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THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY: ROLE OF A LEFTIST PARTY IN THE POLITICS OF BANGLADESH (1972-82)

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It is almost a truism that political development is synonymous with the building of integrative institutions. The most important of these institutions is the political party. The political parties generally perform many manifest functions. Firstly, parties act as brokers of ideas, programmes and policies. In doing so, they articulate as well as aggregate the diverging interests of the country and help resolve cleavages within the nation. Secondly, they recruit support from all parts of the country and help elect political office-bear ere. By developing machinery for the resolution of infra-party disputes, the parties help unite the people from various regions from which they recruit their support arid develop a sense of identity among its supporters. She critical latent effect of these manifest functions of political parties is the creation of a high level of consensus and development and fostering of a national political culture

Since a high degree of consensus is generally lacking in developing countries and the political culture in these countries is of fragmented nature; the latent function of the political parties is of crucial importance for political development in the emerging nations. Bangladesh as a new and developing state is no exception to this. 2?he political parties of Bangladesh both rightists and leftists are seriously facing the problem of institutionalisation and maintenance of a high degree of consensus and cohesion. Here the author has focused attention only on one leftist party, namely the Bangladesh National Awami Party - both the factions - NAP? (Bhashani) and NAP (Muzaffar). The paper is divided into three sections excluding introduction and conclusions. Section I describes briefly the historical background of the foundation of the National Awami party and the emergence of anti-reactionary forces. Section II discusses and analyses the ideology and programmes, structure and locus of power, bases of support and leadership of the Bangladesh National Awami party and section III examines the role of the National Awami Party in the political development and modernisation of Bangladesh.

The National Awami Party (NAP), the first political organisation in erstwhile Pakistan with an avowedly leftist programme, was brought into "being in July 1957 by Maulana Abdul Hamid Zhan Bhashani and his followers who decided, to break away from the Awami League (AL) in order to have a platform of their own. The Leftist Azad Pakistan Party led by a professed socialist, Main Iftekharuddin, in West Pakistan merged with the NAP in the same year. The formation of the NAP was accompanied by the parallel formation of its parliamentary Parties in the Central and Provincial Legislatures in Pakistan. It was mainly because of the conflicts and clashes at the centre and the internal misunderstanding and mistrust within the AL leadership, which hastened the formation of the NAP. Maulana Bhashani was the founder President of the AL to

the power corridor in Pakistan in 1956. This movement flourished in view of the two important demands: the demand for full regional autonomy of East Pakistan and the establishment of an anti-imperialist and non-aligned foreign policy. But because of the policies pursued by the Pakistan Government both the demands could not be met.

With the assumption of Premiership by H. S. Suhrawardy a distinct trend of ideological divergence was taking shape in the ruling AL. For some time, it had provided an Umbrella for all Kinds of political elements who were inclined to oppose the government. But after having power when the party diverted its activities towards consolidating its position, the leftist group led by Maulana Bhashani refused to co-operate. Those who were within the government chose Suhrawarday as their sole leader and ignored Maulana Bhashani who was constantly urging them to make lot of sacrifices. [1]

This marked the beginning of an open rift between Suhravardy and Bhashani - the two top leaders of the AL. The result was an open conflict at the Kagmari Conference on February 7, 1957. Bhashani spoke of exploitation of East Pakistan by West Pakistan and expressed his apprehension that if the exploitation was not stopped a stage night come when the people of East Wing might want separation from the West Wing. In this way, Bhashani was giving top-most priority to the fall regional autonomy of East Pakistan.

The differences that started at the Kagmari Conference took a serious turn in the following month. In March 1957, the organising Secretary of the AL was suspended by the General Secretary of the party, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, for his alleged activities "against the interest of the party". The result was that there was a minor split in the party as nine numbers of the party's working committee tendered their resignations.[2] Suhrawardy tried to patch up the split but failed miserably. During this period, the AL issued a pamphlet setting out the grounds for its demand for regional autonomy for East Pakistan.[3] It showed very clearly that the demand for regional autonomy of East Pakistan was justified both economically and politically. On April 3rd 1957, a non-official motion was unanimously adopted "by the East Pakistan Assembly on regional autonomy.[4] Suhrawardy described the Assembly's resolution as a 'stunt'.

It was in these circumstances that the National Awami Party was formed on 25th July 1957 in the all-Pakistan Democratic Conference held in Dhaka in the Roop Mahal Cinema Ha11. Maulana Bhashani was elected the President of the Central and East Pakistan. Provincial NAP. Mahmudul Huq Osmani and Mahmud Ali became the General Secretaries of the Party. In West Pakistan, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Mahmud Ali Kasuri were elected -President and General Secretary respectively. In the foundation day announcement of the NAP it was resolved that full regional autonomy would be established and all other subjects excepting; defence, foreign affairs and currency would be placed under the jurisdiction of the provinces. It also pledged for the dismemberment r»f one unit scheme formation of a regional federation on lingual and. cultural basis 9 establishment of democracy in its real sense 9 land reforms 9 abolition of Zamindari system

without any compensation, rapid industrialisation and dignity of labour, expansion of education system, social and economic development) the abolition of all military pacts and the pursuance of an independent and non-aligned foreign policy."

