

**THE ALL - PARTY HILL LEADERS' CONFERENCE  
IN MEGHALAYA  
1960-1980 ✓**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF  
THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

**BELIO NONGRUM**

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI - 110067

**1983**

# JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

Gram : JAYENU

Telephone : 652282  
652114

**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

New Mehrauli Road,  
NEW DELHI-110067.

## DECLARATION

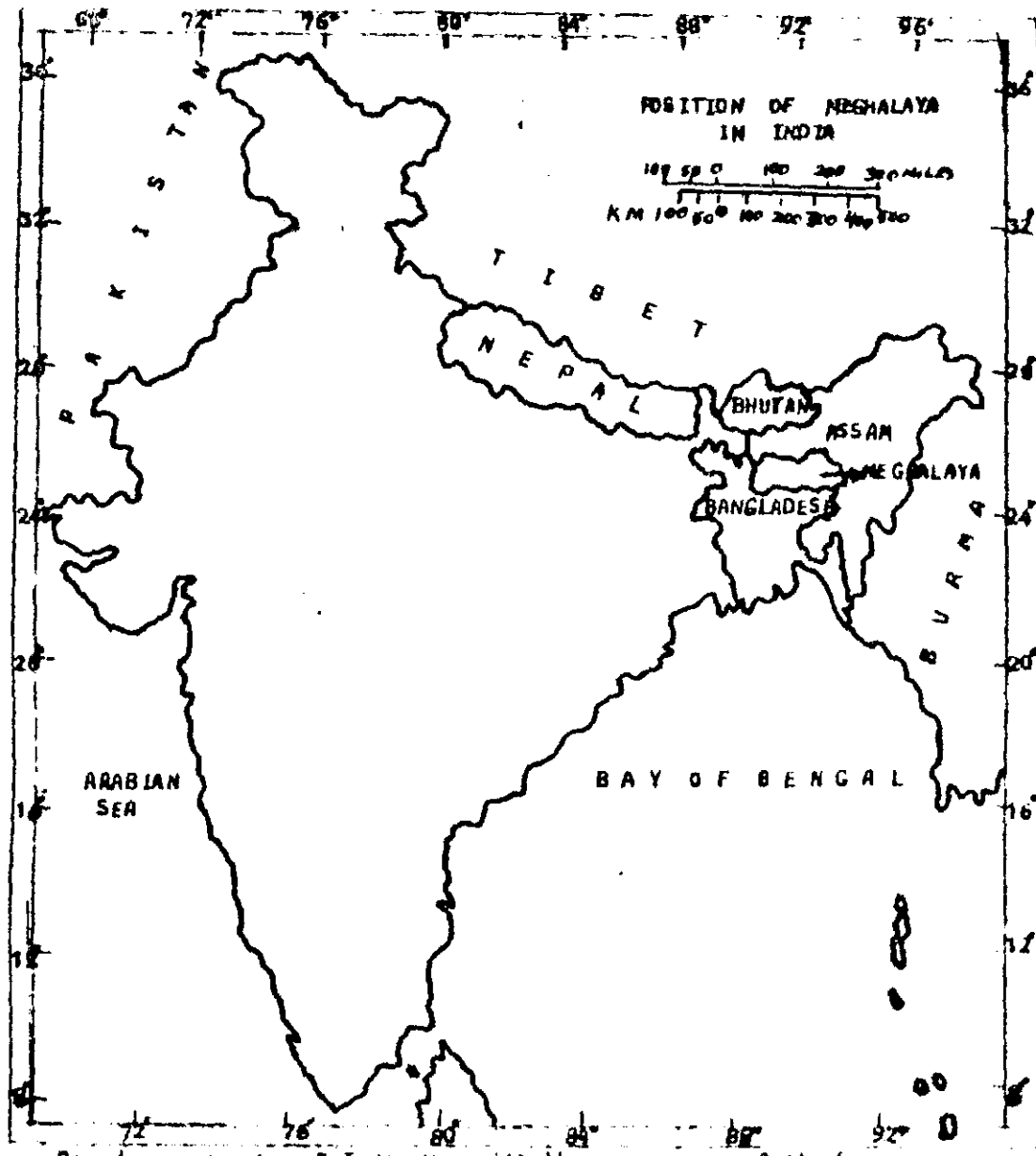
This dissertation entitled "THE ALL PARTY  
HILL LEADERS' CONFERENCE IN MEGHALAYA 1960-1980"  
submitted by Miss JULIO WONGKUM for the award of  
the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY has not been  
previously submitted for any DEGREE in this or any  
other University. This is her bona-fide work.

We recommend this dissertation be placed  
before the examiners for evaluation.

  
( PROF. E. BESHADKI )  
Supervisor

  
( PROF. C.P. BHANU )  
Chairman

The boundary of Meghalaya shown on this map is as interpreted from the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 but has yet to be verified



Based upon survey of India Map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India

(C) Govt. of India Copyright, 1972

SOURCE: Census of India 1971, Meghalaya  
Series-13 Meghalaya General Population, Part-II-A

## PREFACE

In recent years the state is becoming an important unit in the Indian political system and state politics has attracted considerable attention of some scholars — Myron Weiner (ed.) State Politics in India, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Iqbal Narain et.al. (eds), State Politics in India; (Meerut: Minakshi Prakashan, 1967); Paul R. Brass, Factional Politics in an Indian State : The Congress Party in U.P., (University of California, 1966); Richard Sisson, The Congress Party in Rajasthan : Political Integration and Institution Building in an Indian State, (Oxford University Press, 1972); K.L. Kamal, Party Politics in an Indian State: A Study of the Main Political Parties in Rajasthan, (New Delhi: S.Chand and Co.); Baldev Raj Nayar, Minority Politics in Punjab, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Rajni Kothari (ed.), State Politics in India, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970); deal with this subject. The socio-economic studies of the State of Meghalaya have been made by many writers — A. Playfair, The Garos, (Gauhati: United Publishers, 1975); Dr. Gierson, Linguistic Survey of India, vol.II, (Second Edition, 1966);

Edward Gait, A History of Assam, (Calcutta, 1926);  
 Rev. W. Carey, The Garo Jungle Book, (Garo Hills: Tara  
 Book Room, 1966); M.C. Goswami, The Garos of Meghalaya  
 and Their Neighbours in the Tribal People of India,  
 (Government of India: Publication Division, 1973);  
 S.M. Dubey (ed.), N.E. India : A Sociological Study, (Concept  
 Publishing Company, 1978); H. Barch, The History and  
 Culture of the Khasi People, (Published by the author,  
 1967); D.N. Masumdar, The Garos : An Account of the Garos  
 of the Present Day, (Gauhati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1956);  
 J.B. Bhattacharjee, The Garos and the English 1765-1874,  
 (Radiant Publishers, 1978) and many others. But there  
 are very few works on Regional Parties — P.R.G. Nathur,  
The Khasi of Meghalaya : Study in Tribalism and Religion,  
 (Cosmo Publication, 1979); H. Barch, Meghalaya, (New Delhi:  
 R.K. Printers, 1974); J.N. Chaudhury, The Khasi Canvas:  
 A Cult and Pol. History, (Shillong: Smt. T. Chaudhuri, Shillong,  
 Quinton Road, 1978); S. Chaube, Hill Politics in N.E. India,  
 (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1973); V.V. Rao, A Century  
 of Tribal Politics in N.E. India 1874-1974, (New Delhi:  
 S. Chand & Co., 1976); have dealt with the party system  
 in Meghalaya but not in detail. This work, therefore,

is an attempt to deal with an important Regional Political Party—the APHLC.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter gives a profile of Meghalaya; chapter-II studies the circumstances leading to the formation of the APHLC its organisation, aims, objectives and factions in the Party; chapter-III deals with the Electoral Performance of the APHLC, the formation of Government and crisis as well as difference in voting behaviour. Chapter-IV and V are devoted to the Party elite and leadership and the Party in Government respectively, while the last chapter studies the impact of the party on the society and its achievements.

This work is based on empirical data, surveys, interviews, reports, pamphlets, posters, election manifestoes, newspaper cuttings and office files of the Party. And the methods adopted by me are historical, behavioral, analytical and critical.

My sincerest thanks are due to my guide and supervisor Prof. K. Seshadri for without whose constant

encouragement and guidance at every step, this thesis would have not been completed. My thanks are also due to the staff of the JNU and NEHU Libraries, Election and Law Departments of the Government of Meghalaya for giving me access to important records and especially to the party leaders like P.R. Kyndiah, S.D.D. Nichols - Roy, J.D. Pohman, B. Lanong and several others who helped me in the collection of materials and also to Dr. R.S. Lyngdoh of the Department of Khasi, NEHU, for suggesting certain valuable improvements and also to J.E. Taziang who readily granted me interviews and discussed the various aspects of Meghalaya politics. Although all these persons helped me in the preparation of the thesis, I am primarily responsible for what is said and unsaid in this thesis. I have corrected the typescript. If there are still some typographical errors, I may be pardoned.

Dated: New Delhi  
January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1983.

*Belio Hongrum.*  
BELIO HONGRUM

## Abbreviations

AACK	:	Achik Asong Chilchakgipa Kotak
APHIC	:	All Party Hill Leaders' Conference
CPI	:	Communist Party of India
EITU	:	Eastern India Tribal Union
HSPDP	:	Hill State People's Democratic Party
INC	:	Indian National Congress
IND	:	Independent
MIA	:	Member of Legislative Assembly
MDC	:	Member of District Council
PDIC	:	Public Demands Implementation Convention
PSP	:	Praja Socialist Party
RSP	:	Revolutionary Socialist Party
SRC	:	State Re-organisation Commission
SUC	:	Socialist Unity Centre
ULP	:	United Legislature Party
UMPDF	:	United Meghalaya Parliamentary Democratic Forum

---



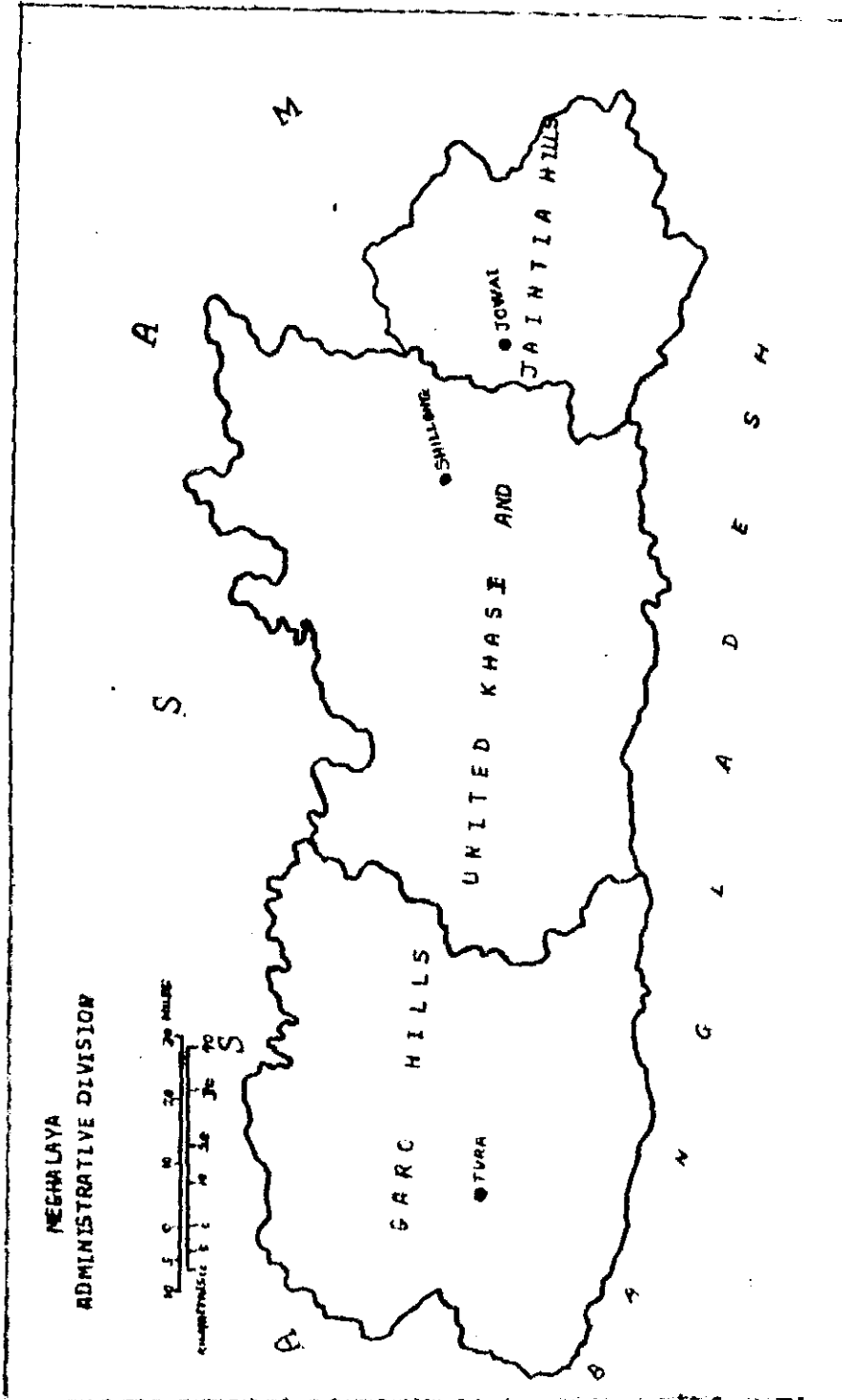
Glossary

- Khatduh** - Youngest daughter among the  
Khasis
- Nokna** - A daughter who is selected as the  
heiress to family property among  
the Garos
- Nokron** - Father's sister's son, husband  
of the Nokna.
- U Blei**  
**Fre Kired**  
**Rabuga Tatara**  
**or Ronaka Tara** | God
- Songtarek** - Non-Christian Garo
- Lyngdoh or**  
**Basan** - Village leader among the  
Khasis
- Nokna (Garo)** |  
**Syiem (Khasi)** | - Traditional chief

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Pages:</b>
<b>Preface</b> ...	<b>1 - iv</b>
<b><u>Chapter- I</u></b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION — A PROFILE OF MEGHALAYA</b>	<b>1 - 28</b>
-- Impact of the Penetration of the British and Missionaries on the Political Life of the Khasis and Garos	
-- Political Consciousness and Process of Integration with the Indian Federal System	
<b><u>Chapter- II</u></b>	
<b>THE ALL PARTY HILL LEADERS' CONFERENCE</b>	<b>29 - 63</b>
- Its Genesis, Constitution and Nature	
- Ideological Orientation and Objectives of the APHLC	
- Factions and Groups in the APHLC	
<b><u>Chapter- III</u></b>	
<b>ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF THE APHLC</b> ...	<b>64 - 115</b>
- Its Relations with other Parties in the State and Its Ministerial Performance and Crisis	
<b><u>Chapter- IV</u></b>	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND ELITE OF THE APHLC</b> ...	<b>116 - 134</b>
<b><u>Chapter- V</u></b>	
<b>APHLC IN GOVERNMENT</b> ...	<b>135 - 145</b>
<b><u>Chapter- VI</u></b>	
<b>C O N C L U S I O N</b> ...	<b>146 - 153</b>
- The Impact of the Party on the Society and Its Achievements	
<b>B I B L I O G R A P H Y</b> ...	<b>154 - 160</b>

Based upon Survey of India Map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India



(C) Government of India copy right 1972

The Boundary of Meghalaya shown on this map is as interpreted from the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 but has yet to be verified.

SOURCE: Census of India, Meghalaya 1971  
Series - 13, Meghalaya General Population, Part II A.

Chapter - I

**A PROFILE OF MEGHALAYA**

Meghalaya<sup>1</sup> is the 21st State of the Indian Union. It came into existence on the 20th January 1972<sup>2</sup> by carving out of the State of Assam. It is bounded by Assam on the North and East and Bangladesh on the South and West. It lies between 25°47'N to 26°10'N latitude and 89°45'E to 92°47'E longitude. The total area of the State is 22,489 square kilometres with a population 10,11,699 — 520,967 males and 490,732 females. The following table shows the district-wise area and population of the State.<sup>3</sup>

Districts	Headquarters	Area	Population
East Khasi Hills	Shillong	11,168.1	4,91,209
West Khasi Hills	Wangetoin		
East Garo Hills	Williamnagar	8,084.0	4,06,615
West Garo Hills	Tura		
Jaintia Hills	Jowai	3,295.5	1,13,875

1. The State 'Meghalaya' owes its name to Dr. S.P. Chatterjee, Professor, Emeritus of Geography Department, Calcutta University, which means the abode of clouds. The term 'Meghalaya' obtained a legal sanction when the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 1969, gives the State that name. Though there are reasons that the people of the State were not in favour of it, yet upto this day the name remains unchanged.
2. Under the North-Eastern areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.

At the time of the inauguration of the State, there were only two districts—the Garo Hills District and the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Districts. But at present the State is divided into five administrative districts.<sup>4</sup>

Meghalaya is mostly a hilly terrain where altitude varies from 1,220 metres to 1,965 metres above the sea level and the area is characterized by heavy rainfall especially in the southern region, namely, Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram - the wettest places in the world. The average rainfall of the state is 10,000 to 12,700 milli metres. The highest peak in the State is the Shillong Peak 1,965 metres and Nokrek in the Garo Hills is the second highest peak, 1,417 metres. A number of rivers, none of them navigable but abound in cataracts and waterfalls drain this mountainous State.

- 
3. Basic facts of Meghalaya issued by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya, (Shillong, August, 1978), p.2.
  4. Under the Government of Meghalaya Notification No. HPL.36/71/43 dated the 21st February, 1972 — the Jaintia Hills District was created, on the 22nd February 1972. The Garo Hills District was divided into East and West Garo Hills Districts on the 22nd October 1976 under the Government of Meghalaya Notification No. HPL.399/75/140 dated 9th October, 1976. And the Khasi Hills District was divided into East and West Khasi Hills districts on the 29th October, 1976 vide Notification No. HPL.49/76/171 dated 12th October 1976 of the Government of Meghalaya.

The climate of the State is temperate and the mercury seldom rises above 26 degrees celsius.

### Social:

Meghalaya is a homeland of two hill communities-- the Khasis and the Garos who do not belong to the same stock. They are linguistically and ethnologically different from one another.<sup>5</sup> It is the belief of the Garos that their original habitation was a province of Tibet.<sup>6</sup> They left Tibet in the distant past and migrated into the present territory, the Garo Hills. The Khasis and Jaintias are a remnant of the first Mongolian overflow into India who established themselves in their present habitat (Khasi-Jaintia Hills) at a very remote period and who owing to their isolated position, maintained their independence.

A peculiar social characteristic of the Khasis and the Garos is the matrilineal system in which women

---

5. Meyson, G.A. has classified the Garos as belonging to a great Bodo race a branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Linguistic Survey of India, vol.I, pt.I, (Reprint, 1967), p.64; while the Khasis and Jaintias as belonging to the Monkhmer, branch of the austroic family languages. Linguistic Survey of India, vol.II, (Second edition), 1966, pp.1-37 and vol.I, pt.I p.55.

6. Major Playfair, A., The Garos, (Gauhati: United publishers, 1973), pp.8-11.

inherit the family and landed property and with regard to succession of chieftainships, the matrilineal law of succession applies. Among the Khasis, the youngest daughter (Khatukh) inherits a lion's share of the family property as she is regarded the priestess and custodian of the family while her sisters are entitled only smaller shares of family property and wealth. The Garos, on the other hand, unlike the Khasis, choose one of the daughters as the heiress (Nekna) but generally her husband Nekrom\* directs the family affairs on her behalf. They adopted cross-cousin marriage system so that progeny and legacy are confined to the same family circle. Residence for the heiress is matrilocal, whereas in the case of other daughters not eligible for heirship, it is neolocal. However, the matrilineal society of the Meghalayans should not be confused with any patriarchal society. Though descent is traced through the mother, in fact, it is the man who plays a more important role in the material and mental life of the people. He is the defender of women and the woman is the keeper of his trust.

---

\* Nekrom - Father's sister's son.



The Meghalayans believe in a Supreme Being -- the author of Creation, Architect of household, Defender of the Kingdom and a Modeller (Rabuga Katara or Bonaka Tara and a Biei or U Tre Kirad). Truly speaking, their faith is a combination of Polytheism, monotheism, supernaturalism and animism. They believe in several spirits of Peaks, Graves, water and caves which they perpetuate by several systems of animal sacrifices; and agricultural rites are observed like wangala among the Garos, poumbiang-Nongkren, Shadsuk mynsiem and Beh dein-khiam (for driving away the evil spirits and for good harvest).

Marriage among them is regarded as a sacred though marriage rite is entirely different as it is between the traditional or animistic Khasis and Garos (Songarek) and the Christians. It is extremely exogamous. Among the Khasis proposal for marriage comes from boy's side but among the Garos, girls are free to choose and propose to a man of their choice with the exception which is the key to the system -- one daughter selected as the heiress (Nokna) is given to the father's sister's son (Nokram) who at the death of his father-in-law assuming

the anomalous position of husband to both mother and daughter<sup>6</sup> but this system has disappeared in the Christianised exogamous society.<sup>7</sup> Divorce is not uncommon and absent. But neither a Khasi nor a Garo woman can divorce her husband out of her own accord without consulting her male relatives or elders of her sib and get their approval. No dowry ever existed but the system of concubinage prevails in the society.

### Economy

The people of Meghalaya were rigidly isolated from the rest of the country by the British which resulted in the neglect of economic and industrial development of the State. Following economic exploitation and alienation of tribal rights resulting from infiltration of non-tribals have had a great impact on the social and economic progress of the people. Again, the Lukewarm policy of the Assam Government till 1970, resulted in keeping the area as mainly agricultural.

