

THE PERIPHERY STRIKES BACK

Challenges to the Nation-State in
Assam and Nagaland



UDAYON MISRA

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
I. India's North-East: An Illusive Construct	1
II. The Naga Struggle: Historical Roots and Clash of Cultures	14
III. The Naga Struggle: Insurgent Politics and State Manoeuvres	44
IV. The Quest for <i>Swadhin Asom</i> : The Makings of a Mindset	62
V. The Quest for <i>Swadhin Asom</i> : Conflicts and Contradictions	111
VI. Potent Causes and Unresolved Issues	154
<i>Appendices</i>	191
<i>Bibliography</i>	269

Foreword

To state that diversity has been a central feature of Indian history amounts to stating only the obvious. But what has not been stressed as often is the fact that the nuances and implications of this diversity were very well understood and appreciated. The oft quoted Rigvedic verse '*tadekam sat*, etc.' is one of the earliest expressions of Indian sensitivity to cultural and ideological diversity. Political thinkers and law givers were especially aware of the complex plural base that the political domain had to confront and come to terms with. This plurality ranged from the highly mobile frontier nomadic-pastoral economy to the sedentary agrarian core areas, bound, often precariously, together by networks of trade and commerce. And then there was a social structure holding a variety of groups. It has thus been asserted repeatedly in the Dharmasastras-Arthasastra works that the ruler should respect customs and usages of *grama*, *sreni*, *jati*, *kula*, etc., and that a conqueror should be very very careful in imposing the laws and customs of his own country displacing those habitually practised in the newly conquered territory. Kautilya advised the ruler not to meddle with in the internal affairs of the 'forest people' even though they lived under his sway.

Ethnic affiliations have been a factor that all states had to contend with in some measure. However, the nation states of the West have been successful in neutralising the centrifugal pulls of ethnicity by building a larger sense of loyalty. Countries like India, which are now in the midst of nation-building process, face the problem of ethnicity more acutely. The present work, which has grown out of a fellowship project at the Institute, analyses the problem in the context of Assam and Nagaland.

I hope the reader would welcome this work for extending and deepening our understanding of the problem.

15 November, 1999

S.C. BHATTACHARYA
Director

Preface

Though the initial project submitted to the Indian Institute of Advanced Study dealt with the problem of ethnicity and nationalism covering the entire north-eastern region of India comprising of the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, yet the realisation soon dawned on me that instead of a general study dealing with the entire North-east, a more specific approach to the problem would perhaps be meaningful in the long run. Accordingly, I decided to confine the parameter of my work to two states of the north-eastern region, Assam and Nagaland, where armed struggles aimed at securing sovereign, independent nations are in progress. My choice of Assam and Nagaland was motivated by several factors. Assam, which today constitutes the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, has had centuries-old interaction with the rest of the Indian sub-continent and has much in common with other parts of the country in matters of language, culture and history. Unlike many of the other nationalities of the northeastern states of the Indian Union, the Assamese were deeply involved in the freedom struggle and from time to time the leading socio-cultural and religious reform movements of the sub-continent have had their share of influence on Assam. Moreover, state-formation in Assam which had taken place during the time of early rulers of Kamarupa, was later on given a solid base by the Ahom kings who ruled Assam for six hundred years. Several tribal state formations such as the Chutia and Kuch Kingdom existed from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. However, by the seventeenth century these were absorbed by the Ahom state. Only the Kachari state continued its separate existence till the early part of the eighteenth century. Assam's history is amongst the best documented in the country and its transition from tribalism to feudalism has been well traced.

By contrast, Nagaland, which comprises the Naga Hills district and Tuensang division of undivided Assam, is a classic case of a direct transition from tribal modes of production-relations to a market economy. The Nagas, divided into two dozen major tribes, were occupied with inter-tribe warfare till only a few decades back and their participation in the freedom struggle

led by Gandhi and the Congress was nil. Culturally, linguistically and socially, the different Naga tribes constituted “republics” of their own and but for trade with the Assam plains, had little interaction with either the Assamese or their other tribal neighbours. It was only in the nineteen forties that the idea of a Naga “nation” slowly started emerging and under Angami Zapo Phizo’s leadership the different tribes came together on a common platform of Nagaism. The Naga National Council, supposedly the one voice of the Naga “nation”, questioned the Nagas’ relationship with free India and insisted on either voluntary union or separation. Thus, began a struggle which has lasted for more than past fifty years and which may be said to be the earliest challenge to the nation-building process in independent India.

While the Naga movement for independence has been viewed from different angles, yet there seems to be a general point of agreement amongst scholars and political analysts on the question of the historical isolation of the Naga tribes from the Indian socio-cultural process—an isolationism deliberately aided by British colonial policy. Hence, there has been much talk about bringing the Naga people within the national “mainstream”. But the case with Assam is very different. It should be highly interesting to probe into the reasons as to why Assam, with its centuries-old socio-historical and cultural links with the rest of India, should be today in the grip of an armed movement led by the United Liberation Front of Assam and whose prime objective is to secure a sovereign, independent Assam which would be part of a confederation of independent north-eastern states. Why has the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), despite its ideological weaknesses and aberrations, been able to strike a responsive chord in the hearts of the Assamese masses is a question which has no easy answers. For this, one must go back into the history of Assam’s relationship with the rest of the country and how, after independence, the insensitivity, ignorance and prejudice of the Central leadership helped to alienate Assam from the Indian Union.

The period of my study begins primarily with the nineteen forties, even as the British were preparing to leave India, and moves upto the present times when the entire northeastern region of the country has been riven by inter-ethnic conflicts which have claimed thousands of lives. Given the ethnic diversity and the different stages of socio-economic progress, the struggle of the different nationalities of India’s “North-East” for what they consider to be their due, poses a great challenge to the Indian State. The future of the Indian nation-state depends a lot of how it can resolve the questions centered on ethnicity, nationalism and sovereignty being thrown

up by the movements in the North-east. This modest work is an attempt to probe into the causes of such conflicts, the factors keeping them alive and the role of the Indian State.

Though the selection of the Naga and Assam movements for sovereign status has helped me in concentrating on certain specific areas and issues, yet I feel that my work would have been more comprehensive had I been able to deal also with the insurrectionary movements in Tripura and Manipur and the growing feeling of alienation among the people of Meghalaya. Maybe, I shall at some future date be able to enlarge the scope of the present work to include these states as well.

I am grateful to Prof. Mrinal Miri, Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, for having given me a nine-month fellowship at the Institute in 1995-96 so that I could take time off from my teaching duties and work on the project. The excellent academic atmosphere at the IAS, the highly co-operative library staff and the extremely polite and ever-helpful employees of the Institute made my stay there a really happy and meaningful one. Friends like Uday Kumar, Papiya Ghosh, Jyotirmaya Sharma, Suresh Sharma, Shekhar Pathak, Birinder Pal Singh, Sucheta Mahajan, Raghavendra Rao, Sujata Miri, S. Sundarajan, S.A. Jabbar, Alekha Jabbar and a host of others added to my stay at the Institute in all possible aspects. To them I shall always be grateful for helping me unravel some of the knots of my work and to see certain things in a wider perspective. I shall always cherish those special evenings with Bhisham Sahni and Shila Sahni which overflowed with the warmth and affection which comes so naturally to them. A special word of thanks to Tilottoma who has not only been providing me with the intellectual stimulus to my work but who, during the period of my absence, managed the home-front all by herself. To my daughter, Sanghamitra, and son, Arindam, I shall always be grateful for their constant encouragement and enthusiastic backing.

15 February, 1999

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CHAPTER ONE

India's North-East: An Illusive Construct

There seems to be a growing tendency among policy planners and social scientists these days to club together the different states of the north-eastern region of the country as the *North-East*. While there is no denying the geographical reality of the North-east, yet complexities are bound to arise if the term is used as an umbrella connotation involving political and cultural aspects as well. It is true that the different states of India's "North-east" share a host of common problems ranging from communication bottlenecks to drug-trafficking, illegal infiltration and insurgency. It is also true that several of the states which today make up the North-east were once part of the undivided state of Assam, and still happen to share certain commonalities. But it would undoubtedly be simplistic to view the problems of the different states through a common *North-East* perspective. For, these states not only possess distinct culturo-historical traditions, but economically too they are in different stages of growth. Present-day Assam, made up primarily of the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys, for example, presents a very different picture when placed with the neighbouring states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal. Assam had a deep and wide-ranging cultural intercourse with the rest of the Indian sub-continent centuries before the other neighbouring hill regions came to know of the "mainstream". When most of the other regions were living on a subsistence economy, Assam was engaged in trade and commerce with neighbouring Bengal and state formation had taken place (Guha, 35).

Of all the hill tribes, it was only the Khasis and the Jaintias who had a moderately developed economy, with the Khasis engaging in vigorous trade with the plains of Assam and with present-day Bangladesh, while Manipur also underwent the process of state formation from relatively early times. Politically too, all the states of the north-eastern region cannot be seen one general unit, facing similar problems. Assam, for example, possessed a completely different political lineage and cannot be equated

with other states of the north-eastern region, as brief introduction to its history, culture and politics will reveal.

Today, because of the rise of insurgency in the entire north-eastern region, "experts" tend to view the problem as a total North-east issue. But even when analysing the roots of insurgency in different states of the region, it would be advisable to take into account the history and economy of each individual state. For, the socio-economic factors which have given rise to insurgency in the different states cannot be put in one basket. Therefore, it is imperative that while dealing with the states of the north-eastern region of the country, the distinct history and culture of each people should be kept in mind and attempt to club all together as the *North-East* should be avoided. In matters of language and literature, culture and religion, the degree of Aryanisation or Sanksritisation etc., the Brahmaputra valley stands distinctly apart from other states of the north-eastern region.

Thus, the similarities that exist between different states of the region should not overshadow the different stages of socio-cultural and politico-economic development. This point was well illustrated during the Film Festival held in New Delhi in the year 1996. In the India Panorama section Assamese, Bodo and Manipuri films had been shown. But when it came to meeting the Press, all the directors belonging to the north-eastern region of the country were slotted together, whereas directors from other parts of the country were given exclusive time slots. This was resented by the Assamese film directors, Bhabendranath Saikia and Jahnu Barua, both winners of several national and international awards, as they felt that the very purpose of interaction with the journalists was nullified by such clubbing together. The Press Information Bureau of the Government of India, however, saw no problems in grouping all the directors of the north-eastern region together. For it, the "North-East" was one single category. The Assamese and Manipuri directors boycotted the Press-meet after making their point clear that in such matters they resented being grouped together. In his editorial in the popular Assamese fortnightly, *Pranteek*, Saikia observed: "I don't think it is rational to club the North-east together on every single issue. One should know where to use the term collectively to include all the states of the region. There are certain issues like foreign infiltration, communication, terrorism and the like on which matters could be discussed keeping in view the entire North-east. But can this be applied to the case of the movies? Do the states which are being clubbed together as North-east depend on one another in matters of film-making? The history of the Assamese cinema is sixty years old. Does this fact alone not add

some significance to Assamese films? I make a film on the strength of my culture and tradition, on the strength of my intellectual powers and hard work. You select it for the Indian Panorama. After that you should present it first as a movie. Only after that could questions of language and region arise. But to begin with the North-East itself? The different states of the north-eastern region must keep up the best of ties with one another. Yet, the distinct historical past and cultural identity of each state or region must not be crushed under a common geographical and, at present, political entity called the 'North-East'. We often use the term 'South India'. But, does that mean we would club together Kerala and Tamil Nadu or Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Mani Ratnam?" (*Pranteek*, Guwahati, 16-19 February 1996: Trans: author). Bhabendranath Saikia was making a strong case that though geographically, and also at times politically, it might appear to be convenient to refer to the region as the North-East, yet it would be wrong to steamroll the different histories and cultures of the people inhabiting this area under the blanket term, "North East". The use of the illusive construct, the *North-East*, has not only led to discriminations in matters of financial allocation to resource-rich and larger states like Assam, but, more importantly, to serious administrative mishandling by the Centre of the complexities of the region. The tendency of the Indian State to treat this extremely diverse region as one unit has resulted in the growth of totally incomplete and often misconceived notions about the different states that make up the northeastern part of the country. Such monolithic conceptions about a region, which stands out for its diversity of cultures and civilisations, would only help to nourish the biases and prejudices which have marked the Indian State's approach towards Assam and her neighbours since independence.

The history of Assam, which is made up of the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys, stretches back to the epics and the Puranas and mention of the region is found in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (Chaudhury, 10-14). The political history of the Brahmaputra Valley could be traced to a period long before the foundation of the Varman line of kings of the fourth century AD. For instance, Amalendu Guha says: "The ancient history of the Assam plains could also be extended backward beyond the fifth and fourth century AD. The Mahabharata and several Puranas that were re-written between circa second century BC and the second century AD and the copper plate Prashastis of the Kamrupa kings—all contain elements of late recorded oral history related to Assam's early Indo-Aryan settlers who were the carriers of the new civilisation marked by iron, cattle, wet rice and the plough" (Guha, 35). The process of state formation in Assam in the fourth

and fifth centuries AD and epigraphic evidence show that the political chronology of Assam can be well traced from the fifth to the twelfth centuries AD (Lahiri: 1991, 7-8). The earliest of the inscriptions was the Umachal rock inscription of Surendravarman (AD 518-42). It was during the rule of Bhaskarvarman (AD 594-650) that the kingdom of Kamarupa reached new heights of political power and influence. Bhaskarvarman was a friend of Harsha Vardhan and the alliance between the two kings was formed on an equal plane (Lahiri, 72). Though some historians hold that Bhaskara was a vassal of Harsha's, others like R.C. Majumdar assert that there could be no doubt about the independent status of Bhaskara's kingdom especially when one takes into account the *Harsacarita* and the detail of the region given by the Chinese pilgrim, Yuang Chwang (Hsuan Tsang) who visited Kamrupa during AD 643 at the invitation of Bhaskarvarman (Barua: 1933, 76; Chaudhury, 180, 201). These, alongwith the Dubi and Nidhanpur copper plate grants of Bhaskarvarman give an idea of the state of the kingdom of Kamrupa in seventh century AD, whereas the "Nalanda Clay Seal" of Bhaskara tends to support the contention that boundaries of the kingdom extended upto or even beyond Bengal (Barua: 1933, 86-7). It was during this period that Assam developed links with not only neighbouring Bengal, Orissa, Mithila, Magadha and Kanauj, but also with China. Choudhury writes: "It appears that after Yuan Chwang's return to China, Bhaskara exchanged envoys with China and showed a keen interest in Taoism. When the two envoys Li-Yi-Piao and Wang-Hiuantse visited India (AD 643-46), Bhaskara asked them to send a portrait of Lao-tse and a Sanskrit translation of the Tao-teh-king. . . . The evidence indicates the cultural contact between Kamarupa and China" (Chaudhury, 194; Bagchi: 1950, 200ff).

Assam had trade links with countries and regions lying to its north-east and to the west. One of the earliest references to commercial relations between Assam and China is to be found in the accounts of "Chang Kien" (200 BC) which have been highlighted in the works of Joseph Needham and P.C. Bagchi. There is a reference in the "Shung Shu" (AD 420-79) that a particular king of Assam sent an envoy to China. (Chaudhury 381). Initially, there seemed to have been one major land route to China through upper Burma (Chaudhury, 382), but later on other routes were developed through Burma, Bhutan and Tibet. The Patkai Pass in upper Assam, through which the Ahoms came in the thirteenth century, must have been an important link in Assam's early relations with Burma and China. The *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* states that there were as many as thirty-five passes between Assam and Tibet (Chaudhury, 383).

Most historians, however, agree that Assam's cultural and commercial relations with the rest of India have been closer (Chaudhury, 384). Lahiri and Chakravarti, though not denying the Assam-Burma route to China, have expressed their doubt about the frequent use of this route from the second century onwards (Lahiri, 157). They maintain that even the later Assam-Burma-China routes mentioned in British records were sparingly used and whatever trade was conducted was in the inter-community barter system (Lahiri, 161). Lahiri and Chakravarti say: "Interestingly enough, the collective testimony of the thirty-two Assamese inscriptions between fifth and thirteenth centuries AD, which contains the bulk of the historical material of the period, goes against any close Chinese or Burmese link. The place names of different regions outside Assam, occurring in these inscriptions are substantial in number, and what is interesting is that they do not invoke China or Burma in any way. There is, in fact, no reason to doubt that throughout the course of her early documented history, the Brhamaputra Valley looked towards inner India ranging from the Deccan to Karnataka on the one hand and to Kashmir and Kamboja on the other" (Lahiri, 157). Chaudhury says that the most intimate contact which early Assam had was with Magadha and that the earliest trade routes between Kamarupa and Magadha are to be found in the *Arthashastra* (Chaudhury, 385). The Brahmaputra must have served as the main communication link between Assam and the rest of India and, compared to the river route, the land route through mountainous passes to Burma and China must have been a difficult one. Hence, the latter routes must have fallen into disuse by the time the British arrived on the scene.

The process of Sanskritisation and Aryanisation of Assam has been a long one. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee is of the view that the Aryanisation of the ruling classes in Kamarupa was completed as early as c. AD 400. Chatterjee says that "by the early centuries of the Christian era, Assam as Pragiyotisa and Kamarupa had become definitely a part of Hindu India, although the masses of its people were probably still Bodo-speaking, as in 16th century North Bengal among the Koches" (Chatterjee, 18). He further maintains that "by the end of the early medieval period, that is by AD 1200, Assam, meaning specifically the plains-lands watered by the Brahmaputra, definitely appears to have become a part of Aryan-speaking India" (Chatterjee, 35). The process of Sanskritisation gathered momentum during the period of Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568), the reformer-saint whose liberal brand of Vaishnavism brought thousands of tribal people of the Brahmaputra Valley within the fold of Hinduism. By the sixteenth century substantial numbers of Bodo-Kacharis and Tai-Ahoms embraced Hinduism

(Guha, 25). But the process of Aryanisation was heavily influenced by the tribal life-pattern of the region and this may be seen in the absence of the growth of professional classes or groups along caste lines (Guha, 25). The non-rigidity of the caste system and the relative egalitarian pattern of society were the direct results of the tribal influence. The lack of occupational specialisation in pre-Ahom Assam is also borne out by some of the inscriptions (Lahiri, 118). Nonetheless, Brahminical culture, which was largely Sanskrit-based, made its presence strongly felt in ancient Assam and continued to be an important influence throughout medieval Assam (Chaudhury, 336-7). The impact of the process of Aryanisation was to be seen in the growth of wet rice plough cultivation in lower Assam during pre-Ahom times and Guha says that 'sali' cultivation in the Assam plains was at least as old as the process of Sanskritisation itself (Guha, 73).

The predominance of Sanskrit-based languages in the Brahmaputra Valley is an important indicator of the process of Sanskritisation (Guha, 2). It is to be noted that language of the epigraphs from fifth to twelfth centuries is Sanskrit. As mentioned already, the earliest use of the Sanskrit language in inscriptions in Assam is the Umacal rock inscription of the fifth century AD (M.M. Sharma, 1977, 1-3; Lahiri, 29-30). The Sanskrit language was used right through the fifth to the thirteenth century and contributed to the development of the Assamese language. The earliest known script of Assam is said to be the "Devnagari" and the art of writing was known in Assam as early as the sixth century AD, if not earlier. This is proved by the grants of Bhutivarman (Chaudhury, 390-1). The Assamese language developed as early as the seventh century AD, its direct ancestor being Magadhi Apabhramsa (B. K. Barua: 1964, 5). The script and the language reached a final shape in the 12th-13th centuries AD, Sanskrit contributing largely in its evolution. The non-Aryan influence added a distinctness to the Assamese language. Bani Kanta Kakati has shown the different influences on the Assamese language ranging from the Aryan and non-Aryan to the Austric and Tibeto-Burmanese (Kakati, 25-52). By the middle of the tenth century, the Assamese language had taken shape, although evidence of the use of Assamese words is found in the copper plates and stone inscriptions from around the seventh century onwards (S.N. Sarma: 1981, 10). Bani Kanta Kakati is of the view that written literature in Assamese actually begins from the fourteenth century, Hem Saraswati and Harihar Vipra being the earliest Assamese writers. In his poem, Saraswati paid tribute to his patron king Durlavnarayan who ruled Assam in the later part of the thirteenth century (Kakati, 13). Assamese prose grew from the end of the sixteenth century onwards and the Buranjis or Assamese prose

chronicles may be found from the middle of the seventeenth century. The verse Buranjis like the "Darrang Rajbangsavali" were written in 1791.

The thirteenth century saw the coming into Assam of the Ahoms, a northern Tai or Shan tribe of upper Burma. Initially numbering only a few thousands, the Ahoms quickly assimilated with the local population. From 1228 onwards the Ahoms gradually extended their domain and ruled Assam till 1826 when by the Treaty of Yandaboo the British took over control of the region. Apart from their well-ordered system of administration, the Ahoms brought about a radical change in the economy of Assam by introducing wet rice cultivation in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra valley and extending it by building hundreds of miles of embankments (Guha, 70-1). Wet-rice cultivation, however, had been going on in lower Assam during the Kamarupa empire and must have produced enough surplus to sustain it. The process of Hinduisation continued during Ahom rule and reached new heights in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus "if the sixteenth century dominated by the expanding Koch kingdom was the formative period of Assamese society, the next one century and a half was the period of steady consolidation under the Ahoms. The extension of plough at the cost of hoe cultivation and of wet at the expense of dry ricelands alongside a general agricultural expansion—a process that was going on for some time in Upper Assam—led to a rapid increase in the surplus produced. The consequent rise in population provided the Ahoms with the material base for their further economic and political expansion. Firearms, introduced in the area first in the 1530s, were increasingly put to use and, by the sixteen sixties, excellent gunpowder, matchlocks and cannons were manufactured locally" (Guha, 85).

Though it is beyond the scope of the present study to go into the process of state formation during the Ahoms, yet suffice it to say that the Ahoms gave Assam a continuous rule for some six hundred years during which a transition from tribalism to feudalism took place (Guha, 89). Trade and commerce flourished during Ahom rule and despite its relative isolation, Assamese traders went as far as Bihar and Bengal in their boats. According to Sihabuddin Talish (1663) gold, musk, aloe wood, pepper and silk-cloth were in great demand. When the British first came to administer Assam in the early nineteenth century, they described the people of Barpeta in lower Assam as vigorous traders. Though the tribal influence was still very strong on the economy and the overall life-pattern of the people, yet accumulation of wealth by the newly emerging feudal and spiritual lords was a common feature. The contradictions between the feudal lords and "gosains" or spiritual heads of monasteries on the one

hand and the bulk of the peasantry on the other, sharpened from the middle of the eighteenth century and resulted in the series of civil strife known as the Moamaria Revolt (1769-1806) which eventually paved the way for the British entry into the region.

Compared to the well documented history of Assam from the fourth century AD onwards, little is known about the hilly regions of the northeastern region which today forms part of the states of Nagaland, Arunachal, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur. The lone exception seems to be Meghalaya, made up of the Khasi and Jaintia hills, where agriculture and trade were relatively developed, with primitive tribal organisations having been long replaced by a political organisation bringing together the different village republics. With most of the other states however, the tribal pattern of life dominated and there was little interaction with the plains. Referring to this Guha says: "In our region of seven sister states one cannot but note a degree of unevenness in the structuring of history of these states, particularly in terms of the time dimension. Assam is a well- charted field of enquiry with some relevant records going back to the fourth century AD. The historiographical literature on Assam is rich with its neat periodization into times ancient, medieval and modern. But this kind of neat periodization breaks down the moment the historian enters the parts of the region where literacy came rather too late. We have no knowledge as to how the hill areas were peopled and how they fared in ancient times"(Guha, 31). It is only from the thirteenth century onwards that one comes to have some historical details about Tripura and Manipur, while little is known about Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. Many historians have, therefore, stressed upon the importance of oral history in understanding this region. Social anthropology and archaeology have also been seen as important entry points. It is only with the coming of the British that we start getting a connected history of the hill areas, although mention of the hill tribes, particularly the Nagas, is there in the Ahom Buranjis and also in pre-Ahom historical literature.

Unlike Assam, most of the hill tribes did not possess the experience of state formation and continued to be governed by their own established tribal organisations. Guha says that "among the different tribes, it was only the Khasis who appeared to have moved towards statehood several centuries before the coming of the British" (Guha, 6-7). Most of the hill tribes maintained their autonomous existence. Village and kinship ties governed the average tribal's life; this being especially true in the case of the Nagas (Sema, 10). Not only in the case of the Nagas, but with most of the tribal people of the region, the central political and economic unit was

the village (Horam, 117). So, it may be concluded that in matters of political organisation, the Nagas and other tribes did not go beyond the village and the immediate community.

Jhumming or shifting cultivation was the predominant form of agriculture in the hill region, with terraced cultivation being practised by the Angamis of Nagaland, the Tangkhuls of Manipur and the Apa Tanis and Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh. The plough was not known in the hills and hoe cultivation was the usual practice. Little use was also made of pack animals (Guha, 4-5). It was the Khasis only who, apart from the traditional jhumming, also engaged in wet rice cultivation and had terraced fields. In most cases it was a tribal economy based on barter. The rice economy of the hill region was supplemented by food-gathering, hunting and fishing (Guha: 1991, 3). The hill people used to come down to the plains mostly in the winter months to barter their forest produce, rock salt and iron for rice, dried fish and cotton goods. Thus, communication links between the hill regions and the plains of Assam were quite active, particularly in areas bordering the Assam plains. Some of the Naga tribes, for example, came into close contact with the Ahoms. Barter trade was restricted usually to immediate necessities. Of all the hill tribes, only the Khasis and Jaintias were engaged in regular trade with the Brahmaputra valley and the plains of East Bengal (now Bangladesh).

The majority of the hill languages and dialects belonged to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages and the absence of a written script is common to most. Only Khasis and Jaintias belong to the Austro-Asiatic group, though they too did not possess any written script. As far as the hill tribes were concerned, it may be said that excepting for the Jaintias, there was no Sanskritisation or Hinduisation at all (Horam, 69). Till the advent of the Christian missionaries, the tribal peoples of the region followed their own rituals and traditions. The traditional pattern of tribal society did not provide for specialisation of professions, though certain villages specialised in the crafts.

In view of the above facts, it would, therefore, be wrong to place Assam on the same par, historically as well as economically, with rest of the states of the north-eastern region of the country. Any discussion of the problem of ethnic resurgence linked with insurgency must take into account the large degree of difference which exists on almost all planes between Assam and her neighbours. The purpose in presenting the above historical facts has been to highlight the socio-cultural and political divide which exists between Assam and the other units of the "North-East", with the former having a recorded history and written literature stretching back to centuries,

whereas in the case of the latter one has to rely primarily on oral tradition till the advent of the British in the nineteenth century.

It is in this complex mosaic of different nationalities at different stages of socio-economic and political growth that the Indian nation-state is today facing some of its gravest challenges, with the entire process of nation-building being questioned. It is here that the centralised authority of the Indian State is being repeatedly questioned, issues based on the uneven development of the socio-economic order raised, and the idea of the "mainstream" re-defined. Time and again, the Indian nation-state has had to work out new strategies and adjustments to deal with the issues raised by the different autonomist and "secessionist" movements of the northeastern region. Though the Indian nation-state's management of the problem of dissent and political identity has been commendable, especially when one takes into account the experience of most third-world countries, yet there seems to be a long way to go. The idea of "one nation" which gathered strength during the country's freedom struggle and which was buttressed up during the years immediately following the partition of the country and its independence, received its first jolt in the hills of the northeastern region. This was an area which had been virtually untouched by the freedom struggle and also historically, outside the pale of Indian civilisation. Hence, it was difficult for those who believed in the unifying force of the Indian civilisation to understand and appreciate the demands for autonomy that were raised in the Naga Hills and other areas soon after independence.

The idea that the Partition had led to the creation of a homogenous Indian nation-state with a strong central government soon came to be questioned because of the nationalist struggles in the northeastern region of the country. The idea of a uni-cultural nation with one dominant language, held together by a strong State which drew its strength from the diverse strands of the rich and varied Indian civilisation, was challenged by the Nagas and the Mizos and finally, even by the Assamese. While the autonomy and "self-determination" or "self-rule" struggles amongst the Nagas and the Mizos was understandable in the light of the historical situation, the subsequent struggle of the Assamese for a *Swadhin Asom* led by a militant organisation, calls for deeper scrutiny. Such a scrutiny would be all the more relevant because the Assamese were not only involved in different stages of the freedom struggle, but also shared with the rest of the country common socio-religious bonds, the politico-geographical isolation from rest of the sub-continent during certain periods of Assam's history notwithstanding. Interestingly, the Indian nation-state

seems to have tackled the problem of socio-political identity as posed by the hills of undivided Assam in quite a successful manner, the creation of separate states and adequate constitutional safeguards being major steps in that direction. It is through hard experience that it has realized that military is no answer to the quest for self-rule amongst the different nationalities of the north eastern states of the Union. During the post-Independence period, the rise of nationalistic aspirations among different communities has nowhere been so prominent as in undivided Assam. This has been a classic case of different ethnic groups at different stages of socio-economic growth emerging as nationalities with a corporate will and determination to shape their own destiny within India if possible, and outside it if things do not work out. What is significant is that this has not been a gradual process but has struck the Indian nation-state with a suddenness. The incorporation of areas which had hitherto been "unadministered territories" inhabited by people living in tribal isolation, into the democratic framework of a new nation committed to the ideals of secularism, equality and representative government, speeded up the process of nationality-formation which otherwise might have taken ages. All its ad hoc measures and blunders notwithstanding, the Indian State has, to its credit, succeeded till now in accommodating these different nationalities within its system. This becomes all the more significant when one sees the plight of small nationalities not only in third-world countries but also in advanced nations like Iraq and Turkey.

But, the success of the nation-state in providing meaningful space within its system to the different nationalities has not been uniform. Assam today poses a really grave challenge to the entire process of nation-building. With its really complex ethnic situation, the almost unsurmountable problem of influx and demographic change and the backward, almost "colonial" state of the economy, Assam has emerged as the problem state, next perhaps to Kashmir. The future health of the Indian State will depend on how well can it resolve the many problems which Assam today throws up. Many years ago, Ram Manohar Lohia had said that the struggle for Indian independence was being fought in the hills of Assam. That was said with reference to the first outbreak of insurgency in the Naga Hills district of Assam. Today, the Indian nation-state is fighting not just insurgency in Assam and the other northeastern states, but is fighting for the survival of those very values on which the Indian Union stands. This is bound to be a difficult struggle because the fight is not restricted merely to the swampy jungles of the region but is very much a fight on the plane of ideas. Moreover, it is a fight with its own people. The very idea of the

Indian nation-state is being challenged by those who are fighting for an independent Nagaland or a *Swadhin Asom*. Will the nation-state be able to accommodate these recalcitrant nationalities within the framework of its Constitution? What are the structural changes in the Constitution that will have to be made for this? Success in dealing with the nationality issues being raised in the northeastern region is bound to strengthen the Indian nation-state, while failure to check separatist tendencies in regions like Assam could have far-reaching negative effects on the country as a whole. As such, an attempt would be made in the succeeding chapters to show how certain historico-political factors have been nourishing the ideas of separateness prevailing among communities as distinct as the Assamese and the Nagas. In the process, focus would naturally be made on certain conceptions and notions which have, in all these years since Independence, marked the Centre's approach as well as the overall "national" response towards this region which has been conveniently labelled as India's "North-East". Today, however, there seems to be the growing realisation that the issues raised by the insurgent/autonomy movements going on in the different states of the northeastern region can never be resolved by force but by a meaningful political dialogue. The success of Centre's response would depend largely on its ability to discard set prejudices and monolithic perceptions and on its willingness to try to understand and appreciate the wide variety and distinctiveness of the different nationalities of the region as also their struggles for autonomy or self-rule. Chapters 2 and 3 take up for discussion the origin and growth of the Naga struggle for independence and how, over the years, the course and content of the struggle has changed. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the beginnings of the idea of *Swadhin Asom* and how, through the different phases of Assam's pre- and post-Independence history, the idea of an independent homeland for the Assamese people has survived and even acquired new connotations. The concluding chapter tries to look into the conflicts and contradictions involved in the struggle of the Nagas and the Assamese for independent homelands and how the Indian State has been reacting to these.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Naga Struggle: Historical Roots and Clash of Cultures

One of the first major challenges to the nation-building process in independent India was posed by the struggle of the Nagas which took on an insurrectionary form in the early fifties.¹ What initially appeared to be a demand for autonomy aimed at safeguarding the Naga “way of life” soon snowballed into a people’s revolt led by the Naga National Council,² thanks to the casual and insensitive attitude of the Central leadership and the irredentist stance of the Assam Government. Today, the Naga struggle is the oldest armed ethnic movement of the post-Independence India and for almost half a century now, a few thousand Naga fighters backed by large section of the Naga people, have been successfully battling the might of the Indian State. Though the Indian State has shown marked resilience in trying to accommodate the Naga revolt within the ambit of the Indian Constitution,—the creation of the State of Nagaland³ and the drawing of the Naga people into the democratic process being major success points—yet some of the issues raised by the Naga struggle remain largely unresolved. Despite splits in the underground leadership and mounting pressure from the State, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) continues to receive support from a sizeable section of the Naga people and remains the most organised and effective rebel outfit in the north-eastern region of the country. Till recently the NSCN was considered the rallying point for other insurgent outfits of the region and attempts under its initiative were being made to forge together a common platform of all the major insurgent outfits of north-eastern India. Today, however the NSCN’s espousal of the cause of greater Nagaland has made the other insurgent groups of Assam and Manipur suspicious of the former’s commitment to an independent federation of the northeastern states run on the basis of mutual trust and equality.

In this chapter we propose to go into the historical roots of the Naga struggle and try to relate it to the state and nation-building process in India. This would involve not only a look into the inner working and

structure of Naga society and the relationship of the Nagas with the Assam plains for centuries, but would also necessitate a discussion on the policies adopted by the Ahoms, the British and, finally, the Indian government towards the Naga tribes. Ignorance and prejudice have long marked New Delhi's approach towards this proud race of people who had been leading an independent existence, except for some seventy odd years of half-hearted British control, at the periphery of what today constitutes the Indian nation-state. Much of the tragedy unleashed on the Naga Hills could have been avoided had a serious and consistent effort been made to understand the Nagas' initial demand for "home rule". But pre-conceived notions, arrogance and the heady brew of power prevented the national leaders from trying to see things from the other's viewpoint even after the NNC's successful boycott of the 1952 elections⁴ and its "Plebiscite".⁵ However, after initial blunders, the Indian State did try to respond to the situation in a positive manner by creating the state of Nagaland in 1963. The creation of a separate state for the Naga tribes, combined with the protective provisions⁶ of the Constitution, gave the Nagas a chance to shape their destiny within the Indian Union. That the Nagas have responded positively to these developments may be seen from their involvement in the democratic process.⁷ Heavy Central subsidies⁸ and the increasing growth of the Indian market forces in the region have brought about many radical changes in the overall socio-political situation in Nagaland, thereby compelling one to revise many an earlier assumption based on certain theoretical premises about these people and their land.

As the Indian leaders set about building the nation-state, still deeply infused with the ideas of nationalism strengthened and rejuvenated by the struggle against the British, they were taken aback when certain communities or nationalities refused to accept their notion of nationalism. This seems a common phenomenon with newly emerging polyglot nation states which often tend to adopt nationalist policies which identify "nation" with the State, thus relegating to the background the claims to "nationhood" by other people within the State structure who do not identify themselves with the prevailing idea of nation (Stavenhagen: 1990, 29). Indian nationalist leaders, were, therefore, not at all attuned to appreciate the demand of the Nagas that since they were outside the ambit of Indian nationalism, they be allowed to shape their own destiny. There was no dearth of the viewpoint which stressed that these tribes had always been part of the great Indian tradition, mention having been made of them in the ancient scriptures, and that in the course of the process of modernisation, these little traditions would be assimilated into the nation-state. Referring

to the great-tradition-little-tradition framework, B.K. Roy Burman says: "In the little-tradition-great-tradition framework there is an unstated assumption of the superiority of the reflective elements of culture. But one would wonder if there is any sociological justification or sociological historical justification of this assumption. . . . Freedom is total. We cannot free ourselves from outside domination and sustain freedom without permeating the values of freedom in every sphere of our life. Many anthropologists have failed to grasp the meaning of this historic shift. Like the proverbial black cat which does not exist in the hall, they carry on their pathetic search for Sanskritisation, no matter whether they are studying the Apa Tani or the Onge. And when they do not find it, they start their angry witch-hunting. They seek scapegoats, either in the 'conspiracy' of the missionaries or in the 'foolishness' of the makers of the Indian Constitution. They ignore an emerging spectra in the world horizon, namely ethnicity based convulsions" (Roy Burman, 110-12).

Thus, till not-too-distant past there had been a tendency to dismiss the Naga struggle as a secessionist movement inspired and abetted by foreign missionaries who had been exploiting the fierce feeling of independence of the hill tribes to break up the Indian nation. In this context, it had also been frequently argued that there is no base for Naga nationalism because the Nagas are made up of fourteen major and several other minor tribes and that they do not possess a common language and are constantly hostile towards one another.⁹ But the persistence of the Naga struggle against grave odds has done away with most of these arguments which were based on ignorance and prejudice about Naga life and society. If a deep attachment to one's native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authority can be accepted as marks of nationalism, then the Nagas qualify on all counts. Moreover, apart from sharing a common economic pattern which is the basis of their long-cherished political and social institutions, the Nagas have evolved the necessary psychological structure on which the common Naga culture rests. This clearly distinguishes them from their other tribal neighbours. The Nagas' not possessing a common language has not been an unsurmountable factor in the growth of nationalism, because to common descent, a distinct territory, a common political and economic pattern of life, customs and traditions, the Nagas have added a corporate will so very essential to the growth of nationalism (U. Misra: 1978, 14). Today, it is admitted even by the staunchest critic of the Naga cause that their long struggle has given them a cohesiveness and sense of unity which very few nationalities of the sub-continent can lay claim to.¹⁰

The coming together of the different Naga tribes and their struggle to protect "the Naga way of life" in the early fifties presents a classic case of ethnic mobilisation by a miniscule Naga middle class by asserting the "sense of peoplehood" (Horowitz, 41, 52) of the Nagas and evoking ideas of common racial ancestry and tradition. In their zeal to push forward their model of integration, the national leadership failed to respond positively to Naga apprehensions about their future identity. Referring to such a situation in many a developing country, Horowitz says: "Unfortunately, models of integration have tended to precede concepts of conflict and policy prescriptions have been dispensed without regard for the character of the ailment they were designed to treat" (Horowitz: 1985, 14). In order to understand as to why the model of integration offered to the Nagas by the Indian government found little response, it would be necessary to trace the historical and socio-cultural roots of the insurgency that could easily claim to be the most protracted armed conflict in the Indian sub-continent since independence. For, right from the beginning of the Naga struggle, the Naga National Council, the political wing of the underground Naga Federal Government, had been consistently maintaining that the Nagas form an independent nationality. The NNC claimed that, except for some seventy five years or so of British control from the 1880s onwards, the Nagas had never been subjugated or ruled by any other people and that they had never formed part of what today constitutes the Indian nation.¹¹ This feeling of separateness from the rest of India has been so widely shared by the Nagas that it may be seen as one of the prime motivating forces in their struggle against New Delhi. The Naga's loyalty to his tribe or clan is today counter-balanced by his loyalty to the concept of a united Naga-inhabited territory between the Chindwin in Myanmar and the Brahmaputra in Assam.¹² This demand for a "greater Nagaland" is clearly linked with the growth of the forces of Naga nationalism which, over the years, have been trying to keep in check, though not always successfully, the inter-tribe and inter-clan rivalries inherent in Naga society. However, the progression from tribe and clan loyalties to allegiance to the concept of a sovereign Naga state comprising the entire Naga nation is bound to be a complex and difficult one. But the experiment is on.¹³

Historically, the different Naga tribes have lived in isolation for centuries. It was only during the rule of the Ahom kings that there seemed to be marginal contact between some of these tribes and the people of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Ahom-Naga relationship is chronicled in the *Buranjis*.¹⁴ To the Ahom kings, the Naga Hills had plenty of strategic importance, for "it was through the land of the Nagas of Patkai and the

Tirap Division of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) that the Ahoms came to Assam over the Patkai mountain and it was this route that they had to use in maintaining relations with their kith and kin in Burma” (Lakshmi Devi, 21). The Ahom Buranjis are full of details about Ahom retaliatory raids into the Naga Hills and how, on each occasion, the Naga tribes submitted and accepted the overlordship of the Ahom king. Right from the beginning of the Ahom entry into Assam, there were clashes with the Nagas, and Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom, is recorded to have meted out the harshest of punishments to the Banfera Nagas (Lakshmi Devi, 23; Gait, 77-9). It was from the Nagas living on the northern slopes of the Patkai mountains in the country known as Khamjang, that the Ahoms met with continuous resistance. Sukapha, after subduing them, had instituted the post of Khamjangia Gohain to administer this area and keep a watch on the Nagas. During the fourteenth and early part of the fifteenth century the Ahom kings had to face several revolts by the Nagas living on the hills bordering the upper Assam plains. Each revolt was crushed and the tribes forced into submission. Several Naga tribes acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom kings and used to pay yearly tributes (Alemchiba: 1970; Lakshmi Devi, 37).

It was only in the seventeenth century that Ahom-Naga relations marginally improved and there are also instances of one particular Naga clan seeking the assistance of the Ahom king in subduing another (Alemchiba: 1970, 35). Though modern Naga historians are averse to accept the facts recorded in the Ahom Buranjis regarding the acceptance of Ahom suzerainty by different Naga tribes living on the borders of Ahom territory, yet scholars like Verrier Elwin hold the view that these Naga tribes were looked upon as subjects by the successive Ahom kings who collected taxes from them in the form of slaves, elephant tusks, spears and hand-woven cloth and cotton (Elwin, 1969). There is no doubt that the Ahom kings kept a close watch on their frontier with the Nagas and succeeded in keeping them under control. But the Ahom policy was also marked by conciliation backed by force. As the Buranjis reveal, each time a particular tribe submitted to the might of the Ahom army, it was pardoned and normal ties were restored. The Ahoms, however, never thought of extending their administration into the Naga hills. They seemed to realise that interference with the internal administration of the Naga tribes could prove hazardous. “The Ahom rulers considered it enough to receive the submission of the Nagas and to allow them to enjoy their tribal autonomy—as long as the Nagas living near the plains, who were granted revenue-free lands and fishing waters along with retainers in the plains, did not raid Ahom territories

and the Nagas on the India-Burma frontier did not ally themselves with the enemies of the Ahoms beyond the Patkai range to jeopardise the Ahom kingdom" (Lakshmi Devi, 47). The Naga tribes, on their part, could never reconcile themselves to Ahom overlordship and from time to time put up the banner of revolt. The brutal measures adopted by Sukapha against the Nagas no doubt kept them subdued for some time. But these could in no way crush the spirit of independence which lurked in the hearts of the tribesfolk. Therefore, the acknowledgement of non-interference in Naga affairs resulted in a cordiality and understanding between the Nagas and the Assamese living on the borders of the Naga Hills and an active barter trade flourished.¹⁵ As Ahom power declined towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Naga tribes once again asserted their independence from outside control, however limited in nature that might have been, and those tribes which had been paying tribute to the Ahom kings stopped doing so. Thus, in summing up Ahom-Naga relations, one may say that while the Nagas submitted to the strength of the Ahom rulers, the latter respected the Nagas' love of freedom and desisted from interfering in their internal matters.

The British too, during the initial years of their rule in Assam, followed a policy of non-interference in Naga affairs. After taking advantage of the Treaty of Yandabo (1826) and annexing Assam, the British speedily consolidated their hold over the fertile valley. But they followed a policy of cautious non-interference towards the hill tribes, especially the Nagas. This was not, as the British administrators later conveniently claimed, to protect the hill people from being exploited by unscrupulous plainsmen, but because annexation of tribal areas and the extension of administration was not considered profitable by the British. The Nagas first came into contact with the British in 1832 when Captain Jenkins and his men marched through Angami Naga territory on their way to the Assam plains from Manipur. From 1831 to 1851 as many as ten punitive expeditions were carried out by the British. These were mainly aimed at putting an end to Angami raids into the plains of Assam. After the tenth expedition in December 1850, a policy of non-interference was clearly laid down and the troops were withdrawn. There is an evidence of this in Lord Dalhousie's Minute which states: "I dissent entirely from the policy which is recommended of what is called obtaining control, that is to say, of taking possession of these hills, and establishing sovereignty over their savage inhabitants. Our possessions could bring no profit to us, and would be as costly to us as it would be unproductive. . . . As it is impossible to contemplate the permanent possession of these hills, so it seems to me impolitic

to sanction temporary possession of them" (Elwin, 162).

This policy continued till around 1862, when Cecil Beadon took over as the Lieutenant Governor and the British started to devise means of bringing the Nagas under their political control so that the armed incursions on the plains of Assam could be halted. In 1874, Captian Johnstone informed the Chief Commissioner that he had "formally taken under (our) protection on payment of revenue two Naga villages which were in immediate danger of attack and had ordered the other hostile villages to leave them alone" (Elwin: 1969, 176). The British occupation of the Naga Hills had begun. Although the Chief Commissioner agreed with Captain Johnstone, the higher authorities showed their disapproval because such a step "may involve us (the British) in the reduction of the country by degrees to a regular system of government regardless of expenses" (Elwin, 176).

Despite such hesitations a "forward policy" was finally resolved, resulting in the British occupation of Kohima on November 14, 1878. This was followed by speedy consolidation of British rule in the Naga Hills. In 1881 the Naga Hills District¹⁶ was established. The British occupation of the Naga Hills was mostly confined to the area covering central Nagaland, with most of the areas bordering Myanmar and Tibet being left almost completely unadministered. The Nagas, particularly the Angamis, put up their last fierce resistance to the British in 1878-80 during the seige of Kohima which lasted eleven days. The attack was mainly led by the thirteen Angami "village-states" along with that of Khonoma.¹⁷ The failure of the Naga attempt to oust the British from their soil may be traced to lack of unity and the absence of a common organized political authority among the various Naga tribes. At that time, the Nagas were living mostly in isolated village-states, each independent of the other, and, more often than not, on hostile terms. Thus, with the British occupation of the Naga Hills, the Nagas for the first time had to accept an alien power right in the midst of their territory. Till then, they had only faced punitive expeditions and had developed their own pattern of guerilla tactics to deal with such situations.

During early part of the British administration of the Naga Hills, legislations were enacted from time to time to ensure special status of the hill areas and to prevent entry and settlement of the non-tribals.¹⁸ The British acknowledged the right of the tribal councils as the sole authority in dealing with Naga affairs and this step helped them to administer the region by keeping expenses at the minimum. The Frontier Tracts Regulation II of 1880 provided for basis by which the Nagas would be able to govern themselves according to their well worked-out pattern of tribal laws and

customs. It is obvious that the British policy of non-interference in the tribal pattern of village democracy was motivated by reasons of political expediency and not necessarily out of concern to safeguard the identity of the tribal people. Had the latter been the case, the British in India would have worked out a common, overall policy affecting the various tribes of the sub-continent and fate of the tribals of Chota-Nagpur, for example, would not have been what it is today. Therefore, although in the course of the military occupation of the Naga Hills, the Britishers extended a rather loose political administration in those areas which came under their sway, they were quite content in leaving the tribes alone in their primitive isolation. Several legislative measures like the Excluded Areas Act and the Partially Excluded Areas Act virtually put an end to interaction between the hills and the plains. The "Excluded Status" of the hill districts gave an added advantage to the British administrators in later years when they used this provision to prevent national political parties from extending their influence in this region.¹⁹ This also explains why the Naga Hills was completely cut-off from the struggle for Indian independence (Chaube: 1973, 72).

That the British administration did not interest itself with the economic progress of the Naga Hills can be seen from the fact that it did not consider it necessary to develop the transport and communication network unless strictly needed for running the administration or for the movement of troops. Referring to this attitude on the part of the British, Alemchiba, a Naga intellectual:

The British Government were contented so long as the tribesmen remained in isolation conducting their own affairs according to their own laws and customs. It presented no problems except that required to prevent raids or other forms of aggression on more civilised or less warlike neighbours. For this purpose a military occupation of territory was necessary and a loose system of political control or administration of some sort which did not involve more than a minimum interference with tribal customs and the expense on which, if greater as it normally was than any revenue yielded by such an area, was in the nature of an insurance . . . while they (the British) took great care to preserve them (tribal manners and customs) to the utmost limit possible and to ensure that such a change as would inevitably come should not be destructive in its suddenness, they failed to appreciate the economic requirements of the hill people and neglected them (Alemchiba in K. Suresh Singh: 1972, 479).

Thus, while the British rulers took full advantage of territorial control of the Naga Hills to protect British interests in the form of tea, coal and timber in the Brahmaputra Valley, considerations of expense deterred them from investing in the development of the hill region. Instead of opening up

trade and communication links with the Assam plains, regulations were initiated which pushed the Naga Hills to a state of almost total isolation. By keeping the hill areas segregated, the British succeeded in preventing the winds of the national movement from reaching there and also in nourishing the idea that once the British left India, the Nagas would be able to decide their own future. This resulted in the Nagas not being psychologically prepared for the transition from British to Indian rule in 1947.

Although the British occupation of the Naga Hills did little effectively to change the life-pattern of the people, with the means and relationships of production remaining the same, yet it was inevitable that the effects of British administrative policy were felt in certain spheres. The inter-tribe wars were contained, the tribal economy was partially monetized and a small class of petty traders and businessmen emerged. But the most important impact of the British take-over was in the field of education. The introduction of western education not only helped the spread of new ideas but also contributed to the rise of a salaried bureaucracy from amongst the newly-educated section. Thus, teachers, government officials and small businessmen formed the core of the tiny but influential middle class which was emerging. This class would, in the years to come, play a pivotal role in the politics of the Naga Hills. Christianity and Western education went hand in hand in the Naga Hills and they brought in new values based on individualism which posed a direct challenge to the collective life-pattern of the people.

Education in the hills was almost totally under control of the Christian missionaries, who were mostly American Baptists. The Government policy, however, was to discourage either widespread or higher education (Chaube, 45) because it did not want an educated elite from amongst the hill peoples to emerge which might question government policies. Thus, during the initial phase of British consolidation, Christian missionary education was chiefly aimed at producing preachers and therefore, almost invariably limited itself to the setting up of middle-standard schools. Nevertheless, it was primarily due to the efforts of these missionaries that people of the Naga Hills were opened up to the benefits of modern education, however limited its objectives might have been. Till the advent of the British, ideas of "nationality" and "nationalism" were unknown with loyalties being defined mainly on clan lines. British administration and its "Rules of Justice" gradually eroded the traditional power of the chiefs and replaced it with that of the "village authority" or the "dubhasi" (interpreter) and the "gaonbura" (village headman). This, along with the conversion of large

sections of the people to Christianity, somewhat cut at the traditional power structure of the villages and helped to weaken exclusive clan allegiance, thereby paying the way for the growth of a pan-Naga consciousness.

It was the British Baptists who had set up a mission at Guwahati as early as 1829. But not being able to achieve even marginal success, they wound up the mission in 1836. In the same year the American Baptists, on an invitation of Captain Francis Jenkins, the Governor General's Agent and Commissioner of Assam, set up their mission at Sadiya in upper Assam with the immediate aim of starting proselytising work among the Khamtis and Singphos. The Khamtis and Singphos with their continuous raids, were posing a threat to the newly-established tea gardens and it was believed that Christianising the tribes would win their allegiance (T. Misra, 66-7). Since the language of the Shan tribes was similar to that of the Burmese, the American Baptists from Burma were encouraged to come and work in Assam. But, these Baptists were not successful and the Sadiya Mission was closed down in 1839 after the Khamti Rebellion in which Capt. White and eighty British soldiers lost their lives (Barpujari, 301-2). The Mission was subsequently shifted to Jaypore and then finally to Sibsagar where the first printing press was set up and the journal *Orunodoi* published in 1846. But the rate of proselytisation in Assam was quite discouraging with only about a hundred Christian converts in sixty years. So, the Baptists started shifting their attention to the neighbouring Naga Hills and in 1872 the first batch of Aos was baptised. From then on, there was no looking back and the success of the missionaries in the hills of the north-eastern region of the country has been an unprecedented one in the annals of church history in India. Within a span of hundred years (1871-1972), almost the entire Ao community was converted to Christianity, and from 24 Christians in 1872 the figure rose to 58,757 out of a total of 59,879 Aos in 1971 (Sinha, 147). The same was true with most of the other tribes, the Konyaks coming into the Christian fold only in the nineteen thirties and forties.

Much has already been written about the impact of Christianity and modern education on western lines on the Naga people. Christian missionary activities were inextricably linked with the spread of education. Therefore, in the early periods of missionary activity, it was difficult to de-link the two. The spread of Christianity and modern ideas not only helped to put an end to inter-tribe warfare, these also introduced concepts of hygiene and health care. It is maintained by some scholars that the church, apart from introducing radical changes in the social practices of the people,

also helped in the emergence of some sort of political platform with a common Naga identity based on Christianity. This is one of the reasons why the foreign Christian missionaries were suspected by the Indian government of fomenting secessionist ideas in the Naga Hills. But it would be a simplification to put such blame at the missionary quarters. Christianity and the attendant spread of education brought about a sense of social awakening amongst the Naga tribes and this in turn led to the demand for a separate homeland (Horam: 1990, 208). Yet, Christianity amongst the Nagas was surely not an unmixed blessing. While the British administrators took care not to tamper with the traditional customs and beliefs of the people and acknowledged the rights of the tribal councils in Naga affairs, the Christian missionaries attempted just the opposite. Traditional feasts, songs and dances were done away with and the collective life of the village suffered. Commenting on this, Alemchiba says:

As religion played a strong part in every Naga ceremony and as that religion was not Christianity, they (the Christian missionaries) felt that every ceremony should be abolished. Such ceremonies as the great Feasts of Merit, at which the religious aspect was far less important than the social, had not been re-modelled on Christian lines but had been utterly abolished among the converts. The tendency was to abolish abruptly the old thing and substitute individualism for a strong community feeling which had enabled the tribes to survive for so long. Not only was individualism wrapped up with strong emphasis on personal salvation, it induced a direct and natural reaction against all old things that mattered in village life and the social genius of the tribe. The result was a conflict not necessarily of arms but of culture, a conflict between the interest of a community and the individual which cause cultural tension in society (Alemchiba: 1972, 479-80).

Alemchiba's views are today shared by many a Naga scholar who feels that along with all the good that Christianity did for the Nagas, it also set in motion a process which has had certain negative effects on their social set-up. Discussing the virtual loss of traditional songs, dances and stories through which Naga history has been handed down through generations, Horam says: "Since the coming of Christianity, all these activities were stopped on the ground that they were based on traditional belief and superstition. Today, many Christian villages do not even remember their traditional stories and do not know the songs and dances and if one likes to learn, one must visit the very old people of seventy and above. This loss of their culture is irreparable" (Horam: 1990, 207). This has resulted in a crisis of identity and of late some tribes have started observing their traditional festivals with both Christian and traditional flavour. The missionary onslaught on the Murungs and Feasts of Merit has been widely

commented upon by anthropologists like Furer-Haimendorf who says: "It is a pity that the American Baptist Mission had little sympathy with the aims of the Government and even less appreciation of the valuable elements of Naga culture. Many of its aspects conflict in no way with the principles of Christianity, and I believe that even some of the old feasts and ceremonies—certainly agricultural festivals—could have been adapted to the new faith, given a new meaning and retained by Christian communities" (Haimendorf, 57). Haimendorf is joined by anthropologists like J.F. Hutton, J.P. Mills and Verrier Elwin, all of whom are of the view that Christianity poses a direct threat to the tribal life-pattern of the Nagas (Sinha, 155). While it is true that Christianity, by putting an end to traditional social practices, created a vacuum which it could not fill with any other substitute, thereby leading to a sense of non-belonging among the Nagas, yet the Western education which it brought with it (however limited its scope may have been) opened up the educated Naga's mind to concepts of "universal love" and the social and political beliefs of Western liberalism. This helped him to overcome the negative aspects of tribal isolationism and to see across tribe and clan boundaries, which in turn contributed to the growth of a middle class ethos. It would perhaps be a hasty generalisation that the sense of community feeling has been substituted by individualism in Naga life because of the spread of Christianity. This is also the overall fall-out of any modernisation process.

A significant feature of the role of Christian Church in the Naga Hills was that it made education available to all sections of the Naga tribes. Whereas in most of the other regions of British India the fruits of modern education were enjoyed generally by that class of people which emerged out of the landed aristocracy or from commercial activity, in Nagaland education imparted by the Church was not confined to any particular section. The tribes like the Aos reaped greater advantages from education because they were the first to come into contact with the missionaries. But as Christian proselytisation progressed, other tribes also came to feel the effects of modern education. While in other parts of the country, the benefits of modern education usually went to the affluent sections of society, in the Naga Hills the village chiefs and elders (who constituted the better-off section in the tribal framework) were suspicious of both Christianity and education (Terhuya, 295). As a result, the educated group of Nagas which emerged, was representative of a cross-section of Naga tribes.²⁰ It was finally this section of the incipient Naga middle class which tried in the early part of the nineteenth century to set up a platform which would represent all the tribes and which would work towards the realisation

of the goal of a unified Naga society and homeland. The stirrings of a Naga national consciousness had begun.

As already stated, the British policy of “specialised” government in the Naga Hills gave rise to serious problems of adjustment with the emerging Indian political leadership. Almost totally cut off from the national struggle against British rule, unexposed to the winds of social change sweeping across the rest of the country and unacquainted with the ideology and belief of the new leaders of India, the middle-class leadership amongst the Nagas reacted with apprehension and distrust. The Congress leadership, both at the Centre and at the State level, failed to gauge the roots of such apprehensions and, instead, tended to view the Naga demand for autonomy as one stemming from secessionist desires fanned by the foreign missionaries. What the policy framers of the Government of India failed to see was the historical background of the hill people’s demand. To the Naga the question of secession from India did not technically arise because he never thought in lines of being an Indian. To him, his land had, except for a brief period of British possession, always been an independent principality. Seventy to eighty years of British rule had done little to bring these areas into active contact with the rest of the country. On the contrary, a concerted move had always been there to keep the tribes aloof. The British policy of “leave alone” had its distinctly negative effects in that a wide communication gap developed between the hill areas and the rest of the country.

Thus, when the emerging middle class leadership of the Naga Hills talked of autonomy or self-rule or “independence”, the reaction of the Congress nationalists was sharp and unsympathetic. The Naga leadership immediately came to be viewed with suspicion, as having harboured extra-territorial loyalties. This feeling was strengthened by the fact that majority of the Nagas had embraced Christianity by the time India moved towards independence. The theory of assimilation was put forward and the idea of a “national mainstream” asserted. Never for once did the Congress nationalists seriously ponder over the fact that the hill tribal’s concept of territorial allegiance could be very different from loyalty to Mother India and that being a Christian did not necessarily affect the Naga’s loyalty to his land and his tribe and clan. The fact was overlooked that conversion to Christianity had not been able to do away with the traditional loyalties, though there had been some radical change in the common beliefs and practices of the people (U. Misra: 1983, 157). S.K. Chaube says: “It is, however, important to note that Christianity did not create a medieval Christian unity. When the Baptist Church in Nagaland, for example, was

nationalised, they were re-organised as the Angami Association, Ao Association etc. This is why the allegation that the Church generated extra-territorial loyalty does not stand" (Chaube, 39). But the stress on difference of religion by a section of the Indian leadership only helped to further widen the divide between the Nagas and the "Indians" and prepared the ground for confrontation (Hazarika, 69). A proper attempt on the part of the Indian leaders to understand the demand for autonomy or self-rule would have prevented much of the suffering and misery undergone by the Nagas in their quest for self-governance in their own homeland. The Government of India too would have been spared the unenviable position of fighting its own people.

Autonomy, and not secession, was the initial demand of the Naga people. For instance, when the Cabinet Mission Plan was published, the Naga National Council meeting in Wokha in June 1946 adopted a resolution demanding autonomy within Assam and opposing the proposal for a Crown Colony as well as "Grouping" scheme (Chaube, 69). The Crown Colony or Coupland Plan was put forth by some British administrators and envisaged a common unit of the hills of Burma and Assam under the direct supervision of the British Crown. But by February 1947 the situation in the Naga Hills underwent a major change with the Angamis adopting a rigid stand on the question of self-rule. The imminent departure of the British coupled with lack of any clear-cut approach on the part of the Congress leadership deepened apprehensions in the Naga mind, with some of the leading tribes bent on securing a Naga homeland which would fit in with their idea of tribal self-sufficiency and independence. Accustomed as they were to a life of fierce independence, the Naga chiefs were naturally apprehensive of any moves initiated by people from outside; and in mobilising the opinion of the chiefs the small section of educated Nagas played a decisive role. The Naga National Council was made up of two central councils, the Kohima Central Council and the Mokokchung Central Council. The former was dominated by the Angamis and the latter by the Aos. While the Ao leadership was in favour of autonomy clearly within the Indian Union, the Angami leaders were more intransigent. This led to an impasse which was sought to be resolved by the Hydari Agreement. All these developments point to the fact that as India moved towards independence, the Nagas were not psychologically prepared for a union with India. Therefore, they questioned the India Independence Act and the Extra-Provincial Jurisdiction Act passed by the British Parliament which empowered the new Indian Government to continue its administration in the Naga Hills.

As early as 1929, the Naga Club had submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission demanding that the Nagas be excluded from the proposed constitutional changes and kept under the direct administration of the British. The Naga Club, formed in 1918, may be said to have been the first attempt at organised political opinion in the Naga Hills. Although it claimed to represent several tribes, in essence it was made up of government officials and a few leading headmen from the neighbouring villages of Kohima (Alemchiba: 1970, 162-3). In its memorandum, the Naga Club stated: "You (the British) are the only people who have conquered us and when you go we should be as we were". Demanding adequate safeguards from possible rule by the Indians, the memorandum concluded with the following plea: "If the British Government, however want to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we were never subjected, but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times" (Alemchiba: 1970, 164). It appears from the text of the memorandum that the Naga Club was not clear about the kind of autonomy it was asking for, the only emphasis being on the continuance of British rule so that their tribal way of life was left undisturbed. This vagueness of approach is also clear in documents of the Naga National Council with the concept of a tribal utopia being projected. Nonetheless, it was clear that this small educated section of Nagas was, at this juncture of history, giving voice to the apprehensions of the Naga tribes that within the Reformed Scheme, their customary laws would be tampered with.

Although the Naga Club claimed to represent as many as twenty tribes, it is clear from the text of the memorandum that there was not much of political interaction between the tribes and the idea of a common approach to Naga issues was quite a new one. For, the memorandum said: "Our country within the administered area consists of eight tribes, quite different from one another with quite different languages which cannot be understood by each other and there are more tribes outside the administered area which are not known at present. We have no unity among us and it is only the British Government that is holding us together" (Alemchiba: 1970, 163). It is also interesting to note that the Club bemoaned the fact that at that juncture the Nagas did not have any particular individual or group of individuals who could represent and lead the different tribes: "we (the Nagas) had no chance or opportunity to improve in education though we can boast of two or three graduates of an Indian university in our country, we have not got one who is able to represent all our different tribes or master our languages, much less one to represent us in any

council or province” (Alemchiba: 1970, 163-4). Within just two decades, however, the situation would radically change and Angami Zapo Phizo²¹ would emerge as the fiery spokesman of the Naga cause.

There are no records of the activities of the Naga Club after their memorandum to the Simon Commission. But the Naga Club was followed by the Lotha Council in 1923 and the Ao Council in 1928. All these set the stage for the emergence of the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945. This was formed at the initiative of the British Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district, Charles Pawsey, and claimed the support of all the major tribes. It was the first major attempt at forming a united Naga organisation. But, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council did not last long, chiefly because it was found not to be representative of the different tribes. Finally, a conference of representatives of individual tribal councils held in February 1946 re-organised the body and renamed it as the Naga National Council (Alemchiba: 1970, 165). It is to be noted that the term “national” was being used for the first time, the NNC being composed of twenty-nine members who represented the various tribes on the basis of proportional representation (U. Misra: 1983, 160). Every Naga was supposed to be a member of the NNC. One gets an idea of the inter-tribal character of the NNC when one looks into the composition of the Kohima Central Council and the Mokokchung Central Council. While the Kohima Council of the NNC had seven Angami members out of a total of twelve, the Mokokchung Council had five Aos, four Semas, three Lothas, two Sangtams and one Chang. The Konyaks were not represented. The founder president of the NNC was Mayangnokcha Ao, while the secretary was Aliba Imti Ao, a one time activist of the Hill Students’ Federation which was affiliated to the leftist All India Students’ Federation. The joint secretary was an Angami, T. Sakhrie. It is clear that right from the beginning, certain tribes like the Angamis and Aos had an edge over others within the NNC set-up. Incidentally, the Angamis were the first to adopt terrace cultivation and the Aos were the first to reap the benefits of western education.

The birth of the Naga National Council was a major step towards the consolidation of the forces of Naga nationalism. For the first time in the history of the Naga tribes was an attempt being made to bring them together on a common political platform. As the activities of the NNC widened, it became the sole political force in the Naga Hills, though in the strict sense it was not a political party because it had no paying membership or pledge of loyalty. A large section of the NNC leadership was drawn from the incipient Naga middle class²² and the movement for solidarity of the Naga tribes, which it launched, contributed greatly towards lessening inter-

tribal rivalry and the consequent emergence of an “all-Naga consciousness” which came to be termed loosely as the “Naga way of life”. The galvanising together of the different tribes who possessed no common language, and who were at different stages of economic development and riven by inter-tribe rivalry, under the banner of the NNC is a classic example of ethnic mobilisation to fight a common adversary. Referring to such ethnic mobilisations in specific situations, Daniel Bell says: “At particular times—but usually in relation to an adversary, which gives it its political character—one specific identification becomes primary and overriding and prompts one to join a particular group” (Nathan Glazier, Daniel Moynihan, 159). In this case the adversary for the Nagas happened to be the Indian Government which, they believed (rightly or wrongly) would initiate moves aimed at eroding their socio-cultural identity. Paul Brass, for example, lays down certain stages in the development of ethnic groups into communities and then eventually into nationalities. He says that in such a process language, religion, territory or colour, play the determining role (Brass, 20-1). In case of the Naga tribes, however, their politicisation and consequent mobilisation was done largely by appeals to their distinctive socio-cultural pattern of life (something related to the distinctiveness of their race) and the imagined threat to their hold over their land (territory). Thus, in the case of the Nagas, Urmila Phadnis’ definition of an ethnic group as “a historically formed aggregate of people having a real or imaginary association with a specified territory, a shared cluster of beliefs and values connoting its distinctiveness in relation to similar groups and recognised as such by others”, seems quite appropriate (Phadnis, 14). Prior to the advent of the NNC, most of the tribes lived in isolation and the role of the tribal council was limited to the “village republics”. Under the banner of the NNC these tribal councils came together, thereby laying the foundation of an all-Naga representative organisation. This was clearly the phenomenon of various tribes coming together to form an ethnic community (Phadnis, 35). Descent and territory were emphasised to subsume inter-tribal differences, although the different Naga tribes did not even possess a common language and could not communicate with one another (Phadnis, 37). Moreover, the bogey of cultural incompatibility with the “Indians” raised by the Naga middle class found easy takers among the tribal chieftains who were uncertain about the results of the transition from British to Indian rule.

Given the particular historical situation, it did not take long for the emerging ethnic community to be politicised. One of the first acts of the NNC was to call upon the Nagas to prepare for self-determination and for

acquiring fundamental rights. The Secretary of the NNC declared in Kohima on December 6, 1946: "... the NNC stands for the unification of all the Naga tribes and their freedom. ... Our country is connected with India, connected in many ways. We should continue this connection. I do not mind whether future India be a Congress government or a League government. But as a distinctive community, as I stated before, we must also develop according to our genius and taste. We shall enjoy home-rule in our country, but on broader issues be connected with India. We must fight for it: we must get it; keep on watching" (Yuno, 165). The NNC leader was voicing here what his organisation thought of the Naga people's relationship with India. But it was not clear as to what shape this relationship should take. It appears that the NNC was talking more in terms of full regional autonomy and not in terms of complete independence (Yuno, 166-8). Whether it was a call for autonomy or a full-fledged Naga State, it was clear that the Nagas were seeking national status and recognition. As Brass says, an ethnic community graduates into a nation when it demands a major share in the political system, seeks autonomous control over its territory or demands full sovereignty. In short, a nation is "an ethnic community politicised, with recognised group rights in the political system" (Brass, 20). The Nagas too, under the leadership of the NNC, were fast emerging as a nation.

The Indian National Congress was aware of the sentiments of the NNC leaders and Jawaharlal Nehru, as President of the Congress, wrote to the NNC leader, T. Sakhrie, in August, 1946: "It is obvious that the Naga territory in Eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries, India and China and part of it consists of rather backward people who need considerable help. When India is independent, as it is bound to be soon, it will not be possible for the British Government to hold on to the Naga territory or any part of it. They would be isolated between India and China. Inevitably, therefore, this Naga territory must form part of India and of Assam with which it has developed such close associations. ..." (Alemchiba: 1970, 166-7). In his long letter, Nehru also referred to the NNC demand for separate electorates for the Nagas, the question of a common language and the issue of bringing the unadministered Naga territories within one administrative set-up. The tone and content of the letter show that the independent status of the "Naga territory" was accepted by the Indian leadership but it felt that for historical as well as strategic reasons this territory must form part of the Indian Union.

Nehru had talked of giving autonomy to the Naga Hills within the

province of Assam. But the NNC was divided on this issue, with one section putting forward the idea of an independent Naga homeland. Others preferred a mandatory status, with Great Britain as the guardian power. But the NNC position was clear on one point, i.e., that the Nagas never formed part of India and they must be given the choice to decide on the nature of their relationship with the latter. Not satisfied with Nehru's assurance, the NNC demanded an "Interim Government" of the Nagas for ten years. During this period, the Nagas would run their own government under the supervision of a Guardian Power (preferably India), but would be free to decide their future after the lapse of this period. When the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Tribes visited the Naga Hills in May 1947, the NNC put forward its scheme for an Interim Government for ten years which contained the following terms:

(a) The interim government of the Naga people will be a government of the Naga people, having full powers in respect of legislation, the executive and the judiciary; (b) Nagaland belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable; (c) the interim government of the Naga people will have full powers in the matter of revenue and expenditure, an annual subvention to cover the deficit being given by the Guardian Power; (d) for defence and for aiding civil power in case of emergency, a force considered necessary by the Naga National Council will be maintained in Nagaland by the Guardian Power. The force will be responsible to the Naga National Council who will in turn be responsible to the Guardian Power.

The negotiations between the Sub-Committee and the NNC resulted in a deadlock over the question of autonomy and the Nagas' relationship with the guardian power. The Committee refused to make any suggestion to the Constituent Assembly on the question of the ten-year guardianship scheme and the NNC declared that since the Nagas had their own "Constitution", the question of being part of any other constitutional arrangement did not arise. The deadlock was attempted to be broken by the Hydari Agreement (Appendix VI). The preamble of this Agreement recognised "the right of the Nagas to develop according to their freely expressed wishes" and provided full safeguards to Naga customary laws. It is relevant to note that the Hydari Agreement acknowledged the Naga National Council as the sole representative authority of the Naga people and gave it right of control over almost every aspect of Naga life ranging from customary laws to the ownership of land and taxation. It assured full autonomy for the Naga tribes and was clearly an unprecedented move in the sense that a body whose credentials were yet to be established through a democratic process (representatives of the different tribes to the NNC

were usually chosen and not elected) was being given such wide-ranging powers. Although the NNC under the leadership of its secretary, Aliba Imti Ao, initially approved of the Hydari Agreement by a majority vote (Alemchiba: 1970, 173), yet the extremist section within the organisation ultimately refused to accept it by stressing that Article 9 of the Agreement was being misinterpreted by the Government of India. Article 9 of the Agreement was worded as follows: "The Governor of Assam, as the agent of the Government of the Indian Union, will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of the Agreement. At the end of this period, the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above Agreement to be extended for a further period or a new Agreement regarding the future of the Naga people is arrived at".

