dhanmondi). It felt as if just a touch would set Bongobondhu's speech in motion. And the corpse would again get back its life. He has engraved such wonderfully lively sculptures on trees, and such life-size Bongobondhu-sculpture! And the painting on them has been made just right. The thick-framed spectacles on his eyes have also been quite befitting. A sudden look at those would surely startle any one.

They took a lot of photographs in their digital and video cameras, and then they came back to the veranda. Hiralal opened a very old tin-box with bird and floral patterns on its lid. The aroma of the great liberation war of 1971 and of history, as if, got wafted around the place. That very handkerchief Bongobondhu had used, and those blood-soaked vests and gamchhas used by Zahid's uncles!

They wanted to take them. Hiralal replied, his eyes moistened in tears, 'Well, you may. I kept them hidden for so many years only in order not to give them away to any one.'

Hiralal and Ratan, then, agreed to part with those teakwood Bongobondhu engravings. They offered a large sum of money for those; the economic conditions of Ratan and the others in the family would vastly improve, and they would suffer from economic woes no longer; they would give them two lakh taka as Ratan's honorarium. The first of these two wood sculptures would be installed right on the spot in Suhrawardy Udyan Bongobondhu had stood on to declare independence through his speech on March 7. And the other one would be installed in the Bongobondhu museum. 'But', Ratan held a hand of his grandfather and said, 'Hi granddad, is Bongobondhu an article for sale? I have engraved him out of love! And my mother helped me paint him. We painted him every year. Can love be sold? You take them all away. But there would be some delay in uprooting those two teakwood trees. A lot of earth has to be dug out, and it would take two to three days. Their roots are very deep in earth.'

Another of the gentlemen now said, 'Mr. Hiralal, 'why did you keep the matter a secret so long? They are all hidden behind a host of creepers and bushes.'

Hiralal, spreading sparks of fire from the dying pupils of his aged eyes, said this time in a rather choked voice, 'Is Bongobondhu a matter to be kept hidden? One has got to search him out, like you have done today.'

The gentleman replied with a smile, 'Would you give them to us?' Hiralal tilted his head to one side in agreement, and gave a sweet smile. That smile appeared to have spread all over Bangladesh. Another of the gentlemen said, 'We won't, of course, take them for free. We will pay the befitting price for them.'

Hiralal glared direct at the gentleman's eyes and cried out, 'Can Bongobondhu be on sale? Can independence be bought for money? Tell me, can it be?'

Every one else present there was stunned.

Hiralal was shivering in excitement.

Bongobondhu and Three Incidents

Swadesh Roy

Incident-1



January 1971, After being released from the Pakistani prison as soon as Bongobondhu had reached London, British Prime Minister Edward Heath greeted him

Bongobondhu had arrived in London after his release from the prison in Pakistan. He was taken to the official residence of the British Prime Minister straight from the airport. A very surprising incident happened when his car arrived at the Prime Minister's residence. The British Prime Minister himself went forward and personally opened the door of the car carrying Bongobondhu. Hundreds of flashlights flared with clicks of as many cameras to capture that scene, because such an incident had never happened before. Bongobondhu was the Head of State of a new state, and the British Prime Minister himself was opening the door of his car. There are people specifically assigned to open doors of cars.

The British Prime Minister did not, in fact, do this for the Head of a state. He had shown respect to the greatest revolutionary leader of the world at the time; to the greatest victorious hero. A lot of writings appeared in different newspapers and journals at that time. Why did the British Prime Minister break traditions and did it? The actual facts came out of those writings. It was asserted that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not just a Head of a state; he was the founder of a state as well. His struggles were the wealth of world history. He had liberated seventy-five million people. His movements had shaken the rest of the world. He was the

most respected and talked-about leader of the world at the time. The British Prime Minister had shown respect to that leader. This respect shown to Bongobondhu had also honoured seventy-five million Bengalis. This Bangladesh of ours, the entire sub-continent— was under the British rule at one time. The people of this region freed themselves from the British after a prolonged struggle and spilling of a lot of blood. And the British government, barely twenty-four years after their departure from this region, showed this respect to the leader of Bangladesh, which no other leader got before him.



Bongobondhu with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia

Incident-2

Saudi Arabia is one of the richest countries of the world. They have a huge amount of petroleum deposits. The system of government is absolute monarchy there. The king is all in all. Saudi Arabia did not support our liberation war in 1971. They sided with Pakistan. They therefore did not extend recognition to us even after liberation. That is why, our people, desirous of performing hajj, had to be sent through India in the year after liberation. They accorded permission to them in that fashion. Bongobondhu first met the Saudi King in 1973 at the Non-aligned conference meet. A meeting between Bongobondhu and the Saudi King was scheduled in the sidelines of the conference. The Saudi King, without any reference whatsoever, said, 'Our economy is in trouble, you see, we won't be able to offer any assistance. Before the King could finish his speech, Bongobondhu snapped, 'I have not come to ask for any assistance from you. I have come just to thank you. I thank you for the opportunity you had provided to our people to perform hajj. You would do well to remember that when we could achieve independence through struggles, we can also survive that way.' The Saudi King got bewildered at this bold assertion by Bongobondhu. He could not think anyone could say a thing like that on his face. He had committed a mistake in his calculations. He took Sheikh Mujib to be like any other leader. He could



The family members of the intellectuals and renowned personalities killed by the Pakistani soldiers, razzakars and Al-Badars in 1971 demanded trial of the killers

not think before that the world witnessed the birth of only one Sheikh Mujib. Such a heightened sense of self-respect could be found in just one person— Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Incident-3

Women are often subjected to humiliation in our society even today. It happens almost every other day. But the Head of State is hardly ever seen getting perturbed by this. But the Father of the Nation, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the kind of head of government, who would be grealy disturbed if he would hear of one such incident. And he himself would take steps to meet the situation. An incident of this nature took place during his presidency somewhere near Dhaka. Two women were subjected to harassment. Bongobondhu, when told of the incident, brought them to his own residence. He told them, 'My mothers, you have been dishonoured during the period of my administration. I am totally responsible for this. I bow down before you. You may inflict any punishment on me.' You would hardly be able to control your tears if you hear what he had said after this. When you grow up and read more about Bongobondhu, you will then be able to know. He had subjected the two senior leaders of that area to severe punishment. They were not spared of this even though they were senior leaders. The Bengalis would never again experience such an administration because there ever was born only one Bongobondhu.

An Excellent Contribution of Bongobondhu: The Constitution of Bangladesh

Shahriar Kabir

If presenting the five-thousand-year-old Bengali Nation a sovereign, independent Peoples' Republic is the apogee of success of the political life of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his second best success is, then, to give this independent, sovereign Peoples' Republic a unique constitution in the shortest possible time. Three million people embraced martyrdom for the independence of Bangladesh. The secular, nationalistic, democratic and socialist constitution of the country has also been written in the sacred blood of this three million people.

The number of countries having written constitution is now 125 in the world. There are some countries that have no written constitution; they are governed by common law, certain contracts and Acts. The best example of this is England. Israel emerged as an independent country more than six decades ago, but they have not been able as yet to adopt a constitution.

The most-discussed of the written constitutions is that of the United States. Although the slimmest in volume, this oldest written constitution of the present-day world, adopted in 1788, has since been influencing, directly or indirectly, all succeeding written constitutions. The total number of words contained in the constitution of the United States, including the signatures, is only 4,543. Only twenty-seven amendments have been incorporated in this constitution during the last two hundred and twenty-five years. The most voluminous constitution in the world is that of India. This constitution, adopted in 1950, contains a total of 1,17,369 words in English. India's constitution went through ninety-four amendments during the last sixty-five years.

The constitution, whether written or unwritten, is the highest law of the country and its most revered document. The basic principles of how a country is run or the philosophy of a state is written down in its constitution most of the countries consider inviolable. The constitution delineates the characteristics, activities and the responsibilities of the three principal organs of the states, viz., the Legislature or Parliament, The Executive or the Administration and the Judiciary as well as other constitutional Institutions. The constitution, likewise, determines the responsibilities of the state towards its citizens and of the citizens towards the state. The constitution is the symbol of the independent and sovereign entity of the state to those countries or nations that attained freedom through fighting against the colonial rulers.

The constitution of Bangladesh, for various reasons, is very important among the 125 countries having written constitution. The constitution of Bangladesh was adopted in the shortest time, just in 181days, compared with the time taken for other countries. Although the principal body of the constitution of the United States was drafted in just one hundred days, its adoption took more than a year. The drafting and adoption of the Indian constitution took four years. The drafting and adoption of the first constitution of Pakistan took nine years; the second one four years and the third (present) one year and a half. It took Vietnam 17 years to adopt her constitution. Venezuela, in the two hundred years of her independence, scrapped her old constitutions to replace them by the new ones twenty-six times.

What the ideology, aims and characteristics of a free and sovereign Bangladesh would be was decided at the time of the declaration of independence. Bongobondhu had declared independence at the very early hours of March 26, 1971, according to the Christian calendar immediately following the launch of one of the cruellest of genocides by the invading forces of Pakistan at the midnight of March 25, 1971. 'The declaration of Independence' declared from Mujibnagar on April 10, contained the very declaration of independence by Bongobondhu and the aims and objectives of the newly-independent country of Bangladesh.

"Whereas the Pakistani Authorities have unleashed a barbaric and cruel war and still carrying on unprecedented massacres and repressions on the unarmed civilians of Bangladesh and whereas the government of Pakistan, by unleashing an unjust war, genocide and various acts of repression, has made it impossible for the people's representatives of Bangladesh to sit together to frame a constitution and establish a people's government;

"And whereas the people of Bangladesh, through their heroism, courage and revolutionary activities, have established their effective authority over Bangladesh;

"And whereas we, the elected representatives, having formed a Constituent Assembly on the strength of the mandate given to us by the people having sovereign authority, through mutual discussions among ourselves that it is our sacred duty to ensure equality, human dignity and social justice among the people of Bangladesh;

"Therefore we do hereby declare our intentions to transform Bangladesh and do thereby also approve of the declaration of independence made beforehand by Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

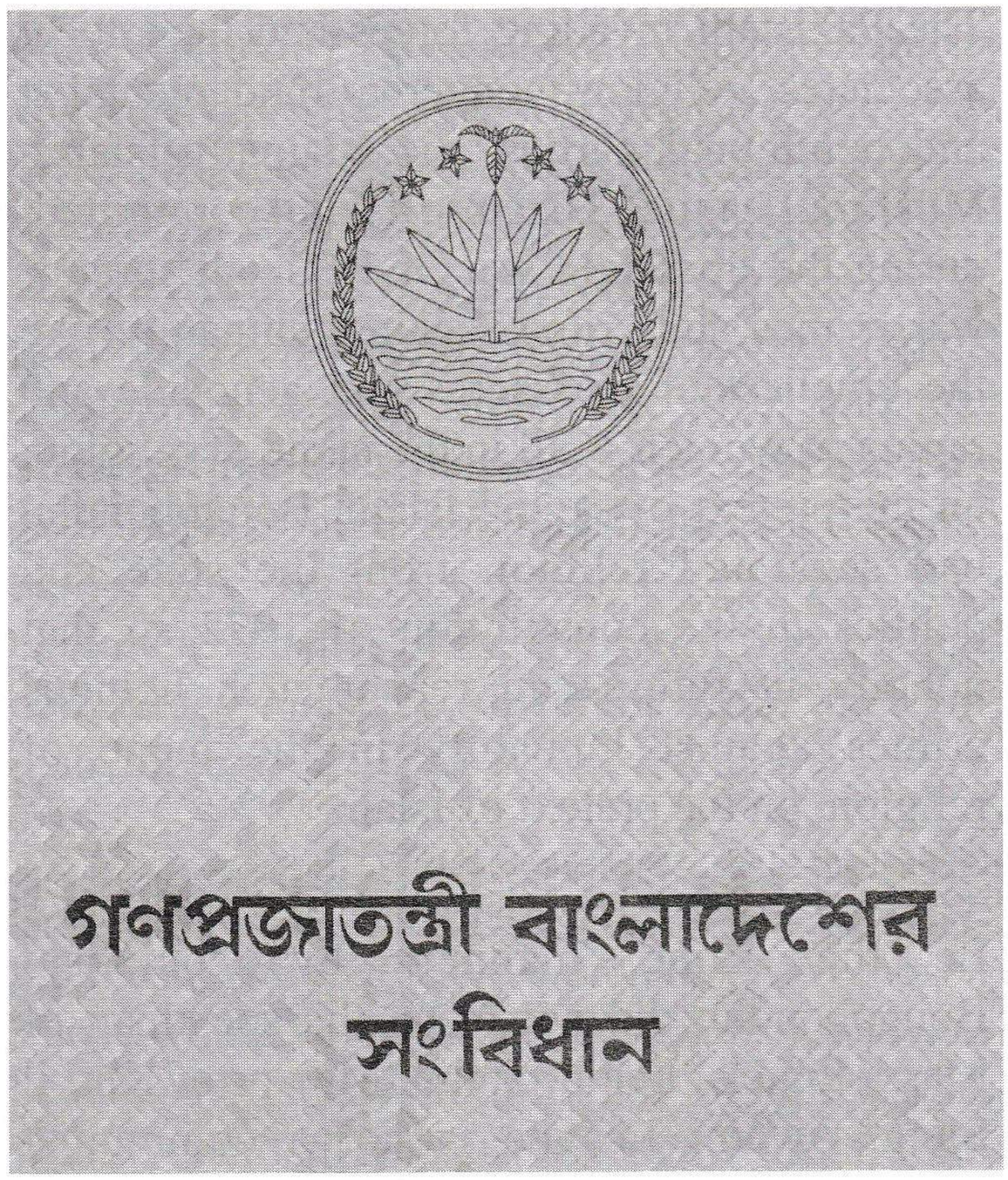
The ideology and objectives of Bangladesh became still clearer and the Awami League government, providing leadership in the war adopted democracy, socialism and secularism as the fundamental state principles and the philosophy of the country. The elected representatives of the people from Awami League formed the first government of independent Bangladesh; but the top leadership from the Communist party, National Congress and from both the factions of the NAP were there in the Council of Advisers. The then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, while extending diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh on December 6, 1971, had made a mention of the basic principles and ideology of the country

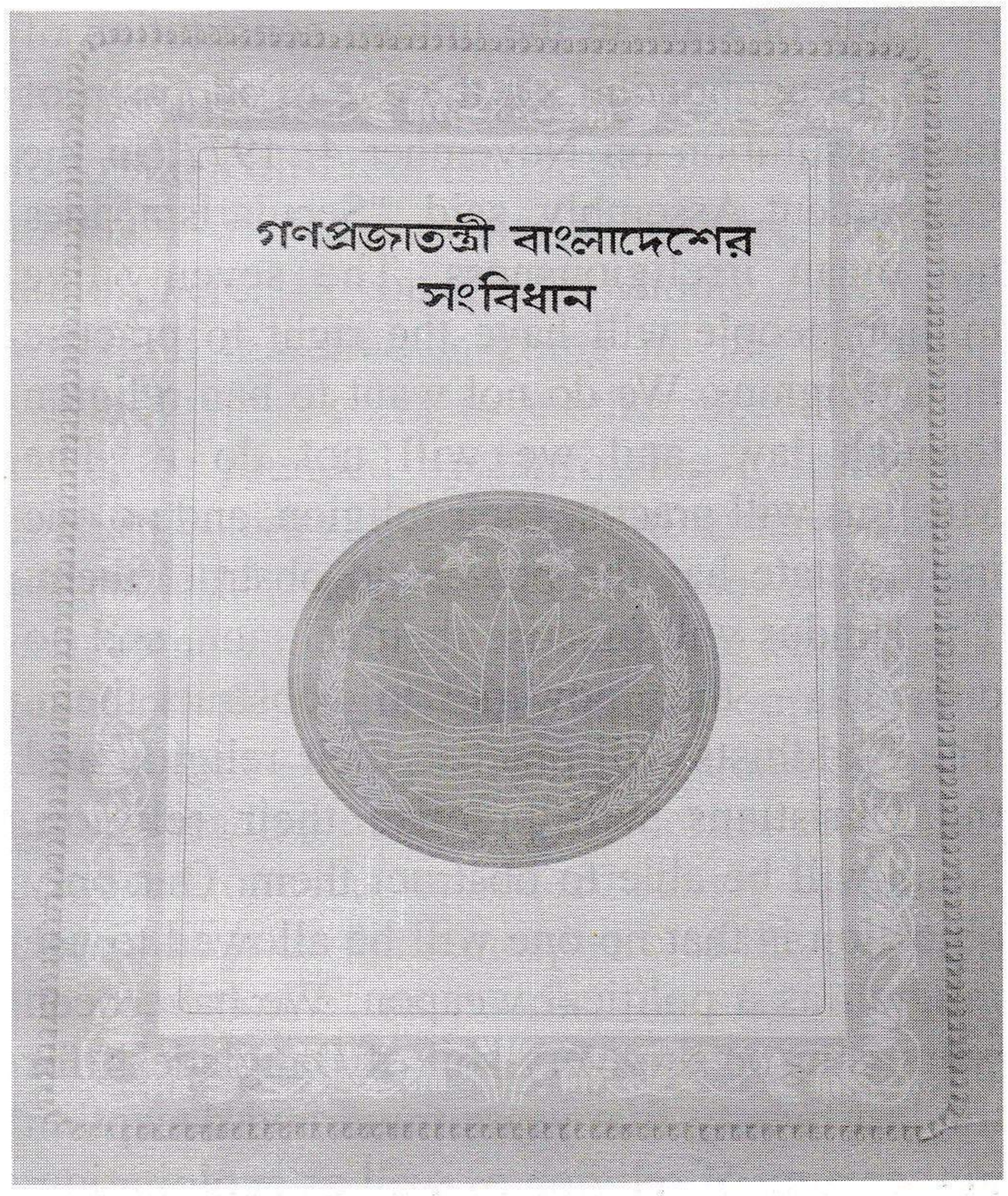
and said, 'India is also committed to these principles and ideologies.'

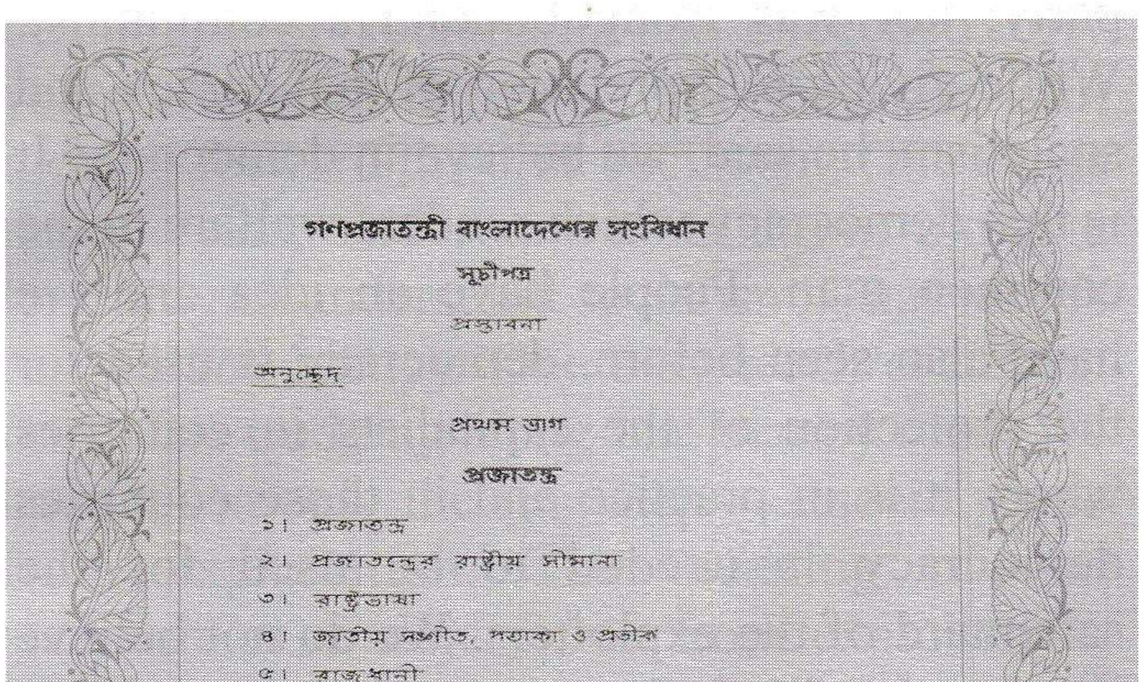
The father of the independent Bengali Nation, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on his way back home after his release from the prisons in Pakistan on January 10, 1972, spoke of his commitment to 'democracy', 'socialism' and 'secularism' in the meeting organised in his honour in Delhi, and the constitution of Bangladesh has been framed on the basis of these principles. The open Encyclopaedia 'Wikipedia' has thus commented on the Bangladesh constitution, 'When the Bangladesh constitution was adopted in 1972, it was then one of the most progressive and democratic constitutions in contemporary history, which earned the praise of international lawyers and jurists as an inspiration to progressive political ideals for the people of the third world engaged in struggles for self-determination.

On his return home, Bongobondhu, along with the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country, engaged himself in doing two important things: (1) to frame a constitution for the independent and sovereign Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh within the shortest possible time and (2) to initiate legal initiatives to try the war criminals. On the strength of a resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh on April 11, 1972, a 34-member draft constitution framing committee was formed with the Law Minister, Dr. Kamal Hossain, as its chairman. The first meeting of this committee was convened on 'Mujibnagar Day', April 17, 1972. This committee needed 181 days to frame the draft constitution. The draft constitution was placed before the Constituent Assembly on 12 October and, after a prolonged discussion, the Constituent Assembly adopted the constitution of Bangladesh on November 4, 1972.

The rather long speech delivered by Bongobondhu in the Constituent Assembly on the eve of adoption of the constitution will be treated as an important document not only in Bangladesh but also in the two-thousand-five-hundred-year-old history of political science. He had, at the outset of the speech, described the historical background of the founding of the independent state of Bangladesh, spoke of the highest sacrifices of the Bengalis for freedom and, thereafter, interpreted the basic principles of the constitution. The constitution of Bangladesh has enshrined in itself 'democracy', 'socialism', 'nationalism' and 'secularism' as its four basic state principles. The ideas of these philosophies have come to the history of political science from the West. The interpretation of democracy, socialism and secularism as provided by Bongobondhu may evoke differences of opinion in many, but it may be said with certainty, in the backdrop of the changes occurring in Bangladesh and in the international arena during the last forty years, that the definitions and interpretations of those are still relevant and worth following. About nationalism, he said, 'There are many definitions of nationalism. Many sages, many wise men, intellectuals and educationists have also provided definitions of this. Let me, therefore, desist from attempting another definition of nationalism. But Bongobondhu's definitions of secularism, democracy and socialism are, in many ways, different from those of the statesmen, philosophers and political scientists in the West. As I have written elsewhere, no other philosopher or political scientist before him had given such an interpretation of secularism as he provided at the time of adopting it as a fundamental


গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের
সংবিধান


গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের
সংবিধান


গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের সংবিধান

সূচীপত্র

প্রস্তাবনা

অনুচ্ছেদ

প্রথম ভাগ

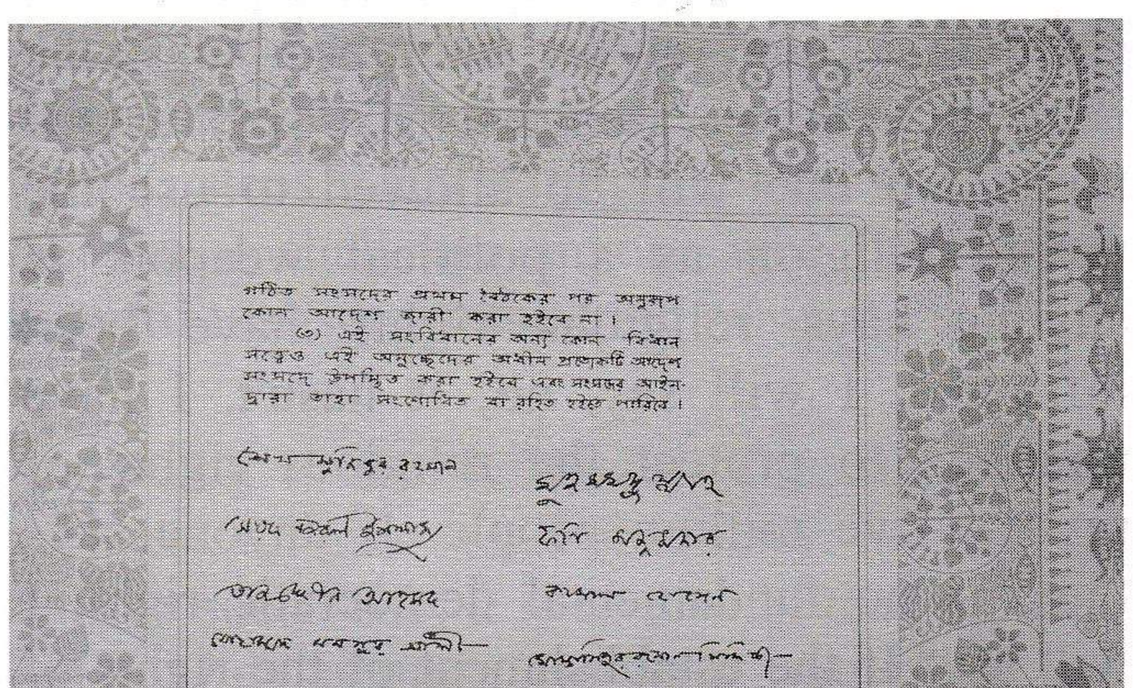
প্রজাতন্ত্র

১। প্রজাতন্ত্র
২। প্রজাতন্ত্রের রাষ্ট্রীয় সীমানা
৩। রাষ্ট্রভাষা
৪। জাতীয় সঙ্গীত, পতাকা ও প্রতীক
৫। রাজধানী
৬। নাগরিকত্ব
৭। সংবিধানের প্রাধান্য

দ্বিতীয় ভাগ

রাষ্ট্রপরিচালনার মূলনীতি

৮। মূলনীতিসমূহ
৯। জাতীয়তাবাদ
১০। সমাজতন্ত্র ও শোষণমুক্তি
১১। গণতন্ত্র ও মানবাধিকার
১২। ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতা ও ধর্মীয় স্বাধীনতা
১৩। মালিকানার নীতি
১৪। কৃষক ও শ্রমিকের মুক্তি
১৫। মৌলিক প্রয়োজনের ব্যবস্থা
১৬। গ্রামীণ উন্নয়ন ও কৃষিবিপ্লব



Four pages of the Constitution of Bangladesh

principle of state in the unique constitution of 1972. Bongobondhu, on the eve of adoption of the constitution on November 4, 1972, in the Constituent Assembly, said, "Secularism does not mean irreligiousness. The seventy-five million people will have the right to practise their religions. We do not want to ban religion through law, and we will not do it. The Muslims will practise their religion, and no one in this state has the powers to obstruct them. The Hindus will practise their religion, and no one has the powers to obstruct them. The Buddhists will practise their religion and the Christians will practise their religion. None will be able to obstruct them. Our only objection is that no one will be allowed to use religion as a political weapon. We have been witnessing in this very soil of Bangladesh for the last twenty-five years fraud and deception in the name of religion as well as exploitation, cheating, torture, murder and rape— all in the name of religion. Religion is a very sacred thing. No one will be allowed to use the sacred religion as a political weapon. If anyone says religious rights have been infringed, I will say, no, it hasn't. I have arranged to protect the religious rights of seventy-five million people. If anyone says there is no fundamental democratic right, I will say: If the establishment of the rights of seventy-five million people requires the scrapping of the same from a handful few, it has got to be done."

The reality of the background against which Bongobondhu and his associates, who had provided leadership during the war of liberation, framed the epoch-making constitution for the newly-independent Bangladesh was the liberation war of 1971 and the genocide committed during that war. The Pakistani invading forces and their local associates, religion-mongerer, fundamentalist and communal parties, viz., Jamat-e-Islami, Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islam committed, during the liberation war of 1971, all sorts of war crimes and crimes against humanity like the cruellest of massacres and genocide and raping of women— all in the name of religion, on the pretext of saving Islam. Bongobondhu had separated religion from the state and politics in the constitution of 1972 so that nobody in future can repeat such heinous crimes against humanity in the name of religion, on the pretext of Islam.

In the same manner, by socialism Bongobondhu did not mean the socialism of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao or of Kim il Sung. Awami League is not a communist party; nor was Bongobondhu a communist. While giving interpretation of democracy and socialism, he said, we believe in democracy. It is that democracy which renders welfare to the common man. People have an idea and we have also seen before, democracy is used for the protection of the capitalists in countries where it is in practice and in those countries democracy is needed to be used for the safeguard of the exploiters. We do not believe in that kind of democracy. We want the democracy of the exploited, and the meaning of that democracy of the exploited is that safeguards have been provided in the democratic set-up of our country so as to protect the poor, and no measure has been incorporated that will protect the exploiters. That is why our democracy differs from that of many others. That has been provided for in many of the schedules and bills. You are also aware of this. A lot of discussion have taken place on the subject that no one can take away

others' property. We will certainly not touch any one's private property. But we want to make the wheel that helps exploit the people a wheel that will be used for the welfare of the people. That is why, we have, at the very beginning, nationalised Banks, Insurance Companies, Textile Mills, Jute Mills and the Sugar Mills. The purpose is to prevent the exploiters from using this democracy. This democracy will be used to protect the exploited. That is why, the definition of our democracy may be different from that of many others.

"We believe in socialism; and that is exactly the reason why we have nationalised all those. Those who get hoarse crying socialism has not been established should, first of all, know what socialism means. Soviet Russia, the birthplace of socialism, has exceeded fifty years of her existence, and they are still inching forward towards socialism. One needs many years, and requires trudging along a long way to understand socialism. That way is rugged and bumpy. One may reach socialism only after trudging along that bumpy road. We have taken only the first step— a society free from exploitation. The meaning of our socialism is a society free from exploitation. We do not want to borrow socialism from anywhere in the world. Each country committed to socialism has been making progress towards that end in its own way. The basic postulate of socialism is a society free from exploitation. It is agreed today that the objective conditions of a country like its climate, the psychology of the people, the economic situation and overall condition has to be taken in to consideration if socialism has to be established there. The way Russia adopted has not been imitated by China. She has gone in another direction. Despite their being in close proximity to Russia, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria have each followed a different course of socialism suited to each of these nations' background and atmosphere. If you go to Middle East, you will find that Iraq is going in one direction while Egypt is going to another. Socialism can never be founded by borrowing it from any foreign country; those who did so have failed to establish socialism. Because socialism cannot be established through the reading of texts on this with their lines, commas and semi-colons— as a movement cannot be built around reading of texts. In order for that to be achieved, one has to proceed slowly keeping a close watch on the atmosphere of the country, the condition of its people, the state of their mental preparedness, etc. Socialism cannot be built in a day. No country in the world, I think, not even those who founded socialism through revolution, could achieve something comparable with what we have done through various steps taken during the nine months of the war. I challenge anyone who may come forward to disprove the truth of what I say."

According to the definition of secularism in the West, religion is not observable not only in state or social life; it is so also in the personal life. The actual Bengali meaning of 'secularism' is 'worldliness'. Bongobondhu had accepted 'religio-neutrality' and not 'worldliness' as its meaning, because he would observe religion in his personal life. He said about secularism that religion would be there in people's personal lives; only state and politics would be separated from religion. He had proscribed politics based on religion through the constitution of 1972 that no other democratic country could do before him. It was a severe ideological defeat for the pro-Pakistan, fundamentalist Jamat-e-Islami,

Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islam and the like, who were defeated in the war of liberation.

Bongobondhu declared the day of adoption of the constitution of Bangladesh in the Constituent Assembly as the happiest day in his life. In the concluding part of his speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 4, Bongobondhu said, 'I again recall today the dangers to my life I have survived; but despite that, today is the happiest day of my life, the happiness I do not have language enough to describe. So much of struggles have been waged in this country for this constitution! The bloodletting by the martyrs and my own life would be meaningful if our future generations can build an exploitation-free society based on socialism, democracy, nationalism and secularism.'

The pro-Pakistan hooligans killed Bongobondhu to avenge their political and military defeat in the war of 1971 and their ideological defeat in 1972. The history of the war of liberation and its spirits could not be wiped off the constitution of 1972; nor could the war crimes trials stopped without assassinating Bongobondhu. After enacting the Collaborators' Act in 1972, he passed the 'International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973' in order to try the war criminals. The First Amendment to the Constitution of 1972 was made in order to safeguard this Act.

The best way to pay respects to Bongobondhu on the 36th anniversary of his martyrdom is to bring the killers convicted of killing him back to the country and to carry out the conviction orders as well as to expedite the trials of the war criminals, and also to nullify the fifth and the eighth amendments to the constitution brought about by Zia and Ershad, respectively, to return to the original constitution adopted by Bongobondhu. The citizens' movement to build Bangladesh on the values of the liberation war has to be kept going till these two functions are completed.



March 7, 1971 and Nawab Sirajuddowla

Hashem Khan

A scene exactly like this one did I see before. That was in the Ramna Race Course, on March 7, 1971. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had just entered the Race Course, and mounted the podium. The other leaders of the Awami League had so far been delivering their speeches. No sooner had Bongobondhu entered than the wide expanse of the field reverberated with slogan after slogan. "Your country and my country— Bangladesh, Bangladesh. Yahya, your declaration— we reject, we reject. Return the rightful shares of the Bengalis. You, the Army— go back to the barracks. Our Demands— six points, six points. Long live Bengal—" the assembled members of the crowd were raising their close-fisted hands with each of those slogans while some others were again and again raising aloft staves, sculls, posters and flags brought with them. I was then at the Ramna Green straight ahead of the Bangla Academy. A little outside and the entire field were jam-packed. The road surrounding the Race Course was over-crowded. I suddenly noticed, during that little span of slogan-resonating time, an adolescent of around 15 or 16 chanting a different kind of slogan as loud as his voice would permit: "Make Bangladesh independent, make Bangladesh independent. Joy Bangla (long live Bangladesh)".

I was somewhat surprised at a slogan like this at the time. The speech of Bongobondhu had not begun till then. Words like 'make Bangladesh independent' would not be heard before the historic declaration of Bongobondhu on March 7, which runs like this: 'Our struggle this time— is the struggle for our emancipation; our struggle this time— is the struggle for independence'. Direct demands for independence in the roads, in meetings, processions or slogans were not till then raised, although some people in chats or informal discussions might have discussed it almost as an academic issue. It seemed all the more surprising to me because I knew the boy, and one of the two flags, inscribed with the writing in Bengali 'victory for Bangladesh', and held aloft a rather thin bamboo pole in his hand, was my hand-writing.

I used to live in Gopibagh in March, 1971. It was 25, Gopibagh (Third Lane). I had been living in that particular house for the last five years. I had first seen the slogan-chanting boy at Gopibagh at the 'Rashed Medical Store' at Ramkrishna Mission Road. My elder brother, Dr. Suleiman Khan, would sit at this medicine store in the late afternoons and evenings to provide treatment to those who would care to visit him there. And many a person of the area would come to him for treatment. I found Dr. Suleiman one evening washing the boy's foot and carefully bandaging it. The boy respectfully greeted me when he marked my presence and said, you paint pictures—



March 7, 1971, Nawab Sirajuddowla at the Ramna Race Course ground

brother to the respected doctor, I know you.

I later learnt of the boy from Dr. Suleiman. His name was Siraj. He lives in a shanty, along with his parents and siblings, near Kamlapur Railway Station. His father runs a rented rickshaw. When he falls sick with asthma, which is not infrequent, Siraj runs the vehicle. He had come to the doctor with his father for medicine, and he knows him since then. Siraj had studied up to class iv in a school. Poverty forced him to give it up and join his father to help him. Dr. Suleiman let me further in— the boy is quite brilliant, he knows quite a bit about the country and its politics. Siraj is aware of the people of East Pakistan being cheated, deprived and they are not getting jobs under the martial law. He had worked like the grown-ups, despite his tender age, during the elections in 1970. He had made his fellow inhabitants in the shanty-town conscious of the necessity to vote for the Awami League. Tiredness could never catch up with him when it came to chanting slogans in the meetings and processions. He can also write posters.

I frequently meet Siraj in the kitchen market or, sometimes, on the street in Gopibagh. He would invariably pick me up on his rickshaw whenever we met if, of course, he had no other passenger already on board. He would like to know news of different kinds: news of politics, of the struggle, meetings and processions and of hartals. He, in return, would also volunteer information on what he had seen at which of the places. He would, at the first available opportunity, go to the chamber of Dr.



March 7, 1971 : Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave announcement of independence in his spirited voice... The Bangalis can establish their independent state through war of liberation. Artist Hashem Khan has produced a painting-version of that speech of hard belief. Bangladesh Bank has collected the painting

Suleiman and wait there, while working as the doctor's errand boy. Dr. Suleiman Khan was a man of politics. He was an active member of the Communist Party. Many political leaders and workers would frequent his chamber. Siraj would not understand it: he would try to know and understand by subjecting me to questions. He announced one day— Sir, I have slightly changed my own name. I have informed my parents my name, from now on, is Sirajuddowla, and have asked them not to address me as Siraj any more.

I continue to listen to him. After a pause, he commented— you haven't said anything whatsoever, sir.

—You rather tell me why you've changed your name from Siraj to Sirajuddowla.

—Sirajuddowla was the Nawab of independent Bengal. He had fought against the English, and embraced martyrdom.

He could not save independence; but had fought a lot to do so. I will also fight for my country; independence for the country would be impossible to attain without our fighting for it: a fight against the Pakistani army.

The day he had said all these was on March 4, 1971.

The people of East Pakistan burst into a severe agitation after they had heard president Yahya Khan's speech on March 1. The West Pakistanis and the Army leadership were unwilling to hand over powers to the Bengalis even though they had decisively won the elections under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib. They would not give them their rightful share. I met Siraj in the Baitul Mukarram area. He picked me up in his rickshaw. I became overwhelmed with surprise hearing what he had to say on our way to my residence at Gopibagh. How acutely conscious was this adolescent from a shanty town! Poverty and deprivation could not stand in the way of his love for the country. Bongobondhu had called for non-cooperation movement on March 3. Siraj was a warrior in that struggle.

Sirajuddowla presented himself at my residence in the morning of March 7. He appeared very preoccupied. He said, 'I have cut to shape a flag out of a piece of hardboard, Sir. Please write down, in bold lettering, 'victory for Bangladesh' on that flag, and below this: Yahya, we don't accept your declaration.'

We had, meanwhile, liked Siraj alias Sirajuddowla. He came very close to us. I, therefore, instantly honour his little importunity. I write down on his hardboard flag what he had wanted me to do.

I get to know by asking Siraj, he would go to Ramna to listen to the speech of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He would go there in a procession of the shanty town dwellers. He said with a certain measure of confidence, 'You will see, Sir, Bongobondhu would declare independence today.'

He had changed the writing on that flag of the morning to 'Make Bangladesh free' just moments before Bongobondhu delivered his speech at the Ramna Race Course on March 7. The writing on Sirajuddowla's flag made me more pensive after the delivery of Bongobondhu's speech. The speech of March 7 contained the last and the correct directive for the Bengalis for reaching the desired destination at the end of their twenty-three years' of struggle. It ended thus, —'Make forts of each one of your houses, you have to face the enemy with whatever you have— The struggle this time— is the struggle for our emancipation. The struggle this time— is the struggle for freedom.' This speech was the outcome of the political sagacity of the undisputed leader of the Bengalis' emancipation and freedom.

Bongobondhu could rightly feel when he had arrived at the Ramna Race Course, what was in the minds of Lakhs of people gathered there as well as that of Siraj alias Sirajuddowla, and their craving for independence. And that is why the principal theme of his March speech was the declaration of independence; the declaration to plunge into the war of liberation.

Two

An indomitable courage and invincible strength came crowding in Siraj from where he did not know after he had heard the speech of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7, 1971. He, then, could not care less for any obstruction, any danger coming from anywhere on earth. That firm declaration of Bongobondhu— 'Make forts of each and every one of your houses, you have got to face the enemy with whatever you have in your hands— Keep in mind, now that we have learnt to let our blood be spilled, we'll let it be spilled more— but we will free the people of

this country, Allah willing' created an acute stirring in the mind of the adolescent rickshaw-puller Siraj— no, Sirajuddowla. People of all vocation and professions— Ironsmiths, potters, farmers, labourers, service-holders, students, and the ordinary people— have to be united from all places— the villages, the towns and cities and the entrepots— to fight against the Pakistani soldiers to make the country independent. Bengalis were left with no alternative to fighting to become free. Every one has to fight were the country to be freed.

Almost everyday of the non-cooperation movement, after March 7, Sirajuddowla would write a stack of posters and bring those along to show to Dr. Suleiman and me. He would also occasionally request me— please write me a few good quality posters, and draw cartoons of the Pakistani soldiers. Siraj himself would draw some in his untrained hand. I would see fun in all those activities of his. There was no respite in his preoccupations till March 25. He would gather the dwellers of his shanty town and make them hear his mimicry of the speech of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; he would team up with his fellow shanty town dwellers to join large processions. The chase by the police, curfew, firing by the army— nothing could deter him.

Thousands of people were killed and wounded in Dhaka, and the city itself was reduced to ruins, by the ferocious invasion of the Pakistani army in the black night of March 25, 1971. The wanton destruction and merciless killings then went on throughout the whole of the country. The armed resistance and the war of liberation of the Bengalis continued for nine months.

I packed up my residence at Gopibagh in August. My enquiries after Siraj at that time revealed that he had left Dhaka on 28th March. His father informed— Sirajuddowla had gone to India, taken training in using firearms and was then engaging the enemy in guerrilla warfare near Mymensingh.

The country has become independent, and a lot of ups and downs have since occurred. Many days have also gone by since. It is now 2005. Thirty-three years. It was just the other day— Tuesday, March 1. When I was scaling up the stairs of the Institute of Fine Arts to go to the Teachers' Common Room on the first floor, a young boy of seventeen or eighteen, standing at the head of the stairs, courteously greeted me and said, 'Sir, I have looked for you for a few days. There is a letter for you. Taking the letter from the boy, I asked him, whose letter is this, and from where has it come?

—You will understand when you read it.

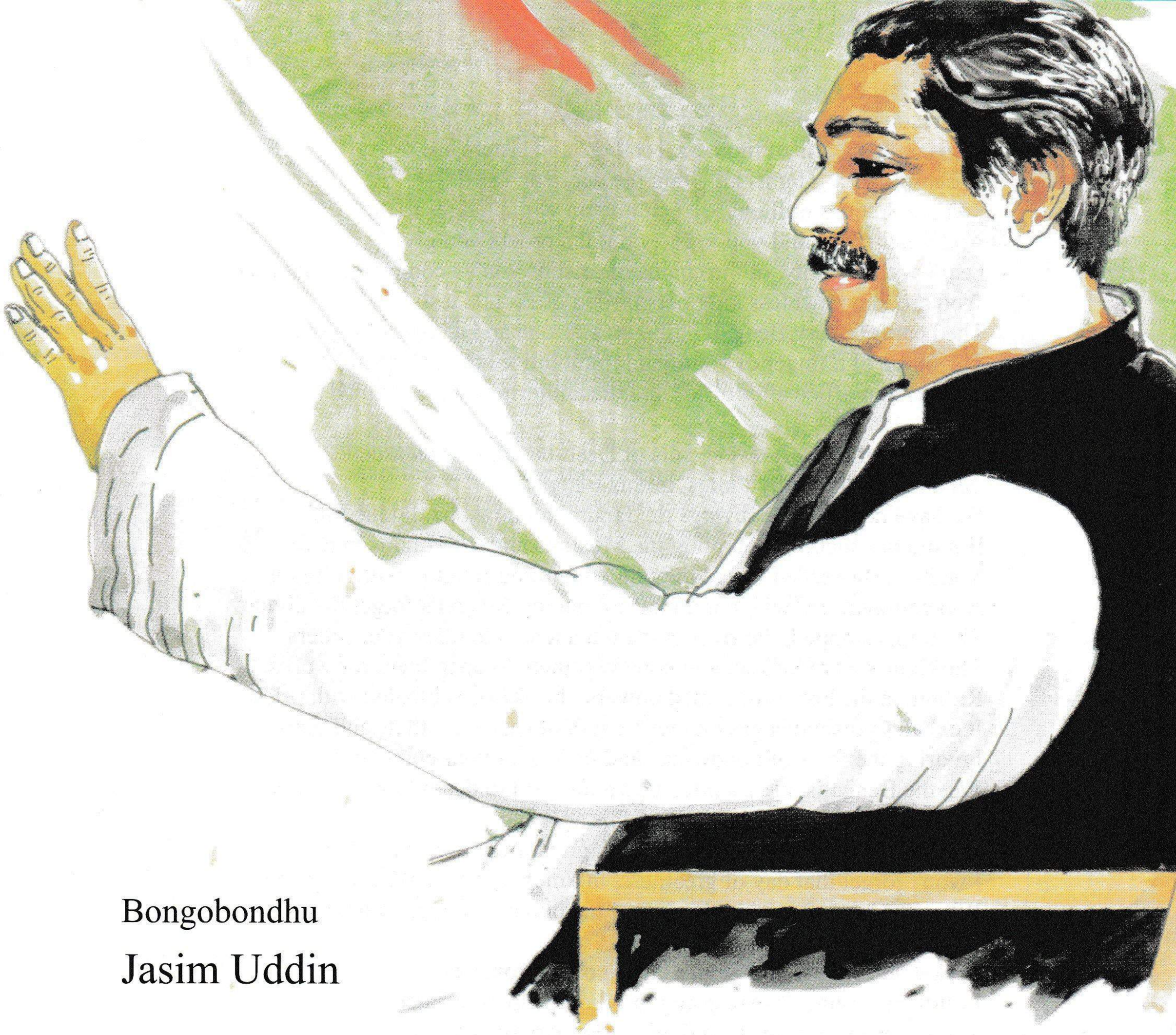
I was surprised at having read the letter, and having seen the scratching of lines on one or two scraps of accompanying papers. I was reminded of the events of thirty-three years ago. It was Siraj of the shanty town near the Kamlapur Railway Station to the North of Gopibagh— the one who had taken up the name of Sirajuddowla to liberate the country. The bearer of the note was the son of the self-same Siraj— he has been admitted to the college. And Siraj had lost both of his legs down from the knees in a mine explosion while attacking a camp of the invading Pakistani army during the war in 1971. And since then— for the last thirty-three years— he has been carrying on his fight, with his disability, for the family, for himself and for the country. Siraj has written many things— he has been staying near Narsinghdi, working as the caretaker of a primary school. He is

informed of much that relates to me; he has also heard of the martyrdom of Dr. Suleiman Khan in 1971. He has written many things, as I have said, but I am writing here why he has sent his son to me.