- 
6. Col. Hodson, F.C., The Garo and Khasi Marriages Systems - Men in India, vol.I, 1921, p.19.
7. Kar, F.C., "A Point of View on the Garos in Transition", Dasgupta<sup>R</sup>(ed.), A Common Perspective for North-East India, (Calcutta, 1967), p.95.

Although christianity and education reinforced by the Government developmental schemes were responsible for prompting technical changes and occupational patterns, Meghalaya is still industrially backward. The bulk of its economy is agriculture. But the main problems of agriculture in Meghalaya are lack of uniformity in soil condition, the practice of jhumming, difficulties to undertake irrigation projects, lack of marketing facilities and complexities of the land tenure system. Above all, educated youngmen looked only for white collar jobs — and once they have seen the school they hardly returned to the paddy fields. In spite of these constraints, the state has other economic potentialities in mineral, forest and hydel resources. There is thus, a great future for the construction of hydel projects and for the development of mineral and forest based industries. The constitution of the Meghalaya Industrial Development Corporation in 1971, marked a turning point in the Industrial development of Meghalaya.

Before we study the development of political parties in Meghalaya, it would be interesting for us to know something of the people of the state and the political changes brought by the British rule.

### Caro Polity:

Each Caro village had a leader called Mokma who is also the custodian of the Akhing land (owned by the village community). But he is only the constitutional head<sup>8</sup> since his power was only repository in character and being regarded as the symbol of his people's right as well as the leader of the religious ceremonies. It was David Scott, the architect of the British domination over the Eastern Frontiers of India, who created the institutions of Sardars, Laskars, Sarbarakars and Mandals. The Sardars were the village headmen. The Laskars were the chiefs of the passes (duars) and responsible for maintaining law and order within their respective jurisdiction as well as collection of public revenue from the Sardars concerned. The Sarbarakar were native officers placed above the Laskars to supervise their activities. To assist the Sardars and the Laskars the institution of Mandals was introduced. The mandals should report all crimes committed by the mountaineers to the nearest Sardar who would then trace and apprehend the offender.<sup>9</sup> In spite

- 
8. Goswami, N.C., The Caros of Neshelava and Their Neighbours in the Tribal People of India, (Government of India: Publication Division, 1973), p.82.
9. Bhattacharjee, J.B., The Caros and the English (1765-1874), (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1978), p.63.

of the new system, it took almost fifty years for the British to subjugate the people completely. It was only in January 1873 that the British through the Deputy Commissioner W.J. Williamson could bring one village after another under its authority and finally gave rise to the formation of a full fledged Garo Hill district which was incorporated into the Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874.

#### Khasi-Jaintia Politics

Political institutions of the Khasis were democratic in character. But unlike those of the Garos, there were no village since the state is something like an agency which links up and associates the clans in various areas. In the pre-sovereignty period, for the convenience and protection, the people ordained a priestly <sup>10</sup> i.e., Lyngdoh clan or senior most family (non-priestly) called Jaid Basan or Roloi to direct the affairs of the village. They were at first appointed by the council of Lyngdohs by resorting to religious means and holding of investiture ceremonies but later on elected by the people or representatives of

---

10. It is pointed by H. Barch, that "The priests were the actual rulers as well as the sacerdotal heads aided by the Council of Basans in the exercise of their executive functions". Barch, H., Khasi Democracy, pp. 38-39.

the class on the basis of adult male suffrage. Lyngdohs or Basans were assisted by a group of officials called Metabors, Sangots, Majis, Chutyas, Factors generally known as Rangbah Shmong or Wahsh Chung. Subsequently, various Lyngdohs, Basans and other petty rulers combined together to form the Syiemship which emanated as an organ to centralise some common subjects of administration.

Syiemship was built on the edifice of democracy since the Syiems can forever act as a guardian of Khasi Law and ceremonial head of the State but with functions of a limited chief. The King or Syiem is not a landlord or landowner as was the case with other Indian native princes. He does not tax land holdings and is much more potential figure in relation to his Syiemship than the British monarch in relation to his Kingdom. He is compared to a mother and usually called U Syiem-a Kmie (King mother) whose function is to protect the people commonly called *Khun-ki Hajar* (children). The Syiem or king is assisted by Nyntris, advisers or Bakhras and other officials, who together do not judge, do not legislate and take action alone without the Durbar (Council) — 3  
 where the entire population participates in

oulding policies, legislations and judicial decisions.<sup>11</sup>  
 In the present administrative set-up though the prerogatives and powers of the Durbars are not unlimited, both the Government and the District Councils put a good deal of value on their functions and services in their respective units.

Impact of the Penetration of the British and Missionaries on the Political Life of the Khasis and Garos:

In order to follow in proper perspective the course of political events leading to the formation of Meghalaya, it would be profitable to recount briefly in retrospect the pattern of administration in the component districts of the State which formed a legacy for Independent India.

The policy of the British Government to the hill tribes in the North East Frontier has been a policy of conciliation or non-interference with the powers of the local chiefs and village organisations. But we can not

---

11. Barch stated that: "Durbars are the leading portraits of Khasi Democracy and help us to understand the progress made by them in the art of self-Government", see, Barch, H., History and Culture of the Khasi People, (Shillong, 1967), pp. 275-80.

deny the fact that by means of arms and different administrative measures<sup>12</sup>, the British Government had effected drastic changes in the powers and functions of the Syiems and Nokmas (Khasi and Garo traditional chiefs) who lost their age old freedom of dispensation among the population by making the concurrence and approval of the government to their election obligatory. By the beginning of 1873, Garo Hills was consolidated and attached to Assam in 1874 over which the Chief Commissioner assisted by the Deputy Commissioner and other officials (Sardars, Laskars, Sardarkars and Mandals) carried on the administration of the district. The new administrative set-up affected the powers, privileges and rights of the Nokmas.

The division of Khasi-Jaintia Hills into Native States and non-States or British areas again affected the rights and powers of the Syiems.<sup>13</sup> In 1877, former

---

12. Mackenzie pointed out that: "it was in 1872 that measures were taken for complete subjugation of the territory and tribes", See Mackenzie, Alexander, History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the N.E. Frontier of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1884), p.6.

13. 25 States in Khasi Hills — 16 Syiemsships, 3 Lyngdohships, 1 Sahdarship and 5 Sardarsships were accorded the status of native States whose chiefs were given autonomy in internal administration like law and order, policing and decision of petty Civil and Criminal cases only. While the entire Jaintia



agreements signed between the British Government and the Khasi chiefs were abrogated and replaced by Sanads and Patanas "which in common political parlance is a grant of recognition from the Crown to the ruler of the State"<sup>14</sup> issued by the Government to the Syiem, Lyngdohs, Mahadars and Sardars respectively by virtue of which, the British Government appropriated to itself the right of ratification of the elections of the chiefs and their continuance in their respective positions was made conditional on their good behaviour and were thus converted into agents of the administration. Further, the British by the Order-in-Council, 1936 divided the tribal areas into Excluded and partially Excluded areas, with an intention "to have a larger control of disposition and exploitation of mineral and forest wealth in these areas and keep their inhabitants apart from the rest of India for easier exploitation and suppression",<sup>15</sup> Thus, by one measure after another, the traditional chiefs were reduced to the formal heads enjoying certain rights of governance at the pleasure of the British Government.

---

Siemship was divided into 12 chieftains along with 32 Khasi states were treated as Non-States of British areas whose chiefs were to pay taxes to the British Government.

14. Rao, V. V., A Century of Tribal Politics in North Eastern India, 1874-1974, (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co, 1976), p. 33.
15. The Indian Annual Register, 1936, vol. 2, (Calcutta, 1937) p. 200.

Political Consciousness and Process of  
Integration with the Indian Federal System:

With the evolution of new administrative structure and the extension of the British colonial rule, the indigenous institutions of the hill people were superseded and the political isolation broken. The organisation of clans and villages into a district contributed much to the emergence of their own identity or tribalism which may be called by the respectable name of 'Proto-Nationalism'.<sup>16</sup> The most significant contribution of the British was Education and the establishment of Tura and Shillong as the Headquarters of the Garo and Khasi Hills districts which helped in the acceleration of the process of socio-economic and political metabolism among the Khasis and the Garos. With education came christianity, which in turn gave new ideas and understanding of new lives for old and rapid structural differentiation. As such, political consciousness present only among the educated and urbanised christians<sup>17</sup> who tried to influence

- 
16. Lyngdoh, B. S., Government and Politics in Meghalaya, (unpublished thesis, 1976), p. 621. Quoted Dr. B. K. Roy's view who characterised "Proto-Nationalism as something positive, constructive and expansive".
17. Thakar, A. V., Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (Other than Assam), sub-Committee Final Report, 1956. Pointed out that "A Christian section of the tribals though small in number is educationally and economically advanced". See Shiva Rao, B., The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol III, Delhi, 1966, P-184

their unconverted tribal brethren to rediscover new merits in their ancient and native culture even when virtually all of it had been forsaken in the name of Christianity. But Christianity should not be blamed solely as the agency of Proto-Nationalism. A sharp consciousness of identity, heritage and traditional norms instigated such a proto-nationalistic movement as evident from the acceptance of the Christian leaders of the ancient tribal norms like observance of state religious ceremonies and dances.

The departure of the British also brought in a new political consciousness of the dangers involved thereafter. It created fear in the minds of the people of being placed under the Indian domination motivated by the dislike of the lowlanders. Out of fear and suspicion, there dawned an awareness of their uniqueness in terms of language, customs and physical appearance from the lowlanders and these have carried into their new lives, their inferior and superior complexes towards the plains people.

---

lly far in advance of the non-Christian tribals. The Christians again appear to be much better organised and vocal and they are found to take prominent part in local political organisations".

A determination to safeguard their own way of life accompanied by the currents and cross-currents of Indian politics culminated in the appointment of the State Reorganisation Commission which gave signal for an upsurge of regional feeling and linguistic jingoism.

In this connection, it is also worth mentioning that a consciousness of their identity gave rise to twin movements for revitalisation and solidarity and proto-nationalism. In the course of the movements those which are social and cultural have been dominated by the non-Christians but political movements by the Christians who were better educated, politically more conscious and who were inducted into the echelons of the governmental authority during the British days. The non-Christians therefore though were not completely outside the orbit of political movements were left with no choice but to accept the domination of the latter (Christians) whose popular image in the political context is definitely greater. Following these, there emerged a new phase of proto-nationalistic organisations among the Khasis and the Garos though the urge for such political self-experience took a long time to take shape.

The first attempt at some kind of solidarity movement was seen in the emergence of the Jaintia Durbar in 1900 as a socio-cultural organisation but not motivated by any political aim. It was in 1923 that the first political organisation, the Khasi National Durbar came into existence with J.J.M. Nichols-Roy as the founder Secretary and has been credited with the earliest attempt at codifying the Khasi customary laws.<sup>18</sup> But it was predominantly aristocratic in character consisting only the Syiems and educated gentry of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The claim of the Durbar to represent the people in its memorandum submitted to the Statutory Committee was also challenged by Traditionalists Group (Headed by Babu Sib Charan Roy and supported by the Syiems) on the ground that the chiefs were merely elected heads with limited rights under Khasi customary laws.

The appointment of the Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission and the Indian States Commission in 1928,

---

18. Chande, S., Hill Politics in N.E. India, (Orient Longman, 1973), p.62, stated that "Popular belief has it that Rev. Nichols-Roy wanted to modify the traditional Khasi Law of inheritance in favour of male succession which floundered on the bed-rock of Traditionalist opposition".

saw the beginning of political activity in the Hills especially when the Khasi chiefs declined to submit their memorandum to the States Commission but to the Simon Commission which, however, did not visit the Khasi Hills. Further in October 1933, due to their resentment of being placed under the Deputy Commissioner<sup>19</sup> they submitted a representation to the Viceroy, Lord Wellington requesting him to define their status, asking for representation in the Federal Legislature and expressing their desire to be placed under the Viceroy. Under the advice of the Viceroy they formed a Khasi states Federation in 1934. But the failure of the Government to recognise the aims and objectives of the Federation reduced it to a social organisation till 1945 which simultaneously stimulated political consciousness of the people who formed other political organisations during 1947-49 like the Khasi States People's Union under G.G. Swell and R.R. Thomas and the Khasi Jaintia Federated National Conference under Rev. Nichols-Roy.

---

19. From 1859 till 1877 the Viceroy was the authority to sign the Sanads, from 1877-1904 the Governor, 1904-1933 the Commissioner of Hills Division and from 1933 the Deputy Commissioner.

the founder secretary of the Khasi National Durbar.

Under the Government of India Act 1935 the Partially Excluded areas like the Nikir, Garo and Khasi and Jaintia Hills had already been granted representation in the Provincial Legislature as a result of which political consciousness had taken strong roots and gave rise to eminent leaders like Rev. Nichols-Roy, L. Gathphoh and Capt. Sangma. Forces were also at work to spread separatism among vested interests of the Hills. Under such circumstances the so-called Coupland Plan for a Crown Colony was born. But Rev. Nichols-Roy was against the idea of Crown Colony and perceived clearly that the future of the Hills could not be apart from India. In the meantime he stressed for the need of preserving the customary institutions and traditions of the hills people consistent with political progress in a separate memorandum which served as an advance copy of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

In 1946, with the visit of the Cabinet Mission the possibility of India's Independence loomed large on

the horizon. As a response to a new administrative set-up in India, the Khasi-Jaintia Chiefs formed the Federation of Khasi States with an avowed object of preserving their rights as well as laws and customs of the people, and with the achievement of India's Independence, it executed a Joint Instrument of Accession to regulate their relation to the Dominion of the Government of India and Province of Assam.

After the accession of the Khasi States, the Governor of Assam convened a Khasi States Constitution Making Durbar consisting of the heads and elected representatives of the people. During the election to the Durbar in the late 1948, the advocates of the District Council of the present Sixth Schedule founded the Khasi Jaintia Federated States National Conference, while the opponents of the Sixth Schedule who advocated the Federation of Khasi States formed the Khasi States People's Union. But eventually some leaders of the Union accepted the Sixth Schedule and ultimately with the formation of the District Council, the



Federation was dissolved.<sup>20</sup>

The genesis of the Sixth Schedule goes back to the recommendation of the Cabinet Mission that there should be an advisory Committee to recommend measures for the protection of rights of the citizens, minorities and tribes of the Excluded areas.<sup>21</sup> In spite of the strong opposition from the traditionalists, the Sixth Schedule (which was based on the report of the North-Eastern Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded areas under Gopinath Bordoloi submitted on the 25th July 1948) has been accepted by the Constituent Assembly and incorporated in the Constitution of India.<sup>22</sup> Under the

20. Barch, H., *op.cit.*, p.244.

21. Rao, V.V., *op.cit.*, p.157.

22. Constituent Assembly Debates vol.II, p.327.

Rev. Nichols Roy who was one of the members of the Bordoloi's Committee and who has been regarded as the author of the Sixth Schedule said: "I must especially thank the Drafting Committee for accepting the draft for the creation of the District Councils with autonomy in the Hills area in Assam which in the Sixth Schedule are called autonomous districts. These Hills District, inhabiting by the Tribal Hill people will under this constitution be able to develop themselves according to their genius and culture...."

DISS

320.954164

N731 AI



TH1409



TH-1409

Sixth Schedule the District Councils ( 5 District Councils in 5 Hills Districts of Assam namely — Garo Hills, United Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Nikir Hills, North-Cachar Hills and Miso Hills) have been entrusted with certain legislative, executive, judicial and concurrent powers and functions. But as it is well known, the Syiems and traditionalists were from the beginning against the Sixth Schedule which aimed at curbing their powers in the interest of a unified and better administration.

The Sixth Schedule as a landmark in the political history of the Hills, strengthened tribal consciousness on the one hand but on the other, curtailed the powers of the traditional chieftains which subsequently brought in conflicts between the leaders of political parties and the traditional chiefs. For example the appointment and succession of chiefs and Headmen Act 1959 affected the status and methods of elections of the chiefs and headmen. This act in turn reflected the failure of the Sixth Schedule to provide adequate safeguards for the preservation and protection of rights and democratic institutions which the people enjoyed from

times immemorial. Again local politics, narrow regional issues and factionalism plagued the District Councils from their very inception. In spite of the best intentions of the framers of the constitution the failure of the Sixth Schedule gave rise to a question -- what is the justification of the existence of the District Council in the Sixth Schedule under the changed circumstances when most of the Hill areas in North East India (Meghalaya) have attained full statehood? They may now almost seem to be mere anachronistic appendages to a full fledged and regular state government. Further, it must obviously be costly to maintain this double system of government and administration.

The Garo National Council:

The Garos were pretty backward. But the spread of literacy, contact with outsiders through trade and business, freedom of movement in the neighbouring areas, the return of Garo Ex-servicemen and above all, the growth of a class of teachers-leaders in different

villages with Church societies<sup>23</sup> developed in the Garos political consciousness which gave birth to a political Party, the Garo National Council in 1946 which played an important role in shaping the social and political life of Garo Hills. In its memorandum submitted to the Sardesai sub-committee, the Garo National Council demanded the abolition of the Zamindari system in Garo Hills and Codification of customary laws, more powers for the local councils and to maintain links with the Provincial Government in respect of subjects like Higher Education and medicine and with the Central Government in matters of defence, external affairs and communications. It also demanded the representation of four members from Garo Hills in the Assam Provincial legislative assembly.<sup>24</sup> In 1960, it decided to fight for a separate State and in 1962, it became a constituent part of the APRLC. Since then the Garo National Council has ceased to be a political party.

---

23. Kar, P.C., "A Decade of Garo Politics", The Assam  
Basak Patrika, (Calcutta, April 2, 1970).

24. Under the Government of India Act 1955, only two seats were allotted to Garo Hills in the Assam Provincial Legislative Assembly.

Mention may also be made of the Congress Party which had its roots in the component Hills Districts of Meghalaya from 1938. But its role was rather a story of wrong alliance, wrong assessment and false steps often marked by opportunistic politics.<sup>25</sup> It sided with vested interests and alienated the sympathy of the educated and eminent hill leaders. Rudeness, obstinancy and authoritarianism of the Congress Chief Minister of Assam (Medhi) at the delicate stage of political development in the hills widened the gap of differences between the hills and the plains. Further, the failure of the party organisers to make a distinction between integration and assimilation lead to antagonism, tension and alienation responsible for the disintegration of Assam. Even B.P. Chaliha who won the heart of the hill people failed to bridge the gulf between the hills and the plains by accepting the resolution of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee on 22nd April 1960, to declare Assamese as the official language of the state. Thus, a failure on the part

---

25. Interview with J.E. Tariang, one of the eminent Congress leaders in Meghalaya on the 28th July, 1980.

of the Congress Chief Ministers of Assam culminated in a demand for a separate Hill State.

We have already noted the factors contributing to the emergence of proto-nationalistic movement among the Garos and the Khasis. These factors were also responsible for "the recent attempts at tribal solidarity and self-identification".<sup>26</sup> This was evident when the leaders of all the Hill Districts of Assam except the Nagas met in a conference at Turu in 1950 to form an Association called the Assam Hills Tribal Union which in its memorandum to the State Reorganisation Commission demanded for a separate Hills state within the Indian Union. When the SRC turned down their demand (6th October, 1954) they formed an ad-hoc Committee - the Tribal Leaders' Conference at Aizawl in October 1955 whose resolution gave birth to the Eastern India

---

26. Srinivas M.N., and Senwal, R.D., "Some Aspects of Political Development in North Eastern Hill Areas of India", North Eastern Research Bulletin, vol.I-3, 1970-73, pp1-5.

Tribal Union representing different tribal organisations.<sup>27</sup>

But factionalism and regional interests in the Union pulled in different directions as the hill leaders, from the very inception of the HITU, were far from being united. Again, though the hill people rallied under the banner of HITU, swept the polls in 1957 on the Hill State issue and formed a coalition with the Indian National Congress in the Assam Assembly, yet it did not work well. In this connection, the observation made by the SRC in the context of the situation was almost prophetic.<sup>28</sup> But on the

- 
27. The Khasi states people's Union, the Khasi Jaintia Federated States National Conference, United Nise Freedom Organisation, the Hills Union of Assam, the Garo National Council, the High Lander's Union and Welfare Union of North Cachar Hills.
28. The Report of the State Reorganisation Commission, (Delhi, 1955), p.188, reads: "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 Korbha Durban (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".

23rd June 1960, as directed by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, the Assam Chief Minister, Cheliba announced that a bill, to declare Assamese as the official language of the state would be introduced. The reaction to such an announcement was the formation of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference on the 6th July 1960 which superseded the HITU. In the subsequent chapters we shall study the *saga* of the APHLC.