Soon the moderates within the NNC lost ground and it was declared that Article 9 actually gave the Nagas the right to complete independence, once the interim period of ten years was over. This was not acceptable to the Indian Government which insisted that this Article gave the Nagas the right to suggest administrative changes within the Indian Union but not that of secession, (Chaube, 144). From the wording of the Agreement, however, it did not appear that the Government of India had settled for a temporary union with the Naga Hills, whatever interpretations the Naga leaders might have given. The wrangle over the interpretation of Article 9 of the Hydari Agreement continued for several months. In the process Aliba Imti Ao was getting increasingly marginalised within the NNC. Though Angami Zapo Phizo was yet to assume his leading role in the NNC, he succeeded in organising the minority group within the body which was opposed to the Hydari Agreement and went with a delegation of five members to meet Mahatma Gandhi in July 19, 1947. Gandhi reportedly told the Naga delegation: "The Nagas have every right to become independent. We did not want to live under the domination of the British and they are now leaving us. I want you to feel that India is yours. I feel that the Naga Hills is mine just as it is yours. But if you say that it is not mine, the matter must stop there. I believe in the brotherhood of man, but I do not believe in force or forced unions. If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to that".²³

Around this time, Aliba Imti who continued to be the NNC secretary, also met Nehru. But nothing substantial emerged from the meeting except that Nehru asked the Naga leader to accept the Sixth Schedule.²⁴ Aliba returned to Naga Hills and sent an ultimatum to Delhi saying that if the NNC's view regarding the Hydari Agreement was not accepted, the Naga people would cease to be a part of the Indian Union from December 6, 1947

(Yuno: 1974, 197). Phizo too, in the meanwhile, returned home and declared independence for Nagaland on August 15, 1947. But he was yet to take the NNC along with him in this move.

Phizo was elected the President of the Naga National Council in November, 1949 and with it the moderates in the organisation were completely silenced and the demand for Naga independence gained momentum. Under Phizo's leadership the NNC was turned from an amorphous middle-class organisation into a militant outfit wedded to the idea of a sovereign Naga homeland. One of the first acts of the NNC after Phizo took over was to reject the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which provided for wide powers to District Councils which would be elected bodies and would replace the traditional tribal councils.²⁵ This was a clever move because it earned him the support of the tribal councils and their chiefs. It is significant that although the leadership of the NNC was drawn largely from the incipient Naga middle class, yet no threat was posed by NNC politics to the traditional leadership of the tribal councils. It is not uncommon that in the course of the growth of nationalistic forces in a tribal society, the small middle class leadership faces strong opposition from the tribal chieftains who, more often than not, derived their power from inter-tribal rivalry (Fanon, 87-9). This was exactly the case in neighbouring Mizoram where the Mizo Union and the District Council found themselves at loggerheads with the chiefs who wielded great power and influence. In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills and Lushai Hills (Mizoram) the emerging middle class formed their own organisations which often ran counter to the traditional organisations headed by the chiefs. The Khasi National Conference, the Garo National Conference and the Mizo Union were such bodies (Chaube, 98). But in the Naga Hills, the NNC was born out of the Naga District Tribal Council and chose to direct its appeal to the traditional power structures of Naga society. While discussing the use of "community resources" in building up political organisations, Brass refers to the National Council of Nigeria, and the Cameroons which, in the 1940s and 1950s based their organizations on the tribal councils (Brass, 48). Though the strategy of the Naga National Council paid immediate dividends, yet in the long run it seems to have proved counter-productive because inter-tribal rivalry was soon to affect its organisational structure. Nevertheless, Phizo's decision to override the District Council in favour of the traditional tribal councils gave the NNC a wide support base just when he needed it.

The support of the village chiefs and the tribal councils for the NNC was amply demonstrated during the "plebiscite" for Naga independence

which Phizo organised from May to August, 1951. During this period NNC volunteers visited the remotest of Naga villages and collected signatures and thumb impressions and administered oaths in the tribal fashion for the fight for independence. This was followed by a total boycott of the 1952 General Elections, with no nomination papers being filed in the Naga Hills. In both cases the NNC could claim that it had received the support of the overwhelming majority of the Naga people. Without the support of the tribal councils and the chiefs, this would not have been possible. The NNC then launched a civil disobedience movement during which school teachers resigned their jobs, government functions were boycotted and taxes refused. Through these moves, each more successful than the other, the NNC was trying to prove that it was the unquestioned spokesman of the Naga people and that the verdict was in favour of independence or "home rule".

Most of the Indian political leaders could not read into the popular base of the Naga struggle, either because of ignorance of the actual state of affairs in the then Naga Hills district of Assam or because of certain in-built prejudices. It, however, goes to the credit of Nehru that right from the beginning, he seemed to have been aware of the uniqueness of the Naga situation and opposed any military solution to it. In a meeting of the All India Congress Committee held on January 5, 1947, Ram Manohar Lohia raised the Naga issue and reiterated that in the Naga Hills the British Government and the American missionaries had started a campaign for separation from the rest of Assam and that Congress should counteract the propaganda. Lohia declared that the battle of Assam was not so much to preserve Assam's provincial autonomy but to preserve India's unity. To Lohia's arguments, Nehru had the following reply: "Dr. Lohia has dealt at length with the Naga Hills. It is true that we can help the people of those hills, but I refuse to accept the proposition that the battle for Indian independence should be fought in the Naga Hills. I appeal for a more positive and fuller approach to the problem" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 1, 1984, 42). About six months earlier, Nehru had written to the NNC leader, Sakhrie, that he was for autonomy as well as constitutional safeguards for the Naga people: "I am glad that the Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all the Naga tribes including those who live in the so-called unadministered territory. I agree entirely with your decision that the Naga Hills should constitutionally be included in an autonomous Assam in a free India with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas" (Alemchina: 1970, 167).

Bishnuram Medhi, who succeeded Gopinath Bardoloi as the Chief

Minister of Assam in 1950, was for a tough no-nonsense approach to the Naga problem which he viewed primarily as the handiwork of a group of westernised Nagas who were acting on the guidance of the foreign missionaries. In response to Medhi's letter that more armed forces be sent to the Naga Hills and that the revolt be dealt with firmly and speedily, Nehru had written in May 1956:

. . . We recognise of course fully that this revolt of some of the Nagas has to be dealt with firmly and speedily. It is far better to restore law and order in these affected areas as quickly as possible than to allow the situation to drag. But, as I have said above, even from the military point of view, we cannot do very much in the interior hills during the monsoon. Operations will certainly continue even during the monsoon and we shall be preparing for a largescale effort a little later. . . . But there is something much more to it than merely a military approach. The Naga troubles and revolts have a larger significance for us in the international sphere and they give a handle to our opponents everywhere. . . . There can be no doubt that an armed revolt has to be met by force and suppressed. There are no two opinions about that and we shall set about it as efficiently and effectively as possible. But our whole past and present outlook is based on force by itself being no remedy. We have repeated this in regard to the greater problems of the world. Much more must we remember this when dealing with our own countrymen who have to be won over and not merely suppressed . . . we have always to remember that the real solution will require a political approach and an attempt to make the Nagas feel that we are friendly to them and that they can be at home in India. It may be that the present is no time for the political approach, because it may be construed as a sign of weakness. But anyhow our minds should be clear and even now onwards we should do nothing which will come in the way of that political approach and we should let it be known that we want to be friends with the Nagas unless they revolt against us (Hazarika, 359-61).

Nehru rounded off the letter by asking Medhi to consider what degree of autonomy could be given to the Nagas. It is an irony of history that the man who was so conscious of the rights of the Nagas should, as the Prime Minister of India, be responsible for the atrocities committed on the ordinary folk by the security forces which involved the burning of villages, the destruction of churches, torture and rape. Nehru's commitment to a negotiated settlement was, for quite a length of time, nullified by the action of the security forces in Nagaland. It was only after mounting criticism at home and abroad that New Delhi grew somewhat sensitive to the issue of human rights violations in Nagaland. The violations, nonetheless, continued despite repeated interventions by the highest judicial body of the country, (Luithui and Haksar, 1984). As the Prime

Minister of independent sovereign India, Nehru had to adopt a no-compromise position on the question of the Naga demand for independence. But, once the army was inducted into the Naga Hills and laws enacted to curb the freedom of the people, human rights violations became a common feature of life in Nagaland. Instead of getting these violations properly investigated, Nehru's government was throughout busy in defending its policy in Nagaland. It was indeed an unenviable position for Nehru. But, his commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue found expression on numerous occasions and ultimately helped shape opinion within his party as well as amongst parliamentarians as a whole, in favour of a separate State for the Nagas.

Amongst the Assamese politicians, Gopinath Bardoloi and Bimala Prasad Chaliha had some understanding of the tribal problem and genuinely tried to redress the grievances of the Nagas and the other hill tribes who lived within the composite state of Assam. Bardoloi, who along with the Khasi leader J.J.M. Nichols-Roy, was responsible for drafting of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India providing safeguards to the tribal peoples, and was opposed to the assimilationist views expressed by some Assamese leaders of the period (*Constituent Assembly Debates*, IX). Bardoloi did not live to see the benefits or otherwise which the Sixth Schedule brought for the tribal people of north-eastern India. Today, there is much criticism of the Sixth Schedule on a variety of points. It is also seen by many social scientists as having contributed to the Balkanisation of Assam. But, Bardoloi stood apart from the average Assamese politician in that he did not believe in steamrolling the different ethnic nationalities under the banner of the greater Assamese nation. The other Assamese politician who succeeded in earning the goodwill and respect of the Nagas was Bimala Prasad Chaliha. Chaliha who succeeded Medhi as the Chief Minister of Assam, was deeply interested in Naga affairs right from the time when he was the state Congress chief. He had succeeded in establishing a meaningful rapport with the Naga leaders and had earned their respect. As a member of the Peace Mission, Chaliha made clear his admiration for the Naga struggle and did not mince words about his support for the self-determination of the Naga people. The Peace Mission clearly stated that it "appreciates the courage and tenacity displayed by the Naga people in their endeavour to achieve this goal" (Alemchiba: 1970, 210). It was a different matter for Jayprakash Narayan or Michael Scott to be a party to such a position. But for someone who was a leading Congressman and the Chief Minister of the province, it did need both sincerity and courage to be a party to such a statement. There was much

criticism of the Peace Mission proposals in Congress circles in Delhi and elsewhere on the ground that these encouraged anti-national trends, because, by talking of “a peace conference to be held and consultations to take place freely among the people of Nagaland and India”, it had given a sort of sovereign status to the Naga Federal Government. But, all these criticisms and misgivings notwithstanding, Chaliha stuck to his position. It was primarily through his efforts that the cessation of hostilities was brought about, though ultimately the proposals fell through because neither the underground Nagas nor the Government of India was prepared to compromise on the question of the demand for independence.

Not being able to check the trend of events in the Naga Hills through a political dialogue, the Government of India decided to crack down on the NNC towards the middle of 1953. The crackdown was preceded by an infructuous visit to Kohima by Prime Minister Nehru accompanied by his Burmese counterpart, Thakin Nu. Police action against the NNC and the search of important Naga villages resulted in most of the NNC leadership going underground in order to mobilise the people. The irredentist stance of the Assam Government made matters worse and thousands of young men and women joined the Naga Home Guard and the Naga Women’s Society.²⁶ Treating the matter primarily as a law and order problem, the Assam Government promulgated the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act, 1953 and applied it to the entire Naga Hills district. This was followed by the dissolution of the Naga tribal councils and tribal courts. Assam Chief Minister, Bishnuram Medhi made it quite clear that the Naga struggle was led by a handful of leaders who were being instigated by the foreign missionaries (Alemchiba: 1970, 175-6). The Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955, was enforced in January 1956 and law and order duties in the Naga Hills were finally handed over to the armed forces. With chances of a negotiated settlement finally receding to the background, the NNC declared the formation of the Federal Government of Nagaland in March 1956.

NOTES

1. Trouble in the Naga Hills district of Assam broke out from early 1953 when police action was initiated against the Naga National Council. This was followed by insurgent attacks on police outposts and government officials. In 1956 the armed forces were moved in.
2. Henceforth to be referred to as the NNC.
3. The State of Nagaland was created by the thirteenth amendment of the Constitution of India (Act No. 73 of 1962) and comprised of the districts of Kohima, Mokukchung and Tuensang.

4. In the 1952 general elections no nomination paper was filed in the Naga Hills and no elections to the District Council were held.
5. Phizo inaugurated the "plebiscite" on the issue of Naga independence at Kohima on May 16, 1951. Seven thousand Nagas were reported to have put their thumb impressions in favour of independence on that day.
6. Nagaland is governed by Inner Line Regulations which make it mandatory for non-Nagas to secure entry-permits into the state. Restrictions are also there for non-Nagas to acquire landed property and to carry on business as in other parts of the country. The British introduced the restrictions through the Inner Line Regulation of 1873.
7. The first successful elections in the state were held in 1964. Despite threats by the underground, Nagas turned out in large numbers to elect their representatives to the legislature.
8. Nagaland is a "special category state" securing 90 per cent grants and 10 per cent loans from the Centre. Over the years the Centre has sanctioned huge amounts as developmental grants but little of this has percolated to the grassroots level. The infrastructure needed for the proper utilisation of Central grants has been lacking.
9. Not all the tribes are equally developed. There is still great disparity between the tribes as far as economic development is concerned. Those tribes which did not come at all under British administration continued to live in socio-economic isolation. The situation, however, started changing after the creation of the state of Nagaland. Today, even though tribes like the Aos, Angamis and Semas are comparatively advanced, others are also fast catching up.
10. The Naga struggle attracted attention abroad much before a dispassionate appraisal began at home in India. Phizo and his small group worked ceaselessly to project the Naga cause in different countries and tried to convince them that the Nagas did constitute a nation. That the efforts of the Naga nationalists abroad met with success can be gleaned from the different publications on the Naga issue brought out by foreign human rights bodies. In one such publication, Neville Maxwell writes: "Their ("the Nagas") social organisation is tribal and they are sometimes thought of as a primitive people even by standards of the Indian sub-continent; but it is seriously to misrepresent them. By standards of literacy, village self-government and democracy, and quick aptitude to the instruments and institutions of modernisation, they are far from backward; their political leadership is mature and sophisticated, and their sense of national identity as strong as that of any other people of the sub-continent and stronger perhaps than most" (*India and the Nagas*, Minority Rights Group, Report No. 17).
11. The British had never exercised jurisdiction over all the Naga tribes. Most of the north-eastern Naga-inhabited areas were left completely untouched till the nineteen thirties. The Government of India Act of 1935 tried to bring these areas under some semblance of control. Political control was vested directly with the Governor-General and was to be exercised by the Governor as his agent.

12. The present state of Nagaland covers an area of 16,488 square kilometres and lies between 25.6' and 27.4' north of the equator and between the longitudinal lines 98.20'E and 95.15'E. But this area, which forms the state of Nagaland as constituted by the Government of India is not acceptable to the majority of the Nagas who are of the opinion that the Naga homeland should include the entire Naga-inhabited areas between the Chindwin and the Brahmaputra. This attitude was reflected in the reaction of both the state government of Nagaland as well as the underground Nagas to the Indo-Burma Border Agreement of 1975. Both sections felt that large chunks of Naga territory had been handed over to Burma. One of their standing grievances has been that under the British as also the Indian government the Nagas have been divided up into different political areas. The creation of Nagaland state partially rectified this. But the Nagas in India maintain that the large Naga population living across the international border and the Nagas living in Manipur should be integrated in a common homeland. This concept of a "greater Nagaland" has raised apprehensions in several of the neighbouring states.
13. Although the Naga tribes differ from one another, each possessing a language unintelligible to the other, yet they share a common tradition and culture in the form of religious beliefs and social customs.
14. "Buranjis" are chronicles of events maintained by the Ahom kings of Assam. These histories carefully compiled through the entire period of Ahom rule were written in the Tai and Assamese languages.
15. Naga-Assamese trade flourished for centuries and Nagas bartered, and sold commodities like rock-salt, cotton, ivory, wax and medicinal herbs to the Assamese who, in turn, supplied the Nagas with rice, cloth etc. Evidence of this is seen in the wide use of 'patois' Assamese in Nagaland, especially in areas bordering the plains of Assam. This, along with additions to the vocabulary from some other languages, is today known as Nagamese. Refer Yusoso Yuno, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 62.
16. The Naga Hills District covered only central Nagaland and did not include the other Naga-inhabited areas under one administrative unit. Naga scholars today blame the British for the deliberate division of their land into Naga Hills proper and parts of Assam, Manipur and Burma. This step, they feel, was taken to keep the Naga tribes divided and hence, to check the growth of Nagaism and Naga nationalism. Yusoso Yuno writes: "Had the British visualised the foremost demand of all Nagas for integration into one unit and state, they would have received a lot of warm goodwill from the Nagas. Time and again, the British rule which created firm boundaries where previously there had been none, between India, China and Burma, cutting across the Nagas here and there against their will, had certainly laid the basis of future trend of Naga progress into conflict with their neighbours" (Yuno, *The Rising Nagas*, p. 158). But, it has to be kept in mind that the question of integrating all the Naga-inhabited areas has come up only after the rise of

a feeling of Naga oneness consequent to the struggle against the Indian government. Prior to this, the different tribes had often fought each other and inter-tribe wars were common till the British advent into the region.

17. Khonoma, the birthplace of Phizo, was the largest "village republic" in the Naga Hills. Khonoma is the birthplace of a large number of Naga intellectuals, social reformers and politicians.
18. The Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order, 1936, declared that the Naga Hills District, the Lushai Hills District and the North Cachar Subdivision of Cachar District and the Frontier tracts as Excluded Areas. The Garo Hills District, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District (excluding Shillong) and the Mikir Hills Tract of the Nowgong and Sibsagar Districts were declared Partially Excluded Areas. Though the executive power of the province (Assam in this case) would extend to the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas, yet no federal or provincial legislation was applicable to these areas without the Governor's assent.
19. The Indian National Congress claimed that the Nagas were involved in the freedom struggle and to prove its point the fight put up against the British by the Zeliangrong Nagas under their leader Guidinliu is cited. Guidinliu was named by Nehru as the Naga Rani. But her struggle was primarily confined to her tribe (made up of three sub-tribes, the Zemis, Liangmeis and Rongmeis) and was based on inter-tribe rivalry, resistance to Christian conversion and the safeguarding of indigenous Naga rites. It was only during the Japanese advance into Kohima during the Second World War that the Nagas developed some degree of oneness with the rest of the sub-continent. Allied success during the siege of Kohima would not have been possible without the help rendered by the local Naga population. The Kohima War Cemetery has at least one gravestone wherein is inscribed the name of Saliezu Angami, sepoy of the Assam Regiment who died in the fight against the Japanese.
20. The spread of Christianity in the Nagaland was not confined primarily to the downtrodden and dispossessed sections of the population as in other parts of India. Here, because of the equalitarian set-up of tribal society, when conversion took place, usually the entire village population was covered.
21. Angami Zapo Phizo was born in 1900(?) in the village of Khonma. He started his career as a small businessman. While his followers insist that Phizo served in the INA and was imprisoned in the Central Jail at Rangoon along with INA prisoners, others are of the opinion that he collaborated with the Japanese and was imprisoned by the British after the recapture of Burma (Chaube, 1973, p. 144). Elected as the chief of the NNC in 1949, Phizo grew into a sort of legend in Naga life since his self-exile in England from 1957. Phizo died in 1990 and his body was brought home by the Indian Government and he was given a state funeral where thousands of Nagas, irrespective of political loyalties, paid their last respects to the man who had consistently and stubbornly fought for the Naga cause for half a

century.

22. By way of example we may refer to A.Z. Phizo and Imkongmeren Ao, the President and Vice-President respectively of the NNC since 1949. Both had been exposed to western education and Christianity. The Naga middle class was the result of western education and the monetized economy introduced by the British. Almost all the leaders of the NNC were drawn from this class. They carried the chiefs and the tribal councils with them by raising apprehensions about a threat to their powers and privileges as well as to the overall Naga pattern of life from outside forces.
23. Though no account of this is to be found in Gandhi's biographies, S.K. Chaube quotes it from "The Naga Revolt" by George Paterson published in *The Spectator* of September 14, 1962.
24. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (Art. 244(A) and 275(1)) provided for District Councils in the tribals areas of undivided Assam which were made into autonomous districts. Though the District Councils, which had elected representation, were given wide-ranging powers over land, water and even mineral resources of the autonomous districts under their control, the relationship between the councils and the state government under which they eventually functioned was not clearly defined. Hence, quite often the District Councils had to depend on the mercy and whims of the State legislature and the government for financial grants to carry out projects. Though the budget of the council was supposed to be prepared by itself and then approved by the legislature, yet in most cases this was not the case. Nevertheless, District Councils did play a progressive role especially in Mizoram and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, where they became the forum of the educated elite as against the autocracy of the chiefs. In Mizoram, for example, the Mizo Union as the ruling body in the Mizo District Council abolished chiefship. But in several cases compromises between the educated elite and the chiefs had to be worked out, whereas in the Naga Hills the moderate elite was outnumbered and sidetracked by the extremists who refused the District Council and went ahead with winning the support of the traditional chiefs. Thus, the struggle between the District Councils and the traditional tribal institutions headed by the chiefs has been termed as one between tradition and modernity (S.K. Chaube, "Tribal Societies and the Problem of Nation Building" in Pakem, ed., *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India*: 1990, 22-3).
25. The tribal council composed of elders of the village, had both judicial and executive powers. The character and composition of the council varied from tribe to tribe. But in each case they formed the machinery of self-government.
26. The Naga Home Guard was raised by Phizo from among ex-servicemen and young recruits. It was the beginning of the Naga Federal Army. The Naga Youth Movement and the Naga Women's Society were the youth wings of the Naga National Council.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Naga Struggle: Insurgent Politics and State Maneuvres

It took quite some time for the governments in Assam and New Delhi to realise that the Naga movement was not being led by a handful of westernised Naga Christians incited and abetted by foreign missionaries, but that the strength of the NNC was drawn from the traditional village councils. Once this became clear, measures were taken to dissolve the tribal councils and courts and reduce the power and influence of the chiefs and their bodies. With such an aim in view, the notorious village re-grouping scheme (Stracey, 164-8) was put into effect. These re-groupings, which were apparently made to flush out rebel elements, had a far-reaching effect on Naga social life because they led to the break-up of the economic pattern of life of the Naga people of which the village was the primary unit. Re-grouping resulted in people from different villages being grouped together, stockaded and isolated from their fields. This was ostensibly done to prevent the villagers from helping the hostiles with food, shelter and other necessities. But it resulted in untold suffering for the people and affected the very core of Naga life—the “autonomous” village. This disruption of the socio-economic life pattern of the Naga people was bound to have far-reaching consequences. The Nagas never seem to have forgiven the Indian government for the notorious re-groupings.¹

The Naga Federal set-up was so well planned, having drawn its strength from the traditional village institutions, that within a relatively short span of time a parallel government started functioning.² In order to counter the growing influence of the NNC, New Delhi encouraged attempts by a section of the Naga elite led by Imkongliba Ao, to work for a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue. Army action was another factor which hastened the process. Subsequently, there was a split in the NNC leadership, with several close confidants of Phizo such as T. Sakhrie and Zasokie deciding to leave the organisation (Alemchiba, 185). This encouraged the Government of India to bring the Naga Hills under direct Central rule and, accordingly, the Naga Hills Tuensang Area comprising the Naga Hills and Tuensang Division

of the North East Frontier Agency under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of External Affairs was formed. This was a great step forward for the moderates who now moved for the formation of a full-fledged state for the Naga people within the Indian Union. The State of Nagaland was inaugurated in December 1963, with the Naga Federal Government denouncing the move as one aimed at dividing the Naga people.

The Delhi Agreement (Appendix X) between a section of the Naga leaders and the Indian Government which led to the formation of the State of Nagaland was fiercely resisted by the Naga Federal Government and hostilities continued unabated. It was against such a background that at a conference of Naga Baptist Churches held in February 1964 a Peace Mission consisting of Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Rev. Michael Scott and Jayprakash Narayan was formed. This Mission succeeded in concluding an agreement for ceasefire and suspension of operations in Nagaland with the Federal Government (Appendix XIII). The Agreement makes interesting reading in that it appears as if it was made between two independent nations. It spells out the sort of activities the underground and the security forces were engaged in. Part of the agreement reads as follows:

On the understanding that the Security Forces of the Government of India undertake to suspend: (a) jungle operations; (b) raiding of Federal Army and all administrative camps; (c) patrolling beyond 1000 yards of security posts; (d) searching of villages; (e) aerial actions; (f) arrests; (g) imposition of political fines; (h) forced labour. . .

We, on behalf of the Federal Government of Nagaland also undertake to suspend: (a) sniping and ambushing; (b) imposition of fines; (c) kidnapping and recruitment; (d) sabotage activities; (e) raiding and firing at security posts, towns and administrative centres (Alemchiba, 203).

From the above it appears that the Indian army was behaving at that time more or less as an occupation force in Nagaland. For, the methods it had adopted in Nagaland did not appear to be those of an army trying to contain a revolt by its own people.

The Peace Mission proposals clearly stated that it "appreciates and understands the desire of the Nagas for self-determination and their urge to preserve their integrity". The Mission, while emphasising the need for a peaceful settlement of the issue, stated that the "Naga Federal Government could on their own volition, decide to be a participant in the Union of India and mutually settle terms and conditions for that purpose." The Government of India too could recast and reshape its relationship with Nagaland "so as to satisfy the political aspirations of all sections of Naga opinion" (Alemchiba, 210-11). Although the Peace Mission's proposals

failed because the Naga Federal Government refused to make any concessions on the question of sovereignty, yet a beginning was made in the form of cessation of hostilities between the two sides. Moreover, the Peace Mission, by acknowledging the nationality issue involved in the Naga struggle helped in partially removing the communication gap which existed between the Naga leadership (both overground and underground) and the Indian political leaders. Jayaprakash Narayan went on record as saying that the Naga struggle was "most certainly a struggle for national freedom" and that its aim was "the throwing out of a Government, namely, the Government of India, which it regards as established here by force". He also said that the Naga struggle could be viewed in its true perspective only when seen in the context of a union of self-governing states (Appendix XII).

The gradual marginalisation of the Naga National Council in Naga politics began with the first successful elections in Nagaland in 1964. Active participation of the Naga people in the electoral process marked the start of a new era as part of the Indian Union. Faced with the new situation wherein the Nagas were ruling their own State, the NNC discovered that the cause they had been fighting for was losing much of its appeal. Inter-tribe rivalry erupted within the NNC ranks, particularly between the Aos, Angamis and the Semas. The factionalism within the Naga underground has been traced by some scholars to the ethnocentric character of Phizo's movement which depended more on the tribal organisations than on the middle class leadership (Chaube, 153). It has been maintained that right from the beginning, the different tribes sought supremacy within the NNC, with the Federal Army being led sometimes by an Angami and sometimes by a Sema. Such factionalism increased after Phizo left the Naga Hills in 1957 for self-exile in England and different power centres started emerging. But to suggest that the NNC and the Federal Government of the underground Nagas were run primarily on lines of tribe affiliation would perhaps be an oversimplification. While there is no doubt that the NNC was dominated by the Angamis, the tribe to which Phizo himself belonged, yet almost all the other tribes were adequately represented in it. For instance, Imkongmeren Ao continued to be the vice-president of the NNC till his death (Misra, *EPW*, 1977). It would be naive to view Phizo just as an Angami leader. It goes to his credit that he was the first Naga leader who successfully cut across tribe affiliations and emerged as the sole spokesman of Naga nationalism. Despite his long absence abroad, he continued to inspire the Naga people and, in his death, has emerged as the only leader of the Nagas who had dared to dream of a

sovereign Naga homeland, who gave them a feeling of oneness as a people, who started a struggle which helped to build up that corporate will of a people which is so necessary in the rise and consolidation of nationalistic feeling. When he died in London in May 1990, the Government of India brought his body home to Nagaland in deference to the wishes of the Naga people. His funeral drew crowds from the remotest corners of Nagaland, cutting across all tribe and clan feelings and was easily the first such occasion in the history of the Naga people when all joined in to pay their homage to a single leader.

Though the ethnocentric tendencies in Phizo's organisation led to the empowering of the tribal councils rather than the emerging middle class, yet the fact remains that had he not done that, the Naga National Council would have remained a mere petition-making middle class organisation and the positive fruits of the Naga struggle, which include the rise and consolidation of a Naga consciousness and the creation of the state of Nagaland (which, of course, Phizo considered as an Indian conspiracy to divide the Nagas) would perhaps have never been achieved. If his utopia remained unachieved, it was primarily because of the abrupt changes in the historical situation. A statement attributed to him runs thus:

Truly, we are a peculiar people. We are all equals. Men and women have an equal status. We have no caste divisions . . . no high class or low class of people. . . . We believe in that form of democratic government which permits the rule not of the majority but of the people as a whole. We have no land tax, no wine tax, no water tax. Forests, rivers and woodland belong to the people for their exploitation without paying taxes... We have no beggars. . . . And wonder of wonders, we have no jails. We do not 'arrest' or 'imprison' anybody. . . . We fear nobody, individually or collectively. We are a healthy people and fear corrupts the health of man. . . . We talk freely, live freely and often fight freely too. We have no inhibitions of any kind. . . . Wild? Yes. . . . But free. There is order in this chaos, law in this freedom. If I were to choose a country, it would be my Nagaland, my fair Nagaland—again and again.

However, staying in far-away England, Phizo was not adequately aware of the socio-economic changes triggered off in his Nagaland after it became a constituent State of the Indian Union. Nagaland's incorporation into the Indian political process brought along with it its negative aspects too. For instance, corruption at all levels of government functioning had become a commonly accepted fact in Naga life. In the 1987 elections, for example, it was alleged that some six to ten crore rupees had been spent by the ruling Congress(I) on an electorate of less than six lakhs, some ten to fifteen lakh

of rupees being spent on each of the state's sixty constituencies (Misra, *EPW*, 1987). The idea of private property was gaining ground, customary laws were under pressure and the entire community life was changing as forces of modernisation were taking over. These changes were not peculiar only to Nagaland but true of all such tribal societies which, within a short time span, were moving from a predominantly barter economy to a modern market economy without going through the intermediate processes of social growth. Moreover, Phizo could not grasp the impact of the democratic experiment in his homeland and continued with his vision of an ideal Naga society based on traditional tribal institutions in the "village republics".

For his part, he never acknowledged the elections in Nagaland to be genuine, for such would have meant the acceptance of the existence of the state of Nagaland within the Indian Union. Till the end he stuck to his position that though the British had occupied a part of Naga territory, they had never incorporated these into British India and that the creation of the Naga Hills District under Assam was done merely as an administrative arrangement. Writing about Phizo's stand, the late Charlie Kevichusa, who was editor of Nagaland's leading weekly and a leader of the Naga National Democratic Front party, observed: "His (Phizo's) political premises have strong similarities with those of Lithuania and the other Baltic States. According to Vytautis Landsvergis, President of Lithuania, his country alongwith other Baltic States had been ceded by Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union by means of an unholy alliance between Hitler and Stalin. And this is a historical fact which the world cannot deny. Landsvergis' stand is that his country had never been a part of the erstwhile Russian empire nor had the Lithuanians ever consented to join the Union of Soviet Socialist republics. If the matter were to be decided in an impartial court of law, both Landsvergis and Phizo would have been proved right. But just as the unholy alliance between Hitler and Stalin had transferred the Baltic States into the USSR, so had the British carelessly and unconcernedly left the land of the Nagas divided between free India and Burma" (*Ura Mail*, May 9, 1990).

Phizo did not live to see the break-up of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Lithuania as a sovereign State. But his consistent espousal of the cause of Naga sovereignty and a united Naga homeland continued to find its echo in the Nagaland of the nineteen nineties. Just as his dogged espousal of the cause of Naga independence continued to evoke passions among the Nagas even when they knew in their heart of hearts that insurgency was bound to fail in the long run, similarly there are sections within the Nagas who blame Phizo for motivating the worst form of tribalism

in Naga politics. The polemical attacks on Phizo by the NSCN are a case in point. Some observers are, therefore, of the view that though Phizo successfully inculcated the sense of pride of identity amongst the Nagas, he failed to consolidate these gains and transform them for the welfare of his people. For instance, a commentator in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, writing on the death of Phizo, observed:

Perhaps, had he played his cards more adroitly, and had he been less consumed by hatred not so much of India but of fellow Naga nationalists equally committed to the cause of Naga sovereignty but only opposed to Phizo's ways and ready, through experience, to modify the demand for sovereignty to one of greatest possible autonomy within India (does anyone remember T. Sakhrie or Imkongliba?), Phizo could have been more unambiguously considered not merely the father of Naga nationalism but also its consolidator. But then, having provided the Naga people with a sense of pride in their own identity and having inculcated the national spirit in the people, Phizo failed to consolidate these gains and transform them for the welfare of the Naga people (Kamrupee, *EPW*, May 5-12, 1990).

The greatest paradox of Phizo seems to be that while on the one hand he instilled a sense of nationhood among the Naga people, on the other he is seen by many of his compatriots as one who helped the re-assertion of tribalism in some of its worst forms in Naga politics by catering primarily to Angami chauvinism and exclusiveness. For instance, the NSCN statement of January 3, 1984 condemns Phizo as a traitor to the Naga cause and accuses him of standing in the "way of Nagaland's salvation" by encouraging inter-tribe rivalry and calling for the unity of the Angamis and the Chakesangs only, while excluding the other tribes (Horam, 303). Referring to the "treacherous tribalism" of A.Z. Phizo, the same statement accuses Phizo of betraying the Naga people by accepting the Shillong Accord and of adopting the position that the "Tenemies" (the Angamis) are the "only trustworthy people" while the other tribes are "destructive and unreliable" (Appendix XVII). All these allegations notwithstanding, it goes to the credit of Phizo that he was not only the first Naga leader who successfully mobilised the different tribes on a common platform, but possessed the capacity of long-term planning. Horam praises Phizo for this "un-Naga" quality and says that it was Phizo who first thought of the Kachin connection so that the Nagas could continue their fight against the Indians "with their backs to the Burmese theatre" (Horam, 48).

Thus, there is naturally another view to the one which puts the major share of the blame for tribalism on Phizo. A young Naga intellectual reacted to the above viewpoint in the following manner:

Sure there was tribalism among the Nagas before the Indian occupation, but Indian leaders worked on it, complicating it further and transforming it into new insidious forms by manipulating the Naga leadership and applying military force where manipulation failed. The divisions and confusions in Nagaland politics today are the direct result of the past forty years of Indian domination, not the work of Phizo. Phizo may have seen his leadership of the Nagas as axiomatic and lived in an unrealistically exalted image of himself, but he was the man who inculcated, nurtured, and brought into being the concept of a common Naga identity and he cannot now be made to bear the burden of tribal conflicts in Nagaland politics” (Pimomo, *EPW*, October 13, 1990).

While it would be a simplification to say that Phizo was primarily responsible for the tribalism now afflicting Naga society and that he was instrumental directly in the rise of Angami chauvinism, it would also be unhistorical to suggest that Phizo is to be exonerated from all responsibility for the present state of affairs in Nagaland. The Phizo factor remained, and still remains to a certain extent, central to Naga politics. Therefore, it is but natural that Phizo and his political legacy should come in for close scrutiny in any discussion of Naga politics. That Phizo’s reliance on the tribal councils in his fight to achieve his political goal did eventually prove to be counter-productive is a fact which must be accepted. To pin the blame of tribalism in Naga politics solely on the Indian “occupiers” would be to adopt an unrealistic position. The manipulations of the Indian State in creating divisions within and between social groups whenever considered necessary are not exclusive to Nagaland. They are equally true with other segments of the Indian population. But, given the situation in Nagaland, it was but natural that the Indian State would adopt all possible means to create divisions in the ranks of its opponents. Yet, the measure of the State’s success is bound to be proportional to the degree of inbuilt weakness in the structure of the opposing forces.

If inter-tribal differences have assumed worrying proportions in Naga politics today, both underground and overground, then the factors contributing to such cleavages were many—Phizo’s absence, the involvement of the Nagas in electoral politics, the question of sharing political power, the entry of market forces, and, above all, the role of the Indian State. Actually, the first fissures started appearing in the NNC with the gradual involvement of the Naga masses in the electoral process. This had progressively reduced the power and influence of the traditional tribal bodies and the chiefs who provided the NNC with its main power base. The new centres of power were the local member of the Legislative Assembly, the member of Parliament and the Ministers—all invariably

elected on clan and tribe lines. This was something which the NNC had not wagered for. However much the underground condemned the elected government as a tool in the hands of the Indian Government, the day-to-day reality in Nagaland had changed. As the people of the state were drawn more and more into the vortex of India's electoral politics, all its attendant ills including caste and clan divisions came into full play. In the struggle for sharing of political power, clan and tribe loyalties were bound to play a dominant role.

To go back to the trend of historical events, when in 1975 the Shillong Accord was signed and a section of the underground lay down arms, it became evident that, with all its limitations, the democratic experiment in Nagaland was catching on (Appendix IX). The Shillong Accord was rejected both by Phizo and a section of the NNC leadership led by Thuengaling Muivah and Isak Scu. Muivah's group broke off from the NNC and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The NSCN issued its manifesto in 1980 in which it declared the Phizoite Naga National Council to be a spent force which had turned "treacherous and reactionary". It affirmed its commitment to a sovereign, independent Nagaland which would be "socialist" and Christian in character. Unlike the NNC which drew its strength from both the Christian and non-Christian segments of the Naga population and which laid great emphasis on the support of the traditional tribal chiefs, the NSCN declared its struggle primarily as one for a Christian Nagaland and adopted the slogan: "Nagaland for Christ". Article X (d) of the NSCN manifesto specifically states that it stands for "faith in God and salvation of mankind in Jesus alone, that is Nagaland for Christ". However, the manifesto assures safeguards for individual freedom of faith (Luithui and Haksar, 137). Despite such an assurance, it appears that the NSCN stands for essentially a Christian State. In sharp contrast to the NSCN position on religion, the NNC's "Yehzabo" or Constitution states that "Protestant Christianity and Naga Religion are recognised religions in Nagaland" (Appendix XIV). This is but one instance of gradual narrowing down of the popular base of the underground movement, leaving not much of scope for the non-Christian Nagas in the NSCN set-up.

Criticising the Church leaders of Nagaland for insisting on a solution within the Indian Union (incidentally, the Church in Nagaland has been dominated by the Aos), the NSCN manifesto equates India with Hinduism and calls upon the Nagas to fight against the "effete Indian and Burmese culture and their faiths". Referring to the Indian Government as a "Hindu Government", it says: "The forces of Hinduism, viz. the numberless Indian

troops, the retail and wholesale dealers, the teachers and the instructors, the intelligentsia, the prophets of non-violence, the gamblers and snake charmers, Hindi songs and Hindi films, the *rasagula* makers and the *Gita* are all arrayed for the mission of supplanting the Christian God, the eternal God of the Universe." Calling upon the Nagas to come forward for the cause of Nagaland and Christ, the manifesto says: "Real sacrifices of the soldiers of Christ are called for to make our country for Him and for Him alone. O' men of God, lead us to Saviour Christ, for He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life that leads to God, the Father. . . . Come for Christ, come for Nagaland's freedom. We are here and you will find us here always. Or you go for India and Burma and their goddesses." This sounds somewhat like the language of the Crusades, with the NSCN leading a holy war for the creation of a Christian Naga homeland. Added to this is a strong feeling of race superiority over the weak and effete Indians and their culture (Appendix XV).

Another important point in the NSCN manifesto which deserves to be noted is the emphasis on socialism which alone, in its words, "can assure the fairest deal to the community as a whole". This socialism is to be built by the dictatorship of the people through a revolutionary council which obviously will be manned by the NSCN. There must be "a single organisation of the people" and other political parties would obviously not be tolerated, for "at the present time, party system could never accomplish anything except leading to ruination: This shows that although the NNC too considered itself as the sole political organisation of the Naga people, yet its set-up and manner of functioning had certain democratic norms, it being accountable to the people's assemblies at various levels. By contrast, the NSCN seemed to be moving along authoritarian and militaristic lines.

It has already been mentioned that the Naga National Council had tried to bring the Naga tribes together on a common platform of ethnic nationalism. Had the Naga movement retained the momentum it had gained in the mid-fifties, inter-tribe friction within the organisation would perhaps have been reduced. The army action and the attendant village re-groupings which wrought havoc on the traditional political and social institutions and the formation of the state of Nagaland which opened up possibilities of sharing the fruits of power, contributed to the rise of tribalism, with certain tribes succeeding in taking greater advantage of the situation than others. The Aos, the first to come into contact with Christian missionaries and western education, were, for example, seen by other tribes as reaping undue benefits out of the system. Inter-tribe rivalry thus became a

significant feature of Naga politics, both overground and underground. The massacre at Tobu where two Naga tribes clashed in 1990 as also the split in the NSCN are pointers in this direction. As way back as 1978, a senior leader of the NNC, Khutovi Sema, while addressing a convention of seventeen tribes, had stated: "tribalism has wrought havoc on the people and has ultimately sapped the strength of the NNC." Today the NSCN too is a victim of inter-tribe rivalry.

The first fissures in the underground set-up could be traced to the murder of NNC secretary, Sakhrie, by suspected Phizo loyalists in 1956. Scholars like Horam, while discounting allegations that the Naga movement was failing to make an impact because of the lack of foreign assistance, observe that Sakhrie's murder "triggered off a fissiparous process which attacked the Naga movement like a disease and ultimately killed it" (Horam: 1988, 207). Thus we see that at a very early stage of the Naga struggle, the seeds of discord were sown and, in the long run, the NNC had to pay a rather heavy price for it. That tribalism has become the great bane of the Naga underground is an accepted fact and is evident in the various statements issued by the different factions from time to time. Several Naga scholars see the formation of the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland in November 1968 under the leadership of Scatu Swu, former President of the NNC's Naga Federal Government, as the beginning of serious tribalism within the underground (Tarapot, 143). Though the Naga National Council split after the Shillong Accord of November 1975 and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland was born in 1980, the latter too was soon to be engulfed by internal dissension. Differences between the Muivah-Isaac Swu and Khaplang groups of the NSCN developed ever since the former accused the latter of trying to arrive at a settlement with the Indian Union in a clandestine manner. It did not take too long for the distrust and suspicion between the two groups to break out into open clashes. One of the worst of such clashes took place on April 30, 1988 when Khaplang's men attacked the General Headquarters of the Muivah faction and killed about one hundred cadres. Among those killed were some of the top leaders of the Muivah group. Of the 230 persons in the NSCN-Muivah group who escaped the attack (these included women and children) only 33 managed to cross the Chindwin and survive. The rest fell to the bullets of the Khaplang section and the Mynamar troops and also to the diseases that had set in with the rains (Tarapot, 122-3). This was easily one of the bloodiest internal clashes in the history of Naga insurgency and in a joint statement issued in July 1989, the NSCN chairman, Isaac Swu and secretary Muivah, accused the vice-chairman of the NSCN (a Myanmar Naga) of killing scores of

“Christian Socialist revolutionaries” who were Tangkhul Nagas. They even accused the Khaplang faction of collaborating with the Burmese forces in mounting an attack on the NSCN headquarters on April 30, 1988. This gives an idea of the dissension and conflict within the NSCN set-up and proves how difficult it would be to unite the Nagas of India and Myanmar to form a common independent homeland.

The recent Naga-Kuki clashes which have claimed hundreds of lives have added a new dimension to the Naga conflict and has shown that the attainment of the NSCN’s professed goal is beset with grave problems. Nevertheless, the NSCN continues to be the main insurrectionary group in the northeastern region and, in several recent encounters, has inflicted heavy losses on the Indian security forces. Its presence is still writ large all over Nagaland and Manipur and it is rightly felt that the underground outfit has its pockets of influence in both the state governments. In such a context, several questions arise. Why does the NSCN continue to adhere to its demand for a sovereign Nagaland, when other equally well-organised outfits like the Mizo National Front have opted to work within the ambit of the Indian Constitution? From where does the NSCN draw its strength? What are its strategy and tactics? Can it claim to represent the Naga masses as the Naga National Council once did?

The answer to these and other questions may be found in the socio-economic and political changes that have occurred in Nagaland in the past four decades or so. The changes triggered off by Christian conversion received a different kind of impetus when the State of Nagaland came into being and the Centre started pumping in massive sums of money in a clear effort to wean away sections of the Naga people from the politics of insurgency. This pumping in of money without providing for the basic infrastructure for its utilisation for the welfare of the people, has been instrumental in creating a highly corrupt politician-bureaucrat combine in the state, with corruption being institutionalised at almost all levels. The entry of Indian market forces into the remotest corners of Nagaland and the speedy growth of consumerism have contributed to the rise of an affluent Naga middle class which has strong stakes in continuing the relationship with India. The sense of egalitarianism which had been a marked feature of Naga social life is fast disappearing and attitudes towards manual labour are undergoing a swift change. Bonds of clan and village are loosening, and the concept of individual property and the ownership of land is speedily gaining ground. In short, there is today a severe crisis of identity in Naga society, with several of its distinctive features giving way (Horam: 1990, 204-5). Commenting on the adverse effect of the “march

of modernity” on tribal life, Mrinal Miri observes:

The march of modernity has all but crushed tribal identity, and for the tribesman to get an authentic, detailed insight into it has become a near impossibility. The search for tribal identity seems thus an endeavour that is doomed to fail. And the desperation accompanying this realisation is immense. While ‘allegiance to the tribe’ is still a powerful motivating value (perceived ‘strongly’ in our case), instead of the earlier density of material in terms of which this allegiance could be articulated or at least felt with phenomenological intensity, there seems now to be a void. There are frantic efforts on the part of the tribesman, to fill this void by e.g. borrowing or adopting somebody else’s past (e.g. the Christian past), and by striking a moral-spiritual stance the connection between which and the old vision is painfully unclear. . . . It is, therefore, unsurprising that while the tribesman’s quest for identity acquires a special poignancy, the moral force of ‘allegiance to the tribe’ becomes prone to exploitation by forces which have nothing to do with the allegiance. It becomes the front for motivation which range from self-aggrandisement of a few to economic gain to political power (Miri, 173-4).

Given such a situation, it was but natural for Phizo’s ideal of a Naga utopia to lose much of its charm. And, added to all this has been the incorporation of Constitutional safeguards aimed at protecting the Nagas’ land and culture.³ The Indian state, its initial blunders notwithstanding, has shown a rare degree of resilience in accommodating several of the ethnic upsurges in the north-eastern region of the country. Despite this, the NSCN sticks to its path of liberation through armed struggle because the emergence of new political equations has made it difficult for it to openly opt for a negotiated settlement. Every government in Nagaland since the state was formed, has had some stakes in having the insurgency continue. Among other things, the insurgency has always been a convenient lever to secure greater benefits from the Centre. Moreover, the present set of leaders may not wish the NSCN to abjure violence and participate in mass politics because that would sizeably reduce their own political space. Thus, the present politics in Nagaland dictates that the insurgency, even if on a limited scale, continues.

But the continuance of the insurgency also means the continuance of draconian measures like the The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the Disturbed Areas Act which gives blanket powers of arrest and detention to the security forces, thereby hampering the normal functioning of the democratic process in the region. The record of the Indian security forces in the matter of human rights in Nagaland is decidedly a negative one (Luithi and Haksar, 1984; U. Misra: *EPW*, Dec 22-9, 1984) and it has been one of the major issues in all the elections of the state. As on other

occasions, during the 1996 elections too, different Naga bodies were demanding the withdrawal of the restrictive measures so that a free and fair poll could be held. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland on its part, has been making consistent attempts to draw the attention of world bodies to the human rights scenario in their state and highlight the claim for a sovereign Naga homeland. In January 1993, the NSCN secured membership of the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation (UNPO) which met in the Hague, Netherlands. The UNPO which seemed more concerned about the unresolved nationality issues of third world countries while overlooking the ethnic struggles going on in the advanced industrial countries of the West, has nevertheless provided an international platform to the Naga underground. Phizo had unremittingly tried to bring the Naga issue before the United Nations and had failed. Political commentators have viewed the NSCN's entry into the UNPO as a major success for the Naga underground at the level of propaganda and publicity. But this "international recognition" has not helped in reducing the intensity of the armed encounters in the region. The NSCN has been consistently trying to balance its efforts to be heard at international forums with military strikes at the Indian security forces in Nagaland and this strategy has helped to keep the Naga issue alive both at home and abroad.

In the changing political scenario, the strategy and tactics of the Naga underground have also undergone certain major changes over the years. It may be recalled that as long as the Naga National Council was in control of matters, it was the Federal Government, the political wing of the NNC, and not the Naga Federal Army which called the shots. Decisions taken by the political wing of the NNC had to be duly ratified by the Tatar Hoho which was made up of representatives of the different tribes. But as the struggle advanced and the Indian State adopted increasingly coercive measures combined with steps to win over a section of Nagas who had opted out of the insurgency, the political wing was gradually marginalised, and the armed wing took over. This resulted in the gradual alienation of the NNC from the masses, with the organisation growing increasingly militaristic in nature. Politics seemed no longer to be in command and by the time the National Socialist Council of Nagaland was formed, it was virtually the armed wing which made up the core of the Naga underground. It is important to realise this change in structure of the underground outfit because with it, its tactics also underwent a change. Whereas the Naga Federal Army under the NNC seldom targeted civilians and strove to maintain close rapport with the Naga masses, the NSCN has not only been targeting civilians but has, of late, resorted to large-scale extortions and occasional

kidnappings. Its role during the Naga-Kuki clashes, when hundreds of innocent men, women and children were killed in the manner of ethnic cleansing, shows that the NSCN is being increasingly drawn into the vortex of narrow ethnocentric politics. The NSCN demand for a greater Nagaland comprising the Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tameglong districts of Manipur and large areas of upper Assam, has led to the cooling off of relations between the NSCN and several other insurgent groups of the northeastern region. The ULFA, for instance, has expressed its strong opposition to the circulation by the NSCN of a map of greater Nagaland which shows large chunks of Assam as part of Naga territory. Similar sentiments have been expressed by the different Manipuri insurgent groups. Feelings of suspicion between the Manipuri insurgents and the NSCN have reached such levels that the former organised unprecedented public demonstrations in Manipur against any possible move by the Centre to appease the NSCN by conceding the latter's claim to Manipur territory. The Kukis too have come out with their demand for a Kukiland to be carved out of the Kuki-majority areas of Manipur and Myanmar.

The Nagas and the Kukis have lived in amity for generations and the present struggle is clearly dictated by claims over right to territory. While there seems to be some substance in the Naga allegation that the Kukis have been encouraged by the Indian State to contain the Nagas, the Naga position that hostility against the Kukis is justified on the plea that they were used by the British some one hundred years ago to defeat the Nagas, is a flawed one. M.S. Prabhakara says:

It is true that there is a certain historical consistency in this setting up of the Kukis and the Nagas against each other by the agencies of the State itself in that it is a continuation of the policy adopted by the governments in Manipur and other parts of the North-east in pre-colonial and colonial times. However, to see these tactics (as groups sympathetic to the NSCN-I-M tend to do) as merely a part of the "divide and rule" policy of the State is simply to miss the inherent antagonisms and contradictions between the two peoples. The document prepared by the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights suffers precisely from this flaw. While it is very candid in its criticism of the Kukis for resorting to what it calls "historical back-projection whereby sanction is sought from the past to justify the present", it resorts to this very device by recalling at the very outset the "events from 1879 to 1890 (when) Chasad Kukis raided the Tangkhul Naga village of Chingsao killing 45 people and taking three as slaves" (Prabhakara, *The Hindu*, April 8, 1993).

The Naga-Kuki clashes have posed a serious challenge to the apex position of the NSCN among the insurgent groups of the northeastern region. It was on the NSCN-Khaplang faction's initiative that the Indo

Burma Revolutionary Front (IBRF) was formed in May 1992 and included not only the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) of Manipur and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) but also the Kuki National Organisation and the Kuki National Army which were the principal adversaries of the NSCN (Muivah). Evidently not too happy with the formation of the IBRF, the NSCN (Muivah) announced the formation of the "Self-Defence United Front of the South-East Himalayan Region" (SDUF) in November 1994 (Appendix XX). This platform of different insurgent groups included amongst others, the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council of Meghalaya and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland from Assam. Interestingly, the ULFA, once a close ally of the NSCN, has been left out of the new alliance. There is reason to believe that the ULFA has been excluded because of its membership of the IBRF which is dominated by the Khaplang faction of the NSCN. But political analysts have remarked that this could also be because the NSCN no longer considers the ULFA as possessing a strong enough base among the Assamese people. (Kamarooopi, *The Sentinel*, 1995). The ULFA, on its part, has been increasingly drifting away from its earlier NSCN(M) mentors and drawing closer to the Khaplang faction of the NSCN. The growing rift between the NSCN (Muivah) and the ULFA has made it difficult for the latter to operate from its upper Myanmar bases. This explains the shifting of the ULFA's bases to Bhutan and the Assam-Bangladesh border. Whatever its moves to bring about co-ordination between the different insurgent groups of the northeastern region, it is certain that the challenge posed to the NSCN by the Kuki National Organisation and its armed wing, the Kuki National Army has resulted in questioning of the position of hegemony which the NSCN has all along been maintaining.

It seems clear from the position adopted by the Manipuri, Assamese and Kuki insurgent groups that, despite its superior organisational skill and fire-power, the NSCN(M) is today no longer in a position to lead the other insurgent groups towards some a tribal socialist utopia. The inherent contradictions within and between the different insurgent groups have made it impossible for any single outfit to assume the leadership of a co-ordinated struggle. The role of NSCN(M) during the Naga-Kuki clashes and its demand for incorporation of large areas of Assam and Manipur in a greater Nagaland have resulted in the alienation of several leading northeastern insurgent groups. Realising that its hegemonic role in northeastern insurgency is practically over, the NSCN(M) has been sending feelers to the Government of India for talks which might lead to a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue. The high-level contacts held abroad between

the NSCN(M) and Indian leaders have led to the declaration of a cease-fire by the Indian security forces in the middle of 1997. Meanwhile, the NSCN(M) leaders have expressed their willingness to arrive at a negotiated settlement with New Delhi. Any such settlement would obviously prove to be of great disadvantage to the other militant outfits of the region. Hence, the strong degree of opposition in insurgent circles in Assam and Manipur towards any possible understanding between the NSCN(M) and Government of India. Thus, from its position of being the leading insurgent organisation of the northeastern region and which had been aiming at the broad-based unity of the different struggling ethnic nationalities, the NSCN(M) has today become just another insurgent outfit fighting solely for the Naga cause.

Nevertheless, because it has inherited a long tradition of armed struggle combined at different phases with a large degree of mass involvement, the NSCN(M) would continue to be amongst the leading insurgent groups of northeastern India. Moreover, the geographical location of its area of operations has always been to the disadvantage of the Indian security forces. Therefore, it would be somewhat simplistic to assess the present strength and popularity of the NSCN on the basis of its number of successful strikes at the security forces. Given the socio-economic condition of the region, organisations like the NSCN would never be short of new recruits from among the disenchanted and disillusioned young men and women. But, the organisation seems to lack the ideological cohesiveness which its parent body, the Naga National Council once possessed. With a few hundred well-trained young fighters under its command, a good arsenal of foreign arms and well-entrenched bases in difficult terrain in neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh, the NSCN would continue to be in a position to strike effectively at the Indian forces. But the fact remains that the Naga struggle as represented by the NSCN today seems to have moved quite a distance away from the earlier position of armed insurgency backed by the people, to a somewhat narrower terroristic plank where the question of immediate political space finds precedence over ideology and identity issues.

NOTES

1. Vietnamese villages had also been regrouped in a similar pattern by the Americans during the Vietnam War.
2. The Naga Federal Government adopted a Constitution which declared:

"Nagaland is a people's sovereign republic. This has been so from time immemorial. There shall be a parliament with the strength of 100 Tatars (members of the Tatar Hoho or House of Representatives). The President will be elected by the people and his cabinet will consist of fifteen Kilonsers (Ministers)." While guaranteeing religious freedom and the equality of the sexes, the Federal Constitution further declared: "Land belongs to the people and it will remain so. There will be no land tax, and other forms of taxation will be formulated by different administrative units".

3. The Constitution (13th Amendment) Act of 1962 (w.e.f. 1-12-1963) provided for special provisions in respect of the State of Nagaland. Article 371 A(1) of the Constitution reads: "Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution— (a) no Act of Parliament in respect of (i) religious or social practices of the Nagas, (ii) Naga customary law and procedure, (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Quest for *Swadhin Asom*: The Makings of a Mindset

On a bright February morning in 1996, a civil rights organization was holding a seminar in Assam's capital to discuss the question of self-determination of the peoples of the north-eastern region in the light of the Treaty of Yandabo of 1826¹ which had been signed between the Burmese King and the British East India Company, by virtue of which Assam passed into British control. Exactly one hundred and seventy years after that treaty had been signed, speaker after speaker was questioning its validity and trying to assert that its clauses did not apply to Assam since it was a treaty between two foreign governments. The conclusion that was being attempted to be drawn was that Assam's accession to British India was "illegal" and that its subsequent transfer to India was void. Whatever the contorted logic involved, it was clear from the deliberations that questioning the basis of the Treaty of Yandabo was part of an attempt to build up a theoretical premise to Assam's demand for self-determination which, in this case, meant independence. The forces of *Swadhin Asom* were trying to re-read, re-interpret and even re-create history in order to build up their theoretical base that Assam had always been a free nation and that its amalgamation into British India was based on trickery and fraud. To understand the logic or otherwise behind such arguments, it is necessary to go into the events of that particular period in Assam's history which culminated in the Treaty of Yandabo and the coming of the British into this region.

The last decades of the eighteenth century saw the disintegration of Ahom rule following a series of revolts by the Moamarias² which began in 1769 and continued intermittently till 1805. The Moamaria Revolt which was in effect a civil war of grave dimensions, seriously depleted the province's population and upset the social structure based on *paiks* and *khels*³ which had been developed by the Ahoms (S.K. Bhuyan, 251-2; Guha: 1991, 122). Even as the Ahom administration tottered, the Singphos and the Khamtis made inroads into Assam and occupied sizeable tracts of

land, reducing thousands of inhabitants to virtual slavery. (H.K. Barpujari, ed., vol 1: 2) Taking advantage of the situation, the Darrang Raja, Krishnarayan revolted and his army, made up primarily of *burkandazes*,⁴ ravaged the villages north of Kamrup. On an appeal for help from the Ahom king, Gaurinath Singha, Lord Cornwallis sent Captain Welsh to Assam in 1792 with six companies of troops (S.K. Bhuyan, 300ff). The Company's forces contained the Moamorias and rid Assam of the *burkandazes*. The fact remains that British help was sought by the King of Assam and without it he would not have been able to restore law and order. But for the participation of the East India Company's troops in the civil war of 1792-94, the situation would not have turned favourable for the royalists. Once the British forces were withdrawn in 1794, following a change in the Company's Assam policy, the region lapsed into anarchy and misrule. The Moamarias rose once again and the mercenaries from neighbouring Bengal re-appeared, while the Singphos and the Khamtis further consolidated their hold over Assamese territory (Barpujari, vol 1: 3-4).

To add to Assam's travails, the Burmese invaded the province in 1817 and 1819. The first time their help was sought by the royalists in order to curb the influence of the powerful Buragohain or Prime Minister. They consolidated the power of the king, Chandrakanta, and then returned home after collecting a huge indemnity and an Assamese princess for the Burmese monarch's harem. They came a second time to re-instate Chandrakanta who had in the meantime been deposed, and to avenge the murder of their ally, the Prime Minister or "Mantri Phukan", Badanchandra. But, this time the Burmese intended to stay on and keep their hold over the country. Chandrakanta, who had been turned into a virtual puppet by the Burmese, soon fell out with them and fled to British territory from where he prepared to attack the invaders (Gait, 234). The Burmese let loose an unprecedented reign of terror (Bhuyan: 1974, 508-9) and continued to rule Assam till 1824. The Burmese occupation of Assam is seen as one of the darkest periods in its history when the civilian population of the province was left completely at the mercy of the occupying forces as well as marauders of all possible shades. The damage done by the Moamoria Revolt to the social structure based on *paiks* and *khels* was aggravated by the Burmese occupation of the province which led to further depopulation and the total collapse of agriculture and trade (Barpujari, ed., vol 1: 5). In October 1822 the deposed Ahom king, Purandhar Singha, petitioned the Governor-General to bring Assam under the "fostering guardianship" of the British Government "in the same way as are the Rajahs of Hindustan who benefiting by its aid and support are allowed to

conduct the internal affairs of their own countries". He promised an annual tribute of three lakhs of rupees and also to meet all the expenses of the troops that would be employed to drive out the Burmese and restore Assam to its previous position (S.K. Bhuyan, 501). But the British government refused because it did not wish at that stage to interfere in the internal affairs of Assam. British reluctance to get involved in the affairs of Assam was obviously because of the expenses and also because this region was not particularly known to them. But accounts by British travellers of the rich natural resources of Assam were not unknown to the British administrators (Pemberton 82-4).

However, the British policy of non-interference quickly underwent a change as the realization dawned that the Burmese might make their hold over Assam permanent and then use it as a base to mount attacks on the Company's territories in Bengal. British apprehensions were proved correct when Burmese acts of aggression started in Chittagong, Cachar and Jayantia (S.K. Bhuyan, 511). And finally, when Burmese forces converged on Cachar which had gone under the Company's protection, the British declared war on Ava on 5 March, 1824. Soon the British troops marched through Goalpara towards Guwahati which they occupied on the 28 March. Within three months the Company's troops scored major successes against the Burmese occupiers and almost drove them out of the province. The onset of the monsoons delayed the operation which was completed by year-end. David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General for the Eastern Frontier, was appointed the administrator of Assam. The final defeat on the Burmese was inflicted in June 1825 and this was followed by the Treaty of Yandabo which was signed on the 24 February, 1826 (Appendix I). By Article 2 of the said treaty, the Burmese king relinquished all claim over Assam and over the contiguous states of Cachar and Manipur. British occupation of Assam was formalized, though British administration in lower Assam had already commenced much before the treaty was signed. However, such administration was then considered to be of a temporary nature "pending the final decision of the Government regarding the disposal of the country" (S.K. Bhuyan, 501).

After the dark spell of the civil wars and the unheard-of cruelty of the Burmese invaders, the Assamese welcomed the peace and stability which British rule brought to their lives (S.K. Bhuyan, 552). Maniram Dewan, who was hanged in 1858 for his involvement in the Revolt of 1857, had initially wished the British "uninterrupted and undiminished sovereignty for thousands of years" as a reward for having freed the Assamese from Burmese occupation (S.K. Bhuyan, 552). Though the British had said in

the beginning that they did not have any intentions of annexing Assam and that their involvement was limited to expelling the Burmese from the province and re-establishing a government adapted to the wants of the Assamese people, yet they went about in a matter-of-fact manner in establishing their administration first in western or lower Assam and then in the rest of the province. Scott recommended that initially lower Assam should be annexed because it yielded an annual revenue of more than three lakhs of rupees. Scott was in favour of the restoration of the Ahom monarchy in upper Assam because he thought that this would be a means of keeping the local people satisfied. He was also in favour of the traditional system of Ahom administration to be retained (Barooah: 1970, 131, 139). Moreover, the annexation of upper Assam, which had been ravaged by the Moamaria Revolt and by the Burmese forces, was considered uneconomic because it yielded scarcely a lakh of rupees annually as revenue (Barpujari: I, 9-10). Scott's proposals were approved by the authorities in Calcutta in March 1928 but upper Assam was not immediately handed over to a Ahom prince. Captain Neufville was appointed the Political Agent of upper Assam. It was only in 1833 that the British made a treaty with Purandar Singha and handed over the erstwhile Ahom territories of upper Assam to him (Appendix II). As per the treaty, Purandar became yet another of the protected princes of the British and was made to pay an annual tribute of fifty thousand rupees and to bear all the expenses incurred in keeping the British troops in his kingdom. It was but natural that given the condition of his territories, Purandhar would not be able to keep his obligations. So, on the plea that the Ahom administration had failed, the British finally annexed upper Assam in 1838. Actually, the East India Company had decided that with a little bit of re-structuring, the annual revenue collection in upper Assam too could be sizeably enhanced (Barooah: 1970, 142).

British efforts in the initial years of their rule in Assam were concentrated almost solely on revenue collection. For this, David Scott retained the traditional revenue system of the Ahoms based on the *paik* system⁵ according to which every adult male was to work for three or four months in a year for the State, in lieu of tax on a limited area of land (about 2.5 acres) given to him for cultivation (S.K. Bhuyan, 529). The British abolished the system of rendering personal service by the *paiks* and instead, a poll tax of three rupees was realized from the peasants of upper Assam whereas those of lower Assam had to pay a tax of two rupees per head and poll-taxes at varying rates. Moreover, the rent-free grants, hitherto exempted from taxation, were brought under assessment (Barpujari, vol 1: 11-12;

S.K. Bhuyan, 564). The paiks were organized under *khels* according to the nature of their duties and each *khel* ranged generally from three thousand to six thousand men. The *khels* used to be under an officer (Phukan) who was helped by other officials (Hazarikas, Saikias and Boras). But the civil wars and the Burmese occupation had wrought havoc to the *khel* system which tended to disintegrate because many of the *paiks* had left or *paiks* from one particular *khel* got mixed with those of another. Consequently, Scott's dependance on the traditional system did not produce the desired results. In lower Assam, however, where the revenue system was modelled on that of the Moghuls, the results were more encouraging for the British. There the districts were divided into *pargannahs* and the Chaudhuris were put in charge of collecting the revenue. Moreover, the peasants in lower Assam were partly accustomed to paying their taxes in cash. In upper Assam this wasn't the case. As such, the hybrid of the traditional system and the administrative innovations of the British didn't function smoothly particularly because of the overall shortage of money among the peasantry. The transition from a semi-tribal economy, where barter and personal service to the state in lieu of taxes payable in cash was the rule, to a monetised economy was not at all an easy process (S.K. Bhuyan, 564-5).

After Scott's death in 1831 and the installation in upper Assam of Purandhar Singha as a tributary king, the British introduced a land revenue system in lower Assam by abolishing the *khel* system and introducing the *mauza* system. Dues were now collected by the revenue collector and assessment was based on the area under cultivation. In upper Assam changes in the revenue system were introduced after 1838. There too the *khel* system was abolished and assessments fixed on areas under cultivation. The rate was one rupee per "pura" of "rupit" land and eight *annas* for all other lands (S.K. Bhuyan, 567). But the absence of a money economy made it increasingly difficult for the peasantry to pay their taxes. It did not take long for the people to see through the designs of the British who were busy transforming the traditional institutions to suit their colonial needs. People discovered that the immediate priority of the new masters was the maximum possible extortion of land revenue and that the British weren't particularly interested in their welfare (Guha: 1977, 2). The peasants were unaccustomed to the payment of taxes in cash and the insufficiency of currency made their condition pitiable. Under the Ahom system there had been very little monetization of the revenue system and the people grew whatever they needed and there was little need for money. Unable to adjust themselves to the new situation, many of the *paiks* left the country

and settled in nearby Bhutan and Cachar where the taxation was very nominal (S K Bhuyan, 564-5). Thus, the initial euphoria over British rule having brought back order and normality in the province did not take long to be dispelled. Peasant dissatisfaction was on the rise and the Ahom nobility and official class which now found themselves totally unprepared to cope with the new pattern of administration introduced by the British grew deeply resentful of British rule (Barpujari, 18-19). With British investment in the tea industry of Assam, the plight of the peasantry further worsened even as the government started enhancing land revenue rates in the hope that the pauperised peasantry would be compelled to work in the newly opened tea gardens, thereby filling up, even if partially, the shortage of labour.

The old Ahom aristocracy's resentment against British rule reached its culmination in the rebellions of Gomadhar Konwar and Rupachand Konwar in 1828 and 1829. These revolts did not have any popular support and were quickly suppressed by the British (Barpujari, 19-20, 25-6). Peali Barphukan, son of Badanchandra Barphukan, former Ahom Governor of Guwahati, and Jeuram Dihingia Baruah were hanged by the British for their involvement in the rebellion. But Peali Barphukan's attempt to dislodge the British, though seen by many as an attempt at a palace revolution by pretenders to the Ahom throne (Guha: 1977, 3) was significant in that it was the first attempt to consolidate the forces of the plains and hill tribes of Assam to drive out the British. The Singphos of the Patkai range attacked the British territory in a concerted move with the Assamese rebels (Barpujari: 1977, 24-5). The people were not with the rebels because their memory of the unsettled times of the last years of Ahom rule was only too fresh and they did not want any change of government. The nobility too was not united and some among them actively aided the British. Even then, the fact that the British quickly hanged the organizers of the revolt after a summary trial shows that they were not too certain of the degree of disaffection among the masses and wanted to prove that they were in control (Barpujari 27).

British fears of similar uprisings were soon proved true when the Khasis began their war of independence under U. Tirot Singh, the Raja of Nungklow, who headed an alliance of Khasi republics. It undoubtedly goes to the credit of the Khasis that it was they who put up the first organized resistance against British rule in the north-eastern region and their struggle involved a large segment of the population (Barpujari, 21-4; Guha: 1977, 3). Tirot Singh's struggle was not limited to his own people. He tried to build up a common front with the Assamese, the Singphos and other tribes. He wrote

to the former Ahom king, Chandrakanta: "The country of the Rajah have been taken possession of by the English. We have been greatly annoyed. We have now killed the English gentlemen here. Should the Rajah now rise and assist us we can with the Garrow people descend from the hills" (Barpujari, 23). After putting up a heroic struggle for three years, Tirot finally surrendered in June 1832. He was imprisoned in Dacca where he died. Once the Khasi resistance was over, the British went about their task of annexing Cachar, Jaintia, the Lushai Hills, the Garo Hills and the Naga Hills.

It is clear from the above that in the first three decades or so of British administration in Assam, the common people, however much they suffered from the new revenue regulations, were in no mood to support any attempt to dislodge the British. The collapse of the Ahom administration which was largely due to infighting of the nobility, palace intrigues and insensitivity towards the common man, had left the masses at the total mercy of the Burmese occupation force and the mercenaries from Bengal. That the people had lost faith in the Ahom nobility was adequately reflected in the latter's failure to mobilize even a small segment of the population against the British (Barpujari, 26). The old Ahom order was being replaced by a new set of officials appointed by the British and in the changing scenario the Mauzadars and the Chaudhuries alongwith the clerks constituted the emerging elite (M. Sharma: 1990, 38). The burden of increased taxation and the disastrous impact of the monetization process on the peasantry (Guha: 1977, 8) would need some years more to find expression in revolts like the *Phulaguri Dhawa* in 1861 and the more organized peasant revolt of 1894 known as the Battle of Patharughat.

In the meantime, the rumblings of the Revolt of 1857 could be heard in Assam. Led primarily by pro-feudal, upper class elements, the attempted revolt in this province was aimed at restoring the Ahom scion, Kandarpeswar Singha, to the throne. Maniram, the rich, powerful and shrewd Dewan of the Company,⁶ was the person who co-ordinated the moves aimed at an uprising against the British. In this he was helped by a wide section of people belonging to different ethnic groups as also by his friends in Bengal. Maniram Dewan had, in 1853, submitted a memorial to A.J. Moffatt Mills, judge of the Sadar Dewani Adalat, who was visiting Assam to enquire into the state of administrative affairs of the province. In his memorandum he prayed that the monarchy as well as the lost privileges of the nobility and upper classes be restored (Mills, 603-9) (Appendix III). It was Maniram who had helped the British during the early years of the consolidation of their rule in Assam and he had been amply rewarded by

being made Sheristadar-Tahsildar of Upper Assam. He had been an indispensable ally of the British. But he had seen through the British game of virtually pauperising the peasantry and reducing the erstwhile nobility to the position of ordinary folks. Actually, having failed to convince Mills with his memorandum, Maniram went to Calcutta in the early part of 1857 to represent the case of both the young prince and the people of Assam to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. It was there that he came to know of the revolt of the sepoy at Kanpur, Meerut and Lucknow. This inspired him to draw up plans to drive the British out of Assam and he wrote several letters to Kandarpeswar Singha to rise in revolt with the aid of the local sepoy (Barpujari, 69-70). Some consultations did take place at the king's residence at Jorhat and a section of the sepoy stationed at Golaghat was said to have offered its support to Kandarpeswar Singha. The British rulers panicked, arrested the subedar and other sepoy suspected of planning a mutiny and court martialled them. Maniram's letters to Kandarpeswar Singha were intercepted and he was arrested in Calcutta. Kandarpeswar was arrested and sent to Calcutta in September 1857. In February 1858 Maniram and Peali Baruah were hanged after a highly partisan trial (Dutta, 21-2) by Holroyd who was appointed Commissioner under Act XIV of 1857. Maniram's other associates, Madhu Mallick, Kamala Baruah, Dutiram Baruah, Marangikhowa Gohain, Trinayan, Mayaram Nazir, Bahadur Gaonbura and Farmud Ali were transported for life. Thus, the revolt was nipped in the bud even before it could take any shape.

