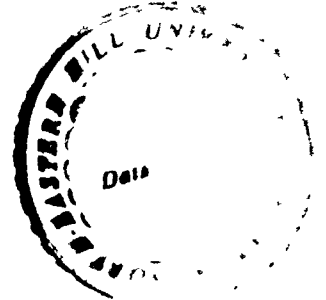


REGIONALISM IN MEGHALAYA



BY

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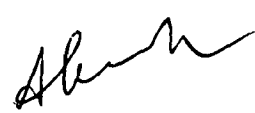
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms. SUSMITA SEN GUPTA has carried out her Ph.D research on the topic - REGIONALISM IN MEGHALAYA - under my supervision. This work which is submitted for a Ph.D degree in North-Eastern Hill University is entirely her own and it does not include any work done by me or any other scholar. This thesis is also not being submitted for a degree to any other University.

Dated 8.5.'97


(A.K. Baruah)
Professor & Supervisor.

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PREFACE

Regionalism is a multi-dimensional composite phenomenon meaning different things to different people and as such, various perspectives may be used for the understanding of regionalism. In course of this study, our attempt will be to explore these perspectives to arrive at a definition of regionalism. It also appears that regionalism has assumed different forms in different parts of India. In North East India, long-standing grievances among large sections of the people against policies followed by the Central Government towards this region as well as homogeneous cultural processes among some specific communities seem to have strengthened the urge for autonomy and independent living. This in turn has led to the formation of political parties for the articulation of regional aspirations. In Meghalaya, for instance, a number of regional parties like All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC), Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC) and Hill People Union (HPU) have been formed to ventilate regional grievances. In view of this steady growth of regional parties in Meghalaya, it seems interesting to examine the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya as well as to examine

the reaction of some of the national parties towards regionalism. The main focus of the proposed work, has, therefore, been on a study of the regional parties in Meghalaya.

As far as regionalism in Meghalaya is concerned, it may be noted that no comprehensive study embracing an analysis of the programmes and support-structure of the regional parties of the State has been attempted so far. Relationship between regionalism and nationalism in Meghalaya as well as the attitudes of regional parties towards nationalism and those of national parties towards regionalism have also remained unexplored hitherto. The present work has, therefore, been undertaken to examine these interesting issues.

The rapid growth of regional consciousness throughout the country has made the question extremely relevant as to whether regionalism in the North East has reached the periphery of secessionism or is simply a product and expression of centrifugal forces within the Indian Union. We have sought an answer to this question in the proposed work. An attempt has also been made to analyse the economic and political programmes of the regional parties for understanding the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya. The work has sought to throw light on the

support-structures of the regional parties which sustain the ideology of regionalism. In order to examine the reaction of the national parties to the emergence of regionalism in Meghalaya, we have chosen to highlight the response of the Congress (I) and the Communist Party of India because of their active and continuous participation in the electoral politics of the State.

The work has sought to examine from a theoretical perspective the various dimensions of regionalism as a concept. In course of the work, a content analysis of the policy statements of the regional parties of Meghalaya has been taken up. The work has been based mostly on primary data, viz., the Constitutions of national and regional parties, their policy resolutions and Election Manifestoes and data generated by discussions with party leaders. Information has also been gathered from Census documents, Statistical Handbooks of Meghalaya as well as Government Gazettes of Meghalaya and Assam.

CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	i-ii
Preface	iii-v
List of Tables	vii-viii
CHAPTER I CONCEPTUALISING REGIONALISM	1-64
CHAPTER II REGIONALISM AND EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN MEGHALAYA	65-109
CHAPTER III REGIONALISM AND NATIONAL PARTIES IN MEGHALAYA	110-170
CHAPTER IV REGIONALISM AND NATIONALISM IN MEGHALAYA - VIEWS OF THE REGIONAL PARTIES	171-208
CHAPTER V SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF REGIONALISM I - AN ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES OF THE REGIONAL PARTIES OF MEGHALAYA	209-262
CHAPTER VI SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF REGIONALISM II - AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL PROGRAMMES OF THE REGIONAL PARTIES OF MEGHALAYA	263-299
CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION	300-317
BIBLIOGRAPHY	318-335
APPENDICES	336-406

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Chapter III	
Table I Candidates fielded, seats won and percentage of votes polled by Congress (I) in General Elections to the Meghalaya Assembly.	126
Table II Candidates set up, seats won and percentage of votes polled by CPI in General Elections to the Meghalaya Assembly.	127
Table III Percentage of Khasi Gazetted Officers since 1970.	145
Table IV Percentage of Khasi Supply Contractors during 1980-1995.	147
Table V Percentage of Khasi registered PWD Contractors (1980-1996).	148
Table VI Percentage of Khasi Lecturers in private colleges.	150
Table VII Percentage of Khasi Lawyers of Shillong Court.	151
Chapter IV	
Table I Appointment of Officers in various Departments of the Government of Meghalaya (May 1996-February 1997).	188
Table II Promotion of Officers in various Departments of the Government of Meghalaya (October 1996)	188
Chapter V	
Table I Trend in Mineral Production.	210
Table II Generation of Electricity.	214
Table III Seats won by APHLC in the Assembly Elections of 1972.	217

Page

Table IV	APHLC and the Assembly Elections of 1978.	218
Table V	APHLC and the Assembly Elections of 1983.	218
Table VI	HSPDP and the Assembly Elections of 1972.	226
Table VII	HSPDP and the Assembly Elections of 1978.	226
Table VIII	HSPDP and the Assembly Elections of 1983.	227
Table IX	PDIC and the Assembly Elections of 1978.	234
Table X	PDIC and the Assembly Elections of 1983.	235
Table XI	HPU and the Assembly Elections of 1988.	241-242
Table XII	Schedule of Demands for Grants for Expenditure of the Government of Meghalaya for the year 1975-76.	252
Table XIII	Schedule of Demands for Grants for Expenditure of the Government of Meghalaya for the year 1979.	257-258
Table XIV	Approved outlay of the Government of Meghalaya for 1990-91.	259-260

Chapter VI

Table I	Number of Educational Institutions in Meghalaya.	274
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CHAPTER I

CONCEPTUALISING REGIONALISM

CONCEPTUALISING REGIONALISM

SECTION A

Regionalism is a complex socio-political phenomenon and as such, different conceptual frameworks have been developed by scholars for analysing various dimensions of this phenomenon. In course of our study, we propose to explore these different forms of conceptualisation on regionalism in order to adopt a relevant and suitable perspective for our present work.

Before we embark on a discussion of regionalism as a theoretical concept, it is necessary to define the term 'region'. In fact, the concept of region lies at the very core of any conceptualisation of regionalism in the sense that this concept provides the existential basis for the emergence of the phenomenon of regional loyalty which eventually finds expression in the political phenomenon of regionalism.¹ Although territoriality provides only a

1. For a discussion on territoriality as an unit of analysis of regionalism, See David B. Knight, "Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism" in Annals of the Association of American Geographers 72(4), 1982, pp. 514-531.

partial understanding of regionalism to a political Scientist, yet we may begin with a discussion on territoriality because it provides the basis for establishing the connection between 'region' and 'regionalism'. For the present work, we propose to look upon 'region' more as an analytical category rather than as a geographical entity. Available literature on the subject offers us a set of definitions which emphasize the socio-cultural aspects of 'region'. According to one such view, a region is a nucleus of social aggregation for a variety of purposes.² From this point of view, a particular territory is set apart, over a period of time, when different variables operate in different degrees. These variables may be geography, topography, religion, language, usages and customs, socio-economic and political stages of development, common historical tradition and experiences etc.³ While the first definition identifies the variables which distinguish a region from other regions, another definition characterizes a region by a widely shared sentiment of 'togetherness' in the people which may be derived from common prosperity, camaraderie

2. See Akhtar Majeed, 'Maldevelopment and Regional Conflict: A General Framework' in Akhtar Majeed (ed), Regionalism: Developmental Tensions in India (New Delhi, 1984), p. 3.

3. Loc.cit.

developed in a common struggle and so on.⁴ In this definition, the emphasis on 'togetherness' may be noted because it is this sense of commonness which gives a distinct identity to a particular region. According to a third point of view, a region is a "perceived segment of space differentiated from others on the basis of one or more defining characteristics".⁵ It is contended that such characteristics and regions (which) they define "may be natural, political, economic or cultural".⁶ This fourfold typology of regions into natural, political, economic and cultural shows that although region is a territorial concept, its attributes are not exclusively territorial and that regionalism emerges precisely because of the differences in the perceptions of regions by respective political actors.⁷

4. Shriram Maheshwari, 'Regionalism in India: Political and Administrative Response', Indian Journal of Public Administration, October-December, 1973, p. 442.

5. Joseph Schwartzberg, 'Prolegomone to the Study of South Asian Regions and Regionalism', in Robert I. Crane (Ed), Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies: An Exploratory Study (Duke University Program in Comparative Studies in Southern Asia Monograph Number Five, 1967), pp. 89-111.

6. Loc.cit.

7. For details, See P.C. Mathur, 'Regionalism in India: An Essay in Dimensionalization of State Politics in India', in Ramakant (Ed), Regionalism in South Asia (Jaipur, 1983), p. 6.

In fact, the word 'region' has different connotations in the context of different realms, viz., local, national and international arenas. In the international context, for example, South Asia comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka etc. is a region.⁸ From the national point of view (in India), North East India is treated as a region. In a still narrower sense, smaller geographical entities within the constituent States of India regard themselves as regions, e.g., Telengana, Vidarbha, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Jammu, Ladakh and so on.⁹ Thus, the concept 'region' may figure in the consciousness of people residing in smaller and smaller territories ad infinitum. Actually, the issues raised by the leaders representing a particular territory or group of people will determine the size and the shape of the region. The term depends on the varying perceptions of the elite who represents the region. It is on account of this that an absolute definition of 'region' is not easy to arrive at. And yet, it is these geopolitical entities called regions which are central to the analysis of regionalism.

8. For use of the word 'region' in the context of South Asia, See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and others, The Regional Imperative: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards South Asian States (New Delhi, 1980).

9. For use of the word 'region' in the case of Telengana, See G.R.S. Rao, Regionalism in India: A Case Study of Telengana Issues (New Delhi, 1975).

This brings us to an enquiry of the nature of regionalism itself. A study of regional movements in different parts of the contemporary world shows the primacy of the ethnic factor. Europe, for instance, provides a glaring example of the importance of ethnicity. For the past two hundred years, European ethnic groups have moved increasingly towards greater political self-determination, leading to the acceptance and promotion of the principle that any ethnic group is entitled to have its own state and that each state has to be based on one such ethnic group or nation.¹⁰ However, multi-State nations and multinational States are exceptions to this rule. In the case of multi-state nations, a smaller part of an ethnic nation may inhabit the territory of another state, thus forming a minority in that state and preparing the ground for minority nationalist movements which are embraced by regional movements.¹¹ The presence of distinct ethnic groups like Serbs, Croats and Muslims in erstwhile Yugoslavia paved the way for separatist movements which were followed by a prolonged civil war.

10. Jaroslav Krejčí and Vitezslav Velimsky, Ethnic and Political Nations in Europe (London, 1981), p. 61.

11. For details, See Ibid., pp. 77-85. It may be noted for instance, that there is a Swedish minority in Finland, a Hungarian one in Romania, erstwhile Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the U.S.S.R. and so on.

In the United States, too, which is a multi-ethnic federation, ethnic conflicts have assumed preponderance over regional conflicts. Such conflicts have been the offshoot of immigration and have manifested themselves in the form of 'nativism'. From the time the Anglo-Americans conquered Indian tribes and became consolidated as the "native" or host group in America, some Indian groups have shown a tendency toward the acceptance of cultural pluralism. However, as McLemore argues, an increased resistance to this movement by the dominant group could easily halt it and strengthen the Indians' demands for autonomy.¹²

Africa, on the other hand, presents a different picture. The entire continent once happened to be the colonies of different European powers. While most of the colonies attained independence, racialism continued to haunt South Africa so much so that apartheid became the major determinant of ethnic relations among Afrikaners and the so-called coloured people. The struggle launched by the African National Congress was aimed at the end of apartheid and establishment of majority rule. It appears, therefore, that opposition to racialism became an important component

12. See S. Dale McLemore, Racial and Ethnic Relations in America (Boston, 1991), pp. 84 and 478.

of nativist assertion in South Africa.¹³ In the African context, the Akans of Ashanti and the affiliated Brong-A-Faho peoples in Ghana may be cited as an example of a regional group.¹⁴ It may, however, be noted that some literature on Africa uses the term 'region' to signify a single African state or a cluster of such states, instead of treating distinct territories of a state as region.¹⁵ Hence, it seems that regionalism, as we understand it in the present context, will not apply to Africa, in the strict sense of the term. However, ethnic conflicts in African states have become a characteristic feature of post-colonial Africa and have manifested themselves in specific regional contexts. Ethnic clashes in Somalia are a case in point. But some observers of the African political scene argue that parties to the Somali conflict are not

13. For discussion, See Hendrik W. Van der Merwe and David Welsh, "Identity, Ethnicity and Nationalism as Political Forces in South Africa: The Case of Afrikaners and Coloured people" in Jacques Dofw and Akinsola Akiwowo (ed), National and Ethnic Movements (California, 1980), pp. 263-273.

14. See Colin Legum, J. William Zartman, Steven Langdon and Lynn K. Mytelka, Africa in the 1980s - A Continent in Crisis (New York, 1979), pp. 27-28. It may be noted that Colin Legum uses the term Subnational groups to signify regional group.

15. See, for example, Anirudha Gupta, Government and Politics in Africa (Delhi, 1975), pp. 3-7. The author speaks of the West African Region, the Central and Southern Region comprising the Congo basin, Gaban Katanga, the Copperbelt of Zambia and Southern Rhodesia and east Africa.

regional, ethnic, religious or linguistic groups - as in Ethiopia, Sudan and Djibouti - but clans and sub-clans of what was previously acclaimed as one of the very few 'nation states' in Africa.¹⁶

Coming back to our conceptual analysis of regionalism, the perspectives we propose to analyse may be broadly classified into seven categories. These are: (1) Regionalism viewed as a manifestation of Centre-State relations; (2) Regionalism in contrast with sub-regionalism, (3) Regionalism as the outcome of internal colonialism; (4) Regionalism as a subsidiary process of political integration; (5) Regionalism as a positive and negative phenomenon; (6) Regionalism with political parties as major actors and (7) Regionalism viewed in terms of elite conflicts. In the following paragraphs, we shall deal with each perspective in some details.

To some, regionalism is a manifest aspect of Centre-State relations. According to Rasheeduddin Khan, for example, nothing is more basic to the very concept of federalism than regionalism.¹⁷ He also tries to explain

16. See Martin Doornbos and John Markakis, "Society and State in Crisis: What went Wrong in Somalia," in Review of African Political Economy, No. 59, 1994.

17. Rasheeduddin Khan, Federal India - A Design for Change (New Delhi, 1992), p. 44.

regionalism in terms of culture when he argues that regions in India have defined and distinct socio-cultural, historical, linguistic, economic and political connotations. To him, India essentially is a multi-regional federation. He urges that the multi-regional character of India's federation should be recognised as the Central pattern of our federal nation-building and underlines the importance of regions in the federalizing process in India. He argues that the concepts of 'nationality' and 'ethnicity' are not adequate to explain the socio-cultural diversities in India and prefers the term 'regional identity' as a comprehensive expression designed to account for the plurality of Indian society.¹⁸ However, this position needs to be critically analysed, particularly in view of what other scholars have to say about the role of ethnicity. While discussing regionalism in India, some scholars have drawn our attention to its ethnic dimension also. For example, B. Pakem, observes that "Ethnic politics is the major concern of any regional party in Meghalaya."¹⁹ In the subsequent chapters, we shall see that every regional party in Meghalaya seeks

18. See Rasheeduddin Khan, op.cit., (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 30-32.

19. B. Pakem, "Indian Nationalism and the Regional Political Parties of Meghalaya", a paper presented to a Seminar on Regionalism and Nationalism in North East India (Dibrugarh, Dibrugarh University, 29-30 November, 1982).

to remind the people of their distinct ethnic identity. Ethnic identity also played an important role in Dravidian, Jharkhand and Gorkhaland movements. Similarly, 'nationality' has its own importance in the Indian context. Most of the ethnic groups in North East India would like to perceive themselves as 'nationalities' which brings them to a sort of confrontation with the Centre because assertion of their identity is misconstrued as a threat to the Indian 'nation state'.²⁰

Another author who dwells much on the federal content of regionalism is D.C. Burman who views regionalism both as a doctrine as well as a tendency which implies decentralisation of administration on a regional basis within a nation, a socio-cultural counter-movement against the imposition of a monolithic national unity, a political counter-movement aiming to achieve greater autonomy of sub-cultural regions and a tendency for separatism to fulfil the political aspirations of a regional group living in a specified socio-cultural region.²¹ But regionalism is a complex phenomenon and to look at it either as a movement

20. For discussion, See A.K. Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam: Middle Class Politics (Guwahati, 1991), p. 2.

21. D.C. Burman, 'Regionalism in Bangladesh: The Story of Chittagong Hill Tracts' in Ramakant (ed), Regionalism in South Asia (Jaipur, 1983), p. 116.

for greater autonomy or as a reaction against federal administrative imbalances is to confine oneself to the superficial aspects of the phenomenon and to oversimplify it. Hence, Burman's definition cannot give us a comprehensive understanding of regionalism. Paul R. Brass, too, speaks of conflicts between the Centre and the States as the source of regionalism. He says,

By regionalism, in the political sense, I mean patterns of politics in the states that are best explained primarily in terms of conflicts and issues that arise within the states rather than in the national political arena and that deviate in easily discernible ways, such as in political party formations and voting patterns, from national trends.²²

This definition of Brass seems to treat regionalism as a legal concept and seeks to demarcate the issues pertaining to the regional jurisdiction from those falling under the national jurisdiction. As we have noted already, territoriality provides us only a partial understanding of the phenomenon of regionalism²³ and hence it is necessary to explore other dimensions of the phenomenon. Moreover,

22. See footnotes in Paul R. Brass, 'Pluralism, Regionalism and Decentralising Tendencies in Contemporary Politics' in Wilson and Dalton (eds), The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration (New Delhi, 1982), p. 260.

23. For discussion on this issue, See P.C. Mathur, op.cit., p. 6.

there cannot be a total segregation of the issues falling under national and regional jurisdictions. Very often, such issues may overlap. A regional problem like the sharing of river waters or terrorism in a particular region will certainly become a cause for national concern. Similarly, a national problem like the fall in foreign exchange reserves will have its reverberation in all regions. Hence, the very assumption about the existence of mutually exclusive national and regional domains seems to be unsound. Another difficulty with this definition is that it does not examine why regional conflicts come to the surface at all and what are the forces that sustain regional consciousness. Brass argues that forces and tendencies moving India towards pluralism, regionalism and decentralization are inherently stronger than those favouring homogeneity, nationalization and centralization.²⁴ He considers this phenomenon as natural because of the essential plurality of the Indian society. Brass also contends that the process of consolidating power in India is inherently tenuous and that power begins to disintegrate immediately at the maximal point of concentration. At that point, he argues, regional political forces and decentralizing tendencies inevitably reassert themselves unless the national leadership chooses to

24. Paul R. Brass, op.cit., p. 260.

attempt a more definitive consolidation by bringing into play the full range of unitary powers provided in the Constitution of India. However, he also argues that pluralist, regionalist and decentralizing tendencies will reassert themselves against any centralizing, authoritarian regime.²⁵ Here, Brass seems to talk of a vicious circle in the sense that only a strong central authority can keep decentralizing or centrifugal tendencies under control, but at the same time, regional forces become active as a reaction against excessive centralization. Thus, in his view, the forces of decentralization ultimately prevail over those of centralization. However, Brass' generalization may not hold good in all cases. In the erstwhile Soviet Union, for example, the aspirations of small nationalities were effectively subdued by all Union laws for several decades. The nationalist upsurge in Ukraine and the Baltic Republics paving the way for similar outbursts in other republics and culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union itself might not have occurred unless the forces of freedom were unleashed by glasnost and perestroika.²⁶ But at the same time, it is also necessary

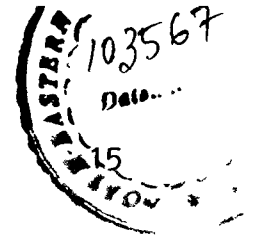
25. Ibid., pp. 225-226.

26. For discussion on this issue, See Martha Brill Olcott, "The Soviet (Dis) Union" in Foreign Policy, No. 82, Spring 1991, pp. 118-121.

to remember that the very introduction of glasnost and perestroika reflects an awareness on the part of the Soviet authorities of the need for liberalization to pave the way for ventilation of accumulated discontent which might have posed a threat in the future.

It will be evident from the above discussion that an attempt to view regionalism in terms of federalism or as a legal concept (which distinguishes itself by its concern for issues originating within the States) is inadequate to grasp the phenomenon in its entirety. This brings us to another perspective which has been developed by Duncan B. Forrester. Forrester draws a distinction between regionalism and subregionalism on the ground that "subregion" is a smaller area within a region or "nation" and argues that the phenomenon of sub-regionalism should not be explained in the same terms as the phenomenon of regionalism.²⁷ It appears that Forrester takes the size of an area as the most important criteria to distinguish between 'region' and 'subregion'. But if this logic is followed, it will be difficult to define a 'region' which may be termed as a 'subregion' when viewed from the standpoint of a larger geographical entity. It may also be argued that the demands and

27. Duncan B. Forrester, "Subregionalism in India", Pacific Affairs, Vol. XLIII, No. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 5.



grievances of regional and sub-regional entities are not always distinguishable, even if it is assumed that the former covers a broader area than the latter. Forrester identifies sub-regionalism as a "by product of modernisation" in so far as it is the result of economic imbalances between historically defined subregions.²⁸ He calls Telengana a typical sub-region within Andhra Pradesh and takes Telengana as a test case to justify his conclusion. According to him, historical and economic factors produce sub-regional problems and encourage the growth of compelling political subcultures which not only do not correspond, but conflict with the larger unities of language, culture and caste represented by the linguistic state.²⁹ However, the growth of linguistic regionalism as well as regional aspirations of different cultural entities and caste conglomerations in India negate this view. Language, in particular, has been the critical factor in the reorganisation of States, which became a force to reckon with in the context of regionalism and therefore, the phrase 'linguistic regionalism' gained currency in the political literature.

28. Loc.cit.

29. Loc.cit.

Having set aside two analytical perspectives on regionalism, we propose to explore other alternative conceptual frameworks. It may be noted in this connection that there are certain related concepts which may add to our understanding of regionalism as a concept. For example, a study of the contemporary political situation reveals that regional movements also embrace minority nationalist movements. However, the two are not exactly identical. Firstly, minority nationalism presupposes the existence of national minorities who perceive a threat from the majority community and aspire for political autonomy. Regionalism, on the other hand, may not necessarily entail the existence of minorities asserting themselves as nationalities or their exploitation at the hands of the majority. But minority nationalist movements may also take the shape of regional movements. Secondly, as Iqbal Narain has rightly pointed out that regionalism has a concrete geographical basis whereas minority nationalist movements usually have a 'diffused' geographical underpinning.³⁰ Academic writings on the subject of minority nationalism seem to be dominated by two different viewpoints. One school has tended to describe local loyalties by such implicitly derogatory

30. See Iqbal Narain, "A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context" in Akhtar Majeed (ed), op.cit., p. 21.

terms as tribalism, communalism and primordial loyalties.³¹ At the other extreme, some writers sympathetic to minorities seem to believe that nation-building entails loss to the minority communities, involving the destruction of their distinctive cultures as well as their political and economic domination by the elites of the majority community.³² Both these views tend to look upon minority nationalism and nation-building as contradictory to each other. We propose to examine in Chapter III whether there is any conflict between regionalism and nation-building.

The differences between minority nationalism and regionalism bring us to Iqbal Narain's conceptualisation of regionalism. He is of the firm belief that the plethora of theories³³ about minority nationalist movements do not always seem to capture the reality about the phenomenon of

31. For use of the term 'tribalism', See Kousar J. Azam, Political Aspects of National Integration (Meerut, 1981), pp. 167-168.

32. See Birch, op.cit., p. 334. A similar sentiment has been expressed in A.K. Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam, op.cit., p. 2.

33. For more important theoretical literature on the subject, See Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge, 1953), Ernest Q. Campbell (ed.) Racial Tensions and National Identity (Nashville, 1972), Walker Connor, "Self-Determination: The New Phase" in World Politics, October 1967, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying" in World Politics, April 1972, and Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (London, 1975).

regionalism in India. He feels that these theories, when applied to the Indian reality, may lead to misleading comparisons and generate fears that may not necessarily come true.³⁴ However, Iqbal Narain does not cite any evidence to prove this point. It may be noted that ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities in various parts of India have not only been in the forefront of articulating regional demands and grievances, but have also sought to nurture nationalist aspirations. Regional autonomy demands articulated by the Sikhs in Punjab,³⁵ who happen to be a religious minority in India or nationalist aspirations emanating from the ethnic minorities of North East India³⁶ show that minority nationalism has become a fact of Indian life. Iqbal Narain goes on to add that regionalism has both positive and negative dimensions. Positively, it embodies a quest for self-fulfilment on the part of the people of an area. In negative terms, regionalism reflects a psyche of relative deprivation on the part of the people of an area, not always viable in terms of rational economic analysis.³⁷ It may be argued, however,

34. See Iqbal Narain, op.cit., p. 21.

35. For a discussion on the situation in Punjab, See Pramod Kumar etc. Op.cit.

36. For details on nationalist movements in North East India, See M. Horam, Naga Insurgency (New Delhi, 1990); Samir Kumar Das, ULFA - A Political Analysis (Delhi, 1994) etc.

37. Iqbal Narain, op.cit., pp. 22-23.

that regionalism in the sense of relative deprivation may have a negative fall-out for the establishment because it critically highlights the negative role of the establishment as an exploiter. But from the point of view of the people of the region, regionalism is perfectly legitimate and a positive instrument for articulating their grievances. Moreover, Iqbal Narain has not substantiated his claim that regionalism as a psyche of relative deprivation cannot always stand the test of rational economic analysis. After taking a componental look at regionalism in India, Iqbal Narain concludes that it is a complex amalgam of geographical, historic-cultural, economic, politico-administrative and psychic factors, although the economic factor may have an edge over the others in the ultimate analysis.³⁸ But this definition seems to be too broad to capture the essence of regionalism. It may mean almost anything to anybody. As a matter of fact, the multiplicity of factors which Iqbal Narain seeks to associate with the phenomenon of regionalism may apply even to nationalism or any other phenomenon. Our endeavour is to arrive at the general attributes of regionalism, but the present definition cannot provide us with any such generalisation because of its diffused focus. Regarding Iqbal Narain's emphasis on the economic dimensions

38. Ibid., p. 23.

of regionalism, it may be noted that status-quoist forces often accuse the regional pressures emanating from economic compulsions as separatist. However, Iqbal Narain retorts that these moves are mere bargaining counters rather than secessionist moves.³⁹ Once again, Iqbal Narain makes a sweeping statement without elaborating his position with suitable illustrations. In this context, two significant questions can be asked, viz., do regional movements get transformed into secessionist movements and if they do, at what point? We propose to deal with these questions as we proceed to arrive at a definition of regionalism later in this chapter.

Echoing Iqbal Narain's concern for economic grievances, Madhu Sudan Misra argues that in a country marked by a dismal politico-economic scenario, the new developmental schemes have generated a race among different groups and regions for acquiring more and more economic gains. This, to him, has resulted in the emergence of a type of regionalism which is best illustrated by the Telengana movement.⁴⁰ It may be pointed out in this connection that the relative backwardness of the Telengana

39. Loc.cit.

40. See Madhu Sudan Misra, Politics of Regionalism in India With Special Reference to Punjab (New Delhi, 1988), pp. 13-14.

region vis-a-vis the coastal region of Andhra was one of the important motivating factors for the Telengana movement. On the whole, however, it appears that the bond which binds the people of a region is a commonality of grievances affecting the life of the people of the region. To illustrate this point, we may refer to the situations that prevail today in Jharkhand and North East India. The common factor which binds the Jharkhand tribals together is a perceived threat to their traditional identity.⁴¹ In the North East, a perceived crisis of identity and a sense of internal colonialism seem to pervade the popular psyche in the seven states of the region.⁴² Such commonality of grievances, coupled with a distinctly territorial basis, paves the way for regionalism.

It is pertinent here to refer to the 'nativist movement' which again is a manifestation of the economic factor. In essence, this movement signifies the conflict between the migrants and the 'sons of the soil'.⁴³ Myron Weiner has identified five conditions for nativist movements in India, viz., presence of migrants from outside the cultural region, cultural differences between the migrants

41. For details, See Section B of this chapter.

42. Ibid. The situation in Assam bears testimony to this fact.

43. See Myron Weiner, Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India (New Jersey, 1978).

and the local community, immobility of the local population in comparison to other groups in the population, a high level of unemployment among the indigenous middle class and a substantial portion of middle class jobs held by culturally alien migrants and a rapid growth of educational opportunities for the lower middle classes. Myron Weiner also points out that development of either a regional or national identity is a precondition to the development of nativism. Nativism, according to Weiner, is that form of ethnic identity that seeks to exclude those who are not members of the local or indigenous ethnic group from residing and working in a territory because they are not natives. He, therefore, considers ethnic selectivity as the characteristic feature of nativism.⁴⁴ The similarity between nativist and regional movements lies in the fact that both have a territorial basis. However, there are certain fundamental differences between the two types of movement. First, unlike the nativist movement, the regional movement does not necessarily presuppose the presence of migrants from outside the region in question or exploitation of natives by migrants. Hence, this movement is not always marked by ethnic selectivity. Regional movement, in fact, springs from some commonality of grievances among the

44. Ibid., pp. 275-285 and 296.

people of the region. We shall see in Section - B of this chapter that regionalism in Punjab and Jharkhand sprang from certain grievances which were shared by the people of the region as a whole. Secondly, nativist movement is always motivated by a deep sense of economic discontent. Regionalism may not necessarily be rooted in economic factors alone. It may be noted that the situation in Assam and other North Eastern States seems to fulfil most of the above noted conditions of the nativist movement. But regional conflicts in the North East have not remained confined to the level of natives vs. migrants and has assumed wider dimensions to include elite conflicts at various levels as we shall see later in our analysis of M.L. Sharma's paradigm.

Having shown the inadequacy of all the perspectives discussed so far, we may now proceed to examine another conceptual framework which is attributed to Kousar J. Azam. Azam believes that in a vast and diversified polity like India, regionalism could be accepted as a legitimate phenomenon and the tendency to view it as a negative polarization to national polity blurs its total dimensions.⁴⁵ Azam refers to B. Subba Rao's formulation which shows how horizontal mobility in India led to centralized empires

45. Kousar J. Azam, op.cit., p. 83.

while vertical mobility led to regional political entities.⁴⁶ According to Azam, the convergence and confluence of these two trends have decided India's political destiny and therefore, defines regionalism as a subsidiary process of political integration in India. She looks upon regionalism as a manifestation of those residual elements which do not find expression in the national polity and national culture and being excluded from the centrality of the new polity, express themselves in political discontent and political exclusionism.⁴⁷ But the problem with Azam's definition is that it reflects an entirely negative perspective on regionalism. Regionalism, after all, is a positive instrument of protest as far as the people of the region are concerned. Hence, to look at regionalism as an expression of elements excluded in the national scheme of things is to forfeit an opportunity to explore the phenomenon in its totality. Moreover, the question arises - why are certain elements excluded from the national polity and national culture? Azam seems to have attempted an answer to this question when she says that national parties due to their ideological commitment at the national level fail to come down to the sub-group level even through their local

46. See B. Subba Rao, "Regions and Regionalism in India", The Economic Weekly, 10, No. 38, 20th September 1958, pp. 1215-20.

47. Azam, op.cit., p. 83.

bodies because any such attempt would not only result in an ideological shift, but would also pose serious organisational problems for them. This, in her view, tends to separate the regional elite from the national elite.⁴⁸ However, Azam does not spell out in clear terms that the difference between the regional elite and the national elite lies in their distinct social bases. The national elite tries to acquire a somewhat popular support-base by using an unifying ideology to bring together the totality of the population around the theme of national unity. In the process, it goes to the extent of considering social, ethnic and religious divisions as anti-national. With a view to reducing and absorbing such cleavages, the national elite assigns an active and important role to the State (at the national level).⁴⁹ The regional elite, on the other hand, tends to be more firmly entrenched at the grass-roots level by virtue of its aversion for the centralised state and its championing of small, but region - specific

48. Ibid., pp. 240-241.

49. For an analysis of the social base of political parties for the purpose of classification, See Daniel-Louis Seiler, Partis et Famillis Politiques (Paris, 1980) as cited by Balveer Arora, "Centralist and Regionalist Parties in India's Federal Polity" in Zoya Hasan, S.N. Jha and Rasheeduddin Khan (eds), The State, Political Processes and Identity - Reflections on Modern India (New Delhi, 1989), p. 192. In Chapters III and IV, we shall see that, such an attempt by the national elite leads to forced integration and suppression of the aspirations of smaller nationalities in a multi-ethnic society.

interests⁵⁰ as opposed to larger national interests. Apart from the leaders of national parties, the national elite comprises owners of big industrial houses, top bureaucrats, technocrats, executives of big business houses, companies and so on. The regional elite, on the other hand, comes from owners of smaller business houses, petty landlords, emerging educated intelligentsia of the region etc. Such differences in the social bases of the regional and the national elite coupled with contradictions in their ideological positions may account for their separate existence and provide the rationale for the emergence of national and regional parties as mouth pieces of their respective constituencies.

This brings us to another important perspective which emphasizes the importance of political parties as catalysts of regional consciousness. In other words, regionalism can be viewed as a product of regional forces organized in the form of political parties. The theme that the stability of representative regimes depends largely upon the congruence or non-congruence of party political, social or ethnic cleavages, has its origins in the writings

50. The Assamese middle class, for instance, articulated such interests. See Introduction by P.S. Datta in P.S. Datta (ed), Ethnic Movements in Poly-Cultural Assam (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 15-20.

of A. Lawrence Lowell and Arthur Bentley. This theory has been systematically expanded in recent times by S.M. Lipset, David Truman and Gabriel Almond which tends to see political parties as reflections of societal cleavages.⁵¹ It is, nowadays, one of the favourite arguments of authoritarian political leaders that regimes of competitive political parties are dangerous threats to national unity and national integration in multi-ethnic societies because the parties tend to reflect ethnic differences.⁵² It is true that political demands can be articulated by a group even before a group acquires cohesion. But the achievement and maintenance of group rights is possible only through political activity and political mobilisation.⁵³ It is in this context that the role of political parties as organised bodies assumes importance.

51. See S.M. Lipset and Bendix Reinhard (eds), Class, Status and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective (New York, 1966). Also Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), Politics of the Developing Areas (Princeton, no details).

52. Contemporary Literature on the relationship between political parties and social and ethnic cleavages reinforce such a view. See, for example, Rupert Emerson, "Parties and National Integration in Africa" in La Palombara and Weiner (eds), Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton, 1966), p. 296.

53. For discussion, See Paul R. Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India (Delhi, 1975), pp. 44-45.

In India, the politics of regionalism with political parties as major actors is not a new phenomenon, given the tremendous heterogeneity of Indian society. In an issue of the journal Seminar, devoted to the problem of Indian nationalism, the fundamental problem facing India was well summarised. "India is not a single nation-state. It is a continent of many communities united through shared experiences but powerfully motivated by parochial and regional considerations."⁵⁴ The politics of regionalism seems to be a manifestation of this reality. Since Independence, many states and regional parties have sprouted in India. In fact, as Lewis P. Fickett Jr. comments, "one of the most significant developments in Indian politics since the 1967 General Election has been the emergence and success of several regional parties."⁵⁵ Today, regional political parties continue to play significant roles in the Indian political system. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (D.M.K.) and the All India Anna DMK in Tamil Nadu, the Akali Dal and its various factions in Punjab, the Shiv Sena of Maharashtra, the Telegu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, the Asom Gana

54. Seminar, 132, August 1970, p. 11.

55. Lewis P. Fickett Jr., "The Politics of Regionalism in India", in Pacific Affairs, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, Summer, 1971, p. 193.

Parishad in Assam, the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference in Meghalaya etc. are some of the most prominent regional parties that have sprung up in India in the post-independence period. Fickett suggests that the major regional parties may play prominent roles in a unique heterogeneous political system which would include several different types of political parties - regional as well as national. In such a system, regional parties may conceivably prove to be more responsive and realistic political mechanisms for India than either a conventional two or multi-party system could provide. Such parties by cooperating constructively with national parties at the centre, could provide the necessary stability at that level for dealing with national problems. In his opinion, the politics of regionalism may well constitute a necessary and salutary phase of political development for a society as diverse as that of India.⁵⁶ Indeed, regional parties are playing a significant role on the national scene in India today. The inclusion of Telegu Desam, Asom Gana Parishad and DMK as partners of the National Front Government at the Centre bears testimony to this fact. Similarly, the United Front Government of 1996 also comprises various regional parties like DMK, Tamil Maanila Congress, Telegu Desam, AGP and so on. However, an important question emerges from the above discussion. Do

56. Ibid., p. 210.

regional parties lead to the emergence of regionalism or vice-versa? But before we answer this question, we propose to take up another perspective which has been developed by M.L. Sharma. According to him, regionalism is not something irrational or impulsive, but is a cover or a plank through which the elites compete and fight for power. Irrespective of the perspective on or dimensionalities of regionalism, he argues, it may commonly be understood as a form of elite conflict at certain levels.⁵⁷ Sharma cites a few concrete instances in course of his discussion of the autonomy movements in North East India to show that regional issues come to be articulated only in the wake of emerging conflicts between the political elites at various levels because of clash of interests and distrust.⁵⁸ It may be noted, however, that in the context of Meghalaya, the difference between elites at various levels is often blurred because of the frequent circulation of political leaders from the national to the regional parties and vice-versa. Moreover, the national elite appears to be conspicuous by its absence in Meghalaya and one comes across the

57. See M.L. Sharma, "Elite Conflicts, Regionalism and Compatibility Crisis: A Study of the Autonomy Movements in North East India" in Ramakant (ed.) op.cit., p. 50.

58. For a discussion on instances of elite conflict, See, Ibid., pp. 82-83.

the regional elite only. Even leaders of the state units of national parties have a distinctly regional outlook according to their own admission.⁵⁹ Although M.L. Sharma's model lacks general applicability, it reminds us of Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" by which he understood the ideological predominance of the dominant classes over the subordinate classes in a civil society.⁶⁰ When M.L. Sharma points out that a group of elite uses emotive issues to generate mass pressures, his argument seems to conform to the Gramscian conception of hegemony. He even regrets that there is hardly any worthwhile study which examines regionalism from that point of view.⁶¹ Although Sharma admits the role played by issues of economic backwardness, fears of exploitation or socio-cultural differences in the fanning of regional consciousness, to him, these factors only provide fuel to the fire, while the ignition comes from the political actors,⁶² implying the hegemonic role played by the elite. However, Sharma's submission that all

59. See Appendix I, abstracts of discussion with Shri D.D. Lapang in Shillong on 3rd January 1991.

60. See A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, Hoare and G. Nowel Smith (ed) (London, 1971). Also See, G.A. Williams, "Gramsci's Concept of Egemonia" in Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 587.

61. See M.L. Sharma, op.cit., p. 51.

62. Ibid., p. 85.

regional demands emanate from elite conflict cannot be substantiated. In reality, it is the emergence of an educated elite,⁶³ and not conflicts between elites which may account for the growth of regionalism in the North East in general and in Meghalaya in particular.

Having thus discussed different perspectives on regionalism as available in the existing literature on the subject and keeping in mind the inadequacy of most of these conceptual frameworks to explain regionalism, we can observe that the perception of the elite seems to be the most significant factor to the understanding of regionalism. The nature of regionalism, in a particular context, seems, therefore, to be determined by issues raised and articulated by the regional elite as well as by the interests perceived by the elite to be of importance for the region it seeks to represent. The Dravidian movement in the South, for instance, had a clear caste dimension because it originated as a protest against the socio-cultural domination of Aryan Brahmins over

63. For discussion on this issue, see A.K. Baruah, "Middle Class Hegemony and the National Question in Assam" in Milton Sangma (ed), Essays on North East India (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 246-247.

Dravidians.⁶⁴ The regional elite who eventually formed the DMK chose to highlight the domination of Brahmins and accordingly, regionalism in Tamil Nadu centred around this particular issue. In Punjab, on the other hand, the regional elite, viz., the Akali leaders for reasons discussed in Section B of this chapter gave a communal dimension to regionalism in Punjab by stirring the communal sentiments of the Sikhs which in turn has reinforced Hindu communalism.⁶⁵ Again, most of the regional outfits in the North East have sought to preserve the ethnic identity of the indigenous people and thus ethnicity is a major component of regionalism in this part of India.⁶⁶ The perceptions of the elite being different in each regional context, the concept of regionalism will naturally undergo modifications as we seek to examine its nature in different contexts. Hence, it is not easy to arrive at an absolute and comprehensive definition of regionalism. But before we seek to formulate a tentative definition, we propose to discuss a very important perspective on regionalism

64. P.D. Devanandan, The Dravida Kazhagam: A Revolt Against Brahmin (Bangalore, 1960), p. 9. Also S.N. Balasundaram, "The Dravidian (Non-Brahmin) Movement in Madras" in Iqbal Narain (ed), State Politics in India, p. 171.

65. For a discussion on the communal dimension of the Punjab problem, See Bipan Chandra, Communalism in Modern India (New Delhi, 1984).

66. See B. Pakem, op.cit.

which comes closer to the definition we are trying to arrive at. This perspective has been developed by Michael Hechter and has come to be known as the 'Internal Colonial Model'. According to Hechter, regionalism is the outcome of real or perceived sense of 'Internal Colonialism'.⁶⁷ Hechter suggests that this model of social development was first enunciated in Lenin's analysis of the development of Russian capitalism and some years later, in Gramsci's discussion of the Italian South.⁶⁸ More recently, the concept has been used by Latin American Sociologists.⁶⁹ But Hechter is the first scholar to have conducted a full length historical study to test the validity of the theory. As Anthony Birch points out, the theory in essence implies that the relationships between members of the core communities and peripheral communities in a state are characterized by exploitation. The core community, having acquired an advantage over the outlying communities in the period of state-building or in the early period of modernisation uses

67. See Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism etc., op.cit.

68. As cited by Anthony H. Birch, "Minority Nationalist Movements and Theories of Political Integration" in World Politics, Vol. XXX, No. 3, April, 1978, p. 326.

69. See Pablo Gonzales-Casanova, "Internal Colonialism and National Development" and Rodolpho Stavenhagen, "Classes, Colonialism and Acculturation", both in Studies in Comparative International Development, 1(1965), no details.

its political and economic power to maintain its superior position. The cultural and (in some states) ethnic differences between the communities do not disappear and in certain circumstances, they may form the basis of demonstrations and separatist agitations by members of the peripheral communities.⁷⁰

The two basic propositions of Hechter's model can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The dominant community defines and regulates influential roles and positions in the state in such a way as to exclude members of the peripheral communities.
- (2) The economic development of the peripheral regions is controlled so as to make them highly specialized in their products, and thus more vulnerable to fluctuations in world markets than the core region is.⁷¹

However, the reasons for the growth of regional movements cannot be reduced simply to economic variables. Relative poverty is not necessarily the motivation for

70. See Anthony H. Birch, op.cit., p. 326.

71. See Hechter, op.cit., pp. 9-10 and 38-40.

regionalism in all cases. Many regional movements have actually derived some of their strength from the relative prosperity of the regions of their origin. But this does not contradict Hechter's position because Hechter seems to believe that even a prosperous region may perceive itself to be the victim of internal colonialism. In this context, it is relevant to refer to the concept of relative deprivation. Basically, relative deprivation means the tension that is generated due to the discrepancy between a man's expectations and his actual achievements.⁷² This implies that even an apparently prosperous region may develop a psyche of relative deprivation, if its achievements do not match its aspirations. The roots of regional discontent in Punjab seem to lie in this deprivation psyche, although Punjab is one among the more prosperous states of India.⁷³

We take the 'internal colonial model' as the basis of our definition because we assume that a perceived sense of exploitation at the hands of central authorities is an important motivating factor for the growth of regional sentiments. We tentatively define regionalism on the following lines.

72. See Ted Robert Gurr, Why Men Rebel? (New Jersey, 1972), pp. 23-58.

73. For a discussion of this perspective on Punjab, See Pramod Kumar, Manmohan Sharma, Atul Sood and Ashwini Handa, Punjab Crisis: Context and Trends (Chandigarh, 1984), pp. 26-29.

Regionalism signifies an organized effort of a community/people, led by its dominant section, residing in a specific region of a country with large-scale diversity, to articulate its interests in terms of assertion of its linguistic, cultural and such other identity and often bargain with the Central political authorities/leadership for a better deal than what the existing scheme of things could have offered. Such organized efforts are often seen to assume ideological dispositions.

We consider regionalism as an organized effort in recognition of the role of the regional elite in shaping regional demands through proper channels and using its hegemony for mass mobilisation. It may be noted that regionalism today is often associated with the aspirations of ethnic or linguistic communities. Thus, regional movements like in the North East, Jharkhand movement, Gorkhaland agitation etc. centre around ethnic identity⁷⁴ whereas demands for Maharashtra, Punjabi Suba and a separate state of Andhra reflected the assertion of linguistic identity.⁷⁵ Instead of embarking on an open confrontationist line, the regional elite prefers to adopt

74. For instance, Khasis, Garos, Jaintias, Nagas, Mizos and other hill tribes of North East, Santhals, Oraons and Mundas of Jharkhand, Nepalis of the hill districts of West Bengal and others resort to regional politics in their anxiety to protect their ethnic identity.

75. Growing regional consciousness of Marathi, Punjabi and Telegu speaking people paved the way for the creation of Maharashtra, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh on linguistic basis.

a bargaining stance vis-a-vis the national elite. Herein lies the dividing line between a regional movement and a secessionist movement. Secession implies the act of separation from an existing State by some section of the inhabitants of that state, based on an identifiable territory which they occupy, in an attempt to set up their own autonomous state, or perhaps to join with some neighbouring state.⁷⁶ Secessionism as a movement implies an attempt at acquiring a separate and independent political entity from an existing political arrangement either in reality or at least in the own perception of the secessionist group. Leadership of a Secessionist movement does not hesitate to wage an open struggle against the central authority simply because its aspirations transcend the prevailing State parameters. It appears from a study of secessionist movements that many secessionist groups claim themselves as nationalities and therefore seek to withdraw from the state in which they constitute only marginalized groups.⁷⁷ However, there may be other factors motivating secession-

76. For details, See Geoffrey K. Roberts, A Dictionary of Political Analysis (London, 1971), p. 195.

77. See, for instance, M. Horam, Naga Insurgency, op.cit., p. 49. For discussion on Secessionism, See Urmila Phadnis, Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia (New Delhi, 1990) and Paul Brass, The New Cambridge History of India: The Politics of India Since Independence, Vol. IV-I (Cambridge, 1988).

ism. In erstwhile East Pakistan, for example, cultural marginalisation of Bengalis by Punjabis and Sindhis of West Pakistan led the former to launch a liberation struggle against the domination of the latter which eventually paved the way for the creation of Bangladesh. Economic exploitation by West Pakistan was another important determinant of the secessionist syndrome in East Pakistan. A colonised country may also resort to secessionism often called national liberation movement, in order to liberate itself from the excesses of a colonial regime. Independence movements launched by colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America are cases in point. Support-base of a Secessionist movement may consist of receptive members of the society like students and unemployed youth, particularly in the absence of any other powerful political formation or social force. Exploited sections of working classes whose hopes are kindled at the possibility of the formation of a new political community, progressive sections of the society who are thoroughly disenchanted with their membership of a state which is non-responsive to their interests and sentiments may also join the bandwagon. In contrast with the secessionist movement, a regional movement is confined within the constitutional and territorial limits of the State in which it originates. As Myron Weiner points out,

When the ethnic group identifies itself with a given territory within the country, we generally speak of regionalism, when it seeks statehood outside, we describe the movement as Secessionist.⁷⁸

The strategy of the regional elite is to pressurize the national elite for releasing a larger share of the benefits that accrue at the national level. Regional groups may consider themselves as distinct nationalities, but unlike most secessionist groups, the former do not necessarily envisage the creation of a separate independent state for fulfilment of their political aspirations.⁷⁹ As far as the support-structure of a regional movement is concerned, the elite spearheading the movement is capable of winning support for their cause not only from the economically underprivileged sections of the ethnic or linguistic group in question, who expect their emancipation in a new regional set-up, but also from the most politically active members of the group in question as well as the regional bourgeoisie whose aspirations are sought to be fulfilled in the new order. In this connection, we may also look into the forces which provide leadership to a regional movement and those which lead a secessionist movement. The former is

78. See Myron Weiner, op.cit., p. 296.

79. Although the Assamese elite view themselves as a nationality, Asom Gana Parishad, the regional party did not clamour for a sovereign, independent state of Assam.

led by the regional elite whose aspirations are comparatively limited because of their conviction in the capability of the central authorities to cope with the problems of the region within the present political entity with additional devolution of power often referred to as autonomy. The secessionist movement, on the other hand, is led by radicals who have lost faith in the prevailing political arrangement and are desperate to break away in search of an alternative arrangement. It may even be argued that the distinction between regional and secessionist movements is similar to the differences that exist between a reformist and a revolutionary movement. The regional movement is more or less reformist in the sense that it is aimed at bringing about certain reforms in the existing political set-up. A secessionist movement, on the other hand, is revolutionary because it is not content with a few changes in the existing set-up, but seeks to replace the old order by a new social and political order.

In the light of the above discussion, we now propose to attempt an answer to the question we raised earlier in the Chapter, viz., whether regionalism leads to regional parties or vice-versa. One of our findings in this chapter has been that the concept of regionalism varies with the varying perceptions of the regional elite. It is

true that the subjective conditions which prevail in each regional situation do generate some nascent consciousness in the minds of the people of the region about their problems as also about the need to seek a redressal of their grievances. But regional consciousness may often manifest and express itself in an organized manner through some movement launched by the regional elite or issues raised by them. In course of time, such movement may transform itself into a political party to provide an ideological orientation to the demands articulated by the regional movement. Viewed in this perspective, role of political parties seems to be crucial to the understanding of regionalism. But, on the other hand, regional parties are not indispensable to the politics of regionalism because movements of various kinds are often found to be quite capable of articulating regional sentiments on behalf of the people of the region.⁸⁰ It may be argued, however, that movements which articulate regional sentiments require some kind of political organisation which is not necessarily a political party, but functions like a political party and eventually takes the shape of a political party when the movement gathers momentum.

80. Regional Movements launched by All Assam Students' Union (AASU), All Party Hill Leaders' Conference as well as Telengana movement, Uttara Khand movement etc. illustrate the existence of regional consciousness in the absence of regional political parties.

SECTION - B

It appears from a study of the available literature that 'regionalism' has entered the political vocabulary in a big way and has also required a lot of flexibility meaning different things to different people. In India, for instance, while the Congress (I) leader, Rajiv Gandhi, regarded regionalism as an anti-national exercise,⁸¹ V.P. Singh, the National Front leader, seemed to have perceived regionalism as a less dangerous exercise as is evident from the association of three regional parties with his National Front Government.⁸² It may appear that in establishing rapport with the regional parties, the Janata Dal leader was guided more by opportunism in the sense of securing easy bases in the states through regional parties, but the decision might have had some ideological content too. The regional parties, on the other hand, had their own compulsions to align with the National Front. For instance, as Udayan Misra points out, growing rift with the AASU and the rise of the militant ULFA propelled the Asom Gana Parishad

81. See B.A.V. Sharma, "Congress and the Federal Balance" in Ram Joshi and R.K. Hebsur (eds), Congress in Indian Politics - A Centenary Perspective (Bombay, 1987), p. 117.

82. Asom Gana Parishad, Telegu Desam and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam were the constituents of the National Front.

toward closer links with the National Front.⁸³ However, as we shall see in Chapter III, when one takes into account the fact that the Congress itself has been aligning with regional parties like the AIADMK, National Conference, Maharashtrawadi Gemantak Party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad etc, one realises that the attitude of national parties towards regional parties is governed basically by electoral considerations.

It may be noted that regional parties in different parts of India lay emphasis on different aspects of regionalism. The following discussion will illustrate the flexibility of regionalism as a concept as it manifests itself through a diversity of socio-economic variables such as language, ethnicity, economic disparity and so on.

The demand for Maharashtra was sustained by the desire of the Marathi speaking elite to carve out an area of influence for themselves which, eventually resulted in the bifurcation of the Bombay State.⁸⁴ But prior to this development, the Mahavidarbha Samiti (Greater Vidarbha Committee) was formed in 1940 and its demand was to carve

83. Udayan Misra, "Twilight of Asom Gana Parishad", EPW, Vol. XXV, No. 5, Feb. 3, 1990.

84. For details, See Aruna Mudholkar and Rajendra Vora, "Regionalism in Maharashtra" in Akhtar Majeed (ed), op.cit., pp. 94-97.

out a unilingual Marathi speaking province from Central Province's Vidarbha division and Nagpur division. Demand for a separate Vidarbha state actually stemmed from the backwardness of the region.⁸⁵ In course of time, however, the Vidarbha movement turned into a movement demanding more autonomy and greater share in development and political power. The demand for statehood was raised from time to time to suit the interests of the political elites, both national and regional. For example, within a few months after the declaration of emergency, Mrs. Gandhi supported the idea of a separate Vidarbha Marathwada state, presumably to weaken the leadership from Western Maharashtra.⁸⁶ The regional elite from Vidarbha too, reiterated their demands whenever they faced a challenge from the dominant regional elite of Western Maharashtra. However, the most vigorous form of regionalism in Maharashtra is associated with the Shiv Sena movement which while speaking of 'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians' and asserting the doctrine of 'Sons of the Soil' in terms of demanding preferential treatment to the Marathi youth in

85. Y.B. Chavan, who hailed from Vidarbha, was aware of this fact and sought to fulfil the aspirations of the regional elite by offering them significant positions in the Cabinet during his Chief Ministership. See Jayant Lele, "Chavan and the Political Integration of Maharashtra" in N.R. Inamdar and others (eds), Contemporary India (Poona, 1982), pp. 29-54.

86. Jagan Phadnis, Satteche Mohra (Marathi), (Bombay, 1977) p. 156 as quoted by Aruna Mudholkar etc., op.cit., p. 103.

the field of employment propagated a Hindu chauvinist philosophy.⁸⁷ Although Shiv Sena originated as a voluntary organization, in due course, it became an important political force with a pronounced political ideology. It came to be perceived as a Marathi and Hindu organization. Its leadership comprised a large element of Brahmins and Kayasthas and⁸⁸ many of its leaders had once been in Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). Sena, however, remained mainly a local organization of Bombay until 1995 when it won the State Assembly elections in alliance with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Some of the steps announced by the new government are - detection of illegal migrants from Bangladesh, changing the nomenclature of Bombay into Mumbai, plan for a Greater Bombay, plan to scrap the State Minorities Commission and so on. In fact, the entire Shiv Sena - BJP coalition and the Shiv Sena, in particular, find themselves in the midst of a controversy as far as its stand on the minorities is concerned. Thus, regionalism of the Shiv Sena has acquired a dual communal dimension in the sense that it is not only directed against linguistic

87. For details, See Mary F. Katzenstein, "Origins of Nativism: The Emergence of Shiv Sena in Bombay" in Donald B. Rosenthal (ed), The City in Indian Politics (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 44-58.

