

Agartala Conspiracy Case 1967.

Mujib-ur- Rehman +34 V's Federation of Pakistan.

The **Agartala Conspiracy Case 1967-68** was proceed in the Ayub khan era against Sheikh Mujib-ur- Rahman, leader of Awami League at Dhaka, East Pakistan. The Tribunal was headed by 3 Judges; **Mr. Justice S.A. Rahman, Mr. Justice M.R. Khan and Mr. Maksum-ul-Hakim.**

The government represented by the **Attorney General Mr. T.H. Khan and former Foreign Minister Mr. Manzoor Qadir.** The case was filed in February 1968 and charged Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman and 34 others in conspiring with India against Pakistan.

The government of Pakistan brought charges against 35 political personalities including three eminent civil servants officials under civil law. They were Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ahmed Fazlur Rahman CSP, Steward Mujibur Rahman, Commander Moazzem Hussain, former LS Sultanuddin Ahmad, LSCDI Nur Mohammad, Flight Sergeant Mahfiz Ullah, Corporal Abdus Samad, former Havildar Dalil Uddin, Ruhul Quddus CSP, Flight Sergeant Md. Fazlul Haq, Bibhuti Bhushan Chowdhury alias Manik Chowdhury, Bidhan Krishna Sen, Subedar Abdur Razzaque, former clerk Mujibur Rahman, former Flight Sergeant Md. Abdur Razzaque, Sergeant Zahurul Haq, Benedict Dias, A.B. Khurshid, Khan Mohammad Shamsur Rahman CSP, AKM Shamsul Haque, Havildar Azizul Haq, Mahfuzul Bari, Sergeant Shamsul Haq, Shamsul Alam, Captain Mohammad Abdul Muttalib, 21 Baluch Regiment, Captain Shawkat Ali, Captain Khondkar Nazmul Huda, Captain A.N.M Nuruzzaman, Sergeant Abdul Jalil, Mahbub Uddin Chowdhury, Lt. M Rahman, former Subedar Tajul Islam, Ali Reza, Captain Khurshid Uddeen Ahmed, Master Warrant Officer Abdul Latif Majumdar, and Lt. Abdur Rauf.

The plot was conceived by Sheikh Mujib in an attempt to ignite an armed revolution against West Pakistan that would result in the secession. Two of the accused, navy steward Mujibur Rahman and the educator Mohammad Ali Reza, went to Agartala, Tripura, a city in Eastern India to seek Indian support for an independent Bangladesh. The alleged conspiracy was uncovered by the

Lieutenant Colonel Shamsul Alam, who commanded the East Pakistan Detachment of the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). It was during this time that an officer of the East Bengal Regiment, Rauf ur Rahman, who was in league with the conspirators made an attempt on Alam's life. Alam displayed great bravery and chased the would-be assassins; for this Alam was awarded the Sitara-e-Basalat, the highest award for bravery in action during peacetime. 1500 Bengalis were arrested in connection with the plot in 1967. In January 1968 the Home Department of Pakistan declared that it had detected a scheme to destabilize Pakistan and break the Eastern swing through an armed revolt, and had arrested 8 people. Later on 18 January, the Department implicated Sheikh Mujib as well. He and others were arrested on 9 May 1968, and were subsequently released, only to be arrested later. The existence of a conspiracy between Mujib and India for the secession of East Pakistan has not been proven.

Pakistan decided to try the accused by court-martial since a lot of the accused were military personnel. However, this was overturned in favor of a civil trial to implicate the politicians ahead of the 1970 elections as well as to provide transparency of the trials. Hence, only 35 were finally accused. The accused were then moved from Dhaka Central Jail to the secured borders of the Dhaka Cantonment. The penal codes were amended to benefit the prosecution of the accused, and the trial began on 19 June 1968 under a special tribunal. The hearings took place inside a secured chamber within the Dhaka Cantonment. The hearing became for Mujib an opportunity to publicize the Awami League demands. The charge sheet of 100 paragraphs were presented before the tribunal, with 227 witnesses and 7 approvers.

Thomas Williams, a British lawyer, along with local attorneys challenged the formation of the tribunal by filing a petition in favor of Sheikh Mujib. The approvers appeared in the witness box and testified that they provided false evidence under the coercion of the State. Members of public looked at the case as a conspiracy of the Pakistan government against the political autonomy movement of East Pakistan, especially since the government was keen to prove that Sheikh Mujib was an Indian agent and a separatist. They organized mass movement and demanded immediate withdrawal of the case and release of all prisoners.^[6] According to the government decision, the final date for the case was 6 February 1969. However, because of the mass upsurge of 1969, the government had to defer the date.

On February 15th, 1969, a Pakistani habildar shot point blank at Sergeant Zahur-ul-Haq at the

door of his jail cell, and killed him. The news of the killing led a furious mob to set fire to the State Guest House and other government buildings, where the chief lawyer for the government and the Chair of the tribunal resided. They vacated secretly. Some of the case files and evidence got burnt as a result of the arson.

In the face of mass movement, the government withdrew the Agartala Conspiracy Case on 22 February 1969. The accused were released on the following day and the Race course Maidansaw a grand reception of the accused, where Sheikh Mujib was given his famous title *Bangabandhu*. Angry protesters formed an action committee. This popular hostility forced Ayub Khan to withdraw the case and convene a Round Table Conference which Sheikh Mujib triumphantly attended but walked out of when his Six-Point demands were ignored. The case and the resulting uprising was a major factor in the fall of Ayub Khan's government and is also seen as one of the major events leading to Bengali nationalism and the Bangladesh Liberation War. Sergeant Zahurul Haq were honoured by the naming of a students' residential hall of the University of Dhaka after him. In 2010, and on the anniversary of the withdrawal on 22 February 2011, surviving conspirator and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Shaukat Ali confessed to the parliament at a point of order that the charges read out to them were accurate, stating that they formed a *Shangram Parishad* (Action Committee) under Sheikh Mujib for the secession of East Pakistan. Parliamentarian Tufail Ahmed added that had the case not been filed, the plot would have culminated in the secession of East Pakistan without bloodshed, and credit the Deputy Speaker for planning the liberation of the nation.