But the revolt planned by Maniram was quite different in nature from that, for example, of Peali Phukan in the eighteen thirties. Maniram did have a considerable degree of popular support and his death was widely mourned, ballads being sung to commemorate the incident. Moreover, the Assamese villagers working for the newly-planted tea gardens struck work to express their solidarity with the rebels. Guha writes: "The bias of the leaders of the revolt was no doubt basically pro-feudal. Yet it was not altogether without a popular support. There is evidence that the workers of the Assam Company—all Assamese villagers working under contractors—struck work to fraternize with the rebels. . . . Madhuram Koch, who was the leader of this labour strike, was sentenced to seven years's rigorous imprisonment on 30 January, 1958" (Guha: 1977, 4-5). Another leading historian of Assam, H.K. Barpujari, however, does not seem to share Guha's view. He blames the failure of the planned revolt on the lack of unity among the nobility and the indifference of the common people towards the cause espoused by Maniram Dewan and his supporters: "Maniram also had failed to realize that his was a lost cause—that the

masses in general were losing faith in a monarchy that had discredited itself by its oppression, misrule and betrayal at the hour of worst peril" (Barpujari, 76-7).

Maniram may not have been able to take the people with him, for that would have given a completely different shape to his endeavours. It is also true that he stood for the rights of the nobility. But it would be wrong to suggest that he did not feel for the plight of the peasantry overburdened with fresh taxes. He faced the gallows bravely and in death he emerged as a symbol of Assamese resistance against the British rule. With the rise of Assamese nationalism in early part of this century, Maniram Dewan became a rallying point for the nationalist forces and acquired the halo of a martyr. (Benudhar Sharma: 1958, ix). The first public meeting to commemorate Maniram's martyrdom was held in Calcutta in January 1920 by the Assamese Students' Literary Club. Since then innumerable articles and dozens of plays have been written on Maniram Dewan.

A multi-faceted personality, Maniram Dewan posed a serious challenge to the image being attempted to be developed by the British that all their work in Assam was for the good of the masses. His deep sense of understanding of the socio-economic scenario of the region and his entrepreneurial skill made the British administrators feel shaky. By executing him after an unfair trial, the British turned Maniram into a symbol of anti-colonial struggle. Just as he inspired the activists of the national struggle against the British, similarly most Assamese today see Maniram as one of the first soldiers in fight against the colonial exploitation of Assam. This colonial exploitation, they maintain, continues in some form or other under the "Delhi rulers".

But it is interesting to observe that although the popular image of Maniram Dewan as a symbol of resistance to colonial rule has remained largely unchanged over the years, yet some of the proponents of *Swadhin Asom* do not subscribe to this view. On the contrary, they are quite critical of Dewan's role in helping the British to start their systematic exploitation of the region by establishing the tea and oil industries. In a booklet brought out by the district unit of the ULFA and addressed to the tea-workers of Assam, Maniram is referred to as a collaborator of the British and his role in getting Peoli Phukan executed is roundly condemned: "The harm which Maniram caused to the Assamese people when in power, could not be undone even by his mounting the scaffold . . . history shows that the British cheated King Purandhar Singha and occupied Assam. The lust for power of the Assamese betrayer, Maniram Dewan, brought darkness to Assam" (tr. Author's: *Bishesh Pracar Patra*, n.d., 37). It is doubtful as to

how many Assamese will accept such a position regarding Maniram Dewan's role. Nevertheless, it is significant that organisations like the ULFA, with their stress on achieving independence through armed struggle, should find Peoli Phukan's abortive attempt to drive out the British from Assam to be more attractive than the collaborationist phase of Maniram Dewan's life.

Close on the heels of the events of 1857-8 came the peasant uprising at Phulaguri in the Nowgong district of central Assam. The prohibition of poppy cultivation and taxes on household and garden lands (which meant that even betel-nut trees were to be taxed) had made the peasants of the areas restive. *Raij-mels* or people's assemblies⁷ were held and the peasants were actively supported by the educated elite which was made up of small landowners, mauzadars, traders and merchants. This section of the people too had been hard-pressed by the ever-increasing rates of taxations (Barpujari, 94). In September 1861 about fifteen thousand peasants marched to the district town and demanded that the taxes on betel-nut and "pan" be withdrawn and that no further taxes be levied (Guha: 1977, 6). This was followed by a series of *rai-j-mels* and in one such assembly a British officer, Lieutenant Singer, was lynched. The news of Singer's death created panic amongst the British officials and a district magistrate ordered his force to fire on a group of peasant demonstrators in Nowgong town, resulting in several deaths. The situation worsened and the army was given control, while several peasant leaders were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment (Dutt, 29). On proper enquiry, the British authorities found that the situation had been aggravated by the tactlessness of the British officials of Nowgong who had refused to listen to the people's grievances. Though British records tried to dismiss the Phulaguri uprising solely as a protest against the ban on poppy cultivation by the British authorities (Guha: 1977, 8) the peasant uprising was soon seen as the first organized popular movement against the British government and drew support from almost all sections of the people (Barpujari, 94). From then on, the *rai-j-mels* would continue to play a significant role in building up popular resistance to British rule as was seen in the peasant uprisings in the districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong from 1892 onwards.

In the year 1892 the Chief Commissioner of Assam raised revenue rates by seventy to eighty per cent and in some cases up to a hundred per cent as per the new settlement. This resulted in great resentment among the peasantry and a no-tax campaign was launched in the districts of Kamrup and Darrang. The *rai-j-mels* became active and popular resistance grew. The Chief Commissioner, on second thoughts, reduced the revenue by

about thirty-seven per cent but this was not acceptable to the peasants who demanded postponement of collection till final orders of the Government of India on pending appeals were received (Guha: 1977, 51). In subsequent developments, the peasants looted the Rangia Bazaar on 24 December 1893 and demonstrated by their thousands. While the government was bent on attaching the property of the peasants who refused to pay the taxes, the *raij mels* decreed that any peasant paying taxes would be excommunicated and socially ostracized. The State unleashed full repression on the peasants and hundreds of arrests were made, while firings and bayonet charges were resorted to in attempts to disperse peasant demonstrators in the affected districts. The incident at Patharughat in the Mangoldoi subdivision on the 28 January 1894 seemed to be the tragic climax to the peasant revolt. On that day thousands of people gathered to face the District Magistrate of Darrang who had gone to Patharughat to suppress the revolt. When the Assembly refused to disperse, firing and bayonet charges were ordered. Scores of ryots fell to police bullets and dozens were grievously injured (Barpujari, 99). This was followed by wide-scale repression in the villages and the revolt was somewhat contained. The Government of India finally climbed down from its earlier position and reduced the revenue rates to 37 per cent increase over the old rates. This was indeed a victory for the peasants who had shown great sense of unity and sacrifice for the cause they were fighting for. The peasant riots drew the attention of the country's leading newspapers which viewed them as acts of open rebellion against the British government. Rashbehari Bose raised the issue in the Imperial Legislature through as many as eight questions on the "Assam Riots" (Barpujari, 101-2).

The most significant aspect of the peasant revolt was the role played by the *raij mels* and the emerging Assamese middle class.⁸ Because of the semi-feudal and semi-tribal character of Assamese society and the tardy growth of the forces of urbanization, this class has always had strong roots in the peasantry (U. Misra in Abbi: 1984, 318-19). These roots may be traced back to the peasant uprisings of the eighteen nineties when middle class-led organizations like the "Sarbanjanik Sabha" of Jorhat and the "Ryot Sabhas" of Tezpur and Nowgong ventilated the grievances of the peasants and helped in organizing them. Referring to the wide base of the struggle, Guha writes: "The widespread peasant struggle, based on the unity of the entire peasantry and a section of the non-cultivating landowners, made an impact on contemporary Assamese society. The non-cultivating land-owners—Brahmins, Mahantas and Dolois, the

traditional rural elite—apparently took the initiative and a leading role. But it was the poor peasantry and other sections of the rural poor, including the artisans, who actually lent it a militant character.” (Guha: 1977, 54). Thus, while one of the prominent leaders of the revolt was an artisan named Pusparam Kanhar, another of its leaders was a landlord named Jajnaram Goswami. Though Guha maintains that the landowners were the first to retreat from the struggle, what is significant is that unlike in most of the other regions of the country, in Assam the landowning class joined hands with, and in some cases even led, the peasantry in a militant fight against the government. This was a totally different tradition of struggle and can be explained only in terms of the Assamese middle class’s strong roots in the peasantry. Almost a hundred years later, during the Assam Movement (1979-1985) middle class organizations would once again play a pivotal role in mobilizing the peasantry and the success of the long resistance put up by middle class bodies like the Karmachari Parishad, an association of state government employees, was largely due to this class’s strong peasant roots (U. Misra, *Angikar*, 1980). If one extends this argument a little further, one will have little difficulty in understanding why middle class-led and dominated organizations like the Asom Sahitya Sabha have played such an important role in the socio-political and cultural life of the Assamese people (U. Misra, *EPW*, 29 May 1982; 14 April 1984). The Sabha’s annual sessions draw massive rural crowds, a phenomenon not found with literary societies elsewhere. This should also help one in understanding the rural support that middle class-led outfits like the United Liberation Front of Assam command.

With the consolidation of language-based Assamese nationalism in the first decades of the twentieth century and the gradual involvement of the Assamese masses in the national struggle against the British, the revolts of Peali Phukan and Maniram Dewan came to be viewed as part of the overall struggle of the Assamese to free themselves from the foreign yoke. The peasant uprisings of the eighteen sixties and the nineties were also projected as people’s wars against the colonial rulers. Maniram and Peali were turned into symbols of Assamese nationalistic aspirations and their deaths were commemorated as days of national remembrance. It was part of the glorification of the past which constitutes the rise and consolidation of nationalism (T. Misra, 215-17). But, in reality neither the revolt of Peali Barphukan nor the attempted revolt of Maniram Dewan can be construed as part of the *national* struggle of the Assamese people. Peali Barphukan’s was an attempt to restore the rights of the nobility which had been nullified by British rule and Amalendu Guha has rightly

termed it as a "palace coup". Maniram Dewan attempted to restore the Ahom monarchy with which he associated the rights and privileges of the nobility and the upper classes. However, there is a distinct difference between the revolt of Peali Barphukan and that of Maniram Dewan because unlike the former, Dewan did not represent obscurantist forces. He himself was keeping pace with the times by organizing his own business and even setting up two medium sized tea gardens all on his own without any support from the British government. It has been rightly observed that there were several signs of modern capitalist enthusiasm and efficiency in Dewan (Gohain: 1991, 25). But the road he chose in his fight against the British was bound to be a lonely one. For, at that period of Assam's history, there were indeed very few sections of the people who wanted the restoration of the Ahom monarchy. Thus, despite his best intentions Maniram Dewan could not carry the people with him. His call for freedom which included the return of Ahom monarchy failed to attract the people.

Moreover, an analysis of the events of the period must also take into account the fact that a struggle involving the restoration of Ahom monarchy in the eighteen fifties in Assam cannot necessarily be seen as being synonymous with a fight for freedom from British rule of all sections of the people of Assam or the Assamese nation. The Ahoms had indeed built up a strong centralized State; but it is questionable as to how durable the Assamese nation which they sought to build would eventually be. For, the Assamese nation which was emerging during the six hundred years of Ahom rule seemed to be in a great crisis in the last years of decay of Ahom power. Several of the ethnic groups had revolted against the growing feudal relationships of Ahom rule and, under the broad Moamoria umbrella, were attempting to carve out a state of their own. For instance, at the time of Purandhar Singha's restoration as a tributary prince in 1833, he agreed to the British proposal that the territory of the Barsenapati of the Moamarias would not be touched. Thus, the Ahom king's sway was limited to only a part of upper and middle Assam. What might have been freedom for Maniram Dewan surely would not have been the same for the Barsenapati. Because, to the Moamaria, freedom from Ahom rule was a cherished goal, for which no sacrifice had been considered as too high. Thus, if *swadhinata* for Maniram Dewan meant the expulsion of the British and the restoration of the Ahom prince, such a *swadhinata* was bound to have little appeal to those ethnic groups which refused to accept Ahom overlordship.

Further, it would be a simplistic reading of history to see the peasant uprisings as part of a larger struggle for a free or *Swadhin Asom*, as many

of the proponents of self-determination today tend to make them out to be. These peasant uprisings were directed against the British government in a bid to force it to change its uxorious taxation laws. At no stage of the struggle is there evidence to suggest that the peasants thought of launching a movement aimed at making the British quit the province. In short, it would not be correct to suggest that these peasant movements had something exclusively Assamese about them or that they reflected a peasant nationalism of a typical Assamese variety. They were movements aimed at securing immediate gains in the form of reduction of land revenue and were not linked with other forms of struggle. But, given the relatively egalitarian structure of Assamese society, the participation of different segments of the population was ensured. Rather, the peasant resistance movements of the eighteen sixties and the nineties in Assam were similar to peasant movements in other parts of British India. Hardiman, for instance, writes: "British rule led to an extreme disruption of rural relationships throughout India. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the peasantry had been impoverished through extremely high rates of land tax levied by the East India Company. After the taxes were lowered, new forms of expropriating the surplus of the peasants through intermediaries such as landlords, merchant-moneylenders and British planters, were evolved" (Hardiman, 6). What happened in the rest of British India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, took place in Assam towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Kathleen Gough, for instance, divides peasant resistance into five types: (a) restorative rebellions to drive out the British and restore earlier rulers and social relations; (b) religious movements for the liberation of a region or an ethnic group so as to establish a new form of government; (c) social banditry; (d) terrorist vengeance, with ideas of meting out collective justice; (e) mass insurrections for the redress of particular grievances (Gough, *EPW*, August 1974; Hardiman, 6). The peasant uprisings in the districts of Nowgong, Darrang and Kamrup seemed to belong to the last category. However strong the challenge posed by these uprisings to the British authorities might have been, they were in many a sense disparate movements although as many as three districts came under their spell. Commenting on the nature of such resistance movements which were part of the all-India phenomenon, Hardiman says:

As the imperial power consolidated its hold and expanded its control over new areas of Indian rural life during the course of the next half century (after 1857), new areas of conflict emerged. These conflicts were, however, more easily contained by the state. Improvements in communications, the development of the machine

gun at the same time as the Indian people were being systematically disarmed, and the expansion of the police and the military, all these made it easier to crush peasant insurgency before it could spread beyond a fairly local area. Conflicts therefore tended to be localized and confined to particular grievances. The history of peasant resistance during the period 1858-1914 is, necessarily, disjointed—a collection of histories of local agrarian relationships and struggles, each of which had its own timetable of revolt. Only with the development of new forms of leadership at the national level after 1918—with Gandhi, and with the Congress championing peasant demands more militantly—did peasant resistance begin to link up once more across the subcontinent to pose a formidable challenge to the colonial state, becoming once again, something more than a collection of isolated struggles” (Hardiman, 11).

There was little scope for these local movements getting transformed into a wide-ranging rebellion against British rule. That had happened in 1857 and then again to a lesser extent in 1920-2 and on a wider scale in 1942 (Hardiman, 11). The involvement of the middle classes in the peasant struggles in Assam was also not something unique to this region. In other parts of the country too the middle class, its opportunistic and vacillating nature notwithstanding, was providing leadership to many a peasant struggle (Hardiman, 45). Like the middle classes elsewhere in India, the Assamese middle class too was a product of colonial rule (Gohain: 1976, 12). Though the attitude of the middle classes was bound to be ambivalent, given the advantages they derived from the colonial system and being themselves creations of British rule, yet in many provinces they did take up a radical stand in support of the impoverished peasantry. This was so in the Punjab and in the Bombay Presidency. The Pune Sarvajanik Sabha founded in 1870, took up the cause of the peasantry right from the beginning. M. G. Ranade was one of its leading members (Hardiman, 51). Vasudeo Phadke, a Chitpawan Brahmin, was at the head of the peasant revolt of 1879 which he sustained for several months against great odds (Joshi, 21). Like the Sarvajanik Sabhas in other parts of the country, in Assam too the Jorhat Sarvajanik Sabha and the Tezpur Ryot Sabha established in 1884, were led by the middle class elite. The Nowgong Riot Sabha and the Upper Assam Associations also played a leading role in mobilizing the peasants. All these were led by the emerging middle class. When in the nineteen twenties the Congress-led movement started gaining momentum, these organizations played an important role and the slogan “rajjei raja” (the ryots themselves are sovereign) gained significance (Guha: 1977, 181-2). Whereas the *Raj Mels* of the closing part of the nineteenth century were dominated by the rural elite and the middle peasants, the Ryot Sabhas,

through peasant organizations, came to be led by the emerging middle classes. It has been observed by some scholars that this change led to the peasants' bodies losing their earlier militancy (Sharma, 101). This argument does not sound convincing because the different Ryot Sabhas in Assam came into existence in the eighteen seventies and eighties, much before the peasant uprisings at Patharughat and elsewhere. To compare the Rajj Mels with the Ryot Sabhas could very well lead to confusions because the former were people's assemblies called to discuss certain urgent issues and to chart out courses of action, whereas the latter were middle class-led peasant organizations with a regular membership. What, however, was unique in the peasant struggles of nineteenth century Assam was the common front put up against the British administration by both the landowning class and the middle and poor peasantry. This was possible because of several factors such as the nature of land settlement under the long Ahom rule, the strong tribal content in Assamese society, the predominance of the small landholding farmer, and the absence of the zamindari system.

This legacy of common struggle in the villages of Assam was to be emulated in later movements such as the Civil Disobedience Movement, the 1942 Quit India struggle or during the agitation against foreign nationals in the nineteen seventies and eighties. What needs to be remembered in making any analysis of the different struggles during the period of British rule of Assam is the fact that by themselves these movements were not for the liberation of the "Assamese nationality" but were simply stages in the mobilization of a people who would, in the years to follow, be involved in a larger national struggle where the peasantry would play a pivotal role. The different ethnic groups, which made up the social fabric of Assam on the eve of the British advent, were yet to be brought together on the common platform of Assamese linguistic nationalism. The struggle against British rule led by the Assamese middle class, who had got a head-start over the other smaller nationalities of the region, gave it a position of hegemony which was to continue till the sixties and seventies when the emerging middle classes of these nationalities started asserting their rights, and schisms began to appear in the facade of a monolithic Assamese nationalism. It was during the initial years of the consolidation of Assamese nationalism in the nineteen twenties and thirties that the idea of a *Swadhin Asom* began to fire the imagination of a section of the middle class.⁹

Modern political consciousness in Assam may be said to have commenced from around the year 1853 when Maniram Dewan and Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan¹⁰ submitted their memorials to Moffatt Mills.

It would take another seventy years or so for this consciousness to develop and give shape to Assamese nationalism. "Nationalism" says Paul Brass, "is a political movement by definition. It requires political organization, skilled political leadership, and resources to gain support to make successful demands in the political system. Moreover, the movement must be able to compete effectively against alternative political groups and must be strong enough to withstand government efforts to suppress it or to undercut its political support. Effective political organization and political leadership and the resource base to maintain them are independent variables that profoundly influence the outcomes" (Brass, 48). The process of consolidation of Assamese nationalism from the nineteen twenties displayed all these characteristics. Although from the very second year of the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885) Assamese delegates attended its sessions, yet it was only after the First World War that a distinct national consciousness, backed up by political organization, began to take shape. Before this, the struggle for the legitimate status of the Assamese language, which had been replaced in 1837 by Bengali, had begun. In this the efforts of the Assamese elite of the period like Dhekiyal Phukan and of the Christian missionaries, who had brought out the journal *Orunodoi* (1846-83) played the deciding role. Assamese was given its rightful place as the official language and the medium of instruction in schools in 1873. The formation of the Assamese Literary Society in Calcutta one year prior to this and its activities highlighting the economic backwardness of Assam showed that modern political consciousness was beginning to take shape in the Brahmaputra Valley (Guha: 1977, 24).

The constitution of Assam into a Chief Commissioner's province along with the East Bengal district of Sylhet (which had a population almost equal to that of the whole of Assam comprising the hill districts, the Brahmaputra Valley and the Surma Valley) in the year 1874 added a new twist to the politics of the region. The Bengali-speaking population increased rapidly and came to outnumber the Assamese till 1947 when the district of Sylhet went to Pakistan through a referendum. The competition for jobs between the Assamese middle class and its Bengali counterpart began, and was to be one of the major factors contributing to Assamese-Bengali bitterness in the decades to follow. A substantial rise in the Muslim population through immigration also marked the beginning of a conflict that would assume frightening proportions from the nineteen thirties onwards. We shall have occasion to discuss these in detail in the concluding chapter.

Though after being made a Chief Commissioner's province, the territorial

jurisdiction of the province of Assam increased, yet during the period 1874-1905 Assam did not have a legislature of its own and the people had no chance of participating in legislative activities (Guha: 1977, 29). The representative process that the British had introduced, even though limited in scale, did not percolate to the different sections of the people. Even the small educated middle class was kept out of the democratic process. When local bodies were formed, the principle of elections was introduced in only six municipalities in 1905-6. As late as 1913, in ten out of the nineteen municipal bodies there was no elected member (Guha: 1977, 32). The European planter lobby played an influential role in the province's politics and the Assamese intelligentsia was marginalized. Chairmanship of local bodies invariably went to Europeans. The marginalization of the Assamese middle class was not only due to the British preference for Bengali officials and clerks to man the bureaucracy, but also because of the demographic changes that were taking place. By the year 1901, according to Guha, "non-indigenous elements came to constitute at least a quarter of the population of Assam proper" (Guha: 1977, 39). Added to this was the serious imbalance triggered off by the highly extractive tea and oil industries between the fast-growing modern sectors of tea, coal and oil and the traditional agricultural sector. With the gap between the income stream and the income disbursed within the province increasingly widening and the extracted surplus being remitted to the United Kingdom in the form of high dividends and individual savings, the indigenous sector of the economy was only marginally benefitted by the colonial development pattern (Guha: 1977, 40). But despite severe constraints, a small group of Assamese businessmen emerged which included a band of Assamese tea planters who had a tough time in competing with British and Marwari capital. Shortage of capital, biased laws in favour of European planters¹¹ and governmental obstruction of varied sorts compelled many an Assamese tea planter to sell his gardens to European rivals.

It was against such a background that the Assamese students studying in Calcutta tried to organize themselves and work for the cause of Assamese nationalism. When the Assamese Literary Society became inactive, the Asamiya Bhasa Unnati-Sadhani Sabha (ABUS) was formed in August 1888. Linguistic nationalism was the prime motive force behind the ABUS which wanted to make Assamese one of the richest and most advanced languages of the world (Bezboroa, 49). There was a distinct attempt on the part of the ABUS to re-discover the glorious past of Assam and pit it against those who tried to underrate Assamese culture and civilization. The activities of the society ranged from attempts to work out a standardized

grammar, to publication of ancient Assamese manuscripts. As early as 1897 two leading members of the group, Kanaklal Barua and Ramakanta Barkakati compiled and published the *Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts*. ABUS also brought out a journal *Jonaki* which ushered in a new era in Assamese literature. Strongly influenced by the stalwarts of Bengali literature and society of the time such as Nabinchandra Sen, Michael Madhusudhan Dutta, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, Surendra Nath Banerjee as also by the British Romantics, the members of ABUS consciously tried to effect a renaissance in Assamese literature (Barpujari, 144-9). But behind the efforts of ABUS to carve out and establish a separate and viable cultural identity of the Assamese people lay the idea of a one-time powerful and glorious Assam. Contributors to *Jonaki* bemoaned the contemporary state of Assam and called upon the people to be inspired by the glories of the past when the kingdom of Kamarupa held sway up to the borders of Bihar. Kanaklal Barua¹² for example, lamented the decay of the handloom industry of Assam and felt that no foreign ruler would ever provide adequate protection to the traditional crafts (T. Misra, 194). The Assamese were upbraided for their laziness and lack of enterprise and visions of the past when Assamese traders went to distant regions were recalled. Barua called upon the people to shun foreign goods and develop local enterprise. The gradual stranglehold of foreign capital in Assam's economy was highlighted in these writings (Kanaklal Barua, *Jonaki*, "Amar Shilpa", 39).

From an argument favouring economic independence to one for political independence was not necessarily a major shift, given the socio-political scenario at the beginning of the current century. For instance, Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya¹³ insisted that the Assamese should constitute an independent, self-reliant nation (T. Misra, 195). He warned that with the development of transport and communication foreigners would pour in to occupy the fertile soil of Assam and Assam's identity would be jeopardized (*Racanavali*, 20-8). The fear of being inundated and overtaken by "stronger" nationalities was attempted to be confronted by a stress on the separate identity of the Assamese people which could be ensured through economic progress and cultural advancement. Though only a few of the contributors to *Jonaki* were forthright in their views about an independent Assamese nation, yet the general tone of the articles seemed to suggest that foreign occupation was at the root of Assam's misfortunes and the *Swadhin Asom* under a Bhaskarvarman or the Ahoms, symbolized happiness and prosperity. Assam had been a glorious land where once such great poets as Ananta Kandali, Ram Saraswati, Sankardeva and

Madhavdeva had been born (T. Misra, 196). Even in the writings of Lakhsmi Nath Bezbaroa¹⁴ which do not generally share the sense of decadence and gloom of Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya or which were not critical of British rule, one finds a deep commitment to the idea of an Asom Desh or homeland of the Assamese people. Bezbaroa's first priority was not political emancipation but the cultural resurgence of the Assamese and he made a conscious attempt to highlight every single aspect of Assamese culture and tradition. The winds of the Bengal Renaissance could not blow Bezbaroa off his feet which were only too strongly planted on the traditional richness of his people. He was intensely aware of the independence and glory of Assam and referred to this in a literary debate with Bengali scholars who had tried to prove that Sankardeva's Vaishnavism was actually an off-shoot of the Chaitanya School. Referring to the non-mention of Sankardeva in histories of Indian saints written in Bengal and other parts of India, Bezbaroa says that this only proves that Assam was till the other day an independent country never subjugated by any Indian ruler (T. Misra, 204).

Though Bezbaroa's Assamese linguistic nationalism or *Asamiya Jatiyatabad* was part of the broader Indian nationalism, yet in his writings *Asom Desh* is an autonomous socio-cultural and political entity. This is clearly revealed in poems like "Mor Desh" and "Asom Sangeet". Written in 1910, "Mor Desh" eulogizes Assam as a country of unparalleled beauty and uniqueness, not to be found anywhere else. This song is today the "Jatiya Sangeet" which is sung at all public occasions in Assam along with the national anthem.¹⁵ From this, we see that two types of nationalism co-existed side by side in the writings published in *Jonaki* and other journals of the period. This, according to Sudhir Chandra, was a common phenomenon throughout India (Sudhir Chandra, *EPW*, 1982). But, in the case of provinces like Assam, not to speak of its hill districts, which came under British rule much later than most of the other parts of the country, the regional brand of nationalism got the better of pan-Indian nationalism whenever the region and the community faced a crisis—economic, political or cultural. Geographical and historical factors often accounted for pan-Indian nationalism to be overshadowed by regional nationalistic feelings in Assam and the northeastern region. Hence, the struggle between the two kinds of nationalism form an important part of Assam's history right from the days of the entry and the consolidation of Congress politics in Assam to the post-Independence period when cries of colonial exploitation by the Centre started growing increasingly vehement.

The partition of Bengal and the formation of a composite province of

Eastern Bengal and Assam in October 1905 led to a massive nationalist upsurge along with the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. In Assam too the partition was resented because it was felt that tagging the backward province with the relatively advanced districts of Bengal would be of great disadvantage to the people of Assam (Barpujari: 1, 180-2). The struggle in Bengal found its echoes in the predominantly Bengali populated Surma Valley where Swadeshi and national schools made a big impact and political terrorism also made its appearance. In the Brahmaputra Valley too protest demonstrations were held in urban pockets and the swadeshi spirit affected the young generation (S. Bora, 7-8). Ambikagiri Roychoudhury,¹⁶ Triguna Barua and others even tried to organize the students on terrorist lines (Dutt, 48). The partition was annulled in April 1912 and Assam once again became a Chief Commissioner's province. The anti-partition movement in Bengal and its echoes in Assam gave the Assamese middle class an idea of the shape that populist agitations against British were taking at that time and also brought Assamese intellectuals into closer touch with developments in the rest of the country. The stage was thus being prepared for the entry of Assam into Congress politics.

The formation of the Assam Chatra Sanmilian in December 1916 marked a new stage in the growing maturity of the Assamese middle class. Though initially it was called the Asamiya Chatrar Sahitya Sanmilian, the word "Sahitya" was dropped in its very first session so as to widen the scope of the organization (Hazarika, 289). Although the declared objective of the Chatra Sanmilian was to shun politics, yet it helped produce a group of young men who later took active part in the Non-cooperation Movement (Dutt, 50; T. Misra, 175-7). The Assam Association in its Tezpur session of 1920 decided to support Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation and thereby signalled Assam's entry into Congress politics. This entry was formalized when the Congress working Committee approved the setting up of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee in January 1921, in line with the decision at the Nagpur session (1920) on linguistic provinces. The Chatra Sanmilian members joined the Non-cooperation Movement and added to its success. In the Kamrup district alone more than fifty mass meetings, attended by thousands, were held within a single fortnight in the month of February 1921 (Guha: 1977, 123). Gandhi's visit to Assam in August 1921 gave a fillip to the movement, particularly in the Brahmaputra Valley.

In the Surma Valley it was the Khilafat issue which dominated politics. Thousands of people responded to the Congress's call and bonfires of foreign cloth were made in almost all the towns of the province and the

sale of opium and liquor was resisted by volunteers. A large number of students quit school and several lawyers gave up their practice (A.C. Bhuyan: II, 44-6). More than four thousand people were arrested in the province during the course of the movement (Dutt, 61) and great repression was let loose by the government. Summing up the movement, Guha writes:

The non-cooperation aspect of the movement as such was not so visibly prominent in the Surma Valley, overshadowed as it was by the Khilafat movement since the middle of 1921. . . . In the Brahmaputra Valley, however, it was the Congress Non-cooperators who dominated the field. Their concentrated attack on the official excise policy was no less a matter of concern for the Government. . . . Between 23 December 1921 and 8 May 1922, as many as three dozen select areas (mauza/police station/town ward) in the plains districts were declared disturbed. Inhabitants of these places were subjected to collective fines (about Rs. 0. 2 million in all) to pay for the deployment of additional police forces, (which) included nine and a half platoons of the Assam Rifles. (Guha: 1977, 140-3).

Hundreds of people, including front-ranking Congress leaders and over twenty lawyers were convicted and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. For the first time in Assam's history a popular movement of such dimension had taken place and its effect on the socio-political scene was, to say the least, very far-reaching. The involvement of large number of women marked yet another aspect of the movement. The middle class leaders of the movement had succeeded in mobilizing large sections of the peasantry and had thereby given non-cooperation its real strength. Once again, the strong middle class-peasantry links in the province had paid rich dividends.

The swift politicization of the masses because of the Non-cooperation Movement became evident in the different socio-political organizations that sprung up soon after the non co-operation was called off. These organizations ranged from the Assam Sangrakshini Sabha founded by Ambikagiri Roychoudhury (later turned into the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha) to dozens of Krishak and Ryot Sabhas aimed at voicing the demands of the peasants. The rise in the level of political consciousness of the people was reflected in the articulation of regional demands which included the rights of the "sons of the soil" and safeguards against unchecked and unlimited immigration from nearby provinces. As early as May 1920, Chandranath Sharma who was the virtual founder of the Congress in Assam and who was known for his radical views, voiced his concern about the threat to Assamese identity from unchecked infiltration. In a letter to a friend, he wrote ". . . something has to be done by the Government

regarding the foreign settlers. Otherwise, the country will have to face very bad days and a miserable situation; our national identity will disappear" (Guha: 1977, 121-2). Sharma is referring here to the national identity of the Assamese people as against pan-Indian nationalism. The "foreign settlers" referred to are obviously the migrants from the other provinces of British India.

Assamese public opinion started to be increasingly agitated over the occupation of cultivable land by immigrants who came mainly from East Bengal. Discussing this, Guha says: "Landless immigrants from over-populated East Bengal— of them some 85 per cent were Muslims—found land in Assam's water-logged, jungle-infested, riverine belt. Used to an amphibious mode of living and industrious, these immigrants came by rail, steamers and boats up the Brahmaputra to reclaim these malarial areas. All that they wanted was land. From their riverine base, they further pressed themselves forward in all directions in search of more living space in the areas held by the autochthons. It was then that an open clash of interests began to take place" (Guha: 1977, 206).

Immigrant leaders like Maulana Bhasani¹⁷ started demanding the abolition of the Line System which had been introduced in 1920 to protect the land rights of the indigenous peoples and, between just six years from 1930 to 1936, as many as 59 grazing, forest and village reserves were thrown open in Nowgong district under the Colonization Scheme for settling the immigrants. The land-hungry immigrants did not appreciate Assamese fears of being turned into a minority in their own land. They were in search of a *lebensraum* and would not stop at anything (Guha: 1977, 210). In this connection the observations of C. S. Mullan, while presenting the Census Report of 1931, are significant. He highlighted the threat posed by the immigration of Bengalis, during the two decades prior to the census, to the culture and identity of the Assamese people (*Census of India 1931*, 50-1). Describing the immigration as an invasion, Mullan declared that in the course of time the Assamese homeland would be confined to only a district or two of upper Assam.¹⁸ Though Mullan has been accused of harbouring mischievous intentions of setting the autochthons against the immigrants, yet the course of events in the succeeding decades has vindicated his observations to a certain extent.¹⁹

It was against such a background that Assamese middle-class intellectuals like Ambikagiri Roychoudhury and Jnananath Bora wrote about the need to defend the Assamese homeland against "foreign" incursions. Chandranath Sharma and Roychoudhuri seemed to harbour similar apprehensions about the fate of the Assamese nationality, even

though their views on other issues might have differed substantially. Roychoudhury was no Assamese chauvinist as he is often made out to be. A Congress activist, Roychoudhury was one of the chief organizers of the Indian National Congress's first session in Assam in 1926. A fiery writer, he initially put forward the idea of an Indian federation of linguistic nationalities with dual citizenship. Roychoudhury insisted that Assam's position as a nation could be ensured only in a federation of equal nationalities that would be Independent India. In the light of today's debates centred around the re-structuring of Centre-State relations based on the acceptance of the principle of multiplicity of nationalities within a broad federal set-up, Roychoudhury's views appear quite relevant and up to date. In his article, "Bharatiyar Swaraj Aru Asamiyar Swaraj" (*Chetana*, 11, 1920) Roychoudhury spelt out his views on the position of a free Assam in an independent India. He believed that although in the fight against the British rulers the different nationalities of the Indian sub-continent had submerged their identities for a common cause, yet once India gained independence, each nationality must be given the right to assert itself according to its own national consciousness (Roychoudhury, 93). Thus, Roychoudhury, despite his being deeply involved in Congress politics, had a distinct vision of an Assamese homeland where the different indigenous peoples would live in quality and harmony (Roychoudhury 581). His dream of a harmonious co-existence of diverse ethnic groups making up the great Assamese nationality was however not fulfilled. He insisted that any community or ethnic group which had made Assam its home, including the migrants, were Assamese. But, as the middle classes of these ethnic groups emerged in the post-Independence period, new assertions were made and demands for autonomy raised (A K. Baruah, 62).

Ambikagiri Roychoudhury was amongst the first of Assamese intellectuals who had his own distinct idea about Assamese nationalism and its relationship with pan-Indian nationalism. When he referred to India as a *Mahajati* and the Assamese as a *jati*, he tried to work out the position of the Assamese in a multi-national state. Though certain scholars have argued that Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's vision of the Assamese *jati* did not include the idea of a sovereign, independent Assam or Asom, (A.K. Baruah, 61), yet as his disillusionment with the Congress grew, he moved nearer to the idea of a *Swadhin Asom*. The failure of the all-India Congress's to adopt an unequivocal stand on the issue of continued influx threatening the Assamese identity and its attempt to force Assam to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan were some of the factors which pushed

Ambikagiri and his Jatiya Mahasabha to express sentiments which bordered on a demand for an independent Assam. As early as November 1937, Roychoudhury had, on behalf of the Asamiya Sanrakshini Sabha, submitted a memorandum to Nehru stating that the withdrawal of the Line System segregating autochthones and immigrants would lead to fresh tension arising out of further immigrant occupation of Assamese-held lands. He referred to the growing feeling among a considerable section of the Assamese intelligentsia that if the central Congress leadership did not view their fears regarding Bengali Muslim influx seriously, then Assam should secede from India. The memorandum declared that support for the Congress in Assam would depend on two major factors affecting the Assamese people—one was the separation of Sylhet and Cachar from Assam and the second was that mass immigration into the Brahmaputra Valley be stopped (Guha, 257). In another memorandum titled “Case of Great Assamese People and of their Homeland: Assam”, and addressed to the All India Congress Committee in June 1946, the Jatiya Mahasabha declared that, faced with the Grouping proposal, the Assamese were prepared for a desperate struggle for national existence and emancipation. It accused the all-India Congress leadership of not being able to foresee the threat to the Assamese identity (Phukan, 62). Roychoudhury also built up an Atmarakshi Bahini to save the Assamese homeland from Muslim League designs to have it included in Pakistan. In his appeal to his countrymen (the Assamese) on the formation of the Asom Atmarakshi Bahini, Roychoudhury cautioned them of the designs of the Muslim League which had resulted in wide-scale riots in the East Bengal districts and declared: “The Assamese have nowhere to go except Assam. The victims of the Noakhali disturbances in Bengal are entering Assam. But if the Assamese fall prey to the miscreants, where will they go? We have nowhere to go but the hills. But even there won’t we lose our identity? What is the way out for the Assamese? . . . Assam’s land is the age-old inheritance of the Assamese people. The Assamese must rise as a man to defend this national property. Otherwise there is no reprieve for the Assamese. There is no other place where the Assamese *jati* can survive” (Roychoudhury, 533-44). He, therefore, called upon the Assamese to join the Atmarakshi Bahini so as to frustrate the designs of the Muslim League.

When, after Independence, the Congress government in Assam failed to provide adequate checks to infiltration from newly created East Pakistan, Roychoudhury and the Jatiya Mahasabha started espousing the cause of an independent Assam. The Jatiya Mahasabha in a meeting held on 1 January 1948, declared that “Assam should come out of the Indian

Union and become an independent country like Burma or any other country" (Phukan, 62). A letter written to a local weekly by some members of the Jatiya Mahasabha ran as follows:

Assam's sovereignty was a fact of ages ago and it should be in future. There are many sovereign states in the world with lesser areas, population and potential resources. Assam is the home of brave martial races and tribes, whom the world has not seen in their full strength. In these days of national inter-dependance no state or country, however small or big, can have any reason for fear of her defence and Assam can perhaps be one of the strongest little states in the whole of the East (Phukan, 62).

Moreover, Roychoudhury was one of those very few Assamese leaders of his period who had sympathy for the Naga cause. In a telegram to the Naga National Council secretary, Aliba Imti Ao, Roychoudhury expressed his support for the Naga struggle for self-determination.

The Jatiya Mahasabha's consistent demand that the Sylhet district be separated from Assam and its later opposition to the Chittagong Hill Tracts being incorporated in Assam was motivated by the urge to have a homogenous Assamese territory, distinct from the Indian mainland. But Ambikagiri Roychoudhury remained a lonely voice in the first two decades or so of post-Independence Assam dominated by Congress politics veering sharply in favour of pan-Indian nationalism. The successful resistance put up against the Grouping Scheme by the Assam Congress under Gopinath Bardoloi's leadership and the separation of Sylhet had greatly eased Assamese fears of losing their identity and from the fifties to the early sixties regional nationalist forces had to take a backseat. It was from the early seventies that Roychoudhury's ideas started finding favour with a section of the post-nineteen-sixty generation of Assamese who had become increasingly aware of the colonial pattern of exploitation of Assam by the Centre as well as the growing threat posed by infiltration of foreigners into the state. Thus, it was only after his death in 1967 that Roychoudhury came to be seen as a rallying point for all those who felt that the Assamese identity was in danger and needed to be defended.

In his lifetime, Roychoudhury's Jatiya Mahasabha could not win a single seat to the State Assembly and he was almost written off as an eccentric voice in the province's politics. Today, Roychoudhury's works are read with respect by the young generation of Assamese who find in his espousal of dual citizenship and a multinational federal state with actual autonomous units, some answers to contemporary political ills. Roychoudhury's concern for the future of the Assamese race has been

eulogized in several patriotic songs, including one by Bhupen Hazarika where he laments that after Ambikagiri there is no one to keep reminding the Assamese that their “desh” is in danger of slipping out of their hands. It is relevant to note here that Ambikagiri was initially a staunch supporter of the Congress and went to prison several times during the national movement. His first involvement in politics was during the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905. His “Songs of the Cell” written during his days in jail, call upon the “million brothers of India” to sound the conch-shell of deliverance “piercing through the plains of Jallianwalla Bagh” (Roychoudhury, 1008). Yet, Ambikagiri gradually moved away from his attempts to synthesize regional nationalism with pan-Indian nationalism and in the last years of his life became a disillusioned and disheartened man who felt that probably the only solution to Assam’s ills lay in a *Swadhin Ason*. Any attempt to understand why such a change occurred in a man like Ambikagiri would have to be a part of a broader attempt to look into the causes of secessionist politics which overtook the province since the nineteen eighties.

The idea of a *Swadhin Ason* was shared by many other Assamese intellectuals of the pre-Independence period. Jnananath Bora, a leading intellectual of Assam, in his articles published in the Assamese journal *Awahn*, and in the newspaper, *Dainik Batori*, put forward his ideas on a sovereign Assam. In an article titled, “Kamrup Aru Bharatvarsha” (Kamrup and India) Bora recalls the glory of the Kamarupa kingdom which had successfully remained a Hindu kingdom even without being a part of Bharatvarsha (J. Bora: 1936, 253). Stressing Kamarupa or Assam’s separate-ness from the rest of India, the author writes: “Today, Kamrupa, which had always been a separate country, has become a province of India. The history of our country is not the same as that of the other provinces of India and there is no need to reiterate that our culture and society have little in common with them. Till today our people have not been able to accept our country as a province of India. Whether one is a Madrasi or a Kabuli, he is a foreigner in our eyes. Who can deny this? In recent times some of our educated persons have been spreading the canard that this Kamrupa is a province of India. . . . Had the British incorporated the former territories of Kamrup like Jalpaiguri and Rangpur and made Assam into a separate ‘country’, then we would have drawn inspiration from the other countries of the world and our views would also have been different.” (J. Bora: 1936, 259-60 translation mine). Giving a detailed chart of the population and national incomes of countries like Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark and Greece, Bora argues that Assam, which

was much larger than many of these sovereign States, could very well exist on her own. Refusing to accept the argument that a hundred years of British rule has made the plea for an independent Assam infructuous, the author stressed that national consciousness cannot be suppressed either by a hundred or a thousand years. The “new countries” of Czechoslovakia and Poland were such examples. Bora concludes the article by making a forceful plea for the liberation of Assam (J. Bora: 1936, 262).

In another article, “Asom Desh Bharatbarshar Bhitarat Thakiba Kiva?” (Why should Assam stay in India?) Jnananath Bora insists that Assam’s regeneration would be possible only if it separated from India. Arguing that before the year 1920, the Assamese knew virtually nothing about the Congress organisation, Bora says:

Before this, the Assamese people had no idea of the Congress. The Assamese have always lived in a distinct country with its own distinctive administration and never seen Assam as part of India (Bharatvarsha). The course of our history is totally different from that of India’s. India’s history is not our history. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that our people consider themselves to be outside India. Like Burma, Afghanistan or Thailand, Assam has always been a neighbouring country of India” (J. Bora: 1938, 264 trans. mine).

Reiterating that although the British forcibly incorporated Assam into India, Bora maintains that the Assamese have always considered themselves to be an independent nation. Would Thailand or Burma become a part of India just because they are brought under a single administrative unit under British India, Bora argues. He blames the educated section amongst the Assamese for having betrayed Assam’s cause: “The educated section amongst us have been trying to prove for a long time that since Assam has been under British administration for quite some time, it is naturally a province of British India. . . . It is these people who are trying in different ways to turn our country into a province of India” (J. Bora: 1938, 265). This argument is very similar to the ULFA’s present stand regarding the role of the intellectuals in Assam who are, by and large, dubbed as Indian agents. Time and again, the ULFA leadership issues warnings to the intellectual class to desist from acting as the agents of New Delhi. Bora’s writings which lay forgotten for decades, have now been resurrected by the proponents of *Swadhin Asom* who have been trying to use them to garner people’s support for the ULFA’s cause.

Jnananath Bora’s position vis-a-vis the Congress of his time is very similar to the position adopted today by the ULFA regarding most of the political parties of the state. Bora argues that ever since the Assamese

people welcomed the Congress, the importance of Assam began to decline. He was strongly opposed to the nationalist trend initiated by the Congress under Gandhi and declared that it was the Congress movement "which brought Assam under the foreign (Indian) yoke" (J. Bora: 1938, 269). Stating that Assam had nothing to gain from the struggle for India's swaraj, Bora observes: "On the one hand the Congress movement is advancing, and on the other, the Assamese are not only losing their status in their own homeland but are getting alienated from their culture and heritage" (Bora, 269). Finally, advocating an independent status for Assam, Bora says that an independent Assam would have all the means needed for financial stability and economic progress. He pleads with the British Government to give Assam the status of neighbouring Burma and cites the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms on Burma.

In this meticulously prepared article, Jnananath Bora lays down the territorial jurisdiction of an independent Assam which would more or less conform to that of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa and would include the Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar regions of present-day West Bengal: "A separate country like Burma must be created by amalgamating all those areas which were once in the Kamarupa kingdom and now have dropped off. The pitiable plight of the autochthons like the Rajbanshis, the Meches, the Koch, Bodos, etc., is the result of their staying within India. They have lost out on trade and commerce to the outsiders . . . that is why all these areas should be brought together within Assam and made to form an independent country" (J. Bora: 1938, 469 trans. mine).

Bora sums up his lengthy article by praising the British for helping Assam out of the anarchy and chaos let loose by the Burmese invaders. But he describes the British occupation of Assam as one of the compulsions of history and maintains that had Assam not been made a part of British India, her present distress would not have occurred. It was the fault of the British that they did not retain Assam's identity as a separate country and it was because of this that an ancient race was about to die out. Therefore, the solution for all of Assam's ills lay in maintaining an independent existence and in not being swayed by the forces of Indian nationalism. The idea of forging the diverse peoples of the sub-continent into an Indian nation was seen as an impossible dream by Jnananath Bora.

It has been considered necessary to dwell at length on Jnananath Bora's views because many of the ideas incorporated in his writings found expression during the Assam Movement (1979-85) on the foreigners' issue. These included the concept of economic independence, the need to bring

the different tribal communities within the ambit of Assamese “*jatiatabad*”, the development of the state’s resources for the benefit of the indigenous people and the idea of internal colonisation. Bora may, therefore, be said to be one of those Assamese intellectuals who, in the nineteen thirties, tried to project the thesis that in order to avoid being colonially exploited by India, Assam must become independent and manage her own resources. Fifty years later, Jnananath Bora’s views would find acceptance among a section of the Assamese youth who would resort to arms in order to liberate Assam from the “Indian colonial yoke”. But, just as Jnananath Bora or Ambikagiri Roychoudhury did not have any clear perception about the position of the different nationalities within a *Swadhin Asom*, the ULFA too has little to say about the nature of ethnic equations in a liberated homeland.

Though it cannot be concluded that Jnananath Bora’s views were representative of Assamese middle class opinion, yet a large section of the intelligentsia seemed to share his views. Despite the large-scale involvement of the Assamese people in the Non Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements and the unquestioned popularity of the Indian National Congress and its leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, yet there continued to be a wide degree of sympathy for the cause of *Swadhin Asom*. Just a century of British rule could not obviously wipe out from the Assamese mind the feeling that till recently their country had been an Independent one and was the inheritor of a six-hundred year rule by the Ahoms, not to speak of the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa and the glory of Bhaskarvarman. The feeling of separateness persisted throughout the thirties and the forties. For example, just a month prior to independence from British rule, one of the leading Assamese intellectuals, Birinchi Kumar Baruah, a known authority on Assamese literature and culture and who later on became the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Gauhati University, said in the course of a public lecture that “culturally, racially and linguistically, every non-Assamese is a foreigner in Assam”. Declaring that from very ancient times Assam never formed part of India, Baruah went on to say that every foreigner who came to and resided in Assam since the British occupation must be viewed as an alien, if Assam was to save herself from the grip of foreigners (Phukan, 66). Populist support for a *Swadhin Asom* was also expressed in public meetings held at Jorhat and other places. In a meeting held at Jorhat in May 1947 a resolution for the creation of an independent Assam was adopted. The meeting expressed the view that an independent Assam could survive well on the “twenty-five crores of rupees that the Centre took away annually” from the province. It is

significant that in many of these meetings where separatist feelings were expressed, front-ranking Congressmen also took part. A leading Congressman and member of the Constituent Assembly, Kuladhar Chaliha, associated himself with the sentiments expressed in the Jorhat meeting (Phukan, 67).

Apart from such expressions of support for *Swadhin Asom* at the popular level, parties like the Communist Party of India also put forward the idea of an independent Assam. In line with the CPI's resolution on the question of nationalities adopted in 1943 which stated that "every section of the Indian people which has a contiguous territory as its homeland, common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological make-up and common economic life would be recognized as a distinct nationality with the right to secede from it if it may so desire", the Assam unit of the party also put forward the plea for self-determination. Gaurishankar Bhattacharyya, the CPI leader, in an article titled "Pakistan and Assam" (*The Assam Tribune*, 10 November 1944; Phukan, 64) gave a plan for the type of government in an independent Assam. It would be on the Russian model, with the Lower House elected through adult franchise, and there would be proportional representation on the basis of population. The Upper House would be a house of communities, made up of representatives of the different ethnic groups. Declaring that an independent Assam would possess economic viability, the author stated: "As to the plea of Assam proper being too small for statehood, it may be observed that both in point of view of population and resources, Assam is in a much better position than any sovereign state in Europe or America" (Phukan, 65). It is interesting to note that the CPI's position regarding an independent Assam was at that time close to the position taken up by people like Jnananath Bora and Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, although ideologically the two were poles apart. The arguments put forward by CPI stalwarts like Bhattacharyya helped to strengthen the view within a section of the Assamese middle class that a *Swadhin Asom* was both politically as well as economically viable. Though the CPI position at that time was part of a general stand on the self-determination of the nationalities, yet in the particular context of Assam it helped to strengthen centrifugal tendencies.

The demand for an independent Assam also came from several tribal organizations of the province. This demand was motivated by the fear that Assam's amalgamation with the rest of India would lead to the strengthening of the caste-Hindu elements in Assamese society and give them a leverage which would be denied to the tribals. Some of these organizations felt that there would be little scope for autonomy for the tribes within the

new set-up and hence, a sovereign Assam which would be the homeland of the tribal people, who were in a majority, was the only answer. The demand for Pakistan further aggravated tribal fears and apart from the Nagas and the Mizos, even the Khasis started talking of autonomy and separate homelands within or outside an autonomous Assam. The United Mizo Freedom Party went a step further than the Mizo Union which had demanded full local autonomy within India. It called for the secession of all Mizo areas from India and their merger with Burma (Phukan, 49). The Khasi-Jayantia Political Association demanded in 1946 that a federation of the Khasi areas be given full cultural and political autonomy within a sovereign Assam. Amongst the plains tribals of Assam, the demand for a sovereign status gained ground among an educated section of the Bodo-Kacharis. The All Assam Plains Tribal League expressed its fear of both caste-Hindu and Muslim domination and demanded that "Assam proper and its hills should be constituted into a sovereign state. Assam and its hills should not be made part or province of any federation—Hindustan or Pakistan—without the consent of its people" (Phukan, 59). The Kachari Sanmela also expressed similar views.

The Ahoms, who had been the rulers of Assam for six hundred years, had always nursed a grievance during British rule that they had been marginalized in favour of the Assamese and Bengali caste-Hindus. A section of the Ahom elite had been insisting that the Ahom identity was under threat from Hindu Aryan culture. But, the Ahom Association which had been formed as early as 1893 had not been able to make much headway among the Ahom masses who had largely integrated with the broader Assamese community and had accepted Sankardeva's Mahapurusiya Vaishnavism. The Association, which till 1910 had been known as the Ahom Sabha, however continued with its efforts to assert the separate identity of the Ahoms (A.C. Bhuyan, III 294-5). When the national movement gained momentum in the province, with the leaders of the Congress being largely drawn from the caste-Hindu sections of the Assamese society, the Ahom elite felt further marginalized and jittery. Terming the Congress as a caste-Hindu organization, a section of the Ahom elite started demanding a separate sovereign status for Assam where the Ahoms would once again be the major cohesive force in Assamese society. It was believed that only through an independent Assam could the Ahom identity be ensured. In its meeting held in September 1944, the All Assam Ahom Association declared: "In view of the peculiar position of Assam, both geographically and otherwise, and the great preponderance of the Mongolian races with their distinctive languages,

cultures and religions in the population of the province, Assam without Sylhet has a legitimate claim for free and independent existence in the event of India being divided territorially into Pakistan and Hindustan zones . . ." (Phukan, 55). The demand for a *Swadhin Asom* was also raised in several other Ahom-dominated parts of the province. It has been rightly observed that the Ahom demand for a sovereign Assam and the demand for a *Swadhin Asom* by other segments of the Assamese population had a lot in common. Invariably the demand was linked up with Assam's glorious and independent past, to which the Ahom kings had contributed a lot. It was being consistently maintained that ethnically Assam belonged to the Mongoloid people and its culture and civilization was a part of the glorious heritage of South East Asia, the province having little to share with India. Today also, this forms a major plank of the thesis being built up by the United Liberation Front of Assam and its ideologues who assert that Assam should look not to India but to its east for inspiration and sustenance, that it forms a part of the great Mongoloid fraternity.

But the inherent contradiction in the demand of organizations like the Ahom Association lay in the fact that the Hinduization of culture and politics which the Ahom elite was so apprehensive about, had actually been brought about in Assam by the Ahom rulers themselves. Moreover, the "glorious past" of Assam also included the pre-Ahom age which was known for its strong cultural links with the rest of the Indian sub-continent with its predominantly Hindu ethos. Just as the Ahom separatists seemed to completely overlook this period of Assam's history, similarly the proponents of *Swadhin Asom* who built their argument on the glory of Kamarupa, intentionally failed to see that kingdoms like those of Bhaskarvarman were very much a part of the civilization of northern India. The strong historical and cultural links which both pre-Ahom and Ahom Assam had maintained with the rest of the country explains, even if partly, the quick acceptance of Gandhi and the Congress in the province. The stress on Assam's Far East connections, especially with Myanmar, was bound to evoke frightful memories of the Burmese occupation of the region. The pro-British and occasionally pro-Muslim League positionings of bodies like the Ahom Association (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 309; Phukan, 54, 76) alienated them from the broad mass of the Ahom people who went along with the Congress in the fight for freedom from British rule (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 302-3). Unable to battle the Congress on the election front, the Ahom Association continued to raise demands for the creation of a separate Ahom State comprising the upper Assam districts and also explored the possibility of establishing contacts with the Shan States beyond the Patkai

Hills (Barpujari: II, 309). But with Assam becoming a province of free India, the Ahom Association soon lost its *locus standi*.

It was but natural that the idea of a *Swadhin Asom* started losing much ground even as the popularity of the Congress increased in the region. Nevertheless, the idea persisted side by side with Congress politics and many leading Congressmen were known to be sympathetic towards it. The separatist and integrationist strands co-existed and the middle-class dominated Congress in Assam often thought in terms of regional independence in a free India. Hence, the State Congress's consistent stress on the maximum possible economic and political autonomy for Assam in a new federal set-up. Thus, in the nineteen thirties and forties, the Assam Congress leadership seemed to have successfully combined the people's urge for freedom from the foreign yoke with that for the maximum of regional autonomy. This partly explains the large degree of popular support which the Congress received in the state during both the Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements.

While the first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement remained primarily a student-dominated agitation (A.C. Bhuyan: II, 157-60), during the second phase which commenced from January 1932, hundreds of people were arrested throughout the province. According to official estimates, almost fifteen hundred persons were arrested between the years 1930-32. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee was banned in December 1930 and continued to be an unlawful organisation till June 1934. However, it was during the Quit India Movement that the province saw the worst forms of State repression. Wide-scale violence occurred in the Nowgong and Darrang districts where scores of people fell to police bullets. On one single day alone, 20 September 1942, as many as thirteen persons were shot dead by the police. Among those killed was a fifteen year old girl, Kanaklata Barua. She headed a procession to hoist the national flag at the Gohpur police station. Gohpur earned the distinction of being the first place where the Congress tricolour was hoisted in the course of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

A marked feature of the 1942 movement was the large degree of participation by the people, with hundreds trying to storm police stations and administrative blocks in the different districts. More than two thousand five hundred people were arrested throughout the state and casualties in police firings totalled twenty seven (Guha: 1977, 275). Another significant aspect of the struggle was the involvement of the different leftist parties and left sections within the Congress in the movement. The people's resistance in the face of massive repression proved finally that they were

with the Congress and its brand of politics. For them the Congress seemed to be the only answer then to the machinations of the Muslim League which had been consistently campaigning for Assam's inclusion in Pakistan. Therefore, there was much dissatisfaction and anger when the all-India Congress leadership showed its indifference to Assam and the Assam Congress's rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan²⁰ grouping Bengal and Assam together, which the latter felt would pose a serious threat to Assam's identity by placing it at the mercy of Muslim-majority Bengal. Fear gripped the people of Assam that this would lead to the eventual creation of a Muslim-majority area—a probable stepping stone to Pakistan. A general feeling of being betrayed by the Congress High Command swept the province. The Assam Pradesh Congress under Gopinath Bardoloi's leadership began a battle which ultimately forced the central Congress leadership to see reason.

The moment the Cabinet Mission proposals were made known, the Assam Congress leadership informed the Congress High Command that the groupings would not be acceptable to the people of the province because Bengal with its majority members would impose its will on Assam. As subsequent events proved it, the Assam Congress leadership rightly anticipated that in the face of the League's persistent demand for an independent Pakistan, the Cabinet Mission might concede a Muslim-dominated zone within an united India (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 342). While mass protests took place in the state, the Assam Assembly in an unprecedented move, resolved against joining the Section and declared that the provincial constitution could be framed only by Assam's own representatives (Guha: 1977, 311). The Assembly asked all the ten representatives in the Constituent Assembly to stay out of the Section when the Provincial Constitution would be drafted, but asked them to participate in the framing of the Union Constitution. The Assam Congress leaders pointed out to the central Congress leadership the vagueness in two of the clauses of the Cabinet Mission's plan. While Clause 15(5) stated that the provinces could be free to form Groups, clause 19(V) contradicted this by directing the provinces to form groups. Initially, the central Congress leaders tried to assure the Congressmen from Assam by saying that the province could later opt out of the Sections if it so desired. Meanwhile, Pethick-Lawrence declared at a press conference that the provinces were actually not free as mentioned in clause 15(5). Initially, Nehru and Azad too seemed quite sympathetic towards Assam's stand and Patel was unequivocal in his support to the Assam Congress leadership. According to the then Assam Congress President, M. Tayebullah, Nehru had said: "Whereas no province could

be compelled to go into the grouping, provinces unwilling to opt in will refuse to go. Who can force a constitution on Assam in Section C when Assam will not accept it at all?" (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 360). Nehru suggested that the Assam Assembly adopt a resolution refusing to sit in the Group and a clear directive be given to the Assam representatives to the Constituent Assembly in this regard. Patel too told the Assam leaders that the Congress was opposed in principle to grouping and that he fully backed Assam's stand (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 361). Finally, when the Assam delegation met Gandhi, he categorically told them to stay out of the Group (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 361). The Congress Working Committee headed by Azad expressed its support for Assam's stand and endorsed Nehru's suggestion regarding a resolution by the Assam Assembly. But surprisingly, when Azad and Nehru met the Cabinet Mission on 10 June 1946, they did not raise the issue of Assam's objection to the Group (A.C. Bhuvan: III, 364).

By the time the Assam Assembly passed the resolution against grouping, the attitude of the central Congress leaders had undergone a change (Appendix IV). Nehru not only expressed his unhappiness at the wording of the resolution but viewed Assam's objection as an obstacle. On 10 August 1946 The Congress Working Committee accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan and Nehru declared: "We are perfectly prepared to, and have accepted, the position of sitting in sections which will consider the question of formation of groups" (Tara Chand: 3, 485-6). Though Nehru soon wrote to Bardoloi saying that Assam would not be forced to do anything against its will, yet it became clear that the central leadership was about to let down Assam. Assam's apprehensions were further strengthened by the British Government's statement of December 1946 which clearly favoured the Muslims League's position on the disputed clauses by declaring that issues in dispute could be resolved by a simple majority in the Sections. The provision for reference to the Federal Court seemed unconvincing and Gandhi was soon to declare that it was a packed court. The die was finally cast and Assam decided to stick to its earlier decision to stay away from the Groupings and fight the All India Congress Committee if necessary.

It was at this moment of grave crisis that Gandhi came to Assam's assistance and told a delegation of Assam Congress leaders, "... if Assam keeps quiet it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It must stand independently as an autonomous unit. It is autonomous to a large extent today. It must become fully independent and autonomous. . . . As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly

to go into sections you will say, 'Gentlemen, Assam retires'. For the independence of India it is the only condition. Each Unit must decide and act for itself. I am hoping that in this, Assam will lead the way. . . . If Assam takes care of itself the rest of India will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the Constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own Constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a constitution yourself" (*Transfer of Power: IX 403-5*). Gandhi exhorted the Assam Congress to revolt against the central Congress leadership if necessary, saying that, not to speak of a provincial committee, even an individual had the right to rebel against the Congress. Gandhi's stand changed the scales in favour of Assam (Appendix V). Azad and Nehru, however, continued to hold the view that Assam's stand was helping the Muslim League and also acting as an obstruction to freedom. Nehru is reported to have told a three-member delegation from Bengal, which asked him as to why Assam was being let down after being given such high hopes by him: "Assam could not hold up the progress of the rest of India and support to Assam would mean refusal to accept the British Prime Minister's statement of December 6 and letting loose forces of chaos and civil war" (*Transfer of Power: IX, 510*).

Nehru was not alone in holding such a view. Sardar Patel, known for his consistency of views, is reported to have said the following in reply to a question as to whether the Congress's change of stand was not a climb-down on the part of the Congress: ". . . but for the good of the people of India principles have sometimes to be swallowed for the sake of expediency. In a political game compromises have to be made, and in India the Congress prestige will not suffer more than it has already suffered by entering the Interim Government. . . . Surely the whole of India cannot be plunged into a civil war for the sake of Assam" (*Transfer of Power: IX, 509*). In the light of all this, it was but natural that at the All India Congress Committee meeting held on January 5 1947, Nehru's resolution accepting the general terms of the British statement of December 6, 1946 regarding the Cabinet Mission proposals was accepted by 522-99 votes. Six of the eight Assam members voted against, while the Assam Congress chief Tayebullah voted in favour of the motion and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed abstained. Assam's demand for an outright rejection of the December 6 statement was supported by Jayaprakash Narayan, Saratchandra Bose and several other leaders (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 85) Nehru said that though he was "alive to the danger that confronts Assam", he would still recommend the resolution for acceptance. Referring to Assam's uncompromising stand, Nehru stated: "It is true that Assam has a mandate to oppose Sections and Groups and

Assam can fight if it wants. But I would like to remind you that battles are won not by the personal courage of one or two but by the cooperation of many thousands and by mobilization and right use of resources. The time may come when Assam will have to fight; that fight will not be single-handed but will be waged with the whole of India behind them" (Gopal: 1984, 42). Nehru's rhetoric did not convince the Assam leaders who felt let down by the central leadership.

Maulana Azad's views on the issue are recorded in his memoirs: "Both Congress and the Muslim League had originally accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan which meant that both accepted the Constituent Assembly. So far as the Congress was concerned, it was still in favour of the Cabinet Mission Plan. The only objection raised from the Congress side was by certain leaders from Assam. They were possessed by an inexplicable fear of Bengalis. They said that if Bengal and Assam were grouped together, the whole region would be dominated by Muslims. Gandhiji had initially accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan . . . however Gandhiji's views changed and he gave his support to Bordoloi. Jawaharlal agreed with me that the fears of the Assam leaders were unjustified and tried hard to impress them. Unfortunately they did not listen to either Jawaharlal or me, especially since Gandhiji was now on their side and issued statements supporting their stand. Jawaharlal was however steadfast and gave me his full support" (Azad, 184-5). Though Azad says that Nehru was consistent in his stand, yet there is evidence to suggest that he was equivocating from the start. For instance, just three months after the AICC resolution of January 1947, Mountbatten records that when asked about Congress's acceptance of the December 6 statement, "Pandit Nehru replied that of course the Congress accepted the statement, but if they were to be asked if whether they were going to force Assam and the Sikhs to abide by it they would have to admit that they were in no position to force any province or section of a Province to comply with all the terms against their will and interest" (*Transfer of Power*: X, 623). Mohammad Ali Jinnah had insisted that the provinces first join the Groups and could afterwards separate if they so wished. Though Azad had to go along with the Congress Working Committee's views broadly supporting Assam's stand, yet he comments: "Looking back after ten years, I concede that there was force in what Jinnah said. The Congress and the League were both parties to the agreement, and it was on the basis of distribution among the Centre, the provinces and the Groups that the League had accepted the Plan. Congress was neither wise nor right in raising doubts. It should have accepted the Plan unequivocally if it stood for the unity of India. Vacillation would give

Jinnah the opportunity to divide India” (Azad, 185; this passage belongs to that part of his memoirs which were published thirty years after his death).

It is obvious from the above that the central leadership of the Congress did not share Assam’s apprehensions about the Cabinet Mission Plan and, but for Gandhi’s support for Bardoloi and the Assam Congress, would have gone ahead with its implementation. Assam’s stand was one of the major reasons why the Cabinet Mission Plan ultimately fell through. But, it is interesting to note that the struggle against the Cabinet Mission Plan, instead of strengthening centrifugal forces, helped the centripetal ones to consolidate. At this critical juncture of Assam’s history, the question naturally arises: Taking advantage of the equivocation and betrayal by the central Congress leadership, why did the proponents of *Swadhin Asom* build up their case effectively among the masses? One of the major reasons for the low profile kept by the separatist forces was the fear of Muslim domination and the need to stay with the rest of India. These forces knew only too well that given the demographic pattern of the province and its past experience with the Saadullah ministries,²¹ a *Swadhin Asom* would be even more vulnerable to the machinations of Muslim East Bengal. The hill leaders too were aware of the need to stay with India in order to avert a Muslim take-over. Nichols-Roy, a Khasi leader declared: “We know what the policy of the Muslim League is in Assam. Even now the Muslim League in Bengal wants to send thousands upon thousands of immigrants into Assam. That is feared by everyone. The people of the hills are afraid of that immigration and say they will fight it to the last. The people of the plains do not want to be swamped. They do not want Assam, which is a non-majority province now, to be turned into a Muslim-majority province. This is the crux of the whole fight between Assam and the Muslim League” (A.C. Bhuyan: III, 384).

The fear of Pakistan and the demographic challenge posed by immigration actually contributed largely towards neutralizing the demand for a *Swadhin Asom*. Those who were advocating the cause of a sovereign Assam knew only too well that they had neither the organization nor the strength of purpose to follow up their demand. Ambikagiri’s call for an army of self defence, though effectively highlighting the threat to the Assamese identity, remained just an idealist plank, while most of the other organizations failed to back up their concepts with the adequate infrastructure. Moreover, the Assamese middle class concept of an independent homeland was limited in geography to the Brahmaputra Valley and in culture to the Assamese language and the Vaishnava cult of

Sankardeva. There was little place in a *Swadhin Asom* for the hill peoples, about whose fate and position nothing precise was thought about. Although in the writings of Ambikagiri it is mentioned that the people of the hills and plains would live in a harmonious relationship based on equality and mutual respect, there was no thought given to questions related to power-sharing and representation. As such, the question of any coordinated struggle just did not arise. Thus, if demand for self-determination continued to surface repeatedly during these pre-Independence years, it was more as a strategy to stall Jinnah's attempt to include Assam in his Pakistan. That is why, once the Muslim-majority district of Sylhet voted for Pakistan and the threat to Assam finally receded, the demand for *Swadhin Asom* also died down, at least for the time being. It would surface once again some forty years later. But this time it would be backed by an adequate infrastructure in the form of an armed organization which would build its thesis on the "colonial exploitation" of Assam and the north-eastern region by the "Indian government" and which would attempt at a coordination of the different insurgent outfits of the region, thus posing a major challenge to the Indian State.

It was actually Assam Congress's fight to defend the interests of the province which largely neutralized the efforts of the separatist forces. The fight which state's Congress under Gopinath Bardoloi's leadership put up against the whole range of central Congress leaders, won the confidence of the masses who seemed to feel at that time that the destiny of the province was safe in the former's hands. What is important is that Congress party in Assam itself had harboured strong autonomous sentiments right from the beginning and many of its leaders were not averse to the idea of a *Swadhin Asom*. This, despite the fact that they supported at every step the policies and programmes of the all-India leadership. These autonomist tendencies became very clear during the Constituent Assembly debates on Centre-State relations. Even prior to this, Bardoloi, in his discussions with the Cabinet Mission, had wanted the Centre's powers to be restricted to defence, foreign relations and special emergency powers together with the right to tax for these purposes. Residuary powers, he insisted, should belong to the states. He demanded the "fullest possible autonomy" for the province so that Assam could "utilise its resources in its own interest" (*Transfer of Power*, 77-8). Almost all the members from Assam demanded at the Constituent Assembly that the Central List should not be made unduly long and that the powers of the states should not be reduced. Kuladhar Chaila warned the Assembly that curtailing the powers of the states would have a "disintegrating effect" and "the provinces will try to

break away from you” (*Constituent Assembly Debates*, VIII, 919). There was a strong unified demand by the Assam members that the rights of the Assamese people be protected through Constitutional safeguards and the economic exploitation of the province by the Centre be stopped. (These points were to come up again in the Assam Accord which was signed between the All Assam Students’ Union and the Central Government on August 15, 1985.) In asking for safeguards to protect the Assamese from socio-political and economic exploitation by outsiders, Omeo Kumar Das demanded that the provinces be given the right to legislate on “migration” and “naturalization” which should be placed in the Concurrent List and not just in the Central List. This was because of justifiable fears of being swamped by influx from neighbouring East Pakistan (Phukan, 84-5). On the question of residuary powers, the members from Assam were unanimous in their view that such powers should be vested in the provinces and not with the Centre. They were also sharply critical of the Union Parliament’s overriding powers regarding subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List, as it was felt that the Union Government should not interfere with the legislative powers of the provincial governments. “We do not want any provincial power to be limited by any Fundamental Rights or any of its powers to be taken by the Union of India”, said the Khasi leader, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy. He insisted that the power to amend the provincial law must reside with the provincial government.

Assam did not want the Union Parliament to extend its jurisdiction over the State legislature. Article 3 of the Draft Constitution which empowered the Union Parliament to redraw state boundaries was looked upon with suspicion and was strongly opposed by the Assam members who saw in this the seeds of the balkanization of the province. Article 131 relating to the appointment of state governors by the Centre was also strongly resisted. This was seen as a negation of state autonomy. (Phukan, 93). (The partisan role played by some of the Governors in post-Independence India clearly proved that the fears of the Assam members about the misuse of Governor’s powers were justified). Insisting on an elected Governor, Rohini Kumar Choudhury asked: “How can you expect that the governor who is selected by the Congress party will act in harmony with the ministry of the province, the premier of which belongs to another party?” (Phukan, 96). On the questions related to the sharing of financial powers between the Centre and the states, members from Assam repeatedly stressed the need for economic independence and greater control over the state’s resources.