88. Amrita Abraham, "Maharashtra: Gendarme of bourgeoisie", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XIV, No. 15, April 14, 1979, pp. 685-686.

minority communities, but also against religious minorities and its stand towards the latter has certainly overshadowed its role as the champion of the sons of the soil alone.

The same trend is reflected in the Dravidian movement also. The Dravida Kazhagam (DK) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu highlighted the economic oppression of the non-Brahminic classes at the hands of the North Indian Aryan Brahmins. The Dravidian movement generated among the Tamil people an awareness of being a nationality. Hindi was considered to be the tool of the subjugation of the South and it became the symbol of Southern apprehensions against the North.⁸⁹ The Dravida Kazhagam even envisaged the creation of an independent Dravidian Republic called Dravidastan. The DMK retained the basic ideology of D.K. regarding secession from India, but the caste issue became non-significant with the opening of its doors to Brahmins.⁹⁰ However, there was a setback to its regional politics when the Sixteenth Amendment to the Indian Constitution (1963) forced the D.M.K. to drop its demand for secession. There was also a split in the D.M.K. when

89. For discussion on this issue, See Robert L. Hardgrave, "The Riots in Tamilnadu", Asian Survey, August 1965, p. 402, and Duncan B. Forrester, "The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation 1965", Pacific Affairs, Spring, 1966, p. 23.

90. Sneh Prabha Rastogi, "Emergence and Rise of the DMK" in Subhash C. Kashyap (ed), Indian Political Parties, (Delhi, 1971), p. 159.

differences between M. Karunanidhi and M.G. Ramachandran led to the formation of Anna D.M.K. in 1972. On the whole, there is no doubt about the fact that the Dravidian movement has lost much of its earlier momentum. Its focus has shifted from secession to the maintenance of a separate Tamil identity and restructuring of present Centre-State relations. Actually, the Tamil middle classes suffered from a fear psychosis in the face of a proposed imposition of Hindi and⁹¹ gave vent to such feelings by resorting to secessionist slogans. Although the slogans died down, the sentiment persisted and sustained the anti-Hindi agitation of the late 1960s which in turn gave an added momentum to regional movements elsewhere in the country.

Demands for secession could be heard not only from Tamils under the banner of the Dravidian movement, but the Sikhs of Punjab also demanded, during the freedom struggle, an independent state of Khalistan which was not conceded. Origin of Sikhism was in a way a religious manifestation of the emerging Punjabi nationalism seeking to assert its autonomy from the Central authority of the Mughals. As Balraj Puri points out, religious and regional sentiments

91. For details, See Mohan Ram, Hindi Against India (New Delhi, 1968), p. 112.

of the Sikhs are mixed and are interchangeable.⁹² However, regional identity of the Sikhs gradually receded into the background because no regional forum could substitute the mobilizational power of the Gurudwaras. Moreover, the Centre's refusal to concede a Punjabi speaking state till ten years after the rest of the country had been reorganised on linguistic basis, also added a religious fervour to a regional demand. Puri goes on to add that the Akali Dal, main champion of the Punjabi identity, remained an exclusively Sikh party (membership has been opened to non-Sikhs very recently) and thus divided this identity on communal lines.⁹³ Regionalism in Punjab is, in fact, a multi-dimensional phenomenon. As Pramod Kumar and his co-authors have noted that while economic factors provide necessary conditions for the existence of the current crisis in Punjab, factors such as electoral competition, religious fundamentalism, language controversies etc. provide ground for its persistence.⁹⁴ Rejecting the view

92. Balraj Puri, "Punjab Accord And After: Opportunity to Go Into Roots of Problem" in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.), Ethnic Conflict in South Asia (Delhi, 1987), p. 102.

93. Loc.cit., Also see Randhir Singh, "Marxists and the Sikh Extremist Movement in Punjab" in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXII, No. 34, August 22, 1987, p. 1440.

94. Pramod Kumar, Manmohan Sharma, Atul Sood, Ashwini Handa, op.cit., p. 17. For discussion on the factors mentioned, See pp. 26, 38-48 and 63-72.

that the problem is the handiwork of extremists, they argue that the actions of anti-social elements or extremists are manifestations of their social placement in society.⁹⁵ They have also questioned the notion that the social, cultural, economic and political interests of the Hindus and the Sikhs are conflicting. They believe that a person may be discriminated against as workers, peasants, unemployed youth etc., but not on the basis of religious identity.⁹⁶ To emphasize this point, they have quoted W.C. Smith who says, "communalism has been a religious issue only for those groups for whom it was also and already a political and economic issue."⁹⁷ Pramod Kumar and his fellow authors have also refuted the proposition that the Punjab problem is the product of uneven and lopsided development and argue that even if the problem of uneven development is solved, it will not rule out the possibility of the existence and persistence of communalism unless a frontal attack is launched against communal ideology.⁹⁸ Without underplaying

95. Authors subscribing to this viewpoint are numerous. For instance, O.P. Sebharwal highlights the need to deal with terrorist gangs ruthlessly as one of the components of the Punjab situation.

96. Pramod Kumar etc., op.cit., p. 19.

97. W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India (New Delhi, 1979), p. 218.

98. Pramod Kumar etc., op.cit., p. 21.

the role of communal ideology in the politics of regionalism in Punjab, we may argue that the Punjab crisis originated from a psyche of relative deprivation of the Punjabi regional bourgeoisie vis-a-vis the national bourgeoisie, in the wake of the Green Revolution. What frustrated the Sikhs most was the fact that their share in political power did not increase in proportion to the economic development of the State. According to Puri, this led to a search for new institutional and constitutional arrangements that would ensure preservation of Sikh identity and Punjabi identity and also maximise their share in political power.⁹⁹ The problem was aggravated because the Hindus and the Sikhs failed to evolve a mechanism for an equitable share of power. The Hindus did not assert their regional identity. On the contrary, the Sikhs perceived the Hindus as agents of the central authority and thereafter, an essentially intraregional problem got transformed into a Sikh versus Nation or Sikh versus Centre problem.¹⁰⁰ Under the prevailing circumstances, the militant's dream of Khalistan seemed to catch the popular imagination which made it all the more imperative to check the process of communal polarisation in the State. In spite of the revival

99. Balraj Puri, op.cit., p. 103.

100. Ibid., p. 108.

of the political process in Punjab with the installation of a Congress government, the situation continues to be volatile and threatens to escalate at any moment. In this context, it is necessary to draw a distinction between the autonomy demands put forward by the Akalis and the demand for Khalistan raised by the militants. While the Akali demand is basically regional, the demand for Khalistan is secessionist in nature and does not come within the purview of our present discussion.

As compared to the turmoil in Punjab which is sustained by forces of communalism, the roots of the Kashmir crisis will have to be sought elsewhere. It appears that the aspirations of various militant outfits in Kashmir have assumed secessionist overtones. Demands for autonomy raised by Jammu and Ladakh, the two distinct regions of the State, apart from Kashmir valley are, of course, regional in character. But such demands could not gather much momentum. Nothing concrete was done to uphold the regional autonomy of Jammu and Ladakh in spite of the repeated promises of successive governments in the state. The credibility of the National Conference, the once-dominant regional party of Jammu and Kashmir, is now at stake and it is perceived more as an agent of the Central Government. As a result of the marginalisation of the National Conference,

politics of regionalism in the State has been completely diluted and has given way to a sentiment of withdrawal from India.¹⁰¹ Return of the National Conference to power in the Assembly Elections of 1996 is significant and performance of this Government in Jammu and Kashmir will be keenly observed by political analysts because the legitimate regional aspirations of Kashmiris are closely associated with the National Conference.

While aspirations of the Kashmiri militant outfits have assumed separatist overtones, the demand for Jharkhand, on the other hand, is basically a demand for reorganisation of boundaries within the federal structure of the Indian Union. In our discussion on secessionism, we have observed that one of the important motivating factors for such a movement lies in a group's consciousness of being a nationality itself. This, in turn, leads the group to assert its right to self-determination and establish a new political entity to fulfil its aspirations. The Jharkhand movement, on the other hand, did not aim at projecting the Jharkhand tribals as a separate nationality nor did the movement question the incorporation of

101. Such a sentiment has been expressed in Gul Mohd. Wani, Kashmir Politics: Problems and Prospects (New Delhi, 1993) pp. 165-171. Also see Edward W. Desmond, "At War With Itself", Time, December 24, 1990, p. 9.

Jharkhand areas into the Indian Union. Thus, the basic premise underlying the Jharkhand movement was not an urge for separatism, but a concern for socio-economic liberation of the Jharkhand tribals who perceive their cultural, linguistic and traditional identity to be at stake. It is, in fact, a protest movement against the destruction of forests which is the only source of livelihood for the people and against the construction of big dams and industries and indiscriminate exploitation of mineral resources resulting in mass displacement and mounting unemployment. The tribals are being haunted by a fear of being swamped by outsiders in their own homeland of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. Among the outsiders, Ramdayal Munda identifies the neo-aliens who poured into the tribal region after independence and now control business and industries.¹⁰² The Committee on Jharkhand matters (CJM) has suggested two alternative measures for the solution of the Jharkhand problem, viz., the creation of a Union Territory out of the 13 South Bihar districts or the creation of an autonomous region within the State of Bihar. It has, however, ruled out the creation of a separate state.¹⁰³ The CJM identifies

102. Ramdayal Munda as quoted in Ramesh Upadhyaya, "Jharkhand: On the Boil" in Frontline (June 10-23, 1989), pp. 25-27.

103. CJM recommendations as cited by Raju Ramachandran "Demand for Tribal States: The Problem is Ethnic not Regional" in V. Grover and R. Arora (eds), op.cit., p. 705.

the problem as regional and not ethnic although it recognises that there are similarities in the ethnicity and cultures of the tribals living in the 22 districts of the proposed state which should be recognised and developed as a distinct cultural area, irrespective of political and administrative boundaries. Raju Ramachandran, therefore, argues that once the entire tribal belt in the four states involved are conceded to have common cultural features, there is no justification for rejecting the demand for a separate state comprising these areas.¹⁰⁴ In the context of the above discussion, however, a question may be raised regarding the ethnic affinity of tribals in the Jharkhand area. It may be noted that after the demise of Jaipal Singh, its founder, the Jharkhand party got fragmented on ethnic lines - Santhals, Oraons and Mundas.¹⁰⁵ The rift has further widened with the creation of a number of outfits such as Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Soren and Mardi factions), All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU), Jharkhand People's Party (JPP), Jharkhand Party of N.E. Horo and so on. It appears, therefore, that the creation of a common cultural area for all the tribals of Jharkhand may not solve the problem once and for all because the ethnic differences are

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 705-706.

105. Ramesh Upadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

likely to resurface, thereby rendering any such arrangement redundant. The Jharkhand movement, in fact, is something more than a demand for a better economic deal. It highlighted the suppression of ethnic and cultural identity of tribal populations due to superimposition of a pattern of development which hampers their traditional life styles. Hence, solution to the Jharkhand problem may be sought in a framework where due regard is paid to tribal sensitivities, their ethnic differences and their distinct ways of living. Only a meaningful tripartite dialogue among the Jharkhand leaders, the Centre and the state governments of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal may help defuse the crisis in the tribal region, irrespective of whether the demand for a separate state is granted or not.

In contrast with the situations discussed so far, the Assam situation falls in a different category altogether in that it represents a crisis caused by the presence of a large number of illegal migrants. The crisis in Assam, according to one point of view, is simply a reflection of the larger crisis facing the Indian state where the consensus that dictated the coming together of various nationalities is breaking down.¹⁰⁶ The Assam movement has been

106. "Assam-Survival Strategies" (editorial) in the Economic and Political Weekly, July 21, 1990, Vol. XXV, No. 29, p. 1566.

interpreted differently by different sets of scholars. If one scholar depicts the movement as 'Little nationalism turned Chauvinist',¹⁰⁷ another scholar calls it as 'cudgel of Chauvinism'.¹⁰⁸ A second set of scholars belonging mostly to the affected community treat north-eastern territories as 'oppressed community' or as 'Colonial Hinterland'.¹⁰⁹ A.K. Baruah notes with serious concern that there is a tendency among some 'nationalist intellectuals' to project the Assam movement as the creation of a band of religious-linguistic chauvinist manipulators, who mislead the simple, peace-loving masses including the students. A subtle attempt at this direction is the communication of Mr. B. Chakravarti on the Assam movement.¹¹⁰ By refuting Chakravarti's view, Baruah argues that the Assam movement is not

107. Amalendu Guha, "Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist: Assam's Anti-Foreigner Upsurge", EPW Special Number Vol. XV (41, 42 and 43), October 1980, pp. 1699-1720.

108. Hiren Gohain, EPW, Vol. XV(8), February 23, 1981. Incidentally, since then, Gohain appears to have revised his views on the Assam situation. See his comment on Guha's article, EPW, XVI(8), February 3, 1981.

109. For relevant references, See Susanta Krishna Dass, "Immigration and Demographic Transformation of Assam 1891-1981", EPW XV(19), May 10, 1980. Also See Tilottama Misra, "Assam: Colonial Hinterland", EPW XV(32), August 9, 1980, pp. 1357-67.

110. B. Chakravarti, "Assam Movement - Background of History" in Man and Development, Vol. V, No. 2, June 1982, pp. 118-125.

against any religious or linguistic community. He points out that the movement in Assam is the result of genuine fears of the Assamese that they may lose their national identity.¹¹¹ The agitation leaders highlighted the threat to the Assamese nationality and the need for Assamese tribals and non-tribals to come under a common regional banner. Issues like demand for more powers for the states within the federal structure of India, the assertion of the right of the states to mobilize resources and plan their development on their own, the promise of retaining 80% of the administrative posts for the State cadre etc. raised in the AGP manifesto are some of the major regional interests sought to be protected by the party.¹¹² The All Assam Students' Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, the two main organizations spearheading the Assam movement, have been neither against all outsiders, nor secessionist in nature.¹¹³ Another factor which leads to frustration

111. See A.K. Baruah, "Assam Movement: Distortions in Analysis" in Man and Development, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1983, pp. 162-163.

112. See Manorama Sharma and Apurba Baruah, "Promises to Keep: An Analysis of the AGP Manifesto" in North East Quarterly, January-March, 1987, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 34.

113. See Save Assam Today To Save India Tomorrow (Gauhati, 1980), leaflet published by the AASU. Also see Apurba Baruah, "Indian Nationalism and the Assamese National Question", North East Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 1, (August, 1982), pp. 14-32. Here, Baruah shows that the movement had not been directed against the non-Assamese.

among the Assamese today is the tremendous pressure on land. Moreover, Baruah has shown in a paper that there is a clear case of discrimination against Assamese job-seekers in both the public and private sectors in Assam.¹¹⁴ It is these grievances which seem to have motivated the agitation in Assam. It appears that regional sentiments in Assam spring from a sense of internal colonialism and are sustained by a perceived threat to Assamese culture and identity as a result of large-scale immigration from across the borders. Viewed from this angle, regionalism in Assam is also a manifestation of nativism because it reflects a conflict between sons of the soil and migrants.

No discussion of the Assam situation can be fruitful without reference to the movement launched by United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). It is believed that one of the factors leading to the formation of ULFA has been the disintegration of the AGP and the political void that resulted therefrom.¹¹⁵ The demands raised by ULFA appear to be aimed at securing the liberation of Assam from India and are, therefore, secessionist in nature. Hence,

114. Apurba Baruah, "Assamese Middle Classes and the Xenophobic Tendencies in Assamese Society", Frontier, Vol. 14, No. 11, pp. 3-6.

115. Samir Kumar Das, ULFA - A Political Analysis, op.cit., p. 37.

the ULFA movement does not fall within the scope of our present discussion.

The above discussion represents an attempt to view regionalism in its multifarious dimensions. But, before we conclude, we propose to examine another movement, viz., the Dalit movement and see whether it may be termed as a regional movement. The present century, particularly the decades after independence, have witnessed the rise of a new consciousness among Dalits led by illustrious leaders like B.R. Ambedkar. Over the decades, the Dalit movement has gathered momentum. The Dalit writers in Maharashtra had initiated a dialogue among the oppressed which was creating an awareness of their plight, problems and common cause. The Dalit literary movement had a profound impact on the ideology of the Backward Classes movement which unfolded itself in the Hindi belt. It also paved the road for the radical Dalit Panthers' movement of the seventies,¹¹⁶ which entered the political arena of Maharashtra first and spread to the other states later. The Dalit Panthers' opposition to the Hindu chauvinistic Shiv Sena and their militant stand on Scheduled Caste issues helped the Dalits to become

116. See A.R. Kamal, Essays on Social Change in India (Pune, 1983), pp. 77 and 95.

more assertive.¹¹⁷ The above mentioned developments reveal the growing potential of the Dalits, but ironically, their coming together with the other backwards was viewed by the upper caste layer of the society with anxiety and indignation. The very emergence of the Dalit educated nucleus was perceived as a breach of the Hindu tradition of banning education and intellectual activity to the untouchables. These perceptions were reflected in the process of a changing realignment of forces illustrated in the division of society into pro and anti-reservationists.¹¹⁸ To answer the challenge posed by anti-reservationists, the middle class from the Dalits came forward and formed a number of Backward Classes' Organisations. One such organisation was launched by Kanshi Ram, a Chamar Sikh from Roper, Punjab which was called the "Dalit Soshit Samaj Sangharsh Samity" (DS₄ founded in 1981). The process of consolidation of Dalits under the leadership of Kanshi Ram culminated in the formation of Bahajan Samaj Party (BSP) in April 1984. The party was registered by the Election Commission in 1985 after it won recognition in a number of States - Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Uttar

117. Lata Marugkar, "Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra: A Sociological Appraisal", Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Bombay, 1987.

118. Yevgenia Yurlova, "Political Emergence of the Scheduled Caste Ethnocommunity", in V. Grover and R. Arora (eds), op.cit., p. 495.

Pradesh.¹¹⁹ To the extent that the Dalit movement has become a force to reckon with in the Hindi belt of Northern India, it has assumed the character of a regional movement. In the Hindi belt, both anti-Congressism and anti-Brahmanism are being applied by the Bahujan Samaj Party to attract not only the Scheduled Castes and the religious minorities, but also the newly articulated backward castes, who are interested in the making of the Mandal Commission recommendations into a law. In future, the electoral behaviour of the backward is expected to have the most durable effect in the Hindi belt and the Punjab, where the share of those sections in the whole population is enormous.¹²⁰ It appears, therefore, that although the Dalit movement had its origin in Maharashtra, it flourished most in the Hindi belt not only because of the presence of a substantial Dalit population, but also because of an articulate leadership. In fact, the Dalit movement became such a major force that its mouthpiece viz., Bahujan Samaj Party tasted power for the first time as a coalition

119. Mainstream (New Delhi, December 9, 1989), p. 5.

120. In 1981, the SCs constituted 15.8 per cent of the population of India. Almost half of the total number of S.Cs live in the five States of the Hindi belt - 23.5 million in U.P., 10 million in Bihar, 7.3 million in Madhya Pradesh, 5.8 million in Rajasthan and 2.5 million in Haryana. In Punjab, this figure is equal to 4.5 million or 26.9 per cent of the State's population. See Sacchidananda, Congress and the Harijans, AICC-I (New Delhi, 1985), p. 6.

partner of the Mulayam Singh Government (Samajwadi Party) in Uttar Pradesh. Finally, the BSP succeeded in sabotaging the coalition Government and forming its own Government with external support from the BJP. It is not within the scope of this paper to examine in detail the implications of an alliance between the BSP and the BJP, but it is obvious that the compulsions of power have led the BSP to compromise its ideological stand towards a supposedly upper caste Hindu chauvinistic party. The inner contradictions of such an alliance led to its eventual collapse, but it appears that the BSP can successfully emerge as a regional alternative in the Hindi belt and can pose a challenge to the dominant national parties on the basis of the support it enjoys not only from the Dalits, but also from other minorities.

To sum up, regionalism has become an integral part of the Indian ethos and will continue to grow as more and more ethnic and linguistic groups become conscious of their distinct identity and seek recognition as regional groups to preserve the same. Emergence of an educated elite and a regional bourgeoisie is an important pre-requisite for the articulation of regional demands. Such forces may consider themselves as nationalities, but do not necessarily aspire for an independent nation-state for themselves. Rather,

they clamour for more autonomy within the existing set-up and desist from raising secessionist demands. Regionalism thus distinguishes itself from secessionism.

In the next Chapter, we propose to examine the factors leading to the emergence of regionalism in Meghalaya, the State on which the present work has been based.

CHAPTER II

REGIONALISM AND EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN MEGHALAYA

In order to trace the roots of regionalism in Meghalaya, it is necessary to turn back to the dawn of political consciousness in the hills which formed part of composite Assam. While Brahmaputra valley was ruled, before the advent of the British, by the Ahoms, the hill areas had never been a part of the Ahom Kingdom and were ruled by traditional tribal Chiefs whose writ ran in the respective territories. As H.K. Barpujari points out, the policy of the Ahom rulers towards the frontier tribes varied from time to time according to the exigencies of the political situation and mainly on the strength and weakness of the ruling Chiefs.¹ Though there has not been much work on the political culture of the hill societies of that period, it is a fact that there were certain checks on the authority of the tribal chiefs. The Raja of Jaintia, for example, could not carry out any important policy measure without the concurrence of other Chiefs. Similarly, the power of the Khasi Chiefs was also checked by an aristocracy called Myntris.² These systems were on the lines of tribal

1. For discussion, See H.K. Barpujari, Problem of the Hill Tribes: North East Frontier, 1822-1842 (Gauhati, 1970), pp. 15-20.

2. Ibid., pp. 6-7. Also See Hamlet Bareh, History and Culture of the Khasi People (Shillong, 1967) and Namita Catherine Shadap Sen, The Origin and Early History of the Khasi-Synteng People (Calcutta, 1981), pp. 184-189.

Chiefdoms and did not really have any democratic content in the modern sense of the term. The position in the Garo Hills was that all disputes had to be settled not by the Chiefs, but by the assembly of the people.³ In spite of the nascent democratic ethos in the functioning of the political system in the Garo Hills, pre-British tribal territories generally presented a picture of lack of political aspiration and consciousness among the majority of the tribal population. Lack of exposure to the world outside and to the political movements taking place therein was partly responsible for the absence of political consciousness. Moreover, under those tribal forms of governance, political consciousness of the modern type was unlikely to emerge. These sparsely populated territories did not yet have enough known economic resource or surplus revenue yielding potentiality to attract the attention of British annexationists. They had been left undisturbed, until the Burmese invasion (1817-24) of Assam and the Cachar plains brought an end to this policy of indifference. On the intervention of the British Indian troops, the Burmese were finally forced to surrender their claim over Assam under the Treaty of Yandabo, 1826. During the

3. Francis Buchanon Hamilton, An Account of Assam, 1817-1820, (London, 1820), p. 91.

next decade and a half, the Kingdoms of Jaintia, Cachar and Assam, along with their dependencies, and all the petty independent tribal states of the Khasi Hills were annexed.⁴

The British, however, had to face resistance from the people of the annexed territories. The 'Khasi War of Independence' (1829-33), led by U Tirot Singh at the head of an alliance of the petty Khasi Republics, was a protracted resistance movement of the entire people, employing guerilla tactics of warfare. The Khasi Chiefs, along with their people fought valiantly against the British, but had to surrender eventually before superior arms.⁵ Following the annexation, the hills had their first major exposure to the outer world. However, due to the British policy of seclusion, there was practically no political development in the hills, except for the Khasi-Jaintia Hills District, until the end of World War II. Of course, Christianity and literacy contributed a lot towards the development of the hill areas. The Christian missionaries not only introduced Christianity, but also the means

4. For discussion, See Amalendu Guha, Planter Raj to Swaraj, Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1942 (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 1-2.

5. For details, See R.M. Lahiri, The Annexation of Assam, 1824-54 (Calcutta, 1954), Chapter III, pp. 59-60. Also E.A. Gait, A History of Assam (2nd Edition, Calcutta/Simla, 1926), pp. 301-3 and 324.

of education and a script in the Hills region.⁶ The early advent of political consciousness in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, according to Guha, might be explained by two factors, viz., the location of the provincial capital there since 1874 and a significant role played by the Chiefs of some twenty five petty states in the evolution of modern political consciousness.⁷ Guha, however, does not examine the process of the emergence of new social forces created with which led to the development of new consciousness. The new awakening and the search for a new identity in the hills of Assam had their manifestations in the setting up of political organisations symbolising landmarks of growing politicisation. These included the Jaintia Durbar formed in 1900, the Khasi National Durbar in 1923 and the Khasi States Federation in 1934.⁸

6. For discussion on the impact of Christianity, see P.C. Goswami, The Economic Development of Assam (Bombay, 1963), Chapter IV. See also W.C. Smith, "Missionary Activities and Acculturation of Backward Peoples" in The Journal of Applied Sociology, March-April, 1923. For more recent literature on the subject, see Sylvanus Sngi Lyngdoh, "The Tribal Value System and the Impact of Christianity on it" in J. Puthenpurakal (ed.), Impact of Christianity on North East India (Shillong, 1996), pp. 202-227; Juanita War, "Family Structures, Customary Laws and Christianity: The Khasi Context", Ibid., pp. 228-241 and Milton S. Sangma, "Impact of Christianity on the Garos", Ibid., pp. 242-247.

7. Amalendu Guha, op.cit., p. 322.

8. Loc.cit. For an insight into the functioning of these institutions, See Kynpham Singh, "Syiem and Durbars in Khasi Polity" in S.K. Chattopadhyay, Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya (Guwahati, 1985), pp. 20-23. Also see B. Pakem, "Social and Political Institutions of the Jaintias of Meghalaya" in Jayanta Sarkar and B. Dutta Roy (eds) Social and Political Institutions of the Hill People of North East India (Calcutta, 1990), pp. 81-82.

Any discussion on the emerging political consciousness in the hills will be incomplete without a reference to the Seng Khasi movement initiated during the British period by Jeebon Roy and followed up by Chandranath Roy, Macdonald Kongor, A.S. Khongphai and others. The movement still continues its struggle to foster the spirit of true Khasism and allied tribal cultures and aspirations. The Seng Khasi has been described as a socio-cultural association of Khasis founded in 1899 as a defence of Khasi culture against intolerant influence of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission Movement and opposition from the Colonial Government in preserving their traditions.⁹ This raises the question - What is Khasi? The Khasis belong to the Mon-Khmer group of Indo-China and research establishes the connection of this group with the large linguistic family in the Indian Peninsula once called the Kolarians, but now more generally known as the Mundas.¹⁰ The term 'Khasi' has a particular significance. 'Kha' means born of and 'Si' refers to an ancient mother. Khasi, therefore, means born of the mother. Hamlet Bareh states that various names of

9. See the excerpt from the Profile, Where Lies the Soul of Our Race (Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1982), p. 76.

10. For a discussion on the close affinities of Khasis with Mundas, See P.R.T. Gurdon, The Khasis (Delhi, 1975), pp. 148-149.

the Khasi clans bear their mothers' name, as for instance, Sawian clan owes its name to Sa, the ancestress of that particular clan.¹¹ He argues that this system of ascribing the names of clans after mothers is, as well, intimately related to the matrilineal system of the people themselves.¹² Coming back to the role of the Seng Khasi movement, it may be noted that the movement claimed to be a champion of distinct Khasi culture, customs and traditions. But although the aims and objectives of the movement appear to be distinctly socio-cultural and religious in nature, without any political fervour, the members of the Seng Khasi organisation were nonetheless concerned with the political problems that faced the country during the colonial period.¹³ Thus, the Association had a long record of outstanding service in generating political consciousness, besides preserving various aspects of the religious and cultural life of the Khasis.

At the backdrop of a growing consciousness in the hills came another development. In the wake of transfer of

11. See Hamlet Bareh, The History and Culture of the Khasi People (Calcutta, 1967), pp. 12-13.

12. Loc.cit.

13. See J.B. Bhattacharjee, "The Messenger of Khasi Heritage" in Hibsien Roy, Khasi Heritage (Seng Khasi, Shillong, 1979). Even today, several members of the association are active in their individual capacity in leading political parties in Meghalaya, viz., Congress, APHLC and HSPDP.

power to India, the British were toying with the idea of a 'Crown Colony',¹⁴ which was rejected by the hill areas moved by countrywide anti-colonial sentiments.¹⁵ However, the official efforts to prepare the ground for a Crown Colony by forming district level political bodies for the participation of the tribal elite led to the kindling of an urge for autonomy in tribal minds. Among the district level tribal political organisations in the hills formed in 1946, most prominent were the Garo National Council, the Khasi Jaintia Political Association, the Karbia Durbar in the Mikir Hills (early 1947), the Naga National Council, the Mizo Union and so on.¹⁶ The emerging political consciousness in the hills manifested itself in a memorial submitted by the Khasi Jaintia Political Association to the Cabinet Mission. The demand of the memorialists was for a federation of the Khasi areas within a 'Sovereign Assam' with adequate 'cultural and political autonomy'.¹⁷ The memorial

14. R. Reid, Years of Change in Bengal and Assam (London, 1966), p. 110. Also Major A.G. Mc Call, Lushai Chrysalis (London, 1949), p. 241.

15. Verrier Elwyn, Nagaland (Shillong, 1961), pp. 51-52.

16. Guha, op.cit., pp. 324-328. Also see B. Dutta Ray and Jayanta Sarkar (eds), op.cit., N.K. Das, "The Naga Political Systems", pp. 97-101; B.B. Goswami, "The Social and Political Institutions of the Mizo", pp.

17. The memorial as quoted in S.K. Chaube, Hill Politics in North East India (Calcutta, 1973), pp. 67-68. The memorial was signed by the Secretary of the Association.

clearly demonstrated that leaders of the Khasi Jaintia Political Association were already motivated by political power and were becoming conscious of the fact that they could carve out their own destiny only as a separate political entity, though not a sovereign state, where alone the individuality and cultural distinctiveness of the Khasis and Jaintias could be preserved.

These developments in the hills need to be analysed in the light of the formation of new social groups. In the hills of Assam, Amalendu Guha observes, communal ownership over land was progressively giving way to the rise of private property during the twentieth century and even earlier. The formation of an educated Christian elite accelerated the process. During the Second World War, when the panic stricken immigrant shopkeepers and petty traders left the hills, circumstances compelled some local hillmen to take up these lucrative professions as well as petty war contracts. Thus, according to Guha, "there emerged a small stratum of middle class people of local origin, which was not in existence there before, except in Khasi Jaintia Hills."¹⁸ In this context, it is necessary to examine whether the term 'Middle Class' is appropriate to explain the emergence of a new social strata in the hills.

18. Amalendu Guha, op.cit., pp. 322-323.

The term 'middle class' itself is of recent origin and it was in common use by the 1840s when it came to be viewed as basically consisting of various "Social groups which occupy an intermediary position between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie."¹⁹ The term "petty bourgeoisie" is more familiar than "middle class" in Marxist literature and according to S.N. Nadel, the term "middle class" as used by bourgeoisie social scientists is unscientific because it is based on an unscientific concept of class."²⁰ Manorama Sharma, however, does not think that in a scientific class analysis of society, the term 'middle class' cannot be used.²¹ Even assuming that the term 'middle class' is useful in class analysis we must take note of the fact that in the hill areas of erstwhile Assam in general and in the hill districts which constitute the present state of Meghalaya in particular, class polarisation has not yet been able to replace clan polarisation. Moreover, in the absence of large scale industrialisation, classes like the proletariat and the bourgeoisie associated with modern industrial societies have not emerged in the

19. S.N. Nadel, Contemporary Capitalism and the Middle Classes (Moscow, 1982), p. 87.

20. Ibid., pp. 88-91.

21. See Manorama Sharma, Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony (Delhi, 1990), pp. 17-18.

hills. From this point of view, it appears that neither the term 'middle class' nor the term 'class' is appropriate to explain the emergence of various groups in the hills. Hence, we prefer to use the term 'a new social group' to denote the rise of an ambitious and enlightened section in the hills. This group actually consisted of an educated elite. It may be noted that in 1891, among the hill tribes of Assam, the Khasi-Jaintias ranked first in education with 38 literate males to every 1,000 of the population.²² By 1901, the proportion of literates was 57 persons to every 1,000 of the population.²³ In 1921, literacy in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district was 7.64% of the population, second only to Kamrup with 7.71%. Female education continued to remain the highest in this district at 2.52% with Kamrup lagging behind at 0.57%.²⁴ Achievements in education turned out to be an important force for the changes that took place in the hills. The emerging educated elite not only became politically conscious, but could also articulate their demands and grievances. Apart from this, the war time contacts with soldiers from many provinces and

22. Census of India 1891, Vol. 1, Assam, p. 146.

23. B.C. Allen, Assam District Gazetteer, Vol. X (Shillong, 1906), p. 109.

24. These figures were cited by J.J.M. Nichols Roy. See Memorandum of the Assam Government, Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. XIV (London, 1930), pp. 58-60.

from many nations exposed the hillmen to the world outside and to a gradual process of politicisation.²⁵ This was the position in the hills when India became independent.

The Constituent Assembly felt the necessity of incorporating special provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Constitution of India. B.L. Hansaria argues that the desire was to see that the aspirations of the people of the hill areas of Assam are met on the one hand, and on the other, that these areas are assimilated with the mainstream of the country.²⁶ To assist the Constituent Assembly in this purpose, a Sub-Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of the then Premier of Assam, Shri Gopinath Bordoloi. Bordoloi was known to be very kind and sympathetic to the hill people, and had been respected by the hill tribes. He had studied very closely the positions of these tribal people. Hence, his views were given great weight. The report of the Sub-Committee dealt in detail the various aspects relating to administration of the tribal areas and its recommendations were incorporated in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. A system of local government through district councils was set up under

25. Amalendu Guha, op.cit., p. 323.

26. See B.L. Hansaria, Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India - A Study (Gauhati, 1983), p. 9.

this Schedule.²⁷ L.S. Gassah notes that with the introduction of such democratic political institutions in the region as the district councils, most of the powers and functions of the traditional chiefs had been taken away and they were put under the control and supervision of the District Council. The emerging elites among the Jaintias, the Khasis and the Garos took advantage of the new political institutions of District Council to consolidate their leadership.²⁸ This elite comprised Western educated men and women some of whom were drawn also to the world of professions and business. From among these educated persons emerged the leaders of the Khasi-Jaintias. Among them were James Joy Mohan Nichols Roy, Roy Rowland Thomas, B. M. Pugh, Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh and so on. Gassah does not examine the process of emergence of this elite or its character. It may be noted, however, that the growing contradiction between the interests of the modern and the traditional elite made the latter suspicious not only of the former, but also of the national elite with whom the

27. Ibid., Appendix 14 - Draft of the Sixth Schedule, the source being B. Shiva Rao (ed), "Framing of India's Constitution" in Select Document, Vol. III, pp. 655-662.

28. L.S. Gassah, "Emerging Political Elites in Jaintia Hills" in Proceedings of North East India History Association, Aizawl, 1984 (Shillong, 1985), pp. 199-201.

former sought fraternities. M.L. Sharma argues that while the majority of the emerging elite became alienated from traditional tribal society, the traditional elite found greater defence in seclusion rather than in assimilation.²⁹ The socio-political structure of the tribal society thus underwent a radical transformation, following which the reins of leadership were transferred to the new educated elite. David Syiemlieh observes that while education made the Khasi-Jaintias the most literate tribe of Assam, it also made them aware that they must preserve their society and religion on the one hand, and that on the other, despite opposition to progress, the educator leaders were in a way successful in politicising the issue of progress or the status quo. He noted that such involvement in politics made them the most politically conscious tribe in the region.³⁰ In Garo Hills, on the contrary, progress in education was slow as the Garos were wholly ignorant of the meaning of schools and education and were strongly prejudiced against outsiders. But subsequently, they began to see the advantages of education and the Garos themselves took the initiative to promote education with Ramke Momin

29. M.L. Sharma, "Elite Conflicts, Regionalism and Compatibility Crisis: A Study of the Autonomy Movements in North East India" in Ramakant (ed), Regionalism in South Asia (Jaipur, 1983), p. 75.

30. See D.R. Syiemlieh, "Education, Elite and Politicisation in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills" in Ashish Bose, Tiplut Nongbri and Nikhilesh Kumar (eds), Tribal Demography and Development in North East India (Delhi, 1990), p.184.

as the pioneer. The British Government also offered protection and financial assistance to the cause of education though their educational policy was merely to reform the 'savage habits' of Garos and make their work easier in conquering and administering the Garo Hills. Another important feature in the history of Garo literacy was that education was handed over to the American Baptist mission, who used it as a strong instrument for propagating Christianity among the Garos.³¹ All these factors contributed to the emergence of an educated elite in the Garo Hills as well.

After India's independence, this educated tribal elite began to perceive a threat of domination by the non-tribals within the composite state of Assam. The limited powers given to the District Councils were not considered adequate to protect the hillmen against exploitation and backwardness and to effect their development according to their own genius. This argument gained ground because the educated elite was no longer satisfied with the existing safeguards provided by the Sixth Schedule, but was interested in sharing political power. In a memorandum submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission in 1954,

31. M.S. Sangma, "Education and the Garos of Meghalaya" in Ibid., p. 192.

the members of the Executive Committees of the Autonomous District Councils of the Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Lushai (Mizo) and North Cachar Hills pointed out that under the existing set up, the Hills peoples disliked the Congress, but they would welcome 'good All India Organisations' including the Congress, after they would have achieved the Hill State covering the Six Autonomous Districts.³² The hill leaders, however, did not explain why they did not like the Congress during the Hill State movement and how overnight they would become admirers of the Congress after the creation of a State. This raises the question - was the demand for hill state a political move for a different goal? It appears that the hill state would have fulfilled the political aspirations of the tribal elite. Although the aspirations of different tribes were not exactly identical due to differences at the levels of educational and cultural development, the general need to dissociate themselves from Assam seemed to have been felt by almost the entire tribal leadership of composite Assam because the hill state seemed to offer better prospects for political autonomy entailing major benefits for this section of the tribal society.

32. Memorandum to the States Reorganisation Commission Submitted by the Hills People of the Autonomous Districts (of Assam), Shillong, 1954. Proceedings of the Chief Executive Members' meeting in Appendix 'A'.

The Assam Hill Tribal Leaders' Conference held at Tura during October 6-8, 1954, decided to place the demand for 'a separate state for the Autonomous Districts of Assam' before the States Reorganisation Commission.³³ But the demand was turned down by the S.R.C. on the following grounds:

Generally speaking, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills and the Lushai Hills are not in favour of a separate hill state and the district council in the Lushai Hills and the Kerbia Durbar (Mikir National Council) are in favour of the status quo. The agitation in favour of a hill state is, therefore, confined virtually to the Garo and Khasi and Jaintia Hills.³⁴

It appears, therefore, that due to a lack of consensus among the leaders of different hill districts on the hill state issue, the movement for the hill state could not gather momentum at that stage. Fear of domination by the Khasis seems to have led the Mizos and the Kerbis to reject the hill state idea. Absence of an educated elite in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills in the 1950s and 1960s implied that articulation of political demands was not very effective during that period. The situation was different in the Khasi Hills where the tribals were more

33. S.K. Chaube, op.cit., p. 112.

34. The Report of the States Reorganisation Commission (Delhi, 1955), p. 188.

advanced than the other hill tribes because of their early exposure to modern education introduced by the Christian Missionaries. Census reports show that the percentage of literacy for the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills was 26.91 in 1961.³⁵ In 1971, the literacy rate rose to 29.49% for the three hill districts which now comprised Meghalaya. It is worth mentioning that this rate was slightly higher than the all India average of 29.46%. Due to the availability of better facilities for education and employment, the urban areas recorded a high percentage of literacy. In 1971, Shillong with a population of 87,659 had a literacy rate of 68.16%.³⁶ In 1981, the literacy rate was higher than the overall State percentage in East Khasi Hills, i.e., 43.73%, mainly because Shillong, the State capital and an important educational centre, also happens to be the headquarters of this district. In 1981, the State had a Scheduled Tribe population of 10,76,345 out of the total state population of 13,35,819. Literates among the Scheduled Tribes were 3,39,560, i.e., 31.55% of the population.³⁷ With their high

35. Census of India, 1961, Vol. III (Assam) Part II-A, General Population Tables (Published by Superintendent of Census Operations, Assam).

36. Census of India, 1971 (Meghalaya), Series 13, Part II-A, General Population Tables (Published by Director of Census Operations, Meghalaya).

37. See Tables 15.1 and 15.2 in Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1994, Published by Directorate of Economics, Statistics and Evaluation, Meghalaya, Shillong, pp. 122-123 (Source - Census of India, 1981).

literacy rate and better educational background, which improved further in the subsequent years, the Khasis seemed to be capable of playing a more dominant role vis-a-vis other tribes in the proposed hill state.

Meanwhile, the States Reorganisation Commission sought to enlarge considerably the powers of the District Councils. But the hill leaders did not consider this a sufficient compensation for the rejection of the hill state demand. A deputation of hill leaders met Prime Minister Nehru in August 1955 in Shillong and stressed that the hills peoples were 'primarily concerned with social and economic development' in the hills. The leaders believed that the economic backwardness of the people created a fear complex and suspicion in them, which could be removed by an Eastern Hill State. The deputation wanted more opportunities in the hills for technical education, social service and learning of Hindi and demanded a separate Public Works Department for them.³⁸ While the concern for technical education seems ridiculous in the absence of opportunities for technical jobs, the rest of the demands voiced by the deputation sound somewhat paradoxical. The

38. Shri B.B. Lyngdoh's notes for discussion with the Prime Minister, 25th August 1955, cited by S.K. Chaube in Hill Politics etc., op.cit., p. 114.

demand for a separate P.W.D. for the hills smacks of vested interest in construction works on the part of the emerging hill elite. We propose to cite concrete statistics in Chapter III to prove that most P.W.D. contracts after statehood have gone to local Khasis. As far as the opportunities of learning Hindi are concerned, the question arises - what made the hill leaders demand such opportunities when English continued to be the lingua-franca for most of the hill areas of the North East? Khasis also opted for the Roman script for their own language. The demand might have been a ploy to impress the Prime Minister about their genuine desire to familiarise themselves with the dominant Indian language and culture. In reality, however, these measures were not expected to serve the interests of the people at large. Technical education, per se, did not guarantee a job for the educated youth. Learning of Hindi, too, did not offer any special opportunities in the North East. Of course, a separate P.W.D. was expected to raise the number of registered contractors and to a certain extent, the number of labourers among the local people. Barring this, the demands did not signify any concrete benefits for the common man. It is also important to note that although the professed emphasis of the regional leaders was on social and economic development of the hill areas, the reiteration of the Eastern Hill State

demand indicated a growing eagerness of the new elite to share political power.

Meanwhile, on June 2, 1955, an interesting discussion between some Khasi politicians including J.J.M. Nichols Roy and B.B. Lyngdoh and a Naga delegation led by A.Z. Phizo took place in Shillong. The Nagas contended that the Khasi leaders were wrong in demanding Hill State within India.³⁹ Thus, the Hill State demand received another setback because the Nagas dissociated themselves from the idea. On October 26-28, 1955, a Conference of the hill leaders was held at Aizawl which was attended by the members of the District Councils of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, North Cachar Hills and members of the Kerbia Durbar of the Mikir Hills. The Eastern India Tribal Union (E.I.T.U.) was formed at the Aizawl Conference, but the Mizo Union refused to merge itself with the E.I.T.U.⁴⁰ Hence, from the very beginning, the E.I.T.U. had a very limited support-base, although it paved the way for larger and stronger political organisations like the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

49. See Notes on the Discussion with the Naga Leaders, June 2, 1955, obtained by S.K. Chaube from Shri B.B. Lyngdoh and referred in Hill Politics etc., op.cit., p. 113.

40. V.V. Rao, op.cit., p. 517.

Before setting up the E.I.T.U., the Aizawl Conference of the hill leaders again gave a call for bringing all hills under one administration.⁴¹ However, as mentioned earlier, S.R.C.'s rejection of the hill state demand was based on the ground that the demand did not enjoy the support of the Mizos and the Kerbis. Apart from this, insurgency was gradually gaining ground in the Naga Hills and the Mizo Hills and the insurgents were fighting not for a hill state, but for sovereign independent states of their own.⁴² On November 1, 1955, a memorandum was submitted to the Home Minister, G.B. Pant, visiting Shillong. Hardening of attitude on the part of the E.I.T.U. leaders and their determination to break out of Assam were evident. The poor performance of the Congress in the hills in the 1957 election gave impetus to the hills movement. Congress lost all the five seats in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills, three seats in Garo Hills and one seat each in the Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills. The E.I.T.U. fought the 1957 general elections to the Assam Assembly on the issue of a separate Hill State and won three out of the four seats if contested in the Khasi Hills. In other hill

41. Resolution No. 1(a) passed at the Aizawl Conference 'unanimously' - obtained by S.K. Chaube from Shri B.B. Lyngdoh.

42. See for instance, M. Horam, Naga Insurgency (New Delhi, 1990).

areas, non-Congress regional outfits won most of the seats.⁴³ Meanwhile, Bishnuram Medhi who had a better rapport with the tribal leaders was replaced as the Chief Minister of Assam by Bimola Prasad Chaliha. At Chaliha's invitation, Captain Williamson Sangma became a Cabinet Minister in charge of the Tribal Areas Department.⁴⁴ The overwhelming success of hill parties like E.I.T.U., Garo National Council, United Mizo Freedom Organization, the Mizo Union etc. in the polls seemed to have persuaded the Chief Minister to make this gesture to the hill people as a concessional measure and as a mark of his government's concern for the tribal cause. The elections, therefore, generated a popular mandate for the hill state. The outcome of the polls in the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills showed the respective hill people's support for the Hill State. The result also shows that by that time the elite had been able to mobilize a large section of the masses on this issue. In other hill areas as well, urge for a destiny outside Assam was strongly felt, even though the hill state idea was not universally accepted.

The tension between the state leaders of Assam and the tribal leaders increased tremendously following the

43. S.K. Chaube, op.cit., p. 115.

44. Ibid., pp. 115-116.

introduction of the Language Bill in the State Assembly in 1960.⁴⁵ The hill leaders interpreted the Language Bill as an effort to impose Assamese language upon them.⁴⁶ Thus, the language issue seemed to have helped the Hill parties to unite on a common platform to articulate regional grievances and mobilize public opinion in their favour. The decision to form the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (A.P.H.L.C.) was reached at a meeting of all leaders of all the political parties in the hill areas at Shillong in July 1960. The Conference unanimously resolved to oppose the Official Language Bill, mainly on the ground that "adoption of Assamese as the official language of the State will adversely affect the opportunities and prospects of the Hills people in the Government services and other avocations notwithstanding any amount of safeguards which can always be circumvented."⁴⁷ This shows that the main concern of the hill leaders was jobs in the Government sector. Under the leadership of the APHLC, the movement for a separate hill state continued to gain momentum. In September 1960, the APHLC Council of Action issued an

45. The Language Bill sought to declare Assamese as the official language of Assam.

46. Memorandum to the Commission on the Hill Areas of Assam, submitted by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference, Appendix 'A'.

47. See Resolutions passed by the 1st All Party Hill Leaders' Conference of the Autonomous Districts of Assam held at Shillong on the 6th and 7th July 1960, published in APHLC Souvenir July 1974 pp. 8-9

ultimatum to the Chief Minister of Assam. In October, Sangma resigned his Cabinet post. In the meantime, the Language Bill was adopted by the Assam Assembly in a special session on October 24, 1960. On November 16-18, 1960, the third All Party Hill Leaders' Conference met at Haflong in North Cachar which demanded the immediate creation of a separate Hill State.⁴⁸ Chaube says that though the language issue provided the ground for the hill state movement, its substance was the hillmen's desire for an equal status with the Assamese plains people.⁴⁹ It may be argued in this context that creation of a hill state or transfer of political power from the Assamese elite to the Khasi, Jaintia or Garo elite could not be expected to change the lot of the poor tribal and in that sense, the demand for a new state could not have been the demand of the tribal masses. Moreover, Chaube seems to believe that the Assamese people and the Hillmen did not have equal status. But it is difficult to understand as to how an ordinary Assamese was better off than an ordinary Hillman. Actually, this desire for an equal status seems to reflect the frustration of the educated elite of the Hills vis-a-vis the Assamese elite.

48. See Resolutions passed by the 3rd All Party Hill Leaders' conference of the Autonomous Districts of Assam held at Haflong, North Cachar Hills, on the 16th, 17th and 18th November, 1960, published in Ibid., pp. 9-10.

49. See Chaube, op.cit., pp. 122-123.

Turning back to our discussion on political groupings spearheading the hill state movement, it may be noted that initially, the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference consisted of leaders belonging to nearly all the existing political parties including the Congress and the Swatantra.⁵⁰ The APHLC was a purely tribal organisation and non-tribals were not allowed membership in this Conference. Eventually, the Congress withdrew its membership from the APHLC on the issue of supporting the Scottish plan, which contemplated that there should be a regional committee consisting of all the elected members of the Assembly from the Autonomous Districts. In the event of disagreement between the Regional Committee and the Legislative Assembly, the matter should be referred to the Governor acting in his discretion for final decision.⁵¹ While the APHLC rejected the Scottish plan, the Congress in the Hill areas excepting Jaintia Hills accepted it. The Council of Action of the APHLC met at Shillong on October 6, 1961, and resolved to contest the third general election to the State Assembly. The options before the hill people were either to accept the plan of "Scottish Pattern of Administration" or to continue struggling for a full state under the

50. R.S. Lyngdoh, "Evolution of Meghalaya", in North-Eastern Affairs, September 1977.

51. For details, See V.V. Rao, op.cit., pp. 374-376.

leadership of the APHLC. The APHLC swept the polls in the Khasi-Jaintia, Garo, Mizo, North Cachar and Mikir Hills winning eleven out of fifteen seats it contested. In spite of this spectacular electoral victory, the dream of a hill state remained unfulfilled. The APHLC, therefore, carried on agitation, organisation and education of the electorate in favour of the Hill State.⁵² Having secured a popular mandate for its programmes, the APHLC could now embark upon bolder steps to achieve its ultimate objective.

From the above discussion, the question arises - how does the hill state demand made by the APHLC reflect regional interests? The tribal elite within the composite state of Assam turned into a regional elite when it perceived its interests being threatened within Assam and therefore, mobilised support from the hill districts of Assam for the hill state which, to them, constituted a region and where alone they perceived their interests to be secure. In so far as the hill elite (excluding the elites among the Mizos, Nagas and Kerbis)⁵³ looked upon the hill state as the answer to their grievances, the demand for the said state assumed a regional dimension from the elite's

52. V.V. Rao, op.cit., pp. 378-379.

53. While the Mizos and the Nagas aspired for sovereign, independent states of their own, the Kerbis were not in a position to articulate political demands effectively in the 1950s and 1960s due to absence of an educated elite.

point of view. As we have observed in Chapter I, regionalism arises out of the issues raised by the regional elite and varies according to what that elite perceives to be the interest of the region it represents. The size and shape of the region, too, are determined by the kind of issues raised by that elite.

In the wake of the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the APHLC found itself in a dilemma. A faction in the party felt that it was the most opportune moment to push ahead the hill state movement. But finally, the APHLC decided to cooperate fully with the Government of India in defence efforts.⁵⁴ P.R. Kyndiah claims that by this political decision, the APHLC enhanced its prestige and status on the one hand, but lost the support of the majority of the people in the Mizo Hills on the other.⁵⁵ Kyndiah seems to believe that the APHLC's prestige was enhanced because of its flexible stand at an hour of national crisis. But the extremist section among the Mizos were in favour of pressurizing the Government of India when it was in a vulnerable position and therefore, opposed the soft posture taken by the APHLC. But there is no concrete evidence to

54. For a discussion on this issue, see Ibid., pp. 380-381.

55. See P.R. Kyndiah, 'APHLC on the March' in APHLC Souvenir, July, 1974, pp. 2-3.

support Kyndiah's claim that APHLC gained political mileage with the leadership in New Delhi by demonstrating its willingness to be a part of the national mainstream during the crisis in 1962.

There was a crack in the APHLC in the second half of 1963. The Mizo Union adopted a hostile stand towards the APHLC. This was partly due to the moderate stand of the APHLC vis-a-vis the Government of India. Meanwhile, the Mizo National Front raised the slogan of an independent Mizoram.⁵⁶ This was no doubt a setback to APHLC's united struggle for the Hill State. On the other hand, the North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills also chose to separate themselves from the Conference and subsequently, the District Councils in these two hill districts chose to stay with Assam.⁵⁷ Thus, the APHLC had to suffer many setbacks in course of its struggle for statehood and lost several important allies before achieving its ultimate objective of separation from Assam.

Towards the end of 1966, two important events took place. On 27th December, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited Shillong and stated at a mammoth gathering

56. S.K. Chaube, op.cit., p. 125. Also see reference No. 16, Ibid., p. 138.

57. Ibid., p. 127.

that there should be some reorganisation which would give dignity and status to the hill people.⁵⁸ The statement seemed to imply as though the hill people had no dignity in the earlier political arrangement. It appears to be a political slogan only because there is no evidence to substantiate this contention. But the statement was significant and had far-reaching consequences in the sense that it made a clear distinction between the political aspirations and economic needs of the hill people of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills and recognised that the problem of the hill people was basically political. Another important development was that on 29 December, 1966, the Prime Minister invited the APHLC to Delhi for discussion on 11 January, 1967. Shortly thereafter, on January 13, 1967, a historic announcement was made by the Government of India to reorganize the State of Assam in appreciation of the political aspirations of 'the people of hill areas'.⁵⁹ This statement was vague because as we have shown above that it was the elite whose political aspirations were expected to be fulfilled through the creation of a separate state. It has never been shown that the people or the masses had such aspirations. Statehood would have meant little for them in

58. V.V. Rao, op.cit., p. 414.

59. Ibid., pp. 415-416. Also see H.K. Chhabra and W.T. Jones, State Politics in India: A Study of Centre-State Relations (Delhi, 1977), pp. 258-259 and 307-310.

terms of concrete benefits. Following the announcement, the Government of India produced the Autonomous State Plan for the Garo Hills and the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills districts. The APHLC now decided to try it without prejudice while reiterating that the best and simplest solution would be the creation of a full-fledged state.⁶⁰ It is thus clear that the APHLC's achievements fell far short of its expectations. On the one hand, the demand for the hill state met a quiet death when the Mizo, North Cachar and Mikir Hills dissociated themselves from the APHLC. Consequently, the size of the region which the APHLC sought to represent became smaller when a section of the hill leadership broke away from the combined regional grouping. This automatically resulted in a narrowing of the range of regional issues raised by the rest of the hill elite. On the other hand, the demand for full statehood was also not conceded at that juncture. Nevertheless, the party achieved an important political victory without violence and by means of organisational efficiency and political maturity.

After a few months of experimentation, the Autonomous State Plan ran into trouble. Under the new administrative set-up, a State within a State had come into being.

60. P.R. Kyndiah, op.cit., p. 5.

The Autonomous State had its own Assembly and Council of Ministers, with responsibility for most of the subjects in the State List. However, this arrangement did not meet the aspirations of the hill elite.⁶¹ Meanwhile, some radicals within the APHLC who were opposed to the formation of the Autonomous State rebelled against the moderates and left the APHLC to form the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP). To counteract the growing influence of the new party in certain areas, the APHLC in its 22nd Session held in September, 1970, resolved to urge upon the Government of India to take immediate steps for the Constitution of Meghalaya into a fully separate state.⁶² Mid-term elections for the Lok Sabha were held in March, 1971, and the APHLC nominee trounced the HSPDP candidate by an overwhelming majority in the Shillong Parliamentary Constituency. Meanwhile in December, 1971, Parliament passed the Bill conferring full statehood on Meghalaya.⁶³ Thus, the APHLC's demand was finally fulfilled, although to a partial extent. Indeed, the party became a major regional force in the

61. See S.K. Chaube, op.cit., p. 132.

62. See proceedings of the 22nd Session held at Shillong on 19th, 21st and 22nd September, 1970, in 'Session to Session: Chronology of the APHLC' published in APHLC Souvenir, op.cit., p. 17.