THE INITIAL SUCCESS OF THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY; THE GALL OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE

The NAP started its journey in West Pakistan as a protest against the One Unit Scheme of West Pakistan. In the provincial Assembly a resolution was adopted for the annulment of One Unit and it received the support of the ruling Republican Party. With the passage of the resolution Prime Minister Suhrawardy became angry and openly began to attack the central coalition of the Republican Party. As a result the Republicans withdrew their support and Suhrawardy had to resign on October 11 1957.

In East -Pakistan also AL had to face the same consequence. Because of its intransigent with the question of provincial autonomy and the widespread corruption, 35 members of the Council brought about certain changes on the basis co-operation withdrew their support and as a result AL cabinet under the leadership of Ataur Rahman Khan fell twice from power. Thus, in order to foil the conspirators and mischief mongers and to increase class-consciousness the NAP established its class organisations and created its sound bases. In December, 1957» "the Krishak Samity was founded under the leadership of Maulana Bhashani. Later on in February, 1958» Mohammad Toaha reorganised the Majdoor Federation with the co-operation of the NAP.

THE POLITICS OF CONSPIRACY: MILITARY RULE AND THE REV PHASE OF MOVEMENT

Amidst different movements and activities and through the formation of Parliamentary Board, the NAP was taking necessary preparation for participation in. the elections scheduled to be held in 1959. But after the 1958 martial law the democratic process was thwarted and Maulana Bhashani along with other leaders of the party was pat under detention. As a result, within fifteen months since its foundation, the NAP found itself within the grip of disaster.

The NAP started its journey in the second phase on March 1, 1964. During this time, the NAP joined the National Democratic Front (NDF) in its demand for democratising the 1962 constitution. Bhashani's hunger strike on October 25 gave the movement further intensity and speed. In the meanwhile, due to the lack of no clear-cut programme and Suhrawardy's antagonistic policies, the NDf could not gain any success. Consequently, the political parties started to revive and in the process Maulana Bhashani also revived his party.

After the revival of the NAP its main thrust was on universal adult franchise and establishment of parliamentary system. She JKAP began to play a crucial role in the movement for democracy. In this process it joined the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) in July 1964. It participated in the National Assembly elections held

in March 1965 and the party members within the National Assembly carried forward their anti-government movement. On the other hand, a movement against the government and. the moulding of public opinion was being hastened by Maulana Bhashani himself.

In order to provide the movement with a mass base the council session of the East Pakistan NAP was held on 24th July 1965. In the council session heavy stress was given on the pursuance of good relationship with the socialist countries. In 1966 the NAP put forward a Fourteen Point Programme which included, among others, the demand for provincial autonomy, the establishment of parliamentary system of government, stoppage of the flight of capital from East Pakistan to West Pakistan, permanent measure for flood control, the release of all political prisoners and withdrawal of all oases against them, abolition of one unit scheme and. the pursuance of a non-aligned foreign policy.[6] This showed that some immediate and long-range demands were included in the programmes of the NAP. This resulted in a split in December 1967 and the rival group came to be known as the NAP (Muzaffar) which was led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed. Soon it spelled out its programme and pointed out its differences with the Bhashani group. The Muzaffar NAP stood for the establishment of socialism through democratic ways and means.

II

When the NAP was founded in 1957 it did not originate with a Marxist ideology. Maulana Bhashani, its leader was not a Marxist although his ideas brought him near to that particular camp. It seemed that he established the party more to organise protest against the pro-western policy of the Pakistan government than to establish Marxist socialism. For the sake of a systematic discussion and analysis, this section has been divided into three parts: the first part discusses the ideology and programmes, the second, part deals with the structure and locus of power and the third part focuses attention on the bases of support and leadership of the party.

A

In this section an attempt has been made to throw some light on the ideologies and programmes of both the factions of the NAP. When the party was founded in 1957 it was based on three main ideals. Firstly, it was opposed to imperialism; secondly, it was opposed to feudalism and thirdly, it was committed to render support to the right of self-determination of all peoples and states. It was pursuing these programmes and policies till 1971. With the emergence of Bangladesh, the programmes of the SAP (Bhashani) were recest to include the following: -

(i) It will oppose all imperialist alliances and military pacts;
(ii) It will establish state ownership of all economic activities of the state;
(iii) It will establish parliamentary system in the country;
(iv) It will provide education, health, housing and opportunities to all people;

(v) It will abolish feudal system of land tenure and. establish ownership of land for the farmers;

(vi) It will introduce universal adult franchise and proportional representation. Provision will be kept for impeachment of the elected representatives.

(vii) All foreign capitals would be nationalised without any compensation. All big industries and foreign trade would also be nationalised. Private ownership upto 5 lakhs would be allowed. Participation of workers in the management and direction of industries would be ensured.

