

**PROBLEM OF THE
HILL TRIBES
NORTH EAST FRONTIER**

VOL. II

H K Barpujari

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PROBLEM OF THE HILL TRIBES NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

1843-72

Vol. II

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To my wife

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

The period covered in this volume from 1843 to 1872 witnessed the gradual abandonment of the policy of non-intervention to one of slow but steady penetration. It would be wrong to presume that this was the outcome of a deliberately calculated policy to extend British suzerainty over areas occupied by the frontier tribes. The British Government of India not only resisted but invariably reprimanded the local authorities in their repeated urge for expansion at a time of financial stringency in the wake of the wars with Afghanistan, Sind and the Punjab. The watchword of the government was conciliation to its utmost, but conciliation could hardly succeed when vital interests were at stake. The extension of revenue and police jurisdiction and the operation of European speculators beyond the border areas could not but produce illfeeling and resentment of the tribesmen to whom no motive was so strong as the preservation of their rights on lands and forests whether old or newly acquired. To conciliate the tribes, friendly and unfriendly, peace missions followed one after another; and these were not entirely barren in results. Even the valiant Angami chiefs entered into agreements acknowledging the authority of the government, agreeing to pay tribute and assuring to abstain from internecine feuds. It was vain to expect of the warring communities to abandon their tribal feuds which passed from generation to generation or to forgo the habit of honouring the dead with the head or scalp of their trophies. In communities where each individual was his own master and when every affair of importance had to be decided by the Council of elders, engagements with the chiefs bore little fruit. Hence followed raids and counter-raids "involving both the innocent and guilty in one indiscriminate slaughter, arson and rapine".

Despite repeated expedition when in 1851 Lord Dalhousie found the Nagas as unbending as ever, he had no option but to withdraw altogether from these hills allowing the tribes "to cut each other's throats (to) their heart's content" Inevitably, matters drifted

from bad to worse; even British districts were not spared from incessant inroad of the Nagas which the frontier officials were powerless to meet or to punish. There were two alternatives before the government—absolute control or absolute withdrawal. The practical effect of the latter course would be, it was feared, that within a few years the districts in the plains would be parcelled out amongst the neighbouring tribes and the British would be driven out speedily from the province. No wonder, therefore, even a non-interventionist like Lord Lawrence had to agree to the only course that was left open—“to assert British authority over these tribes and to bring them under a system suited to circumstances”.

The forward policy demanded administrative measures to tighten the grip of the local authorities over areas brought under control or sphere of British influence. The general tendency was to have a form of government acceptable to the people suited to their needs and requirements without much change in the existing institutions. Even in the defence of the frontier, stress was laid more and more on Militias composed of tribes and communities as could enter the hills at all seasons without apprehension of the climate or of the terrain. Every endeavour was however made to redeem the tribes from their utter backwardness; for it was patently clear that coercive measures alone would not restore normalcy in border areas.

The British government had to move cautiously. It did not aim at the initial stages to bring all the tribes under effective control; for its immediate objective was protection of the lowlands from their incursions. All that it wanted was to establish beyond dispute that there was no “real frontier” for making a distinction between the tract occupied by these tribes and the British territory. *Laissez-faire* continued to be the keynote of the policy towards the hillmen in the extreme south or to those in inaccessible north. Even within their limits the district authorities were warned not to meddle in inter-tribal feuds except in cases where the interests of British subjects were involved. Inner Line Regulations, before long, set a limit “to that indefinite, slow but certain aggression and advance to a dangerous and exposed position which has been the source of our present difficulties”.

In writing this volume in the absence of indigenous sources I had to rely mostly on unpublished official documents. In this respect

my problem had been not scarcity but profusion of materials; and therefore every endeavour had been made to highlight the key points in the narrative. I am well aware of my limitations; yet I hope I have presented facts as they are without fear to favour and it is up to the readers to judge whether I have succeeded.

I have to express my sincere thanks to Dr. R.K. Mahanta who read the typescript and to Dr. S.K. Barpujari, my younger brother, who helped me throughout in the publication of this volume. In collecting materials I received much help from my former pupils Dr. Imdad Hussain, Dr. J.B. Bhattacharjee and Dr. S. Chattopadhyaya. The official of the National Archives of India, New Delhi, West-Bengal State Archives, Calcutta, and Keeper of Records, Government of Assam, Shillong, placed at my disposal materials at their respective Archives, for which I am grateful.

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June 1976

H.K. Barpujari

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

<i>FC</i>	—	Foreign Political Consultations
<i>FPA</i>	—	Foreign Political Proceedings - A
<i>MP</i>	—	Military Proceedings - A
<i>BJP</i>	—	Bengal Judicial Proceedings
<i>AS</i>	--	Assam Secretariat Records
<i>AC</i>	—	Assam Commissioner's Files
<i>PP</i>	—	Parliamentary Papers

CHAPTER ONE

South-East Frontier

The hopes entertained by Major Jenkins that the eastern districts would remain undisturbed was dommed to a bitter disappointment. On the morning of 10 January 1843, the Singphos numbering about four hundred made a simultaneous attack on the frontier guards at Ningroo and Beesa. The rebels were repulsed at the former outpost with heavy losses; the detachment at Beesa surrendered after two days when their ammunitions were completely exhausted; its *jamadar* and *havildar* were killed on the spot and most of the sepoy carried into slavery.¹ The detachment at Koojoo was also attacked although it was saved by the timely arrival of a party of sepoy under Lieutenant Lockett. All the chiefs including Beesa Gaum and Ningroola who had hitherto been loyal were involved in the outbreak; the acknowledged leader was however Serro-la-ten, an adherent and supposed successor of Beesa Gaum. Captain Vetch, the political agent Upper Assam, hurried to Ningroo early next morning calling upon Lituenant D. Reid, the commandant of the Local Artillery, Dibrugarh, to join him there with guns and mortar; requisition for force was also made to Major Hannay, commanding Assam Light Infantry at Jaypur, and to Captain Smith at Bishwanath.²

It was indeed a rude shock to Jenkins to learn that even Ningroola on whom he counted much had joined hands with the rebels'. The sudden and simultaneous attack on two frontier outposts followed by a report that Saikhowa was also threatened by a body of Khamtis led him to believe that there was a well organised plan of aggression in which the Tipam Raja†, the governor of Mougauing,

¹ FC, 1 February 1843, Nos. 94-100.

² *Ibid.*, Vetch to Jenkins 13 January.

* This chief, who was engaged in the cultivation of tea produced, it appears from official reports, about fifteen maunds of tea annually since 1839.

might also have a secret hand. To meet any emergency the Agent called upon Captain F.G. Lister, commanding Sylhet Light Infantry at Cherrapunjii, to despatch two companies of troops and the Commandant 23rd Regiment at Jamalpur to move two additional companies as speedily as possible.³

Feeling himself insecure Ningroola surrendered soon after the insurrection and Beesa Gaum followed suit. Several chiefs under Serrola took up their position at Tirapmukh near Ningroo wherefrom they were dislodged by Lieutenant Reid who had arrived in time with a couple of guns.⁴ On 22 January Vetch accompanied by 150 sepoy advanced towards Beesa then strongly entrenched by Let Gaum to concert measures with Lieutenant Lockett and Reynolds who had been directed to march there with detachments at Koojoo and Saikhowa. The enemy offered little resistance either at the breastwork thrown up at Karempani or at their stockaded position at Beesa. These were soon abandoned, but they were supposed to have been lurking in the neighbourhood. After a march lasting a few days through impenetrable jungles Captain Mainwarring, commanding the Second Assam Sebundis, succeeded in making a surprise attack on a party led by Let Gaum compelling them to beat a hasty retreat abandoning their stores and slaves. In the pursuit several Singphos were killed by the Doaneahs and the Nagas; the family of Let Gaum was intercepted by a detachment at Towkak which made the chief to surrender voluntarily to the Officer Commanding at Ningroo.⁵

While proceeding to Ningroo Reynolds found a letter on the way supposed to have been written by Serrola and fourteen gaums the translation of which reads as follows :

† Bihuram the Tipam Raja alias Bishwanath Singha, accompanied his sister Hemo Aideo whom Raja Chandrakanta (1810-18) offered as a present to the king of Ava. Vetch reported, on the authority of Burmese agents, that the Tipam Raja was made the Governor of Hoopong Moule (?), a part of Mogaung, and that his sister made over to him her district of Bhamo. For details see Bhuyan. S.K. (ed), *Tungkhungia Buranji*, Pp. 207, 219; FC, 12 August 1843, No. 105; Vetch 6 May.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ FC, 22 February 1843, No. 162; Vetch to Jenkins 27 and 28 January.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 May, Nos. 76-7.

This land is ours and Vetch Sahib has taken it from us. Formerly Scott Sahib and Neufville Sahib gave to the Tengi Meyo' from Dehingmukh, from Namsangmookh, from Tipam hill and in consequence of Vetch Sahib having taken it away we have made war and on that account we have fought also. Vetch Sahib has seized and carried off our Singphos. Further we have received orders from the Tipam Rajah to make war; now if you will abandon the country from the guard at Dehingmookh we shall come to Karemookh, but if you will not, we will not come. If you do not come, you will have the burning of all the villages on the Tengapani; once if we set to work we shall plunder the country thoroughly.⁶

Evidently the chiefs traced the origin of the outbreak to three grievances; (i) the resumption of Singhpho lands, (ii) seizure and confinement of the Singphos and (iii) the order of Tipam Raja to wage war against the British. Of these Captain Vetch could not deny the first. In his letter on 20 April 1843, the Political Agent referred to two instances in which the Singphos had been deprived of their lands. These were cases of Koojoo and Jogundo; the chiefs of both, he explained, had been guilty of offences against the British government. The former for aiding in the disturbances at Sadiya; the latter in lifting cattle of some ryots in the district of Muttock.⁷ In his forwarding note on 31 May Jenkins brought home to the Government of Bengal that actually no violation of treaty was made since no defined tract of territory was ever made to the Singphos either by the British or by the former government. The only agreement with them was that their lands were to be exempted from taxation on their surrendering Assamese slaves; and this exemption, he added, did not extend even to lands cultivated by Assamese refugees. With respect to the extension of tea plantation in areas occupied by the Singphos, Jenkins pointed out that at the time of clearance of these tracts the Political Agent made it clear to the chiefs that no objection could be raised by them on the occupation of waste lands which the Singphos made no use. The establishment of factories, the Agent felt, was agreeable to many inasmuch as the culture and manufacture

* The Singphos who were commonly called Tengi Myo were reported to have descendants of three brothers—Myo, Naikce and Tengi. From the first derived the clans of Laloo, Gaking [Duffa] and Ningroo; from the second Noomly or Beesa and from the third Serro-la-ten and Waqueyat.

⁶ FC, 12 August 1843, Nos. 90-1; Vetch to Jenkins 20 April.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Jenkins 31 May.

of tea had brought within their reach money and luxuries otherwise not obtainable by them. Jenkins nonetheless admitted that occasional punishment had been meted out to the Singphos, because the power of inflicting punishment for offences committed by them by ordinary courts of law had been exercised since British occupation. Several Singphos had been hanged and deported for heinous crimes; and on one occasion even Beesa Gaum was ordered to attend the court as an aggressor.⁸

In regard to Tipam Raja's complicity, the Political Agent held the view that although he was not an active participant in the outbreak, he encouraged the insurgents which was borne out by the fact that he had conferred on Serro-la-ten marks of distinction—a horse, a golden umbrella, a borkha and five seers of silver—when he crossed the frontier with a body of armed men raised in his territory; that he sent to Beesa Gaum three seers of needle, half of these being broken which the chief is said to have distributed amongst his followers; and this, according to the custom of the Singphos, was the signal for war.⁹ Jenkins did not believe that the Raja really intended to make an invasion in person. Since he had been vested with the charge of a frontier province, he could not intervene without involving in it the Burmese government. Nevertheless the Agent held the view that the Tipam Raja “connived at and encouraged” the Singphos to keep the frontier disturbed with a view to taking ultimately advantage of any extension of rebellion to Assam and in the meantime to ascertaining feelings of the Assamese nobles to the pretensions of the ancient rights of his family.¹⁰

The Governor-General in Council in their proceedings on 31 May never failed to realise that the causes of the outbreak must have been deeper; otherwise Ningroola, a loyal chief who had recently been engaged in tea-cultivation, would not have been a collaborator of the insurgents.¹¹ It was therefore considered expedient to institute a full and searching enquiry into the whole affair. A commission

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 102, see depositions of Lalong, Let Gaum, Gokheel, Chunglung and Chinge Singh.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ FC. 31 May 1843, Nos. 86 and 106.

consisting of Colonel G.B. Lloyd and H. Stainforth was appointed to inquire into the causes and nature of the insurrection and to suggest measures to prevent its recurrence.¹² When one of the members could not proceed to the frontier on ground of health, the Agent to the Governor-General was directed to furnish information in consultation with local authorities so as to enable the Governor-General in Council to form an opinion on the subject. Since direct accusations had been made by the chiefs against the Political Agent, T.R. Davidson, Secretary to the Government of India in the foreign Department, called upon Jenkins to discover whether really any encroachments had been made since the days of Scott.¹³ He agreed that privileges which the chiefs stipulated were "rather personal than local"; yet the immunities claimed were within certain limits and from which they were not dislodged. "The simple and energetic manner in which Beesa urged his claim shows a firm conviction of his rights and a deep sense of wrong inflicted on him" The Governor-General in Council strongly felt that "encroachments upon the Singphos and apprehension of further inroads upon their privileges" were the real causes of disaffection. The Agent was directed to give full consideration to these remarks and to report whether or not these were the real causes which drove the Singphos to revolt.¹⁴

Accordingly after the rains Jenkins proceeded to Upper Assam. On the basis of depositions of a number of chiefs whom he interviewed at Saikhowa and Dibrugarh and information furnished by several men of respectively the Agent submitted a lengthy report on 14 February 1844.¹⁵ Therein he categorically denied the charges levelled by Serrola and others that Singphos had been deprived of their lands and particularly of Beesa whom neither the British nor the former government ever acknowledged as entitled to any land. This was borne out by the evidence of Maniram, the dewan of the Assam Company. Jenkins brought home to the Governor-General in Council that Beesa claimed not an estate but an independent territory

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

* See Appendix-A

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ FC, 23 March 1844, Nos. 89-91; Jenkins 15 February.

which he intended to be a part of a scheme of the Tipam Raja. If such a claim was to be recognised, he added, Beesa would hold the tract in connection with that chief and perhaps under the tutelege of the Burmese government.¹⁶ The principal cause of the general discontent, Jenkins believed, was the desertion of the Doaneah slaves; without it the other cause would not have drive the Singphos to revolt. He did not rule out the possibility of Tipam Raja's complicity although he could not exactly say the extent of such encouragement by him or his agents.¹⁷

In spite of the protests that were subsequently made by the Tipam Raja in a letter to the Political Agent the deposition made by several witnesses strengthened the belief that the chief might have had a secret hand in fomenting the insurrection.¹⁸

Nor can we dismiss the contention of Jenkins that the desertion of slaves was one of the important though not the sole cause of the event. To the Singphos the slaves constituted their most valuable property; on these they depended primarily for their agricultural labour. Desertion of slaves inevitably left even the wealthiest amongst them without the means of subsistence. While the chance for raiding

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ FC, 12 August 1843, No. 105; Vetch 6 May.

Towards the close of 1837, the Tipam Raja in a representation to the Agent claimed the rule of Upper Assam on the strength of his right as a jubaraj [heir-apparent] under king Jogeswar Singha (1821). Although this was turned down by the government, the pretender through his relatives and agents never ceased to make the Ahom families in Upper Assam believe that he was determined to recover his kingdom if it was not willingly made over to him by the British and that he made gifts to the priests for prayers for his success. So general was the feeling for an invasion of Assam by the Tipam Raja, that many for fear of a change in government endeavoured to placate his kith and kin by offer of presents or otherwise. Jenkins was not wrong to say that the disaffected Singphos used the name of Tipam Raja for their own purpose. Maniram, the dewan of the Assam Company, believed that the Tipam Raja, who never lost hopes of ultimately holding Upper Assam, was carrying on his intrigues with the Singphos. FC, 23 March 1844, No. 89; Jenkins 15 February; also AS, Letters issued to Government vol. 7: 31 May 1838, No. 65; see translation of Munceram's Letter Aghun 1789 [S.E.]; FC, 12 August 1843, Nos. 102-5; Vetch 6 May; see depositions of Lalong, Let-Gaum, Dao Saw *doaneah*, Domae and Neenkee Jow.

Assamese villages and carrying off their inhabitants became increasingly difficult, the extension of tea gardens and the establishment of military outposts encouraged desertions. Hannay wrote to the Agent that the growth of the tea baris in the vicinity of their villages and consequent demand for labour at competitive rates multiplied cases of elopement.¹⁹ Zalim Singh, the officer in-charge Sadiya, reported in 1833 that the presence of the armed men had enabled the escape of forty Assamese captives in Burma who had been forcibly confined on the way by the Singphos including Beesa Gaum.²⁰ Ningroola was certainly aggrieved when the guard at Ningroo connived at the flight of the captives whom he procured at great pains and expense from Burma. Moreover the location of military outposts in and near their villages though carried out with concurrence of the chiefs could not but produce deep resentment and disaffection; for they found themselves reduced and subject in a great measure to the government of a *jamadar* or *havildar*.²¹ *Parwanas* were not infrequently issued by them demanding feudal services, viz. repairing of roads, raising stockades; though occasionally remunerated, these were vexations and as such extremely odious to them.²² Above all the subjugation of the Singphos to the court of the Principal Assistant could not but be offensive to the simple-minded hillmen whose notion of crime and justice was different from those who tried them. Serrola, the would be successor to Beesa, considered it a grievance when he found his cousin imprisoned for selling an Assamese captive to the Mishmis.²³ The chief of Jogundo bore the implacable hatred against the British from the moment he was sentenced to three years imprisonment for

¹⁹ FC, 23 March 1844, No. 90; Hannay to Jenkins, 20 November 1843.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, *Mainwarring to Jenkins 25 November 1843.*

* The neighbouring tea-planter F. Bonynge informed Jenkins that even the most favoured Ningroola felt annoyed at the *parwanas* issued to him demanding feudal services. "He made complains to me in March 1842 of their frequency and of the want of remuneration of his troubles and expenses and as a chief he always had to take a number of followers with him". Bonynge to Jenkins, 25 November 1843.

²³ FC, 23 March 1844, No. 89, Jenkins 15 February.

a trifling offence like the cattle lifting.²⁴ Let Gaum was constrained to join the insurgents for fear of service retribution for his having put to death two slaves for practising witchcraft.²⁵ Evidently the gaums, not excluding Ningroola, saw in the extension of British power their common ruin which must be called to a halt before it was too late. It was Beesa not Serro-la-ten who was the prime mover in the attack on the outpost. Hitherto the most influential and wealthiest of the gaums Beesa was reduced to abject poverty by the loss of slaves and by repeated incursions into his village by Duffa. He was no longer the *sanjatee* the official channel of communication with the British, which he keenly felt as an affront to his dignity.† “Had he [Beesa] not considered himself a ruined man” rightly remarks Jenkins “I feel assured to disturbance would have taken place.”²⁶

The authorities in England never failed to realise that the outbreak of the Singphos was the outcome of accumulated grievances and for which the local authorities were no less responsible. Lord Ellenborough, the governor-general, was therefore, advised not only to redress all “real grievances” but also to show “reasonable considerations for all expectations”. He was specially instructed not to visit them with unnecessary punishment for which “a strong sense of injury can be pleaded for excuse”.²⁷ Though belatedly a change had occurred in the temper of the local authorities: some of them even thought that any intercourse with these tribes was a “necessary evil”; it should be confined to “bare exchange of civilities”. The communications to the chiefs, if any, should be couched in complimentary terms and not by *parwanas* or a mode of correspondence which the latter thought served only to lower orders. The necessity of subjecting the chiefs to formal process of court of law should be avoided’ in the event of any outrage, of course detachment should be sent out to demand reparations.²⁸

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

† Brodie wrote; “It appeared to me [a] short-time before the out-break Beesa Gaum had been abused and called a dog by a Jamadar commanding at Beesa and this appears to have rankled his mind.” Brodie to Jenkins, 11 November 1843.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Political Despatch from the Court 27 March 1844, No. 14.

²⁸ FC, 20 March 1844, No. 80; Mainwarring 25 November 1843.

In the trial of the insurgents, too, the local authorities respected the wishes of the Court and exercised "a sound discretion". Beesa Gaum, the principal rebel, was awarded transportation for life for being guilty of treason and rebellion. In consideration of his age and infirmity the sentence was reduced to one of confinement at Dibrugarh as "a measure of precaution rather than punishment". Ningroola, "the privy to the plot" was liberated, but his son Saman "an active adviser, and contriver", was kept confined at Dibrugarh until such time as might be considered necessary by the Political Agent. Likewise capital punishment was commuted to one of transportation to life in favour of Let Gaum and his son La Mungoloo on the ground that both were merely acting under the orders of their immediate chiefs. Deserted by his followers Serro-la-ten left for Hukwang and nothing was heard of him afterwards.²⁹

The revolt of the Singphos made it clear to the local authorities that the South-East Frontier continued to be vulnerable. Every endeavour had to be made therefore to meet any emergency. Jenkins conceived that the three frontier outposts—Beesa, Ningroo and Koojoo—were either too far advanced or that the detachments located therein were of insufficient strength in view of the difficulties of reinforcing them. He called upon the officers commanding the troops to submit proposals with respects to the alterations necessary either in the position of these posts or distribution of their respective corps.³⁰

Captain Hannay, the commandant of the Assam Light Infantry, was not in favour of having any small post advanced beyond Saikhowa on the Brahmaputra and Ningroo on the Buridihing. Since the Doaneahs, Fakials and other villagers who were located along the latter river migrated to the vicinity of Jaypur consequent upon the outbreak at Sadiya [1839], Hannay proposed that Jaypur should be the convenient site for the advanced post in the South-East Frontier.³¹ Captain Mainwarring, commanding Second Assam Sebundis, on the other hand, was opposed to any alteration of the location of detachments; he confined himself to measures for increasing the

²⁹ FC, 9 May 1845, Nos. 145-6.

³⁰ FC, 18 November 1843, Nos. 158-63.

³¹ *Ibid.*

efficiency of the regiment. Agreeing with him Captain Vetch, the political agent Upper Assam, emphasised the need for maintaining the posts at Koojoo, Ningroo and Saikhowa and deprecated the idea of withdrawing the advanced post at Ningroo. He argued that the principal object for which this post was established-to give confidence to the people of Muttock-had been fully attained; but for the intervention of this the attack of the Singphos would have fallen on the defenceless villagers.³²

Vetch's policy of maintaining the advanced posts received the concurrence of the Agent who was also not prepared to retire in consequence of the expansion of the tea-cultivation in the South-East frontier. The removal of the headquarters from Sadiya and Saikhowa had caused the Khamtis to boast that they had driven the British on to the other side of the river; and this must have encouraged, Jenkins felt, the Singphos to drive the British from the advanced posts on the frontier. He therefore considered it inadvisable to alter the location of the outposts as recommended by the Political Agent. In addition to the construction of a new fort at Ningroo and linking it up by a good road from Saikhowa and Jaypur, he suggested several other measures necessary for the defence of the frontier.³³

Hannay suggested that the headquarters of the Second Assam Sebundy Corps should be shifted to Dibrugarh from Rongagora which was no longer important as before. The chief object of raising this corps was the prevention of insurrection amongst the Muttocks, many of whom had already left the locality and scattered themselves in other parts of the district. Composed as it was mostly of the Doaneahs and the Muttocks, this regiment was intended to attach to the British a number of warlike families of these tribes.* Addicted as they were to opium, they had shown a great aversion to service; in fact, many of them had already withdrawn from the corps and thus the regiment then came to be consisted mostly of men from Lower Assam and the Hindustanees, Jenkins suggested that in case the government considered it expedient to remove this corps from

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

* See Barpujari, H.K. Problem of the Hill Tribes : North-East Frontier, 117-19.

Rongagora, it should be transferred to Sibsagar and be employed in civil duties while the Assam Light Infantry be moved up to take up the duties at the important posts at Saikhowa, Ningroo and Jaypur and which must always command the passes to Ava and to restrain the warlike tribes in the frontier.³⁴

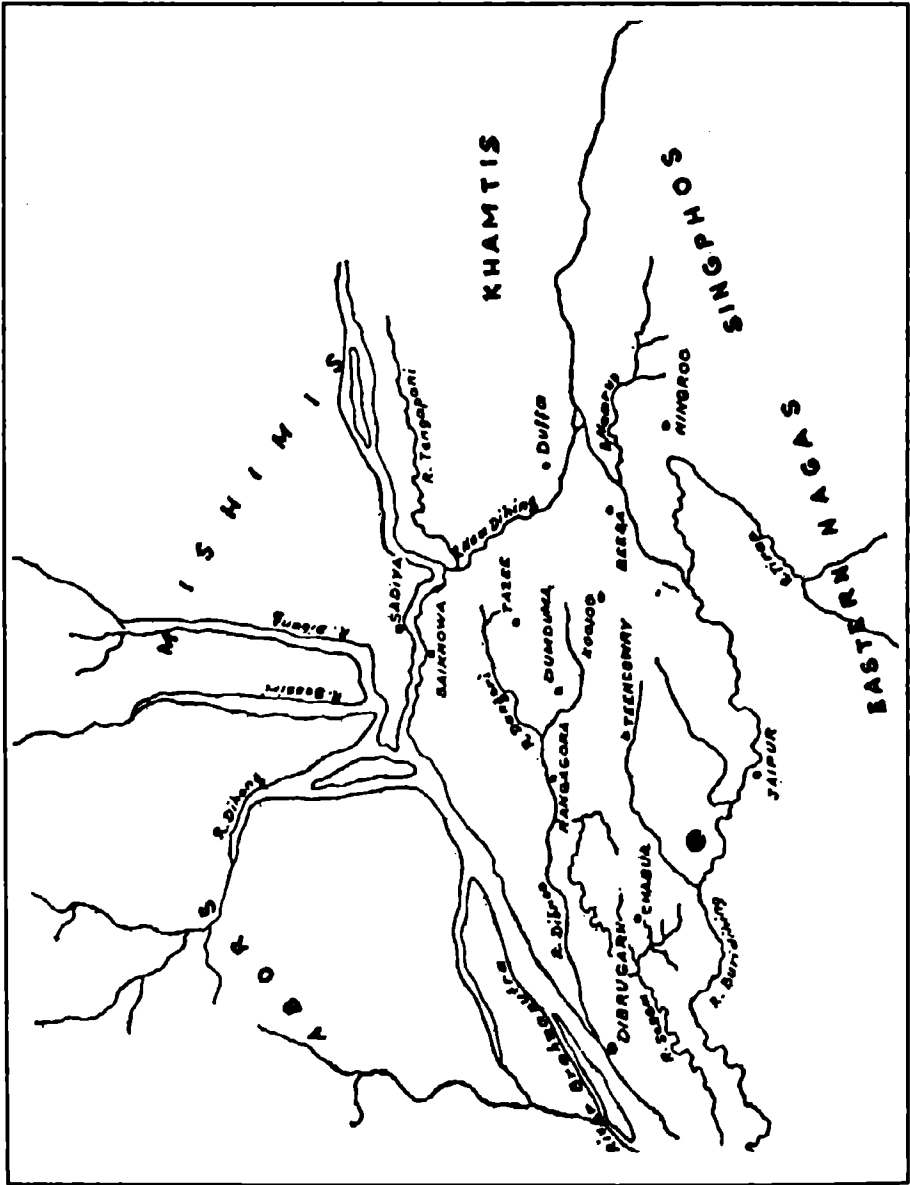
The Commander-in-Chief, when he was called upon to express his views on the subject, proposed that the Assam Light Infantry and the Second Assam Sebundy should be assimilated in every respect by granting to the latter the same pay, invalid pension and every other amenity then enjoyed by the former corps. The two being amalgamated might be designated as the First and the Second Assam Light Infantry Battalions. The senior officer of the two in command should be appointed to the Commander in Upper Assam and vested with the power to regulate and control all military arrangements for the defence of the frontier.³⁵ The post of Beesa appeared to him to be too far in advance to be occupied; but he considered it necessary to have one intermediate post in the line between Ningroo and Saikhowa and suggested that it to be located on the river Dumduma. He considered the post on the right bank of Brahmaputre near Sadiya as unsuitable; but suggested that one of the gun-boats should be stationed at Saikhowa to keep up communication between that post and the right bank of the same river. He further stressed that Ningroo and Saikhowa should be strongly stockaded and work should be thrown up at Koojoo, Tazee at the proposed post at Dumduma to enable the detachments therein to hold these when attacked until reinforced from the rear.³⁶

The Governor-General in Council in their proceedings on 18 November 1843 ordered that (i) the headquarters of the Assam Light Infantry be transferred to Jaypur and the posts of Saikhowa and Ningroo be occupied by this regiment each with the strength of two companies under the command of an European officer and a post to be established either at Dumduma or some other place between

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 168; Commander-in-Chief to the Governor-General in Council, 18 October.

³⁶ *Ibid.*



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Koojoo and Tazee and to be held by one full company;³⁷ (ii) the headquarters of the Second Assam Sebundy be shifted to Dibrugarh; from there one company be detached to Sibsagar to take the duties of the civil station, furnish a guard at Jorhat and another company to be detached to some convenient location in Lakhimpur. Two companies of this regiment be posted at Rongagora where from support can be afforded to the advanced posts in the frontier; (iii) two guns from the Local Artillery at Dibrugarh be detached to Saikhowa where one of the gun-boats be stationed to keep up the communication between that post and the right bank of that river.³⁸ The advanced posts at Beesa and Sadiya should no longer be occupied, but the Agent was advised to take measures for the construction of stockades at Ningroo, Saikhowa and Dumduma. Finally the programme of road building already begun should be extended through Jaypur, Ningroo, Koojoo and Tazee to Saikhowa. Another line of communication passable in all the season of the year be started to connect Jaypur with Dibrugarh through Rongagora and with Saikhowa so that in the event of one post being attacked the advanced of support from another might not be delayed.³⁹

Meanwhile the heavy financial strain caused by the Afghan War compelled the Government of India to resort to measures of utmost economy. When in his letter on 23 August 1843 Mr Muddock, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department called upon the Agent to reduce expenditure in Military establishment, the letter was at a loss; for recent events amply demonstrated that the frontier continued to be in danger of foreign invasion and threatened with uprisings of warlike tribes. The annexation of Bhutan Duars and consequent unfriendly relations with the Government of Bhutan demanding an increase in military strength also rendered difficult any reduction in expenditure.⁴⁰

The defence of the North-East Frontier had been entrusted so long to the Assam Light Infantry and the two Sebundy corps in

³⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 169; Secretary Government of India, Military Department, 18 November.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ FC, 6 April 1844, No. 180; Jenkins to Davidson, 4 March.

Upper and Lower Assam.* There existed in addition two companies of the 23rd Native infantry at Bishwanath which were called for as a reinforcement on the outbreak of the Singphos in 1843. Of the irregulars, the Shan Militia was posted in the Naga Frontier and the Assam Militia consisting of about one hundred men retained as a police corps in Sibsagar. The Cachary Levy employed in the Dufla frontier had already been disbanded. Jenkins brought home to the Government of India that the defence of the frontier whether in the event of a sudden raid of the hill tribes or a rupture with Ava must depend for years to come mainly on the Assam Light Infantry and as such no reduction in strength could be effected in this regiment. The troops were required, he added, under altered arrangement to occupy a number of detached posts in depopulated areas wherein they suffered extreme privations from rigours of climate besides inadequate supplies in regard to quality and variety of provisions.⁴¹ Efficiency of the regiment rather than its reduction, Jenkins thought, should be the objective of the government and this could be ensured by relieving periodically the Assam Light Infantry from its strenuous duties. With this end in view and also as a measure of economy Jenkins proposed to disband the Second Assam Sebundy as a regiment by reattaching the two companies which were taken from the First Assam Sebundy; and the latter be converted into a local corps placing it on the same footing as the present Light Infantry as regards pay and other privileges. Of these two regiments—the First and Second Assam Light Infantry—one is to relieve the other at intervals in their duties in Upper and Lower Assam.⁴² In the event of these measures receiving approval Jenkins recommended that three hundred men of the Second Sebundy should be retained as the nucleus of a Civil Police Corps as a permanent measure or till such times as the frontier tribes assume a more settled state. He wanted to do away with the station at Rongagora and recommended immediate withdrawal of the two companies of Regular Troops then stationed at Bishwanath which would effect a considerable saving in allowances and also in hire of boats for the regiment.⁴³

* See Barpujari, H.K., *Op. cit* Pp. 155 ff.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

On 4 March 1844, Governor-General in Council accorded their approval in general to the measures recommended by the Agent. Prior to the issue of the final orders however it was considered desirable to call for the final opinion of the Commander-in-Chief on the subject.⁴⁴ The latter concurred fully with the proposal that the First Assam Sebundy should be augmented by two Companies so that it might be placed on the same footing as the Assam Light Infantry and this was in conformity with Commander-in-Chiefs' previous recommendation as to the Sebundy Corps in Upper Assam. He was also agreeable that three hundred men of the latter regiment should be retained as a Police Battalion for the purpose of sharing the duties at numerous outposts. But he was reluctant to do away with the station at Rongagora wherein he wanted to retain at least with one company for better support to the frontier line. Nor was he inclined to withdraw the Regulars at Bishwanath which formed a connecting link between the corps in Upper and Lower Assam and which he felt as absolutely necessary for reinforcement to Upper Assam in case of emergency. This detachment was furnished by the corps at Jamalpur 350 miles below Bishwanath with a tedious communication up the river of over two months.⁴⁵ In consideration of this fact and the state of affairs in Assam demanding constant vigilance and preparation to put down disturbers of peace, the Commander-in-Chief considered it inexpedient to withdraw the Regulars from Assam. The Governor-General in Council in their final order on 9 August 1844 ordered the disbanding of the Second Assam Sebundy and to augment its two companies to the First which would hereafter be treated as a Local Corps and be designated as the Second Assam Light Infantry Battalion. The decision on matters objected to by the Commander-in-Chief was deferred.⁴⁶

Towards the close of 1844 the Second Assam Sebundy was disbanded, Pressing call for reinforcement in Upper India in the meantime demanded the withdrawal of the two companies of 23rd N.I. from Bishwanath.⁴⁷ Inevitably the demand for additional troops

⁴⁴ FC, 24 August 1844 No. 51; Adjutant General to the Secretary, Government of India Military Department, Simla, 6 May.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Secretary Government of India, Military Department, 9 August 1844.

⁴⁷ FC, 28 February 1845, No. 145; Stuart to Jenkins, 10 January.

became urgent; for it was inexpedient to relieve any of the outposts by the regiments in Lower Assam with headquarters at Gauhati. Already Vetch had raised a Civil Militia of 104 men, and 64 sepoy from it had been sent to *Lakhimpur* to relieve the guards furnished by the Assam Light Infantry.⁴⁸ The strength of the Dibrugarh or Lakhimpur *Militia* was raised to 120 so as to render regiment disposable for any other call.⁴⁹ In hospitable climate at Jaypur demanded before long the removal of the headquarters of the regiment to Dibrugarh and parties of the militia replaced the Assam Light Infantry at Ningroo, Makum, Dumduma and Saikhowa.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ AS, vol. 13 (a), Letters issued to Government: Jenkins to Bushby, 17 February 1846; FC, 3 April 1847, No. 27.

