This thesis deals with the genesis, growth and role of the Awami (people) League in the political development of East Pakistan. This study enables us to understand the political processes that operated in Pakistan until the first Martial Law regime which came to power in 1958. This was extremely a crucial period when the East Bengali attitude towards the Central Government and West Pakistan crystallised. The autonomy movement in East Pakistan which reached its fruition in the struggle for national liberation in East Pakistan had its origins in this period.

The Awami League had been, from the very beginning the major vehicle through which autonomist sentiments were channelled in East Pakistan. It was a major partner in the United Front (U.F) which won a massive victory at the polls in East Bengal provincial elections of 1954. The 21-Point Programme of the United Front was the precursor of the six-point autonomy charter of the Awami League which was expounded in 1966.

The significance of the Awami League's role in Pakistan's Political development also arises from the fact that it was the first major opposition Party to the Muslim League. The growth of opposition politics in Pakistan, therefore, owes much to the Awami League and its leaders.

For a short while the Awami League ruled in East Pakistan as well as participated in a coalition Government at the centre. An attempt has been made to study how the Awami League, when in power, tried to translate its programme into action. The successes and failures of the Awami League Government in pushing through its programmes would also shed light on the nature of Pakistan's political system and the power structure in the country.

Moreover, a study of the social, economic and educational backgrounds of the Awami League leadership would reveal the nature and character of the rising middle class in East Pakistan. In fact, the Awami League was the most important political organisation of this class.
No detailed study has so far been conducted on the Awami League in East Pakistan. It was felt, therefore, that a detailed study of the role of the Awami League in East Pakistan would be of crucial significance for the understanding of the political process in that country.

After collecting and studying the available data in India, I visited Bangladesh in 1974 for the purpose of collecting material and also for interviewing the Awami League leaders and party workers. I stayed there from January to August 1974. During my stay, I interviewed many top leaders of the Awami League who played a key role in founding and building up the party during the period under study. I also interviewed a large number of Awami League Party workers and legislators who were either members of the Working Committee or Presidents or Secretaries of the district or Sub-divisional Awami League. Besides, I interviewed leading journalists, university Professors and leaders of other political Parties with a view to getting their assessment of the character and role of the Awami League in East Pakistan. The questionnaire was mailed to few Awami Leaguers who could not otherwise be contacted due to lack of time and who were kind enough to send it back after filling it. Data regarding few others were collected from knowledgeable persons and also from books.

The main problem faced by the researcher was the non-availability of Party records like membership register, proceedings of the Working Committee and various other Party publications. This was mainly due to the fact that during Martial Law regime which came to power in 1958, the Awami League Party Central office was completely destroyed by fire and had thus lost forever all Party records. Even individual Awami Leaguers had to destroy whatever Party documents they had in their possession out of fear during the Martial Law regime. However, some of the important Party documents like Party manifesto, constitution and rules, General Secretary's reports, presidential addresses to various Party council meetings and few other Party publications were consulted in the Dacca University library.

Fieldwork in Bangladesh had also enabled me to consult the proceedings of the East Pakistan Legislative
Assembly, Government publications and important newspapers like the 'Pakistan Observer', 'Morning News', 'Azad', 'Ittefaq', 'Dawn', and 'Pakistan Times'. Important decisions and resolutions of the Working Committee, Council, District Party units, and statements of Awami League leaders were available in these newspapers. All these have enabled me to construct a fairly comprehensive account of the character and role of the Awami League in East Pakistan.

The study was made possible mainly because of the fellowship given to me first by the Kerala Government and later by the University Grants Commission. Jawaharlal Nehru University, where I was a research scholar in the School of International Studies, made my fieldwork possible in Bangladesh.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. Mohammad Ayoob of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for his valuable guidance during my stay at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

I am also indebted to Dr. V. Venkata Rao, Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Gauhati University, for his encouragement and kind guidance.

I am grateful to the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, for granting me study leave which enabled me to complete this work.

I am also grateful to the Awami League leaders and party workers and the many people, I interviewed in Bangladesh without their cooperation this work would not have been possible.

Finally, I thank the staff of the Sapru House Library, New Delhi, and the Dacca University Library for their help.

Although all these persons helped me in the collection and presentation of the material I alone am responsible for all that is said and unsaid in the thesis.

I am grateful to Shri Nishi K.P. Choudhury for typing the thesis within a short period.

SHILLONG
The 4th October 1982

(M) BHASKARAN NATP