63. Here, we are referring to North Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act, 1971.

Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills in the sixties and the seventies and could somehow project itself as the champion of tribal aspirations in the three hill districts.

As mentioned earlier, during the final stages of the regional movement for the hill state, some cracks appeared in the APHLC and a few splinter groups emerged as a consequence. The HSPDP, for instance, was an extremist faction that broke away from APHLC although there was no substantial difference in the programmes of the two regional parties. Hopingstone Lyngdoh, an APHLC member, was first suspended in July, 1968, and later expelled on a charge of misusing the volunteer force of the party raised for the forthcoming Satyagraha. Lyngdoh, who was an ex-EITU man and Secretary of its Khasi Hills District Volunteer Organisation, soon formed the Hill State People's Democratic Party.⁶⁴ It appears that the HSPDP was opposed to the Autonomous Hill State Plan. It was mainly to neutralize the radical postures of the rebel faction who later formed the HSPDP that the APHLC decided to launch a non-violent civil disobedience movement, on September 10, 1966, while continuing negotiations with the Central Government.⁶⁵ The

64. See S.K. Chaube, op.cit., p. 132.

65. Loc.cit.

aims and aspiraions of the APHLC and the HSPDP being more or less the same, there does not seem to be any rationale, whatsoever, for the continued existence of the HSPDP after the formation of Meghalaya. Perhaps an enquiry into the temperamental differences among the leaders of the two parties as well as their personality clashes may provide an explanation for their survival as separate entities. Eventually, the APHLC and a section of the HSPDP merged themselves to launch the Hill People Union in 1984, although the faction led by H.S. Lyngdoh stayed away from the merger.

In its election manifesto of 1983, the HSPDP declares itself as a Tribal Regional Party which promises to serve the State and its people better to enable them to develop according to their own genius.⁶⁶ It may be noted, however, that the HSPDP which was the oldest local opposition group, could not make any breakthrough in the Garo Hills. Its influence remained confined to the Khasi Hills. In the State Assembly elections of 1972, for example, the HSPDP fielded 22 candidates in the Khasi Hills out of whom 8 candidates returned victorious. In 1978, the party set up 28 candidates in the Khasi Hills and 11 of them won their seats. The party improved its tally of elected members by

66. See Election Manifesto of the Hill State People's Democratic Party, 1983.

winning 12 seats from the Khasi Hills in 1983.⁶⁷ It appears that the HSPDP has continued to remain a factor in the politics of Meghalaya because its uncompromising postures on ethnic issues is likely to invoke considerable sympathy from those sections within the state which are not satisfied with the existing political arrangements.

Divergence of thinking among regional leaders and their personal ambitions seem to have stood in the way of setting up a single, coherent regional platform in Meghalaya. Instead, ambitious political leaders were seeking to establish their own political organisations by regionalising some issues of popular concern. The formation of Public Demands Implementation Convention is a case in point. The PDIC came into being in 1977. The formation of the PDIC was prompted by the proclaimed desire to highlight the problems of the farmers, especially the potato farmers of Khyrim area of Khasi Hills. The PDIC felt that the interests of the farmers were neglected and they were not getting the remunerative price for their produce. The professed aim of the PDIC was, therefore, to redress the grievances of the farmers and to render assistance to them through the Government machinery. Among the founder members

67. For election data, see Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983, pp. 50-54.

of the PDIC were - Prof. Martin Narayan Majaw, Prof. G.G. Swell, Mr. Upstar Kharbuli, Mr. Evansius Kek Mawlong, Mr. Chorel Lyngdoh, Mr. Noken Lyngdoh, Mr. Dominic Roblin Nongkynrih and Prof. Ambrose B.M. Roy.⁶⁸ Initially, the PDIC directed its attack against the APHLC and cooperated with the Congress. The PDIC member in the Assembly brought a no confidence motion against the APHLC government in 1973 along with the support of the Congress.⁶⁹ In 1978, however, the PDIC came to an understanding with the APHLC and the HSPDP for formation of the Ministry and preventing Congress rule or Presidential regime.⁷⁰ The PDIC was recognised as a State Political Party by the Election Commission of India on 21st September, 1978, and candidates sponsored by the party were treated as Independents for the General Elections in 1978. The PDIC sponsored 23 candidates in the Assembly Election of 1978, but secured only 2 seats in the Assembly. In the 1983 elections to the Legislative Assembly, too, the party won 2 seats, although 21 of its

68. Appendix 8, abstracts of discussion with Mr. A.B.M. Roy, PDIC President, in Shillong on 28th July, 1991.

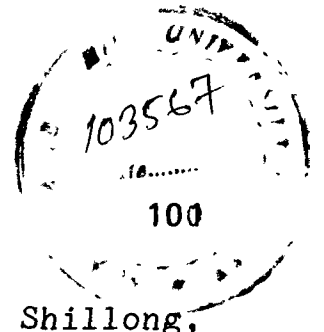
69. For discussion, see Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Debates (Winter Session, 1972), Vol. VI, No. 2 (The 11th, 12th and 13th December, 1973), Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Shillong.

70. Dhiren Bhagwati, "The INC and Political Department of Meghalaya" in P.S. Dutta (ed), Electoral Politics in North East India, NEICSSR (New Delhi, 1986), p. 88.

candidates were in the fray.⁷¹ The election results are an ample evidence of the PDIC's lack of influence and the existence of the party seems to have been more or less eclipsed by the more dominant regional parties, viz., the APHLC and the HSPDP. The PDIC was a partner of the coalition government in Meghalaya formed by B.B. Lyngdoh in 1990. It may be noted here that the PDIC distinguishes itself from other regional parties by its agrarian character and has not joined the unification moves initiated by the two other regional parties viz., the APHLC and the HSPDP. The PDIC continues to exist independently with its token presence in the Assembly and its participation in the coalition government led by Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh was in its individual capacity and not through merger with the Hill People Union.

Meanwhile, informal discussions were held way back in 1975 by the leaders of the APHLC and the HSPDP for unification of the two parties in order to serve the best interests of the people. At a special session of the APHLC held in August, 1983, an unanimous decision was reached for unification of the APHLC and the HSPDP. The plenary session

71. See Meghalaya Election Handbook (February, 1983), pp. 48, 50, 51, 53 and 54.



of the APHLC held on the 6th September, 1984, at Shillong, authorised the Central Working Committee to finalise the unification of the two parties. The Central Working Committee of the two parties met and drafted a Constitution of the new regional party known as "The Hill People Union" which was adopted on 16th November, 1984.⁷² The formation of the party was in response to the need for a strong regional party to provide a viable alternative to the national parties. Dr. Milton S. Sangma in his Presidential Address to the Second Plenary Session of the General Council, HPU observed, "... The Hill People Union is thus a product of the general will of the indigenous tribals of Meghalaya...."⁷³ However, efforts for the unification of regional parties received a setback because a few leaders from the erstwhile HSPDP opted out of the HPU and continued with the HSPDP. The HPU declares:

The basic stand of the HPU stems from the fact that the unity of regional parties is the safeguard of regional interests of the people within the prescribed framework of the Constitution of India.⁷⁴

72. Written testimony in typed script signed by Shri Milton Sangma and Shri S.D.D. Nichols Roy titled "How the Hill People Union was formed" (unpublished) Appendix 9.

73. Presidential Address by Dr. Milton S. Sangma at the Second Plenary Session of the General Council, Hill People Union held on September 11-12, 1987, Shillong. (Typed copy obtained from Shri Milton S. Sangma).

74. See Election Manifesto of the Hill People Union, 1988.

The Hill People Union has been the latest entry into the politics of Meghalaya and has just completed a decade of political experience. The HPU came to power in March, 1990, when Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh, along with his party colleagues crossed the floor, deserting the Congress (I) Chief Minister, Mr. Purno A. Sangma, to join hands with a coalition of regional parties. The Speaker, Mr. P.R. Kyndiah's favourable ruling enabled Mr. Lyngdoh to evade the jurisdiction of the anti-defection law. Mr. Lyngdoh had to struggle hard to keep the alliance together. Apart from his own HPU group, he had to look after the divergent interests of two other factions of the HPU, two factions of the HSPDP, Mr. G.G. Swell's PDIC, a lone member of the Congress (I) who managed a berth in the government and seven independents. These different political entities came together and decided to coalesce into a single homogeneous whole that was christened the Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party (MUPP). But even after a year later, the groups far from merging remained poles apart.⁷⁵ The survival of the unique alliance under the leadership of Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh was of crucial importance for the success of

75. Diptosh Majumdar, "Tough Time for Meghalaya C.M.", in The Statesman, March 12, 1991, p. 16. Also see G.W. Lyngdoh, "MUPP on Verge of Collapse" in The Shillong Times, September 16, 1991, pp. 1 and 4.

the regional experiment in Meghalaya. But in the wake of a deteriorating law and order situation and a growing rift within the MUPP coalition, Meghalaya came under a short spell of President's Rule towards the end of 1991 following which the Congress (I) was reinstalled in power under the leadership of Mr. D.D. Lapang.

As Soumen Sen observes, regionalism in Meghalaya has passed through four different phases.⁷⁶ The first phase was the phase of the movement for a hill state under the banner of the APHLC. The second phase began with the formation of the State of Meghalaya, first as a sub-State in 1970 and then as a full fledged State in 1972. During the third phase, the politics of regionalism lost much of its relevance as leaders of the regional parties, at one time or the other, found it convenient to defect and join the Congress. The final phase, according to Sen, seems to be a phase of uncertainty linked with the problem and direction of development. He adds that as the regional parties are not backed by any specific ideology or socio-economic programmes, the Congress has filled the political vacuum with its manipulative power and has emerged as the

75. For details, See Soumen Sen, "Regionalism in Meghalaya Today", a paper presented in a colloquium on 'Regionalism in India Today' at Calcutta University, Department of Political Science - UGC Special Assistance Programme 31 December, 1990.

protector of 'regional interests'.⁷⁷ Sen, however, does not substantiate his argument. The first phase was synonymous with a movement backed by leaders from most of the hill districts of composite Assam and the leadership worked for a larger goal in the sense that it visualized the hill State as the unit for a fulfilment of its regional aspirations. The next stage signified a substantial erosion of the regional base and a challenge to the undisputed leadership of the APHLC, although the movement succeeded in getting its demand fulfilled, at least to a partial extent. The third phase was marked by defections and frequent movement of the regional elite to the dominant national party, implying disenchantment with regional ideology. The last phase symbolises an era of unfulfilled expectations. The regional parties came into the fray with a bag full of promises, but belied the expectations of the people. The failure of the regional experiment proves beyond doubt that while the APHLC's agitation for statehood was a successful one, the party failed miserably when its capacity to retain power was put to test during the late seventies. Even the HPU, the successor to the APHLC and born out of a merger between the APHLC and a faction of the HSPDP, exhibited its weaknesses when it fell a victim to the shrewd manoeuvring capabilities of the Congress and its term of office was cut

77. Ibid.

short by the imposition of President's Rule followed by the return of the Congress to power.

In this chapter, we have tried to trace the background of the hill state movement which paved the way for the formation of the first regional party in the hills, viz., the APHLC. But the motivating factors for regionalism lay deeper. For a comprehensive understanding of regionalism in Meghalaya, it is necessary to enquire into the roots of the hills problem. According to S.K. Chaube, the outstanding aspect of the hills problem is political, the economic foundation of which can be traced not only in the Hills People's long standing grievances, but also in the aspirations for a new destiny. In short, Chaube points out that the Hills problem is a problem of growth which, under special circumstances, has been articulated in political movements.⁷⁸ The regional movement launched under the banner of the APHLC is a case in point. Indeed, a very important motivation for the emergence of regional parties is the desire of the new elite of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills for a share of political power because they were not content with economic safeguards any longer. Again, the people of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills seemed to have been

78. S. K. Chaube, op.cit., p. 107.

haunted by a sense of perceived insecurity arising from their fear of cultural extinction which came as a reaction to the Official Language Bill adopted by the Assam Assembly. This fear was effectively articulated by the APHLC. The APHLC also mobilised public opinion by citing economic backwardness as the rationale for the creation of a separate political unit.⁷⁹ Moreover, the regional leaders also articulated the various aspects of tribal exclusiveness and propounded its protection. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, a tribal leader in the 1920s, asserted the inherent superiority of the tribal traditions and made it explicit that the tribal cultures would not yield to any pressures.⁸⁰ Although the tribal leaders betrayed an attitude of conservatism by refusing to interact with other cultures and by preferring seclusion, this very attitude helped them to muster support for the regional cause of an independent political unit.

In the context of the above discussion, the question arises - did regional sentiment in the hills lead to the emergence of regional parties or vice-versa? An

79. Election Manifestoes of the APHLC for 1962 and 1967 promised economic growth.

80. See J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. IX, pp. 1022-23.

answer to this question may be sought in the light of our observation in the previous chapter that regional parties are not indispensable to a conceptualisation of regionalism. Although regional sentiment is an abstraction which takes concrete shape through the efforts of organized groups, such groups need not necessarily be political parties, but may very well be movements launched by the regional elite. The movement for statehood, initiated under the banner of the APHLC, illustrates this point.⁸¹ Viewed in this perspective, it may be argued that regional parties in the hills which later constituted Meghalaya were not directly responsible for the genesis of regional consciousness. Rather, such consciousness manifested itself through an organized movement under the leadership of the APHLC which eventually took the shape of a full fledged political party.

To conclude, it may be noted that a new dimension has been added to regionalism in Meghalaya with ethnic identity assuming preponderance over regional identity. All the regional parties in Meghalaya seek to endear themselves to the electorate by raising the slogan of 'preservation of

81. It may be noted that at the outset, the APHLC was not a political party as such, but was a conglomeration of various regional groups in the hills of Assam.

the identity of the Tribal and development of their customs and culture'.⁸² The HSPDP goes to the extent of declaring itself as a Tribal Regional Party. As Myron Weiner comments.

What are gradually referred to as "regional" movements in India are political movements by ethnic groups to create or govern states organized around an explicit ethnic identity, hence ... in Assam's hill area various tribal parties agitated for the creation of the tribal state of Meghalaya. After these and other ethnically (mainly linguistically) defined states were created, regional sentiments persisted and deepened....⁸³

It may be noted that regional political parties in Meghalaya like those in other parts of the country are functioning strictly within the constitutional framework and no secessionist voices have been heard so far. In their memorandum to the President of India, the tribal leadership as represented by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference made it clear that,

their aspirations are that they should be allowed to exist unimpaired, to preserve and develop their distinct identities - their language, cultures and ways of life to run their own affairs and at the same time, to be in tune with the stream of

82. See, for example, Election Manifesto of the APHLC, 1978.

83. Myron Weiner, Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India (New Jersey, 1978), p. 295.

national life, to sail on the wide ocean
that is India.⁸⁴

The frequent use of the phrase "preservation of cultural identity" by regional political parties of Meghalaya raises the question - do they use it as a mere slogan or actually try to protect the cultural identity of the tribals? This issue may be taken up later in our analysis of the political programmes of the regional parties of Meghalaya.

In the next chapter, we propose to take up an analysis of the reaction of the national parties to the politics of regionalism.

84. APHLC Memorandum to the President as cited by Ranajit Naug, "From Grassroots to State Power" in APHLC Souvenir, op.cit., pp. 37-38.

CHAPTER III

REGIONALISM AND NATIONAL PARTIES IN MEGHALAYA

As regionalism strikes root in the socio-political milieu of India and gets entrenched in its heterogeneous polity, the phenomenon evokes varied responses from different quarters. In the present chapter, we propose to examine the responses of major national parties towards the phenomenon of regionalism. One of the key questions proposed to be examined in this connection is - does regionalism pose a threat to national integration irrespective of the views of national parties? A related question is - do national parties accept regionalism as a reality of Indian political life? Since, as we shall see, the question of smaller nationalities is intrinsically connected with regionalism, we would also like to examine as to what is the stand of the national parties on the nationality question. In the context of Meghalaya, the most pertinent question is whether national parties in Meghalaya regard nationalism and regionalism as complementary or contradictory. Since regionalism in Meghalaya is associated with the aspirations of tribals, it will be interesting to examine if national parties in Meghalaya view the interests of tribals as harmonious or conflicting with those of non-tribals.

Broadly, the responses to regionalism are accompanied by two different lines of arguments. One argument is

that the phenomenon of regionalism goes against a well-integrated political system. This approach is based on the assumption that regionalism is a divisive force and hence a threat to national unity because it leads to separatism, parochialism, isolationism and secessionism. In this connection, Paul R. Brass notes that the tendency in the literature on political development and modernisation of late has been to focus upon 'national integration' as a process of state-building and to treat all other loyalties except those to the state as 'parochial' or 'primordial' loyalties divisive in their impact and detrimental to national integration.¹ This tendency noted by Brass is, of course, one trend only. The approach seems to find its echo in the melting pot theory which equates the concept of the state with that of the nation. In this connection, we may refer to the favourite arguments of authoritarian political leaders that even regimes with competitive political parties are dangerous threats to national unity and national integration in multi-ethnic societies because the parties tend to reflect ethnic differences.² Such an

1. Paul R. Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India (Delhi, 1975), p. 5.

2. See Rupert Emerson, "Parties and National Integration in Africa" in Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton, 1966), p. 296.

attitude aims at imposing homogeneity on essentially heterogeneous societies and embarks on forced integration generating perennial socio-political tensions in these societies. Diametrically opposite to this approach is the view that particularistic identities are necessary for national integration. Lewis P. Fickett Junior subscribes to a similar view when he argues that the politics of regionalism may well constitute a necessary and salutary phase of political development for a society as diverse as that of India.³ The various cultural and ethnic communities inhabiting India have their own distinct cultures and traditions which make them assert their identity as separate nationalities. As A.K. Baruah rightly argues, that this assertion of identity by smaller nationalities need not be construed as a threat to the Indian nation state because it is possible to accept the existence of more than one nationality within a state without expecting them to assimilate with the dominant one of the state concerned or suspecting them as secessionist and leading to the disintegration of the present state.⁴ This approach distinguishes

3. See Lewis P. Fickett Junior, "The Politics of Regionalism in India" in Pacific Affairs, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, Summer, 1971, p. 210.

4. Apurba Kr. Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam - Middle Class Politics (Guwahati, 1991), p. 4. In fact, in India, we have both the perspectives presented very strongly in contemporary social science literature. See, for instance, In Search of India's Renaissance, Vol. II (New Delhi, 1992), Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh.

between the state and the nation, but most national parties in India do not make this distinction.

It appears that the bogey of nationalism has often been raised to suppress even legitimate regional aspirations. In India, for instance, the political mainstream constituted by the ruling Congress party considers any challenge to the State authority at the Centre as an onslaught on the very existence of the nation-state. In this context, it becomes necessary to examine the nature of nationalism and its relationship with regionalism.

The word 'nation' which is derived from 'natus' connotes the idea of birth or race. E.H. Carr considers nation as a human group and identifies its characteristics as the idea of a common government, closeness of contact between all its individual members, a defined territory, certain characteristics like language distinguishing the nation from other nations, common interests of individual members and so on.⁶ Joseph Stalin aims at a more comprehensive definition when he introduces the economic factor as an additional bond to nationhood. According to him, nation

5. See T.K. Oommen, "Social Movements and Nation-State in India: Towards Relegitimisation of Cultural Nationalisms" in Journal of Social and Economic Studies (n.s.) 3,2 (1986), pp. 107-129.

6. E.H. Carr, Nationalism (1939) cited by A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism (Bombay, 1994). See Prologue, p. 1, Footnote Number 1.

is a historically evolved community having a territory, common economic life and a common psychological make-up, either independent or struggling to be independent.⁷ It may be noted that both the scholars view nation as a cultural entity and not as a political unit. While accepting this position, we must emphasize the fact that the terms 'nation' and 'state' are conceptually distinct categories although they are often used interchangeably. The state provides a basis for political and legal jurisdiction in the form of citizenship, whereas the nation promotes an emotional relationship through which the individual gains a sense of cultural identity. Nations and states do not always share the same cultural and territorial boundaries. Hence, the term nation-state has been used by social scientists to denote the gradual fusion that may occur between cultural and political boundaries after prolonged maintenance of political control by a Central authority over a given territory and its inhabitants.

From the above discussion, it may appear that 'nation' is a purely cultural concept with an emphasis on its ethnic dimensions and not a political concept. But as A.K. Baruah points out, all nationalities in the modern

7. Joseph Stalin, Marxism and Question of Nationality (Moscow, 1951), p. 6.

world perceive some national rights and view themselves as political groups. Hence, it is necessary to take into account the political dimension of nationality.⁸ Baruah also observes that all nationalities invariably claim a homeland where they can protect their own cultural and economic interests.

Before we take up a conceptual analysis of nationalism, we need to familiarise ourselves with the debate concerning the distinction between nation and nationality. According to E.K. Francis, a sociologist, the term 'nation' has to be reserved for the dominant ethnics in the State.⁹ The term 'nationality' describes in his taxonomy an imperfect nation, i.e. an ethnic minority which as a community has acquired some acknowledgement, in the form either of autonomous or of protected status, in a state of another nation.¹⁰ If a cultural nation happens to be divided between several states, Francis speaks of 'multistate ethnic society' evading both 'nation' and 'nationality' in this context. If several nationalities within a state reach a more or less equal footing, then

8. See A.K. Baruah, op.cit., p. 4.

9. Emerich K. Francis, Inter-Ethnic Relations, An Essay in Sociological Theory (New York, 1976), p. 394.

10. Loc.cit.

Francis terms it as 'multi-ethnic nation state'. This implies that regardless of whatever happens on the ethnic front, Francis always identifies a nation with a state. This, according to Krejci and Velimsky, can hardly help to clarify the terms.¹¹ Since both political and cultural aspects are important in the awareness of being, or belonging to a nation, Krejci and Velimsky propose to proceed in a different way. This approach may be elaborated later in this Chapter.

From an analysis of the interactions between nation and state, we may proceed to an enquiry into the nature and dimensions of nationalism as an ideology. In this regard, we propose to classify the available perspectives on nationalism as the Marxian view of nationalism and the non-Marxian perspective. The latter will include the formulations of Ernest Gellner, Paul Brass, Karl Deutsch and Hans Kohn. We shall begin with the non-Marxian perspective.

An important perspective on nationalism emerges from Ernest Gellner. According to him, mankind is irreversibly committed to industrial society and the kind of

11. See Jaroslav Krejci and Vitezslav Velimsky, Ethnic and Political Nations in Europe (London, 1981), pp. 35-36.

cultural homogeneity demanded by nationalism is one of the essential concomitants of industrial society.¹² He does not agree, however, to Elie Kedourie's view that nationalism imposes homogeneity.¹³ He rather feels that a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the name of nationalism. The age of transition to industrialism coincided, according to Gellner's model, with a transition to the urge of nationalism.¹⁴ Gellner, thus, seeks to relate nationalism with industrial development. His main argument is that, "... as the wave of industrialisation and modernisation moves outward, it disrupts the previous political units [which are] generally either small and intimate ... or large but loose and ill-centralised".¹⁵ The 'two prongs of nationalism', he suggests, 'tend to be a proletariat and an intelligentsia': the former is first uprooted and then gradually incorporated in a new national community, the latter provides new cultural definitions of group membership which are widely diffused with the development of mass literacy and a national educational system which

12. Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford, 1983), p. 39.

13. See Elie Kedourie, Nationalism (London, 1960).

14. Gellner, op.cit., pp. 39-40.

15. Ernest Gellner, Thought and Change (London, 1964), Chapter 7.

industrialisation itself makes necessary.¹⁶ It must be noted here that this theory of Gellner is obviously concerned mainly with the nationalism of the twentieth century and with what are claimed to be its roots in the social, cultural and political changes which occurred in Western Europe during the 19th Century. But it is evident that the development of the idea of a 'nation' and the formation of nation-states in Europe began at a much earlier time and Gellner's theory cannot be applied to explain the earlier developments.

The next perspective we propose to discuss is, in fact, a combination of two approaches, viz., the subjective and the objective. Krejci and Velimsky, for example, observe five objective factors which can contribute to the identification of a group as a nation: territory, state (or similar political status), language, culture and history. They argue that when positive answers to all of these criteria coincide, there can be little doubt that the respective community or population is a nation.¹⁷ The objective approach thus seeks to identify nationalism and the nation-state in terms of quantifiable characteristics which, apart from those mentioned by Krejci and Velimsky,

16. Ibid.

17. Krejci and Velimsky, op.cit., p. 44.

may also include religious uniformity, volume of economic and social communication and so on.¹⁸ Krejci and Velimsky then go on to add a sixth factor, the subjective criterion, by which they imply the presence of national consciousness.¹⁹ Broadly speaking, the subjective approach views nationalism and the nation-state as a set of emotional and ideological bonds between an individual and a community.²⁰ Subjective and objective definitions can be misleading, however, if they are used separately. For instance, the population on both sides of a political frontier may possess a common national ethnic identity - the objective test and at the same time be politically and legally divided between two or more states, e.g., the overseas Chinese of South East Asia, the Magyar minority of Romania, the Turkish cultural community, whose members are dispersed from the Balkans across Western Asia and into China. Moreover, the problem arises with situations where some, or

18. The objective approach is best represented by the pioneering work of Karl Deutsch. See especially his Nationalism and Social Communication: An Enquiry Into The Foundations of Nationality, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1966). Also see his Nationalism and Its Alternatives (New York, 1969).

19. Krejci and Velimsky, op.cit., p. 44.

20. For representative writings on the subject, See Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation: The Rise and Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples (Boston, 1960), Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins and Background (New York, 1951) and Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789-1815 (Princeton, 1967).

even most of the objective criteria are missing and yet the community feels itself to be a nation. For example, such ethnically heterogeneous states as Belgium and Switzerland exhibit considerable diversity at the objective level, yet subjectively, their citizens have a strong emotional attachment toward the state that provides them with security and enables their heterogeneous society to achieve its goals. Krejci and Velimsky, therefore, assert that the subjective factor of consciousness is the ultimate factor which eventually decides the issue of national identity. According to them, whether the rest of the world are or are not willing to acknowledge the group in question as a separate nation is, in the long run, irrelevant.²¹ Without undermining the importance of the subjective feeling of nationhood, it may be argued that a nation requires some amount of international recognition for the fulfilment of its aspirations. Apart from this, a confusing picture emerging from the separate application of subjective and objective tests makes it an unreliable paradigm for the understanding of nationalism.

We now propose to introduce an altogether different view of nationalism which neither seeks to quantify the

21. Krejci and Velimsky, op.cit., pp. 44-45.

essential characteristics of nationalism nor does it perceive nationalism in terms of a subjective consciousness. This view emerges from Paul Brass who argues that ethnicity and nationalism are social and political constructions and are not 'givens'.²² According to him, ethnicity and nationalism are creations of elites, who draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves. Brass also argues that ethnicity and nationalism are modern phenomena inseparably connected with the activities of the modern centralizing state.²³ It must be pointed out that the arguments of Brass separate his position from those writers who consider ethnicity and nationalism to be reflections of primordial identities and who have searched the past to find evidence of the existence of ethnic identities and nationalism throughout recorded history.²⁴ We accept the argument of Brass that nationalism is the product of manipulation of culture by an elite, although it is arguable whether nationalism is a

22. See Paul R. Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism - Theory and Comparison (New Delhi, 1991), pp. 8 and 14.

23. Ibid., p. 8.

24. See Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations (Oxford, 1986) and John A. Armstrong, Nations Before Nationalism (Chapell Hill, 1982).

recent development completely unknown in the past centuries.

Inadequacies of the non-Marxist views on nationalism bring us to an examination of the Marxist perspective. Karl Marx was the first writer to perceive that nationalism in his time had become the sole ideal of the bourgeoisie. Marx made a crucial distinction between nationalism of an imperialist state and that of a weak and small nation fighting for its independence. His support to the incipient national movement was based on the fact that he saw in the emergence of the nation-state the consolidation of the local bourgeoisie against outmoded feudal forms, which he believed to be a pre-condition for the growth of socialism.²⁵ The Marxian conception of nationalism is thus an extension of the general Marxist methodology of the ultimate transition to socialism through the stages of feudalism and capitalism.

Following Karl Marx, Stalin also contended that the nation originated in the 'process of elimination of feudalism and the development of capitalism.'²⁶ Indeed, the

25. For details on the Marxist standpoint, See J.V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question", Collected Works, Vol. 2, 1907-13 (Moscow, 1953). Also see V.I. Lenin, "Critical remarks on the national question", Collected Works, Vol. 20, 1913-14 (Moscow, 1964), p. 35.

26. See J.V. Stalin, op.cit., p. 306.

emergence of nations all over Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was brought about with the initiative of the bourgeoisie with an eye to secure the domestic market within the limits of national boundaries. The bourgeoisie unfurled the flag of nationalism because, in the words of Stalin, 'The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism'.²⁷

Shaibal Gupta argues that in India, scholars like Niharanjan Ray,²⁸ Partha Chatterjee²⁹ and Irfan Habib³⁰ fundamentally subscribed to the theoretical format of Stalin, that the nation was built in Western Europe in the era of capitalism. But Barun De³¹ disagrees with this formulation and argues that national consciousness or national movements existed even prior to the era of capitalism.

Another Indian scholar with Marxist orientations, Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, argues that the replacement of

27. Loc.cit.

28. Niharanjan Ray, Nationalism in India (Sir Syed Hall Publication No. 4), p. 9.

29. Partha Chatterjee, "Bengal: Rise and Growth of Nationality" in Social Scientist, August, 1975, pp. 67-82.

30. Irfan Habib, "Emergence of Nationalities", Social Scientist, August, 1975, p. 14.

31. Barun De, "Complexities in the Relationship Between Nationalism, Capitalism and Colonialism" in Debi Prasad Chattopadhyay (ed.) History and Society (Calcutta, 1976), p. 481.

capitalism by some form of socialism is an essential precondition for the eradication of the nationalist ideology, although it is not a sufficient condition.³² He considers nationalism as a synthetic ideology fabricated by the ruling classes out of certain pre-existing ideologies in order to perpetuate social stratification and prompt their own class interests. This formulation is somewhat similar to the perspective offered by Paul Brass, although Brass does not talk about the replacement of capitalism by socialism for the eradication of nationalism. Bandyopadhyaya argues that his general theory of nationalism applies to capitalist, socialist and Third World Societies and comes to the conclusion that while capitalism invariably and inevitably generates nationalism, including its imperialistic and neo-imperialistic manifestations, the socialist form of nationalism is a reversible deviation, caused by historical forces, and not an inevitable by-product of the socialist system itself.³³ It may be noted that while Marx distinguished between nationalism of an imperialist state and that of an oppressed nation, Bandyopadhyaya also makes a subtle distinction between nationalisms of the capitalist and socialist varieties. But his

32. See Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, Nationalism Unveiled (New Delhi, 1990).

33. Ibid.

basic argument about the eradication of the nationalist ideology through socialism cannot be substantiated by ground realities in the socialist countries like the former USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia where aggressive nationalism of the respective dominant communities like Russians, Slovaks and Serbs unleashed the forces of disintegration because such nationalism threatened the peripheral communities.

Having reviewed the available literature on nationalism, we may proceed to examine the perceptions of major national parties in India about the phenomenon of regionalism. As noted before, most national parties commit a conceptual error when they treat 'state' and 'nation' as synonymous. This misconception seems to have prejudiced the views of national political parties about regionalism. For the purpose of our present analysis of regionalism in Meghalaya, we propose to focus on the positions adopted by the two major national parties, viz., the Congress and the Communist Party of India which are not only distinguished by their ideologies in the political spectrum, but which are also the only national parties of significance operating in Meghalaya. The Indian National Congress contested 12 out of 60 assembly constituencies in the first Assembly Elections of Meghalaya held in 1972 while the CPI contested

for 2 seats.³⁴ In the 1978 Elections, the Congress set up 57 candidates with the CPI extending its electoral battle to 4 constituencies.³⁵ In 1983, the Congress was confident enough to contest in all 60 Assembly constituencies whereas the CPI fielded 7 candidates.³⁶ In the next Elections of 1988, the CPI went a step forward to put up 9 candidates.³⁷ Our choice, therefore, automatically falls on the Congress and the CPI which have acquired a measure of prominence in the politics of Meghalaya by their participation in all the Assembly Elections held in the State. The following tables will show the level of participation of the Congress (I) and the CPI in the Assembly Elections in Meghalaya.

Table 1 - Candidates fielded, seats won and percentage of votes polled by Congress (I) in General Elections to the Meghalaya Assembly.

Year	No. of candidates fielded	No. of seats won	Percentage of votes polled
1972	12	9	4.89%
1978	57	20	18.74%
1983	60	25	19.21%

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February 1983, pp. 46-54.

34. See Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983, p. 52.

35. Ibid., p. 51.

36. Ibid., p. 50.

37. See Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1988, p. 84.

Table II - Candidates set up, seats won and percentage of votes polled by CPI in General Elections to the Meghalaya Assembly.

Year	No. of candidates set up	No. of Seats won	Percentage of votes polled
1972	2	Nil	0.28%
1978	4	Nil	0.40%
1983	7	Nil	0.35%

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983, pp. 46-54.

It appears from Table II that the CPI has not been able to achieve any breakthrough in the electoral politics of Meghalaya. Nevertheless, the party has made its presence felt by putting up candidates in all the Assembly Elections.

The reaction of the Congress to the growth of regional consciousness seems to have been conditioned to a great extent by the appreciation of its own role as the upholder of national integration. In fact, at one stage, the party started identifying itself with the nation and considered criticism of its leaders and its policies as anti-national and unpatriotic. It went to such an extent that the prospects of democracy in India were linked with the prospects of the Congress as a party in the country. The party started abrogating to itself the right of being

the only national body. In a circular issued to its members, it exhorted them not to permit the opposition parties to criticise it and directed them that a 'positive stand against the criticism about the Prime Minister should be taken. It must be emphasized that those who criticise him are traitors.'³⁸ The Congress intolerance towards opposition of all kind clearly indicates that the party's response to regionalism cannot be a favourable one.

Since its inception, the Congress had been professing the unity of India as its ultimate goal. This implied, according to Kousar J. Azam, an incorporation of divergence within the pattern of unity, for, without a convergence of the divergence towards the goals of freedom, there could be no unity.³⁹ In his first presidential address, W. C. Bonnerjee gave a call for unity. He emphasized that the first task before the Congress was "the eradication, by direct friendly intercourse of all possible racial, creedal or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country and the fuller development and consolidation of ... sentiments of national unity."⁴⁰ But the Congress conception of

38. For historical details, see S.P. Aiyar and Srinivasan (eds.), Studies in Indian Democracy, (Bombay, 1965), See Introduction, p. XXX.

39. See Kousar J. Azam, Political Aspects of National Integration (Meerut, 1981), p. 213.

40. W.C. Bonnerjee, cited in R.P. Dua, Social Factors in the Birth and Growth of Indian National Congress Movement (Delhi, 1967), p. 27.

national unity embracing racial, cultural and regional diversities under its own umbrella appears to be an unattainable ideal as different ethnic and regional groups in India have sought to preserve their distinct identities by putting up strong resistance against the forced assimilation process. Such assertions of the smaller nationalities to protect their identity have come to be viewed as major threats to the state of India although prevalence of this phenomenon during the British period led the Indian National Congress to resort to linguistic reorganisation which helped it to derive support from different regions.⁴¹ There was, however, a change in the attitude of the Congress Party in the post-independence period and this became clear in the J.V.P. Committee (1949) report which viewed linguistic reorganisation as a threat to the political and economic stability of the country.⁴² In this connection, A.K. Baruah argues that the champions of 'Indian Nationalism' could not realise that appreciation of the aspirations of the smaller nationalities specially in respect of linguistic cultural identity would in fact strengthen political integration.⁴³

41. See Shankar Ghosh, Political Ideas and Movements in India (Bombay, 1975), p. 200.

42. Ibid.

43. For details, see A.K. Baruah, op.cit., p. 10.

The failure and reluctance of the Congress to grasp the reality of a basically pluralistic Indian polity has led the party to adopt policies such as nationalization of political issues, political destruction of the state political supremos resulting in disintegration of the Congress organization in the districts and the selection of Chief Ministers in the States who lack independent bases of power and can, therefore, be counted upon to follow the directives of the Central Government.⁴⁴ The party's preference for centralization is also evident in its Manifesto for the 1980 elections which specifically stressed that 'the planning process' would 'once again' be used 'to reorganise the national economy' and that the state governments would be persuaded to implement national, uniform policies on subjects included in the 'State List' under the Constitution'.⁴⁵ Brass argues that the precise purpose for which the 'State List' was inserted in the Indian Constitution was to allow the states independent powers of legislation on certain subjects exclusively concerning the states. According to him, deliberate

44. Paul R. Brass, "Pluralism, Regionalism and Decentralizing Tendencies in Contemporary Indian Politics" in A.J. Wilson and Denis Dalton (eds.) The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration (New Delhi, 1982), p. 255.

45. Indian National Congress (I) Election Manifesto, 1980 (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee (I), 1979).

interference of the Congress with the state's legitimate jurisdiction and attempts to lower the prestige of the state leaders have encouraged state autonomy movements and the growth of regional feelings throughout India.⁴⁶ Another factor fomenting discontent and tensions in a multicultural society like India noted by A.K. Baruah is that except for the regional parties and a small section of the left, the dominant political opinion in India today represented by the Congress views India as one nation and perceives the concept of the state as inseparable from the idea of nation. Refusal to recognise small communities as nationalities breeds discontent among the smaller nationalities inciting some aggressive sections to propagate anti-Indian ideas. Unless this trend is reversed, warns Baruah, there may be an acute crisis in the Indian political community.⁴⁷

As Paul R. Brass has noted that every state in India had a distinctive group of land-owning castes who continue to control the countryside. Where the Congress had lost support among such groups, these groups remain available to be organized by state-level politicians and regional parties. Linguistic and cultural differences also continue to provide strong support for regional political parties

46. Paul R. Brass, op.cit.

47. For details, see A.K. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 2-8.

and generate persistent pressures for cultural pluralism and demands for regional autonomy in the states.⁴⁸ It appears that the Congress Party views the regional movements with dismay and regards these as a threat to its own authoritarian mode of functioning. To Mrs. Indira Gandhi, regionalism was as poisonous as casteism or communalism: 'a very serious threat to the development, progress, and unity of the country'.⁴⁹ But compulsions of political expediency have led the Congress to seek alignments with powerful regional parties. Thus, the Congress had entered into electoral alliances with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu and with the National Conference of Dr. Farooq Abdullah in Kashmir. In Punjab, however, the essence of the Congress policy has been the marginalisation of the Akali Dal. The offshoots of this policy have been the fragmentation of the Akali Dal into numerous factions, the growth of religious fundamentalism and the political subjugation of the Akali Dal by the militant supporters of Khalistan.⁵⁰ Thus, some

48. See Paul R. Brass, "Pluralism, Regionalism etc.", op.cit., p. 256.

49. Selected Speeches of Indira Gandhi, January 1966 - August 1969, (New Delhi, 1971), p. 85.

50. Balraj Puri argues that the ruling party (implying the Congress) found in terrorists an excellent instrument in breaking the back of the Akali Dal which was its principal rival in the field of elections and tussle for power in Punjab. See Balraj Puri, "Punjab Accord and After: Opportunity to go into Roots of Problem" in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.), Ethnic Conflict in South Asia (Delhi, 1987), p. 100.

of the grave crises that India faces today seem to owe their origin from the Congress (I)'s attitude towards the regional parties.

A look at the 1984 Election Manifesto of the Congress (I) shows the party's determination to fight with all its strength those elements and forces which are trying to reverse the historical processes which have led to the unification of India. The party also claims to transcend narrow religious, linguistic, regional and parochial affiliations.⁵¹ This clearly reflects the Congress (I)'s antagonism to regional loyalties which the party treats at par with parochial affiliations. The Congress (I) has gone to the extent of promoting the theory that the same party should rule at the Centre and in the states. The party's propaganda that regional parties are a threat to national unity had been criticized by late Mr. N.T. Rama Rao, the Telegu Desam leader, as an insult to public opinion. The forum of thirteen non-Congress (I) regional parties criticised the Congress (I) leader Rajiv Gandhi for an

intemperate and irresponsible attack on opposition parties, especially regional parties and calling them anti-national. Dubbing the democratic aspirations of the people of several states as anti-national

51. Election Manifesto of the INC (I), 1984, pp. 4-5.

was itself a gross anti-national act and in no way served the cause of national unity....⁵²

Thus, the Congress (I)'s disregard for regional sentiments seems to have taken an extreme form and such panic in the wake of regional assertions may have originated from a sense of insecurity in its leadership. After all, the Congress faces a very real threat to its domination over the State governments due to a mushroom growth of regional parties and rise in their popularity and widening of their power bases. Again, as we have seen in Chapter I, it has been argued by Kousar J. Azam that regional parties emerge partly because of the failure of national parties to cater to the interests of regional constituencies and partly as a reaction to monolithic and authoritarian tendencies of the government at the Centre.⁵³ The policies followed by the Congress (I) give some credence to such a view.

As far as the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress (I) Committee's response to regionalism in Meghalaya is

52. Cited in B.A.V. Sharma, "Congress and the Federal Balance" in Ram Joshi and R.K. Hebsur (eds) Congress in Indian Politics - A Centenary Perspective (Bombay, 1987), p. 117.

53. For details on the emergence of regional parties, see Chapter I. Also see Kousar J. Azam, Political Aspects of National Integration (Meerut, 1981).

concerned, the party claims to have championed all along the cause of the tribal people and the weaker sections and promises to ensure that their identity and culture are retained.⁵⁴ Congress leaders in the North East blame the forces of regionalism for retarding the pace of unity and development in the North Eastern part of the country.⁵⁵ These leaders are of the opinion that the task of bringing all the areas of North East India into the mainstream of national life has become difficult in view of the policies pursued by the forces of regionalism in the region.⁵⁶ It may be noted that the MPCC (I)'s claim of championing the cause of the tribal people is based merely on the fact that it was the Congress Government at the Centre which conceded the demand for the formation of Meghalaya. The party's attitude towards regionalism is not much different from that of the national body. In fact, the party considers regional forces as nothing but the manifestation of selfish vested interests.⁵⁷ By adopting this stance, the MPCC (I)

54. Election Manifesto of the Indian National Congress (I) in Meghalaya, 1983, pp. 1-2.

55. See Hokishe Sema, "National Integration and North Eastern Region" in North Eastern Cultural Forum Souvenir (Dimapur, April 11, 1981), p. 64.

56. Ibid., p. 63.

57. For details, see Congress (I) Manifesto, Meghalaya Elections, 1988, p. 3.

fails to take cognizance of the fact that some measure of autonomy for regional forces will act as a safety valve for discontent and strengthen the forces of integration in the long run.

While expressing his party's views on regionalism, Mr. D.D. Lapang, President of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCCI) states that the party regards regionalism as the organized expression of a people's concern for the well-being of their own region which assumes a narrow dimension when viewed from the national context. The Congress (I) denounces the regional parties in Meghalaya as having no specific ideology, plan, programme, policy or doctrines which thrive by rousing communal passions and by raising slogans for survival and other issues that reflect a negative attitude. According to the Congress (I), the regional parties earn popularity by propagating the identity of certain communities. However, the party asserts that regional parties cannot serve the interests of their people without a national outlook.⁵⁸ The MPCC(I), therefore, regards regionalism as a narrow ideology which is sustained by communal consciousness and is incompatible with the national consciousness. In this

58. See Appendix (I). Discussions with Mr. D.D. Lapang on 3rd January, 1991, in Shillong.

respect, the MPCC(I)'s stand fully conforms to the party's national posture.

Denying categorically that the national parties have failed to protect regional interests, the Congress (I) emphasizes that the national parties are fully competent to ensure the survival of regional groups and ethnic communities. In this regard, the MPCC(I) President points out that Meghalaya could not have been brought into existence without the backing and support of the national parties and adds that the national parties of Meghalaya have already indicated their concern for safeguarding the identity of the indigenous tribals. The MPCC(I) takes pride in the fact that it was at the instance of the national parties that certain special facilities for the tribals were enshrined in the Constitution of India. To illustrate this point, the party cites the inclusion of Section 475 providing for encouragement of tribal students through special scholarship in educational activities.⁵⁹ It may be noted, however, that in spite of the Congress (I)'s claim of championing the tribal cause, the party continues to be identified as a non-tribal organization in Meghalaya.⁶⁰ The

59. Ibid.

60. It may be noted that in the Assembly Election of 1983, the Khasi and Jaintia voters opted for the regional parties, although the Garos voted for the Congress (I). For analysis, see Khiren Roy, "Meghalaya: Eight Months to Polls" in The Assam Tribune, June 8, 1987, p. 4.

party's attempts to absorb regional parties within its fold have also added to popular suspicion about the party's real intentions.

As far as its assessment of regionalism and regional parties is concerned, the MPCC(I)'s observation seems to be that regionalism cannot survive on its own. In this connection, the MPCC(I) President comments that regionalism can serve a good purpose if the regional parties can project the desire, anxiety, hopes and problems of the people of the region. But in the long run, he argues, the problems of the region can only be solved in the national context.⁶¹ MPCC(I) declares,

... notwithstanding what the protagonists of "regionalism" and "regional or state parties" for selfish vested interests of a few individuals may say, the fact remains that it has all along been leaders with selfless National vision, initially the members of the Constituent Assembly who, having fully and carefully comprehended the needs, the fears and the aspirations of the tribals and other weaker sections of the society, provided for adequate constitutional safeguards....⁶²

However, in spite of its attempt to underplay the role of regional parties, the MPCC(I) does not consider

61. Ibid.

62. Congress (I) Manifesto, 1988, op.cit., pp. 3-4.

regionalism as contradictory to nationalism. While articulating the party's position in this regard, the MPCC(I) President affirms that the intentions of the regional parties of Meghalaya are good, although they have failed to implement them through concrete actions. According to the Congress (I), the regional parties lack the national outlook, but are helpless without the cooperation of the national parties. The party acknowledges the role of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference in the struggle for the Hill State, but goes on to add that immediately after the formation of Meghalaya, the APHLC had to turn to the Congress for seat adjustments and decided to work with the Congress at all levels.⁶³ It has been noted before that the MPCC(I) has sought to enhance its electoral appeal by citing the support and cooperation rendered by the Congress-ruled Centre in the achievement of Statehood. On the other hand, from the point of view of regional parties, the APHLC's pragmatic decision to work with the Congress seems to have been influenced by the desire to extract concessions from the Centre which has become more or less synonymous with the Congress Party by virtue of its remaining in power at the Centre almost uninterruptedly except for short intervals.

63. See Appendix (I), op.cit.

On the issue of Centre-State relations, the MPCC(I) almost echoes the voice of the Party High Command when it envisages a strong Centre to guide the States in India. In this regard, the official position of the Indian National Congress (I) is that,

the States should be strong to effectively discharge their obligations to the people for social, economic and cultural development.... At the same time a strong Centre is required to safeguard the country's unity and integrity, to ensure the success of the planning process and to direct the nation's endeavour for a social and economic order based on socialism. There is no contradiction between a strong Centre and strong States. The two reinforce each other....⁶⁴

In spite of its plea for making the states strong, the Congress (I)'s centripetal bias is too evident to be ignored. The MPCC(I) follows the same perspective when it asserts that a firm central government is in a position to discipline any recalcitrant state or party. The party visualises total chaos and collapse of law and order in the absence of Central guidance. The party concedes, however, that the Central government should consider decentralisation of power at certain levels. According to the MPCC(I), the Centre should leave the States alone in the matter of collection of revenues, extraction of minerals etc. While

⁶⁴. Indian National Congress (I) Election Manifesto, 1984,
(New Delhi), p. 23.

there should be some financial and administrative autonomy for the states, the Centre should retain overall authority to supervise state affairs and to rectify the acts of omission and commission on the part of the state governments.⁶⁵ As a state unit of the Congress (I), the MPCC (I) has expressed its concern for state autonomy, but one wonders whether this is a genuine concern for decentralisation or whether the party pays only lip service to deprive the regional parties of propaganda advantage in this regard.

As far as the interests of non-tribal minorities in Meghalaya are concerned, the MPCC (I) promises to ensure that minorities in the State are protected and they get their due shares. The party also proposes to set up a formal mechanism to consider their grievances, if necessary. The party even claims that it would like the minorities in the State to feel that they are equal partners in the development of the State.⁶⁶ The MPCC (I) accords full recognition to the role of non-tribals since the pre-independence days.⁶⁷ Ironically, such appreciation

65. See Appendix (I), op.cit.

66. See Meghalaya Pradesh Congress (I) Election Manifesto, State Assembly Elections, February, 1993, pp. 14-15.

67. Appendix (I), op.cit.

of the contribution of non-tribals seems to have led to an identification of the Congress as a party of non-tribals. In reality, however, the Congress (I) in Meghalaya played a less than commendable role in protecting non-tribal minorities during the ethnic disturbances in 1987 and 1992 when the party happened to be in power. Perhaps the party was anxious to dilute the popular perception of the Congress as a non-tribal party and took a lenient attitude towards dealing with violent ethnic clashes in 1992. The Meghalaya Guardian commented thus, "... the authorities can create legislations or relevant system to help the locals get their due share of economic benefits; but the Government cannot just remain as a passive onlooker to such serious ethnic violence and bloodshed...."⁶⁸ In spite of its passive role during ethnic disturbances, the MPCC(I) expresses its concern about the erosion of communal harmony and an ever deepening hatred among different communities of the State. The party seems to share the views of regional parties when it traces the roots of communal tension from the phenomenon of influx. But in reality, non-fulfilment of popular expectations after the achievement of statehood is one of the important factors which seems to have led to communal riots in Meghalaya. It appears from our analysis

68. See the editorial titled "A Suicidal Course" in the Meghalaya Guardian, Shillong, Friday, October 9, 1992, p. 4.

of the role of the educated elite in Chapter II that the elite not only raised the demand for statehood, but they were also likely to be the beneficiaries in a separate state. Statehood was neither a popular demand nor was it likely to usher in an improvement in the lot of the common man. But while raising the demand for a separate state, the elite sought to carry the masses behind them by arousing popular expectations about a new political arrangement. When the new state was formed, the elite gained a lot in terms of political power and economic benefits. But expectations of an average tribal were belied under the new arrangement. Grievances accumulated with the passage of time and seem to have found an outlet in ethnic outburst at regular intervals. To this was added influx from across the border and the local tribals now perceived a very real threat to their identity. It appears that the issue of influx from neighbouring countries has served as a cover for the hostile attitude to non-tribals in general.

While stating the party position on the relationship between tribals and non-tribals in Meghalaya, the MPCC (I) President makes a comparative analysis between the performance and achievements of both in various fields, including the economic field. The party notes that local tribals who are lagging far behind, allege exploitation at

the hands of non-tribals. According to the MPCC (I), unemployment among the local youth as well as corrupt and unfair practices like the operation of the 'benami system' provided the ideal scenario for the occurrence of communal clashes. The party regrets that the concerned authorities, viz., the District Council could have regulated the conduct of trade and business through proper licensing from the very beginning.⁶⁹ It needs to be pointed out in this connection that except for short intervals, when regional parties formed the Government in Meghalaya, the Congress (I) has been the main ruling party in the State. It seems rather unfair on the part of the Congress (I) to blame other parties for the persistence of the 'benami' system because the party itself has failed to put a stop to such practices during its tenure of office. The contrast drawn by the Congress (I) in the achievements of tribals and non-tribals appears to be an attempt to apply the 'relative deprivation' argument in the context of Meghalaya. But ground realities present an altogether different picture. As a matter of fact, local tribals are fast catching up with the non-tribals and even outdoing them in several fields. We propose to take up an analysis of the emergence of the tribal elite to substantiate this point. We have conducted a statistical survey of the growth of this elite since 1970. Our samples include Gazetted Officers (Class I

69. See Appendix (I), op.cit.

and II), Lecturers, Doctors, Lawyers, Supply Contractors and P.W.D. Contractors. Beginning from 1970, we have observed the growth of these sections of the elite during 1970, 1972, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995. We propose to start with the list of gazetted officers.

Table III - Percentage of Khasi Gazetted Officers since 1970.

Name of the categories	Total No. of persons	No. of Khasis	Percentage of Khasis	Year
Class I Officers	248	6	2.42	1970
Class II Officers	164	5	3.05	1970
Class I Officers	231	37	16.68	1972
Class II Officers	148	47	31.75	1972
Class I Officers	78	56	71.79	1980
Class II Officers	55	45	81.82	1980
Class I Officers	27	23	85.19	1985
Class II Officers	69	49	71.01	1985
Class I Officers	39	24	61.54	1990
Class II Officers	51	43	84.12	1990
Class I Officers	45	25	55.55	1995
Class II Officers	272	188	69.12	1995

Source: The Assam Gazette, Shillong, January 14, 1970, pp. 74, 76 and 79; January 21, 1970, p. 115; February 11, 1970, pp. 331-332; March 25, 1970, p. 857.

The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, January 22, 1972, pp. 1-2; *Ibid.*, January 29, 1972, pp. 21-23; March 4, 1972, p. 53; March 18, 1972, p. 60; March 25, 1972, p. 65; April 1, 1972, pp. 68-69; April 29, 1972, pp. 121-122; July 29, 1972, p. 119; November 11, 1972, pp. 174-175; December 9, 1972, p. 189.

The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, February 21, 1980, p. 58; *Ibid.*, March 13, 1980, p. 79; July 3, 1980, pp. 207-209; August 28, 1980, p. 270; September 4, 1980, p. 275; October 2, 1980, pp. 301-302; November 6, 1980, p. 344; November 27, 1980, pp. 171-172, 175-176, 180-185.

The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, August 15, 1985, pp. 274-275; Ibid., October 10, 1985, p. 347; October 24, 1985, p. 367; October 31, 1985, p. 379; December 5, 1985, p. 428.

The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, January 4, 1990, p. 3; Ibid., June 7, 1990, pp. 245-247; June 21, 1990, p. 279; August 16, 1990, pp. 361 and 364; November 1, 1990, pp. 451-452; November 22, 1990, pp. 480-481.

The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, January 12, 1995, pp. 9-10; Ibid., January 19, 1995, p. 16; January 5, 1995, p. 4; March 2, 1995, pp. 53-55; May 18, 1995, pp. 128-130; July 13, 1995, p. 191; August 10, 1995, p. 221; August 24, 1995, pp. 240-241; August 31, 1995, p. 249; October 12, 1995, p. 298-299, 303; November 9, 1995, pp. 338-339.

It is significant to note that after the achievement of statehood, there has been a steady increase in the number of Khasis as far as recruitment to Class I and Class II gazetted posts is concerned. The percentage of Khasis in the Class I category was as low as 2.42% in 1970, but the percentage rose to 85.19% in 1985. In the Class II category, the Khasis constituted 3.05% of the officers recruited in 1970. However, the percentage shot up to 84.12% in 1990. Some fluctuations in the percentage of Khasis may be noticed during 1985 when there was a comparative decline in the percentage of Khasi Class II officers as against their percentage in 1980. In 1990, the percentage of Khasis in the Class I category declined although there was a rise in the Class II category. In 1995, the decline can be perceived in both the categories of officers. A probable explanation for the perceived

fluctuations lies in the fact that data was collected from the available copies of Meghalaya Gazettes only and hence, the list of officers is not a comprehensive one. But in spite of the fluctuations, it may be observed that the ratio of Khasis vis-a-vis total number of officers has multiplied substantially over the years following the creation of Meghalaya.