(viii) Free and compulsory state-controlled education upto class Ten will be ensured. Religious education will be given proper opportunity to develop. Side by side, socialistic ideas will be introduced in the field of education.

(ix) Independent, anti-imperialistic and non-aligned foreign policy would be pursued.

(x) Establishment of a socialist system in which the means of production, distribution and exchange would be owned and operated by the state. Reconciliation of Marxism with Islam and establishment of 'Islamic Socialism' in Bangladesh.

We shall now turn our attention to the ideology and programme of the NAP (Muzaffar) which was founded in 1967 as a result of a split in the original NAP. The split was not fortuitous. Political differences on such vital issues as the attitude towards the ruling clique in Pakistan, the formation of a united front of all the democratic and opposition forces and the immediate objective of the party had troubled the it for sometime.[7] A close examination of the circumstances of the split revealed what the NAP? (Muzaffar) faction stood for. It essentially stood for the establishment of socialism through democratic ways and means* With the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state, the party categorically supported the popular government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which stood on four fundamental principles of State Policy — nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism*

The NAP (Muzaffar) adopted certain ideology and programme in its national Convention held in May, "1972 which may be described as follows:

(i) The state apparatus will be directed in the interest of the labour, peasants and middle class people.

(ii) All activities and propaganda against the four Fundamental Principles of State Policy shall be banned.

(iii) Parliamentary democracy shall be established in the country. A member of the Parliament shall be removed by the electorate.

(iv) The maximum land ceiling per head would be fixed at five bighae and fifty bighas per family. Co-operative and collective farming shall be introduced*

(v) Nationalised industries shall be made the principal determinant of national economy. Gras, oil, tea, hide and skin, foreign banks and insurance ceiling also be nationalised.

(vi) The entire educational system shall be reorganised and the students shall be imbued with the proper national ideals, culture and tradition.

(vii) The foreign policy of Bangladesh shall be independent and non-aligned.

(viii) The party shall seek to strengthen its struggle against the forces of imperialism« colonialism and neo-colonialism

(ix) The NAP (Hazaffar) welcomes the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation and considers it to be a step in the right direction.

(x) Regarding the armed forces of the country, the NAP (Muzaffar) holds R very high opinion. It wants to build up the armed forces as patriotic ones capable of protecting the country from foreign aggression and maintaining internal peace and tranquillity.

Besides, the NAP (Muzaffar) declared its policy against all reactionary forces and agents of imperialism who act against the economic and political stability of Bangladesh."It called for a united action to end all evil forces inside the country.

Evidently, both the NAP (Bhashani) and the NAP (Muzaffar) had their own ideology and programmes of action but they did not differ fundamentally from one another. It is also noticeable that both the parties stood for socialism in the economic field and parliamentary system in the political field. The NAP (Muzaffar) however» wanted to establish socialism through democratic means whereas the NAP (Bhashani) did not believe too much in a parliamentary system which could only replace one government by another but could not establish a 'real democracy of the people free from 'exploitation. It wanted only that kind of democracy which would be in the real interests of the people. Its leaders Maulana Bhashani, was in favour of an Islamic Socialism which differed to & great extent from Marxism In all other respects both the factions had almost similar views. But the fact was that while the NAP (Muzaffar) clearly came forward with a programme for democratic socialism in Bangladesh, the NAP (Bhashani) confined itself only to the polemics of socialism.

B

In this section we have made an attempt to look into the structure and locus of power of the KAP (both factions)* The NAP (Bhashani) consisted of such organisational units as the National Convention* the National Council« the Parliamentary Board, the Parliamentary Party the Party Gomaittees of the distictSy towns upazilas and the unions as approved by the NAP and the Regional Committees consisting of five members worthing under the Union Committee on grounds of necessity. [10]

The Organisational set-up of the NAP (Muzaffar) was also the same as that of the KAP (Bhashani). The Executive Committee of the party consisted of 1 President, 7 Vice-Presidents, 1 General Secretary, 7 Secretaries and 1 Treasurer. The party has its own student, labour, cultural, peasant, youth, women and teachers' wing. Each wing is assigned with certain functions in its respective field.[11] Both the factions of the party has got their District,

Upazila and local coamitteas. Major decisions about the policies of the party are usually taken by the President. The locus of power in the NAP seemed to be in the person of Maulana Bhashani so long he was alive and that of NAP (Muzaffar) in the person, of Professor Muzaffar Ahmed.

C

The bases of support and leadership of the party form an important part of our discussion, is this section. Daring Pakistani days, both the factions of the KAP drew their main support from a youth-group linked with the Youth League and from the left-wing student's organisation, the East Pakistan Student's Union. Both these groups were generally described as pro-Indian by the ruling Muslim League press. Uptill 1971 and during the liberation war, the NAP (Bhashani) had a large number of followers and workers. People from different walks of life were also associated in some form with the working of the party. After the birth of Bangladesh, both the factions of the NAP reorganised their party structures and widened their support base. They formed their respective labour, peasant, youth and other fronts. These fronts were the source of their power. They also served as instruments of mass contact. The party leaders and workers undertook tours in every hook and comer of the country addressed public meetings and gained support in their favour. Both the factions of the NAP undertook election campaign in favour of their candidates in the different elections held in the country till 1982.