CHAPTER TWO

Peace Mission and Punitive Expeditions

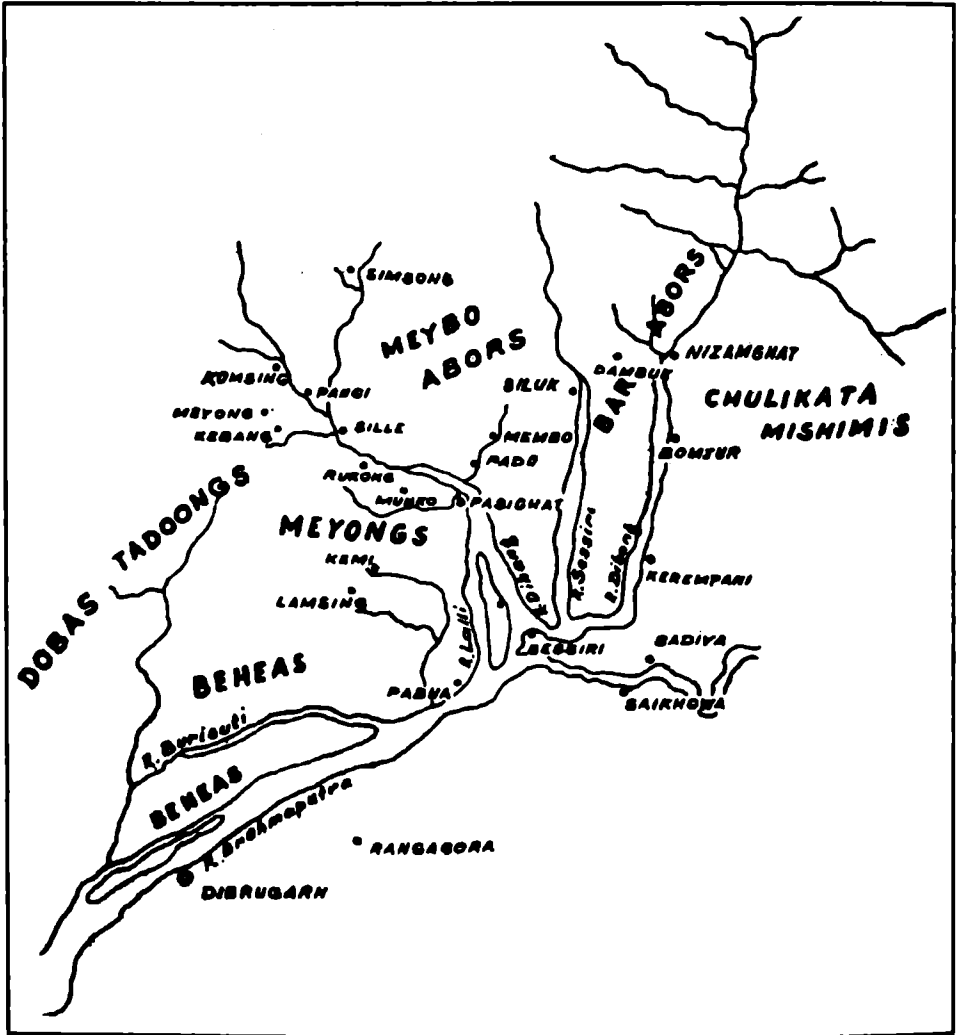
The defensive measures coupled with the deaths, desertions and incarcerations of the leading chiefs pacified the Singphos, but the Abors in the meantime raised their heads in the north. Their chiefs claimed sovereignty over the Miris in the foothills and to fish and to mine gold in the rivers that flowed down from their hills. For "fear and interest", the Behea gold-washers* inhabiting on the west of the Dihong and between the rivers Brahmaputra and the Burisuti appeased the Abors with hospitality and occasional payment of the *posa* when the chiefs visited the lowlands. The situation altered after British occupation when the Miris moved themselves to areas under the protection of the government away from their Abor masters. The gold-washers, too, withdrew themselves from their original homes although parties of the Beheas continued to frequent their earlier resorts for gold-dust.¹

The emigration of the Miris hit the Abors hard; for these go-betweens hitherto supplied these hillmen with their requirement of salt, cloth and other necessities. Complaints of loss of their retainers had been frequently made to the local authorities; but the issue was deliberately avoided although no objection was raised to the Abors paying visits to their dependents in the plains.² In the winter of 1847, Captain Vetch, political agent Upper Assam, held a meeting

* Of the several auriferous rivers in the north, the Dihong 12 to 17 miles from its mouth, was the most favourite resort of the *sonowals* or gold-washers. With the decline in the number of these artisans in the middle of the nineteenth century, the operations were normally carried on for about fifteen days and the total yield did not exceed annually fifty *tolas* (one *tola* equivalent to 11.66 grammes). Under the Ahom government the *sonowals* were taxed at rupees five per head; with the introduction of land tax the right of farming gold was farmed out to the highest bidder.

¹ FC. 2 March 1848, No. 200; BJP. 30 April 1851, Nos. 166-7; Vetch to Jenkins 19 March.

² *Ibid.*



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with several chiefs on the Dihong with the object of establishing a golah or trade depot* at a convenient place which the Abors prayed for. Apart from conciliating the chiefs, this would open up an easy and direct intercourse with the people on the other side of the hills.³ These prospects were doomed to bitter disappointment towards the end of the same year when the Doba Abors on the west seized

* In the reign of Ahom king Rudra Singha (1696-1714) a golah was set up at Rangdoi Chapari on the Dihong for barter trade with these tribes, but this ceased to exist during the period of Moamaria insurrections.

³ *Ibid.*

Rangaman, a Behea headman, who was said to have discontinued payment of the posa on his removal to Dibrugarh. Accompanied by a party of sepoy Vetch went up and secured the release of the captive; but his camp was attacked on the same night by the hillmen who were of course repulsed and the village was burnt to the ground. For protection of the ryots already a guard was posted at Leegee and at the same time Vetch stopped the posa and all intercourse with the insolent tribe as a warning to others that such outrages could not go unpunished.⁴

Notwithstanding the preventive measures, in the following years extortions of the Abors on the gold-washers were on the increase. Apart from a warning to the chiefs—that such oppressions in future could not be tolerated—the Political Agent was not prepared to resort to force of arms; for it had been the custom of the Beheas prior to their emigration to propitiate the chiefs with perquisites of various kinds. Moreover, police jurisdiction scarcely be said to have extended to the scene of occurrence.⁵ In his letter to the Agent on 19 March 1851 Vetch proposed to accompany the gold-washers with an escort during the period of their next operations, and to cultivate friendly relations with the Abors he would induce the traders to accompany them for the establishment of a market or fair which the chiefs so keenly desired. The visit of officers accompanied by neighbouring traders, Jenkins greatly hoped, would “increase the traffic” and thereby “greater command” over these tribes.⁶

Accordingly in the next winter with a party of gold-washers and an escort of Assam Light Infantry Vetch arrived at Kamjungo on the Dihong about twenty miles from its mouth. The Abor chiefs who came in had a little trade and were apparently pleased with having rum that was distributed amongst them, but the prospect of friendly intercourse continued to be remote so long as the British claimed suzerainty over lands up to the foothills and the Abors were denied the right of collecting their dues direct from those whom they considered as their vassals.⁷

⁴ FC, 28 April 1848, Nos. 104-6; 23 June 1849, Nos. 23-4.

⁵ BJP, 4 April 1851, Nos. 166-7, Vetch 19 March.

⁶ BJP, 4 March 1852, Nos. 127-8; Jenkins to Grant, 20 January.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vetch to Jenkins, 31 December 1851.

Captain Bigge's peace mission in the Angami country, it may be remembered, succeeded in "intimidating" the Nagas and awakening in them a confidence in the bonafides of the government.* Continuing their peaceful behaviour they visited Dimapur for traffic and even sought good offices of the British in reconciling their internecine feuds. Encouraged by such prospects in February 1842, Bigge accompanied by a party of sepoy proceeded again into the hills. The advance of the season prevented the Principal Assistant from making progress beyond Dimapur; he had however interviews with heads of villages on the lines of the river Jamuna with whom he made verbal engagements and promised them presents and protection of the government.⁸ In the following year the Angamis themselves came down to Nowgong and entered into agreement with I.T. Gordon who then succeeded Bigge as Principal Assistant. Finally they promised to visit the mart at Dimapur and cultivate friendly intercourse with British subjects in plains.⁹

In spite of professions of friendship the Nagas threw into winds their agreement and renewed hostilities. In January 1844 when Brown Wood, the sub-assistant Golaghat, went up to collect tribute, the minor chiefs no doubt paid but powerful clans of the Mozomah and Khonomah flatly refused and defied the authority of the government.¹⁰ Towards the close of the same year, a party of the Khonomahs attacked the outpost at Lankee or Lawkhiram near Semkhar and burnt down the village Mozomah for the aid the latter rendered to the British. Captain Eld, the principal assistant Nowgong, accompanied by Wood and a detachment of the Second Assam Light Infantry hastened through North Cachar against the enemy. From among the friendly Nagas many came in. Of the main object of the expedition little was done beyond the recovery of some slain sepoy and the

* See Barpujari, H.K., Problem of the Hill Tribes : North-East Frontier, i. Pp. 180-3.

⁸ BJP, 10 April 1843, Nos. 85-6; Bigge to Jenkins, 22 February and 10 March 1842.

⁹ FC, 12 April 1843, No. 76; Gordon to Jenkins, 8 March.

¹⁰ FC, 28 December 1844, Nos. 87-8; see Brown Wood, "Extract from a Report of a Journey into Naga Hills in 1844," JASB, xiii (1844); Pp. 771-85.

destruction of the villages Khonomah, Beremah and Assalo that aided the agreeors.¹¹

The retaliatory measures did not find favour with the authorities in Calcutta who were deeply committed to a policy of conciliation; all the more because the headman of the Khonomahs disapproved of the outrages and even punished two of the ring leaders. Two chiefs who were no parties to the offence also surrendered; yet all alike had to suffer by the destruction of the village.¹² Regretting such punishment involving "in common chastisement many for the guilt of a few", Jenkins knew not how such measures could be avoided without entailing further aggressions. Actually in the years following outrages were on the increase on the Nagas friendly to the British and upon traders and villagers under British protection. There was no alternative for the Agent but to despatch another expedition into the hills to demand surrender of the offenders and also to examine whether it would be expedient and practicable to locate a military post in the Angami country.¹³

Accordingly, in January 1846 John Butler who had then succeeded Eld as principal assistant, Nowgong, proceeded to the hills. Once again the Nagas surrendered one after another; even chiefs of the Mozomahs and Knonomahs came in with tributes of ivory, cloths and spears; but the party concerned at Lankee was not surrendered. The compliance of this demand, the chief of the Khonomahs stated in unambiguous terms, was "beyond their power". Coercive measures, Butler realised, would be useless for the delivery of delinquents; "the community did not allow them to exercise such a power". Nor could they ascertain the criminals, for "a small body had gone on the fray from their village and committed the massacre". It would therefore be highly inexpedient to retaliate against them for their past offence by seizing their grain, destroying their houses and carrying off their cattle for such proceedings would "exasperate and close the door for reconciliation". Since conciliatory

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Political Despatch from the Court, 6 January 1846, No. 3.

¹³ BJP, September 1870, No. 145.

measures were the “positive and primary object”, chiefs were again taken into favour on renewal of their engagement on solemn oath.¹⁴

For the protection of the Naga frontier, there existed three outposts mostly of Shan sepoy at Dimapur, Mohungdijua and Hossang Hajo. These posts were strengthened and the corps was redesignated as Nowgong Militia with the addition of a number of sepoy of the disbanded Second Assam Sebundis in early 1846.¹⁵ Butler sought to establish a military post at Samagutting seven miles from Dimapur; for he felt yearly expeditions against the Angamis were useless “since recollection of these did not survive their termination”.¹⁶ The proposal was unacceptable to the Agent who contended that yearly expeditions were “absolutely necessary” without which no authority could be exercised over the Nagas under protection. He wanted the continuance of the existing procedure for punishment of outrages upon British subjects and for few effective checking of their internal feuds. The *thana* with a few sepoy, he rightly pointed out, would be too ineffective to check the Angamis while it would be a “constant eye-shore” to prove their hostility.¹⁷

The views of the Agent underwent a radical change in the middle of 1846 when there occurred in quick succession outrages of the Angamis at Hossang Hajo, Samagutting and Beremah. He felt convinced that no reliance could be placed on the engagement of these tribes and that there was no alternative but to the establishment of a military post as suggested by the Principal Assistant.¹⁸ On the approval of the measure by the Governor-General in Council on 14 November, Butler was deputed again to the hills. He was advised to invite the chiefs to a conference and to bring home to them the object of the government to maintain a post amongst them was occasioned by their repeated outrages and for the violation of their solemn pledges; that the government was determined to exact their obedience and to punish with severity all those who would be found

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, FC, 14 November 1846, No. 19; Butler to Jenkins 6 October.

¹⁵ FC, 28 February 1846, No. 142; 13 June No. 29.

Hitherto the Shams received a pay of Rs 5-8 whereas a sepoy of the Sebundy Rs 5-4. Since both were later required to perform the same duty, the disparity in pay was removed by making it uniform at Rs. 5-8.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

guilty of aggression against British subject and Nagas friendly to the government; and that in case of failure of apprehending the offenders, the chiefs of their respective villages would be held responsible.¹⁹ He was to visit villages which continued to be refractory or refused to surrender individuals implicated in the late outrages; but under no circumstances was he to coerce them or act in a manner calculated to bring an open collision. He was to remain in their neighbourhood as long as necessary to prevail on them to surrender the individuals concerned. With respect to other chiefs, they were to enter into agreements to obey government orders, to give assistance in the apprehension of offenders and to aid in the movement of troops intimating them that in their adhering to these conditions they could be free to carry on trade with the people of the plains and every facility would be provided to barter the products of the hills for such articles as they were daily in need of.²⁰

In early 1847, Butler commenced his tour and visited several Angami villages. Enquiring into past outrages he learnt that "every village had its feuds and quarrels to revenge" and, therefore, to meddle into their affairs would be impolitic since the wrong party might be assisted. He came to know that the Nagas of Japsemah and Kohemah had committed atrocities on Beremah and Samagutting, but the latter appeared to have been also the aggressor. Butler entered into agreement with several chiefs; the latter agreeing to pay tribute and promising to abstain from future wars. A military post was then established at Samagutting under Bhogchand, a daroga, who had intimate knowledge and ripe experience in dealing with these tribes. From this post to that in Mohungdijua a road was cleared and a stockade with grain depot was set up at Dimapur. A school was started at Samagutting and free communication opened with Nowgong encouraging the Angamis to have intercourse with the people of the plains.²¹

Encouraged by his earlier successes, towards the close of 1844 Captain Brodie, principal assistant Sibsagar, visited the territory of

¹⁹ FC, 24 April 1847, No. 37; 14 November, No. 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ FC, 24 April 1847, No. 37; 29 May, No. 22; Political Despatch from the Court, 10 June, No. 14.

the Nagas between the rivers Dikhow and Doyang.²² He came across in each village a dozen of aspirants for power; and every day he witnessed "brawls" among rivals which threatened at times to become serious collisions. Brodie went constantly on the apprehension of an outbreak; however nothing untoward happened. In return of khats or rent-free grains in the plains, Brodie entered into agreements with most of the chiefs considered to be dependent of the Ahom government.²³ The *katakis* or the manager of these khats were to serve, as in former time, the channel of communication between the chiefs and the district authorities.* Brodie won over the Sema Nagas by granting them trading rights in the plains. He secured the adhesion of the Tablung Raja, a powerful chief, by offer of rent-free grant in lieu of the Khats which he held under the former government. He desired that the Lhotas [*Lothas*] might be allowed to take up land on this side of the river Dhansiri since the khats which they formerly held had been occupied by others. Brodie suggested that the influence acquired over these tribes should be maintained by repetition of visits by offers to enable them to lodge their complains, if any, against their neighbours. The degree of interference however should be confined to summoning and if necessary compelling the aggressors to the arbitration of the Principal Assistant and to taking engagements for their future good behaviour.²⁴

Despite the conciliatory attitude exhibited by the local authorities the Garos on the west never ceased to commit aggressions on the border areas of the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup. In early 1840 Captain Davidson, the principal assistant Goalpara, reported the murder of a Garo sardar by the Dusanees. In July, the same year,

²² FC, 19 October 1844, Nos. 123-6; see Barpujari, H.K. *op cit.* Pp. 183-5; also *Selection of Papers regarding the Hill tracts between Assam and Burma*, Pp. 195 ff; Brodie to Jenkins, 6 August 1844.

In between these two rivers the Nagas were broadly divided into six groups—Namsangias (western), Dopdaris, Charingia or Asiringias, Hatigharias, Doyongias and Panephetias (Lhotas).

²³ *Ibid.* See Appendix-B.

* For their services, the *katakis* used to receive under the former government a remission of poll-tax and later of land revenue equal to what was remitted when poll-tax existed.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

two more murders had been committed by the Hill Garos on the Luki Duar and this was followed by an attack on some villages at Kulmulpara. In April 1843, Independent Garos killed several persons on the southern frontier of Goalpara and took away their skulls. Though the border chiefs were under engagement to prevent these outrages, all alike took pride in having skulls buried with their relatives and felt it a religious duty to provide these funeral honours whenever possible.²⁵ There was hardly any other means, Jenkins felt convinced, of speedily effecting a change in the social outlook of these primitive tribes than by bringing them in direct contact with the European officers. Inhospitable climate rendered it difficult for the district officers to have frequent tours in the hills. Interviews could however be arranged, Jenkins thought, with the chiefs during winter when services of the *laskars* would be available if officers deputed travelled by boat to the hats where chiefs of different clans might meet. The Government of India agreed with Jenkins that the Principal Assistant Goalpara should visit the hats after the rains making collections and distributing presents in return.²⁶ To begin with, in February 1845, as advised by the Agent, A. Stuart, the principal assistant Goalpara, left with a detachment by boat to Balughat and thence to Mohendraganj. From there marching through several friendly villages, Stuart reached Ramrangpara wherein several chiefs paid tribute in acknowledgment of British authority. At Damrah and Jeerah fresh engagement had been made with those *laskars* who had hitherto been contumacious. In December Jenkins himself visited Singimari, Putimari, Taltari and Damrah meeting each chief who promised tribute and to obey the commands that might be issued by the government.²⁷

Trouble arose next year when Lieutenant E.T. Dalton the new Principal Assistant, visited a few villages in the interior, the inhabitants of which had interests more with plainmen in the south than those in the north. Prolonged negotiations brought several heads of

²⁵ FC, July 1840, Nos. 78-9; 7 September, Nos. 95-6; 25 October 1841, Nos. 76-7; 2 September 1843, Nos. 124-6.

²⁶ AS, Letters Issued to Government, vol. 13 (a) Jenkins to Turnbull, 3 February 1846; FC, 7 November 1845, Nos. 34-6; FC, 7 February 1846, No. 20; 12 December, Nos. 36-9.

²⁷ FC, 24 April 1846, No. 46; 17 July, Nos. 22-4.

villages to terms; but the chief of Jeerah came in only after closure of the hats and stopping of supplies from other quarters. Coercive measures had also become necessary against the Dusanees when towards the close of 1846 they murdered the *laskar* of Rissugiri with his entire family for inducing the villagers to pay tribute to the government. In early 1847, with a party of troops Dalton marched against the offenders. He was attacked on the way but the enemies were beaten off. The season being too far advanced operations had to be suspended. In December, the same year, Captain C.S. Reynolds, who then succeeded as Principal Assistant, accompanied by a detachment under Lieutenant Belli left Goalpara enroute to Rissuguri. Phelleng, the principal murderer, took to flight on the advance of troops. Every endeavour to induce the chiefs to surrender the culprit having failed, Reynolds advanced to Rissugiri and amidst showers of dart and stones entered into the village only to find it completely deserted. The hopes of a settlement being extremely remote Reynolds burnt the village and destroyed the granaries.²⁸

The visits paid by the local authorities temporarily pacified the Garos both dependent and independent. But raids were renewed and in fact were on the increase. In the month of August 1852 alone, twenty six persons were brutally murdered and their heads carried off either out of a spirit of revenge or for practising witchcrafts or for skulls. Finding no alternative Lieutenant Agnew, the principal assistant Goalpara, proposed to enter into agreements with the chiefs under which they were to send their sons as hostages who would be imparted instructions at his headquarters. He further suggested construction of a road through the hills, spread of education amongst these tribes and their employment under government.²⁹ Lord Dalhousie doubted the efficacy of the proposed measures. To him all written agreements with hillmen were a "mockery". Delivery of hostages would not afford any hold on these tribes for they were well aware that government would not harm them. Garo youths need be educated by all means; but a remedy of this nature would prove ineffective. The measures which he considered desirable were enunciated in a minute of 11 November 1852 :³⁰

²⁸ FC, 24 December 1847, Nos. 81-4; 7 April 1848, No. 145.

²⁹ BJP, 20 January 1853, Nos. 128-32; Agnew To Jenkins, 12 October, 1852.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, see Minute by the Governor-General, 11 November 1852.

A force should be sent to the guilty village, a fine should be exacted and some of the chiefs or their children taken as hostages to Gowalpara. These and any other who can be secured may be instructed as has been proposed. If any demur to paying fine or whatever reparation may be demanded warning should be given that if compliance be not given within a certain time the village and crops will be destroyed. If such warning be disregarded, the threat should be executed vigorously. Further warning be given that if these atrocious offences are repeated, their country will everywhere be subjected to the same treatment until offences ceased.³¹

Dalhousie made a departure from the policy so long followed by the government; measure of severity alone, he thought, would be effective. "Harsh as the measure is" remarked the Governor-General, "it is better to have recourse to it than to permit our subjects in the plains to be butchered in scores by these savages ... who commit them for purpose of the most brutal superstitions."³²

Accordingly, on 13 December 1852, with a detachment of the Second Assam Light Infantry Agnew marched against Gaurangiri, the villagers of which were alleged to have murdered eighteen men of Belangiri. As he approached the village of the aggressors the advanced guard was attacked by a party of the Garos; they were repulsed and on the next day the troops entered into Gaurangiri, unopposed and found it deserted. Negotiations could not be carried out with the chiefs; for a messenger even if persuaded to do so was likely to be waylaid and murdered. "From the Garrows themselves", reported Agnew, "I got no information nor assistance; a dogged profession of ignorance on every point connected with the people or places is all I have met with.' Finding no alternative he ordered the destruction of crops and burning of the village to the ground."³³

Likewise following the establishment of a post at Samagutting "a thousand Angahmee Nagahs visited the station of Nowgong to trade with the merchants in salt and cornelian beads... and the utmost goodwill was manifested towards the authorities and the people of the plains".³⁴ In spite of this, engagements with the chiefs became useless as before; "every affair of importance was decided

³¹ *Ibid.*, Allen to Jenkins, 19 November 1852.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, Agnew to Jenkins, 30 December 1852.

³⁴ Butler, J., *Travels and Adventures in Assam*, p. 173.

by an assembly of the elders, and in personal matters each man was his own master avenging his own quarrels and acknowledging responsibility only to him". Hardly a year passed when several women of Hossang Hajo were killed by the Bermah Nagas whose chief was in alliance with the government. Even in February 1847. Nagas of Lakemah killed a Mozomah man and carried off his head, hands and feet. On 8 March, accompanied by a party of twenty sepoy Bhogchand left Samagutting against the aggressors. After an abortive attempt to come to terms the *daroga* advanced against the Nagas, numbering about 1600 men, who had thrown up breast-work on all directions. Terrified by the war-yell of the Nagas seven sepoy left the field. But the enemy could hardly resist the volleys of muskets with their wooden shields; many of them fell dead and wounded and the rest left the field.³⁵

In early 1849, on the representation made by Jubilee, the chief of Mozomah, Butler was directed by the Agent to locate a police guard in his village as a security against the Khonomahs. In the meantime to mediate the quarrel between Jubilee and Nilholy, the two rival chiefs, Bhogchand proceeded to Mozomah with a small party of thirty sepoy. He was well received on arrival by both the chiefs. After erecting a stockade in the village and settling the dispute, foolishly the *daroga* demanded the surrender of a man alleged to have murdered a follower of Jubilee. This was flatly refused and the *daroga* forcibly apprehended the murdered which made Nilholy and his men furious. On 3 August at Pripemah, on his way to the headquarters Bhogchand and his party was surrounded by Nilholy's clan; the *daroga* was speared to death, a *havildar* and several sepoy shared his fate. The rest of the party took to their heels leaving behind the dead and wounded. Nilholy retired to Khonomah where on the ridge of the hill he commenced construction of a fort; he was well aware that he would be visited soon by the vengeance of British troops.³⁶

Bhogchand had no reason to meddle with inter-tribal feuds when his primary objective was purely defensive-the protection of the British frontier. His successes against the Lakemahs made him underrate the fighting quality of the Nagas. He took no precautionary

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Pp. 173-8; FC, 17 November 1849; Nos. 156-9.

measures against a surprise attack and this sealed his fate. Butler's confidence on the police guards was so much shaken that he was reluctant to erect the advanced post amongst the Mozomahs; he suggested instead the location of a European officer with civil duties in these hills. In any case he was definitely opposed to retaliatory measures against Nilholy and his men.³⁷ Jenkins, on the otherhand, advocated a bolder policy; for an atrocity of this nature could not be passed over with impunity without rendering these tribes bolder than ever. "Very great forbearance had [already] been shown," remarked the Secretary to the Government of India, "for some years a policy of entirely conciliatory in its character had been adopted towards them to live in terms of amity with each other. These efforts however seem unhappily to have been quite unproductive of any good result."³⁸ The Governor-General in Council also felt that deterrent measures were "imperatively necessary". The Agent was directed to depute Lieutenant G.F.F. Vincent, junior assistant Nowgong, with an adequate force to seize the culprits including Nilholy; but he was to be warned against burning of villages or destruction of crops except in case of absolute necessity.³⁹

In December 1949, accompanied by a detachment Vincent advanced against the Angamis. Butler was already advised to proceed to Dimapur or Samgutting so as to be at hand to meet any emergency. After reoccupation of Mozomah, Vincent marched to Beremah, but ill health compelled him to retire before he reached his destination. Lieutenant Campbell who commanded the detachment made an unsuccessful attack on the stockade of Japsemah and during his absence the friendly village of Mozomah was burnt to the ground and the provision of the detachment was totally destroyed. Campbell was forced to make a hasty retreat; his difficulties were considerably increased since he was encumbered by the women and children of the allies who crowded to his protection.⁴⁰

In the meantime two traders were killed at Mohungdijua and this was followed by the murder of twenty eight person at Dilao and

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Nos. 160-9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, also 22 December, Nos. 102-3.

⁴⁰ Butler, J., *op. cit.*, Pp. 179 ff.

another eighteen at Lunggijan both near about Mohungdijua.⁴¹ To divert the Angamis from these inroads Vincent set out again with a body of troops and reached Mozomah on 6 March 1850. He surprised Nilholy's men compelling them to flee for their lives. Later, he attacked and burnt the village Jakemah whose inhabitants were an all alliance with the enemy. The friendly Nagas of Mozomah were reinstated in their village which was abandoned since it was burnt about a year ago.. To cut off the enemy from their sources of supplies, Vincent occupied an advanced post at Khonomah itself where he decided to remain during rainy season which was hitherto considered to be extremely hazardous.⁴² Jenkins was thereby led to believe that Vincent had succeeded in acquiring such an influence over the Nagas that their final subjugation was only a question of time.* The situation was otherwise; for in his report on 26th August Vincent wrote :

I do not consider my position at Mozomah even with an increased force so safe. For though our troops can withstand and have successfully withstood, repeated attempts at surprise and attack still it is impossible to expect them to be prepared against treachery at their very threshold.⁴³

In fact Vincent's position was so insecure that he had to abandon his advanced post; for he could depend on none of the Nagas except a few of the Jubilee's clan and that the remaining villages to the extent of over five thousand warriors were likely to array themselves against the English. It was also rumoured that the Manipuris were indirectly aiding them. The call for reinforcement was pressing. For his ignorance of the actual state of affairs Jenkins was severally taken to task by the President-in-Council.⁴⁴ To relieve Vincent and thereby to restore "the influence so grievously weak-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Pp. 182 ff.

⁴² *Ibid.*

* The whole tenor of correspondence made by Jenkins lead the Governor-General in Council believe that no operation on a major scale would be undertaken; and all that would be necessary would be the dislodgement of Nilholy and his party from the stockade in the Khonoma heights; that speedy subjugation of the Angamis would be effected with no larger a force than that Vincent had with him in his earlier operation against these tribes.

⁴³ Butler, J., *op. cit.*, Pp. 180-1.

⁴⁴ FC, 20 December 1850, Nos. 309-13 and 318; Secretary Government of India to the Agent, 28 October.

ened", it was decided to despatch against the Khonomahs a force of five hundred under Major Foquett, Commanding the Second Assam Light Infantry and the Agent was directed to proceed himself to conduct the operations. Towards the close of November 1850, Captain Reid of the Artillery and Lieutenant Bivar with a detachment and two three pounder guns advanced on Mozomah. Major Foquett and Captain Butler reached there on 7 December.⁴⁵ On the 10th Butler narrates :

At two P.M., the mortars commenced firing shells on the fort, at a distance of 600 yards. but owing to a dense fog and the narrow ridge of the mountains on which the enemy's position was situated, the shells seemed to have little effect, falling either short of, or beyond, the position. The two three pounder guns were then advanced within 150 yards of the fort, to effect a breach in the barricade for the troops to enter, but the defence being very strongly constructed of stone and timber, and not being injured after many rounds of shot and canister had been expended, the guns were advanced to within seventy yards. Still, as there appeared no hope of breaching the barricade, and the day was closing, the whole party advanced to escalate the position. On reaching the defence, a deep and wide trench stopped all further progress, and as it was flanked at each end by an abrupt precipice and exposed to showers of spears, musketry, and stones, the troops were obliged to retire to the spot where the guns first opened fire, and there bivouacked for the night on the morning of the 11th, the friendly Nagas reported that the enemy had evacuated the fort and our troops immediately took possession of it.⁴⁶

Thus after a siege of sixteen hours Khonomah passed under the control of British troops, Hostiles were then hunted out from their hideouts and a number of villages—Saphemah Kegomah, Kekromah—were burnt to the ground.⁴⁷ "We have driven the enemy from his stronghold", remarked Butler, "and he must now be sensible of our power, and it is a question to be considered, whether it would not be more advisable not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagahs but to... maintain posts... at Dheemahpoor and Mohung Dehooah, for the protection of our frontier."⁴⁸ In other words Butler, wanted to leave the Nagas "entirely to themselves". Vincent, on the otherhand,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 333; 7 February 1851, No. 152.

⁴⁶ Butler, J., *op. cit.*, Pp. 198-9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Pp. 204 ff.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201; FC, 7 February 1851; No. 201.

proposed permanent annexation of the Angami country failing which he suggested that a force of one hundred men to be kept at Mozomah to capture the leading hostiles as well as to secure the safety of the Mozomahs. He suggested the retention of the post at Mozomah for about a year inasmuch as the annihilation of Jubilee's clan retention of the present post, Jenkins greatly hoped, would be attended with greatest good to the government as well as to these tribes.⁴⁹

Punitive expeditions had been sent out, we have seen, one after another, in relation of the incursions made by the Angamis on British subjects and the Nagas friendly to the government. So far as the primary objective was concerned, these were on the whole successful. Not only the villages on the border were free for several years from attacks of the Nagas, but several chiefs and clans came in and entered into verbal agreements acknowledging the authority of the British including payment of a nominal tribute. The local authorities went a step further—began to meddle with the inter-tribal feuds of the Nagas and, thereby, dragged themselves into a series of "Little Wars" attended with loss of lives, burning of villages and destruction of crops, "There can be no doubt," remarked Lewis, a member of the Governor-General in Council, "that a smaller number of lives would have been lost had Nilholly and Jubilee been allowed to fight their quarrels between themselves".⁵⁰ The Agent was, therefore, directed by the President-in-Council to withdraw the troops to Dimapur and the friendly Nagas ordered the option of remaining at their own village or of taking refuge in British territory. In his minute on 21 February Dalhousie made it clear :

Our future policy ought to be to confine ourself to our own frontier, to protect it, as it could and ought to be protected, never to meddle in fights and feuds of those savages, to encourage trade with them so long as they

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

* The Angamis, though "a wild, bold and restless race", Jenkins believed, "were very intelligent and exceedingly anxious after traffic and gain". Already, they had considerable barter trade of their hill produce for necessaries or luxuries to be obtainable at the nearby hats. "I have great confidence" Jenkins concluded, "out of this spirit of legitimate traffic we have the means of turning them to profitable account and converted them from plunders to industrial people."

⁵⁰ FC, 20 December 1850, No. 311; see Minute by Hon'ble J. Lewis.

were peaceful towards us, rigidly to exclude them all communications either to sell or to buy, on their becoming turbulent or troublesome.⁵²

While the Garos and the Nagas were causing serious anxiety in the minds of the authorities in Calcutta, the Lushais or the Kukis posed a serious problem in the south. J. W. Edgar reported that about 1840 the Lushais penetrated into the hills south of Cachar and Manipur and drove the original inhabitants—the Thalangums, Changsels, Thados and Poitoos—forcing many of them to take refuge in the hill tracts of Cachar, Manipur and Tipperah. The conquerors occupied the lands deserted by the conquered and not unoften followed them to their new settlements. Inevitably, not only the refugees but the people of the plains were subjected to frequent raids of the newcomers.⁵³

Lalul, the first Lushai chief, had four sons—Lalingbhum, Lalsavung, Mungpir and Bhuta. Even before the death of their father each son had carved out a principality of his own, Mungpir occupied Chatterchura hills driving out the Poitoos; Lalingbhum's village was located on the hills east of the river Dhaleswari; Lalsavung established himself in the Champai valley driving out the Thados; Bhuta of course succeeded to his father's possession.⁵⁴

To recover their lost possessions the Poitoos appealed for aid to Ram Singh and Tribhubanjit Singh, the Manipuri chiefs the settlers in Hailakandi south of Cachar. The latter surprised Mungpir's village and made him a prisoner, but was later released on his agreeing not to molest in future the Poitoos or the Manipuris. Mungpir broke his promise and attacked Laroo, the Poitoo chief, driving him out from his possessions. In retaliation Lalchokla, son of Laroo, soon after the death of his father in April 1844 raided Kachubari, a Manipuri village south-east of Sylhet, killing twenty persons and carrying off six into captivity. This was an act of aggression on a territory under protection of the British. Endeavours that were made

⁵¹ FC, 7 February 1851, No. 206.

⁵² Political Letter to the Court, 21 April 1853, No. 29.

⁵³ FPA, August 1872, Nos. 61-113; Edgar to the Commissioner of Dacca, 3 April.

⁵⁴ *Ibi.d.*

for the apprehension of the chief through the Raja of Tipperah who claimed suzerainty over these tribes having failed, a party of Sylhet Light Infantry under Captain Blackwood advanced into the hills and took possession of Lalchokla's village. The chief surrendered on condition of his life being spared and that he would not be kept in captivity. But he was transported for life after a trial—an act which the Lushais could neither forget nor forgive. Gaurshailon, son of Lalchokla, is said to have taken an oath to avenge the wrong in due course.⁵⁵

Since 1847, raids had been committed repeatedly by the Lushais on villages in Cachar, Manipur and Sylhet. In November 1849 reports arrived of an atrocity committed by Vonpikal, son of Mora, at Rupcherra ten miles from Silchar, where twenty-nine persons were killed and forty-two carried off. There were attacks on wood-cutters and burning of villages on the east of Sylhet.⁵⁶ The raiders were supposed to be the subjects of Tipperah Raja; but on latter's inability to deliver them up the Government of Bengal directed Colonel Lister, commandant Sylhet Light Infantry, to proceed against the aggressors. Accordingly in early January 1850 Lister left Silchar and reached in village of Mora, son of Lalingbhum on the 16th. Taking advantage of the absence of the fighting men in one of their expeditions, Lister killed forty six men, destroyed the village and burnt the granaries. He dared not to follow up his successes; Barmulin, the head chief, commanded several thousand men. The strength of the stockade at the top of the hills and the difficulties of terrain compelled him to make a hasty retreat lest he should be cut off in the jungles. "Unless something decisive is done", Lister thought, "the whole of Cachar south of the Barak and probably south of Sylhet will become a desert." To reduce these tribes effectively, he brought home to the Government of Bengal, a force of at least three thousand men would be necessary; for punitive expedition with small detachments would do nothing more than inciting them to fresh

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, also BJP, 27 May 1844, Nos. 108-9; 29 July Nos. 46-9; 3 September, Nos. 43-5; 8 January 1845, Nos. 192-4; 12 February 1846, Nos. 104-5.

⁵⁶ BJP, 28 July 1847, Nos. 101-7; 25 August, Nos. 109-11; 5 December 1849, Nos. 108-117.

attacks from a spirit of revenge. As a temporary measure he suggested the establishment of a few stockades in the south to be garrisoned by parties of the Sylhet Light Infantry and to organise a *Kuky Levy* of two hundred men.⁵⁷

Punitive expeditions against the Nagas and the Garos bore little fruit. Naturally the authorities in Calcutta were reluctant to resort to such measures on an extensive scale. The best course would be, Lister was told, to conciliate the chiefs so that they might treat the English as allies not as enemies and to impress them that their hills were no longer inaccessible to troops, and that any act of hostility on their part would be visited by heavy retribution. The measures proposed for the defence of the frontier received approval of the Government of Bengal and Lister was placed in charge of the frontier of the districts of Cachar and Sylhet.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ B.J.P., 27 February 1950, Nos. 35-7; Lister 5 February.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Grant to Lister 21 February.

CHAPTER THREE

Non-Intervention

To the great delight of the local authorities towards the close of 1850 there arrived at Silchar, the headquarters of the Superintendent of Cachar, deputies of several Lushai chiefs, including Sukpial son of Mungpir, with overtures of peace. They offered to pay tribute and become ryots of the government in return for aid against the northward move of the Pois, a powerful tribe in the south.¹ The Government of Bengal declined to enter agreement with the chiefs lest that should entangle it with their intertribal feuds. It accepted the offer of friendship, ordered a boundary to be defined for them and an assurance was given that no harm would be done to them so long as they made no raid to the north of it.

Friendly relations were formed by degrees with Sookpial's people; messages and presents were frequently exchanged and when tea-gardens were first established in Cachar the Looshais from time to time came down and worked upon them, while traders and wood-cutters from Cachar made annual visits into their country.

Lister established three stockades garrisoned by parties of the Sylhet Light Infantry for the defence of the southern frontier of Sylhet and Cachar, and organised under Lieutenant R. Steward, 22nd Native Infantry, the Kuky Levy 200 rank and file "partly as a force to be used against the Looshais and partly to give employment to the youth of the Kukee tribes". The latter being found lacking in martial spirit and averse to strict discipline, half of the recruits had to be drafted from the Kacharis who were no less accustomed to jungle life as those of the Kukis.³

¹ BJP, 2 January 1851, No. 98; 15 January Nos. 121-2.

² *Ibid.*, 5 February, Nos. 86-7; FPA, August 1872; Nos. 61-113, Edgar to the Commissioner Dacca Division 3 April.

³ BJP, 27 February 1850, Nos. 33 and 36; 14 August, No. 90; 11 November 1852, Nos. 116-7; FC, December 1869; No. 238.