We may now proceed to explore the number of registered P.W.D. contractors as well as supply contractors to examine our observation in Chapter II that a vested interest has developed in this sector.

Table IV - Percentage of Khasi Supply Contractors during 1980-1995.

Total number of Firms approved for supply of various items	No. of Khasi firms	Percentage of Khasi firms	Year
19	10	52.63	1980
33	19	57.57	1985
Figures not available	-	-	1990
77	50	64.92	1995

Source: The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, December 18, 1980, p. 1468; Ibid., November 7, 1985, p. 1413, October 3, 1985, p. 1050; October 19, 1995, pp. 839-840; October 26, 1995, p. 863.

Table V - Percentage of Khasi registered PWD Contractors (1980-1996).

Name of the Categories	Total No. of persons recruited	No. of Khasi contractors	Percentage of Khasi contractors	Year
Class I Contractors (East Khasi Hills & Jaintia Hills)	40	39	97.5	1980-82
Class II Contractors (Jaintia Hills)	281	281	100.0	1980-82
Class I Contractors (East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills)	144	143	99.3	1984-86
Class II Contractors (Except Garo Hills)	1067	1052	98.59	1984-86
Class I Contractors (Except Garo Hills)	121	118	97.52	1990-91
Class II Contractors (Except Garo Hills)	964	942	97.71	1990-91
Class I Contractors (Except Garo Hills)	241	238	98.75	1995-96
Class II Contractors (Except Garo Hills)	2073	2034	98.11	1995-96

Source: Statements issued by the Office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD (Roads), Jowai Circle, Jowai (1980-81 to 1995-96), by the Office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD (Roads), Eastern Shillong Circle, Shillong (1981-82 upto 1995-96) and by the Office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD (Roads), West Khasi Hills (1984-85 upto 1995-96), showing the list of Class I and Class II Contractors. The number of Khasi Contractors has been worked out by the scholar in terms of their percentage vis-a-vis total number of Contractors in each circle as mentioned by Shri M.K. Dey, Under Secretary (Works), PWD (Road and Building), Meghalaya.

The percentage of supply contractors in Table IV shows the monopoly of Khasi firms in this field. As far as the Class I PWD contractors are concerned, it is interesting to observe from Table V that their percentage has varied from 97.5% to 99.3% during 1980-82 to 1995-96. The percentage of Class II contractors reflects a higher representation of Khasis and ranges from 97.71% to 100%. According to information obtained from the Under Secretary, PWD, Meghalaya, the Khasis constitute cent per cent of registered contractors in Jaintia Hills and West Khasi Hills. In view of the available figures regarding the number of gazetted officers which also includes lecturers and doctors, it may be argued that not only has an educated elite emerged in Meghalaya, but there has also been a steady growth in their ranks after statehood. The Khasis have also left the non-tribals far behind by grabbing the bulk of contracts for road construction and supply of goods to various Government Departments.

We have also conducted a survey regarding the percentage of Khasi lecturers in two private colleges of Shillong. The following table will show the position.

Table VI - Percentage of Khasi Lecturers in Private Colleges.

Name of College	Total No. of Lecturers	No. of Khasis	Percentage of Khasis	Year
St. Edmund's College	45	6	13.33	1972
"	50	6	8.00	1980
"	66	7	10.66	1985
"	68	10	14.66	1990
"	72	17	23.61	1995
Lady Keane Girls' College	65	6	9.23	1972
"	63	8	12.69	1980
"	64	12	18.75	1985
"	71	15	21.13	1990
"	72	19	26.25	1995

Source: Acquittance Rolls of St. Edmund's College, 1972, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1990 and 1995. Acquittance Rolls of Lady Keane Girls' College, 1972, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995.

The above table shows a steady increase in the percentage of Khasi Lecturers in both the colleges that were surveyed. The only deviation can be noticed in St. Edmund's College where the number of Lecturers increased from 45 in 1972 to 50 in 1980, but the number of Khasis remained static at 5 which actually led to a fall in the percentage of Khasi Lecturers. It may also be noted that very few Khasis have been recruited as Lecturers in the Science faculty. In Lady Keane College, for instance, there was only one Khasi Lecturer in the Science faculty in 1985. The number increased to 4 in 1990 and remained static in

1995. The reason for this phenomenon perhaps lies in the fact that very few Khasis were enrolled as students in the Science Departments of the North-Eastern Hill University. During 1986-87, e.g., a total of 20 tribal students were enrolled in the Science Faculties out of a total of 102 students. Thus, the share of tribal students stood at a mere 19.6% and the Khasis must have constituted an even smaller percentage.⁷⁰ During 1987-88, there was an increase in the number of tribal students. Out of a total of 63 students, tribal enrolment was 31. This amounted to 50% of total enrolled students.⁷¹

We proposed to conclude our statistical analysis of the emerging Khasi elite with some data on the number of Khasi lawyers of the Shillong Court.

Table VII - Percentage of Khasi Lawyers of Shillong Court.

Year	Total No. of Lawyers registered	No. of Khasis	Percentage of Khasis
1972-1980	33	8	24.24
1980-1995	157	50	31.84
1995-1996	10	4	40.00

Source: Vakalatnama of 1995 obtained from Shri S.R. Sen, Advocate, Shillong Court.

70. See NEHU 13th Annual Report (1986-1987), Shillong, pp. 51-102. The break-up of Khasi enrolment was not given in the report.

71. See NEHU 14th Annual Report (1987-88), Shillong, pp. 67-97.

The above figures show the steady growth in the number of Khasi lawyers which goes further to substantiate our argument about the emergence of a Khasi elite which has been successful in articulating regional demands in a forceful manner.

Coming back to our analysis of the views of MPCC(I) on various issues, it may be mentioned that protection of tribal ethos is a favourite catchword for all political parties in Meghalaya, whether regional or national. The MPCC(I) also promises to take all necessary steps to maintain the population structure of the State with the cooperation of the local democratic institutions like the Syiemship, Lyngdohship, Nokmaship, Doloiship, Laskarship, Wahadadarship and other village institutions⁷² and to make efforts to vest them with statutory authority in certain spheres so that these institutions are made responsible in planning and implementing socio-economic programmes for the benefits of the people in these local areas.⁷³

In this connection, it is necessary to examine the character of these traditional institutions and see whether they can be called democratic. It may be noted that only

72. Congress (I) Manifesto of 1988, op.cit., p. 12.

73. MPCC (I) Election Manifesto, February 1993, op.cit., p. 11.

the male adults of the village participate in the election of the Syiem and there are no voting rights for women.⁷⁴ The same rule also applies to institutions like Wahadadarship.⁷⁵ This clearly shows their undemocratic character and raises the question as to how these undemocratic institutions can be expected to protect the interests of the people. It appears, therefore, that the MPCC(I)'s claim to maintain the demographic balance in the State with the help of these political institutions does not carry much weight. The Congress (I) also claims to stand for special protection of identity of the tribes of Meghalaya and pledges to uphold Article 371(A) of the Constitution for the preservation of their traditions, culture, customs and usages, religious practices, land and its resources.⁷⁶ Speaking on his party's stand on the protection of tribal ethos, the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress President, Mr. D.D. Lapang declares that his party seeks to promote justice and equality and to ensure that every section of the population should find a place in India and be allowed to survive and thrive according to its own genius. The party refers to Constitutional safeguards for the protection of minorities

74. Hamlet Bareh, History of the Khasi People, (Shillong, 1967), p. 270.

75. For details, see P.N. Dutta, "Wahadadarship of Shella: Origin and Rise" in S.K. Chattopadhyay (ed.) Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya (Guwahati, 1985), pp. 81-96.

76. Congress (I) Manifesto of 1988, op.cit., pp. 12-13.

and weak sections of the people and endorses such provisions. The MPCC(I), however, notes with regret that the provisions of the Sixth Schedule as instruments for emancipation of the tribal people have not been utilised to the optimum. The District Council has not been able to utilise properly the powers of making laws, rules and regulations vested in it under the Sixth Schedule.⁷⁷ It may be noted that the MPCC(I) relies on the cooperation of both traditional tribal institutions as well as District Councils to preserve tribal culture and traditions. The party also expresses its national character by expressing full confidence in the provisions of the Constitution. But the Congress (I) cannot absolve itself from its share of the blame along with the regional parties for inadequate implementation of the proposed safeguards under the Sixth Schedule when it was the ruling party in Meghalaya. In 1987, the issue of protecting the indigenous tribal identity became the main election plank of all the regional parties. There was popular pressure on the then Home Minister of the Congress (I) Government in Meghalaya, Mr. D.D. Lapang, to tender his resignation. Ironically, the Congress (I) M.P., Mr. G.G. Swell and another party MLA,

77. See Appendix (I), discussion with D.D. Lapang, op.cit.

Mr. D.R. Nongkynrih, lent their support to the opposition demand that the State Government headed by Captain W.A. Sangma should immediately resign because it had failed to protect the interests of the tribal people of Meghalaya.⁷⁸ It appears, therefore, that in spite of the Congress (I)'s commitment to protect tribal identity as expressed in its election manifesto, the party's stand on the issue has not convinced all sections of the tribal society.

Regarding the establishment of industries in Meghalaya, the MPCC(I) claims that it is not opposed to industrialisation and looks upon it as an avenue for creating employment potential. The party shows preference for agro-based industries and industries based on other local products and calls for imparting training to the local youth to man these industries.⁷⁹ While supporting the motion of thanks on the Governor's Speech during the Budget Session of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly on 7th March, 1975, the Congress (I) Member, Mr. D.D. Lapang lauded the achievement of the Industries Department in taking over the Assam State Warehousing Corporation. In the same breath, he cautioned the Government to ensure that when other industries would come up, the employees are recruited from among

78. See the editorial titled "Shillong Portents" in the Assam Tribune, June 30, 1987.

79. For details, see MPCC(I) Election Manifesto, 1993, op.cit., pp. 6-7.

the tribal people. He called upon the Government to check the influx of outsiders.⁸⁰ It appears, therefore, that the Congress (I) is apprehensive of measures for industrialisation of the State lest the population structure of the state is disturbed. In this regard, the Congress (I) stands on an equal footing with the regional parties of Meghalaya all of which oppose industrialisation on the ground that it will lead to influx from outside the state. It may be noted that the Congress (I) Election Manifesto of 1988 does not mention at all about the party's industrial policy in Meghalaya while the earlier Manifesto of 1983 makes a casual reference to the development of small scale and cottage industries.⁸¹ This may be interpreted to mean that the Meghalaya Unit of the Congress (I) is neither convinced about the prospects of industrialisation in Meghalaya nor the party is in a position to allay popular misgivings in this regard through effective propaganda.

As far as the proposal for the establishment of railway lines in Meghalaya is concerned, the Congress (I) seems to lend its support on the ground that this will provide local traders and farmers with easy and cheap

80. See Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Debates, (Budget Session, 1975), Vol. X, No. 1.

81. See Election Manifestoes of the Congress (I) in Meghalaya, 1983 and 1988, op.cit.

transportation facilities for selling their products outside the State.⁸² But the issue does not figure in the programmes of the party which implies that the Congress (I) in Meghalaya does not have any genuine concern for the establishment of railway lines.

Our analysis of the views of the Congress (I) on various issues may be summed up by observing that the Congress (I) regards 'regionalism' as detrimental to the process of national integration. Indeed, the Congress (I) looks upon regionalism as a narrow ideology which is sustained by communal consciousness. The Congress (I) also favours centralisation of power and is not sympathetic to demands for federal autonomy. But there seems to exist some dichotomy between the Congress (I) stand at the all India level and the MPCC(I) stand on the relationship between regionalism and nationalism. While the MPCC(I) President emphatically states that his party does not regard regionalism as contradictory to nationalism, the INC(I) openly dubs regional aspirations as anti-national. The MPCC(I) expresses its concern for the preservation of the tribal ethos and proclaims its determination to maintain the existing demographic balance in the state. But the

82. See Appendix (I), discussions with D.D. Lapang, op.cit.

sincerity of the party in the attainment of these goals remains open to scrutiny. The MPCC(I) goes to the extent of declaring itself as a national party with a regional outlook and is confident of the capabilities of national parties to protect regional interests.

The Communist Party of India's response to regionalism marks a sharp ideological contrast from that of the Congress (I). The Communists had advocated the theory of multi-national India and maintains that the right of self-determination is an essential condition for the unity of India.⁸³ It is this ideological specificity of the Communist Party of India which accounts for its relevance for our present analysis.

Lenin saw the rise of nationalism as a transient political phenomenon more than counterbalanced by a concurrent trend towards increasing internationalisation of economic, political and cultural life. This is why he did not come up with explicit definitions of such concepts as nation, nationality and nationalism. But the basic thrust of his thinking was to see these as economic and political phenomena - the result of the centralising tendencies of

83. Overstreet and Windmiller, Communism in India (Berkeley, 1958).

capitalist modernisation.⁸⁴ It is this methodology that has dominated the thinking of the Indian Left on the 'national' or 'nationality' question where this question now refers essentially to the internal political arrangements of an Indian Union comprising a number of linguistic territorial state units and confronted with a variety of regional pressures.

The Communist Party of India, as a matter of fact, has never accepted the new Indian political system. It has been eager to see India organized either on the Soviet or the Chinese model rather than on the democratic model of the West.⁸⁵ The Second Congress of the CPI which met in March, 1948, took a decision for a determined democratization of India and its conversion into a Union of national people's democratic republics on the basis of the principle of national self-determination and the abolition of princely states.⁸⁶

In sophisticated Marxist accounts, there is recognition of the existence of a 'dual consciousness', of a pan-Indian identity as well as of regional, linguistic-

84. For details, see V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24 (Moscow, 1964).

85. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, The Programme Explained (Calcutta 1966), pp. 118-124.

86. Cited in Taufiq Ahmed Nizami, The Communist Party and India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1971), p. 10.

based 'nationalism'. The National Movement is said to have fostered and promoted both kinds of identities. It is believed that behind these regional, nationality or national movements are not distinct regional bourgeoisie but different sections of the ruling class alliance or bloc, as well as sections of the working class and peasantry with their specific democratic aspirations. In general, the Marxists support the demands for greater state autonomy because it is said to enhance democracy.⁸⁷ However, they make a distinction between regional claims or movements backed by the oppressed classes and those backed by oppressor classes. This divergence reveals itself largely through the kind of opposition parties leading these movements or making claims, or in the character of the party in government in the states. Thus, CPI and CPI(M) led states by definition express the aspirations of the working class and oppressed peasantry just as bourgeoisie parties in the states represent the interests of segments of the ruling class or bloc.⁸⁸ In other words, the Communist Parties in India judge regional demands on the basis of their class

87. Of course, as we shall see later, there are exceptions to this general Marxist posture in specific situations.

88. See Achin Vanaik, "Is there a nationality question in India?" in The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXIII, No. 44, October 29, 1988, p. 2278.

character and support or oppose these demands accordingly, at least from the theoretical point of view.

As we have already noted, the Communist Party of India has been opposed to the conception of India as a multi-lingual nation, and has been advocating the theory of a multi-national state based on the Soviet model. It, therefore, opposes the present centralization and has been advocating maximum autonomy for the states. The party even advocated the formation of tribal states on district level.⁸⁹ It has been difficult for the party to project an image of typical Indian nationalism due to its international character. Many of the Communists even doubt whether it was wise to participate in the democratic process of election. In its election manifesto of 1967, the CPI demanded that,

wider power and authority, particularly in financial and economic matters be given to the states of the Indian Union. The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution must be revised and amended so as to enlarge the powers of the state and abridge those of the Central Government.⁹⁰

89. See Kousar J. Azam, op.cit., p. 226. The Communist attempts to subvert the existing order in the states of West Bengal and Kerala through the agency of coalition governments were indications of the same trend. In fact, they earlier attempted a subversive movement to topple the existing regime in the Telengana region of the state of Hyderabad.

90. Election Manifesto of the Communist Party of India, 1967, p. 29.

As guided by their ideology, the Marxists would make every effort to promote integration and to break down the barriers separating people, particularly the working classes. This general principle would entail respect for the equality of all languages and culture. It would mean rejecting privileges for any particular ethnic group while safeguarding the interests of minorities.⁹¹ In India, this would imply the adoption of a policy of 'positive discrimination' or 'affirmative action' for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.⁹² Tribal movements for autonomy would, in general, be supported by Marxists because these are quite often perceived as the result of non-tribal exploitation and displacement of indigenous tribals.

The CPI, from the beginning, has been to advocating the linguistic reorganisation of India. The party takes the various linguistic groups in India as national groups and has been advocating their linguistic cause as the nationality cause. This doctrinal commitment on the part of the Communists has enabled them to support all regional and autonomy movements by linguistic groups irrespective of their political desirability.⁹³

91. V.I. Lenin, Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism (Moscow, 1970), pp. 32-37.

92. Achin Vanaik, op.cit., p. 2286.

93. But the dichotomy in the Communist stand becomes evident when in specific situations like the Assam movement or the GNLF movement, the Communists fail to live up to the aspirations of smaller nationalities. See A.K. Baruah, op.cit.

Speaking on his party's position on regionalism, the veteran CPI leader of erstwhile Assam and of the present state of Meghalaya, Prafulla Misra observes that the term 'regionalism' has been wrongly used to denote the narrow interests of a particular group, of a particular area. During the struggle for independence, various regional groups came together to fight against colonialism. According to the Meghalaya Unit of the CPI, Misra argues, championing the cause of a particular ethnic group should not be branded or dubbed as 'regionalism' because India, being a homeland of various nationalities, the rights of every segment of the population must be guaranteed and this alone will ensure the unity of India. The CPI does not seem to agree with the term 'regional parties' as it is commonly used, but concedes that these parties in Meghalaya, like their brothers in the rest of the country, champion the cause of their own people, strive to safeguard their identity as small nationalities and to ensure that they may develop according to their own historical tradition and genius.⁹⁴ It is striking to note that while the MPCC(I) looks upon regionalism as a narrow ideology, the CPI adopts a less strident and more sympathetic posture towards this phenomenon, in conformity with the Marxist doctrine. But,

94. See Appendix (2). Discussions with Shri Prafulla Misra, Communist Party of India leader, on 4th January, 1991, in Shillong.

in spite of the CPI's disapproval with the term 'regional parties', the party stops short of suggesting a suitable, alternative term to substitute the same.

The CPI in Meghalaya seems to consider regionalism as a natural phenomenon. Tracing its roots in India, the party leader, Prafulla Misra refers to the uneven and lopsided development in India. After independence, as a result of mass education and development of roads and communications, more and more backward people who were not in the social and political map of India so far have started asserting their rights. The CPI considers this as a welcome development which should not be termed as 'regionalism'. According to the Meghalaya unit of the CPI, the regional parties are popular because they champion the cause of the region. The national parties too, deal with regional problems, but the CPI admits that sometimes parties with a national allegiance fail to project regional issues in an effective manner as a result of which the regional parties assume preponderance over the national parties. As far as regionalism in Meghalaya is concerned, the CPI does not seem to regard it as antagonistic with nationalism. Misra justifies his party's stand in this regard by citing Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh, the APHLC leader's declaration that "Ours is regional party with a national

outlook".⁹⁵ Thus, the CPI in Meghalaya seems to view regionalism as a natural phenomenon arising in response to the socio-economic and political situation of India. In other words, the Communists in Meghalaya do not doubt the legitimacy of regionalism as such. But once again, the party continues to disapprove the use of the term 'regionalism', although the party finds nothing wrong with the activities that are associated with it.

Speaking about the CPI's stand on the clashes between the tribals and non-tribals in Meghalaya, Misra observes that the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos hoped that all their problems would be solved once they got rid of Assamese political domination and achieved statehood. In reality, however, they got only political freedom, but not economic freedom. In the field of trade and business, the tribal traders had to face stiff competition from their non-tribal counterparts. This, according to the CPI, is the crux of the problem. As a possible solution to the problem, the Meghalaya Unit of the CPI suggests the decentralization of the market place to ease the pressure on Barabazar and urges that the local tribals be given first preference to carry on trade and business.⁹⁶ It is surprising that the

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

CPI in Meghalaya does not explain the tribal-non-tribal divide in terms of class struggle. This is because class polarisation in the Marxist sense has not taken place in Meghalaya and the friction basically concerns the same class with different ethnic affiliations. It is, therefore, a case of intra-class and not inter-class conflict that marks the politics of Meghalaya today.

The CPI does not consider its national commitments a liability at the State or regional level. Citing the party's programme on the tribal problem, Misra emphasizes the CPI's deep concern for the tribal cause.⁹⁷ This implies the party's commitment to the promotion of tribal welfare both at the national and at the state levels. The CPI's stand is that every nationality or ethnic group, whether big or small, must be given some political rights in his or her homeland. There must also be some safeguards to ensure that small tribal people are not 'swamped' by migration from outside. That is, the demographic balance of the tribal societies must not be affected.⁹⁸ The Meghalaya CPI's views on the tribal issue follow from the general party doctrine of recognition of the rights of different nationalities and ethnic groups.

97. See details of the CPI's programme on the tribal problem as cited in ibid. Also see CPI on Burning Problems of Meghalaya issued by the Meghalaya State Council, CPI, October 20, 1983 and Draft Programme of the Meghalaya Coordination Committee of the CPI.

98. Ibid.

The CPI favours the establishment of industries in Meghalaya. The party urged the Government to select some industries and arrange necessary training for the local people to man these industries. The party regrets that these suggestions have fallen in deaf ears.⁹⁹ The establishment of industries seems to be one major issue on which the CPI's position is fundamentally different from that of the regional parties. The regional parties of Meghalaya have made no secrets of their opposition to industrialisation, although they are not against the establishment of small scale industries. While all parties talk about the need of training local manpower, no significant breakthrough has so far been made in this regard which has, in turn, hampered the long-term prospects of industrialisation in the State.

Regarding Centre-State relations, the CPI claims to have demanded for a long time the restructuring of these relations in order to vest more power in the states. The party believes that the Government of India's grant of certain rights to different ethnic groups through the signing of a number of accords was necessary to maintain the federal character of the Constitution.¹⁰⁰ The CPI,

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

however, does not suggest measures to reverse the centripetal tendencies of the Indian Constitution. The party also fails to take note of the fact that most of the autonomy accords have been rendered ineffective due to non-implementation of their provisions and reluctance of some State Governments to part with financial and decision-making powers.

The CPI's stand on the issue of the Hill State reflects the party's attitude towards regional aspirations in the hills. The CPI felt that the problem of the hills people was basically a problem of their regeneration. The hills people wanted full opportunities for self-expression and for shaping their future freely within the great family of Indian Union. According to the CPI, the fulfilment of genuine aspirations in the hills had become urgent to promote integrity of the nation and prosperity of the region.¹⁰¹ Thus, the CPI did not look at the problem merely from the point of view of the 'development' of the people of the area, but took the question of national integration also into consideration. Though the CPI rejected the proposal of the Union Home Ministry for the creation of a federal structure, the party recommended in its memorandum to Chavan that,

101. Shillong Observer, August 1, 1967, Vol. IX, No. 8, p. 1.

... each of the Hill peoples ... should be granted full autonomy within their respective distinct region, with the right to constitute them into Union Territory, if any one of them so desire, with clear provision to remain, out of their own volition, within the State of Assam as Autonomous Region.....¹⁰²

The CPI was the first national party to welcome and support the formation of Meghalaya so that the tribal people might develop their way of life in accordance with their tradition and culture.¹⁰³ It must be noted, however, that although the CPI stands for the preservation of tribal identity, the party finds no contradiction between the legitimate rights of the tribal majority and the non-tribal minorities who are permanent inhabitants of Meghalaya.¹⁰⁴ This is certainly a significant point of departure from the positions adopted by the regional parties. Moreover, the party's proposal for an integrated State of Assam with safeguards for the hills people marked a sharp contrast from the standpoints of the regional parties.

On the whole, it may be observed that the CPI supports regional movements and other centrifugal forces, at least on the theoretical plane. The Communist mainstream

102. "CPI Memorandum to Y.V. Chavan", Published in Shillong Observer, June 1, 1967, Vol. IX, No. 4, p. 3.

103. CPI on Burning Problems of Meghalaya issued by the Meghalaya State Council, CPI, October 20, 1983, p. 5.

104. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

characterises the existing linguistic division of states as a division reflecting the existence of different nations or nationalities. This is done in order to lend legitimacy to regional demands in consonance with the Marxist concern and consideration for the 'Nationality Question'. In conformity with the views of the national leadership the Meghalaya Unit of the CPI also endorses its support of regional aspirations. The Congress (I)'s response in this regard appears to be fundamentally different from that of the CPI. As the rise of regionalism poses a threat to the support-base of the Congress (I), the Congress-ruled Centre seems to have few options but to resort to repression to cope with regional and centrifugal forces.

In the next chapter, we propose to take up an analysis of the position adopted by the regional parties of Meghalaya on the question of national integration and nationalism.

CHAPTER IV

REGIONALISM AND NATIONALISM IN MEGHALAYA - VIEWS OF THE REGIONAL PARTIES

In the previous Chapter, we have examined the phenomenon of nationalism as well as the responses of major national parties towards the phenomenon of regionalism. This makes it imperative on us to analyse the responses of the regional parties of Meghalaya towards nationalism and national integration and in the present Chapter, we propose to take up a discussion on these lines.

In order to examine the attitudes of regional parties towards 'national integration', it is necessary to look into the implications of this concept both in its global and Indian contexts. Paul R. Brass, an eminent scholar, denounces the trend to look upon 'national integration' as a process of state-building and to treat all other loyalties except those to the state as 'parochial' or 'primordial loyalties' divisive in their impact and detrimental to national integration. He feels that national integration, seen as a process of reducing the elite-mass gap and of transforming loyalties from parochial to national orientations, is a simplistic concept to apply to the predominantly multi-ethnic states of Asia and Africa. He feels that an alternative to the 'national integration' approach lies in sociological theories of nationalism,

viewed as a process of nationality formation rather than state-building.¹ The pre-eminent theorist of this approach is, of course, Karl Deutsch.² The 'National integration' approach seems to ignore the process by which intermediary loyalties are developed and thus fails to take into account the inter-ethnic relations which are so important to the integrative process in the Afro-Asian states. Another drawback of this approach has been the failure to consider alternative models of state-nation relations other than either nation-state integration or secession. Brass argues that the sociological approach is an improvement upon the national integration approach as it begins first with ethnic groups and asks under what conditions do ethnic groups develop into nation, what are the relations between the institutions and policies of the state and the developing nationalities and how can the state influence the process of nationality formation. Such questions do not assume the superiority of state over nation or vice-versa. They also leave open the question of what kinds of political regimes can function best in the midst of ethnic group transformations.³ We accept the position of Brass on the

1. See Paul R. Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India (Delhi, 1975), pp. 6-7.

2. Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication: An Enquiry Into The Foundations of Nationality, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1966).

3. Paul R. Brass, op.cit., pp. 6-7.

'national integration' approach on the basis of his arguments which clearly establish the limitations of this approach to tackle the problems of multi-ethnic states.

It may be noted, however, that in spite of the shortcomings of the national integration approach, it has been predominantly applied in the Indian context resulting in a strain between the State and the emerging nationalities or ethnic groups. In this connection, we may refer to the following views expressed by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi which reflect the official version of national integration in India.

... Our national integration does not mean unity of language, ideology or religion; it is, as we have proclaimed many times, unity in diversity. The real basis of national integration should be widely shared goals and values, commitment to, what for want of a better word we call, 'Indianness' without sacrificing the identity of sub-cultures....⁴

It may appear from the above statements that Indira Gandhi did not envisage a merger of sub-cultures when she spoke of 'national integration'. However, she contradicted herself when she stated,

4. See Indira Gandhi's Inaugural Address at the meeting of the National Integration Council, New Delhi, January 21, 1984, in Indira Gandhi - Selected Speeches and Writings 1982-84 (Vol. V), (New Delhi, 1986), pp. 70-71.

... The enduring strength of India is her capacity to synthesize different cultural and religious traditions, different styles of living, different modes of expression. Exclusiveness of any kind is alien to the spirit of India....⁵

It is evident from this paragraph that Indira Gandhi favoured an assimilation of different cultural traditions in the name of national integration. This attitude seems to have resulted from a belief in the melting pot theory and the contention that India is a 'nation state'. The official position, therefore, is that the various ethnic and cultural communities inhabiting the country should be assimilated in the melting pot of Indian nationalism.⁶ Indira Gandhi also expressed an intolerant attitude towards regionalism and seemed to have viewed regionalism as a threat to national integration. She asked,

... What are the challenges to unity? The old enemies are communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguistic fanaticism. We had been engaged in a vigorous intellectual and moral campaign against such tendencies in order to promote the concept of India and of Indianness.⁷

Once 'national integration' is officially interpreted as being antagonistic with regionalism, it seeks to

5. Ibid., p. 73.

6. For discussion on the application of the melting pot theory in the Indian context, see A.K. Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam-Middle Class Politics (Guwahati, 1991), p. 2.

7. Indira Gandhi - Selected Speeches etc., op.cit., p. 71.

legitimise the suppression of regional movements. But as Rasheeduddin Khan argues, regionalism and 'sub-regionalism' are unavoidable in a country as vast as India. He denounces the attempt by those supporting the cause of 'unity' and 'integrity' of the nation to dub 'sub-regional' and regional interests as divisive, fissiparous and disintegrative.⁸ National integration, to him, should signify a condition of unity in diversity in which the components and the whole are equally valid and mutually inter-dependent. He regards integration not as a process of conversion of diversities into a uniformity, but a congruence of diversities leading to a higher level of unity in which both the varieties and similarities are maintained.⁹ If national integration is interpreted and understood in this manner, it need not come into conflict with regionalism. However, the official version of 'national integration' in India is too narrow to accommodate regional interests and sentiments.

Having examined the nature of nationalism as a global phenomenon and the implications of the 'national integration' approach in India, we propose to focus our

8. Rasheeduddin Khan, Federal India - A Design for Change (New Delhi, 1991), p. 83. We do not consider 'sub-regionalism' as an appropriate term. For reasons, see Chapter I.

9. Ibid., pp. 84-85.

attention on the responses of the regional parties to nationalism. It appears that the growth and development of regional, communal and tribal parties in India showed a shift from the pre-independence ideal of nationalism. On the question of national integration, the regional parties like the Akali Dal, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the parties representing tribal ethnic groups like the Jharkhand Party, the Mizo Union, the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference etc. accepted the status quo, but tend to be revivalistic.¹⁰ The resistance of tribal sub-cultures to all assimilationistic policies were most powerfully projected by J.J.M. Nichols Roy, a tribal leader himself. Asserting the existence of tribal sub-cultures, he pointed out:

To say that the culture of these people must be swallowed by another culture, unless it is a better culture, and unless it be a process of gradual evaluation, is rather very surprising to anyone who wants to build up India as a nation and bring all the people together.¹¹

Nichols Roy made it explicit that the tribal cultures would not yield to any pressures. He asserted

10. For details, See Kousar J. Azam, Political Aspects of National Integration (Meerut, 1981), p. 236.

11. J.J.M. Nichols Roy's Statement as cited in Ibid., pp. 173-174.

the inherent superiority of the tribal traditions and said,

India should rise to that feeling or idea of equality and real democracy which the tribal people have. They (assimilationists) should not for a second think that these people should give up their democracy and equality and be swallowed up by another culture which is quite different from what they are used to, and which is considered by them not at all suitable to their society... There is some kind of culture in the hill areas which is far better than what is obtaining in the plains.¹²

Such concern for the preservation of the tribal ethos sustains the strong resistance against any efforts towards assimilation in the pan-Indian culture and tradition. This opposition to assimilation need not be interpreted as being anti-India, although the claim regarding superiority of tribal culture is debatable and may not be accepted universally.

It cannot, however, be denied that exclusiveness of tribal culture is an important determinant of regional politics in Meghalaya and taking due note of this fact, we shall seek to examine the attitudes of regional parties of Meghalaya to the issue of national integration in India and also to the very concept of nationalism. The stand of regional parties on these questions may be studied with

12. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. IX, pp. 1022-1023.

reference to their understanding of regionalism and its relationship with nationalism, their appraisal of centre-state relations, their attitude to non-tribal interests and so on.

We may begin with the views of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) which spearheaded the movement for the formation of Meghalaya.

While stating his party's position on the question of national integration, the General Secretary of the APHLC, Mr. S.D.D. Nichols Roy points out that the APHLC has always regarded the North-Eastern Zone to be a part of India. He claims that his party has been in favour of national integration as a concept and in practice. However, the APHLC denounces any attempt by other parts of the nation to impose their will, their identity, their culture, their language and their ways of life on the people of a particular area, in the name of national integration.¹³ While the APHLC seems to be committed to Meghalaya's membership of the Indian Union, its understanding of national integration necessarily encompasses the preservation of the distinct cultures of different ethnic groups

13. See Appendix (3), abstracts of discussion with Mr. S.D.D. Nichols Roy on 11th January, 1991, in Shillong.

and the tribes of Meghalaya, in particular. The party wants the customs and traditions of the tribal people to be protected and not diluted. This shows that the APHLC's idea of integration is not in consonance with the official version of national integration in India. The party seems to pay mere lip service to national integration, while its ideological position does not favour any kind of integration, except political integration with India. In other words, while the regional parties in Meghalaya seem to oppose 'national' integration they are not opposed to political integration of India as a political entity. As far as the APHLC's 'national' commitments are concerned, the party constitution states, "The objects of the Party shall be ... to play a constructive role in the affairs of the nation."¹⁴ Apart from this constitutional obligation, the party also tried to prove its 'nationalist' credentials and concern for the State of India by suspending its programme of direct action during the Sino-Indian border war of 1962.

The next regional party whose views on various issues we seek to examine is the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP). Its members represented an

14. See Constitution of the APHLC, p. 1.

extremist faction within the APHLC who broke away from the parent party in protest against the APHLC's acceptance of the Autonomous State Plan. It appears that the HSPDP's views on different issues are not totally distinguishable from those of the APHLC. For instance, the HSPDP, like the APHLC, pays only lip service to the idea of national integration, but remains apprehensive about the possible fall-out of such integration on the distinct identity of the tribal people of Meghalaya. The HSPDP states,

Meghalaya is the abode of tribals who are a minority, having a separate identity, different and more backward than the other major communities who constitute the bulk of the population in the country. The foremost duty, therefore, is to safeguard them through their own good customs and usages, and to develop according to their own ability and genius so that their identity would not be lost in the sea of changes.¹⁵

The HSPDP reiterates that the regional identity of the tribal people of Meghalaya will have to be maintained and their regional interests are not to be sacrificed at the altar of national integration.¹⁶ Thus, the party's statements on the issue of national integration reflect only a mechanical concern for integration.

15. See Election Manifesto of the HSPDP, 1983, p. 2.

16. See Appendix (6), abstracts of discussion with Mr. E.K. Mawlong, General Secretary, HSPDP, on 2nd May, 1991, in Shillong.

Spelling out his party's perception of regionalism, Mr. E.K. Mawlong, General Secretary of the HSPDP, states that regionalism in the Meghalayan context means protecting the interests of the tribal people of Meghalaya and preserving their cultural identity - their language, customs and usages.¹⁷ It is interesting to note that the HSPDP uses the phrase 'interests of the tribal people' as though such interests are identical for all tribals.¹⁸ The party proclaims to stand for "the rights, justice, liberties and progress of the tribal people and for their all round development according to their own genius...."¹⁹ Thus, the HSPDP seems to treat regionalism as synonymous with the protection of tribal identity and preservation of tribal customs and traditions. This, no doubt, is a narrow interpretation of regionalism which is a global phenomenon today. But it reflects the spirit of tribal regionalism in the north eastern part of India.

We shall now proceed to highlight the views of Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC), another regional party which was formed in 1977, professedly to focus attention on the problems of the farmers, to redress

17. Ibid.

18. It will be evident from our discussion of the views of the HPU that concept of a common tribal interest is a misnomer.

19. See Constitution of the Hill State People's Democratic Party, p. 1.

their grievances and to render assistance to them through the Government machinery. This emphasis apart, views of the PDIC do not differ much from those of other regional parties in Meghalaya. Regionalism, for the PDIC, means the protection of anything that concerns the interests of a particular region, such as language, culture, customs etc. The PDIC, therefore, vows to preserve the language, traditional trade and business, sports (Rongbiria) and cultural identity of the tribal people of Meghalaya, which also includes their religion, customs, usages and food habit.²⁰ The PDIC's views in this regard resemble the views of the HSPDP, treating regionalism as coterminus with the protection of tribal identity. Speaking on his party's stand on national integration, the PDIC President, Mr. A.B.M. Roy states that the PDIC considers national integration to be in the interest of the people of Meghalaya because Meghalaya is part and parcel of the Indian Union.²¹ This statement sounds vague because the phrase 'people of Meghalaya' has been used in a loose manner. In a comprehensive sense, the phrase should include all inhabitants of Meghalaya, regardless of ethnic identity. But viewed from

20. See Aims and Objectives in Constitution of the PDIC. Also see Election Manifesto of the PDIC, 6th November, 1987 (Translated into English from Khasi by Dr. Pascal Malngiang) and Appendix (8), abstracts of discussion with Mr. A.B.M. Roy, PDIC President, on 28th July, 1991, in Shillong.

21. See Appendix (8), Ibid.

the PDIC's regional perspective, the emphasis seems to be on the tribal people. Secondly, the PDIC has obviously failed to distinguish between Meghalaya's political integration with India and national integration which implies cultural integration. In this regard, some contradictions may be noted in the position of the PDIC because national integration in the official sense may dilute the tribal identity to some extent and result in a setback for the party's goal of protection of tribal ethos. The official view of the PDIC seems to be that regionalism and nationalism are complementary and not antagonistic with each other.²² The PDIC President does not elaborate his party's position further on this issue which indicates that the party leadership has not been able to comprehend the nature of interactions between regionalism and nationalism. It appears that there is a lack of ideological content in the programmes of the PDIC because the party manifestoes make no reference to issues such as relationship between regionalism and nationalism, the party's stand on national integration and so on.²³

22. Ibid. There is no reference to these issues either in the Election Manifesto of the PDIC or in its Constitution.

23. Since these issues do not figure in the programmes and election manifestoes of the PDIC, it became necessary to rely on statements made by the Party President as reflecting the party's stand on such issues.

After an analysis of the views of APHLC, HSPDP and PDIC, we propose to examine the position of the Hill People Union (HPU) on different issues. The HPU is the youngest regional party of Meghalaya formed by a group of erstwhile APHLC and HSPDP members in an attempt at unification of the regional movement in Meghalaya. It is only natural, therefore, that the views of the HPU reflect, to a large extent, those of the APHLC and the HSPDP. Regionalism, according to the HPU, implies the love for a particular region or state in preference to the country as a whole.²⁴ It appears that there is some conceptual confusion in this statement. The terms 'region' and 'state' have been treated as being identical in meaning. Moreover, the word 'country' has been used, presumably to signify a territorially larger political unit than the region. But this does not seem to be a conceptually correct position. If activities of regional parties are analysed, it will be evident that it is not love for a particular region which motivates regionalism, but articulation of opinion by the regional elite on certain major issues that serves as a catalyst to the growth of regionalism. Commenting on regional politics as practised by the HPU, the party President, Prof. Milton

24. See Appendix (5), abstracts of discussion with Mr. S.D. Khongwir, General Secretary of the HPU, on 18th March, 1991, in Shillong.

Sangma observes that its political activities are confined mainly to the State and aim at protecting the interests of the State in cooperation with the Centre.²⁵ But here a number of questions arise, viz., what does the HPU perceive to be the interests of the state? Has the party been able to project and also to protect such interests? Or is it merely an attempt at camouflaging the interests of the regional elite in the garb of the interests of the state? Again, interests of the state embraces the interests of the entire body of the population residing in it and not the interests of a few sections of the population or of a particular ethnic group only. It appears that the HPU has not been able to fulfil the aspirations of all sections of the population during its brief tenure of power in 1990-91.²⁶ Hence the HPU cannot claim to be a champion of the interests of the state as a whole.

In the backdrop of HPU's interpretation of regionalism in terms of identification with a particular

25. See Appendix (4), abstracts of discussion with Mr. Milton Sangma, HPU President, on 20th March 1991, in Shillong.

26. See the Editorial titled 'Rich State, Poor People' in the Meghalaya Guardian, December 7, 1990. Commenting on the statement of the former Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Mr. P.A. Sangma that "the majority benefit of the state have gone to a few selected people", the Meghalaya Guardian states that the fortune of Meghalaya lies in the development of its rural areas where the majority live. This implies that the Government led by HPU could not improve the lot of the common man.

region or state, we may now examine the aims and objects of the HPU which are as follows:

- 1) To safeguard and preserve the identity of the tribal people and to protect their interests, especially in respect of land, their democratic institutions, language, customs and culture.
- 2) To ensure the territorial integrity of the State of Meghalaya and to restore to the State the rightful areas and those contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people.
- 3) To promote the economic development of the tribal people in particular and of the State in general.
- 4) To ensure social justice and economic freedom in the State.²⁷

Aims and objectives of the HPU show that this regional party is basically a tribal party. The HPU has repeatedly asserted its commitment for the tribal cause. But in Meghalaya, there are three tribal groups, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. Does the HPU stand for and represent the interests of all these tribes? An analysis of the HPU's participation and performance in the Assembly Elections of Meghalaya will show that the party lacks uniform support among the three tribal groups.²⁸ In

27. See Constitution of the Hill People Union, p. 1.

28. The HPU lost all the 7 seats it contested from Jaintia Hills in the Assembly Elections of 1988. The party won 9 seats in the Khasi Hills out of 29 seats it contested. In the Garo Hills, the HPU captured 10 seats after contesting in 24 constituencies. For details, see Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1988.

this context, the HPU's pledge for preservation of the identity of the tribal people in general does not seem to carry much conviction. As a state, Meghalaya has a heterogeneous population structure including diverse ethnic communities. In view of this, how can a party like HPU committed to protection of specific tribal interests claim to protect the general interests of the state? Apart from this, the aims and objects of the HPU reflect some more contradictions. For instance, the concept of social justice is a misnomer in the Meghalaya society and regional parties have never sought to reduce social inequalities or put an end to social discrimination of minority ethnic groups. Inequalities are also perceivable among the three major tribes in the matter of employment. A survey covering the period from May, 1996 to February, 1997, and based on a sample of 200 officers from Cooperation, Taxation, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary and Public Health Engineering Departments as well as including Treasury Officers, Finance and Accounts Officers and Officers of the Meghalaya Secretariat Service shows discrimination in the appointment and promotion of Officers in ethnic terms.

Table I - Appointment of Officers in Various Departments of the Government of Meghalaya (May, 1996 - February, 1997).

Number of Officers appointed	Number and Percentage of Khasi and Jaintia Officers	Number and Percentage of Garo Officers
176	101 (57.7%)	18 (10.28%)

Source: The Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, May 23, 1996, June 20, 1996, December 19, 1996, January 2, 1997, February 6, 1997, February 13, 1997.

Table II - Promotion of Officers in Various Departments of the Government of Meghalaya (October, 1996).

Number of Officers promoted	Number and Percentage of Khasi and Jaintia Officers	Number and Percentage of Garo Officers
24	10 (41.6%)	5 (20.83%)

Source: The Gazette of Meghalaya, October 17, 1996.

The above tables clearly indicate that as far as appointment to gazetted posts are concerned, the Khasis and Jaintias have grabbed a larger share of Government jobs than the Garos. The same trend applies to promotions as well. The HPU's talk of ensuring social justice, therefore, does not correspond to reality. Economic freedom or

laissez-faire, too, seems to have taken a back seat in Meghalaya in view of the restrictions imposed by district councils on the free conduct of trade by non-tribal communities.

Regarding the relationship between regionalism and nationalism, the official position of the HPU is that the two are complementary and not contradictory. According to the HPU, the priority of regional parties is to protect the interests of the people at the state level.²⁹ We have already noted that interests of the state cannot be equated with the interests of a single ethnic group or community only. The HPU, with its emphasis on specific tribal interests cannot claim to represent the interests of the state. The party also declares that it would like to play a role at the national level and uphold the unity and integrity of the country.³⁰ In this statement, the HPU seems to have confused the country as the nation which is tantamount to treating a geopolitical entity as a cultural entity. While acknowledging its commitments at the national level, the HPU opposes assimilation in the name of integration and expects every group and community in India to grow and bloom like flowers in the Mughal Garden.³¹ The HPU, in

29. See Appendix (4), discussions with Milton Sangma, op.cit.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

other words, categorically rejects the melting pot theory of national integration and prefers instead the bouquet approach of exhibiting diverse flowers, each of which will retain its own individuality among other flowers in the bouquet. It must be noted that the HPU's stand on national integration deviates from the official version of national integration in India. It appears from the above discussion that all the four regional parties of Meghalaya have tried to interpret regionalism in terms of the preservation of tribal culture and traditions. How far the regional parties are sincere about this goal is an important question to be examined in Chapter VI. But understanding of regionalism in terms of tribal identity certainly shows the ethnic dimension of regionalism in Meghalaya.

Another important issue on which we seek to ascertain the views of regional parties is Centre-State relations. In this regard, the APHLC seems to be in favour of more autonomy for the States. But the party has not come up with any specific suggestions for the restructuring of Centre-State relations. Speaking on his party's stand on the issue, S.D.D. Nichols Roy, the General Secretary of the APHLC states that the APHLC favours a federal structure in which the regional parties would govern the states and at the national level, they would join hands and cooperate

with national parties in a coalition government.³² But the problem is - if contrary to the party's speculation, a national party wins the Assembly Elections, what kind of a role would the APHLC envisage for the regional parties? Secondly, it must be pointed out that a 'federal' arrangement can be understood only in terms of distribution of powers between different sets of government and not in terms of parties, viz., national and regional, ruling at different levels.

On the issue of Centre-State relations, the official view of the HSPDP is that there should be a closer understanding between the Centre and the States so far as division of powers is concerned. The HSPDP is in favour of more autonomy to the states in different fields so that they can exercise their powers freely without much interference from the Centre.³³ In one of its election manifestoes, the HSPDP promised that in relation with the Central Government, it would strive to obtain more safeguards for the tribals in the State by having more powers for the state and the district councils and also obtain more autonomy for the State in respect of other matters in the

32. See Appendix (3), discussion with S.D.D. Nichols Roy, op.cit.

33. See Appendix (6), discussions with E.K. Mawlong, op.cit.

administration through amendments of the Constitution of India.³⁴ It appears from this statement that the HSPDP is not satisfied with the existing powers granted to the district councils by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. The HSPDP also seems to share the concern of regional parties from other parts of India to safeguard state autonomy from being encroached by an all powerful Centre. But this concern remains a mere mechanical exercise, without any attempt on the part of the HSPDP to come up with concrete proposals to tilt the balance of such relations in favour of the states.

Regarding Centre-State relations, the PDIC does not seem to be satisfied with the existing alignment of powers between the Centre and the States. The party shares the feeling with other regional parties of Meghalaya and those of other States that there is scope for improvement in the structure of these relations.³⁵ But in spite of the PDIC's professed dissatisfaction on the issue, the party does not seem to have taken any initiative in improving these relations which implies that the issue is not on top of the party's priorities.

34. Election Manifesto of the HSPDP, 1983, op.cit., p. 3.

35. See Appendix (8), discussions with A.B.M. Roy, op.cit.

The HPU's position on Centre-State relations shows that the party does not favour the existing alignment of powers. The party's stand is that there should be some modification in the Centre-State as well as in the State-District relations. A section of the party even feels that there should be a direct flow of funds from the Centre to the districts.³⁶ The HPU categorically asserted that the erosion in the federal structure had taken place due to the deliberate policies of the Indian National Congress (I) and while opposing these policies, the HPU strongly felt that the communities of different regions should have adequate share of freedom and responsibility.³⁷ But the HPU did not forward any suggestions to the Sarkaria Commission for improvement of Centre-State relations. This implies that there has not been any meaningful debate within the party on this issue which in turn shows that the party's concern in this regard is less than sincere. It appears that the HPU has only sought to secure propaganda mileage over other regional parties by shouting mechanical slogans for improvement of Centre-State relations. As a matter of fact, free flow of political leaders from the Congress (I) to HPU

36. See Appendix (4), discussions with Milton Sangma, op.cit.

37. See Election Manifesto of HPU, 1984, Shillong.

and vice-versa³⁸ demonstrates that the ideological differences between the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress (I) and the HPU in Meghalaya are not so pronounced. Consequently, the HPU's opinion on Centre-State relations is unlikely to offer any sharp contrast from that of the Congress (I). The Congress (I), it may be noted, is by and large satisfied with the present alignment of powers between the Centre and the States.³⁹ The HPU, too, pays only lip service when it joins regional parties of other States in their demand to restructure relations between the Centre and the States.

On the whole, our analysis of the views of regional parties on the issue of Centre-State relations does not show any substantial difference of opinion among these parties in this regard.

Since regionalism in Meghalaya has been associated with the aspirations of tribals, our understanding of this

38. The shifting of allegiance by the Congress (I) MLA, H.B. Dan to the HPU-led MUPP coalition in 1990 as well as the merger of an APHLC group led by Captain W.A. Sangma in the Congress (I) are some of the glaring instances of defection in the Meghalayan context. This has resulted in a phenomenon of circulation of leaders from the national to the regional parties and vice-versa. For discussion on defection, see the editorial titled "Unnecessary Controversy" in The Shillong Times, April 4, 1990. Also see P.C. Biswas, "Electoral Politics in Meghalaya" in P.S. Dutta (ed.) Electoral Politics in North East India (NEICSSR, New Delhi, 1986), pp. 77-78.

39. See Indian National Congress (I) Election Manifesto, 1984 (New Delhi, 1984), p. 23.

regionalism necessitates an enquiry into the attitudes of regional parties towards the interests of non-tribals. We may start with the views of the APHLC in this regard. In its Second Conference, the APHLC declared that it was demanding the creation of a separate State for the hill areas of Assam where the interests of non-tribals would be fully protected.⁴⁰ Clarifying his party's stand on tribal-non-tribal relationship, Mr. S.D.D. Nichols Roy, General Secretary of the APHLC, notes that although the interests of tribals and non-tribals need not clash, they do clash because the District Councils in the tribal areas of the north-eastern hill states had been entrusted with the power to preserve the tribal land. Trade by non-tribals also was subjected to control by the District Councils. In the field of trade and business, however, the system of 'benami' has become a common feature, adding a sense of exploitation in the tribal psyche. The APHLC leadership seems to have acknowledged the role of both tribals and non-tribals in the development of Meghalaya.⁴¹ From this, it may appear that on the issue of non-tribal interests in Meghalaya, the APHLC favours full protection for non-tribals in recognition

40. See Resolutions passed by the Second All Party Hill Leaders' Conference held at Shillong on August 22nd and 23rd, 1960 under the Chairmanship of Mr. E.M. Sangma in "Historic Political Resolutions Adopted by the APHLC - 1960-1973" published in APHLC Souvenir, July 1974, p.9.

41. See Appendix (3), discussions with Nichols Roy, op.cit.

of their service to the State, without jeopardising the economic and other interests of the tribals. In reality, however, the APHLC Government could not play an effective role in protecting the non-tribal minority in the wake of ethnic disturbances in 1979.⁴² Thus, there is many a gap between precept and practice as far as the APHLC is concerned. It must also be noted that all tribals of Meghalaya do not necessarily have a common interest because tribals in Meghalaya do not constitute a homogeneous ethnic group. The Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have their own distinct interests which cannot be brought under the umbrella of a common, unified, tribal interest. In fact, the 1998 General Elections to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly is likely to be dominated by the issue of a new State - the Hynniewtrep State for the Khasis and Jaintias and Garoland for the Garos. The movement for a new State is slowly gaining momentum with the formation of the Bri U Hynniewtrep State Movement by Dominic Roblin Nongkynrih, the ex-Chief of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. In the Garo Hills, on the other hand, the Garo National Council has been spearheading a movement for a separate

42. For discussion, see "Awe-Inspiring Tales of Official Laxity", a report by a Special Correspondent in The Shillong Times, December 29, 1979, p. 1.

Garoland. Interestingly, the Garoland movement has also received the support of the Khasi Students' Union (KSU).⁴³ Apart from separate political aspirations of Khasis, Jaintias and Garos, it appears that there is no unanimity on the economic interests of Khasis themselves. In a mass rally organized by the opposition Meghalaya Federation and other social organisations, a resolution was passed to form a Joint Action Committee to pressurize the Government to immediately stop the controversial border fencing, uranium mining in West Khasi Hills and also to amend the forest policy which banned the trading and export of fifteen species of timber in the State. This implies that some policies of the Government are considered to be against the interests of the Khasis. The veteran HSPDP leader, Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh even exhorted the people not to entertain rules and laws which are taking away their basic rights of ownership of land and its assets.⁴⁴ In the light of the above, it appears that the very projection of non-tribal interests vis-a-vis tribal interests will make little sense unless the diversity of interests among the tribals themselves is taken into consideration.

43. For details, see G.W. Pohti, "Vote for Change and Vote for a New State" in The Shillong Times, March 10, 1997, p. 1.

44. For details, see the report titled "MF Rally Lambasts State Government" in The Shillong Times, December 15, 1994.

Views of the HSPDP on the relationship between tribals and non-tribals should be examined in the light of the party's bold declaration that it is a 'Tribal Regional Party'.⁴⁵ As such, the party's programmes revolve around the protection of specific tribal interests. For instance, the HSPDP seeks to obtain more safeguards for the tribals in the state by having more powers for the state and the district councils. The party proudly proclaims its success in amending the Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act, to totally stop the sale of land in the state to the non-tribals.⁴⁶ This reflects the concern of the HSPDP to protect tribal rights on land. But it appears that there are striking contradictions between the official position of the HSPDP as stated in its Election Manifestoes and the party position as clarified by its leadership in course of discussions with this scholar. In its Election Manifestoes, the HSPDP clearly makes a distinction between the interests of tribals and those of non-tribals. But General Secretary of the HSPDP, Mr. E.K. Mawlong states that his party does not consider the interests of non-tribals as contradictory with those of tribals and that the HSPDP acknowledges the important role played by non-tribals in the economic field

45. See HSPDP Manifesto, 1983, op.cit., p. 4.

46. Ibid., p. 2.

in Meghalaya. The General Secretary then makes a statement which is more in tune with the HSPDP's stand reflected in the party manifesto. He refers to an apprehension gaining ground among the tribal youths that non-tribals are snatching the business away from them and are thus exploiting the tribals. Defending his party's position on the issue, Mr. Mawlong adds that although the HSPDP does not intend to prevent non-tribals from carrying on their business in Meghalaya, the party expects non-tribals to cooperate with the tribals and help the latter to pick up with the former in the field of business, trade and commerce.⁴⁷ The HSPDP here articulates the popular concern about the exploitation of tribals by non-tribals. But the HSPDP has not cited any evidence to show this perceived exploitation of tribals by non-tribals. The District Councils in Meghalaya have been regulating the conduct of trade and business in Meghalaya by virtue of their power of issuing licences. If in spite of this regulation, the non-tribals have had any success in this field, it would imply lack of initiative and entrepreneurship on the part of tribals. In this connection, we would like to invite a reference to Table IV in Chapter III regarding the percentage of Khasi supply contractors during 1980-1995.