Chapter-IX

THE ALL PARTY HILL LEADERS' CONFERENCE

Genesis of the APHLC

The APHLC was brought into existence under compelling circumstances. On the 22nd April, 1960 the Assam Provincial Congress Committee directed the Chief Minister to declare Assamese as the State language in the teeth of opposition from the Hills and other minority communities of Assam. B.P. Chaliha (the then Chief Minister of Assam) assured that "the government would prefer to wait till they get the demand from the non-Assamese speaking population for the declaration of Assamese as the State language".<sup>1</sup> Due to strong pressure, the Government had no alternative but to yield and on 23rd June 1960, Chaliha announced that the Assamese official language Bill would be introduced in the next session of the Assembly. When Capt. W.A. Sangma expressed his unhappiness over the decision of the government, Chaliha under a wrong impression that a majority of the hill leaders were

---

1. Chaliha's speeches in the Assembly on the April 3, 1960.

indifferent to the language issue, advised Capt. Sangma to call a meeting of the Hill leaders and to consult them. Thus Capt. Sangma, a minister for Tribal areas, Transport and Publicity in the Chakma ministry convened a meeting of the leaders of all the Political Parties and other non-aligned leaders of the Autonomous Hills Districts (excepting the Naga Hills) on July 6, 1960 at his official residence in Shillong. The NITU, the Garo National Council, the Khasi-Jaintia Federated States Conference, the Jaintia Durbar, the Karbi Durbar, the Mizo Union, the Swatantra and even the District Congress Committees of the Autonomous Hills Districts joined the Conference. The conference unanimously opposed the move to make Assamese as the official State language. It was on that issue that the APHLC was born. At this conference, the APHLC did not speak a word about a separate Hill State. It was only when the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Assam official Language Bill on the 24th October 1960 that the APHLC, in its 3rd meeting held on the 16th, 17th and 18th November 1960 at Haflong that it demanded, for the first time, in its history for separation from Assam and

the creation of the Eastern Frontier State (for the Hill areas) for the preservation of the distinct identity, culture and language so that the hill people could grow and develop according to their own genius.<sup>2</sup> After 11 years of struggle and challenges, the APHLC ultimately succeeded in achieving its end -- the establishment of the State of Meghalaya (20th January, 1972).

Truly speaking the APHLC, at first, was only a platform or a forum of all hills parties rather than a conventional political party. But the political conditions and circumstances transformed it into a political party which also took the reins of administration of a newly created state, Meghalaya, into its own hand for 6 consecutive years (1970-1976).

#### Constitution and Nature of the APHLC

In modern times Party organisation assumes great importance : it constitutes the general setting for the

---

2. "The 3rd Conference of the APHLC was a milestone in the history of the APHLC in particular and in the Hill State movement in general". Quoted from Iyngdeh Nongbri, R.S., Government and Politics in Meghalaya, (Unpublished Thesis, June 1976), p.442.

activity of the members, the form imposed on their solidarity, it determines the machinery for the selection of leaders and decides their powers. It often explains the strength and efficiency of certain parties; the weakness and inefficiency of others.<sup>3</sup> The APHLC is not a cadre but rather a mass-ethnic party -- a party to articulate the grievances and aspirations of the hill people. At the apex of the APHLC, is the Central Executive Committee with the following members:<sup>4</sup>

- a) members of the Central Working Committee;
- b) members of Parliament and State Legislature belonging to the party; and
- c) such member or members or representatives from each district unit or branch or affiliated political parties as may be decided upon by the state level conference from time to time.

Among the important bodies of the Central Executive Committee include the Central Working Committee

---

3. Daeverger, Maurice, Political Parties, Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1955), p.4.

4. Article XI of the Constitution of the APHLC, published by D.D. Pugh, General Secretary, October 1, 1977, p.3.

and the Central Election Committee.

The Central Working Committee shall consist  
of:<sup>5</sup>

- a) the Central office bearers, the President  
the 4 Vice-Presidents, General Secretary,  
3 Secretaries and a Treasurer;
- b) not more than 25 members to be elected  
by the party in a plenary session.

The Central Working Committee shall meet as the  
President and the General Secretary consider it  
necessary.

The Central Election Committee shall be consti-  
tuted 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, State Legislature and District Councils.

Besides the above Committees, there are other  
smaller units like the Primary circle and the District  
level units. At the District level, District Election  
Committees shall be constituted by the Central Working

---

5. Article XII of the Constitution of the  
APFLC, p.4.

Committee in consultation with the units or branches concerned to recommend names of the candidates for the Central Election Committee.

Membership:

Normally the concept 'member' of a party coincides with that of an adherent who should be distinguished from the 'supporter'. A supporter, unlike a member, is one who is in agreement with the Party's ideology and also finds himself in a position to lead his support to the party but also at the same time remains outside the organisation. The concept of member is linked with a particular notion of Political Party that was born at the beginning of the 20th century along with the socialist parties and that has subsequently been initiated by others. It does not correspond to the old conception of party which flourished in the 19th century in Parliament system with a franchise based on property qualification. The concept of membership is a result of the evolution which led from the cadre party to the mass party.<sup>6</sup> The APHLC as stated earlier is a mass party.

---

6. Duverger, N., DR. cit., p.63.

According to articles VI and VII of its constitution, any person or party who accepts article III which reads:

"The objects of the Party shall be,  
 (a) the well being and 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, (b) the preservation of the identity of the tribal people,  
 (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."<sup>7</sup>

On payment of a yearly subscription of 0.25 p (twentyfive paise) a person becomes a member of the party. A member on payment of an active membership fee of Rs.10/- (Rupees ten) per annum, shall be eligible to hold an elective post in the Party. The APHLC may admit or grant affiliation to any political party which subscribes and accepts article-III of its constitution and pays a sum of Rs.250/- (Rupees two hundred and fifty) only as affiliation fee, renewable

---

7. Constitution of the APHLC, Article-III, p.1.



every year on payment of Rs.100/- (Rupees one hundred) only. But applications for affiliation shall be dealt with and decided upon by the Central Working Committee. The APHLC was a mass party. Membership was thrown open to all tribal and non-tribals. It was composed of leaders of the different parties of the Hills including the All India Parties like the Indian National Congress and the Swatantra. But after the creation of Meghalaya, membership for non-tribals was opened only in Shillong.

The leaders of the APHLC came from different sections of the society and carried with them the message of dedication and sacrifice which attracted the people from all walks of life in all parts of the State both urban and rural. Some tribal businessmen and traditional leaders however contended that the APHLC leaders were not from the mainstream of the society. This is not true. All the leaders were indigenous in origin. They were moderates, constitutionalists and pragmatists. They had a clear conception of their aims and aspirations. The extremists who did not anchor their boat near the shore lines of reality who,

did not follow any principle dubbed the leaders as foreigners.

As a matter of fact, charges against the APHLC were based on 'Revivalism' which "has made its appearance among the educated group which had hitherto been oriented towards modernisation" and that "the Congress is supporting the revivalist demand... as a part of its opposition to the APHLC".<sup>8</sup> and the claim of the APHLC as "a Regional Party with National Outlook"<sup>9</sup> can not be denied after a careful study of its aims and objectives as expressed in the Constitution and in the Election Manifestoes of the APHLC.

#### Ideological Orientation and Objectives of the APHLC

A close study of the four election manifestoes of the APHLC (1962, '67, '72 and '77) indicates that the party, though "regional in character, has a national outlook". Its main aim and objective was to establish a separate North-Eastern Hill Frontier State within

---

8. The Statesman, May 11, 1968.

9. Rao, V.V., "The Success of the APHLC", APHLC Souvenir, 1974, p.29.

the Indian Union. This resolution was adopted with a view to preserve the distinct identity, language and culture of the hill tribes, so that the hill people could grow and develop according to their own genius and also for the development of the economic condition of the hill areas and for the promotion of the standard of life of the individuals in these areas and for the protection of the minorities living in the Hill areas.<sup>10</sup> With this end in view, the AFHLC ultimately succeeded in achieving its objective, that is, the establishment of Meghalaya through a national consensus and through good will from all quarters.

Since its inception, the AFHLC was aware of the social, educational, industrial and economic backwardness of the region. Hence, in all its election manifestoes, it laid great emphasis on the pragmatic programmes to solve the problems. In the three general elections, that is, 1967, 1972 and 1977, as evident from its election manifestoes, the AFHLC fought on the issues of improvement of education and agriculture, meaningful

---

10. Election Manifesto of the AFHLC, 1962.

exploitation of mineral and forest resources and better employment opportunities for the people of the State. These manifestoes assured the electorate to make the state self-sufficient in agriculture by encouraging the farmers to take to modern methods of cultivation and to provide them with financial assistance and incentives in the matter of irrigation, land reclamation and procurement of seeds and fertilizers. To eradicate illiteracy, one of its election pledges was to provide facilities for the intellectual growth and development of the youth in the state through the Hill University<sup>11</sup> — the establishment of the North Eastern Hill University has given a sense of satisfaction to the people in-as-much as such demand for a university was almost as old as the demand for a separate State.

The manifestoes further outlined that it should endeavour to increase agricultural production. As soon as the APHLC formed the government, its first task was to appoint the Land Reform Commission<sup>12</sup> in the Khasi Hills but unfortunately its recommendations have not been

---

11. Election Manifesto of the APHLC, 1967.

12. Notification No. B.D. 238/72/Part  
dated July 2, 1973.

implemented. While greatest emphasis is laid on the development of agriculture and communications, the party's attention has been diverted more and more to economic developments as a pre-requisite to a real progress of the State. To accelerate and expedite economic development, the party promised scientific exploitation of the mineral and other natural resources and new schemes and undertakings to ease out the problems of the people living in the border areas and to create employment opportunities that has been its promise. In this respect the APHC government has been able to establish industrial undertakings such as the Meghalaya Industrial Development Corporation in 1971, which marked a turning point in the industrial development programmes in Meghalaya.

At first the Party tended to adhere to the ethical and moral values by eradicating social evils and promoting healthy social life. Further, the party which has committed to serve the people of Meghalaya in particular, and of the country in general, has increasingly realised that communalism, regionalism,

narrow and parochial tendencies were impending for the march of the Indian people towards new goals and modern social set-up. Therefore in its second session held on the 22nd and 23rd August 1960, it adopted a resolution — "This conference assures all non-tribal residents in the autonomous Hills Districts that their legitimate interests will be fully safeguarded in the proposed state." On the basis of this resolution, the party had repeatedly promised, in its election manifestoes to protect the minorities in the State. However, it assured that culture and heritage of the hill people would be safeguarded at all cost.

The APHLC during the struggle, strongly believed in the Gandhian concept of attaining the good ends by equally good means. It is in that frame of mind that it adhered to the Gandhian principles of non-violence and peaceful constitutional struggle. Further, its belief was that Meghalaya would enable the Hill people not only to grow according to their goal and genius but also to play a constructive role in the affairs of the Nation. In fact, this was the motivating

force for the APHLC to initiate a unique political framework of a neo-type structure which ultimately found expression in the formation of the North Eastern Council<sup>13</sup> -- a forum which is to serve all the areas of the North East Region.

The ideologies, aims and objectives of the APHLC so far included in its election manifestoes show that this party is regional in character with national outlook. To substantiate this, let us illustrate its claim in its mandate to the people.

- a) It accepts English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges in order to facilitate the emotional integration of the whole of the N.E. India and of the country;
- b) It takes a leading part in the establishment of a Central University, the doors of which are opened to all Indians;
- c) It does not make an appeal to parochial feelings and narrow prejudices by speaking in any language or about any religion which can be the cause of disintegration. It strongly believes in egalitarianism

---

13. Interview with P.R. Kyndiah the APHLC sitting MLA on the 27th July 1950.

society and promises protection of minorities of all kinds<sup>14</sup>

- d) Further the APHLC does not encourage secessionist or isolationist tendency in the country. Unlike other Hill Parties, the APHLC has not demanded for a separate State outside India, but a State within the Indian Union. This was demonstrated on the occasion when the country had to face a national problem in October 1962. The APHLC did not take advantage of the delicate situation but cooperated with the Government of India in its war efforts by keeping in abeyance the launching of its non-violent direct action programme in view of National Emergency.

#### Factions and Groups in the APHLC:

Having discussed the ideological orientation of the APHLC, we now proceed to examine the party in action. The capacity of the APHLC to transform itself from a proto-nationalist organisation to an effective political party may be examined by taking into consideration the role of the party.

---

14. Rao, V.V., The Success of the APHLC, op.cit., pp. 29-30.



In a large number of countries undergoing modernisation and where a single party's dominance has emerged, factional politics has come to play an important role. It is with the gaining of power that internal conflict developed leading to defections and splits. A number of reasons have been advanced for the existence of this phenomenon like distribution of powers and status in the government and the different view points and interests of the component members. Factionalism is a phenomenon, that in different degrees play an important role in the internal structure of modern political parties even in a highly developed party system as in Great Britain with two party system and Italy with multi-party system. Factions are responsible not only for the rise and fall of governments but also for the activities and policies adopted by government.

Parties in India have acquired a heterogeneity of character, composed as they were, of myriad groups and interests that constantly compete in the intra-party struggle. On the other hand a faction is a close knitted entity promoting common interests and owing allegiance to a common leader. While the party provides

the structure of an ideological base to the institutionalised public opinion, factions give interest orientation to intra-party politics and thereby provide party politics with realism.<sup>15</sup> In the context of State politics in Meghalaya, unlike in the other states in India, there has been no dominant caste such as Kammas and Reddis (A.P.), Mudaliars and Pillais (Tamil Nadu), Patidars (Gujarat) and Nayars or Menons of Kerala. A significant feature of the political system in Meghalaya has been the dominant position occupied by the APHLC. But factional politics has always played an important role within the party from the very beginning which has affected its stability. Therefore, where factionalism has been rampant and beyond control, it has led not only to frequent change of governments but also changes in the internal structure and composition of its membership, resulting in inefficient administration and low economic development.

From the point of view of the type and intensity of factionalism within the APHLC, the period can be roughly divided into two phases -- the first was during the struggle for statehood (1960-1971) and the second

---

15. Khan, R., "The Indian Political Landscape", Indian Quarterly, XXIV, October-December, 1968, pp. 301-10.

after the formation of Meghalaya (1972-till the 6th General Elections) - when the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Assam official Language Bill on the 24th October, 1960, in the teeth of strong opposition especially from the Hill Leaders; the third conference of the APHLC which was held at Haflong resolved to send a delegation to meet the Prime Minister to demand, for the first time, for the formation of a separate Hill State. The result of this discussion was the famous offer of the "Scottish Pattern of Administration" by the late Prime Minister, Nehru. The APHLC, for the first time, became a house divided against itself. The APHLC rejected the Plan and resigned from all the Councils, Boards and Committees constituted by the Government on the ground that the Scottish Plan was merely a constitutional expression of the existing working of the Tribal areas Department without actual political separation. But the District Congress Committees of the Hills districts (excepting Jaintia Hills) accepted the plan and severed their connection with the APHLC. The Congress leaders like J.B. Hajjer (North Cachar Hills) Mahan Singh (Khasi Hills), Bunsingh Sangma (Caro Hills) and two

APHLC members, A. Thanglura (Nise Hills) and K. Rymbai (Jaintia Hills) severed their connection with the APHLC. These leaders fought the 1962 General Elections on the issue of the Scottish Pattern and were ingloriously defeated. But their disassociation with the party did not at all deter the APHLC in its struggle for the Hill State. To get its goal achieved, the APHLC reversed its decision to boycott the 3rd General Elections 1962. Accordingly, the APHLC Council of action which met at Shillong on the 6th October 1961 resolved to contest the elections and that all successful candidates should resign their membership from the Assembly by the 24th October 1962. This issue again brought a split in the APHLC where four of eleven APHLC MLAs (H. B. Pohokan, R. Thanglura, N. Nomin and N. Sangma) declined to resign.

Another crack in the APHLC took place in the second part of 1962 when on the 30th October, 1962, the APHLC decided not to resort to its non-violent direct action programme due to the Chinese aggression. The Nise Union (a constituent part of the APHLC) adopted a rebellious attitude and parted company from the APHLC

In the bye-elections that followed on the 24th July, 1963 (to fill up vacancies caused by the resignation of seven APHLC MLAs), the APHLC in the Mizo Hills was beaten by the new extremist party, the Mizo National Front which demanded secession from India and fought the election on the issue of an Independent Mizo Republic (Mizoram State) and no longer for a Hill State. In these circumstances the APHLC lost ground in the Mizo Hills and remained confined to the North-Cachar Hills, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills.

The ups and downs of the struggle, the rebuffs and disappointments, however, did not deter the APHLC from pursuing its cherished goal. Through continuous dialogues with the Government of India various proposals were presented and discussed and which were either discarded or unimplemented.<sup>16</sup> The problem for the time being seemed to defy all solutions, but the search was not given up and no party banged the door on the other.

---

16. Started with the Scottish Pattern of Administration 1960, Nehru Plan of full Autonomy 1963, Pataskar Commission 1966, Regional Federal Plan 1967 and the Asoka Mehta Committee 1967.

At last a National Consensus emerged when <sup>in</sup> September 11, 1966, the Government of India announced its decision to create an autonomous state. The cloud of factionalism which loomed large on the APHLC horizon was still visible even in the last stage of its successful struggle for statehood. The Federal Plan (Vishnu Sahay's proposal) announced by the Government of India ~~in~~ January 13, 1967 to reorganise the State of Assam on a pattern of the Ausleigh 1867-1914, divided the APHLC into two groups — the extremists and the moderates.

The extremists like Hoover Hynniewta, Kopingstone Lyngdoh and others would not budge an inch to think of participation in the joint discussion over the sub-State or Federal Plan while the moderates like B.B. Lyngdoh, R.S. Lyngdoh, J.D. Fohmen, Capt. Sangma, P.R. Hynniah were in favour of participation in the joint discussion. But the joint discussion did not bring any result. As a matter of fact the two parties parted company with bitterness. Factionalism still took a stronghold with the announcement of the Union

Home Minister (Y.B. Chavan) on the 14th May 1968 that the plan contemplated by the Government of India for the reorganisation was creation of the autonomous state within Assam. Although the Plan was not fully spelled out, it was rumored that the APHLC leaders who were present in Delhi had unconditionally accepted the Plan. Therefore the radical group within the party was very unhappy. Fourteen persons including some circle organisers and volunteers of the Non-Violent action organisation of the APHLC formed an ad-hoc-Committee to challenge the APHLC leaders. Hopingstone Lyngdoh, Chief organiser of the volunteers wing, Khasi Hills, who was expelled from the party on the 1st July 1968 due to his grave indisciplinary action joined the extremists Branch of the ad-hoc-committee and formed a parallel organisation known as the Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party<sup>17</sup> in October 1968. But with the emergence of the HSPDF, factionalism and defection did not come to an end in the APHLC.

---

17. Lyngdoh, R.S., Government and Politics in Meghalaya, (unpublished Thesis), June 1976, p.616.

Another phase of factionalism took its shape in 1973 soon after the formation of the full fledged state of Meghalaya. G.G. Swell one of the prominent figures in the APHLC, a genuine spokesman of the party in particular and of the people in general, during the struggle for a separate Hill State, challenged the party leadership by making charges of corruption and administrative lapses against the APHLC Government.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, due to his anti-party activities he was expelled from the party in 1974. He formed his own party, the Public Demand Implementation Committee which is later on known as the Public Demand Implementation Convention that brought a split in the Party. The split within the party did not end with the expulsion of G.G. Swell. Rather it widened when the Congress-APHLC merger issue came up for consideration on the 1st November 1976. The APHLC had an electoral alliance with the Congress in 1972 and further in its 24th session held at Shillong on the 19th and 20th June 1973 resolved that it "shall continue to maintain and strengthen its

---

18. Mr. G.G.Swell's letter dated October 2, 1973 addressed to Mr. P.R. Kyndiah, General Secretary of the APHLC in a booklet", Mr. G.G.Swell Expelled, Why?".



relationship with the Prime Minister and her party, the Indian National Congress at all levels". In spite of its reiteration to extend its cooperation with the Congress, somehow National Politics took a threatening turn with the proclamation of National Emergency ~~in~~ <sup>on</sup> June 25, 1975 when the Congress leaders took it as an opportunity to bring the APHLC under the Congress umbrella. So out of fear for any consequence a faction of the APHLC legislators and councillors decided at Medipathar to merge with the Congress. With such a decision, the internal unity and integrity of the party were at stake and the APHLC once again, became a house divided against itself into two factions. In the General meeting of the APHLC held ~~on~~ <sup>on</sup> November 1, 1976, Capt. Sangma the then Chief Minister of Meghalaya and Party president decided to bid the November 16, 1976 as the date for the Medipathar Conference to discuss the immediate Congress-APHLC merger issue very much against the will of B.B. Lyngdoh, B.D.D. Nichols-Boy, F.R. Kyndiah and D.D. Pugh (senior party members and cabinet ministers in the Sangma's ministry) and R.S. Lyngdoh, speaker of the Assembly. As a reaction

to the President's decision, they decided not to participate in the Mendipathar conference though affirmed the party's faith and full confidence in the unique leadership and statesmanship of the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi.<sup>19</sup> While the other faction including B. Barch, Sanford K. Narak and a large number of MLAs and MDCs under the leadership of Capt. Sangma attended the Mendipathar conference where they decided to leave the Party and merge with the Congress "in response to the desire of the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi and her Party for the larger and fuller interests of the people of Meghalaya in particular and of the country in general"<sup>20</sup> and announced the dissolution of the APHLC. In November 18, 1976, Capt. Sangma and his supporters became the members of the Congress Party. It would not be wrong to say, however, that they joined the Congress Party not for people's or country's interest but for

---

19. Extract taken from the resolution passed by the Executive Committee of the APHLC held at Shillong on the 10th and 11th November 1976.

20. Extract taken from a resolution adopted at the Mendipathar Conference, 16th November 1976.

their own political future as the Congress Party at that time was a ruling party at the centre as well as in most of the States with great patronage at its disposal. Their action in turn contributed to a severe split in the party which amounted to the waning influence of the APHLC in Meghalaya. Further, at the initiative of Capt. Sangma, the Election Commission of India freed<sup>21</sup> the "Flower" as an election symbol of the APHLC in Meghalaya and Assam.<sup>22</sup> While the legal battle continued in the Supreme Court of India, the 6th Parliamentary election also came. The APHLC nominees, Mr. P.R. Nyndiah and Mr. K. Marak had to use "the scales" and "Two Leaves" respectively, as their symbols. Demoralised by the loss of the reserved symbol, i.e., public confusion as a result of "Flower" being frozen, the party was pushed to the second position in the Tura Parliamentary constituency and stood last in the Shillong Parliamentary seat.

