CHAPTER  VIII
CHAPTER VIII

THE ANTI AYUB MOVEMENT

The popular upsurge of 1968-69 in Pakistan which challenged the carefully built-up but fragile legitimacy of the Government was the inevitable outcome of the system's failure to take into account popular urges and to satisfy them. In other words, it proved the failure to concede people's demands put forward through whatever meagre institutional means was available. In East Pakistan the anti-Ayub agitation initiated and mainly conducted by the All Parties Students Action Committee (APJAC) vindicated the long-standing and unanimous expression of East Pakistan's political dissent against the non-democratic system. Equally significant, if not more, was APJAC's contribution in establishing the legitimacy of the EUSL as the most representative party of the province. By incorporating the Six-Point formula in full in its Eleven Points Charter of Demand - the focal point of the anti-Ayub agitation in EP1 - the APJAC in fact gave a new lease of life to the formula, the autonomy movement and

1 Even in East Pakistan the APJAC's Eleven Points were considered to be the most representative of Pakistani students' demands. See Iffat S. Qar, "Students' Problems", a paper presented at the Pakistan Council Seminar, Islamabad, October 30, 1970.
the EPAL. But for this fillip to the EPAL the political dynamics of Pakistan would have certainly been of a different order than what it was subsequently.

Although the EPAL did not accord official recognition to the Eleven Points when the APSAC was formed in early December 1969, later those were eulogised by the EPAL. However, a tactical distinction was maintained between the immediate necessity of the Six Points and the ultimate inevitability of the Eleven Points.

The initial reservation of the EPAL about the Eleven Points can be rationalised as its preference to keep the students as an independent factor for easier manoeuvrability and greater effectiveness. It could be due to the yet uncertain nature of the proposed oppositional front as against the APSAC composition as well.

Of the three initial components of the APSAC - the CL, CU (Matia) and CU (Menon) - the CL had total identification with the EPAL objectives. But the large-scale student participation in the autonomy movement so far did not mean unreserved support by all politicalised students. The other most important student organisations - the PACU (Matia) and PrCU (Menon) had not officially joined the movement. The

2 See Ittefaq (Dacca), 9 March 1966 for CL's endorsement of the Six Points.

3 The original PPCU - student front of the original ECP/ original NAP had bifurcated following the split in ECP but before the official split of the NAP. The faction led by Begam Matia Chaudhury remained with ECP/ NAP(H) and was known as PPCU (Matia). The other faction led by Rashed Khan Menon which initially remained with the ECP/PML/ NAP (B), was known as PPCU (Menon). For details
PPCU (Matia) supported the Six-Point Formula as a part of its movement for the establishment of a national democratic government. But it had not acknowledged the Formula as the Muktishand (Charter of Freedom) like the CL did, because this was not an adequate tool for bringing socialism in the country as envisaged by the PPCU (Matia) (or the SFCP). The PPCU (Matia) therefore lent partial and limited support to the CL in keeping alive the spirit of the autonomy movement in 1967. While continuing with their separate agitations CL and PPCU (Matia) had led a few joint agitations also. The PPCU (Menon) which had not publicly supported either the Formula or the autonomy movement carried out similar agitations independently. All the three organisations, however, called for a province-wide strike on 1 August 1967 for press freedom and release of all political prisoners. Consequent police atrocities and other repressive measures seem to have brought them closer through common suffering. And at their joint call along with DACSU, SACSU and a large number of residential halls and college unions 30 August 1967 was observed throughout the province as Bandimuktī and Julum Pratirodh Dibas through students strike,

of split in SFCP see Talukdar Maniruzzaman, Radical Politics and Emergence of Bangladesh (Dacca, 1975), pp. 12-20.

4 For details see Oitihasik Egaro Dafa Karmsuchi O Egaro Dafar Pratighatar Path - published by Central Committee, Purba Pakistan Chhatra Union (Dacca, n.d.), p. 7.
meetings and peaceful demonstrations.\(^5\) There was however no permanent understanding among these three premier students organisations. Anyway, throughout 1968 the East Pakistani students organisations either jointly or separately continued with various agitations piecemeal and faced closure of universities and other educational institutions and residential halls, arrests, lathi charge and police firing all over the province. At times some of them, particularly CU (Matia) drew attention to the need for unity among all opposition parties against the common enemy to lead a movement determined to dislodge the undemocratic regime.\(^6\)

Some EPAL leaders were aware of the need for making common cause with the students. But even with the tacit approval of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was in prison, they could not get the EPAL NC approve the Eleven Points officially.\(^7\) Formal acceptance might have been opposed by some members who shared Khondkar Muhshtaque Ahmad's view that the Eleven Points were meant to overshadow the Six Points.\(^8\)

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5 For details see Azad (Dacca), June-July-August 1967, particularly 21-23 July and 23-25 August and 1 September 1967.

6 For details see ibid and Sangbad (Dacca), January-November 1968.

7 See Mustafa Jarwar, "Panchish Bachhorer Sangrame Awami League O Bangabandhu", Bangladesh Awami League Council Adhibeshan Smaranika '74 (Bengali) (Dacca, 1974).

8 Khondkar's view was expressed in his interview with me in 1976.
While in East Pakistan student organizations were trying to evolve a united programme and speculations were afloat about a progressive oppositional front to be led by the EPAL, trouble was brewing in West Pakistan also. Large scale disturbances had followed the incident in Landi Kotal in the first week of November 1968. Some students were killed in police firing. The veteran NAP leader Wali Khan and the emerging PPP leader Bhutto were arrested, escalating the anti-Government student agitation. A general strike was observed on 29 November 1968 in West Pakistan. The East Pakistani students organised protest movements and renewed their call for unity among the opposition and themselves finalised the formation of the APJAC and formulation of the eleven Points.

The NAP (M) appears to have been the first among the political parties of East Pakistan to urge for an immediate meeting of the two NAP’s, the AL and PDM to chalk out a line of action, taking note of the situation. Mizanur Rahman Chaudhury, Acting General Secretary of the EPAL had favourably responded to the call. Presumably, in order to justify its existence the EP branch of the PDM decided to observe ten consecutive protest days from 4 December 1968.

9 For details see Tariq Ali, Military Rule or People’s Power (London, 1970).

But the most forceful and effective reaction was voiced by Maulana Bhashani. At a meeting organised by NAP(B) and its subsidiaries, Krishak Samiti and Sramik Federation, held on 6 December 1969 in Dacca, Maulana Bhashani asked President Ayub Khan to "bow down" to the people's demands, "give up power" and "lead a retired life". He called on the ruling coterie to abide by the promises made during the Pakistan movement and accord full regional autonomy to East Pakistan. He was reported to have said that East Pakistanis would create an "independent East Bengal" if this demand continued to be neglected. Conceding a request from the Rickshaw Pullers' Union, he called for a hartal the next day. The same day the BNP along with NAP(M) also called for a Daman Neeti Protirodh Diwas on 13 December 1969.

The police excesses perpetrated on 7 December in Dacca totally exposed the Government and marked the beginning of a continued struggle by the people to end the undemocratic regime. The same day while Maulana Bhashani led a huge procession to the Governor's House in the evening to submit a memorandum to Governor, the leaders of AL, BNP, PPP, Nel, Jel and NAP (M) after a six and a half hour long discussion decided to observe hartal on the following day. Bhashani had already issued a call for the same and instructed his workers to observe the protest day through hartal and public meetings.