But once the fight to keep the residual powers with the states was lost and the rights over mineral resources going to the Centre, Bardoloi insisted

that the percentage of share should be high enough to meet the needs of a economically backward state like Assam (Barooah: 1990, 40). During the discussion on Article 253 (Art 272 of the final draft) relating to the sharing of Union duties of excise among the states and the centre, Rohini Kumar Choudhury moved an amendment which wanted that seventy five per cent of the excise duties on tea should accrue to the state producing it. In his intervention, Bardoloi had proposed that the petroleum and kerosene producing states should get seventy five per cent of the excise duties collected by the Union Government. The drafting committee did not accept the amendments though they were supported by members from Orissa and Uttar Pradesh (Barooah: 1990, 40). Bardoloi's plea for Assam to be treated as a special case in view of the colonial pattern of extractive exploitation which the state had been subjected to by the British, found little support from the central leadership of the Congress. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy told the House: "If the excise and export duties on tea and petroleum are allotted to us which give about eight crores annually from Assam alone to the coffers of the Government of India, we shall have enough resources to finance our development schemes all round" (*Constituent Assembly Debates*: VII, 227). Another member, Omeo Kumar Das declared: "My province, Assam, has been the source of contribution to the central exchequer to the extent of nearly rupees eight crore annually in the shape of excise and export duty on tea and petrol. But the subvention that was given to Assam was only rupees thirty lakh. I do not find any change in the outlook today" (*Constituent Assembly Debates*: V, 95). Summing up the attitude towards Assam displayed by the Central leaders, Nirode Barooah says:

By not recognizing Assam as a special case of underdevelopment in the draft Article 255 and by failing to allot to it shares of export and excise duties on tea and petroleum in the draft Articles 254 and 253(2) respectively, the authors of the Draft Constitution left Assam practically on the same situation as it had been under the Government of India Act of 1935. . . . As far as Assam was concerned, it failed, even after the imperialist era, to exercise enough economic and financial independence. The Oil Fields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948, for example, empowered the Central Government to fix royalty for Assam which continued to remain negligible. . . . even Bardoloi's earlier grievances which he had raised with the Cabinet Mission concerning tea-tax revenue were not redressed. The revenue continued to go to the West Bengal exchequer since the tea companies had—and still have—their offices in Calcutta, where they filed their income tax returns. With such built-in maladjustments and disparity between the Centre and the State on the one hand and between two neighbouring states on the other, the joint ventures with the other states, as had been envisaged by the Bardoloi group, could

hardly be realized. It is small wonder that after seeing the draft Constitution, Bardoloi contemplated resignation as the Chief Minister of Assam" (Barooah: 1990, 49).

Assam lost its fight in the Constituent Assembly to secure greater financial and political autonomy for the provinces. But the issues related primarily to Centre-State relations which were raised in the debates were to assume important dimensions in the years to come. The sharp differences which marked Assam's relationship with the Centre on matters ranging from financial aid to refugees and influx in the immediate post-Independence years would, in the decades to follow, manifest themselves in new forms of protest culminating in the rise of militant separatism symbolized by the United Liberation Front of Assam in the nineteen eighties.

NOTES

1. Article 2 of the treaty which states that the king of Ava renounces all claims to the "principality of Assam and its dependencies" has been interpreted in certain circles as British acceptance of the return to status quo, that is Ahom rule over Assam.
2. The Moamarias were largely peasants, initially belonging to the Moran tribe of upper Assam who followed the teachings of Aniruddhadeva, (1553-1624) who preached a neo-Vaishnavism which questioned the authority of the upper caste "Gosains" and "Mahantas" of the "satras" or Vaishnava monasteries which were very influential in Assam. The Moamarias did not worship idols or acknowledge the supremacy of the Brahmins or upper castes. The relatively democratic way of life upheld by the Mayamara Satra attracted people from different segments of society who owed allegiance to their guru above everything else. Soon the Moamarias fell out with the Ahom rulers who ruthlessly persecuted their religious heads. The struggle of the Moamarias became one against the feudal structure of Ahom rule and with it began a series of civil wars which eventually accelerated the downfall of the Ahom monarchy. S.K. Bhuyan comments: "The Moamarias were all disciples of one Satra or its few branches; but they belonged to separate tribes and communities, Morans, Chutias, Kacharis, Bihias, Ahoms, Kaivartas and Britials; and many caste Hindus, Brahmans, Kayasthas and Kalitas were found among the Moamarias." (Bhuyan: 1974, 254). Amalendu Guha sees the Moamaria Revolt as a class struggle, with the temporal and spiritual lords ranged on one side and the peasantry and the unconsolidated trader and artisan elements on the other (Guha: 1991, 129).
3. "The adult population of Assam was divided into "khels" having to render specific service to the state, such as arrow-making, boat-building, boat-

plying, house-building, provision-supplying, fighting, writing, revenue collecting, road-building, catching and training of elephants, superintendence of horses, training of hawks and supervision of forests. Each "khel" was like a guild to which lands were allotted for cultivation by the constituent members, free of rent in return for the service they rendered to the state. The strength of a "khel" varied from 3000 to 100. Each "khel" was placed under a Phukan if it was an important one and of a Rajkhowa or Barua if it was of less importance. . . . An adult male whose name was registered for state service was called a "paik" and four "paiks" constituted a unit called a "got" (S K Bhuyan: 1974, 10-11). In times of war and other emergencies the "paiks" were mobilized by the officers in charge of the "khels". The standing army at the capital was usually a poor one. S.K. Bhuyan finds striking similarities between the "khel" system of the Ahoms and the "mansabdari" system of the Moghuls.

4. The Barkandazes came from the cashiered soldiers of the Moslem armies or troops disbanded by the zamindars. Giving the impression that they were *sanyasians* and *fakirs*, these bandits ravaged the countryside. Many zamindars used to keep barkandazes for their protection. These mercenary freebooters often carried out plundering raids into Assam. In 1780 Warren Hastings had assured the Assam king of help against the barkandazes in the Goalpara region. The Darrang King Krishnanarayan's army was made up largely of the barkandazes.
5. The old revenue system of Assam depended on the work put in for the state, in lieu of tax for their cultivable land, by every adult male for three to four months in a year. During peacetime the paiks, who were known as "kari-paiks" ("kar"=arrow), built roads, bridges and repaired tanks etc. A "kari-paik" was exempted from personal service if he was given an official position or if his name was transferred to one of the many groups of artisans, weavers, smiths, gold-gatherers, brass-workers and the like. The latter were known as "chamua-paiks" and in lieu of tax they provided items to the royal household and the public stores.
6. Maniram Dutta Baruah (Maniram Dewan) had, in the initial years of Company's rule in Assam, been of great help to the British. He came into contact with David Scott while he was staying as a fugitive in Bengal's Rangpur district during the Burmese occupation of Assam. He entered Assam alongwith Scott's army and was actively involved in the anti-Burmese campaigns. Maniram was made the Sheristadar-Tahsildar of upper Assam in 1828 and he successfully re-organized the "khels" so that revenues picked up. He did not have any sympathy for the uprisings by the Khamtis and the Singphos or the revolt by Peali Phukan. Rather, he helped the British in suppressing these. He was made a Dewan of the Assam Company in 1839. When upper Assam was taken over by the British after Purandhar Singha failed to pay the promised annual tribute of Rs. 50,000, Maniram was deprived of much of his powers and eventually all the "mauzas" under

him were taken away. He resigned from the Dewanship in 1845 and opened two tea gardens despite obstruction from the British administration which refused to give him land at concessional rates as was given to European planters under waste land regulations. Deprived of power and privilege, it was but natural that Maniram Dewan thought of restoring the Ahom rule. The British were obviously apprehensive about Maniram's actions because they were acquainted with his depth of intellect and his capacity to organize things. Maniram was arrested for his alleged conspiracy to restore the Ahom prince during the Revolt of 1857. He was executed on February 26, 1858. His tea gardens were confiscated by the British after his death.

7. The "Raj Mels" were people's assemblies usually led by the influential sections of the village population such as the "dolois", the gosseins and the large landowners. Popular grievances were ventilated at these "mels" or assemblies during the early phases of the Company's rule in Assam. But, later on these "mels" became focal points of resistance to the new taxes which were imposed by the British. Guha refers to an Assamese proverb which says "the people are (your) sovereign and the clan, your Ganga" ("*raije raja, jnativei ganga*") and says that the word "raj mel" was more than what we usually understand by a village panchayat.
8. Although the British monetised the economy and Assam became a part of the economic structure of British India, Assamese society continued to nourish its strong semi-tribal, semi-feudal base. While neither the bourgeoisie nor the landlord class evolved during British rule, the ground however was laid for the emergence of the Assamese middle classes. This class was not largely alienated from land and because of this it acquired a strength and confidence quite uncharacteristic of it. Unlike in states like Bihar or Uttar Pradesh where peasant-landlord relationships have been marked by intense feudal exploitation, the Assamese peasantry, all the struggle and hardships notwithstanding, has been relatively spared from being at the mercy of big landlords. The Assamese middle class's strong cultural links with the peasantry have given the peasant-middle class base of Assamese society a distinct character (U. Misra, "The Assam Movement and the Assamese National Question" in B.L. Abbi, 1984).
9. In this context Benedict Anderson's definition of nationalism as an "imagined community" appears significant.
10. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan (1829-59) was educated at Guwahati and at Calcutta's Hindu College and became Sub-Assistant Commissioner in 1850. He was deeply influenced by the leading figures of the Bengal Renaissance and was a member of the Bethune Society. A friend and admirer of the Baptist missionaries in Assam, Anandaram used to write regularly for the first Assamese journal, *Orunodoi*. He submitted a memorandum to Moffatt-Mills asking for the restoration of the rightful place of the Assamese language and for the abolition of the British government's policy on opium. It was

largely through his efforts that Assamese was restored to its rightful place in 1873.

11. The Wasteland Rules of March 1838 were framed to help the British tea planters acquire large tracts of land at very nominal revenue rates. Wastelands were leased out for forty-five years on the condition that at least one-fourth of the area must be cleared within five years. One fourth of the land was totally revenue free. Taking advantage of the regulation, British planters acquired more land than they actually needed. Later on, the rules were revised to extend the lease period to 99 years. The rules had been framed in such a manner that non-Europeans could not avail themselves of the opportunities offered.
12. Kanaklal Barua (1872-1940) was a Law graduate and became Extra Assistant Commissioner in 1900. He was elected a member of the Assam Legislative Council and became Minister for Local Self-Government. Barua was actively associated with historical research of the region and was president of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti. He was a member of the Indian Historical Records Commission.
13. Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya (1855-1936) was the editor of the journal *Assam Hitaishi*. He was actively involved in the National movement and was known for his radical views.
14. Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1864-1938) belonged to a family of personal physicians to the Ahom king. He had his education in Guwahati and Calcutta and took up timber business in Orissa. Easily the most prolific and influential Assamese writer of the modern period Bezbaroa is known as the "Sahityarathi". Apart from his literary output which included novels, plays, short stories and satiric pieces, Bezbaroa was known for his relentless flight to establish Assamese language and literature in its own right. He was engaged in a long literary debate with those who had refused to accept Assamese as an independent language with a rich literary tradition of its own. His emphasis on traditional Vaishanava faith propagated by Sankardeva was part of his struggle. He married the grand-daughter of Devendranath Tagore, Prajnasundari Devi.
15. In Assam the "Jatiya Sangeet", *O'Mor Apunar Desh*, is usually sung at the beginning of social functions. The National anthem is sung at the conclusion. But on most occasions, it is the Jatiya Sangeet alone that is sung.
16. Ambikagiri Raychoudhury (1885-1967) received his early education at Sibsagar and Guwahati. He joined the Anarchist group in 1904 and was interned at Barpeta. He edited the *Chetana* from 1918. Was jailed for a year for his participation in the Non-cooperation Movement. He was a front-ranking writer in Assamese and was posthumously awarded the Sahitya Akademi prize for his volume of poems "Bedanar Ulka".
17. Abdul Hamid Khan, better known as Maulana Bhasani, was born in a peasant family of East Bengal. He was involved in the Khilafat and Non-

cooperation Movements and finally emerged as a leader of the Muslim peasants of East Bengal where he organized them to fight against the zamindars. Soon he became influential among the Bengali Muslim immigrants in Assam and was elected a member of the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1937. Bhasani led the immigrant Muslims in a movement against the Line System in Assam and demanded that belts and blocks reserved for the tribals be opened up for occupation. As the president of the provincial Muslim League, Bhasani had, with the support of Muslim leaders in Bengal, planned a series of marches in lower Assam in February 1947 against the Line System but the move fizzled out when the possibility of Assam being included in East Pakistan receded.

18. In the 1931 Census Report, C.S. Mullan observed: "probably the most important event in the province during the last twenty-five years—an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1820, the whole culture and civilization—has been the invasion of a vast horde of Bengali immigrants, mostly from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular from Mymensingh. This invasion began before 1911, and the census reports (which) made mention of the advancing host. . . by 1921 the first corps had passed into Assam and had practically conquered the district of Goalpara". Though Mullan's observations have been termed by some social scientists as mischievous, yet the rise in Muslim population was spectacular. Amalendu Guha refers to these figures and says that the Muslim population in the Brahmaputra Valley had increased from 9 per cent in 1881 to 19 per cent in 1931 and 23 per cent in 1941. In 1911 Muslims made up 0. 1 per cent of the population of Barpeta subdivision; but by 1941 they constituted nearly 49 per cent.
19. The 1991 Census has shown that while the Muslim population of India increased by 40.2 million or 65.47 per cent over that of 1971. In Assam the increase has been by 77.42 per cent. The Muslims now form a majority in the Dhubri (70. 46%) Goalpara (50.42%), Barpeta (56.07%) and Hailakandi (55.42%). If the current trend of increase continues, Muslims would be a majority in the districts of Marigaon, Nagaon and Karimganj by AD 2001.
20. The Cabinet Mission Plan provided for division of the different provinces into three Sections: A, B, and C. Section C was to consist of Bengal and Assam. The Provinces were free to form Groups with executives and legislatures, and each Group could determine the Provincial subjects to be taken in common. In Section C, Assam would have had 7 general members and 3 Muslim members, whereas Bengal would have had 27 general members and 33 Muslim members.
21. Saiyid Muhammad Saadulla headed, in all, five different ministries in Assam during the period April 1937 to February 1946. An Assamese Muslim, Saadulla is seen as being largely responsible for the large-scale entry and settlement of Bengali Muslim immigrants from East Bengal. His policy of

“Grow More Food” during the war years was seen as a policy of “Grow more Muslims” by Wavell. In just one year 1939-40 the Saadulla Government settled Bengali Muslim immigrants on one lakh bighas of land in the Brahmaputra Valley. He joined the Muslim League in 1937 and supported the Grouping under the Cabinet Mission plan. Even Saadula had at a particular point to oppose Bhasani’s move to throw open the reserved belts to immigrant Muslims.

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The Quest for *Swadhin Asom*: Conflicts and Contradictions

The dropping of the Cabinet Mission proposals and the subsequent separation of the Muslim-majority district of Sylhet by a referendum¹ set at rest, for the time being, Assamese fears of losing their identity. The role played by Gopinath Bardoloi and the members from both the hills and plains of Assam in foiling the attempts of Jinnah and the Muslim League to include Assam in Pakistan, gave a new-found sense of confidence to the people of the region. But the views expressed by the Assam members in the Constituent Assembly foretold the trend of events that was to follow. As mentioned earlier, the struggle in Assam against the Grouping Scheme had been led by the Congress, actively supported by several other political groups. It has also been discussed how this struggle helped to strengthen the centrifugal forces by marginalising the forces advocating a sovereign Assam. But, on several major issues, the central Congress leadership under Nehru and Patel displayed a degree of nonchalance and insensitivity which would, in the years to follow, contribute substantially to the alienation of the Assamese people from New Delhi.

The first major difference of opinion between Assam and the Centre occurred over the question of settling the refugees from newly-created East Pakistan in the state. A steady stream of Hindu refugees had been flowing into Assam ever since the Partition and, the Assam Government, despite severe financial constraints, was doing its best to provide land and shelter to the uprooted. Of about twenty lakh refugees who entered India during 1947-1950, undivided Assam had to give shelter to some three lakhs. But when the state government expressed its unwillingness to continue settling refugees without limit, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Bardoloi in May 1949 that Assam was getting a bad name for its narrow approach to the problem and continued: "You say there is no further land available in Assam. This is a question of fact which can easily be determined. It is patent, however, that if land is not available in Assam, it is still less available in the rest of India." Nehru, in the same letter, threatened the Assam Chief

Minister in no uncertain terms that if his state did not agree to accept the unending stream of refugees from East Pakistan and settle them on its land, then the Centre would cut off financial aid to Assam. Stating that the refugee problem was one of the problems given first priority by the Indian Government, Nehru concluded by saying that "if Assam adopts an attitude of incapacity to help solve the refugee problem, then the claims of Assam for financial help (would) obviously suffer (Barooah: 1990, 30-1). Bardoloi drew Nehru's attention to the pressure on cultivable land in Assam and stated that as against the 25,000 acres fit for reclamation, there were already some 1.86 lakhs of landless Assamese peasant families whom the government had to settle. Refuting the allegation that the Assam Government was soft towards the Muslim immigrants but resisted the Bengali Hindu refugees, Bardoloi reminded Nehru of Assam's struggle against the Grouping Scheme and how at that time Nehru and several of his colleagues in the Congress had been uncharitable towards Assam. In reply to Nehru's threat of economically strangling Assam, Gopinath Bardoloi wrote:

I feel extremely hurt when you say that the claims of Assam for financial help would suffer for our incapacity to help solving the refugee problem. . . It will be quite easy to throttle the province of its existence by withholding the necessary help for its life and growth; but I hope it will not be done — not surely on the plea of our failure to solve this particular problem. . . . I am sure that if we are unable to do more, it is entirely due to the non-development of the province. A more developed province today might have helped better in solving the problem (Barooah, 32).

Finding Bordoloi's stand quite tough and unyielding, the Centre tried with the idea of settling the refugees on railway land which belonged to the Central Government. When the Assam Government objected to this on the rather facile plea that the railway employees were by and large of communist sympathies and if settled on railway land the refugees too would be influenced on those lines, Nehru wrote to Bordoloi: "It means that we should not employ Bengalis anywhere in India, as communism might spread because Bengalis might be presumed to be communists. . . . If Assam wants to follow a narrow provincial policy excluding others, there are bound to be reactions against Assam in other parts of India. It will be difficult for the Central Government to have any major scheme in Assam" (Barooah, 33).

Nehru's prejudices and fears regarding the Assamese Congress leadership which were strengthened when he heard of the demand for

dual citizenship from parties like the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha of Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, were expressed succinctly in a letter to the Chief Minister: "I suppose one of these days we might be asked for the independence of Assam". He repeated his earlier threat that this would mean "that Assam will have to be left out of consideration in our general schemes of progress" (Barooah, 33). It is to the credit of Gopinath Bardoloi that he did not wince at Nehru's words; rather, he let the Prime Minister know in clear terms that Assam would not accept unfounded allegations. Bardoloi wrote to Nehru: "You have done the people of Assam wrong in assuming that the people of Assam want dual citizenship. . . . If some crank ventilate, through press and literature, any fad of his, the blame should neither go to the people of Assam nor to the government. I could understand your bitterness about it if any responsible person had made such statement or supported it. But as it is, I am afraid, we are giving undue importance to anybody who makes a statement or sends a telegram" (Bardoloi to Nehru, Shillong 24 August 1949 quoted by Barooah, 33). The "crank" referred to here seemed to be Ambikagiri Roychoudhury who was tirelessly advocating dual citizenship and autonomy for Assam. Clearly accusing Nehru of harbouring certain built-in prejudices against the Assamese people which had been duly strengthened by the Bengali Press, Bardoloi expressed his dismay at the exaggerated and false propaganda against the Assamese which are easily swallowed by the men in authority at the Centre. This, despite the fact that the Bengalis in Assam were having a large share of offices and contracts of the government (Barooah, 34).

Nehru's outbursts against Bardoloi and the Congress government in Assam just after Independence amply reveal the degree of New Delhi's authoritarian attitude towards the states of the Indian Union. As it was, Nehru was not too happy with the Assam Congress leaders having successfully won over Gandhi to their side on the question of Grouping, totally bypassing stalwarts like Nehru, Patel and Azad. And now, with Bardoloi refusing to toe the Central line, it was natural for Nehru to resort to threats. Nehru's intolerance and near-total refusal to see the Assamese viewpoint would mark Assam-Centre relations in the years to follow and would contribute in no small measure towards widening the gap between Assam and the rest of the country.

The differences between the Centre and Assam further sharpened over the question of unchecked illegal migration into Assam from East Pakistan. Right from the days of the Muslim League ministries under Saadulla, the opening up of the reserve belts to Muslim immigrants had been a major issue in Assam politics. Though immediately after independence some

fifty thousand immigrant Muslims were said to have left the state, tens of thousands more kept coming over the years. It was against this background that the Assam Government demanded strong measures from the Centre which included the introduction of a permit system for Assam. When Bardoloi raised this matter in his meeting with the Prime Minister in July 1948, Nehru tried to shirk the issue by saying that it could be discussed at the Inter-Dominion Conference (Barooah, 52). The more Bardoloi drew the attention of the Central leadership to the grave dangers posed by illegal infiltration from East Pakistan into Assam, the more thick-skinned the latter appeared to be. Obviously, Nehru and Patel were afraid of antagonizing the West Bengal leadership by putting restrictions on the movement of migrants into Assam. The West Bengal Government was opposed to the permit system on the ground that such a step would push the Hindu refugees towards West Bengal. As if it was Assam's solemn duty to accommodate not only the refugees but also the illegal migrants.

West Bengal's reaction to the refugee or immigrant influx into Assam was on predictable lines and was in no way different from the position adopted by the previous Muslim League ministry of undivided Bengal. For, it was only a few years before Independence, in 1944, that the Muslim League government of Bengal had issued a communique opposing the Assam Government's decision to prohibit the occupation of land by immigrants from East Bengal who had entered the state after 1st January, 1938. The communique read thus: "The Government of Assam in their resolution dated 21 June 1940 prohibited the settlement of land with persons coming from outside the province after 1 January, 1938. This decision affected the border districts like Mymensingh from where large number of agriculturists go to Assam in search of agricultural land on account of heavy pressure on such lands in this province. During the last session of the Bengal Legislative Council a motion was carried for presenting an address to His Excellency requesting him to urge upon the Government of India to take immediate steps so that all existing restrictions imposed by the Government of Assam on cultivators from their province in getting settlement of land in the Assam Valley might be removed. Accordingly, the Government of Bengal requested the Government of Assam to withdraw or suspend the restrictions imposed by the said resolution in the interest of inter-provincial amity and as a measure of relief to the distressed people of Bengal. The Bengal Government communique further stated that in response to its request, the Assam Government had agreed to liberalise its policy regarding the settlement of lands by immigrants and that "they are trying their level best to accelerate the process of dereserving surplus

lands in the professional grazing reserves in certain districts” (Rajendra Prasad, 245-6).

Assam was then ruled by the Muslim League ministry headed by Saadulla. The same policy was now being followed in free India by West Bengal which was putting pressure on the Centre not to accede to Assam’s request for strong and effective measures to stop the flow of immigrants into the state. Nehru was not alone in adopting a totally partisan stand on the question of settling the refugees in Assam. Sardar Patel, who otherwise seemed perturbed by the continued influx of immigrants into Assam from East Pakistan, made clear his disapproval of the Assam Government’s move to first settle landless indigenous peasants on surplus waste lands, to be followed by tea garden labourers. It wanted to give the third priority to the refugees in matter of land settlement. Patel wanted the surplus waste land to be distributed on a fifty-fifty basis between the Assamese landless and the refugees and was clearly upset when the Assam Revenue Minister, Bishnuram Medhi refused to be impressed. In a letter to Bardoloi, Patel condemned Medhi as a narrow and parochial person who did not wish to give any land to the “outsiders” (Barooah, 36-7). When Patel and Nehru were accusing Assam of not harbouring enough refugees, the state had already taken in some two and a half to three lakhs of displaced persons from East Pakistan. But, instead of appreciating Assam’s position, Patel wrote a sharp letter to Bardoloi in July 1950 saying that instead of falling a prey to local prejudices, he should appreciate the difficulties of the Centre on the question of the refugees (Barooah, 37). Nirode Barooah points out how, even in matters like the appointment of the Chief Secretary of the state, central leaders of the stature of Nehru and Patel consistently interfered and tried to plant men of their choice in Assam. It was such interference in the functioning of government and gross insensitivity and prejudice towards the state that initially sowed the seeds of discord which ultimately flowered into secessionist demands in the nineteen seventies.

When Nehru was threatening to cut off financial aid to the state, Assam was going through a grave economic crisis. The partition of the country had cut off Assam from the rest of India² and turned it into a completely land locked province. Assam’s natural outlet was through Bengal and as early as 1904 Dibrugarh in upper Assam had been connected by rail to Chittagong port through which much of the initial trade in tea was carried on. The creation of East Pakistan severely upset the economy of the hill districts of Assam which had for ages depended on their trade with the plains of Sylhet. Almost overnight the prosperous economy of the border areas came to a standstill, with the border being closed and check-posts

being erected. In the absence of a market, produce from the border areas perished unused and there was acute shortage of essential commodities (Bhagabati: 1991, 3-4).³ Nehru himself in a letter to the Chief Ministers of the different provinces had referred to the difficulties faced by the people of the Assam hills because of the snapping of trade links with former East Bengal (*Nehru Letters*, vol I, 1947-8, 1984, New Delhi). The river system of the state which had been so well developed by the British and on which depended a large part of the tea and coal sectors, was disrupted with Partition. The same was true of the railway system which connected the upper Assam tea, coal and oil belt with both Chittagong and Calcutta. Added to the grave economic crisis was the communal situation in lower Assam where riots had forced some fifty thousand Muslims to flee their homes. But, instead of trying to help the Assam Government face these problems, the Central leadership seemed hell-bent on browbeating the state on the refugee issue. The seeds of separatist movements which would overtake the state in the years to follow lay embedded in the policies and prejudices of the Central Congress leadership towards Assam. Nehru seemed to harbour certain suspicions regarding Bardoloi and his team of Congressmen who had defied the central Congress leadership on the Cabinet Mission Plan and who he felt would not have stopped short of a struggle for an independent Assam if the need arose. Moreover, Bardoloi who had great regard for Nehru, did not mince words when it came to defending the interests of his state. This might have been unpalatable for the Prime Minister.

The refusal on the part of the Centre to extend special financial assistance to Assam to overcome its economic backwardness which had been largely contributed to by the highly extractive nature of the tea, coal and petroleum industries under the British,⁴ compounded with the economic crisis arising out of Partition pushed the Bordoloi government to an unenviable position. To make matters even more difficult, the Revolutionary Communist party was leading a peasant resistance movement in parts of the state, while the C.P.I. was organizing strikes in the industrial sector, though its call for a railway strike in March 1949 did not evoke much response. Although writers and intellectuals of the stature of Jyotiprasad Agarwalla⁵ and Bishnuprasad Rabha⁶ were involved in politico-cultural movements led by the communists and leftists at that time, yet the general mood in the state was in favour of the Congress. This also meant that the centripetal forces were quite strong. The writings of both Jyotiprasad and Rabha, though advocating a radical change in society, provided the ideological impetus to Assam's relationship with the Indian Union. The

common feeling at that time seemed to be that the economic crisis the state was facing was part of the post-Independence blues and the Congress under Bardoloi's able leadership would soon be able to put things together. But, with Bardoloi's death in August 1950 and the passing on of the leadership to Bishnuram Medhi, the overall situation in the state gradually began to change.

Medhi possessed neither Bardoloi's stature nor his perspective and his manner of functioning failed to create a favourable lobby for Assam in New Delhi or bring together the different nationalities of undivided Assam to put up a joint constitutional fight against the Centre's colonial attitude. Meanwhile, the migration from East Pakistan continued and the number of Bengali Hindu refugees in the state increased from two lakhs and seventy three thousand in 1951 to six lakhs and twenty eight thousand in 1961 (*Census of India 1961* Vol 3, Part III C 218; *Census of India 1951* Vol. 12, Part I-A, Report, 32-3). The rate of growth of Assam's population during the period 1951-1961 was 34.9% as against the all-India average of 24.6%. In the next decade, 1961-71, the population in the age-group of 15 to 59 years which normally constitutes the work force, increased by some 20.59 lakhs or 41% (S. Baruah: 1983, 32-3). The number of job seekers went up from 29.5 thousand in 1961 to 93.8 thousand in 1971. Thus, as the unemployment figures rose, dissatisfaction also grew at a fast pace primarily among the Assamese middle class (the middle classes of the other ethnic groups were to follow suit) which started questioning the Centre's policies towards this resource-rich state.

Medhi, who had soon after Independence, stated that his government was bent on nationalizing the tea industry in Assam, found it almost impossible to convince the Central leaders about the urgent need to develop the industrial infrastructure of his state. As a result, popular anger at what had now come to be termed the stepmotherly treatment of Assam, mounted and found its first expression in the movement for the first oil refinery in Assam which occurred in 1957, exactly seven years after Bardoloi's death. The agitation for the setting up of the first oil refinery in the public sector in Assam⁷ was the first populist movement since Independence and was supported by all the political parties of the state. It was co-ordinated by an all-party Sangram Parishad which succeeded in mobilizing the masses particularly in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Assam Congress, keeping in line with the popular mood, made it plain to the Centre that it was opposed to the setting up of a refinery at Barauni in Bihar which would run on Assam crude carried over hundreds of kilometres of pipeline from the upper Assam oilfields. Nehru cited defence reasons for not setting up the

refinery in Assam. In a letter to the Assam Chief Minister, he made clear his disapproval of the Assam Congress's opposition to the Barauni refinery and stated that the Defence Ministry cited reasons of national security to have the refinery in Bihar. The Assam Chief Minister, Medhi wrote back to Nehru: "If Defence cannot undertake to protect the refinery located in Assam, how will they protect the oil-fields and the transport system in the Eastern Region". He further stated: "We feel that the proper course is not to think of protection of the refinery separately from the oil fields and the transport system, but to treat the refinery, oil fields and the lines of transport as parts of an integrated defence system in national interest". Bishnuram Medhi reflected the mood of the people of his state when he raised the poser to the central government thus: "In that case we do not understand how Defence will be able to protect the pipeline to Baruauni, 140 miles of which will necessarily have to pass along the Pakistan border. We do not understand how the pipeline would be more defensible than the railways system as a good bit of it will have to pass at a distance of only 20 miles from the border" (Hazarika, 250). Though faced with a concerted public demand, the Centre did not revise its earlier decision of setting up a 3.30 million tonnes annual capacity refinery at Barauni. However, as a small concession to Assam, a toy refinery with a capacity of 0.85 million tonnes was set up at Guwahati. Much damage had already been done to Assam's relationship with the Centre. The feeling continued to grow among the people of the state that the Centre would not concede even their most legitimate rights without a fight (Appendix VIII).

Medhi was succeeded by the more astute and acceptable Bimalaprasad Chaliha. But his government's move to make Assamese the official language of the state created wide-scale dissension among the tribals and the Bengalis and paved the way for the break-up of Assam. While for the Assamese, the adoption of their language as the official language of the state seemed to be a necessary logical step towards safeguarding their identity and culture, the non-Assamese tribals were beset by the fear of being Assamised. Bengali reaction, both in Assam and in West Bengal, to the official Language Bill contributed to the worsening of relations between the two communities and, following the death of an Assamese student in police firing at Guwahati, wide-scale riots broke out in parts of lower Assam. These were the first riots centered around the issue of language in the state. But apart from the communal violence which attended the language movement in 1960, the significant fact which emerged was the role played by the Assamese student community and the premier Assamese literary organization, the Asom Sahitya Sabha. The Sabha had been pressing for

the adoption of Assamese as the sole official language of the state and its observance of "State Language Day" in September 1959 virtually set the stage for the language movement. The Sahitya Sabha-student combine would, in the coming years, play a dominant role in furthering the cause of Assamese linguistic nationalism as was evidenced in the agitation for Medium of instruction in 1972⁸ and, finally in the Assam Movement on the foreigners' issue in 1979-1985. Student-intellectual led populist movements would dominate the Assam scene in the decades to follow.

The sixties were indeed turbulent years for Assam. Close on the heels of the language agitation which nearly wrecked the socio-cultural fabric of Assam, came the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962. The rout of the Indian forces and the virtual withdrawal of the army from Assam, followed by the "farewell address" of Pandit Nehru contributed a lot to the emerging centrifugal forces in the state.* Today, separatist ideologues constantly refer to the abandoning of Assam to the advancing Chinese forces by the Indian government as proof that the Centre considers Assam and the northeastern region merely as its colony (Parag Das, 48-9). The average citizen of Assam felt let down by the Centre's attitude and memories were revived of the Grouping days when Assam almost went to Pakistan. The credibility of the Indian Government was mightily eroded. But, despite such feelings, the overall atmosphere in Assam was in favour of India and against the Chinese. Defence Committees manned by students and the public sprang up overnight and aid was offered to the retreating soldiers. Leading Assamese poet-singers like Bhupen Hazarika eulogized the sacrifice of the Indian jawan in highly popular songs (U. Misra, 1991). The people of the state contributed liberally to the Defence of India Fund. The feeling of being let down endured nevertheless and would soon find violent expression in yet another upsurge of nationalistic feeling—this time in the form of attacks on Marwari business houses in Guwahati and other towns of Assam in January 1968. The events of January 1968 were preceded by a state-wide agitation against rising prices and scarcity of foodstuffs in 1966-67, which too was primarily run by the students, though several left parties took an active role.

Meanwhile, the Mizo revolt led by Laldenga which started in February 1966 with the capture of the leading towns of the then Mizo Hills district of

*Even as the advancing Chinese troops captured the Arunachal town of Bomdila in November, 1962 and were poised to enter the plains of Assam without any resistance from the Indian troops, Nehru in a broadcast to the nation over All India Radio, virtually abandoned Assam and the northeastern region to the Chinese.

Assam by the Mizo National Front, added much to the woes of the state government. There was talk that New Delhi was seriously considering the re-organization of Assam on a federal basis. The Assamese students once again started an agitation against the re-organization of the state. Prime Minister Nehru's statement at Jorhat on December 28, 1967, that regions which wanted to separate from Assam would eventually be allowed to do so, further stoked the fires of agitation in the Brahmaputra Valley. The popular sentiment against the re-organization of Assam was chiefly based on Assamese perceptions that those regions which did not have an Assamese-speaking population and which territorially belonged to Assam, were part of the greater Assamese fraternity. But, the reality was quite different. The Assamese of the Brahmaputra Valley rarely thought it necessary to take into consideration the views of these non-Assamese areas while mounting agitations on issues which directly affected all sections of the people of the state. For the Assamese middle class, Assam has, for all practical purposes, meant only the Brahmaputra Valley. This was adequately reflected, for example, during the movement for the setting up of the first university in Assam. The proposal to have the university at Shillong which was then the capital of Assam and which had a relatively good educational network, was not acceptable to the Assamese elite who mounted an agitation and finally got the university established at Guwahati. Guwahati perhaps was the better site for the university; but the opposition to Shillong was built up primarily because for most Assamese, it was not really a part of Assam. The role of the Assamese residents in Shillong, most of whom manned the government offices in the capital, was mostly that of migrants living in a foreign land.

Discussing the contradictory pulls in the Assamese mind, Myron Weiner says: "Behind the rhetoric and the political moves and countermoves, clearly lay two divergent conceptions of what constitutes an appropriate social contract to guide the Assamese and the non-Assamese in the state. The Assamese have been torn between two conflicting objectives. One has been to make Assam the land of the Assamese, in which the Assamese language and culture would play the same dominant role that Bengali language and culture play in West Bengal, Tamil language and culture in Tamil Nadu, and the other regional languages in their own states, and so to reject the notion that Assam is a 'miniature India', 'a patchwork quilt' of a variety of civilizations. The second objective was to retain control over all those territories that the British had historically annexed to Assam, even though some of these are areas in which the non-Assamese predominate" (Weiner, 121). Thus, the more the Assamese asserted their

cultural identity and pressed the case for the Assamese language throughout undivided Assam, the greater grew the apprehensions among the non-Assamese sections about being swamped by the largest linguistic group of the province. Yet the Assamese middle class seemed to believe that they would be able to further the cause of the Assamese language and culture and at the same time keep the territorial integrity of Assam intact. Keeping this as its objective, the Asom Federal Birodhi Karma Parishad (Assam Anti-Federation Action Council) called for a state-wide strike on January 24, 1968, which was followed by a call to boycott the Republic Day celebrations two days later. It was during this boycott that large-scale disturbances broke out in Guwahati where the business establishments owned by the Marwari and other communities were burnt and looted by irate student-youth mobs. In the process, several Assamese and Bengali business establishments were also targetted (Chattopadhyay, 62). The anger against the Marwari business community seemed to have been in continuation of passions released during the state-wide food agitation of 1966-7 which was led by the opposition parties and the student bodies of Assam and which had touched all parts of Assam from the Barak Valley to the hill districts.

The 1968 attacks in Guwahati were carried out under the banner of the newly-formed "Lachit Sena", named after the legendary Ahom general of the seventeenth century. Though much was made of the Lachit Sena in the Bengal press, in actuality it was a loose organization of some Assamese youths who had initially come together under the banner of a newly formed student body called the All Assam Independent Students Association. It was primarily a paper organization which tried to push forward the idea of "Assam for the Assamese" through wall posterings and leaflets. The disturbances at Guwahati and the suburbs died down almost as quickly as they had erupted and the Lachit Sena too went out of existence. Nevertheless, the January 1968 events were a pointer to a more co-ordinated action by the students and youth of Assam on questions of autonomy and self-rule that were to follow in the years to come.

That the anger against New Delhi was taking on new channels could be gauged from the fact that at a public meeting held in Guwahati by the students on the occasion of "Unity Day" to oppose the proposed re-organization of the state, several speakers, perhaps for the first time in post-Independence Assam, openly called for Assam's separation from India (Parag Das 50). The growing feeling of alienation among the youth of Assam and their demand that the state should duly benefit from its rich natural resources were the motivating factors of the mass movement for a

second oil refinery which engulfed Assam in 1969. The support base of this movement, which was actively participated in by left parties like the CPI, was much wider than the previous ones and it seemed to be a sort of dress rehearsal for the Assam Movement of 1979-85. The convenors of the All Assam Oil Refinery Sangram Parishad were Biswa Goswami, Socialist leader (later Janata MP from Assam), Promode Gogoi, CPI leader (several times MLA and leader of the CPI legislative group) and businessman and youth leader B.L. Hansaria. Though an all Assam students body had been formed in 1967, the well-knit All Assam Students' Union was yet to take shape.⁹ But the students rallied to the call of the Sangram Parishad, led by their respective college and school unions.

Thousands of people from the Brahmaputra Valley took to the streets to vent their anger against the Centre's lackadaisical attitude towards Assam and demanded speedy industrialization of the state. The regional press too took up the cudgels and highlighted the Centre's exploitation of Assam. The colonial thesis was being raised seriously for the first time. Barely ten years later, yet another Sangram Parishad would be formed¹⁰ to launch an unprecedented mass movement on the issue of foreign infiltration into Assam. This would be preceded by a state-wide agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union in 1974 on the issue of the economic development of the state. It is significant that during this agitation although the influx issue had been mentioned in the charter of demands, the chief thrust was on compelling the central and state governments to speed up the industrialization of the state and fight unemployment. The release of political prisoners was high on the demand list. Interestingly, this was the period when a section of the AASU leadership had come under the influence of radical left ideas and the Naxalite hold on Assam's student-youth movement seemed to be gaining ground. The increasing pressure on land and jobs would ultimately find expression in the anti-foreigner upsurge when the Indian State would be held accountable not only for colonially exploiting Assam and the northeastern region but also for abdicating its role in defending the sovereignty of the country. The question would naturally arise, if the Indian State could not defend its own borders from foreign influx then what was the point in continuing as a constituent part of the Indian Union?

The Assam Movement of 1979-85 has thrown up a considerable amount of literature which has tried to analyse its course, content and character as well as the factors contributing to it.¹¹ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into the details of this movement which may easily be termed as one of the greatest mass upheavals in the history of post-Independence India.

Nevertheless, one could highlight some of the causes leading up to it. While the problem of continued influx and the ever-growing pressure on land coupled with the fear of the Assamese losing their socio-political identity seemed to be the immediate motivating factors of the movement, it was in actuality a popular outburst against decades of economic neglect of the state by the Central government. It is significant that the immediate popular movement which preceded the Assam Movement was the one led by the AASU on the issue of economic backwardness of the state. There was great paucity of productive capital in the state and its annual growth rate during 1970-80 was a mere 0.4 per cent compared to the all-India average of 1.43 per cent. The number of the unemployed was rising at a phenomenal rate during the period 1971-80, applicants on the live register of the Employment Exchange increasing by as much as 270 per cent. During the same period the educated unemployed increased by 343 per cent. Of the total number of job seekers (3.5 lakh) in December 1980, as many as one and a half lakh were post-matriculates and ITI and engineering diploma holders. Compared to this, the job sector in the state government was virtually stagnant, while the public sector undertakings under the Central Government were known for their discriminatory attitude in the matter of appointment of local candidates, particularly the Assamese and tribals (Baruah, 1983). In fact, the Employment Review Committee of the Assam Legislative Assembly in its First Report stated that "a feeling has been growing that the managements in charge of industrial establishments show discriminatory attitude towards local applicants in the matter of employment, though they have equal qualifications as others. Such feeling spreads poisonous seeds for creating further tensions. Very often, the storm or earthquake is preceded by stillness in the atmosphere. But it is dangerous to be deceived by such stillness. Violent outburst would nullify the objective of national integration for which India had taken up planned development. We want that any Indian should be able to live in any other State with dignity and honour, as much as we want that the sons of the soil of the State are not deprived of the benefits due to them". (*Employment Review Committee First Report*, 1970, p. 3). These were prophetic words indeed. Just before the report was published, the Assam Chief Minister, Bimalaprasad Chaliha, had written to the Union Minister for Railways expressing grave dissatisfaction at the unsympathetic attitude of the railway authorities towards the legitimate claims of the local youths (Baruah, 35).

The Assam Assembly members were evidently aware of the growing sense of alienation amongst the Assamese youth as revealed in the

different agitations and the outburst on Republic Day in early 1968. But, apart from expressing their concern, the state government did little to improve the situation. For, the Employment Review Committee of the Assam Assembly in its Sixth Report revealed that “till the time of collecting the last phase of data of 21 February, 1976, the NF Railway headquarters at Maligaon had in all 4,474 employees of whom nearly two-thirds (59 per cent) had their birthplaces outside Assam. Of the Total number of employees only 1,830 accounting for 41 per cent had their birthplaces in Assam” (*Report of ERC 1976*, p. 17). The same report states that of those employees who had recorded their birthplace as outside Assam, 57 per cent were from former East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh) and 22 per cent from West Bengal. Of the employees within the Class I to Class IV categories, only 28 per cent had Assamese as their mother-tongue (T. Misra, 1980). This was only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. For, the situation in the state’s tea, oil, coal and plywood sectors was even worse. The realization seemed to be dawning in the seventies that despite the state’s flourishing tea, petroleum and plywood industries, to name only three, there seemed to be little positive impact on the economy of the state. The tea industry which had grown up with unduly large concessions from the British rulers¹² had done almost nothing for the welfare of the people of Assam (Borgohain, 64). Enormous profits earned by the British and Indian tea companies were invariably channelized outside the state and even in the matter of sales tax, Assam got only about half the amount secured by West Bengal by virtue of the head offices of most of the large tea companies being in Calcutta. For example, according to a report published in *The Assam Tribune* of June 15-16, 1980, Assam that year got only Rs. 22 crores as sales tax on tea produced in the state whereas West Bengal got Rs. 42 crores. Similarly, on plywood extracted from the state, Assam got only Rs. 35 lakhs whereas the Centre got Rs. 80 crores (T. Misra, 1980). A quick survey of profits made by the tea gardens in Assam in the years prior to the Assam movement shows that the 175 Agency House gardens which had foreign capital involved, stated gross profits from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 12 crores. In 1976 on the eve of the Assam Movement, the gross profits of the Duncan Agro-Industries Limited were Rs. 4.69 crores while that of Tata-Finlay and Macneill-Magor were Rs. 12.24 crores and Rs. 7.93 crores respectively (Borgohain, 64; T. Misra, 1990).

The transfer of ownership of tea gardens from British to Indian hands meant no difference for the economy of the state and the new Indian owners brought people from outside to man the managerial posts. The Fifth Report of the *Employment Review Committee of the Assam Assembly*

stated that 82 per cent of the managerial posts in Assam tea gardens were held by persons from outside the state (*ERC Report*, 1976, 162). Not only were most of the head offices of the tea companies situated in Calcutta (the situation has not changed till date, but the state was denied a Tea Auction Centre till recently and the main office of the Tea Board, the highest authority of the tea industry, continued to be in Calcutta. This, despite the fact that the 756 tea gardens of Assam produced 55 per cent of the country's tea and earned an annual foreign exchange of some five hundred crores (T. Misra, 1980). During the period 1962-1976, Assam was producing on an average 250 million kilograms of tea per year. Given the international price of tea at 2.5 dollars per kilogram, the total amount would come to some 5, 250 million dollars (P. Das, 62). But the tea industry's role in the state still remains predominantly colonial, with not even marginal investments being made to develop the economic infrastructure of the region. Even areas immediately surrounding the highly profitable tea estates continue to live in medieval darkness, while tea's almost totally Indianised managerial staff flaunt a life style reminiscent of the colonial days. In short, there seems to be much gist in the allegation that the tea industry in Assam is part of the overall colonial exploitation of the state by big industry and the Centre.

The state's public sector petroleum industry too did not have the sort of impact it should have had in the economy of Assam. Though the private sector oil industry at Digboi in upper Assam is over a hundred years old, the public sector in this field expanded sharply from the late 1960s. Up to 1962 the production of Assam crude was some 0.1 million tonnes on an average per year. But the discovery of oil in several areas in upper Assam in the late sixties pushed up the crude production figure to an average of 3.5 million tonnes a year. From the seventies onwards the production figures have touched five million tonnes per year. But the royalty paid by the Centre for Assam crude on the eve of the popular upsurge of 1979 was a mere Rs. 42 per tonne. It was only in the mid-eighties that the royalty rate was revised at Rs. 325 per tonne of crude and subsequently to Rs. 578 per tonne. In its memorandum to the Centre in 1979, the Assam Government demanded that the proprietors of the non-replenishable crude oil should be adequately compensated and the royalty rates effectively raised. It wanted the rates to be fixed at 20 per cent of the posted price of equivalent Middle East crude in India (T. Misra, 1980). It was pointed out to the Centre that even in the matter of sales tax on Assam crude, the state got only Rs. 54 per tonne, whereas the Centre got Rs. 991 per tonne. As New Delhi refused to listen to the state government's pleas for revision of royalty on

crude, the feeling strengthened among the people that the Centre was merely bent on exploiting the resources of the region without in the least being worried over Assam's ever-deteriorating economic situation. Even in the matter of kerosene produced in the Assam refineries, the sales tax amounting to several crores till 1979 went to West Bengal because the marketing division of this product was situated at Siliguri, the kerosene from the Assam refineries being carried there by one of the world's longest pipelines. In the matter of natural gas, of which Assam has an estimated reserve of some 60 billion cubic metres, the Centre displayed an even worse sort of indifference. Over 50 million cubic feet of natural gas are flared up daily in the oilfields of Assam, whereas its proper utilization would have turned the state into one of the richest areas of the country in the matter of power generation and the production of various industrial goods like different types of rubber, plastics, nylon, polyester fibres, paints and dyes, lacquer, pesticides and a variety of other chemicals (T. Misra, 1980). With a little bit of positive involvement in the economy of the state, both the tea and the oil sectors could have contributed substantially towards improving the overall condition of the people of the region, thereby keeping the growth of secessionist ideas in check. However, these two sectors would desperately try to remedy the situation only after a movement for full-scale secession had taken shape in the state.

Added to the growing feeling of colonial exploitation was the problem of ever-increasing influx and the consequent pressure on land. There has been a lot of jugglery over influx figures in the state, with interested forces either exaggerating or underplaying the crisis caused by such influx. Influx from the eastern parts of Bengal had been a common phenomenon in the early decades of this century, with the migrants adding to the growth of the state's economy by opening up difficult waste tracts and riverine belts for cultivation. But as immigrant pressure on the reserved tribal belts and blocks and the grazing areas increased, Assamese public opinion swiftly veered against immigration. The British government introduced the Line System in 1920 to restrict the immigrants who were mostly Bengali Muslims, to certain areas. According to the 1951 Census, the number of settlers had risen from three lakhs in 1921 to over five lakhs in 1931. Attempts by Assamese members to bring in legislation to prevent the further settlement of immigrants met with little success in the nineteen twenties and during 1930-36 as many as 59 grazing, forest and village reserves were thrown open in Nowgong district alone to the immigrants under the Colonization Scheme.¹³ Amalendu Guha writes: "Out of the district's total occupied area of 5,41,160 acres—sown and fallow—in 1936, 2,04,078 acres or 37.7 per

cent were under the immigrants' occupation, as against 62.3 per cent still in the hands of the indigenous people. The cultivable waste lands other than fallow in the district amounted to more than 1.4 million acres. . . . The land-hungry Muslim immigrants, segregated and pitted against all odds, never appreciated the Assamese point of view. If all men were equal in the eyes of Allah, why should thousand of acres of land remain waste, particularly when men in search of a livelihood and lebensraum were available to turn them into smiling fields? . . . They wanted the Line System to go" (Guha, 209-10).

Till March 1933 in Nowgong district alone 47,636 acres of land had been given to 441 Hindu and 1,619 immigrant Muslim families. Thus, Mullan was neither motivated nor wrong when he declared in the 1931 Census Report: "Probably the most important event in the province during the last twenty-five years—an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1830 the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization—has been the invasion of a vast horde of land hungry Bengali immigrants, mostly Muslims from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular from Mymensingh" (*1931 Census Report*, 51). Mullan also predicted that in thirty years the Assamese would be reduced to a minority throughout the state except in the district of Sibsagar. Mullan's argument has been sought to be nullified by citing figures which show that over the years the Assamese-speaking population has remained more or less constant and, hence, there is no tangible threat to the Assamese identity (Guha, 212-3; Hussain 206-7). It has been shown that the adoption of the Assamese language by the Muslims from East Bengal, and later on Bangladesh, had ensured the position of Assamese as the official language of the state and given it a clear majority over other languages. While it is true that the assimilation of a section of the Bengali Muslims into the Assamese nationality as *Na-Asamiyas* (neo-Assamese) has kept the figure of Assamese speakers steady, yet substantial changes in Assamese culture and civilization because of this demographic change cannot be ruled out. We shall have occasion to discuss this in the concluding chapter. Mullan's prediction was based on two assumptions, (a) that the influx of Bengali Muslims would turn the Assamese into a minority in most of the districts within a span of thirty years, and (b) that the Bengali Muslims would continue to retain their identity in Assam. The first part of his prediction would perhaps have come true in fifty, if not in thirty, years had the partition of the country not taken place and the district of Sylhet not incorporated into Pakistan. The creation of Pakistan stemmed the tide of Bengali Muslims

for a period, while bringing in lakhs of Bengali Hindus into the state.

That the Bengali Muslims started returning Assamese as their mother tongue is a trend which developed after Independence when they knew that their very survival depended on their identification with the Assamese community (it was only later that they became aware of their political rights in an independent secular country). Those who see the Na-Asamiyas as an integral part of the Assamese community, which they no doubt are, should also not overlook the socio-cultural and religious differences which exist between these two groups. It would be simplistic to conclude that the cordiality and warmth which marked the relationship between the large majority of Assamese Hindus and the rather small Assamese Muslim community would be repeated in the case of the Assamese Hindus and the Na-Asamiya Muslims. The latter constituting some 28 per cent of the population of the state would also be prone to functioning as a separate socio-political force in the state, just as the Assamese Hindus who have been providing the major taproots of Assamese culture and society, would be increasingly burdened by the fear of being outnumbered in their homeland. This is clearly revealed in the opposite positions adopted by Assamese and neo-Assamese organizations on the sensitive question of influx of foreigners (mainly Bengali Muslims and Hindus) into the state. Although the neo-Assamese Muslims claim they are an integral part of the Assamese nationality (and this feeling is shared by most of the leading Assamese intellectuals and political leaders), yet they are not as exercised over the question of Muslim infiltration into Assam as are the indigenous Assamese and the tribal communities. History bears out that while the latter have all along asked for measures to stop immigration (before 1947) and infiltration (after 1947), the former has been involved in the struggle to open up more and more reserved belts and blocks for new settlers from East Bengal, East Pakistan and then Bangladesh.

In the urgency to prove that the Assamese language speakers are still in a confident majority, the land question has often been overlooked. The alienation from their land would invariably turn the indigenous Assamese and the tribals against all immigrants who would be seen as encroachers and as threats to one's identity. The struggle against the Line System took on a new ferocity under the leadership of Maulana Bhasani during Syed Saadula's tenure as the Chief Minister of Assam. Though the roots of immigration into Assam decidedly lay in the British policy of colonization, yet it was only in the thirties that the struggle for cultivable land in Assam took on a new shape. Under pressure from the immigrants as well as from the West Bengal Government and also with the intention of increasing the

Muslim population of the state, the fourth Saadula ministry (August 1942-March 1945) adopted land settlement measures which were aimed at the dereservation of select grazing reserves in the Nowgong district and the opening up of the professional grazing reserves in Kamrup and Darrang districts. It also decided to open up surplus reserves in Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts with the ostensible aim of settling landless indigenous people. These measures were taken against the express advice of S.P. Desai, the Special Officer appointed by the Assam Government to ascertain whether surplus land was available for settlement. Desai had stated that grazing reserves had already been forcibly occupied by the immigrants even in predominantly Assamese and tribal areas (Guha, 281). The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, aptly described the new settlement under the slogan "Grow more Food" as one aimed at growing more Muslims. In a meeting held in April 1944 at Barpeta in lower Assam, immigrants under Bhasani's leadership demanded that the Saadula Ministry give them more land or resign. It was at this meeting that Saadula charged the headmen of the immigrant villages of manipulating land deeds for seventy to hundred acres of land and even driving out the Assamese and the tribals from newly reclaimed lands. Saadula interestingly drew a parallel between the Muslim immigration into Assam and the unrestricted Jewish immigration into the Arab homeland. But, the immigrant peasants were not impressed by Saadula's arguments. At a meeting held in Guwahati in January 1945 under Bhasani's chairmanship, they demanded the abolition of the Line System (Guha: 285-6).

Discussing the impact of migration on land use, Myron Weiner says: "The impact of these Muslim migrants on land use in Assam has been considerable. Between 1930 and 1950, some 1,508,000 acres, mostly in the Brahmaputra Valley, were settled by migrants" (Weiner, 98). Weiner has shown how Assam's population growing at the All-India rate between 1901 and 1971, should have been some 7.6 million in 1971, whereas in actuality it stood at 15 million, making a difference of 7.4 million which must have been filled up by immigrants (Weiner, 81). He says: "If we accept the 1891 census estimate that one-fourth of the population of the Brahmaputra Valley was then of migrant origin, we can estimate that the migrant population (and its descendants) in 1971 was more likely 8.5 million, as against an 'indigenous' population of 6.5 million". Between 1961 and 1971 Assam's population grew at the rate of 34.5 per cent whereas the growth rate of the country was 24.6 per cent. It is however difficult to accept that the difference in projected and real population of the state was filled up by immigrants (both Muslims and Hindus) from East Pakistan or

Bangladesh alone. But, Sanjoy Hazarika convincingly refers to an article by a Bangladesh demographer¹⁴ to show that between 1961 and 1974 there was an outflow of some 1.5 Million migrants into Assam, some one lakh ten thousand migrants annually. Hazarika uses the demographer's figures to say that Assam has some seven million people more in 1991 than it should actually have had, if the growth rate of the 1950s was adhered to (Hazarika, 30-1).

Migration figures have naturally given rise to a lot of controversy in Assam, with some scholars trying to prove that the immigration of both Hindus and Muslims into Assam has not brought about any major demographic change in the state (Hussain, 243). Without entering into the debate on immigration figures, it may be concluded that the percentage of migrants in Assam's population has been quite a substantial one, with the number of Bengali Hindu refugees in the state numbering some 6.5 lakhs in 1961 and Bengali Muslim immigrants constituting several times that number. The Bangladesh Liberation War brought some ten million refugees into Assam, of which one million stayed back (Franda, 109-17). However much one tries to play down the threat posed to Assam's demographic balance by continued immigration from Bangladesh, the fact emerges that such migration is part of Bangladesh's policy of trying to find a *lebensraum*¹⁵ for its people. This has resulted in great pressure on cultivable land in Assam and this has been one of the leading factors contributing to ethnic tension. Just before the outbreak of the Assam Movement too, the land factor had assumed disturbing proportions with the indigenous Assamese and the tribals being increasingly alienated from their land. Because of the high rate of population growth and the occupation of vast tracts of land by the immigrants over a period of some seventy-five years, during the years 1961-71 the size of per capita agricultural holdings in Assam declined by 26 per cent against the national average of 16.7 per cent during the same decade (P. Sarmah, 70).

Immigration has affected the average size of ownership holdings in Assam which are about 1.26 hectares. Moreover, the number of landless peasants in the state has gone up spectacularly, the percentage of households owning no land being 27.77, amongst the highest in the country. According to Parameswar Sarma, there was practically no problem of landlessness in pre-1947 Assam and the radical transformation in the land holding pattern occurred in less than a decade and a half after Independence (Sarma, 70-1). Pointing to rising growth rate of density of population per 100 hectares of land under food crops as an indicator of mounting demographic pressure, Sarma says: "For the period 1961-71, as estimated

by Dr. K. Alam of Gauhati University this rate was 74 per cent for Assam, against 32 per cent for the country as a whole. This rate incidentally is the highest among the neighbouring states" (P. Sarma, 71). Along with the growing pressure on cultivable land, the forest area of the state was also being continuously being depleted because of encroachments by immigrants. The forest land was reduced from 38.32 per cent to 28.07 per cent between 1950 and 1973. Assam lost as much as 41.5 per cent of her forest land during 1951-1971 (Kumar, 49). Commenting on the growing sub-nationalist movements in Assam and the north-eastern region, M.S. Prabhakara says: "However, the present ferment among the hill and plains tribes appears to be related more fundamentally to the grievances that they, the truly indigenous people of the state, nurse as a consequence of large-scale alienation of their homelands and the failure of successive governments to mitigate the grievances in any way. On the contrary, the leaders of the tribal people argue that the governments have actively connived in the process. . . . The land question in Assam is extremely complicated and even more than the "ethnic" dimension and the "threat to identity" it was the land question which invested the Assam agitation with a measure of legitimacy. Vast areas of the state have for years been settled upon and cultivated by people who have no formal claims on the land. Further, the area of land under revenue lease has remained virtually static" (Prabhakara, 1987). Thus, uneven development bordering on colonial pattern of exploitation coupled with pressure on land and jobs could be said to be some of the prime motivating factors behind the Assam Movement.

It was but natural that in course of time the students' demands for economic development of the state would be shifted to the foreign migrants who were seen as the chief factor contributing to the present state of affairs. The immediate cause was the apprehension in the Assamese mind that the migrants, particularly the immigrant Muslims, constituting easily the largest vote-bank of the state, were about to emerge as a viable political entity. The long-built Assamese fear of being outnumbered and outvoted in their homeland found voice in the statements of the Chief Election Commissioner on the immigration issue. Sakhder expressed serious concern at the fact that foreign nationals constituted a sizeable proportion of the voters of the state and urged upon the Union Home Ministry to issue identity cards to the genuine voters of the state. But the Chief Election Commissioner's warning cut little ice with the central leaders who continued to display the arrogance and insensitivity that one had come to associate with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru.¹⁶ The final stage for the Assam Movement

on the foreigners' issue was set in mid-1979 with the updating of the rolls for the Parliamentary bye-election to the Mangoldoi constituency caused by the death of a sitting member. In the process the tribunal set up by the state government declared as many as 45,000 voters in an electorate of 6 lakhs to be foreigners. The foreign infiltrant had finally emerged as a major electoral factor in the state's politics. The All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad composed of several regional parties, the Asom Sahitya Sabha and the All Assam Students' Union, was formed at Dibrugarh on the initiative of the AASU in August 1979. Within three months the Assam Movement had begun.

We have already stated that it is beyond the scope of this exercise to go into the course of the Assam Movement. However, it would be relevant to point out some of its salient features which could help us understand the demand for *Swadhin Asom* which gained ground even as the realization dawned amongst a section of the youth that despite the massive involvement of the people, nothing really tangible was gained by them. Though reservations have been expressed by social analysts and scholars about the democratic content of the Assam movement,¹⁷ yet given the scale of people's participation in it, it must be said that there was a great degree of national content in it. Had it not been for its wide popular base, the movement would not have been able to sustain itself against such severe state repression for five long years. The Assamese middle class no doubt played the leading role in the agitation; but its success was ensured because of the strong degree of support it received from the rural masses, both Assamese and tribal. The "civil disobedience" programmes, the "janata curfews", the oil blockade and finally, the boycott of the 1983 polls would not have been possible if the rural population of Assam had not overwhelmingly responded to the call of the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad. A strong emotional content notwithstanding, for the majority of the Assamese this was the last fight to ensure their identity and culture. Although the AASU leaders consistently maintained that theirs was a struggle to save Assam today so as to save India tomorrow, yet there were trends within the movement which seemed to espouse the cause of an independent Assam. The Jatiyatabadi Dal and the Asom Yuvak Samaj as well as the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad were known to harbour secessionist feelings and the demand for a sovereign, independent Assam free from the "colonial clutches" of New Delhi, often surfaced in posters and leaflets. The feeling of having been continuously let down by the Centre on issues ranging from industrialization to influx and jobs, would be finding new channels even before the Assam movement had run its full course. As the

agitation against the foreign nationals took steam, the colonial thesis also started gaining ground and comparisons began to be made in the regional press between West Pakistan's treatment of its eastern wing and New Delhi's treatment of Assam and the north-eastern region. The stage, therefore, was gradually being prepared for the emergence of a political group which would eventually demand a sovereign Assam in order to put an end to the "colonial" exploitation of the region. The Indian State's reliance on blatantly coercive measures to suppress the Assam Movement, particularly the State violence perpetrated during the controversial elections of 1983 in which at least one hundred and thirty persons lost their lives in police firings and other forms of State violence (N. Sarmah, 147-55) succeeded in alienating the Assamese and also a large section of the plains tribals from the Indian "mainstream". By the time the Assam Accord was signed in August 1985, people's confidence in the Centre had been thoroughly shaken and the vacuum created in the political scene by the virtual nullifying of the Congress which had ruled the state almost uninterruptedly since 1947, was now sought to be filled in by forces which propagated separation from India through armed struggle.

Though it is commonly assumed that the United Liberation Front of Asom was a consequence of the Assam Movement, yet actually the ULFA was formed on April 7, 1979, some two months before the All Assam Students' Union observed its first 12-hours state-wide strike on June 8, 1979, to protest against continued infiltration of foreign nationals into the state and their only too easy inclusion into the voters rolls. Several of the founding members of the ULFA belonged to the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad and had close links with the All Assam Students' Union. The ULFA leaders actively participated in the anti-foreigner stir and the first Chairman of the organization, Bhadreswar Gohain, later on became a Deputy Speaker of the Assam Assembly as a Asom Gana Parishad nominee. The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) unlike the AASU, has all along been a semi-militant organization with many of its members having been known to hold popular Marxist as well as Assamese nationalist views. Formed in March 1978, the AJYCP quickly made its mark in the political scenario of the state because of its good organizational network and a band of dedicated workers. The organization, which shuns parliamentary politics, declared that its objective was to build "communism on a nationalist base" and secure for the people of Assam dual citizenship and the right of self-determination. (AJYCP, *Istahar*; 6). Terming the Indian Constitution as a tool in the hands of those who seek to continue a sort of neo-colonial rule in the country, the AJYCP asserts that only full self-rule

would give the state's control over their natural resources and put an end to their being colonially exploited by the Centre (*Istahar*, 21-2). The AJYCP is one of the few organizations of its type which has a land policy aimed at bringing succour to the state's landless peasantry constituting 30 per cent of the total population and acknowledges the rights of the tribal nationalities whose aspirations, it feels, should be met within a proper federal set-up having constitutional safeguards. Though not in any sense a communist organization, the AJYCP stresses the need for an egalitarian social set-up where nationalism and communist ideas would form its guiding principles (U. Misra: 1988, 149-50).

The AJYCP roots of the ULFA should help one in understanding the latter's emphasis on "scientific socialism" from time to time—something which has been picked up by social scientists and journalists to give the ULFA a Marxist or Communist veneer, while in reality it is a militaristic outfit. Just like the AJYCP, the ULFA too is said to be attempting a blend of Maoism and Assamese nationalism (Gupta, 1990). For instance, the CPI (M-L) leader, Vinod Mishra has said that ULFA's "faith on Mao's thought has led them to provide a new turn to the erstwhile Assam movement, a left turn indeed, doing away with its anti-communist, anti-left communal bias of the early 80's" (Vinod Mishra, 12). Thus, parties like the CPI (M-L) have tried to project ULFA as a "representative organization of the Assamese people" which has taken "Mao's ideology as its prime weapon in its fight against the all-India supra-national forces" (Barman, 16).

There is always the danger of simplification in arriving at such conclusions without trying to understand the inner workings of organizations like the ULFA. The fact, however, is often overlooked that right from its inception, the ULFA maintained close links with the AASU and the AGP, occasional differences notwithstanding, and during the first few years most of the ULFA recruits were drawn from the ranks of the AASU. Though today the ULFA seems to have moved away from its original plank of Assamese nationalism to a position where it speaks for the "people of Assam" yet its main appeal springs from the idea of some form of regional nationalism where all those who have made Assam their home would be bound together by a kind of overall Assamese ethos. In a revision of its earlier stand on "denationalization" of the different ethnic communities, the ULFA now extends its support to the struggle of the different ethnic minorities in the state and views such struggles as part of the greater struggle for an independent Assam. Its earlier position had been that for the sake of achieving its goal of independence, ethnic differences would have to be kept submerged so that the main emphasis could be given to the fight to end the colonial rule of New Delhi. In a clever

twist, it now tries to link up the colonial thesis with the present state of backwardness of the ethnic communities whose aspirations, it claims, are part of its broader struggle. An analysis of the structure and class character of the ULFA does not show it either as a communist or even radical Marxist organization, though it has been quite common for the insurgent groups of the northeastern region of the country to claim left credentials. The colonial thesis and the stress on armed struggle to achieve one's ends have quite often been factors which have led sections of the communist left in our country to conclude that such organizations share the Maoist-Marxist ideology. Referring to the ULFA's claims to scientific socialism, M.S. Prabhakara writes: "... characterizing itself as a party committed to 'scientific socialism', ULFA maintains that its aim of liberating Assam and making it independent is only the first stage of its two-stage revolution, the second and final stage being implementation of the principles of scientific socialism. The literature that is available from the organization suggests that it has a fairly simple notion of what scientific socialism is all about" (Prabhakara, 1990).

For the first five years of its existence, the ULFA maintained a low profile, concentrating chiefly on building up its organization, establishing foreign links as well as co-ordination with other militant groups of the region and trying to create a popular base by punishing bootleggers, profiteers and "anti-socials". Those who participated in the controversial polls of 1983 came in for special attack, this clearly being a measure to win over the support of the Assamese masses who viewed these elections as the ultimate treachery of the Centre towards Assam. But, as the need for funds to procure arms grew, the organization changed its tactics and the attack on a Guwahati bank in May 1985 was the first indication that the ULFA had emerged as a major presence in the socio-political scene of Assam. The next five years from 1985 to 1990 saw dozens of non-Assamese businessmen being gunned down for their refusal or inability to meet the militant outfit's demands. ULFA's targets at this time also included scores of Assamese politicians belonging mainly to the Congress (I).

According to official figures more than a hundred people were gunned down by ULFA during this period and the overwhelming majority of those killed being Assamese (Prabhakara, 1990). This was the period of the Asom Gana Parishad's rule and the ULFA took full advantage of its close links with the one-time AASU leaders (now with the AGP) to set up a parallel administration in many areas.

Throughout the Assam Movement the ULFA had not made its presence felt and during the Congress (I) rule headed by Hiteswar Saikia its only major "action" was the bank robbery at Guwahati. But, with the coming to

power of the AGP in December 1985 ULFA started spreading its network very fast and there is little doubt that in this it received a lot of direct and indirect support from the state government. Thus, in the process, the ULFA entered into a rather complex sort of relationship with the State authority. Many of the ULFA cadres were close to the Asom Gana Parishad and the latter could not help but patronise them. As a result, the AGP, during its first term in office, was not in a position to initiate tough measures against the ULFA. Since both the AGP and the ULFA drew their support from the same constituency, it was impossible for the AGP leadership to deal with the situation with impersonal firmness (Prabhakara, 1990). However, during the second term of the AGP government beginning 1996, the AGP's relationship with the ULFA underwent a major change, with the former making a conscious effort to disown its ULFA links and finally backing the military crackdown on the extremist outfit.

Taking full advantage of the AGP rule, the ULFA succeeded not only in penetrating into the state's bureaucracy at almost all levels, but also got its own men posted at the right spots in the police and intelligence network. It was only when the ULFA started targeting the influential tea lobby of the state that the Centre began taking grave note of the Assam situation. But, by the time Operation Bajrang was launched following the dismissal of the AGP government in November 1990, the ULFA had already collected several hundred crores from the tea garden managements in the state. Operation Bajrang was a failure because hours before it was launched, the ULFA leaders and cadres went underground, making full use of the mass contact programme which they had nourished over the years. But the discovery of the mass graves at the Lakhpathar camp of the ULFA sent shock waves throughout the state and ultimately contributed to the collapse of many a popular myth about the organization. It revealed a completely new face of the organization and led to a gradual erosion of support for it among the middle classes in particular. Earlier there has been instances when several of the state's leading intellectuals had gone to the extent of almost justifying the ULFA killings as necessary evils for a radical social change. Doubts came to be raised about the organizational structure and ideological commitment of the outfit when it embarked on a programme of abductions and killings of some of the technical staff associated with the state's oil and coal industries. The killing of the Russian engineer, Sergei Gritchenko and the ONGC engineer, T. Raju, drew wide-scale condemnation. Congress activists were also made the targets of ULFA attacks, along with district and police officials. Surprisingly, the ULFA adopted a neutral stance during the 1991 elections which brought Hiteswar

Saikia and the Congress (I) into power. But, it did try to use its influence in bridging the differences which had surfaced within the Asom Gana Parishad, thereby hoping that the return to power of a regional party would make matters smooth for it.

Operation Rhino launched by the Indian security forces in September 1991 proved to be a greater success from the government's point of view. Most of the ULFA bases within the state were busted, scores of cadres were killed and hundreds taken into custody. But the successes of the army were neutralized to a large extent by the excesses committed in the course of the operations. The ULFA was quick to capitalise on the anger and bitterness that was generated in the average Assamese villager by the army operation. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the Disturbed Areas Act gave the security forces blanket powers of search, arrest and detention, and the killing of ULFA cadres in false encounters came to be repeated with frightening regularity. The excesses committed by the State alienated it further from the people and its moral authority was severely eroded.¹⁸ The collapse of the moral authority of the State actually helped the proponents of *Swadhin Asom*. Though the Indian security forces were pitted in a difficult no-win situation in their effort to root out the ULFA, yet in the ULFA's rejection of the Indian Constitution was no justification for the State to adopt means which went beyond the legal and constitutional framework. Such action on the part of the State only helped to create conditions conducive to the secessionist forces. The "encounter" cases in which ULFA young men were picked up and killed in cold blood made the people grow more sympathetic to the cause upheld by the ULFA. Thus, by adopting counter-violence to tackle the insurgents, the Indian State is enfeebling itself because with each such extra-legal and extra-constitutional method it adopts, the insurgents stand to make strategic gains. Every death by torture in custody and every cold-blooded killing of an insurgent releases a surge of sympathy for the militants and proves at the same time that the Indian State is not strong enough to protect itself through constitutional and legal means. If the State continuously adopts the same means which it finds in the militants so objectionable, then it not only compromises its moral authority but also its political authority.