To understand the latest phase of factionalism in the APHLC, the changes of Government in the present

---

21. Election Commission of India, Notification Order issued on 1st February, 1977.

22. Election Commission of India vide its Notification No. 56/66, 1st December 1966 has allotted "Flower" as the reserved symbol of the APHLC.

assembly are to be taken into consideration. Here a reference may be made to the entry of the Congress and the HEPDP into the third government, that is, the United Naghalaya Parliamentary Democratic Forum which marked a great development in the politics of the State vis-a-vis, the organisation of the APHLC. Whether history repeats itself or not, the election scene of 1972 were certainly not repeated in 1978 when the APHLC secured only 16 seats in a 60 member assembly and left without a leader. But due to public pressure the APHLC along with the other non-Congress parties, the PDIC and the HEPDP, were swayed to form a coalition government which stayed on the saddle of power for eleven months only (March 1978 to February 1979). The three party government was facing crisis when the APHLC with a strength of 51 MLAs supported by 3 PDIC MLAs resigned under the leadership of D.D. Fugh who assumed the office as the APHLC Chief Minister. But the one party Government (as claimed by D.D. Fugh) was rather weak and shaky due to (a) constant strain and stress among the APHLC members both in the Parliamentary Wing and the Party organisation, (b) the APHLC MLAs from

Jaintia Hills have become restive as their district did not yet fair share of ministerial post (Fugh's second ministry was composed of 5 from Garo Hills, 7 from Khasi Hills and 1 from Jaintia Hills).

(d) exclusion of the party senior most members like B.D.D. Nichols-Roy, B.B. Iyngdoh from the cabinet. B.B. Iyngdoh a senior party member, saw in it an opportunity to come to power by objecting and criticising the inclusion of M.N. Majaw (FDIC) in the cabinet and by challenging the claim of D.D. Fugh that his government was a purely APHLC government. On the basis of these facts, B.B. Iyngdoh resigned from the Parliamentary Party and not from the Party. But as a matter of fact, his aspiration to chief ministership made him to resign and his personal grudge against M.N. Majaw was used as a cover of all his plans and ideas.<sup>23</sup>

With his resignation, a true picture of the latest phase of the APHLC factionalism took its shape and came to light in the assembly when Iyngdoh lent his support

---

23. "The APHLC legislators knew his plan only too well because a letter canvassing for leadership in the Party was addressed by Mr. Iyngdoh to them all.... six others who joined the APHLC later subscribed to the idea of Mr. Iyngdoh for forming another government". Sten, H.W., Naghalaya Inset Book, 1979, p.69.

to the combined opposition parties which subsequently formed themselves into what is known as the United Meghalaya Parliamentary Democratic Forum under his leadership on the 17th April 1979 and formed the Government on the 7th May 1979. Truly speaking, Lyngdoh's rise to chief ministership and the defeat of D.D.Pugh marked the end of an epoch characterized by the dominance of the APHEC in Meghalaya and indicated a severe split in the party which prominently stands divided into two factions APHEC(B) and APHEC(M). With such developments, a three day APHEC General Conference was held at Shillong (8-10 May, 1979) to solve the problem and to ensure the unity and integrity of the party as well as to replace the newly formed UMPDF government. Mr. Lyngdoh also attended the conference and never gave up the claim that he along with the other six dissidents APHEC members (R.Nomin, P.Sangma, P.B. Nomin, G. Karak, L. Nomin, D.D. Lapsang all MLAs and S.G. Lyngdoh MDC) were still in the party though he strongly alleged about the interpolations of the party decision of the Conference. He further denied of any split in the Party when he stated "It is my proposal which was accepted

by all to avert a split in the Party",<sup>24</sup> and claimed that the Forum Government was a partyless government. To support his claim, he convened a General Conference on the 26th and 27th July 1979 at the National Durbar Hall Shillong. But the fact remain that he has alienated himself from the original APHLC because of his anti-party policies and actions which aimed to strip away the real image of the party.

The gap between the two factions was further widened when the senior leaders of the party like Nedy K. Marak, S.D.D. Nicholas-Roy, P.R. Lyndiah, D.D. Pugh and others who claimed themselves to be on the vanguard of the Party organization made no move to patch up and reconcile with Lyngdoh and termed his conference as illegal and complete violation of the constitution of the APHLC. D.D. Pugh, the ex-Chief Minister and Party General Secretary stated that "Lyngdoh and his group were neither members of the APHLC nor had any connection or link with it after their expulsion from the Party on the 31st May 1979".<sup>25</sup> The claims and

---

24. Lyngdoh statement made on the 10th May 1979, quoted in the Assam Tribune, May 11, 1979.

25. Extracted from the Press Release of Mr. D.D. Pugh, General Secretary, APHLC, quoted in U Namplings, August 8, 1979.

counter-claims of the two factions may give us a question -- whose party is the real APHLC? If we examine the strength of his group of seven members, only two were elected on APHLC ticket but the rest were the defectors elected on HSPDP and Congress tickets.<sup>26</sup> Further, it was reliably learnt that just before the end of his tenure of chief ministership, Mr. Lyngdoh was told by the Chief Election Commissioner of India that the APHLC(N) was the real APHLC.

Under the terms of the serious solemn agreement signed by the leaders of the APHLC(B) Congress-I and HSPDP who formed the UNEDP on April 17, 1979, Lyngdoh was to be in the office of Chief Ministership for 2 years ( May 7, 1979 to May 7, 1981), after which to be succeeded by Capt. Sangma (Congress-I). As the days of handing over charge were knocking at the door, the APHLC(B) was in a dilemma. It was on this ground that B.B. Lyngdoh initiated a move for a re-union of the two factions of the APHLC by organising a meeting on the 13-14 June, 1980, but it yielded no result. However,

---

26. Interview with S.D.D. Nichols-Boy sitting APHLC MLA and one of the four vice-presidents of the Party on the 27th July, 1980.



the hope for their re-union got a better response in their meetings held on the 4th November 1980 at Shillong, on the 6th at Tura and 7th at Meddipethar. In these meetings the two factions expressed their hope for a re-union before the end of March 1981.<sup>27</sup> Although their continuous discussions over the re-union issue appeared in different local papers of Shillong, the possibility of their re-union, only time can tell as most of the APHLC(M) members who are on the vanguard of the party were not unanimous on this issue. A convention was held at Shillong *in* April 18, 1981 to discuss the major issues confronting the party in particular and the state in general. This convention paved the way for the Dima Joint Meeting of the APHLC, held on the 28-29 December, 1981 under the Chairmanship of A. Marjri, M.P., as a mediator of the two factions which for the first time after the split, indicated the possibility of re-uniting the two factions as evident from its resolution -- "It was agreed that henceforward, the party should function as one body and entity.... A special session of the state level conference of the party be

---

27. La Exata A Bixylin, November 18, 1980.

convened by the president... to consider the relationship of the APHLC with other parties and also other vital matters confronting the party and the State". In spite of this resolution re-union had not taken place. Time alone can tell the fate of the resolution and the re-union of the two factions of the APHLC.

Thus a study of the APHLC factional politics may be ascribed to the strained relationship between the organisational and the parliamentary wings. In fact, this is a struggle for power and leadership. But this is not a new phenomenon in the context of party politics of the Indian states or India as a whole. The history of British Parties at the end of the 19th century shows that the development of Party structure gave rise to rivalry between the organisational leaders and the parliamentary representatives. The larger the organisation, the stronger the rivalry and the more does the authority of parliamentary representatives decrease to the advantage of the authority of the organisational leaders.

The genesis of the APHLC shows that it started as a platform for a movement to fight for a separate

Hill state but transformed itself into an effective political party in the hands of able leaders like Capt. Sangma, B.B. Lyngdoh, G.G. Swell, R.S. Lyngdoh, S.K. Narak, S.D.D. Nichols-Roy, N. Barch, P.R. Kyndiah and others who entered the government and controlled the party organisation simultaneously. However the organisational wing has not been strengthened after the creation of Meghalaya. It could never establish its leadership over the Parliamentary Wing. Truly speaking, factions in the APHLC have developed not because of the gap between the organisational and the Parliamentary Wings but because of sharp differences between the two powerful groups over the APHLC-Congress merger issue and also over leadership conflicts among the front-ranking personalities. Moreover, the problem of reciprocal relationship between the organisational leaders and Parliamentary representatives was not acute with the APHLC since the party leaders held both elective mandates from the electorate and leading position in the party.<sup>28</sup> Democracy requires

---

28. For example Capt. W.A. Sangma was the Party President and Chief Minister and D.D. Pugh was also the Chief Minister and Party General Secretary simultaneously.

that Parliamentary representatives should take precedence over the party leaders and the electorate over the members of the party, since the electors constitute a larger group than party members who are included in it.<sup>29</sup>

---

29. Duvoyger, H., SR. 612, p. 182.

Chapter - III

**ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF THE APHC**

To know how the APHLC controls as well as influences policy decisions and maintains legitimacy in Meghalaya, this chapter is proposed to study the electoral performance and role of the APHLC in the Assembly and Parliamentary Elections.

Elections are not unknown in the traditional society of Meghalaya. But it was the Government of India Act, 1953 which for the first time attempted to break the cage of custom and penetrated into the political consciousness of comparatively large sections of society by granting statutory representation to the hill people in the Assam Legislative Assembly. It allotted two seats to the Garo Hills District and three seats to the Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and one seat for women in Shillong and with it, the districts further assumed a social, political and moral reality when the new political classes began their education in the theory and practice of democratic politics. The APHLC faced the electorate for the first time in 1962. The general elections provided an opportunity to the new leaders to mobilise the different

sections of the State and articulate public opinion for the creation of a separate Hill State and enter the corridor of power. The APHLC which emerged from the different political parties of the Hills was not as old as the other regional parties of the other States. But this did augur well for the APHLC because proto-nationalism got entrenched in the life of the party. Though there were other political parties in the field, the real contest in most of the parliamentary and assembly constituencies was between the INC and the APHLC. The former stood for Democracy and Scottish Pattern of administration. While the latter stood for a separate Hill State. It is against this background that we now proceed to study the electoral politics of the APHLC in the four General Elections held from 1962 to 1978.

Before 1972, the constituting districts of Meghalaya, Garo Hills and the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills were divided into nine territorial constituencies (four in the Garo Hills and five in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills) and two parliamentary constituencies --

the autonomous Districts (Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the North Cachar Hills) and the Dhubri Parliamentary constituency, Garo Hills was attached to it. But under sub-Section (4) of Section 20 of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act 1971, the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was allotted sixty seats of which fifty were reserved for the scheduled tribes and two seats in Lok Sabha.

The APHLC and the four Assembly General Elections:

Now let us study the electoral performance of the APHLC in 1962. Three seats were allotted to the Niao Hills. The Niao Union (which became a constituent part of the APHLC in 1960) set up three candidates available in 1962. In the Aizawl East and West constituencies, there was a straight contest between the APHLC and the INC; in the Janglai constituency there were three candidates in the field. All the three seats were won by the APHLC. In the Nikir Hills and North Cachar Hills with two and one seat respectively, the APHLC lost all the seats. The INC



won all of them. But in the Garo Hills and the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills out of nine seats, eight were won by the APHLC and the Fmubari seat in the Garo Hills went to the INC.

The results of the third Assembly General Elections 1962, show the popularity of the APHLC in the Niso, Garo and the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills. It secured eleven out of fifteen seats allotted to all Hills Districts in the Assam Legislature. Even with such spectacular victory, the demand for a separate Hill State was not conceded. Therefore, to demonstrate its strength, the APHLC called on its elected members in the assembly to resign. In the Niso Hills out of three only two (Saprawaga and Ohlunga) responded to the call but not Thanlira. While in the Garo, United Khasi-Jaintia Hills out of eight, three declined to resign.

In July 24, 1963, there was a bye-election to the vacancies caused by the resignation of the seven APHLC members. But the performance of the APHLC was somewhat disappointing. The slump in the popularity

of the party was due to the growing popularity of the Niso National Front in Niso Hills which won the two seats available for contest and also due to the decision of the APHLC to suspend its non-cooperation and non-violent direct action programmes which induced the Niso Union to adopt a rebellious attitude against the APHLC as well as to alienate itself from the APHLC and decided to demand a separate state for the Nisos within the Indian Union.<sup>1</sup> Thus in 1963, the APHLC lost ground in the Niso Hills.

We shall now consider the performance of the APHLC in the Fourth Assembly General Elections 1967. As stated before, the APHLC which lost ground in the Niso Hills in the later part of 1963, was still functioning in the Nikir and North Cachar Hills but it was not as popular and active as in the Garo and United Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The APHLC set-up four candidates in the two Hills District (three seats allotted to the Nikir Hills and one to the North-Cachar Hills) but lost all of them in a straight contest with

---

1. APHLC Souvenir, July, 1974, p. 5.

the INC. But in the Garo and United Khasi-Jaintia Hills all the nine seats allotted to them were won by the APHLC. The results of the Third and Fourth Assembly General Elections show that the Khasi Hills and the North Cachar Hills were not in favour of a separate Hill State, and that the APHLC was virtually confined to the Garo and the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Districts.

Before we proceed to the Fifth Assembly General Elections held in 1972, a mention must be made of the year 1970, when the autonomous state of Meghalaya<sup>2</sup> was created with a separate Provincial Legislative Assembly of its own whose members were elected by the elected Members of the District Councils, eighteen from the Khasi Hills, sixteen from the Garo Hills and four from the Jaintia Hills and three members nominated by the Governor to represent the minorities (Assamese, Bengalee and Nepalee). In a fortyone member Assembly, the Congress could capture only four seats and the APHLC with thirtyfour members came to power within

---

2. Assam Re-organisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969.

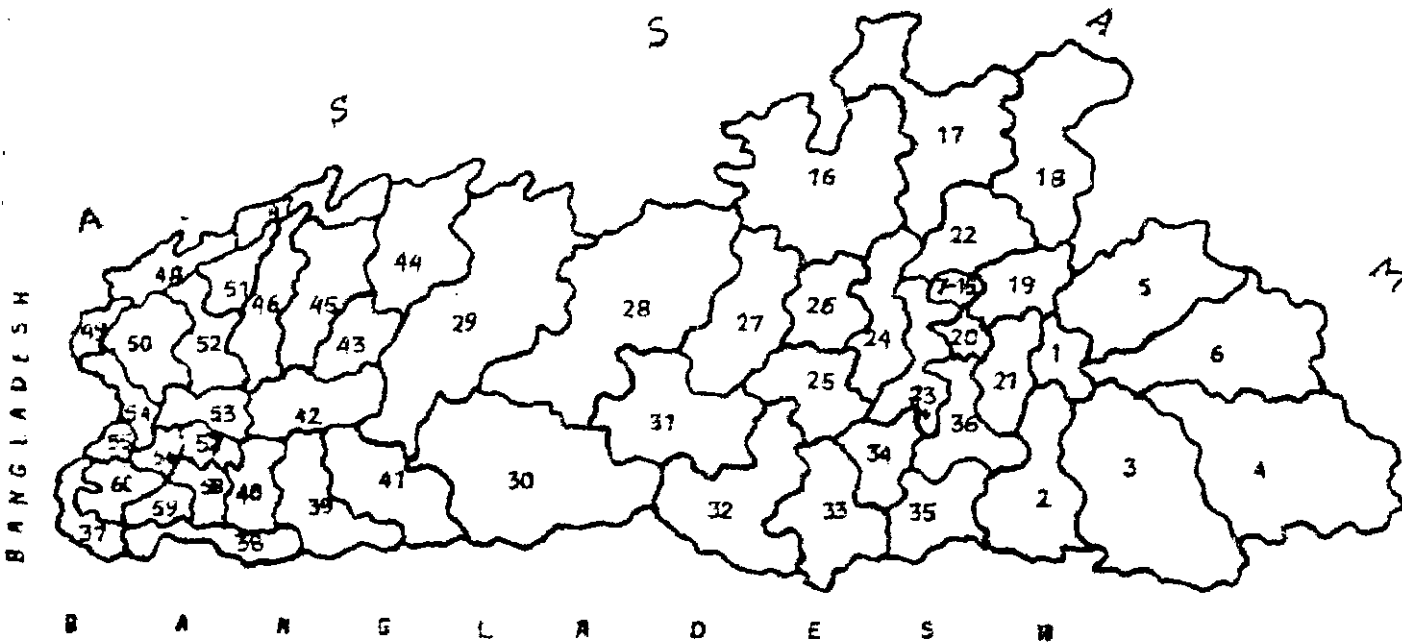
ten years of its formation. The first General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was held in March 1972. In a sixty member House<sup>3</sup>, the Garo Hills was allotted twentyfour seats. Of the twentyfour seats, twenty were reserved for the scheduled tribes. The Khasia Hills got thirty seats and Jaintia Hills six. Of the thirty-six seats thirty seats were reserved for the scheduled tribes. After the withdrawal of thirtyeight candidates, 198 candidates were in the fray for sixty seats. Of these, the INC set up twelve candidates (six in the Garo Hills, four in the Khasi Hills and two in the Jaintia Hills) the Communist Party of India set up two candidates (one in the Garo Hills and one in the Khasi Hills), APHEC set up 49 (18 in the Garo Hills, 25 in the Khasi Hills and 6 in the Jaintia Hills). There were 135 independent candidates including HSEDF<sup>4</sup> candidates. Surprisingly, in the 1972

- 
3. Sub-Section(4) of the Section 20 of the North Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act 1971.
  4. The Party which came into existence in 1968, in 1972 was neither a recognised nor a registered party and never put forward any notice to that effect to the Returning Officer and the Chief Electoral Officer as required under paragraph 13 of the Election Symbol (Reservation and allotment) Order 1968.

MAP OF MEGHALAYA SHOWING  
60 (SIXTY) ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES - 1972

1. Jowai ST, 2. Nongtalang ST, 3. Rymbai ST, 4. Sutaga ST, 5. Martiang ST, 6. Mynso-Kaliang ST, 7. Mawlai ST,
8. Mawkyat ST, 9. Jaisam ST, 10. Mowprea, 11. Shillong Cantonment, 12. Laban, 13. Maiki, 14. Laitumkhrah, 15. Nong-
- thema ST, 16. Nongkhlow ST, 17. Nongpoh ST, 18. Mawhati ST, 19. Sohryngkham ST, 20. Nongkrem ST, 21. Diang-
- chek ST, 22. Umroi ST, 23. Mylliem ST, 24. Sohlong ST, 25. Nongspung ST, 26. Mairang ST, 27. Parlong ST,
28. Mngstoin ST, 29. Mawthongkut ST, 30. Langrin ST, 31. Mawkywat ST, 32. Mawsynram ST, 33. Shella ST,
34. Sonra ST, 35. Nongshken ST, 36. Lyngkyrdem ST, 37. Mahendraganj, 38. Dalu ST, 39. Dambuk-Aga ST, 40. Chokpot ST,
41. Siju ST, 42. Rongrenggiri ST, 43. Rongjeng ST, 44. Kharkutta ST, 45. Songsak ST, 46. Resubelpara ST, 47. Mandi-
- puther, 48. Tikrikilla, 49. Phulbari, 50. Rongchugiri ST, 51. Bajengdoba ST, 52. Dadenggiri ST, 53. Rongram ST,
54. Selsella ST, 55. Apatigiri ST, 56. Rangsakona ST, 57. Tura ST, 58. Kharapara ST, 59. Dalangiri ST and
60. Salomonpara ST.

SOURCE - Meghalaya Election Hand Book  
March 1972



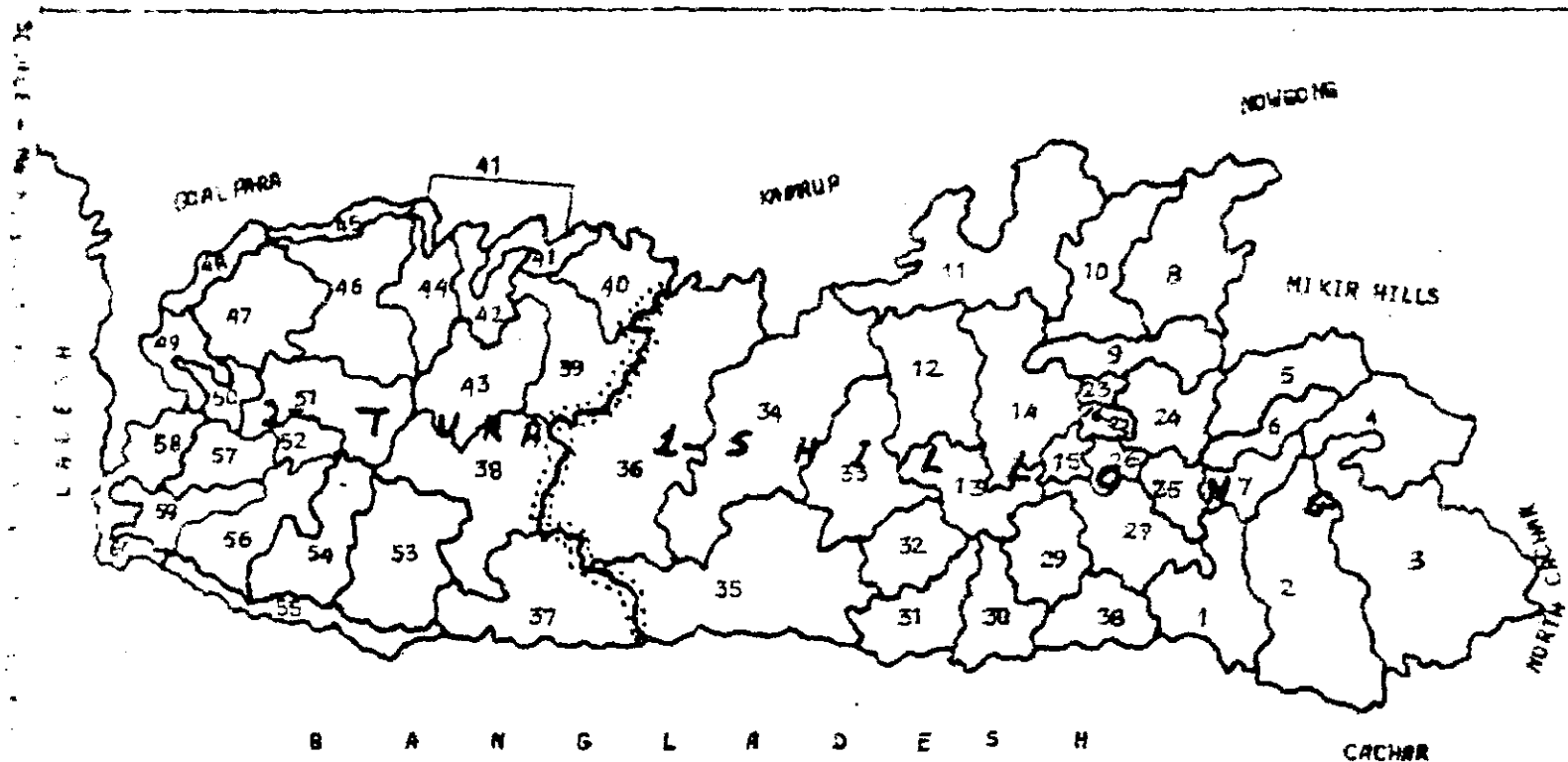
assembly elections, the ruling APHLC which had an electoral alliance with the Congress (except in the Jaintia Hills) suffered a serious set back and just managed to get a bare majority of thirtytwo to enable it to form the Government (Congress secured nine seats and Independent nineteen of which nine were HSPDP candidates). The APHLC which had emerged as a winner at the hustings in the 1972 Assembly General Elections improved its position subsequently with the help of some independents. The strength of the APHLC increased from thirtytwo to thirtynine. The Congress also increased its strength from nine to twelve.