11 For details see Sambah, Azad and Dainik Pakistan (Dacca), 8 December 1969.
in East Pakistan during the first week of the month, comment-
ted that the opposition seemed to be determined for blood-
shed. The provocations indeed seemed designed for such an
eventuality. For example, at the **Ghaebana Namaz-i-Janaza**
held for those killed on 7 December, as soon as Maulana
Bhashani who was leading the prayers started it, some armed
policemen dragged Mizanur Rahman Chaudhury, Arif Iftekhar,
Masiur Rahman (NAP) and Asaduzzaman from their places.
Bhashani's efforts along with Mohiuddin (NAP), Masiur
Rahman, Arif and the EPAL leaders present to break Section
144 was foiled by Police Riot Carts which threw water by
hose pipe and dispersed the gathering. Bhashani criticised
the police attempt to prevent people from taking part in
the Namaz-i-Janaza and called for a strike the next day. It
is to be noted that some MDM members like Golam Azam (Jel)
and Shafiqul Islam (ML Council), though representing the
so-called pro-Islam parties, were reported to have opposed
Bhashani's decision to break 144 in protest of the ugly police
act of dragging people from a prayer meeting.

The hartal on 13 December called by the EPAL, NAP
(Nuzaffar), NDF and twenty MNAs and endorsed by Bhashani was
a total success. In spite of police provocations it remained
peaceful.

12 *Dainik Pakistan*, 12 December 1968.
13 For details see *ibid.*, 9 December 1968.
Starting with the incidents of 7 December 1969, there was a considerable change in the political climate of East Pakistan. Bhashani's reaction appears to have been more in tune with the explosive situation than the EPAL's, although neither Bhashani nor the EPAL could immediately decide upon the course of action. So, while the EPAL deliberated upon a "combined programme" of a united opposition, Bhashani merely underlined that the emerging opposition front was not meant for fighting the elections, it was meant for establishing a new constitution with a socialist structure with universal adult franchise and complete autonomy for all constituent units, namely, EP and four provinces of WP.

Significantly, while defining autonomy he reiterated his ideas made known in 1957.16

Though there seemed to be some signs of rapprochement among the political parties, each so far reluctant even to recognise the credibility of the others, they were yet to evolve a consensus regarding the basic issue: was it enough to challenge the legitimacy of the Government through participation in the elections under a system partially democratic in form but non-democratic in content or was a mass movement inevitable? Should the mass movement, if any, be directed

15 See statement by Mizamur, Azad, 15 December 1968.
16 See report of Bhashani's long speech at Pabna in Dainik Pakistan, 30 December 1968.
only to remove Ayub Khan or should it also have some economic demands? Would an amendment of the 1962 constitution suffice or should the revival of the 1956 constitution be sought? Between the extreme Left and the extreme Right there prevailed almost as many views as the number of parties, factions and groups were there. The NAP (M) was against participation in the elections and generally believed in an anti-imperialist mass movement. Some party men, however advocated mass uprising beginning with a programme of "gherao". Their critics pointed out the lack of the basics for such a programme - like a strong organisational base among the workers and peasants, a well-trained cadre, etc. They were certain that the consequent distress suffered by the unprepared masses was bound to be counter-productive.

The other NAP - that was NAP (Vali) better known in EP as NAP (Mozaffar) or NAP (Moscow) - a believer in evolutionary social change through parliamentary democracy - was prepared to utilise whatever opportunities the bourgeoisie system could offer. According to it, in the absence of an organised working class - a multi-class movement was the only alternative. To prevent the reactionary, communal forces and "stooges of imperialism" from acquiring political leadership the NAP (M) was prepared to join hands with the pro-Six-Point AL and even the liberal section of the PDM to launch an issue-oriented movement. The PDM - almost a still-born opposition front - was divided. Mahmud Ali, representing the NDF favoured participation in all stages of the elections,
Salam Khan of pro-PDM AL wanted participation only at the lowest level, that is, election of the Basic Democrats. Some other members of the PDM believed that unless the pro-Six Point AL and the two NAPs joined them no decision could be effective. Most of the West Pakistani leaders, including Nawabzada Nasrullah and Mian Mamtaz Daultana, encouraged by the agitations in West Pakistan, hoped that the opposition would win the primary elections. Council ML and Nezam-e-Islam favoured participation in elections accompanied by, if necessary, a mild constitutional movement. Jamat-e-Islami wanted removal of the Government but was not prepared for any movement involving civil disobedience since that might adversely affect the interest of the affluent. It was also not prepared to join hands with the NAP in any joint front. IPAL was prepared for a joint movement with both the NAP but the NAP (M) was not prepared to work with NAP (B). That was apparently the kind of a complicated jigsaw puzzle that East Pakistani (also West Pakistani) politics was when the EP students, always in the vanguard of any opposition movement, showed their political acumen by overtaking the hesitant and indecisive politicians. Various students' organisations, decided to submerge their ideological differences and came forward to form the APSAC. They held a meeting on 1 January 1969 at the historic Bat talo in the Dacca University campus. The meeting condemned the recent atrocities on students and others in both wings of the country and demanded normal functioning of educational
institutions without sudden breaks, and cancellation of the
Hamoodur Rahman Report on Education which aimed at limiting
the scope for higher education only to the upper stratum of
the country. It was made clear that unless East Pakistan's
demands were conceded no political decision would be
accepted. East Pakistani students' total politicisation
was indicated further by the declaration that while fighting
for specific demands of the student community, they would
simultaneously participate in other political, economic
and cultural movements because, being a part of the society,
the students could not afford to be indifferent to the
sufferings of the people. Tofail Ahmed of the BPL who was
also the Vice President of DACSU announced that the programme
for a united students movement would be announced on
7 January 1969 and called for a students' strike on the same
day. The strike, however, was postponed, obviously to
give time to the politicians who were holding both open-door
and closed-door intra-party and inter-party discussions in
groups and individually. Syed Nazrul Islam, Acting President
of EPAL, was frequently conferring with Bhashani undoubtedly
to seek his advice for the right strategy if not to make him
give the much-needed lead to start large-scale anti-Government
agitations. One thing was certain that Bhashani's honeymoon

17 For details see Sangbad and Dainik Pakistan, 2 January
1969.

18 Sangbad, 7 January 1969.
with the Government was over. He was no longer a prisoner of
the misconstrued logic that a Government friendly with
socialist countries was a likely instrument for introducing
socialism in the country. By now he had realised that re-
structuring of society, which was what he had been striving
for, could not be expected to be introduced from above by
those who would certainly lose by such change. He also knew
that such change could not be effected overnight. There had
to be a long struggle. But a beginning had to be made, and
therefore, common people must be aroused from a state of
lethargy first. And any opportunity for doing so needed to
be utilised. The result was that it was Maulana Bhashani
who actually sparked off the revolutionary fervour of East
Pakistani youth for releasing Sheikh Mujib with a determined
call to break the prison walls if necessary.

But the EPAL leadership, moving very cautiously,
kept their options open. While discussing with Bhashani
and endorsing the students programme they were also con-
ferring with those interested in a joint front and finally
joined the eight-party Democratic Action Committee (DAC)

19 During my conversation with Maulana Bhashani in Summer
1976 I found that he still held the same view. I would
therefore, not agree with Masiur Rahman's comment
during my conversation with him in Dacca in Summer
1976 that Bhashani's "head was overpowered by his
heart - in launching the movement for the release of
Mujib" - Mr. Rahman popularly known as Jadu Milan
became the chief of the Bangladesh NAI (Bhashani)
after Bhashani's death.
when it was formed in early January 1969 after about three months' deliberations. The DAC actually was a combination of PDM, APAL (pro-Six Points), JUUI and NAP(W). Neither NAP (B) nor PPP joined the DAC. The DAC decided not to participate in the elections and adopted an eight point programme which did not include demands for regional autonomy. Therefore, the EPAL's decision to join the DAC would have looked quite baffling but for the fifth point of the DAC programme which demanded unconditional release of all political prisoners, students, workers and journalists including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Khan Abdul Wali Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This point also included demand for the withdrawal of not only all pending court cases involving politicians but cases under tribunals as well. As has already been explained, the EPAL needed wider support to bring pressure on President Ayub for the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This was also their only way to prevent too much radicalisation of East Pakistani politics by the students and thus ensure their own position. Thirdly, this

20 The signatories to DAC programme were: Amir Hosein Shah, Acting President of APNAP(W), Chaudhury Mohammad Ali, President NEL, Jufri Mahmud, Secretary-General of the JUUI, Muntas Daultana, President PML (Council), Haqulla Khan, President PAL (pro-PDM), Iaurul Amin, President NDF, Syed Nazrul Islam, Acting President EPAL and Mian Tofail Ahmed, Acting Ameer, Jel. Langham, 9 January 1969.