Thus, the Assamese middle class outrage at the ULFA killings of businessmen, "traitors" or "jati-drohis" and "anti-socials" (terms used to denote varying shades of opponents to ULFA's ideology and programmes) was gradually replaced by concern and sympathy for the "boys". The large turnouts at the funerals of ULFA cadres killed in "encounters" bore evidence to the fact that all its weaknesses notwithstanding, the

organization had succeeded in striking strong rural roots. For instance, at the funeral of ULFA leader, Hirakjyoti Mahanta who was shot dead after being captured in a house at Guwahati in January 1992, thousands of villagers turned up at a place near Nalbari as ULFA cadres fired shots in the air and reversed arms to bid farewell to their deputy commander-in-chief. The same pattern has been repeated on many other occasions. Even though the general public seemed to be aware of the luxurious life-style of some of the ULFA activists who had brought the five-star culture¹⁹ into the insurgent movements in the northeastern region (Hazarika, 175). Yet every single State killing released strong waves of sympathy for the organization. The common feeling seemed to be that the boys were not fighting for personal gain but for a greater patriotic cause—for an Assam free from exploitation, and *swadhin* if need be.

The idea of a *Swadhin Asom* was once again catching on especially in the rural areas, however unrealisable that goal might actually be. A section of the regional press frequently wrote on this theme. For instance, commenting on the surrender of a section of ULFA leaders in January 1992 and their virtual acceptance of a solution within the constitutional framework, the *Boodhbar*, an Assamese weekly known for espousing the ULFA cause, in its editorial titled, "Yes, We Are Still Talking About Independence", wrote:

As well wishers, we would like to say that the ULFA should not have thrust the idea of independence and armed struggle on the people of Assam if it itself did not possess the sense of sacrifice and the courage needed to face the Indian State. . . . Independence is not something which is to be begged from one's adversary. A subject, oppressed nationality secures its independence through struggle and not through entreaties. . . . We accept the fact that the majority of the people of Assam and particularly the opinion-moulding Assamese middle class are not yet prepared to accept the idea of an independent Assam. The baits offered by the Indian State to the urban middle class to maintain the status quo and the farce of elections which still misguide the masses stand in the way of a spontaneous upsurge of the people. . . . However, even with a reduced voice we shall keep the idea of struggle (for an independent Assam) alive with the hope that the day will arrive when the masses will come forward spontaneously to take part in that struggle [*Boodhbar*, Jan. 22, 1992, trans. author's].

The split in the ULFA in early 1992 led a section of it to give up the path of armed struggle and accept the Indian Constitution. ULFA's top-ranking leader and publicity secretary, Sunil Nath,²⁰ had written only a year before his quitting the organization that strict army discipline and modern weapons were the first priority in the struggle for independence although

there was much in the criticism that ULFA had neglected efforts to mobilize the people (*Boodhbar*, January 16, 1991). Yet in January 1992 he was among those who declared their disillusionment with the organization and instead of "swadhinata", talked of "swadhikar" of the Assamese people. Clearly the split in the ULFA led to one section within it to give up its claim of a *Swadhin Asom* and opt for full autonomy within the Indian Union. Although the ULFA Chairman, Arabindra Rajkhowa (actual name Rajib Raj Konwar is said to have written to the Prime Minister in December 1991 and January 1992 that his organization had agreed to (a) accept the Constitution of India for the resolution of the Assam problem, (b) to abjure violence, and (c) to deposit arms at an appropriate time mutually decided upon, yet he on pressure from his uncompromising "commander-in-chief", Paresh Barua, had backtracked when the talks with the Central Government leaders began. The talks failed although several of the ULFA's top leaders were involved in them. Though Arabindra Rajkhowa along with the ULFA vice-chairman Pradip Gogoi and general secretary Anup Chetia tried to impress upon the cadres the need for a negotiated settlement of the issue raised by the organization in the course of its armed struggle, it was Paresh Barua, who from his hideout in Bangladesh had the final say. Right from the beginning Barua was against any compromise on the question of *Swadhin Asom* and he finally succeeded in winning over the majority of the cadres to his viewpoint.

Those who had thought that ULFA had finally given up on its demand for an independent Assam were proved wrong. The failure of the talks between ULFA and New Delhi, despite the letters from the ULFA chairman, Arabindra Rajkhowa did not command the type of unquestioned authority which Laldenga had among the Mizo insurgents. Secondly, the physical absence of the ULFA chairman from the talks made it easier for him and the other leaders to backtrack (Prabhakara, 1992). But, the real cause for the failure of the talks seemed to lie in the fact that right from the beginning the ULFA was organized as a militaristic organization where the political wing occupied a subsidiary status. The talks were bound to fail because the "commander-in-chief" was opposed to them and he was in virtual control of ULFA's armoury as well as its district commanders. This naturally calls for a bit of analysis on the structure of the organization which would perhaps help us understand it better. Unlike the Naga National Council which spearheaded the Naga struggle during its initial years, the ULFA has right from the beginning been a militaristic organization. The political wing, if ever there was a clearly demarcated one, has never had much of a say in policy matters. This is in sharp contrast with other conventional

insurgent organizations where the political wing often has a greater weightage. It is interesting to note that the danger of the armed wing marginalising the political wing has been noticed in many an African State where armed insurgency has overthrown colonial rule. For example, in Guineau-Bisseau, the revolutionary leader, Amilcar Cabral made it a point to punish all those officers who tried to give the armed wing priority over the political wing, and he consistently warned his countrymen of the dangers of militarism. Cabral repeatedly emphasized that the struggle for national liberation was primarily a political and not a military struggle. Neera Chandoke says that Cabral was aware that "militarism led to grave abuses by the guerilla groups in areas where they had achieved military success. Military successes had led to personalized political power and this assumed dangerous proportions in liberated areas" (Chandhoke, 172). In organizations which were built on militaristic lines, there was bound to be a power struggle between those in command of the armed wing and those in charge of the political wing.

We have already discussed in the chapter on the Naga insurgency how the split in the NNC was preceded by the military wing within the underground gradually taking precedence over the political wing. In the ULFA too, its militaristic structure has stood in the way of inner-party democracy and has led to lack of proper co-ordination on policy matters between the different district and local units. There have been many instances of actions carried out by district and local units without the central committee being aware of it. Greater reliance on the gun than in winning over the confidence of the people often resulted in terror becoming "the accepted weapon for both helping to maintain obedience, secrecy and loyalty, and as the ultimate sanction against the deviant member" (Wilkinson, 55). The dominance of the armed wing and the district commanders has often led to ideological weaknesses which have been reflected in the organization's increasing alienation from the masses. Even after the first army operation ULFA ideologues insisted that military discipline and armed preparedness were of greater importance for the organization than mobilizing the masses (Nath, 1991). Though at one phase the ULFA did try to strike a rapport with the masses through certain welfare programmes carried out under its overground mass organization, the "Jatiya Unnayan Parishad", yet it soon retreated into its militaristic shell where secrecy, discipline and the unquestioning obedience to orders seemed to be the rule. This has often resulted in grave aberrations and the image of the outfit has greatly suffered as was the case when the mass graves were discovered at Lakhpathar by the Indian security forces during

operation Bajrang. This also partly explains why the ULFA's ideological positions on important issue are not known to the people.

During its initial years ULFA ideologues like Uddipta Hazarika (real name Rajen Sarma) and Sunil Nath had tried to communicate with the people on important issues through the columns of some regional papers. But the precedence of the armed wing must have marginalized the ideologues, some of whom eventually dropped out. Over-emphasis on the military aspect of the struggle often led to a lack of proper ideological orientation of the cadres and this shortcoming was adequately revealed when sections of those who had opted out of the organization ("surrendered ULFA" or Sulfa in common parlance) started collaborating with the agencies of the State in getting their former comrades gunned down (U. Misra: 1993, 135-6). A proper ideological orientation would have made this difficult. Commenting on the role played by the surrendered ULFA elements, the Sibsagar district committee of the ULFA observed: "Our one-time revolutionary comrades who have surrendered and are now busy picking up the crumbs from the State's table, have today joined forces with our enemies in order to carry out a fratricidal struggle. For paltry gains and having forgotten their commitment to the national freedom struggle, these elements are now engaged upon unleashing the worst forms of terror on their erstwhile comrades and on the innocent people. They are allowing themselves to be used by the Indian State" (*Boodhbar*, June 16, 1993). Another noticeable feature of the ULFA's manner of functioning has been that, at no stage of its struggle has it really tried to test the people's support for its actions. Unlike the Naga National Council which had carried out a "plebiscite" and a poll boycott to rest the people's will, the ULFA has devised no mechanism towards this end. Hence, its claim of support from the broad masses of the people of Assam remains to be substantiated.

Though certain political commentators have said that ULFA's links with Bangladesh have not evoked the sort of anger and opposition from the Assamese people as one might have expected (Prabhakara, 1992), there is reason to believe that military needs have compelled the outfit to shed much of its earlier intransigence towards foreigners and outsiders on Assam soil and adopt a position which would ensure support and sanctuary in Bangladesh. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the 15-page booklet issued in July 1992 which is addressed to "The people of Assam of East Bengal Origin". Tracing the roots of migration from East Bengal into Assam, the ULFA document states that the migrants had now become a major part of the national life of the state. At a particular section, the

document states: "When we refer to the Assamese, instead of meaning the Assamese-speaking people we actually mean the different inter-mixture of tribal nationalities—those who are committed towards working for the good of Assam. The mixture of nationalities that is the Assamese is, in reality, result of immigration. We consider the immigrants from East Bengal to be a major part of the national life of the people of Assam. Our freedom struggle can never be successful without these people. . . the masses who earn their living through hard physical labour can never be our enemies. All the labouring masses are our friends and the main motive force of our freedom revolt." (*Sanjukta Mukti Bahini, Asom, Prachar Patra*, July 1992 trans author's). Another portion of the document runs thus: "The contribution of the people of East Bengal origin in Assam towards increasing the state's economic output is indeed noteworthy. It is this community which produces the state's vegetables, mustard, sesame and 82 per cent of the total jute. This is the main group of peasants who can produce plenty out of small areas of land." The document further states: "We would like to state here for everybody's information that the movement led by the All Assam Students' Union and the Gana Sangram Parishad from 1979 to 1985 is viewed by the ULFA as one based on emotion" (*Prachar Patra*, July 1992 translation author's). Yet another significant point made by the document is that English would be the link language of *Swadhin Asom*, thereby nullifying almost a century of struggle to give the Assamese language its legitimate place in the state (Prabhakara, Sept. 8, 1992).

The All Assam Students Union was naturally quick to criticise the ULFA as working against the interests of the Assamese people. It declared the document as a plan to reduce the Assamese to a minority in their own state (Hazarika, 233). There is no doubt that ULFA's position vis-a-vis the immigrants made it difficult for AASU and the other regional parties to keep insisting on cut-off dates for the deletion of names from voters' lists and the deportation of post-1971 immigrants. In its document the ULFA's position regarding immigration is stated thus: ". . . we would like to make it clear that the ULFA is against any immigration from Bangladesh or any other country to Assam because such immigration often hinders the struggle for national liberation. . . . We appeal to the people of Assam to put up a common fight along with the people of the 'char' (riverine) areas against the continuing influx into the state (*Prachar Patra*: 1992, 9). By moving away from its earlier position of espousing the Assamese nationalist cause to one in which it seeks to represent the "people of Assam" of whom the immigrant sections form a sizeable proportion, the ULFA was

obviously trying to widen its organizational base and its area of operations. It was trying to shed its image of being an organization which was indifferent to both the immigrants and the tribals. Regarding the ethnic nationalities of the state, the ULFA states towards the end of its document that in *Swadhin Asom* all the tribal communities would enjoy equality of status based on the right of self-determination. This, however, was not enough to win over the confidence of organizations like the United Reservation Movement Council of Assam (URMCA), a conglomerate body of plains tribals, which still continued to view to ULFA as a chauvinist middle class Assamese organization. It is necessary for the ULFA to shed this image if it is to continue in its struggle for an independent Assam. Whatever the exigencies that have dictated this change in posture, the dividends accrued to ULFA seem to be quite high.

Although right from the beginning the ULFA succeeded in attracting young men from all the communities and tribal groups of Assam, yet its appeal among the immigrant sections of the population seemed to be limited. But, its stand on the immigrant population is bound to help it extend its area of influence in immigrant pockets and make it more representative of the entire people of Assam. Even then, the main ideological prop to ULFA's idea of a *Swadhin Asom* still continues to come from the Assamese middle class which, despite its strong stakes in the Indian market, has been nourishing a feeling of deprivation ever since Independence. The Centre's continued neglect of the region and its indifference to peaceful forms of protest on socio-political and economic issues have turned a section of the middle class into sympathizers of *Swadhin Asom*. But despite its being different from the middle classes of other regions in that it still nourishes rather strong roots in the peasantry, the Assamese middle class too is not prepared to side completely with the forces espousing the cause of independence and would prefer to limit the struggle to securing some major concessions from the Centre. Nevertheless, the idea of independence holds great charm for sections of this class which has long been burdened by a sense of antagonism and hatred for the "Indian" ruling class which, it feels, has been depriving it of its rightful share in the development process. Therefore, this section, even when realizing the unattainable nature of the independence demand, would like to keep the idea alive so as to use it as a convenient lever to extract concessions from New Delhi.

What New Delhi has failed to realize is that in Assam it is not just fighting yet another insurgent outfit but also an idea which has long been embedded in the Assamese psyche. That is exactly why the ULFA,

notwithstanding all its excesses, has been able to draw a large degree of sympathy, if not always active support, from sizeable sections of the people. The call for a negotiated settlement of the ULFA problem, cutting across party lines, reflects this. Not only the regional parties, but many others including the CPI, have been demanding the withdrawal of draconian measures like the Disturbed Areas Act and insisting on talks with the insurgent outfit. Discussing this, Prabhakara makes the following perceptive remark: "Indeed the problem in Assam is that while the ULFA phenomenon in itself is neither mysterious nor profound, the organization rather than the social base that has sustained the organization has received an undeservedly large amount of attention. For, the organization has been sustained not merely by its numerical strength or the strength of its arms or its organizing capacity, though all these, especially the last, have been considerable, but by its social base. It is the ideological and moral sanction provided by the Assamese society—even making allowance for all the fragmented nature of that structure—that has sustained the ULFA" (Prabhakara, 1992). It remains to be seen, however, as to how long the Assamese society will continue to sustain the ULFA. For, the very reasons for which the ULFA was born, that is, to secure for the Assamese peasantry their right over land, for the Assamese middle class their rights to business and commerce and the rightful position of the Assamese nationality vis-a-vis Indian great nationalism, seem to have been compromised in the quest for a *Swadhin Asom* not only for the Assamese nationality but for the entire "people of Assam".

Despite its rather weak ideological moorings and its militaristic character, it must be said to ULFA's credit that it has been the first insurgent outfit of the north-eastern region which focused effectively on the colonial thesis and called for a joint armed struggle against New Delhi. Unlike the Naga National Council which seemed to limit its vision to some sort of a tribal utopia and the NSCN which, despite reaching out to different insurgent groups of the region and trying to build a common platform, harps on a Christian Naga state run on socialist principles, the ULFA puts forward the idea of a federal Assam where different nationalities would possess the maximum autonomy bordering on self-rule. It was one of those very first insurgent organizations to have raised certain very fundamental points about the Centre's economic relationship with the states. By forcing the Indian State to mount two major army operations against it and that too without much success, it brought to the fore the question of political and economic autonomy for the states within a viable federal structure. In this it has drawn on past struggle of the Assamese people to retain their

swadhinata. But, given the changed political scenario and the highly complex ethnic situation in the state, it is doubtful whether ULFA's concept of a *Swadhin Asom* would be acceptable to the different ethnic groups of the region.

Though the ULFA has time and again come out with literature in the tribal languages espousing the cause of sovereign Assam, it has not specifically spelt out whether it would actually favour the right of secession for these groups. In its 1992 booklet referred to earlier, the organization does speak of the equal rights of the tribal communities in an independent Assam and of how they would be given the right of *atma-niantran* which in this case means self-determination within *Swadhin Asom* (*Prachar Patra*, July 1992). In the same booklet it also says that the aim of the organization would be to eventually transform the national consciousness of the different groups and communities of Assam into the nationalism of the exploited masses of the state. Saying that it does not consider only the Assamese-speaking people as the Assamese, the ULFA makes it clear that it sees all the small and big nationalities residing in Assam as Assamese. Moreover, instead of a policy of reservations, it would prefer to see the different nationalities grow by themselves. All this sounds very good. But in the long run would not the ULFA's position on the infiltration issue, its clear links with Bangladesh and its support for maximum tribal autonomy, bring it into conflict with the proponents of Assamese linguistic nationalism such as the AASU and the Asom Gana Parishad? Would it be possible for ULFA to build up a consolidated front of the people of Assam by neglecting the feelings of that section of the Assamese people who feel that their cultural identity is under threat from unchecked immigration? The highly heterogeneous ethnic situation in the state makes it all the more difficult for organizations like the ULFA to take along with it the different ethnic groups, most of whom are struggling under their own banners to wrest concessions from the Centre. It is to be noted that often the strength of a secessionist movement is inversely related to the heterogeneity of a particular region (Horowitz, 267).

ULFA appears to be aware of the hurdles involved in its struggle to achieve an independent Assam. Therefore, instead of trying to spell out the details of the inter-ethnic pattern of relationships that would emerge and be encouraged in *Swadhin Asom*, it is involved in furthering its thesis that Assam was never a part of India and hence, should be left alone to mould its own destiny. This argument is similar to that being offered by most of the other insurgent groups, including, of course, the Naga underground. ULFA leaflets and documents repeatedly stress that the

Treaty of Yandaboo, by virtue of which the British gained control of Assam from the Burmese, was a fraud perpetrated on the people of Assam. For instance, in his address on the eleventh foundation day of the ULFA, its Chairman, Arabindra Rajkhowa, declared:

... history does not sustain the argument that Asom and Asom's identity is part of India and the Indian identity. It is for this reason that Asom is not even mentioned in India's national anthem. For us Asom is our only mainstream. We are not secessionists. The demand for Asom's independence is a just demand. History provides no instance of any Indian ruler ever ruling over Asom. The British were able to rule over Asom only half a century after they conquered India. After the British left, India had the moral right to take over Asom. At the time of India's independence the Indian rulers masquerading under the guise of democracy and Gandhism deceptively forced us to be a part of India instead of allowing us to be independent (Free translation of the ULFA chairman's speech in Assamese as given in *The Frontline*, May 12-25, 1990).

Obviously, in trying to build up his argument, the ULFA chairman has made a selective reading of Assam's recent history, especially about the struggle for independence from British rule and Assam's role in it. In his speech, the ULFA chairman has not mentioned the participation of the Assamese masses in the freedom struggle against the British and the role played by countless leading intellectuals in the Congress-led movement. Not to speak of reformer-saints like Sankardeva for whom "Bharatvarsha" was such an important concept and who contributed immensely to bringing Assam within the Indian "mainstream", even rebels like Jyotiprasad Agarwalla and Bishnuprasad Rabha, and literateurs like Padmanath Gohainbaruah and Lakshminath Bezbaroa, believed in Assam's destiny to be inextricably linked with India's. Mention is also not made of the many martyrs who embraced death in the belief that theirs was a struggle for an Independent India. Interestingly, Parag Das's *Swadhinatar Prastab* (Agenda for Independence) also echoes the ULFA's interpretations of Assam's history to prove that Assam had never been part of India and that even Sankardeva was not part of the overall Indian socio-cultural ethos because he was a fish-eater! (Parag Das, 29). Das draws lessons from a simplistic reading of the anthropological traits of the Assamese people to prove that the Assamese are closer to their Mongolian brothers and sisters and have little or nothing to do with the Indian peoples (Das, 18-20). All this shows that while the case of colonial exploitation of the region appears to go down well with the masses and may, in the long run, sustain the idea of a *Swadhin Asom*, the very selective reading of Assam's

history is bound to lead to greater confusion. There is no dearth of instances of revolutionary organisations and governments tampering with history, but this has been always at their own peril. Assam's participation in the national struggle is much too recent history to be tailored to suit any particular outfit's needs.

It is true that given the present national and international realities, the ULFA's attainment of its goal of an independent Assam may appear quite remote. But, despite the might of the Indian security forces being pitted against it, the ULFA still continues to hold the centre-stage in the state's politics. There is no denying the fact that although there has been a large degree of erosion of support for it among the Assamese people, yet the organisation has been continuing to draw enough sympathy from the rural masses to keep it alive as a viable striking force. Though there is a large degree of questioning among the Assamese people of the ULFA's policies and programmes as well as its concept of *Swadhin Asom*, yet a substantial part of its social base seems to be still intact. It is also true that the ULFA's efforts to forge a common platform of the different insurgent groups of the region have also not met with any noticeable success. The working relationship between different insurgent groups appears to be a part of their overall strategy of mutual survival in their struggle against the Indian State.²¹ What is remarkable is that, instead of its numbers declining, the ranks of organisations like the ULFA have been expanding at an alarming rate and they have been successful in recruiting youth from almost all the segments of Assamese society, including the tea-tribes, the immigrant Muslims and the plains tribals. This in itself is no mean achievement for an organisation which started off on a rather narrow Assamese nationalist agenda. It would, therefore, be necessary to look into the socio-economic causes which continue to feed the taproots of such organisations, all their inherent weaknesses in ideology and practice notwithstanding.

New Delhi's simplistic assessment of the situation in Assam and its problems has helped the ULFA ideology to survive despite its inherent weaknesses. If the ULFA's manner of functioning, its random resort to kidnappings and killings have resulted in narrowing its support base, then the manner in which the security forces have been conducting themselves, the tell-tale pictures of torture of suspected ultras, the rapes and molestations,²² not to speak of the countless custodial and "encounter" deaths have all greatly helped to keep the anti-New Delhi and anti-India mood alive. This, despite the fact that for most Assamese even today the goal of independence from India is neither acceptable nor desirable. But the issues relating to political and financial autonomy raised by Assam's

leaders in the nineteen forties continue to exercise the Assamese mind even today. Unchecked infiltration from across the border, the ever-increasing pressure on land, the swiftly changing demographic pattern and the moribund state of economic progress have all been contributing towards sustaining insurgent politics in region. The mood for greater autonomy to the states has been adequately reflected in the 1996 election manifesto of the Asom Gana Parishad which states that it would be fighting for Assam's "self-rule" which will mean complete autonomy for the state, with only foreign affairs, communications, defence and currency being left to Central hands. The echoes of demands for autonomy made by the Assam members in the Constituent Assembly are being heard once again. *Swadhin Asom* may not be realizable; but the idea of a *Swadhin Asom* will continue to inspire struggles for greater autonomy. The Indian nation-state would be ignoring these struggles at grave risk to its future existence.

NOTES

1. Mountbatten's pronouncement of June 3, 1947 provided for a referendum to be held in the Sylhet district of Assam to ascertain whether the people in the district wished to join Pakistan or continue to remain in Assam (India). Sylhet had been made a district of Assam in 1874 and ever since then public opinion in Sylhet was in favour of merging with Bengal rather than stay with a 'backward' province like Assam. The Assamese also wanted Sylhet to be separated from their province, especially when continued Muslim influx from East Bengal changed the demographic pattern of Assam. It was believed that the separation of the Muslim-majority district of Sylhet would make Assam more homogenous and this view was shared by leaders like Nehru. Just prior to independence, the Sylhet issue became central to Assam politics, with the Congress under Bardoloi's leadership consistently demanding the separation of the district from Assam. Jinnah, whose plan was to include entire Assam in his proposed Pakistan, was given the choice of a referendum in Sylhet. In the referendum, which according to Nehru and Patel was not entirely a free one, Sylhet voted for Pakistan by a majority of just 55,578 votes. 56.56 per cent of the electorate voted for Pakistan while 43.44 per cent voted for India.
2. Assam's rail-link with the rest of the country was snapped following the Partition. It was only in January 1950 that the rail-link was restored by a metre-gauge line through the narrow chicken-neck corridor of north Bengal. The disruption in the rail-link had a very adverse affect on Assam's economy. Partition also resulted in the loss of Chittagong port which was a major outlet for Assam tea.

3. The Partition virtually put an end to the age-old trade ties between the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills and the plains of East Bengal. The economic condition of the people living in the border areas sharply deteriorated as the normal channels of trade suddenly closed. Large-scale smuggling became the order of the day. It is only recently that serious attempts have been made by the Indian and Bangladesh authorities to re-open the border trade.
4. The tea industry in Assam grew out of heavy British patronage with large areas of land being given to the British planters virtually tax-free. The wastelands settlement policy and simple fee grants helped the British planters to grab much more land than they really needed for their tea gardens. By 1870 almost 0.7 million acres of land were held by the planters although the actual area under tea cultivation was only 56,000 acres. Today some 5 million acres of land are being held by the tea industry in the state. Given the huge profits made by the tea gardens, the actual inflow of capital into the state was negligible. In recent times, however, some cosmetic measures have been resorted to by the tea industry to show that part of its profits are being ploughed back into the state.
5. Jyotiprasad Agarwalla was the grandson of Haribilas Agarwalla, one of the pioneer Marwari tea-planters of Assam. Regarded as the doyen of modern Assamese literature, Jyotiprasad was a man of diverse talents, being a poet, essayist, film-maker and political activist all rolled into one. He was deeply involved in the 1942 movement and his patriotic songs still stir the Assamese heart. After 1947, Jyotiprasad virtually dissociated himself from the Congress and drew close to the communists and leftists and was an active patron of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA).
6. Bishnuprasada Rabha was a legendary figure in Assam's socio-political life. He was model of the a romantic revolutionary, with gun in one hand and book of verses in the other, for the Assamese youth of the 1950s. A member of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), Rabha was actively involved in the militant peasant movement of post-independence Assam. A poet-composer, singer and political activist, Rabha wrote incisive pieces on a variety of topics related to the region's society and culture. He is today a symbol of the unified and integrated Assamese nationality, and is known as the "Kalaguru".
7. The first oil refinery in private sector was set up by the British at Digboi in upper Assam in the year 1890.
8. The "medium agitation" was centred on making Assamese the medium of instruction in the universities of Gauhati and Dibrugarh. When Gauhati University opted to retain English as medium of instruction for a period of time, while allowing examination answers to be written in Assamese, Bengali and English, widescale disturbances broke out in the Bahmaputra Valley in 1972. It was demanded by the All Assam Students' Union and the Asom Sahitya Sabha that Assamese be made sole medium of instruction and English continue till required. Bengali was just not acceptable because it

was feared that its acceptance would make Assam a bilingual state. This AASU demand led to disturbances in the Bengali-speaking district of Cachar. The Assam Assembly's resolution ratifying the Gauhati and Dibrugarh University decisions but promising a separate university for Cachar, led to widespread violence against the Bengali population of the state. Finally, the Assam Government decided not to abide by the Assembly Resolution and said that Assamese would be compulsorily taught in all non-Assamese schools of the state. This evoked protests not only from the Bengali-speaking population but also from the Bodos and other plains tribals. It was in fact that beginning of the divide between the Assamese and the plains tribals in the state. The intransigence of the AASU and the Asom Sahitya Sabha was largely responsible for creating this divide.

9. Though there were organisations called the All Assam Students' Union in 1959 and 1966, it was actually in 1971 that the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in its present shape came into being. The distinctness of the AASU lay in the fact that it followed a consistent policy of not aligning itself with any political party, thereby claiming to be non-political in character. It was only during the first years of the Asom Gana Parishad rule that the AASU drew very close to the ruling party, an error which its leaders have been trying to rectify ever since. Today, the AASU leadership has come in for a lot of criticism for not allowing democratic change within the organisation. The same set of leaders have been continuing for years.
10. The All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad was made up of the All Assam Students' Union, the Asom Sahitya Sabha, the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad, the Asom Jaitiyatabadi Dal, the All Assam Tribal Students' Union, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the All Assam Karmachari Parishad.
11. Apart from the huge volume of writing in the regional press on the Assam Movement on the foreigners' issue, almost every leading political analyst of the country has commented on it. Among the interesting debates on the character and course of the agitation was the one which figured on the pages of the *The Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay.
12. Till the outbreak of the ULFA insurgency, the tea industry of the state was almost nowhere in the picture as far as welfare measures were concerned. Even in the matter of appointments it followed a highly secretive policy. The centenary volume of the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association cites the building of some roadside passenger sheds as part of its social service schemes.
13. As per the Colonisation Scheme, 20 bighas of land were given to each immigrant family on payment of a nominal sum.
14. Sharifa Begum, "Birth rate and Death rate in Bangladesh 1951-74", Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Dhaka 1979.
15. see Chapter six, p. 165.
16. Ever since the nineteen fifties, the Central leaders treated Assam's pleas for

strict infiltration-control measures with indifference. Nehru's response to a letter from a dozen Congress Members of Parliament from Assam in the early sixties drawing his attention to the grave dangers posed by unchecked infiltration, was at best, lukewarm. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee in a resolution adopted in April 1964 on "Security of the State of Assam and Pakistani Infiltration" asked for a no-man's strip of land on the Assam-East Pakistan border which would be a prohibited area for use by the Defence Department. The Assam Congress also brought to the notice of the Centre that "it is most unfortunate that notwithstanding the earnestness on the part of the highest authorities, the problem of infiltration has not only persisted, but got more and more complex and complicated due to the non-implementation of the steps effectively and expeditiously" (Kumar: 1990, 67). Though the Assam Congress was fully aware of the influx issue, it decided to shelve it in the later years because of pressure from Muslim Congress members and also because it grew increasingly dependent on the immigrant vote-bank for its electoral successes. In sharp contrast to the position adopted by the Assam Congress in the post-sixty period, the Congress party in Arunchal Pradesh has taken a united stand along with the students and other political groups of the state on the foreigners' issue centred on the Chakmas.

17. Despite its Gandhian claims, the anti-foreigner movement was not without its communal outbursts of violence. Though the killings at Nellie might have been immediately provoked by the kidnapping and rape of tribal Lalong girls by the immigrant Muslims, yet the large-scale nature of killings where women and children were mercilessly butchered clearly reveal strong communal overtones. Communal violence on a large scale also took place in several areas of Kamrup and Darrang districts. Not only immigrant Muslims were the targets, but in several cases, Bengali Hindus were also attacked.
18. For details refer to Amnesty International Reports on human rights violations in Assam and other areas of the northeastern region. Also refer to *A Report on Human Rights Violation and State Terrorism in Assam During Operation Rhino*, published by Ajit Kumar Bhuvan on behalf of the Manab Adhikar Suraksha Samiti (MASS), Guwahati, September 1991.
19. A large section of the ULFA leaders and cadres displayed a luxurious life-style. This was all the more evident in the case of those who had surrendered and are known as SULFA.
20. Sunil Nath alias Siddharta Phukan was one of the top ideologues of the ULFA and used to keep the people acquainted about the organisation's policies and viewpoints through articles published in the regional press. After quitting the ULFA, he has been pleading for a solution within the Indian Constitution.
21. Though the ULFA is a member of most of the common fronts put up by different insurgent groups of the northeastern region, yet there appears to be no common ideological oneness binding these groups together. They no

doubt have a vague idea of securing an independent state outside India and seem united as far as question of an armed struggle against the Indian State is concerned. But apart from this, there does not seem to be much unity of purpose or ideological understanding. Very often the unity seems forced by the need to depend on one another in their fight against the Indian security forces. Quite often, armed training has been imparted by the insurgent groups of northern Myanmar to the insurgents from the Indian side on payment of large sums of money and there have been instances when ULFA boys were virtually held prisoner by the Kachins for not being able to pay the sums demanded.

22. Cases of rape and torture by army during their operations in Assam have been detailed in publications of the Manab Adhikar Suraksha Samiti. Though there are conflicting reports about exact number of rape cases or torture deaths, scores of youth have been killed in "encounters" by army and police.

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CHAPTER SIX

Potent Causes and Unresolved Issues

The different ethnic struggles in the northeastern region of the country, ranging from movements aimed at establishing independent, sovereign states to those fighting for different degrees of autonomy within the Indian Union, have raised certain central issues concerning the future of the nation-state in India. The entire thesis of nation-building has come in for revaluation and attempts are now being made to re-assess and review the relationships of the federating units of the multinational state with one another as well as with the Centre. There was a time when the ethnic assertions of people of the northeastern region were invariably looked upon with distrust by the Government of India and its agencies which saw these as attempts to break-up the country. Along with strong-arm tactics, efforts were made to bring the peoples of these peripheral regions into the “mainstream” of Indian life. It was felt that once these regions were opened up to rest of the country and development process initiated, the troubles would subside. But, even as the Indian market economy made further inroads into these areas and they were brought within the ambit of the overall democratic process of the country, ethnic demands took on new shapes and identity movements began to multiply. It did not take long for policy planners and analysts to realize that these movements for identity assertion were actually the result of the modernization process and that the entire approach to nation-building needed to be re-appraised. While “the simple opposition of tradition and modernity, so dear to the expounders of modernization theory, turned out to be an illusion”, ethnic movements, instead of disappearing during the years of post-colonial nation-building, started becoming stronger (Stavenhagen, 17). This was true not only in the case of the Third World countries but also in Western and Eastern Europe as well as in North America.

In India, the concept of a broadly secular Indian nationalism which developed during the Independence struggle came to be opposed by centrifugal tendencies based on regional, ethnic, linguistic and communal identities. The nation-state has had to adjust itself to the changing scenario, and referring to the incongruence often arising in a country like

ours because of the adoption of a largely European model of the nation-state, Stevanhagen comments: "Many newer, post-colonial States in Latin America, Asia, and Africa adopted the European model uncritically with slight regard for the completely different historical and cultural circumstances. This fact led to many of the difficulties that third world countries encounter in the task of 'nation-building': it has led to conflicts between states and peoples. . . the lack of congruence between States and nations has led to unexpected difficulties in the implementation of economic and social development models . . ." (Stavenhagen, 19). In India too during the first two decades or so after Independence, it became clear that future survival of the nation-state would depend on acceptance of the plurality of nationalities. But, there continued to be a strong strain of thought which sought to do away with group identities in the name of national integration. Such attempts at national integration were bound to meet with little success and a lot of resistance in areas like the northeastern region of the country, where for a variety of reasons, the nation-state has had a minimal presence (Ghose and Chakrabarti, 2-3). We have already discussed how, barring the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys, the rest of undivided Assam had virtually remained cut-off from the Indian ethos till the advent of independence. Identity movements in the northeastern region have proved that conflict situations are bound to arise whenever attempts are made by the Indian ruling elite to overrule the diversity of a particular community or people and impose homogeneous set of values. Trying to bring different tribal communities of the northeastern region within the ambit of the nation-state was a great experiment indeed, because most of these communities had not been part of social and political developments which took place in rest of the country, and they had become a part of independent India without self-consciously involving themselves in the struggle for independence (Sinha, xv-xvi).

Naturally, therefore, the people of this region were apprehensive about attempts at national integration without any degree of psychological integration. Referring to this, a leading social scientist of Meghalaya says "On the question of nationalism, I have only to say that there is difference between the Indian nationalism of the freedom struggle and the nationalism of post-independence period. After independence, nationalism is often equated with the process of nation-building or national integration. Speaking about national integration, I fail to understand why we are still continuing to talk about it nearly fifty years after independence. I believe that we are fully integrated territorially, politically, administratively and educationally. If there is any sphere where we have been unable to integrate

ourselves is in the realm of psychological integration, call it emotional integration if you will . . . what is most disturbing is the threat of a gradual disappearance of ethnic units because of the imperative of the nation-state. The fundamental question at a theoretical level is whether the State is a logical outgrowth of a nation or is it the nation which is the supra-State. The trouble in India is that, in the strict sense of the term, we have a state-nation and not a nation-state, nationism and not nationalism after India's independence" (Pakem, 1995). Pakem makes it clear for all those who happen to still believe in the homogenizing idea of the nation-state that nationalism of the freedom movement which became for many synonymous with Indian nationalism is not acceptable to different small nationalities of the northeastern region. This is easily one of the major contributions of the northeastern region towards a radical re-orientation of the very idea of Indian nationalism and of those principles on which the federal structure is supposed to work.

Although it has been said that the Indian State has been encountering a lot of difficulty in the management of "difference" (Ghosh and Chakrabarti, 27), yet it appears that in India there is the growing realization that instead of trying to bring about identity between the state and the nation, one should "learn to recognize the existence and to cope with the development of regional-national sentiments while simultaneously promoting and developing patriotic ties among diverse nationalities to a common political and territorial unit" (Brass, 15). Paul Brass has pointed out four major rules which have regulated the Central Government's attitude towards regional demands for greater autonomy and statehood. He says that Centre has always tried to accommodate the following demands: (a) demands for regional autonomy short of secession, (b) demands based on language and culture and not on religion, (c) demands for autonomy backed by popular support of the particular region, and (d) demands for split up of multilingual states with support from different linguistic groups (Brass, 17-19). According to him, this strategy of accommodation has resulted in the creation of separate political units and the regionalisation of politics, reducing thereby the anti-Centre feeling. But, this has not been generally true. Whereas it is a fact that creation of different territorial units for hill peoples of the northeastern region has met ethnic aspirations to a large extent and have drawn these peoples into country's democratic process, yet grave regional imbalances and continuance of internal "colonial pockets" have tended to stoke fires of secessionist insurgency in the area. Under-development and relative deprivation syndrome have been major factors contributing to growing sense of alienation from rest of the

country among a sizeable section of the youth of the northeastern region.

It is rather paradoxical that sense of deprivation grew even as the process of development, however slow was initiated. The emerging middle class elite of these regions soon realized that struggle for jobs, privileges as well as political space would not be easy in a system where uneven economic development was the rule and strong regional disparities prevailed. Thus, ethnic or sub-nationalist mobilization initially on economic grounds would be resorted to by the emerging middle classes who would also be the spokesmen of the masses. Soon the struggle would be expanded to include other issues like land, language and cultural identity. Though economic factors do play a vital role in bringing people together on a common ethno-nationalist platform, yet it would be somewhat simplistic to suggest that economics of a situation alone determines course of such movements. For, there have been numerous identity and autonomy movements which were motivated by factors that were not immediately economic in nature. For instance, the Naga struggle had as its prime motivating factor neither regional disparity nor uneven development but idea of an independent Naga homeland where "Naga way of life" would be ensured. Unlike many other regions of India where ethnic movements arose virtually out of development process, in the Naga Hills historical and cultural factors seemed to play a dominating role. Therefore, certain secessionist ethnic movements cannot be explained in terms of simple economic criteria such as uneven or lop-sided development or disjunction between industry and agriculture. What needs to be seen in its correct perspective is the previous history of relationship which a particular community has had with the pan-Indian nationalism (Alam, 64). The fact is often overlooked that at the time of Independence the Nagas were not psychologically prepared to enter into a union with free India and it took years for New Delhi to see through this and take steps to overcome the psychological and cultural barriers which marked Naga-India relationship. In the process much damage was done. By the time the Government of India carved out a state for the Nagas in 1963 and took steps to ensure cultural and political autonomy of the Naga people, the breach between the Nagas and the Indian Government had been widened by prolonged human tragedy. In its attempt to win over the Nagas, the Centre pumped in disproportionate sums of money into the new state without trying to build up an infrastructure for proper dispersal and utilisation of such funds. The benefits did not percolate to the masses but instead, helped to create a class of people who developed strong stakes in the Indian market and hence became increasingly dependant on New Delhi.

The gradual involvement of former underground elements in the democratic process and series of successful elections in Nagaland adequately prove the resilience of the Indian State and its power of accommodating strong centrifugal forces. It would not be a simplification to say that more than half of the battle in Nagaland has been won for the Indian Union by the market forces. A situation has been created today where vocal sections of Naga society made up of increasingly urbanized middle class would not favour secession from India. Heavy Central subsidies and investments have made secession less attractive, though it is still viewed as a necessary factor to obtain greater concessions from the Centre. Commenting on practice in many countries of trying to stave off secessionist movements through liberal economic concessions, Horowitz says, "Federalism or regionalism will be most attractive if it is coupled with policies whose effect is to raise the costs of a successful secession. . . . Secessionism has been attempted to be countered by many countries through liberal concessions to separatists. Pakistan has been following the British practice of providing Pathans with opportunities in the army, frontier scouts, militia while at the same time expanding disproportionate funds on investment in Pathan areas" (Horowitz, 626). In the case of Nagaland too, the Government of India has been following a similar policy once it realized that a military solution of the Naga problem would not be possible. But despite measures like the Inner Line Regulations which make it impossible even for fellow-Indians to enter Nagaland without a permit, and a legislation which debar non-Nagas from owning land or real estate in the state, the demand for an independent Naga homeland still attracts a substantial portion of Naga people, especially the youth.

The Nagas feel that many of the crucial issues concerning their identity are yet to be resolved. For instance, when the Indian federation inherited the territorial boundaries of provinces from colonial administration, the Naga tribes continued to be scattered in parts of Manipur and Myanmar. Naga public opinion has always been critical of the British for having kept the Nagas divided and not bringing all the tribes within one administrative unit. The Indian government too is seen as following the same policy. Hence, the idea of a greater Naga homeland for all the Naga tribes is espoused by both underground and overground elements. The Naga-Kuki clashes are also to be seen against such a background. But, despite this urge for a still more homogenous Naga homeland, the fact remains that under the present circumstances, the Nagas have been able to secure for themselves enough of Constitutional safeguards¹ to ensure their cultural as well as political future (Appendix XI). Despite xenophobic feelings

about presence of non-Nagas in Nagaland being raised time and again, the very pattern of regulations makes it impossible for non-Nagas to pose any demographic threat to the Naga identity. With more than 87 per cent of state's population being scheduled tribes,² the Nagas today are relatively better placed than their Assamese or Tripuri neighbours who have no reservations to fall back on. For the Nagas now, it is now more a question of consolidation and extension of their identity than a struggle to defend it. The feeling of insecurity which has developed among the Nagas just after Independence, especially in relation to the relatively stronger out-group, the Assamese, came to an end with the formation of a separate state of Nagaland. Today, more than two decades after gaining their state, the Nagas seem to be much in control of their destiny, the serious imbalances in Centre-State relations notwithstanding. Therefore, in the given circumstances, it is but natural that the appeal for an independent Naga homeland, though still evoking an emotional response in certain sections of the people, would not be too successful in forging together the different tribes as also the different classes of present Naga society.

More than the struggle for a separate independent Naga homeland, the Naga society today appears concerned at issues like the resurgence of tribalism which is threatening the Naga homogeneity which emerged in the course of struggle against New Delhi. The educated elite belonging to different tribes are engaged in a silent struggle for the gains of modernization as well as political power and this struggle becomes intense if one or two particular groups get a head-start in the competition for rewards of modernization.³ The elites of different tribes are bound to further their own class interests by invoking ethnic support and encouraging ethnic exclusiveness (Horowitz, 101-2). As already discussed in a preceding chapter, Naga society has undergone certain major changes in the past half century. Its integration into the Indian market economy has created certain divides in Naga society which would make it all the more difficult for a homogenized ethno-national Naga consciousness to continue its fight for a separate homeland outside the Indian federation. During its fight with the Government of India the different tribes came together on a common platform and developed a unified national ethos or will. Discussing this, A.C. Bhagabati says:

An interesting aspect of tribal identity in this part of India is its attempted crystallization on a bigger scale, cutting across barriers of village, language and tribe. Communities which never visualized unity beyond the limits of their villages barely 40 years ago, are now consciously becoming involved in the creation of a wider identity involving other villages and even warring tribes. An example is the

Naga group. The Nagas are not a homogenous tribe but rather a constellation of the 13 distinct tribes (Konyak, Ao, Sema, Anhami, Lotha, Chakesang, Sangtam, Phom, Chang, Khemunger, Yamchaunger, Rengma and Zemi). Each one has a discrete habitat within Nagaland. The Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Kabui, Kacha, Maring, etc., in neighbouring Manipur also belong to the Naga constellation and some of them seek integration of their habitat with Nagaland. In the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam there are concentrations of Zemi (or Zemei), Rongmei, Liangmei and the Rengma who, too, are Nagas. The Naga identity has become such a force that many groups in recent years have claimed that they are Naga . . . a wider Naga identity based on the redefinition of former narrower identities and, to some extent, effacement of loyalties to one's clan, sub-tribe or tribe, has developed in the course of the last few decades (Bhagabati, 151-2).

But, once the Nagas gained political space within Indian Union, contradictions were bound to appear within Naga society on clan and tribe lines. The forces of ethnic nationalism came to be opposed, in due course of time, by those of tribalism and this was reflected not only in electoral politics of the state but also in matters of language and script as was revealed in the resistance to the use of Angami in radio broadcasts over All India Radio, Kohima.⁴ Thus, the struggle to keep up the homogenized nature of Naga society would occupy much space in the years to follow, even pushing the quest for an independent Nagaland to a subsidiary position. Therefore, in the given circumstances, the scope and nature of struggle for an independent Nagaland is bound to be narrowed, with the main underground formation, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland getting increasingly involved in intra-ethnic and even inter-ethnic confrontations. From a broader ethno-national struggle for the protection of the overall Naga identity under the aegis of the Naga National Council, the insurgent movement led by two factions of the NSCN seem to have become a narrow struggle for immediate political space for themselves. Because of this, the process of integration of other Naga and even some Kuki tribes of Manipur in the broader Naga identity has received a setback. The Naga-Kuki clashes have also put a check on the coming together of different insurgent groups on a common platform of racial oneness. Moreover, underground attempts to reduce existing differences between the Naga tribes of Myanmar and those living in India have not met with the desired success.

Despite all this, the NSCN-led struggle continues to attract a large number of Naga youngsters and the organization itself continues to hold its hegemonic position in the insurgency-ridden northeastern region. It not only runs a virtual parallel government in some of the remote areas but

continues to be a major presence in Naga politics. The reasons for this are many. Favoured by a geographical terrain conducive to insurgent guerilla activities, the NSCN has been akin to its striking power every year. It has been taking full advantage of the state and central government's failure to initiate meaningful developmental measures in remote areas of Nagaland and Manipur, especially those bordering Myanmar. Moreover, every combing operation by security forces following some NSCN attack, has invariably been attended by varying degrees of excesses on local population, thereby leading to their growing sense of alienation. The purpose of any terrorist organization is to draw the security forces into committing excesses on the people, thereby helping the former to extend its base by exploiting the sympathy factor. Discussing the problems faced by any liberal democratic government in tackling what he calls "revolutionary terrorism", Wilkinson observes:

Domestic revolutionary terrorism does create serious problems for liberal democracies. The liberties of a democratic society are ultimately dependent upon the maintenance of the rule of law. . . . Unless government ensures that the law of the land is obeyed, the whole system of rights and obligations breaks down. If the law and the constitution of the land come to be openly and regularly defied and held in contempt, the rule of law will collapse. . . . The authorities must convince the general population that they can protect them against the terrorists: otherwise the terrorists will use coercive terror on the population to compensate for any lack of support. . . . Above all, the government must seek to avoid alienating the support of the mass of the population. . . . It is the terrorists' intention to provoke a campaign of governmental repression which will turn the people against the government. Hence, to needlessly harass, frighten, or in any way harm the general population, is to play into the hands of the terrorists and to present them with potential recruits and sympathizers. Thus, while government is dealing effectively with the military and the security threat posed by the terrorists, it must also be engaged in a political struggle with the political wing of the terrorist movement to win the allegiance of the people. Experience of past terrorist struggles indicates that the government cannot win unless it produces reforms to meet the major grievances or demands of the citizens (Wilkinson, 137-8).

Thus, the struggle for an independent Nagaland is bound to continue in some form of the other unless central and state government policies succeed in increasingly drawing the people not only into exercising their franchise every five years or so but also in the affairs of running the state. This would call for greater decentralization of powers and a radical restructuring of Centre-State relations. The government must make it clear that it can run the state without continuously depending on repressive

measures like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the Disturbed Areas Act and that it is prepared for a political understanding with the underground without compromising the question of country's sovereignty. And, above everything else, certain set attitudes regarding the Nagas which developed during the colonial period and were nourished, consciously or otherwise, after Independence, must be replaced with feelings of equal trust and mutual respect. In a country whose politics is dominated and virtually charted by the big states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, just one or two Naga members in the Lok Sabha would naturally feel isolated and insecure. It is exactly this feeling of uncertainty that must be removed and a new orientation to the idea of Indian nationalism given.

Assam today presents a much more complex picture than Nagaland. Subjected to a highly extractive nature of colonial rule for a century, this resource-rich state of the northeastern region is today among the most backward in the country in terms of per capita income, industrial growth rate, literacy etc. This, despite the fact that the state produces about 54% of the country's tea, a substantial portion of its petroleum and is rich in coal, timber and hydro-power resources.⁵ We have discussed earlier how tea industry in Assam grew under direct patronage of the British government and how it was of only marginal benefit to the people of the region in terms of employment and wages. The British did not try to develop the subsidiary industries related to the needs of tea industry and bought all the requirements for the gardens either from London or Calcutta. Though both tea and coal production registered an impressive growth from the middle of the nineteenth century, the indigenous people of the region benefitted little. Discussing this, Amalendu Guha writes:

Impressive though it was in appearance, this growth did not lead to an equivalent generation of incomes and diffusion of gains amongst the indigenous population. . . . even the one-third or so of the industry's gross earnings which were spent on Assam account, did not wholly accrue to the indigenous people. There were substantial leakages through (i) the fat salary bill, (ii) recruitment and transportation costs incurred outside Assam, and (iii) purchases of materials from Calcutta, gains of which accrued mostly to non-residents. . . . Let us, for example, take the year 1844. The Company's production cost in Assam amounted to Rs. 127,000. The list of some 25 European officers along with their scales of pay in the *History of the Assam Company* (pp. 75, 422 and 425) suggests that the salary-bill was not less than Rs. 30,000 or about a quarter of the production cost. Presumably, most of this huge amount was saved or spent outside, as spending avenues in Assam jungles were extremely limited. . . . Another considerable leakage took place through

wasteful and unsuccessful recruitment drives. . . We may, therefore, assume that quite a substantial part of this spending did not enter into the local income-flow (Guha: 1991, 161-2).

Almost all expenses related to the tea industry benefitted the outsiders. The Bengal-based transportation companies pocketed the transportation charges while almost everything needed by the industry from brushes and paints to iron pans, hoes and bill-books were imported from London. Till the middle of the eighteen fifties, packing boxes too continued to come from England, although Calcutta and Chittagong became the main centres of such supplies later on (Guha: 1991, 162). This policy continued for decades after independence and only in recent years have some marginal changes occurred, and that too because of pressure mounted on tea industry by the local people and their organisations. Since most of the major tea companies still have their head offices at Calcutta, Assam is deprived of crores of rupees as income tax every year. Assam produces on an average about 40 crore kilograms of tea, the money value of which comes to two thousand crores, if each kilo of tea is priced at rupees fifty. For instance, in the year 1989-90 as per the government's inspection report, the production charge per kilogram of tea was between eighteen to twenty rupees. The selling price being some fifty rupees per kilogram, the total value of the four hundred million kilograms of tea would come to two thousand crores. Out of this, if the gardens had spent even one thousand crores on production, they would have been left with another one thousand crores as annual profit. On this amount, the income tax calculated at the rate of 55 per cent plus 10 per cent surcharge would have come to six hundred and five crores, the state government's share being some five hundred and forty five crores. Moreover, the state government would also have got a further two hundred and twenty crores as agricultural income tax, giving it a total income of seven hundred and sixty five crores in that year from the tea sector. But, the tea industry has been deftly manipulating its accounts and in the year 1989-90, the agricultural income tax paid by the tea industry to the state government came to approximately thirty five crores only. Since the agricultural income tax is calculated at the rate of forty per cent of the total income tax payable, one can infer that the total income tax paid that year by the tea sector came to some one hundred and sixty crores only, whereas it should have been one thousand crores. And, even out of this amount, the West Bengal government got a share of eighty seven crores as income tax because most of the head offices of the tea gardens are situated at Calcutta (Bagchi, 83-6). Thus, it may be

concluded that the tea industry in the state has done little to improve the lot of the average citizen and still continues to function as an enclave economy. Added to this was the indifferent and often insensitive attitude of the Centre which consistently resisted the Assam Government's attempts in the early fifties to nationalize some of the state's leading industries, including tea. By and large, the colonial pattern of exploitation of the state's resources continued after Independence and the state's position in the economic map of the country registered a downward slide. Massive loans instead of grants from the Centre made it almost impossible for the state government to initiate developmental projects and, with every passing year, its dependence on the Centre increased tenfold. The stage was thus set for mass agitations for the industrial development of the state. The colonial thesis started gaining ground.

However, the overall socio-economic situation in the state reached a crisis point because of the changes wrought in the demographic pattern by the continuous migration of people from former East Bengal-East Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh. Although the entire process of migration was initially linked with colonialism, it was soon to reach a saturation point because of the growing scarcity of cultivable land and the increasing pressure by immigrants on tribal belts and block and the reserve forest areas. Soon it was to become a simple struggle for cultivable land between the immigrants and the autochthons. Figures have often been cited to prove that immigration has not in effect changed the majority status of the Assamese-speaking people; but the land alienation figures are not readily available. As pressure on land started mounting in the districts where the immigrants concentrated, communal tensions took a new turn. Though a lot of work has been done on the language politics in Assam, the land question has not merited the attention it deserves. The alienation from land of the indigenous Assamiyas as well as the tribal people is bound to lead to major changes in the Assamese cultural set-up and, in the long run, affect the entire character and composition of the Assamese nationality itself.

The threat to identity which brought the Asamiyas as well as the other ethnic groups together to launch agitation against the foreign nationals was essentially a product of land-alienation. Therefore, it was but inevitable that economic struggles for development and jobs should get intertwined inextricably with the problem of migration and the resultant pressure on land. The threat to linguistic and cultural identity which was the main plank of the Assam Movement and also of the later Bodo Movement is actually to be seen in the context of the land question. It is a pity that some

scholars have been consistently playing down the demographic threat posed by unchecked immigration into Assam. That the threat is a tangible one can be seen from documents and articles produced by Bangladeshi scholars and demographers. Bangladesh has been attempting to build up the argument that its quest for a *lebensraum* for its over-spilling population is a justified move. Writing in the Dacca weekly, *Holiday*, of October 18, 1991, Sadeq Khan, a former Bangladesh diplomat, defends Bangladeshi emigration into nearby countries in the following manner: "The question of *lebensraum* or living space for the people of Bangladesh has not yet been raised as a moot issue. All projections, however, clearly indicate that by the next decade, that is to say by the first decade of the 21st century, Bangladesh will face a serious problem of *lebensraum*. No possible performance of population planning, actual or hypothetical, significantly alters that prediction. . . . There is no reason why underpopulated regions in the developed world cannot make room for planned colonies to relieve build-up of demographic disasters in countries like Bangladesh." The author continues to argue that Bangladesh could expect little external help on the issue of *lebensraum*, nor would it be able to develop enough sustainable urbanization or reclaim sufficient cultivable land from its off-shore potential: "A natural overflow of population pressure is therefore very much on the cards and will not be restrainable by barbed wire or border patrol measures. The natural trend of population overflow from Bangladesh is towards the sparsely populated lands in the South East, in the Arakan side and of the north-east in the Seven sisters side of the Indian sub-continent" (Quoted by Bezboruah, *The Sentinel*, 14 June 1992). Though Bangladesh has officially rejected the presence of any of its citizens in India, the article quoted shows that it is steadily building up a case for the migration of Bangladeshis to nearby regions.

Those who refused to see any rationale behind the Assam Movement and tried to dismiss it as yet another expression of Assamese xenophobia manipulated by the middle class and who supported the Bodo struggle⁶ as one against Assamese irredentism were in for a rude shock when the Bodos attacked immigrant Muslim pockets in Kokrajhar and BARPETA districts in July 1994. These killings, which have been referred to as an attempt at "ethnic cleansing" by the Bodos, had their roots in the land problem. The attacks on the Muslim settlements came within a few months of the signing of the Bodo Accord which claimed to give the Bodos an autonomous region to be run by the Bodo Autonomous Council.⁷ The prime factor motivating the attacks was clearly the land issue. The memorandum submitted by the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) to the

Assam Government had one of its demands (Demand No. 46) dealing with the 'foreign national issue'. In this clause, the ABSU stated: ". . . the influx of the non-tribal immigrants and foreign nationals is still going on in the Tribal Belts and Blocks and other predominantly general tribal areas of entire Assam unchecked, thus out-numbering and out-balancing the indigenous peace-loving Plains Tribal people of Assam . . . all 33 Tribal Belts and Blocks including predominantly general tribal areas of Assam have been pushed into the crucial position of being annihilated and extinguished totally by the unchecked continuous encroachment and influx of the so-called non-tribal immigrants and foreign nationals . . ." (ABSU Memorandum, January 1984). Commenting on the violence committed on the Muslim peasants by the Bodo militants, the Special Correspondent of *The Hindu*, writes: "To see the violence as merely a calculated move to drive out the non-Bodos and ensure that the Bodos would form a majority in the BAC area would be not merely a mechanical reading of a complex situation but also ignoring the hard demographic realities of the region." (Prabhakara, August 2, 1994). Referring to apprehension over loss of land, which in many cases was an accomplished fact, Prabhakara writes: ". . . the antagonism towards aliens of migrant origin (was) grounded in everyday experience of tension arising over the very fact of such settlements which came up (and in some cases were set up) quite illegally in areas officially designated as tribal belts and blocks" (Prabhakara, August 2, 1994).

The Bodos did not take long to realize that the demographic pattern of the area covered by the BAC had virtually nullified their quest for a separate Bodoland. Despite the strongest of feelings against the Assamese who have been accused of a big brother assimilationist attitude, the Bodo leadership seems to have realized now that given the peculiar demographic nature of Bodoland in particular and of Assam in general, it would be in the best interests of both the Bodos and the Assamese to put up a joint fight against the threat to their identities arising out of continuing infiltration. Not only the Bodos but also the Karbis seem to have realized the gravity of the position and the need to put up a common front. This partly explains the coming together of the regional forces on a common political platform during the 1996 elections which resulted in bringing back the Asom Gana Parishad and its allies once again into power in the state. Even the left parties like the CPI and the CPM seem to have accepted the threat posed by infiltration⁸ and have formed an electoral alliance with their one-time enemies, the Asom Gana Parishad. Accommodation and not exclusiveness seems to be the only way out for both the Assamese and the different

tribal communities of the northeastern region, especially in view of the ever-increasing threat of infiltration which has been dealt with by the Centre in a most ad hoc manner.

The sharp rise in the Muslim population shown in the 1991 Census⁹ can be accounted for only by continued influx from across the border and fears of further changes in the already delicate demographic pattern of the state cannot be ruled out. During 1971-91 the percentage of Hindu population in Assam fell from 72.51 in 1971 to 67.13 per cent in 1991. On the other hand, the Muslim population in the state increased from 24.56 per cent in 1971 to 28.53 per cent in 1991. The growth rate of Hindus during the same period was 41.89 per cent, whereas that of Muslims was 77.42 per cent. In the eleven districts including Dhubri in the east, Sonitpur in the north and Nowgong in the south, the growth rate of the Muslim population in the last twenty years has been 81.91 per cent; and 93 per cent of the Brahmaputra Valley Muslims live in these districts. Muslims constitute 37.15 per cent of the population in this region (Appendix XXI). Today, it would be in the interest of not only the indigenous Assamese Hindus and Assamese Muslims but also of the immigrant Muslim population which has integrated with Assamese society, to resist further infiltration. For, any further pressure on land could very well lead to a Bosnia-like civil war situation in the state. Clearly, this involves not only the question of future political power slipping out of the hands of indigenous population, but there could also be major changes in the economic and cultural base of the Assamese people. During the revision of electoral rolls prior to the 1996 elections, out of the 15 lakh complaints received from 40 of the 126 Assembly constituencies, as many as 9 lakhs were deleted from the rolls as foreign nationals. The deletion has been resisted by minority organizations but it reflects the real state of affairs in Assam.

During the initial phases of the anti-foreigner agitation, large sections of Assamese Muslims actually participated and the All Assam Students Union was led by its Assamese Muslim vice-president, Nurul Hussain, during a very crucial period when most of its top-ranking leaders including the president Prafulla Mahanta and secretary Bhrigu Kumar Phukan were behind the bars. But, even as the agitation progressed, its secular credentials came under severe strain, with a section within the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad's leadership consistently attempting to channelise the popular upsurge along communal lines. The efforts of this section proved successful when large-scale communal killings of immigrant Muslims took place in several parts of the state's Kamrup and Darrang districts. Though the massacre at Nellie, which claimed the lives of several

hundred people, drew attention of the world because of the scale and intensity of the violence indulged in by the Lalung tribals, yet it was the killings of immigrant Muslims at Chaolkhowa Chapori which bore evidence of a planned execution. It was these killings which eventually led to a feeling of alienation amongst the Assamese Muslims who, perhaps for the first time in the state's history, displayed clear signs of insecurity. Discussing this, two Assamese Muslim intellectuals observe: "Consequently, many of immigrant Muslims, who in 1971 had identified themselves with the Assamese society and language, expressed openly at a meeting at Haji Musafirkhana at Guwahati on the eve of the 1991 Census the futility of false pretensions of assimilative gestures and their effort towards consolidation of their Assamese identity. While the vast majority of the immigrant Muslims, who have already gone far ahead of the process of Assamization adhered to their decision of 1971 in respect of their mother tongue issue, an insignificant minority did return Bengali as their mother tongue at the time of the 1991 census" (Ahmed and Yasin, 48). Ahmed and Yasin raise some other significant points regarding the status of the Assamese and immigrant Muslims in the following manner:

The Muslims of Assam, being confronted with the identity crisis, are putting to themselves a few but extremely significant questions having far-reaching implications. Unlike the Muslims of northern India who suffer from some kind of superiority complex based on the fiction that once they had ruled India, the Muslims of Assam have been trying to resolve their identity problem by actively participating in state politics and yet often try to find answers to disturbing questions. Who are they? Are those Muslims, who are born and brought up in Assam and whose forefathers came to Assam in the thirteenth century, and whose mother-tongue is Assamese, whose cultural foundation has been shaped by the folk-tradition of Assam, really Assamese or Muslims or both? Are the immigrant Muslims who too have accepted Assamese as mother-tongue and recorded thus in 1971 Census, whose children are taking education in Assamese-medium schools in their respective areas, whose new generation has produced a good number of Assamese poets, writers and intellectuals, really Assamese, Bengali or Muslims? Where do they stand? Shall they continue to claim themselves as Assamese and consider themselves as part of the mainstream Assamese but not to be accorded recognition(?) by the mainstream? (Ahmed and Yasin, 148).

While raising these points Ahmed and Yasin say that, given the present situation in Assam, a large segment of the Muslim population is being drawn to pan-Islamic positions. But the important point to note is that Assamese Muslims who have been an integral part of Assamese society and who used to have only marginal social interaction with the immigrant

Bengali Muslims are today being faced with a crisis of identity. As long as the indigenous Assamese Muslims constituted a very small minority within the Assamese nationality, problems of identity did not really arise. It is only when a particular minority grows into a sizeable group that it becomes aware of identity issues. And that is exactly what is happening to the Assamese Muslim community in the present juncture. Today it sees itself not only as a segment of the broader Assamese nationality but also attaches a great deal of importance to its being an integral part of the overall Muslim brotherhood of the country. This change of perspective is to be seen in relation to the alterations in the demographic pattern of the state because of continued influx of Bengali-speaking Muslims. Through the centuries, the Assamese Muslim has always considered himself as a small but significant part of the Assamese nationality, there being not a single instance till date of any communal flare-up or even tension between the Assamese Muslim and the Assamese Hindu. Muslim historians from outside visiting the region have always commented on the Assamese Muslim being more Assamese than Muslim. It was always the Assamese identity which seemed to receive priority over the broader Muslim identity as far as the Assamese Muslim was concerned. Culturally, the Assamese Muslim was well integrated into the Assamese society and in the sphere of Assamese literature Assamese Muslim writers have made major contributions.

But, with Muslim population of the state having sizeably increased, the position of the Assamese Muslim vis-a-vis the Assamese Hindu as well as the immigrant Muslim seems to have undergone a marked change. The pressures of a broader Muslim brotherhood encompassing the Assamese and immigrant Muslims are being increasingly felt in today's Assamese Muslim society. This explains why questions relating to the identity status of the Assamese Muslim have taken on so much of urgency. Moreover, those sections of the Bengali immigrant Muslims who have, over the course of time, returned Assamese as their mother tongue and who themselves are undergoing the process of assimilation into the broader Assamese nationality are still not sure of their position. Otherwise why should even a small section of those who returned Assamese as their mother-tongue in the 1971 Census now think of going back to Bengali as their mother tongue? Clearly, the returning of Assamese as the mother tongue was partly a political decision dictated by needs of survival—a compromise and an adjustment wherein the linguistic identity would be sacrificed to win over the confidence of the Assamese-speaking people. This is yet another instance in history of a people with a distinct culturo-

linguistic heritage being forced by circumstances to adopt a new language and culture. And, this adoption of a new language has been the first step in their becoming members of a separate nationality. The immigrant Bengali Muslim who had for centuries been part of the Bengali nationality, was to abandon his nationhood and start getting assimilated into the Assamese mainstream.

While there is no denying the fact that at different levels the process of assimilation of immigrant Muslims into the Assamese nationality is going on, yet certain questions are bound to arise regarding the changes that could be wrought in the overall cultural base of Assamese society by such assimilation. The cultural base of Assamese society has been built up through an amalgam of folk traditions and tribal practices with broad pan-Hindu forms. Srimanta Sankardeva's school of Vaishnavism upholds such an ethos whose liberal base has strengthened social fibres of the state. The Muslims who came to Assam in the 13th and 14th centuries got assimilated within this cultural base and this is adequately reflected in the *Zikir* and *Zari* songs which talk more of peace, harmony and assimilation than of Islam (Malik, 1958). One of the reasons which helped such an assimilation was the demographic structure of Assamese society at that time. Not only did the Muslims speedily assimilate into the Assamese society, but also did a large section of Bengali Hindus who became a part of the Assamese caste-Hindu social structure.

This process of assimilation of Bengali Hindus into the Assamese community came to a halt even as communication routes improved and it became easier for them to retain links with their home region and also nourish their own cultural and linguistic roots. As flow of Bengali Hindu population increased along with spread of British colonial administration in the state, need for assimilation with the Assamese disappeared and was speedily replaced by urge to maintain the Bengali identity. Large-scale migration of Hindus before and after partition of the country resulted in Bengali Hindu enclaves coming up in several areas of the Brahmaputra Valley where linguistic and cultural exclusiveness played a major role (U. Misra in Abbi, ed., 1984). In recent years, however, there seems to have been a positive reduction in the Assamese-Bengali (Hindu) divide, with the Bengalis in the Brahmaputra Valley having accepted the status of Assamese as the official language and making serious attempts to adjust themselves to the majority community. Like the immigrant Muslims, the Bengali Hindus too in many areas send their children to Assamese-medium schools, although they would not surely prefer to return Assamese as their mother-tongue. But with new generations of Bengali Hindus in the

Brahmaputra Valley being increasingly educated in Assamese-medium schools, earlier antagonisms are bound to disappear, though culturally both linguistic groups would maintain their separate identities. Like the immigrant Muslims, Bengali Hindus too in Assam have contributed greatly to the growth of Assamese literature and culture.

But to return to the issue of far-reaching cultural changes that are bound to follow a shift in the demographic balance, with the segment of immigrant Muslims within Assamese society has registered a sharp rise. Unlike the Muslims of the earlier period who, for a variety of reasons, got assimilated within the Assamese cultural framework, the substantially large Muslim population of today cannot be expected to accept Assamese cultural icons easily. For example, the *namghar* or place of worship forms an integral part of Assamese society and is central to its socio-cultural and religious life. Would the *masjid* which is equally central to the neo-Assamese Muslim's socio-cultural and religious life really be able to substitute the role of the *namghar*? How far would the immigrant neo-Assamese Muslims be able to integrate themselves with the Assamese nationality? How far would the cultural taproots of Assamese literature and society be affected by the assimilation process? Would the future of the Assamese as a distinct nationality be ensured if the number of Assamese-speakers recorded in the Census figures remain more or less constant or would other socio-economic factors also count? Can language always be seen as the sole determining ingredient of culture of a particular community? These are questions which brook no easy answers, but are bound to come up whenever the assimilation of two culturally diverse groups of people takes place because of a variety of political and social factors

Given the above situation, it is inevitable that any popular struggle either of the Assamese or of the tribal communities in the state would be linked with the problem of influx. Even if more autonomous administrative units or states are carved out of present-day Assam to satisfy aspirations of the emerging middle classes among Bodos, Mishings Tiwas, Rabhas and other tribal communities, the threat posed to the identity of these communities by changes in demographic pattern and the consequent pressure on land would not be reduced. The demand for autonomous homelands being raised by almost every ethnic group in Assam is actually indicative of the growing apprehension in these communities about being eventually swamped by outsiders. Assam's first Chief Minister, Gopinath Bardoloi was aware of tribal apprehensions and had, along with J.J.M. Nichols-Roy, worked out the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

which, it was believed, would meet the aspirations of the smaller ethnic groups. But in course of time the Sixth Schedule turned out to be a mere plank for statehood demands and the very purpose for which it had been framed was thwarted.

In recent years, the Assam Government has signed several accords with the plains tribal groups but none of these may be said to have been successful. The Bodo leadership has now rejected the Bodo Accord and is planning to launch a new movement for complete statehood. Similar seems to be the fate of the other accords. As stated already, the complex demographic pattern of the state would make it impossible for any particular ethnic group to exercise territorial autonomy. Commenting on such attempts at devolution of powers, Horowitz says,

Important as it is to ask how a regime of devolved power should be structured, it is also important to ask related questions: when and how devolution and other policies to counter separatism can be put in place and how they can avoid fostering the very secession they aim to prevent. Proposals for devolution abound, but more often than not devolution arguments are difficult to reach and, once reached, soon abort. Most such agreements are concluded against a background of secessionist warfare or terrorist violence. Where central authority is secure, as in India, the appropriate decisions can be made and implemented by the Center. But, where the very question is how far the writ of the center will run, devolution is a matter of bilateral agreement, and an enduring agreement is an elusive thing (Horowitz, 622-3).

Yet, despite the Centre's being a party to it, the Bodo Accord has floundered primarily because the heterogeneity of the region constituting Bodoland makes it impossible for the Accord to be worked out successfully.

A federal restructuring of Assam has been on the cards for long. But no one is clear as to how this would be worked out. The homogeneity of the state has been gravely upset by the influx and this makes it extremely difficult for a genuine sharing of power between different ethnic groups. The resultant frustration is bound to find expression in different violent movements sometimes against what are perceived as out-groups and sometimes of an inter-ethnic nature. This is clearly to be seen in the fratricidal conflict which has gripped the Bodoland movement. While more militant groups like the National Democratic Front for Bodoland (NDFB) and the Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) have been gunning down Bodo activists who do not accept their vision of an independent Bodoland.

the moderate elements like the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha are being increasingly marginalised. The different Bodo militant groups have also embarked on a programme of ethnic cleansing by gunning down non-Bodo villagers belonging to Assamese, immigrant Muslim and Bengali Hindu segments of the population.