The Meghalaya politics, however, took a sharp turn through a major split in the APHLC in the Mendiyathar special conference of the APHLC held on the 16th November 1976 in which its unchallenged leader, Capt. Sangma and a number of MLAs and MDCs decided to dissolve the Party and merge itself with the Congress. This conference replaced the APHLC government by the Congress which was in power till the next general elections held on February 23, 1978. There were

262 candidates in the field. Strangely enough none of the parties contested all the 60 seats. The ruling Congress fielded 57 candidates, APHLC 52, HSPDP 35, Congress-I 9, CPI 4 and Independent 105.

By February 1978, the Congress party had remained in power for nearly 15 months which helped it to strengthen its base in the Khasi and the Garo Hills. Further it gave the Congressmen a feeling of relief resulting from their discovery that the opposition was hopelessly divided and could never be united to overthrow the government. One overwhelming factor in favour of the Congress was that a number of independents all ex-APHLC men were not opposed to the Congress as such but to some APHLC leaders instead, and this provided an opportunity to the Congress leaders for maneuvering. But surprisingly enough, no Party won a workable majority. Even the Congress which had 35 legislators before the elections and with "high expectations" won only 20 seats. The APHLC won 16, the HSPDP 14, PHLC 2 and Independents 8. The election results marked the sudden rise of the HSPDP and the decline of the APHLC. Though no Party got a workable majority, the non-Congress

MAP OF MEGHALAYA  
SHOWING  
60 (SIXTY) ASSEMBLY AND  
2 (TWO) PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES



60 (sixty) Assembly Constituencies - 1978

1-Riati, 2-Rymbai, 3-Sutnga-Shangpung, 4-Rellang, 5-Nartiang, 6-Nongboh-Wahlojer, 7-Jowai, 8-Mawhati, 9-Mawlaik, 10-Nongpoh, 11-Jirang, 12-Mairang, 13-Nongspung, 14-Schlong, 15-Mylliem, 16-Malki-Nongthymmai, 17-Tumkhar, 18-Pyntheru-Makha, 19-Jaiam, 20-Mawshar, 21-Mawrem, 22-Lacan, 23-Mawlaik, 24-Schryangkham, 25-Laca, 26-Nongkreem, 27-Lyngkyrdem, 28-Nongshken, 29-Sorra, 30-Shella, 31-Mawsyram, 32-Mawkywad, 33-Laca, 34-Nonstoin, 35-Langrin, 36-Awthangkut, 37-Bagmara, 38-Rongrenggari, 39-Rongjeng, 40-Kharkutta, 41-Nipathar, 42-Rasubelpara, 43-Songsak, 44-Bajangdoba, 45-Tibrilla, 46-Dadeng-giri, 47-Rongchugiri, 48-Nipathar, 49-Azaballa, 50-Suisella, 51-Rongrem, 52-Tura, 53-Chakpot, 54-Kharapara, 55-Dalu, 56-Dalamgiri, 57-Nipathar, 58-Ampetgiri, 59-Selampara, 60-Mahandraganj.



legislators formed the United Legislature Party being the first ministry in the present assembly which lasted only for 11 months ( 10th March, 1978 to 21st February, 1979 ). Interestingly enough, the strength of the parties was not the same. There were defections. As a consequence the strength of the APHLC increased from 16 to 31; HSPDP to 14; PDIC from 2 to 3, whereas Congress declined from 20 to 10 and independents from 5 to 2. The APHLC with a strength of 31 members formed the second ministry in coalition with the PDIC. B.B. Lyngdoh worked against the second ministry headed by D.D. Fugh and in the trial of strength *( ) in* May 4, 1979, the APHLC ministry fell by 29 to 30 votes and succeeded by the United Meghalaya Parliamentary Democratic Forum Government which (on the 7th May 1979) composed of 13 HSPDP, 10 Congress, 7 APHLC(B) and 1 PDIC. However Lyngdoh's victory and Fugh's defeat indicated not only a severe split in the APHLC but also marked the end of the dominance of the APHLC which emerged as the leading opposition in the Assembly.

Role of the APHLC in Parliamentary Elections:

Meghalaya is represented in Parliament by 3 members, one in the Rajya Sabha and two in the Lok Sabha. Before 1972, two seats were allotted to the Garo and Khasi and Jaintia Hills namely the Autonomous Districts (ST) and Dhubri Parliamentary constituencies which, since the creation of Meghalaya have been converted into the Shillong and Fura Parliamentary Constituencies. As stated before, the APHLC fought the battle of ballot in 1962 both to the Assembly and Parliamentary General Elections when it set up G. G. Swell from the Autonomous (ST) Parliamentary constituency swept the polls with a convincing margin of 61.83 per cent <sup>of</sup> votes against its Congress rival candidate J. E. Tasiang with only 38.17 per cent but did not contest in the Dhubri Parliamentary constituency. The following table shows the performance of the different parties in the Parliamentary Elections 1962.

Table - I

Showing the Performance of the Different Parties in the Lok Sabha Elections 1962<sup>5</sup>

Name of the Constituency	Electerates	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidate	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Per centage of votes
1. Autonomous Districts ( ST )	3,20,132	1,46,531	1	1. G. O. Swell	ANBLO	91,850	61.83
				2. J. B. Bariang	INC	56,701	38.17
2. Dhabri	3,91,360	2,09,635	1	1. A. N. Ghyasuddin	INC	89,407	42.69
				2. Sargun Williamson	IND	61,891	29.55
				3. Ali Anand	PPP	58,137	27.76

5. Report on the General Elections to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly and the by-election from the 2-Tura (ST) Parliamentary Constituency 1972, Election Department of Meghalaya, 1975, p. 30.

Then comes the Fourth General Elections 1967, both Parliamentary and Assembly. The APHLC whose main objective was the creation of a separate state decided to boycott the General Elections because a Cabinet Committee under the Chairmanship of the Home Minister G.L. Nanda recommended a sub-state which would have a separate Legislature, and a Council of Ministers for the Hills but would continue to remain with the State of Assam. The Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi came to Shillong on the 27th December 1966 to discuss this subject with the APHLC. The APHLC presented a memorandum demanding a separate Hill State at a mammoth meeting. The Prime Minister replied in general terms that there should be some reorganisation which would give status and dignity to the hill people and on the 29th December 1966, invited the APHLC to Delhi for discussion on the 11th January 1967. The result of the discussion between the Government of India and the APHLC was the decision of the Government of India to re-organise the State of Assam on the basis of a federal structure conferring upon the Hill areas equal status with the rest of the State of Assam announced on the 13th January 1967. The APHLC

welcomed the Plan and resolved to contest the General Elections and to postpone its non-violent direct action programme scheduled to commence on the 17th January 1967.<sup>6</sup> It then entered the electoral battle on the 'Hill State' issue and won not only the assembly seats in the Garo and Khasi-Jaintia Hills but also the autonomous Districts (ST) Parliamentary constituency in a straight contest with the INC. Table-II shows the electoral performance of the different parties in the Fourth Parliamentary General Elections, 1967.

The convincing success of the APHLC in the Fourth Parliamentary General Elections is an eloquent testimony to the Popularity of the Party among the Khasis and the Garos and because of its exciting 'Hill State' issue, 61.35 per cent of votes of the people were with it.

In the mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha in 1971, the APHLC as in the previous General Elections contested only in the Autonomous Districts (ST). There were three candidates in the field. Its candidate,

---

6. Rao, V.V., op.cit., pp.410-16.

Table - II

Showing the Performance of the Different Parties in the Fourth Lok Sabha General Elections, 1967<sup>1</sup>

<u>Name of the Parliamentary Constituency</u>	<u>Valid votes polled</u>	<u>No. of seats</u>	<u>Name of candidates</u>	<u>Party affiliation</u>	<u>Votes obtained</u>	<u>Percentage of votes</u>
1. Autonomous Districts (SE)	1,85,241	1	1. G. G. Swell	AFULC	1,12,422	61.35
			2. B. G. Nomin	INC	70,819	38.65
2. Dhulri constituency	2,69,431	1	1. J. Ahmed	PSP	1,44,141	55.90
			2. A. Ali	INC	77,833	28.89
			3. N. R. Sarkar	IND	47,457	17.61

7. Report on the General Election, pp. 411, p. 51.

Prof. G.G. Swell who trounced the two independent candidates was elected for the third time to the Lok Sabha on APHLC ticket. The votes polled by different parties in the Fifth Lok Sabha General Elections are shown in Table-III.

It may be noted, that in the Third and Fourth Lok Sabha General Elections the Congress Party was the main rival to the APHLC. But in the Lok Sabha mid-term polls, there was an electoral alliance between the APHLC and the Congress and instead of the Congress Party, the breakaway HSPDP formed by the disgruntled and dissident APHLC members, emerged as the largest Party to challenge the APHLC in the electoral battle. The APHLC-Congress alliance was however, not favoured by the masses especially in the West Khasi Hills but due to the personal charisma and oratorical skill of the APHLC candidate (G.G. Swell) and the support of the Congress Party, the APHLC again swept the polls by winning an absolute majority of 51.24 per cent of votes.

Table - III

Showing the Performance of the Different Parties in the Fifth Lok Sabha Elections, 1971<sup>B</sup>

Name of the constituency	Electorate	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidate	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Percentage of votes
1. Autonomous Districts (ST)	4,17,506	1,77,140	1	1. B. Singhar	IND	27,140	15.32
				2. G. G. Swell	APHU	90,772	51.24
				3. H. S. Lyngdoh	IND	59,228	33.44
2. Dhabri constituency	4,52,946	2,60,765	1	1. J. Bangsa	IND	7,073	2.71
				2. J. Ahmed	FSP	30,478	11.69
				3. F. G. Moyles Dar	RSP	28,362	10.88
				4. D. J. Abedin	SUC	6,876	2.64
				5. W. Incha	INC(N)	5,185	1.99
				6. B. P. Barikata	IND	2,561	0.98
				7. H. Eque Chandhary	INC(J)	1,30,226	69.11

B. Ibid., p.44.



As stated earlier, under sub-section (4) of Section 20 of the North Eastern areas (Re-organisation) Act 1971, sixty assembly seats were assigned to Meghalaya with two Parliamentary constituencies, Shillong and Tura which succeeded the Autonomous Districts and Dhubri constituencies respectively. With such new arrangements, the Election Commission of India took up the work of reorganisation and delimitation of the Parliamentary and assembly constituencies in the new state through its Delimitation Order published on the 24th July 1972. The said Commission further vide its notification order dated February 4, 1972 called upon the 2-Tura (ST) Parliamentary constituency to have a bye-election to the Lok Sabha and the assembly constituencies to elect members to the new Meghalaya Legislative Assembly simultaneously. Two candidates jumped into the election arena from the 2-Tura Parliamentary constituency, Brotsack Nomin and Earnesh Narak. Their votes polled is shown in Table-IV.

Table - IV

Showing the Performance of the Different Parties in the 2-Tura (ST) Lok Sabha  
By-Elections, 1972<sup>9</sup>

<u>Name of the constituency</u>	<u>Electors</u>	<u>Valid votes polled</u>	<u>No. of seats</u>	<u>Name of candidates</u>	<u>Party affiliation</u>	<u>Votes obtained</u>	<u>Percentage votes</u>
1. 2-Tura(ST)	1,48,286	54,400	1	1. Bronson Nomin 2. Karnoch Narak	IND APHC	16,189 38,211	29.76 70.24

9. Report on the General Election, GR.g.E., P.41.

The INC which had an electoral alliance with the APHLC did not contest in the 2-Turn(8T) Lok Sabha Elections 1972. The APHLC, therefore, with the full support of the INC, easily swept the polls against its independent rival candidate with 70.24 per cent of votes.

The Presidential declaration to dissolve the Fifth Lok Sabha and the decision to hold the Sixth Lok Sabha General Elections in March 1977 were received with much enthusiasm in Meghalaya. Each Political Party wanted to test its political stand. The two regional parties, the NFPDP and the APHLC started immediate negotiations to have some sort of electoral understanding but failed. The decision of the Election Commission which freed the 'Flower' as the reserved Election symbol of the APHLC influenced the NFPDP to set up its own candidate from the Shillong Parliamentary constituency and to support the APHLC candidate from the Tura Parliamentary constituency. In view of the order of the Election Commission of India that the APHLC was no longer a recognised political party, the APHLC finally nominated N. K. Marak and P. R. Kundish for the Tura and

Shillong Parliamentary constituencies respectively whose nomination papers were accepted as Independent candidates with 'The Two Leaves' and 'The Scales' as their symbols. Demoralised by the loss of a reserved symbol, i.e., APHLC supporters especially in the rural areas became confused as a result of Floor being frozen and public opinion was sharply divided on the merger of the APHLC with the Congress, the party lost both the Parliamentary seats to the HSEDP,<sup>10</sup> and the Congress. The position occupied by the different parties in the Sixth Lok Sabha General Elections from the Shillong and Tura constituencies is shown in Table-V.

The results of the Sixth Lok Sabha Elections marked the decline of the APHLC and the rise of both the HSEDP and the Congress Party. Then comes the Seventh Lok Sabha General Elections in 1980. Of the two seats allotted to Meghalaya, elections were held only in the Tura Parliamentary constituency and not in the

---

10. HSEDP which was recognised by the Election Commission of India on the 25th January 1978 and its candidates were treated as Independents even for the Sixth Lok Sabha General Elections, 1977.

Table - V

Showing the Position Occupied by the Different Parties in the Sixth Lok Sabha  
General Elections, 1978<sup>11</sup>

Name of the constituency	Total Electorate polled	Total votes	Total votes valid	No. of seats	Name of candidates	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Percentage of votes
1. Shillong	3,41,910	1,90,149	1,84,146	1	1. G. G. Swell	IND	38,841	21.09
					2. H. S. Lyngdoh	NSPDP	55,732	30.27
					3. P. C. Harbeniang	INC	50,967	27.68
					4. P. R. Kyndiah	APHC	38,606	20.96
2. Para	1,88,416	74,393	69,900	1	1. B. Sangma	IND	3,338	4.80
					2. Nody K. Narak	APHC	26,254	37.56
					3. X. A. Sangma	INC	40,268	57.64

11: Himalaya Election Handbook, February, 1978, p. 22.

Shillong Parliamentary constituency on account of the "Foreigners" issue. There were four candidates in the fray. The success of the Congress-I candidates further reveals the eroding popularity of the APHLC which was pushed down to the second position. The factors and causes which contributed to the waning influence and difference in voting behaviour of the APHLC are given in the following pages.

The APHLC which came into existence in July 1960 was rather a platform consisting of the representatives of the different political parties of the Hill Districts in Assam but gradually, under fortuitous circumstances<sup>12</sup>, it became a political party and fought the battle of ballot in 1962, two years after its birth, to both the Assembly and the Parliamentary General Elections. As a matter of fact, the history of the APHLC from 1960 to the end of 1971 was largely a history of a Hill State Movement and "any one<sup>who</sup> was in the bandwagon of the movement is a member of the APHLC".<sup>13</sup> The General Elections of

---

12. Pakyntein, B.H., "Lest we forget....", APHLC Souvenir, July 1974, p.31.

13. Ibid., p.33.

1972 were the first election in a new State, Meghalaya. The post Meghalaya APHLC was not of what it was in 1971 when the cloud of its declining influence began to loom large over its horizon as evident from the election results of 1972. A careful analysis of the results reveals the fact that while the party fared commendably in the Garo Hills, its performance in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills was rather poor. In the Garo Hills the Party contested 18 out of 24 seats having 6 seats uncontested in favour of its partner (the Congress) and bagged 17 seats and its partner secured 5 out of 6 seats. In the Khasi Hills it contested 25 out of 30 leaving 4 seats in favour of the Congress Party but secured only 13 seats while its electoral partner bagged all the 4 seats. In Jaintia Hills, the Party suffered a humiliating defeat where 4 out of its 6 nominees were routed at the hands of the Independent candidates including the Hill State People's Democratic Party's nominees. The results of the 1972 assembly General Elections thus gave rise to a question -- why the APHLC suffered a set back so soon after Meghalaya achieved the status of a

fulledged state? The factors which were responsible for the decline of the AFHLC were -- the Congress Party was gained ground since the formation of Meghalaya. Generally speaking, in Meghalaya like in the Hills areas of the North East India the election results have shown the popularity of the regional parties while national parties were relegated to a corner even when <sup>most of</sup> the states and Union government were in the hands of the Congress Party.<sup>14</sup> But with the split of the AFHLC in the Raddipathar Conference November 1976, the Congress Party for the first time came to power in Meghalaya. With the installation of the Congress government, the party which was in a state of slow and steady growth ramified in every direction which culminated in the Sixth Lok Sabha Elections 1977 when the Tura Parliamentary seat went to the Congress. Prior to the Sixth General Elections except in 1952, in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills the Congress never had deep roots though the Tribal leaders like Mahan Singh and J.B. Barlang were nursing

---

14. Datta Ray, Electoral Politics in Meghalaya, (Published by B.Datta Ray, N.E.India Council for Social Sciences Research, B.T.Hostel, Shillong, 1978), p.60.



it for a long time. Its influence in the Garo Hills was limited only in the plain portions of the districts. Its victory in 1977 (occupied the first position and second in the Jura and Shillong Parliamentary constituencies respectively) and the defeat of G. G. Swell and N. Sangma of the old APHLC, were due to Capt. Sangma. This further, goes to establish the fact that politics in Meghalaya revolves round personalities not principles nor ideological differences, with Capt. Sangma (as the chief minister and president of the Congress Party), the anti-Congress sentiment which was mounting high cooled down.

The APHLC was always identified with the 'Tribals' while the Congress with 'non-Tribals'. In spite of such a popular identification, the APHLC which offered its cooperation with the Congress Party declined for a complete merger and wanted to retain its own identity. However in the Fifth Lok Sabha General Election 1971 it extended its support to the Congress candidates and in the Assembly General Elections 1972 had an electoral alliance with the Congress Party which was disliked by

the tribal people. The other regional parties branded the APHLC as a non-tribal party. With these conditions the APHLC suffered a set-back in the elections.

In the past, the APHLC enjoyed the whole hearted support of the people on the issue of a separate Hill State. With the creation of Meghalaya, this issue no longer existed in the Fifth General Elections, but the excitement of the time yielded to the sober realization that statehood was not an end in itself. The election promises of the contesting parties were therefore rapid economic and industrial development, clean and efficient administration and the all round development of the State. These issues received great prominence and swayed the voters.<sup>15</sup> The emergence of the Independent United Legislature Party which had brought under its banner a large number of independents chiefly the APHLC dissidents and the ESPLP members who polled more votes than the APHLC due to the fact that number of independent candidates was greater than other party candidates.

---

15. International Dictionary of Electoral Politics and Local Election Activity (1952-78) Year-wise and State-wise (alphabetically); Assemblies and Lok Sabha turn by turn in each State, (Published by Institute for Electoral Studies, 50-NIG, Prasad Nagar, New Delhi-5), vol.I, February, 1979, p.1.

May be the sins of omission and commission of the Sangma government alienated itself from the people. But this could not be the reason for the poor showing of the party because it fared exceptionally well in the Garo Hills which is an eloquent testimony to the popularity of Capt. Sangma in his home district. As a logical corollary, the leadership in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills has evidently lost its hold on the masses.<sup>16</sup> Internally the APHLC before 1973 was more consolidated. But its abrupt decline began to take shape in the same year when G.C. Swell with a recognition as an elderly politician and genuine spokesman of the party who was elected for three consecutive terms to the Lok Sabha on APHLC ticket was expelled from the Party when he revolted against its leadership. Through his newly formed party, the PDIC he campaigned against the APHLC which really affected its prestige and prospects at the polls in 1977 and contributed to the rising popularity of the INEDP.<sup>17</sup>

---

16. Valungkar, T.N., "Problems of National Integration", North Eastern Affairs, vol.I, 1972-73, p.21.

17. During the election campaign he toured extensively in the rural areas to voice people's grievances against the APHLC leadership on account of its wrong outlook and many abuses and vices which crept into it. But for reason of his own was tolerant of the INEDP and offered it as the second choice to his rural voters.