21 For details of the PDP programme see ibid.
saved them from depending too much on the initiative of the students who were growing increasingly aggressive. However, participation in the DAC was not effected at the cost of EPAL's own programmes. While the DAC was in the making, an EPAL WC meeting passed certain resolutions which included decisions to organise large-scale mass movement for democratisation and realisation of the Six Points and boycott elections at all levels. It also asked the opposition members to resign from the National and Provincial Assemblies and withdrew expulsion orders served on certain members of the party with a renewed call to them to return to the Party fold to participate in the proposed mass movement. 22 This was further proved when at the Round Table Conference in March 1969 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stood firmly by the Six Points and left the DAC. It should also be noted that but for the EPAL's association with the DAC it might never have had the chance of a direct dialogue with President Ayub. This had in fact elevated it to the status of the other so-called national parties of Pakistan.

The DAC gave a call for an all-Pakistan Demands Day on 17 January 1969 and the APSAC decided to start its programme to realise their Eleven Points demand on the same day. It should be noted here that the APSAC had waited till the DAC was formed, and it was only when the students were

22 Ibid.
certain that "the predominance of the rightists in it would prevent it from adopting a full democratic programme" that they publicised their demands originally decided upon in 1967, and tried to pressurise the DAC to call for a movement on its basis.23 The DAC did not accede but their demands Day on 17 January gave the students a fair chance to give a start to their own programme. The Eleven Points were explained at an APSAC meeting held in Dacca University where the students renewed their call to all opposition parties to unite on the basis of the Eleven Points. Their attempt to take out a procession was foiled by lathi charge and tear gas and arrests. The EP DAC also held a meeting at the Bar Library Hall in Dacca on the same day under armed police surveillance but it was allowed to take out a procession.24 Processions taken out by the students on the following days also were treated with stern and at times anticipatory police action. In addition to the demand for autonomy the Eleven Points included demands for changes in the educational system, nationalisation of banking and insurance, big industries, reduction of tax burdens on farmers, better wages for workers, etc.25 The imprint of the general EPAL programme and the Six Points Formula was unmistakable. Point 3 of the SAC

23 Citihnsik 11 dafa, n. 4, pp. 9-10.
25 See Appendix for the text of the 11 Points Programme.
demands for regional autonomy in fact was the Six Points Formula of the BPL without any change and except for certain demands concerning the student community all others had figured in the BPL/BPLA manifestoes regularly. Thus, in the eleven points of the SAC of 1968-69 the East Pakistan Awami League demands were clubbed together with some additions and greater participation ensued. However, the SAC added a third dimension to the anti-Ayub movement in East Pakistan’s demands for the end of the Ayub system, and self-rule for East Pakistan were joined with a demand for social change. The students-authority confrontation reached a new height when on 20 January 1969 Asaduzzam, a law student of Dacca University, was killed in police firing on a students’ procession. The next day, after the Ghaebana Janaza-Janaza of Asad at the Paltan Maidan, an one lakh-strong procession covered the whole city displaying the bloodstained shirt of Asad and shouting anti-Government slogans. The police along with the EK-R resorted to firing and bayonet charging on that day also. The SAC called for a three-day students strike all over the province and instructed the local units of all students organisations to start intensive mass contact through meetings and processions everywhere. In Dacca the students took out a torch light procession also. The Army was called to contain the students. However, more and more areas were responding to the students’ call and repressive governmental actions involving tear-gassing, bayonet charging, firing etc.
were reported from Narayanganj, Khulna, Daulatpur, Khalishpur, Mymensingh, etc. in the new few days. The AJAC leaders met every day and issued instructions for the next day's programme. On 25 January they asked for the return of the Army and EPR personnel to their barracks, and announced that in view of the students' determination to carry on their fight till their demands were met, the AJAC would announce details of a wider programme soon. To prepare themselves for this more intense struggle, the people were called on to:

1. form committees in co-operation with the local units of the APSAC at the district, subdivisional, thana and village levels and in all educational institutions;
2. distribute pamphlets, leaflets, posters and hold street-side meetings with the help of microphones to publicise the APSAC programme, to mobilise the masses and form volunteer corps;
3. maintain order and communal harmony.

In addition, students and workers were requested to come forward to form volunteer corps.

The indiscriminate police firing killing innocent people like peasants working in the fields, a mother feeding her child, a worker buying bread, besides repressing the agitating students in EP aroused anger in West Pakistan also.

26 For details see Sangbad and Azad, 18-25 January 1969.
27 Sangbad, 26 January 1969.
As a result the army was called out in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Gujranwala.28

Ae'IL Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam in a press statement, sounding a note of accord with the students, said that the situation had reached the limit. It was no longer possible to see people being killed like animals. He reminded the Government that these repressive means could neither help the Government retain its position nor suppress the uprising of twelve crores of Pakistanis. And therefore it was time to send the Army back to the barracks. Otherwise, he said, it would be too late.29 The Government's attempt to corner the students further was evident when the Vice-Chancellor of Dacca University was informed that the Army would intervene if the APSAC meeting scheduled for 29 January 1969 was held at the Bat tala. Consequently, following requests from the faculty, the meeting was held inside the Arts Faculty Building and called for a students' strike on 5 February 1969.30 It should be noted here that

28 For details see Azad and Sangbad, 25-30 January 1969.


30 Sangbad, 30 January 1969. The "Bat tala" had become a part of the students' movements in El like "Madhur Canteen". The tree under which the speakers usually stood was chopped down in anger by Yahya Khan's Army in 1971 and Madhur, owner of the canteen where usually group discussions used to take place was killed on 25-26 night of March 1971. However, "Madhur Canteen" still draws political elements among the students and the sapling of a banyan tree planted by Senator Edward Kennedy in 1972 at the same spot is still the venue for meetings of students' organisations.
on 28 January 1969, just the day before the above-mentioned threat was given, Sheikh Mujib in his statement against the accusations had said that as far as the said conspiracy was concerned he was innocent, the charges against him were fabricated to malign him for his legitimate political activities. And the students present in the court were heard shouting slogans: We want the release of Sheikh Mujib, "withdraw the false case", and "To hell with Ayubshahi".  

As repression of and unrest among the people were increasing simultaneously, the instruments of repression, primarily the police and the EPR, were yielding diminishing returns. On various occasions they were reluctant to carry on with their assigned tasks. This necessitated calling out of the Army. Obviously this was the last resort of Ayub Khan's Government. For soon after this the President announced his willingness to have a dialogue with "responsible" political parties.