47. See Appendix (6), discussions with E.K. Mawlong, op.cit.

The table shows that out of the total number of firms approved for supply of various items to the Civil and PWD Secretariats, Khasi firms constituted 52.63% in 1980, 57.57% in 1985 and 64.92% in 1995.⁴⁸ If this piece of statistics is any indication, it may be argued that ever since the achievement of statehood, tribals in Meghalaya have consolidated their grip over business, leaving non-tribals behind in the race for supremacy. Apart from this, there also exists the phenomenon of exploitation of tribals by tribals themselves. The HSPDP does not seem to have addressed itself to this problem as yet.

As far as the relations between tribals and non-tribals are concerned, the PDIC expresses serious concern about the exploitation of tribals by non-tribals.⁴⁹ The party's position in this regard is identical with the position of the HSPDP and like the HSPDP, the PDIC also stops short of substantiating its allegations of exploitation by concrete facts. Although there is no direct reference to the interests of non-tribals in the Election

48. The percentage of Khasi firms has been worked out by this research scholar on the basis of Statistics obtained from the Gazette of Meghalaya, Shillong, December 18, 1980, p. 1468; Ibid., November 7, 1985, p. 1413, October 3, 1985, p. 1050, October 19, 1995, pp. 839-840 and October 26, 1995, p. 863.

49. See Appendix (8), discussions with A.B.M. Roy, op.cit.

Manifesto of the PDIC, the party's attitude in this regard can be gauged by its demand for reservation of all 60 seats in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly in favour of tribals. The party expressed its displeasure over the fact that at present, only 55 seats were reserved for Scheduled Tribes and demanded that Meghalaya Assembly should pass a resolution providing for 100% reservation of Assembly seats for the tribals.⁵⁰ This implies that the PDIC has adopted a rather harsh attitude to non-tribals, in spite of their political insignificance. Only 5 seats for non-tribals in the Assembly means that there is a token representation of non-tribal communities in that forum and as such, non-tribal interests can be reflected, only in a limited way, in the deliberations of the Assembly.

On the issue of tribal-non-tribal relationship, the HPU claims that it would like to look after the interests of the people living permanently in the State, ensuring, at the same time, that the tribals are not exploited by people coming from outside the State.⁵¹ But contrary to the HPU's claim, the party failed to play an effective role during the riots in Meghalaya in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁵²

50. Election Manifesto of the PDIC, 1987, op.cit.

51. See Appendix (4), discussions with Milton Sangma, op.cit.

52. See the Editorial titled "Shillong Portents" in the Assam Tribune, June 30, 1987, p.4 on the role of non-Congress parties including HPU in playing up the tribal-non-tribal divide.

As to the occasional rifts between tribals and non-tribals, the HPU believes that disappointment and frustration among the tribal youth are partly responsible for ethnic disturbances. On the other hand, the party also admits that the disturbances are politically motivated which implies that the HPU cannot absolve itself of some of the blame for inciting ethnic passions. The HPU suggests that the ethnic problem can be solved by the Government by creating opportunities and avenues for the youth of the State. While this is one way of pacifying the misguided youths, the HPU concedes that some elements may still remain vulnerable to political manipulations.⁵³ Although the suggestion of the HPU seems reasonably sound, there was no follow-up action in the direction of creating new opportunities on the part of the coalition government led by Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh during 1990-91. Of course, more seats have been reserved for tribal students in educational institutions. But subsequent developments in the State show that this step has not proved adequate to prevent the outbreak of ethnic disturbances in Meghalaya at regular intervals. A possible explanation for the repeated occurrence of such incidents may be that grievances of local tribals centre around a psyche of perceived and not actual deprivation and hence

53. See Appendix (4), op.cit.

concessions in favour of tribals in various fields have not been able to eliminate this feeling of deprivation which has become so deep rooted in the tribal psyche.

From the ongoing discussion, certain generalisations about the nature of regional parties and their attitude to nationalism can be arrived at. First, all the regional parties of Meghalaya profess their support for national integration while opposing the assimilation and merger of the distinct culture and identity of the hill people of Meghalaya in the ocean of pan-Indian culture and traditions. However, none of the regional parties have come out with strong condemnation of slogans and wall writings like "We are Khasis by race, Indians by accident". This shows the hollowness of their commitment to national integration. Secondly, unlike Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) or Naga National Council (NNC) which at one point of time favoured secession from India, the regional parties of Meghalaya have not displayed any overt secessionist ambitions so far. They have neither any record of hobnobbing with secessionist outfits of the North East nor do they have links with separatist forces in other parts of the country. It is true that regional parties of other States also do not voice any secessionist slogans, but there is one factor which lends a unique dimension to

regionalism in Meghalaya. In this connection, we may draw a special reference to the position of the HSPDP which categorically states that the present arrangement is the best arrangement for Meghalaya, i.e., to continue as a separate state, but as a part of the Indian Union.⁵⁴ In other words, regional parties of Meghalaya will not raise any demand for secession because they cannot visualize a better future for Meghalaya outside the Indian Union. Thirdly, regional parties of Meghalaya profess their displeasure with the domination of the Centre in general and the authoritarian attitude of the dominant national party, i.e., the Congress (I) in particular. In this context, the APHLC asserts its opinion in favour of a truly federal structure with regional parties governing the states, but cooperating with national parties to form a coalition at the Centre. It may be argued, however, that the APHLC has misinterpreted the federal structure by explaining it in terms of parties ruling at different levels, presuming althrough that there are two different political spaces, viz., central and regional. But it is difficult to envisage a viable political arrangement if there is a clear segregation of the areas where national and regional parties operate. In reality, no such segregation exists nor is it possible to

54. See Appendix (6), discussions with E.K. Mawlong, op.cit.

maintain separate political spaces for national and regional parties. Fourthly, the regional parties profess their desire to provide full protection to non-tribals, preventing, at the same time, the exploitation of tribals at the hands of non-tribals. However, none of the regional parties comes out with concrete proof of such exploitation. On the other hand, regional parties of Meghalaya have failed to protect the interests of non-tribals, in spite of their claim to the contrary. The APHLC, for example, could not contain ethnic clashes that took place in Meghalaya during the APHLC's tenure of office in 1979.⁵⁵ It appears from editorial comments in The Assam Tribune, a leading daily from the North East, that even while in the opposition, regional parties could not play an admirable role in upholding non-tribal interests.⁵⁶ All these show that there are wide gaps between promise and practice as far as the regional parties of Meghalaya are concerned.

An interesting aspect of regionalism in Meghalaya emerges out of the above discussion. On paper, all the regional parties have expressed their commitment to the unity and integrity of India. But it appears that such

55. See the report titled "Fear Grips Non-Tribals" in The Shillong Times, November 24, 1979. Also see "Awe-Inspiring Tales" etc. op.cit.

56. For comments, see Editorial in The Assam Tribune, June 30, 1987, p. 4, op.cit.

commitment to an united India is neither a spontaneous response nor is it the product of an emotional attachment to the so called Indian nation. On the other hand, their loyalty to the Indian Union is necessitated by expediency. For instance, the HPU President asserts that the present arrangement is the best arrangement for Meghalaya because the people of Meghalaya have no other choice.⁵⁷ The regional parties of Meghalaya will, therefore, bargain with the Government at the Centre for more concessions for the tribal people of Meghalaya within India rather than campaign for an independent Meghalaya or opt for Meghalaya's alignment with any of the bordering States adjacent to Meghalaya because neither of these options offers any better prospects for the local tribals. Regional parties in Meghalaya seem to be convinced that the interests of the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos are fully secure within India. It is true that students' bodies like the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) have taken a lot of interest in the activities of regional parties. On February 16, 1988, the KSU convened a public meeting calling upon the newly elected members of the Assembly belonging to the various regional parties to unite and offer an alternative to the Congress (I).⁵⁸ In fact, leaders of regional parties

57. See Appendix (4), op.cit.

58. The Implanter, Vol. XX, No. 13 (February 17, 1988, Shillong).

have even asserted that the KSU was acting unknowingly as their student wing and hence the regional parties did not feel the need for having their own student wings.⁵⁹ This implies that regional parties, either overtly or covertly, endorse the demands of the KSU which include sensitive issues like implementation of the Inner Line Regulation Act, reservation of all sixty seats in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly for the local tribals, immediate removal of the names of the foreigners and non-tribals from outside the State from fresh electoral roll and so on.⁶⁰ It is striking to note that non-tribals from outside Meghalaya have been sought to be treated at par with foreigners. This has dangerous implications for non-tribal communities, but regional parties have not come out with any condemnation of the proposal. However, in spite of regional parties' close association and covert understanding with student bodies which seem to be somewhat intolerant of the interests of ethnic minorities in Meghalaya, it may be argued that politics of regionalism in Meghalaya does not pose any immediate threat to the Indian State at least so long as the regional parties are guided by expediency and

59. Pascal Malngiang, Students and Politics in Meghalaya (Shillong, 1994), p. 64.

60. Discussions between the Government of Meghalaya and the KSU, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya, (Shillong, 1987), p. 2.

profess to safeguard the interests of the indigenous tribals within the Indian Union.

In the next chapter, we propose to take up an analysis of the economic programmes of the regional parties of Meghalaya.

CHAPTER V

SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF REGIONALISM I - AN ANALYSIS OF THE ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES OF THE REGIONAL PARTIES OF MEGHALAYA

In Chapter IV, we have examined the responses of the regional parties towards nationalism and national integration. Since the programmes and political actions of parties emanate from and are influenced by their social bases, it is necessary to examine the support structure of the regional parties of Meghalaya which sustains the ideology of regionalism. This will entail an analysis of the economic and political programmes of regional parties. Such an analysis should help us arrive at an understanding of the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya. In the present chapter, we propose to concentrate on the economic programmes of the regional parties of Meghalaya.

We may begin our analysis with the APHLC which was the pioneer political organisation of the hills that now constitute Meghalaya, while the rest of the regional parties emerged at a subsequent period. The Constitution of the APHLC as adopted on the 30th September, 1977, pledges to establish a welfare state in the country and to protect the economic rights of the people.¹ In its first election manifesto of 1962, the party promised that it would develop the economic condition of the hill areas and the standard of living of the individual would be raised.²

1. See Constitution of the APHLC, p. 1. Appendix 10.

2. APHLC Election Manifesto, 1962, as quoted in the APHLC Souvenir, July, 1974, pp. 28-29.

These were, of course, only general statements which formed part of the APHLC programme. But the party spelt out its economic programme more clearly in the 1967 Election Manifesto which declared that the party would make the state self-sufficient in agriculture and promised planned and scientific exploitation of the mineral resources of the region.³ Since the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills of Assam could not boast of any major industries, the emphasis on agricultural development assumed special importance. It was also an attempt to woo the cultivators.⁴ But the talk of self-sufficiency did not carry much conviction. The hill areas which later became known as Meghalaya are rich in mineral resources, especially coal and limestone.⁵ It was,

3. APHLC Election Manifesto, 1967, as quoted in Ibid., p. 29.

4. The estimated number of cultivators in Meghalaya in 1991 was more than 4,01,417 out of a total population of 18,00,000. The number has been worked out on the basis of Socio-Economic Indicators - Meghalaya (Table 24.01) provided by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Meghalaya, Shillong, in Pocket Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1994.

5. Trend in Mineral Production - Table I.

Year	Coal	Limestone
1986	1507,000 Tonnes	249,000 Tonnes
1987	1448,000 Tonnes	244,000 Tonnes
1988	1807,000 Tonnes	237,000 Tonnes
1989	2252,000 Tonnes	227,000 Tonnes
1990	3747,000 Tonnes	273,000 Tonnes
1991	3464,000 Tonnes	235,000 Tonnes
1992	3487,000 Tonnes	188,000 Tonnes
1993	2543,000 Tonnes	209,000 Tonnes

Source: Directorate of Mineral Resources, Meghalaya.

therefore, logical for the party to promise steps for the exploitation of these resources.

The APHLC Election Manifestoes of 1962 and 1967 were adopted before the emergence of Meghalaya as a full-fledged State. But in 1972, the scenario had changed. Meghalaya was just born and the APHLC which had fought for it now made a strong and confident appeal to the people to vote for the party. The economic programmes pledged by the APHLC in 1972 included self-sufficiency in food through increased agricultural output, scientific exploitation of mineral and other natural resources, to create employment opportunities, to undertake special schemes such as 'Border road schemes' and the like, to undertake urban development schemes etc.⁶ A close look at the above-mentioned programmes shows the APHLC's awareness, at least on paper, of some of the specific problems likely to be faced by the new-born state. Even during the initial years of the formation of Meghalaya, the spectre of unemployment was posing a threat to the stability of the infant state. In 1974, there were 5198 persons who registered themselves in the Employment Exchange. During that year, 863 vacancies were notified against which 372 persons were placed. A total of 7024 names figured in the live register.

6. APHLC Election Manifesto of 1972.

The number of unemployed persons continued to multiply in the span of the next two years and by 1976, the number in the live register rose to 11,967.⁷ To this, should be added the level of unemployment in the unorganized sector for which no figures are available. Visualising a grim scenario on the employment front, the APHLC deemed it proper to make some promises to alleviate the problem to a certain extent, at least. The border areas of Meghalaya also needed special attention and patronage because of the presence of a sizable number of border population.⁸ For a state like Meghalaya which does not have too many sources of revenue, utilization of the existing resources is of vital importance. As Captain W.A. Sangma declared,

We are determined to give the highest priority to the proper utilisation of our natural resources and we have every confidence that, in the years to come, we shall succeed in developing a self-sustaining economy and will be in a position to make a positive and significant contribution to the nation's resources.⁹

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7. Employment Exchanges Statistics provided by Directorate of Employment and Craftsmen Training, Meghalaya, as published in Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1984, Directorate of Economics, Statistics and Evaluation, Meghalaya, Shillong.
 8. The population of Shella-Bholaganj Block was 45,799 and that of Pynursla Block was 47,171 according to Census of India, 1991.
 9. Captain W.A. Sangma's Welcome address to Prime Minister, January 20, 1972, as quoted in APHLC Souvenir, Shillong, 1974, p. 30.

In reality, however, the APHLC does not seem to have succeeded in fulfilling many of its promises. An analysis of the APHLC's actual achievements will be taken up later in this chapter to examine the extent to which the party's programmes have been backed by concrete actions.

The 1978 APHLC Manifesto indicated an eighteen point pldege - to safeguard against economic exploitation of the tribal people - to develop border trade - to create greater employment opportunities for the people of the state - to make efforts for self-sufficiency in food - to give due weightage to local tribals in employment in all government offices and so on.¹⁰ It seems, however, that the APHLC has failed to suggest concrete measures for preventing the perceived economic exploitation of the tribals. In fact, the very talk of economic exploitation of tribals in Meghalaya makes little sense as the tables in Chapter III show that the tribals are doing quite well on the economic front, especially in the post-statehood period.¹¹ As far as unemployment is concerned, the APHLC has expressed its concern, but remains silent about providing employment for the uneducated youth.

10. See APHLC Election Manifesto, 1978.

11. For details, see Chapter III.

The APHLC manifesto of 1983 laid down an eleven point pledge.¹² The pledges were more or less similar to those of 1978. But the priority shifted to progressive revision of power tariff and elimination of the urban property tax. Among the north eastern states, Meghalaya has achieved the distinction of being self-sufficient in hydel power as well as of being capable of supplying surplus power to the neighbouring states. The following table will show the volume of power generation by Meghalaya State Electricity Board in different block years.

Table 2 - Generation of Electricity.

Year	Generation (MKWH)
1980-81	352.54
1985-86	355.44
1990-91	338.63
1991-92	421.08
1992-93	429.80

Source: Meghalaya State Electricity Board.
Cited in Pocket Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1994, p. 36.

It may be noted that the MSEB has an extra state consumer in Assam State Electricity Board which purchased 148.39 MKWH in 1990-91, 199.39 MKWH in 1991-92 and 195.61

12. For details, see APHLC Election Manifesto, 1983.

MKWH in 1992-93 from MSEB.¹³ In this context, the APHLC's promise for revision of power tariff was an important step towards enhancing the State's revenues. Pledge to withdraw the Urban Property Tax indicated the APHLC's willingness to make a gesture to urban voters in general and to woo the urban propertied classes in particular.

A look into the APHLC's Constitution, policy statements and election manifestoes indicates that it is a tribal regional party with a distinctly urban bias. As far as the support-structure of the party is concerned, the party General Secretary claims that supporters belong to all levels of the society, whether rural or urban.¹⁴ But viewed in terms of the party's economic programme, it appears that the APHLC has sought to give priority to the interests of unemployed youth, farmers, urban propertied class and the border constituencies. It may be noted that there is no specific mention in the APHLC manifestoes about the economic upliftment of the rural areas, although some emphasis has been laid on the interests of farmers and a commitment made to increase agricultural output by

13. Sale of Electricity figures provided by MSEB. Cited in Pocket Statistical Handbook, op.cit., p. 37.

14. See Appendix (3), abstracts of discussion with S.D.D. Nichols Roy, General Secretary of APHLC, in Shillong, on 8th January, 1991.

providing farmers with assistance and incentives in the matter of irrigation, procurement of seeds etc. But the party does not seem to have taken any follow-up action to translate its commitment into reality.

In the absence of big industries, there is no industrial lobby as such, in Meghalaya. Therefore, the question of the APHLC's support base among big industrial groups does not arise. But like all other regional parties of Meghalaya, the APHLC, too, speaks of encouraging small and medium scale industries and seems to have tried to make some inroads among the emerging petty industrial groups in Meghalaya. In this connection, it may be noted that in the absence of class polarisation in Meghalaya, there is no radical difference between various sections of the social strata. The differences among classes being blurred in Meghalaya, it becomes difficult to identify the support base of a party in a specific strata of the society, especially if the party in question is not ideologically distinguishable from other parties in the political spectrum. In view of the above, our analysis of the support base of regional parties in Meghalaya will be based mostly on rural-urban patterns.

A glance at the results of the Assembly Elections of Meghalaya in 1972 shows that the APHLC won the maximum

number of seats in the Garo Hills followed by the Khasi Hills and the Jaintia Hills. In the Assembly Elections of 1978, the APHLC could not improve its tally in the Jaintia Hills while there was a decline in its fortunes in the Khasi Hills and the Garo Hills. In the 1983 Assembly elections, the party suffered a further setback in the Jaintia Hills, although its tally remained more or less static in the Khasi Hills and the Garo Hills. Reasons for the APHLC's electoral setbacks in some districts and stagnation in its support-base in some others may be sought after taking a look at the districtwise performance of the APHLC in the Assembly Elections of 1972, 1978 and 1983.

Table 3 - Seats won by APHLC in the Assembly Elections of 1972.

District	Total No. of seats	Seats contested by APHLC	Seats won by APHLC
1. Jaintia Hills	6	6	2
2. Khasi Hills	30	25	13
3. Garo Hills	24	18	17
Total	60	49	32

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, March, 1972.

Table 4 - APHLC and the Assembly Elections of 1978.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by APHLC	Seats won by APHLC
1. Jaintia Hills	7	6	2
2. East Khasi Hills (Shillong)	17	15	6
3. West Garo Hills (Tura)	15	11	6
4. Baghmara Subdivision	2	2	1
5. East Garo Hills	7	7	1
Total	48	41	16

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

Table 5 - APHLC and the Assembly Elections of 1983.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by APHLC	Seats won by APHLC
1. Jaintia Hills	7	7	1
2. East Khasi Hills			
(a) Shillong	19	16	8
(b) Ri Bhoi	4	4	0
3. West Khasi Hills			
(a) Mairang	1	1	1
(b) Mawkyrwat	2	2	0
(c) Nongstoin	3	3	0
4. East Garo Hills	7	6	1
5. West Garo Hills			
(a) Baghmara	2	1	0
(b) Tura	15	15	4
Total	60	55	15

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

It appears from a study of the results of the three Assembly elections that the APHLC has been able to build up a fairly solid support base in and around the urban and semi-urban areas of Shillong and Tura. However, it could not make an impressive breakthrough in electoral terms in the far-flung rural areas of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. In the elections of 1978, the APHLC captured 6 seats each in the Shillong and Tura Sub-division, its tally in Jaintia Hills being two seats and one seat each in Baghmara Sub-division of West Garo Hills and in East Garo Hills. In the 1983 Assembly elections, the APHLC won 8 seats in Shillong Sub-division and 4 seats in Tura Sub-division, while it registered victory in one constituency each in Jaintia Hills, West Khasi Hills and East Garo Hills. Thus, the voting patterns in the rural areas of Meghalaya confirm our observation that there is no special emphasis in the APHLC's economic programme on the upliftment of the rural areas. It seems, therefore, that the APHLC has campaigned most successfully in the urban constituencies and has been able to muster maximum support in those constituencies. The party's gestures to the farmers have not brought any special mileage for it in terms of actual votes. It may thus be argued that although the APHLC's struggle for the Hill State fetched mass support for it in the initial stages, the party could not maintain rapport at the grass-

roots level mainly because of its failure to come up with constructive programmes to meet the needs and aspirations of the people during the period following the achievement of statehood.

Another regional party which challenged the dominance and supremacy of the APHLC was the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP). The party was formed by a faction of the APHLC which disagreed with the moderate stance of the party on the issue of full statehood for Meghalaya. According to the Constitution of the HSPDP, the aims and objects of the party include economic upliftment of the tribal people in particular and of the State in general, safeguarding the rights and interests of the tribal people in respect of land and forests and so on.¹⁵ The economic programmes of the HSPDP were spelt out in detail in the party's first election manifesto of 1972 which declares that the Hill State People's Democratic Party aims at eradicating poverty, illiteracy and sickness, and at achieving social, economic and political justice to all the people within the shortest time possible by conceiving and implementing good programmes based on the genius

15. See the Constitution of the Hill State People's Democratic Party, p. 2.

and ability of the people.¹⁶ The specific economic programmes of the HSPDP laid down in the 1972 Election Manifesto show that the party has accorded topmost priority to the fulfilment of basic material needs of the people. The party attaches equal importance to agriculture and industry, but adds that development should be labour intensive rather than capital intensive in order to generate employment for the youth. The HSPDP also lays emphasis on the development of roads for the marketing of agricultural and industrial products. The party favours both public sector and private sector industries to be set up in the State. While the economic viability of the former is to be ascertained before investing capital in the public sector units, the private entrepreneurs would be assisted with grants and loans.¹⁷ It appears that the HSPDP's attitude towards industrialisation is more positive than that of the APHLC. The party's proposal to link investment with returns shows its practical approach. The HSPDP would like to preserve the existing land tenure system, but suggests reforms if the public interest so demands. The party is in favour of relaxed and flexible border trade between India and Bangladesh for the benefit of people

16. See the Election Manifesto of HSPDP (1972).

17. Ibid.

residing in the border areas.¹⁸ An important aspect of the HSPDP's economic programme is its emphasis on the marketing of agricultural products. The party is aware of the fact that in the absence of proper marketing facilities, the indigenous products cannot reach the much bigger markets outside the State as a result of which the farmers have been deprived of a reasonable price for their produce. Hence, the HSPDP is committed to promote favourable economic conditions for the benefit of the farmers and identify markets for agricultural and horticultural produces.¹⁹ A look at the HSPDP's economic programme of 1972 shows that the party seeks to protect the interests of unemployed youth, farmers, industrial labourers and also people residing in the border areas. We shall take up an analysis of the HSPDP's actual electoral performance later in the chapter to find out whether these sections of the society have actually turned into reliable support-bases for the party in terms of votes.

The HSPDP's economic programme as spelt out in the 1983 manifesto drew the voters' attention to the problems faced by the border people, particularly in trade and

18. Ibid.

19. See Appendix (6), discussions with Mr. E.K. Mawlong held in Shillong on 2nd May 1991.

commerce and promised steps to help in removing their difficulties, by taking up the matter with the Central Government. The party would also strive to obtain adequate financial assistance from the Centre for the upliftment of the backward tribals to help them develop according to their own ability and genius.²⁰ The HSPDP reminded the voters of some of its achievements during its participation in the State Government which also show its pro-tribal bias, viz., amending the Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act, to totally stop the sale of land in the state to the non-tribals and checking the wanton destruction of forests in the State to retain the valuable benefits derived from them. Other aspects of the party's economic programme were - to help in promoting agriculture, educate and encourage the tribals in trade, small and cottage industries, to do away with the obstacles posed by the middlemen, to see that the tribals do not become mere 'benamis' at the hands of other people, see that the utilisation of the rich resources of the State should be for the benefit of the tribals, stop the wanton destruction of forests in the State to retain the management of lands according to usual traditions and customs, have good roads

20. See Election Manifesto of the HSPDP, 1983.

and communications, especially to reach the borders of the State for safeguarding its boundaries and also for further integration of the tribal people, see that investment of finances go to those projects which would really bring help to the people and so on.²¹ The HSPDP seems to have accorded special priority to the problems of the border people and would like to tackle these problems through central assistance. Having declared itself as a "Tribal Regional Party", the HSPDP seeks to ensure that all the benefits of development should go to the tribals. Hence, utilisation of the State's resources, management of lands according to tribal customs and traditions, prevention of deforestation, encouraging the growth of small and cottage industries - all these measures are pronounced to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the indigenous tribals. It may be noted, however, that by making such pious pronouncements, the HSPDP has merely paid lip service to the 'traditional lobby' in the Khasi society. As far as utilisation of resources and protection of forests are concerned, the party has not achieved much in concrete terms.

Regarding unemployment, the 1983 manifesto of the HSPDP does not specify measures to tackle it. The party has

21. Ibid.

highlighted two other problems faced by the tribals, viz., unscrupulous role of the middlemen and the operation of the 'benami' system both of which have allegedly led to the exploitation of the tribal people. The party has promised steps to stop both the practices²² which have become deep-rooted evils in the socio-economic life of Meghalaya. But in reality, these practices have continued to be as rampant as ever before.

We may now examine the results of State Assembly elections to identify tentatively those sections of the society which seem to have supported the economic programme of the HSPDP. Since the HSPDP was recognised as a State Political Party by the Election Commission on 25th January, 1978, candidates sponsored by the party were treated as Independents for the General Elections in 1972 and 1977. In the Assembly Elections of 1972, the HSPDP fielded candidates in the Khasi Hills only and could win 8 seats. The party expanded its electoral arena in 1978 and won a total of 14 seats in Jaintia Hills, East and West Khasi Hills districts. There was only a token increase in the HSPDP's tally in the 1983 Assembly Elections when the party captured 15 seats. The HSPDP has not won any seats from Garo Hills indicating that it is a party based mostly in

22. See Appendix (6), discussions with E.K. Mawlong, op.cit.

the Khasi Hills with some following in the Jaintia Hills. We may have an impression about the HSPDP's electoral position in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills from the tables given below:

Table 6 - HSPDP and the Assembly Elections of 1972.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested	Seats won by HSPDP
Khasi Hills	30	22	8
Total	30	22	8

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, March, 1972.

Table 7 - HSPDP and the Assembly Elections of 1978

District	No. of Seats	Seats contested by HSPDP	Seats won by HSPDP
Jaintia Hills	7	7	3
East Khasi Hills (Shillong)	17	16	3
East Khasi Hills (Ri Bhoi)	4	4	Nil
West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin)	5	5	5
West Khasi Hills (Mairang)	3	3	3
Total	36	35	14

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

Table 8 - HSPDP and the Assembly Elections of 1983.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by HSPDP	Seats won by HSPDP
Jaintia Hills	7	7	3
East Khasi Hills (Shillong)	19	17	4
East Khasi Hills (Ri Bhoi)	4	4	3
West Khasi Hills (Mairang)	1	1	Nil
West Khasi Hills (Mawkyrwat)	2	2	2
West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin)	3	3	3
East Garo Hills	7	3	Nil
West Garo Hills (Tura)	15	9	Nil
Total	58	46	15

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

Results of the Assembly elections show that the HSPDP did not have a strong organizational base in the early years of its formation. In the 1972 Assembly election, the party put up 22 candidates in the Khasi Hills district only and about one-third of its candidates were declared elected, mostly from the rural constituencies. The priority given to the agricultural sector with special emphasis on marketing of products and introduction of land reforms may account for the party's popularity in the rural

areas. In 1978, the HSPDP tried its electoral fortune in the Jaintia Hills and opened its account in the district with 3 seats. The party could win only 3 seats in the Shillong Sub-division of East Khasi Hills although it contested in 16 out of 17 constituencies. Obviously, the HSPDP could not match the organizational strength and popularity of the Congress and the APHLC which swept the polls in and around Shillong. The party also drew a blank in the Ri Bhoi Sub-division indicating the fragility of its support-base in the area. However, the HSPDP could boast of a solid base in West Khasi Hills where it made a total sweep in both the sub-divisions. In the Assembly elections of 1983, the electoral position of the HSPDP remained static in the Jaintia Hills which implies that the party's popularity in the district had reached a saturation point. There was a marginal increase in the party's tally in the Shillong Sub-division of East Khasi Hills while there was a reversal in the party's fortunes in the Ri Bhoi area. The HSPDP retained its support in Nongstoin and Mawkyrwat Sub-divisions, but its popularity declined in Mairang. In 1983, the HSPDP fielded candidates for the first time in Garo Hills, but failed to achieve any breakthrough either in West Garo Hills (Tura Sub-division) or in East Garo Hills where the Indian National Congress seemed to enjoy an overwhelming support. Thus, over the years, the HSPDP has

been able to build up a more or less secure support-base in the rural and semi-rural constituencies of West Khasi Hills whereas it enjoys the support of a marginal section of the voters in the urban constituencies of Shillong. There has been no increase in the HSPDP's tally of seats in the Jaintia Hills which implies that its popularity in the district may actually be on the wane. The party's support-base in the Garo Hills is extremely fragile and the party is yet to open its account in any constituency in the Garo Hills districts. It appears, therefore, that the HSPDP's electoral support has fluctuated in all districts except in West Khasi Hills. We may even go to the extent of characterising the HSPDP as basically a Khasi political party with only token presence in the Jaintia and the Garo Hills. On an analysis of HSPDP election manifestoes of 1972 and 1983, it is possible to identify unemployed youth, farmers, industrial labourers and border residents as potential supporters of the party. While industrial labourers and unemployed youth represent the urban constituencies, farmers represent the rural areas. Border residents are represented in the rural and semi-urban constituencies like Dawki in Jaintia Hills, Shella in Khasi Hills as well certain constituencies of South Garo Hills bordering Bangladesh. Election results show that the HSPDP could capture very few seats in the urban constituencies of

Shillong Sub-division of East Khasi Hills, indicating thereby a poor response to the party's programme from the urban voters. However, the HSPDP has performed well in the rural and semi-urban areas of Ri Bhoi Sub-division in East Khasi Hills and Nongstoin, Mairang and Mawkyrwat Sub-divisions of West Khasi Hills. This shows that the party's commitments in the agricultural sector including promises on the marketing front have had some appeal to the farming community. Since the HSPDP could not win any Assembly seats in Garo Hills, it is obvious that the party could not win over border residents in the southern parts of Garo Hills bordering Bangladesh. On the whole, therefore, the picture emerges that the HSPDP is a predominantly Khasi party with a rural following represented mostly by farmers. It appears that the party's urban votes have fluctuated, thus negating the possibility of its consolidation in the urban areas. Actually, the HSPDP was born as a reaction against the moderatism of the APHLC on the hill state issue. But mere opposition to the policies and programmes of the APHLC cannot sustain or even justify the existence of the HSPDP unless it follows a specific ideology or offers an attractive economic package for the people. The very fact that the HSPDP has had an unstable electoral response shows the voters' lack of faith in a party which is ideologically indistinguishable from other regional parties in the fray.

The third regional party which has emerged on the political scene of Meghalaya is the Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC). It was formed in July 1973 with a view to mobilize the people of the State irrespective of party affiliations to fulfil the demands of the people as well as to develop their economic and social life. According to the Constitution of the PDIC, the party aims to develop the economic condition of the people by securing for them adequate prices for the various agricultural products like potato, ginger, orange, betelnut and leaf, bay leaves, pepper, broom etc. The party would also like to ensure that the aids granted by the Government are used for the benefit of the people.²³ It needs to be examined whether and how far the PDIC has succeeded in fulfilling these self-professed promises in reality.

The fundamental problems of the farmers which strike the PDIC most are absence of marketing facilities, exploitation of farmers at the hands of middlemen and denial of remunerative price for their products.²⁴ The agrarian policy of the PDIC is, therefore, directed towards redressing the grievances of the farmers on these three

23. See the Constitution of the PDIC.

24. For details, see Election Manifesto of the PDIC, 1987, as translated into English from Khasi by Dr. Pascal Malngiang.

fronts. The party has suggested measures like construction of roads for carrying agricultural products from remote rural areas to special markets in and around Shillong. The PDIC is in favour of Government involvement for direct purchase of agricultural produce from the farmers through allocation of special funds for the purpose. This, according to the PDIC, will neutralise somewhat the role of the middlemen. The party also proposes to fix the price of products annually and provide the farmers with fertilizers and irrigation facilities. It is, however, doubtful whether direct purchase of products by the Government will eliminate the exploitation by the middlemen altogether. Apart from this, if the Government does not earmark substantial funds to buy all products from the farmers, the latter will continue to be vulnerable to the machinations of the middlemen. The party proposes to establish agro-based industries in view of the non-feasibility of large scale industries in the present stage of Meghalaya's development. This will also enhance the utilisation of agricultural products in the growth of the State's economy. The encouragement to poultry farming is considered essential to reduce dependence on land cultivation alone as well as to provide the farmers with an alternative source of livelihood. It should be noted that there is no mention in the PDIC manifesto of 1987 about the traditional

practice of shifting or jhum cultivation in Meghalaya which adversely affects the long-term interests of the cultivators. The PDIC should have focussed attention on this problem as it professes to be a champion of farmer's interests.

The PDIC urges the Government to provide aid to the farmers and also to write off their loans. As regards land ownership, the PDIC feels that safeguards provided by District Council laws are not adequate in this respect. The party suggests that the constitutional provision stating that no law can be made by Parliament to take away the traditional rights of the tribals regarding land ownership without concurrence of the State Assemblies in Nagaland and Mizoram should also apply to Meghalaya.²⁵ The PDIC has sought to endear itself to the farmers by its proposal to write off their loans. Safeguards for the tribals regarding ownership of land are sought to prevent the transfer of land to migrants from outside the State. The emphasis given by the PDIC on this aspect seems to have been aimed at deriving some propaganda advantage over other regional parties because the transfer of land to non-tribals has already been stopped by existing District Council laws.

25. Ibid.

A probe into the electoral performance of the PDIC is necessary to endorse the PDIC's claim of being a champion of the rural farmers. It may be noted that the PDIC was recognised as a State political party on 25th September 1978, and its candidates were treated as Independents for the General Elections in 1978.²⁶ The PDIC fielded 23 candidates (in the Khasi Hills only) for the Assembly Elections of 1978 and could win only 2 seats. In 1983, the party contested 21 seats, including 3 seats from Jaintia Hills, but its tally remained static at 2 seats. Thus, the PDIC, like the HSPDP, is a party based mainly in the Khasi Hills with only a feeble presence in the Jaintia Hills. The following tables will show the electoral performance of the PDIC in the Assembly Elections of Meghalaya.

Table 9 - PDIC and the Assembly Elections of 1978.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by PDIC	Seats won by PDIC
East Khasi Hills (Shillong)	17	14	1
East Khasi Hills (Ri Bhoi)	4	4	1
West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin)	5	4	Nil
West Khasi Hills (Mairang)	3	1	Nil
Total	29	23	2

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

26. Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983, p. 48.

Table 10 - PDIC and the Assembly Elections of 1983.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by PDIC	Seats won by PDIC
Jaintia Hills	7	3	Nil
East Khasi Hills (Shillong)	19	11	2
East Khasi Hills (Ri Bhoi)	4	4	Nil
West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin)	3	3	Nil
Total	33	21	2

Source: Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

Performance of the PDIC in the Assembly Elections reflects the party's failure to establish rapport at the grass roots level. The PDIC, being a self-professed champion of the farmer's cause, should have gained the maximum mileage in the rural constituencies. But ironically enough, in 1978, the PDIC drew a blank in all rural and semi-rural constituencies except in Ri Bhoi and Shillong where the party managed to capture two Assembly seats. In the Assembly Elections of 1983, the PDIC seemed to have lost ground to the HSPDP which made a total sweep in the three Assembly constituencies from the Ri Bhoi area, while the Congress (I) grabbed the remaining one seat, thereby depriving the PDIC of considerable electoral support in the

area. However, the PDIC seemed to have improved its position in the Shillong Sub-division where it added one more seat to its tally. On the whole, it appears, therefore, that the PDIC has failed to mobilize a large section of farmers on the basis of its economic programme into a reliable vote bank. A probe into the percentage of valid votes polled by the PDIC vis-a-vis total electorate will add to our understanding about the party's support - structure in different constituencies. In 1978, in the Shillong Sub-division of East Khasi Hills, the PDIC polled 13,214 votes which was 8.15% of the total electorate, 3,832 votes in Ri Bhoi being 9.66% of the total electorate, 303 votes in Mairang Sub-division of West Khasi Hills or 0.88% of the total electorate and 589 votes or 1.00% in Nongstoin.²⁷ These figures show that the PDIC had been able to build some organizational base in the Ri Bhoi area as well as in and around Shillong, whereas its support-base was extremely fragile in both the Sub-divisions of West Khasi Hills. On the whole, the PDIC polled 17,938 votes which was a meagre 3.06% of the total electorate. In the same election, the APHLC and the HSPDP polled 16.13% and 12.45% respectively²⁸ and this is a testimony to the PDIC's

27. See Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983, p. 48.

28. Ibid., p. 48.

insignificant position as compared to the dominance enjoyed by the two other regional parties of Meghalaya. In the Assembly elections of 1983, the PDIC polled 1,008 valid votes in Jaintia Hills accounting for 1.04% of the total electorate. The party's tally improved marginally in the Shillong Sub-division of East Khasi Hills where it polled 17,252 valid votes which represented 8.21% of the total electorate. The PDIC actually enhanced its hold over the electorate in Ri Bhoi by capturing 4,522 votes or 10.04% of the total electorate, although it failed to win any seats from the area. The party's electoral position was dismal in Nongstoin Sub-division where it secured only 471 valid votes amounting to 1.08% of the total electorate. There was, however, a marginal increase in the overall support for the PDIC which polled 23,253 votes or 3.41% of the total electorate in 1983.²⁹ An analysis of the above election statistics indicates that the PDIC has been able to build a more or less steady support-base in Ri Bhoi, even though the party has failed to translate this support in concrete electoral terms. The party also enjoys same support in the Shillong Sub-division, having grabbed two Assembly seats of Dienglieng and Nongkrem in 1983. It may be noted that the PDIC sought to highlight the problems of

29. Ibid., p. 46.

the farmers in these areas from its very inception and seems to have been rewarded to some extent with electoral recognition of its economic programme for the farmers of the region.

Yet another regional party that has appeared in the political horizon of Meghalaya is the Hill People Union. The formation of this party was necessitated by the urge for the unification of the regional movement in Meghalaya to offer a viable alternative to the national party, viz., the Congress (I). According to the Constitution of the Hill People Union, the aim of the party shall be "To promote the economic development of the tribal people in particular and of the State in general."³⁰ In addition to this general declaration, the HPU spelt out the details of its economic programme in its election manifesto of 1988. The party promises to make all efforts, through constitutional means, to provide safeguards against influx and economic exploitation of the tribal people of Meghalaya; to make every possible effort for the permanent economic rehabilitation and upliftment of the Border people and to impress the Union Government to take necessary steps to improve the trade relations in the border areas to create better

30. See Constitution of the Hill People Union, p. 1.

economic opportunities; to create greater employment opportunities for the people of the State, especially for the tribal people, by tapping all available resources and in particular to encourage greater participation by the tribal people in trade and commerce and in household, village, cottage and small scale industries; to make efforts for self-sufficiency in food through increased agricultural output by modernisation of the methods of cultivation, to impress upon the Government of India on the need to give due weight to the local people of the State especially the tribals in the matters of employment in the Central Government offices and institutions located in Meghalaya.³¹

The HPU, being the product of a merger between the APHLC and the HSPDP, its economic programme seems to have combined different aspects of the economic policies of both the parent parties. Like its predecessors and other regional parties of Meghalaya, the HPU, too, expresses its reservation about the phenomenon of influx and relates it to the economic exploitation of the tribal people.³² The HPU is anxious to take steps to prevent influx as a means to prevent the economic exploitation of the local tribals.

31. See Election Manifesto of the HPU, 1988.

32. However, we have shown in Chapter III that the very notion of 'economic exploitation of tribals by non-tribals' is a misconceived one because the employment figures and other economic criteria clearly establish the predominance of tribals in the economic field, particularly in the post-statehood period.

However, it is doubtful whether influx is responsible for the economic hardships of the people. There exists a phenomenon of exploitation of tribals by fellow tribals, e.g., tribal farmers are very much at the mercy of intermediaries who arbitrarily fix the price of agricultural products, thus depriving the farmers of the remunerative price for their products. Attention of all regional parties needs to be focussed on this problem. The HPU's promise to take steps for the economic upliftment of the border people is a legacy of the HSPDP manifesto which promised similar steps for enhancing economic opportunities in the border areas. The APHLC manifesto, too, proposed schemes for the border areas. Thus, an analysis of the HPU's economic programme shows no novelty in its policies. Nor does the party propose any radical or fundamental changes to improve the lot of the tribal people. As mentioned earlier, the party's economic manifesto is more or less a repetition of the APHLC and the HSPDP manifestoes. It will, perhaps, not be unfair to suggest that the HPU is basically a reincarnation of the APHLC and the HSPDP, committed to reiterate the regional ideology and to rekindle the regional spirit as a reaction against the dominant role played by the national party, viz., the Congress (I).

As far as the support-structure of the party is

concerned, it appears that the HPU manifesto has made gestures to the border constituencies and promised employment opportunities for the tribal youth. The party has also tried to woo the farmers by proposing modernisation of agricultural techniques. It needs to be examined whether the HPU has succeeded in deriving electoral support from these sections of the society.

It may be noted that the Hill People Union became a State recognised Political Party on the 10th September, 1986. The party contested Assembly elections for the first time in 1988 and fielded a total of 55 candidates. Unlike the HSPDP and the PDIC, the HPU chose to test its electoral fortune in all the districts of Meghalaya (except in the Mairang Sub-division of West Khasi Hills) in the very first election it contested. The party, however, succeeded in capturing 19 seats only, which fell 3 short of the Congress (I) tally. The following table will show the electoral performance of the HPU in the Assembly elections of 1988.

Table 11 - HPU and the Assembly Elections of 1988.

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by the HPU	Seats won by the HPU
Jaintia Hills	7	7	0
East Khasi Hills (Shillong)	17	16	6

Table 11 (Contd.)

District	No. of seats	Seats contested by the HPU	Seats won by the HPU
Ri Bhoi Sub-division	4	3	1
Sohra Sub-division	2	2	1
West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin)	3	3	0
Mairang Sub-division	1	0	0
Mawkyrwat Sub-division	2	2	1
East Garo Hills	7	7	5
West Garo Hills (Tura)	15	14	4
Baghmara Sub-division	2	1	1
Total	60	55	19

Source; Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1988.

An analysis of the above election statistics shows the HPU's almost total lack of support in the Jaintia Hills where the party drew a blank, losing ground to the INC and independents. In fact, the party seems to have over-estimated its chances in the sense that it put up candidates for all 7 constituencies in the district. But election results proved that the HPU was yet to build up a sound organizational base in the district. Out of a total electorate of 1,00,447, the HPU could extract the support of 22,705 voters (22.63% of the population). As far as the

HPU's performance in East Khasi Hills was concerned, it succeeded in capturing 37.5% of the seats it contested in the Shillong Sub-division, accounting for 22.68% of votes. In Ri Bhoi and Sohra Sub-divisions, the HPU seemed to have mustered token support, having won 1 seat each from the two Sub-divisions, its percentage of valid votes being 13.56% and 27.41% respectively. In West Khasi Hills, the HPU seemed to have very little support at the grass-roots level and the party polled a meagre 6.78% of valid votes in Nongstoin Sub-division and 27.08% in Mawkyrwat Sub-division. The HPU was crowned with some electoral success in East Garo Hills, although its share of votes did not exceed 29.36%. The party's achievement was somewhat mediocre in West Garo Hills, having polled 14.05% of valid votes in Baghmara and 17.68% in Tura. The HPU's statewide share of votes stood at 20.05%.³³ It appears from the above analysis that from its very inception, the HPU has been able to build up its support-base in and around Shillong in East Khasi Hills and East Garo Hills. While the former includes mostly urban and semi-urban constituencies, the latter consists of semi-urban and rural constituencies. Thus, the HPU seems to have derived some concrete electoral support in the urban areas, in recognition of its programme

33. For details on valid votes polled by political parties, see Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1988, p. 66.

for the tribal youth. This may also account for the HPU's success in Tura Sub-division of West Garo Hills. In the rest of the rural and semi-rural constituencies, the party seems to have established its moderate presence, although absence of effective organizational network has stood in the way of any spectacular electoral success.

After examining the economic programmes of the regional parties of Meghalaya, we may identify some important issues which have been raised by all of them. Some of these issues are - agriculture, marketing of products, mineral resources, industries, introduction of railways, employment, forests, programmes for the border areas and rural areas, exploitation of the tribal people etc. We shall take up each of these issues separately for an understanding of the party positions on such issues.

On the agricultural front, the APHLC raises an unrealistic slogan of self-sufficiency in foodgrains through improved methods of agriculture. The HSPDP's emphasis is on marketing of products. The party also seeks to develop Meghalaya's large potential in the horticultural sector and to make the state self-sufficient in agriculture. Although the PDIC claims to be a champion of the farmers' cause, there is not much novelty in its stand on agriculture. Its emphasis is on securing for farmers

remunerative prices for their products. The HPU also reiterates the positions of APHLC and HSPDP when it makes a call for self-sufficiency in food. It appears, therefore, that on the issue of agriculture, there is no perceivable difference in the positions of the four regional parties.

As far as exploitation of mineral resources is concerned, the APHLC calls for their scientific exploitation. There is no reference to this issue in the HSPDP manifesto, but recently, the party has raised a lot of hue and cry, protesting against uranium mining in West Khasi Hills.³⁴ Manifestoes of the PDIC and the HPU are silent on this issue. This implies that exploitation of mineral resources is not a major issue for these parties. Moreover, they do not seem to have examined the wider ramifications of mining activities in Meghalaya.

Regarding industrialisation, all the regional parties have agreed unanimously that large scale industries will not benefit the local people. The APHLC categorically states that unless the indigenous people are prepared to take up jobs in the newly established industries, it will not favour rapid industrialisation of the state. The

34. For discussion on the HSPDP's stand on this issue, see the editorial titled "Promise in Meghalaya" in The Statesman, November 18, 1996.

APHLC is oblivious of the fact that Meghalaya lacks skilled labour and has no option but to hire labour from outside the State. An analysis of the APHLC's industrial policy shows its lack of progressive outlook and absence of dynamism in the party's approach. The party seems to relate industrial development with employment for the sons of the soil. But to resist the very course of industrialisation almost amounts to denying the fruits of technological development to the people of the State. The official position of the HSPDP on industrialisation is more or less similar to that of the APHLC. The party is of the opinion that establishment of big industries may aggravate the problem of influx in Meghalaya.³⁵ The PDIC stresses the need for agro-based industries and industries based on natural resources of the State like limestone. The party is in favour of industries for the production of sauce from chilly, sugar from beet roots, processing of ginger and turmeric for export purposes, dairy farms for production of cheese, butter and ghee from milk and so on. The party believes that these industries will provide employment to the local people and enlarge the market for the farmers.³⁶ It may be noted that all these industries mentioned by the

35. For details, see Appendix (6), discussions with E.K. Mawlong, op.cit.

36. See PDIC Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

PDIC fall in the category of small scale industries which will give employment to the local people. Thus, the PDIC seems to share the concern of the APHLC and the HSPDP regarding big industries. There is no mention in the HPU manifesto about the establishment of large scale industries and this reinforces the concern of yet another regional party about industrialisation of Meghalaya. Such allergy to industrial growth can hardly be justified. In an era of rapid industrialisation, it is imperative on the part of all regional parties to shed their reservations about industrialisation and open the door of Meghalaya to investors from outside the State to bring economic prosperity for Meghalaya which is so heavily dependent on central grants.

As far as introduction of railways is concerned, there is nothing to distinguish between the official position of the regional parties. All of them have been sceptical on this issue on the ground that railways will encourage large scale influx of people from outside the state which will affect the existing demographic balance of Meghalaya. An eminent leader of the HSPDP proposed to establish an internal railway network connecting Shillong with other district towns in order to ensure the free movement of goods to and from the farflung areas.³⁷

37. See Appendix (6), discussion with E.K. Mawlong, op.cit.

However, there is many a gap between the proposal and its implementation and one may doubt its feasibility and financial viability, considering the inhospitable hilly terrain of the State and its peculiar topography.

On the issue of employment, all the regional parties seek preferential treatment for the local tribals and endorse the reservation policy for the scheduled tribes. But all these parties have unwittingly restricted the job market by opposing the industrialisation of the State. The HSPDP categorically rules out the possibility of accommodating all the unemployed youths in Government service. The party is in favour of launching some specific economic programmes involving the youth and accords priority to self-employment. The HSPDP also calls for an increase in the employment opportunities in the rural areas to ease the pressure of unemployment in the urban areas.³⁸ The position of the HSPDP on this issue is different from that of the APHLC whose perception of development is blatantly urban-oriented.³⁹ The PDIC shares the views of

38. Ibid.

39. For instance, the APHLC General Secretary points out that during the APHLC's first tenure in office, an industrial estate was set up in Byrnihat, but it was found that the young people of Shillong were unwilling to take up jobs at Byrnihat because of its hot climate. This statement implies as if small scale industries were ment for the people of Shillong only. See Appendix (3), discussions with S.D.D. Nichols Roy, op.cit.

the HSPDP when it maintains that the youth should not count on Government employment alone and should explore employment avenues in marketing, agriculture and agro-based industries.⁴⁰ The HPU also seeks the creation of greater employment opportunities for the local people. Thus, there is no originality in the HPU's views in this regard. It may be noted, however, that the employment policy of the regional parties has not laid much emphasis on unemployment among the uneducated and unless this factor is taken into account, a true picture of the employment scenario will not emerge.

Regarding protection of forests, no clear cut policy seems to have been outlined in the manifestoes of the APHLC, the PDIC and the HPU. Only the HSPDP in its Election Manifesto of 1983 promises steps to check deforestation. In reality, however, the HSPDP has not been able to achieve much in this regard.

As far as upliftment of the border areas is concerned, the APHLC promised to undertake 'Border Road Schemes' and to develop border trade. The party also proposes schemes such as 'Border area rehabilitation programme' including the 'Regrouping of villages in the

40. See PDIC Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

border area of Garo Hills'. The HSPDP vowed to impress upon the Government of India regarding the border problems so that the Government may take necessary steps to relax the rigidity of trade between India and Bangladesh.⁴¹ The HPU promises to make every possible effort for the permanent economic rehabilitation and upliftment of the border people. The party's views in this regard are similar to those of the HSPDP. The PDIC manifesto is silent on the border development issue. This shows the party's lack of interest in cultivating its base in the border constituencies.

Regarding upliftment of rural areas, there is no specific mention in the APHLC manifesto which signifies the party's urban bias. The HSPDP manifesto, on the other hand, makes a number of promises in the agricultural sector which are likely to benefit rural areas. The same is true of the PDIC's programme. The HPU manifesto, as mentioned earlier, oscillates between the programmes and policies of the APHLC and the HSPDP. The party promises to encourage greater participation by the tribal people in village industries. This shows that the party's response to problems of the rural areas is lukewarm.

41. See HSPDP Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

A striking feature of the election manifestoes of the regional parties of Meghalaya is that all of them refer to a perceived economic exploitation of tribals by non-tribals. However, no evidence has been offered by these parties to substantiate this allegation. Rather employment figures and other economic criteria cited in Chapter III affirm the emergence of a prosperous tribal elite.

We now propose to analyse budget allocations on different heads of expenditure as well as budget speeches and debates in order to have an understanding of the actual achievements of regional parties. Such an analysis should also focus on the actual economic situation of the State.

We shall start with the budget of 1975-76 which was prepared by an APHLC Government. Instead of discussing the entire budget, we shall only cite the amount of money that was allocated on important items like agriculture, urban development, industries, forests, labour and employment, village and small industries, mines and minerals etc. in the following table.

Table 12 - Schedule of Demands for Grants for Expenditure of the Government of Meghalaya for the year 1975-76.

Item of Expenditure	Amount voted in Rupees	Percentage of total amount voted (approximately)
Agriculture	1,98,25,000	5.5
Urban Development	11,01,000	0.3
Industries	11,26,000	0.31
Forests	69,65,600	1.9
Labour and Employment	38,95,500	1.08
Village and Small Industries	76,27,000	2.1
Mines and Minerals - Regulation and Development of Mines	20,79,300	0.57

Out of a total voted amount of Rs. 36,00,94,200.

Source: Government of Meghalaya, Finance Department Budget 1975-76, Vol. II.

It may be noted that out of a total sectoral allocation of Rs. 306.72 lakhs for State Plan and centrally sponsored schemes, Rs. 65 lakhs were earmarked for border areas programme. This amount was 21% of the total sectoral allocation.⁴² It is evident from Table 13 that the APHLC Government proposed to spend much more on agriculture than

42. 'Statement showing sectoral allocations for State Plan and Centrally Sponsored Schemes' published in Government of Meghalaya, Finance Department Budget 1975-76, Vol. II.

on industry, but expenditure on agriculture was, nevertheless, only 5.5% of the total amount voted for expenditure in 1975-76. Expenditure on village and small industries exceeded the expenditure on industries in general (big industries situated in urban areas). This is a clear indication of the priorities of the APHLC Government. In his budget speech, the Finance Minister stated that highest priority was given to agriculture.⁴³ But during discussions in the budget session, an Independent member, Mr. W. Syiemiong regretted that the Government had not paid much attention to agriculture. He added that the cultivators were also not getting marketing facilities.⁴⁴ Regarding industries, the Finance Minister mentioned the achievements of the Government in setting up the Associated Beverages, Meghalaya Plywoods and Kommorah Limestone Mining Company Ltd., Meghalaya Essential Oils and Chemicals Ltd at Mawshamok and so on. Apart from these, he referred to the proposed schemes like a jute mill, fruit processing and canning units, a roller flour mill, a clinker factory, the programme for expansion of sericulture and weaving and

43. See Budget Speech in Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Debates, 1975, (Budget Session), Vol. X, No. 2 (The 10th, 11th and 12th March, 1975).

44. See debates on the Governor's Address to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 7th March, 1975, in Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Debates, 1975.

small and cottage industries.⁴⁵ But Mr. W. Syiemiong pointed out that in spite of a number of proposals for the setting up of undertakings, nothing much was done. He demanded that the Government should clarify its industrial policies towards labour as well as the safeguards in the industrial policy of the Government about the interests and sentiments of the tribal people.⁴⁶ In sharp contrast to his party position, Mr. S.P. Swer of the APHLC stressed the need to encourage industrialists from within the country to come and set up industries in the State because he felt that they cannot make the State an industrialised one without the help and cooperation of those industrialists from other parts of the country. He also recognized the need of experienced hands in marketing of the products.⁴⁷ Lack of sincerity in the APHLC Government's efforts became evident when Mr. Sibendra Narayan Koch (Congress) regretted that nothing is known about the project report or feasibility report of a proposed jute mill in Garo Hills except that this jute mill would be located at Bajengdoba which was not a jute growing area. He suggested that Mendipathar would be the most suitable place. On the agricultural front, Mr.