"The enemies of our freedom, through various tactics and deceptions as also because of a lack of consciousness or outright foolhardiness of the people in power in this country throughout the last thirty-three years, are today partners of political powers in this country. The party known as Jamat-e-Islami never acknowledged the war of liberation of Bangladesh. Many of the Razakar and Al-Badr members, collaborators and lackeys of the Pakistani Army in 1971, are now occupying, through indulgences by many of us, important positions of power and authority, and chasing around the freedom fighters. Why does the history of independence get changed now? The terror of fundamentalism has made its way into every pore of the villages and localities of the country. They are bombing the jatra performances, the mausoleums, the cinema halls, the churches and the public meetings; they are bombing to kill the intellectuals and the educated people of the country. They have been spreading terror to bring to a halt the cultural activities, education, in a word, the normal lifestyle of the people. People are now groaning under the heavy weight of wants, shortages and unemployment. In order to save our language, education and culture as well as our freedom, which are equivalent to saving our own existence, we all have to unite again, as we did in 1971, to fight against fundamentalism, terrorism and the enemies of our freedom. A great artist of our country, Patua Quamrul Hassan, had painted a picture in 1971 and gave it the caption, 'This demon has to be killed'. Annihilate these demons that painting helped us identify the enemy during our war of liberation, and we derived the strength and inspiration from that painting to guard our loins to fight against the invading forces with courage and conviction. I request you today to paint a picture like that. Please don't take offence at my insolence. We knew the demon in 1971— we could identify his face. But would you find any specific appearance of today's fundamentalism and terrorism? They live in darkness, but however much do they carry on their attacks, we all know them, can identify them. What is now called for is forging unity amongst us, like in 1971, and to destroy them. Then and only then will this country be a country of peace, a country with freedom for the future generations. I send herewith a sketch of a face (of demon). If you like it, please make the appearance somewhat more ferocious and write down, below that, the caption— 'The people of Bangladesh will not be free till the dark demon of fundamentalism and terrorism is slaughtered'.



Annihilate these demons
Painting by Patua Quamrul Hassan in 1971



Bongobondhu

Jasim Uddin

Mujibur Rahman
That very name smacks of the Visuvius disgorging a flood of fire.
From one end of Bengal to all the others sweeping,
The eternal fire a-burning in the hearts of thunder and storms.
All the injustices of the past, and the beatings undeserved,
Morphed into coals of tolerance in hearts after hearts;
They grew and expanded in the hearts of the oppressed with passing days,
And waiting to be set afire and burn in thousand flames;
That unlit fire has come alive in the form of those burning flames,
And stomping around the world under that name with forces of thunder.
Mujibur Rahman
We have made your horse clean- bathe in our blood.
The sighs of the oppressed have given it the powers of speed,
And the martyrs killed with bullets have given the lights on its mien.
The demons of famines have provided it the invincible strength,
And the pangs of hunger in the famished stomachs make it restless.
The immortal epics written in numerous wounds in hospital wards,

Are resonating, ceaselessly, at every step of your way.
Pains in the hearts of mothers, brothers and sisters all,
Are now shining lights all along the way you tread.
Soldiers in their millions are behind you with pledges to die,
And treading behind you to carry out the orders you give.
Fears of the mighty, of the chains of prisons you've conquered with ease
You are the crownless king personified of Bangladesh
The heart of every Bengali harbours a throne and a crown for you.
The move of a finger of your hand immobilised the government
Put locks in office after office and the authorities were stunned.

We heard of the soft-sweet calls of Desh-bandhu, as an ascetic,
Shunning all worldly things, in this Bengal.
We have heard of the sayings of Gandhi; let down he did his life
But did not succeed in uniting the Muslims and the Hindus in love.
You have succeeded where they failed, uniting religion with religion
And communities with communities making Bengalis forget the divide.
The trains stopped; the river crafts put anchors to obey your orders
The Courts were locked; and none was there to open them for works.
Riding on the horses of armed powers, the Terror is bloated with pride,
It exhales poisonous gas on the strength of canons, bullets and guns.
Ignoring the fears of hoodwinks and terrors, at your command
We, the Bengalis, have started down the road to death to win victory.
Blessed is this poet, living still at this age, and
Witnessing the march of history with great pride in front of him.
I won't forget that day of greatness, in times of the fight for language,
When the boys, ignoring the fear of the bullets, jumped in the battle.

Barkat and Jabbar and Salam falling on the roadside
Left the message, "we're going, brothers, follow us later."
The Bengalis have answered this in January of seventy,



The boys got out of home on to the streets in a storm of bullets.
They wrote history on roads after roads with the blood of their bosoms,
And millions of Bengalis marched along those roads proclaiming those.
O what a violent excitement for death, the fear fled in fear,
Men and women ran like mad with death in their grips.

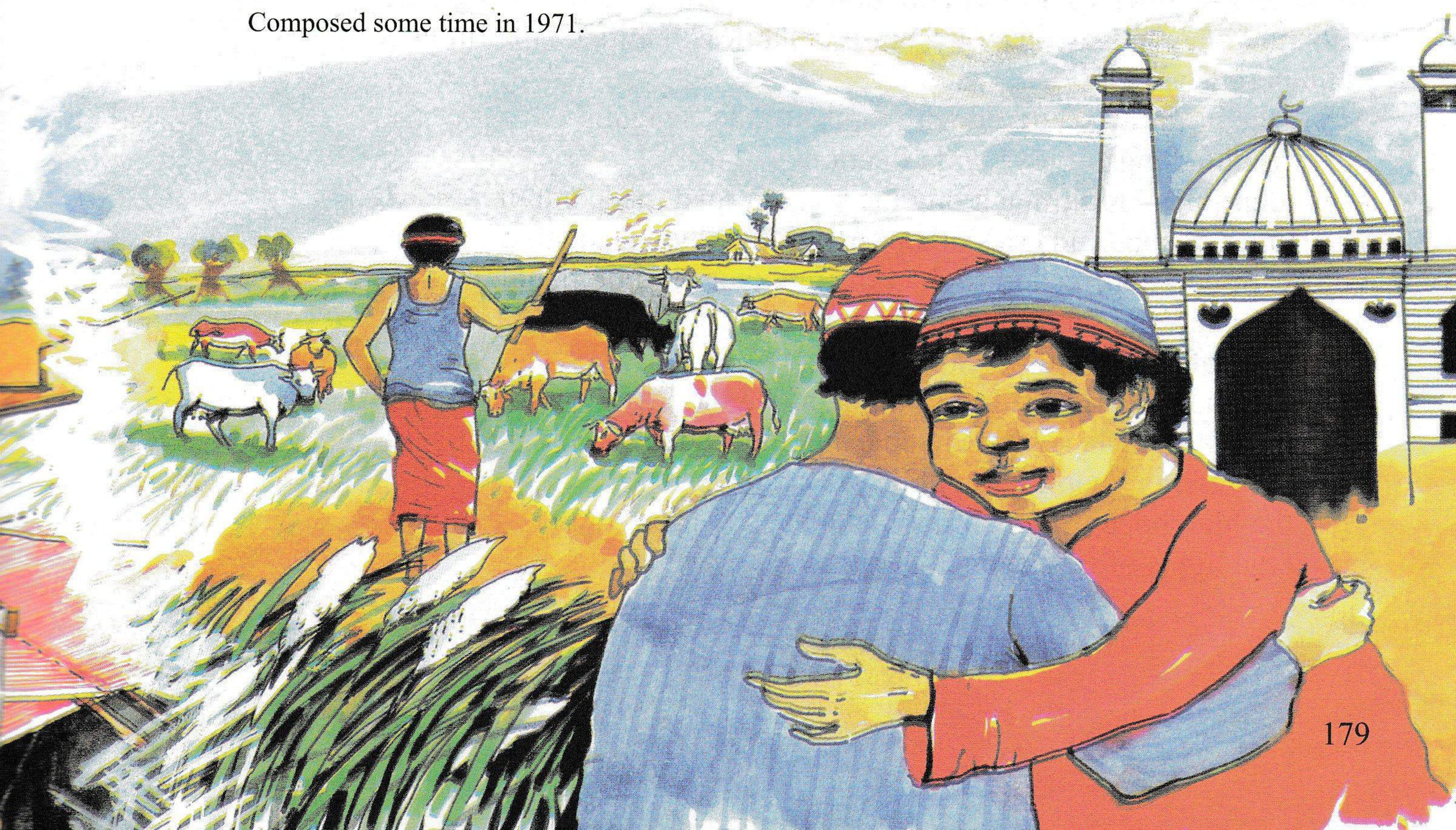
Another day it was when I felt myself blessed watching the great scene,
When the Bengalis' trumpets of victory blew all around.
And they brought Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujib out
Breaking the stone-gate of the prison of the oppressor-king.

Happy I would be on another day when food and wealth,
And knowledge and learning shall make the land proud on earth.
The crops arriving at the calls of the fields and draped in season's attire,
Shall stitch the pictures of the embroidered quilt in colours and smells.

No differences would remain among men; each would be for the other,
They would, unitedly, enjoy all the gifts of the mother earth.
On the silvery banks of the wide rivers of Padma, Meghna and Jamuna
The indigenous bhatiali tune of songs would play for the whole world.
In the cottages under the cool shades of mango- and jackfruit-orchards,
Peace would come and wallow and play around in fun.

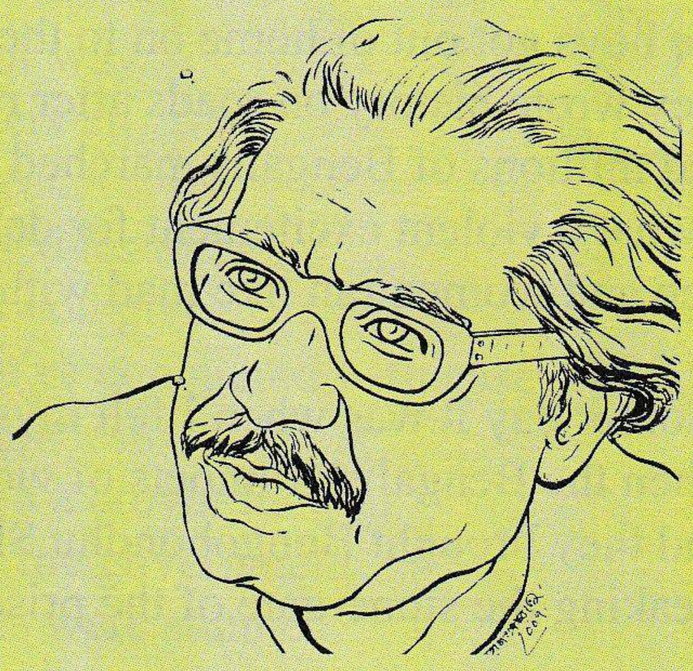
And on another day would I be blessed when, without any care or fear,
When our Nation would tug at the turban of the leaders, and ask:
"What rights did you have to sell off the Nation's interests?"
Let my country always be fearless like that.

Composed some time in 1971.



Sheikh Mujib is Coming Back

Sikandar Abu Jafar



Along the goodwill road of freedom-seeking men
The father of the State of Bangladesh
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
Is coming back to Bangladesh.
Known was it he would come back,
Known was it the chorus in the voices
Of seventy-five million Bengalis, and
The uproarious popular demand in the world
Could never go in vain.
Crossing the stone plaque of the conflict between human and the sub-
Human, was he returning along the uncharted road of history.
He is swimming across the river of blood of the unarmed shed by
The fire-powers of the fully-armed,
The rider on storms made out of million sighs
Was he coming, victorious Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujib,
Victory shouts of pledges of scattered skulls and skeletons ringing around
The treading feet.
He is coming back swimming across the woeful cries of dishonoured
Womanhood of wives, sisters and moms
And touching the welcome of ashes of countless families of burnt huts
In numerous villages
Along the highway scattered with tombs of the Bengalis'
Pulverised feelings of love and affection
Is he returning— returning along the smooth road made out of
The stones of sobs and cries of seventy-five million Bengalis;
The death-defying freedom fighter of Bangladesh returning along the
road drenched and sanctified by a mixture of
The blood of Indo-Bangladesh.
Returning he, the Father of the Nation, along the way
Resounding with claps of the people and the students
To the sovereign Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
With the high hopes of an untrammelled and fearless future
Lit by the lights of emblazoned dreams.

(Abridged)

Mujib! Mujib!

Syed Shamsul Haq

Mujib! Mujib! The blue of the sky is overcast with black clouds.
The sky gets reddened with Mujib's blood at dusk till now.
Mujib was here! Where is he now! The banks of the Padma erode.
Mujib's waves flow in Bengal through the greens of paddy.
Mujib still calls out with every utterance of Joy Bangla.
Mujib's sounds are the sounds of victory in History's page.
Mujib! Mujib! the 'dotara' forms strong tunes with the calls.
Mujib! Mujib! The morning arrives at the borders of nights.
The boatman pulls at sculls even today as Mujib's still there.
The passengers return home till today with Mujib in the boat.
Children grow up in homes after homes in the dirt-strewn compounds.
The farmers spread their rice seedlings in fields after fields.
The labourers till now wake up at hammers' sounds in factories and mils.
Mujib was there! Mujib's still there! He's seen over there.
He's seen in the sunlight of the day and the full-moon in the nights.
Mujib it is who still blows at the heart of darkness.
Mujib doesn't die, he has not died by any bullet's hit.
Only the body fell by bullets, he remains immortal in the soul.
Rub your useless tears off, throughout this Bengal till today
In huts cities villages and water-expanses he walks on foot-
Mujib treads unstopped with a blood-wrapper covering him.
Mujib! Mujib! Is it so easy to erase the father's name from memory!

I Took Initiation from Mujib
Mazharul Islam

Taking the initiation from Mujib
I launched into the war with arms in hands
Taking heat from one Sun
I spread it all in fields far and wide.

My oaths are those that were in the battlefield
I will run the luminous chariot of victory
It is I who has put the red, round mark
On the forehead of mother Bengal
Taking the initiation from Mujib— in hands.

My wars in the name of Mujib shall never cease
Shall go on without a respite
My two arms shall not be daunted
Limitless are their powers
The waves of the seas are wild today
The sound of roaring waves are heard in the air
The voice of thunder calls bravo! I take
That call in my voice
Taking the initiation from Mujib— in hands.

Which of the Pictures
Zillur Rahman Siddiqui

Which of the pictures did you see, quickly,
On the screen of your memory, in the recess of your dreams?
Your beloved? The son? Your mother? The colourful kite
Carefully kept in the room of your adolescence? Or the small room
In the Baker hostel in Kolkata? Or the long nights, and days,
In the central jail in Dhaka!
Or the days disappeared on the wheels of works,
Returning home far into the night, the cold rice—
Or none of these! The death that dogged
Every step of your life,
And you always ignored it,
When he jerked you out of your sleep and said,
Come along, you had not learnt the language
To respond to his surprising audacity.

I Haven't Come to Ask for Anyone's Blood Today

Nirmalendu Goon

I, too, like all the others assembled today, love roses very much,
One of those roses, while I was going across the Race Course,
Asked me yesterday
To speak of Sheikh Mujib in my poems.
I have come to speak of him.
I, too, like all the others assembled today, love palashes very much, while
I was passing along the road in front of 'Samakal', a freshly-blossomed Palash whispered into my ears yesterday to speak of Sheikh Mujib in my Poems.
I have come to speak of him.
The rotating fountain at the Shahbagh Avenue asked me in a distressed Voice,
To speak of Sheikh Mujib in my poems.
I have come to speak of him.
I, too, like all the others assembled today, have a weakness for dreams,
Have love for them— a bold dream dreamt in the early hours yesterday
Asked me to speak of Sheikh Mujib in my poems.
I have come to speak of him.
Let all these pained humans assembled at the banyan-base this spring Stand witness,
Let all those hidden buds of the dried, broken-down and not-blossomed Krishnachudas pay heed,
Let this black cuckoo in the imminent evening know—
Touching this sacred earth beneath my feet
I keep the words of that rose, that palash, and of that dream today.
I have not come today to ask for anyone's blood,
I came to speak of my love.





Mujib Comes Back

Mahadev Saha

When the sky rises in the morning and the dews drop on the grasses
At that dawn cheered with the chirping of birds Mujib comes back,
Rains patter on the bosom of the rivers when waves rise high
I am coming, says Mujib, Some one is calling me there.

When the gardens go wild with the smell of sweet flowers
Mujib then comes back very dear to us all,
When millions of stars twinkle in the sky at dusk
Mujib comes back like the flow of thousand lives;
When the call to freedom fills the country the whole of March
Mujib comes, let the whole country get back a new life,
When children titter at dawn in their mothers' laps
That smile on their lips brings Mujib Back.

Bengal is Full of Child-Mujibs

Muhammad Nurul Huda

Papa papa calling out
Papa's in his own abode.

Fixing helms in ebb- low-tide
Boats go with unfurled sails ahead.
Adolescent-children ply the oars
Papa in his boat with laughter roars.

In mom's lap and father's ribs
Tungipara in happiness sleeps.
Endless is Tungipara's name
Tungipara has a Bangladesh fame.

Come all come home don't be late
To this Bangladesh, your nation-state.
Only one nation whole Bengal spans
This confluence has one and no more clans.

Doel, Shalik and the sparrows
Evening noon and in the morns,
Flutter around and trill,
'Child-Mujibs whole Bengal fill'.

Bengalis in one voice all declare
Mujib is this nation's father.
Papa papa calling out
Papa's in his own abode.

My abode and your abode
Mujib abode Mujib abode.
All the Bengalis' pilgrim-abode
Mujib abode Mujib abode.



That Face was Beyond Poetry

Kamal Chowdhury

That face was fond of freedom
That face would turn human in processions
With raised hands, live processions and gaits of movement
That face was a companion to fire.

In my sad and weeping black days
That face alone would stand above as a giant shading tree
In epidemics, pestilences and destructions caused by men
That face would radiate love throughout the world.

His moves were like the forceful streams of the Padma
Would stream in force to flush out all the dirt and disgrace
His speeches were the roars of thunder and lightning in clouds
Reigning in slogans and processions with resonating sounds
That face, in fact, was of our father.

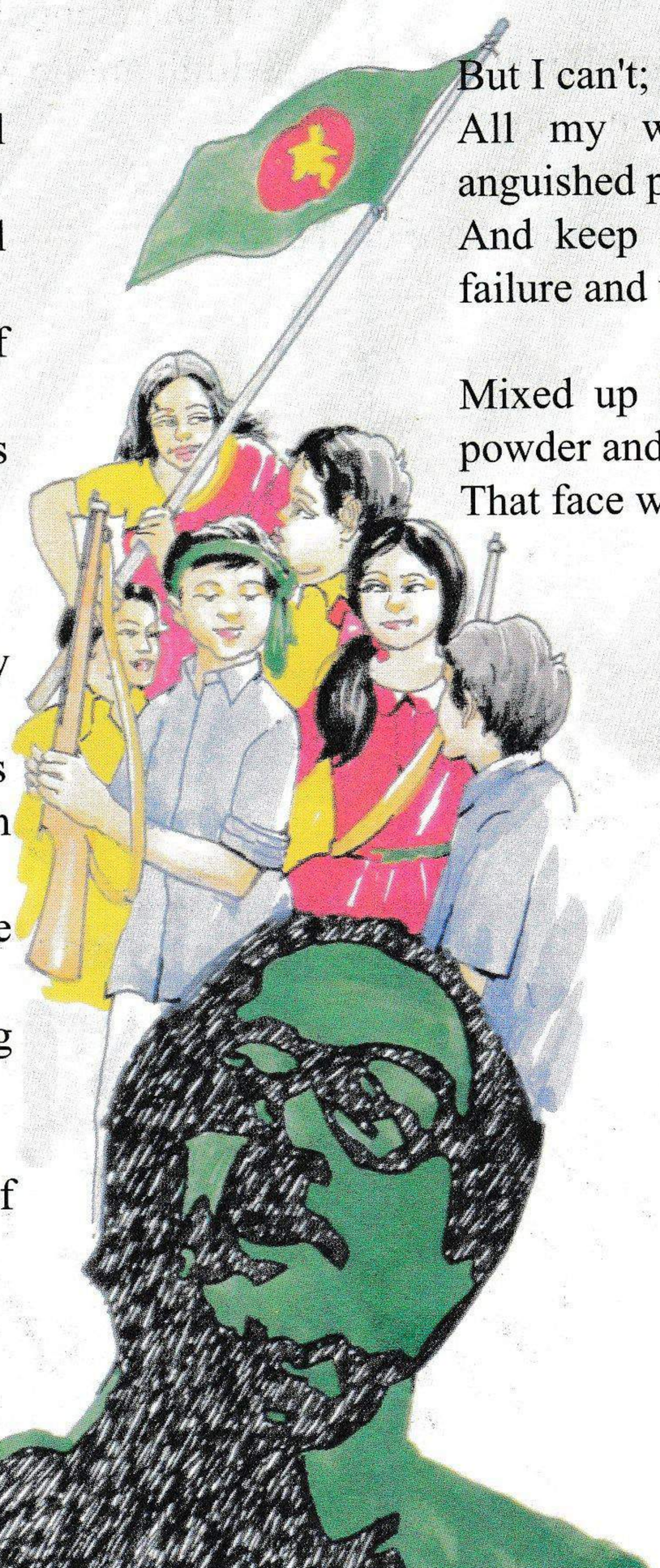
In the murky waters of blood in my native land
His two hands were like pointing rifles
In wars, gun-powders and a soft touch on the martyr's corpse
From Camp to Camp-in all the battlefields—
That face would provide the cooling shade of my dear homeland.

That lively face in the fateful night of death
Lay down in a messy mix of bullets and blood
In the likeable smell of gun-powder, without incense and lamps,
That corpse provided an inspiration to fight.

Like a bare foot would return to dew-drenched grasses
That face comes back again and again
Smelling gun-powder, blood and remembrances of war
Long have I tried to paint that face.

But I can't; can't I paint that face, Alas!
All my words weep and cry in anguished pain
And keep awake the whole night in failure and vain.

Mixed up in wars, processions, gun-powder and death
That face was beyond poetry.



He it is Who is the Father of the Nation

Sujan Barua

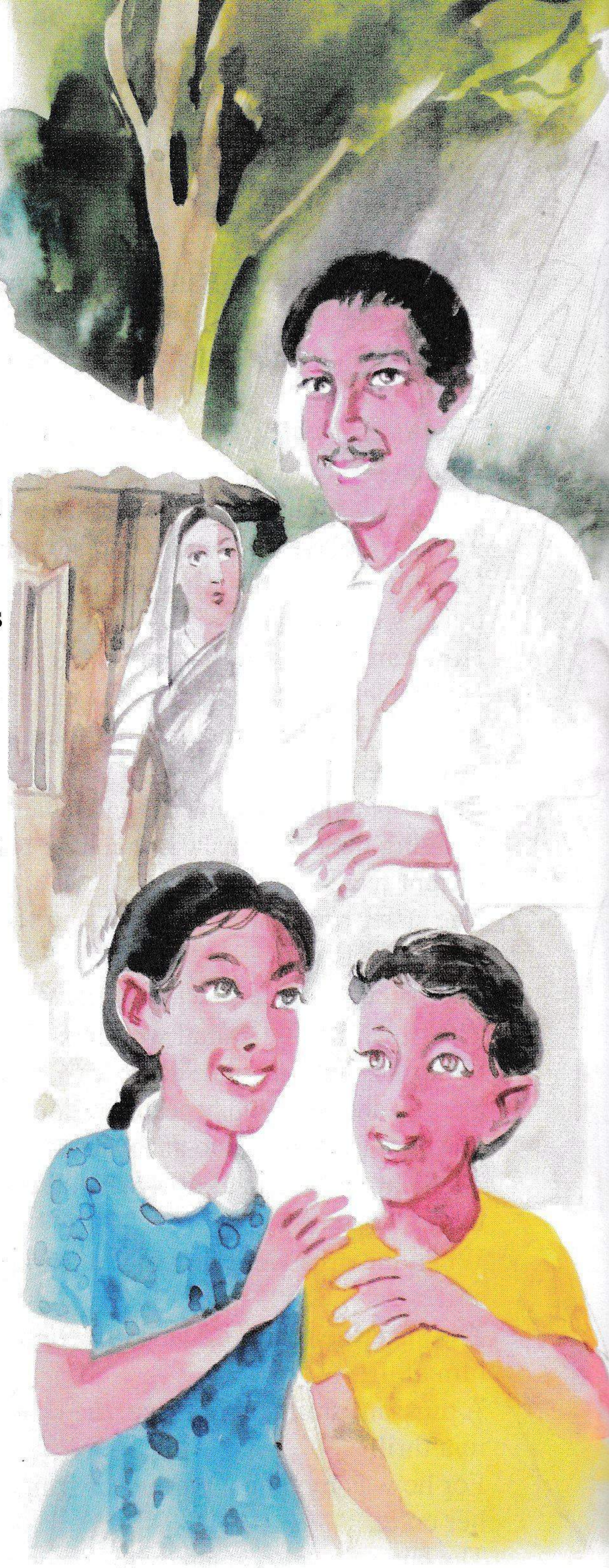
In a small village in Bangladesh in their own little corner of a cosy home
There lived a little sister with her brother the grandparents and their mom,
The sister is elder, Hasina her name, Kamal is the younger brother—
He toddles around, falls and follows, wanting to be near her.
The sissy plays all the day and stomps and runs all around
One moment on the bank of the pond and the next in the house's ground,
How can Kamal go that far on his short unsteady feet!
He flounces yet to catch up with her and tries to move ahead,
The sissy by that time, leaving the jute-fields behind, do far away press
Berries jammruls, karamchas and rattan-fruits in the fold of her dress
Leaving the cane-bushes, touching bamboo groves among distant reeds
The sister roams around, walks, moves and flies as her own fancy needs,
The sister is not the sister, as if, now a sun-dazzled bird is she
That I call her— Kamal wonders— can't she hear me!
Tired of calling out, some distance enters between the sissy and Kamal
Silently does he stand beneath the thick, shady foliage of tamal,
Waves of tears in pseudo-annoyance two piteous eyes roll down
And Kamal couldn't know when the sissy had come closer on her own.
When the orbs were flowing in tears— he suddenly felt a touch soft
The sister held him in deep affection embrace and was holding him aloft!
A pleasant smile on his face, the brother and sister inseparable in a thrill
For he was by then a partner of fruits the sissy had gathered in her creel,
The butterfly, too, caught by the sister is in younger Kamal's hands
Chewing and eating fruits while returning home he in happiness lands,
The sibling Hasina and Kamal, like Durga and Apu in the novel,
Frolic in plays and pleasure, unceasingly, for the day whole.
The brother and the sister thus grew up, all the year round
Passed their days in this fashion, with pleasures unbound,



Young Kamal saw one evening in the midst of it all—
A man was stepping into their house; he was well-built and tall,
The man created uproar once inside the house he got
But the grand-parents came rushing out and him in their bosoms caught,
The man has come out of jail, some one has just said
And Kamal's dear Hasu apu is this man's daughter, what a twist of fate,
And what kind of a sister is she! Once she got the man home
Forgot her loving brother; and does always around the stranger roam,
She is cooing like a dove surrounding that man unknown
Like waves lap on the shores of rivers getting by the wind blown,
She's often like a tender shoot of the bottle-gourd plant by breeze shaken
Calling him 'papa', the two are with pent-up exchanges taken,
Kamal is taken aback, from his hideaway, watching all these
The stranger also beckons him from time to time with hand- signs of his
'you also come closer, let me caress you', says he; ' but
Why should I go near him' —thought Kamal, 'tut, tut—
Who this man is to me and who am I to him, anyway
This thought again and again keeps Kamal from the man away.

The night passed and morning came, Kamal watched in a new light
His sister's friendship with the man has taken on a different height,
Seated on the stranger's lap, his sister a book reads
Addresses him 'daddy', she talks, laughs and eats,
Kamal feels slightly aggrieved watching it all
And with it, like his sister, wants someone he may 'daddy' call.
Kamal doesn't know what a daddy is, knows not his own father
Getting his sister aside that day, he amidst all the works told her
'I have a wish, Apu, do you know what is that desire?
May I call your dad also my own father?'
Hearing this from her brother, the sister breaks into laughter
Says she— 'call him daddy lovingly, call him your father
My father is your father, the one and only father we have
Our daddy remains busy, day and night, with the people to serve
He roams around in distant places, that's why you know him not
Know it from today he is our dear papa, the only one we've got.'

O dear friends like Kamal, of him have you learned
That father of Kamal has for this country freedom earned,
His sacrifices and continuous struggle has not in vain gone
Kamal's father is our father, too, he is the father of the nation.



Bangabandhu Asks
How are You My Bangladesh

Akhter Hussain

How are you Bengal's fields and pastures
How are you green Durba grass
How are you the hats of entrepots and villages
How are you the seasons and months of Bengal?

How are you shimul and palash flowers
How are you tuberoses and champaks
How are you jasmines, chamelis and bakuls
How are you lotus shivering with the waves?

How are you mornings and the evenings
How are you the tunes of enchanting flutes
How are you arm-spreading horizon
How are you the beckoning distance?

How are you the clumps of rattan-plants
How are you the marshes, rivulets, ditches and the lakes
How are you the slippery banks of ponds
How are you the hilshas glistening?

How are you the bulbulis of Bengal
How are you the sankos and the bridges
How are you ektara and the drummer
How are you earthen plates and hearths?

How are you the rural wives and mothers
How are you Dhenki and winnows, dhama
How are you the umbrellas for sun and the rains
How are you lungi, gamchha and shirt?

How are you milk, milk-film, banana and curd
How are you crystalised date-palm molasses and cakes
How are you hempen-roofed huts
How are you cat and climbing fish and ritha?

How are you shyama, doel, crows
How are you cuckoos, the queen of tunes
How are you the flock of shaliks
How are you golden-winged kites?



How are you finge and doves
How are you nest of the weaver-birds
How are you the sweet voice of dahuk
How are you the love of cats?

How are you sweet blobs, possets and frumenty?
How are you globular sweets and pantua
How are you rabri and sandesh
How are you flat, fried rice, popcorn and moa?

How are you tamarind, jackfruit and berries
How are you starfruits and meoa
How are you langra and fajli mangoes
How are you the clean waters of the large tanks?

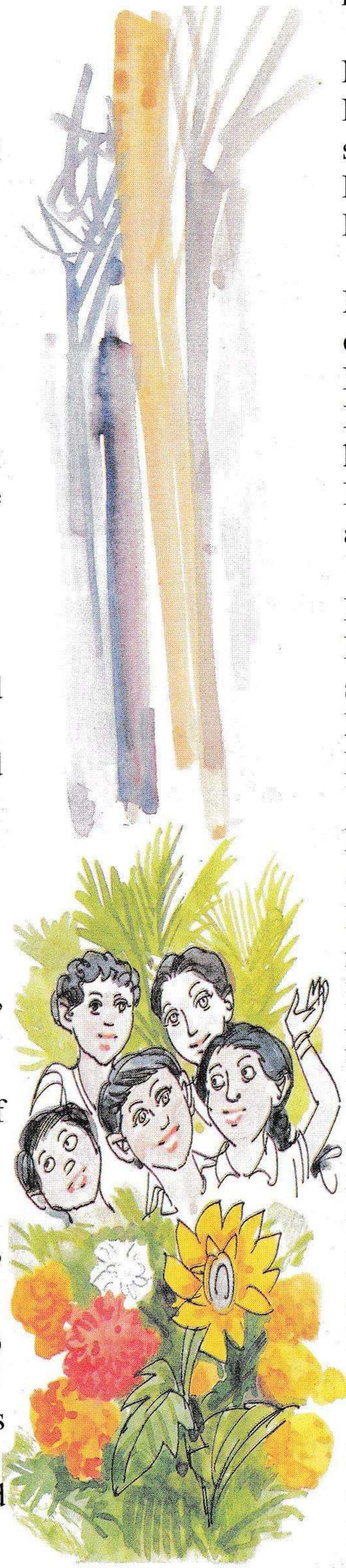
How are you all the sailing boats
How are you the madrassah and schools
How are you the peaceful villages and entrepots
How are you the huts and the four-roofed houses?

How are you the mosques and the temples
How are you the churches and the shrines
How are you the bird-nest-like cottages
How are you the earthenware pitchers, painting?

How are you the neighbourhoods of ironsmiths and the potters
How are you alpana of the artists
How are you the jute and paddy saplings
How are you the dew-drops in the morning?

How are you the steamer-ghat of Goalundo
How are you the long-distance boatmen
How are you the shops and selling-spots of the hats
How are you the betel-leaf containers and the dispensers?

How are you the Padma and the Madhumati
How are you the Baigar and the aarial
How are you flowing Jamuna



How are you Chalan beel and the rivulets?

How are you the game of dariabanda
How are you the waters of dip-and-swim
How are you the mela of gollachhut
How are you the mighty football

How are you the swarms of flowery children
How are you the flowers gardens all
How are you the honey-filled bee-hives
How are you the rites of the sadhus and the sages/

How are you the hills and the mountains
How are you the teak and the sundari woods
How are you the red-clay-built roads
How are you the fairies of the tales?

How are you the colourful embroidered quilts
How are you the gatherings for the recitation from the puthis
How are you the songs of Lalon, his poems
How are you the sacred tunes of dotaras?

How are you the violins and the karatals
How are you the sea and the shore
How are you the mother-of-pearl and the corals
How are you the silvery and the golden nose-rings?

How are you the Nazrul and Bhatiali songs
How are you Tagore songs
How are you the clapping of poetry recitation
How are you the jingle of anklet?

How are you the painters and the artists
How are you the canvas, paint and brush
How are you the fields of Bengal
How are you the speeches and the run-of-the-mill lectures?

How are you placid communism
How are you the followers of religions
How are you all those desires of the poor
How are you roots of the trees, their entrails?

How are you the labourers and the peasants
How are you the clerks, and the workers
How are you the smile of the iron-point of the plough
How are you the earthenware pot of the date-palm juice?

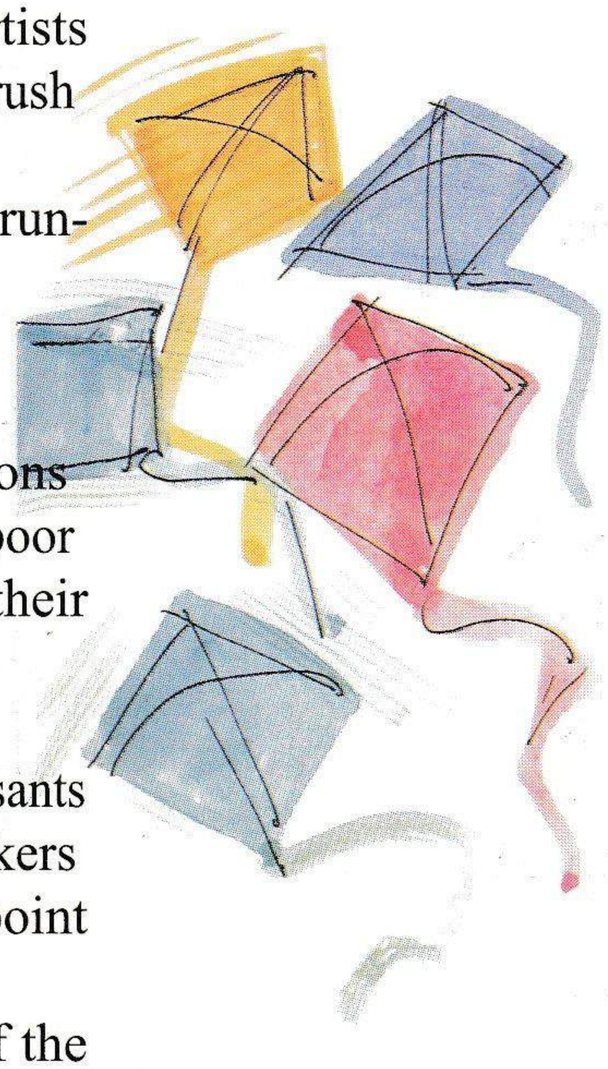
How are you the drunken philosopher
How are you the borrowed philosophy
How are you the horizon and all-around
How are you the rains of Bengal?

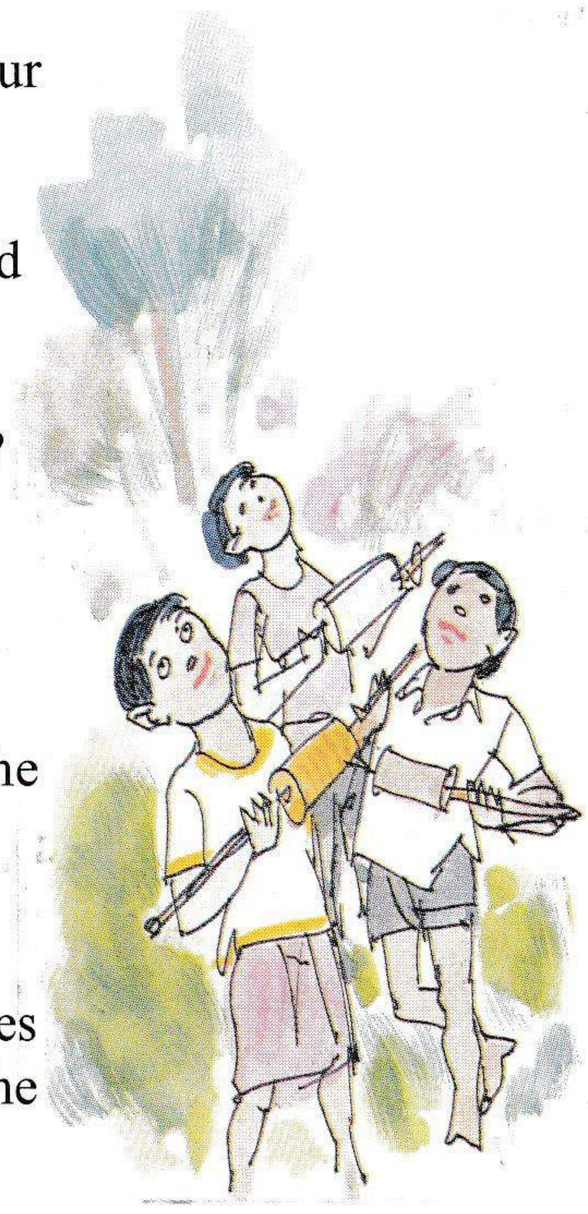
How are you dear Mahasthangarh
How are you sacred paharpur
How are you the bright light-house
How are you the banyan and the pakur trees?

How are you unadulterated sticky mud
How are you the wide sand-banks
How are you the golden reed-mats
How are you the rainbow enchanting?

How are you Jatra and the Pala
How are you bibek and the dohars
How are you sweet swarthy rural lass
How are you the traders and the merchants?

How are you Teknaf, Tentulia
How are you the red, blue and white kites
How are you the shalik, moyna and the parrots





How are you the fried papad and the puffed rice?

How are you politics unrestrained
How are you the conservatives and the backward-looking
How are you the liberal and the left
How are you the sly vulture, the kites?

How are you the syncretist religion
How are you the extremely tolerant
How are you the sure victory to logic
How are you the liberty to argue?

How are you the prayers, the Monazat
How are you the call to prayers
How are you the sejda and the salat
How are you the 'hulu' and the conch-shell sounds?

How are you the Quran and the Bible
How are you the Tripitak, the Gita and
How are you Avesta overflowing
How are you the gist of the Dhammapada?

How are you the endless flows of sheep
How are you the business and the intellectual
How are you the mountains of wealth
How are you the molehill?

How are you the ambitious all
How are you the boot-lickers
How are you the silence of the meditating saints
How are you the strength of one's own feet?

How are you the songs of 'Joy Bangla'
How are you the identity of the Bengalis
How are you the sky-rending slogans
How are you the assurances of peace?

How are you my friends, companions
How are you all my enemies

How are you the forward-chest of the bold
How are you the fatherless daughter?

How are you the library packed with books
How are you all the brilliant readers
How are you the history of Bengal
How are you the stages and the theatres?

How are you the water-flows of the fountains
How are you all the young men and women
How are you the overflowing youth
How are you the promises to break barriers?

How are you the laid-down flat-stool of wood
How are you brother the freedom fighter
How are you the courageous mom and sister
How are you last resort of the martyrs?

How are you the Bengalis, the Bengali language
How are you the pride of fifty-two
How are you love and affection
How are you the aroma of liberation?
How are you all professors
How are you the teachers, the respected ones
How are you justice and the judges
How are you the brilliance and the intellect?

How are you the meetings and the seminars
How are you the Race Course Udyan
How are you number thirty-two
How are you the Paltan maidan?

How are you the surviving friends
How are you my country and its residents
How are you the blood-stained flag
How are you the bright smile of the sun and the green?

How are you the Sundarbans
How are you flocks of deer
Is the roar still heard
Bengalis are 'Royal Bengal Tigers'?



BONGOBONDHU'S CALL TO FREEDOM
HISTORIC SPEECH ON 7TH MARCH 1971

My brothers,

I come before you today with a heart laden with sadness. You are aware of everything and know every bit of happenings. We have tried with our lives. And yet the sadness remains that today, in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur the streets are soaked by the blood of my brothers. Today the people of Bengal desire emancipation, the people of Bengal wish to live, the people of Bengal demand that their rights be acknowledged.

What wrong have we committed? In the elections, the people of Bangladesh entrusted me and the Awami League with the totality of their electoral support. It was our expectation that the Parliament would meet, there we would frame our constitution, that we would develop this land, that the people of this country would achieve their economic, political and cultural freedom. But it is a matter of grief that today we are constrained to say in all sadness that the history of the past twenty three years has been the history of persecution of the people of Bengal, a history of shedding blood of the people of Bengal. This history of the past twenty three years has been one of the agonizing cries of men and women.

The history of Bengal has been a history where the people of this land have made the streets and highways of this land crimson with their blood. We offered blood in 1952; in 1954, we won the elections and yet were not allowed to hold the power. In 1958, Ayub Khan imposed Martial Law and kept the nation in a state of slavery for ten years. On 7 June 1966, when the sons of my land rose in support of the Six-Points movement, they were mown down in gunfire. When Yahya Khan took over after Ayub Khan fell in the fury of the movement of 1969, he promised that he would give us a constitution, give us democracy. We put our faith on him. And then history moved a long way, the elections took place. I have met President Yahya Khan. I appealed to him, not just as the majority leader of Bengal but also as the majority leader of Pakistan, to convene the National Assembly on 15 February. He did not pay heed to my appeal. He listened to Mr. Bhutto. And he said that the Assembly would be convened in the first week of March. I agreed with him and said we would sit in the Parliament. I said that we would discuss matters in the Assembly. I even went to the extent of suggesting that despite our party being a majority, if anyone propose anything that is legitimate and right, we would accept his proposal. Mr. Bhutto came here. He held negotiations with us, and when he left, he said that the door is not closed, that more discussion would take place. After that, I spoke to other political leaders. I told them to join me in deliberations so that we could give shape to a Constitution for the country. But Mr. Bhutto said that if members elected from West Pakistan came here, the Assembly would turn into a slaughter house, an abattoir. He warned that anyone who would join the Assembly would end up losing his life. He issued dreadful warnings of closing down all the shops from Peswar to Karachi if the Assembly Session would go ahead. And then, suddenly, on the first of March the Assembly Session was called off. Mr. Yahya Khan, exercising his power as President, had called the National Assembly into Session; and I had said that I would go to the Assembly. Mr. Bhutto said he would not go. Thirty five members came here from West Pakistan. And suddenly the Assembly was called off.