The APSAC unequivocally opposed the proposal which they considered to be an eye-wash to divert attention from the popular movement for the Eleven Points. In an interview


32 Information gathered from conversation with many activists and eye witnesses in Bangladesh in 1976.

33 See First of the Month Speech of the President, Pakistan Observer, 2 February 1969.

34 Azad, 6 February 1969.
with the ten top leaders of the APSAC whom he called the “brain of the January movement and the life of the Eleven Points”, a staff reporter of Azad found that as far as the students were concerned the Eleven Points were absolutely “non-negotiable”. They were very clear on their firm stand that their co-operation to anyone or any group or party would be conditional upon the latter’s stand on the Eleven Points. The reason, as they explained:

We want a structural change of the administrative system – not just a change of government... We will oppose any government which is anti-Eleven Points... Our movement will not stop till we are able to uproot this government and establish a full fledged democratic system ensuring complete autonomy for East Bengal, effecting a complete rout of the vestiges of imperialism, feudalism and monopoly capital, solving the manifold problems of students, workers, peasants, job-holders and small and medium size industrialists. 35

The aims and objectives enumerated above reflecting the views of a cross-section of the student community – which in turn in the context of East Pakistani society encompassed not only the feelings of the urban intelligentsia but that of the illiterate and semi-literate but poverty-conscious, if not politically conscious, stratum of East Pakistani society. Nevertheless, there were certain ambiguities. What would be the exact nature of the “democratic system”? What would be the structure of the economy that could take care of the

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35 Interview published in the full-page account of the APSAC in ibid.
toiling masses and small and medium size industrialists simultaneously? These and other details were not delineated. And perhaps that made the Eleven Points more readily acceptable to the EPAL - which had been professing more or less similar objectives without defining the modalities to achieve them. The ambiguity of APJAC was inherent in its composition - the students organizations represented in it having different ideological leanings. The two PCUs were loosely identified with two NAPs, the split in PCU having predated the split in the NAP and followed closely the split in the international Communist Movement. The HSF - originally a tool of the establishment - had changed its stand with the change of time and leadership but certainly did not share the ideology of either of the CUs. The PCCL like its unofficial parent party, the EPAL, was basically a coalitional centrist group with elements belonging to both the moderate left and moderate right. But because of its close links with EPAL through regular recruitment from PCCL to EPAL on the one hand and through direct and close contact with the EPAL leaders the PCCL was undoubtedly the most popular students' organisation and therefore was in a position to dictate terms to the rest of the APJAC resulting in a rather watered down "revolutionary" programme.

Lack of cohesion within the APJAC was also reflected in their individual stand about the basis of any discussion. According to one view, which was very vague,
negotiation was possible only if the students were convinced of the sincerity of the negotiators. Another view, a little clearer, was that a promise to the effect that Eleven Points would not be opposed would suffice if negotiations were to be undertaken. The third view was, discussions or negotiations were possible only if all demands pertaining to students were accepted, all political prisoners were freed, 'Agartala Case' was withdrawn, election based on universal adult franchise was announced and above all, full regional autonomy, according to the Eleven Points, was assured. However, the fourth view was the final and majority view of the APJAC - and that was: "...we know that the Government knows that acceptance of Eleven Points - which are peoples' demands - would render the Government non-existent and therefore they are bound to break any promise made by them for sheer self-interest and hence there is no question of any negotiations regarding the Eleven Points." 36

The very fact that Azad, basically a conservative newspaper, turned somewhat liberal, which had already been penalised by Ayub Khan's Government, chose and dared to publish a special feature about the Eleven Points on the day the President was arriving in the provincial capital was a clear indication that Governmental authority in the province was in an absolute shambles.

36 Ibid.
Ayub Khan on his arrival in WP disclosed to the Press that he was considering withdrawal of the emergency and the DPH and use of ordinances. There were also other signs of the accommodating attitude of the Government. The confiscation of the New Nation Printing Press was withdrawn during his stay in WP. Some political prisoners like Mustafa Ahmed and Altaf Hosein of NAP(M) were released. But these feelings did not achieve much in his favour. There was no sign of toning down on the part of the APSAC. Rather, encouraged by such concessions, students stood firm against any negotiation that would undermine the Eleven Points. At the APSAC public meeting - described as the biggest in recent years - at the Faltan Maidan the APSAC leaders Jofail Ahmed, Abdur Rauf, Mustafa Jamal Haider, Saifuddin Manik, Fakhrul Islam, Mahbubullah, Ibrahim Khalil, Khaled Mohammad Ali and Shamsuddoha reiterated their stand that anything short of acceptance of the Eleven Points would not do. It was pointed out that the Presidential offer of discussions with the much maligned politicians, removal of ban on Ittefaq, decision to withdraw emergency and DPH were indicators that the autocratic structure was breaking down in the face of people's movement. They said victory was theirs. They would see it, through turbulent uprising, if necessary, that other demands, including unconditional release of Sheikh Mujib, were conceded. The proposed Round Table Conference, although it was taken to be a step towards victory of the movement, was described as a
smokescreen to divert the people from the path of struggle. It was stated that the student community would not support the idea of discussions unless certain demands were met first. These preconditions as passed in a resolution at the meeting included immediate release of Sheikh Mujib, Ali Khan, Shutto, Soni Singh, Abdul Jabbar; withdrawal of all political cases including the 'Agartala case', release of all political prisoners including students held under the JPA; resignation of the provincial Governor Jomon Khan, penalty for those officers associated with excesses committed during the movement, promise of compensation to the families of persons killed during the movement, announcement of judicial enquiry of police firings, withdrawal of warrants against political leaders and workers, like Mohammad Sohag, Gyan Chakrabarti, Sukhendu Dasidar, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Mohammad Farhad, etc., restoration of full freedom of the press, freedom of speech and cancellation of all black laws including the minorities ordinance; fulfilment of peasants', workers' and salary earners' demands etc. Although the resolutions also included fulfilment of exclusively students' demands, the broad spectrum of the MNS and the students' total involvement in the mainstream of politics was clear from their claim "in our own interests, we cannot keep away from the struggle that our parents must carry on to protect their politico-economic rights".  

37 For further details of the speeches and resolutions see Japanbad and Azad, 10 February 1969, and Ittefaq, 11 February 1969.
In the Agartala Case, hearing of about 250 witnesses and recording of statements by the accused persons were completed on 6 February 1969 and the chief counsel for the Government, Manzur Awdar, had started his arguments on 10 February 1969. But the proceedings were adjourned on the 13th till 17th February 1969 and then further extended up to 10 March 1969. Meanwhile the Emergency was lifted on 17 February 1969 and the DPA was withdrawn, and finally all the accused of the 'Agartala Conspiracy' case were released on 22 February 1969. A Government of Pakistan Press note explained that Fundamental Rights had been restored with the withdrawal of the state of Emergency and, therefore, to avoid any misunderstanding the Special Tribunal had been dissolved, and it was in that context that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others had been released.37a

Whatever might have been the technical legal grounds cited by the Government for the withdrawal of the case, the circumstances under which the decision was taken proved that it was the two-tier popular upsurge, one demanding the release of Sheikh Mujib and the second, demanding the end of the undemocratic regime that had compelled the Government to take such a decision. Finally Lomen Khan also left East Pakistan for Rawalpindi on 22 March 1969 and did not come back to his post and Ayub Khan stepped down on 25 March 1969. But meanwhile a lot more blood was shed as the facade of 'negotiations' failed and the APJAC and EPAL had to work hard for ushering

37a See Shadajanta Manala, n. 31, p. 103.
in the changes, however nominal these might have proved later.