Every political party is influenced to a great extent by the character of its leaders. "This is equally true in the case of NAP. The party was being influenced by the character of its leaders since its foundation days. Muslims, Hindus and some members of the Communist Party joined in increasing numbers in both the factions of the NAP. The leaders and workers of the party mainly came from the middle-class. A close look at the demographic characteristics of the Executive Committee of both the factions of the NAP reveals that a large number of its leaders are highly educated, older in age and belong to the middle class. Most of the loaders live in the cities. Hence the class character of the party could not be different from other petty bourgeoisie parties in the country.

III

Bangladesh emerged as an independent, sovereign state on December 16, 1971 on the map of the world through an armed struggle led by the AL. However, it may be said that the idea of an armed ft struggle was not in the political programme of the AL till 1970. It was rather because of the pressure of the Student

Community's. Eleven -Point -Programme that the AL was forced to include some radical programmes into its Election Manifesto of 1970. The leftist parties of the country in spite of their programmes for liberating East Pakistan from the control and domination West Pakistani ruling class could not make much headway in that direction as the AL foreshadowed all of them through its massive victory in 1970 elections. All eyes, therefore, were revealed towards the AL in spite of the call of Maulana Bhashani, the NAP leader, for an 'independent east Bengal'. The NAP (Muzaffar), however, was soft in its attitude towards the AL and hence did not join in the efforts of Maulana Bhashani. For the same of a better analysis we shall discuss the role of each faction of the AP separately. First of all we shall discuss the role of the NAP (Bhashani) in two phases — during the liberation war and subsequently in independent Bangladesh till 1982.

ROLE OF KAP (BHASHANI) DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

With the beginning" of the Bangladesh liberation movement and the formation of the *Mukti Bafeini* (Liberation Army) the Indian Government supported the case of liberation and took side with the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile mostly composed, of the AL leaders. Naturally, the Indian Government started, to channelise all its aid and support for the liberation war through the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile. This reduced the leftist parties particularly the NAP to the position of performing a secondary role in the liberation movement.

Despite the AL'S policy of excluding the other leftist parties from the liberation movement, the NAP (Bhashani) in co-operation with other leftist parties made an effort to form a co-ordination Committee in support of the liberation movement but the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile did not accept the proposals However, on September 9, 1971, it agreed to form a Consultative Committee in which Bhashani was a member. The underlying purpose behind the formation of the Committee was to conduct the liberation war and ensure greater help and assistance from the Soviet Onion. Earlier also Bhashani appealed to twelve world leaders including the UN Secretary-General U-Thant, the British Prime Minister Edward Heath, American President Richard Nixon, the Chinese Chairman Mao-Tse-Tung, the Russian President Podgorney, the French President Pompidou to use their good offices and raise their voice against the barbarities and brutalities committed by the trigger-happy solders of dictator Yahya Khan.[12] But nothing very positive was coding from these world leaders at that time.

It seemed that the pro-Peking leftists became totally confused and disillusioned, with the support given by the Chinese Government to the Yahya regime in its brutal suppression of the liberation government. Some of these leftist parties g groups and, the NAP amongst them, fled to India and formed *the Bangladesh Mukti Sangram Somonnoy Committee* (Co-ordination Committee for the Bangladesh Liberation struggle).[13] Bhashani was its Chairman. The committee was reportedly backed and financed by the CPM which had its own attitude towards the Bangladesh Liberation movement. While the CPM decried the Chinese attitude toward Bangladesh and supported the cause of the Bangladesh movement, it could not tolerate the dominance of the AL as well as the Indian

Government.[14] Although Bhashani was chosen to be the Chairman of the Committee, a few days later, he disowned his connection with it and put full support to the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile and the *Mukti Bhahini*. However, in the eyes of NAP (Bhashani) the liberation war of Bangladesh was not in consonance with the declared principles of the party for the establishment of a socialistic order of life. [15]

SOLE OF THE NAP (BHASHANI) FROM 1972-1982:

Soon after independence in 1971 the NAP (Bhashani) began to work in co-operation with the ruling AL. It supported the stand taken by the AL in all its efforts of national reconstruction.