The blame was placed squarely on the people of Bengal; the blame was put at my door. Once the Assembly meeting was postponed, the people of this land decided to resist the act. I enjoined upon them to observe a peaceful general strike. I instructed them to close down all factories and industrial installations. The people responded positively to my directives. Through sheer spontaneity they emerged on the streets. They ware determined to pursue their struggle through peaceful means.

What have we attained? The weapons we bought with our money to defend the country against foreign aggression are being used against the poor and down-trodden people of my country today. The bullets pierce their hearts today. We are the majority in Pakistan. Whenever we Bengalis have attempted to ascend to the heights of power, they have swooped upon us.

I have spoken to him over telephone. I told him, "Mr. Yahya Khan, you are the President of Pakistan. Come, be a witness to the inhumanity in which the people of my Bengal are being murdered, to the way in which the mothers of my land are being deprived of their sons." I told him, "Come, see and dispense justice". But he construed that I had agreed to participate in a Round Table Conference to be held on 10 March, I have already said a long time ago, what RTC? With

whom do I sit down to talk? Can I fraternize with those who have taken the blood of my people? All of a sudden, without discussing anything with me and after a secret meeting lasting five hours, he has delivered a speech in which he has placed all blames for the impasse on me, on the people of Bengal.

My brothers,

They have called the assembly on the twenty-fifth. The marks of blood have not yet dried up. I said on the tenth that Mujibur Rahman would not walk across that blood to take part in a Round Table Conference. You have called the Assembly. But my demands must be met first. Martial Law must be withdrawn. All military personnel must be taken back to the barracks. An inquiry must be conducted into the manner in which the killings have been caused. And power must be transferred to the elected representatives of the people. And only then shall we consider the question of whether or not to sit in the National Assembly. Prior to the fulfilment of our demands, we cannot take part in the Assembly.

I do not wish to become the Prime Minister. I wish to see the rights of the people of this country established. Let me make it clear, without ambiguity, that beginning from today, in Bangladesh, all courts, magistracies, government offices and educational institutions will remain closed for an indefinite period. In order that the poor do not suffer, in order that my people do not go through pain, all other activities will continue, will not come within the ambit of the general strike from tomorrow. Rickshaws, horse carriages, trains and river vessels will ply. The Supreme Court, High Court, Judge's Court, semi-government offices, WAPDA–nothing will work. Employees will collect their salaries on the twenty eighth. But if the salaries are not paid, if another bullet is fired, if any more of the people are murdered, it is my directive to all of you: turn every house into a fortress; resist the enemy with everything you have. And even if I am not around to guide you, I direct you–close off all road and pathways for ever.

We will starve them into submission. We will submerge them in water. You are our brothers. Return to your barracks and no harm will come to you. But do not try to fire bullets into my heart again. You can not keep seventy five million people in bondage. Now that we have learnt to die, no power on earth can keep us in subjugation.

For those who have embraced martyrdom, and for those who have sustained injuries, we in the Awami League will do all we can to relieve their tragedy. Those among you who can please, lend a helping hand through contributing to our relief committee. The owners of industries will make sure that the wages of workers who have taken part in the strike for the past seven days are duly paid to them. I shall tell employees of the government, my word must be heard, and my instructions followed. Until freedom comes to my land, all taxes will be held back from payment. No one will pay them. Bear in mind that the enemy has infiltrated our ranks to cause confusion and sow discord among us. In our Bengal, everyone, be a Hindu or a Muslim, Bengali or non-Bengali, is our brother. It is our responsibility to ensure their security. Our good name must not be tainted. And remember, employees of radio and television, if radio does not get our message across, no Bengali all to the radio station. If television does not broadcast our news, no Bengali will go to television. Banks will remain open for two hours to enable people to engage in transactions. But there will be no transfer of even a single paisa (penny) from East Bengal to West Pakistan. Telephone and telegram service will continue in East Bengal and news can be dispatched overseas. But if moves are made to exterminate the people of this country, Bengalis must act with caution.

In every village, every neighbourhood set up Sangram Parishad under the leadership of the Awami League. And be prepared with whatever you have. Remember: Having mastered the lesson of sacrifice, we shall give more blood. InshaAllah (By the Will of the Almighty God), we shall be able to free the people of this land.

The Struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation.
The struggle this time is the struggle for independence.

Joy Bangla!

BONGOBONDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN
THE FATEHR OF THE NATION
A POLITICAL PROFILE

1920
Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in a respectable Muslim family on 17 March, 1920 in Tungipara village under the then Gopalgonj subdivision (at present district) of Faridpur district. He was the third child among four daughters and two sons of Sheikh Lutfor Rahman and Sheikh Sayera Khatun. His parents used to call him Khoka out of affection. Bongobondhu spent his childhood in Tungipara.

1927
At the age of seven, Bongobondhu began his schooling at Gimadanga Primary School. At nine, he was admitted to class three at Gopalgonj Public School. Subsequently, he was transferred to a local missionary school.

1934
Bongobondhu was forced to go for a break of study when at the age of fourteen, one of his eyes had to be operated on.

1937
Bongobondhu returned to school after a break of four years caused by the severity of an eye operation.

1938
At eighteen, Mujib married Begum Fazilatunnesa. They subsequently became the happy parents of two daughters– Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, and three sons– Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel. All the three sons were killed along with their parents on 15 August, 1975.

1939
Bongobondhu's political career was effectively inaugurated while he was a student at Gopalgonj Missionary School. He led a group of students to demand that the cracked roof of the school be repaired when Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq, Chief Minister of undivided Bengal, came to visit the school along with Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, later Chief Minister of Bengal and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

1940
Sheikh Mujib joined the Nikhil Bharat Muslim Chhatra Federation (All India Muslim Students Federation). He was elected Councillor for a one-year term.

1942
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman passed the Entrance (currently Secondary School Certificate) Examination. He then got himself admitted as an intermediate student in the Humanities faculty of Calcutta Islamia College, where he had lodgings at Baker Hostel. That same year Bongobondhu got actively involved with the movement for the creation of Pakistan.

1943
Sheikh Mujib's busy and active political -career took off in the literal sense with his election as a Councillor of the Muslim League.

1944
Bongobondhu took part in the conference of the All Bengal Muslim Students League held at Kushtia, where he played a significant role. He was also elected Secretary of Faridpur District Association, a Calcutta-based organization of the residents of Faridpur.

1946
Sheikh Mujib was elected General Secretary of Islamia College Students Union.

1947
Bongobondhu obtained Bachelor of Arts degree from Islamia College under Calcutta University. When communal riots broke out in the wake of the partition of India and the birth of Pakistan, Bongobondhu played a pioneering role in protecting Muslims and trying to contain the violence.

1948
Bongobondhu took admission in the Law Department of Dhaka University. He founded the Muslim Students League on 4 January. He rose in spontaneous protest on 23rd February when Prime Minister Khawja Nazimuddin in his speech at the Legislative Assembly declared: "The people of East Pakistan will accept Urdu as their state language." Khawaja Nazimuddin's remarks stroke a storm of protests across the country. Sheikh Mujib immediately plunged into hectic activities to build a strong movement against the Muslim League's premeditated, heinous design to make Urdu the only state language of Pakistan. He established contacts with students and political leaders. On 2 March, a meeting of the workers of different political parties was held to plan the course of the movement against the Muslim League on the language issue. The meeting held at Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall approved a resolution placed by Bongobondhu to form an All-Party State Language Action Council. The Action Council called for a general strike on 11 March to register its protest against the conspiracy of the Muslim League against Bangla Language. On 11 March, Bongobondhu was arrested along with some colleagues while they were holding a demonstration in front of the Secretariat building. The student community of the country exploded in protest following the arrest of Bongobondhu. In the face of the strong student movement the Muslim League government was forced to release Bongobondhu and other student leaders on 15 March.

Following his release, the All-Party State Language Action Council held a public rally at Dhaka University Amtala on 16 March. Bongobondhu presided over the rally, which was soon set upon by the police. To protest the police action Bongobondhu immediately announced a countrywide student strike on 17 March. Mujib was arrested again on 11 September for joining the movement against Cordon system at Faridpur.

1949

Sheikh Mujib was released from jail on 21 January. He extended his support to a strike called by the Class Four employees of Dhaka University to press home their various demands. The university authorities illogically imposed a fine on him for leading the movement of the employees. He rejected the unjust order. Mujib was arrested for staging a sit-in strike before the Vice-Chancellor's residence. When the East Pakistan Awami League was formed on 23 June, Sheikh Mujib was elected its Joint Secretary despite his imprisonment. He was released in late June. Immediately after his release, he began organizing an agitation against the prevailing crisis. In September, he was detained for violating Section 144. However, he was freed later.

He raised the demand for Chief Minister Nurul Amin's resignation at a meeting of the Awami Muslim League in October.

The Awami Muslim League brought out an anti-famine procession in Dhaka on the occasion of Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's visit to the province. Once again Bongobondhu was arrested and jailed, this time for two years and five months, for leading the demonstration.

1952

On 26 January, Khawja Nazimuddin declared that Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan. Bongobondhu played a vital role in organizing a protest against this announcement from the jail. From the prison he passed an instruction to the State Language Action Council to observe 21 February as Demand Day for pressing release of all political prisoners and declaring Bangla the state language. He began hunger strike on 16 February. On 21 February, the student community, violating Section 144 imposed by the government, brought out a procession in Dhaka to press the demand for recognition of Bangla as the state language. Police opened fire and killed Salam, Barkat, Rafique, Jabbar and Shafiur. They are acknowledged as martyrs of the Language Movement. In a statement from jail, Bongobondhu condemned the shooting by police and recorded his strong protest. He was on hunger strike for 13 consecutive days. The authorities transferred him from Dhaka central jail to Faridpur jail to prevent him from making contact with the organizers of the language movement. He was released from jail on 26 February.

1953

On 9 July, Mujib was elected as the General Secretary of East Pakistan Awami League at its council. Efforts were made to build unity among Moulana Bhashani, A.K. Fazlul Huq and Shaheed Suhrawardy with the objective of defeating the Muslim League at the ensuing general elections. To achieve this, a special council session of the party was called on 14 November, in which a resolution to form the Jukta Front (United Front) was approved.

1954

The first general elections in East Bengal were held on 10 March. The United Front acquired 223 seats out of 237. The Awami League captured 143 seats. Defeating the influential Muslim league leader Wahiduzzaman, Sheikh Mujib won the Gopalganj constituency by a margin of 13,000 votes. He took oath as Minister in the new provincial government. On 15 May he took over as Agriculture and Forest Minister. The central government arbitrarily dismissed the United Front ministry on 29 May. Bongobondhu was once again arrested when his plane landed at Dhaka airport from Karachi on 30 May. He was released on 23 December.

1955

Bongobondhu was elected as a member of the Constituent Assembly on 5th June. The Awami League held a public meeting at Paltan Maidan (ground) on 17 June. A 21 points programme was put forward demanding autonomy for East Pakistan. On 23 June the Working Committee of the Awami League took a decision that the Awami League members of the Legislative Assembly would resign if autonomy was not granted to East Pakistan.

On 25 August Bongobondhu told the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in Karachi.-

"SIR, YOU WILL SEE THAT THEY WANT TO USE THE PHRASE 'EAST PAKISTAN' INSTEAD OF 'EAST BENGAL'. WE HAVE DEMANDED MANY TIMES THAT YOU SHOULD USE BENGAL INSTEAD OF EAST PAKISTAN. THE WORD 'BENGAL' HAS A HISTORY, HAS A TRADITION OF ITS OWN. YOU CAN CHANGE IT ONLY AFTER THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CONSULTED. IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE IT, WE HAVE TO GO BACK TO BENGAL AND ASK THEM WHETHER THEY ARE READY TO ACCEPT IT. SO FAR AS THE QUESTION OF ONE UNIT IS CONCERNED IT CAN BE INCORPORATED IN THE CONSTITUTION. WHY DO YOU WANT IT TO BE TAKEN UP RIGHT NOW? WHAT ABOUT THE STATE LANGUAGE, BENGALI? WE ARE PREPARED TO CONSIDER ONE-UNIT WITH ALL THESE THINGS. SO, I APPEAL TO MY FRIENDS ON THAT SIDE TO ALLOW THE PEOPLE TO GIVE THEIR VERDICT IN ANY WAY, IN THE FORM OF REFERENDUM OR IN THE FORM OF PLEBISCITE."

On 21 October Awami Muslim League dropped the word 'Muslim' from its name at a special council to make the party a truly modern and secular one. Bongobondhu was re-elected general secretary of the party.

1956

On 3 February, Awami League leaders, during a meeting with the Chief Minister, demanded that the subject of provincial autonomy be included in the draft constitution. On 14 July, the Awami League at a meeting adopted a resolution opposing the representation of the military in the administration. The resolution was moved by Bongobondhu. On 4 September an antifeminist procession was brought out under the leadership of Bongobondhu defying Section 144. At least three persons were killed when police opened fire on the procession at Chawkbazar area. On 16 September, Bongobondhu assumed the responsibility of Industries,

Commerce, Labor, Anti-Corruption and Village-Aid Ministry in the coalition government.

1957
On 30 May, in response to a resolution of the party, Bongobondhu resigned from the cabinet to strengthen the organization by working full-time. On 7 August, he went on an official tour to China and the Soviet Union.

1958
Pakistan's President, Major General Iskandar Mirza, and the Chief of Pakistan's army, General Ayub Khan, imposed martial law on 7 October and banned political activities. Bongobondhu was arrested on 11 October. Thereafter, he was continuously harassed in false cases. He was released from prison after a long 14 months, but was arrested again at the jail gate.

1961
Bongobondhu was released from jail after the High Court declared his detention unlawful. After his release from the jail he started covert political activities against the martial law regime and Ayub Khan, the dictator. He set up an underground organization called "Swadhin Bangla Biplobi Parishad" (Revolutionary Council for Independent Bangla) comprising outstanding student leaders in order to work for the independence of Bangladesh.

1962
Bongobondhu was arrested under the Public Security Act on 6 February. He was freed on 18 June following the withdrawal of the four-year-long martial law on 2 June. On 25 June, Bongobondhu joined other national leaders to protest the unlawful measures intrduced by general Ayub Khan. On 5 July he addressed a public rally at Paltan Maidan. He bitterly criticized Ayub Khan in his speech. He went to London on 24 September and joined Shaheed Suhrawardy to form the National Democratic Front, and alliance of the opposition parties. He spent the entire month of October travelling across the Bengal along with Shaheed Suhrawardy to build up public support for the Front.

1963
Bongobondhu went to London for consultations with Suhrawardy, who was there for medical treatment. On 5 December, Suhrawardy died in Beirut.

1964
The Awami League was revitalized on 25 January at a meeting held at Bongobondhu's residence. The meeting adopted a resolution to demand the introduction of parliamentary democracy on the basis of adult franchise in response to public sentiment. The meeting elected Moulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish as party president and Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujib as the general secretary.

On 11 March, an All-Party Action Committee was formed. Bongobondhu led a committee to defuse communal riots. After the riots he took initiative to start a vigorous anti-Ayub movement. Bongobondhu was arrested 14 days before the presidential election.
1965
The government charged Sheikh Mujib with sedition and for making objectionable statements. He was sentenced to a one-year imprisonment. He was later released by the order of the High Court.

1966
On 5 February, a national conference of the opposition parties was held in Lahore. Bongobondhu placed his historic 6-points programme before the select committee of the conference. The 6-points demand was the charter of freedom of the Bangali nation. On 1 March, Bongobondhu was elected the president of the Awami league. Following his election, he launched a campaign to obtain enthusiastic support for the 6-points demand. He travelled around the country. Police arrested and detained him several times at Sylhet, Mymensing and Dhaka during his campaign. He was arrested eight times in the first quarter of the year. On 8 May, he was arrested after his speech at a rally of jute mill workers at Narayanganj. A countrywide hartal was observed on 7 June to press the demand to release Bongobondhu and other political prisoners. Police opened fire on picketers during the hartal and killed a number of workers in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Tongi.

1968
The Pakistan government filed the infamous Agartala conspiracy case against Bongobondhu and 34 Bengali Civil and military officers. Sheikh Mujib was named as accused number one in the case. The arrested persons were charged with conspiring for the secession of East Pakistan from the rest of Pakistan. The accused persons were detained inside the Dhaka Cantonment. Demonstrations took place throughout the province demanding the release of Bongobondhu and the other co-accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case. The trial began on 19 June inside Dhaka Cantonment amidst tight security.

1969
The Central Students Action Council was formed on 5 January to press for the acceptance of the 11-points which included the 6-points demand of Bongobondhu. The council initiated a countrywide student agitation to compel the government to withdraw the Agartala Conspiracy Case and free Bongobondhu. The agitation gradually took its shape into a mass movement. After months of protests, violations of Government imposed ban on meetings and processions under Section 144 and curfews, indiscriminate shooting by the police and the EPR and a number of casualties, the movement peaked into an unprecedented mass upsurge that forced Ayub Khan to convene a round-table conference of political leaders and announce Bongobondhu's release on parole. Bongobondhu rejected the offer of release on parole. On 22 February, the Pakistani government bowed down to the continued mass protests and freed Bongobondhu and the other co-accused. The conspiracy case was withdrawn. The Central Student Action Council arranged a reception in honour of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 23 February at the Race Course (Suhrawardy Udyan). One million people attended the meeting. Mujib was publicly declared as Bongobondhu (Friend of Bengal) in the meeting. In his speech on the occasion, Bongobondhu pledged his wholehearted support to the 11-points demand of the students.
On 10 March, Bongobondhu joined the round-table conference

called by Ayub Khan in Rawalpindi. At the conference Bongobondhu placed the 6-points demand of his party and the 11-points demand of the students and said: "To end people's anger there is no other alternative to the acceptance of the 6-points and 11-points demand and the granting of regional autonomy." When the Pakistani politicians and rulers discarded his demand he left the conference on 13 March. He returned Dhaka on the next day. On 25 March, Gen. Yahya Khan took over and imposed martial law. On 25 October, Bongobondhu went to London on a three week organizational tour. On 5 December, Bongobondhu declared at a discussion meeting held to observe the death anniversary of Shaheed Suhrawardy that henceforth East Pakistan would be called Bangladesh. He added, "There was a time when evil efforts were made to wipe out the word 'Bangla', from our land and map. The existence of the word 'Bangla' was found nowhere except in the Bay of Bengal. I, on behalf of the people proclaim today that the eastern Province of Pakistan will be called 'Bangladesh' instead of 'East Pakistan.'"

1970

Bongobondhu was re-elected President of the Awami League on 6 January. The Awami League at a meeting of the working committee on 1 April decided to take part in the general elections scheduled for later that year. On 7 June, Bongobondhu addressed a public meeting at the Race Course ground and urged the people to elect his party on the issue of the 6-points demand. On 17 October, Bongobondhu chose the boat as his party's election symbol and launched his campaign through an election rally at Dhaka's Dholai Khal. On 28 October, he addressed the nation over radio and television and called upon the people to elect his party's candidates to implement the 6-points. When a mighty cyclonic storm hit the coastal belt of Bangladesh, killing at least one million people, Bongobondhu suspended his election campaign and rushed to the aid of the helpless people in the affected areas. He strongly condemned and protested the Pakistani rulers for their indifference to the victims. He called upon the international community to help the people affected by the cyclone. In the general elections held on 7 December, the Awami League acquired an absolute majority. The Awami League secured 167 seats out of 169 National Assembly seats in the then East Pakistan and won 288 out of 300 seats in the Provincial Assembly.

1971

On 3 January, Bongobondhu conducted the oath of the peoples' representatives at a meeting at the Race Course ground. The Awami League members took oath to frame a constitution on the basis of the 6-point demand and pledged to remain loyal to the people who had elected them. On 5 January, Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the majority Party, the People's Party, in the then West Pakistan, announced his readiness to form a coalition government at the centre with Awami League. Bongobondhu was elected as the leader of his party's parliamentary party at a meeting of the MNAs of his party. On 27 January, Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto arrived in Dhaka for talks with Bongobondhu. The talks failed after three days of deliberations. In an announcement on 13 February, President Yahya Khan summoned the National Assembly to sit in Dhaka on 3 March. On 15 February, Bhutto announced that he would boycott the session and demanded that power be handed over to the majority parties in East Pakistan and West Pakistan. In a statement on 16 February, Bongobondhu bitterly criticized Bhutto for putting forward such demand and said, "The demand of Bhutto sahib is totally illogical. Power is to be handed over to the majority party, the Awami League. The power now lay with the people of East Bengal."

On 1 March, Yahya Khan abruptly postponed the National Assembly session which prompted a storm of protest throughout Bangladesh. Bongobondhu presided over a meeting of the Awami League working committee. Awami League called a countrywide general strike on 3 March. After successful general strike, Bongobondhu demanded to the President for immediate transfer of power to his party.

On 7 March, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed a mammoth public rally at the Race Course ground, where he declared:

"The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for independence. Joi Bangla." In this historic speech, Bongobondhu urged the nation to break the shackles of subjugation and declared, "Since we have given blood, we will give more blood. By the will of the Almighty God, the people of this land will be liberated …turn every house into a fortress. Face (the enemy) with whatever you have."
He advised the people to prepare themselves for a guerrilla war against the enemy. He asked the people to start a total non-cooperation movement against the government of Yahya Khan. There were orders from Yahya Khan on the one hand and on the other hand Bongobondhu's directives from Road 32, Dhanmondi. The entire nation carried out Bongobondhu's instructions. Every organization- including government offices, courts, banks, insurance companies, schools, colleges, mills and factories obeyed Bongobondhu's orders. The all-out response of the people of Bangladesh to Bongobondhu's call was unprecedented in the history. In reality, Bongobondhu ruled an independent Bangladesh from March 7 to March 25.

On 16 March, Yahya Khan came to Dhaka for talks with Bongobondhu regarding the transfer of power. Bhutto also came a few days later to Dhaka. The Mujib-Yahya-Butto talks continued until 24 March. Yahya Khan secretly left Dhaka in the evening of 25 March. On the dead night of 25 March, the Pakistan army cracked down on the innocent unarmed Bangalis. They attacked Dhaka University, the Peelkhana Headquarters of the then East Pakistan Rifles and the Police Headquarters at Rajarbagh.

Moments after the crackdown began Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence at 12:30 AM 26 March. His declaration was transmitted through wireless to every place of the country :
"THIS MAY BE MY LAST MESSAGE; FROM TO-DAY BANGLADESH IS INDEPENDENT. I CALL UPON THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH WHEREVER YOU MIGHT BE AND WITH WHATEVER YOU HAVE, TO RESIST THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION TO THE LAST. YOUR FIGHT MUST GO ON UNTIL THE LAST SOLDIER OF THE PAKISTAN OCCUPATION ARMY IS EXPELLED FROM THE SOIL OF BANGLADESH. FINAL VICTORY IS OURS."
He also sent a message in Bengali, which reads as follows:

"THE PAKISTANI ARMY HAS SUDDENLY ATTACKED PILKHANA EPR HEADQUARTERS, RAJARBAGH POLICE LINE. BATTLE IS GOING ON THE STREETS OF THE CITY. I AM CALLING FOR HELP TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. OUR FREEDOM FIGHTERS ARE FIGHTING VALIANTLY AGAINST THE ENEMY TO LIBERATE OUR MOTHERLAND. IN THE NAME OF THE ALLMIGHTY GOD I ORDER AND CALL UPON YOU TO LIBERATE OUR COUNTRY. FIGHT TILL YOU HAVE ONE DROP OF BLOOD. ASK FOR HELP FROM POLICE, EPR, BENGAL REGIMENT AND ANSARS. ASK THEM TO FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE WITH YOU. QUESTION OF COMPROMISE DOES NOT ARISE. VICTORY WILL BE OURS. DRIVE OUT THE LAST SOLDIER OF THE ENEMY FROM OUR SACRED MOTHERLAND. PASS THIS MESSAGE TO ALL AWAMI LAEGUE LEADERS, WORKERS AND ALL COMPATRIOT PEOPLE. GOD BLESS YOU. JOI BANGLA."

He called upon all sections of people including Bengali military and civilian personnel, students, workers and peasants, to join the resistance war against the occupation Pakistan army. This massage of Bongobondhu was immediately disseminated throughout the country through radio equipment under special arrangements. The same night jawans and officers in Chittagong, Comilla and Jessore cantonments put up resistance to the Pakistan army after receiving this message. Bongobondhu's declaration was broadcasted by Chittagong radio station. The Pakistan army arrested Bongobondhu from his Dhanmondi residence at 1:30 a.m. and whisked him away to Dhaka cantonment. On 26 March he was flown to Pakistan as a prisoner. The same day, General Yahya Khan, in his speech banned the Awami League and declared Bongobondhu a traitor.

On 26 March, M.A. Hannan, an Awami League leader in Chittagong, read out Bongobondhu's declaration of independence over Chittagong radio. On 10 April, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Bangladesh headed by Bongobondhu as President was formed.

The revolutionary government took the oath of office on 17 April at the Amrakanan of Baidyanathtala in Meherpur, which is now known as Mujibnagar. Bongobondhu was elected President, Syed Nazrul Islam as acting President and Tajuddin Ahmed as Prime Minister. The Liberation War ended on 16 December when the Pakistani occupation forces surrendered at the historic Race Course ground accepting defeat in the glorious war led by the revolutionary government in exile. Bangladesh was finally free.

Earlier, between August and September of 1971, the Pakistani junta held a secret trial of Bongobondhu inside Layalpur jail in Pakistan. He was sentenced to death. The freedom loving people of the world demanded absolute security of Bongobondhu's life. On 27 December, the Bangladesh government demanded immediate and unconditional release of Father of the Nation Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A number of countries, including India and the Soviet Union, and various international organizations demanded release of Bongobondhu. They held that Pakistan had no right to detain Bongobondhu, who was the President of Independent Bangladesh. In the meantime, Bangladesh had been recognized by many countries of the world.

1972

The Pakistan government had to release Bongobondhu on 8 January, 1972 bowing to international pressure. Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto met Bongobondhu. The same day Bongobondhu left for London en route to Dhaka. In London, British Prime Minister Edward Heath met him. On his way back to Dhaka from London Bongobondhu had a stopover in New Delhi. He was received by Indian President V. V. Giri and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at the airport.

An unforgettable reception was accorded to Bongobondhu when the Father of the Nation reached Dhaka on 10 January. From the airport he drove straight to the Race Course ground. He delivered his address in tears before the mammoth gathering. On 12 January, Bongobondhu took over as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. On 6 February he visited India at the invitation of the Indian government. After twenty four years of expulsion the Dhaka University authorities rescinded the expulsion order and accorded him life membership.

On 1 March he went to the Soviet Union on an official visit. The Indian army left Dhaka on 12 March at the request of Bongobondhu. On 1 May Bongobondhu announced a raise in the salary of class III and IV employees of the government. On 30 July Bongobondhu underwent a gall-bladder operation in London. From there he went to Geneva. On 10 October the World Peace Council conferred the Joliot-Curie award on him. On 4 November, Bongobondhu announced that the first general election in Banglaesh would be held on 7 March, 1973. On 15 December, Bongobondhu's government announced that state awards would be accorded to the freedom fighters. On 14 December Bongobondhu affixed his signature to the draft constitution. On the first anniversary of the liberation the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was adopted.

The important achievements of the Bongobondhu government are : the reorganization of the administrative system, framing of the constitution, rehabilitation of one crore people, restoration and development of communication system, expansion of education, supply of free books to students up to class V and low priced books to students up to class VIII, effective ban on all anti-Islamic and anti-social activities e.g., gambling, horse race, consumption of liquor, establishment of Islamic Foundation, reorganization of Madrasa Education Board, establishment of 11,000 primary schools, nationalization of 40,000 primary schools, establishment of women's rehabilitation centre for the welfare of defiled and distressed women, Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust, tax waive up to 25 bighas of land, distribution of agricultural inputs among farmers free of cost or at nominal price, nationalization of banks and insurance companies, 580 industrial units abandoned by the Pakistanis and employment of thousands of workers and employees, construction of Ghorasal fertilizer factory, primary work of Ashuganj complex and establishment of new industrial units and reopening of the closed industries. Bongobondhu successfully built an economic infrastructure to lead the country towards progress and prosperity. Another landmark achievement of the Bongobondhu government was to achieve recognition of almost all countries of the world and the United Nations membership in a short span of time.

1973

The Awami League secured 293 seats out of the 300 Jatiyo Sangsad (Parliament) seats in the first general elections. On 3 September, the Awami League, CPB and NAP formed Oikya Front

(United Front). On 6 September, Bongobondhu set off to Algeria to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit conference.

1974
The People's Republic of Bangladesh was accorded membership of the United Nations. On 24 September, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed the UN General Assembly in Bengali for the first time in the history of UN.

1975
On 25 January, the country switched over to the presidential system of government and Bongobondhu took over as the President of the Republic. On 24 February, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League comprising all the political parties of the country, was launched. On 25 February, Bongobondhu called upon all political parties and leaders to join the national party. He felt the need to make Bangladesh self-reliant nation by reducing dependence on foreign aid. Therefore, he significantly reformed the economic policies to achieve the goal of self-reliance, He launched the Second Revolution to make the independence meaningful and ensure food, clothing, shelter, medicare, education and work to the people. The objectives of the revolution were: elimination of corruption, boosting production in mills, factories and fields, population control and establishment of national unity.

Bongobondhu received an unprecedented response to his call to achieve economic freedom by uniting the entire nation. The economy started picking up rapidly within a short time. Production increased. Smuggling stopped. The prices of essentials came down within the purchasing power of the common men. Imbued with new hope, the people unitedly marched forward to extend the benefits of independence to every doorstep. But that did not last long.

In the pre-dawn hours of 15 August, the noblest and the greatest of Bengalis in a thousand years, Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of Bangladesh and the Father of the Nation, was assassinated by a handful of ambitious and treacherous military officers. On that day, Bongobondhu's wife, a noble women, Begum Fazilatun Nessa his eldest son freedom fighter Sheikh Kamal; second son Lt. Sheikh Jamal; youngest son Sheikh Russel; two daughters-in-law- Sultana Kamal and Rosy Jamal; Bongobondhu's brother Sheikh Naser; brother-in-law and Agriculture Minister Abdur Rab Serniabat; and his daughter Baby Serniabat; son Arif Serniabat, grandson Sukanto Abdullah and nephew Shahid Serniabat; Bongobondhu's nephew, youth leader and journalist Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni and his pregnant wife Arzoo Moni; Bongobondhu's security officer Colonel Jamil and a 14-year-old boy Rintoo were killed. The bloodthirsty killers murdered 16 persons.

Martial law was imposed in the country after the killing of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Democracy was done away with and basic rights were snatched away. Thus began the politics of killing, coups and conspiracy. The people's rights to food and vote were taken away.

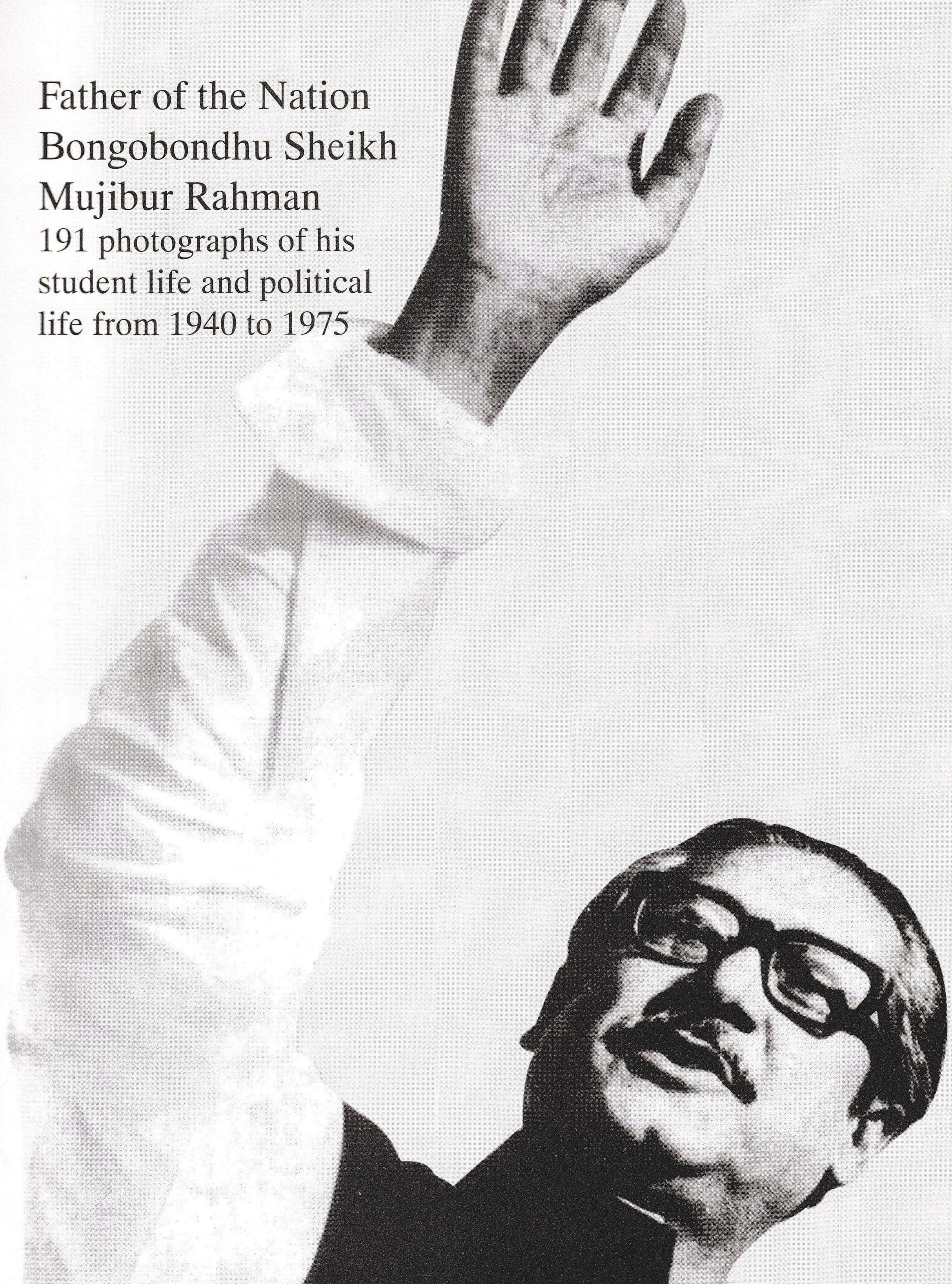
There is international provision to hold trial of killers to protect human rights in the world. But unfortunately in Bangladesh, a law was enacted on 26 September under a martial law ordinance indemnifying the self-proclaimed killers of Bongobondhu from any trial. Having captured power illegally through a military coup d'etat General Ziaur Rahman stained the sanctity of the constitution by incorporating the infamous Indemnity Ordinance in the Fifth Amendment to the constitution. He rewarded the killers by appointing them in Bangladesh diplomatic missions abroad. The Indemnity Ordinance, which is against basic human rights, had to be replaced and the killers are to be punished to restore rule of law in the country.

After Bongobondhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina came to power at the head of an Awami-League government on 23 June 1996, in 2 October a case was filed in Dhanmondi Police Station against those involved in the murder of the Father of the Nation and its President Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members. On 12 November the Jatiyo Sangsad (Parliament) annulled the Indemnity Ordinance.

The trial began on 1 March, 1997 in the court of the Dhaka District and Session Judge. On 8 November, 1998 the Judge of the Court, Kazi Gholam Rasul, delivered a 76-page verdict in which he sentenced fifteen of the accused to death. On 18 November 2000, two judges gave a split judgment in the death reference and appeal case lodged against the sentence in the High Court. Subsequently, a third judge ruled decisively in favour of upholding the death sentence on twelve of the accused. Five convicted then filed a 'leave to appeal' with the Appellate Division of the court. When the BNP-Jamat alliance was in power from 2002 to 2006 it dropped the case from the 'cause-list'. A bench was finally formed to hear the case in 2007. After 29 days of hearings in 2009 on 19 November a judicial bench comprising the Chief Justice and four other judges rejected the appeal. After three days of hearings on 27 January four judges also dismissed the review petition. The following midnight, that is to say, on 28 January, five of the assassins were executed and the verdict was implemented in their case. One of the assassins had died while a fugitive from justice overseas while six still are hiding in other countries. However, the demand that the murderers be tried has finally been addressed thirty-four years after the assassination of Bongobondhu and the murder of his family members.

August 15, 1975, is the blackest day in nation's life. The nation observes this day as the National Mourning Day.

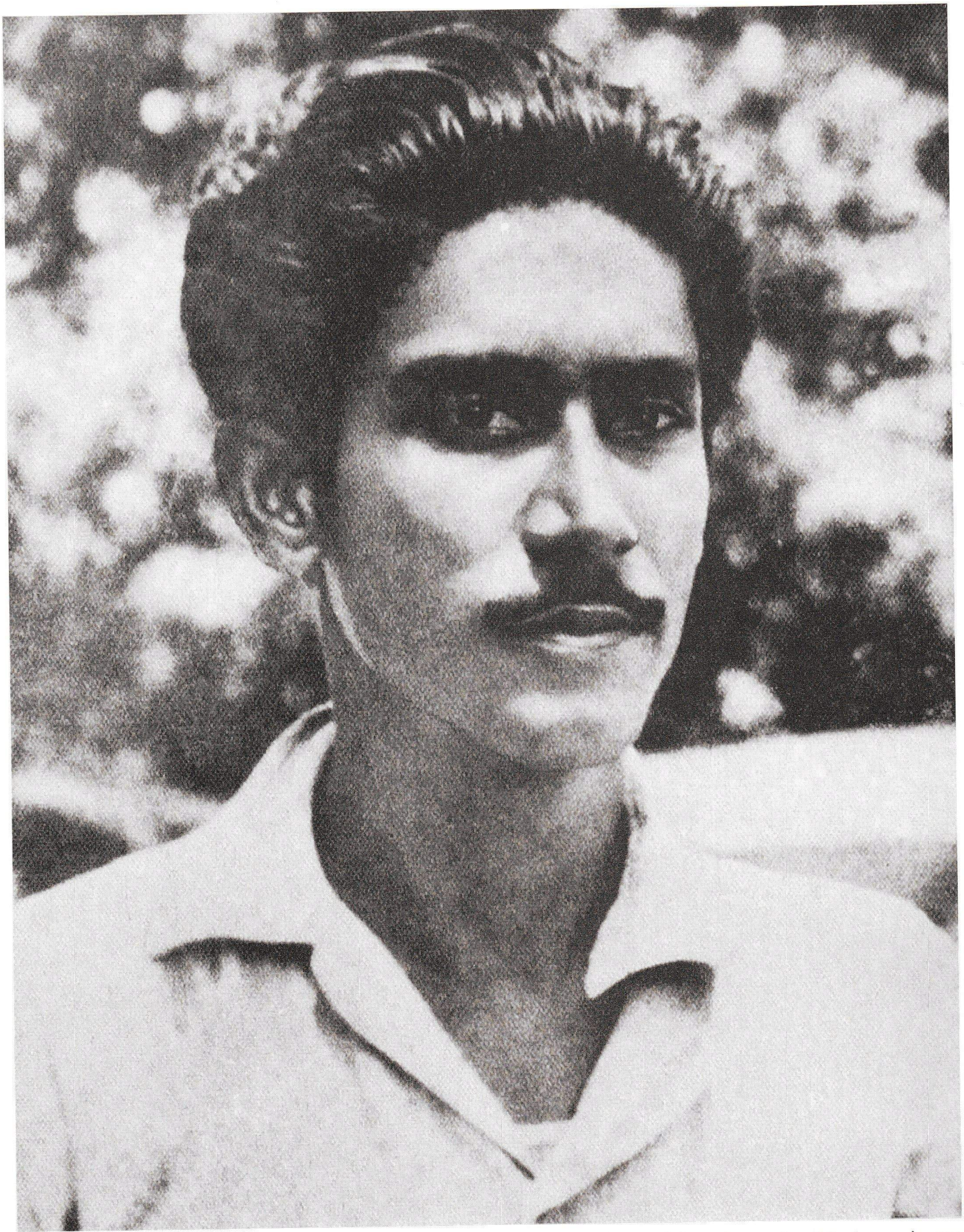
Father of the Nation
Bongobondhu Sheikh
Mujibur Rahman
191 photographs of his
student life and political
life from 1940 to 1975





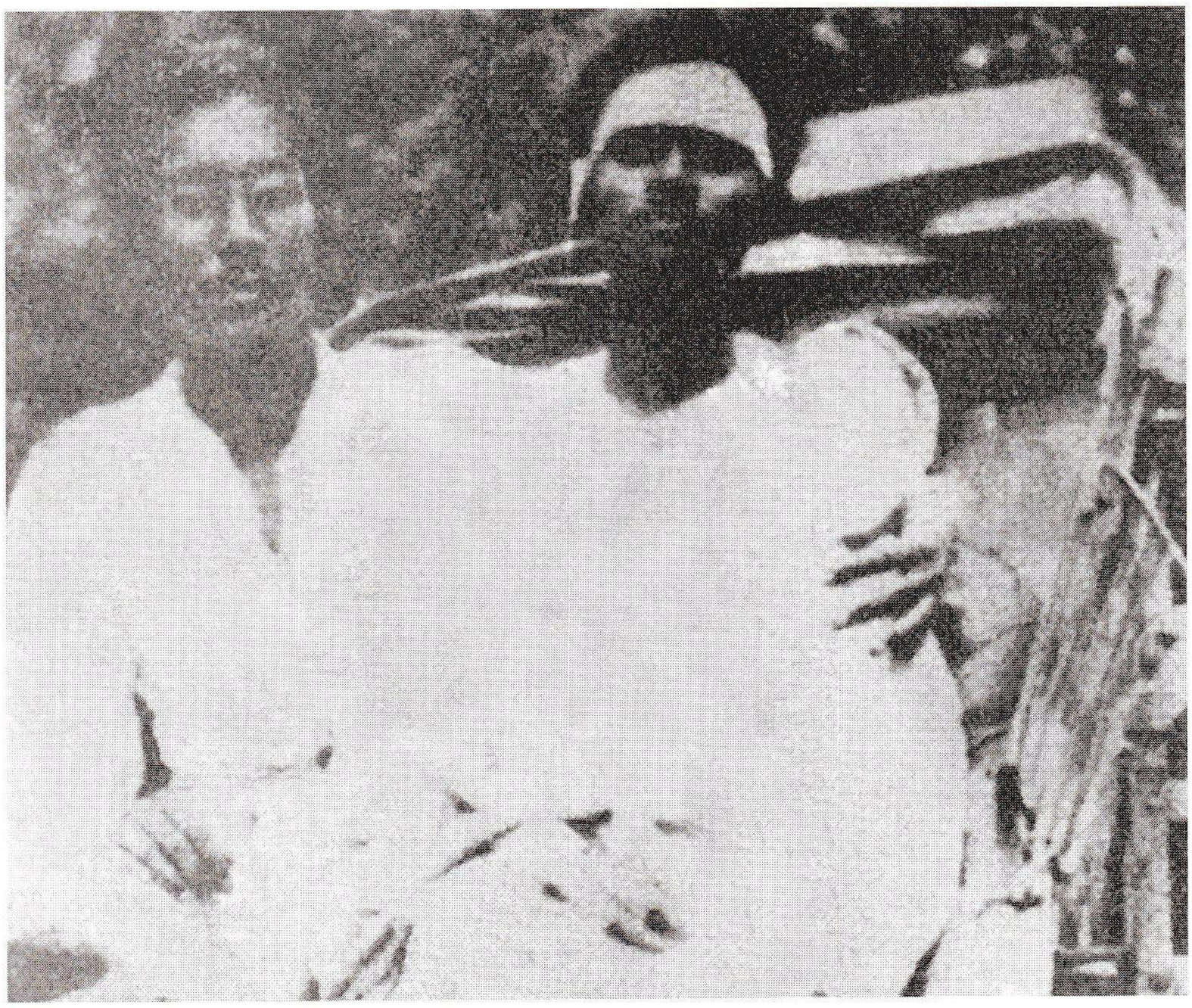


Young Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. His nick-name was Khoka.
He loved to play football. He was the captain of school's soccer team while he was studying in Mission School.