The APHLC in the later part of 1976 was organisationally a truncated version of what it was in 1971 following the action of Capt. Sangma who got (the then APHLC chief minister and party president) into a non-conciliatory mood decided along with his supporters to dissolve the party and merge it with the Congress in November 1976 against the advice of his colleagues and lieutenants from the Khasi Hills. Thus on the eve of the Sixth General Elections, the APHLC was facing a split in its organisation which really threatened its chances at poll. Capt. Sangma who is really a captain who could maintain discipline in the party shattered the hopes, image and prestige of the party because in his initiative the Election Commission of India froze 'the Flower' the reserved symbol of the APHLC, demoralised by the loss of its reserved symbol (i.e., people's confusion as a result of 'flower' being frozen) the party emerged out of the sixth elections arena severely battered. Further the moral support extended by the Janata Party hit the APHLC hard. In spite of its clarification over the matter<sup>18</sup> it could not escape

---

18. Leaflet issued by the General Secretary of the APHLC dated March 6, 1977 -- "U General Secretary U Fynshai".

hostile comments particularly in the rural constituencies of West Khasi Hills district Bhoi and Border areas whose voters interpreted the APHLC-Janata association as synonymous with militant Hindu reaction and Plain invasion.<sup>19</sup> The situation of the APHLC deteriorated when the three main contending parties (Congress, HSPDF and PDIC) made themselves a common enemy of the APHLC by taking advantage of APHLC-Janata relation. However it may be pointed out that the Janata support to the APHLC improved the fortunes of the Congress among the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos and a loss for the Congress among the Bengalees, Beharis and Marwaris.

The rising influence and victory of the HSPDF in the sixth general elections signified electorate's rejection and antagonism especially the rural voters against the style of work of the APHLC. The lukewarm attitude adopted by the APHLC members representing the rural areas especially the Border areas towards their economic condition was the main cause for the decline of the APHLC, and got a jolt in the sixth general election.

---

19. B. Datta Ray, *op.cit.*, p.63.

Let us make a comparative analysis of the four assembly elections vis-a-vis the APHLC. It would give interesting information regarding the changes in political opinion.

Table No. VI, shows the number of votes secured by the different parties for the nine seats allotted to the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills in the Third Assembly General Election, 1962.

Table No. VII, shows the number of votes secured by the APHLC and other parties in the Fourth Assembly General Election 1967.

The first Assembly General Election held in March 1972 to the sixty member Meghalaya Legislative Assembly surprisingly gave a jolt to the prestige and popularity of the APHLC which successfully championed the Hill State movement. Table No. VIII shows the number of seats secured by the APHLC and other parties in the Fifth Assembly General Election 1972 being the first Assembly General Election for Meghalaya.

Table - VI

Showing the Position of Different Parties for the Nine seats allotted to the United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills in the Third Assembly General Elections, 1962<sup>20</sup>

UNITED KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS, 1962

Name of constituency	Electorate	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidates	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Remark	Percentage of votes
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Jowai (ST)	41,051	25,043	1	1. Pohelma, B	APHLC	10,762	Elected	46.70
				2. Rymbai, K	IND	4,557		19.69
				3. Shallan, D	IND	4,347		18.87
				4. Khyriem, L	IND	5,397		14.74
2. Nongpoh (ST)	41,905	17,793	1	1. Lyngdoh, B. B.	APHLC	13,076	Elected	73.47
				2. Khongphai, A. J.	INC	2,926		16.44
				3. Syiem, J.	IND	1,796		10.09
3. Shillong	36,855	21,686	1	1. Peade, W	APHLC	10,751	Elected	49.57
				2. Alley, A	INC	7,754		35.76
				3. Labiri, B. K.	CPI	3,027		13.96
				4. Debn, U. G.	IND	154		.71

20. Report on the General Elections, pp. cit., p. 49.

contd.....

Table-VI.....

Name of constituency	Electorate	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidates	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Remark	Percentage of votes
4. Hougstoin (ST)	37,147	14,574	1	1. Lyngdoh, K. S.	APFEC	9,825	Elected	67.41
				2. Syiem, B	INC	2,827		19.40
				3. Syiem, W	IND	1,625		11.14
				4. Syiemliah, N. S.	IND	299		2.05
5. Cherrapunjee (ST)	49,642	26,507	1	1. Nichols-Roy, S. D. D.	APFEC	18,786	Elected	70.87
				2. Singh, M	INC	7,721		29.13
GARO HILLS DISTRICT 1962								
1. Bagmara (ST)	27,161	12,968	1	1. Sangma, W. A.	APFEC	7,855	Elected	60.57
				2. Monominam, D	INC	4,796		36.98
				3. Marak, W	AACK	317		2.45
2. Dainadubi (ST)	31,255	8,988	1	1. Sangma, W	APFEC	6,258	Elected	69.40
				2. Sangma, A	INC	2,102		23.39
				3. Sangma, J	AACK	648		7.21

Contd...../-



Table-VI contd...

Name of constituency	Electorate	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidates	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Remark	Percentage of votes
3. Turu (ST)	32,944	14,423	1	1. Nomin, B	APFEC	7,979	Elected	55.32
				2. Sangma, N	INC	3,750		26.00
				3. Narak, J	AACK	2,694		18.68
4. Phulbari (ST)	31,954	11,954	1	1. Sangma, B	INC	6,104	Elected	51.06
				2. Nomin, B	APFEC	4,340		36.51
				3. Narak, H	AACK	1,510		12.63

Table - VII

Showing the Electoral Performance of the Different Parties for the Nine seats allotted to the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills in the Fourth Assembly General Elections, 1967 <sup>21</sup>

## UNITED KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS, 1967

Name of constituency	Electorate	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidates	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Remarks	Percentage of votes
1. Jowai (ST)	45,625	27,478	1	1. B. Barsh 2. B. Pohshie	APHEC IND	17,806 9,672	Elected	64.80 35.20
2. Shillong	40,220	26,252	1	1. A. S. Ray 2. H. Rynniewta 3. L. B. Dey	IND APHEC IND	478 15,651 10,123	Elected	1.82 59.62 38.56
3. Nongpoh (ST)	46,293	Nil	1	1. B. B. Lyngdoh	APHEC		Elected uncontested	
4. Nongstoin (ST)	48,499	19,807	1	1. H. S. Lyngdoh 2. S. Lyngdoh	APHEC IND	18,747 1,060	Elected	94.65 5.35
5. Cherapunji (ST)	51,155	Nil	1	1. B. D. D. Nichols-Roy	APHEC		Elected uncontested	

21. Report on the General Elections, Ibid., pp.50-51.

Table-VII contd....

## GARO HILLS DISTRICT, 1967

Name of constituency	Electorate	Valid votes polled	No. of seats	Name of candidates	Party affiliation	Votes obtained	Remarks	Percentage of votes
1. Bagmara (ST)	30,085	15,559	1	1. R. Narak	CPI	618	Elected	3.97
				2. S. Sangma	Congress	5,246		33.72
				3. V. A. Sangma	APFHC	9,695		62.31
2. Dainodubi (ST)	37,739	19,739	1	1. A. N. Sangma	IND	146	Elected	1.06
				2. D. K. Sangma	Congress	3,473		25.28
				3. H. Narak	APFHC	9,425		68.60
				4. N. Sangma	IND	695		3.06
3. Tura (ST)	39,956	17,955	1	1. B. Nomin	Congress	4,618	Elected	25.72
				2. G. Narak	APFHC	12,058		67.17
				3. J. Narak	IND	1,277		7.11
4. Phuldari (ST)	37,023	16,908	1	1. B. Nomin	APFHC	9,452	Elected	55.90
				2. E. Bangshali	CPI	1,338		7.91
				3. B. N. Sangma	Congress	5,758		34.06
				4. L. Narak	IND	360		2.13

Table - VIII

Showing the Number of Seats secured by the Different Parties in the Fifth Assembly General Elections, 1972<sup>22</sup>

Name of District	No. of seats	INC		CPI		APHC		IND		Total candidates	
		Contested	Gain- ed	Contested	Gain- ed	Contested	Gain- ed	Contested	Gain- ed	Contested	Gain- ed
1. Jaintia Hills	6	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	6	2	11	4	19	6
2. Khasi Hills	30	4	4	1	Nil	25	13	90	13	120	30
3. Garo Hills	24	6	5	1	Nil	18	17	54	2	59	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>60</b>

22. Naghalaya Election Hand Book, March, 1972, p.ii.

From the problems discussed in the previous pages the real cause for the decline of the party are firstly, economic and secondly, intra-party fights. Table-IX shows the position of the APHLC and other parties in the Sixth Assembly General Elections 1978 and the weakness of the APHLC in the different districts as reflected at the polls.

A study of the four General Elections shows that six constituencies in West Garo Hills and six constituencies<sup>25</sup> in East Khasi Hills district were the strongholds of the APHLC while in other constituencies the APHLC influence was inf fluctuating. In 1978 Elections, the Congress and HSPDP emerged successfully in Shillong and Tura sub-divisions and in West Khasi Hills respectively. In the Khasi Hills out of 32, the APHLC secured only six seats from the Shillong sub-division. In the Ribhoi sub-division and west Khasi Hills it was scathed fully. In the Garo Hills out of 20 seats it was literally crushed and secured only 8 seats and in Jaintia Hills

---

25. Kharapara, Chokpot, Dadenggiri, Dalangiri, Bongram and Langsakona (West Garo Hills) and Shella, Cherrayunji, Jalaw, Nawkhar, Sohryngkham and Lyngkyrdem (East Khasi Hills District).

Table - IX

SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE APHLC AND OTHER PARTIES IN THE SIXTH ASSEMBLY GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1978<sup>24</sup>

Name of districts and sub-divisions	No. of seats	Congress			Congress-I			CPI			APHLC			HSPDP			Independents			Total	
		Cont-ested	Gai-ned	PC of votes	Cont-ested	Gai-ned	PC of votes	Cont-ested	Gai-ned	PC of votes	Cont-ested	Gai-ned	PC of votes	Cont-ested	Gai-ned	PC of votes	Cont-ested	Gai-ned	PC of votes	Cont-ested	Gai-ned
1. JAINTIA HILLS DISTRICT	7	7	-	24.51	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	28.26	7	3	22.71	12	2	24.51	32	7
2. N. KHASI HILLS DISTRICT																					
1. Shillong sub-div.	17	15	7	24.01	5	-	1.07	2	-	1.62	15	6	28.28	16	3	19.93	41	1	25.09	94	17
2. Ri-Bhoi sub-div.	4	3	2	20.78	1	-	1.51	1	-	0.42	4	-	19.46	4	-	27.37	9	2	30.46	22	4
3. W. KHASI HILLS DISTRICT																					
1. Mairang sub-div.	3	3	-	15.41	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	16.91	3	3	51.09	4	-	16.59	12	3
2. Nongstoin sub-div.	5	5	-	22.51	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	18.12	5	5	52.03	6	-	7.34	21	5
4. W. GARO HILLS DISTRICT																					
1. Bagmara sub-div.	2	2	1	56.32	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	32.06	-	-	-	2	-	11.62	6	2
2. Tura sub-div.	15	15	5	38.66	2	-	3.25	1	-	0.58	11	6	22.04	-	-	-	23	4	35.47	52	15
5. E. GARO HILLS DISTRICT																					
	7	7	5	44.46	1	-	3.82	-	-	-	7	1	31.36	-	-	-	8	1	20.36	23	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28.96</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>1.44</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24.92</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19.24</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24.82</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>60</b>

24. Meghalaya Election Handbook, (February, 1978), pp. 21, 25 and 27.

it could return only two out of six candidates. Thus the election results of 1977-78 go to establish the fact that the APHLC has declined and weak for obvious reasons: Firstly, the APHLC was practically left without leadership. There was no leader of repute who could command wider mass appeal. Secondly, the rural people developed the feeling that the APHLC government had done nothing for the development of the areas.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the APHLC leaders ignored the younger generations. Above all, the APHLC leaders came from the richer classes with an urban based pleasure and power loving elite with no leadership qualities. Those who had the leadership qualities, however, left the organisation and challenged its right to govern the state.

Relation of the APHLC with other Parties in the State and Its Ministerial Performance and Crisis:

To understand the ministerial performance and crisis of the APHLC in the two assemblies, a reference should be made of its relationship with other parties. The undivided APHLC leadership which piloted the Hill State government and which gave a stable government in the State of Meghalaya for about seven years had been facing vicissitudes

---

25. Interview with some prominent citizens of these areas.

since its formation. The HSPDP and the PDIC which have been formed by the dissident APHLC leaders and members, challenged the dominant position of the APHLC.

The HSPDP was founded by H.S. Lyngdoh in October 1968 after his expulsion from the APHLC due to his anti-party activities as the chief organiser of the volunteer wing of the APHLC Khasi Hills. Though the HSPDP like the APHLC is a regional party, but unlike the latter it is ultra regional and communal in outlook. It aims for the preservation of the customs and traditions of the Meghalaya people from the danger of being swamped by the people of the plains, protection of the territory of Meghalaya, elimination of indigence and illiteracy of the masses and is against immigration of outsiders into Meghalaya. With these aims, the party faced the electorate for the first time in 1972. Its candidates contested as Independents and secured 9 seats in a 60 member assembly. After the Fifth General Elections, the party became more active in mobilising public opinion especially in the rural areas of West Khasi Hills and Ribhoi areas of East Khasi Hills. The main factor which contributed to the rise



of the Party was the Mendipathar special conference of the APHLC which decided the merger of the APHLC with the Congress. The merger resulted in the de-recognition of the APHLC as a party by the Election Commission of India by freezing its symbol 'Flower' on the 1st February, 1977. The Janata also extended its support to the APHLC in the Sixth General Elections. All these developments were not to the liking of several in Meghalaya. Therefore the APHLC lost its influence in the State. Further, the HSPDF could mobilise public opinion in the personalities of Kynphan Singh a Khasi intellectual, who through his letters<sup>26</sup> made a mass appeal by criticising every party except the HSPDF and Swell himself who for reasons best known to him canvassed for the HSPDF and offered it as a second choice to his rural voters. But no one can deny the fact that the HSPDF is extremely communal and regional<sup>27</sup> in character with its stronghold in West Khasi Hills only and nowhere else.

---

26. Shishi sha U Paralok III, in consonance with the aims of the HSPDF, he raised the question of Khasi religion and family planning - 1st March 1977 and in his Shishi sha U Paralok V he said that "The APHLC was without a constitution for 17 years till the October 1, 1977 and functioned after the Congress programmes and policies", February 6, 1978, p.10.

27. Though the APHLC and the HSPDF are regional parties, unlike the HSPDF, the APHLC was anxious that the non-tribals should not only be protected but should also be involved in the political process of Meghalaya.

It is, however, interesting to note that the two contending parties with different aims and objectives explored some possibilities of electoral adjustment in the sixth general elections without surrendering their separate identity. But negotiations broke down on the 8th February, 1977 when the HSPDP realised that the attempt to the APHLC was motivated for a change of the internal leadership of the Party, it decided to fight the elections alone. It also argued that the APHLC simply supported all the policies and programmes of the Congress and thereby branded it as a non-tribal party. This is an unjust accusation. The HSPDP knew pretty well that the APHLC always follows the policies of the Central Government. Curiously enough it entered into coalition with the non-tribal parties including the Congress Party, to form the government. Here the HSPDP was guided by expediency and not by principles. Politicians are always strange bed fellows. They change their attitudes just as clouds change in Meghalaya.

The EDLO — G.G. Swell one of the front ranking political personalities in Meghalaya with a popular recognition as a genuine spokesman of the APHLC, who was

electd to the Lok Sabha for three consecutive terms on APHLC ticket but expelled from the same in 1974 for his alleged party activities, founded another regional party, the Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC). The PDIC constituted another challenge to the APHLC dominance in the state. Truly speaking, he founded the Public Demands Implementation Committee in July 1973, with no intention to make it a political party but to keep it as a non-partisan organisation. But with his expulsion from the party the Committee became a political party under the designation of Public Demands Implementation Convention and contested the Sixth General Elections on the basis of economic programme. The people were not impressed by the policies and programmes of the party but were rather impressed by the personality of its founder which enabled the PDIC to secure two seats in a 60 member assembly but lost his Shillong Parliamentary seat.

Economic issue was the main issue on which a rift between G. C. Swell and the APHLC developed. On the basis of this, the PDIC offered another challenge to the APHLC especially in rural areas. It criticised the APHLC leadership, its wrong outlook and the abuses and vices

that crept into it and raised the question of Janata support to it. The allegations made by the PDIC against the APHLC gave a jolt to the prestige of the APHLC and it had to face hostile comments especially among the rural voters and a debacle in the Sixth General Elections.

The Congress Party -- The Congress Party which had its roots in the component districts of Meghalaya since 1938 has been a history of wrong alliance and assessment. It sided with vested interest and alienated the sympathy of the educated and eminent hill leaders like Rev. Nichols-Roy and Capt. Sangma Rudeness, attorney and authoritarianism on the party of Medhi, the then Congress chief minister at the delicate stage of political development in the Hills widened the gap between the Hills and the plains. Further the failure of the Party organisers like Rohini Kumar Choudhury to make a distinction between integration and assimilation led to antagonism, tension and alienation which were responsible for the disintegration of Assam. These factors added

to its unpopularity among the hillmen.<sup>28</sup> In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills it never had any deep root, although the Congress leaders like Mahan Singh and J.B. Tarling nursed it for a long time. Its influence in the Garo Hills was limited only in the Plain portions of the district. Generally speaking, not only in Meghalaya but in other Hill areas of the North East India, the regional and not the National parties were popular even though most of the States and the Union Government were controlled by Congress.

It was, however, the Mendipathar conference 1976 which for the first time reduced the APHLC into a truncated organisation and contributed to the rise of the Congress influence in Meghalaya.

In 1978 election no party got a workable majority. In a 60 member house, the Congress won 20 seats, APHLC-16, BHPDP-14, PDIU-2 and Independents-8. The non-Congress legislators were compelled by the Meghalaya

---

28. Interview with J.B. Tarling a veteran Congressman and ex-President of the NPCC who is no more in the Congress Party at present.

Tribal Youth Organisation to form the first coalition ministry. But it was on the shaky foundation because elected non-Congress legislators were forced to be in the coalition and leadership issue was decided by lots drawn by a missionary who characterized the new government as an act of Providence -- D.D. Pugh of the APHLC was elected as the Chief Minister, while S.D. Khongwir of the HSPDP as the Deputy Chief Minister. The ministry was in power from 10th March 1978 to 20th February 1979. The partners in the coalition did not work as a team. On the contrary, the three parties (APHLC, PHLIC and HSPDP) were pulling in different directions. The chief minister himself admitted that "the ministry was not functioning well and that the inherent weakness of the coalition was becoming real than apparent".<sup>29</sup> Further the chief minister did not make any secret that it was becoming impossible for his "party to work with the HSPDP partners who were working in complete watertight compartments without any cooperation".<sup>30</sup> It was popularly

---

29. This statement was quoted in the Assam Tribune, March 1, 1979.

30. Quoted in the Assam Tribune, March 5, 1979.

believed that once the regional parties formed the coalition, it would pave the way for merger. But ostensibly, the coalition belied all hopes. Instead of coming closer, the partners in the coalition have gone apart from one another hardly leaving any scope for merger as evident in the three District Councils elections when the parties were fighting against each other which was however, the last straw on the camel's back. Another hitch was over the question of Chairmanship of the Meghalaya Planning Board. The APHLC argued that the chief minister by virtue of being the member of the National Development Council should be the Chairman while the HSEDP argued that the same should go to the Deputy Chief Minister by virtue of being the Planning Minister. Thus the bargain tussle between the partners in the coalition culminated in the game of horse trading. The honeymoon of the three regional parties came to grief.

In the Central Working Committee of the APHLC which met on October 10-11, 1978 most of its members were in favour of parting company with the HSEDP. It must be admitted that in the game of defection and redefection

there was almost a tug of war between the HSPDF and APHLC. At last the snag of the APHLC which succeeded in bringing eleven MLAs belonging to the Congress and HSPDF by floor crossing in a criss cross manner was to run the government alone. It also made several overtures to the Congress-I leaders for their support from outside. The result was abortive because of the wrangle between them over the office of Chief Ministership. The Congress stand was "if we support the APHLC government it would be on the basis of equal partnership in the administration"<sup>31</sup> which was not accepted by the APHLC. It turned towards the PDIC. The PDIC responded favourably. The three party coalition government fell with the resignation of D.D. Pugh to assume the office as the APHLC Chief Minister - in - February 21, 1979. The claim of D.D. Pugh that the Government was a pure APHLC government cannot be accepted since the APHLC with a strength of 51 members has been supported by three PDIC members one of whom was included in the Ministry. This Government was shaky and weak due to constant strain and stress among the APHLC members both in the parliamentary wing and party organisation, Chief among them was B.B. Lyngdoh. The APHLC

---

31. The Assam Tribune, February 4, 1979.



ministry headed by D.D. Pugh barely one month old was facing crisis following a move to topple it by the joint efforts of the UNFDP, Congress and Dissident APHLC members headed by B.B. Lyngdoh which formed the FDP on the 17th April 1979. In its frantic effort to form an alternative government it claimed to have the support of 32 members. The claims and counter claims as having a majority in a 60 member assembly made the political situation in Meghalaya fluid and finally led to the trial of strength ~~in~~ May 4, 1979 between the ruling APHLC headed by D.D. Pugh and the newly formed UNFDP headed by B.B. Lyngdoh. The latter won by a majority of one vote 30 by 29. On the same day, Pugh's ministry resigned and the Third ministry headed by B.B. Lyngdoh assumed office ~~in~~ May 7, 1979. According to the terms and conditions of the solemn agreement signed on the 17th April 1979 by the three parties which formed the UNFDP, the APHLC(B) under Lyngdoh was to be succeeded by the Congress-I under Capt. Bangma after two years i.e., May 7, 1981.