On his return from India on 23rd January 1972, Mauna Bhutan declared that his political activities would be with the NAP and his main task would be to bring about unity in the faction-torn leftists of the country. A few days later in the Working Committee meeting of his party held in Santesh it was decided to allow sufficient time to the AL to materialise the four fundamental principles of State Policy -- democracy, socialism, secularism and nationalism. The meeting also decided to render fullest support and co-operation to the policies and programmes pursued by the AL. 16 It also called for eradication of corruption and black-marketing from the society. An eight-member committee was formed and Bhutan was made the Convenor of the said Committee. 17

Mauna Bhutan welcomed the India-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship of Co-operation. He, however, was opposed to any military pact, be it with India, Soviet Union or the United States. He further said that the could be real friendship and permanent co-operation between the people of India and Bangladesh after the establishment of socialism in the country. Meanwhile, a propaganda was being carried out reportedly by the pro-Moscow parties and groups that Bhutan was an agent of the United States. Bhutan stood against it and demanded punishment for those who carried out such propaganda. [18]

The NAP (Bhutan) believed that in post-independent Bangladesh it was nothing but natural that the ruling AL Government would have established good relations with India. But problem arose when it was fund that this good relationship was being misused by both the peoples and as a result black-marketing in the border areas of Bangladesh incased to a great height. Its adverse effects fell on the economy of Bangladesh. Corruption's and illegal occupation of property by those who were near to the power corridor became a regular phenomenon. In view of such a condition prevailing in the country Bhutan protested against AL's too much tilt towards India and boarding, black-marketing and profiteering. While addressing a public meeting in Chittagong on March 30, 1972, Bhutan vehemently criticised the policies pursued by the AL. This created the ire of AL leaders and they began to characterise Bhutan as an enemy of India and Soviet Union. This signalled the complete pating of ways between the NAP (Bhutan) and the ruling AL.

Meanwhile, due to mismanagement on the economic front, the prices of all essential goods were increasing by leaps and bounds and this went out of the purchasing power of the people. The number of the unfed and unclothed was increasing day by day. In such a situation, Bhutan called a hunger march on August 14, 1972 and it was spontaneously supported by the Jatio League, *Sramik-Krishak Samajbadi Dal*, the communist Party of Bangladesh (Leninbadi), *Bangladesh Krishak Samiti*, *Bangladesh Sramik Federation*, *Biplobi Chatra Federation*, *Biplobi Chatra Union*, *Gonotantrik Jubo League* and *Bangladesh Jubo Federation*. [19] The hunger march came out in the city of Dhaka. In a meeting at the Paltan Maidan on the same day, Bhutan demanded formation of a national government to save the people from extinction[20].

The task of constitution making was in progress but Bhutan demanded for the approval of the constitution in an all-party conference and to judge public opinion in favour of it. Another factor was added to this. The claim of the AL that it only had brought independence was not liked by other parties and they were out to discredit it. Bhutan took the lead and on December 25, 1972 he declared that the AL government should resign by 31st December or he would form an all-party interim government[21]. He went a step further and formed an All-party Action Committee to carry on his struggle against the AL government. The Committee decried the secret pact between India and Bangladesh and called a Hartal on February 2, 1973 in protest of curtailment of freedom of press and use of governmental services for party interests. Bhutan also declared that the struggle for socialism would continue both inside and outside of the Parliament[22].

Meanwhile, NAP (Bhashani) demanded resignation of the AL Government and formation of an all-party government. Soon the AL Government responded by announcing the date of election. NAP (Bhashani) had no alternative but to contest the election. An electoral alliance consisting of six parties was formed with a view to strengthening the electoral platform.[23] But it failed to arrive at a unanimous decision. This was reflected in the election manifesto announced by the party. The manifesto included a ten-point demand which called for the "establishment of socialism in the country".[24] The result of the election was disastrous for the party as it could net get any seat. It seemed that although the AL was losing its popularity gradually yet it did not reach the lowest ebb.

After the election, the NAP (Bhashani) alleged that the election was not free and fair and in some places its candidates were not allowed to take part in election propaganda by the show of fear and intimidation. Kazi Zafar Ahmed, the acting General Secretary of the party, called for undoing the election altogether and to that end an Action Committee was formed.[25] It also decided to observe a *Dabi Divas* on 29th April, 1973 to protest against widespread corruption, nepotism and food crisis prevailing in the country. Maulana Bhashani also decided to go for a hunger strike demanding toed for all. On May 15, 1975 he started fasting unto death on the basis of a three-point demand at the party's Central Office in Dhaka. The demands were reduction of prices of food stuffs and other essential goods 9 removal of all sorts of irregularities in all walks of life particularly in business, industries and jobs.[26] The demands were supported by the communist party

(Leninist) and the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and urged the ruling AL Government to fulfil those demands. Meanwhile, the condition of Maulana Bhashani, who still continued his fasting, deteriorated greatly and to save his life the opposition parties of the country gave him a written undertaking to carry on their struggle for the realisation of the three-point demands. On June 3, 1973 the NAP (Bhashani) gave a call for a public meeting which was followed by a procession and as a result the situation become very tense. Seeing that the situation was becoming increasingly volatile 9 Maulana Bhashani gave a call for non-violent movement. At this stage he received the support of some of the rightist parties and groups.