The AIPAC declaration that there would be no compromise at the cost of Eleven Points had, in addition to the tacit support of the LlAL and declared support by mill workers, a fillip from Bhashani, one of the doyens of agitational politics in the Indian sub-continent. Bhashani in a series of public meetings categorically stated that East Pakistan would not tolerate non-acceptance of the Eleven Points. He compared the prevailing situation with the AII-L-HIC tussle and commented that the non-acceptance of the Fourteen Points of the AIZ by the Indian National Congress led to the bifurcation of India, non-acceptance of the valid demands of the students by the Government might lead to a similar situation. Finally, at a M(A) meeting in Dacca on 16 February 1969 he declared that the days of non-violent constitutional movement were over, the next phase had to be violent and extra-constitutional. He declared that if Sheikh Mujib, his one-time fellow traveller and others were not released immediately the people would break the prison walls as was done during the French Revolution and would free them. He also said that if the Eleven-Point demands were not fulfilled people would stop paying the taxes and rent. Bhashani's assessment of the situation was in tune

38 For details see Azad, Sansabad, and Dainik Pakistan, 10-16 February 1969.

39 For further details of Bhashani's Paltan Maidan speech on 16 February 1969 see Sansabad and Ittefaq, 17 February 1969.
with the popular feeling of wrath of the day. Sgt. Zahirul Haq, one of the principal accused in the Agartala Case, had been killed by a sentry in the Cantonment jail the day before and evoked by a very small but significant incident while his body was being taken in a procession for burial, Dacca people had set several buildings on fire which included official and private residences of four Central and provincial ministers, the State Guest House - the official residence of the Chairman of the Special Tribunal set up for the Agartala case, residence of the EP Convenor of Convention ML, the existing office building and the one under construction of the same party, some portions of the Dacca Gymkhana Club and a printing press. 40

Bhashani's reference to the release of Sheikh Mujib introduced a new slogan: "Jeler tala bhangbo, Sheikh Mujibke anbo" (we will break the prison walls to free Sheikh Mujib) and added to the strength of the EPAL WC resolution reiterating the demand that withdrawal of the Agartala Case and Sheikh Mujib's release should be the minimum preconditions for DAC's participation in the proposed Round Table Conference between the President and the politicians. 41 Responding to the EPAL call, Sheikh Mujib Day and Six Points Day was

40 Ittefaq and Sangbad, 17 February 1969.
41 Ittefaq, 12 February 1969.
observed on 11 February 1969 all over the province. Chittagong and Sylhet were reported to have observed full hartal, and Chittagong observed it with meetings. Karachi AL also demanded Sheikh Mujib's release. The prominent labour leader Abdul Mannan announced at a workers rally at Adamji Nagar in Narail that the workers would start a massive movement if Mujib was not released. This threat was repeated by other labour leaders like Rahil Amin and Maulana Sajidur Rahman. The DAC, however, was still undecided about its stand. A three-day long meeting of the DAC held in Dacca, in fact, ended on 11 February 1969 in a deadlock in the face of EPAL's firm stand on the issue, and a further meeting was fixed for 15 February onwards in Lahore. While various speculations were being made about the possible DAC decision and the outcome of the RTC, if held, Jyed Nazrul Islam, used the typical AL tactics of strengthening its position by seeking popular support. At a DAC public meeting in Dacca Paltan Maidan on 14 February 1969 he promised that no compromise would be made over Sheikh Mujib's release as a precondition. He pointed out that it was wrong to impute the

42 Ibid., and Sangbad, 12 and 14 February 1969.
43 Ittefaq, 13 February 1969.
44 Reported in Azad, 12 February 1969.
same meaning to "discussions" and "compromise". While clarifying EPAL position vis-a-vis DAC he said that all constituents of DAC had retained their party identity and programmes, but for effective carrying out of those programmes a democratic environment was essential and DAC's eight Point Programme was meant for this limited purpose only. Significantly, Syed Nazrul Islam also said: "To-day the various stages of our struggle have to be understood with deep foresight." Obviously he was hinting that participation in the DAC meeting, or even the IIC, was not an end in itself but should be taken as "means to the end". For the EPAL at that stage the most vital problem was survival which was to a great extent dependent on the survival of the party leader. So, the various tangles to be solved in order of preference were survival of the leader, survival of the party and survival of East Pakistan. And the strategy adopted, that is, joining DAC for a limited purpose, even if it smelt of opportunism in the strict moral sense, was pragmatic. Pragmatism had always been EPAL's trump card in any crisis.

Syed Nazrul Islam's pointed reference that Sheikh Mujib's release was no longer East Pakistan's demand only, that it was the demand of twelve crores Pakistanis, was a clear pointer towards the real purpose of EPAL's participation in the DAC though the DAC programme fell far short of the EPAL programme. Although the EPAL argument that DAC-style democratisation would be the necessary beginning only, was
apparently plausible, it did not explain EPAL's blunt refusal to join the PDM which also aimed at democratisation of the system at least, if nothing more. It can be presumed, however, that if PDM was formed after the Agartala case was constituted perhaps the EPAL would have used it to secure Sheikh Mujib's release.

At the meeting Syed Nazrul Islam made it known that EPAL participation in the Lahore meeting of the DAC had been approved by Sheikh Mujib but that he (Nazrul) wanted the people's verdict on the question of any compromise without Sheikh Mujib's release. The huge gathering was reported to have said "no" in one voice. He conveyed Sheikh Mujib's message to the people which was an appeal to them for unitedly carrying on a relentless struggle against tyranny without losing strength in internal squabbling.45

Though Bhashani's stand on Sheikh Mujib's release was a source of strength for the EPAL, it also constituted a threat. Too much aggressiveness could take the situation beyond EPAL's professed programme of "constitutional" movement and beyond political handling thus jeopardising the leader's, the party's and the province's future as visualised

45 For details of Syed Nazrul Islam's speech see Ittefaq, 16 February 1969. Sheikh Mujib's meeting with Islam, Khondkar Mushtaque and Mullah Jalaluddin on 9 February 1969 was reported in Sanabad, 10 February 1969.
by the EPAL leadership. This apart, with the inclusion of the demand for Sheikh Mujib's release in the Eight Points of the DAC signifying its approval by the West Pakistani leaders concerned, it would not have been surprising if some leaders of the EPAL had become optimistic enough to hope that ultimately Six Points also could be made acceptable to West Pakistani leaders. Tajuddin Ahmad's statement warning against the "extremists" and his emphasis on the participation of both wings in the current movement on his release from jail on 12 February 1969 was certainly conditioned by apprehensions about escalating violence and expectation for an amicable settlement. A little later, probably when he was apprised of the full details of the preceding developments, he did say that people's movement and politicians' discussions would go on simultaneously, reflecting the EPAL strategy of keeping its options open. But he did not specify the nature of the "movement".

The essential demand of the movement was withdrawal of the Agartala Conspiracy Case and unconditional release of Sheikh Mujib as according to the party decision he was the only person who could represent EPAL at the RIC. But there must have been some communication gap between the recently released leaders and those who had been steering the party through the difficult years. At the Lahore meeting of the DAC there was believed to have been some initial confusion

46 For Tajuddin Ahmad's statement and speech at Faltan Maidan see Ittefaq, 13 and 15 February 1969.
about the EPAL stand as there was a hint of disagreement between the General Secretary and the Acting President which was, of course, speedily resolved and Muyezuddin, one of the EPAL delegates, was sent to Dacca to inform Sheikh Mujib through his wife not to accept release on parole. There had been a rumour that he might attend RTC while on parole and that acceptance of this alternative had been cleared by Tajuddin. It was not certain whether Mujib would act on this advice but precautionary measures were taken all the same. Maulana Bhashani was also believed to have advised Mujib not to accept release on parole. For the Maulana, however, the RTC was a non-factor. He had denounced it as an imperialists' conspiracy to perpetuate their hold on the country. He had branded the Eight Points of DAC as the "charter for jeopardising popular upsurge", and announced at NAP (B) Council meeting in Khulna soon after his meeting

47 Begam Mujib was widely believed to have said, after conveying the message, that she would rather be a widow than have Mujib attending the RTC while a single accused in the Case remained in prison. Details from interview, with Amena Began, Abdul Mannan, Kanruddin Ahmad. Tajuddin's somewhat hasty acceptance of the possibility of Mujib's release on parole for attending RTC was widely known but never publicised.