45. Ibid., Budget Speech by Finance Minister.

46. Ibid., debates on the Governor's Address, 8th March, 1975.

47. Ibid., debates on the Governor's Address, 8th March, 1975.

Koch mentioned about the neglect of the Koch and Hajong cultivators who are inhabitants of the foothills area of the Garo Hills.⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that MLAs from Garo Hills had a general feeling of neglect of their constituencies as far as development work was concerned. William Cecil R. Marak (Congress), e.g., mentioned the neglect of Tura regarding town development. He also pointed out the problems of irrigation faced by Garo Hills where irrigation projects were not set up. Besides, he regretted that the Pharmaceutical Institute proposed to be set up at Tura had not materialised.⁴⁹ The APHLC Government faced more criticism when Mr. H.E. Pohshna (Independent) argued that lakhs and crores of rupees had been spent for the Agriculture Department, Community Development and other development Departments in the various blocs in Meghalaya, but no visible sign of progress and improvement was found, because those schemes were not properly implemented. Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP stalwart but fought the election as an Independent as his party was recognised by the Election Commission later) also expressed his resentment over the current economic situation, particularly on rising price, with regard to civil supplies. He argued that the

48. Ibid., general discussion on the Budget.

49. Ibid., debates on the Governor's Speech, 7th March, 1975.

Government was not sincere enough in its employment policy under the Half-A-Million-Jobs programme as one of the National Programmes. On the agricultural front, he regretted that although a lot of money was spent by the Government in the previous year, the Government had failed in the programmes that had been taken up.⁵⁰ Raising the problems of border areas, Mr. S.D. Khongwir (Independent) mentioned that there were some permit holders who used to take down various commodities from Shillong to the border areas and very often these commodities were either stuck up in Shillong or the permit holders crossed the border areas into Bangladesh. He wanted information from the Government regarding the setting up of border market.⁵¹ Mr. G. Laloo (APHLC) raised the problems of the border people living in the villages just outside the border areas, particularly the village within the eastern portion of the Pynursla Development Block adjoining Jaintia Hills which had been declared as a specially backward area. After the partition, there had been no regular markets for the betelleaf growers of the area who used to sell their produces in the District of Sylhet in East Bengal. He urged upon the Government to help these people to switch over to pipul or wild pepper

50. Ibid., general discussion on the Budget.

51. Ibid., debates on the Governor's Speech, 8th March, 1975.

cultivation in place of betel leaves for quick return.⁵² The above mentioned debate on the budget of 1975-76 makes it amply clear that the Government led by the APHLC performed dismally on almost all fronts - agriculture, industry, employment, border area development, town planning and so on. This substantiates our earlier observation that in spite of its bombastic election promises, the APHLC failed to fulfil the aspirations of its supporters in the post-statehood period.

It may be noted that during 1977-80, another APHLC Government headed by Shri B.B. Lyngdoh was in power. We may, therefore, make a brief reference to the budget of 1979-80 in order to have an understanding of the economic priorities of the APHLC.

Table 13 - Schedule of Demands for Grants for Expenditure of the Government of Meghalaya for the year 1979-80.

Item of Expenditure	Amount voted in Rupees	Percentage of total amount voted (approximately)
Agriculture	3,48,31,000	5.1
Urban Development	27,66,000	0.4
Industries	1,11,52,000	1.6

52. Ibid., general discussion on the Budget.

Table 13 (Contd.)

Item of Expenditure	Amounted voted in Rupees	Percentage of total amount voted (approx- imately)
Forests	1,97,00,000	2.9
Labour and Employment	43,86,000	0.6
Village and Small Industries	1,99,43,000	2.9
Mines and Minerals	25,70,000	0.3

Out of a total voted amount of Rs. 67,20,50,700.

Source: Government of Meghalaya, Finance Department Budget, Vol. 2, Parts I and II, 1979-80.

It appares from the above table that in comparison with the 1975-76 budget of the previous APHLC Government, there was a marginal increase in the budget of 1979-80 in the allocations for urban development, industries, forests, village and small industries while there was a cut in the allocations for agriculture, labour and employment and mines and minerals. The increase or the cut in allocations should be viewed in terms of percentage of the total voted amount because in terms of figures, there was an increase on all items of expenditure. A comparative study of tables 13 and 14 will show that there was a slight shift in the priorities of the APHLC Government in 1979-80. Although the allocation on industries continued to be low, it increased

from a mere 0.31 to 1.6 in terms of percentage. Village and small industries also received more attention. But the cut in allocations for labour and employment exposes the contradictions in the programmes of the APHLC laid down in its election manifesto and actual allocations made in the budget on this account.⁵³

We also propose to have a look at the Annual Plan outlay for 1990-91 approved by the Government of Meghalaya. During 1990-91, a coalition called Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party (MUPP) consisting of all the regional parties of Meghalaya was in power and therefore, the Annual Plan Outlay for 1990-91 approved by this coalition Government will reflect the priorities given by the regional parties to different sectors. Plan outlay for a few important sectors will be shown in the table below.

Table 14 - Approved outlay of the Government of Meghalaya for 1990-91.

Name of Sector	Approved outlay (Rs. Crores)	Percentage of total outlay (Approximately)
Agriculture and Allied Services	25.91	14.2

53. It may be noted that the APHLC Election Manifestoes of 1972 and 1978 pledged to create greater employment opportunities for the people of the State.

Table 14 (Contd.)

Name of Sector	Approved outlay (Rs. Crores)	Percentage of total outlay (Approximately)
Rural Development	6.14	4.5
Border Area Development Programme	2.10	1.1
Industry and Minerals	9.05	5.1
Urban Development	2.75	1.7
Aid to the District Councils	1.50	0.8
Labour and Labour Welfare	0.04	0.02

Out of a total approved outlay of Rs. 175.00 crores.

Source: Meghalaya State Planning Board Statement showing Eighth Five Year Plan and Annual Plan 1990-91 and 1991-92, Sectoral Outlays recommended by M.S.P.B. and approved by the State Government, vis-a-vis Sectoral Outlays reportedly recommended by the Planning Commission Working Groups which met on 31st October, 1990, (November, 1990).

A look at the above table shows that the MUPP Coalition Government accorded a high priority to agriculture. Moreover, rural development received more attention than urban development. Industry and minerals accounted for 5.1% of the total approved outlay which was not more than one-third of the outlay on agriculture. This suggests that all the regional parties were unanimous in their misgivings about industry. Meghalaya State Planning

Board in its recommendations on the Eight Five Year Plan (1990-95) stated that agro-industries, electronic industries, available mineral and other resource-based industries are to be selectively encouraged in selective areas where required raw materials are naturally available. The M.S.P.B. considered these sectors as important sources of revenue for the State Exchequer. But surprisingly, while fixing the sectoral outlays out of the proposed Eight Plan Outlay of Rs. 1170 crores, the State Planning Board did not mention the industry sector and sought to include this sector under the broad category of 'Other Sectors' and proposed 11% of the total outlay to be spent on these Sectors.⁵⁴ This may be interpreted to mean that the Meghalaya State Planning Board, an agency of the State Government, proposed to enhance the State's revenues from the industry sector without substantial expenditure for the growth of this sector. It needs to be mentioned here that recommendations of the M.S.P.B. on the Eight Plan was made during the tenure of the previous United Meghalaya Parliamentary Forum (U.M.P.F.) Coalition Government led by the Congress (I). But by approving such recommendations, the MUPP Coalition of regional parties endorsed the attitude of

54. Meghalaya State Planning Board Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-95), see recommendations of the Meghalaya State Planning Board, November, 1989.

the State Planning Board towards the industry sector.

In view of the above discussion, it may be argued that none of the regional parties of Meghalaya has been able to formulate radical economic measures and policies because in the absence of an organized proletariat in Meghalaya, no demand for such policies has been raised. The economic programmes of the four regional parties show striking similarities, with some differences in emphasis. As class polarisation has not taken place in Meghalaya due to lack of big industries, it is extremely difficult to identify the support-bases of political parties in specific sections of the society. As a matter of fact, the support-bases of regional parties have fluctuated from time to time in the volatile socio-economic and political scenario of Meghalaya. This is because of the fact that the regional parties could not supplement their economic programmes by concrete political actions. It appears that the leadership of all these parties is composed of an educated elite and therefore, the programmes followed by these parties uphold the interests of this elite. In the next chapter, we shall take up an analysis of the political programmes of the regional parties of Meghalaya.

CHAPTER VI

SUPPORT-STRUCTURE OF REGIONALISM II - AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL PROGRAMMES OF THE REGIONAL PARTIES OF MEGHALAYA

In the previous chapter, we have examined the economic programmes of the regional parties of Meghalaya. But an understanding of the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya will be incomplete without an analysis of the political programmes of the four regional parties. It appears that the regional parties of Meghalaya are hardly distinguishable from one another in terms of their economic programmes. Hence, it needs to be examined whether these parties are marked by any ideological specificity on the basis of their political programmes. It is also interesting to examine the impact of such programmes on different sections of the society because a favourable response to the political programmes of parties can be transformed into reliable electoral support for the parties in question.

We propose to examine the political programmes of regional parties in terms of issues like preservation of the cultural identity of the tribals, problem of influx in Meghalaya, education, interests of non-tribals, upholding justice and other ideas of the Constitution, providing a good and efficient administration, district councils, problems of youth, reservation for tribals, territorial expansion of Meghalaya, innerline regulations and so on.

We may begin with the views of regional parties on 'preservation of tribal identity' because this issue figures invariably in the political programmes of all these parties and has become a favourite catchword for all of them. The Election Manifesto of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference in 1978 started with a brief objective statement viz., "Preservation of the identity of the Tribal and Development of their customs and culture...."¹ On this issue, the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) declares,

Meghalaya is the abode of the tribals who are a minority, having a separate identity, different and more backward than the other major communities who constitute the bulk of the population in the country. The foremost duty, therefore, is to safeguard them through their own good customs and usages, and to develop according to their ability and genius so that their identity would not be lost in the sea of changes. THIS IS BASIC PRINCIPLE THAT THE H.S.P.D.P. HAS ALWAYS STOOD FOR.²

One of the important objectives laid down in the Constitution of the Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC) is to maintain and improve the culture and to respect the religions of all the tribals.³ Similarly, the Hill People Union (HPU) also aims to safeguard and preserve

1. See APHLIC Election Manifesto, 1978.

2. Election Manifesto of the HSPDP, 1983, p. 2.

3. Constitution of the PDIC, as translated from Khasi into English by Dr. Pascal Malngiang (unpublished translated version).

the identity of the tribal people and protect their language, customs and culture.⁴ We may observe the meticulousness with which the regional parties have tried to woo the tribal voters by using the 'identity' bogey. But in reality, the regional parties seem to have sought to nurture and protect the vested interests of the tribal educated elite. A swelling in the ranks of the tribal officers, doctors, engineers and teachers in the post-statehood period⁵ will lend credence to this argument. It may be noted in this context that regionalism in Meghalaya centres round the issue of tribal identity. The tribal community, being a minority at the national level, suffers from a perennial sense of insecurity which is articulated by the regional parties of Meghalaya. Although slogans about 'protection of tribal identity' do not seem to have brought any significant socio-political benefits to the tribal society as a whole, the 'identity' bogey does appear to have some propaganda potential which has been utilized by all regional parties in the fray.

Another important issue on which we propose to highlight the positions of regional parties is the problem of influx in Meghalaya. The APHLC in its 1978 manifesto

4. See Constitution of the Hill People Union, p. 1.

5. This phenomenon has been shown with the help of tables in Chapter III.

pledged to safeguard against influx⁶ without elaborating its stand on the issue. The HSPDP also promised to continue in the efforts to check the influx of foreign nationals into the State and also to expel such people from it, but to maintain peace and communal harmony among all the rightful citizens of the State.⁷ The PDIC takes an uncompromising posture on this issue when it categorically states that there are foreigners in Meghalaya. The party suggests that tribunals should be set up for the trial and deportation of illegal migrants. According to the PDIC, such tribunals will also enable the people to bring the suspects before them.⁸ The official position of the HPU on this issue has not been seplt out in any of its election manifestoes. It appears that the foreign nationals' issue has become an important election theme for both the HSPDP and the PDIC. This problem seems to have generated lot of distrust and suspicion among the local tribals towards non-tribals in general and the divide between the two communities is widening. PDIC's suggestion regarding the setting up of tribunals for detection and deportation of foreign nationals may be appreciated only with a provision for safeguards to prevent the harassment of bonafide Indian

6. See APHLC Manifesto, 1978, op.cit.

7. See HSPDP Manifesto, 1983, op.cit.

8. Election Manifesto of the PDIC, 1987 (as translated into English from Khasi by Dr. Pascal Malngiang)

citizens. It is clear that the regional parties have waged a propaganda battle over the issue and are trying to beat one another by posing to adopt the sternest possible stand in this regard. Here, we must make a distinction between infiltration of foreigners and influx of people from other states of India. Influx in the latter sense also seems to have perturbed all the regional parties because as we have seen in Chapter V, all these parties have opposed industrialisation and establishment of railway network in the state on the ground that both the programmes will accelerate the process of influx from outside the state. It appears that the regional parties of Meghalaya lack the political will to allay popular apprehensions on this issue.

Misgivings expressed by regional parties about influx of people from other states of India naturally raise the question, viz., how do these parties look at non-tribal interests in Meghalaya? In its first election manifesto after the formation of Meghalaya, the APHLC pledged to safeguard the legitimate interests of all non-tribal residents in the proposed new state.⁹ The assurance for such protection of non-tribal minorities became imperative

9. See Election Manifesto of the APHLC, 1972.

for the party in view of a sense of insecurity of these communities in a newly born hill state with a tribal majority. But as subsequent developments would show, the APHLC Government of 1979 proved ineffective in upholding non-tribal interests during ethnic disturbances in the State.¹⁰ Political programmes of the next party, the HSPDP seems to be so clearly based on pledges for the tribals that interests of non-tribals hardly finds a mention in them. The party categorically described itself as a tribal regional party which could serve the State and its people better to enable them to develop according to their own genius.¹¹ Discussions with prominent leaders of the HSPDP elicited the response that interests of non-tribals are not contradictory to the interests of tribals.¹² This implies that the party leadership has preferred to admit the role of non-tribals in Meghalaya who constitute a significant section of the electorate, knowing fully well that no party in Meghalaya can afford to alienate non-tribal voters altogether, if it aspires for success in the electoral arena. Thus, the HSPDP has sought to modify its brand of

10. See the report titled "Fear Grips Non-Tribals" in The Shillong Times, November 24, 1979. Also see "Awe-Inspiring Tales of Official Laxity", report by a Special Correspondent in The Shillong Times, December 29, 1979, p. 1.

11. HSPDP Manifesto of 1983, op.cit.

12. See Appendix (6), discussions with Mr. E.K. Mawlong, HSPDP General Secretary, in Shillong on 2nd May, 1991.

ethnic regionalism in response to the compulsions of electoral politics. But actually, the HSPDP's professed stand on non-tribal interests is not vindicated by its role during ethnic disturbances in Meghalaya. The HSPDP does not seem to have been able to contribute in any significant way in bridging the tribal-non-tribal divide. The political programme of the PDIC is silent on interests of non-tribals. Rather, the party's opinion in favour of more reservation¹³ for tribals reveals the party's tough posture on the issue. Without citing the interests of non-tribals, the HPU manifesto merely promises to strive for peace and harmony among all sections of the people and the various communities inhabiting the State.¹⁴ But the party's record in the promotion of communal harmony does not seem to be very outstanding.

Education is another important issue on which we seek to examine the views of regional parties. The APHLC pledged to eradicate illiteracy and to bring about a change in the system of education so as to ensure for the youth of the State a more useful and meaningful course of studies in the schools and colleges and to provide the best available facilities for the intellectual growth and development of

13. PDIC Election Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

14. Election Manifesto of the Hill People Union, 1988.

the youth in and through the "Indira Gandhi Hill University".¹⁵ Although the APHLC attaches a lot of emphasis on literacy and education and even contemplates a reorientation in the system of education, presumably to make it more job-oriented, there has been no effort in this direction during the period in which the party ruled the State. The party expected the North Eastern Hill University (then proposed to be named after Mrs. Indira Gandhi) to be an outstanding institute for learning, although it is difficult to understand how the APHLC could have created favourable conditions for the intellectual development of the youth through the Central University or what role it could have played in the academic achievements of NEHU. The party also pledged to improve primary education and to improve the service conditions of school and college teachers.¹⁶ The APHLC manifesto of 1983 gave top priority to the improvement of education at all levels in the State.¹⁷ We may take up a survey of the growth of educational institutions in Meghalaya to examine how far the APHLC and the three other regional parties have contributed to the improvement of education in the State. But

15. APHLC Election Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

16. See APHLC Manifesto, 1978, op.cit.

17. See APHLC Manifesto, 1983, op.cit.

before we take up this survey, it is necessary to have a look at the views of three other regional parties on the issue. The HSPDP in 1972 promised to intensify education to eradicate illiteracy in the State as well as to establish Universities.¹⁸ It is somewhat surprising that the HSPDP is in favour of more than one University in the State as a move towards intensification of education in view of the fact that the proposal for setting up the North Eastern Hill University was already accepted which would cater to the higher educational needs of the entire State. The party's call for the establishment of 'universities' can be meaningful if an agricultural university or an institute of technology is sought to be established. The HSPDP also wanted more authority for the State Government in the administration of the North Eastern Hill University to render more help to the University's tribal students of the State in their problems and in removing the irregularities prevailing in it and finding other means in the furtherance of higher, technical and science education in the State and giving the first preference to all the privileges in the matter to the tribal students of the State.¹⁹ The HSPDP's attempt to justify a greater role for the State Government in the administrative affairs of NEHU seemed to have gone

18. HSPDP Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

19. HSPDP Manifesto, 1983, op.cit.

too far in the sense that it would curtail the authority of the University which is supposed to be an autonomous body.

As far as the views of the PDIC on education are concerned, we may refer to its Election Manifesto of 1987 which included a paragraph on this issue. The party wants secondary schools to be set up not only in Shillong, but also in towns and villages outside Shillong. The secondary schools should have hostels, playground facilities as well as dispensaries and doctors for the surrounding villages. The doors of colleges and universities should be open for the tribal youth because there is a dearth of scientists, doctors and engineers among the tribals.²⁰ Being a party with a professed rural and agrarian orientation, the PDIC has focussed on the step motherly treatment meted out to rural and semi-rural areas regarding the provision of educational facilities. As in the rest of India, in Meghalaya, too, the bulk of secondary and higher secondary schools are concentrated in and around the urban centres to the utter neglect of the villages. The PDIC wants a reversal of this position. As far as greater opportunities for tribal students regarding admission to educational institutions are concerned, it needs to be pointed out that the doors of the universities and colleges were never

20. Election Manifesto of the PDIC, 1987, op.cit.

closed for the tribal youth. Although not explicitly stated, the PDIC seems to be in favour of reservation of a large number of seats for tribal students in colleges and in the University. But the fact is that in every academic year, a number of seats meant for tribal students remain vacant in most of the colleges and in the University Departments. This implies that tribal students have not been able to avail of the opportunities already made available to them. Hence, the prospects of further reservation do not seem to be very bright. The PDIC has actually sought to articulate the sentiments and aspirations of an ambitious student community and the state has already experienced a spell of agitation in colleges and in the university on the issue of reservation.

A glance at the views of the HPU on education shows that the party pledges to improve primary education and to bring about a system of education which is useful and meaningful to the youths of the state, to rationalise the criteria governing the grant of financial assistance to educational institutions in order to improve the standard of education in the State and to improve the service conditions of school and college teachers.²¹ In this regard, the HPU manifesto is a replica of the APHLC and

21. HPU Election Manifesto, op.cit.

HSPDP manifestoes and no radical programmes on education have been offered. We shall now take up a survey of the growth of educational institutions in Meghalaya during 1981-1992.

Table 1 - Number of Educational Institutions in Meghalaya.

Institutions	1981-82	1982-83	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
1. Pre-Primary and Pre-Basic	650	780	1242	1272	N.A.
2. Primary and Junior Basic	4010	4075	4231	4273	4235
3. Middle and Senior Basic	488	502	777	805	827
4. High/Higher Secondary	208	218	412	447	419
5. Teachers' Training/ Basic & Non-Basic Training	10	10	10	10	10
6. Teachers' Training Colleges	1	1	1	1	1
7. School for Vocational & Other education	400	N.A.	* 1	* 1	* 1
8. College	14	15	23	23	23
9. University	1	1	1	1	1
10. All institutions	5782	5602	6698	6833	5517

* Polytechnic

Source: Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1984, Directorate of Economics, Statistics and Evaluation, Meghalaya, Shillong, p. 124. Also Pocket Statistical Hand Book, Meghalaya, 1994, p. 68.

The above table shows a spectacular rise in the number of educational institutions in Meghalaya within the span of a decade. It may, therefore, be argued that regional parties can claim some success for improvement in the field of education, particularly during 1990-91 when a coalition of regional parties (Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party) was in power in Meghalaya.

It appears that the regional parties of Meghalaya have proclaimed their commitment to the political ideals spelt out in the Constitution of India. The APHLC, for example, declares that the objects of the party shall be the well-being and the advancement of the people of Meghalaya and the establishment in the country, by peaceful and constitutional means, of a welfare state based on parliamentary democracy; to protect the political, economic, social and religious rights of the people and to play a constructive role in the affairs of the nation.²² It is interesting to note that the APHLC accepts India as a nation and expresses its commitment to the values and principles which lie at the root of India's post-British political set up. It must be admitted that the long struggle for statehood launched by the APHLC was by and large peaceful and within constitutional limits and

22. See Constitution of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference, p. 1.

moreover, the party showed its faith in parliamentary democracy by participating in the Assembly Elections ever since 1962. This is in sharp contrast with other regional movements like the Dravidian movement which were more violent and had separatist overtones.²³

The HSPDP also seems to make some idealistic commitments when it pledges to stand for the rights, justice, liberties and progress of the tribal people as well as justice to all as guaranteed by the Constitution of India. The party also promises to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.²⁴ A contradiction that emerges from the above statements of the HSPDP is that on the one hand, the party stands for justice to the tribal people and on the other, by invoking the Constitution of India, it seeks to promote justice to all. This begs the question, which is primary, justice for the tribal people or justice for all? 'Justice for all' certainly incorporates or embraces 'justice for the tribal

23. See literature on Dravidian movement such as Robert L. Hardgrave, 'The Riots in Tamilnadu' in Asian Survey, August 1965, and Duncan B. Forrester, 'The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation 1965' in Pacific Affairs, Spring, 1966.

24. See The Constitution of the Hill State People's Democratic Party, p. 1.

people' as well, but by mentioning them separately, the HSPDP has unwittingly assumed a conflict between the two which needs to be sorted out or defused. The party also affirms its loyalty to the Constitution of India and to the principles enshrined therein and this shows that the party is willing to function within the Constitutional framework and does not harbour any separatist ambitions.

The political programme of the PDIC does not contain any such commitment to ideals. The party merely vows to uplift the country, the people and the state with a strong administration.²⁵ The HPU promises to ensure social justice and democratic freedom in the State. The party further declares that it stands firmly for the establishment of democracy in the country under which every citizen shall have full freedom and liberty such as freedom of expression, association, religion, culture, language and the press. To this end, the party is willing to cooperate with the democratic forces in the country and also with the Union Government in the implementation of the national programmes directed at the advancement and the welfare of the people.²⁶ But the HPU's claim of upholding democracy

25. Constitution of the PDIC, op.cit.

26. Constitution of the HPU, op.cit. Also HPU Election Manifesto, op.cit.

does not sound very convincing because the demand for political reservation raised by regional parties including the HPU goes against the principle of democracy. It appears that neither social justice nor democratic freedom have been given a fair trial by the HPU or any other regional party. Hence, the question remains - what are the implications of this social justice and democratic freedom the HPU is talking about? If social justice implies absence of discrimination and the right of everybody in the society to have equal opportunities, Meghalayan society certainly does not present the picture of such a just social order, if viewed in the perspective of tribal-non-tribal relations. Of course, it must be admitted that class polarisation has not taken place in Meghalaya due to the absence of industries. But it appears that political parties like the HPU have not come up with any measure to bridge the differences and discriminations between various communities that persist in the socio-political set up of Meghalaya.

It may be noted that all the regional parties of Meghalaya claim to provide a good and efficient administration. The APHLC, for instance, pledged to provide clean administration. The party affirmed its commitment to provide a clean, strong and stable government in order to make the newborn state an instrument in the hands of the

people to achieve the ends for which the movement for a Hill State was launched.²⁷ It may be argued that the State, far from being an instrument in the hands of the people, has actually been an instrument in the hands of the elite for the furtherance of their interests. Our tabular data in Chapter III will substantiate this point. The HSPDP put forward before the Central Government its demand for bifurcation of the joint cadre between Meghalaya and Assam in respect of the services in the State.²⁸ This demand seems to have been made in order to consolidate the grip of the Government of Meghalaya over the bureaucracy. Separate cadre was also expected to improve the service conditions of the Officers as far as promotions on seniority basis were concerned. The PDIC promised to serve the State with a clean, honest, responsible and strong administration.²⁹ But such promise has remained on paper only because the party is yet to become a major force in the politics of Meghalaya to be able to form an independent government of its own. The HPU also pledges to provide a democratic, clean and effective administration.³⁰ But the party does not specify as to how it proposes to improve the administration or do

27. APHLC Manifesto, 1978, op.cit. Also see APHLC Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

28. HSPDP Manifesto, 1983, op.cit.

29. Constitution of the PDIC, op.cit.

30. HPU Election Manifesto, 1988, op.cit.

away with corruption. The only Government led by the HPU in 1990-91 was in power for a brief spell and Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh, the Chief Minister belonging to the HPU had to perform such a balancing act in holding the coalition of regional parties together³¹ that nothing significant was done to improve the quality of administration.

We may also examine the views of regional parties pertaining to district councils. The APHLC pledged to improve district councils³² implying thereby that their functioning is far from being satisfactory. The HSPDP is in favour of maintenance of the existing District Councils and their reorientation according to needs.³³ This indicates that the HSPDP appreciates the utility of the District Councils as an instrument of democratic decentralisation and political and financial autonomy for the tribal people. But the party's proposal for their reorientation suggests that there is scope for improvement in their functioning. In 1983, the HSPDP demanded more safeguards for the tribals in the State by having more powers for the district councils.³⁴ Unlike in 1972, the HSPDP did not appear to be

31. See Diptosh Majumdar, 'Tough Time for Meghalaya CM' in The Statesman, March 12, 1991, p. 16. Also see G.W. Lyngdoh, 'MUPP on verge of Collapse' in The Shillong Times, September 16, 1991, pp. 1 and 4.

32. APHLC Manifesto, 1978, op.cit.

33. HSPDP Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

34. HSPDP Manifesto, 1983, op.cit.

happy with the powers enjoyed by the district councils and urged for an increase in their powers, professedly to provide safeguards for the local tribals, but actually keeping in mind the interests of the emerging tribal elite: Such change of posture in 1983 without citing any convincing reasons can only be interpreted as an ascendance of chauvinism. There is no mention about district councils in the PDIC manifesto of 1987.³⁵ The HPU pledges to maintain and improve the District Councils,³⁶ but does not spell out the means for the purpose. A feeling has gradually gained ground in the political circles of Meghalaya that the District Councils have failed to fulfil the tasks for which they were created, viz., to function as truly autonomous bodies for the all round development of indigenous tribals. It appears that the regional parties have not been able to do much to improve the functioning of district councils apart from demanding more autonomy for these bodies.

Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Tribes in the Meghalaya Legislature is a sensitive issue which figures in the programmes of the regional parties. The HSPDP declared its support for the Thirty First Constitution Amendmend Bill which provided for extension of

35. The translated version of the Manifesto which was available to this scholar does not refer to this issue.

36. HPU Election Manifesto, 1988, op.cit.

reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the Union and State Legislatures.³⁷ The PDIC adopts a stiff posture in this regard when it demands that all the 60 seats in the Meghalaya Assembly should be reserved in favour of the tribals. The PDIC proposed that the Meghalaya Assembly should pass a resolution providing for 100% reservation for tribals.³⁸ The HSPDP and the PDIC have thus articulated the feeling of insecurity which seems to haunt the tribals. But the question arises - has the overwhelming presence of tribal members in the Meghalaya Assembly really helped the cause of tribals? On the other hand, to prevent the complete alienation of non-tribals in Meghalaya, a few seats in the Meghalaya Assembly could be kept open in order to provide the non-tribal minority with at least a nominal representation, without affecting the interests of tribals. There is no explicit mention about reservation in the political programmes of APHLC and HPU which suggests that the HSPDP and the PDIC have stolen the propaganda initiative on this issue.

Another sensitive issue taken up by the regional parties is the proposal for inclusion of certain areas into the existing territory of Meghalaya. While the APHLC

37. See Election Manifesto of the HSPDP, 1978.

38. PDIC Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

promises to continue efforts for the settlement of boundary disputes with Assam,³⁹ the HSPDP demands that the Sonapur area, the Jorabat-Khanapara-Basistha area, the Rani and Borduar Mawzas, the area cut off from Jaintia Hills and added to Mikir Hills vide Notification of the Government of Assam No. TAD/R/31/50/49 dated 13.4.51, the areas inhabited by the Garos in the Goalpara district of Assam, the Jaintia Parganas, the six thanas of the Garos and other areas in the South bordering Bangladesh. The HSPDP also suggested that the two hill districts of North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills be given an option to join Meghalaya, by a referendum.⁴⁰ The HSPDP seems to have resorted to a double standard while raising such territorial demands in the sense that it does not specify the criterion which should determine its claim for fresh territories. If habitation is the criterion on the basis of which the HSPDP demands certain areas of Goalpara district, the party is not justified in its demand for North Cachar and Mikir Hills districts because these are not predominantly inhabited by Khasis, Jaintias or Garos. It is also not clear whether the HSPDP has taken geographical contiguity or traditional boundary as the criteria. The demand for the Jorabat-Khanapara-Basistha area has already triggered a boundary

39. APHLC Manifesto, 1978, op.cit.

40. See HSPDP Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

dispute between the Governments of Meghalaya and Assam. The PDIC also wants the recovery of certain areas, which, according to it, belonged to Meghalaya. The party points out that Meghalaya has lost Blocks I and II of Jaintia Hills and some parts of Khasi Hills. The party alleges that there is encroachment by Assam in areas like Rambrai, Patharkhmah, Pilingkata, Byrnihat, Umwang. Langpih, Bari-dwa, Saitsama, Um Koiron and so on. In order to settle the boundary issue between Meghalaya and Assam, the Chief Ministers of the two States appointed the Chandrachud Committee which submitted its report to the Chief Ministers. The PDIC demands that the report should be made public soon.⁴¹ The party's demand for retrieval of disputed territories pending settlement by a delimitation commission sounds blatantly chauvanistic. The PDIC may have expected to derive some political mileage by raising the issue, but ironically, the HSPDP seems to have snatched the advantage as is evident from a comparatively better electoral mandate in its favour. This issue also figures in the political programme of the HPU. One of the aims and objectives of the party is to ensure the territorial integrity of the State of Meghalaya and to restore the State the rightful areas and those contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by the

41. PDIC Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

tribal people and to ensure social justice and democratic freedom in the State.⁴² In this regard, the HPU position seems to have been influenced by the HSPDP Constitution, but the party has not specified any criterion to determine the "rightful areas" belonging to Meghalaya. Objectively speaking, an unanimity of opinion on this issue is difficult to arrive at, in view of the divergent positions of the Governments of Meghalaya and Assam, since any territorial concessions in favour of one State is likely to harm the territorial interests of the other.

A novel issue raised by one of the regional parties, viz., the PDIC is regarding the introduction of inner line regulations in Meghalaya. By quoting the 1981 Census, the PDIC points out that the number of scheduled tribes in Meghalaya was only 1,076,345 out of the total Indian population of 800 million.⁴³ It must be mentioned, however, that the population ratio in Meghalaya is very much in favour of the indigenous tribes. To be precise, out of Meghalaya's total population of 1774778, Scheduled Tribes account for 1517927, whereas the number of others stands at 247779 and that of Scheduled Castes comes to a

42. See Constitution of the HPU, op.cit., p. 1.

43. See PDIC Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

meagre 9072.⁴⁴ In this scenario, the PDIC's argument for introduction of inner line regulations in Meghalaya to maintain the delicate demographic balance does not seem to be convincing. Moreover, the efficacy of inner line regulation itself is arguable. At the present stage of its development, Meghalaya needs some exposure to the world outside so that the State may move speedily along the path towards prosperity. The introduction of inner line regulations in Meghalaya at this stage may prove counter productive in the sense that such regulations are likely to hamper the process of development by restricting the flow of trained manpower so necessary for the State's speedy progress.

Apart from these basic issues raised in the political programmes of almost all the regional parties, there are a few other issues which find mention in the programmes of a particular regional party only. For instance, the APHLC promises to enact a law prohibiting defection of the elected representatives of the people.⁴⁵ This promise needs to be viewed in the light of a serious setback suffered by the party after November, 1976, when

44. See Census of India, 1991, as quoted in Table 1.06 (Population of Scheduled Castes/Tribes by District, 1991) of Pocket Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1994 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Meghalaya, Shillong, 1994).

45. APHLC Manifesto, 1978, op.cit.

the Sangma group had merged in the Congress (I). But APHLC's opposition to defection remains on paper only. Its leaders have continued to be as vulnerable to defection as those of other regional parties.

The HSPDP in its socio-political programme pledged to provide medical facilities in the form of free health services through charitable dispensaries, health centres and clinics; to provide protected drinking water to the people; intensify and extend town and country planning⁴⁶ and so on. Provisions of basic social services and extension of country planning promised by the HSPDP appear to be gestures to tribal people residing in the remote rural areas whereas intensification of town planning seems to have been promised keeping the urban voters in mind.

The HPU also pledges to promote a healthy moral and social life by making efforts towards eradication of social evils, to pay special attention to the development of the youths of Meghalaya in all spheres of activities including games and sports and to involve them in schemes and projects for the advancement of the people of the State.⁴⁷ Here, the HPU simply pays lip service to the moral goal of a better society, but does not spell out what efforts would

46. HSPDP Manifesto, 1972, op.cit.

47. See HPU Manifesto, 1988, op.cit.

be made to achieve this goal. Nor does the party specify which social evils it seeks to eradicate and how. The HPU also talks about the welfare of the youth, although it is difficult to imagine how this can be achieved without any programme for industrialisation which alone can open up the possibilities of new schemes and projects for the absorption of the youth.

Another issue which figures in the election manifesto of the HSPDP only is Centre-State relations. The party demands more autonomy for the State in different matters of administration through amendments of the Constitution of India.⁴⁸ But the HSPDP has not taken much initiative in this regard. This is evident from the fact that the party has not submitted any recommendations to the Sarkaria Commission.

It appears that all the regional parties have expressed their commitment to preserve the traditional institutions of the tribals. On this issue, the PDIC lays special emphasis in its manifesto. The party declares its resolve to strengthen institutions like Syiemship, Doloiship, Sardarship, Rangbah Shnong (Headman system), Durbar Hima (State Council), Durbar Raid (small body),

48. HSPDP Manifesto, 1983, op.cit.

Durbar Shnong (Local Durbar) and so on.⁴⁹ The party's professed enthusiasm in this regard indicates that the PDIC has sought to appease the traditional lobby, although the party's stand is marked by an element of conservatism in the realm of modern politics and in the context of the emergence of modern political institutions.

The PDIC also raises the issue of development of tribal culture and the customs and traditions of the people and suggests the setting up of financial foundations for the purpose. The party also urges the need for assistance to authors in their literary pursuits in order to immortalise the indigenous tribal culture.⁵⁰ PDIC's views on this issue emphasizes the ethnicity of regionalism in Meghalaya, thereby articulating a strong resistance towards assimilation of tribal culture in the ocean of pan-Indian culture and traditions. But it is not clear whether repeated assertion of the "protection of tribal culture" bogey is only an election gimmick and a political stunt or whether the PDIC is really interested in accomplishing this goal with a sincerity of purpose.

From the above discussion, it appears that the

49. See PDIC Manifesto, 1987, op.cit.

50. Ibid.

issues raised by the regional parties of Meghalaya can be broadly classified as those catering to the interests of the educated elite, those pertaining to rural masses and populist and chauvinistic issues. Provision of basic facilities like health, drinking water etc. and intensification of and extension of country planning promised by the HSPDP are gestures to rural masses. PDIC's proposal for introduction of inner line regulations in Meghalaya, extension of Meghalaya's territories beyond its existing boundaries proposed by HSPDP and PDIC and reservation of all seats of Meghalaya Legislative Assembly in favour of local tribals recommended by the PDIC seem to articulate chauvinistic sentiments. The regional parties have also taken up populist issues like preservation of tribal identity. It appears that some demands have been raised by regional parties primarily to enhance the interests of the educated elite. Reservation of all seats for tribals in the State Assembly, more authority for the State Government in the administration of the North Eastern Hill University, an increase in the powers of the District Councils and bifurcation of the joint cadre between Meghalaya and Assam to consolidate the hold of the elite over the bureaucracy seem to illustrate this point.

We may now take up an analysis of the support-

structure of regional parties on the basis of their electoral performance. In the General Elections of 1972, the APHLC made a clean sweep in all the three districts of Meghalaya, riding on the crest of a statehood wave.⁵¹ In the Assembly Elections of 1978, however, the APHLC suffered a reversal of fortunes, making its presence felt only in the urban and semi-urban constituencies of Shillong and Tura Sub-divisions, while it failed even to open its account in Ri Bhoi, Mairang and Nongstoin Sub-divisions. The party's tally showed a further downward trend in the 1983 General Elections, with its support receding in Jaintia Hills, Tura Sub-division of West Garo Hills and in East Garo Hills, although the party won its maiden seat in Mairang Sub-division of West Khasi Hills. In terms of actual percentage of valid votes polled by the APHLC, election statistics show that in 1972, the party polled the highest percentage of votes in Jaintia Hills (30.73%). In 1978, the support dwindled to 21.53% in Jaintia Hills. The party's next significant support-base was Shillong Sub-division where it polled 19.07% of valid votes. The APHLC's support in West Khasi Hills, when translated into actual electoral terms, stood at 11.29% of valid votes. In West

51. For information on APHLC's electoral performance, see Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1983.

Garo Hills and East Garo Hills, the party polled 14.37% and 15.38% of votes respectively. In 1983, the APHLC's support shrank further to 19.88% in Jaintia Hills. The party's support also dwindled in Shillong Sub-division (18.95%). But the APHLC made some breakthrough in Mairang Sub-division of West Khasi Hills where it secured 32.4% of valid votes. The party's show was impressive in Tura Sub-division where it mustered 19.05% of votes and in Mawkyrwat Sub-division of West Khasi Hills (18.94%).⁵² A look at the APHLC's performance in the three Assembly elections shows that the party's support has remained more or less consistent among the urban voters of Shillong and Tura. This seems to be in recognition of the APHLC's role in the achievement of statehood. As the literacy rate is very high in the urban areas,⁵³ the level of political consciousness also is likely to be higher among urban voters than among the rural electorate. It also appears that the highly educated tribals in the urban areas have grabbed the posts of doctors, engineers, lawyers, lecturers and gazetted officers in the period following statehood.⁵⁴ This implies

52. Ibid., pp. 50-52.

53. For instance, Shillong, with a population of 87,659 in 1971 recorded the highest percentage of literacy, viz., 68.16%. See Census of India 1971 (Meghalaya), Series 13, Part II A, General Population Tables published by Director of Census Operations, Meghalaya.

54. See Chapter III for tabular data which show a swelling in the number of doctors, engineers etc, among local tribals immediately after statehood.

that statehood has benefitted this educated urban elite to a great extent and it is, therefore, natural that this section has continued to support the APHLC as the chief architect of statehood. But the election manifestoes of the APHLC do not include any radical political programme to meet the rising expectations of the people in the rural areas. The party's support in the rural constituencies has, therefore, fluctuated from one election to another.

As far as the support-base of the HSPDP is concerned, we may tentatively identify a section of the tribal youth and student community, emerging tribal elite, and a section of educated intelligentsia represented by the community of primary school teachers as its potential supporters on the basis of its election manifestoes of 1972, 1978 and 1983. The party seems to have made an attempt to woo the rural masses through its promise of certain basic amenities for the rural areas. By raising chauvinistic demands of territorial expansion, the HSPDP seems to have evoked the support of a militant section of the tribal youth. But in terms of actual votes, the party's popularity has remained confined to a small section of voters in and around Shillong, while its support has remained more or less stable in Jaintia Hills. It is probable that the presence of a sizable number of non-

tribal voters in the urban constituencies of Shillong has led to a decline in the support for the HSPDP because the party's radical and uncompromising stand on issues concerning non-tribals may have dissuaded them to render support to the HSPDP. The HSPDP has also not been able to secure any support, whatsoever, from constituencies in Garo Hills where it contested elections for the first time in 1983, but drew a blank. Being a Khasi-Jaintia dominated party, the HSPDP does neither seem to have a strong organisational base in Garo Hills nor do the problems of Garo Hills figure much in the political programme of the HSPDP. The party appears to be fairly strong in West Khasi Hills and dominated the electoral scene in that district in the two consecutive elections of 1978 and 1983. To be precise, the HSPDP polled a total of 19,890 votes in the district, indicating the support of 25.07% of the total electorate.⁵⁵ It may be noted that the political programmes of the HSPDP in 1978 and 1983 did not contain any special promises for the rural and semi-urban constituencies of West Khasi Hills. But as we have observed in the previous chapter, the economic programme of the party had to offer a few things for the consumption of the people of these areas and therefore, the party's success in West Khasi Hills may

55. See Meghalaya Election Handbook, op.cit., p. 46.

be attributed more to its economic programme.⁵⁶ HSPDP's demands for continuing with reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the State Assembly, more powers for district councils and more authority for the State Government in the administrative affairs of the Central University seem to have been raised with a view to enhance the interests of the educated elite. In this regard, there appears to be a commonality between the APHLC and the HSPDP because both have sought to uphold the interests of the elite whose members constitute their own leadership.

Coming to an analysis of the support-structure of the PDIC, it may be noted that the party's promises to reclaim some areas from neighbouring Assam, to introduce inner line regulations, to try and deport illegal migrants and to widen admission facilities in favour of tribal students are gestures to the tribal youth and to the more militant sections of the tribal society. The party's pledges regarding the preservation of tribal culture and strengthening of traditional tribal institutions are likely to please the conservative and orthodox sections of the society, but this does not mean that the traditional elite necessarily renders support to the PDIC because all

56. See Chapter V for analysis of the HSPDP's electoral performance.

regional parties have come out with identical pledges. The PDIC manifesto does not make any promises to non-tribals. Nor does the party offer any assurance for the protection of the legitimate interests of the non-tribal minority. It may be noted that in spite of its promises to different sections of the tribal society, electoral achievements of the PDIC are insignificant. In the elections of 1978 and 1983, the party won a couple of seats in East Khasi Hills only. Even the support of the farmers in the Ri Bhoi area seems to have fluctuated.⁵⁷ Although the PDIC claims to enjoy the support of the farmers, in reality, the party is articulating the interests of the tribal elite. The party's outright demand for reservation of 100% seats for tribals in the State Assembly is a testimony to this fact. But the party has not been able to mobilize support on the basis of its ideology. The PDIC has also failed to translate its potential support into concrete votes. The impact of the PDIC on the regional politics of Meghalaya seems to have been eclipsed, to some extent, by the more dominant APHLC, HSPDP and HPU.

An examination of the HPU's election manifesto reveals that the party has sought the support of a militant

57. Ibid., for an analysis of the electoral performance of the PDIC.

section of the tribal society by bringing into limelight the contentious boundary issue involving Assam and Meghalaya. The HPU also seems to have explored the goodwill of a section of the educated intelligentsia represented by school and college teachers through its promise to improve their service conditions. In terms of actual electoral support, the HPU seems to have established more or less strong bases in Shillong, Tura and East Garo Hills, with the party polling 22.68%, 17.68% and 29.36% of valid votes respectively in these areas in the Assembly Election of 1988. The party registered a token presence in West Khasi Hills District by securing 27.08% of votes in Mawkyrwat Sub-division. The HPU also secured 1 seat each in Ri Bhoi Sub-division (13.56%), Sohra Sub-division (27.41%) and in Baghmara Sub-division (14.05%).⁵⁸ The above election statistics seems to indicate that the HPU is a predominantly urban party, with bases around Shillong and Tura, while the party has succeeded in obtaining some support in the peripheral semi-urban and rural areas. It is surprising that the HPU failed to open its account in Jaintia Hills, although it managed to secure 22.63% of valid votes in the district.⁵⁹ It appears that the HPU has

58. See Meghalaya Election Handbook, February, 1988, pp. 66 and 87.

59. Ibid., p. 66.

succeeded, to a certain extent, in translating the potential support of urban voters like school and college teachers and militant and ambitious sections of the tribal youth into concrete vote banks. But it needs to be remembered that the HPU has just completed a decade of political experience in Meghalaya. As a matter of fact, the party does not seem to have crystallized its support-base around specific areas and specific sections of the people. Perhaps it is too early to comment on the nature of its support, especially in view of the fact that the voters have not had much opportunity to judge the party during its brief tenure of office as one of the partners of Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party (MUPP) Coalition Government in 1990-91.

In the light of the above discussion, it may be observed that all the four regional parties of Meghalaya are apparently articulating regional grievances on different issues. But a thorough analysis reveals that by doing so, the regional parties have tried to serve some other purpose. Instead of upholding the interests of the region, viz. Meghalaya as a whole, or catering to the needs of all sections of the people within the region in question, the regional parties have sought to uphold the aspirations of the tribal educated elite. An elite began to

emerge in Meghalaya through the spread of western education introduced by Christian missionaries and this process culminated in the capture of important jobs and professions by members of this section. It seems that this elite is in the process of consolidating itself and the regional parties of Meghalaya are articulating the interests of this emerging elite. The political and economic programmes of the regional parties, therefore, reflect and sustain this phenomenon.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Regionalism is a global phenomenon which seems to have gained importance in recent times. It has assumed different forms in different parts of India. In its extreme form, it has manifested itself as a violent demand for secession of a particular region from the Union of India. While such demands relate to limited parts of India, regional sentiments have been expressed quite often in favour of demanding separate political and administrative units within the existing federal framework and also in the form of demand for decentralization of political power. As far as the situation in North East India is concerned, it appears that large sections of the people of this region have longstanding grievances against the policy followed by successive governments at the Centre regarding extension of various amenities, creation of infrastructures, fixing royalties of raw materials extracted from the region and processed elsewhere and so on.¹ These grievances against the Centre coupled with homogeneous cultural processes among some specific communities have strengthened the urge for autonomy and independent living which in turn has found

1. For discussion, see B.K. Roy Burman, "Points and Counter-Points in North East India" in Akhtar Majeed (ed). Regionalism: Development Tensions in India (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 72-74.

expression through the formation of political parties for the articulation of regional aspirations. In Meghalaya, for instance, a number of regional parties like All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC), Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC) and Hill People Union (HPU) have been formed to ventilate regional grievances. In view of this steady growth of regional parties in Meghalaya, it seems interesting to examine the nature of regionalism in Meghalaya as well as to examine the reaction of some of the national parties towards regionalism. In the preceding chapters we made an attempt to understand this phenomenon.

Chapter I has been divided into two sections. In Section I, an attempt has been made to define the concept 'region'. It has been found that an absolute definition of 'region' is not easy to arrive at because the issues raised by the leaders representing a particular territory or group of people seem to determine the size and shape of the region. In our conceptual analysis of regionalism, seven perspectives on regionalism have been analysed. These are - (1) Regionalism viewed as a manifestation of Centre-State relations; (2) Regionalism in contrast with sub-regionalism; (3) Regionalism as a subsidiary process of political integration; (4) Regionalism as a positive and

negative phenomenon; (5) Regionalism with political parties as major actors; (6) Regionalism viewed in terms of elite conflicts, and (7) Regionalism as the outcome of internal colonialism.

Scholars like Paul R. Brass² and Rasheeduddin Khan³ have viewed regionalism in terms of federalism and Centre-State relations. But regionalism is a complex phenomenon and to look at it either as a movement for greater autonomy or as a reaction against federal administrative imbalances is to confine oneself to the superficial aspects of the phenomenon and to oversimplify it. Another perspective emerges from the writings of Duncan B. Forrester⁴ who draws a distinction between regionalism and sub-regionalism purely in terms of the size of the area covered by the two. This position cannot be accepted because size of a region need not be the criterion for regionalism and regional movements. A study of regionalism in India has to take into account the formulations of Iqbal Narain who has given the broadest possible definition of regionalism that covers geographical, historico-cultural, economic, politico-

2. Paul R. Brass, "Pluralism, Regionalism and Decentralising Tendencies in Contemporary Politics" in Wilson and D. Dalton (eds), The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration (New Delhi, 1982), p. 260.

3. Rasheeduddin Khan, Federal India - A Design for Change (New Delhi, 1992), p. 44.

4. Duncan B. Forrester, "Subregionalism in India", Pacific Affairs, Vol. XLIII, No. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 5.

administrative and psychic factors.⁵ But this definition does not enable us to arrive at the general attributes of regionalism because of its diffused focus. This brings us to the definition offered by Kousar J. Azam which reflects an entirely negative perspective on regionalism in the sense that she looks upon regionalism as a manifestation of those residual elements which do not find expression in the national polity and national culture.⁶ Academic writings on regionalism also reflect a trend towards viewing political parties as catalysts of regional consciousness.⁷ It may be argued, however, that political parties are not always indispensable to the politics of regionalism because movements of various kinds are often found to be quite capable of articulating regional sentiments on behalf of the people of any region.⁸ Another perspective on regionalism seeks to explain this phenomenon in terms of elite conflict.⁹ But the argument that all regional demands emanate from elite

5. Iqbal Narain, "A Conceptual Analysis in the Indian Context" in Akhtar Majeed (ed), op.cit.

6. Kousar J. Azam, Political Aspects of National Integration (Meerut, 1984), pp. 167-168.

7. Lewis P. Fickett, Jr. "The Politics of Regionalism in India" in Pacific Affairs, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, Summer, 1971, p. 193.

8. Regional movements launched by All Assam Students' Union (AASU), All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (Not a full-fledged party at the outset), Telengana movement, Uttara Khand movement etc. illustrate this point.

9. M.L. Sharma, "Elite Conflicts, Regionalism and Compatibility Crisis: A Study of the Autonomy Movements in North East India" in Rama Kant (ed), Regionalism in South Asia (Jaipur, 1983).

conflict cannot be substantiated. A very significant approach towards regionalism has been developed by Michael Hechter and has come to be known as the 'Internal Colonial model'.¹⁰ Hechter's contention that regionalism is the outcome of real or perceived sense of 'Internal Colonialism' comes closer to the tentative definition of regionalism that we have tried to develop in course of our work. The essence of the internal colonial model is that the relationships between members of the core communities and the peripheral communities in a State are characterized by exploitation.¹¹ It is this real or perceived sense of exploitation that seems to lie at the core of regionalism. However, the perceptions of the elite being different in each regional context, it is not easy to arrive at an absolute and comprehensive definition of regionalism. In our tentative definition, we consider regionalism as an organized effort in recognition of the role of the regional elite in shaping regional demands through proper channels and using its hegemony for mass mobilisation. This elite seeks to assert the identity of the community it represents and negotiates with the Central political leadership to secure a better deal than what is available to it under the present arrangement.

10. Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (London, 1975).

11. For discussion, see Anthony H. Birch, "Minority Nationalist Movements and Theories of Political Integration" in World Politics, Vol. XXX, No.3, April, 1978, p. 326.

In Section II of Chapter I, we have taken up a detailed analysis of important regional movements all over India such as the Shiv Sena movement of Maharashtra, the Dravidian movement of Tamilnadu, the Punjab turmoil, the Jharkhand movement, the Assam movement and so on. It has been observed that regionalism has become an integral part of the Indian ethos and has been acquiring an ethnic dimension. The trend, it appears, will continue to grow as more and more ethnic and linguistic communities become conscious of their distinct identity and seek recognition as regional entities to preserve the same. This, we have seen throughout this study, does not however, totally nullify the internal colonization thesis. As is seen in Chapters II and III, emergence of an educated elite has been an important prerequisite for the articulation of regional demands. Such forces clamour for more autonomy within the existing political set up and desist from raising secessionist demands. Regionalism thus distinguishes itself from secessionism.

Chapter II begins with a historical account of the political situation prevailing in the hills of composite Assam in the pre-British days. The hills generally presented a picture of lack of political aspiration and consciousness until the British annexation exposed them to

the outer world. It was apparent that new social forces were emerging in the hills which consisted of an educated elite.¹² The emerging educated elite not only became politically conscious, but could also articulate their demands and grievances. This was the position in the hills when India became independent. After independence, the educated elite in the hills of greater Assam began to perceive a threat of domination by the non-tribals within the composite State. Although the aspirations of different tribal groups were not identical, the general need to dissociate themselves from Assam seemed to have been felt by the entire tribal leadership of the North East. This was due to the fact that the elite was no longer satisfied with the existing safeguards, but was interested in sharing political power. This aspiration for political power was articulated by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) which initially launched a struggle for a Hill State, but had to settle for a separate state for the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills only due to lack of support from the Lushai Hills and United Mikir and North

12. For details, See D.R. Syiemlieh, "Education, Elite and Politicisation in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills" in Ashish Bose, Tiplut Nongbri and Nikhilesh Kumar (eds), Tribal Demography and Development in North East India (Delhi, 1990). It may be noted that this elite comprised Western educated men and women some of whom were drawn also to the world of professions and business.

Cachar Hills. Then our analysis in Chapter II shows that fear of domination by the more advanced Khasis¹³ seems to have been an important factor that led to the rejection of the Hill State idea by the Mizos and the Kerbis. But more importantly, absence of an educated elite in these hill districts implied that articulation of political demands could not gain momentum at that stage of 'democratic' politics.

An examination of the nature of demands raised by the APHLC was followed by a discussion of the factors that led to the formation of three other regional parties in Meghalaya, viz., Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC) and Hill People Union (HPU). Divergence of thinking among regional leaders and their personal ambitions seem to have stood in the way of setting up a single, coherent regional platform in Meghalaya. Although the HPU was formed in response to the 'need for a strong regional party to provide a viable alternative to the national parties', there was a setback because a few leaders from the erstwhile HSPDP opted out of the HPU and continued with the

13. In this regard, we have cited educational statistics from Census of India reports to show higher literacy levels among Khasis which gave them an edge over other tribes of Assam.

HSPDP. It appears from the discussions in Chapter II that regional experiments in Meghalaya have not been very successful because the regional parties have proved their incapacity to mobilize enough support to retain power. Failure of the Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party (MUPP) Coalition of 1990-91 is a glaring illustration of this point.

Our observation in Chapter II has been that a new dimension has been added to regionalism in Meghalaya with ethnic identity assuming preponderance over regional identity. It has also been observed that regional parties in Meghalaya like those in other parts of the country are functioning strictly within the constitutional framework of India and no secessionist voices have been heard so far.

In Chapter III, we have tried to examine the responses of national parties towards the phenomenon of regionalism. In this connection, the views of the Congress (I) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) were taken into account primarily due to the fact that these two national parties have registered their participation in all the Assembly elections held so far in Meghalaya and they seem to have followings of political significance. In course of our analysis, we sought to examine whether regionalism is a threat to national integration, irrespective of the views

of national parties. Since the question of smaller nationalities is intricately connected with regionalism, we also examined the stand of the national parties on the nationality question. Lastly, as regionalism in Meghalaya is associated with the aspirations of 'tribals', it became necessary to examine whether national parties in Meghalaya view the interests of tribals as harmonious with those of non-tribals or not.