The question of cultural identity and political rights is deeply involved in any assertion either for autonomy or independent statehood by any of the communities. And these are in turn linked with land and demographic change. Therefore, influx and the land issue will continue to occupy central positions in any such struggle. Organizations which would try to play down the threat posed by influx, and the resultant change in the demographic pattern, are bound to lose out on those who would focus on these. The recent elections (1996) have shown that any national party which denied the presence of foreign nationals in Assam has had to make way once again to the Asom Gana Parishad which, though making assuring noises to the minorities, is still committed to the Assam Accord which calls for expulsion of post-March 1971 immigrants (both Muslims and Hindus) and which is for the repeal of the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act of 1983.¹⁰—a measure introduced by the Congress (I) government and which makes it difficult for illegal migrants to be detected and deported. The Asom Gana Parishad, which came to power by exploiting the wishes of the Assamese the people on the influx issue, is formally committed to take measures on both illegal influx and the encroachment of land by foreign migrants. If it fails on these fronts, all its talk about “self-rule”¹¹ for the people of Assam would be of little avail.

That the AGP’s talk of “self-rule” has lost much of its edge in the past one year of it being in office may be seen from the fact that it has decided to drop the issues of influx and land encroachment by immigrants from its agenda. The party has also been maintaining a stony silence on the question of repeal of the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act. As a result, organisations like the All Assam Students Union and the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad have come out in open opposition to the Asom Gana Parishad and are trying to forge an alternate alliance of regional parties and groups in the state. It is ironical that the Asom Gana Parishad, which was the first party to come to power on the appeal of regional politics, is today seen by both the AASU and the ULFA as a betrayer of the regional cause.

Fifty years ago, Assam members of the Constituent Assembly had demanded political and financial autonomy for the states of the Indian Union. None of their demands were given even a sympathetic hearing by

the Central leaders. And, Congress party which took over reins of government in Assam started capitulating to New Delhi after the death of Gopinath Bardoloi in 1950. Since then upto 1977, when the first non-Congress government led by the Janata Party came to power, the state Congress consistently compromised the interests of Assam. And, when the Congress came back to power after eighteen months of Janata rule, it continued its game of playing off the minority immigrant Muslims, the tea-garden community and the plains tribal groups against the core Assamese segment of the population. Issues like illegal influx and the consequent pressure on cultivable land leading to pauperisation of the Assamese peasantry were conveniently pushed under the carpet and the Congress maintained its power base by nuturing its vote-banks among the minorities. Ironically, the Asom Gana Parishad too seemed to be following the same course to stay in power. Like the Assam Congress of the nineteen forties, the Asom Gana Parishad too vociferously promoted the regional plank and was voted to power. And, very much like the Congress, the compulsions of power forced it to change its sails. The demographic pattern of the state has compelled the AGP to rely more and more on the predominantly non-Assamese support base. But, although the AGP has shelved the issue of foreign influx for the time being and has put the Assam Accord in cold storage, yet in order to keep up its appeal as a regional party, it would have to continue to buttress its demand for greater autonomy for the state. For, without it, its very existence as a regional party would be jeopardised. Hence, its insistence on self-rule for the states, which would mean that the Centre would have to give full autonomy and retain only defence, communications, foreign affairs and currency under it. As long as it continues to voice this demand, the AGP is bound to get the qualified support of bodies like the AASU and the AJYCP as well as the smaller regional outfits of the state.

The All Assam Students' Union has also been calling for a radical restructuring of Centre-State relations. While such demands would naturally help maintain the focus on the need to restructure Centre-State relations and keep the debate going on what sort of a viable federalism should be evolved, they would not help resolve some of the immediate issues faced by the people of the northeastern region. For that, a mere change of government at the state level will not do. What will be needed is a major change in the attitude of the Centre towards states like Assam which are plagued today not only by chronic economic backwardness but, more importantly, by a feeling of alienation from the rest of the country. The feeling that the Central Government has been continuously abdicating its

responsibilities in the case of Assam and the Assamese people must be effectively erased. The issue of illegal influx must be fought at the national level and must not be viewed as a problem faced by the Assamese alone.

Not that the Congress-ruled Centre has not been made aware of the problem. For, as way back as 1992, the Congress (I) general secretaries of the northeastern region in their document entitled "Report of the General Secretaries (1st March 1989 to 2nd July, 1992)" had highlighted the dangers posed by the illegal influx into the region and how this influx was being actively aided and abetted by the fundamentalist parties of Bangladesh. It quoted Bangladesh Census figures to prove that between 1971 and 1989 as many as 75 lakhs of minority Hindus left Bangladesh because of religious persecution. The report further linked the increase in the influx into the northeastern region to the rise of fundamentalism in Bangladesh and said: "... the emerging trends in Bangladesh today and the increasing infiltration have thrown a challenge to the minorities living in the region to take a wise and farsighted stand. To turn a blind eye or to oppose any such talk, using a forum in the name of a particular community, in a tone and temper that strengthen only the fundamentalist forces, will be the height of folly" (Hazarika, 255). This was a clear call to the Muslims of the northeastern region to resist the illegal infiltration in their own larger interest.

The NEICC (I) document also held New Delhi responsible for a "half-hearted approach to this challenging problem" and blamed the External Affairs Ministry of not functioning at all on the infiltration issue (Hazarika, 255). The document noted that ideological support was given to the phenomenon of infiltration by Islamic fundamentalists who envisaged a larger Islamic country comprising Bangladesh and the entire North-East. Commenting on the Centre's lackadaisical attitude, a special correspondent of a leading national daily writes: "And yet, at the 'national level', this is not how the issue is seen, at least in public. As far as the leaders of the Union Government go, the problem is entirely the creation of "Assamese chauvinists" and is now being exploited by the BJP and the Hindutva forces to make political gains. Such dichotomy or, in plainer language, hypocrisy, characterizes virtually every aspect of Delhi's perception of the North-East. Is it any wonder that separatism, despite claims that the problem of the ULFA has been sorted out and only a few malcontents remain to be brought into the mainstream, continues to gain ground and attract fresh converts, day after day, even while on the surface, barring of course the sheer agonies of daily life of the ordinary citizen, everything looks under control? Is anybody listening?" (Prabhakara, July 3, 1993).

The abdication of responsibility by the Centre not only on the influx

issue but also on matters of economic and industrial development of the state has been directly conducive to the growth of militant insurgency. Not that the average Assamese has been taken in by the idea of *Swadhin Aom* floated by the United Liberation Front of Assam; but, as long as the Centre fails to discharge its duties towards the states, especially when the culture and identity of a particular people are at stake, insurgency and separatism are bound to grow. Unlike neighbouring Nagaland which is not faced with problems like mass-scale illegal influx and the identity of whose people is ensured by Constitutional provisions, Assam today is fighting a last-ditch battle to retain its identity and culture. There was a time when the Assamese seemed to believe that once the fate of their language was decided, their identity would be secure. This view was shared not only by the Assamese nationalists but also by Assamese Congressmen exposed adequately to all-India politics. For instance, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee in its six-point election appeal issued in the year 1945, declared:

. . . unless the province of Assam be organised on the basis of the Assamese language and Assamese culture, the survival of the Assamese nationality and culture will become impossible. The inclusion of Bengali-speaking Sylhet and Cachar (plains portion) and the immigration or importation of lakhs of Bengali settlers on wastelands has been threatening to destroy the distinctness of Assam and has, in practice, caused many disorders in its administration. For appropriate solution and redress of this big problem, the Congress party should be installed as the majority in the Assembly (Guha: 1977, 302).

Congress politics was aimed at securing a homogenous homeland for the Assamese-speaking people and this obviously led to the eventual alienation of the different ethnic groups, first in the hills and then in the plains. The Assamese perception of nationality was confined to that of linguistic identity alone and this has proved to be self-defeating in the long run. It was once again the Assam Congress's insistence on making Assamese the state language in 1960 that triggered off the process for the break up of the state. Assamese rigidity on matters of the official language and the medium of instruction in colleges and universities have already done considerable damage to the social fabric of the state, while the tendency of the Assamese majority to take the other tribal communities for granted has added to the Assamese-tribal divide. The basically Assamese character of the Assam Congress resulted in alienating it from the hill tribes and helped the break-up of composite Assam. But irony of the situation lay in the fact that when the issues of demographic change, pressure on cultivable land and a sharp increase in the educated

unemployed eventually caught up with the Congress, it was forced to abandon its traditional ethnic Assamese base and grow increasingly dependant on the "vote-banks" among the immigrants and the tea garden tribes.

The Congress has had to pay heavily by forfeiting the support of its traditional Asamiya base. Regional parties like the Asom Gana Parishad were quick to take advantage of the situation. But it did not take long for the AGP to realise that given the demographic picture of the state, it would be imperative for it to shed its image of being a party of the Assamese middle class. Even in the relatively homogenised Brahmaputra Valley, in their effort to consolidate their national identity, the ethnic Assamese are today facing stiff resistance from the Bodos and other plains tribals. As a result, several representative Assamese organisations like the Asom Sahitya Sabha and the All Assam Students Union are today emphasising on the need for a spirit of understanding and accommodation amongst the Assamese. Though for the AASU, illegal influx and the presence of foreign nationals in the state continue to pose the gravest threat to the Assamese community and the issue of detection and deportation of foreigners comes first in its agenda, yet it has been giving priority to its efforts to win over the different tribal organisations of the state by working out a commonly acceptable agenda. On the other hand, the Asom Sahitya Sabha, long known for its Assamese middle-class irredentism, has, of late, been trying to expand its base among the immigrant pockets in the riverine belts and has been repeatedly stressing on the need to finally accept the neo-Assamese as integral parts of the Assamese community. This change of positioning vis-a-vis the plains tribals and the immigrants on the part of two of the most important Assamese socio-political organisations is clearly indicative of the fact that the Assamese have come to accept the pluralism of their state and have realised the impossibility of achieving a uni-cultural or uni-lingual homeland. Therefore, in such a situation, the Centre's efforts should be directed not towards carving out more and more autonomous zones for the state's ethnic groups but to encourage and support any such move which would help provide a workable formula for the ethnic Assamese and the tribal communities and other minorities of the state to live in a spirit of mutual respect and accommodativeness. Just as the separation of Sylhet did not lead to a homogenous Assamese homeland, similarly the creation of more and more autonomous homelands for the different tribal communities of the present state of Assam, would not completely meet ethnic aspirations.

Why is it that while on the one hand the Assamese are adjusting

themselves to the complex demographic pattern of their state which stands in the way of their achieving a homogenous homeland, on the other hand, the struggle for an independent Assam continues to attract a substantial section of the youth? All the contradictions within the Assamese nationality notwithstanding, the idea of a *Swadhin Asom* seems quite often to be a sort of rallying point for a people who are faced today with a grave crisis of identity. It could also be seen as part of a strategy to continue to ensure the hegemonic role of the Assamese in the region. The idea of a *Swadhin Asom*, long embedded in the Assamese psyche, found expression in insurgency because of certain specific socio-economic and political reasons. Therefore, the problem of insurgency in the northeastern states must be seen in its true perspective, as one having more than strong roots in the land issue, in the large-scale unemployment of educated youth, and the deep-seated feeling of cultural insecurity of the people as a whole. It would, therefore, be totally self-defeating for the Centre if, instead of attempting a political solution, it opts for a military one. The entire northeastern region has been the victim of wrong perceptions and prejudices. This has been progressively revealed not only in the Central Government's overall attitude towards the region and its people, but also in many of the scholarly presentations on the "Seven Sisters". The people of the northeastern region are often blamed for being unduly sensitive about what others think of them. But if the same set of prejudices and misconceptions are kept on being repeated at different levels and get reflected in government policy as well, then one must conclude that somewhere something is inherently wrong. It is quite common for inhabitants of the northeastern region to be mistaken for South-East Asians or Chinese in the streets of Delhi or Bombay. Students from this region are often referred to as "chinks" in the capital, an obvious reference to their high cheekbones and narrow eyes. One often comes across protests from these students against such attitudes in the letter-columns of national dailies.

Though the situation seems to be changing somewhat especially because of the electronic media which has made the people of the heartland aware of rich diversity of cultures that makes up our country, yet certain representations which have come down from the colonial period, still prevail. For example, the Assamese are lazy, indolent and xenophobic; the Nagas are all head hunters; Assam and the northeastern region are full of jungles and primitive tribals, etc. What is disturbing is that this sort of attitude is to be found not only among the less-informed but surprisingly, also among a section of the educated elite of the country. For instance, in

a recent book by a leading social scientist, the author, while discussing the roots of Assamese nationalism (which he terms as “ethnic chauvinism”), says that the language issue was taken up by the Assamese neither for their love of the mother-tongue nor for the development of the Assamese language, but primarily because of “an animus born out of the mortification feeling (sic!) among the Assamese at the relative excellence of the Bengali-speaking people who surpassed them not only in the economic spheres but also in the university examinations” (Basu, 51). The author concludes that, among other factors, it was “the hangover of Bengali domination (which) incited an inferior cultural complex among the Assamese. The “Lahe Lahe” (leisurely) attitude of the Assamese, lack of any literary-cultural resurgence, minimum participation in nationalist movement might be reasons for Assamese chauvinism leading to divisions of the state and rise of sub-regional movements, vis., Udayachal, Bodoland etc.” (Basu, 53). Here the writer is not only giving vent to commonly held misconceptions about a people but has also twisted history to suit his purpose. For, anyone acquainted even marginally with the history of modern Assam knows about the degree of participation by the Assamese in different phases of the freedom struggle. That the Assamese quest for identity was well integrated with the national movement led by Gandhiji is a fact well established (Banerjee, 46). This has already been dealt with in the introductory chapter of this book.

Such prejudices at the scholarly level not only lead to misunderstandings between different communities but also tend to create wrong impressions in the minds of policy planners and administrators. The author, in his urge to denigrate a particular community, arrives at generalizations about his own people which are not borne out by historical facts. For instance, he says: “At no time, Bengal showed any tendency towards language chauvinism, or nativist sentiment based on cultural factors. Some American scholars, viz., Myron Weiner, Marcus Franda, John Broomfield have earmarked Bengali Bhadrakalok’s attitude towards the non-Bengalee outsiders as expressed in such contemptuous terms as Khotta (denoting Hindi-speaking Beharis or Uttar Pradeshis), Uray (Oriyas) and Mero (Marwaris). But the Bengalee sense of humour and pun include the East Bengal refugees who are termed as Bangals or Germans” (Basu, 45). Being a historian himself, the scholar should have been acquainted with the sentiments expressed in Ramananda Chatterjee’s *Prabasi* and the espousal of the cause of greater Bengal which was to be made up of Bihar, Bengal and Assam and where Bengali was to be the sole language and culture. One is also reminded of the debate over the status of the Assamese

language (then seen by many as a dialect of Bengali) in journals like *Mrinmayee* and *Bharati* towards the close of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, with the consistent demand being made that Oriya and Assamese merge with Bengali which was a much superior language (T. Misra 162-3).

The position adopted by scholars like Basu show that almost a century after the parochial discourse in a section of the Bengali Press, the idea of excellence of one people over another is still being asserted. While holding no brief whatsoever for Assamese linguistic chauvinism whose worst side has been time and again expressed from 1960s to the 1980s, one feels that an objective assessment of historico-political causes leading to the assertion of language-based identity in Assam would perhaps help us to see through the mists of chauvinism. That would also help one to better understand the different movements for identity-assertion that are going on at various levels among the ethnic groups of the northeastern region. Set attitudes and prejudices need to be shed precisely because they have been responsible for much of the tragedy unleashed on the people of the northeastern region. It is a known fact that during the initial years of the insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram, the Indian army which had been trained to fight external aggression, did not know how to deal with an internal revolt and thought that it was fighting just another war. As a result the entire population of the insurgency-ridden area was considered as belonging to the enemy camp and treated likewise. The attitude of the Indian security forces towards the people of the northeastern region was part of the overall attitude of the Hindi-Hindu heartland towards the peripheral regions of the country. That the Nagas and Mizos happened to be predominantly Christians, seemed to have added substantially to the misconception that they were non-Indians working against the integrity of the nation. Ignorance about the region compounded with certain set prejudices made the Indian forces behave like an occupation army in the insurgency affected areas. Even today, despite clear directions from the top-brass of the army as well as orientation programmes for the jawans, large-scale violations of human rights are being committed in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

Though certain instances of major human rights violations, like the Oinam incident in Nagaland, have received national and international attention, there have been innumerable instances of torture and "encounter" deaths in the northeastern region which have gone virtually unnoticed. For instance, in the year 1995, the Guwahati High Court ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation into torture-deaths of four

Assamese youths at the hands of army personnel. The tell-tale photographs of the bodies of the tortured youths evoked wide-scale public resentment against the army in the state. (U. Misra, *EPW*, April 15 1995). Clearly, the army was doing something which went against its basic principles of functioning. It is true that when tackling an insurgency any army has to function under great constraints. But the incidents of rape, torture and killings, even if committed by "a handful of errant soldiers" does affect the credibility of the army as a whole and adds towards alienating the people.¹²

Army personnel, who are pitted in a no-win situation while fighting the insurgents, often resort to retaliatory violence on the common people for attacks carried out against the security forces by the militants. There have been numerous cases of random arrest and torture of civilians by the security forces and deaths in army custody have become common occurrence. This has been to the advantage of the militants who not only gain the sympathy of the masses but also succeed in portraying the Indian security forces as an occupation army. The violence perpetrated by the State is often focussed upon by the militants to divert the people's attention from their own acts of abductions and murder of civilians, not to speak of the attacks on the security forces. It is, however, a positive sign that of late the army authorities seem to have become aware of the need for educating the troops regarding the rights of the people in insurgency-ridden areas¹³ (Appendix XXII). There have been instances of deterrent punishment being given to army offenders, although these have been very few in number and are invariably outweighed by the deaths in army custody and in fake encounters of suspected militants who quite often are innocent civilians. A single death of an innocent civilian in army custody swiftly neutralises whatever popular anger there happens to be against excesses committed by the militants. Therefore, it is imperative that the security forces tackling insurgency be extremely cautious in the matter of human rights because showing due respect to the rights of the citizens, even when faced by grave odds, is an important plank of counter-insurgency operations. For, without some degree of popular support, it would be impossible for the security forces to tackle the insurgents.

Thus, violations of human rights will be substantially reduced, if not totally done away with, only if the overall attitude towards the insurgency-hit areas of northeastern India undergoes a major change. Not only set attitudes and perceptions must change, but the Centre must also learn to react quickly and sharply to the problems faced by this particular region. Once the Centre learns to react with alacrity to this region, not just in times

of insurgency and mass protests, but as a matter of policy, much of the lost confidence of the people will be restored. Those at the helm of affairs at the Centre must realise that the people of the northeastern region are often compelled by circumstances to side with the insurgents. The break-up of the law and order machinery and the inability of the State to ensure the right to life and property of the average citizen has given much leverage to the militants. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that the people are not critical of the violence indulged in by the militants. With the State machinery being virtually absent in the remote, inaccessible villages, the militants have no problem in enforcing their writ on the common man. There have been some instances of late in Assam and other areas of the northeastern region where the people have openly expressed their opposition to the diktats of the militants and have expressed their repulsion against the murder of civilians by the latter. But, in the absence of meaningful steps by the Centre and the state governments to win over the confidence of the people, the militants would continue to have a free run.

It is a pity that most of the time the northeastern states are engaged in representing their case before the Centre and trying to get a hearing from the nation's leaders. This has been so since the forties, and history bears out how insensitive and unsympathetic the latter have often been. Much of the creative energy of these states is, therefore, consumed in projecting their self-image. Asok Mitra aptly sums this up in the following manner:

Assam, unlike most other areas of the north-east, has always integrated with India's freedom movement and her aspirations of material and cultural might. It has produced some of the finest national leaders and scholars, and has contributed so much to the intellectual and cultural wealth of India through its beautiful language and rich literature. Therefore, Assam could have well spent some of the energies it has wasted on projecting its self-image, on training more and more of its sons and daughters in entrepreneurship, science and technology, insisting that they should be enabled to fill the bulk of entrepreneurial, technical, managerial and production positions in a time bound programme. Being master in one's house, however modestly, is surely worth more than sub-serving machismo (Mitra, May 1983).

Even more than Nagaland, it is Assam which presents a test-case for the Indian nation-state today. The continuous attempts by the Assamese to develop a cohesive identity, the ever-growing complex demographic picture of the state, the colonial pattern of the economy and the sharp ethnic divides have turned Assam into one of the problem states of the Indian Union. Any attempt to understand the present situation in Assam is made difficult by the fact that the growth of secessionist insurgency in

the state cannot easily be explained by economic factors alone because the region and its people have had a long history of cultural interaction with the rest of the country and the question of a psychological divide, as in the case of the hill states, does not appear too relevant. Discussing Assam's peculiar position, Ashis Banerjee says:

Assam presents by far the most complex picture in terms of its effort to develop a cohesive identity. With the penetration of British plantation interests in Assam the entire economy as well as demography composition was substantially altered. Migration into Assam took place on a massive scale with the influx of the Bengalis as well as plantation labour, not to mention the Marwaris and other trading communities. Large tracts of land were given at concessional rates to tea-plantation owners as a part of deliberate British policy. Besides, not only was the Surma Valley a part of Assam, largely populated by Bengalis, but also the Brahmaputra Valley developed Bengali concentrations such as in the Goalpara district. Tribal populations presented a different kind of problem to the uneasy combination of the emergent Ahom and caste-Hindu Assamese middle classes. Besides, a deliberate policy of Muslim migration from eastern Bengal promoted by the Muslim League especially in the years preceding independence compounded the problems even further (Banerjee: 1989, 12-13).

It is significant that more serious threat to the Indian nation-state should come from Assam rather than from her hill neighbours, when the Assamese, long considered as the "Indians" of the northeastern region, started harbouring notions of a *Swadhin Asom* and even plastered the walls with slogans like "Indians, Go Home". That this could happen in Assam's relationship with the Indian Union is in itself one of the strongest indictments of the nation-state. The future of the Indian federation will depend a lot on how effectively it can tackle the problem of uneven development of the states and ensure equitable distribution of resources. The demand for a radical restructuring of the Constitution is gaining ground and several regional parties have been demanding greater political and economic autonomy. For Assam and the northeastern region, the struggle for autonomy that began in the forties is bound to gather increasing momentum in the years to follow. The wheel seems to have come full circle.

It has often been argued that the ethnic problem in Assam would be largely solved if a viable federal set-up is worked out within the state by carving out autonomous units for different nationalities. It has also been argued that even in small countries like Switzerland decentralization has not led to fragmentation, that territoriality reduces the potential of conflict between the different groups (Narang, 216). But as we have discussed earlier, such territoriality may not be possible for states like Assam where

there are few homogenous ethnic zones. The Accords signed by the Assam government with the different ethnic groups are bound to be non-starters because of this. Moreover, whenever an autonomous area is carved out for a particular nationality, there is much resentment among the large minority groups in that area who often come to be treated as second-class citizens. Merely to suggest a federal set-up constituted of several autonomous units may look attractive on paper but may fail to meet the demands of the actual ground situation. Therefore, the central and state governments must try to work out a solution within the present territorial framework of the state.

The Centre's credentials have been badly affected in the northeastern region and what is needed today are affective measures which will restore the confidence of the people. The demand for greater powers for states must be met and the states must be given the right over their land and resources. The struggle not only for political autonomy but for the right over one's resources is something which unites the entire northeastern region. The resilience of the Indian nation-state will be tested in the coming years on these issues. Much will depend on how sincere the Indian State is in accommodating the wishes of these peoples. The North-Eastern Congress (I) Co-ordination Committee in its "Report of the General Secretaries" summed this up succinctly in the following words: "If Delhi is not to remain distant (even foreign) in the minds of the people of this region, if they have instinctively and compulsively to feel themselves as much in the mainstream of development as their counterparts in rest of the country then action must match words. . . . The Centre's goodwill and resolve must be made manifest and plain for any one to see. We would venture to suggest that the best antidote to the burgeoning insurgency in this region would be a convinced citizenry of the North-east—convinced of the Centre's goodwill, its emphatic imagination, its capacity to convert its words into deeds—*facta non verba*". These are not the words of any angry students' body but a collective voice of the northeastern units of a political party which has often been accused of kow-towing to the Central Congress leadership and failing to defend regional interests; which has been accused of even selling the region to infiltrators. But, all the politics of vote-banks in today's Assam and the often reprehensible role of the Congress notwithstanding, these are also the words of a party which once possessed a strong legacy of struggle to defend the identity of the peoples of this region. Hence, the warning sounded by the NEICC (I) has a ring of urgency. When it says that the Centre must convince the people of the northeastern region about its goodwill and sincerity, one is reminded of

the fraudulent character of the Assam Accord foisted by the Centre (Appendix XVII). Instead of addressing itself to any one of the major points raised by the All Assam Students' Union in its seventeen-point memorandum, the Centre tried to wriggle out of a difficult situation by conceding certain purely economic demands apart from detection and disenfranchisement clauses for foreign nationals which too were soon to be nullified by the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act of 1983 (Appendix XVI). Major demands ranging from reservation of Assembly seats for the Assamese people, introduction of Inner Line permit system and ban on sale of land to non-Assamese, were left untouched for obvious reasons. But with the ethnic situation taking an even more complicated turn as major areas of conflict between the autochthones and the immigrants are developing, the Indian State must act quickly and decisively to cull indigenous fears of being outnumbered in their own homeland. The nation-state in India has proved its accommodative power in Mizoram and partly also in Nagaland. It remains to be seen how it faces the highly complex situation in Assam in particular and the northeastern region in general.

The struggles for an independent Nagaland and a *Swadhin Asom*, however decimated they might look at times, continue to hold centre-stage in the politics of the region. No discussion on Assam would be complete without taking into account the United Liberation Front of Assam and its activities. Similarly, there can be no talk about a stable peace in strife-torn Nagaland without taking into account both the factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. This, despite the fact that both the states have representative governments as well as elected local bodies right down to the village level. From where then do organizations like the ULFA and the NSCN draw their legitimacy in the eyes of the people? Is it just the fear of the gun or is it that these organizations have raised certain issues which are close to the hearts of the people? Do the common people really approve of the tactics adopted by these outfits in confronting the State? Or do they just keep quiet because they know that neither the elected government nor the insurgents can really bring about any substantial change in their lives, that either way it is a lost cause? Everyone, from the human rights bodies to the average citizen, is outraged and concerned at the violence being perpetrated by the State. What should one say about the violence let loose by the "forces of liberation"? Should one accept it as part of the ongoing struggle for liberation? But, there are also other disturbing questions lurking in the background. Would the forces of liberation behave in a democratic manner, once "freedom" is achieved? What actually would be the rights of the different communities

and nationalities in the liberated land? What are the credentials of those who have taken upon themselves the onerous duty of freeing their countrymen from the “colonial yoke”? What lessons does the history of similar struggles in other parts of the world hold for the people? Have not liberation struggles often ended up in bloody civil war between the different ethnic groups who once constituted the corporate body under whose banner the struggle was initially carried on? All these questions, and many more, have not yet been satisfactorily tackled either by the different militant groups fighting for independence or by the Indian State or the political elite of the country. Meanwhile, it is the common people who are being tossed about in the turbulent waters of insurgency, even as the idea of a *Swadhin Asom* or an independent Nagaland continues to endure.

NOTES

1. The Constitution of India gives the Nagas the exclusive right over their land and resources and in the matter of customary laws. These provisions were incorporated in the Constitution when the state of Nagaland was formed and mark an important step in the Indian Nation-State's attempts to accommodate diverse ethno-nationalist aspirations. Refer Chapter 3, fn. 29.

2. As per the Census of 1991, except in Arunachal, in all the other tribal states the scheduled tribe population registered a marked rise. In Nagaland the S.T. population increased from 83.99 per cent to 87.70 per cent, whereas in Mizoram it increased from 93.55 per cent to 94.75 per cent. In Meghalaya the increase was from 80.58 per cent to 85.53 per cent. This shows that the indigenous population of these states are not being threatened by influx of outsiders.

3. The Ao tribe was the first to come into contact with Christianity and modern education. As a result, it got a head-start over other tribes. This has often resulted in a strong anti-Ao feeling among other tribes.

4. When there was a move to replace Nagamese by Angami in broadcasts made by Radio Kohima, there was a strong resistance from the other tribes. Although Nagamese is somewhat looked down upon by the Naga tribes, yet in the absence of a commonly acceptable tribal language, Nagamese continues to be the only link language. The proceedings of the Nagaland Assembly are also recorded in Nagamese.

5. Most of these industries being still largely extractive in nature, the plough-back of capital in the state is still very small. The annual profits of the tea industry alone exceed the annual budget of the state. But the impact of tea in the state's economy had been quite marginal till recent times.

6. During the height of the Bodo stir when school-buildings, offices and bridges were made the major targets, (not to speak of the several bomb explosions in public vehicles leading to scores of deaths), the then Asom Gana Parishad

government had alleged that the Research and Analysis Wing of the Government of India was training and arming the Bodo militants under Operation Jhum Jhum. While the AGP government's language policy further fuelled Bodo apprehensions, yet the role of the Centre in destabilising the government led by a regional party cannot be ruled out. Moreover, those who tried to channelise the Bodo movement primarily against the AGP and the indigenous Assamese were trying to push under the carpet the main cause of Bodo anxiety—the land factor.

7. The Bodoland Accord has hit the rocks because of the Central and state government's refusal to include the ten kilometre wide belt in the north touching the Indo-Bhutan border as well as 515 more villages. But this seems to be only the apparent reason. The real reason for the failure of the Accord would be related to the land-ownership pattern and the fact that in the total area of Bodoland covering 5,186 square kilometres and having a population of 21,37,000, only 30 per cent are Bodos. Of the 2570 villages in Bodoland, the Bodos are a majority in just around a thousand villages. Thus, it did not take long for the Bodo leadership to realise soon after Bodoland was formed, that with the overwhelming majority of the Bodos being landless (some figures put it as high as seventy per cent), the main aim of their struggle would in the long run be subverted. The wide-scale attacks by the Bodos on the immigrant Muslims in the Bodo areas of Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon in 1993, 1994 and 1996 were obviously part of an attempt to drive the immigrants out of the cultivable land. In the 1994 disturbances, as many as 50,000 immigrant Muslims were rendered homeless, though they returned to their villages after peace was restored. The May 1996 attacks by Bodos on tea tribes in the Kokrajhar area, leaving scores dead and leading to a mass exodus of the former, is also linked to the land factor. The Bodo desperation is clearly associated with the realisation that they constitute a minority in the areas covered by Bodoland. Thus, it would be simplistic to view the Bodo struggle as one aimed chiefly against the "cultural imperialism" of the Assamese.

8. Over the years, the position of left parties like the CPI and CPI (M) has changed perceptibly on the influx issue. While both the parties had taken a stand against the Assam Movement, the CPI did not take long to recognise the popular content of the agitation. The CPM, however, stuck to its stand that the movement against foreign nationals led by the AASU-AAGSP was "anti-national" and needed to be dealt firmly. It also termed the Asom Gana Parishad as a chauvinist force. But, with the situation in Tripura assuming ever-dangerous proportions because of the demographic imbalance caused by influx of Bengali Hindus from Bangladesh, the CPM Chief Minister called for "Inner Line" restrictions against non-tribals entering his state. In Assam too, the CPM has shed its earlier position on the influx issue and joined the electoral alliance with the Asom Gana Parishad in the 1996 elections. Although the CPM has decided to support the new AGP government from outside, the CPI has joined the government.

9. The assumption that the rise in Muslim population in Assam has been due to influx from neighbouring Bangladesh, has been discounted by several scholars and statisticians who argue that this is the result of normal birth-rate. They

maintain that the major migration of Muslim peasants into Assam took place between 1921-1941 and that since then the growth rate of Muslims has veered around a steady 24 per cent. Assam's higher growth rate in comparison with the all-India figure is sought to be explained in terms of high natural growth rate of the indigenous Assamese and the relative absence of mobility of the Assamese people, with immigration being just one of the factors. This, however, is not borne out by latest Census figures which show that the Muslim growth rate in Assam during 1971-1991 has been above 77 per cent, with that of Hindus being below 42 per cent. The percentage of Muslims has gone up from 24.56 per cent in 1971 to 28.43 per cent in 1991.

10. The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act of 1983 puts certain restrictive clauses on the detection of alleged foreign nationals in the state (see Appendix).

11. There seems to be much confusion over the connotations of the terms, "swadhikar" and "atma-niantran". While the first has often meant "self-rule", the second meant "self-determination". But when organisations like the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad refer to "atma-niantran" or self-determination, they themselves are not clear whether it means autonomy within the Indian Union or the right to secede.

12. Cases of rape and encounter killings are usually covered by the regional press, with only very blatant violations of human rights figuring in the national press. There have been some instances in Assam and Nagaland where the army authorities have taken deterrent action against jawans responsible for such crimes as rape. But these are few and far between. During each major operation, there has been widescale violation of human rights in the states of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland and very often such violations go unreported or are reported very late because of the remoteness of the areas concerned. But, since the last few years human rights organisations in these states have been doing commendable work in documenting cases of human rights violations.

13. The army authorities have, of late, become aware of the need to avoid excesses if they are to achieve success in their mission of controlling insurgency. The Army chief's guidelines to the jawans, though in itself self-revealing, seem to be a step to check such abuses. The army authorities have officially placed human rights on their agenda, though it remains to be seen how sincere they are about it. The constitution of the Human Rights Commission, whatever its inherent weaknesses, has provided human rights bodies a chance to at least highlight abuses by the security forces and the police.

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APPENDIX-I

The Treaty of Yandaboo, Feb. 24, 1826

Treaty of peace between the Honourable East India Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other, settled by Major General Sir Archibald Campbells K.C.B. & K.C.T.S. commanding the expedition, and Senior Commissioner in Pegu and Ava, Thomas Campbell Robertson, Esquire, Civil Commissioner in Pegu and Ava and Henry Dacie Chandds, Esquire, Captain Commanding his Britannic Majesty's and the Honourable Company's Naval Force on the Irrawaddy River, on the part of the Honourable Company: and by Mengyee-Mahah-Men-Hlah-kyan-ten Woonguee, Lord of Lay-Kain and Mengyee-Mahah-Hlah-Thoo-Atween-Woon, Lord of the Revenue, on the part of the king of Ava; who have each communicated to the other their full power agreed to and executed at Yandaboo, in the Kingdom of Ava on this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six, corresponding with the Fourth day of the decrease of the Moon Taboung, in the year One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty and seven Gaudama Era.

Article-1. There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable Company on the one part and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other.

Article-2. His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jyntia. With regard to Mannipoor it is stipulated, that should Ghumbheer Sing desire to return to that country, he shall be recognised by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.

Article-3. To prevent all future disputes respecting the boundary line between two great Nations, the British Government will retain the conquered Provinces of Arracan, including the four divisions of Arracan, Ramrec Cheduba and Sandoway, and His Majesty the King of Ava cedes all right thereto. The Unnoupectort mien or Arakan Mountains (known in Arakan by the name of the Yeomatoun or Pokhinglong Range) will henceforth form the boundary between the two great Nations on that side. Any doubts regarding the side line of demarcation will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective governments for the purpose, such Commissioners from both powers to be of suitable and corresponding rank.

Article-4. His Majesty the king of Ava cedes to the British Government the conquered Provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, and Mergni and Tennasscrim. With the islands and dependencies there unto appertaining taking the Salween River as the line of demarcation on that frontier; any doubts regarding their boundaries will be settled as specified in the concluding part of the Article third.

Article-5. In proof of the sincere disposition of the Burmese Government to maintain the relations of peace and amity between the Nations and as part indemnification to British Government for the expenses of the war, His Majesty the King of Ava agrees to pay the sum of one crore of Rupees.

Article-6. No person whatever, whether Native or foreign, is hereafter to be molested by either party, on account of the part which he may have taken or have been compelled to take in the present war.

Article-7. In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two governments, it is agreed that accredited ministers,

retaining an escort of safeguard of fifty men, from each, shall reside at the Durbar of the other, shall be permitted to purchase, or build a suitable place of residence, of permanent materials; and a Commercial Treaty, upon principles of reciprocal, advantage, will be entered into by the two high contracting powers.

Article-8. All public and private debts contracted by either Government or by the subjects of either Government with the others previous to the war, to be recognised and liquidated upon the same principles of honour and good faith as if hostilities had not taken place between the two Nations, and no advantage shall be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred or in consequence of the war; and according to the universal law of Nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava, shall in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul in the said dominions who will dispose of the same according to the tenor of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying under the same circumstances, in any part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the minister or other authority delegated by His Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

Article-9. The King of Ava will abolish all exactions upon British ships or vessels in Burman ports, that are not required from Burman ships or vessels in British ports, nor shall ships or vessels the property of British subjects, whether European or Indian, entering the Rangoon River or the Burman ports, be required to land their guns, or unship their rudders, or to do any other act not required of Burmese ships or vessels in British ports.

Article-10. The good and faithful ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken a part in the present war will, to the fullest extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subject, be included in the above Treaty.

Article-11. This treaty to be ratified by the Burmese authorities competent in the like case, and the ratification to be accompanied by all British, whether European or Native, American and other prisoners, who will be delivered over to the British Commissioners, on their part engaging that the said Treaty shall be ratified by the Right Honourable the Governor-General-in Council, and the Ratification shall be delivered to his Majesty the King of Ava, in four months or sooner if possible, and all the Burmese prisoners shall in like manner, be delivered over to their own Government as soon as they arrive in Bengal.

Sd/- Largeen Meonja
Woonghee

(seal of the Lotoo)
Sd/- Shwagum Woon,
Atawoon

Sd/- Archibald Campbell (L.S.)
Sd/- T.C. Robertson
Civil Commissioner (L.S.)
Sd/- Hy. D. Chads,
Captain Royal Navy. (L.S.)

APPENDIX II

**East India Company's Treaty with Poorunder Singh,
Raja of Assam, 1833.**

Article 1. The Company give over to Rajah Poorunder Singh the portion of Assam lying on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra of the eastward of the Dhuvsi-reen River (Dhansiri?) and on the northern bank to the eastward of a nullah immediately east of Bishnath.

Article 2. The Rajah Poorunder Singh agrees to pay an annual tribute, of 50,000 Rupees of Raja Mohree coinage to the Honourable Company.

Article 3. The Rajah Poorunder Singh binds himself, in the administration of justice in the country now made over to him, to abstain from the practices of the former Rajahs of Assam, as to cutting of ears and noses, extracting eyes or otherwise mutilating or torturing, and that he will not inflict cruel punishment for slight faults, but generally assimilate the administration of justice in his territory to that which prevails in the dominions of the H.C. He further finds himself not to permit the immolation of women by suttees.

Article 4. The Rajah Poorunder Singh binds himself to assist the passage of the troops of the Company through his territory, furnishing supplies and carriage on receiving payment for the same.

Article 5. Whether at Jorhat or elsewhere, wheresoever a spot may be required for the permanent cantonment of the troops of the British Government the Rajah agrees that, within the limits assigned to such cantonment he shall exercise no power whatever; all matters connected with such cantonment to be decided on by the office of the British government.

Article 6. In the event of a detachment being stationed at Suddeya or elsewhere, the Rajah Poorunder Singh binds himself to render it all the assistance that it shall require in regard to provisions and carriage.

Article 7. The Rajah binds himself ever to listen with attention to the advice of the political Agent to be stationed in Upper Assam, or to that of the Agent to the Governor-General with a view to the conduct of affairs in the country made over to him in conformity of the stipulations of this Agreement.

Article 8. The Rajah binds himself not to carry on any correspondence by letter or otherwise, or to enter into any contract or Agreement with the Rulers of any Foreign States. In all cases of necessity he will consult with Political Agent or Agent to the Governor-General by whom the necessary communication will be made.

Article 9. The Rajah binds himself to surrender, on demand from the Agent to the Governor-General or P.A., any fugitive from justice who may take refuge in his territory, and always to apply to those officers for the apprehension of any individual who may fly from his territory into that of the Honourable Company, or of any other State.

Article 10. It is distinctly understood that this Treaty invests Rajah Poorunder Singh with no power over the Moamaria country of the Bur Senaputtee.

Article 11. It being notorious that the quantity of opium produced in Assam is the cause of many miseries to the inhabitants, the Rajah binds himself that, whatever measures may be determined on with a view to checking this source of mischief in the territory of the Honourable Company, corresponding measures shall be adopted in the

territory made over to him.

In the event of Rajah's continuing faithful to the articles of this Treaty, the British Government engages to protect him from the aggressions of any foreign force, but if, which God forbid, he should in any way depart from a faithful adherence to the same, and be guilty of oppressing the people of the country entrusted to his charge then the right is reserved to the Government of Honourable Company either to transfer the said country to another ruler, or take in into its own immediate occupation.

Dated the 2nd March 1833, or 20th Phagoon, 1239 B.E.

True Translation

Signed T.C. Robertson

APPENDIX III

Extracts from a Petition in Person to A.G. Moffat Mills.

Judge of the Sudder Court.

By Maniram Dutta Barowa Dewan in 1853

(Mill's Report on the Province of Assam, 1854)

The Assam Rajahs, or Sorgee Deos, governed the country for 600 years and treated with mercy and consideration all classes in Assam, from the most respectable down to the Abors and other Hill Tribes; but by the mutual jealousies and dissensions of Rajahs and Muntrees [Ministers], the former lost their throne as well as sovereignty, while the country fell into the hands of the Burmese, and the people into twelve kinds of fire. After this the British Government at their own cost conquered the province, and drove out the Burmese. It was then found that the country was too poor to pay the expenses of Government; under instructions, conveyed in Mr. Secretary Swinton's letter, dated in April 1825, the Province was divided by Colonel Richards and Mr. David Scott into two Zillahs styled Senior and Junior Khunds; and in order to recover, if possible, the expenses incurred in conquering the Province, the Government reserved to themselves the Senior Khund, while the Junior Khund, which included all Upper Assam from the Bhyrubee Nuddee upwards, was abandoned or set apart for the preservation of the name and title of a fallen monarch and the rank, respectability and occupation of his nobility, the Borwahs and Phookans. This latter arrangement was a source of extreme delight to the people of these parts who hoped, thereby, to enjoy the blessings of a mild Government and to live in a state of happiness and contentment under the beneficent sway of a poor Assam Rajah. By the departure, however, of the abovenamed gentlemen, the people have been reduced to the most abject and hopeless state of misery from the loss of their fame, honour, rank, caste, employment.

1st. During the rule of Mr. Robertson, who succeeded Mr. David Scott in the superintendence of the Province, contrary to the advice of the latter, and agreeably to the suggestions of military men, a settlement was made in the country on a Jumma quite disproportioned to the capabilities of such a poor country. Nevertheless when the confusion occurred, had strict inquiry been made, it would have been found that there was no blame to be attached to the parties concerned, because if we take into consideration the annual resources and outlay of the present administration, it will be seen that without supporting the different grades of Mohuntos (Priests), nor upholding

the various ranks of nobility, the income of the Province is just adequate to cover the expenses of governing it, without leaving any profit. Illustrious Sir, we are just now, as it were, in the belly of tiger; and if our misfortune yielded any advantage to the Government, we should be content, but the fact is, there is neither gain to the people nor the Government, and so long as the present state of things continues, we can see no prospect of improvement in the future.

2nd. During the Long-continued sovereignty of the Assam Rajahs, the Hill Tribes that border on Assam. Akas, Bjotes, Garrows, Meerees, Nagas, Daflas, Abors, Mishmees, Khamties, Singphos, Norrahs, Meekirs, Laloongs (Dooaneeas) and Fakeeals (Dooaneeas) were effectually kept in check, and the whole Province governed with a force of only nine companies of Sepoys. Besides this, all the different ranks of Assamese noblemen and officers, from the Borahs and Sykeahs to the three Dangureeas (Ministers of State) were honorably and respectably maintained, the various grades of Mohuntos (Priests) comfortably provided for, the poojahs seasonally performed and the offerings punctually made at the several Hindoo temples and places of worship, and all the expenses involved under such a Government were duly met by former Rajahs without difficulty or failure, besides supporting the Royal family. But under the present administration although revenue is collected from those who were formerly exempted, immunities and privileges (resumes or) removed that had existed for 600 years without intermission, the Abors brought under taxation and the sources of revenue increased four-fold, yet the Government in twenty-nine years have no substantial benefit from the province. This is indeed a source of great wonder!

3rd. Whether the increase of Zillahs and the Military forces, involving an extra outlay, be any source of profit or advantage to the Government, we cannot tell, but this we can testify to that the establishment of Zillahs in every village has tendered only to the rise of deceitful and fraudulent character who delight in the institution of falsesuits. While the people have imbibed such a love for petty matter that they are perpetually devoting their time and money in the prosecution and defence of frivolous cases. Furthermore the expense incurred by Government for the establishment of Dewanny Courts is quite useless. Because neither are the Regulations nor the established customs of the country adhered to therein, but instead thereof a system is pursued which resembles Khicheree to the great ruin of the people. The proof of this rests in the fact that decisions or decrees are given in favour of both plaintiff and defendant on the same written deeds. In addition to this when Military officers are first appointed to take charge of Zillahs, whether they are acquainted with their duties or not will be ascertained on due investigation.

4th. Faithful Investigator: The abolition of old customs and establishment in their stead of courts and unjust taxation; secondly, the introduction of opium in the District for the gratification of an opium eating people, who are daily becoming more unfit for agricultural pursuits, thirdly, the making of this Province khas and discontinuing the poojahs at Kamakhya (temple) in consequence of which the country has become subject to various calamities, the people to every species of suffering and distress, and the annual crops to a constantly recurring failure. Under these several afflictions the population of Assam is becoming daily more miserable. In proof of this, permit us to bring forward the fact that during the days of the Boorah Gohain and down even to the time of Mr. Scott there were in every village two, four or five respectable ryots possessing granaries filled with grain. But in these days in the midst of 100 villages it will be difficult to discover a couple of such ryots.

5th. Whether the present Mouzadars and others are not in a state of poverty, coupled with dissatisfaction compared with the Borwahs, Phookans and other officers of former times will be ascertained on due inquiry. Besides this, the property of several individuals has been sold in satisfaction of Government revenue due, their houses and lands, not even excepting the Rajah who has had occasionally some of his property attached on account of small sums of revenue; and with all this the Government has derived no advantage. Furthermore, the Besoyas will all be found on due inquiry to be labouring under great dejection and deep sorrow caused by the loss of all their substance. In addition to this only one anna out of sixteen annas of them will be found to be free from debt, and even this it will perhaps be difficult to establish.

6th. It might be supposed that by having given pensions to some of the respectable Assamese great benefit has been conferred on them. But the fact is that those who ought to have got pensions did not get any while those whose services had been but of short duration and their claims insignificant proved most successful. Such were the fruits of strict justice.

7th. By the stoppage of such cruel practices, as extracting the eyes, cutting of noses and ears and the forcible abduction of virgins from their homes and by the removal of all way-side transit duties together with the old objectionable practice of keeping clear Military and Dawk roads by the forced labour of villagers, the British Government has earned for itself inestimable praise and renown. But by the introduction into the Province of new customs, numerous Courts, an unjust system of taxation, and objectionable treatment of Hill Tribes, the consequence of which has been a constant state of warfare with them involving a mutual loss of life and money, neither the British Government nor their subjects have gained any benefit.

8th. Furthermore, in the midst of the cruel oppressions and wanton ravages committed by the Burmese the ancient tombs as well as bones of the former Assam Rajah were left untouched. But under the present administration those tombs have been desecrated, the bones defiled, and the wealth secretly kept therewith robbed; Thus have the relics of our deceased kings been dishonoured and disgraced! This is worthy of deep consideration.

9th. Under the revenue settlement of Military Officers, while a number of respectable Assamese are out of employ, the inhabitants of Marwar and Bengalees from Sylhet have been appointed to Mouzadarships; and for us respectable Assamese to become the ryots of such foreigners is a source of deep mortification.

10th. In the Shastras it is written, that Rulers ought to practice righteousness and govern their subjects with justice while studying their welfare. These are not now done, but the very contrary and for such sins and negligence, due rewards will be meted out even in a future state. May we therefore pray that after due investigation and reflection, the former native administration be re-introduced, and old habits and customs of the people re-established in the country.

The upper and middle classes have seen those officers abolished which were most suitable for them. Their Logwas and Licksos taken away and their male and female slaves set free.

Those classes who had been exempted from the payment of revenue for 600 years are now brought under the assessment.

Those again whose ancestors never lived by digging, ploughing or carrying burdens are now nearly reduced to such degrading employment. While those even who are Mouzadars or employed by Government or receive those pensions are reduced to such

deep distress that they will be soon compelled to follow the above occupations. And if any one of them should happen at present to fall into any difficulty, he would find it impossible to get the loan of a single Rupee, even if he should give a bit of his own flesh in exchange. Also, if any of them should wish to borrow Rs. 10 from a Kayah, he would first have to deposit Rs. 20 worth of jewels as security and then be obliged to pay interest at the rate of Rs. 5 per cent per mensem. Yet with all this it is exceedingly difficult to get credit. This ought to meet with due consideration.

APPENDIX IV

A Note on Assam's Stand vis a vis British Government Statement of 6th December, 1946

*(Appeal to Congress Working Committee, Members of All India
Congress Committee and members of the Constituent Assembly From
Assam Provincial Congress Committee)*

On the very day of announcement by the British Cabinet Mission of their Statement of May 16, 1946, the Assam P.C.C., which was in session at Gauhati, sent a telegraphic message to the Congress Working Committee in session in New Delhi, intimating the universal feeling of apprehension of the people of Assam, and lodging emphatic protest against the grouping clauses in the State Paper and Shri G.N. Bardoloi, who was then in New Delhi, was also instructed telegraphically to meet Congress Working Committee and represent Assam's case and acquaint the Committee with Assam's strong opposition and her refusal to accept the Grouping Plan.

Accordingly Shri G.N. Bardoloi met Congress Working Committee and submitted a Memorandum on 19th May, 1946.

On June 10, 1946, the Assam Congress Delegation headed by M. Tayyebulla, President A.P.C.C., met the Congress Working Committee at New Delhi where Mahatma Gandhi was also present, and submitted a memorandum and urged upon Congress Working Committee to lend full support to Assam in her decision not to accept under any circumstances whatsoever, the provision of decision by simple majority of votes in Section 'C' in the matter of settling her constitution.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Congress president, gave on behalf of the Congress Working Committee, full assurance of support and also conveyed through the Assam Delegation a message of sympathy and support to the people of Assam. This allayed, for the time being, to a great extent the anxiety of the people of the province.

In July, the Assam Legislative Assembly elected Assam's ten representatives to the Constituent Assembly including the three Muslim League members and gave a clear mandate in a Resolution which was passed without division not to go into Section and Accept the Group Plan of H.M.G. State paper.

On September 25, 1946, the Assam P.C.C. President M. Tayyebulla and the A.I.C.C. members of Assam met Mahatmaji and other Congress leaders at New Delhi during the A.I.C.C. session and obtained further assurances of strong support to Assam. Mahatmaji advised on the very line of his recently published Srirampur Note on 17th December, 1946, wherein he advised Assam not to go into the Section if full

assurance is not given by the Congress.

But H.M.G. Statement of December 6, 1946, which now seeks to alter and add to the 16th May State paper fundamentally, has given a rude shock to the people of India in general and to the people of Assam in particular, by its interpretation of the grouping clause and thereby raised a deep universal feeling of alarm and resentment in the province. Assam finds herself in grave peril, facing a crisis indeed!

On December 9, 1946, Shri G.N. Bardoloi on behalf of the Assam members of the Constituent Assembly, submitted a memorandum to the Congress Working Committee in regard to the stand of Assam vis-a-vis H.M.G. Statement of December 6, and represented Assam's case fully.

On December 10, 1946, President A.P.C.C. sent a telegraphic message to Congress President and the members of the Working Committee and Mahatma Gandhi (at Srirampur) conveying Assam's decision not to accept under any circumstances whatsoever to submit to simple majority vote in Section C for the settlement of Assam's H.M.G. Statement and asked for assurances of support.

On December 17, Shri Bejoychandra Bhagavati, Secretary Assam P.C.C. and Shri Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, Secretary Assam Congress Parliamentary Party, were deputed to meet Mahatma Gandhi at Srirampur and seek his advice. Mahatmaji handed over to them a Note giving his advice, which was published in the Press on December 23, 1946.

Shri G.N. Bardoloi and prominent Assam Constituent Assembly members thereupon met the Congress Working Committee at New Delhi and acquainted them of the new position of Assam and Gandhiji's advice in the matter of Grouping and Section.

On return from New Delhi, Shri G.N. Bardoloi made a full statement before the Provincial Congress Working Committee on December 26, 1946, regarding the position of Assam obtaining in the counsels of the Congress Working Committee and Constituent Assembly. The Provincial Working Committee thereupon having reviewed the whole matter, adopted a Statement which will speak for itself.

To place the decision and point of view of the Assam P.C. Working Committee, contained in the Statement, deputation was appointed to meet the Congress Working Committee at new Delhi during the A.I.C.C. session as well as to meet A.I.C.C. members and others and make all possible efforts to obtaining the fullest support and a final decision of the A.I.C.C. in the full satisfaction of the people of Assam.

The question of Assam, and of N.W.F.P. and the Sikhs, vis-a-vis Grouping and Section is today a vital issue of All India importance before the Indian National Congress and the whole country. The A.P.C.C., therefore, appeal to the Congress Working Committee, members of the A.I.C.C. and the members of the Constituent Assembly to lend their fullest support to the just and righteous cause of Assam in their hour of grave crisis in her national life when her very existence is in peril.

[Gopinath Bardoloi Papers,
Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi]

APPENDIX V

Gandhi's Advice to Assam on Grouping*(A) Telegram to Mahomed Tayabulla¹*

Srirampur,

[On or before December 15, 1946]²I AM WATCHING.³

—Gandhi

*The Bombay Chronicle, 16-12-1946**(B) Interview to Assam Congressmen⁴*

Srirampur,

December 15, 1946

Asked for guidance in regard to the question of Grouping,⁵ Gandhiji replied:

I do not need a single minute to come to a decision, for on this I have a mind. I am a Congressman to the very marrow, as I am mainly the framer of the constitution of the Congress as it stands today. I told Bardoloi that if there is no clear guidance from the Congress Committee, Assam should not go into the Sections. It should lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a kind of satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress.

Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has come to the decision that it will stand by the judgment of the Federal Court. The dice are heavily loaded. The decision of the Federal Court will go against the Congress interpretation of Grouping as far as I can make out, for the simple reason that the Cabinet has got legal advice which upholds their decision.

The Federal Court is the creation of the British. It is a packed court. To be consistent, the Congress must abide by its decision whatever it may be. If Assam keeps quiet, it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It is autonomous to a large extent today.

It must become fully independent and autonomous. Whether you have that courage, grit and the gumption, I do not know. You alone can say that. But if you can make that declaration, it will be a fine thing. As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly to go into Sections you will say, "Gentlemen, Assam retires". For the independence of India it is the only condition. Each unit must be able to decide and act for itself. I am hoping that in this Assam will lead the way.

I have the same advice for the Sikhs. But your position is much happier than that of the Sikhs. You are a whole Province. They are a community inside a Province. But

¹President of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee.

²The Telegram was reported under the date-line Gauhati, December 15, 1946.

³Tayabulla had reiterated Assam's protest against the Grouping Clause in the Cabinet Mission's plan and had sought Gandhiji's help "at this hour of Assam's peril". Vide also the following item.

⁴Bijayachandra Bhagwati, M.L.A., and Mohendra Mohan Chowdhury, Secretary of the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party, met Gandhiji on behalf of Gopinath Bardoloi. This appeared under the title, "Gandhiji's Advice to Assam".

⁵The reference is to the British Cabinet's statement dated December 6.

I feel every individual has the right to act for himself, just as I have.

Q. But we are told that the framing of the constitution for the whole of India cannot be held up for the sake of Assam. Assam cannot be allowed to block the way.

A. There is no need to do that. That is why I say I am in utter darkness. Why are not these simple truths evident to all after so many years? If Assam retires, it does not block, but leads the way to India's independence.

Q. The British Government has said that the Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot be imposed on unwilling units. So, if some parts do not accept it, the British Parliament won't accept it.

A. Who is the British Government? If we think independence is going to descend on our heads from England or somewhere, we are greatly mistaken. It won't be independence. We will be crushed to atoms. We are fluctuating between independence and helpless dependence. The Cabinet Mission's plan lies in between.

If we act rightly, there will be the full blown flower of independence. If we react wrongly, the blossom will wither away. Mind you, the League standpoint is quite correct. If they stand out, the Constituent Assembly cannot impose its Constitution on an unwilling party. The British Government has no say in the matter one way or the other.

The British cannot interfere with the working of the Constituent Assembly. Suppressing the vast majority, including the Muslims and others form a constitution, you can defy the British Parliament if it seeks to interfere. Power is in your hands. Some such thing happened in Ireland only recently. And de Valera is no non-violent fighter. The position of India is far better than that of Ireland. If we have not the penetration, we will lose the advantage we have, as it is apparently being lost today.

If Assam takes care of itself, the rest of India, will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a constitution all right even now.

I have never despised the 1935 constitution. It is based on provincial autonomy. It has the capacity for fullest growth, provided the people are worth it. The hill people are with you. Many Muslims are also with you. The remainder can be, too, if you act on the square.

You will have to forget petty jealousies and rivalries and overcome your weaknesses. Assam has many weaknesses as it has much strength, for I know my Assam.

Assam Congressmen: With your blessings we can even go outside the Congress and fight.

Gandhiji: In 1939, when there was the question of giving up the Ministry, Subhas Babu opposed it as he thought Assam's was a special case. I told Bardoloi that there was much in what Subhas Babu had said and, although I was the author of that scheme of boycott, I said Assam should not come out if it did not feel like it. But Assam did come out; it was wrong.

The Assam Congressmen said that the Maulana Saheb had then said that exception could not be made in the case of Assam.

G. "Here there is no question of exception. Assam rebelled and that civilly. But we have that slavish mentality. We look to the Congress and then feel that if we do not follow it slavishly, something will go wrong with it. I have said that not only a Province but even an individual can rebel against the Congress and by doing so, save it, assuming that he is in the right. I have done so myself. Congress has not attained

the present stature without much travail.

I remember in 1918, I think, there was the Provincial Conference of the Congress workers of Gujarat at Ahmedabad. The late Abbas Tyabjee was in the chair. All the old guards were there. The Ali Brothers had not yet joined hands with me fully then, as they did later on. The late Shri Vithalbhai Patel was there, and I moved the non-cooperation resolution. I was a nonentity then. A constitutional question arose. Could a Provincial Conference anticipate the decision of the Congress? I said, "Yes." A provincial Conference and even a single individual could anticipate the Congress for its own benefit. In spite of opposition of the old hands, the resolution was carried. That paved the way for the Congress to pass a similar resolution at Calcutta. India was dumbfounded at the audacity of a provincial Conference passing the revolutionary resolution.

We had formed a Satyagraha Sabha outside the Congress. It was joined by Horniman, Sarojini Devi, Shankarlal, Umar Sobhani and Vallabhbhai. I was ill. The Rowlatt Act was passed. I shook with rage. I said to the Sardar I could do nothing unless he helped me. Sardar was willing. And the rest you know. It was rebellion, but a healthy one. We celebrate the 6th of April to the 13th. You have all these historical instances before you.

I have given you all this time to steel your hearts, to give you courage. If you do not act correctly and now, Assam will be finished. Tell Bardoloi I do not feel the least uneasiness. My mind is made up. Assam must not lose its soul. It must uphold it against the whole world. Else I will say that Assam had only manikins and no men. It is an impertinent suggestion that Bengal should dominate Assam in any way.

Asked if they could tell the people that they had rebelled against the Congress with Gandhiji's blessings, Gandhiji said:

Talk of God's blessings. They are much richer. Tell the people even if Gandhiji tries to dissuade us, we won't listen.

Harijan, 29-12-1946

[*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. Eighty Six, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, 1982]

APPENDIX VI

The Naga-Akhar Hydari Accord

*Tribes Represented at Discussions on the 26th, 27th and 28th June, 1947,
at Kohima*

Western Angamis.
Eastern Angamis.
Kukis.
Kacha Nagas (Mzemi).
Rengmas.
Semas.
Lothas.
Aos.
Sangtams.
Changs.

Heads of Proposed Understanding

That the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes is recognized.

1. Judicial—All cases whether civil or criminal arising between Nagas in the Naga Hills will be disposed of by duly constituted Naga Courts according to Naga customary law or such law as may be introduced with the consent of duly recognized Naga representative organizations: save that where a sentence of transportation or death has been passed there will be a right of appeal to the Governor.

In cases arising between Nagas and non-Nagas in (a) Kohima and Mokokchung town areas, and (b) in the neighbouring plains districts, the judge if not a Naga will be assisted by a Naga assessor.

2. Executive—The general principle is accepted that what the Naga Council is prepared to pay for, the Naga Council should control. This principle will apply equally to the work done as well as the staff employed.

While the District Officer will be appointed at the discretion of the Governor, Subdivisions of the Naga Hills should be administered by a Subdivisional Council with a full time executive President paid by Naga Council who would be responsible to the District Officer for all matters falling within the latter's responsibility, and to the Naga Council for all matters falling within their responsibility.

In regard to: (a) Agriculture—the Naga Council will exercise all the powers now vested in the District Officer.

(b) C.W.D.—the Naga Council would take over full control.

(c) Education and Forest Department—The Naga Council is prepared to pay for all the services and staff.

3. Legislative—That no laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislature which would materially affect the terms of this agreement or the religious practices of the Nagas shall have legal force in the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council. In cases of dispute as to whether any law did so affect this agreement the matter would be referred by the Naga Council to the Governor who would then direct that the law in question should not have legal force in the Naga Hills pending the decision of the Central Government.

4. Land—That land with all its resources in the Naga Hills should not be alienated to a non-Naga without the consent of the Naga Council.

5. Taxation—That the Naga Council will be responsible for the imposition, collection, and expenditure of land revenue and house tax and of such other taxes as may be imposed by the Naga Council.

6. Boundaries—That present administrative divisions should be modified so as (1) to bring back into the Naga Hills District all the forests transferred to the Sibsagar and Nowgong Districts in the past, and (2) to bring under one unified administrative unit as far as possible all Nagas. All the areas so included would be within the scope of the present proposed agreement. No areas should be transferred out of the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council.

7. Arms Act—The Deputy Commissioner will act on the advice of the Naga Council in accordance with the provisions of the Arms Act.

8. Regulations—The Chin Hills regulations and the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations will remain in force.

9. Period of Agreement—The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people arrived at.

APPENDIX - VII

Secret & Personal

No. 1116-PMH/56
New Delhi,
May 13, 1956

My dear Medhi,

This morning we had a conference to consider the Naga situation. Pantji and Dr. Katju were present among our Ministers and there were the senior officials of the External Affairs and Defence Ministries. Also our Army Chief of Staff, General Shrinagesh.

2. Nothing special had happened to necessitate such a conference, but we wanted to clear our minds not only about the present situation but the future. From a military point of view, some progress is being made on our side and no doubt this will continue. You suggested in one of your recent letters that more armed forces were necessary. The view of our Army Staff is that during the monsoon there will be no advantage in sending more forces. In fact this may well be a liability because of the large scale arrangements necessary for maintaining them there. It may be that later it would be desirable to send more forces. We shall review the situation from time to time and, when it is necessary, we shall try to send more forces. As far as we can see, this will not be necessary or desirable during the monsoon.

3. We recognise of course fully that this revolt of some of the Nagas has to be dealt with firmly and speedily. It is far better to restore law and order in these affected areas as quickly as possible than to allow the situation to drag on. But, as I have said above, even from a military point of view, we cannot do very much in the interior hills during the monsoon. Operations will certainly continue even during the monsoon and we shall be preparing for a large scale effort a little later.

4. That is, as I understand it, the military appraisal of the situation. But there is something much more to it than merely the military approach. These Naga troubles and revolts have a larger significance for us in the international sphere and they give a handle to our opponents everywhere. More particularly, of course, Pakistan takes advantage of them. In view of our tense situation in regard to Pakistan, we have to be wary always and it is unfortunate that we should be tied up in the Naga Hills etc., where some other emergency might have to be faced by us.

5. But more important than all this is the question of the basic policy that we should pursue.

There can be no doubt that an armed revolt has to be met by force and suppressed. There are no two opinions about that and we shall set about it as efficiently and effectively as possible. But our whole past and present outlook is based on force by itself being no remedy. We have repeated this in regard to the greater problems of the

world. Much more must we remember this when dealing with our own countrymen who have to be won over and not merely suppressed.

6. We have to remember that the operations in remote mountainous country without communications are always difficult. We have an example in Malaya where, it is said, that about 5000 or so rebels have held up large British forces and aircraft now for seven years. In Malaya they have dense jungles, here we have this mountain area. Both are difficult of access. We know that the Nagas are tough people and are very disciplined. It is therefore conceivable that even when we have succeeded completely in a military sense, small scale guerrilla tactics may continue giving us continuous headaches, apart from affecting our reputation both in India and abroad. How then are we to face this situation?

7. We shall of course use our armed forces to the fullest extent necessary. But we have always to remember that the real solution will require a political approach and an attempt to make the Nagas feel that we are friendly to them and that they can be at home in India. It may be that the present is no time for the political approach, because it may be construed as a sign of weakness. But anyhow our minds should be clear and even now onwards we should do nothing which will come in the way of that political approach and we should let it be known that we want to be friends with the Nagas unless they revolt against us.

8. In this morning's Times of India there is an article on the Nagas. This article is not a fair one I think and puts the blame entirely on our side. Even the facts are not correctly given. Nevertheless, there is some little truth in this article and I feel that we have not dealt with this question of the Nagas with wisdom in the past. We must not judge them as we would others who are undoubtedly part of India. The Nagas have no such background or sensation and we have to create that sensation among them by our goodwill and treatment. We shall have to think how we can produce this impression and what political steps may be necessary. This may come later of course, but the thinking part should begin from now onwards.

9. Unfortunately the Nagas have got a particular grouse against the Assam Government. Your Government may not be responsible for this and the mere fact that you have to deal with them led to this situation. But the fact remains that they are very dissatisfied with the present position. One of their grievances is that under our Constitution we split them up in different political areas. Whether it is possible or desirable to bring them together again is for us to consider. Also what measure of autonomy we should give them so that they can lead their own lives without any sensation of interference.

10. I suppose this developing Naga situation is bound to have some effect on the other Hill tribes in Assam. This has also to be borne in mind.

11. I have tried to think loudly in this letter, so that I might let you have a glimpse of my mind and I want you to think also and to have talks with your new Governow who has a good deal of experience and can view these questions with some wisdom.

Shri B.R. Medhi,
Chief Minister, Assam,
Shillong.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- J. Nehru

APPENDIX - VIII

Top Secret
No.459-PMO/57
New Delhi
June 12, 1957

My dear Fazl Ali,

Our Cabinet Committee on Oil met yesterday and sat for about three hours continuously discussing the question of the oil refinery, pipelines, etc. This discussion took place on a report from our Negotiating Committee who were dealing with the Assam Oil Company.

The Assam Oil Company had taken up a very difficult attitude and insisted on the refinery being near Calcutta. They said that they did not consider any other proposal economic and would not like to be made responsible for it. In other words, there was a deadlock between them and our Negotiating Committee. This was reported to us, and we had to consider what we should do in the circumstances.

One aspect of the question was how far we could undertake this work entirely from our own resources. These resources are totally inadequate in so far as trained personnel is concerned and, in view of our entanglement with the Assam Oil Company, all kinds of difficulties are likely to arise. Also, as you know, this is just the time when we are very hard put to find money for anything. In fact, we have introduced stringent economies everywhere. In other words, it was not possible for us to undertake this heavy burden by ourselves. At the same time, we saw no reason why we should be dictated to by the Assam Oil Company in this matter.

Then another aspect of this question came forcibly before us. Our Defence Chiefs having examined these various schemes said definitely that they could not undertake to protect the refinery if it was situated in Assam or the pipeline if it went to Calcutta along the Pakistan border. This strong and definite statement by those responsible for our defence and security could not be ignored. In fact, this statement came also in the way of the Assam Oil Company's proposal to run a pipeline along the Pakistan border to Calcutta. It was possible, of course, to take that pipeline some distance away from the border, but that would have extended the length of it, apart from other consequences.

For all these reasons, we could not agree to the Assam Oil Company's proposal as it was. Nor could we accept the proposal to have the refinery in Assam, when military opinion was dead against it, apart from other reasons to which reference has been made previously.

While it was not necessary for us to come to a final decision about every matter at this stage, we could not leave this question in a state of deadlock. Some opening had to be made for fresh consideration. And, for hours we discussed this matter thoroughly from every point of view, so that we could continue our negotiations with the Assam Oil Company or make some other arrangements if they were feasible.

We were driven to the conclusion that the only feasible proposition was to locate the refinery at Brauni to proceed with our discussions on this basis. The refinery initially should be capable of dealing with one million five hundred thousand tons of oil per annum, but there should be the possibility of its extension if and when necessary. The pipeline would, to begin with, come to Barauni only. This pipeline is likely to be of twenty inches to provide for future developments. Later, that is in two or three

years time, we might be in a position to see how far there was surplus oil to be sent to Calcutta for export or for Visakhapatnam. If this appears desirable, a pipeline would have to be constructed either from Barauni or from somewhere else on the way to it to Calcutta.

Further we were of opinion that steps should be taken to develop the use of natural gas in Assam for power and other purposes. The use of this can be expanded in many ways and for various industries.

The refinery itself is not supposed to employ many people, just a few hundreds, as the latest machinery is used.

We realised fully the disappointment that this would cause to our friends in Assam. In fact, this matter was discussed, but we had no choice left except to give up the scheme or delay it indefinitely, which was harmful to India and to Assam. We were driven to our present conclusion, whatever the other reasons might have been, and they were strong enough, the very definite and unequivocal attitude of Defence left no other choice open to us. Personally, I think that the decision is a correct one, not only from the point of view of the development of this oil, but even of Assam. It is far easier and better to develop industries on natural gas and start the exploitation of oil as soon as possible on an economic basis than to hold up everything and to wait for some good fortune in the future. I have no doubt that this oil is going to be of great benefit to Assam from the point of view of revenue and industrial development. And, the sooner we get going with this, the better.

As I have indicated above, we are in the middle of negotiations and final decisions depend upon many factors. We do not even know what the reaction of the Assam Oil Company will be. They have been troublesome, but we have to have some basis for future discussion as the old line did not work, and hence these present decisions.

I am sending a copy of this letter to your Chief Minister, Medhi.

I am leaving day after tomorrow for Europe and shall be away for a month. With all good wishes to you.

Shri Fazl Ali,
Governor of Assam,
Shillong

Yours sincerely,
Sd. Jawaharlal Nehru

[*Bishnuram Medhi Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi]

APPENDIX - IX

The Shillong Accord of November 11, 1975, between the Government of India and the Underground Nagas.

1. The following representatives of the Underground organisations met the Governor of Nagaland, Shri L.P. Singh, representing the Government of India, at Shillong on 10th November, 1975.

1. Shri I. Temjenha
2. Shri S. Dahru
3. Shri Veeniyi Rhakhu
4. Shri Z. Ramyo

5. Shri M Assa
6. Shri Kevi Yallay

2. There was a series of four discussions. Some of the discussions were held with the Governor alone; at others, the Governor was Assisted by the two advisers for Nagaland, Shri M. Ramunny and Shri H. Zopiange, and Shri M.L. Kampani, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs. All the five members of the Liaison Committee, namely Rev. Longri Ao, Dr. M. Aram, Shri L. Lungalang, Shri Kenneth Kerhuo and Shri Lungshim Shaiza, participated in the discussions.

3. The following were the outcome of the discussions:

(i) The representatives of the Underground organisations conveyed their decision, of their own volition, to accept, without condition, the Constitution of India.

(ii) It was agreed that the arms, now underground, would be brought out and deposited at appointed places. Details for giving effect to this agreement will be worked out between them and representatives of the Government, the Security Forces and members of the Liaison Committee.

(iii) It was agreed that the representatives of the underground organisations should have reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussion for final settlement.

Date: Shillong
November 11, 1975.

Sd/- L.P. Singh
on behalf of the Government of India
Sd/- (I. Temjenba)
Sd/- (S. Dahru)
Sd/- (Z-Ramyo)
Sd/- (M. Assa)
Sd/- (Kevi Yallay)
(on behalf of the representatives of the Underground Organisation)

APPENDIX - X

The Sixteen Point Agreement Arrived at Between the Naga People's Convention and The Government of India in July 1960

The points placed by the delegates of the Naga People's Convention before the Prime Minister on 26 July 1960, as finally recast by the Delegation in the light of discussions on 27 and 28 July 1960 with the Foreign Secretary.