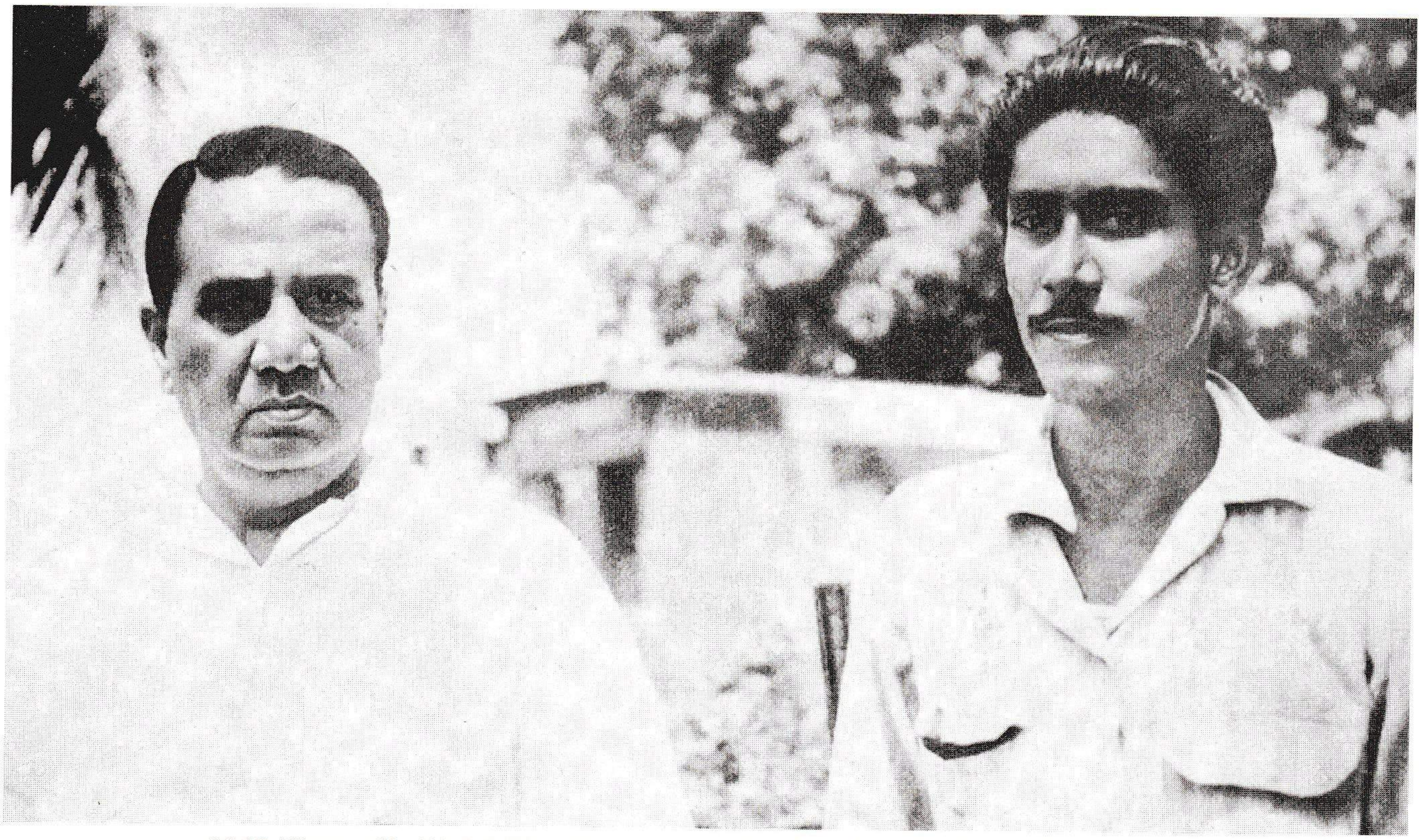


1949. Sheikh Mujib in his youth– slowly growing to be a leader through his social services and political consciousness.

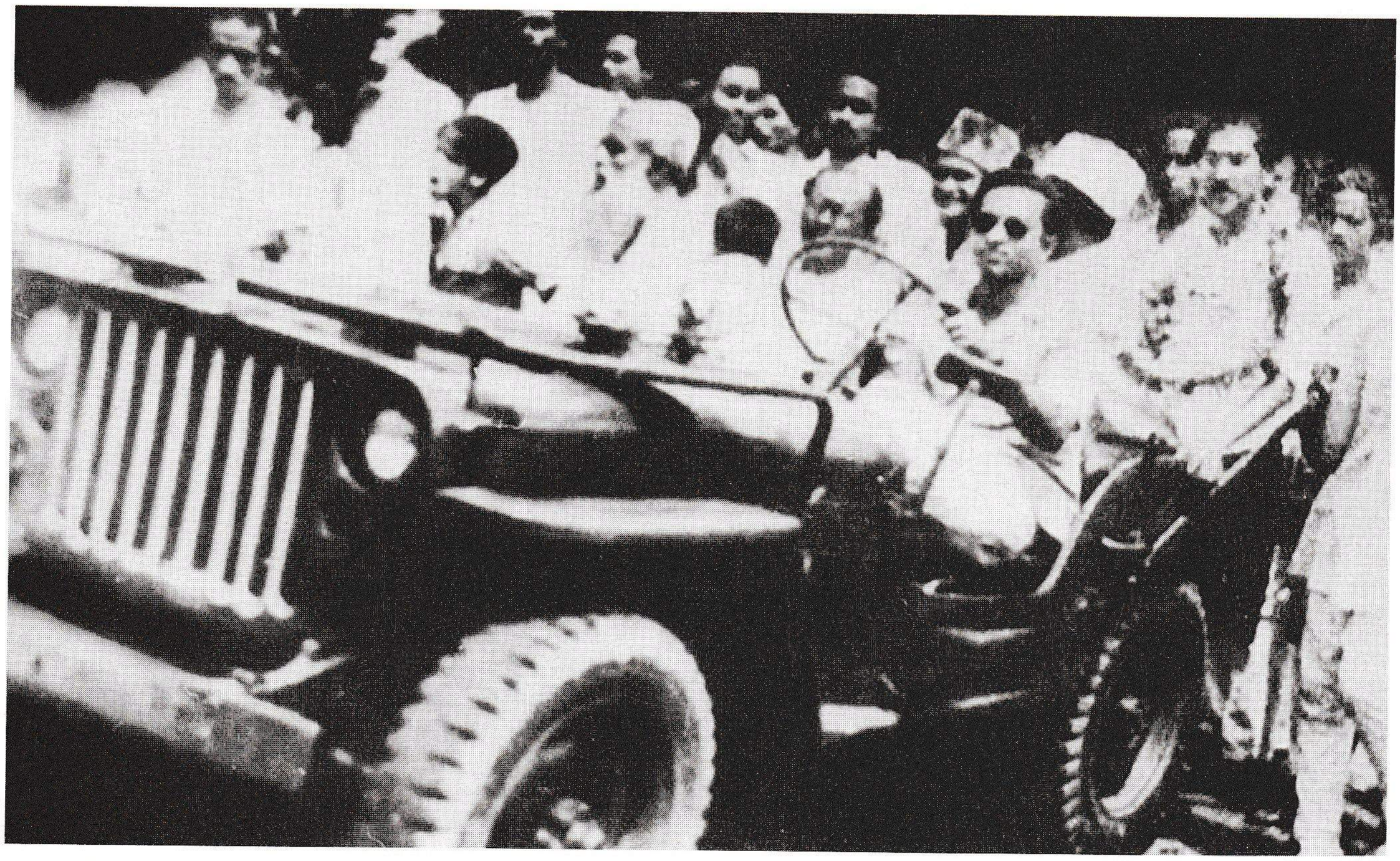
March 11, 1948. The students, for fulfillment of a number of their demands, observed stay-in strike (lying down on the road) in front of the Secretariat of the East Pakistan Government. Mujib led the strike.



1948. Shawkat Ali Khan got injured when police lathicharged on the agitation attempt of the All Party State Language Movement. Sheikh Mujib took him to hospital in a rickshaw.



1949. Young Sheikh Mujib with his beloved leader Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy.



January 21, 1949. Just offer his release from the Central Jail Shiekh Mujib rushed to the workers' meeting in a jeep. Along with him were Awami League leaders Shamsul Haque and Year Mohammad Khan, his father Lutfor Rahman and many others.



February 26, 1952. As soon as Sheikh Mujib was released from the Faridpur Jail, leaders and workers of Awami League rushed to meet him.

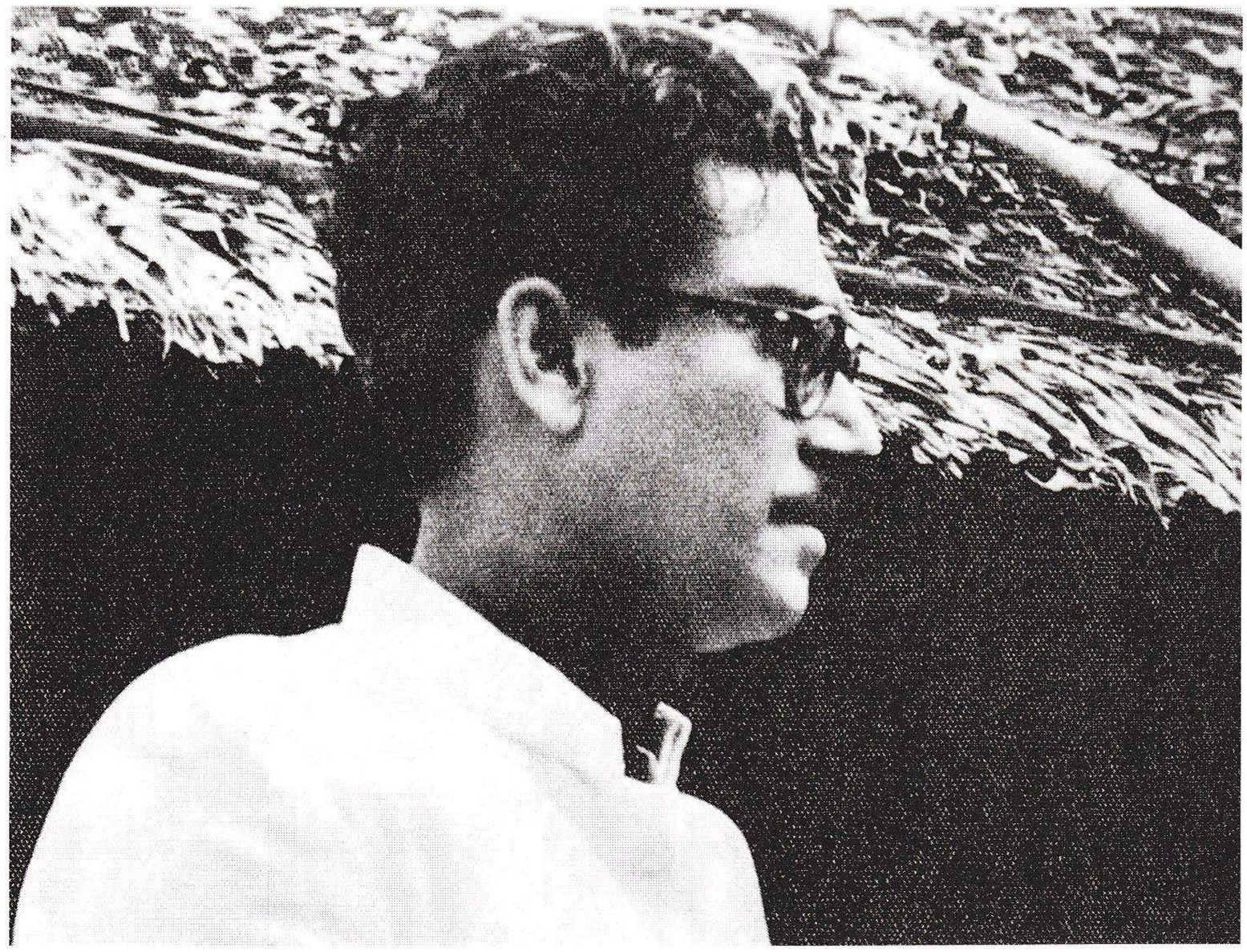


1953. The then General Secretary of East Pakistan Awami League council Sheikh Mujib participating in the process of selection of candidates before the Juktofront election (1954).

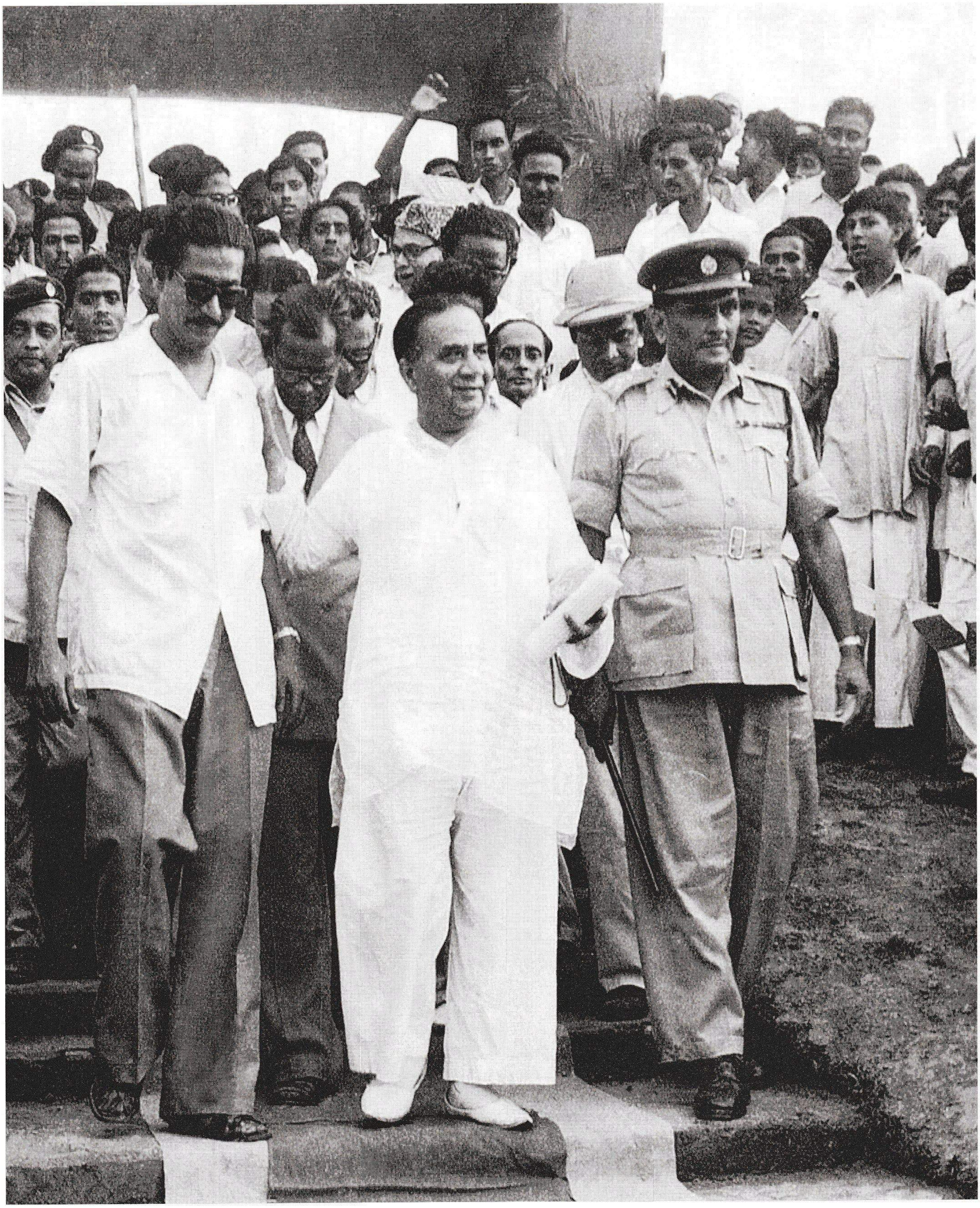


February 21, 1953. Moulana Bhasani and Sheikh Mujib walking towards `Shahid Minar' along with others pre-dawn bare-foot processionists.

March 10, 1954. After the election Provincial Ministry was formed in East Pakistan. In the front row, from left to right are Khairat Hossain, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Minister, Agriculture and Forestry), Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque (Chief Minister), Ataur Rahman Khan, Basanta Kumar Das and Mohammad Ali. Standing in the back row are, from left to right, Abdur Rahman, Monoranjan Dhar, Mashiur Rahman, Dhirendranath Dutta and Capt. Mansur Ali.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was entrusted with the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Provincial Government.



1954. Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy was accompanied by the then provincial Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, while he went for a visit to Rajshahi.

September 14, 1955. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his presidential speech at workers' conference at Jaipurhat in North Bengal.



1955. Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy operating his camera while touring North Bengal. Beside him is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



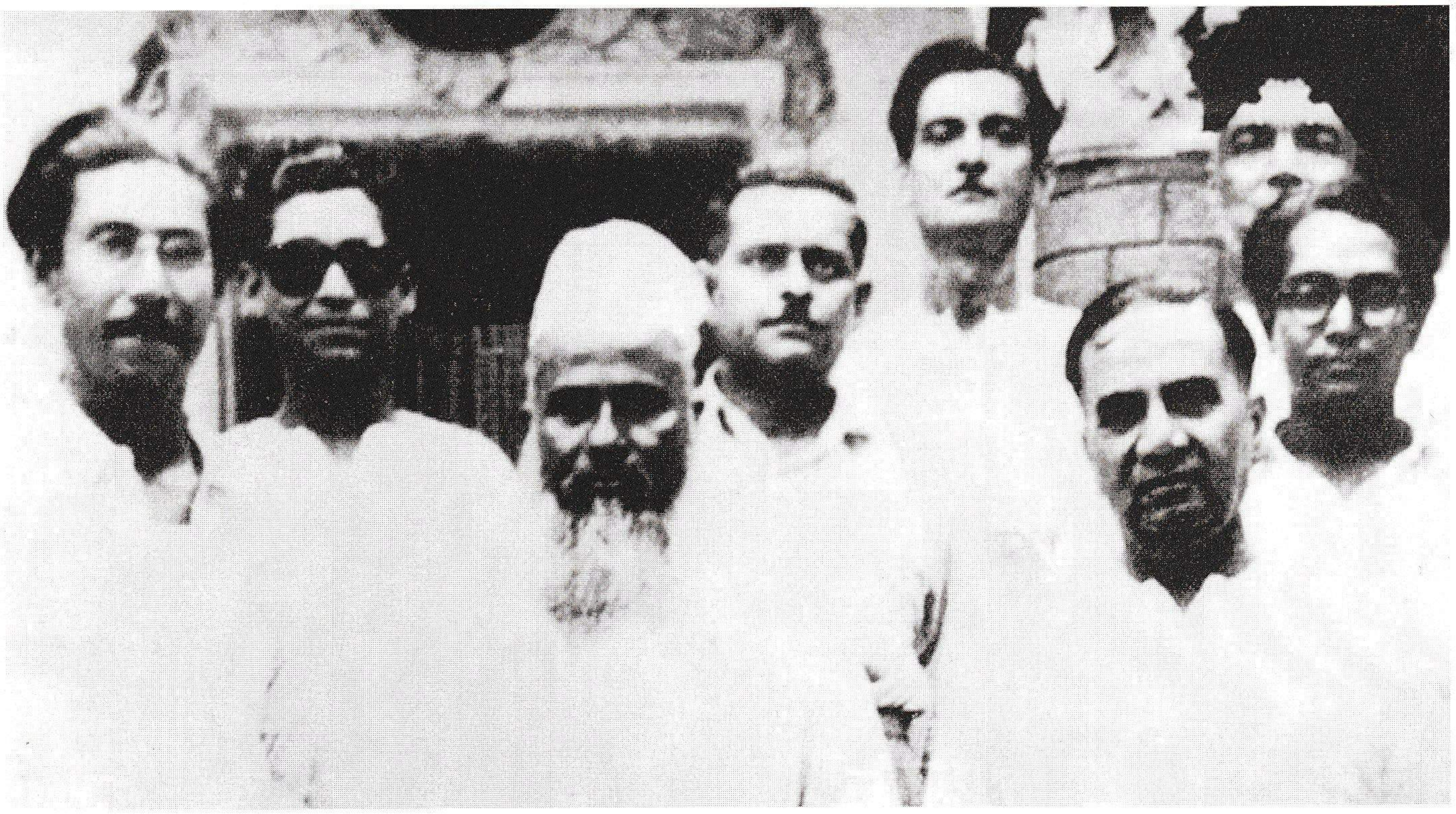
1956. While visiting China the then Provincial Industries Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had discussion with Mao-Tse-Tung and Chou En Lai on the friendly relation between Pakistan and China.



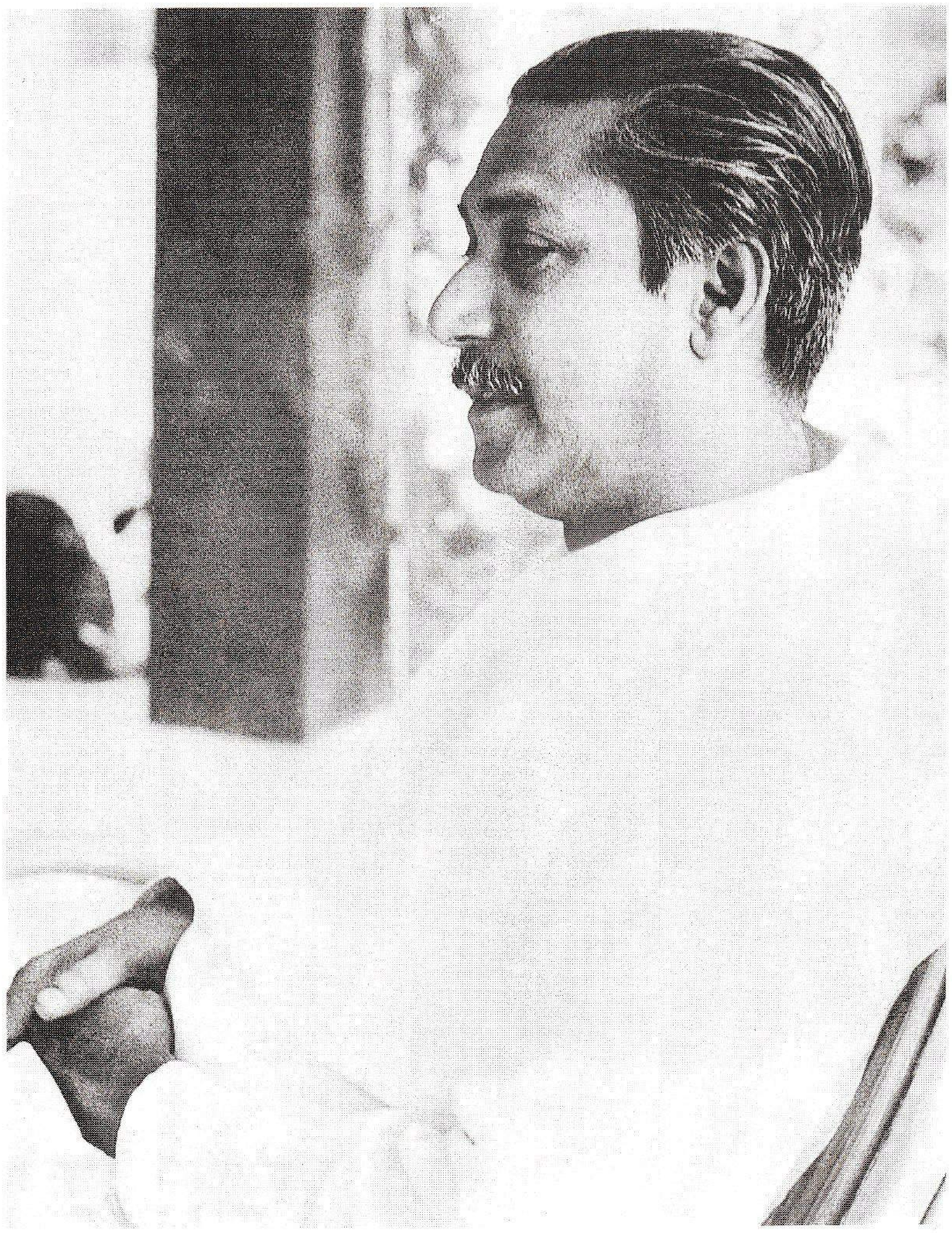
1956. In China, the then Industries Minister of East Pakistan Sheikh Mujibur Rahman congratulating the Chinese artists after a cultural function.



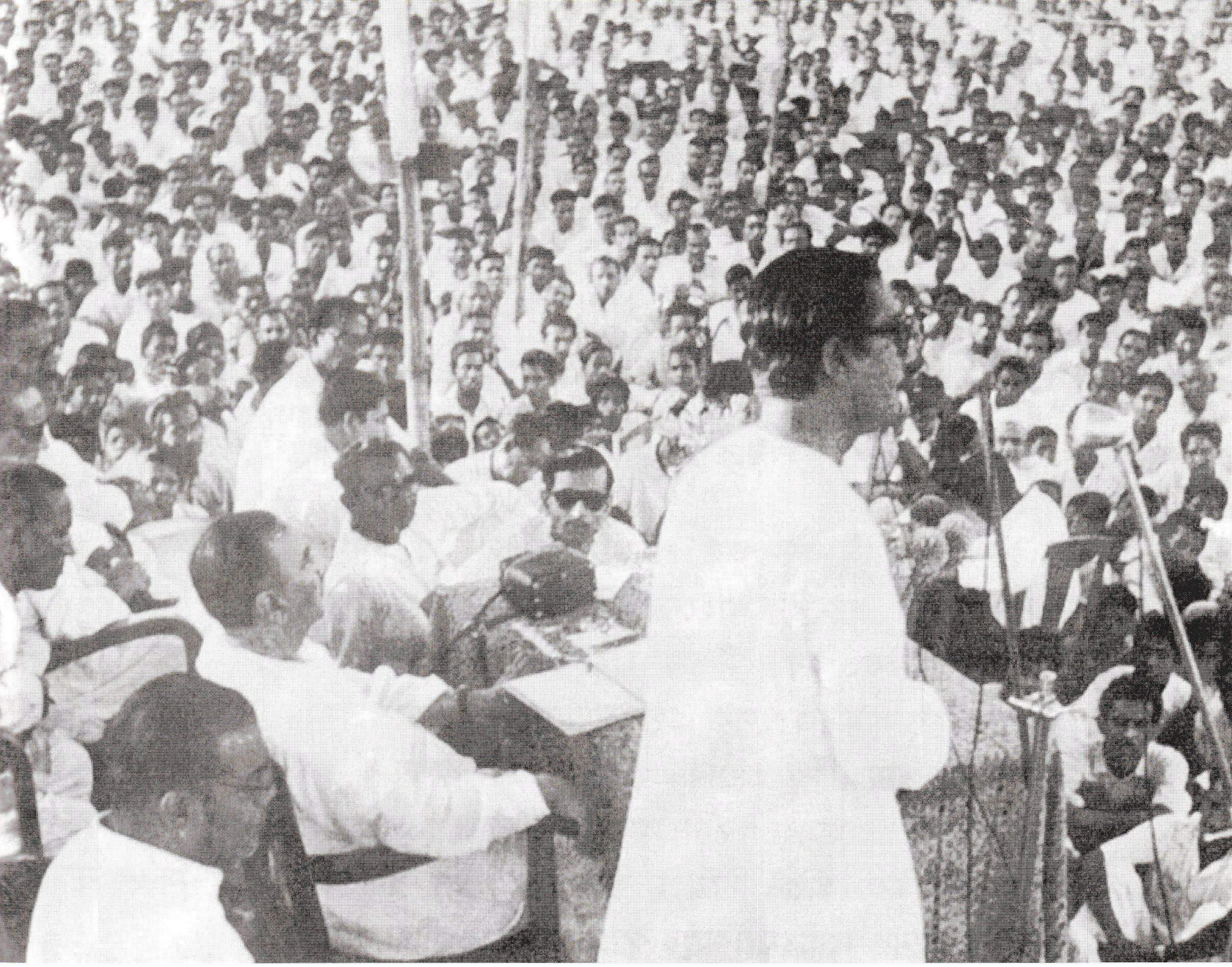
February 26, 1956. Sheikh Mujib and the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy in the reception given to the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai in Dhaka.



February 1958. In the Kagmari Afro-Asian cultural conference: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (at the extreme left), Moulana Bhashani (with cap in the middle), behind him the editor of Ittefaq Tafazzol Hossain Manik Mia, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy and others.



1962. On the right: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after he was released from the jail of Pakistan government.





September 10, 1962. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went on organizing meetings where he highlighted the dual economy and disparity of Pakistan's two regions. At that time Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy always backed him.

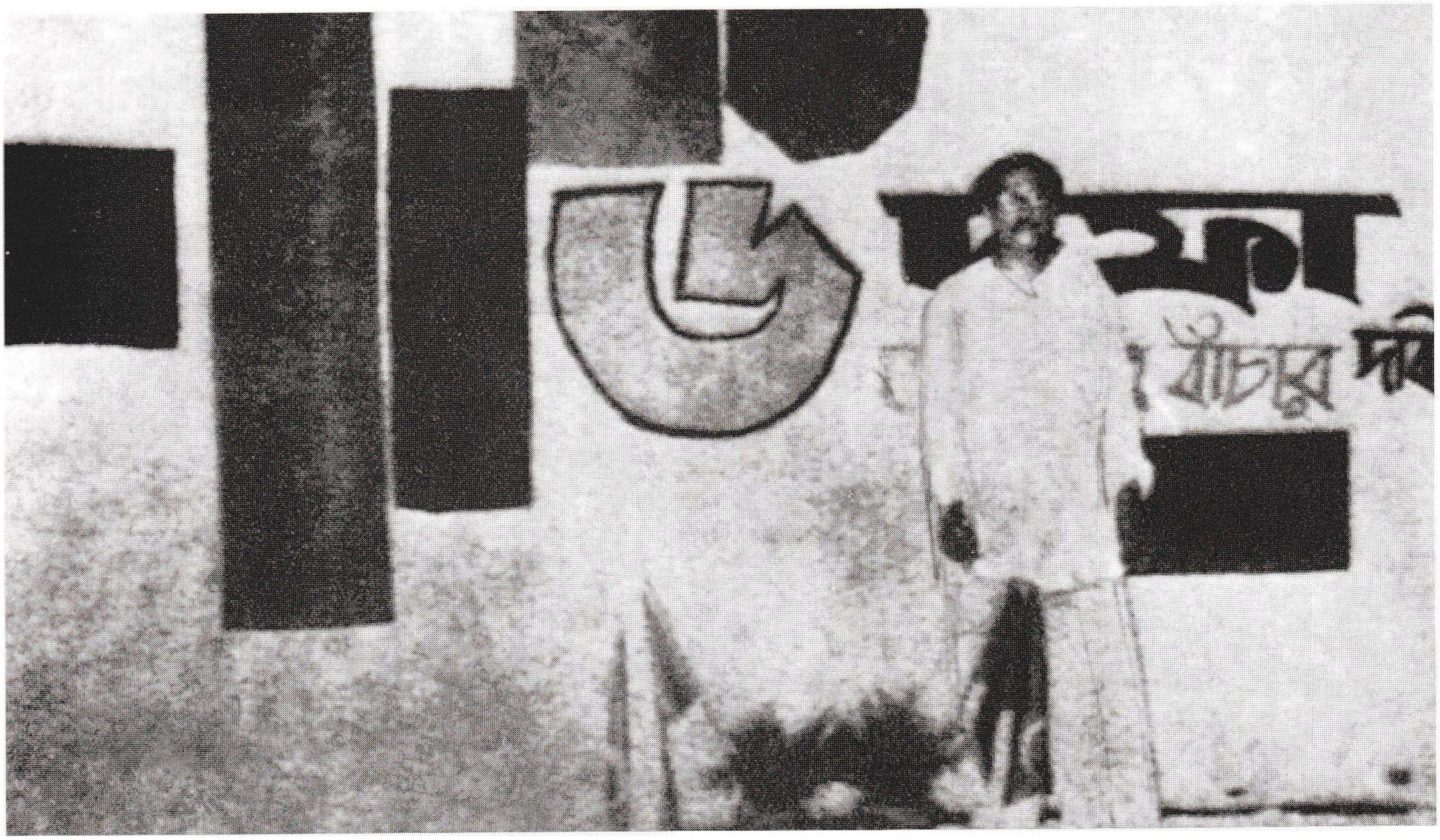
Bongobondhu explaining how the people of East Pakistan were deprived due to the discrimination between the two parts of Pakistan.

On the right: When the Martial Law Government promulgated `Elective Bodies Disqualification Ordinance' (EBDO) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman strongly voiced his protest.



February 5, 1966. In Lahore of West Pakistan Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced 6-point demand, the charter of freedom of the Bengalis, and thus placed his demand for autonomy of East Pakistan.





above: March 20, 1966. Eden Hotel ground, Dhaka. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman explaining 6-point from the dias of 6-point. The decoration of the dias was done by artist Hashem Khan.



below: Country-wide movement began for autonomy of East Pakistan on the basis of 6-point.

৬-দফা

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান ১৯৬৬ সালে যে ছয় দফা দাবি পেশ করেন তা দেখে পাক সরকার বিপাকে পড়ে। অন্যদিকে পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের মানুষ আশার আলোতে আরো সাহসী ও শক্তিশালী হয়ে ওঠে। দেশব্যাপী ছাত্র জনতা, কৃষক মজুর, সকল পেশার মানুষ ছয় দফার দাবি পূরণের দুর্বার আন্দোলন গড়ে তোলে। সে আন্দোলন কয়েক বছর গড়িয়ে '৬৯'-এর গণ-আন্দোলন তথা গণ-অভ্যুত্থানে পরিণত হয়। স্বৈরাচারী পাক সরকার বাধ্য হয়ে পরাজয় বরণ করে নেয়। জেনারেল আইয়ুবের পতন ঘটে।

১. শাসনতান্ত্রিক কাঠামো ও রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রকৃতি :
দেশের শাসনতান্ত্রিক কাঠামো এমনি হতে হবে যেখানে পাকিস্তান হবে একটি ফেডারেশনভিত্তিক রাষ্ট্রসংঘ এবং তার ভিত্তি হবে লাহোর প্রস্তাব। সরকার হবে পার্লামেন্টারি ধরনের। আইন পরিষদের (Legislatures) ক্ষমতা হবে সার্বভৌম। এবং এই পরিষদও নির্বাচিত হবে সর্বজনীন ভোটাধিকারের ভিত্তিতে জনসাধারণের সরাসরি ভোটে।

২. কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের ক্ষমতা :
কেন্দ্রীয় (ফেডারেল) সরকারের ক্ষমতা কেবলমাত্র দু'টি ক্ষেত্রেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকবে- যথা, দেশরক্ষা ও বৈদেশিক নীতি। অবশিষ্ট সকল বিষয়ে অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলোর ক্ষমতা থাকবে নিরঙ্কুশ।

৩. মুদ্রা বা অর্থ-সম্বন্ধীয় ক্ষমতা :
মুদ্রার ব্যাপারে নিম্নলিখিত দুইটির যে কোনো একটি প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ করা চলতে পারে

(ক) সমগ্র দেশের জন্য দু'টি পৃথক, অথচ অবাধে বিনিময়যোগ্য মুদ্রা চালু থাকবে।

অথবা

(খ) বর্তমান নিয়মে সমগ্র দেশের জন্য কেবলমাত্র একটি মুদ্রাই চালু থাকতে পারে। তবে সেক্ষেত্রে শাসনতন্ত্রে এমন ফলপ্রসূ ব্যবস্থা রাখতে হবে যাতে করে পূর্ব পাকিস্তান থেকে পশ্চিম পাকিস্তানে মূলধন পাচারের পথ বন্ধ হয়। এক্ষেত্রে পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের জন্য পৃথক ব্যাঙ্কিং রিজার্ভেরও পত্তন করতে হবে এবং পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের জন্য পৃথক আর্থিক বা অর্থবিষয়ক নীতি প্রবর্তন করতে হবে।

৪. রাজস্ব, কর বা শুল্ক সম্বন্ধীয় ক্ষমতা :
ফেডারেশনের অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলির কর বা শুল্ক ধার্যের ক্ষমতা থাকবে না। তবে প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যয় নির্বাহের জন্য অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রীয় রাজস্বের একটি অংশ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের প্রাপ্য হবে। অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলির সবরকম করের শতকরা একই হারে আদায়কৃত অংশ নিয়ে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের তহবিল গঠিত হবে।

৫. বৈদেশিক বাণিজ্য বিষয়ক ক্ষমতা :

(ক) ফেডারেশনের অন্তর্ভুক্ত প্রতিটি অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রের বহির্বাণিজ্যের পৃথক হিসাব রক্ষা করতে হবে।

(খ) বহির্বাণিজ্যের মাধ্যমে অর্জিত বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলির এক্তিয়ারাধীন থাকবে।

(গ) কেন্দ্রের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় বৈদেশিক মুদ্রার চাহিদা সমান হারে অথবা সর্বসম্মত কোনো হারে অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলিই মিটাবে।

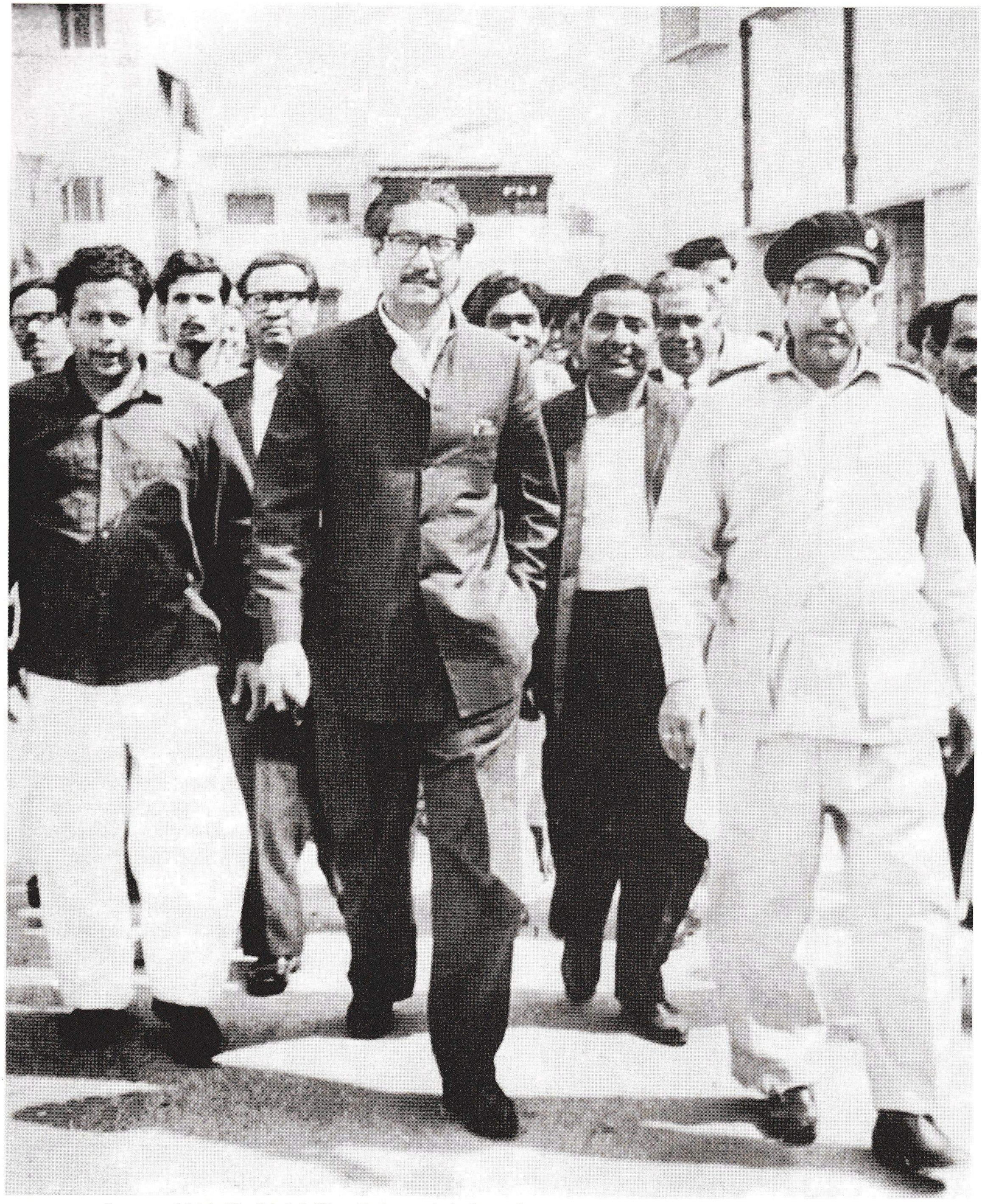
(ঘ) অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলির মধ্যে দেশজ দ্রব্যাদি চলাচলের ক্ষেত্রে শুল্ক বা কর জাতীয় কোনো বাধানিষেধ থাকবে না।

(ঙ) শাসনতন্ত্রে অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলিকে বিদেশে নিজ নিজ বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিনিধি প্রেরণ এবং স্ব-স্বার্থে বাণিজ্যিক চুক্তি সম্পাদনের ক্ষমতা দিতে হবে।

৬. আঞ্চলিক সেনাবাহিনী গঠনের ক্ষমতা :
আঞ্চলিক সংহতি ও শাসনতন্ত্র রক্ষার জন্য শাসনতন্ত্রে অঙ্গরাষ্ট্রগুলিকে স্বীয় কর্তৃত্বাধীনে আধা-সামরিক বা আঞ্চলিক সেনাবাহিনী গঠন ও রাখার ক্ষমতা দিতে হবে।

above : 1969. The 11-point of the Students' Action Committee and demand for withdrawal of Agartala Conspiracy Case got combined with 6-point movement. The movement found its momentum throughout the country. Ayub government became afraid of this movement.

below: During the mass-movement of 1969 the artists of Dhaka brought out poster-procession in support of 6-point.



January 1964. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is being taken to court to face the Agartala Case Tribunal.



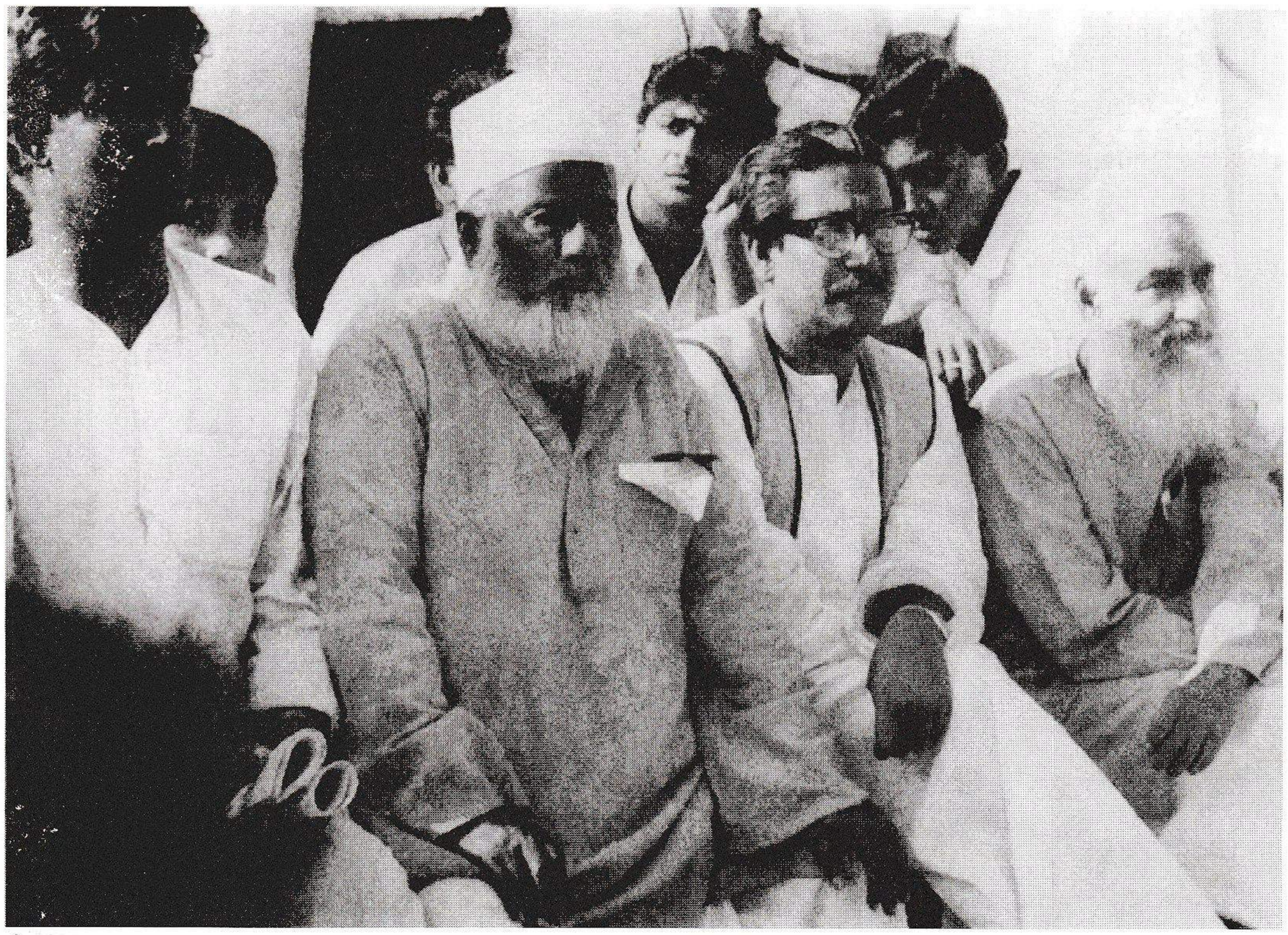
1969. During the mass-uprising mourning procession led by poet Sufia Kamal was brought out in memory of the martyrs. Sheikh Hasina, then a student-leader, was there in the procession (fourth from right).