By mid-September. 1974, Maulana Bhashani declared through a statement that he would start a mass-movement. But subsequently the whole idea was dropped and rumour had it that he would sever his relationship with the NAP. With the enactment of the Fourth Amendment to the 1972 Constitution in January 1975 which brought about the one party system« the Bhashani NAP along with ether parties were abolished* Although Maulana Bhashani did net join the *Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League* (BABAL) same of his party workers became its members.[27]

The NAP (Bhashani) gave moral support to the ruling elites who emerged after the August 15 coup of 1975. Farakka posed to be a very important political issue at that time. Maulana Bhashani mobilised public support against Farakka and expressed his sentiment against the announced election schedule of the Mushtaq Government. The new government favoured the NAP (Bhashani) and released quite a good number of its leaders and workers. Under the Political Parties Regulation of 1976, the NAP (Bhashani) was revived but the process of split and defection was accentuated more than ever before. Dr. Aleem-al-fiazie was trying to form a new party. On August 4, 1976, a conference of the party was convened and in that conference a 46-member working committee was formed. Abu Naser Khan Bhashani, Maulana Bhashapi's son, and Siddique Ali Bhuiyan were elected Vice-President and Secretary respectively of the working committee. The committee chalked out the organisation and programmes of the party for approval of the government. But Maulana Bhashani during that time was more with the anti-Farakka campaign and the Ahuda-e-Khidmatgar. Before the party could secure government 's approval, Maulana Bhashani had died.

With the government's approval being secured., the NAP (Bhashani) announced its new programme in which more emphasis was laid on democratic principles than on establishing socialism in the country. It was declared that the aim of the party would be to establish a stable elected government, to re-establish the democratic rights of the people and to uproot all the opposing forces of independence and sovereignty.[28] On 25th October, 1976, Abu Naser Khan Bhashani called for a meeting of the party's Central Committee which listed for four days. The committee accepted the justification of holding of elections. Besides the election issue, the Farakka issues also came to the fore.

With the beginning of 1977 there occurred certain changes in the leadership of the

party. In the council session of 27th March, Mashur Rahman and S.A. Bari A.T. were elected its. President and General Secretary respectively. Gazi Shahidullah, Advocate Mujibur Sfthman Ghowdhury, Barrister Salimul Huq, Nurur Rahman and Abu Naser Khan Bhashani were elected Vice-Presidents. Although Mashiur Rahman was able to check the divisive tendency which was noticeable within the warring factions for the time being yet on the question of rendering support to the ruling Zia Government the party had another split in April, 1977. In the party convention of 26th June 1977, another NAP was formed under the leadership of Abu Naser Khan Bhashani and Gazi Shahidullah. However, by far the most important event of 1977-78 was the formation of a People's Party by President Ziaur Rahman. NAP under the leadership of Mashiur fiahman expressed its willingness to join the proposed political front.

The support of the NAP to President Zia's efforts undoubtedly reflected the weakness of the party and lust for power amongst the top-rank party leaders. With the formation on the *Jatiotabadi Gonotantrik Dal* (JAGODAL) under the inspiration of President Zia, NAP leader, Mashiur Sahman, decided to join the Front and welcomed the initiatives undertaken by President Zia for civilianizing his regime.

Meanwhile, the NAP under the leadership of Abu Naser Zhan Bhashani had a split in July 1978. 'The split occurred mainly on the issue of giving support to Zia in the presidential election. Gazi Shahidullah showed some intransigence about rendering his support to President Zia. It was on this count that he was removed from the party and a new party NAP (Gazi) had emerged.

In September, 197,8 when the Jatiotabadi Front was dissolved and the new party-Bangladesh Nationalist Party — was formed then Mashiur Rahman and his supporters joined it and advised all NAP workers to follow suit. Mashiur Rahman claimed that it was necessary for the greater interest and unity of the nation. The abolition of the party, however, could not be liked by the Senior Vice-presidents of the party like Nurur Rahman and Anwar Zahid and they termed the activities of Mashiur Rahman and others as totally undemocratic and illegal. They, therefore, devoted themselves to protect the very existence of the party.

In 1980 under the leadership of Anwar Zahid a faction of the NAP joined the other three parties and formed the Gonotantrik Party* Advocate Jafar Chowdhury assumed the responsibility of the General Secretary of the party. Later, on his initiative another new NAP was formed in 1985 and joined the 7-party Alliance against the Military government of General Ershad.

BOLE OF THE NAG (HUAAFFAR) DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Like the KAP (Bhashani), the NAP (Muzaffar) along with its front organisations namely the *Kriahak Sa.mi.ti* (Peasants Association) y Students' Union and the Trade Union Centre, all supported and co-operated with the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile and participated in the liberation struggle. Following the

formation of *Mujib Bhahini* distinct from the *Mukti Bhehini,* the NAP (Muzaffar) also decided to organise and form a separate guerrilla unit of their own. And, in fact, with the assistance of the CPI, the NAP (Muzaffar) succeeded in doing that and trained about 20,000 guerrillas who later became very active in the different sectors of the liberation war. The Indian Government's attitude towards the AL as the only representative of the people of Bangladesh was, however, criticised by Muzaffar Ahmed. He accused the Indian Government of putting all eggs into one basket.[29] Since then gradually the Indian government began to provide assistance to the NAP (Muzaffar) separately.