Under the direction of the Government of India troops were withdrawn from the Angami territory in March 1851. This was followed, as anticipated by the Agent, by renewal of outrages. In the next two years as many as twenty four attacks were made in which fifty five persons were killed, ten wounded and one hundred and thirteen taken as captives. Lieutenant Vincent, who was deputed to make an enquiry into these atrocities, traced the causes to the Nagas' lack of faith in the justice obtainable from the officers of the government, "supineness and laxity of the police," cessation of periodical visits by the European officers and the withdrawal of troops from the hills.⁴ "The Nagas are driven to the commission of outrages" Jenkins held the view, "by the desire of plunder joined by usual incentive of military glory and by the necessity of obtaining skulls or scalps of the victims to grace the funeral ceremonies of the chiefs and relations".⁵ Above all,

If there is quarrel between two Nagas of different villages, the dispute inevitably cause bloodshed and a feud is established between the villages of two disputants which nothing will assuage, and which in time as advantage offers will find issue on some dreadful massacre. The Nagas brook no insult. An insult given, it is a point of honour to have blood and bloodshed by the one party calls for a like stream on the part of the other.⁶

To prevent outrages, Vincent suggested, amongst others, the appointment of an officer in civil and military duties all over the hills then attached to Nowgong, the establishment of military posts and *thanas*, the enrolment of a local militia and the infliction of capital punishment on the spot where outrage was committed and offer of rewards for apprehension of offenders.⁷ He laid stress on the resumption of adjoining areas particularly the territory under Tularam Seanpati † which stood as a formidable bar to any measure that might be designed to prevent the Nagas from their atrocious attacks.

⁴ BJP, 29 January 1852, No. 200; 8 April, Nos. 150-60, Vincent to Butler 1 March.

⁵ BJP, 18 November 1852, Nos. 121-25; Jenkins 9 August.

⁶ Stewart. R., "Notes on Northern Cachar." JASB xxiv (1855), Pp. 607-17.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, Vincent to Jenkins 10 September 1852.

[†] For further study see Barpujari, H.K. Assam in the Days of Company, Pp. 140ff.

Under the agreement of 1834, subject to certain conditions*, the chief was allowed to hold the territory bounded by the river Jamuna on the west, Jamuna and Doyang on the north, Dhansiri on the east and river Mahur and Naga hills on the south and south-west. "The position of Tularam's territory" Jenkins also agreed "not only cut off our means of communication with the Angami Hills but separates our large and improving tracts in the Northern Cachar from that part of the valley of the Jamuna and Dhansiri by which we have to advance in all operation against the Nagas."* The Agent however considered the appointment of an officer in permanent charge of North-Cachar as of "paramount importance"; for that "would do much in suppressing feuds between tribes amenable to our jurisdiction".⁹ The villagers would scarcely attempt, he felt, in presence of that officer to set out on an expedition against any other clans; and if they occasionally kill individuals with whom old feuds existed, the officer-in-charge would be able to bring the offender to book. Despite renewal of outrages, Jenkins added, there had been much changes in the conduct of the Angamis. They had been carrying on considerable traffic with the people of the plains proceeding as far as Goalpara and bringing with them their children for education in Assamese language. This intercourse would be greatly increased, Jenkins felt convinced, if an officer appointed on the lines suggested by Vincent.¹⁰ Lord Dalhousie was not agreeable to the resumption of the territory under Tularam†, but he could not but accord his approval

* *Inter alia* payment of an annual tribute, furnishing of carriage and provisions to British troops in the event of their marching through his territory and an assurance that he would not wage war with his neighbours without permission of the British Government. Aitchison, C.U. *Traeties, Engagements and Sanads* Pp. 139-40.

⁸ BJP, November 1850, No. 127; Jenkins to Grant 13 July.

⁹ BJP, 18 November 1852, Nos. 121-5; Jenkins 9 August.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

† Since 1850, Butler had been pressing for annexation on the alleged breach of treaty obligations by Tularam. The death of the Senapati in October 1851 afforded the Principal Assistant the muchdesired pretext for resumption. But his argument—that the territory lapsed to the paramount power since the treaty was merely personal one—did not receive the concurrence of Dalhousie to whom "something more than that consideration was necessary to justify the action".

BJP. 1 June 1853. Letter to the court; *also* AS. Letters received from Government Vol. 34 (1852): Secretary, Government of Bengal 6 March.

to the appointment of an officer in North Cachar so ably represented by the Agent. The officer to be appointed to have direct communication with the Agent; for reference through the Principal Assistant Nowgong would delay matters requiring prompt action.¹¹

Jenkins was belied in his expectations. No sooner Lieutenant H.S. Bivar joined his assignment at his headquarters at Goomaigojo, than there occurred on 3 April 1853 the most atrocious and fateful disaster at Semkhar, adjacent to British territory, where in retaliation for a previous outrage the Mozomah Nagas burnt the village, killed 80 men and carried off 115 captives.¹² Nakulram, son of Tularam, at the head of an army of 300 men proceeded against the Nagas. When he was within a few miles of the offending village he was trapped and hacked to pieces. The Kacharis after the fall of their chief made a hasty retreat, but many of them shared his fate.¹³ On receipt of the news, Jenkins directed the principal assistant, Nowgong, to send hurriedly a detachment to the place of occurrence and to take such measures as might be necessary to prevent the Nagas from renewing their attack. The Agent was informed by Bivar that nothing short of resumption would effectively prevent the recurrence of atrocities since the Kacharis had neither the means nor ability to repel the Nagas who were sure to follow up their success and lay the country waste.¹⁴ "Unless we assume the management of the country" Jenkins was convinced, "we cannot provide for the maintenance of detachment nor open out roads to connect the military posts" from Goomaigojo to Dimapur so essential to prevent the incursion of the Angamis.¹⁵ When the view of the Agent received corroboration of A.J.M. Mills, the judge of the *Sadar dewani adawalt*, "that the country under its present management is a serious obstacle to the settlement of the Naga country", Dalhousie accorded his approval to the measure. I would rather have nothing to do with these jungles", he remarked, "but as the occupying of the country

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² BJP, 12 June 1854, Nos. 174-7; Bivar to Jenkins 4 May 1853.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Nos. 177-8; Bivar to Jenkins 21 June 1853.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 182; Bivar to Jenkins 1 July 1853.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 186; Jenkins to Mills 30 May 1853.

seems less objectionable alternative than letting it alone I propose..... to resume Tularam's territory."¹⁶

Hardly had Bivar formally occupied the territory as a part of the British dominion, when 31 March 1854 intelligence arrived of a serious outrage at Kah, a Mikir village, in which the Nagas killed as many as forty six and took away six persons.¹⁷ This was followed by attacks on villages of Japshemah, Setikemah, Beremah and Samagutting. In the same month, on the invitation of the Khonomahs an army of fifteen hundred Manipuris headed by a chief of their own had invaded and totally destroyed Mozomah. Apprehending fresh attack from Manipur, a deputation on behalf of the villages of Mozomah, Samagutting, Muzephemah, Pephemah, Rezephemah and Tessemah, nearly half of the Angami territory, awaited on the Agent soliciting protection of the government and promising submission and regular payment in return.¹⁸ As a matter of fact in every Angami village there existed two parties — one attached to Manipuri and the other to the British—each "working for an alliance to get aid in crushing the opposite faction". The deputationists made it clear that even the Nagas friendly to Manipuri were so much dissatisfied with the conduct of their allies that they would sever connection with the Manipuris in case a part of the hills brought under control of the government. Under the protection of the British, they sincerely believed, they would be free from the attacks of the Manipuris or any foreign power; they would become "better men", "an orderly and improved class of subjects" of the British government.¹⁹

The voluntary offer of submission by a substantial section of the Angamis emboldened the local authorities to make a further move to bestow on the Nagas "the blessings of civilisation and good government". The subjugation of these tribes, they believed, was the only means by which incursions into the plains could be prevented

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Nos. 185 and 188; see Extract from Mills's Report, para 177-8; also Minute by Dalhousie 17 August 1853.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 198; Bivar to Jenkins 3 December 1853; 29 April 1854, No 147; 22 June, No. 158; 10 August, Nos. 92 and 96.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Nos. 746-7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

and thereby lives and properties of the British subjects could be ensured.²⁰ "In comparison with other tribes", Bivar remarked :

The Nagas are a peculiar people; they acknowledge no supremacy except that of the spear..... they brook no authority, each man his own master..... thirst for plunder and a natural desire for revenge are leading features of their character..... To induce the Naga tribes to change their habits they must be made to feel certain that the offending individual will meet with condign punishment and this cannot be attained unless they are subjugated to such a control as would successfully be entailed by annexation.²¹

In a similar strain Jenkins drew the attention of Frederick Halliday, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1853-59), in his letter on 5 June 1854 that occupation of the country held out the only prospect of putting an end to the incursions of the Angamis into the British frontier.²² Almost all these outrages, he held had originated in blood feuds which these tribes considered it their sacred duty to prosecute and revenge and which they could neither forgo nor forgive except through the mediation of a superior power. From time to time, therefore, they sought British protection and there was every reason to hope that by this arrangement they were sincerely desirous of putting an end to the state of anarchy that prevailed in the hills. "I do not conceive" Jenkins concluded,

that the orders of the Government not to interfere with the internal feuds of the Angami Nagas..... can be said to have dissolved our connection with the Nagas, at least they have not so understood them; and from their physical positions, their habits and wants, their connection must be continued; and the only question to be considered in my opinion whether this connection is to remain in its present unsatisfactory state or whether it can be improved for the benefit of both parties.²³

The forceful manner in which Jenkins pleaded for occupation of the hills incurred the displeasure of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal who continued to adhere to the policy of non-intervention.²⁴ He felt that the Agent had made no serious attempt to explain to the

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ BJP, 7 September 1854, Nos. 76-7; Bivar to Jenkins 25 July.

²² BJP, 14 June 1855, No. 186; Jenkins 5 June 1854.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 194; Grey to Jenkins, on board Matabagh, 29 November 1854.

Nagas the policy of the government. He had also much doubt from the tenor of correspondence whether the junior officers like Bivar had clearly understood the objectives of the government and expressed the hope that under no circumstances they should make any departure from the policy laid down by the government in 1851.²⁵ The Agent was advised on 2 March 1855 to intimate the Nagas that the government had

no wish to interfere in the smallest degree with their independence and are at all times willing so long as they conduct themselves in a peaceful and friendly manner to receive them in our territories in a similar spirit when they desire to resort there for trade and other purposes.²⁶

This was indeed a great rebuff to the Agent. He had then no alternative but to inform the friendly Nagas when the latter approached him in early 1855 that the government was against meddling in any way in their internal affairs. In June 1854 when the Japshemas reported the attack of the Angamis on several villages, the Agent could hold out no hope to them to interfere in their feuds. Earlier he turned down the petition of the Kohima Nagas when the latter appealed for aid against their enemies who murdered eleven villagers.²⁷

Undoubtedly, the British policy of wooing the Nagas by presents and other tokens of friendship had totally failed. The resort to punitive expeditions, on the otherhand, by burning the village and massacring the inhabitants served only to provoke their retaliatory raids into British territory rendering, thereby, lives and properties of peaceful subjects wholly insecure. The policy of annexation so strongly advocated by the local authorities was attended with too many difficulties. So bold and daring were the Angamis that Jenkins himself admitted that their subjugation would be a matter of considerable difficulty. The defence of so extensive a frontier necessarily involved heavy expenditures. Multiplication of military posts was difficult to maintain; for the country was sparsely populated to

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ BJP, 8 March No. 163; Grey to Jenkins 2 March.

²⁷ BJP, 14 June 1855, Nos. 183 and 188; 8 March, No. 161.

furnish supplies for the troops and where the people had a great aversion to serve as porters. However effective might be the means of defence and beneficent the measures, these might be differently construed by so independent a tribe like that of the Angamis.

No wonder therefore the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal remained adamant; he felt nothing special had occurred as to warrant a change in the policy already laid down. On the contrary he realised the inexpediency of pushing the frontier too far and of maintaining detached outposts in close proximity to the very tribes from whom the government had experienced much trouble. In so doing the local authorities had mixed themselves up with internecine feuds and allowed themselves to be drawn into embarrassing quarrels which not unoften led to murderous attacks on British subjects. It was therefore finally resolved not to meddle any more in their internal feuds and to confine the attention of the local authorities to the legitimate boundary of actual subject population, to punish inroads on British possession by following the offenders and inflicting summary punishments in their villages. It was decided even to abandon Dimapur and not to extend the line of the frontier beyond Borpathar.²⁸

Coercive measures against the Garos, too, it may be remembered, proved ineffective. The *laskars* or the headmen in a body refused assistance in furnishing information or forwarding supplies. A chain of military posts in the hills would have made it possible, but this was rendered extremely difficult in a region of inhospitable climate. Considering that every attempt to enforce obedience of the recalcitrants by military force would be futile, Agnew proposed to exclude the Garos from all intercourse with the plains.²⁹ For a month or so they might hold out but eventually they would be compelled to come to terms, since they were dependent on the markets in the plains for sale of their cotton and purchase of salt and other necessities. Jenkins doubted much whether it would be possible to shut the Garos from intercourse even with Goalpara not to speak of preventing them from getting supplies from the south of the hills. The stoppage of the cotton mart, he was also afraid, would adversely

²⁸ BJP, 20 September 1855, No. 193, 17 January 1856, Nos. 187-9.

²⁹ BJP, 20 January 1853, No. 135, Agnew to Jenkins 30 December 1852.

affect the interests of the British subjects.³⁰ It was no small compliment to Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General, that he realised that the police he advocated hitherto was a mistaken one. He ruled out "further military operations" in his minute on 17 January 1859 as "mere waste of lives". While admitting that closure of the *hats* would inflict injury on the innocent in punishing the guilty, he felt, there was hardly any alternative—"individual interest must yield to public interest". Garos need be rigidly excluded till the delivery of the murderers.³¹ From Damrah to Porakhasmah accordingly *hats* were closed and the Garos were interdicted from entering into the plains.³² As apprehended by the Agent, the closure of the *hats* affected the inoffensive Garos, the cultivators of the border areas who bartered with the Garos their agricultural produce and the merchants frequenting the *hats* for cotton. Hundreds of them were found to be on the verge of starvation. On the otherhand the Independent Garos, invariably the aggressors, who had been receiving regularly their supplies from the south escaped the penalty. Not only did they violate the order of the government but committed outrages with impunity. The *sarbakars* in-charge proved unequal to the task of apprehending or convicting the offenders; for they received no co-operation from their subordinates. The only hope of securing permanent peace, Jenkins felt convinced, lay in military occupation of the hills.³³ A.J.M. Mills, who was then on a tour in Assam, also remarked: "unless a European Functionary could reside in the interior and superintend the administration we should not attempt to extend our rule over unprofitable hills." He suggested severe punishment of the offenders, the opening of a road and the maintenance of frequent contact with the Garos by European officers.³⁴ Since the policy of the Government of India continued to be one of non-intervention the proposition of Mills received but scant attention.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 134; Jenkins to Gordon 4 January.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Nos. 137-8; Minute by Dalhousie 17 January; Beadon to Jenkins 17 January.

³² BJP, 12 January 1854, Nos. 203 as see the Proclamation.

³³ BJP, 22 March 1860, No. 3, Jenkins to Lushington 29 November 1859.

³⁴ BJP, 12 January 1854, No. 139.

To make matters worse friction arose about this time with Government of Bhutan. With the extension of police Jurisdiction consequent upon the annexation of Kamrup *Duars* in 1842, law and order remained on the whole undisturbed in the frontier on the north. To conciliate the Bhutias, the Government of India sanctioned in 1843 the payment of Rs. 3660 estimated to be one third of the net revenue of the *duars* and this was subsequently raised to rupees ten thousand.³⁵ The Bhutias could hardly reconcile to the loss of the *duars* over which they laid a vague claim and which supplied, directly and indirectly, their foodstuff and other necessaries of life. The wrath of these hillmen inevitably fell on the plains adjoining the *duars* in Bengal. "Scarcely a year has passed without the occurrence of several outrages ... In every instance aggressors have been, not the villagers, but Bhutan frontier officials or gangs of robbers protected or harboured by them and generally led by some of their immediate dependents."³⁶

When the prospect of restoration of the *duars* was bleak, an attempt was made by the Bhutia authorities to increase compensation paid for the *duars* to rupees fifteen thousand, if not at least to twelve thousand. In March 1854, a deputation, headed by an uncle of the Dharma Raja and Jadum, the Dewangiri Raja, awaited on the Agent to the Governor-General at Gauhati; but the latter could not accede to the demand of the Bhutias. On their way back to the hills the chiefs committed several atrocities in Buxa Duar; "the whole of the people had become so alarmed that most had left their homes and property and fled to the jungles as the Booteahs had already wounded several and applied tortures to others to make them disclose their property."³⁷

The Principal Assistant Kamrup, who hurried to the frontier, learnt that some of the robberies had been committed by the Dewangiri Raja himself. While these were under enquiry reports came of other outrages committed by the Bhutias on merchants and British subjects. Jenkins believed that the Dewangiri Raja was not only implicated in

³⁵ FC, 8 March 1843, Nos. 143-4; 23 October 1847, Nos. 26-7.

³⁶ Eden, A., *Political Mission to Bhutan*, 20 July 1864.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Political Letter to the Court, 22 November 1855, No. 64.

these atrocities but he had organised bands of robbers and that Tongso Pilo, the governor of Eastern Duars, was aware of the acts of his subordinates. A demand was made on the Government of Bhutan for the surrender of the culprits and at the same time the local authorities were directed to close the passes from the hills if the demand was not complied with or in the event of repetition of outrages.³⁸

In all probability the Deb and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan were aware of the activities of their officials; for on the closure of the passes not only the Dewangiri Raja was removed from office but Tongso Pilo was heavily fined. In retaliation the Tongso Pilo in a threatening letter demanded of the Agent payment of half of the fine and surrender of some of the criminals who had been seized by the British officials. Reports followed that the Dewangiri Raja was building forts, opening roads and making necessary preparations for hostilities. Colonel Jenkins, who took little notice of the demands, proposed on 13 November 1855 that the value of the property plundered by the Dewangiri Raja should be deducted from the Bhutia share of the *duar* revenue and submitted for the consideration of the government whether he should withhold payment altogether until the offenders were given up for trial. Further he wanted to punish the Bhutias by immediate occupation of all the Bengal Duars the only measure he felt, "likely to be effective short of invading the country".³⁹

Dalhousie was not prepared to precipitate matters with Bhutan as long as the situation in the Naga and Garo frontier continued to be disquieting. Nevertheless he considered it necessary to take some effective means to protect the ryots from constant alarm and actual injury caused by the atrocities; all the more because of the insolent communication made by Tongso Pilo and also of the threatening attitude of the Dewangiri Raja. The Agent was advised on 11 January 1856 to make a demand of the Tongso Pilo to apologise for the disrespect shown to him; failing which he was to be informed that

³⁸ *Ibid.*, FC, MAY 1855, K.W. Nos. 73-8, Jenkins 16 MArch; Vetch 21 March and 16 April.

³⁹ Political Letter to the Court, 20 September 1856, No. 97 : FC 25 May 1855, Nos. 26-8; February 1856, Nos. 78-90; 14 March Nos. 5-7; 9 May Nos. 40-2.

necessary measures would be taken to cripple his authority in the frontier. Dalhousie considered it inexpedient to declare that the share of the duar revenue would be entirely withheld as suggested by the Agent until offenders were surrendered. But under any circumstances, he added, the value of the property plundered should be deducted from the Bhutia's share of the *duar* revenue. Should there be a recurrence of incursions, in the interest of its own ryots the Governor-General in Council would have no alternative but to take immediate measures for the permanent annexation of the Bengal Duars as well.⁴⁰

The Agent to the Governor-General lost no time in carrying out these instructions. Hardly had the message reached the authorities in Bhutan when came the report that Arun Singh, the *zamindar* of Gumah Duar who had taken refuge in British territory for fear of vengeance of the Bhutias, was carried off by a party of armed men headed by a Bhutia official. Frederick Halliday, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, desired that in the first instance a communication should be made to the Government of Bhutan, but the authorities in Calcutta considered such a soft line as inconsistent after the remonstrations already made to the Bhutia *darbar* and advised the Lieutenant Governor to demand from them the punishment of offenders and apology for the acts of their dependents in default of which the government would be compelled to take permanent possession of the Bengal Duars.⁴¹

It was a matter of great satisfaction to the Government of Bengal when on 1 July 1856 Jenkins reported that the Deb and Dharma Rajas as well as Tongso Pilo had apologised for previous misconduct. A settlement with Bhutan appeared to be in sight and the Agent was told in reply that in case the Bhutia authorities offered full satisfaction for aggressions on Arun Singh, communication with Tongso Pilo should be resumed and the share of *duar* revenue be raised to rupees twelve thousand.⁴² Not only was the demand for surrender of the captive evaded but to make matters worse, on 26 November Saligram Oswal, a British merchant who had gone to Mainaguri for trade, was seized and detained on flimsy

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1856, Nos. 15-7.

⁴² FC, 18 July 1856, Nos. 18-21; Jenkins to Grey 3 June.

grounds. Latter, a party of Bhutias carried off from Salmarah in Cooch Behar Jubil Das, Ramdulal and Harmohan with their females and properties. On payment of ransom Jubil and three women were later set free; it appeared that the unfortunate victims were tortured which was borne out by the scars in the person of one of them after his release.⁴³

Jenkins had already made it clear that the prospect of effective management of the districts in the plains by the Government of Bhutan was remote; "the contention which appears to have existed for so many years amongst the chief families of Bhutan for supreme government of the country appears to be still continued." Therefore, further reference to the authorities in Bhutan would be useless. For redress of past offences and security for the future, he was convinced, there was hardly any alternative than permanent annexation of the Bengal Duars. The views of the Agent did not receive the concurrence of Lord Canning, the then Governor-General of India. He was, in fact, uncertain "in whose hands the chief authority rests [*in Bhutan*] or whether there is any effective chief authority". Jenkins reported that the scramble for power which existed in Bhutan for many years remained unabated, but he was indefinite about the nature and extent of the authority of the Deb and Dharma Rajas nor was he sure whether the Tongso Pilo was a mere viceroy or an independent chief in his own district. Apart from this, the Tongso Pilo had already apologised for his misdemeanour and acts of insolence, and the offence for which he was then held responsible was committed at a place in Bhulka Duar beyond the pale of his jurisdiction. Canning was therefore doubtful whether "atonment" on the part of the Tongso Pilo "would be a matter of concern to his fellow governors further west or to any superior authority"; and it was not unlikely that this chief would be powerless" to obtain for the Government of India satisfaction which is required". The Governor-General in Council had no alternative but to ask the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, who was about to visit the frontier, to furnish necessary information and to suggest the best course necessary to bring the authorities in Bhutan "to a sense of their duties towards their neighbours".⁴⁴

⁴³ Political Letter to the Court, 8 September 1857, Nos. 56; FC 23 January 1857, Nos. 10-3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Jenkins to Buckland 13 November 1856.

Considering the defence of the Western Duars rather weak, the Government of Bengal under direction of the Government of India, established a cantonment at Jalpaiguri and stationed therein the 73rd Regiment and a detachment of the 11th irregular cavalry. Halliday paid a visit to the frontier in early 1857. After discussion with the Agent to the Governor-General and others he recorded a minute on 5 March wherein he stated that ordinarily the Deb and Dharma Rajas exercised an effective control over their subordinates; but this depended on the strength and weakness of the parties at the Court.⁴⁵ Although for some years the civil war had weakened the central authority in Bhutan, of late the Deb, an usurper, had died and a new ruler succeeded with the support of the party of the Dharma Raja. Considering this change to be favourable to the British, the Lieutenant Governor suggested that a further communication be addressed to the Deb and Dharma Rajas calling upon them to deliver up the captives or to abide by such measures as the government might on the failure of full satisfaction adopt for vindication of its rights and power. The measure which Halliday proposed in the latter case was not the annexation of all the *duars* but Ambari-Falakata and Jalpes, the territories ceded to Bhutan about seventy years ago.* The Governor-General in Council concurred with the views of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. In view of the recent changes in the Government of Bhutan and "apparently in the temper of the authorities", Halliday was advised on 14 April 1857 to make another demand to the Deb and Dharma Rajas for the delivery of the abducted persons accompanied by a warning that in case of non compliance Government of India would take measures for its enforcement. The first step of retribution which the Government proposed was the permanent annexation of Falakata to be followed thereafter by the occupation and retention of Jalpes.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, FC, 14 April 1857, Nos. 62-5.

* Jalpes or Jalpesh and Ambari-Falakata, on the east and west of the river Teesta, hitherto, formed a part of the Zamindari of Baikunthapur of the Raja of Cooch Behar. In 1780-84 these tracts were ceded to the Deb Raja by Warren Hastings to earn his good will and thereby facilitate commercial penetration to Tibet.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In the face of unfriendly relations with a number of frontier tribes the Governor-General in Council could hardly agree to a measure calculated to open a rupture with Bhutan. They were also reluctant to saddle themselves with the responsibilities of a territory extremely unhealthy to Europeans and Indians alike. Above all a forward policy on the northern frontier of Bengal would have serious repercussions on the Government of India at a time when the latter had to mobilize its resources against the mutinous sepoys of northern India.

The incursions of the Mishmis about this time caused further anxiety in the minds of the local authorities. Of the several clans into which this tribe was divided, the friendly Digarus frequented the marts and fairs in the plains and occasionally rendered aid to the British authorities. Occupying in the hills in the extreme east the Mijus or the Idus commanded the routes to Tibet and not unoften opposed the entry of foreigners into their hills.* The Mijus of Jeengsa and Senga villages murdered in December 1847 Paramanund Acharjee, a *fakir*, in his attempt to penetrate into Lhasa by a route through their hills. The *fakir* was afforded necessary facilities by the local authorities in his mission in the hope of cultivating friendly relations with the Tibetans which was then at a low ebb. A resort of force for the apprehension of the criminals was considered out of question. Employment of clans at enmity with the Mijus for the purpose was ruled out on the ground that such measures might drive away the tribes so necessary for promoting intercourse with the Chinese and the Tibetans.⁴⁷

In 1854, with the aid of Khosa, a Digaru chief, two French Missionaries M.M. Krick and Bourry reached the border of Tibet. Hardly had they crossed the frontier when both of them were murdered

* Of the three principal clans the Tains or the Digarus resided on the south-east of Sadiya, the Mijus or Idus, the extreme east bordering China and the Chulikatas or the "hair cropped" occupied the hills between the rivers Dihong and Digaru. For details see Michell J., *The North-East Frontier of India* Pp. 85 ff; AS, Letters Received from District Officers, vol. 49; Comber to Hopkinson, *Camp* Tengakhat, 2 November 1865.

⁴⁷ AS, Letters to Government vol. 13; Jenkins to Elliot, 20 January 1848; see letter of Choking Gohain 24 December; BJP, 28 April 1848, NO. 103; Vetch to Jenkins 24 March.

by a party of the Mishmis under Kai-ee-sha.⁴⁸ To punish the offending tribe a detachment of Assam Light Infantry under Lieutenant Eden accompanied by Khamti volunteers went up the hills. After eight days of arduous marches, “swinging over dangerous torrents on bridges of single canes”, Eden and his party arrived at Kai-ee-sha’s village near the river Du. The chief was seized and later hanged, his sons fell fighting and the village was completely destroyed.⁴⁹

The heavy retribution on Kai-ee-sha and his clan alarmed the Mijus and their neighbours so much that for over thirty years they remained in peace. The case was otherwise with the Chulikatas who had committed several acts of aggression in and near about Sadiya.⁵⁰ Descending down upon the plains in parties of forty or more they crept through the jungles and fell upon unsuspecting ryots with their daws and spears killing as many as they could lay their hands on, plundering properties and retiring to the hills with their booties before any information could reach the military guards in the neighbourhood. During 1854-57, no less than six outrages were committed in which over twenty six persons were killed, four wounded and fifteen carried off into captivity. In January 1857, the Chulikatas raided a village at Sadiya murdering eight at midday within three hundred yards of a military guard and thereafter the party retreated to the hills unmolested.⁵¹ The population around Sadiya was not only scanty but scattered since the villages were located in the midst of jungles from the vicinity of the Brahmaputra to the northern hills. Consequently the inhabitants were incapable of making any attempt to defend themselves against the marauding raids of the Mishmis. Neither the sepoy guards, limited in number as they were, could afford protection to the ryots in the exposed villages. Such guards were in fact considered useless unless supported by a system of organised patrolling or a class of people capable of providing for

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, vol. 19; Jenkins to Grey 29 November 1854; vol. 19 (a), Jenkins to Grey, letter Nos. 3 and 128 of 1855. Shakespear, L. W., *The History of the Assam Rifles*, Pp. 45-47; Michell, J., *op. cit.* Pp. 99-100.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ BJP, 10 January 1856, No. 245; Dalton to Jenkins 19 December 1855; 21 February, No. 124, Dalton to Jenkins 17 January 1856.

⁵¹ BJP, 16 July 1857, No. 169; Jenkins to Grey 7 January, see petition of Bhabanath Thookim, 21 December 1856.

their security establish themselves at the vulnerable positions. H.S. Bivar, the Principal assistant Lakhimpur, suggested the settlement of Khamtis on the border villages as being desired by the Assamese ryots and whom the Mishmis dreaded most. In any case he wanted that the culprits should not go unpunished. To impress these tribes that offenders, however remote, could not escape retribution, Bivar proposed that a punitive expedition should enter the hills in the ensuing winter and punish the raiders, failing which their crop should be destroyed and the villages burnt to the ground.⁵²

The time was highly inopportune. The harrowing tales of the massacre of European men and women in Upper India by the mutineers produced a spirit of restlessness amongst the sepoy^s of the Assam Light Infantry in Upper Assam.* The sepoys were in fact spurred into activity by the conspiracy that was hatched up by a group of Assamese nobles headed by Maniram, the ex-dewan of the Assam Company, with the object of restoring Ahom Monarchy in Upper Assam. To protect the lives and properties of the few Englishmen there existed not a single European soldier in Upper Assam. Nor was it possible on the part of the authorities in Calcutta to despatch reinforcement for paucity of disposable troops on account of simultaneous outbreak of sepoys in scattered areas of Northern India. Jenkins therefore considered it impolitic to the exhibition of force proposed by Bivar and advised him to content himself in taking measures as of organising a Khamti police for the protection of the British subjects.⁵³

Despite overwhelming odds, the Government of India had to sanction an expedition against the Meyong Abors of Kebug who made an atrocious attack on 31 January 1858 at Sengajan, a Behea village, wherein twenty one persons were killed and six wounded. The Beheas were subjected to taxation; naturally they looked upon the government for protection. Since the village was only six miles from Dibrugarh, the headquarters of the district, Captain Bivar with

⁵² BJP, 10 September 1757, Nos. 120-1, Bivar to Jenkins 6 June.

* For repercussions of the Mutiny in Upper Assam see Barpujari, H.K., *Assam in the Days of the Company*, Pp. 163 ff.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Jenkins to Young 14 August.

101 men, rank and file, of the Assam Light Infantry under the command of Captain W.H. Lowther had to advance against the offending tribe. On 19 March the force arrived at Pasighat and on the next day the advance began against the enemy. Apart from paucity of troops the difficulties of the terrain and lack of coordination between the civil and military authorities resulted in the failure of the expedition.⁵⁴ Allied with their neighbouring clans the Meyongs had advanced and taken up a threatening position at Pasighat. Fearing that the security of the British subjects would be endangered if the Abors were given a free hand in the north bank, the Government of India decided to despatch another expedition in a manner as would ensure complete success. The overtures that were made in the meantime by the friendly Abors for a reconciliation between the government and the hostile clans ended in a failure; it was considered impolitic to overlook the events of the past nor to accept anything short of complete submission on terms to be dictated by the government.⁵⁵

In early 1859, the second expedition was organised with due caution and on an elaborate scale under Colonel Hannay, Commandant of the Assam Light Infantry, aided by Major Reid of the Local Artillery. They were accompanied by a force of 400 men under Lieutenants Lewis and Davies who had in the meantime arrived with a Brigade of Sailors on pressing call for reinforcement by the European planters. Bivar proceeded in advance of the troops to Dihongmukh to make necessary preparations while Lowther moved down to Dibong to create a diversion and to keep in check the eastern clans in event of their joining the enemy.⁵⁶ On 28 February the troops arrived at Pasighat where the enemy had entrenched themselves with a great force. On the following day the village was stormed and occupied by the troops. This was followed by the destruction of two other offending villages Munko and Runkong.⁵⁷ The punishment inflicted was so

⁵⁴ BJP, 19 August 1858, Nos. 262-84; Michell, J., *op. cit.*, Pp. 66 ff.

⁵⁵ BJP, 27 January 1858, Nos. 88-100; Buckland, C.T. to the Secretary, Government of India 5 January 1859; Michell, J., *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ BJP, 7 April 1859, No. 76-83; Jenkins to Young 25 February.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Jenkins to Young 11 March 1859, also Shakespear, L.W., *op. cit.*, Pp. 41-5.

severe that several clans made overtures for peace. But the redoubtable Meyongs remained unbending as ever, asserting that all the lands on the northern bank were their own and that any advance by the British beyond the river would be at their peril.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ AS, Letters Received from District Officers vol. 49; Comber to Hopkinson 2 November 1865.

CHAPTER FOUR

Indecision

On the south-east of Hill Tipperah lie Chittagong Hill Tracts inhabited by the *jumeas* or cultivators by hand who were held by several hill chiefs tributary to the British government. Of the principal chiefs Phrus or Poang had authority over the tract south of the river Karnafuli while Kalindi Rani and Mong Raja ruled in the north. The border of these areas were occupied by the clans of Rattan Poea, the Sylos and the Howlongs who though politically distinct were offshoots of the Lushais in the north. The Hill Tract was subjected to frequent raids of the neighbouring tribes particularly the powerful Sindus in the south-east.*

A private quarrel with a neighbouring clan, a scarcity of women and domestic servants..... the simple desire of plunder or of obtaining heads to grace the obsequies of some departed chieftains were the principal causes which led to the commission of these raids.¹

In 1847, on the suggestion of Henry Ricketts, the commissioner of Chittagong, the Government of Bengal made the Chief of Poang responsible for the defence of the frontier by keeping up a number payable by him*. This proved ineffective and raids were renewed soon after. The endeavours that were later made by the local authorities or by the chief bore little fruit. Because

It was very difficult to reach the offenders. Before troops could arrive upon the spot, the marauders had returned with their booty to their labyrinth of hills and the pursuit was almost hopeless in a country everywhere intersected with precipices and water courses and covered with densest jungles. The

* For details see Lewin, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the dwellers therein*, 1869; also Mackenzie, A., *History of Relations of the Government with the Hills Tribes, North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Pp. 329 ff.

¹ Buckland, C.E., *Bengal under Lieutenant Governors*, p. 180.

* For Rickett's proposals see selection of Records, Government of Bengal, xi.

villages, too, where these savages resided were stockaded and paths strewn with caltrops and other devices to render the approaches as dangerous and difficult as possible.²

In utter despair Colonel Hopkinson, assistant commissioner of Arakan, proposed in 1848 to despatch a military expedition against the offending tribes and to supply the Poang Raja arms and amunition to avenge the wrongs done to the subjects. The first measure did not receive the approval of Fredrick Halliday, the lieutenant governor of Bengal, since such an experiment would cause indiscriminate slaughter of friends and foes alike. Establishment of military posts was also considered to be the impracticable. The extensive nature of the country, inhospitable climate and the difficulties in furnishing supplies rendered the maintenance of such posts extremely difficult. Any alteration of the policy was therefore ruled out; but the arrangement made with the Poang Chief soon proved a total failure and the interference of the government became absolutely necessary. Difficulties arose from the fact that these tracts fell under the jurisdiction of regular civil and criminal courts. It was felt that regulation law was unsuited to these areas inhabited by primitive tribes. Therefore, in 1859 the Lieutenant Governor recommended that this tract should be removed from the application of the General Regulation and be left entirely in the hands of the hill chiefs under supervision of a Superintendent "who should interfere as little as possible" except in cases of defending the people near the plains or preventing them from making raids or committing outrages amongst themselves.³

While these measures were under consideration of the government intelligence arrived on 31 January 1860 that the Kukis descended down on the plains of Tipperah, burnt 15 villages, killed 185 British subjects and carried off 100 captives.⁴ The tribe of Rattan Poca was reported to be the aggressors and the allegation was that they were instigated by the Tipperah Raja's subjects who had grievances of their own. In January 1861, Captain Raban with a

² Buckland, C.E., *op. cit.*

³ BJP, 9 September 1858, Nos. 277-85, also see Hopkinson's Review of the policy on the Chittagong Frontier in 1856; Mackenzie, A., *op. cit.*

⁴ BJP, November 186, Nos. 245-7.

large body of Military Police marched against the enemy.⁵ No sooner had the troops appeared than the Kukis themselves burnt their village and field into the jungles. Simultaneously the Kukis made an atrocious attack on hill Tipperah; and on their return destroyed several villages in Kalindi Rani's territory and attacked a police outpost in the Chittagong Hill Tract. Inevitably, "the frontier was in a state of panic, large tracts of country were deserted by the Joomese (sic) and it seemed as if nothing that our police and troops could effect would secure them from attack."⁶

To strengthen the defence of the frontier, Captain Graham who had in the meantime been appointed Superintendent of the Hill Tract directed the Tipperah Raja to erect five frontier outposts besides a stockade of 150 men on the river Fenny and these were to be connected with each other by roads. Likewise, the Poang chief was advised to strengthen his roads.⁷ Being alarmed at these developments and the fear of having the supplies if this tribe being cut off, Ratan Poea voluntarily surrendered to Graham in September 1861 agreeing to offer aid to the British if needed against his neighbouring tribes. The powerful Sylos and the Howlongs refused to come to terms declaring that they had every right to cut up other tribes, but they had no enmity with the English.