48 According to Masirur Rahman (Jadu Mian), the US Ambassador was actively involved in persuading Ayub Khan for having the RTC and that elaborate arrangements were made to keep the US Embassy informed about the minute-to-minute developments in the conference.

49 Sangbad, 12 February 1969.
with Nasrullah on 8 February 1969 that he could meet the President only when the students' Eleven Points and NAP(B)'s Fourteen Points were accepted. He was, however, advised to be rational and was reminded that the Indian National Congress had passed its resolution for complete independence in 1930 but still after protracted movements the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was made, and both the Congress and the Muslim League, though having their distinctive party-programmes like the Quit India and the Direct Action respectively, did meet Wavell and Mountbatten for discussions. Bhashani was also asked what preconditions he imposed when he met the President and the West Pakistan Governor Kalabagh in March 1963 - at a time when hosts of political prisoners had been in detention without trial; when there were no democratic rights, even trade unions being banned; when peasants were being over-taxed and suffering in the hands of tehsildars and touts. He was also asked what he achieved by his meetings either for the people in general or for his party-programme. He was told that asking others to accept his party programme itself was undemocratic, it should be left to the people to decide what programmes they would prefer. What he should make clear was whether he wanted the people to get an opportunity to express their choice or he wanted the present situation to prevail.  

50 See Mosafir, "Rajnaitik Mancha", Ittefaq, 14 February 1969 for a detailed discussion on Bhashani's stand. It should be noted that Bhashani's call for breaking the prison walls to release Mujib came immediately after this - on 16 February 1969.
While some optimist politicians speculated about DAC's success in making the President accept the E\:AL pre-condition for attending the RTC and hoped that the RTC would yield something positive for democratisation of the system ushering in normal political activities some politicians doubted it - but both eulogised the students of East Pakistan who forged ahead with their agitations with great tenacity. The people of East Pakistan rendered massive support to their call. In spite of the fact that the Government spared no means to suppress the spread of the Eleven Points, "surging crowds filled the streets of the cities, towns, and thana (police station) headquarters, defying police orders that were intended to prohibit the assembly of more than four persons. The imposition of army curfew designed to prevent the spread of the slogans for swadhikar (emancipation) of East Bengal and establishment of gramik Raj (rule by peasants and workers) seemed almost naive."51 The largest spontaneous outburst of popular resentment against the Government was seen in Dacca on 13 February 1969. This was in reaction to the news received from Rajshahi about the brutal killing the same day of a student and a Professor who was the Proctor of the Rajshahi University and was helping the striking students to remain

51 Telukdar Maniruzzaman, Radical Politics and Emergence of Bangladesh (Dacca, 1975), p. 38.
peaceful. Besides, there was deep-felt apprehensions about Mujib’s release when the rumour that he was to be freed on the 19th proved false. Newspaper reports described the sudden appearance of streams of students and others on the streets in all parts of Dacca, as a "tidal bore". The curfewed Dacca streets, said the reports, appeared to have woken from a hundred years of slumber with the sounds of the protesting crowds’ feet. At one stage slogans shouted in various areas of the city had the combined sound effect of a roaring sea. Firing by Army patrol throughout the night could not stop the people from demanding withdrawal of curfew, withdrawal of the Agartala case and release of Sheikh Mujib. The utter brutality of the regime was exposed when the patrolling Army prevented removal of the wounded and the dead by ambulance vans. The President was immediately apprised of the situation by Ataur Rahman, Shah Azizur Rahman and Asaduzzaman Khan. A similar upsurge was reported from Narayanganj also. Next day, again defying curfew orders, people from all walks of life came out on streets in protest and were again met with bayonets and bullets. Teachers of all educational institutions went on indefinite strike in protest. Mosafir warned all, particularly the

52 See Ittefaq, 18 January 1969 for the details of the rumour.
53 For details see ibid and Sangbad, 19 and 20 February 1969.
opportunists and the vested interests not to take lightly the sacrifices that the youth were making for restoration of people's rights. He was certain that victory was theirs and not for those who had villified the youth by calling them "kittens".  

Victory in the first lap, in fact, was round the corner. On 21 February 1969 President Field Marshal Ayub Khan told the nation that he would not contest the next elections, and on 22 February 1969, the Agartala Conspiracy Case was withdrawn, Sheikh Mujib and others including political prisoners like the BNP leader Moni Singh were released and Sheikh Mujib was invited to attend the NTC by Khwaja Shahabuddin, Ayub's Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

Sheikh Mujib met Maulana Bashani immediately after his release and announced his support to Eleven Points. The public reception meeting organised by the APJAC, however, signified a complete rapprochement and rapport between Mujib and the APJAC leadership. In his speech he marked his release as the sign of victory of the students and assured


55 Ibid., 23 February 1969. It is significant, if the report was verbatim, that he said "sangramee chinatrara je egar dafa diyachen tar proti amaro samarthan robhie karon egar dafa rabbeye amar daler chhaya daker reprekho rahiyache" - meaning that he supported the Eleven Points also because it included the Six Points of his party. Emphasis added.
that he would actively stand by the Eleven Points. He talked about autonomy, dissolution of one unit, representation on the basis of population not only in the legislatures but in all spheres of life in the country. He promised that he would put forward all the relevant demands. If these were not conceded, he would intensify the popular movement, return to jail to be freed by the students again.  

This clearly showed that his party's association with the DAC could not have been more than skin-deep and that it was aimed only at serving some immediate gains for the party. The rift between the EPAL and the DAC was quite visible, still the facade of an alliance persisted till the inauguration of the RIC on 26 February 1969. The most difficult obstacle in the way of holding the RIC removed, the DAC had got busy resolving other tangles within itself. The inherent disunity, however, surfaced clearly when it met to finalise its stand in the RIC during the working session. The objective of the RIC was to determine the precondition for participation in the elections.

As Dr. Kamal Hossain rightly put it: "The inherently conflicting interests which were represented in the DAC began to surface the moment it was clear that Ayub could no longer retain power and that a new constitutional dispensation

56 Ibid., 24 February 1969.
The anti-autonomy and pro-One-Unit faction of DAC led by Chaudhury Mohammed Ali, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan and Maulana Maudoodi had already ruled in the preparatory meeting held in February that since the issues of autonomy and One Unit were not covered by the DAC's Light Points these could not be discussed at the RTC. The pro-autonomists-cum-anti One Unit faction, that is, the pro-Six Points AL and NAP (U), failed to convince them that since the conference was being held under the extraordinary circumstances of a mass movement - the pivot of which in East Pakistan at least was the Eleven Points which embodied the demands for regional autonomy and breaking of One Unit - any conference where these could not be discussed was of little use. The DAC subcommittee responsible for a common stand could not achieve unanimity on the five-point unanimous resolution of the EP delegates which were: universal adult franchise, federal parliamentary government, full regional autonomy, representation on population basis and breaking of the One-Unit. The maximum opposition was about autonomy. Dr. Kamal

57 Kamal Hossain, "Postmortem on RTC", Forum (Dacca, weekly), vol. 1, no. 17, 14 March 1970, pp. 8-9. Forum played a very important role during its short life-span of about one and a half years from November 1969 to March 1971 by publishing excellent objective analyses by eminent academics, political analysts and journalists of the prevailing critical situation in Pakistan, particularly in East Pakistan during these crucial months.
Hossain, a close associate of the EP delegation wrote:

Metaphysics and jurisprudence were invoked to argue that neither the DAC nor Ayub's legislature which was to be called upon to make the requisite constitutional amendments had a 'mandate' or the 'representative character' necessary to deal with the question of regional autonomy. It was, however, a convenient jurisprudence which allowed both DAC and Ayub's legislature to have a 'mandate' and just sufficient 'representative character' to give effect to such changes as were desired by the anti-autonomists. The extent to which they opposed any proposal, DAC and Ayub's legislature ceased to have competence to deal with them. 58

As a result, the EP delegation, which was by now professedly committed to the Eleven Points - which included the Six Points also, decided not to attend the RTC. While they were preparing for the return journey on the 9th, Air Marshal Asghar Khan succeeded in evolving a compromise formula acceptable to all. This empowered Nasrullah Khan to put forward the commonly agreed demands leaving all other parties free to put forward their individual proposals at the RTC. Consequently, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Governor of DAC, demanded:

(1) Establishment of a federal parliamentary democracy, and
(2) Introduction of a system of direct election based on universal adult franchise.