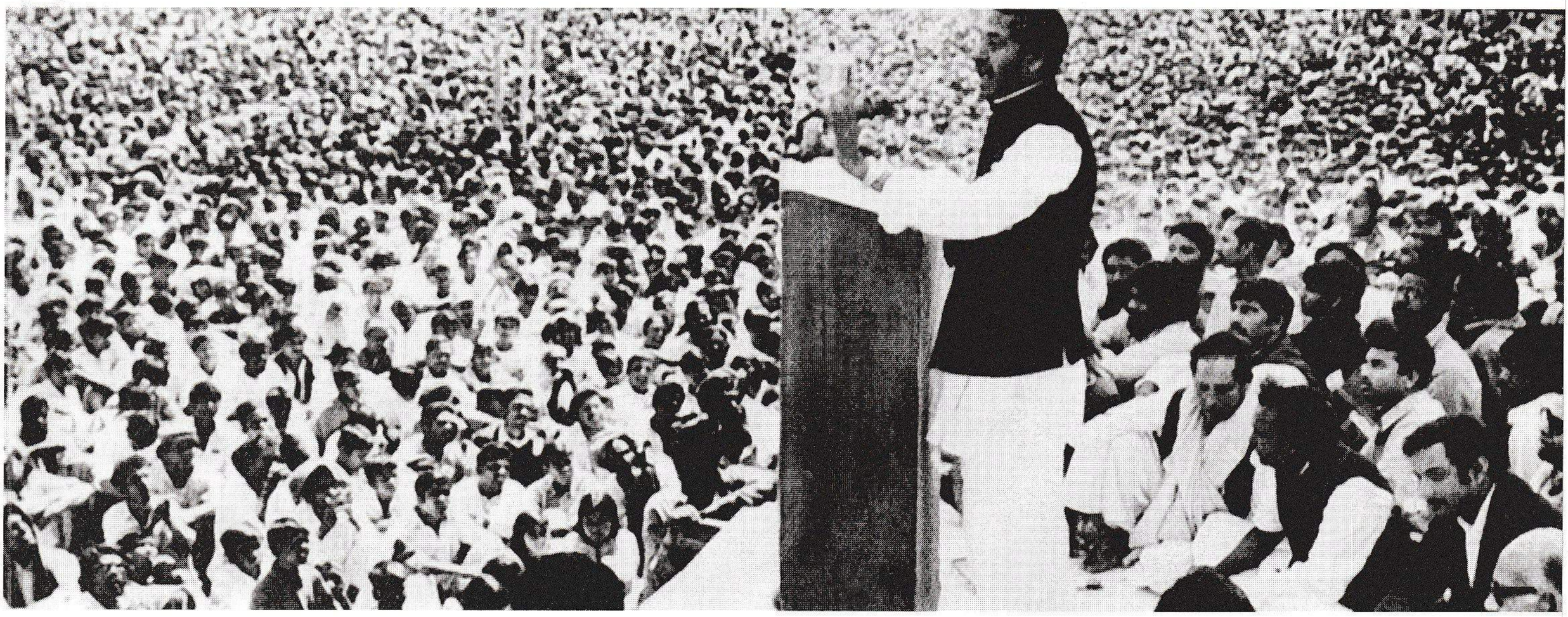
Procession of the mass-movement of 1969.



After his acquittal from the Agartala Conspiracy Case Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from jail on 22 February, 1969.



After being released from Agartala Case Sheikh Mujib came to Shahid Minar. Here in the photograph are (from left to right) Mohiuddin Ahmed and Moulana Bhashani and in the right Moulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish.



February 23, 1969. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was given the tititle of Bongobondhu at the then Race Course ground (Presently Suhrawardy Udyan) by the Central Students' Action Committee.

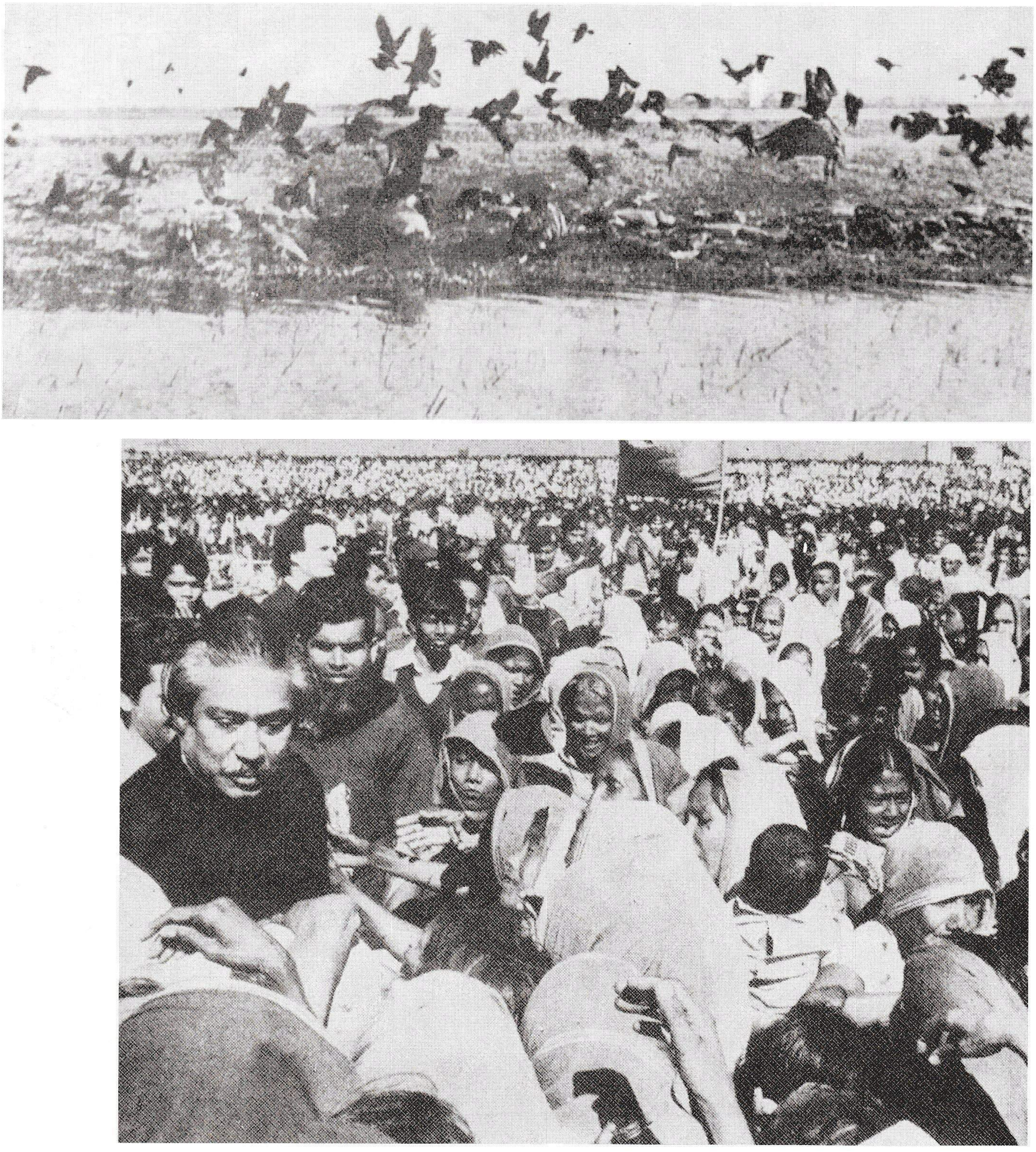


March 9, 1969. Bongobondhu, lost in deep thought before he went to Rawalpindi to attend the Round Table Talk convened by Ayub Khan.

10 March 1969. Ayub Khan's Round Table Talk in Rawalpindi of West Pakistan.



1970. As soon as the preparations for general election began people from all walks of life extended their help.



November 12, 1970. Severe cyclonic storm hit all the coastal areas including Chittagong, Bhola, Barisal, Patuakhali, Noakhali, Khulna and offshove islands. Lakhs of People and cattle were washed away. Bongobondhu cancelled his election campaign and rushed to the cyclone-hit areas. The then Pakistan government did say nothing about the affected people, neither they showed any sympathy nor gave any help. Bongobondhu was much aggrieved at that. He condemned the indifference of the rulers and voiced his protest. At the same time he appealed to the world community for sending relief.



December 7, 1970. Awami League won a landslide victory in the general election. Bongobondhu waving his hands to congratulate the people from the foreground of his Dhanmondi Road 32 residence.

1970. After winning 167 out of 169 National Assembly seats and 305 out of 310 Provincial Assembly seats Bongobondhu with the Awami League Leaders.



February, 1971. In the assemblage of newly elected MNAs and MPs of National and Provincial Assembly respectively. Bongobondhu and other leaders are offering prayers and praying for absolution of the martyrs' souls who sacrificed their lives in the movement for achieving self-right.

March 1, 1971. After Yahya Khan announced the postponement of National Assembly session for indefinite period, the whole of East Pakistan thundered into protest and the Bengalis did burst in anger.

February 15, 1971. `Joi Bangla Bahini' gave guard of honour to Bongobondhu by raising a new flag having a yellow-coloured map of Bangladesh on the red sun amidst a green background.



March 7, 1971. Lakhs of people came from near and remote villages and towns of the then East Pakistan and assembled at Romna Race Course (presently Suhrawardy Udyan). Their beloved leader Sheikh Mujib would tell them the tale of independence. We are ready to offer our lives to free our country from the hands of the autocratic Pakistan army. Now no other point ... only one point and that one is freedom–independence. Bongobondhu announced splendidly in his thunder-like voice… We have shed our blood and more shall we shed, we shall free our people Inshaallah.

The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation.
The struggle this time is the struggle for independence. Joi Bangla.







March 23, 1971. Bongobondhu raised the flag of independent Bangladesh before the enthusiastic people who assembled at his residence at Dhanmondi 32.



March 23 1971. Bongobondhu waving his hand to the people from the balcony of his Dhanmondi 32 residence.





Pakistan army made their sudden heinous attack on the innocent unarmed common Bengalis on 25th March night. They attacked Dhaka University, Peelkhana, Rajarbag Police Headquarter and began their genocide. They killed thousands of students, teachers and other Bengali people.

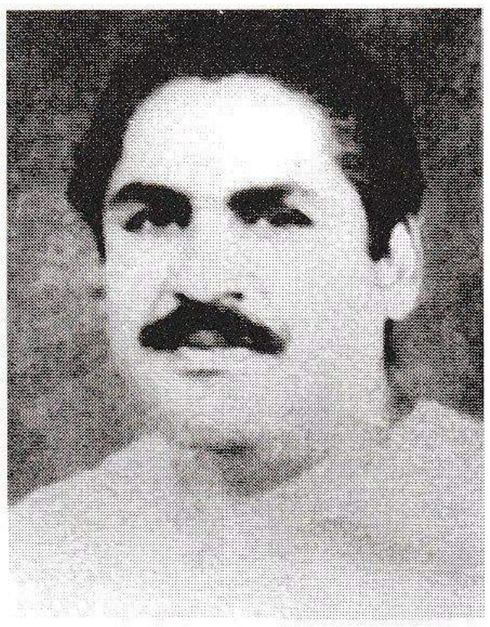
On 25th March night 1971 at 12-20 a.m. just before he was arrested by the soldiers of the autocratic rulers of Pakistan Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made the declaration of independence. This declaration was sent to all over the then East Pakistan at that moment and later also through wireless, telephone and telegram.

Declaration of Independence

"This may be my last message; from today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved."



1971, 25th March night 1:30 am. The autocratic rulers of Pakistan arrested Bongobondhu from his Dhanmondi-32 residence. Later he was flown to the then West Pakistan.

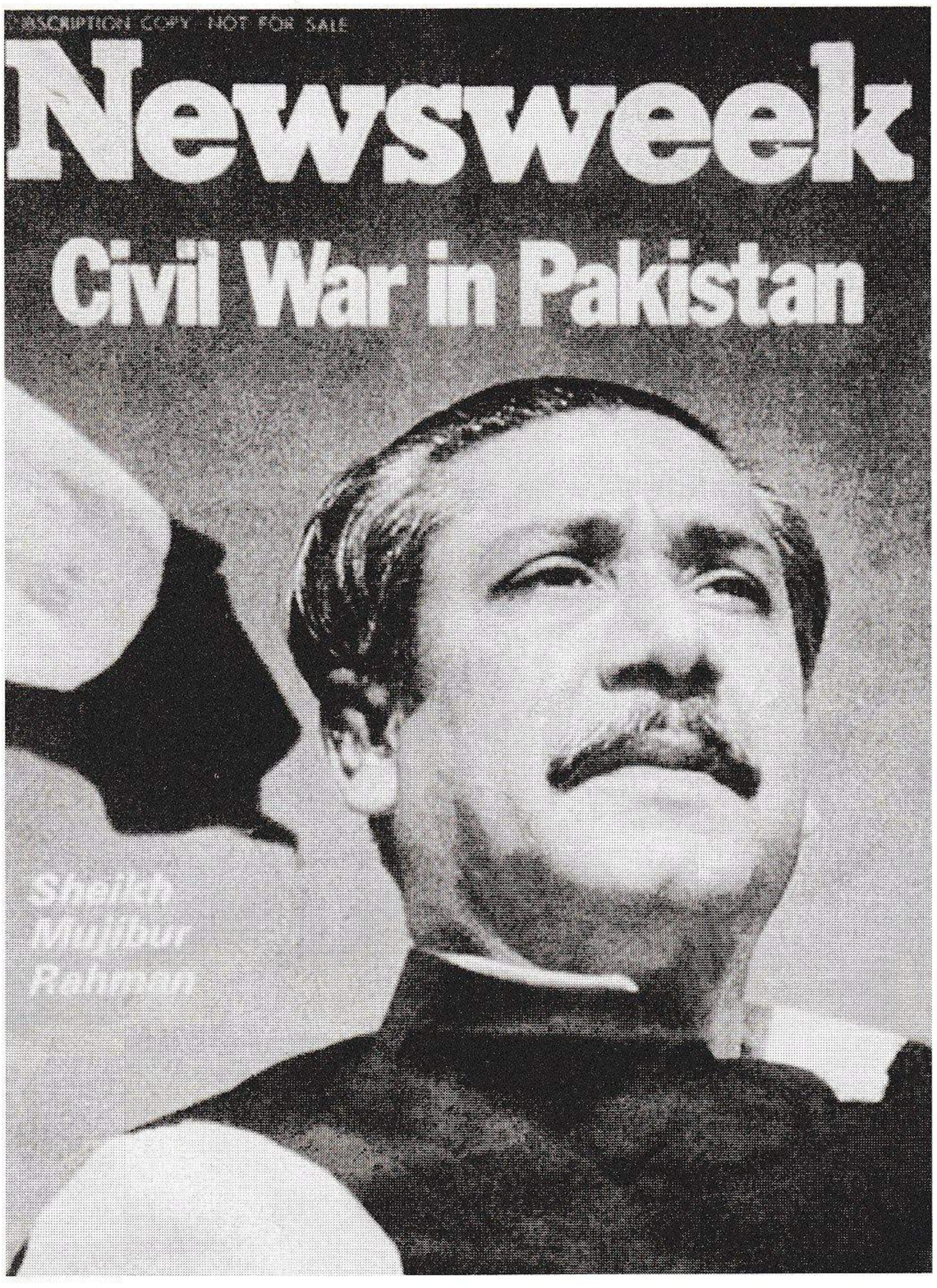


Md. Abdul Hannan

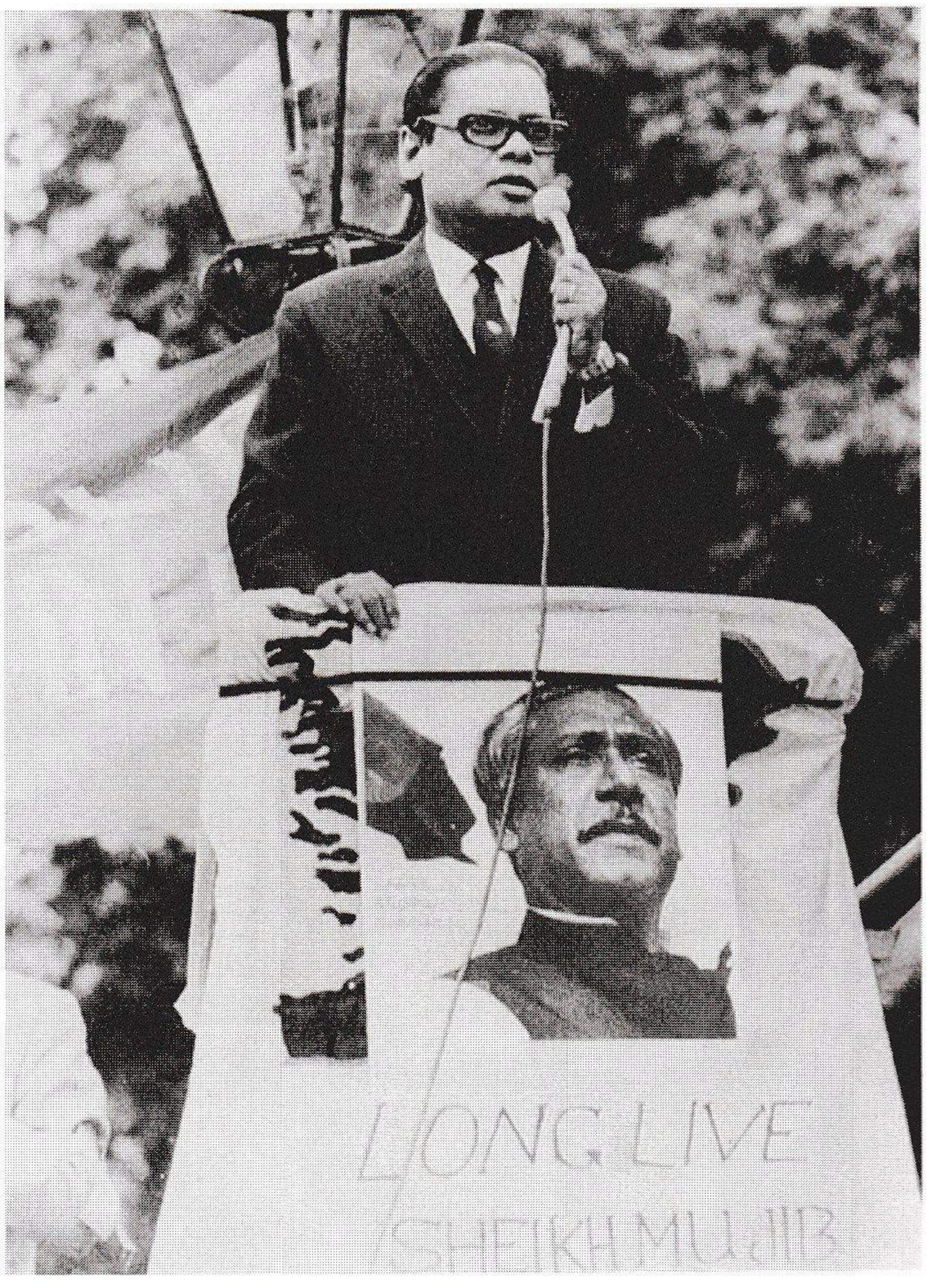


Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, Chittagong

The message containing the announcement of independence by Bongobondhu was first read out by Md. Abdul Hannan from temporary Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra on 26 March and after that it was broadcasted again and again.



April 5, 1971. Newsweek published Bongobondhu's picture and some details about the independence of Bangladesh giving much importance.



April 1971. In a meeting in London Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury made an appeal to the world to support Bangladesh's war of liberation and release of Bongobondhu.

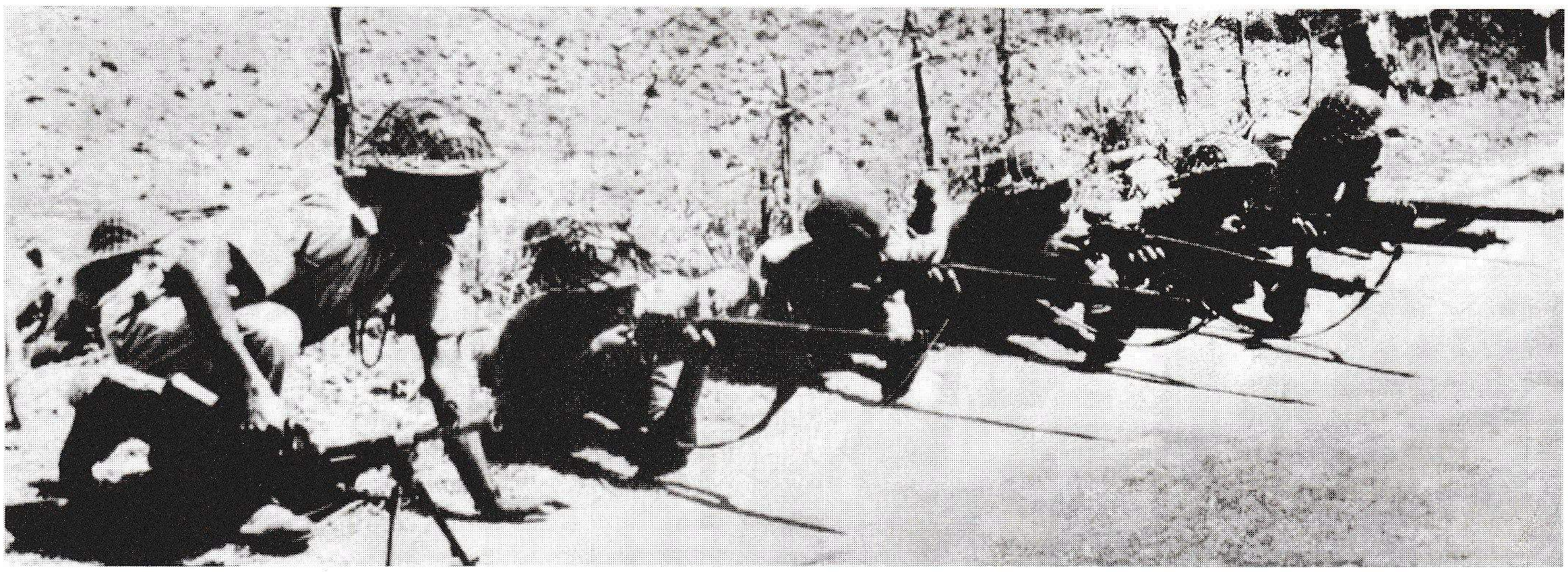


April 17, 1971. Temporary Govt. of Bangladesh in exile was formed at Baidyanathtala of Meherpur. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was made the President (then in a Pakistani jail). In his absence Syed Nazrul Islam was made the acting President. Tajuddin Ahmed became the Prime Minister and Col. Ataul Gani Osmani became the Army Chief. Other ministers were Capt. Monsur Ali, A H M Qamruzzaman and Khandakar Mushtaq Ahmed. Later Mushtaq was condemned by people for his shrewd politics.

'Turn every house into a fortress; resist the enemy with everything you have'– responding to this call of Bongobondhu (7 March 1971) people all over Bangladesh took part in the liberation war. Aiming at freeing the country from the invaders people irrespective of caste, creed and gender took up arms and vowed that without liberating the motherland they would not come back to home.

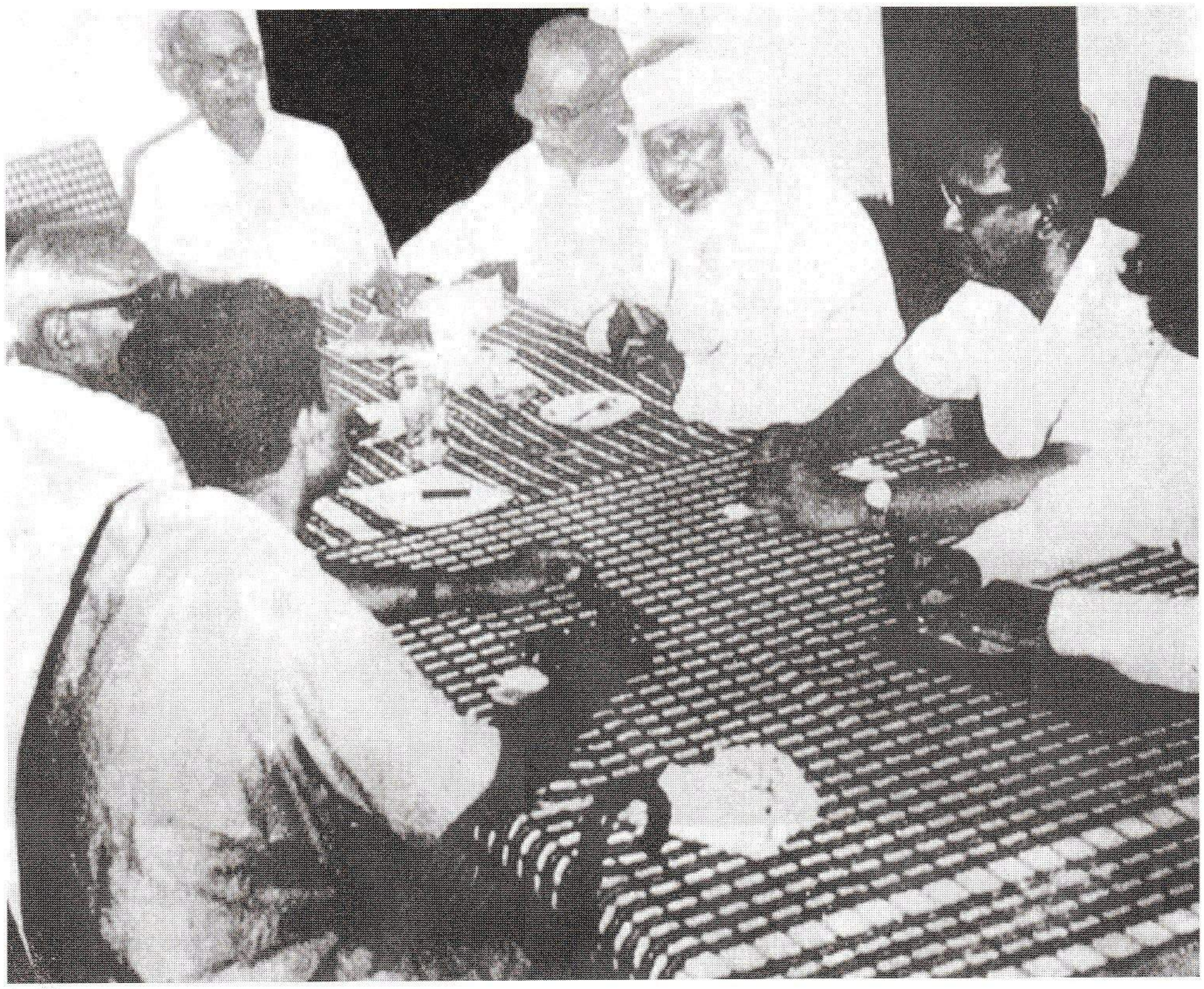








Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam and behind him Col. (later General) MAG Osmany taking guard of honour of the trained freedom fighters at Mujibnagar.



Under the leadership of Moulana Bhashani, Moni Singh, Mozaffar Ahmed, Monoranjan Dhar, Tajuddin Ahmed and others used to advise the Mujibnagar Government.



December 16,1971. The indomitable brave sons of Bangladesh have come back to their liberated homeland. Their eyes and faces reflect the spirit and jubilation of victory.



December 14, 1971. The defeated Pakistani butchers arranged brutal killing of the writers, artists, journalists, engineers and teachers of this country by their associate Al-badrs and Rajakars. They imposed curfew for two days and two nights and under the cover of this curfew they picked the intellectuals from their houses. Their aim was to make Bangladesh a country bereft of intellect.





December 16, 1971. After nine months of fierce bloody war Pakistan army surrendered. Pakistan army's chief in Bangladesh Gen. Niazi signing the document of surrender in presence of the chief of the Combined Forces Gen. Aurora. On behalf of the Liberation Army Second Commanding Officer A K Khandakar was present there.



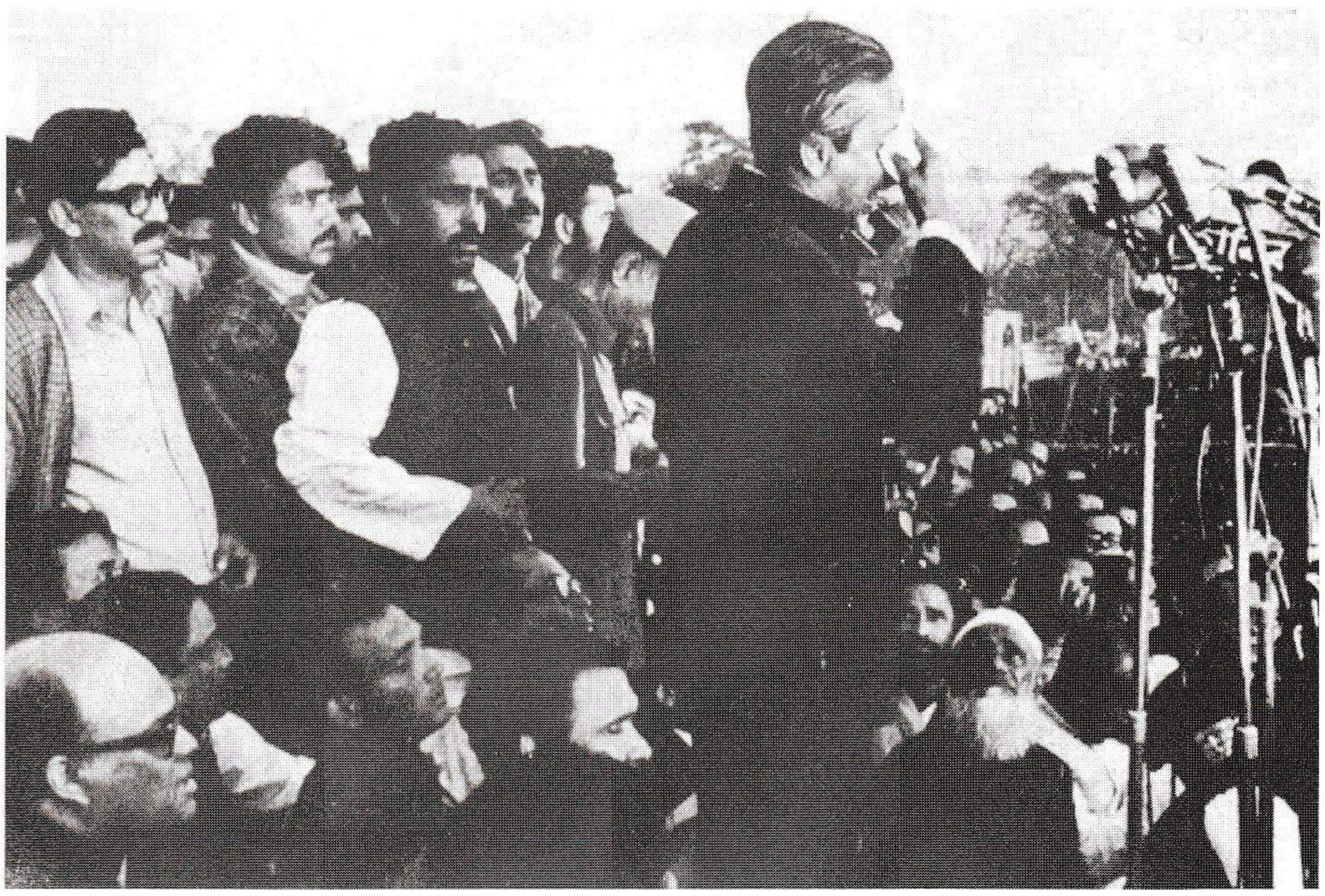
December 16, 1971. Lakhs of people came out in the streets of Dhaka to welcome the members of the Combined Forces of Bangladesh and India.



January 9, 1972. Just after his release from the Pakistani Jail Bongobondhu was sent to London. British Prime Minister Edward Heath congratulated and welcomed him there.



January 10, 1972. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came back to his dreamland –free and liberated Bangladesh. In the Ramna Race Course ground lakhs of people received him with their warmth of hearts.



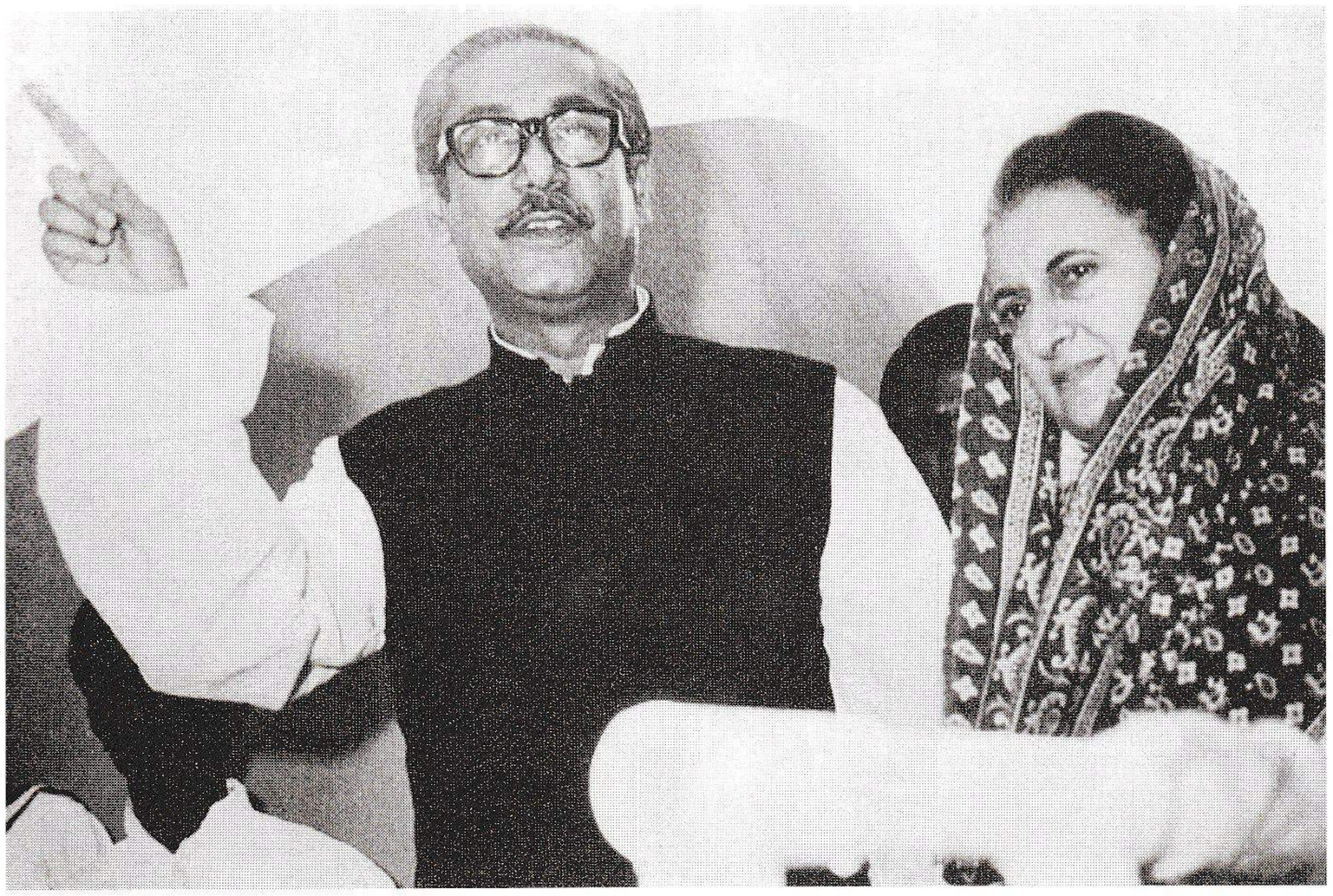
January 10, 1972. Independence of Bangladesh was achieved at the cost 30 lakh lives and indignity of lakhs of mothers and sisters. Bongobondhu burst into tears while speaking about the struggle and sacrifices of his Golden Bengal.



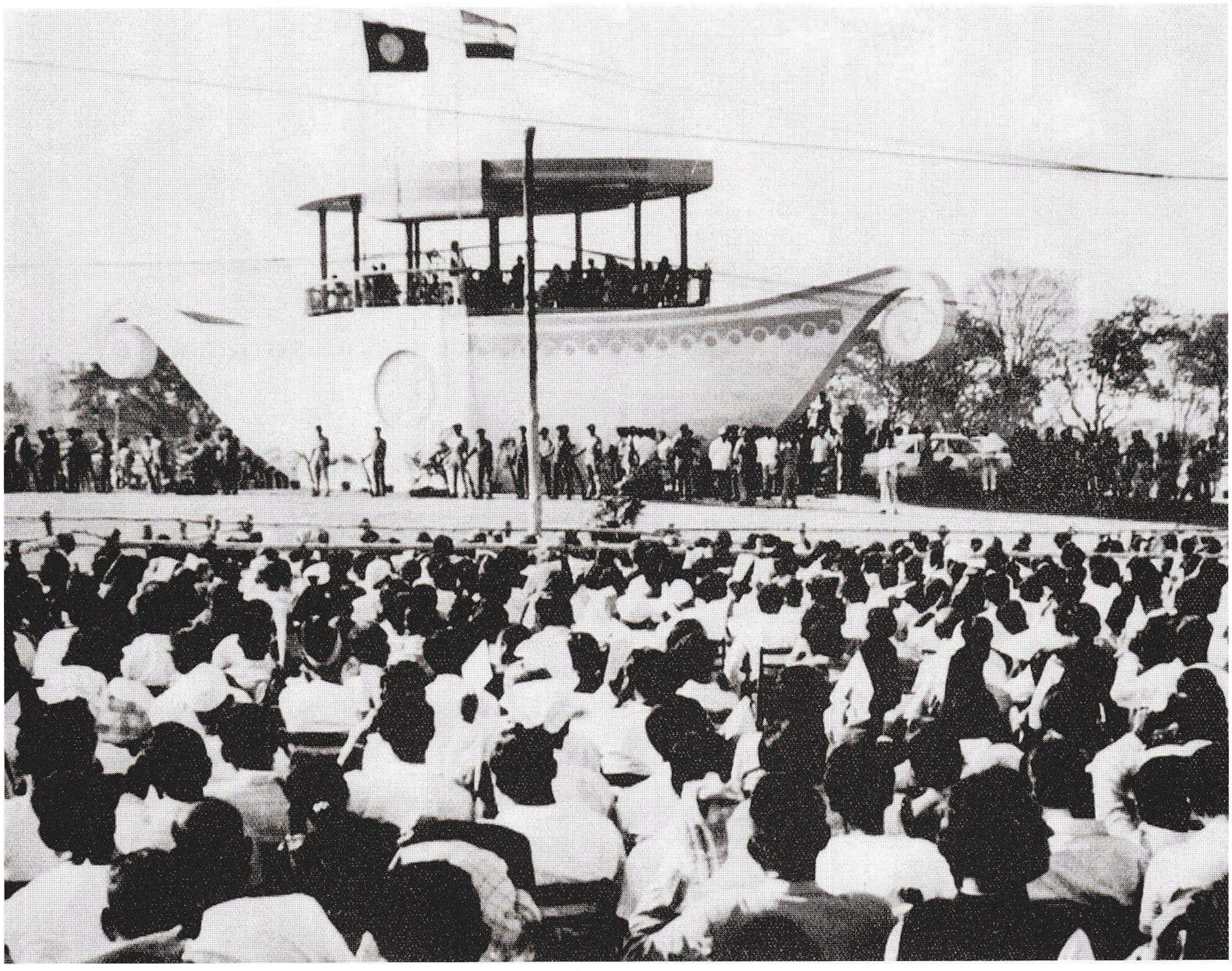
above : January 12, 1972. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took oath as the Prime Minister of independent Bangladesh.



below : December 16, 1972. The constitution of Bangladesh came into effect. Bongobondhu banned gambling by horse-race in Race Course ground. The ground was renamed as Suhrawardy Udyan to honour the memory of great political leader Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy. Inauguration of Udyan was done by sowing the sapling of a coconut tree.



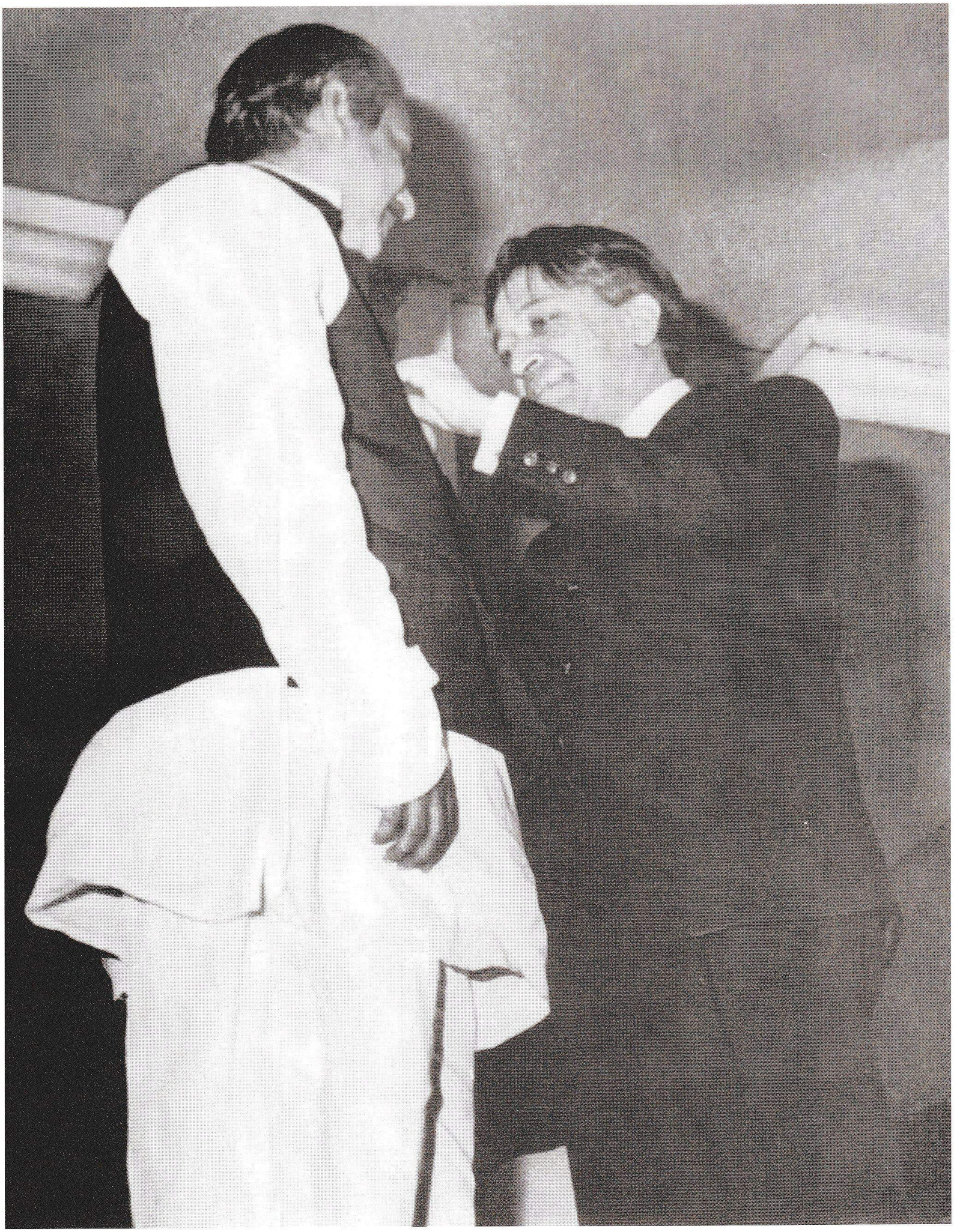
March 29, 1972. Friendship Treaty for 25 years signed in Dhaka between Bangladesh and India.



1972. 'Indira Moncha', a special stage designed like a boat was made to accord rousing reception to India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Its designer was artist Nitun Kundu. The Indian Government provided all sorts of help to Bangladesh during the nine months of Liberation War. They provided shelter and food for one crore refugees and also gave training and arms to the freedom fighters. The Indian soldiers fought side by side with the freedom fighters for Bangladesh's liberation.



March 1972. Bongobondhu bidding farewell to Indian Premier Indira Gandhi after her visit to Bangladesh.



