PREFACE
This is a study of the East Pakistan Awami League between the years 1958-1971. The period under consideration is important because these were the years when Pakistan as a whole was gradually becoming 'an army in search of a nation', while one region within Pakistan was moving towards nationhood through a movement for political and fiscal autonomy. The main actors in these two simultaneous and interconnected but yet contradictory processes were the Pakistani ruling clique, composed of the higher echelons of the military and the bureaucracy, and the East Pakistan Awami League. While some aspects of the former have been studied, no indepth analysis of the latter has been made.

The present study is a descriptive - analytic attempt to assess the functioning of a liberal democratic regional party, in a quasi-democratic political system. The centralised political system of Pakistan had failed to accommodate the aspirations of East Pakistan, geographically distant from the seat of power located in West Pakistan. East Pakistanis were exploited to protect the politico-economic aspirations of a cluster of interest groups located in the west which had no societal linkage with East Pakistan. This typically colonial scenario generated a set of conflicts between the oppressed and the oppressors.
Protest against colonial exploitation has been one of the most important political forces of the modern world. Therefore, East Pakistan's perception of its subject status vis-à-vis West Pakistan was destined to induce the spirit of a national liberation movement among the culturally homogeneous, economically downtrodden and politically disenchanted East Pakistanis. The East Pakistan Awami League was the instrument which initiated and conducted this movement. Hence a study of the East Pakistan Awami League, as attempted here, is essentially a study of a people's quest for the right to self-determination, or in other words, a nation's quest for statehood.

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