The Chapter began with the observation that there are two broad responses to regionalism, viz., that it is a divisive force and hence a threat to national unity¹⁴ and secondly, that assertion of regional identity need not be construed as a threat to national integration.¹⁵ The views of the Congress (I) on regionalism were examined in detail followed by an examination of the views of the MPCC (I). Similarly, the response of the CPI at the national level and that of the Meghalaya unit of the CPI were analysed separately. An important aspect highlighted in the Chapter is the pre-eminence of local tribals in the post-statehood period in Government service, particularly in Class I and

14. Paul R. Brass refers to this trend in his Language, Religion and Politics in North India (Delhi, 1975), p.5.

15. See A.K. Baruah, Social Tensions in Assam (Guwahati, 1991), p. 4. In fact, in India, both these perspectives have been presented strongly in contemporary social science literature. See, for instance, In Search of India's Renaissance, Vol. II (New Delhi, 1992), Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh.

Class II gazetted posts, in educational service, mainly in private and Government Colleges as well as in the field of P.W.D. contracts.¹⁶

It has been observed in Chapter III that the Congress (I) regards 'regionalism' as detrimental to the process of national integration. The Congress (I) also seems to favour centralization of power and is not sympathetic to demands for federal autonomy. However, there seems to exist some dichotomy between the Congress (I)'s stand at the national level and the MPCC (I) stand on the relationship between regionalism and nationalism. While the INC (I) dubs regional aspirations as anti-national, the MPCC (I) refuses to consider regionalism as contradictory to nationalism. As far as the CPI is concerned, it supports regional movements and other centrifugal forces, at least on paper. But in reality, the party's attitude towards certain autonomy movements such as the Gorkhaland movement marks a sharp contrast from its theoretical posture. The Meghalaya unit of the CPI seems to endorse the official views of the Central leadership on regionalism. It appears that the rise of regionalism poses a threat to the support-

16. The data in this regard has been generated from Meghalaya Government Gazettes and through information provided by the Office of the Chief Engineer (PWD) and by the Principals of prominent Colleges.

base of the Congress (I), thus forcing the party to be apprehensive about regional and centrifugal forces.

In Chapter IV, we have sought to analyse the responses of the regional parties of Meghalaya towards nationalism and national integration. In this connection, an examination of the concept of 'national integration' has been taken up. An attempt was made to analyse the official view of national integration in India with reference to the statements of national leaders expressed at the meetings of the National Integration Council. A general discussion of the views of major regional parties of India has been followed by an analysis of the reactions of the four regional parties of Meghalaya towards nationalism. An enquiry into the issue revealed that there are wide gaps between precepts and practices as far as the regional parties of Meghalaya are concerned.

We have observed in Chapter IV that while all the regional parties of Meghalaya have expressed their commitment to the unity and integrity of India, such commitment is neither a spontaneous response nor is it the product of an emotional attachment to the so called Indian 'nation'. On the other hand, their loyalty to the Indian Union is necessitated by expediency. The regional parties of Meghalaya will prefer to bargain with the Central

Government for more concessions for the tribal people of Meghalaya within India rather than campaign for an independent Meghalaya or opt for Meghalaya's alignment with any of the bordering States adjacent to Meghalaya because neither of these options offer any better prospects for the local tribals. It may be argued, therefore, that politics of regionalism in Meghalaya does not pose any immediate threat to the Indian State.

In Chapter V, an attempt has been made to analyse the support-structures of the regional parties of Meghalaya on the basis of the economic programmes of these parties. In the absence of class polarisation in Meghalaya, it has not been possible to identify the social bases of these parties in terms of 'class'. But the economic programmes of regional parties show their urban or rural bias, agrarian or industrial orientations, concern for or callous attitude towards unemployed youth, concern for or neglect of border constituencies and so on. Apart from an examination of the election manifestoes of the regional parties, budgetary allocations made by Finance Ministers belonging to regional parties as well as general discussions on the budgets have been taken up for an understanding of actual party positions on economic issues.

Our contention in Chapter V has been that none of

the regional parties of Meghalaya has been able to formulate radical economic measures and policies because in the absence of an organized proletariat in Meghalaya, no demand for such policies has been raised. But the leadership of all these parties is composed of an educated elite and therefore, the programmes followed by these parties uphold the interests of this elite. It seems that the elite is not interested in the investment of capital because it does not possess capital. It follows, therefore, that this elite cannot identify itself with the national bourgeoisie since it does not have a bourgeoisie character. The primary interest of the elite seems to lie in the public sector jobs. Protests voiced by the APHLC against the Assam Official Language Bill on the ground that it will restrict the access of the hillsmen to Government Services should lend credence to our argument.¹⁷ Jobs in the Government sector being the most important consideration for the elite, it has been persuading the Government to give preference to local tribals in this sector by declaring Khasi as the official language. In this context, we may argue that regionalism in Meghalaya can perhaps be understood only in terms of the protection of Khasi language and identity. The ultimate objective of the educated elite leading the regional parties seems to be the

17. See Chapter II for discussion on this issue.

creation of a Khasiland where the Khasi identity can be preserved and protected.¹⁸ If regionalism in Meghalaya is thus viewed in terms of ethnic identity, it may be pertinent to refer to a Report on the attitude of the middle class in Assam to the Kerbi and Bodo demands for political autonomy where it has been observed that while the first generation literates among the Assamese middle class are absolutely intolerant about such demands, the second generation literates are more tolerant and the third generation literates are so liberal and broadminded as to acknowledge the need for safeguarding the identity of these ethnic groups.¹⁹ Whether the same observation applies to the Khasi society is a question that needs to be examined through a survey in the future.

In Chapter VI, the support-structures of the regional parties of Meghalaya have been examined on the basis of their political programmes in terms of issues like preservation of the cultural identity of the tribals, problem of influx in Meghalaya, education, interests of

18. Formation of the Bri U Hynniewtrep State Movement for the creation of a new state for the Khasis and Jaintias is a step in this direction. For details, see G.W. Pohti, "Vote for Change and Vote for a New State" in The Shillong Times, March 10, 1997, p. 1.

19. See, Smita Khaund, "Middle Class and Ethnic Issues in Assam: A Study of the Attitude of the Lawyers of Guwahati City to the Kerbi and Bodo Demands for Political Autonomy", Unpublished Report on the Project carried out under the Junior Short Term Fellowship Scheme of the Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, March, 1994.

non-tribals, district councils, problems of youth, reservation for tribals, territorial expansion of Meghalaya and innerline regulations. We have noticed striking similarities in the political programmes of all the four regional parties. It appears that the issues raised by the regional parties can be broadly classified as those catering to the interests of the educated elite, those pertaining to rural masses and populist and chauvinistic issues. Our analysis of the election statistics shows that the APHLC has a strong urban orientation while the HSPDP is basically a Khasi-Jaintia dominated party with strong support in West Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. The PDIC raises some chauvinistic demands such as reclamation of some areas from Assam, introduction of innerline regulations and 100% reservation of seats for tribals in the State Assembly which are likely to endear the party to the militant sections of the tribal society. But in terms of actual electoral support, the PDIC has fallen far behind the three other dominant regional parties. It appears that the HPU has succeeded in capturing the support of urban voters to a certain extent, but it is premature to comment on the party's support since the HPU has entered the political scene of Meghalaya much later than the APHLC, HSPDP and the PDIC.

We have observed in this Chapter that all the regional parties of Meghalaya are articulating the interests of the tribal educated elite through their political and economic programmes. It may be noted that these parties have expressed their commitment for the 'protection and preservation of tribal identity'. But in reality, each of these parties have sought to extract propaganda mileage over its rivals by raising such slogans. Their political programmes contain a number of pious pronouncements, but the regional parties lag behind when the question of implementing their programmes arises. It appears that the leadership of regional parties suffer from a sense of insecurity vis-a-vis the national elite. This makes them protective of their own distinct interests, even though they pay lip service to the slogan of 'national integration'.

In view of the above, it may be observed that regionalism in North East India has assumed an ethnic dimension. This implies that more and more ethnic groups and communities in this part of India led by their respective elite have been asserting their rights as regional entities who seem to perceive a threat to their identity and seek to protect the same by trying to extract as many concessions as possible from the Central political authorities. It is this process of bargaining with the

Centre for a better deal which appears to be associated very often with the politics of regionalism. To sum up, it may be argued that in order to achieve a genuine political integration of India, it is essential to appreciate the regional aspirations articulated by the elite of different ethnic groups and communities in India. An understanding of regionalism in India, therefore, will require an enquiry into these processes.

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APPENDIX 1

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH SHRI D.D. LAPANG, CONGRESS (I)

PRESIDENT, ON 3RD JANUARY, 1991, IN SHILLONG

Q.1. What do you mean by 'regionalism'? How do you look upon the activities of regional parties in Meghalaya?

Ans. Regionalism comprises a certain region and certain political thinkers' thought of the well-being of their own region which in the national context falls under a narrower circumference. In Meghalaya, we have got a number of regional parties. But these regional parties do not have the proper ideology, programme or policy. Mostly, they thrive on issues which reflect a negative attitude such as communal tensions and survival which are not very acceptable in the national context.

Q.2. What do you think, are the reasons for the popularity of regional parties? Do you think that the national parties have failed to protect regional interests?

Ans. Regional parties are popular because they try to propagate the identity of certain communities. By that, they do not meet the requirement under the ambit of the Constitution of India where everybody has got a right to survive anywhere in India. Even the regional parties are not true to their slogans because they believe that they alone can serve the interests of the people of the region. But actually they cannot serve these interests properly without the national outlook.

I do not think that the national parties have failed to protect the regional interests. Meghalaya could not be brought into being by regional parties without the support and cooperation of national parties. The national parties of Meghalaya have already indicated their concern about the identity of the tribal people of Meghalaya. It was not the regional parties which demanded for the inclusion of many special facilities for the tribals in the Constitution. For instance, Section 475 in the Constitution (encouragement of tribal students through special scholarship in educational activities) and the Sixth Schedule were included in the Constitution long before the coming into

being of the regional parties. They came up only when they demanded a separate state. The Congress at that time included in the Constitution all the provisions for the existence, identity and well-being of the minorities like the tribal people in the North East, including Meghalaya. So, it is absolutely wrong to say that the national parties have failed to protect regional interests. The INC supported the hill state. India is a land of diversity where many states have come up and many more will come up. Such states allow the people to grow according to their own genius. But the communal feeling should not be there. We want the people of Meghalaya to thrive and succeed according to their own genius.

Q.3. What is your party's stand on the recent tribal-non-tribal divide in Meghalaya?

Ans. In Meghalaya, non-tribals have existed from the very beginning. There was no clash or communal tension. But in course of time, population started increasing. Shillong has become very much congested. There is lot of influx. As compared to the non-tribals, the performance of the tribals in the economic field is much below expectation. Unemployment has become acute. There is a feeling of exploitation by non-tribals in business. The system of benami also is there. I feel that the concerned authorities, viz., the District Council should have regulated business from the very beginning through proper licensing. There is also communication gap between the tribals and non-tribals. But this does not mean that tribals and non-tribals cannot work together. In Laban, for example, all the agitations and law and order problems could not make much of an impact. This is because the people of Laban have bridged the gap through social understanding and a sense of responsibility for co-existence. But the social contact is missing, for example, in Mawprem. The tribals are suspicious that non-tribals are harbouring foreign nationals. There is also the problem of influx. There should be a common platform where the tribals and non-tribals can meet together, perhaps through social and musical programmes, intelligence test etc. At the same time, the Government should do something about the problem of unemployment. The non-tribals are also frustrated. Thousands of them pass out from Colleges and Universities. But their job prospects are limited. Thus, frustration among both tribals and non-tribals create a lot of bitterness. There should be some permanent solution.

Q.4. Do you regard regionalism as a legitimate political ideology? Is it contrary or complementary to nationalism?

Ans. Regionalism cannot survive on its own. Regionalism is good if it can project the problems, the desire, anxiety and hope of the people. But this can be done only in the national context by the national party. No secluded state or party can survive alone.

Whether regionalism is contradictory with nationalism or not depends on the situation. In Meghalaya, I feel that the intentions of the regional parties are good, but they cannot implement their well-intentioned policies. They do not have the national outlook which is embraced under the national parties. The regional party in Meghalaya, viz., the APHLC fought for the hill state. But the moment they achieved it, they met Mrs. Indira Gandhi for poll adjustment. They offered 4 seats to the Congress candidates and decided to work with the Congress at all levels. Thus, the regional parties in Meghalaya are helpless without the national parties.

Q.5. Are your party's national commitments a hindrance to its commitments at the state or regional level?

Ans. A strong and firm centre can discipline any state or party. The states need central guidance. A strong centre is needed in India without which there will be chaos and law and order problems. If the Centre is not able to control the states, innocent people will be victimised. A weak Centre like V.P. Singh's Government can create confusion in the states due to lack of direction.

Q.6. What is your party's stand on the protection of tribal ethos and traditional tribal mode of life?

Ans. The Congress wants to mete out justice, to have equality and to see that every section of people, big or small, major or minor should find a place to survive and thrive properly. The Indian Constitution has got sufficient provisions to ensure that the minorities are protected. The ideology of the Congress is to see that the weakest sections of the community shall get better protection. The provisions of the Sixth Schedule have not been utilised to the maximum, with regard to the making of laws, rules and regulations. We would like to see a strong District Council with very strong, capable representatives. Then only the Sixth Schedule will be utilised in its letter and spirit.

Q.7. Do you support or oppose the establishment of industries in Meghalaya?

Ans. We do not oppose the establishment of industries. There is an apprehension in Meghalaya that industries will result in influx from outside the State. But industry is a must because Government Offices cannot accommodate all the people. Industries should be agro-based and forest-based and the local tribals should have proper training to enable them to man the industries themselves. We also support the establishment of railway lines upto Byrnihat. Railways will create lot of opportunities for the businessmen, the cultivators and the farmers by facilitating the export of their produce. But in the setting up of any industries or taking up of projects, the population structure should be maintained at all costs.

Q.8. What, do you think, are the causes for the emergence of regionalism?

Ans. A narrow outlook makes some regional parties to grow, but they cannot thrive. The APHLC fought for the hill state, but disintegrated thereafter. HSPDP, PDIC and various factions of the HPU have emerged, all of which are in the Government and the performance of the Government led by regional parties is there for all to see. The Congress, in spite of being a national party has got a regional outlook and hence regional parties are no longer necessary.

Q.9. Is your party satisfied with the Centre-State relations existing in India? If not, what are your suggestions for restructuring these relations?

Ans. The Central Government shall consider the process of decentralisation of power. The Centre should leave the States alone in the matter of collection of revenues, extraction of minerals etc. There should be some financial and administrative autonomy for the States without losing sight of the fact that the Centre should have the authority to supervise and to correct the wrongs committed by the State Government.

APPENDIX 2

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH SHRI PRAFULLA MISHRA, VETERAN
LEADER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA, MEGHALAYA UNIT, ON
JANUARY 4, 1991, IN SHILLONG

Q.1. What do you mean by 'regionalism'? How do you look upon the activities of regional parties in Meghalaya?

Ans. The term 'regionalism' has been wrongly used to denote the narrow interests of a particular group of a particular area. India is a multinational State. Every region is the historical homeland of various nationalities or ethnic groups which comprises the Indian nation. During the struggle for independence, various regional groups came together to fight against Colonialism. For example, Khuda-e-Khidmatgars joined the Indian National Congress, but retained their own identity. Thus, the I.N.C. became an united front of various segments of the population of the country. Championing the cause of a particular ethnic group should not be branded as 'regionalism' because India being a homeland of various nationalities, the rights of every segment of the population must be guaranteed and this alone will ensure the unity of India. Regional parties (not a very appropriate term) in Meghalaya like their brothers in the rest of the country champion the cause of their own people, strive to safeguard their identity as small nationalities and to ensure that they may develop according to their own historical tradition and genius.

Q.2. What do you think, are the reasons for the popularity of regional parties? Do you think that the national parties have failed to protect regional interests?

Ans. The regional parties get popularity because they champion the cause of the region which all-India parties sometimes fail to understand. But the national parties also take up the cause of the region. Thus, the CPI, the Congress and others joined hands to fight against the 'Grouping Scheme' in the interest of Assam. Again, the leftist parties like the CPI, the RCPI and the PSP jointly fought for the establishment of a refinery in Assam.

Q.3. What is your party's stand on the recent tribal-non-tribal divide in Meghalaya?

Ans. The Garos, the Khasis and the Jaintias thought that all their problems would be solved after attaining statehood. In reality, they got the political freedom, but are far from getting the economic freedom. They were nowhere in the field as far as trade and industry are concerned. But during this period, money has flown from the Centre and many developmental works have been taken up in Meghalaya. So a rising trading community has developed in Meghalaya. Here, the tribals find the non-tribal traders as their rival. This is the crux of the problem. The local tribals should be given the first preference to carry on trade and business.

Q.4. Do you regard regionalism as a legitimate political ideology? Is it contrary or complimentary to nationalism?

Ans. The legitimacy of regionalism does not depend on personal likes and dislikes. One should not try to bypass the objective reality. Sometimes, regionalism is complementary to nationalism. But, at times, it is also contradictory. Regionalism in Meghalaya is not contrary to nationalism. Mr. B.B. Lyngdoh, the APHLC leader, clearly declared that "Ours is a regional party with a national outlook". The Naga people's fight for independence is not regionalism.

Q.5. Are your party's national commitments a hindrance to its commitments at the State or regional level?

Ans. No. I quote from the party's programme on the tribals. "It is common knowledge that vast tracts of tribal areas are spread throughout the length and breadth of our country, that the people living in those areas are most backward politically, economically, socially and culturally and they are now becoming conscious of their wretched state of affairs and want them to be improved. Unless an all-sided improvement takes place in their position, the advancement of our country suffers greatly. And hence the national democratic government will take measures for radically improving the status of the tribal people. The tribal areas inhabited by the tribal people will be given regional autonomy as parts of the present states comprising the Indian Union or the status of States as component units of the Indian Union like Nagaland depending on the stage of development, consciousness and other conditions prevailing

in the respective tribal areas. Liberal financial and technical assistance will be given to the people of these areas to help them to discard the system of shifting cultivation and take to settled cultivation... Industries and communications will be developed in these areas to provide tribal people with the values of living.... The occupation of the land of the tribal people by outside vested interests will be prohibited. The tribal people will be allowed to utilize forest produce freely. Trading Cooperatives of the tribal people will be organized to save them from the loot of the rapacious traders... The tribal people will be assisted to develop their culture and language. They will be provided with free education and medical facilities with a view to improve their cultural and health conditions." From this, it is clear that the party stands for the rights of the various people. We support the Assam Accord. In certain situations, the CPI failed to take the correct line and was isolated. The CPI fought for the establishment of the linguistic states. The CPI is for the establishment of Gorkhaland. Every nationality or ethnic group, big or small, must be given some political rights in his or her husband. Without that, there cannot be Indian unity. This is the clearest party programme.

Q.6. What is your party's stand on the protection of tribal ethos and traditional tribal mode of life?

Ans. Small tribal people have got the right to develop according to their history, tradition, culture and their own genius. They should be given safeguards against migration from outside. The problem has taken an acute turn in Tripura due to unchecked migration. The customs and traditions of the tribal people should be preserved and not diluted.

Q.7. What is your party's stand on the establishment of industries in Meghalaya?

Ans. Meghalaya cannot have big industries due to topography and communication difficulties leading to rise in the cost of production. The CPI called upon the Government of Meghalaya to select some industries and send the local boys and girls for necessary training to man the industries. But it has fallen in deaf ears.

Q.8. What do you think, are the causes for the emergence of regionalism?

Ans. India is a multinational state and there is uneven development in the country. After independence, more

and more backward people who were not in the social and political map of India so long have come up and are asserting their rights which is very natural. One should not be afraid of these developments by calling it 'regionalism'.

Q.9. Is your party satisfied with the Centre-State relations existing in India? If not, what are your suggestions for restructuring these relations?

Ans. The CPI is demanding for a long time the restructuring of Centre-State relations in order to give more powers to the states. Though India is federal in form, it is unitary in spirit. The signing of Mizoram Accord, Nagaland Accord, Assam Accord, Punjab Accord, Gorkhaland Accord etc. show that in order to maintain the federal character of the State, some accords will have to be signed with different ethnic groups of the country. The Government of India will be forced to take a pragmatic view of the situation prevailing in the country and to give certain rights to different ethnic groups.

APPENDIX 3

**ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH SHRI S.D.D. NICHOLS-ROY, APHLC
GENERAL SECRETARY, IN SHILLONG, ON 8TH JANUARY, 1991**

Giving a background of how he came into the political scene, Mr. S.D.D. Nichols-Roy recalls that his father, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy was one of the leaders of the hill people from the early 1920s. He was elected to the Legislative Council and was taken into the Cabinet by the British Governor in 1928. Later on, he joined the Indian National Congress which represented the main group fighting for independence. When the British Government came up with the proposal of a 'Crown Colony' linking all the hill areas directly under Britain, his father rejected the idea outright. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy also opposed the move by some Khasi native states to join Pakistan on grounds that Pakistan had become a theocratic, Muslim State, where the hill people who either have their own religion or are Christians would be more or less second class citizens. He opted strongly in favour of joining India. He also formed a party called the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. After independence, J.J.M. Nichols-Roy could not get the type of Administration that he felt was required for the hill areas. Although Nichols-Roy had a good rapport with Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam, he could not get along well with Bishnuram Medhi, the next Chief Minister. The Tribal Areas portfolio was not given to Nichols-Roy as was expected. This created a rift between the Assamese leadership and the tribal leadership. It was also felt by some hill leaders that the district council administration in the hill areas was not working well. The idea of the hill state was slowly gaining momentum. But the States Reorganisation Commission rejected the idea of the hill state. Nichols-Roy was now forced to either give up the hill state idea or resign his ministership. He finally resigned from the Cabinet and also from the Congress and concentrated on reorganising his own party, viz., the Khasi-Jaintia Conference. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy died in 1960 following which S.D.D. Nichols-Roy was persuaded to join politics. It was at this stage that the Assamese language movement generated a lot of controversy and all the parties in the hill areas came together to discuss the strategy in the face of the language movement. In July, 1960, Nichols-Roy joined the APHLC which was a form of regional parties

like the Mizo Union, the E.I.T.U., the People's Conference of North Cachar Hills and the district units of the Congress Party. Nichols-Roy was made the General Secretary. The first attempt was to prevent the imposition of Assamese as the sole official language of the State of Assam. After the third Conference of the APHLC, its leaders met the Prime Minister to make it clear that they would like to be separate from Assam if Assamese was going to be the sole official language of the State. The APHLC tried to involve all the parties including the Congress on the basis of an all-Party approach to the need of this region. But the Congress withdrew from the hill state movement accepting the Scottish pattern of autonomy which was rejected by the APHLC. The APHLC thus became the main regional party in the hills and was recognised as such by the Election Commission of India.

Q.1. What do you mean by regionalism?

Ans. We want to protect the integrity, the cultural identity, the rights and privileges and interests of the people of this region. In 1962, the APHLC decided to contest the Assembly Election on the hill state issue following which the elected members would resign to show that they did not want to be part of Assam. So, the APHLC used the election as a referendum for the hill state. The APHLC got the support of 62% of the voters and won 9 seats. The date for the resignation of the MLAs was fixed on October 24, 1962, a significant date on which the Assam Language Act was passed. Meanwhile, China attacked India on October 20, 1962, and hence, the political impact of the resignation of APHLC MLAs was not felt much because the country was at war. The resignation took place as scheduled, but only 5 out of 9 MLAs resigned. Nevertheless, the Government of India did pay attention to the demand of the APHLC for the creation of a separate state.

Q.2. What exactly do you mean by the protection of cultural identity of the people?

Ans. It is a common term used in recent times to ensure that the culture of the people, i.e., their livelihood, their ways of looking at things etc. are preserved. India is composed of different ethnic groups each of which has its own identity. They were brought politically under the map of India although they are different from one another. The APHLC's concept of India is that there are so many differences that we cannot have a nation of one culture, of one language, of one ethnic group. The party accepts this

multiplicity of different groups, each having a part to play, each having its own identity and yet contributing to the national well-being.

During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, it was strongly felt that each state would be autonomous, deriving its powers from the State List. But this federation concept has been eroded. Central control over the states through monetary control, collection of taxes and distribution of funds through the Finance Commission and the Planning Commission reflect centralising tendencies. In addition, the Congress which was the main party in the Centre and in the states sought to decide everything at the Central level. Therefore, it is necessary to have a party at the state level which would look after the special interests of the people of the state. A good federal structure is one in which the regional parties look after their own states and at the Central Government level, they join hands with national parties.

Q.3. What are your views on the interests of non-tribals? Do you think that these interests are contradictory to the interests of tribals?

Ans. In its 3rd Conference, the APHLC declared that it was demanding the creation of a separate state for the hill areas of Assam where the interests of non-tribals would be fully protected. When the APHLC was running the administration during 1970-1976, there existed a good relationship between tribals and non-tribals. But in recent years, the situation seems to have changed. The interests of tribals and non-tribals need not clash, but they do clash because the land system in the tribal areas is different and the District Councils regulate the purchase and sale of land. Trade by a non-tribal is also regulated. But in the long run, the idea is that both the tribal and the non-tribal have their own parts to play.

Q.4. What is your party's stand on the question of national integration? Do you think regionalism and nationalism are contradictory or complementary?

Ans. We have always held the view that Meghalaya should be part of the nation. We are in favour of national integration as a concept and in practice. But other parts of the nation should not impose their will, their identity, their culture, their language and ways of life on anybody else. One can certainly be a Khasi and an Indian at the same time. Interests of the region should fall in line with those of the nation and vice-versa.

Q.5. Is your party satisfied with the Centre-State relations existing in India?

Ans. We have not gone for any restructuring of such relations. But the general feeling of the party is that there should be some improvement because the federal idea seems to have been eroded.

Q.6. Has the Centre treated Meghalaya at par with other states of India or has it sought merely to exploit its resources?

Ans. The Centre has not tried to exploit the resources of Meghalaya. We demand private partnership in developing our state because we do not have the financial resources or the technical and business management expertise.

Q.7. Do you feel that Central grants for developmental purposes have been properly utilised in Meghalaya?

Ans. Central grants have been utilised sometimes and sometimes not due to mismanagement, misutilisation and corruption. One problem is that the funds are not provided until at the fag end of the year. As a special invitee to the Planning Board, I am trying to tackle this problem along with other members.

Q.8. Does your party support or oppose the establishment of industries? What is your party's programme for bringing about economic development?

Ans. Our party does not oppose the establishment of industries per se. But industries should provide employment to the people of the region. The cement factory in Cherrapunjee which is basically a public sector enterprise with some private shares is, in fact, the biggest enterprise in Meghalaya. The Government of Meghalaya inherited it from Assam as a sick industry. The factory gradually started functioning well, but it has not been able to show profits. We are aware of this and particularly in view of lack of trained manpower, we would like to adopt a policy of slow industrial development. During the APHLC's first tenure in office, an industrial estate was set up at Byrnihat with the expectation that the products would easily reach the market at Gauhati and other parts of India. But after some industries were set up, it was found that the young people of Shillong were unwilling to take up jobs at Byrnihat because of its hot climate. The local people, majority of whom were farmers, worked in the fields

during most parts of the year and could at best be casual labourers in the factory. The employees came mostly from outside the State and thus industrial development did not mean any employment to the people of the state. The site for the industrial estate was eventually shifted to Barapani and some youths of Shillong have been employed there.

Q.9. Is there any specific issue on which your party's stand is radically different from other regional parties?

Ans. No. That is why the APHLC came together with the HSPDP to form the HPU which was expected to be the main regional party and other smaller parties would join hands. But that process has not yet been completed.

Q.10. What is the nature of your supporters?

Ans. Our supporters are from all levels of the society - rural and urban. Among the farming communities in the rural areas, certain constituencies are very much in favour of the regional parties.

Q.11. What is your party's stand on the recent tribal-non-tribal divide?

Ans. We are very sad about what happened in August, 1990, that suddenly erupted into a division between tribals and non-tribals. My colleagues in the Y.M.C.A. convened a meeting to bring together people of goodwill of all communities to bring about peace and good relations. It is a few anti-socials in all communities who create the problems. In due course, we hope that some forums, not necessarily at the government level alone, are important where some of the thinking people of the different communities of Shillong would discuss ways and means to bring about better relations among the people of this State.

APPENDIX 4

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH SHRI MILTON SANGMA,
HPU PRESIDENT, ON 20TH MARCH, 1991, IN SHILLONG

Q. 1. How far have you succeeded in unifying the regional movement in Meghalaya?

Ans. HPU and HSPDP are not yet completely united. Some remnants of the HSPDP are still there led by Mr. Hopingstone Lyngdoh. But the bulk of the HSPDP is now in the HPU. The HPU has extended invitation to the PDIC as well. In the last Lok Sabha election, we had jointly sponsored Prof. G.G. Swell. But when he was defeated, we had sponsored his candidature to the Rajya Sabha. We are working in the Assembly together with the decision that before the end of 1991, there should be one regional party. The HSPDP faction headed by Mr. Hopingstone Lyngdoh is also a party to this decision.

Q.2. What do you mean by 'regionalism'? What major regional interests of Meghalaya your party would like to protect?

Ans. By the term 'regionalism', I understand that our political activities will be mainly confined to the state level and will be aimed at looking after the interests of the state in cooperation with the Centre, because Meghalaya depends entirely on Central resources.

First of all, my party would like to preserve and protect the identity of the tribal people here. Secondly, it would also like to look after the interests of other people living permanently in the state, so that the tribal people will not be exploited by people coming from outside.

Q.3. What exactly do you mean by 'protection of cultural identity' of the people?

Ans. Protection of cultural identity means to preserve the culture, traditions, customs of the people because if unlimited influx is allowed, there will be a change in the population structure and their culture and economic interests will be affected. Economic protection also is to be given to the tribals and to other people who are permanent residents of the state, especially those who have been living here even before the British came or came here with the arrival of the British to work in offices. But they will have to cooperate with the tribals so that together, they can take measures in order that they will not be swamped by outsiders.

Q.4. What are your views on the interests of non-tribals in Meghalaya? Do you regard these interests as contradictory to the interests of tribals?

Ans. My personal view as well as the view of the HPU is that those non-tribals who have been residing permanently in the state should be given proper attention. In fact, there is now about 10% reservation for non-tribals. For admission to colleges, first preference will be given to tribals, then come permanent residents of the state and lastly, the tribals from other states and then general. This is the order of priority. So, the non-tribals also should have some share in the economic and other facilities in the state.

Q.5. How do you account for the recent tribal-non-tribal divide? How can such problems be solved?

Ans. It is very unfortunate that these things happen. Disappointment among the tribal youth is partly responsible for this. Meghalaya has now started facing the unemployment problem. Many of the tribals do not get admission in the Colleges and Schools. Secondly, there is the political factor. Some of the students want to go for politics. Some politicians are also behind this, leading to a number of arrests.

The Government can do quite a lot to bring about peace with the youth of the state. The Government will have to create good opportunities for their future. Academic activities should be given a boost. Commerce college and other technical institutions should be opened here. The polytechnic should be upgraded. An agricultural college should be opened. With the availability of more facilities, many of the youths can be absorbed in them. This is one way of pacifying the youths. Even then, there will be some anti-social elements in all societies. They cannot be ruled out.

Q.6. What is the position of your party on the question of national integration? Do you regard regionalism and nationalism as complementary or antagonistic to each other?

Ans. We are for national integration. Where else will the tribals of Meghalaya go? On one side is Bangladesh, on the other side are China and Burma. It is unthinkable that they will join with any of these countries. In 1930s, there were some British officials like H.A. Hutton, the then

Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Reid and others who drafted the Scheme of a Crown Colony, uniting the hills of Assam with Burma and then bring them directly under the administration of the British Crown. In 1988, I happened to visit the India Office Library in London where I came across letters from Garo leaders that they did not want the Crown Colony arrangement. After the partition of 1947, there is no question of going to the other side. In the Khasi Hills, only the Syiem of Nongstoin wanted the Khasi Hills to go to East Pakistan. Except that, the rest are with India. When we are in India, we are naturally interested in national integration. But in the name of integration we do not want assimilation. It should be like the Moghul-Garden where many flowers bloom with different colours and with different shapes. Within the Garden, we want every kind of flower to grow and bloom.

Regionalism and nationalism are not antagonistic. We are also Indian nationals. But our priority is the interests of the people at the state level. We also want to play a role at the national level in supporting the cause of unity, integration and integrity of the country. These two are complementary.

Q.7. Is your party satisfied with the Centre-State relations existing in India? If not, what are your suggestions for restructuring these relations?

Ans. My party is not completely satisfied with the existing Centre-State relations. Our stand is that there should be some modification in the State-Centre relations and also State-District relations. Some of us feel that there should be a direct funding of money from the Centre to the districts - that is, district councils. Otherwise, it gets blocked at the state level. The district councils receive the money sanction for the development projects only at the eleventh hour as a result of which they cannot utilise the money. Of course, for direct funding of district councils, some changes in the Constitution will have to be brought about.

Q.8. Do you think that the provisions of the Sixth Schedule are adequate?

Ans. So far as we are concerned, these are adequate. To be frank, although politically, we may say these are not adequate, from the academic and practical point of view, I feel that the District Councils have not been able to manage even those powers which have been given to them.

The HPU has not given any suggestions to the Sarkaria Commission so far. We have had a few rounds of discussion. But then, the Government here changed and with that, the issue is lying dormant for the time being. But we hope to revive the discussion soon.

Q.9. Do you believe that the Centre has treated Meghalaya at par with other States of India or has it sought merely to exploit its resources?

Ans. The HPU thinks that Meghalaya is not at par with other states. We would expect more liberal grants from the Centre. I do not think that the Centre has merely tried to exploit the resources of the State. The Centre should help the State in the exploitation of the State's resources. We have asked the Centre for some opportunities and facilities to transport our minerals to Bangladesh where there is great demand for limestone, coal etc. We have been negotiating with the Central Government if this could be possible and also to create some international markets at the borders. Meghalaya Government at one time organized the Border Area Development Transport. But that did not work properly.

Q.10. Do you feel that Central grants have been properly utilised in Meghalaya?

Ans. We must admit shamefully that not even 25% of Central funds are utilised properly. The tribals were once regarded as very innocent straight forward people, but now they have started following the footsteps of other people.

Q.11. Does your party support or oppose the establishment of industries?

Ans. We always support the establishment of small scale industries where a family or group of families or clan or group of people could come together and run them. As far as medium scale and other industries are concerned, we feel that unless we have our own people to man those industries, at least, the bulk of the personnel required in these industries, we should not go for them.

Q.12. What is your programme for bringing about economic development of Meghalaya?

Ans. Officially, there is no proposal as such. But we want to encourage our own people to go for big business and replace the outsiders who have been enjoying these privileges so far. In Khasi Hills, in particular, there are

quite a few local businessmen who have come up and can very ably compete with others. This is not so in Garo Hills. Loans and subsidies are given to encourage these people. Banks are also very liberal in this regard. In the Eighth Five Year Plan for Meghalaya, we have given top priority to the settlement of lands - that is, cadestral survey. We are planning to finish the survey by 1993, although I am sceptical about it. Next in the order of priorities is horticulture. The jhum cultivators are very unhappy nowadays because the yield is so poor. They know the difficulties of shifting cultivation. But they have to fall back on it since they have no other option. After horticulture, comes agriculture.

Q.13. Is there any specific issue on which your party's stand is radically different from those of other regional parties?

Ans. HPU, HSPDP and PDIC do not have any radical differences. In fact, when we framed the Constitution of the HPU, we have incorporated in it the aims and objects of both the APHLC and the HSPDP. PDIC also wants to protect the identity of the people, to promote the economic development of the people and to look after the interests of the people. Some personality clash or some attachment to the old party may bring a gap. But, ideologically, they are almost the same.

Q.14. What is the nature of your party's supporters?

Ans. We don't cater to any specific caste or creed. In urban areas like Shillong, people support mostly the regional parties. Of course, there are some hardcore Congress supporters, hardcore HSPDP supporters or hardcore HPU supporters who always vote for that particular party irrespective of the candidate. Whereas there are others who want a particular person to be the party candidate and may shift their allegiance if that particular person is not given a party ticket. Money factor, personality, clan factor - all these also count.

Q.15. Do you feel that Meghalaya's interests can be best protected under the present arrangement?

Ans. Yes. We have no other choice. We have no other alternative. Whether good or bad, we will have to be here. We are destined to be here. We cannot think of any other choice.

APPENDIX 5

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH MR. S.D. KHONGWIR
ON 18TH APRIL, 1991, IN SHILLONG

Q.1. What do you mean by 'regionalism'? What major regional interests of Meghalaya your party would like to protect?

Ans. 'Regionalism' in India is an essential product of diversity. Regionalism is a nation-wide phenomenon spreading from North to South and East to West. It also means the intensive love for a particular region or a state in preference to a country as a whole.

Please see Party Constitution.

Q.2. What exactly do you mean by 'protection of cultural identity' of the people?

Ans. India is a land of many cultures. The Khasis, Jaintias and Garos have a distinct cultural identity different from the rest of the country. A people/community is known and identified by language, customs, culture etc. If the culture of a particular tribe/community is mingled with the other more powerful and dominating culture, then the identity of that particular community is bound to disappear.

Q.3. What are your views on the interests of non-tribals in Meghalaya? Do you regard these interests as contradictory to the interests of non-tribals?

Ans. The genuine non-tribal residents of Meghalaya are accepted and therefore, their interest, to a reasonable extent, should be protected. As long as the interest of the tribal inhabitants of Meghalaya are not in any way affected, I do not see that these interests will come into conflict with each other.

Q.4. What is the position of your party on the question of national integration? Do you regard regionalism and nationalism as antagonistic with each other or as complementary to each other?

Ans. We are for national integration. India is 'unity in diversity'.

Complementary.

Q.5. Is your party satisfied with the Centre-State relations existing in India? If not, what are your suggestions for restructuring these relations?

Ans. This is a question which could not be replied in a sentence or two. India is a Union of States and as such true federation does not come into full play.

There is room for improvement especially in the field of division of powers between the Centre and States.

Q.6. Do you believe that the Centre has treated Meghalaya at par with other states of India or has it sought merely to exploit its resources?

Ans. Meghalaya along with 9 other states have been named as special category states. We expect that the Centre would still provide Meghalaya with special treatment.

Q.7. Do you feel that the Central grants for developmental purposes have been properly utilised in Meghalaya?

Ans. Not to the extent expected.

Q.8. Does your party support or oppose the establishment of industries?

Ans. We oppose setting up of major and large scale industries.

Q.9. How do you propose to safeguard the interests of the regional bourgeoisie as against the national bourgeoisie? What is your programme for bringing about the economic development of Meghalaya?

Ans. It is the policy to safeguard the interest of regional against that of national bourgeoisie by way of preferential treatment.

The various resources of the state will have to be tapped judiciously so that the maximum benefit goes to the people.

Q.10. Is there any specific issue on which your party's stand is radically different from those of other regional parties?

Ans. No.

Q.11. What is the nature of your party's supporters?

Ans. A mixture of all sections.

Q.12. Do you feel that Meghalaya's interests can be best protected under the present arrangement?

Ans. Yes.

APPENDIX 6

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH MR. E.K. MAWLONG, HSPDP
GENERAL SECRETARY, ON 2ND MAY 1991, IN SHILLONG

Q.1. What do you mean by regionalism? What major regional interests of Meghalaya your party would like to protect?

Ans. India is a land of unity in diversity. To me, regionalism means protecting the interests of our own people - the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos whom we represent in particular, but also the interests of the country in general.

Q.2. What exactly do you mean by the protection of cultural identity of the people?

Ans. This means preservation of the tribal language, customs, usages and whatever is connected with the people.

Q.3. What are your views on the interests of non-tribals in Meghalaya? Do you think that these interests are contradictory to the interests of tribals?

Ans. I do not think that the interests of non-tribals contract with those of tribals except for the fact that now there is a feeling among the tribal youths that non-tribals are taking away the business from them and exploiting them. Non-tribals are playing a very important role in the economic field. My party expects non-tribals to cooperate with the local entrepreneur and help them to come up in the field of business, trade and commerce.

Q.4. What is your party's stand on the question of national integration? Do you think regionalism and nationalism are contradictory or complementary?

Ans. No. They are not contradictory. India is a big country composed of different regions and people having different cultures and speaking different languages. The national feeling cannot be strengthened unless there is a strong regional set-up. In a national party, no person can be debarred from membership. By being in the regional party, we can serve the interests of the people better. My party would like to strengthen national integration, but at the same time, to maintain the regional identity and regional interests.

Q.5. Is your party satisfied with the Centre-State relations existing in India? If not, what are your suggestions for restructuring these relations?

Ans. In general, there should be a closer understanding between the Centre and the states. More autonomy should be given to the states in different fields so that they can exercise their powers freely without having to depend on the Centre.

Q.6. Has the Centre treated Meghalaya at par with other states of India or has it sought merely to exploit its resources?

Ans. The Centre has not exploited the resources of Meghalaya. Meghalaya being weak from the financial point of view, my party expects the Centre to help the state in this respect. Recently, I met the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Mr. Mohan Dharja and informed him about the resource constraints of Meghalaya. Meghalaya has already been treated as a special category state. From the point of view of communication, Meghalaya is at a disadvantage. If Meghalaya has its own railway head upto the CRPF Camp near Jorabat, it would not be necessary to dump the goods in godowns at Guwahati, but can be transported directly to Meghalaya. I also suggested to the Chief Minister the setting up of a network of internal railways linking Shillong with interior places of Meghalaya.

Q.7. Do you feel that Central grants for development purposes have been properly utilised in Meghalaya?

Ans. Yes. We are trying to utilise the funds from the Centre for whatever purposes they have been earmarked.

Q.8. Does your party support or oppose the establishment of industries?

Ans. My party does not oppose the establishment of industries as such. But the HSPDP has apprehension regarding big industries which may create the problem of influx. The people here have not developed the industrial culture. However, the party is in favour of small-scale industries where the local people can work and where indigenous goods are produced.

Q.9. What is your party's programme for bringing about the economic development of Meghalaya?

Ans. People here are very poor. To uplift the economic conditions of the people, there should be some programmes. My own Department, viz., Cooperation Department, is trying to find ways and means to market the produces like potato, ginger, bay leaves and oranges and we have been able to identify markets for these agricultural and horticultural products. As far as animal husbandry is concerned, Meghalaya is not self-sufficient in poultry, piggery and cattle farming. Therefore, the people will have to be encouraged to go in a big way to produce their own. The Government is making schemes in different departments to select some people and assist them through subsidies or grants so that the state may become self-sufficient in farming.

Thirty thousand unemployed youths registered in the Employment Exchange cannot be employed by the Government. Hence, there should be some economic programmes, specially in the rural areas through which the youth may be encouraged for self-employment. In fact, educated youths can be expected to do better in the economic field because they are in a position to know the markets better and are also not vulnerable to exploitation by the middlemen.

Q.10. Is there any specific issue on which your party's stand is radically different from those of other regional parties?

Ans. Not very much. Ideologically most of the regional parties are the same - to preserve the cultural identity and to promote the interests of the tribals.

Q.11. What is the nature of your party's supporters?

Ans. Supporters are everywhere. In the last few years, we had a good number of supporters. The HSPDP won the Lok Sabha election in 1977. But unfortunately, the party split after a few years and there was widespread defection so that we are reduced to 6 MLAs in the Assembly. But in 1983, we had won about 15 seats. Now, a big group has broken away and joined the HPU. We have our units in different villages and districts. We are trying to strengthen the grassroots base of the party.

Q.12. Do you feel that Meghalaya's interests can be best protected under the present arrangement?

Ans. We were neglected so much in the erstwhile state of Assam which led us to fight for our own state. I hope that the present arrangement will be the best arrangement, i.e., to continue as a separate state, but as part of this great nation. We would like to be united in diversity and strengthen the Indian Union. However, states will have to be strong in order to build a strong India. We will have to work towards that goal. We expect that the Government of India will strengthen the units so that the entire country can be strengthened.

APPENDIX 7

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH SHRI HOPINGSTONE LYNGDH,
PRESIDENT, HSPDP, IN SHILLONG, ON 10TH JUNE, 1991

In 1954, the leaders of Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, North Cachar Hills, Mikir Hills and Mizo Hills organized the Eastern India Tribal Union because they were not satisfied with the manner in which the Assam Government dealt with the protection and development of the tribal people. They demanded a state for the hills of the North East. In 1960, when Assamese was declared as the state language, all parties joined together and formed the APHLC which demanded statehood. In 1963, when the Government of India announced Nehru Plan, Scottish Pattern of autonomy and so on, the MLAs from the hills resigned. They continued demanding the hill state and threatened non-violent direct action if their demand was not conceded. Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh was appointed as the Chief Organizer of volunteers. Meanwhile, the Mizos moved away and started armed rebellion. The Mikir and North Cachar Hills were in a dilemma as to whether they should join the Hill State. The APHLC fought the election of 1967 with an ultimatum to the Government of India that in case, it wins the election and its demand is not conceded, the party will start direct action. The APHLC won all the seats in the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. In a meeting at Tura, the High Command was considering direct action. But the majority did not agree. In a meeting called by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in Delhi in May 1968, most of the Hill leaders except H.S. Lyngdoh accepted the Autonomous State Plan. Mr. Lyngdoh got the expulsion order from W.A. Sangma and B.B. Lyngdoh following which he organized an adhoc Volunteer Committee from May to October, 1968, and eventually formed the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP). The HSPDP was trying to consolidate itself in Khasi, Jaintia, Garo and even in Mikir and North Cachar Hills. When the Assam Reorganisation Act was passed on 23rd of December, 1969, the Mikirs left them and decided to remain in Assam. On 2nd April, 1970, Autonomous State was inaugurated. The HSPDP demonstrated with 18,000 volunteers in Shillong with black flags. In October, 1970, 14 HSPDP members went to meet Mrs. Gandhi at Gauhati on her invitation. Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh gave her an ultimatum that if fullfledged State was not declared by December, 1970, he would launch direct action. Ultimately, statehood was granted through the North Eastern Reorganization Act, 1971. However, Mr. Lyngdoh does not consider it as a fullfledged state because Meghalaya still has a joint cadre with Assam. State means specific boundary, specific territory,

everything therein including the people and the power to make rules and laws. Meghalaya's boundary has not yet been settled. So the objective of the HSPDP is to consolidate the territory of the State in order that the boundary can be identified. Mr. Lyngdoh regrets that his party has not got the majority to rule the state and implement the party's programmes. Nevertheless, he would like to maintain the separate identity of his party and states that there is no question of its merger. Of course, one section of the HSPDP has joined the HPU in 1985-86. But among the leaders who parted company from the HSPDP, there are four factions because they have no principle. The HPU Constitution is just a copy of the HSPDP Constitution. In spite of the setbacks that Mr. Lyngdoh has suffered in his long political career, he is determined to take up any public issue and face the problems.

Each of the 3,830 communities in India would like to maintain its identity according to its genius and interests. But at the same time, these communities will have to cooperate with the rest of the people in the country.

Speaking on Centre-State relations, Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh points out that the jurisdiction of the State and Central Governments have been clearly laid down in the Constitution. But the Centre renders help when the state machinery fails to function. For example, during the recent disturbances in Shillong, the army had to be called in to assist the civil authorities. But the army should be disciplined.

Mr. Lyngdoh feels that certain commitments made under the Constitution for the tribal people have not been implemented, viz. Article 275. He is also not satisfied fully with the Central grants and believes that Meghalaya has been neglected among the North Eastern States. The local administration has also remained backward. He refers to district Councils and village Durbars in this context.

Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh argues that there is no basic difference with other regional parties. But he feels that some regional parties have no principle.

APPENDIX 8

ABSTRACTS OF DISCUSSION WITH MR. A.B.M. ROY, PDIC
PRESIDENT, ON 28TH JULY, 1991, IN SHILLONG

Q.1. How as the PDIC formed?

Ans. The PDIC came into being in the year 1977. The first and foremost thing which led the leaders at that time to make a decision to set up this political party was to highlight the problems of the farmers and cultivators, especially the potato farmers of the Khyrim area, because the farmers were neglected and were not getting the right price for their produce. In Nongkrem and some parts of Myllem, which are PDIC strongholds, people earn their living by cultivating potatoes. But the farmers of these areas and in Khasi Hills in general, have been exploited by the middlemen and the businessmen who buy the potatoes in bulk, but at their own price and not at a price fixed by the farmers. After having brought the potatoes from Dienglieng and other far-flung areas like Nongkrem in hired vehicles, they go to businessmen and offer the potatoes for sale. These middlemen fix the price and if the villagers are not ready to sell at that price, they have to take the produce back to the villages which means a double expenditure for them. It was their grievances which led to the formation of the PDIC and the party wanted to extend some assistance to the farmers through the instrumentality of the government.

Q.2. Who was the founder leader of the party?

Ans. There was no question of a founder leader. The party was founded by a group of people. In 1977, there were Prof. M.N. Majaw, Prof. G.G. Swell who was also the sitting member of the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Upstar Kharbuli, Mr. E.K. Mawlong (now in HSPDP), Mr. Chorel Lyngdoh, Mr. Noken Lyngdoh, Mr. D.R. Nongkynrih and myself (Mr. A.B.M. Roy) - all of us came together to fight for the cause of the farmers. Some of these leaders like Mr. Majaw and Mr. Swell were in the APHLC. However, since the Government was not paying attention to the problems of the farmers, they left the APHLC and formed the PDIC.

In 1977-78, we did not have any President of the party. We only had a senior Vice-President who was also the Convenor. Mr. Leo R. Lyngkhoi was the first senior Vice-President and Convenor of the PDIC.

Q.3. What is the PDIC's stand on the unification move initiated by the APHLC and the HSPDP?

Ans. APHLC and a faction of the HSPDP have joined hands to form the HPU. But the PDIC has not done so. The PDIC has not been extended the formal invitation in this regard. The party has its own conditions if it is to merge in a unified party, the condition being that the upliftment of the farmers should be given the foremost priority in the economic programme before the unification of regional parties is brought about.

Q.4. What are PDIC's views on industrialisation of Meghalaya?

Ans. The PDIC is against the establishment of large-scale industries because Meghalaya does not have the manpower. The party has nothing against industrialisation if the indigenous people are trained to man the important jobs. Otherwise, people will have to be brought from outside resulting in influx. This also creates some sort of misunderstanding in the villages because the villagers do not understand the language of the outsiders. The party, however, favours small scale and cottage industries, specially agro-based industries. In fact, there was a proposal that a small agro-based industry should be set up for producing industrial alcohol out of potatoes, since Meghalaya is a potato growing area and the industries can buy the crops of the farmers. Thus, the farmers can get a higher price than they are getting at present.

Q.5. Is the party completely united now? Or is there any inner party conflict?

Ans. There is a faction in the party which has brought an injunction in the Court. Actually, according to the Constitution of the PDIC, the convention should be held once a year in which new office bearers are elected. Since I took over as President in 1984-85 and Mr. Sanbor Swell became the General Secretary, we have had only one convention in 1986. On the request of the members of the Executive Committee, I advised the General Secretary to call the convention in November, 1990. But the General Secretary was reluctant for some unknown reason. Under such

circumstances, Central Executive members requisitioned the convention asking me to sign the notice calling the Convention. I signed it on their request. As soon as the General Secretary came to know that I had called the Convention, he moved the Court and brought an injunction, restraining the party from holding the Convention. Thus, the Convention could be called. The matter is still pending in the Court. Of course, I expect reconciliation and the question of split does not arise. Prof. G.G. Swell, though a member of the PDIC, left the party without resignation and joined the HSPDP and was elected to Rajya Sabha on HSPDP ticket. Sanbor Swell, son of Prof. G.G. Swell, is still in the PDIC and Prof. Swell wants the PDIC to merge with the HSPDP. But most of the PDIC members are totally against the merger. The President commands the majority in the party and hence the General Secretary is not calling the Convention, knowing fully well that he will be ousted from the post of General Secretary because of his idea of merger of the PDIC with another regional party. I feel that the unification of regional parties is a dim probability, because only the MLAs and leaders want to be united to safeguard their own chair, whereas the rank and file of the party are not for the unity of regional parties. I did not attend the meeting for the unity of regional parties. So, official PDIC is not represented in the meeting. I was unofficially contacted in this regard. But I have not replied. I said, "No comments at the moment. I will have to consult members of the Central Executive Committee."

APPENDIX 9

HOW THE HILL PEOPLE UNION WAS FORMED

1. As far back as 1975, informal discussions were held by the leaders for unification of the APHLC and the HSPDP, in order to serve the best interests of the people.
2. The Central Working Committee of the APHLC met on April 5, 1983, and recommended to appoint a Committee of leaders to explore the possibility of unification of the regional parties of the State.
3. The General Conference of the APHLC met on the 10th and 11th June, 1983, and endorsed the recommendation of the C.W.C. for appointing a Committee of leaders to explore the ways and means of bringing about the unification of the regional parties.
4. The Committee of leaders of both APHLC and HSPDP met on May 28, 1983, and were all convinced that the time is ripe for bringing about the unficiation among the regional parties in the State.
5. A joint meeting of the General Body of leaders of APHLC and HSPDP met on July 19, 1983, and, after hearing the reports of the Committee showing public support for unification of APHLC and HSPDP, recommended to their respective parties to take up this issue and pass appropriate Resolutions to unite and form a new Regional Party.
6. The special session of APHLC was held on 4th, 5th and 6th August, 1983, an unanimous decision for unification after two main Regional Parties - APHLC and HSPDP and also authorised the C.W.C. to come to an agreement with the HSPDP (for common candidate) in the District Council election to set up common candidates with the HSPDP in the District Council elections.
7. The plenary session of APHLC was held on 27th and 28th July, 1984, at Shillong and urged upon the two Committees to complete the modalities for unification by 31st August, 1984. The plenary session of the APHLC was held on the 6th SEptember, 1984, at Shillong and arrived at a consensus that "Unification can be best effected" by dissolving the two parties, APHLC & HSPDP

and forming new party without further delay. The Conference, therefore, authorised the CWC to finalize with the HSPDP concerning unification of the two parties.

9. The Central Election Committees of the two parties met and drafted a Constitution of the new Regional Party, known as "The Hill People Union" which was adopted on 16th November, 1984.
10. The Hill People Union decided to contest the Lok Sabha Elections jointly and set up Dr. B. Pakem and Mr. Wilnan A. Sangma at Shillong and Tura Parliamentary Constituencies respectively.
11. On June 29, 1985, Mr. H.S. Lyngdoh with a few of his HSPDP friends withdrew from the Hill People Union.
12. On 26th August, 1985, the Hill People Union consisting of the majority of the APHLC and HSPDP leaders, that is, 18 MLAs & 39 MDCs decided to register the Hill People Union.

OF RELATIONSHIP G.N.C. WITH APHLC AND H.P.U.

The G.N.C. had all along been a constituent member of APHLC. When the APHLC had decided to go in for unification with HSPDP, the G.N.C. as a part and parcel of APHLC, was a party to all the decisions and resolutions. It is therefore clear that the G.N.C. being a constituent member of APHLC is also a constituent part of the Hill People Union. This was also recognised in the constitution of the Hill People Union as amended on 26th September, 1985.

Sd/- S.D.D. Nichols Roy
General Secretary
APHLC

Sd/- Miltion Sangma
President 25/1
APHLC

APPENDIX 10

CONSTITUTION OF THE

All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC)

(Adopted on the 30th day of September 1977)

INTRODUCTION

When, in 1960 it became evident that the majority community in the erstwhile composite State of Assam were determined to make Assamese the sole official language of the State, hill leaders belonging to the various local political parties got together, in a conference, at Shillong on the 6th & 7th of July 1960 and formed a common platform under the name and style of the "All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference" (APHLC) to protest against the move of the majority community.