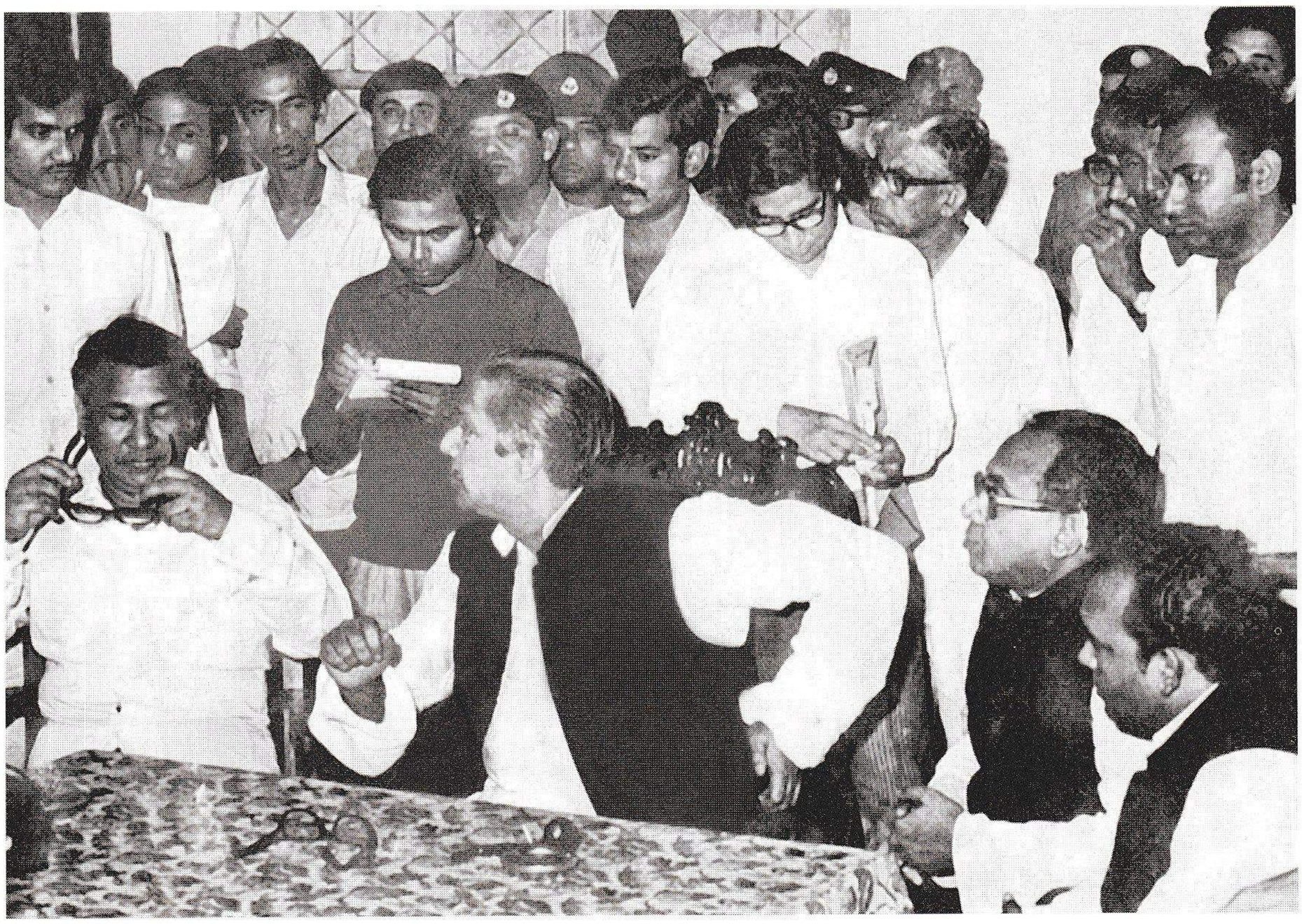
May 23, 1973. Secretary General of World Peace Council Ramesh Chandra decorating Bongobondhu with the Julio Curie Peace Medal. After his 23 years' struggle and suffering in jail and outside he had achieved on independent Bangladesh for seventy five million people.

above : May 14, 1972. Rebel Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was brought to Dhaka. Bongobondhu received him warm-heartedly.

below : Bongobondhu with poet Jasim Uddin.



The family members and near and dear ones of the martyrs killed by Al-Badrs and Razakars during Liberation War came to meet Bongobondhu with their demand for trial of the killers.



August 4, 1972. Sylhet was hit by severe flood. Bongobondhu discussing with Tajuddin Ahmed, Abdus Samad Azad and Tofael Ahmed regarding relief operations there. Behind them were the media-persons are there.

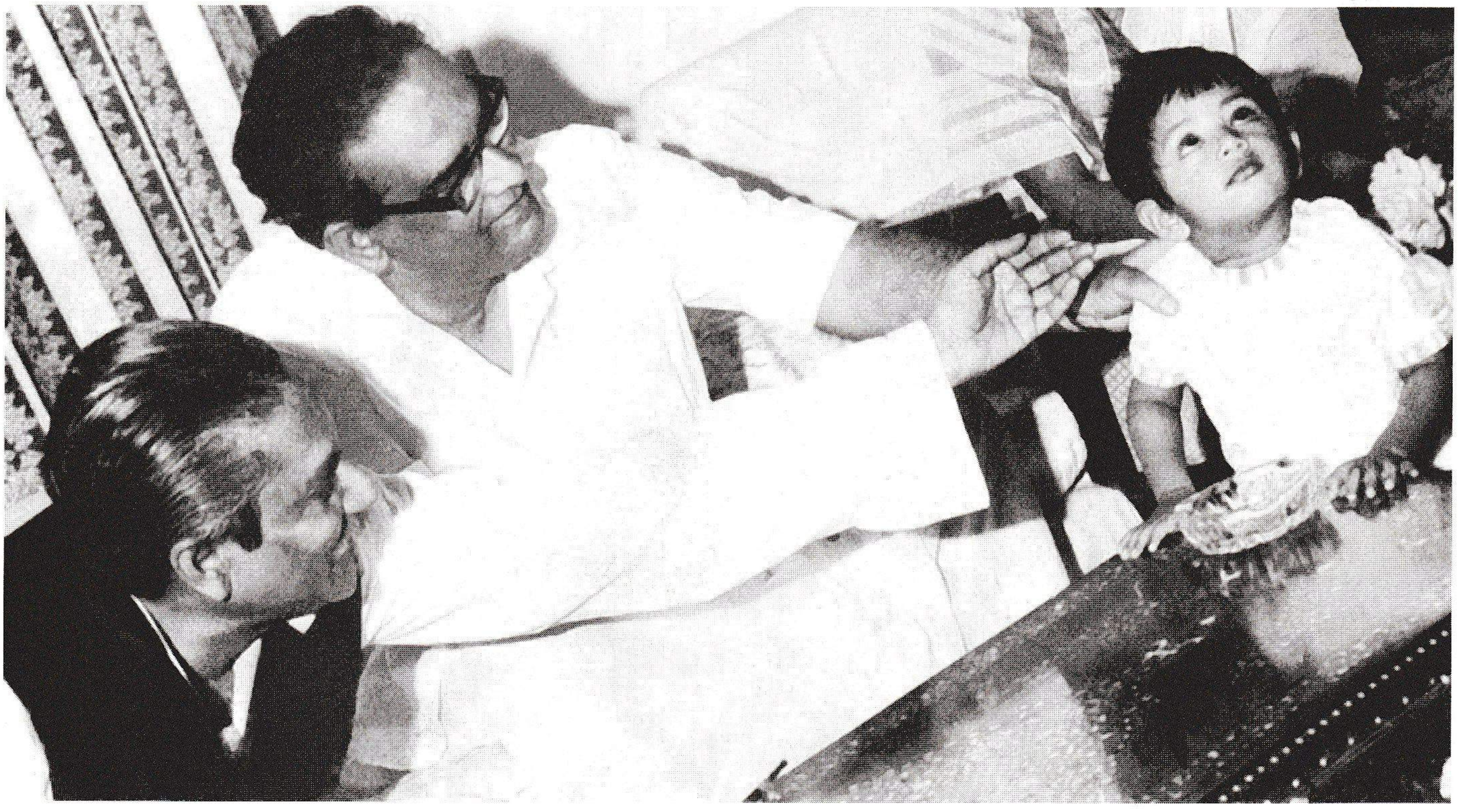


December 14, 1972. Bongobondhu putting his signature on the first constitution of Bangladesh. In pursuance of his earnest will this Constitution was prepared very quickly for the welfare of the people of this newly freed state. The basis of our constitution are the following four principles :

Nationalism
Democracy
Socialism
and
Secularism



The original copy of the Constitution, designed and printed with beautiful artworks, is being handed over to Bongobondhu by Shilpacharya Jainul Abedin, artist Hashem Khan, Law Minister Dr. Kamal Hossain and others related with the artwork and decoration.



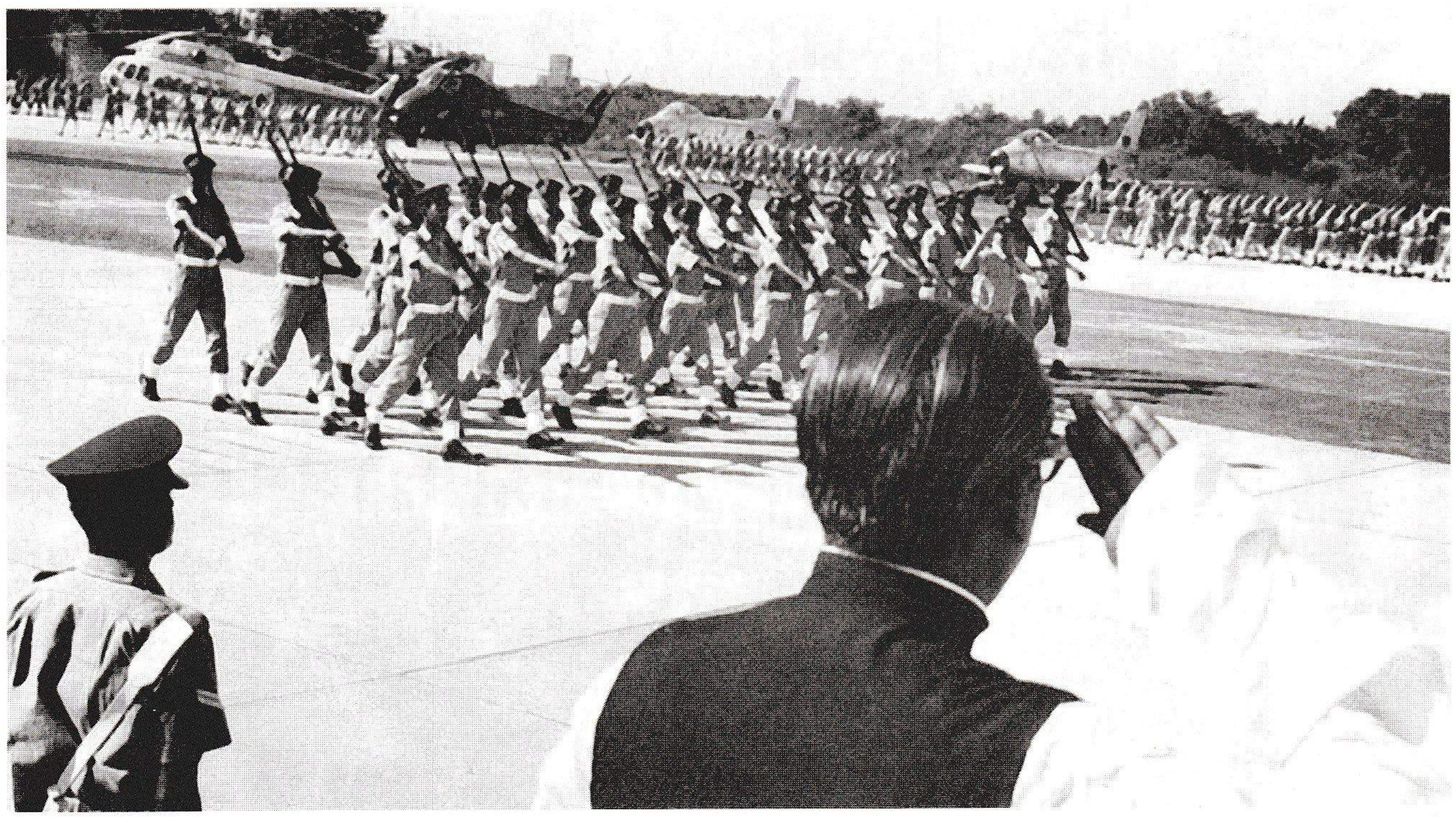
Bongobondhu and his grandson Joy. Famous singer Hemanta Mukhopadhay came to meet Bongobondhu on courtesy-call.

February 1972. Bongobondhu delivering his speech in Kolkata Brigade Ground. Beside him is Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi.





Bongobondhu delivering his speech at Comilla Cantonment. On his extreme right is the then GOC of Comilla Brig. General Ziaur Rahman.



Bongobondhu taking salute of the Air-force.

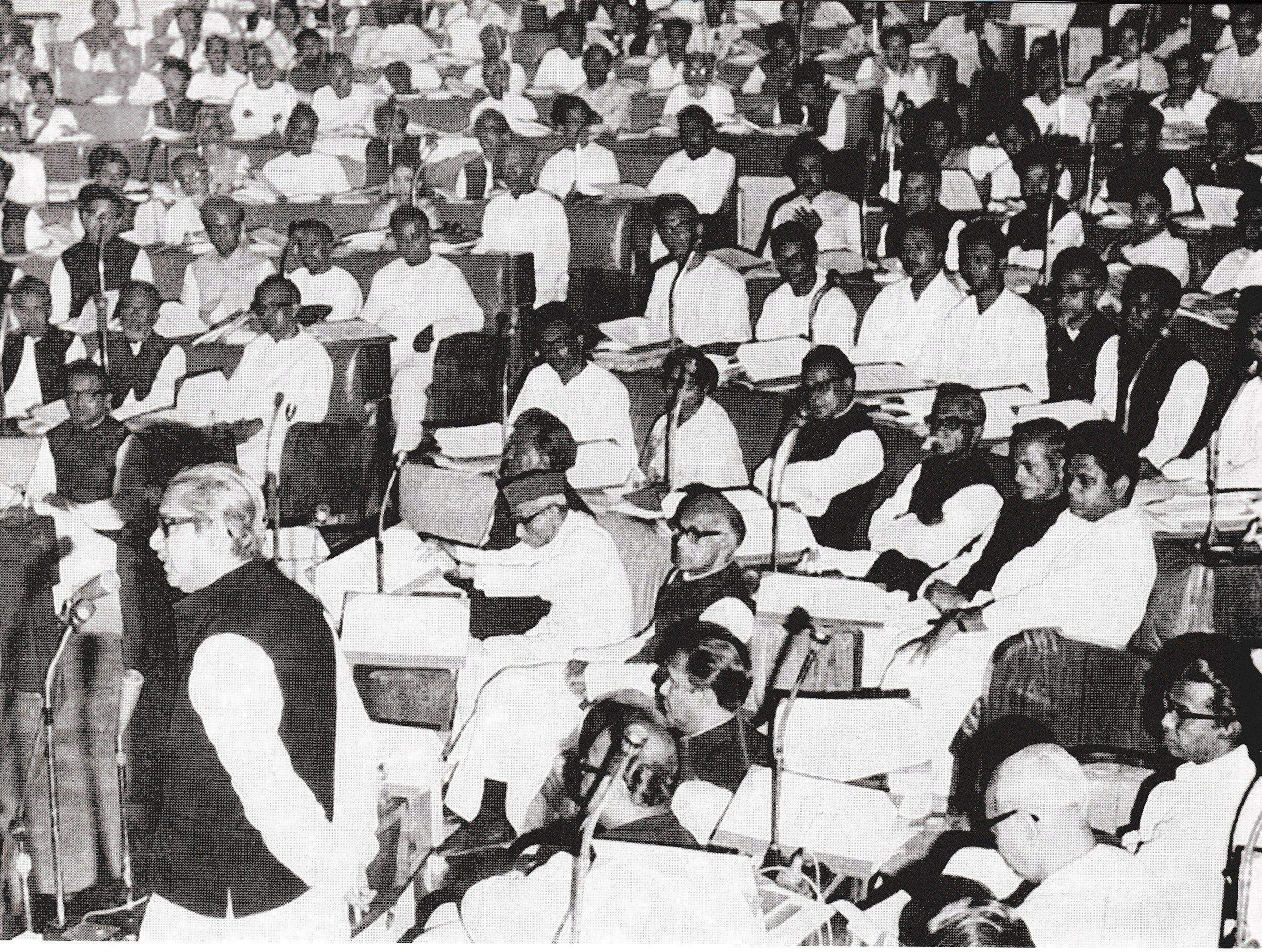
January 1973. On the founding anniversary of Student League in Dhaka Bongobondhu discussing about the responsibilities and duties of students.



Bongobondhu giving instruction to Nurul Islam, the then member of the publicity committee of Awami League, about the posters, festoons, circular notices and other publicity materials related to 1973's election.



1973. Bongobondhu taking oath as Prime Minister with President Abu Sayeed Chowdhury.



1973. Bongobondhu delivering his speech in the National Assembly.



Dr. Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury, accompanied by Tofael Ahmed, handing over the reportr of Services Reorganization Committee to Bongobondhu.



Bongobondhu receiving the report of the Education Commission from Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda.



Father of the Nation Bongobondhu is an exceptional leader among the peace-loving leaders of the world who fought throughout his life for seventy five million Bengalis and realized for them an independent country named Bangladesh.



September 6, 1973. Bongobondhu delivering his speech at the Non-aligned Conference in Algiers.



1973. At the Non-aligned Conference in Algiers with Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are Head of the state of Cambodia Norodom Sihanuk, journalists Obaidul Haque, Toab Khan, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury and others and Foreign Minister Dr. Kamal Hossain.



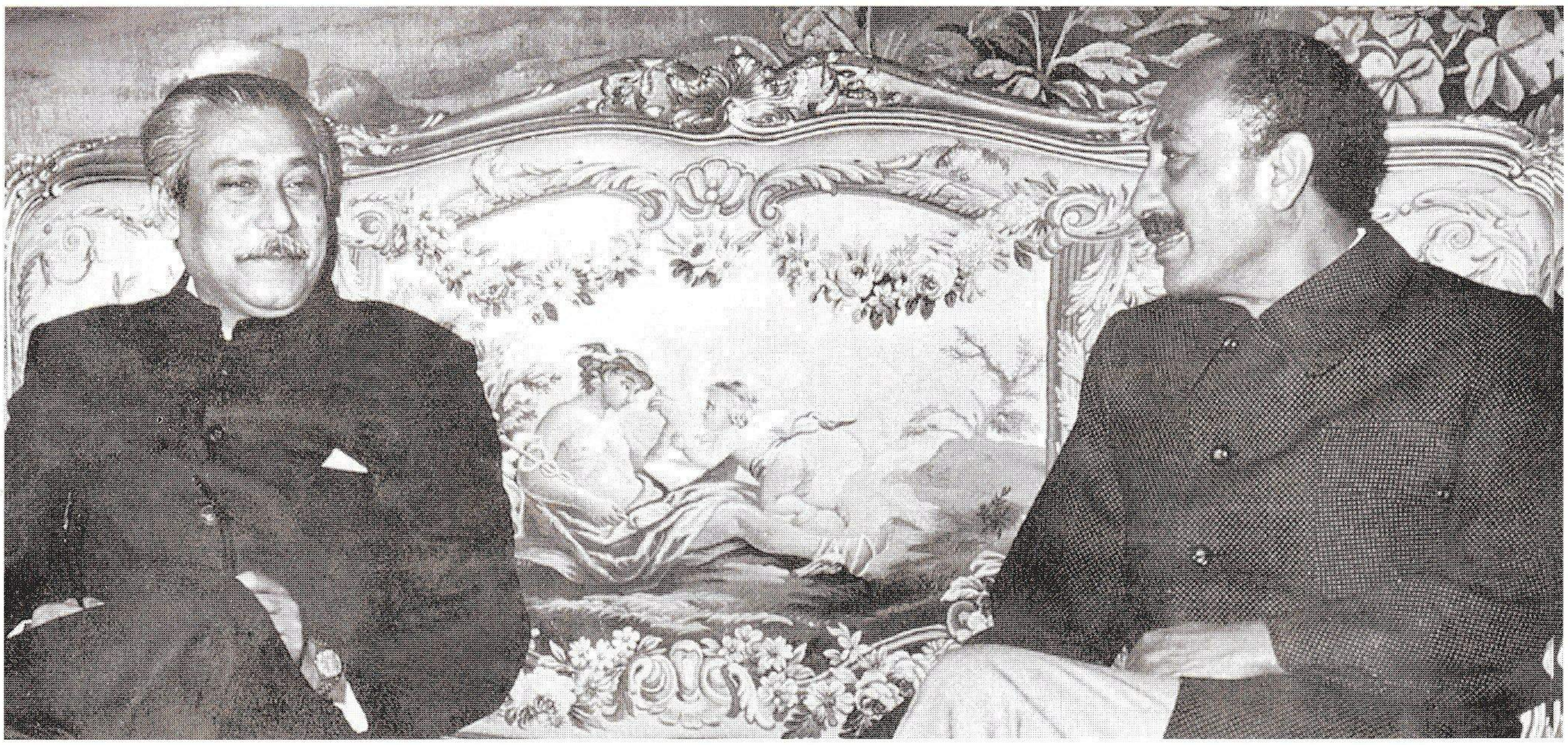


Eminent philosopher, intellectual and diplomat of France Andre Malraux came on a visit to Dhaka at the invitation of Bongobondhu. During the liberation war of nine months Andre Malraux strongly gave support to Bangladesh's War of Liberation and also expressed his will to take part in the war himself.

Editor of Egypt's newspaper Al-ahram Mr. Heikel met Bongobondhu.



Bongobondhu in deep and earnest conversation with the Cuban President Fidel Castro.



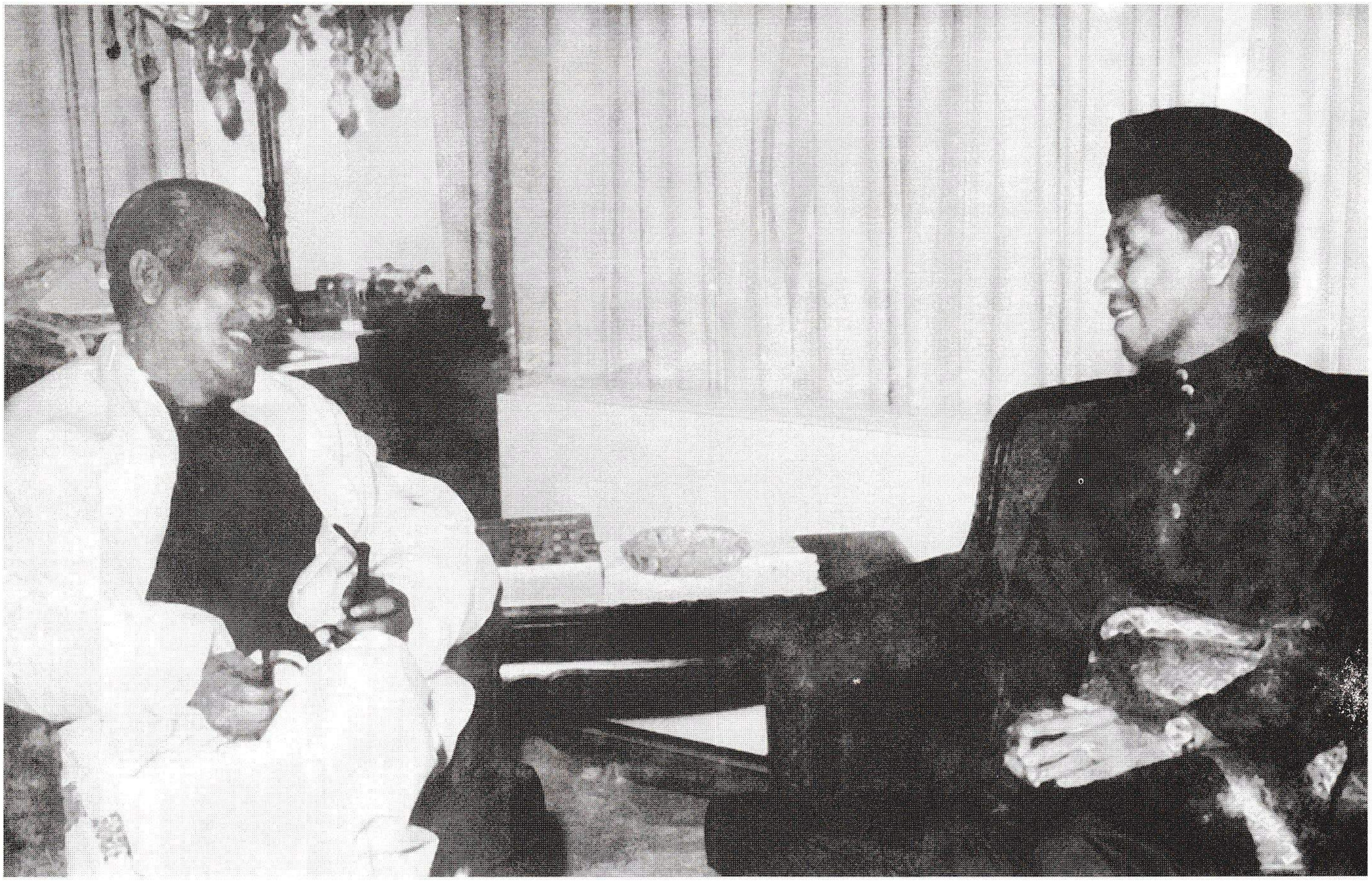
Bongobondhu with the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.



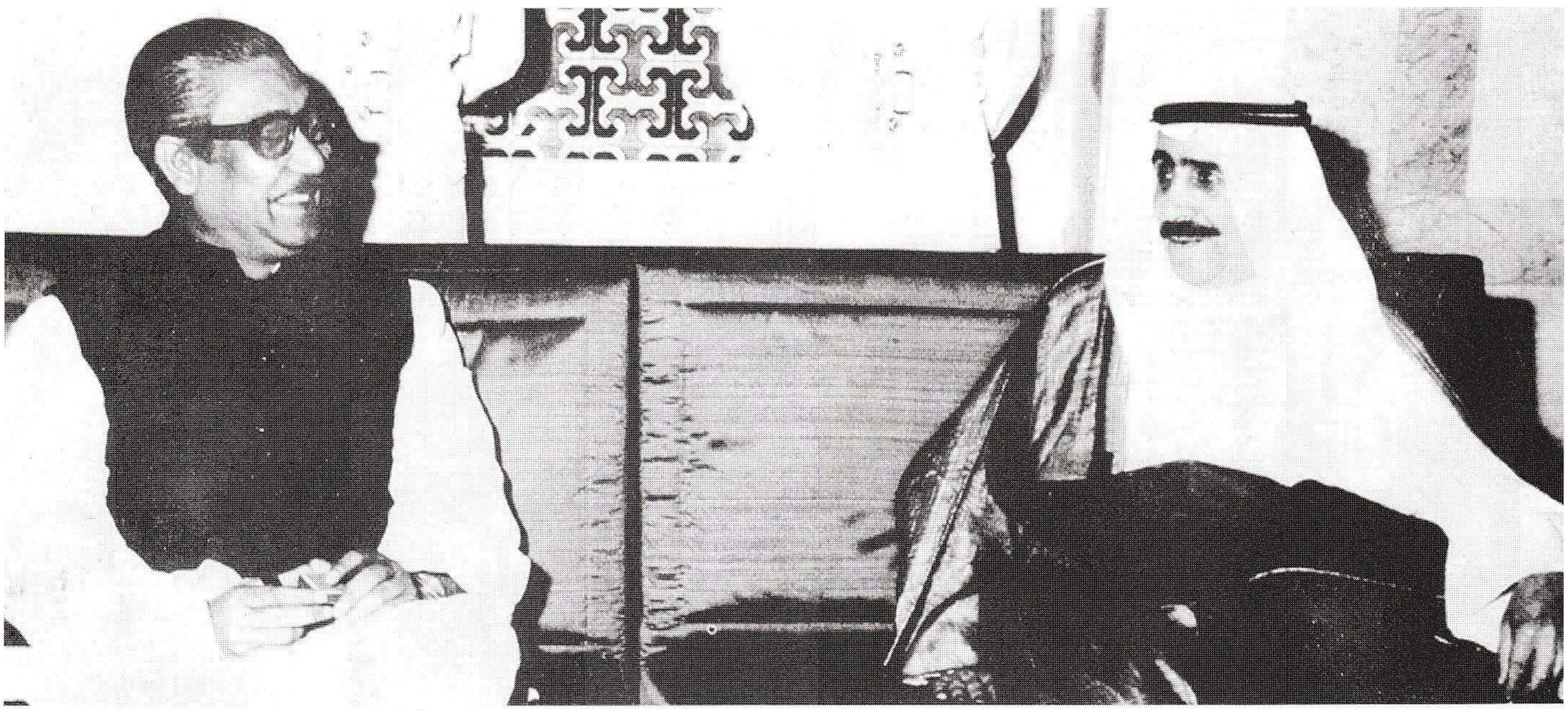
Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi and Bongobondhu.



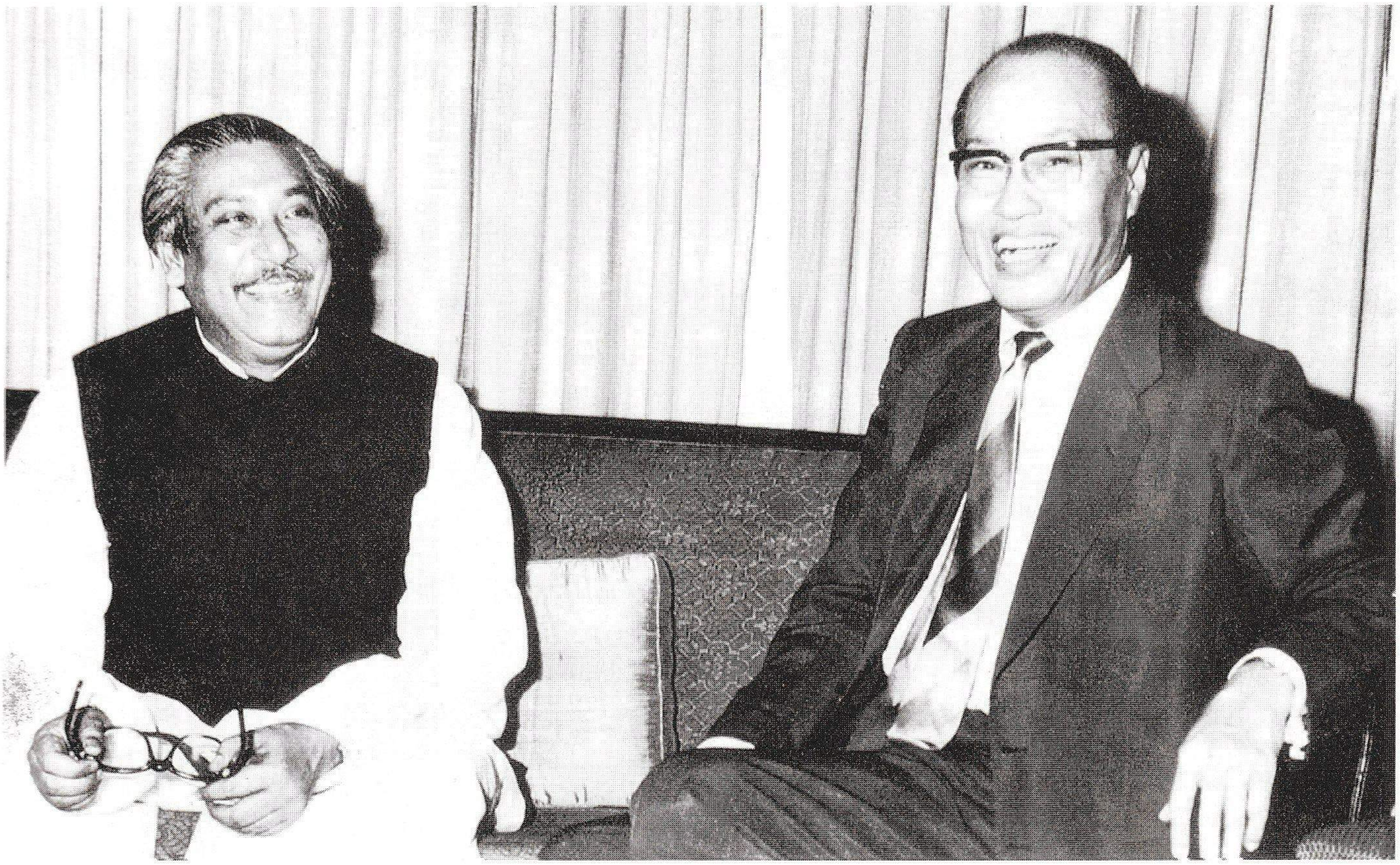
1974. Bongobondhu paid a courtesy visit to White House and met the then American President Gerald Ford.



Malaysia's king Abdul Halim and Bongobondhu.



Bongobondhu and the Amir of Kuwait.



Burmese President Ne Win and Bongobondhu.



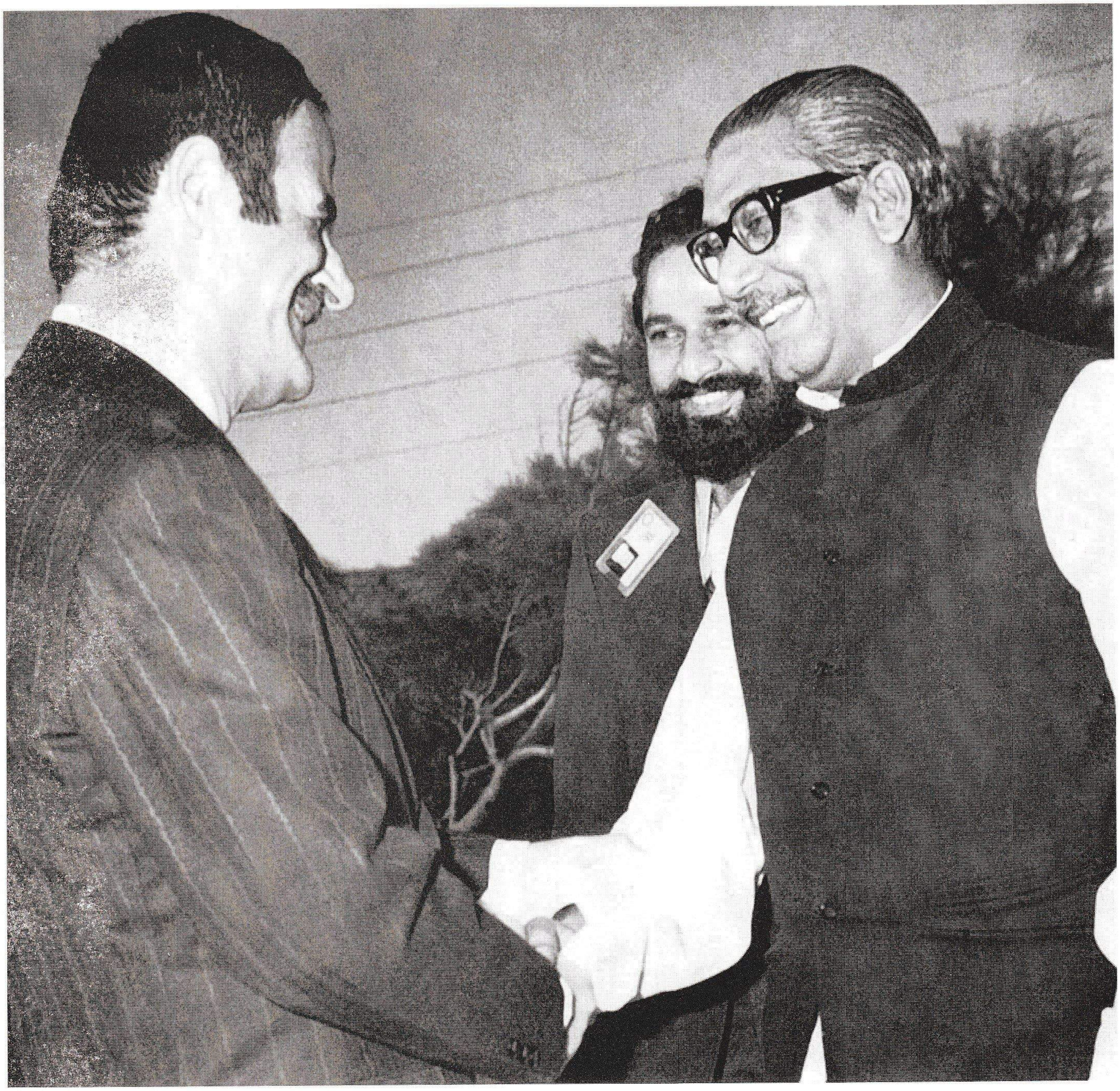
Indonesia's Foreign Minister Dr. Adam Malik met
Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a courtesy-call.



Bongobondhu with king Faisal of Saudi Arabia.



Sultan of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahian engaged in talk with Bongobondhu.



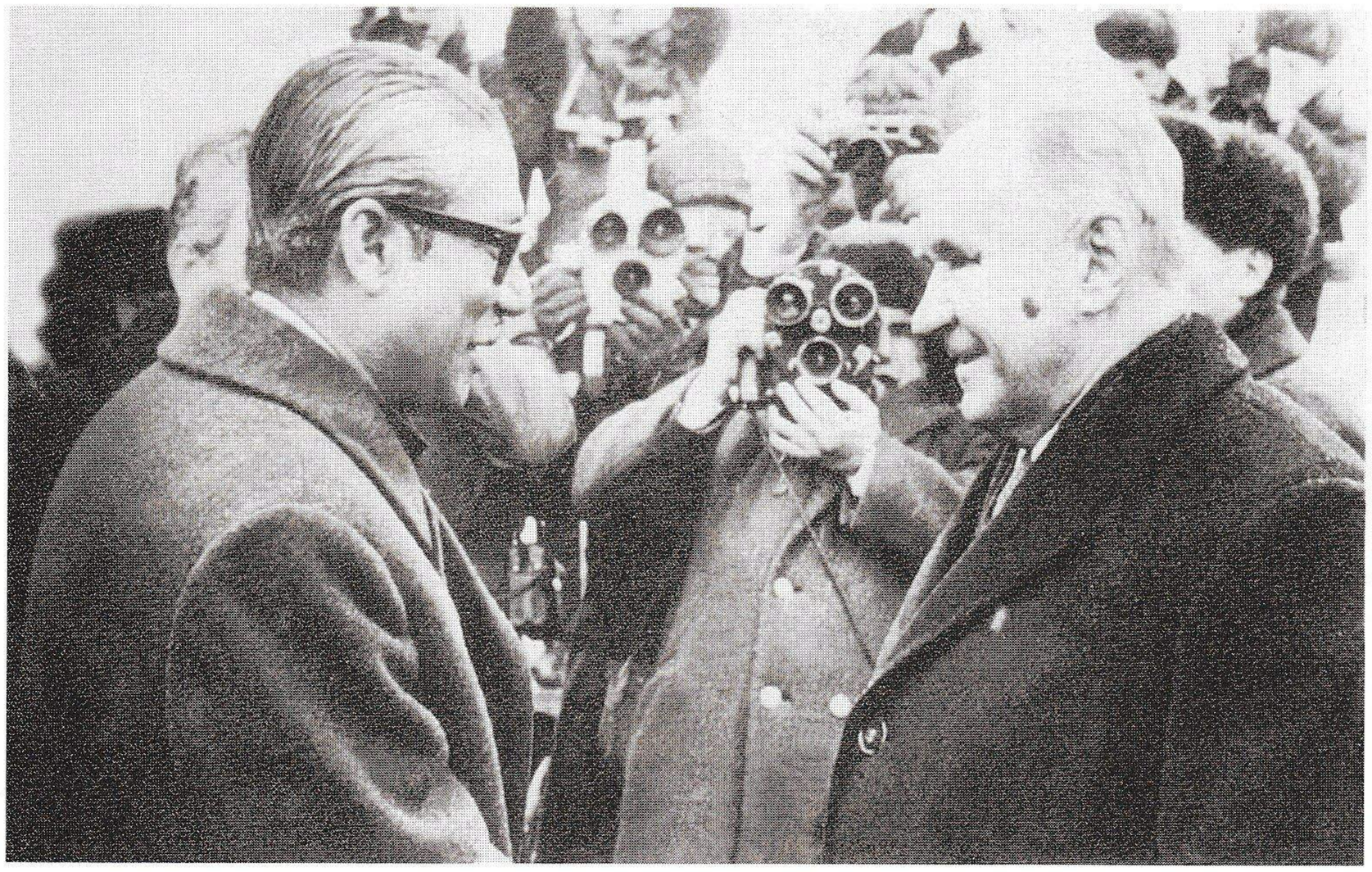
Syria's President Hafiz Al-Asad shaking hands with Bongobondhu. Beside Bongobondhu is Barrister Amirul Islam.



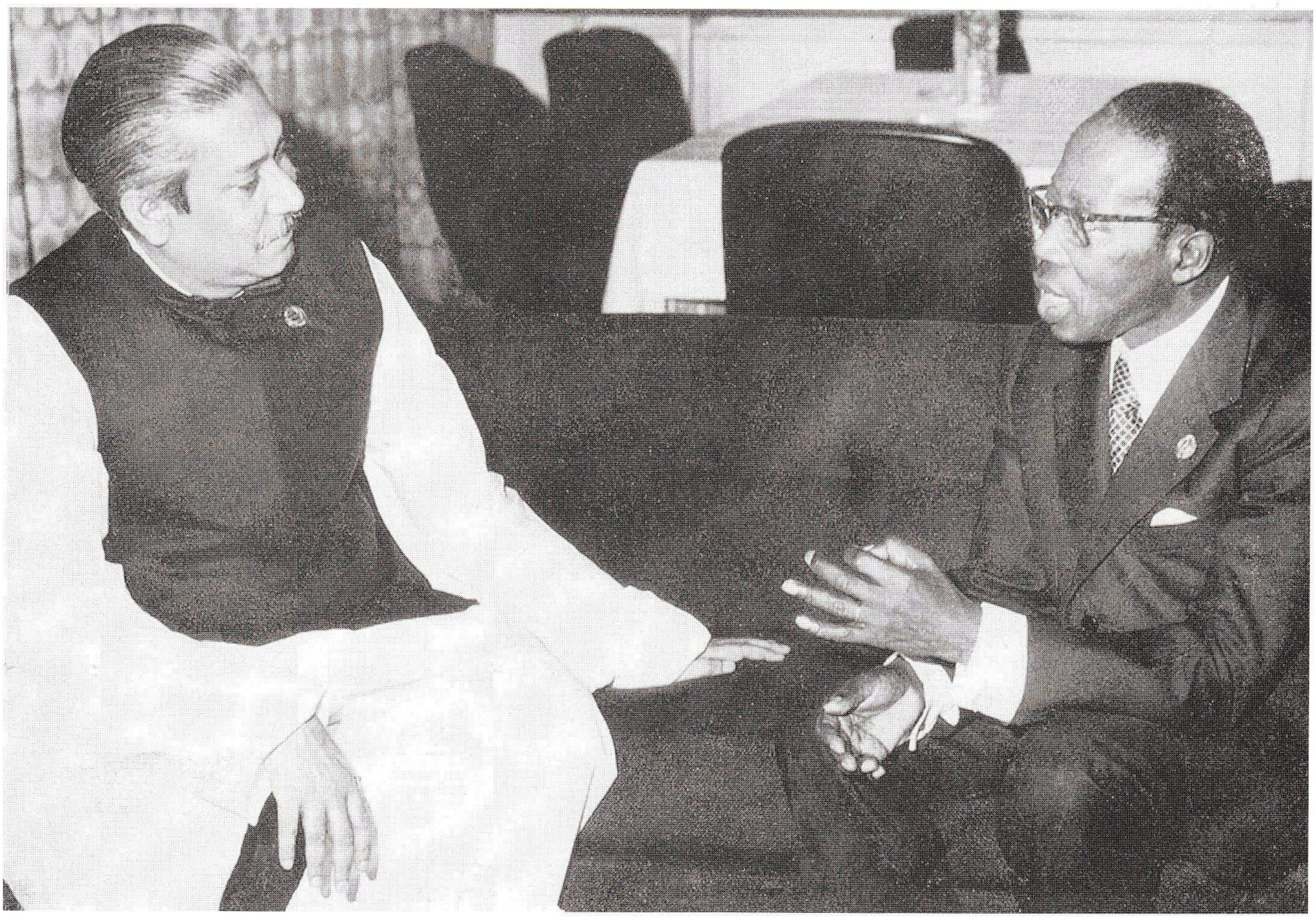
Soviet Leader Breznev had an intimate call with Bongobondhu.



Bangladesh Premier Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his speech before the Soviet communist leaders at Kremlin in Moscow.



February 28, 1972. Soviet Premier Alexy Kosygyn welcomed Bongobondhu to Russia.



President of Senegal Leopold Senghor having discussion with Bongobondhu.

Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of United Nations, engaged in discussion with Bongobondhu.



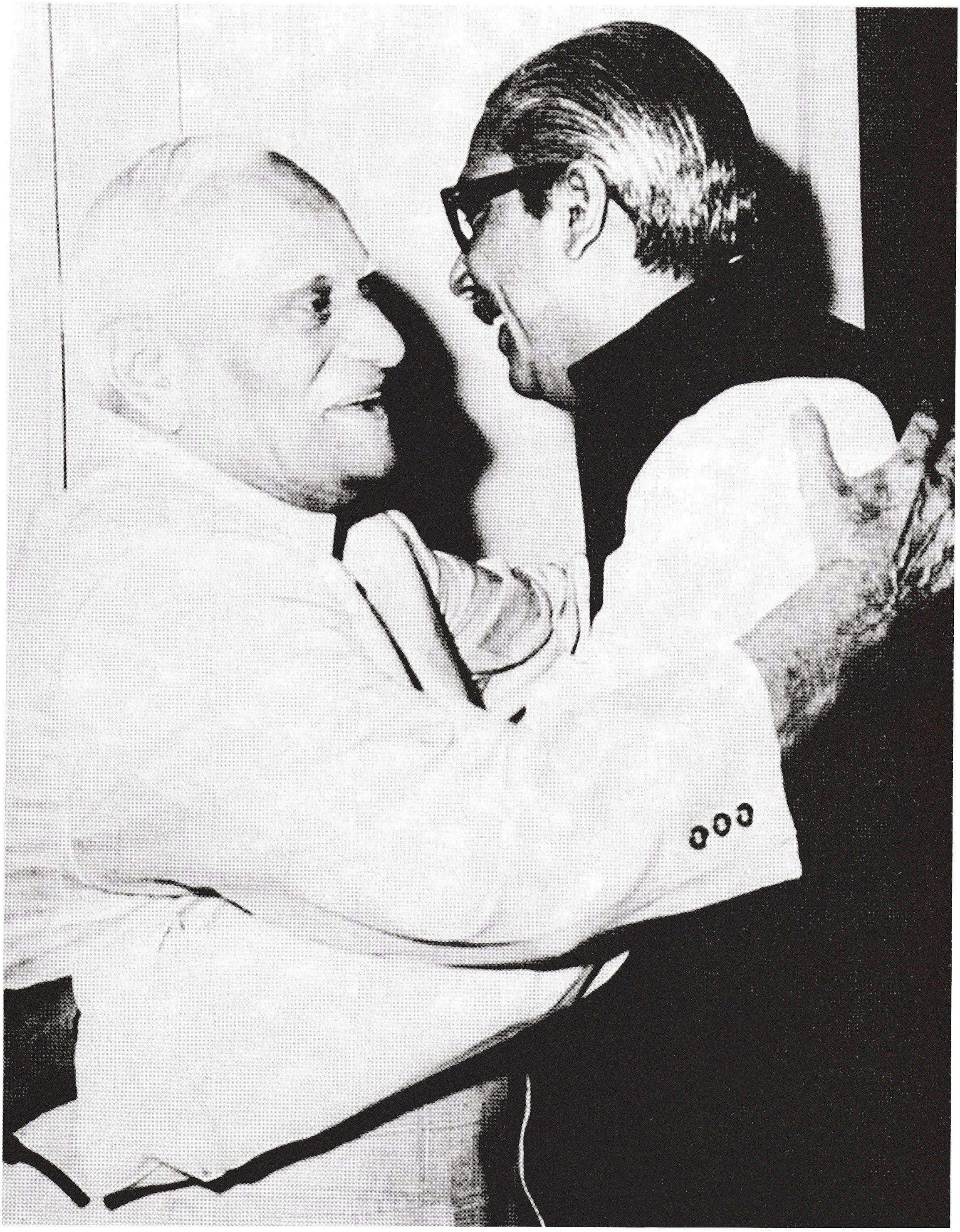
Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan shaking hands with Bongobondhu.



President Marcos of Philippine shaking hands with Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Tofael Ahmed and others were there.



Bongobondhu having discussion with Mr. Keneth Kaundaa, President of Zambia.



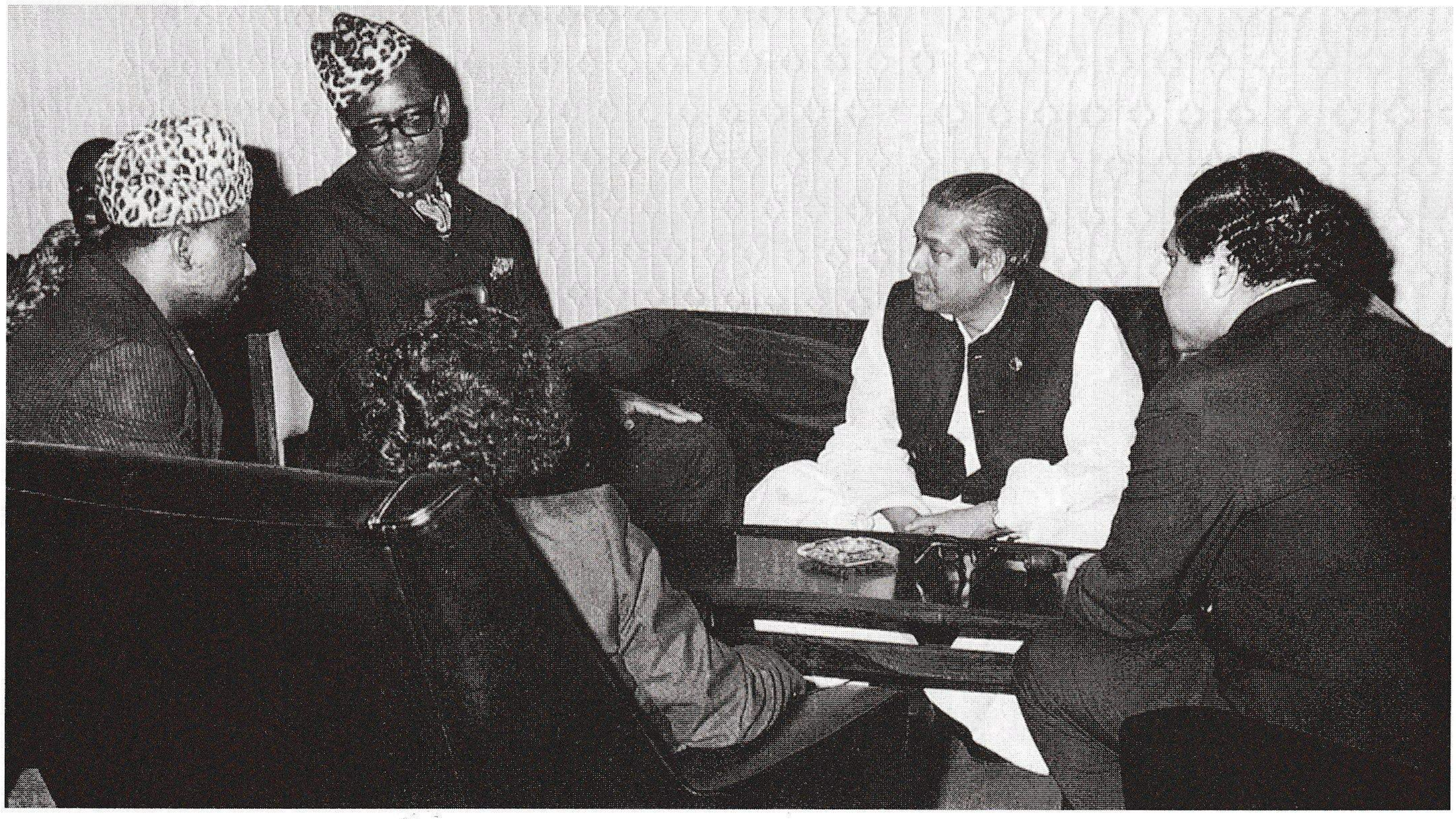
Indian President V.V. Giri and Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman– congratulating and paying regards to each other.



President Martial Joseph Broze Tito of the then Yugoslavia and Bongobondhu.



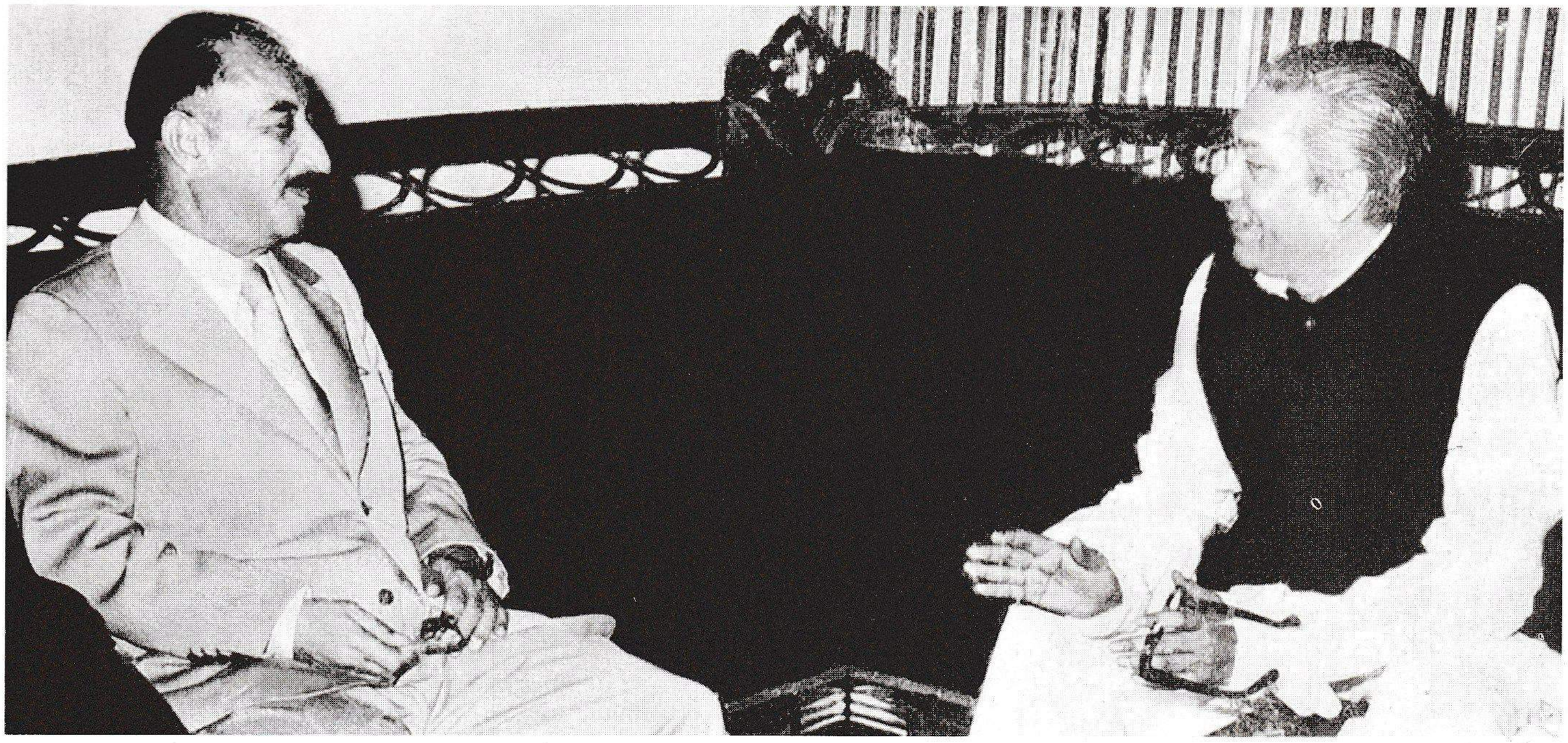
Martial Tito and Madam Tito expressing joy and pleasure at the sight of river and boats of Bangladesh.



President Mobutu of Zaiare having discussion with Bongobondhu.



Bongobondhu with the Prime Minister of Lebanon.



Ahmed Hasan Al-bakar, President of Iraq, engaged in discussion with Bongobondhu.



Revolutionary Council of Iraq and Saddam Hossain having discussion with Bongobondhu.



October 17, 1973. When Bongobondhu came to visit Japan, he was given guard of honour at Narita Airport. Beside Bongobondhu is the then Prime Minister of Japan Mr. Kakui Tanaka.



above : Bongobondhu and Mr. Tanaka enjoying each other's company.
below : At the reception and banquet with daughter Rehana and youngest son Russel.



At the Buckingham Palace of England Queen Elizabeth and Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman paying regards and expressing good wishes to each other. On left of the queen is Prince Philip.



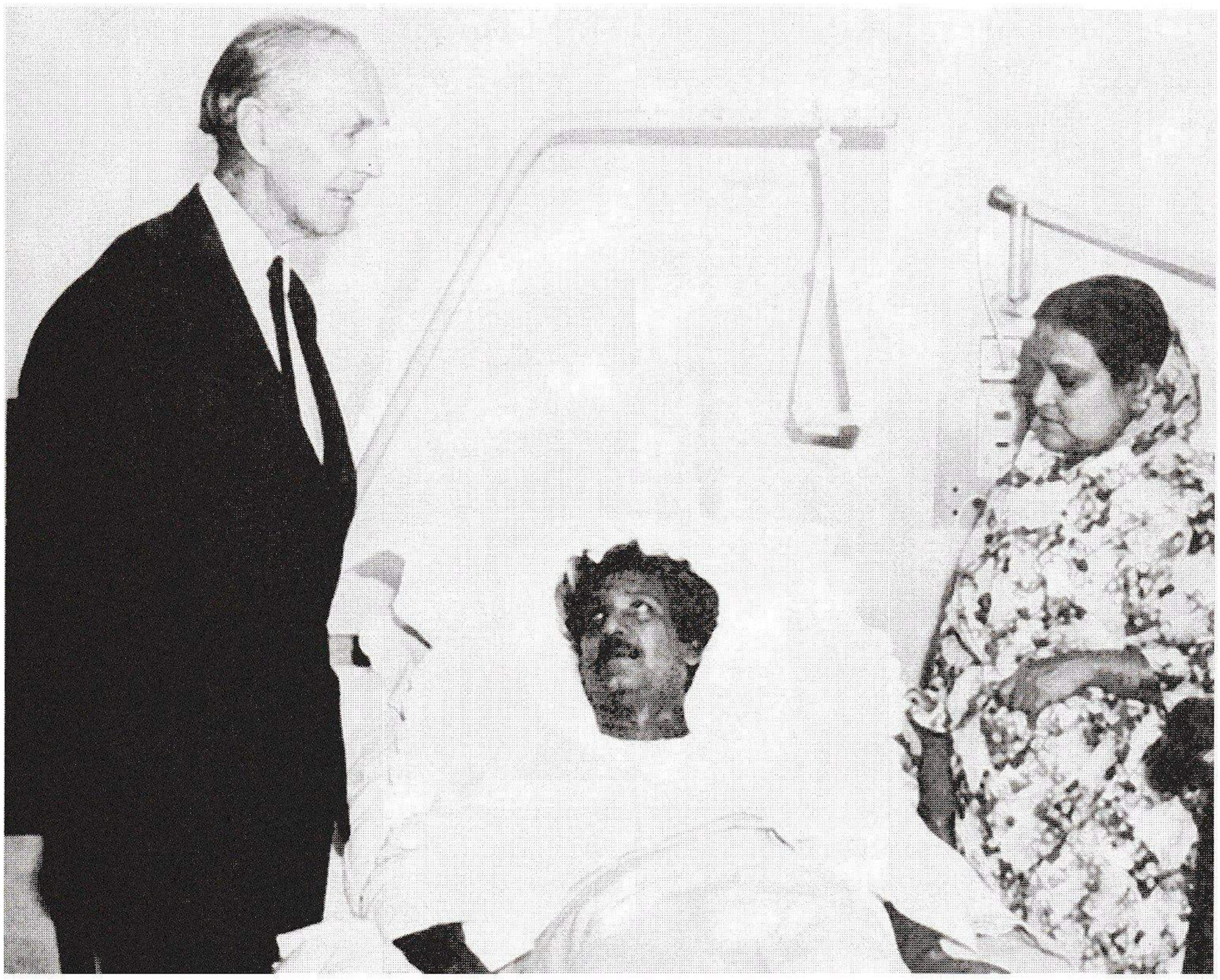
Bongobondhu in high level meeting between Bangladesh and New Zealand.



July 1973. Bongobondhu went to England for treatment. There British Prime Minister Edward Heath came to hospital to see him.



Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the heads of the commonwealth states.



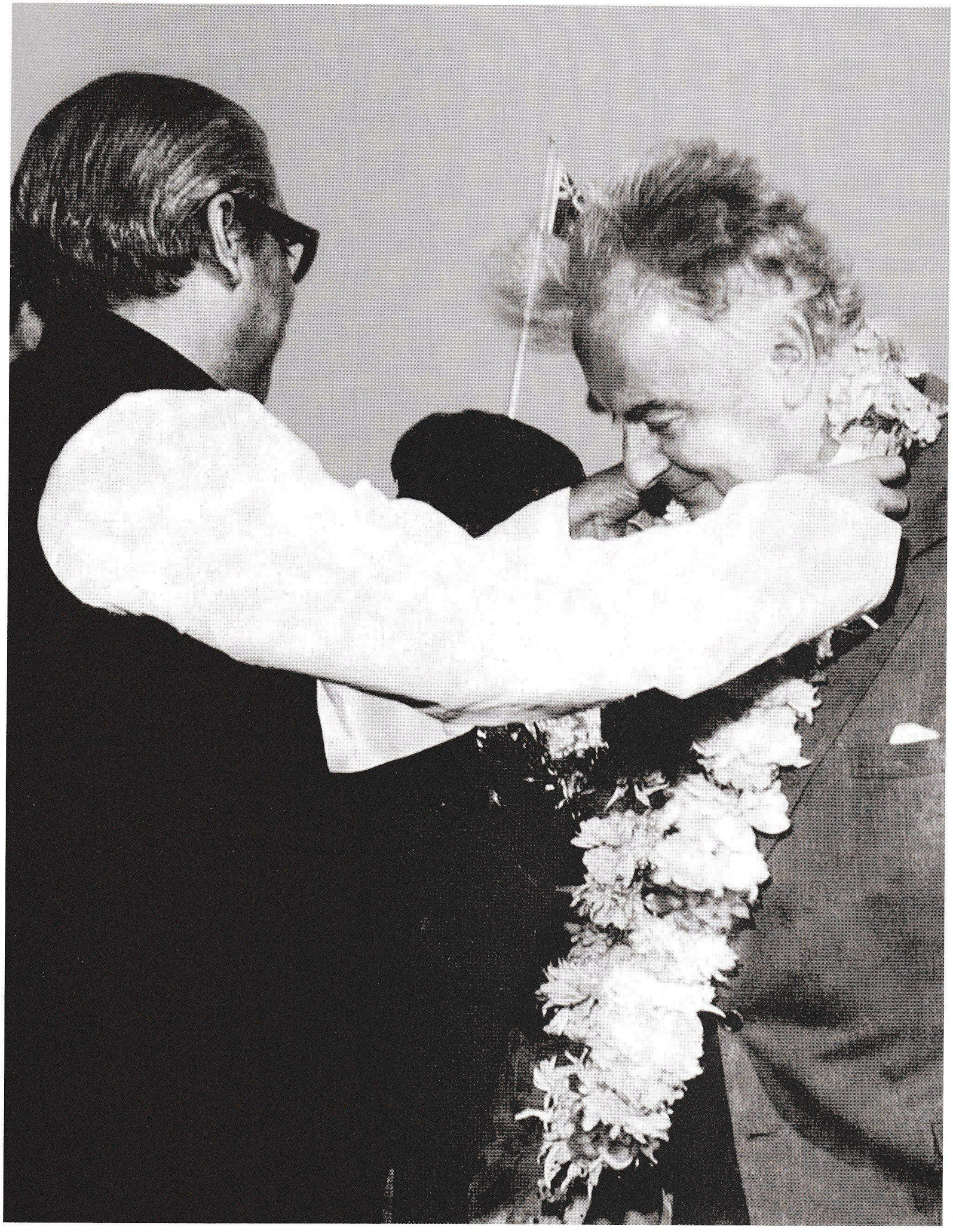
July 30, 1972. Bongobondhu's gall-bladder was operated upon, British Foreign Minister Mr. Douglas Hume came to hospital to see him. Beside Bongobondhu's bed is Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib.



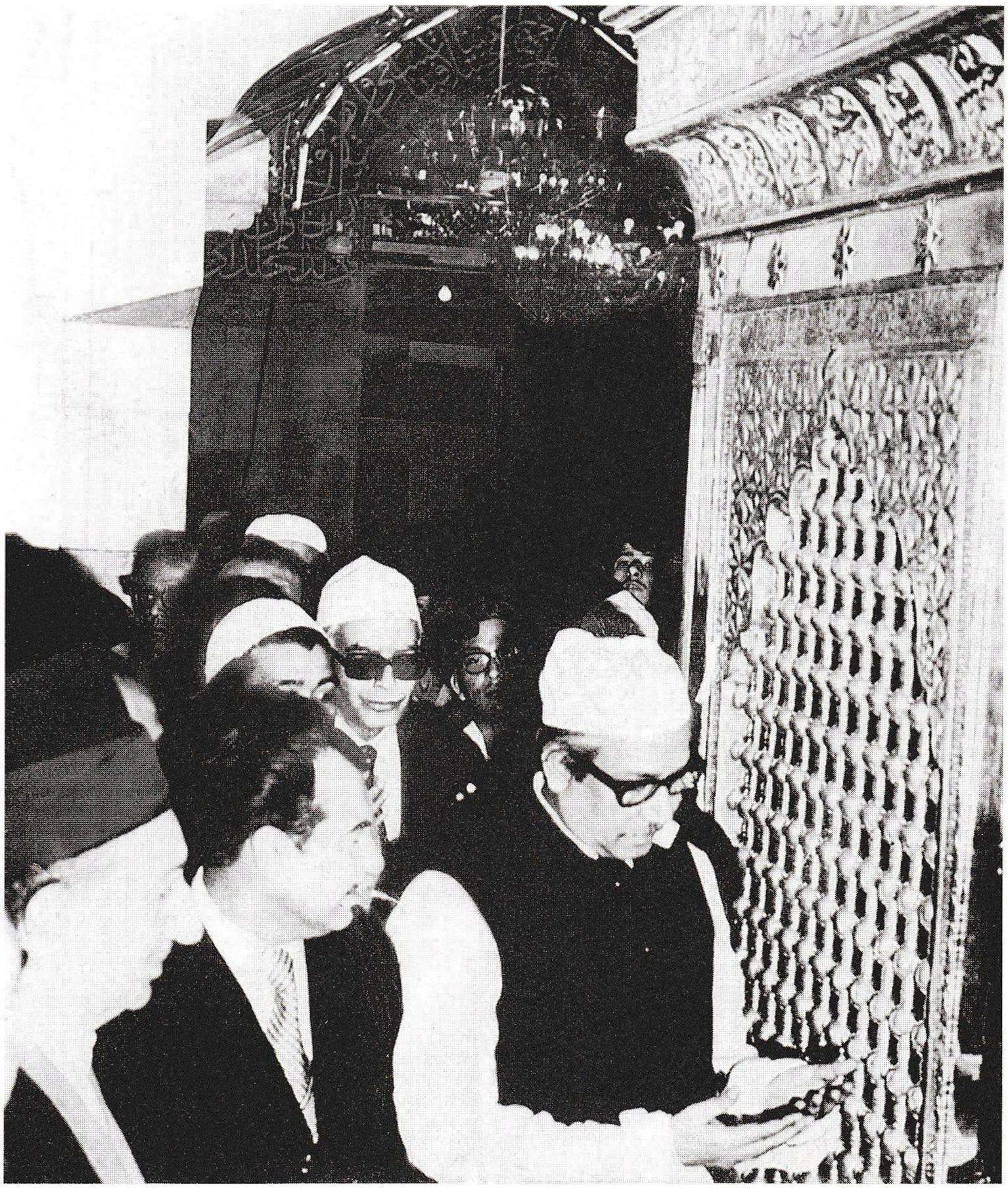
February 23, 1974. Bongobondhu attended the summit meeting of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Lahore.



In the OIC summit conference Bongobondhu with Algerian President Bume din on one side and Pakistan's Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto on other side.



In 1971, afer the victory in War of Liberation Australia gave recognition to Bangladesh quickly. During the War of Liberation also Australia supported the people of Bangladesh. Prime Minister of Bangladesh Bongobondhu welcoming the Australian Prime Minister Mr. Whitlam to Dhaka.



1974. During his Iraq visit to Bongobondhu praying for salvation of the departed souls at the shrine of Hazrat Abdul Quader Zilani (R.)



A 'gilaff' of Mazar Sharif was presented to Bongobondhu.



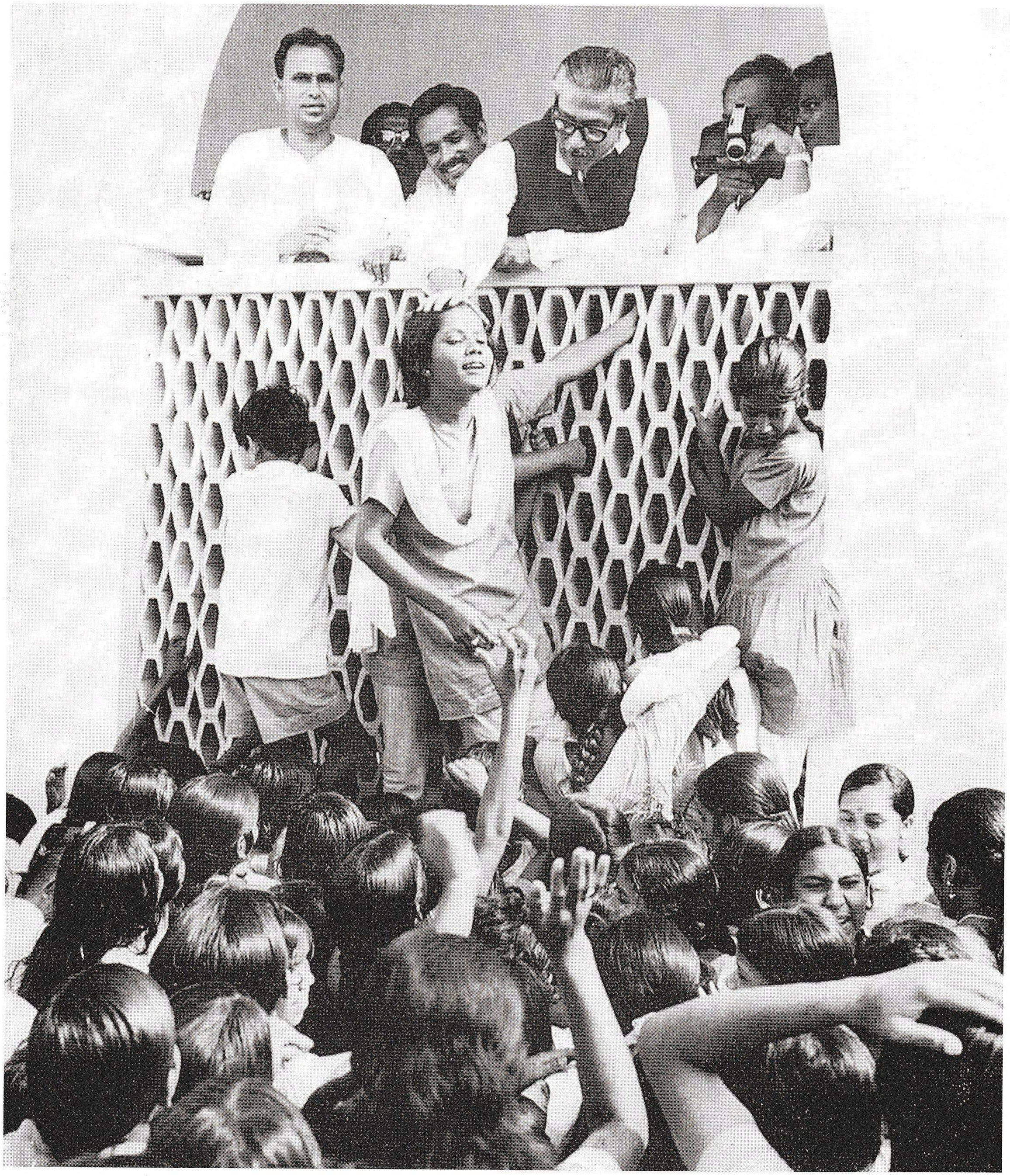
September 24, 1974. Father of the Nation Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave speech in mother-tongue Bengali at UNO as Prime Minister of Bangladesh. At the UNO session this was for the first time that the speech was given in Bengali by a head of the government of a member state.



1974. Bongobondhu delivering his speech on the occasion of Bengali Literary Conference at Bangla Academy premises. Behind him are among others Dr. Abdul Matin chowdhury v.c. of Dhaka University, Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin and poet Jasim Uddin.

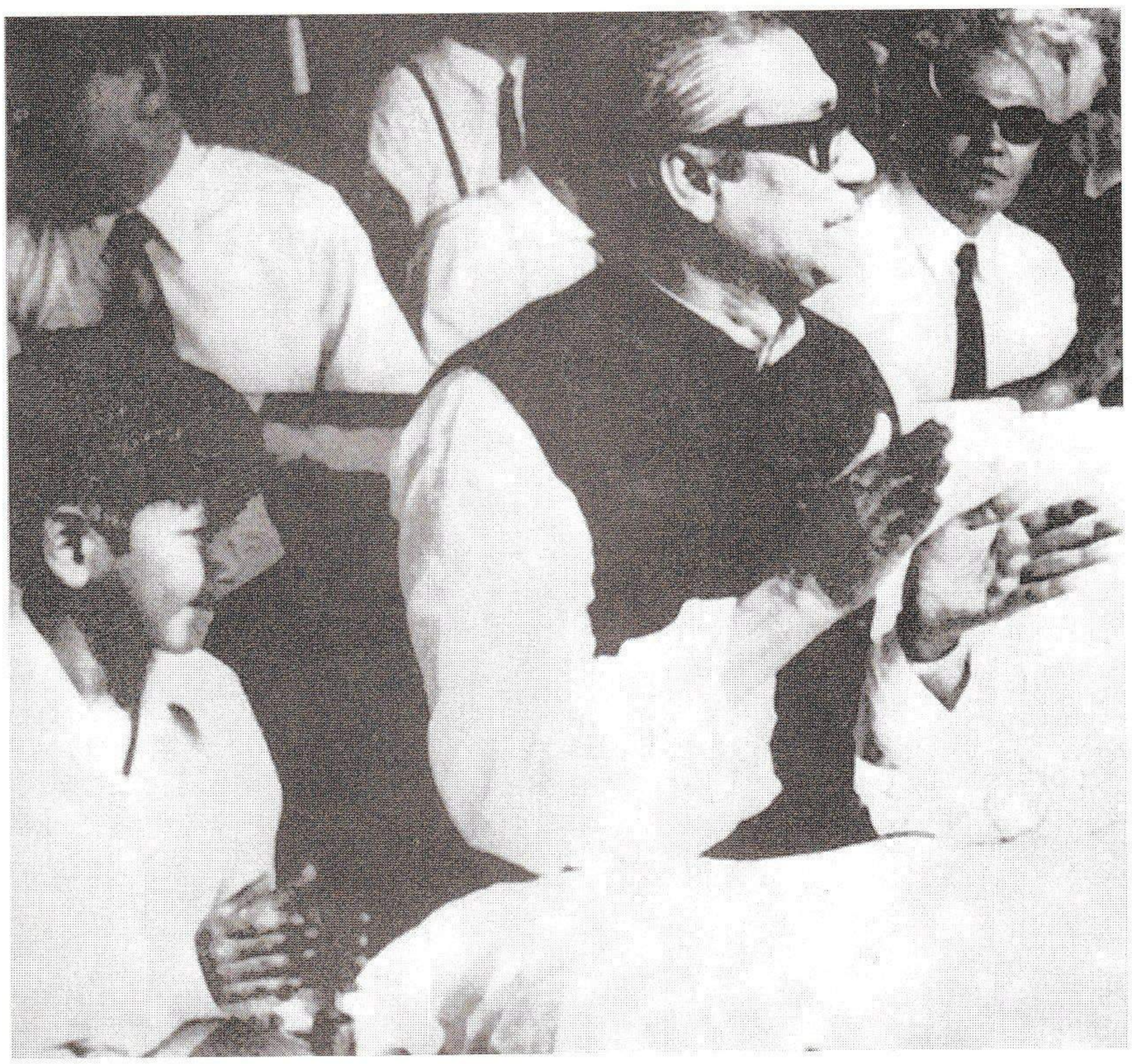


1974. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his inaugural speech
at Bengali Literary Conference at Bangla Academy.



Bongobondhu had true and deep love for the children. He always cared for their education, health and food. In the photograph above Bongobondhu fondling the students of a girls' school in Rangpur.

March 17, 1975. The young members of Kanchi-Kanchar Mela, Boyscouts and Girl Guides observed Bongobondhu's birthday by arranging joyful events.



Bongobondhu enjoying the events with his youngest son Russel.



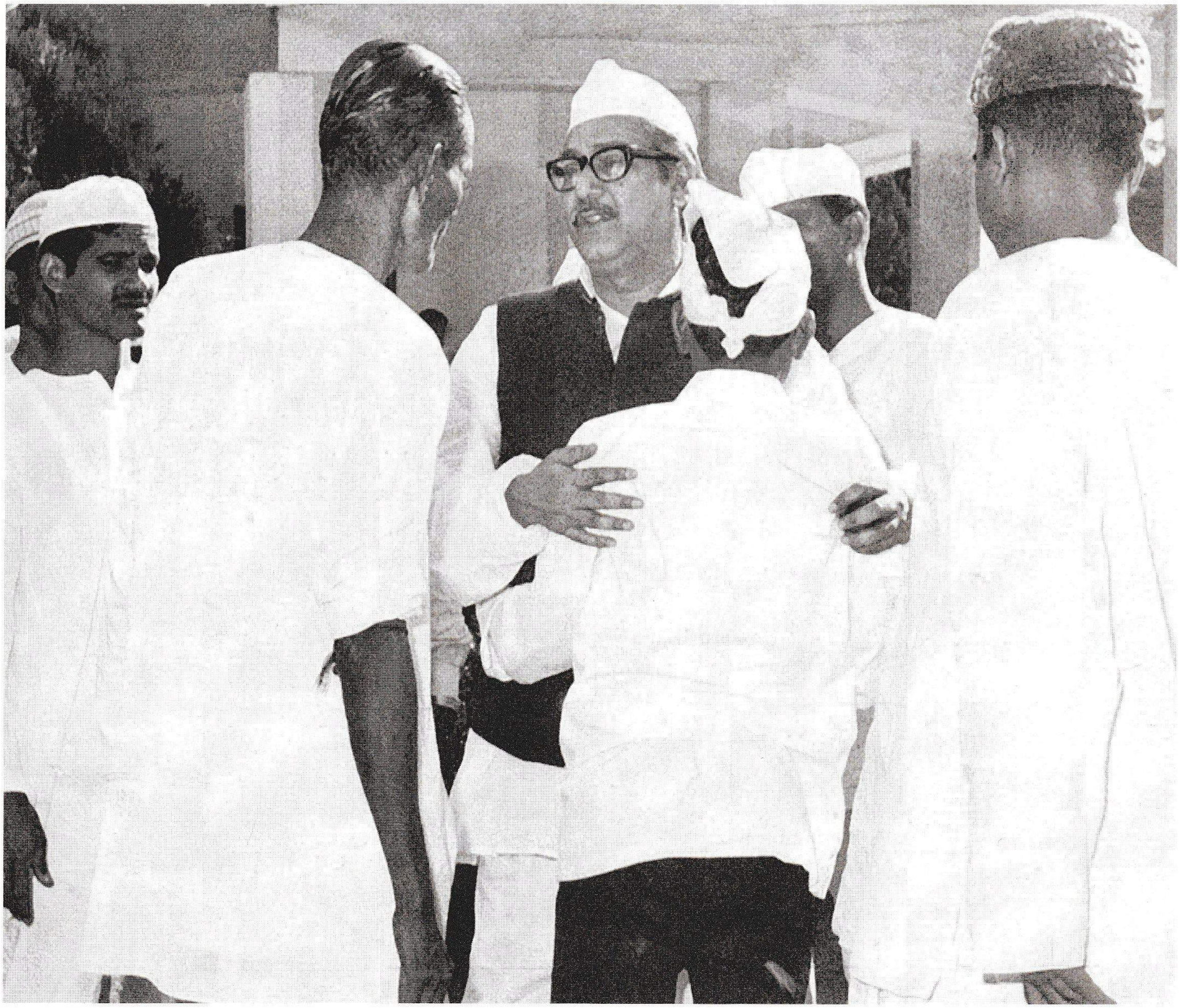
Bongobondhu with the women workers of Awami League.



Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the legal practitioners of Dhaka.



1974. Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his speech at the Biennial Council session of Bangladesh Awami League.



Common people could easily come in close contact with Bongobondhu.
On a Eid-day he is embracing the visitors and enquiring about their days.



Bongobondhu rushed to Tejgaon to know about the demands and wants of the labours and common people.



Bongobondhu looking at the 1st issue of `Banglar Bani' edited and published by Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni.

1975. Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League was formed with all political and professional people. Group after group of people came to join the meeting.



Bongobondhu presided over a meeting. Syed Nazul Islam, Capt. Mansur Ali and others were with him.



All on a sudden :

August 15, 1975. With their heinous aim of snatching the freedom and democracy of Bangladesh a group of hyena-like evil course following army-members under the cover of darkness of night attacked the house at road no. 32. Dhanmondi. Wasting no time they killed the Father of the Nation, That night they killed 16 people including the family members and relatives of Bongobondhu. Among them were Bongobondhu's youngest son Russel— a ten years old child and other 3 children.

At this brutal killing the nation became astounded and stunned. The world as a whole expressed their ulter hatred

Listen, the voice of one Mujibur
Turns into million voice and—
echoes the sky and the air resound
Bangladesh My Bangladesh.

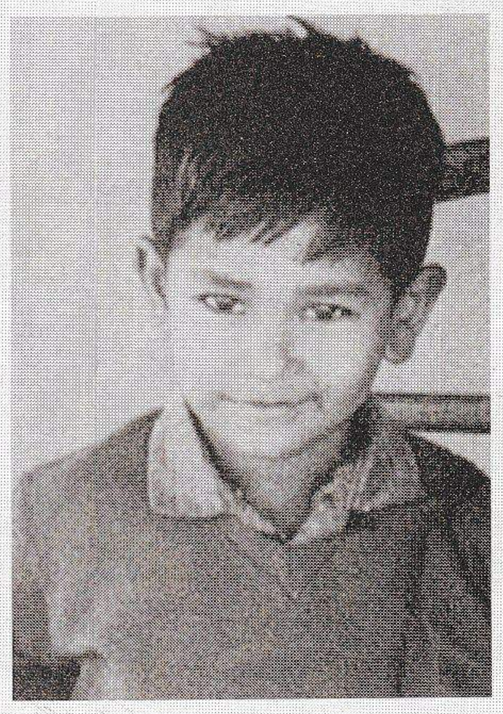
The lone path in the breast of green
I will go back there again
I will find back my Bangla, my lost Bangla……

August 15, 1975.