Neither coercive measures advocated by Mills nor military occupation of the Garo country proposed by Jenkins received serious attention of the Government of India. Since 1855 reports of outrages continued to pour in both on the Gawalpara and Mymensingh frontier. Abortive attempts had been made to apprehend the culprits, but no comprehensive policy was laid down nor any attempt made to bring the offenders to book. Proposals were no doubt made by the local authorities to open up the country by a road through the hills with a chain of police outposts along it and to appoint a responsible officer in the interior with duties to follow up in the tract of the offenders. In early 1857 the *sarbakar* who had been hitherto the

⁵ BJP, December 1860; No. 418; MArch 1861, Nos. 15-22.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ BJP, February 1861, Nos. 119-24; March 113-4, November, Nos. 9-11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, November 1860, No. 238; December 1861, Nos. 70-1.

channel to communication with the Garos but who had proved himself incapable of controlling his subordinates was abolished and the Sub-Assistant at Singimari was placed in-charge of the Garo mahals. Police force was at the same time strengthened and several outposts were located in the frontier.⁹

Notwithstanding the aforesaid measures raids were on the increase. In November 1859, W.C.A. Beckett, the officiating principal assistant Gawalpara, brought to the notice of the Agent the occurrence of as many as eight outrages within the jurisdictions of Gawalpara, Karaibari and Singimari.¹⁰ In February 1860, as reported by the Commissioner of Dacca, a body of Garos descending down from the hills attacked the house of one Kirti Singh Sarkar, murdered the entire family and carried off their heads.¹¹ This was followed by an outrage in Nazarana mahals in which fifteen persons were killed—all the perpetrators were supposed to be the Independent Garos. The frontier police proved itself incapable of apprehending the aggressors who inhabited high ranges of the hills wherein they defended themselves by erecting stockades and blocking the passes leading up the hills.¹² The proposal of closure of the *hats* was discussed and ruled out; experience showed that such a measure would be more injurious to the British subjects and innocents than to the offending chiefs in the interior. A blockade to be effective, Jenkins was strongly of the opinion, need be followed up by a military expedition, but the means to carry out such a measure was utterly inadequate. The detachment of the Assam Light Infantry could not be employed, for they suffered as much from the rigours of the climate as the Europeans. Therefore, the Agent urged to strengthen the police by a militia composed of recruits of the frontier as could enter the hills at any season without fear of the climate; and

⁹ BJP, 22 November 1855, No. 226; Agnew 4 July; 12 June 1855, No. 165.

¹⁰ BJP, 22 March 1860, Becket to Jenkins, 19 November 1859.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, No. 81; Davidson C.T., Commissioner of Dacca, 29 February 1860.

* Under Ensign Bogle who was hitherto placed in exclusive charge of these hills, the Garos were brought under effective control of the government. Later, Mr. Strong was appointed Sub-Assistant Gawalpara for supervision of these tribes and thereafter, the Principal Assistant was placed in direct charge of the Garos.

¹² *Ibid.*, No. 34; Jenkins to Lushington, 6 February 1860.

this should be placed under a local officer of rank who would enter the hills without awaiting for a European officer who could be detached only for a few months after the rains. The appointment of such an officer became all the more necessary when it was found that some of the outrages had been occasioned by boundary disputes between villages under nominal control of the government and *zamindars* in the south. In absence of such an officer to settle disputes the aggrieved had no alternative but to take law into their own hands.¹³

The repeated murders and the comparative impunity with which the Garos carried on these outrages convinced John Peter Grant, the new lieutenant governor of Bengal (1859-62), that some permanent measures were necessary for keeping these tribes in check. In March 1860 he accorded his approval to the restoration of the office of the *sarbarkar* but took no further step, as recommended by the Agent, to put a stop to the aggression of these tribes.¹⁴ To do this B.W.D. Morton, since appointed principal assistant Gawalpara, considered it essential to have measures both of conciliation and coercion—that a European officer should have interviews with the hill chiefs as frequently as possible and at the same time a strong body of armed police need be posted along the whole line of frontier. To begin with, he sought to apprehend the culprits by sending up in the next winter two detachments from Gawalpara and Mymensingh and on the failure to obtain surrender of the aggressors he would destroy the crops and burn the village in which they resided or remained concealed.¹⁵

On the approval of the aforesaid measures by the Government of Bengal after the rains Lieutenant Chambers, second in command Assam Light Infantry, with a party of sepoy advanced unopposed into the hills. On his approach the offenders took to flight and the pursuit of the fugitives in terrain full of jungles proved next to impossible. Nevertheless when the Garos saw that their hills and ravines were not inaccessible to the troops several chiefs paid off their arrears and a few independent *sardars* also came in and ten-

¹³ *Ibid.*, No. 30; Jenkins to Lushington, 29 November 1859.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 38.

¹⁵ BJP, September 1860, Nos. 371-5; Jenkins to Young 18 August.

dered their submission.¹⁶ Morton who commanded the troops from Mymensingh was on the whole successful. He captured forty Garos more or less implicated in the outrages and burnt to the ground the villages of those offenders which he could not apprehend. For effective supervision of the Garos bordering Gawalpara and Mymensingh, Morton proposed in his letter on 26 January 1861 (i) the extension of the Garo villages on the frontier of Mymensingh, the same system of revenue assessment as was adopted in Gawalpara; (ii) the construction of a permanent military road from Gawalpara to the border of Sylhet joining intermediary *hats*; (iii) the raising of a police militia of one hundred men with its complement of officers, commissioned and non-commissioned; (iv) the location of Sub Assistant at Karaibari vested with the power of a Principal Assistant and (v) to meet the expenses of the establishment to reimpose the duty on cotton at the *hats* including those in the district of Mymensingh.¹⁷

In forwarding these measures Jenkins stressed the need of locating a European Officer in exclusive charge of these hills; for it was vain to expect that the Garos from his headquarters.¹⁸ The Lieutenant Governor accorded his approval to the first proposal and also agreed that great advantage would be derived from construction of roads, but he was afraid such projects could not be materialised for paucity of funds. He was also unable to accept the proposal of raising a local militia; the utmost he could do was to move the Government of India to make the office of the *sarharkar* a permanent one for the protection of the frontier. The proposal to appoint a special officer in charge of the Garos was also ruled out and the Principal Assistant was advised to make a yearly visit to the frontier. Nor could the Lieutenant Governor agree to the reimposition of the *hat* duties since there was every likelihood of Garo cotton soon being in larger demand in England; rather the attention of the Agent was directed to increase the supply of the commodity from which its export could be facilitated.²⁰

¹⁶ BJP, July 1861, No. 277; Chambers to Morton 21 March.

¹⁷ BJP, April 1861, No. 254; Morton to Jenkins 26 March.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 268; Morton to Jenkins 26 January.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 257; Jenkins to Young 16 February.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 269; Young to Jenkins 23 March.

On the north-east, too, British relations with the Abors continued to be far from being friendly. Since early 1861 the Meyongs assumed such a threatening attitude that military guards at Sisi and Demoh had to be strengthened and a party of sepoy was despatched to the junction of the rivers Dihong and Dibong, the route by which the raiders descended down on the plains.²¹ In spite of precautionary measures, on 4 December 1861 H.S. Bivar, the deputy commissioner Lakhimpur,* reported the attack of the Abors on Bordhun Bhuyan, a Behea village fifteen miles from Dibrugarh. The outrage had been traced to the desertion of the Beheas of their village on the north bank of the Brahmaputra following the raid at Sengajan and party out of vengeance for the aid they rendered to the British troops in operations in 1859. The Miris who occupied a few scattered villages below the hills were suspected to be the collaborators while the Meybo and Meyong clans were the authors of this outrages.²²

For the protection of ryots Bivar considered two measures as essential; firstly the deportation of the Miris to the south of the Brahmaputra; secondly the military occupation of the Abor hills at least for a season; and to do this he sought to build a fort between Lalimukh and Pabhamukh and to link it up with Demoh and Sisi so that it might be patrolled by sepoy guards.²³ Henry Hopkionson who had succeeded Jenkins in February 1861 as the Agent ruled out the first measure on the ground that the services of the Miris would be indispensable for the construction of roads and no Assamese would go there for fear of the Abor tribes. He of course agreed with the Deputy Commissioner that defensive measures alone would not ensure the security of the frontier. "I am afraid", he made it clear, "we must go into the Abor hills, but if we go we must stay there and we must not go further than where we can stay." He wanted to make Pabhamukh the base of operations where from he would push forward towards Pasighat so as to make it and the tract in its vicinity a

²¹ AS. Letters received from District officers. vol. 49: Comber to Hopkinson. 2 November 1865.

* In 1861 Principal Assistant, Junior Assistant and Sub-Assistant were changed to Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and Extra Assistant Commissioners.

²² BJP, January 1862, Nos. 305-8; Hopkinson 28 December 1861.

²³ *Ibid.*

British possession. He would make further advance as far as Kembang so as to get into rear of the Abors and to control them effectively. This involved, he admitted, considerable expenditure but this was inevitable in consequence of the occupation of Lakhimpur, Sadiya and Muttock.²⁴ Evidently Hopkinson advocated a forward policy and this should be carried out not so much by force of arms as by military forts and roads inasmuch as

Their [Abor] chief strength lay in their impregnable country; when that was pierced and made accessible to our troops, their submission was accomplished and arts and commerce followed our soldiers and consolidated the victory.²⁵

Hopkinson's views received the concurrence of John Peter Grant, the lieutenant governor of Bengal.²⁶ When the Abors had crossed the Brahmaputra and massacred the people within fifteen miles from the principal military station in Assam, he brought home to the Government of India, two courses were left open to the government—either to abandon that part of the province or to afford it effective protection. He was well aware that the first alternative would be unacceptable in view of increasing importance of the tea-plantation on the north bank of Brahmaputra; but the latter would also be impracticable without augmentation of military force in Upper Assam. In fact civil and military officers in Assam had repeatedly pointed out that the military force hitherto allotted to Assam was entirely inadequate.† Unless an adequate force was sanctioned for the province Grant considered it useless to discuss the question of protecting Upper Assam.²⁷

In the Naga hills, British troops were withdrawn from Dimapur in January 1850. For the protection of the frontier the military guard at Golaghat was strengthened and the outposts at Mohungdijua, Barpathar and Jamuguri were linked up with one another.²⁸ The

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Lushington to the Secretary Government of India, 25 January 1862.

* See Chapter viii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ BJP, 6 March 1856, No. 227, 20 September 1855, Nos. 187 and 193, 20 November 1855, Nos. 182-5; 27 August 1857, No. 167.

Angamis were left beyond the pale of the jurisdiction of the officer in charge N.C. Hills whose headquarters was then moved to Assalo from Goomigojo.²⁹ When the line of actual control was thus “contracted”, the Nagas gradually advanced or roamed about the deserted areas with the notion that they had succeeded in driving the British troops.³⁰ Inducement was given to warlike Kukis by rent-free grants to occupy the no-man’s lands, but failed to produce the desired result. A proposal was also made to organise village communities to defend themselves from the attacks of the Nagas by furnishing them with muskets and ammunitions; the Kacharis, the Mikirs and the Aroong Nagas, invariably the victims of aggressions, were too unwarlike to make the scheme a success. Already thirty seven Naga youths were enlisted in Nowgong Police with the ultimate object of having a militia of their own for the protection of the frontier. Military discipline proved so irksome and galling to the freedom-loving Nagas that within a period of four years the number dwindled to eight and the experiment thus came to an end.³¹

Matters soon drifted from bad to worse. North Cachar was subjected to frequent incursions of the Nagas which the local authorities were “powerless to meet or to punish”. During 1854-56 seventy five British subjects were killed, thirteen wounded and carried off into captivity when there existed a chain of outposts connected by roads and patrols.³² In utter disgust Hopkinson proposed to withdraw altogether from North Cachar; for “there is no advantageous middle course between their thorough occupation or having nothing to do with them.”³³

British policy towards the Eastern Nagas continued to be one of “active control” and “vigorous intervention”. For effective protection of the South East Frontier, the Lakhimpur Militia was raised in

²⁹ BJP, 15 May 1856, Nos. 188-9.

³⁰ BJP, September 1862, Nos. 226-7; Masters to Scone 28 June.

³¹ BJP, 17 September 1856; Nos. 265-8; 26 April 1855, No. 216; 31 May, No. 273; 31 October, No. 50; 14 April 1959, No. 45.

³² FPA, June 1866, Nos. 37-9; Hopkinson 4 November 1865.

³³ BJP, July 1861, Nos. 162-3; Hopkinson 14 May.

1847 to 160 sepoys by reducing the strength of *Assam Militia* then consisted of a number of old, decrepit opium addicts. In 1852, this militia was replaced by well-armed *Sibsagar Militia* of 100 men to guard the Naga frontier and to relieve the local corps from civil duties.³⁴ Following his predecessor in 1854 Captain Holroyd, principal assistant *Sibsagar*, amicably settled a longstanding dispute between the *Namsangia* and *Borduaria* Nagas over their claims on some villages.³⁵ He adjusted in the same year disputes between the chiefs of *Changnoi* and *Jabaka* Nagas and the *Changnoi* and the *Motone Rajas*.³⁶ However, on the renewal of hostilities between the *Borduarias* and *Namsangias* in early 1856 Holroyd was advised by the Government of Bengal not to meddle in their affairs on the ground that the decided policy of the government was non-intervention towards the tribes beyond the frontier.³⁷

Dependent as they were on the supplies of the plains the stoppage of commercial intercourse, occasionally, compelled the Nagas to come to terms. In early 1852, for murder of four Assamese subjects on the *Dhodar Ali*, south of the district of *Sibsagar*, the closure of the *Jabaka duar* made the *Banferas* to bring the perpetrators to book.³⁸ Again in 1861, the interdiction of trade hastened the Nagas of *Tablung*, *Jaktung*, *Kamsang* and *Namsang* to compel the *Nangta* clan to deliver up the murderer of an Assamese ryot in the *Geleki duar*.³⁹ The powerful *Lhotas* on the otherhand could not be similarly coerced when in April 1852 they committed several acts of aggression on the *Rengmas* and the Assamese subjects.⁴⁰ In March 1862, three outrages were committed within the course of twenty

³⁴ FC. 4 September 1847, Nos. 32-3; 4 June 1852, Nos. 98-9; Holroyd to Jenkins 20 April.

³⁵ BJP, 6 April 1854, Nos. 181-4.

³⁶ BJP, 29 April 1854, No. 699.

³⁷ BJP, 15 May 1856, Nos. 179-81.

³⁸ BJP, 8 April 1852, No. 162.

³⁹ BJP, September 1862: Nos. 223-5, Hopkinson 15 February.

⁴⁰ BJP, 20 January 1853, Nos. 120-1; Jenkins 19 April 1852.

The *Lhotas* were reported to have brought down to the plains annually 12,000 maunds of cotton and had exclusive right of fishing in the *Doyang* river to a distance of thirty miles below their hills. As a punishment to their outrages, they were strictly prohibited from fishing in the river and entering into the plains, but to no purpose.

four days all within the rifle range of the police guard at Barpathar.⁴¹ The interdiction placed upon their intercourse with the Assamese people..... has entirely failed” reported Major Agnew, the officiating agent, in his letter to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal on 28 June 1862.⁴² “Year after year” he continued, “the Nagas come down and butcher at pleasure our ryots in their very homesteads, retreating in most instances unmolested to their hills.” This must be stopped in any case in the interest of the tea plantation which existed in the direction of the Nagas. Agnew considered it absolutely necessary to establish direct intercourse with these tribes through an officer stationed in the hills; “I would let the Nagas know that our earnest desire and only object was to cultivate more friendly relations with them.”⁴³

It was obvious to Sir Cecil Beadon, the new lieutenant governor of Bengal (1862-71), that at no distant future European tea-planters would extend their operations in the direction of the Naga hills which abounded with finest tea-seeds and wherein already existed several gardens. Moreover the Nagas were not averse rather they might welcome Europeans in their neighbourhood. He agreed forthwith with the recommendation made by the officiating Agent that an officer should be placed under orders of the Principal Assistant Nowgong at Dimapur or any other convenient location.⁴⁴ He should invite the chiefs and impress them after a feast that he was their friend and adviser. He was to devise a rough scheme of administration whereby it would be their interest to prevent their people from making raids and to refer all disputes to him. Every chief should be placed in charge of villages which acknowledged his authority and made responsible for any outrage committed. He might be authorised at times to receive trifling offerings in acknowledgment of allegiance and to give in return presents as were acceptable to these people. He should also be authorised to decide disputes voluntarily submitted by them to his judgment, but not to interfere in their internal affairs.⁴⁵

⁴¹ BJP, September 1862, Nos. 226-8; Masters to Scone 6 April 1862.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Agnew to the officiating Secretary Government of Bengal, 28 June.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, officiating Secretary Government of Bengal 23 September.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Evidently, Beadon wanted to extend British influence over the Nagas "by degrees" with the ultimate object of bringing them under effective control of the government. Such a policy did not find favour with Colonel J.C. Haughton who had in the meantime succeeded Agnew as the Agent to the Governor-General. To the latter the proposed officer in the hills would serve little purpose; for if he obtained confidence of those adjoining him, it would be of little advantage since they would be harassed by their more powerful neighbours beyond or the government must protect them as well. He was convinced that no compromise was possible with these warlike tribes short of extending British sovereignty over all the Nagas as far as the frontier of Burma and Manipur.⁴⁶ "I do not propose". He explained,

that the independent Naga Tribes should be forthwith conquered, taxed and brought in subjection to our laws and revenue system; but we should avow sovereignty over them, protect them from outward aggression..... subjecting them to such rule and taxation as they are able to bear.⁴⁷

To begin with, Haughton proposed in January 1864 that an officer should be placed over these hills declaring sovereignty over all the Nagas and calling for their chiefs and clans to submit to the authority of the government. They were to obey orders and pay a nominal tribute to the government. Further they were to undertake not to wage war with their neighbours and to refer their disputes to the officer in charge for arbitration. Communities refusing to submit should be distinctly told that they would be left to themselves so long as they remained in peace with the government and those submitted to its protection.⁴⁸ The conflicting propositions made by the local authorities and the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal left the policy towards the Nagas unaltered.

Since 1857, official reports of the Government of Bengal reveal that the Bhutias had committed several acts of aggressions in which forty five persons had been carried off; of whom twenty seven had been released and the rest detained in captivity.⁴⁹ Jenkins brought

⁴⁶ BJP, January 1866, Nos. 96-7; Haughton 4 January 1864.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Eden, A., *Political Mission to Bhutan*, 20 July 1864; also FPA June 1864, No. 126; see *Relations with Bhootan*.

home to the Government of Bengal that the higher authorities in Bhutan in all probability might be well disposed towards the British, but they had no effective control over their subordinate officers. "Nothing I fear", he added "[will] induce the Bhutia authorities to give up the unfortunate [victims] now detained in captivity and the restitution of the value of the property which has from time to time been plundered from the border villages except by the actual occupation of one or more of the Doars."⁵⁰ Grant was reluctant to take such an extreme measure which he thought to be kept as the last expedient. The Agent's views on the other hand received the concurrence of the Governor-General in Council, and they felt that the time had arrived when the instructions of 14 April 1857 should be acted upon. Grant was accordingly advised on 10 June 1859 to take possession of Ambari-Falakata and to communicate to the Government of Bhutan the circumstances which led to the adoption of this measure and demanding not only the restoration of the captives, but the punishment of the guilty, failing which the territory would be annexed to the British dominion.⁵¹

In carrying out these instructions Jenkins went a step further. Not only did he advise the local officers to have "the absolute and permanent possession of the tract" but threatened the Bhutias with seizure of additional territories in case the demands of the government were not complied with. "By the occupation of the Doars," the Agent explained :

We should completely provide against any disturbance occurring on the frontiers of Rungpore, Cooch Behar and Gawalpara; and though the Doars themselves might occasionally be subject to alarm, yet all our districts would be unaffected by the frequent violence and large tracts as now left uncultivated and uninhabited from fear of Bootia incursions would be reclaimed on being freed from all apprehensions of hostile attacks.⁵²

There is every reason to believe, as suggested by a recent writer, that stories of outrages had been "exaggerated" and for these

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² FPA, June 1864, No. 126, *op. cit.*

the Bhutias were not solely responsible.* There were cases of non-payment of dues to the Bhutia authorities by the elephant catchers and subjects of the British and Cooch Behar governments. Arun Singh, for instance, being allowed to settle in British territory evaded the payment of his just dues for the zamindari which he continued to hold in Bhutan.⁵³ "The complaints against Cooch Behar people", Agnew reported, "were not devoid of foundation and many of the Bhutia outrages reported from that quarter are merely retaliation of aggression on the part of their neighbour."⁵⁴ The Agent was informed by the Deb :

The wicked and evil disposed persons of your territory enter into mine and commit serious depredations. I had written to you to apprehend and send them to me whether they be Bhuteah or not or else enquire into their cases yourself.⁵⁵

The refusal of the British government to the extradition of criminals and their reluctance to make over Bhutia settlers in Sikkim were additional grounds of friction between the two governments.

In any case the Government of India was placed in an embarrassing situation. It had no other alternative but to connive at what was done and Jenkins was mildly warned that the government was not committed to the line of "retributive coercion" to seize other's lands.⁵⁶ Contrary to his expectations, the proceedings of the Agent resulted in increase in the number of outrages in the next two years in the territory of the British government as well as those of the

* See Gupta, S., *British Relations with Bhutan* Pp. 144 ff. Analysing the causes Gupta writes : "The failure of the British Government to define and demarcate and guard the boundaries..... their unwillingness to observe reciprocity in extradition of criminals and their failure to prevent British subjects from attacking Bhutan were bound to lead to perpetration of outrages."

⁵³ FC, 23 January 1857, Nos. 10-3; also 27 June 1856, No. 15-7 K.W. The Deb Raja wrote in defence of his seizure of Arun Singh : "He was for many years a *zamindar* of Bhootan and not a subject of your territory. It was to enquire into his case he was seized..... He is all along a servant of mine and you say there will be a quarrel if he is not sent back. I have not done injury to any of your subject." Deb Raja to the Agent 11 *Kartick*.

⁵⁴ FPA, January 1863, Nos. 146-54, *see* K.W.

⁵⁵ FC, 23 June 1857, Nos. 10-3; *see* Deb Raja to the Agent 28 *Aswin*.

⁵⁶ FPA, Part A, June 1860, Nos. 170-1; *see* Minute by the Governor-General.

Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, and the Bhutias were reported to have attempted to procure through the superintendent of Darjeeling and envoy to Sikkim the payment of the rent of Falakata.⁵⁷ Hopkinson was convinced that no satisfaction of demands would be possible from the Deb Raja inasmuch as

It is in the power of the frontier officers not only to intercept any communication which might be addressed to the Deb Raja complaining of their conduct but so to misrepresent the circumstances that had actually occurred as to make that appears an aggression against their government which was really an injury to ours.⁵⁸

Hopkinson, therefore, proposed that the government should act with respect to the Bengal Duars in the same manner as Assam Duars and failing which he suggested that a mission should be sent to Bhutan. Beadon also agreed that "some course of action of a decided character" must be taken.⁵⁹ Of the two alternatives the Lieutenant Governor recommended the second one, that of deputing a mission and locating a permanent agent at the Court of Bhutan. The proposal received the approval of Lord Canning who considered it "very expedient" that a mission should be sent to Bhutan "to explain what our demands are and what we shall do if they are not conceded".⁶⁰ Prior to it a messenger was despatched in July 1862 to the Deb and the Dharma Rajas to inform them of the intention of the government to depute an envoy and enquiring of the route by which the latter should proceed to Bhutan.⁶¹

On his arrival at Tassisudon in September 1862 Makunda Singh, the messenger, was accorded a warm reception by the Deb Raja; for he was equally eager to arrive at a settlement in matters

⁵⁷ FPA, January 1862, Nos. 132-7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Durpen Raja, a Bhutia chief, who was sent by the Deb Raja for collection of rent of the Assam Duars informed the Agent : "There were a great many Dooars, and a great many kind of people in them who made mischief in them and that the Deb Raja really did not know what went on in the Dooars. What goes on in the Dooars is concealed from the Deb Raja." FPA, March 1862, Nos. 10-4; also Rennie : *Bhootan and the Story of the Dooar War*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ FPA, August 1863, Nos. 13-4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, also June 1864, No. 126 see *Relations with Bhootan*.

relating to the revenues of Falakata.⁶² In a message to the Agent the Deb wrote :

You have constantly written to us that the Bhooteahs of our Dowars have committed aggressions..... we have sent *zinkaffs* to the soobhas of the different Dowars to investigate the matter; but from their replies it appears that their people do not commit any acts of aggressions or rebellion. I have often asked you in reply to your letters..... to send us a list containing the names of the offenders and whose jurisdiction they reside, but you have not given us any. You only say the Bhooteahs commit aggressions. It is impossible to investigate the matters without the names of offenders.⁶³

To adjust the existing disputes the Deb assured the Agent to depute a *zinkaff* when the season would permit. He even expressed his willingness to receive the Agent to have a dialogue somewhere in Assam Duars, but he was reluctant to receive an envoy since the Dharma Raja was opposed to it.⁶⁴ In spite of it Beadon pressed for early despatch of the mission, but the Viceroy wanted to wait till the arrival of the Bhutia messenger who would communicate the wishes of his masters; all the more because he learnt that "faults by no means lay on one side".⁶⁵

Nothing was heard of the proposed deputation of *zinkaffs* until March 1863. The Governor-General in Council, therefore, resolved on 11 August to despatch the Mission to Bhutan towards the close of the same year under Ashley Eden, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal.⁶⁶ Colonel H.M. Durand, the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, advised Eden to explain the Deb and Dharma Rajas the circumstances which made it necessary for the British to occupy Ambari-Falakata and to withhold its revenue. That the government had no desire of occupying that territory longer than necessary to demand the surrender of the captives and restoration of properties of its subject and those of the Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar. He was to collect from the Bhutan government details of acts

⁶² FPA, January 1863, Nos. 146-54.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, see translation of a letter from the Deb Raja of Bhootan to the Agent to the Governor-General.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ FPA, June 1864, No. 126, op. cit.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, August 1863, Nos. 96-102.

of aggression alleged to have been committed by British subjects and inhabitants of Cooch Behar and to enquire into those acts to give such redress as the circumstances might call for. He was also to make necessary arrangement for the extradition of criminals by the British and the Bhutan government who might hereafter be guilty of crimes within the territories of either governments. Finally he was to endeavour to secure commercial intercourse between the subjects of the two governments and protection of merchants and travellers. The Deb and the Dharma Rajas were also informed of the intention of the Government of India to send a mission requesting them to depute a *zinkaff* to escort them to the court.⁶⁷

In early November 1863 Eden left for Darjeeling on way to Bhutan. No reply reached him from the authorities in Bhutan since a revolution to overthrow the Deb then occurred headed by the Tongso Pilo. He was also advised by the subha of Dalimkote not to proceed further until a reply was received from Punakha. The Envoy laid before the government the difficulties to be encountered in the progress of the Mission. But he considered these to be not serious enough since the revolution was already over and successful.⁶⁸ His views received the concurrence of Lord Elgin who believe that to strengthen his position the new Deb would likely to be friendly to the British.⁶⁹ Therefore the Mission left Darjeeling and on its way it was subjected to most "insolent treatment". At Paro, Rennie writes :

The Penlow's soldiers crowded round the camp, stolen whatever was within their reach, jeered the coolies and followers, called them slaves, and drew their knives upon them, on their making any attempt at reply. The mission servants were fined for going about with their heads covered and attempts were made to make Mr. Eden and higher officers dismount from their ponies on reaching the residence of the police officer of the place.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, October 1863, Nos. 28-30.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, January, Nos. 82-6; June Nos. 122-3; Eden to Durand 21 April.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Rennie, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

The author was in medical charge of the 80th Regiment which formed the reserve of the Left Brigade of the Duar Field Force and served with it till the end of the operation. He was favourably situated for obtaining information as to the illfated mission as well as of the subsequent operations against Bhutan.

On 13 March 1864, the Envoy reached Punakha and found therein the Deb and the Dharma Rajas mere puppets in the hands of the Tongso Pilo who had in the meantime successfully effected the revolution.⁷¹ Negotiations commenced at the *darbar* over the draft treaty which Eden brought with him and which Tongso Pilo refused to accept except on his own terms. The latter called out : "I want nothing but Assam Dooars and if don't get them, it is better to have a war than a treaty". The Envoy's explanation—that he was not authorised to reopen an issue which was already closed and for which compensation had duly been paid—made the Pilo furious. Crumpling up the document he exclaimed, "Then we will have war, you are nobody, you have no authority from the Governor-General..... I will have nothing more to do with you".⁷² Later the Mission was subjected to all sorts of insults and indignities. It was "buffeted, spat upon and threatened with imprisonment."* Eden was permitted to return on his signing an agreement to the effect that the British government "would readjust the whole boundary between the two countries, restore Assam Doors, deliver up all runaway slaves and political offenders who had taken refuge in British territory".⁷³

The mission under Eden thus ended miserably. Official circles attributed this failure partly to envoy's indiscretion in not observing certain formalities prior to his negotiations and partly to his delivery of a copy of the draft treaty thereby "showing his whole hand", although several of its clauses were alternatives which he was not to press in case they interfered with the primary objective.⁷⁴ There is hardly any evidence to show that the authorities in Bhutan ever raised these points in discussion. Under existing circumstances the Mission was bound to fail : it was too much to expect of the Deb, a

⁷¹ *Op. cit.*

⁷² FPA, June 1861, Nos. 121-31; Eden to Durand 21 April.

* Rennie writes : Tongso Pilo "took up a large piece of wet dough, rubbed Mr Eden's face with it, pulled his hair, slapped him on the back and committed other acts of very great insolence..... The Angdu Forung Jungpen surpassed Tongso Pilo by taking some *pawn* leaf, which he had chewed from his mouth, and requesting Dr Simson (who accompanied as a medical officer) to eat it, throwing it angrily in his face in his refusing to do so....." Rennie, *op.cit.* pp. 124-5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Aitchison C.U. 19 May.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

purpet in the hands of the Tongso Pilo, that he would dare to enter into an agreement much against the wish and interests of a chief who then exercised unlimited authority over the affairs of Bhutan.

Eden was censured by the Governor-General in Council for his advance beyond Paro when the Bhutias were not prepared to receive him at the capital.⁷⁵ In the opinion of Charles Wood, the secretary of State, "it would have been sound discretion on his part either to have withdrawn the mission at once (and) to have halted it at Paro and sent an express soliciting further instructions....."⁷⁶ Not the envoy alone but the Government of India was equally responsible for the failure of the mission. The latter "did not think the state of affairs unfavourable to a successful issue" and "saw no reason why the advance of the Mission should be postponed" in spite of the difficulties attending its progress as pointed out by Eden in his communications from Darjeeling and Dalimkote.⁷⁷ "Eden's position became one of undoubted difficulty and embarrassment and certainly not favourable to independent action."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ FPA, September 1864, Nos. 37-40.

⁷⁶ PP. (House of Commons) vol. 39, Political Letter to the Governor-General, 18 July 1864, No. 39.

⁷⁷ *Op. cit.* Eden to Durand 25 July.

⁷⁸ Rennie, *op. cit.*, P. 150.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jayantia Rebellion

While the authorities in Calcutta adhered strictly to the policy of non-intervention in relation to the Garos and the Nagas, the general tendency towards the minor States in the Khasi-Jaintia hills was one of gradual but effective control. The reasons were not far to seek. These hills formed an integral part of Assam. Through these ran the main lines of communication of troops and commerce between Sylhet and the valley of the Brahmaputra. Besides salubrious climate, the hills possessed immense potentialities; their timber, coal and limestone had already attracted European settlers and it was estimated that in 1859 the volume of the export trade alone amounted to seven lakhs.

The Khasi States, twenty-five in number, were broadly divided into two categories. The chiefs of the semi-independent States—Cherra, Khyrem, Nustong, Lungree and Nuspoong—had neither been coerced nor were required to enter into any agreement. As in case of protected States, “they were bound to administer public affairs in accordance with the ancient and established uses of the districts, to keep their people quiet and contented and to obey without demur, all the mandates of the British Government”. The dependent or minor States, majority of them, on account of their uprisings in 1829-31, had been conquered by British troops, but their territories were restored to them after cessation of hostilities.¹ Succession to chieftainships, which was generally hereditary, had to be confirmed by the Political Agent, Khasi Hills; while a disputed succession was decided on by the majority of vote of the people of the State concerned.* To tighten the grip over the semi-independent States,

¹ For details see Allen, W.J., *Report on the Administration of the Cosseah and Jynteah Hill Territory*, 1858; Mills, A.J., *Report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills*.

* A Khasi chieftain is, ordinarily, succeeded by his brother; failing which his eldest sister's eldest son subject to the approval of the assembly of the people.

W.J.Allen, member Board of Revenue, in his report *on the Administration of the Cosseya and Jynteah Territory* in 1858 made a number of recommendations and these received, with slight modifications, the approval of the government. Accordingly, all succession to chieftainship in future should be reported to and sanctioned by the government. Each chief on succession should receive in return for a *nazzur a khilat* from the government, and that he should also execute an *ikrarnamah* promising to govern the State in conformity with ancient usages, to reside in his territory and to obey the orders that may be issued from time to time by the government.² Successions to in the minor States were to be reported to the Agent to the Governor-General who was authorised to grant *sunnuds* to the chief, the *sardars* and the elders. This formal investiture, it was expected, would render the chiefs more loyal and careful in the exercise of the delegated functions of the paramount authority.

The semi-independent States were to exercise, subject to the mandates of the government, civil and criminal justice within their respective jurisdictions. The chiefs and sardars of the dependent States were also to investigate into the civil and criminal offences except those of murder and homicide. In fact, no Khasi State was authorised since British occupation of the hills to try cases requiring sentences of death.³ For the trial of capital cases, Allen suggested a tribunal consisting of the Principal Assistant and the chief in whose territory the offence was committed. They were to be authorised to pass sentences of imprisonment not exceeding fourteen years and to refer all other cases requiring heavier punishment for final orders of the government. An appeal against the final sentences of the Principal Assistant and the chief should be made to the Agent to the Governor-General who should pass final orders or refer the case to the government.⁴ The proposal received approval of the Government of Bengal for it was felt that there would be no objection to it from the states concerned. Nonetheless, it was considered expedient to implement this measure at the time of new succession when the sanction of the government would be obligatory.⁵ The Lieutenant

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ AS File C.O., 339; Young to Allen 28 March 1859, No. 593.

Governor concurred also with the view of Allen that in return for protecting the States from the aggression of their neighbours and ensuring security of life and property, the government had every right to demand from them revenue and tribute whenever it considered it expedient to so. Likewise the Government of Bengal sought to prevent the chiefs and sardars from making grant of lands to Europeans and other foreigners without the knowledge and approval of the government.⁶

Evidently, in regard to the Khasi States the authorities in Calcutta realised that innovations need be carried out under proper climate and with caution without causing irritation and resentment among the hillmen. It was however otherwise in relation to the neighbouring territory namely the Jayantia. On the alleged guilt of Rajendra Singh for the murder of two British subjects, it may be remembered, this territory was annexed to the British dominion in March 1835.* Since then, subject to the nominal authority of the Political Agent, Cherra, the *dolois* or the heads of villages, heard all civil cases and criminal offences not of heinous character in their respective jurisdictions.† They were aided in their duties by the *sangots*, *bashans* and *majhees*. Allegations were made occasionally of "lawless proceedings" and "corrupt practices" of *dolois* who were reported to have managed for themselves all the crown or *raj* lands.⁷ To curb the growing power of the *dolois*, in 1850 the office was made a triennial one in place of life, as it was formerly. Further on

⁶ *Ibid.*

* For detailed study see Barpujari, H.K., *Problem of the Hill Tribes, North-East Frontier*, i, Pp. 88 ff.

The territory was placed after its annexation under Major F.G. Lister, the political agent Khasi Hills. On his retirement in 1854 it was re-transferred to the charge of the Agent to the Governor-General North-East Frontier and under his supervision C.K. Hudson and later Major E.A. Rowlatt discharged the duties of a Deputy Commissioner of the district.

† Of the nineteen *elakas* or minor States into which this hilltract was divided, fifteen were under the *dolois* elected by the people and four being managed by hereditary *sardars*.