Lyngdoh's victory and Pugh's defeat indicated a severe split in the APHLC into two factions APHLC(B) and

APHLC(N) which in turn affected the image and prestige of the Party. The three ministries formed since 1978 show that political parties in Meghalaya change their nomenclatures and compositions in a very inexplicable manner. There was a musical chair competition for Chief Ministership. Unlike in other big states where ideological and factional consideration led to changes in ministries, in Meghalaya, changes appear to be the consequences of clashes of personalities. It is a well-known fact that Meghalaya Politics is generally tribal. It is in the name of 'Tribal Identity' that Meghalaya came into existence to protect the identity, culture and language of the Khasi and Garo people who are linguistically and ethnologically different from one another. However, inspite of their linguistic and ethnic differences there is no inter-tribal clashes among them. Party conflicts that took place in Meghalaya were not tribal but personal conflicts. For example, B.B. Lyngdoh with his Garo and Khasi colleagues worked against the second ministry headed by D.D. Pugh not on tribal basis but because of their <sup>own</sup> personal aspirations. If APHLC is to revive its former glory and prestige,

a reunion of the two factions is the first requisite. Also, will there be any possibility for that? Time alone can tell.

To conclude this chapter a mention may also be made of a general belief (elsewhere outside Meghalaya) that electoral politics in Meghalaya is very much influenced by the Church. But to take a more realistic view, this is not so. As a matter of fact, most of the political leaders are Christians, whose primary aim is not to preach or propagate christianity but to protect the distinct culture and identity of the people. In this context, the results of the Sixth Assembly General Elections 1978 may be cited as an example when the question of leadership of the United Legislative Party government has been settled through a lottery drawn by a missionary (Catholic Priest). His role, however, is not to be taken as Church interference or influence since he is merely a choice of the people as an impartial umpire in order to save Meghalaya from being placed under the spell of President's Rule or National Party like the Congress Party.

Chapter - IV

LEADERSHIP AND ELITE OF THE APHC

In this chapter, it is proposed to study the leadership of the APHLC with particular reference to Sangma's and Pugh's leadership and the change of leadership which affected the party organisation in particular and state politics in general.

The leadership of the APHLC before the emergence of Meghalaya in 1972, was in the hands of Capt. Sangma who was an ex-army captain, who maintained discipline in the party almost in a military fashion, G. C. Swell with a popular recognition as a chief spokesman of the Party who could keep the people spell bound because of his eloquence, R. S. Lyngdoh with unrivalled rhetorical oratory, S. D. D. Nichols-Boy a polished gentleman, B. B. Lyngdoh, F. R. Lyndiah, S. A. Marak, H. S. Lyngdoh, B. Barah, D. D. Pugh who attained great stature as public figures were the champions of Hill State movement. All of them were moderates. They began their political education under the Gandhian principle of non-violence. They worked with dedication and won the hearts of the politically conscious sections of the society. Most of them started their career as social workers and teachers

except Capt. Sangma and B.B. Lyngdoh who were the army captain and lawyer respectively.<sup>1</sup> But very soon two of them H.S. Lyngdoh and G.G. Swell because of their alleged anti-party activities were expelled from the party in 1968 and 1974 respectively. They founded their own parties, the HSPDP and the PDIC.

Under these leaders the APHLC gave Meghalaya a stable administration for seven years. As a matter of fact, stability was possible only with Sangma's chief ministership from April 1970 to November 1976. The study of the APHLC elite begins with the social occupational and educational background of the APHLC ministries in the 1970 and 1972 assemblies headed by Capt. W.A. Sangma.

Table-I : showing the social, occupational and educational background of the APHLC ministry<sup>2</sup> in the

- 
1. MLA Files No. BE-7/MLA/73/472 and BE-7/MLA/78.
  2. The Sangma Ministry of the Provincial Legislative Assembly consists of 5 Cabinet Ministers and one Minister of State.

Provincial Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya from  
April 1970 to March 1972.

Table-1

<u>Ethnic</u>	<u>Occupational</u>	<u>Educational</u>
Garos- 2	Professionals <sup>3</sup> -4	MA/M.Sc.-2
Khasi-3	Social Workers-2	BA/LLB/B.Sc.-1
Jaintia-1		Under graduate-3

The following Table-2 showing the ethnic occupational and educational background of the APHLC ministry from March 1972 to November 1976.

Table-2

<u>Ethnic</u>	<u>Occupational</u>	<u>Educational</u>
Garos-4	Professionals-7	MA/M.Sc.-3
Khasi-4	Social workers-3	BA/LLB/B.Sc.-2
Jaintia-2		Under graduate-3

From the above two tables<sup>4</sup> we came to know that

3. This category includes doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, defence personnel and others with specific profession. Here 2 of them are defence personnel, one lawyer and one college teacher.
4. Data in the above two tables have been compiled on the basis of the Who's Who Files available in the Library of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, Shillong.

the members of the Sangma ministry were drawn from all the districts of Meghalaya. From occupational point of view, the 'professionals' constituted a majority than those engaged in social or public services. Moreover, the office of chief ministership was in the hands of Capt. Sangma who was also the president of the APHLC -- the architect of Meghalaya.

Generally speaking, leaders, once they had tasted political power, they could neither resist its temptation nor could they adjust themselves under the changing panorama of State politics. This view is applicable to the APHLC leaders who left the Party and joined the Congress in 1976 because in it they saw their political future as the Congress Party was a ruling party in the centre as well as in most states with great patronage at its disposal. The Mendipathar conference held in 1976 under the chairmanship of Capt. Sangma the APHLC Chief Minister and Party President of that time constituted a land mark not only in the history of the APHLC but also of Meghalaya as a whole. It marked a major split in the APHLC which finally threw the APHLC into the opposition bench and brought the Congress Party into



the saddle of power. As stated earlier, politics in Meghalaya revolved round personalities and not principles on the basis of which his decision to merge the APHLC with the Congress did not affect his personality as a leader but affected APHLC leadership in the State. Interestingly enough, inspite of such developments, the APHLC along with the other Regional Parties in the State — the HSPDP and the PDIC could form a coalition ministry<sup>5</sup> with D.D. Pugh (APHLC leader) as the chief minister.

Table-3 is showing the ethnic, occupational and educational background of the APHLC ministers in the Pugh's first ministry that lasted for 11 months (from 10 March 1978 to 21 February 1979).

**Table-3**

Ethnic	Occupational	Educational
Khasi-1	Social services- 6	BA-2
Jaintia-2	" "	Matriculation-2
Garos-3	" "	Under graduate-1 Under matriculation-1

5. Party-wise representation in the Coalition Ministry of United Legislature Party APHLC-6, HSPDP-6 and PDIC-1.

The reasons of its instability were: (i) the coalition partners did not have a team spirit; (ii) the elected non-Congress legislators were forced by the extremist youths to be in the coalition and the last but not the least was that D.D. Fugh was never a strong Chief Minister like Capt. Sangma and failed to work in cooperation with other senior members of his party. In addition to the above reasons, D.D. Fugh whose party's strength rose to 31 members tendered his resignation from the first ministry to assume office as the APHLC Chief Minister of the second Ministry. But his second Ministry was not a pure APHLC Ministry, FDIC was associated with it.<sup>6</sup> The following Table-4 shows the ethnic, occupational and educational background of the 10 APHLC ministers in the Fugh's second Ministry (21 February, 1979 to 7 May, 1979).

Ethnic	Occupational	Educational
Khasi -3	Social services-7	BA/B.Sc. - 6
Jaintia -2	Professionals - 3	Under graduates - 2
Garos -5		Matriculation - 2

6. Fugh's second Ministry is composed of 10 APHLC Ministers and 1 FDIC Minister.

A perusal of the above Tables ( 3 and 4) of the two Pugh's ministries shows the dominant position of those who may be put into the category of social services. Coming to the racial origin of the ministers we find that most of them were not in the vanguard of the separate state movement. Moreover the APHLC members from Jaintia Hills became restive as they were not adequately represented in his ministries - of the two Jaintia Ministers only one represented the Jaintia Hills i.e., War Jaintia constituency while the other represented the Khasi Hills i.e., Jalaw constituency. As regards the Educational background of the ministers, we find that they were less qualified than those of the Sangma's ministry. Further they were inexperienced. Again his ministries did not include senior members of the party like B.D. Lyngdoh<sup>7</sup> and S.D.D. Nichols-Roy.

---

7. B.D. Lyngdoh, a senior party member to Pugh was not selected as the Party leader. Therefore to fulfill his aspiration to Chief ministership he not only resigned from the APHLC Parliamentary Party but also formed the UMPDF to topple Pugh's ministry which amounted to his expulsion from the APHLC on May 31, 1979.

Table- 3

Showing the Occupational, Ethnic and Educational Background of the APHLC Members in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly<sup>6</sup>

	Figures in		
	1970	1972	1978
<u>Occupational Background</u>			
1. Professionals			
a) Teachers	10	16	3
b) Lawyers	1	1	1
c) Defence Personnel	1	2	-
d) Government service	1	-	3
2. Social Services	21	12	9
3. Businessmen	-	1	-
<u>Ethnic Background</u>			
Garo	12	17	6
Khasi	16	11	3
Jaintia	6	4	3
<u>Educational Background</u>			
MA/LLB	-	2	-
MA/M.Sc.	3	3	1
BA/LLB	1	2	1
BA/B.Sc.	9	6	7
BA/BE	-	2	1
Undergraduation	15	9	2
Matriculation	2	3	2
Under-matriculation	4	3	2

6. Who's Who Files in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

From the above table, it is evident that teachers especially school teachers occupy a dominant position in the occupational group. In 1970 and 1972 the number of teachers was more or less the same but declined in 1978. This shows that in 1972, teachers took active part in politics. As regards those belonging to the social service group they constituted a sizeable portion of the AFILC membership. As a matter of fact, the expression 'social services' is vague but a good number of them being the middle class businessmen, preferred to be included in this category.

As regards the ethnic factor, we find the Garos in a sizeable number. But in 1978, their number declined due to the growing influence of the Congress Party in the Garo Hills under Capt. Sangma. The Khasis in 1970, constituted a sizeable number but in the subsequent years their percentage came down due to the rising influence of the other regional parties, the HSPDP and the PDIC in the West Khasi Hills border areas and Ri Bhoi areas respectively.

Although all the sections of society have been represented in the AFHLC, yet it may be pointed out that the AFHLC could provide effective leadership and stable government only for 7 years. With prominent figures and capable leaders outside its organization like Capt. Sangma and B.G. Swell, the party after 1976 was not the same as the one we witnessed in 1972-73. It became a truncated organization which culminated in the expulsion of B.D. Iengdeh another senior member of the party. Truly speaking, leaders of the old order of the AFHLC offered a true challenge to the Party leadership and dominance in Meghalaya.

Having discussed the AFHLC elite in the Government we now proceed to study the role of some eminent AFHLC leaders individually — Let us begin with Capt. Sangma, under whose leadership politics in Meghalaya attained stability.

Capt. N.A. Sangma— A study of the AFHLC in Meghalaya would be incomplete without considering the role of the gallant captain. He, more than any body

also, was responsible for the uninterrupted APFLC rule in Meghalaya. A study of Sangma as a leader of the Party organisation, head of the APFLC ministry and as a stabiliser in the stormy and shaky politics of the state would reveal an interesting aspect of a man. A probe into the activities of the man would reverse many popular conclusions and generalisations made in the context of the state politics.

Born in 1921 at Bagmara in Garo Hills, Capt. Sangma matriculated from the Government High School, Goalpara in 1938 and then proceeded to Dacca for his college studies (Intermediate Jagannath Inter-College, Dacca). In 1942, he was commissioned in the Indian army and held the rank of a Captain and popularly known as Capt. Sangma ever since. After independence, he entered politics joining the Garo National Council as its third President. He was elected as the Chief Executive Member of the Garo Hills District Council in 1952, and 1957 and 1962 and he was also the Chairman of the Eastern Tribal Union which captured 11 of the 15 seats allotted to the Hill areas

in the Assam Legislative Assembly -- on the issue of a separate Hill State. In 1958, his party on the advice of the Union Minister agreed to participate in the Chaliha Ministry as the Cabinet Minister for Tribal areas, transport and publicity. But after a brief honeymoon in the Chaliha ministry "Hitches were created and intensified and the situation reached a climax when in 1960 the Assamese dominated State Government pushed through a Bill in the Assam Legislature declaring Assamese as the sole official language of the State in the teeth of united opposition from the Hills".<sup>9</sup> On this issue Capt. Bangma and his colleagues resigned their seats in the Assembly and in July 1960, under his initiative the APHLC was formed with the declared objective of opposing the declaration of Assamese as the official language and in the alternative, the creation of a separate Hill State for the Hill people of Assam. In 1970, he was elected as the leader of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

With the formation of Meghalaya, he became the first Chief Minister of the APHLC Government. It was

---

9. Memorandum submitted by the APHLC to the National leaders on the 17th July, 1960.



under his leadership that the APHLC which ruled the State for 7 years has a proud record of achievements, progress, political stability and administrative efficiency along with unique harmony and tranquility among all sections and communities in the State.<sup>10</sup>

But the declining influence of the APHLC became evident with the Captain outside it, when in the Mendipathar Conference held on the 16th November 1976 the Captain along with his lieutenants decided to dissolve the party and merge it into the Congress. The result of such a decision was not only a split in the ministry but also in the party. Four ministers (S.D.D. Nicholas-Ray, B.D. Lyngdoh, D.D. Fugh and P.R. Lyndiah) resigned from the Sangma ministry on the 16th November, 1976 and Capt. Sangma resigned as the APHLC Chief Minister to swear in as the Congress Chief Minister and president of the adhoc body of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee. Thus the rise of Captain Sangma to the Congress Chiefministership marked the beginning of the end of an epoch characterised by the APHLC in Meghalaya.

---

10. Rags V.V. has pointed out that: "His experience in the army and in politics enabled him to control the party efficiently". See, "The Success of the APHLC", APHLC Souvenir, 1974, p.28.

In short it was under Sangma's stewardship that Meghalaya and the APHLC party politics got stabilised. Again the APHLC legislature party under him sponsored important pieces of legislation which attempted to bring about a change in the socio-economic life of the State. By temperament, training and conviction, Sangma is a moderator, mediator, conciliator and compromiser. He is a middle of the road politician.

G.G. Swell:- Another beacon-light of the APHLC who had been regarded as the genuine spokesman of the party and acted as a go-between the Government of India and the APHLC during the course of the Hill State Movement was G.G. Swell. He entered politics after a long and distinguished career as a teacher.

His education began in his own village, Laithkyneev, from there he went to Ban Krishna Mission High School, Cherra punjee where he received liberal education and developed a taste for art. The Scottish Church, his alma-mater at Calcutta, opened before him the treasure of world literature. Swell entered politics as a member

of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar, the first political association of the Khasis-Jaintias founded in 1926. In 1946, the Khasi chiefs formed an organisation called the Federation of the Khasi states People's Union with Swell as the President whose avowed object was to preserve the rights, laws, customs and traditional institutions of the Khasi people. But in 1957, he became a Congressman and as a Congress candidate he was defeated in the 1957 Parliamentary general election by H. Hyuniewta, the Eastern Tribal Union candidate. With the formation of the APHLC, he became the APHLC member and contested the Lok Sabha elections and was elected for three consecutive terms to the Lok Sabha on APHLC ticket.<sup>11</sup> But due to his alleged anti-party activities, he was expelled from the APHLC in 1974 and founded a new regional party, the FIMC. With his expulsion, the party gradually declined and became a truncated version of what it was before 1974.

---

11. He was appointed as the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha on the 9th December 1969.

Erington Duhai Lyngdoh:- B.B. Lyngdoh was the third Chief Minister of Meghalaya. Born in February 2, 1921, he is the son of late A. Shabong and Merimal Lyngdoh of Iaitlyngkot village about 20 k.m. from Shillong. He was educated at the Ram Krishna Mission High School, Cherra Punjee, Shillong Government High School, Cotton College, Gauhati and after graduation, he took Law degree from the Law College of Calcutta University. He entered the Bar at Shillong in 1953. He became the General Secretary of the Eastern India Tribal Union in 1954-55 and in 1960 he became the Vice Chairman of the APHLC. When the APHLC was facing a critical period during the course of its Hill State movement, "It was fortunate to have B.B. Lyngdoh who was quick at reparte and his sound logic put the opposition party in a quandary".<sup>12</sup> He was the Finance and Revenue Minister in the Sangma Ministry from 1970-1975 and resigned from the same when in November 1976, Capt. Sangma decided in the Mendipathar conference to dissolve the APHLC and merge it with the Congress.

---

12. Lyngdoh, B. B., Government and Politics in Meghalaya, June 1976, (Unpublished Thesis), p.542.

The rise of D.D. Fugh in the political scene of Meghalaya is significant. B.B. Lyngdoh a senior APHLC member saw in it, the possibility and the corridor to come to power. He opposed the second ministry of D.D. Fugh for having included in it a non-APHLC member. Under his influence, six APHLC MLAs subscribed to his idea and collectively formed the dissident APHLC group which finally formed the United Meghalaya Parliamentary Democratic Forum with Lyngdoh as its leader. This made B.B. Lyngdoh to realise his ambition. Thus Lyngdoh was responsible for the severe split in the APHLC. D.D. Fugh fell. But Fugh is a colourless politician.

Senator D.D. Nichols-Roy:- Another important figure of the APHLC is S.D.D. Nichols-Roy. He was born in Shillong in 1920. His father, the late Rev. J.J. Mohan Nichols-Roy was a member of the constituent assembly and a cabinet minister in Assam over a long period.

S.D.D. Nichols-Roy was educated at Woodstock School, Mussoorie, St. Edmund's Shillong, Presidency

College, Calcutta and took his M.Sc. degree in Food Technology from the University of California, Berkeley. In 1960, he was elected General Secretary of the APHLC. In 1962 and 1967 he was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly and resigned in 1968 along with the other hill leaders on the issue of a separate Hill State.<sup>13</sup> He was elected unopposed to the Meghalaya Provincial Legislative Assembly in April 1970 and was included in the Sangma Ministry 1972, with a Cabinet rank till November 1976, when he along with the other three colleagues resigned in protest against the decision of Capt. Sangma to dissolve the APHLC and merge it with the Congress.

Being a senior member of the party upto this day he is still holding a key position as the Vice-President of the party. Roy combines in his personality the discernment of a mature politician and the self effacing spirit of service of a clergyman "The APHLC is fortunate to have him who speaks to people with sincerity".<sup>14</sup> He worked among the villagers who are

13. Who's Who Files, OP. cit.

14. Lyngdoh, R. S., OP. cit., p. 542.

proud of him. He was done pioneering works in providing educational facilities to the tribal people and actively campaigned for the political rights of the hill people. The Union Christian College, Barapani is a monument of his tireless social work.

From the foregoing data regarding the APHLC elite, it is revealed that the image of its eminent leaders was so high that no one could ever think of challenging the APHLC leadership and dominance in Meghalaya. But as mentioned earlier<sup>15</sup> like the allegations against some members of anti-party activities, APHLC-Congress merger issue, group formation and personal ambitions were causing erosion, of the APHLC. It was under these circumstances, that the non-APHLC government stepped in, contrary to the expectations of the well-wishers and supporters of the APHLC.

---

15. Discussed elaborately in chapters XI<sup>2</sup> and XII.

**CHAPTER - V**

**AFELC IN GOVERNMENT**



The APHLC having been founded on the demand for a separate Hill State began its career with initial difficulties. A study of the important legislation passed by the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly under the stewardship of the APHLC shows that despite its commitment to the ideology of socialism the APHLC policy throughout its career remained a regional party with national outlook.<sup>1</sup> It may however be conceded that a change has come in the socio-economic life and pattern of relationship, in the State. The following legislation would guide our study of the behaviour of the APHLC while in the seat of power:

The Meghalaya prevention of Gambling Act, 1970.

The Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act, 1972.

The Meghalaya Forest Regulation (Application and Amendment) Act, 1973.

Meghalaya Board of School Education Act, 1973.

Meghalaya Tree Preservation Act, 1976.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Election Manifestoes, 1967 and 1972.

2. Sources: Collection of Meghalaya (Autonomous State) Acts, Ordinances and Regulations Orders covering the Period from End April 1970 to 1976.

As a matter of fact from April 2, 1970 to 1976 the APHLC government made 109 pieces of legislation. (From April 2, 1970 to January 20, 1972, 20 pieces of legislation have been made, in <sup>1972-22, in</sup> 1973-27, in 1974-13, in 1975-9 and in 1976-18).

The Meghalaya Prevention of Gambling Act 1970, prevents gambling and for matters connected therewith by which a person intentionally exposes money to the risk of loss by chance but does not include lottery or betting upon a horse race on the date on which the race is to be run with the permission of the government. The basic aim of this act was to eradicate the social evils in the State.