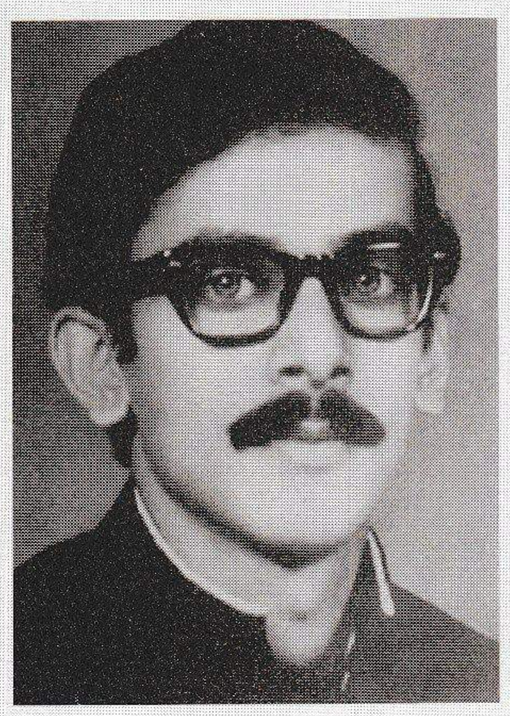
Those who were killed that day by the cruel soldiers



Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib



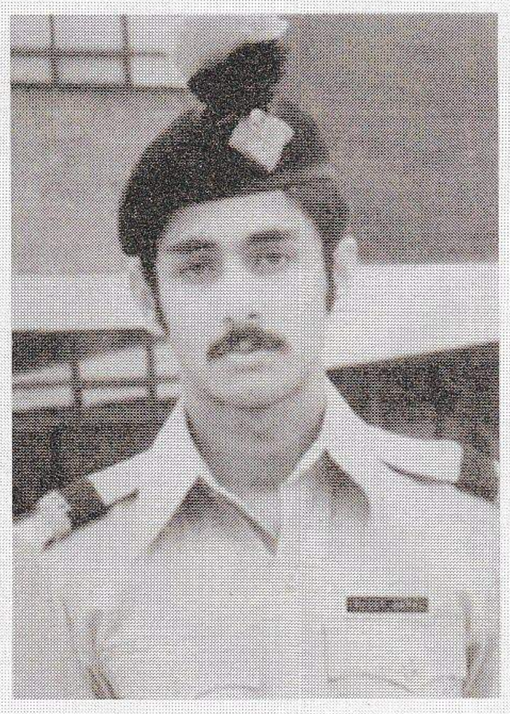
Sheikh Russel



Sheikh Kamal



Sultana Kamal



Sheikh Jamal



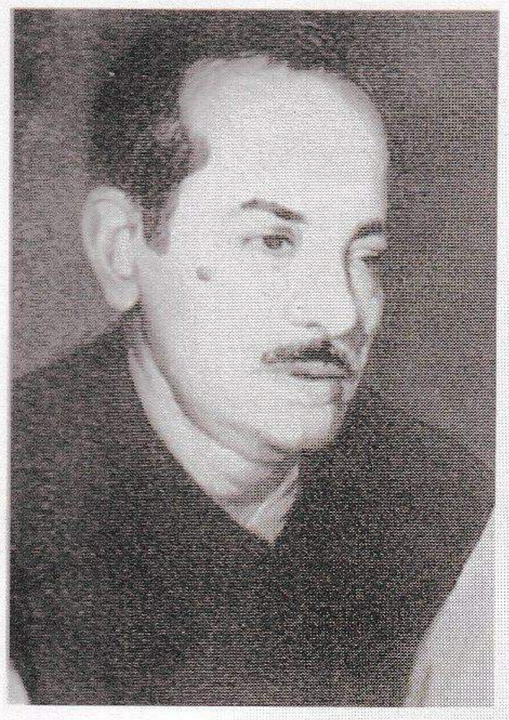
Pervin Jamal Rosy



Sheikh Abu Naser



Col. Jamiluddin Ahmed



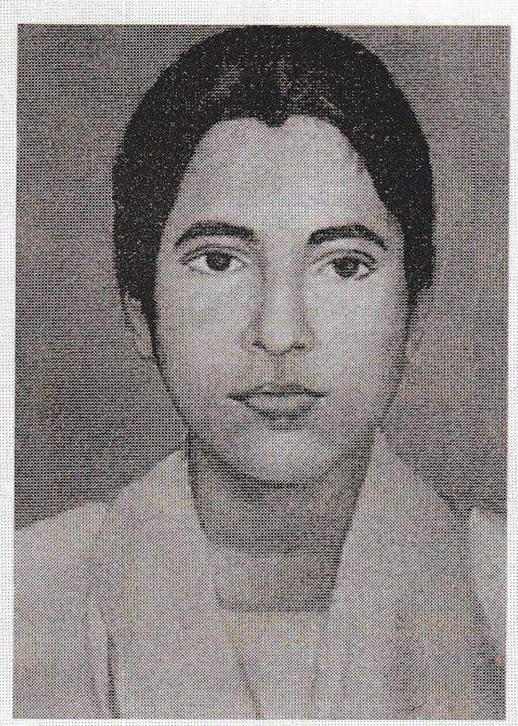
Abdur Rab Serniabat



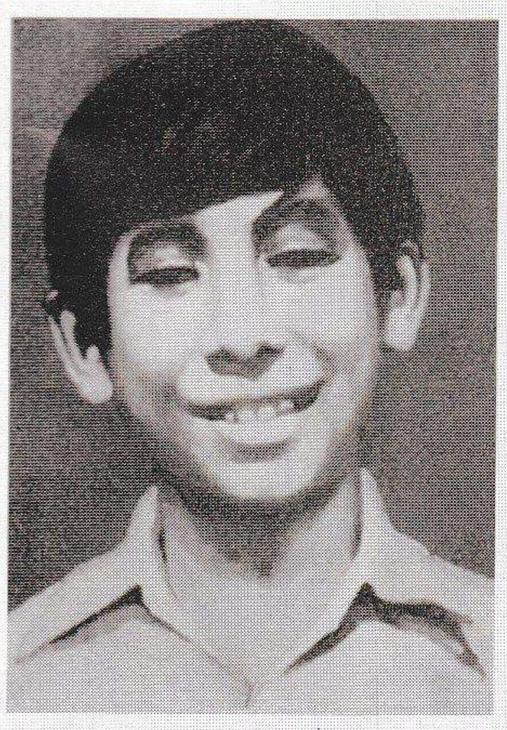
Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni



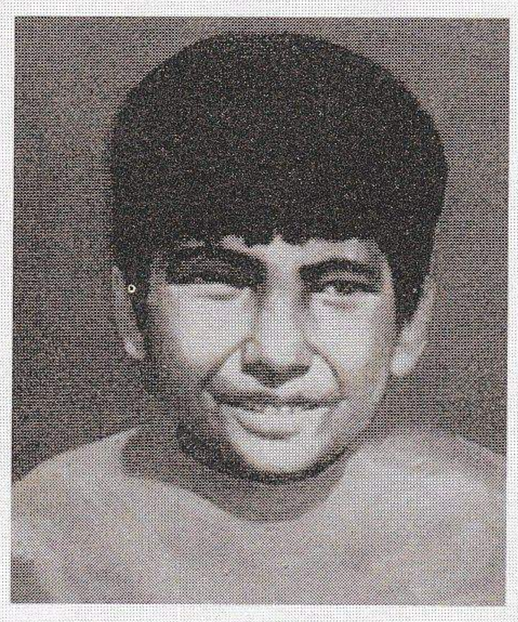
Begum Arzoo Moni



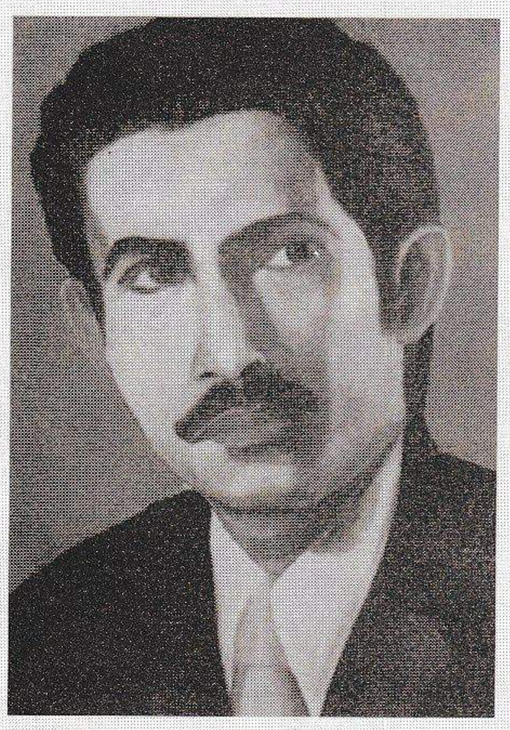
Baby Serniabat



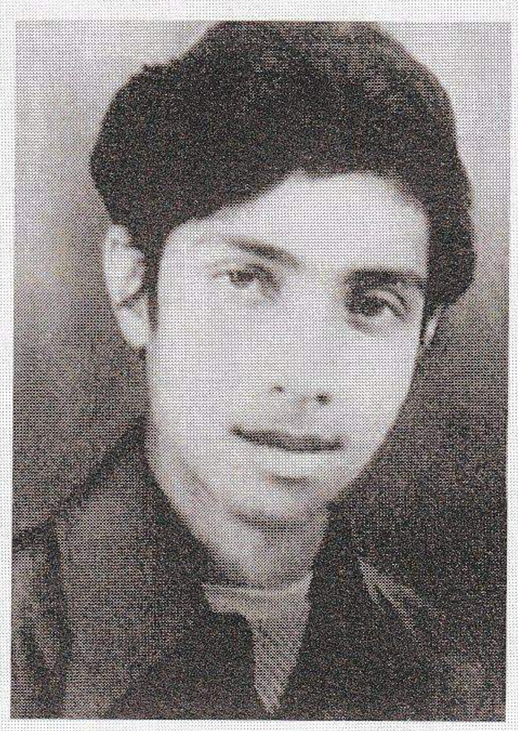
Arif Serniabat



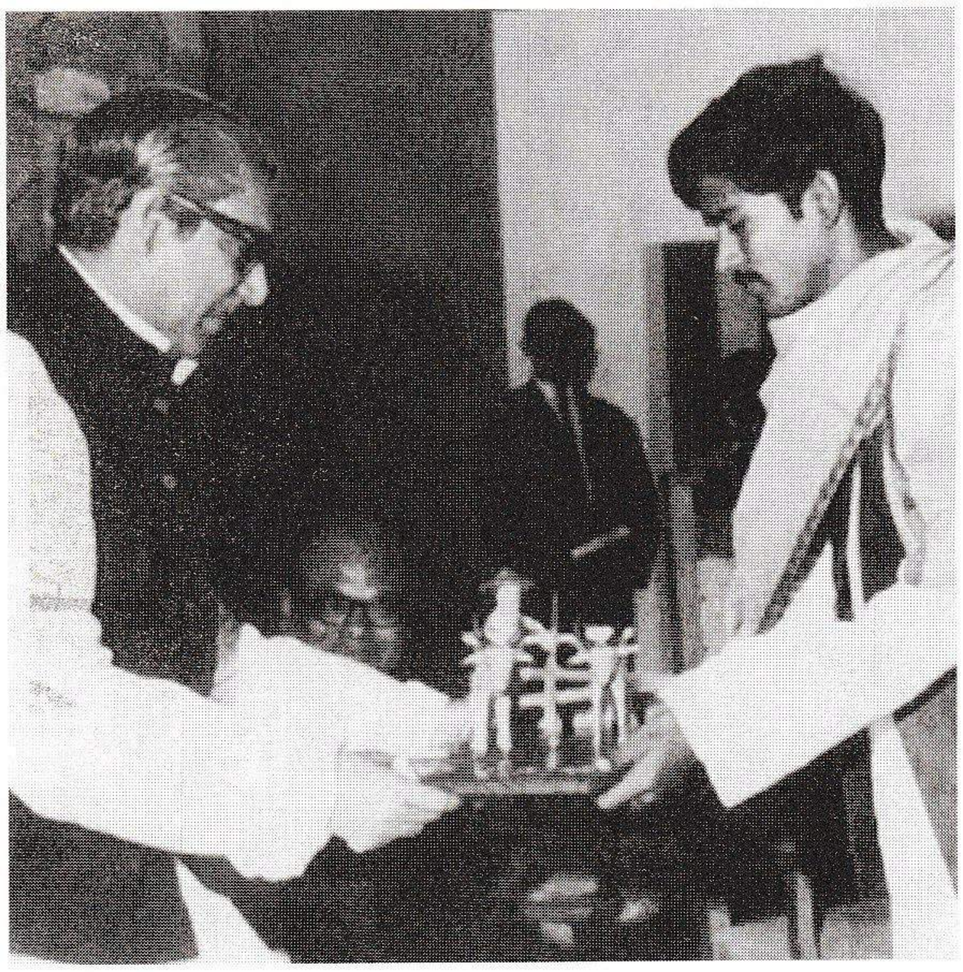
Sukanta Abdulla



Shaheed Serniabat



Abdul Nayeem Khan Rintu



Bongobondhu encouraging an youth in his persuasion of crafts.



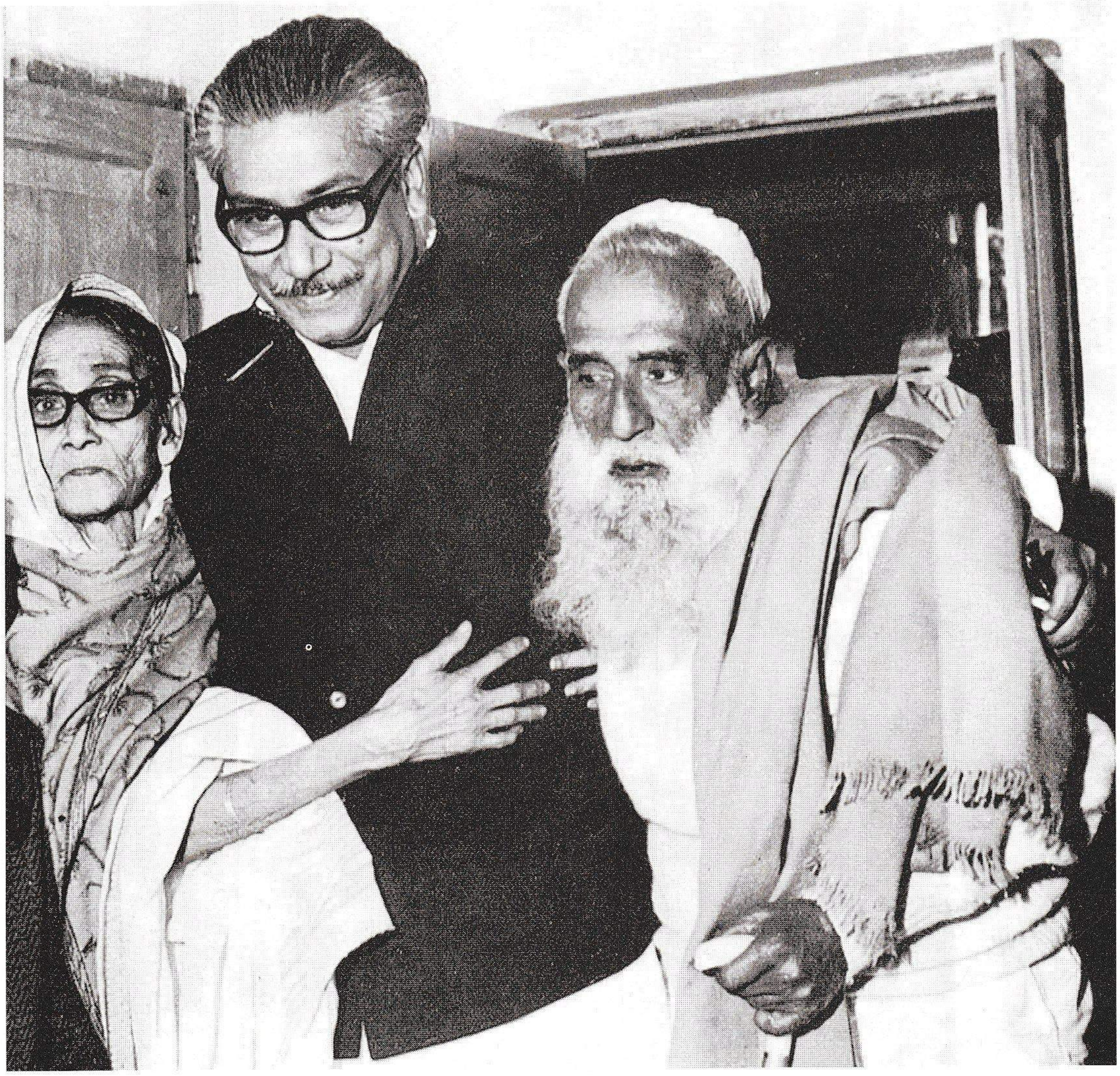
The poor and helpless farmers and fishermen earned their courage for living from Bongobondhu.



Bongobondhu talking to common labourers and working people



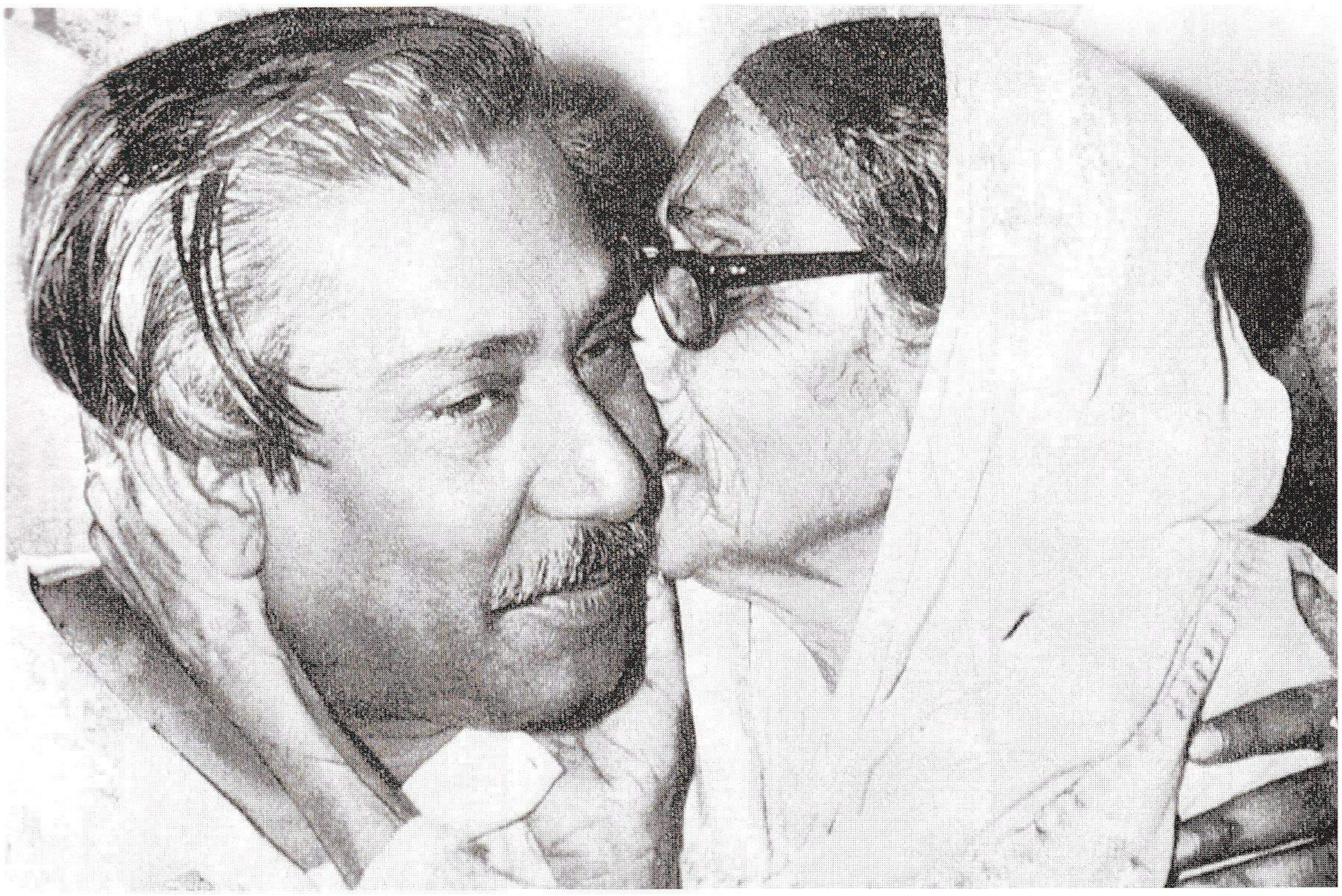
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born at Tungipara of Gopalgonj. Bongobondhu's ancestral house at Tungipara.



Mother Sayera Khatun and Father Lutfor Rahman with their beloved son.



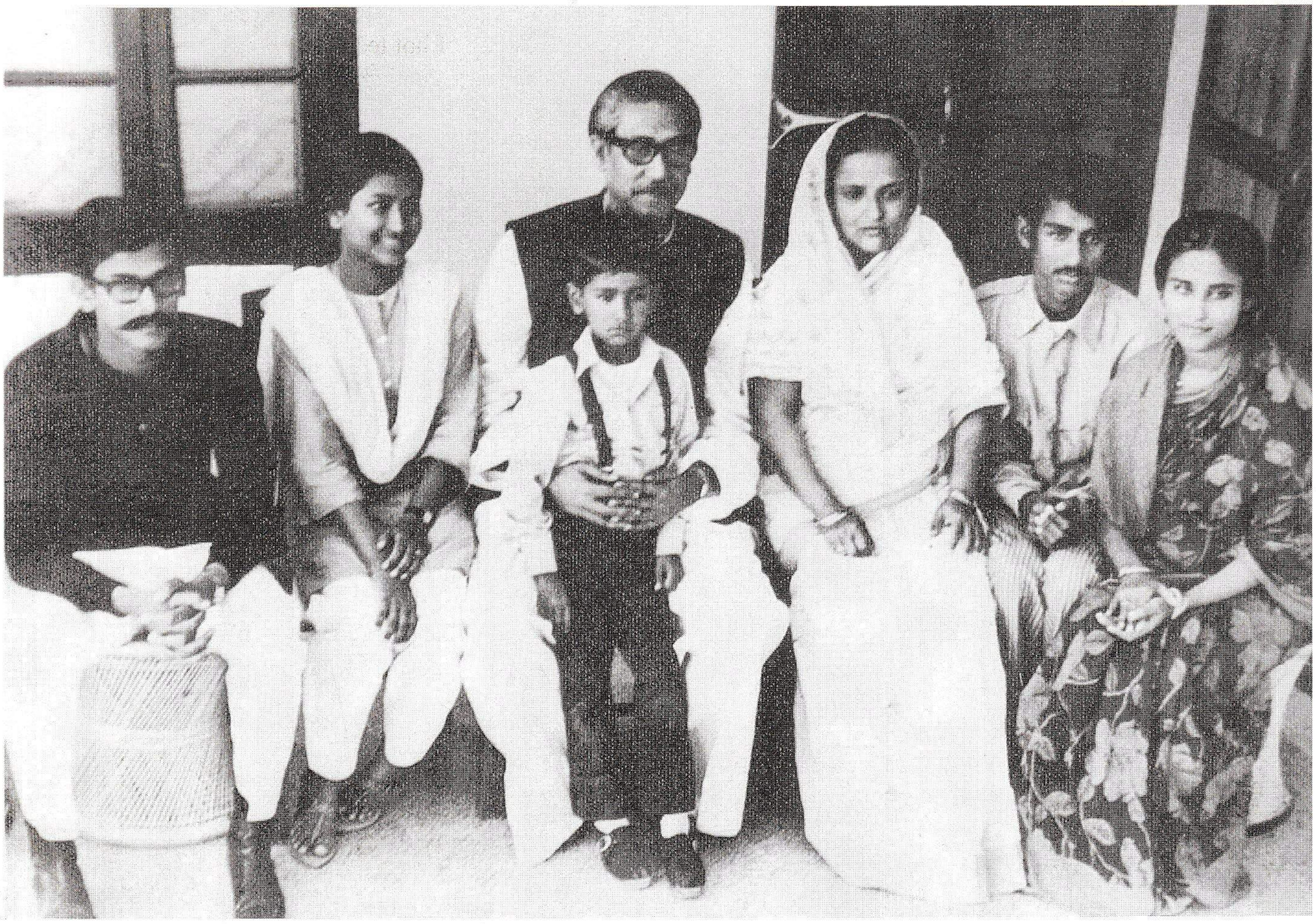
It was a matter of great pleasure,
even when he grew up, to
have rice from mother's hand.



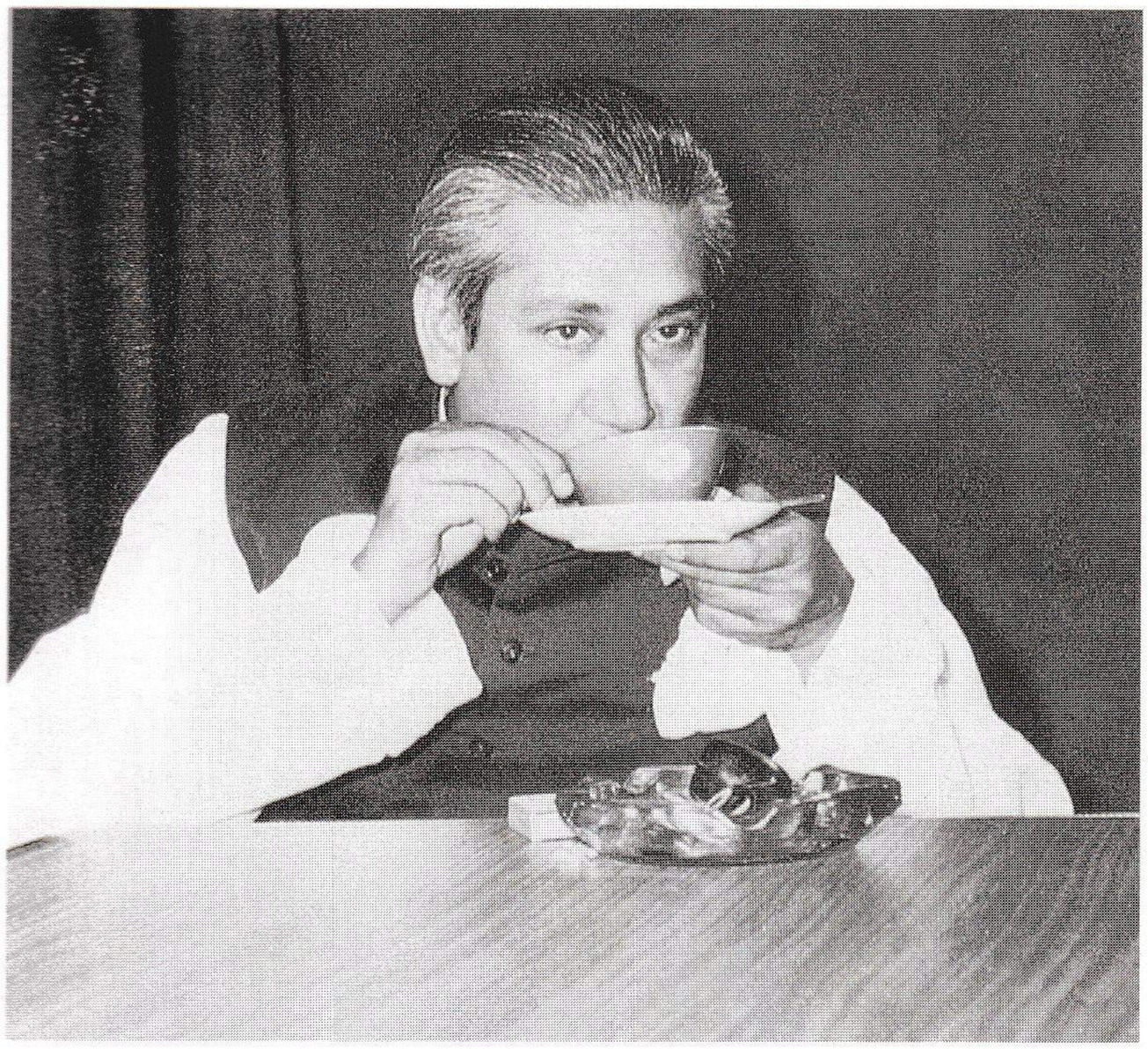
Having caress and blessings
from mother and father–

Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
their beloved Khoka.





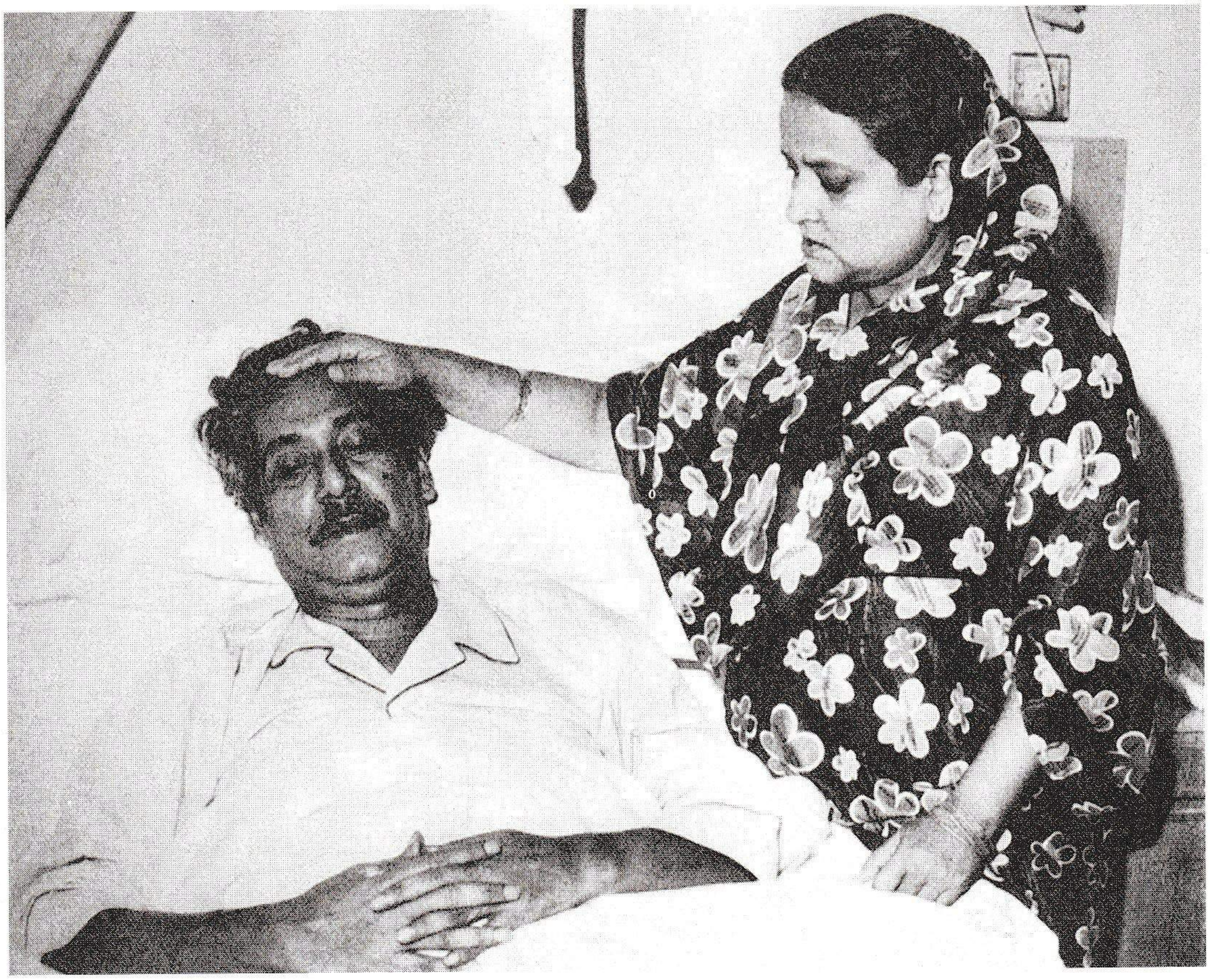
Bongobondhu's family-1972
On left of Bongobondhu : Begum Fazilatunnessa, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Hasina
On right of Bongobondhu : Sheikh Rehana, Sheikh Kamal and on Bongobondhu's lap Sheikh Russel



A cup of hot tea was a thing of great pleasure and satisfaction to Bongobondhu

below : With family members around the dining table

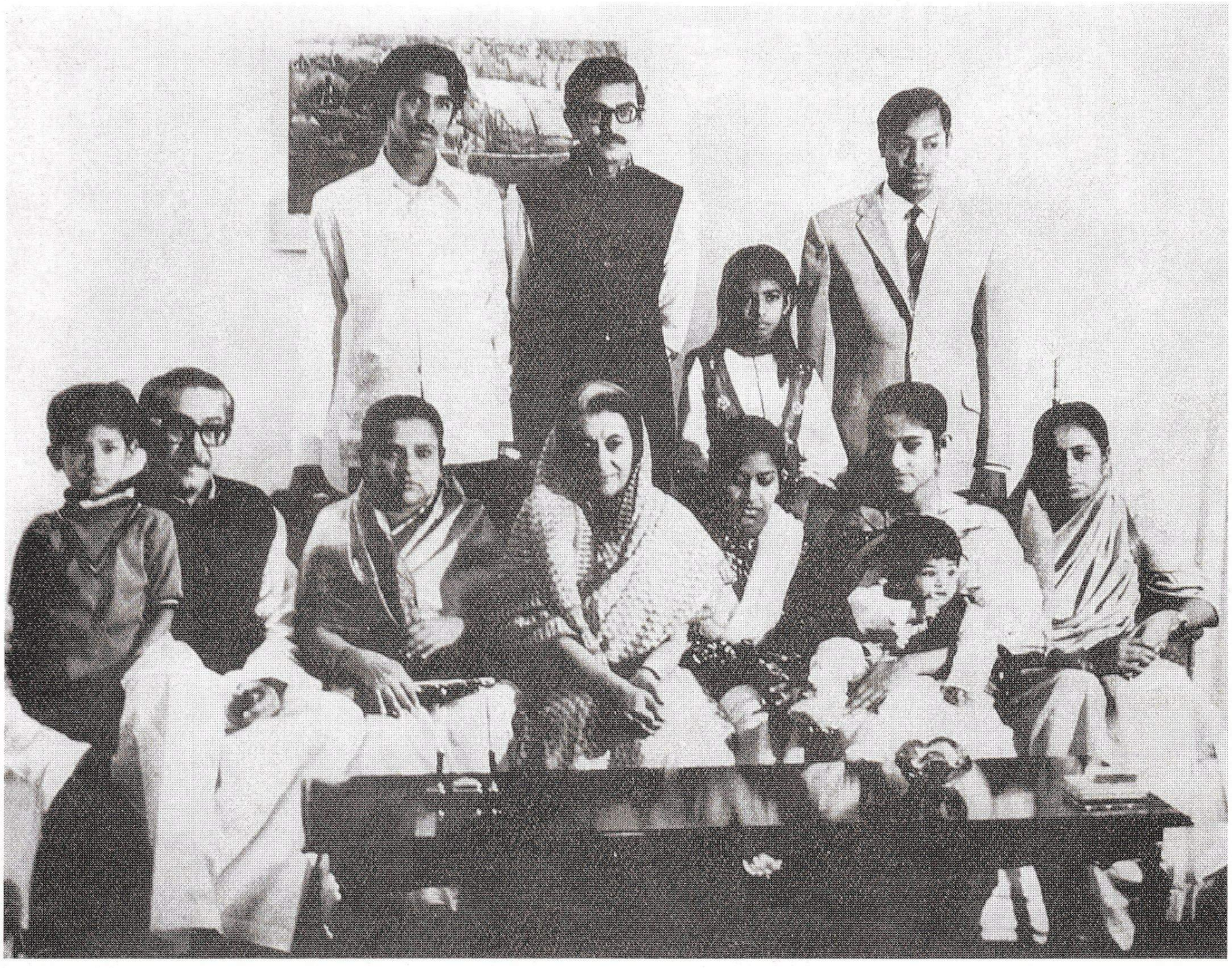




July 30, 1972. Begum Mujib by the bedside of her husband under treatment in London.

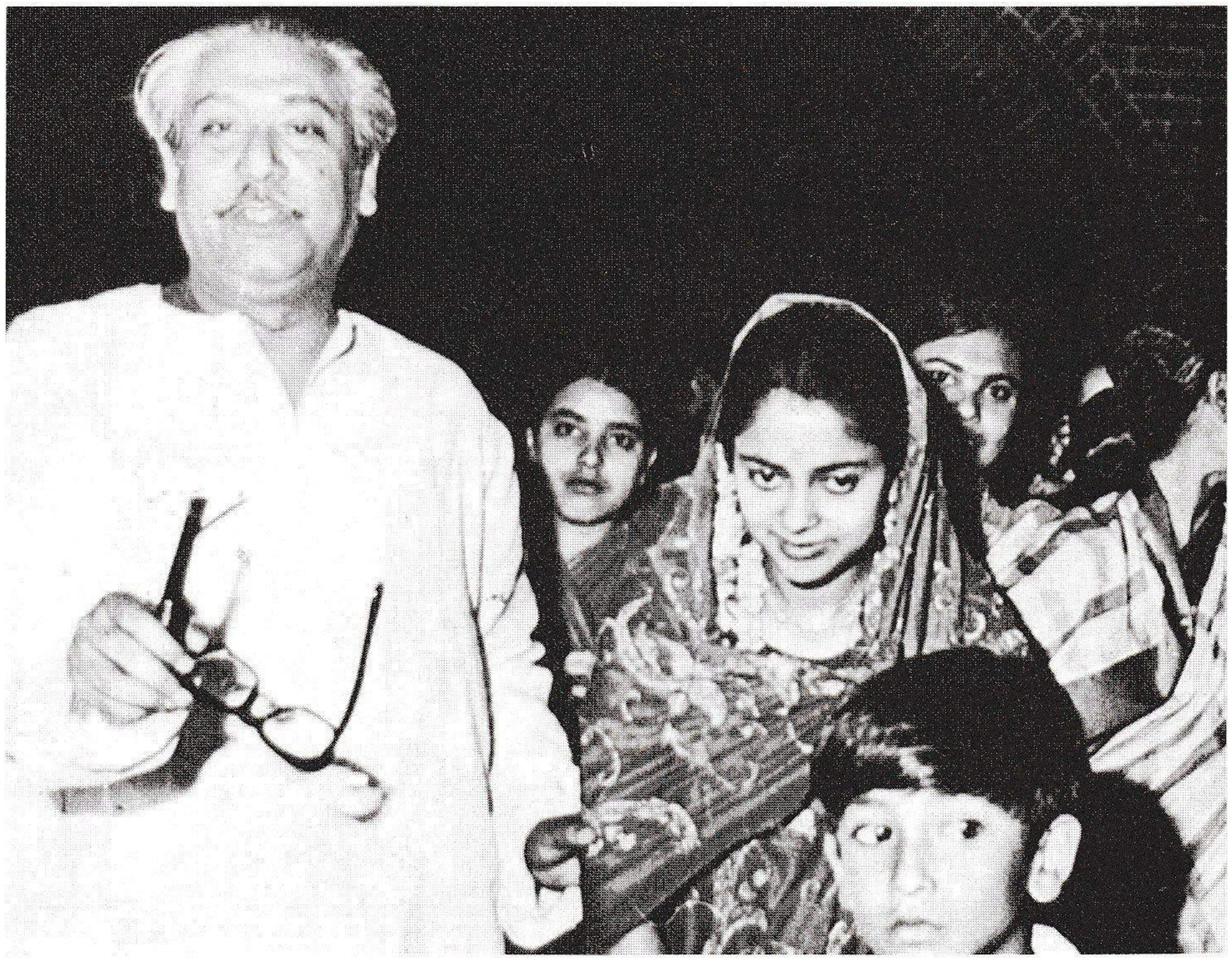


March 30, 1975. Father Sheikh Lutfar Rahman breathed his last breath, Bongobondhu in deep grief- beside him his eldest son Sheikh Kamal

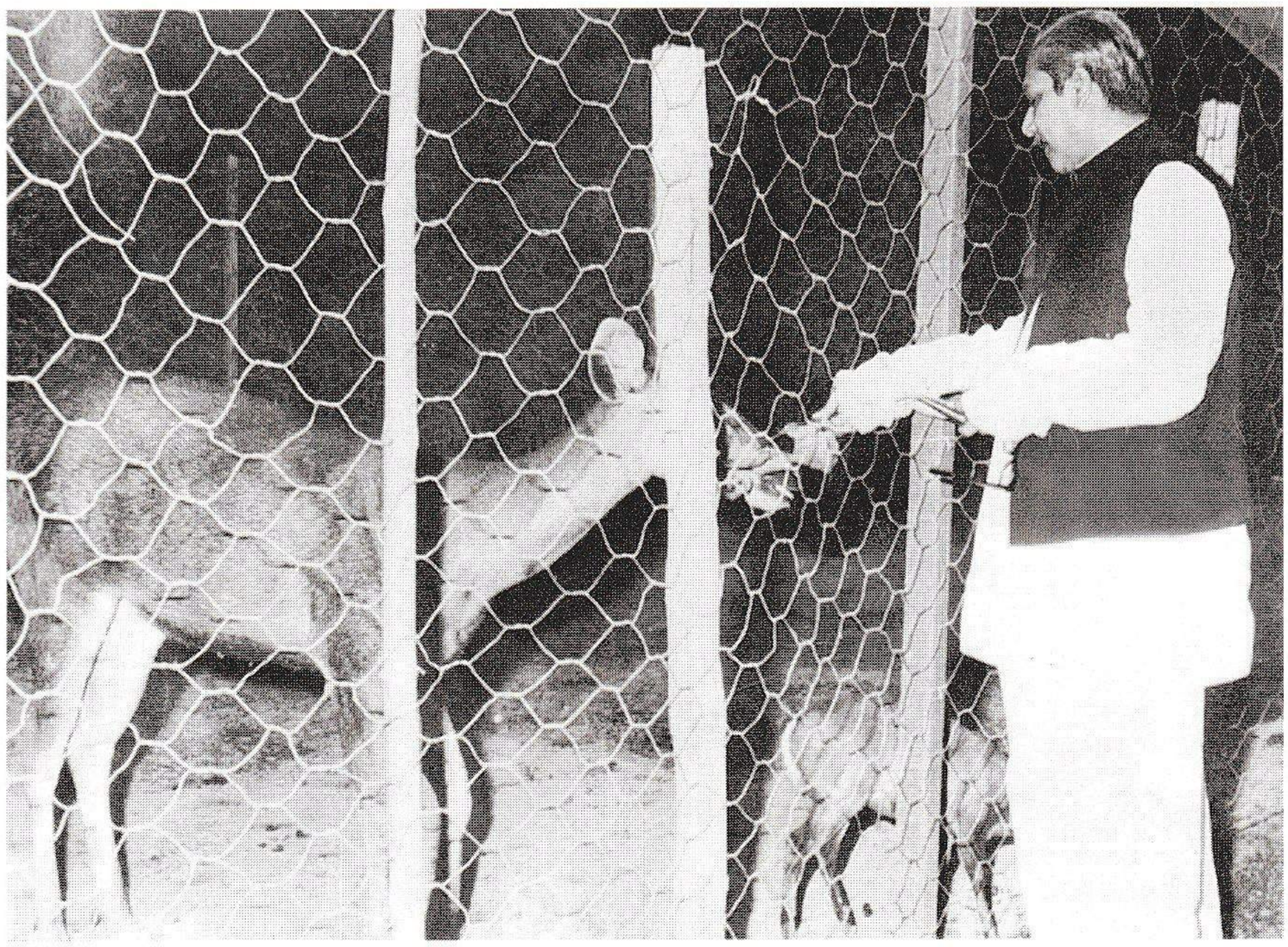


Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi with Bongobondhu's family. Sitting from left: Shiekh Russel, Bongobondhu, Begum Fazilatunnessa, Indira Gandhi, Sheikh Rehana (Joy in her lap), Begum Razia Naser. Standing from left: Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Kamal, Tahmina Sheikh and M. Wazed Mia.

Grandpa Bongobondhu caressing Joy and Putul. Beside them are mother Sheikh Hasina and grandmother Begum Mujib.



Bongobondhu introducing daughter-in-law Sultana Kamal to others



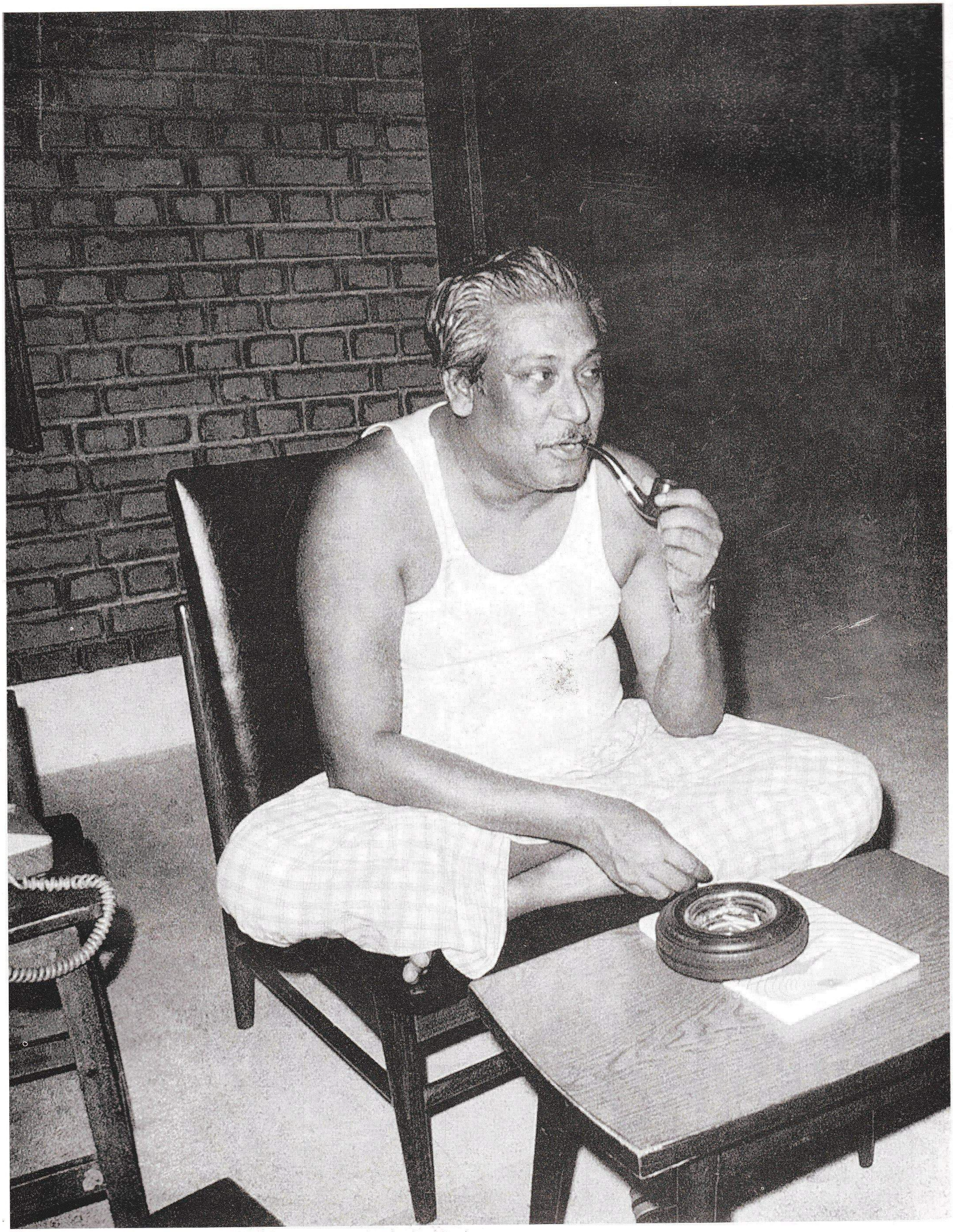
Looking after the deer at 32 Dhanmondi's mini-museum.



Pigeon symbolizes peace. Bongobondhu had many pet pigeons. If he could manage time, he used to feed them by his own hands and also caress them.



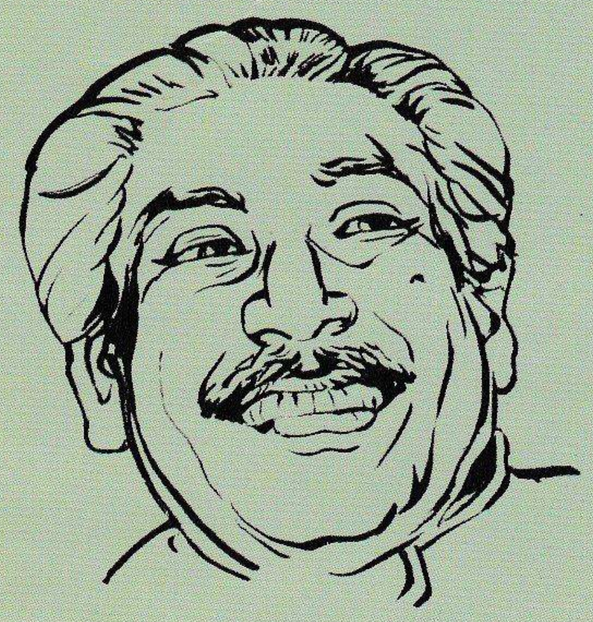
Whenever he could find time Bongobondhu used to read books. He had a personal library and he loved reading books.



At 32 Dhanmondi's house Bongobondhu just enjoying his own time of leisure.



Bongobondhu with his youngest son Russel and eldest son Sheikh Kamal



This is our Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh have earned this country at the cost of a fierce fighting against the occupation army of Pakistan.

The dream of an independent country was put in the herat of this nation by Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. For long twenty three years he had to suffer the oppression and sorrows of imprisonment for the cause of independence of this country. He is the greatest of all Bangalis of all time. He is the Father of the Nation.

In 1971 the brave people of Bangladesh took up arms and fought a deadly war being inspired by his ideals. If we can know him truly we will know ourselves. And in this way each and everyone will come to know the true history and heritage of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Shishu Academy has published 25 books ont the life, struggle and achievements of the Father of the Nation.

The ehildren will read these books. Their guardians will give them those. Schools, colleges and libraries will collect these books as well.

Book Design & Cover
Hashem Khan

ISBN : 984-70076-0723-5

Price : Tk. 300.00