⁷ BJP, October 1862, No. 98; Morton 9 July. Endorsing the views of Allen, Morton remarks : "On the Hills first becoming British territory, the only alteration made in the position of the inhabitants appears to have been relinquishment of the cultivation of the *Raj* lands which were accordingly taken possession of by the *Dolloys*".

the recommendation of A.J.M. Mills who had been deputed to this district in 1854 to enquire into the judicial anomalies, a military guard was established at Jowai. The Syntengs, as the Jayantias were called, though contributed as in former times a he-goat a village annually to the government, they were totally exempted from taxation. This was considered objectionable by Mills who opined : "In the neighbouring hill tracts a house tax was paid and we are acting unwisely and inquitably in exempting Jayanteah." Sharing this view Allen in his report advocated a moderate house-tax.⁸

The local authorities were well aware that any measure of taxation would be unpalatable to the people; yet to make the authority of the paramount power real, a house-tax was introduced in 1860. It was vehemently opposed; Solomon, the *tahsildar*, was expelled and an outbreak followed. The timely arrival of a regiment under Colonel Richardson, commanding at Cherra, brought the situation under control. To strengthen security measures the civil officers were empowered to dismiss the *dolois* for misconduct and the policemen at Jowai were authorised to take cognizance of complaints brought against the heads of villages. The introduction of income-tax in early next year confirmed the belief of the hillmen that the English were determined to stay and fleece them. On 17 January 1862 the Syntengs numbering about six hundred made a surprise attack on the military guard at Jowai, burnt down the Christian settlement and thereafter retired and stockaded their villages in the neighbourhood.⁹

The time was highly inopportune. Following the recommendations of the Peel Commission, the strength of the 44th Native Infantry had in the meantime been considerably reduced; and what remained of the regiment was then scattered in a number of outlying detachments.¹⁰ On 25 January, accompanied by a body of troops, E.A. Rowlatt, the deputy commissioner Khasi and Jayantia Hills, marched against the insurgents; but the latter dispersed without

⁸ *Ibid.*, also Allen *op. cit.*

⁹ *Selection of Records Government of Bengal*, xvii, Rowlatt to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 9 April 1862; Showers to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 15 April; Haughton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 3 July 1863.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Richardson to Deputy Adjutant General 21 January 1862.

offering any resistance. The villages of Jowai, Amwai and Nunteng were occupied, stockades were demolished and granaries destroyed. A few villages on the west came in; but those in the east, "the leaders of the insurrection" remained as violent as ever.¹¹ Considering the situation rather serious, on 28 March, in supersession of the authority of the Commissioner of Assam, the Government of India placed Brigadier-General G.D. Showers of the Eastern Command in exclusive Civil and Military Administration of these hills.¹²

Tracing the causes of the outbreak, J.C. Haughton, the officiating agent, later remarked : "Taxation was introduced without supervision..... It followed up by fresh taxation, and rumours of other taxes..... which tender to disturb the minds of the people....."¹³ Haughton believed that people in general could pay the tax since the incidence of taxation was not very high. He, of course, admitted that introduction of such a tax on a people who could furnish no accurate account of their income was unwise and inexpedient; "the tax practically became one on property and not on income and it was exacted from many who should have been exempted in the spirit of the section 130 of the Income-tax Act." Not only rumours of increased taxation were current, but "imposts of one sort or another were in fact appearing like mushrooms."¹⁴ Judicial stamps were introduced in 1860, and this was followed by taxation on fisheries which was hitherto free from assessment. In the same year the right to cut timber in certain areas was sold out to the highest bidder putting a stop thereby to the privileges of the villagers of cutting timber, fuel, thatch etc. which they enjoyed so long.¹⁵ The total amount realised from all these sources was trivial, but introduction of too many taxes so closely one after another could not but produce irritation and resentment in a people who had never been subjected to such taxation.

"It appears doubtful", Brigadier Showers remarks, "whether the feelings of the people would have broken out into open violence

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Dunsford to Showers, 15 March 1862.

¹² *Ibid.*, Grey to Lushington, 28 March 1862.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Haughton to Eden, 3 July 1863.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

unless they had been aggravated by acts of local authorities".¹⁶ Allegations of venality, oppression and corruption on the part of the officials at Cherra Court, to which these hillmen had resort to, were common. "With few exceptions, they (Syntengs) did not know a word of the court language and all, as ignorant of laws, entirely dependent on and at the mercy of the native officials who did not hesitate to grow rich at their expense".¹⁷ The people used to say, "we can do nothing, every case is lost unless we give bribes".* However conscientious and zealous the Deputy Commissioner might be, in the midst of his multifarious duties he could hardly afford to give personal attention to which these hillmen were accustomed hitherto. Rowlatt was so much preoccupied in the supervision of Shillong-Gauhati road, which was then under construction, that he had little time to devote himself to the redress of people's grievances.[†]

The Deputy Commissioner, on the otherhand, carried out several unpopular measures which aggravated the situation. In 1860, soon after the outbreak, he partially disarmed the people by confiscating their swords and shields. To these heirlooms the Syntengs attached considerable importance; they required these not only in their *pujas* and ceremonial occasions, but for their protection in a country teeming with wild animals. They were greatly offended when they found that their swords were sold out or broken up and their shields burnt in their very presence.¹⁸ Rowlatt further issued summary orders asking the people of Jowai not to burn their dead on the old site near the military outpost and that any infringement,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Showers to Secretary Government of Bengal, 15 March 1862.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Houghton to Eden, 3 July 1863; see Rev. Jones, T., *A few hints on the origin and causes of the Jyntiah rebellion*.

* Ooden, the *doloi* of Jowai, complained to Allen that in order to ensure his office he had to pay Rs. 350 to the *mukhtear* of Inglis, son-in-law of the Political Agent, a *gold mohur* to Solomon, the interpreter, and rupees fifteen to Rammohan, the treasurer.

† Houghton believed that if the Deputy Commissioner had been at his headquarters throughout or devoted more of his attention to the affairs of Jayantia when he thought it to be in a disturbed state no rebellion would have occurred: *Selection of records, op. cit.*; Houghton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 3 July 1863.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, From official records, it appears, that 588 shields, 457 swords, 14 guns and some spears were confiscated and destroyed.

thereof, would be severely dealt with. In fact the location of the outpost in the heart of the village was obnoxious to the people. They found that a large number of their women had been enticed to run away with the sepoy; they believed that this process would go on increasing so long as the sepoy would be allowed to remain so near to them. No sooner was the military guard erected, than a school came up and the Syntengs were told that they must be Christians and give up their time honoured *pujas* and that parents not sending their children to school and anyone worshipping or divining according to old usages would soon come to grief.¹⁹ The immediate cause of the outbreak was in fact the interference on the part of the *daroga* in a religious ceremony held at Jalong, a few miles off Jowai, towards the close of November 1861. On the report that a large quantity of shields and swords had been collected on the occasion, the officer went up and forced, as was alleged, the people to speak out, an act which was not permissible on such solemn occasions. "Their former grievances of every kind", remarks, T. Jones, the Christian Missionary, "were as heaps of powder in all directions and the *Daroga* there applied the torch to them and set the whole country in ablaze."²⁰

Rowlatt suspected that Indra Singh, the ex-*raja*, had a secret hand in the outbreak. Doubtless the relations between the chief and the English were far from friendly. It was not so much the annexation of his territory as the manner of its implementation that embittered the *ex-raja's* feelings towards the British government. Not only did the Political Agent assume charge of the territory but also seized personal effects of the chief not sparing even his cooking pots.²¹ From his asylum at Sylhet the *raja* poured in representations one after another for a reconsideration of his case and restoration of his

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Jones T., *op. cit.*, Showers to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 15 April 1862.

That the rebels had animosities against the Christians is borne out by the fact that Christian settlements near Jowai were burnt to the ground at the very commencement of the outbreak.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Ookiang Nongbah in course of his trial told the Commission that although income-tax was absurdly distasteful to all and shook their confidence on the government, yet the immediate cause of the revolt was the interference with their religious rites. *BJP*, January 1863, No. 424; Dunsford to Assistant Adjutant-General, 31 December 1862.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Haughton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 3 July 1863.

territory, but these bore little fruit.²² To win goodwill of the British, the chief volunteered his services with a contingent of 2500 on the outbreak of the sepoy in 1857; this was not only rejected but the *ex-rajā* was kept under surveillance lest he might carry on intrigues with anti-British elements.²³ The very fact—that a section of the Syntengs represented in 1862 that if they were to be taxed it should be through their own chief and the outbreak occurred soon after the petition was turned down—proved to some extent the *ex-rajā's* complicity in the outbreak.²⁴

It is however doubtful if the rebels were sincerely desirous of having the *ex-rajā* or his heirs restored; not unoften they affronted the *kuwars* (heirs) and even told them that if they wanted a *rajā* at all it would be of their own choice.²⁵ On the otherhand, the *dolois* and *sardars*, who had hitherto exerted considerable influence in the State, could hardly reconcile themselves to the rule of the English who had deprived them of the power and privilege which they enjoyed from early times. They found their position greatly lowered by the presence of a *daroga* in their midst to whom the aggrieved invariably lodged their complaint.²⁶ The *rajlands*, which they held rent free, it was rumoured, would soon be brought under assessment.²⁷ What was worse, like others, they were now entirely at the mercy of petty officials without whose support they could not expect to hold office even though elected by their own people.²⁸ Without restoration of the old regime, if not of the *ex-rajā*, they felt that there was no future for them. The *dolois* and the *sardars*, thus, took initiative in the movement with the object of driving the hated *dykhai* (foreigners) from the hills. Brisk preparations were made for the year of liberation by collecting arms, erecting stockades, storing up grains and sending emissaries for aid even to Burma.²⁹

²² FC, 1 August 1838, No. 110; 27 September 1841, No. 118.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13 November 1857, Nos. 138-142; see *Rajā of Jayanti to the Secretary Government of Bengal*, 16 September.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, Haughton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 3 July 1863.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Allen, *op. cit.*, paras 244 and 266.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, Haughton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 3 July 1863.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 February 1863.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 July 1863.

On his arrival Showers found the situation extremely disquieting. No doubt the rebels had been dispersed, their stockades destroyed and rendered incapable of making any resistance; but the hard core remained unsubdued and the outbreak had in the meantime extended all over the district. The task was indeed formidable. On the one hand Showers had to carry on operations vigorously against the hostiles, and on the other he was to allay the alarm and inspire confidence among the loyal chieftains with the assurance that the English were not only willing but able to protect them from retaliatory acts of their neighbours. He issued a proclamation granting amnesty to all those who would lay down arms with exception of the ring leaders and those guilty of gross acts of aggressions. A reward of rupees one thousand was offered for the seizure of Ookiang Nongba, the "principal instigator" of the rebellion. Three columns of troops were organised to move through every corner of the district where the rebels were supposed to have removed their families and stores.³⁰ For his "injudicious proceedings" and "ignorance of the feelings of the people" Major Rowlatt, the deputy commissioner, was suspended from his civil duties and removed from the hills.³¹

The prompt and energetic measures, as mentioned above, broke down the morale of the insurgents. The sardars of Shampoong, Galong and Munsow tendered their submission. The inhabitants of Shillong-Muntang and also of Jowai, Latoobar, Lakadong and Nungtalong had returned to their villages and resumed respective occupations.³² Showers was happy to report on 22 May 1862 that active operations were at an end and open opposition of the rebels

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Showers to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 15 April and 22 May 1862.

³¹ BJP, September 1863, Nos. 153-5. It was remarked; "though he knew that the people had threatened to oppose the Income-tax and to rebel again if they were imposed, he neither took any personal part in the assessment nor made any attempt to explain the nature of it to the people or to reconcile them to the noval impost". Above all, he made himself a byword of reproach to the people by the manner in which he disarmed them by burning their shields in their presence and acquiring thereby, the nick name "shield-burner".

³² *Op. cit.*, Showers to the Secretary Government of Bengal. 31 May 1862; see Memorandum for information of Captain Morton 28 May.

had ceased.³³ B.W.D. Morton, who had succeeded Rowlatt as Deputy Commissioner, on the otherhand, after ascertaining the feelings of several villages, brought home to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal that “the spirit of insubordination is not yet subdued”, that no less than two thousand men were still at arms. They showed very little inclination to come in; on the contrary they let no opportunity to slip to ambuscade detachments and travellers when they could do with impunity. The rebels exerted so much influence over their followers that the Deputy Commissioner was sceptical whether the latter would come to terms at all. He, therefore, advocated strong and deterrent measures including destruction of crops and burning of villages.³⁴

Morton’s proposal did not find favour with Cecil Beadon, the lieutenant governor of Bengal. The power of the government had already been sufficiently shown by the military occupation of the hills, by the destruction of their strongholds and properties and by the punishment of the guilty and the innocent. Their continued resistance, Beadon felt, might be actuated by resentment of the past and fear of severe retribution in the event of submission. The Deputy Commissioner was, therefore, advised to spare no pain to induce them to come to terms intimating them that the government was prepared to redress their grievances if genuine and that those who made voluntary submission would receive full pardon; but resistance would be punished with utmost severity. He was further warned not to act in a manner calculated to irritate the people or doubt the bonafides of the government as to drive them to desperation.³⁵

Notwithstanding sustained endeavours that had been made by the local authorities and through the friendly chiefs to induce the rebels to come to terms, the latter continued to defy the government by their determined resistance and repeated acts of aggression.³⁶ Narrating the actual state of affairs, in his letter on 20 September 1862 Morton once again urged the necessity of augmenting military

³³ *Ibid.*, Showers to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 22 May 1862.

³⁴ BJP, October 1862, No. 67 : Morton 19 June.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 71; Gordon to Morton 6 July; No. 80, 31 July.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 115; Morton 20 September.

force for renewing operations.³⁷ The attitude of the Government of Bengal remained unchanged. On the impression that the Deputy Commissioner had taken unnecessarily an unfavourable view of the Syntengs, the Lieutenant Governor expected of him to use all forbearance in dealing with these people and to make all possible exertions to bring them to terms even though they were not disposed to respond so readily. Active operations, it was felt, should not be renewed while negotiations with the rebels were on foot.³⁸

To have harassed and irritated the people by desultory attacks on villages suspected of hostile intentions while at the same time..... inviting [them] to submit by a promise of general amnesty, would only serve to arouse their suspicions : and to exasperate those who were inclined to be peaceful.....³⁹

Morton rightly gauged the situation. Not only did the rebels remain unbending as ever but openly demanded complete independence. In a durbar held in the village Moobokhon attended by about five hundred insurgents, Ookiing Nongba announced in unambiguous terms that there would be no compromise with the English unless they were exempted from taxation, their raja was restored, troops and police were withdrawn from the hills. That they would fight as long as they could and in the event of their being unsuccessful they would abandon the territory.⁴⁰ Considering the situation rather serious Major J.C. Haughton, the officiating Agent, arrived at Jowai on 1 November 1862 and found therein the inhabitants extremely panicky. The station was threatened and lines of communication with Sylhet and Cachar had already been cut off. Without reinforcement he doubted much whether the troops would be able to hold on for long.⁴¹

The prospect of a settlement being extremely remote the Government of Bengal had no alternative but to alter its views and renew the operations. The absence of a considerable number of men of the 44th Native Infantry in detached duties in Cachar and the

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 120; Eden to Morton 9 October.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, Eden to Haughton, 18 November 1862.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Eden to Morton 9 October, see statement of Ramsingh, Raja of Cherra.—Appendix C.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Haughton, camp Oomki, 4 February 1863.

difficulties of moving troops during the rains compelled the troops to be on the defensive. Under direction of Brigadier Showers, the 28th Native Infantry then at Gauhati advanced into the hills and detachments of the 44th Native Infantry in Cachar and Sylhet were also called in. The European Artillery at Dacca was ordered to proceed to Cherrapunji. The operations were to be conducted under the direction of Colonel Dunsford commanding 28th Native Infantry. J.C. Haughton, the officiating agent, was to aid the officer commanding the troops as well as the civil authorities to restore law and order and administrative reorganisation in the district.⁴²

On the night of 7 November 1862 a party of rebels attacked the village Terraghat killing a sepoy and two individuals.⁴³ To intercept the enemy Lieutenant Worsely, the deputy superintendent police, with a detachment hurried to Borpunji. On his arrival he was attacked by the rebels but they were repulsed. The situation altered with the arrival of troops under Dunsford on 12 November when pickets were posted to guard the foothills and to meet the parties in arms and those in concealment for maintaining a desultory warfare.⁴⁴ On 27th, a party under Lieutenant Sadlier of the 28th Native Infantry led by Oollung Sallonga, a resident of Nurtung, effected the capture of Nongba at Oompara, a village 25 miles off Nurtung. He was tried, found guilty of rebellion and was publicly hanged on 30 December 1862. The Synteng offered gallant resistance at the stockades of Oomki, Oomkrong and Nongbarai; but against the volleys of fire of British troops they could do little. The stockades fell one after another within a week with severe losses to both sides.⁴⁵

The service of the auxiliaries then became indispensable to follow up the successes in hunting down the rebels in the hills and fastnesses. Haughton called upon the friendly chiefs of Cherra, Khyrem and Nungklow and all of them readily responded. On the arrival of the contingents, towards the close of January 1863, Worsely accom-

⁴² *Ibid.*, Eden to the Secretary Government of India, 25 November 1862; also to the officiating Commissioner of Assam, 18 November.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Haughton 4 February 1863.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ BJP, January 1863, Nos. 419, 424 and 427; Dunsford to Showers 30 December; Assistant Adjutant General 31 December 1862.

panied by a party of one hundred advanced to the valley of Mungut and Haughton with another contingent to Nongkradam in the neighbourhood of which the rebels were reported to have moved their families.⁴⁶ On 29th Worsely was attacked, but the enemy was beaten back with loss of twelve men and capture of over a hundred; several women and children were drowned in their attempt to cross the river Mungut. This was followed by the surrender of Sathpunji and isolated villages on the north and east of Jowai.⁴⁷ In the meantime Dunsford attacked Nartiang in south-east which hold out relying on its difficult terrain. The village was stormed and several heads of cattle and much grain were captured. Major Thelwall swept over the jungles in the north and compelled the surrender of several leaders then in rebellion.⁴⁸

The people of Jowai, Monsow and Jallong repaired back to their villages. Of the remaining ring leaders, Oosawar, the *doloi* of Satunga, was shot in an encounter with troops while attempting to rally the rebels after defeat at Nartiang. Oochey Rungbah, the military co-adjutor of Nongbah, was killed in an encounter with the inhabitants on Nongbah. Oo Mon, the *doloi* of Rambai, was murdered by his followers near Nartiang. Oo Bang, the *doloi* of Ralliang, surrendered and so also Bukhere, the *pathor*, who tendered his submission on condition his life be spared. A few rebel leaders continued to be at large; but they were too powerless to act against the British troops. "The people have been very severely punished and that all inclination to rebel is at an end"—so ran a communique from Haughton on 23 March 1864.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, Haughton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 4 February 1863.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ BJP, April 1863, No. 457.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 460; Haughton 7 April.

CHAPTER SIX

Forward Policy

The Mission under Ashley Eden though failed in its objectives, convinced the Government of India the guilt of the authorities in Bhutan for acts of aggression on the British territories, The Envoy made it clear that the outrages had been committed at the connivance of the higher authorities and that plundered properties and the kidnapped persons were sent to the *pilos* and their subordinates.¹ “ We saw with our own eyes that Bengalees in large numbers employed as slaves in the residences of the *Penlows* and the *Durbar*, and a British subject who had taken refuge in my camp was actually taken from me by another *Penlow*”.² In his memorandum on 7 May, Eden reported the occurrence of a constant scramble for power between the two *pilos* or viceroys who exercised authority over the greater part of the country; whoever for a time succeeded in securing power removed the Deb placing his own nominee at the head of the government. There had been at the same time struggles of the subordinate officials, namely the *jungpens* and the *zinkaffs* to eject and appoint the *pilos*. Each *pilo* had his own nominee and consequently officers changed too often.” In short there was no government worth the name in Bhutan.³ The Envoy brought home to the Government of India that it would be too much to expect of the authorities in Bhutan to restrain the aggression of its own officers even if they were disposed to do so. To prevent the recurrence of

¹ FPA, June 1864, Nos. 122A-131; see Eden's Memorandum 7 May.

² *Ibid.*

³ “During our visit to Bootan”, Eden reported, “we found two rival *soobhas* to Dalingcote, two *soobhas* of Sangbear, three Paro Penlows, two Tongso Penlows, two Deb Rajas and if we had visited a greater portion of the country we should have found probably that there were two claimants to every office.”

⁴ *Ibid.*

outrages Eden proposed three alternatives-(i) permanent occupation of the whole country; (ii) temporary occupation to be followed by the withdrawal of the occupying force after destruction of military construction; and (iii) permanent occupation of Bengal Duars and the stoppage of revenue of the *duars* in Assam.⁴

Sir Cecil Beadon, the lieutenant governor of Bengal, in his minute on 3 May 1864 also brought home to the Government of India that a counter revolution had already been begun by Paro Pilo to restore the former Deb and to deprive Tongso Pilo and his party of all shares in the government.⁵ The continuance of this internal strife and the insecurity of Tongso Pilo, Beadon felt, might prevent an immediate rupture with Bhutan, but there was every possibility that the Pilo would demand the fulfilment of the terms of the "agreement" and any refusal of these might be followed by raids on British subjects at the frontier.⁶ These arguments reinforced by those of the Envoy convinced Lord Lawrence about the urgency and necessity of adopting measures of coercion against the Government of Bhutan. In a *khureeta* on 9 May 1864, after bringing home to the Bhutia authorities of their past misconduct, the Viceroy repudiated the agreement signed by the Envoy under duress. He was well aware that internal dissension had so much weakened the Deb and Dharma Rajas that they were powerless to act against their insubordinate officials; but the British government could not permit that its subjects should suffer and the aggressors to go unpunished. He declared permanent annexation of Ambari-Falakato and stoppage of payment of its rent and also of the Assam Duars. Further he demanded within a period not exceeding three months liberation of all the captives and restitution of properties plundered during last five year; failing which, he warned, that necessary measures would be taken to enforce the demand.⁷

Contrary to earlier precedents the Dharma Raja made a reply on 23 July. Without making any apology for the indignities shown to the Envoy he threw the entwined responsibility of that incident to his

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, Minute by Cecil Beadon 3 May 1864.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, see *khureeta* by Lord Lawrence 9 June.

subordinates and expressed his willingness to receive a fresh Mission or send one himself.⁸ Intelligence also arrived, as anticipated by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, that Tongso Pilo had actually asserted on the strength of the "agreement" in the name of the Deb and Dharma Rajas the restoration of the Assam Duars and the payment of rupees ten thousand as revenue of these since they were under British occupation.⁹ The Agent was advised to refuse payment of rent forthwith on account of the duars and to cut off all communications with the authorities in Bhutan. The frontier officials were at the same time directed to keep a close watch in the form of an open attack or sudden raid on British territory.¹⁰

The Government of India ruled out altogether the proposal for deputation of another Envoy to the Court of Bhutan after the shabby treatment that had been meted out to the late Mission. Neither was any apology offered nor security given against their repetition. The Governor-General in Council, therefore, resolved upon "administrative and military considerations" to secure effective control of all passes from Dewangiri to Dalimkote. The occupation of these, it was hoped, would bring the Bhutias to reason and prevent thereby having recourse of severe retribution.¹¹

Towards the close of 1864, preparations were made under the direction of Hugh Rose, the Commander-in-chief, to occupy the duars by a military force of considerable strength. The "Duar Field Force" was to consist of four columns. Under Brigadier-General Mulcaster the Right Column was to march from Gauhati to Dewangiri and the Right Centre from Goalpara to take possession of Sidli and

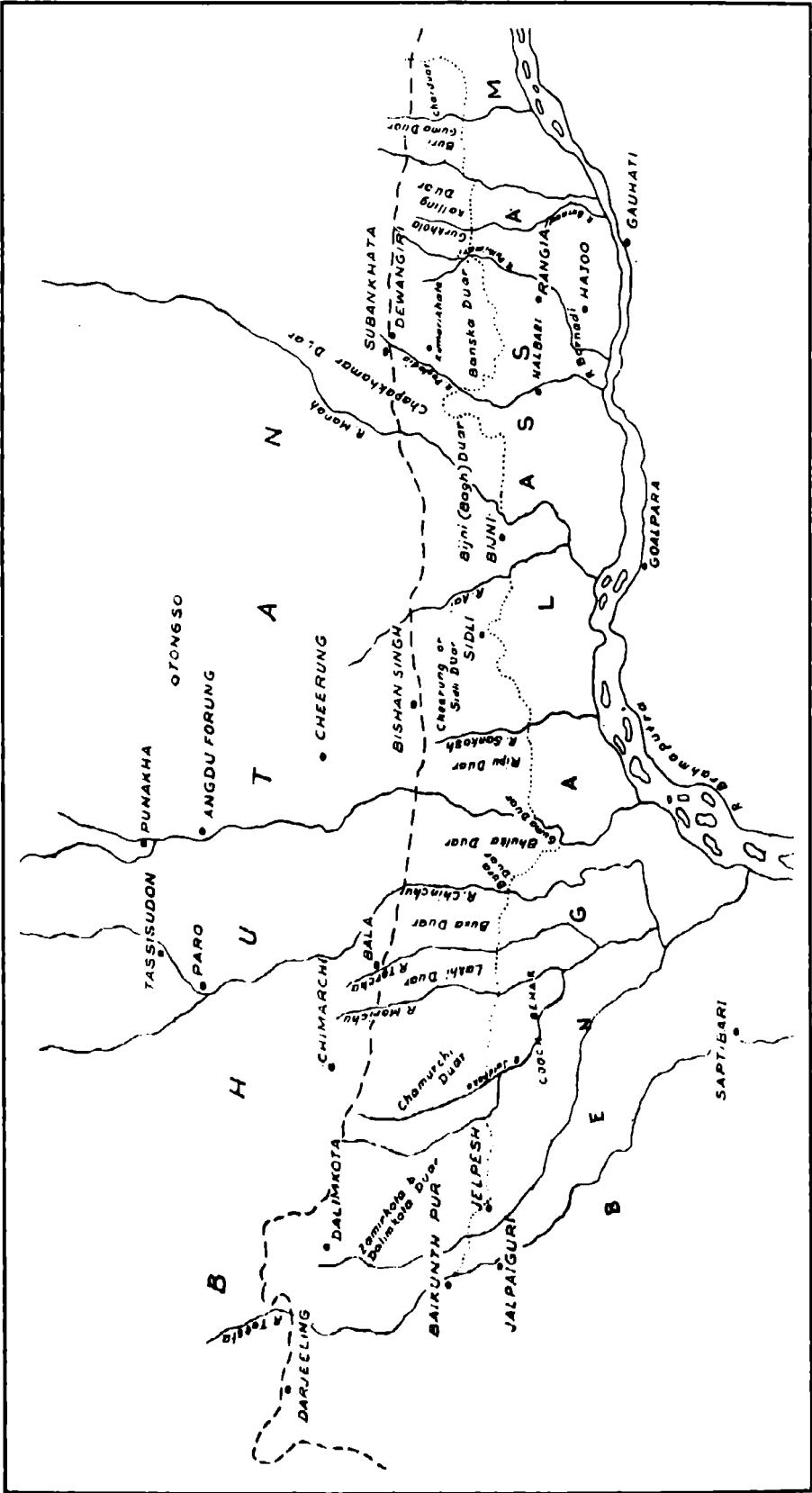
⁸ FPA, September 1864, Nos. 56-8. Vide, Letter from Dhurma Rajah to Governor Bahadur- *Appendix-D*.

⁹ *Ibid.*, September 1864 Nos. 41-4; Minute by Cecil Beadon 22 July.

Eden was also informed by *subha* of Dalimkote, a subordinate officer of Paro Pilo, that in accordance with the agreement the Deb and the Dharma Rajas had issued orders to all *subhas* to act according to its terms and inquired of him whether these orders had been carried out .

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, also June, Nos. 122A-31; Minute by the Lieutenant Governor 3 May.

¹¹ FPA, December 1864, Nos. 1-30; Durand, H.M., Secretary Government of India to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 12 September.



BHUTAN DUARS

Bijni. Left Centre and Left Column under General Dunsford were to advance from Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri towards Buxa and Dalimkote. J. C. Haughton, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, was appointed Political Agent and Chief Civil Officer to occupy the *duars*.¹²

The appeal for aid which the government of Bhutan made to the authorities at Lhasa was turned down ; the latter could hardly afford to incur the enmity of the English at a time when Tibet was in a state of disturbance.¹³ The Bhutias nevertheless fought bravely behind the stockades in their hills, but against the fire arms of the British troops their resistance broke down in the plains. Dalimkote fell in 5 November; this was followed by the capture of Buxa Duar (1 December). Dewangiri (11 December), Bijni(26 December), Sidli (28 December) and Bishan Singh (8 January 1965) in rapid succession. By the end of January the duars and the hill forts passed under the control of British troops.¹⁴

Hardly had arrangements been made for withdrawal of troops and for civil administration of the duars, when intelligence arrived that the Bhutias were making preparations to recover their lost possessions. The British troops were compelled to abandon Tozagong or Balla on 2 February 1865. Already Dewangiri was attacked by a force under Tongso Pilo aided by several chiefs and the garrison therein consisting of 43rd N.I. was so much encircled and hardpressed that Colonel Campbell Commanding the troops had to evacuate it on 4 February abandoning the wounded, the arms and provisions in the hands of the enemy. Bishan Singh fell on 24 February and so Ripu on 11 March.¹⁵ In the counter offensive Tazagong was recaptured on 16 March by General Tytler who had then succeeded General

¹² *Ibid.*, Quarter Master General to the Secretary Government of India, Military Department, 8 September.

¹³ *Ibid.*, December, No. 10A ; Deputy Commissioner Darjeeling 8 September.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, January 1965, No. 68; February, N. 80B; MP, January 1965 No.95; Watson 22 December 1864. For further details see Rennie, *Bhotan an the story of the Dooar war*, Chaps. VIII to XVI.

¹⁵ FPA, February 1865. Nos. 205-7; Haughton 4 February; March, No. 273; Mp, February 1965, No. 487.

Dunsford. By the end of the month the Bhutias were driven out of their stockades at Buxa and Chamurchi. In the meantime Brigadier General Tombs who had superceeded Mulchaster attacked Dewangiri and the fort was retaken on 2 April; but evacuated on 6th as the season was too far advanced to admit of arrangement for its secure occupation. Passes leading to Dewangiri were of course guarded by military force located at Kumarikhata, Koklabari, Silakoli and Rangia. Troops were also posted at Dalimkote, Buxa and Chamurchi.¹⁶

The recapture of the strategic hill forts and the military occupation of the duars, both in Assam and Bengal, left the Bhutias entirely at the mercy of the British government; but the authorities at the Punakha refused to come to terms except on their own- the surrender of the annexed territory.¹⁷ Military occupation of the hill forts, on the otherhand, entailed heavy expenditure both in men and money and it was difficult to foresee how long it might be continued. Lawrence, therefore, resolved on an invasion of Bhutan; "We must either undertake such an expedition or confine ourselves to the present system with the cost of life and money".¹⁸ The Deb. and the Dharma Rajas were told, "unless you come to terms and make amends for misdeeds of your people, I shall enter your country and punish your officers and soldiers."¹⁹ Preparations to that end had actually begun. Being alarmed at these developments the authorities

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, April, No. 152; Deputy Commissioner Cooch Behar 24 March; Mp, March, No. 766; Tytler 17 March; PP (House of Commons), No.52; Political Letter to the Secretary of State, 15 June 1865, No. 65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Vide Letter from the Deb and the Dharma Rajas to the Lieutenant Government Appendix-E

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

"It was originally anticipated" the Governor-General added, "that comparatively small garrisons, some of them of the police, would suffice for the security of the hill forts, but the reverse has been found necessary. A very considerable body of police will also be required to guard the plains while the proportion of troops maintained in reserve is also greater than was anticipated. But the chief drawback arise from the insalubrity of the plains in which a considerable body of troops and police must be retained and the expense which this defensive system entails."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Viceroy to the Deb Raja, 5 Jun 1865.

in Bhutan hastened to make overtures for peace.²⁰ The Viceroy was no less desirous of a settlement upon terms consistent with "honour and interest". In his despatch to Charles Wood, the secretary of State, the Viceroy explained :

Our want of accurate knowledge respecting the interior of Bhutan, the serious difficulties which must certainly attend operations there, the notorious insalubrity of climate, both in the hills and in the plains, by which they are approached and lastly the heavy expenditure that must be entailed by operations all constitute valid reasons for concluding peace²¹

Hence followed the treaty of Sinchula on 18 November 1865, under which the Government of Bhutan surrendered to the British all the duars and the hill tract between the rivers Teesta and Jalghata and release the captives detained in Bhutan. They were further to give up the treaty extorted from the Envoy and to enter arrangements for extradition of criminals and reciprocity of trade. British Government on its part agreed that an annual payment of rupees twenty five thousand rising up to fifty thousand to be made to Bhutan on condition of latter's keeping in peace and preventing its subjects from committing aggressions on British possessions.²²

The annexation of the Bengal Dears cleared the British the road to Lhasa and placed them on "a most advantageous position to deal with any government which may be established or with the chief by whose sanction or connivance the inroads of the plundering hands into the low countries have been encouraged".²³ The territory annexed would yield, it was estimated, a gross revenue of one and a half lakh of rupees with prospects of increasing several-fold in course of a few years.²⁴ It possessed vast tracts of excellent timbers besides immense possibilities of the cultivation of tea and other

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Adjutant General to the Secretary Government of India. Military Department, 26 August; FPA, April 1865, No. 82; Haughton 31 March; May, Nos. 84-6; August, Nos. 137-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Political Letter to the Secretary of the State . 22 November 1865, No. 162.

²² FPA, December 1865, No. 62.

²³ *Op. cit.*, No. 39, Political Letter from the Secretary of State, 18 July 1864, No. 39.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 52; Political Letter to the Secretary of State, 22 November 1865, No. 16.

forest products. "Even if troops had advanced upon Punakha" remarked Lawrence, "we doubt whether terms materially more advantageous than those now imposed would have been dictated to the enemy".²⁵

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, it may be remembered, ruled out military occupation of the Abor country proposed by the local authorities without an increase in the military strength of the frontier. Nevertheless proposals were made and accepted by the government for the construction of a number of roads and fortifications for the protection of the ryots. A strong stockade with accommodation for a European officer was erected at Pabha midway between Lalimukh and Pabhamukh. From Rangdoi Chapari a road was opened up to Rongagora shortening thereby the communication with Dibrugarh. The territory of the hostile Abors had been cut off by another road from Lalimukh to Dimoh through Pabha. The tract between Dimoh and Sisi had been cleared, communication from Dimoh to Dibrugarh was opened and to ensure security on the line from Dibrugarh to Sadiya a stockade was built at the confluence of the rivers Dihong and Dibong.²⁶

The defensive measures never failed to produce the desired results. Bivar reported on 23 December 1862 the arrival at his headquarters' of several Abor representatives including those of the Meyongs with overtures for peace.²⁷ If they were granted amnesty for past offences they assured to behave peacefully in future and would make a offerings from each village of a bison and a brass dish. Suspecting their bonafides Bivar refused to come to terms unless the *gaums* delivered the ring leaders of the atrocity at Bordhun Bhuyan. Cecil Beadon doubted much whether such a demand could be made and under no circumstance, he felt, should it be made a condition of future friendly relations with these tribes; for he was afraid that the outrage might be the work of a few individuals and for which the tribe as a whole or the chief might not be responsible.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ AC, File No. 486; Bivar to Hopkinson 23 February 1861.

²⁷ BJP, December 1862, No. 191; *see* diary of the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur 28 October.

Bivar was advised to adopt such measures as would prevent outrages in future, to secure integrity of the British frontier and establish relations with these tribes on a friendly footing. In the accomplishment of these, he was directed, to enter into written engagement with the chiefs under which the latter would bind themselves and their followers not to cross the frontier for the purpose of attacking British subjects, but to present all grievances, whether against such persons or otherwise, to the Deputy Commissioner for redress and a corresponding guarantee being given that there should be free communication across the frontier for purpose of trade and other friendly intercourse. Subject to these conditions, subsidies might be granted to them to keep a police for the purpose of preventing marauding attacks on the British subjects. By employment of Abors in the police duties and annual meetings between the district officer and chiefs with interchange of presents, the Lieutenant Governor felt that friendly relations with the Abors would be established and maintained.²⁸

Accordingly, Bivar paid a visit to the Abor country towards the close of 1862. At Lalimukh, he was interviewed by several clans of the Meyongs. The latter represented that the raid which they had committed originated from the Beheas having resisted their demands of the *posa* and that the outrage at Bordhun Bhuyan was an act of retaliation for the attack on their village in the former expedition in which their properties had been destroyed and several people killed. If their past offences were overlooked, they added, they would make their submission to the government and would remain in friendly term. The explanation appeared to be satisfactory to the Deputy Commissioner who was required to come to terms at any cost with these tribes so as to preclude the necessity of offensive operations. After much discussion the Meyongs and their followers signed an agreement which was drawn up on the lines laid down by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.²⁹ Later, Bivar met and entered into similar engagements with the Bor Abors and the chiefs of the Meybo, Pado, Sillok and the Bomjur clans.³⁰

²⁸ AC, File No. 686; Lushington to Angnew 26 May 1862, also 8 August 1862.