58 Kamal Hossain, ibid.
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, recently elected President of All Pakistan Awami League (pro-Six Points), demanded in addition:

(1) Constitutional changes to provide for representation on the basis of population in the federal legislature.

(2) Full regional autonomy as outlined in the Six Points Formula.

(3) Annulment of the One Unit in the West Wing.

Whether or not Sheikh Mujib's speech made any impact on the other participants, he did not miss this opportunity to put on record the AL stand. He also used this platform to lend a more radical colour to his party by his emphasis that solution of the crisis through which the country was passing lay in the implementation of the Eleven Points and the Six Points formulae. He agreed that there should be a restructuring of society and admitted that the Eleven-Point Programme rightly pin-pointed the need for the reorganisation of the economic and educational systems of the country. But he reminded the audience that the Six-Point Programme also recognised the need for radical economic reorganisation, and that the demand for regional autonomy as outlined in the programme was an essential precondition for economic reorganisation and implementation of effective economic measures. Thus, reassuring the youth of East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujib
said that implementation of the Six-Point Programme was not an end in itself, but was to serve as the groundwork for far greater changes demanded by them. But, he added, for the time being he would like to confine himself to outlining the constitutional changes that were the prerequisites for the attainment of economic justice between man and man, and between region and region.\(^5^9\)

In 1966-67, the EPAL had made its position stronger by not aligning with the conservative faction of the opposition parties. The radical opposition led by Bhashani lost much of its credentials by not accepting the EPAL viewpoint. In 1969 the AL made its position secure by aligning itself with the APSA, the strongest organisation of the students who were the most vocal and determined section of the East Wing. The alignment thus reached paid great dividends to the AL in the next phase of its struggle.

The AL attitude is a reminder of the tactics adopted by the Indian National Congress when the Congress High Command by anticipating and by incorporating the radical demands in the AICC programme used to take away much of the edge from the programmes chalked out by progressives in the party and thus reduce open conflict to the minimum.

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59 For the text of the speech see, Golba taba hoithake Shadist Mujibur Rahamanor bhasan (Bengali) (Dacca, n.d.). See also Kamal Hossain, 1962., who writes that Mujib also proposed an experts' committee to go into the details immediately if regional autonomy was agreed to in principle and that some renowned economists were already sounded for serving on such a committee, if formed.
In fact, at that point of time the \textit{EPAL} could not afford to antagonise the most vocal and committed section: the politically conscious East Pakistan population, namely the students. An attitude of indifference would have led the students to defy the \textit{EPAL} altogether and might have driven them closer to Bhashani and getting lost in the factional infightings of his followers. The attitude of the other constituents of the DAC and that of the ruling coterie being quite clear, the \textit{EPAL} must have been certain that their fight had to be carried on beyond the DAC and therefore it would be better to have the students on their side.

Sheikh Mujib gave very broad hints about the shape of things to come if the broad constitutional issues relating to the East-West conflict were not solved immediately. In the beginning of his speech at the \textit{RNC} he said: "What is at stake is our survival." Later he said: "Such proposals as I am presenting before the conference are based on the conviction that they are absolutely essential in order to preserve and indeed to strengthen Pakistan."

But President Ayub and the majority of the DAC missed the note of warning underlying the reference to "survival" and "preservation" of Pakistan. In his verdict at the \textit{RNC} President Ayub pleaded that since consensus had been reached about two issues only, namely the establishment of federal parliamentary

\footnote{\textit{Cole tabil}, \textit{Ibid.}}
democracy, and the introduction of a system of direct elections based on adult franchise, he could grant only those for the time being, leaving the rest to be decided by the Assembly. Thus the interests of the regime and the west Pakistani politicians as well as those of the conservative East Pakistani politicians converged at this stage. Kamal Hossain wrote:

Had there been no prior understanding between some of the 'leaders' sitting on the opposition side and the 'hawks' [of the Government], the natural response of DAC and the opposition leaders would have been: (a) to seek a recess for joint consultation between DAC members, (b) at least to seek clarification on what was meant by 'federal parliamentary government' and what was to be the time schedule for amendments and elections, and (c) to press for an easier procedure for amendment of the Constitution. Instead, the moment Ayub had completed his peroration, Ma`arullah, Maudoodi and [Chaudhury] Mohammed Ali vied with each other in heaping blessings and congratulations. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, supported by NAP's representatives and a characteristically feeble 'it would have been better if regional autonomy would also have been discussed' remark from Nurul Amin, protested against this method of concluding the conference. Justice Faruqul Islam called for making the amendment procedure easier, which Asghar Khan supported. The rest, including all other East Pakistani leaders, sat mute witnesses in this mockery of a conference being concluded by a unilateral award — unless nocturnal and clandestine exchanges between the anti-autonomists, their fellow-travellers and the 'hawks' are taken into account.... They [the ruling group] were content to win the battle even at the cost of losing the war. For the people rejected Ayub's award... the people's movement in East Pakistan forged ahead. 61

61 Kamal Hossain, n. 57. Emphases in original.
Unmistakably, the situation, one would agree with Kamal Hossain had reached a point where "nothing can be solved around the table, so long as those sitting around it, consist of discredited and unrepresentative leaders prone to dealings under the table and behind the screen". The people of East Pakistan also seem to have realised this. They expressed their disapproval of Ayub Khan's verdict by demonstrations, in many cases turning violent. The APSAC called for a province-wide hartal on 17 March 1969 in protest against the RTC verdict, the role of certain EP leaders in the RTC, and to make a renewed vow for the implementation of the Eleven Points.

On his return to Dacca Sheikh Mujib at a press conference openly criticised Hamidul Haq Chaudhury (NDF), Abdus Salam Khan and Mahmud Ali (PDM), and Farid Ahmad (NFI) for their role in the RTC and praised Nurul Amin, Justice Mursheed and Mozaffar Ahmad (NAP-W) for their boldness. He had already announced severance of his party's connection with DAC. Significantly, he regretted Maulana Bhashani's abstention from the RTC by saying that it would have been much better if both of them had returned (from the RTC) together. This obviously meant that the impact would have been much greater and the next phase of the movement would

62 Ibid.
63 Ittefaq, 14 and 15 March 1969.
64 See Sheikh Mujib's comment in Ittefaq, 15 March 1969.
have been more forceful. This was a frank admission of Bhashani's important position in the politics of East Pakistan - and consequently that of Pakistan. But while Sheikh Mujib acknowledged Bhashani's importance, Tofail Ahmad, the CL and APSAC leader, questioned his credentials. He asked if Bhashani was so much in favour of the Eleven Points why did he not attend the RTC/present it there?  

If the E. AL had joined the DAC for a limited purpose so had some other parties or groups. This became apparent when after attaining their limited objectives they started preparations for the next round of manipulative politics - a characteristic feature of Pakistan. Hasrullah Khan announced the dissolution of DAC on 13 March 1969 - the day RTC was concluded - and hosted a reception in honour of the President the same evening; Air Marshall Asghar Khan announced formation of the Justice Party. Nasrullah later on formed the Pakistan Democratic Party mostly with the old PDM constituents.  