In May 1971, the NAP (Muzaffar) suggested the formation of a National liberation Front consisting of all the parties participating in the liberation war. It was argued that the formation of such a Front would be helpful in securing the support of all the progressive forces of the world including the socialist bloc. But the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile did not accept such & proposal. Instead, on September 9, 1971, it agreed to form a consultative committee of which Muzaffar Ahmed was one of the co-members. The Committee unanimously declared that no solution to the Bangladesh crisis other than complete independence would be acceptable to the Bangladesh Government.

It should be mentioned that with the 'operation genocidel being carried out by the Pakistan army, the NAP (Muzaffar) leaders managed to assemble at Mugibnagar in Mushtia District. They started the process of participating the liberation war with the support given to the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile on April 17, 1971. However, owing to the policy pursued by the AL to exclude the other parties from the liberation war, the NAP (Muzaffar) was deprived from directly 'participating the war. Consequently, its leaders continued widespread negotiations with the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile which, in fact, lasted upto September 1971. And with the support given by the Soviet Union to the liberation war the NAP (Muzaffar) got an opportunity to participate in the liberation war in a limited scale.

SOLE OF THE NAP (MUZAFFAR) PROM 1972-1982

Like the NAP (Bhashani), the NAP (Muzaffar) also started to work in co-operation with the ruling AL. It gave unconditional support to all the activities and policies pursued by the AL. It essentially pursued a policy of responsive co-operation with the AL Government. It so happened that Muzaffar Ahmed and Pankaj Bhattacharya, President and General Secretary respectively to the party did not protest police firing on the demonstrating students against the US atrocities in Vietnam on January 1, 1975. The wrath of the police also came on some of the party loaders* Muzaffar Ahmed described it to be an 'accident of highest magnitude'.

Behind the party's policy of responsive co-operation was its earnest desire of sharing power. With that end in view, it formed a tri-partite alliance with the AL and the Communist party of Bangladesh (CPB). But in spite of its best efforts, the NAP (Muzaffar) was badly defeated in the 1975 elections. Tot the party clung to its policy of responsive co-operation somehow or other.

However, the post-election environment had brought some opportunity for the NAP (Muzaffar) for the realisation of its hopes and aspirations. Because of the failure of the leftist movement led by Maulana Bhashani on the one hand and the pressure of the Indian and the Soviet Government on the other, Sheikh Mujib had to change his strategy and techniques. The result was the establishment of the tri-partite alliance on 3rd September 1973.

The co-partners of the tri-partite alliance considered, all other parties and groups as unpatriotic and against the forces of independence o To them, all anti-government elements including Maulana Bhashani were anti-state and anti-liberation. To the ruling AL this was the appropriate time to crush the NAP (BhasLani). Evidently, Moni Singh, the Communist Party leader, addressing a public gathering on 29th December, 1975 at the Baitui Mukarram square, declared to undo the NAP (Bhashani). The pro-Moscow groups supported the 3?ou3Mh Amendment and received as many as six members in the 115- member Central Committee of the BAKSAL from 1974 to 1979.

After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the fall of the BAKSAL, the pro-Moscow groups emerged into the political arena of Bangladesh with a separate tone and programme. They supported the stand of Ziaur Rahman towards the Awami-Bakshalites and obtained the approval of the Political Parties Regulation of 1976. They stood in favour of Ziaur Rahman during the referendum of 30th May 1977 and the 'canal digging revolution' of the govérnment. The 19-point Programme was also supported by the NAP (Muzaffar) contested the presidential election of 3rd June 1978, as the member of the Gonotantrik Oikya Jote yet after the victory of Ziaur Rahman, it altogether altered its strategy. In a public meeting at the Baitui Mukarram square on 19th June, 1978, Mussaffar Ahmed declared that his party made a mistake by joining the CKMT, Explaining the reason he said: "The poor people of the country did not vote for 'beat', they voted for President Zia because during the Zia regime the people got an opportunity for earning their bread and livelihood".[30]

The unconditional supper given to Ziaur Rahman and Muzaffar Ahmed's theory of religion and socialism gave rise to misunderstanding amongst the members of the party. This misunderstanding brought about a split in the party. Five leaders including Syed Altaf Hussain of the party described the activities of Muzaffar Ahmed as undemocratic and unconstitutional and said that he was trying to perpetuate his position by dishonest means. At this Muzaffar Ahmed reacted very sharply and cancelled their primary membership. As a mark: of protest the requisition NAP was formed under the leadership of Syed Altaf Hussain and under its initiative Jatio Ekata -Party was formed on 30th December, 1978. Syed Altaf Hussain became the President and Suranjeet Sen Gupta became the General Secretary of the Party.

Although the majority members remained with the original NAP, the debate on the different issues raised by Muzaffar Ahmed still continued. Depending on his policy of responsive co-operation 9 he began to speak about the progressive role which could be played by the military. Differences of opinion widened to a great

extent at this but this came to the fore after the 1979 parliamentary elections. The victory of Muzaffar Ahmed, the lone NAP candidate was viewed by other members of the party as a reward given by Ziaur Rahman for his unconditional support to Zia's policies and practices.