1. The Name

The territories that were heretofore known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area under the Naga Hills-Tunesang Area Act 1957, shall form a State within the Indian Union and the hereafter known as Nagaland.

2. The Ministry Incharge

The Nagaland shall be under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India

3. The Governor of Nagaland

(1) The President of India shall appoint a Governor for Nagaland and he will be vested with the executive powers of the government of Nagaland. He will have his headquarters in Nagaland.

(2) His administrative secretariat will be headed by a Chief Secretary stationed at the Headquarters with other secretariat Staff as necessary.

(3) The Governor shall have special responsibility with regard to law and order during the transitional period and for so long as the law and order situation continues to remain disturbed on account of hostile activities. In exercising this special responsibility, the Governor, shall, after consultation with the Ministry, act in his individual judgement. This special responsibility of the Governor will cease when normalcy returns.

4. Council of Ministers

(1) There shall be a Council of Ministers with a Chief Minister at the head to assist and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions.

(2) The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Naga Legislative Assembly.

5. The Legislature

There shall be constituted a legislative Assembly consisting of elected and nominated members as may be deemed necessary, representing different tribes. (Further a duly constituted body of experts may be formed to examine and determine the principles of representation on democratic basis).

6. Representation in Parliament

Two elected members shall represent Nagaland in the Union, that is to say one for the Lok Sabha and the other for the Rajya Sabha.

7. Acts of Parliament

No Act or Law passed by the Union Parliament affecting the following provisions shall have legal force in the Nagaland unless specifically applied by a majority vote of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly:

(1) The Religious or Social Practices of the Nagas.

(2) Naga Customary Laws and Procedure.

(3) Civil and criminal justice so far as these concern decisions according to Naga Customary Law.

The existing laws relating to administration of civil and criminal justice as provided in the Rules for the Administration of Justice and Police in the Naga Hills district shall continue to be in force.

(4) The ownership and transfer of land and its resources.

8. Local Self-Government

Each tribe shall have the following units of rule-making and administrative local bodies to deal with matters concerning the respective tribes and area:

(1) The Village Council;

(2) The Range Council; and

(3) The Tribal Council.

These Councils will also deal with disputes and cases involving breaches of customary laws and usages.

9. Administration of Justice.

(a) The existing system of administration of civil and criminal justice shall continue.

(b) Appellate Courts:

(1) The District Court-Cum-Sessions court (for each district), High Court and Supreme Court of India.

(2) The Naga Tribunal (for the whole of the Nagaland) in respect of cases decided according to customary Law.

10. Administration of Tuensang District

(1) The Governor shall carry on the administration of the Tuensang District for a period of 10 (ten) years until such time when the tribes in the Tuensang District are capable of shouldering more responsibility of the advanced system of administration. The commencement of the ten-year period of administration will start simultaneously with the enforcement of detailed workings of the constitution in other parts of the Nagaland.

(2) Provided further that a regional Council shall be formed for Tuensang District by elected representatives from all the tribes in Tuensang District, and the Governor may nominate representatives to the Regional Council as well. The Deputy Commissioner will be the Ex-officio Chairman of the Council. The Regional Council will elect members to the Naga Legislative to represent Tuensang District.

(3) provided further that on the advice of the Regional Council, steps will be taken to start various Councils and Courts, in those areas where the people feel themselves capable of establishing such institutions.

(4) provided further that no Act or Law passed by the Naga Legislative Assembly shall be applicable to Tuensang District unless specifically recommended by the Regional Council.

(5) provided further that the Regional Council shall supervise and guide the working of the various Councils and Tribal Courts within Tuensang District and wherever necessary depute the local officers to act as Chairman thereof.

(6) Provided further the Councils of such areas inhabited by a mixed population or which have not as yet decided to which specific tribal council to be affiliated to, shall be directly under the Regional Council for the time being. And at the end of ten years the situation will be reviewed and if the people so desire the period will be further extended.

11. Financial Assistance from the Government of India

To supplement the revenues of the Nagaland, there will be need for the Government of India to pay out of the Consolidated Fund of India:

(1) A lump sum each year for the development programme in the Nagaland; and

(2) A grant-in aid towards meeting the cost of administration.

Proposals for the above grants shall be prepared and submitted by the Government of Nagaland to the Government of India for their approval. The Governor will have general responsibility for ensuring that the funds made available by the Government of India are expended for purposes for which they have been approved.

12. Consolidation of Forest Areas.

The delegation wished the following to be placed on record:

The Naga delegation discussed the question of the inclusion of the Reserve Forests and of contiguous areas inhabited by the Nagas. They were referred to the provisions in Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution, prescribing the procedure for the transfer of areas from one State to another.

13. Consolidation of Contiguous Naga Areas

The delegation wished the following to be placed on record:

The Naga leaders expressed the wish for the contiguous areas to join the new State. It was pointed out to them on behalf of the Government of India that Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution provided for increasing the area of any State, but that it was not possible for the Government of India to make any commitment in this regard at this stage.

14. Formation of Separate Naga Regiment

In order that the Naga people can fulfill their desire of playing a full role in the defence forces of India the question of raising a separate Naga Regiment should be duly examined for action.

15. Transitional Period

(a) On reaching the political settlement with the Government of India, the Government of India will prepare a Bill for such amendment of the Constitution, as may be necessary, in order to implement the decision. The Draft Bill, before presentation to parliament, will be shown to the delegates of the NPC.

(b) There shall be constituted an Interim Body with elected representatives from every tribe, to assist and advise the Governor in the administration of the Nagaland during the transitional period. The tenure of office of the Interim Body will be 3 (three) years subject to re-election.

16. Inner Line Regulation

Rules embodied in the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 shall remain in force in the Nagaland.

APPENDIX XI

The Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962*An Act further to amend the Constitution of India*

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Thirteenth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

1. *Short title and commencement*—(1) This Act may be called the Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962.

2. *Amendment of Part XXI*—In Part XXI of the Constitution—

(a) for the heading, the following heading shall be substituted, namely:

“Temporary Transitional And Special Provisions”;

(b) after article 371, the following article shall be inserted, namely:

“371A. Special Provision with respect to the State of Nagaland—

(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution,

(a) no Act of Parliament in respect of

(i) religious or social practices of the Nagas.

(ii) Naga customary law and procedure,

(iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law.

(iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides;

(b) the Governor Nagaland shall have special responsibility with respect to law and order in the State of Nagaland for so long as in his opinion internal disturbances occurring in the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area immediately before the formation of that State continue therein or in any part thereof and in the discharge of his functions in relation thereto the Governor shall, after consulting the Council of Ministers, exercise his individual judgement as to the action to be taken:

Provided that if any question arises whether any matter is or is not a matter as respects which the Governor is under this sub-clause required to act in the exercise of his individual judgement, the decision of the Governor in his discretion shall be final, and the validity of anything done by the Governor shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in the exercise of his individual judgement;

Provided further that if the President on receipt of a report from the Governor or otherwise is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the governor to have special responsibility with respect to law and order in the State of Nagaland, he may by order direct that the governor shall cease to have such responsibility with effect from such date as may be supplied in the order;

(c) in making his recommendation with respect to any demand for a grant, the Governor of Nagaland shall ensure that any money provided by the government of India out of the Consolidated Fund of India for any specific service or purpose is included in the demand for a grant relating to that service or purpose and not in any other demand;

(d) as from such date as the Governor of Nagaland may by public notification in this behalf specify, there shall be established a regional council for the Tuensang district consisting of thirty-five members and the Governor shall in his discretion make rules providing for-

(i) The composition of the regional council and the manner in which the members of the regional council shall be chosen:

Provided that the Deputy Commissioner of the Tuensang district shall be the Chairman ex officio of the regional council and the Vice-Chairman of the regional council shall be elected by the members thereof from amongst themselves;

(ii) the qualifications for being chosen as, and for being, members of the regional council:

(iii) the term of office of, and the salaries and allowances, if any, to be paid to members of, the regional council;

(iv) the procedure and conduct of business of the regional council;

(v) the appointment of officers and staff of the regional council and their conditions of service; and

(vi) any other matter in respect of which it is necessary to make rules for the constitution and proper functioning of the regional council.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, for a period of ten years from the date of the formation of the State of Nagaland or for such further period as the Governor may, on the recommendation of the regional council, by public notification specify in this behalf.

(a) the administration of the Tuensang district shall be carried on by the Governor;

(b) where any money is provided by the Government of India to the Government of Nagaland to meet the requirements of the State of Nagaland as a whole, the Governor shall in his discretion arrange for an equitable allocation of that money between the Tuensang district and the rest of the State;

(c) no Act of the Legislature of Nagaland shall apply to the Tuensang district unless the Governor, on the recommendation of the regional council, by the public notification so directs and the Governor in giving such direction with respect to any such Act may direct that the Act shall in its application to the Tuensang district or any part thereof have effect subject to such exceptions or modifications as the governor may specify on the recommendation of the regional council:

Provided that any direction given under this sub-clause may be given so as to have retrospective effect;

(d) the governor may make regulations for the peace, progress and good government of the Tuensang district and any regulations so made may repeal or amend with retrospective effect, if necessary, any Act of parliament or any other law which is for the time being applicable to that district:

(e) (i) one of the members representing the Tuensang district in the Legislative assembly of Nagaland shall be appointed Minister for Tuensang affairs by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister and the Chief Minister in tendering his advice shall act on the recommendation of the majority of the members as aforesaid:

(ii) the Minister for Tuensang affairs shall deal with and have, direct access to the Governor on all matters relating to the Tuensang district but he shall keep the Chief Minister informed about the same:

(f) notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this clause the final decision on all matters relating to the Tuensang district shall be made by the Governor in his discretion;

(g) in articles 54 and 55 and clause (4) of article 80, references to the elected members of the Legislative Assembly of a State or to each such member shall include references to the members or member of the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland elected by the regional council established under this article:

(h) in article 170-

(i) clause (1) shall in relation to the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland, have effect as if for the word 'sixty', the words 'forty-six' had been substituted;

(ii) in the said clause, the reference to direct election from territorial constituencies in the State shall include election by the members of the regional council established under this article;

(iii) in clauses (2) and (3), references to territorial constituencies shall mean references to territorial constituencies in the Kohima and Mokokchung district;

(3) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any of the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may by order do anything (including any adaptation or modification of any other article) which appears to him to be necessary for the purpose of removing that difficulty:

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiration of three years from the date of the formation of the state of Nagaland.

Explanation-In this article, the Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang districts shall have the same meanings as in the State of Nagaland Act, 1962."

APPENDIX - XII

The Peace Mission's Proposals, 20th December, 1964

1. It has been a matter of considerable satisfaction to the Peace Mission, as to all others in Nagaland and in the rest of India, that since firing ceased on 6th September, 1964, for the first time in ten years people in Nagaland are experiencing what normalcy is. The Peace Mission feels that it is the moral obligation of every one in Nagaland and more so, of the Peace Mission, in whom so much confidence and faith has been reposed, to see that peace becomes everlasting in Nagaland.

2. But first it should be placed on record to the honour of both parties that have been in conflict that the attempt to find peace and agreement to a cease-fire was an adventurous step which issued from their deep desire to find an honourable way to terminate such a bitter, wasteful and protracted conflict.

3. The marked difference in the atmosphere that prevails in Nagaland today as compared with that prevailing prior to the cessation of operation will probably be only realised by those who have lived or worked in Nagaland where there was fear as soon as darkness began and a sense of insecurity resulting from the ever present possibility of sudden violence. Today, the people are returning to their normal occupations. Families are being reunited, the biggest harvest for many years has been gathered and there is a feeling of hope in Nagaland which makes every delegate engaged in the peace talks only too conscious of the heavy burden of decision on

those who have to take it, the life and happiness of so many dependent on the decisions that are taken. In all this, it is fair to pay tribute not only to the Government of India for their humanity and imagination but also to the leaders of the Baptist Church for whom this initiative was the result of much thought and powerful consideration of the good of both India and Nagaland.

4. The Nagaland Peace Talks, which started on 23rd of September, 1964, have now come to a stage where the NFG delegation have placed their demands for consideration by the Government of India. This was in response to the statement of the leader of the Government of India delegation at Chedema on November 14, wherein the Government of India also stated their position and understanding of the problem, as they saw it.

5. The Nagaland Federal delegation have claimed that the Nagas had never been conquered by the Indian Army or ruled by an Indian Government, although their territory had been forcibly annexed by the British Army and the British Government about a century ago. Nevertheless, their right of self determination, they claim, belongs to them separately as a people from the Sovereign Independent State of India, and they are now demanding recognition of this independence, which as they say, India herself demanded and heroically struggled for under the historic slogan of Swaraj.

6. The Government of India's position, on the other hand, is that Nagaland formed an integral part of India before 1947 and that with the transfer of power to India by the British Parliament, Nagaland became part of India in the same way as all other States in India. At the same time the Government of India claim that they have already accepted the need for granting the fullest autonomy to Nagaland by constituting the State of Nagaland so as to ensure the fullest development of the Nagas and to guarantee their separate ethnic and cultural entity and to ensure their traditional right and their resources. Accordingly, the Nagas are not ruled by the alien power but are ruling themselves.

7. The Peace Mission notes that a section of the Naga people accepted the status of statehood thus conferred upon Nagaland as being in their best interest. Another section did not consider that satisfied the aims and objectives they had been fighting for. Thus, there are these two divergent positions of the Government of India and the NFG confronting each other.

8. Though the two positions appear to be far apart, the Peace Mission believes that, with goodwill and understanding on both sides, a solution acceptable to both can be found.

9. As earlier stated, the Peace Mission reiterates that it is under an inescapable moral obligation to ensure maintenance of peace and settlement of all outstanding problems through peaceful means. The Peace Mission believes that there is no human problem that cannot be solved by peaceful means. The Peace Mission further believes that the Governments concerned and the people concerned share and subscribe to this view.

10. While the Peace Mission fully agrees and endorses the principle that all subject peoples have the right of self determination and that no group of people is competent to rule over another, it also has to invite the attention of the Nagaland Federal Government to certain historical processes that had taken place to give birth to the Union of India and to the emergence of the great concepts and ideals underlying the Union Constitution.

11. The British had conquered at several stages and in diverse manner, various parts of the India sub-continent, comprising different ethnic groups, political system and religions. However, under the aegis of the Indian National Congress and since 1920, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, these various different peoples, representing diverse linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious elements, came together against foreign colonial rule and developed a consciousness of nationhood. Unfortunately, this common struggle against foreign imperialism, that had welded these diverse peoples in the Indian sub-continent into one nation, did not somehow have an appreciable impact on the Nagas. This was, no doubt, due to the policy of isolation and exclusion, so deftly practised by British rulers, who believed in creating pockets contrary to each other and hoping to rule in perpetuity by dividing the peoples. In any case, this great national movement of unification which freed India including Nagaland from the yoke of foreign rule did not bring within its embracing sweep the Naga population to the same extent as it did in the other parts of the sub-continent. Thus, in 1947, when all the diverse people of India, who had been brought under British rule, voluntarily agreed to form the Union of India and to share in the common endeavour to ensure that in this great Union the ideals of Fraternity, Liberty, Justice and Equality, as enshrined in the Constitution, are fully achieved, for the common benefit of all, the same response and sense of participation was not noticeable in the Naga areas.

12. The Peace Mission, in the circumstances, appreciates and understands the desire of the Nagas for self-determination and their urge to preserve their integrity. The Peace Mission also appreciates the courage and tenacity, displayed by the Naga people in their endeavour to achieve this goal. The objectives which they have placed before themselves in their memorandum "Naga Peace Declaration" dated 11th December, 1964, and addressed to the Peace Mission, namely, their desire to find peace, their resolve to maintain their integrity and to resist entanglement in war, are all extremely laudable and should command themselves to all peace loving people. It is, however, to be noted that this declaration, in itself, does not resolve the political issue. Therefore, some appropriate meeting point has to be found, where the aims and ideals of the NFG can be achieved, at the same time, making it possible for the Government of India to accept these within the framework of the political settlement to be mutually agreed upon.

13. The Peace Mission in the pursuit of a settlement through peaceful means, to which the Government of India as well as the NFG equally subscribe, would like both the Government of India and the NFG to consider seriously whether such a meeting point could be reached. On the one hand, the NFG could, on their own volition, decide to be a participant in the Union of India and mutually settle the terms and conditions for that purpose. On the other hand, the Government of India could consider to what extent the pattern and structure of the relationship between the Nagaland and the Government of India should be adapted and recast, so as to satisfy the political aspirations of all sections of Naga opinion and to make it possible for the ideals of peace as expressed in the Naga Peace Declaration to be substantially realised.

14. The Peace Mission would like, in all earnestness, to impress upon both sides that the approach, herein suggested, is not only the fairest, but the only practical one in the given circumstances; and it fervently hopes that it will command itself to the Government of India as well as to the Nagaland Federal Government.

15. The Peace Mission reiterates that the peace now obtaining in Nagaland should

be made everlasting. With the object in view, the peace Mission offered certain suggestions, whereupon both the parties had unequivocally affirmed and declared that they would renounce war and violence as a means for political settlement. This declaration of renunciation of war and use of armed force, it is earnestly emphasised, must not be deviated from by any means. The Peace Mission's proposal, following this bilateral declaration of renunciation of war, to deposit all underground arms in safe custody and to withdraw all Indian security force from law and order duties could not unfortunately be implemented.

16. Nevertheless, the Peace Mission would earnestly desire that, in faithful pursuance of the declaration of renunciation of use of armed forces, both parties take concrete steps to remove all frictions. There have been numerous complaints and counter-complaints from both. The Peace Mission would suggest that the NFG require all arms issued to its forces to be concentrated at one or several place, in their armouries and under their custody, so that there can be no basis for any future complaint of their forces parading with arms or extorting money or supplies under threat. They should also seriously ask themselves whether further recruiting and movement out of Nagaland towards Pakistan does not create an impression that these are only acts preparatory to resumption of hostilities and, if so, they should take remedial measures by putting a stop to such recruitment and movement. The Government of India should ensure that its security forces and the civil administration continue to abide strictly with the terms of the agreement, both in spirit and letter.

17. The Peace Mission makes a fervent appeal for consideration of the suggestions contained in this paper and for all action that is possible for the maintenance of peace.

20.12.1964

Bimalaprasad Chaliha
Jayaprakash Narayan
Michael Scott.

APPENDIX XIII

Cease-Fire Agreement, September 6, 1964

1. The Government of India welcomes the steps intended to bring about peace in Nagaland and with this object in view, as already stated, they will depute representatives, with whom will be associated the representatives of the Government of Nagaland, to take part in talks with leaders of the underground. To facilitate these talks and taking note of the letter of August 10, 1964, referred to above, it has been ordered that with effect from September 6, 1964, and for a period thereafter of one month at present, the security forces will not undertake:

- (a) Jungle operations;
- (b) raiding of camps of the underground;
- (c) patrolling beyond one thousand yards of security posts;
- (d) searching of villages;
- (e) aerial action;
- (f) arrests; and
- (g) imposition of labour by way of punishment.

During this period fines connected with allegations of complicity with underground activities will be imposed.

2. (a) Operations will be suspended as above on the understanding that the underground have accepted that during this period they will refrain from:

(i) Sniping and ambushing;

(ii) imposition of fines;

(iii) kidnapping and recruiting;

(iv) sabotage activities;

(v) raiding and firing on security posts, towns and administrative centres; and,

(vi) moving with arms or in uniform in towns, villages and administrative centres, wherever there are security posts and approaching within one thousand yards of security posts.

(b) The assurance, contained in para 5 of the letter of August 10, 1964 is noted that during this period, the Underground will refrain from moving with arms or in uniform in towns and villages and within a radius of one thousand yards of security posts. The understanding is confirmed that special arrangements may be made in cases where movement with arms or in uniform becomes necessary in any area where there may be risk of encounter with security forces, e.g. along or across or bridges.

3. The arrangements specified above are calculated to preclude any unexpected encounter but in the event of encounter coming about, both sides will during the period of stoppage of operations observe the rule "no firing unless first fired upon".

4. The assurance is noted that, during the period of stoppage of operations, in order to promote an atmosphere conducive to peaceful occupations and free discussion there will be no parading with arms in inhabited areas where security forces will not be present under this agreement.

5. It has been agreed that on the international border security forces will maintain patrolling to a depth of three miles as the crow flies from the frontier and that arrangements will be made for modification of the zone when the stoppage of operations is effected. For practical considerations, as suggested in your letter of August 12, arrangements may be made for reconsideration of the depth of this zone at a very early date.

6. The assurance is noted that no arms will be imported from abroad by the underground during the period of stoppage of operations.

7. During the period of stoppage of operations the Government of India will continue the protection of Army Convoys on maintenance service and the usual road patrolling on either side of the road will continue. The road patrols will withdraw when the last convoy of the day has passed. The Underground may move about freely on the roads when the convoy has passed the locality and also on non-convoy days. The days of the week and the particular routes used by the convoys will be practicable. It may be necessary to have emergence convoys for such purposes as evacuation of sick and wounded personnel. It may not be possible to give prior information of these convoys. For such convoys however there will be no road protection parties. They will move self-contained for protection. It is noted that the depth of patrolling on either side of the road will be one hundred yards. This is accepted for the present but 100 yards is for practical reasons inadequate and therefore this matter also should be kept open for re-consideration at an early date.

APPENDIX XIV

The Yehzabo of Nagaland
(*Constitution of the Federal Government*)

PREAMBLE

We, the people of Nagaland, solemnly acknowledging that the sovereignty over this earth and the entire universe belongs to Almighty God alone, and the authority of the people to be exercised on the territory is a sacred trust from God, who sustained our forefathers, the National workers and our people through the years of trial, and

Having our attachment to the truth of popular sovereignty as declared on 22 March 1956, and in the articles in the provisional Yehzabo of 1962, and following the amended Yehzabo of 1968, to establish national institutions based on the common ideals of democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity among the people composing it.

Do hereby adopt in our National Assembly the (Amended) Yehzabo of Nagaland this 6th March in the year of our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Seventy One.

PART I

1. The territory of Nagaland shall comprise all the territories inhabited by the indigenous Naga Tribes and such other territories as Tatar Hoho may, by law, admit on such terms and conditions as it deems fit.

2. This Yehzabo shall apply to the territories as defined in Article I.

3. (a) Nothing in the Yehzabo or by any law shall allow any tribe to secede from the Nation.

(b) The Tatar Hoho shall, from time to time, make laws for ensuring and preserving the unity and integrity of the Nation.

4. Each village is a republic having its territory, full authority over its own affairs including land, community organisation, social and religion, customs and practices.

5. Each area or territory inhabited by the communities of a tribe shall be constituted into a federated Unit to be called a Region and each of the Regions shall be given autonomy to the extent of management of local affairs and administration.

6. Some persons or group of persons belonging to other communities living in such area or territory which is inhabited predominantly by a larger tribe or community, shall be duly associated along with the latter for the purpose of the administration of the areas.

7. The demarcated boundary between regions or sub-regions from the day of the British shall continue to have legal recognition of this Yehzabo.

8. The Name of the National Government shall continue to be called THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NAGALAND.

PART II. CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS OF CITIZENS

9. There shall be but one citizenship throughout Nagaland, that is to say, there shall be no citizenship of the Unit as distinct from that of the Nation.

10. At the commencement of this Yehzabo any person who was a citizen of Nagaland immediately before the commencement of the amended Yehzabo shall become and be a citizen of Nagaland.

11. Notwithstanding the provision contained in Article 10, nothing in the Yehzabo shall derogate the power of the Tatar Hoho to make such laws for admission of new classes of citizens or for the termination of the citizenship of any existing classes.

12. All citizens irrespective of birth, religion, sex or race shall be equal before the eyes of the law.

13. There shall be no discrimination against any citizen in political, economic and social relations because of social status or family origin.

14. There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters of public employment, appointment, promotion and recruitment, irrespective of clan, tribe and family origin.

15. No titles other than academic distinction shall be recognised by any citizen of Nagaland except with the approval of the Government.

16. Free profession and practice of religion shall be guaranteed to any citizen.

17. Subject to the security of Nagaland, public order, morality, contempt of court and defamation, all citizens shall have the right to enjoy freedom of speech and expression, to form assembly and association to move freely throughout Nagaland, to carry on any procession and to use, enjoy and dispose of any property in accordance with local usage and practice.

PART III. EXECUTIVE

18. There shall be a President of Nagaland.

19. The Executive power of the Federal Government of Nagaland shall be vested in the President and shall be exercised by him with the Council of Kiloners in accordance with the provisions of this Yehzabo and laws.

20. The President shall be elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected members of the Tatar Hoho.

21. The President shall hold Office for a term of 3 (three) years from the date on which he enters upon his office.

22. The President shall be removed from Office on impeachment for violation of the Yehzabo and conviction of treason, sedition, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanours.

23(a) The President shall, by writing under his own hand addressed to the Vice-President, resign his Office. Any resignation addressed to the Vice-President shall forthwith be communicated by him to the Speaker of the Tatar Hoho.

(b) If the Office of the President is caused vacant the election to fill the vacant seat shall be completed before the expiration of that term.

24. The President shall, after the expiration of his term, continue to hold office until his successor enters upon his Office.

25. Any citizen of Nagaland who is born of Naga blood and has completed 40(forty) years of age, and is qualified for election as a member of Tatar Hoho, shall be eligible for election to the Office of the President.

26. Any person who holds or has held Office of the President shall be eligible for re-election for the Office for more terms.

27. Every person acting as President or discharging the function of the President shall, before entering upon his office make and subscribe the following oath in the presence of the Chief Justice of Supreme Court or any person appointed in that behalf: "I...do solemnly declare and affirm that I will faithfully execute the Office of the President of Nagaland, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and

defend the Yahzabo of Nagaland and that I will dedicate wholly myself to the service and welfare of the people of Nagaland.”

28. When a President is to be impeached as defined in Art 22, a proposal shall be moved in the form of resolution in writing signed by not less than one-fourth of the total number of the House. When such a resolution has been passed by a majority of not less than 2/3 (two-third) membership of the House, such resolution shall have the effect of removing the President from his Office, with effect from the date on which the resolution is so passed.

29. In case of the removal of the President from Office, or of his death or resignation, the Vice-president shall act as Acting President, until a fresh Presidential election takes place.

30. (a) The President shall be the Supreme Commander of Armed Forces of Nagaland, and

(b) In exercise of his powers as Supreme Commander, the President shall have power to issue directives for disposition of Armed Forces, for planning and execution of military campaigns, to deal with emergencies like foreign invasion and any matter appertaining to the conduct of war.

(c) The President shall have the power to confer commissions on the Officers of Armed Forces.

(d) The President shall not have power either to declare war or conclude peace without the consent of the Tatar Hoho.

(31) The President shall have the power to grant pardon and reprieve, to suspend or remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted in criminal offences.

(32) (a) The President shall have the right to exercise Emergency Powers when the security of Nagaland or any part thereof is threatened by external aggression, internal disturbances or failure of constitutional machinery.

(b) In exercise of the foregoing powers the President shall issue Ordinances by proclamation and use such forces for meeting the situation for a period of six months unless extended by Tatar Hoho.

33. The President shall also have power to exercise such extraordinary powers which the Tatar Hoho may, from time to time, empower him to exercise.

VICE PRESIDENT

34. There shall be a Vice President of Nagaland.

35. The Vice President shall be elected in accordance with the provision contained in Article 20.

36. The Vice President shall hold Office for a term of 3(three) years from the date on which he enters upon his Office.

37. The Vice President shall be removed from his Office on impeachment in accordance with the provisions contained in Articles 22 and 28.

38. (a) The Vice President shall, by writing under his own hand addressed to the President, resign his Office.

(b) If the Office of the Vice President is caused vacant, election to fill the vacant seat shall be completed before the expiration of that term.

39. The qualification for election to the Office of vice President shall be the same as the provision contined in Article 25.

40. If and when a member of the Tatar Hoho is elected to the Office of the Vice President he shall after his election be deemed to have vacated his seat in the House.

41. The Vice President shall, before entering upon his Office, make and subscribe, before the President or a person appointed in that behalf, the following oath—"I . . . do solemnly declare and affirm that I will faithfully execute the Office of the Vice President of Nagaland, and I will faithfully discharge the functions and duties conferred on me by the Yehzabo and the laws".

42. The Vice President shall, during the absence of the President from his Office, discharge and perform the powers and functions of the President as Acting President.

PART IV. COUNCIL OF KILONSERS

43. There shall be a Council of Kilonsers, with equal status, to aid and advise the President in exercise of his powers and functions.

44 (a) The Council of Kilonsers shall consist of such numbers as may be determined by Tatar Hoho from time to time from amongst its members and shall hold office for a term of 3 (three) years.

(b) There shall be Deputy Kilonsers to assist the Council of Kilonsers.

45. The Council of Kilonsers shall perform and discharge such duties and functions as may be assigned to them by the President collectively or individually from time to time.

46. The President shall preside in the meeting of the Council of Kilonsers and shall have the right to vote in case of a tie.

47. A Kilonser or Deputy Kilonser shall remain in Office till the expiration of his term, unless:

(a) he is removed from the Office by a resolution of the House on ground of his inefficiency or committing such offences against the Yehzabo or the State.

(b) he resigns on ground of personal disability.

48. Any member of Tatar Hoho when he is elected to the Office of Kilonser or Deputy Kilonser shall be deemed not to have vacated his seat in the House.

49. Every Kilonser or Deputy Kilonser before entering upon his Office, shall make before the President or a person appointed in that behalf the following oath—"I . . . do solemnly declare and affirm that I will faithfully and sincerely performed the duties assigned to me to the best satisfaction of the people of Nagaland".

50. There shall be a Central Secretariat headed by a Secretary-General. Establishment of the Central Secretariat shall be regulated by law.

TATAR HOHO (PARLIAMENT)

51. There shall be a Federal Parliament consisting of one House known as Tatar Hoho (National Parliament).

52. All the legislative powers of Nagaland shall be vested in the Tatar Hoho.

53. The Tatar Hoho shall be composed of:

(a) Representatives of the Regions elected by the people thereof, on proportionate population, on the basis of one representative per 15,000 population. Notwithstanding clause (a) any region or regions whose population is less than 15,000, shall send one representative to the Tatar Hoho.

(b) Two members to be nominated by the President.

54 (a) Any Naga citizen who has completed 25 (twenty-five) years of age and is not otherwise disqualified by the law of the land shall be eligible for election to the Tatar Hoho.

55. Every Tatar elected to the Tatar Hoho shall, before taking his seat, take the oath before the Speaker in the following prescribed manner: "I,...solemnly and truly declare and affirm that I will be faithful and bear allegiance to the Federal Government of Nagaland dedicating wholly myself to the service of the Nation."

56. (a) The Tatar Hoho shall be summoned to meet at least twice in every year.

(b) Nothing in the Yehzabo shall preclude the President to call an Emergency session of Tatar Hoho.

57. (a) The Hoho shall, unless sooner dissolved, continue for two years and at the expiration of the said period it shall be deemed to have been dissolved.

(b) Notwithstanding clause (a) of this Article, during operation of Emergency by proclamation, the said period may be extended by the Tatar Hoho for a period of six months. Provided further, if the operation of Emergency is ended, the extended period shall also be reduced.

58. The Tatar Hoho shall, from amongst its members, choose one Speaker and one Deputy Speaker.

59(a) The Deputy Speaker, in the absence of the Speaker shall preside over the session and shall conduct the business of the House.

(b) In case of the dissolution of the Hoho, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall continue to hold their respective Office until the newly elected Hoho assembles.

60. (a) There shall be a Secretariat department.

(b) The Secretaries or Secretary shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Speaker. Non-Tatars are qualified for the appointment.

(c) The Secretaries or Secretary shall be responsible for the Business of the House.

61. The Tatar Hoho shall make the rule of procedure and the conduct of business in the House.

62. 2/3 (two-thirds) in case of general session and 1/4 (one-fourth) in case of Emergency of the total number of members in the Tatar Hoho shall constitute a quorum to transact the business of the House.

63. All matters in the Tatar Hoho shall be decided by a majority of the members present, the Speaker or any person presiding in the House shall have a casting vote in case of a tie.

64. When a resolution for the removal of the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker from Office is discussed and debated in the House, the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker shall not preside in the House.

65. No person shall be a member of the Tatar Hoho unless he/she is so elected by the Regional Leacy in that behalf.

66. The Tatar Hoho shall have the power to expel any member or members from the house if he/she commits any offence against the House or the State.

67. If a member of the Tatar Hoho is absent from the session for three consecutive sessions without sufficient cause, his/her seat shall be declared vacant.

68. When any seat in the House falls vacant the Speaker shall inform the Regional Leacy concerned with a request to send a new representative to fill the vacancy within a stipulated period.

69. The Regional Leacy shall have the power to withdraw any of its representatives from the Tatar Hoho for want of confidence and shall have power to send a new member in place of the member so withdrawn.

70. (a) No member of the Tatar Hoho shall be prosecuted, arrested, detained or tried for the opinion expressed or vote cast by him in exercise of his function in the

House.

(b) The members of Tatar Hoho shall, except for treason, sedition, felony or breach of peace, be privileged from arrest during the session of the Tatar Hoho.

71. (a) The Tatar Hoho shall have the sole power to try all impeachments. During trials the members who bring the charges of impeachment shall be examined on oath.

(b) During impeachment no person shall, without the concurrency of 2/3 of the members present, be convicted.

(c) When the President of Nagaland is impeached the Chief Justice shall preside.

72. Judgement in case of impeachment shall not extend further than removal from Office and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honour or trust under the authority of Nagaland.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE

73. President shall have the right to address the House at the opening session of the Tatar Hoho.

74. The President shall place reports and statements (including financial statements) on matters of national or public importance before the House.

75. (a) Every Bill which has been passed by Tatar Hoho shall, before it becomes a law, be presented to the President for his assent. The President may give his assent to it or send it back with his objection to the House for reconsideration within three months.

(b) If any Bill is not returned within the stipulated time the same shall be deemed to have become a law.

76. (a) Any Bill except money Bill shall be introduced by any member in the Tatar Hoho.

(b) Any Bill shall be deemed to have been passed if it is passed by the House, with or without amendment.

77. (a) A money Bill shall be introduced in the Tatar Hoho.

(b) The President shall prepare estimate of receipts and expenditure of the Government for every financial year and shall present them to the Tatar Hoho for consideration.

78. The submission of estimate of expenditure, the appropriation of the revenues and all other matters connected therewith shall, in so far as provision is not made in that behalf by this Yehzabo, be regulated by law made by Tatar Hoho as it deems fit.

79. (a) All estimates of expenditure shall be submitted in the form of demands for grants to the Tatar Hoho and the House shall have power to assent to or reject any demand with such requisition of the amount.

(b) No demand for a grant shall be made in the same session except on the recommendation of the President.

80. Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing provision the Tatar Hoho shall have power:

(a) To make any grant in advance in respect of the estimated expenditure for a part of any financial year;

(b) To make a grant for meeting an unexpected demand such as for defence or for a military undertaking etc.

81. (a) The Tatar Hoho shall have power to levy and collect taxes and revenues.

(b) The Tatar Hoho shall also have the power to take loans on the credit of the Government and to pay debt.

82. The Tatar Hoho shall have powers to raise and support armies, to provide and maintain service, to lay down rules covering the organisation and maintenance of the Military Forces.

83. The Tatar Hoho shall have the powers to make Laws on the following subjects: Foreign Affairs including entering into treaties, agreement and contracts with other countries, war and peace, communications, census, all federal services, audit of accounts of Federal Government, Supreme Court, elections, preventive detension, amnesty etc.

PART V . FEDERAL JUDICIARY

84. There shall be a Federal Supreme Court of Nagaland consisting of a Chief Justice and four other Judges.

85. The President shall have power, with the advice and consent of the Tatar Hoho, to appoint the Chief Justice and other Judges.

86. Any person who is a citizen of Nagaland and has special experience and knowledge in legal realm of customs, traditions, social practices or academic laws, shall be eligible to be appointed as Judge of the Supreme Court.

87. A Judge of the Supreme Court or other subordinate Court shall not be removed from Office except for proved misconduct or incapacity.

88. (a) A proposal to prefer a charge for removal of a Judge of the Supreme Court shall not be adopted by Tatar Hoho except upon a resolution of the House supported by two-thirds majority of members present.

(b) Where a charge is preferred against a judge, a Special Tribunal, consisting of the members of the Tatar Hoho, shall be appointed to investigate the charge.

(c) The decision shall, on the report of the Special Tribunal, be taken by the Tatar Hoho for or against removal of the Judge.

89. The Judges of the Supreme Court shall, while entering upon the Office, take an oath in the manner prescribed as follows: "I,...having been appointed Chief Justice (Judge) of the Supreme Court, do hereby solemnly declare and affirm that I will faithfully and honestly perform the duties assigned to me, and to the best of my knowledge and judgement I shall administer justice to the people of our land and that I will uphold the Yehzabo and the laws."

90. The Supreme Court shall have original jurisdiction over the following matters:

- (a) All matters arising under the Constitution and involving its interpretations,
- (b) Between regions or between the State and the region or regions,
- (c) Such other matters, if any, as may be defined by law.

91. The Supreme Court shall have appellate jurisdiction from the decision and judgement of the Regional Courts, and shall also have appellate jurisdiction from the decision of other tribunals appointed by the Tatar Hoho for exceptional cases.

92. (a) An appeal shall lay to the Supreme Court from any judgement, final order or sentence, any criminal proceeding of a Regional Court if the Regional Court certifies that the case is fit for appeal to the Supreme Court.

(b) (i) An appeal shall lay to the Supreme Court from any judgement, decree or final order in a civil proceeding of a Regional Court if the Regional Court certifies that the value of the subject matter of the dispute is not less than Rs. 3,000.

(ii) The claim of title respecting property is valued at not less than Rs. 3,000.

(iii) Notwithstanding clause (a) and (b) of this Article the Supreme Court shall, in its discretion, grant special leave to appeal from any judgement, sentence or order

made by any Regional Court or Tribunal, where, (a) gross injustice has been done in criminal proceedings, (b) in civil cases the question of general interest or public importance is involved.

93. The Supreme Court shall be barred from interfering in any proceeding of cases pending in other Courts.

94. The decision, order or judgement made by the Supreme Court shall be binding on all Courts, within the territory of Nagaland.

95. Subject to the provisions of any law made by the Tatar Hoho the Supreme Court shall, with the approval of the Tatar Hoho, be empowered to make rules and procedure of the Court.

PART VI. REGIONAL LEACY

96. There shall be a Regional Leacy for each Region consisting of members elected by Sub-Regional Committee.

97. Each Regional Leacy shall have the right to determine the number of its members.

98. (a) There shall be a Speaker and Secretary in the Leacy elected from amongst its members.

(b) The tenure of Office of the Members in Leacy shall be 3(three) years with effect from the date on which they enter upon their office.

99. Any member of the Regional Leacy shall be removed from his Office by two-thirds majority of the members present for offences against the State or the law.

100. The Leacy shall have the power to make legislation on the following matters of local affairs such as:

1. Maintenance of public order, regional administration, regional finance.
2. Organisation of Sub-Regional Committee and Courts.
3. Reformatory institutions
4. Public health
5. Rehabilitation
6. Land and land development
7. Agriculture
8. Water and irrigation
9. Protection of wild animals
10. Forests
11. Gambling.

101. The Regional Leacy shall have the power to make legislation on the matters of local interest which are not specifically enumerated in Article 100, but in case of any inconsistency of the Regional legislation with the Federal Law the latter will prevail.

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

102. There shall be an Executive Head in a Region called Midan Peyu.

103. The Midan Peyu shall be the Agent of the President and be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Regional Leacy for a term of three years, and he shall remain in Office till his successor takes over the Office.

104. Any citizen of Nagaland shall be eligible to the Office of Midan Peyu.

105. The Executive power and function of the Region shall be vested in the Midan Peyu and shall be exercised by him through the Regional Executive.

106. The Midan Peyu shall, in a Region, be responsible to perform the duties towards the Federal Government of Nagaland.

107. There shall be a Regional Executive the number of which shall be determined by the Regional Leacy concerned.

108. The members of the Regional Executive shall be elected by the Regional Leacy from amongst its members.

109. The Regional Executive shall advise and assist the Midan Peyu in discharge of his functions and duties.

SUB-REGIONAL COMMITTEE

110. There shall be more than one Sub-Regional Units in a Region and a Sub-Regional Committee shall be composed of the representatives of village Councils.

111. The Village Council shall, in the Sub-Regional Units in a Region and a Sub-Regional Committee shall be composed of the representatives of Village Councils.

112. (a) The Sub-Regional Committee shall have the local administrative powers in the area under the direction of the Regional Leacy, and the administrative power for the Sub-Regional Unit shall be exercised by the Runa Peyu as its Administrative Head.

(b) The Runa Peyu shall be appointed by the Midan Peyu on the recommendation of the Sub-Regional Committee.

113. The Sub-Regional Committee shall remain subordinate to the Regional Leacy and its functions and duties shall be regulated by the rules made by the Regional Leacy.

114. Notwithstanding the provisions contained in the foregoing Articles 110 and 11, where the formation of Sub-Regional Committee is not practicable the Regional Leacy shall have the powers to formulate its own administrative arrangement according to the convenience of the Region concerned.

REGIONAL COURT

115. There shall be a Regional Court for each Region.

116. (a) The number of Judges in the Regional Court shall be determined by the Regional Leacy and the Judges shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation and advice of the Regional Leacy through Midan Peyu.

(b) The President shall appoint one from amongst the Judges as presiding Chairman of the Court.

117. The Judges shall hold office during their good behaviour in Office.

118. A Judge of the Regional Court shall be removed from Office for his proved misconduct by a resolution passed by two-thirds majority of the members in the Leacy.

119. The Regional Leacy shall have no power or jurisdiction in the interpretation of the Yehzabo.

120. The Regional Court shall have original jurisdiction on any matter that arises between two or more sub-Regions.

121. The Regional Court shall have appellate jurisdiction to hear disputes on appeals from the decisions, orders or judgement of the Sub-Regional Courts.

122. The Regional Court shall have the power of superintendence over the Sub-Regional Courts.

SUB-REGIONAL COURT

123. There shall be a Sub-Regional Court for each sub-Region and the number of Judges shall be determined by the Regional Leacy.

124. The Judges of the Sub-Regional Court shall be elected by the members of the Regional Leacy and the Runa Peyu and shall act as Presiding Officer of the Court.

125. The Sub-Regional Court shall have original jurisdiction over disputes that arise between two or more villages or between persons or groups of persons of different Villages.

126. The Sub-Regional Court shall have appellate jurisdiction over the dispute that arises from the decision of the Village Court.

127. The Village Court shall be the lowest Judicial Court in Nagaland and the administration of Justice shall be regulated according to their customs, traditions and usage.

128. (a) In exercise of the foregoing Article 127, no outside interference shall be allowed by the Yehzabo and by law.

(b) No appeal from the jurisdiction of the Village Court shall be entertained in the Higher Court except a certificate for appeal was granted by the Village Court.

PART VII. OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

129. The Official Language throughout Nagaland shall be English and all Official business of the Government shall be transacted in English. (Other languages shall be used as medium of common understanding).

130. Regional language shall be used as Official Language in the Region for Official transaction of business of Local Government.

PART VIII. DEFENCE

131. The Federal Government of Nagaland shall maintain a standing National Army.

132. The Organisation for Defence shall be regulated by the Tatar Hoho in consideration of the situation prevalent in the country.

133. Subject to the provision of Article 54(b) the Speaker of Tatar Hoho is empowered to allow two Naga Army representatives to participate in the deliberations of the House, particularly on matters of defence.

PART IX. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

136. The Federal Government of Nagaland shall maintain Diplomatic Relations with all Nations.

137. The Relationship of the Federal Government of Nagaland towards all Nations shall be one of peaceful co-existence with military neutrality.

PART X. RELIGION

138. Christianity and Naga Religion are recognised Religions in Nagaland.

PART XI. YEHzABO

139. The Yahzabo of Nagaland is flexible in nature and as such amendment in respect of any Article or Clause can be affected if and when a Bill is passed to that effect by two-third majority of the Tatar Hoho.

PART XII. POLITICAL ORGANISATION

140. The Naga National Council shall be the only recognised political institution in Nagaland.

141. The Naga National Council shall work on the following principles:

There shall be: 1) a Central Executive Committee which will guide and control the political policy and decisions of the Nation.

2) Regional and Range Committees which will deal with organisational activities and problems in the respective regions.

Whereas National Assembly, having passed a Resolution and presented to the President of Nagaland, seeking an assent to the amended Articles of the Yehzabo which were adopted on the 25th July, 1968.

I.G. Mhiasiu, President of Nagaland, being satisfied with the ratified Articles of the Yahzabo, do hereby assent by affixing my signatures and the Federal Seal to the approved Yehzabo of Nagaland this seventh day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty eight.

SEAL

Dated Oking:
The 7th August, 1968.

(G.Mhaisiu)
President of Nagaland.

1. This National Assembly of Nagaland having assembled at the federal Headquarters by a special Degree from the President of Nagaland and, whereas the plenary session of the National Assembly having gone through the readings and unanimously accepted the amended Articles of the Yehzabo, it is hereby resolved that the amended Articles of the Yehzabo, shall now go to the President of Nagaland from appending signatures and the Federal Seal.

2. The National Assembly further resolved that the President of Nagaland be moved to notify the formation of Regional Council within 30 (thirty) days from today.

Sd/-
(Z. Ramyo)
Chairman
25.7.68

APPENDIX XV

Manifesto of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland

PREFACE

The concept of 'Human Race,' internationalism and the myth of nations could in no sense deprive the Nagas of the basis of being a family and a nation of their own existence. This self-determination is their righteous cause and Nagas shall always be the people of this noble cause. It is, however, to be admitted that, notwithstanding the feat of patriotism and valour, Nagas found themselves being self-defeated now and then. It is purely due to, in the first place, parochialism practised in the highest circle of national affairs. Also, the path the people have to tread was not illuminated, the

sine qua non of clarity of the way to their salvation was absent. The masses were, by and large, led along in the name of nation alone.

It is the bounden duty of every sensible citizen to be concerned about the necessity of evolving the sure way to save the nation from such treacherous mess of conditions. It is time to enlighten the people and meet them with a clear cut Manifesto that they be led out of their precarious helplessness, that potentials may be sublimated and channelised towards the salvation of their country.

Isak Chishi Swu

Executive Chairman

National Socialist Council
of Nagaland

Oking

31 January 1980

MANIFESTO OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST COUNCIL OF NAGALAND

Nothing is more inalienable for a nation, big or small, than her sovereignty. No moment, either, is more challenging for a people than the time when their free existence is challenged. The Naga National Council has failed. The sovereign existence of Nagaland is more at peril than ever before. It is high time for the revolutionary patriots to declare their national principles, their views and their aims.

I. NAGALAND AND THE NAGA NATIONAL COUNCIL

We live in a world of constant change. But the forces causing the change are not always the same. They develop and perish according to the different given conditions, stages and times.

To us, the forces that defend the righteous cause of sovereign national existence and further the just cause of the people along the inevitable course are alone patriots and revolutionaries. All forces standing in opposition to this are traitors and reactionaries, in that they try to pull the wheels of history back. All the reactionary traitors lean upon one another, all revolutionary patriots stand as one, supporting one another; there is no *via media*.

The Naga National Council was the only authentic political organisation of the people of Nagaland. It was this council that boldly took up the historic national trust, that is, the safeguarding of the right of the sovereign existence of Nagaland. With all its resoluteness, the Council faced ups and downs and it was never deterred by setbacks here and setbacks there. It had withstood the bitter period of the past three decades or so, turning neither to the right nor to the left—although there had been marked degeneration in its integrity and vigour. Our country could exist and we owe it to the National Council and the thousands of patriots who have unsparingly laid down their lives and to the unprecedented endurance of the people, thanks to the leadership Naga National Council had given to the people in their past national trials and tribulations till the time of its failure to condemn the treacherous Ministry and the Accord of treason of 1975.

The sober reality, however, is that our country is still under heavy occupation of the enemy troops. What are we to do with this? The enemy will never withdraw of its own accord. In no circumstances should we allow ourselves either to count on the sensibleness of the enemy. Because it is always suicidal. History has sufficiently warned us against the possible repetition of such error. Politics is successful but only when backed by arms. We are safe so long as we fight to save ourselves. Therefore, we

have to fight back the enemy out at all hazards. If negotiations, however, would be indispensable, they should be done only from a position of strength. Any attempt, therefore, at negotiated settlement at the moment would undoubtedly mean doing away with oneself, if not, it is traitorous in motive.

Facts must be acknowledged in spite of whatever turn the world might take; people must be told the truth so that they may understand their country and know what is what. The enemy is superior, therefore, our war will have to be a protracted one. We are in the course of active defence. Who will lead us through this long war? It is the most decisive issue. Is this the Naga National Council still? It has got to be reasoned out.

True, facts must be admitted and it is a fact that the most ignominious sell-out in the history of Naga people ever since the time the first bullet of freedom was fired, is beyond dispute the notorious 'Shillong Accord.' That Accord deserved an outright official and open condemnation by the Ministry that surrendered arms and consented to such sell-out. This failure left the country in a dangerous political mess. Nationwide danger was thus brought about. Any earnest appeal in a time like this for guidance, and letters of determination to fight to the last were never vouchsafed; no imperative given. The helpless unyielding were left entirely to themselves.

Of course, being resolute in purpose, we were able to make shift for ourselves. Any bold and genuine act of competent people in the forefront, in the name of the National Council, to save the country from the tragedy of the Shillong Accord by condemning it and the Ministry concerned was adversely reacted to. Any correct and required stride given in the matter of policy to salvage the country from the dead-end of the leadership was often brushed aside. The aloofness of the leadership from the people all through the difficult years, despite the earnest appeal of the people to come back and lead them, was justified on selfish considerations. Dissensions, misunderstandings and failures naturally arising therefrom were often imputed to the people. Essential men were often toppled by intrigues and their lives were treated as mere stuff. Only relatives were confided to and the hard-won glory and honour of the nation and the sacrifices and untold sufferings of thousands of patriots and the people, were appropriated and the highest office of national trust was used for the glory and gains of a family or two and their relatives. Any criticism to that effect was dealt with at gun-point, family and relatives were placed above the nation. Who can deny all this? Indeed, the truth is suppressed; that is the problem.

What is more, the delegation of downright traitors was warmly welcomed and met time and again before the eyes of the whole world. The use of the exalted name of the only national institution by the traitors was deliberately consented to and resolutions of anti-national aspiration were countenanced. Apparently, modalities and terms for another fresh capitulation are being worked out in close collaboration with the rank traitors. Surely traitors are collaborated with, patriots despised. Traitors are propped up, patriots condemned and the principle of upholding the freedom of every inch of Nagaland is deliberately withdrawn. These are the unfolding realities of the day and not of long ago. Because traitors are always from within and they lean upon one another in due time. One naturally wonders, if such conduct of affairs would commend itself. What can such state of affairs assure to the people? Nothing but danger. It is only heading for fresh capitulation from the highest level. But this is Nagaland and we are the people, we claim your promise; where is it?

Indeed, the Naga National Council is spent; it has turned out to be treacherous and

reactionary. Any effort to revolutionise it is stifled. It has neglected to carry its solemn national trust through to the end. It has totally failed. The resort being made to 'peace' and 'unity' is simply a desperate attempt at covering up and making virtue of their obvious treason. No matter in how many ways you would try to pass yourself off as saviour, you would be discovered. We declare the issue is sharp between the reactionary traitors on one side and the revolutionary patriots on the other. No identity exists between the dross and the grain whatever. Lovers of the nation and the people are driven to a state where a break-through is a must and it has to be promptly done if Nagaland and the Naga people are to be saved at all for what is their due on earth. Truly, the historic moment of saving Nagaland from the failure of the Naga National Council has come as the most crucial challenge to one and all.

II. ON POLICY

Every problem has a solution and to effect it, there is always the most realistic way. In the words of Chairman Mao, 'Policy is the life-line.' Therefore, any problem that is not handled precisely in the way the objective conditions warrant, is bound to meet with failure. It is policy that decides the out-come of any contest apart from strength. Thus, the question of making the right approach is, above all others, to be pondered over in the light of practical investigations.

(a) *Policy and the leadership*

The defeat of a people is not always brought about by the superiority of the adversary in strength but through incorrect leadership and the pursuit of unfounded policy. We should take this fact into serious consideration in order to avert the danger of self-defeat. A people that fails to admit the maxim that national victory is impossible without correct policy and correct leadership, is doomed to ultimate ruin. It is not uncommon that often leaders act at the dictate of their feelings and whims and suffer setbacks one after another, for any policy that is independent of the objective conditions is without basis and as such, is bound to suffer failure. Policy could only be realistic when it is based on the actual conditions of the people concerned and the enemy, and the world in general.

It is, therefore, not a matter of one's choice but that of necessity that leadership should have correct assessment of any situation through close investigations. It necessitates that he should be at the core of the situation, that is, he has to be with the masses, mobilising and working in close association, to lead them through all the critical stages with policy that is warranted by the conditions. It is in this way that the people could appreciate the wisdom of the leadership and his concern for the nation. They could confidently rally round him. Moreover, they could learn the knack of analysing problems and discover the right and the wrong for themselves. They could also acquire practical experience to handle the situation, enhance confidence in themselves and raise their cause. Such perfect harmony between the people and the leadership makes them invincible.

It is deplored that the leadership acted, in the past long period of nation-saving, completely independently of the actual conditions and in total isolation from the people. No amount of attempts to explain away the aloofness of the leadership on the ground that he was sent out by the people could hold water any longer. Obsolete views should be shaken off. We should be realistic because it is the politics of saving the nation and not that of justifying one's position.

We do not think it proper either, on the part of the leadership, to stay away from the people even when there is fatal danger at home and against the appeal of the people to come back and illuminate their way. It should also be borne in mind that when he failed to understand the people and vice versa, both would lose their bearings. However far he may make his way ahead, however high he may soar, he is bound to be pulled back and be down if he does not pull the people along with him. He should see that there is no adverse gap between him and the people. Indeed, in a problem of this nature, nothing could be accomplished apart from the people.

The contention that a particular leadership staying in a foreign land has sustained the existence of Nagaland thus far and that he alone will bring the final victory too, needs immediate correction. It explicitly means that a policy, though it has no bearing on the objective conditions, could be correct and a nation could be saved without the support and sacrifices of the people. This is the basic erroneous conception that has bred internal strifes which have brought the Nagas down to this ebb. Such a view categorically rules out the support of the people and ignores their untold sacrifices.

It has placed the leadership who has lost the confidence of the people above the people, above the nation and above righteousness. This section of the people, in no way, stands for the national cause since it is the line of direct negation. They are treacherous; they have to perish with the leader whom they blindly worship. Probably, their leader would bring them the golden plate of Nagaland's freedom from the hidden deep blue sky! Facts are stubborn and have no regard for anyone, although we acted oftentimes in deference to the elders. Things are now more in perspective and Nagas are no longer in their 1950s. We have to put an end to the reactionary mentality of interpreting the correctness of policy in terms of personality. We are revolutionaries; we do not believe in fantasy and absurdity; neither could we ever be persuaded of the talisman of any helpless leadership. We shall not fly in the air; we shall walk on the ground and work with the people, for it is our experience that correct policy could only be determined in the right perspective of a given situation and correct leadership could emerge only in the course of the struggle along with the people.

In addition, the conduct of national affairs through the intermediary of the family and relatives through the past years has naturally alienated the people and the Government. The refusal of the leadership to keep correspondence with the Home Government on official terms and his meagre and perfunctory pieces of advice, the correspondence between him and his family and near relatives, who are mostly traitors, often despising the home authority, the subjection of Government communications to the virtual censorship of the family, who maintain an air of hauteur, the practice of viewing the home situation in the light of self-motivated information from the family and his ultra vires utterances on some national issues—have made a mess of everything in us. Such arrogation to themselves of the authority to conduct affairs exclusively and the shameless, self-made notion of being above others in respect of nationality and ownership of Nagaland, has deliberately relegated altogether the people and the nation far to the background.

Who can question these facts? Nagas are made to see a strange centre of power, being created out of the family and relatives of the leadership and a few others with whom he has apparently formed an aristocratic circle, above the Government, above the people and above Nagaland. He has practically forgotten the people and their immeasurable sacrifices. He does not count on the people's support but seeks the backing of his men who are mostly traitors. Accordingly, he has acted irrespective of

the involvement of the question of national principles. The people are alienated; he has dug a chasm between himself and his henchmen on the one side and the people of Nagaland on the other.

It will be a wonder of wonders if such policy is to be the wisdom to save a nation. Of course, if one knows the people, the people would know him too; if one despises the people, the people would certainly despise him too; if one respects the sanctity of National cause, the nation would honour him too; and this is the way of the world. We are revolutionary patriots; we do not allow ourselves and our people to be imposed upon by empty rhetoric. We are vehemently opposed to the politics of any family or tribe that attempts to lord it over Nagaland. Parochialism of any form shall be done away with and the nation's integrity safeguarded. We cannot bluff heaven and earth too long; the people know who is who and what is what. We will never relinquish Nagaland to anyone. It is high time to sum up our past and take a concrete approach to the problems confronting us. Nagaland has got to be liberated from prejudices, injustice and from all sorts of aristocratic snobbery.

(b) *Rectification of basic erroneous views*

Since the inception, there has been a persistent view that it is too much for the Nagas to resist the colossal invading might of India and Burma, and that some sort of settlement by peaceful means should be arrived at. Unfortunately, the failure to grasp the reality of the problem has made many a well-intentioned national worker turn opportunist.

While admitting elements of truth in this view, one should as well fully realise the national danger involved in the possible inference to be made from it. The issue is not a contest of strength but of upholding our historic right against the aggressive forces. In this society of human frailty, we do not discount the impact of might on any issue. Nevertheless, the trend of viewing the world from the angle of power alone, ruling out the question of right and wrong, obviously leads to the conclusion that the weak are born to be ruled by the strong and the poor by the rich.

In other words, the world is for the monster and not for the people. This view represents the mentality of the lower nature of man, especially when taken over by an aberration. It makes the existence of human society meaningless. Men of sense look at problems from the viewpoint of right and that decides more approvingly the outcome of conflicting issues. The strong make might their resort. They are more easily prone to the use of force in settling problems. They are able to do much harm and can even annihilate many of the weak and win battles; but it is perseverance and the act of undaunted confrontation with the eventuality of death for the truth one knows that win the war in the long run.

Victory is, thus, not in the power to kill but in the fearlessness to face death for a just cause. The logic that the strong win over the weak is foul if it is taken at its face value without taking into consideration the other side of the experience of history. The strong are often defeated by the weak if they persevere for their just cause to the end. The outcome of the US-Vietnamese war may serve as a clear example.

The rulers of India and their strong men could not understand Nagaland and her people. They only knew that the Nagas were 'naked' and on this account, despised them and disregarded all their historical rights. However, 'Naked Nagas' also have their homeland and it has never been conquered by the Indians nor by the Burmese. Neither have the Nagas ever joined the Indian Union nor that of Burma by consent.

As the Indians and the Burmese took recourse to force, Naga people knew for certain that the problem had involved the challenge on our stand on the basic issue of principle, to face which, we have come into being. Indians demanded 'total surrender.' They also boasted stating that to finish the Nagas was a matter of a day, and took pride in it. The generals and the strong men who were the hope of India were sent one after another into Nagaland to conduct the unprecedented theatre of cruel war. Hundreds and thousands of troops operated and ravaged the land, indiscriminately putting out thousands of lives. They resorted to endless devices of torture and killing.

They did their worst. But are the Nagas finished and are they no more now? Have the Indians won the war? By no means. They had to change their stand from 'total surrender' to negotiations; the 'one day' has turned out to be a quarter of a century. The Shillong Accord, by virtue of which India claimed victory, is a dead letter. From the relentless resistance of the people, totally condemning the Shillong Accord and its predecessors, it is proved that any agreement that may be entered into on Indian terms can never be the solution to the problem.

However, it is clear that India would muster all the traitors and organise them into an active puppet front to attain their objective which is expressed in lucid terms by Morarji Desai, a one-time Prime Minister of India, as "I will exterminate the Nagas without any compunction." But the prospect of winning the war in the years to come is still worse as the force that fights a wrong cause can never be strong *ad finem*. The longer they fight the greater would be their loss, for it is a mere false hope that is encouraged by the acts of the traitors to nurture. Moreover, it is evident from the present-day phenomena that India, not to speak of forcing the Nagas into the Union, would not be able to hold together all its component parts for all time to come; the discontented peoples and nationalities are bound to rise up to save themselves from perishing altogether in Indian society where suppression, discrimination and all sorts of corruption abound. India would soon be bound up with her internal turmoil. The mighty problem of poverty and hunger shall loom ever more. India can gain no ground to defeat us.

As regards the possible settlement of the problem, it is an ill-time by all considerations, because our adversaries, relying on their might are intransigent and are not prepared to recognise the fact of our distinct existence. Whatever solutions they might talk about are nothing but terms of surrender. Secondly, though we have been able to establish ourselves on more solid ideological grounds, at present, we are not yet able to present ourselves formidably to make the adversaries admit that we can fight a long war to their detriment.

And so to seek a solution in a time like this would evidently be suicidal. An honourable solution is only in our preparedness to fight a protracted war to the victorious end. Our righteous cause would unfailingly back us up; it cannot be otherwise. Although might, in its own way can be formidable, it is the truth and our resoluteness for it that would inevitably triumph in the long run.

(c) *Principles and expediency*

It is principle on which the meaning of life takes root. When it is shaken, everything is forced afloat on the evil side of the world; the purpose of life is discarded and society is set out of scruples. The conduct of such a permissive society is governed by the philosophy of the Fallen Angel. It is beyond forbearance to see the fate of any people being wafted on towards that end.

It is by keeping the principles that objectives are attained through policy and the meaning of life is pursued to its reality. To save a nation or a society one must, above all, be established on the solid rock of principle. We should know that whenever expediency is stressed there is always the danger of principle being sacrificed. It is like running with both feet off the ground leading to a fall. Opportunities get circumscribed where expediency is resorted to.

We, Nagas, have suffered much from this, we have to struggle to come round from such grievous hurt. It stems, in the main, from failure to know the exact prowess of the enemy. When the enemy's power is overestimated, there is always a fear which consequently leads one to embark upon unfounded, feeble policy through which the adversary could come to know of him and have the advantage of taking the offensive on all fronts. It is most dangerous when we do not know both ourselves and the adversary; until we know the adversary, paradoxically we cannot know ourselves either as we are, to deal with him.

The leaders at home did not believe in the resisting power of the people, they did not comprehend the fact that, for all setbacks, the force of the people could make its way to the final victory. They feared that continued fighting would bring terrible consequences, nay, that India could even annihilate the people of Nagaland and argued—“what would freedom mean if people are finished; it has, therefore, involved the question of humanity.” They accordingly discouraged fighting and the efforts to strengthen the defence line. The cause of the nation was no more in them. They carried within them only the defeated hearts.

It is also an open secret that they had been playing an underhand game with the enemy to get the area of their occupation free from military operation and directed the spearhead of the operation to the stalwart patriots to soften them in their line. Unfortunately, many a well-intentioned national worker became victim of it. They always overestimated the enemy in spite of his practical inability to crush us in the past twenty-five years and made importunate, fear-ridden overtures here and there which they considered expedient at the time when Nagas were worst situated.

This nature of unrealistic and ill-timed approaches exposed our helplessness to the adversary. He had got what he wanted. Now knowing for sure that Nagas were no longer in a position to hold their own both in battle and at the negotiating table, the Government of India launched a timely offensive and successfully had his terms dictated. It was, it should be acknowledged, a splendid catch hauled ashore.

In their vain attempts to foist the treacherous accord on the people, they have employed all sorts of political black arts, calling heaven and earth, now here, now there. They do not cease to talk at large of their act—“Our conscience is clear; we have done it to save our nation.” Words of valour and honour are profusely used in their politics of prostrate capitulation.

We wonder if a man could fight better with a monster by jumping into his jaws, nay, by permitting to be swallowed deep into the stomach, than from a free position! Are we to experiment upon the sovereign existence of Nagaland by concluding an agreement of treason, and bury it for expedience' sake? Is this expedient, as claimed by the Accord-makers, who once boasted of themselves as the oracles of the country? It is no more than saving one's own life at the expense of the nation. Your philosophy is—“let it be, even though everything of the nation is lost, if I am saved.” Nagaland would not be so cheap as it was disposed of in your agreement. You will come to know the hard fact that Nagaland belongs only to the people and you cannot defraud them

of it. The leadership who still harbours the notion that people could be led by the nose has overshot himself and has fallen astern of time. We, the revolutionary patriots, shall at no time view our free Motherland through the eyes of a traitor. Whatever noise you may make, it will be only your helpless cry from the bottomless pit into which you have jumped of your own accord. You are there and your doom is sealed there.

On the whole, we cannot approach the world without clarity, neither could we ascertain the actuality of any condition through fear. Accurate appraisal of what the enemy and ourselves can and cannot do is essential for prudent dealing. Whatever might be the superiority of the enemy, there is no power on earth that dares annihilate the Nagas.

Therefore, we should never allow ourselves to be carried away by the baseless view that the adversary could wipe out the whole population. This is a mere phantom projected through the fear-ridden shallow politicians, now traitors, to intimidate the people into accepting their line of capitulation. We should not yield to blackmail of whatever kind. We should never lose sight of the truth that victory is in our resoluteness and correct policy, for Nagaland can definitely fight for the just cause of her freedom so long as the opponents are able to fight the wrong, being mindful of the fact that overestimation of the adversary causes fear and makes one commit right opportunism, while underestimation leads him to be presumptuous and makes him commit left opportunism. It is the correct reassessment of the actual condition that makes a correct approach possible.

III. NAGALAND AND THE INFUX OF INDIAN CAPITAL AND INDIAN NATIONALS

The pouring in of Indian capital in our country, for political reasons, has shattered the Naga people into a society of wild money. Its accumulation in the hands of the reactionary traitors and the rich has accelerated the process of exploitation and suppression of the people. The appropriation of the vast means of production, distribution and exchange and other means of profit-making by this exploiting class and by the Indian parasites has drawn a distinct line between them and the people. The struggle between the two classes would ever assume greater magnitude with the exploiting class and the Indians defending all the time the untenable status quo and the people directly opposing it. This antagonism is not a small problem and no Naga would be free from it.

In addition, the involuntary influx of Indian nationals from overpopulated India into our country has set all Nagaland under constant threat of eventual submersion. In this connection, it may be recalled that before the year 1947, there was not a single Indian in Nagaland. It has now more than two hundred thousand Indians. If, with a greater ratio of influx, another twenty years would go, what would be the state of affairs? The expropriation of vast tracts of public land and other means of capital-making everywhere by the exploiting class by using the Indian nationals as labourers and their votes in the election contest have given a clear aspect of certainty to the constant and rapid exploitation of the Naga people at large by the reactionary traitors and the Indians.

The massive exploitation of mineral resources by the Central Government of India with the bureaucrats and the exploiting reactionary traitors in the puppet state power and the constant flow of swarms of Indians into the small area of Nagaland, will

in a short period of time completely overwhelm and uproot Nagaland, depriving thereby the Naga people of all jobs and their just due and of their means of life. Because exploitation has no temperance. This is how a people is exploited to the worst of fates—the fate of becoming the helpless exploited foreigners in their own motherland. What does this lost world hold for the Naga people? Nagas are, indeed, faced with the irreconcilable fate from which we have to deliver ourselves. But deliverance from such imminent doom decisively calls for a revolutionary force.

NAGALAND AND THE EFFETE INDIAN AND BURMESE CULTURE AND THEIR FAITHS

Along with the occupation of Nagaland by sheer military might, one started witnessing the process of Indianisation of the Naga people on full massive scale. The rulers of both India and Burma knew well that force alone could never serve their purpose of making the Nagas the component parts of their communities. As they knew that anything Indian or Burmese was detestable to the Naga, they had to undergo a tough course of time to have the Nagas assimilated to their culture and ways of life. Persuasion was not possible either, only the process of subjecting them to assimilation was essential. For this reason, massive introduction of decadent Hindu culture and literature and those of the Burmese, in the social and individual life of the Naga people through public institutions and mass media, started all-Nagaland pervasiveness. Thus being conditioned entirely to and swamped by the waves of Indian and Burmese influence, one could only see the precious varieties of the Naga people in jeopardy of eventual extinction.

New problems bring new omens. The spread of Hinduism and the queer noises have reached our homeland. Although, as a doctrine Hinduism is not a recruiting force, it is not to be easily dismissed, since it is backed by a Hindu Government. The forces of Hinduism, viz., the numberless Indian troops, the retail and wholesale dealers, the teachers and the instructors, the intelligentsia, the prophets of non-violence, the gamblers and the snake-charmers, Hindi songs and Hindi films, the rasogula makers and the Gita are all arrayed for the mission of supplanting the Christian God, the eternal God of the Universe. The challenge is serious, there is no hiding; no pretension.

The preachers of the Gospel, the holy men of God and the demagogues, are you prepared to resist these surging waves of the Hindu world upon our country? This danger flows from India and the vulnerability of the Church leaders and the pliable demagogues has added to the problem. To join the Indian Union as they insisted, is to allow ourselves to be drowned and perish in these waves of dead doctrine. Whereas to defend Nagaland's Independent Existence as we have been doing with our lives and our all, is to assure ourselves safety from the doom of Hinduism.

This is simple logic. The failure of the Christian leaders to grasp the way the evil forces work and their failure to face them in the way they should has, indeed, placed Nagaland on a most serious trial. We are not only confronted with a war of physical force but also with the more dangerous insidious war of assimilation. A war of such nature does not admit of a shallow approach; it demands of us thorough combat.

We live in a sophisticated world but our religious leaders take a shallow view of it. They do not apprehend the fact that the hard realities are always beneath the surface. In spite of the long political bloodshed, they have never realised the immense significance the politics of defending one's own national freedom has on the question of spiritual salvation. They believe in the illusion that the constitutional sanction of

India would safeguard the freedom of their faith. They failed to realise that any written constitution could be thrown overboard by the majority whenever expediency arose. The recent 'Freedom of Religion Bill, 1978' introduced in the Indian Parliament which forbids further conversion to Christianity is a clear example to this effect, and it would serve as an eye-opener to all those who trust in the constitutional guarantee.

Yet the Church leaders would persist in joining the Indian Union of their own volition. You, good fellows, want us to resign ourselves to the wrong world which, to us, is the hardest of all. This is very wrong and you have done it. Harmful brains work harmful things. Preachers of all ranks have gone after the blessing and the 'awards' of Indian bosses. Spiritual uprightness is pushed into the background, pliable demagogues are out, dressed in 'dhoti' with that queer red mark of foreign goddess on their broad foreheads, preaching reverence for cows—half absorbed, full devil! O Nagaland, whither goeth thou!

One is urged to ask, if Jesus, the Christ, is not sufficient to save the Nagas and the world and how the question of taking help from the Hindu goddess has ever arisen. The keeping of a substantial area of Nagaland and the Naga people therein under the so-called Arunachal Pradesh exclusively for the influence of Ram Krishna Mission over the innocent is a long-range design to wreck the Nagas among themselves on different religious faiths and thus perpetuate their occupation of Nagaland.

Furthermore, the abundant amenities of life accorded to them are only sinister seeds of dissension being sown in the Naga family. Whatever it may be and wherever they may be, Nagas are Nagas and we shall prove the evil of this policy before long. India's "Ahimsa," "All Roads Lead to Rome," and "No Religion Has the Monopoly of Righteousness" are, no doubt masterpieces of philosophy, but the way to eternal Life is not philosophy. The time has come for you and for us either to shrink back or prove through. God wants us right now to stand for Him. Now is the time to hold firm our ground with Christ and face the stick and carrot policy and persecutions of all Indian type. Real sacrifices of the soldiers of Christ are called for to make our country for Him and for Him alone. O men of God, lead us to Saviour Christ, for He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life that leads to God, the Father. Our Saviour taught us saying, "and thou shalt be hated of all nations for My name's sake." Truly, it is time we pose the question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Come for Christ, come for Nagaland's freedom. We are here and you will find us here always. Or you go for India and Burma and their goddesses. There is no third way, for "he who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters."