For the protection of the interest of the scheduled tribes in the State, another important Act the Meghalaya Land Transfer Act 1972 which restricted the transfer of land by a tribal to a nontribal or by a nontribal to another nontribal except with the previous sanction of the competent authority as the Government of Meghalaya may specify.

To eradicate illiteracy, the APHEC passed the Meghalaya Board of School Education Act 1973 which provided for free and compulsory primary education. To preserve the natural wealth of the State and to protect them against exploitation the APHEC government passed the Meghalaya Forest and Tree Prevention and Regulation Acts in 1973 and 1976 respectively.

The foregoing acts revealed the attempts of the APHEC government to bring a change in the socio-economic life of the State. Promises made by the APHEC to the electorates on the eve of the Fourth and Fifth General Elections were reflected in the above legislation. But the fact remains that the Party was a centrist party and professed leftist inclination with regard to its economic programme. The drawbacks of the APHEC are several.

The first thing that the APHEC ministers did in April 1970 was to propose to give themselves salaries almost double those of their counterparts in bigger and prosperous states, though Meghalaya was a

poor and backward state. It was only after a warning from Swell the then Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha (in his letter dated April 11, 1970) to the Chief Minister, Capt. Sangma that they dropped the proposal of Rs. 2500/- for the Chief Minister and Rs. 2000/- for the other ministers.<sup>3</sup> Further, in order to procure money for private gains and pleasures, the state administration has encouraged various kinds of shady and dishonest deals as for instance, a party patronised by the state government has diverted 10,000 tonnes of much needed fertilisers meant for the peasants of Meghalaya to other parts of the country. Instead of penalising the party, the state government made an excess payment of Rs. 41,000/- to the <sup>same</sup> party on account of fertilisers.<sup>4</sup> The state administration has also been callous to the hardships of the people living in the border areas (Bangladesh) and has failed to undertake economic measures to rescue the potato, cotton

---

3. The Meghalaya Ministers salaries and allowances Act 1970, provided that there shall be paid to the Chief Minister a salary of Rs. 1500/- and ministers Rs. 1250/- per month.

4. Shillong Observer, October 1, 1973.

and jute producers in the state from the exploitation of the middle class men by buying their produces at a fixed minimum support price. It has also failed to take vital transport and communication routes within the state and to give protection to the small coal-mines of the state on which a large number of people depend for their livelihood.<sup>5</sup>

While failing to safeguard, protect and promote the economic interest of the people of the state, the APHLC government has resorted to actions which resulted in further weakening their will to stand on their own, and fight for their development and upliftment. For instance, it gave its consent to the Government of India to introduce the 31st Amendment Bill in the Parliament and to have it passed by which reservation of seats in the state assembly and the parliament for scheduled tribes in the state was done away with.<sup>6</sup> Although V.V. Rao pointed out that:

---

5. Despite the availability of Article 12-A(b) of the Sixth Schedule, the APHLC government has not sought exemptions of these coal mines from nationalisation.

6. The Gazette of Meghalaya, November 10, 1973, pp. 477-78.

"the application of the principle of reservation of seats for the majority communities in Meghalaya was anachronism hardly consistent with democratic norms"<sup>7</sup>; yet people and political leaders of the State, to protect their own identity and culture, still feel the need of such a principle.<sup>8</sup>

Next it appointed the Land Reforms Commission for the Khasi Hills in July 1973 but the report and recommendations of the said Commission were never implemented as the Commission itself was against the wishes of the people and, moreover, land holdings in the Khasi Hills are extremely small and far below ceilings imposed by the other states in the country within the National guidelines of Land Reform.

Finally the APFLC government has misused government machinery, funds and resources for its party's end. This was most evident in the Nantongkut bye-election held in 1973.

---

7. Quoted by J.N. Chaudhury, *op.cit.*, p.384.

8. Meghalaya Assembly in its Budget Session 1980 passed a resolution for the Restoration of Reservation of seats. See, Bulletin No. 23, March 31, 1980.

In the border states like Assam and Meghalaya an awareness of a threat to local identity and culture has been the primary concern of not only the people but also of the public representatives and political workers. In Meghalaya therefore the need for special law to regulate the residence in the state for people coming from other states (Bangladesh and Nepal) and to protect local interest was felt. Thus inspite of the alleged misdeeds against the AFHLC government in economic fields, the same was aware of the popular fear of the people that they will one day, be reduced to a minority in their own State. As a result of which, the AFHLC government passed the Meghalaya Residential Permit Bill on the 13th December 1973 and submitted it to the Governor of the State who eventually submitted it to the President of India for his assent who has not so far given his opinion on it nor has returned the same for reconsideration by the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly till date.

The above allegations popularly termed as "Sins of Omission and Commission of the Sangma Ministry"<sup>9</sup> and

---

9. North Eastern Affairs, pp. 211, p. 20.

elaborated by the PMLC<sup>10</sup> in 1973, could not be accepted as the sound reasons for the APHLC's failure in its economic programme especially in the rural and border areas. But the real reasons are:

Firstly, the APHLC in Meghalaya was never a cohesive and disciplined body so as to provide articulate leadership.

Secondly, the Party succumbed to pressures emanating from the opposition as a result of which it could not take bold decisions since it has remained in a precarious majority in all the general elections.

Thirdly, the intra-Party factions made it difficult for the APHLC to pursue a clear line consistent with its professed ideology. The pressure group coinciding with communal and economic interest prevented the party from fully implementing the assurances given to the electorates at the time of polls and made it essentially a Centrist Party.

Another important cause which had weakened the fabric and dismantled the popularity of the APHLC was the

---

10. PMLC Booklet, "Mistake of the APHLC Government of Meghalaya", November, 1973.



disputes for leadership and clashes in personalities. The party has no outstanding leader of high calibre. All the leaders were equal to one another and all are suitors for the Helen of Troy -- the Chief Ministership. This was realised by them but no one even initiated a compromise formula.

Ethnic differences were also responsible. The Garos and the Khasis contested for supremacy. The time may come when either of them may seek for a separation -- After the death of the present leaders who are moderates, the extremists will assume the role when a Garo-Khasi combination would be an impossibility.

Corruption -- not on a large scale also existed. Favouritism, nepotism and log-rolling were also responsible to say the vitality and popularity of the party. Some important members of the party for example, used their influence and secured jobs and promotions of their relatives overlooking the claims of the qualified candidates and seniors. Sometimes individual member scandals were also responsible for undermining the popularity of the party. Along with the above

reasons, it may be worthwhile to note that not only economic but also political development was absent during the APFLC regime. The three variables and dimensions of Parson<sup>11</sup> and Pys<sup>12</sup>, being the appropriate index of political development in the tribal areas seem to be non-existent in Meghalaya. But it is wrong to come to the conclusion that the APFLC was solely responsible for the absence of political development in Meghalaya, which according to Chhabra was a mere "story of the emergence of Meghalaya".<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, mere existence of the APFLC and emulation of modern political institutions are a poor substitute and will in no way bring political development without people's meaning participation.

Thus the APFLC which piloted the movement for a separate Hill State and which ruled Meghalaya for

- 
11. Parson, T. and Shils E.A., Towards a General Theory of Action, (Massachusetts, 1954), p.77 and Parson, T., et.al., Working Papers in Theory of Action, (Glencoe, 1953), p.65.
  12. Pys, L. V., Aspects of Political Development, (Boston, 1966), pp.31-48.
  13. Chhabra, H. K., State Politics in India : Study of Centre State Relations, (New Delhi: Subject Publications, 1971), p.305.

seven years with many vicissitudes since its formation, is yet to make a dent evenly in the State. Hence to brush up the party image in all the component districts of the State, the party leaders of the two factions under Lyngdoh and Pugh respectively, should take every possible step for a reunion. Election results ought to serve as an eye-opener to the AFELC leadership. The situation calls for serious heart searching by the leaders to analyse the causes of the waning influence of the party in their jurisdiction. They must sink their differences and take immediate and corrective measures to reunite themselves so as to reestablish rapport with the masses. Failure to take timely action to refurbish the party image and to prove its own mettle, the electorate will undoubtedly reject them in the elections and years to come which would lead to the ultimate disintegration of this federated body.

Chapter - VI

CONCLUSION

The APHLC came into being as a platform to protest against the move of the majority community in the erstwhile composite state of Assam to make Assamese the sole official language of the State.<sup>1</sup> But from a forum of Hill State struggle it has evolved itself into a well knit political party bearing the same name, the APHLC.<sup>2</sup> In spite of hostile comments and unfavourable circumstances, it could rally mass support to broaden its base in every corner of all the component districts of Meghalaya.

In the Third and Fourth General Elections held in 1962 and 1967 respectively, the APHLC contested all the seats allotted to the Hill areas in the Assam Legislative Assembly, on the Hill State issue. In 1962 it faced a stiff opposition from the Congress

- 
1. Introduction to the Constitution of the APHLC, (Shillong, October 1, 1977).
  2. The Election Commission of India vide its Notification No. 56/66 1st December 1966 has allotted "Flower" as its reserved symbol.

but it never failed to realize the importance of bringing into its fold the influential and educated legislators. Captain Sangma and his lieutenants were instrumental in bringing these people under its banner with a view to counterbalance the influence of the Congress in the Hills. After 8 years of peaceful struggle and correspondence with the Government of India (In between the two General Elections 1962 and 1967 in the dialogue between the AFHLC and the Government of India, various proposals were thought of, discussed and either discarded or implemented including the Scottish Pattern of Administration 1960, Nehru Plan of Full Autonomy 1963, Pataskar Commission 1965, Federal Plan 1967, Nektu Plan 1967 and at last a consensus emerged between the two parties with the announcement of the Government of India of its decision to re-organise Assam by creating an Autonomous Hill State envisaged by the 22nd Constitutional Bill which led to the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 24th December 1969 which paved the way for the North Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act 1971 which granted a full fledged state

to Meghalaya on the 20th January 1972) the APHLC ultimately succeeded in achieving its end — the establishment of Meghalaya. The APHLC which came into existence for the creation of a separate Hill State tried to project its image as a secular non-communal regional party with National outlook<sup>3</sup> on the basis of which it could rally mass support of both tribals and non-tribals in the Second General Elections.

With the emergence of Meghalaya 1972 the Hill State issue was replaced by the APHLC-Congress merger issue culminated in the Mendipathar conference 1976, which constituted a landmark in the History of the APHLC politics of Meghalaya. It also indicated the declining influence of the APHLC with the masses especially the rural electorate and in the Sixth General Elections (1977-78) the APHLC was not what it had been in the past.<sup>4</sup> Finally with the formation of the IMEDF government in May 1979, the APHLC was sailing over troubled waters when its internal unity and

---

3. Election Manifestos, 1962 and 1967.

4. Details in chapters II and III.

integrity were at stake. It became a house divided against itself and till date, compromise between the two factions became an idiom of the APHLC.

A study of the APHLC in 21 years of its existence shows that the Party with a popular recognition as the - architect of Meghalaya could remain on the saddle of power only for 7 years, after which it became a truncated organisation marked by factional pulls, defections and disputes over leadership. Further its failure to initiate programme for economic reconstruction had weakened its fabric while the charisma of its pre-1976 performance had carried it through three general elections to power, the momentum had spent itself by the time the sixth general elections came round. The monolith of the APHLC power was dismantled as also the restraining influence it exercised on fragmentation from a position of power and strength. With the APHLC in disarray, the opportunists both inside and outside the party felt encouraged to organise themselves to dislodge the APHLC by forming coalitions with others so determined.



As stated in the previous pages that political institutions are poor substitute without people's meaning participation - on the basis of this statement, it would be interesting to discuss the impact of political system on the political behaviour of the people of Meghalaya. It has always been argued that Parliamentary democracy and party system competing for the support of the electorate developed in the society where the individual was not born into a tightly organised group which demands his loyalty and affords him support in his dealing with the rest of the community. In India such groups-caste and sub-caste dominate social life and inevitably influence their members' attitude towards political groupings.<sup>5</sup> Democracy in India has so far been a clever balancing of different caste interest.<sup>6</sup> But in the context of Meghalaya "Factionalism and groupism made the formative stage of tribal politics like in other parts of North-East

---

5. G. Von Furer Haimendorf, Caste and Politics in South Asia in Politics and Society in India, (ed.), G.H. Phillip, (George Allen and Unwin Ltd.), pp.53-54.

6. Ashok Mehta in his article on "Group Prejudices and Political Parties", (eds.) Manital B.Narasvati and C.N. Vakil, (Bombay, 1955), p.160.

India possibly because tribal allegiance was in the beginning primarily clan oriented or village oriented",<sup>7</sup> where the individual behaviour within the structure of society is regulated in terms of the accepted norms of the clan to which he belongs (with regard to birth, death, marriage and financial obligations clan represents a close clustering of the members on family kin). But with the coming of representative institutions clan is no longer the sole determining factor in politics.

Truly speaking, before the Government of India Act 1935 — "a constitutional advancement for the Hills",<sup>8</sup> rural leadership was not identified with political parties. Clan loyalty and family status were the important basis of leadership and political affiliation were relatively insignificant. Age, educational qualifications and occupation were at best, secondary considerations — women had little opportunity to acquire leadership status.<sup>9</sup> But after 1935, new trends

---

7. Chaudhury, J.N., *op.cit.*, p.375.

8. *Ibid.*, p.351.

9. Society is matrilineal but not matriarchal. Women do not rule and were not even allowed to attend the Darbars or Councils.

in the structure of leadership arose. Local leadership is now inclined towards a power orientation and the rural candidate as well as candidates were engaged in a keen political competition and kept political objectives upper most in their minds when deciding their election strategy and techniques in regard to the mobilisation of political support. The Fifth General Elections (first in Meghalaya) show that the voter is increasingly becoming more articulate and his growing sensitivity to the economic and political problems but not clan as the sole determining factor in his voting behaviour. The political system was thus in the process of westernisation but the persistence of tradition as reflected in the system is one of the remarkable characteristics in the process. In this connection Almond and Coleman<sup>10</sup> had emphasised that every political system is dualistic or mixed falling somewhere along a continuum between the modern and the traditional. It may be pointed out that a modern political systems are the greater differentiation of the secondary structures and an attempt on their part to

---

10. Almond and Coleman, The Politics of the Developing Areas: Introduction of a Functional Approach to Comparative Politics, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), pp. 533-37.

penetrate and modernise the primary structures.

A study of the political behaviour of the people of Meghalaya reveals a mixture of tradition and modernity and modernism and traditionalism are the twin interacting features of the political system in Meghalaya. It tends to aim at the achievement of political and economic goals but the means employed in this direction may be traditional, neo-traditional and also modern. Here a mention may be made of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian constitution which aimed at the introduction of the element of popular participation in politics and administration and at the same time to protect the traditional institutions which are still in existence. In this connection B. Paken observed that: "when all is said and done, the fact remains that the society has not been able to entirely discard the traditions nor totally absorb new ideas at most - the society lies somewhere between a transition from tradition to modernity which may sometimes be called the modernity of tradition".<sup>11</sup>

---

11. B. Paken in his article on "Jaintia Tribe of Meghalaya", Seminar on Social and Political Institutions of the Hills People of North East India, July 4-5, 1977, under the joint auspices of Anthropological Survey of India and North East India Council of Social Studies Research, Shillong.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Books

- Almond, G.A., and Coleman, J.S., Politics of Developing Areas, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).
- Bareh, H., The History and Culture of the Khasi People, (Shillong: Published by the author, 1967).
- \_\_\_\_\_, Meghalaya, (New Delhi: R.K. Printers, 1974).
- Bhattacharjee, J.B., Garos and the English, 1765-1874, (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1978).
- Chaudhury, J.N., The Khasi Canvas : A Cult and Political History, (Shillong: Smt. J.N. Chaudhury, Quinton Rd., 1978).
- Chaube, S., Hill Politics in North-East India, (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1973).
- Chhabra, H.K., State Politics in India : Study of Centre-State Relations, (New Delhi: Surjeet Publication, 1977).
- Chanda, Ashok, Under the Indian Sky, (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications Ltd, 1971).
- Dubey, S.M. (ed.), North East India : A Sociological Study, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1978).
- Duverger, Maurice, Political Parties : Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State, (ed. 3, Tr. by Barbara and Robert North; London: Methuen and Company Ltd, 1969).
- Dasgupta, Pannalal, (ed.), A Common Perspective for North-Eastern India, (Calcutta, 1967).

Glerson, G.A., Linguistic Survey of India, vol.I, Part-I, (Reprint, 1967) and vol.II, *Second Edition*, 1966.

Gones, Morris, Government and Politics of India, (Hutchinson University Library, 1964).

Lipset, S.M., Political Man, (New Delhi: Rpt. Arnold Heinemann, 1973).

Lyngdoh, Nongbri, R.S., Government and Politics in Meghalaya, (Unpublished Thesis, 1976).

Mathur, P.R.G., The Khasis of Meghalaya (Study in Tribalism and Religion), (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979).

Mackenzie, Alexander, History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1884).

Michael, Robert, Political Parties, (New York: Dover).

Mairaj, Iqbal (ed.), State Politics in India, (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967).

Neumann, Sigmund, Modern Political Parties: Approach To Comparative Politics, Towards a Comparative Study of Political Parties, (The University of Chicago Press, 1956).

Pye, L.W., Aspects of Political Development, (Boston, 1972).

Parson, T., and Shils, E.A. (ed.), Towards a General Theory of Action, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

Parson, T., et.al., Working Papers in the Theory of Action, (New York: Free Press, 1953).

Playfair, A., The Garo, (Gauhati: United Publishers, 1975).

Phillips, C.H. (ed.), Politics and Society in India, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.).

Rannay, Austin, (ed.), The Comparative Study of Political Participation : Essays on the Behavioral Study of Politics, (University of Illinois Press, 1962).

Rao, V.V., A Century of Tribal Politics in North-East India (1874-1974), (New Delhi: S.Chand and Co, 1976).

Ray, B. Datta, Election Politics in Meghalaya, (Shillong: North-East India Council for Social Science Research, 1978).

Weiner, Myron, Political Change in South Asia and Party Politics in India -- The Development of Multi-Party System, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

#### Acts and Notifications

The Assam Re-Organisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969.

The North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971.

The Meghalaya Ministers Salaries and Allowances Act, October, 1970.

The Meghalaya Prevention of Gambling Act, 1970.



The Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act,  
1972.

The Meghalaya Board of School Education Act, 1973.

Notification: No. HPL 36/71/43 dt. 21 February, 1972.

Notification: No. HPL399/75/140 dt. 9 October, 1976

Notification: No. HPL 49/76/171 dt. 12 October, 1976.

Notification: No. HD 238/72/Part dt. 2 July, 1976

Election Commission Notification No. 56/66 dt. 1 December,  
1966.

Pamphlets and Manifestoes:

Basic Facts of Meghalaya, Issued by the Directorate  
of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya,  
Shillong, August 1978.

Meghalaya Election Hand Book 1972 and 1978

FDIC Pamphlet on "The Misdeeds of APHLC Government  
of Meghalaya, 1973

APHLC Souvenir, July 1974.

Ka Shithi Sha U Paralok III, 1977 and V, 1978

G.G. Swell. Expelled. Why? Issued by P.R. Kyndiah,  
General Secretary, APHLC, 1973.

APHLC Resolution passed by the Executive Committee,  
on the 10th and 11th November 1976, Shillong.

APHLC Resolution passed at the Mendipathar Conference, November 16, 1976.

Gazetteer of Meghalaya, November 10, 1973.

Bulletin No.23, March 31, 1980 of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

Who's Who Files : BK-7/MLA/73/472 and BK-7/MLA/78. (Available in the Library, Meghalaya Legislative Assembly).

Election Manifestoes of the APHLC, 1962, 1967, 1972, 1977 and 1978

#### Articles, Reports and Publications

Goswami, M. C., "The Garos of Meghalaya and Their Neighbours in the Tribal People of India", (Government of India: Publication Division, 1973).

Hodson, T. C., "The Garo and Khasi Marriage Systems", Man in India, vol.I, 1921.

Kar, P. C., "A Point of View on the Garos in Transition", Dasgupta, Pannalal (ed.), A Common Perspective for North-East India, (Calcutta, 1967).

\_\_\_\_\_, "A Decade of Garo Politics", The Assam Bazar Patrika, (Calcutta, April 2, 1970).

Khan, R., "The Indian Political Landscape", Indian Quarterly, XXIV, October-December, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Regional Dimension", Seminar, April, 1973.

Pakynstein, B.H., "Lest We Forget....", APHLC Souvenir, 1974.

Pakem, B., "Jaintia Tribe of Meghalaya", Seminar on Social and Political Institutions of the Hill People of North East India, (July, 1977).

Rao, V.V., "The Success of APHLC", APHLC Souvenir, 1974.

Srinivas, H.N., and Sanwal, R.D., "Some Aspects of Political Development in North Eastern Hill Areas of India", North-Eastern Research Bulletin, vols. 1-3, 1970-73.

Valungkar, T.N., "Problems of National Integration", North Eastern Affairs, vol. I, 1972-73.

Thakar, A.V., "Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (other than Assam) Sub-Committee Final Report",

Shiva Rao, B., The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, vol. III, (Delhi, 1966).

Report of the State Reorganisation Committee, (Delhi, 1955).

The Indian Annual Register, 1936, vol. II, (Calcutta, 1937).

Newspapers and Periodicals  
(National and Regional)

Mainstream, ( April 4, 1970).

Axita Bazar Patrika, (April 2, 1970).

The Statesman, (May 11, 1968).

The Shillong Observer, (October 1, 1973).

The Assam Tribune, (May 11, 1979).

U Namliang, (August 8, 1979).

The Assam Tribune, (March 1, 1979).

The Assam Tribune, (March 5, 1979).

Is Fyrtu U Riewlum, (November 18, 1980).

Meghalaya Year Book, (1979).