The Awami League Chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at a three-lakh strong public meeting at Adamji Nagar in Narainganj presided over by Maulana Saidur Rahman, President of the Purba Pakistan Chatkal Federation, indicated his party's future line of action. He said henceforward the struggle

66 Ibid., 14 March 1969.
would be two-pronged: one, mass movement and two, people's votes. He was certain that with this strategy it would be possible to realise autonomy for East Pakistan, abolition of One Unit in the West and formation of a sub-federation there with autonomous provinces. He said: "I am a man of one word; and I am assuring my countrymen that in order to realise the legitimate demands of the students and workers—peasants I shall continue to fight shoulder to shoulder with them." He touched on the extent of inter-wing disparities and the aim of the Six Points and also on the problems of peasants and workers suffering from high taxes, rent and inflation.

That the AL was aware of the countervailing forces was made clear by Tajuddin Ahmad, General Secretary of EPAL, who mentioned that the reactionaries were becoming active to jeopardise the people's movement but hoped that people would not be tricked any more.

The emotional aspect of the situation was touched upon by Mizanur Rahman Chaudhury, Organising Secretary of EPAL, who said that the President by protecting the West Pakistani interests acted in a way as if he was the President of West Pakistan only, and not of East Pakistan also. He cited the example of expediting works for Tarbela Dam and Mangla Dam against the total inaction about flood control in East Pakistan and mentioned that the Government was yet to represent the Farakka issue in the United Nations while
thirteen districts of EP were facing desertisation due to the Farakka Barrage in India.

Abdur Rauf and Tofail Ahmad, the Pt-CL speakers at the meeting sounding accord with the EPAL stand warned against the possible degeneration of a constitutional movement into a violent one for short-term political gains.

Maulana Saidur Rahman expressed the hope that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would continue to be on the side of the workers, and Abdul Mannan, a well-known labour leader and Secretary of the Chatkal Sramik Federation, voiced the workers' demand for raising their wages at least by 30 per cent in view of the high prices and sought Sheikh Mujib's co-operation in solving their multifarious problems. Others, who spoke were Abdul Motalib, Secretary Sutakal Sramik Union, Fazlur Rahman, President of the Narainganj Subdivision AL and Nurul Haq, MPA and Secretary of the Noakhali District AL. Various resolutions were also passed by showing of hands as these were being read by Sirajul Alam Khan, a prominent Pt-CL leader. The venue, composition of the audience and presence of trade union leaders signified the EPAL's stronghold among the mill/factory workers also.67

In conformity with professed preference for constitutional reformism, the AL submitted a constitutional amendment bill to the Secretary of the National Assembly on 24 March 1969.68 Through the 100 proposed amendments the AL

67 For details of the speeches and other details of the meeting see ibid., 22 and 23 March 1969.
68 Ittefaq, 25 March 1969. See Appendix for excerpts from the proposed Amendment Bill.
sought a federal parliamentary system with regional autonomy in accordance with the Six Point and Eleven Point Formulae, dissolution of the One Unit followed by a West Pakistani subfederation. This last ditch attempt could have solved Pakistan's political problems. Free and frank discussion of the amendments in the NA might have minimised the perceived threat of a weak Centre, allegedly envisaged by the Six Points and thus make the arrangements acceptable to the West Pakistani people. But the West Pakistani decision makers, as usual, thought otherwise. And presumably, alarmed on the one hand at the possibility that the AL amendment might be passed in the National Assembly with the help of Sindhi, Pathan, Baluchi and Bengali members, and by the revolutionary situation on the other, President Field Marshall Ayub Khan handed over power to the Army. In a radio broadcast on 25 March 1969 President Ayub Khan told the nation that the demand for decentralisation would ultimately destroy the country and he, as the President, could ill-afford to witness it, and as the nation demanded of the Army Chief to perform his constitutional obligations, he was relinquishing the Presidentship of Pakistan. 69 Previously, in a letter dated 24 March 1969 Ayub Khan had already informed General Yahya Khan, the Army Chief, of handing over power to the Army. 70

While the AL had kept its options open for both constitutional and extra-constitutional methods, Maulana

69 See the full text in Dainik Pakistan, 26 March 1969.
70 See Dainik Pakistan, 27 March 1969.
Bhashani categorically rejected the former. He declined participation in the elections (which were to be held on the basis of adult franchise and not under the electoral colleges system) and opted for agitation for securing a people's constitution as a prerequisite and, though advocating peaceful movement, suggested certain not-so-peaceful methods. He asked the masses to carry on the sangram (fight) peacefully but threatened that unless certain basic demands of the workers were fulfilled they would occupy the mills and factories.

Replying to the criticism of his oft quoted slogan, Jvalo, Jvalo, acun Jvalo (kindle the fire) he explained this was a call for kindling a fire in the hearts of the oppressed against tyranny and not meant for physically burning certain national assets. He also talked of leading a "long march" to "gherao" the governor's house. He wanted a referendum to ratify a people's constitution drafted by a convention of people from all walks of life. There seemed to be a perceptible change in Bhashani's ideological orientation for now he was referring to "Islamic socialism" as the only means to emancipate the "have nots". But that only added to the prevailing confusion about his stand.  

71 For details of Bhashani's uttering see Ittefaq, 25 March 1969 his speech on his return from West Pakistan. Badruddin Umar attributes this to Bhashani's ignorance of the "mechanism of exploitation" and his attempt in the face of Jamaat-e-Islami's vilification of him as a "kafir" "to prove that he is a greater Muslim than Maududi". See Badruddin Umar, "The Political Cycle of Maulana Bhashani", Holiday (Dacca, weekly), Special Supplement on Maulana Bhashani, 13 January 1970.
Anyway, Bhashani was not the only unknown or unpredictable factor in the then East Pakistani politics. The future role of the APSAC also was uncertain. The APSAC had succeeded in getting their demands acknowledged as the ultimate goal by the then undisputed leader of East Pakistan whose recently acquired charisma was partially of its own making. Having done so, the APSAC could not have defied him effectively. The Eleven Points Programme was still the dominant theme in East Pakistani politics but initiative for political action certainly had shifted back to the EPAL - or to be more precise - to Sheikh Mujib. Under the existing situation, therefore, it would not have been surprising if certain constituents of the SAC became lukewarm. For after all, both the Chhatra Unions had clear ideological commitments and loyalties to their overground/underground parent parties. For example, Mahbubullah, representing PPCU (Menon) in SAC belonged to EPCP and could not have aligned with PPCL or even PPCU (Matia) but for tactical reasons and limited purposes. Similarly Saifuddin Ahmad Manik of PPCU (Matia), following the long-term strategy of his parent party, the EPCP, could have remained close to the PPCL but certainly not to PPCU (Menon) for any longer than was required for serving an immediate purpose. Once the EPAL had regained its footing in the province the PPCL obviously no longer needed the protection of the APSAC and in course of time became lukewarm to PPCU (Matia) following similar treatment of the EPAL towards
NAP (M). However, before anything could further crystallise about the future of political movements, the situation in a typically Pakistani way had taken a dramatic but not unanticipated turn with Ayub Khan's abdication.

Ayub Khan's departure did not change the Pakistani power structure. But the circumstances which compelled him to step down indicated that Pakistan had reached a stage where a "government of the President, by the President and for the President"\(^{72}\) was no longer acceptable to the politically relevant section of the population. As a political party it was the adaptive and mobilist \(\text{BAL}\) which contributed the most in the development of this situation, particularly in East Pakistan.

\(^{72}\) An expression used by Chaudhury Mohammad Ali to describe the Ayub Government. See \textit{Dawn}, 2 April 1963.