V. NAGALAND AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

A country is always to be saved by its population but population as such is not a force until it is organised and brought into solidarity. It is, therefore, first and foremost that there should be solidarity and single organisation of the people. In other words, a nation is most secure when its citizens are kept instituted against any possible influence of the anti-national elements. Party politics proceeds in the main, from party interests, and as such permitting party politics in any form in times of national emergency, is in many ways obviously affording opportunities to the opponents to have a hold on some of the antagonistic parties. Any force that may have the tendency to disintegrate the solidarity of the people must be removed at the first opportunity.

In a country like Nagaland, particularly at the present time, party system could never accomplish anything except leading to ruination. It would mean only the game

of the traitors and the exploiting class. The stage where there could be conducive practice of party system is still a long way off. The nature of the problem with which we have been confronted necessitates concerted efforts of the people through an organisation, if our country is positively to be saved from danger of any kind. The dictatorship of the people through an organisation is, therefore, indispensable.

Nevertheless, it is to be admitted that the constructive criticism of any erroneous policy is as much indispensable as the dictatorship of the people itself. Hence the dictatorship of the people through a single political organisation and the active practice of democracy within the organisation is unquestionable for the salvation of Nagaland. Will not party system then be essential in normal times hereafter? Whether it is normal time or not the kind of existence that our society will have cannot approve of parties of anti-nationals and exploiting class. In short, there can be no room for anti-people elements to function in our society.

The damage done to the healthy body politic and the upright characteristics of the Naga people as a whole, through the practice of Indian party system by the traitors, is beyond easy description. In their contest for the rein of state power all the parties involved in it indulged in all evil practices. To win the favour of the Central ruling party, 'the mithun' and 'the cock' alike promised in their words the annihilation of what they called 'hostiles' and the 'miscreants.' At the same time to ingratiate itself into indirect favour with and dupe the national defenders, 'the cock' showed superficial leniency to the common people and to those unfortunate national workers who fell victims of arrest. Both favour the inflow of Indians and exploited them for votes.

The accumulation of Indian money in their hands and the corrupt ubiquitous practice of bribery and the purchase of votes for money has left the people to the tender mercy of money. It is money that works, it is money that represents the 'Assembly.' All are shaken down before money that has no sentiment and are taken over. These 'parties' are formed mostly out of the traitors and the deserters from Naga National Council. Now the notorious Shillong Accord makers in direct collusion with these parties, paradoxically, in the stolen name of the people, are merrily pulling the NNC back to their traitor's home, to save and enhance their parties and status at the expense of the National right. It is because they all are status mongers and renegades; they have no ideals to give up. Quo vadis, NNC! You cannot conceal for long years your treacherous inclination; you cannot shift the blame on to the people. We advise you to stop presuming upon the people's forbearance of you. We, the Nagas of today, do not permit any easy calculation on us.

The mithun and the cock, the 'honest brokers' and the hypocrites, the holy men of peace and the prophets of non-violence, and the latest Accord makers, all without exception have joined hands with one another in the noble enterprise of instituting the modernmost Vanity Fair in the puppet society where freedom, power and reality of life all end up in money, wine and women. Is this the system of society the Nagas are to seek their salvation from? Certainly no. On the contrary, this is a system that must be done away and the Nagas delivered from this nether gloom for a society of higher order free from the fear of domination, exploitation and suppression.

VI. THE INDO-BURMA ISSUE WITH NAGALAND AND THE MEANS

The fate of a nation is never decided by spinning a coin. Neither our means is determined by the influence of any divine principles nor by our wishes. To us, there is

no violence or non-violence as such in respect of policy, but it is the nature of the objective conditions that has to do with the means. To break a stone we use a hammer, to reap a field we use a sickle and to deliver Nagaland from the preposterous occupation of Indian and Burmese military might, we need arms.

When Gandhiji was there the Nagas were happiest to talk of the Indo-Naga issue and even came to initial agreement. But the authorities post-Gandhiji tore up the agreement and the worst was forced upon the Nagas thereafter. Shooting down the Nagas at will started despite peaceful approaches. In the circumstances, the Nagas could not be expected to face Indian bullets with Gandhiji's Ahimsa. Nagas had to fire back in self-defence.

At any rate, could we make it the turn of Nagaland to be devoured? Never reason with a monster. Gandhiji's Ahimsa posed to the liberal Englishmen might have led into the gas chambers if it had been posed to Hitler, the Fuehrer. We shall in no case meet invasion of our country with non-violence. It is coward's politics, heading only for the jaws of the monster. Force to force, reason to reason. It is your aggression on us that had given rise to this spell of armed conflict; it is your killing of us that had touched off bitter retaliation. The problem is with you, it is not with the Nagas.

A political issue needs a political solution. The issue between India and Burma on the one side and Nagaland on the other is a political one. Therefore, it requires a political solution. But India and Burma seek military solution and this is the crux of the problem. Our freedom is forced into the battle-field; we have to pick it up with the gun. How long India and Burma continue their occupation of our homeland, that long we are bound to fight. We permit no power on earth to disturb our home and dictate terms to us.

And to you, who shout aloud for 'peace' and 'unity' we make our position unequivocal. If peace is the issue, we are for peace and that with freedom, and not for the peace you mean in capitulation. If unity is the question, we are definitely for unity but on the correct line alone. Those who shouted 'peace,' 'unity,' 'compromise,' 'reconciliation,' 'humanity' and so on: where have they all gone? These and more are the slogans of the traitors and the hypocrites combined. No nation is ever rescued by high sounding empty slogans. It is arms that save a nation. We are revolutionary patriots; we shall hold fast to our gun. He who laws down his gun, lays down his freedom. This is the Gospel truth of our politics. We declare we will never lay down from our hands our arms, our freedom and our country.

VII. NAGALAND AND THE POLICY OF SELF-RELIANCE

No country is prepared for the worst until its people are settled down to the practice of self-reliance. In other words, the people that have no determination to struggle by themselves have practically no motive force to sustain the meaning of life they have to live; they are left adrift only waiting for the unknown destiny to be driven to. It is the practice of relying on oneself that gives reality to one's existence.

The most dangerous harm affecting our politics today is that ab initio the people were made to believe in foreign help for their survival. This policy of setting the people on the hope of external help sapped the initiative to save themselves. Such policy is opportunist and treacherous in that the people are driven to despair and capitulation when things would not turn out as they expected. We have to see to it that people are educated and built up on the realistic line. Without putting into practice the principle of self-dependency, the essence of being revolutionary vanishes. The

revolutionaries being mindful of the truth that their efforts alone are decisive, have to struggle to stand on their own feet. They should be well established with the people as one and teach them to realise that their future is assured only in their preparedness to save by their own efforts and abandon the idea of making external aid decide their course. They should also cultivate themselves to make the best of the conditions they are in and struggle against the inconducive tendencies such as indulging in tastes, acting at the dictate of whims or being dissipated, which the revolutionary state or condition can never approve.

It is hard to consolidate ourselves on foreign assistance. There could be no consolidation of our position without the practice of self-reliance, and without consolidation, it is idle to think of the final victory. We have to struggle and it is in the course of struggle that we acquire the experience essential for surmounting the inevitable problems on our way to final victory. Consolidation of home-front by our own efforts and the determination to fight through to the end could certainly win the favour of other countries and make their help worth-while. He who does not realise the significance of the practice of self-reliance could not be a revolutionary patriot to the last.

Upholding the principle and shouting that 'Nagaland belongs to the Nagas' alone will not do. It requires of us far beyond that. Every vigorous effort must be made to realise it. We should not believe in parroting the principle; we must be prepared with the people and practically chart our way through. Mere words should not be our strategy; Nagaland has experienced enough of it; it has not yet recovered from the crisis of faith created by the strategy of bombastic utterances.

However, without the centralised system it is quite a problem to achieve anything good. It is in the centralised system that unity could be fostered and save the country from the persisting internal nuisances and fight for the freedom of every inch of Nagaland. The policy of relying on ourselves could also be best implemented in this system. We should also change our tactics and strategy. Persistent fighting, as in the past, is an area where the enemy could do better: it should not be encouraged. We should find out the weak point of the enemy and consolidate ourselves there and that should be our base area. In this way, we can wrestle and have initiative almost all the time in our hand in dealing with the enemy, however superior he might be.

VIII. NAGALAND AND THE POLICY OF UNITED FRONT

The problem before us is how to confront an enemy of superior force and defeat them. The practical wisdom of the leadership lies in solving this problem. In order that the adversary may be defeated, he needs to be confronted on all fronts, which is pretty well impossible for a much weaker opponent. We should, however, know that we are not alone, because it is the world of conflicting historical forces.

Therefore, the question of the strategy of United Front with all the forces that could be united with it in some way or other cannot be dispensed with. In other words, we should by no means ignore or underestimate the necessity of a united front so long as there is the danger of isolated forces being defeated one after another. We should learn to help one another so that we are able to stand against the common enemy. Two men are always stronger than one and fighting on several fronts is more effective than fighting on a single front. We should be so united that there is coordination in our action.

There should be firm coordination with the forces that are within the enemy line too, and struggle to wreck the enemy from within. Enemy forces are most effectively disintegrated only when they are confronted from within and without. The old style of fighting single-handed like a bull should be avoided. We are to see the conditions around are jointly exploited against the enemy. Until that is done, we cannot claim that we are confronting him precisely in the way by which he could be defeated. It amounts to leaving the field to the opponent alone with all the initiative in his hands to defeat us.

We have to rectify our policy from being indifferent or opposed to the formation of united front. We are revolutionaries; we should not be confined to ourselves alone, we should not just fight about without the tactics and strategy of winning over the enemy. We should even forgive the traitors and the mistake of being on their side provided they repent of their mistakes and cooperate with us in the task of saving the nation of us all. We declare we will unite with all the forces, God-fearing and Godless, that can be united with the fight against the monster in packs.

It is a pity that the leadership persistently harps and counts on the tantalising boon of some particular imperialist country and bosses and the sensibleness of the adversary by making antagonistic pronouncements against the countries which are sympathetically sharing with us the weal and woe. We cannot refuse to ask ourselves: By so doing, has he gained them as he calculated? Definitely no. It is just beating about the bush. As a matter of fact, he is held up in a predicament by his own boomeranging. The option before him now is either to go on parroting the principle or come back empty-handed. And then, en route to . . . ? Disloyalty to friends in their critical time has done much damage to mutual confidence. When open war broke out between our friends and our adversary, the leadership betrayed cooperation for the wanton purpose of winning the favour of the adversary. The ambivalent policy of the enemy was often miscalculated. Wounds caused by such perfidy are not easily healed. Friends are wounded, the adversary is gladdened and strengthened against us.

This is a total failure of policy, resulting from the inability to know the forces that would be on our side and the forces that are against us. It is the failure to understand Nagaland and the world around. It is self-isolation and self-antagonism; it is rightist and cowardice; and treacherous in the ultimate analysis. It is self-defeat on both fronts, Internal and external. It is a sad thing that we are led into such adverse state of affairs. The good old times are gone, we cannot call them back. We have to have the damages repaired, however long it may take, and hide our time. The world is not ended here; it keeps evolving. We should endeavour to adapt ourselves to and catch up with the forces at work. It is not for the world to wait for us; it is for us to struggle and to keep pace with the march of time. We should also correct ourselves from the past mistake of being out of step with the forces that are in our favour.

IX. NAGALAND AND THE SYSTEM OF SOCIALISM

What existence must our society have in this material world is the cardinal issue before us. We are to know that it is the world where there is the problem of exploitation of men by men and we are not an exception to this. It is altogether due to the system we live in. Therefore, it is true that the problems of disparity and poverty, and the concomitant evils, which have resulted from exploitation cannot be solved by any amount of benevolence and benefactions. It is the system that has to be abolished and lead the people into a new one where there is freedom from the fear of economic

exploitation and political domination and suppression. Of course, we shall not struggle for the stage of perfect equality, simply for the factual reason of impossibility.

Nagas are living in a society of free enterprise and it is this system that amply affords the reactionary traitors and the rich a free hand to exploit the poor and the masses in general. The naked armed invasion on us by India and Burma marked the beginning of enormous influx of Indian capital and its prominent role and activities in our society have created wild conditions. The concentration of capital in a few hands and its constant investment for acquiring more-capital has set the whole society into a tremendous swing of exploitation of the Nagas by all Nagas and by the Indian parasites.

The existence of class distinction is more prominent than ever before. The exploiting class consists mainly of the reactionary traitors, the bureaucrats, a handful of rich men and the Indian vermin. They have practically no concern for the masses nor for the survival of the nation, but interest themselves in exploitation of the people and retention of their status. Their identification of interests with those of the exploiting rulers of India, has led them to be identified with the Indians in various walks of life; and as they are accomplices, the Government of India is always behind them. On the other hand, the masses are the victims; they bore the brunt of the long attack. It is undoubtedly to their unyielding endurance that we owe the survival of the nation today and it shall be so for all time to come. They are also the victims of exploitation; they are daily exploited everywhere. The contradictions that exist between the two chasses are such that there could be no meeting point whatsoever.

From the above brief analysis, two outstanding points emerge. In the first place, the free existence of Nagaland is a must for the salvation of the people. In the next, the abolition of exploitation of the people is imperative if people are to assure their future.

The fact that the sacrifices and the efforts of the people alone could withstand and save the nation from external invasion is beyond dispute. But in spite of the standing fact, we are posed with the question—For whom would the nation, saved by the sacrifices and the efforts of the people, be? No doubt, it would be for the people alone. However, the actuality of this would be borne out solely by the system that would be implemented.

To us, it is definitely Socialism alone that can assure the fairest deal to the community as a whole as it is the only social and economic system that does away with exploitation and oppression. Moreover, we are profoundly convinced of the course of human society to socialism, that is, the inevitability of Socialism from the struggle of the two irreconcilable classes. Without this salvation in Socialism, we promise no future to the people; we betray them to no hope; they are made beasts of burden.

However, to achieve the salvation of the people in Socialism, the dictatorship of the people through a revolutionary organisation is indispensable. It is because the revolutionaries alone stand out for the political freedom of Nagaland, against the system of exploitation of the Nagas by the Nagas, and further the cause of the people to Socialism, where virtually all the means of production, natural resources and their distribution, transportation and communication, and other essential functions are to be owned by the state or by the community as a whole. It is only in the dictatorship of the people through a Revolutionary Council that the principle of people's supremacy is upheld to its meaning, the free existence of Nagaland could be safeguarded and Socialism could be realised. Therefore, any force opposing it would obviously amount to being anti-national and anti-people.

X. NAGALAND AND THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST COUNCIL

The world is changing fast but the Naga National Council has failed to keep pace with changing conditions. It has not understood the world and Nagaland; it has isolated itself from the people; it has not promised the people any future from the danger of the forces of domination, exploitation and assimilation. All the old forces have yielded and are drowned without a trace and any contrary claim is just a claim to save one's own face, and not to save the nation. All have fallen and Nagaland remains to be saved. Where is the way to save our nation now? Where is the Council that upholds the cause of the sovereign Nagaland and the salvation of the people?

We declare we are revolutionary patriots. Let no traitorous nor reactionary bounds be on us. To us the sovereign existence of our country, the salvation of our people in Socialism with their spiritual salvation in Christ are eternal and unquestionable. It is because life has meaning and that is in freedom alone. Only the revolutionary patriots are diametrically opposed to all the anti-national, anti-people forces. Because: We refuse Nagaland to be valued for one's status. Indeed, our Nagaland shall forever refuse to perish together with any leadership or organisation that has failed and betrayed her cause, that has no promise of future for the people. Time moves on, and we have to move along, although the Naga National Council does not, for we have to redeem Nagaland. Therefore, in this irreconcilable world, our National Socialist Council declares:

(a) *National existence*

We stand for the unquestionable sovereign right of the Naga people over every inch of Nagaland whatever it may be and admit of no other existence whatever.

(b) *Political institution*

We stand for the principle of People's supremacy, that is, the dictatorship of the people through the National Socialist Council and the practice of Democracy within the organisation.

(c) *Economic system*

We stand for Socialism. Because it is the only social and economic system that does away with exploitation and ensures fair equality to all the people.

(d) *Religion*

We stand for the faith in God and the salvation of mankind in Jesus, the Christ, alone, that is "Nagaland for Christ." However, the individual freedom of religion shall be safeguarded and the imposition of this faith on others is strictly forbidden.

(e) *Means*

We rule out the illusion of saving Nagaland through peaceful means. It is arms and arms alone that will save our nation and ensure freedom to the people.

(f) *Self-reliance and the policy of United Front*

We stand for the practice of the principle of self-reliance and for the policy of United Front with all the forces that can be united with.

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF NAGALAND:

Ask not what the Maker has in store for us. In His righteousness, he has given us all that is ours. Let us understand our country and our freedom and hold them fast. For what have the people that doubt their freedom and that of their country? They are only fit to be ruled, nay, they are already ruled. They are the people to be pitied most. Without her freedom Nagaland too has nothing. Truly, when freedom falls, everything falls. Your country is challenged; your freedom is in peril. Arise and look! It is time; it is our today; we should never fail her, for no amount of sermons and lamentations can save her tomorrow. We have chosen Nagaland and her freedom forever; we will never part with them. Indeed, it is the war we have to fight: it is the war we have to win. We shall accept no summons to bow down; our Nagaland shall never put her hands up. We shall live only in freedom. This alone is the way to our salvation. Praise the Lord! We hold the promises of history.

Long Live Nagaland
Long Live the National Socialist Council of Nagaland

APPENDIX XVI

The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983
(Act No. 39 of 1983)

An Act to provide for the establishment of Tribunals for the determination, in a fair manner, of the question whether a person is an illegal migrant to enable the Central Government to expel illegal migrants from India and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto

Whereas a good number of the foreigners who migrated into India across the borders of the eastern and north-eastern regions of the country on and after the 25th day of March, 1971, have, by taking advantage of the circumstances of such migration and their ethnic similarities and other connections with the people of India and without having in their possession any lawful authority so to do, illegally remained in India:

And whereas the continuance of such foreigners in India is detrimental to the interests of the public of India.

And whereas on account of the number of such foreigners and the manner in which such foreigners have clandestinely been trying to pass off as citizen of India and all other relevant circumstances, it is necessary for the protection of the citizens of India to make special provisions for the detection of such foreigners in Assam and also in any other part of India in which such foreigners may be found to have remained illegally;

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Thirty-fourth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

CHAPTER I. PRELIMINARY

1. *Short title, extent commencement:* (1) This Act may be called the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983.

(2) It extends to the whole of India.

(3) It shall be deemed to have come into force in the State of Assam on the 15th day of October, 1983 and in any other State on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette,¹ appoint and different dates may be appointed for different States and references in this Act to the commencement of this Act shall be construed in relation to any State as references to the date of commencement of this Act in such State.

2. *Application*: Nothing in this Act shall apply to or in relation to

(a) any person who was in any State and who had been expelled from that State or India before the commencement of this Act in that State or in relation to whose expulsion from such State or India any order made before such commencement under any other law is in force;

(b) any person detected as a foreigner at the time of his entry across any border of India;

(c) any foreigner who, having entered into India under a valid passport or travel document, continued to remain therein after the expiry of the period for which he was authorised to remain in India under such passport or travel document.

3. *Definitions and construction of references*: (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,

(a) "Appellate Tribunal" means an Appellate Tribunal established by the Central Government under sub-section (1) of section 15;

(b) "foreigner" has the same meaning as in the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946);

(c) "illegal migrant" means a person in respect of whom each of the following conditions is satisfied, namely:

(i) he has entered into India on or after the 25th day of March, 1971;

(ii) he is a foreigner;

(iii) he has entered into India without being in possession of a valid passport or other travel document or any other lawful authority in that behalf;

(d) "notification" means a notification published in the Official Gazette;

(e) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(f) "Tribunals" means a Tribunal established by the Central Government under sub-section (1) of section 5.

(2) Any reference in this Act to any law which is not in force in any area shall, in relation to that area, be construed as a reference to the corresponding law, if any, in force in that area.

4. *Overriding effect of the Act*: (1) The provisions of this Act or of any rule or order made thereunder shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 (34 of 1920) or the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946) or the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act 1950 (10 of 1950) or the Passports Act, 1967 (15 of 1967) or any rule or order made under any of the said Acts and in force for the time being.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the provisions of sub-section (1), nothing in the proviso to section 2 of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 (10 of 1950) shall apply to or in relation to an illegal migrant as defined in clause © of sub-section (1) of section 3.

¹The Act received the assent of the President on the 29th December, 1983 and published in the Gazette of India Extra, Part II, Section 1 on 26th December, 1983.

CHAPTER II. ESTABLISHMENT OF TRIBUNALS

5. *Establishment of Illegal Migrants (Determination) Tribunals:* (1) The Central Government may, by notification, establish, for the purposes of this Act, as many Illegal Migrants (Determination) Tribunals as it may deem necessary and specify the principal place of sitting of, and the territorial limits within which, each such Tribunal shall exercise its jurisdiction.

(2) No person shall be appointed as a member of any such Tribunal unless he is or has been a District Judge or an Additional District Judge in any State.

(3) Each Tribunal shall consist of three members.

(4) On the establishment of a Tribunal, the Central Government shall appoint one of the members thereof as the Chairman of such Tribunal.

(5) Each Tribunal shall sit in its principal place of sitting and in such other place or places as its Chairman may, from time to time, appoint.

(6) *Filling of Vacancies:* If, for any reason, any vacancy occurs in the office of the Chairman or any other member of a Tribunal, the Central Government may fill the vacancy by appointing any person who fulfils the qualification specified in sub-section (2) of section 5, as the Chairman, or, as the case may be, member of such Tribunal.

(7) *Staff of the Tribunals:* The Central Government shall make available to every Tribunal such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions under this Act.

(8) *References or applications to Tribunals:* (1) If any question arises as to whether any person is or is not an illegal migrant, the Central Government may, whether such question has arisen on a representation made by such person against any order under the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946) requiring him not to remain in India or to any other effect or has arisen in any other manner whatsoever, order such question to a Tribunal for decision.

(2) Without prejudice to the power conferred on the Central Government by sub-section (1), any person may make an application to the Tribunal, for its decision, as to whether the person whose name and other particulars are given in the application, is or is not an illegal migrant:

Provided that no such application shall be entertained by the Tribunal unless the person in relation to whom the application is made is found, or resides, at a place within three kilometres from the place of residence of the applicant.

(3) Every application made under sub-section (2) shall be made in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed and shall be accompanied by affidavits sworn by not less than two persons residing within three kilometres of the area in which the person referred to in the application is found, or residing, corroborating the averments made in the application, and shall also be accompanied by such fee, being not less than twenty-five, and not more than one hundred rupees, as may be prescribed.

(4) Every reference under sub-section (1) and every application under sub-section (2), shall be made to the Tribunal within the territorial limits of whose jurisdiction the place of residence of the person named in such reference or application, as the case may be, is situated:

Provided that where the person named in such reference or application has no place of residence, the reference or application, as the case may be, shall be made to the Tribunal within the territorial limits of whose jurisdiction such person is found.

(9) Powers of the Tribunal: Every Tribunal shall have the same powers as are

vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) while trying a suit, in respect of the following matters, namely:

(a) Summoning and enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath;

(b) Discovery and production of any document;

(c) Reception of evidence on affidavits;

(d) Requisitioning of public records from any court or office;

(e) Issuing of any commission for the examination of witnesses.

(10) *Procedures with respect to reference under sub-section (1) of Section 8:* On receipt of a reference under sub-section (1) of section 8, the Tribunal shall serve on the person named in such reference, in a notice, accompanied by a copy of such reference, calling upon him to make, within a period of thirty days from the date of receipt of such notice, such representation with regard to the averments made in the reference, and to produce such evidence as he may think fit in support of his defence:

Provided that if the Tribunal is satisfied that the person aforesaid was prevented by sufficient cause from making his representation and from producing evidence in support of his defence within the said period of thirty days, it may permit him to make his representation and to produce evidence in support of his defence, within such further period, not exceeding thirty days, as it may, by order, specify.

(11) *Procedure with respect to applications under sub-section (2) of section 8:* (1) On receipt of an application under sub-section (2) of section 8, the Tribunal shall issue a notice, accompanied by a copy of the application, to the prescribed authority calling upon it to furnish, after making such inquiry as that authority may deem fit, a report to the Tribunal with regard to the averments made in the application.

(2) If, on a consideration of the report made by the prescribed authority, the Tribunal is satisfied that—

(a) the person named in the application is not an illegal migrant or that the application is frivolous or vexatious, or has not been in good faith, the Tribunal shall, after giving the applicant an opportunity to be heard, reject the applications;

(b) There are reasonable grounds to believe that the person named in the application is an illegal migrant, the Tribunal shall issue a notice accompanied by a copy of the application, to the person named in the application, calling upon him to make, within thirty days from the date of receipt of the notice, such representation with regard to the averments made in the application and to produce such evidence as he may think fit in support of his defence:

Provided that if the Tribunal is satisfied that the person aforesaid was prevented by sufficient cause from making his representation and from producing evidence in support of his defence within the said period of thirty days, it may permit him to make his representation and to produce evidence in support of his defence, within such further period, not exceeding thirty days, as it may, by order, specify.

12. *Determination of the question as to whether a person is an illegal migrant:* (1) The Tribunal to which a reference has been made under section 8, or to which an application has been made under that section, shall, after taking such evidence as may be adduced before it and after making such inquiry as it may think fit and after hearing such persons as it may deem appropriate, by order, decide the question as to whether the person named in such reference or application, as the case may be, is or is not an illegal migrant:

Provided that where for the determination of such question in any case the

decision on any issue renders any decision on any other issues or issues unnecessary, the Tribunal may not decide such other issues or issues.

(2) Where the members of the Tribunal differ in their opinion on any point, the decision on such point shall be according to the opinion of the majority of such members.

(3) The Tribunal shall send a copy of every order passed by it to the prescribed authority and to the parties to the reference, or the application, as the case may be.

(4) Every order passed under sub-section (1) shall, subject to the decision of the Appellate Tribunal, be final and shall not be called in question in any court.

13. *Reference and application to be disposed of within six months:* Every reference made to a Tribunal under section 8 or application made to a Tribunal under that section shall be inquired into as expeditiously as possible and every endeavour shall be made to conclude such inquiry within a period of six months from the date of the service, on the person concerned, of a copy of such reference or application.

14. *Appeal:* The Central Government, or any person, named in a reference or an application under section 8, or any applicant under sub-section (2) of that section may, if it or he is not satisfied with any order made by a Tribunal under section 12, prefer an appeal to the Appellate Tribunal against such order.

15. *Appellate Tribunal:* (1) The Central Government may, by notification, establish for each State in which this Act is in force an Appellate Tribunal to be known as the Illegal Migrants (Determination) Appellate Tribunal for deciding appeals preferred under section 14 against orders made by Tribunals, in the State and specify the principal place of sitting of such Appellate Tribunal.

(2) No person shall be appointed as a member of an Appellate Tribunal unless he is or has been, a Judge of a High Court.

(3) An Appellate Tribunal shall consist of as many members, not being less than three and more than six, as the Central Government may think fit.

(4) The Central Government shall appoint one of the members of an Appellate Tribunal to be the President thereof.

(5) An Appellate Tribunal shall sit in its principal place of sitting or any such other place or places as the President thereof may, from time to time, appoint.

(6) The powers and functions of an Appellate Tribunal may be exercised and discharged by benches constituted by the President thereof from amongst members thereof and each bench shall consist of not less than two members.

(7) The Central Government shall make available to every Appellate Tribunal such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions under this Act.

(8) Every memorandum of appeal to an Appellate Tribunal shall be made in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed, and, in the case of an appeal preferred by an applicant under sub-section (2) of section 8, shall also be accompanied by such fee, not being less than twenty-five and more than one hundred rupees, as may be prescribed.

(9) Every appeal shall be preferred within thirty days from the date on which the order sought to be appealed against was communicated to the appellant:

Provided that the Appellate Tribunal may, if it is satisfied that the appellant was prevented by sufficient cause from preferring the appeal within the said period, admit an appeal after the expiry of the aforesaid period of thirty days.

(10) Every Appellate Tribunal shall have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) while trying a suit, in

respect of the following matters, namely:

- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath;
- (b) discovery and production of any document;
- (c) reception of evidence on affidavits;
- (d) requisitioning of public records from any court or office;
- (e) issuing of any commission for the examination of witnesses.

16. *Order of the Appellate Tribunal:* (1) The Appellate Tribunal may, after giving the parties to the appeal a reasonable opportunity of being heard, pass such orders thereon as it may think fit, confirming, modifying or annulling the order appealed against or may remand the case to the Tribunal which had passed such order with such directions to that Tribunal as the appellate Tribunal may think fit, for fresh determination after taking additional evidence if necessary.

(2) Where an appeal had been heard by the Appellate Tribunal and the members thereof differ in their opinion on any point, the decision on such point shall, where there is a majority, be according to the opinion of such majority, and where there is no majority and the members are equally divided in their opinion, they shall draw up a statement of the facts of the case and the point or points on which they differ in their opinion and make a reference of the point or points or of the appeal, as the case may be, to the President of such Tribunal, and on receipt of such reference, the President of the Tribunal shall arrange for the hearing of such point or points, or the appeal, by one or more of the members of the Appellate Tribunal, and such point or points, or the appeal, as the case may be, shall be decided according to the opinion of the majority of the members of the Appellate Tribunal, who have heard the appeal, including those who had first heard it.

(3) The Appellate Tribunal shall send a copy of every order passed by it under sub-section (1) to the parties to the appeal and to the Tribunal concerned.

(4) Subject to the provisions of section 17, every order passed under sub-section (1), other than an order remanding the case, shall be final and no order passed under that sub-section shall be called in question in any court.

17. *Revision:* The High Court may call for the record of any case which has been decided by the Appellate Tribunal situate within its local jurisdiction, and if such Appellate Tribunal appears-

- (a) to have exercised a jurisdiction not vested in it by law, or
- (b) to have failed to exercise a jurisdiction so vested, or
- (c) to have acted in the exercise of its jurisdiction illegally or with material irregularity,

the High Court may make such order in the case as it thinks fit:

Provided that the High Court shall not, under this section, vary or reverse any order made or any order deciding an issue in the course of a proceeding with respect to an appeal, except where

- (i) the order, if it had been made in favour of the party applying for revision, would have finally disposed of the proceeding, or
- (ii) the order, if allowed to stand, would occasion a failure of justice or cause irreparable injury to the party against whom it was made.

Explanation—In this section, the expression “any case which has been decided” includes any order made or any order deciding an issue in the course of a proceeding with respect to any appeal.

CHAPTER III. PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL TRIBUNAL

18. *Procedure*: Subject to the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder, every Tribunal and every Appellate Tribunal shall have the power to regulate its own procedure in all matters arising out of the exercise of its powers or for the discharge of its functions.

19. *Proceeding before every Tribunal to be judicial proceeding for certain purposes*: Every proceeding before a Tribunal or the Appellate Tribunal shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of sections 193 and 228, and for the purposes of section 196 of the Indian Penal code, 1860 (45 of 1860) and every such tribunal or Appellate Tribunal, as the case may be, shall be, deemed to be a civil court for the purposes of section 195 and Chapter XXVI of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974).

CHAPTER IV. ENFORCEMENT OF THE ORDERS MADE BY THE TRIBUNALS

20. *Expulsion of illegal migrant*: Where a person has been determined by a Tribunal, or, as the case may be, by the Appellate Tribunal, to be an illegal migrant, the Central Government shall, by order served on such person, direct such person to remove himself from India within such time and by such route as may be specified in the order and may give such further directions in regard to his removal from India as it may consider necessary or expedient.

CHAPTER V. MISCELLANEOUS

21. *Delegation of powers*: The Central Government may, by notification, direct that the powers and duties conferred or imposed on it by this Act other than the powers conferred by section 28, and the powers conferred by this section, may, subject to such conditions as may be specified in the notification, be exercised or discharged also by—

- (a) any officer subordinate to the central Government;
- (b) any State Government or any officer subordinate to that Government.

22. *Power to give effect to the orders, etc.*: Any authority empowered by or in pursuance of the provisions of this act to exercise any power, may, in addition to any other action expressly provided for in this Act, take, or cause to be taken, such steps, and use, or cause to be used, such force, as may in its opinion be reasonably necessary for the effective exercise of such powers.

23. *Bar of jurisdiction of civil courts*: Where a Tribunal or Appellate Tribunal has been established for any area for the purpose of determining whether a person is or is not an illegal migrant, no civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any question relating to that matter in that area and no injunction or any other order in respect of any action taken by, or before, the Tribunal or Appellate Tribunal in respect of that matter shall be granted or made by any civil court.

24. *Transitory provision*: Wherein any suit or other legal proceeding pending, whether in a civil court or in any Tribunal established under any other law for the time being in force, immediately before the commencement of this Act, a question arises as to whether a person is or is not an illegal migrant, such court or Tribunal shall, without deciding such question, make an order transferring such suit or other legal proceeding to the Tribunal under this Act within the territorial limits of whose jurisdiction such court or other Tribunal is situate and on such transfer such question shall be dealt with by such Tribunal in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

25. *Penalties:* Any person who

(a) contravenes or attempts to contravene, or abets the contravention of any order made under section 20; or

(b) fails to comply with any direction given by any such order; or

(c) harbours any person who has contravened any order made under section 20 or has failed to comply with any direction given by any such order, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.

26. *Protection of action taken in good faith:* No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against any person for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act.

27. *Power to remove difficulties:* (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Central Government may, by order to be published in the official Gazette, make such provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty:

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the commencement of this act.

2. Every order made under this section shall, as soon as may be after it is made, be laid before each House of Parliament.

28. *Power to make rules:* (1) the Central Government may, by notification, make rules to carry out the provisions of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing powers, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:

(a) the form and the manner in which an application may be made and the fee which shall accompany such application, as required by sub-section (3) of Section 8

(b) The authority to be prescribed under section 11;

(c) The form and the manner in which an appeal to the Appellate Tribunal may be preferred and the fee which shall accompany such appeal, as required by sub-section (8) of section 15;

(d) Any other matter which is required to be, or may, be prescribed.

(3) Every rule made by the Central Government under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be, so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.

29. *Repeal and saving:* (1) The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Ordinance, 1983 (8 of 1983) is hereby repealed.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done or any action taken under the said Ordinance shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act.

COMMENTARY

The object of this Act is to establish Tribunals for determination of persons who are illegal migrants and to expel the illegal migrants from India who has entered into India on or after the 25th of March 1971, without being in possession of a valid passport or other travel document or any other lawful authority in that behalf.

APPENDIX XVII

**Statement Of The National Socialist Council of Nagaland
3.1.1984**

In view of the widespread unfounded "Unity Moves" through the Angami local and Indian papers in the stolen name of Chairman Isak Chishi Swu, we are making ourselves definitely clear of our position to the people of Nagaland, through this written statement, so that our people may know the evil wiles of the traitors. Our Naga people know for sure that their future is only in the socialism of the National Socialist Council. The reactionary traitors have felt the impact of this irresistible wave on the people. They are in dread as their dooms draw fast closer upon them and finding no other way out from their doom they ceaselessly devise means for the extenuation of their high treason in one and thousand ways. They have to concoct lies and have them propagated through the enemy mass media, to try their utmost to confuse the people if they could. The adversary newsmen, at the same time, could be purchased with a bottle of XXX rum and also to make capital for themselves out of the publication, readily accepted the job. They are collaborated between themselves to deceive the masses against the patriots. This being the actual condition of ours today, how could there be "unity moves" from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland? How could there be unity between the dead and the living, between darkness and light, between rust and steel, between the reactionary traitors and the revolutionary patriots, between capitalistic egoism, socialistic altruism, between the treacherous A.Z. Phizo's tribalism and the Socialism of the NSCN? It is simply a pity for one to talk of unity between the totally perishing Phizo's clique and vigorously risen forces of the NSCN. This is practically the impossibility of the present-day Nagaland politics. We will never perish together with the sold-out NNC and Federal government headed by Phizo, for ours is to save our country, however small it may be. Why Phizo and his henchmen are desperately talking of compromise and unity now, employing enemy pressmen? Who started unleashing blood shedding and killing among us? Who attempted to betray the nation altogether by annihilating staunch patriots? Who deliberately declined to condemn the notorious Shillong Accord? Who betrayed Nagaland accepting the Indian Constitution of their own volition? Who, in all servility, surrendered arms? All these shameful but historical facts are committed by Angami Zapu Phizo and his men. It is absolutely volte-face, a complete fall from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the lofty national freedom to the prostrated capitulation, from 'Kuknalim' to 'Jai Hind'. This is the beautiful politics, perhaps, out of the wonderful medium of the Shillong Accord makers and fetish of A.Z. Phizo. How then could there be unity between NSCN and Phizo? No. Never, after all what chaff has to do with the wheat: Therefore, the cry for the concocted unity by Phizo and his men is but the helpless struggle of a drowning man to catch any straw.

A.Z. Phizo still wants to claim the championship on the ground that he did not sign on the capitulation paper, and his henchmen supported it. Has he forgotten that he refused to condemn the Shillong Accord, the architect of which was his younger brother Kevi Yalley and warmly welcomed the traitors at his London mansion? Has he forgotten that Th. Muivah and Mr. Isak Swu together with other delegation members, while they were abroad, insisted to condemn outright the capitulation agreement of 1975 which he refused on purpose? Has he forgotten that Messrs.

Muivah, Isak with other delegation members wrote to him that they would take him (Phizo) to be a party to the capitulation accord if he would not condemn it? Has he also forgotten that Messrs. Muivah, Isak and fellow delegates earnestly asked for his guidance and directions even a total of three times in that particular year alone which he absolutely ignored? On the reverse, he wrote to late Mr. Venu, Chakhesang, a member of the delegation abroad in which he curiously urged that "Angami and Chakhesang should be united, others are not reliable". Naturally one is intrigued to know the meaning and the standard of the letter from the man of topmost National standing, through it is not a novelty in his politics. Unity between Angami and Chakhesang against whom? For what purpose? Obviously against Naga people for the purpose of realising Phizo's aims which is mentioned in this statement. This political logic of A.Z. Phizo is not hard for one to get at. Moreover, when did he take note of our determined assurance that we would fight to the last? What regard and concern he has for the people and unyielded patriots except for his family, tribe and for the traitors, his accomplices? Who despised whom? It is certainly Angami Zapu Phizo who has despised the Naga people choosing the traitors of his brother's brand. Where is he now? Where will he conceal his inclination, tilted politics? Has he forgotten that after returning from meeting with him, the traitors sent their agents and plotted the paranoid coup d'etat and killing started, proclaiming "All powers of both NNC and Federal are in our hand"? Did they not declare that 'Martial Law' was on the ground that Mr. Isak Swu, the then Vice Chairman and Th. Muivah, General Secretary, NNC, with the people, has condemned the Shillong Accord which Phizo did not? Where is A.Z. Phizo's NNC now? Has he forgotten that all the traitors gathered together at his village Khunema in 1978 and held meeting in the name of NNC and passed resolutions of anti-national aspirations to which he warmly countenanced? It is not a council now used by the traitors alone. It has, per adventure, become an organisation for the congregation of the traitors headed by A.Z. Phizo himself. Has he forgotten that his agents came in the month of August, 1979, and put forward to us a proposal that Phizo should be the lifetime Chief Minister of the so-called Nagaland State, the miniature type of Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir, with the Indian constitutional authority to nominate 20 M.L.A.s? Has he forgotten that to that proposal he reacted positively saying, "It is no problem for me, the problem is with our men in the east, talk to them"? Has he forgotten that on total refusal of that policy of treason, the lives of Messrs. Isak Swu, S.S. Kaplang, T.H. Muivah and their closed associates were attempted and undoubtedly they could have been finished if it were not by Providential protection? Has he forgotten that his men dug three times, at different places, the graves of Messrs. Isak Swu, Th. Muivah and their supporters? Has he also forgotten that his men openly challenge uttering "Whoever would oppose A.Z. Phizo and the Shillong Accord shall be totally crushed"? Probably Phizo wants to pretend to be above all these felonious acts. Now, they cry for unity: Can they fool the people to accept their capitulation in the name of unity? We Naga people are prepared to see how far A.Z. Phizo, his brother Kevi Yalley, Z. Ramyo and their proteges could manage to save themselves by their attempts to dupe the people on the pretext of unity now they cry for. Under the circumstances, what unity could one expect unless he despises one and chooses the other.

Again, every one in the east knows that Povizo Sohe and Angami Dupu Kevichusa, taking the cue from Yalley and Zashei Haire, established underhand relations with the Burmese troops on conditions that they would fight against the NSCN forces. We

shall watch and stay the course of the drama of such tacit marriage against us. How long it would be too shrewd a wisdom for Phizo and his men? We predict it would be ephemeral and shall be ended up in distended treachery of each other. Again, the widely published news in Angami local papers that Povizo Sohe and Angami Dupu Kevichusa had reached China is altogether another false news to hoodwink the people. It is an insult to the people. As a matter of fact, Povizo Sohe was driven back by the Kachins in the early part of 1983 and he is now stealthily hiding in the eastern part of Khyamungan area. Angami Dupu Kevichusa who was left there to meet the Kachin authority is now completely frustrated as they refused to have any relations with Phizo and his men. He is on his way back to Khyamngan. It is a fool's dream that Povizo and Dupu are in China. Not to speak at all of their acceptance by the Chinese, they were driven back by the K.I.O. Whose checkmate is that on diplomatic front? It is left to the sensible people to understand. How long Phizo and his supporters would take comfort in the silly hallucination of their own creation? They think they can pull the people with the lies they constantly manufacture. But we know our people are not so cheap a stuff as to be fuddled as they has been in the past by traitors of all shades.

Things are not stopped here. A.Z. Phizo always harps particularly on family and tribe which has been actively inseminated by his younger brother, who wrote to his tribesmen "Tenemies" (meaning Angamis) are the only trustworthy people and that political powers should be in their hand? Other tribes are destructive and unreliable". Unfortunately Messrs. Muivah, Isak and others, then in authority, were not Angami ant that they had to be sacked by show of arms. He also circulated, "The Tangkhuls, the Semas, the Aos, the Konyaks and others are emotional and have not concern for the future of the country, it is the Tenemies alone". Truly, malice, jealousy, hatred and pride have over-taken Phizo and his men and they have completely failed to appreciate the reality that is with the Naga people. It is known to all the they called us, 'criminals' and branded us, 'communists' and organised "Christ Soldiers" to eliminate the patriots who are indeed for Christ. The Tenemias with two or three Ao reverends in active collaboration with the chief traitors shouted far and wide, "Away with the communists, Muivah, Isak, Khaplant and their supporters". But heaven knows, for ourselves, we are here standing for our Saviour Christ, however humble we might be. Where are the Angami Christ soldiers now? Again recently, they formed 'Naga Elders' collecting some hypocrites from here and there to reinforce Phizo's worn out politics and to curse the National Socialist Council as Balaam did. Can a few treasonous hypocrites represent a nation? No, never: yet, we know, they will struggle with Phizo until their own destruction would overhaul them. What is more, in his revised standard version of the term, "Tenemias" Kavi Yasley has enlarged the areas adjoining Angami inhabited so as to include the people around them to support and realize Phizo's aims. In the circumstances, the National Socialist Council compelled by the necessity of the integrity and salvation of the Naga people from malignant harm of treacherous Phizo's objectives:

1. Political power to be in the hand of the Tenemia,
2. State Language to be Angami,
3. The State Capital to be at Kohima,
4. To be within the Indian Union to seek the blessing of the Indian rulers to realise this aim.

Deliberately exploiting in this way, the untold sufferings and sacrifices of the

people everywhere of the past three decades Phizo and his men are strenuously working to establish the treacherous glory of their families and tribe. This is paradoxically the beautiful politics of A.Z. Phizo, his relatives and his tribe. But, here, we make you categorically clear that the people of Nagaland should not be counted in any sense, for we will not be a party whatsoever to whatever Phizo and his men would commit.

Will Naga people endorse the interpretation made by Phizo's henchmen of Naga politics that, "The people of Nagaland would go wherever Phizo goes, even to India". The lives of those who opposed this traitorous perversion were treated as mere stuff. The National Socialist Council who have Naga Nation from the tragedy of Shillong Accord and Phizo-arrogated hegemony, shall be slow to forget it. The way you murdered the loyal Nagas as chickens, the way you pointed your guns against us, the slaughter you have precipitated among the Nagas, the policy to cow down Nagaland and the kind of dictatorship you seek through gun shall be promptly met with gun. You fight Phizo's war, we shall fight our war of saving Naga people. We tell you, we will never worship the statue created in the plain of Dura by King Darius, how many times the trumpet would be blown, nor the Mussolini who claimed to be 'never wrong', nor Angami Zapu Phizo in whose name tens of lovers of nation are slaughtered as chickens. In the Nagaland of NSCN, the evil forces of familism, nepotism, aristocratic snobbism, tribalism, in short, Phizoism, shall be given no room. We shall face them to their very end. We shall not be silent to challenge anyone whenever he goes out of the bounds of Nagaland. Therefore, to make no mistake, we declare that any argument or conception that is originated from the point of saving Phizo at the cost of the nation shall be at once rebuffed. Any argument or conception that is proceeded from the question of Nagaland's dear cause of freedom shall be honoured. Any attempt to make Phizo and his men above the people, above the nation shall be dealt with as high treason.

The inculcation of the shameless notion among the Angami masses that without the Angamis there would be no stable leadership among the Nagas, would be only an addition to your own vanity. You should rather know that the most ignominious sell-out, the Shillong Accord, is but almost entirely the work of the Tenemi leadership. How long Phizo and his men would wallow in the tribal pool of stupid arrogance: They should struggle before it is too late from being traitorous to be on the straight. They should not be conceited. They should try to comprehend the fact that Nagaland is larger than Kohima district and Naga people above the Tenemias. Get also yourselves corrected from the misled conception that Phizo would bring the sovereignty of the people, for sovereignty as such is not a thing to be fetched. It is in the people and we are the people. Where are those domineering bosses who shouted "nothing short of Independence" against their contemporaries? Where is A.Z. Phizo's 'Ur-ra Uve'? Where is that Z. Ramyo, the political prostitute, the giant money-eater of Nagaland? Are not all the traitors heaped up there the sanctuary, the home of the traitors? If by chance Phizo's men were able to annihilate the stalwart national defenders in 1978-1979, when they made their all-out attempts, where Phizo and his men would have gone to according to their utterances? What will have been the political state of affairs? The people can very well imagine. Will the government of India talk to A.Z. Phizo, the fugitive traitor, knowing that he is supported only by the traitors, unless it is on humiliating surrendered terms of refined Shillong Accord? The people of Nagaland know where your politics is en-route to. Do not think you can bluff the people. It will

be to your own folly. Some paradoxes as illustrations may help know more of your mistakes.

Paradox No. 1. While we positively stand for every inch of Nagaland, you draw the map of our country as you wished. The map of Nagaland you sketched in your paper along the river Chindwin is fraught with danger and you are to be responsible for any consequences that would arise therefrom. You have the habit of drawing, writing and speaking much about the things you do not know.

Paradox No. 2. When the 'Revolutionary Government' of, particularly, the Semas surrendered, you condemned them to the point of nausea whipping up your rancour in every nook and corner of the country. When you capitulated to the most disgraceful sellout, the Shillong Accord, will not others condemn you? Of course, the people of Nagaland will, for the Shillong Accord is yours. The mentality that whatever you do is right and whatever others do is wrong, is too much a fanatic. It cannot be the criterion of the relations anywhere among human societies. Beware of your 'holier-than-thou' attitude. Come to reason and know that it has buried A.Z. Phizo and his politics.

Paradox No. 3. When we condemned the Shillong Accord, you said "why do you condemn which Phizo does not", and you started the most horrible slaughter among the Nagas. We tell you, we condemn it, because we have the courage to undo the capitulation of your make. Again, when we sent 12 of our men in three batches one after another for the national workers in khyamgan area, to call them for clear-cut understanding, you murdered them in cold-blood and set the whole nation on blood-path. Yet you shifted the blame wholesale on to us white washing the horrible murder you committed, shouting, "Christians Vs. Communists".

Paradox No. 4. When centralisation was implemented, you opposed it as it would do away with your policy of accumulating arms for yourselves by means of which you wanted to control other Nagas and retain your status without knowing that such policy had given rise to hatred of the most dangerous nature along the Nagas which would eventually lead to national self-defeat. The magnitude of disunited animosity already in existence was bound to explode resulting in the destruction of even the Naga body-politic beyond repair. Nagas and their politics had to be saved, averting such imminent danger, by correct orientation. We, thus, sought unity on realistic basis, that is, on correct line and correct policy, but never on the chauvinistic posture of any leadership or tribe. In other words, unity among all Nagas is in the established correct line of the National Socialist Council alone and not at all in Phizoism, for what apples could be expected from the thistles.

Paradox No. 5. When we were united with our friends around and formed a front against the enemy, you despised the step, for the mere reason of our problem being different in nature. You wanted to be exclusive and assumed a single combat attitude of a bull whereas we chose the policy of confronting the enemy on all fronts. It is politics and not a one-hye-one challenge in an Olympic game. In practical political politics to be realistic is always better than high sounding phrasology. We shall unite with all the revolutionary forces and fight against the monster in packs.

Paradox No. 6. When any Naga woman married to an Indian, you were always the first to attempt at her life on the ground that she betrayed the nation. But when your daughters or sisters, even Phizo's did the same, how you reacted? You looked down upon others placing yourselves above the rest. When anybody was found travelling on Indian visa, you at once adopted censorious attitude towards him. But when Phizo's

son and daughter did, everyone of you sided them on this and that pretext. Phizo's daughter No.1 and son No.1 went to England accepting Indian nationality. But to the astonishment of Naga people, A.Z. Phizo had been using them as national delegates whenever he would meet with high dignitaries, and as envoys of the Nagas in foreign land and this policy of Phizo is being hailed by his Angami tribesmen. This is your politics: This is your justice: And you call the Nagas in the South, East and North as non-Nagas to show your stupid complex. We advise you to measure the box of your brain and reduce yourselves first to your own size. Try hard to come up to the level of other Nagas realising that you are far below them in respect of discerning right and wrong.

Paradox No. 7. When we fought, you said, "Why you fight". "It has involved the question of humanity". Firmly supporting that Phizo said "Let us not fight any more". Phizo's would have it, his troops taking protection from both the Indian and Burmese troops, at once started killing loyal Nagas, chopping off heads. Surely, Phizo and his fellow traitors have shown already the seed of hatred and massacre. Beyond doubt, they have become the sworn enemy of the people. In course of time, the people shall square account with you, however craftily you might struggle to extricate yourselves from the labyrinth of crimes you committed. We tell you, we fight because we have the courage to defend our motherland. Who are you to question us?

Paradox No. 8. When time comes and we talk, you would say, "why do you talk". We will talk but only on the initiative of the opponent, unlike your right opportunist overtures. We talk because we have the courage to talk. Your philosophy is "a time to fight and a time to surrender". Ours is "A time to fight and a time to honourable solution". We disdain altogether the subservient approach of Phizo and his Naga Elders importunately begging to talk. In practical politics subservient approach is disdained everywhere because wise men know subservient people cannot crack the nut.

Paradox No. 9. The sky-high eulogy of Phizo by the Angami local papers as if Washington, London, Beijing, etc. are in his hand, without knowing the hard fact that he is a helplessly stranded man supported, in this vast universe, only by some Angamis, shall be to their own shame. The impudent figure of the reactionary Phizo troops put at 4,000 disparaging the forces of the NSCN down to 400 shall be sneered at even by the fools. We shall tell you the fact. The Federal troops of Phizo whom you hailed were smashed left and right leaving, at the most, 70 men with 30 arms who were also impotent. Whose checkmate is that in military combat? It is left for the intelligent people to know. The endless fabrications you made against the NSCN through the 'Urri Mail' and your other mediums shall not be easily dismissed as mere stunts. They are deeply rooted political prejudices against the proud Nagaland's defenders. In this regard, we give you a piece of advice: You need to be corrected from the mentality of rushing on masse headlong in any conflict on the side of your men without analysis into the right and the wrong. Such nature of predisposition towards sharp national issue is being witnessed even today. Try to be objective, shaking off prejudices of your characteristics, for Naga people know the standard of your tribe propaganda. Be undetached, if you want to be for the good of the people.

From the stand you took in the past as mentioned above on vital issues, sensible men know the bankruptcy is your politics. There was no clarity in you as to the way of Naga salvation. Your voice thus often became the noise of a confused fanatic. How

could then our people repose their confidence on you knowing for certain that you do not represent the wave of the future? It would be worthwhile to make mention of an aspect of Kevi Yalley politics. He projected and sought to make Tenemias, who were then in complete national authority, the last and then take pride in being the last to surrender, meaning it was the rest of the Nagas who failed to defend and that Tenemias had to yield and to hand it down to the posterity to be proud of and repeat the folly of their do-day. You wanted to blame the Naga people and make them the scapegoat for your Tenemias Shillong Accord. Your political wit has already landed on a impasse of most disgraceful capitulation. Where are you now in relation to the course history is taking at this crucial stage? Know the truth:

The World Changes;
The old decayed and perished;
The new shoots up and yield fruits.

We Naga people are proudly defending our sweet motherland. We do not take a short view of her fate. We will take pride but only in our sovereign victory. What Phizo and his men will continue to do? They shall continue to crush the determined revolutionary patriots, the NSCN, though it is practically out of question. Therefore, A.Z. Phizo and his followers are the sworn enemy of the people. They shall always stand on the way to Nagaland's salvation.

Countrymen, your sovereignty is no more in the danger of the Shillong Accord, nor in the folly of Phizoism. It is at stake on account of the pressure of the adversaries. But, by the unfailing God's power, it is securely in the hand of the National Socialist Council. We praise Him for having brought us safe thus far. Our future too is in him alone. How great is his faithfulness: We assure you once again that we will never relinquish anything of Nagaland's Sovereignty to the invaders nor to Phizo and his men, but to the sovereign Naga people alone.

KUKNALIM

Dated Oking:
3 January, 1984.

1. Isak Chishi Swu
Chairman
National Socialist Council of Nagaland
2.S.S. Khaplang
Vice Chairman
National Socialist Council of Nagaland
3.Th. Muivah
General secretary
National Socialist Council of Nagaland

APPENDIX XVIII

**Memorandum of Settlement
(The Assam Accord)**

Government have all along been most anxious to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of foreigners in Assam. The All Assam Student Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) have also expressed their keenness to find such a solution.

2. The AASU through their Memorandum dated 2nd February, 1980 presented to the late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, conveyed their profound sense of apprehensions regarding the continuing influx of foreign nationals into Assam and the fear about adverse effects upon the political, social, cultural and economic life of the State.

3. Being fully alive to the genuine apprehensions of the people of Assam, the then Prime Minister initiated the dialogue with the AASU/AAGSP. Subsequently, talks were held at the Prime Minister and Home Minister's levels during the period 1980-83. Several round of informal talks were held during 1984. Formal discussions were resumed in March 1985.

4. Keeping all aspects of the problem including constitutional and legal provisions, international agreements, national commitments and humanitarian considerations, it has been decided to proceed as follows:-

Foreigners Issue:

5.1 For purpose of detection and deletion of foreigners, 1.1.1966 shall be the base date and year.

5.2 All persons who came to Assam prior to 1.1.1966, including those amongst them whose names appeared on the electoral rolls used in 1976 elections, shall be regularised.

5.3 Foreigners who came to Assam after 1.1.1966 (inclusive) and upto 24th March, 1971 shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964.

5.4. Names of foreigners so detected will be deleted from the electoral rolls in force. Such persons will be required to register themselves before the Registration Officers of the respective districts in accordance with the provisions of the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 and the Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1939.

5.5 For the purpose, Government of India will undertake suitable strengthening of the governmental machinery.

5.6 On the expiry of period of ten years following the date of detection, the names of all such persons which have been deleted from the electoral rolls shall be restored.

5.7 All persons who were expelled earlier, but have since re-entered illegally into Assam; shall be expelled.

5.8. Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall continue to be detected and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners.

5.9 The Government will give due consideration to certain difficulties expressed

by the AASU/AAGSP regarding the implementation of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983.

Safeguards and Economic Development:

6. Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

7. The Government take this opportunity to renew their commitment for the speedy all round economic development of Assam, so as to improve the standard of living of the people. Special emphasis will be placed on education and science & technology through establishment of national institutions.

Other Issues:

8.1. The Government will arrange for the issue of citizenship certificates in future only by the authorities of the Central Government.

8.2 Specific complaints that may be made by the AASU/AAGSP about irregular issuance of Indian Citizenship Certificate (ICC), will be looked into.

9. The international border shall be made secure against future infiltration by erection of physical barriers like walls, barbed wire fencing and other obstacles at appropriate places. Patrolling by security forces on land and riverine routes all long the international border shall be adequately intensified. In order to further strengthen the security arrangements, to prevent effectively future filtration, an adequate number of check posts shall be set up.

9.2 Besides the arrangements mentioned above and keeping in view security consideration, a road all along the international border shall be constructed so as to facilitate patrolling by security forces. Land between border and the road would be kept free on human habitation, where possible. Riverine patrolling along the international border would be intensified. All effective measures would be adopted to prevent infiltrators crossing or attempting to cross the international border.

10. It will be ensured that relevant laws for prevention of encroachment of government lands and lands in tribal belts and blocks are strictly enforced and unauthorised encroachers evicted as laid down under such laws.

11. It will be ensured that the relevant law restricting acquisition of immovable property by foreigners in Assam is strictly enforced.

12. It will be ensured that Birth and Death Registers are duly maintained.

Restoration of Normalcy:

13. The all Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) call off the agitation, assure all co-operation and dedicate themselves towards the development of the country.

14. The Central and the State Government have agreed to:

(a) review with sympathy and withdraw cases of disciplinary action taken against employees in the context of the agitation and to ensure that there is not victimization;

(b) frame a scheme for ex-gratia payment to next of kin of those who were killed in the course of the agitation;

(c) give sympathetic consideration to proposal for relaxation of upper age limit for employment in public services in Assam, having regard to exceptional situation

that prevailed in holding of academic and competitive examinations, etc. in the context of agitation in Assam.

(d) undertake review of detention cases, if any, as well as cases against persons charged with criminal offences in connection with the agitation, except those charged with commission of heinous offences;

(e) consider withdrawal of the prohibitory orders/notifications in force, if any.

15. The Ministry of Home Affairs will be the nodal Ministry/for the implementation of the above.

sd/-

(P.K. Mahanta)
President
All Assam Students

sd/-

(B.K. Phukan)
General secretary
All Assam Students Union

sd/-

(Biraj Sharma)
Convener
All Assam Gana
Sangram Parishad

sd/-

(R.D. Pradhan)
Home Secretary
Union Govt. of India

sd/-

(Smt. P.P.Trivedi)
Chief Secretary
Govt. of Assam

In the presence of

sd/-

(Rajiv Gandhi)
Prime Minister of India

Date: 15th August, 1985

Place: New Delhi

APPENDIX XIX

Memorandum of Settlement, 1986 (The Mizo Accord)

PREAMBLE

1. Government of India have all along been making earnest efforts to bring about an end to the disturbed conditions in Mizoram and to restore peace and harmony.

2. Towards this end, initiative was taken by the late prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi. On the acceptance by Shri Laldenga on behalf of the Mizo National Front (MNF) of the two conditions, namely cessation of violence by MNF and holding of talks within the frame work of the Constitution of India, a series of discussions were held with Shri Laldenga. Settlement on various issues reached during the course of the talks is incorporated in the following paragraph.

RESTORATION OF NORMALCY

3.1. With a view to restoring peace and normalcy in Mizoram the MNF party, on their part, undertakes within the agreed time-frame, to take all necessary steps to end all underground activities, to bring out all underground personnel of the MNF with their arms, ammunition and equipment to ensure their return to civil life, to abjure violence and generally to help in the process of restoration of normalcy. The modalities of bringing out all underground personnel and the deposit of arms,ammunition and equipment will be as worked out. The implementation of the foregoing will be under the supervision of the Central Government.

3.2 The MNF Party will take immediate steps to amend its Articles of Association so as to make them conform to the provision of law.

3.3 The Central Government will take steps for the resettlement and rehabilitation of underground MNF personnel coming overground after considering the schemes proposed in this regard by the Government of Mizoram.

3.4 The MNF undertakes not to extend any support to Tripura/Tribal National Volunteers (TNV), People's Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA) and any other such groups, by way of training, supply of arms or providing protection or in any other manner.

LEGAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER STEPS

4.1 With a view to satisfying the desires and aspirations of all sections of the people of Mizoram, the Government will initiate measure to confer Statehood on the Union Territory of Mizoram, subject to the other stipulations contained in this Memorandum of Settlement.

4.2 To give effect to the above, the necessary legislative and administrative measures will be undertaken, including those for the enactment of Bills for the amendment of the Constitution and other laws for the conferment of Statehood as aforesaid, to come into effect on a date to be notified by the Central Government.

4.3 The amendments aforesaid shall provide, among other things, for the following:-

(I) The territory of Mizoram shall consist of the territory specified in Section 6 of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.

(II) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of

(a) religious or social practices of the Mizos,

(b) Mizo customary law or procedure,

(c) administration of Civil and Criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law,

(d) ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides:

Provided that nothing in this clause shall apply to any Central Act in force in Mizoram immediately before that appointed day.

(III) Article 170, Clause (1) shall, in relation to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, have effect as if for the word 'sixty', the word 'forty' has been substituted.

5. Soon after the Bill for conferment of Statehood becomes law, and when the President is satisfied that normalcy has returned and that conditions conducive to the holding of free and fair elections exist, the process of holding elections to the

Legislative assembly will be initiated.

6. (a) The Centre will transfer resources to the new Government keeping in view the change in status from a Union Territory to a State and this will include resources to cover the revenue gap for the year.

(b) Central assistance for Plan will be fixed taking note of any residuary gap in resources so as to sustain the approved Plan outlay and the pattern of assistance will be in the case of special category States.

7. Border trade in locally produced or grown agricultural commodities could be allowed under the scheme to be formulated by the Central Government, subject to international arrangements with neighbouring countries.

8. The Inner Line Regulations, as now in force in Mizoram, will not be amended or repealed without consulting the State Government.

OTHER STEPS

9. The rights and privileges of the minorities in Mizoram as envisaged in the Constitution, shall continue to be preserved and protected and their social and economic advancement shall be ensured.

10. Steps will be taken by the Government of Mizoram at the earliest to review and codify the existing customs, practices, laws or other usages relating to the matters specified in clauses (a) to (d) of para 4.3 (II) of the Memorandum keeping in view that any individual Mizo may prefer to be governed by Acts of Parliament dealing with such matters and which are of general application.

11. The questions fo the unification of Mizo inhabited areas of other States to the administrative unit was raised by the MNF delegation. It was pointed out to them on behalf of the Government of India, that Article 3 of the Constitution of India prescribes the procedure in this regard but that the Government cannot make any commitment in this respect.

12. It was also pointed out on behalf of the Government that as soon as Mizoram becomes a state;

(i) The provisions of Part XVII of the Constitution will apply and the State will be at liberty to adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the state as the language to be used for all or any of the official purposes of the State.

(ii) It is open to the State to move for the establishment of a separate university in the State in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

(iii) In the light of the Prime Minister's statement at the joint Conference of the Chief Justice, Chief Ministers and Law Ministers held at New Delhi on 31st August, 1985, Mizoram will be entitled to have a High Court of its own, if it so wishes.

13. (a) It was noted that there is already a scheme in force for payment of *ex-gratia* amount to heirs/dependents of persons who were killed during disturbances in 1966 and thereafter in the Union Territory of Mizoram. Arrangements will be made to expeditiously disburse payment to those eligible persons who had already applied but who had not been made over payment of the same.

(b) It was noted that consequent on verification done by a joint team of officers, the Government of India had already made arrangements for payment of compensation in respect of damage to crops, buildings destroyed/damaged during the action in Mizoram, and rental charges of buildings and lands occupied by the Security Forces. There may, however be some claims which were preferred and verified by the above

team but have not yet been settled. These pending claims will be settled expeditiously. Arrangement will also be made for payment of pending claims of rental charges for lands/buildings occupied by the Security Forces.

(Signed)

LALDENGA

On behalf of

Mizo National Front

(Signed)

R.D. PRADHAN

Home Secretary

Government of India

LALKHAMA

Chief Secretary

Government of Mizoram

Date: 30 June 1986

Place: New Delhi

APPENDIX XX

Solemn Declaration on the Formation of a Self-Defence United Front of the South-East Himalayan region against Indian Expansionism and Indian State Terrorism

Whereas the South-east Himalayan Region has been victimized since 1947 by Indian invasion of Nagaland and occupation, domination, suppression, exploitation and assimilation of all the region in total violation of all the different levels of the rights of the people thereof, to self-determination:

Whereas the policy of the Indian Government has all along been for a complete demographic change and a total Indianization of the indigenous people of the region through methods, inter alia, the policy of letting massive influx of Indian nationals into the region:

Whereas the perpetuation of the occupation of the region through ruthless military means, notwithstanding the peaceful approaches made various peoples in the region in the past years, is aimed at destroying the entities and total subjugation of the peoples: and

Whereas the challenge is serious and the toughest course of resistance being called for, before time runs out for survival:

We, the representatives of the region, gather together on this day of 30th November 1994 and have decided unanimously among ourselves on the formation of a Self-Defence United Front against Indian Expansionism and Indian State Terrorism in the region. Further, resistance being the only way left to salvation, the members present pledge to a man to stand up to forced Indian occupation of the region until people are set free from the danger. The members are also resolved to go all out against all manners of Indian domination, exploitation, assimilation and suppression. In addition, the following resolutions among others are passed in this historic meeting.

1. The name of the United Front shall be Self-Defence United Front of the South-East Himalayan Region.
2. All members of the front are equal in status.
3. All the parties to the Front shall co-ordinate with one another in all possible fields of activities.
4. All the parties are committed to consolidate further the solidarity of the Front and to educate the people about the necessity involved for an integrated destiny, although it may take a good distance of time.
5. The Front supports the just struggles of the Jammu Kashmir people and the people of Khalistan for their rights of self-determination. The Front also supports the cause of the Adivasis, the Dalits, the Jarkhans (sic), the Uttarakhand movement (USSS), the Gorkhas and all others who are awakened to save themselves from centuries of Indian exploitation and suppression. We also fully support the People's War Group who are struggling for the justice that is due to the peoples.

The Names of the Organizations and their Representatives:

1. M. Ibopishak Mangang: Chairman, Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)
2. Achou Toijamba: Vice Chairman, KYKL
3. Lourembam Solungba, General secretary KYKL
4. Salam Khemba. Finance Secretary, KYKL
5. Namal Jam Okon, Regional Affairs secretary, KYKL
6. Julias Kitbok Dorphan, Chairman, Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC)
7. Cheristerfield Thangkhiew, General Secretary, HLAC
8. John Kharkrang, Defence Secretary, HLAC
9. Japhang, Chief Political Adviser, National Liberation Front of Twipra (NLFOT)
10. Holongstone, Representative, NLFT.
11. Waisong Engjai, Vice-chairman, Karbi National Volunteers (KNV)
12. Risso Tokbi, Assistant General Secretary, KNV
13. V.I. Kivom, Co-ordinator, Hmar Peoples Convention (HPC)
14. Lalminthang Sanate, Representative, HPC
15. Robert Lalnungsang, Representative, HPC
16. Th. Muivah, General Secretary, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)
17. W. Shimray, Liaison Officer, NSCN
18. Ningkhan Shimray, Co-ordinator, Foreign Affairs, NSCN
19. Th. Tuba (Tula?). Member, Foreign Affairs, NSCN
20. D.R. Nabla, President, National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB)
21. Jabrang, Deputy Commander, Boroland Army, NDFB
22. B. Hosthai a. Member, Foreign Affairs, NDFB
23. B. Irakdao, Member, Foreign Affairs, NDFB

APPENDIX XXI

Districtwise population percentages of Hindus and Muslims and Other Religions in Assam – 1991

District	Hindu (Percentage)	Muslim (percentage)	Other Religion (Percentage)	Total Population
Dhubri	3,82,817 (28.72)	9,38,789 (70.45)	10,869 (0.83)	13,32,475
Kokrajhar	5,31,477 (66.37)	1,54,801 (19.33)	1,14,381 (14.30)	8,00,659
Bongaigaon	5,16,830 (64.00)	2,64,393 (32.14)	26,300 (3.26)	8,07,523
Goalpara	2,66,499 (39.88)	3,35,275 (50.18)	66,364 (9.94)	6,68,138
Barpeta	5,57,929 (40.26)	7,76,974 (56.07)	50,765 (3.67)	13,85,659
Nalbari	7,87,485 (77.47)	2,02,653 (19.93)	26,252 (2.60)	10,16,390
Kamrup	14,86,526 (74.32)	4,67,544 (23.37)	46,401 (2.31)	20,00,071
Darrang	7,86,332 (60.54)	4,15,323 (31.97)	97,205 (7.49)	12,98,860
Sonitpur	11,42,228 (80.19)	1,89,859 (13.33)	92,200 (6.48)	14,24,287
Lakhimpur	5,98,946 (79.69)	1,09,010 (14.50)	43,561 (5.81)	7,51,517
Dhemaji	4,49,492 (93.87)	7,114 (1.48)	22,224 (4.65)	4,78,830
Marigaon	3,48,989 (54.55)	2,89,835 (45.30)	858 (0.15)	6,39,682
Nagaon	9,79,395 (51.73)	8,93,322 (47.18)	20,454 (1.09)	18,93,171
Golaghat	7,13,131 (86.11)	58,859 (7.10)	56,106 (6.79)	8,28,096
Jorhat	8,15,320 (93.58)	37,651 (4.32)	18,236 (3.00)	8,71,206
Sibsagar	8,10,445 (89.25)	69,260 (7.62)	28,278 (3.13)	9,07,983
Dibrugarh	9,51,763 (91.29)	46,814 (4.49)	43,880 (4.32)	10,42,457
Tinsukia	8,67,825 (90.18)	30,095 (3.12)	64,378 (6.70)	9,62,298
Karbi Anglong	5,62,102 (84.81)	10,421 (1.57)	90,200 (13.62)	6,62,723
N.C. Hills	1,09,957 (72.91)	3,340 (2.21)	37,504 (24.88)	1,50,801
Karimganj	4,14,731 (50.14)	4,06,706 (49.17)	5,626 (0.69)	8,27,063
Hailakandi	1,96,269 (43.70)	2,46,016 (54.78)	6,763 (1.52)	4,49,048
Cachar	7,70,803 (63.42)	4,19,150 (34.48)	25,432 (2.10)	12,15,385
Assam	1,50,47,293 (67.13)	63,73,204 (28.43)	9,93,825 (4.44)	2,24,14,322

(Census of India, 1991)

APPENDIX XXII

सेनाध्यक्ष के आदेश COAS COMMANDMENT शराफत और तमीज (Virtue and Civility)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. बलात्कार कभी नहीं | 1. No rape. |
| 2. औरतों से छेड़खानी कभी नहीं । | 2. No molestation. |
| 3. अमानुशिक कूरता कभी नहीं । | 3. No inhuman torture. |
| 4. मुंह काला होने से मरना भला । | 4. Death preferable to military disgrace. |
| 5. नागरिक प्रशासन में दखलंआजी कभी नहीं । | 5. No meddling in civil administration ie. Land disputes or quarrels |
| 6. पलाटून/कम्पनी टेक्टिक्स में निपुणता । | 6. Competence in platoon/company tactics with innovation. |
| 7. खुशी से जनता को राहत पहुंचाओ । | 7. Willingly carry out civil action. |
| 8. पत्रकारों से सही सम्बन्ध रखो । | 8. Maintain a good relationship with media—use it as a ‘force multiplier’ and not as a ‘force degrader’. |
| 9. मानव अधिकारियों की इज्जत करो । | 9. Respect human rights |
| 10. सिर्फ भगवान से डरो, धर्म का रास्ता पकडो और खुश होकर देश सेवा करो । | 10. Only fear Go, uphold the path of righteousness and enjoy serving the country. |

APPENDIX XIII

Extracts of Personal Message from COAS to Army Commanders on 27 January 1995

- Firstly (.) Good faith and minimum force are cardinal principles in Counter-insurgency Operations (.)
- Fourthly (.) . . . Minimum collateral damage and casualties to civilians and respect for human rights with adherence to Ten Commandments.

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