²⁹ BJP, December 1862, No 195; see diary of the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur

³⁰ *Ibid.*

For the next two years, apparently, relations with the Abors continued to be friendly. In his annual visit the Deputy Commissioner met the *gaums* of different clans who professing loyalty to the British offered presents of *mithan*, chicken etc., receiving in return articles under the agreement. But they could hardly abide by the terms of an agreement which deprived them of their prescriptive rights in the plains.* In the heart of their hearts they considered the restrictions too galling and not unoften they exhibited their temper in making demands far in excess of stipulations. When they were asked on one occasion to produce copies of their agreement, all of them evaded and it was later known that they had eaten these up in a fit of passion and some of them even wanted renewal of hostilities. In utter disgust the Deputy Commissioner remarked :

I despair of any satisfactory dealings with Abors. They will continue year after year to claim more and I do not think [that] they will remain long content with the present arrangement.³¹

In spite of these developments, the Agent was advised by the Lieutenant Governor to be more generous in his dealings with these tribes . In case of good behavior the chiefs should be given in excess of their stipulated allowance of salt, clothes and even money for the object of the government was to bring home to them that- "they will gain more by friendly and neighbourly conduct than by lawlessness".³² A policy of this nature did not find favour with Hopkinson who was convinced that there was hardly any change of heart on the part of these tribes and thus the conciliatory policy followed by the

In fact dispute arose soon after the condence began over the provisions of the agreement particularly as to the limits of the British territory extending up to the foot-hills. Bivar reported that the dealogue was about to break up since the Abors were not prepared to resign their claims over all the lands up to the Brahamputra . From morning till evening much time was taken to induce the chiefs to enter into the agreement. It was buoughty home to them that the whole tract which was then vast wastes would be improved and populous and that markets would be opened up for their advantage. Being convinced of these followed by exchange of presents.

³¹ BJP, May 1865, Nos. 120-1; see Extract of a Journal, Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur .

³² *Ibid.*, Geoghegan to Commissioner 16 May.

government was a total failure.³³ To him the policy of subsidising the Abors or "Black Mail" as he called it, a mere staving off the evil day", certainly not a permanent solution of the problem of defence of the frontier. He was, nevertheless, agreeable to continue it so long as it secured the peace of the frontier; but necessary preparations need be made, he made it clear to the Government of Bengal, for successful operations against these tribes, inasmuch as

gold has never yet prevailed in the long run where there was not iron in reserve to support it and on this frontier an appeal to the sword is a contingency for which we must ever be prepared.³⁴

Even these forceful arguments could not impress Beadon to alter his views mainly because the situation in the Naga frontier continued to cause serious anxiety to the Government of India. Since 1854, there had been as many as nineteen Angami raids in which 232 British subjects were killed, wounded or carried off as captives.³⁵ Lieutenant Gregory, the officer incharge North Cachar Hills, made it clear to the government that unless he was permitted to adopt more vigorous measures than his predecessors, he could not guarantee security of his subdivision.³⁶ The Government of India could no longer remain a silent observer of the scene. It was considered imperative to prevent the recurrence of these outrages and in any case to bring to book the actual perpetrators. Inevitably a reconsideration of the whole issue was called for.³⁷ There were then three alternatives:

We might abandon North Cachar and all the hills inhabited by the Nagas.

We might advance into the hills, place special officers in charge and maintain them there by force of arms.

We might while confining ourselves to the plains cultivate political relations with the neighbouring chiefs into stipendiary police relations to ourselves.³⁸

³³ BJP, June 1865, No. 71, Hopkinson 9 May.

³⁴ *Ibid.*,

³⁵ FPA, June 1866, Nos. 37-9; Hopkinson 4 November 1865.

³⁶ BJP, April, Nos. 129-30 ; Gregory 8 April 1865.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ FPA, July 1869, No. 263; also Mackenzie, A., *History of Relation of the Government etc.* p. 117.

Hopkinson reiterated his earlier proposal-withdrawal from the entire country south of the river Jamuna; he saw “no alternative between absolute conquest and absolute non-interference”.³⁹ Beadon, on the otherhand, wanted to have a trial of the third, as given above, sketched by him in 1862. If this had been carried out “in the spirit in which it was conceived”, he thought, outrages would have ceased altogether.⁴⁰ He was definitely against a policy of withdrawal.

The practical effect of such measure would be that in the course of a few years Assam would be divided amongst the Bhutias, Abors, Nagas, Garrows, Mishmis and other wild tribes; if petty outrages were to be followed by withdrawal of our frontier, we should very speedily find ourselves driven out of the province.⁴¹

Beadon also stood opposed to the policy of interdicting the Nagas from trade; it acted “as a direct check to any desire for friendly intercourse and as a provocation of further hostility”. Such a policy not only “unsound in itself” but “impossible to carry it out” in a country as that of the Angamis. He even advocated the policy of blackmail or subsidising the Nagas as had been done in case of the Garos and the Abors.⁴²

Hopkinson did not mean that the British should recede before the wild tribes when the latter made an attack on the frontier. All that he proposed was “a limited and alternative suggestion” to retire from a particular point namely North Catchar-not a general retreat along the whole line of the frontier. “I hazarded a doubt”, he explained, in his letter of 30 October 1865, “whether it would be less creditable to abandon it than to maintain a mere nominal control which afforded scarcely any protection of life and property within it”.⁴³ Nor was he averse to the payment of subsidies or blackmail in certain cases; but he could not consider it a “universal solvent” of all the difficulties with these tribes.⁴⁴ No subsidy or payment of any kind had ever been made to the Nagas and he doubted much whether under existing circumstances such a policy would be successful; for

³⁹ *Ibid.*, FPA, July 1865, No. 51.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, FPA, June 1865, No. 136.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ FPA, June 1866, Nos. 37-9; Hopkinson to Edin 30 October 1865.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the local officials gave him not the least encouragement* to try the policy of subsidising the “friendly Nagas” or more correctly the “unfriendly Nagas”. Interdiction of trade or blockade, on the otherhand, the Agent maintained was advantageous when it could be enforced effectively.⁴⁵

Our attempt to exclude the Angami Nagas from trade has not always been unsuccessful... Major Holroyd has employed it successfully in Seebasaugor... those who were fully behind the scenes knew that a capital part the interruption of their intercourse with the plains played in the reduction of the Jynteah people to submission to us in the late rebellion; and if trouble were to come in the Cosseyah Hills, no more potent instrument could be resorted to than an efficient blockade.⁴⁶

In restraining these predatory tribes Hopkinson proposed to adopt a “comprehensive policy”. He was convinced that no reliance could be placed on a particular policy - all possible expedients need to be resorted to suit varying circumstances.

Sometimes we must employ coercion, pure and simple, sometimes blockades; very often a judicious system of subsidising will keep tribes quiet for a long while; but still the surest foundation on which to build our control over them will be their fear of us. It is not coercion that has often failed us but failure to coerce.⁴⁷

The Agent held the view that it would be impossible to propose measures for the security of the border areas until the government laid down a clear-cut policy. So far, he deplored, there existed no fixed policy; for the plan of paying Garos or the Abors or the proposed subsidy to the Nagas were at best temporary expedients. The annexation of Assam, he maintained, had brought with it a

* Gregory held the view that under existing circumstances any expenditure of the kind would fail in purchasing peace in the frontier. Since communication with the Nagas had to be conducted through their respective chief or headmen, there was no guarantee whatever that agreement made by them would be acceptable to the clans over which “they have as little social or political power as a captain of volunteers over his company off the parade”. Even if ratified by the general assembly of the people, such an engagement could not be binding in the minority; for every individual of the clan was independent and responsible to him alone for his action. “They would undoubtedly for the present promise readily anything we might ask them, as heretofore, they would as readily break them their promises.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

distinct and positive obligation of the life and property of its subjects. It was inconsistent, he added, to separate the people of the plains from those of the hills and to treat the former as subjects leaving the latter to prey upon those whom the government had professed to take under its protection.⁴⁸ Pleading for a radical change in policy Hopkinson remarked :

We must cease to regard them as aliens or even as enemies, but acknowledge them as subjects, seek to establish ourselves amongst them, to extend our influence over them and bring them under our control and with the pace of civilization.⁴⁹

He was confident that this would not prove in the long run expensive; and even if it did, government would have to pay for it as a penalty for annexing Assam. "Shut out by us from all civilizing and elevating influence", Hopkinson made it clear,

We must be responsible for their condition'; their murderous raids— their inhuman sacrifices lies at our doors ; and we are as answerable for their continuance in their present state as it used to be held that the States of North America were answerable for the continuation of slavery in the South.⁵⁰

The policy to be pursued towards the Nagas, Hopkinson proposed to follow in respect of other tribes. As to the Angamis, he agreed on the main lines the measures suggested by Haughton— that of extending British sovereignty over the whole of the Naga country not included within Burma and Manipur and gradually to bring them to order . Such a process, he admitted, would be an "arduous one" but there was no middle course between "attempting it and accepting the outrages of the Nagas".⁵¹ In carrying out this measure he would follow the suggestions made in the meantime by Lieutenant Gregory. The officer in charge of North Cachar Hills. To begin with, the latter contemplated the assertion of British authority only over the village Samagutting where the Nagas had been friendly and were said to be anxious to come under British protection.⁵² From that location, by

⁴⁸ FPA, June 1866 Nos. 37-9, Hopkinson 4 November 1865.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Hopkinson to Eden, 30 October 1865.

⁵² *Ibid.*

exhibition of friendly relations between Nagas and the British, he would gradually endeavour to win the confidence and friendship of the neighbouring villages.

I would advance step by step yearly, opening out a good road as I went, never getting in advance of the road, and never in advance of the ground I am not sure of until I reached the very centre of the most thickly populated part of the country.⁵³

The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, who had already condemned the policy of non-intervention so long followed by the Government of India, could not but accord his approval to the measures recommended by the Agent. He strongly held the view in his letter on 24 April 1866 that the abandonment of the position held previous to 1854 and the withdrawal of the lines of the frontier posts to the left bank of the Dhansiri was a "grave mistake".⁵⁴ He felt that the only course left to the government was to reassert the authority over them under the system of administration suited to them and gradually to reclaim them from habits of lawlessness to order and civilization. He agreed with Hopkinson that there existed no real frontier from making a distinction between the tract occupied by the Angamis or the British territory inasmuch as the treaty with Burma and Manipur recognized only the Patkai and Barail as the boundary between these countries and British India.⁵⁵ Therefore, the tribes who inhabited the southern slopes of these hills were subjects to the Burmese and Manipur and those on the northern slopes to the British government. "The Angamee Nagas are independent only on the sense" Beadon explained :

that the British Government has refrained from reducing them to practical subjection and has left them, except at occasional intervals, entirely to themselves; but they have never enjoyed or acquired political or territorial independence.⁵⁶

Evidently Beadon wanted to bring the whole country of the Angamis under effective control of the government. This was a

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Secretary Government of Bengal, 24 April.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

“decided advance” on the comprehensive policy advocated by Hopkinson and which the Government of India was not prepared to accept. The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, in his letter on 7 June 1866, accorded the approval on the main lines of the recommendations made by the local authorities.⁵⁷ Gregory was to be directed to take up the proposed position at Samagutting where from he would endeavour by “tact and good management” and by “a moderate display of physical force” to bring only that part of the hills adjacent to his jurisdiction. In dealing with these tribes the main object of the Government was to protect the lowlands from their incursions. Therefore, instead of exerting himself in extending his jurisdiction he would refrain from doing so.⁵⁸ As to the actual methods to be employed Gregory was to be told that

A conciliatory demeanour will, of course, be indispensable and, perhaps, the expenditure of a little money to the leading men will be useful. When conciliation fails, punitive measures will not be shrunk from. In some instance a blockade of the passes, so as to exclude the offending tribe or village, from our bazars may be attended with good results. But in all cases the great point will be to select a penalty suitable to the circumstances of the particular affair.⁵⁹

Already grounds had been prepared for the extension of “comprehensive policy” in the Garo hills. In 1860, under direction of the Government of Government of Bengal, the office of the *sarbarker* was restored for the security of the border areas, but it ailed to answer the purpose as before. In May 1865, Morton proposed a police organisation on the model of the Scott’s system under which the *laskars* or the village headmen in return for annual payments undertook to punctual payment of revenue (*nazarana*) besides maintenance of law and order within their respective jurisdiction. The *laskars* of the larger villages, under this new scheme, would continue their police duties and in that capacity they would be called *zimmdars*.⁶⁰ They would exercise,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department 7 June.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ BJP, July 1865, Nos. 102-4; Morton to Jenkin 6 May.

Criminal powers in petty cases, and civil powers for trial of suits when the property in dispute does not exceed Rupees 50; to administer justice impartially and in accordance with village customs; to endeavour to maintain peace in their respective jurisdiction and to apprehend offenders; to prevent persons from other *elakas* from overstepping their jurisdiction and committing murder or other offence in the hills or plains, to prevent human sacrifices; to report accidental deaths; and to endeavour to induce those Garrows who have acknowledged the sovereignty of British Government..... to submit and pay their Nuzzeranah as heretofore.⁶¹

In case of smaller villages, the laskars of contiguous areas would elect on of their own as the *zimmadar*. Each continued to be responsible for the tribute ; but their duties, police and revenue, would be kept separate. Since the scheme did not involve much expenditure, it received forth with the approval of the Governor-General in Council.⁶²

In January 1866, Lieutenant Williamson, assistant commissioner, Gowalpara, announced to the Garo chiefs in a meeting their new duties and responsibilities. Majority of them entered into agreement; but a few demurred and expressed their inability to bind themselves to pursue the offenders into independent territories for fear of retribution since "the Garrows never forgive an injury".⁶³ In the following month, intelligence arrived that on account of a petty dispute over rights of a hill, villagers of Dekronggiri attacked Seebalgiri, killed seven men and a woman and took off their heads. On 25 February, to seize the culprits Williamson proceeded against the offending village, but found it completely deserted. He called upon the zimmadars in the neighbourhood to make every endeavor to apprehend the offenders; the latter dared not to carry out the order, for they dreaded most the anger of so powerful a village as Dekronggiri. Hopkinson was constrained to remark that the *zimmadars*, too, had failed; they were "timid, unenterprising or incompetent" to be useful.⁶⁴ The suggestion later made by Williamson to proceed against the enemy with a detachment and to destroy the village in

⁶¹ BJP, March 1866, Nos 77-9 Secretary Government of Bengal , 21 March.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Eden to the Commissioner of Assam 12 July; also March 1866, *op. cit.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, April 1866, No 48, Hopkinson 19 March.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

the event of his failure to capture the murderers was not acceptable to the Agent to the Governor-General; the season was too far advanced to admit of operations and no good result would follow, he thought, even if Dekronggiri was burned down; "destruction of a bamboo village... irritates them, but does them little harm".⁶⁵

It was vain to expect that with his multifarious duties the Deputy Commissioner, Gawalpara, would be able to do adequate justice to the affairs of the Garos. For effective supervision. Jenkins had been pressing all along the Government of Bengal for the appointment of an officer in exclusive charge of these hills. Hopkinson, in his letter on 19 March 1866, stressed the need for a special officer with headquarters at Tura which was centrally located where from he might bring all the neighbouring tribes under effective control, Beadon did not agree with the view of the Agent that the zimmadars had totally failed; for the attack on Seebalgiri was made, it was found, two years before the introduction of the new police system. Lieutenant Governor however admitted that the Garos inhabiting a tract of hilly country surrounded by districts under regular administration should not be allowed to continue internecine feuds and be a terror to their neighbours.⁶⁶ Concurring in this view E.C.Bailey, Secretary to the Government of India, approved on 7 May 1866 the location of a civil officer as proposed by the Agent; but in absence of requisite information as to the area, revenue and population the Governor-General in Council suggested that an Assistant Commissioner might be appointed until data was obtained of the country and of the duties to be performed by the officer permanently located in these hills. Williamson was accordingly placed in charge of Garo hills.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ BJP, August 1866, No. 60; Bayley to Machenzie 7 May.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

Towards Consolidation

The forward policy inevitably demanded measures of administrative consolidation to tighten the grip of the local authorities over the tribes brought under control of sphere of British influence. The process had already begun in the Khasi Hills wherein the tendency was to make the *siems* mere figureheads robbing them and their *durbars* much of the powers which they hitherto exercised.* The chiefs were too much divided to offer a united front against the innovations nor could they rally round their banner the hillmen who were reconciled to the rule of the English against whom they fought a relentless war only a few years ago.† Since 1867, under the terms of a new agreement, a *siem* was placed under the control and authority of the Deputy Commissioner who was to decide all cases arising between the chief and any other State. He was of course authorised to decide according to former usage civil and criminal cases within his jurisdiction; but with respect to heinous offences and disputes in which persons of other States, Europeans and plainmen, were involved, he was to refer for adjudication to the Deputy Commissioner or any other authority. He was bound to surrender on demand refugees and offenders coming to or residing within his territory. He must also look after the welfare of his subjects, assist British officers, protect travellers passing through his territory and facilitate commercial intercourse between his subjects and those of other States. In the event of his misgovernment or oppression, the British government had the right to remove him and appoint another in his place.¹

* See ante Pp. 74-76.

† In his report on the Khasi Hills Mills writes : "the Khasis have become altogether reconciled to our rule, and the district is now one of the last in which the Government would except to hear of any outbreak or disturbance beyond the management of local police "See Mackenzie, A., *Relations of the Government* etc. p. 239.

¹ Aitchison C.U., *Treaties, Engagements and Sunnads* etc. Pp. 178-9; BJP (General), January 1867, Nos. 10-3; September, No. 10.

Evidently the chief were relegated to the position of a number of functionaries under the Deputy Commissioner whose orders they were bound to obey; otherwise they were liable to be fined or subjected to penalties as might be considered fit by the authorities concerned.² Under the terms of the agreement in 1856 the Raja of Nungklow conceded to the British the right of establishing cantonment, military and civil sanatoria in any part of his territory, of occupying rent-free lands that might be required for these and other purposes by the government and of opening roads in any direction.³ Not only this right had to be acknowledged by the signatory of a new agreement, but he had to confirm the cession to the British "in perpetuity" of all waste lands, forests and areas having lime stone, coal and other minerals on condition of receiving half of the profits from their lease, sale or transfer of any other part.⁴ Above all, the chiefs were prohibited from alienating properties even for support of the family of the deceased chief without the knowledge and sanction of the government.⁵

In the territory of the Jayantias, too the local authorities insisted upon a reversal of the earlier system reducing the village authorities to nonentities making the people and the chiefs to look up to the government for their needs and requirements.⁶ With the lessons of the late insurrection fresh in his mind, Cecil Beadon, the lieutenant governor of Bengal, was not prepared to make any radical change; rather he wanted to have a form of government acceptable to the people suitable to the needs and circumstances without much change in the existing institutions.⁷ The Syntengs were accordingly placed under an Assistant Commissioner at Jowai vested with the powers of a Magistrate in a sub-division in criminal cases and those of a *sadar-amin* in civil suits. The general control of the district however remained with the Deputy Commissioner Khasi-Jayantia

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, In their agreement with the government several chiefs conceded this right even in 1859. Aitchison C.U., *op. cit.*, Pp. 167-8.

⁵ BJP, (General), January 1871, Nos. 22-3.

⁶ BJP, October 1862, No. 92; Morton to Agnew 9 July.

⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 90; Junior Secretary Government of Bengal, 31 July.

Hills; the latter exercising a concurrent authority in all matters with the Assistant Commissioner and having power to take up and dispose of cases within that officer's cognisance, ordinarily, occupied the place of the Court of Sessions and acted as a Court of Appeal in civil cases.⁸ The maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue, as in former times, continued to be the responsibilities of the *dolois* and *sardars* in their respective jurisdictions. Aided by *panchayats* consisting of the *pathors* and *lyngdows* or in their individual capacity, the village headmen were to try civil cases with some exceptions and criminal cases not of heinous character or those in which persons of other villages or tribes were not concerned. No appeal could be made against their decision; but to check the arbitrary character of these tribunals the Assistant Commissioner had the power to call up criminal or civil suits and decide these himself. Professional agents or *muktears* were discouraged and in all cases personal presence of the parties concerned was insisted upon; proceedings were to be oral and all processes and orders to be communicated verbally to the heads of the villages or some members of the *panchayat*; one of whom should always be present at the hearing of the case in which his village was involved.⁹

The village authorities were nevertheless brought under effective control of the Assistant Commissioner without whose approval no *doloi* or *lyngdow*, though duly elected by the people, could be confirmed in his office. No one was to be debarred from holding office on account of his participation in the late uprisings, but nobody was to be confirmed if the Assistant Commissioner had misgivings as to his efficiency or allegiance. The heads of the villages or one of the members of the *panchayat* was required to be at the headquarters to acquaint the Assistant Commissioner of the affairs of his village and to receive instructions in return. The Government had to be very cautious in making a fresh demand of the Syntengs. The Income-tax was done away with; but the people were to pay, as before, the poll-tax and due regard was to be paid to complaints of inequitable or injurious assessment. To enquire into

⁸ *Selection of Records, Government of Bengal*, xiii, Lusington to Haughton 6 March 1863; BJP, June 1865, Nos. 128-41.

⁹ *Ibid.*

the allegations against the village authorities, the European functionaries were required to be on frequent tours of the interior and to converse freely on such occasions, without the aid of interpreters, they were required to have working knowledge of the language of the people under their jurisdiction.¹⁰

Administrative reasons demanded construction of roads linking up the headquarters and locations of strategic importance. Already the Government of Bengal sanctioned necessary funds for opening up of roads between Cherra and Lylongkot, Lylongkot and Shillong via Yedo, Lylongkot and Pourring and thence to Nurtong.¹¹ Proposals were made for a new line of communication from Shillong to Gauhati. This would reduce the distance from 105 to 75 miles apart from effecting a huge saving in expenditure; for the Cherra-Gauhati road was then in such a state that the cost of its repair, it was estimated, would exceed that of opening a new line from Shillong to Gauhati.¹²

Cherrapunji, because of its heavy rainfall, was considered unsuitable as the headquarters of the regiment and civil administration of the Khasi-Jayantia Hills. The communication from it to Gauhati was also not dependable, liable to be cut off at any season of the year. In September 1860. Rowlatt sought to move his headquarters to Shillong which enjoyed a commanding position besides having a salubrious climate suitable for a sanatoria and residence of the Europeans. The proposal received the strong support of Brigadier-General Showers, then Special Commissioner of these hills, but Hopkins considered it inexpedient to shift the headquarters prior to the construction of the Shillong-Gauhati road. The political developments in the hills before long altered the views of the Agent—that the proposition should be carried out irrespective of the contemplated road. The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal accorded his approval to the measure and lands for the purpose were authorised to be purchased from Khyrem and Mylliem at an amount of Rs. 8443.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ AC, File No. 44; Officiating Junior Secretary Government of Bengal, 8 September.

¹² AS, Letter issued to Government, vol. 24; Commissioner of Assam, 8 May 1861; BJP May 1862 Nos. 246, 268-72.

In early 1866, the headquarters of the regiment and the office of the Deputy Commissioner were transferred to Shillong and Yedo and eight years this was made the capital of the newly constituted province of Assam.¹³

In early 1866, with a party of 150 sepoy Lieutenants Gregory established himself at Samagutting.¹⁴ He had to move cautiously; his position was extremely vulnerable being in the neighbourhood of hostile villages—Rajephemah, Safimah, Phakekramah and Diphomah. He was advised to grant a general amnesty to the Nagas except those of Rajephemah who were reported to have killed twenty-five persons at the Mikir village Sergamcha. He was then to convene a meeting of the representatives at a place in the interior wherein he would offer a feast and explain to them the objects with which he had come to their hills and call upon them to assist him in carrying these out. He was to make it clear to them that while he was anxious to cultivate and maintain friendly relations with them, he would not fail to inflict deterrent punishment to those villages that did not restrain their members from committing outrages on British territories or failed to deliver up the offenders.¹⁵ Gregory was told not to exercise any control over the Nagas beyond Samagutting and even within his jurisdiction he was forbidden to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagas, although he was required to act as an arbiter in their disputes.¹⁶ Every endeavour had to be made to demonstrate to the surrounding villages that the Nagas at Samagutting were enjoying peace and blessings of good government and were not subjected to forced labour or to supply *rasud* as was hitherto the case in North Cachar.¹⁷ Passports were issued for the Angamis visiting the plains and to prevent inter-tribal feuds a system of Residentiary Delegates was stationed at the headquarters from various communities and to whom stipends were granted for acting as interpreters or *dobhasies* of their respective clans.¹⁸

¹³ *Ibid.*, BJP, December 1862, 293-305; January 1863, Nos. 176-7; 375-6; January 1864, Nos. 119-24, 192-3; June 1866, Nos. 90-1.

¹⁴ BJP, October 1866, Nos. 56-62.

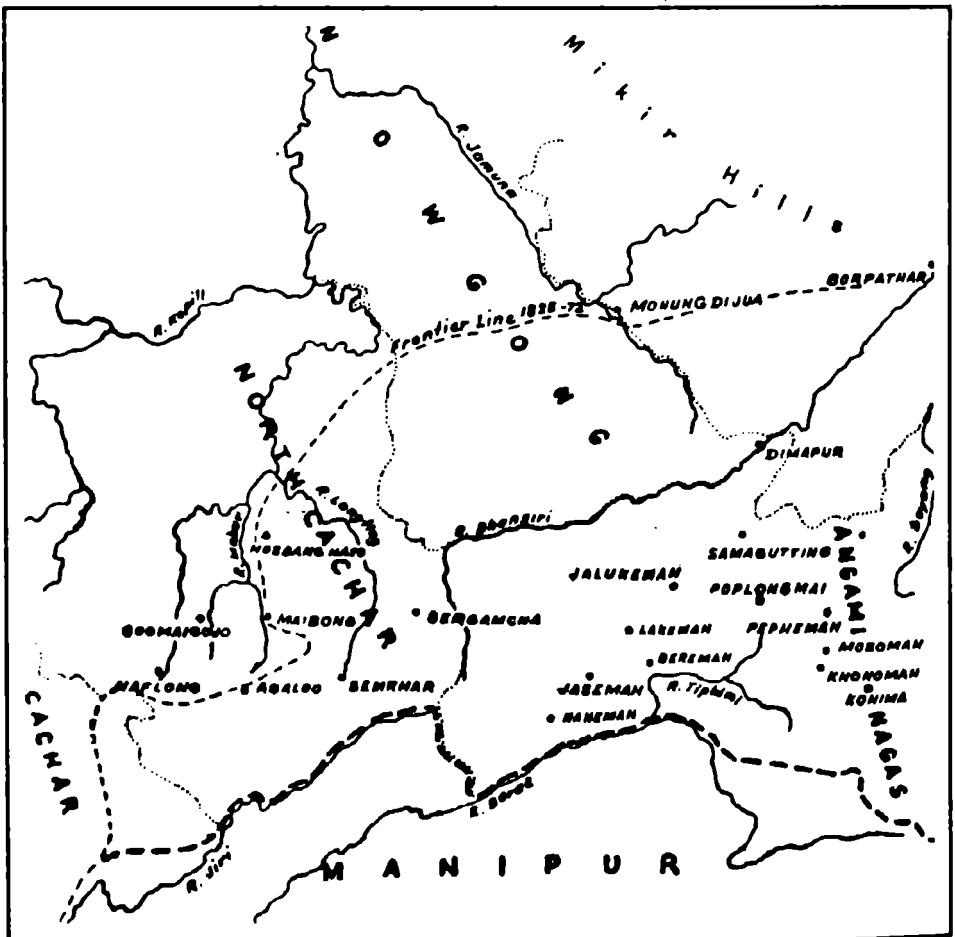
¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ FPA, June 1865, Nos. 37-9; Hopkinson 30 October.

¹⁸ BJP, April 1867, Nos. 17-9; December 1868, Nos. 93-5; January 1869, No. 81.

In November 1866, North Cachar sub-division was abolished and Naga Hills was constituted as a district with Gregory as Deputy Commissioner comprising a part of the district of Nowgong, Naga hills and on both the banks of the river Doyang.¹⁹ The Deputy Commissioner was vested with the powers of a Judge for trial of cases punishable with death or in which a punishment heavier than seven years' imprisonment was called for. He was to exercise the powers of a Session Judge with the aid of Assessors, but sentences



Sketch Map showing Naga Frontier (western)

of death need to be confirmed by the Judicial Commissioner, Assam. He was also to act as the Superintendent of Police and an Assistant Commissioner; in the later capacity he was to exercise the powers of

¹⁹ BJP, October 1866, Nos. 61-2.

a Magistrate.²⁰ The village headman or the gaonburah was made responsible not only for the law and order within his limits but also for collection of revenue, while receiving a remuneration in return. The Nagas were made to pay as a token of loyalty to the British a house tax of rupees two per house or eight days labour a year.²¹ The gaonburah and the leading men in the village were to constitute a *panchayat* for the trial of criminal cases except those of heinous offences and those in which parties belonged to different tribes in villages.²²

The emergence of the Naga Hills district brought forth the question of the jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner over disputes between the subjects of Manipur and the Nagas under control or influence of the British government. Such disputes, the Lieutenant Governor maintained, should be referred to the Deputy Commissioner and the Manipuris should be restrained from making incursions into any part of Naga Hills. Measures to redress outrage committed by the Angamis were to be taken up by the Deputy Commissioner in concert with the Manipur government. Agreeing with him, the Governor-General in Council directed in March 1867 that in case of the Nagas committing raids into Manipur, the Manipuri troops might follow them up and punish them in their own territory.²³

Inevitably, a demand for delimitation of boundaries between Manipur and the newly constituted district of Naga Hills was called for. In 1842, Lieutenant Bigge and Captain Gordon, during their tour of the Angami country, defined the boundary between the two districts as follows : Firstly, by the Duotighar mountains east of the Barak; secondly, the Barak up to its source in the Barail, and west by the peak of the Barail on the source of the Mow river flowing north towards Assam.²⁴ The boundary was neither recognized by the Manipur government nor acceptable to the Government of India, for soon after withdrawal of British troops from Samagutting in 1851,

²⁰ BJP, September 1871, No. 25.

²¹ BJP, October 1866, Nos. 56-7; see Gregory's Memorandum.

²² BJP, September 1871, No. 25; March 1867, Nos. 160-1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Manipuri troops advanced as far as Mozomah and the Manipur government was given a free hand over the Nagas. On the formation of the Naga Hills dispute arose between the Manipur government and the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills over villages on the east of the Rengma and north of the Barails. In 1867 at the suggestion of the Surveyor General, a provisional boundary was settled under which the eastern boundary was to advance as far as the river Namsang east of Sibsagar and to be coterminus with Manipur and Burma.²⁵ On the objections raised by Hopkinson—that the attention of the Deputy Commissioner should at first exclusively be devoted to the Angamis and that the south of the district of Sibsagar could be more conveniently managed by the Deputy Commissioner of that district—the Doyang or Rengma river west of Sibsagar district was finally made the eastern boundary of the Naga Hills. To aid the Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills in procuring labour, at the suggestion of the Commissioner, the tract occupied by the Mikir and the Kacharis on the north of the North Cachar Hills were later tagged to the Naga Hills.²⁶

Naga Hills, in the words of Hopkinson, offered a clear field with nothing to destroy but everything to construct upon it. A scheme of administrative measures for the Garos, on the otherhand, posed a difficult problem. "We are to deal with the more complicated affairs of a people from rude anarchical condition to various degrees of subjection to the rule of the British and those of zamindars under perpetual settlement."²⁷ Of these, the *zamindari* Garos prior to 1822 paid revenue to the *zamindars* and these were later collected by the Deputy Commissioner Gowalpara on account of zamindars; the *nazaranas*, who had hitherto paid no revenue, were brought under assessment; and the independent or the *bemulwahs* inhabiting in the interior were practically subject to no control and need to be explored. The first two categories who were more or less under control of the government were in charge of *laskars* with whom Scott entered into agreements in 1822 under which besides payment of *nazaranas* they were to maintain law and order within their respec-

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ BJP, 1866, Nos. 20-9, Hopkinson, 9 October.

tive jurisdiction.²⁸ In 1865, police and revenue duties of the *laskars* were separated and in the former capacity, the *laskars* of larger areas were designated as *zimmadars*. In December 1866, on the recommendation of the local authorities, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal ordered amalgamation of police and revenue duties of the village under one headman namely the *laskar*. With the aid of a *panchayat*, he was to try criminal cases not of heinous character nor those in which persons of other tribes or villages were concerned, and the proceedings should be viva voce and without records. With the exception of cases where persons of other tribes or villages were concerned he was to try civil suits with the aid of a *panchayat*.²⁹

Captain Williamson who had already had intimate knowledge of the affairs of these tribes was made the Assistant Commissioner in these hills with headquarters at Tura. He was to exercise the authority of a Magistrate and also the powers vested under Act XV 1862 for trial of cases not punishable by death or in which a punishment heavier than seven years imprisonment was called for. With the aid of Assessors he was also to exercise the powers of a Sessions Judge for trial of cases punishable by death or other heinous offences, but no sentence of death could be carried into effect unless confirmed by the Commissioner of Cooch Behar. In civil cases, he was simply to supervise the action of the *laskars* calling for final orders any case of importance or in which persons of different tribes were concerned.³⁰

The primary object of the government was then not so much the realisation of a substantial revenue as of ensuring peace in border areas. The Independent Garos or those in the interior remained untaxed; the *nazarana* and the remaining clans were subjected to a house tax under different conditions and at variable rates.* Williamson's suggestion to substitute a capitation tax, in lieu of house tax was negatived by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Mackenzie to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, 8 December.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

* In some places the assessment was on bachelor's house @ Rs.2-0-7, in Khas mahala the rate varied from Re.1 to Rs. 2, while the *Zamindary* Garos were assessed @ Rs. 3 to Rs. 5.

who considered it inexpedient to make any change without ascertaining the feelings of the chiefs and people in these hills.³¹

The process of slow but steady penetration, it was greatly hoped, would be accelerated with the appointment of an Assistant Commissioner with headquarters at Tura. Security reasons actuated even in the first year as many as twenty one clans to come to terms and even to pay tribute to the government.³² They welcomed the rule of the British at whose dictation they could drop inter-tribal feuds which no Garo at his own could relinquish without disgrace. This was rendered difficult in the southern part of the hills where the *zamindars* of Mymensingh claimed suzerainty and even collected rents from the hillmen which invariably provoked them to commit retaliatory raids in which innocents were killed and their heads carried off as trophies. The *zamindars* were not slow to realise that they would be driven out of their hill possessions; therefore, instead of rendering aid, as they formerly did, not unoften they screened the culprits and even joined hands with them in their aggressions.³³

In fact, friction arose between the zamindars and the local authorities since 1857 when in course of the revenue survey of Mymensingh, the northern boundary of the *pargana* of Sushang and Sherpur was laid down along the foot hills.³⁴ The Raja of Sushang challenged this claiming areas beyond the revenue boundary as forming a part of his permanently settled estate. For a settlement of the dispute, the Raja demanded, amongst others, compensations for the cash payments hitherto made by the Garos, to carry on operations in limestone and coal beds, the right to catch elephants and to collect timber and other forest produce in these hills.³⁵ The High Court to which the case was ultimately referred to also held the view that although the Raja did not establish his title to the land in dispute, the "boundary proceedings were irregular" and that he had "some rights of some kind" to villages north of the boundary laid down.³⁶

³¹ BJP, December 1866, No. 28; Mackenzie 3 December.

³² FPA, September 1872, No. 276; Mackenzie to the Secretary Government of India, 24 July.

³³ BJP, (Home), June 1870, Nos. 45-7; see Note on the Garrow Hills and the Gawalpara and Mymensingh frontier.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The matter came to a head in February 1866 when there occurred an outrage in a village in Mymensingh in which three persons were killed and a few wounded.³⁷ The enquiries later made by the local authorities revealed that the primary cause of the incident was an attempt of the Raja to collect rents from the Garos who had been independent and who repudiated his authority. On their refusal, the Raja closed the hats to them cutting off their supplies which drove them to commit acts of aggression.³⁸ To put a stop to such "bloodshed and anarchy", the Lieutenant Governor thought it absolutely necessary that the zamindars and their agents should be strictly prohibited from having any direct relations with the Garos and that the whole of the Garo Hills including such parts as claimed by the zamindars should be brought under effective control of the government.³⁹ He was, of course, alive to the fact that the northern boundary of Sushang remained undefined and need be settled. Nor could these areas be brought under Regulation X of 1822 since the High Court had already decided that these areas were beyond the jurisdiction of the Regulations. He, therefore, proposed that necessary legislation need be enacted to exclude the tract inhabited by the Garos from the zamindars and to ascertain the actual rights of the Raja and to award him adequate compensation for the resumption of these rights, title and interests.⁴⁰

The Governor-General in Council accorded their approval to the measure and passed Act XXVII of 1869 in lieu of Regulation X of 1822. It laid down the boundary of the Garo Hills in the south by the district of Mymensingh as defined by the revenue survey".⁴¹ With effect from 1 March 1870, the Lieutenant Governor strictly prohibited "collection, direct and indirect" by the Raja of Sushang or any other *zamindar* of any cesses, tributes or exactions whatever, from the inhabitants of the Garo Hills. The zamindars were, of course, asked to submit to the Deputy Commissioner statements as to average amount of collections and profits to award compensation

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Mackenzie, A., 17 June 1868; BJP, August 1866, Nos. 63-93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, BJP, (Home), May 1869, Nos. 25-6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Mackenzie, A., *History of Relations* etc. Pp. 262 ff.

of any loss which they might sustain in consequence of the orders of the government.⁴² The memorial which the Raja of Sushang submitted to the Secretary of State of India praying for annulment of the Act on the ground that a considerable tract beyond the boundary defined by the Act formed a part of his permanently settled tract was turned down, but the latter desired that pecuniary losses which the Raja or any other zamindar sustained in consequence of the enforcement of the Act might be considered.⁴³ J.C. Haughton, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, who subsequently investigated the records, reported that the Raja had failed to substantiate his claims, that the territory north of the pargana ever formed a part of his ancestral state. Nor did he find any record as to warrant that he had "original right or title" to levy cesses or make any collections in the hills.⁴⁴

the Raja of Shoosung had gradually driven back the Garrows who occupied the plains..... into their native mountains and that having the command of the places at which markets are held in the plains, he used the opportunity to acquire influence and exact some tribute from the hill people as a condition for their being allowed to frequent markets.⁴⁵

Whatever might be their nature the Raja had, evidently, certain rights of rents, cesses and other exactions which the Lieutenant Governor could not ignore. In conformity with the directives of the authorities in England George Campbell, the lieutenant governor of Bengal (1871-74), recommended adequate compensation for collection, "hitherto made or alleged to have been made."⁴⁶ The Raja's claim for customs transit duties were considered as illegal; but an annual payment of Rs.2262-11-9 was to be made to him on account of his losses in the territorial revenue and trading speculations. In addition a lump sum of rupees fifty thousand was to be paid as

⁴² *Ibid.*, see Extract from the proceedings of the Government of Bengal, 24 February 1870, also BJP, June 1870, Nos. 45-7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, No. 47; Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, 3 June 1870.