When, in spite of this appeal to good sense and subsequent warnings about the harmful effects on the stability of the State, the Assam Legislative Assembly decided to adopt the Language Bill, the APHLC in its third session held at Haflong on the 16th, 17th & 18th November 1960 decided to launch a non-violent and constitutional struggle to achieve separation from Assam and the creation of a separate state comprising the hill districts. This was fully achieved on the 21st of January 1972, when the State of Meghalaya was inaugurated.

Over the years, the APHLC had, by convention, formulated and created well-established democratic norms and guidelines by which the affairs and activities of the Party have been conducted and carried out. The APHLC has, however, to-date not had a 'written' constitution. In response, therefore, to the expressed general wish of the members of the Party throughout the State, the All-Party Hill Leader's Conference, in a plenary session held at Shillong from the 29th of September to the 1st of October 1977, under the chairmanship of the Party President, Mr. Mody K. Marak, adopted this Constitution.

Place: SHILLONG

L.D. Pugh

General Secretary, APHLC

Date: 1st October 1977.

Article I

Name

The name of the party shall be:- All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC).

Article II

Territory

The Party shall operate in the State of Meghalaya and in such other areas as may be decided upon by the Party.

Article III

Objects

The objects of the Party shall be:-

- (a) the well-being and the advancement of the people of Meghalaya and the achievement of the objectives of the Constitution of India; and
- (b) the preservation of the identity of the tribal people and the development of their democratic institutions, languages, customs and culture;
- (c) to protect the political, economic, social and religious rights of the people; and
- (d) to play a constructive role in the affairs of the nation.

Article IV

Emblem

The emblem of the Party shall be a red rose with three green leaves against a white background.

Article V

Flag

The flag of the Party shall consist of three horizontal colours, viz deep red at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the base. The white portion shall be twice the size of either the red or green which shall be of the same size. In the white portion, there shall be an outline of three peaks in green colour. The emblem of the Party shall be superimposed in the centre of the flag.

Article VI

Membership

1. Any person who accepts Article III shall, on making a written declaration in Form A, and on payment of a yearly subscription of 0.25P (twentyfive paise) become a member of the Party.
2. A member on payment of an active member's fee of Rs. 10/- (rupees ten) per annum, shall be eligible to hold an elective post in the Party.
3. Renewal of membership will be deemed to have been completed by depositing the requisite membership fee.
4. The term of membership shall be from the date of enrolment upto the 31st of December of the year.
5. Registers of members shall be maintained by all units.

Article VII

Membership of political parties

The Party may admit or grant affiliation to a political party which accepts and subscribes to the objects of the Party (APHLC) as stated in Article III and pays a sum of Rs. 250/- (rupees two hundred and fifty) only as affiliation fee, renewable every year on payment of Rs. 100 - (rupees one hundred) only. Applications for affiliation shall be dealt with and decided upon by the Central Working Committee.

Article VIII

Constituents

The Party shall have the following constituents :-

- (a) District units or branches; and
- (b) Affiliated political parties.

Article IX

Organs

The following shall be the organs through which the Party shall function at its various levels :-

- (a) Plenary session;
- (b) Executive Committee; and
- (c) Working Committee.

Note: The quorum for each of the above named organs shall be one fourth of the total membership of the organ concerned.

Article X

Plenary session

1. The plenary session of the State-level conference shall ordinarily be held once a year at a time and place decided by the Central Working Committee or the Central Executive Committee, as the case may be, may so decide.
2. A special session of the State-level conference may be held whenever the Central Working Committee or the Central Executive Committee, as the case may be, may so decide.
3. The members of the Central Executive Committee, the members of the District Councils belonging to the Party and such number or numbers of delegates as may be allocated by the Central Working Committee to each of the constituents, as per rules to be framed by the Central Executive Committee, shall be eligible to attend the State-level conference.

- (b) Special invitees and/or observers may be invited to attend plenary sessions of the Party. Such special invitees or observers shall have the right to participate in the deliberations of the session but shall have no right to vote.

Article XI

Central Executive Committee

1. The Central Executive Committee shall consist of the

following :-

- (a) Members of the Central Working Committee;
- (b) Members of Parliament and the State Legislature belonging to the Party; and

(c) Such number or numbers of representatives from each district unit or branch or affiliated political party as may be decided upon by the State-level conference from time to time.

2. The Central Executive Committee shall ordinarily meet twice a year at a time and place decided upon by the Central Working Committee.

Article XII

Central Working Committee

1. The Central Working Committee shall consist of:—

- (a) The central office bearers; and
- (b) Not more than 25 (twentyfive) members to be elected by the Party in a plenary session.

2. The Central Working Committee shall meet as often as the President and the General Secretary consider it necessary.

Article XIII

Primary/Circle District Committees

The Primary, Circle and District-level committees shall be constituted as per rules to be framed by the respective district units or branches.

Article XIV

Requisitioned meetings

On a requisition made by not less than one half of the total membership of an organ of the Party or of any of its committees, the President and/or the General Secretary, or the Chairman and/or the General Secretary, as the case may be shall convene such a meeting within 21 (twentyone) days from the date on which the requisition is received. In the event of the failure of any of the above-named office bearers to convene the requisitioned meeting, the requisitionists may convene and hold the meeting.

Article XV

Election Committees

1. A Central Election Committee shall be constituted at a State-level conference, in a plenary session, or by the Central Executive Committee to deal with and finally decide on all matters connected with elections to Parliament, the State Legislature and the District Councils.
2. District election committees shall be constituted by the Central Working Committee in consultation with the district unit or branch concerned to recommend names of candidates to the Central Election Committee for final selection and to

undertake such other responsibilities as may be entrusted to it by the Central Election Committee.

3. Any person or persons aggrieved with the recommendation of a District Election Committee may represent to the Central Election Committee, as per rules to be framed by the Central Working Committee.

Article XVI

Terms of committees

1. An Executive Committee and Working Committee shall ordinarily be constituted for a term of one year.

2. Any other committee shall be appointed as per the terms of reference prescribed.

Article XVII

Office bearers

1. At a State-level conference, meeting in a plenary session, the Party shall elect the following office bearers:

- (a) A President,
- (b) Vice Presidents (such number as may be decided upon by the conference), and
- (c) A General Secretary,
- (d) Secretaries (such number as may be decided upon by the conference), and
- (e) A Treasurer.

2. The President shall be the head of the Party and shall preside over the meetings of the organs of the Party; in the absence of the President, one of the Vice Presidents shall assist the President in conducting the said meetings; the General Secretary shall be the principal executive officer and custodian of the Party documents, while the Secretaries shall assist the General Secretary in the discharge of his duties and functions; and the Treasurer shall be the custodian of the Party Fund.

3. An office bearer shall ordinarily hold office for a term of one year unless or until replaced; provided that a member may be re-elected to any office.

Article XVIII

Vacancies

1. The office of a delegate or a member of any committee constituted under this Constitution shall be vacated by resignation, removal or death.
2. All vacancies shall, unless otherwise provided for, be filled in the same manner in which the vacated member was chosen and members so elected shall hold office for the unexpired term of the seat vacated.

3. In the absence of any provision to the contrary, a committee, once it is properly constituted, shall not become invalid by reason of any vacancy on it.

Article XIX

Party Fund

1. The APHLC shall have a Party Fund to enable it to implement the objects of the Party.
2. The Party Fund shall be deposited in a Bank to be nominated by the Central Working Committee, and shall be jointly operated by the General Secretary and the Treasurer.
3. The subscription fees collected by the Party shall be apportioned among the Party's committees in the following ratio:

- (a) Central - 10%
- (b) District - 30%
- (c) Circle - 20%
- (d) Primary - 40%

4. The Central Working Committee and/or the Central Executive Committee shall decide on ways and means of raising funds for the Party.

5. The accounts of the Party shall be audited once a year by auditors to be appointed by the Central Working Committee.

6. The Central Working Committee and/or the Central Executive Committee shall frame rules governing the manner in which the Party Fund shall be utilised.

Article XX

Disciplinary action

Disciplinary action may be taken against any member of the Party in accordance with rules framed by the Central Working Committee.

Article XXI

Rules

The Party may frame rules for the smooth working of this Constitution

Article XXII

Amendment

This constitution may be amended, altered or added to only by the State-level conference, in a plenary session, by a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting; provided that due notice of the proposed amendment shall be circulated to all the 'constituents' atleast twentyone days before a conference is scheduled to be held.

MEMBERSHIP FORM (A)

I wish to be enrolled as a primary/active member of the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference. I accept Article III being the object of the Party.

I hereby deposit Rs _____ as membership subscription for the year _____ and _____.

Name _____

Mother's or father's name _____

Permanent address _____

Permanent place of residence _____
or place of work _____

Age _____ Occupation _____

Date _____

Signature or thumb
impression of the
applicant

(Signature of the Unit Secretary)

Note: In case the applicant affixes his/her thumb impression, the same should be attested.

THE CONSTITUTION OF

THE HILL STATE PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

STATEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HILL STATE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY:

I. The Party stands for-

1. The rights, justice, liberties and progress of the tribal people and for their all round development according to their own genius.
2. The building up of the State for the development and benefit of the people and justice to all as guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

II.

The Party shalla bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to the Principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the Sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

CHAPTER I

Art. 1. Name of the Party :- The name of the Party is the HILL STATE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

Art. 2. Headquarters :- The headquarters of the Party will be at SHILLONG unless decided otherwise by the General Council at its session.

Art. 3. Aims and Objects :- (a) To strive for social and political justice and speedy attainment of educational and economic upliftment of the tribal people in particular and of the State in general.

(b) To safeguard the rights and interests of the tribal people in respect of land and forests, and to encourage and improve traditional arts and Culture and to strive for the development of the tribal people according to their own genius.

(c) To restore to the State of Meghalaya those areas which were parts of the erstwhile Khasi States and to add into the State the contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people if they so desire.

(d) To run the Government in the State and District levels for the achievements of the above aims and objects.

CHAPTER II ORGANISATION (Part - A-Central)

Art. 4

1. General Council:-

There will be a General Council consisting of:-
(1) All office-bearers and members of the Central Executive Committee and all office bearers of the District Committees.

(2) Representatives of not more than 60 members from each District to be nominated by the District Committees.

2. Session of the General Council :-

The General Council shall meet in session at least once in a year and each such session shall be convened by the General Secretary.

3. Emergent Session of the General Council :-

The President of the Party (Central) may summon an emergent session of the General Council, if in his opinion there exists a situation which requires the immediate decision of the General Council.

4. Arrangement of the Session :-

The Central Executive Committee, on the direction of the President of the Party (Central) shall make all necessary arrangements.

5. Quorum in the Session of the General Council:-

One-fourth of the total number of members of the General Council shall form a quorum in any session of the Council.

6. Powers and Functions :-

The powers and functions of the General Council shall be as laid down in Part I of Chapter III of this Constitution.

7. Interim Provision :-

It is hereby provided that if there exists a situation in which the General Council cannot be held as hitherto provided, the existing Central Executive Committee shall continue to function until such time when the General Council is held.

Art. 5.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. There shall be a Central Executive Committee, consisting of :-

- (i) The President of the Party.
- (ii) The Vice-Presidents of the Party.
- (iii) The General Secretary of the Party.
- (iv) The Joint Secretaries of the Party.
- (v) The Treasurer of the Party.
- (vi) The Auditors of the Party.
- (vii) All M.Ps, M.L.As, and M.D.Cs.
- (viii) The Chief Directors of the 'Volunteers' and Women's Wings of both the Central and Districts.
- (ix) The Presidents and Secretaries of the District Committees and shall also include not less than 5 and not more than 10 repre-

sentatives from each District to be nominated by the District Executive Committee.

2. The Central Executive Committee shall deal with all matters effecting the State as a whole and on any other matter as provided in Part II of Chapter III of this Constitution.

Art. 6. (P A R T - B D I S T R I C T S)

District Committees :-

1. There shall be a District Committee for each District.
2. The District Committee shall consist of :-
 - (a) The President of the Party at the District.
 - (b) The Vice-Presidents of the Party at the District.
 - (c) The Secretary of the Party at the District.
 - (d) The Joint Secretaries of the Party at the District.
 - (e) The Treasurer of the Party at the District.

- (f) The President, Vice-President and Secretaries of the Units of the Party.

- (g) All M.P.s and M.L.A.s and M.D.C.s of the Constituencies falling within that District.

- (h) All other members who are qualified to be members of the District Committees as defined in Art. 14 of Constitution.

3. The District Committee shall meet not less than twice a year.

Provided that the District Committee can be summoned to meet at any time on a joint requisition of not less than 20 members of the District Committee or on the requisition of the President of the Party at the District. All such requisition shall be made to the Secretary of the District giving at least 15 clear days' notice and must also state the purpose for which the meeting is to be convened.

4. Every meeting of the District Committee shall be convened by the Secretary of the District.
5. The powers and functions of the District Committee shall be as provided in Part III of Chapter III of this Constitution.

Art 7.

DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. There shall be a District Executive Committee for each District.
2. The District Executive Committee shall consist of:--
 - (a) The President and Vice-Presidents of the Party at the District.
 - (b) The Secretary and joint Secretaries of Party and all other office bearers of the Party at the District level appointed by the District Committee.
 - (c) Not less than 5 and not more than 20 other members to be nominated by the District Committee.
 - (d) All M.Ps, M.L.As and M.D.Cs of the Constituencies falling within the District.
3. The District Executive Committee shall, if possible, meet once a month. It is however provided that no meeting of the District Executive Committee shall intervene by more than three months from the date of its last meeting.

4. All meetings of the District Executive Committee shall be convened by the Secretary of the Party.
5. The District Executive Committee shall constitute a body to be known as the District Working Committee, the powers and functions of which shall be as prescribed in Part V of Chapter III of this Constitution.
6. All other powers and functions of the District Executive Committee shall be as prescribed in Part IV of Chapter III of this Constitution.

Art. 8.

UNITS OF THE PARTY

1. Each District shall be divided into Areas and each such Area shall form a Unit of the Party.
2. Each Unit may be divided into Primary Units as is convenient.
3. Every Primary Unit shall, at its General Meeting, elect its own President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Joint Secretaries and Treasurer and shall also nominate the members who along with the above office bearers shall form the Primary Unit Executive Committee. All such elections and nominations shall be forthwith communicated to the Secretary

of the Party at the District.

4. The Presidents' Vice-Presidents, Secretaries, Joint Secretaries and Treasurers of the various Primary Units shall be the members of the Unit Committee.
5. The Unit Committee shall, at its General Meeting elect its own President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretaries and Treasurer from amongst its own members and all such appointment shall be forthwith communicated to the Secretary of the Party at the District.
6. The first General Meeting of the Units shall be convened by the District Working Committee and shall be presided over by any person nominated by it.
7. (1) The working, functions and all other matters concerning the organisation of the Primary Units and the Units themselves shall be exclusively under the jurisdiction and control of the District Working Committee.
(2) The District Working Committee may make rules for the smooth functioning of the Primary Units and of the Units thereto and pending the framing of such rules may issue orders or directives it may deem fit and proper for that purpose.

- (3) Until such time as the Primary Units and the Units are constituted as laid down hereunder, the District Working Committee may make interim arrangements as may be necessary for the smooth functioning of the Party at this level.

8. Mps, MLAs, will be ex-officio members of the Unit Committee and Primary Unit Executive Committee of those areas from where they are so elected.

Art. 9. CONVENTION

(Central)

1. There shall be a Central Convention of the Party to be held as and when necessary at a place and date to be decided by the Central Executive Committee.
2. Provided that, whenever possible, the Central Convention should be held, at the same place and date of the session of the General Council.
3. The programme, agenda and all other matters and arrangements for the holding of the Central Convention shall be made by the Central Executive Committee.

(DISTRICT)

4. Each District may also hold a District conventions as and when necessary at a place and date to be decided by the District Executive Committee. Provided that whenever possible the District Convention shall be held at the same place and date as the meeting of the District Committee.

5. The Programme, agenda and all other matters and arrangements for the holding of the District Convention shall be made by the District Executive Committee or the District Executive Committee may delegate its powers in this respect to the District Working Committee.

Art. 10

SESSIONS AND MEETINGS

1. The respective Presidents or in their absence, the Vice-President shall preside over all the meetings and sessions of any Committee.
- Provided that when both the President and the Vice-President are absent, the members present shall elect from amongst themselves any person to act as chairman of the Committee Meeting.

2. Unless otherwise provided for in this Constitution One-fifth of the total number of any Committee shall form a quorum of that Committee.
3. All a meetings and sessions of the Party shall be conducted in the manner to be prescribed by rules made in this behalf by the Central Executive Committee.

Art. 11.

TENURE

1. The term of office of all office-bearers of the Party and the tenure of all Committees shall be for a period of one year from the date of appointment as such office-bearers and/or constitution of such Committee
- Provided that the same person may be elected to the same post for the next term.
2. In case of an expiry of the term of an Executive Committee, and because of unavoidable circumstances the same cannot be constituted accordingly, the President of the Party at the Central or District level respectively may extend the life of such a Committee for a period not exceeding six months.
3. The tenure of the qualifying members of the District Committee shall be two years

from the date of such qualification.

Art. 12

SUB-COMMITTEES

The General Council and all other Committees duly constituted shall have the power to constitute sub-Committees for the purpose of carrying out any specific work or works and all such Committees shall expire after the completion of such work or works unless provided otherwise.

Art. 13.

MEMBERSHIP

- 1, Any person of the age of maturity who subscribes to the principles of the Party shall on making a declaration in the form prescribed in Appendix I of this Constitution and pays the prescribed fees will become a member of the Party provided that he is not a member of any political party or is for any other reason found to be unfit.
2. All applications for membership shall be made to the Secretary of the Party at the District to which the applicant belongs, and the acceptance or rejection of such applications will be according to the

Working Committee concerned.

3. The members will be according to the categories as shown below and their will be governed accordingly :-

1. Active members

2. Primary Members.

- 4 (1) Active members :- Any Primary member who has been such member for a period of two years can by paying a subscription fee of Rs. 5 -- be classed as an Active member.

- (2) Primary Members: Any person who on admission pays an entry fee of Re. 1/- shall be classed as a Primary Member.

- (3) The annual subscription fee for a Primary Member will be Re. 1/- and for an Active Member Rs. 5 :-

- (4) The Working Committee in its discretion may admit any person directly as an Active member on payment of an admission fee of Rs. 10/-. It is however provided that in the case of any prominent political person the concurrence of the Central Executive Committee is required before any such person is admitted directly as an Active Member.

- (5) Ordinary Members of the Party shall not be eligible to be elected as office-bearer of the Party but they can become member of any Committee.
- (6) Any Active Member who pays the sum of Rs. 30 - or in the alternative enrolls 30 new Primary members shall be eligible to be a member of the District Committee.

REGISTER OF MEMBERS

Art. 14.

1. The Districts, Units and Primary Units shall maintain a permanent register of all Active and Primary Members under it.
2. The District shall supply a list of the Members under the District Roll to the Central Executive Committee and the Central Executive Committee shall cause the same to be entered under the Central Roll. The District shall also keep the Centre informed of any changemade in the District Rolls,
3. The Working Committee shall maintain a permanent register of all the members who are qualified as members of the District Committee.

4. The register shall contain the full name, address, age, profession and date of enrolment, and in the case of qualifying member the date of their being qualified as such member shall also be made.
5. Membership shall cease by death, resignation or removal from the Party Rolls as provided in this Constitution.

Art. 15

CO-OPTION OF MEMBERS TO ANY COMMITTEE :

The various Committees of the Party constituted as provided for in this Constitution can, whenever necessary, co-opt any other member to be a member of that particular Committee but such co-opted member shall not have right to vote in any matter before the Committee.

Art. 16

PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES AND BOARDS

- 1 There shall be constituted a State Legislature Parliamentary Party consisting of all the elected representatives of the State Legislature and District Parliamentary Party for each Autono-

mous District Council consisting of all the elected representatives of the respective Autonomous District Council.

2. There shall be constituted as Central Parliamentary Board in respect of the State consisting of all the members of the Legislature and the office - bearers of the Centre,
3. There shall be constituted a District Parliamentary Board in respect of the District consisting of all the member of the District Council and all the office - bearers of the District.
4. The Central Executive Committee in respect of the Central Parliamentary Board and the District Executive Committee in respect of the District Parliamentary Board shall make rules regarding the powers and functions of the Board.

CHAPTER III

PART I GENERAL COUNCIL

Art. 17.

The General Council constituted under Art. 4. shall be the highest authority of the Party and shall:-

1. Decide the policies of the Party.
2. Elect the President and other office-bearers of the Party.
3. Amend the Constitution of the Party.
4. Pass the Central Budget of the Party.
5. Confirm, reject or modify any act or acts done by any Committee or any other body of the Party.
6. Submit an annual report through the General Secretary at the Council on the functions and policy statements of the Party at the Central Convention.
7. Any other matters specified under this Constitution.
8. The General Council can delegate any of its powers to the Central Executive Committee but such a delegation of power shall be specified by it and the Central Executive Committee can act on such power delegated to it only to the extent so specified.

PART II. CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Art. 18.

The Central Executive Committee is

the highest Executive body of the Party subordinate only to the General Council and shall be solely responsible to it for its functions and actions.

1. It shall carry out and implement all the resolutions, orders, directives and decisions of the General Council.
2. It shall have the power to make rules not inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution for the smooth functioning of the Party.
3. It may delegate any specific function to any Committee formed by it or to any Working Committee of the Districts.
4. Prepare the Central Budget.
5. Prepare the annual report on the general function of the Party.
6. It shall supervise any of the works done by any Sub-Committee constituted by the General Council and in case of failure with the approval of the President of the Party at the Centre suspend that Sub-committee and assume its functions to itself.
7. Issue instructions to and call for reports from the Districts.

8. Suspend, remove or expel any member of the Party.

9. Deal with any other matter as provided for in this Constitution and all other matters not falling within the purview of the District.

(PART III DISTRICT COMMITTEES)

Art. 19. The District Committee shall be the highest authority of the Party in the District level and shall :-

1. Elect the President and Vice-Presidents of the Party.
2. Appoint the Secretary of the Party and all other office-bearers of the District Executive Committee.
3. Pass the budget of the District.
4. Confirm or otherwise any act done by any Committee, Sub-Committee or any other body subordinate to it.
5. Call for reports from any Committee or any other body subordinate to it.
6. Suspend or remove any member from the Party except those who are members of the General Council and/or the Cen-

tral Executive Committee.

7. Submit an annual report on the functions of the Party at the District level to the District Convention.
8. Issue directives and instructions to the Committee or any other body subordinate to it.
9. Formulate the policy of the Party at the District level in matters only which does not affect the State.
10. Deal with any other matter that may be specified in this Constitution.

Art. 20.

(PART IV. DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE)

The District Executive Committee is a body subordinate to the District Committee and shall be solely responsible to it for its functions and actions:-

1. It shall carry out all the orders, directives and instructions of the Committee.
2. Prepare a bi-annual report on the functions of the Party at the District level and submit the same to the District Committee.

3. Prepare the District budget.
4. Supervise the working and functions of all the Committees or any other body subordinate to it.
5. Formulate and chalk out programmes for the achievement of the Party's aims and objectives in the District level.
6. Any other functions as may be prescribed in this Constitution.

Art. 21.

(PART V. THE WORKING COMMITTEE)

1. The working Committee shall be an active organ of the District Executive Committee and shall be responsible to it for its functions and actions. It shall consist of :-

- (1) The President and Vice - Presidents of the District.
- (2) The Secretary, Joint Secretaries, Finance Secretary, Treasurer and Auditor of the Party at the District.
- (3) The President and Secretary of the Women's Wing of the Party.
- (4) The Secretary of the District in his

capacity as Chief Director of the Volunteers' Wing.

- (5) Not less than 2 and not more than 5 other members to be selected by the District Executive Committee.
- 2 (1) The Working Committee shall deal with the day to the affairs of all matters falling within the purview of the District Executive Committee.
- (2) Shall deal with all financial matters of the District.
- (3) Shall act as a conciliatory body in any dispute between Party members.
- (4) Supervise and control the working and function of the Units and Primary Units and may constitute new Units or abolish existing Units and do all, or any other acts for the smooth running of such Units and Primary Units.
- (5) To distribute and appropriate the District funds between the Units and Primary Units and the District.
- (6) To co-ordinate the working of the Unit and the Primary Unit between them and with the District.

- (7) To co-ordinate the working and functions between the different Wings of the Party.
- (8) To issue Press Notes, Pamphlets, etc.
- (9) To Supervise the working and functions and to call for reports from the various Committees, appointed by itself or constituted by the District Committee or the District Executive Committee; and if in the opinion of the Working Committee any such Committee is not functioning as required or is not functioning at all, the Working Committee shall take over the function of such Committee or take any other action as may be necessary in its opinion.

Provided, however that Working Committee shall not have the power to supersede the Parliamentary Board of the District.

- (10) Supervise upon the function and working of the various Wings of the Party.
- (11) Any other function that may be entrusted to it by a superior authority.

3. The Working Committee shall meet at least once a month and one-fifth of the total numbers shall form the quorum of any meeting of the Working Committee.

CHAPTER IV

Art. 22. POWER AND FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE - BEARERS.

The President of the Party at the Centre and the President of the Party at the District shall be the highest office-bearers of the Party in their respective spheres. All other office-bearers in the Party shall exercise their powers in consonance with their respective jurisdiction and as laid down in this Constitution.

Art. 23.

THE PRESIDENT

- The President of the Party at the Centre shall be and function as the Head of the Party in the State. The President of the Party at the District shall be the head of the Party at the District level.

- (2) it shall be the sole responsibility of the President to see that the programmes, objectives and aims of the Party are carried out and achieved in accordance with and within the provisions of this Constitution.

- (3) The President shall have the supervising authority over the functions and actions of any office-bearers of the Party, and in his opinion found the activity, or otherwise of any office-bearer will, if no immediate action be taken, prejudice the party place such office-bearer under suspension and shall appoint another person in his place or take any other action which he may consider it fit and proper for the smooth functioning of the Party.

Provided that any such action of the President shall be immediately referred to the Central Executive Committee in respect of an office-bearer of the Central and to the District Executive Committee in case of an office-bearer of the District.

- (4) The President will submit a separate report on the functions and achievement of the Party at the Convention.

- (5) The President shall sign all proceedings of any meeting of which he is the Chairman and all other important correspondence or documents.

- (6) The President can direct for the convening of any meeting of any Committee and can also direct any Committee to implement the decision of the Party.

Art. 24.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT

1. The Vice-President shall be subordinate to the President and shall at all times render his service and assistance to the President in all matters that the President may require.
2. The Vice-President shall assume the duty and act as the President in case of the resignation, death or removal of the President.

Art. 25.

THE SECRETARY

1. The General Secretary of the Party at the Central level and the Secretary at the District level shall function, implement, carry out the decisions and directives of their respective superior authorities or bodies and shall be responsible to that body by which they were appointed.
2. They shall call a meeting of their respective Committee as provided in the Constitution as and whenever directed by the competent authority to do so and shall prepare the agenda for such meeting.

3. They shall act as recorders of the Committee and it will be their duty to prepare and extract of the relevant decision of that Committee and to forward the same to the persons or Committee concerned.
4. They shall sign all the correspondences of their respective Committee.
5. They shall be ex-officio Secretaries of all the Sub-Committees constituted under the provisions of this Constitution.
6. The Secretary of the District of East Khasi Hills shall unless the Headquarters of the Party be situated elsewhere, be the custodian of the Party Office and all the documents, etc of the Party. All permissions for use of the Party office shall be obtained from him, and he shall have the discretion over the Party fund for the upkeep of the Party office.
7. The General Secretary at the Centre and the Secretary of the District shall respectively make an annual report on the working of the Party to their respective Conventions.
8. The General Secretary at the Centre and the Secretary at the District shall be invested with all the powers not directly invested to any other office -

bearers of the Party in their respective spheres and all and any other power as mentioned in this Constitution.

Art. 26

JOINT SECRETARY

1. The Joint Secretary shall be subordinate to the Secretary and shall assist and help the Secretary in all matters in his functions as the General Secretary at the Central level and the Secretary in the District level respectively.

2. In case of the resignations death or removal of the Secretary, the Joint Secretary with the sanction of the President of the Committee concerned shall function as the Secretary, until the appointment of the Secretary concerned.

Art. 27.

TREASURER

1. The treasurer shall be the custodian of all the Party funds entrusted to him by the General Secretary, or any other authority.

2. Shall maintain a register or Account Book containing all details of receipts expenditures and shall substantiate all such accounts by receipts and vouchers.

3. Shall furnish all financial reports as required under this Constitution.

4. Shall hold responsible for the safe keeping of the Party fund and shall be liable to compensate for loss of the same.

5. Shall carry out all orders and directives issued by the competent authority regarding the safe keeping of the Party fund and the maintenance of records of the same.

6. Shall allow and facilitate the auditing of the cash balance and Account Books by the Auditors appointed by the competent authority.

Art. 28.

AUDITORS

The Auditors of the Party shall have the authority to inspect all the Account Books of the Party and to make a report accordingly to their respective Committee.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL FUND

Art. 29.

1. There shall be a fund of the Party to be known as the General fund for the whole State and also a District Fund for the respective Districts.

2. All membership fees shall be credited to the Central Fund.
3. All subscription fees, donation etc shall be credited to the District fund. Art. 30.

ELECTIONS

1. The Party Shall contest all the elections to Parliament, State Legislature and the Autonomous District Councils unless the Central Executive Committee decides otherwise.

2. The Central Executive Committee shall be the authority in respect of elections to parliament and State Legislature and the District Executive Committees for the elections to the Autonomous District Councils.

Provided that under extraordinary circumstances the Central Executive Committee may assume to itself all authority in respect of all elections to Parliament, State Legislature and Autonomous District Councils.

Provided further that there shall be constituted a Central level and the District Election Committee at the District level respectively for the purpose of carrying out this provision of the Constitution.

3. The District Executive Committee

shall recommend to the Central Executive Committee the names of the proposed candidates for the elections to the State Legislature as proposed by their respective Area Units within that District. The same principle may be applied in respect of candidates for the elections to the Autonomous District Councils.

4. There shall be created a special fund to be known as the Election Fund for the District which shall be utilised exclusively for meeting expenditures of the MLAs and MDCs and any other elections.

5. The election expenditure shall be made from donations and subscriptions for that purpose.

Art. 31.

CHAPTER VI DISCIPLINE

1. (a) Every member of the Party should have a sense of dedication, to be guided by the principles herein enunciated and exercise restraint in word, and deeds through a self-imposed discipline as well as the discipline of the Party.

- (b) NO member of the Party, shall without the prior approval of the Working

Committee to which he is subject to initiate, associate or involve in any movement or organisation other than those of the Party itself, notwithstanding its effects upon the Party in so far as such acts directly effect the policy or its stand.

2. Any member who violates the provisions as laid down in this Constitution and the rule made there under of the discipline of the Party as stated at (a) above shall liable to be expelled from the Party or action may be taken against him by the appropriate authority as it deems fit and proper.

CHAPTER VII RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

Art. 32.

1. No member of the Party shall be expelled from the Party without giving such member a chance of being heard.

2. Any member who is aggrieved by any action of the Party Unit shall have the right to appeal to the Unit and a second appeal will lie to the Working Committee whose decision shall be final.

An appeal against the action of the Unit will lie to the Working Committee and its decision will be final. An appeal against the action of the Working Com-

mittee and the District Executive Committee will lie to the District Committee whose decision will be final.

An appeal against the action of the District Committee will lie to the Central Executive Committee and its decision will be final. An appeal against the action of the Central Executive Committee shall lie to the General Council and its decision will be final.

CHAPTER VIII

Art 33

MAINTENANCE OF THE PARTY OFFICE

The maintenance of the Party Office shall be under the Working Committee of the District in which the office situate and all the expenditure incurred thereon shall be proportionately shared by the District and the Central.

Art. 34

PUBLICITY

The Party for the purpose of propagating its aims, objectives and programmes may establish and publish newspaper or issue leaflets, pamphlets, appeals, memorandum, etc and for this purpose may delegate or empower any organ under it for carrying out this purpose.

Art. 35

PARTY ELECTIONS

1. All elections within the Party may be conducted by a system of a secret ballot and each voter shall have one vote irrespective of the fact that such voter may hold two or more posts within the Party.
2. Central Executive Committee shall frame rules for the smooth conduct of any election within the Party.

CHAPTER IX**WINGS OF THE PARTY**

Art. 36

1. (a) There shall be separate Wings to be known as the Women's Wing for the women members of the Party and such Wing shall be created for specific area of the District to be determined by the Working Committee

(b) The Women's Wing shall have its own office - bearers and its work and functions shall be according to the guidance and directions of the Working Committee concerned.

2. (a) There shall be a Volunteers' Wing of the Party for the youth members of the Party and such Wing shall be created for a specific area of the District to be determined by the Working Committee.

- (b) The Volunteers' Wing shall have a director for each such specific area. The Secretary of the District shall be the Chief Director and have control over the various Wings within the District subject to the guidance and control of the Working Committee.

CHAPTER-X**FLAG**

Art. 37

FLAG :- The flag of the Party shall be of three vertical colours, blue and red at the sides and white at the middle which shall be equal to the size of the sides and with an emblem of Eagle and five stars of red colour beneath the emblem embossed on the white portion of the flag at the middle.

MISCELLANECUS

Art. 38

1. The General' Council or any other Committee except a Sub - Committee may whenever necessary delegate or invest any of its powers or functions to a smaller Committee
2. The Central Executive Committee shall be the final authority in the interpretation of this Constitution and its decision shall not be liable to be questioned by any person in a Court of Law.

3. Any person who does not attend three successive meetings of any Committee, without prior intimation of his absence shall cease to be a member of that Committee concerned.

4. To meet the aims and objects of the Party in the service of the people and also for strengthening the Party organisation there shall be Party programmes which may be chalked out from time to time by the Executive Committee either at the Central or at the District level.

5. The Article of this Constitution may be amended from time to time by the General Council at its annual Session by a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Art. 39.

DEFECTION, SPLIT AND MERGER

The Central Executive Committee shall make rules pertaining to defection, split in and merger of the Party.

Art. 40.

EXTRA PROVISION

All Committees and posts existing prior to the commencement of this Constitu-

tion and unless otherwise provided for shall cease to exist.

Art. 41.

CHAPTER XI

It is hereby provided that Chapter III of this Constitution in which the powers and functions of the office-bearers have been laid down shall not be deemed to extend to the powers and functions of the office-bearers of the Primary Units and Units.

HILL STATE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY :

Form 1
(Membership)

No.....

After I have carefully read and understood the Constitution of the Hill State People's Democratic Party, I Shri/Smt of offer myself to be a member of the Hill State People's Democratic Party today the day..... month..... year

I promise to obey the rules and follow the instructions of the Party that may be issued from time to time and I

affirm my decision by starting my particulars below and put my signature here-under.

- (1) Name (in Block Letters).....
- (2) Father's name.....
- (3) Address.....
- (4) Age
- (5) Occupation.....
- (6) Previous/present relation with other political Parties if any
- (7) The reasons why you have left the Party which you have previously joined.....
That I have paid the fee and contribution/donation Rs.....

I declare that the above statement is true

Date..... Signature
Place.....

This is to certify that Shri/Smt.....
..... son/daughter of.....

.....of.....is a member of the Hill State People's Democratic Party from..... was received and Rs..... as fee/subscription.

Date..... Signature
Hill State People's Democratic Party

APPENDIX 12

CONSTITUTION OF PDIC

(As translated from Khasi into English by Dr. Pascal Malngiang)

Introduction/Preamble

PDIC was first formed on July 1971 with the objective to gather the people of the State, without party consideration, to fulfil the demands of the people and to develop the economy, and the social life of the people. However, this attempt made by the PDIC was not successful to eliminate the party feeling among the people. Therefore, in 1977, the PDIC set up its candidate in the Lok Sabha election held on March that year. It secured 21 per cent of valid votes. This was more than the required 4 per cent as required by law to get recognition as a recognised political party.

At the General Election held on February 1978, PDIC emerged as a political party and fought for the elections from a few constituencies. The Party secured two seats (Mawhati and Nongkrem). Therefore, the Election Commission recognised the PDIC as a State's political party and it allotted or reserved the symbol 'Spade' for the Party.

1. **Name:** The name of the Party is PDIC which means a Party that would work to meet the demands of the people.

2. **Boundary:** The boundary of the PDIC would include the whole state of Meghalaya.

3. **Aims and Objectives:** The aims and objectives of the Party are:

- (a) To uplift the country, the people and the State with a clean, honest, responsible, strong, knowledgable wise means of administration.
- (b) To maintain and improve the culture and to respect the religions of all the tribals.
- (c) To develop the economy of the people by securing for them, through the Government, adequate prices for the various agricultural produce like potato, jinger, orange, betel nut and leaf, tezpata, pepper, broom and other products that can be expected.

- (d) To see that the aids granted by the Government are used for the benefit of the people not only through the Government offices, but also through the village durbar, welfare associations or religious organisations that can get the confidence of the people and the Government.

4. Membership:

- (a) All the tribals (trais) of Meghalaya, who have reached the age of 18 years, can be members of the Party if,
 - (i) They fill and sign the membership application form as given in Schedule I with the payment of Re. 1 as the application fee.
 - (ii) If the Primary Unit of the village or the place where they reside recommends such application, and
 - (iii) If the District Executive Committee that manages or takes care of the Unit accepts such applications.
- (b) The fee for the application form shall be Re. 1/-, but the membership fee shall be as follows:
 - (i) Active members: Rs. 3/- per year.
 - (ii) Life Members: Rs. 100/-
- (c) All the Active members and Life members will receive the Membership card as given in Schedule II which shall be signed by the General Secretary of the Central Executive Committee. These cards must be properly kept and in case the card is lost, fresh application for the same shall be made to the General Secretary.
- (d) Any member who has resigned or left the party shall not be able to return or be a member of the Party except by the special decision (resolution) of the CEC.
- (e) The power to expel or suspend any one from the party lies only with the CEC.

5. Central Executive Committee:

- (a) The apex body of the Party shall be the CEC which shall consist of not more than 100 members, with

office bearers, from each and every District Committee of the Party. The CEC shall meet as and when required, at least once in three months and the quorum shall be 1/6 of the membership.

(b) Functions of the CEC shall be as follows:

- (i) To do all that is needed to implement the policy of the party and the resolutions of the Annual Convention.
- (ii) To appoint sub-committees under its supervision for any need and to decide on its report.
- (iii) To distribute works among the office bearers if there is any work to be considered specially.
- (iv) To organise the Units and also strengthen them.

6. (a) Office bearers of the Party shall be as follows:

- (i) President - 1
- (ii) Senior Vice-President - 1
- (iii) Vice-Presidents - 5
- (iv) General Secretary - 1
- (v) Assistant General Secretary - 1
- (vi) Chief Organiser - 1
- (vii) Assistant Chief Organiser - 1
- (viii) Finance Secretary - 1
- (ix) Treasurer - 1
- (x) Joint Secretaries - 10

(b) The office bearers of the Party shall also be members of the CEC and their term of office shall be for one year or till the Annual Convention elects new ones.

7. (a) President:

- (i) He should be a life member of the Party before the election as President but if the membership card is not ready, he shall be deemed to be a life member if he deposits the subscription of Rs. 100 with the Treasurer.
- (ii) He shall preside over the Annual Convention, the CEC, the Central Working Committee, Central Election Committee and the Central Nomination Committee.
- (iii) He shall supervise, take care and lead the Party, especially the CED and CWC according to the aims and objectives and the resolution of the Party.

- (iv) He shall sign on the minutes at the meetings wherein he presides.
- (v) He shall have the power to supervise, inspect and inquire all the books, accounts of the Party. He shall also have the power to dissolve the CEC and appoint by himself the Ad-hoc CEC. This shall take place when there are disputes in the Party.
- (vi) He shall be responsible to build up the relationship among the members of the Party, Unit, District Committees and the office bearers and leaders of the various political parties.
- (vii) He shall be responsible to always protect the name and honour of the party, by holding consultations only with the members of the Party if the matter is urgent, as publications against the Party or its leaders, false propaganda about the activities or resolutions of the Party etc.

But he shall take the first chance to convene and inform the CEC about such activities so as to get its approval.

(b) Senior Vice-President:

- (i) He shall assist the President.
- (ii) He shall be the acting President in case the President is absent.
- (iii) He shall unite and bind the Vice-Presidents in their activities.
- (iv) He shall preside over the meetings of the Central Disciplinary Committee and sign the minutes.

(c) Vice-Presidents:

- (i) There shall be 5 Vice-Presidents, and as far as possible they shall represent all the Districts.
- (ii) They shall assist the President and Senior Vice President.

- (iii) In case the President and Senior Vice President are absent one of the Vice President shall be the acting president. He has to be elected by the members of the Committee.

(d) General Secretary

- (i) He shall convene with the knowledge of the President, meeting of the CEC and CWC and other Committees wherein he is the Secretary.
- (ii) He shall be responsible to keep the resolutions of the State Annual Convention, CEC, CWC and other papers in order.
- (iii) He shall be responsible to implement and carry out the resolutions and aims of the Party.
- (iv) He shall distribute activities to the Assistant General Secretary and Joint Secretary of the CEC and he shall supervise over their activities.
- (v) He shall submit a report immediately to the CWC and CEC if any member or office bearer has resigns from his job or membership of the Party.

8. Convention

(a) State Annual Convention:

- (i) There shall be the State Annual Convention of the Party, at least once in a year, wherein all the members of the Party shall have the right to attend.
- (ii) The State Annual Convention shall be convened with the concurrence of the CEC.
- (iii) The functions of the State Annual Convention shall be as follows:
 - 1. To decide on the matters brought by the CEC.
 - 2. To elect new office bearers.
 - 3. To decide on any other matters.

9. Funds

(a) The Fund of the Party shall consist of the following:

- (i) Membership application fee.

- (ii) Membership fees, active and life.
- (iii) Voluntary monthly subscriptions.

10. Amendment

- (a) The power to amend the constitution shall lie with the State Annual Convention of the Party at the proposal of the CEC.
- (b) A member of the Party, after writing to the General Secretary, can bring, through the CEC, the proposals to amend this constitution.
- (c) The resolution for the amendment of the Constitution shall be by a two-thirds majority of members at the Convention.

All the activities of the PDIC shall be carried out in accordance with the Constitution of India by believing, obeying and binding by it.

11. This Constitution shall take effect (shall become operational) from today the 24th August, 1982, as confirmed today at this Convention.

APPENDIX - 13

CONSTITUTION OF THE HILL PEOPLE UNION**ARTICLE 1**

Name : The name of the Party shall be the "Hill People Union."

ARTICLE 2**Aims and Objects**

- 1) To safeguard and preserve the identity of the tribal people and to protect their interests, especially in respect of land, their democratic institutions, language, customs and culture.
- 2) To ensure the territorial integrity of the State of Meghalaya and to restore the State the rightful areas and those contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people.
- 3) To promote the economic development of the tribal people in particular and of the State in general.
- 4) To ensure social justice and democratic freedom in the State.

ARTICLE 3**Membership**

- 1) Any person who subscribes to the principles and constitution of the Party, shall on making a written declaration in the form, as given in the Appendix - 'A' and on payment of the entry of Rs. 1/- become a primary Member of the Party.
- 2) Primary Members shall pay an annual subscription of Re. 1/-
- 3) Primary Members may become Active Members on payment of Rs. 10/-per annum. Only Active Members shall be eligible to hold elective posts.
- 4) Registers of Members shall be maintained by the District Branches and units. The Registers shall contain the full name, address, age, profession and date of enrolment of the member.
- 5) Enrolment of members shall be done through the District Branches at various levels
- 6) the Garo National Council, a constituent of the erstwhile APHLC, shall now be a constituent of the Hill People Union.

ARTICLE 4**Headquarters**

The Headquarters of the Party shall be at Shillong.

ARTICLE 5**Central Organisation****(A) General Council**

There shall be a General Council which shall be the supreme body of the party, constituted as follows :

- 1) All members of the Central Executive Committee,

- 2) Presidents and Secretaries of all Circle Unit constituted under Article 6(F).
- 3) Not more than 10 (ten) to be nominated by the President and the Secretaries of the respective District Branch.

(B) Plenary Session

The Plenary Session of the General Council shall be held at least once a year, to be convened by the General Secretary or a Joint Secretary as decided by the Central Office Bearers. However, if a Plenary is not convened within the Stipulated period, any three of the Central Office Bearers may convene the Plenary session.

(C) Special Session

A special session of the General Council may be held at any time as decided by the Central Office Bearers.

- (D) If a Plenary Session/a Special Session of the General Council is not convened within the stipulated period, a requisitioned meeting may be convened by not less than one-fourth of the members.**

(E) Central Office Bearers

- 1) President
- 2) A senior Vice-President and four Vice-Presidents.
- 3) A General Secretary
- 4) Five Joint Secretaries.
- 5) A treasurer.
- 6) Chief Youth Organiser.
- 7) A President and General Secretary, Women's Wing.

(F) Functions of the General Council

The General Council shall have power to

- 1) Decide the policies and programmes of the Party ;
- 2) Elect the Central Office Bearers.
- 3) Amend the Constitution.

(G) Central Executive Committee

The Central Executive Committee shall consist of

- 1) Central Office Bearers of the Party.
- 2) Office Bearers of the District Branches.
- 3) MPs, MLAs and MDCs belonging to the Party.
- 4) Not more than 10 (ten) members to be selected by the Central Office Bearers.

(H) Functions of the Central Executive Committee

The Central Executive Committee shall

- 1) Ensure the execution and implementation of all resolutions, decisions, directives and orders of the General Council ;
- 2) Take disciplinary action against any member of the party in accordance with the rules of discipline framed by the Central Executive Committee ;
- 3) Supervise the day functioning of the office of the party.

ARTICLE 6

District Organisation

(A) District Branches

Originally each Civil District shall have a District Branch of the party. Each District Branch shall have the following organs :

A District General Council, An Executive Committee, Circle Units and Primary Units

(B) District General Council

The District General Council shall be the highest authority of the Party in the District Branch and shall be constituted as follows :

- 1) Office Bearers of the District Branch, namely, A President, not more than 4 Vice-Presidents, and Secretary and not more than 4 Joint Secretaries and one Treasurer
- 2) MPs, MLAs, MDCs and Central Officer bearers belonging to the District
- 3) Presidents and Secretaries of the Circle and Primary Units.

(C) Functions of the District General Council

- 1) The District General Council shall meet at least once a year to be convened by the Secretary of the District Branch in consultation with the District President.
- 2) The District General Council shall elect the office bearers of the District Branch its own office bearers.
- 3) It shall have power to recommend to the Central Executive Committee for disciplinary action against members as provided in the rules of discipline.

(D) District Executive Committee

The District Executive Committee shall be constituted as follows :

- 1) Office Bearers of the District.
- 2) MPs, MLAs, and MDCs of the District belonging to the Party.
- 3) The President of the Circle Units
- 4) Ten Members to be selected by the District General Council.

The Executive Committee shall be convened by the Secretary in consultation with the District President.

(E) Functions of the District Executive Committee

- 1) To execute and implement resolutions and decisions of the District General Council.
- 2) To implement resolutions of the Central General Council as directed by the Central Executive Committee.

(F) Circle Units

In each District Branch there shall be Circle Units of the Party, each shall ordinarily correspond to an MLA Constituency.

The Circle Unit shall consist of

- (i) Office bearers of all Primary Units in the Circle.
- (ii) Five members to be selected by each Primary Unit.

The first General Meeting of the Circle shall be convened by the Secretary or a Joint Secretary of the District Branch and the following office Bearers shall be elected, a President; a Vice-President, a Secretary, one or more Joint Secretaries and a Treasurer from among its members, and the names of the Office bearers shall be communicated to the Secretary of the District Branch of the Party.

(G) Primary Units

Under each Circle Unit there shall be Primary Units. Not more than one Primary Unit will be organised in each village and two or more villages may be organised under one Primary Unit.

Every Unit shall elect at a General Meeting its own President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and two members who along with the above office bearer shall constitute the Executive Committee of the Primary Unit. The name of the members of the Executive Committee shall be communicated to the Secretary of the respective Circle Units and the Secretary of the District Branch.

ARTICLE 7

Election Committee

- 1) A Central Election Committee shall be constituted by the Central Executive Committee to deal with and finally decide on all matters connected with elections to Parliament, State Assembly and the District Councils.
- 2) District Election Committees shall be constituted by the District Executive Committee to recommend names of candidates for elections which shall be finally selected by Central Election Committee. Unless for elections which decided by the District Executive Committee the District Election Committee shall ordinarily recommend candidates selected by the Circle Units on the basis of election by members of the Circle Units as per rules to be framed by the District Election Committee.
- 3) Any member Aggrieved with the recommendation of the District Election Committee may appeal to the Central Election Committee whose decision shall be final.

ARTICLE 8

Parliamentary Boards

- 1) There shall be a State Parliamentary Board consisting of MPs, MLAs and MDCs of the Party, Presidents and Secretaries of the District Branches, all Central Office Bearers and two persons to be selected by the Central Executive Committee. the state Parliamentary Board shall decide all matters relating to formation of the Government and selection of the leader of the Parliamentary Party.
- 3) The State Parliamentary Board shall meet at least three times a year, to discuss and decide matters relating to the administration and development in the State.
- 4) There shall be District Parliamentary Boards for the three District Councils of Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills consisting of Office Bearers of the District Branches,

- MLAs and MDCs belonging to the relevant districts, and five members from each District Branch to be selected by the Executive Committee of each District Branch,
- 5) The District Parliamentary Boards shall meet at least three times a year to discuss decide matters relating to the formation of the Executive Committee and selection of the leader of the Parliamentary Party in the District Council Concerned.
 - 6) The District Parliamentary Boards shall consider and decide matters of administration and development under the District Council.
 - 7) Each Parliamentary Board shall be presided over by the leader of the Parliamentary Party and shall elect its own Secretary.

ARTICLE 8(A)

Finance Committee

The Central Executive Committee and all other District Executive Committees shall have power to constitute Finance Committee for the purpose of raising funds for the party.

ARTICLE 9

Powers and Functions of the Office Members

(A) President

- 1) The President shall function as the head of the party in the State. The President of a District Branch shall be the head of the party at the District level.
- 2) It shall be the responsibility of the President to see that the policies programmes, aims and objects of the party are implemented by the various party organs in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.
- 3) If in the opinion of the President, the activity of any office bearer will seriously prejudice the party, he may, after consulting the other Office-Bearers, place the office bearer under suspension from the office and may appoint any other member in his place or may take any other action which he may consider proper for the smooth functioning of the party. Any such action of the President shall, within a month, be referred to the Central Executive Committee.
- 4) The President shall preside at meetings of the Central General Council and the Central Executive Committee. The District President shall preside at meetings of the District General Councils and the District Executive Committees.

(B) Vice-President

- 1) The Vice-President shall assist the President in the discharge of his duties and functions.
- 2) One of the Vice-Presidents shall preside at meeting in the absence of the President.
- 3) In the event of removal, death or resignation being accepted of the President, the Senior Vice-President at the Central level, and one of the Vice-Presidents at the District level so elected by the District Executive Committee, shall act as the President of the Party at the Central and District levels respectively, till the next election of office bearers.

In the event of removal, death or resignation being accepted of the Senior Vice-President, and where the position of President at the Central level falls vacant,

one of the Vice-Presidents so elected by the Cen-Executive Committee, shall act as the President of the Party till the next election of office bearers.

(C) The General Secretary

- 1) The General Secretary at the Central level and the Secretary at the District level shall implement the decisions and directives of the party.
- 2) They shall convene meetings of their respective committees as provided for in the constitution, and shall prepare the agenda for the meetings.
- 3) They shall record the proceedings of the committees.
- 4) They shall sign all correspondence of their respective committees.
- 5) They shall submit reports to their respective annual sessions. They shall also submit the annual audited accounts and the audit report to the annual sessions.
- 6) The General Secretary at the Central level and the Secretaries at the District level shall be invested with all the powers not directly invested in any other office bearers of the party in their respective spheres.

(D) The Joint Secretaries

- 1) The Joint Secretaries shall assist the General Secretary at the Central level and the Secretary at the District level respectively.
- 2) In the event of removal, death or resignation of the General Secretary or District Secretary, the President at the Central level or the President at the District level, as the case may be, appoint one of the Joint Secretaries to act as General Secretary or District Secretary respectively till the next regular election of office bearers.

(E) The Treasurer

- 1) The Treasurer at various level shall be the custodian of all Party funds entrusted to him by the General Secretary or respective Secretary.
- 2) He shall maintain the accounts containing details of receipts and expenditure.
- 3) He shall furnish financial reports as called for by the respective Committee under which he functions.
- 4) He shall present the accounts to the auditor(s) appointed by the competent authority.

ARTICLE 10

Tenure

The term of the office bearers shall be for a period of one year or unless earlier replaced. In the event of failure to hold the annual session and due time, the office bearers may continue in eligible for reelection.

ARTICLE 11

Auditors

- 1) The Central Executive Committee or the District Committee shall appoint auditors who will audit the accounts of the party at the Central and District level respectively.
- 2) Central and District office bearers shall not be entitled to be appointed as Auditors at the Central and District levels respectively.

ARTICLE 12**A. Central Youth Welfare Committee**

There shall be a Central Youth Welfare Committee consisting of the Chief Youth Organiser, one Central Vice-President, one Central Joint Secretary and ten members to be selected by the Central Executive Committee, to plan and supervise all youth activities and Youth Programmes of the Party. At least one half of the members of the Committee shall be active members below the ages of 35 years. The Chief Youth Organiser shall be the Convenor.

District Branches may constitute District Youth Welfare Committee.

B. Women Wing

There shall be a Women Wing consisting of the President, the General Secretary, Women Wing and 10 (ten) Women members to be nominated by the Central Executive Committee to plan and supervise Women activities and programme of the Party.

ARTICLE 13**Interpretation of the Constitution**

The Central Executive Committee shall be the final authority in the interpretation of the Constitution and its decision shall be final, and not be liable to be questioned by any person in a court of law.

Amendment**ARTICLE 14**

The Constitution may be amended by the Central General Council in a Plenary or Special Session by a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting, provided that due notice of the proposed amendment shall be submitted to the General Secretary who, as far as practicable, shall circulate the same to the members at least ten days before the Session to scheduled.

Discipline**ARTICLE 15**

- 1) Every member should be loyal to the Party and have a sense of dedication for the aims and objects of the Party, and exercise restraint in words and deeds.
- 2) No member of the Party shall associate with any other political organisation or Party without the approval of the Party.
- 3) Every member shall support the policies and programmes of the Party.
- 4) Any member who violates Party discipline or acts in a manner prejudicial to the Party shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Party Fund**ARTICLE 16**

- 1) The Party shall have fund at various level to be maintained by the respective treasurers.
- 2) The Central Executive Committee shall incur expenditures out of the Party Funds and as far as practicable the Party Fund shall be kept in a Bank.

Quorum**ARTICLE 17**

The quorum of any meeting of the Union or its Committee shall be one-fifth of its members. When there is no quorum, the meeting will be adjourned to another date where a quorum will not be required after one notice is given.

APPENDIX A

(Membership form)

After I have carefully read and understood the Constitution of the Hill People Union,
I, Shri/Smtioffer myself
to be a member of the Hill People Union.

I promise to abide by the Constitution of the Party and follow the instructions that
may be issued from time to time. I affirm my decision by stating my particulars below
and put my signature hereunder :

Name (in block letters)

Father's name

Address

Age

Occupation

I declare that the above statement is true

Date :.....

Signature

Necessary entry fee of Re 1/- is enclosed.

3

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