In the pest-election period, an extended meeting of the central committee of the NAP was held. In that meeting serious objections were raised about the anti-party and pro-government activities of Muzaffar Ahmed. As a retaliatory measure, Muzaffar Ahmed dismissed quite promptly Pankaj Bhattacharya and Motia Chewdhury, General Secretary and Organising Secretary respectively of the party. Show cause notice was also served to eleven others. Later as a mark of protest a new SAP was formed in July 1979. Chewdhury Harun-or-fiashid and Pankaj Bhattacharya were elected the President and Secretary Secretary respectively of the party. In the circumstances, Muzaffar Ahmed paid his attention to reorganise and revitalise his group by appointing Pir Habibur Rahman the General Secretary of the party.

Meanwhile in view of the international pressure on the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), a process for building, unity amongst the pro-Hoscow parties was noticeable from 1981. With that end in view, the CPB nominated Mussaffar Ahmed as its candidate in the 1981 Presidential election. With the Proclamation of martial law on 24th March 1982, the two groups of the NAP and the Ekota Party stood against the military rule of General Ershad and joined the 15-party Alliance formed in September 1983.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to delineate the leftist politics in Bangladesh particularly with reference to the foundation and organisation, ideology and programmes, leadership pattern, support base and role of the NAP in the political development of the country. It has been revealed that the NAP did not originate with a Marxist ideology and its leader, Maulana Bhashani, was not a Marxist in the real sense of the term. He rather believed In a vague concept of 'Islamic Socialism' and established his party more to organise protest against the pro-Western policy of the government. From all accounts it seemed that the party was not prepared for a class struggle on the Marxist line.

It becomes evident that although the NAP stated as the first leftist organisation in the former Pakistan yet it could not be successful in mobilising the masses to bring about a change in the political and economic life of the country. Both Maulana Bhashani and Muzaffar Ahmed gave a leftist programme to the people although they differed in fundamentals. At certain times both the factions of the NAP had a good number of followers. But because of the splits which occurred from time to time in the party, its leadership became weak and divided. The latest split in the BAP (Muzaffar) and NAP (Bhashani) had further weakened it considerably. The NAP is still in disarray in the political arena of Bangladesh as it had been during the Pakistani days.

END NOTES

1. Maulana Bhashani presiding over a public meeting in Dhaka which was addressed by Suhrawardy on September 13th 1956 made a plea that Suhrawardy should be ready to resign within a fortnight if the Central Government failed to rush sufficient food supplies to the province of East Pakistan.

2. *The Ittefaq* (Dhaka) February 8th 1957.

3. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman : *Why Autonomy?* A Pamphlet published by the Al in 1957.

4. The motion was moved by Muzaffar Ahmed and supported by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Abu Hussain Sarkar.

5. *Bichitra* (a Bengali Weekly, Dhaka), NO.11, August 7 1987.

6. Resolution of the Working Committee of the National Awami Party held on May 16 and 17 in 1966.

7. See the resolutions adopted at the Pakistan National Awami Party Council Meeting held on June 30 and July 1, at Peshawar & Karachi, 1967.

8. Pakistan National Awami Party : *Ideology, Objectives and Programme,* Dhaka, 1968.

9. Interview with Pankaj Bhattachariya, General Secretary, Bangladesh National Awami Party on August 20, 1985.

10. *Constitutions*: Bangladesh National Awami Party (Bhashani), Dhaka n.d.

11. *Constitutions*: Bangladesh National Awami Party (Muzaffar) Adopted in the National Convention of the party held in Dhaka on 7th and 8th March 1982.

12. *The Bangladesh Documents*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, pp. 299-306.

13. The other parties and groups were he CCCR, CWA, BCP (Hatiar Group), EBCP (Deven-Bashar), EPCP (M-L) and the CSK.

14. *Nutun Bangla* (a pro-Moscow Bengali Weekly), October 28, 1971.

15. Interview with Abu Nasser Khan Bhashani, President of the NAP, on July 22, 1985.

16. *The Dainik Bangla* (Dhaka), February 10, 1972.

17. The other members of the Committee were Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, Alamgir Siddiqui, Bazlus Sattar, Ghazi Shahidullah, Abdul Rahman Siddiqui and Faridul Huda.

18. *The Dainik Sangbad* (Dhaka), March 26, 1972.

19. *The Ittefaq* (Dhaka), August 15 and 22 1972.

20. Ibid. September 3, 1972.

21. *The Daily Sangbad* (Dhaka), December 26, 1972.

22. Ibid, December 30, 1972.

23. The six parties were the NAP (Bhashani), Bangladesh Jatio league (Ataur Rahman Khan), Bangladesh Jatio League (Oli Ahad), Communist Party of Bangladesh (Leninist) Sramuk-Krishak Samajbadi Dal and the Banglar Communist Party.

24. *The Dainik Bangla* (Dhaka), March 5, 1973.

25. *The Ittefaq* (Dhaka), March 18, 1973.