⁴⁴ *Proceedings of the Department of Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce, Bengal*, October 1872, Nos. 68-9; Haughton to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 21 June 1872.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, see Resolution.

compensation for loss of privilege for elephant catching.⁴⁷ The petition later made by the zamindar of Sherpur was not forwarded even; it contained no stronger ground for reconsideration of the case than already made by the Raja of Sushang.

Notwithstanding the new Regulations, Campbell would have preferred a policy of peaceful penetration if the Independents remained in peace with their neighbours who were under the protection of the government; but they chose the war path disturbing the peace not only in the hills but in the plains north and south. During the winter of 1870-71, in the excitement of a drunken feast, a signaller of a survey party then working in the hills was murdered at Farungiri, a dependent village, south of the central ridge.⁴⁸ The police party under Captain La Touch, the officiating deputy commissioner, which was sent against the offending village failed to apprehend the culprits. In May 1871, intelligence arrived that a large body of Independent Garos made an attack on the *laskar* of Damukchigiri killing over a dozen of people.⁴⁹ The repeated outrages in the village and in its neighbourhood made the people panicky, but the advance of the season rendered it difficult for Williamson to punish the murderers. "This will be a constant source of trouble" Campbell thought, "unless they were speedily and effectively dealt with". He proposed that an expedition should be sent against the offending village to put an end to the independence of the Garos in a corner of the British dominion and his views received the concurrence of the Government of India. The authority of the British government must be vindicated, but the operation should not be of a more hostile character or on a larger scale than necessary to secure the object in view. The opportunity should be taken to make a complete survey of the territory and also to open roads through the hills.⁵⁰

Preparation for an expedition in the ensuing winter was set on foot. The local authorities thought that a moderate force well equipped

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ FPA, September 1872, Nos. 276-86. Mackenzie to the Secretary Government of India, 24 July.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Aitchison, C.U., to the officiating Secretary Government of Bengal, 3 September.

would be able to do all that was required; but Campbell wanted to have a pincer movement; that two or three companies of 43rd Native Infantry should advance from Shillong to concert measures with police force approaching Dilmagiri, the offending village, from the west and the south. Accordingly, one column under captain Davis entered the hills from Goalpara and another under Mr Daly advanced from Mymensingh and the main under Williamson marched from Tura. It was planned that each column after visiting and enforcing submission of the Independents was to meet at a central place.⁵¹

The Garos possessed a few guns and relied on their spiking of paths. rolling down of stones and bending of bamboos to act as spring bows. Devoid of the power of combination, they could offer but little resistance to the advancing columns of British troops. Williamson occupied without opposition Dilmagiri and received submission of the villages in the neighbourhood. Daly joined him in the middle of December and repelled the attack of a party of Garos receiving submission of villages enroute. While awaiting for Davis at Rangragiri, they visited independent villages within their reach, receiving submission and imposing fines in cases of opposition. Davis could not arrive at his destination in time; he was attacked twice on the way by the Garos which was however repulsed without much loss. Being convinced of the impossibility of making further resistance, the remaining clans of the Independents tendered their submission and undertook to obey the commands of the government.⁵² In the meantime, the companies of the 43rd Native Infantry stationed in the frontier of Khasi Hills, though not engaged in operation, opened a bridle path as far as Tura.⁵³ Two more roads were cleared; one right across the hills from Dalu in the plains of Mymensingh through Tura to Goalpara and the other from the Brahmaputra at Raumari to Tura passable by wheeled carriage carrying nine pounder field pieces. The survey party under R.G. Woodthrop that accompanied the troops made considerable progress in areas hitherto left unexplored.⁵⁴

⁵¹ BJP, 1 March 1873, Nos. 164-75.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Haughton 6 February.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

How to keep the Independents under effective control—the question arose. The Commissioner of Cooch Behar considered it inexpedient to have regular police over them; for that would be irritating to a people so long independent and from which no compensating good could be obtained. Nor was he inclined to maintain a number of police outposts in areas away from the base of supplies demanding services of the inhabitants as porters.⁵⁵ Williamson pinned his faith in the local chiefs or *laskars* acceptable to the people and who were in allegiance to the government. Campbell wanted “to leave nothing to chance”; the armed police force was considerably augmented and the posts were arranged in a manner that the authority of the government “may be visible and beyond doubt.”⁵⁶ Undisturbed peace which subsequently followed in these hills showed Campbell was not belied in his expectations.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, see Resolution, 1 March 1873.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Frontier Police

Ever since the outbreak of the Mutiny in 1857-58, nothing was heard of internal rebellion or foreign invasion in the North-East Frontier. Nevertheless the local authorities had to be vigilant throughout against the incursions of the predatory tribes beyond the frontier. Militarily, these tribes were not formidable; their arms were of the most archaic type consisting mostly of bows and arrows; very few of them possessed fire arms, and in a pitched battle a party of fifty would be more than a match for any force that might be arrayed against it. The inaccessible character of their country and the sudden nature of their attacks, however, rendered it necessary that they should be constantly watched and in the event of an outbreak, the aggressors repelled and brought to book. Not unoften the local authorities were called upon to confront with simultaneous attacks requiring punitive expeditions against several tribes. Inevitably, a number of defensive posts had to be maintained along the frontier besides an adequate reserve of disposable troops at certain location to meet any emergency.

In 1858. the military strength of the province consisted mainly of the three regiments- the First and the Second Assam Light Infantry and the Sylhet Light Infantry with headquarters at Dibrugarh, Gauhati and Sylhet respectively. Of these, the first two consisted of 1000 men each and the third 1200 men. A company of Local Artillery was stationed at Dibrugarh and another party of ninety men attached to the second Assam Light Infantry. To guard the frontier outposts, there existed Police Militias with 100 to 160 men, at Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nowgong besides the *Kuky Leby* at Silchar.

¹ MP, December 1862, No. 527; see E. K. O. Gilbert, officiating Adjutant General of the Army; *Tabular statement of troops formerly stationed in Assam*, Appendix A; also AS, Letters issued to Government vol. 22; Jenkins to Young 12 June 1858.

In spite of the increase in the number militias the Assam Light Infantry was required to maintain a number of frontier outposts besides serving as a reserve to meet any emergency. With the extension of the frontier line and consequent increase in the responsibilities of the local authorities, there had been a pressing demand for additional troops for the defence of the frontier.

The military reorganisation laid down by the Peel Commission (1859) required admixture of troops, increase in the number of European element and reservation of the artillery for them.² Although no specific instruction was issued as to the proportion of each class, the military authorities were directed to recruit the hills tribes and people of the frontier and that the number of Hindustanees should not exceed one fourth of the total strength.³ The local authorities persistently urged the permanent location of a European Artillery without which, they felt, the European planters would not feel secure for extension of their operations or employment of more capital in them.⁴ Rigours of the climate apart from the paucity of troops rendered it difficult for the employment of larger number of Europeans on Assam. The Government of India decided in its resolution on 3 May 1861 to retain the company of Local Artillery besides the European Artillery serving at Dibrugarh "where guns have been occasionally needed and where employment of native gunners is not open to objection".⁵ The irregulars of the First and Second Assam Light Infantry were then transferred to the Bengal Army and were numbered as 42nd, 43rd and 44th Native Infantry.⁶ Drastic reductions, however, had to be made not only in the number of regiments but also in the numerical strength of each regiment which would consist of 75 Privates and a total of 712 of all ranks. The 42nd and

² See Philips, C. H., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan* Pp.506-7; Singh, H. L., *Problem and Policies of the British Government in India*, Chapter III.

³ MP, November 1862, No. 729.

⁴ AS, Letters issued to Government, *op. cit.*, also vol. 24, Hopkinson 20 April 1861.

⁵ MP, Letter to the Secretary of State, 18 May 1861, No. 80

⁶ *Ibid.*, Rough Draft of General Letters to the Secretary of State, 3 May 1861, No.400 see Resolution.

These were numbered at first as 46th, 47th and 48th N. I.; but on the withdrawal of the Gurkha Regiments renumbered as 42nd, 43rd and 44th N. I.

* Consisting of the *subadar*, one *jamadar*, five *havildars*, five *naicks*, two *drummers* and seventy five privates- $89 \times 8 = 712$.

44th regiments were accordingly reduced, but the officer commanding 43rd Native Infantry could discharge only 130 men, for there was no local militia to his support and a large number of men were then scattered about in numerous outposts while an equal number was on furlough.⁷

The time was highly inopportune. On the imposition of the house-tax the Syntengs had in the meantime unfurled the standard of revolt and punitive expeditions had to be sent out against the refractory Garos and the Kukis of the Chittagong frontier, The Nagas continued to cause serious anxiety in the minds of the local authorities while the Abors descending down upon the plains had threatened the European planters in the north. Colonel Jenkins, then commanding troops in the North-East Frontier, strongly urged in his communication on 7 November 1861 to the Government of Bengal the restoration of the former strength of the three regiments in Assam. He also sought to raise a militia of 150 men for Gowalpara to save the 43rd regiment from broken into endless detachments and to occupy posts located in unhealthy terrain where it was difficult to maintain supplies and to keep up health and discipline of troops. The proposal received the support of Colonel Vetch, the officiating agent who wanted such a corps "to balance the Regulars", for "a homogeneous native force is dangerous in case of a mutinous spirit".⁸

On the basic issue, increase in the strength of troops, Hopkinson agreed with Jenkins; but he proposed three instead of five regiments of 600 each to be located on (i) Khasi-Jayantia Hills and Nowgong; (ii) Garo and Bhutan frontier; (iii) Naga frontier; (iv) Abor and Singpho frontier and (v) Manipur, Cachar and sylhet. He stood opposed to the employment of militias;⁹ it was in direct contraven-

⁷ MP, February 1862, Nos. 312-3; Jenkins 7 November 1861; BJP, June 1861, No. 387; Campbell 22 May.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, Hopkinson 13 December 1861.

Mills was also averse to the employment of militias in large numbers since they were not disciplined, had no officer to drill them and were not reliable as the Assam Light Infantry. In 1853, when Jenkins proposed to increase the militias even by a reduction of the regular troops, Mills considered it "a doubtful policy to reduce the strength of the efficient corps and expend what is saved in entertaining a body of men who must in every sense of the word inefficient". FC, 4 June 1852, No. 98; Mills, Report on the province of Assam, Appendix iv .

tion to the order of the government, under which Military Police, including the militias, were to be abolished and the defence of the frontier had to be entrusted on disciplined troops.¹⁰ He traced the origin of these levies to paucity of Regulars, recruitment of men not suited to climate and mainly on the notion that the frontier could not be defended without a proportion of troops being detached for field services all the year round along an extensive frontier. To him these were the duties primarily required of the troops in Assam. "If Bengal Army does not permit the frontier being watched and protected by Regulars", he stated categorically "let us have no Regular Troops in Assam, but only an organized Police or constabulary for all purposes of defence internal and external." If properly trained and disciplined, he was confident, such a corps would be competent to meet any emergency. That the local militia would neutralize the mutinous spirit of the Regulars, a view held by Vetch, was not acceptable to him. What was the guarantee that disaffection would not spread among the corps variously constituted? The fidelity of the native troops could be ensured, he felt, only by the presence of European soldiers and of which three or four companies need be stationed in the Khasi Hills which afforded facilities of a sanatorium for such troops,¹¹

In view of the continued insecurity of the frontier, the reduction of troops without consultation with and even of knowledge of the local authorities, was viewed with serious concern by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. The defence of the frontier demanded, he concurred with Hopkinson, five Native Infantry Regiments besides a few companies of Europeans, both infantry and Artillery, Even this force or any other force, would be of "little use" unless it consists of "acclimated men". Such a force, he thought could be improved by

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, also BJP, April 1863, No. 211. *Ibid.* (police), 1864; No. 16, *Report on Bengal Police* for 1862.

The Government of India in the Home Department directed on 8 March 1862 that the police should be organized as laid down in the Police Act of 1861; under which police was required "to relieve the troops from all duties not strictly Military, to repress all local disturbances, to check frontier raids and thus to render the active employment of troops unnecessary unless in case of emergency".

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the infusion of men of the frontier tribes.¹² Notwithstanding these forceful arguments, the proposal for augmentation of troops did not receive the approval of the governor-general in Council; the reorganization of the Bengal Army made it difficult for the government to make reallocation of additional troops, Nor were they agreeable to station European troops in the Khasi and Jayantia Hills where uneasy feeling continued to prevail since the outbreak in 1860.¹³ Nevertheless, Brigadier-General G. D. Showers, Commanding presidency Division, was called upon on 24 January 1862 to furnish a report on the military defense of the North-East Frontier particularly whether an armed Police could be made the chief Plank of frontier defence and also to indicate a healthy site for the location of a small body of European troops.

In his elaborate report on 10 September 1862, after tracing relations with the frontier tribes, Showers emphasized the need for maintaining a number of frontier out posts, He explained therein that it would not be possible on the part of the government to have any intercourse with these rude tribes without misunderstanding other than barter transactions at localities “ where there will be thick forest between the lands of the barbarous tribes and our own territories, and where..... there will not be a British subject or village for the marauding parties of the tribe to injure”¹⁴ Such posts should be held, he proposed, by Mixed bodies of army and constabulary; that constabulary; should be set up at a distance of eight to ten miles from each other and in seasons of scarcity in border areas or on the occurrence of any event likely to endanger the security of the frontier, greater vigilance should be exercised over the neighbouring tribes. Since these duties were “irksome”, Showers suggested that parties should be relieved as frequently as possible and in seasons when the tribes confine themselves to their hills, the guards might be

¹² *Ibid.*, Lushington 23 January 1862.

¹³ MP, January 1862, Nos. 513-21.

¹⁴ MP, December 1862, No.527; G. D., Showers to the adjutant General, 10 September; AS Letters received from Government, vol. 47 of 1864: Major General Bechar to the Secretary Government of India, Military Department 29 October.

withdrawn altogether.¹⁵ The proposal was unacceptable to Sir Hugh Rose, the Commander-in-Chief, to whom occupation of the front-line partly by army and partly by police was "fraught with evil." United command, so indispensable for success in a frontier operation, in the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief, could not be achieved if command and responsibility were divided between the police and army in the same line of operation. He wanted the constabulary to confine its activities to civil duties, in the maintenance of law and order in areas guarded by the army and the latter should act in concert with civil authorities only in emergency, but actual fighting should be a concern only of the regimental units.¹⁶

Showers held the view that a European force, whether artillery or infantry, was unnecessary for military operations in Assam. "The warlike qualities of the hill tribes and their mode of warfare is such that Native Infantry with Muskets will always be sufficient to compete with any troops that can bring into field." He considered the location of such a force, of course, necessary "to satisfy the mercantile community and to inspire confidence in them to extend their Operations.¹⁷ He opposed to make Bishwanath the Military Headquarters of the province; it occupied a central position with respect to the tribes in the north and provides ready communication with different posts to which detachments could be sent out when called for. Herein, he would locate, in addition to a regiment of Native Infantry, headquarters of a wing of European Infantry and a company of sappers under a European officer.¹⁸ The latter part of the proposal received the concurrence of Hugh Rose, but on "political and sanitary grounds" he wanted the location of European troops and the headquarters of the command at Shillong instead of at Bishwanath which was not sufficiently central from the mainlines of roads proposed to be constructed in the province. In the event of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

* "Nothing weakens discipline so much" the Commander-in-Chief added, "as detachment and nothing is so unfavourable to success of operation which depends upon united command as a divided responsibility and command".

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

lines of communication completed across the hills-Sylhet to Gauhati and through Jayantia Hills to Cachar-Shillong or near about would enable the officer commanding the troops to have a general control of the province and to move promptly to any point threatened with disturbance.¹⁹

Hugh Rose agreed with Showers that a regiment of Native Infantry should be stationed at Dibrugarh and from which guards should be posted at Sadiya, Jaypur and Sibsagar. He desired that a detachment of the British Infantry from the headquarters should be located at Dibrugarh which had a fort and commanded the river Brahmaputra, the Native Artillery be converted into a Mountain Train Battery and a few guns be placed at the fort so that it might serve as a place of security and refuge, if and when necessary, to the planters and European settlers alike, The Commander-in-Chief further wanted the disbandment of the local corps attached to regulars and already under the Police Act V of 1861, the local militias of Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Nowgong and the Kooky Levy of Cachar were abolished and their men drafted into constabularies.²⁰

As to the location of troops the Commander-in-Chief raised no objection to the rest of the proposals made by Showers: that police should replace the army in the outposts of the Abor and northern frontier and that guards should be posted at Dhopavar and Geleki for the protection of the Naga hats, on the west intermediary constabularies should be located between detachments at Golaghat, Barpathar and Mohungdijua to prevent parties of the Nagas from raiding the British districts; that another regiment should be stationed at Gauhati wherefrom a party of eighty men to be located at Gawalpara and another at Dhubri for the protection of the *duars* in the north and the frontier in the south. For the defence of the Khasi-jayantia Hills, Catcher and Sight, Showers finally proposed to locate one regiment each at Sylhet and Jowai with a detachment at Silchar.²¹

General Showers brought home to the Government of India the necessity of periodical movement of troops for exercise and exhibi-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

tion of military strength and the urgency of having military roads both across the hills and on either side of the Brahmaputra for speedy movement of troops from one to another station. Introduction of regular steamer communication, the establishment of an Ordnance Depot and the appointment of a Brigadier General for the Province were additional measures recommended by Showers for the defence of the frontier.²²

Cecil Beadon, the lieutenant governor of Bengal, agreed of the mainlines the proposal made by Showers, but he had "no wish to see a European soldier stationed any where to the eastward of Calcutta or Dumdum". J.C. Houghton, the officiating agent, when he was called upon to give his views on the subject, deprecated the practice of scattering about regiments at outposts as "wasteful" and "objectionable". He did not rule out the necessity of coordination between the civil and military authority; but he made it clear that the duty of police in the frontier would be "to maintain vigilant watch on the tribes beyond it, maintain order amongst those frequenting the markets and to repress all inroads into our territory. "The duty of troops on the otherhand, would be "to give support should the civil force be threatened and to be ready to resist any organized inroad on our frontier as well as to punish it, should it take place."²³

The recommendations made by Showers and observations thereon by the Commander-in-Chief and the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal came before the Governor-General in Council for their consideration in their proceedings on 23 March 1864. After careful examination it was decided that the front line should be defended both by the army and police. All raids by the hillmen or anything to disturb the security of the frontier should be promptly reported to the military authority and in the event of actual hostilities breaking out, the police holding such posts must be in direct communication with and when necessary even under orders of the Military Commander., North-East Frontier should be placed under a Brigadier General with headquarters at Gauhati so as to enable the chief civil and military authorities to concert measures for the security of the frontier. The military garrison should consist of four and half regiments to be

²² *Ibid.*

²³ BJP, April 1863, Nos. 203-11; Haughton 16 April.

located at Gauhati, Dibrugarh, Cherrapunji, Jowai and Bishwanath. In addition a Battery of Native Infantry with six guns was to be stationed at Dibrugarh. The proposal for the location of European troops and establishment of an Ordnance Depot were not acceptable to the Governor-General in Council.²⁴

Hardly had these measures carried out when the “most shameful and unsoldierlike” conduct of the 43rd Regiment in the retreat and evacuation of Dewangiri* called for a second thought over the employment of the army in outpost duties. The Court of Enquiry condemned the corps as “totally inefficient”²⁵ while General W. Mansfield, the Commander-in-Chief, traced “the laxity of discipline” exhibited by the regiment to the enlistment of a large section of men not of fighting class but of opium-eaters and mainly to the fact that it was broken up into numerous small detachments some of which had been away from the headquarters for years together.²⁶ He felt that it was vain to expect under these circumstances discipline and efficiency of the corps. On the otherhand, rigours of the climate made it difficult for the Hindustanees and the Sikhs to serve in the frontier; in fact the commanding officers found it increasingly difficult to grant furloughs to the men and at the sometime it maintain too many outposts in the frontier. The Commander-in-Chief sought to reduce the number of outposts, as far as practicable, and to rearrange the troops in a manner to ensure regular and periodical relief to all regiments.²⁷ Unlike his predecessor Mansfield had no prejudice against local corps provided due care was taken to prevent them from degenerating into a half police. What he recommended to the Government of India in his letter on 1 July 1865 was a corps on the model of the Gurkha Regiment of Bengal or the Sind Regiment of the presidency of Bombay.²⁸ Although these units had permanent regimental headquarters, they were liable to serve any where whether in Peace or in war. Men of proven military skill would then be available without having connection with locality or province giving

²⁴ BJP, May 1864. Nos.19-20; H. W. Norman, Secretary Government of India Military Department, 23 May.

* See ante p. 91.

²⁵ MP, May 1865, No. 137; Adjutant General to the Secretary, Government of India Military Department, 29 April.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, July No. 146; Adjustant General 1 July.

the name to the service. To grapple with the hillmen on their own ground, Mansfield proposed to have two such regiments one mainly of the Gurkhas and the other consisting of the frontier tribes. These two corps in addition to the existing regiments would provide for the security of the frontier.²⁹

Brigadier General Tombs, commanding the Duar Field Force, ruled out the possibility of guarding the whole line of extensive frontier. His scheme of frontier defence consisted in subsidising the tribal chiefs for their good behaviour; failing which he would stop payment and send out punitive expedition against the offending tribe.³⁰ For this, he proposed to have two strong and well equipped regiments at Gauhati and Dibrugarh; and in the event of any raid into British territory, troops would march into the hill and inflict such punishment as would deter them from making similar attacks in future. The regiments proposed should not be broken up into smaller detachments nor to be left at the mercy of civil authorities, The police would, of course, watch and guard the frontier, the task of repelling the attack or movement into the hills should be a work of the regiments proposed.³¹

No divergence of views existed between the civil and military authorities as to the maintenance of a number of outposts for the defence of the frontier. The civil authorities, of course, wanted the detachment duties to be done not by disciplined troops but by militias and police. Since the duties of sepoys consisted mainly in guarding the frontier against sudden raids of the tribes beyond, what was essentially required of them was their "mobility and handiness". Herein they failed. Troops consisting of the Purbias or the Punjabis". require a large portion of carriage, they require their paths clear for them, their supplies brought to them, their stockades built for them". A Police, on the otherhand, accustomed as he was to jungle life, "cuts his own path, runs up his own huts, fetches his own food and waits upon himself", Even in actual warfare whether with the Bhutias or in an expedition against the Nagas or the Lushais, they fought shoulder to shoulder with the corps of the regimental units.³²

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ FPA, July 1865, Nos. 80-2, K.W.I. Tombs 24 April.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Home (police), February 1863, Nos. 1-17; see Bailey, S. C., to the Secretary Government of India, 12 August 1879.

No wonder, therefore, the civil authorities continued to emphasize the role of the police for the defence of the frontier. Hopkinson went so far as to say in his note on 30 October 1865 that the pacification of the frontier tribes should be a concern of the civil authorities alone and in which military authorities were not even competent to advise.³³ He held the view that there could be no other frontier in Assam other than the frontier with Bhutan, Burma and Manipur. Between the Nagas and the British, for instance, there was hardly any frontier, but an intervening zone at which the tribes "choose to keep away from our settlement", and which from the military point of view was indefensible;³⁴ because.

it is a tract to which we can hardly convey troops, a tract into which if we did get them, we could not feed them nor move them in any direction, a tract void of roads, covered with forests, having a dense undergrowth, and in which divisions or detachments a few miles apart must be lost to one another, a tract in which the most perfect army would soon become disorganized by sickness.³⁴

Notwithstanding the overwhelming odds, he added, the Military authorities had proposed the erection of a number of posts for the defence of the frontier General Tytler's remedy against the Abors, for instance, was a regiment at Sadiya and a steam gunboat and a contingent on the bank of the Dhansiri for the defence of North Cachar.³⁵ To Hopkinson a military outpost in Assam.

is a protection against the hill tribe as an umbrella is against rain, but no more, or at most it exercise the moral influence of a scarecrow sure to be found out at least to be harmless.³⁶

³³ EPA, June 1866, Nos. 37-9; Hopkinson 4 November 1865.

In explanation Hopkinson says: "Military organisation is concerned with masses, not units. A French Army might hold the pyrenees against Spanish Army, but it would certainly fail in dealing with parties of contrabandists and stopping contraband along the Spanish frontier. The Italian Army is efficient enough, but the brigands of the Abruzzi are said to set its detachments at defiance. Though the United States might be able to overwhelm Canada with its armies, it cannot prevent smuggling along the Canadian Frontier, I might add, even raids. But the case of our troops in Assam terai against parties of Nagas or Abors or Garrows is, beyond all comparison, a more hopeless one".

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

He, therefore, recommended that regular troops should be employed only as a support and reserve at certain locations leaving the duties of the frontier in the hands of the militias officered and commanded by a chief acting in concert or under the orders of the Agent to the Governor - General.³⁷

The Government of India was not agreeable to any increase in the number of military force as advocated by the military authorities on the ground that the tribes in Assam frontier were not so well armed and dangerous as their counterparts in the Punjab.³⁸ Hopkinson's arguments, being supported by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, appeared to the Governor-General in Council so cogent and convincing that they readily accorded their approval to his recommendations on 7 June 1866. All outpost and frontier duties were to be entrusted to the police under civil authorities and Regular troops were to serve only as a reserve force. Besides regimental headquarters, detachments not exceeding two companies were to be stationed at certain locations to act in concert with the police when called for. All other posts hitherto held by troops should be Taken over by the police.³⁹ Accordingly, as central reserve, two regiments were located at Shillong which was made the headquarters of the Brigade for its having a salubrious climate and centrally situated with respect to northern, southern and south-eastern frontier; another at Dibrugarh to which steamer communication was available in all seasons of the year; the headquarters of the fourth regiment was stationed at Silchar, on the bank of the river Surma, having command over the Nagas on the north, the Lushies on the south and Manipur on the east. Detachments or "local reserves" were posted at Gauhati, Jaypur, Golaghat and Sadiya. In addition, along the whole line of frontier, over forty outposts were erected and these were occupied by the Frontier Police.⁴⁰

Thus, there occurred a radical change in the system of defence of the North-East Frontier. Unlike the militias which were defective in organization and discipline, Frontier Police "were armed, drilled

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ MP, (Separate), Letter to the Secretary of State, 15 August 1865.

³⁹ EPA, June 1866, Nos. 37-9; Beadon 14 April; Secretary Government of India to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 7 June.

⁴⁰ Home (police), February 1883, Nos. 1-17; *op.cit.*

and instructed in musketry'. But they never ceased to be a wing a wing of the Assam Police with the duties of maintaining law and order (in Garo and Naga Hills), guarding court, treasuries and jails and escorting prisoners. Moreover, frontier outposts continued to be held in an "arbitrary manner.⁴¹ Partly by army and partly by police." There is no system such as central posts being held by troops and the flanks by police or important and dangerous posts by army and less dangerous posts by police and even one district by troops and another by police.⁴² Semi civil duties performed by Frontier Police evoked severe criticisms, "Station guards and escorts do not require highly trained soldiers". To place "a highly trained Gurkha as a Jail or Treasury guard is a pure waste of money". "There was no reason" remarked Elliot, the chief commissioner of Assam, "why a gentle and peaceful population like the Assamese a more war like instrument should be required for such purpose than elsewhere."⁴³

In 1868, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal sought to relieve the army from outpost duties by augmentation in the strength of the police and also to separate the same into two branches, armed and unarmed;⁴⁴ The proposal was unacceptable to the Government of India as it would not materially reduce the military expenditure of the government.⁴⁵ In his lengthy *Note on the Military requirement of Assam*, on 12 August 1879, S.C. Bailey the chief commissioner of Assam, pointing out the anomalies in frontier defence strongly urged that the detachment duties should be left entirely in the hands of armed police; for they would prove "decidedly more effective" than the native regiments besides effecting a saving in money.* He proposed to raise the strength of the police to three thousand by reducing the number of regiments from four to two to be located at

⁴¹ MP, September 1868, No. 3; Mackenzie to the Secretary Government of India Military ? Department, 26 May.

⁴² Home (Police), February 1883, Nos. 1-17; op.cit.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, see Elliot, C., *Note on the reorganisation of Police Department in Assam*, 20 June 1882.

⁴⁴ MP, Septemeber 1868. Nos. 3-4; Mackenzie 26 May.

⁴⁵ Norman, H. W., Secretary, Government of India Military Department, 31 July.

* Each sepoy of the Regiment cost the government not less than Rs.333 a year whereas a policeman Rs. 180.

Silchar, Shillong, Sadiya or Dibrugarh.⁴⁶ The Army Commission (1879) also emphasized that the Frontier Police should be strengthened so as to undertake the whole outpost duties since the distribution of regiments over many small outposts impaired the efficiency and discipline of the troops.⁴⁷ In his note to the Government of India, Military Department, on 20 January 1882, D. M. Stewart, the Commander-in-Chief, proposed not only to relieve the troops from outpost duties but also to improve the quality of police, for they were called upon to perform duties more of “a military rather than civil character.”⁴⁸

The repeated famines and the costly Afghan War had imposed severe financial strain on the Government of India. The governor-general in Council was, therefore, reluctant to make any alteration in the defence of the frontier as would entail additional expenditure; all the more when the whole question was discussed and settled only a few years ago. The proposal to separate the police into two branches, armed and unarmed, however, received the sanction of the government in March 1878 on condition that no addition be made to provincial allotment of the extra expenditure involved.⁴⁹ The strongest terms in which the Army Commission and the Commander-in-chief urged on the substitution of the police persuaded the Government of India in March 1883 to agree, within certain financial limitations, (i) to constitute four divisions of Frontier Police; (ii) to relieve the troops from outpost duties and (iii) to relieve the frontier police of all station duties and to make over these, with few exceptions, to civil police.⁵⁰ The Frontier police, later Military Police, thus became the main plank in the system of defence, North-East Frontier.

⁴⁶ Home (police), February 1883, Nos. 1-17. op.cit.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Bernard, C., officiating Secretary Government of India, 27 March 1880.

⁴⁸ MP, March 1883, No. 381 ; Stewart, D.M., 20 January 1882.

⁴⁹ Home (Police), March 1878, Nos. 33-7.

⁵⁰ Home (police), October 1884, Nos. 25-7; A Mackenzie to the Chief Commission of Assam, 15 August 1883.

CHAPTER NINE

Back to non-Intervention

Hopkinson's contention that the conciliatory policy towards the Abor tribes was a failure did not receive the concurrence of Cecil Beadon, the lieutenant governor of Bengal.¹ The policy was on trial; it was too premature to pass a verdict as to its success or failure. "It is not to be expected that these tribes who have been so long hostile to us and have incessantly kept up a system of predatory attacks upon our frontier will suddenly conceive or even profess a confiding and firm friendship for our officers". The very fact that the frontier had been free from incursions since its adoption clearly showed that the policy was not a total failure. In the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor, the Commissioner was wrong to stigmatise the subsidies as blackmail;* for he failed to realise that the allowance paid to the chiefs were indirectly payment for police duties for preservation of peace along the frontier. No one ever expected that the chiefs would maintain regular police establishment at selected locations and the utmost one could expect of them was that they would adopt such measures as were in their judgment necessary and in accordance with their tribal organisation to prevent the recurrence of outrages in the frontier.² Beadon felt that patience, infinite patience, was required of the local authorities in dealing with these tribes.

No one supposes that their civilization is to be effected in a few years; and no one expects that in endeavouring to conciliate them the Government will

¹ BJP, June 1865, No. 73; Eden to the Commissioner of Assam, 10 June.

* "The essential difference between Black Mail and annual allowance is", in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor, "that in one case the forbearance of the savage tribe is made by them conditional on the payment of the stipulated allowance and the other the payment is made by us conditional on the good behaviour of the conduct of the tribe. One is initiated in an aggressive spirit, the other in a spirit of conciliation.

² *Ibid.*

not meet with occasional disappointment, but the policy is nonetheless sound and intelligible.³

Concurring with the Lieutenant Governor, the Governor-General in Council in their proceedings on 14 July 1865 declared that every effort should be made to conciliate the Abors and to establish British influence over these tribes.⁴ To that end reasonable expenditure need be incurred, but that did not mean that "expenditure will be increased in proportion to the threatening attitude of the tribes or that even the present payment be secured otherwise than by orderly and pacific arrangement upon their part". The military occupation of the Abor hills so strongly urged by the local authorities was ruled out; for the Government of India could provide neither men nor money at a time when these were required to meet pressing demands at other quarters. The local authorities were, therefore, directed to confine their attention up to the foothills and not beyond. They were told.

Our object should not be to extend our frontier, but to secure its good administration. If at any time, it may be necessary to advance into the hills beyond the border as a punitive measure, our troops should remain as long as it is necessary for the attainment of this object and no longer.⁵

Beadon sought to extend to the Kukis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts the same policy that had been pursued towards the Abor tribes. The Government of Bengal was unnecessarily dragged, he thought, into a series of profitless warfare on the assumption of the local authorities that there could be no peace in the frontier until the tribes were made to feel the power of the British. "No attempt should be made", he warned "to wound the savage pride of these tribes" by compelling them to present themselves before the superintendent at Chittagong or at a place away from their frontier; rather the latter should meet them at a spot "convenient to both" and enter into engagements for the preservation of peace in the frontier. At annual gatherings, the officer should receive trifling offerings from the chief and make him a present in return and availing the opportu-

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ B JP, September, No. 10; W. Muir, Secretary Government of India 10 July.

⁵ *Ibid.*

nity of hearing and redressing grievances, if any, of encouraging friendly intercourse between the tribes and with the people of the plains, As in case of the Abors a small allowance, either in cash or kind, might be made to the chief on condition of his maintaining peace within his as well as neighbour's Jurisdictions. The cost of subsidising the tribes, it was hoped, would be more than covered by the reduction in military and police establishment.⁶

On the approval of the aforesaid measures by the Government of India in March 1863, Captain Graham, the superintendent of the Hill Tracts, in a meeting at Ratan Poea's village entered into agreements with several chief, all agreeing in return for payments in cash and kind, amongst others, to acknowledge the authority of the government, to prevent their clansmen from attacking British subjects or trading, cultivating or travelling in the hills, and in case of any dispute arising between them and British subjects they would refer it to the Superintendent for his arbitration. Though belatedly, the Sylos and the Howlongs, too, through their representatives signed the agreement binding themselves to keep peace in the frontier and meet the officers as Kasalong.⁸

The experiment did not auger well. Even the first meeting in December 1884 was not a success; none of the leading chiefs attended on the pretext of their being engaged in reaping their harvests; yet cash allowances were forwarded to the chiefs including the Sylos and Howlongs. In 1866, the annual meeting was attended by eleven chief; of these only five remained till the end.⁹ Ratan Poea, the weakest of all, remained loyal to the government and was made the channel of communication with other tribes; but the Sylos and the Howlongs threw into winds the agreements; they considered the Hill tracts as their sole preserve wherein as a Ulick Browne, the commissioner of Chittagong, remarked :

they have destroyed our villages and the property of the inhabitants, murdered such of our subjects as they chose, and carried into lifelong captivity

⁶ FPA, July 1869, No. 253; also Mackenzie, A., Relations of the Government etc. Pp. 346-7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, BJP, July 1863, Nos. 152-3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ BJP, January 1867, Nos. 98 and 104; Lewin, T.H., 15 December 1866.

such as they thought would be useful [to them] as slaves. They have done this whenever they chose with perfect impunity ...naturally.....their feeling and reasoning is we are either too weak and too much afraid to punish them.....¹⁰

Small wonder that these warlike tribes construed the subsidies as tributes payable by the government for their forbearance in attacking British subjects.

Ever since Lister's expedition in 1850, relations with the Lushais in the east continued to be, on the whole, satisfactory. The situation, however, altered in January 1862 when Sukpial under instigation mainly of Gaurshailon, the Poito chief, to avenge the wrong done to his father raided some villages in the district of Sylhet wherein several British subjects were killed and carried off.¹¹ Fearing that the use of force might bring the Lushais down on the European Planters, Captain Stewart, the deputy commissioner Cachar, was directed by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to induce Sukpial to deliver up the captives and to undertake protection of the frontier by restraining his own and neighboring chief's people from attacking British subjects. In October 1864, the Deputy Commissioner succeeded in entering into an engagement with Sukpial under which the chief was to receive an annual payment of rupees six hundred on his agreeing to do his utmost to preserve peace on the frontier and to send each year, certain articles as tributes to the government.¹²

Sukpial made no serious attempt to fulfill his obligations. On the other hand, he had removed himself from the Chattrachura hills to a position southward close to the Sylos.¹³ Vonolel or Mora had died; his wife Impanoo with her infant son Vonpial had shifted to village Kholel, east of the river Sonai. Several chiefs had followed a line of conduct which showed that they "feared and suspected us". They had gradually abandoned the former practice of taking up the village sites deserted by the refugees and consequently within a few years there had emerged a tract of waste land covered with jungles "known only to a few old man who had not been over the grounds

¹⁰ BJP, December 1870, No. 172; EPA. July 1870, No. 256.

