pure Islamic state for the Muslims of the subcontinent. In fact, as the campaign for the 1970 general elections got underway, Khan Abdus Sabur Khan, a Bengali who had loyally served Ayub as central minister for communications and was leader of the Convention Muslim League in the National Assembly, told the country that he and a few others had advised the president against instituting the case because it could boomerang on the regime.

And boomerang it did. What has eventually emerged in the nearly four decades since the case was dropped is that Mujib was certainly aiming at the independence of East Pakistan, that it was his objective to take the Bengalis out of Pakistan and create a separate, secular, and democratic state. A very early sign of Mujib's dream of Bengali freedom remains his question to Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, back in 1957, regarding the feasibility of political sovereignty for East Pakistan. At the time, Suhrawardy (and he was prime minister of Pakistan) firmly put him in his place. But what has never been in doubt about the Agartala Case, though, is the ugly and rather uncouth way in which the Ayub regime went about building the case.

When the first arrests in the case were announced in late December 1967, not a word was said about Mujib's involvement in the conspiracy. The general assumption was that the regime had embarked on a program to discredit the growing Bengali demand for regional autonomy through bringing some senior Bengali officers of the Pakistan civil service, as well as elements of the armed forces, into disrepute.

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