¹¹ BJP, April 1862, Nos. 432-5; June Nos. 5-7; January 1863, Nos. 172-3.

¹² BJP, November 1864, Nos. 4-8; 167-9; December, Nos. 98-9.

¹³ FPA, August 1872, Nos. 61-113; Edgar to the Commissioner of Dacca 3 April.

for years".¹⁴ The occupation of these tracts by European planters for actual or proposed cultivation could not but be construed by hillmen as an encroachment on their prescriptive rights.* In 1864 when messengers of Vonpikal lodged a protest against such action to Major Stewart, the deputy commissioner Cachar, the latter endeavoured to allay their suspicions by pointing out that the Lushais too would be benefited by extension of tea plantations.¹⁵ It was indeed a "political mistake", as Stewarts successor J. W. Edgar thought, to throw open village sites to planters who were led to believe that tea cultivation would extend as far as the streams were navigable. For this had the effect of

alienating from us all the hillmen within this district to create a feeling of distrust of our intentions amongst not only the tribes in the neighbourhood but even the Munnipoorees who oppose the survey of the tract lying between our frontier and the valley, because they suspect us of wishing to seize it for tea-planting."¹⁶

Before long Sukpikal's sons grew up and some of them, like Khalkom, gained considerable influence over their neighbours. Vonpikal took over the management from his mother and strengthened himself by marrying the daughter of his powerful neighbour Poiboi who succeeded to the village Lalpung. Vonolel's son Lenkum started a village north of Champai while his brother Deute established himself on west.¹⁷ These young chief, adventurous and even eager for fighting, were determined to resist the infiltrators whether from the north or the south. They ridiculed the advice of the fearful older folk to desist from attacking British territories; for they believed that the British in Cachar and Manipur were not so powerful as they had been hitherto and that they were then not accessible to British troops.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, also BJP, October 1869, No.7; Junior Secretary Government of Benal to the Board of Revenue, 21 May. Edgar was told by an old chief that he would even prefer the oppressive rule of Maniper because " We allow the planters to make slaves of the tribes in Cachar and Assam". Edgar felt that it wes a reproach to the British government that "our subjects be forced to take refuge under an oppressive government like that of Munnipore".

¹⁷ FPA, August 1872, Nos. 61-113; *op. cit.*: see geneological table Appendix-F.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

In November 1868 intelligence arrived that the Naga village Mentha in Manipur was attacked and burned by Vompilal and Poiboi and several captives carried off.¹⁹ In December, Sukpilal's people attacked Rungboom, a Kuky Chief in Hill Tipperah and committed outrages in the south-east and south of Sylhet.* On 10 January 1869, the garden of Nawarbund was plundered, burned and some coolies were killed. On 14th, Deute attacked the garden of Moneirkhal and the police guard located therein failed to prevent the plundering of the garden and destruction of its buildings. Early in February several chiefs raided the Kala Naga stockade which was strongly garrisoned by Manipuri sepoy.²⁰ The repeated raids and the loss of lives and properties of British speculators ultimately forced the Governor-General in Council on 5 February 1869 to sanction an expedition against the offending tribes. The local authorities were however directed that punishment be inflicted upon villages the inhabitants of which were the actual perpetrators of the outrages and that every means should be taken to impress upon these tribes the determination of the government to punish several similar crimes and that offenders would never be safe from the retribution.²¹ Suspecting Sukpilal and Vompilal as the actual perpetrators of the outrages, it was proposed that two columns consisting of 44th N.I. and the 7th N.I. besides a wing of the artillery should advance, one along the Dhaleswari to Sukpilal's village and other along the Sonai to Vompilal; while a detachment of the 7th N. I. should march from Sylhet to Rangbhoom village and effect a junction with the Dhaleswari column. A contingent of Manipuri troops should act in concert while the Tipperah Raja should cooperate with the party from Sylhet.²²

The central column under Brigadier - General Nuthall started on 26 February 1869 from Jallencherra, the southernmost tea garden

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, FPA February 1869, Nos. 72-105.

* It was suspected that these raids were committed to divert the attention of the authorities while an attempt was made in Cachar to put Kanai Singh the pretender on the throne of Manipur. The matter caused so much anxiety in the minds of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal that he directed Brigadier-General Nuthall of the Eastern Command to comply with any requisition for aid that might be made by the Commissioner of Dacca or the Magistrate of Sylhet.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

in Cachar, and reached after eight days river Boolung, a tributary of the Dhaleswari, where its progress was impeded by incessant rain and was compelled to fall back. On the 13th, the Sylhet column under Messrs Kemble and Baker, the deputy inspector general of police, accompanied by a detachment of 7th N. I., 170 police and a party of Tipperah Raja's sepoy left the headquarters and reached on 17th river Gootoor where they met Sukpial and his followers.²³

The enemy was attacked and beaten off ; but the difficulties of procuring supplies under inclement weather compelled the troops to retire back to Sylhet.²⁴ The Sonai column under Major Simson, the commissioner of Dacca, accompanied by J. W. Edgar, the deputy commissioner Cachar, with 400 sepoy left Silchar on 22 February and despite torrential rain and difficulties of the terrain reached Bazarghat. They were met by the emissaries of Vonpial declaring that their chief had died and that he had taken no part in the raids .Edgar discovered the truth of their statement and in the dialogue that followed all vowed their innocence of the attacks on British territory which they attributed to other branches-those on Sylhet by Sukpial, on Nowarbund by Lalgam, son of Lalpung, on Monirkhal by Duete, son of Vonolel. Promising fidelity for the future, they undertook to do all that was possible for the restitution of the captives that were under the custody of other chiefs, Finally, they assured the Deputy Commissioner to see him at his headquarters after rains and would induce others to do so.²⁵

The difficulties of the terrain and incessant rain resulted in the failure of the expedition. The expedition was ill timed. It lacked coordination to achieve success. "The organisation and management of the whole expedition", as the Lieutenant Governor remarked, "was of more decidedly military character than suitable for expeditions of this sort. A small force of picked troops under a select officer and supported by a body of well drilled and well armed police would be likely to be more successful in such a country against such an enemy as the Looshais than a force having a military

²³ FPA, March, 1869, No. 317.

²⁴ FPA, December 1869, No. 245.

²⁵ FPA, August 1872, Nos. 61-113; Edgar 3 April.

organisation commanded by an officer of high rank hampered by impediments inseparable from a force of that character.²⁶ The failure of the expedition, it was feared, would embolden the Lushais to renew their attacks on a larger scale in the next cold weather or near future when they were fully prepared. Edgar thought of conciliation, but it must be preceded by measures of retribution.

The injuries they have done to us were so injurious, the gain to them so very great, and the difficulties they found so small, that if they are allowed to get off with impunity and without making reparation, I fear they will be encouraged to commit outrages upon us on a far larger scale hereafter, and that the other tribes on our border, seeing the success of the Lushais, might be tempted to follow their example.²⁷

Dr Browne, the political agent Manipur, considered it "imperatively necessary" to send on expedition in the next winter with the object of punishing the chiefs, insisting on their submission and demanding surrender of captives and fire arms on their possession.²⁸ In a similar strain Mr. Simson, the commissioner of Dacca urged the despatch of the expedition to demonstrate the Lushais "our ability to occupy the country and our determination to protect our subjects" and also to inform them that "we neither desire nor intend to assert aggressive or oppressive dominions nor to take harassing tributes from them, but we wish to facilitate friendly intercourse and trade."²⁹ After reviewing the proceedings of the expedition, William Grey, the lieutenant governor of Bengal, also proposed to despatch an expedition, "not necessarily of a hostile character". with the object of demanding surrender of captives, submission of chiefs and as a token of which to pay a nominal tribute, binding them by engagements to abstain from committing raids on territories of the British, Manipur and Hill Tipperah and also to prevent others from doing so. He further desired to select a spot where an officer might be stationed with the object of exercising "real influence" over these tribes.³⁰ Notwithstanding the forceful

²⁶ FPA, December 1869, No. 245.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 238.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 281.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 236.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 245; also BJP, August 1869, Nos. 222-3.

advocacy of the local authorities and the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, the Governor-General in Council were reluctant to despatch another expedition even of a limited nature or to admit that when outrages occur within British frontier it was imperative to punish the offenders by following them up to their hills.³¹

The jungly and wild nature of the country, the unfavourable climate which renders active operations impossible except for short periods of the year, the difficulty of inflicting a retribution sufficient to produce a lasting effect on savages possessed of little or no property, and the time that has elapsed, are themselves reasons why a military expedition should not be resorted to.³²

Agreeing with the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal the Government of India directed that measure should be taken to place an officer in the tract between the district of Cachar and Hill Tract of Chittagong which was liable to the incursions of the Lushais. The officer so appointed should meet the chiefs and take engagements on the lines suggested by the Lieutenant Governor. To resist sudden and unprovoked attacks, the frontier should be strengthened wherever vulnerable and necessary measures need be taken to prevent importation of arms and ammunitions to the tribes from across the frontier.³³

While these measures were under consideration, there had arrived at Silchar a deputation of the Eastern Lushais to renew their intercourse and Edgar sought to avail his opportunity to visit their country in return. The proposal received forthwith the sanction of the government. It was arranged that the Deputy Commissioner would be accompanied by a small force and Major Macdonald of the survey department for defining the southern boundary of Cachar.³⁴ Edgar left his headquarters towards the close of December 1869 and reached Lushai Hat on the river Sonai where he met the Muntrees (Ministers) of Imapanoo, Khalkom, (son of Sukpibal) and several other chiefs. "with big dinners and bigger drinks for the *Muntrees*", Edgar endeavoured to impress upon them the necessity of preventing the recurrence of outrages and also of fixing a boundary line beyond which the British would exercise no jurisdiction. In the event of any

³¹ *Ibid.*, No.240; also BJP, 1869 Nos. 289-308.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ FPA, December 1869, No.288.

attack, the friendly chief should give timely intelligence and, if possible, drive the enemy back and in return the British would provide them with necessary arms.³⁵ Later, Edgar reached Bepari Bazar near Sukpibal's village and after much persuasion the chief came in and agreed *inter alia* (i) that a boundary line should be laid down and that the chief would advance his village northward where in he would station outposts close to the boundary, (ii) that he would refer to the Deputy Commissioner all disputes that might arise with any of the tribes lying between his village and those of Sylhet or Tipperah, and that (iii) he would have the monopoly of trade with Cachar by the Gootoor levying fixed rates on all licensed dealer and on wood-cutters entering into the territory. At the end of the conference, Sukpibal received a robe of honour specially made for him of green *pyjamas*, a purple coat, a pant of green and white silk besides necklaces, gold beads and earrings.³⁶

Edgar's mission was successful and in any case in procuring information about the chief and a country hitherto not much known. In his report to the Government of Bengal, he made it clear that the proposal of stationing an officer in the Lushai country would arouse the "apprehension and wrath" of the Lushais preventing, thereby, "the growth of confidence" between the British and these tribes.³⁷ He suggested that the Deputy Commissioner or one of his subordinates should visit the Lushai country and hear grievances of the chiefs and offer presents to those who behaved well. He was also not in favour of taking written engagements with the chiefs as recommended by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. He sought instead to issue *sunnuds* defining the boundary beyond which British civil jurisdiction would not extend and containing the conditions on which they would be allowed to hold their lands free of interference. Finally, Edgar recommended the establishment of a Political Agent in Hill Tipperah which he considered as "absolutely indispensable" to make the Raja to fall in line with the general policy adopted by

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ FPA, May 1869, No. 104; K.W. 1., July 1870, Nos.257-66; News items, Observer 25 February 1871.

³⁷ FPA, K.W. 2, July 1870, Nos. 257-66.

the government for dealing with these tribes, to restrain his subjects from irritating the Lushais and to keep watch over the intrigues of the Tipperah Officials who were suspected of supplying fire arms to these tribes.³⁸

Lord Mayo, like his predecessor, adhered strictly to non-intervention. Concurring in the views of the Deputy Commissioner Cachar, the Viceroy opposed the idea of placing an Agent in the midst of these tribes or beyond the frontier; for when a tribe was brought under his control, the government would then be responsible for its protection in case of any attack by the tribes beyond the frontier and “there is nothing to prevent this process from being repeated indefinitely till we find ourselves endeavouring to protect indefinitely till we find ourselves endeavouring to protect and conciliate savage tribes on the frontier of western China”. He was strongly in favour of granting *sunnads* instead of having written agreements on the ground that would leave the tribes undisturbed in their possession subject to the fulfilment of conditions specified therein.³⁹ Even in case of the appointment of the Political Agent in Hill Tipperah, it was not the desire of the Viceroy “to interfere with the lawful and proper exercise of Raja’s authority over his subjects.” The chief would be left free to deal with the Lushais under his effective control, but with respect to those independent or who did not acknowledge him as their chief, the Raja would be prohibited from adopting any punitive measure without the approval of the government.⁴⁰

The Government of India directed on 30 June 1870 that the policy which was adopted on the Cachar side should also be tried on the Chittagong frontier.⁴¹ Ulick Browne, the commissioner of Chittagong, when he was called upon to give effect to these measures, held the view that certain aspects of the order were not applicable to the Chittagong border. Therein the boundary line need not be defined since a wide tract lay between the frontier posts and the hostile tribes. *Sunnads* guaranteeing their possessions did not

³⁸ *Ibid.*: also BJP, March 1870, Nos. 83-4; April Nos. 38 and 66-8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, BJP, July 1870, Nos 117-8.

⁴⁰ BJP., July 1870, Nos. 21-5; also FPA, April 1871, Nos. 25-6.

⁴¹ BJP., September 1870, Nos.190-1.

arise with the Howlongs and the Sylos when the government did not contemplate occupying their village and such a measure would create nothing but suspicion and ill feeling with these rude tribes. The visiting of the wild country “to see the chiefs, to hear grievances, to adjust quarrels and to give presents” Browne represented, had already been acted upon with success as regards Ratan Poea and the Sylos, but not with the Howlongs, the most powerful of the tribes.⁴² No better method, he thought, could be adopted to deal with these tribes than that of establishing a post at Ratan Poea’s village “near enough to the Howlongs to exercise a moral effect, though not near enough to provoke them to attack us”. The measure received the approval of William Grey, the lieutenant governor of Bengal (1867-71) who felt that the proposed post under a European officer would be the best possible agency “for effectively bringing home the Lushai tribes the conciliatory policy laid down by the government.”⁴⁴ The Government of India had also to admit that the circumstances of frontier tribes of the Chittagong hills were different from those of Cachar and, in fact, it was not the desire of the Governor-General in Council to lay down one “unvarying and rigid policy” over an extensive frontier from Assam to Akyab. The policy to be followed “must necessarily vary in its details with the varying circumstances of the country and the tribes bordering such an extensive line”. If it was considered inexpedient by the local authorities to establish trading marts in the Chittagong frontier or to issue *sunnuds* to the chiefs similar to those in Cachar such measures need not be attempted.⁴⁵ But Mayo’s government deprecated the very idea of an advanced post in Ratan Poes’s village which would lead, before long, “to attempts to extend our direct influence further east.”⁴¹ The Governor-General in Council was decidedly of opinion that it would be preferable to withdraw to a convenient line in the frontier of the existing police posts to the border of the Hill Tipperah. The Police posts should be strengthened and connected, as far as practicable, by

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ BJP, December 1870, No. 172.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, also FPA, December 1870, No. 751.

bridle paths which should be constantly patrolled. Beyond this line, no attempt should be made to establish civil jurisdiction or direct authority over the tribes who should be left entirely free to manage their affairs and the district officers "should confine their efforts to frequent and friendly intercourse with the chiefs and tribes, occasional friendly visits, the distribution of presents, friendly arbitration to settle differences and other measures calculated to establish a permanent personal influence over them".⁴⁶

In the Angami country, so far as the immediate objectives were concerned, the advance to Samagutting was a success. Raids upon Nowgong and North Cachar gradually ceased and the protection of the lowlands was secured. The work of civilizing the Nagas also began in right earnest. A road was opened from Dimapur to Samagutting and steps were taken to start a hospital and set up a school at the headquarters. The Nagas were encouraged to send their children to the school and the sick to the hospital.⁴⁷ The increased security in the hills resulted in the fall of the price of the grains and the Angamis were seen taking services as cooks and entering trade in tea seeds with Assam and ponies with Manipur.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding these developments, Gregory had to inform the Government of Bengal that he could not have the meeting of the Nagas in the interior as many of the clans were then at feud and the representatives of the distant villages could not risk their lives to reach the place of meeting.⁴⁹ The dobhasies or Residentiary Delegates, too, failed in settling old disputes or preventing new feuds from breaking out.⁵⁰ Raids upon the Nagas and upon Mainpur, therefore, remained unabated. Towards the close of December 1870 Gregory's successor Lieutenant Butler reporting two serious intertribal raids by opposing factions of Khonomah on their neighbours, expressed his regret that he was prevented from putting a stop to such outrages where "war - to-the knife" was the order of the day and neither women nor children were spared. He felt that the impunity with which such

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ BJP, October 1866. Nos. 56-7; see Gregory's Memorandum.

⁴⁸ BJP, General A, July 1872, see Administrative Report year ending in April 1872.

⁴⁹ BJP, March 1867, No. 225; Gregory 12 February.

⁵⁰ BJP, February 1871, No. 279; Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills 3 January.

atrocities had been committed so frequently could no but discredit the British government.⁵¹

The primary object of appointing Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor was not so much to check them as to prevent raid into British territory; and to this extent the measure had been a success.⁵² He was not inclined to incur any responsibility or expenditure for blood feuds which were matters with which the government had no concern beyond offer of advice and remonstrance. To C.U. Aitchison, the Secretary to the Government of India, "a zealous officer is vexed with inequities that are perpetrated. His fingers itch to apply a remedy- the first advice, then mediation, then force to carry orders and then direct assumption of jurisdiction". This "ascending scale" of interference was not acceptable to the Governor-General in Council; the latter considered it inexpedient to make any alteration in the policy of non-intervention.⁵³

Hopkinson was well aware that the Deputy Commissioner could do very little. "Mediation and remonstrance", he felt, "cannot be pushed far without great danger of involving the mediator in quarrel and they are likely to be disregarded by the parties to the quarrel as soon as it is made certain to them that the mediator will not actively interfere in them."⁵⁴ Yet, the Commissioner was then not prepared to make any change in the policy; rather he would push non-interference to the "utmost verge of forbearance" for no other reason than to convince the government that interference was unavoidable.⁵⁵ The actual position in the Naga Hills continued to be unsatisfactory and that complications arising from it were increasing in "seriousness and magnitude". The prevention of their raids into North Cachar was no longer the concern of the government; for as a result of the new boundary line difficulties had arisen in keeping peace between the Angamis and Manipur.

The Nagas were left free to carry on their incursions into the

⁵¹ FPA, August 1871, Nos. 154-9; see Policy to be pursued with respect to inter-line Feuds of the Angami Nagas; Government of Bengal, 15 April.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.* Aitchison 15 July; BJP, October 1871, No. 45; Secretary Government of India 10 August.

⁵⁴ BJP, April 1871, Nos. 88-90; Hopkinson 28 March.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, September, No. 12; Hopkinson 10 May.

territory of Manipur since they were prevented from retaliatory raids on what was declared as British territory while the British officers were forbidden to exercise any control over the independent Nagas. Complaints were made by the Political Agent Manipur, that "villages south of the Barail are in a state of turmoil", atrocious outrages had been committed by the villages north-east of Manipur" and that "worst of these outrages had been committed by villages on the east of Naga Hills" which had been described by the Political Agent as independent but by the Deputy Commissioner as British territory. There also loomed large the danger of serious conflict between the Eastern Nagas, particularly the Lhotas (or Lothas) and the planters of the district of Sibsagar who had extended their operations into the interior of the hills. Inevitably

We shall be obliged to decide shortly whether we are to advance to the occupation of the Naga Hills, or retire, letting the Muneepurees complete the conquest of the Angamis on their side and ours withdrawing our frontier to a safe distance from the incursion of these tribes.⁵⁶

Evidently, Hopkinson advocated a continuation of the policy of non-intervention only because it would break down, sooner or later, and force the government to a more comprehensive policy. He saw no difficulty on the occupation and reduction of the whole country.

With a fine body of infantry properly posted in it, strong supports below, and a good military road traversing the entire country, there would probably be very soon an end of the Nagas, as there had been an end of the Khasi difficulty.⁵⁷

"If it had been foreseen in 1860", remarked J.W. Edgar, the secretary to the Government of Bengal, "to grow out of the measures then taken, I scarcely think that the formation of the Naga Hills District would have been proposed by the Government of Bengal and sanctioned by the Government of India and Secretary of State for India."⁵⁸ The policy of the Government of India at that stage remained unaltered; the prophecy of the Commissioner-we must either fall back before the Nagas or treat the Angami Hills as the Khasi Hills- came to be too true as will be seen on our next volume.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ BJP, September 1871, No. 25, Edgar 24 June.

APPENDIX-A

1

English translation of Beesa Gaum's letter to the Agent to the Governor-General:

..... With respect to lands, these from Namsang Mookh, Noa Dehing Mookh and to the Patkai, Galling Hills (?) are the Singpho lands; but you of the Company have forgotten what was said to Scott Sahib, and Neufvill Sahib and after this the Major Sahib (Major White) said, that the land is ours.

..... now it is said that where the tea grows, that is yours, but when we make sacrifice we require tea for our funerals; we therefore perceive that you have taken all the country, and if we, the old and respectable, can't get tea to drink. We are not well satisfied. FC, 12 August 1843, No. 96 .

11

When captain Brodie, principal assistant Sibsagar, asked Beesa Gaum to produce documentary evidence in support of his claims, the latter wrote :

..... Where can I give written authority you required. If I have not received the written order how can I send it. Yet when I took the oath to the Company the land was given; Maneeram Kagoti, the Deka Phukan and Burgohain were present and heard this. No *purwana* was given, but on Beesa's asking the country was given and when Ningroola asked for lands he was told he would receive them from the Beesa for at that time I was proprietor as far as Dehing Mookh. Now wherever you find tea you make a Tea Garden; if it be so, there will be no room for the Seventeen Gaums to remain..... FC, 12 August 1843, No. 97.

III

Letter of Serro-la-ten and others :

What we have just done was not done against the Company, it was against Vetch Sahib..... Vetch Sahib has taken our lands and

fields; therefore we did it. If you will release the Beesa Rajah Norotah, it will be your pleasure; but if you will not, let the Beesa Rajah go we Singpho are not all dead and destroyed. Vetch Sahib used force with us, therefore we wrested (?) with him, and besides we do not get good from Vetch Sahib; he did not give us back our slaves; if we put witches to death he punished us and therefore we are all discontented dated Khamti year 1205, 23rd of Kartick. *FC, 23 March 1844 No. 90, Vetch to Jenkins 17 December 1843.*

APPENDIX-B

Statement showing the Number of *Katakis*, remission for *Kataki* lands and Naga Khats in the district of Seeksagar. FC, 19 October 1844, No. 124

No. Names of Dwars	No. of <i>Katakees</i>	Remission for <i>Kata-</i> <i>kees</i> lands	Remission for Naga <i>Khats</i>	Total amount Remission
1. Mohong Bor Dwariya	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
2. Panee dwaria	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
3. Namsang	3	9-0-0	0-0-0	9-0-0
4. Moothoon	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
5. Banphera	3	9-0-0	12-0-1	21-0-1
6. Jobokah	3	9-0-0	0-0-0	9-0-0
7. Bheetur Namsang	3	9-0-0	16-6-8	25-6-8
8. Teeree	3	9-0-0	15-13-7	24-13-7
9. Khappun	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
10. Jaktoongiya	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
11. Jabloongiya	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
12. Abor Naga	2	6-0-0	0-0-0	6-0-0
13. Gelekee	4	12-0-0	6-0-0	18-0-0
14. Dobdhor	7	21-0-0	16-0-0	36-0-0
15. Ausringiya	2	6-0-0	35-5-9	41-5-9
16. Hateeghur	2	6-0-0	24-6-10	30-6-10

DYUNG DWAR

17. Charegaih	2	6-0-0	10-0-0	16-0-0
18. Malochee	3	9-0-0	29-3-0	38-8-0
19. Jungpang	3	9-0-0	24-2-0	35-2-0
20. Mekilace	2	6-0-0	39-10-5	45-10-5
21. Mohom	2	6-0-0	13-5-3	19-5-3
22. Lakoteeah	8	24-0-0	45-12-2	69-12-2

23. Sancegaon and Kergaon	2	6-0-0	23-13-4	29-13-4
24 . Borgaon	3	9-0-0	34-8-7	43-8-7
25. Hilleegaon	3	9-0-0	40-7-10	49-7-10
26. Nesangaon	3	9-0-0	26-8-0	35-3-0
27 . Bhaderee	2	6-0-0	27-10-6	35-10-6
28. Nowgong	2	6-0-0	26-8-0	32-8-0
29. Kaboong	3	9-0-0	16-10-6	25-10-6
30. Mohon 2	3	9-0-0	16-0-0	25-0-0
31. Akook	3	9-0-0	20-11-3	29-11-3
32 Oorboong	0	0-0-0	12-0-0	12-0-0
Total	88	264-0-0	533-4-0	797-4-9

SD. T Brodie

Prinl. Asstt. Commissioner.

APPENDIX-C

Statement made by Ram Singh, Rajah of Cherra, regarding the *darbar* of the rebels at Mobookhon (*BJP*, November 1862, No. 352)

I Met (sic) at Mobookhoon, Ookkiang Nungba of Jowai; Ookma Langdo (*sic*) and Oosan Saloo of Jallong; A *Pathor* of Nurteng and the *Dolloyes* of Shamphong and Nongjoongi. About 500 or 600 Rebels attended the *Durbar*. Ookkiang Nungba, who has been elected Rebel *Lusker*, was the spokesman. He said that, if the *Raj* was restored and the Hills relinquished by Government, the Rebels would make friends, but that they wished neither to see nor have any thing to do with Government. He assigned as his reason for saying so that their *Poojah* had been interfered with. He referred also to Government having in Colonel Lister's and Mr. Inglis' time taken the Guns and wealth belonging to the Rajah of Jynteeahpore. Also that in Mr. Scott's time the Jynteeahs had made roads through their territory on the understanding that the country would not be annexed by Government. I explained that it neither was nor had been the intention of Government to interfere with their *Poojah* and customs, but Ookkiang said I was deceiving him. I said "if you don't trust me I'll leave my brother or myself in your hands, and if Government in any way falsify my word, you may cut the hostage in (*sic*) pieces". Ookkiang would not agree. I am of opinion Ookkiang Nungba and Mullong *Dolloye* of Munsow are of same mind. The *Dalloyes* of Ralliong and Shampoong are, I think, in favour of submission, but Ookkiang said he would cut the children in (*sic*) pieces if they gave in I don't know whether the *Kooars* can do any thing towards getting in the Rebels. Ookkiang (*ou*) twitted them. After the *Durbar* was over Hajun Manick and I left. The *Kooars* also went to their hut. Ookkiang Nungba and twenty men went after the *Kooars*, with whom they conversed for about half an hour. I did not inquire what transpired. I have no hope that Rabun Sing and I can do anything further.

Read over to the Rajah of Cherra in *Oordoo*, which he understands , and acknowledged correct.

B.W.D. MORTON,

Deputy Commissioner, Cossyah and Jynteeah Hills

APPENDIX-D

Translation of a letter from the Dhurma Rjah to the Governor Bahadoor. (*FPA, September 1864, Nos. 56-8*).

May you always remain well, and may God protect your power and authority.

On the day of July [21 Sraban] I received a letter sent through the Delingcote soubah in which it is written that my subjects have committed robberies and other outrages on British subjects, and that you sent Mr. Eden to me to enquire into these matters. When Mr. Eden came to my *Durbar* I was then only newly appointed Dhurma Rajah; when the *Sahib* arrived I told my council, "see these gentlemen have come a long journey, and are tired; therefore they received them (*Sic*) well, and do all that they want." After the *Sahib* had rested I met him, and asked him for what purpose he had come; and he answered "I have come to inquire into the robberies and other outrages committed by your people on our subjects." Regarding this I have given orders. You write that you have seized the revenue of Assam Dooars and of Ambaree Fallacota, and that you will not give it back unless I comply with your demands. You say that the Tongso Penlow has shown violence to Mr. Eden; this is true, but the Tongso Penlow has gone away to his country. *To settle all, if you wish, send some Sahibs again to me, I settle before them*, and I will explain everything to them, and then you will know the truth. If the *Sahibs* do not come, I will, if you want to enquire into the matter, send my [*amlah who*] can decide what is wrong and what is right, and do what is proper; do't send the *Sahibs* or write on the matter to the other side [East Bootan]. The Bootan country belongs of old to the Dhurmah Rajah, and you pay the revenue which have seized or not as you please.

Always write to me about your health.

True translation
(Signed) A. Eden
Secretary to the Government of
Bengal.

APPENDIX-E

Translation of a letter from the Deb and the Dhurma Rajahs to the Lieutenant Governor. PP (*House of Commons*) No. 52, Pp. 325-6.

You are well, and your government is prosperous and this we are pleased.

You sent Mr. Eden here satisfactorily to arrange matters, because there was confusion between your government and Bootan; you sent him that there should be accord and friendship between the Dhurma [Rajah] and the Queen. We don't understand the English Language; so Cheeboo Lama was the Interpreter; the *Sahib* [Eden] came as *Vakeel* for the Queen.

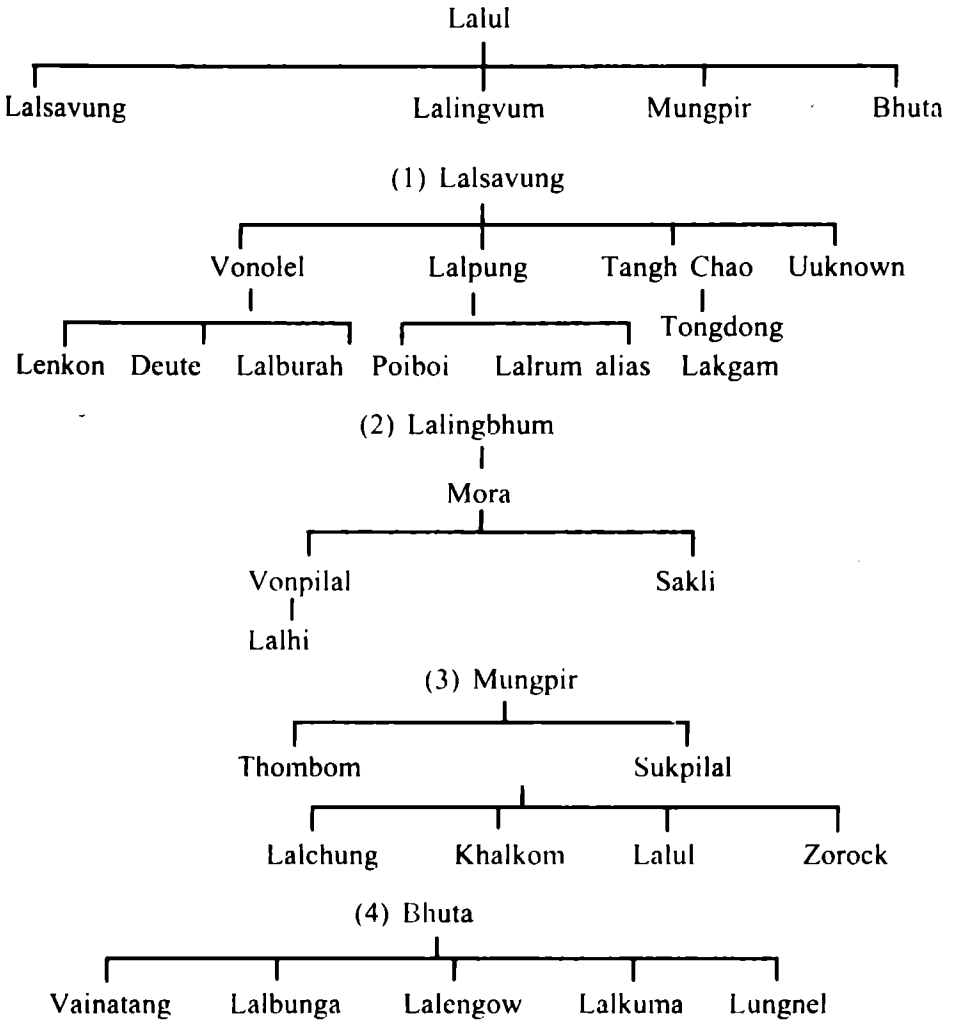
We gave the *Sahib* and the *amlah* the council [on having met] instruction (that the treaty should be made), so that it should be beneficial, and that our amicable relations; never before broken, should be made stronger. Afterward the *Sahib* and the *amlah* having consulted, said that the treaty was arranged. we also agreed to it, that is to say, all being agreed to, we explained it to the *Sahib* properly and dismissed him. At that time he said nothing [but] having arrived there [at Darjeeling] and having misrepresented matters two letters were sent here by you to the effect that we had used compulsion last year to Mr. Eden; but if his signature to the treaty had been obtained by force, we would have remedied if he had told is so.

The *Sahib* came here as a great man, he should have come with his mind made up as to what he should do; he went away satisfied and on arrival [at Darjeeling] spoke differently. *What was agreed on the treaty last year should be kept to; there is no necessity for any more discussion (or new words)*. Two letters have been written from here, that there should be no disagreement between [our] relations. The *amlahs* are the medium of Rajah's orders, according to perpetual custom in Bootan, and *it is not our custom to alter what is once agreed on*; but accommodation to matter is good. If you wish it, a treaty can be made with your consent. If you will send a *Sahib* in *Kartick*, after making a satisfactory treaty, I will send him back; or if there is any difficulty or trouble in this, and you ask for

an envoy from here, it is now, hot weather, and we cannot send a fit person. When the cold weather arrives we will send one to any place you may appoint, but uptil now we have received no reply good or bad. Our letter must have reached you. We have no way deviated from the treaty of last year. From letters from the people on our frontier we learn that a bridge has been made, and troops collected, oppsite Kalimpong, in the Soubah of Dalimcott's Division, and that a fort has been built and preparation for war and that travellers and traders from Domunee and Mynagoree are stopped on the frontier as Buxur Dooar and that the northern frontier at Dhumsong is also closed. This must be by your orders. But we have committed no misdemeanour in your territory; our people may have committed some thefts and dacoities in your territory; but the thefts, decoities and invasions by bodies like armies in our territory; are innumerable, and we are not dissatisfied with this. Sometime ago you seized on seven *talooks* in Assam, for which provisions for Dharmah Rajah's *poojah* were brought, and you paid some rupees in exchange, and we, consenting reserved them. This [payment] has been stopped and the rent of Ambaree Fallacota has not been paid for five years; besides the erection of the forts on the frontier has suddenly stopped the importation of provision for *poojah*. You are a officer of great rank under the Queen: consider well whether all this is well done; and if you will arrange matters, consider whether proceedings are good or bed. If you well treat, white and say so; if you are bent on violent measures, we also having well considered, will have to act. Please send a speedy answer.

APPENDIX-F

Geneological table of the Lushai chiefs



GLOSSARY

Bari, a garden,

Bashan, head of a local administrative unit.

Boorkha, a garment.

Daroga, Inspector of Police.

Dewan, chief executive.

Dobhashi, an interpreter.

Doloi, head of an *elaka* or administrative division.

Duar, a region adjoining a hill, a mountain pass.

Durbar, an assembly.

Dykhai, a foreigner.

Fakir, a mendicant, a devotee.

Gaum, a tribal chief.

Gaonburah, a village headman.

Golah, a stop, depot.

Hat, market.

Havildar, a sepoy non-commissioned officer.

Ikrarnamah, an agreement.

Jumeas, cultivators by hand or by jumming under which a tract is cleared of jungle and cultivated for a few years, after which the land is allowed to remain fallow for a period to regain fertility.

Jamadar, a subordinate police officer.

Jungpen or Zoompon, head of an administrative unit in Bhutan.

Kataki, an envoy, an agent.

Khat, an estate.

Khilat, a dress of honour.

Khureeta, a letter passing between a native ruler and the Governor-General.

Laskar, a Garo village headman.

Lingdow, or *Lyngdoh*, a priest, head of an administrative unit.

Majhee, a local official.

Mithan, a specie of India bison.

Muktear, a spokesman.

Muntree, a Minister.

Nazarana, tributary.

Panchayat, a council of elders.

Parwana, an order.

Pilo or Penlow, a viceroy or governor of Bhutan.

Posa, personal service or produce payable to hillmen.

Puja, a religious ceremony.

Pyjama, a garment.

Rajlands, crown land.

Rasud, provisions.

Sangots, a local administrative officer.

Sanjatee, a frontier official.

Sarbakar, a superintendent.

Sardar, head of an administrative unit in Khasi-Jayantia Hills.

Siem or Syiem, head of a Khasi State.

Sunnud, a written authority.

Tahsildar, revenue officer.

Thana, a police station.

Zamindar, a hereditary collector of revenue.

Zimmadar, a headman of a village or group of villages.

Zinkaff, a Bhutia messenger.

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